Landscape and Conflict in Fourteenth-Century Wakefield

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Abstract

This thesis explores the manor of Wakefield in the fourteenth century. Wakefield was unusual as an extremely large manor covering approximately 240 square miles, thus bringing a wide array of landscape types under the remit of one manorial institution. The thesis investigates how the interplay between humans, institutions, and landscape in Wakefield produced distinctive kinds of social and legal conflict. The thesis employs an interdisciplinary methodology, using a rich documentary source— the Wakefield manor court rolls— as its primary body of evidence, while focusing on issues of space, landscape, and lived experience. Breaking with the current dominance of quantitatively-driven research in manorial history, this thesis prioritises qualitative assessment of historical sources. Alongside this, the thesis builds upon recent theoretical innovations in landscape archaeology and anthropology, interpreting the historical data through the lens of bodily experience and physical action.

This methodology is deployed in three subject areas. The first is the effect of the landscape of Wakefield on the way in which residents of the manor negotiated conflict with one another. On this subject, the thesis concludes that the manorial environment made residents highly aware of the public nature of activity within the manor court or in some spaces outside of it, and that they were encouraged to prioritise the effects of their actions on the public standing and reputation of themselves and their opponents. Following this, the thesis examines the impact of landscape on manorial governance, arguing that the large size of Wakefield contributed to a weaker bond between institutional authority and the authority exercised by leading tenants. Finally, the thesis considers the position of landscape in the display of status and prestige by tenants, finding that being able to control or modify the local landscape was central to the assertion of prestige and authority by Wakefield tenants.

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Author's Declaration

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

Acknowledgments

Note on Translations

In translating the primary sources used throughout this thesis I have for the most part followed the conventions used in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's editions of the Wakefield manor court rolls. This has entailed rendering the Latin *prepositus* as the Yorkshire dialect term "grave", rather than "reeve" as is the case for documents produced elsewhere. This carries over to derived terms, "graveship" substituting for "reeveship", etc.

For the convenience of the reader place-names and most surnames have been standardised in the general text, but are retained in their original form in direct quotations from the primary sources. First names are rendered in their standard modern English forms throughout.

A glossary of specialist terminology, and other regional dialect terms used in the thesis, is provided in Appendix II.

Chapter 1: Introduction

15th September 1340: An inquiry is to come to determine whether or not John de Mora broke an agreement with Henry de Holgate concerning a solar. And whether he threw down a certain sheepfold which he took away from there and carried off the timber, and also broke the gate of his holding. And whether John's beasts depastured Henry's grass and broke the hedge around Henry's corn and carried it away.[1]

The incident quoted above is but one of many hundreds of conflicts and disputes between peasants which are recorded in the rolls of the Wakefield manor court, the institution responsible for arbitrating peasant disputes across a jurisdiction which spanned more than two hundred square miles on the edge of the West Riding of Yorkshire. John de Mora and Henry de Holgate's conflict is in many respects typical of the wider set of disagreements recorded in the court rolls. It is apparent from the description of the conflict, for instance, that John and Henry's disagreement, as did many that arose between the peasants of Wakefield, had a long history before reaching the manor court, having originated with a broken contract and subsequently encompassed a range of trespasses by John against Henry. Unfortunately, and in common with most disagreements recorded in the court rolls, the surviving records are too brief and perfunctory to determine the details of the agreement that had been broken or the sequence of events that led John and Henry into conflict. The recorded actions taken by Henry, however, are common in peasant disputes, encompassing the destruction of fences, gates, and hedges, the theft of timbers, and the destruction of crops by Henry's livestock.

Although little about the running dispute between John de Mora and Henry de Holgate is exceptional, their actions nevertheless prompt a range of questions regarding the nature and perception of justice on the manor of Wakefield, the navigation of conflict by the peasants who lived there, and the relationship between

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1 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 253.

those peasants and the land in which they lived and worked. We might ask, for instance, why Henry made the decision to bring this dispute before the manor court at the time that he did, when John had been pursuing his grievance through extra-judicial actions. Was Henry hoping to achieve an easy victory in court on account of superior social standing or good relationships with the peers who were likely to form the inquiry that delivered judgement? Or did Henry choose to take the disagreement to the public forum of the manor court in order to embarrass John in front of his peers, or use public pressure to force him into acquiescence?

More questions can be asked of Henry's actions before the conflict reached the court. Were his attacks on John's enclosures and the theft of his timber merely matters of material harm, an attempt to seek restitution by causing John financial damage? Does the repeated use of these techniques—the breaking of fences and destruction of crops—by disputing peasants at Wakefield suggest that more was at risk in terms of status, reputation, and public standing in these sorts of attacks? And while these questions emerge from a fairly unremarkable incidence of peasant conflict, a different set of questions can be asked of the more unusual occurrences which also populate the rolls. Take, for instance, the following two cases:

> 30th April 1350: Robert Wolf offers himself against Richard de Thorne rector of Kirkburton and complains that he and Sir John recently earl of Warenne unjustly took from Robert victuals for the earl's use, viz wheat, bread, and ale to the value of 17s 4d, for which they delivered 5 tallies to Robert, the which 5 tallies Richard on the Wednesday before the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Mary in the twelfth year, 2 September 1338, took from Robert and broke and threw in the fire. So that Robert had nothing by which he produces suit. Richard says that he never took nor broke such tallies of Robert's, nor threw them in the fire as alleged. He wages law concerning this; pledge for the law William de Kyrkby etc.[2]

> 15th April 1316: John Damyas, [amerced] 2s. for making an unlawful enclosure with walls in the common of the town of Wakefield in the Millerodes; and 12d for obstructing the common way to the common ford over the Keldre [Calder], by two

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2   Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 175.

weirs wrongfully raised, so that Wakefield Bridge as well as the lord's mill is injured. The weirs are to be cast down, and he is amerced.[3]

Robert Wolf's action, on the one hand, expose the tensions between tenants and the manorial administration, and the potential for malicious conduct by the lords of the manor and their officers. While similar examples of misconduct by officials can be found in every part of medieval England, the sheer size of the manor of Wakefield compared to most other manors raises questions about the ability of manorial government to adapt to these unusual circumstances, and how the relationship between tenants, officers, and institutions may have changed when confronted with the unique problems of an unusually large jurisdiction. On the other hand, John Damyas's involvement with the manor court highlights how the control and use of landscape features were central not only to economic success but also to expressions of authority, and from this we may ask how deeply the relationship between peasants, institutions, and the landscape was involved in expressions of status and authority on the manor.

All these incidents, and many more besides, survive in the present day through the records of the Wakefield manor court, drawn up by successive clerks and stewards and stored in a central archive adjacent to the Wakefield moot hall, where they were held until the demise of the manor court in the early twentieth century.[4] Produced over the course of nearly eight hundred years, from 1274 to 1925, the Wakefield court rolls constitute one of the richest series of manorial court documents in England, recording through thousands of individual cases the changing nature of conflict on the manor, both between tenants themselves, and between the tenants of Wakefield and the institutions which governed their lives. Within only the three extracts quoted above, for instance, we can see the accumulation of many minor

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3   Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 126.
4   The moot hall and the building used for the storage of court records were located opposite the church (now cathedral) of All Saints in Wakefield, and are mapped in the frontispiece of Walker, *Wakefield: Its History and People*, though Walker's sources for this map are not clear. Neither has survived to the modern day: the moot hall was replaced with a new building on the same location in the eighteenth century, this building being demolished in 1913, and the archive building suffered a similar fate, though the date of its demolition is not known (see Michelmore and Edwards, 'The Records of the Manor of Wakefield', 245). The court rolls are now held by the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds.

transgressions and trespasses in the dispute between John de Mora and Henry de Holgate, an accusation of fraud and effective theft levelled against a senior officer of the manor by Robert Wolf, who had been nursing his grudge for over a decade before seeking restitution in the court, and disagreement between John Damyas and the manor government over the correct use of the lands and waterways surrounding Wakefield town.

The entanglements between landscape, conflict, justice, and authority which are apparent in the cases quoted above form the core concerns of this thesis, which tackles these issues within the unique context of the manor of Wakefield during the fourteenth century. A rich tradition of scholarship has already examined the operation of law and justice at the local level in medieval England and the interplay between legal institutions, peasant conflict, and inequality in rural settlements. However, this has for the most part been conducted largely separate from research into medieval landscapes and the relationships between individuals, communities, and the environments in which they lived. With this thesis, I hope to bring these traditions of scholarship together, drawing on the rich documentary record of the manor of Wakefield to ask how landscape, justice, and dispute influenced and affected one another, and challenging some prevailing academic ideas about governance, authority, and conflict by examining the embodied, physical processes through which justice, control, and disagreement were enacted in the fourteenth century.

Through the lens of the conflicts recorded in Wakefield's court rolls I will examine how the landscape of the manor worked with its central institutions to heighten concern for reputation and public exposure among residents of the manor, and ask in what ways this could have affected their motivations for pursuing disputes through either the manor court or private actions, and how these same concerns influenced the tactics used by tenants during these disputes. I will also ask how the landscape of the manor, and in particular its great size, complicated the task of governance by the manorial administration. In doing so, I will look at the difficulties encountered by the tenant officers who formed much of the administrative apparatus of the manor, and if these difficulties contributed to the emergence of parallel forms of authority, claimed and exerted by leading tenants outside of the usual structures of seigneurial authority

on the manor. Turning some of these questions on their head, I will also ask why the tenants of Wakefield sought to affect and mould the landscape around them in the way the court rolls record that they did, asking whether their actions in working upon the landscape were wholly a matter of resources and material exploitation, or if there were also concerns of status and authority which were being expressed in these actions. Before asking these questions, however, it is necessary to place this thesis within the existing historiography of rural life in medieval England, the administration of manors and their courts, and the varied interactions between the people of medieval England and the landscapes in which they lived.

1.1: Literature Review

The modern tradition of historical research using manorial records, encompassing documents such as court rolls, accounts, surveys, rentals, extents, and similar, has its roots in the nineteenth century, often undertaken in the context of broader research on the legal systems of medieval England. Much of this research was performed by scholars who had legal training or were practising lawyers, and who were performing their research at a time when manor courts were still in operation in many parts of the country—the Wakefield manor court, for example, continued to hold sessions until 1925, though the range of business conducted during the twentieth century was much reduced compared to the business of the medieval court.[5] The concerns of such historians, however, were relatively wide-ranging, focused not only on the systems and procedures of law represented by manor courts and their records, but also on the implications they held for the understanding of social and economic life in the medieval period, and the position of formal systems of law in relation to social customs, moral rules, and other informal systems of regulation and control.[6]

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5   Barber, 'The YAS and the Wakefield Manor Court Rolls, 1898-2014', 42.
6   For discussion of the procedures and legal underpinnings of manorial courts, see the introductions to Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seignorial Courts. Volume 1: Reigns of Henry III and Edward* and Maitland and Baildon, *The Court Baron: Being Precedents for Use in Seigniorial*

Of the historians of this period the most well-respected among scholars in the present day is F. W. Maitland, though his contemporaries Frederick Pollock and Paul Vinogradoff are also often-cited within discussions of the historiography of manorial documents.[7] When treating the legal elements of manorial documents, Maitland displays a concern for both the procedures and institutional arrangements of manor courts, and also their position in the wider structures of English common law.[8] In his introduction to *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seignorial Courts*, for instance, Maitland is predominantly concerned with the seigneurial rights which are implied in the possession of a manor and its court, the origin of such rights in legalistic terms, and the way in which they were conceptualised by contemporaries and fitted alongside the other rights and obligations of medieval lords.[9] The position of the peasantry in relation to manor courts and the various other legal systems which operated alongside them, however, is given less attention, though subsequent research has demonstrated that peasants were, like their social superiors in the nobility, deeply enmeshed in a variety of overlapping legal institutions. Musson, for instance, presents formal aspects of medieval legal systems as formed of three basic categories: the common law exercised in royal courts, customary law in manor courts, and canon law developed in ecclesiastical institutions, with all of these systems accessible to varying extent by peasants.[10] The breadth and diversity of local legal structures in medieval England is further demonstrated by Tom Johnson, who

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and Other Local Courts, Together With Select Pleas from the Bishop of Ely's Court of Littleport; manorial documents are employed alongside other sources in economic and social research in Seebohm, *The English Village Community Examined in Its Relations to the Manorial and Tribal Systems and to the Common or Open Field System of Husbandry : An Essay in Economic History* and Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*; and the interplay of law, moral regulation, and social custom in the grandest sense is discussed in Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, xxv–xxviii.

7   See, for instance, discussion of Maitland and contemporaries in Clanchy, 'Law and Love in the Middle Ages', 50; Razi and Smith, 'The Historiography of Manorial Court Rolls', 3; Hyams, 'What Did English Villagers Mean by "Customary Law"?', 104; and Johnson, *Law in Common*, 22. An early critique of the research direction of these authors appears in Bennett, *Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions 1150—1400*, viii and is echoed in Razi, 'The Toronto School's Reconstruction of Medieval Peasant Society: A Critical View', 152.

8   Maitland and Baildon, *The Court Baron: Being Precedents for Use in Seigniorial and Other Local Courts, Together With Select Pleas from the Bishop of Ely's Court of Littleport*; Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seignorial Courts. Volume 1: Reigns of Henry III and Edward*.

9   Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seginorial Courts. Volume 1: Reigns of Henry III and Edward*, xvii-xix, xxxix-xl.

10 Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness From Magna Carta to The Peasants' Revolt*, 9–10.

enumerates the various types of court in operation during the middle ages, including 'manorial courts, leets and tourns, borough and mayoral courts, market or 'pie-powder' courts, admiralty courts and port courts, marshland 'congregations', mining and stannary courts, Forest courts, along with a plethora of ecclesiastical courts and tribunals', though it is impossible for all of these courts to have been present in any given town or village.[11]

Outside of courts, Musson also describes a range of informal systems of private arbitration, which were not legal institutions in the strictest sense but still acted as arenas in which legal world-views could be formed and expressed.[12] Clanchy, furthermore, argues that medieval jurists show a clear preference for the informal mechanisms of private arbitration and other forms of negotiated settlement over court judgements, believing the former to be more conducive to good social relations in the long term, while a wide range of historians are agreed that a significant proportion of disputes among the peasantry were resolved before trial through these informal forms of settlement and arbitration.[13] Musson and Johnson emphasise the overlapping nature of these formal and informal legal traditions and institutions, which had many shared principles and processes, fluid boundaries in terms of the pleas that could be heard in each, and overlap in both the personnel who staffed various courts and, more significantly, the litigants who were using them.[14]

The existence of this inter-connected set of legal institutions, and the lack of clear-cut distinctions in the business which each could conduct, allowed litigants some degree of choice in where to lodge their pleas. Low-value debt cases, for instance, would ordinarily be litigated in manor courts, but plaintiffs could also bring them before church courts if the case was framed as a breach of trust rather than a debt as such.[15] Furthermore, some organisations such as guilds and fraternities

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11 Johnson, *Law in Common*, 3.
12 Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness From Magna Carta to The Peasants' Revolt*, 16–17.
13 Clanchy, 'Law and Love in the Middle Ages', 60–61; Briggs, 'Creditors and Debtors and Their Relationships at Oakington, Cottenham and Dry Dayton (Cambridgeshire, 1291 – 1350)', 129–30; Schofield, 'Peasants and the Manor Court: Gossip and Litigation in a Suffolk Village at the Close of the Thirteenth Century', 1998, 13–17.
14 Johnson, *Law in Common*, 271–72; Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness From Magna Carta to The Peasants' Revolt*, 12–15.
15 Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 36.

operated their own parallel court systems outside of the regular system of law, adjudicating disputes between their members without necessitating the involvement of regular courts and the public spectacle that use of the courts often entailed.[16] This ability to exercise choice over the venue for their litigation allowed peasants to develop preferences around the processes they used for litigation and the style of justice different courts offered. Given that this thesis will ask a number of questions regarding the motivations peasants had for using manor courts or involving themselves in local institutions, the issue of how these preferences and conceptions of justice, and the objectives peasants had when engaging with courts, will be highly relevant to the arguments made. Fortunately, these are subjects that have been considered by a number of scholars within the last thirty years.

1.1.1: Peasant Understandings of Law

An early attempt at analysing the peasant perception of legal systems was made by Hyams in 1996, arguing that manorial scholarship should be grounded in the understanding of law and ideals of justice held and expressed by medieval villagers themselves, and challenging subsequent scholars to take up this line of research.[17] The core of Hyams' argument is that the tenants, and especially wealthy tenants, of rural manors were highly likely to have attended ecclesiastical and common law courts at some point in their lives, and that their experiences in these courts informed much of their expectations of what correct legal form and process looked like. Hyams argues that these tenants held the manor court to the standards they developed through engagement with other courts, putting pressure on manorial lords and stewards to model their procedure after that of the common law, to ensure the manor court remained the first choice for tenants' litigation.[18] This argument emphasises the possession by villagers of both an independent ideal of proper law, and the ability to influence local institutions to conform to this ideal, a contrast to earlier research which generally privileges the role of lords and their officials in controlling manor court procedure, and which is discussed below.

16 Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages*, 69.
17 Hyams, 'What Did Edwardian Villagers Understand by "Law"?', 1996, 70.
18 Hyams, 70, 78.

Since Hyams, however, few others have attempted work in this vein, a paucity of research highlighted by Christopher Briggs and Phillipp Schofield while introducing their own research into the problems originally posed by Hyams.[19] In this research, Briggs and Schofield attempt to derive some understanding of peasant attitudes to the law from the evidence of manor courts, drawing directly on Hyams' work to show how residents on some manors developed relatively sophisticated ideas around proper court procedure. Where these highly rigid and formalised expectations prevailed, a small number of villagers successfully contested suits on the basis that plaintiffs had failed to follow correct procedure.[20] This research further reinforces the arguments put forward by Hyams, demonstrating the complexity and technical detail which could develop within villagers' ideals of law, and the willingness with which they were willing to weaponise these expectations against one another.

The emphasis on formal expectations and ideals of law seen throughout this research is counter-balanced by further work Schofield has performed on the engagement of villagers with manor courts. Schofield's research examines the whole constellation of factors which could have motivated rural litigation, and particularly how much activity in manor courts was driven by the practical and pragmatic concerns of debt, reputation, sexual misconduct, social power, and gossip.[21] This research serves as a useful reminder that, however sophisticated their abstract understanding of the law may have been, for many villagers the manor court was still a practical tool for pursuing conflict and gaining advantage over neighbours, associates, and enemies. The issue of how the use of courts in particular was positioned alongside other methods that peasants had to pursue their grievances, and what manner of advantages they sought to gain from bringing conflicts before courts, are explored in detail later in this thesis.

An alternative approach to the analysis of peasants' conceptions of local legal institutions is provided by another small group of historians working in a more technical and legalistic framework. Lloyd Bonfield and John Beckerman are

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19 Briggs and Schofield, 'Understanding Edwardian Villagers' Use of Law: Some Manor Court Litigation Evidence', 119.
20 Briggs and Schofield, 131–32.
21 Schofield, 'Peasants and the Manor Court: Gossip and Litigation in a Suffolk Village at the Close of the Thirteenth Century', 1998.

prominent examples of scholars working in this vein, and a debate between the two demonstrates many of the technical complexities which emerge through study of the legal underpinnings of manor courts. Bonfield had argued that manor courts were in essence comparable to modern-day Alternative Dispute Resolution procedures, suggesting that their litigants would have been aware that the courts emphasised fair outcomes over strict applications of legal principles and prioritised the satisfaction of the involved parties over wider notions of justice or public good.[22] Beckerman, in response, argued that manor courts exercised something closer to substantive law, rooted in an understanding of rights and obligations owed by and to each person, and followed fixed, rigid procedures in the hope of pursuing largely impartial judgements.[23]

Over the course of this debate, Beckerman and Bonfield were, like Hyams, Briggs, and Schofield, looking to determine how the nature of medieval law and the purpose of legal institutions would have been understood by medieval people themselves. However, they differed from those other scholars in approaching the issue with reference to terms and concepts derived from modern legal theories, such as the concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution, around which Bonfield's arguments were framed but which would have been wholly unrecognisable to a medieval jurist or litigant. This, ultimately, is a less successful approach to the subject than that employed by Hyams, Briggs, and Schofield, who employ a shallower knowledge of legal theory but remains more tightly-focused on the experiences and understandings of medieval people themselves. Beckerman and Bonfield, by contrast, spend much of their time considering small details of process or arguing the suitability, or unsuitability, of modern legal terms and concepts to the medieval past, with significantly less time spent developing a deeper understanding of the medieval context itself.[24]

Alongside these problems with framing that are apparent in Beckerman and Bonfield's work, the studies discussed above also suffer from issues with the

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22 Bonfield, 'What Did English Villagers Mean by "Customary Law"?', 108–9.
23 Beckerman, 'Toward A Theory of Medieval Manorial Adjudication: The Nature of Communal Judgements in a System of Customary Law', 1–3.
24 e.g. Beckerman, 1–3; Bonfield, 'What Did English Villagers Mean by "Customary Law"?', 106–9.

evidence at hand, which is rarely well-suited to address questions of peasant perceptions and understandings of law. Briggs and Schofield point out that manor court records usually record only the judgements rendered in a case, and not the arguments put forward by litigants, leaving little explicit record of villagers' opinions regarding the law and forcing historians to mine court rolls for indirect evidence, a challenge few have attempted to overcome.[25] Legal activities outside of courts, in the world of informal processes described by Musson, face similar problems caused by a paucity of good evidence. Clanchy, for instance, highlights that arbitration and love-days, among the most common means of settling interpersonal disputes outside of courts, rarely leave detailed records of any kind and thus even less information for historians to work with than the already-concise records of local courts, and rendering these crucial extra-curial procedures even more difficult to properly analyse.[26]

Nearly all of the researchers cited above, however, have limited themselves to documentary evidence, and primarily the documents produced by courts and other legal and administrative institutions. This raises the question of whether a different understanding of the relationship between medieval peasants and systems of law and justice could be gained by considering other lines of evidence and forms of data, and in this thesis I address this question in regard to the use of landscape and spatial evidence. By placing medieval legal systems into the physical and spatial context in which they existed, rather than working exclusively in the often abstract world of the documentary record, I hope to illuminate more deeply the effect that manor courts in particular had on the course of peasant conflicts, and how peasants were motivated to engage with manor courts and other institutions, or to make use of extra-curial action.

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25 Briggs and Schofield, 'Understanding Edwardian Villagers' Use of Law: Some Manor Court Litigation Evidence', 120.
26 Clanchy, 'Law and Love in the Middle Ages', 46–50, 62.

1.1.2: Landscape and Archaeological Literature

Questions of space and landscape of this kind are a central element of the research presented in this thesis. The subject of landscape, however, has rarely been integrated with the study of courts and legal institutions, despite landscape forming an integral component of many medieval legal procedures and activities.[27] An extensive body of research on medieval landscapes does exist, produced by archaeologists and landscape historians, but in the context of the peasant engagement with landscape this research is predominantly focused on agriculture, economic resources, and settlement.

Central to much of the analysis of medieval landscape is the notion of the Midlands-style village, a style of settlement pattern and agricultural practice characterised by dense, nucleated villages and open-field arable farming, and the contrast between the Midlands regime and landscapes characterised by more widely-dispersed settlement and different forms of agriculture.[28] Much work on medieval landscapes has been dedicated to determining the extent to which varying settlement and agricultural patterns predominated in different regions of the country, the majority of which characterise nucleated settlement as being concentrated into a broad band through the middle of the country, stretching south-west to north-east, often referred to as the Central Province.[29] This characterisation originated in the work of Wrathmell and Roberts, emerging out of a project to plot not only the strength of nucleation or dispersion across England, but also compile data such as elevation, topography, and underlying geology, allowing comparison between settlement pattern and other landscape features.[30] This research uncovered a more complex picture of varied settlement than the division into the nucleated Central Province and dispersed outlying areas initially suggests, and Wrathmell and Roberts also identify a set of smaller sub-provinces, in which an array of local factors lead to intermediate forms of

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27 See, for instance, Johnson, *Law in Common*, 153–73 for the English context; and Wickham, 'Fama and the Law in Twelfth-Century Tuscany', 20–22, for a continental comparison.
28 For discussion of this framework see Jones and Hooke, 'Methodological Approaches to Medieval Rural Settlements and Landscapes', 40; O'Donnell, 'Field Systems and the Arable Fields', 87–90; and Williamson, Shaping Medieval Landscapes, 6–7.
29 O'Donnell, 'Field Systems and the Arable Fields', 87–91.
30 Roberts and Wrathmell, *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England*.

settlement or pockets of nucleation or dispersal within regions otherwise dominated by a different form.[31]

While Wrathmell and Roberts limited themselves largely to the task of collating and presenting geographic data, other authors have analysed the causes of difference in settlement patterns and agricultural regimes.[32] These studies, almost all carried out on a smaller scale than Wrathmell and Roberts' nationwide survey, and incorporating a broader range of evidence, have not yet produced a consensus on the primary reasons that nucleated settlement developed in some parts of medieval England but not others. Williamson, for instance, advocates for a deterministic explanation, arguing that nucleation developed largely from the adoption of heavy ploughs and the co-operative open-field agricultural regimes needed to operate them effectively. As a result, Williamson argues, the development of nucleated settlements is therefore dependent on the presence of climate, topographic, and soil conditions which necessitated the use of heavy ploughs, though a variety of different circumstances could lead to that eventuality.[33]

Other scholars, however, have demonstrated a poor correlation between degree of nucleation and environmental conditions of the kind Williamson highlights, and have argued that cultural factors—such as a desire to appear as progressive and forward-thinking as neighbouring villages—were as important as local environment in influencing settlement patterns.[34] Taylor, meanwhile, is sceptical of both positions, finding that in East Anglia the spread of nucleated settlements does not accord to any given environmental factor, nor can it be wholly explained as the spread of a cultural movement or fashion. He concluded that no over-arching structural explanation yet proposed is universally applicable as an explanation for the spread of nucleated settlement.[35]

Taylor's conclusions are broadly supported by the results of an investigation led by Carenza Lewis into the development of rural settlement forms. While Lewis and

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31 Roberts and Wrathmell, 40–57.
32 Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*; Taylor, 'Nucleated Settlement'; Williamson, Shaping Medieval Landscapes.
33 Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes*, 192.
34 Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*, 186–87; *Jones, Medieval Villages in an English Landscape*, 12–13.
35 Taylor, 'Nucleated Settlement', 53–55, 68-69.

her co-authors acknowledge a range of factors which influenced how rural settlements evolved and developed over time, they reserve the greatest level of influence for village communities themselves, suggesting that the decision to form nucleated villages was more closely tied to the villagers' own perception of their local environment and agricultural or social needs. The authors argue that in the majority of settlements it was only villagers who would have possessed sufficient knowledge of on-the-ground conditions and interest in the precise degree of agricultural productivity which might be gained to motivate drastic changes to settlement form, as well as the material means to actually carry out such large-scale transformations.[36]

The distinction between the Central Province and outlying regions is not the only major landscape difference which has been noted by medievalists. Miller and Hatcher, for instance, also a highlight the degree of divergence between the northern counties of England and other parts of the country, pointing to the larger average size of manors and parishes in the north, the greater preponderance of free tenants there, and the legacy of the more violent integration of northern England into the Norman state. The authors argue that these were more than simply differences in administration, but also reflected and engendered differences in social organisation and attitudes in the north. Northern communities, they argue, were more weakly connected than those in the south and midlands, and the larger parishes and manors —and the hands-off nature of governance which accompanied these—resulted in a more individualistic outlook on life, with weaker and less-coherent local communities.[37] Although Miller and Hatcher's basic observations about the northern counties are not in dispute, elements of their conclusions regarding the effect of these differences have been challenged by subsequent historians. Forrest, for instance, has criticised Miller and Hatcher's conception of the social and political environment of the larger northern parishes and manors as a failure to conceive of forms of social power that were not predicated on the existence of close bureaucratic control or strong forms of government.[38]

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36 Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*, 2001, 177–78.
37 Miller and Hatcher, *Medieval England– Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348*, 19–21, 32, 107–110.
38 Forrest, 'People and Power in Thirteenth-Century England', 18–19.

A similar debate regarding the strength of peasant communities is also present among wider manorial scholarship, not only that focused on the influence of landscape. Arguments in this area go back to the historians of the nineteenth century, principally Seebohm, Vinogradoff, and Maitland. These authors argued that many distinctive features of medieval village communities were impositions made by manorial lords after the Norman Conquest, especially the obligations of serfdom and the customs and regulations which governed customary lands and their inheritance.[39] Subsequent research has challenged these arguments. Dyer, for instance, locates the origin of village communities in the acquisition of shared resources. In this conception, pre-Conquest villages grew out of collections of people sharing the same resource base, forging community identities that were strengthened as specialised production, particularly the expansion and intensification of arable agriculture, required communities to make collective agreements with neighbouring villages to share scarce resources such as wood or pasture across manorial boundaries.[40] Furthermore, other researchers have demonstrated that the impetus for rule-making and regulation did not come only from lords seeking to exploit peasant labour or religious authorities enforcing top-down behavioural standards. This research has instead found that peasants themselves, and especially wealthy and established peasants, could take a pro-active role in shaping their own communities through the creation of by-laws or manipulation of judicial procedures. These locally-influential peasants self-consciously attempted to forge communities that displayed high standards of conduct, participated in effective communal agriculture, and invested in potent expressions of religious devotion.[41]

This thesis makes some further contributions to this debate, largely in support of strong influence by higher authorities on the nature of peasant communities. In particular, I argue that manorial institutions played a significant role in encouraging social ties even in areas of well-dispersed population, as argued in detail in chapter

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39 These positions are summarised in Razi and Smith, 'The Historiography of Manorial Court Rolls', 4–5.
40 Dyer, 'Were late medieval English villages 'self-contained'?', 22–3.
41 See, for instance, Ault, 'Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England: A Study of Village By-Laws', Butler, 'Local Concerns: Suicide and Jury Behaviour in Medieval England, Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 130–131, and the more detailed discussion of these subjects in part 1.1.3 of this thesis.

three. The thesis also contributes to debates on the distinction between northern and southern manors by addressing some of the consequences of the distinctly northern tendency for greater size in administrative divisions, in respect to both local governance and the nature of social and institutional bonds. Being centred on a single manor, however, the thesis cannot address the need for greater comparative work using northern and southern material, as has been performed for regions of nucleation and dispersion.

While debates about the origins and development of settlement patterns and agricultural practice dominate much of the literature on medieval landscapes, more recently some scholars in the field have begun to consider the impact of landscape at a smaller scale, asking how the relationship between individuals and the landscape affects individual and community identity, social cohesion, and other issues not often present in research on settlement and agriculture. A leading proponent of this theoretically-driven approach to landscape studies is Matthew Johnson, who in his most recent research has concentrated on the interactions of space and landscape with personal identity, social relations, and lived experience in medieval contexts.[42] Throughout his work Johnson has, on account of his origins as a buildings archaeologist, operated on a generally smaller scale than many of the authors cited above, and his recent work has focused particularly on individual agency and perceptions of or interactions with the landscape and built environment.

Johnson's research on the medieval landscapes surrounding Bodiam Castle, for instance, has drawn heavily on phenomenological theory, which centres embodied experiences, in order to revitalise academic debates around castles and similar sites, moving away from questions regarding form and intended function that are traditionally the focus of scholarly inquiry to instead examine how spaces and

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42 Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* and Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* are early and influential efforts to interpret archaeological subjects through a theoretical lens, though their focus is on buildings rather than landscapes *per se*; Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* presents the case for theoretical approaches in landscape studies proper, though is largely a historiographical review; Johnson, *Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages: Studies of Bodiam and Other Elite Landscapes in South-Eastern England* sets out to implement Johnson's preferred frameworks in the context of a new survey of medieval and early modern sites.

landscapes influenced and reflected individual identity, experience, and agency.[43] At Bodiam, Johnson's phenomenological approach has resulted in the relatively radical conclusion that the castle itself, which has been the overwhelming focus of scholarly analysis of the Bodiam landscape, was in fact a somewhat minor element of its own environment. By analysing the totality of work and activity at Bodiam, rather than just the activities of the elites who occupied the castle, Johnson concludes that most activity took place outside of the castle, in a wider landscape of action driven largely by the work of non-elites.[44] However, while Johnson presents some new arguments and conclusions regarding the agency of the residents of Bodiam Castle and the potential of a phenomenological framework, he prioritises the presentation of new survey data of the Bodiam site, necessarily leaving less space for the interpretation of that data.

A study of Ewelme Hundred, in South Oxfordshire, by Mileson and Brookes also provides an example of theoretically-informed worked on space and landscape, but where greater prominence is given to deeper interpretation. This research covers an area of approximately 10,000 hectares and examines long term processes, from the sixth to the seventeenth century, operating at a similar scale to the work of Lewis, Williamson, or Taylor, but asks questions of individual identity and perception which are closer to the research agenda of Johnson.[45] Mileson's study with Brookes makes more wide-ranging conclusions, utilising not just a theoretical framework inspired by phenomenology but also some of the experimental research techniques favoured by practitioners of phenomenology to argue for the importance of soundscapes in creating group identities and to demonstrate the role of particular landscape features in the creation of historical memory.[46]

With this thesis, I aim to push this type of research, centred on individual relationships to landscape and the impact of differing landscapes on a smaller scale, into the legal and political sphere discussed above. I intend to go further than prior

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43 Johnson, 'Introduction', 1–4.
44 Johnson, 'Discussion: Elite Sites, Political Landscapes, and Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages', 195–99.
45 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 1–5.
46 Mileson and Brookes, 265–70.

scholarship has in analysing the relationship between status and authority among peasants and their activity in the landscape, and to ask how different landscapes and environmental conditions impact on the exercise of government in the Middle Ages, and the conduct of conflict between peasants.

1.1.3: Development and Influence in Manor Courts

Throughout the scholarship above a central concern is the ability of peasant communities to influence the development of local institutions, be that through pressure on local courts to conform to peasants' expectations—as explored by Hyams or Beckerman, for instance—or through the large-scale changes in settlement and agriculture at the instigation of peasants, as argued by Lewis.

Analysis of the key forces which affected the development of medieval legal institutions in particular has a long history in manorial historiography, the arguments in this area, once again, going back to Maitland. In contrast to the more recent historians already discussed, Maitland argued that the chief influence on manorial procedures and recording practices were manorial lords, who had themselves originated manor court rolls and other documents to ensure they were receiving all the fines and fees they were owed from the officers and subordinates who operated courts and handled other aspects of demesne management. In Maitland's view these lords were mainly influenced by their experience with courts of the common law, which record the first uses of many procedures and recording practices which are later seen in manorial courts.[47]

Work performed since Maitland's time has challenged much of the detail of his arguments, though generally still supporting the view that manor courts and associated records had their origin as tools of seigneurial control. The increasing use of documents on manors, in courts and elsewhere, is, for instance, now increasingly argued not to have been simply a means of aiding financial book-keeping, but a tool for increasing seigneurial control and oversight in a broader sense. The appearance

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47 Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seignorial Courts. Volume 1: Reigns of Henry III and Edward,* xii-xiii.

and proliferation of manorial records coincides with a general increase in direct involvement of lords with the management of their own estates, and it is argued that these records not only ensured revenues were being handled correctly, but also that the directives and desires of the lord were being adhered to in the management of demesne agriculture and resources, provision of justice, and adherence to local custom.[48] Razi and Smith, however, provide a dissenting opinion, arguing that the introduction of written records to manor courts was also driven by a desire among peasants for reliable and easily-accessible records of local custom, and that this may have been as influential as pressure from lords.[49]

A similar division of scholarly opinion is apparent in discussion of how the procedures of manor courts developed from the thirteenth century onward, and whether these new innovations and alterations were driven by, and primarily benefited, lords or their tenants. Beckerman's analysis of the procedural development of manor courts is pessimistic on the rights and freedoms of tenants, arguing that most of the innovations that were introduced to manor courts after the thirteenth century acted primarily to increase rates of convictions and hence secure greater income for lords through fines and amercements. Most of the new procedures Beckerman discusses, such as the introduction of jury trial and the use of presentment by jury, appeared in royal courts before they made their way to manorial courts. Beckerman characterises this process as a seigneurial imposition, pointing to recorded resistance by tenants to jury-based procedures especially as evidence that seigneurial influence was the driving force in the adoption of those new procedures.[50]

Razi and Smith, however, in making a similar analysis of procedural change in manor courts, offer an alternative to Beckerman's narrative of ever-decreasing rights. While these authors recognise the resistance to the introduction of juries to manor courts that Beckerman highlights, they point out that the adoption of other common law procedures at the manorial level resulted in a much greater volume and range of information being recorded in manor court rolls. While this increase in recorded

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48 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 97–99; Razi and Smith, 'The Origins of the Manorial Court Roll as a Written Record: A Puzzle', 36–37.

49 Razi and Smith, 'The Origins of the Manorial Court Roll as a Written Record: A Puzzle', 51–53.

50 Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 199–200, 218–19, 230–33.

information had some benefits for lords, Razi and Smith argue that tenants gained the most from the new recording practices, which made tenants more secure in their customary rights and especially in the terms of land-holding. The security afforded by more detailed records is demonstrated by a marked increase during the fourteenth century in requests for court rolls to be searched to provide evidence for litigants, as tenants preferred the use of records when defending their rights and interests.[51]

Ault, furthermore, highlights the influence of local communities over legal process through the implementation by-laws relating to social behaviour and the management of open fields, and the use of split fines for such offences, whereby revenues from fines were divided between the court itself and the local parish church.[52] Ault argues that by-laws introduced during the fifteenth century were of little interest to lords, as they mainly concerned nuisance behaviour and tenant agriculture rather than the lord's resources or rights, and that the diversion of court revenue to parish churches, which were often a focal point for investment by wealthier tenants, was most likely driven by tenants themselves. The introduction of such by-laws and split fines, therefore, represent a degree of usurpation of manor courts by leading members of local communities, who were able to use the court and its procedures to pursue their own concerns and interests, in place of seigneurial interests.[53]

The manor court, furthermore, was not the only arena in which local residents were able to exert influence, peasant communities demonstrating an ability to exert pressure on the development of a range of legal and economic institutions. Chris Dyer has been particularly forceful in arguing for the broad influence of peasants and peasant communities over not only matters of law and administration, but also economic developments and the evolution of landscapes and local environments. Dyer has argued, for instance, that peasants were a primary influence on the development of medieval agricultural regimes, both in the expansion of cultivation and the drive for greater arable productivity in the pre-plague period, and in the realignment of agriculture and land-use in the situation that emerged after the

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51 Razi and Smith, 'The Historiography of Manorial Court Rolls', 52–56.
52 Ault, 'Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England', 55–56.
53 Ault, 58–60.

plague.[54] Dyer's more recent work has presented particularly expansive arguments for the effect of peasant agency on institutional and economic development, arguing that the influence of the peasantry was instrumental in bringing about the changes in economic institutions, law, social structures, religious practices, and modes of governance that occurred between the eleventh century and the sixteenth.[55]

Other scholars have drawn out in detail the ability of peasants to influence broader institutions and practices in the way Dyer describes. Ian Forrest, for instance, has made such observations in relation to ecclesiastical administration, through an analysis of the relationships between bishops and the villages and towns within their dioceses. This relationship was centred around the identification of 'trustworthy men', prominent local individuals who acted as both sources of information for the bishop, and enforcers of episcopal regulations in the local area.[56] These trustworthy men were not, however, merely passive tools of episcopal power. Instead, they used the authority that trustworthy status granted them to enforce their own behavioural standards, for instance by prescribing harsher punishments than were actually required for some transgressions. This was usually done because the community at large viewed these actions more severely than the church administration, or because relatives of the trustworthy men were implicated, and so were punished more harshly in order to preserve personal and family reputations.[57]

The imposition of harsher penalties for certain crimes has also been noted by Sara Butler, in the context of jury decisions on suicide cases. Butler records the frequency with which coroner's juries, responsible for assigning a cause of death when a person had died by unnatural means, gave rulings of suicide in cases which were clearly accidents or homicides, or ruled clear suicides to be accidents.[58] Butler argues that these suicide verdicts were deployed as a means of social control, with the outcome dependent more on the reputation and standing of the victim or their family than on the actual facts of their death. In Butler's view, verdicts of suicide could

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54 Dyer, *Hanbury: Settlement and Society in a Woodland Landscape*, 31, 55–58; 'Conflict in the landscape: the enclosure movement in England, 1220— 1349', 25–26.
55 Dyer, *Peasants Making History: Living in an English Region 1200-*1450, 342–345.
56 Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 91.
57 Forrest, 131.
58 Butler, 'Local Concerns: Suicide and Jury Behavior in Medieval England', 820–21.

be alternately used to punish those who had been acting against the community's ideal standards of behaviour, or to spare the humiliation and material loss that resulted from a suicide verdict from a family which was well-regarded by their neighbours.[59]

The ability of local communities to create and enforce independent standards of behaviour is further demonstrated in Gervase Rosser's work on late medieval guilds. Rosser argues that one of the principal purposes of guilds was to enable their members to live up to a particular ideal of good Christian behaviour. This was facilitated by pooling members' resources to make more effective acts of charity and beneficence, and also by policing their behaviour, acting as a quasi-legal institution that issued fines and other punishments to members who failed to follow guild ethics.[60] In this way, guilds served as a community-driven form of authority, parallel to the institutions of secular and ecclesiastical law, encouraging and enforcing popular norms and ideals which the law of church and government did not.

This thesis builds on this work on agency by examining the entanglements of peasant agency and landscape conditions. Chapter three in particular is concerned with the effect that the forms of landscape and the institutional geography present on the manor of Wakefield could have in restricting the agency of peasants, providing them with fewer options for socially-acceptable conduct in public disputes. The subsequent chapters are more optimistic in their consideration of peasant agency. Chapter four argues that the landscape of Wakefield contributed to a weakening of some forms of manorial authority, and thus a strengthening of the authority of peasants. Chapter five, meanwhile, follows Dyer in presenting the case that peasants were actively involved in modification of the landscape, and that this ability was core to the expression of prestige and status among the upper echelons of the Wakefield peasantry. This agency, however, was not evenly-distributed among all peasants, and the influence of inequalities of wealth and institutional power on agency and freedom of action in rural society have long been of concern for manorial scholars. Among such historians, a consensus has developed that influence and control were largely

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59 Butler, 'Local Concerns: Suicide and Jury Behavior in Medieval England', 821, 829.
60 Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250-1550*, 44, 69.

concentrated among a smaller group of wealthy individuals and families, following wider patterns of material inequality.

1.1.4: Rural Inequality and Peasant Oligarchy

Inequality, in terms of both material wealth and social or political capital, has again been debated since the earliest days of manorial history, though there has been significant change in the terms by which inequalities have been conceived and discussed by scholars. The measurement and discussion of inequality is often lead by the priorities of the sources being used: overall economic conditions, for instance, are tracked through grain yields and the output of demesne farms and herds as recorded in manorial accounts,[61] while economic activity and relative wealth among peasants is most usually analysed by means of landholding and credit transactions, the former detailed in rentals and surveys and the latter forming the majority of business in most manor courts.[62]

While issues of inequality had been considered to some extent by earlier scholars, detailed analysis of the material conditions in rural settlements, based on extensive statistical study of manorial documents, is generally stated to have begun with the work of members of the Toronto School, writing around the middle of the 20th century.[63] Subsequent research with manorial records has continued the use of quantitative methods of the sort favoured by the Toronto School, examining in detail the material circumstances of peasant households. Razi and Harvey, for instance, both made use of in-depth statistical analysis to examine disparities of wealth and land ownership on the manors of Halesowen and Cuxham, respectively, and the development of this disparity over time, and both authors reach similar conclusions regarding the increase in wealth inequality as the middle ages wore on.

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61 Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late Medieval World*, 27; Myrdal and Sapoznik, 'Technology, Labour, and Productivity Potential in Peasant Agriculture: England, c.1000 to 1348', 197.

62 See, e.g. Hyams, 'The Origins of a Peasant Land Market in England'; Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside'; Briggs, Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England.

63 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 114–15; Razi, 'The Toronto School's Reconstruction of Medieval Peasant Society: A Critical View', 141–42; Razi and Smith, 'The Historiography of Manorial Court Rolls', 2–9.

In Halesowen, for instance, Razi notes a concentration of landholdings throughout the late medieval period, driven primarily by wealthy, expansionist villagers, who prior to the Black Death sought to increase their holdings by expanding cultivation to previously unused land, and after the plague by buying the plots of villagers who held too much land to work by themselves.[64] Harvey comes to a similar conclusion for Cuxham, drawing particular attention to the effect of the Black Death on the worsening of inequality in the village. It was only following the devastation of the plague, Harvey states, that some of the villagers in Cuxham were able to expand their holdings to include more than the customary half-virgate of land, with some particularly successful individuals able to acquire miniature estates made up of holdings scattered among a number of villages, leased to tenants of their own.[65]

Although substantial inequality is widely-observed by scholars working with manorial material, the conception of this inequality is much-debated. Some members of the Toronto School, for instance, advocated for an understanding of rural communities through a strongly Marxist socio-economic stratification, in which peasant households could be categorised into distinct groups complete with an incipient sense of class consciousness among sets of poorer and richer tenants, though these interpretations have subsequently been harshly criticised.[66] Razi, in his study of Halesowen, recognises the existence of largely distinct groups of poor, middling, and rich tenants who could be distinguished by the size of their landholding and the extent of their participation in local offices. He does not, however, consider these categories to represent consolidated in-groups in the fashion of earlier scholars, and does not argue they held a strong sense of group identity.[67] Mileson, writing more recently, also identifies groups of poor, middling, and rich tenants, but suggests that the middling tenants formed the most cohesive and unified group. Mileson argues that differences in wealth were strengthened by patterns of residence and the relationship of villagers to both shared and private space. According to Mileson, tenants in the middling set lived close to one another in the central parts of villages and co-operated with one another more in agriculture, and these conditions

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64 Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 97, 110.
65 Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 1965, 116–17, 139–40.
66 Razi, 'The Toronto School's Reconstruction of Medieval Peasant Society: A Critical View', 155–56.
67 Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 77–79.

provided them with more opportunities to form stronger social bonds. Poor and rich tenants, on the other hand, lived in relative isolation and had less need to pool their labour, causing them to form weaker links with their fellow villagers than Mileson observed among the middling peasants.[68]

In more recent studies, the inter-linked set of material and social privileges which were enjoyed by wealthier, high-status peasants, and which underlay the control they could exert over local institutions and their fellow peasants, have been studied through the framework of oligarchy. The concept of the peasant oligarchy holds that prominent families and individuals formed a generally exclusive, elite group within the hierarchy of rural settlements, holding sway over their communities not only through their greater wealth and material success, which allowed them prominent positions as employers and money-lenders, but also through a near-monopolisation of official positions in courts, manorial and royal administration, and parish governance.[69]

Ault, for instance, emphasises the influence of leading tenants specifically, rather than the local community as a whole, highlighting how divisions of wealth, social status, and local power had a substantial effect on the operation of manor courts and other local institutions.[70] Briggs and Schofield, furthermore, suggest that village elites, who more frequently participated in court actions, would acquire greater knowledge of procedure and legal technicalities than their peers. With correct form and procedure often vital to successful litigation, these elites may have used this greater knowledge to outmanoeuvre opposing litigants, further cementing their own wealth and status, though with the acknowledgment that the practical benefits of this greater legal knowledge were relatively minor on the manors they had studied.[71] Given the concentration of power in the hands of wealthy peasant elites, tenant-driven innovations in court procedure are therefore more likely to be reflective of the greater influence that wealthier and more prominent tenants already held in local institutions, rather than emerging from the desires and priorities of the community as a whole.

68 Mileson, 'Openness and Closure in the Later Medieval Village', 10–19.
69 Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 130–47; Johnson, *Law in Common*, 32–33; *Musson, Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness From Magna Carta to The Peasants' Revolt*, 116–18.
70 Ault, 'Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England'.
71 Briggs and Schofield, 'Understanding Edwardian Villagers' Use of Law: Some Manor Court Litigation Evidence', 2014, 134–36.

Oligarchic control of this kind is closely intertwined with seigneurial power and control, as upper stratum of the peasantry are generally suggested to gain much of their power and influence through the capture of the offices that formed the main infrastructure for seigneurial management, as well as the royal and ecclesiastical administrative structures that were becoming more expansive from the thirteenth century onwards.[72] Few scholars, however, argue that the peasant elite necessarily shared the interests and concerns of their lords, or that shared interests united the members of local oligarchies, instead arguing that these peasants used their positions of influence in order to pursue their own agendas and support individual or household interests.[73] Less consideration has been given to how such peasant elites might have exercised control and influence outside of these official positions, and whether their positions in the local hierarchy gave them a degree of influence that stemmed from their status in and of itself, rather than their official powers or relative economic might, though these factors were ultimately all bound up together.

The relative strength of local oligarchies was not constant throughout the medieval period, or even just the fourteenth century, and a number of scholars have argued that peasant elites experienced an increase in both wealth relative to their neighbours and their control over local institutions in the late fourteenth century, in the wake of the Black Death.[74] It is significant that Ault, for instance, writes on the influence of tenant communities in the fifteenth century, when leading tenants in most areas of the country had become wealthier and the enthusiasm of most lords for directly managing estates had declined.[75] Mileson, similarly, notes that increases in the wealth of leading tenants in Ewelme hundred following the Black Death, facilitated

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72 E.g. Larson, 'Village Voice or Village Oligarchy?'; Johnson, *Law in Common*, 32–33; Forrest, 'Power and the People in Thirteenth-Century England', 30–33; *Trustworthy Men*, 130–35.
73 Forrest, *Trustworthy Men,* 322–23; Maddicot, 'The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown 1294-1341', 294–95; Musson, 'Sub-Keepers and Constables: The Role of Local Officials in Keeping the Peace in Fourteenth-Century England', 21–22; Larson, 'Village Voice or Village Oligarchy?', 699–700.
74 The economic effects of the plague are widely-discussed, see e.g. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late Medieval World*, 310; Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348-1530*, 48–52; Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 226–28; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village, 138–44*; Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 130–31; Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 237-8; on bottom-up change in legal systems after the mid-fourteenth century, see Hyams, 'What Did Edwardian Villagers Understand by "Law"?', 83–85, and Johnson, *Law in Common*, 20.
75 Ault, 'Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England', 58–60.

in many cases by leasing of assets previously managed as part of the demesne, were also accompanied by the growing influence of those tenants in local institutions and the appearance of hierarchical divisions in previously communal spaces such as churches, the furnishing and use of which came to be increasingly controlled by wealthy parishioners from the late-fourteenth century.[76]

While this research has done much to establish how rural oligarchy was articulated through a combination of greater wealth and the possession of institutional influence, there are further questions that can be asked about the expression of power and status by these peasant elites, and the ways in which they exerted influence over their peers. One of these questions relates to the ways in which wealthy villagers expressed their dominance in areas of life not closely related to formal governance or institutional control. Possession of land, for instance, is central to considerations of wealth among medieval communities, in most studies serving as the principal measure of household wealth, but the way in which control over land could itself serve as a materialisation of expression of power by peasant elites has been less-frequently examined by historians.[77] Recent studies of peasant communities have analysed the relationship between status and control of both public and private spaces, Mileson in particular arguing that the ability to control space and create exclusive spaces was a key element of group identity for wealthy peasants.[78] In the later chapters of this thesis I will go further in arguing that control of space, land, and resources was central to the articulation of status and authority among peasants as much as was the case among lords and other high-status groups, though this has rarely been considered in an explicit and well-theorised way by previous historians.

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76 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 234–50.

77 Size of landholding forms the principal measure of wealth in, among others, Briggs, 'Credit and the Peasant Household Economy in England Before the Black Death', 236–40; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 138–44; Postles, 'Personal Pledging: Medieval "Reciprocity" or "Symbolic Capital"?', 432; Raftis, 'Social Structures in Five East Midland Villages: A Study of Possibilities in the Use of Court Roll Data', 84–87; Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 77–89; and Schofield, 'The Social Economy of the Medieval Village in the Early Fourteenth Century', 41–43. Examples of alternative measures are seen in Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late Medieval World*, 168–71, which uses estimated annual income; and Jervis, Briggs, and Tompkins, 'Exploring Text and Objects: Escheators' Inventories and Material Culture in Medieval English Rural Households', 171–78, using the value of moveable wealth as indicated in lay subsidies and records of distraints and seizures.

78 Mileson, 'Openness and Closure in the Later Medieval Village'.

A second question emerges from the use of office-holding as a metric for the strength of local oligarchy and the concentration of local power. Measuring this kind of local influence through appointments to official positions is a useful method for the historian, as the selection of officers is well-recorded in the documents of many manors and therefore produces viable quantities of easily-digestible data. This does, however, raise a question of whether oligarchic power in rural settlements was necessarily linked to the exercise of seigneurial power, and whether leading members of the peasantry could wield authority without having to co-opt seigneurial authority through the control of offices. This is a particularly relevant line of inquiry for the current study, which is based around an unusually large manor, where much of the population was well-dispersed and living at great distance from the centre of the manorial administration, a landscape which made institutional authority and control harder to maintain than in smaller manors characterised by dense settlement. In this kind of landscape context, where the presence of seigneurial institutions was weaker, could the power of governing institutions and the power of wealthy peasants become decoupled from one another, the latter group exerting control over other tenants through informal channels separate from official avenues of control?

This research agenda both builds upon and departs from the research that has been discussed above, and the nature of the questions being asked has also necessitated a departure from many of the methods which have been used by previous scholars, especially those working in the tradition of manorial history.

1.2: Methodology

This thesis makes a particular departure in de-emphasising the use of quantitative analyses, which have been central to most manorial scholarship since the mid-twentieth century. Instead, the thesis leans more heavily on qualitative analysis of the sources consulted, which are primarily court rolls, though statistical methods have

Years Covered	Classmark	Published/Unpublished
1306 to 1316	YAS/MD225/1/32–40	1306–1316 published
1329 to 1331	YAS/MD225/1/55–57	1329–1331 published
1338 to 1340	YAS/MD225/1/64–66	1338–1340 published
1348 to 1358	YAS/MD225/1/74–84	1348 to 1352 published
1379 to 1389	YAS/MD/225/1/105–115	Unpublished

Table 1.1: Summary of Wakefield court rolls consulted

been used for some aspects of the analysis where appropriate. The scope of the thesis, however, is more typical of prior work, being focused on a single area, in this case the manor of Wakefield in West Yorkshire, during the fourteenth century. Wakefield was an unusually large manor, and throughout the fourteenth century was held by a series of absentee landlords, with important consequences for its governance which will be seen throughout this thesis. Additionally, it spanned an area of varied physical and human geography, the details of which, along with other features of the manor which serve to set it apart from those areas that have already been studied, are described in more detail in the following chapter.

The thesis examines a variety of factors across both time and space, and as such the court rolls examined have been chosen from across as full a span of the fourteenth century as the survival of the documents and the limitations of the project have allowed. In total court rolls have been examined from the years 1306 to 1316, 1329 to 1331, 1338 to 1340, 1348 to 1358, and 1379 to 1389; each year is represented by a single court roll, with the exception of the years 1349–50, 1352–3, 1355–6, and 1357–8, which have two rolls each. The documentary research has drawn on a combination of unpublished manuscripts and edited versions of the court rolls as published by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, the owner of the rolls. The published rolls are represented by the years 1306 to 1316, edited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the years 1338 to 1340 and 1348 to 1352, edited and published from 1981 onwards. All the other rolls consulted are unpublished and were consulted in manuscript form, as summarised in Table 1.1.

Documents outside the court rolls, such as accounts and surveys, are poorly-preserved for fourteenth-century Wakefield, and as such see limited use in the thesis, though a 1309 survey, covering only the western region of the manor, has been consulted and used as a supplementary source in some the analysis. Not all the rolls used in the thesis have been subject to the same level of detailed examination, and some have been consulted only for a small number of metrics for use in quantitative analysis. In-depth qualitative research has been performed primarily on the court rolls for 1313 to 1316, 1338 to 1340, 1348 to 1352, and 1379 to 1380, the quantitative and qualitative analyses in the thesis taking account of approximately 1,500 individual court entries in total.

The rolls being sampled are balanced more heavily towards the published court rolls than had originally been intended at the outset of this project. This has largely been the result of the circumstances in which the thesis was written: work began approximately six months before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and a series of subsequent lockdown measures in the United Kingdom, which restricted access to archival sources until relatively late in the course of my research. The inability to access archives for this period resulted in greater use of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society court rolls series, which was accessible online, above the unpublished rolls which could only be consulted in-person at the University of Leeds. The final balance of rolls, additionally, is more heavily weighted to the early years of the fourteenth century, and earlier rolls are themselves more frequently cited in the subsequent analysis. On Wakefield, as on many other manors, however, earlier rolls are both more detailed in the information they record and contain a greater variety of pleas and incidents than those of the late fourteenth century, and so are more amenable to the qualitative research which forms the bulk of the work undertaken in this thesis.

The statistical analysis of the rolls has primarily been deployed to allow comparison between different parts of the manor of Wakefield, and to observe differences in certain actions and occurrences across the span of the fourteenth century. For the regional comparisons I have used the graveship, an administrative sub-division of the manor explained in more detail in chapter two, as the primary unit of analysis, as the vast majority of entries in the Wakefield court rolls identify incidents

on the basis of graveship rather than any more precise geographic identifier. The specific methodological and sampling strategies used for individual analyses are laid out in subsequent chapters, as the quantitative analyses themselves are introduced into the text.

A variety of sources have been used to acquire the geographic data used for the landscape analysis of the thesis: publicly-available data from Ordnance Survey has been used for elevation and water-courses; soil geology data has been sourced from the British Geological Survey; data on settlement types and patterns, geology, and soil types in the broader region have been derived from a combination of M. L. Faull and S. A. Moorhouse's *West Yorkshire: An Archaeological Survey to A.D. 1500* and the digitisation of the data used in Wrathmell and Robert's *Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* compiled by Andrew G. Lowerre and made available by Heritage England.[79] Transport routes outside of the manor have been sourced from the University College London *Early Medieval Atlas* project and James Edwards and Brian Hindle's article 'The transportation system of medieval England and Wales'. Data on the environment of the manor of Wakefield during the fourteenth century—including boundaries and divisions, the location of particular settlements, and the distribution of resources—are derived primarily from Moorhouse's work on the manor, especially his article 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages'. All of the geographical and landscape data were digitised and compiled into a GIS system, which allowed comparison between all of the landscape data from the various sources.

As noted above, the court rolls themselves lack geographic precision, and so most of the landscape analysis has been performed by comparing environmental conditions in the graveships, and how these might explain or have influenced different patterns of activity observed in the court rolls. The landscape approach of the thesis is broadly empiricist, in the sense that the analysis within relies largely on verifiable physical variables regarding geography, location of resources, and patterns of settlement in the manor of Wakefield and surrounding regions. However, the interpretive framework of the taskscape, which originated in phenomenological

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79 For the latter, see Lowerre, 'The *Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* GIS'.

anthropology, is deployed in chapter three as part of an analysis of the movements and activities of the manor's residents, and is introduced in detail at the beginning of that chapter.

1.2.1: Quantitative Scholarship

The divergences in method between this thesis and the work of other scholars are intended to address a number of deficiencies in the methodology of both manorial scholarship and landscape history and archaeology. Recent manorial scholarship has tended to follow a heavily quantitative tradition, following the work of the Toronto School in introducing statistical methods to the analysis of manorial documents.[80] The specific methods used by the Toronto School, and the interpretive frameworks they used to analyse their data, have been the subject of extensive critique by later writers, such as Razi, but quantitative approaches continue to dominate in the manorial historiography.[81] Razi's own research, for instance, is centred on quantitative analyses of manorial documents, and his work with Smith on the development of manorial historiography clearly favours quantitative methods. Razi and Smith's summary of research using manorial documents extensively praises studies undertaken with statistical methods, holding these to be more sophisticated and in early examples ahead of their time, while qualitative research is frequently denigrated, described by the authors as shallow or 'anecdotal', in clear contrast to what they view as the superior, statistically-driven research.[82]

Despite being favoured by most scholars, and extensively praised by Razi and Smith, these quantitative approaches are not without their flaws. A particular problem

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80 The Toronto School itself was concerned largely with demographic reconstruction of specific manors and villages, as seen in Raftis, 'Social Structures in Five East Midland Villages: A Study of Possibilities in the Use of Court Roll Data'; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village* is a contemporary study undertaken by a scholar not part of the Toronto School; Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish* is a later example by a noted critic of the Toronto authors; statistical techniques have since been applied to a range of other topics: Jewell, 'Women at the Courts of the Manor of Wakefield, 1348-1350' analyses the position of women in manor courts; Postles, 'Personal Pledging: Medieval "Reciprocity" or "Symbolic Capital"?' the social dynamics of pledge-making; and Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside' and Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England* demonstrate the application of quantitative techniques in economic history.
81 Razi, 'The Toronto School's Reconstruction of Medieval Peasant Society: A Critical View'.
82 Razi and Smith, 'The Historiography of Manorial Court Rolls', 8–9, 20–21.

stems from how few authors of the statistical school grapple with the suitability of manorial court rolls to quantitative analysis. Razi and Smith acknowledge some of the critiques which have been made on this point, but make little meaningful attempt to rebut them.[83] Similarly, both Harvey and Razi introduce their manorial studies by emphasising the relative completeness of the court rolls for Cuxham and Halesowen, pointing out the long sequences of consecutive court sessions they record, and the short and infrequent gaps in these records.[84] While intended to demonstrate the suitability of their chosen study areas for in-depth statistical analysis, this preference for 'complete' rolls shows that Harvey and Razi are aware that their conclusions might be affected by missing data or omissions in the recording of court cases, but neither shows much awareness of how such problems might arise from the inherent nature of the court rolls, rather than the vagaries of preservation. A particular problem with the use of court rolls is that these records are generally agreed to represent only a partial sample of most activities, as many disputes would have been resolved without recourse to litigation. This shortcoming is often discussed in the context of credit and debt, for example, but the acknowledgment of this flaw within the sources rarely deters scholars from forming their conclusions overwhelmingly on the basis of statistical analysis.[85]

The insistence of most authors on long, relatively complete sequences of rolls, in order to ensure statistical validity, also engenders some degree of bias in the sort of manors which are selected for research, and the subjects which are most-often discussed in the scholarly literature. The manors selected by previous scholars have most often been part of larger ecclesiastical estates or royal manors, these institutional landlords being more likely to have centralised record-keeping with long sequences of rolls preserved to the present day. The manor of Halesown, studied by Razi, was a holding of the Premonstratensian Abbey of Halesowen, Harvey's choice of Cuxham was held by Merton College, Oxford, Larson's research has used the manors

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83 Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 21.
84 Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 1965, 12; Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 10.
85 See e.g. Briggs, 'Creditors and Debtors and Their Relationships at Oakington, Cottenham and Dry Dayton (Cambridgeshire, 1291 – 1350)', 138–40; Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside', 114–15.

of the bishops of Durham, and Briggs has written on the manors of Crowland Abbey, to give just some examples.[86] Manors of this kind, however, do not represent the majority in existence during the Middle Ages. Estimates of land-holding in medieval England have suggested that most manors were held by secular landlords with smaller estates, and some research has also suggested that ecclesiastical institutions operated their manors in a different fashion from secular landlords, operating more punitive regimes and making greater demands in terms of the extraction of wealth and resources from their manors.[87] The current state of research, therefore, has focused on what may well be unusual experiences compared to the medieval norm, and risks asserting as universal or dominant trends that were in reality confined to the particular sub-set of manors held by large institutions.

