

THE MERCERS IN MEDIEVAL YORK
1272/3 to 1529

Social Aspirations and Commercial Enterprise

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BI	Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BL	British Library
<i>Buildings of England</i>	N. Pevsner <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>The Buildings of England Series</i> (Harmondsworth, 1957-)
<i>Cal. Inq. Misc.</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous, Henry III-Henry V</i> (HMSO, 1916-69)
<i>Cal. Plea and Mem. Rolls</i>	A. H. Thomas, <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Calendar of the Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, 1323-1482</i> (6 vols., Cambridge, 1926-61).
<i>CCG Register.</i>	R. H. Skaife (ed.), <i>The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi in the City of York</i> , Surtees Society, 57 (1872)
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls, 1272-1509</i> (HMSO, 1900-63)
CFR	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1272-1509</i> (HMSO, 1911-63)
'Civic Officials'	R. H. Skaife, 'Civic Officials of York and Parliamentary Representatives', 3 MS volumes, York Civic Records
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1272-1509</i> (HMSO, 1901-16)
DML	D. R. Howlett, <i>et al</i> (eds.), <i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources: Fascicule VI, M</i> (Oxford, 2001)
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
ECP	<i>List of Early Chancery Proceedings Preserved in the Public Record Office, Lists and Indexes, 12</i> (1892-, reprinted 1963)
EETS	Early English Text Society
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
FR, 1	F. Collins (ed.), <i>The Register of the Freemen of the City of York from the City Records, 1: 1272-1588</i> , Surtees Society, 96 (1897)
Letham, <i>Medieval Latin Word-List</i>	R. E. Letham (ed.), <i>Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources</i> (London, 1965, reprinted 1983)
MED	H. Kurath and S. M. Kuhn (eds.), <i>Medieval English Dictionary</i> (12 vols., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1954-)
OED	J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, <i>The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition</i> (20 vols., Oxford, 1989, reprinted 1991)
Page, <i>Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries</i>	W. Page (ed.), <i>Certificates of the Commissioners Appointed to Survey the Chantries, Guilds, Hospitals, etc, in the County of York</i> , 2 vols., Surtees Society, 91, 92 (1894-95).
PR	Archbishops' Probate Registers, Borthwick Institute, York

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, Continued

<i>Pipe Rolls</i>	<i>Great Rolls of the Pipe...from 1162</i> , 38 vols., Pipe Roll Society (1884-1925)
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), <i>An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York</i> (5 vols., London, 1981)
<i>REED, York</i>	A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson (eds.), <i>Records of Early English Drama: York</i> (2 vols., Toronto, 1979)
<i>Rot. Parl.</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut et Petitiones, etc.</i> , (6 vols., London, 1783-)
<i>Smith, Guide</i>	D. M. Smith (ed.), <i>A Guide to the Archives of the Company of Merchant Adventurers of York</i> , Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 16 (1990).
<i>SR</i>	<i>The Statutes of the Realm, etc.</i> (11 vols. in 12, London, 1963)
<i>TE</i>	J. Raine <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Testamenta Eboracensia</i> , 6 vols., Surtees Society, 4, 30, 45, 53, 79, 106 (1836-1902).
TNA	The National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office)
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>VCH, City of York</i>	P. M. Tillott (ed.), <i>The Victoria History of the County of York: The City of York</i> (1961)
<i>VCH, Hull</i>	K. J. Allison (ed.), <i>The Victoria History of the County of York. East Riding</i> , 1 (1969)
<i>YAJ</i>	<i>Yorkshire Archaeological Society</i>
YASRS	Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series
<i>YChA</i>	R. B. Dobson (ed.), <i>York City Chamberlains' Account Rolls, 1396-1500</i> , Surtees Society, 192 (1980)
<i>YCR</i>	A. Raine (ed.), <i>York Civic Records</i> , 8 vols., YASRS, 109, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119 (1939-53)
<i>YD</i>	W. Brown <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Yorkshire Deeds</i> , 10 vols., YASRS, 39, 50, 63, 65, 69, 76, 83, 102, 111, 120 (1909-1955)
YMAA	The York Company of Merchant Adventurers' archives.
<i>YMB</i>	M. Sellers and J. Percy (eds.), <i>York Memorandum Book</i> , 3 volumes, Surtees Society, 120, 125, 186 (1912, 1914, 1973).
YML	York Minster Library Archives
YML, 2/4, 2/5	Dean and Chapter Probate Registers, 1 and 2, York Minster Library
<i>Yorkshire Feet of Fines</i>	F. Collins, <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Feet of Fines for the County of York</i> , 12 vols. YASRS, 2, 5, 7-8, 42, 52, 62, 67, 82, 121, 127, 158 (1937-)
YORMA	The York Company of Merchant Adventurers' museum collection.

NOTE OF TERMS USED IN THE THESIS

Citizens, Freemen and Admission to the Freedom

In an urban context citizens (*cives*), burgesses and freemen indicate full membership of the community; that is they were entitled to a share in the political and legal rights, and the economic privileges granted to the borough or town.¹ These privileges were collectively referred to as liberties, franchises or cherished freedoms; hence the phrase freedom of the city used in the context of acquiring citizen status. The criterion for citizenship was originally based on residence, financial contributions to the city and property held by burgage tenure; and those who qualified were known as burgesses. Over time there were demographic and economic changes which diminished the importance of burgage tenure; and qualifications for citizenship became increasingly focused on trade and manufacture. There were three main ways to qualify for freedom: by patrimony, as the son of a burgess or citizen born in the city; by servitude, having completed an apprenticeship with a citizen master; or by redemption or purchase, having paid for the privilege. The successful candidate was usually known as a freeman and the process of becoming a citizen referred to as admission to the freedom.

Primary Occupation

It is accepted that in order to earn a living many medieval people practised more than one trade.² However a distinction can be drawn between their main occupation and the ancillary activities they engaged in over a lifetime; and throughout this thesis the craft or trade recorded in the York freemen's register is considered the primary occupation for that individual.

¹ S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1977, reprinted 1984), pp. 184-5; S. H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages. Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke and London, 1995), pp. 162-3; G. A. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London, 1963, reprinted 1970), p. 43; J Tait, *The Medieval English Borough: Studies in its Origins and Constitutional History* (Manchester, 1936), p. 112.

² M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 123-6; H. Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), pp. 29-48 at pp. 33-37; J. F. Pound, 'The Validity of the Freemen's Lists: Some Norwich Evidence', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 34/1 (1981), pp. 48-59 at pp. 53-4.

Mercer, Mercer-Associate and Community of Mercers

The majority of York mercers, who can be traced beyond their enrolment as freemen, retained this occupational designation throughout their working life. However a sizeable proportion became known later as merchants, drapers, chapmen or some other trade; and several chapmen, haberdashers and drapers became known as mercers. It is recognised that the commercial activities of their occupations would overlap at times but, in the context of social stratification, distinctions are revealed according to notions of prestige and wealth. Therefore throughout this thesis the mercer is treated as a separate occupation with a theoretically distinct economic role; and the changes in occupational ascription are considered reflections of the expansion or contraction in the scope and scale of the individual's trade. The community of mercers in York therefore comprises two main groups: **mercers** enrolled as such in the freemen's register and those known at some point in their working life as mercers, the latter designated for these present purposes as **mercier-associates**. The constituent groups are described below and counted according to the number enrolled in the York freemen's register between 1272/3 and 1529 or by date of first occurrence:

COMPOSITION OF THE YORK COMMUNITY OF MERCERS, 1272/3 to 1529:

751 MERCERS

- A 645 mercers enrolled in freemen's register
- B 86 mercers, freemen later known as merchants
- C 20 mercers, freemen later known as drapers, innkeepers, chapmen or vintners

212 MERCER-ASSOCIATES

- D 51 no trade given as freemen, but known as mercers from other sources
- E 45 not enrolled as freemen, but known as mercers from other sources
- F 28 merchants, freemen known later as mercers
- G 15 other freemen known later as mercers
- H 22 chapmen known sometimes as mercers
- I 34 chapmen recorded in taxation returns
- J 13 haberdashers admitted to Mercers' Guild
- K 4 others closely associated with mercers

TOTAL 963

In the interval 1530-1549 another 5 mercers have been identified and this gives a total of 968 whose names are listed in the Biographical Register in Appendix B.

Occasionally there is reference to the **mercantile community**, a term used to encompass all mercantile occupations in York, in particular merchants and mercers.

Fraternity, Guild and Company

To avoid cumbersome titles, the Fraternity of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary is shortened to Fraternity of St. Mary; and when the context is clear, occasionally Fraternity. The Hospital of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary was also known as Holy Trinity Hospital and this is generally shortened in the text to Trinity Hospital. The York Mercers' Guild assumed the management of Trinity Hospital in 1430 when it became formally incorporated; and this role continued through the Reformation until reincorporated as the York Company of Merchant Adventurers. The term Guild is used in the text to indicated the Mercers' Guild; and the term Company is used only in the context of the London Livery Companies.

The Reference to and Use of Numerical Data

Throughout the text cardinal numbers greater than one are generally written as numerals to aid comprehension and comparisons; the exceptions are numbers in chapter titles and maps and at the beginning of sentences. Numerical data has been extracted from the freemen's register, membership and other lists, taxation returns and customs accounts and has been tabulated variously for comparative purposes. The approach used is not a complicated statistical analysis, but rather simple comparison of numbers with a few percentages; and numbers are considered in relative not absolute terms with sum totals regarded as minimums. The introduction to Appendix A describes the methodology used to count, collect and collate numerical data extracted from the York freemen's register.

Spelling of Names

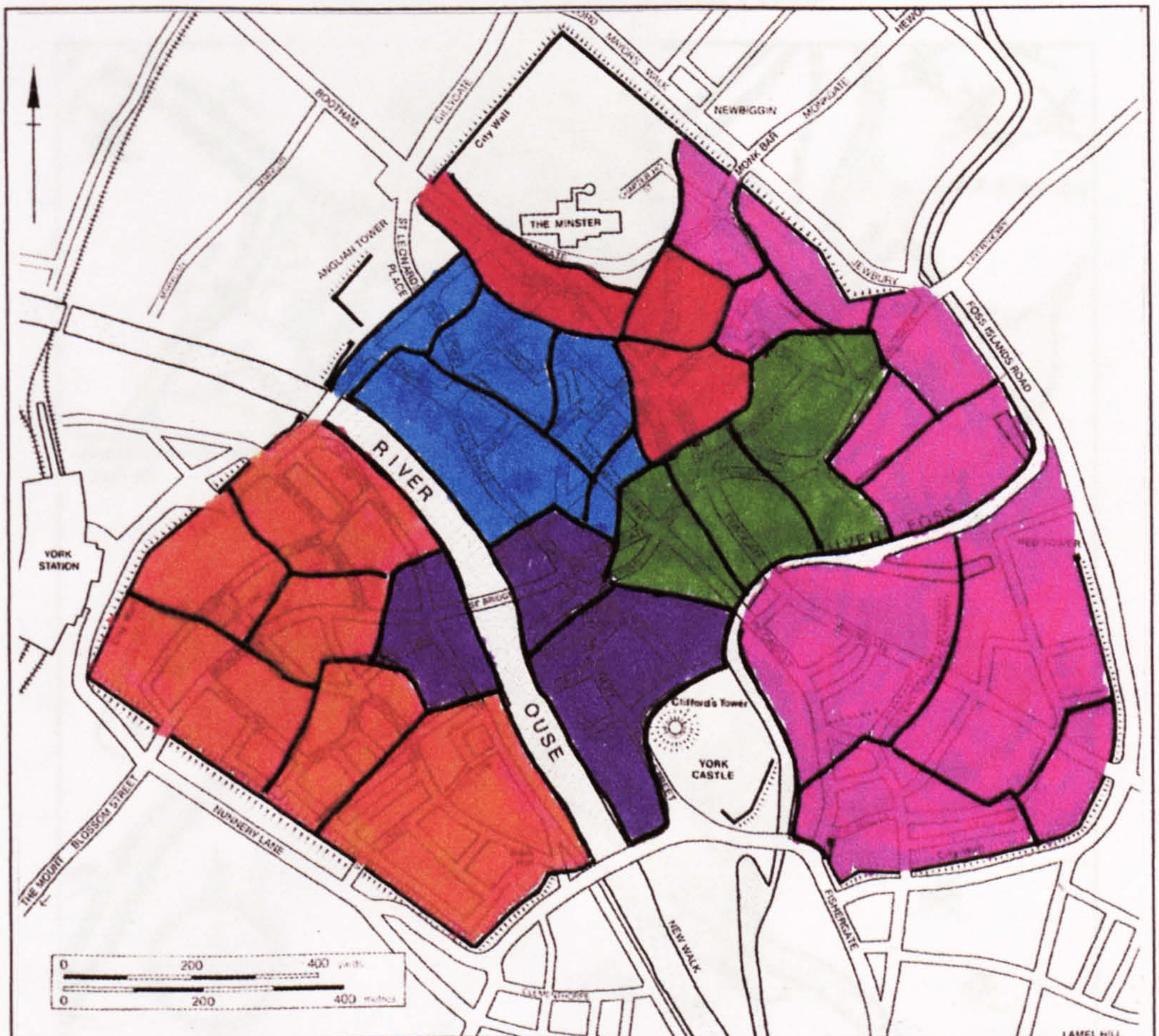
Christian names have been modernized and surnames given a consistent spelling to help locate them in the Biographical Register in Appendix B. Where the surname alludes to a recognizable place-name, this is given as the preferred spelling.

Footnotes and Citations to Biographical Register

References in the text to York mercers and mercer-associates are cited in the footnotes in the order they are mentioned in the text; that is by their numbered entry in the Biographical Register in Appendix B. Other relevant sources are then given in sequential order of page, folio number or probate register.

MAP ONE

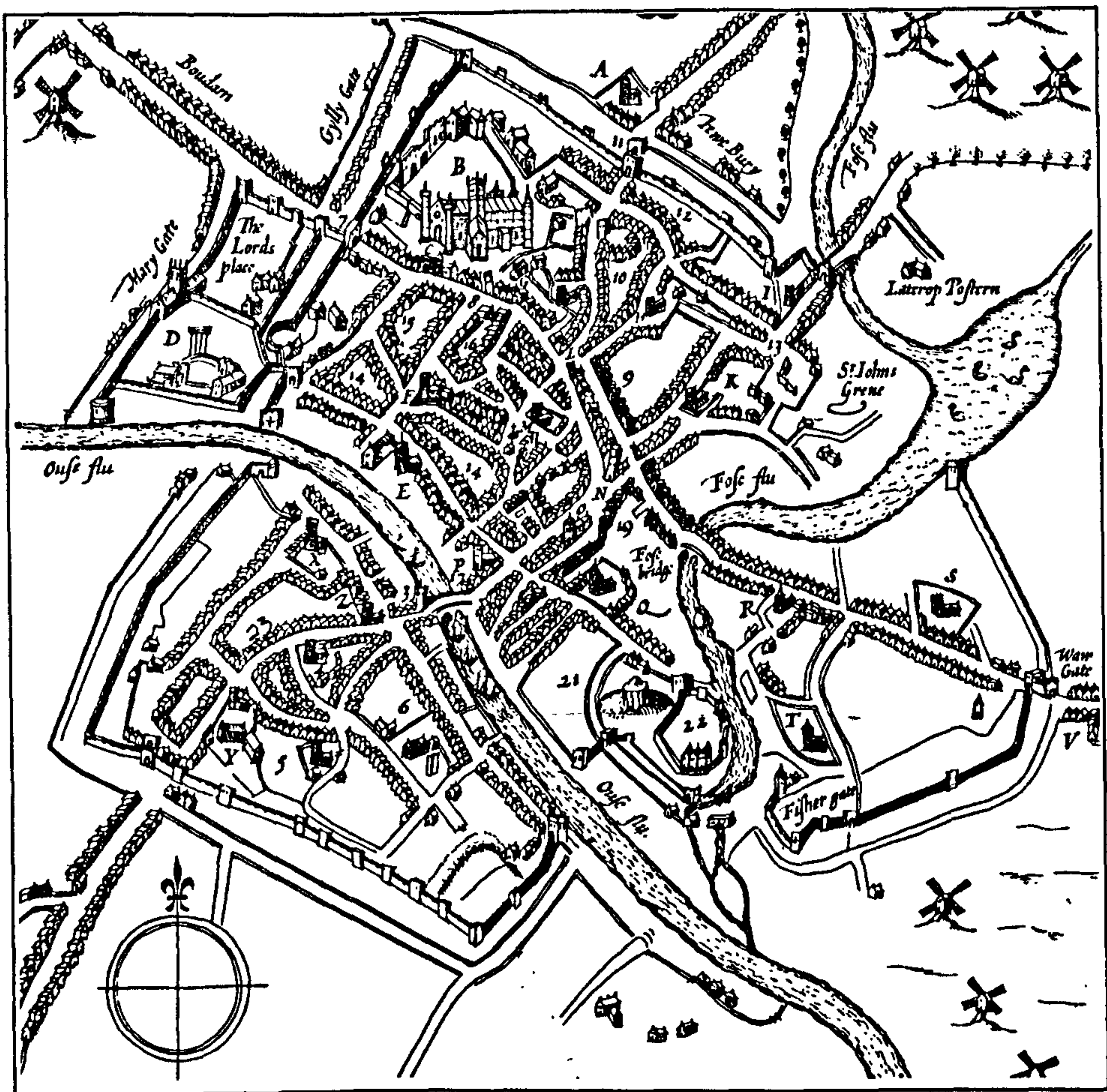
MEDIEVAL YORK PARISHES SUPERIMPOSED ON A MODERN MAP



- PETERGATE AREA**
 St. Michael le Belfrey; Holy Trinity Goodramgate; and Holy Trinity King's Court.
- PAVEMENT CROSSROADS**
 All Saints' Pavement; St. Crux; and St. Saviour.
- CENTRAL DISTRICT**
 St. Martin Coney Street; St. Helen Stonegate; St. Wilfrid with St. Leonard's Hospital; St. Peter the Little; and St. Sampson.
- OUSE BRIDGE AREA**
 St. Michael Spurriergate; St. Mary Castlegate; and St. John Ouse Bridge.
- WEST BANK**
 Holy Trinity Micklegate; St. Martin *cum* Gregory; All Saints' North Street; St. Mary Bishophill; and St. Mary the Elder with St. Clement.
- EASTERN EDGE**
 St. John del Pike; St. Helen Aldwark; St. Cuthbert; All Saints', Peaseholme Green; St. John Hungate; in Walmgate: St. Denys; Ss. Mary and Margaret; St. Peter le Willows; and St. George.
- EXTRA MURAL**
 Bootham: St. Olave and St. Giles; Monkgate: St. Maurice; Layerthorpe: St. Mary; Outside Walmgate Bar: St. Michael; St. Edward, St. Nicholas and St. Lawrence; in Fishergate: All Saints'; St. Helen, St. George, St. Gregory and St. Stephen.

MAP TWO

YORK PARISH CHURCHES, STREETS AND OTHER FEATURES, FROM JOHN SPEED'S MAP, 1610



Parish Churches

- A St. Maurice Monkgate
- B St. Peter (The Minster)
- C St. Michael le Belfrey
- D St. Mary's Abbey
- E St. Martin Coney Street
- F St. Helen Stonegate
- G Holy Trinity Goodramgate
- H St. Andrew
- I St. Cuthbert
- K St. Saviour
- L Holy Trinity King's Court
- M St. Sampson
- N St. Crux
- O All Saints' Pavement
- P St. Michael Spurriergate
- Q St. Mary Castlegate
- R St. Denys
- S Ss. Mary and Margaret
- T St. George
- V St. Laurence
- W St. Nicholas
- X All Saints' North Street
- Y Holy Trinity Micklegate
- Z St. John Ouse Bridge

Parish Churches, continued

- 3 St. William's Chapel
- 4 St. Martin *cum* Gregory
- 5 St. Mary Bishophill
- 6 St. Mary the Elder

Bars, Streets, Markets and Buildings

- 7 Bootham Bar
- 8 Petergate
- 9 Colliergate
- 10 Goodramgate
- 11 Monkgate
- 12 Aldwark
- 13 St. Anthony's Hospital
- 14 Coney Street
- 15 Blake Street
- 16 Stonegate
- 17 Ouse Bridge
- 18 Thursday Market
- 19 Coppergate
- 20 Pavement
- 21 Clifford's Tower
- 22 The Castle
- 23 Micklegate

Map reproduced with permission from York Civic Archives.

INTRODUCTION

A. INCEPTION, HYPOTHESES AND STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis is based on documentary evidence dating from 1272/3 to 1529 and is about the occupational group of York men known as mercers and the category of goods they handled called mercery. The inception of the thesis was three questions which had not been adequately answered in my MA thesis on the York Mercers' Guild: what was the difference between a mercer and a merchant in medieval York; how did a mercer earn a living; and why did the occupation mercer almost but not quite disappear from the freemen's register by the sixteenth century?¹ Had mercers disappeared completely, it could be assumed that their economic role had been absorbed by merchants or taken over by another trade. This was not the case and York civic, guild and probate records continued to refer to mercers and merchants and to mercery and merchandise without definition or description, justifying further investigation. Initial research confirmed that the occupation mercer no longer exists in England and the term mercery is obsolete; yet there was evidence to show that mercer was a recognised occupation in England from the early-twelfth to the mid-nineteenth centuries and that mercery was also a term given to a category of foreign trade.

Anne Sutton's recent book, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578*, provides a comprehensive survey of the commercial activities of London mercers and the provenance and nature of mercery; that is imported consumer goods including linen, cotton and silk textiles and an assorted range of clothing accessories, dress-making supplies and miscellaneous wares.² In *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500*, Sylvia Thrupp provided an overview of mercers within a larger group of traders known collectively as merchants, generally from their participation in overseas trade; but enrolled as freemen as mercers, grocers, drapers and so on.³

¹ L. R. Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502: Origins, Organisation and Ordinances' (unpublished MA Thesis (History), University of York, 1993).

² A. F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 21-43.

³ S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London 1300-1500* (Ann Arbor, 1948, reprinted 1962), pp. 1-14.

She contrasted the distinct and well-organised trade of the London mercer with the less specialised provincial mercer or merchant whom she considered general traders.⁴

The classic study published in 1890, *The Gild Merchant. A Contribution to British Municipal History* by Charles Gross proved an informative and well-documented source for references to mercers in the provinces, occasionally existing side by side with merchants.⁵ His discussion in respect to the differences between mercer and merchant offers insight into the evolution of the original mercer as a dealer in small wares, who became more specialised over time.⁶ John Patten's article, 'Urban Occupations in Pre-Industrial England' looked at the nature of English occupations from the sixteenth century and details various problems of sources and terminology; he explored a classification broadly based on types of production and types of work, that is the 'economic behaviour of individuals' which, if examined in detail, would give a 'truer picture and better interpretation of occupational structure'.⁷ These studies suggested new avenues of inquiry into the development of specialised traders or agents of trade and the changes over time which might lead to greater or lesser distinctions.

As to studies of medieval York, most discuss the occupations of residents, and artisans, victuallers, professionals and service providers can usually be classified fairly easily and distinguished one from another; but the differences between traders is not so straightforward, particularly between mercers and merchants. Maud Sellers referred to a specialised group of mercers and merchants and notes the increased use of merchant in the freemen's register from the late fourteenth century.⁸ Heather Swanson used the two terms interchangeably and David Palliser said merchant had a general meaning as a large-scale or wholesale trader, but might encompass other

⁴ S. L. Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London. A Study of Distributive Trade' in E. Power and M. M. Postan (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd impression, 1951), pp. 247-92 at p. 291.

⁵ C. Gross, *The Gild Merchant. A Contribution to British Municipal History* (2 vols., Oxford, 1890).

⁶ Gross, *Gild Merchant*, 1, pp 128, footnote 1.

⁷ J. Patten, 'Urban Occupations in Pre-Industrial England', *Trans. of the Institute of British Geographers*, new series, 2/3: *Change in the Town* (1977), pp. 296-311 at p. 311.

⁸ M. Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers, 1356-1917*, Surtees Society, 129 (1918), p. xiii.

trades such as chapman and mercer.⁹ Although Nigel Bartlett and Jenny Kermode acknowledged a range of occupational descriptions including mercers and merchants, they focused their studies on the merchant whose investment was in wholesale trade and commerce rather than retail; and Jeremy Goldberg's analysis of occupation incorporated both mercer and merchant, but did not define the difference.¹⁰

Considering that in York the line of demarcation between mercer and merchant might be slim, the first task was to determine whether or not there was sufficient evidence to isolate mercers for an in-depth study. It seemed logical to look again at the records of the York Mercers' Guild, housed in the archives of the York Company of Merchant Adventurers.¹¹ The 1430 foundation charter is headed, '*pro hominibus mistere mercerie civitatis Ebor*' and the clause concerning the election of guild officials grants supervision, rule and governance of the mystery and the wider community of mercers.¹² Two relevant documents are also dated 1430, one a letter addressed to the worthy company of the noble craft of mercers and the other an indenture which refers to four mercers acting on behalf of all the mercers in York.¹³ Additionally, most of the account rolls from 1432-1404/5 are headed '*compotus...magistri communitatis mistere mercerorum*'; and a memorandum of 1498 records John Stockdale as the master of the fellowship of mercers.¹⁴ The heading on the account rolls from 1496 to 1528 expands to '*communitas mistere mercerorum et mercatorum*' and in 1529, written in English, it clearly records that the fellowship and mystery included merchants and mercers.¹⁵

⁹ H. C. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans. An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 19, 67, 130-31, 139-40, 141; D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 151, 158.

¹⁰ J. N. Bartlett; 'The Expansion and Decline of York in the Later Middle Ages', *EcHR*, 12/1 (1959), pp. 17-33 at pp. 26, 30; J. Kermode; *Medieval Merchants. York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 2; P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 60-2, 64-71.

¹¹ D. M. Smith, *A Guide to the Archives of the Company of Merchant Adventurers of York*, Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 16 (1990), henceforth Smith, *Guide*; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 126-46.

¹² YMAA, Royal Charters and Grants, 1/1A-B; D. M. Smith, *Guide*, p. 2; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 35-6 (*mercatorum* is *mercerorum* in original); Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 135, note 51.

¹³ YMAA, Royal Charters and Grants, 1/3; Trinity Hospital Administration, Brethren and Sisters, 14; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 2, 12; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 32, 34-5.

¹⁴ YMAA, Guild Account Rolls, 1-28; Cartulary, fos. 155v-146r, Smith, *Guide*, pp. 28-9, 50; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 104.

¹⁵ YMAA, Guild Account Rolls, 29-61; *Guide*, pp. 29-31; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 129.

Thus it was with more confidence that information pertaining to mercers could be assembled; and, having made a preliminary survey, it became clear that mercers were regularly noted in York records, particularly after the inception of the freemen's register in 1272/3. They were elected as civic officials from before 1300 and well into the sixteenth century; some became aldermen and mayors and others served as MPs. Mercers were involved in the foundation of social and religious fraternities, formed their own powerful guild and showed themselves capable of corporate leadership and financial management. They are named on extant title deeds, leases and estate and tenancy papers as tenants, landlords, neighbours and witnesses; and some acted as trustees for friends, kinsmen and corporate bodies. Mercers stood as pledges for colleagues in a variety of civic and legal situations and served on juries and commissions of inquiry. As householders, mercers were liable for tax in parishes throughout the city and suburbs, and contributed to other financial charges whether civic, guild, national, occasional or recurrent. To finance and organise their commercial activity, mercers borrowed and lent money, drew up and signed contracts and indentures and formed and dissolved partnerships. Mercers are named in the particular customs accounts for Hull, in the Mercers' Guild shipping records and in various other sources attesting to their investment in overseas trade. Occasional references to regional trade reveal networks of supply and distribution particularly in the production and finishing of woollen cloth. Although local trade is indicated by their tenure of shops and commercial premises in York, only three inventories have been uncovered detailing their retail stock; but the demand for mercery is evident from the inventories of artisans and the higher ranking clergy. The mercers' own wills attest to a range of pious, charitable, civic and personal concerns; and their provisions for commemoration and the amount of cash bequeathed shed light on their wealth in terms of fixed, current and potential assets.

Although there proved to be sufficient information to justify a study of mercers isolated from merchants, several anomalies came to the fore. The first was that merchants are also recorded in these sources and in larger numbers, particularly as overseas traders and aldermen and mayor. Second, that a few grocers, drapers, dyers and goldsmiths were equally successful. Third, that there was a tendency for the most prominent mercers to become known as merchants and for those of other occupations to become known as mercers.¹⁶ Fourth, that the corporate bodies

¹⁶ See above p. xii and Appendix B, Table 1.

founded by mercers comprised very mixed occupational memberships; and the Mercers' Guild became increasingly dominated by merchants.

Therefore any definition of mercer and of merchant in York would have to take these factors into account and explain the lack of description of mercery and merchandise. The use of two similar words could indicate that there was little difference in the first place, or that the distinction had been lost in the passage of time (*eg.* kith and kin) or that the differences were visible or otherwise self-evident. Indeed, the lack of detail, description or definition suggests mercery and merchandise were so familiar that no explanation was necessary and that mercers and merchants took their occupational designations from their stock in trade. However, the actual trade practised would depend on the capital resources of the mercer or merchant, and on the scope and scale of their trade; and their particular economic role and distinctions might result in a shift of occupation from mercer to merchant or the reverse and the distinctions blurred.

The mixed membership of the corporate bodies founded by mercers indicates that they operated in a mercantile milieu; and the presence of mercers, merchants and artisans suggests commercial networks based on supply, manufacture, marketing and retail distribution. It is the presence of other occupations that strongly suggests a pivotal role for the mercer between manufacturers and wholesale suppliers; and the opportunities for artisans to branch into supply and distribution, at which point they might be deemed a mercer.

In light of occupational shifts, the focus of this thesis is the community of mercers including those enrolled as mercers in the freemen's register; those who became merchants; and others who were known as mercers at some point in their lives (labelled here as mercer-associates). At this point the task of collecting information about York mercers could begin; and during the collection of numerical and nominal data and attempting to assimilate a vast literature of secondary sources, a number of new questions were raised which prompted lines of inquiry and generated a series of hypotheses.

