

Chapter Three

The reeve and estate management

A role for which the reeve has famously been known is his position as an estate manager. His activity on the estate in this occupation is relatively well attested and understood in the post-Conquest period.¹ It is clear that the reeve was an important figure in the daily running and administration of the estate, who worked under (and with) the bailiff.² What do we know of his Anglo-Saxon counterpart? The estate reeve in Anglo-Saxon England was a shadowy figure; even for the late Anglo-Saxon period, there is far more evidence for the reeve in his role as a royal administrator, particularly in the laws and in the diplomatic material, as opposed for that of the estate manager.³ Much of what is known of the estate reeve tends to be vague and generalizing; for example: he occupied some type of administrative role on the late Anglo-Saxon estate and could be rewarded or compensated with small grants of land from within his lord's estate. However, the evidence hints at a rather more dynamic role for this individual. It appears that the estate reeve in late Anglo-Saxon England was an individual who bore heavy responsibilities and an important role in the running and working of an estate. There are many questions surrounding this figure that this chapter will attempt to address: what role(s) and duties did the reeve carry out on the estate? Was he free or unfree? Was he literate? Did lords retain more than one reeve? How was the reeve compensated for his work? How does the reeve fit into our picture of the late Anglo-Saxon estate (and economy)? And finally, can we gain an understanding of how the estate reeve might have been perceived by his contemporaries? Not only will the answers (or attempts to answer) to these questions provide insight on the little-understood figure of the reeve as an estate

¹ For more information on the role(s) of the post-Conquest reeve, see Dorothea Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971). This text will be given a brief treatment below.

² Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, particularly at 274 – 281.

³ For more on the reeve as a royal administrator, particularly as a figure operating in the localities, please see Chapters One and Two, above.

manager in the late Anglo-Saxon period, but they will also shed some light upon the social and economic changes and developments taking place in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

There are several important late Anglo-Saxon sources on estates and the reeve that collectively, will prove instructive here. There are a handful of estate memoranda and related texts that survive from the tenth and eleventh centuries. These are: *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum (RSP)*, *Bege sceadwisan gerefan* or “*Gerefa*”,⁴ “survey of an estate at Tidenham, Gloucestershire” and “statement of services rendered at Hurstborne Priors, Hampshire.”⁵ These texts will provide insight on the workings of the estate, as well as the role of the reeve within it. *Gerefa* may also offer clues as to how the reeve was perceived. Historians have argued that *Gerefa* neatly fills a gap in the content of *RSP*, since the latter text deals in detail with the rights and obligations of those who worked on an estate, likely from the perspective of the reeve, though there is no reference to the reeve’s perquisites and obligations.⁶ *Gerefa* may be alluring to scholars of late Anglo-Saxon England, with its potential to uncover more about not only the workings of a late Anglo-Saxon estate, but also the reeve’s role upon it. However, one must tread carefully here; it has been convincingly argued that *Gerefa* was composed as a literary work, or a type of prose composition exercise with possible Classical influences.⁷ Of course, this does not necessarily mean that *Gerefa* is not useful in at least partially illuminating the role of the late Anglo-Saxon estate reeve, and it should not be condemned as useless in that regard.

⁴ For Old English and German texts, see: Liebermann, ed., trans. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 453 – 455 and for Modern English translation, see: Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30 – 33. For the most recent translation and commentary, see: Thomas Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” in *Early English Laws*, ed. Bruce O’Brien and Jane Winters (2012): www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

⁵ Robertson, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos. CIX and CX, 204 – 207. See also: David C. Douglas and George Greenaway, eds. *English Historical Documents, Volume II: 1042 – 1189*, second edition (London: Eyre Methuen and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), nos. 173 and 174, 879 – 880.

⁶ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 3, 4.

⁷ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 9 and Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 389.

The implications are merely that it is vital to proceed cautiously in the uses and interpretations of this text.

There are two extant Anglo-Saxon “work calendars” from the early eleventh century, which can be found as part of the following manuscripts: British Library, MS Cotton Julius A. VI and British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. V,⁸ and in which the “labors of the months” are carefully rendered.⁹ These calendars will offer impressions of the seasonal work that would have been undertaken on the estate, and which correlates (reasonably well) with the detail offered in *RSP* and *Gerefa*, as well as other known calendars from the period.¹⁰ The wills of several laypeople from the tenth and eleventh centuries will aid our understanding of how reeves were compensated for their work and may also shed light on their position within the hierarchy of an estate. Material from the laws may yield further clues as to the reeve’s position within the estate, as well as whether he was free or unfree. Finally, a comparison with some thirteenth-century estate treatises (namely, the *Seneschaucy* and Walter of Henley’s *Husbandry*) may prove useful.¹¹

Now, before turning to the texts themselves, it is important to consider Anglo-Saxon England’s social, economic and agricultural climate in the tenth and eleventh centuries. This will provide the appropriate context from which to interpret the texts. The tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed a rise in the number of small estates across Anglo-Saxon England. This was caused by the fragmentation of the “great estates” held by the king, ecclesiastical institutions and the great lay lords, and which had dominated England’s landscape in the

⁸ These manuscripts can be found cataloged in: Elzbieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, Volume Two: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts, 900 – 1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), nos. 62 and 87; and Janet Backhouse, DH Turner and Leslie Webster, eds. *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art, 966 – 1066* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum and the British Library Board, British Museum Publications Ltd., 1984), nos. 60 and 164.

⁹ David Hill has reproduced the images from MS Cotton Julius A. vi in his “Eleventh century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures,” *Landscape History*, vol. 20 (1998): 31, 33 & 34.

¹⁰ Peter Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 266 – 269. See also: Hill, “Eleventh century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures,” *Landscape History*, vol. 20 (1998): 29 – 39.

¹¹ Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*.

period up to and around 850.¹² This change in the administrative and economic organization of the landscape was spurred by several factors, and had profound implications that reached beyond the Conquest. Before the tenth century, England's landscape was dotted with units of landholding referred to by historians as "multiple estates".¹³ These estates tended to encompass vast tracts of land, often equipped with varying resources, and which were organized around and subject to a central point.¹⁴ The settlements within the estates were responsible for providing food renders and "specialist services" (such as agricultural work or duties relating to hospitality) to the center.¹⁵ Some examples of these kinds of services are cited by Faith: "...ploughing and harvest work at the centre, and attendance and service at the lord's hunt."¹⁶ The divide between free and unfree in the late seventh-century village and settlement was markedly distinct, and was highlighted by differences in status and economic power amongst the peasantry.¹⁷ Chris Wickham remarks that although those who were unfree often did the same agricultural labor as those who were free, the "subordinate" nature of the relationship nevertheless remained clear.¹⁸

These great estates were owned and exploited by the king, the church and great lay magnates, and unsurprisingly, Faith notes that it was this social stratum which possessed the power and wide-reaching influence required to manage and organize these estates, as well as to collect the renders from all of their constituent parts.¹⁹ Managing this type of estate tended to consist of collecting

¹² Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 18 – 19; Rosamund Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London and Washington: Leicester University Press, 1997), 154 and Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 290 – 292.

¹³ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 11.

¹⁴ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 12.

¹⁵ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 12.

¹⁶ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 12.

¹⁷ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400 – 800* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 430.

¹⁸ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400 – 800*, 430.

Additionally, Wickham notes that free men in these settlements would have attended the *gemot* assembly, presided over by the lord of the many villages in the area, and which later became the hundred court meeting (430 – 431).

¹⁹ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 15 – 16.

renders and ensuring that rights and obligations were enforced and carried out.²⁰ Significantly, Christopher Dyer observes that the renders collected from the estates in this period were only a fraction of the amount that the land and people were capable of producing.²¹ This type of estate administration would have been well-suited to early Anglo-Saxon kings, who moved regularly around their kingdoms, staying at one or another of their estates for a few days at a time on their circuit around their territory.²² However, it is immediately apparent that the requirements of the church and its minsters were very different. Minsters, unlike kings, remained static and would have required deliveries of supplies.²³ Out of this need developed the concept of the “inland”, or “directly exploited core area”.²⁴ The inland was a geld-free area and was surrounded by outlying properties made up of settlements, often with varying types of resources, and which had an obligation to deliver payments or renders (*feorm*) to the core estate or inland.²⁵ This, as one can imagine, would have in itself required immense resources and control in order to manage. This difficulty was in part an impetus for changes in patterns of landholding, though there were numerous factors involved. Beginning in the latter part of the ninth century and intensifying and quickening in the tenth and eleventh centuries, we can see these vast great estates fragmenting into smaller landholdings.²⁶

In the period after 850, these small estates began to appear in increasing numbers. Whereas the former great estates could often encompass forty hides or more, the new smaller estates tended to be between one and ten hides.²⁷ Due to

²⁰ Rosamund Faith, “Estate Management,” in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), 175.

²¹ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 29.

²² Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 27.

²³ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 15. See also Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 28.

²⁴ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 16.

²⁵ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 22, 28 – 30.

²⁶ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 154 – 155 and Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 26.

²⁷ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 30 – 31 and Robin Fleming, “Land use and people,” in *A Social History of England, 900 – 1200*, ed. Julia Crick and Elisabeth van Houts (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

the new, smaller size and scale of these landholdings, the methods of exploitation shifted somewhat. Instead of working to provide various (seasonal) renders to a central place, these small estates now needed to support the lord and his household, full time.²⁸ This accordingly meant intensification of agricultural production and resource extraction across these small estates, and it will be shown that it was in this period that the role of the reeve on estates became much more important. The lord often would have resided on his estate; indeed, Dyer observes that the tenth and eleventh centuries saw an increase in the building of aristocratic residences.²⁹ These small estates tended to consist of a “seigneurial center,” often enclosed and situated around the lord’s residence, which was geared towards providing for the lord’s table.³⁰ This inland or “demesne,” would also have had small pieces of land set aside for the estate’s slaves and its dependent workers, who occupied and maintained their land in exchange for dues and heavy labor responsibilities.³¹ Faith asserts that all tenants of this inland/demesne were tied to it and therefore unfree.³² The part of the estate outside the demesne was let out to semi-dependent tenants who then owed numerous services in monetary dues, renders of produce and animals and labor.³³ This new type of estate organization was geared towards reaping the maximum amount of profits from the land and the people on it, thus intensifying the use of the land and its resources.³⁴

It has been convincingly argued that these changes led to changes in attitudes towards estate management.³⁵ Individuals viewed their estates as their

²⁸ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 31.

²⁹ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 31.

These aristocratic residences of the tenth and eleventh centuries are examined in greater detail in: Ann Williams, “A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest,” in *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the fifth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1990*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 221 – 240.

³⁰ Rosamund Faith, “Manors and Manorial Lordship,” in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), 300.

³¹ Faith, “Manors and Manorial Lordship,” 300.

³² Faith, “Manors and Manorial Lordship,” 300.

³³ Faith, “Manors and Manorial Lordship,” 300.

³⁴ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 31.

³⁵ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 31.

own property and as their sole means of income, and thus took measures to increase and ensure their estates' productivity. People came to possess these estates in a variety of ways, some of which were driving forces behind the fragmentation of the great estates. The two principal types of land tenure in Anglo-Saxon England were bookland and folkland (OE *bocland* and *folcland*). Bookland was a permanent holding, acquired through royal charter and as such was secure from both the king and hereditary and other claims.³⁶ Folkland encompassed any other type of land tenure, and was subject to hereditary claims.³⁷ Folkland, due to its inalienable and hereditary nature, does not often appear in the extant sources. Significantly, Williams notes that it is thus impossible to develop a completely accurate picture of a nobleman's wealth, since we cannot know how much of this wealth derived from his folkland holdings, as opposed to those more easily documented, such as bookland and leases.³⁸ Both bookland and folkland could be leased out, as *lænland*, though Baxter and Blair speculate that bookland was the type more often to be leased.³⁹ Williams comments upon the sparseness of records pertaining to leaseholds granted by laymen; she suggests that these may have been typically oral arrangements, and thus unrecorded.⁴⁰ Laymen leasing their lands out may have been more commonplace than the evidence shows. Leasing lands out not only provided the king with a manner in which to reward *ministri* and royal agents, but it also offered a method in which great lay landlords could effectively manage their large holdings.⁴¹ It is also evident that even small landholders leased out

³⁶ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 159 – 160 and 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 XXVIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 2005*, ed. CP Lewis (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 19 – 20. For more information on *lænland*, see also Ann Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 75 – 84.

³⁷ Baxter and Blair, "Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study," 20 and Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 160.

³⁸ Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 84.

³⁹ Baxter and Blair, "Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study," 20.

⁴⁰ Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 77.

⁴¹ Baxter and Blair, "Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study," 20 – 21 and Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 161.

portions of their estates, in return for rents and labor services.⁴² Leasing of lands is also referred to as “farming” them out, and was particularly effective/useful for lay landowners who held estates ranging over a wide geographical area.⁴³ This enabled lords to simply collect rent (or “farm”) on distant properties, without the concerns of the land’s daily management. The possibility that men might have moved between their own holdings in the era of great estates, or moved between leaseholds, is raised in Ine’s law code: “Gif gesiðcund mon fare, þonne mot he habban his gerefan mid him 7 his smið 7 his cildfestrān.”⁴⁴ Of course, this clause dates to the late seventh century, several centuries earlier than the production of *RSP* and *Gerefa*, and may only be relevant in the days of the great multiple estates, before c. 850. However, what it does tell us is that the reeve had likely been an established member of the lord’s household from the seventh century. This clause also raises the question as to whether the reeve was free or unfree.

The practice of leasing lands out was wholly embraced by the church, which was prohibited canonically from permanently granting away church property.⁴⁵ Instead, the church leased its lands, generally for the term of three lives, a practice which also provided substantial income.⁴⁶ An additional added benefit of leasing out church lands may in some cases have been relieving the church of hospitality duty to the grantee, who now had a means of support.⁴⁷ However, this practice tended to have the unpleasant backlash of the church encountering extreme difficulty in repossessing the land once it was leased.⁴⁸ Many of the extant Anglo-Saxon charters deal with land disputes, attesting to the

However, it is important to note that *ministri* and royal agents were also granted holdings of bookland (Baxter and Blair, “Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study,” 20 – 21).

⁴² Faith, “Manors and Manorial Lordship,” 300 – 301.

⁴³ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 34.

⁴⁴ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 118 (Ine 63).

“If a nobleman moves his residence he may take with him his reeve, his smith and his children’s nurse.” Attenborough, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 57.

⁴⁵ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 161.

⁴⁶ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 161 – 162.

⁴⁷ Christopher Dyer, “St Oswald and 10,000 West Midland peasants,” in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996), 177.