There is, furthermore, a distinct geographic bias in the manors which have thus far received the most attention in the scholarly literature. With a handful of notable exceptions, such as Larson's work on County Durham, the studies I have discussed in this chapter have been performed on regions in the south and midlands of England, with comparatively little work undertaken in the north of England. The extent of this bias in the manorial literature is demonstrated by Figure 1.1, reproduced from Razi and Smith's edited volume on manor courts, which plots all the manors discussed in the volume. While a significant number of the manors are located in the midlands, east, and south-east of England, there are very few north of Norfolk—Skegness and Wakefield being rare exceptions—and none at all from the north-west of the country. Although availability and accessibility of records has some role in producing this biased pattern, the work of Larson in County Durham and my own work on Wakefield in this thesis show that the north of England is not wholly devoid of rich manorial sources, and more research with these records is necessary in order to reconstruct

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86 Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 5; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 1965, 6; Larson, 'Village Voice or Village Oligarchy?', August 2010, 679–80; Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, 19.
87 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 7–8.

MAP 0.1   Principal places mentioned in the text

Figure 1.1: Principal sites mentioned in Razi and Smith, Medieval Society and the Manor Court. *The vast majority of sites are located in the south and midlands of England. Only two, Wakefield and Skegness, are in northern England.*

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the full experience of rural life in medieval England. In addition to this, an emphasis on quantitative methods first and foremost leads to some limitations on the subjects which are the focus of detailed study, as scholars prefer topics which are recorded most heavily in the source documents themselves. We have already seen some of these limits in the research focus of economic historians, who centre activities such as land transfers or credit transactions, which are by far the most frequently-recorded economic activities in manorial documents.

Demographically, the most frequent appearances in court rolls are made by men, and especially men of middling or higher wealth, and as a result manorial research tends to focus most heavily on these individuals. In his research on Halesowen, for example, Razi is often forced to extrapolate the activity of women in Halesowen out of the male activity recorded on the rolls, or else simply assume that the demographic and economic patterns which are visible for men in the records are more-or-less applicable to women as well.[88] Alongside these problems, little consideration is given to how even recorded cases might have their details distorted during the process of trial and recording, resulting in a court record which may be somewhat removed from the reality at hand. Manor courts are especially vulnerable to this kind of distortion, which might occur both when allegations were presented to the court, as plaintiffs sought to frame events in a manner which would be most likely to result in conviction,[89] and in the recording of cases onto the rolls themselves, when clerks reduced potentially very complex and nuanced incidents into the simpler, formulaic language of official record.[90] This process of distortion is hardly addressed at all by either Harvey or Razi, who instead assume manorial records to be a broadly accurate reflection of actual social life.

Furthermore, the overwhelming focus of these studies on quantitative techniques engenders an explanatory approach which is heavily systems-driven. By interpreting activity on the manor through a framework of external influences such as disease, famine, climactic variations, grain prices, or wage standards, the impact of the choices and actions of individual residents is substantially minimised, these human

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88 Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 77, 103–4, 120.
89 Johnson, *Law in Common*, 30.
90 P. D. A. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 43.

actors reduced to largely passive elements of a system set in motion by external triggers. Razi, for example, rarely allows villagers any active role in their own destinies except in the decision to purchase more land, a desire treated as near-universal among the population of Halesowen. Otherwise, the villagers are strictly reactive, responding to changing conditions in the parish rather than making any sustained attempt to change conditions themselves.[91] Harvey displays a similar lack of consideration of the individual agency of Cuxham's villagers. Indeed, the villagers are the central focus of only a single chapter in Harvey's work, and a full exploration of the agency of villagers is granted only to exceptional individuals, such as the leading members of the wealthy Grene family.[92] It is also notable that neither Razi nor Harvey give particularly deep consideration to the relationship between villagers and the manorial administration, a relationship Razi barely mentions at all, and which is briefly glossed over by Harvey as 'mainly good'.[93]

Landscape studies have been similarly focused on metrics which are most easily visible archaeologically or in surviving records: village layouts, visible through archaeological remains and in some maps, the expansion and contraction of arable land, recorded through land transactions in manorial court rolls, rentals, and similar documents, and methods of agriculture or husbandry, recorded primarily in manorial account rolls and surveys or inventories of tenant lands and livestock. There is also a notable preference for analysis over periods of hundreds of years, in some studies covering over a millennium of change and development in regional landscapes.[94] This prominent concern for *longue durée* processes favours a mode of scholarship which emphasises the study of broader regions, so as to facilitate comparison between different settlements and landscape types, and which examines change over the course of hundreds of years.[95] In taking a high level view, the importance of small-scale interactions in shaping rural environments is often obscured, leading some

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91 Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 147–49.
92 Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 1965, 115–18.
93 Harvey, 128.
94 See Jones, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape*, which covers the ninth to seventeenth centuries; Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*, spanning the sixth to thirteenth centuries; and Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*.
95 See e.g. *Altenberg, Experiencing Landscapes*; Jones, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape*; Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*.

researchers to overstate the degree of unity and cohesion in village communities. One such example is provided by Lewis, in an account of a field re-organisation in the village of Segenhoe, which was divided between two lords, which is described by Lewis thus:

> … as a result of upheavals in a time of war … the lands were found to be occupied unjustly. The solution involved the combined authority of the two lay lords, who took action in the manor court, and that of the villagers, represented by six old men. All the tenants (knights, freemen, and 'all others') gave their common assent, and surrendered their lands to the lords, and they were then measured (by the perch, 'as if newly conquered') and assigned 'reasonably' to each tenant.[96]

This incident is treated as a simple victory of the village community, who acquired greater control of their fields through this new arrangement, mediated by respected, elderly villagers who were prioritising fairness in their distribution of lands.[97] Little consideration is given to the inequalities of power and status which have been much-studied by manorial historians, and which might have affected this process: in deciding the new organisation of the village's fields, how can we be sure this committee of six older men was actually working in the interests of the community as a whole, and not planning the re-organisation with an eye on material gain for themselves, their friends, and their families?

The possibility of internal conflict of this nature is conspicuously ignored in further discussions of the development of rural settlements, as Lewis prefers to place these in an economic and environmental context, driven by a desire for higher grain yields, more efficient use of labour, or easier access to pasture.[98] The anecdote highlighted above, however, showcases another motivating factor which the authors fail to consider: that the wealthiest and most influential members of village communities may have encouraged, or even forced, nucleation or the consolidation of land into open fields in order to gain greater control over their neighbours by taking on the

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96 Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*, 2001, 178.
97 Lewis, 178–79.
98 Lewis, 130–131, 170–72, 186–187.

managerial and regulatory roles which farming in common required, and which the cultivation of land in private did not. A preference for long time scales and big-picture research questions has similar results for Jones and Page, who do not consistently engage with the historical sources which might shed light on the personal interactions which helped to inform the decisions around settlement layout and transformation which they look to analyse.[99]

Additionally, it is apparent from the works cited above that manorial scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on either single manors, or small groups of neighbouring manors, often owned by a single landlord. This is, once more, a field in which practical considerations have had a significant influence, as deep study of primary sources is rarely feasible for more than a handful of manors at any one time. As an unusually large manor holding frequent court sessions, thereby producing a large volume of documentary material, the issue of dealing with large volumes of data has been especially salient in studying Wakefield, precluding comparison to other manors except through the use of secondary literature. This thesis itself, furthermore, argues that local environments and circumstances could have profound effects on the actions of both individuals and governing institutions. As these effects are best seen in the context of limited, regional studies, no attempt is being made here to break with the tradition of single manor or small-region studies. The choice of Wakefield in particular, however, being a secular manor of exceptional size and encompassing a variety of landscape types, differs significantly from the sorts of manors which have been the focus of prior research, and through this difference I hope to expand our current understanding of rural life and manorial governance.

1.2.2: Qualitative Scholarship

Although quantitative techniques have long been dominant in the methodologies of manorial scholarship and studies of medieval landscape, qualitative techniques of the sort being deployed in this thesis have not been wholly absent from recent historiography. One of the more sustained, in-depth uses of qualitative analysis is

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99 Jones, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape*, xx.

provided in Schofield's article 'Peasants and the Manor Court', which consists almost entirely of an in-depth analysis of a single legal conflict between two tenants in the Suffolk manor of Hinderclay. Schofield charts this conflict from its first appearance in the court rolls to the last, and its off-shoots into other ecclesiastical and secular courts, while also attempting to discern something of the motivating factors which drove the two litigants in the case to pursue each other so ardently across such a long period of time.[100]

Much of this analysis is speculative, given the limited information recorded in court rolls, but is effective in exploring how disputes which originate, and are to large part carried out, outside of the court could easily extend into court action. For these litigants at Hinderclay the manor, and other, courts were one of a range of tools that might be used to embarrass and humiliate, intimidate, or threaten one another, and Schofield's work serves as an example of how these complex webs of motivating factors and out-of-court relationships might be unpicked, if historians are willing to take a risk by drawing inferences and indirect information from thin court records.

Schofield ably demonstrates the great potential of qualitative analysis for gaining insight into the beliefs, motivations, and circumstances which caused rural litigants to engage with the manor court, as well as the great amount of detail of rural life which we can gain from examining very small sections of court records. However, Schofield also highlights a potential weakness of this form of analysis, in its potential for over-reliance on speculation which may be somewhat removed from the facts at hand. Alongside this, another drawback to a qualitative approach is demonstrated by Beckerman's examination of the development of manor court procedure.

Beckerman attempts to cover this development across almost the whole of England, in order to gain a sense of the overriding structures and processes which affected procedural change.[101] This attempt to determine a broad, national pattern is, however, hampered by the significant local variation between individual manors, with the result that while Beckerman is able to make very broad conclusions– that manor

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100 Schofield, 'Peasants and the Manor Court: Gossip and Litigation in a Suffolk Village at the Close of the Thirteenth Century'.

101 Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 1992, 197–98.

court procedure was influenced by the procedural development of royal courts, for instance– establishing more of the specific dynamics and effects within this is much more difficult. To take one example, Beckerman is unable to properly characterise the effect of trial by jury: on most manors juries rendered judgements that could not be overturned, but on manors such as Wakefield sufficiently wealthy litigants could pay for an attaint jury to scrutinise and potentially reverse the decision of the original jury, and on an even smaller number of manors a second attaint jury could be employed to re-examine the decision of the first attaint jury.[102] The exact effect of the introduction of jury trials on the balance of power within the manor court is, therefore, highly dependent on local factors, especially the presence or absence of attaint, and cannot be easily drawn into a national process.

The difficulty of relating details from a single manor or region to a national process is explicitly raised by Larson, who cautions his readers against uncritically applying his conclusions regarding the Durham halmotes to courts in other parts of the country.[103] Larson draws particular attention to the conservatism of County Durham's legal culture, and the significant differences in organisation between Durham and other areas of the country, alerting the reader to the significance of local circumstances as well as national developments in determining or influencing the specifics of legal process and community cohesion in any given area.[104] The important realisation to take from these difficulties is that the operation of manor courts was strongly localised, and though all manor courts were exposed to national processes of change and development through their connection to other legal and cultural institutions, the exact effect of these connections could vary dramatically between manors. Caution and a critical eye are required, therefore, when attempting to relate the activity or development of one manor to a wider structure.

On the landscape side, this thesis builds upon a field of theoretically-informed landscape study that has only recently begun to gain traction in medieval history and archaeology. In particular, I make use of methods and interpretive frameworks which originate in phenomenology, which has been briefly mentioned above.

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102 Beckerman, 217–18.
103 Larson, 'Village Voice or Village Oligarchy?', August 2010, 679.
104 Larson, 679.

Phenomenology has a long history in anthropology and prehistoric archaeology, having emerged in the late 1980s from a broader set of theoretical and interpretive frameworks dubbed 'postprocessual', and which reacted to what was increasingly viewed as an overly-positivist, systems-driven theoretical paradigm which had been dominant in archaeology since the 1960s.[105]

While phenomenology itself originates with early- and mid-twentieth century philosophers, most notably Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, phenomenology was introduced to archaeology primarily through the works of Chris Tilley, who remains one of the most-cited, and most-criticised, figures in phenomenological thought.[106] Within Tilley's writings, phenomenology is presented as both a theory for interpreting space and landscape, and a method of archaeological practice. As a theory, Tilley's phenomenology draws upon the works of Heidegger, Husserl, and Maurice Merlau-Ponty to conceptualise individual people as a Being-in-the-world, undergoing a fundamentally subjective experience of the wider world and physical space through embodied perception and interaction, mediated through bodily senses. Methodologically, Tilley stresses the importance of experiencing landscapes and spaces oneself, visiting and walking through archaeological sites in order to gain personal, subjective, experience of the environments the archaeologist seeks to analyse.[107]

Since coming to prominence within landscape archaeology, Tilley's phenomenological approach has been subject to extensive and broad criticism. Early critiques by Andrew Fleming focused on the quality of evidence put forward by phenomenologists, arguing that the spatial relationships between archaeological sites and natural features claimed by Tilley and other scholars rarely matched with the

105 Johnson, 'Phenomenological Approaches in Landscape Archaeology', provides an overview of the origins of phenomenological thought in archaeology, its roots in continental philosophy, and later criticisms.

106 Tilley, *'A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments'* is the first major work of landscape phenomenology. Tilley is used as the key reference point for phenomenological thought in Barret and Ko, 'A phenomenology of landscape: a crisis in British archaeology?'; Fleming, 'Post-processual Landscape Archaeology: a Critique', and Johnson 'Phenomenological Approaches in Landscape Archaeology', among others.

107 Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape,* 1–25 outlines the theoretical basis of phenomenology, and 71–75 the basis of Tilley's method. Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*, 1–28, though written ten years later, reiterates much of the same ideas,

observable reality when the same sites were visited by Fleming. Later critiques by Fleming were more expansive, taking aim at the underlying theoretical basis of phenomenology, which Fleming believes lacks appropriate scholarly rigour in contrast to traditional, empiricist landscape archaeology.[108]

While Fleming represents opposition from the traditionalist wing of landscape archaeology, Tilley's brand of phenomenology has also been criticised by scholars who have been supportive of the broader postprocessual movement, including those who explicitly ally themselves to phenomenology. Thus, Barrett and Ko criticise Tilley for displaying a shallow engagement with the actual philosophy of phenomenology as presented by Husserl and Heidegger, and Johnson argues that phenomenology is rarely as self-reflexive as it claims to be, and often perpetuates a style of British Romantic landscape writing that closely resembles the older, non-theorised tradition of landscape archaeology the phenomenologists claim to be overturning.[109]

Of these various criticisms, those pertaining to the particular methodology advocated for by Tilley and other phenomenologists are the most convincing, demonstrating that even where the observations made by phenomenologists in the field can be replicated by other authors, they rarely lead to strong arguments regarding the symbolic meaning of landscapes or the perceptions of people in the past. It is notable in this respect that recent studies in phenomenology—which use methods similar to those espoused by Tilley—tend to do so in the context of a more positivist experimental design, with clearer parameters for assessment of the resulting data and easier means of verification by other scholars.[110] Critiques of the underlying theory, however, are generally less effective: as Johnson points out, these often rely on misrepresentations of the key propositions of phenomenology—often while appealing to a much more rigorous and empiricist version of traditional landscape

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108 Fleming, 'Phenomenology and the megaliths of Wales: A dreaming too far?' and 'Megaliths and post-modernism: the case of Wales' present criticisms against the observations of phenomenologists in regard to Welsh neolithic cites; ' Post-processual Landscape Archaeology: a Critique' lays out Fleming's wider arguments against phenomenology.

109 Barrett and Ko, 'A phenomenology of landscape', 280–5; Johnson, 'Phenomenological Approaches in Landscape Archaeology', 277–8.

110 See, for instance, the work on prehistoric soundscapes presented in Mills, *Auditory Archaeology: Understanding Sound and Hearing in the Past*; for medieval examples see Cooper, 'Lived Experience at Bodiam and Ightham' and Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 265–270.

archaeology than actually exists in the literature—while ignoring how many of the fundamental ideas of phenomenology have become common in all kinds of landscape archaeology, even among authors who explicitly reject phenomenology and its methods.[111]

While the summary above shows the significant influence, and controversy, which has been achieved by phenomenology in the wider field of archaeology, phenomenology and its associated frameworks have only begun to enter medieval landscape history and archaeology relatively recently.[112]While Johnson has been a critic of some aspects of phenomenology, researchers working under Johnson at the Bodiam Castle project have explicitly drawn on phenomenological theory in their work.[113]Beyond this, early adopters of phenomenological frameworks in the study of medieval landscapes include Karin Altenberg, who has made use of an embodied, agent-centred approach to examine the construction and expression of identity in marginal landscapes in both England and Scandinavia, emphasising the importance of analysing and understanding human activity as an essential and inseparable element of historic landscapes.[114] Altenberg's approach has, however, been criticised for a degree of atemporality, making use of evidence from the early medieval period to the nineteenth century without critical reflection on how far back recorded perspectives and relationships with the land can be projected.[115]

More recently, phenomenology is clearly visible as an influence on the work of Mileson and Brookes, who adopt both the theoretical approaches of phenomenologists alongside the experimental techniques used by many prehistorians, reconstructing the soundscapes created by church bells as part of an

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111 Johnson, 'Phenomenological Approaches in Landscape Archaeology', 276–277, 279.

112 The failure of British landscape history to grapple with explicit theory was noted in 2007 by Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, 1–2; writing eleven years later Gardiner and Kilby, 'Perceptions of Medieval Settlement', 210–11 and Jones and Hooke, 'Methodological Approaches to Medieval Rural Settlements and Landscapes', 31, observe the same reluctance of medieval archaeologists and landscape historians to adopt what were by then well-established theoretical approaches.

113 Cooper, 'Lived Experience at Bodiam and Ightham', 143–45.

114 Altenberg, *Experiencing Landscapes*, 1–5, 223–225.

115 Gardiner, review of *Experiencing Landscapes: A Study of Space and Identity in Three Marginal Areas of Medieval Britain and Scandinavia*, by Karin Altenberg, *Medieval Archaeology* 48, no. 1, (2003): 360–361.

analysis of regional affinities and parish loyalties in Ewelme hundred.[116] Furthermore, some medieval historians and archaeologists, though not explicitly drawing upon phenomenology, have produced work that echoes many of the methods of phenomenologists and their underlying conceptual ideas. Work in this vein is particularly common in the study of medieval elite landscapes, where many sites are amenable to the sort of walking survey practised by Tilley in prehistoric contexts, though like Tilley these studies have been criticised for reaching conclusions not truly supported by surviving physical or documentary evidence.[117]

As the debates summarised above highlight, there are clear issues with the methodology of personal observation and perception that are core to much phenomenological archaeology. Within the context of this thesis, furthermore, the use of such techniques would be doubly inappropriate, given that, since the fourteenth century, the Wakefield environment has undergone significant modification through urbanisation and industrialisation, such that the medieval experience would be difficult to reconstruct for a modern observer.

However, while I do not make use of all the methods employed by these scholars in this thesis, I have made the phenomenological concerns of physical activity and embodied experiences of the natural and built environment central to my understanding of the Wakefield landscape. Central to this approach is the recognition that the activities and practices recorded in manorial documents were, for the most part, physical processes, which necessitated that individuals go and do things in the world. Such a recognition is missing from much manorial scholarship which often treats issues of debt, official service, and litigation as abstract structures and patterns. The influence of phenomenology on my research is most visible in chapter three, which applies to economic and legal affairs in Wakefield an aspect of phenomenological theory—the concept of the taskscape—which has previously been

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116 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 265–70.
117 See Liddiard and Williamson, 'There By Design? Some Reflections on Medieval Elite Landscapes' for an overview of this trend in medieval archaeology and critique of its conclusions.

restricted primarily to work on religious and sacred landscapes, rather than landscapes of work and everyday life.[118]

1.3: Thesis Outline

At the beginning of this introduction I laid out, in brief, the main objectives of this thesis, and before continuing will elaborate in more detail the arguments to be presented, which cover three broad areas of analysis. The first, in chapter three, examines the landscape of Wakefield in the most detail, utilising Tim Ingold's concept of the taskscape to integrate the physical arrangement of the Wakefield landscape with the activity of residents of the manor, and their interactions with each other and with institutions within and the manor and in neighbouring regions. Within this chapter I argue that these institutions forged the numerous settlements of Wakefield into a socially-coherent, unified community, facilitating the creation of social ties and the spread of information across the manor. As a consequence of this social network created by the manorial taskscape, I argue that tenants of Wakefield were strongly influenced to prioritise personal reputation, which was of fundamental importance to many aspects of life on the manor, over immediate material interests when pursuing disputes with one another within the manor court and outside of it.

Chapter four focuses more narrowly on the manorial officers who were responsible for on-the-ground management in Wakefield, and how enthusiasm for office-holding was affected by local landscape conditions in addition to the nature of the offices themselves. I argue that the nature of landscape and settlement on the manor made some offices especially unappealing to Wakefield tenants, in contrast to many other manors where leading tenants appear to have made concerted efforts to secure control over key offices, and that the wealthier tenants of Wakefield preferred to exercise control over their peers through informal or semi-formal roles that

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118 See e.g. Lash, 'Pebbles and Peregrinatio: The Taskscape of Medieval Devotion on Inishark Island, Ireland'.

conveyed some degree of locally-recognised authority without tying these tenants to the priorities of the manorial administration and the risks of manorial offices.

While these two chapters are concerned largely with the way in which the landscape of the manor acted upon Wakefield residents and influenced their actions, chapter five instead looks at how tenants of the manor acted upon the landscape, and utilised their ability to affect the landscape as a means of expressing authority and prestige. I argue that control over the natural world, including not only the landscape itself but also animals and other resources, was central to the expression of status at all levels of society in medieval Wakefield, and that efforts by Wakefield tenants to establish exclusive use of land and resources should be understood not only in terms of material benefits, but also as a means of signalling prestige and social superiority to others.

Before this, however, I will begin with a more detailed examination of the manor of Wakefield, the subject of all the analysis in this thesis. Chapter two describes the manor of Wakefield, its environment, and the state of its administration in the fourteenth century. The chapter focuses on the internal variety of the manor in geography, settlement, and human activity, the nature of the manorial administration, and the documentary record the manor produced during the fourteenth century, emphasising the unique elements of the manor compared to those that have been studied by other scholars.

Chapter 2: The Manor of Wakefield and Its Landscape

2.1: Manorial Boundaries and Divisions

Located near the western border of the West Riding of Yorkshire, the manor of Wakefield spans an area approximately 31 miles east to west, between the settlement of Normanton and the tops of the Pennines, and 21 miles north to south, from the vill of Eccleshill to the hills and valleys around Holme.[119] The boundaries of the manor, which are shown in Figure 2.1, were somewhat irregular in form, enclosing two larger, non-contiguous blocks of territory and four smaller exclaves, and encompassing some 240 square miles of land across these areas. The largest part of the manor's territory spanned from the peaks of the Pennines around Holme in the south-west to the lowlands which surrounded Wakefield town in the east, the manorial territory in some parts of this area narrowing to barely more than a quarter of a mile wide. The second major unit of the manorial lands lay to the north and west of this, in upland territory in the Pennine heights and foothills, between two and five miles from the larger part of the manor. Although more compact and regular in its shape, this part of the manor also had some unusual borders, as it wholly contained a detached portion of the honour of Pontefract, the large estate which occupied most of the land neighbouring Wakefield. The remaining parts of the manor of Wakefield consisted of four smaller exclaves, all of which had been subinfeudated by the fourteenth century, located between the larger parts of the manor at Dalton and Shitlington, just to the east of its limits at Normanton, and roughly five miles north of the main body of the manor at Eccleshill.

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119 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 44.

York

Leeds

Bradford

Halifax

Wakefield

N

0   5   10   15   20 mi

Sheffield
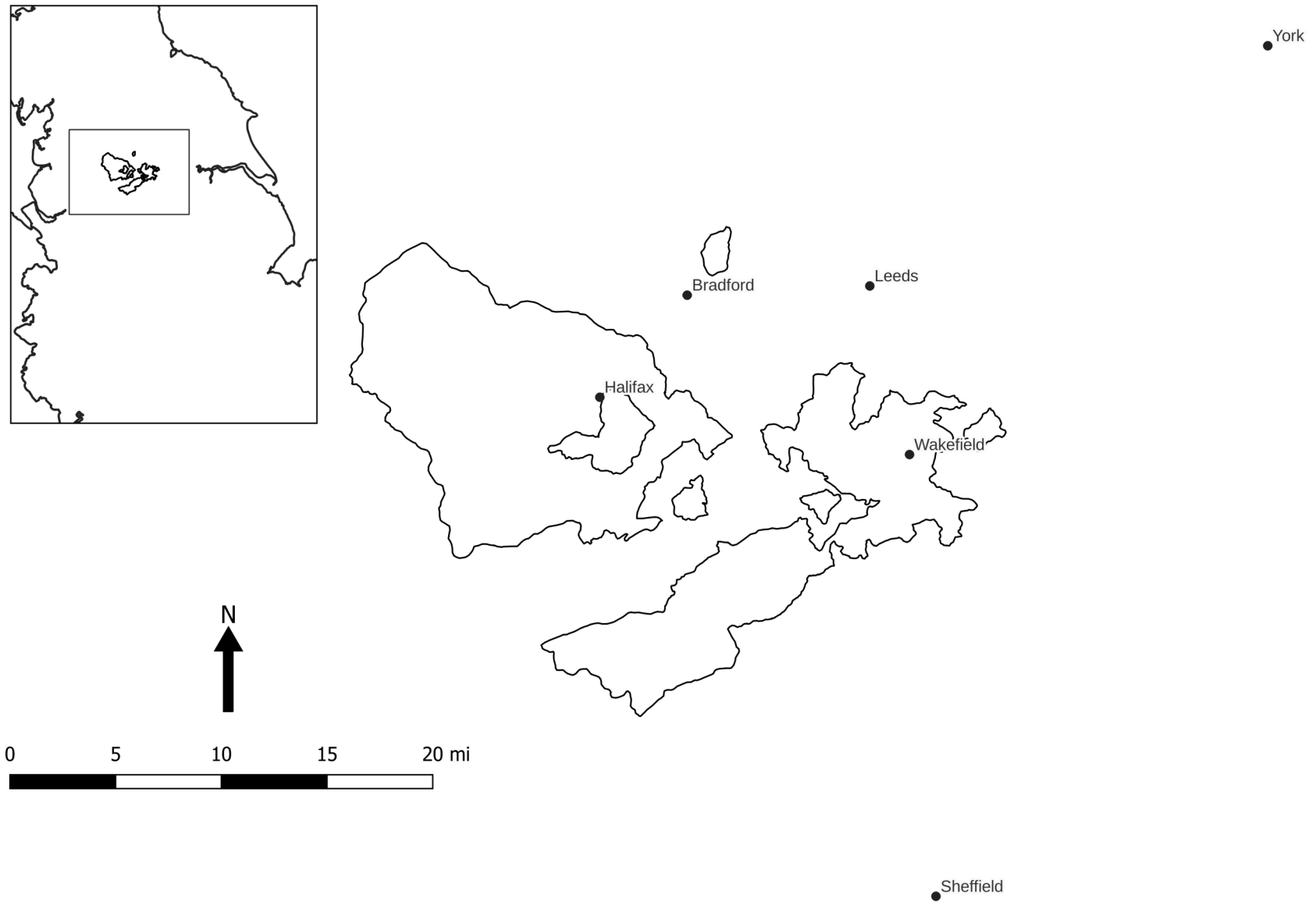
Figure 2.1: *The manor of Wakefield in its region, with a wider view of northern England in the inset.*
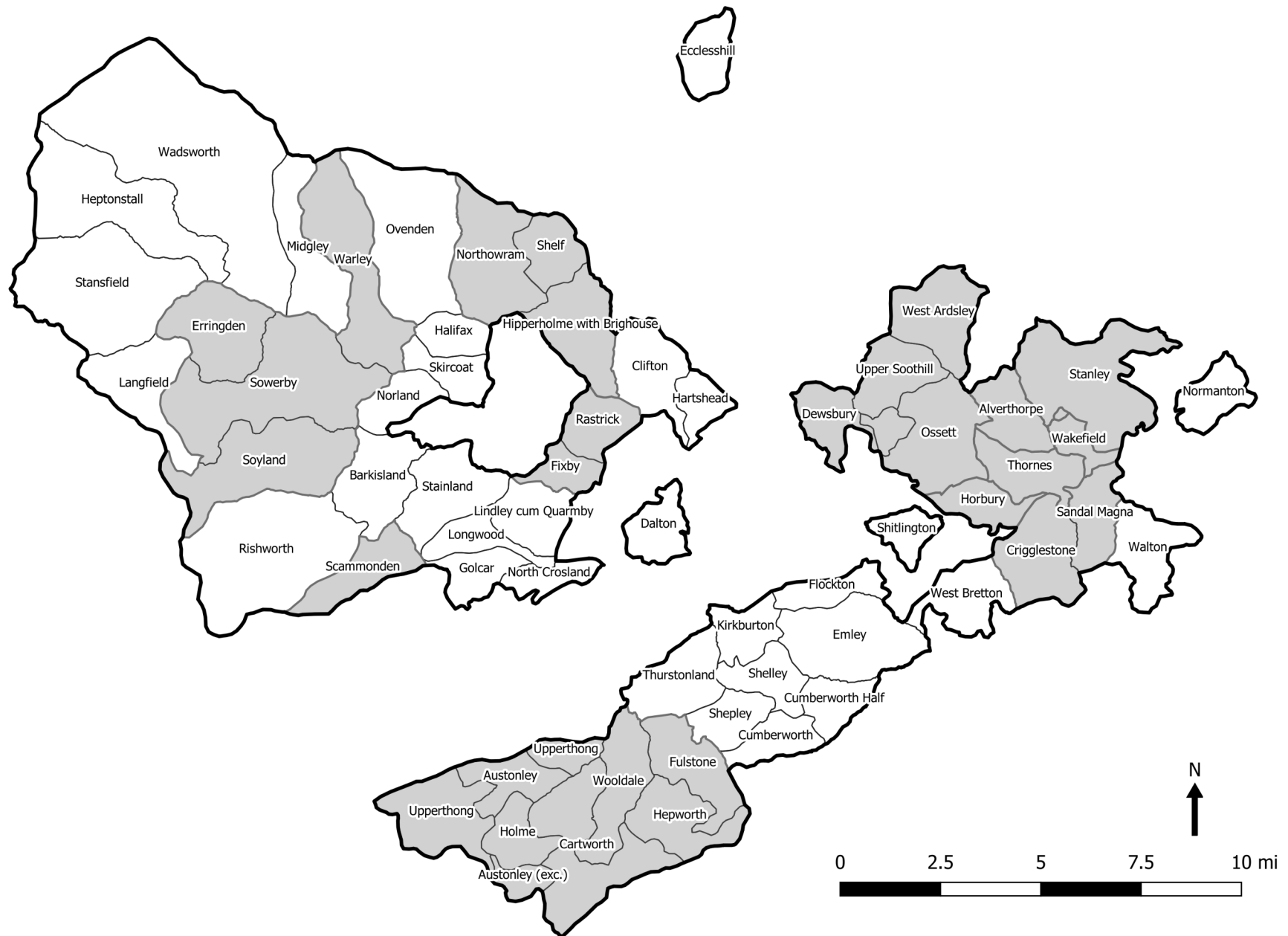
Figure 2.2: *The internal divisions of the manor of Wakefield. Shaded areas were under direct management of the lord of Wakefield, unshaded areas were subinfeudated.*

For the most part, these borders were already in place by the time of the Norman Conquest, though a lack of records dating before the eleventh century makes it difficult to determine how far back the manor's existence as a single landholding unit can be projected.[120] In the immediate aftermath of the Conquest some minor adjustments to the manorial boundaries occurred as the lands neighbouring Wakefield were amalgamated into the honour of Pontefract, as happened to parts of the townships of Lindley cum Quarmby and West Bretton. Minor enlargement of the manor of Wakefield also took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the reverse process occurred and lands were transferred from Pontefract to Wakefield, which acquired the townships of Clifton, Dalton, Flockton, and possibly Halifax. This process had largely ended by the start of the fourteenth century, with the boundaries of Wakefield and Pontefract had becoming settled.[121] The eventual borders of Wakefield and Pontefract display relatively little overlap with the boundaries the West Yorkshire parishes, which has led Michelmore to argue that the former were formed at least in part by splitting the lands of the pre-Conquest estates out of which the parish borders developed, though this connection is not made explicitly in surviving documentation.[122]

Compared to most other English manors, Wakefield was unusually large. According to the Hundred Rolls, compiled during the 1270s, around 65 per cent of manors contained fewer than 500 acres of land, equivalent to 0.8 square miles and less than a half of a per cent of the land contained within the manor of the Wakefield.[123] An attempt by Moorhouse to locate settlements named in medieval documentation from Wakefield identified some 550 distinct settlements within the manor's boundaries, and these are shown in Figure 2.3.[124] However, many of these settlements, especially in the uplands, were small hamlets or possibly even isolated farmsteads rather than substantial villages, and as is discussed below much of the manor was thinly-populated. The great size of Wakefield relative to manors further to

120 Michelmore and Moorhouse, 'Documentary Sources, 8; Hey, *Yorkshire from AD 1000*, 18.
121 Michelmore, 'Township Gazetteer', 348, 356, 375, 385, 431, 556.
122 Michelmore, 402–3.
123 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500,* 6–7.
124 The original map is found in Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield in the Middle Ages', 46.
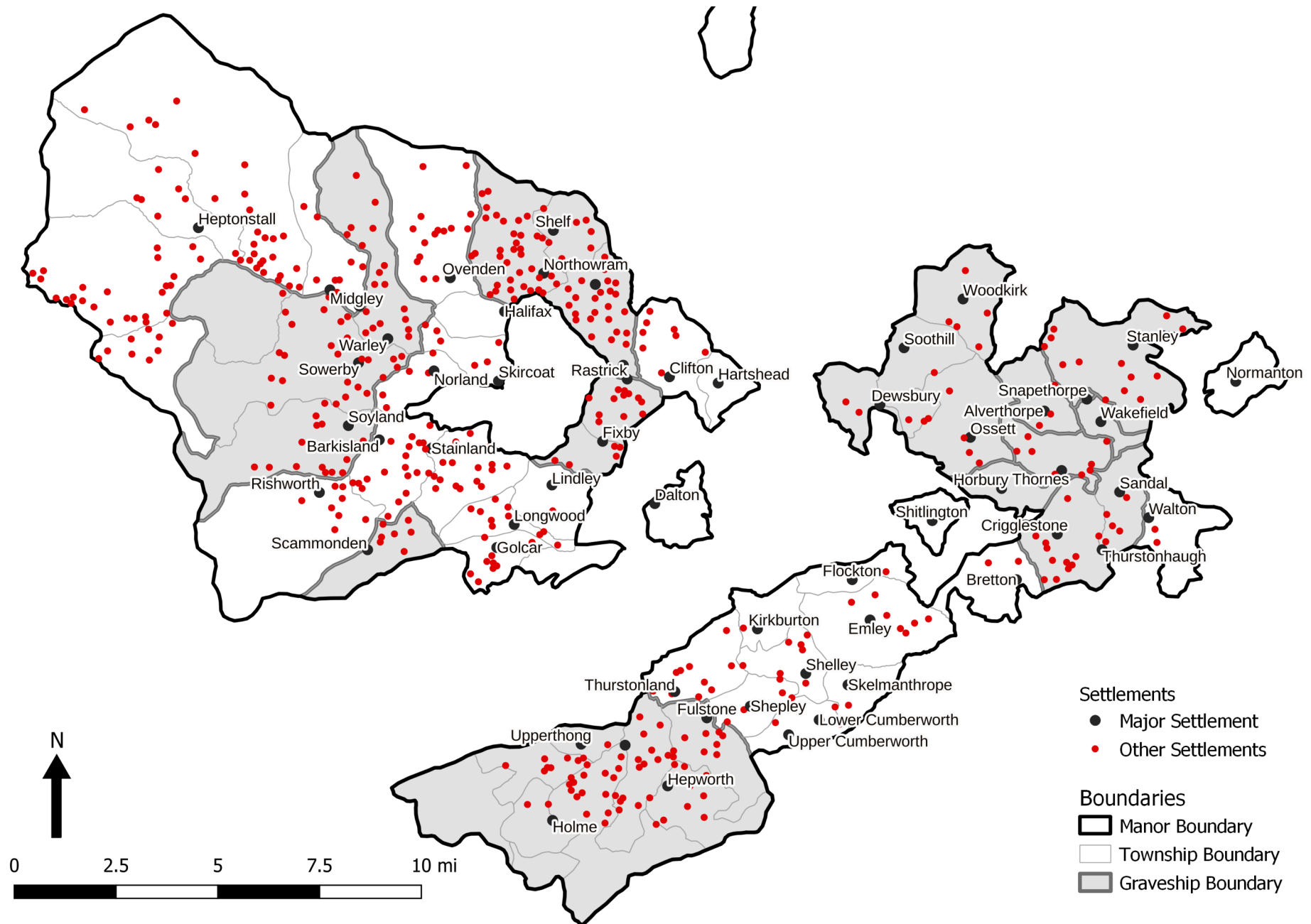
Figure 2.3: *Medieval settlements on the manor of Wakefield, as identified by Moorhouse. Notable settlements are labelled. Though settlements are more numerous in the west, western settlements were on average much smaller.*

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the south can be aptly demonstrated by comparison to Ewelme Hundred, the area of South Oxfordshire which has been recently studied by Mileson. In Ewelme, manors ranged in size from 0.4 to 1.5 square miles, the smallest of these not even encompassing whole villages, while the Hundred itself was slightly less than 40 square miles in extent.[125] At this size, Ewelme Hundred could fit into Wakefield more than six times over, and if Wakefield were divided into separate manors of similar size to those at Ewelme it might produce some 200 or more independent jurisdictions.

Within northern England, however, and particularly the local context of the West Riding, the size of Wakefield manor is less exceptional. Very large manors were more common in the north than in the south. The manor of Chester in County Durham, for instance, was of comparable size to Wakefield and contained ten settlements and their surrounding lands, alongside the principal town of Chester-le-Street itself.[126] Large secular estates in particular dominated the West Riding of Yorkshire: the majority of the land adjacent to Wakefield was part of the honour of Pontefract, an even larger territory than Wakefield, and the West Riding also contained the similarly extensive lordships of Tickhill and Conisbrough, the latter initially also held by the de Warenne family. The presence of large estates had a long history in Yorkshire, which was enhanced in the eleventh century as Norman families were rewarded with substantial grants of land in the north. Conisbrough was, like Wakefield, a pre-Conquest estate granted to the de Warennes in the aftermath of the Conquest, while the honours of Tickhill and Pontefract were formed by merging an array of smaller manors and lordships and granting the new, larger estates to the aristocratic de Bouli and de Lacey families, respectively.[127]

Although it was located on the edge of the Riding, Wakefield was not a remote or inaccessible manor in relation to other estates in Yorkshire. Rather, it sat on the western extremity of a swathe of dense settlement that ran from Halifax, in the centre of the manor, to York, the political and commercial centre of Yorkshire.[128] Beyond this, Wakefield was connected to the important port of Kingston-upon-Hull by the river

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125 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 2, 151.
126 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 7.
127 Hey, *Yorkshire from AD 1000,* 33.
128 Danby and Maxwell, *The Domesday Geography of Northern England*, 17.

Calder, which merges into the Aire just north of Castleford. Although direct evidence records river journeys in the medieval era no further than Stanley in the north-east of the manor, the Calder was potentially navigable as far upstream as Brighouse.[129] Wakefield also had westward connections, as the manor straddled one of the main Pennine roads connecting Lancashire and Cheshire with Yorkshire, the route of which has been reconstructed between Halifax and Wakefield, where it was known as the Wakefield Gate.[130] Further overland routes connected Wakefield to Pontefract—which was in turn linked by road to York—and evidence from royal itineraries and records of long-distance mercantile transactions suggest that a major north-south route ran through the manor of Wakefield, joining Doncaster to Bradford, and thence heading to Cumbria.[131] These routes are mapped in Figure 2.4.

Of these external connections it was those with the honour of Pontefract that were the most significant. Pontefract itself was the first settlement in the West Riding to be granted borough status and remained the largest population centre in the fourteenth century, rendering the town an important commercial centre for the surrounding region.[132] The integration of the two estates reached its apogee between 1317 and 1321, when Thomas, earl of Lancaster—who had become lord of Pontefract after the de Lacey family lost control of the honour—temporarily took over the administration of the manor of Wakefield following a private war with the then-lord of Wakefield John de Warenne. The effect of this brief period of unity on the ground, however, cannot be fully determined, as the manorial records covering this period have failed to survive to the modern day.[133]

The two estates were closely intertwined even before this brief spell of shared lordship, however. As noted above, the post-Conquest reorganisation which created the honour of Pontefract resulted in a complex arrangement of boundaries between the two estates, as the borders of Wakefield and Pontefract snaked around one another across the West Riding, giving rise to numerous exclaves and enclaves,

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129 Edwards and Hindle, 'The transportation system of medieval England and Wales', 127.
130 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 48; Hey, *Yorkshire from AD 1000,* 74..
131 Edwards and Hindle, 'The transportation system of medieval England and Wales', 132.
132 Barber, 'Boroughs and burgages, kings and corporations', 3–5.
133 Harrison, 'From memory to written record?', 48–9.
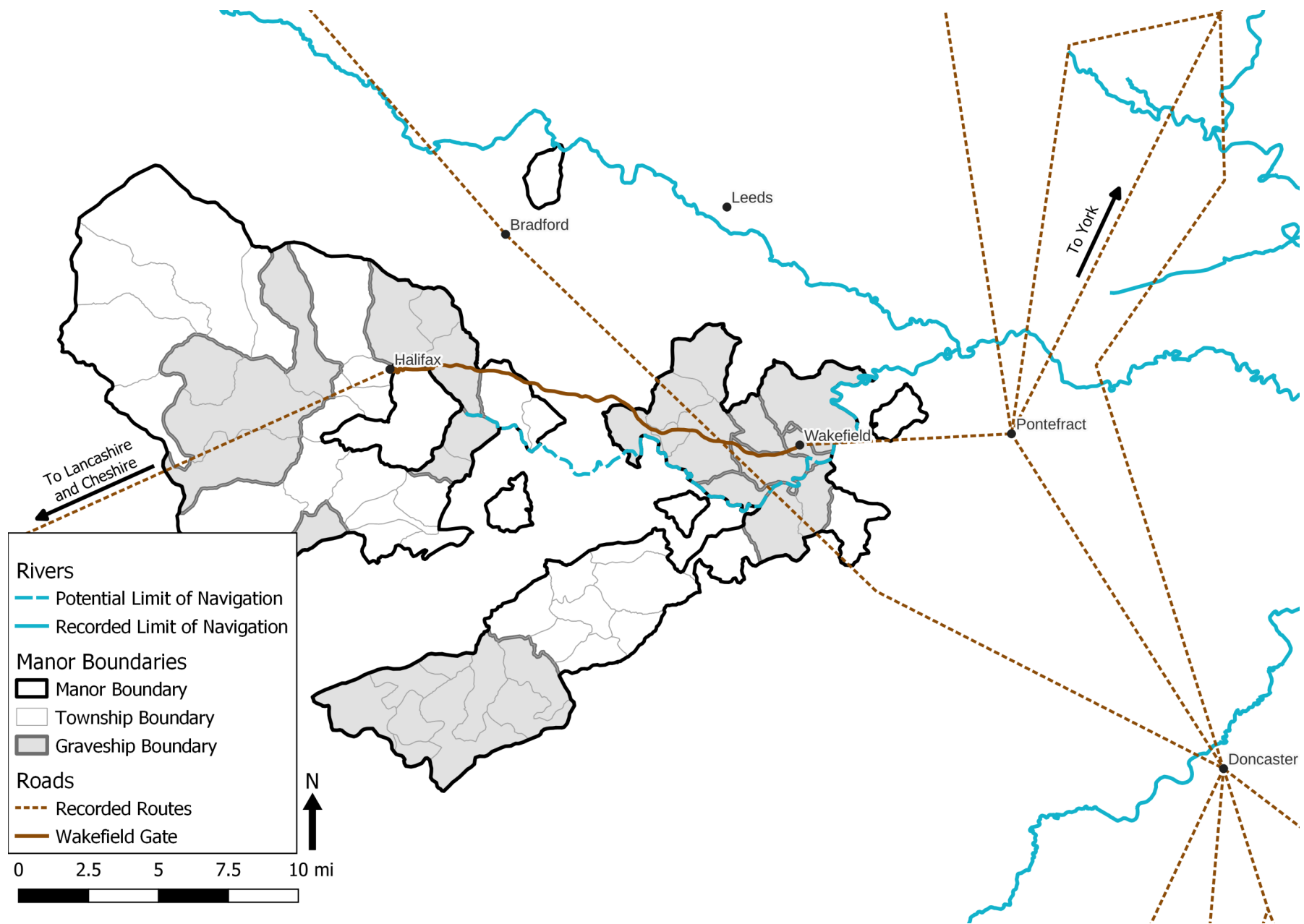
Figure 2.4: *Outward transport connections on the manor of Wakefield. Solid lines show actual routes used; dashed lines represent travel between known points, the precise routes used being unknown.*

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detached regions, and irregular boundaries. As a consequence, residents of Wakefield and Pontefract had frequent cause to travel across each other's lands, on account of manorial or parochial obligations which required them to attend courts or churches in or beyond the other estate, or because their nearest market was located across the manorial borders.

The exact routes which residents used for this back-and-forth travel have not been fully reconstructed, only the course of the Wakefield Gate being known for certain. Moorhouse has argued that the hubs of road networks within the manor of Wakefield, and the parts of the honour of Pontefract which cut across it, were centred on the settlements in the region which hosted parish churches and markets, mapped in Figures 2.6 and 3.2 respectively.[134] Both Moorhouse and McDonnell, furthermore, have proposed that the boundaries of the townships and graveships would have been the principal influences of the roads and droveways themselves, to provide settlements with easy access to all parts of the agricultural landscape, the amenities of mills and waterways, and to give cattle- and sheep-herders easy access to upland pastures during the summer months.[135] The known path of the Wakefield Gate, however, only partially conforms to these expectations, closely following the boundary-lines between Alverthorpe and Thornes and Upper and Lower Soothill, but cutting straight through Ossett and Hipperholme. Reconstructing precise routes of communication in the manor of Wakefield, beyond these broad statements, may be possible, but requires more concerted on-the-ground research than it has been possible to carry out during the course of this thesis.[136]

Effective administration of large manors like Wakefield was, of course, more difficult than for the average, much smaller manor, necessitating the use of some administrative structures that are not often observed elsewhere. In 1086 the manor of Wakefield was administrated through the system of berewicks and sokes which was common among large estates in northern England, possessing eighteen berewicks

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134 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield in the Middle Ages', 47–49.

135 Moorhouse, 48; McDonnel, 'The Role of Transhumance in Northern England', 5.

136 Moorhouse, 50, shows the location of some bridges and fords around Wakefield town, and reconstructs some of the routes leading out of Wakefield to outlying settlements, but the reconstruction is incomplete and partly speculative.

and fourteen pieces of sokeland.[137] By the fourteenth century, however, no trace of this arrangement remained in the records of manorial administration, which instead operated under a combination of subinfeudation of some townships to lesser lords and direct management of others through what is known to historians as the graveship system.[138] Subinfeudation was being deployed at Wakefield from an early date, and by the start of the fourteenth century more than half of the land in the manor of Wakefield had been leased to subsidiary landlords, leaving approximately 92 square miles of territory under the direct control of the lords of Wakefield themselves.[139] These lands were divided into smaller administrative areas—the graveships—each overseen by an elected official called a grave, with the number of graveships varying between eleven and thirteen over the course of the fourteenth century. Initially there were elven extant graveships: Alverthorpe, Hipperholme with Brighouse, Holme, Horbury, Ossett, Rastrick, Sandal, Sowerby, Stanley, Thornes, and Wakefield. Around the middle of the century Scammonden was incorporated as a twelfth graveship, the first recorded grave of Scammonden being elected in 1343.[140] Finally, thirteen graveships existed for a brief period in the 1340s and 1350s, when Sowerby was split into two graveships, the north-east section becoming the new graveship of Warley, these being re-combined into a single graveship of Sowerby by 1360.[141] The bounds of the graveships and their locations within the manor are displayed in Figure 2.5. The early division of the manor into berewicks and sokes does not appear to have had any bearing on which areas were subsequently subinfeudated and which were incorporated into graveships: some former berewicks, such as Midgley, were leased as sub-manors after the eleventh century, while other berewicks, like Sowerby, located just to the south of Midgeley in the west of the manor, became graveships.[142]

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137 Danby and Maxwell, *The Domesday Geography of Northern England*, 4–5.

138 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350,* xv–xvi; grave and graveship are northern dialect terms analogous to the southern reeve or reeveship, and like the latter are written in the manorial documents using the Latin *prepositum*.

139 For the known dates of subinfeudation of the Wakefield townships and sub-manors, see their descriptions in Michelmore, 294–579.

140 Michelmore, 492.

141 Michelmore and Edwards, 'The Records of the Manor of Wakefield', 245.

142 Michelmore, 'Township Gazetteer', 519.
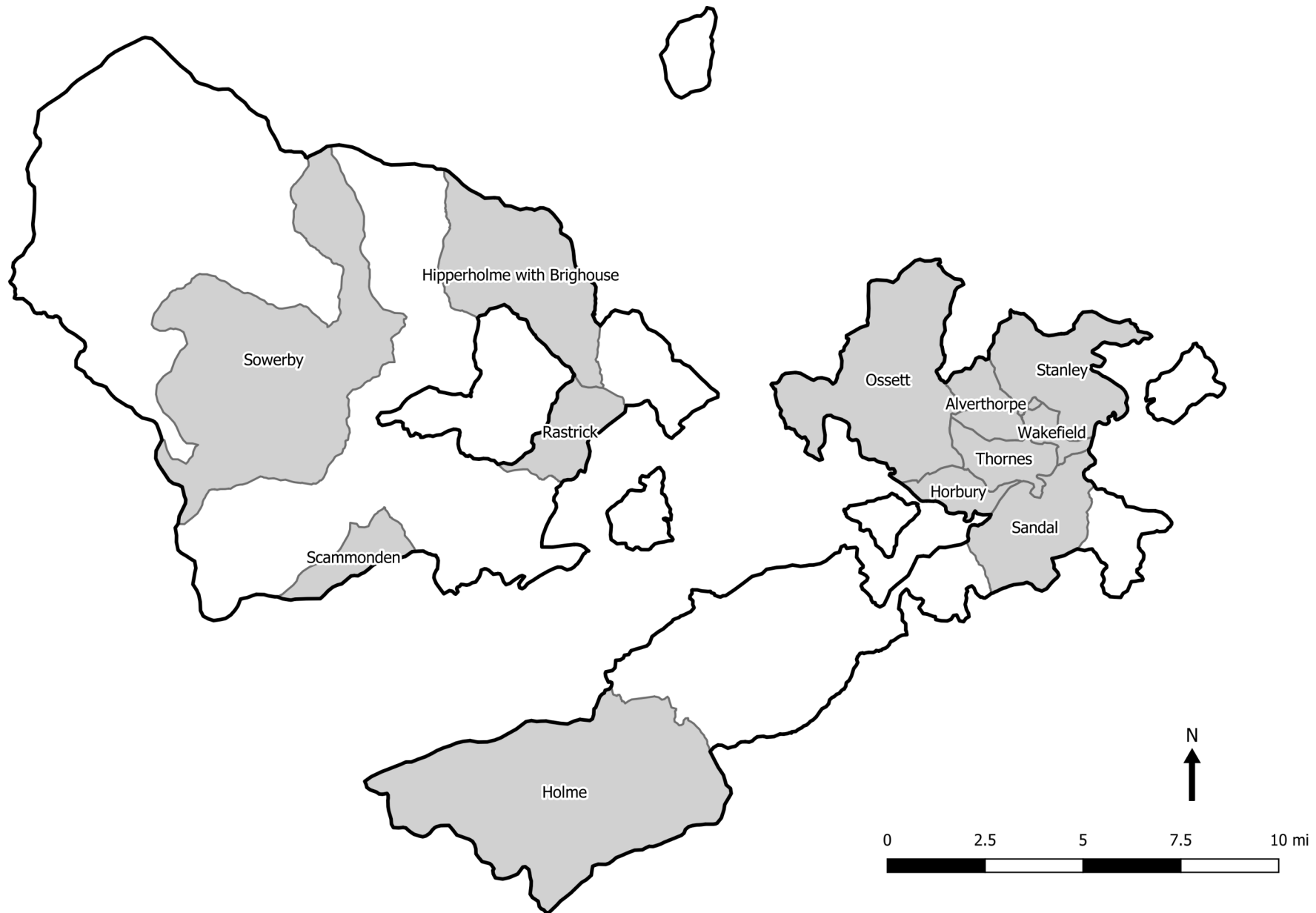
Figure 2.5: *The twelve Wakefield graveships as they existed for most of the fourteenth century. Unshaded areas were subinfeudated, and not directly managed by the manorial administration.*

For some purposes, usually related to royal perquisites such as the reporting of offences at tourn sessions or for tax assessments, the manor was further subdivided into areas referred to in the secondary literature as either vills or townships, the boundaries of which are shown in Figure 2.2. Around half of the graveships contained more than one township, while the graveships Wakefield, Horbury, and Scammonden were formed from only a single township. A more complex situation existed in the graveships of Stanley, Alverthorpe, and Thornes. These three graveships were each treated as their own township when presenting offences at the tourn, but in tax assessments are listed as a single township under the name Stanley, and a single constable was appointed to manage all three graveships.[143] There is similar disjunction between the internal divisions of the manor and the boundaries of the West Yorkshire parishes and wapentakes, owing to both the large size of the manor and the different times at which various royal, ecclesiastical, and manorial divisions became established.[144] The manor of Wakefield was split between two wapentakes, Agbrigg and Morley, and fourteen parishes, the parish boundaries often placing parts of the manor of Wakefield together with neighbouring areas of the honour of Pontefract, and splitting the graveships of Ossett and Holme into multiple parishes, as shown in Figure 2.6.[145]

As can be seen clearly in the maps presented above, these subdivisions, graveships, and townships on the manor of Wakefield were not equal or undifferentiated, but varied sometimes very dramatically in their size, the nature of their local landscape, and their distance from the manorial and commercial centre in Wakefield town. In addition to these differences, there were also a wide range of other contrasts and distinctions across the manor of Wakefield, encompassing physical and environmental factors, differences in population size and density, unequal access to resources, and significant variety in human activity, such as agricultural practice, commerce, and involvement in manorial or parochial institutions. As many of the questions of this thesis revolve around the effect of this variation in local

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143 Michelmore, 'Township Gazetteer', 521.
144 For examples, see Michelmore, 310, 348, 356, 375, and 385.
145 The parish boundaries around Wakefield are plotted in Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 49; the parish and wapentake affiliations of the Wakefield townships are detailed in Michelmore, 'Township Gazetteer'.
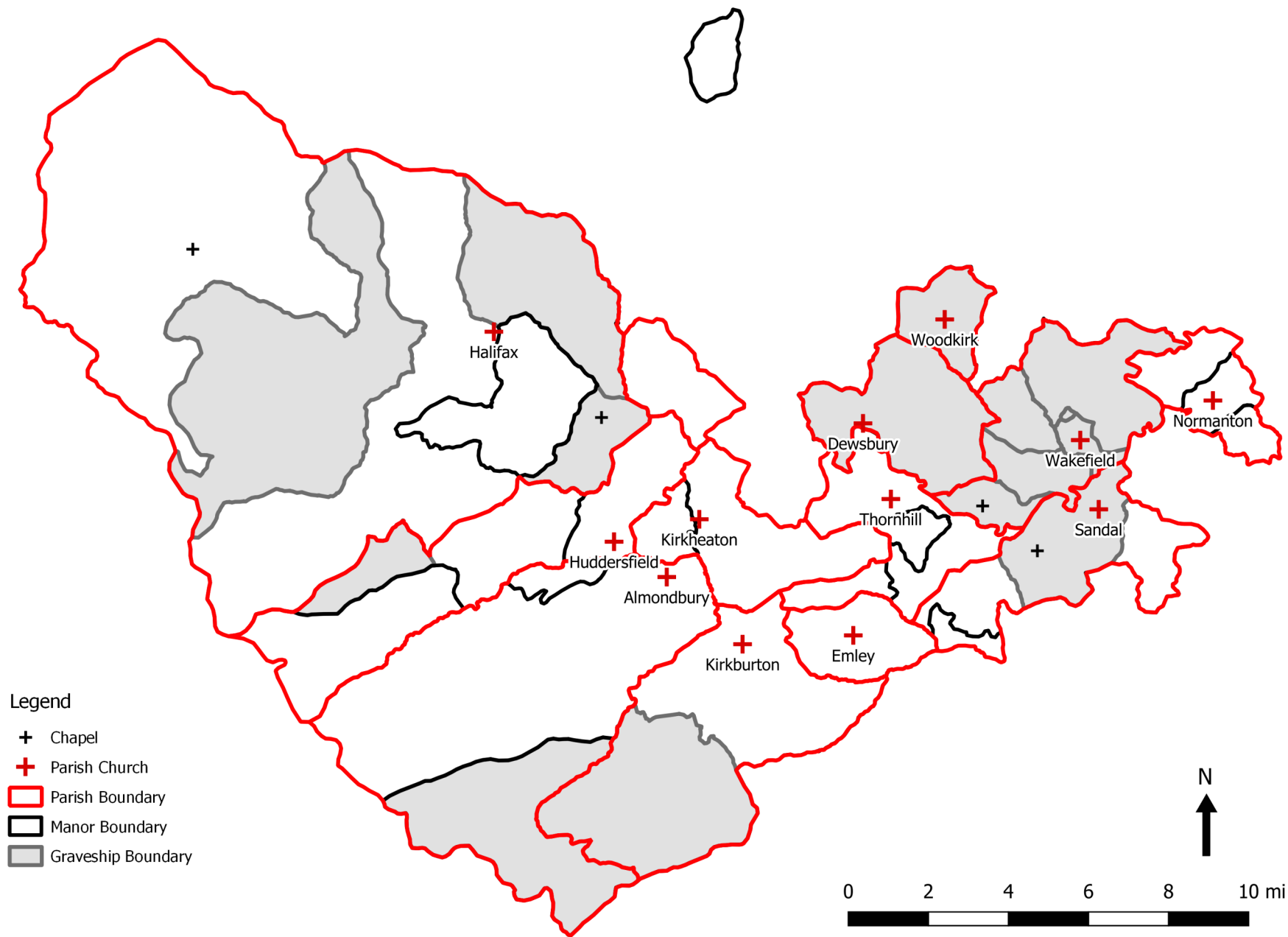
Figure 2.6: *Parish boundaries, parish churches, and chapels in the manor of Wakefield and surrounding region.*

circumstances on the actions of Wakefield residents, it is vital to describe the key points of contrast between parts of the manor in detail.

2.2: Landscape and Settlement Diversity

The greatest contrast is seen between the western regions of the manor around Halifax and Holme— among the peaks, moors, and valleys of the Pennines— and the eastern section in the lower ground surrounding Wakefield town itself. The clearest difference between these two areas of the manor is in their topography, which can be seen in Figure 2.7. The land in the west, where the boundaries of the manor reach the tops of the Pennines, sits at significantly higher altitudes than in the eastern regions, to an extreme of 582m at the local high point of Black Hill. These high moorland plateaus are contrasted by deep valleys, cut by the channels of numerous rivers and streams, which host most of the human settlement in the west. Most of the rivers themselves are funnelled towards confluences near Elland, Rastrick, and Hartshead, all joining into the Calder by the time the manor of Wakefield gives way to the central span of Pontefract lands between Wakefield's eastern and western portions. The few exceptions emerge around Cumberworth and Emley, flowing east to form the southernmost boundary of the manor before being diverted by a Pennine spur southwards towards Doncaster.

By the time the Calder re-enters the manor of Wakefield just south of Dewsbury the land has largely levelled out, hilly ground now being limited to the north- and south-west, reaching less than 250m of elevation even at their highest points. The narrow river valleys of the west have, in turn, been replaced by a flood plain formed by the Calder, which flows broader and slower through the lowlands on its path north-east, joining the Aire at Castleford not far from from the eastern edge of the manor. While the landscape in the manor's west is characterised by variation and contrasts, the east is more homogenous, with fewer sudden changes in elevation and a gentle
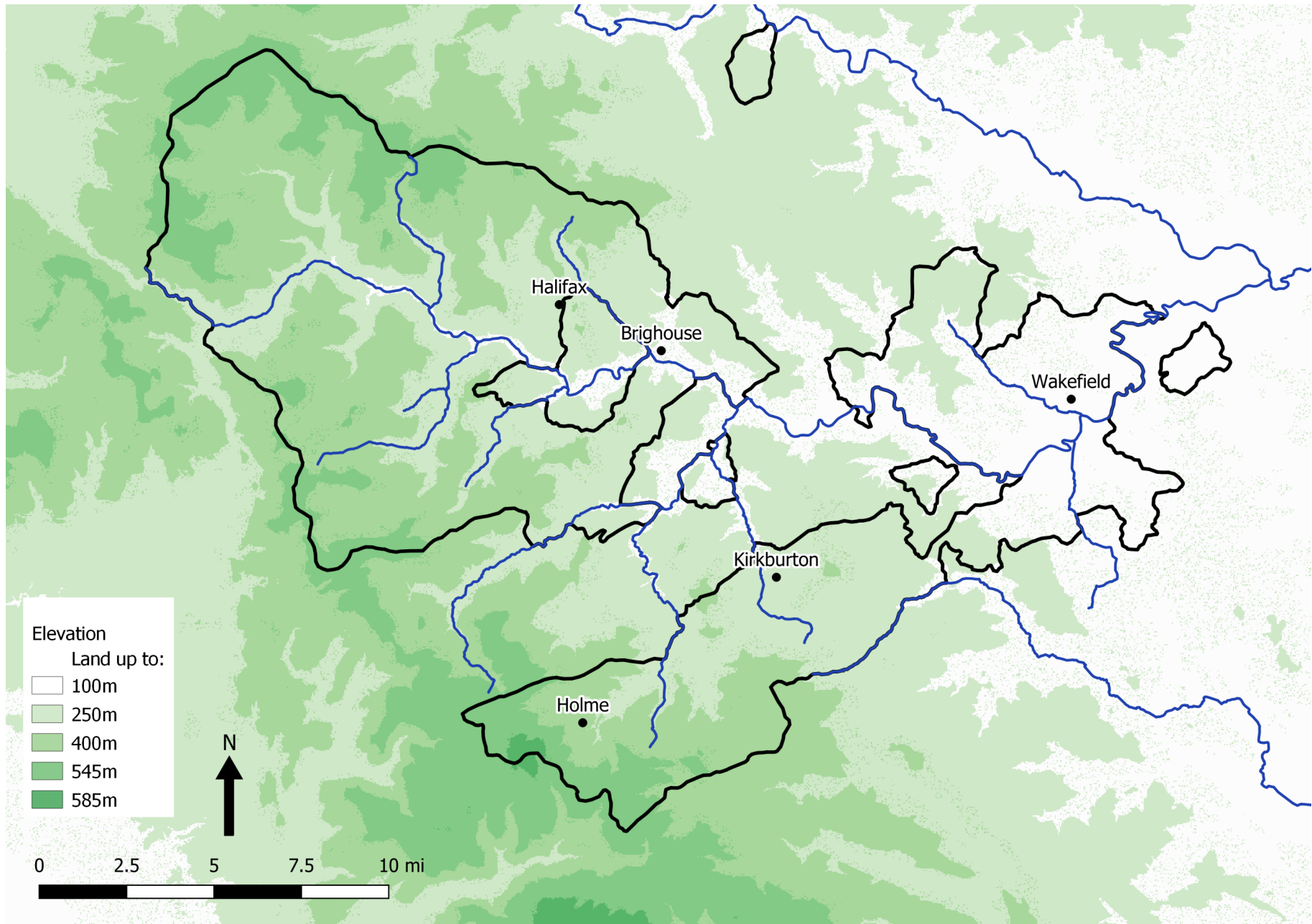
Figure 2.7: *Topography of the area around Wakefield, with the major rivers plotted.*

progression from uplands on the western extremities to lowlands in the centre and east, which in the modern day have largely been filled in by urban growth.