Lines of Inquiry and Hypotheses

1. That freedom of the city was a financial system and numbers admitted varied according to the attitude and policy of the civic authority at particular times.¹⁷
2. That the terminology and the tasks performed as mercer might change over time in response to competition, consumer demand and technological improvements.¹⁸
3. That factors of migration, youth and life-cycle would account for the non-recurrence of 40% of mercers enrolled as freemen.¹⁹
4. That mortality and reduced population had economic repercussions: initially beneficial after the Black Death, raising *per capita* production, wealth and consumption; but eventually detrimental, reducing consumer demand and altering the economic structure.²⁰
5. That the expanding economy of the fourteenth century provided new opportunities for mercers, drapers and chapmen, either through direct participation in overseas trade or in local and regional supply and distribution.²¹
6. That the economic decline of the fifteenth century contributed to conflict between mercers and merchants; and that a series of political crises with economic repercussion increased commercial rivalry with Hanse and London merchants.²²

¹⁷ R. B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages', *ECHR*, 2nd series, 26/1 (1973), pp 1-21; Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp 29-48; H. Swanson, 'Artisans in the Urban Economy: The Documentary Evidence from York' in P. J. Corfield and D. Keene (eds.), *Work in Towns 850-1850* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 42-56; S. Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1464' in S. Rees Jones (ed.), *The Government of Medieval York. Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, Borthwick Studies in History, 3 (1997), pp 108-140 at pp. 120-1.

¹⁸ Patten, 'Urban Occupations in Pre-Industrial England', pp. 296-8; S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 61-75; P. J. Corfield, 'Defining Urban Work' in P. J. Corfield and D. Keene (eds.), *Work in Towns 850-1850* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 207-230 at pp. 220-1.

¹⁹ J. Patten, *Rural-Urban Migration in Pre-Industrial England*, School of Geography, University of Oxford, Research Paper 6 (1973); P. Clark and D. Souden, *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London, 1987); Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 285-328; B. A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London. The Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford, 1993).

²⁰ J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530* (London & Basingstoke, 1977); R. Smith, 'Demographic Developments' in B. Campbell (ed.), *Before the Black Death. Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century* (Manchester and New York, 1991) pp. 58-9; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York, 1390-1514', *Northern History*, 24 (1988), pp. 38-55; T. H. Hollingsworth, *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence: Historical Demography* (London and Southampton, 1969), pp. 375-388 and Appendix 3; E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *An Introduction. English Historical Demography, from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1966).

²¹ J. N. Bartlett, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of York in the Later Middle Ages, 1300-1550' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1958); Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', pp. 17-33; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, *passim*.

²² Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 1-22, 94-100, 120-125, 137-146; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 128-9, 149-55, 342-344; A. J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses. Lay Society, War, and Politics 1450-1500* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 53-81, esp. pp. 72-3.

7. That prolonged economic contraction disrupted patterns of supply, distribution and manufacture; and York merchants were forced to retrench, reorganise their trade and incorporate a retail side, the latter replacing the role of the mercer.²³
8. That the growth of a market economy provided new opportunities for agents of trade such as the mercer, chapman and merchant; and this role developed in response to changes in the economy, the supply of money and credit, the growth of consumerism and the dominance of London.²⁴

When considered as a whole, these lines of inquiry and hypotheses seem to come together in the general concept of commercialisation.

The Theoretical Framework

Britnell's seminal work *The Commercialisation of English Society 1000-1500* sets out the basic tenants of this theory of economic development which is augmented and extended in the series of essays edited by Britnell and Campbell, *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300*.²⁵ Hatcher and Bailey provide a clear and cogent analysis in their *Modelling the Middle Ages. The History and Theory of England's Economic Development* and Masschaele's, *Peasants, Merchants and Markets: Inland Trade in Medieval England, 1150-1350* examines the role of commerce in transforming society through 'the collective enterprise of succeeding generations'.²⁶ Although comprehension of such an all-encompassing theory remains incomplete, it is felt that commercialisation is the underlying model needed to explain both the development and near demise of the economic role of the mercer in York.

²³ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 308-312, 313-18; E. Miller, 'Medieval York' in P. M. Tilliott (ed.), *Victoria History of the County of York: The City of York* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 25-116 at pp. 27-33, henceforth *VCH, City of York*; P. Nightingale, 'The Growth of London in the Medieval Economy' in R. H. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England. Essays in Honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 89-106.

²⁴ J. L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500* (London and Melbourne, 1980), pp. 119-179; J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects. The Development of a Consumer Society on Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978, reprinted 1988); C. M. Barron, 'London 1300-1540' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 395-440; P. Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit in Later Medieval England', *ECHR*, 2nd series, 43/4 (1990), pp. 560-75.

²⁵ R. H. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society 1000-1500* (Cambridge, 1993); R. H. Britnell and B. M. S. Campbell (eds.), *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300* (Manchester, 1995).

²⁶ J. Hatcher and M. Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages. The History and Theory of England's Economic Development* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 121-173; J. Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets. Inland Trade in Medieval England, 1150-1350* (New York, 1997), p. 227.

Commercialisation is the term given to the process by which society became more dependent on formal markets for exchange of goods and services. In England this process took place between the Norman Conquest and 1300, but it was not a static process nor were all parts of the country evenly commercialised nor were all individuals equally involved or attuned to the change.²⁷ The age-old barter system did not disappear nor did the informal market of exchange in the street, farmyard, field or warehouse. But it did mean a change in thinking and planning in that growers and manufacturers adjusted their production schedule so that produce, raw materials, industrial supplies or wares could be sold at particular times in particular places; and likewise buyers had the opportunity to seek out the best place to make their purchases. Landlords were the chief financial beneficiary of formal markets and fairs, reaping the reward of tolls and other charges; but there were also benefits to traders and customers in the increased measures of security based on enforceable rules and regulations of trade, the regularity or predictability of weekly or monthly markets, the increased variety of goods for sale and the attendant improvements in transport and communications.

Increased population is credited with increasing consumer demand for basic foods, clothing and implements; and population pressure on land the impetus for those with little or no land to find alternative livelihoods as labourers or artisans; and this, in turn, increased demand for opportunities of market exchange in order to buy food and new supplies and find customers. At the same time urban areas expanded both as an overflow for the landless seeking opportunities and as centres for specialist manufacture and trade. These were some of the factors which contributed to an increase in market exchange, in other words, the expansion of commercial activity. They presented new opportunities for middlemen or agents of trade, who neither grew nor made what they bought or sold, but acted as intermediaries between growers, processors, manufacturers, other agents and final consumers.

From the known activities of York mercers, they clearly occupied several commercial roles as agents of trade. Their traditional, though perhaps not original, role would have been as an urban retailer, buying supplies directly from an artisan or other agent of trade and selling to the customer for immediate use. Mercers, already dealing with imported articles not available from local manufacturers, would be well placed to

²⁷ R. S. Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350* (Cambridge, 1971, reprinted 1998), pp. 85-122.

branch into supplying local artisans with imported silk fibres, special leather or edged tools to be assembled into clothing accessories. As a wholesaler the mercer would have a role in two or more stages of production, buying raw materials from the grower and selling them to a processor; and when these were ready for the next stage buying them back and selling them on to the manufacturer and so on from the manufacturer to the retailer. This is a simplistic scenario, but shows the potential for the mercer to expand the scope and scale of his retail trade into the supply and distribution of larger quantities at various stages of production.

There would have been an impetus for taking on a commercial role among countrymen, but most would be reluctant at first to give up an agrarian life and the security offered by the tenure of a small parcel of land upon which some food could be grown. Indeed even a non-free tenure was a package of rights and obligations which defined one's legal position and status, so to be landless was to be without status or lordship, a precarious position even for a legally free man.²⁸ The fact that a good proportion of mercers migrated into York from a rural artisan background suggests that their ancestors had been among those with insufficient land on which to earn a living and had been forced to take up an alternative livelihood as artisans. Having taken that step and become accustomed to market exchange, and observing the obvious success of some agents of trade, the next generational step might well be to encourage the son into commerce, perhaps even investing in his training as an urban-based mercer. Here the goal would be to raise the social and economic prospects of the kinship group. This facet of commercialisation is especially important in forming the aspiring attitude, adaptive behaviour, responsible nature and commercial enterprise which is so evident within the York community of mercers.

The Structure of the Thesis

The three core questions centred on the distinction between mercer and merchant in medieval York prompted a series of questions and suggested themes such as occupation, migration, family background, social mobility, urban success, social standing, economic class and livelihood. Addressing these themes has given the thesis its form of six chapters, each with an introduction and conclusion and subsections with introductory and summary remarks.

²⁸ J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History. Third Edition* (London, 1990, reprinted, 1998), pp. 255-282.

In order to cope with the vast literature of secondary sources which has informed every aspect of this thesis, there is an overview at the beginning of Chapters One, Two, Five and Six; and at the beginning of each sub-section of Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter One is a survey of documentary references to mercers in England from the twelfth to the sixteenth century; and also to the nature, value and composition of mercery and its distinction from merchandise. This established the background into which the evidence for York mercers could be examined. Chapter Two looks at the number of mercers in York as revealed in four different settings as freemen, guild members, civic officials and taxpayers. The most comprehensive source has been the freemen's register which records the admission of mercers from its inception in 1272/3 up to 1529; and it has proved useful to look at mercer admissions from 1530 to 1549 and beyond to 1599. Viewing the admission figures in half-century intervals showed that the number of mercers increased to a peak around 1400 and decreased steadily to 1450; afterward their numbers fell drastically and between 1502 and 1514 no mercers were enrolled as freemen. This pattern mirrored the economic model of expansion and decline used by Bartlett in his seminal study of York's medieval economy; and has proved a useful model for assessing the impact of the economy on the commercial role of the mercer.²⁹

The numerical analysis prompted new lines of inquiry into the demographic, social, political and economic factors which would affect the number of mercers in York, and shed light on their shifts in occupation, social and economic aspirations and achievements, current assets and commercial enterprise. Chapter Three therefore explores geographic and social origin, patterns of migration, retained ties to ancestral home, family background, occupational and social mobility, apprenticeship, employment, and marriage and household formation. Social and economic success is examined in Chapter Four in terms of the mercers' own perceptions of social standing: looking first at the arrangements they felt suitable for funerals and commemoration; second, at the signs and symbols of affiliation in select societies; and third, at the outward display of authority as civic officials, particularly as mayor. Economic class is discussed in terms of inequalities of wealth within and without the community of mercers and measured by the value of possessions, size of households, annual income from land, disposable income and amount of cash bequeathed at death.

²⁹ Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 197-319.

The scope of inland trade features in Chapter Five where scant direct evidence for regional trade is supplemented with references to contacts with suppliers of raw materials and rural employees; familiarity with modes of carriage, and maintenance of roads and bridges; involvement in networks of credit; and commercial links with London. Local trade as shopkeepers is discussed with reference to parish of residence and to the location and type of commercial premises; the range of mercery likely to be stocked by mercers; and the value, use and consumer demand for linen. Chapter Six is a survey of the various current assets available to York mercers which financed their commercial enterprise particularly in overseas trade. This is carried out in chronological order of the source with reference to the new opportunities in the expanding fourteenth-century economy and the adaptation and retrenchment required in the prolonged fifteenth-century recession. Not only are great inequalities revealed within this select group of mercers, but after 1460 there is increasing polarisation between rich and poor within the community of mercers. Moreover, mercers as members of the Mercers' Guild are increasingly marginalised.

The Conclusion provides a short overview of the topics covered in each chapter; considers the answers to the core questions; looks at the results of testing the hypotheses against the evidence; and ends with suggestions for further investigation.

Some subjects proved too complex to be discussed briefly or required separate in-depth treatment; for example the population of York, the proportion of mercers and the size of their customer base. Property tenure and income from land have been mentioned, but further work is warranted on mercers as landlords and tenants; on their use of property; and on the corporate management of the endowment of Trinity Hospital. It would be instructive to continue investigation into the value, use and consumer demand for textiles other than linen and for the small wares of mercery. Standards of living have not been addressed though there is evidence available. The crucial factors of credit and debt have not been addressed quantitatively although some figures are given; and this is seen as the study to be undertaken next in an attempt to assess the crucial role of credit in the commercial activity of York mercers and merchants. Further investigations along these lines would help place the York evidence in the wider context of the social and commercial importance of the medieval provincial mercer.

Appendices

There are also 2 appendices. Appendix A provides a tabulated summary of all admissions to the freedom of York by occupational categories from 1272/3 to 1549; and also a statistical analysis of admissions by occupation. The numerical data extracted from this summary has been used extensively in Chapter Two to compare the number and pattern of mercer admissions; and the methodology for collection and compilation is set out as the introduction to Appendix A. Appendix B is a biographical register of the members of the York community of mercers. It is arranged in alphabetical order according to regularised spelling of surnames and each entry is numbered sequentially; and references to particular mercers in the text are cited in the footnotes with these numbers. The methodology used to identify, trace and verify names is set out in the introduction to Appendix B; and naturally the amount of biographical information varies from individual to individual, but includes the date of first and last occurrence and the source.

B. SURVEY OF PRIMARY SOURCES

Selection of Sources

A brief overview of the 8 sources used to extract numerical and nominal data is outlined below, but the methodology is detailed in the introductions to the appendices; and the following survey of main sources provides the necessary citations. The criteria for selection of sources to survey the number of mercers in medieval York were that they seemed to be the most comprehensive; that is, that they had a dated context, existed as a series of records over a number of years, and contained information about other York residents so that mercers could be isolated for comparative purposes. Four major sources met these requirements:

1. The freemen's register which provides the names of York residents recorded as mercers admitted to the freedom from 1272/3 to 1529 and beyond.
2. The freemen's register also provides chronological lists of civic officials; information which is supplemented by dated references in other civic records such as the Memorandum and House Books and the chamberlains' and bridgewardens' accounts; and also in title deeds.
3. The accounts and other records pertaining to the York Mercers' Guild, its predecessor the Fraternity of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and its successor the York Company of Merchant Adventurers, which reveal additional

information about guild officials, wives and families and the names of mercers not registered as freemen.

4. The taxation returns pertaining to the lay subsidies of 1327, 1334 and 1524/5 and the poll taxes of 1377 and 1381 which record names of mercers, their parish of residence, information about their wives and household dependents and the amount of their tax liabilities.

There were 4 other sources which provide a dated context, but are not as complete or comprehensive, but disclose additional details about York mercers, help confirm or deny identity and have been particularly useful in reconstructing biographies:

1. The most important were wills, because the dates of probate provided dependable terminal dates to use in conjunction with the dates of freedom which were generally the first time mercers were recorded.
2. Corporate collections of charters and deeds relating to property are rich sources for the names of mercers, their heirs and ancestors and record their position as donors, recipients, neighbours and witnesses and the locale, type and use of property.
3. The register of the York Corpus Christi Guild is another useful source with dated references of admission from 1408 to 1546 and an obituary recording the dates of death of members from 1408 to 1437.
4. York mercers can also be identified in the particular customs accounts for Hull which survive sporadically from c.1300, but the most useful have been those for 1391/2, 1401, 1430 and from 1453-90.

A few cautionary notes are warranted about using these sources in order to assess their authority and the reliability of the evidence. The aim has been to use as many printed sources as possible, because these are easier to access than manuscripts in archival collections; although, when possible, the originals have been searched. Even so, manuscript sources present a number of problems including the difficulty of reading the text, and the researcher's errors attendant on transcription and translation. Some of the originals had been compiled in the past from earlier documents which present a range of uncertainties and possibilities of misunderstanding on the part of both compiler and reader. Thus when there are alternative versions, these texts have been consulted to ascertain whether or not different words are significant; and overall a cautious approach has been adopted in order to weigh up the evidence as judiciously as possible.

Key Primary Sources

The key primary sources fall into 5 groups: the archives belonging to the York Company of Merchant Adventurers; York civic records; ecclesiastical records for the York Diocese; charters, title deeds and rentals; and royal and national records.

These groups of documents shed light on various aspects of the lives and activities of members of the community of mercers; for instance who they were, what they did, where they lived and worked, what groups they joined, what positions they held, how they perceived their social standing and measured their wealth and so on.

1. The Archives of the York Company of Merchant Adventurers

There are 2 main subgroups of archives which are relevant: those of the Fraternity of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary (also known St. Mary) and those of the York Mercers' Guild. The Fraternity was founded by letters patent in March 1357 and dissolved in 1371 upon the foundation of Trinity Hospital.³⁰ Mercers were the largest occupational group within the membership; some were founding members and officials and their names and other details are recorded in: letters patent (1357, 1371); five account rolls (1357-1366); the paper account book (1357-c.1369); and in property deeds and mortmain licences concerning the acquisition of the Hospital's endowment.³¹ The account rolls show that income was collected from donations, rents and the sale of obits; and the account book lists the weekly expenditure on wages and building materials during the years which it took to build Trinity Hall in Fossgate. Other entries record the payment of salaries to chaplains, fees for professional services, expenses on funerals and obits and purchase of food and other supplies for social occasions.

There are approximately 500 title deeds dating from the early thirteenth century which pertain to the endowment of Trinity Hospital.³² These are a major source of information about mercers, who are named as donors, recipients, neighbours and

³⁰ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 22-39, 59-60, 78-80.

³¹ YMAA, Fraternity of St. Mary, Account Rolls c.1357-1367, 1-5, Account Book 1358-1369; Smith, *Guide*, p. 26.

³² YMAA, Estate Acquisition, *Inquisition Ad Quod Damnum*, 1A-B, 2A-C; Title Deeds, York City; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 51, 52-135; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 72-73, 75.

witnesses, and also of particular details of location, type of property and use. There are leases, estate and tenancy papers and a series of rentals relating to the endowment with details of conditions of lease, levels of rent and expenditure on maintenance.³³ There is also a fifteenth-century cartulary which preserves copies of the title deeds, the advowsons, letters patent, archiepiscopal licences, indentures and agreements; chronological lists of guild officials and of the admission of members and their wives; and inventories and records of gifts.³⁴

The process of founding the Mercers' Guild began in 1420 when a group of mercers assumed responsibility for Trinity Hospital and in 1430 were instrumental in obtaining the letters patent incorporating the Guild.³⁵ Mercers are named in the accounts for most years from 1432 to 1530 and intermittently from then on until 1581 when the Guild was re-incorporated as the Company of Merchant Adventurers.³⁶ The format of the accounts alters slightly over time; income generally comprised payments of arrears, entry fees for new members, annual subsidies due from members and their wives or widows, contributions for collective shipping ventures and for producing the Corpus Christi play. Expenditure fell into categories of salaries, minor expenses, torches for celebrating the feasts of Corpus Christi and Trinity Sunday, repairs to Trinity Hall and Chapel and, less regularly, food and wine for feasts. Other information about mercers can be found in the lists of debtors attached to several fifteenth-century accounts: the draft accounts (1433-1528), pageant accounts (1454-1467), miscellaneous assessments (1400-c.1500) and a subsidy list of 1525.³⁷ The medieval and early modern artefacts also have relevance, such as the seal matrices referenced in David Smith's published guide to the archives and other items by their museum YORMA number.³⁸

³³ YMAA, Estate Management, Rentals 1-17; Guild, Accounts 32-61; Deeds and Leases, York City; Estate and Tenancy Papers 1-2; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 138, 140-161.

³⁴ YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 1r-8v, 9r-10r, 15v, 148v-150r, 155r-158r, Smith, *Guide*, pp. 48-50; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. vi-vii.

³⁵ YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 1r; Royal Charters and Grants, 1/1A-B; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 2, 48; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 94-105, 126-177.

³⁶ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 1-62, 62-127; Royal Charters and Grants, 2/1; Smith, *Guide*, p. 2.

³⁷ YMAA, Draft Accounts 1-6; Pageant Accounts 1-6; Miscellaneous Assessments and Accounts 1-4, 7-8; Subsidy Lists 1; Feast Expenses 1; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 34-6

³⁸ Smith, *Guide*, p. 24; as yet there is no published guide to the museum collections referenced here by YORMA accession numbers.

A few indentures and contracts pertain to short-term partnerships or long-term corporate endeavours; and there is a small collection of bonds, obligations and other arrangements for credit and recovery of debt.³⁹ Many of the administrative documents concern the enforcement of rules and regulations governing contracts and other business practices, local trade and shopkeepers, and overseas trade. Others deal with procedures for dealing with customs officials, organising shipping and supervising apprentices and factors at home and abroad.⁴⁰ Minutes and memoranda of meetings (1443-1526) reveal the presence of mercers at elections and at general meetings including those called to organise collective shipping.⁴¹ There are three shipping documents which record the names of members, of merchants from Yorkshire and of crew members, as well as the type, quantity and sometimes value of export and import cargoes.⁴² Correspondence brings to light concerns over competition with Hanse and London merchants and conflict elsewhere.⁴³

2. York Civic Records

Most important of the key sources for this thesis is the city's register of freemen which exists as an unbroken series of annual entries from 1272/3.⁴⁴ This gives the date of admission, the names of persons admitted to the freedom, usually their trade and occasionally the conditions for admission or payment. The manuscript version of the register contains other material of interest and the chronological lists of civic officials are particularly useful.⁴⁵ The register cannot however be used without recognising its limitations, discussed further in Chapter Two; but it is significant that

³⁹ YMAA, Administration 5, 14; Apprenticeship 1; Cases and Litigation 1-2; Trade Correspondence 15; Pageant Business 1; Bonds and Related Documents 1-13; Cartulary, fo. 139r-v; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 10, 12, 14, 19, 39-42, 50

⁴⁰ YMAA, Acts and Ordinances 1-3; Cartulary, fos. 11r-15v, 155r-165v; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 5, 48, 50; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 191-220.

⁴¹ YMAA, Meetings 1-11; Smith, *Guide*, p. 8.

⁴² YMAA, Shipping 1-3; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 18-19.

⁴³ YMAA, Trade Correspondence 1,3, 8, 11, 12; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁴ YCA, D.1: MS Register, fos. 32r-191v, 194v-209r; F. Collins (ed.), *Register of the Freemen of the City of York from the City Records*, 1: 1272-1588, Surtees Society, 96 (1897), henceforth *FR*, 1.

⁴⁵ YCA, D.1, MS Register, fos. 4r-27r, 209v, 288v-310v, 318r-320v, 321r-321v, 311r-329r, 330r-331v; D. J. S. O'Brien, 'The Veray Registre of All Trouthe': The Content, Function and Character of the Civic Registers of London and York, c.1274-c.1482 (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of York, May 1999), Appendix 1 (catalogue of the contents of York, YCA, MS D.1); Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1464', pp 110-111.

most mercers were enrolled as freemen and that this is usually the first time they are visible in written records.⁴⁶

References to mercers occur in most other York civic records such as the Memorandum Books which record diverse matters concerning the city from c.1300;⁴⁷ and there are also the House Books or Council Minutes which date from 1476.⁴⁸ The financial accounts kept by the city chamberlains survive from 1396/7.⁴⁹ The accounts record a few fines imposed on mercers and chapmen and chapwomen; the contributions paid for the stations where the Corpus Christi play was performed; and the Guild's annual fee for storing the pageant wagon on Toft Green.⁵⁰ The chamberlains' accounts record the purchase of some mercery and give details of the quantity, cost and cloth chosen for civic and mayoral liveries.⁵¹ The bridgewardens' accounts are especially valuable as they record the income from rents and farms of civic property, and shops on Ouse Bridge were regularly leased by mercers.⁵² The Memorandum and House Books record various legal matters and disputes that came before the mayor concerning felony, wrongful arrest, slander, unseemly language, seditious words and assault, with the coroner's inquests into cases of accidental death and murder.⁵³ Other issues arose in the Sheriffs' Court and a few fifteenth-century records survive showing mercers involved in trespass and deceit and, more often, recovery of debt; and there are similar entries in the first volume of Minutes of the Quarter Sessions of the Peace, 1499-1500.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', pp. 8-9.

⁴⁷ YCA, E.20, E.20A: A/Y and B/Y; M. Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 2 vols., Surtees Society, 120, 125 (1911, 1914), henceforth *YMB*, 1 or 2; J. Percy (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 3, Surtees Society, 186 (1969), henceforth *YMB*, 3.

⁴⁸ YCA, B.1-11: House Books; A. Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 8 vols., YASRS, 109, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119 (1939-53), henceforth *YCR*; L. C. Attreed (ed.), *The York House Books 1461-1490*, (2 vols., Wolfeboro Falls, NH, 1991).

⁴⁹ YCA, C.1-6: Chamberlains' Rolls of Account 1396/7-1540; CC: 1-3: Chamberlains' Books of Account, 1446-1538.

⁵⁰ *YChA*, pp. 85, 90-1, 105-6, 107, 122-3, 147-8, 180, 197-8.

⁵¹ *YChA*, pp. 2-4, 15-7, 20, 25, 32-4, 63-4, 75, 83, 94-5, 111, 113, 126-7, 137, 149, 153, 165, 171, 181, 188, 190, 203-4.

⁵² YCA, C.80; C.82-85; P. M. Stell (ed.), *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, The Archaeology of York, 2: Historical Sources after A.D. 1100 (2003); *YMB*, 1, pp. 1-12 (1376/7, city rental).

⁵³ Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1464, pp. 115-127

⁵⁴ YCA, E25, 25A: Sheriffs' Court Books; E39: *Liber Miscellanea*; F1: Sessions of the Peace; P. M. Stell (ed.), *Sheriffs' Court Books of the City of York for the Fifteenth Century* (York, 2000), henceforth Stell, *York Sheriffs' Court Books*.

The civic archives hold 23 account rolls for the Corpus Christi Guild, 1415-1540 which include inventories of the guild's possessions, vestments and napery and expenditure on food and drink for the annual feasts.⁵⁵ The register of the guild is housed in the British Library, but Skaife's printed version is accepted as accurate and includes an appendix of relevant documents and useful biographical footnotes pertaining to the secular and religious membership.⁵⁶

3. Ecclesiastical Records for the York Diocese

Although the foundation of chantries for the perpetual provision of post-mortem prayers seems an ecclesiastical concern, it is the city archives which preserve a collection of original foundation deeds, some drawn up by mercers or their kin.⁵⁷ The certificates issued at the Reformation dissolution are another source of information about chantries and the property used for their endowment.⁵⁸ Chantry foundations have attracted the attention of several scholars whose works contain useful insight and citations; and Barnett's doctoral thesis is a comprehensive, documented survey of the types of commemoration funded by York residents including mercers and their wives.⁵⁹

The Cause Papers from the Archbishop's Court of York reveal mercers caught up in issues of matrimony, divorce, defamation and breach of faith, or summoned to provide testimonies on behalf of the litigants; and there are some references to mercers in archiepiscopal registers and the Court Books.⁶⁰ Another source for the

⁵⁵ YCA, C.99-103: Corpus Christi Gild Rolls 1415-1540; extracts printed in A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson (eds.), *Records of Early English Drama: York* (2 vols., Toronto, 1979), 2, Appendix 2 at pp. 628-644, cited henceforth as *REED, York*.

⁵⁶ BL, Lansdowne 403: Register of York's Corpus Christi Guild, 1408-1547, printed in R. Skaife (ed.), *The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi in the City of York, etc.*, Surtees Society, 57 (1872).

⁵⁷ YCR, G.70: Chantry Foundation Deeds, 1-40 (typescript transcriptions).

⁵⁸ W. Page (ed.), *Certificates of the Commissioners Appointed to Survey the Chantries, Guilds, Hospitals, etc., in the County of York*, (2 vols.), Surtees Society, 91, 92 (1894-95), henceforth Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*.

⁵⁹ R. B. Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), pp. 253-66, 257-284; C. M. Barnett, 'Memorials and Commemoration in the Parish Churches of Late Medieval York' (2 vols., unpublished DPhil thesis (History), University of York, 1997).

⁶⁰ BI, CP.E, F: Cause Papers; D. M. Smith (ed.), *Ecclesiastical Cause Papers at York: The Court of York 1301-1399*, Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 14 (1988), p. 73; D. M. Smith (ed.), *The Court of York, 1400-1499. A Handlist of the Cause Papers and an Index to the Archiepiscopal Court Books*, Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 29 (2003).

study of credit and debt transactions is the parchment register titled *Condempnaciones 1315-27* which pertains to the Court of the Dean and Chapter and deals with breaches of faith, mostly for the recovery of debt.⁶¹

Both the Dean and Chapter and the Archbishop had separate courts dealing with the registration of wills and the granting of probate or administration; and the printed indices are invaluable.⁶² The probate registers housed in the Borthwick Institute and the Minster contain copies of wills and there are scattered copies in civic records and the Mercers' Guild cartulary; and the collections of transcribed wills are immensely useful, albeit those in the Surtees Society volumes, *Testamenta Eboracensia*, are seldom full transcriptions.⁶³ There are also a few original wills preserved in the archives of York Minster and amongst the title deeds of the Vicars Choral and the Mercers' Guild.⁶⁴ Probate inventories survive generally as original documents, but in far fewer numbers; some are printed in various volumes of *Testamenta Eboracensia* and 91 have been recently printed in Stell and Hampson's *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500*.⁶⁵ It is to be regretted that inventories do not survive for known York mercers or merchants, but there is one for Thomas Grissop, a chapman and another for a Richard Bishop, a *quasi* mercer.⁶⁶

⁶¹ YML, M2/1a: Dean and Chapter *Condempnaciones* (Register of recognisances and other business in the Court of Audience).

⁶² YML, 2/4, 2/5a: Dean and Chapter Wills Registers 1-2; BI, Probate Registers of the Exchequer and Prerogative Court of the Archbishop, henceforth PR; *Index of Wills in the York Registry, 1389-1514 and 1514-1553*, (2 vols.), YASRS, 6, 11 (1888, 1891); *Index of Wills, etc. from the Dean and Chapter's Court at York, AD. 1321-1636 with Appendix of Original Wills, AD. 1524-1724*, YASRS, 38 (1907).

⁶³ YMB, 3, pp. 17-18, 46; YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 72v-74r, 86v, 147v; J. Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia or Wills Registered at York Illustrative of the History, Manners, Language, Statistics, etc. of the Province of York from the Year 1300 Downwards* (6 vols.), Surtees Society, 4, 30, 45, 53, 79, 106 (1836-1902), henceforth TE; The Latin Project, *The Blakburns in York. Testaments of a Merchant Family in the Later Middle Ages* (York, 2006).

⁶⁴ BI, Dean and Chapter of York, Original Wills and Inventories, 1388-1499; N. J. Tringham (ed.), *Charters of the Vicars Choral of York Minster: City of York and its Suburbs to 1546*, YASRS, 148, 156 (1988-9, 2005), 1, pp. 31, 55, nos. 53, 92-3, henceforth Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1; YMAA, Title Deeds, Little Bretgate 10; Fossgate 7, 19, 39, 64; Monkgate 8; Walmgate, St. Edward 33; Testamentary Business; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 56, 59, 62, 67, 72, 99, 117, 135.

⁶⁵ YML, Probate Jurisdiction, Inventories, L1(17); BI, Dean and Chapter of York, Original Wills and Inventories 1383-1499; see P. M. Stell and L. Hampson (eds.), *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese, 1350-1500* (York, c.2000); The Latin Project, *The Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby Archdeacon of Richmond, d.1400* (York, 2000).

