

Chapter Two

The reeve: status and the balance of power

The reeve has been established as a royal official who was present at numerous levels of Anglo-Saxon society. In his capacity as a royal agent, the reeve has been shown to have had many roles, with the foremost of those being his work as a judicial official convening public meetings in the localities, ensuring tax collection and protecting and ensuring the rights and privileges of the church and clergy. The most significant element of the reeve's role was arguably his position as a royal agent in England's localities. It has been shown that the reeve bore numerous judicial duties in local districts, representing both the king's will and his authority. Not only did this permit royal power to be felt on the ground – including in areas far from royal centers – but helped to ensure that local peace was kept and justice maintained, thereby helping to fulfill an aspect of the *promissio regis*. The reeve's role in aiding and protecting the church becomes sharpened and more apparent from the tenth century, in the wake of the monastic reform. This work too helped to accomplish yet another aspect of the *promissio regis*, wherein the king promises to ensure true peace to not only the Christian people but the church as well. It is evident that the reeve was an important middling royal official and that his work in England's localities was an essential cog in the machinery of the Old English government. What is not yet clear is both how the reeve aided in maintaining the local balance of power, as well as what social status he occupied. Evidence from the law codes, Asser's *Life of Alfred* and the charters will be deployed to demonstrate that the reeve was by the nature of his position very much under the king's control, but also that by the tenth and eleventh centuries, the reeve had emerged as a member of a new rising class aspiring toward the lower aristocracy.

This research looks here at how the markers of status (land, wealth/endowment and proximity to the king) reveal the reeve as essentially a rising star in the late Anglo-Saxon administration. This figure becomes more

visible over the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries. He emerges from his dubious status as an estate manager to (in some cases) occupying the role of king's favorite. Originally the king's puppet in the localities, as the period draws on, the reeve emerges as a vital official. He is needed to counterbalance the powerful and influential ealdormen, to oversee justice and quarrels over land, and to be the king's voice on the ground. Concurrently, reeves acquire bookland, hereditary power (through this land) and wealth, with which they can endow churches and therefore gain status. King Æthelred begins referring to his reeves as *preciosus*. Whereas the reeve originally appears as completely the king's man, by the tenth and eleventh centuries he apparently becomes someone who can influence the king. It is plausible that the reeve was powerful and influential enough that he could possibly push weak kings like Æthelred to back him in disputes with the ealdormen.

The reeve, status and other royal officials

In an effort to attain a clearer understanding of aspects of the king's relationship with royal officials, Baxter and Blair have explored late Anglo-Saxon landholding, and in particular, the practice of leasing land to royal officials as a benefit of holding a particular office. The lease of folkland to royal officials during their tenure in office in late Anglo-Saxon England seems to have been important; Baxter and Blair primarily cite leases to earls as examples, though they acknowledge that this could also have been the case for other royal agents.¹ One element of crucial importance within this arrangement was the king's ability to manage or control his officials to some extent through the movement of lands leased to them on basis of their offices.² Of course, there were instances in which

¹ Stephen Baxter and John Blair, "Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study," in *Anglo-Norman Studies* 28 (2005), 20.

² Baxter and Blair, "Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study," 26 – 29. See also: Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 125 – 151.

bookland was granted to royal officials as a reward, and with which they could do as they pleased.³ Grants of leases of folkland, or “royal *lænland*” however, tended to be for a specified period, and attached to a particular office. Though distributing this *lænland* was not without risks – it was often difficult for the lessor to regain control of his property at the end of a lease agreement.⁴ Royal officials are cited as being amongst those who sought to retain control of property following the end of a lease.⁵ In order to attain a clearer understanding of the relationship between *lænland* and royal officials, Baxter and Blair conducted a case study of the royal estate at Bampton hundred in Oxfordshire. They convincingly argue that there was a specific “zone of ‘ministerial property’ held by royal servants and officials to the north and west” of a royal center.⁶ These ministerial properties tended to be small estates and were located close to the royal holdings in the center.⁷ These land divisions appear to have been carefully organized and laid out, and indicative of “ordered power.”⁸ Interestingly, they also point out that these ordered holdings would have had the effect of grouping together men of similar office, who by nature of their *lænland*, would now also have similar local ties and interests.⁹ It is argued that these estates held by royal officials would have resulted in the localities having very close political ties with the king and the royal government.¹⁰ This is because not only would these royal agents have had local ties and interests, but they would

³ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 28.

⁴ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 29.

⁵ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 29.

⁶ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 29.

⁷ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 41. Other holdings within the area appear to have been either bookland or of a comital nature (35 – 41).

⁸ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 44.

⁹ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 45.

¹⁰ Baxter and Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” 46.

also have been linked tightly to the king by virtue of the ministerial properties they held as a result of his generosity, as well as the physical proximity of their estates to the royal lands at the center. This is arguably one method the king relied upon to bind his officials to him.

Reeves and sheriffs were perhaps particularly useful in managing the power and influence of the earls and ealdormen.¹¹ As royal officials not only bound to the king, but also invested with considerable judicial authority, reeves and sheriffs were well placed to counter the earls' activities, and perhaps even to keep the king apprised of their machinations. It seems likely that this may have often been the case, but conversely there are interesting possibilities for the activities and alliances of local royal officials. In her study of the family of Æthelwine, sheriff of Warwickshire under Edward the Confessor (and possibly also for a period following the Conquest), Williams examines how the family of a royal official and their lands fared through the Conquest.¹² This study involved identifying and attempting to track the family's landholdings from Edward the Confessor's reign through to after the Conquest; various political connections have emerged as a result.¹³ The study of the movements and tenures of land within this family has revealed a connection between Æthelwine the sheriff's family and the earls of Mercia.¹⁴ This suggests that perhaps, the earls might have attempted to forge connections with royal agents, such as sheriffs, possibly to sway their allegiance away from the king.¹⁵ Furthermore, Williams highlights another possible instance in which similar behavior or activity may be detected. Citing the example of Cyneweard of Laughern,¹⁶ sheriff of Worcestershire before

¹¹ Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 61 – 124.

¹² Ann Williams, "A vice-comital family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire," *Anglo-Norman Studies XI: The proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1988*, ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989).

¹³ Williams, "A vice-comital family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire," 290 – 291.

¹⁴ Williams, "A vice-comital family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire," 291.

¹⁵ Williams, "A vice-comital family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire," 291.

¹⁶ *PASE* reveals ten hits for the name "Cyneweard" – it is possible that four of them, Cyneweard 1, 7, 8 and 9, may have been the same individual. Each was active in the eleventh century. Cyneweard 1 is indentified as *praepositus/minister*, Cyneweard 7 was a landholder in Worcestershire, Cyneweard 8 was the sheriff of Worcestershire and Cyneweard 9 was the aforementioned Cyneweard of Laughern. Since all of these men were active around the same time

the Conquest, she remarks upon his kinship to Archbishop Wulfstan of York, arguing that ecclesiastical lords too were interested in cultivating relationships with royal officials.¹⁷ Connections between religious and secular officials should be unsurprising – apart from ecclesiastics’ involvement in the political arena and the role of reeves in protecting the rights of the church and clergy, the functions of spiritual and secular sites could often be intertwined. Not only do we see the founding and endowment of churches and minsters by the aristocracy throughout the period, but also it is plain that at times, minsters were utilized for public meetings and carrying out of judicial activity.¹⁸ In fact, Crawford notes that archaeological evidence points toward some sites fluctuating between ecclesiastical and secular/royal use, citing Flixborough as a possible example.¹⁹ The lines are blurred when it comes to various religious and secular matters in Anglo-Saxon England and thus it should come as no surprise that ecclesiastic officials may have looked to forge connections to their advantage with local reeves and sheriffs as much as the ealdormen might have done. This activity may perhaps shed some light upon not only interactions in the localities between ealdormen, powerful ecclesiastics and royal agents, but also may aid in explaining some of the tension between ealdormen and reeves.

Charters are often ripe with incidental detail, and as such, can often yield a wealth of valuable information, not the least of which contributes to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon law at work in the localities. S 926 (1012, Rochester) sheds light upon the position of the reeve as a royal agent, as well as the fact that ealdormen certainly did clash with reeves (and with each other, for that matter), on more than one occasion.²⁰ It is clear from the text of S 926 and S

in roughly the same geographical area, it would not be surprising if they were further identified as the same individual – certainly a man of influence (“Cyneweard 1, 7, 8, 9”, *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk>, accessed 10 December 2012).