The differences, however, are deeper and more extensive than these highly visible topographic distinctions. Deeper in a literal sense, as the eastern and western regions of the manor are marked by divergent geology and dominant soil types, the key elements of which are shown in Figure 2.8. In the highest parts of the manor, along the tops of the Pennines in the west, soils are dominated by raw peat, rendering these areas largely unsuitable for human settlement and for most types of agriculture even today.[146] The lower regions of the Pennine uplands, however, are markedly more hospitable, the Pennines and their foothills being largely composed of Millstone Grit, a geology formed from alternating layers of shale, grit, and mudstone. This geology gives rise to stagnopodzol soils, a sandy soil type not well-suited to arable farming but which does make good grazing, and therefore of clear benefit to the largely pastoral economy which developed in the upland parts of the manor.[147] In the lower-lying areas to the east Millstone Grit is replaced by Coal Measures, consisting of strata of sandstone with some shale, which is overlain by fertile brown earth soils much more conducive to arable agriculture than the stagnopodzols in the uplands. In addition to these brown earths, the river Calder also begins to deposit rich alluvial soils as it enters the lowlands, further enhancing the suitability of the manor's eastern region to arable farming.[148]

The varying geology of the manor of Wakefield is linked to differences in the human activity on the manor, and particularly the forms of agriculture, and consequently settlement, evidenced in upland and lowland regions. In the east, where there was lower, flatter ground and more fertile soils, the agricultural regime was weighted more heavily towards arable, settlement was more heavily-nucleated, and open-field farming played a more prominent role in the local economy than it did further west.[149] The extent to which the Wakefield lowlands resembled a midlands-type agricultural regime of the kind seen further to the east or south of the manor

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146 Yarwood, 'The Environmental Background', 38.
147 Yarwood, 34, 38.
148 Yarwood, 34, 38.
149 Miller, 'Farming Practice and Technique: Yorkshire and Lancashire', 184–85.
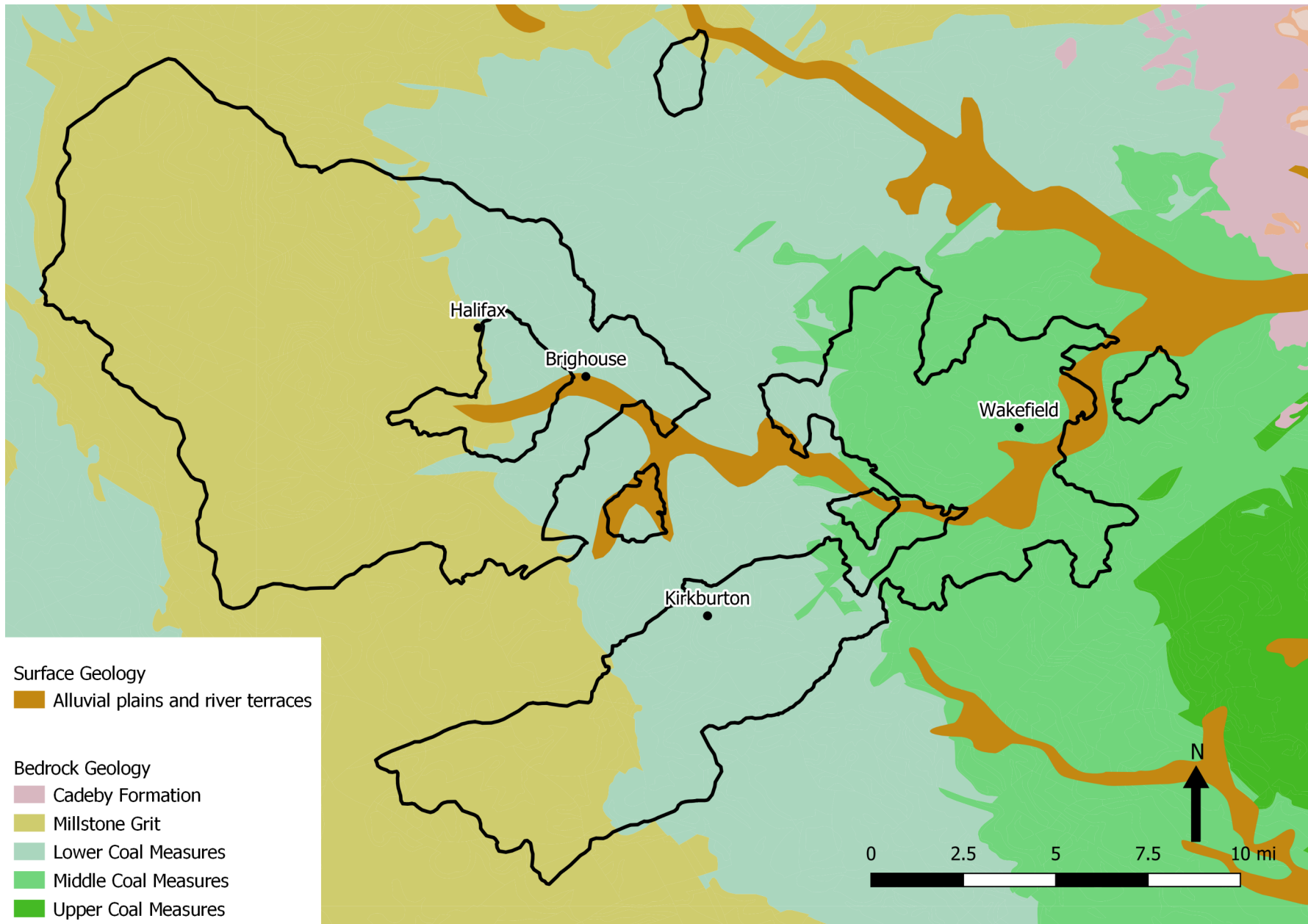
Figure 2.8: *Bedrock geology of the Wakefield region, with alluvium deposits plotted.*

Surface Geology
- Alluvial plains and river terraces

Bedrock Geology
- Cadeby Formation
- Millstone Grit
- Lower Coal Measures
- Middle Coal Measures
- Upper Coal Measures

should not be overstated, however. Open-field systems, for instance, were not as extensive in the manor of Wakefield as was the case in true midlands districts, with the majority of land held in severalty, and in the open fields that did exist tenants held their land in contiguous blocks rather than in the intermixed strips typical of midlands agricultural practice. The balance of crops grown, too, was distinct from that of the champion country, wheat being grown largely on the demesne land rather than in the fields of tenants, where hardier barley and oats were preferred.[150]

The western zone of the manor was, by contrast, a largely pastoral area, as it continues to be today. The poor soils, high altitudes, and more varied topography of the west rendered arable farming more difficult, and thus more effort was devoted to pastoralism, principally the raising of sheep and cattle, with arable farming a secondary concern.[151] Open fields were less prominent in the western districts of the manor, with enclosures consequently more common, and a greater proportion of the available land was given over to pasture and grazing.[152] Demesne pastures were particularly prominent in some parts of the west, most notably the Erringden township, a $12km^2$ area which was wholly emparked by the fourteenth century and used as summer pasture for cattle in the lord's vaccaries.[153] There was not, however, a clean division between pastoral and arable areas, and the extent to which one or the other held greater prominence varied continuously across the manor. While areas such as Sowerby graveship and the outskirts of Wakefield town were heavily weighted to livestock and arable, respectively, other locations such as the lands around Holme and Brighouse display more of a mixed farming regime, with arable and pastoral agriculture in closer balance.[154]

These distinctions in the nature of agriculture being practised by Wakefield peasants correlate with divergent patterns of settlement and population distribution across the manor. Wakefield's large size and its position beside the Pennines places the manor over the boundary of the Central Province, the area of England where

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150 Miller, 'Farming Practice and Technique: Yorkshire and Lancashire', 184–87.
151 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, xvi.
152 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 44.
153 Michelmore, 'Township Gazetteer', 367.
154 Moorhouse, 44.

nucleated settlement was the dominant form during the medieval period, according to the boundaries plotted by Wrathmell and Roberts. The position of Wakefield in relation to the Central Province is shown in Figure 2.9, most of the Holme graveship and the higher lands north and south of Sowerby lying outside the Central Province, while the rest of the manor is within it. The same map also shows Wrathmell and Roberts' dispersion scores, which quantify the average density of settlement across England. Pale dots on the map indicate areas with a lower degree of dispersed settlement, and hence more nucleated villages, and darker dots a high degree of dispersal.

The dispersal scores reveal a more gradual transition from dispersal to nucleation than the hard line of the Central Province border suggests. The western uplands as a whole exhibit a high degree of dispersal according to Wrathmell and Roberts' scoring system, though some ofthe strongest dispersal scores on the manor, reaching the highest points in Wrathmell and Roberts' scale, are located within the Central Province. Given that settlement pattern occurs along a spectrum of more- and less-dispersed forms, and that the Central Province is presented as a hard division between the extremes of this spectrum, it should be expected that discrepancies of this kind will occur, especially as Wrathmell and Roberts were working across the whole of England, and thus less able to give on-the-ground nuances full consideration in every area of ambiguous or intermediate dispersion.

In the lowland regions around Wakefield town Wrathmell and Roberts' dispersal ratings are notably lower, though the very lowest scores are not present within the manor itself, being seen only in the lands east of Wakefield's borders. Unusually, low dispersal scores are also seen in some of the highest parts of the manor, such as the extreme south-western edge. These scores, however, more likely represent the existence of a very small number of small settlements in these inhospitable higher-altitude regions—thus giving the appearance of low levels of dispersal—rather than the existence of dense, midlands-style villages on the windswept moors. The distinction in settlement pattern between a largely dispersed west and a more strongly-nucleated east is reinforced by Moorhouse's plotting of the manor's
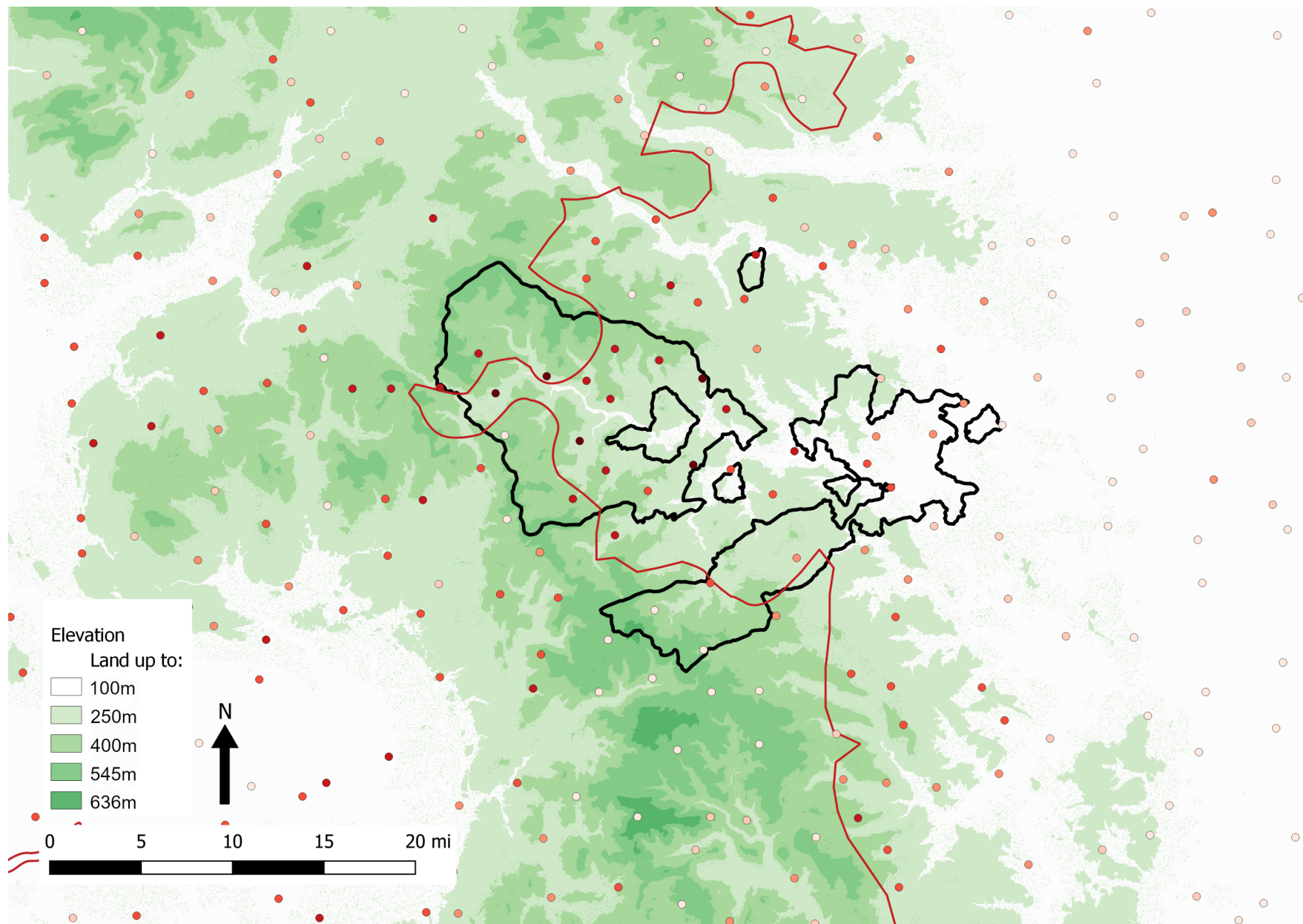
Figure 2.9: *Settlement pattern in the broad area around Wakefield: the dots indicate the degree of dispersal, with darker dots showing more widely-dispersed settlement. The red line is the border of the Central Province. For the most part, the most dispersed settlements are in the upland areas and lower lands to the west, and the most heavily-nucleated settlements in the lowlands in the east.*

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settlements seen in Figure 2.3.[155] In the west, Moorhouse identifies a greater number of settlements than in the east, scattered widely across the landscape. Although more numerous, our knowledge of the historical population of the manor, as laid out below, implies that the western settlements must have on average been much smaller, and Moorhouse's plotting shows these small villages, hamlets, and farmsteads strung out along the river courses and the sheltered valleys of the western uplands. Fewer settlements are found on the higher ground, with the south and western edges of the manor almost completely devoid of settlement, these being the areas of high altitude and peat soils, useful only for grazing at best and largely hostile to permanent settlement.

To the east, Moorhouse identifies fewer and larger settlements, with some of the eastern graveships, such as Horbury, possessing only a single central settlement in contrast to the dozens found in some graveships in the west. As noted above, these villages were placed within predominantly arable landscape, with larger field systems and, in most districts, open fields were worked on a scale that was not seen in the uplands to the west. These differences in physical landscape also impacted on the social landscape of Wakefield tenants. Concentrated into dense, nucleated settlements, the residents of the eastern lowlands operated within more tightly-knit village communities, with common property and ideals closely guarded by the wealthiest peasants, while the western residents, scattered across the landscape, had more diffuse bonds, and appear to have had weaker communal leadership and local domination, a distinction explored throughout subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Outside of these broad characterisations, detailed information on the population of the manor is limited in availability, as few of the surviving records which deal, directly or indirectly, with the habitation of Wakefield are complete for all parts of the manor, a particular problem for the pre-plague period. A survey of the manor was, for instance, drawn up in 1309, but only the records for the western graveships of Sowerby, Hipperholme, and Rastrick have survived to the present. A similar situation prevails for the lay subsidies of 1297, the records of which exist for the south-eastern

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155 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 46.

Agbrigg wapentake, but not the north-western wapentake of Morley.[156] Nevertheless, a limited amount of detail can be gleaned about the population and settlement of the manor from these and other sources, such as the relevant entries of the Domesday Book and incidental information recorded in the court rolls. As is the case with Yorkshire more broadly, the Domesday evidence suggests that Wakefield was thinly-populated in 1086 in comparison to southern and midlands counties, with a high proportion of waste land and low numbers of ploughlands and plough-teams, with some vills on the manor recording no plough-teams at all.[157]

The interpretation of the Domesday evidence, including what precisely is meant by the term 'waste' in Domesday entries and the causes of the smaller population of the northern counties, is contentious, such that precise assessments of population and its distribution in the eleventh century is difficult to achieve.[158] As noted by Miller and Hatcher, the low population of Yorkshire at the close of the eleventh century allowed for particularly rapid growth in the subsequent decades, evidenced on the manor of Wakefield through the foundation of new settlements across the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as Rishworth, Holmfirth, and Scammonden.[159] The Wakefield court rolls supply evidence for the expansion of cultivation on the manor through to the middle of the fourteenth century, when the onset of plague caused a significant contraction in manorial population, exemplified by the enclosure of a total of 96 acres of land in Scammonden by pioneering tenants in 1338.[160]

This run of expansion was brought to something of an abrupt end in 1348, when plague began to appear in Wakefield, with the devastating effect replicated on the manor as it was in the rest of England. Plague mortality was at its highest in the summer of 1348, and by the cessation of the main wave of plague in 1349 had resulted in the deaths of some thirty to fifty per cent of the manor's population.[161] For

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156 The surviving parts of the Yorkshire lay subsidy returns are published in Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy, Being a Ninth Collected in 25 Edward I (1297)*.

157 See Danby and Maxwell, *The Domesday Geography of Northern England*, 28–32, 59–65 for Domesday evidence; Miller and Hatcher, *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348*, 32, for the situation in Yorkshire compared to the rest of England.

158 Hey, *Yorkshire from AD 1000*, 26–28.

159 Miller and Hatcher, 32–33; Danby and Maxwell, 15.

160 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 202-3

161 Jewell*, Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350,* xviii-xix.

this later period, with its much-reduced manorial population, a more precise knowledge of the manorial population and its distribution can be derived from the poll tax records of 1377 and 1379, which record data from all parts of the manor.[162] The poll tax records benefit from a completeness of coverage that earlier documentary sources lack, and though the overall size of the manorial population was much smaller in the late fourteenth century than it was just a few decades earlier, the differences in settlement pattern which underlie the distribution of the human population of the manor are apparent from well before the fourteenth century, and for this reason the poll tax returns can still provide an approximate guide to the relative distribution of population across the manor throughout the fourteenth century.

The returns of the tax suggest that the manorial population was weighted to the east, where there was also markedly higher population density than is recorded further west. Figure 2.10 shows the manor of Wakefield divided into three large areas, on the basis of the 1377 poll tax records. According to the tax returns the most populous area of the manor was in the east, in the region around and including Wakefield town, where 1,302 taxpayers were resident in 1377. The southern region around Holme recorded only 574 taxpayers, while the western section of the manor surrounding Halifax had 1,010. This distribution placed slightly less than half of the manorial population in an area which constituted approximately one-fifth of the total land area of the manor, and consequently a much greater density of taxpayers per square kilometre is seen in the east. Even excluding the Wakefield township, which recorded nearly 500 taxpayers in the 1377 returns, the eastern townships average 10 taxpayers per square kilometre, while the southern region records 6.2 and the west only 5.2 taxpayers per square kilometre.[163]

More extreme differences can be seen when examining the tax returns on the basis of the assessments from individual townships. Sowerby and Holme, in the uplands near the edge of the manor, record only 1.9 and 3.1 taxpayers per square kilometre, respectively, in 1377. The eastern townships, even outside of Wakefield, are in some places up to six times more densely populated, such as the 7.4 taxpayers per

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162 Published in Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381: Part 3, Wiltshire to Yorkshire*.
163 Fenwick, 276–79.

Average Taxpayers per Square Kilometre

- 5.2
- 6.6
- 10

1,010 Taxpayers

1,302 Taxpayers

574 Taxpayers

0   5   10 mi

N
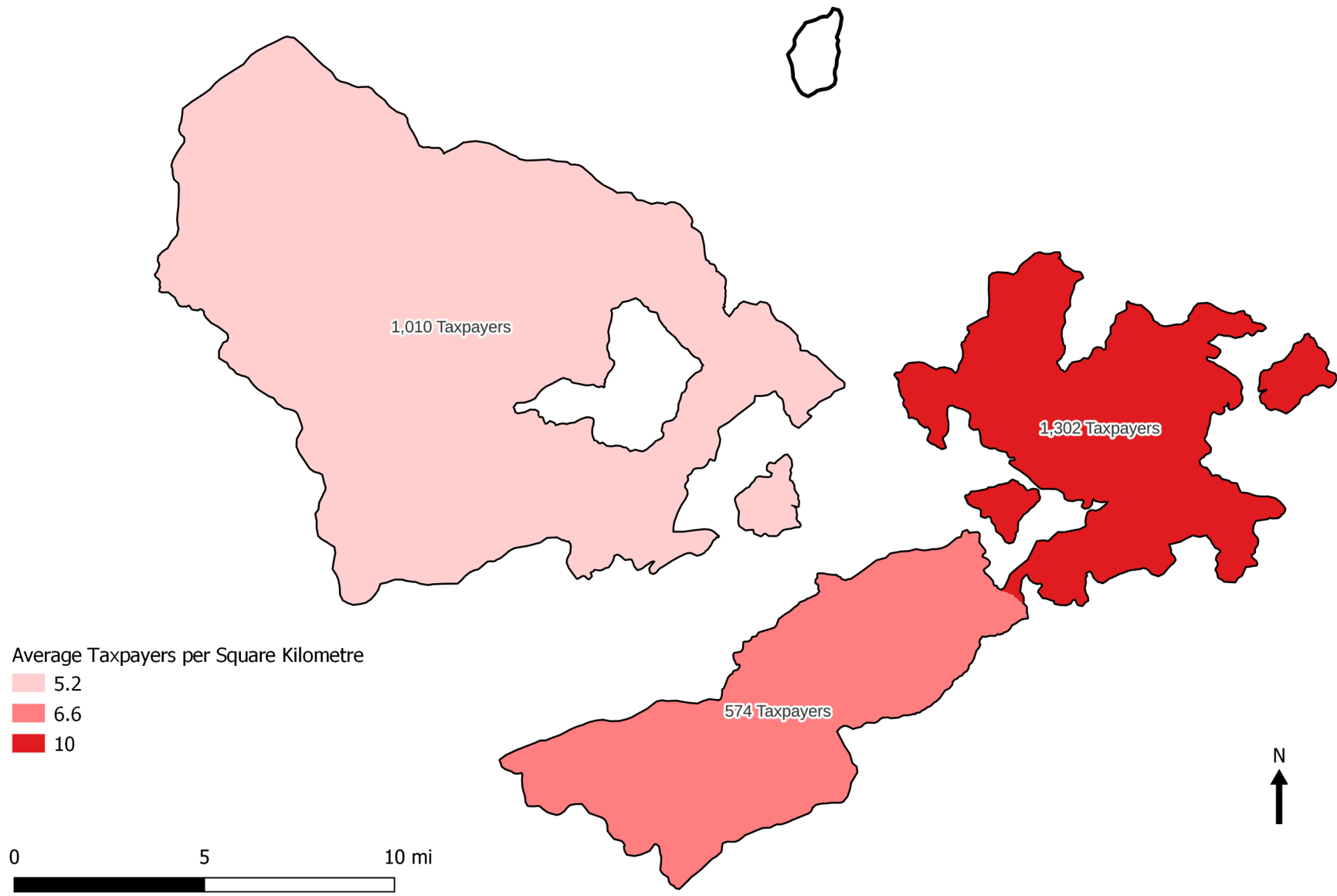
Figure 2.10: *Taxpayers in the 1377 poll tax returns. Taxpayers are concentrated in the eastern area around Wakefield town.*

square kilometre recorded in Sandal, or the 12.7 per square kilometre in Horbury. Other parts of the manor lie between these more extreme figures: Rastrick and Hipperholme, on the edge of the western bock of manorial territory, record 5.1 and 5.7 taxpayers per square kilometre, while Ossett, lying on the western end of the eastern block, has a similar density of 5.13 taxpayers per square kilometre. In this way recorded population density is similar to the variation of agricultural practice on the manor, with extremes of high and low density in the immediate surroundings of Wakefield town and the higher reaches of the western uplands, and a spectrum of intermediate values in the lands in between.

While this suite of inter-connected geographical, agricultural, and settlement variations formed the most substantial set of differences between parts of the manor of Wakefield, there was also a potentially significant difference in the extent of seigneurial presence across the manor. Seigneurial structures and landscape features such as enclosed parks, which are mapped in Figure 2.11, were concentrated largely in the east of the manor, while these physical markers of seigneurial presence and authority were rare in the west. While Wakefield town hosted the moot hall, where meetings of the manor court took place and hence where tenants would have most frequently encountered direct manorial authority, the most prominent and imposing seigneurial structure on the manor lay south of Wakefield, on the opposite bank of the river Calder. This was Sandal Castle, located in the village of the same name, and was not only the largest seigneurial building on the manor but probably also one of the most substantial secular buildings in the wider region. The castle was attached to a 30-acre deer park, and two more of the lord's parks were also located in the eastern region of the manor, abutting the borders of the manor in the regions north of Wakefield town.[164]

In the west, by contrast, these sorts of large seigneurial structures, expansive enclosed lands, and central meeting places were present only sparingly. Where the eastern graveships hosted three of the lord's parks, for instance, in the west there was only one park, which encompassed the entirety of the township of Erringden, in the

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164 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the
    Middle Ages', 55.
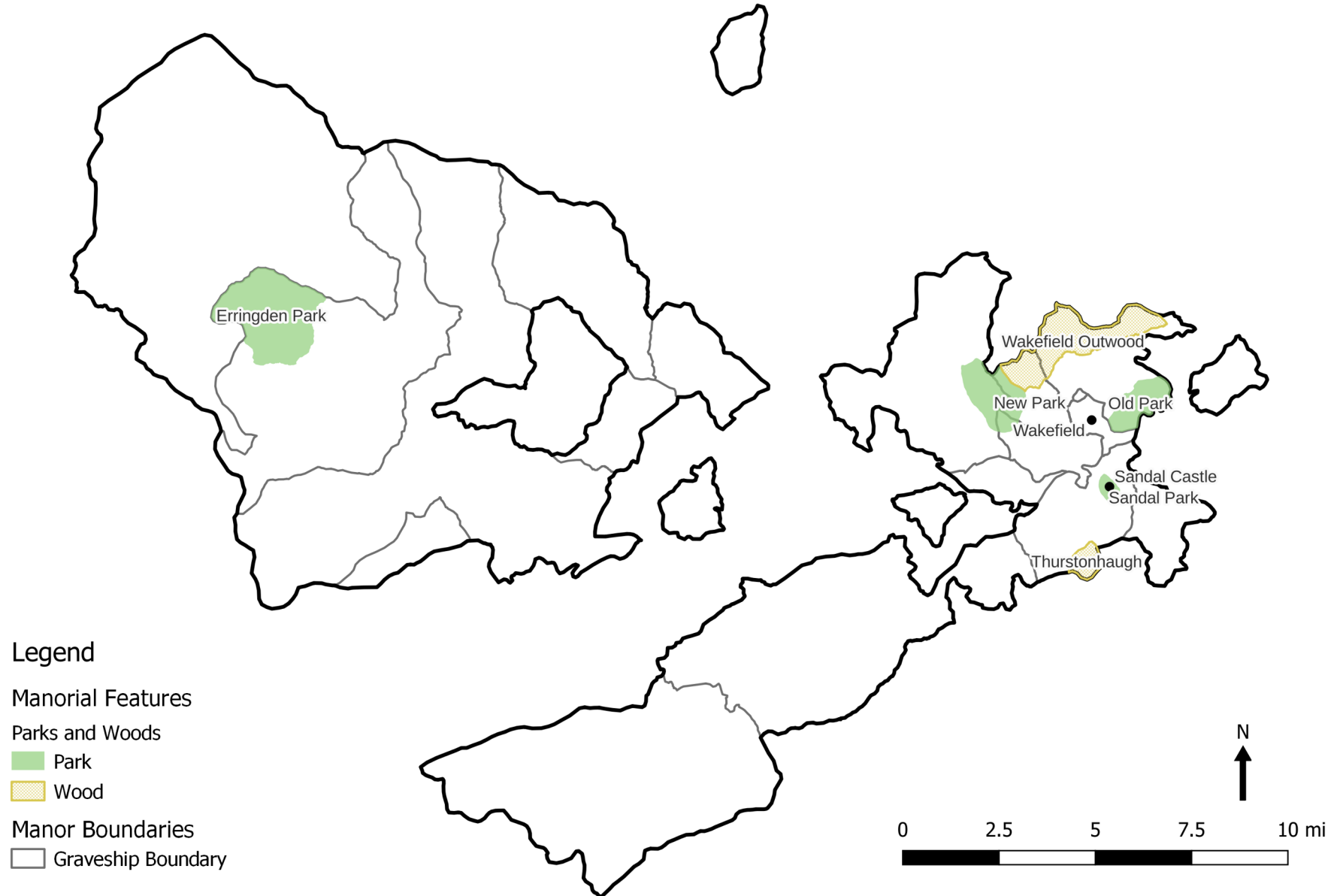
Figure 2.11: *Parks and known woods in the manor of Wakefield.*

Sowerby graveship.[165] Seigneurial buildings of equal prominence to Sandal castle or the Wakefield moot hall were also absent. Seigneurial presence, however, could still be felt in mills, which were more numerous in the west than the east, and through the lord's vaccaries, three of which were located in Sowerby, oversight of both mills and cattle herds being leased out to wealthier tenants from the local area.[166]

2.3: Administration and the Court

This discussion of seigneurial presence on the manor ties neatly into the next subject of interest, the management of Wakefield by the lord's officers and institutions. Seigneurial control over the Wakefield tenants was exerted primarily through the manor court, which has also supplied historians with the bulk of surviving documentation related to the manor. Sessions of the manor court were convened every three weeks, and for most of the year met at the moot hall in Wakefield town. These principal sessions of the court are referred to in some of the secondary literature on Wakefield as the 'court baron', though in the court rolls themselves they are simply labelled the *curia* with no other qualification save for the Michaelmas session which opens each court roll and is sometimes designated a *curia magna*. In addition to these courts the lord of Wakefield also held the right to a tourn, which fulfilled a similar role as the leet courts of more southerly regions in enforcing regulations such as the assizes of bread and ale, drawing of blood, or the use and misuse of the hue and cry, which were originally responsibilities of royal administration.[167]

While the regular courts were nearly always held in Wakefield, the tourn sessions were itinerant, holding sessions at four different locations across the manor: one of these sessions was held in the moot hall in Wakefield, and the others at Halifax,

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165 Michelmore, 'Township Gazetteer', 367.
166 For the distribution of mills see Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 51; the terms of leases on vaccaries are recorded in 'Manor of Wakefield and graveships of Rastrick, Hipperholme and Sowerby: transcript of survey', membranes 24-5.
167 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 178–84 describes the responsibilities of leet courts, and see page 230 of the same volume for comparison of a leet court to a tourn.

Kirkburton, and one of either Brighouse or Rastrick, which faced each other on opposite banks of the river Calder. The tourn held a much wider jurisdiction than the court baron, its authority extending beyond the graveships to encompass the whole of the manor, including those areas that had been subinfeudated and whose lessees held their own manor courts; Figure 2.12 shows the location of each tourn session and the area of the manor which reported to it. During each year in the fourteenth century eight sessions of the tourn were held, four in the autumn and four in the spring, one session being held at the four tourn locations in each of those seasons.

During the 1320s the operations of the court were further complicated by a division of the tourn into two sessions, one continuing to be labelled as a tourn and the other as a halmote. The reasons for this division are not apparent in the court rolls and it does not appear to have resulted in much difference beyond record-keeping, as tourns and halmotes took place on the same days, in the same locations, and with the same personnel, with no new types of business appearing in the records during this time and the division in any case being short-lived.

While the Wakefield court met more frequently than those in many smaller manors, and its tourn displays some idiosyncratic organisational features, in most respects the procedures of the court were typical of those used by English manor courts. Judgement of cases in the fourteenth century, for instance, was achieved either by wager of law or an inquiry by six or twelve jurors, both common procedures among other manor courts.[168] Litigants were also, in some instances, granted license by the court to agree their own resolution, again a common feature of manor courts.[169] These licences, however, were deployed less often in Wakefield than other forms of judgement, perhaps because attempts at a compromise had already failed by the time disputes were brought to the court.

Penalties issued by the court were almost entirely financial, in the form of fines, monetary damages, or both. Failure to pay fines, or to otherwise obey orders of the court, was usually met with a distraint or confiscation of goods. Targets of distraints

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168 Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 203-06, 215-16.
169 Clanchy, 'Law and Love in the Middle Ages', 58–60.
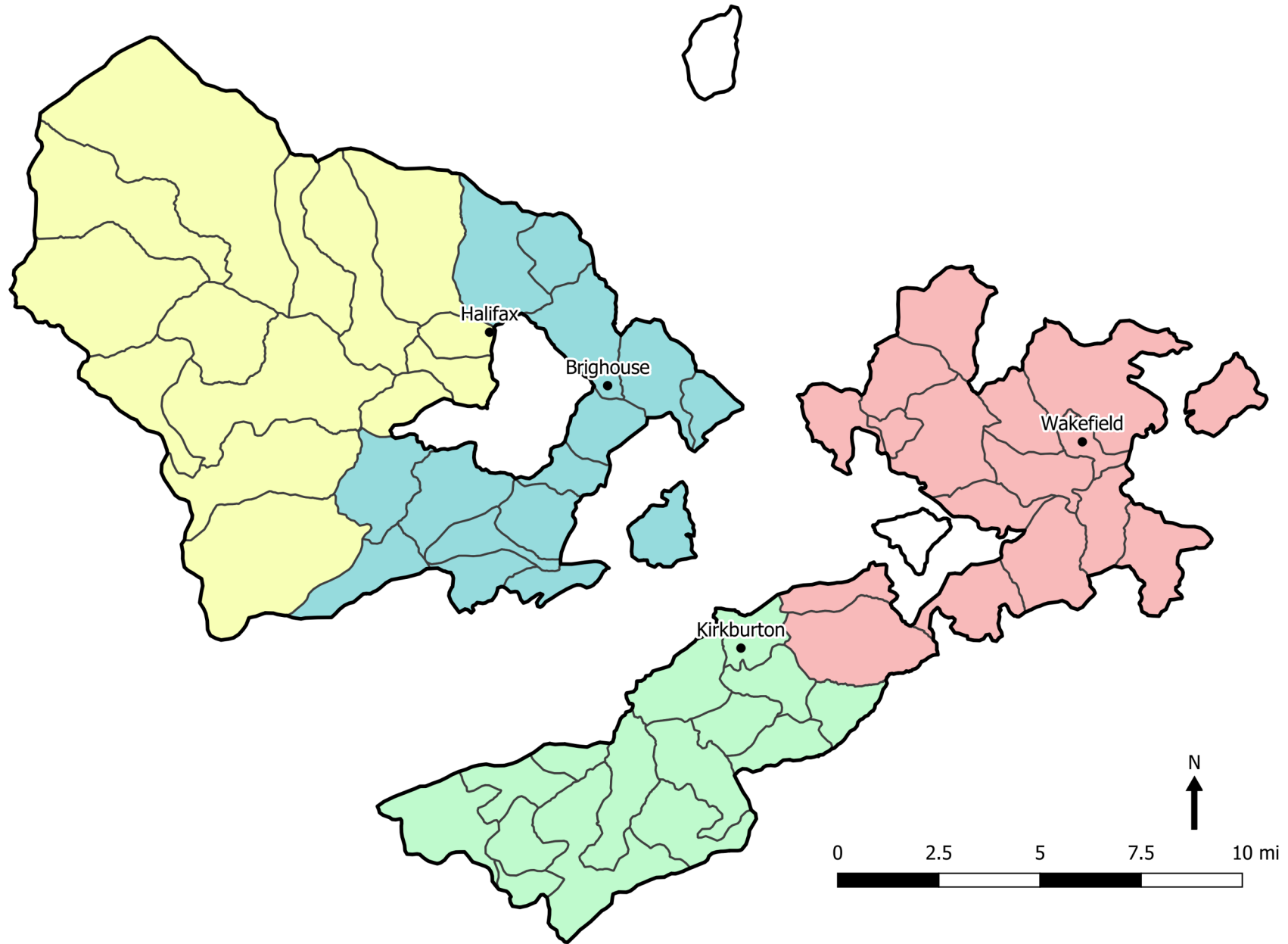
Figure 2.12: *Sites where tourn sessions were held, with their jurisdictions shaded.*

were usually animals, such as horses or cows, or valuable household items, principally pots, dishes, and other vessels, though the court could make more unusual distraints when other chattels could not be found, such as when John son of Margery de Holne was distrained by the corn still growing in his fields on the 6th August 1313.[170] In some circumstances the manor court could issue more severe punishments. Wakefield was, for example, unusual in holding the right to execute thieves who were caught red-handed on the manor, though this occurs in only a handful of cases over the fourteenth century.[171] Imprisonment was also used as a punishment for some offences, such as when jurors were found to have issued a wrongful verdict, the ability of litigants to demand a re-evaluation of jury judgements also being an area of Wakefield's procedure which was uncommon among other manors.[172]

The Wakefield manor court rolls are also typical in the perfunctory nature of the records of individual cases, which generally lack substantial details of the events and disputes they concern. These recording practices cause a variety of problems with interpretation of the court rolls, which are much-discussed in the context of individual cases throughout this thesis. One particularly common omission from the court rolls, and which therefore merits some discussion here, is the date at which the incidents reported to the court actually took place. In the absence of this detail, disputes between tenants are dated in this thesis on the basis of the first session in which they are brought to the manor court, rather than the point at which the dispute began. Where a date is given in the court rolls, this is usually for either accusations of physical violence, or when the event under scrutiny had taken place many years previously. The latter such cases can be up to a decade old or more at the time they are brought to the court, and are often successfully prosecuted despite the great distance from the events they concern. Most of these cases, however, concern the rights and activities of the lord or his agents, and it may be the case that the involvement of the lord was an important factor in allowing these old cases to be

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170 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 152.
171 One such case is recorded in Lister, 136. No other examples were encountered in the rolls studied for this thesis.
172 Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 1992, 217.

heard, in a way that would have been more difficult for private disputes between tenants. Dates are also provided when an alleged offence had been occurring continuously over a long period of time, in most cases this being a dispute over the ownership or use of land or some other asset. The implication in these disputes, however, is that the particular transgression had been continuing down to the date of the court where they were presented, and as such had less of a historical nature.

Cases for which dates are provided are, then, of a somewhat exceptional nature, involving incidents that had taken place years prior to the court session where they were recorded, which had the involvement of the lord as a distinctive feature, or which centred on violent assaults and therefore required a firm date in the event that the case was transferred to a higher court. That dates were primarily used in this fashion suggests that, in most cases, the incidents being brought before the court had occurred within weeks or months of the session where they were first presented, close enough that they were not felt to merit comment in the court rolls. In most cases it is also probable that use of the manor court was not the first resort for litigants, who are instead likely to have sought extra-curial means of solving their disputes and reaching agreements, such that the appearance of cases in the court rolls represents an intermediate stage in a longer process of arbitration and negotiation rather then the beginning of it. However, the frequency of meetings of the Wakefield court compared to those on smaller manors, which might have only held court sessions twice a year,[173] for example, may have reduced the pressure on tenants to seek extra-curial solutions, as it was never necessary to wait especially long before an incident could be presented to the court. Given that the court records by their nature only record incidents which had reached the court, these arguments can never be conclusively proven one way or the other. Nevertheless, I would argue that the greater accessibility of the Wakefield manor court, in the sense that sessions were held at greater frequency, made it more likely that tenants would turn to the court sooner in the course of disputes, and that subsequently litigation in the Wakefield court both occurred at a lesser chronological remove and represented a

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173 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 227.

greater proportion of overall conflicts than is the case on small manors with less frequent court meetings.

The operation of the court appears to have been consistent throughout the fourteenth century, this stability in administration being maintained despite the turbulence which occurred in the ownership of the manor of Wakefield from the middle of the fourteenth century. For the first half of the century the manor was held by the Warenne earls of Surrey, who had been lords of Wakefield since shortly after the Norman Conquest and, possessing extensive estates across England, were largely absent from their lands in Wakefield. Following the death of the final earl in 1347 the tenurial situation became more complicated, as the earl had no legitimate children to inherit his lands but was survived by his estranged wife, Joan de Bar. The manor of Wakefield at this point reverted to the crown, with Joan retaining dower rights, and was settled on Edward III's fifth son Edmund Langley, though as Edmund was then a minor the lordship of Wakefield was exercised by his mother, Philippa of Hainault. Joan relinquished her dower rights in the manor to the crown in 1359, in return for an annuity of £120, and Edmund took personal control of the manor following Joan's death in 1361, Wakefield remaining a part of Edmund's estate until the end of the fourteenth century.[174]

The period of split lordship between 1347 and 1359 had only a minor effect on the administration of the manor, which continued to be managed by a single steward and the same set of officers as had been the case before 1347. The operation of the manor courts, however, was modified slightly, as authority over the graveships, and rights to their revenues, was split between Joan and Philippa. Thus, two sets of courts are held during the years of split lordship, one court held by the Countess Joan holding authority over the graveships of Hipperholme, Holme, Horbury, Rastrick, Sandal, Scammonden, Sowerby, and Warley, while a court of Queen Philippa governed Alverthorpe, Ossett, Stanley, and Thornes. The procedures of the manor court were otherwise unaffected, and the activities of both Joan and Philippa's courts

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174 Walker, *Wakefield: Its History and People, 1:*60–61, 113.

were recorded on the same rolls. From 1359 the court reverts to the mode of operation which was present in the first half of the fourteenth century.[175]

The lords of the manor of Wakefield were also the lords of the town of Wakefield. The town records, however, are poorly-preserved, and documentary sources relating to the borough only survive in substantial numbers from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Consequently little is known of the town's government during the fourteenth century, or how the activities of the borough and its citizens related to those of the manor and its peasants.[176] Some references are made to the borough court and the activities of townspeople in the manor court rolls, and a borough bailiff was present during sessions of the manor court in order to identify cases which involved citizens of the town and remove them to borough court. From this we can be sure that residents of the town and the surrounding countryside were able to build relationships and could be involved in one another's business, though recorded incidents of cases in the manor court being transferred to the borough are rarely recorded outside of the early half of the century.[177] The borough records are not the only element of Wakefield's historical record that are poorly-preserved, as survival of manorial documents other than the court rolls is limited and inconsistent for the fourteenth century. There are, for instance, only a single set of surviving fourteenth-century account rolls, covering the years 1389 to 1391, and though there are three surviving surveys, all dated to 1309, none covers the whole of the manor, two surveying only single graveships, Sandal and Hipperholme, while the most extensive of the surveys concerns only Sowerby, Rastrick, and Hipperholme.[178]

The Wakefield court rolls, however, are some of the best-preserved manor court records in the country, especially when compared to the records of other secular estates. The earliest rolls on the sequence come from 1274, but survival of the rolls is sporadic and much-interrupted until 1322, after which a near-complete sequence of rolls is preserved all the way up to the demise of copyhold tenure and the abolition of the manor court in 1925.[179] Prior to coming into the possession of the Yorkshire

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175 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350, ix-x.*
176 Michelmore and Edwards, 'The Records of the Manor of Wakefield', 548.
177 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 53.
178 'Manor of Wakefield and graveships of Rastrick, Hipperholme and Sowerby: transcript of survey'.
179 Michelmore and Edwards, 246.

Archaeological Society the rolls were held by the solicitor who operated the manor court, and have suffered to varying degrees from sub-optimal storage conditions prior to their transfer to the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds.[180] Although much of the court rolls are still well-preserved and easily legible, some rolls suffer extensively from water damage and mould, decay and darkening of the parchment, and faded ink, rendering many court entries or the details of some cases difficult or impossible to reconstruct. The extent of damage can vary from membrane to membrane even within the same roll: figures 2.13 and 2.14 show contrasting membranes of the 1379 rolls, representing the extremes of good and poor preservation of the court rolls.

2.4: Wakefield in Current Scholarship

The Wakefield manor court rolls have been subject to two attempts to produce edited translations. The first began in the late nineteenth century, and set out to translate and edit the court rolls in chronological order, with the results published as part of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series.[181] A renewed effort by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society to edit the court rolls began in 1977, this second initiative eschewing the strict chronological progression of the earlier editions in favour of selecting tranches of court rolls from across the full span of the manor court's documentary record, favouring those the editors considered to be of particular interest.[182] Thus the first volume of this new series presented the court rolls of 1639 to 1640, nearly three hundred years later than the last point reached by the earlier editors, with the second returning to the fourteenth century and the plague years of 1348 to 1350.[183] The remaining volumes, of which twenty-one are either published or in preparation, move around in time according to the preferences of individual editors,

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180 Barber, 'The YAS and the Wakefield Manor Court Rolls, 1898-2014', 43.
181 Barber, 43.
182 Barber, 43–44.
183 Fraser and Emsley, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1639 to September 1640;* Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*
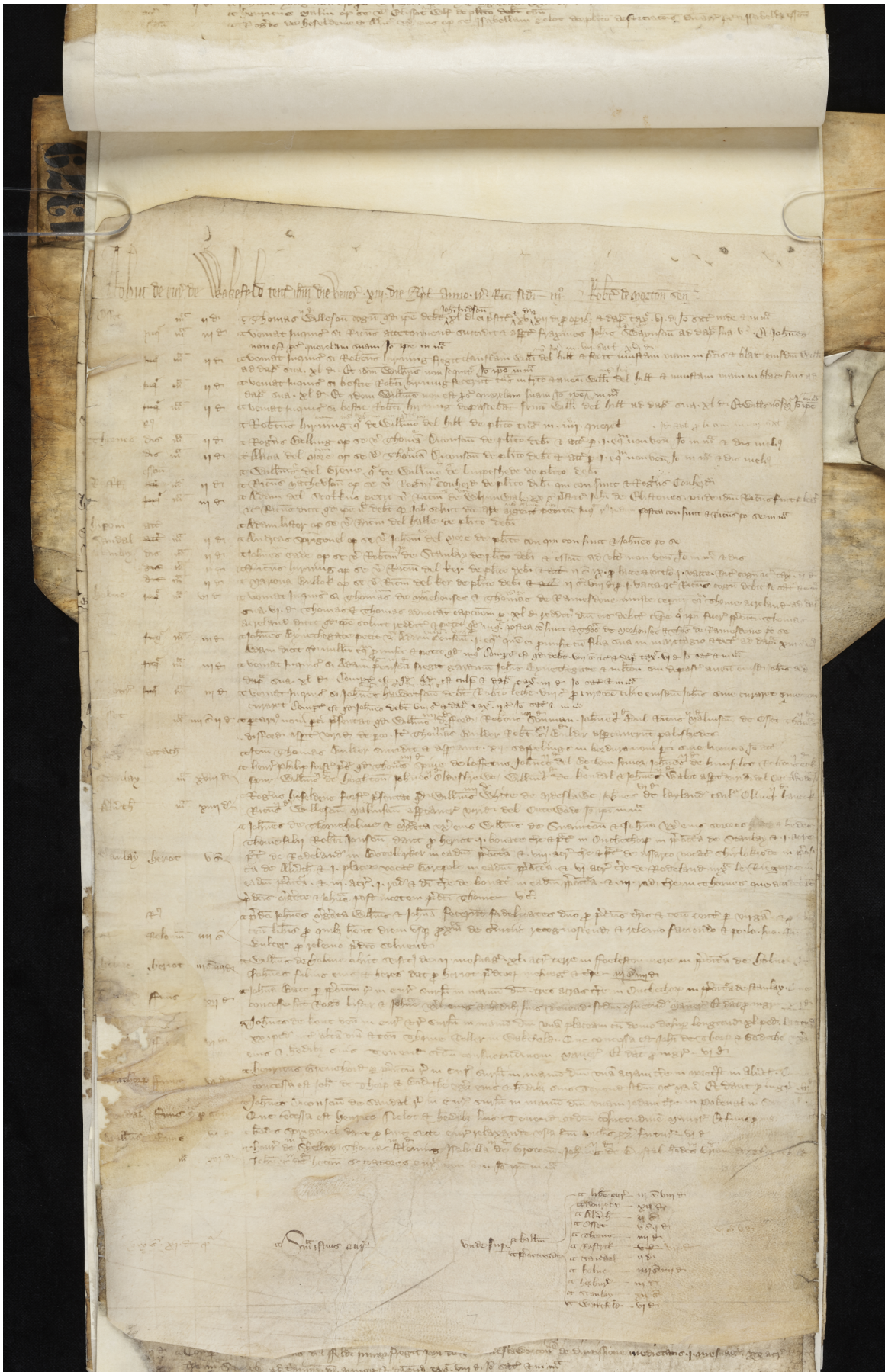
Figure 2.13: Membrane 7 recto of the 1379-80 court roll. This is a well-preserved example, showing the heading; marginal notes to indicate the origin of cases and value of amercements, fees, and so on; and a sum of income form the court session at the bottom of the membrane.
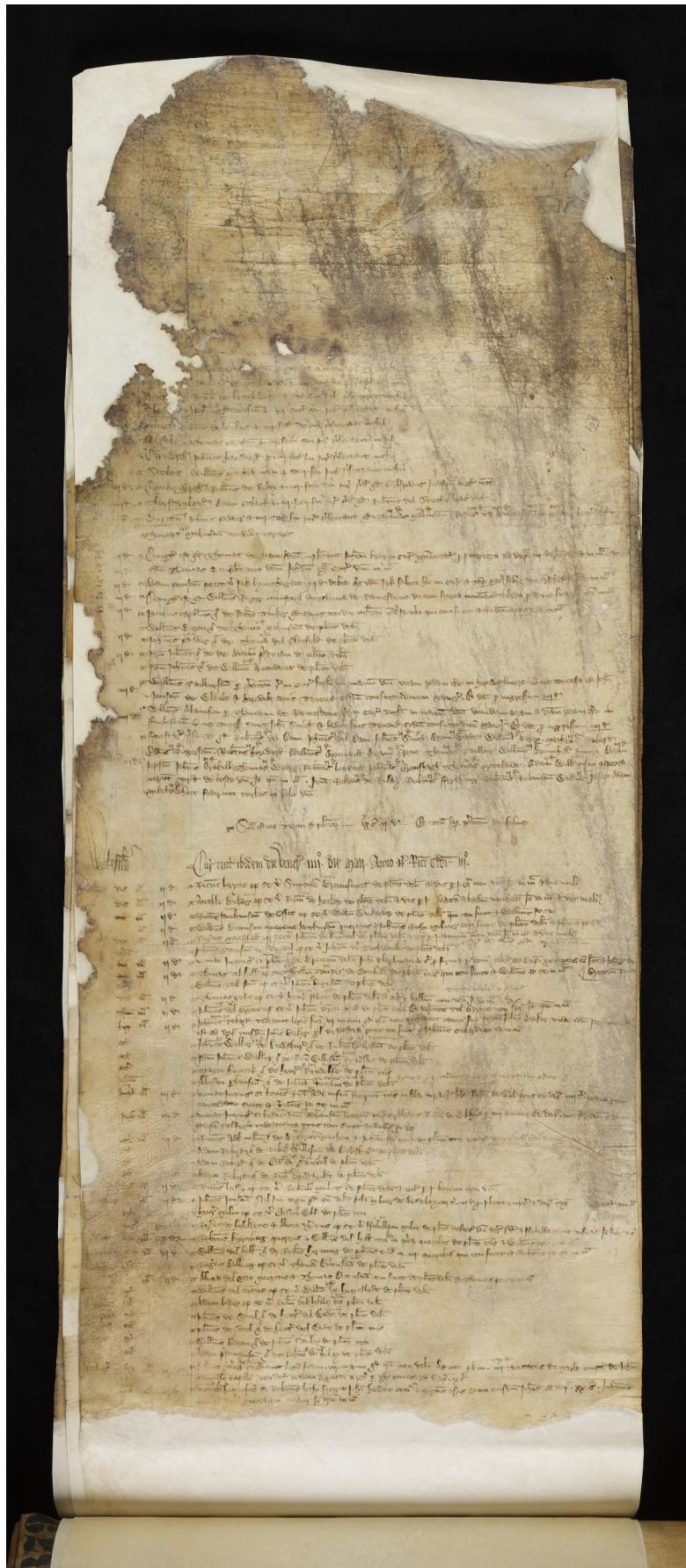
Figure 2.14: *Membrane 8 verso of the 1379-80 court roll. This membrane has suffered extensive damage: the edges are ragged, destroying some writing around the margins, and the top of the membrane is heavily decayed, leaving many lines of text illegible.*

though a clear majority of the current volumes concern years between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries.[184]

Despite the relative richness of the documentary record for Wakefield and the availability of large parts of the court rolls in translation, Wakefield has thus far been the subject of few serious, long-form monograph studies. This is the case despite the fact that Wakefield is generally well-known among manorial scholars, and evidence from Wakefield often features in broad studies and overviews of institutional development and economic and procedural change in medieval England. Comparative studies of the procedures of manor courts and the development of local administration, for instance, frequently refer to the published Wakefield court rolls to provide evidence or illustrate arguments.[185] As a prominent and relatively well-evidenced Yorkshire manor, furthermore, Wakefield also frequently appears in regional studies of Yorkshire and northern England more broadly.[186] However, the focus of such scholarship—regional developments or changes occurring at the national scale—necessarily prevents them from carrying out detailed analysis of the idiosyncrasies of the manor of Wakefield and the effects of the manor's unique aspects on its residents and on the operation of its governing institutions, as this thesis aims to do. This situation occurs despite the fact that many authors who draw on the Wakefield data do so with an acknowledgement of its unusual features, principally its unusually large size and distinctive administrative arrangements, these authors being prevented by the scope of their studies from working through the implications of such differences in full.[187]

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184 Brian Barber, personal communication, 1st October 2020

185 The Wakefield records are used in this way in, for instance, Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts'; Bonfield, 'What Did English Villagers Mean by "Customary Law"?'; Hyams, 'The Origins of a Peasant Land Market in England'; Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy ;* and extracts from the edited court rolls are used in Bailey*, The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500.*

186 See references to Wakefield in, for instance, Faull and Moorhouse, *West Yorkshire: An Archaeological Survey to A.D.* 1500; Danby and Maxwell, *The Domesday Geography of Northern England*; and Hey, *Yorkshire From AD 1000*, among others.

187 For examples, see Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500,* 7, where the size of the manor of Wakefield is noted; Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 217–8, which highlights unusual legal processes found at Wakefield; and Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy*, 285–6, again noting the exceptional size of the manor, this time in relation to unusually high rates of avoidance of suit of mill there.

Unfortunately, this awareness among scholars of the richness of the Wakefield records and the unusual nature of the manor has not resulted in a great amount of in-depth, long-form work using the Wakefield data. Instead, published work taking the manor of Wakefield as its sole subject occurs almost entirely in the form of shorter articles, with much of these produced by authors associated with the most recent translation initiative, and including explicit pleas for more extensive research to be performed using the Wakefield records.[188] These shorter studies have examined a variety of subjects, including landscape and settlement on the manor, the position of women in the courts at Wakefield, the importance (or lack thereof) of written records for peasant engagement with legal procedure, or the operation of poaching in the manor's forests and parks, demonstrating the breadth of subject matter on which Wakefield can make a useful contribution.[189] These publications are, however, constrained by their brevity, being presented in formats that prevent their subjects from being considered in the necessary depth, clearly displaying the need that many of these scholars themselves note for considered and detailed study of Wakefield.

The only substantial monograph that draws on the Wakefield manor records is J. W. Walker's *Wakefield: Its History and People*. Walker was a surgeon by trade rather than a professional academic, and as a member of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society was instrumental in bringing the Wakefield court rolls into the society's possession via his personal connections to the solicitor who was the then-steward of the manor court.[190] Walker's publication presents an overview of the Wakefield region from prehistoric times up until Walker's own time, and draws extensively from the manor court rolls and related documents as sources of evidence. Though this work demonstrates a great familiarity with the Wakefield documents, and much of Walker's arguments are well-supported by the documentary record, in many other places his work displays a lack of the academic rigour that would be expected from a modern historian. A great number of the arguments presented by Walker, for instance, are

188 Barber, 'The YAS and the Wakefield Manor Court Rolls, 1898-2014'; Jewell, 'The Wakefield Court Rolls: A Plea for Their Computerized Analysis'; Michelmore and Edwards, 'The Records of the Manor of Wakefield'.
189 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages'; Jewell, 'Women at the Courts of the Manor of Wakefield, 1348-1350'; Harrison, 'From memory to written record?'; Holmes, 'Making a Fast Buck in the Middle Ages'.
190 Barber, 'The YAS and the Wakefield Manor Court Rolls, 1898-2014', 43.

based on assumptions of idealised expectations of the operation of a medieval manor and the lives of its inhabitants, only poorly-supported by the historical evidence, and in places he is given to even wilder flights of fancy, presenting in one chapter of his book a highly dubious claim that the Wakefield court rolls contain evidence for the real existence and true identity of Robin Hood.[191] Given this paucity of serious, long-form research using the Wakefield material, there is clear space for a thesis such as this one, which draws on the rich record of Wakefield to not only illuminate life on the manor itself, but also the connections between landscape and rural life in medieval England in a broader sense.

Conclusion

This overview of the manor of Wakefield has highlighted a number of aspects of the manor that make it a prime subject for the study at hand. Most notably, the large size of Wakefield manor and its internal diversity in terms of landscape types, patterns of settlement, and human activity make it ideally placed to address the central questions of this thesis, which concern the involvement of landscape in the activities of medieval peasants and the operation of manorial institutions. In addition to an ideal landscape context, Wakefield also benefits from a rich historical record, in the form of its manor court rolls, allowing for comparison not only between the regions of the manor but also across the span of the fourteenth century.

Furthermore, the position of Wakefield within current scholarship demonstrates the potential contribution a study of the manor could make to the field of manorial history more widely. Partly this is due to the lack of in-depth research thus far performed on Wakefield, with the result that any thorough study of the manor will necessarily make some original contribution to manorial scholarship. More significant, however, is the sort of manor which Wakefield represents, and the difference between this and the manors most often studied by other researchers. As my review of the manorial literature has highlighted, historians have generally favoured royal manors or

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191 Walker, *Wakefield: Its History and People*, 117-122.

those held by ecclesiastical institutions, located in the midlands or southern counties, and tending to be of smaller size. Wakefield, by contrast, was a secular holding for most of the fourteenth century, was located in the north of England and in a transitional area between upland and lowland environments, and ranked among the largest manors in the country. On account of these distinct features, a study of the manor Wakefield stands to broaden our understanding of how manorial institutions operated in a wider range of social and economic contexts, and how manorial authority could, or could not, be maintained when faced with issues of size and scale that most manorial lords rarely, if ever, had to deal with.

Chapter 3: Movement, Talk, and Reputation on the Manor

In the previous chapter I have highlighted some of the principal ways in which Wakefield was distinct from more well-studied manors of the south and midlands. The remaining chapters of this thesis will examine how the most notable of these distinct features—the large size of the manor and the variety of settlement patterns, population density, and agricultural regimes present within it—affected the lives of tenants at Wakefield, and the operation of the manor's institutions. I will begin, in this chapter, by analysing the effect that this landscape had on social connections between tenants. In particular, I argue that shared institutions, both within the manor and without, bound tenants into a dense social network spread across the whole of the manor, which created an additional layer of strong social connections between residents of distant settlements. Following this, I argue that the effect of this web of social connections, and the spread of information it facilitated, was to make Wakefield tenants highly vulnerable to the effects of negative rumours and reputational damage, even though their communities were widely dispersed across the landscape, and thus encouraged actions during interpersonal conflicts that prioritised consequences for reputation and public standing above the material risks and benefits of any given course of action.

The bonds between members of rural communities, be they in social, legal, or financial terms, have long been a concern of manorial historians. The bulk of research performed on these communal connections, however, has studied relatively bounded, nucleated communities, rather than large and sprawling manors like Wakefield, composed of many settlements of varying forms. Indeed, some of the manors in the south of England that have been studied by other historians are the opposite of Wakefield in terms of size and organisation, with single villages split between two or

more small manors, governed by institutions with very limited geographic reach.[192] The experience of life in these areas is characterised by physical closeness between neighbours and peers. The manor of Wakefield, by contrast, is characterised by distance both between settlements and within settlements in the upland graveships; given this distance, and the larger area of the manor, can the same level of communal integration, be that through horizontal or vertical ties, have existed in Wakefield as it had in previously-studied manors?

Some scholars working in the south of England have argued that the physical closeness between villagers in nucleated settlements encouraged the development of horizontal, co-operative ties. Mileson, for instance, puts forward this argument in the context of Oxfordshire villages in which tenants of middle wealth lived in close proximity in the core of the settlement, while rich and poor residents lived in areas of relative isolation. Manorial documents from these settlements suggest that the middling tenants possessed more, and stronger, reciprocal and co-operative bonds with their neighbours, and Mileson argues that this difference can be at least partly linked to the fact of their proximity, which encouraged more intense relations between neighbours. The rich and poor, by contrast, had fewer bonds, their ability to form close relationships curtailed by their distance from the daily life of the village, whether that be forced on the landless tenants or sought by the richer ones.[193]

Other research on the experience of medieval rural life has emphasised the importance of reputation, rumour, and gossip to life in medieval communities. The nuances of these studies are discussed in more detail below, but for now it is sufficient to state that this work has affirmed the importance of reputation at a variety of social levels, and across much of medieval Europe. Reputation and its consequences are analysed across Western Europe and in both urban and rural contexts in Fenster and Smail's *Fama*,[194] for instance, whereas the specific context of English manors has been investigated by both Schofield and Wickham.[195]

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192 Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*, 175; Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 152.
193 Mileson, 'Openness and Closure in the Later Medieval Village', 16–18.
194 Fenster and Smail, *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*.
195 Schofield, 'Peasants and the Manor Court: Gossip and Litigation in a Suffolk Village at the Close of the Thirteenth Century'; Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry'.

While this research confirms the importance of reputation and rumour to medieval communities, it is also important to note the reasons reputation could have such a great influence. Comparative anthropological and sociological studies of rumour have found that the effectiveness of rumour, and reputation, as constraining forces is highly dependent on the boundedness of communities, and the closeness of relations between community members: if relations between neighbours are ephemeral and individuals have easy means to leave and join new communities, rumour and gossip have little effect on social standing or individual success. Where communities are close-knit and leaving is prohibitively difficult, by contrast, rumour attains elevated importance, and negative rumours can easily lead to ostracisation and material losses.[196] Within a nucleated medieval village the latter situation often prevailed, as neighbours lived in close proximity, saw and talked to each other every day, and villeins were prevented from leaving the village by force of the law. These observations further reinforce Mileson's arguments regarding difference within villages, the tenants living among the village core being more exposed to rumour and gossip through more frequent contact with their neighbours, and unable to escape the gaze of gossiping peers as the wealthier and poorer tenants could by retreating to their isolated homes at the edge of the village.

A manor such as Wakefield, however, presents a different situation: many settlements were dispersed, with tenants physically distant from their neighbours; maintaining a developed knowledge of every other tenant, and their personal histories and reputations, would have been almost impossible given a manorial population of at least two or three thousand adults; and though villeins could not leave the manor, it was possible to acquire landholdings in other graveships and transfer oneself into a new community. Despite the physically diffuse nature of the communities on the manor of Wakefield, however, I argue below that the actions of residents of fourteenth-century Wakefield were still affected by concerns of reputation and by dependence on fellow tenants for mutual assistance, credit, and legal support. This effect, however, was not rooted in physical closeness, as Mileson suggests was the case for Oxfordshire settlements, but instead in the powerful binding effect of local

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196 Merry, 'Rethinking Gossip and Scandal', 296.

institutions, including not just the manor but also commercial and ecclesiastical bodies. These institutions intervened frequently in the lives of Wakefield residents and controlled much of their movement, acting to bring residents together and forge a meaningful manorial community despite their wide physical dispersion.