⁶⁶ BI, Dean and Chapter of York, Original Wills and Inventories, 1383-1499; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 151-159; TE, 4, pp. 191-3, no. 98.

4. Charters, Title Deeds and Rentals

A rich source of information about York mercers can be found in the ample records pertaining to the acquisition and management of real estate which survive as original charters and deeds in the archives of some landowners, corporate bodies and religious houses or as copies written into cartularies.⁶⁷ The collection of title deeds and leases in the archives of the York Company of Merchant Adventurers has been mentioned; and there is a larger and equally, if not more, important collection in the archives of the Vicars Choral of York Minster including title deeds, rentals, lease books, maps and plans, rolls of the chamberlains and bursars, and building and tileworks accounts.⁶⁸ These and other records relating to real estate and rents in York have been compiled by Sarah Rees Jones, who used a select group as the basis for her doctoral thesis, 'Property, Tenure and Rents: Some Aspects of the Topography and Economy of Medieval York'.⁶⁹ Part of her study was the reconstruction of the streetscape of Petergate from Bootham Bar to *le Mercery* in which the shops of mercers are a prominent feature; and it is hoped that similar reconstructions elsewhere in the city will be forthcoming. Printed calendars of deeds are easily accessible such as Farrer's *Early York Charters* and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's volumes, *York Deeds*.⁷⁰ York mercers can be identified in the printed volumes of the *Feet of Fines* for Yorkshire which record details of their property transactions from c.1218 to the late Tudor period. These transactions also shed light on the property market, patterns of inheritance, kinship connections and the amount of money transferred.⁷¹

⁶⁷ A. Raine, *Mediaeval York. A Topographical Survey Based on Original Sources* (London, 1955).

⁶⁸ Tringham *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, see list of manuscript sources; F. Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College. The Story of the Vicars-Choral of York Minster* (London, 1952).

⁶⁹ S. R. Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents: Some Aspects of the Topography and Economy of Medieval York' (2 vols., unpublished DPhil thesis (History), University of York, 1987).⁶⁹

⁷⁰ W. Farrer (ed.), *Early Yorkshire Charters. Being a Collection of Documents Anterior to the Thirteenth Century Made from the Public Records, Monastic Chartularies, Roger Dodsworth's Manuscripts and Other Available Sources* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1914-16); C. T. Clay and E. M. Clay (eds.), *Index to Volumes 1-3: Early Yorkshire Charters*, YASRS, Extra Series, 4 (1920); W. Brown, C. T. Clay and M. J. Stanley-Price (eds.), *Yorkshire Deeds*, 10 vols., YASRS, 39, 50, 63, 65, 69, 76, 83, 102, 111, 120 (1909-1955), henceforth *YD*.

⁷¹ F. Collins, W. P. Baildon, J. W. R. Parker, F. H. Slingsby, M. Roper (eds.), *Feet of Fines for the County of York, from 1218 to the Tudor Period*, 11 vols., YASRS, 2, 5, 7, 8, 42, 52, 62, 67, 82, 121, 127 (1937-1965); M. Roper and C. Kitching (eds.), *Feet of Fines for the County of York, from 1314-1326*, YASRS, 5/158 (2006), henceforth *Yorkshire Feet of Fines*.

5. Royal and National Records

The most accessible of national administrative records are the printed calendars of the Close, Patent and Fine Rolls and the indices of Early Chancery Proceedings.⁷² York mercers are also recorded, but less frequently, in various other calendars and especially in the Pipe Rolls.⁷³ The Close and Patent Rolls record the names of York mercers involved in Edward III's wool monopoly (1336-1343) and Liddy's *War, Politics and Finance* discusses their role as royal creditors whose loans were secured on future wool exports.⁷⁴ Other entries detail the contributions of mercers towards the cost of an embassy to Prussia in 1388 which aimed to restore trading relations with the Hanse and recover the cloth and other goods seized previously.⁷⁵ The East Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace record the activities of York mercers and merchants as wool merchants in the 1360s, who seem to be representing the merchants of the York Staple; and Christian Liddy's research provides further details of involvement.⁷⁶ A few alnage accounts survive as detailed lists of the number, colours and types of cloth which were taxed before mercers could expose them for sale, and this suggests their involvement in the production as well as the marketing of English woollen cloth.⁷⁷

The taxation returns for the city of York are an important source of information about members of the mercer community according to various measures of wealth, in particular the printed returns for the lay subsidies of 1327, 1332 [see footnote] and

⁷² *Calendar of Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1272-1509* (London, from 1892); *Calendar of Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1272-1509* (London, from 1891); *Calendar of Fines Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1272-1509* (London, from 1911), henceforth, CCR, CPR, CFR; *List of Early Chancery Proceedings Preserved in the Public Record Office, Lists and Indexes, 12* (London, 1892-, reprinted 1963), henceforth ECP.

⁷³ *Inquisitions Post Mortem Relating to Yorkshire of the Reigns of Henry IV and Henry V*, YASRS, 59 (1918); *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry III-Henry V* (London, 1916-69); *Pipe Rolls: Great Rolls of the Pipe for 9-32 Henry II, 1162-86*, 17 vols., Pipe Roll Society (1886-1914); *Great Rolls of the Pipe for 2 Richard I to 13 John, Michaelmas 1190 to Michaelmas 1211*, 13 vols., Pipe Roll Society (1925-53), henceforth *Pipe Rolls*, by reign and year.

⁷⁴ C. D. Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns. Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350-1400* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 26, Table 2 and Appendix, Table 2.

⁷⁵ CCR, 1385-89, pp. 564-5.

⁷⁶ B. H. Putnam (ed.), *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace, 1361-1364*, YASRS, 100 (1939); Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, Appendix, Table 2.

⁷⁷ J. Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade and Extracts from the Hull Customs' rolls and Complete Transcripts of the Ulnagers' Rolls*, YASRS, 64 (1924), pp. 47-95.

1524/5 which were levied on the value of possessions.⁷⁸ There are extant returns for the poll taxes of 1377 and 1381 which were assessed according to age and ability to pay; and a rare income tax of 1436 based on annual income from lands and rents.⁷⁹ Additional details emerge in these returns including the parish of residence, names of wives, size of household and change in occupation from freedom to taxation.

Finally, there are the customs accounts which survive in two formats, particular or detailed versions, and enrolled or summary accounts.⁸⁰ The classic study by Gras on the development of the customs system is invaluable for interpretation and transcription of a representative selection of accounts.⁸¹ The printed versions of the particular customs accounts for the port of Hull have been used for this thesis and cover the years 1391/2, 1401, 1430 and 1453-90.⁸² They record the name of the ship, the homeport, the master and the date of arrival or departure, in addition to the name of the shipper and the type, quantity, value of cargo and, for certain items, the amount of customs due.⁸³ These details provide a base for determining the commodities, value and direction of the foreign trade of York mercers; and the changes contingent upon various demographic, political and economic factors. Although more enrolled accounts for Hull survive, they are not discussed in this thesis apart from helping to assess the decline in the investment in foreign trade through the port of Hull over time.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ J. W. R. Parker (ed.), 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III' in *Miscellanea* 2, YASRS, 74 (1929), pp. 104-171 at pp. 160-171 (City of York); P. M. Stell and A. Hawkyard (eds.), 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [sic] for York', *York Historian*, 13 (1996), pp. 2-14 [here the title is misprinted as 1334 and should be 1332]; E. Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', *YAJ*, 4 (1877), pp. 170-201.

⁷⁹ C. C. Fenwick (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. 3: Wiltshire-Yorkshire, etc.*, Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 37 (2005), pp. 133-4, 135-140; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', Appendix D.

⁸⁰ R. C. Jarvis, 'The Archival History of the Customs Records' in F. Ranger (ed.), *Prisca Munimenta. Studies in Archival and Administrative History Presented to Dr. A. E. J. Hollaender* (London, 1973), pp. 202-214.

⁸¹ N. S. B. Gras (ed.), *The Early English Customs System. A Documentary Study of the Institutional Economic History of the Customs from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA, 1918).

⁸² C. Frost, *Notices Relative to the Early History of the Town and Port of Kingston-upon-Hull* (Hull, 1827), Appendix, pp. 1-27; Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 1-34; W. R. Childs (ed.), *The Customs Accounts of Hull 1453-1490*, YASRS, 144 (1984), henceforth *Hull Customs Accounts*.

⁸³ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, preface.

⁸⁴ H. L. Gray, 'Tables of Enrolled Customs and Subsidy Accounts, 1399-1482' in M. M. Postan and E. Power (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd edition, 1951), pp. 321-360.

CHAPTER ONE

MERCERS AND MERCERY

Definitions and Defining References

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One begins with the modern definition of mercer and mercery, gives an overview of the traditional etymology and looks at Old English terminology for traders and commodities of trade. A longer section follows based on documentary references to mercers which provide a date and context. The references to mercers reveal aspects of their social and civic standing, individual and collective identity, character and reputation and locale of commercial activity. Mercery as a category of foreign trade is looked at in the context of local tolls and national customs, at its provenance and suppliers, its packaging, quantification and value, and at evidence for its redistribution. The chapter ends with a survey of two main categories of goods comprising mercery; the small wares used for personal adornment and dressmaking and lengths of fine linen, silk and fustian used for clothing and household furnishings.

SOURCES

A start was to survey the definitions in dictionaries, glossaries and word lists which provide illustrative examples from British sources written in English, Latin and French. The sources selected are not exhaustive, but have the advantage of being easily accessible and provide citations to legal and administrative documents and literature which date from the twelfth to the sixteen centuries. The *Oxford English Dictionary* and Kurath and Kuhn's *Medieval English Dictionary* have proved the main sources.¹ Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and Wright's *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies* were extremely useful in providing an idea of the interplay between language and culture, and Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial*

¹ J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition* (20 vols., Oxford, 1989, reprinted 1991), henceforth *OED*; H. Kurath and S. M. Kuhn (eds.), *Medieval English Dictionary* (12 vols., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1954-), henceforth *MED*.

Words aided comprehension.² Letham's *Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish* was in constant use and Howlett's *Fascicule VI* of the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* was invaluable; and the *Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis* provided additional sources in European texts.³ Rothwell's *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* was disappointing in the few citations to documentary references, but Godefroy's *Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Francaise* proved useful.⁴ Although the definitions were informative in themselves, it was tracking down the documentary sources that helped create a substantial base for investigating mercers and mercery.

Sutton's work on London mercers and the mercery trade has been equally, if not more valuable. Her thesis, 'The Mercery Trade and the Mercers' Company of London, from the 1130s to 1578' sets out copious illustrative examples of mercery gleaned from a wide variety of sources, and a summary of these is printed in 'Mercery Through Four Centuries 1130s-c.1500'.⁵ An earlier article on the linen and worsted industry of Norfolk shed light on the cultivation of flax and the production of linen textiles and the commercial importance of linen to the London mercers, individually and as a corporate body.⁶ 'The Shop Floor of the London Mercery Trade' provides insight into domestic production of articles made from silk thread and the role of the mercer.⁷ Her recent book *The Mercery of London* incorporates a vast amount of

² T. N. Toller (ed.), *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth* (Oxford, 1882); J. Roberts, C. Kay and L. Grundy (eds.), *A Thesaurus of Old English in Two Volumes* (2 vols., London, 1995); J. O. Halliwell (ed.), *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words, etc.* (7th edition, London, 1924).

³ R. E. Letham (ed.), *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London, 1965, reprinted 1983); D. R. Howlett, et al (eds.), *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources: Fascicule VI, M* (Oxford, 2001), henceforth *DML*, 6; R. E. Letham, et al (eds.), *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (Oxford, 1975-); F. Blatt (ed.), *Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis Ab Anno DCCC usque AD Annum MCC* (Hafnaie, 1957-).

⁴ W. Rothwell, et al (eds.), *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (London, 1992); F. Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de L'Ancienne Langue Française et de tous ses Dialects du IX^e au XV^e siècle* (10 vols., Paris, 1883-1902, Nedlen, reprinted, 1969); A. J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Français jusqu'au Milieu du XIV^e Siècle* (2nd edition, Paris, 1968); A. Rey, et al (eds.), *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française* (2 vols., Paris, 1992); 2, p. 1226 (*mercier*).

⁵ A. F. Sutton, 'The Mercery Trade and the Mercers' Company of London, from the 1130s to 1348' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1995); A. F. Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries 1130s-c.1500', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 41 (1997), pp. 100-125.

⁶ A. F. Sutton, 'The Early Linen and Worsted Industry of Norfolk and the Evolution of the London Mercers' Company', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 40/3 (1989), pp. 201-225.

⁷ A. F. Sutton, 'The Shop Floor of the London Mercery Trade, c.1200-c.1500: The Marginalisation of the Artisan, the Itinerant Mercer and the Shopholder', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 45 (2001), pp. 12-50.

information about mercers and mercery and is rightly considered a major source for this thesis, providing background, insight and additional illustrative examples.⁸

A. DEFINITIONS, ETYMOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

i. Current Usage

Although the terms mercer and mercery are no longer in common parlance in England, there is the surname Mercer, variously spelled Mercer, Mercier or Merchier, an occupational by-name; and the verb mercerise derives from the surname of a dyer in Accrington, who discovered a new chemical process for finishing cotton cloth.⁹ Those aware of livery companies would be familiar with the Mercers of London, the Mercers' Company of Coventry and the Mercers, Grocers and Haberdashers of Richmond, North Yorkshire.¹⁰ From this the term mercer could be surmised as a trade or craft but not what it entailed.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* was consulted in the first stage of investigation and there were two definitions for mercer: first, as a dealer in silks, velvets and other expensive textiles; and second, as a retailer of small-wares.¹¹ The definition of small-wares is by reference to the nineteenth-century *Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures and Mines* in which they are described as narrow textiles, tape-like bands and bindings made from cotton, linen, silk or woollen fibres.¹² Mercery is simply defined as 'the wares sold by a mercer' and 'the trade in mercery-ware', but there is no reference to small wares.¹³ Although these circular definitions are not satisfactory, they indicate that a mercer was a tradesman, who might be a specialist dealer in imported and

⁸ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, *passim*.

⁹ P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (London, 1958, 2nd revised edition 1976), p. 238; H. Anstey and T. Weston, *The Anstey Weston Guide to Textile Terms* (1997), section F.

¹⁰ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 67-200, 235-378, 409-474; W. Herbert, *The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London, Principally Compiled from their Grants and Records, etc.* (2 vols., London, 1836), 1, pp. 225-96; J. Lang, *Pride Without Prejudice. The Story of London's Guilds and Livery Companies* (London, 1975); R. M. Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries. The Mercers' Company of Coventry, 1550-1680* (University Park, PA, 1993); R. Waggett, *A History of the Company of Mercers, Grocers and haberdashers of Richmond* (Keighley, 2002).

¹¹ OED, 9, p. 345.

¹² OED, 15, p 774 citing A. Ure (ed.), *Dictionary of Arts, Manufacture and Mines* (1839); see A. Seiler-Baldinger, *Textiles. A Classification of Techniques* (Bathurst, NSW, Australia, 1994).

¹³ OED, 9, pp. 345-6.

valuable textiles or a general shopkeeper whose stock comprised dress-making accessories.

The sources cited in the *OED* record the use of mercer and mercery occurring in British records from c.1132 to c.1870, but no reason is given for the demise of the occupation of mercer nor the loss of the word mercery as a category of commodities. A number of questions arose concerning the obsolescence of terms used for over 700 years:

- 1 What is the derivation of the words mercer and mercery?
- 2 What terms were used before the twelfth century and did they remain in use?
- 3 Was the occupation of mercer primarily distinguished by stock in trade?
- 4 Did mercery comprise the same items throughout these centuries?

These question are addressed below.

ii. Etymology

Skeat defined the mercer as a dealer in silks and woollen cloth and thought the word originally referred to a general trader. He said that the word mercer came into Middle English from the French *mercier* which had developed from the late Latin *mercerius*; that the latter had been formed from the stem *merci-* from *merx* meaning merchandise; and that the suffix *-arius* denoted the agent.¹⁴ More recent work by Onions discussed the difficulties of determining whether or not words were derived from Latin or from Latin through French; and concluded that decisions would need to be based generally on spelling. Thus, mercer had been adopted from the Anglo-Norman *mercer*; and the Old French *mercier* had been formed on Latin *merci-*, *merx* or merchandise. Merchant followed a slightly different derivation from the Old French *marchand* which had itself been modified and developed from the Latin *mercat-*, *mercari* meaning to barter or trade, the latter also formed on *merx*.¹⁵ These are not particularly helpful, apart from indicating that the words mercer and merchant came into English by way of Old and Norman French.

¹⁴ W. W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford, 1879-82, impression 1963), p. 371.

¹⁵ C. T. Onions (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford, 1966), pp. vii-viii, 570.

British sources written in Latin record a bewildering array of words formed from *merx*: *mercandisa*, *merchaundisa* (merchandise); *mercatum*, *mercatio* (market); *mercionalis*, *mercimonius* (mercantile); *marcandiso*, *mercandisatio* (trade and buying); *mercandizabilis* (marketable); *merces*, *mercimonia*, *mercicula* (reward); and *mercimoniatus* (regulation of commerce).¹⁶ A casual glance at wordlists and glossaries reveals numerous spelling variants for mercer and mercery, for example in Middle English *marcer* or *mersier* and *marcery*, *mercerie* or *mersorie*.¹⁷ Medieval Latin forms are *merciarius*, *mercarius*, *mercennarius*, *mercimonarius*, *mercerus*, *mercier*, *mercer* and *merceria*, *mercecies*, *merces*, *mercimonium*, *mercenarium*.¹⁸ Old and Norman French variations are similar with *mercerius*, *mercenarius*, *mercier*, *merciere*, *mercheir* and *merchere* and *mercerie*.¹⁹ In most cases, the context makes the meaning clear; but the great diversity of variant forms and spellings may reflect an increase in commercial activity after the Norman Conquest. Here it is instructive to consider briefly the terminology used pre-Conquest for traders and merchandise.

iii. Old English Terminology

Although *The Thesaurus of Old English* records *mertz* for commodities of trade, there do not seem to be Latin derivatives in the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* edited by Toller.²⁰ Instead, most words for traders and goods traded are derived from *ceap* which originally meant cattle, the chief commodity of trade.²¹ *Ceap* became an all-encompassing term for things bought and sold, for the place where trade took place, for business in general and for value or price. *Ceap-man*, later chapman, indicated a man who brought things to sell in the market; *ceap-stow* was a market place, *ceap-daeg*, the day of the market; and related words were *ceap-gyld* for a bargain or market price and *ceap-scip*, a merchant ship. The verbs *(ge)ceapian* and *(ge)sellan* mean to sell, exchange or deal, but the former might also mean bargain, buy or bribe and the latter, give, grant or relinquish.²² The context obviously would be essential for

¹⁶ Letham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List*, p. 296.

¹⁷ *MED*, pp. 325-7; Blatt, *Novum Glossarium*, M-N, pp. 396-406.

¹⁸ *DML*, 6, p. 1772c (*mercimonium*, 1a), (*mercimonium*, 3).

¹⁹ Rothwell, *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*; p. 417; Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Française*, 5, pp. 251, 253; Rey, *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, 2, p. 1226.

²⁰ Roberts, *et al.*, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, 1, p. 647 (*mertze*); Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.

²¹ Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 148 (*ceáp*).

²² Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, pp. 148, 450; G. N. Garmonsway (ed.), *Aelfric's Colloquy* (London, 1939, 2nd edition 1947, reprinted 1961), lines 96, 99, 154, 162, 164.

understanding words with these multiple meanings; for example *(ge)bycgan* could mean to buy or to sell and it is the latter which is glossed in the tenth-century text, *Aelfric's Colloquy*.²³

Another word for a trader or dealer was *mangere* which still in use today for a retailer of fish, iron or cheese, or for a gossip.²⁴ *Aelfric's Colloquy* uses *mancgere* for the high status overseas trader, who faced dangers and shipwreck in order to bring precious things to benefit the king, the wealthy and all people.²⁵ This prestige may account for the use of monger in the names of two of the oldest, leading London companies, the Fishmongers and Ironmongers.²⁶ Aelfric also used *cypmenn* as a collective term for merchants and this is the term used in the 'Tale of Brian' where the hero sailed around with a cargo of wine as if he were a *chepmon*.²⁷

There is evidence that the imported fabrics which become known as mercery were imported into pre-Conquest England; indeed *Aelfric's Colloquy* lists Byzantine silk, silk and special clothes.²⁸ Archaeological and documentary evidence also record the use of imported textiles and a wide array of small manufactures.²⁹ Although there does not seem to be an Old English word or collective noun to classify these goods, Anglo-Saxon authors writing in Latin were familiar with words based on *merx*. Bede used *mercimonium* to describe the goods cast out of the Temple; and Alcuin for the commodities carried by Italian merchants.³⁰ In Aldhelm *mercimonium* refers to commerce and trade; and this is the word used in the eighth-century life of St.

²³ Biegan Roberts *et al*, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, 1, p. 647; Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, pp. 98, 148, 450; Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, lines 98, 154, 170.

²⁴ Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 667.

²⁵ Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, pp. 33-4, lines 149-166; T. Wright and R. P. Wülcker (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 1 (London, 1884, reissued Darmstadt, 1968), 'The Colloquy of Archbishop Aelfric of the Tenth Century', pp. 89-103 at pp. 96-7. M. Swanton (ed. and trans.), *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London, 1975), 'Aelfric's Colloquy', pp. 107-115 at pp. 111-112.

²⁶ Herbert, *Twelve Great Livery Companies*, 2, pp. 1-20, 567-624.

²⁷ Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, p. 20, lines 20, 33-4; F. Madden (trans.), *Layamons Brut, or Chronicle of Britain; a Poetical Semi-Saxon Paraphrase of The Brut of Wace, etc.* (reprint of the 1847 edition, Osnabrück, 1967), 3, pp. 231-2.

²⁸ C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art. A New Perspective* (Ithaca, New York, 1982), pp. 1-23, 129-169, 170-187; Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, pp. 33-4.

²⁹ C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art. A New Perspective* (Ithaca, New York, 1982), pp. 1-23, 129-169, 170-187; Garmonsway, *Aelfric's Colloquy*, pp. 33-4.

³⁰ DML, 6, pp. 1770 (*mercatorius*, 1), 1772c (*mercimonium*, 1); S. Allott, *Alcuin of York, c. A.D. 732 to 804* (York, 1974), pp. 153-4, no. 158.

Willibald to describes Southampton as a place where trading takes place.³¹ A compilation of Old and Middle English vocabularies dated between the eight and twelfth centuries gives Latin glosses equating *merces* with *cepe-thinge*, *mercator* with *mangere* and *merx* with *warae*; and it is a later, fifteenth century reference to mercer which is given as an English synonym for *mercinarius*.³²

This glimpse of Old English terminology affords little more than the obvious conclusion, that words derived from *merx* become widespread after the Norman Conquest. Chapman and monger were retained in the vernacular, but the general impression is that they were low status traders; and this may be a reflection of Norman suppression of the conquered and their language.³³

B. MEDIEVAL DEFINING REFERENCES: MERCER AND MERCERY

i. Mercer

Although the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* adds only slightly to the *OED*'s definitions, together the citations to documentary references are rewarding. Mercer is defined variously as a merchant dealing in textiles, a member of the mercers' guild and/or a seller of sundry small items.³⁴ The earliest reference to an English mercer is Stephen who witnessed a London charter in 1132, a few years before the first reference to Parisian *venditores mercium* in 1137.³⁵ The early Pipe Rolls record Nicholas *mercenarius* in 1130 and Peter *merciarius* in 1155/6.³⁶ Within a decade, Ailwin *merciarius* of Gloucester and Ailsa *merciarius* of York make an appearance; and in 1176, there is Adam *le mercerer* of York.³⁷ In the fifteen-year

³¹ *DML*, 6, p. 1772c (*mercimonium*, 2b, 3); A. R. Rumble, 'HAMTVN *alias* HAMWIC (Saxon Southampton): the Place-name Traditions and their Significance' in P. Holdsworth (ed.), *Excavations at Melbourne Street, Southampton, 1971-76*, SARC, Research Report, 33 (1990), pp. 7-19 at p. 11.

³² J. Zupitza (ed.), *Aelfric's Grammatik und Glossar. Text und Varianten* (1880, reissued Berlin, 1966, 1966), p. 302, line 10 (*mercator, uel negociator: mangere*); Wülcker, *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 1, pp. 1-553, 673-744 at p. 685; Roberts, *et al.*, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, p. 647.

³³ J. C. Holt, *Colonial England 1066-1215* (London and Rio Grande, 1997), pp. 13-17.

³⁴ *DML*, 6, p. 326.

³⁵ J. H. Round, 'Bernard the King's Scribe', *EHR*, 55 (1899), pp. 417-430 at p. 429; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 7.

³⁶ *DML*, 6, p. 1771b-c; J. Hunter (ed.), *The Pipe Rolls of 2-3-4 Henry II, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Edition of 1844* (London, 1930), p. 53 (1155-6, Peter).

³⁷ *Pipe Rolls*, 11 Hen. II, 1164-65, pp. 14, 48; 22 Hen. II, 1175-6, p. 120.

period 1166-81, the Pipe Rolls note *merciarius* by their town or country: Bonda of Norfolk, Hamo and Malger of London, Gamel of Lincoln, Eudo of Doncaster, Henry of Northampton, Godwin of Warwick, Thurston of Staffordshire and Richard of Suffolk.³⁸

Ailwin the mercer is thought to have been instrumental in obtaining civic privileges for Gloucester in 1165 and paid half a fine incurred on behalf of the community c.1170 when he was probably an alderman of the nascent Gild Merchant.³⁹ In 1196, William, the man of Walter the mercer, was admitted to the Leicester Gild Merchant, and mercers were recorded in the Shrewsbury Gild Rolls from 1209 and in Wallingford by 1227.⁴⁰ Serlo the mercer of London was mayor as early as 1215 whereas it would be the late 1290s before mercers were elected to civic office in York.⁴¹ Civic roles are implied for William the mercer, who in 1298 was responsible for collecting the king's revenue from the sale of wine in Chester; and in the 1280s Robert the mercer was a co-keeper of the Cheshire Exchange.⁴² In the last quarter of the thirteenth century mercers become more visible in York; for instance Robert de Newton, Thomas de Thornton and John de Haxby are amongst the first freemen recorded in the new register.⁴³ Although Alvered was the sole mercer in Stamford in the Lincolnshire assize roll of 1298, there were 7 mercers in Boston around the same date.⁴⁴ The familiarity with the mercer's trade is reflected in its use as an occupational byname such as Andrew Mercer in Faversham in 1305.⁴⁵ Margaret Mercer may have traded as a mercer, but John le Mercer, Sub-dean of Norwich c.

³⁸ *Pipe Rolls*, 11 Hen. II, 1166-7, p. 20; 14 Hen. II, 1167-8, p. 79; 18 Hen. II, 1171-2, p. 63; 19 Hen. II, 1172-3, pp. 188-9; 21 Hen. II, 1174-5, p. 46; 23 Hen. II, 1176-7, p. 29; 27 Hen. II, 1180-1, p. 88.

³⁹ Tait, *Medieval English Borough*, pp. 176-7.

⁴⁰ M. Bateson (ed.), *Records of the Borough of Leicester* (2 vols., London, 1899); Gross, *Gild Merchant*, 2, pp. 210-13; *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, 1: *Report and Appendix* (London, 1877), pp. 372-594 at p. 576b.

⁴¹ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 565; *FR*, 1, p. 7.

⁴² H. M. Mills and R. Stewart-Brown (ed. and trans.), *Cheshire in the Pipe Rolls 1158-1301, Transcribed from 1237 by M. H. Mills*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 92 (1938), pp. 48-9, 137-8.

⁴³ *FR*, 1, p. 1.

⁴⁴ W. S. Thomson (ed.), *A Lincolnshire Assize Roll for 1298*, Lincoln Record Society, 36 (1944), pp. 125-6; Reaney, *Dictionary of English Surnames*, pp. xiv, xli-xlii, 306.

⁴⁵ *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, 1: *Report and Appendix*, p. 504.

1287 inherited his surname as did William Mercer, a currier enrolled as a York freeman in 1429.⁴⁶

The records of the major English fairs reveal a common practice of grouping traders together by occupation, for example Norman, a twelfth-century London mercer, was tenant of two shops in *la merceries* at Boston fair.⁴⁷ In 1278 the *mercarii* attending the fair at St. Ives rented stalls, perhaps the same as the mercers' stalls located under the stone wall in 1284.⁴⁸ At St. Giles' fair in Winchester a street was reserved for mercers; and rows of booths were set aside for York and Beverley men at St. Ives in 1284 and 1287, perhaps a range under a single roof similar to the covered selds in London.⁴⁹ Mercers tended to congregate in urban areas, for in London their shops in Cheapside became known as the Mercery, and in York *le Mercery* or the Merceries was at the junction of Petergate and Goodramgate.⁵⁰ The Mercers' Row in Oxford was in All Saints' parish where John Tod acquired commercial premises c.1255; and there is a reference of 1421 to Mercers' Row in Beverley.⁵¹

Living and working together would foster cohesion which developed into recognition as a *communitas de merceria* in London by 1304; in 1386 the folk of the mercery complained to the king of the many wrongs done to them; and in 1394 they were incorporated by royal charter.⁵² A written account of a dispute in York concerning the weights and measures in 1398 records *scrutatores artificii mercerum*; in the 1420s John Lilling's fraudulent practices caused a scandal which was 'noysed amang mercers'; and in 1430 a charter of incorporation was addressed to the *homines mistere*

⁴⁶ G. Fransson, *Middle English Surnames of Occupation 1100-1350*, Leeds Studies in English, 3 (1935), p. 92 (1329); W. Hudson (ed.), *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, etc.*, Selden Society, 5 (1891), pp. xci-xcii, 15; *FR*, 1, p. 142.

⁴⁷ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ E. W. Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England. An Introductory Study*, Pontifical Institute Studies and Texts, 72 (1985), pp. 146-154, 269-70

⁴⁹ D. Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 2 vols., Winchester Studies, 2 (1985), 1. p. 321; Moore, pp. 36, 149, 153; D. Keene, 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London' in L. Grant (ed.), *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London*, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 10 (1990), pp. 29-46 at pp. 38-40.

⁵⁰ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 16-18; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 43.

⁵¹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum* 2, p. 359a; A. Clark (ed.), *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery near Oxford*, EETS, o.s. 142 (1911), p. 412, no. 557 (1255); K. J. Allison, 'Medieval Beverley: Topography and Growth' in *A History of the County of York. East Riding 6: The Borough and Liberties of Beverley* (London, 1969), pp.49-57 at p. 50.

⁵² Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 67, 121-8; R. W. Chambers and M. Daunt (eds.), *A Book of London English* (London, 1931), pp. 33-7.