⁴⁸ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 162.

relative frequency of this problem. Small estates were also granted either as bookland or leasehold, to estate officials and others, often in return for services.⁴⁹ This activity can be most readily seen in the Anglo-Saxon wills, which will be considered in detail below.

Urban development would have also had an effect on not only the economy itself, but also agrarian practices and estate fragmentation. The rise of towns from the eighth century onwards would have intensified the pressure on the land to produce more surplus to supply the new urban centers.⁵⁰ Another factor which arguably contributed to the rise in the numbers of small estates, was the practice of granting lands to royal officials and to *ministri* or king's thegns.⁵¹ Faith argues that the increase in endowments to men of this type was directly connected with the development of the late Anglo-Saxon state.⁵² Indeed, Baxter and Blair cite the ability of the king to dispense small estates to his *ministri* and royal agents to be an important aspect of royal patronage.⁵³

Two further factors at play, which were likely contributors to changes in land management and the intensification of production, were the numerous instances of tax and tribute paid in the tenth and eleventh centuries, as well as increasing trends of aristocratic consumption and display. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, between 850 and 1066, tribute was paid to the viking armies seven times. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records tribute paid in 991 (£10,000), 994 (£16,000), 1007 (£36,000), 1012 (£48,000), 1014 (£21,000—a payment ordered by Cnut) and 1017 (£72,000 paid by England as a whole, and

⁴⁹ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 159.

⁵⁰ PJ Fowler, "Agriculture," in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), 23 and Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 271 – 274. See also David Pelteret, "Poor and powerless," in *A Social History of England, 900 – 1200*, ed. Julia Crick and Elisabeth van Houts (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 147 – 148 and Fleming, "Land use and people," 30 – 32.

⁵¹ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 155 – 159 and Baxter and Blair, "Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study," 19 – 46.

⁵² Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 156.

⁵³ Baxter and Blair, "Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study," 20.

£10,500 paid solely by London).⁵⁴ Furthermore, in 1008, Æthelred ordered a massive ship-building program: “a warship from 310 hides and a helmet and corselet from eight hides.”⁵⁵ 1041 saw Harthacnut levying an army tax of £21,099, as well as £11,048 for 32 ships.⁵⁶ These were clearly vast sums of cash, which were raised in relatively short intervals, as the dates indicate. This certainly would have prompted lords and lay landowners to drastically increase the productivity of their estates, in order to meet the taxation demands placed upon them.⁵⁷

Finally, increasing trends in aristocratic consumption not only pushed lords to squeeze more out of their estates, but it also led to intensified interest in estate management and status tracts. The necessity for lords to support themselves from the income of these new small estates was at least in part spurred by the new culture of conspicuous consumption emerging in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and this in turn led to new views on estate management.⁵⁸ Fleming argues that the need for funds due to taxation in this period, coupled with greater use of agricultural resources, led to an increase in the demand for markets and the luxury goods supplied by traders.⁵⁹ Fleming highlights the fact that the new wealth generated by intensified agricultural exploitation, along with urban development, generated a culture in which conspicuous consumption was a method of showcasing aristocratic status.⁶⁰ Another force at work which impelled this display would have been thegn’s involvement in their local, regional shire courts and administration.⁶¹ The use of

⁵⁴ Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 83, 89, 90, 93, 97. All figures taken from the C (D, E) versions of the *Chronicle*. It is noteworthy that all tribute was paid during the reign of Æthelred.

⁵⁵ Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 88.

⁵⁶ Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 106.

⁵⁷ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 2.

⁵⁸ Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 168 – 169.

⁵⁹ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 2.

⁶⁰ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 3. For a detailed discussion of aristocratic trends and other methods of conspicuous display, see: Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 85 – 137.

⁶¹ Senecal, “Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 252.

status markers would have increased their local standing and prestige in the public arena of local administration.⁶² Christine Senecal cites the absence of some regionally important men from royal charters as evidence of their greater concern with local circles.⁶³ Another of the driving factors behind this conspicuous display was the fact that the growth of the small estate as a means of support meant that the aristocratic lifestyle was now open to many more people than it had been in the past.⁶⁴ This helped to create an anxiety in those at the top of the social ladder to use conspicuous display (in ever-increasing amounts) to ensure that they remained there.⁶⁵ Senecal argues that this anxiety stemmed partially from the lack of any specifically designated parameters that signified or denoted status in late Anglo-Saxon England.⁶⁶ This display manifested itself in numerous ways: for example, clothing, food, the layout of thegny residence, and the foundation and endowment of churches.⁶⁷

In addition to patronizing minsters and other great churches, many wealthy laymen founded churches on their estates; such activity was viewed not only as pious, but also as a mark of status.⁶⁸ This status display would have been evident in part by the fact that the priest would have had to wait for the lord's

⁶² Senecal, "Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England," 252.

⁶³ Senecal, "Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England," 254.

⁶⁴ Fleming, "The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England," 3 – 4.

⁶⁵ Fleming, "The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England," 3 – 4.

⁶⁶ Senecal, "Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England," 258.

⁶⁷ Fleming, "The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England," 5 – 13.

⁶⁸ Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 99 – 100. See also: Fleming, "The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England," 11 – 12; Senecal, "Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England," 260 – 261; Ann Williams, "Thegny Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the Late Old English Kingdom," in *Anglo-Norman Studies* XXIV, ed. John Gillingham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 7 – 8 and Ann Williams, "Lost Worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh Century," in *Medieval Prosopography* 20 (1999), 58. Additionally, Ann Williams discusses the "bell-house", or church tower, listed as an element of the "thegnly residence" in *Gephyncðo* (Ann Williams, "A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest," in *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the fifth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1990* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 233 – 234.

presence before saying mass, and he also may have attended the local courts alongside the lord as part of a “retinue”.⁶⁹ Such great expenditures of cash and resources would have been aimed at ensuring the social strata remained as defined as possible; Fleming remarks on how the tenth- and eleventh-century economy enabled many to attain status that had in the past been out of reach.⁷⁰ Men such as reeves, merchants and *ceorls* all aspired to the status of thegn, and, with the right amount of funds, could now attain it.⁷¹ Reeves’ newfound importance on lordly estates, in addition to the grants of land they received for their services, may often have caused these men to increasingly push the bounds of thegnhood. Indeed, some reeves may also now have had the funds to purchase lands; S915 is a royal diploma dating to 1007, and it details a reeve’s purchase of eight hides in Berkshire from Æthelred II in exchange for 300 mancuses of gold and silver.⁷² Not only did this motivate the wealthiest to ever more extravagant display – Fleming cites the commission and donation of gold, silver and gilt life-sized religious figures and crosses to religious houses – but it also spurred the production of texts on status, as well as estate management, which we do not really see before this period.⁷³ Some examples of this type of text are Wulfstan’s *Gepyncðu* and tracts and treatises on estate management, such as *RSP*, estate surveys and *Gerefa*. In fact, *Gepyncðu*, the eleventh-century text on status, includes a church amongst the requirements for a thegnly estate:⁷⁴

7 gif ceorl geþeah, þæt he hæfde fullice fif hida
agenes landes, [cirican 7 kycenan], bell[hus] 7

⁶⁹ Williams, “Lost Worlds: Kentish Society in the Eleventh Century,” 58.

⁷⁰ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 18.

⁷¹ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 18 – 19.

⁷² Kelly, ed., *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey, Part 2*, no. 134, 522 – 525. It is possible that this reeve Ælfgar was a royal reeve. Kelly notes that there were at least two king’s reeves operating at this time who bore the name Ælfgar (p525).

⁷³ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 14, 4 and: Senecal, “Keeping up with the Godwinesons: In pursuit of aristocratic status in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 258 – 259. See also: Williams, “Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the late Old English Kingdom,” 6 – 7.

⁷⁴ Fleming, “The new wealth, the new rich and the new political style in late Anglo-Saxon England,” 11 and Williams, “A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest,” 225 – 226.

burhgeat, setl 7 sundernote on cynges healle, þonne
wæs he þanon forð þegenrihtes weorðe.⁷⁵

All of this is suggestive that the audiences for these texts on status and estate management would have been among the upper echelons of the aristocracy.⁷⁶ The church was a major landowner, and as such, was sharing in the climate of general agricultural intensification. Dyer suggests that the author of *Gerefa* was an ecclesiastic, and Faith contends that members of the church in this period were interested in estate management as well as Classical texts and practices of it.⁷⁷ Therefore, it is likely that *RSP* and our other tracts on estate management were not only authored by churchmen, but that ecclesiastics also would have read them as well.⁷⁸ What remains an interesting and important question is why the reeve was the sole subject of one of these treatises? It is these texts on estate management that will aid in our understanding of not only the operation of a late Anglo-Saxon estate, but also of the reeve's role on it.

It is important, before turning to the texts themselves, to consider our texts and their manuscript history. *RSP* and *Gerefa* both appear in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 383. MS 383 is a collection of Anglo-Saxon laws in Old English, with Latin and French marginalia, and is suggested by Neil Ker as having a St Paul's Cathedral, London provenance.⁷⁹ The majority of the manuscript was drafted by a single scribe at the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century.⁸⁰ Ker noted that several of the components of MS 383 do not

⁷⁵ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 456. This text of *Gebyncðu* derives from the Textus Roffensis MS, with the bracketed words only being present in this version of the text. "And if a ceorl prospered, that he possessed fully five hides of land of his own [church and kitchen], a bell [house] and burh-geat, a seat and special office in the king's hall, then was he henceforth entitled to the rights of a thegn." Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents, c. 500 – 1042*, 468.

⁷⁶ Though this of course highlights the difficult question of whom in the lay population was literate, as well as what type of transmission these texts enjoyed in late Anglo-Saxon England.

⁷⁷ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850 – 1520*, 34 and Faith, "Estate Management," 175.

⁷⁸ Faith, "Estate Management," 175 and see also: Ann Williams, "Lost Worlds: Kentish society in the eleventh century," in *Medieval Prosopography* 20 (1999): 72.

⁷⁹ NR Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), no. 65, 110 – 113.

⁸⁰ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 233.

survive elsewhere, including *RSP* and *Gerefa*.⁸¹ Wormald contends that MS 383 was entirely made up of earlier texts that the scribe compiled, rather than adding any new material.⁸² Wormald highlights the small size and portability of this legal compendium and suggests that it was the earliest of three post-Conquest Anglo-Saxon legal compilations; the other two texts of the same type are *Textus Roffensis* and *Quadripartitus*.⁸³ *RSP* and *Gerefa* are located in quire seven⁸⁴ of MS 383, which contains, in order: II Æthelred, *Dunsæte*, *RSP*, *Gerefa*, St Paul's "Shipmen" list and truncated West Saxon genealogical regnal list.⁸⁵ *RSP* and *Gerefa* followed *Dunsæte* in MS 383; interestingly Wormald notes that *Dunsæte*, a local peace treaty centered on the area around the river Wye, dealt with an area close to Bath's manor at Tidenham.⁸⁶ *RSP* was likely composed in the mid-tenth century and appears to have been intended as a practical guide for matters relating to estate management from the perspective of the reeve; accordingly, Paul Harvey suggests that it was written with a specific estate in mind.⁸⁷ The estates of St Peter's Abbey, Bath seem most likely.⁸⁸ This is noteworthy because *RSP*'s stipulations for governing an estate are similar to those set out for Tidenham, which, as noted, is in proximity to the area dealt with in *Dunsæte*.⁸⁹ A detail of particular interest is the apparent connection between *RSP* and the Old English estate survey concerning Tidenham in Gloucestershire, noted by Harvey, Liebermann and others.⁹⁰ One of the highlighted details that suggests this

⁸¹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, 110.

However, it is important to note that *RSP* also survives in Latin in *Quadripartitus* (Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 388).

⁸² Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 233.

⁸³ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 232, 235.

⁸⁴ Furthermore, Wormald contends that there are at least three lost quires (*The Making of English Law*, 229 – 230).

⁸⁵ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 229 – 230.

⁸⁶ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 382, 388.

⁸⁷ PDA Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," in *The English Historical Review* CCCCXXVI (1993): 19.

⁸⁸ Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," 19, 21 and Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

⁸⁹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 388.

⁹⁰ Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," 20.

For the text of the Tidenham survey, see: Douglas and Greenaway, eds., *English Historical Documents, Volume II: 1042 – 1189*, no. 174, 879 – 880. See also Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. CIX.

connection is the appearance in both of the following stipulation in regard to the *geneat*: he is to “ridan 7 auerian 7 lade lædan.”⁹¹ Thomas Gobbitt contends that the more general aspects of *RSP*’s text are a result of its eleventh-century editing.⁹² It is important to bear in mind that *RSP* as we now have it is the product of several revisions; it has been suggested that the text was reworked in some manner, along with *Gerefa*, its companion in MS 383, four times.⁹³ The text of *Gerefa* lays out the work of the reeve administering an estate, discussing what duties were to be undertaken at what times of year, as well as lists of equipment and tools.⁹⁴

It is generally accepted that *Gerefa* filled a gap in the text of *RSP* and was deliberately appended to the former in the late eleventh century, though Harvey argues that the two documents had different origins, and that they were edited simultaneously in order to work together.⁹⁵ It has been suggested by Dorothy Bethurum that Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, was the editor of these two texts.⁹⁶ This has largely been refuted due to differences in “tone, vocabulary and message” between *RSP*, *Gerefa* and the works firmly attributed to the archbishop.⁹⁷ It has instead been postulated, noting similarities between *RSP* and *Gerefa* with Wulfstan’s *Gepyncðu*, that the two texts may have been edited by someone in Wulfstan’s circle.⁹⁸ Following this, Liebermann, who was the first scholar to highlight the existence of *Gerefa*,⁹⁹ combined the two texts as a single unit in his

⁹¹ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 20.

⁹² Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

⁹³ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 4 – 7 and Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

⁹⁴ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 3 and Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30 – 33.

⁹⁵ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 7, 8. Also Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century. Volume I: Legislation and its Limits*, 388. See also: Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

⁹⁶ Dorothy Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 46. See also: Dorothy Bethurum, “Episcopal Magnificence in the Eleventh Century,” in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. SB Greenfield (Oregon: University of Oregon Books, 1963), 162 – 170.

⁹⁷ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 388.

⁹⁸ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 388. See also: Williams, “Lost Worlds: Kentish society in the eleventh century,” 72.