¹⁷ Williams, “A vice-comital family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire,” 291.

¹⁸ Sally Crawford, “Settlement and Social Differentiation”, in *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages: Britain and Ireland, c. 500 – c. 1100*, ed. Pauline Stafford (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009, 440.

¹⁹ Crawford, “Settlement and Social Differentiation”, 440.

²⁰ Campbell, ed., *Charters of Rochester*, no. 33, 43-47 and Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period*, 79-81.

883 (995, Abingdon) that Æthelred placed great value upon his royal reeves.²¹ S 926 details how a widow named Æthelflæd, who was the sister of Ealdorman Leofsige, aided her brother after he had been exiled for the crime of killing the king's reeve, Æfic. Aiding Leofsige in his exile was expressly forbidden, and for this breach of the law, Æthelflæd forfeited all of her property. S 926 describes Ealdorman Leofsige's crimes to some extent:

In tantum ut floccipenderet quin offensione multímoda me multoties grauiter offenderet . Nam prefectum meum Æficum quem primatem inter primates meos taxaui non cunctatus est in propria 'domo' eius eo inscio perimere quod nefarium et peregrinum opus est apud Christianos et gentiles.²²

It is clear that Æthelred thought very highly of Æfic; not only was the king very upset at the reeve's death, but also Æfic was said to be the primary official amongst the king's chief men. This was high praise indeed, and perhaps reflective of how valuable and useful the reeves could be to the king. Furthermore, it seems that the punishment meted out for Ealdorman Leofsige was perhaps harsher than that established by the laws—particularly for a high status individual such as an ealdorman.²³ There are a number of instances where Æthelred specifies his personal value of a reeve: he also refers to the reeve Ælfgar in S 918 as "his favorite," and the shire reeve of Buckingham, Æthelwig in S 883 as "dear and precious" to him. Æthelred reports that his counselors recommended that Leofsige be exiled for this crime, and additionally that anyone who aided him be punished. Again it is clear that the king took the ealdorman's crime very seriously, and it serves to underline the importance of the royal reeve.

²¹ S 883 (995, Abingdon) is addressed in detail above, in Chapter One; Wormald also classes this charter as containing the details of a law suit: #54 ("A handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits," 262).

²² Campbell, ed., *Charters of Rochester*, no. 33, p46. See also Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period*, 79.

"he thought nothing of the many ways in which he was grievously offending me; for he did not hesitate to kill my reeve Æfic, whom I considered the chief among my chief men, in his own house without warning, which is a wicked and unnatural work among Christians and heathen." Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period*, 80.

²³ Leofsige was exiled for this crime, though the laws state that if a man kill another man, he is to pay the slain man's wergeld within twelve months (II Edward 1), or if a man cause violence in another's house he shall forfeit all he possesses, and possibly his life as well (II Edward 6).

Æthelred refers to Æfic as *prefectum meum*, but the fact that he elaborates and states that he valued Æfic highest amongst his chief men (*primatem inter primates meos taxauit*) suggests that in Æfic we are dealing with a royal reeve and that by that early eleventh century, reeves had become important officials, upon whom the king relied a great deal. It is clear from S 926 and the evidence discussed earlier in Chapter One from S 883 that the royal reeve was important enough that the king could and did defend them against his other officials – even the powerful ealdorman. As noted above in Chapter One, Ealdorman Leofsighe clashed with royal reeves in the 990s (S 883), when he lawfully objected to their illegal Christian burial of men guilty of criminal activity. Despite the ealdorman's higher status, more powerful position and his clear adherence to the law, S 883 shows that the king sided with the reeves' conduct. This activity, along with the case of Æfic, is surely indicative of the growing value kings placed on reeves, as well as their apparent importance as local officials. This action reveals that there was occasionally some tension between royal reeves and ealdormen in the localities. In the case of Æfic, the conflict must have been significant in order to escalate to the point where the ealdorman was moved to murder the reeve in his own house, particularly in light of the fact that violation of the king's peace and bringing violence to a man's home was considered a grievous crime.²⁴ This tension may be seen as a result of the reeves acting as royal officials in the localities, working in some instances to counterbalance the power and the ealdormen and their influential families. The increasing significance of the reeve is likely linked with the turmoil in England at the time. The pressures on land would have emphasized the role of the reeve in overseeing transactions around bookland, and the potential for unrest within the noble ranks underlined the need for a royal agent on the ground. Reeves became more necessary figures by the late Anglo-Saxon period.

While reeves were becoming increasingly important agents of government in the tenth and eleventh centuries, they were also gaining in wealth and status,

²⁴ II Edmund 6. Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 188. See also Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 10, 11.

becoming more prominent figures in society. In terms of reeves' potential wealth and status, the charters offer some compelling evidence. There are seven examples of tenth- and eleventh-century charters which involve reeves either receiving or granting lands. Consideration of these documents can offer valuable insight into the personal wealth, status and piety of these individuals, and thus perhaps afford us a picture of the reeve's position in the society of late Anglo-Saxon England. Importantly, Keynes cautions that a diploma granting land to an individual did not always indicate especial favor towards that person.²⁵ For an example, see S 915 (1007, Abingdon) below, wherein Æthelred grants a reeve land in exchange for a sum of money. Exploration of evidence pertaining to reeves and land grants also yields a clearer understanding of the reeve as a royal official, and particularly how he might have been compensated for his royal service – such as can be seen from the work of Baxter and Blair – and perhaps also managed or controlled as an official in the localities.

Within these seven documents, three describe instances in which reeves granted land to the church, three indicate reeves receiving land, and the final diploma, S 925 (1012, Winchester, Old Minster) is a land grant from King Æthelred to his wife Ælfgifu of an estate in Winchester, which had on it a church dedicated to St Peter which was built by an Æthelwine praefectus. It has been established that in the late Anglo-Saxon period social display amongst the aristocracy, as well as those who aspired to elite status was very much a feature of the public landscape.²⁶ Status was demonstrated in a variety of methods, such as through food consumption, clothing, other textiles such as tapestries, church

²⁵ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978 – 1016: A study in their use as historical evidence*, 33.

²⁶ Robin Fleming, "The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23 (2000): 1 – 22. See also: Ann Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the late Old English Kingdom," in *Anglo-Norman Studies* 24 (2001): 1-24, Ann Williams, "Lost worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh century," in *Medieval Prosopography* 20 (1999): 51-74 and Christine Senecal, "Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England", *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIII, Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, ed. John Gillingham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), 251 – 266.

building and endowing, and of course, land.²⁷ In particular, late tenth- and early eleventh-century thegnly residences have been highlighted as vehicles for display of status and wealth.²⁸ Robin Fleming notes the element of thegn's "social mimicry" of the aristocracy in building and inhabiting such residences.²⁹ The text *Gehyncðu* denotes visible markers such as "land, church, burh-geat³⁰ and royal service" as the symbols of the thegn's status. It seems clear that not only giving land to the church but building and/or endowing churches would have likely been viewed as markers of elevated status, and accordingly been appealing activities for those who aspired to position, wealth and power. However, Williams does not necessarily discredit the piety of the donors in these cases – she highlights here social mores and different values of the different society and period in which they lived.³¹ Furthermore, personal closeness to the king – encapsulated by the German term *königsnähe*, a custom dating back to the early Anglo-Saxon period – may have been another viable route to status, and one that was perhaps more easily accessible to royal officials.³²

Charters are valuable for the occasional glimpse they can sometimes provide into the details of some of these men's lives. S 1654 (991, Canterbury, St Augustine's), and S 1607 (s.x^{ex} – s.xiⁱⁿ?, Bury St Edmunds) are not easily accessible, but the brief treatment in *The Electronic Sawyer* indicates some interesting features.³³ These charters are of interest because they record

²⁷ Fleming, "The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 10 – 11.

²⁸ Fleming, "The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 11.

²⁹ Fleming, "The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 11. See also: Williams, "Lost worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh century," 58.

³⁰ Williams suggests that this would most likely have denoted the entire manor house, not just the gateway entrance ("A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest," 226).

³¹ Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the late Old English Kingdom," 21.

³² David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53.