Within this chapter I will analyse the social network of the manor of Wakefield using the interpretive framework of the taskscape, examining how the influence of local institutions and the fundamental necessities of rural life caused manorial residents to frequently congregate around central sites in the manor and wider landscape. Following this, I investigate how the spread of information and rumour through this network exposed residents to the gaze and judgement of their fellow manorial residents, even if these were not near-neighbours, leaving the all-important personal reputations of tenants highly vulnerable to negative rumours and gossip. Finally, I draw upon case studies from the Wakefield court rolls to examine how this confluence of concerns around rumour, public exposure, and information encouraged particular forms of action when tenants came into conflict with one another, arguing that Wakefield tenants display both an awareness of the vulnerability which wide public exposure caused and a willingness to manipulate those same structures of rumour and reputation to pursue personal advantage, both inside and outside the court.

3.1: Taskscape

An analysis rooted in the movement of tenants across the manorial landscape must, by necessity, begin by laying out the range of movements and activities undertaken by Wakefield tenants on a regular basis. While this landscape has already been described in a largely static form in the previous chapter, here I will turn to consider the landscape in motion, injecting tenant activities into the geography of the manor. In approaching the landscape of Wakefield in this way I draw upon the framework of the

taskscape, originally formulated by the anthropologist Tim Ingold. Ingold's notion of the taskscape examines landscapes not only as a collection of fixed, physical features, but also as a site of activity, of regular rhythms of action, and of change over time.[197] The temporal, rhythmic focus of the taskscape gives prominence to activities, be they human or non-human, that occur in regular, seasonal cycles, and this seasonal focus has been adopted for the examination of the Wakefield taskscape that is laid out below.

Although taskscape approaches have remained a common feature of anthropological and archaeological studies, as part of a broader constellation of phenomenological theories, use of the taskscape has not been as prominent in medieval studies. Some work on religious sites and ritual has made use of taskscape in order to analyse pilgrimage practices, such as the work performed by Ryan Lash on early medieval pilgrimage centres on the isles of western Ireland.[198] Matthew Johnson has, furthermore, deployed the taskscape in the study of later, secular sites, in the wide-ranging research project lead by Johnson at Bodiam Castle.[199] Johnson's study is notable for introducing a taskscape-centred analysis to a site that has been the subject of long-running, and often contentious, academic debate, Bodiam having served as a central case study for arguments over the functions of medieval castles and the intentions of their builders. Johnson's use of the taskscape propels the study of Bodiam beyond these well-worn arguments, focused largely on the static form of castles, looking instead to the activity of the castle's inhabitants with an analysis centred on evidence for actual use of the castle site instead of hypothesised intentions in the minds of its original builders.[200]

The discussion of the Wakefield taskscape which takes place here acts in a similar manner to that made by Johnson for Bodiam, re-framing subjects that are well-studied in the manorial literature by prioritising the physical and bodily elements of rural fourteenth-century life. The issues examined further in this chapter, of

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197 Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, 189–208.
198 Lash, 'Pebbles and Peregrinatio: The Taskscape of Medieval Devotion on Inishark Island, Ireland'.
199 Johnson, *Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages: Studies of Bodiam and Other Elite Landscapes in South-Eastern England*.
200 Johnson, 'Discussion: Elite Sites, Political Landscapes, and Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages', 198–99.

personal reputation, legal practice, agriculture, and credit, all have long histories in academic literature. Much of the discussion of these issues, especially in the case of quantitatively-driven studies of the most recent decades, can easily become abstract, focused on quantifiable outputs of debt pleas, crop yields, and other statistics, and removed from the physical experiences that underpinned and created the surviving evidence. In looking first at the taskscape of Wakefield, and the array of physical activities contained within it, I aim to illuminate in more detail the agencies which were at work on the fourteenth-century manor, the constraints that these agencies placed on the movements of tenants, and the connections between tenants that their movement and the intervention of institutional agency created. Following this exploration of the Wakefield taskscape, I will examine how the insights gained from a taskscape analysis can be brought to bear on some of the central elements of peasant life, and what this may tell us about the motivations of tenants in their dealings with each other and with the manor court.

3.1.1: Autumn and Year-Round Tasks

The limitations of the available sources render it difficult to reconstruct in its entirety the taskscape of fourteenth-century Wakefield, on account of the generally poor and intermittent information they provide on the forms and practices of peasant agriculture on the manor. This task is further complicated by the observable differences between parts of the manor, such that details of agricultural practice recorded for one graveship may not be applicable to others. Take for instance the following entries in the court rolls, both from the 14th October 1339:

> William le Wright enclosed a piece of land which the township [of Wakefield] ought to have in common each third year and in open time; amerced.

> John Hode enclosed a piece of land which the township ought to have in common each third year and in open time; amerced.[201]

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201 Both quotes from Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 126.

The references in these entries to plots of land held in common every third year suggest the existence of a three-field system of crop rotation, with communally-managed open fields, in the Wakefield graveship. This graveship was in the heart of the lowland region on the east of the manor, the area that most closely resembled a Midlands-style landscape of nucleated villages and open-field farming. The western uplands, however, were substantially less likely to be practising this form of agriculture, given the differences in topography, soil types, and settlement pattern that made the regions around Holme and Halifax much less conducive to arable agriculture, as detailed in the previous chapter. These regions were instead likely to have seen a much greater prominence of pastoralism over arable farming, with the latter taking place more often in enclosed or irregular fields with less, if any, of the carefully-managed, communal farming seen in the Wakefield graveship. This difference in regime is supported by the court roll data, in which much greater numbers of presentments involving livestock are reported from the western graveships. In Sowerby, for instance, 41% of all attachments between 1338 and 1340 were for escapes of livestock, compared to an average of 11% for the eastern graveships, a testament to the much greater numbers of livestock being kept there.[202]

In either case, however, discussion of peasant agriculture on the manor is limited to these kinds of broad generalisations, supported by snippets of more detailed information derived from the occasional court entry, and by comparison to geographically-similar manors where peasant cropping and livestock-keeping are known in more detail. The general lack of frequent pleas or amercements for breaches of agricultural regulations in Wakefield, however, may itself reveal something of the way in which peasant agriculture was managed. Disputes involving agricultural land in the court rolls mainly concern disagreements over leases and contracts, and accusations of crop destruction or physical trespass, usually in enclosed lands. Cases involving breaches of agricultural regulations, such as those involving John Hode and William le Wright above, appear only a handful of times. Although this may occur because the agricultural customs of Wakefield were uncontroversial and rarely breached, it also suggests that the manor itself was not interested in enforcing

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202 Troup*, The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* xvi–xvii

agricultural relations and cropping regimes, the management of which was left to tenants to work out for themselves. This hands-off attitude towards agricultural regulation on the part of manorial authorities was common across England,[203] though Wakefield appears especially uninterested in this regard, given the vanishingly small number of court cases centred on open-field regulations and the large size and population of the manor.

In keeping with the temporal, rhythmic focus of Ingold's taskscape, the remainder of this section will follow the tenants of Wakefield, their movements, and their tasks over the course of the year, following the seasonal changes, and continuities, in their activity. With the manor court rolls as my main source of evidence, this seasonal analysis will begin in September, when the first sessions of the court year are held. These initial sessions fell across the period in the autumn when the tenants of Wakefield could put their animals out to agistment in the lord's woods, providing an early and clear demonstration of the influence of manorial authority on the lives of tenants. The forester's presentments in the months of September, October, and November prominently feature amercements for pannage, those of the earlier years of the century featuring a particularly large number of tenants putting their animals into the woods.[204] As this was a task reliant on the growth of acorns and other nuts during the autumn, presentments related to agistment rarely appear after November, and such cases almost always take the form of suits against tenants who had put pigs into the wood without paying the appropriate fine, this deception being discovered and prosecuted after the fact.[205] At the same time that agistment and pannage were under way, tenants were also active in the woods and forests to gather dry and green wood, the activity which takes up the majority of the forester's presentments across the fourteenth-century rolls.[206] Unlike pannage, however, this task continued

203 Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England: A Study of Village By-Laws*, 19–20, 62.

204 For a representative example see Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 16–17. The lower number of animals recorded in later decades may reflect a smaller number of livestock given reduced population, a lessened dependence on pig-rearing as a source of supplemental income, changes in recording practice, or a lessened interest in enforcement on the part of the lord; the surviving records provide little aid in making a firmer statement.

205 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 51–52.

206 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 16–17; Troup, 42.

throughout the year, and peasants are amerced for the collection of wood in all seasons.[207]

Regulated appearances such as these were not the only times that tenants were present in the lord's forest at Wakefield, and the court rolls also record recurrent illegal activity in the woods and parks. Trespassers in the seigneurial forests were usually prosecuted for poaching deer, though some do also appear in the rolls as trespassers without being charged for any other action. A typical example of a poaching charge appears in October 1315, when Adam son of Roger de Wassledene is amerced for hunting one of the lord's deer:

> Adam, s. of Roger de Walssedene, killed a doe at Haderschelf, and took the carcase to his father's house with his father's knowledge, and dealt with it at his will. They are both to be attached. Adam constantly trespasses in the free chace [*sic*], with his father's knowledge. Roger, the father, fines 2 marks to be acquitted. Sureties: Roger Rotel and Richard, s. of Alota.[208]

Like the collection of wood, trespassing and poaching occurred throughout the year, and though the numbers of tenants involved were much fewer, these were rarely solitary activities. In the winter immediately after Adam son of Roger was amerced for poaching, for instance, a different set of tenants were charged by the manor court with trespasses in the lord's parks in Sowerby, in a court session in January 1316.[209] Later in the century the tenants John Drabel and Adam del Holme were reported for poaching in the spring, being sued in April 1339 for hunting deer together in the lord's parks.[210] Poaching was, furthermore, not exclusive to woods and forest, as manorial authorities also exerted control over the waterways that cut across the manor. Thus a group of four tenants are also amerced for fishing in these waters, without the appropriate permissions and under cover of darkness, in March 1314.[211]

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207 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 58, 66, 93.
208 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 74.
209 Lister, 104–6.
210 Troup, 71.
211 Lister, 36.

These wood and forest activities did not necessarily take tenants far from their homes, as each graveship on the manor was provided with at least one demesne wood which could be used for wood-gathering, agistment, or as a source of construction timber.[212] The distribution of woods and forests is not wholly known, but the location of some of the principal woods, as well as the seigneurial parks, are mapped in Figure 2.11, with most of the larger woods appearing at the margins of the graveships. In areas where wood resources were concentrated in these large, marginal woods and forests, tenants living in central areas of the graveship or on its opposite edges could face more substantial journeys in order to reach the wood and its vital resources. Others, however, were able to cut out the inconvenience of travel to the local wood entirely by sending servants or dependents to gather firewood or take pigs to pannage on their behalf, evidenced in the court rolls by regular amercements of tenants for activities in the forest that were actually carried out by their servants.[213]

As well as shaping the ability of tenants to access natural resources within the Wakefield landscape, the authority of the manor also extended into tenants' management of their household resources, and especially their grain. In this instance the authority of the manor was exerted through the control of demesne mills, and the requirement of manorial tenants to bring their grain to specific mills. The leases for these mills were agreed soon after the beginning of the court year, and a near-complete listing of the mill leases is recorded in the 1379-80 court rolls, as laid out in Table 3.1. In this year the amounts paid by tenants for the operation of mills ranged from 21s 6d, paid for both the Rastrick and Shibden mills together, to ten marks paid for the lease of the Horbury mill alone.[214] In earlier years of the court rolls the tenants who bought these leases could themselves sub-let the operation of the mill to other tenants: in 1313 John de Amyas, who had taken on a number of manorial franchises,

212 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 51.
213 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 7; Troup, T*he Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 51, 163.
214 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 2 verso.

Mill	Lessee	Amount Paid	Pledges
Rastrick and Shipdene	Robert Flecher	21s 6d	John Hanson and William de Sh[*ipdene?*]
Horbury	John Rose	10 marks	William del Grene, John Judson de Ossett, and William de Wilson
Sandal	Robert Smallrerd	8 marks 3s 3d	John de Rilay and Edward Henryson
Holme	John de Rodes	8 marks 3s 4d	Edward Rogerson and John de [*surname not legible*]
Sowerby and Soyland	[*not legible*]	4 marks	[*not legible*]

Table 3.1: *Leases of demesne mills, 1379.*

is recorded sub-letting the Sandal and Thurstonhaugh mills to Henry Calf for a fee of nine marks.[215]

As on many other English manors, the manorial monopoly on milling was resented by tenants at Wakefield, expressed in the court rolls by regular amercements for failing to use their designated demesne mills, though the rolls are silent as to whether such tenants were instead visiting mills outside the manor, grinding grain by hand at home, or using some other method to evade the use of demesne mills. Cases of tenants avoiding demesne mills appear throughout the year in the majority of the court rolls, and are not exclusive to any particular region or specific mills. In April 1316, for instance, tenants who owed suit to the Rastrick mill are amerced for failing to bring their grain to it;[216] later in the court rolls similar resistance is expressed by tenants bound to the Horbury mill to the east, in December 1339 and November 1348;[217] and in 1351 tenants are amerced for avoiding use of the mills at Sandal and Thurstonhaugh.[218] According to Langdon's

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[215] Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 20.

[216] Lister, 121.

[217] Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 155; Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 24.

[218] Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 22.
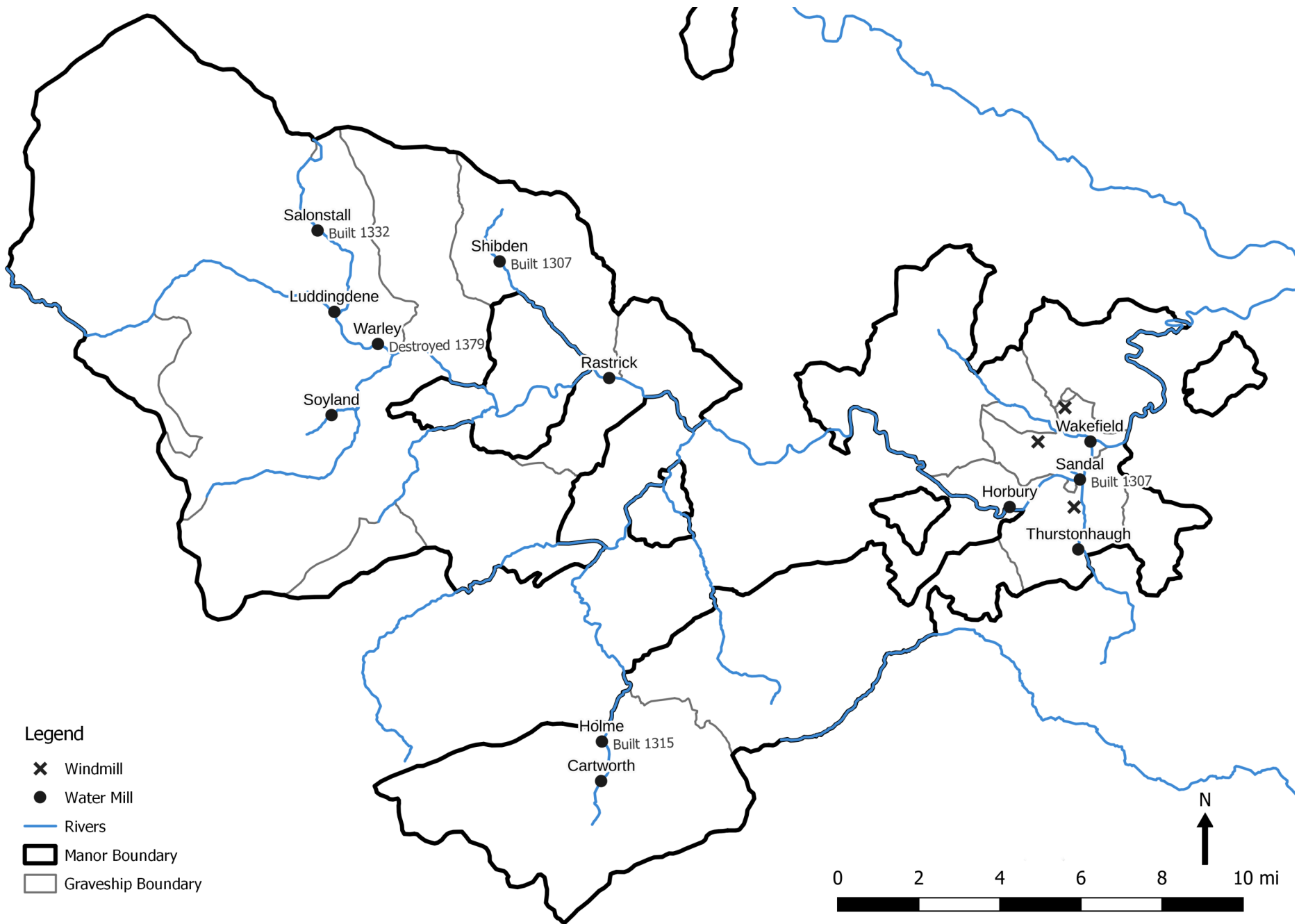
Figure 3.1: *Demesne mills on the manor of Wakefield, with waterways plotted.*

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study of milling amercements across England, tenants of Wakefield were fined for breaching suit of mill there more frequently than anywhere else in the country, implying that Wakefield tenants held an unusual level of opprobrium towards the requirement to use demesne mills.[219] Langdon suggests this was because the large size of the manor made journeys to and from mills longer and more onerous for most residents, an argument largely borne out by the evidence regarding the location of Wakefield's demesne mills.[220]

Unlike with the demesne woods described above, the mills at Wakefield were distributed very unevenly throughout the landscape, as shown in Figure 3.1, with the result that some tenants were faced with long journeys to reach their demesne mill. A particular discrepancy is evident in the number of mills provided between the eastern and western graveships, with fewer mills built in the east despite the larger number of people, and greater amounts of grain, present there. Sowerby and Holme, for instance, each had two mills despite being some of the most sparsely-populated areas of the manor, while in the east mills are located only in Horbury, Thornes, Sandal, and Wakefield graveships, with none at all in Alverthorpe, Ossett, or Stanley.[221]

It is possible that the variable costs for leasing the mills reflects the significant differences in the number of tenants who owed suit at each mill. In 1379 the smallest amounts, 21s 6d and 4 marks, were paid for the Rastrick and Shibden mills and the Sowerby and Soyland mills respectively, these being located in thinly-populated areas on the western slope of the Pennines. By contrast the Sandal and Horbury mills, in the denser eastern region of the manor, attracted higher leasing costs, of 8 marks 3s 3d and 10 marks respectively. The eastern mills, furthermore, did not only exist in a region of higher population, but also with a greater prominence of arable farming and therefore greater potential custom for each mill, as the average household was growing a larger quantity of grain than those in the west, another factor leading to their higher value.

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219 Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy: England 1300—1540*, 283–86.
220 Langdon, 286.
221 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 51.

The limited distribution of these mills, especially in the eastern graveships, would have exerted significant influence over the movement of tenants by tying their need to grind grain with journeys to a potentially distant demesne mill. Some combination of the inconvenience of having to travel to a distant demesne mill and the fees charged by the lessees, or sub-lessees, of the mills themselves is likely the cause of the distaste that tenants often showed for using the demesne mills. Mills were not the only manorial asset that tenants at Wakefield could farm, and in the first quarter of the century at least tenants had the opportunity to lease some of the manor's vaccaries and bercaries.[222] The surviving records do not make it clear how these assets were managed, as the actual operation of vaccaries, rather than the terms under which they were leased, appears as an incidental detail only in the following two cases, both from the 21st October 1315:

> The inquisition on Adam Attetownend [*ad capud ville*] de Miggeley, formerly the lord's stockkeeper in Sourbyshire, finds that he kept 11 sheep on the lord's hay during the winter in the vaccary at Salonstall; sentence is at the lord's will.[223]

> Robert de Midelton, a common malefactor in the Earl's free chases, came, together with other malefactors, to the vaccary of the Wythenes, and lodged there at night, and the keeper of the said vaccary fled and hid himself in the hay, and in the morning they carried off the boy of the keeper of the vaccary aforesaid as far as Turneleye mosse.[224]

These cases relate something of the potential risks and rewards associated with the management of vaccaries: in the former, the potential for lessees to subsidise their own herds on the resources provided by the lord for the vaccary, and in the latter some of the dangers posed by work at isolated vaccaries. They do not, however, provide much detail on the day-to-day management of these seigneurial assets.

John McDonnel has argued that the manor's cattle and sheep herds were likely to have been managed by transhumance, spending the winter in the lowland pastures

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222 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 74, 132-3.
223 Lister, 72.
224 Lister, 74.

around Wakefield itself before moving up to summer grazing in the lord's park at Erringden, in the Sowerby graveship.[225] The evidence McDonnel presents, however, is circumstantial and derived largely from the coincidence of medieval tracks and drove-ways with manorial boundaries, rather than surviving documents or detailed archaeological evidence. The court roll evidence quoted above does little to clarify matters. Both cases are reported from Sowerby graveship, indicating the presence of vaccaries in the western uplands. Furthermore, the circumstances of Robert Midelton's raid on the vaccary of the Wythenes, with the keeper forced to hide amongst his hay rather than summon help from neighbours or raise the hue and cry, suggests these vaccaries were in isolated locations away from the regular settlements, as might be expected of temporary lodgings used by migratory stock-keepers. However, both cases were reported to the court in October, well outside of the spring and summer period in which upland pastures would be used in a transhumance model, with the first case suggesting that animals, though not necessarily the lord's animals, were being kept on the upland vaccaries over the winter.

If McDonnel's argument is correct, the tenants involved in managing the manorial vaccaries and bercaries would have experienced a relatively extreme form of seasonal mobility, moving with their herds between lowland east and upland west as the seasons changed. If the shepherds and stock-keepers of the demesne vaccaries were moving with their herds and staying with them on the summer pastures, this would mean a small part of the population of the eastern lowlands were living for part of the year among the residents of the western graveships as they cared for the lord's herds, making these communities somewhat more porous than they otherwise appear. In any case, the current evidence for the management of the Wakefield vaccaries is scant and inconclusive, and firm conclusions are impossible without deeper investigation.

The early months of the court rolls also contain references to one of the more important secondary activities on the manor, the brewing and sale of ale. Ordinarily brewing activity was a concern only for the half-yearly tourns, which regulated the

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225 McDonnel, 'The Role of Transhumance in Northern England', 5.

assize of ale on the manor. Occasionally, however, the regular sessions of the manor court contain rulings on ale-related offences, almost always when a brewer had failed to follow the correct procedures for inspection. The most common form of such case involves an individual being amerced for failure to summon ale-tasters to inspect their brew, regardless of whether the resulting ale was compliant with the assize or not. Cases of this kind occur throughout the year, including amercements for failure to summon ale-tasters in September 1351, at the very beginning of the court rolls, with other incidents occurring in December during 1338, and much later in the year during July of 1339.[226]

More than simply revealing the presence of brewing on the manor, which is any case well-attested in the records of the tourn, these court entries also reveal something of the social and physical action involved in the regulation of brewing. The amercements make it clear that, as was the case in most parts of the country, brewers were expected to pro-actively seek out ale-tasters and inform them of each new batch of ale they had brewed, rather than relying on the tasters to come to them.[227] Doing so not only required knowledge of who the ale-tasters of the local township were and where they might be found, but also the ability to send a message to an ale-taster in a timely enough manner that the brewer did not become liable for the kind of amercements described above.

3.1.2: Winter to Summer

As we move out of the immediate beginning of the court year and into the winter months, some of the court rolls contain records of irregular activity by Wakefield peasants, spurred by the confluence of natural and institutional forces. Institutional agency entered this equation through the obligation placed on many of the manor's villein tenants to repair and maintain certain manorial structures, such as the palings which surrounded seigneurial parks or the buildings, dams, and water-courses attached to demesne mills. Natural agency was made manifest through episodes of

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226 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 50; Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 37, 99.
227 Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300—1600*, 100–101.

adverse weather, which could be especially destructive for water-mills vulnerable to flooding, though on some occasions storm winds on their own were strong enough to knock down tenant houses.[228]

One of the more notable incidents of poor weather creating additional obligations for manorial tenants occurred in November 1379, when the mill at Warley, in the Sowerby graveship, was destroyed by flooding. In this instance the flood did more than merely wash away the mill dam and buildings, but also caused a change in the course of the river, such that when the floodwaters receded the Warley site was no longer suitable for a mill.[229] As a consequence, the court ordered that four tenants were to take charge of building a new mill and mill-pond slightly up-river at Luddingdene, being charged not only to undertake construction but also being given specific orders to guard the construction site until the mill had been completed.

The order to guard the site as well as simply undertaking construction placed a particular burden on these tenants, requiring them to spend more of their time on an endeavour that primarily benefited the manor and the small number of tenant millers. It also risked putting them into conflict with other tenants, who were very likely to be the people they were expected to guard the mill from: theft of timber from mills and other demesne structures had occurred previously on the manor, as when ten men were amerced on 21st April 1340 for carrying away timber from the mill-pond and bridge at Wakefield.[230] And while the regular obligations of tenants, such as attendance at court or agricultural services, occurred regularly and in a way that could be predicted and planned for, obligations such as the repair of destroyed mills were unpredictable, occurring at the mercy of the elements, and could create more inconvenience for tenants as they scrambled to find the time to undertake these obligations without jeopardising their own plans and production. The example of the Warley mill therefore highlights the potentially disruptive nature of outside agencies on the lives of tenants, as plans were interrupted and activities controlled by the combination of natural and institutional agency.

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228 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 54–55.
229 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 3 verso.
230 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, 195.

Outside of irregular impositions such as these, the winter months in the court rolls also contain some additional evidence for other elements of the agricultural regime at Wakefield. This evidence takes the form of a small number of disputes over unpaid wages for ploughmen, occurring across December and January of 1338 to 1339.[231] Accounting for the three-week gap between court sessions, and the time required for the owed wages to go into default, these pleas must have been made in relation to work that had been performed in the previous months. The implication, therefore, is that ploughing was taking place in at least some parts of Wakefield during October or November, conforming to the expected timeline for peasants growing winter-sown crops, such as wheat.[232] These crops, however, rarely figure in direct evidence of the crops being grown by tenants, such as in the descriptions of destroyed crops given in depasturing cases. Where specific cereal grains are referred to in depasturing cases these are nearly always oats, a spring-sown crop, with the great number of depasturing cases that revolve around oats suggesting that this crop was widely grown on the manor. With the evidence above for winter crops, this suggests that the activities of ploughing, sowing, and harrowing were taking place twice a year on the holdings of many Wakefield tenants, as they sowed their winter wheat and spring oats.

On many peasant households in Wakefield these agricultural tasks were likely to have possessed a significant social nature, as peasant agriculture generally favoured labour-intensive methods, often involving the whole household working the fields at the same time. While the court cases described above demonstrate that some Wakefield tenants were using hired ploughmen to work their fields, for less wealthy households ploughing is likely to have been carried out with larger groups of shovel-wielding household members rather than small teams of ploughmen, possibly requiring co-operation and assistance from neighbouring households if individual households were lacking in the necessary labour force.[233]

Between this period, when the fields were being prepared and sown, and the summer harvest, however, other agricultural activities are less well-evidenced in the

231 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 31, 41.
232 Bennett, *Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions 1150—1400*, 79.
233 Myrdal and Sapoznik, 'Technology, Labour, and Productivity Potential in Peasant Agriculture: England, c.1000 to 1348', 198–200, 205-6.

court rolls. The appearance of oats in depasturing cases, as already stated, suggests that activity in the arable occurred during the spring as fields were planted with more crops. Otherwise, however, there is little evidence of intense activity on tenant landholdings until late June, when tenants would have had to head into the fields for weeding, a vital task which could only be properly performed within a narrow time frame around midsummer, and which was, like ploughing, an activity requiring the participation of the whole household, including the elderly and children.[234] Tenants would have also had much to do in the management of flocks, especially in the west of the manor, though here again the available evidence is not sufficient to determine the precise rhythms of shearing, dairying, and similar pastoral activities on the manor. While there was likely to have been some movement of herds from winter lodgings into summer pastures, this may not have occurred to the extreme extent that McDonnel suggests was the case for the manorial herds.

The cumulation of activity in the fields and meadows of Wakefield came towards the end of the court year, when harvests were bought in. Disputes and amercements relating to the harvest do not appear often in the court rolls, and those that do are disagreements between tenants rather than suits regarding harvest services owed to the manor. Those harvest cases that do appear suggest that grass was mowed slightly earlier in the summer than the grain harvest. Pleas regarding tenants mowing their neighbours' grass appear in August sessions in both 1339 and 1340, with the usual delay for cases to reach the court suggesting that the grass in question had actually been mowed earlier, during July or at the very start of August.[235] References in the court rolls to the grain harvest, meanwhile, suggest that this occurred later in August. In the session held on the 6th August 1316, for instance, the tenant John Torold is attached by his crops, which at the time of the court session are stated to be still growing in his fields, evidently ready for harvest later in the month.[236] Harvesting of first the grass and then the grain crop, therefore, would have occupied much of

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234 Myrdal and Sapoznik, 'Technology, Labour, and Productivity Potential in Peasant Agriculture: England, c.1000 to 1348', 205–6.
235 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 102, 247.
236 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 152.

tenants' efforts across July and August, even if in cases such as John Torold's the imposition of the manor court rendered much of this effort ultimately futile.

3.1.3: The Influence of the Manor Court

While the above sections have concentrated on the fundamental agricultural and economic tasks which were necessary to life on the manor, and which formed much of the day-to-day activity of Wakefield residents throughout the year, these basic necessities were not the only pressures which influenced tenants' actions on the manor. Tenants were also faced with demands and requirements placed upon them by civic and ecclesiastical institutions operating in the Wakefield region, which dictated their movement and prescribed particular activities, none of which is more prominent in the surviving sources than the requirement for attendance at, and involvement with, the manor court itself.

Sessions of the court were held every three weeks, on almost every occasion were held in Wakefield town, and were mandatory for most tenants of the manor, evidenced by an ample supply of essoins paid by tenants who were absent during sessions of the court. For tenants of the western graveships the town was well outside the distance that could be easily travelled within a single day: Rastrick, one of the closer settlements in the western graveships, is approximately twelve miles in a straight line from Wakefield town, Holme slightly more than fourteen miles, and Warley, in the Sowerby graveship, nearly eighteen miles. Given that attendance at sessions of the court was mandatory for the majority of tenants, tenants in these western regions were obliged to undertake regular return journeys, probably taking at least two days to complete, all throughout the year. The difficulty involved in making such journeys is represented in the court session of the 27th October 1351, which, as attested to by the presentment of two tenants who had looted timbers from buildings destroyed by winds, took place shortly after a storm. The inclement weather appears to have prevented a substantial portion of tenants from attending the court: nineteen unauthorised absences are noted from Sowerby graveship alone, among numerous absences from other graveships. These numbers are well in excess of the usual rates

of absence on 1351: many sessions from that year record no absences at all.[237] Making the long journey to court in all weathers was, needless to say, a significant imposition for tenants living far from Wakefield town, complicating the planning and management of their own resources through the necessity of regular travel to the court.

As well as facing this regular obligation to attend court, tenants could also easily find themselves drawn into business at the court even when they were not themselves acting as litigants. This most often occurred when tenants acted as a pledge or surety for others, as pledges were required for a wide range of procedures in the court, the most common being as part of an essoin for a tenant or litigant absent from a court session, as part of the set of pledges bought for compurgation, or as the surety for a tenant who had been ordered to pay a particularly large fine, damages, or debt payment. For some individuals serving as a pledge or surety could be their main form of engagement with the court, as was the case for Richard Birstall, who appears through the 1313-14 rolls as a repeat pledge for essoined tenants, but is only plaintiff or defendant in a case a small handful of times.[238]

Involvement in the court could also come through service in official positions. The most involved of these were roles as officers of the court and manor, such as the graves, foresters, ale-tasters, and others, though only a small number of tenants from each each graveship would have served in these roles each year. A greater number of people would have served on juries attached to the manor court, which provided judgement on some cases and oversaw the operation of the tourns. Taking on any of these roles would have placed greater obligations on tenants, their official duties necessitating more activity outside of the household and greater movement around their graveship or township. The additional set of tasks and movements attached to these offices, and the impact they had on the day-to-day lives of those who held them, are discussed more thoroughly in chapter four.

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237 The session of the 27th November 1351 is recorded in Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06,* 54–55.
238 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 1, 5, 24, 31, 53, 82.

The bi-annual tourn sessions placed a lesser obligation of movement on Wakefield tenants, as it was the court itself which moved across the manor for the autumn and spring tourns. The tourn was also distinct from the regular court in holding a wider geographical jurisdiction, shown in Figure 2.12. This wider geographical reach brought together residents of the graveships who attended the regular court sessions with inhabitants of the subinfeudated manors, which in the rest of the year operated their own courts. Sessions of the tourn, therefore, provided an opportunity for residents of the graveships to mix with residents of nearby townships, as well as exposing both groups to each other's misdeeds in a manner which did not occur so directly in other parts of the year, when they were split among different judicial institutions.

As well as bringing together neighbours, however, the tourn sessions also required some degree of co-ordination from the officers involved in reporting offences to the tourn. These offences were collated and brought to the tourn by the jurors of the whole tourn, constables from each township, and in some cases other officers such as ale-tasters. The implication of some presentments made in the tourn is that these officers were expected to verify the reports that each gave, and ensure they were not excluding offences from their reports. One example of this sort of behaviour is recorded in the tourn at Halifax on 21st October 1315, in which two separate charges are brought against tourn jurors for failing to amerce some individuals, probably wives of the jurors, which had been reported for weak ales by the ale-tasters.[239] Checking on each other's work in this way required these officers and jurors to organise themselves before the tourn began, gathering reports of which offences each set of officers was supposed to present, and potentially conspiring with one another to ensure that certain offences were concealed from the court.

3.1.4: Other Institutional Agencies

Thus far this exploration of the Wakefield taskscape has centred largely around the influence that was wielded by institutions directly associated with the manorial

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239 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 75.

administration and courts. The manor, however, was not the only source of institutional influence at Wakefield, and the lives, activities, and movements of tenants were also affected by religious bodies and commercial institutions such as markets and fairs, which operated both within and without the manor itself.

None of these forms of authority were wholly separate from each other, as the institutions at Wakefield embodied the fluid boundaries between legal and administrative bodies that were common in rural areas across England.[240] These overlapping authorities and institutional boundaries are most evident at the tourn, where the manor court and its staff were involved in the enforcement of royal legislation, but is also seen in commercial activity and the implementation of ecclesiastical law. Market regulation, for instance, clearly overlapped with the exercise of seigneurial authority, as the market in Wakefield town was operated by the lords of the manor, and breaches of marketing regulation are punished, albeit very sparingly, in the court rolls. In April 1316, for instance, a local official is amerced for levying excessive tolls on visitors to the Wakefield market, and in October 1338 a tenant is amerced for obstructing the market with timbers.[241]

Whether the majority of tenants on the manor of Wakefield were using the town's market as their primary site for buying and selling cannot be known for certain, though circumstances suggest that this was probably the case. Wakefield was not the only market within easy travelling distance for residents on the manor, though all of the other nearby markets were located in towns much smaller than Wakefield, as shown in Figure 3.2. Emley, for instance, had only 85 taxpayers in the 1377 poll tax, compared to 482 recorded from Wakefield. Elland, another nearby market, was even smaller than this, though it was located much closer to the western graveships and this convenience may have outweighed any disadvantages caused by its smaller size for residents in the west.[242] The only larger market in the region was at Pontefract, a town with over 1,000 taxpayers in 1377.[243] Pontefract, however, was located some

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240 Johnson, *Law in Common*, 20.

241 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 118; Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 20.

242 Grants of market charters are recorded in Maxwell Lyte, *Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry III A.D. 1226-1257*, 431; taxpayers in Emley and Thornhill from Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381: Part 3, Wiltshire to Yorkshire*, 257.

243 Fenwick, 264.
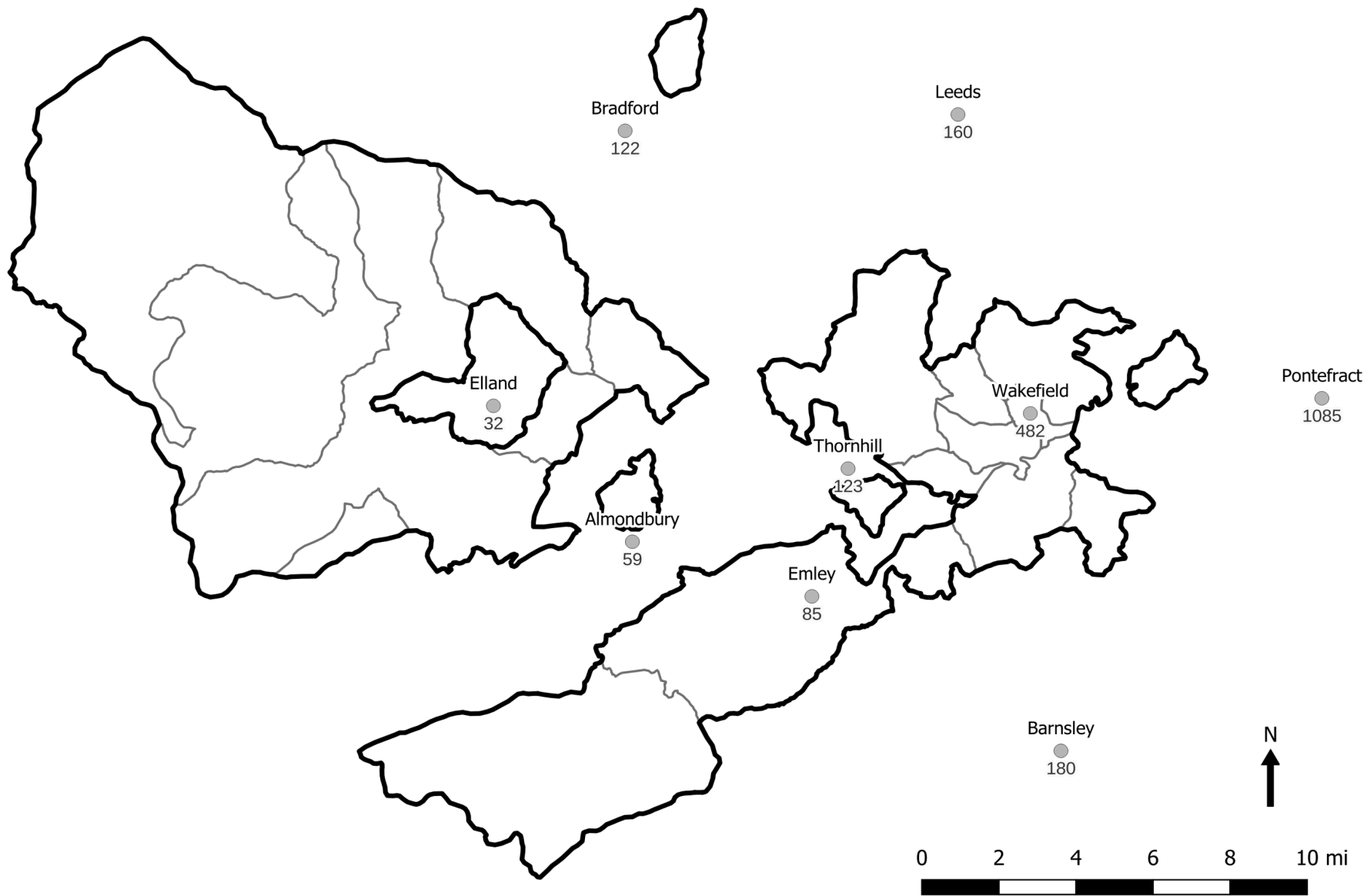
Figure 3.2: Market towns in the vicinity of the manor of Wakefield. The number of taxpayers recorded in each town in 1377 is also displayed.

eight miles to the west of Wakefield town, necessitating a much longer journey for the great majority of the manor of Wakefield's residents. Though there were likely additional commercial opportunities granted by Pontefract's greater population, these may not have always been enough to counteract the greater travel time required to reach it.

As well as being larger than nearby alternatives, the market at Wakefield was also held on Fridays, the same day used for sessions of the manor court.[244] This coincidence with the court sessions that many tenants were already attending provided further encouragement for manorial residents to make more use of the Wakefield market, as both marketing and court attendance could be undertaken with a single trip to the town.

Size and proximity, however, were not the only factors that affected Wakefield residents' choice of market, and the following entry from the court session of 14th April 1316 suggests some other factors that may have affected these decisions:

> An inquisition finds that Robert, s. of Pelle, had a horse stopped in Pontefract, which was being taken by Robert, s. of Adam, to sell at Pontefract market, for part of his arrears; damages, 2s., which he is to pay, and he is amerced 2s.[245]

The wording of this entry makes it difficult to determine the exact circumstances at play, including whether the horse ultimately belong to Robert son of Pelle or Robert son of Adam, and whether the arrears in question were owed by one Robert to the other or by one of the Roberts to the manor or another body. Possible interpretations are that the horse was owned by Robert son of Pelle, and had been stolen by the son of Adam to sell to pay the latter's arrears to an unrelated party; that Robert son of Pelle both owed the arrears to another party and owned the horse, but he had sent the second Robert to sell it on his behalf; or that Robert son of Adam owed the arrears to Robert son of Pelle and that the horse belonged originally to the son of Adam, with the son of Pelle placing a private distraint on the animal as collateral for

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244 Walker, *Wakefield: Its History and People*, 1:109.
245 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 134.

the debt, which Robert son of Adam subsequently attempted to sell before the other Robert could make good on his distraint and seize the animal.

In any case, the decision to take the horse in question to Pontefract rather than Wakefield may be rooted in a desire for secrecy, rather than geographic convenience or a belief that the larger market at Pontefract would allow a better price to obtained. In every possible scenario Robert, be it the son of Adam or son of Pelle, was transporting and selling the horse illicitly, and therefore had to avoid notice by manorial officers or neighbours who might have known about the situation and reported the transgression, and be able to find a buyer who would be unaware of the circumstances behind the sale, or else unwilling or unlikely to tell anyone else about Robert's actions. All these criteria are fulfilled in choosing to sell the horse in Pontefract, with the smaller numbers of Wakefield tenants marketing there both reducing the risk that Robert would run into dangerous witnesses, and increasing the likelihood that he would be able to find an oblivious buyer— though, in any case, Robert was unable to escape the gaze of the manor court and its informants.

Towns, furthermore, were potentially important to tenants for reasons apart from the buying and selling of goods. The use of towns, and of the burgesses who lived there, as sources of credit for rural residents is well-documented across medieval England, and it is probable that some of the wealthier tenants of the manor of Wakefield were going to nearby towns to contract debts.[246] Arranging these contracts would have required more frequent travel to Wakefield and other nearby towns, enhancing the pull which these commercial centres exerted over rural residents.

Religious authority was not as clearly integrated with the manorial authority on Wakefield, as the court rolls do not often concern themselves with religious matters. The rolls do contain evidence of tenants, as would be expected, acting as local officers in ecclesiastical governance, with the tenant Philipot identified in 3rd March 1351 as 'lately churchwarden of Sandal'.[247] Presumably many more tenants than this

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246 Briggs, 'Credit and the Peasant Household Economy in England Before the Black Death', 244;
   Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside', 110–11.
247 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 22.

were fulfilling similar duties in parochial administration, though it is very rare to see tenants identified as such in the manor court records.

The court rolls contain some evidence of friction between the manor and church courts, reflecting common tensions around the limits of each institution's jurisdiction. The cases which indicate this friction follow a typical pattern for jurisdictional conflicts of this type, amercing tenants who had taken disputes to church courts which the manor believed it had the sole right to adjudicate, the formulation used on Wakefield describing these as 'matters neither testamentary nor matrimonial'.[248] Cases of this kind are, however, relatively infrequent across the court rolls, a possible indication that if there was tension between the church and manor administrations it was not particularly intense or hostile.

The engagement of Wakefield tenants in ordinary religious activities and their attendance at parish churches and chapels cannot be determined from the available evidence. The location of these churches and chapels, however, is known, as are the approximate boundaries of the parishes in Wakefield and the surrounding area, already shown in Figure 2.6.[249] As can be seen, the parish boundaries around Wakefield do not always align with the boundaries of the manor or its internal divisions, with the result that tenants in a number of graveships and townships were part of parishes that also included parts of manors outside of Wakefield. For these tenants, therefore, religious observances were also opportunities to socialise with the residents of neighbouring manors, sharing news with one another as well as potentially striking commercial or credit deals with their peers from outside Wakefield.

These large, inter-manorial parishes, while presenting opportunities for some tenants to mix outside the boundaries of the manor, could also pose additional barriers for attendance at religious services and ceremonies, owing to the distribution of churches and chapels within the parishes. Servicing a large area inevitably means that residents in some parishes would be living significant distances from their parish church or a nearby chapel, imposing long journeys to fulfil religious obligations. In

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248 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 114, 126, 221; Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, 96.
249 Moorhouse, 'Documentary Evidence for the Landscape of the Manor of Wakefield During the Middle Ages', 48–49.

Wakefield this is most apparent in the graveships of Scammonden and Holme, which were part of parishes that had their church in Dewsbury and Almondbury, respectively. Attending a service at these churches entailed journeys of anywhere between four and seven miles, across the rough terrain of the western uplands.

Alongside this travel within the parish, the Wakefield court rolls also record instances of tenants making much longer journeys, to locations even further afield, for the sake of religious observance. Take, for instance, this entry from 13th August 1350:

> John son of Richard Isbell at the suit of Thomas del Kerre of Stanley comes here in court and recognises that he broke an agreement with Thomas in this that he pledged to carry out a pilgrimage for him to St. James in Galicia and St. Mary Magdalene in *Aundernes* before Easter last, 28 March 1350, which he did not do.[250]

Of the two shrines referred to here only that of 'St. James in Galicia', almost certainly the church at Santiago, is know with any degree of confidence: the shrine of St. Mary Magdalene in Aundernes has not been identified.[251] Additionally, the fact that Thomas del Kerre was able to sub-contract this pilgrimage to another tenant suggests it was being undertaken as penance for some religious transgression, and in this sense it is intriguing that the case was judged before the manor court, when the agreement that was breached is more likely to have resulted from a church court ruling. This case is, furthermore, the only reference to tenants undertaking pilgrimages within the court rolls. The frequency with which pilgrimages were being undertaken, whether voluntary or involuntarily as in Thomas's case, therefore cannot be known from the available evidence. The case does, however, serve as a reminder that at least some proportion of Wakefield tenants were on occasion undertaking long journeys well outside of the bounds of the manor, or of the country.

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250 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 188.
251 Explained in Jewell, 188 n.1.

3.1.5: Information, Rumour, and the Taskscape

The exploration of the Wakefield taskscape laid out above has been complex and wide-ranging, and in closing this discussion of the taskscape I wish to draw out two elements from this analysis for further discussion: the social nature of much of the activity which occurred at Wakefield, and the concentration of tenants into a small set of central places. These two aspects of taskscape contributed to a widespread network of rumour and information exchange on the manor, the implications of which for the actions of tenants are examined below.

The social element of the Wakefield taskscape is already evident in the discussion above, which has highlighted the necessity of group action in much of the agricultural practice on the manor, in activities such as poaching, and through the large gatherings of people which occurred periodically for the sake of religious observances, fairs and markets, and meetings of the manor court and tourns. It is also evident from the court rolls that a significant amount of planning, co-ordination, and co-operation was being applied to illicit and violent activity on the manor, in addition to the more mundane and everyday activities outlined above. It is common, for instance, to find groups of tenants planning or carrying out assaults together, including both families and unrelated tenants working together. In November of 1338, to take one example, Thomas de Ketelsthorp was assaulted in Sandal by John le Shephird, aided by three of his sons.[252] Another group assault occurs in September 1379, this time involving more assailants and a greater degree of forward planning. In this instance eight men from Horbury were found to have conspired together to hire a ninth, William Wilkinson, to assault the Horbury grave, apparently in relation to a financial dispute between the grave, the eight conspirators, and other members of their tithing group.[253]

Group activity is also present for less violent action carried out on the manor, appearing frequently in relation to depasturing. One of the largest group actions recorded in the court rolls is a hedge-breaking and depasturing incident, recorded in the court session of the 3rd February 1349 and involving eighteen perpetrators:

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252 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 35.
253 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 1 recto.

An inquiry is to come at the next court as to whether John Melyn, Hugh son of Elias, John Elison, Robert Elison, William del Wro, Agnes del Wro, Julian de Lupsete, John Brunn of Horbury, Hugh Shoter, Robert son of William, Agnes Modisaul, Isolda Modisaul, Hugh son of John Melyn, John son of Jordan, Thomas de Horbir, John Hudson and Richard Hudson broke the hedges of William's enclosure in Horbury and trampled and depastured his grass with their beasts and cut and carried off his wood, or not.[254]

The social nature of such a broad range of the activity apparent on the manor is important to note in relation to the patterns of movement which the taskscape analysis reveals, in which tenants regularly left their settlement, graveship, and sometimes even the manor itself in order to visit central locations alongside other residents. Tenants left their settlement in order to access woods and other natural resources, might have had to leave their graveship to visit demesne mills, or visit the court or market in Wakefield town, and may have had to cross manorial boundaries in order to attend church services or visit markets in nearby towns. As so many of the tasks performed in these places were social, tenants were therefore in relatively frequent contact not only with the inhabitants of neighbouring villages and hamlets, but also with people from across the whole of the manor of Wakefield and often neighbouring manors as well. Despite their wide physical dispersal, the tenants of Wakefield were thus linked in a relatively dense social network, possessing direct or very close links with a great number of their fellow tenants on the manor and outside it.

The connections recorded between tenants in the Wakefield court rolls go some way in demonstrating the potential extent of the social networks on the manor. For most tenants the most frequent and intense connections are with their near neighbours in the settlements and graveships in which they lived. Nearly all tenants, however, also had broader connections across wider parts of the manor. Take, for instance, Richard Wythundes, whose appearances in the court rolls are the focus of two case studies later in this chapter. Richard lived in the graveship of Alverthorpe and most of his entries in the court rolls originate in Alverthorpe, recording credit

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254 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 72–73.

relationships between other tenants of the graveships, disputes over land and property, and involvement with manorial officers in the graveship. In addition to these local links, Richard also had connections to residents across the eastern graveships of the manor, such as Stanley, Thornes, and Horbury, acting as pledge or surety for tenants of neighbouring graveships and serving on juries in Horbury and Stanley. While Richard Wythundes is particularly well-documented, such connections are evidenced even among tenants with only a handful of appearances in the court rolls, such as William de la Grene, active in Stanley, Sandal, and Alverthorpe.

A particularly extensive network, highlighting the diversity of connections which could be acquired by Wakefield tenants, is evidenced by Richard Birstall, already noted above for his frequent appearances as a pledge between 1313 and 1316. Richard's main residence is uncertain. He appears in litigation in all parts of the manor but is absent from both the 1297 lay subsidy and 1309 survey. Though the surname Birstall suggests a connection with the settlement of that name in the Ossett graveship, one court entry gives his name as Richard de Birstall of Normanton, indicating either residence or origin in the subinfeduated vill of Normanton on the far eastern edge of the manor. Richard Birstall's involvement in the court reveals varied social connections with distant areas of the manor: while much of his connections are to tenants from the nearby eastern graveships, such as Stanley and Wakefield, he also stands as a pledge for residents of Holme, Rastrick, and Sowerby in the west, many miles from Richard's own settlements. Furthermore, in one session of the court Richard is listed as a juror in an inquiry into an allegation of theft in Hipperholme, suggesting not just ephemeral connections with the residents of the western parts of the manor, but a much deeper awareness of and involvement in their activities. Richard's jury service in these two distant areas, additionally, demonstrates a type of involvement in the affairs of distant settlements that was not only mediated through the institutions of the manor court, but could not have existed except in a large manor such as Wakefield, where a single set of institutions governed disparate collections of territory.

While broad links such as these did not replace the intense bonds that existed between close neighbours and residents of nearby settlements, as evidenced by

Richard Wythundes' dense connections with his neighbours in Alverthorpe, they did provide a greater level of connection to those living in far-flung settlements or graveships. With the force of Wakefield's manorial institutions pulling them together, tenants not only had strong and frequent contact with residents of distant settlements, but those residents were themselves more likely to have their own social connections with the original tenants' neighbours and peers from home. Thus, the manorial institutions of Wakefield, alongside other institutions with large jurisdictional reach such as the region's parishes, acted to engender a dense network of connections between tenants residing in distant locations. This situation contrasts greatly with that prevailing in many southern or midland manors, with their smaller manors and parishes, where institutions exerted less attraction outside of the village, and connections with outside settlements were likely more ephemeral.

The density of connections which manorial agency forged, with its regular coming-together of tenants from far-flung settlements and the frequent exposure of their misdeeds to one another through the activities of the manor court, is particularly important when considering the spread of gossip and rumour across the manor. Anthropology has long recognised the importance of rumour, gossip, and scandal— and particularly negative rumours about particular individuals— in creating or destroying the reputations and public standing of prominent community members. This link is commented upon by Max Gluckman, one of the earliest scholars to attempt to explicitly theorise rumour, gossip, and scandal, noting both the ubiquity of gossip across human societies, and its effect in checking the ambitions of leading individuals through scandal and bad reputation.[255] This analysis is furthered by Paine, who argues that gossip and rumour were actively manipulated by ambitious individuals, looking to advance their own interests and undermine their rivals by spreading good or bad rumours concerning themselves and others.[256]

Work by medievalists has affirmed this link between rumour, reputation, and self-interest in a medieval context, and at a variety of social levels. Wickham has examined the connection of rumour and reputation at the elite level, in regard to a long-running

255 Gluckman, 'Papers in Honor of Melville J. Herskovits', 307–13.
256 Paine, 'What Is Gossip About? An Alternative Hypothesis', 282–83.

conflict between two rival bishoprics in Tuscany, over the ownership of disputed lands and chapels.[257] The bishops involved in this dispute made extensive use of loud, eye-catching, and attention-grabbing public rituals in order to assert their rights in the disputed regions, with the elaborate and public nature of these actions engendering the spread of rumours and gossip regarding the bishops' activities. By spreading these positive rumours about themselves the bishops influenced local *fama*, the body of common knowledge in a given area that could affect legal decisions, with the intention of drawing upon this *fama* to support their claims when the dispute was litigated in court.[258]

In an urban English context, Craun has argued that town authorities were often greatly concerned with controlling the spread of gossip and rumour, harshly treating notorious rumour-mongers, on account of the deleterious effect that rumours could have on the reputations of urban notables, and consequently on their ability to properly conduct business.[259] Schofield, meanwhile, has noted the importance of rumour and reputation among the peasantry of medieval England, arguing that negative rumours and gossip could be deliberately spread to damage a rival's character, with consequences for the participation of victims of this kind of negative gossip in future legal proceedings.[260]

As has already been stated, the spread of news and rumour across the manor of Wakefield was facilitated by the movement of residents back and forth from a series of central sites, and of all of these sites the most powerful pull was exerted by the town of Wakefield. Much of this gravity was generated by the presence of the manor court, as the frequency of court sessions and the obligation of tenants to attend the court attracted a greater number of people on a more regular basis than any other place on the manor, placing Wakefield town in a central position among the webs of mobility and social connection that extended across the manor and the wider area. The strength of gravity of Wakefield was further enhanced by the presence of the market, held on the same day as court sessions, giving further encouragement for

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257 Wickham, Fenster, and Smail, 'Fama and the Law in Twelfth-Century Tuscany'.
258 Wickham, Fenster, and Smail, 'Fama and the Law in Twelfth-Century Tuscany', 22–24.
259 Craun, 'Fama and Pastoral Constraints on Rebuking Sinners: The Book of Margery Kempe', 191.
260 Schofield, 'Peasants and the Manor Court: Gossip and Litigation in a Suffolk Village at the Close of the Thirteenth Century', 36.

tenants to travel to Wakefield even if they had no particular business with the court and could have easily essoined.

While this attraction was powerful, it should not be overstated. In theory, all of the customary tenants of the manor were obligated to attend each session of the manor court, but it is clear from the court rolls that not all required to attend did so. Every session of the court records at least some absent suitors, either because they essoined themselves or because they simply did not turn up to the court. The number of direct witnesses to activity in the court would, furthermore, have been limited by the physical arrangement of the court building itself, though the exact nature of this arrangement is difficult to reconstruct. The medieval building was replaced in the eighteenth century with a new moot hall on the same footprint, which was itself demolished in 1913 leaving no surviving physical evidence.[261] There is some photographic evidence of this second moot hall, reproduced in Figure 3.3, showing its interior in 1913 and providing only a very limited impression of its size.

Buildings with a similar function to the Wakefield moot hall have been surveyed in the south and east of England, to which our limited knowledge of the Wakefield building can be compared. The largest of these surveyed halls was located in Poundstock, Cornwall, and had a measured internal space of 98m^2, from which a maximum standing capacity of 196 people has been calculated.[262] Although the full extent of the later moot hall at Wakefield is not shown in the available photographs, the impression given is that even a relatively packed hall would have struggled to comfortably accommodate a much larger audience than the Poundstock hall. How closely the internal dimensions of the later hall matched that of the medieval building is unknown, and the earlier structure likely had much less elaborate furnishings, but there is little evidence to suggest it was substantially larger.

Given that sessions of the manor court could involve hundreds of plaintiffs and defendants, pledges, jurors, and other involved parties, as well as many more tenants not involved in litigation but present to fulfil obligations of attendance, it was practically impossible for the entire body of suitors to be present within the court

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261 Michelmore and Edwards, 'The Records of the Manor of Wakefield', 245.
262 Weir, 'Aula Communitatis: The Community Hall in England, c. 1400 – 1640', 235.

Figure 3.3: Top: the interior of the Wakefield moot hall as it was in 1913, on the last session before the building was demolished. Bottom: the same building, empty. Both images courtesy of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

building throughout the whole of a session. Although many attendees at court were not likely to have spent a great deal of time observing the sessions themselves, theywere likely to have remained in town while the sessions continued, either to make use of the other amenities available there or out of necessity for tenants of the western graveships who lived too far from the town to make a return journey on the same day. Remaining in the town, it was easy for these tenants to quickly learn of events that had occurred in the parts of the sessions they had missed, and carry this news back with them to their own communities across the manor.

On account of these factors, the manor court was one of the most visible and exposed sites within the manorial taskscape, with the fewest links required for information learned at the court to be transmitted to other communities in the manor of Wakefield, and to connected sites outside of it. With tenants themselves, and the rumours and gossip they spread, moving through the central nexus of Wakefield to all other areas of the manor, Wakefield's residents would have found it harder to escape from their own social worlds into those of distant settlements, as malicious rumours, poor reputations, and other social fallout spread more easily across the full extent of the manor. A tenant who suffered a public loss of face or reputation in the manor court faced greater potential effect than if the same loss of reputation was exposed elsewhere, on account of news spreading quickly from the court to other areas of the manor. And conversely, tenants who had their reputations enhanced and strengthened in the manor court would have felt the positive effects of this more easily and more rapidly. Consequently, tenants were encouraged to defend their own reputations and attack their rivals more fiercely in the manor court than elsewhere, in order to contain or exacerbate rumours and news of notable incidents. In the remainder of this chapter I examine in more detail this intersection of the manorial taskscape and the social network it generated, the influence of reputation and rumour on tenants, and the ways in which the actions of tenants within the manor court can be interpreted as either responses to these pressures or efforts to take advantage of them.

3.2: Reputation and Manor Court Process

The influence of these colliding factors on the actions of peasants is clearly demonstrated through the operation of the manor court, which was replete with procedures which were difficult to participate in for litigants who had not retained good reputations, and which made prominent use of methods of judgement based more strongly on rumour and personal reputation than direct witnessing and hard proofs.

The involvement of rumour and common knowledge in medieval court procedures, rather than in social or commercial relationships, has been well-studied in continental Europe. The concept of *fama* as used in Italian courts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for instance, has already been discussed above. Wickham notes that, in this context, *publica fama* was a body of knowledge—regarding particular events, the standing or reputation of notable individuals, and of personal and institutional rights—known by everybody in a given region and therefore considered close to fact.[263] Italian jurists explicitly discussed the reliability of *fama* and its correct use during court trials, and litigants often presented *fama* in the court to strengthen their arguments, even in cases where written proofs and witness testimonies existed.[264] A similar situation was present in medieval France, where common knowledge was referred to as *notoire*. In French courts cases could be bought against individuals on the basis of *notoire*, though in trials themselves *notoire* was not considered a valid form of proof and other evidence would have to be introduced to secure convictions.[265]

English manor courts do not display as well-developed a history of jurisprudence in regard to rumour and common knowledge as is seen in these continental examples. Some researchers, nevertheless, have argued for a prominent position for rumour and reputation in the judgements rendered in manor courts. Schofield, for

263 Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', 4–5.
264 Wickham, Fenster, and Smail, 'Fama and the Law in Twelfth-Century Tuscany', 16–17, 19–20.
265 Akehurst, 'Good Name, Reputation, and Notoriety in French Customary Law', 82–84.

instance, has noted that devices such as jury trial and judgements rendered by the 'whole court' or 'whole of the vill', common in manor court trials, were often judgements based on reputation and local rumour. When using these procedures, the outcome of a trial hinged on the opinion that members of the jury or the community at large held about the disputing litigants, opinions which were formed in a large part by circulating rumours and the personal reputations of the parties in question.[266] Similar arguments have been made by Kane, who has argued that even when witnesses provided evidence in manor court trials much of the knowledge they provided was based on rumour and gossip rather than direct witnessing or first-hand knowledge.[267]

These methods of judgement, based around rumour as much as direct proofs, were in operation at Wakefield throughout the fourteenth century. While there is no evidence of judgements by the whole court or whole vill in the Wakefield court rolls, extensive use was made of jury judgements. The other main method of reaching judgements in the manor court was compurgation, which became less prominent through time as juries are brought to judge a greater proportion of cases. Between 1313 and 1316 juries are used in roughly half of cases where a method of judgement is recorded, with the other half made up largely of compurgation. By 1338, however, juries had already begun to outnumber compurgation by approximately four to one, and by 1379 compurgation had become even more rare, with the great majority of cases settled using juries.