⁹⁹ Liebermann, ed., trans. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 453 – 455.

third edition of *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, believing them to have originally been intended as such.¹⁰⁰ Despite the fact that the texts were likely edited together in the eleventh century, they are of a very different type. *RSP* is a practical guide, whereas *Gerefa* is a literary work.¹⁰¹

RSP and *Gerefa* are two of a small group of extant texts on Anglo-Saxon estate management, and are also the only two of these texts which concern the estate reeve, and as such, are vital to the attempt to understand more about the estate reeve and his role. Harvey contends that the *Gerefa* text was not conceived or composed as a guide to a reeve or to the owner of an estate – *Gerefa* is not comprehensive enough to have acted as a template for an estate manager.¹⁰² However, it has been established that *RSP* was indeed intended as a guide to an estate manager—likely a reeve—and is thus an important resource on the reeve as an estate official.¹⁰³ *Gerefa* should instead be viewed as an exercise in prose composition; it has been suggested that it had as a model a Classical Latin treatise on agriculture.¹⁰⁴ Based upon an analysis of its contents, Harvey argues for the influence of the work of Cato or Columella as being the most likely.¹⁰⁵ In summary, Harvey contends that *Gerefa* was initially composed in Old English in the late tenth or early eleventh century as a literary exercise, and unquestionably *not* intended as a practical guide.¹⁰⁶ Despite their inclusion in a manuscript compendium of legal texts, neither *RSP* nor *Gerefa* is a legal work; *RSP* was a tract on estate management and Wormald classifies *Gerefa* as “a work in the genre of ‘estates literature’ rather than estate management.”¹⁰⁷ Instead, it will be argued that *Gerefa* was a moralizing text intended as a reminder of how a good reeve

¹⁰⁰ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk. Gobbitt notes that in the first edition of *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, Liebermann edited the two texts separately, but had revised his opinion when working on his third edition of *Die Gesetze*.

¹⁰¹ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹⁰² Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 8.

¹⁰³ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹⁰⁴ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 9.

¹⁰⁵ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 9 – 10.

¹⁰⁶ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 12.

¹⁰⁷ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 388.

should act. A text of this type should not be surprising in the climate of increased agricultural exploitation and production of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

RSP discusses the roles and obligations of individuals from four different social strata on the estate: the thegn,¹⁰⁸ the *geneat* (tenant), the *kotesettlar* (cottager) and the *gebur* (peasant).¹⁰⁹ Both Gobbitt and Harvey note the sensible ordering of this group – from least amount of obligations on the estate to the heaviest.¹¹⁰ This is followed by discussion of tenant beekeepers, tenant and bound swineherds, bound women and men and finally, eleven specific estate occupations, such as the ploughman.¹¹¹ What is currently of interest is how this text relates to the reeve, and what it can tell us about him and his role.

One of the most prominent aspects throughout *RSP* is its repeated references to the taxes and tithes that the reeve must collect. Taxes and tithes, to be paid to the lord and the church, respectively, are noted repeatedly throughout the text, sometimes specifically: “sylle his heorð pænig onhalgan ðunres dæg eal swa ælcan frigean men gebyreð...”¹¹² This is also at times denoted rather vaguely: “onsumon he sceal land gafol syllan...”¹¹³ The incorporation of the specific taxes and tithes to be paid by those on the estate in this administrative document suggests that it was the reeve who was responsible for collecting them, both for the lord and the church.¹¹⁴ Also the law codes have *tungerefan* both collecting and witnessing the collection of tithes:

¹⁰⁸ Gobbitt specifies that this was not a king’s thegn, but a thegn who held his land as (presumably) a lease from the greater lord who owned the larger overall estate.

¹⁰⁹ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation and commentary).

¹¹⁰ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” 12 and Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹¹¹ Harvey tentatively suggests that *folgere* or “follower” indicates “ploughman” (pp 14 – 15); Gobbitt seems a little more secure in this identification. The identification of “ploughman” makes sense also in light of the fact that the ploughman was a prominent agricultural figure of the period in Ælfric’s *Colloquy* (GN Garmonsway, *Ælfric’s Colloquy* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1939), 20). See page 189 below for a more detailed consideration.

¹¹² Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation). “He pays his hearth-penny on Holy Thursday just as befits each free man...”

¹¹³ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation). “In some he must pay land tax...”

¹¹⁴ See also Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

VII Æthelred 2 §5: Et sciat omnis presbiter et tungraius et decimales homines, ut hec elemosina et ieunium proueniat, sicut in sanctis iurare poterunt.¹¹⁵

and

VII Æthelred 2 §3: 7 bringe man þæt to cirican 7 siððan on þreo dæle be scriftes 7 be tunesgeretan gewitnesse.¹¹⁶

It is possible that these tenth- and eleventh-century village reeves collecting tithes were in fact estate reeves, working for the lords who owned the villages (i.e. villages housing the dependents attached to their estates), and that the law codes were attempting to regulate or control their collection of church funds. This proposal gains merit in view of the clauses VIII Æthelred 8 and I Cnut 8 §2, which both stipulate that the “reeve of the lord of the manor” (gerefa...þæs landrican) enforce church tithes, along with the king’s reeve and the priest of the church or the bishop’s reeve.¹¹⁷ Although these clauses derive from Wulfstan law codes, a reference to reeves ensuring payments of church dues can also be seen in the earlier laws of Æthelstan: “7 ic wille eac, þæt mine gerefan gedon, þæt man agyfe þa ciricsceattas 7 þa sawlsceattas to þam stowum þe hit mid rihte togebyrige...”¹¹⁸ However, it has been shown that in the tenth and eleventh centuries, there were a growing number of lordly churches founded on

¹¹⁵ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 261.

“And every priest and the reeve of every village and the heads of the tithings shall be witnesses that this alms-giving and fasting is carried out, and shall be able to swear to it on the holy relics.” Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 111.

¹¹⁶ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 262.

“And it [from every hide a penny or the value of a penny shall be given as dues] shall be brought to the church and afterwards divided in three in the presence of the confessor and the reeve of the village as witnesses.” Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 115.

¹¹⁷ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 265 and 292. See also: Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 120 and 164.

However, it is important to bear in mind that both of these law codes were drafted by Archbishop Wulfstan, and therefore would have had the interests and welfare of the church as one of the priorities.

¹¹⁸ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 146 (I Æthelstan 4).

“And I further desire that my reeves see to it that church dues and payments for the souls of the dead are rendered at the places to which they are legally due...” Attenborough, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 125.

aristocratic estates. In fact, these lordly churches had grown in such abundance that Williams notes the occasion of an eleventh-century English bishop remarking on proliferation of churches to the pope in Rome.¹¹⁹ Although the building of these thegnly churches must have occasioned consternation and anxiety amongst the minsters due to diversion of tithes, Williams contends that this lordly activity was not all negative.¹²⁰ Citing Earl Godwine's refoundation of the minster at Dover, she suggests that sometimes aristocrats refurbished and gave new life to churches previously in ruins.¹²¹ These new churches would have complicated the collection and distribution of ecclesiastical tithes, since now a thegn could in theory divert some of the tithes collected from his estate back to his church.¹²² Concerns surrounding this issue may be reflected in II Edgar 2, which details how tithes should be handled, with regard to thegnly churches:

Gif hwa þonne ðegna sý, ðe on his bócland cyrican habbe, þe legerstow on sy, gesylle he þridan dæl his agenre teoðunge into his cirican.

§1. Gif hwa cyrican habbe, þe legerstow on ne sie, ðonne do he of þam nigan dælum his preoste þæt þæt he wille.¹²³

This clause, while it does articulate that a thegn could retain a percentage of his tithes for his own church, does outline specifications governing (in theory) when this was allowable. The thegn's church had to be built on his bookland, and needed to have a graveyard in order to qualify for the "third part" of the tithes. It is possible that these rulings were intended to ensure that the tithes were

¹¹⁹ Ann Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the late Old English Kingdom," in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIV*, ed. John Gillingham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 7.

¹²⁰ Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the late Old English Kingdom," 8.

¹²¹ Williams, "Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the late Old English Kingdom," 8.

¹²² Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 99.

¹²³ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 196.

"2. If, however, there is a thegn who, on the land which he holds by title-deed, has a church to which is attached a graveyard, he shall pay the third part of his own tithes to his church.

2. §1. If anyone has a church to which there is no graveyard attached, he shall pay what he will to his priest out of the next tenth part." Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 21.

Williams touches upon this issue with regard to Edgar's law code, arguing that the increasing numbers of thegnly churches in the late Anglo-Saxon period occasioned royal legislation on the matter: *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 99.

funding legitimate ecclesiastical foundations, rather than simply lining the lord's pockets. Indeed, Blair notes that the tenth and eleventh centuries saw an increase in royal legislation on church tithes and dues.¹²⁴ In particular, Blair highlights Edgar's contribution to this legislation, with law codes attempting to assert minsters' rights.¹²⁵ Blair suggests that the allowance of small estate churches with graveyards to have the third part of the tithes was permitted as a result of not only Carolingian precedents, but also "new public needs" that arose in the late Anglo-Saxon period.¹²⁶ It seems likely that Edgar's legislation on church dues reflects an increase in the number of thegnly churches in this period.¹²⁷ Church dues are mentioned in the Tidenham and Hurstborne Priors estate surveys, though since these were likely ecclesiastical properties, Blair contends that their tithes officially would have been owed to the local minsters, but may in fact have been treated like estate dues by their administrators.¹²⁸ Furthermore, it seems likely that in the case of founding churches, thegns may have also been looking to further establish their power and influence in their local area; Blair cites the possibility of lords tapping into "sources of traditional power."¹²⁹

Additionally, it is interesting that throughout *RSP* is the reminder that taxes, dues and customs could vary between estates. For example: 5. "ðeos land lagu stænt onsuman lande . ge hwar hit is swa ic ær cwæð hefigre ge hwar ea leohdre . for ðam ealle landsida ne syn gelice."¹³⁰ This stipulation may, of course, be a result of one of the four revisions the text underwent since its inception, in

¹²⁴ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 440 – 441.

¹²⁵ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 442 – 443.

¹²⁶ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 443.

¹²⁷ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 385.

¹²⁸ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 446. Additionally, for the text of the estate surveys, see: Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos. CIX and CX, 204 – 207; and David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway, eds., *English Historical Documents II: 1042 – 1189* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), nos. 173 and 174, 879 – 881.

¹²⁹ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 382.

¹³⁰ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation). "This land-law stands on some estates, in some places it is, just as I said before, heavier, elsewhere, lighter, because not all estates are the same."

an effort to make the text more widely applicable.¹³¹ This clause, along with clause 21, serves to highlight the importance of estate dues and their proper collection.

Clause 21: Land Laga Syn mistlice. swa ic ær beforan sæde. ne sette wena ðas ge rihtu ofer ealle ðeoda . ðe we ær beforan ymbe spræcon ac we cyðað hwæt ðeaw is ðær ðær us cuð is gyf we selre ge leorniað þæt we willað georne lufian 7healdon be ðære ðede ðeawe ðewe ðænne onwuniað . for ðam . laga sceal onleode luflice leornian . lof seðe on lande sylf nele leofan .¹³²

This concern over the exaction of correct dues is in step with the economic climate of increased agrarian production in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Landowners would have wanted to intensify resource extraction from their holdings, and rendering and collection of proper dues would have been a key element in this. This was yet another reiteration that the reeve must be aware of the estate customs, but it also specifies that these customs were subject to change if “better” alternatives came to light. This may allude to the landlord’s expectation that the reeve was always on the lookout for opportunities to better the management – and therefore, productivity – of his lord’s estate. This suggestion gains ground in light of clause 22.b of *Gerefa*: “He sceal snotorlice smeagean 7 geor|ne ðurhsmugan ealle ða ðing ðehlaforde magan to ræde.”¹³³ This clause firmly places the reeve in the role of advocate for the lord and indicates that the reeve was expected to continually be working towards the lord’s best interests, and maintaining (and perhaps increasing?) the estate’s profits and productivity.

¹³¹ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” 8 – 22 and Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹³² Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation). “The laws of the land are different, just as I said before, [and] we should not set these customs, which we spoke about before, over all lands; but we describe what is custom where [it] is known to us, if we learn that better [customs] then we will eagerly adopt these, the custom of the land in which we then dwell, because the law must be willingly learned from the people if one does not wish to lose one’s honour in the land.”

¹³³ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation). “He must wisely consider and eagerly think through all the things which may be of help to his lord.”

Of course, one of the primary elements of *RSP* is its specific laying out of dues to be rendered by various members of the estate. This seems particularly significant against the economic backdrop of increased agricultural exploitation. Lords were pushing their lands and the peasants on them harder and for more returns than ever before. It should therefore not be surprising that this change coincided with a rise in the production of agricultural tracts and treatises. Ross Balzaretto has shown, in the case of ecclesiastical holdings in ninth- and tenth-century Italy, that the church sought to use the written word in order to gain greater control over peasants who previously had had significantly lighter burdens.¹³⁴ Although Balzaretto's work reflects the situation in contemporary Italy, the production of texts such as *RSP* and other estate memoranda give the impression of similar activity occurring in late Anglo-Saxon England. Here, the text was utilized as a means of establishing legitimacy; Balzaretto argues that the peasants were well aware of the importance of "written records of customs."¹³⁵ Accordingly, it was the use of these written statements of dues and customs that allowed Sant' Ambrogio to repeatedly win dispute settlements against the peasants, despite the monastery's imposition of greater labor and renders upon its peasantry than those required in the past.¹³⁶ Balzaretto emphasizes Sant' Ambrogio's desire to clearly stipulate in writing the service, obligations and renders due from its peasants.¹³⁷ He also argues that (in some cases) the wording of these texts was intended "to humiliate" the peasants, such as by forcing them to engage in "ritual prostration" before the abbot, or to submit to the tonsure.¹³⁸ Although we do not see exactly the same precepts in Anglo-Saxon texts, the carefully laid out prescriptions and obligations may perhaps also have

¹³⁴ Ross Balzaretto, "The monastery of Sant' Ambrogio and dispute settlement in early medieval Milan," *Early Medieval Europe* vol. 3, issue 1 (1994): 15.

¹³⁵ Balzaretto, "The monastery of Sant' Ambrogio and dispute settlement in early medieval Milan," 17.

¹³⁶ Balzaretto, "The monastery of Sant' Ambrogio and dispute settlement in early medieval Milan," 7 – 11, 14 – 15.

¹³⁷ Balzaretto, "The monastery of Sant' Ambrogio and dispute settlement in early medieval Milan," 14.