³³ S 1607 (e x – l xi?, Bury St Edmunds): <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/content/charter/1607.html>
S 1654 (991, Canterbury, St Augustine's):

<http://www.esawyer.org.uk/content/charter/1654.html>

Additionally, see the forthcoming volume: *The Charters of Bury St Edmunds*, ed. Katie Lowe and Sarah Foot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, sponsored by the British Academy and the Royal Historical Society, forthcoming).

instances of reeves granting land to the church. S 1654 details a grant of two *hagas* and a meadow at Fordwich, Kent to Abbot Sigeric of St Augustine's from Bruman the port reeve. This was to be a grant for life with reversion to the abbey. This does not appear to have been a particularly significant amount of property – the term *haga* represents an enclosure, yard or dwelling in a town – but it does plainly indicate that Bruman the port reeve had the resources and the desire to make a pious donation.³⁴ Both of these criteria would place him among those striving to imitate the upper echelons of Anglo-Saxon society. S 1607 (e x – l xi?, Bury St Edmunds) records another pious land grant by a reeve. A reeve named Alnoth granted land at Fornham All Saints, Suffolk to St Edmunds Abbey. While the amount of land donated here is not specified, it is likely that this is another example of an aspirant to the aristocracy imitating the upper classes through a gift of land to the church. Another example of a reevish land grant can be found in S 1119 (1042 x 1044, Westminster). This text is a writ of King Edward confirming a grant of land made to Westminster Abbey.³⁵ The grant consisted of an unspecified amount of land, along with a wharf given to the abbey by Ulf the port reeve and his wife Cynegyth:

icc wille þat Sce Peter 7 þa gebroþera on Westminstre
habben þat land 7 þane wearf þarto þe Ulf portgerefa 7
his wif Kinegið for here sawle alesedisse into þare halgan
stowe gæfon swa ful 7 swa forð. swa hi best hit ahton.³⁶

It is not clear where Ulf exercised his office as portgerefa; it is possible that he was port reeve in London at the time and this fact simply went unspecified in the writ. But that is a minor detail; what is significant here is that this writ represents yet another instance of a reeve making a pious donation in late Anglo-Saxon England. The donors' desire to display their piety is plainly expressed in

³⁴ Bosworth, "An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online." Haga. March 21, 2010. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/018013>.

³⁵ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 75, 342.

³⁶ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 75, 342.

"I will that St Peter and the brethren at Westminster shall have the land and the wharf with it that Ulf the port reeve and his wife Cynegyth gave to the holy foundation, for the redemption of their souls, as fully and as completely as ever they possessed it." *Ibid*, 342.

the writ, though their aspiration to showcase personal wealth, and accordingly status, should not be taken for granted.

In addition to reeves making land grants, the charter evidence also reveals them as recipients of property. S 883 (995, Abingdon), S 910 (1005, Sherborne) and S 915 (1007, Abingdon) all concern reeves who were beneficiaries of land grants.³⁷ S 883, as discussed in Chapter One, details the chain of events which led to King Æthelred's grant of five hides of forfeit land in Oxfordshire to a shire reeve. This charter offers a treasure trove of rich information. Apart from illuminating judicial activity of local reeves and their interactions with an ealdorman, S 883 demonstrates that the king could and did reward officials with outright grants of land – and this is bookland, indicating that their status (and wealth) is growing, as marked by the permanence of landed property (as opposed to the conditionally held ministerial land).

S 910 (1005, Sherborne) records a land grant of one hide in Devon to Eadsige, *minister* from Æthelred II, in exchange for 100 mancuses of gold. In the Old English rubric Eadsige is referred to as king's *gerefa*, but in the Latin text he is called *minister*: “uni meo ministro nuncupato uocamine Eadsige.”³⁸ This detail is a strong indicator that the reeve Eadsige also bore the status of thegn. Not only does the charter text reference him as *minister*, but it also notes that he paid 100 mancuses of gold – equivalent to about 3,000d or £12.5 – for the property. This was a significant sum of money; Nicholas Brooks illustrates that the cash element of the heriot of some thegns amounted to 50 or 100 mancuses in late Anglo-Saxon England.³⁹ It seems likely, then, that based on his title in the text of the charter and the transaction it records, in Eadsige is an example of a reeve who had also attained the status of thegn. Furthermore, MA O'Donovan raises the possibility

³⁷ S 883: Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2*, no. 125, 483-486 and Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents, Volume I c. 500-1042*, no. 117, 525-526. S 910: MA O'Donovan, ed., *Charters of Sherborne* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1988), no. 19, 64-66. S 915: Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2*, no. 134, 522-524.

³⁸ O'Donovan, ed., *Charters of Sherborne*, no. 19, 64.

“One of my *ministers* who is called by the name Eadsige.” [my translation]

³⁹ Nicholas Brooks, *Communities and Warfare 700 – 1400* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 2000), 149.

that this Eadsige *gerefa* might have been the same individual referenced in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS A: [in 1001] ““Eadsige, the king’s reeve”, together with “Kola, the king’s reeve”, led an English army against the Danes at Pinhoe, Devon.”⁴⁰ Of course, this may be merely a coincidence, but *The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* records fourteen individuals by the name of Eadsige in the tenth and eleventh centuries, with only two of them documented as reeves: “Eadsige 10”, our *minister* named in S 910, and “Eadsige 11”, the king’s reeve at the head of the force at Pinhoe.⁴¹ Both Eadsige 10 and Eadsige 11 were active at around the same time, 1005 and 1001 – 1014, respectively, and the known location for both men was the same region – Devon. Thus, these individuals could easily have been the same man: a reeve who was also a thegn and had led men into battle.

S 915 (1007, Abingdon) is a document recording the grant of eight hides in Berkshire from Æthelred II to the reeve Ælfgar.⁴² Kelly is uncertain as to whether this is the same Ælfgar appearing in S 918, described as seizing lands from Abingdon abbey with Æthelred’s consent.⁴³ This document is interesting because it indicates that Ælfgar approached Æthelred and asked for the land in exchange for 300 mancuses of gold and silver – a weighty sum of money, equivalent to about 9,000d or £37.5. This was arguably the manner in which many estates changed hands in grants, perhaps particularly during Æthelred’s reign when the economy was stressed due to repeated tribute payments.⁴⁴ Ælfgar’s approach and request to Æthelred to purchase the land may not seem that unusual when set against the backdrop of contemporary political events. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 1007 states that in that year alone, 36,000 pounds were paid in tribute to the viking army.⁴⁵ Thus, it would not be unusual

⁴⁰ O’Donovan, ed., *Charters of Sherborne*, no. 19, 67. See also: Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 85. MS A, 1001.

⁴¹ “Eadsige 10” and “Eadsige 11”, *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk>, accessed November 25, 2011.

⁴² Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2*, no. 134, 522-524.

⁴³ Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2*, 525.

⁴⁴ Kelly, ed., *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2*, 525.

⁴⁵ Whitelock, ed., trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 88.

that Æthelred might have attempted to raise funds through the sale of land, particularly land which had been forfeit.⁴⁶ This Ælfgar stands as a good example of a late Anglo-Saxon reeve who likely held a measure of wealth and status. Not only did he own a significant landholding, but he also possessed a large amount of cash with which to acquire it. It is unclear as to whether Ælfgar had attained any of the other requirements for thegnhood, outlined in *Gebyncðu*, but he certainly had secured more than enough land. This is compelling further evidence that by the late Anglo-Saxon period the office of reeve was not only gaining in power and responsibility, but perhaps also to some degree, in status and prestige, as marked by the land and their involvement in church endowment.

S 918 (1008, Abingdon) is a charter of King Æthelred, in which he returned an estate to Abingdon that had been unjustly taken from the foundation.⁴⁷ The 20 hides at Moredon (in Wiltshire) had been “unjustly acquired” away from Abingdon abbey by one of Æthelred’s reeves, a *miles* he refers to as his favorite (*preciosus*): “quod quidam miles Ælfgarus nomine, meus uidelicet prepositus...”⁴⁸ Interestingly, Æthelred does soften the charge against the reeve, stating that he had given Ælfgar his consent to take the property, though he does specify that the action itself was unjust.⁴⁹ The charter then goes on to state that Ælfgar left this property to his wife when he died, and that the land was forfeit on account of her new husband’s crimes.⁵⁰ When Æthelred returned Moredon to Abingdon, he also gave the abbey an estate at Cricklade, which he states he had given previously to the reeve Ælfgar.⁵¹

⁴⁶ For example, 1002 was another year in which a large tribute (24,000 pounds) was paid to the viking fleet (Whitelock, ed., trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 86), and there are charters attesting to Æthelred’s sale of property in that year as well: S 900, S 901, S 902 and S 903.

⁴⁷ John Hudson, ed., trans. *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis, The History of the Church of Abingdon, Volume I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 160 – 161.