*mercerie civitatis Ebor.*⁵³ An association of mercers were recognised in Beverley in 1390 and a company of merchants, mercers and drapers in 1446; and the craft of mercers was well-established as a separate entity in Bristol by 1468.⁵⁴

The social status and reputation of mercers emerge in some literary references such as the *Ancrene Riwe* c.1230 in which rich mercers dealing in valuable wares are contrasted with poor pedlars selling soap.⁵⁵ Matthew Paris records the Pope's admiration and desire for English embroideries and reveals that in 1246 the London *mercennarii* commissioned these wares and set their own prices.⁵⁶ Mercers were liable to contribute to royal revenue; the Pipe Rolls of 1199 show Ralph *mercerius* and his father John owed £4 4s; and the Yorkshire returns for the lay subsidy of 1297 record Richard and William among several rural mercers.⁵⁷ As reputable householders, Auti, Richard and Osbert *mercennarii* were called to witness a grant to Newhouse Abbey c.1170; and a decade later Richard and Alvered *mercerii* witnessed a confirmation that Gervase of Cornhill had granted land to St. Paul's Cathedral.⁵⁸ Around 1200, Benedict the mercer was a witness to the conveyance of a message to Osney Abbey and Thomas mercer of Stafford confirmed his mother's grant.⁵⁹ Mercers held freehold tenures of urban real estate, for example a burgage property conveyed by John the mercer in Lincoln c.1175; and the lane to Geoffrey the mercer's house in Yaxham was inconveniently blocked c.1387.⁶⁰ Serlo the mercer

⁵³ YMB, 2, p. 9; J. Raine (ed.), *A Volume of English Miscellanies Illustrating the History and Language of the Northern Counties of England*, Surtees Society, 85 (1888), pp. 1-10 at p. 4; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 35 (1430); Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 112-119; 133-136.

⁵⁴ S. Kramer, *English Craft Gilds: Studies in their Progress and Decline* (New York, 1927), p. 28; A. F. Leach (ed.), *Beverley Town Documents*, Selden Society, 14 (1900), p. 74; E. W. W. Veale, *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, 3, Bristol Record Society, 16 (1951), pp. 80-1.

⁵⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien (ed.), *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe*, EETS, o.s., 249 (1960), p. 36, lines 25-7.

⁵⁶ H. R. Luard (ed.), *Matthaei Parisiensis Monachi Sancti Albani: Chronica Majora*, 4: 1240-1247, Roll Series, 57/4 (1872-3), p. 4/547.

⁵⁷ *Pipe Rolls, 1 John, 1199*, p. 133; W. Brown (ed.), *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy, a Ninth Collected in 25 Edward I*, YASRS, 16 (1894), pp. 100, 147.

⁵⁸ DML, 6, p. 1771b-c (5 *mercennarius*); F. M. Stenton (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, British Academy Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales, 5 (1920), p. 198, no. 264; M. Griffiths (ed.), *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, London, Ninth to Thirteenth Century*, Camden Society, 3rd series, 58 (1939), p. 135, no. 175.

⁵⁹ H. E. Salter (ed.), *Cartulary of Osney Abbey*, 2, Oxford Historical Society, 90 (1929), pp. 121, 277, nos. 655, 838 (c.1220).

⁶⁰ Stenton, *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw* p. 78; Hudson, *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich*, pp. 16-17.

owned scattered properties in early thirteenth-century London as did some of his fellow mercers; but few would have had the resources for the substantial tenement with wharf, crane and extensive grounds known as Brown's Place in the tenure of a succession of mercers and drapers.⁶¹ Wealth and prominence gained through commercial acumen is indicated in *Pecock's Rule of Crysten Religioun* c.1443 in which the mercer serves as an example of dealing with complicated business negotiations; and the pinnacle of success is represented by Richard Whittington whose service to the crown was recognised in a chronicle or history of England.⁶²

A less favourable view of mercers is shown in *Piers Plowman* where Avarice compares miserly knights to mercers who paid nothing for their apprenticeships; and Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* views the sales patter of mercers as trickery typifying the allegorical figure of Fraud.⁶³ John Lilling a York mercer was notorious for selling adulterated tin and lead and forging false osmonds for export to Iceland in the 1420s; and in Beverley street traders and *mercenarii* called snarlers were alleged to walk around selling goods stolen in the town.⁶⁴ A variant spelling of *mercimoniare* was used in the Wakefield Court proceedings c.1300 to describe Walter's refusal to have any further dealings with William over a cask of wine.⁶⁵ Disputes arose between London mercers and their Lombard rivals c.1357 and again c.1465, when there was a 'grete horlynge' between them.⁶⁶ A spirit of friendly competition may lie behind a wrestling match at Blackheath c.1375 when John Norwood mercer was slain; but deliberate provocation on the part of a London mercer against an Italian openly

⁶¹ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 11-12; C. L. Kingsford, 'A London Merchant's House and its Owners, 1360-1614', *Archaeologia*, 74 (1923), pp. 139-58 at pp. 142, 156.

⁶² W. C. Greet (ed.), *Pecock's Reule of Cristen Religiouni*, EETS, os. 171 (1927, reprinted 1971), p. 21; F. W. D. Brie, *The Brut or The Chronicles of England*, 1, EETS, 131 (1906), p. 449, lines 30, 31.

⁶³ W. W. Skeat (ed.), *This Vision of William Concerning Piers Ploughman*: 2, EETS, 38, (1869, reprinted 1930), p. 5, line 255; G. C. Macaulay (ed.), *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 1: *The French Works* (Oxford, 1899), here *Mirour de l'Omme* pp. 279-80, lines 25273-25308.

⁶⁴ Raine, *A Volume of English Miscellanies*, p. 4; A. F. Leach (ed.), *Beverley Town Documents*, Selden Society, 14 (1900), p. 42.

⁶⁵ W. P. Baildon (ed.), *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield*, 2: 1297-1309, YASRS, 36 (1906), p. 110.

⁶⁶ I. S. Leedam and J. F. Baldwin (eds.), *Select Cases Before the King's Council 1243-1482*, Selden Society, 35 (1918), pp. lxxvi-lxxxii, 35; J. Gairdner (ed.), *Short English Chronicle: Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, Camden Society, new series, 28 (1880), here 'A Short English Chronicle', pp. 1-80 at p. 70.

carrying a dagger resulted in a riot, quelled only by action on the part of the Mercers' Company.⁶⁷

Some idea of the places where mercers sold their wares can be gleaned: for example St. Godric of Finchale recounts his early days selling from a tray hung round his neck; and in Colchester and Beverley street traders sold their wares straight from their packs.⁶⁸ A seld is recorded in Winchester where linen was sold in 1148; and this may have been similar to the great selds or covered bazaars in London in which stations could be leased and goods sold from chests or stalls.⁶⁹ Robert Hauteyn was a London mercer who sold goods from a chest around 1261; and the alderman Nicolas Picot bequeathed the chests and cupboards he leased in Arras's Seld to his children and apprentices in 1312.⁷⁰ The seld John Tod acquired in Oxford c.1255 was an individual unit with a stall in front and cellar underneath and probably his residence behind; but the stallage of mercers and grocers noted in 1376 suggests the temporary structures used in marketplaces.⁷¹ In 1202 Martin the mercer demanded an assize of *mort d'ancestor* concerning a shop in Stain (Lincolnshire); and over the century there was a proliferation of minute shops in Cheapside as specialised retail trade developed.⁷² The huge shop inventory of Richard de Elsing suggests he had more than a shop in Soper Lane, London at his death in 1332; but single shops were more characteristic of York mercers such as the small one on Ouse Bridge leased by John the mercer in 1376.⁷³ Different locales used as selling places suggests different types of traders, customers and goods offered for sale; and some confirmation of this emerges in a survey of documentary references and descriptions of mercery.

⁶⁷ Gairdner, *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, p. 47 (wrestling); R. Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France...Named by Himself the Concordance of Histories; Reprinted from Pynson's Edition of 1516. Preface and Index by Henry Ellis* (London, 1811), pp. 630-1 (c.1456).

⁶⁸ J. Stevenson (ed.), *Libellus de Vita et Miraculis S. Godrici, Heremita de Finchale, Auctore Reginaldo Monacho Dunelmensi*, Surtees Society, 20 (1847), pp. 24-5; Gross, *The Gild Merchant*, 1, p. 128, note 1; W. G. Benham (ed.), *The Oath Book or Red Parchment Book of Colchester* (Colchester, 1907), p. 10; Leach, *Beverley Town Documents*, p. 42.

⁶⁹ Keene, 'Shops and Shopping', pp. 38-9.

⁷⁰ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 59, 60.

⁷¹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum* 2, p. 359a; Clark, *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery*, p. 412, no. 557.

⁷² W. P. Baildon (ed.), *Select Civil Pleas, AD 1200-1203*, 1, Selden Society, 3 (1889), p. 97, no. 246; D. Keene, 'London from the Post-Roman Period to 1300' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1: 600-1540 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 187-216 at p. 201.

⁷³ Keene, 'Shops and Shopping', pp. 38, 201; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 82-3, 530; *YMB*, 1, p. 5.

ii. Mercery

The foreign provenance of mercery is seen in the documents concerning the taxation of goods exposed for sale in London; for instance the so-called 'Laws of the Lorrainers' dating from c.1130 which describe *mercerie* as pepper, cumin, wax and fustian (a cotton-linen textile) and also refer to silks and fine linen.⁷⁴ A related text is the mid-fourteenth century schedule of London tolls known as scavage which was imposed on mercery, haberdashery, fustian, silk and linen cloths.⁷⁵ In the *Carta Mercatoria* of 1303 mercery is grouped with spices as examples of *merces*; and the phrase indicates that alien merchants were accustomed to selling these goods in small quantities throughout England:

*merces que vulgaritur mercerie vocantur ac species minutatim vendi possint*⁷⁶

As the national customs system developed mercery seems to have become a more distinct category of foreign trade.⁷⁷ Indeed from 1303 there are increased references to mercery in particular customs accounts; for example those for Ipswich and Sandwich record diverse '*mercium*' and in Dover there was an array of mercery, some noted as minute and other consignments grouped with spices and cutlery.⁷⁸ The terms used in the 1324-5 customs accounts from Lynn and ports in the south-west are *mercimonia* and *merces*; and in 1347 a cargo of *mercimonia* arrived in Exeter on ships from Bordeaux and Jersey.⁷⁹

The provenance of mercery is revealed in a charter granted to English merchants by the dukes of Brabant in 1296 which lists the tolls due on exports from Antwerp.⁸⁰ The names of shippers recorded in customs accounts for Sandwich in 1305-6 suggest origins throughout Europe, particularly Italy, France, the Low Countries and

⁷⁴ M. Bateson, 'A London Municipal Collection of the Reign of John', *EHR*, 17 (1902), pp. 480-511, 707-730 at pp. 482-3, 495-502.

⁷⁵ H. T. Riley (ed.), *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum et Liber Horn*, 2 vols., Roll Series, 12 (1859-62, reprinted, 1964), 1, pp. 230-1; 2, pp. 57-6, 64-5.

⁷⁶ H. Rothwell (ed.), *English Historical Documents, 1189-1327* (London, 1975), pp. 515-18, no. 91, henceforth *EHD*, 1189-1327; Gras, *The Early English Customs System*, pp. 257-64 at pp. 260, 263.

⁷⁷ Gras, *Early English Customs System*, pp. 1-152 at pp. 74-7.

⁷⁸ Gras, *Early English Customs System*, pp. 266, 268, 271, 273, 311, 317, 327-8, 330-4, 338, 341, 344-5.

⁷⁹ Gras, *Early English Customs System*, pp. 374, 395-7, 523-5.

⁸⁰ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp. 112-3.

Prussia.⁸¹ The petty customs accounts for London in 1420 record the arrival of Italian galleys with raw silk, fine fabrics of linen, fustian and silk, and other types of linen for napery and kerchiefs.⁸² Linen textiles from Prussian and German territories, the Low Countries and northern France came into most ports though did so in vast quantities only into London.⁸³ London mercers were increasingly involved in the import and distribution of linen, and would be particularly affected by restrictions on trade such as the prohibition in 1439 against purchasing any mercery in the territories of Flanders, Brabant or Hainault.⁸⁴ This was typified as the provenance for mercery, haberdashery and grocery in the fifteenth-century poem, *The Libelle of Englyshe Policye*.⁸⁵

An idea of the physical characteristics of mercery can be seen in the way it was packaged for transport, such as the chest full of mercery wares worth £60 lost at sea in 1402.⁸⁶ The cloth, hats, belts and purses ordered from Simon de Swanland by the Archbishop of York in the 1320s were to be made into a truss '*enun fardel come les merces menont lour mercerie*'.⁸⁷ Italian merchants used a variety of packing for their cargoes arriving in London in 1420: silk fabrics laid between sheets of paper and into '*couples*', raw silk bundled into fardles, silk fringe placed into boxes, and thread put into packs.⁸⁸ Kerchiefs from Cyprus or made from *tartaryn* and satin velvet were packed in chests, fustian was rolled into bales and pieces of cotton, napery and towelling may have been wrapped in canvas. In 1399 the records for Colchester report that men came to town with fardels on their backs and 'males' full of mercery;

⁸¹ Gras, *Early English Customs System*, pp. 326-333.

⁸² Gras, *Early English Customs System*, pp. 511-4.

⁸³ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp. 123-4; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 99.

⁸⁴ *CCR, 1435-41*, p. 282 (26 June 1439).

⁸⁵ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 117, 152, 224, 235, 296-7, 466; T. Wright (ed.), *Political Poems and Song Relating to English History, Composed During the Period from the Accession of Edw. III to that of Ric. III*, Roll Series, 14/2 (1861), here *The Libelle of Englyshe Policye*, pp. 157-205 at pp. 168, 179.

⁸⁶ *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, 7: 1399-1422, pp. 113-5, no. 226 at p. 114.

⁸⁷ J. H. Bloom, 'Simon de Swanland and King Edward II', *Notes and Queries*, 11th series, 4 (July-December 1911), pp. 1-2.

⁸⁸ Gras, *The Early English Customs System*, pp. 510-14.

and in 1442 a mercer in Beverley had mercer-ware [*sic*] in both foot-and horse packs worth 40 shillings.⁸⁹

The way mercery was quantified is also indicative of its physical properties and appearance. *The Nouble of Weyghte*, a fifteenth-century tract, has a category for diverse wares in the mercery which gives the standard measurements or assize for a range of imported textiles.⁹⁰ *Fustian* and *vustian* were to contain 30 and 15 yards respectively; *dornyk*, a linen originally from Tournais, was to be 28 yards long; and linen or cotton *buckrams* were to measure 40 yards in length unless they were short ones of 5¼ yards. The standard length for silks such as *bord Alexander* was 28 yards and for the less expensive *tartaryn* 10 yards; and the specially finished lawn and *umple* typically used for kerchiefs were to be folded into sixteen pleats each 1 yard broad. The hundred of canvas and linen was a length of 100 or 120 ells; and the chief was another term for a piece of cloth which varied in length from 10 ells for *sindon* to 14 ells for *fustian*.⁹¹ The dozen or gross was a method of counting out small wares in groups of 12 or 144; for example silk and other types of laces, points (laces with metal tips), purses, knives, balls and string.⁹² Some mercery was weighed such as thread and raw silk; and it was by *pois de mercerie* that Gilbert Maghfild sold raw silk in the 1390s.⁹³

These methods of quantification together with the type of packaging indicate that mercery was compact, of little weight and bulk. As cargo on board a ship mercery would take up little space and it could be carried overland by packhorse, factors which would keep transportation costs low. As to the value of mercery, the fact that it was imported indicates a sufficient value to be worth the time, risk and expense involved in the many stages involved from manufacturer to final customer. A vital

⁸⁹ Benham, *The Oath Book or Red Parchment Book of Colchester*, p. 10; W. T. Barbour (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History 4: The History of Contract in Early English Equity* (Oxford, 1914), p. 182, bundle IX, no. 382.

⁹⁰ H. Hall and F. J. Nicholas (eds.), 'Select Tracts and Table Books Relating to English Weights and Measures, 1100-1742' in *Camden Miscellany XV*, Camden, 34, series 41 (London, 1929), 'The Nouble of Weyghts', pp. 1-68 at pp. 12-20, 28.

⁹¹ R. D. Connors, *The Weights and Measures of England* (London, 1987), pp. 94, 320-1, 231; Hall and Nicholas, 'Select Tracts and Table Books', p. 28.

⁹² Hall and Nicholas, 'Select Tracts and Table Books', pp. 11, 17.

⁹³ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 3, 30-1; E. Rickert, 'Documents and Records: Extracts from a Fourteenth Century Account Book', *Modern Philology*, 24 (1926-7), pp. 111-19 at p. 116.

factor of course was the consumer demand for articles aptly described c.1170 as the minute mercery which St. Godric of Finchale carried from place to place.⁹⁴

Some idea of redistribution of mercery from port of entry to the provinces is reflected in local customs accounts, such as the Torksey tolls which were imposed on all goods, chattels and *mercimonia* passing through in 1228.⁹⁵ The murage accounts for Dublin charged 1d for every hundred of linen web, canvas and Irish cloth; ½d for each cloth of silk with gold, *samite*, *diaper* and *baudkin* and ¼d for other silk cloths and the chief of *cendal*.⁹⁶ A schedule dating from 1283 of tolls in King's Lynn describes small *mercimonia* as cheese, apples and butter, but these would not be the contents of the locked chests of *mercimonia* recorded in a related inquisition into the amounts charged.⁹⁷ In Norwich c.1333 tolls for goods coming into the market included ½d for the 'fees' (?pack) of a man of mercery; and the local customs accounts for Exeter 1266-1321 record fardles of mercery both large and small, fardles of towels, a tun cask full of towels and tablecloths, ells of *tartaryn* and pieces, seams, yards, ells, fardles and quarters of linen.⁹⁸ In the fifteen century tolls were imposed on ships and goods arriving in Dunwich, for example 2d and 4d for a 'hundred' of linen depending on whether it was worse or better quality; and in the York murage of 1510 a toll of ¼d was to be levied on each fardel of mercery ware from any country that was greater in value than 5s.⁹⁹

Mercers would have several opportunities to become involved in the distribution of mercery and their particular role would depend primarily on their own capital resources. The range of mercery from small trifles to sumptuous fabrics would allow for variable investments by the mercer in that the range of goods handled could be restricted or the quality or the quantity. The demand for mercery would depend on the needs and resources of the customer and, potentially, the different quality of

⁹⁴ Stevenson, *S. Godrici, Heremita de Finchale*, p. 25.

⁹⁵ Gras, *Early English Customs System*, p. 156; F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 311 citing B.M. Rot. Cott. II, 14.

⁹⁶ *CPR, 1281-92*, p. 2.

⁹⁷ D. M. Owen (ed.), *The Making of King's Lynn. A Documentary Survey*, Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 9 (1984), pp. 99-102, nos. 76, 77.

⁹⁸ W. Hudson and J. C. Tingey (eds.), *The Records of the City of Norwich* (2 vols., London, 1910), 2, p. 202; M. Kowaleski (ed.), *The Local Customs Accounts of the Port of Exeter 1266-1321*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society (1993), pp. 25, 46 *seq.*

⁹⁹ Gras, *Early English Customs System*, p. 192; *YCR*, 3, pp. 32-3.

goods would match the different quality of clients.¹⁰⁰ The evidence of local and national customs accounts and inventories clearly indicates a steady if not increasing demand for all the wares known as mercery and for the services of several middlemen or agents of trade: the itinerant pedlar, the long distance chapman, the urban retail shopkeeper, the large-scale supplier, the royal purveyor and the importer.

The activity of mercers at fairs has already been noted, as well as their stalls at markets. The street trader and pedlar would supply small wares directly to the customer, perhaps at the lower end of the market; whereas the agent taking his sumptuous *mersimonia* from Battle Abbey to the chamber at Alciston would represent a higher class of consumer.¹⁰¹ Bodekin *mercemonarus de Lesclus* supplied the royal wardrobe with hose during the preparations in 1332 for the marriage of Eleanor, sister of Edward III; and Richard Whittington was a veritable royal purveyor of cloths of gold, damasks, taffetas, velvets and gold-embroidered velvets which during some years in the 1390s were valued over £3,000.¹⁰² However it was as urban shopkeepers that most mercers earned their livelihood. Gower provides a satirical but perhaps accurate description of their tricks, jokes and sales patter to entice the vain and vulnerable into their shops; and then to purchase bedding, silks, satins and imported cloths, kerchiefs and ostrich feathers.¹⁰³ York mercers turned to London to purchase stock for their shops, for instance John Gaytenby and Thomas Grissop were indebted to London mercers at their deaths in 1334 and 1446.¹⁰⁴ William Bedale was repaid 7s 5d for 2 pleasts of *umple* purchased in London when John Lilling was there on Mercers' Guild business in 1430.¹⁰⁵ It was at a mercer's shop in Cheapside in 1464 where the gentry family of Howard purchased 10 yards of *sarcenet*; and in

¹⁰⁰ Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, p. 106

¹⁰¹ *DML*, 6, p. 1772c (1s *mercimonium*) citing S. R. Scargill-Bird (ed.), *Custumals of Battle Abbey, 1283-1312*, Camden Society, new series, 41 (1887), p. 54.

¹⁰² C. M. Barron, 'Richard Whittington. The Man Behind the Myth' in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds.), *Studies in London History Presented to Philip Edmund Jones* (London, 1969), pp. 197-250 at pp. 200-1.

¹⁰³ Macaulay, *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 1, *Mirour de l'Onme*, pp. 279-80, lines 25273-96; W. B. Wilson (trans.), *John Gower. Mirour de l'Omme (The Mirror of Mankind)*, (East Lansing, Michigan, 1992), pp. 331-2, lines 25273-96.

¹⁰⁴ YML, 2/4, fo. 16; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁵ YMAA, Royal Charters and Grants 1/2A-B; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 33.

1526, a conversation was overheard in Beverley of plans for going to London to bring home the goods available in Cheapside.¹⁰⁶

iii. Mercery as Small Wares and Fine Fabrics

Despite the trifling nature of some items of mercery, its importance as a category of foreign trade was recognised in Parliamentary legislation such as the Act of 2 Richard II which refers to both *petites* and *grosses merceries*.¹⁰⁷ Examples of small mercery are given as gold and silver wire, coverchiefs and all manner of small wares; and also to large mercery such as lengths of gold or of silver cloth, silk, *sendal*, napery, linen and canvas.¹⁰⁸ A good idea of the small mercery is given in literary descriptions with the mercer or pedlar the subject of disapproval. The poem dated c.1400, *The Song Against the Friars*, implies that monks wandered around acting like pedlars of mercery and selling purses, pins, knives, girdles and gloves.¹⁰⁹ Wycliff, around the same date, typified pedlar's wares as knives, purses, pins, girdles, spices, silk, precious skins and furs for women.¹¹⁰ The term used to classify the goods sold by Hagiography in 'The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man' is mercery and ointments, knives, combs, mirrors, head bands and hair nets are given as examples.¹¹¹

An early fourteenth-century French ditty *le Dit du Mercier* catalogues a fascinating array of small wares which can be sorted into eight categories: cloth, clothing accessories, dress-making equipment, jewellery and trinkets, toiletry articles, groceries, containers and miscellaneous.¹¹² Articles for personal hygiene included combs, mirrors, razors, tweezers, ear-picks and tooth-picks, soap, rouge and whitening; sewing accessories included sharp needles, pincushions, thimbles and

¹⁰⁶ T. H. Turner (ed.), *The Expenses and Accounts of Sir John Howard: Manners and Household Expenses of England in the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Roxburgh Club, 57 (1841), p. 248; Keene, 'Shops and Shopping', p. 31.

¹⁰⁷ SR, 2, pp. 6-8, st.1, c.1 (2 Ric. II: All merchants may buy and sell).

¹⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹ Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, 1, here 'Songs Against the Friars', pp. 263-268 at p. 264.

¹¹⁰ F. D. Matthew, *The English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted*, EETS, 74 (1880), here 'Wyclif's English Tracts', I, pp. 1-28 at p. 12.

¹¹¹ F. J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man Translated by John Lydgate*, EETS, extra series, 77, 93 and 92 (1899, 1901, 1904, reprinted as one volume, 1975), pp. 563, 594, 596-7, 601, lines 22126, 22247, 22252, 22332-44, 22368, 22383, 22520, 22534.

¹¹² F. W. Fairholt, *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume* (London, 1849), here *Le Dit du Mercier*, pp. 7-15.

netting shuttles; and small tools were fishhooks, awls for leather, lancets for bleeding and crimping irons. Grocery was represented by dried fruit, nuts, ginger, saffron, spices, cumin and pepper; and these were typically part of a provincial mercer's stock in trade though not in London.¹¹³

The narrow wares on offer in *le Dit* were laces made of silk, linen and leather, points with metal tips, braids and short silk plaits suitable for seal tags. Also sold were buckles and chains for belts or girdles which came in several colours and were ornamented with metal plaques. More luxurious narrow wares were made from silk and metal threads produced by silkwomen such as Matilda of London (1134-8) and Mabel of Bury St. Edmunds (1231-45).¹¹⁴ London silkwomen had workshops and apprentices and worked on commission, often for mercers; and it is possible that York mercers were similarly involved although silkweavers are not documented before the late sixteenth century.¹¹⁵ However there were embroiderers, *parmenters* and vestment-makers working in York; and the Minster accounts record members of the Setter family, who trimmed vestments with silk ribbon, braids and orphreys.¹¹⁶

The near-universal practice of women covering their heads, necks or chins with linen created a steady demand for both plain and special weaves. The poem called The London Lickpenny describes shopkeepers in Cheapside selling thread from Paris, velvet and silk fabrics and lawn, a fine linen used for headscarves or kerchiefs.¹¹⁷ The *Dit du Mercier* lists wimples, nuns' veiling, rich kerchiefs, coifs of silk and linen and embroidered chapeaux.¹¹⁸ The import of ornaments for the hair is shown in the Brabant tolls of 1296 which detail the contents of a bale of mercery: inexpensive silk,

¹¹³ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp. 102-3.

¹¹⁴ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp. 103-4, 109-110; Staniland, *Embroiderers*, p. 10.

¹¹⁵ Sutton, 'The Shop Floor of the London Mercery Trade', *passim.*; K. Lacey, 'The Production of 'Narrow Ware' by Silkwomen in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century England', *Textile History*, 18/2 (1987), pp. 187-204; S. D. Hogarth and C. C. Webb (eds.), 'The Account Book of the York Company of Silkweavers, 1611-1700', *YAJ*, 66 (1994), pp. 191-213; S. D. Hogarth and C. C. Webb (eds.), [Appendices to] 'The Account Book of the York Company of Silkweavers, 1611-1700', *YAJ*, 67 (1995), pp. 163-173.

¹¹⁶ S. Hogarth, 'Ecclesiastical Vestments and Vestmentmakers in York, 1300-1600', *York Historian*, 7 (1986), pp. 2-11 at pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁷ R. H. Robbins (ed.), *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York, 1959), 'London Lickpenny', pp. 130-134 at p. 133, lines 64-68; E. P. Hammond, *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, NC, 1927), p. 239; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 211.

¹¹⁸ Fairholt, *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume*, pp. 9-10.

linen for wimples, kerchiefs, crisp linen veiling, embroidered panels, garlands, hair bands, cloths of gold, linen fabrics, muslin, hose or stockings and coverlets.¹¹⁹ Disapproval was expressed about the extravagant use of linen coverings at the French court of Eleanor of Aquitaine; and a royal purchase of 100 ells of linen from a London mercer in 1189 suggests she continued this practice after marriage to Henry II.¹²⁰ Three hundred years later in Bristol the mercer was distinguished through his stock of linen 'cross cloth', probably a muslin used for kerchiefs which may have been cut on the bias or cross into triangular pieces to tie behind the head.¹²¹

The Parliamentary Act of 2 Richard II describes *grosses* or large mercery as lengths of gold or of silver cloth, silk, *sendal*, napery, linen and canvas.¹²² These were not new fabrics, rather they had been known from antiquity and imported into England before the Norman Conquest. Demand increased afterwards and accounts of the royal wardrobe and other large households record the kind, quality and use of a wide range of imported textiles within aristocratic, knightly and ecclesiastical circles.¹²³ Linen bedding, tablecloths and towels are particularly evident in inventories of urban artisans and traders; and their wills reveal the symbolic value of certain personal articles of apparel such as silk girdles, purses and knives. A range of other sources reveal glimpses of linen used in rural households and by poor people.¹²⁴

Few mercers would be able to invest in a large stock of high quality fabrics and it is assumed that most bought on commission for particular clients. An idea of the amount of capital tied up in stock is seen in Richard de Elsing's inventory of 1332 in

¹¹⁹ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp.112-3 (footnote translations).

¹²⁰ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', p. 105 citing *Pipe Rolls, Michaelmas 1190*, p. 2 (1189).

¹²¹ Veale, *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, 3, pp. 80-1; D. Woodward (ed.), *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642*, Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 8 (1984), pp. 110-111; www.appins.org/womensclothing.htm – copyright 1998 and 2003, The Appin Historical Society: Women's Clothing Guidelines c.1745.

¹²² SR, 2, pp. 6-8, st.1, c.1.

¹²³ V. A. Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', *Textile History*, 18/2 (1987), pp. 205-218; K. Staniland, 'The Great Wardrobe Accounts as a Source for Historians of Fourteenth-Century Clothing and Textiles' in L. Monnas and H. Granger-Taylor (eds.), *Ancient and Medieval Textiles. Studies in Honour of Donald King*, *Textile History*, 20/2 (1989), pp. 275-283; L. Monnas, 'Silk Cloths Purchased for the Great Wardrobe of the Kings of England, 1325-1462' in L. Monnas and H. Granger-Taylor (eds.), *Ancient and Medieval Textiles. Studies in Honour of Donald King*, *Textile History*, 20/2 (1989), pp. 283-308.