If these juries were required to present reasoning for coming to a particular conclusion, this reasoning has not been preserved in the court rolls, and consequently jurors' methods of gathering information and consulting witnesses are not known. For some cases it is certainly plausible that juries could have found witnesses with first-hand experience of the events in question without much difficulty. Cases of depasturing, for instance, may have on many occasions been undertaken with the aim of generating as many witnesses to the act as possible, a possibility discussed in more detail in part four of this chapter. Furthermore, while other incidents may not have been courting attention from on-lookers in quite the same

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266 Schofield, 'Peasants and the Manor Court: Gossip and Litigation in a Suffolk Village at the Close of the Thirteenth Century', 11, 29.
267 Kane, 'Neighbourhood and Local Knowledge in Later Medieval England', 36.

way, a disregard for the presence of witnesses is apparent in some incidents recorded in the court rolls. See, for instance, this account of an assault brought before the court on 25th June 1316:

> Margery the Wryhte sues Agnes, d. of Geoffrey de Newebyggyng, for assaulting her in Crigleston Chapel on St. James' day, and breaking her head with a shingle. Agnes says she has already made terms and reparation for the said assault.[268]

Though the question for the court in this case was not whether the assault had taken place but instead whether or not it had already been compensated for, the description of the attack shows that Agnes was not concerned with secrecy, conducting her assault in a public place, the Crigglestone chapel, on a feast day. In other assaults occurring in public spaces the physical attack is combined with verbal abuse, drawing more attention to the attack rather than helping to keep it unnoticed, as can be seen in the following example from 15th November 1315:

> An inquisition of twelve finds that Henry the Truncer and his wife cursed [*maledixerunt*] Thomas de Holgate, the grave, because he struck Henry, and drew blood from him. And the said Henry struck the said Thomas in return, and drew blood from him. Both of them are amerced 12d.[269]

Aside from instances like these, where witnesses might have been easy to find, in other cases the court could also rely upon written proofs when assessing claims. The use of written evidence in the Wakefield manor court is rare, however, and is largely limited to the resolution of land disputes where the court rolls themselves could be consulted. This situation occurs, for instance, on the 6th October 1313, when a dispute over inheritance is resolved by searching the rolls for 1295 to determine the terms by which the disputed lands were held.[270] The court rolls were also sometimes searched to resolve disagreements over procedural aspects of trials. This happens on 13th January 1380, when John Machem, who was defendant in a plea of covenant

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268 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 145.
269 Lister, 88.
270 Lister, 3.

brought by Thomas Rose, requested the rolls be searched to prove that John had already been sued by Thomas over the same breach of covenant.[271]

Situations like these, where clear lines of evidence were available, are limited in their number and prominence in the court rolls. In most cases the extent of available evidence for jurors or the court is ambiguous, but in some cases it is clear that evidence would have been scarce and witnesses to an event hard to find or unreliable. This is especially noticeable in cases which centre on incidents that had taken place many years before they were brought to court. A circumstance of this kind occurs in John Drabel's poaching case, which has already been mentioned in this chapter, and was entered into the court roll as follows:

> 22nd April 1339: The jurors say that John Drabel and John son of Adam de Holne found a wounded hind which had been hit by an arrow outside the lordship of Holne, and which fled within the lordship and there it died twelve years ago, and they took its meat and carried it home and from there made their meal. They give 6s 8d for respite until the coming of the lord.[272]

The most obvious aspect of this case that would have precluded the availability of firm evidence is the gap of more than a decade between the deer being taken and the accusation being lodged against the two men in court. Given such a long period of time had passed, the jury investigating this case had no hope of uncovering any physical evidence that could confirm or deny the poaching accusation against the two men. Furthermore, the deer itself was killed and taken from the edges of the thinly-populated Holme graveship, where the likelihood of any other people being present to witness the event directly were substantially lower. The investigating jury, therefore, had limited options for how to assess the truth of this claim. In these circumstances the jury were likely restricted to a reliance on any rumours about the incident that were still circulating among the people of Holme, or else making a judgement based mainly on the reputations of John Drabel and John son of Adam, determining whether they seemed the sort of people who might have poached a deer in this way.

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271 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 4 verso.
272 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* 71.

The procedures for judging cases in the manor court, therefore, heightened the importance of rumour, and of the maintenance of good reputation, in determining success or failure in court. This importance was further enhanced in a range of other court procedures, not all to do with the judgement of cases, which required tenants to produce pledges, sureties, and other supporters to assist them in court. Many of these procedures have already been described in part one, and the most common are sureties for tenants wishing to essoin themselves from court, and also sureties assigned by the court to tenants who were repeatedly absent without providing their own essoin; sureties and pledges for defendants who were ordered to pay large fines or damage payments, or who had taken out substantial loans; pledges to keep the peace in the case of ongoing disputes that had erupted into violence; and pledges for compurgation or wager of law.

As has been discussed above, compuragtion was one of the main forms of judgement in fourteenth-century Wakefield, and was especially prominent in the first quarter of the century. Unlike most other forms of pledging, compurgation required litigants to bring a relatively large group of pledges each of whom would swear precise oaths that affirmed their account of the case under dispute.[273] Accordingly, maintaining a body of faithful and reliable friends was of great importance to those tenants who preferred not to leave all judgements in the hands of jurors who may not always have been well-disposed to them.

Pledges and sureties who were called upon to guarantee payments, keep the peace, or ensure attendance were financially liable if the tenant they had pledged for failed to abide by the rulings of the court or defaulted on their debts, introducing an element of material risk for much pledging. At Wakefield these risks seem to have been particularly acute for tenants who had stood as sureties for loans and other debts, as creditors frequently lodge debt cases against sureties for loans rather than the principal who had actually taken out the debt. John Attebarre, for instance, was sued for this reason by William Fisher on 2nd June 1340, with John ordered to pay 2s in damages to William for the default of a loan originally taken out by Richard

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273 Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 203–5.

Wythundes, for whom John had served as surety.[274] Given the real risk involved in standing as a pledge, therefore, potential pledges were likely to have been reluctant to stand for tenants who had histories of defaults or disobedience, and were not likely to win their cases or abide by orders of the court.

A final, though less common, aspect of Wakefield court procedure rested on the ability of tenants to find reliable supporters during litigation. This was representation by attorney, in which a litigant could be represented in court by another tenant, who would carry on the case on their behalf. The few incidents in the court rolls where litigants are represented by attorneys suggest that litigants seeking an attorney did not have to gain their approval beforehand, and that tenants nominated as attorney were not obligated to perform this role. In 1315, for instance, the plaintiff Thomas de Tothill gave the court two names when offering himself by attorney, allowing for either John Patrikes or Henry de Wakefield to represent Thomas depending on which of the two was willing or available.[275] Employing an attorney, therefore, relied upon a litigant possessing a trusted friend they could call upon, and who was in turn close enough to the litigant to agree to manage their case.

In all of these ways, successful engagement with the manor court was reliant on maintaining a good personal reputation, and controlling or inhibiting the spread of harmful and negative rumours. Conversely, this meant that rivals could damage an opponent's chances of success in the court by attacking their reputations or encouraging the spread of negative rumours, thus rendering it more difficult for their rival to access pledges and biasing juries against them. This could be achieved by spreading allegations of both real and fabricated wrongdoing, the latter proving effective even in situations where they were eventually disproved.[276] Given the importance of the manor court as a site from which information and rumours could quickly spread to other locations on the manor, the court itself was an ideal place in which to launch attacks on reputation, allowing news of an opponents misdeed to travel quickly across the manor and damage their reputation among the community at large.

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274 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 216.
275 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 69.
276 Craun, 'Fama and Pastoral Constraints on Rebuking Sinners: The Book of Margery Kempe', 198.

Some in-depth examples from the court rolls serve to illustrate how these attacks may have functioned in practice, the first of which is recorded in the 1379-80 court roll, involving the tenants John Broun and Robert Leche. These two tenants are involved in four cases against one another, all brought in the same court session in September 1379. Two are pleas of debt, both with John Broun as plaintiff and Robert Leche as defendant. The third is a complaint that Robert had seized and detained a cow belonging to John, and in the fourth John is accused of unjustly detaining 17d owed to Robert from an earlier credit purchase. In the same session Robert is involved in three further disputes. Two were brought by John Dudson, each time claiming that Robert had directed or allowed his dogs to attack John Dudson's sheep. In the third Robert is the plaintiff against John Diconson, alleging that this John had unjustly seized Robert's cow and held it to ransom for 3s 1d.[277] Whether these latter two disputes were related to the disagreements between Robert Leche and John Brown is unclear.

Most tenants on the manor were unlikely to become involved in this volume of litigation during a single session, and indeed some tenants appear in the court rolls fewer times over a whole year than Robert Leche appears in just this one session. However, while most tenants were not involved in them, tit-for-tat accusations of this kind, with a single pair or small group of litigants launching multiple claims against each other in one session, are not uncommon in the court rolls, and appear with particular frequency across 1379-80. Situations of this kind were enabled by the absence of any sort of time limit for tenants seeking to bring their cases to the court in Wakefield, and we have already seen above how incidents could be brought to the court many years after they had taken place. Wakefield was far from unique in lacking time limits on pleas, and Schofield has argued that, on other manors where regulations were similarly loose, tenants could save up allegations and offences committed against them, ready to be deployed all at once in order to achieve a greater effect.[278]

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277 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 1 recto.
278 Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside', 116.

Being able to bring a greater weight of accusations against an opponent, even if not all of these accusations were validated by the court, had the effect of turning the network of rumour and common knowledge against the rival from the very beginning of litigation. Casting aspersions on a rival's reputation and trustworthiness in this manner hampered their ability to succeed in litigation, for all the reasons outlined above, but also had the potential to jeopardise their future social relations, as they struggled to shake off a reputation for unreliability or untrustworthiness generated by action in the court.

This style of retaliatory litigation is not limited only to the original parties to a particular case, and may have also extended to family members, friends, or even opportunistic bystanders. John Dudson's suits against Robert Leche, for example, could have been brought to the court in support of John Broun's cases, helping to increase the scale of the legal attack against Robert. Alternatively, John Dudson may have brought these cases to take advantage of Robert's temporary weakness and diminished chances of success caused by John Broun's litigation, though proving any such link is difficult with the available evidence.

A clearer example of supporters piling-on to a dispute with additional litigation is provided by the court record of 2nd October 1338, in a series of pleas involving Robert son of Ivo, Hugh Viron, and a number of others. In this session of the court Hugh Viron brought three pleas against Robert son of Ivo, suing him for debts totalling 23d, accusing Robert of depasturing Hugh's corn, and finally alleging that Robert had assaulted Hugh.[279] An additional case is brought against Robert by a tenant called Roger Viron, evidently a relative of Hugh, who lodged a plea of trespass deemed by the court to have been false.[280] In addition to these, Robert son of Ivo is sued by three more tenants—Thomas Gardyner, William de Dewesbury, and Richard Proudefoot—all in pleas of debt.[281] Given the familial relationship between Hugh and Roger Viron, the false claim lodged by Roger is likely to have been made in support of Hugh's original litigation, attempting to boost his chances of success against Robert by casting more doubt on the latter's conduct, trustworthiness, and reputation by

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279 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 3–4.
280 Troup, 4.
281 Troup, 5.

exposing more of his alleged misdeeds. The motivations of the latter three tenants cannot be constructed with certainty, especially as the dates at which the debts in question were incurred are not recorded in the court rolls. That all three cases were brought to the court at the same time as Hugh and Roger were trying to sue Robert may have been a coincidence, or possibly they were the natural consequence of Robert's actions outside of the court in the previous weeks attracting an unusual level of enmity from other tenants. An alternative explanation, however, is that the suits brought by Hugh and Roger Viron encouraged the other three plaintiffs to bring their cases at that particular moment, the parties involved hoping that involvement in a larger number of cases at the same time would push Robert to acquiesce, or else prejudice jurors or potential pledges against him, thus paving the way to smoother victories for Robert's legal enemies.

These case studies demonstrate the importance of maintaining face in the public setting of the manor court, and the potential consequences for tenants who had failed to do so. As the examples of Robert Leche and Robert son of Ivo show, tenants who suffered even a temporary loss of reputation through conflicts played out in the manor court could easily find themselves subject to a mass of litigation they may have struggled to fight, brought by supporters of their original opponent or even unrelated parties. Not only did this volume of litigation expose them to greater material loss if they were not able to refute all the allegations brought, but the existence of large numbers of pleas made the tenant less likely to succeed in the court at all, as the public reputation which was central to success in much of the court process buckled under the weight of allegations, whether spurious or genuine.

The extent to which court pile-ons of this kind had a long-term effect on the ability of litigants to succeed in the court is less certain, however. Subsequent to his dispute with John Broun, Robert Leche's remaining appearances in the 1379-80 court roll are of a relatively mundane character. Robert appears largely as a defendant in debt cases, although he is plaintiff in a plea of debt at least once. This pattern could be interpreted as representative of an unwillingness or reticence to actively engage with the court following his experience with John Broun, though it is also not an unusual pattern for a person of middle or lower wealth and status, especially in the

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rolls of the late fourteenth century, which are overwhelmingly concerned with debt. Robert son of Ivo displays a similar pattern in his appearances following the dispute with Hugh and Roger Viron. Though he appears primarily as a defendant in debt cases, Robert was not entirely unsuccessful in this litigation, winning two and losing three cases.[282] Robert was, furthermore, the plaintiff in one debt case, against Thomas Gardyner, but the judgement of this case was delayed through the rest of 1339, and so the outcome is uncertain.[283] That these two tenants were able to return to relatively normal engagement with the court after such intense periods of claim and counter-claim suggests that the loss of reputation through litigation was in general an acute problem, capable of causing significant short-term stress but having a limited impact on the ability of tenants to successfully navigate court procedures in the long term. Their ability to engage successfully with the court, however, may not have been the only concern that Wakefield's tenants had when deciding how to conduct their court cases, as I will now turn to consider.

3.3: Reputation and Rumour Outside of the Court

Success in the manor court was not the only field in which Wakefield tenants were motivated to protect their reputations, as many aspects of economic life on the manor were also closely-linked to reputation. This link between economic activity and personal reputation is most obvious in the case of credit and debt, as issues of debt occupied a great amount of the effort of the Wakefield manor court. Credit networks among the peasantry have also been well-studied by other manorial scholars, providing ample points of comparison for the Wakefield evidence. Outside of credit,

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282 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* 22, 74, 90, 187 251.

283 This case, which also involved accusations against Robert, begins on 11th June 1339, in Troup, 86; a jury had been empanelled by 7th April 1340 (Troup, 186), but their judgement was respited until beyond the end of the court roll, (Troup, 206).

access to mutual assistance was for many tenants an important factor in maintaining a sufficient pool of agricultural labour, for which a good reputation was also essential.

As was typical for English manors,[284] accusations of unpaid debt have an overwhelming presence on manor court rolls, with few other kinds of litigation brought before the court as frequently as debt cases. The dominance of debt litigation, however, takes some time to establish itself in Wakefield. During the early years of the fourteenth century the bulk of court business is made up of land transfers and the entry of new rents, with pleas of debt representing approximately 10% of all cases between 1313 and 1316. By the middle of the century, however, debt cases constitute nearly half of the litigation recorded by the court, and this pattern carries through the later decades: in the year 1379-80 debt cases make up 55% of all the entries on the court rolls. It should also be noted that this debt litigation represents only credit transactions which were brought before the courts. There were few institutions operating in rural England that regularly recorded contracted, rather than defaulted, loans among the peasantry, and as such there was almost certainly a much higher number of successful loans, repaid on-time and in full, that are not recorded in the court rolls.[285]

The roles of creditor and debtor on Wakefield were not mutually exclusive, and many tenants appear in the court rolls as both defendants and plaintiffs in debt cases, a common occurrence in manor courts across the country.[286] There were some individuals, however, who appear in the court rolls as only creditor or debtor. The tenant Robert Wolf, for instance, is involved in debt cases only as a plaintiff, though this does not necessarily imply Robert had no debts; instead, this may indicate that Robert was reliably able to pay his debts, or was contracting debts with creditors outside of the manor's jurisdiction—such as burgesses from Wakefield town—and hence prosecuted for default in other courts. Tenants involved in the Wakefield credit market came from a range of backgrounds, including both those who were clearly of

284 Briggs, 'Credit and the Peasant Household Economy in England Before the Black Death', 241; Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside', 108.
285 Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, 12, 15-6.
286 Schofield, 'Access to Credit in the Early Fourteenth-Century English Countryside', 110–14.

significant wealth and standing in the community and tenants who appear to have been of middling or lesser wealth.

Within the court rolls a greater number of debt actions are made against tenants of middle and high wealth than are lodged against poor tenants, though the extent to which this reflects a real pattern rather than a distortion of the evidence is uncertain. The better-off tenants are more prominent in the court rolls as a whole, and the dominance of this group in debt litigation may represent a general bias within the court rolls which over-states their activity. On the other hand, the more frequent appearances of the wealthier set of tenants may reflect a genuine incidence of greater involvement in credit networks by this group. Briggs has argued that this is the case for the Cambridgeshire manors which he has studied, the greater involvement of the well-off, landed villagers in credit reflecting their greater desire and ability to leverage credit for long-term gains.[287]

Although I have not analysed the Wakefield credit market in the same depth as Briggs, there are indications within the court rolls that wealthier tenants were leveraging credit for long-term gains in a similar manner to Briggs' tenants in Cambridgeshire. For instance, while most tenants at Wakefield were using loans in order to purchase small amounts of grains, hay, or livestock, a smaller group of tenants were contracting debts in order to gain access to more substantial productive assets. Leases for mills, for instance, were often bought on credit, a state of affairs attested directly through suits for defaults on leases and indirectly through the many sureties and pledges which mill lessees were required to bring.[288] Furthermore, while most tenants used credit to purchase livestock in small amounts, only one or two animals at a time, by the late fourteenth century a minority were taking out loans for large herds, such as Thomas, William, and John de Whimwal, who bought twenty cows apiece from John de Savil for loans of 33s 4d each, and which all three defaulted on in January 1380.[289] These large loans were clearly not fulfilling short-term needs—in the lay subsidy of the previous century nearly all West Yorkshire

287 Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England,* 63–64.
288 See, for instance, the lessees of mills and their pledges in 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 2 verso.
289 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 5 recto.

households were getting by with only a single cow—and resemble in some respects the purchases of cattle on credit with an eye for quick sale on the meat market that Briggs observes in Cambridgeshire.[290]

While wealthy tenants were making complex arrangements of loans in the hope of accumulating substantial gains in the long term, the widespread reliance of poorer tenants on credit transactions may be related to the seasonal nature of agricultural productivity and income, where income came into households mainly at particular times of the year where crops or livestock could be marketed. Tenants with smaller landholdings were particularly exposed to shortfalls in their income, as many peasants held lands barely sufficient to sustain a single family for a whole year, and thus faced recurring shortages that had to be covered using credit.[291] Even substantial tenants, possessed of assets more than enough to supply their own household needs, may have frequently found themselves in need of credit, either to make up for the often limited availability of circulating currency in the fourteenth century,[292] or to meet the substantial capital costs of purchasing large quantities of livestock or acquiring leases to demesne mills, vaccaries, and similar franchises.[293] Continuing access to credit was therefore fundamental to nearly all tenants on the manor of Wakefield, providing the capital that richer tenants needed for large purchases, and keeping both rich and poor alike in a steady supply of cash as the availability of coinage fluctuated and incomes waxed and waned over the year.

Economic prosperity for the residents of Wakefield was not only dependent on credit, however, and many peasants may also have been bound to each other through a need for mutual assistance in agriculture. Recent research on medieval agriculture has argued that peasant agriculturalists were practising a suite of techniques, in both arable and pastoral agriculture, that required substantially higher labour inputs than the profit-oriented techniques pursued on the demesne lands that have provided

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290 Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, 54–55.
291 Briggs, 'Credit and the Peasant Household Economy in England Before the Black Death', 231–32.
292 Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, 201–4; Mayhew, 'Money and the Economy', 216.
293 Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, 54–55; Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 20.

most of our knowledge of medieval farming techniques.[294] The use of these techniques was particularly important to smallholders, who needed to make use of labour-intensive methods in order to enhance the productivity of their land and ensure that basic needs could be met. The labour requirements of some of the most important agricultural tasks were such that they required the participation of the whole household, with activities such as intensive weeding in the summer necessitating the participation of men, women, and children.[295]

Maintaining the large pool of available labour required for this type of agricultural management was not guaranteed for all households, however, especially during a period like the fourteenth century with many episodes of acute crisis. While events such as famine or outbreaks of disease are often discussed by historians primarily in terms of mortality, it should also be remembered that starvation and illness could incapacitate household members even in situations where they ultimately survived, and that events such as the famine of the early fourteenth century or the plague of 1349 would have featured periods of labour shortage for many households alongside or in advance of mortality. Outside of these crisis moments, furthermore, households could also suffer from losses of labour as individuals became subject to violence or accidental injury that rendered them unable to work, or were prevented from working through imprisonment or because they were called upon to perform official duties, among other individual circumstances. While wealthier households may have been able to make up for this shortage of household labour with hired workers, smaller landholders with lower incomes were not likely to be able to do so on a regular basis, forcing them instead to make further use of credit to hire labourers, or turn to their neighbours or friends for reciprocal assistance.

Some degree of mutual assistance may have been necessary even among the wealthier tenants on the manor, given the high cost and limited availability of heavy equipment, such as ploughs, and draught animals in numbers necessary to use them. Among peasant communities ownership of both ploughs and sufficient numbers of

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294 Myrdal and Sapoznik, 'Technology, Labour, and Productivity Potential in Peasant Agriculture: England, c.1000 to 1348', 194–96.

295 Myrdal and Sapoznik, 'Technology, Labour, and Productivity Potential in Peasant Agriculture: England, c.1000 to 1348', 205–6.

draught animals to operate was rare, even among households with relatively large holdings: in County Durham fewer than half of households with more than ten acres of land possessed ploughing equipment.[296] Wakefield lacks equivalent inventories of peasant farming equipment, though the assessments for the 1297 lay subsidy do record peasant livestock, including draught animals.[297] During this period, and through the fourteenth century, oxen remained the preferred animal for ploughing on both peasant and demesne lands in West Yorkshire,[298] and so their presence in the subsidy provides a rough guide for how many households would have been able to organise ploughing through their own resources.

In total 98 households from the manor of Wakefield were assessed in the 1297 subsidy, a number which excludes the 22 households in the vill of Wakefield, which encompassed the town and had a distinctly non-agricultural character with only two recoded oxen. Of the 98 rural households, 45 possessed only a single ox, and 28 had no oxen at all. The size of peasant plough-teams in the Middle Ages were variable and poorly-evidenced, but even with a small team of only two oxen the lay subsidy data suggest that fewer than two-thirds of Wakefield households were able to form a plough team using only their own livestock.[299] If a larger team of four oxen was the standard the rates of self-sufficiency are even lower, with only eight households, less than 10% of the total, owning four oxen. As with labour, the options for households without access to this equipment or reserves of animal-power were limited to assistance from neighbours and friends or acquisition through credit,[300] in either case requiring good relations and a trustworthy reputation on order to access.

Both mutual assistance and credit access became more difficult for individuals who had acquired poor reputations or were widely regarded as unreliable or untrustworthy, as their neighbours and associates lost faith that such individuals

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296 Myrdal and Sapoznik, 'Technology, Labour, and Productivity Potential in Peasant Agirculture: England, c.1000 to 1348', 199.
297 Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidies,* 89–115 lists most of the vills which composed the manor of Wakefield under the wapentake of Agbrigg. Records of the Morley wapentake, where the remainder of the manor was located, have not survived.
298 Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation: The Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066 to 1500*, 106–109, 216–17.
299 See Langdon, 72, for discussion of peasant plough-teams.
300 Langdon, 126–29.

would be able or willing to repay debts or return favours. Briggs highlights this relationship in the context of rural credit, arguing that lenders were only likely to give loans to those whose personal histories suggested they would be able to repay, and a similar connection between reputation and credit access is drawn by Rosser in the context of guilds and fraternal associations.[301] On account of these links, economic prosperity for virtually all tenants on the manor of Wakefield was dependent on maintenance of a good reputation, and with that reputation access to much-needed credit as well as mutual assistance and co-operation from neighbours. Perhaps the only exceptions to this requirement would have been tenants of the most extreme wealth, who may have been able to use that wealth to draw other tenants into social and economic dependence even if they were not personally well-liked. The existence of any such tenants, however, remains hypothetical, as no examples of tenants operating in such a fashion are found within the Wakefield court rolls.

3.3.2: Case Studies

Given the extent to which good reputation was central to successful life on the manor, any damage caused to an individual's reputation could have deeply detrimental long-term effects on their household's economic well-being. When discussing the activity of tenants in the manor court, this could mean that the immediate material effects of losing a court case were outweighed by the long-term impact of the reputational damage or negative rumours caused a loss in court, as credit became difficult to access and assistance harder to come by. On account of this long-term impact, litigants in some cases may have been motivated to pursue cases to an extent that seems disproportionate to the level of material risk involved for either party.

This dynamic is demonstrated through a case study involving Robert Wolf and Richard Wythundes, who were involved in a dispute over the years 1348 and 1349. The core of this conflict was a disagreement over the terms of a two-year lease of a meadow from Richard to Robert, though by the time it was brought to the court in the

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301 Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, 66; Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages*, 156–57.

21st October 1348 the scope of the dispute had widened to include accusations of slander and low-value debts:

> An inquiry is to come as to whether Robert Wolf defamed Richard Wythundes and called him false and a robber to his damages; and as to whether Richard broke an agreement with Robert relating to a meadow demised to Robert for the term of two years, or not. Richard cannot deny that he unjustly detains from Robert 6d for bread sold to him; he is to satisfy and is amerced.[302]

The value of the meadow which is the centre of the dispute, and of the lease which Robert had taken for it, are not recorded in the rolls as the case is never fully prosecuted, such that the exact value of the meadow to either party cannot be determined with certainty. Whatever the value of the meadow, it is clear that both Richard and Robert were willing to go to great lengths in order to defend their rights to it, employing court procedures that were rarely used in any circumstances.

Both Richard Wythundes and Robert Wolf were frequent participants in manor court litigation, though the nature of their engagement with the court is very distinct. Richard appears in the court rolls from 1314 until the 22nd December 1349, when his wife Matilda is listed as the executor of the deceased Richard's estate.[303] Richard was most active in the graveship of Alverthorpe, and frequently appears in the rolls as a defendant in debt cases, being sued for debt fourteen times from 1338 to 1340 and 1348 to 1349, while appearing as a plaintiff for debt only once, on 5th November 1339.[304] As well as being involved in manorial credit networks, Richard was also active in the local land market, though as with his recurrent indebtedness his activity in this field is also suggestive of financial insecurity. While Richard is recorded selling land three times between 1314 and 1316 and once in 1348, he never appears in the court rolls to purchase land.[305]

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302 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 13.
303 Jewell, 162.
304 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 138.
305 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 4, 54, 150; Jewell, 6.

Despite the financial difficulties implied by this pattern of appearances, Richard also appeared to have held some degree of standing within his community. Richard was active in official positions on the manor, for instance, serving as an ale-taster for Alverthorpe on 16th April 1316, and serving as juror three times, on 23rd April 1314, 23rd April 1339, and 2nd June 1340.[306] Furthermore, Richard also appears as a pledge six times, for six different tenants, over the course of eight years. Occupying these positions implies that, despite his recurrent financial difficulties, Richard occupied a trusted position in the minds of many of his fellow tenants, who called on Richard as a pledge and approved his selection as a manorial officer. The overall impression of Richard given in the court rolls, then, is of an individual relatively well-integrated with the social life of the community in Alverthorpe, retaining respect among his peers even while suffering from material insecurity.

In contrast to Richard, Robert Wolf's history in the court rolls suggest a greater degree of financial security, but much less engagement with the operation of the court and other local institutions. Robert's career in the court begins slightly later than Richard, appearing from 1338 onward, but he is present in court cases with similar frequency, appearing in court twenty-two times from 1338 and 1340, and on forty-one occasions from 1348 to 1350. Robert Wolf stops appearing in the court rolls after 1350, possibly because he, too, had died during the worst period of plague on Wakefield, though unlike Richard his death is not explicitly recorded.

Across his time in the court rolls Robert appears as a frequent plaintiff in debt cases, bringing twenty pleas of debt against other tenants in this period, while never appearing as a defendant for debt. Similar implications of secure wealth are evident in Robert's engagement with the Wakefield land market, where he appears purchasing land once in 1339 and twice more in 1349 and 1350, but is not recorded selling land at any point.[307] Despite these many appearances as a litigant, however, Robert Wolf is not recorded in the court as a juror or manorial official in the way that Richard is, though the evidence presented by the court rolls make it difficult to determine if this

306 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 42, 128; Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 76, 223.
307 Troup, 42; Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 75, 174.

was on account of a personal preference or because of opposition from other members of the community.

Regardless of his lack of engagement with the operation of the court, however, Robert's appearances indicate that he was ranked among the wealthier tenants of the manor. Robert was active in the local land market, continually expanding the size of his holdings, and was also a major creditor, implying that he possessed a large enough income and surplus production to supply a substantial number of loans to other tenants each year. While this wealth may have insulated Robert from concerns of reputation to some extent, as he appears to have rarely if ever relied on credit himself and was not likely to have been reliant on assistance from others in managing his lands and herds, Robert's frequent litigation required that he maintain good standing at least among those tenants who were influential in the court, and who would have judged the various pleas that Robert brought.

Though both Richard and Robert display very different personal circumstances, both had reason to defend their reputations in the court, though Richard might have felt this more strongly. Most obviously, Richard needed to maintain a good reputation in order to retain access to the loans on which he appeared to have been heavily dependent. In addition this, Richard's participation in official roles and duties also required that he maintain good standing among his peers, such that they would trust him to exercise these offices effectively. And while Robert's greater wealth may have insulated him to some extent from the vagaries of rumour and gossip, his heavy involvement as a plaintiff in the manor court also required a good local reputation, in order to win over juries or secure compurgation pledges, and therefore reliably achieve victory in court.

The court rolls indicate that both Richard and Robert made extensive investment in the court case regarding the leased meadow. This escalation begins on the 20th January 1349, when an inquiry passes a judgement in favour of Robert. Apparently unwilling to let this stand, Richard requested that the case be re-examined by an attaint jury of twelve jurors, spending 12d in order to do so.[308] On the 3rd March 1349 Richard's attaint jury duly overturns the prior judgement and rules the case in his

308 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 64.

favour. At this point Robert, like Richard before him, chooses not to acquiesce to the ruling, and has a second attaint jury convened in order to examine the ruling yet again, this time paying 2s for a jury of twenty-four men to be impanelled. This attaint returns its verdict on the 17th March, but despite a favourable ruling Robert fails to prosecute, and the case is not brought to a definitive conclusion, and both Richard and Robert are amerced.[309] No further disputes between Richard and Robert appear in the court rolls after this point, though this may have more to do with Richard's death before the end of the year rather than a peaceful settlement between the two men being reached.

The use of two attaint juries over the course of this dispute represents an extraordinary level of commitment to victory in a manor court case. Not only were attaints expensive— Richard paying 12d and Robert 2s for their attaints— they were also risky. If an attaint jury returned the same verdict as the original jury on the case, the litigant who had summoned the attaint could be imprisoned, as happened in Wakefield to John son of Robert Pollard and his wife Alice after requesting an attaint jury in 1314.[310] Perhaps on account of these costs and risks, the use of attaints in Wakefield was exceptionally rare: Robert and Alice are the only tenants who make use of an attaint between 1314 and 1316, only three are summoned between 1338 and 1340, none at all are summoned between 1350 and 1352, and Richard and Robert's attaints represent the only times the procedure is deployed between 1348 and 1350.

The dispute between Richard and Robert, then, involved the use of an exceptionally rare court procedure, the risk of imprisonment for both men, and upfront costs not present in other forms of litigation, all over the lease of a patch of meadow for only two years, and which in the end saw both parties amerced and no financial damages or material reward for either side. Given this, why did both Richard Wythundes and Robert Wolf make this level of investment in a case that ultimately saw no material reward for either of them?

The long-term effects of lost reputation, as have been laid out above, combined with the public nature of the manor court, may hold the answer. Rather than looking

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309 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 85, 91.
310 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 42.

only to the immediate consequences of their victory or defeat, Richard and Robert may instead have been acting with an eye to the effect of the dispute on their reputations. The effects of a loss in the public forum of the manor court may have been particularly relevant here, as the neighbours, friends, and associates of either man would lose faith in their reliability and good standing if Richard or Robert were shown to be unable to defend their rights in public. The pressures of reputation-management and the highly public nature of action in the manor court, therefore, encouraged an extreme level of commitment in this case, as neither party wished to back down from the conflict first and therefore lose face in the court, where they were exposed to the critical gaze of friends and potential future allies, either directly or through networks of talk and rumour. How the result of the case really did affect either Richard or Robert, however, cannot be known. As has already been stated, Richard died less than a year after the dispute reached its resolution, and Robert's survival after the turbulent plague years is uncertain.

3.4: Taking Advantage of Taskscape and Visibility

The case studies examined above show how the inter-connectedness of local and regional institutions at Wakefield worked with the importance of reputation in everyday life to constrain and influence the actions of tenants. These forces, however, were not always oppressive. Wily tenants, rather than being limited by the density of the social network and the greater visibility it lent to public actions, could instead take advantage of these dynamics to enhance their own reputation, bring attention to the misdeeds of others, or push their rivals into particular forms of retaliation.

A final case study will demonstrate how this could be achieved, with Richard Wythundes appearing once more, this time in a conflict with William Gerbot which also began in 1348. Unlike the dispute between Richard and Robert Wolf, this conflict

appears only in a single entry from the court session held on the 21st October 1348, with Richard initiating the litigation:

> An inquiry is to come as to whether William Gerbot broke an ash of Richard Wythunde's and trampled and depastured Richard's grass and corn with his beasts and also whether he defamed Richard saying that he killed his uncle to his damages, or not.[311]

It is clear from this entry that there was a pre-existing enmity between the two men, with William attacking Richard outside of the court. Whether there was any truth to William's accusation of murder is not clear, as judging such allegations was well outside the manor court's jurisdiction. However, the fact that Richard remained a free man both at this stage and in subsequent sessions of the court suggests that either no case was brought against him for murder, or if he had been charged that he was successfully acquitted. It is also not clear how much damage William was able to inflict on Richard through his depasturing attack, as the resolution of this case, and thus the amount of any damages that might have been awarded, is not recorded in the rolls. Comparison to other cases involving the destruction of crops and trees suggests the damages were not likely to have been especially large: some such incidents result in as little as a half-penny of damage, while damages in the most serious cases of depasturing is valued at 40d.

Given that the motivating incident behind William's attack on Richard's crops was the alleged death of the former's uncle, the actual substance of his actions appears underwhelming as a retaliation, unlikely to result in significant material damage to Richard. Despite the limited extent of the material damage that depasturing could cause it remained a common means of attacking opponents and rivals at Wakefield, constituting one of the most common types of trespass recorded in the rolls.

The court rolls are replete with accusations of depasturing, though the typical depasturing case records little beyond the alleged perpetrator, the victim of the

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311 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 13.

attack, and the value of damage caused, with the type of crop destroyed appearing as a common additional detail. The following examples, selected from across the rolls, are representative of the majority of recorded depasturing cases:

14th November 1338: An inquiry finds that Walter Wright depastured the grass of John Gerbot with his beasts at Alvirthorp, damage 2d. He is to satisfy and is amerced 4d.[312]

14th July 1340: Thomas Roller <puts himself> has a day at the next court to wager his law that he did not depasture with his beasts the grass of John Attebarre in the meadows of Neuton, to John's damage 12s.[313]

9th September 1350: An inquiry finds that James de Halle, John son of Thomas cleric, John son of Richard de Osset (3d each) and Henry Shephird, with their beasts depastured and trampled the lady's park at Sandal called le Tonnyng, to the lady countesses' damages taxed at 12s. They are to satisfy and are amerced.[314]

Acts of depasturing such as these could have occurred for a variety of reasons, and the court rolls rarely assign motivations or record enough detail of incidents to allow a motivation to be inferred. Some instances of depasturing may well have been motivated by practical concerns, such as scarcity of grass leading tenants to illicitly graze their animals in their neighbours' fields; other incidents are clearly accidental, caused by unsupervised animals finding their way into other tenants' fields.[315] However, it is also clear in many cases that depasturing was undertaken for more than material gain, but for symbolic reasons. Numerous entries in the court rolls record depasturing facilitated by tenants cutting through hedges or fences to allow their animals access, in concert with further destruction such as the felling of trees

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312 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 22.
313 Troup, 234.
314 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 258.
315 See, for instance, Troup, 97, where a depasturing incident is explicitly blamed on a defective fence allowing grazing animals to pass from one enclosure to another unsupervised.

while their animals grazed. This suite of deliberate actions is apparent in the following examples of depasturing cases:

3rd February 1349: John Eliot, Henry de Hill, Henry Presteknave and John Godale have a day to make law that they did not break the hedges of William de Gayrgrave's enclosure in Horbury with their beasts nor cut and carry off William's trees, viz young oaks, alder, hawthorn, hazel and holly to damages of 20s, pledge for the law each for the other.[316]

23rd December 1350: Also an inquiry is to be held at the next court to find whether or not the same Isolda broke and carried away the fence of the said William, and, further, whether she depastured the corn of the said William, as she is charged.[317]

Many such incidents of fence-cutting, depasturing, and tree-felling had been carried out as part of pre-existing disputes between tenants. This, of course, was the case in the conflict between Richard Wythundes and William Gerbot that is being examined here. In addition, depasturing also appears as part of the set of retaliatory cases that were lodged by Hugh Viron and Robert son of Ivo against each other, as has already been discussed in part two of this chapter.

Depasturing has also been recorded as a method of attack outside of the peasant context being dealt with here, appearing among more elevated social classes and in parts of England quite distant from Wakefield. Conflicts among the gentry of East Anglia, for instance, have been recorded as involving a nearly identical suite of actions as William employed against Richard— breaking into fields, felling trees, and herding animals to trample and destroy a rival's crop— and which are described as a supreme affront against the victim of the attack, even if the material damage was minor.[318]

Clearly, then, depasturing had significant cachet among the people of fourteenth-century England, being a popular method of furthering disputes among rural people

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316 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 72.
317 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 14.
318 Williamson, *Rabbits, Warrens, and Archaeology*, 15–16.

of a variety of social classes and across much of the country. The reason why depasturing was so widely preferred over direct violence or forms of attack with a potential for greater material damage may by hinted at by the use of depasturing with gentry feuds. The use of depasturing by gentry accords with observations made by Hyams about the nature of gentry feuds in medieval England. Hyams argued that violent conflicts among the gentry were undertaken with the primary intention of causing damage to the public reputation of rivals rather than the greatest amount of material damage.[319] Depasturing, therefore, might be better seen as a means ultimately of attacking reputation, rather than solely an effort to damage crops.

In this sense, depasturing achieves its effect not just through its direct impact on property, but also through the manipulation of rumour networks of the kind that were active and extensive on the manor of Wakefield. The actions required to perform a depasturing attack were difficult to perform secretly, requiring a group of animals to be herded to the appropriate field, hedges or fences to be cut through, the animals herded into the field to uproot crops and grass, trees cut down, and finally the animals rounded up and herded back out again. The presence of large groups of noise-making animals is particularly important here, rendering depasturing not only visually prominent but also distinctly audible.

These qualities made depasturing attacks visible and noticeable, a form of public provocation and humiliation which could be easily witnessed directly in the field itself. Following this, news of depasturing could be spread quickly by initial witnesses to others through the social network of the manor, knowledge of the incident quickly reaching the ears of associates and friends of the target. In order to contain the spread of this negative rumour, and avoid the impression that they were unable to adequately protect their rights and holdings, victims of depasturing had to make an equally public retaliation, thereby becoming drawn into a potentially damaging feud. In the specific context of the dispute between Richard Wythundes and William Gerbot, the act of depasturing is associated with slander of Richard by William. By linking this slander to a noticeable, public depasturing attack William was able to amplify the spread of his allegation against Richard, alerting more people to the murder

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319 Hyams, *Rancor & Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 211–13.

accusation as it spread alongside news of the depasturing, and magnifying the potential reputational damage that both the slander and the depasturing could cause.

Conclusion

The evidence of the court rolls, as laid out above, demonstrates that tenants at Wakefield were as concerned for their reputation as residents of any other part of medieval England. We have seen that this concern for reputation arose out of practical considerations: reputation affected the ability of tenants to engage with and achieve victory in the manor court, and to maintain their economic success and prosperity outside of the court. Tenants were, therefore, motivated to vigorously defend their reputation in public spaces, for the good of their long-term success and well-being.

The size of Wakefield, however, did little to help tenants escape from the webs of rumour and gossip that could often be so damaging to members of bounded, close-knit communities. The taskscape analysis performed above reveals that, despite being physically dispersed, the residents of Wakefield and surrounding regions were drawn together by the influence of their governing institutions, whether these were secular or ecclesiastical in nature. While tenants at Wakefield remained most closely and intensely connected to people from their own or nearby settlements, the institutional agencies which operated across the manor also pulled them into a broader social network. This larger network rendered tenants more closely-connected and involved with residents of distant settlements, and facilitated the spread of news and rumour across otherwise disparate communities. As a result, there were few places on the manor where tenants could escape the influence of rumour or create new, unblemished reputations.

In some particularly central places, such as the manor court in Wakefield, tenants were in some respects more exposed than anywhere else, their actions witnessed

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and quickly reported to a much greater number of people than might be the case on a smaller manor. On account of this institutional influence, reputations at Wakefield could be even more vulnerable, and defending them even more difficult, than was the case on other, smaller manors. While this wide network of news and rumour made tenants vulnerable in some respects, we can also see how more unscrupulous tenants could take advantage of the same network, encouraging negative rumours through attention-grabbing public actions that damaged their rivals and invited strong, public responses.

Thus, we can see that Wakefield tenants did display a concern for publicity and reputation, but unlike in other areas already subject to historical study, this was not necessarily rooted in physical closeness and a fear of direct witnessing. Instead, the concern for reputation at Wakefield was encouraged by the influence of shared institutions across and beyond the manor, and an awareness among tenants of a wide web of social connections, information, and rumour that bound the manor together.

Chapter 4: Authority, Officials, and Lordship

During the manor court session of the 11th November 1314 John Cay, a tenant of the graveship of Wakefield, negotiated with the manorial authorities an increase in his own rent payments in return for a lifetime exemption from service as the grave of Wakefield.[320] Given the many financial pressures of rural life in the fourteenth century it might initially seem unusual for a manorial tenant to voluntarily raise their own rent in this way, but on the manor of Wakefield John Cay's actions were far from extraordinary. Many other tenants are recorded in the court rolls making similar sacrifices in order to avoid serving as a grave, including tenants making one-off payments for temporary reprieve and at least one case of a tenant selling land to secure an exemption. Although the nature and severity of these sacrifices vary, their presence indicates that at least for a subset of Wakefield tenants, the office of grave was viewed with a significant level of disdain, and individuals were willing to go to great lengths to avoid it.

The office of grave was one of a number of official positions and duties that Wakefield tenants could become involved in, through customary obligations or contractual relationships, in manorial, royal, or parochial administrations. Each of these offices came with a unique balance of responsibilities, burdens, risks, and rewards, and subsequently attracted different attitudes and perceptions from the tenants who were engaged in them. This chapter sets out to examine these variations in attitude towards manorial offices, asking why it was that certain offices were more attractive to tenants while others such as the grave were routinely avoided. Studying the engagement of tenants with manorial offices further demonstrates the effect of landscape on the problem of implementing seigneurial control and authority, caused not only by issues of scale but also by the tension which existed between the institutions of the manor and the leading tenants they relied upon to control others, these tenants possessing certain priorities and preferences in exercising authority over their peers and neighbours.

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320 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 89.

4.1: Previous Perspectives

Tenant offices are a universal feature of manorial administration and comparable positions existed in a range of other medieval institutions. Consequently, a great deal of scholarly effort has been spent on the examination of the role and function of these customary and semi-professional offices in manorial, judicial, and ecclesiastical administration. Much of this scholarship has converged on the belief that offices such as reeve, constable, juror, churchwarden and the like were largely the preserve of the elite of rural settlements, those individuals and families who possessed above-average amounts of land—generally defined as anything more than the 10 to 15 acres that formed most customary units of arable—and showed other signs of economic dominance, such as by acting as regular creditors for poorer neighbours and peers.[321] Numerous studies have found that this wealthiest set of tenants occupied these offices with greater frequency and for longer periods of time at the expense of tenants of poor or middling wealth, who were thus excluded from decision-making and local government.[322]

This dominance by a peasant elite is visible in surviving records through a variety of metrics, with the most commonly-cited in the scholarly literature being a greater frequency of service in official roles by tenants with larger landholdings, the same tenants having their first and last instances of service being placed across a longer span of years, or by particular individuals or families holding the same office continuously for long periods of time. Among the offices that have been associated with this pattern of dominance by the wealthiest set of peasants, numerous scholars

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321 See discussions of economic stratification in, e.g., Bennett, *Life on the English Manor*, 63–4; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 139–40; Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 76–9; and Schofield, 'The Social Economy of the Medieval Village in the Early Fourteenth Century, 41.

322 Bennett, *Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions 1150 – 1400*, 167–69; Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 130; Raftis, 'Social Structures in Five East Midland Villages: A Study of Possibilities in the Use of Court Roll Data', 85.

have argued that juries were more likely to fall under the control of a small number of people, and that these local oligarchies held a stronger grip on juries than other offices.[323] In focusing predominantly on the relationship between wealthy tenants and formal offices or institutional positions, however, this previous research has neglected some of the informal means by which elite groups within the peasantry could have exercised control and authority outside of the bounds of governing institutions. At the end of this chapter I consider the possibilities of this informal oligarchic control that are presented by the Wakefield evidence, and which suggest that the existence of a rural oligarchy was not necessarily predicated on a close relationship between wealthy tenants and local institutions.

Beyond these issues of how oligarchy was manifested, investigations into the reasons that oligarchic control of offices first arose and was subsequently maintained have examined the issue from the perspective of both tenants and office-holders, and the institutions they were serving. Governing institutions, for instance, could benefit from office-holders taking longer or more frequent periods of service, with Musson pointing out that longer service allowed officers to build up deeper knowledge of legal structures and processes, gain deeper experience of agricultural and demesne management, or become more comfortable in dealings with significant local personalities, neighbours, and higher officials.[324] The greater experience and knowledge gained by tenants who were frequent office-holders therefore allowed them to carry out their duties more effectively and efficiently, to the benefit of both their superiors and the local community.

Among officers themselves a desire for regular service has been framed by scholars in terms of self-interest and self-advancement, as individuals and groups who could dominate offices stood to benefit greatly from the control this granted them over judicial process or economic institutions, alongside the more immediate benefits of wages, stipends, or new avenues for commercial opportunity that their offices

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323 Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness From Magna Carta to The Peasants' Revolt*, 116–17; Larson, 'Village Voice or Village Oligarchy?', August 2010, 679–99; Johnson, *Law in Common*, 32–33.

324 Musson, 'Sub-Keepers and Constables: The Role of Local Officials in Keeping the Peace in Fourteenth-Century England', 4.

opened up.[325] These benefits were not limited only to material gains, but positions in courts and similar bodies also gave tenants a significant degree of control over social norms and standards of behaviour. By capturing such offices, local elites could not only pursue personal vendettas but also regulate the conduct and morals of their neighbours more widely, though this practice is more visible in courts of the fifteenth century and later.[326]

However, it should also be noted that office-holding was not a wholly positive experience, and these benefits were balanced against an array of risks and potential drawbacks. For one, taking up any office involved taking on some degree of additional labour, which by necessity gave office-holders less time for their own agricultural and professional concerns. The exact degree of additional labour varied according to the office, and the personal circumstances of officers also affected the degree of sacrifice this represented. The effect of taking on additional labour was exacerbated for poorer tenants, in particular, and lower rates of participation among poor tenants in certain offices may be a result of the poor voluntarily passing over offices they believed would cause too great a strain on their material circumstances, as Eamon Duffy has argued was the case for parish shepherds and churchwardens in Morebath, Devon.[327] Richer tenants, by contrast, were more likely to have larger households, with more servants and children who moved out of the parental home at a later age, providing a greater ability to fill the labour gap caused by office-holding, and thus encouraging wealthy tenants to participate in offices more frequently.[328]

Difficulties of labour, furthermore, were not affected solely by the quantity of work offices required, but also by the nature of work involved in the office-holder's primary profession. This factor has been more closely investigated in relation to urban offices than rural ones. The dominance of merchants above equally-wealthy artisans and craftspeople in the city government of York, for instance, has been explained in terms of the different demands of mercantile and artisan business. While it was relatively

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325 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 98–99.
326 Butler, 'Local Concerns', 820; Musson, 'Sub-Keepers and Constables: The Role of Local Officials in Keeping the Peace in Fourteenth-Century England', 21; Ault, 'Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England', 58–59.
327 Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*, 27–28.
328 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 197.

easy for York's merchants to set up their businesses in such a way that they ran themselves with minimal supervision, among craft professions much more hands-on supervision was required even for the most successful artisans, leaving less time for the artisans to get involved in city government.[329] While rural residents were almost all involved in agriculture and livestock-rearing in some way, the nature of this involvement did vary based on wealth, the richer tenants being largely concerned with working their own lands and herds whereas poorer tenants were more often required to undertake wage-work on the side to make ends meet.[330] Wealthy tenants would, generally, have had little trouble hiring labourers to carry out any tasks that their official duties pulled them away from, while poor tenants would have faced much greater difficulty in finding other tenants to sub-contract their own wage-work, yet again exacerbating the inherent difficulties of taking up an office for poorer tenants.

Alongside this concern of lost labour, office-holders also had to consider the risk of conflict with their neighbours arising from office-holding, which was a particular concern for tenants taking on positions which involved the enforcement of laws, regulations, and judgements. These disagreements were liable to have both immediate and long-term consequences, as tenants attempted to take violent retribution against officials they believed had wronged them, or harboured resentments and grudges that coloured their relations with officials even after they had relinquished their post.[331] Yet more conflict could arise between office-holders and the institutions and individuals which they served. This risk was especially high for positions such as manorial bailiffs, who acted as deputies and managers for their lords. By the fourteenth century offices of this nature were regulated by statutes and precedents which heavily favoured lords who had grievances with their officers and allowed for unusually harsh treatment, including the use of imprisonment as a first recourse against officers who lords felt had not properly accounted for their activities.[332]

329 Lohmann, '"On the Pavement, Thinking About the Government": The Corpus Christi Cycle and the Emergence of Muncipal Merchant Power in York', 125.
330 Schofield, 'The Social Economy of the Medieval Village in the Early Fourteenth Century', 41–42.
331 Musson, 'Sub-Keepers and Constables: The Role of Local Officials in Keeping the Peace in Fourteenth-Century England', 24.
332 Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170-1300*, 48–50.

This combination of burden and risk was, in some cases, enough to discourage eligible candidates from standing for office even if they possessed sufficient wealth and were not being actively excluded by the politicking of other office-holders. This effect is more obvious in urban contexts, where senior offices necessitated even greater expenditures to maintain. In Norwich, for instance, only a small minority of wealthy households held the citizen status which made them eligible for offices in the city government, even though citizenship could be purchased relatively easily even by newcomers to the city.[333] This low rate of participation even among the wealthy is possibly an indication that most people considered the benefits of official service to be outweighed by its costs and inconveniences, and I argue below that a similar aversion to office was present among may of the wealthier tenants of the manor of Wakefield.

As with most manorial research, however, the bulk of scholarly study of tenant offices has been focused on areas in the south and midlands, and therefore may not represent the full breadth of experience in medieval England. Those studies that have drawn more widely for their evidence have noted how patterns of office-holding and the presence of local oligarchies can vary according to landscape and local geography. Ian Forrest, for instance, has suggested a correlation between the pre-eminence of elite men among the *fidedigni*, a kind of local episcopal representative, and broader equality in the community. *Fidedigni* acted as a point of contact for bishops within parishes and local communities, providing a channel through which episcopal authorities could manipulate local power structures and acquire information they needed to investigate or judge disputes and incidents occurring in the localities.[334] The extent to which these trusted individuals were composed of a closed oligarchy or a more open body correlates, Forrest notes, with the settlement pattern of the local area, areas with more strongly nucleated settlement displaying stronger evidence for a local oligarchy than those with a more dispersed settlement pattern.[335] A similar correlation between settlement pattern and minority control of manorial offices is evident in research conducted by Alex Gibbs, in which a comparison

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333 Frost, 'The Urban Elite', 242.
334 Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 91, 322.
335 Forrest, 145–47.

between three manors across England reveals that offices, principally reeves and manor court jurors, were more strongly concentrated in the hands of the elite in areas with a more strongly nucleated style of settlement.[336]

Given the diversity of landscape and settlement in Wakefield, and the vast size of the manor compared to most others in England, tenant officers there could find themselves operating in jurisdictions that were not only much larger than those of officers operating in the south or midlands, but also had a much different physical and human environment. These features allow the study of Wakefield to illuminate in more detail the links between landscape and attitudes to office-holding, and the impact of factors such as distance, necessity of movement, and the physical effort of fulfilling office on the officers themselves.

4.2: The Offices at Wakefield

Although the tenants of Wakefield were acting across a wide range of offices within manorial, ecclesiastical, and judicial institutions, the analysis in this chapter will be limited to those that are most visible within the court rolls. As would be expected, the offices which appear most frequently in the rolls are those most closely involved in the operation of the court and the manorial administration, the graves being the most prominent of these, alongside the manorial foresters, ale-tasters, and the jurors of the court baron and tourn. A small number of references are also made to the activities of royal tax-collectors and revenue officers, and these are also involved in the analysis below. The most significant absences are ecclesiastical offices, which are almost never mentioned within the court rolls, though tenants of Wakefield were serving in parish offices. A tenant called Philipot, for instance, is identified as 'lately churchwarden of Sandal' in the court session of 3rd March 1351, though this is used

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336 Gibbs, 'Manorial Officeholding in Late Medieval and Early Modern England, 1300-1600', 110–11.

purely as an identification and the entry itself is not related to Philipot's activities as churchwarden.[337]

4.2.1: Graves and Bailiffs

The Wakefield graves were roughly the equivalent to the reeve on other manors, and like them is denoted in the manor's records by the Latin term *prepositus*, although the authority of the grave was limited to their specific graveship rather than the manor as a whole. The grave's duties were a mixture of management and enforcement, combining responsibility for some seigneurial assets with a duty to present offences to the manor court, seize and impound stray animals, and to enforce rulings of the court through the confiscation of assets. The function of grave was similar to, and often overlapped with, that of the bailiff, referred to in records as the *baillius*. Unlike the grave only a single bailiff served at a time and possessed authority across the whole of the manor, though their activities are not touched on so frequently in the court rolls.[338] Much of the work of the bailiff was in the management of the demesne lands and agricultural regime, activities that were more the concern of the manorial account rolls rather than the court, and the bailiff most often appears in the latter as the chief officer in charge of effecting seizures and distraints, though this duty was also shared with the graves. The bailiff also appears to have been a professional appointee, and hence would have differed from the grave in terms of the relationship each had to the lord of the manor, the grave being a customary office based on the hierarchical relationship between lord and villein, while the bailiff was a contracted deputy whose relationship with the lord was based on trust and the stringent expectations for subordinate officers which were enforced in the common law.[339]

The process used to select graves during the fourteenth century is not fully known, and this ambiguity will complicate interpretation of the office-holding patterns described in more detail below. The court rolls expend little detail when recording the appointment of graves, stating the name of the elected officer and confirming that

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337 Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 22.
338 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350,* xvi.
339 Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170-1300*, 45–50.

they had been sworn-in, also giving details of a substitute grave if the original appointee could not fulfil the office, with no elaboration of either the methods of election or the reasons for substitution where one had occurred. The typical format of a grave election, and the extent of detail given, is demonstrated by the following extract from the 1379 roll:

Sandal: Richard Broun is grave of the said place, elected and sworn.

Sowerby: John Wythewater is grave of the said place, elected and sworn, and in his place John Attetounend is elected and sworn.

Hiperum: Richard del Cliffe is grave of the said place, elected and sworn.[340]

While the records of elections give little insight into the underlying procedures, other court entries mentioning the grave do help to illuminate some of the customs and regulations surrounding the appointment of the grave. We can be certain that service as the grave was a villein obligation not applicable to free tenants, and that there was a minimum quantity of land which had to be held before a tenant became eligible. It is also clear that selecting a grave was the responsibility of the community of the graveship rather than a prerogative of the lord as was the case on some other manors, and communities could be amerced for failing to appoint a grave in timely fashion.[341] The case of John Cay and the many other tenants who attempted to get themselves out of grave duty also make it clear that nominees did not have to be willing volunteers.

Beyond these points there are fewer certainties. Helen Jewell has suggested that the graves were selected by a system of rotation, moving in sequence through the eligible landholdings in each graveship.[342] This argument is supported in the court rolls by the relatively common occurrence of the nomination falling on a woman or child, who was therefore ineligible and had a substitute to carry out the office in their

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340 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80' membrane 1 recto.
341 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 177.
342 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350*, xvi-xvii.

stead. Other cases in the court rolls, however, suggest that this system of rotation was poorly codified, and that it was in practice subject to some level of misinterpretation or deliberate manipulation, resulting in the election of graves who held insufficient lands, held their lands under the wrong kind of tenure to be eligible, or were wrongfully elected for some other reason. The recorded instances of wrongful election have significant implications for the distribution of influence and control across the manor, and are discussed in this respect in more detail in parts five and six of this chapter. However, on account of the presence of such incidents I would argue that the election of the graves in Wakefield, though it may in theory have proceeded as a rotation through all eligible tenants, was in practice subject to control by prominent tenants, who were able to exert some degree of choice over who became the grave in each year.

4.2.2: Other Offices

The other manorial offices at Wakefield had more limited duties, and as such appear in the court rolls less frequently. Foremost amongst these secondary officials were the foresters, who were charged with keeping and maintaining the lord's parks and woods. This was achieved by the arrest of trespassers and poachers, and by regulating activities such as pannage and agistment, the felling of trees, or collection of wood, and other activities related to the forests, woods, and parks. In the early years of the fourteenth century foresters appear in nearly every session of the manor court, largely through their responsibility for presenting tenants who had committed forest offences: pannage, gathering of fresh and dry wood, and the escape of livestock. These categories of offence are by far the most common type of charge brought by the lord against Wakefield tenants in the first third of the century, and by extension one of the most common types of case in the court rolls at all, responsible for dozens of amercements in the court sessions of the early fourteenth century. In the session of October 6th in 1313, for example, sixty-four amercements are made for forest-related offences, and these high numbers of forestry amercements continue

through later decades, forty-three being recorded from the Hipperholme graveship alone in a session dated to the 8th June 1331.[343]

After this point, however, the foresters appear with diminishing frequency in the court rolls. During the middle years of the century forestry presentments have progressed from being a universal feature of the manor court sessions to an occasional one, and by the end of the century they are barely present at all, the 1379-80 roll featuring only a single set of forestry presentments, for agistment of livestock, on 14th June 1380[344]. The reasons for this decline are not entirely certain from the evidence currently available, and changes in presentment patterns in general often come with multiple potential explanations and little indicative evidence.[345] While the court rolls display lower volumes of all types of business in concert with the reduced population following the plague, the decline in forestry presentments is particularly precipitous and is not likely to have been caused solely by a fall in the number of tenants making use of forest resources. One possibility is that the lower population, and subsequently reduced pressure on the manorial woods and forests, lessened the need for the lords of Wakefield to enforce tenants' use of woodland resources as closely, leading them to abandon the regulation of small-scale wood-gathering and instead focusing only on the felling of larger timbers and the more damaging incidents of agistment. Alternatively, or perhaps alongside this, adjustments in the post-plague economy may have led fewer tenants to keep large numbers of pigs, the animal most often grazed in woodland, as a source of additional income, such that the amount of pannage occurring on the manor fell more steeply than overall population. There is also the possibility that enforcement continued as before but recording practices changed, with foresters in the second half of the fourteenth century recording the bulk of their business in documents other than the court rolls. Going beyond this speculation to concrete explanations, however, is not possible given the surviving documentation, and the changing nature of forestry on Wakefield must for now remain a mystery.

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343 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 4; 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1330-31', membrane 9 verso.
344 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 7 verso.
345 Theses issues are briefly discussed in Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* xix.

Putting these problems aside, we can move on to the smaller number of entries in the court rolls concern positions that were related to the oversight and enforcement of royal statutes. Two such offices are visible in Wakefield: the ale-tasters and constables. Although the former were most closely linked to the functions of the tourn, where presentments for breaking the assize of ale were made, the office of ale-taster is mentioned frequently in the records of regular court sessions, which sometimes record their elections and attest to the disputes that could arise between tasters and other tenants during the course of their duties. The constables in Wakefield, as was the case elsewhere in England, were responsible for local peace-keeping and the enforcement of assizes. For most of the fourteenth century the activities of the constables are barely present in the court rolls, but during the final decades they become prominent in the tourn records, as the name of the constable from each township is given before the list of presentments from that area.

Alongside these officers a large number of tenants were also involved in the court as jurors, appearing as part of inquiries into specific cases brought before the court baron, or as the presentment juries responsible for presenting offences at the tourn. Although jury inquiry was a common means of judging cases at Wakefield, the court rolls are not consistent in recording the names of jurors on each panel, with little readily apparent logic governing why panels are identified in some cases but not in others. The tourn juries, on the other hand, are listed with much greater consistency, allowing the pattern of service for this role to be subject to some statistical analysis later in this chapter.

Finally, the court rolls also on occasion mention some other offices, not part of the manor courts or administration, which were being carried out by tenants. Thus we see tenants attached to titles such as 'collector of the wools' or 'receiver of the green wax' appearing in the court rolls because these offices had bought them into conflict with other tenants.[346] The nature of these offices is rarely described in the court entries where they appear, though some clues to their duties are given. The collector of wools, for instance, appears to be a tax-collector of some kind, and appears in the

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346 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 21; Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 73.

court accused of extorting excessive sums from Wakefield tenants, while 'green wax' was a term generally associated with the collection of debts to the crown, and its appearance in the court rolls likely indicates another royal revenue officer.[347] The action of some of these offices is referred towards the end of this chapter, but the fleeting and singular nature of their appearances in the rolls has precluded a systematic analysis of these kinds of ancillary offices.

4.3: Patterns of Office-Holding

As has already been noted, for most of the Wakefield offices appointments are not recorded with enough consistency or completeness for a useful statistical analysis to be made. Two offices, however, form an exception to this: the graves and the jurors at the tourn. The selection of graves is usually recorded in the Michaelmas court session at the beginning of each roll, though the recording of new graves could take place in any of the sessions before the first tourn. Jurors of the tourn, meanwhile, are listed at the start of the tourn sessions at which they serve. Recording of both these offices, however, suffers to some degree from the vagaries of preservation, which has left some lists of appointees partially or wholly illegible, and from inconsistencies in recording practices. Records of the tourn jurors particularly suffer from the problem of inconsistent recording, as the court rolls cease enumerating jurors from at least 1329 before proceeding again in 1340, and dropping off again in the immediate of the aftermath of the plague in 1351, before continuing once more at the end of that decade.

On account of these difficulties it has not been possible to select a sample of court rolls for statistical analysis which has wholly complete listings of graves and tourn jurors while also providing coverage of appointments across the whole of the century. This latter objective has been prioritised above completeness of records, and

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347 Maddicot, 'The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown 1294-1341', 295.

One appearance	213
2-4 appearances	135
5-9 appearances	78
10 or more appearances	14
Total appearing more than once	227

Table 4.1: *Appearances of names in the Wakefield tourn jury lists.*

the following analysis is based on thirty years' worth of court records, divided into contiguous ten-year runs of rolls at the beginning, middle, and end of the fourteenth century: the rolls of 1306 to 1316, 1348 to 1358, and 1379 to 1389. Within this sample of court rolls 440 names appear on the jury lists, occupying a total of 1,286 jury positions, an additional 20 names being only partly legible and therefore excluded from the analysis. For the graves, of which a smaller number were selected each year, 170 names are recorded in 199 positions. Analysis of these appointments is intended to determine the degree to which Wakefield can be said to display an oligarchic pattern of office-holding, in which a small sub-set of tenants occupy a disproportionate number of positions, and how the extent of oligarchic control differed across time or between different regions on the manor. Given the large volume of rolls being studied for this statistical analysis, however, and the limitations of a PhD project, it has not been possible to ensure that each name on the jury lists refers to a specific individual, leaving open the possibility that some jurors appear on the lists under more than one name, or some names refer to more than one individual.