¹³⁸ Balzaretto, "The monastery of Sant' Ambrogio and dispute settlement in early medieval Milan," 14.

been intended to reinforce peasants' social status. Wickham has established that even in Anglo-Saxon villages, the line between free and unfree was readily apparent, even in cases where the two groups worked side by side.¹³⁹ The Sant' Ambrogio evidence lends support to the impression that the need to intensify agricultural exploitation and production in tenth- and eleventh-century England spurred the creation of documents like *RSP* and estate surveys in order to cement the aristocracy's grip on the peasants (and accordingly, also their status), while at the same time pushing them for greater productivity than ever before. Another tenth-century document of interest is S 1368, a c. 964 letter from Oswald, bishop of Worcester to King Edgar, detailing the conditions on which he grants leases.¹⁴⁰ A sample of some of the duties required of Oswald's tenants is as follows:

Super hæc etiam ad omnis industriæ episcopi indigentiam semetipsos presto impendant equos prestant . ipsi equitent . et ad totum piraticum opus æcclesiæ calcis . atque ad pontis edificium . ultro inveniantur parati . Sed et venationis sepem domini episcopi ultronei ad edificandum repperiantur suaque quandocumque domino episcopo libuerit venabula destinent venatum .¹⁴¹

Although the obligations and duties set out in this text pertain to individuals of higher status than those discussed in *RSP* (or perhaps equivalent to the "thegn" discussed in *RSP*), S 1368 still reflects a similar tenth- and eleventh-century concern that the duties and obligations of tenants are clearly specified, and enshrined in writing, should they be contested. At the same time, the moralizing *Gerefa* text reminds the reeve that he must be aware of and properly adhere to the estate customs as the lord's advocate. *Gerefa's* focus on ensuring that the

¹³⁹ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400 – 800*, 430.

¹⁴⁰ For the Latin text, please see: *Regesta Regum Anglorum*: <http://ascharters.net/charters/1368>. For the translated text, please see: R. Allen Brown, *The Norman Conquest of England: Sources and Documents* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1984), no. 163, 134 – 135.

See also: Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900 – 1066*, 78 – 79.

¹⁴¹ *Regesta Regum Anglorum*, S1368: <http://ascharters.net/charters/1368>

"In addition, they shall hold themselves available to supply all the needs of the bishop, they shall lend horses, they shall ride themselves, and, moreover, be ready to build bridges and do all that is necessary in burning lime for the work of the church. They shall be prepared to make deer-hedges for the bishop's hunting, and they must send their own hunting spears to the chase whenever the lord bishop wishes." Brown, *The Norman Conquest of England: Sources and Documents*, no. 163, 134.

lord's rights were protected, rather than those subject to him, may be seen to fit in with tenth- and eleventh-century ecclesiastical interest in Classical texts, as well as concerns surrounding ecclesiastical properties at the time.¹⁴² This also accords with the late Anglo-Saxon need to get as much productivity from estates as possible, in order to maximize income.

The *Vita et miracula Sancti Kenelmi*, dating to 1066 x 1075, provides a late Anglo-Saxon example of a landlord wishing to maximize profits.¹⁴³ On stylistic grounds, Michael Lapidge attributes the *Life of Saint Kenelm* to Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, a prolific hagiographer working in England from ca. 1062 – ca. 1107.¹⁴⁴ Despite building a convincing case based on stylistic elements and Goscelin's known whereabouts and connections, Rosalind Love nevertheless seems hesitant to ascribe this *Life* to the hagiographer, though she contends that it is certainly very plausible.¹⁴⁵ Regardless, it seems fairly certain that the *Life* was composed sometime in the latter half of the eleventh century. The text details the martyrdom and legend of St Kenelm, who was said to be the ætheling son of King Coenwulf (d. 821).¹⁴⁶ Love contends that the *Life of Saint Kenelm* is primarily fiction, based on the fact that there is no mention of Kenelm in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and Kenelm would have been too young to have been the “Cynhelm *dux*” who attested charters from 803 – 811.¹⁴⁷ However, saints' lives often incorporate incidental facts, which may often yield a wealth of detail contemporary with the authorship of the text. The miracles described were to have taken place in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and indeed were composed roughly in the same period. Thus their content would have been contemporary with the period of the rise of small estates, intensified agricultural exploitation and increased

¹⁴² For example, many estates were lost to laymen, particularly during the early years of Æthelred's reign.

¹⁴³ Rosalind Love, ed., trans., *Three Eleventh-Century Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), lxxxviii – lxxxix.

¹⁴⁴ Lapidge, Crook, Dushman, and Rankin, *The Cult of St Swithun*, 614, 618.

¹⁴⁵ Love, ed., trans., *Three Eleventh-Century Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, xcvi – ci.

¹⁴⁶ Love, ed., trans., *Three Eleventh-Century Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, lxxxviii – lxxxix.

¹⁴⁷ Love, ed., trans., *Three Eleventh-Century Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, lxxxviii – lxxxix.

aristocratic consumption. The *Life of Saint Kenelm* offers an eleventh-century description of a landlord who was pushing her land and resources for more:

Ea tempestate iusserat ex more sacerdos in Peyletona festum beati Kenelmi intermissis operibus celebrari. Quod cum audisset eidem uille presidens matrona uti recumbebat ad prandium in ipso die festo, typo superbie refutauit, atque indignantia uerba in sanctum intorsit, nec quicquam operis intermitti tumido fastu imperauit. 'Pro Kenemlo', inquit, 'nescio quo fructum diei perderemus.'¹⁴⁸

This scene fits in well with our picture of the economic climate in late Anglo-Saxon England, and indeed it is likely that this example reflects particular real or historical instances in which peasants were pushed beyond traditional arrangements. As has been shown, increased pressure on the land created by the proliferation of small estates caused landlords to adjust the management methods of their estates, in order to maximize their production and create surplus to support an aristocratic lifestyle. The desire to intensify exploitation coincides with the need to codify dues and obligations in writing – such as the case with *RSP* – particularly in view of peasant objections to heavier loads. This extract from the *Life of Saint Kenelm* shows that landlords may at times have been willing to ignore ancient and established customs, if it meant increasing profits. The landlord in this particular episode, the *matrona*, did not get away with her attempt to flout the customs of a saint's day – her eyes fell out – but the inclusion of this event as a miracle story in late Anglo-Saxon prose likely indicates that this type of estate administration, for the benefit of the lord, was not entirely

¹⁴⁸ Love, ed., trans., *Three Eleventh-Century Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, 76.

"At that time the priest in Pailton, as was the custom, directed that the feast of St Kenelm should be celebrated by a break from work. When the lady who presided over that village heard this, as she reclined at dinner on that very feast-day, she refuted it with arrogant pride, hurled impatient words at the saint, and commanded with haughty contempt that no work should be interrupted. 'Just because of Kenelm', she said, 'I don't know why we should lose a day's profit.'" *Ibid*, 77.

uncommon.¹⁴⁹ This may further clarify the point of *Gerefa* as a moralizing reminder for the reeve to be attentive to all matters that may benefit his lord.

The need to record these dues and obligations in writing was also increased by occurrences of complaints from peasants, such as, for example, those about the heavier burdens being placed upon them. This can be readily seen in Balzaretti's case study of some estates of Sant' Ambrogio. However, it is also possible to glimpse dissatisfaction from the Anglo-Saxon peasants as well. S 1215 is a charter of Canterbury, Christ Church, dating to 968.¹⁵⁰ This charter details the exchange from Æthelflæd to Ælfwold of a swine-pasture at Heronden in Tenterden, Kent for 1450 pence. There are a few noteworthy elements about what would seem to be an ordinary grant. Firstly, the witness-list includes not only King Edgar and Dunstan, the archbishop of Canterbury, but also nine *rustici*, or peasants, and three reeves, one of whom was designated *portgerefa*. This list, with its inclusion of important individuals such as the king, the archbishop, the brotherhood of Christ Church and the brotherhood of St Augustine and a port reeve (presumably that of Canterbury),¹⁵¹ may be an indication that this charter was witnessed at a meeting of the Kentish shire court, which in turn may suggest that the peasants had travelled there to witness the agreement. However, no meeting location is indicated in the text of the charter. Kennedy highlights the importance of regional courts and the frequency of their appearance in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*.¹⁵² In addition to shire courts, important business could be conducted at meetings of eight hundreds, and Kennedy contends that "joint meetings of shire and borough or hundred(s) and borough" were not

¹⁴⁹ St Kenelm's feast day is cited by Lapidge as being on July 17th (*The Cult of St Swithun*, 712). According to the calendar MSS and *Gerefa*, this would have been the time of year for mowing, harrowing and spreading manure, all tasks that would have a direct effect on the autumn harvest.

¹⁵⁰ For the Latin text, please see: *Regesta Regum Anglorum*: <http://ascharters.net/charters/1215>. For the translation of S1215 please see: Gordon Ward, "Saxon Records of Tenterden", *Archaeologia Cantiana* 49 (1937), 229 – 240.

¹⁵¹ Though it should be noted that according to *The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, the name "Hloðewig" does not occur elsewhere ("Hlothewig 1", *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk>, accessed 27 March 2012).

¹⁵² Alan Kennedy, "Law and litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (2007): 137 – 141.

unusual.¹⁵³ It is also possible that local judicial meetings could be convened on an “as-needed” basis within the localities.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, in light of the absence of this detail from S 1215, it is possible only to hazard a guess as to the location of this particular meeting.

It is also an intriguing possibility that the other two reeves listed amongst the witnesses may have been the estate reeves who managed the work of these peasants; though, without further evidence, it must remain only a possibility. Tenterden lies 25 miles away from Canterbury, and if indeed this exchange took place in Canterbury, then it likely would have taken the peasants the better part of a day to journey to the shire court meeting, particularly if they travelled on foot. This represents a significant investment of time and therefore suggests that this matter was believed to be important. A further noteworthy element of this charter lies in the text itself. Ælfwold, the purchaser of the land, gave to Eadwold – one of the peasants on the witness list – and his sons 100 pence in order that the sale of the land remain undisputed: “7 Ælfwold gesealde Eadwolde 7 his sunum . c . panæga anuppan all ðis oðer wiððan ðe hit hiora unna wære butan ælcra anwæendednesse.”¹⁵⁵ This suggests that the peasants had contested the original ownership of the land by Æthelflæd, and that this charter reflects their pursuing the matter to the court. Wickham discusses the existence of a “headman” amongst the peasants in Anglo-Saxon villages and settlements, who, among other roles, would have been responsible for leading the men of the village to the local assemblies, and perhaps stand as surety for them as well.¹⁵⁶ It may be that Eadwold was the headman of the peasants at Tenterden, and it was therefore his responsibility to attend court meetings in the event of disputes. Although the peasants may not have been entirely effective in their dispute (though due to the nature of the charter text, this is a detail we will never know), they did at least

¹⁵³ Kennedy, “Law and litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*,” 141.

¹⁵⁴ Kennedy, “Law and litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*,” 141.

¹⁵⁵ *Regesta Regum Anglorum*: <http://ascharters.net/charters/1215>.

“...and Ælfwold has given Eadwold and his sons 100 pence in addition to all this other provided that their gift (i.e. the conveyance to Ælfwold) remains undisputed.” (Ward, “Saxon Records of Tenterden”, 230).

¹⁵⁶ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400 – 800*, 431.

succeed in some monetary remuneration. This text also throws light on the very real possibility that the shire reeves, as administrators in the localities, would have been expected to have a knowledge of local estate customs, in order to adjudicate over disputes.

Clause 5.c of *RSP* states that: “hede seðe scire healde þæt he wite a hwæt eald land rædensy . 7hwæt eald land rædensy 7hwæt ðeode ðeaw.”¹⁵⁷ It is more than likely that this was a revision addition made when *RSP* and *Gerefa* were compiled together, since Gobbitt notes that this phrase is exactly repeated in clause 22.a of the *Gerefa* text.¹⁵⁸ What is of interest here is that this line was included in *RSP* and *Gerefa* at all; it seems to make a connection between the estate reeve and the more “publically” active administrator of the shires. As seen above in the case study of Sant’ Ambrogio, the extract from the *Life of Saint Kenelm*, and in S 1215, issues and disputes regarding land and the obligations and dues of those who worked on it, could and indeed did arise. As shown in S 1215 and the Sant’ Ambrogio evidence, these disputes could end up in local courts, wherein the presiding reeve would need to understand the estate customs in order to adjudicate. *RSP* and *Gerefa* were initially conceived independently, and these lines concerning “he who would hold a shire” have reasonably confidently been attributed to the revision that brought them together. Perhaps the compiler understood that shire reeves, by the nature of their administrative role, would have needed to be aware of local customs, and so sought to underline this point. Additionally, the law codes may prove instructive here. III Æthelstan deals with surety:

7. Septimum: ut omnis homo teneat homines suos in fideiussione sua contra omne furtum.

7 §1. Si tunc sit aliquis qui tot homines habeat, quod non sufficiat omnes custodire, preponat sibi singulis uillis prepositum unum [talem prepositum] qui credibilis ei sit et qui concredat hominibus.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition, translation). “He that would hold a shire should heed that he know what the old estate customs and what the customs of the region are.”

¹⁵⁸ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹⁵⁹ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 170.

This clause indicates the possibility that estate reeves were also responsible for the surety (which was a legal matter, and essentially guaranteed an individual's good behavior) of the dependents on the estate. This would clarify the links made between the two types of reeve in *RSP* and *Gerefa*.

There are several other elements of interest in *RSP*. Gobbitt observes that one of the duties of the thegn was to "levy a company," as part of his responsibility to the king.¹⁶⁰ Gobbitt suggests that it was in fact the reeve to whom fell the actual role of mustering the men from the estate, since he would have been the most disposed to knowing who could and could not be spared from his work at various times of the year.¹⁶¹ The estate reeves would then perhaps have had to "liaise" with shire reeves, regarding which men could be spared from the estate. Of course, the reeves mentioned as leading men into battle in the *Chronicle* were royal reeves, and the sources seem to be silent regarding the role, if any, of the estate reeve in this capacity. It may be suggested, since Kola and Eadsige fought "with what army they could gather,"¹⁶² that they were leading mustered men from the surrounding countryside, and thus perhaps among those were men levied from estates by the reeves. The shire reeve may also have come into contact with the estate reeve in the instances of disputes. As has already been shown, the tenth and eleventh centuries brought about intensified exploitation of the land and its resources, alongside the increased production of treatises on estate management. It seems plausible, from the examples of Sant' Ambrogio and S 1215, that peasants could, and did, dispute the increased burdens.

RSP is a rich and fascinating text. Not only is it one of the few surviving estate memoranda from late Anglo-Saxon England, but it is also one of a few

"7. Seventhly, every man shall stand surety for his own men against every [charge of] crime. 7 §1. If, however, there is anyone who has so many men, that he is not able to control them, he shall place each estate in charge of a reeve, whom he can trust, and who will trust the men" (Attenborough, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 145).