¹²⁴ C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages. Social Change in England c.1200-1520* (Cambridge, 1989, reprinted, 1990), pp. 109-188, 211-257.

which he had £37 invested in linen both imported and domestic; over £50 in silk textiles and vestments; £45 in worsted furnishing fabric; and about £152 in a wide range of miscellaneous small wares and some pearls.¹²⁵ The vestments Elsing had for sale included chasubles of *fustian*, *buckram*, *taffeta* and cloth of gold, and prices ranged from 2s to 25s each, thus suitable for both the parish priest and for the high ranking ecclesiastic.¹²⁶ The church was a major client for mercers handling the more valuable range of fine fabrics such as Thomas Cheyner who supplied Windsor Chapel with velvet vestments in 1350; and Richard Storer and Robert Holme who sold green silk, blue velvet and cloths of gold to York Minster in the 1390s.¹²⁷

The inventories pertaining to the chantries founded by York citizens describe similar fabrics used for vestments and furnishings; and though the impression is that local mercers supplied the fabric, it is likely it had been purchased either in London or from visiting London mercers. An overview of the range of mercery handled by York mercers is encompassed in the fifteenth-century furnishings of their Guild Chapel of Holy Trinity.¹²⁸ For instance, the liturgical symbolism of white linen ensured that there was a good supply of altar cloths, some of plain weave and others of twill. There were also towels of twill, fine linen squares for use as corporal cloths and a sheer linen veil with 3 knobs of silver- gilt to drape over the hanging pyx. The pillows of crewels and sample work were embroidered on linen backings and there were linen hangings painted with images of St. Anne and Our Lord sitting on a rainbow with the Coronation of the Virgin on a blue ground. There was also a linen vestment painted with fleur-de-lys, with two copes and a tunic; and two other vestments were fashioned from white *fustian*, one described as ancient. Cotton or cotton-linen textiles were used for the large red banner of *buckram* which was embossed with a gold image of the Trinity and decorated with ostrich feathers; and blue *bocasin* was used for curtains, cushions and vestments painted with gold stars.

The most luxurious fabrics used in the Chapel were of silk; and two mercers are credited with gifts: Thomas Fynch for a square of silk for the canopy in the sacrament box and John Gilliot for a corporal case of black velvet embossed with a gold-leaf

¹²⁵ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', p. 116.

¹²⁶ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 82-3.

¹²⁷ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp. 108-9, 111; Hogarth, 'Ecclesiastical Vestments', p. 6.

¹²⁸ YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 8r, 148v-150r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 85, 96-9.

image of the Trinity. Two pillows were of green silk and there were curtains of russet sarcenet and striped silk; and those of red damask were interwoven with images of the Trinity and scenes from the Passion. Yellow silk was used for two canopies or hangings, and a large *baudkyn* of blue velvet with gold stars may have been used as a pall cover. Other gifts from Thomas Fynch and John Gilliot were altar frontals of striped satin fringed with white, red and green silk and another of russet satin with three shields of white silver 'powdered' with 36 letters of Venetian gold. Dark blue cloth of gold was used for an amice and vestments were made of *bord Alexander*, 2 red, one striped and another chequered. Finally there was a colourful array of vestments: green embroidered, yellow satin, cloth of gold, white silk with roses and black silk painted with gold.

To sum up, it is apparent that when the articles comprising mercery are listed and described, the adjectives small and large are seen to be appropriate. Small mercery consisted of distinct, small articles of personal adornment and dress accessories or an array of sewing supplies; and large mercery referred to bolts or long lengths of fabric used for clothing, bedding, napery, hangings and other soft furnishings. In classifying mercery as a category of foreign trade, it can be seen clearly to have been man-made, hand-crafted or manufactured. It was ready to sell to the consumer and more or less able to be used without further processing apart from cutting and sewing or embellishing with needlework or trimming. The way in which mercery was packaged and transported suggests it was by nature light and compact; and this is reflected in the way it was quantified by linear measure or counted rather than being weighed. That is to say, mercery was not raw materials, semi-processed industrial supplies or basic foods which were other categories of foreign trade. These were quantified by weight, volume or wagon-load and were clearly large, heavy and bulky; and are best classified as merchandise. Mercery would thus be visually distinct from merchandise and further definition or description would be unnecessary.

CONCLUSION

Although mercer is an obsolete occupation in modern England and mercery no longer a term for certain consumer goods, there is considerable evidence for mercers and mercery from the early twelfth century and throughout the period under study. Etymology shows that the words came into English from the French via the Latin *merx*-. Old English terminology suggests that these Latinate words for trader and

goods traded were not in common parlance until after the Norman Conquest. It is during the twelfth century that mercers begin to be recorded in British sources written in English, Latin and French. These references reveal mercers as responsible persons, accepted as members of guilds merchant, full citizens or freemen of urban centres, property owners, taxpayers and civic officials. They established a collective identity as groups of traders or corporate guild members; and might be respected or criticised for their commercial activities, skills or business practices. Mercers conducted their trade in markets and fairs, in the streets of towns, in covered bazaars or in shops. Mercery as a category of foreign trade first becomes apparent in twelfth-century London tolls, and later in the national customs accounts which show it was imported by foreign and denizen merchants. These accounts reveal the physical characteristics of mercery in the way it was packaged, measured and carried. It was small, light and compact; and the fact that it was imported meant mercery had sufficient value to cover the costs and risks involved. Mercery is listed in schedules of tolls imposed on goods carried into and out of inland ports and towns, attesting to a wide area of redistribution; and it is here that opportunities arose for a middleman to interact between the importer, the large-scale distributor, the shopkeeper and the customer.

Mercery comprised an array of small manufactures used for personal adornment, clothing accessories and dress-making supplies on the one hand and of lengths or bolts of fine linen, fustian or silk fabrics on the other. The range of small wares was also part of urban mercers' stock in trade, and the type, quantity and quality of fine fabrics would depend on the capital resources of both the mercer and his potential customers. Mercery was hand-made and manufactured and would be ready to sell to the final consumer by retail or in small quantities. This was in contrast to merchandise which encompassed raw materials, industrial supplies and basic foods which were handled in large quantities and sold in large quantities for further processing before being sold on to the final consumer. Thus, evidence suggests that the original mercer was a retailer and the merchant a wholesaler; but in actuality the difference might be blurred depending on the scope and scale of their trade.

There was nothing new about the items described as mercery; it was the increased availability of mercery that was new, and the increased variety which implies a wide price range and broad customer base. It is in this context that the social aspirations and commercial enterprise of York mercers can be investigated; and the first stage is to look at the number of mercers living and working in York between 1272/3 and 1549, the focus of Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NUMBER OF MERCERS IN YORK

New Freeman and Established Residents

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two looks at the number of mercers living and working in York in 4 different settings: as new entrants to the freedom; as guild members; as civic officials; and as taxpayers. Each sub-section of the chapter begins with a discussion which aims to provide the background context for the York evidence.

THE USE OF NUMERICAL DATA

A new summary of the number of freemen enrolled between 1272/3 and 1549 has been compiled by occupation and occupational categories and sub-totals given for half-century intervals. This is printed in Appendix A and has been used consistently as the foundation for comparing the number and proportion of mercers to freemen; and for determining the trend of admissions for mercers, merchants and all freemen over time. The approach used with numerical data is not a complicated statistical analysis, but rather simple comparisons of numbers with a few percentages. The numbers are considered in relative not absolute terms, and sum totals are regarded as minimums or reasonable estimates. The methodology used to count, collect and collate the data is set out as the introduction to Appendix A.

THE CORE QUESTIONS

The chapter addresses the third of the core questions, why did the occupation mercer almost but not quite disappear from the York freemen's register by the sixteenth century? This question arose in the context of the fifteenth-century membership of the York Mercers' Guild, and it was not adequately answered in my MA thesis on its origins, organisation and ordinances.¹ Although mercers and merchants were the

¹ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 8-21, 109, 128, Tables 1-3, 6, Graphs 2-3.

largest occupational groups within the membership in the period 1420 to 1502, annual admissions show that mercers were increasingly outnumbered by merchants. The composition of the Guild altered around 1500, the diversity of the membership was lost and it became an association of overseas traders apart from a handful of mercers and haberdashers. The near demise of the mercer within the Mercers' Guild mirrored the pattern of declining admissions of mercers to the freedom of York. No explanation was readily apparent, and this prompted the other core questions concerning the difference between mercers and merchants and the livelihood of a mercer.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Interpreting the numerical data extracted from the freemen's register raised a series of questions about the occupational structure of York and the economic role of the mercer. The upward trend in the number of mercers admitted until about 1400 and the increasingly steep decline afterwards suggested the economic model set out by Bartlett of the expansion and decline of York's economy in the later Middle Ages.² Miller's essay 'Medieval York' enriched and extended Bartlett's argument; and Kermode's in-depth study of northern merchants has provided insight and confirmation.³ Other scholars have discussed the ramifications of expanding and contracting economies on urban occupational structure; and it is proposed to set York mercers in this context to assess the numerical evidence; and then to discuss other relevant issues in subsequent chapters.⁴

² Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York'; Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', pp. 17-33.

³ Miller, 'Medieval York' pp. 25-116; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*.

⁴ A. Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1640* (Cambridge, 1991, republished 1995), pp. 62-3, 64-6; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 201-225; D. M. Palliser, 'A Crisis in English Towns? The Case of York, 1460-1640', *Northern History*, 14 (1978), pp. 108-125; D. M. Palliser, 'Urban Decay Revisited' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 1-22; R. B. Dobson, 'Urban Decline in Late Medieval England', *TRHS*, 5th series, 27 (1977), pp. 1-22; J. Kermode, 'Urban Decline? The Flight from Office in Later Medieval York', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 35/2 (1982), pp. 179-198; J. I. Kermode, 'Merchants, Overseas Trade, and Urban Decline: York, Beverley and Hull c.1380-1500', *Northern History*, 23 (1987), pp. 51-73; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-Cycle*, pp. 72-81.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The main source of nominal and numerical data is the York freemen's register, and though invaluable, it cannot be used uncritically. The first freemen's register is one of the oldest surviving records of the city and covers the years 1272/3 to 1617.⁵ It is a complex composition collated from a number of texts and assembled at various times. Paleographic evidence suggests most entries were written contemporaneously except for the first decades up to 1307 which were probably written up retrospectively.⁶ In addition to the lists of freemen admitted each year, the register contains supplemental lists of those admitted by patrimony or by apprenticeship, calendars of civic officials, copies of their oaths, short chronicles of some mayoral years, descriptions of royal events and notes about legal matters.⁷ The original manuscript has been consulted on occasion for this thesis, but printed version has been the source of nominal and numerical data.⁸ Dobson notes errors in the transcription and problems caused by dating methods which overlapped; and Palliser subsequently carried out a careful scrutiny of both texts, readdressed the issue of chronology and provided a number of small amendments.⁹

There are also problems about using the register as a complete guide to the number of freemen trading in the city, because some residents were under-recorded, in particular those qualifying by inheritance before 1397; and women were not normally registered.¹⁰ In most years a proportion of new entrants do not have a trade designation; and some known occupations were recorded sporadically, a few occupations merged and others disappeared.¹¹ Moreover, the number of freemen would vary according to civic policy and expediency and to the underlying social,

⁵ O'Brien, 'The Veray Registre of All Trouthe', Appendix 1: A Catalogue of the Contents of York, YCA, MS D.1.

⁶ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', pp. 5-6.

⁷ Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', p. 110.

⁸ *FR*, 1 or 2

⁹ Dobson, 'Admission to the Freedom', p. 4; D. M. Palliser, 'The York Freemen's Register 1273-1540. Amendments and Additions' *York Historian*, 12 (1995), pp. 21-27 at p. 21

¹⁰ Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 31, 33, 40, 44; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 107-110; Goldberg, 'Women, Work and Life Cycle', pp. 49-63.

¹¹ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', pp. 7-10, 11-14, 14-16.

demographic and economic conditions.¹² These factors create uncertainty about using annual totals of freemen to assess the size of the population, to determine occupational structure or to track demographic trends.¹³ Nonetheless they do provide the relative numbers of 'inhabitants...entitled...to the legal and economic privileges of a freeman' and an idea of the broad base of York's economy.¹⁴ Therefore the freemen's register has been used with caution as a source of nominal and numerical information about the mercers who intended to set up their business in York. Three other main sources provide supplemental numerical data pertaining to a smaller number of mercers who established residency.

The archives of the York Company of Merchant Adventurers preserve five account rolls and an account book surviving for the Fraternity of St. Mary from which the members can be deduced, counted and sorted into occupational groups. Similar account rolls and specific lists of new members provide information about the admission of members to the Mercers' Guild, to the length of their membership and the offices held; and the diversity of occupations and the patterns of admission provide data that can be used comparatively and analysed numerically.¹⁵ Although the civic records provide nominal data in several documentary classes, it is the lists of civic officials in the freemen's register that have provided the information from which numerical data can be derived. A concerted attempt has been made to reconcile regnal and mayoral years with the modern calendar in order to provide an accurate tally of the number of mercers holding civic office in particular decades.

¹² Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', pp. 12-16, 18; D. M. Palliser, 'The Birth of York's Civic Liberties, c.1200-1354' in S. Rees Jones (ed.), *The Government of Medieval York. Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, Borthwick Studies in History, 3 (1997), pp. 88-197 at p. 103 note 68; Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 130-132; S. Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government in the Later Middle Ages' in M. Carlier and T. Soens (eds.), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities Italy and North-western Europe Compared* (Louvain, 2001), pp. 71-88 at pp. 79-80; S. Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour: the Regulation of Labour in Medieval English Towns' in J. Bothwell, P. J. P. Goldberg and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 133-153 at pp. 146-8; Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 40, 44; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 5, 48, 107-8, 109-110; Swanson, 'Artisans in the Urban Economy', pp. 46-7.

¹³ Dobson, 'Admission to the Freedom', p. 16; D. M. Woodward, 'Sources for Urban History 1: Freemen's Rolls', *Local Historian*, 9 (1970), pp. 89-95 at p. 90; J. F. Pound, 'The Validity of the Freemen's Lists; Some Norwich Evidence', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 34/1 (1981), pp. 48-59; Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 33-4, 41.

¹⁴ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', p. 19.

¹⁵ YMAA, Fraternity of St. Mary, Account Rolls 1-5, Paper Account Book; Cartulary, fos. 1r-10v, 1554-165v; Guild Accounts 1-61; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 26-31, 48-50.

Here reference has been made to Skaife's manuscript of civic officials and to the list of mayors compiled by Kightly and Semlyn.¹⁶ The taxation returns for the city of York exist for the lay subsidies of 1327, 1334 and 1524/5 and for the poll taxes of 1377 and 1381.¹⁷ These record the names of mercers living in particular parishes and tax levied at particular rates on the value of their possessions or on their person. The numerical data extracted can be used to gauge the proportional representation of mercers in their parish and among taxpayers; and to track the changes in the time intervals between. Chapters Four and Six will also discuss taxation returns in the context of inequalities of wealth and levels of current assets.

I

MERCERS AS NEW FREEMEN

In order to assess how many mercers there were in late medieval York, it was necessary to identify and count their names in the York freemen's register.¹⁸ Attempts to relate these figures to those derived by Bartlett and Miller in their analyses of occupational structure in York proved problematic.¹⁹ Therefore a new statistical analysis was carried out by counting all freemen enrolled between the inception of the freemen's register in 1272/3 and 1549. Individual occupations were sorted into 10 categories with reference to other studies of urban occupations; and numbers counted by admission per year.²⁰ Subtotals were calculated by decade and half-century from 1300 to 1549 with a shorter interval from 1272/3-1299; and then total figures were reckoned for each occupation and occupational category. A tabulated summary can be found in Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2; and these figures are

¹⁶ YCR, R. H. Skaife, 'Civic Officials of York and Parliamentary Representatives', 3 MS volumes; C. Kightly and R. Semlyn, *Lords of the City. The Lord Mayors of York and their Mansion House* (York, 1980).

¹⁷ Parker, 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III', pp. 160-171; Stell and Hawkyard, 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [1332] for York', pp. 2-14; Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, pp. 133-4, 135-140; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', Appendix D; Peacock, 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty [1524/5]', pp. 170-201

¹⁸ YCR, MS. D.1, fos. 32r-191v, 194v-209r; printed Collins, *Register of the Freemen of the City of York*, 1: 1272-1588.

¹⁹ Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', pp. 21-23; Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 114-16.

²⁰ Woodward, 'Freemen's Rolls', pp. 89-95; Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', pp. 129-14; Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', pp. 68-85.

used as the basis for the comparative analyses which follow. Before looking at the York evidence, it is instructive to review the value of freemen's registers as historical sources and their use in determining occupational structure.

A. FREEMEN AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

i. Registers of Freemen as Historical Sources

The lists, rolls and registers recording new freemen are among the earliest 'internally produced records' to survive for several English towns.²¹ These sometimes exist as consecutive series; for example in Leicester from 1196 to 1770, Exeter from 1266 to 1967, Norwich from 1317 to 1603 and York 1272/3 to the present.²² The occupation of candidates was often recorded, their status as independent master craftsmen a prerequisite; and in some places freedom was linked to membership of a craft or trade guild.²³ The fact that these records were kept over long periods of time attests to the importance attached both to the identity of those who qualified as citizens and to the composition of the manufacturing and trading community.²⁴ Overall freemen were a select group of residents with higher status than non-freemen, but their privileges were tied up with financial and other civic obligations.²⁵ The attitude and policy of the civic authority was likely to differ dramatically from place to place about who and how many freemen were desirable; and population increase or decrease, rates of

²¹ J. Campbell, 'Power and Authority 600-1300' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1:600-1540 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 51-79 at pp. 70-1; G. H. Martin, 'The English Borough in the Thirteenth Century', *TRHS*, 5th series, 13 (1963), pp. 123-44; G. R. Elton, *England 1200-1640* (London, 1962), pp. 119-28; *House of Commons Letters and Papers 1931-2*. 10: *Summary List*, pp. 663-94.

²² H. Hartopp (ed.), *Register of the Freemen of Leicester, 1196-1770* (Leicester, 1927); M. M. Rowe and A. M. Jackson (eds.), *Exeter Freemen 1266-1967*, Devon & Cornwall Record Society, new series, 24, 26 (1981, 1983); W. Rye (ed.), *The Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich, 1317-1603, compiled by J L'Estrange* (London, 1888); *FR*, 1, 2; J. Malden (ed.), *Register of York Freemen 1680-1986. Compiled from the Original Registers* (York, 1989).

²³ S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), p. 125.

²⁴ Martin, 'The English Borough in the Thirteenth Century', pp. 134, 144; Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', p. 20.

²⁵ Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 107-8; Palliser, 'The Birth of York's Civic Liberties', p. 103 note 68; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, p. 186.

mortality and prosperity or poverty were other factors that might affect the number and ratio of freemen.²⁶

ii. Freemen and Occupational Structure

Scholars working with freemen's rolls and registers pertaining to English cities and towns have analyzed the ratio of freemen to the population and their interpretations are valuable aids in comparing and weighing up the York evidence.²⁷ In Exeter in 1377, the number of freemen represented 4% of the lay population whereas in York the figure was about 22%; and by the mid-sixteenth century in York almost 50% of adult males were freemen, again a larger proportion than in Exeter, Leicester, Norwich or Oxford.²⁸ The number of freemen admitted in the 1360s ranged from less than 7 in Exeter to 24 in Norwich compared to more than 100 in York.²⁹ A surge of admissions between 1349 and 1355 in Colchester, King's Lynn, Norwich and York would reflect the need to replenish population following the Black Death; and increases at other periods might be seen in terms of expediency, changes in civic policy or expansion of the economic base.³⁰

²⁶ Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 155; Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', pp. 22-25, 27-30; A. R. Bridbury, *Economic Growth. England in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1962), pp. 48-49, 56-64, 65-69; Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York', pp. 38-55.

²⁷ W. G. Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century' in W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England* (London, 1963), pp. 68-85; Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', pp. 49-69; Woodward, 'Freemen's Rolls', pp. 89-95; Pound, 'The Validity of the Freemen's Lists', pp. 48-59; Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48.

²⁸ Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, p. 96; Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', p. 22; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 53-4, 57; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 177-8; W. T. MacCaffery, *Exeter, 1540-1640. The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), pp. 162-3; W. G. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan Provincial Town: Leicester' in W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England* (London, 1963), pp. 86-114 at p. 94; Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', pp. 67-9; H. E. Salter (ed.), *Oxford Council Acts 1583-1626* (Oxford History Society, 87, 1928), p. xi.

²⁹ Kowaleski, *Local Markets & Regional Trade*, p. 92, Table 3.2; Hudson and Tingey, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, 2, pp. xxx-xxxi; Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', p. 22 (Table 1); Woodward, 'Freemen's Rolls', p. 91.

³⁰ Bridbury, *Economic Growth*, pp. 62, 65-69; R. B. Dobson, 'General Survey 1300-1540' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 273-290 at p. 276; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 52-54; Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', p. 26.

The social and occupational structures of towns have been determined by using registers of freemen in the medieval and early modern periods. Occupations are usually grouped into main categories for analysis depending on their major economic role: trade, manufacture or service; and also subdivided into main occupations.³¹ The number and proportion of freemen in each category in one place can then be compared with another, for example the thirteenth-century data from York with Coventry, Norwich, Wallingford and Winchester.³² Similarly the information about trades in York c.1450 can be contrasted with that from Canterbury, Chester, Hull, Leicester, King's Lynn, Norwich, Nottingham and Wells.³³ Changes in the economic structure can be tracked over time by ranking occupations according to the numbers admitted to the freedom; and figures from York in the early sixteenth century can be compared to those for Bristol, Chester, Coventry, Exeter, King's Lynn, Leicester, Northampton and Norwich.³⁴ These comparisons show that more freemen were admitted to the freedom in York at all periods and in most years than in other provincial towns.³⁵ The range of trades in York was not necessarily more extensive, but the impression is that there was a broader economic base in York with more opportunities for a greater number of specialist craftsmen and traders.³⁶

³¹ Woodward, 'Freemen's Rolls', p. 90; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 49-63, 72-81; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 120-175; Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns' pp. 78-81; Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', pp. 55-63, 65-69; C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City. Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 208-19, 226-8, 241-3 and Appendix 3c and 3d.

³² E. Miller and J. *Medieval England: Town, Commerce and Crafts 1086-1348* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 324-330 and Table 6.1; J. Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets. Inland Trade in Medieval England, 1150-1350* (New York, 1997), pp. 14-18 and Table 1.1; S. Kelly, E. Rutledge and M. Tillyard, *Men of Property: an Analysis of the Norwich Enrolled Deeds, 1285-1311* (Norwich, 1983), pp. 13-30; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, pp. 249-365 and Table 26; Patten, 'Urban Occupations in Pre-industrial England', pp. 296-313.

³³ Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 60-1; J. H. E. Bennett (ed.), *The Rolls of the Freemen of Chester* (2 vols.), Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, 51, 55 (1906, 1908); *VCH, Kingston upon Hull*, p. 56, Table 1; J. F. Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich* (Chichester, 1988), pp. 46-61, 177-183; D. G. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community. The City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 64-69.

³⁴ C. Phythian-Adams, 'The Economic and Social Structure' in C. Phythian-Adams, K. Wilson and P. Clark (eds.), *The Fabric of the Traditional Community* (Milton Keynes, 1977), pp. 15-20, 39-40; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 154-160 (Tables 3 & 4); Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns', pp. 79-81, Tables 2, 3; Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, pp. 52, 56, Tables 5.11, 5.12; A. D. Dyer, 'Northampton in 1524', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 6 (1979), pp. 73-80 at pp. 77-9.

³⁵ Bridbury, *Economic Growth*, pp. 61-64.

³⁶ Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 114-6; Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', p. 23.

B. THE NUMBER OF YORK MERCERS AS FREEMEN, 1272/3 to 1549

The tabulated summary of York freemen admissions between 1272/3 and 1549 is the source of the numerical data used in the following analyses and is not specially cited, but can be viewed in Appendix A, Tables One and Two. A systematic count of the number of mercers enrolled during this period gives a figure of 756 or in roughly half-century intervals: 23 (1272/3-1299), 147 (1300-1349), 333 (1349-1399), 186 (1400-1449), 50 (1450-1499) and 17 (1500-1549). For some comparison it is useful to omit the 23 enrolled before 1399 and for other comparisons to add the 39 enrolled 1550-1599, and the sum totals are adjusted accordingly. The numbers pertain solely to those enrolled as mercers in the freemen's register and not to mercer-associates, who were known from other sources as mercers.³⁷

Looking first at the 772 mercers enrolled as freemen in the extended period 1300 to 1599, Table 2.1 sets out the figures according to decade and century. In the years up to 1349, the numbers range from 11 to 48 per decade; and in the second half of the century there were increases of 69 in the 1360s and 85 in the 1390s with the largest admission of 90 in the 1350s the decade after the Black Death. These increases may well reflect replacement of the workforce following the decimation of the plague and recurrent outbreaks.³⁸

TABLE 2.1
NUMBER OF MERCERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK,
BY DECADE AND CENTURY, 1300 to 1599

1300s	1310s	1320s	1330s	1340s	1350s	1360s	1370s	1380s	1390s	Total
11	25	24	39	48	90	69	48	41	85	480
1400s	1410s	1420s	1430s	1440s	1450s	1460s	1470s	1480s	1490s	Total
30	53	53	31	19	14	16	13	5	2	236
1500s	1510s	1520s	1530s	1540s	1550s	1560s	1570s	1580s	1590s	Total
2	5	5	1	4	1	3	4	14	17	56
This table omits the 23 mercers enrolled between 1272/3-1299.										

The fifteenth-century figures dropped from a total of 480 to 236. Admissions reached a high of 53 in the two decades 1410 to 1429, were around 30 in the decades before and after; and numbers declined steadily from the 1440s from 19 down to 2 per

³⁷ For mercer-associates see above p. xii and Appendix B, Table 1.

³⁸ Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', p. 24; Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 121-2, 130-2.

decade by the end of the century. Decadal figures remained very low in the years 1500 to 1579 ranging from 1 to 5 per decade; and it was only in the final two decades that mercer admissions suddenly increased up to 14 and 17 respectively so that the sixteenth-century total was 56. The general impression is clearly that something significant affected the occupation of mercer which reduced admissions per century from 480 to 56; that is, changes in the system of freemen admissions, within the occupation itself, in the supply and distribution of mercery or in consumer demand.

The pattern of decline is equally apparent looking at admission figures in half-century intervals which are set out in Table 2.2 for the period 1300 to 1599. In the first half-century 1300-1349 there were 147 mercers recorded as new freemen, almost a 6-fold increase on the 23 known to have been admitted up to 1299. This number more than doubled to 333 in the period 1350-1399 giving the highest half-century total.

TABLE 2.2

NUMBER OF MERCERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM, 1300-1599, BY HALF-CENTURIES; WITH ANNUAL AND DECADAL AVERAGES

	1300-49	1350-99	1400-49	1450-99	1500-49	1550-99	Total
Mercers	147	333	186	50	17	39	772
<i>Average/decade</i>	29	67	37	10	3	8	25
<i>Average/year</i>	3	7	4	1	<i>1 every 4</i>	<i>4 every 5</i>	2.5

In the first half of the fifteenth century the numbers decrease to 186 followed by a sharp drop to 50 by 1499; and in the period 1500-49 only 17 mercers were admitted as freemen. Worked out as averages it can be seen that there could be up to 7 mercers admitted each year between 1350-1399 or as few as one every four years in the period 1500-1549.

Whether looking at annual, decadal or half-century figures, the same picture emerges of an occupation that nearly, but not quite disappears from the freemen's register. To determine whether or not this was unique to mercers, a series of comparisons can be carried out using the numerical data for the admission of other occupations and occupational groups. Using the tabulated summary of freemen's admissions printed in Appendix A, there were over 19,000 men and a few women enrolled between 1272/3 and 1549. There was a proportion of freemen enrolled without a trade ascription. To gauge the significance of this in the context of mercers being hidden from view, Table 2.3 sets out the number and percentage of the freemen registered

with and without occupational descriptions between 1272/3 and 1549.³⁹ Table 2.3 also compares the number and percentage of mercers to all freemen over the period 1272/3 to 1549.

TABLE 2.3
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FREEMEN ENROLLED WITH AND WITHOUT A TRADE COMPARED TO MERCERS, 1272/3 to 1549

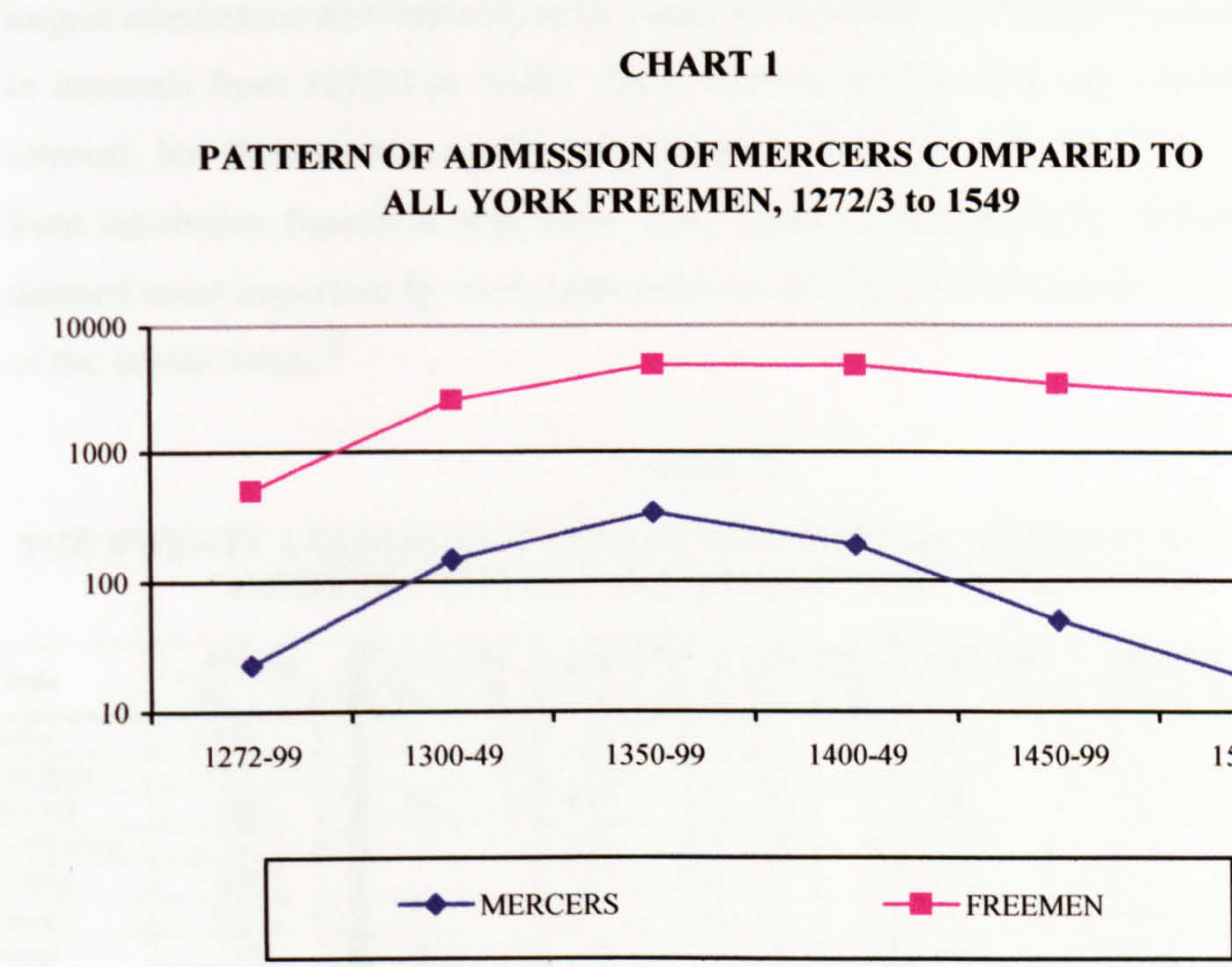
Freemen	1272/3-1299	1300-1349	1350-1399	1400-1449	1450-1499	1500-1549	Total
Enrolled without trade	180	596	354	397	54	37	1,618
Enrolled with trade	317	2,003	4,554	4,451	3,415	2,696	17,436
TOTAL	497	2,599	4,908	4,848	3,469	2,733	19,054
% without trade	36	23	7	8	2	1	8
Mercers	23	147	333	186	50	17	756
% Mercer	5	6	7	4	1	1	4

The overall figures show that the number of freemen increased five-fold from 497 in the period before 1300 up to 2,599 by 1349. Between 1350-1399 numbers almost doubled to 4,908, only slightly more than the 4,848 total for the period 1400-1449. Numbers had decreased to 3,469 by the end of the fifteenth century and continued to drop during 1500-1549 to 2,733, a figure only slightly higher than that of two hundred years earlier. As to freemen admitted without a trade designation, the highest proportion, 36%, were enrolled in the first interval 1272/3 to 1300 and decreased to 23% in the second, 1300-1349. Thereafter the trend was downward, on average 8% in the hundred years 1350 to 1449, falling to 2% by 1500 and ending at 1% by 1549. This suggests that occupation increasingly became a component of urban identity; and though some mercers may have been overlooked in the period up to 1400, it is unlikely they were after 1450, the crucial period for the near demise of the occupation.