With this caveat borne in mind, the rates of repeat appearances for the 440 named tourn jurors across all the years being sampled are shown in Table 4.1. As can be seen, 227 individuals, or fifty-two per cent, appear on more than one jury list, while 213 jurors, the remaining forty-eight per cent, are named on only one juror list. Of the names which appear more than once the overwhelming majority appear in one tourn location only, a mere four jurors serving in multiple locations: two serve on juries in Wakefield and Brighouse, one in Brighouse and Halifax, and one in Halifax and Kirkburton. This general lack of overlap between the juries in different locations

suggests some kind of residence or landholding requirement to stand on the local tourn jury, though the rolls themselves give no clues as to what these requirements may have been. Some of the individuals who appear on the jury lists of 1306-16 also appear in the 1309 survey of the western graveships, all of these jurors holding lands by free tenure, with the implication that villeinage disqualified tenants from jury service at the tourn. There is, however, some evidence that this was not a strict requirement, as a small number of jurors also appear as graves, such as Henry de Holgate, who was grave of Sowerby in 1308 and a juror at the Halifax tourn. The graveship was a villein service, and free tenants often strongly opposed attempts to make them serve as grave, with Henry's appearance on both lists therefore implying that villeins were, in some circumstances, able to act as jurors of the tourn.

Putting the question of eligibility aside, the balance of single to repeat-appearance jurors on the Wakefield tourn indicates a moderate level of elite control when compared to other parts of the country. In County Durham the juries at halmote courts display a much stronger pattern of oligarchic control, with 75% of jurors serving in more than one court session.[348] At the other end of the scale the leet juries of the manor of Worfield, Shropshire, show much wider participation than at Wakefield, as only one individual appears on more than one jury list at Worfield during the 1340s.[349]

Sitting between these extremes, the data from Wakefield indicate that leading tenants did establish some degree of exclusivity in relation to the tourn juries, though not quite the stranglehold that existed in County Durham. It was clearly possible for prominent tenants to repeatedly gain positions on the jury if they desired to do so, and determined tenants could enjoy very long careers on the jury, appearing in lists over multiple decades. John de la More, for instance, is present on the Wakefield tourn jury nine times between 1306 and 1316, and a further five times between 1348 and 1359. Later in the century John de Godelay appears on the Halifax jury five times from 1348 to 1359 and eight times from 1379 to 1389, while Henry de Rissheworth serves as a juror at Brighouse three times and seven times across the same periods.

348 Larson, 'Village Voice or Village Oligarchy?', August 2010, 692.
349 Gibbs, 'Manorial Officeholding in Late Medieval and Early Modern England, 1300-1600', 93.

Conversely, there were still frequent opportunities for new jurors to gain positions, and at any tourn roughly half of the available jury positions were likely to be filled by tenants who had not served as a juror at the tourn before.

The jury data present a stark contrast to the pattern of participation for the graves, where a wider range of individuals were serving in the office, for shorter periods of time and at lower frequencies. Within the sampled years only 15% of names appear on the grave lists more than once, and it is rare for a single individual serve more than two consecutive terms as grave. Furthermore, while it was common for more than half of the jurors in one tourn session to be carried over from the previous session, for the graves there are never more than a quarter of office-holders continued from one year into the next. This pattern could, in part, be blamed on the rotation selection method outlined above, in which the graveship was expected to pass regularly between eligible landholders. However, this did not stop some tenants from fulfilling the office with greater than normal frequency. This was the case with Robert Malyn, who was grave of Alverthorpe four times between 1348 and 1358, and William Philip, the grave of Wakefield in every year between 1379 and 1389 for which a grave list survives. Given these tenants were able to hold the office of grave repeatedly, and in William's case over a long, continuous period, it must be the case that lack of enthusiasm for repeated grave service, rather than a lack of opportunity to take on multiple terms, was responsible for the pattern of participation seen in the court records. This apparent lack of enthusiasm for the office of grave contrasts greatly with evidence from more southerly manors, where it is more common to find reeves serving for longer periods, sometimes more than a decade at a time. Bennett, for instance, records that one reeve on the manor of Teddington in Surrey, one Walter le Noterie, served as reeve for twenty-two consecutive years, and at Cuxham the years 1288 to 1349 see only two reeves, Robert Beneyt and Robert Oldman.[350]

The aversion that tenants held towards the position of grave at Wakefield is further shown by rates of resignation in the early fourteenth century. During the 1310s appointed graves were able to postpone their term in office, or leave the position

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350 Bennett, *Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions 1150−1400*, 167; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 1965, 65.

before their year was up, by paying a fee to the court. It is clear from the rolls that many tenants took advantage of this opportunity, with at least twenty recorded resignations occurring between 1312 and 1315 alone. The customs or regulations which allowed for this procedure appear to have been wholly or partially rescinded during the 1320s, as after this period resignations of graves appear very rarely, and in general graves are only removed from office if their initial selection was ruled to be invalid.

These contrasting patterns of service imply a very divergent set of attitudes that tenants on the manor, or at least the wealthy and influential tenants, held towards the offices of juror and grave. Where there appears to have been an effort made by a certain group of tenants to repeatedly acquire positions on juries, most seem content to have served as grave only when their time came, with little attempt to monopolise or control the office.

4.3.1: Discussion of the Overall Pattern

Evidence from within the court rolls themselves suggests that serving as grave was seen as burdensome, and necessitated some form of monetary compensation for the tenant taking up the office. When a grave was standing in place of an ineligible nominee, for instance, it was common for the stand-in to receive payment from the original nominee. This occurred, for example, in 1348, when the nomination for the Horbury graveship fell originally on Agnes, formerly wife of Elias de Horbury, who was excluded from serving as grave on account of her gender, and as such paid 5s to Robert Godale to serve as the grave of Horbury in her stead.[351] Furthermore, on at least some of the graveships custom dictated that the whole body of eligible tenants contribute financial aid to newly-elected graves, though these payments only appear in the court rolls when they are under dispute and are therefore only directly attested for the graveships of Alverthorpe and Stanley.[352] The two instances where these disputes occur are discussed in more detail later in this chapter, though as this

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351 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 11.
352 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 192; Jewell, 125.

financial aid is raised in the court only where it has become a point of contention, it is possible that aid was being given in all graveships, as recompense for the additional labour and obligations the grave took on through their office.

As well as an additional material burden, service as the grave also exposed tenants to greater risks, in the form of amercements and other legal entanglements, and conflict with their fellow tenants. In the former respect, graves faced the possibility of punishment, generally in the from of fines, if they failed to adequately carry out their official duties. Thus we see graves in the court rolls amerced for neglecting to carry out their duties, mismanaging the seigneurial assets to which they were entrusted, bringing false presentments and testimony to court, or failing to present offences they were obligated to report.[353] In addition, the graves were also routinely subject to harsher punishment, and larger fines, for offences not related to their office. Non-attendance at court by a grave, for instance, was regularly treated more harshly than it was for ordinary tenants. Where regular tenants might usually expect to receive a small fine, usually 2d, for absences at court, graves were subject to larger amercements for their absences, and in some cases orders are given to distrain the goods of a grave after the first instance of non-attendance, a punishment that ordinary tenants only risked facing after a long series of continual failures to attend the court.[354]

The risk of conflict with other tenants stemmed largely from the grave's position as an enforcer of manorial regulations and court rulings, not all of which were popular with the tenants they impacted. Distraints and confiscations of other goods and chattels, for instance, often met resistance from the tenants concerned, sometimes through the use of cunning schemes rather than attempts at physical resistance. On 13th August 1339, to take one example, Richard del Kerheved was able to briefly avoid having a distraint carried out by transferring all of his movable property to a relative, Alice del Kerheved, before the officers of the court arrived to seize his goods. As Richard technically had no property for the officers to take, they were forced to leave

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353 For examples, see Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 72. 114, 127; Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350*, 19; Habberjam, O'Regan, and Hale, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 06*, 06, 99.
354 Jewell, 4.

empty-handed and report the incident to the court, where Richard duly received an additional fine for defrauding the lord's officials.[355] Although incidents such as this posed no physical danger to the officers concerned, as occurred in many other incidents discussed below, it did expose them to potential embarrassment, as well as the ire of the court authorities for having failed to properly carry out their duties.

Occasionally altercations between the grave and other tenants escalate to direct threats or actual violence perpetrated against the grave, though it is not always clear if these attacks occurred in response to the grave's official duties or as a result of pre-existing grievances between the grave and other tenants. In some cases disputes remain at the level of verbal abuse or disparagement, Thomas Prest being accused of such a transgression while rescuing an impounded animal in January of 1340, while other incidents escalated to violence, as in the case of Henry the Trunce and his wife, who were involved in a physical brawl with Thomas de Holgate, at that time grave of Sandal, in November 1315.[356] Conflict of this kind did not always arise between the graves and specific individuals, and the potential existed for graves to invoke the anger of larger groups of tenants. The grave of Horbury became involved in such a dispute in 1379, for instance, when a group of eight tenants conspired to hire William Wilkinson to assault the grave, in relation to a financial dispute between the grave and members of a local tithing group.[357]

Exposure to violent retaliation, however, was not the sole preserve of the grave, and other officers are also recorded as having faced hostility and violence in the course of their duties. In these aspects the foresters appear to have been closest to the grave in terms of the level of personal risk the role entailed. Actions against poachers in the lord's forest exposed the foresters to particular danger, no doubt as a result of the fact that poachers, by the nature of their activities, were likely to be more heavily-armed than other tenants. Two of the manorial foresters fell foul of this in July 1316 when a trespasser they were attempting to arrest shot at them with bow and arrow during the course of a pursuit.[358] The rolls do not record either of the foresters

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355 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 102.
356 Troup, 157; Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 88.
357 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 1 recto.
358 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 148.

in this incident being injured, but the case does highlight the potentially severe consequences that some of the forester's duties exposed them to.

Other offices also had the potential to bring their holders into conflict with other tenants, but this was both less frequent and the incidents less perilous than was the case for graves and foresters. One of the manor ale-tasters became embroiled in a dispute with another tenant in May 1349, for instance, but this disagreement did not escalate into violence and no other instances of an ale-taster attracting that level of hostility are recorded.[359] Tenants acting in positions relating to royal administration are also recorded in disputes with their neighbours in the court rolls, though again the examples are few and infrequent. One such incident occurs in 1348, when John Peny had been 'collector of wools' in Alverthorpe, probably a role connected to some form of royal taxation. In this case the tenants of Alverthorpe believed that John had unfairly extracted an excessive sum of money from them in the course of his duties, responding to this perceived injustice by nominating three tenants, Robert Malyn, John Gerbot, and William Gerbot to seize 'a horse of John Peny's in name of distraint for the said money by common assent of the vill', holding it until John Peny had returned the money he had unjustly taken.[360] The record of this incident contains no suggestion that John had come to any harm, and the actions of the tenants— appointing a set of representatives in order to carry out what is explicitly described in the court record as a distraint— have something of a quasi-judicial character, and the court ruled that the action was legitimate. The formalised nature of this action, and its vindication by the court, have wider implications for the perception of legitimate authority on the manor, and these are discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

By contrast, none of the individuals listed as jurors are recorded as victims of violence, even in situations where there is no clear link to their juror status. The closest to a violent incident involving jurors, in fact, takes place not between jurors and other tenants directly, but between two animals owned by Edward Rogerson and Thomas Tynker, who appear frequently as jurors in the Kirkburton tourn. This incident

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359 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 104.
360 Jewell, 21.

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is recorded in the court session of 1st September 1379, Thomas alleging that one of his sheep had been attacked by Edward's dog, an occurrence not likely to have been related to their official activities.[361] This lack of overt animosity towards jurors is perhaps a result of the more limited nature of their activity, which rarely strayed beyond finding facts and presenting judgements to the court. Actually enforcing these judgements fell to other officers, such as the bailiff or grave, with the result that jury service involved fewer flashpoints that could lead to violence or attract hostility and resentment. Furthermore, jurors may also have benefited from a degree of anonymity and safety in numbers, as jurors were assembled in panels of six, twelve, or very rarely twenty-four, thus preventing any one individual from being singled out as a target by aggrieved tenants.

Jurors also benefited from a greater degree of autonomy in carrying out their duties when compared to the other offices in operation on the manor. The grave, for instance, was limited to carrying out the directives and commands of the lord and acting to protect the lord's interest, such as in the management of seigneurial assets. In practice, this meant punishing unruly tenants or enacting the lord's authority over waifs and strays. Many of the same restrictions applied for other manorial offices such as the bailiffs or foresters, and for statutory offices such as the ale-tasters and constables, who exercised a limited authority over particular areas of manorial life. Jurors, by contrast, were empowered to investigate disputes and offences according to their own priorities, and had some degree of discretion over what evidence they considered and their standards for right and wrong behaviour. This freedom is most obvious in the case of coroner's juries, who were able to return highly improbable verdicts, such as accidental hangings, in order to protect well-liked families or soften the effect of the law on suicide and murder, only being challenged if the cases advanced to the county courts.[362] The juries assembled by the manor court of Wakefield and which oversaw the Wakefield tourns were not likely to have had quite this level of freedom to pass judgements against the letter of the law, as they faced oversight from other officers or through the process of attaint. However, judgements by jurors at Wakefield were rarely overturned and juries were not required to give

361 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 1 recto.
362 Butler, 'Local Concerns', 824–25.

explanations for their decisions, or at least none that are recorded, giving Wakefield jurors some scope to prioritise their own perspectives on issues of justice and guilt.

This consideration of the demands and risks involved in manorial offices, and the relative autonomy with which different officers were able to operate, demonstrates that tenants had clear reasons to avoid certain offices and favour service in some positions over others. The grave, especially, stands out as an office carrying particularly high demands and risks when compared to other offices, while also offering its holders much less freedom in how the office was carried out. I will now turn to consider how the experience of office-holding was further impacted by divergent landscape and changing economic circumstances on the manor.

4.4: Temporal and Regional Variation in Offices

The influence of changes in the wider manorial economy is particularly well-illustrated through the rate of resignations from the graveship in the 1310s. Within this period resignations are overwhelmingly concentrated in the year 1314-15, when 18 people resign or defer the graveship, compared to only two in the year 1312-13. All of these resignations are voluntary, with only one exception: Adam son of Ivo, elected grave of Sowerby in 1314, who is removed from his position after being imprisoned for theft in April 1315.[363] Adam is replaced by Robert de Salonstall, who subsequently resigns so that Adam can be re-instated upon his release from prison,[364] though the court rolls are ambiguous as to whether this was pre-arranged and Robert was only ever intended to be a temporary substitute, or if he would have been able to see out the rest of his term if he so wished but chose not to. The voluntary nature of the majority of the resignations makes it likely that they were made out of a distaste for the role, rather than reflecting individuals being forced or persuaded to excuse themselves from office.

363 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 116.
364 Lister, 129.

Clustering around the period 1314-15, the resignations of graves correlate with the most intense period of the Great Famine, when tenants' agricultural incomes were depressed and fewer would have been willing to take on the additional burden of office-holding.[365] Studies of the land market in Wakefield have recorded a dramatic increase in land prices between 1313 and 1316, alongside the expansion of cultivation into more marginal land. These trends are indicative of greatly increased demand for food, and with it imply at least some degree of deprivation, especially among poorer residents of the manor.[366] Across the same period the court rolls also record a greater number of loan defaults, debts, and violent disputes compared with the years before the famine.[367] An increase in such incidents would have in turn created more work for the graves, who were consequently required to make more distraints, more attachments, and more seizures. Thus, much of the additional work generated by the conditions of the famine was specifically the kind that was most likely to bring the graves into conflict with their peers, resulting in a situation that was highly unlikely to have made service as the grave appealing to many.

The regional variations in patterns of office-holding present some more intriguing data, with fewer clear explanations than are apparent for these chronological patterns. Some of the prior research summarised at the beginning of this chapter has suggested that office-holding was generally more exclusive in areas of nucleated settlement, where economies were dominated by arable agriculture, while areas of pastoral agriculture and dispersed settlement had generally more egalitarian patterns. The data from Wakefield, however, do not always support such a clear division, at least in terms of access to official positions.

Data for the graves appears to reinforce these prior observations, as more graves who served consecutive terms came from graveships in the eastern lowlands, and the

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365 The classic treatment of the Great Famine in Europe is Lucas, 'The Great European Famine of 1315, 1316, and 1317'; Campbell, *The Great Transition*, 165–171, provides a more modern perspective of the impact of famine on living conditions in England; the effects of famine on local communities are analysed in Kershaw, 'The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England 1315-1322' and Schofield, 'The Social Economy of the Medieval Village in the Early Fourteenth Century'; the effects of famine in West Yorkshire specifically are outlined in Moisà, 'Est Panis Famelicis? Fourteenth-Century Hungry Theft in the West Riding'.

366 Sapoznik, 'The Impact of Landscape on Regional Agricultural Systems and Market Opportunities at Wakefield Manor: 1313-1317', 12–13.

367 Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500*, 31.

only two graves to stand for more than two terms within a ten-year period are from Alverthorpe and Wakefield, in the east. The relative exclusivity of tourn juries, however, is a much more complex picture, varying across time as seen in Figure 4.1. In the early years of the century, between 1306 and 1316, the jury at the Wakefield tourn was the most open, 58% of jurors there appearing in the jury lists only once, compared to 53% in Halifax, 41% in Kirkburton, and only 36% in Brighouse, which consequently had the most limited jury pool. The relative openness of the Wakefield jury pool, however, does not necessarily have to be a result of a weak oligarchy in that region. Instead, it may be a result of population difference across the areas covered by the four tourns. Each tourn required twelve jurors to stand in each session, even though the areas they covered varied widely in population. The Wakefield tourn covered the most populous of the four regions, therefore possessing a larger pool of eligible jurors, with the result that fewer jurors were likely to repeat service. The area covered by the Brighouse tourn, by contrast, had fewer people, and was therefore more likely to see the same individuals repeatedly appear on the tourn juries.

By the period 1348-58, however, this position has reversed. During this period Wakefield and Brighouse display the most exclusive jury lists, 46% of jurors in each location appearing once only, while the proportion of single-appearance jurors in Halifax and Kirkburton rise to 57% and 62%, respectively. It is notable in this respect that the area covered by the Brighouse tourn, while in the western region of the manor, had an economy that was not as heavily-weighted to pastoralism when compared to the Halifax and Kirkburton regions. The increasing exclusivity of the tourn jury at Brighouse and Wakefield, therefore, may represent a strengthening of social control and inequality in these areas prior to the Black Death.

At the end of the century, between 1379 and 1389, a different situation is again apparent in the data. In these years the Wakefield tourn has once again become less exclusive, being tied with Kirkburton for the highest rate of single-appearance jurors, at 53%. Brighouse, meanwhile, has returned to the position it was in during 1306-16, with 36% of jurors appearing once only, while Halifax has become the most exclusive tourn jury, as only 29% of jurors there are listed only once in the jury lists. The increased exclusivity of the juries in Halifax and Brighouse may be a reflection of

1306-16
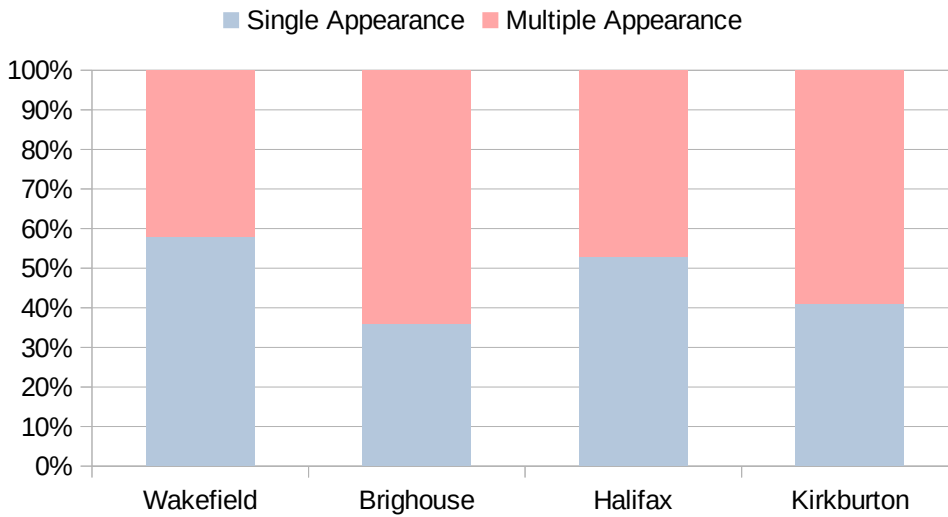
1348-58
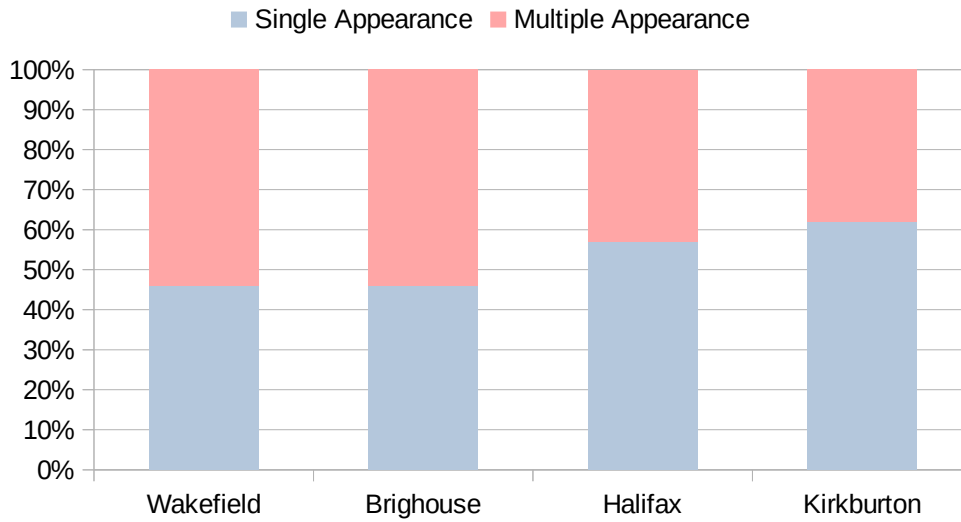
1379-89
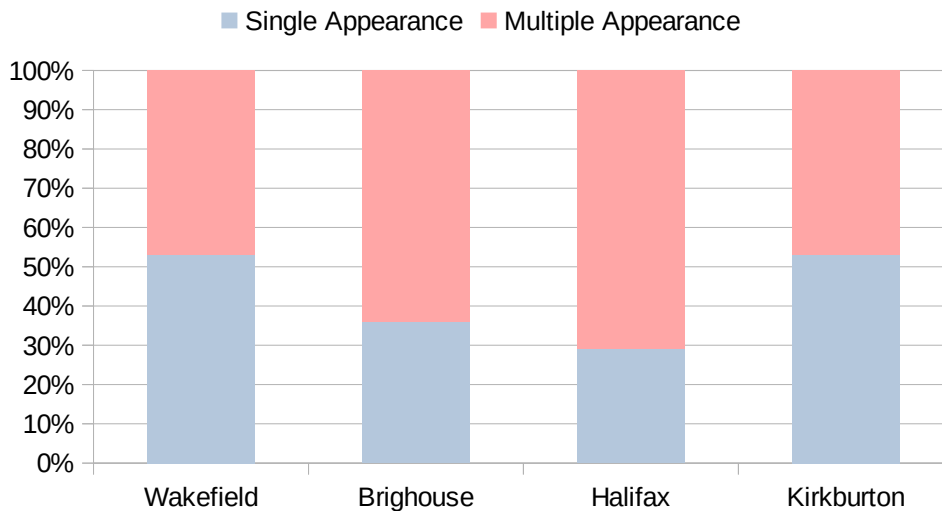
Figure 4.1: *Rates of repetition of tourn jurors. A larger pink bar indicates a more exclusive jury, a larger blue bar a more open jury.*

increased wealth inequality in upland areas after the plague, similar to the post-plague situation recorded by Mileson in the Chiltern hills, in southern Oxfordshire, where depopulation in the late fourteenth century caused a stark divide between rich and poor tenants.[368] If this was also taking place in Wakefield, however, it is not clear why the same trend to greater exclusivity is not also seen in the Kirkburton tourn, which has similar landscape and economic situation to Halifax but follows an opposite trend in terms of access to the tourn jury.

While regional data for the tourns present few consistent trends, a stronger set of landscape correlations are seen in the resignations of graves during the 1310s, which are shown in Figure 4.2. As can be seen, more resignations are recorded in graveships with larger land areas. This is not a universal trend, and there are some outliers to the overall pattern, the most notable being Holme— the second-largest graveship the manor but which records only a single resignation— and Sandal, a smaller graveship which records four resignations, though three of these occur on the same date in 1316, and thus may represent unusual conditions in that year rather than a general trend. Overall, however, the correlation between size of a graveship and the number of resignations it records holds true, the greatest frequencies of resignation being seen in graveships which have an area of 30km^2 or more, while those 20km^2 or less in extent have fewer.

This correlation of land area with frequency of resignations is likely related to the greater difficulty of carrying out the duties of the grave in a larger graveship, making service as grave less attractive to those who lived in the bigger graveships. Much of this difficulty was derived from the amount of travel that graves were required to undertake in order to fulfil duties such as distraints and confiscations, the distances involved and the time required to carry out such activity being greater in graveships such as Sowerby or Ossett where settlements were spread over a larger area. The graves were also required to travel across their graveships in order to seize and impound stray animals, another onerous task required of the grave and exacerbated by service in a larger graveship. The difficulties of seizing animals, in particular,

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368 Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500-1650*, 239–42.
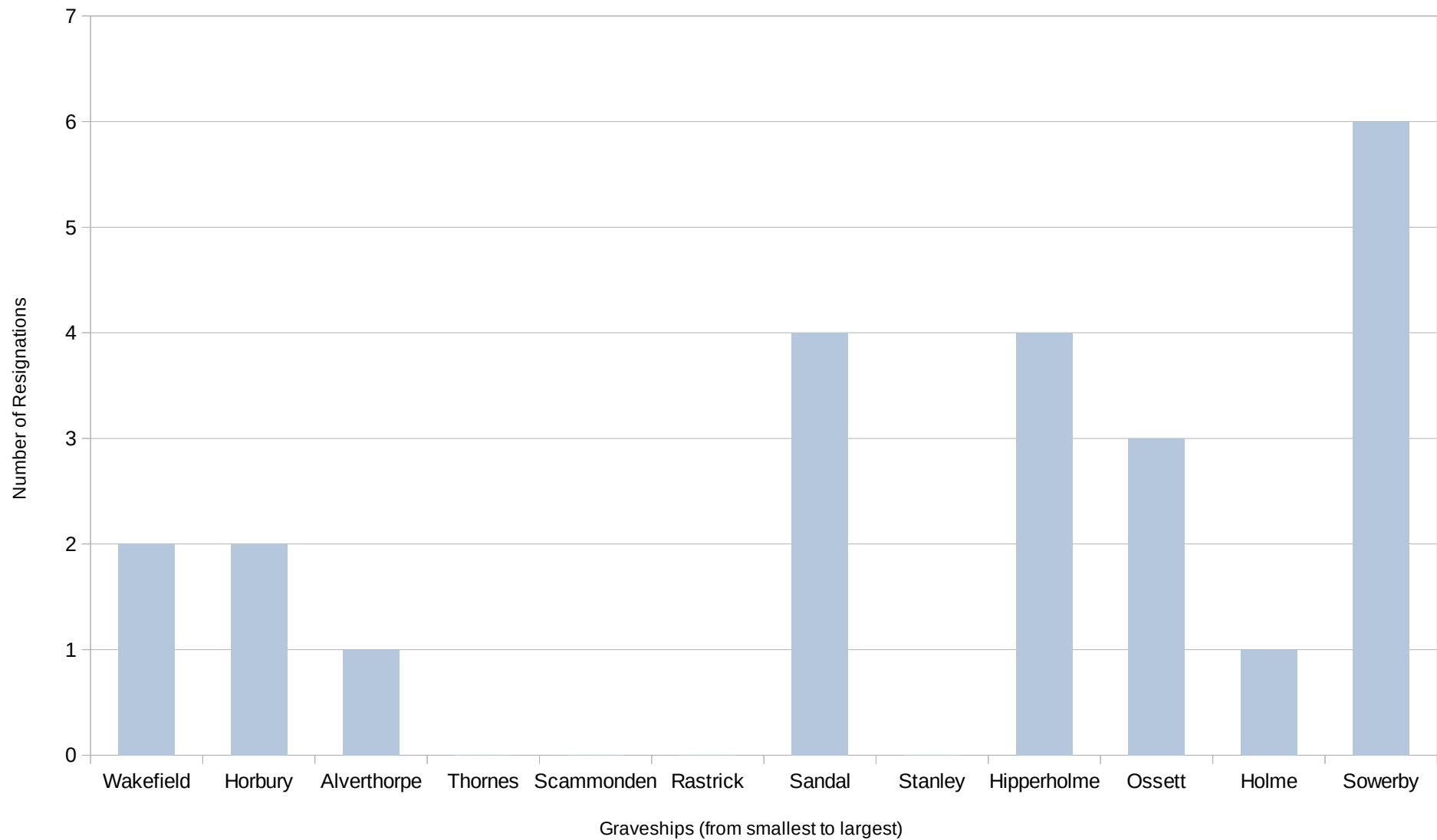
Figure 4.2: *Resignation of graves prior to 1317. With a small number of exceptions, the most resignations occur in the graveships with larger land areas.*

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extended long beyond the initial capture, as tenants are frequently recorded making attempts to retrieve animals from the possession of the grave after they had been impounded, as the following examples demonstrate:

13th November 1338: William Jonot is amerced 12d for a rescue made from the grave of Stanley.[369]

30th September 1348: Thomas del Wode cannot deny that he by his servants took his beasts that had been impounded by the grave; he is amerced 2d.[370]

5th May 1349: The same [inquiry] finds that Alice wife of John Dobson and with her households took from the fold a beast taken and put there by the grave for a fine for some land, she is amerced 3d.[371]

The necessity of defending impounded animals from their original owners, or of identifying the culprits of rescues made from the pound, both created additional labour for the grave, and contributed another flashpoint at which confrontations or violence could break out between the grave and other tenants.

In terms of the physical labour involved in its execution, the forester was the only manorial office comparable to the grave. We have already seen how foresters were involved in the pursuit of trespassers in the forests and parks, and the supervision of pannage, agistment, and escapes meant that, like the graves, the foresters were also involved in the management and capture of tenants' livestock as component of their duties. Additionally, at least for the early part of the century, foresters had a not insubstantial bureaucratic task attached to their office, that of compiling the lists of forestry presentments that were brought to the sessions of the court. Compiling these lists required the forester to identify all of the tenants involved in pannage, or who had collected either green or dry wood, or allowed their animals to escape into the forest, assess the amounts each owed for doing so, and to record or memorise the lists of

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369 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 23.
370 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 5.
371 Jewell, 101.

these assessments, potentially dozens of names long, for presentation at the next court. Placed next to these labours, the other offices seem to have been much easier to carry out. I have already noted in the previous chapter that ale-tasters, for instance, were not necessarily expected to pro-actively regulate brewing on the manor, and instead responded to summonses by brewers. The nature of their activity itself was also substantially different, visiting alehouses to test brews probably being a more attractive prospect to most tenants than corralling stray horses or chasing poachers through the forest, as graves and foresters were called upon to do.

These issues of labour and travel were, of course, exacerbated by service in larger graveships, where settlements and farmsteads were further apart and the distances graves were expected to traverse in the course of their regular duties were greater. The social elements of service as a grave, too, were rendered more difficult in large graveships. Graves serving in smaller graveships would have found it easier to form closer social relationships with, or at least an awareness of, their neighbours who were living and working in closer proximity to them and who they saw more frequently as they went about day-to-day business. Graves of the larger graveships, on the other hand, would have had less knowledge of their neighbours, increasing the difficulty of the office and potentially leading to more conflict and dispute if the graves misjudged the personalities and temperaments of tenants they did not know well.

The ease of carrying out official duties in a smaller graveship is largely borne out in the data on resignations, where the only graveships with no recorded resignations are among the smallest on the manor: Thornes, at only 7km^2 in extent, as well as Scammonden and Rastrick, scarcely larger at 8km^2 and 10km^2, respectively. By contrast Sowerby, the largest graveship overall at approximately 75km^2, has six recorded resignations, the most of any graveship, while Ossett, the largest of the eastern graveships at 40km^2, also produces the most resignations in the eastern region. It is also notable that Wakefield, the smallest graveship with a land area of only slightly more than 3km^2, produces the grave with the longest consecutive term of service in William Philip, who occupies the position for at least ten years between 1379 and 1389. The impression given, then, is that the greater antipathy towards the office of grave in larger graveships may well have been related to these differences in

size, with the extra difficulty of serving as grave in a physically larger jurisdiction acting to turn more candidates away from office in the largest set of graveships.

4.5: Case Studies

While the above analysis is based on broad generalisations about the exercise of official duties in Wakefield, I will now move on to a closer examination of some of the individuals involved in office-holding on the manor. By taking a closer and more detailed look at the court rolls I hope to highlight how some of the overarching structural forces examined in the earlier parts of this chapter came together to impact individual tenants and officers, as well as bringing to the fore other influential factors which are not so apparent in the more removed quantitative overview presented above.

Two of these cases studies involve free tenants, and serve to demonstrate the importance of status concerns in relation to offices and the particular distaste for service in certain offices that could be held by freemen. The first of these cases concerns Henry de Coppeley, who appears as a nominee to the graveship of Hipperholme in October 1312, in the following entry to the court rolls:

> Henry de Coppeley was elected grave of Hyperum for a bovate of villein land [*terra nativa*] that he held in the said graveship; he came and said he is a free man, and did not wish to be grave on account of the said land, which he surrendered. And John del Clif, the Earl's villein [*nativus*], fined 40d to take the said bovate.[372]

A bovate represented roughly fifteen acres of land, and according to the 1309 survey of Hipperholme Henry's free holdings constituted 16 acres, such that the

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[372] Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 09.

bovate he sold in 1312 to avoid serving as grave represented nearly half of his entire landholding, a significant sacrifice to keep out of office.[373]

Why Henry originally acquired the bovate of land that put him at risk of performing services he was not evidently not willing to fulfil is not clear from the surviving evidence. Possibly this may have been a result of confusion over the limits of free and villein status, Henry believing that the personal nature of status meant that it was also, in some sense, universal, and that as a freeman he could not be compelled to perform villein services even if he entered into villein land. Alternatively, Henry may have been fully aware that he was exposing himself to obligations such as the election to the graveship, and simply believed that he would be fortunate enough not to have to carry out the most onerous of villein obligations. Regardless of his reasons for purchasing the land, Henry's decisions to sell it off rather than serve office, despite this requiring the surrender of such a significant proportion of his agricultural capacity, attests to the depth of feeling that was attached to issues of status, and the deep aversion that certain tenants held as a result towards manorial offices that were associated with villein servitude. In the mind of tenants like Henry de Coppeley, the taint of villein status that was associated with offices such as the grave evidently clearly outweighed whatever potential benefits these offices granted in terms of control over fellow tenants. In this respect it is important to remember that the line between free and villein status was not always finely-drawn, and in the early fourteenth century when Henry was active reliable markers of status had only just begun to crystallise.[374] Any office which, like that of the grave, was clearly associated with villein status, and thus with liability for other villein services, would have been rendered even more objectionable to men such as Henry who thought of themselves, first and foremost, as free men, and who may have benefited from the ambiguity that surrounded questions of status and the limits of freedom.

The second example of a status-related office-holding dispute relates not to an office itself, but the obligation of other tenants to give financial aid to manorial officers,

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373 'Manor of Wakefield and graveships of Rastrick, Hipperholme and Sowerby: transcript of survey', membrane 16 recto.

374 Hyams, *Kings, Lords, and Peasants in Medieval England: The Common Law of Villeinage in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, 187–88.

in this case the grave of Stanley. This incident dates to 1349, when John Anot became involved in a dispute with other tenants of Stanley over his refusal to contribute 3s as financial aid to the grave, claiming in the manor court that the only land he holds in Stanley is 'rodeland', the tenants of which John claims 'ought not to have to be grave or give aid to the grave's office'. This interpretation of the customs of the manor was disputed by John, son of Nicholas be Bately, who represented the tenants of Stanley in this matter. The issue was put to an inquiry, which concluded that John Anot's claims were correct, and he should be considered exempt from both standing as grave and giving aid to the grave.[375] The records of the court make no determination of whether these conflicting interpretations of custom had arisen out of genuine misunderstanding, or if the customs were being deliberately ignored in order to extort money from John Anot. In either instance this case, like that of Henry de Coppeley, demonstrates that ambiguity around manorial customs and regulations was not an issue only for modern-day scholars, but was also a source of disagreement for contemporaries, though they could also prove beneficial for groups or individuals who took advantage of the room for interpretation left by these ambiguities. John Anot's experience, in particular, also highlights one of the long-term material disadvantages that could come from holding office, as this by nature identified the office-holder as part of the group of tenants who would be expected to make financial subsidies to successive officers.

The next case study highlights another kind of risk which office-holders exposed themselves to: the potential for conflict with peers, in this case arising out of the financial obligations and entanglements which John Anot appears to have been hoping to avoid. This particular case involves John Attebarre, a tenant of Alverthorpe who appears in the court rolls between 1312 and 1340. John's appearances suggest that he was a moderately wealthy tenant, who was well-integrated into the community at Alverthorpe, actively involved in local offices and the operation of the court. During the 28-year period in which he is visible in the court rolls John was involved in the manor's land market and appears as both a creditor and debtor. Between 1338 and 1340 John stands three times as a pledge or surety, supporting his fellow tenants in

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375 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 125.

their court actions, and in the same period is twice listed as a juror, a sign that John was clearly not shying away from participation in manorial offices. In addition, John is twice listed as the grave of Alverthorpe: once in 1312, serving the office with no apparent distaste, resistance, or attempt made to make an early resignation,[376] and again in 1338, though this second election became the subject of a dispute within the manor court. Upon being elected to this second term, John launched a suit against the other tenants of Alverthorpe, alleging in a court session on the 13th November that he was wrongfully elected to the office of grave. The grounds on which his election was wrongful are not given in the initial suit or in any subsequent record of the dispute, and are described simply as a 'false presentment to the office of grave'.[377] The issue was put out to an inquiry, which eventually ruled in John's favour and released him from the office of grave on the 22nd January 1339.[378]

John had been willing to stand as grave thirty years earlier, and he was elected in one of the easier-to-manage eastern graveships, making it less likely that his refusal to serve in 1338 was made out of a general dislike or aversion to the office. Instead, the records of the manor court suggest that John's refusal to be grave in 1338 was rooted in a local conflict, involving John and two other influential Alverthorpe tenants, Richard Swan and Richard Wythundes. In the year before John had been elected as grave he had lodged two suits against Richard Swan, one for debt and the other for trespass, and at the same time as his wrongful election suit was progressing John was also plaintiff in a debt case against Richard Wythundes.[379] John is involved in further disputes with the two Richards after his election as grave, suing them along with a third tenant, John Gerbot, for money they owed him for his period of service as grave.[380] These three tenants are named in this case as 'pledges for the town of Alverthorpe', indicating that the money they owed to John Attebarre was not a personal debt but a sum he was owed by the graveship as a whole. As they were acting in this case as representatives of the whole community of Alverthorpe, it is likely that the same three tenants had a central role in the selection of the grave.

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376 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 36.
377 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 24.
378 Troup, 45.
379 Troup, 25, 30, 36.
380 Troup, 192.

Part of the motivation for John's refusal to stand as grave in 1338, then, may lie in an unwillingness to work alongside these leading tenants that he was currently involved in disputes with, or perhaps out of fear that the duties of the grave would bring him into further conflict with those tenants and bring even further damage to their mutual relations. If John did have such concerns, they were in some sense vindicated by the dispute over unpaid debts which he entered into with the pledges of Alverthorpe, a conflict arising out of John's time spent as grave and which would, of course, not have occurred had he never been elected. Similar financial entanglements were also the cause of conflict with John Anot and the tenants of Stanley, the two incidents together illustrating how fraught the office of grave was with the potential for acrimonious disputes between officers and their fellow tenants, even in instances where the grave was not carrying out specific action such as the seizure of property, and highlighting the difficulties of smooth administration when local authority was so closely enmeshed in the often contentious micro-politics of rural life.

While the cases above centre on tenants who were looking to avoid offices, my next case study focuses on a tenant who appears to have actively sought offices he was not eligible for, an unusual circumstance at Wakefield which serves as both a corrective to the wider trend of aversion to office-holding, and illuminates more deeply the structural issues that surrounded the desirability of offices and the distribution of power among Wakefield's tenantry. The tenant in question was Robert Malyn, who appears alongside the community of Thornes graveship as defendant in a case of wrongful election, brought by the lord against Robert and his neighbours on 23rd October 1338. The court in this case alleged that the community of Thornes had initially presented Robert as 'able and sufficient in lands and holdings to hold the office of grave', but they were later forced to admit that he was not, and subsequently Robert was removed from his position and the whole of the graveship was amerced 40d.[381]

In most wrongful election suits it is the office-holder themselves who brings the case to the court, whereas in Robert's case the suit is brought by the lord of the manor against both officer and the community who nominated him, leaving open the

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381 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 9.

possibility that Robert had collaborated with the other tenants of Thornes to illegitimately acquire his position as grave. The objection of the lord in this instance may be rooted in a fear of corruption or purloinment: if Robert were, as the court records state, lacking in lands of his own, he may been vulnerable to manipulation by the wealthier tenants who had elected him, either through bribes or as a result of pre-existing credit relationships, with the result that he would not be as dedicated or effective in carrying out commands of the lord against that same group of tenants.

Robert's other appearances in the court rolls, however, suggest he was more than a mere patsy put in place by wealthier associates, as he appears to have been an enthusiastic participant in local office-holding compared to most of his peers. Robert appears as a juror for Crigglestone, in the graveship of Sandal, in 1339, and is also a juror in Alverthorpe in 1340.[382] In 1349 he appears twice more on juries, and by this point has acquired enough land to successfully stand as grave of Alverthorpe, a position he occupies with unusual frequency: first in 1348 and again in 1349 as a substitute for the heir of Henry del Stokes, then taking another two-year term across 1357 and 1358[383]. Robert's office-holding pattern is unusual in two respects. First, it was rare for tenants to serve in official positions in more than one graveship in the way that Robert was involved in offices across Thornes, Sandal, and Alverthorpe. Second, Robert served as a grave with unusually high frequency, his four terms as grave as Alverthorpe representing a frequency of service matched only by William Philip, grave of Wakefield for ten years between 1379 and 1389. The impression given is that Robert was unusually desirous of official positions, and in 1338 had attempted to leverage his local influence or connections in Thornes to gain one of these offices despite not fulfilling the criteria to stand.

Robert's enthusiasm compared to most tenants on the manor may emphasise the importance of local landscape in influencing these sorts of decisions. Robert, notably, sought the office of grave in some of the smaller graveships of the east, Thornes and Alverthorpe, and the only tenant more enthusiastic than him in acting as grave does so in Wakefield, an even smaller graveship than these. On the other hand, the fact

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382 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* 76, 233.
383 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 16;
    'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1357-58'; 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1358-59'.

that Robert's early attempt to become grave at Thornes was frustrated by the manorial authorities, despite the support of the local community, demonstrates that the most ambitious men could still be restrained by watchful manorial institutions. The disjunction between what the community of Thornes and the lord considered a suitable candidate, furthermore, is an indication of the tension that existed within the manor between the opinion of the lord and of the leading tenants regarding how manorial institutions should operate and what their officers should work towards. The final part of this chapter will return to some of the cases raised so far, as well as examining some new evidence, to consider how these leading tenants worked towards their own goals outside of the formal structures of authority the manor provided, and without the interference of the lord's deputies who operated them.

4.6: Informal Influence on the Manor

In closing this chapter, I will elaborate on a small number of the cases which have been discussed above, which I argue have significant implications for our understanding of how tenants on the manor of Wakefield exercised influence over their communities, and how they perceived legitimate authority to be expressed. These arguments, however, are based on relatively minor details in a very small number of court cases, and should therefore be taken as tentative and largely speculative in their conclusions.

Two court entries are of concern here, the earliest of which appears in a session dated to 21st April 1340, and has already been raised in the preceding part of this chapter in relation to John Attebarre. This entry reads as follows:

An inquiry is to come to the next court to determine whether Richard Wythundes, Richard Swan, and John Gerbot as pledges for the township of Alvirthorp detain

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10s from John Attebarre which they undertook to pay him for the office of grave of Alvirthorp.[384]

The second case dates to the 18ᵗʰ November 1348, and involves John Peny's appearance in the rolls as a collector of the wools in Alverthorpe:

> Robert Malyn, John Gerbot, and William Gerbot swear in court that John Peny
> owes and detains unjustly from tenants of the vill of Alverthorpe 14d from the time
> he was collector of the wools there, saying that Robert Malyn took a horse of John
> Peny's in name of distraint for the said money by common assent of the vill,
> whence John Peny complains etc. John is to take nothing of his plea and is
> amerced 3d for a false claim.[385]

In both of these cases we see two groups of tenants in Alverthorpe acting as representatives of their community, in the first case as defendants in a dispute over a debt owed from the township to John Attebarre, and in the second case as representatives of the graveship in a dispute with a public official. The exact means by which these five men were able to act as representatives of their community is not certain, and the record of each case is unclear on whether they were acting as part of a formal institution or as an ad hoc solution to the problems at the centre of each incident. In neither instance are these tenants attached to a formal title. While in the first case the three men are referred to as 'pledges for the township', it is not apparent if this is meant to refer to a position akin to a capital pledge, or was being used as a term of convenience by a clerk to describe a role that had no formal existence in the customs of the manor.

I believe that these two cases hint at the existence of a semi-formal institution of local authority on the manor of Wakefield, the legitimacy of which was only partially recognised by the manorial administration. The men involved in each case were prominent in the court rolls and occupied positions of some standing on the manor. Richard Wythunde's appearances in the rolls have been discussed previously, and Robert Malyn, as is described earlier in this chapter, was a frequent holder of

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384 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 192.
385 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350.*, 21.

manorial offices. Furthermore, the presence of John Gerbot in both instances, eight years apart from each other, suggests a continuity of leadership in this informal institution that was comparable to the continuous appearances of some tenants in the ranks of the tourn juries.

The activities of these two groups of tenants bear some similarities to the committees of prominent parishioners who exercised significant influence over parish activity in early-modern England. These committees are generally referred to by the number of men who served on them: "four men", "five men", "eight men", and so on, and are identified in a number of parishes across the country.[386] The detailed nature of the records for the parish of Morebath, as studied by Duffy, are particularly useful in illuminating the responsibilities of these groups, and in many instances their activities overlap with those seen by the Wakefield tenants described above.

Thus, members of the Five Men in Morebath served in that position for as long as they were willing to, exhibiting some of the continuity that John Gerbot also displays in Wakefield.[387] Additionally, the principal tasks of Morebath's Five Men were centred on communal expenditures, and their members were expected to front payments that the parish was required to make as whole, claiming this money back later through communal levies, while an equivalent body of four men at Chagford also advanced funds for parish expenditures.[388] Similarly, the tenants at Wakefield are seen acting as managers of communal funds, Richard Wythundes, Richard Swan, and John Gerbot being expected to make the aid payments that custom dictated were owed by the graveship to the grave, as we have seen in their dispute with John Attebarre. Furthermore, at the parish of Prescot, in Peterborough, the committee of eight men was even more deeply involved in the operation of local offices, being responsible for choosing churchwardens, while the career of Robert Malyn in the manorial offices of Wakefield suggests that leading tenants had a similar influence in selecting officers there.[389] Finally, both the Five Men and these Wakefield tenants represented the

386 Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*, 30–31; Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c. 1400—1560*, 80, 158.
387 Duffy, 30-1.
388 Duffy, 30; Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c. 1400—1560*, 158.
389 Kümin, 80.

community in interactions with other officials, the first on occasions such as episcopal visitations to Morebath, and the second in the incident involving John Peny, where Robert Malyn acted for the graveship in a confrontation with a royal tax collector.[390]

Alongside these two incidents, some further evidence from the court rolls may indicate the existence of a wealthy subset of tenants wielding extra-curial power at Wakefield. This case originates in the graveship of Thornes, and concerns a violation of cropping practices in the graveship's open fields, which was brought to the attention of the court on 19th February 1339:

> Hugh Iveson, Thomas his brother, John Baret, Thomas del Hagh, and Hebry Shilving were attached to answer Thomas Gradiner who offers himself by attorney in a plea alleging that they depastured with their beasts his corn growing in Snaypthorp, damage 5s. They say that they found the corn sown in the fallow of Snaypthorp, in their common, and they depastured that as was lawful for them to do, and they seek an inquiry. Order is given to the grave to bring an inquiry, and the defendants put William de Thornes in their place.[391]

Incidents involving the enforcement of communal cropping regulations are very rare in the Wakefield court rolls, even when compared to the relatively infrequent appearances of such cases in the courts of other manors, and the Wakefield rolls contain no listings of agricultural by-laws, as sometimes appear in the court rolls of manors elsewhere in England.[392] It is notable that in the incident described above the case is brought to the court by Thomas Gardiner, who had committed the original breach of regulations and was protesting his punishment, rather than the other tenants of Thornes, who appear to have acted unilaterally in taking action to enforce their customs without seeking permission from the court beforehand. Given the unilateral nature of this action, and the general lack of involvement by the court in regulating agricultural practice in those parts of the manor that had open fields, it may have been the norm for communal farming regimes in Wakefield to be overseen and regulated by the tenants with the largest stake in the fields, taking action against rule-

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390 Duffy, 31.
391 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 52.
392 Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England: A Study of Village By-Laws*, 19–20.

breakers on their own authority and without moving through the court or other administrative institutions. This vestment of leading men with a quasi-judicial authority, and powers that in other places were reserved for the court and manorial officers, again seems similar to Morebath's Five Men, the key difference being that in the latter the influence of these tenants was formally recognised by local institutions.

I believe that these entries in the court rolls indicate the existence of a largely informal exercise of authority by leading tenants on the manor of Wakefield, resembling a prototypical form of the later institution represented by Morebath's Five Men. The evidence gathered here is too limited to affirm this argument for certain, and as only two graveships are represented in the evidence above we cannot be sure that this informal governing institution had a wider existence on the manor. The cases do, however, demonstrate that a subset of, generally wealthier, tenants within Wakefield were able to exercise additional influence and authority within their graveships outside of the main manorial offices. These men had control of communal finances, such as they existed at the time; were emboldened to make interpretations of customary regulations, such as who should be liable to make financial contributions for the grave and when and how these should be paid; and could undertake quasi-judicial actions, such as distraints and the enforcement of agricultural regulations, when the wider community, or possibly merely these leading tenants themselves, believed this necessary.

The existence of such a class of people has significant implications for our understanding of how oligarchic control and the power of peasant elites manifested itself on the manor of Wakefield. The muted enthusiasm of many of the tenants of the manor for its regular offices, for instance, may not only be caused by the various factors which I have outlined above. It may have also been driven, or exacerbated, by the existence by this parallel form of authority, an informal institution that allowed wealthy tenants to exert authority over their peers without subordinating themselves to the apparatus of the manorial administration. Rather than seeking positions as the grave or on the manor's juries, which brought with them a range of burdens and difficulties alongside the requirement to follow the orders of the lord, many leading tenants may have instead preferred to act through these informal positions, wielding

power and authority informally, on their own terms, and following their own priorities. In doing so, these leading tenants formed an oligarchy that is barely visible to us now through the surviving records of the manor, as the institutions that created those records did not fully recognise that these positions of authority existed, but nevertheless held significant influence over the lives of their fellow tenants.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a complex picture of the factors which influenced office-holding on the manor of Wakefield. Despite this complexity, some key conclusions do emerge, the principal points being that a desire to engage with offices was not universal on the manor, and that many of the leading tenants in Wakefield were actively avoiding involvement in official positions. That many leading tenants were averse to manorial offices, however, does not mean Wakefield was more equal than areas where the peasant elite were enthusiastic office-holders. Instead, the court rolls suggest that leading tenants were wielding their influence outside of manorial institutions and the formal structures of authority that they provided. This, perhaps, should not be surprising, as these informal channels of power allowed tenants to act on their own initiative and agency when exerting control over others, rather than adhering to the priorities of the lord as, manorial officers were often forced to do.

It is also clear that personal sacrifice, risk, and material burden were crucial factors in tenants' decisions to take on or reject particular offices, as the offices that were most strongly-desired were those such as jury positions that offered the greatest level of social control at the smallest level of personal inconvenience. These influences also varied across space and time, and potential drawbacks became more influential in periods of crisis. During the famine of 1315, for instance, problems of material sacrifice were exacerbated by widespread deprivation, rendering the most burdensome offices, such as the grave, even less desirable and more frequently

avoided by tenants. While much of this influence is visible through quantitative assessment of the Wakefield court rolls, deeper analysis of specific case studies has also shown that office-holding was influenced by the vagaries of local politics and interpersonal relations, with the nature of relationships between tenants and the extent to which these were benign or acrimonious also affecting individual tenants' decisions to hold or refuse offices, just as these interpersonal factors influenced many other decisions tenants at Wakefield might make.

Chapter 5: Enclosure and Authority on the Manor of Wakefield

The prior chapters of this thesis have centred on areas of life where the tenants of Wakefield were frequently curtailed in their activities by the demands of manorial institutions and the requirements of engaging with those institutions. In this final chapter, by contrast, I will examine an area in which tenants displayed a greater sense of control and agency, more constrained by potential social consequences than the regulations of the manor court and its administration. Making such an analysis thus requires a move outside of the realm of the manor court and its officers, and into the landscape of the manor, and the fields, pastures, and meadows on which peasant livelihoods depended.

In particular, this chapter will examine how tenants at Wakefield expressed and exerted control over their landholdings through the enclosure of fields and pastures. As was normal with upland areas across the West Yorkshire region, enclosed land was substantially more common on the manor of Wakefield than in low-lying, midland areas, the holding of land in severalty often predominating over open-field systems. Within open fields themselves, furthermore, there was also a lower incidence of strip-farming, tenant holdings in open fields instead more likely to be gathered into contiguous blocks.[393] Agricultural enclosures were among the most visible and substantial modifications of the landscape that the residents of Wakefield were able to make, and as such are of great importance to our understanding of how the people of fourteenth-century Wakefield used their engagement with the landscape to express and negotiate their identities and relationships. This chapter will set out to investigate how the tenants of the manor of Wakefield made use of enclosure, and how their relationship with enclosure was affected by the local landscapes in which they lived.

The issue of enclosure in Wakefield is also, however, closely intertwined with the control of animals, as enclosures were constructed to prevent access by animals as much as by their human masters. As a consequence, this chapter will also touch on

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393 Miller, 'Farming Practice and Technique: Yorkshire and Lancashire', 1991, 185–86.

the influence of animals on concerns of status, reputation, and identity among Wakefield's peasantry. As with enclosed land, animals were more common on Wakefield than on the stereotypical midland manor, Wakefield being situated within a much larger area, where pastoralism was more dominant, and with a great number of peasant-owned herds attested directly through the court rolls.[394] This chapter will argue that control over animal herds was integrated with the creation and maintenance of enclosures in a symbolic scheme, recognised among the peasantry of Wakefield as well as their lords, which visibly expressed authority and prestige.

5.1: Prior Scholarship

The study of medieval enclosures has thus far been relatively fragmented, with very different approaches taken depending on the form and type of enclosure under discussion, and the social origins of the enclosers. There is a particularly large gulf between the perspectives deployed by scholars in the study of piecemeal enclosures made by peasants for agricultural purposes, and the larger tracts of land enclosed by landlords for leisure purposes in forests and parks. In the former category, research on assarts—parcels of woodland, pasture, or the like enclosed and usually converted to arable—is well-developed among economic historians, landscape archaeologists, and other students of agricultural development. The creation of new assarts reached its peak in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and the progression of assarting in England has been most commonly understood within the context of the agrarian crisis of the same period, in which population growth created greater demand for agricultural products.[395]

This is, for instance, the position adopted by Walker in his regional study of Wakefield, produced in the early twentieth century. Walker treats assarting, like most

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394 Miller, 188–90; Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, xvi.

395 Jones, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape*, 118–19; O'Donnell, 'Field Systems and the Arable Fields', 92–96.

later authors, as a consequence of the demand for food and land among the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century peasantry, with an additional benefit for manorial lords who could profit from new rents and increased revenues. Walker does briefly touch on some of the social implications of assarting, though this too comes from an economic perspective, by relating the discontent of some segments of the peasant population at the loss of what had been common pasture to cultivation.[396] In recent years a number of detailed studies have traced the progress of assarting and enclosure in other areas in England, though these largely reach the same conclusions regarding the motivations for assarting, and like Walker, only sparingly consider social aspects of the assarting process.[397]

More sustained attempts to examine the social consequence of assarting have been made by some scholars. Summerson, for instance, has argued increases in crime rates in thirteenth-century Devon were linked to the disafforestation of 1204, the sudden availability of much new land in the county fostering more intense, sometimes violent, competition between inhabitants.[398] While his focus on the social fallout of intensive assarting is praiseworthy, Summerson's work only considers the consequences of assarting rather than the motivations for assarts to be created in the first place, making little attempt to move beyond well-worn economic arguments. A similar examination of the tensions that arise from assarting and enclosure has been made by Dyer, drawing on evidence from across the whole of England to discuss the enclosure process. In particular, Dyer highlights the conflict between individual gains and the loss of communal resources, not dissimilar from the arguments previously made by Walker, and the effect this had on the negative perception of enclosures held by many rural residents.[399]

As well as enclosing activity among peasants, enclosures were also constructed in large numbers by lords and formed central elements in many seigneurial landscapes.[400] Parks, forests, and warrens, for example, were frequently surrounded

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396 Walker, *Wakefield, Its History and People*, 73.
397 Altenberg, *Experiencing Landscapes*; Jones, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape*, 2006; Lewis, *Village, Hamlet and Field*, 2001.
398 Summerson, 'Crime and Society in Thirteenth-Century Devon', 70–75.
399 Dyer, 'Conflict in the Landscape: The Enclosure Movement in England, 1220–1349', 31–32.
400 Creighton, 'Seigneurial and Elite Sites in the Medieval Landscape', 63–68.

by ditches, banks, or fences to restrict movement of people and animals in and out. On a smaller scale, manorial residences, halls, and other sites were often set apart from peasant structures with similar sets of devices, such as earthworks and moats, fences, palisades, and, in the most elaborate and substantial cases, imposing circuits of castle walls.[401]

Although these seigneurial structures were constructed on a significantly grander scale than tenants' holdings, in the basic techniques of their construction most seigneurial structures were similar to the earthworks and other landscape interventions that were built by tenants. Across the country peasant houses, for instance, were surrounded by banks, ditches, or fences, and the Wakefield court rolls record the frequent use of fencing, hedging, and earthworks to bound peasants' agricultural holdings.[402] In Wakefield, additionally, tenants would have been intimately familiar with the methods used to enclose manorial parks and warrens, as maintenance of the palings and earthworks that surrounded these formed part of the services tenants owed to the lord. Even water-scaping fell within the possibilities of peasant achievement: at least one tenant is amerced in the court rolls after attempting to construct their own fish-pond,[403] and excavations at a possible peasant farmstead at Lofthouse, just outside the manor of Wakefield, have uncovered tentative evidence for a peasant agricultural complex surrounded by a water-filled ditch.[404]

Seigneurial and peasant enclosures did not only have similar methods of construction, but at their most immediate and practical level also shared a similar function, that of demarcating ownership and controlling the movement of people and animals around privately-held sites. Thus lords employ fences, hedges, ditches, and similar constructions to clearly delineate their own lands from tenant holdings, and to guard crops from wandering animals or human trespassers.[405] The fences and earthworks around forests and parks also served to keep animals contained within, providing protected environments for prestigious, semi-wild species, principally deer,

401 Creighton and Barry, 'Seigneurial and Elite Sites in the Medieval Landscape', 63–68.
402 Dyer, 'Rural Living 1100–1540', 195–96.
403 Troup, *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls Vol. 12*, 181.
404 Walker, *Wakefield, Its History and People*, 73–75.
405 Gardiner and Kilby, 'Perceptions of Medieval Settlement', 218.

rabbits, and birds such as pheasants and partridges, with fish-ponds fulfilling a similar role for fish and water fowl.[406]

Despite these similarities in construction and practical purpose, the study of elite enclosures has taken on a very different direction than research on peasant enclosures. When considering elite enclosure practices, historians and archaeologists have been much more willing to emphasise the importance of ideological symbolism and forms of social expression represented in enclosures, while comparable practices undertaken by peasants are discussed largely in prosaic, economic terms. In his study of medieval enclosure mentioned above, for instance, Dyer acknowledges the practical purposes of seigneurial enclosures, but ultimately states that their principal objective was the expression of elite status and identity, while making little attempt to investigate the same motivations in respect of the peasant activity which is his main focus.[407] Many scholars focused exclusively on elite landscapes and enclosures have come to similar conclusions, emphasising the social and symbolic aspects of even the material output of seigneurial forests and parks above economic utility, identifying in the opportunities for hunting, the rare meats, and the luxurious hides and furs that these exclusive landscapes provided the core aspects of aristocratic identity, which served to set them apart from people of lower rank.[408]

Medieval parks have even been interpreted through a lens of religious ideology and aspiration, argued to be a reflection of the pastoral duties placed upon Adam in the narrative of Genesis, and in following Adam's example by keeping and caring for wild species medieval lords asserted their piety and religious convictions.[409] Furthermore, some individual species have been argued to hold specific religious connotations, rendering them desirable additions in the holdings of secular and ecclesiastic landlords. Rabbits, to take one example, were held as symbolic of the salvation of mankind through Christ and the Church, and Williamson argues these connotations led to rabbit warrens occupying prominent positions on the estates of some monasteries.[410] In addition to these arguments, there is also an extensive body

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406 Sykes, *Beastly Questions*, 109.
407 Dyer, 'Conflict in the Landscape: The Enclosure Movement in England, 1220–1349', 27.
408 Sykes, 110–12; Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England*, 82–83, 110–115.
409 Sykes, 112.
410 Williamson, *Rabbits, Warrens & Archaeology*, 165–66.

of literature, too complex to summarise in detail here, that has examined the importance of castle buildings and surrounding landscapes in constructions of elite identity, and in negotiating and representing the relationships between lords and their subjects.[411] Although consideration of identity and the expression of authority and religious conviction are well-developed in relation to elite structures, similar questions have rarely been asked of peasant enclosures, though as will be seen later in this chapter medieval court rolls provide ample evidence that peasants held similar ideological and symbolic relationships to enclosure as their lords did.

This academic focus on the symbolic and ideological alongside, and sometimes even above, the profane and practical continues into study of later medieval and early modern enclosures. The process of enclosure in this later period is more strongly associated with economic trends than is the case in discussions of enclosure among the medieval elite, emphasising the emergence of market-oriented agricultural capitalism and shifts in tenant-landlord relations that occurred over the late medieval-early modern horizon. This perspective is represented, for instance, in Briony McDonagh's 'Making and Breaking Property', which analyses the impact of sixteenth-century enclosure on the erasure of common rights and growing power of landlords, or Nicholas Blomely's 'Making Private Property', where sixteenth- and seventeenth-century enclosures are examined as a materialisation of developing notions of private property, and the increasing importance of 'improvement' as an objective of agricultural management.[412] The importance of enclosure in scholarly perspectives on the rapidly evolving agrarian economy of the late medieval to early modern transition is highlighted in essays by Briony McDonagh, Heather Falvey, and William D. Shannon in *Landlords and Tenants in Britain*, all of which explore the tensions around and consequences of enclosure across England over the course of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.[413]

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411 Early work of this kind is best represented in Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance*; the classic rebuke remains Platt, 'Revisionism in Castle Studies: A Caution'; more recent, and balanced, perspectives can be found Creighton, 'Seigneurial and Elite Sites in the Medieval Landscape' and Johnson, *Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages: Studies of Bodiam and Other Elite Landscapes in South-Eastern England*.
412 McDonagh, 'Making and Breaking Property'; Blomley, 'Making Private Property'.
413 Whittle, *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660*.