¹⁶⁰ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹⁶¹ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹⁶² Whitelock, ed., trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 85.

documents to shed some light on the reeve in his role as an estate administrator. The results of its analysis are revealing and tie into other evidence surviving for the reeve, enabling us to develop more of a picture of his role. The estate reeve emerges here as the official in charge of collecting taxes and tithes owed by the estate tenants and dependents to the lord and the church. It has been shown that it is likely that the laws attempted to regulate this aspect of the estate reeve's duties, where they pertained to the rights and privileges of the church.

A close analysis of *RSP* sheds some light on the reeve's responsibilities on the estate. The text is replete with clauses detailing specific obligations, work and renders due from the workers of the estate. For example, on some estates, the tenant (*geneat*) is required, among other things, to pay land tax and a pasturage pig yearly: "onsumon he sceal land gafol syllan 7 gærs swyn . ongear..."¹⁶³ However, the peasant (*gebur*) bore significantly heavier burdens, among which were ploughing for the lord and feeding the lord's hunting dogs:

7of ðam timan ðe man ærest ereð oð mar|tinus
mæssan he sceal ælcra wucan erian . i. æcer . 7ræpan
self þæt sæd on hlafordes berne . to eacanðam .iii.
æcras to bene . 7ii . to gærs yrðe . gyf he mawan
gærses be ðyrfe ðonne earnige ðæs swa him man ða
fige . his gauol yrðe .iii. æceras erige ysawe of his
aganum berne . 7sulle his heorð pænig . tewgen 7
twegen fedan ænne heador hund . 7ælc gebur sylle .vi.
hlafas ðam inswa ðonnne he his heorde to mæstene
drife .¹⁶⁴

It is evident that the dues and work obligations specified for the workers on an estate could be manifold and detailed, and thus in order to ensure that these

¹⁶³ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

"In some [estates] he must pay land tax and a pasturage pig each year..." *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

"And from the time when one first ploughs to Martin's Mass he must plough one acre each week, and collect the seed himself from the lord's barn. In addition to that, [he must plough] three acres as compulsory service on demand and two [acres] pasturage-ploughing. If he needs more grass then he may earn it in such way as one allows him to. His plough-rent [is] to plough three acres and to sow [it with seed] from his own barn. And [he] pays his hearth-penny. As one of a pair [he must] feed a hunting dog. And each peasant pays six loaves to the lord's swineherd when he drives his drove [of pigs] to woodland-pasture." *Ibid.*

were carried out in a satisfactory manner, the lord would have required a reeve on the ground to act on his behalf. A selection from Ælfric's *Colloquy* concerning the work of the ploughman highlights that the lord was able to make his presence felt amongst the workers on his estate:

Eala, leof hlaford, þearle ic deorfe. Ic 3a ut on dæ3ræd þypende oxon to felda, 7 iu3ie hi3 to syl; nys hit spa stearc þinter þæt ic durre lutian æt ham for e3e hlafordes mines, ac 3eiukodan oxan, 7 3efæstnodon sceare 7 cultre mit þære syl, ælce dæ3 ic sceal erian fulne æcer oþþe mare.¹⁶⁵

The ploughman's anxiety that his lord views him as a hard worker is almost palpable in this extract. However, it is unlikely that the lord himself was physically out in the field with his workers at day break to monitor their progress. Instead it is probable, particularly in view of the details in *RSP* regarding ploughing, that the reeve would have been the one to oversee this activity on the estate. This extract from Ælfric's *Colloquy* can perhaps be viewed as a testament to the efficacy of the reeve's work. It is important to bear in mind that Ælfric's *Colloquy* was composed as a text to aid in the education of oblates in a monastic house.¹⁶⁶ This education took its form based upon the Classical Roman *artes liberales*.¹⁶⁷ Therefore in Ælfric's *Colloquy* we have a rather idealized text, and although it does likely provide much incidental insight into Anglo-Saxon life, it would also have presented an idealized view as to how estate workers should behave. Significantly, Michael Camille contends that the plough and the ploughman in medieval texts and art represented "feudal service performed by tenants", signifying productivity in an ordered society.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Garmonsway, *Ælfric's Colloquy*, 20.

"Oh, I work very hard, dear lord. I go out at daybreak driving the oxen to the field, and yoke them to the plough; for fear of my lord, there is no winter so severe that I dare hide at home; but the oxen, having been yoked and the share and coulter fastened to the plough, I must plough a full acre or more every day." (Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 169).

¹⁶⁶ Garmonsway, *Ælfric's Colloquy*, 12.

¹⁶⁷ Garmonsway, *Ælfric's Colloquy*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Camille, "'When Adam Delved': Laboring on the Land in English Medieval Art," in *Agriculture in the Middle Ages: Technology, Practice, and Representation*, ed. Del Sweeney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 257.

Historians are in general agreement that *RSP* was a directive or manual for an estate reeve, as the official on the ground amongst the workers. The reeve, as the lord's advocate and representative, would have been responsible for ensuring that the necessary dues were paid and requisite work was carried out. The reeve would have been the intermediary between the peasants and the lord, and would have collected both lordly and ecclesiastical dues. This ties in with *Gerefa's* moralizing reminder that the good reeve "...consider ... all the things which may be of help to his lord" (He sceal snotorlice smeagean 7geor|ne ðurhsmugan ealle ða ðing ðehlaforde magan to ræde .)¹⁶⁹ Not only would it have been important to the lord that the reeve ensure that work was done on the estate, but also that he collected the appropriate dues and did not skim any off the top to line his own pockets.

Further details from *RSP* emphasize the necessity of the reeve's presence and attention to detail. His presence on behalf of the lord would have been particularly important when it came to renders required from peasants as a percentage of what they raised or grew. In addition to supervising the work on the estate, the reeve would have also been responsible for collecting these renders. Many of the peasants who cared for and worked with the estate's many animals would have been entitled to renders of a percentage of the animals' produce or their offspring.¹⁷⁰ Percentages by nature are subjective to individual yearly totals, and those based upon animal productivity would certainly have varied. This too would have necessitated the reeve's day-to-day presence on the estate, in order to ensure that the lord received his rightful percentage of dues. For example, in the case of the tenant swineherd, this peasant owed fifteen pigs to the lord yearly, but could keep any that he raised over that amount: "manegum landum stent þæt he sylle ælce geara . xv . swynto sticunge . x. ealde . 7.v. gyngre .

¹⁶⁹ Gobbitt, "*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*," (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk. *Gerefa*, clause 22.b.

¹⁷⁰ For example, see *RSP* clauses 12 – 15 (Gobbitt, "*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*," (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk).

hæb|be sylf þæt he ofer þæt arære .”¹⁷¹ It would have fallen to the reeve to go and count the piglets from each litter to ensure that the lord was given his due, and that the swineherd did not keep any back for himself, perhaps by claiming that one had died. It can be seen that the reeve’s involvement with the animals of the estate continued; later Anglo-Norman estate management treatises such as *The Seneschaucy* (ca. 1260 – 1276) and *Husbandry* (c. 1300), detailed the work of the post-Conquest reeve.¹⁷² While Walter of Henley has been attributed authorship of *The Husbandry* dating to c. 1285, the texts of the *Seneschaucy* and the c. 1300 *Husbandry* remain anonymous.¹⁷³ However, it seems apparent that all of these texts were written for the use of estate administrators, an occupation that by the twelfth century was becoming something of a profession in its own right.¹⁷⁴

It is clear that the reeve had myriad duties in this later period as well, many of them involving the animals on the estate.¹⁷⁵ For example, clause 10 of *Husbandry* makes it plain that the reeve was held fully accountable for the productivity, care and health of the mares on the estate:

c. 10 Le provost deyt respundre del issue des jumentz de la curt, cest a saver de chescun jument un poleyn par an, e si ly seyt nule qe ne ayt poleyn seyt enquis, si ceo seyt par malveyse garde, ou par defaute de viande, ou par trop de travayl, ou par defaute de stalun, ou qe ele seyt baraygnye e

¹⁷¹ Gobbitt, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

“On many estates [the custom] stands that he gives each year fifteen pigs for slaughter, ten mature and five young. He has [for] himself [any] that he rears over that [amount].” *Ibid*.

¹⁷² Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 274 – 281 and 418 – 445.

¹⁷³ Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 88 – 89, 145 and 200.

¹⁷⁴ Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 3 – 9.

¹⁷⁵ Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 274 – 281 and 418 – 445. For example, the reeve was expected to monitor the care given to the estate’s animals; *Husbandry* specifies in clause 10 that the reeve was considered wholly responsible for the estate’s broodmares and their foaling. References to stud farms that start to appear in the wills (Linda Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press (Boydell and Brewer), 2011, 218 – 221, particularly at 220) in the late Anglo-Saxon period may point to their (growing?) importance in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

le provost la pout aver change e en tens pur un altre e ne fist
mye, si seyt il charge pleynement del issue ou de la value.¹⁷⁶

Care and maintenance of the broodmares and foals would have been a major responsibility, not the least because horses were costly and important animals, but also because feeding them was expensive. The thirteenth- and fourteenth-century equitum regis accounts specify in detail the feeding rations due to each type of horse (cart-horse, palfrey, destrier, broodmare, stallion, etc), depending on their age, size and the time of the year.¹⁷⁷ This is indicative of exacting attention to detail regarding the management of these animals. Returning to Anglo-Saxon England, the horse was not only a valued asset, but was also regarded as a status symbol.¹⁷⁸ Stud farms begin to appear in the late Anglo-Saxon wills and may be a testament to a growing interest in horse breeding and management on the eve of the Conquest.¹⁷⁹ The continued importance of the horse throughout the medieval and early modern periods is unquestionable, and thus it can be assumed that responsibility for their care was a weighty one.

Husbandry makes it plain that the Anglo-Norman reeve would have borne other duties on the estate as well, again primarily concerning animals. Some of these tasks included: accountability for the cows' production of calves, along with the manor bailiff, the task of ensuring the welfare of all of the animals on the estate, the role of "disposing of" (the text appears to suggest selling) any animals

¹⁷⁶ Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 422. "The reeve ought to answer for the issue of the mares of the manor, that is to say for each mare one foal in the year. And if there is any mare which has no foal an inquiry ought to be made whether this is due to bad keeping or lack of food, too much work or through lack of a stallion, or whether the mare is barren and the reeve could have changed her – and in time – for another but did not do so. In these cases he ought to be charged fully for the foal or the value." *Ibid*, 423.

¹⁷⁷ Charles Gladitz, *Horse Breeding in the Medieval World* (Dublin and Portland: Four Courts Press, 1997), 152 – 154.

¹⁷⁸ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 220.

¹⁷⁹ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 219 – 220. See also Gladitz, *Horse Breeding in the Medieval World*, 141 – 143. An increased interest in horses and horse breeding in late Anglo-Saxon England seems even more likely against the backdrop of ever-increasing aristocratic consumption and display. It is likely that the many varieties and differentiations between grades and types of horses – from utilitarian cart horses to valuable palfreys and destriers – noted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was present, or at least developing, in the Anglo-Saxon period. Possession of fine horses must have been one of the ultimate expressions of status and wealth. This may also be signaled in the fact that heriot payments for those of high status often included riding horses, with or without tack.

that were no longer useful, the feeding of the horses and oxen, and overseeing all of the servants on the estate, among other duties.¹⁸⁰ Although these texts are a few centuries later than *RSP* and *Gerefa*, they may still be instructive regarding some of the specifics of the reeve's role, such as in animal husbandry. They certainly offer a similar impression of an extremely busy estate manager, with little free time. However, these treatises also give the unmistakable impression that the Anglo-Norman reeve was subordinate to the estate's bailiff, while the Anglo-Saxon evidence suggests that the reeve was the sole intermediary between the lord and the workers.

Finally, *RSP* details the expectation that the reeve would have been accountable for distributing any provisions or meals to the peasants, owed to them by the lord:

Onsumre ðeode ge byreð winter feorm . easter feorm .
bendform for ripe . gyt feorm for yrðe . mæð med
hreac mete . æt wudulade wæn treow . æt corn lade
hreac copp . 7fela ðinga ðe ic ge tellan ne mæig . ðis is
ðeah myn|gung manna bi wiste . 7eal þæt ic ær
beforan ymbe rehte.¹⁸¹

This particular duty does signal an effort on the part of the lord to provide rewards and returns to the peasants, though this was most likely associated with the desire to provide them with incentives to work hard. Thus it is clear from the details in *RSP* that the reeve's presence was a vital aspect in the daily administration and operation of the late Anglo-Saxon estate. The reeve's busy life as an overseer and manager of the daily activities and work on the estate is also evident in *Gerefa*. The necessity for the reeve's day-to-day presence is emphasized in David Hill's table (additionally reproduced in part in Fowler),

¹⁸⁰ Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 422, 438 and 440.

¹⁸¹ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk. *RSP* Clause 21.b.

"On some lands winter provisions are due, Easter provisions, a boon-meal for reaping, a ploughing-feast for ploughing, hayrick-meal [as] reward [for] cutting grass, for a load of wood one tree, for a load of corn the top of the hayrick, and many things which I may not tell, this [last] is nevertheless an admonition about watching over men, and all that I explained about before" (*Ibid*).

wherein the reeve's duties as listed in *Gerefa* are compared with the agricultural duties illustrated in the late Anglo-Saxon calendar manuscripts.¹⁸² The author of *Gerefa* states numerous times that it is essentially impossible to enumerate all of the good reeve's responsibilities: "Hit earfoðe eall to geseccanne þæt se beðen|can sceal ðe scire healt . ne sceolde he nan ðing ."¹⁸³

Despite its placement within the literary realm as a treatise or exercise in prose composition, *Gerefa* is our only contemporary text with a description of the role and duties of the estate reeve, and thus should be noted. *Gerefa* presents the reeve as the overall manager of all things pertaining to the running of an estate.¹⁸⁴ The text begins by emphasizing that it is vital that the reeve be aware of and observe both the rights of the lord and the people on the estate, according to the particular customs on that estate.¹⁸⁵ We are also told that the reeve was expected to be attentive to detail and that no matter concerning the estate was too minor for his attention; for example, the text stresses that even mousetraps merit a good reeve's time and attention.¹⁸⁶ *Gerefa* puts the reeve in a position of authority over the other workers on the estate (specifically he is referred to as a "governor of men"), backed by the authority of the lord:

Ne læte he næfre his hyrmen hyne oferwealdan, ac wille he ælcne mid hlaforðes crafte 7 mid folcrihte: selre him his æfre of folgoðe ðonne on, gyf hine magan wyldan ða ðe he scolde wealdan; ne bið hit hlaforde ræd, þæt he þæt ðafige.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 267 – 269 and Hill, "Eleventh century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures," 37. See also: Appendix I for D. Hill's reproduction drawings of the agricultural duties illustrated in MS Cotton Julius A. vi.