It is important to ascertain whether or not there was a proportional relationship between the number of mercers and all freemen, that is if the decline in the number of mercers mirrored the pattern of freemen admissions. Looking at the proportional representation of mercers, it is clear that overall they represented 4% of all freemen admissions. However this representation was not constant, averaging about 6% in the years 1272/3 to 1399 and falling to 4% by the mid-fifteenth century and down to 1% in the 100 years 1450-1549. That mercer admissions do not mirror the pattern of

³⁹ Swanson, ‘Artisans in the Urban Economy’, p. 44 (Table 3.1).

freemen admissions generally is shown in Chart 1 which uses a logarithmic scale to highlight the differences.



The pattern of freemen admissions is one of gradual increase until 1400 then a plateau to 1450 followed by a slight decline to 1500 and ending up by 1549 at about the same level as two centuries earlier. In contrast the pattern of mercer admissions is more variable, showing a distinct increase up to 1350 and reaching a peak about 1400, but afterwards there is no plateau before beginning an increasingly steep decline to 1500 and ending up at a lower position than in the late thirteenth century.

Some of the demographic, economic and political factors that would influence both freemen admissions and the near demise of an occupation will be explored more fully in later chapters.⁴⁰ Here it needs to be reiterated that, even in their largest numbers, mercers were a very small proportion of new freemen; and to assess their relative importance in the occupational structure of York, it is instructive to look at a selection of other occupational groups ranked according to the number of freemen admissions.

Of the 308 occupations recorded in the freemen's register between 1272/3 and 1549, there were 4 with noticeably large admission numbers: cordwainers (747), mercers (756), merchants (975) and tailors (1,231). Another 16 occupations accounted for

⁴⁰ Swanson, 'Artisans in the Urban Economy', p. 17.

admission numbers in the 200 to 700 range in stark contrast to the majority which accounted for less than 50 freemen each.⁴¹ Table 2.4 sets out the 20 occupations with largest admissions and ranks them in order, first in terms of overall numbers and then in intervals from 1272/3 to 1549. Most of these occupations are recorded in each interval, but their rank according to numbers varies considerably. The impression from admission figures is that these were leading occupations or at least the ones deemed most important by civic authorities to the economic structure or maintenance of the labour force.⁴²

TABLE 2.4
THE TWENTY LEADING OCCUPATIONS RANKED ACCORDING TO NUMBERS
ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, 1272/3 to 1549

Trade	Overall		1272-1299		1300-1349		1350-1399		1400-1449		1450-1499		1500-1549	
	N=	R	N=	R	N=	R	N=	R	N=	R	N=	R	N=	R
Tailor	1,231	1	9	7	116	3	393	1	288	2	227	1	198	2
Merchant	975	2	1	16	64	9	184	5	306	1	216	2	204	1
Mercer	756	3	24	3	147	1	333	2	186	4	50	15	17	18
Cordwainer	747	4	2	13	129	2	225	4	170	5	120	5	101	7
Weaver	662	5			29	13	275	3	200	3	121	4	37	13
Tanner	612	6	40	1	115	4	134	7	123	9	98	7	102	6
Baker	575	7	36	2	76	7	129	8	130	7	109	6	95	8
Butcher	574	8	15	5	102	5	120	10	142	6	92	8	103	5
Fisher & Fishmonger	527	9	5	9	84	6	75	16	105	12	138	3	120	3
Carpenter & Wright	381	10	1	15	25	15	111	11	114	11	66	11	64	9
Dyer	365	11			25	14	138	6	100	13	79	9	23	15
Skinner	357	12	13	4	60	10	124	9	115	10	27	19	18	17
Clerk	302	13	2	12	29	12	83	15	129	8	45	18	14	19
Tapiter	270	14					53	20	59	17	51	14	107	4
Chapman	268	15			23	16	84	14	97	14	58	12	6	20
Cook	264	16	8	8	52	11	63	17	59	16	45	17	37	12
Fuller	259	17	3	10	5	19	90	13	66	15	73	10	22	16
Glover	248	18	10	6	19	18	61	18	46	19	55	13	57	11
Smith	237	19	1	14	20	17	60	19	49	18	46	16	61	10
Mariner	234	20	2	11	69	8	102	12	29	20	9	20	23	14
Notes:														
N= number of freemen admitted in each occupation														
R rank according to numbers														

In the period 1300-1349 the first 3 positions were held by mercers (1st), cordwainers (2nd) and tanners (3rd) and, though mercers held their place in the following half century, tailors moved up to 1st and woollen weavers rose from 13th to 3rd and maintained their place until 1449. Over the long period from 1400 to 1549 tailors and merchants alternated between 1st and 2nd place and after 1450 fishers and fishmongers ranked 3rd. As to mercers, they dropped from 1st to 4th place between 1300 to 1449, slide to 15th by 1500 and ended up in 18th place by 1549. In contrast merchants

⁴¹ My figure is 308; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional*, pp. 350-352.

⁴² Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns', p. 79, Table 2.

showed a steady rise from a low 15th in the period before 1299 up to 5th by 1400 and from then on held onto 1st or 2nd position. Finally, it should be noted that chapmen rose in rank from 16th in the period 1300-1349 to 12th between 1450-1499, but dropped back into last place by 1549.

Ranking occupations by the number of freemen admitted does not take into account the difference between the number of those aspiring to set up in trade and the number who became permanent residents. Nonetheless the signs are that the occupation of mercer declined numerically more than the occupations of merchant, tailor or cordwainer. To assess the significance of this change it useful to look at the larger picture of occupational structure. Table 2.5 set out the numerical data for 3 main categories: Trade, Industry-Manufacture and Other which are subdivided into nine groups: Provision, Mercantile, Transport, Building, Leather, Metal, Textile and Clothing, Miscellaneous and Uncertain (obsolete or activity not certain).⁴³ There is also a category of Unknown comprising freemen enrolled without an occupation.

TABLE 2.5
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FREEMEN BY OCCUPATIONAL
CATEGORIES, 1272/3 to 1549

Categories & Sub-groups	1272/3-1299	1300-1349	1350-1399	1400 - 1449	1450-1499	1500-1549	Sub Total	Total	%
TRADE								5,655	30
28 Provision	89	458	521	619	583	587	2,857		
6 Mercantile	25	235	604	595	337	271	2,067		
14 Transport	5	95	188	182	152	109	731		
INDUSTRY & MANUFACTURE								9,699	51
23 Building	6	96	365	393	248	219	1,327		
16 Leather	88	408	729	555	433	386	2,599		
45 Metal	59	307	554	482	377	317	2,096		
38 Textile and Clothing	36	256	1,216	918	734	517	3,677		
OTHER								2,082	10
96 Miscellaneous	8	123	359	690	546	289	2,015		
42 Uncertain	1	25	18	17	5	1	67		
UNKNOWN								1,618	9
No trade given	180	596	354	397	54	37	1,618		
TOTAL	497	2,599	4,908	4,848	3,469	2,733	19,054	19,054	100

The admission figures indicate that the majority of freemen were artisans and craftsmen, 51% engaged in Industry and Manufacture and 10% in Other; 30% were associated with Trade and the remaining 18% were Unknown. The smallest occupational sub-groups were Uncertain (67) and Transport (731); numbers were

⁴³ P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Urban Identity and the Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 43/2 (1990), pp. 194-216 at p. 211, Table 8.

higher for Building (1,327) and Unknown (1,618). There were nearly equal numbers for Mercantile (2,067), Metal (2,096) and Other (2,015), slightly more for Leather (2,599) and Provision (2,857), and the largest number of freemen were Textile and Clothing workers (3,677). As to the pattern of admission over time, numbers peaked in the half century 1350-1399 for Mercantile, Transport. Leather, Metal and Textile; and in the next half century for Provision, Building, Miscellaneous and Unknown. By 1549 the number of freemen admissions had decreased for all occupational groups except for Provision, but particularly for Textile from a peak of 1,216 to 517 and for Mercantile from a peak of 604 to 271. These sharp drops are significant in the context of York's prolonged economic recession and indicate a restructuring of the economic base.

It is reasonable to expect that the demise of the mercer as an occupation would have a noticeable effect on the number of freemen representing the Mercantile trades. Table 2.6 sets out the both the number and percentage of Mercantile traders compared to freemen and the proportion of mercers within the Mercantile category. In the period up to 1299 the vast majority of Mercantile traders were mercers, 23 out of 25 or 92%; and in the half century up to the Black Death, 147 mercers represented 62% of 235 Mercantile traders.

TABLE 2.6
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCANTILE TRADERS AND
MERCERS COMPARED TO ALL YORK FREEMEN, 1272/3 to 1549

	1272/3- 1299	1300- 1349	1350- 1399	1400- 1449	1450- 1499	1500- 1549	TOTAL
FREEMEN	497	2,599	4,908	4,848	3,469	2,733	19,054
MERCANTILE	25	235	604	595	337	271	2,067
% Mercantile within Freemen	5	9	12	12	10	10	11
Mercer	23	147	333	186	50	17	756
% Mercer within Mercantile	92	62	55	31	15	6	36

In the 100 years from 1350 to 1449 the proportion of mercers dropped from 55% to 31%; and in the next 100 years it dropped to 15% and finally to 6%. Here the average figure of 36% is not an accurate reflection of a complete reversal from dominance to fractional representation. In contrast, the proportion of Mercantile traders compared to freemen does not show a commensurate decline. Rather the representation increased from 5% before 1300 up to 12% by the end of the fourteenth century; and then retained this proportion until 1449 and afterwards declined slightly

to 10% for the next hundred years 1450-1549. Although the overall average of 11% is consistent with half-century figures from the mid-fourteenth century, this is a curious result when examining the admission figures for the separate occupations which made up Mercantile.

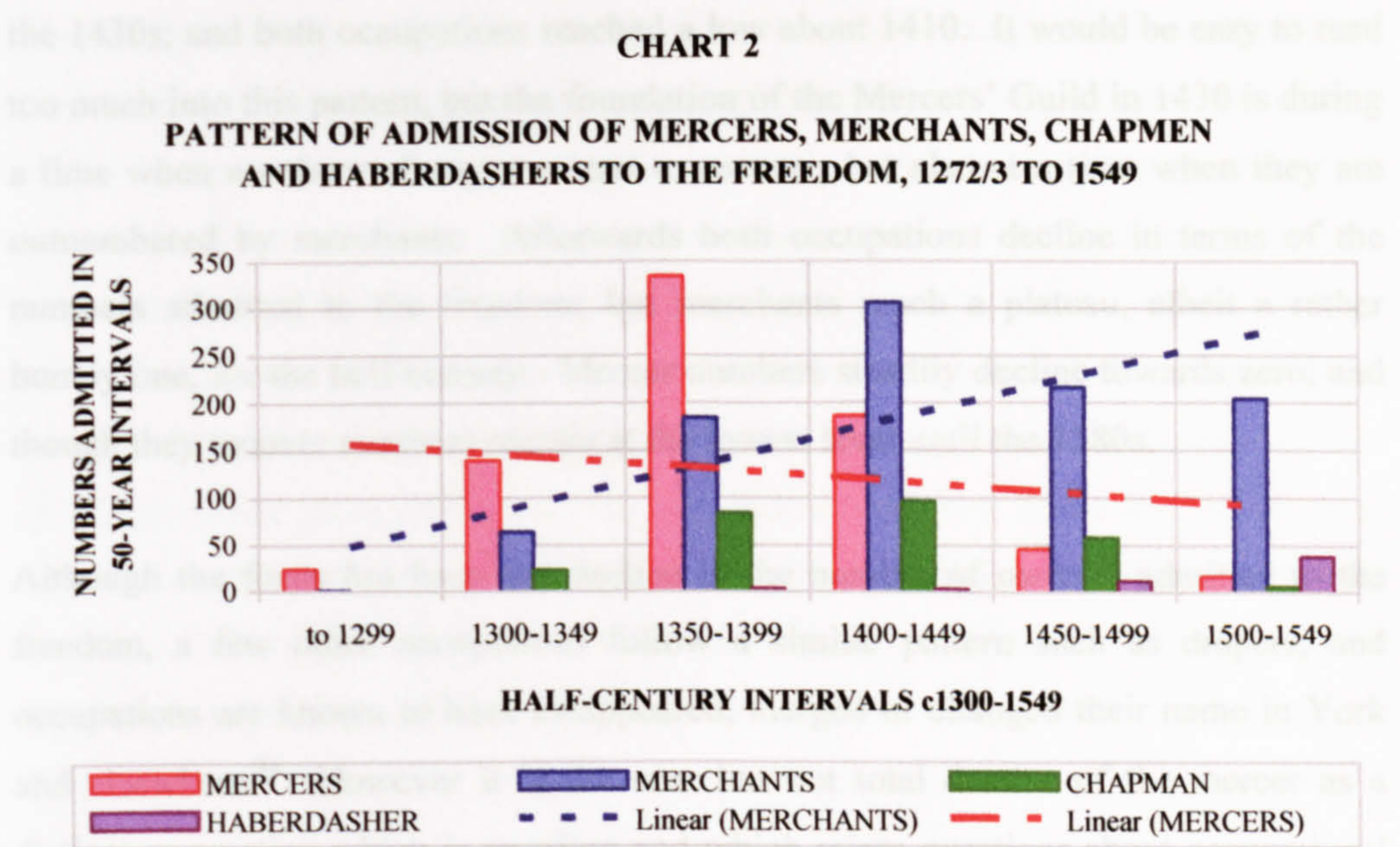
The occupations comprising the Mercantile category of freemen are set out in Table 2.7 as: chapman, haberdasher, huckster, mercer, merchant and stationer. It is clear that during the fourteenth century mercer is the dominant mercantile occupation, but that merchants begin to increase in numbers from mid-century and predominate in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

TABLE 2.7
NUMBER AND TYPE OF MERCANTILE TRADERS ADMITTED
TO THE FREEDOM, 1272/3 TO 1549

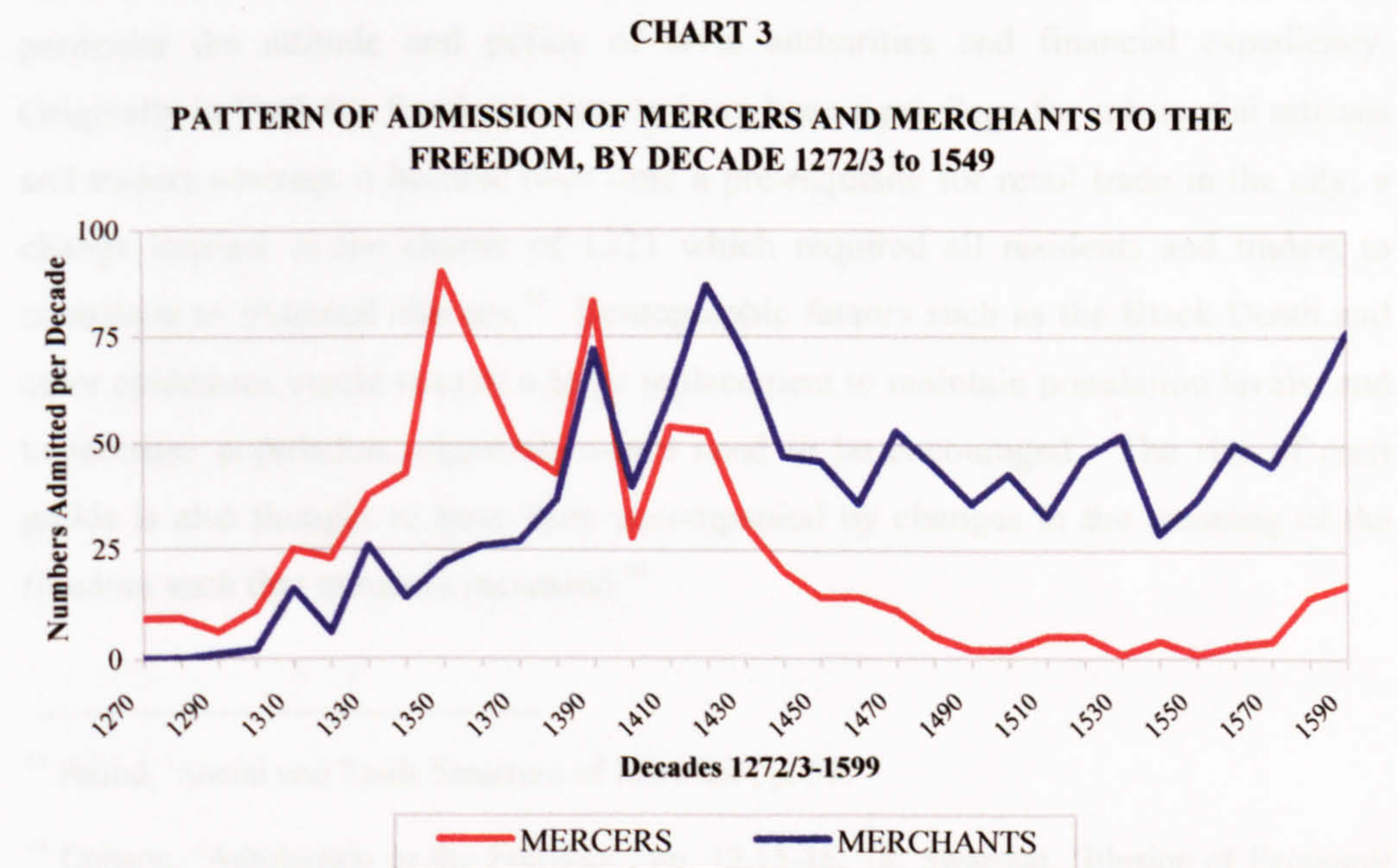
Occupation	1272/3-1299	1300-1349	1350-1399	1400-1449	1450-1499	1500-1549	Total
Chapman	0	23	84	97	58	6	268
Haberdasher	0	0	3	3	12	38	56
Huckster	1	0	0	2	1	0	4
MERCER	23	147	333	186	50	17	756
Merchant	1	64	184	306	216	204	975
Stationer	0	1	0	1	0	6	8
Total	25	235	604	595	337	271	2,067

Of the many street and market traders, the 4 hucksters enrolled as freemen were clearly exceptional. Chapmen were enrolled as freemen from the early 1300s; their numbers increased from 23 to 84 by 1400, rose to 97 in the period 1400-1449 and then decreased to 58 between 1450 and 1499, declining thereafter to 6. Haberdashers appeared in the last half of the fifteenth century and stationers in the sixteenth; but it is the rise in the number of merchants which is significant, because they became the primary Mercantile occupation. This is graphically portrayed in Chart 2 which compares the number of mercers, merchants, chapmen and haberdashers as a bar graph.

Chart 2 shows not only how few chapmen and haberdashers there were compared to mercers and merchants, but also the direction of trend in their respective admissions. Indeed it is the direction that is significant: for mercers it is downward, despite their high numbers in the fourteenth century; and for merchants it is upward though they started with fewer numbers.



The point at which the trend lines cross is the crucial period in the numerical ascent of merchants, and Chart 3 displays this as a line graph in which the numbers of mercers and merchants are plotted by decade of admission from 1272/3 to 1549.



Although not the highest peak for either occupation, the peaks and troughs nearly coincide in the period between 1390 and 1410, and it is around 1400 when the numbers of mercer and merchants were nearly equal. The highest peak for mercers was in the decades following the Black Death and the highest for merchants was in

the 1430s; and both occupations reached a low about 1410. It would be easy to read too much into this pattern, but the foundation of the Mercers' Guild in 1430 is during a time when numbers of mercers start to recover, but also at a time when they are outnumbered by merchants. Afterwards both occupations decline in terms of the numbers admitted to the freedom; but merchants reach a plateau, albeit a rather bumpy one, for the half century. Mercer numbers steadily decline towards zero, and though they recover numbers remain at the lowest level until the 1580s.

Although the focus has been the decline in the number of mercers admitted to the freedom, a few other occupations follow a similar pattern such as drapers; and occupations are known to have disappeared, merged or changed their name in York and elsewhere.⁴⁴ However it is the near but not total demise of the mercer as a distinct occupation which is puzzling and which raises questions about occupational structure in general and changes within the community of mercantile traders in particular.

Summary Remarks

There would be several reasons for the fluctuations of numbers of freemen, in particular the attitude and policy of civic authorities and financial expediency. Originally in York the freedom seems to have been a privilege for substantial artisans and traders whereas it became over time a pre-requisite for retail trade in the city; a change implied in the charter of 1321 which required all residents and traders to contribute to financial charges.⁴⁵ Demographic factors such as the Black Death and other epidemics would require a large replacement to maintain population levels; and to increase population migration would need to be encouraged. The rise of craft guilds is also thought to have been accompanied by changes in the meaning of the freedom such that numbers increased.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', p. 59.

⁴⁵ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', pp. 12, 15-16, 18; Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48 at pp. 40, 44; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 5, 48, 107-8, 109-110; Palliser, 'Birth of York's Civic Liberties', p. 103 and footnote 68; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-Cycle*, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Swanson, 'Artisans in the Urban Economy', pp. 46-7; Swanson, 'Illusions of Economic Structure', pp. 32, 38; Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 130-132; Rees Jones, 'Household and English Urban Government', pp. 79-80; Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 146-8.

The net effect of these political and administrative changes might explain the increase in numbers of mercers admitted as freemen from 1320 and 1400, but not the pattern of the fifteen-century sharp decline in numbers. Thus subsequent chapters will address some of the underlying causes which restructured mercantile occupations including the near demise of the mercer. Moreover, in carrying out a nominal linkage search for mercers enrolled as freemen, about 60% could be identified in other York records. That is, around 40% of mercer freemen could not be traced further and this raised questions about urban success and failure and why some mercers became visible and others invisible. Here it is useful to look at the number of mercers who became established residents, information which can be extracted from the 3 other main sources, starting with the records of their corporate associations.

II

MERCERS AS FRATERNITY AND GUILD MEMBERS

York mercers were members of the fourteenth-century Fraternity of St. Mary and the fifteenth-century Mercers' Guild. Numerical data pertaining to the membership can be extracted from the accounts of both corporate bodies and show that mercers started out as the largest of the constituent groups. Within the Mercers' Guild, their numbers dropped off sharply over time so that by 1500 there were very few mercers, a situation which continued until the 1580s. At this time the Mercers' Guild was reincorporated as the Company of Merchant Adventurers in 1581 and mercers become more noticeable as members, but numbers remain low. Thus there is a relationship between the near demise of the mercer as an occupation admitted to the freedom and also as members of the Guild they founded. Again this suggests that there were changes in the commercial role of the mercer in their individual and corporate identity; and it is instructive to look briefly at the development of guilds of mercers elsewhere in England before returning to York.

A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUILDS OF MERCERS

It is hard to determine when guilds of mercers became established in provincial towns, though mercers were recorded as resident traders from the twelfth century as discussed in Chapter One. There might be a sufficient array of traders and artisans to

sub-divide them into occupations within the gild merchant as in Shrewsbury c.1209; and in Wallingford there were 44 *mercenarii* in 1227, a group which included a painter, locksmith and soap-maker, as well as Thomas the linen-draper and Hugh the mercer.⁴⁷

A number of reasons may have prompted mercers to establish more organised societies, fellowships or mysteries, and long-term success would depend on the attitude of the governing authority.⁴⁸ There also had to be a sufficient number to form a cohesive unit; hence in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1342 the mercers were one of a dozen 'guilds'; but in Ripon there were only 4 traders in 1379, hardly enough to justify the separate ascriptions of mercer, merchant and draper.⁴⁹ Thus mercers often featured in affiliations of traders, among the worthy men in Bristol in 1370 and along with merchants and drapers in Beverley in 1390.⁵⁰

London provides the earliest evidence for mercers operating in a collective capacity when in 1190 they assumed the patronage of the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon; and by 1290 were well organised as a fraternity with an administrative structure.⁵¹ Indeed parish and religious fraternities are felt to be the core of most craft associations; and can reveal commercial connections within the membership; for instance in Coventry,

⁴⁷ Gross, *Gild Merchant*, 2, pp. 210-213 citing W. Cunningham, 'Shrewsbury Gild Rolls', *RHS*, new series, 9 (1895), p. 97; *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, p. 576b.

⁴⁸ Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 361-375; Sutton, 'The Silent Years of London Guild History', pp. 121-41; Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, pp. 164-8; Rees Jones, 'The Regulation of Labour in Medieval English Towns', p. 146; G. O. Sayles, 'Dissolution of a Gild at York in 1306', *EHR*, 55 (1940), pp. 83-98.

⁴⁹ Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 32, 38; F. W. Denby (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, 1, Surtees Society, 93 (1895), pp. xxiii-xxiv; J. I. Kermode, 'Northern Towns' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 657-680 at p. 677; S. Kramer, *The English Craft Gilds. Studies in their Progress and Decline* (New York, 1927), p. 104 note 8.

⁵⁰ F. B. Bickley (ed.), *The Little Red Book of Bristol*, 1 (Bristol, 1900), p. 51; Leach, *Beverley Town Documents*, p. 33.

⁵¹ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 5-12, 47-71; L. Lyell and F. D. Watney (eds.), *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company, 1453-1527*, (Cambridge, 1936), p. viii; Herbert, *Twelve Great Livery Companies*, 1, p. 232.

King's Lynn and York.⁵² Topographical references indicate distinct communities of mercers, for instance Mercers' Row in Nottingham or the Mercery in London and in York.⁵³ The latter was a station for the York Corpus Christi Plays, and mercers were responsible for producing one of the episodes or pageants from 1376, a signifier of collective action and identity.⁵⁴

In fact mercers became fully integrated into the system of craft guilds in the late fourteenth century.⁵⁵ This process is attributed to the legislation of 1363 and seen as a 'political and administrative move' which required artisans to practise one craft and for searchers to be appointed as policemen to control the work-force.⁵⁶ York mercers were not exempt and searchers were in place by 1396.⁵⁷ In light of this legislation it is interesting that London mercers received their first royal charter of incorporation in 1394; and by 1430 the York mercers followed suit.⁵⁸ These charters converted their fraternal and trade organisations into legal corporations with a range of associated rights and privileges.⁵⁹ Incorporation was rare and implied a level of wealth beyond most groups of traders; this alone set the London and York mercers in a class apart; even so provincial mercers were often the leading guild in their communities.⁶⁰

⁵² M. D. Harris and G. Templeman (eds.), *The Register of the Guild of Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry*, Dugdale Society, 13 (1935), p. xxiii; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 118-122; Gross, *Gild Merchant*, 2, pp. 151-70, 379-80; H. F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (London, 1919), pp. 138-238.

⁵³ J. C. Cox (ed.), *Records of the Borough of Northampton*, 2 (Northampton, 1898), pp. 174, 247, 261; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 16-20; J. Watney (ed.), *Some Account of the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon, in the Cheap, London, etc* (London, 1892, 2nd edition 1906), p. 8; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, pp. 124-5; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 43.

⁵⁴ *YChA*, pp. 91, 106, 123; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government' in S. Rees Jones (ed.), *The Government of Medieval York. Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, Borthwick Studies in History, 3 (1997), pp. 141-163 at p. 152; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 111.

⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Introduction to English Medieval Towns*, pp. 166-7.

⁵⁶ Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 33, 39-40; Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1464', pp 108-140 at pp. 117, 121, 124.

⁵⁷ *YMB*, 2, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 121-128; Herbert, *Twelve Great Livery Companies*, p. 242; Smith, *Guide*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ G. Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (London, 1908, 4th edition, 1963), pp. 161, 166, 170; Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 99.

⁶⁰ Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', p. 32; Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, p. 4.

The process of guild formation and reformation continued in the fifteenth century in many towns: Bristol, Coventry, Leicester, Norwich, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Southampton and Winchester.⁶¹ Kramer studied the amalgamation of traders and certain artisans into complex trading associations whose collective identity was that of mercer or merchant; and these societies or guilds are found in Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Gateshead, Ipswich, Lichfield, Northampton, Norwich, Oxford, Preston, Reading and York.⁶² A further stage was the formation of chartered Companies of Merchant Adventurers, which might include mercers, for example in Bristol, Chester, Exeter, Hull, Newcastle and York.⁶³ It must be recognised that throughout a long period of development the purpose and organisation of associations of mercers could be quite different at different stages despite a thread of continuity.⁶⁴

There are 3 additional points to bear in mind when considering York mercers in their corporate bodies: they had a fraternal organisation at an early date (1357); they were incorporated by royal charter (1430); and, though the occupation nearly disappeared, the name of their guild did not change until 1581. Nonetheless, by the early sixteenth century the London Mercers were ranked first among the twelve leading companies, and in the provinces individual mercers become increasingly visible.

B. THE NUMBER OF YORK MERCERS AS GUILD MEMBERS

1357-1371 and 1420-1529

i. The Fraternity of St. Mary, 1357 to c.1371

A handful of account rolls survive from the Fraternity for the years 1356 to 1371.⁶⁵ They contain the names of 334 men and 113 women who pledged or paid various amounts of money into the common fund apparently as members; and the letters

⁶¹ Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, pp. 4, 21-2, 23, 26-7, 29, 30-1, 166; Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 99-100; M. D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book or Mayor's Register*, 1, EETS, 134 (1907), p. 246; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, p. 320.