Across this literature on enclosure a broad, but not complete, consensus has emerged as to the key influences on the process, and the economic and ideological factors that ignited and then maintained the enclosure movement across the centuries. It is generally agreed, for instance, that one of the most significant drivers of early modern enclosure was the economic incentive for landlords to convert a greater proportion of land from arable to pasture. With more pasture land, landlords could support larger flocks of sheep, which required less labour to manage than arable farming, and produced a more marketable, and thus more profitable, commodity. In addition to this drive for greater profits, Williamson has also identified in the early modern period an additional incentive for landlords in conversion to pasture, linked to the depopulation that resulted from a loss of arable. With a smaller overall population the number of people who would have required poor relief, paid for through contributions from landlords, would also be reduced, thereby ensuring more landlord revenues remained in their own hands instead of finding their way back into the community.[414]

However, a significant body of research on early modern enclosure has, like its medieval counterpart, connected the enclosure movements of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries with social aspirations, ideological expression, and religious belief. Matthew Johnson, for instance, has connected agricultural enclosure to the growth of a capitalist mindset and Protestant religious beliefs, valuing privacy and self-discipline, which caused a re-configuration of English society, with the importance of community fading and the individual achieving much greater prominence.[415] The specific social and ideological forces at play in this later enclosure movement have been disputed, but the involvement of such factors in encouraging the spread of enclosure has rarely been rejected. Williamson, for instance, criticises Johnson for raising enclosure to the level of a 'mystical structuring force', and attempting to force a disparate set of changes in thought and practice into a single, unified process.[416] Williamson's alternative proposals, however, still identify an ideological motivation for enclosure, pointing instead to the aesthetic attachment of

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414 Williamson, 'Understanding Enclosure', 57.
415 Johnson, *Housing Culture*, 163–64.
416 Williamson, 57–58.

early modern landlords to the sparse and peaceful landscapes of pastoralism over the busy, working spaces of arable farming, and a belief that common lands were socially disruptive, attracting vagrants, gypsies, and other undesirable elements that would cause harm to the social fabric.[417] Williamson also highlights the importance of enclosure as a sign of agricultural improvement, an opinion also shared by Blomley. These authors argue that the spread of enclosure was linked to the development of more scientific approaches to estate management, which motivated landlords to enclose in order to display their commitment to the task of improving the productivity and utility of their land.[418]

The arguments relating to early modern enclosure often draw upon cultural elements, such as the spread of Protestant belief, that were largely or entirely absent in the fourteenth century. The point I wish to emphasise for the current purpose, however, is that writing on early modern enclosure retains a consistent theorisation of the process and practice of enclosure, which recognises that enclosure was driven largely by economic incentives but was nevertheless also influenced by desires that were not strictly practical and profit-focused. While the same emphasis on social meaning, ideological expression, and the creation of identity is, as we have seen, present in writing on the enclosure practices of medieval elites, they are largely absent from discussion of peasant enclosures. This leaves the impression that the landscapes constructed by medieval and early modern elites were more than simple exercises in controlling particular resources, but were also powerful material assertions of elite identity and authority. By enclosing parks and forests, constructing grand residences for themselves, and surrounding these with elaborate schemes of earthworks, moats, and fish-ponds, the social elite of medieval England transformed the landscape into a visible marker of their status and identity, expressing self-belief, piety, and prestige alongside their real ability to control the human and natural world.

Landscapes constructed by peasants, however, are viewed by previous historians as only practical, their builders concerned purely with productivity and resource use, and not at all with the assertion of authority or the creation of identity. The current

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417 Williamson, 'Understanding Enclosure' 71–73.
418 Williamson, 72; Blomley, 'Making Private Property', 6.

chapter aims to challenge this trend, examining the role of enclosure in the expression of status and identity among the tenants of Wakefield. Using disputes around enclosure recorded in the Wakefield Court Rolls as evidence, I will ask why residents of the manor in the fourteenth century carried out enclosures of land, and what they sought to gain both materially and socially by doing so. Additionally, I will analyse the responses of their neighbours to enclosures, and ask what these disputes and responses can reveal about the perceptions of enclosure among the peasant community, and how attitudes towards enclosures differed across the vast and varied landscape of the manor of Wakefield.

5.2: The Chronology of Enclosure at Wakefield

The following analysis is based on records of the manor court dating from 1313-14, 1315-16, 1338-40, 1349-52, and 1379-80. Over this period suits explicitly mentioning enclosures appear a total of eighty-eight times, and cover a range of specific disputes and incidents: forty-six relate to damage caused to fences, hedges, or the contents of enclosures, twenty-four to the construction of enclosures made without license from the lord of the manor, twelve concern the impounding or rescue of animals from pounds and folds, seven trespasses in enclosures where no damage has occurred, and two relate to an assault taking place inside or in the vicinity of an enclosure, but are not clearly related to the enclosure itself. Some court entries involve multiple allegations, and so appear in more than one of the above categories.

This analysis is, of course, affected by the ever-present problem in dealing with court rolls, already much-discussed in earlier chapters, that not all disputes and conflicts ended up before the court, and it is likely that many were resolved using extra-curial means and thus not included in the records. Although I have argued in chapter two that the frequent meetings of the Wakefield court may have reduced the incentive for tenants there to seek settlements out of court, we must remain mindful

of the likelihood that a great many acts of enclosure and disputes centred on enclosures occurred outside of the view of the court, and that a statistical analysis of the recorded incidents cannot be the be-all and end-all of an analysis of enclosure at Wakefield. An additional problem in dealing with the enclosure sample is that the set of eighty-eight cases within it represent a small percentage of the total number of cases brought to the court in the years listed above, which together would constitute many thousands of individual suits. Consequently, any statistical analysis of these is more likely to be affected by unusual circumstances or atypical events in a given year, which would not be representative of the usual experience of manorial residents. This is an especially acute issue when dealing with the sub-categories of enclosure case, which sometimes represent only a small handful of individual incidents. Accordingly, quantitative analysis of the court roll data has been limited to broad statements about the origin and chronological patterns of enclosure disputes, and this work has been supplemented by an in-depth qualitative assessment of some specific incidents in order to provide a deeper analysis.

Across the eighty-eight disputes it is clear that the frequently-observed link between the intensification of enclosure-making and population pressure is present at Wakefield much as it was elsewhere, with a greater concentration of enclosure incidents occurring in the earlier half of the fourteenth century, displayed in Figure 5.1. Between 1313 and 1316 forty-one enclosure entries are recorded in the court rolls and twenty-five are recorded across 1338 to 1340, compared to thirteen across 1349 and 1350, and nine in the 1379 to 1380 court roll. This variation is driven largely by a single class of case, the objections to new enclosures, as shown in Figure 5.2. These are overwhelmingly concentrated before 1340, thirteen such entries recorded in 1313-16 and ten in 1338-40, with only one occurring after this date, brought to the court on 22nd October 1379.[419] In other categories of case variations are slight, with differences of two or three cases at most between the highest- and lowest-reporting years, which are therefore difficult to use as the basis of strong conclusions.

The chronological distribution of cases related to new enclosures accords with previous research on the growth and decline of assarting and new cultivation, and the

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419 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 2 recto.
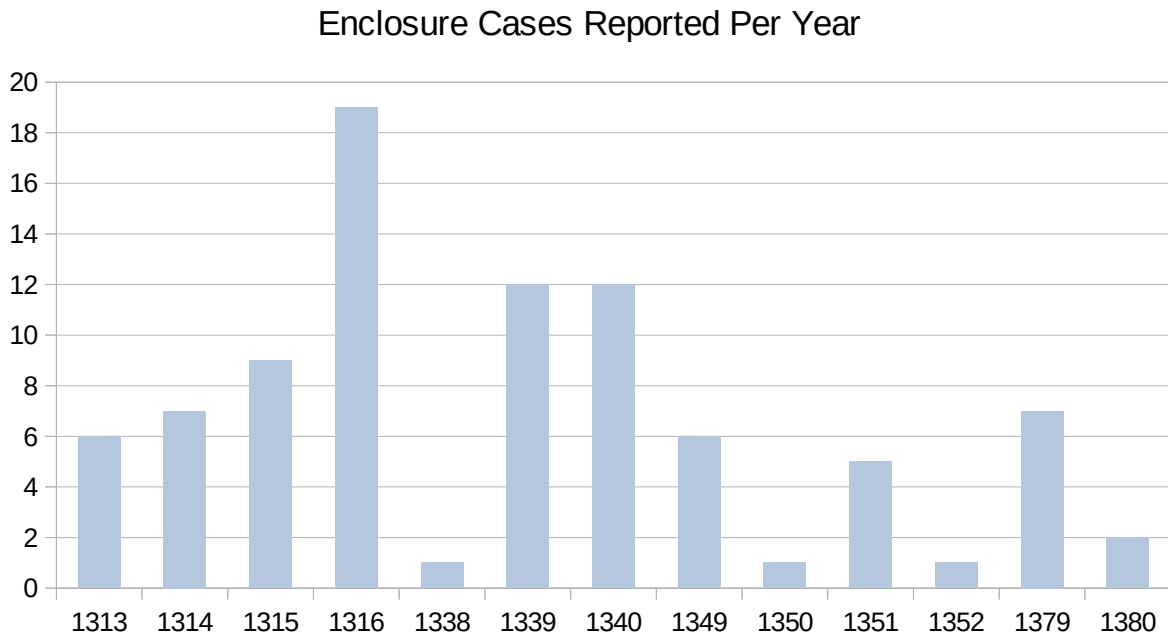
Figure 5.1: *Number of enclosure cases reported in each year being studied.*
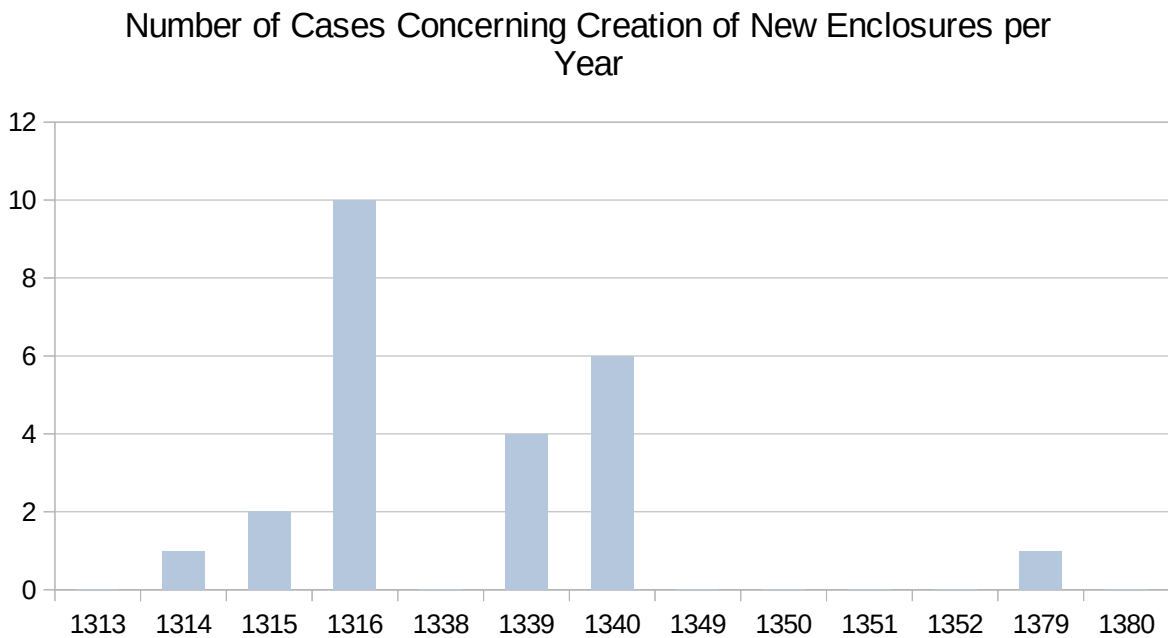
Figure 5.2: *Number of cases objecting to the creation of new enclosures reported in each year being studied.*

established narratives regarding agrarian crisis in the early fourteenth century. Pressure on the land at the manor of Wakefield is evident within the court rolls, especially in the much greater proportion of new rents registered across 1313-16 compared to later years, as has been commented upon previously. This increase in desire for productive land is also reflected in the enclosure cases, as more enclosures are created, and subsequently objected to, in the early years of the fourteenth century. As population growth slows and declines through the first half of the fourteenth century the pace of new enclosure lessens, and objections to new enclosures disappear almost entirely after the precipitous fall in population that occurs after the plague arrives in Wakefield during 1349. This dramatic drop-off in the number of disputes around creation of enclosures may also represent a change in attitude to enclosures over time, as well as a reduction in the intensity of enclosure-building, as greater availability of land in the wake of mid-century population decline caused tenants to view their neighbour's enclosures as less of a threat to their own resources.

The seasonal distribution of enclosure cases, shown in Figure 5.3, is less strongly differentiated, the number of cases reported to the court remaining relatively even throughout most of the year. The difficulty of inferring the actual date at which an incident occurred from the date at which it is first recorded in the court rolls as has been discussed in chapter 2, and the data for enclosure cases demonstrate some of the complexities involved when dealing with dates of reporting. Two notable spikes in reporting occur around October and April, each of which records 15 cases when no other month records more than ten. October and April were the months in which the bi-annual tourn sessions were usually held, and it is notable that cases from tourn sessions are prominent in the totals for October and April, raising the possibility that these increases in cases were caused by litigation that was being saved for the tourn rather than an increase in actual enclosure incidents at these parts of the year. Alongside this, there is also a noticeable decline in the number of cases reported in August and September, with only two court entries each. This coincides with the busiest part of the agricultural calendar at Wakefield, when mowing and reaping were in full swing as detailed in chapter three, with the decrease in reported cases possibly
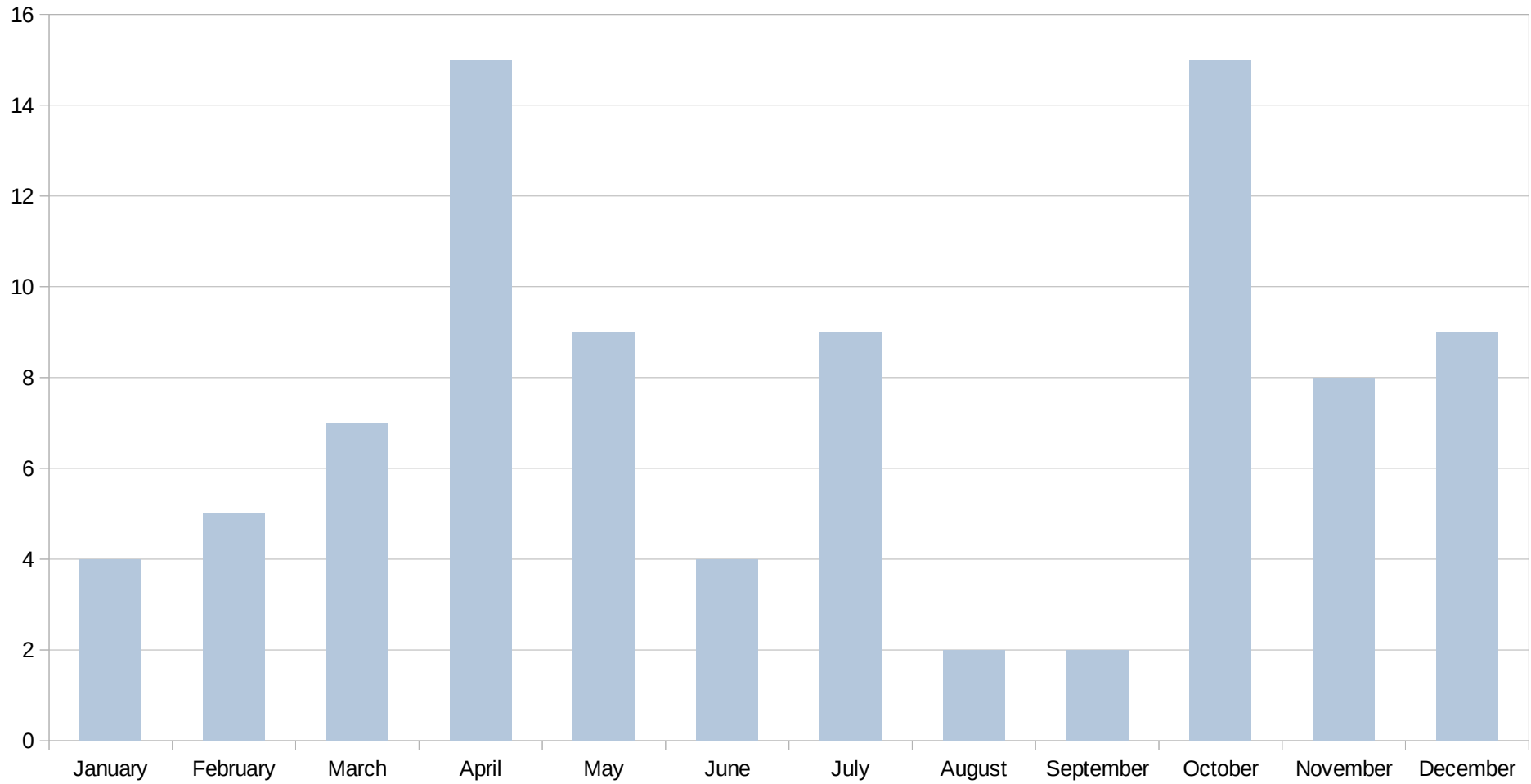
Figure 5.3: *Number of enclosure cases reported each month.*

a result of residents of the manor being either too busy to prepare cases to bring to the court, or so preoccupied by work in the fields that they lacked opportunities to enter into serious disagreements with their neighbours, at least over the issue of land enclosure. As these two variations are likely to be more closely-related to changes in reporting patterns than in the incidence of actual enclosure disputes, it appears to have been the case that conflicts around enclosure arose at a relatively even rate throughout the year, and were not linked to any particular seasonal activity.

5.3: Perceptions of Enclosure Across the Manor

While the chronological distribution of enclosure disputes falls into a well-established pattern linked to the changing fortunes of fourteenth-century agriculture, the distribution of cases between graveships offers much more intriguing data, with deeper implications for the social meaning of enclosure on the manor. The geographic origin of enclosure disputes has been mapped based on unique cases, so as not to distort the data with single cases that produce multiple entries in the court rolls, such as the six entries produced over the course of a dispute between the lord and tenants of Scammonden over their rights in that graveship.[420] When mapped in this way, as in Figure 5.4, the enclosure incidents display a clear bias for origin in the eastern graveships, in the low-lying regions around Wakefield town, with far fewer disputes originating in the upland, western graveships. Across all the graveships Sandal and Thornes are particularly well-represented, while the smallest numbers of reported disputes come from Ossett, Scammonden, and Rastrick. In contrast to the chronological distribution, this same broad pattern of distribution, favouring eastern origin, is repeated through each of the sub-categories of enclosure dispute.

Expanding the scope of this analysis beyond cases where enclosures are explicitly mentioned to include those where enclosures are likely to have been

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420 This dispute had begun in Michaelmas of 1337, and was not resolved until the 10th May 1340, see
   Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 5, 202-3.
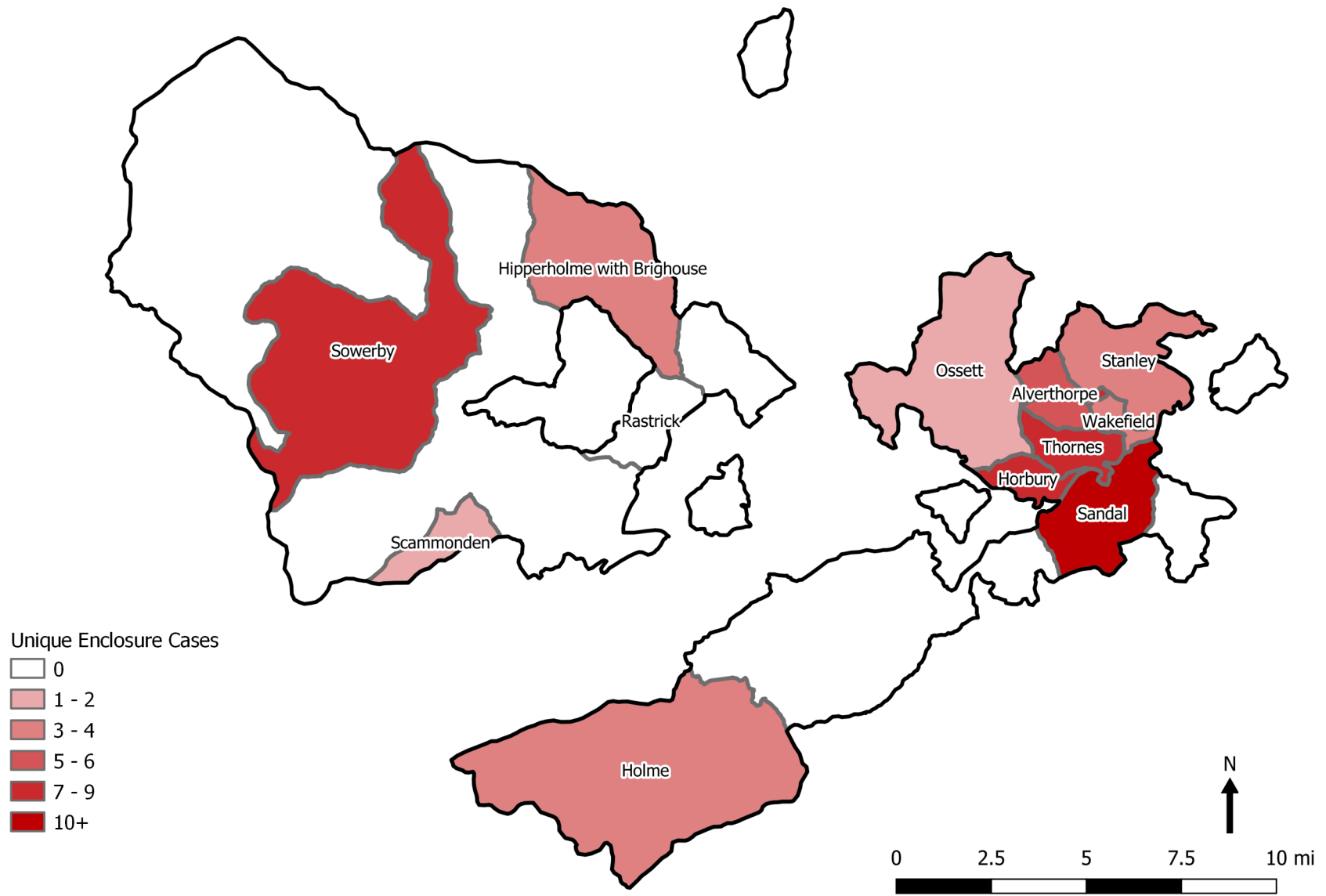
Figure 5.4: *Graveship of origin for enclosure cases across all the years being studied.*

involved produces a similar distribution. Depasturing cases, discussed in some detail in chapter three, are not usually recorded explicitly as involving enclosures, but the majority are likely to have been trespasses in enclosures. The court rolls record over 150 depasturing cases, of which only twenty-five cases describe the lands on which depasturing took place. Twenty-one of these occurred within enclosures, and four on commons or open fields. Of the latter cases, three took place on pasture lands which had been overburdened by the presence of an excess number of animals. The remaining case is the only recorded instance of a cereal crop in an open field being uprooted, when members of the community of Thornes uprooted corn that had been sown, against regulations, in a field that was at the time being kept fallow.[421]

For the larger number of ambiguous depasturing cases the details of the court records suggest that many of these were more likely than not to have taken place in enclosures. The overwhelming majority of these ambiguous cases are presented by a single plaintiff against another individual or a group of defendants, in some cases numbering more than a dozen, while cases in which crops belonging to multiple people are damaged in the same incident are virtually non-existent. That this is true across nearly a hundred incidents, occurring over the span of many years, suggests that the majority of depasturing incidents took place within enclosures rather than in open fields, where many farmers' crops were growing together, and where we would consequently expect to see at least a small number of incidents where more than one tenant had suffered from depasturing. Such an argument is lent further support by the fact that most depasturings were carried out by herds of livestock, which would not have been aware of the precise divisions of ownership between plots in an open field, and therefore even more likely to cause some degree of collateral damage even in a targeted attack.

Including all the depasturing cases which do not clearly take place on open or common land adds another 116 court entries to the sample, and eastern graveships again predominate for the abundance of cases. In the west of the manor only the graveship of Holme returns more than ten cases with depasturing incidents included, whereas in the east this threshold of ten cases is exceeded by all graveships except

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421 *Troup, The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 52.
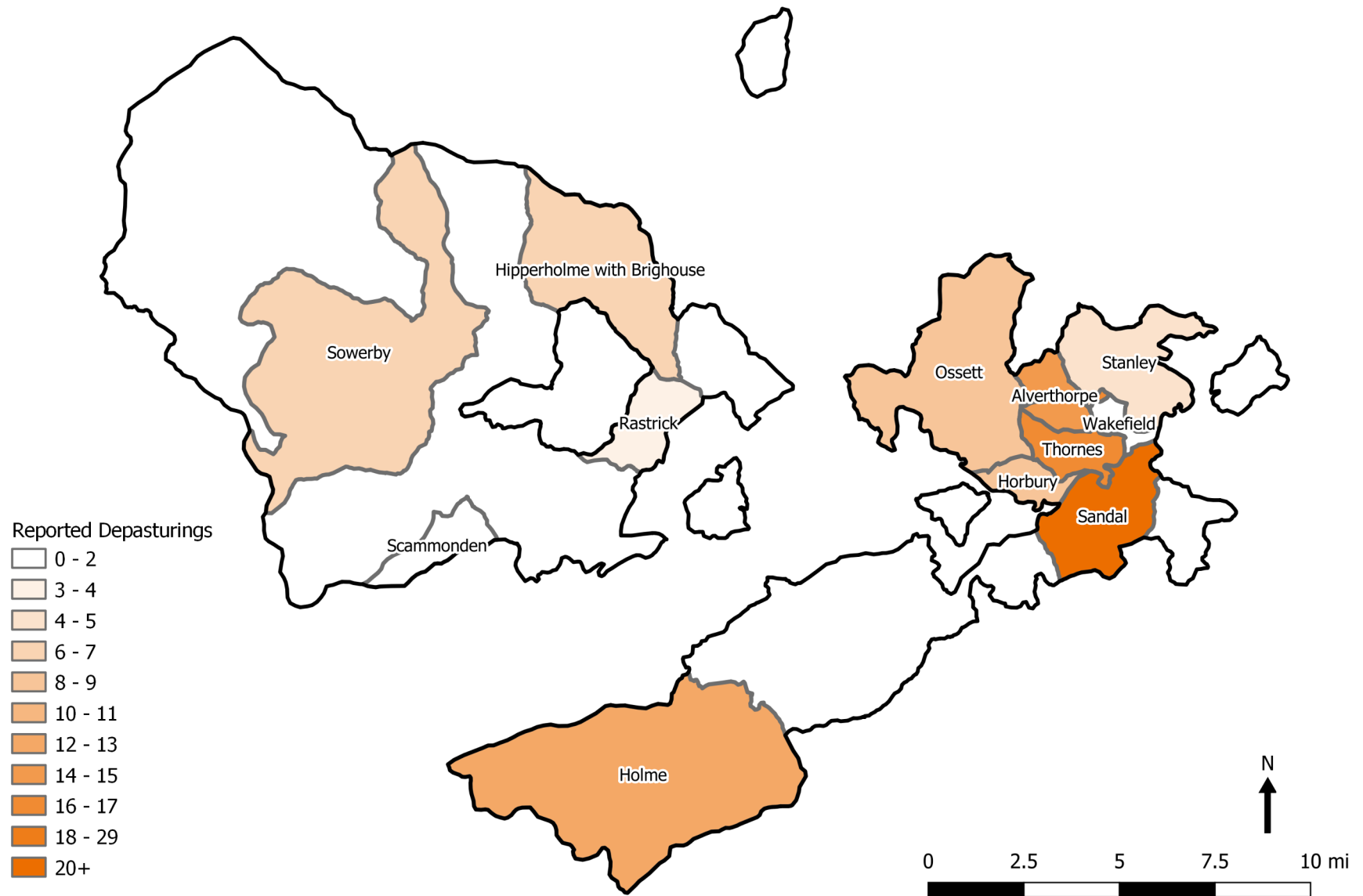
Figure 5.5: *Graveship of origin for depasturing cases across all years being studied.*

Wakefield and Stanley. This concentration of enclosure disputes in the east of the manor correlates with the population distribution, with the most cases reported from the eastern region where more of the manorial population lived. This may suggest a causal relationship, as the more populous eastern graveships produced more recorded incidents by simple force of numbers. However, while this may partially account for the general trend for more court cases to originate in the east, closer examination of the reporting patterns in the court rolls suggests that more factors are at play than simply the numbers of people living in each graveship. Examining the distribution of cases graveship by graveship, rather then between the eastern and western regions, shows that a correlation between the number of reported cases and the local population does not hold at this smaller scale of analysis. A particular concentration of incidents occurs in Sandal, for instance, despite this being a relatively sparsely-populated area compared to the graveships of Ossett, Horbury, and Stanley, which held more people but each produced fewer than half as many disputes in the court rolls. In the case of depasturing incidents it is important to also take into the account the animal population of the manor as well as the human population. While tenants in the west of the manor possessed larger herds of animals than those in the east, and thus had easier access to the means of depasturing, it is nevertheless the case that more depasturing disputes are brought to the court from the eastern graveships.

There is, additionally, a qualitative difference in the enclosure disputes which arise in the eastern graveships than in the west, rather than merely a difference in numbers. Cases which centre on the unlicensed enclosure of land, for instance, have a starkly different character between the two regions. In the west these cases consist entirely of enclosures made in waste, forest, or unoccupied lands, and are thus framed by the court as a violation of the lord's rights to the land, whereas in the east the majority centre on enclosures made on commons or other tenant's landholdings, and are hence also treated by the courts as disputes between tenants as well as offences against the authority of the lord. The impression given by this pattern is that tenants of the western graveships of the manor were less likely to object to enclosing activity by their neighbours. Suits were instead brought by manorial officers and

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administrators on the lord's behalf, potentially a sign that enclosure in general was considered less contentious or otherwise less likely to cause interpersonal conflicts than was the case in the east.

5.3.1: Settlement Patterns and Perceptions of Enclosure

As population difference alone cannot account for the distribution of enclosure disputes across the manor, and the different nature of those disputes in different graveships, I instead believe that settlement pattern and agricultural regime provide better explanations, for both the distribution pattern and the differences in the perception of enclosures which this implies. Particularly relevant to this discussion is the tendency of settlements in the eastern graveships to show a greater degree of nucleation and a lower proportion of land held in severalty. The lower proportion of land held in enclosures in the eastern region may have meant that enclosures here attracted a greater level of significance, and hence controversy, on account of their relative scarcity. In the west, where the majority of agricultural land was held in severalty, the practice of bringing land into individual ownership may have been so ubiquitous as to render it largely devoid of any particular social meaning.

In addition to the rarity of enclosures lending them greater significance, additional weight may have been lent by another feature of nucleated settlement: physically closer living. That villagers living in close proximity to other peasants formed denser social networks than peasants who lived in more isolated or dispersed environments was noted by Smith in 1979, who also argued that nearby neighbours could form social bonds of a similar strength to those that existed between close kin, such as siblings or parents and children.[422] Similar arguments have been advanced more recently by Mileson, who has argued that denser, more intense social bonds were formed through closer living, and that close neighbours had a tendency to co-operate more frequently in agriculture and other pursuits.[423] While initially this may suggest that areas of nucleated settlement should be expected to display lower rates of disagreement, in disputes over enclosure a greater frequency of disagreement is still

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422 Smith, 'Kin and Neighbors in a Thirteenth-Century Suffolk Community', 228–35, 243-244.
423 Mileson, 'Openness and Closure in the Later Medieval Village', 16–17.

compatible with the existence of stronger communal feeling. The anti-communitarian nature of enclosures, raised in Dyer's research,[424] is key to the perception they held among the tenants of nucleated villages, where community spirit was stronger and a greater proportion of the population was reliant upon shared and common resources. Within this context the creation of enclosures was more likely to be perceived as a rejection of prevailing community values, and a usurpation of shared and common resources for private gain. This is because enclosures are anti-communitarian by nature, representing both a legal appropriation of land by a single person or household, and the physical exclusion of other members of the community from that land. In settlements that were already more community-minded, land enclosures were therefore more likely to have been looked upon negatively, as a rejection of communal values, and therefore more frequently became a source of dispute and objection.

That residents in the east of the manor perceived enclosure as an anti-communitarian act is supported by the court cases which centre upon the creation or expansion of enclosures. In the majority of these cases the creation of enclosures is objected to because the enclosures infringe upon common lands, as is demonstrated by these two examples

> 17th May 1314: William del Clogh raised a bank round a piece of meadow in the town common, which was presented at a previous tourn, since then he has raised the bank afresh; amerced 12d.[425]

> 26th November 1339: An inquiry found at the tourn that John Hode enclosed a certain plot where the township of Horbiry has its common. He is amerced 12d.[426]

In other instances enclosures are reported to the court because they have disadvantaged the community in some other fashion, most commonly because the fence or bank surrounding the enclosure obstructed a road, as in these examples:

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424 Dyer, 'Conflict in the Landscape: The Enclosure Movement in England, 1220–1349', 22.
425 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 53.
426 Troup*, The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 147.

15th April 1316: John del Hagh blocked up a common path in Snaypthorp with the paling of his plantation; amerced 12d.[427]

22nd October 1379: Adam Foet, 2d, made an enclosure on a road above Gilledene.[428]

There are only two recorded cases in which an enclosure was reported to the court for encroaching upon land belonging to a specific individual rather than a common, waste, or open field, both of which were reported in 1316 from the Wakefield and Sandal graveships.[429] Five more cases concern enclosures being made on waste lands without license from the court, presented as a transgression against the lord of the manor rather than as an act which damages a tenant community. Notably, all five cases of this kind come from western graveships— Scammonden, Sowerby, and Holme— whereas cases of commons or roads being enclosed are largely from the east. This distinction implies that residents in the west were substantially less likely to find enclosures objectionable, even where they had been erected illegally, than those in the east, who were much more proactive in reporting enclosures to the court.

As well as their relationship to communal norms, enclosures may also have been perceived more negatively in the east of the manor because of differences in the nature of the landscape there, and particularly the greater presence of seigneurial structures such as parks, forests, and castles. As has been noted in the introduction to this thesis, the eastern graveships of the manor hosted a greater number of seigneurial buildings and enclosures, including three closely-protected parks and Sandal castle. These interventions in the landscape had been generating tension between the tenants of the manor and their lord for some time before the fourteenth century. One incident, recorded in the Patent Rolls, occurred in 1253, when the then-lord John, seventh earl de Warenne, attempted to increase the size of the Old and New Parks, expanding their palings until they encroached upon the land of manorial

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427 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 125.
428 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 2 recto.
429 Lister, 127, 149.

tenants and the burgesses of Wakefield. The residents lodged a legal challenge to the expansion of the parks, which was ruled in their favour and forced John to revert the parks to the previous boundaries.[430]

Conflict around the lord's parks is present on a smaller scale during the fourteenth century itself, the lord's park at Sandal having been targeted by a group of four tenants of the Sandal graveship in 1350, who entered the park to trample and destroy grass that was growing there.[431] The heavier presence of these parks in the east, and consequently the greater impact they would have had on the movements and activities of tenants, is likely to have contributed to a greater association between the presence of enclosure and imposition on the rights and freedoms of the community. While enclosures in the east were thus closely associated with damage to the wider community and the expression of superiority by domineering manorial institutions, in the west the position of enclosures was less contentious. In those upland areas not only was a greater proportion of the population already cultivating land within enclosures, but the only large demesne park was located on the edge of the territory, posing less of an inconvenience to local residents. In such conditions enclosures were likely perceived in neutral terms, being neither a sign of prestige nor exceptional status, and of individuals placing personal prosperity above the prosperity of the community as a whole, nor as a strong detriment to the well-being of communities

5.4: Motivations for Enclosure

While the analysis above considers how enclosures at Wakefield were perceived by those who were not major participants in the construction of enclosures, the court rolls also offer the opportunity to examine why the tenants who were enclosing land chose to do so. The rolls present a wealth of reasons for tenants to be discouraged

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430 Walker, *Wakefield, Its History and People*, 54.
431 Jewell, 'Women at the Courts of the Manor of Wakefield, 1348-1350', 258.

from creating enclosures, including the opprobrium they attracted from the wider community, as outlined above, and the fines that were levied by the court if enclosures were built without license. Despite these obstacles tenants on the manor continued to build enclosures, even in circumstances highly likely to attract the ire of neighbours and the court. In the east of the manor, for instance, it was relatively common for tenants to attempt to enclose common land. Doing so was very unlikely to result in the person constructing such an enclosure being vindicated by the court: of the eleven recorded examples, only one ends with the construction of an enclosure on common land being legitimised by the court and protected from being dismantled.[432] As well as having a low chance of success in this sense, constructing enclosures on common lands was almost certain to receive a negative response from one's neighbours, aggrieved at their common resources being usurped for private use. Given this, why would anyone have ever attempted to enclose common land, without license, in this way?

To begin with, there were clear, practical benefits to enclosure which should be balanced against the potential negative consequences. The most obvious of these is that constructing enclosures increases the amount of land available for the exclusive use of a particular household, a benefit which was much more important when demand for land was heightened. It is almost certainly for this reason that the majority of cases in which common land was enclosed are reported between the years 1313 and 1316, a period of famine both in the Wakefield region and the nation at large. Greater demand for land in this period is evidenced by much greater prominence of entries for new rents in the court rolls for these years compared to later periods, and the impact of the famine on the land market in Wakefield has been further studied by Alex Sapoznik. Sapoznik has found that most types of land became more desirable and more valuable in all parts of the manor between 1313 and 1317, with the existence of more widespread deprivation on the manor indicated by an increase in the number of tenants selling or alienating land across the same period.[433] These were the conditions which, in other parts of the country, were usually accompanied

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432 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 129.
433 Sapoznik, 'The Impact of Landscape on Regional Agricultural Systems and Market Opportunities at Wakefield Manor: 1313-1317', 12, 22.

with larger areas of waste brought under cultivation. In the eastern region of Wakefield, however, Sapoznik finds that this was not the case, and that there is instead a clear preference for eastern tenants to expand their holdings with purchases of previously-cultivated land rather than by bringing wastes under the plough.[434] The appearance of unlicensed enclosures on common lands in the court rolls may be an expression of this preference for previously-cultivated land, but this preference itself has few obvious explanations.

This tendency to avoid assarting uncultivated waste could be explained by an acute lack of available land, thus forcing tenants to resort to the enclosure of commons, but the data from Wakefield offer little support for such a conclusion. If this were the case, the graveships with smaller land areas and higher populations would be expected to return the most incidents of commons enclosures, as these would be the areas where the shortage of land was most strongly felt. In reality, however, the enclosure of common land occurs across both densely- and sparsely-populated graveships with only minor variation. Four such cases, for instance, appear in Wakefield, the most densely-settled graveship, but three also originate from Sandal, a much larger graveship with a smaller population. Conversely, the small but well-populated graveship of Alverthorpe returns no cases of enclosed commons in the court rolls. Given the very small numbers of cases being discussed here it may not be wise to draw firm conclusions from these distributions, but the presence of commons enclosures in Sandal, where an excess of land is more likely to have been available, strongly suggests that more factors were at play than simply a lack of other available land.

Dyer notes that disputes over enclosure occurred more often when woodland was being enclosed, and so Wakefield tenants may have avoided enclosing woods and wastes to reduce the chance of conflict erupting over their enclosures. The Wakefield court rolls, however, indicate that enclosures made on all types of land could become the focus of disputes, and Dyer highlights that it is nearly always common rights or access to resources that are the root cause of enclosure disputes rather than differing

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434 Sapoznik, 13–14, 19-21.

attitudes towards particular categories of land as such.[435] Potentially, the tenants of Wakefield's eastern graveships may have opted for previously-cultivated land because this had a history of proven productivity against which the costs of conflict could be weighed, unlike wastes or woods where the resulting agricultural gains might turn out to be less than expected and hence not worth the trouble of negotiating the ensuing disputes over their enclosure. If the priority among these tenants was to acquire land whose productivity was already assured, this may have acted in concert with anxieties driven by the famine conditions that set in after 1313 to create a belief that enclosing commons, despite the social and legal repercussions that would result, was a safer means of acquiring additional productive land than taking the risk on a plot of waste. Though rare, it was not impossible for tenants who enclosed commons to gain license for their actions retroactively, and the hope that this would occur may have been heightened by the widespread deprivation of that time period. Consequently, while the effort of purchasing and constructing an enclosure on waste land may not have been seen as commensurate with the potential benefits, risking the ire of the community and legal consequences in the manor court by enclosing common land, where productivity was guaranteed, could have been perceived as a more worthwhile.

A further practical benefit of enclosure is the greater level of protection which enclosures afforded against wandering and ravenous animals, which were present in varying numbers across the manor and, as the many recorded depasturing cases demonstrate, could pose a particular threat to crops. While human cultivators would have been well aware of the ownership of particular fields and the boundaries and demarcations between crops of different households, animals had no such awareness and the court rolls provide numerous examples of stray and unguarded livestock wandering into fields and consuming their contents. The 1338 rolls, for instance, record examples of cows straying into gardens or meadows and grazing on the grass there,[436] and of a flock of sheep breaking through a defective enclosure hedge to devour the crops on the other side.[437] The records of the court further suggest that

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435 Dyer, 'Conflict in the landscape: the enclosure movement in England, 1220— 1349', 22–23, 31.
436 *Troup, The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 109–10.
437 Troup, 101.

physical enclosures were a key part of the defence against wandering animals and their consumptive impulses, as attested by the frequency with which depasturing attacks were preceded by the destruction of fences, hedges, and gates to create access for animals, as the following examples show:

> 5th November 1339: An inquiry is to come to determine whether or not William son of William and John Bulneys broke a fence of Alexander de Wakefield in Thornes, and whether Alexander's corn was depastured and trampled by their beasts.[438]

> 3rd February 1349: John Eliot, Henry de Hill, Henry Presteknave and John Godale have a day to make law that they did not break the hedges of William de Gayrgrave's enclosure in Horbury with their beasts nor cut and carry off William's trees, viz young oaks, alder, hawthorn, hazel, and holly to damages of 20s, pledge for the law each for another.[439]

> 13th April 1380: Inquiry, amerced 2d: An inquiry comes and says that Robert Hirning broke a gate of William del Hill and unjustly made a path through the pasture and corn of the said William, to damages of 40d. And the said William does not prosecute and therefore is in mercy.[440]

There are many more incidents in the court rolls in which an act of depasturing has been made possible only because a human perpetrator has first cut through the protective boundary of an enclosure, and incidents of this kind are much more common than those where animals have gained access to an enclosure by themselves. This suggests that hedges and fencing were generally effective as a means of protecting crops and controlling the movements of animals, a crucial motivating factor for the construction of enclosures in an area, like Wakefield, with an economy more strongly weighted to pastoralism. The enclosure of commons, in particular, may represent an attempt by some tenants to extend this protection to

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438 Troup, 135.
439 Jewell, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from September 1348 to September 1350*, 72.
440 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 7 recto.

what they considered to be their share of common fields or pastures, enclosing plots of land in order to guard them from their neighbours' livestock.

5.5: Enclosure, Status, and Authority

While a broad overview of the practices of enclosure on the manor Wakefield can suggest some of the practical and pragmatic reasons tenants were constructing enclosures, a deeper appreciation of potential motivations—including, crucially, social expectations and the role of individual reputation and identity—can be gained by a more thorough analysis of a select group of individual enclosers and their appearances in the court rolls. Deeper investigation of the lives of all of the individuals indicted in the court for the creation of enclosures is not possible, as many appear in the court rolls in relation too few incidents for the detail of their lives to be reconstructed. This is the case, for example, with Adam Shakelokes, who appears in the court rolls only once, when amerced for enclosing land without license,[441] or for Adam del Croft, who appears once in the rolls for enclosure and a second time in a forestry presentment, of the sort that affected people of all levels of wealth and social standing.[442] Furthermore, some individuals with many appearances in the court rolls do so only in relation to one or two incidents, thereby imparting less useful information about their lives. This is shown very clearly in the example of John de Seyvill, who is named twenty-three times between 1338 and 1340, these appearances made up of eight essoins, one amercement for non-attendance, and a single case of appropriating from the lord's waste, the judgement of which is postponed on fourteen separate occasions.

On account of these difficulties I will instead focus on five individuals whose appearances in the court rolls allow for closer reconstruction of their lives, wealth,

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441 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 125.
442 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 147, 203.

and standing within the community of the manor. It should be noted, however, that frequent appearances in the court rolls are generally made by tenants with a relatively higher degree of wealth, and who enjoyed higher social status; poorer, more marginalised individuals were not likely to appear in more than a handful of cases, if at all. Women, also, were less likely to appear in multiple cases, and the only woman indicted for unlicensed enclosure does not appear in the court rolls in any other context.[443] The conclusions drawn from this exercise, therefore, are necessarily limited in their applicability beyond this select group, and should be taken as a representation of how some, but not all, residents of the manor approached the issue of enclosure.

The five people selected for further examination are William de la Grene, Henry de Salonstall, William Wright, John Hode, and Henry, son of Richard. William de la Grene and Henry de Salonstall appear in the court rolls between 1313 and 1316, and all of the others appear between 1338 and 1340. Of these five William de la Grene, William Wright, and John Hode were active primarily in the east of the manor, whereas Henry de Salonstall appears mainly in cases from the western graveships. Henry, son of Richard, is somewhat unusual in making appearances in both eastern and western graveships, being named in a number of presentments from Scammonden as well as in cases from Stanley and Alverthorpe. This pattern, although based on a very small sample, lends some support to the argument that residents of the western and eastern region of the manor could have developed distinct beliefs and perceptions around subjects such as land ownership or court process, as has already been touched upon earlier in this chapter.

Most of these men appear to have been of relatively good standing within their local communities. This is clearest in the case of John Hode, who displays the most extensive social network, appearing in the rolls as a pledge or surety on five occasions for four different people, and in one other session of the court as an attorney.[444] That John Hode was relied upon so frequently by his peers and neighbours for support in the manor court indicates that he enjoyed a high level of

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443 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 157.
444 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340*, 155.

trust and respect among his peers and neighbours, at least when compared to the other four men. William de la Grene and Henry de Salonstall appear as pledge or surety once and twice respectively, whereas William Wright is the only one of the five never to have stood in either role. The position of Henry, son of Richard, is somewhat more ambiguous, as he is listed as pledge on only one occasion, on 2nd April 1339, but does so for the Abbot of Fountains, an unusually high-ranking social connection for Henry to have if he was a particularly poor peasant.[445] That none of these men were greatly marginalised is further suggested by the official appointments they enjoyed over their court careers, Henry de Salonstall being appointed as warden of the Warley Mill in 1313, William Wright as an affeerer in 1338, and John Hode as a juror in 1340.[446]

As well as this social standing, the court rolls also suggest a degree of material success for William de la Grene, Henry de Salonstall, and John Hode. Both William de la Grene and Henry de Salonstall were active in the land market on the manor, each making more appearances to purchase land than they do to sell it, and all three were active as creditors, appearing as plaintiffs in debt cases but never as defendants. Henry, son of Richard occupied more of a middling position, displaying no evidence of great success but also not being clearly impoverished or desperate in his financial dealings. There are no recorded instances of Henry selling or alienating his land, while he does acquire a license to enclose eight acres in Scammonden on 10th May 1340.[447] Furthermore, while Henry is never listed as a creditor, he appears to have been relatively reliable as a debtor, being accused of failure to pay debts on only one occasion, on 2nd June 1340.[448] William Wright, meanwhile, projects little impression of great material security. William was involved in the land market only as a seller of land and never as a purchaser, with a degree of financial trouble being further implied by William's appearance as a defendant in three suits for unpaid debts.

This selection of individuals, though small, showcases the variety of people who were involved in enclosure on the manor. As is expected from this method of analysis,

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445 Troup, 63.
446 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 8; Troup, 10, 224.
447 Troup, 203.
448 Troup, 216.

all members of the group were fairly well-integrated into their communities, either by holding official positions within the court or administration of the manor, or through relationships of trust with their neighbours expressed by service as pledges or sureties. The presence of William Wright among the group, however, shows that it was not only the wealthiest peasants who were carrying out enclosures and acquisitions of land, and at least some tenants who had less secure material circumstances also attempted to carry out enclosure. Perhaps most significant, however, is the fact that of these five tenants, Henry, son of Richard and Henry de Salonstall are the only tenants who were accused of enclosing land that was not part of a common, the others all building their enclosures on commons.

For William Wright, we might be able to assign his attempt to enclose a plot of common land to desperation born out of dire financial circumstances. William was indicted twice in the court rolls for enclosing commons, and in the year immediately prior to this was sued twice for debt and sold two plots of land. The enclosures William was reported for, therefore, could be read as a bid to compensate for his loss of land through these earlier sales, the risk of being brought before the court outweighed by a desperate desire to regain some measure of financial stability. While such an explanation makes for a compelling narrative in this particular context, very different explanations are required when discussing William de la Grene and John Hode, neither of whom display any signs in the court rolls of financial difficulty, instead appearing to have wholly secure finances, and no need to act in such a desperate manner.

In the case of the wealthier tenants who were enclosing land at Wakefield, the motivation for their actions may also be related to the symbolic and cultural associations which enclosure held in the fourteenth century, alongside the practical and economic benefits already outlined. We have already seen, at the beginning of this chapter, how many scholars have associated the construction and maintenance of parks and forests, a specialised type of enclosure, with prestige and identity among the medieval aristocracy. While prior scholarship has often presented this connection between exclusive control of land and the expression of status and authority as a uniquely aristocratic phenomenon, I now wish to return to the question I posed at the

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start of this chapter, and ask why such an association could not also be true among the peasantry of fourteenth-century Wakefield.

5.5.1 Enclosure, Control, and Peasant Authority

The tenants of Wakefield were frequently involved with the authority that the manorial parks and forests represented, and would have been aware of the degree to which the private interests of the lord was prioritised over the needs of tenants when it came to forest management. The protection and regulation of the forests and parks has already been discussed in both chapters three and four, with regular appearances of forest-related presentments in the court rolls, and a great number of convictions and amercements issued for forest offences, testifying to the importance which was placed on preserving the rights of the forest. As well as encountering the sharp end of the authority materialised in parks, Wakefield's tenants also shared with their lord the Christian worldview that reinforced the prestige of emparkment. This religious expression, as argued by Williamson, Sykes, and others, held the creation of parks and forests by medieval aristocrats to be part of an aspiration to control and dominate the natural world as Adam was charged to do in the garden of Eden.[449] Although we cannot be certain that the peasants and lords of Wakefield held exactly the same aspirations in relation to this aspect of religious belief, their common Christian outlook would have at least given tenants of the manor an appreciation of the religious symbolism involved in the ownership of parks and forests.

Further to this, I would argue that the expression of status and authority identified by previous scholars in medieval parks, forests, and similar structures was not unique to these features of the landscape, but formed part of a broader symbolic scheme in which authority was heavily associated with the ability to exert control over the natural

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449 Sykes, *Beastly Questions*, 112; Williamson, *Rabbits, Warrens, and Archaeology*, 165–66.

world, and that this was as powerful and meaningful among the peasantry as it was among the aristocracy. Within the context of the seigneurial forest, control over land and control over the animal populations residing on that land were inseparable: a forest, park, or warren was of little value without the deer, rabbits, and other animals which provided valued commodities and enabled prestigious hunting activities.

That control over animals was an appropriate and meaningful expression of authority for medieval institutions has been reinforced by research on legal trials involving animals in continental Europe, which have been argued to represent both a belief in the universal applicability of justice and that animals were appropriate subjects on which to express monarchical or ecclesiastical power.[450] Animal trials, however, were unusual and relatively rare occurrences, in most cases undertaken only following out-of-the-ordinary activity by animals, fatal attacks on humans and mass pest outbreaks being the most common.[451] Given the exceptional nature of such incidents, animal trials are a poor means by which to evaluate the state of human-animal relationships in the medieval world, and of the position of animals in the articulation of power and authority, as they bear upon only the most unusual of circumstances. The Wakefield court rolls, by contrast, preserve hundreds of examples of everyday interactions between humans and animals, and although court documents by their nature record only circumstances gone awry, the events of the court rolls are of a much more mundane nature than the extraordinary incidents of the continental animal trials. Examining the manor court rolls, therefore, provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between animals, people, status, and authority in a way which is more strongly representative of the medieval norm than the conclusions derived from study of animal trials can be.

Within the Wakefield court rolls themselves there are some indications that peasantry, like lords and ecclesiastical institutions, also used power over animals,

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450 See Cohen, 'Law, Folklore, and Animal Lore' for an early treatment of animal trials, which considers them a concession by legal authorities to popular belief in anthropomorphic qualities of animals expressed in folklore; recent research has tended, in contrast, to emphasise the expression of state power in animal trials, which underscored the importance of the trials as demonstrations of the role of state institutions in ensuring peace by demarcating and punishing criminals, be they human or animal, for which see Dinzelbacher, 'Animal Trials'; MacGregor, 'Criminalising Animals in Medieval France', and Koyuncu, 'Animals as Criminals'.
451 Dinzelbacher, 'Animal Trials', 407–9.

both their own and those owned by other tenants, to express their own sense of authority and higher status. This is particularly apparent in the seizure of livestock by tenants, an action often taken unilaterally by wealthier tenants seeking to gain leverage over, or influence the actions of, other tenants. These seizures usually occurred in response to unpaid debts, the tenants involved co-opting the process of distraint that was used as a means of enforcement by manorial authorities, as seen in the following examples:

8th December 1313: Adam de Wodesom sues John de Amyas for driving 2 cows of his from Walton to Wakefield, and detaining them: damages 6s 8d. John acknowledges the seizure, saying he farmed the said town of Wakefield, with the mill, and its appurtenances; and that he leased the new mill under Thurstanhagh, with Sandale mill, to one Henry Calf, for 9 marks last year; and Adam was surety for 6 marks of the rent, 2 of which were in arrears. Adam denies any arrears.[452]

13th April 1380: Inquiry, amerced 6d: An inquiry comes and says that Thomas de Morehouse and Thomas de Ranesdene unjustly captured a horse of Thomas Acreland to damages of 6d. And Thomas and Thomas argue that they captured the horse for 40d hey were owed and which had been assessed by the grave. Thomas Acreland said that he had made the payment and petitions for an inquiry.[453]

These livestock seizures display tenants on the manor pursuing their interests in ways which mirrored the actions of the governing manorial institutions, and allowed wealthier tenants of the manor to exert their own sense of authority and superiority over poorer tenants who had defaulted on their debts. Private seizures and distraints, therefore, not only caused economic harm to their victims by depriving them of the use of working animals, but also established the superior status and social position of the party that had carried out the distraint. The enclosing activity carried out by tenants such as William de la Grene and John Hode may have served a similar purpose, expressing in this case the extent of their control over land on the manor,

452 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 20.
453 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80'.

and through this their greater status and prestige compared to tenants who lacked this authority. In this sense it is notable that both William and John lived in the east of the manor where, as has been argued above, enclosures in general, and enclosures on common land especially, were associated with self-aggrandising, anti-communitarian attitude, and were closely linked to the exercise of seigneurial authority. As substantial, physical modifications of the landscape, enclosures clearly and visibly expressed the extent of their holdings, and the independent nature of enclosures contrasted with communal farming in open fields, further expressing the distinction between those who held enclosures and those who did not.

Whether this association between enclosure-building and personal prestige penetrated to parts of the manor beyond the nucleated, arable-focused eastern graveships is not wholly clear. Few recorded enclosure disputes originate in the western graveships, making clear patterns difficult to discern, and those that do are rarely of a character that illuminates peasant attitudes to enclosure in that part of the manor. It has already been mentioned that only a small number of depasturing cases originate from the western graveships, despite both the greater proportion of enclosed land and the greater number of animals present there, which may indicate that personal prestige was less closely-connected to the possession and security of enclosures in the west, and thus less effective as a means of attacking opponents.

Accusations of illegal land enclosures, furthermore, take on something of a different character in the west, as none of those recorded involve common lands being enclosed. Instead, the offences are presented as a violation of the lord's rights to regulate enclosure and receive rents and fees. Indeed, nearly all instances of illegal enclosure in the west are resolved with the payment of a fine to the court with the enclosure left standing, even in the case of the very substantial amount of 97 acres of waste enclosed by various tenants of Scammonden in 1340.[454] While this is likely to be at least partly a result of the lower population density of the western graveships, and thus a greater availability of land for grazing and similar use, it may also be a result of enclosure itself being less symbolically-charged in the west, and thus less effective as a means of expressing prestige.

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454 Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* 202–3.

It is not always clear to what extent these various activities—enclosure-building, seizure of livestock, and other means of controlling people and animals—were being used together by Wakefield peasants as part of a suite of prestige-building actions, owing to the partial evidence provided by the manorial documents. Returning to the individuals examined for the case studies above, the evidence of the court rolls suggests that some of these men were pursuing broader strategies to enhance their prestige, as well as their wealth, alongside their enclosing activity. This was certainly not the case for all the people recorded in the court rolls enclosing common land, as discussed above in the example of William Wright, and the ability to identify such patterns is heavily dependent on the individuals concerned making repeat appearances in the rolls.

Despite these limitations, however, it is possible to see that both William de la Grene and Henry de Salonstall were enthusiastic purchasers of land, appearing multiple times across short spans of the court rolls to make acquisitions of sometimes extravagant size, such as the eighteen acres bought by Henry around Easter in 1316.[455] This steady accumulation of larger and larger landholdings was not only materially beneficial, providing additional agricultural production and the ability to leverage land for cash through leasing arrangements, but also served to underscore the superior status of these acquisitive tenants, effectively articulating the distinction between the wealthiest set of Wakefield peasants and their smallholding neighbours.

These enclosers were also establishing their prestige in subtler ways than the simple engrossment of their landholdings. These alternative methods are most apparent in the career of Henry de Salonstall, who appears more times in the court rolls than any of the other individuals studied in this chapter. As well as making repeated, large purchases of land, Henry was leveraging his wealth to exert direct control over his fellow peasants by employing them in his household, though the detail of the court rolls is too thin to ascertain the full size of the body of servants who laboured on Henry's behalf.[456] While Henry's status was expressed in his relationships

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455 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286,* 117; further purchases by Henry de Salonstall occur in Lister, 7, 142; purchases by William de la Grene in Lister, 70, 102.
456 Lister, 74.

to other peasants through these contracts of employment, other enclosers were leaning on methods of elaborate construction to display their prestige to others. John Hode, for instance, is amerced in the court rolls not only for enclosing land, but also for constructing a fishpond without license in March 1340.[457] Actions of this kind closely imitated the lord of Wakefield, who claimed many exclusive fisheries in the manor's waterways. In making a similar attempt to cultivate exclusive control over this aspect of the manor's natural resources John Hode can be seen as making a similar exertion of power over the natural world that was expressed in seigneurial fishponds and parks, and perhaps because of this encroachment on the legal rights and ideological territory of the lord John's efforts was ultimately unsuccessful and his fishpond short-lived.

Actions like John's, which closely modelled the activity undertaken by lords in the construction of fisheries and fishponds, raise the question of how much the prestige-building activities of peasants came about as a simple imitation of their lords, or were motivated by a deeper and more universal set of ideologies and symbolic associations. I have argued above that control over land, nature, and other human beings was fundamental to the expression of authority and status across the society of medieval England. Given the roots of this symbolism in religious discourse disseminated across all levels of society, it is not necessary for the ideology of control, under which enclosure comes to be a marker of prestige rather than a neutral wealth-building act, to originate first in the nobility and thence diffuse into the levels of the peasantry; instead, such a mindset can originate from a shared ideological source. Determining whether this truly was the case, rather than a distinct possibility, however, is difficult given the evidence at hand for this thesis. As has been frequently noted, court rolls for the most part record only actions and not motivations, requiring great effort to reconstruct the mentalities of the peasants of Wakefield and the reasons which lay behind their activity.

It certainly appears that the lords of Wakefield were not greatly concerned by exertions of status by their tenants, or viewed these as a major threat to their own status or authority. Manorial authorities only objected to the enclosure of land where

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457 Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286,* 181.

this encroached on the rights of the lord, particularly their right to rents and revenues, or breached statutes the manor court was responsible for enforcing. The example of John Hode's fishpond may preserve an instance in which the lord felt a peasant was rising above their station in making an exclusive claim to the manor's fish, but their objection might equally be blamed on a desire to preserve exclusive control of an economic resource. Incidents where the lord objects to the enclosure of unoccupied land without license, furthermore, occur with some frequency in the court rolls, but this is nearly always is rooted in loss of revenue rather than a principled objection to enclosure, and most such cases are resolved by the payment of entry fines and the enclosing tenants agreeing rents for the new land. The dispute between the lord and tenants of Scammonden, already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, progressed in this way, initially as a complaint against tenants for enclosing waste land without license, and was eventually resolved with the tenants' enclosures allowed to remain standing under terms agreed with the lord.[458] Otherwise, cases against enclosure are for the most part presented as violations against common rights, and thus the community of the manor as a whole, rather than offences against the lord specifically.[459]

When interpreted in this way as a projection of authority and social prestige, the apparently self-defeating nature of enclosing on common land can, in fact, be read as a stronger expression of this superior position. For most tenants the negative impact on personal reputation that could have been caused by impositions on common land would have been severely damaging, as a loss of trust and reputation would have made access to credit, pledges, and agricultural assistance more difficult. For wealthier, more secure tenants, who had less need of credit or were able to purchase labour, this loss of reputation would not have had as great an impact. In deliberately attracting the ire of their neighbours, therefore, wealthier tenants such as William de la Grene and John Hode were making even more forceful and impressive expressions

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458 The first entry in this dispute is in Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* 171; the resolution is in Troup, 202–3.

459 Obstruction of roads with enclosures is presented as a breach of common rights in, for instance, Lister, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield Volume III: 1313 to 1316, and 1286*, 125, and 'Manor of Wakefield Court Roll 1379-80', membrane 2 recto; likewise enclosure on unoccupied wastes is framed as a breach of common rights in e.g. Lister, 125, and Troup, *The Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield from October 1338 to September 1340,* 126.

of their superior wealth, security, and social position, using the construction of enclosures on the commons to demonstrate how easily they were able to ignore the concerns of reputation that bound their neighbours, acting less like their fellow peasants and more like their lords.

Conclusion

As has been emphasised above, these insights cannot represent the full range of perceptions and implications of enclosure among the residents of fourteenth-century Wakefield. It does, however, suggest how the wealthier tenants on the manor especially were engaged with enclosure on a level that went beyond simple economics and material benefits, the arena in which previous scholars have largely limited the enclosing activity of medieval peasants. In the activity of the wealthy tenants of Wakefield, it is possible to see enclosure being used as part of a broader pattern of activities that expressed and materialised the status and authority which leading tenants sought to exert, by establishing greater and more exclusive control of the landscape and natural world around them. For these tenants, the construction of enclosures mirrored the actions of landlords, as the construction and proliferation of enclosure worked to represent through control of the landscape the greater wealth and status of the people who maintained them, becoming a prominent means for those at the top of rural society to display their privileged position, and belief in their own superiority.