⁴⁸ Hudson, ed., trans. *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis, The History of the Church of Abingdon, Volume I*, 160.

“...a certain knight named Ælfgar, my reeve and favorite...” *Ibid*, 161.

⁴⁹ Hudson, ed., trans. *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis, The History of the Church of Abingdon, Volume I*, 160 – 161.

⁵⁰ Hudson, ed., trans. *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis, The History of the Church of Abingdon, Volume I*, 160 – 161.

⁵¹ Hudson, ed., trans. *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis, The History of the Church of Abingdon, Volume I*, 160 – 161.

Keynes notes that there was a “consistent and prominent witness” named Ælfgar in Æthelred’s diplomas 982 – 990.⁵² It is possible that this was the same Ælfgar who appears as witness in S 830 and 832 of King Edward.⁵³ The Ælfgar *minister* appearing in S 861 who receives land at Ebbesborne in Wiltshire, has tentatively been identified by Keynes with the aforementioned Ælfgar of the witness lists.⁵⁴ Keynes further raises the possibility that this Ælfgar was indeed the same individual as the reeve of S 918.⁵⁵ The reeve Ælfgar appears to have (at least for a time) enjoyed a close relationship with the king – who indeed refers to the reeve as his favorite – and it is certainly plausible that the witness and the reeve were the same individual.

Furthermore, Keynes raises the possibility that this Ælfgar was the unfortunate son of Ealdorman Ælfric, who was blinded in 993 on Æthelred’s orders.⁵⁶ Not only does this relationship have political implications in terms of how Æthelred chose to punish those whom he perceived to have misguided him in the early years of his reign, but it has implications for our understanding of the reeve in this period.⁵⁷ This evidence indicates that not only could reeves be drawn from the elite levels in society, but also that reeves could in some instances exert considerable influence upon this particular king.⁵⁸ Ælfgar’s particular role as reeve is unfortunately unspecified by the text and will likely have to remain a question mark. It is likely that he was some type of king’s reeve, due to his apparent level of contact with the king. It is unclear whether his

⁵² Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “The Unready” 978 – 1016: A Study in their use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 183.

⁵³ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “The Unready” 978 – 1016: A Study in their use as Historical Evidence*, 183.

⁵⁴ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “The Unready” 978 – 1016: A Study in their use as Historical Evidence*, 183. This property at Ebbesborne was land that may have been taken from the Old Minster, Winchester (Keynes, *Diplomas*, 183).

⁵⁵ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “The Unready” 978 – 1016: A Study in their use as Historical Evidence*, 183.

⁵⁶ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “The Unready” 978 – 1016: A Study in their use as Historical Evidence*, 183.

⁵⁷ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “The Unready” 978 – 1016: A Study in their use as Historical Evidence*, 184.

⁵⁸ Æthelred is indeed called *unraed* because many amongst the elite did not like his councilors. Could these new men, rising thegns and boisterous reeves, perhaps be this type of ‘bad influence’ that the foremost of the country objected to?

prominence in the witness lists of the 980s was due to his position as reeve (when he attained this office is not clear) or as a *minister*, but the fact remains that a man who was a royal reeve was able to persuade the king to grant him property which belonged to a religious foundation.⁵⁹

This evidence additionally offers an example of reevish greed and willingness to act outside the bounds of the law. Indeed, Campbell highlights numerous *Domesday* entries which mention reeves on account of their misconduct.⁶⁰ These incidents of rapaciousness tended to revolve around land.⁶¹ It is likely that at least by the eleventh century (and very possibly earlier), reevish greed and individuals taking advantage of their office for personal gain was viewed as an issue. Administrative positions would have provided numerous opportunities for gain and prosperity in late Anglo-Saxon England.⁶² Campbell goes so far as to suggest that by the late Anglo-Saxon period, administrative positions were the chief manner in which men sought to improve themselves socially.⁶³ The law codes incorporate clauses warning reeves to conduct themselves justly in their office and to respect the ownership of property. Cnut's injunction addressed specifically to reeves and sheriffs puts it rather bluntly:

Praecipio etiam omnibus vicecomitibus et praepositis universi regni mei, sicut meam amicitiam aut suam salutem habere volunt, ut nulli homini, nec divitinec pauperi, vim iniustam inferant, sed omnibus, tam nobiles quam ignobilibus, et divitibus et pauperibus sit fas iusta lege potiundi, a qua nec propter favorem regum aut alicuius potentis personam nec propter mihi congregandam pecuniam ullo modo devietur, quia nulla mihi necessitas est ut iniqua exactione mihi pecunia congregetur.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ It is of course important to bear in mind that if Ælfgar were the son of Ealdorman Ælfric, then he might have already been somewhat of a prominent and important political figure in his own right.

⁶⁰ Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 207.

⁶¹ Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 210.

⁶² Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 216.

⁶³ Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 216.

⁶⁴ Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 277. Cnut's Proclamation of 1027, 12.

"I enjoin likewise upon all the sheriffs and reeves throughout my kingdom that, as they desire to retain my friendship and their own security, they employ no unjust force towards any man, either rich or poor, but that all, both nobles and commoners, rich and poor, shall have the right of just

This clause certainly gives the impression that reeves' greed and duplicity was considered to be a problem by the late Anglo-Saxon period. This impression is further borne out in other, non-administrative evidence. Late Anglo-Saxon homilies, particularly those of Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, also denounce reeves and complain of their illicit activities.⁶⁵ It is clear that by the late Anglo-Saxon period there was some discontent with the manner in which reeves were operating, and that means were sought to manage this type of negative conduct. What is unclear is the extent to which this behavior reached, and whether this negative impression of the reeve was based upon the activities of a prominent few, or if this corruption was more commonplace.

It can also be seen by the eleventh century, that reevish posts may have even attracted men of established wealth and status. An example of this can be found in Guy of Amiens' *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, a poem detailing the battle of Hastings and the events surrounding it. In his discussion on the power of towns in late Anglo-Saxon England, James Campbell notes an instance described in the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, in which an individual named "Ansgardus" negotiates the surrender of the city of London to William the Conqueror in 1066.⁶⁶

Intus erat quidam contractus debilitate renum sicque
pedum segnis, ab officio vulnera pro patria quia non
numerosa recepit. Lectica uehitur, mobilitate carens;
omnibus ille tamen primatibus imperat urbis, eius et auxilio
publica res agitur. Huic per legatum clam rex pociora
reuelat, secretim poscens quatinus his faueat: solum rex
uocitetur, ait, set commoda regni vt iubet Ansgardus subdita
cuncta regat.⁶⁷

possession, which shall not be infringed upon in any way, either for the sake of obtaining the favour of the king or of gratifying any powerful person or of collecting money for me; for I have no need that money should be collected for me by any unjust exactions." Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 151.

⁶⁵ Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 216.

Additionally, the theme of moral discourse on secular authority and the impressions of royal officials will be addressed and discussed in full in Chapter Four.

⁶⁶ Campbell, "Power and authority 600 – 1300," 59.

⁶⁷ Guy, Bishop of Amiens, *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*. Ed. Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 45.

This extract establishes Ansgar as the leading official in the city of London: not only does he govern the actions of the other chief men of London, but it is Ansgar to whom William the Conqueror directs his negotiations concerning the surrender of the city. Clearly London, its administration and its people are in Ansgar's hands. Furthermore, Campbell has raised the possibility that Ansgar was the port reeve of London, which, if this was so, signals a great deal of power and influence attributed to the role of port reeve by the mid-eleventh century.⁶⁸ It has also been suggested that this Ansgar was in fact "Asgar the Staller,"⁶⁹ who was not only a nobleman, but one of the wealthiest thegns in late Anglo-Saxon England.⁷⁰ Understanding the term "staller" and its potential administrative implications has proved difficult for scholars. It has been established that initially stallers were Scandinavian officials, who, like housecarls, first came to England with Cnut.⁷¹ This role, however, is shown to have undergone a degree of transformation by the reign of Edward the Confessor. Katharin Mack has shown, particularly through *Domesday* evidence, that on the eve of the Conquest, the stallers appear to have constituted a small clutch of wealthy thegns.⁷² Ansgar was in fact close to the top of this group. *Domesday* reveals that these men all held great estates across several shires and all in similar landholding patterns – yet it is noteworthy that these individuals were wealthy in their own right,

"In the city there was a certain man crippled by a weakness of the loins and therefore slow upon his feet, because he had received some few wounds in the service of his country. He was borne on a litter, lacking the ability to move, yet he commanded all the chief men of the city and the affairs of the community were conducted by his aid. To this man, by an envoy, the king secretly revealed a better choice, privately seeking to learn how far he favoured this. Let him only be *called* king, he said, but merely in order that he may administer all the interests of the kingdom subject to him as Ansgar directed." *Ibid*, 44.