¹⁸³ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," (text and translation) www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk. Gerefa Clause 30.

"It is difficult to say everything that one who runs a shire must keep in mind; [but] he should not overlook anything which might ever be of significance, not even a mousetrap even though it be as insignificant as a fastening peg" (*Ibid*).

¹⁸⁴ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30 – 1.

¹⁸⁵ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30.

¹⁸⁶ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 31, 33. However, Harvey wonders if this was a lost literary reference, in addition to the remark about the hasp-peg. Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," 11.

¹⁸⁷ Liebermann, ed., trans. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 454.

"He should never allow his servants to over-rule him, but he is to command each one with the authority of the lord according to the rights of the people: it is better for him to be forever out of

Amongst some of the activities in which the reeve was supposed to be involved are: harrowing, shearing sheep, making repairs, reaping, woodcutting, preparing the estate for winter, plowing, threshing and planting.¹⁸⁸ The text explicitly states that the “good reeve” can always find a useful task with which to occupy his time.¹⁸⁹ The reeve is also to ensure that the estate is supplied with all necessary tools and equipment, and that those who work under him are supplied with the tools they require to do their jobs.¹⁹⁰

It is interesting that the *Gerefa* text does not provide for any leisure time for the estate reeve. Instead, it is repeatedly emphasized that the good reeve should always be occupied with the management of the estate, and that he should take care to be faithful to his lord and aware of his rights, as well as a fair and effective manager of those working under him.¹⁹¹ It is possible that these stipulations regarding rights, faithfulness and effective management might have been specific additions during the eleventh-century editing of the text. If so, they would fit in well with the cultural and economic trends of the period. Bethurum has suggested that Wulfstan might have been this editor, and if so, these intrusions are consistent with his views on a moral and properly ordered society.¹⁹² Furthermore, in his *Institutes of Polity*, Wulfstan has a section concerning the reeve.¹⁹³ Here Wulfstan expresses his concern that reeves work hard to “provide for their lords aright”.¹⁹⁴ He also details several failings of reeves, referring to them as robbers and also to their taking advantage of poor or

office than in, if those whom he should govern can govern him; it is not prudent for a lord to allow that.” Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 31.

¹⁸⁸ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 31 – 32.

¹⁸⁹ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 31, 32.

¹⁹⁰ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 32.

¹⁹¹ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30, 31, 33.

¹⁹² Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 46. See also: Bethurum, “Episcopal Magnificence in the Eleventh Century,” 162 – 170. And: Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*,” 6 – 7. This idea of Wulfstan and his views on a moral and properly ordered society will be addressed in full detail below in Chapter Four.

¹⁹³ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 193.

¹⁹⁴ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 193.

defenseless men, as well as their unjust abuse of the laws.¹⁹⁵ It is clear that Wulfstan felt strongly about the behavior of reeves, and in this vein, the texts of *Gerefa* and *Institutes of Polity* appear to complement each other. However, as noted by Gobbitt, with regards to reeves, Wulfstan primarily seemed concerned with rapacious or corrupt reeves and the ill effects of this on the people.¹⁹⁶ So although Wulfstan was very much interested in status and the ideals of an ordered society, it is unlikely that he was the eleventh-century editor of *Gerefa*. Perhaps, as has been mentioned, the text was edited by someone in his circle, or someone who had been trained by Wulfstan.

What, then, if anything, can we learn about the late Anglo-Saxon estate reeve from this text? It is of course possible that some of the activities and duties ascribed to the reeve in *Gerefa* may in fact have a basis in late Anglo-Saxon practice. As with the *Life of Saint Kenelm*, it has been shown that some literary works of the Anglo-Saxon period do sometimes shed some light upon aspects of life in Anglo-Saxon England, even when this was not the text's aim.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, Peter Fowler highlights some similarities and differences between tasks outlined in *Gerefa* and the duties specified for an estate in the illustrations of the eleventh-century BL Cotton, Julius A.VI and Tiberius B.V manuscripts.¹⁹⁸ Hill observes that these calendar illustrations are part of a long tradition of illustrating the months and agricultural labors, which stretches back to antiquity.¹⁹⁹ The calendar tradition becomes visible in Western Europe from around the ninth century, and gained great popularity by the twelfth century.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 193.

¹⁹⁶ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

¹⁹⁷ It is likely that these texts would have included detail recognizable to their late Anglo-Saxon audiences, which would have made the text easier to relate to. Some examples of this are: the Old English version of the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers* and the detail about life in late Anglo-Saxon towns that this narrative provides; additionally Ælfric's *Colloquy* employs recognizable characters, such as craftsman and farm workers.

¹⁹⁸ Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 266 – 269.

¹⁹⁹ David Hill, "Eleventh century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures," 34.

²⁰⁰ Bridget Ann Henisch, "In Due Season: Farm Work in the Medieval Calendar Tradition," in *Agriculture in the Middle Ages: Technology, Practice, and Representation*, ed. Del Sweeney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 310.

It has been shown that agricultural toil had Biblical overtones in the medieval period, and was often linked with Adam's fall.²⁰¹

Hill demonstrates that the Anglo-Saxon calendar illustrations are different from continental examples, citing not only differences in numbers of figures but also layout and design.²⁰² Fowler notes that the seasonal activities laid out in the MSS illustrations are roughly comparable with those outlined in the *Gerefa* text, with a few differences.²⁰³ The similarities between the calendar illustrations and *Gerefa* are displayed in a useful table drawn up by Hill, and he contends that these similarities strongly suggest that the illustrations' model was an Anglo-Saxon one.²⁰⁴ This is an important conclusion, because it points towards the likelihood that the activities represented therein – and in *Gerefa* – are a [relatively] realistic description of the agricultural activities that took place on a late Anglo-Saxon estate. For example, *Gerefa* fails to mention the responsibility of hay-making, indicated by the manuscript illustrations as a vital duty in June and July for any estate with livestock.²⁰⁵ The more striking discrepancy is perhaps that *Gerefa* does not provide for any relaxation or leisure time, whereas the manuscript illustrations suggest that two such opportunities presented themselves in the months of April and September.²⁰⁶ The failure of *Gerefa* to include this "leisure time" might simply be due to its composition as a literary exercise or perhaps possible homiletic influences from the eleventh-century editing. If *Gerefa* was indeed intended as a moralizing guide to the "ideal" estate reeve, the absence of provision for leisure time makes sense against the backdrop of the tenth- and eleventh-century climate of increased agricultural productivity. Of course *Gerefa*'s origin as a literary work as opposed to a practical guide means that most likely its author (and later, editors) would not have been concerned

²⁰¹ Henisch, "In Due Season: Farm Work in the Medieval Calendar Tradition," 310.

²⁰² Hill, "Eleventh century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures," 34.

²⁰³ Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 267.

²⁰⁴ Hill, "Eleventh century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures," 38.

²⁰⁵ Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 267.

²⁰⁶ Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror*, 267.

with careful accurate representation of the reeve's role. However, it is also possible that some incidental factual information might have been included, such as in the cases of the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers* and in *Ælfric's Colloquy*. Nevertheless, the contrast in how the two sources present the estate manager's time being spent may be indicative of the heavy and all-encompassing responsibilities an estate reeve might have borne.

Since *RSP* is considered to be a practical guide, whereas *Gerefa* is a literary work or treatise,²⁰⁷ and the two were edited with the aim to weld them together, might it be possible to surmise that some of the information *Gerefa* provides to fill in *RSP's* perceived gaps may indeed reflect some aspects of the reeve's work on an estate? It seems that *RSP* was concerned with ensuring that the reeve understood the duties, perquisites and dues concerning those who worked on the estate, in order that the reeve could be an effective manager. In light of this, one would expect that *Gerefa* would have enumerated any dues and perquisites concerning the reeve. The only hint at any kind of compensation (and a weak hint at that) is a clause in 22f., which states that the reeve should manage his lord's estate as he would his own, suggesting that the reeve might have had the opportunity to own (or lease) an estate.²⁰⁸ Instead, what we see is a seemingly endless list of duties and responsibilities, accompanied by equipment lists, which have been shown to be alliterative.²⁰⁹ Mark Gardiner highlights the similarity of *Gerefa* with texts of the "glossary" type, based on the grouping of words in its lists.²¹⁰ It is likely, as the calendar illustrations demonstrate, that the activities described as taking place on the estate are relatively accurate for late Anglo-Saxon England. Therefore we can assume that the author and very likely also the eleventh-century editor, possessed an awareness of estate management practices. It follows that he would have understood that *Gerefa* would have fallen far short

²⁰⁷ Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," 22.

²⁰⁸ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk (edition and translation).

²⁰⁹ Gobbitt, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk, and Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," 8 - 10.

²¹⁰ Mark Gardiner, "Implements and utensils in *Gerefa* and the organization of seigneurial farmsteads in the high middle ages," in *Medieval Archaeology* vol. 50 (2006): 263.

as a practical manual. Even the addition of *RSP* does not fill all the gaps to render the compiled work as a complete manual on estate administration – Harvey contends that it was likely taken as a “ready made” filler for *RSP* in the eleventh century, when the two were combined.²¹¹ Of course, *Gerefa*’s literary style also precludes its use as a practical guide. All of this points towards the conclusion that *Gerefa* was a moralizing treatise, primarily intended to promote ideal behavior in the estate reeve, detailing the ways in which he should endeavor to represent his lord’s best interests. The moralizing tone, coupled with the exaggerated representation of an official too busy for leisure time, emphasizes the point that the reeve could not go too far in working to serve his lord.

The reeve in late Anglo-Saxon wills

It is apparent that the late Anglo-Saxon reeve would have been a very busy individual, concerned not only with the collection of dues, tithes and renders, but also in ensuring the proper daily operation and efficiency of the estate. The reeve would thus have been spending the majority of his time on the ground on the lord’s estate, which would have thus required that he live nearby. The evidence from the Anglo-Saxon wills demonstrates that reeves could be rewarded with small estates of their own as compensation for their work on the lord’s estate. Sometimes they were leased this land during the lord’s lifetime. It will be shown that it is likely that this “reeveland” would have been situated within or near the larger lord’s estate administered by the reeve.

Late Anglo-Saxon wills are one of the primary sources for information on and details about the role of the reeve as an estate manager. These may provide insight on the relationship between the reeve and the landowner, the reeve’s status and place in the hierarchy of the estate upon which he worked, and the responsibilities the reeve bore to the estate and to his lord. The wills additionally

²¹¹ Harvey, “*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa*,” 12.

will prove particularly instructive regarding questions such as the manner in which the estate reeve was compensated for his work, as well as the reeve's importance to his employer. They may also be revealing regarding the sizes of the estates administered by reeves. However, before beginning a consideration of the wills and what they can tell us about the role of the estate reeve in the tenth and eleventh centuries, it is important first to gain an appreciation of wills as evidence and the context in which they were created.

The extant Anglo-Saxon wills all survive in the archives of religious foundations; Tollerton observes that aside from one exception, all extant Anglo-Saxon wills give property to the church.²¹² The importance of the will's oral nature is evidenced by the use of the vernacular in its composition, which would have allowed for increased accessibility and lay engagement with the content.²¹³ It is important to bear in mind that will-making was an oral act before witnesses and thus it is highly likely that the majority were never committed to writing.²¹⁴ Most likely, the surviving wills represent a small proportion of the total wills made.

Tollerton notes that although there are a few extant wills dating to the ninth century (nine), the bulk of the evidence survives from the period 924 x 1070.²¹⁵ She suggests that an untold number of wills may have been lost in damage incurred by viking raids, and she also notes the destruction of Christ Church Canterbury's archive in 798.²¹⁶ She contends that there is a link between the low numbers of wills before the tenth century, and paucity of land grant royal charters from the third quarter of the ninth century to the second quarter of the tenth century, highlighting that wills become more numerous from the reign of Æthelstan onwards, possibly spurred by Æthelstan's royal grants.²¹⁷ Finally, Tollerton argues that the increase in written wills in the ninth through the

²¹² Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 11, 54.

²¹³ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 – 24, 27 - 29.

²¹⁴ Marie-Françoise Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain* (Oxford, Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 118.

²¹⁵ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 13 – 15.

²¹⁶ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 12.

²¹⁷ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 15.

eleventh centuries bears a close connection with the contemporary religious reform taking place in late Anglo-Saxon England.²¹⁸

For the tenth and eleventh centuries, reeves appear in four wills of private individuals or laypeople, out of the 69 wills surviving from Anglo-Saxon England. Of these four wills, three of the testators are women, and one a man. All three of these women were widows, and Marie-Françoise Alamichel suggests that the man, Ketel, was a widower.²¹⁹ One of the three female wills, that of Æthelgifu includes reference to a reeve, but this individual was certainly not an estate reeve and was likely a royal reeve.²²⁰ Thus, the will of Æthelgifu will be considered elsewhere. The other two women and the man bequeathed land to reeves working on their estates. It is interesting and certainly noteworthy that of all the extant Anglo-Saxon wills, only three individuals bequeathed property to reeves, and that the majority of this small number were women. As noted, the tenth and eleventh centuries saw an increase in the production of wills, which Tollerton has linked to the renewal of royal land grants under the reign of King Æthelstan (924 – 939).²²¹ This period also coincides with the era of estate fragmentation, and the proliferation of smaller estates, which would have necessitated new methods of management, such as the employment of a reeve. Reeves became important in this milieu of rural production and it should not be surprising that this development was reflected in their appearances in laypeople's wills.

It is interesting that proportionally, more women made provision for their reeves. Alamichel suggests that some widows might have been living on one of their estates, and thus to some extent being personally involved in the administration of their properties, as opposed to living at court after the death of their husbands.²²² Alamichel contends, based on higher numbers of slave manumissions, that these women were perhaps more closely involved in the

²¹⁸ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 15 – 18.

²¹⁹ Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain*, 114, 118; and Julia Crick, ed., *Charters of St Albans: Anglo-Saxon Charters XII* (Oxford: published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2007), 91.

²²⁰ Crick, ed., *Charters of St Albans: Anglo-Saxon Charters XII*, 91 – 154.

²²¹ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 15.