In addition, we have also seen how differences in the landscape itself could lend varied meaning to enclosures, and affect the reputation they held in the minds of other tenants. In areas where soil conditions, topography, and farming regimes conspired to create landscapes replete with enclosed land and holdings in severalty, enclosures were less likely to attract negative connotations in the mind of the population at large. The perception of enclosure can also be linked to the degree to

which seigneurial power was materialised in the landscape, as places where the imposition of demesne parks and manorial complexes were more vivid experienced more tension and animosity around the subject of enclosure more generally.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have interrogated the impact of landscape on the manor of Wakefield, and in doing so have demonstrated how a full consideration of landscape and its effects can deepen our understanding of rural life in medieval England. Building on the work of both landscape archaeologists and manorial historians, I applied an interpretative framework which centres consideration of landscape and lived experience in addressing questions which are largely the preserve of documentary historians. The core of this approach was introduced in chapter three, which brought the theoretical concept of the taskscape to bear on the Wakefield evidence. By making use of an interdisciplinary methodology borrowed from anthropological and archaeological literature, the landscape of the manor of Wakefield was re-assessed as a living environment, imbued with all manner of movement and activity, and governed by its own set of seasonal rhythms and cycles of action.

The taskscape analysis demonstrated that local institutions, be they manorial, ecclesiastical, or commercial, exerted a gravitational attraction across the surrounding landscape and onto the people who lived there, drawing a population that was dispersed across a wide area into a handful of sites at regular intervals. This coming together, instigated by local institutions, allowed the residents of distant settlements to form stronger social bonds and develop a wider network of information and rumour than was possible in regions with more insular settlements. The presence of this network, in turn, had significant effects for the behaviour of Wakefield's residents towards their neighbours and their actions in the manor court. The importance of this network of rumour and gossip was rooted in the deleterious effect that rumour could have on the reputation and public standing of people who became the subjects of negative rumour, this reputation being vital to participation in a range of economic and social activity on the manor, and to success in litigation. The wide network of rumour visible through the taskscape at Wakefield left residents of the manor highly exposed to the damage caused by negative rumour, and conversely

gave them more to gain by their reputations being bolstered through positive rumours.

Using examples from the Wakefield court rolls, I highlighted how the actions of some tenants within the manor court implied an awareness of the vulnerability of personal reputation on the manor, and how the nature of the court as one of the central, unifying institutions of the manor heightened their exposure and the extent to which reputation could be damaged or enhanced by actions there. Thus, we can see instances of tenants saving up multiple grievances in order to launch a series of suits against a particular rival all at once, amplifying the effect of reputational damage by airing a multitude of grievances. Similarly, some tenants used conflicts between their neighbours as an opportunity to launch their own, unrelated litigation, piling on plaints in order to seek easier victories while the reputation of their opponent was under additional scrutiny. The public nature of the court, furthermore, compelled other tenants to make substantial, possibly even excessive, investment in legal disputes which were ultimately of little material value, in order to avoid the loss of face and reputation that could come from being seen publicly to abandon or acquiesce in a conflict with a neighbour.

Outside of the courtroom, meanwhile, the activities of tenants also display a concern with reputation. In this area there are many examples of tenants who were engaged in particularly visible, attention-grabbing actions while embroiled in disputes with their neighbours. By taking part in highly conspicuous activity, these tenants sought to draw attention to their conflicts and the misdeeds of the rivals, putting their opponents under pressure to respond as news of misbehaviour spread across the manorial rumour network.

In chapter four I turned my attention from the actions of ordinary tenants to the activity of the manorial administration and the impact that Wakefield's landscape had on the governance of the manor. In this section of the thesis I had a particular interest in the manorial officers who were responsible for on-the-ground management, and the effect that the landscape of Wakefield had on officers' relationships with other tenants and their attitudes towards their offices. Like many other manors, Wakefield

displayed evidence of oligarchic control of manorial offices, in which a small set of wealthy tenants served repeatedly in most official positions. However, this was not evident in every office on the manor, and for some offices— most notably the important position of the grave— many tenants were going out of their away to avoid taking on official duties. While there are many reasons to explain this pattern, I drew particular attention to the loose correlation between the size of each graveship and the rate of avoidance of grave service there. As tenants were more likely to avoid grave service in graveships with a larger area, the additional difficulties that a physically large jurisdiction caused for manorial officers played a central role in dissuading many eligible tenants from seeking offices such as the grave in areas where they would be responsible for managing large tracts of upland territory.

In this analysis of office-holding on the manor, it was also apparent that tenants' enthusiasm for manorial offices was blunted by the ability of tenants with greater wealth and social standing to exert control over their neighbours through informal positions of power, separate from the manorial administration. Evidence in the court rolls suggests that these tenants were able to influence the selection of the actual manorial officers, managed communal finances, and were responsible for policing the use of common fields and other resources. These informal roles allowed wealthy tenants to control their communities without having to submit to the priorities and demands of the manorial administration, whose interests were not often aligned with their own.

The manor court, for example, reserved proactive regulation for the preservation of the lord's revenues—from rents, leases for mills, vaccaries, and other assets, or fines issued by the court—or else to the protection of seigneurial property and franchises, such as parks, woods, and water-ways. And though manorial officers were frequently required to police these matters, the actions of leading tenants wielding informal authority were most clear in areas such as the management of communal agriculture and common resources, and the pursuit of grievances against unscrupulous higher officials, concerns for which the manor court showed almost no active interest. The ability of tenants to acquire local power without having to take on institutional roles discouraged tenants from taking on manorial offices, where their

actions were largely dictated by the priorities of the institutions themselves, when informal positions were less demanding, granted substantial control over their peers, and were focused on issues of greater relevance to the tenants themselves.

Finally, I turned the questions of the thesis on their head, looking not at how the Wakefield landscape affected the peasants living there, but instead at how those peasants affected the landscape. In particular, I was interested in how use of the land was integrated with the display and expression of status by Wakefield residents. In asking these questions, I set out to theorise peasant enclosure-making in the same terms as historians and archaeologists have treated aristocratic parks and enclosures, focusing on their role in the articulation and materialisation of status, wealth, and prestige rather than only their practical and economic benefits.

The influence of local landscape conditions could still be seen in this aspect of life, as objection to the creation of enclosures by peasants was most strongly felt in the eastern regions of the manor where there was a greater quantity of common land and open-field systems, and a more intrusive presence of seigneurial enclosures and parks. These conditions contributed to closer neighbourly bonds and a greater emphasis on the use of communal resources and shared assets, and a stronger perception of enclosures as an imposition on the rights of the community. As a result, the creation of enclosures by peasants attracted greater negative connotations, being perceived as a violation of community values in favour of personal gain. From the perspective of those tenants who were constructing enclosures, on the other hand, asserting exclusive control over land and animals through the construction of enclosures allowed the wealthier peasants in Wakefield to make similar symbolic statements as lords who went through the effort of constructing parks. These constructions expressed not only wealth—the ability of tenants to purchase the land they enclosed—but also the status and prestige that was necessary to make and support a claim to exclusive use of the land, which set these tenants apart from, and above, their fellow tenants.

As the chapters of this thesis make their conclusions largely in isolation form one another, it is pertinent in closing the thesis to draw out some of the common threads

that run through them, and explore the relevance of these findings to manorial scholarship beyond Wakefield specifically. First, though the remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to the conclusions of the thesis that differ from the arguments of previous manorial scholars, I will note the areas in which the work I have performed in Wakefield has affirmed the pre-existing academic consensus on social, legal, and economic life in rural medieval England. The impact of settlement pattern and agricultural practice on the lives of peasants, much-discussed in prior literature, for example, is clearly evident within the evidence from Wakefield, and the great number of contrasts visible between the nucleated, arable east and the dispersed, pastoral west of the manor. This distinction is, for instance, the root of differences in the perception of and reaction to enclosures across different parts of the manor, and it has a significant impact on the incidence of certain offences and forms of action, especially depasturing and the enclosure of common lands, while also appearing to underlie the concentration of local power in the hands of the holders of unofficial or semi-official offices, as discussed towards the end of chapter four.

The evidence from Wakefield also reinforces arguments previously made about the degree to which medieval peasants relied on mutual support and co-operation from neighbours, peers, and family in order to achieve success and prosperity in their day-to-day lives. This is perhaps most apparent in the networks of credit and financial assistance that permeated the manor of Wakefield as they did other locales, and were being used by peasants for day-to-day purchases, capital investments, and in order to facilitate official duties, among other purposes. In other fields, we have seen that some amount of co-operation with neighbours was necessary for most people in agricultural production and litigation. For the former, mutual support was necessary given the limited numbers of draught animals and heavy farming equipment present on the manor, and enforced in the communal agreements and regulations that governed open fields and common lands that were vital to much production. For the latter, the judicial procedures used on the manor required that litigating tenants came to the court with supportive peers who could stand as pledges or supporters in wagers of law, and who could further enhance the impact of court action by bringing parallel litigation against shared enemies.

Finally, the thesis also affirms the recurrent disjunction and disconnect that can occur between the holders of local offices and the institutions they serve, as has been noted in manors and jurisdictions outside of Wakefield. The evidence from Wakefield does differ, however, in the means by which this disjunction was manifested. While much of the prior scholarly discussion of this subject has focused on individuals who held official positions and used the power and authority these granted to pursue their own agenda, rather than conforming to the objectives of the institution they served, at Wakefield we see that many of the wealthier individuals who would be expected to seek offices in order to co-opt authority in this way instead avoid certain offices, preferring to exercise informal power largely outside of the purview of local governing institutions and their priorities.

While these elements of the thesis largely reiterate arguments that have already been put forward by historians and archaeologists working in other areas of the country, my work with the data from Wakefield has also presented some conclusions that differ from prior scholarship, and it is to these issues I will now turn. Throughout this thesis I have examined the interplay between landscape and peasant social life. This is itself a relatively understudied subject within manorial literature, and there is one aspect of the Wakefield landscape in particular that occupies a prominent position across the arguments I have made above, despite being a factor that has not been subject to much analysis even in works focused on landscape: the unusually large size of the manorial jurisdiction at Wakefield, and its subdivisions, such as the manor's graveships or the parishes which encompassed Wakefield's territory.

While the impact of the size of the manor is not as visible in chapter five, which in any case is more concerned with the impact of Wakefield's residents on the landscape rather than the other way around, the effect that the size of the manor and its sub-jurisdictions had on tenants and the manorial institutions themselves is clear throughout chapters three and four. In chapter three we have seen how the manor's size affected the social environment in which Wakefield's peasants lived and had to negotiate personal relationships, financial entanglements, and litigation, with the size of the manor and unifying effects of its institutions having particular impact on the considerations that litigants in the manor court had in mind when navigating court

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cases. In chapter four, meanwhile, I have argued that the size of graveships was one of the most significant factors in determining the enthusiasm with which tenants approached offices such as the grave, those individuals who were faced with physically large jurisdictions appearing to be both less likely to actively seek offices such as the grave, and more likely to attempt to leave such offices early in the event that they were burdened with them.

I have noted above how the Wakefield evidence gives the impression that most tenants on the manor were reliant on mutual dependence and co-operation from neighbours to achieve success and prosperity. Throughout the thesis, however, there have been examples of individuals among the Wakefield peasantry who act against this background of interdependence, instead preferring an ability to act independently and without the support or co-operation of others. Such a tendency is discussed in the most detail in chapter five, in relation to Wakefield tenants' use of enclosure and the possibilities that enclosure and control were central elements of a broadly-understood language of authority and status used by Wakefield's peasants. Tenants who enclosed land can be seen as attempting to extricate themselves from dependency on commons, and their attendant regulations, by favouring private resources, an assertion of independence which was particularly apparent in the case of tenants who enclosed the common lands themselves, thus usurping a shared resource for their own private use.

Throughout the incidents and disputes presented in this thesis, however, it has been possible to discern attempts by wealthy and ambitious peasants to assert authority through independence across a range of fields, not solely through their use of enclosures. Chapter three, for instance, presented the figure of Robert Wolf, a wealthy tenant who presents an image of financial independence in the court rolls, having no record of the recurrent debts which characterised the activity of many other tenants, while simultaneously drawing his neighbours and peers into dependence on Robert by providing them credit. Robert in this way achieved a measure of influence over his fellow tenants through financial dependence, while rejecting the co-option of manorial authority through official service that would have tied him to manorial priorities and demands. In chapter four, meanwhile, we have

seen this rejection of manorial offices go further, with a number of tenants apparently avoiding or rejecting service in the key manorial offices, where their authority would be subordinate to that of the manorial administration, and instead using informal influence and office to project independent authority and control over their fellow tenants. By favouring this informal authority, independent from the demands of Wakefield's lords, these leading tenants could set their own priorities and follow their own objectives when asserting power over their fellow tenants. Via these means—enclosing land, refusing to take on debt, or rejecting subordinate offices—ambitious tenants removed themselves from many of the forms of interdependence that bound their peers, exerting status through this exceptional state of burgeoning independence.

This pattern of authority expressed through independence, however, may not necessarily have been universal throughout the manor. This is especially visible in relation to the observations I have made about the symbolic cachet of enclosure on the manor, which evidence suggests was strongest in the eastern areas where nucleated settlement and open-field farming were more dominant, and less meaningful in the west, where settlement was dispersed and enclosure of land in general more common. Furthermore, this landscape difference may not be the only factor which influences how peasants expressed or recognised status and authority. As the conclusions being made here have arisen indirectly, through analysis which has been focused on other aspects of the social, economic, and legal dynamics at play on the manor of Wakefield, further research into this question specifically would be required before any arguments on this matter could be made forcefully and clearly. This is not the only area in which the findings of this thesis raise tantalising possibilities for further investigation.

6.1: New Contributions and Future Directions

While the argument made above is tentative, and much more evidence from Wakefield could be brought to bear on the question of how peasants symbolically expressed and communicated their status and prestige, even in a preliminary state it indicates a new way in which the activities of medieval peasants, their relationships with one another, and their engagement with the landscape can, and should, be examined. It is now routine for scholars to assign this kind of symbolic communication to activities conducted by lords and nobles that are, at first glance, of an economic of martial nature, such as emparkment, hunting, castle-building, or trespass onto each other's lands. It is high time, I believe, to begin treating the activity as peasants in the same way, and to interrogate how their actions formed a component of social competition, display, and the materialisation of authority, beyond the simplistic paradigms of accumulation of wealth or the imitation of their social superiors.

In chapter five of this thesis and in the preceding section of this conclusion I have argued for the importance of enclosure in particular, and for a broader range of actions that serve to set individual peasants apart from their peers by making expressions or assertions of independence, in the expression of status and prestige by peasants at Wakefield. These proposals ought now to be subjected to more rigorous interrogation against the surviving evidence, not only to determine how strongly such a hypothesis can hold up against the evidence in Wakefield specifically, but also whether expressions of prestige and status are similarly discernible among the records of other manors. If these are valid forms of symbolic expression among the peasantry at Wakefield, to what extent can they be detected elsewhere? Were they peculiar to the idiosyncratic forms of administration and governance which had developed on the manor of Wakefield, with its great size and diverse landscape? Or were they instead reliant on particular forms of landscape, settlement pattern, or agricultural practice to have the necessary effect, with medieval peasants in different landscape or settlement zones expressing and asserting their status in different ways? These are some of the questions which the arguments I have made in this

thesis raise, and each deserves fuller consideration that it has been possible to give here.

It should also be noted at this juncture that this thesis has been largely focused on documentary evidence and questions of landscape on a relatively large scale, with the use of archaeological data hindered by a lack of good excavated sites across most of the manor of Wakefield and a significant transformation of the Wakefield landscape through post-medieval industrialisation. The questions posed above, however, are concerned with the manipulation and use of landscape and space by peasants, and thus there is much that stands to be gained by marshalling archaeological data on peasant dwelling and land-use in order to answer them. Given the nature of the evidence at Wakefield, this sort of investigation would be best performed in a different region, with less post-medieval disruption and a richer archaeological record, and where other conclusions of the thesis could be tested in a different physical and social environment.

These issues, however, have emerged somewhat incidentally from the primary focus of the thesis, which has been on the impact of landscape on the lives of Wakefield's tenants and their entanglements with the landscape over the course of their day-to-day lives. Across all chapters of this thesis I have demonstrated the substantial impact of landscape on the lives of peasants of Wakefield, unpicking the influence of landscape on the social lives and pressures faced by those peasants, well beyond the well-worn effects of landscape on preferred forms of settlement and agricultural regime. Throughout my study of the manor of Wakefield, I have shown how landscape impacts the breadth of the social networks within which peasants on the manor were enmeshed, the ways in which information and rumour could spread between settlements, the opinion of tenants towards manorial institutions and official services, and the means by which peasants were able to use the landscape for expressions of status and authority.

The overall emphasis of the thesis on landscape serves as a reminder to other scholars to consider how landscape may impact on their own studies, even in areas where this isn't initially apparent. However, I also want to emphasise a particular

aspect of the landscape which has been prominent through my thesis, but which rarely receives serious consideration in the work of other scholars: size. As I have already noted above, my thesis has repeatedly drawn out the great influence that the size of the manor of Wakefield as a jurisdiction had on the lives of the tenants living there, be it socially, politically, or legally. The contrasting sizes of manors, parishes, and other administrative divisions has been often noted by prior scholars, especially the tendency for very large manors to be found in the north of England while very small manors are more common in the south.[460] Given the substantial impact of size on day-to-day life in Wakefield, as my research has uncovered, it would be fruitful for further work to be done on the ways in which jurisdictions of different sizes impact on their inhabitants and subjects in different ways, treating the divide between large northern estates and small southern ones as a serious subject of scholarly study, rather than an intriguing regional quirk.

Finally, I turn to the methodological contributions which my thesis has made to the field of manorial history. In the introduction to this thesis I emphasised that I was attempting to move beyond what are now well-worn methodologies of manorial scholarship, emphasising a deeper qualitative valuation of the historical sources, and an interpretive approach which was firmly centred on landscape and the application of techniques from landscape history and archaeology to questions usually posed by historians. In closing the thesis, I will evaluate the approach that I have taken, and the lessons the results of this approach have for future research on rural medieval society.

While medieval landscapes have been much-studied previously, I have attempted to advance this field by introducing to medieval studies some techniques which are more prominent in the work of theoretically-engaged archaeologists and anthropologists, especially those working in the broad tradition of phenomenology. Accordingly, my thesis has concentrated on the active nature of the Wakefield landscape, and the embodied experiences of the people who lived there. In doing so I

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460 See Miller and Hatcher, *Medieval England– Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348*, 19–21, 32, 107–110; and Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200 — c. 1500,* 7 for differences in size between northern and southern manors in general; and Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy*, 285–6, which notes the size of Wakefield specifically..

have attempted to look at the actual, physical activity that underlies all of the incidents, procedures, and actions that are recorded in the Wakefield documents, above the more abstract, quantitative data favoured by the majority of manorial historians.

The advantages of my focus on landscape and embodied experience are visible throughout the thesis. On the subject of litigation and personal reputation, for instance, I reconstructed the physical requirements of going to court, examining the extent to which manor court sessions were public events with a large audience, and outlining the position of the court as a central node in networks of movement and information on the manor. Doing this demonstrated that the activities of Wakefield tenants in the court and over the course of their conflicts with each other were not necessarily motivated by immediate material concerns, but instead with the perception of their actions by the many onlookers who attended court, and their social contacts who might hear of those actions second-hand. Similarly, in considering the physical requirements of carrying out manorial offices, rather than considering the duties and responsibilities of officers in a removed and abstract manner, I was able to draw out the deeper impact of landscape on attitudes of tenants towards offices. This analysis revealed how the landscape of Wakefield made it more difficult for governing institutions there to integrate their authority with the structures of power and control that existed within peasant communities.

Given the range of these findings, there is potential for the methodologies I have deployed here—emphasis on the effects of landscape, use of a phenomenological framework, and greater use of qualitative analysis—to be fruitfully applied in the research of other manors and regions, with different qualities from Wakefield. How, for instance, would peasants' concern for reputation and the wider perception of their action be altered by living in a more bounded community, or a region where residents' movements were less constrained by the demands of central institutions? And how did the relationship of manorial offices to their duties differ when they had more compact jurisdictions, and what implications might this have for the relationship between manorial authorities and the wealthy tenants they often relied upon? In seeking to address questions such as these it will be possible to greatly expand our

understanding of the deep impact of landscape on social life and the operation of governing institutions in rural regions, and of the complex and multi-faceted interplay of landscape, legal action, institutional authority, social display, and interpersonal relations which this thesis has exposed.

Outside of the specific issue of landscape, furthermore, my prioritisation of qualitative over quantitative methods has illuminated some aspects of life on the manor of Wakefield that would not be so readily apparent if I had followed the norm of modern manorial scholarship and its emphasis on statistical analysis. Of course, neither a quantitative nor a qualitative approach can be the be-all and end-all of historical analysis, and number of conclusions in the thesis could not have been made without the use of statistical methods. The association of larger graveships with greater disdain for serving as grave, for instance, emerges only through statistical analysis, as does the link between objections to the creation of new enclosures and more extensive use of open-field farming and nucleated settlement. In other respects, however, a deeper examination of the detail which lies behind these statistical trends, and an appreciation of the spatial context in which they played out, has been necessary to gain fuller insight into the structures and processes that are really at play.

On the subject of office-holding, to take one notable example, my close analysis of the court entries related to the exercise of power outside of the bounds of manorial offices has suggested that inequalities of power and authority in rural settlements were not limited to official positions. Rather, wealthy tenants were also engaged in unofficial roles and positions of authority not often recorded by manorial administrators, which brings into question whether data derived from official positions only can be an effective measure of inequalities in the distribution of power, as many academics previously have taken it to be. Intriguingly, Ault had written on this problem in 1972, as statistical methods were coming into vogue in manorial history, when he noted that manorial documents tended to record neither the selection nor the activity of field-wardens, these officers who were deeply influential in the operation of agricultural regimes in open-field systems apparently being of only incidental interest

to manorial authorities.[461] Subsequent research on the operation of local power, however, has largely neglected unseen positions of influence such as these in favour of the easily-quantifiable manorial offices of reeve, juror, and so on. My findings in this thesis conform with Ault's argument that inequalities of power are often expressed out of the view of manorial documents, suggesting that much recent work on this subject has over-emphasised the relationship between institutional authority and local power, which perhaps requires re-evaluation through more detailed reading of the sources at hand.

While this particular example focuses on manorial offices, it has broader implications for any manorial research that has a predominantly quantitative character. In taking a qualitative approach to the question of office-holding, I have demonstrated how a narrow focus on certain sets of easily-obtained statistics can lead historians to lose sight of the larger picture, with many nuances and crucial dynamics discernible only through detailed qualitative assessment of sources, even where such dynamics had been apparent to earlier scholars, such as Ault. This raises the question of what other aspects of manorial history—or, indeed, medieval history more widely—may be being hindered by similar oversights rooted in a statistical methodology. Many aspects of rural life in medieval England are now studied primarily through quantitative approaches, such as debt and credit, agricultural production and other economic activity, or land markets and land use, to name just a few. Having made much progress in advancing understanding in these areas, perhaps it is now time for the scholars involved in the quantitative turn to take a more critical eye to their own methodology, and ask what statistical analysis may be causing them to overlook in their sources.

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461 Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England: A Study of Village By-Laws*, 62.

Appendix: Wakefield Officer Lists

Part 1: Graves

Note: a slash (/) indicates that no record was made of an election, or that the rolls are too damaged for the name to be read. There was no Scammonden graveship between 1306 and 1316, and the court rolls for 1309 and 1310 have not survived.

Graveship	1306	1307	1308	1311	1312	1313	1314	1315	1316
Alverthorpe	/	/	Robert son of Ralph de Ouchethorpe	/	/	Robert Gerbot	/	Adam of Flanslow	/
Hipperholme	/	/	Simon del Dene	/	/	Henry de Coppeley; John son of Walter; Simon Attedene	John de Sunderland	Henry of Copley	/
Holme	/	/	William Strecayse	/	/	/	/	/	John of the Both
Horbury	/	/	/	/	/	Thomas Elin (carried from 1312)	/	Robert of the Okes (refused); Robert of the Wro	Robert of Ok
Ossett	/	/	Richard son of John de Chikinlay	/	/	Adam son of William son of Jordan	/	William of Heton (carried from	

Graveship	1306	1307	1308	1311	1312	1313	1314	1315	1316
								1315)	
Rastrick	/	/	Henry son of John de Rastrick	/	/	/	/	Henry son of John	/
Sandal	/	/	John Cokewald (carried from 1307)	/	/	Robert son of Adam (carried from 1312)	/	/	John of Osset (refused); William of Osset (refused); Nelle of Doncaster (refused); Robert son of Pelle
Sowerby	/	/	Henry de Hollegate	/	/	Henry de Salonstall (carried from 1312)	/	/	/
Stanley	/	/	Andrew Pogge	/	/	Robert de Milkelfeld	/	Richard Poket	/
Thornes	/	/	Ralph Bate	/	/	/	/	/	/
Wakefield	/	/	/	/	/	/	John Cay (refused)	/	/

Graveship	1348	1349	1350	1351	1352	1353	1354	1355	1356	1357	1358
Alverthorpe	Robert Malyn	Robert Malyn (for heir of Henry del Stokes)	/	/	/	Thomas Store Capet (?)	William Schote	Thomas Bate	/	Robert Malyn	Robert Malyn
Hipperholme	Henry son of Matthew	John son of William del Rode	John de Whitill	/	/	/	/	/	John Wilkinson	John Stronge (?)	John Symson
Holme	William Wade	William Wade (for Adam Wade)	Matthew de Romesden (for John son of Robert de Skoles)	William del Morehous	/	/	/	/	Henry Willeson	William de Morehous	William del Bothe
Horbury	Robert Godale (for Agnes wife of Elias de Horbury)	Hugh del Wroo	John Godale	Ribert Stut	/	/	/	/	John Ibbot	Robert Scrone (?)	Henry Elyot (for Robert Sena ?)
Ossett	John Broun of Heaton	John Broun	/	/	/	William Blunt (?)	John Wram (or Broun?) junior	[John or Richard?] Hyinyet	/	Thomas son of Hugh de Disseford (?)	Adam Cade
Rastrick	Roger Taillour of Rastrick	John de Rastrick	John Rayner	Roger Cowhird	/	/	/	/	John de Bothrode	John de Bothrode	Hugh son of Stephen
Sandal	Thomas Harpour	Robert Wylimot	William del Grene	Thomas del Okes	/	/	/	/	William Broun	Thomas Harpor	William Jonson Shephird (for John de Halyfax)
Scammonden	Geoffrey de Scammonden	Henry del Sagh	Thomas del Wodeheved	John Willeson del Hole	/	/	/	/	John son of Henry	Henry del Shagh	John de Grenwod
Sowerby	Adam del Field	Adam de Bentlayrod	Adam de Ovynden	Thomas del Lane (for	/	/	/	/	John Robynson	Thomas de Salonstall	Thomas Sychewod

Graveship	1348	1349	1350	1351	1352	1353	1354	1355	1356	1357	1358
				Richard del Rode)							(?) (for Roger Edeson)
Stanley	Walter Gunne	Henry son of Philip Sagher	/	/	/	William Sagher	Henry Hunt	Thomas Peny	/	Robert Wilkes	John Carte
Thornes	John son of Richard de Lupsed	Thomas Iveson (for Robert Foerboer)	/	/	/	Henry Wythondes	Hugh de Lokyngton	Hugh de Cuplote (?)	/	Thomas Elyot	Robert Peger
Wakefield	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Warley	William del Dene	John son of Thomas de Salonstall	Richard Sklater	Richard Sklater	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Graveship	1379	1380	1381	1382	1383	1384	1385	1386	1387	1388	1389
Alverthorpe	/	John Roberts (for John Ibbot)	/	John Sireson	/	John Henreson	/	William Wilkynson (for John Roberts)	John Hounslawe (for Roger de Halifax)	John Oldschrewe (for Robert de Welles)	John Clifton (for William Pynder)
Hipperholme	Richard del Cliffe	Richard Matheson (for Thomas de Sidale)	/	John Johnson Simson	/	John Boie (for Cecilia Boie)	/	John Boy	John Diconson	Richard Simson (for Robert de Wolkey)	Richard Symson
Holme	William son of William de Altenley (for Richard de Littlewood)	John Gray	/	John Simondson	/	William de Brounehill	/	Thomas de Oxlegh	Adam de Brodehode (?)	Thomas Wade	Roger del Morehouse
Horbury	/	Thomas de Westerton	/	Richard del Hyganus (?)	/	Robert Elyot	/	John de Whyte	John Maunsell	John Shoter	John Diconson
Ossett	John Bull	John Judson	/	Robert Souman	/	Robert Soneman (for John Hardegate)	/	Thomas de Westerton	William Dischford (for Richard Hirning)	Robert Burnan (for John de Bradeford)	Thomas Clifford
Rastrick	John Hanson	Robert Wul	/	John hanson	/	Robert Wul (for Agnes wife of John de Sotehill)	/	Richard de Botherode	John de Wodehouse (for Alice del Halle)	Hugo Stevenson	John de Schepley
Sandal	Richard Broun (replaced by Philpott de Northwyche by autumn tourn)	William del Grene (for Thomas Broun)	/	John de Walton (for John de Northpole)	/	John Samson (for John de Halifax)	/	Roger Wodehouse	William Auphdene (?) (for Henry Fiere)	Thomas Shephird	William Part
Scammonden	Richard Jonson	John Sayvill (for Thomas de Sidale?)	/		/	Richard del hey (for William son of John de	/	Richard del Hey	Robert del Hole	Henry del Hole	William de Wodhed

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Graveship	1379	1380	1381	1382	1383	1384	1385	1386	1387	1388	1389
						Denton)					
Sowerby	John Attetownende (for John Wythewater)	Thomas de Sidale	/	John Attetounende	/	John del Deyn (for John del Deyn)	/	Richard Robinson	John Attetownende (for Richard Johnson)	John del Deyn (for Richard de Heliwell)	John at Bowende (for Robert de Westonhouse)
Stanley	William Carter (possibly for Juliana)	John de Kent de Wakefield (for William Caster)	/	Andrew de Stanley	Name Unclear (for John de Kent de Wakefield)	Robert Poket	/	John Oldeschewe de Stanley (for William de Fynchedene)	John Oldeschewe (for Robert Jonson)	William de Fynchedene	Henry Philip (for Hugo Phillip)
Thornes	/	John Nailer (?)	/	John Mariot (for John Roberts)	John Mariot (for Thomas Dewson)	John Mariot (for John Swerd)	/	John Diconson	John Anot (for William de Hipslode)	John son of Hugo de Hipslede (for John del More)	William Peger
Wakefield	William Phillip	William Philip	/	William Philip	/	William Philip	/	William Phillip	William Phillip	William Pillip	William Philip

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Part 2: Tourn Jurors

Note: a slash (/) indicates that no record was made of jury selection, or that the rolls are too damaged for the name to be read. No juries lists were made in the years 1311, 1313, 1351, 1352-54, 1356, 1358, 1381, and 1385-89. In the first Wakefield tourn of 1316, 24 jurors were selected.

1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield	
Walter de Grimiston	John Patrick	Robert de Wyveromth orpe	Richard de Wyveromth orpe	Robert de Wyromthor pe	John Patrik	John Patrik	Robert de Wyrunthor pe	Walter de Grimeston	Robert de Wyrunthor p	William of Grymeston	Thomas de Seyville	Robert of Wyverumth orp	Walter of Toftclif
Robert de Wyrunthor pe	Walter de Grymeston	Henry de Chyvet	William Ingreys	Walter de Grymmest on	Walter de Grymmest on	Walter de Gunston	William Ingrays	Thomas de Seyvill	William de Dewesbury	Thomas Patrikes	Robert of Wyverumth orpe	William of Dewsbiry	Richard of Salsa Mara
John Patrick	Robert de Wyromthor pe	Thomas de Wyttelay	Walter de Grymmest on	William Ingreys	William Ingreys	Richard de Birstall	John Patrikes	Thomas de Qwitlay	Thomas de Wytlay	William of Dewesbury	Rober the Walker of Wakefield	Henry of Chivet	Robert of Wyrunthor p
William de Dewysbiry	William Ingreys	William Ingreys	Richard de Birstall	Richard de Birstall	William de Dewisbury	John de Wyrunthor p	Thomas de Wytlay	Robert de Wyrunthor p	Henry de Chivet	Henry of Chevet	John Tasch of Wakefield	John Patryk	William Grenehod
John de la More	William son of Micahel de Floketon	William de Dewysbiry	John de Toftclif	Robert de Wodesom	John de la More	Thomas de Seyvill	Thomas de Seyvill	Richatd Tylli	John Patrik	John of the More	William of Dewesbury	Robert of Stodley	William of Desbiry
William del Floketon	William de Dewsbiry	W[alter?] de Grymmest on	Richard de Bretton	Richard de Salsa Mara	Henry de Chyvet	William Ingreys of Chevet	Richard de Birstall	John Patrikes	Richard de Salsamara	Richard of Birstall	Richard of Birstall	John Pykard	Richard of Birstall of Normanton
Paulin de Emmeley	Robert de Horbyry	Richard de Salsa Mara	William de Dewisbiry	John Patrik	John de Toftclyf	John de Mora	William de Deusbery	Thomas Alayn	William Alayn	Richard so Salsa-mara	Richard of Salsamara	John Aleyn of Eccleshill	William son of Michael of Floketon
Richard son of	Richard de Salsa Mara	Richard de Birstall	John de la More	Robert Dernelove	Richard de Birstall	John Rased	German Filcokes	Robert the Walker	Robert the Walker of	William of Floktone	William son of Michael	Richard son of	Richard Kyng of

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1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
John de Ossete									Wakefield		of Flokton	John of Osset	Walton
Henry de Heton	Richard de Birstall	Robert de Wodesom	Richard son of John de Ossete	John de Fery	Robert de Wodesom	Thomas Aleyn	Robert the Walker	Walter Scotes	German Filcokes of Wakefield	German Filcokes	German Filcokes	German Filcok	John Patryk
Walter Scot	Robert de Wodesom	John de la More	Robert de Wodesom	Walter Scott	John de Fery	Robert de Fetherston	Henry de Chevet	William de Dewsbury	John Tasche of Wakefield	Robert the Walker	John Patrikes	John Erl	Robert the Walker
William Grenehod	Henry de Chyvet	Henry Erle	John del Fery	John Cussing	Walter Scot	German Swerd	Thomas Alayn	Richard de Salsamara	Robert the Roller of Wakefield	John Tasehe	Henry of Chyvet	Thomas son of Lawrence	Henry of Heton
William the Goldsmith	Hugh de Seyvill	William Grenehode	Walter Scot	John de Mora	Robert Dernelove		William Grenhod	German Folcokes	John de la More	Robert the Roller	William of Castilford	William of Castilforth	William Erl
												Richard of Salsa Mara	
												Walter of Tofteclyf	
												John of the More	
												Adam Sprigonel the younger	
												Thomas of the Bellehous	
												William Grenehod	
												Robert the Fuller	

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1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
												Robert of Heyrode	
												Thomas Attekirke of Erdeslou	
												William of the Okes	
												Robert the Drapur of Stanley	
												Adam of Wodesom	
Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse	
Thomas de Fekysby	John de Rodes	John de Locwode	Alan del Frith	Alexander del Frith	Alexander del Frith	Thomas de Dalton	Master Thomas de Dalton	John de Quernby	Alexander del Frith	Alexander of the Frith	John of Querneby	John of Querneby	John of Querneby
John de Locwode	William del Bothes	Alexander del Frith	Thomas de Dalton	Luke de Nettleton	John le Flemang of Dalton	John de Hertseheved	Alexander del Fryth	Thomas de Tothill	John Flemyng of Dalton	John Flemyng of Dalton	Alexander of the Fryth	John Flemyng of Clifton	Thomas of Totehill
John Percy	John de Locwode	Thomas de Dalton	Ralph de Gouthelaghchartes	John de Locwode	Thomas Fisicus of Dalton (previously Thomas de Dalton)	John son of Adam de Lockewod	John the Fleming of Dalton	John the Fleming of Clifton	Thomas de Dalton physician	John of Quernby	Thomas of Tothill	Thomas of Dalton	Alexander of the Frith
John the Clerk of …	John l Flemyng of Dalton	John le Flemyng	Henry de Frankisse of Staynland	Matthew de Lynthait	John de Locwode junior	John del Rode	John de Lokwod, senior	John the Fleming of Walton	John son of Adam de Locwode	Thomas of Tothill	John the Flemyng of Clifton	Alexander of the Fryth	Thomas of Dalton physician

1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
William del Bothes	Wheny son of Walter	John son of Adam de Locwode	… Talvace	Henry de Frankisse	Roger de la Sale	Thomas de Whitewod	John the Clerk of Hertsheved	Alexander del Firth	John de Herteshev ed	John Flemyng og Clifton	Hugh of Tothill	Henry of Coldelay	John son of Adam of Lockewode
Ralph de Guthlacharwes	John de Birstall	John de Hertsheved	John de Birstall	John del Rode	Lovecok de Nettleton	Henry de Coldley	John de la Rode	John the Clerk of Hertsheved	John de la Rode of Hipperholme	Master Thomas of Dalton	John Flemyng of Dalton	John of Hertsheved	John of Hertsheved
John de Flemeng	Henry de Coildelay	John de Percy of Clifton	John del Rode	Henry de Coldelay	John the Clerk of Hertsheved	*name illegible*	John de Birtal	William de Sunderland	Henry de Coldelay	John son of John of Lokwode	Andrew Forester	Thomas of Whittwod	Thomas of Whitewode
/		John de Percy	Geoffrey del Dene	John the Clerk of Heresheved	Henry Beytonefield	Henry de Coldelay	John son of William de Steynland	Thomas Dines of Dalton	John del Rode	Roger of the Haghe	Henry of Coldelay	John of Birstall of Northowram	John of the Rode o Hyperum
/		John de Herteshev ed	John de Birstall	Henry de Coldelay	John de Birstal	John the Fleming of Dalton	Roger de Aula	Thomas del Wode of Fekesby	Thomas de Fikesby	John Clerk of Hertsheved	John of Birstall	Thomas de Bosco of Fekesby	Henry of Coldelay
/		William de Bradelay	Henry de Coildelay	John de P…	Roger de Aula	Thomas del Wode of Fekesby	Thomas del Wode of Fekesby	Matthew de Bosco	Roger del Haghe	Henry of Coldelay	John of Hetsheved clerk	John son of Adam de Locwode	John of Birtsall
/		Alexander del Frith	Henry le Franceys (?)	Thomas de Wytewode	John le Flemang	Locokes de Nettleton	Lovecokes de Nettelton	John son of William de Steynland	John de Nettelton	John of Birstall	Roger of Haya	Andrew the Forester	William Squier
/		Simon de Schelfley	Lovecok de Nettleon	Roger de Clifton	John the Clerk of Herteshev ed	William the … of Hyperum	John son of Adam de Lokwode	John son of Adam de Lokwode		John son of John de Locwode	William Squier	Matthew of Lynthwayt	Matthew of Linthwayt

1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax	
/	Richard de Waddeswo rth	Thomas de Coppelay	Richard de Waddeswo rth junior	Richard del Dene	John de Stanesfield	Richard de Waddeswo rth	John de Hassenhirs te	Richard de Waddeswo rth	Adam del Schagh	William of Sothill junior	Matthew de Bosco	John of Soland	Thomas of the Hall
/	Richard del Dene	Richard de Waddeswo rth	John de Stodelay	Richard the Tailor of Waddeswo rth	Richard del Dene	Matthew de Bosco	William de Eastwood	Matthew del Wod	John Fox of Stansfeld	Thomas of Waddeswo rth	William of Sothill senior	John of Longeley	John Culpon
/	John son of John de Northeland e	William son of Molle	William del Croft	John del Rediker	William del Croft of Langfeld	John de Stansfeld	Adam del Schaye	William de Counale	William de Soothill junior	Richard son of John of Stanesfeld	John son of William of Stodlay	Ivo of Saltonstall	John of the Rode
/	John de Langlay	Peter de Crosseley	John de Chewelleye	German del Grenewod e	John Fox of Stanesfeld	John Fox of Stansfeld	Richard the Tailor of Waddeswo rth	Adam de Middleton	John Coulpon	Adam of the Schaghe	Robert of Salonstall	Henry of Werlolry, clerk	John of Longeley
/	John de Miggelay	German de Grenewod e	Hugh son of Reynald	William de Heyley	Richard son of Richard de Waddeswo rth	Adam del Schaye	John de Cogcrofte	John de Northland	Richard de Cheswelley	John Fox	Adam of the Schaghe	William of Sotehill junior	Henry of the Clerk of Werloley
/	Henry son of Reynald	Adam Attetounhe nd	John de Miggelay	John de Routonstall	William de Sothil	German de Vrenwod	John son of John de Soland	William de Skyrcote	Richard de Salonstall	John Culpon	Thomas of the Bellehous	German of the Grenewod e	Adam of the Schagh
/	Thomas de Bellehouse s	Richard de Salonstall	Adam de Midelton	Peter Swerd	William de Connale	Richard the Taillur de Waddeswo rth	John de Langley	Alan de Heptonstall	William son of Hanne de Northland	Richard of Counhale	Henry of the Holgate	John, son of Robert of Chesewalle y	John son of Robert of Chesewalle y

1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
/	German del Grenewode	Roger son of Amabel	John son of Hugh de Northlaund	John de Cockecroft	John son of John de Soland	Adam-at-Townend of Miggeley	Henry de Hollegate	Bate the Lister	John son of Hugh del Toun	John of the Toun	John of Solande	Henry of the Holgate	William of the Ryding
/	William del Croft	John de Noteschagh	Adam de Illingworth	Thomas de Aula	Thomas de la Sale of Northeland	Richard de Salonstal	Henry son of Wilcoke	John Fox	Thomas de Bellehous	Richard of the Wyteleye	William of Snape	Robert of Salonstall	Henry of the Holgate
/	John Fox	Thomas de Bellehouses	Adame de Miggelay	William de Skircotes	Richard son of Bateman	John de Cokecroft	William de Counale	Robert del Haye	Thomas de Wadesworth	William of the Ryding	John son of Robert of Chesewalley	William of the Ryding	Adam Attetounende
/	William de Northende of Halifax	William del Bothem	Jordan de Skircotes	Thomas de Coppelay	Matthew de Bosco	John de Miggeley	William de Skircotes	Richarde de Whyteleye	William de Estwode	John Judyng	Richard of Wyndhill	John Culpon	Richard of the Windhill
/	Richard de Salonstall	John de Cockecroft	Adam del Lee	Gilbert de Halifax	John de Cockecroft	Thomas de Belhous	Bate the Lister	Richard de Salonstall	Thomas son of Robert del Brigge	Ivo of Salonstall	Robert of the Grenehirst	Thomas of Solande	William Horsknave
						Gilbert Prestinethorp							
Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton	
John Wyther	Richard de Thornetlay	Richard Osan	Henry de Scheflay	Richard de Thornetlay	Henry de Schelvelay	John Withir	/	Adam de Heley	Henry de Schellay	Henry of Schellay	William of Rylay	Henry of Schellay	John of Schepeley
Richard de Thornicthel	Richard Osan	John Wyther	John Wyther	John Wither	Adam de Helay	Richard de Thornie	/	Richard de Thorteley	Adam de Helay	Adam of Helay	Richard Osan	Adam of Heley	Robert of Wolwro
Henry de Birton	Hugh de Thornetlay	John de Braythayt	John son of John de Chepelay	Rochard Osan	Richard de Thornteley	William de Riley	/	Henry de Schelley	Richard de Thornotlay	Richard of Thornetlay	John Wyther	Henry of Byrton	William of Ryley

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1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
Richard Osan	John Wyther	Thomas Bridde	Hugh de Thurstanland	Henry de Birton	John Wyther	Robert de Wolwro	/	Robert de Wlfwro	Robert del Wolwro	John Wyther	John son of John of Braythwayt	Robert of Wlvro	John son of Quenilda
John de Braythetweyt	John son of Quenilda	Adam del Skoles	Thomas Bridde	John de Legh	John de Braythait	John de Braitwait	/	William de Ryley	John Wyhter	Henry of Birton	Richard of Birton	John son of Quenild	John of the Stokkes
Thomas the Shepherd	John de Braythiet	William …	Adam del Skoles	John de Braithait	Simon de Thurstanland	John son of Adam de Heppeworth	/	John Wyther	Henry de Birton	Adam son of Nicholas of Wolvedale	Adam of Wolvedale	Hugh son of Adam of Thurstanland	Thomas the Smith of Schepely
Thomas Ferenhoule	Henry de Birton	John son of Gilbert de Heppeworth	John son of Gilbert	Adam son of Emma	Henry de Birton	Adam del Scoles	/	John de Braytwayt	Richard de Birton	Richard of Birton	John son of Adam of Heppeworth	William Strekeyse	Adam Kenward of Wolvedale
John de Heppeworth	Thomas Fernoule	Nicholas Keneward	William Strechayse	John son of Quenilda	Thomas Bridde	Hugh del Holes	/	Henry de Birton	John son of Adam	John son of Adam of Heppeworth	Richard of the Dene	Adam of Wlvdale	Hugh of Thornetlay
Richard del la Grene	John son of Gilbert	Matthew de Marisco	Nicholas de Littelwode	Thomas Fernehoule	John son of Alcok de Heppeworth	Adam de la Grene	/	Richard de Birton	? son of Adam	Adam of the Grene	Hugh of the Hole	Adam of Grene of Alestanley	Elias of the Graunge
Adam del Scoles	Adam son of Emme	Richard …	Nicholas Keneward	Gilbert de Astanlay	Adam del Skoles	Adam de Wolvedale	/	John son of Adam son of Adam de Wolvedale	Adam de la Grene	Hugh of the Hole	William Strekys	Richard son of John of Heppeworth	Richard Osan
John son of Gilbert	Richard de la Grene	Hugh de Thorntelay	Richard Osan	John son of Gilbert	Adam de Wolvedale	Richard de Birton	/	Adam de la Grene	Hugh de Hole	Adam of the Scoles	Thomas of Thurstamland	Richard of Tounstedes	Hugh of the Hole

1306		1307		1308		1312		1314		1315		1316	
	William Strekase		Richard de Birton	Hugh del Hole	Hugh de Hole	John de Stokis	/	Hugh del Hole	Richard del Dene	Richard of the Dene	Richard of Yrys		Thomas of Billeclif
				Nicholas de Keneward									

1348		1349		1350		1355		1357	
Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield	
John de Seyvill	John Malet	Thomas de Birtsall	John Alayn	/	/	Thomas de Birstall (?)	Ade de …	Thomas de Birstall	John Alyn
...' Gates	Thomas de Birtsall	John Malet	John de Gairgrave	/	/	… Heghrode	Geoffrey …	John Malet	John Malet
Thomas de Birstall	William de Caylli	Richard de Fincheden	Richard de Fincheden	/	/	John del More	William …	Geoffrey Pykards	Ade de Mosely
John Alayn of Wakefield	Thomas Gates	John de Gairgrave	William Orfeour	/	/	Henry de Flokton	… de Amyas	Adam del Heghrode	Thomas de Birstall
Adam de Wyrunthorp	John de Bretton	John Alayn	John de Sayvill	/	/	Richard de ...onghlewe (?)	Henry de Flokton	John Bretton	John de Bretton
Edmund de Dronsfeld	John Alayn of Wakefield	John de Bretton	John de Mora	/	/	John Alayn	/	William de Kyrkeby	Adam de Heghrode
Adam de Heghrod	Richard de Funcheden	Alan de Heyrod	William de Flockton	/	/	William de Kirkeby	/	Henry de Flokton	John de Mallynges
William son of Roger de Eckleshill	William Parmenter	John de Sayvill	William de Kyrkby	/	/	Robert Erle	/	Edward de Amyas	William de Suytall
John de Mora of Thornes	William Orfevre	Thomas Gates	Edmund de Dronsfeld	/	/	John Sayvill	/	William de Suytall	Henry de Flokton
William Orfeure	John de More of Thornes	William Smith of Eccleshill	William Smith of Eccleshill	/	/	Thomas Gates	/	Simon son of Thomas	John Taillur de Dewsbury
Adam Hewer	Ralph de Kerlinghawe	Geoffrey de Normnaton	John Malet	/	/			John Bunny	Geoffrey Pykard
Simon son of Thomas	William de Nanygham	John de Mora of Thornes		/	/			Thomas de Lokwod	William Orfeure(?)

Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse	
Thomas de Lockewod	Thomas de Lockewod	Thomas de Locwod	William de Staynland	/	/	/	/	/	/
William de Steyland	William de Steynland	William de Staynland	Richard de Hertesheved	/	/	/	/	/	/
William de Bradelay	John Evotson de Scammonden	John de Hepton	Henry de Rysseworth	/	/	/	/	/	/
Thomas del Stockes	Thomas del Stocke	Richard de Hertesheved	John de Hopton de Dalton	/	/	/	/	/	/
Thomas de Whitacres	Henry de Coppelay	John de Dalton	John son of Thomas de Dalton	/	/	/	/	/	/
Richard de Hertesheved	Richard de Hertesheved	Henry de Rysseworth	John son of Eva de Scammonden	/	/	/	/	/	/
Robert de Whitewod	Robert de Whitewod	John de Stayncliff	Nicholas de Helywelle	/	/	/	/	/	/
Richard del Rokes	John de Rastrick	Adam del Hirst	John de Staynland	/	/	/	/	/	/
Henry de Rissheworth	John de Hopton	Nicholas de Helywell	John son of Ellen de Rastrick	/	/	/	/	/	/
John del Brighous junior	John del Brighouse junior	John del Brighous	John Doggeson of Brighouse	/	/	/	/	/	/
John son of Richard de Hopton	/	Richard de Rothelset	Richard de Gledhill	/	/	/	/	/	/
John de Stayncliff	/	John son of Eva de Scammonden	John son of Simon del Dene	/	/	/	/	/	/

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Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax	
Thomas Culpon	Thomas Cuplon	Hugh de Coplay	William de Stansfield	Hugh de Coplay	/	/	/	/	/
Hugh de Coppelay	Hugh de Coppelay	Thomas Culpon	Hugh de Coplay	William de Stansfeld	/	/	/	/	/
Thomas de Sothill	William de Stansfield	Richard de Estwod	RIchard de Waddesworth	Thomas Culpon	/	/	/	/	/
Richard de Waddeswrth junior	Richard de Waddesworth junior	Peter del Crossleygh	Thomas Culpon	William…	/	/	/	/	/
Richard del Estewode	Richard de Westwod	William del Lawe	William de Estwod	William Samson de Grenwod	/	/	/	/	/
William del Ryding junior	Richard del Wod	William del Rydyng	William son of Thomas de Heptonstall	William del Ryding	/	/	/	/	/
Jordan de Acreland	William del Ryding	Thomas del Toun of Northland	William Tailor	William de Coplay	/	/	/	/	/
John de Godlay	William son of John	John de Goblay	John Iveson of Salonstall	William de Slak	/	/	/	/	/
Thomas de Northland	Richard de Northland	Richard del Wod	Thomas del Toun	John de Godlay	/	/	/	/	/
Alexander del Hyngandrode	Thomas del Torni	John son of Ivo de Salnstall	William del Rydyng	/	/	/	/	/	/
William del Lawe of Longfield	John de Godelay	Henry Walker	John de Godlay	/	/	/	/	/	/
William de Grenewode	William de Fyfhnd	Alexander del Henganrod	Alexander del Henganrod	/	/	/	/	/	/

Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kirkburton		Kikrburton	
William de Birton	John Wychire	William de Storthes	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
John de Shepley	John de Shepley	Ralph de Skelmerthorp	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
John Wyther	Ralph de Skelmerthorpe	Robert de Thornetlay	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
William del Storthes	John Lister junior	John Lister	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Robert de Walwro	Robert del Walwro	Robert de Wolwro	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Ralph de Skelmerthorp	William de Hengecliff	John Smith of Sheplay	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
William de Hengecliff	Adam son of Roger de Heppeworth	William de Craven	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Robert del Bothe	John Drabell	John Drable	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
John Drabell	Thomas de Hyngecliff	Matthew de Romesden	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
John son of Nicholas Kenward	John de Brounhill	John son of Nicholas de Wolvedale	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Nicholas son of Simon de Heppewrth	William Hughettes	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
William de Craven	John Smytho of Shepley	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Roger le Walker		/	/	/	/	/	/	/

1379		1380		1382		1383		1384	
Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield		Wakefield	
Robert de Wilkeson	Thomas de Manyngham	William de Kirkeby	/	/	William de Kirkeby	/	William de Kirkeby	Robert de…	Robert de Silkeston
Robert de Fynchedene	William de Kirkburton de Silketon	Richard de Blakker	/	/	Robert de Silkeston	/	John de Burstall de Normanton	… de Thornes	William de Kirkbey
John del Mare de Thornes	William …	John del More	/	/	William Bate	/	John del More de Thornes	John de Birstall	John de Burstall de Normanton
John Young de Thornes	Robert de Blakker	John Young	/	/	John del More de Thornes	/	John lake de Normanton	John de Rilay	John grenehode'
Richard de Walker	John Ring de …	John King de Walton	/	/	Richard de Blacker	/	Adam de Merlay de Birdeslowe	Thomas de …	John del More
John Young de Walton	Thomas del Abbay	John Birstal	/	/	John Lake	/	Richard Hirning	Thomas de Abbay	Richard Hirning
William de Fenton	John Young de Horbury	John Lake	/	/	John Kyng	/	John de Rilay	John de …	Thomas del Abbay
John Weldebor	/	William de Fenton	/	/	Robert de Welles	/	Thomas del Abbay de Wakefield	Richard Hirning	John de Thorp
Robert de Stanlay	/	Robert de Fyncheden	/	/	John Young	/	Robert Bull de Eadem (?)	/	Adam de Merlay
William de Houses	/	Thomas del Abbay	/	/	Richard Hirning	/	Thomas Shulder de Eadem	/	John del Grene de Ossett
John de Birstal	/	John de Thorp	/	/	Thomas Porter	/	John Grenehode	/	Richard de Methley
William Bate	/	John Malinson	/	/			Richard de Methelay de Horbury	/	John de Akeworth

1379			1380	1382		1383		1384	
Brighouse			Brighouse	Brighouse		Brighouse		Brighouse	
Henry de Risehworth	/	/	Henry de Rissheworth	Henry de Rissheworth	Henry de Rissheworth	/	Henry de Rissheworth	[parchment damaged]	Henry de Rissheworth
Thomas de Walton	/	/	Adam del Stokkis	William de Wythill	William de Whital	/	William de Witehill	Henry de Rissheworth	William de Whithill
Ade del Stakkins	/	/	Thomas de Dalton	John Drakes	John Drake	/	John Drake	Thomas de Dalton	John Drake
John Drake	/	/	Jalyis (?) Drake	Roger de Wodehede	Roger de Wodehede	/	Thomas de Dalton	John … pworth	John de Hepworth
Thomas del Hisrt	/	/	John del Rokus	Thomas de Dalton	Thomas de Dalton	/	Thomas del Hirst	… del Firthe	William de Hurst
Richard del Welle	/	/	John Jagger	John del Rokes	John de Rokes	/	John del Fitche	Richard del Halwel	John del Firth
John de Rokes	/	/	John del More	Richard de Heliwelle	Richard de Heliwelle	/	Roger de Wodehed	John del …	Elliot Denison de Crosseland
John del More	/	/	John del Firth	John de Carthouse	John de Calthorne	/	Richard de Holiewell	… Drake	Richard de Halewell
Robert del Rode	/	/	John del Carthouse	John Jagger	Thomas del Hurt	/	Richard del Hey	John …	John del More
John Jagger	/	/	Richard del Heliwelle	John del Firth	John de Hepworth	/	John del More	… de Whithill	John del Rokes
John de Hepworth	/	/	Roger de Wodehede	Thomas del Hirst	Robert Walleson	/	John del Rokes	Richard del Hey	William de Steinland
John de Carthome	/	/	Richarde del hey	John de Hepworth	John del More	/	John de Hepworth	Henry Brac	Thomas de Lokwod
/	/	/	John de Hepworth						

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1379		1380		1382		1383		1384	
Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax		Halifax	
William de Stansfield	William de Stansfield	/	Richard Mathewson	Robert de Waddesworth	John de Godelay	Robert de Waddesworth	Robert de Waddesworth	Robert de Waddesworth	Robert de Waddesworth
Robert de Waddesworth	Robert de Waddesworth	/	Robert del Waddesworth	William de Brouneshirft	Richard Matthewson	William Brouneshirst	John de Godelay	John de Godelay	Richard Matthewson
Richard de Brownwood	Richard Tomson de Greenwode	/	John de Godelay	Richard de grenewode	Richard de Grenewode	Richard de Grenewod	John de Stodelay	John de Stodelay	John de Srodelay
John de Gedeley	John de Godelay	/	John de Stodelay	John de Godelay	Robert de Waddesworth	John de Godelay	Richard de Grenwode	Richard de Grenewode	Richard Benson
John de Stodelay	John de Stodelay	/	John del Dene	John de Stodelay	Thomas del Wrig	John de Stodelay	William de Brounshirst	William de Brounhyst	John del Deyn
John del Dene	John del Shore	/	Thomas del Cliffe	Robert Lister	William de Brouneshift	Thomas del Feld	John del Dene	John del Hoile	William de Brounshift
Thomas del Cliffe	William de Groumeshaft	/	Thomas del Fela	Richard Mathewson	Robert del Dene	Richard Matthewson	Thomas del Wrig	Thomas del Oldfield	Robert del Deyn
Thomas del Field	Richard Matthewson	/	Thomas del Oldfield	John de Estwode	John de Stodelay	Ribert Lister	John Jepson	John del Deyn	Thomas del Wrig
Thomas del Oldfield	Thomas del Field	/	John del Shore	John del Halle	John Williamson de Estwode	John de Estwod	Robert de Prestlay	Robert Richardson	Robert de Prestlay
Richard del Shore	Robert del Dene	/	John de Estwode	John del Dene	Thomas del Felde	Robert del Deynis	Robert del Denay	Thomas del Wrig	Thomas del Oldefield
/	Thomas del Oldfield	/	John son of Richard	Robert del Dene	Thomas del Oldfield	John del Deynis	Thomas del Oldfield	Robert de Prestlay	Thomas del Clif
		/	William de Brouneshirft	Thomas del Brig (?)	John del Dene	Thomas del Wrig de Langfeld	John Culpon	John Culpon	John Culpon
						Thomas del Oldefield			

1379		1380		1382		1383		1384	
Kikrburton		**Kikrburton**		**Kikrburton**		**Kikrburton**		**Kirkburton**	
William de Shepelay	/	William de Shepelay	William de Scheplay	William de Schepelay	William de Schepelay	William de Schepelay	William de Schepelay	William de Schepealy	Adam de Tonay
John de Hochlay	/	Robert del Bothes	Robert de Storthes	Richarde de Storthes	Robert del Stoches	Robert de Storthes	Robert del Storthes	Robert del Storthes	William del West
John del Stockes	/	John de Hoelay	John de Hoelay	John de Hoelay	John de Hoelay	Robert de Helay	John de Helay	John de Holay	Robert Tollay
Richard Comper	/	John del Stokkis	Robert de Hoelay	Richard del Bothe	Richard de Bothe	William de Wortelay	William de Westelay	Robert de Helay	Thomas Tynker
Edward Rogers	/	Edward Rogerson	Richard del Bothe	Richard Couper	Richard Couper	John de Holay	Richard del Bothes	William de Witlay	John Bythegate
John de Hyncheliffe	/	Adam del Grene	John de Stokkis	Richard Alcok	John de Hyngecliffe	Richard de Bothes	Richard Couper	Richard del Bothes	Adam del …
John de Hyttlewood	/	William de Wortlay	John de Hyngecliffe	John de Hyngecliffe	John de Littelwode	Richard de Couper	John de Lokwode	Richard Couper	William Wade
Adam del Grene	/	Richard Couper	Richard Couper	Robert de Helay	Robert de Helay	John de Litilwode	John del Stokes	John de Litilwode	John Moeke
John de Orenshagh	/	Thomas Walker	John de Rolay	William de Wortlay	William de Wirtlay	John del Stokes	John de Hinchecliffe	John de Hinchecliffe	Willim de Houlay
John de Raelay	/	Richard de Myelon	John Walker de Birton	Edward Rogerson	Edward Rogerson	John de Hingecliff	Edward Rogerson	Edward Rogerson	Richard de Inchecliffe
William de Wortlay	/	John de Hyngecliffe	Thomas de Mochouse	John de Wolay	John de Rolay	Edward Rogerson	Thoams del Morehouse	Thomas del Morehouse	Robert Loukes
Robert del Storches	/	Richard del Bothe	John de Lyttlewode		John Stokkis	Thomas del Morehouse	John Alcok	John Alcok	William Huet

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Appendix 2: Glossary

Agistment: The practice of putting animals out to graze in the lord's woods; also called pannage, or, when referencing the feeding of pigs on nuts and acorns in the woods, nutting.

Amercement: A fine levied by the court as a form of punishment; distinct from monetary damages awarded to the wronged party in a suit, and fees levied by the court in exchange for a service, such as the entry of land transfers into the court rolls or exemption from serving in an office, among others.

Attaint: A court procedure used to review, and potentially overturn, a verdict delivered by a jury; also used to describe the jury empanelled to carry out the attaint procedure, generally with twice as many members as were in the original jury.

Bailiff: A manorial officer, responsible for administration and enforcement across the whole of the manor; bailiffs were professional appointees rather than a customary service.

Compurgation: Procedure for judging a court case in which the plaintiff and defendant bring supporters to the court, who were then required to swear oaths affirming the truth of their testimony; also referred to as a wager of law.

Depasturing: The act of trampling or otherwise destroying crops; can be performed by people or animals, and may be deliberate or accidental.

Essoin: Procedure used to excuse a tenant from the obligation to attend a session of the court, by sending a friend or supporter to court and having them pay a fine to gain exemption; also used to refer to the supporter themselves.

Grave: Officer appointed to an annual term to represent the manorial authorities in a graveship, responsible for enacting orders of the court, managing the graveship's pound, and reporting offences to the court; all tenants holding customary or villein land in a graveship were eligible for service as grave; roughly equivalent to a reeve on other manors.

Graveship: Primary administrative subdivision of the manor of Wakefield; only used in parts of the manor where the lords of Wakefield maintained direct control, areas leased to subsidiary landlords were not assigned to graveships.

Pannage: See *agistment*.

Pledge: A supporter in a legal procedure or contract; used variously to describe essoins, supporters in compurgation, and guarantors in financial agreements and court orders.

Surety: A guarantor in a contract or court order, who agrees to repay a debt or pay a fine in the event that the principal party defaults or breaches terms of the contract or order.

Tourn: A special session of the court held twice each year to enforce royal perquisites; unlike ordinary sessions, the tourn had jurisdiction over the whole of the manor, including subinfeudated territories, and was organised on the basis of vill rather than graveship.

Township: See *vill*.

Vill: A subdivision of a wapentake, used primarily by crown institutions such as royal courts or tax-collectors; vills appear in manorial documentation for the reporting of offences at the tourn, and subinfeudated areas of the manor were leased on the basis of the vill.

Wager of law: See *compurgation*.

Wapentake: A subdivision of the Yorkshire Ridings, roughly equivalent in purpose to the hundreds of other counties, though larger in size.

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The court rolls are dated by the year in which they begin, such that e.g. the 1316 court roll encompasses September 1316 to August 1317.

32—40: 1316 to 1340
55—56: 1329 to 1330
74—84/2:   1348 to 1358
105—115:   1379 to 1380

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