⁶⁸ Campbell, "Power and authority 600 – 1300," 59.

⁶⁹ Campbell, "Power and authority 600 – 1300," 59; and Guy, Bishop of Amiens, *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, 45, note #2.

⁷⁰ Ann Williams, "Asgar the Staller (d. after 1066)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/52346>), accessed 1 Feb 2011. See also Katharin Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 12 (1986): 126. Ansgar was in fact, the wealthiest thegn in England TRE.

⁷¹ Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", 123.

⁷² Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", 126.

separate from lands granted them by the king.⁷³ These men attested some charters and were addressees on a few writs; this, coupled with their wealth and particular landholding patterns arguably points to the stallers as occasional administrators who were intimate counselors of Edward the Confessor – Mack argues that they were only involved in select matters of especial importance to the king.⁷⁴

Ansgar is said to have held an estate of over 300 hides of land; Mack estimates his income at over £400 annually.⁷⁵ However, despite Ansgar's evident wealth and prominent position, Williams also contends that he was port reeve of London at the time of the Conquest and that it is indeed possible that Ansgar wielded the authority ascribed to him in the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*.⁷⁶ This is significant not only because it intimates that by the end of the late Anglo-Saxon period the port reeve of a major town was a powerful and influential figure, but in that it suggests that not only might the post offer the possibility of lands and other benefits, and that by this period it was attractive enough that it held appeal for even very wealthy noblemen.⁷⁷

⁷³ Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", 128 – 129.

⁷⁴ Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", 130.

⁷⁵ Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", 126.

⁷⁶ Williams, "Ansgar the Staller (*d. after 1066*)."

⁷⁷ There is a long and ongoing debate amongst scholars regarding the dating of the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*. The historiography is divided between the argument for a date soon after 1066, and for a date in the later twelfth century. This debate is primarily centered around the question of whether the *Carmen* was in fact the poem ascribed to Guy of Amiens by Orderic Vitalis. Studies on the *Carmen* include works by: Elisabeth MC van Houts, RHC Davis, LJ Engels, et al., "The *Carmen de Hastingae de Proelio*: a discussion," *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies* II (1979), DDR Owen and of course the study done by the *Carmen's* editors, Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz. Following an appraisal of both sides of the argument surrounding the dating and authorship of the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, I find it difficult to disagree with the evidence in favor of Guy of Amiens' authorship, despite the convincing points raised to the contrary. The historical and literary evidence marshaled in support of an early date is difficult to dismiss, and additionally, the work of van Houts on Latin poetry in the Anglo-Norman court from 1066 to 1135 supports the early date in a contemporary literary context. Owen's argument for serious borrowing from the *Chanson de Roland* may perhaps be refuted in part by van Houts' literary research. Therefore, it is plausible, based upon a brief survey of the historiography, that the *Carmen* dates to around 1067. This of course, as discussed above with regard to Ansgar, may have important implications with regard to historians' understanding of the reeve's role and influence within an Anglo-Saxon town on the eve of the Conquest. Although the *Carmen* is of course a literary text, and as such must be used with caution, it is still our earliest extant source on the Conquest, and a valuable informant on the events of 1066. Of course, even if the *Carmen* were in fact dated to the mid-twelfth century, its reflections of the role of the reeve are still important,

It has been possible to craft a case study of sorts, of some of the actions, wealth and landholdings of a sheriff operating in the mid-eleventh century. This individual was a thegn of Edward the Confessor, who also held the office of sheriff of Essex for a period.⁷⁸ This man, Leofcild, appears in seven documents in the period 1037 x 1053, which include two writs of Edward the Confessor, the will of Leofgifu, the wills of Thurstan, a diploma of Edward the Confessor, and finally, a writ of Edward the Confessor, confirming Leofcild's own grant of an estate to Westminster Abbey.⁷⁹ All of these documentary appearances occurred within a relatively short chronological period, with six of the documents clustering in the late 1030s and early 1040s and culminating with Leofcild's final appearance in the early 1050s.

Leofcild's activity is intriguing because it may shed some light on the machinations of a late Anglo-Saxon sheriff. Leofcild was clearly a sheriff, as he was identified as such in the two 1042 x 1044 writs of Edward the Confessor addressed: "Eadward kyng gret Ælfward biscop. 7 Leofcild scirgerefan. 7 ealle mine þeignas on Eastsexan frendlice."⁸⁰ Leofcild is also documented as sheriff in

though albeit in a different light. If the text indeed does belong to a later date, its information on mid-eleventh-century London and the activities of the port reeve would still be important, though this would be along the lines of Anglo-Norman impressions of the Anglo-Saxon past, and the manner in which they *envisaged* pre-Conquest towns to have been administered. Thus, this would still be valuable insight, but it would be critical to view it as a backward glance into the past.

⁷⁸ Chris Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*,

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/history/research/proj/profile.aspx>, forthcoming.

See also Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no. XXX (S 1530) "Thurstan's Bequest to Christ Church," 78 – 79, and also Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, nos. 73 & 74 (S 1117 & 1118), 339 – 341.

⁷⁹ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, nos. 73 & 74 (S 1117 & 1118), 339 – 341; Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no. XXIX (S 1521), 76 – 79; Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no. XXX (S 1530) "Thurstan's Bequest to Christ Church," 78 – 79 and no. XXXI (S 1531) "The Will of Thurstan," 80 – 85; S 1044, *Regesta Regum Anglorum*, <http://ascharters.net/charters/1044> and Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 6 – 7. See also Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 84 (S 1128), 350 – 351. Additionally, see Katharin Mack, "The stallers: administrative innovation in the reign of Edward the Confessor", 127: she notes that Leofcild appears as a sheriff TRE, witnessing S 1530 and likely 1531, but does not appear in *Domesday book*.

⁸⁰ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 73 (S 1117), 340.

"King Edward sends friendly greetings to Bishop Ælfward and Leofcild the sheriff and all my thegns in Essex." *Ibid*, 340. See also Harmer no. 74 (S 1118), 340 – 341: "Edward king gret Ælfward b. 7 Leofcild sirefan 7 alle mine þeignes on Estsexen freondlice."

"King Edward sends friendly greetings to Bishop Ælfward and Leofcild the sheriff and all my thegns in Essex." *Ibid*, 341.

the roughly contemporary S 1530 and S 1531, of 1042-3 x 1043-5: Thurstan's bequest to Christ Church and the will of Thurstan.⁸¹ In both wills, Leofcild appears in the witness list; named as sheriff in S 1530, the shorter bequest, but not in S 1531, the longer will.⁸² Noting his appearance amongst a group of thegns, Chris Lewis contends that Leofcild was most likely still sheriff of Essex at the time of the second will, particularly noting that the only person listed ahead of Leofcild in the group is Ælfgar, the son of Earl Morcar of Mercia.⁸³

Leofcild also appears as a witness (under the title minister) in S 1044 (1042 x 1044, Canterbury Christ Church), which was a diploma of Edward the Confessor granting land in Kent to his optimas Æthelred.⁸⁴ Lewis states that the witness list included important men from all over England.⁸⁵ However, Lewis also notes Leofcild's absence from other witness lists and suggests that he was not an important enough figure to attend the king's court on a regular basis.⁸⁶ Conversely (and perhaps more likely), Lewis suggests that Leofcild only attended while he was sheriff of Essex, and that he only held the office for a short period.⁸⁷

Leofcild's appearance in writs and wills pertaining to and taking place in Essex reinforces the view that the reeve or sheriff of a shire was an important and regular participant in local and shire court meetings.⁸⁸ It is likely that sheriffs too were sometime recipients of ministerial land. Leofcild appears again in S 1521, the will of Leofgifu (1035 x 1040). It is rather ambiguous what type of relationship Leofcild might have had with the donor; he is listed between

⁸¹ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no. XXX (S 1530) "Thurstan's Bequest to Christchurch," 78 – 79 and no. XXXI (S 1531) "The Will of Thurstan," 80 – 85.

⁸² S 1530: "Leofcild scirgerefa" and S 1531: "and Lefkild..."

⁸³ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 6.

⁸⁴ S 1044, *Regesta Regum Anglorum*, <http://ascharters.net/charters/1044>.