²²² Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain*, 126.

daily running of their estates, and as a result might have had closer relationships with “ordinary people.”²²³ What is noteworthy here is that the two women who bequeathed land to their reeves, Leofgifu and Æthelflæd, were among those Alamichel places as perhaps living at court – and thus at a distance from their estates.²²⁴ Alternatively, Tollerton suggests the possibility that Æthelflæd was resident at Damerham after the death of King Edmund, due to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’s* reference to her as “Æthelflæd of Damerham”.²²⁵ Whether or not Æthelflæd lived on the estate at Damerham, the nature of the work in managing an estate – as outlined in *RSP* – in addition to her possession of multiple properties, easily necessitates her employment of a reeve. Thus it is possible that out of necessity, these women relied much more heavily upon the services of their reeves – as opposed to those who lived on their estates and thus might have had a hand in their administration – and accordingly, wished to reward their reeves.

These wills seem to only deal with one or two estate reeves, but most likely the donor retained the services of more than one reeve, since all three testators considered here owned more than one estate. The contention that owners of multiple estates would have retained more than one reeve can potentially be supported by the text of *Gerefa*. Although it is contended that *Gerefa* was a moralizing text designed to remind the reeve of his obligation to his lord, it also presents the reeve as busy at all times of the year, occupied with the concerns of effectively managing the estate.²²⁶ If indeed the reeve of an estate was truly so busy with its management and upkeep that he could not afford any leisure time, then this is a strong indication that owners of multiple estates would have had to engage the services of multiple reeves.

²²³ Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain* 127.

²²⁴ Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain*, 125 – 126.

²²⁵ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 94.

Tollerton notes the reversion of this estate to Glastonbury at Æthelflæd’s death, as well as a reference in King Alfred’s will to a religious foundation on the estate at Damerham (Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 94).

²²⁶ Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30 – 33.

As it has been shown, it is clear that these reeves were primarily estate reeves, retained by individual laypeople for the management of an estate. The manner in which the reeves appear and are referenced in these wills can provide much information regarding their role, position within the estate hierarchy, and also the manner in which they were compensated for their services.

S 1494 (962 x 991, Bury St Edmunds) is the will of a laywoman named Æthelflæd.²²⁷ Æthelflæd was a well-connected woman of wealth and status: she was the daughter of Ealdorman Ælfgar of Essex and was also the second wife of King Edmund, both of whom gave her land as bequests.²²⁸ Additionally, her sister Ælfflæd was married to Ealdorman Brihtnoth of Essex. Æthelflæd's will is mentioned in the *Liber Eliensis*, wherein she is referred to as the wife of Ealdorman Æthelstan (her second husband); there are two men of this name who attest in the early tenth century: Æthelstan "Half-King" of East Anglia, and another whose region of authority is not known.²²⁹ Whitelock states that it is likely that Æthelflæd's husband was the latter of the two, whom she also outlived, after which she remained a widow.²³⁰ Based on the information contained in her will, Æthelflæd held at least twenty-two properties spread across eight counties,²³¹ and also appears to have had some personal goods, such as four horses, gold and clothing, along with cups and bowls. The major beneficiaries in her will after the king²³² were the church,²³³ and Ealdorman Brihtnoth and his wife, Æthelflæd's sister, Ælfflæd.

Æthelflæd grants four hides to her reeve Ecgwine: "Ægwinæ minum gerefan."²³⁴ Whitelock in her note to S 1494 indicates that the reeve was in this

²²⁷ Dorothy Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1930), no. XIV, 34-37. Bury St Edmunds archive.

²²⁸ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 138-139.

²²⁹ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 138.

²³⁰ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 138.

²³¹ Estates were located in: Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Hampshire, Suffolk, Essex, Warwickshire and London.

²³² Since the will dates to 962 x 991, the king at this time would have been Edgar, Edward the Martyr or Æthelred II.

²³³ The specific foundations are: Glastonbury, Christchurch Canterbury, St Mary's at Barking, St Paul's, London, Ely, and Bury St Edmunds.

²³⁴ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 36.

case an estate manager.²³⁵ The reeve was granted four hides at a place called Hadham; it is clear, from a closer look at Æthelflæd's other bequests, that Hadham itself was a larger estate, since "the estate at Hadham" was granted to Ealdorman Brihtnoth and Ælfflæd for their lifetimes, with reversion to St Paul's in London. Æthelflæd makes no specifications regarding the reeve's terms of holding his portion of this property, but presumably it was at least for the duration of Ecgwine's lifetime. The separate bequests of this estate and four hides within it indicate that Ecgwine was probably the estate reeve at Hadham, compensated for his service with the use of the four hides within the estate, which he was ultimately awarded in Æthelflæd's will. The evidence from *RSP* and *Gerefa* paints the picture of an important official of middling rank who was very much involved in the daily operation of his lord's estate. Æthelflæd's will demonstrates a recognition of this by the lord, with the grant of a few hides within the larger estate the reeve administered. What is unknown here is whether the reversion to St Paul's, London specified after the lifetimes of Brihtnoth and Ælfflæd also applied to the land granted to the reeve; no provision has been issued to this effect in the will. It is also unclear as to whether Ecgwine was to work for the new owners of the estate, or just to hold the lands given to him. Æthelflæd's reference in her will to Ecgwine as "her reeve," but no reference to any other such individual may suggest that he was simply preeminent amongst her reeves and accordingly rewarded. The grant of four hides might have been an indicator that his services were highly valued.

The reeve's grant of land can be found towards the end of the will, amongst other bequests specified by numbers of hides. Due to their placement in the will, and the fact that numerous "estates" were given to Brihtnoth and Ælfflæd, this group of bequests seems to represent the lesser properties Æthelflæd owned. The allocation to the reeve is found within allocations to a group of servants. The number of hides granted to others in her will are specified

"Ecgwine my reeve," *Ibid*, 37.

²³⁵ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 141.

in relation to her kinsman (ten hides), her servant (two hides), two of her priests (two hides each) and another kinsman, Ælfgeat, who was granted two hides:

ic gean ðæra . x . hida æt Wicforda Sibrhite minum mægæ ofer minne dæg . 7 ic gean Ægwineæ minum geræfan. þara . IIII . hida æt Hedham. ofer miminne deg. *swa hit on æalddagum gestod*. 7 ic gæan Brihtwolde minum cnihtæ þara twegra hida. on Dunninglande ofer minnæ dæg. 7 ic an Alfwolde minum preoste twægra hida on Dunninglande ofer minne dæg. 7 ic gean Æþælmære minum præoste twægra hida on Dunninglandæ ofæ[r] minne dæg. 7 ic gæan Ælfgæate minum megæ. twegra hida on Dunninglande ofar minnæ dæg [my italics].²³⁶

The reeve's position rather high in this particular listing is suggestive that the reeve Ecgwine was a valued and important member of her staff, and occupied a chief position within the estate hierarchy. Ecgwine's appearance not only as a recipient in Æthelflæd's will, but at the top of the group of servants, receiving the greatest portion of land in the group, reflects the picture from *RSP* and *Gerefa* that the reeve was a vital and preeminent member of the staff of estate workers. The phrase "swa hit on æalddagum gestod" (as it was settled in former times) additionally flags up what was presumably a pre-existing arrangement, wherein Ecgwine occupied the four hides as "reeveland" in compensation for his work on the larger estate within which his lands lay. Finally, it is interesting to note that the reeve Ecgwine received *four* hides as his compensation. Recalling the precepts outlined in *Geþyncðu*, one of the requirements of thegnhood was five hides. Could this bequest of four have been the donor's attempt to reward her servant, but not so well as to permit him to rise up the ranks socially? This is perhaps impossible to know now, but it is certainly an intriguing notion, against

²³⁶ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 36.

"And I grant the ten hides at Wickford to my kinsman Sibrht after my death. And to my reeve Ecgwine I grant the four hides at Hadham after my death, *as it was settled in former times*. And I grant to my servant Brihtwold two hides in Donyland after my death. And I grant to Ælfwold my priest two hides in Donyland after my death. And I grant to Æthelmær my priest two hides in Donyland after my death. And I grant to Ælfgeat my kinsman two hides in Donyland after my death [my italics]." *Ibid*, 37.

the tenth- and eleventh-century backdrop of aristocratic conspicuous display and the production of moralizing texts on status. Furthermore, Tollerton underlines the focus and importance placed upon this land requirement in terms of achieving status, in another Wulfstan text, *Norðleoda laga*, which states: “And þeah he geþeo, þæt he hæbbe helm 7 byrnan 7 golde fæted sweord, gif he þæt land nafað, he bið ceorl swa þeah.”²³⁷

S 1521 (1035 x 1044, Bury St Edmunds), a later document dating to the second quarter of the eleventh century, is the will of a woman named Leofgifu.²³⁸ Nothing is known about Leofgifu outside of her will, but her will establishes her as having been a landowner of at least sixteen properties in Essex and Suffolk.²³⁹ The king, the church, her lady²⁴⁰, some kinsmen and women and her servants are among the beneficiaries. Alamichel suggests that the fact that Leofgifu addresses her will to the queen specifically may be an indication that she lived at court, and thus likely at a distance from her many estates.²⁴¹ Despite Alamichel’s contention that Leofgifu may have lived at court, Tollerton suggests that the detailed descriptions of estates in Leofgifu’s will suggests that she was well-acquainted with her properties, and was perhaps involved in their management.²⁴² This suggestion may perhaps gain currency in light of Leofgifu’s many bequests to servants, along with the stipulation that those who do the best work were those who were rewarded: “...mine chihtes ... þe me best heren willen.”²⁴³ This

²³⁷ Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 140 – 141. Tollerton quotes this passage in full (from Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 456), with its translation (from Whitelock, *English Historical Documents I*, no. 51).

“And even if he prospers [so] that he possesses a helmet and a coat of mail and a gold-plated sword, if he has not the land, he is a ceorl all the same.” *Ibid*, 141.

²³⁸ Bury St Edmunds archive. A noteworthy element of this will is that it is specified at the end of the document that there were three copies: “on is mid þise kinges halidome. and oþer at seynt Eadmonde. 7 þridde mid Leofgiue seluen” (Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 78). “One is in the king’s sanctuary; and the second is at St Edmunds; and the third with Leofgifu herself” (*Ibid*, 79). None of the other three wills specify that the king retained a copy. He received two marks of gold in Leofgifu’s will; it is possible that this was enough to merit special interest.

²³⁹ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 187.

²⁴⁰ i.e. the Queen.

²⁴¹ Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain*, 126.

²⁴² Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 177.

²⁴³ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 78.

“...my servants who will serve me best.” *Ibid*, 77.

statement raises the possibility that Leofgifu was perhaps at least involved enough in the management of her estates to know whether her officials and servants were doing their jobs effectively. Among the servant beneficiaries were three stewards and two reeves. There is a slight parallel in the text of Leofgifu's will with that of Æthelflæd in S 1494: Leofgifu states that: "...and mine lauedi þat lond at Belhcham buten þat lond þat Godric mine stiward haueð þat habbe he."²⁴⁴ The amount of land which Godric held within the estate at Belchamp was not specified,²⁴⁵ but it is clear that this estate servant was being given a designated parcel of land within a larger estate that was bequeathed to someone else. This supports the notion that it was possible for smaller holdings within estates to be granted separately, as has been seen in S 1494, wherein Æthelflæd grants the estate at Hadham to Ealdorman Brihtnoth and her sister; Æthelflæd grants four hides in that same estate to her reeve Ecgwine.²⁴⁶ Another parallel with Æthelflæd's will is that the steward Godric was receiving land which he already occupied as part of a pre-existing arrangement.

In S 1521, Leofgifu bequeaths land to two men who appear to have been in her service as estate reeves. The fact that two reeves are noted here in connection with specific properties clearly indicates that it was possible, and likely common that an individual would retain the services of several reeves to manage his or her estates. This is especially relevant in light of the nature and number of the reeve's tasks and responsibilities as flagged in *RSP*. It seems reasonable to assume that reeves would not have had the time to manage more than one estate. Here again we see smaller holdings within estates granted to the reeves:

²⁴⁴ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 76.

"and to my lady the estate at Belchamp except the land which my steward, Godric, has. He is to keep it." *Ibid*, 77.

²⁴⁵ Stewards also appear to have been granted lands they already held; such as in the case of the stewards Godric and Ælfwig in S 1521. It appears that they could be and at least sometimes were rewarded for service in the same manner as reeves.

²⁴⁶ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 34, 35.

And Aylmer habbe þat lond at Stonham þe ic hym er to
hande let. to reflande. And ic an Godric mine reue at
Walddingfeld þa þritti acre þe ic him er to hande let.²⁴⁷

The reeves, Æthelmær and Godric, were given land at Stonham and Waldingfield, which were most likely smaller holdings within larger estates of the testator, since Leofgifu gave these two estates to her nephew: “And Ailric mine brothers sone þat lond at Stonham and at Waldingfeld and at Lithtletic.”²⁴⁸ Again, as in S 1494, the donor bequeaths smaller estates within larger ones to her servants: the size of the lands within Stonham that the reeve Æthelmær receives is not specified; however, the reeve Godric received 30 acres, roughly one quarter of a hide, within Waldingfield.²⁴⁹ Although the size of Æthelmær’s grant is not specified, the reeve Godric received a fairly small holding, particularly in light of the “five hide” requirement in order to achieve thegnhood. In fact, aside from Godric’s thirty acres and the one hide granted to Æthelric the priest, the sizes of the other bequests to servants are not specified. It is likely that this was simply due to assumed local knowledge of the properties and who held them. And again, these small estates or “reeveland”, were occupied by these men prior to the bequests, in return for their duties as estate reeves.

Leofgifu’s will also has the noteworthy element that it incorporates the interesting term, “reeveland.”²⁵⁰ Whitelock suggests that the “reeveland” indicated in the will might have been “land that had been let to him [the reeve] while he was reeve in return for his services.”²⁵¹ The text makes it clear that Godric was an estate manager affiliated with Leofgifu’s estate at Waldingfield, and it seems reasonable to suggest that Æthelmær was the estate reeve at

²⁴⁷ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 76, 78.

“And let Æthelmær have the estate at Stonham which I have let to him as ‘reeve land.’ And I grant to Godric, my reeve at Waldingfield, the thirty acres which I have let to him.” *Ibid*, 77.

²⁴⁸ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 76.

“And to Æthelric my brother’s son the estate at Stonham and at Waldingfield and at *Lithtletic*.” *Ibid*, 77.

²⁴⁹ Since one hide has generally been regarded as the standard unit of land required to support a family in Anglo-Saxon England, it is clear that Godric’s 30 acres would not have been enough with which to earn a living; could this therefore have been a token gift?

²⁵⁰ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, np. XXIX, 76-79.

²⁵¹ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 189 n.