⁶² Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, pp. 5-7, 23-5, 38-9, 40-1, 49-50, 95; Gross, *Gild Merchant*, 1, p. 162; *ibid*, 2, p. 130; D. M. Palliser, 'The Trade Gilds of Tudor York' in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), *Crises and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 86-116.

⁶³ Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, pp. 32-3; Gross, *Gild Merchant* 1, p. 152; 2, pp 26-8, 87-9, 110-114, 185, 362, 385; YMAA, Administration 1, 2.1; Smith, *Guide*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, pp. 19, 27-32; Swanson, 'Artisans in the Urban Economy', p. 46.

⁶⁵ YMAA, Fraternity of St. Mary, Accounts, 1-5 and Account Book; Smith, *Guide*, p. 26.

patent record those involved in the foundation and in the dissolution upon its conversion into a hospital.⁶⁶ Though the letters patent imply the intent was a social and religious society, the occupations of 254 members can be ascertained and these suggest an affiliation of prosperous shopkeepers and provisioners and their wives or widows.⁶⁷ The mixed composition of the Fraternity is apparent through sorting these occupations into five categories: mercantile, provision, artisan, professional and other or unknown; with a separate category for women (Table 2.8).

Looking at the distribution, the largest group comprised 124 artisans engaged in major or minor manufactures: 10% in textiles or clothing, 7% in leather- and metal-work and 2% each in building crafts or miscellaneous trades. The second largest category was women, representing 25% of the membership; and 19% followed other trades or for whom a trade cannot be ascertained. A further 8% were chaplains and clerks, 6% were involved with the provision of food or drink, and the remaining 14% were mercantile traders of whom most were mercers.

TABLE 2.8
COMPOSITION OF THE FRATERNITY OF St. MARY, BY OCCUPATION,
PROFESSION OR GENDER, 1357 to c.1371

	Mercantile ¹	Provision ²	Artisan ³	Profession ⁴	Other & Unknown ⁵	Women	Total
N=	62	29	124	36	83	113	447
% 447	14	6	28	8	19	25	100
<p>Notes:</p> <p>¹ Mercantile: mercer, merchant, chapman, mercers later draper or merchant</p> <p>² Provision: baker, butcher, cook, fisher, spicer/apothecary and taverner</p> <p>³ Artisan:</p> <p><u>Textile and clothing</u>: chaloner, combster, draper, hosier, dyer, haberdasher, hatter, setter, shearman, tailor, tapiter, walker, weaver</p> <p><u>Leather workers</u>: cordwainer, glover, 'parchmener', saddler, skinner, tanner</p> <p><u>Metal workers</u>: armourer, cutler, girdler, goldsmith, ironmonger, latoner, marshall, pinner, potter, smith, spurrier</p> <p><u>Building craftsmen</u>: carpenter, dauber, glazier, sawyer, tiler</p> <p><u>Miscellaneous</u>: bookbinder, bowyer, packer, painter</p> <p>⁴ Profession: chaplain, other clergy, clerk, notary</p> <p>⁵ Other & Unknown: knight, servant, household marshall, those enrolled without a trade or trade not known</p>							

Although the composition suggests an affiliation of artisans, a different perspective emerges when individual occupations are considered. The main artisan categories (textile, leather and metal) encompassed 30 separate occupations each with an average representation of 2 to 4 members and building crafts and miscellaneous

⁶⁶ Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild, pp. 22-39, 59-74.

⁶⁷ Barron, 'London 1300-1540', p. 432; C. M. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London' in C. M. Barron and C. Harper-Bill (eds.), *The Church in Pre Reformation Society* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 13-37, esp. pp. 28-30.

occupations had lower averages of 1 or 2. Of the provisioners, an average of 5 members worked in each of 6 trades and of the 62 grouped under mercantile, 50 were mercers, 7 were merchants and there were 2 chapmen, 1 haberdasher and 2 drapers originally enrolled as mercers. Thirty-eight of the mercers can be identified from the freemen's register and 12 were described as mercer in the Fraternity accounts not having been enrolled as freemen; thus the mercer presence was the largest single occupation within the Fraternity and likely to have had a greater influence than numbers alone might indicate. Indeed 4 of the 13 men on the foundation charter of the Fraternity were mercers; and two of these had been involved in the acquisition of property upon which they proceeded to build their guild hall and hospital or almshouse.⁶⁸ Furthermore this group of mercers also served as masters and chamberlains of the Fraternity displaying administrative skills and financial responsibility. Twelve mercers recur often in the records as prominent members who made larger than average contributions to the funds or provided in their wills for the maintenance of the building or the support of the Hospital. After the formal organisation was dissolved in 1371, a handful of mercers continued to be involved with the Hospital and its endowment property. Subsequently the collective identity established under the auspices of the mercers, the influential core group of the Fraternity, would develop into a corporate body, the York Mercers' Guild.

ii. The York Mercers' Guild, c.1420-1529

The York Mercers' Guild was formally incorporated in 1430, but there is evidence to show that the founding members had been acting as a unit in the previous decade.⁶⁹ Thereafter the membership expanded to comprise a diverse array of more than 40 occupations; and until c.1500 women were admitted with their husbands and paid annual subsidies in their own right as widows.⁷⁰ Table 2.9 sets out the membership admission figures for the 110-year period 1420-1529. A total of 704 men were admitted during this time and while most paid an annual subsidy for their wives, only the *femmes soles* or single women members are counted here. Occupations can be sorted into 4 categories: Mercantile (mercator, chapman, haberdasher, merchant and mariner); Provision (grocer, spicer, apothecary, fishmonger, vintner and a few

⁶⁸ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild', pp 32-39.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 94-98, 133-6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 153-4.

others); Artisan (building trades, leather, metal and textile manufacture); Professional (chaplain, clerk, lawyer, notary). A fifth category Other encompasses 4 sub-groups: those engaged in service occupations; those known by their rank or status; those whose trade cannot be determined; and widows. 441 were Mercantile and a much smaller group of 59 were Provisioners. There were 54 Professionals and 69 Artisans; and the remaining 81 members comprised 12 service providers, 20 identified by rank, 38 of unknown occupation and 11 single women.

TABLE 2.9
NUMBER OF NEW MEMBERS ADMITTED TO THE YORK MERCERS' GUILD,
BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY, 1420-1529

	1420s	1430s	1440s	1450s	1460s	1470s	1480s	1490s	1500s	1510s	1520s	Total
Mercantile	31	29	45	53	24	51	45	31	62	35	35	441
Provision	0	0	3	2	3	14	12	12	13	0	0	59
Professions	2	2	3	2	1	9	11	2	12	7	3	54
Artisan	0	3	8	3	6	15	11	11	7	3	2	69
Other	2	3	4	5	5	25	12	4	17	3	1	81
TOTAL	35	37	63	65	39	114	91	60	111	48	41	704

The membership reveals shifts in occupation amongst the mercers in particular; and it is instructive to consider their presence as members of the community of mercers, that is as mercers enrolled as freemen and mercer-associates known from other documentary sources as mercers.⁷¹ Table 2.10 shows admission to membership of 86 mercers and 31 mercer-associates from 1420 to 1529 or 117 representatives of the community of mercers compared to 326 merchants.

TABLE 2.10
NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY OF MERCERS ADMITTED TO
YORK MERCERS' GUILD, 1420-1529 COMPARED TO NUMBER OF MERCHANTS

Trade	Fifteenth Century								Sixteenth Century			Total
	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s	1500s	10s	20s	
Mercers	24	10	15	10	9	7	4	1	2	3	1	86
Mercer-associate	4	3	2	5	3	4	2	2	4	2	0	31
Total	28	13	17	15	12	11	6	3	6	5	1	117
Merchants	3	17	28	39	12	40	39	28	56	30	34	326
Notes: Mercers, enrolled as mercer in the freemen's register Mercer-associates, known from documents other than the freemen's register as mercers Merchants, both those enrolled as merchant in the freemen's register and other mercantile trades												

Admission figures per decade show a pattern of decreasing numbers of mercers, fairly steady but low numbers of mercer-associates and increasing numbers of merchants. The number of mercers declined steadily during the fifteenth-century from 24 in the

1420s to less than 5 each decade from 1480 down to one in the 1520s. The small number of mercer-associates, despite an influx of haberdashers from c.1500, barely boosted these decadal figures. Thus it is clear that merchants were the largest occupational group admitted to the Mercers' Guild despite the founding presence of mercers and the retention of their occupation as the name of the Guild.

Table 2.11 gives the percentage of the membership represented by merchants and by mercers grouped with mercer-associates. This shows the scale of the decline for mercers from a proportional representation of 80% in the 1420s, to about a third in the 1430s and down to a low of 2% in the 1520s. As a group merchants rose from a low of 9% in the 1420s to a high of 83% in the 1520s having reached a 50% mark in the first decade of the sixteenth century. The average figure for mercers of 17% is not an accurate reflection of their presence which declined so markedly from the 1470s.

TABLE 2.11
PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS AND MERCHANTS COMPARED TO ALL MEMBERS
ADMITTED TO THE MERCERS' GUILD, 1420-1529

	1420s	1430s	1440s	1450s	1460s	1470s	1480s	1490s	1500s	1510s	1520s	Total
TOTAL	35	37	63	65	39	114	91	60	111	48	41	704
Mercer	28	13	17	15	12	11	6	3	6	5	1	117
%	80	35	27	23	31	10	7	5	5	10	2	17
Merchant	3	17	28	39	12	40	39	28	56	30	34	326
%	9	46	44	60	31	35	43	47	50	62	83	46
Notes: Mercer refers to members of the community of mercers, that is mercers and mercer-associates. Merchant includes a few vintners and grocers.												

Clearly mercers become an insignificant presence in the Guild they founded; whereas merchants become increasingly prominent, not only dominating the membership but restricting to merchants; that is during the 1520s only 2% of new members were mercers. A preliminary survey of the pattern of admissions from 1530 to 1580 shows that around the date the Guild was reincorporated as the York Company of Merchant Adventurers, there was a significant increase in the number of mercers admitted to the freedom and a slight rise in the numbers admitted to the new company. This situation warrants further investigation in light of the underlying economic changes and the occupational structure of both city and guild.

The numerical evidence derived from admissions to the Mercers' Guild indicates that, despite a prominent position as founders and masters from 1420 to 1465, the presence

⁷¹ See above p. xii (Composition of the Community of Mercers).

of mercers admitted to the Guild diminished rapidly from the 1470s, slightly lagging behind their admission as freemen, but following the same pattern of near demise. In contrast, the number of merchants admitted as members increased; and it is hard to believe that mercers were unaware of the changing composition of their Guild. Here, the tendency for prominent mercers to shift their occupational designation from mercer to merchant is a likely factor in reducing the number of mercer members and would also blur the distinction between mercer and merchant as distinct occupations. Some insight into the significance of the shift mercer to merchant emerges in the context of civic office, the third setting from which numerical data can be derived.

III

MERCERS AS CIVIC OFFICIALS

The names of York municipal officers from c.1300 to 1549 can be found in the freemen's register, on property deeds and in other civic records; and these can be compiled and counted providing numerical data for analysis and interpretation. The names of members of the community of mercers can be recognised, predominately mercers, but a few chapmen and haberdashers whose urban success is implied by election to civic office. A significant number of mercers elected to the mayoralty were known by that date as merchants, a shift in occupation implying expansion of the scope and scale of their trade and subsequent affluence. This survey reveals the community of mercers as a small sub-group of potential civic officials, whose presence diminished over time.

A. THE *CURSUS HONORUM* IN LATE MEDIEVAL YORK

The system of government in late medieval English towns has been described as magisterial and in practice oligarchic.⁷² York's government has been deemed a mercantile oligarchy, as was often the case elsewhere; and the personnel of the ruling

⁷² S. Rigby, 'Urban Oligarchy in Late Medieval England' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 62-86 at pp. 63-4; S. Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', *Urban History Year Book* (1982), pp. 14-26; Reynolds, *Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, pp. 135-6, 171; C. J. Hammer, 'Anatomy of an Oligarchy: the Oxford Town Council in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Journal of British Studies*, 18/1 (1979), pp. 1-27 at pp. 24-5.

élite has been the focus of several studies.⁷³ It is instructive to isolate mercers from merchants to assess the degree of influence they may have had as separate occupations by surveying the civic offices they held and the number of available positions they filled.⁷⁴

Medieval local government was the preserve of freemen and wealth was a key determinant for qualification.⁷⁵ The evidence suggests that mercers aimed for civic positions, and began at ward or parish level with appointments to such posts as common sergeant, constable and sub-constable of the walls, keepers of the chains across the river Ouse, and keepers of the keys to the bars or city gates.⁷⁶ Those who held major offices were recorded more systematically: mayors and bailiffs from 1272/3; chamberlains from 1379/80, bridge-masters from 1357 and sheriffs from 1396/7.⁷⁷ The progression from chamberlain to bailiffs or sheriff was accompanied by eligibility for membership of the lower governing council, The Twenty-Four, from

⁷³ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 71; Dobson, 'General Survey 1300-1540', p. 280; J. I. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late Medieval English Towns' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 87-106; M. Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century' in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The English Medieval Town. A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 184-215; J. I. Kermode, 'Urban Decline? The Flight from Office in Late Medieval York', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 35/2 (1982), pp. 179-188 at pp. 181, 193; C. E. Carpenter, 'The Formation of Urban Elites: Civic Officials in Late Medieval York, 1476-1525' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis (Medieval Studies), University of York, 2001); A. Kulukundis, 'The *Cursus Honorum* in Fifteenth-Century York' (unpublished MA thesis (Medieval Studies), University of York, 1991).

⁷⁴ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 39-40; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 62-72, 92-110.

⁷⁵ S. Rigby and E. Ewan, 'Government, Power and Authority 1300-1540' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1, pp. 291-312 at p. 301; Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 122-5.

⁷⁶ *YMB* 1, pp. 18-20, 24, 43, 151-4, 154-5; *YMB* 2, pp. 90, 260-1; Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour, p. 137.

⁷⁷ *YCA*, MS. D.1, Freemen's Register, fos. 330-331; Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 70-5; *YChA*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii; C. E. Carpenter, 'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridgemaster in York 1450-1499' (unpublished MA thesis, Medieval Studies, University of York, 1995/6); Kulukundis, '*Cursus Honorum*', Appendix list of 15th century officials; D. J. F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power. Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire 1389-1547* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 269-285; Kightly and Semlyen, *Lords of the City*, pp. 93-96 list of mayors 1217-1981.

which aldermen were chosen.⁷⁸ Aldermen were appointed for life and comprised the upper council, The Twelve, from which mayors were selected from the 1370s.⁷⁹

B. THE NUMBER OF YORK MERCERS AS CIVIC OFFICIALS, 1300 to 1549

Of the 968 members of the community of mercers in York between 1272/3 and 1529, 155 held civic office as chamberlain, bailiff/sheriff or mayor; and most were mercers or the mercers known later as merchants and very few were chapmen or haberdashers. Their names are recorded in relevant lists in the freemen's register and show that they were appointed to civic office from c.1300 to 1549.⁸⁰ The following tables will set out numerical data in various settings, beginning in Table 2.12 with the number of positions held by mercers in 5 intervals from 1295 to 1549 based on the date of their first appointment.

TABLE 2.12
NUMBER OF CIVIC POSITIONS HELD BY MERCERS,1295 TO 1549

	One Position		Two Positions		Three Positions	TOTAL
	Chamberlain	Bailiff/ Sheriff	Chamberlain & Bailiff/Sheriff	Bailiff/Sheriff & Mayor	Chamberlain, Bailiff/Sheriff & Mayor	
1295-1349	6	10	16			32
1350-99	11	11	24	6	3	55
1400-49	9	1	17	2	13	42
1450-99	7	0	9	0	4	20
1500-49	0	0	3	0	3	6
TOTAL	33	22	69	8	23	155
%	21	14	45	5	15	100
Sources: YCR, MS. D.1, MS Register, fos. 4r-27r, 209v, 288v-310v, 318r-320v, 321r-321v, 311r-329r, 330r-331v. A. Kulukundis, 'The <i>Cursus Honorum</i> in Fifteenth-Century York' (unpublished MA thesis (Medieval Studies), University of York, 1991), Appendix.						

Of the 155 civic positions held by mercers, 55 or 35% held a single office either as chamberlain or bailiff/sheriff. Another 75 mercers or 50% were elected to 2 offices, 67 as chamberlain and bailiff/sheriff and 8 bailiff/sheriff and mayor. A much smaller group of 23 or 15% served in all 3 positions and of these, 6 served as mayor more

⁷⁸ Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 122-3, 140; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 70-1; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 121-2.

⁷⁹ Kermode, 'Urban Decline? Flight from Office', pp. 190, 192; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 44-5; Kulukundis, '*Cursus Honorum*' pp. 6, 12-14, 15-16; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 70-1.

⁸⁰ YCA, D.1, MS Register, fos. 4r-27r, 209v, 288v-310v, 318r-320v, 321r-321v, 311r-329r, 330r-331v.

than once.⁸¹ Looking at the percentages, it can be seen that for 21% of mercers their sole office was the lowest position of chamberlain, slightly more than twice as many or 45% moved up the *cursus honorum* from chamberlain to bailiff/sheriff and 20% reached the pinnacle as mayor. A further 14% held office solely as bailiff/sheriff, all but one in the period before 1400. The impression is that mercers had the potential to ascend the *cursus honorum* and, at certain periods, to skip the position of chamberlain and move straight into the higher post of bailiff/sheriff or even mayor.

The largest mercer representation was in the half century 1350-1399 when 55 mercers held civic office, a rise from 32 in the period before the Black Death. There were 42 mercers in civic office in the first half of the fifteenth century, but in the second half of the century their presence reduced to 20 and declined further to 6 in the years 1500-1459. This declining number of mercers in civic office thus mirrors the diminished numbers admitted to the freedom and in the Mercers' Guild. Nonetheless, members of the community of mercers continued to have a presence in civic office, an indication that though few they retained a high status.⁸²

The potential influence of mercers in civic office can be gauged according to the number of available positions filled. Calculations are based on the assumption that between c.1300 to 1396 there were 7 positions available: 3 chamberlains, 3 bailiffs and 1 mayor. The 3 bailiffs were replaced after 1396 by 2 sheriffs and the 3 chamberlains increased to 6 between 1480 and 1502. In light of these variations, it is reckoned that between 1295 to 1549 there were 807 chamberlains, 611 bailiffs/sheriffs and 255 mayors, a total of 1,673 civic positions. Table 2.13 sets out the number of positions by office and in intervals from 1295, the first recorded office held by a mercer, with the number and percentage filled by mercers.

During the period 1295 to 1549, members of the community of mercers filled 286 or 17% of the 1,673 available civic positions available, but the proportion varied according to particular office. Mercers held 15% of the 807 positions for chamberlains and for the 255 positions for mayor and 20% of the 611 positions for bailiffs/sheriffs. Looking in the first interval from 1295 to 1349 with 385 available positions, mercers held 44 or 11%; and over the next 100 years from 1350 to 1449,

⁸¹ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 70.

⁸² Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 63; Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and Mobile Labour', pp. 151-2; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 16, 40.

mercers filled an average of 28% of the available office, a rise seen particularly in mayoral office. In the last half of the fifteenth century, mercers filled far fewer positions, 46 out of 340 or 14%; and this reduced further in the first half of the sixteenth century to 17 out of 302 or 6%. Although the representation of mercers varied according to position at different times, the period 1400-1449 saw the largest percentage of mercers in each office, 27% of chamberlains, 34% of sheriffs and 26% of mayors; and even in the period of sharpest decline of mercers as freemen, 1450-1500, they still filled 26% of the mayoralty. Nonetheless, the decline in the number of mercers generally meant a contraction in the recruitment pool and seriously reduced the influence of mercers as a distinct occupation within aldermanic ranks; and this is reflected in the 10% of the mayoralty filled by mercers in the first half of the sixteenth century.

TABLE 2.13
NUMBER OF CIVIC POSITIONS AVAILABLE, 1295 to 1549; AND NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE FILLED BY MERCERS

	Chamberlain ¹			Bailiff/Sheriff ²			Mayor			Total		
	N=	M	%	N=	M	%	N=	M	%	Positions	M	%
1295-1349	165	22	13	165	22	13	55			385	44	11
1350-99	150	38	25	146	46	32	50	8	16	346	92	27
1400-49	150	40	27	100	34	34	50	13	26	300	87	29
1450-99	190	19	10	100	14	14	50	13	26	340	46	14
1500-49	152	6	4	100	6	6	50	5	10	302	17	6
Total	807	125	15	611	122	20	255	39	15	1,673	286	17
Notes: Mercers refer to members of the community of mercers, primarily mercers, but a few mercer associates. The number of positions available have been adjusted to reflect: ¹ the increase in chamberlains between 1380 and 1502 and ² the overlap of bailiff and sheriffs in 1396.												

The lingering presence of mercers in civic office suggests that, despite the factors that contributed to their near demise as freemen, they continued to qualify for civic office and sought to ascend the *cursus honorum* to the mayoralty.⁸³ This implies that the commercial opportunities remained for the acquisition of wealth which was so crucial a requirement for civic office.⁸⁴

It is significant that most of the mercers elected to the mayoralty were known by that date as merchants; and Table 2.14 sets out the number of mercers in civic office

⁸³ *YChA*, p. xxxviii; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 72; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 41, 46-7, 55; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 72; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 124.

⁸⁴ Kulukundis, '*Cursus Honorum*', pp. 33, 37-8; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 63-5; Kermode, 'Flight from Office', p. 189.

compared to the number of mercers later merchants (mercera→merchant), according to the number of positions held, by date of first office 1295 to 1549. For example, out of the 38 mercers elected chamberlain or bailiff/sheriff between 1295 and 1399, 11 or 29% became known later as merchants; and, for those holding a single office, this pattern continued after 1400 with 8 or 47% of the 17 mercers. Six or 15% of the 40 mercers serving as both chamberlain and bailiff/sheriff before 1400 became known as merchants; and this proportion increased to 41% afterwards or 12 out 29.

TABLE 2.14
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS-LATER-MERCHANTS
COMPARED TO MERCERS IN CIVIC OFFICE, 1295 to 1549

Community of Mercers	One Office ¹		Two Offices ²		Mayors, Two or Three Offices ²		Total
	1295- 1399	1400- 1549	1295- 1399	1400- 1549	1295- 1399	1400- 1549	
N=	38	17	40	29	9	22	155
Mercer→merchant	11	8	6	12	8	14	52
%	29	47	15	41	89	63	33
Notes: Members of the community of mercers in civic office are primarily mercers. Mercer→merchant indicates the mercer freeman later known as a merchant ¹ Chamberlain or bailiff/sheriff ² Chamberlain and bailiff/sheriff ³ Bailiff/sheriff and mayor and Chamberlain, bailiff/sheriff and mayor.							

Such an occupational shift is even more apparent in the group elected as mayor: 8 of the 9 who held their first civic position before 1400 became known as merchants soon afterwards; and though this pattern declined for those elected after 1400, there were still 63% or 14 out of 22 known as merchants for most of their working life. In the context of the most prestigious civic office and considering the interplay between wealth, status and occupation, the shift in occupation from mercer to merchant implies higher standing within an urban occupational hierarchy.⁸⁵ Recognising that most of these mercers participated in foreign trade indicates that the expansion in the scope and scale of their commercial activities had been beneficial, had increased their wealth and status and made them prime candidates for ascent up the *cursus honorum* to alderman and mayor.

The tendency for the most prominent mercers to shift their occupational designation to merchant seems to be one factor accounting for the decrease in mercers elected to civic office. Table 2.15 tracks this trend over the period 1364 to 1545, the first and last dates when mercers held office as mayor. In the 180 years 1364 to 1545, there

⁸⁵ Rees Jones, ‘York’s Civic Administration’, p. 135; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 47; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 93, 107.

were 186 mayors, 6 having been replaced upon death in office. For the period 1364 to 1399, the 36 mayoral positions were filled 8 times by mercers, all known later as merchants; and by 23 merchants and grocers and 5 men of other occupations. The first half of the fifteenth century saw 13 mayoral positions filled by mercers, 12 of whom were known as merchants; and again they were outnumbered by 33 merchants and grocers. About the same number of mercers, merchants and grocers served as mayor between 1450 and 1499, indicating that merchants held two-thirds of the mayoral positions, mercers about a quarter and other occupations much less.

TABLE 2.15
COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF MAYORAL POSITIONS
FILLED BY MERCERS AND MERCHANTS, 1364 to 1545

Positions ¹		Mercers			Merchants			Others
Date	Total	Mercer	Mercer ² → Merchant	N=	Merchant	Vintner, Grocer	N=	
1364-99	36		8	8	21	2	23	5
1400-49	50	1	12	13	33		33	4
1450-99	51	3	10	13	29	3	32	6
1500-45	49		5	5	24	3	27	17
Total	186	4	35	39	107	8	115	32
%	100			21			62	17

¹ There were 6 replacements for death in office, 1491, 1505, 1508, 1521, 1522, 1538 giving 2 mayors for each year.
² Mercer→merchant refers to mercer freemen known later as merchant and 7 others who shifted occupation similarly.

However a major change can be seen in the first half of the sixteenth century when the positions filled by mercers falls to 5 out of 49. Other occupations become noticeable and hold 17 mayoral positions compared to their average of 5 during the previous years 1364 to 1499; and merchants show a slight drop serving as mayor 27 rather than 32 times. This situation indicates changes in the composition of the civic élite, with mercers excluded on the one hand and non-mercantile occupations included on the other.⁸⁶ Moreover the impression is that merchants did not escape unscathed from the social, demographic or economic factors which caused the near demise of mercers as a distinct occupation.⁸⁷ Some supporting evidence for this can be seen in the taxation records for York which can be used to assess the change in the number of mercers liable to pay tax between the late fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

⁸⁶ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 124-50; Kulukundis, ‘*Cursus Honorum*’, pp 37-8.

⁸⁷ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 123; Kulukundis, ‘*Cursus Honorum*’, pp. 33-38; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 106-7; Kermode, ‘*Obvious Observations*’, pp. 101-2; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 67-8.

IV

MERCERS AS TAXPAYERS

Taxation returns are another source from which numerical data pertaining to York mercers can be extracted. There are extant returns for York from the lay subsidies of 1327, 1334 and 1524 and from the poll taxes of 1377 and 1381. The number of mercers liable for tax would vary according to their wealth as measured by the particular basis of each taxation; and the possibility of evasion and illegible entries and gaps in the text mean that these numbers are minimums.⁸⁸ The numerical evidence itself suggests that there were demographic changes over time which adversely affected the number of mercers; and some returns provide evidence for occupational shifts, in particular for mercers to become known as merchants and for chapmen as mercers. The information about parish of residence is also useful in tracking changes over time to occupational topography; and Map 1 at the beginning of the thesis shows medieval York parishes superimposed on a modern street map.

A. THE MEDIEVAL LAY SUBSIDIES AND POLL TAXES

A system of taxation came into existence in the later Middle Ages which took the form of subsidies granted by Parliament upon the personal possessions of the laity and they are referred to as lay subsidies.⁸⁹ The tax was levied on the value of moveable possessions according to a proportional rate which varied with each taxation and was generally higher for urban than rural areas.⁹⁰ Thus lay subsidies are cited by year of Parliamentary grant and rate, for example 9th 25 Edward I or 15th and

⁸⁸ A. Dyer, 'Appendix: Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 747-770 at pp. 755-767.

⁸⁹ J. F. Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property, 1290 to 1334. A Study in Mediaeval English Financial Administration* (Cambridge, MA, 1934); M. Jurkowski, C. L. Smith and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales 1188-1688*, Public Record Office Handbook, 31 (1998).

⁹⁰ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes, 1290-1334*, pp. 3-5, 9-10, 73-86, 110-37; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, pp. xxix-xxx; J. F. Willard *et al*, *Surrey Taxation Returns. Fifteenths and Tenths. Part (A) – the 1332 Assessment*, Surrey Record Society, 18 (1922), p. xi.

10th 6 Edward III.⁹¹ The unit of assessment was the vill or hundred; the manor, hamlet or group of vills; and for larger cities and boroughs, the parish or ward.⁹²

In 1334 the system of direct taxation upon individuals was replaced by one based on the collection of a set amount from each community or taxation unit.⁹³ The charge or quota was to be no less than the sum paid for the lay subsidy of 1332 and became the standard basis for subsequent lay subsidies until 1623.⁹⁴ Various details are not known about apportionment or assessment, but evidence suggests that many people were too poor to contribute.⁹⁵ The extant returns up to 1332 are found in two formats, as nominal lists with full descriptions as survives for York, or as summary statements which became the norm after 1334.⁹⁶

In the fifteenth century there were a 'series of experimental taxes on income' and the York returns survive for the 1436 tax on income from land which is discussed in Chapter Four.⁹⁷ The practice of individual assessments was revived in the sixteenth century with various changes designed to increase yield; and there were 4 lay subsidies granted in 1523 of which the first 2 are considered the most comprehensive, because the taxation base was wide, taxing those with incomes as low as 20s per year from rents or wages and with possessions worth as little as 40s.⁹⁸ The tax was levied

⁹¹ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes 1290-1334*, p. 9.

⁹² Willard, *Surrey Taxation Returns*, pp. 5, 17, 40; C. Dyer, 'Taxation and Communities in late Medieval England' in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England, Essays in Honour of Edward Miller*, (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 168-190.

⁹³ R. E. Glasscock (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334* (London, 1975), pp. 356-7, 366-8.

⁹⁴ Glasscock, *Lay Subsidy of 1334*, p. xiv

⁹⁵ Glasscock, *Lay Subsidy of 1334*, pp. xxii, xxiv; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, p. xxxiii.

⁹⁶ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes 1290-1334*, pp. 66-68; Glasscock, *Lay Subsidy of 1334*, p. xiv; Stell and Hawkyard, 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [1332] for York', pp. 2-14.

⁹⁷ Jurkowski, *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, pp. xxxvii, xxxviii-xxxix; TNA E/179/271/42 cited and analysed by Bartlett, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of York', Appendix D.