⁸⁵ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

⁸⁶ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

⁸⁷ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

⁸⁸ It would also seem that the sheriff was expected/required to locally enforce the king's writs addressed to his locality.

Leofgifu's kin and her servants.⁸⁹ Chris Lewis raises the possibility that due to the similar name element, Leofcild might have been a kinsman of Leofgifu and thus a beneficiary in her will.⁹⁰ This will also reveals that Leofcild already held property when Leofgifu bequeathed him two more hides: "And Lefkyld þa to hide onfast his owen."⁹¹ Lewis highlights the fact that the land granted to Leofcild here was not named or specified in any way, and was in fact the only unnamed land recorded in this will.⁹² This ambiguity may be reflective of the new land being located adjacent or very close to Leofcild's existing holding. Lewis suggests that this indicates that Leofcild only owned one estate (at least at this time), and further argues that this was situated in Essex.⁹³

S 1128 (1052 x 1053, Westminster) is a writ of Edward the Confessor confirming Leofcild's bequest of an estate at Moulsham to Westminster Abbey.⁹⁴ Moulsham was assessed as being 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ hides worth £9 TRE.⁹⁵ The writ is addressed to: "Willem .b. 7 Harold eorll 7 Rodberd stallere 7 alle mine þegnes on Estsex'..."⁹⁶ This writ offers further evidence of reeves granting lands; it and the evidence from Leofgifu's will arguably indicate that by the eleventh century, the office of sheriff (and perhaps other "reevish" offices) was an attractive career prospect that drew men from the lesser nobility and elite classes – and in fact its potential power may even have appealed to men of status and wealth also. Interestingly, although this writ is addressed to the shire court of Essex, no sheriff is named, and Lewis underlines the appearance of Robert the staller in the

⁸⁹ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no. XXIX (S 1521), 76, 77.

⁹⁰ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 6.

⁹¹ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no. XXIX (S 1521), 76.

"And to Leofcild the two hides next to his own." *Ibid*, 77.

⁹² Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 6.

⁹³ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 6.

⁹⁴ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 84 (S 1128), 350 – 351.

⁹⁵ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

⁹⁶ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 84 (S 1128), 350.

"Bishop William and Earl Harold and Robert the staller and all my thegns in Essex." *Ibid*, 350.

sheriff's position within the address.⁹⁷ Lewis argues that this indicates that Leofcild was no longer sheriff by 1052 x 1053, though it is impossible to discern whether or not he was in fact dead.⁹⁸

Lewis suggests that the sheriff Leofcild was the same individual as a king's thegn Leofcild who owned an estate at Wheatley in Essex in 1066.⁹⁹ He contends that Wheatley may have been Leofcild's possession because he held the office of sheriff: "It should be noted that TRE need not of itself mean 1066, so that Leofcild's tenure of Wheatley TRE could be compatible with his death before 1052 – 1053."¹⁰⁰ The estate of Wheatley was located only ten miles from Moulsham, the estate Leofcild gave to Westminster.¹⁰¹ Significantly, Wheatley was held by Swein of Essex after the Conquest.¹⁰² Swein was the son of Robert the staller, who was addressed in writs in the slot typically reserved for the sheriff of Essex at least from 1052 – 1053 under Edward the Confessor.¹⁰³ It is plausible that in this property we have an example of ministerial land attached to the office of the sheriff of Essex.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, likely the office of sheriff (at least by the eleventh century) came with the perquisite of an estate (or perhaps even multiple estates) to be enjoyed by the office holder for the tenure of his position. For men aspiring to join the ranks of the aristocracy this would have been an appealing manner through which to gain a foothold.

Finally, while S 925 (1012, Winchester, Old Minster) does not deal directly with a reeve, it does reveal something of a reeve's activity. The text

⁹⁷ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

⁹⁸ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

⁹⁹ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 8.

¹⁰² Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 8.

¹⁰³ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 8.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis, "Leofcild 3, Sheriff of Essex," *Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066*, 7.

details a land grant from King Æthelred to his wife Æthelgifu of an estate in Winchester. What is significant here is that this estate included a church dedicated to St Peter which had been built by a reeve named Æthelwine: “Quo quippe praedio basilica a quodam ciuitatis eiusdem praefecto nomine Æðelwino sancti Petri honore fabrefacta nitescit.”¹⁰⁵ That Æthelwine built a church not only indicates his desire to display personal piety, but it also reflects an aspiration to be viewed as being part of a certain social stratum. This type of conduct enabled one to emulate kings and great men, who were often bestowing lands upon monasteries and churches, or founding them.¹⁰⁶

In terms of class and status, the ealdorman and the reeve operated on very different levels. The ealdorman was a nationally significant figure, who was generally a member of a wealthy, powerful family. The shire court was the pinnacle of the local administration, and as such was naturally headed by England’s great magnates: earls and bishops.¹⁰⁷ The earls and ealdormen were of course leading elites of the Old English kingdom, and Williams cites their repeated appearances in diplomas, memoranda and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as indicators of their local power and influence.¹⁰⁸ Ealdormen operated not only locally, but they also had important connections with the royal court.¹⁰⁹ Baxter has established that shires could move between earldoms, and so accordingly the ealdorman’s area of command would shift and be altered, likely a tool used by the king to enable him to maintain more control over these powerful subjects.¹¹⁰ He details the competition that went on between these aristocratic families as they vied for control over what he terms “debatable shires,” that is, those districts that

¹⁰⁵ *Regesta Regum Anglorum*, S 925 (1012, Winchester, Old Minster): <http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet/?do=seek&query=S+925>

¹⁰⁶ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 87.

The aristocratic foundation of churches and minsters extends back a long way in the Anglo-Saxon period: see Bede’s “Letter to Ecgberht” for concerns regarding the quality of many of these foundations and whether they were founded more as an aristocratic means to an end, as opposed to for pious reasons (Blair, 2005, 102).

¹⁰⁷ Ann Williams, “Lost Worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh Century,” *Medieval Prosopography* 20 (1999), 51.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, “Lost Worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh Century,” 52 -53.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, “Lost Worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh Century,” 52.

¹¹⁰ Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 62 – 65.

had at one time or another been part of different earldoms.¹¹¹ Ealdormen had a range of responsibilities in the administration of the kingdom, encompassing political, military, financial and judicial roles. This was an individual who bore significantly important duties in the administration of the Old English state and was a key player on the national stage. These were not individuals that the king could necessarily easily command or lightly ignore. The reeve, it has been seen, did not operate on the same level or with the same influence, though as shown above, it was not uncommon for some reeves to attain a measure of status and wealth. Fleming maintains that some reeves had attained the status of thegn by the late tenth and eleventh centuries, and she attributes this status to the fact that by this period – in which conspicuous consumption was beginning to permeate numerous levels of society – they had greater access to money and wealth.¹¹²

That the reeve could and sometimes did assume the duties of the earls is apparent in the manner in which some of the sheriffs in the tenth and eleventh centuries were able to take on many of the responsibilities of the earls who were captured or killed.¹¹³ Significantly, III Æthelred 1.1 stipulates that a breach of the peace established by *either* the ealdorman or the king's reeve in the Court of the Five Boroughs was liable for the same compensation – 1200 of silver.¹¹⁴ This clause endows the reeve and the ealdorman with equal power in this particular situation. It is noteworthy that both the presiding earl and the sheriff of the shire were addressed in the king's writs of the eleventh century, indicating that both individuals were instrumental in the administration of the shire.¹¹⁵ This most assuredly suggests that the sheriffs were to some degree accustomed to handling the responsibilities, duties and functions of the ealdormen and earls in late Anglo-Saxon England. It also indicates that although the earls were the more prominent

¹¹¹ Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 65 – 68.

¹¹² Robin Fleming, "The New Wealth, the New Rich, and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIII: The Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, ed. John Gillingham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), 3, 18 – 19.

¹¹³ Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 12.

¹¹⁴ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachen*, 228. See also Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 64 – 65.

¹¹⁵ Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 249.

and more powerful entities, the reeves in the districts and shires had authority and power in their own right, and were perhaps not to be dismissed lightly from the local stage.