Stonham, since Leofgifu's bequest earlier in her will of "the estate at Stonham" to her nephew firmly establishes that Æthelmær's grant there must have been a smaller holding within a larger estate, thus he was presumably the reeve in charge of managing the estate as a whole. As it has been shown, both Æthelmær and Godric appear already to have occupied these lands which they were granted in Leofgifu's will. Based on the text of S 1494 and S 1521, together with Whitelock's assessment, at least one method of compensation for estate reeves was to rent them smaller estates within their lord's holdings for the duration of their service. Thus it is clear that an individual could retain more than one reeve to manage his or her estates, particularly if the estates were many and spread across multiple shires, as in the cases of S 1494 (at least twenty-two estates, across eight counties) and S 1521 (at least sixteen estates, between two shires). What is notable here is that the wills often only mention one or two reeves, who appear as estate managers and beneficiaries. Thus the question arises: where are the other estate reeves? As shown by *RSP*, managing an estate was a great, and apparently all-consuming responsibility; it makes sense that owners of large and widespread properties would require a reeve to manage at least the more distant estates. So why – once reeves begin to rise in importance during the tenth and eleventh centuries, occasioning their appearance in the wills – do we not see more of them? One possible answer is suggested by S 1521: towards the end of the text, Leofgifu specifies that an estate at Lawford (of unspecified size) was to go to "Ailric min hirdpreost 7 Alric mine chihntes þat lond at Lalleford þe me best heren willen."²⁵² This is a clear indicator that perhaps not all servants were beneficiaries in a donor's will; thus it is possible that in the instances in which only one or no reeves at all are mentioned as beneficiaries, it is not because they did not exist, but because they were not especially favored servants or hard-working and so went unrewarded in the will. It is also difficult to discern here whether the reeves occupied any sort of significant position within the hierarchy

²⁵² Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 78.

"And the estate at Lawford to Æthelric my household chaplain, and Ælfric [and] my servants who will serve me best." *Ibid*, 77.

of estate workers. In general, the amount of land received by each of the servants is unspecified; perhaps it is enough of an indication of their value and importance that they were given land at all.

The latest of the four wills examined here, S 1519 (1052 x 1056, Bury St Edmunds), dating from the reign of Edward the Confessor, is the will of a man named Ketel.²⁵³ Not much is known about Ketel, though it is clear from his will that he was a thegn of Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury, to whom he left his heriot and also bequeathed some lands. Nicholas Brooks asserts that the heriot in Anglo-Saxon England was the payment of military equipment by any man of thegnly rank or higher, due to his lord upon the event of his death.²⁵⁴ Whitelock elaborates on this information, adding that he was recorded in *Domesday Book* as holding estates during the reign of Edward the Confessor (*tempus regis Eadwardi*), and that his mother was named Wulfgyth, testatrix of another will.²⁵⁵ Additionally, Alamichel refers to Ketel as a widower.²⁵⁶ Based upon the lands bequeathed in his will, Ketel held at least eleven estates in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. Among the beneficiaries of his will were, Christ Church Canterbury, Archbishop Stigand, his reeve Mann, numerous named but otherwise unspecified people, his sister, his brother, his stepdaughter, Bury St Edmunds, Earl Harold and his priest and relative Ælfric. Christ Church Canterbury was the first of the beneficiaries listed in Ketel's will; it is possible that because he was a thegn of Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury that there were particularly close ties operating there, which makes sense in light of the fact that Christ Church appears to have gained significantly from the bequests in this will – Ketel seems particularly anxious that Christ Church be given an adequate amount – though the sizes of the estates are not specified.

Mann, Ketel's reeve, was the second beneficiary named in the will, though the amount and location of the lands he received remain unspecified. It is clear

²⁵³ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, no., XXXIV, 88-91. Bury St Edmunds archive.

²⁵⁴ Brooks, *Communities and Warfare 700 – 1400*, 139.

²⁵⁵ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 201.

The will of Wulfgyth is XXXII in Whitelock.

²⁵⁶ Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain*, 118.

that Mann was an estate reeve, since he is referred to as *myne refe* in Ketel's will. The wording of the will indicates that Mann already had this land in his possession, again in the same manner seen in S 1494 and S 1521, as compensation for his work as an estate reeve. Here Ketel states that his reeve "shall occupy the free land which I have given over into his possession":

And ic wille þat mine men ben alle fre 7 Mann myne refe
þat he sitte on þe fre lond þat ic him to honde habbe leten.
his time euer fre. and after his time folege þat lond þen
opere.²⁵⁷

Although in this will it is not clear on which estate Mann had worked, though presumably it was the same one from which his lands derive. Ketel also specifies that the land that Mann is to receive is *fre lond* ("free land");²⁵⁸ this designation may be indicative of this particular piece of land being free or exempt from some obligation. Most likely, like the other estate reeves considered here, Mann was given some lands within a larger estate. Accordingly, a reasonable interpretation of *fre lond* is that Mann's lands were to be held separately and disengaged from the larger estate within which they lay. Another possible interpretation here is that these lands were to be held with no obligation to the church. That is, until Mann's death, the church would not be able to claim tithes on the property.

Also present in Ketel's will is the element that the lands Mann receives are only for his lifetime, after which they were to revert to Christ Church Canterbury. This indicates two things: first that due to his placement in the list of beneficiaries and receipt of land, Mann was a valued servant of Ketel, probably close to the top of the estate hierarchy, and Ketel wished to reward him. Secondly, this indicates that Ketel also wished to give adequately to Christ Church – it is clear from both his concerns for the souls of others (for example, those of

²⁵⁷ Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 88.

"And it is my will that all my men shall be free, and that my reeve, Mann, shall occupy the free land which I have given over into his possession, for ever freely during his life, and after his death that estate is to go with the other." *Ibid*, 89.

²⁵⁸ This particular phrase does not occur elsewhere in the Old English corpus, aside from Ketel's will. Both "fre lond" and "fre land" were searched. <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/>

his father, and Sæflæd²⁵⁹) and his evident desire to go on pilgrimage to Rome that Ketel was a pious individual. Thus in his will he manages both to reward what appears to have been a valued servant and also give to Christ Church. It is possible that he felt obliged to maneuver his land in this manner because his holdings may have been on the smaller side; Ketel held fewer lands than the donors in the other two wills under consideration here.²⁶⁰

It is clear from an examination of these three late Anglo-Saxon wills that these documents offer valuable insight on the reeve as an estate manager. This evidence establishes that the private reeve was, at least in some cases, an important member of the staff on a late Anglo-Saxon estate. It is evident that it was likely that an individual retained the services of more than one reeve; this would have been especially applicable in the circumstances where the estate owner held many properties, and if these were distributed across more than one district, and if the donor was resident at court. The wills reveal the distinct possibility that the estate reeve was more widespread than the scope of the evidence indicates. The appearance of reeves in these late Anglo-Saxon wills is likely a reflection of their rising importance in the economic climate of agricultural intensification in the tenth and eleventh centuries. However, it has been noted that not all late Anglo-Saxon wills included reeves, and it is probably likely that even those that do include them do not necessarily represent all the men in their service.

This indicates that it was indeed possible that many individuals may simply not have elected to reward their reeves in their wills. This becomes particularly relevant in light of the concerns regarding piety that are apparent in the wills, and perhaps particularly visible in S 1519, in Ketel's maneuvering of his properties. If the donor had few lands at his or her disposal, it is far more likely that these would go to the church or to the donor's kin, as opposed to men in their service. The instances in which reeves do appear as beneficiaries in the

²⁵⁹ Whitelock suggests that Sæflæd was Ketel's wife (Whitelock, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 202).

²⁶⁰ Ketel held 11 estates, Leofgifu held 16 estates, Æthelflæd held 22 estates and Æthelgifu had 15 estates.

wills may be a clear indicator that they were valued or particularly favored members of the estate staff.

Furthermore, the wills provide insight into the manner in which the estate reeve was compensated for his work. All three wills considered here make it clear that the lands which the reeves received in the donor's will were not only all lands which they already held – the term “reeveland” is specifically deployed here – but also that these were smaller holdings within larger estates. This illustrates that the estate reeve was compensated for his work as an estate manager by being given use of a smaller estate within the larger one. It is also fairly evident that since their names were attached to these larger estates and their own lands too fell within them, that these larger properties were those that they managed. These larger properties tended to be bequeathed to others, such as the church or the donor's kin. It was sometimes specified that the servant was still to retain his own land grant, despite the change of ownership for the larger overall estate.²⁶¹ What still remains unclear regarding the estate reeve is whether he was to continue as the manager of the estate once it changed hands.²⁶²

Conclusions

The fragmentation of Anglo-Saxon England's “great estates” from c. 850 had resulted in many smaller holdings, from which lords needed to extract their entire living. These lords needed not only to support themselves on the proceeds of their small estates, but they also needed to finance their aristocratic lifestyles. This necessitated the development of new methods of estate management in order for lords to gain a living from the new smaller estates. This change in

²⁶¹ As discussed, an example of this can be seen in the will of Leofgifu: S 1521 (1035 x 1044, Bury St Edmunds).

²⁶² The will of Æthelgifu, S 1497 (956 x 1002, St Albans) makes provision in several cases for the bequest of servants' services and of slaves to beneficiaries. Of course it is important to remember that the estate reeve appears to have been a free man; additionally, there is no evidence of the bequest of services being the case for the reeve. Thus the question remains: did his services tend to come with the estate? Was this an unspoken arrangement?

agricultural administration spurred the need for lords to appoint officials – reeves – on their estates, acting as the lord’s advocate amongst the workers, in order to ensure the rendering and collection of dues and tithes, as well as the efficient daily running of the estate. These reeves, as intermediaries between the lord and the peasants, were clearly forces of power on these estates, and it has been shown that they often received leases and land grants of their own – usually within the lord’s larger estate – as rewards and compensation for their work. With the proliferation of many smaller estates came a new social stratum of men of middling importance, such as reeves, stewards and other officials. The acquisition of land and influence often meant that thegnhood – and a step up the social ladder – was now within their reach. The wealthiest aristocrats responded to this with conspicuous consumption and great displays of wealth, seeking to distance themselves from the newcomers. However, access to cash meant that many of these middling men could afford to engage in aristocratic mimicry. This seems to have fuelled the production of tracts on status, such as *Gebyncðo* and *Norðleoda laga*.

It has been established that the social and economic climate of the tenth and eleventh centuries resulted in part in the intensification of agricultural exploitation. One of the results of this intensified use of the land and resources was that lords began pushing the peasants harder and for more than ever before. This occasioned not only a rise in peasant complaints but also the production of texts such as *RSP*, which enshrined in writing the dues and obligations of the workforce of the estate. The appearance of texts such as *RSP* and *Gerefa* also underline the reeve’s significance in this period. *RSP* details just how much the reeve was expected to know and manage, and establishes him as a vital cog in the complex machine that was an effective and productive late Anglo-Saxon estate.

Simultaneously, the reeve rose significantly in importance as the collector and enforcer of these dues and obligations, and as the lord’s representative and intermediary among the estate workers. As a result of the reeve’s increased influence, he joined the ranks of men of middling importance who strove to break the bounds of thegnhood. This may have sparked the production of the

moralizing *Gerefa* text in order to remind the reeve that his first and foremost duty and loyalty was to his lord. *Gerefa* emphasizes the reeve's many responsibilities, but as it has been understood as a literary treatise, its aim was different. The moralizing tone of this text and its rather emphatic reminders that the good reeve acts as his lord's advocate may reflect some anxiety on behalf of the lord. *Gerefa*'s tone reflects lordly concern that the reeve remembered that his role was to protect and uphold his lord's rights and privileges within the estate. Among some of the paramount issues here would have been ensuring that the reeve did not keep back for himself any of the dues he collected, and that he honestly gathered renders from the estate workers. Additionally, the dues and obligations listed in *RSP* and the roles outlined in *Gerefa* give the impression that the reeve's role required him to be physically present on the estate at all times, to ensure its smooth and efficient operation (this was a slightly different picture than that illustrated in the contemporary Anglo-Saxon work calendars, which did provide for leisure time on the estate).²⁶³ *Gerefa*'s guidelines advocated for the reeve's constant presence on the estate he managed. This appears to be reflected in the manner in which he was compensated for his work. It has been shown that estate Reeves were often rewarded with small estates of their own, located within the larger estates they administered.

The wills indicate that this tended to be a small estate, though only in two instances are the sizes actually specified. The disparity between the two is great: Ecgwine of S 1494 received four hides from his lady Æthelflæd, while Godric of S 1521 was given only thirty acres by Leofgifu. It is possible that the difference in the size of grants is reflected in the lord's value of the service of a particular reeve, but with such a limited sample size, one can only hazard a guess. What is notable about both of these grants is that they are both under the requisite five hides that *Geþyncðu* and *Norðleoda laga* specify as necessary to achieve thegnhood. The extant wills place this "reeveland" within the larger estate that the reeve

²⁶³ Notably, the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman text on estate management, *Seneschaucy*, dictates that the reeve and the bailiff were required to keep records of the labor, services and work done on the estate and to account for this each week. Oschinsky, ed., *Walter of Henley and other treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, 278 – 279.

managed. This was likely inspired by the practical desire to keep the reeve and his interests as close as possible to the property he managed. However, in light of the apparent lack of free time, the reeve might have viewed this proximity as a useful convenience, allowing him to care for his own land, while also maintaining his duties to his lord.

Reeves do not, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, appear to be tied to the estates for which they worked, since they were given grants of land that do not seem to be linked with dues or obligations. This alone does not necessarily constitute evidence of “free” status,²⁶⁴ but it has also been shown that reeves were vital officials on the small estate, powerful in their own right. This newfound influence is reflected in the production of the text *Gerefa*, which offers clues revealing a lord’s concern that the reeve act in the lord’s own best interests. It seems unlikely that this text would be necessary if the reeve were an unfree individual. Similarly, the production of tracts on status in this period also evinces aristocratic anxiety surrounding the pursuit of status by those of lower social strata, such as the newly important reeve. The laws of Ine hint that perhaps the late seventh-century estate reeve was unfree, yet it seems clear that this was no longer the case by the late Anglo-Saxon period.²⁶⁵ Finally, reeves begin appearing in wills and other documents with much greater frequency at this time (or so the extant evidence indicates), and this, particularly in the case of the wills, is a result of their vastly increased importance in the changing world of tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England.

²⁶⁴ For example, any customs, dues or obligations associated with “reeveland” may have been oral and have gone unrecorded.

²⁶⁵ Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 118. See also: Attenborough, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 56 (Ine 63).