In considering the reeve as an official of the royal administration, important questions arise regarding the nature of his position, perhaps particularly as compared to that of the ealdorman. Was the reeve's position one that might be considered a function of lordship and status, and therefore undefined and somewhat ambiguous in nature? Or are we dealing with appointed officials with more specifically denoted and prescribed duties and functions? The Anglo-Saxon law codes provide evidence that indicate more firmly that the reeve was an appointed official, whose duties were carefully set out in the legislation, as shown in Chapter One. The law codes, as has been shown, are replete with injunctions and instructions to the reeves, indicating the nature of their duties. Conversely, the legislation only bears a few clauses with either instructions or references to ealdormen, such as Alfred 38:

Gif mon beforan cyninges ealdermen on gemote gefeohte,
bete wer ond wite, swa hit rhyt sy, 7 beforan ðam CXX
scll' ðam ealdermen to wite.¹¹⁶

As can be seen from this example, these clauses tend to indicate the power and authority of the ealdormen, as opposed to providing instructions for various duties and responsibilities, as can be seen with those relating to the reeve. Not only does the reeve receive many more instructions and royal commands in the law codes, but the laws also bear various admonitions against failure to uphold the duties outlined.¹¹⁷ The reeve was envisaged in late Anglo-Saxon England as an official very much under the king's power, and subject to royal authority in a

¹¹⁶ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 70.

"If anyone fights at a meeting in the presence of an *ealdorman* of the king, he shall pay as compensation [such] wergeld and fine as is due, but previous to this [he shall pay] a fine of 120 shillings to the *ealdorman*." Attenborough, ed., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 81.

¹¹⁷ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*: II Edward 2: 142; II Edward 8: 144; Ordinance Relating to Charities 2: 148; II Æthelstan 25 & 25.1: 164; IV Æthelstan 7: 172; V Æthelstan 1.2 & 1.3: 168; VI Æthelstan Eleventh: 182; III Edmund 7.2: 191; IV Edgar, 1.5: 208; IV Edgar 13.1: 212; IV Æthelred 7.3: 236; VII Æthelred 6.3: 261; Cnut's Proclamation of 1020 11: 274; Cnut's Proclamation of 1027 12: 277 and II Cnut 8.2: 314.

way the ealdorman was not. Two such examples of this particular subjectivity from the laws of Edward and Cnut respectively, are as follows:

7 gif hit se gerefa ne amanige mid rihte on ðara manna gewitnesse, ðe him to gewitnesse getealde syndon, þonne bete mine *oferhyrnesse* mid CXX scll' [my italics].¹¹⁸

7 eac ic beode eallum minum gerefum, be minum freondscype 7 be eallum þam þe hi agon 7 be heora agenum life, þæt hy æghwær min folc rihtlice healdan 7 rihte domas deman be ðære scira *biscope* gewitnesse 7 swylce mildheortnesse þæron don, swylce þære scire *biscope* riht þince 7 se man acuman mæge.¹¹⁹

The above are two examples of the types of admonitions issued to reeves in the Anglo-Saxon legislation. The first clause, II Edward 2, concerns reeves who fail to exact fines for the breach of the public peace. What is interesting about this clause is the usage of the term *oferhyrnesse*, which can indicate disobedience, disregard, neglect or contempt. Bosworth-Toller regards it as chiefly occurring in legal contexts, and a search in the Old English Corpus reveals its appearance primarily in legal texts: sixteen out of its seventeen occurrences in Old English are in legislation.¹²⁰ The reeve's failure to adhere to the king's instructions as laid out in the legislation was viewed as tantamount to insubordination and was thus punishable. II Edward 2 underlines the reeve's position as an appointed official who was accountable for specified duties and who was answerable to the king.

¹¹⁸ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 142: II Edward 2.

"And if the reeve does not exact it [the fine] in accordance with the law, and in the presence of men who have been assigned to him as witnesses, he shall pay 120 shillings compensation for *insubordination* to me [my italics]. Attenborough, ed., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 119.

¹¹⁹ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*: Cnut's Proclamation of 1020 11: 274.

"And likewise I enjoin upon all my reeves, under pain of forfeiting my friendship and all that they possess and their own lives, to govern my people justly everywhere, and to pronounce just judgments with the cognisance of the bishops of the dioceses, and to inflict such mitigated penalties as the bishop may approve and the man himself may be able to bear." Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 143.

¹²⁰ Bosworth, "An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online." Ofer-híran. August 23, 2010.

<http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/024120>. See also: *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, simple search of "oferhyrne". <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/cgi-bin/doecorpus/oec-idx?index=Fragmentary&type=simple&q1=oferhyrne&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=All&size=First+100>

The penalties indicated by these clauses varied, though the range encompassed a fine for 120 shillings, through to the other end of the scale, wherein the reeve was not only at stake to lose “the king’s friendship,” and his royal office, but in some cases even his life.

While Cnut’s proclamation was intended first and foremost to assure the English of just governance and the continuation of the good laws of the past, it also serves to highlight the reeve as a royal agent at the king’s disposal, and through whom the king’s duties to the English people could in part be discharged. The king literally appears to have had the power of life or death over his reeves, which would have made them a valuable administrative tool indeed. While there are several of these “warning” clauses issued to royal reeves, should they fail to carry out their assigned duties, there is no record of such legislation pertaining to ealdormen. This evidence points toward the king’s ability to control and police the activity of his reeves much more closely than the actions of the higher status and more powerful ealdormen. This does not necessarily suggest that reeves could not become members of the lower aristocracy – it has been shown that they could and indeed did in some cases achieve this. What is different about this as opposed to the ealdormen, however, is that reeves seemed to have necessarily bought their way into the aristocratic ranks – or arrived there as a result of the king’s generosity for their service, while ealdormen generally tended to derive from old and powerful families.

The only comparable clause pertaining to ealdormen occurs once in the body of Anglo-Saxon legislation, in Ine 36.1: “Gif he ealdermon sy, þolige his scire, buton him se cyning arian wille.”¹²¹ The ordinance relating to this clause, Ine 36, deals with the capture of thieves, and deliverance of them into custody.¹²² Thus Ine 36.1 stipulates that if an ealdorman fails to deal properly with a thief, in the manner stipulated by the law code, he is to forfeit his shire. This is of course no light penalty, but it is the only one in the body of Anglo-Saxon legislation in

¹²¹ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 104.

“If he is an *ealdorman* he shall forfeit his ‘shire’, unless the king is willing to pardon him.” Attenborough, ed., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 49.

¹²² Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 104.

which a consequence for failure to comply is mentioned for an ealdorman, and here there is no threat of loss of the king's friendship, or of death. We also see this clause appearing rather early on in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon legislation – the seventh and early eighth centuries – and it is notably not repeated in the laws of subsequent kings. This clause also seems to provide the ealdorman with the opportunity to gain a pardon (*arian*) from the king, a privilege that does not in any case appear to have been extended to the reeve. As can be seen from a brief comparison with those admonitions addressed to reeves, Ine 36.1 appears a somewhat milder reproof – there are no threats of loss of the king's friendship, substantial fines, or death, and it includes the accompanying possibility of a royal pardon. This points to the ealdorman as a higher status, more powerful individual, with whom the king had to contend, and perhaps more often “manage,” as opposed to “command.” By all appearances the king wielded far closer control over the royal reeves as opposed to the ealdormen. The legislative evidence also seems to support the hypothesis that the royal reeves were appointed officials, with prescribed duties and activities, who were accordingly held responsible for ensuring that these duties were performed. However, it is important to recall the ideological nature of the law codes and the question of how far we can take their prescriptions and rulings to have been enacted on the ground. It must be acknowledged that it is at least possible that there were other existing clauses for the regulation and control of ealdormen that simply have not survived.

In addition to being more firmly under the king's influence, the law codes, and their many injunctions concerning reeves and the performance of their duties, seem to make it clear that the reeve fell below the ealdorman in the hierarchy of royal officials. Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, in a chapter discussing Alfred's management of his kingdom, offers an additional piece of evidence suggesting that the reeve was situated at the bottom of the administrative hierarchy:

Nam assidue suos episcopos et comites ac nobilissimos, sibique dilectissimos suos ministros, necnon et praepositos, quibus post Dominum et regem omnis totius regni potestas, sicut dignum, subdita videtur, leniter docendo, adulando, hortando, imperando, ad ultimum inoboedientes, post longam patientiam, acrius castigando, vulgarem stultitiam et pertinaciam omni modo abominando, ad suam voluntatem et ad communem totius regni utilitatem sapientissime usurpabat et annectebat.¹²³

This extract from Asser's *Life of King Alfred* indicates that the administration of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom was envisaged as being in the hands of the royal officials, as well as ecclesiastics, to some extent.¹²⁴ It is important to bear in mind that this is ninth-century material, and that it is valuable for the insight it provides on the remarkable growth of the visibility and importance of the reeve. It is also evident from this extract that the king expected to actively manage his officials, to ensure that they operated to the best interests of the administration. A hierarchy of sorts unquestionably emerges here, with the reeve distinctly positioned at the bottom. This selection supports the implications of the law codes, that the reeve was an administrative official, situated below the ealdorman in both power and status, and as such, much more firmly under the king's control. This does not preclude royal reeves coming from families with some measure of status, but it does seem to indicate that these men were situated lower down the social ladder from ealdormen, and that the appointment

¹²³ William Stevenson, ed., *Asser's Life of King Alfred, together with the Annals of Saint Neots* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 78.

"For by gently instructing, cajoling, urging, commanding, and (in the end, when his patience was exhausted) by sharply chastising those who were disobedient and by despising popular stupidity and stubbornness in every way, he carefully and cleverly exploited and converted his bishops and ealdormen and nobles, and his thegns most dear to him, and reeves as well (in all of whom, after the Lord and the king, the authority of the entire kingdom is seen to be invested, as is appropriate), to his own will and to the general advantage of the whole realm." Simon Keynes and Lapidge, Michael, trans. *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 101 – 102.

¹²⁴ This is paralleled to some degree in Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity*, which will be addressed in Chapter Four, below.

was an office based on instructions and performance.¹²⁵ The reeves who do appear imbued with status tend to also be thegns; additionally, there are reeves who appear in the diplomatic material, asking the king for land in return for money, such as the aforementioned reeve Ælfgar in S 915 (1007, Abingdon).¹²⁶

The “warning” clauses in the law codes, and their existence primarily in relation to reeves, indicates that the reeve’s office was more precarious and much more closely bound up with and aligned to the “centralized” institution of the Anglo-Saxon state. The law codes suggest that their ability to retain their position depended upon how well they discharged the duties of their office. As such, the reeves would have been the ideal vehicle through which the king could maintain control over the localities and also through which he could strive to maintain public peace and justice. This makes sense considered alongside Baxter’s suggestion of the reeves acting as balancing forces in the localities against the power of the ealdormen.¹²⁷ It seems likely that the king would be desirous of administrative officials placed around the localities whose official position was closely tied with performance and the king’s will. This would have provided the king and the administration with officials whose fortunes and futures were to some extent bound up with their work for that administration, who could work alongside the lordship structures we can see operating in the localities.

¹²⁵ Indeed, there are occurrences of reeves who are also additionally indentified in the diplomatic as thegns, such as Byrnríc in S1497, Æthelwíg in S883, Æthelric in S950, Kineward/Cyneward in S1404 and Godric in S967.

¹²⁶ Kelly, ed. *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2*, no. 134, 522 – 524.

¹²⁷ The evident influence of the reeves in the localities can be further seen in S 883, wherein two shire reeves provide Christian burial for two brothers who had supported the activities of a thief. Ealdorman Leofsig of Essex objected to Æthelred about this, and the king stood by his reeves’ decision, even granting the brothers’ forfeit land to one of them.

Conclusions

A review of the reeve's presence in the law codes in terms of local activity reveals much about the nature of the reeve's "official" position. Reeves were from an early point involved in judicial activities, and they were present at public meetings, particularly hundred courts, which were important local events. Accordingly, it has been suggested that by the eleventh century, the sheriff was responsible for ensuring that the shire and hundred court profits from his locality reached the king.¹²⁸ By the time of Edward the Elder, reeves were also involved in public meetings for dispute settlements. Evidence suggests that it is possible, even likely, that at least some reeves and other royal officials may have possessed pragmatic literacy in order to carry out their offices. To that end, it has been postulated that the texts *Hundred Ordinance*, *Forfang* and *Be Blaserum* were once part of a set, accompanying the *domboc* as a reference volume of sorts for administrative officials.¹²⁹ This of course not only offers the tantalizing hint that these officials might have been literate, but it also supports the notion that the prescriptions in the law codes might have been something more than simply ideological. Furthermore, it has been established that the law codes invest the reeve with responsibility towards the church. Reeves were to offer secular support to the church in the form of enforcing tithe payments, as well as support of the "temporal needs" of its abbots. This is likely connected with the kings' attempts to indicate that they were indeed keeping their coronation promise and offering their secular support to the church.

We can also see that by the tenth and eleventh centuries, reeves were not only recipients of land grants, but also making pious donations themselves. Not only was *lænland* often leased to ealdormen for their tenure in office, but this benefit was most likely also applied to other royal officials. While it has been established that the king wielded more precise control over his reeves, he likely would have wished to encourage their interest and ties with the areas in which

¹²⁸ Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England, c. 500 – 1066*, 109.

¹²⁹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 378 – 379.

they held jurisdiction. This *lænland* of course would have also served as a compelling reward and perquisite of holding royal office, potentially attracting ambitious and motivated men to the posts. Evidence indicates that the king could also make outright grants of land to reeves whose work pleased him – another way in which carrying out the duties of the office could be rewarded. Furthermore, Baxter and Blair have shown (at least in their case study of Bampton hundred, Oxfordshire) that this “ministerial land” was carefully laid out and could be very close to a royal center.¹³⁰ This evidence ties in nicely with the injunctions to reeves in the law codes which indicate that these officials were more closely managed and controlled by the king than the more powerful and nationally important ealdormen. However, in consideration of Williams’ discussion of the family of Æthelwine, sheriff of Warwickshire, it seems likely that shire reeves might have been pulled in two directions: experiencing influence and pressure not only from the king, but also the local earl. Thus these *lænland* leases may represent not only recompense for services rendered, but perhaps also the king’s effort to maintain close links with and, importantly, influence over his royal agents in the localities. These ministerial landholdings would have been particularly appealing to those men who aspired to aristocratic status. Indeed, numerous charters indicate reeves attaining land and also giving it away, likely in mimicry of the upper classes. A number of these men are also addressed as thegns, signaling that they had taken a step up the social ladder.

It is clear that by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, reeves appear (through the lens of the law codes at least) to be an important political agency operating in the localities, on behalf of the royal government. These men of course functioned on very different levels than ealdormen, who were nationally significant figures, but they were still important forces in local areas. The law codes present the reeve as an appointed royal official, with carefully prescribed duties, and as an agent who was answerable to the king. This is indicated

¹³⁰ For example, ministerial land was that which was leased to royal officials, as opposed to comital land, which was set aside specifically for the ealdormen’s use. This would not only better enable the king to manage his officials, but it also allowed for those officials to be situated close to the local administrative center.

through the many injunctions, instructions and potential penalties addressed to reeves that can be found in the law codes. This further differentiates the reeve from the ealdorman, with the reeve more at the king's behest, and accordingly more firmly under his control. The reeve emerges, then, as an official who was appointed to his position, as opposed to gaining the role through any hereditary or familial means. This is significant for a few reasons. Not only did these parameters give the king greater control over *whom* his reeves were, but by nature of their appointed – and therefore precarious – position, the king wielded greater power and maneuverability over these men on the ground. However, despite the king's apparent closer control over the reeves as opposed to the ealdormen, it is evident that there were sometimes clashes between the two in the localities. This arguably stems from the slightly overlapping nature of their duties, responsibilities and jurisdiction in terms of justice and the courts. Additionally, tensions may have developed as a result of the king's close relationship with these agents – Æthelred II is noted to have repeatedly articulated his affection for his reeves, and one ealdorman of Essex is known to have clashed with them on two separate occasions. It has been established that the reeve was not only a royal official based in the localities with myriad duties and functions, but that he also was closely tied to the king – both by legislation and ministerial land grants. These agents were subordinate to, yet worked alongside the realm's ealdormen, with tensions sometimes developing. It has also been shown that some reeves aspired to aristocratic status, striving to achieve this through the acquisition of *lænland*, the outright purchase of properties, and the social mimicry and display of making pious donations. It is possible that the estate fragmentation occurring in late Anglo-Saxon England and the associated opening to some degree of the lower aristocratic ranks may have spurred more upwardly striving men to seek advancement through royal posts. This may perhaps account to some extent for the greater visibility of reeves by the tenth and eleventh centuries. This visibility communicates a need for these men placed in the localities, counterbalancing the ealdormen, and also a necessity to bind them to the king's side during Æthelred's reign: the king went

so far as to offer them even bookland and emphasize repeatedly that they are so precious, and so greatly favored, in his attempt to keep them loyal. The development of small estates in late Anglo-Saxon England, ties to the land and the reeve's work on it will be examined in detail below in Chapter Three.