⁹⁸ R. W. Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records: A Guild for Users*, PRO, Guide 5 (1994), pp. 3, 23-6; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, p. xlii; Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', pp. 68-85 at p. 70; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 59, 77, 111, 134-144, 202.

on the category of wealth which would yield the most revenue, and the returns record the asset of each taxpayer deemed by the collectors as the most valuable.⁹⁹

A different system of taxation was introduced with the poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1380/1 in which the person and not possessions was the basis.¹⁰⁰ In 1377 the tax was levied at a flat rate of 4d on all persons over the age of 14: heads of household, wives, widows and servants; rich and poor except for the indigent; and the clergy was taxed separately.¹⁰¹ In 1379 this approach was tried again with the age limit raised to 16 and payments graduated according to income and status with married couples rated the same as individuals.¹⁰² The third poll tax, granted in 1380 and collected in 1381, combined features of both: the minimum age was lowered to 15, the standard rate of 1s per head was adjusted according to ability to pay down to 4d or up to 20s for a married couple.¹⁰³

Most of the extant returns for 1377 record only the total amount of tax collected; but a few, including those for York, list the names of individual taxpayers and number of servants.¹⁰⁴ The returns for the city of York do not survive for 1379, but elsewhere the status of taxpayers is given and sometimes occupation.¹⁰⁵ The returns for the 1381 poll tax however provide a range of useful information; for instance in York, the name, surname and occupation of the householder and the forenames of wives and servants.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records*, pp. 12-15.

¹⁰⁰ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 1, pp. xiii, xiv-xvii; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, pp. xxiv-xxxviii; M. W. Beresford, *The Lay Subsidies. Part I – 1290-1334. Part II – after 1334 and the Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381* (Bridge Place, near Canterbury, 1963).

¹⁰¹ Goldberg, 'Urban Identity, and the Poll Taxes', pp. 194-216.

¹⁰² Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, p. xxv-xxvi.

¹⁰³ J. N. Bartlett, 'The Lay Poll Tax Returns for the City of York in 1381', *Trans. of the East Riding Antiquarian Society*, 30 (1953), pp. 1-80 at p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ J. I. Legget (ed.), 'The 1377 Poll Tax Return for the City of York', *YAJ*, 43 (1971), pp. 128-146.

¹⁰⁵ Goldberg, 'Urban Identity, and the Poll Taxes', p. 196; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, p. xxxvi.

¹⁰⁶ Goldberg, 'Urban Identity, and the Poll Taxes', p. 196.

B. THE NUMBER OF YORK MERCERS AS TAXPAYERS, 1327, 1332, 1377, 1381 and 1524/5

In the following analyses of taxation returns for the city of York, the number of mercers refers to the number of members of the community of mercers both enrolled as mercers in the freemen's register (mercers proper) and those known from other sources as mercers (mercero-associates).¹⁰⁷ The numerical data is set out in tables according to parish of taxation, and parishes are grouped into seven locales A to G which are based on a main thoroughfare, district or other feature:

A. Petergate Area:	St. Michael le Belfrey, Holy Trinity Goodramgate and Holy Trinity King's Court.
B. Pavement Crossroads:	St. Saviour, St. Crux and All Saints' Pavement.
C. Central District:	St. Martin Coney Street, St. Helen Stonegate, St. Wilfrid with St. Leonard's Hospital, St. Sampson and St. Peter the Little.
D. Ouse Bridge Area:	St. Mary Castlegate, St. Michael Spurriergate and St. John Ouse Bridge.
E. West Bank:	Holy Trinity Micklegate, St. Martin <i>cum</i> Gregory, St. Mary Bishophill, St. Mary the Elder and St. Clement; and All Saints' North Street.
F. Eastern Edge:	St. John del Pike, St. Helen Aldwark, St. Andrew, St. John Hungate, St. Denys, Ss. Mary and Margaret, St. Peter le Willows and St. Michael.
G. Extra Mural:	Bootham, Monkgate, Layerthorpe with St. Cuthbert, Outside Walmgate Bar and down Fishergate.

i. The Lay Subsidies of 1327 and 1332

One of the taxation returns to survive for the city of York pertains to the 20th of 1 Edward III [1327].¹⁰⁸ This records 815 heads of households assessed for the tax in their parish of residence of whom the names of 22 can be identified as mercers.¹⁰⁹ Seven others were probably mercers and there were a linen draper and 4 chapmen which, together with mercers, gives a total of 34 or 4% of taxpayers. The situation was similar in 1332 when the 15th of 8 Edward III was levied; and out of 851 taxpayers, 35 or 4% can be identified as members of the community of mercers: 29 enrolled as mercers in the freemen's register, 2 had yet to become freemen, 2

¹⁰⁷ See above, p. xii (Composition of the York Community of Mercers).

¹⁰⁸ TNA, E/179/213/3, printed Parker, 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III [1327]', pp. 104-171 at pp. 160-171 (City of York).

¹⁰⁹ Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government in the Later Middle Ages', pp. 80-2.

probably mercers and 2 chapmen.¹¹⁰ It is clear that at this period mercers were a very small occupational group; indeed is hard not to conclude that numerically they were insignificant as an occupational group.

Table 2.16 sets out the data in terms of number of taxpayers and number of mercers in their parishes of residence; and gives a percentage of members of the community of mercers in their parish or two adjacent parishes; and these are grouped A to G based on location within or without the city walls.¹¹¹ In 1327 mercers were assessed in 12 parishes within the city walls in numbers which ranged from 1 to 8; and in 1332, 34 of the 35 mercers were taxed in 13 intra-mural parishes and another showed up in Fishergate; but numbers remained in the same low range of 1 to 7 per parish. However in looking at groups of parishes, small concentrations of mercers can be seen, especially in the Petergate Area (Band A) where 32% of the community of mercers were assessed in 1327 and 40% in 1332. About 30% lived in the parishes labelled Pavement Crossroads and the Central District (Bands B and C) in 1327; and fell slightly to 26% in 1332. The parishes along Micklegate and the approaches to Ouse Bridge (Bands D and E) were the residence of 32% of the community of mercers in 1327 and 25% in 1334.

The impression is that the Petergate Area was more attractive commercially to mercers in 1334 than it had been in 1327, but that they did not abandon the parishes along the main thoroughfare and the single bridged crossing of the Ouse. Considering the commercial role of the mercer to have been a retail distributor of imported textiles and clothing accessories, it might be assumed that their Petergate shops were located in a prime retail district, adjacent to the Minster precinct on two sides with the potential for return customers. There shops might also line Petergate and Goodramgate leading at one end from major entries into the city (Bootham and Monk Bars) down to the main meat market in the Shambles. Mercers might reasonably hope to capture passing trade, particularly those entering the Minster precinct or sufficiently affluent to buy meat. What is noticeable is that mercers are conspicuous by their absence in the Eastern Edge parishes and outside the city walls, an indication that these were not as attractive for retail shopkeepers.

¹¹⁰ TNA, E/179/217/5 (1332) printed, but wrongly dated 1334 by Stell and Hawkyard, 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 for York', pp. 2-14 at p. 2.

¹¹¹ See Map 1, p. xiv.

TABLE 2.16

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES IN PARISH OF TAXATION, 1327 and 1332

Band	Parish	1327 Lay Subsidy			1332 Lay Subsidy		
		Total	Mercers		Total	Mercers	
		N=	N=	%	N=	N=	%
A	Michael le Belfrey	53	1	32	74	2	40
	Holy Trinity Goodramgate	30	2		27	5	
	Holy Trinity King's Court	66	8		77	7	
B	Saviour	27	4	18	29	4	20
	Crux	85	2		67	3	
	All Saints' Pavement	35			39		
C	Martin Coney St	40	2	12	41	1	6
	Helen Stonegate	38	1		30		
	Wilfrid, Leonard's Hospital	20	1		28	1	
	Sampson	19			22		
	Peter the Little	30			20		
D	Mary Cstlegate	25		18	26	2	14
	Michael Spurriergate	86	3		70		
	John Ouse Bridge	54	3		53	3	
E	Holy Trinity Micklegate	25		14	32		11
	Martin <i>cum</i> Gregory	31			30	1	
	Mary Bishophill						
	Mary the Elder, Clement	37	4		40		
	All Saints' North St.	31	1		22	3	
F	John del Pike			6			6
	Helen Aldwark, Andrew	18			8		
	John Hungate						
	Denys	36	2		38	1	
	Mary & Margaret	11			14	1	
	Peter le Willows, Michael				9		
G	Bootham			0	13		3
	Monkgate				14	1	
	Laythorpe with Cuthbert				5		
	Ex Walmgate Bar	9			12		
	Fishergate	9			10		
Totals		815	34	100	850	35	100
Sources:							
¹ TNA, PRO, E/179/213/3, printed J. W. R. Parker (ed.), 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III' in <i>Miscellanea 2</i> (YASRS, 74, 1929), pp. 104-171 at pp. 160-171 (City of York).							
² TNA, E/179/217/5, printed P. M. Stell and A. Hawkyard (eds.), 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [1332] for York', <i>York Historian</i> , 13 (1996), pp. 2-14 at p. 2.							
M = member of the York community of mercers, mercers and mercer-associates.							
Parish Bands: A. Petergate Area B. Pavement Crossroads C. Central District D. Ouse Bridge Area E. West Bank F. Eastern Edge G. Extra Mural							

ii. The Poll Taxes of 1377 and 1381

The official enrolled figure given for the number of York taxpayers assessed in the poll tax of 1377 was 7,248 taxpayers, but the extant return is not in perfect condition; and entries are legible for only 8 parishes and 2,502 taxpayers of whom 793 were heads of household.¹¹² Occupations are not recorded, but 27 mercers, a haberdasher and a chapman can be identified as members of the community of mercers, a total of

¹¹² TNA, E/179/217/13 printed Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 3, pp. 133, 135-140; Leggett, 'The 1377 Poll Tax Return for the City of York', p. 131; Poos, *Rural Society After the Black Death*, p. 296; Bartlett, 'Lay Poll Tax Returns, 1381', pp. 3-4.

29 or 4% of householders. The York returns to the poll tax of 1381 are more complete, but again the text is imperfect and entries are legible for 3,500 out of the 4,015 recorded in the enrolled accounts.¹¹³ There were 75 mercers and mercer-associates who can be identified either by their name in the freemen's register or by the occupation recorded in the text; and it is here that shifts in occupation between the date of freedom and the taxation are noted. Indeed several mercer freemen are recorded in the returns as chapmen, drapers or merchants, some chapmen and drapers are listed as mercers, and also some merchants as mercers.¹¹⁴ The implications of these shifts will be discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.

It is instructive to compare the data from 1377 and 1381 and Table 2.17 set outs the number of taxpayers and the number in their parishes of residences; and the percentage of members of the community of mercers within each group of parishes labelled A to G. The returns for 1377 are disappointingly sparse in information, but show that the mercer presence in all but one parish remained low, from 1 to 5, and that 2 mercers lived outside the city walls in Bootham. The large number of 14 in St. Sampson parish suggests that this area, near to the main market place called Thursday market, had become more commercially attractive.

This impression is strengthened in the returns for 1381 when the 10 mercers there were again the largest number (Band B). A change in 1381 from the earlier lay subsidies is the presence of mercers in 21 parishes scattered throughout the city and also in the extra mural areas of Bootham and down Walmgate. Although the average number of mercers was about 3 per parish, there were distinct concentrations: 26 mercers or 35% of the community of mercers lived in the Petergate Area (Band A), 16% in the Pavement Crossroads (Band B) and 23% in the Central District (Band C). The mercer representation was less in the parishes on the approaches to Ouse Bridge (Bands D) and along Micklegate (Band E), 4 or 5% and 7 or 9% respectively. The Eastern Edge parishes (Band F) attracted more mercers than recorded in earlier lay subsidies, that is 6% or 8%; and there were 2 mercers in Bootham and one in Layerthorpe (Band G). It may be that the wider taxation base of the poll tax is the reason that there are more members of the mercer community recorded than in the lay

¹¹³ TNA, E179/217/16/1c.1 printed Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 3, pp. 133-4, 140-156; Bartlett, 'York Poll Tax Returns, 1381', pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁴ See above p. xii (Composition of the Community of Mercers).

subsidies; but 75 is still a very small proportion of taxpayers and far less than would be expected from the record numbers admitted as freemen from 1350 to 1379.

TABLE 2.17
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES IN
PARISH OF TAXATION, 1377 and 1381

Band	Parish	1377 ¹				1381 ²			
		N=	House holds	M	%	N=	House holds	M	%
A	Michael le Belfrey					170	73	9	35
	Holy Trinity Goodramgate					149	41	8	
	Holy Trinity King's Court					260	76	9	
B	Saviour	203	89	5	17	129	39	7	16
	Crux	394	137			280	103	1	
	All Saints' Pavement	315	18			163	65	4	
C	Martin Coney St.	313	96	4	72	203	65	3	23
	Helen Stonegate	211	86	3		183	84		
	Wilfrid, Leonard Hospital					82	44	3	
	Sampson	401	169	14		207	74	10	
	Peter the Little					100	32	1	
D	Mary Castlegate					149	65	1	5
	Michael Spurriergate					255	105	2	
	John Ouse Bridge					216	71	1	
E	Holy Trinity Micklegate					151	58	2	9
	Martin cum Gregory					118	51	2	
	Mary Bishophill					53	31	1	
	Mary the Elder, Clement					168	67	2	
	All Saints' North St.					241	83		
F	John del Pike				3	75	40	3	8
	Helen Aldwark, Andrew					91	46	1	
	John Hungate								
	Denys	138	95	1		127	47	1	
	Mary & Margaret					77	46	1	
	Peter le Willows, Michael								
G	Bootham	243	103	2	7	144	82	2	4
	Monkgate					39	19		
	Layerthorpe, Cuthbert								
	Ex Walmgate Bar					40	28	1	
	Fishergate					30	12		
	Unknown parish	284							
	TOTALS	2,502	793	29	99	3,900	1,547	75	100
	Enrolled Totals	7,248				4,015			

Sources:

¹ TNA, E179/217/13 edited by J. I. Leggett, 'The 1377 Poll Tax for the City of York' *YAJ*, 43 (71), pp. 128-146; total taxpayers 1377 from C. C. Fenwick (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. 3: Wiltshire-Yorkshire, etc.* (Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 37, 2005), p. 133.

² TNA, E179/217/16 edited by J. N. Bartlett, 'Lay Poll Tax Returns for the City of York 1381', *East Riding Antiquarian Society Transactions*, 30 (1953), pp. 1-9; total taxpayers 1381 from C. C. Fenwick (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. 3: Wiltshire-Yorkshire, etc.*, Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 37 (2005), pp. 133-4.

M = member of the York community of mercers either mercers or mercer-associates

Parish Bands: A. Petergate Area B. Pavement Crossroads C. Central District
D. Ouse Bridge Area E. West Bank F. Eastern Edge G. Extra Mural

It seems from this distribution that the parishes along or adjacent to Petergate remained a prime location for the retail shops of mercers; but that areas near to the main marketplaces had an increasing attraction, that is Thursday Market in St. Sampson parish (Band C) and Pavement Market between All Saints' Pavement and St. Crux (Band B). The presence of mercers and mercer-associates parishes along the Eastern Edge and in Bootham suggests that these were less favourable locations,

more distant from the main shopping areas, but still suitable for retail distributors. Moreover the poll tax of 1381 exposes mercers that were otherwise not visible and reveals shifts in occupation that suggest the expansion or contraction in the intended scope of their trade. The impression is of a mixed community of mercers with unequal prospects reflected in their parish of taxation, and this will be discussed further in Chapter Four in the context of measures of wealth.

iii. Lay Subsidy, 1524/5

There is a gap of almost 150 years between the poll tax of 1381 and the lay subsidy of 1524/5; and there are several indications that there had been changes in the occupational structure of York in the meantime.¹¹⁵ For instance, entries in the return refer to assessments not being paid in advance because the taxpayer had sustained trading losses during the year which reduced the value of their possessions.¹¹⁶ There were also a mere 4 mercers recorded, a mere 0.4% of the 882 taxpayers; and their trades were fluid: one remained known as a mercer, another was not yet a freeman, the third was known shortly thereafter as a merchant and the fourth was a merchant later known as a mercer. This fractional representation is not sufficient for comparative purposes, but there were 16 haberdashers recorded; and considering the 55 merchants liable for tax, it is possible to look at 75 members of the mercantile community or 8% of taxpayers.

The number and percentage of taxpayers, the mercantile community and each constituent group is set out in Table 2.18 by parish; and the percentage of mercantile taxpayers is reckoned in seven groups of parishes Bands A to G and compared to the proportional representation reckoned above for the taxations 1327, 1332, 1377 and 1381. Looking first at the mercers it can be seen that none resided in the Petergate Area (Band A); and they were widely scattered in St. Crux (Band B), St. Michael Spurriergate (Band D) and in the Eastern Edge parishes of St. John del Pike near the Minster and St. Denys down Walmgate (Band F). Haberdashers were found in small numbers in 7 locales; there were 3 in Bootham outside the city walls but elsewhere their numbers were in the range of 1 or 2 per parish. Merchants were much more

¹¹⁵ TNA, E 179/217/92, printed Peacock, 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty [1524/5]', pp. 170-201; Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns', p. 70; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 134-138.

¹¹⁶ Peacock, 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty [1524/5]', pp. 170, 173, 176.

prominent both as an occupation and in certain locales such as the Pavement Crossroads (Band B) where there were 17 in total including 11 in St. Crux parish.

TABLE 2.18

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS, HABERDASHERS AND MERCHANTS IN PARISH OF TAXATION, 1524/5; WITH PERCENTAGES FOR TAXATIONS OF 1327, 1332, 1377 and 1381

Band	Parish	1524/5 Taxation ¹						1327-1381 Taxation ²			
		N=	Mercantile Community					27	32	77	81
			M	H	Mt	Total	%	%	%	%	%
A	Michael le Belfrey	114		2	10	12	20	32	40		35
	Holy Trinity Goodramgate	19			1	1					
	Holy Trinity King's Court	39		1	1	2					
B	Saviour	39		1	1	2	27	18	20	17	16
	Crux	68	1		11	12					
	All Saints' Pavement	37		1	5	6					
C	Martin Coney St	47		2	2	4	16	12	6	72	23
	Helen Stonegate	25			1	1					
	Wilfrid	8			2	2					
	Leonard's Hospital	9		1		1					
	Sampson	23		1	3	4					
	Peter the Little	14									
D	Mary Castlegate	21			3	3	17	18	14	0	5
	Michael Spurriergate	37	1	1	4	6					
	John Ouse Bridge	30			4	4					
E	Holy Trinity Micklegate	56			2	2	8	14	11	0	9
	Martin & Gregory	24		2	1	3					
	Mary Bishophill	12									
	Mary the Elder, Clement	14			1	1					
	All Saints' North St.	15									
F	John del Pike	31	1			1	5	6	6	3	8
	Helen Aldwark, Andrew	24									
	John Hungate	0									
	Denys	40	1	1	1	3					
	Mary & Margaret	19									
	Peter le Willows, Michael	6									
G	Bootham	70		3	2	5	7	0	3	7	4
	Monkgate	20									
	Layerthorpe, Cuthbert	3									
	Ex Walmgate Bar	9									
	Fishergate	9									
	TOTALS	882	4	16	55	75	100	100	100	99	100
Sources:											
¹ TNA, E 179/217/92, printed E. Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', <i>YAJ</i> , 4 (1877), pp. 170-201.											
² see Tables 2.16 and 2.17 for lay subsidies 1327 and 1332, and poll taxes 1377 and 1381.											
M = Mercer H = Haberdasher Mt = Merchant											
Parish Bands: A. Petergate Area B. Pavement Crossroads C. Central District D. Ouse Bridge Area											
E. West Bank F. Eastern Edge G. Extra Mural											

Eight merchants lived in the Central District (Band C) and another 11 in the parishes either side of Ouse Bridge (Band D), but only 4 on the West Bank (Band E). The merchant in St. Denys was a fellow parishioner of a mercer and a haberdasher (Band F) and the 2 merchants in Bootham would be neighbours of the 3 haberdashers there (Band G). The unexpected locale where merchants were prominent was the Petergate Area where there were 10 in St. Michael le Belfrey and another 2 in Holy Trinity Goodramgate and Holy Trinity King's Court (Band A). This area had previously

been the mercers' retail district, close to the Minster precinct and able to attract both returning customers and passing trade.

The impression is that merchants had moved into the retail shopping areas along the north-south corridor into the city and strengthened their presence in the areas near to the major marketplaces in St. Sampson parish and on the Pavement. Although they did not seem to line the main approach to Ouse Bridge along Micklegate, they were found in the parishes on either side spanning the river (Band D) and leading onto Pavement Crossroads (Band B). That is, merchants lived in the most commercial areas of York, had access to prime locations for catching the eye of passing trade, and of regular market traders and for attracting returning retail customers. Mercers and haberdashers were not only outnumbered, but scattered too thinly to have any meaningful presence and seem marginalised both topographically and commercially.

Summary Remarks

It is clear that the numerical data from taxation returns is not as satisfactory as that derived from other sources, primarily because the numbers are low and the proportions so small. However the fact that mercers recurrently represented 4% of fourteenth-century taxpayers is significant, because it confirms the notion that a small proportion of the mercers admitted as freemen were able to establish themselves as resident householders who were substantial enough to be liable for tax. By the sixteenth century the lack of mercers as freemen, members of the Mercers' Guild and civic officials bolsters the evidence from the lay subsidy of 1524/5 where only 4 mercers are recorded and suggests that a fractional representation of 0.4% of taxpayers is accurate. Therefore the taxation returns prompt additional questions about the underlying demographic, social and economic factors that determined the proportion of aspirant freemen who became permanent residents, that diminished the commercial role of the mercer and that caused the merchant to assume the retail shopkeeping role of the mercer.

CONCLUSION

The aim of Chapter Two was to determine the number of mercers in medieval York by extracting numerical data from a selection of sources. The most comprehensive source was the freemen's register which recorded the enrolment of 756 mercers

between its inception in 1272/2 and 1549. These numbers record mercers who qualified as freemen, aspired to set up in business as independent or self-employed traders and presumably intended to become permanent residents of York. There were 3 other sources which provided numerical data pertaining to mercers who succeeded in establishing themselves as residents, that is those who joined guilds, held civic office and paid taxes. These sources also revealed mercers who became known as merchants, mercers not enrolled as such in the freemen's register, and also men of other occupations who were known as mercers during their lives. This composite group has been labelled the community of mercers and its constituent members mercers and mercer-associates. The number of established mercers, or more accurately members of the mercer community, varied according to the source: 117 members of the Mercers' Guild from 1420 to 1529; 155 civic officials from 1295 to 1549; and in a particular year of taxation from 4 to 75 taxpayers. Proportionately mercers in these settings might represent from as little as 0.4% to as much as 25%, but overall the occupation seems to have been to have been more influential than numbers alone would suggest.

The number of mercers enrolled as freemen was compared variously, starting with the numbers admitted by decade over three centuries from 1300-1599 and then looking at decadal and half-century figures from 1300 to 1549 with a shorter interval between 1272/3 and 1299. Although there was a trend of increasing numbers of mercers admitted to the freedom up to about 1400, thereafter the pattern became one of steady decline, especially from 1450 to 1500 when decadal figures reached a nadir such that none were enrolled between 1502 and 1514. In order to ascertain whether or not this pattern was typical of freemen admissions in general, the number of mercers was then compared to the number of freemen in total and by roughly half-century intervals 1272/3 to 1549. Viewed graphically freemen admissions rose steadily to a peak about 1400, leveled off to a plateau for about 50 years and decreased gradually after 1450 to 1549; whereas mercer admissions rose sharply to a peak about 1400 and then decreased equally sharply down to very low levels from 1500 to 1549.

Other comparisons looked at the 20 occupations ranked according to numbers of freemen admitted; and mercers were overall the third largest, but their position varied in half-century intervals from first to near last. In order to gauge the effect declining mercer numbers might have on mercantile occupations, another comparison looked at occupational groups of which artisans and craftsmen represented 60% of freemen, mercantile traders about 30% and those of unknown occupation less than 10%.

Mercantile trades were then isolated and examined in terms of the constituent occupations (chapman, haberdasher, huckster, mercer, merchant and stationer); and mercers were shown to have been the largest group up to 1400, after which the merchants increased dramatically and soon predominated. The most telling comparison was a chart comparing the pattern of mercer and merchant admissions which showed a downward trend for mercers despite their large fourteenth century numbers and an upward trend for merchants though their initial numbers were few.

Changes in the policy governing freemen admissions were thought to account for the increased number of freemen generally; but it was felt that demographic and economic factors were the likely causes of the near demise of the mercer as a distinct occupation. The next investigation was to look at the number of mercers in other contexts and to ascertain the consequences of their decline as freemen.

Mercers were shown from the numerical data extracted from the accounts and membership lists of the Fraternity of St. Mary to have been a small but influential occupational group within a large, diverse membership of men and women. Mercers were instrumental in founding the fifteenth-century Mercers' Guild where they provided leadership for over 30 years and were initially the largest occupational group within a membership comprising artisans and merchants. Merchants however soon outnumbered mercers and replaced them in most of the guild offices, such that by 1500 the composition of the Guild had altered and most members were merchants engaged in overseas trade. Restructuring of mercantile trades is also suggested by the absence of mercers on the one hand and the presence of haberdashers in the positions they previously held.

The records pertaining to York civic officials also provided numerical data which could be used to assess the proportional representation of mercers. Here they were recorded from before 1300 as chamberlains and bailiffs and from the 1360s as mayor. In terms of the number of positions available, mercers filled about 25% overall, but the percentage varied considerably in half-century intervals with a distinct downward trend from the middle years of the fifteenth century. Merchants filled the same positions from about the same date and in much greater numbers, representing overall about 75% of civic officials and dominating civic office from about 1460. In the sixteenth century a few more places were filled by men of other occupations, mercers had a marginal representation and the merchant majority reduced to about 50%. Again, these suggest changes within the mercantile élite.

The numerical data extracted from taxation returns showed that mercers represented about 4% of taxpayers in the fourteenth century. There were one or two mercer households in scattered parishes; and small concentrations in parishes along the main routes into the city from the north and west, near the main market place or on the approaches to the main river crossing. These were good locations for retail shops and for catching passing traffic, market traders and returning customers. The situation was quite different in 1524/5: there were only 4 mercers recorded, a fraction of a percent of all taxpayers; and haberdashers and merchants had moved into the mercers' former retail districts. The impression is that something major had happened which altered the economic role of the merchant and excluded the mercer.

However the numbers were viewed, analysed, compared or interpreted, the decline in the number of mercers suggests something drastic happened to erode the commercial role of an occupation which had been prominent. This situation raised questions about the nature and meaning of the freedom, factors of urban success and failure, occupational structure and, in particular, the underlying demographic, social and economic conditions that altered the occupational structure of York and led to the near demise of the occupation of mercer. In order to look more closely at some of these factors, Chapter Three begins with an investigation of the geographic and social origins of York mercers and the reasons they came to York, took out their freedom and stayed or not as the case may be.

CHAPTER THREE

ORIGINS, OCCUPATION AND MARRIAGE

Aspects of Geographic and Social Mobility

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses factors of geographic and social mobility which contributed to the urban success of York mercers whose family background seems to have been in rural artisan households. The topics explored in Part I include the distance and direction of migration, the communities of previous residence, the reasons for migration and the importance of mutual kinship support. Part II looks at the implications of shifts of occupation between fathers and sons, social mobility within an urban hierarchy and the role of the parent in career choice of the son. Important factors of eventual urban success are explored with reference to the role of the master as tutor, patron and employer. The social and economic aspects of marriage are discussed with reference to the capital assets contributed by parents and each spouse, the age of marriage, choice of wife and the alliances forged through the marriages of their children.

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE NUMBERS

References in the text to York mercers and mercer-associates are cited in the footnotes in the order they are mentioned in the text by their numbered entry in the Biographical Register in Appendix B. Other relevant sources are then given in sequential order of page, folio number or probate register.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The only information known for 45% of the York mercers under study is that recorded in the freemen's register: their name, surname, occupation, date of admission and, occasionally, the name and trade of their father, son, daughter, master or apprentice. These details provide an idea of occupational and social background; and their surnames allude to aspects of heritage depending on their derivation,

particularly surnames formed from occupation and place of residence. Considering that 70% of mercers bore placename surnames suggests that it was customary to identify themselves by reference to their ancestral home or previous place of residence. This type of identity may also have been required by civic officials so that new entrants to the freedom could be traced to ascertain legal status or confirm eligibility; and details for those with other types of surnames may have been recorded separately, as was the case in the sixteenth century.¹ Although placename surnames are indirect evidence of previous residence, they have been widely used in studies of rural to urban migration. McClure and Patten have set out methodologies which can be adapted to improve accuracy, and other studies provide models to follow.² Locations have been identified with reference to the comprehensive studies of English surnames carried out by Ekwall and Reaney, to Darby and Versey's *Domesday Gazetteer* and to Kirkby's *Inquest*; and information about church dedications can be found in various volumes of *The Buildings of England*.³

There are other sources which provide direct and indirect information about the geographic and social background of York mercers, in particular the probate copies of over 160 wills, and an equal number survive for their wives, children and kin; and the foundation deeds of chantries are particularly useful. Other than the freemen's register, other civic records occasionally reveal details of previous residence, kinship connections and regional contacts.

¹ Martin, 'English Boroughs in the Thirteenth Century', pp. 132-6, 135, 144; D. M. Palliser, 'A Regional Capital as Magnet: Immigrants to York, 1477-1566, *YAJ*, 57 (1985), pp. 111-124 at p. 113.

² P. McClure, 'Patterns of Migration in the late Middle Ages: The Evidence of English Place-Name Surnames', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 32/2 (1979), pp. 167-182; P. McClure, 'Surnames from English Place names as Evidence for Mobility in the Middle Ages', *Local Historian*, 13/2 (1978), pp. 80-86.

³ E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1936, 4th edition, reprinted 1991); Reaney, *Dictionary of English Surnames*; H. C. Darby and G. R. Versey (eds.), *A Domesday Gazetteer* (Cambridge, 1975); H. C. Darby, *A New Historical Geography of England* (Cambridge, 1973); R. H. Skaife (ed.), *Survey of the County of York, taken by John de Kirkby*, Surtees Society, 49 (1867), pp. 487-536, henceforth *Kirkby's Inquest*; N. Pevsner and others (eds.), *The Buildings of England Series* (Harmondsworth, 1945-), henceforth, *Buildings of England* and the county.

I

PATTERNS OF MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS

The first section examines migration into York as a major urban centre of trade and industry by using the allusions of their placename surnames to previous place of residence. Placename surnames are used to plot the distance and direction of migration from various sources of population from which it is possible to determine distinct catchment areas or fields of migration, and a survey of changes over time can be used to assess the effects of underlying demographic and economic conditions. The reasons for migration are discussed in terms of the type of community from which mercers came, the distance from York and the commercial opportunities available including acquisition of marketing experience and forging of supply and distribution networks. The final section examines urban success in terms of length of residency which depended on factors including capability, good health and the moral and financial support of kinfolk; and retention of kinship ties to the ancestral home implies there were benefits to the kinship group in having a York-based member.

The movement of people from one place to another forms a large body of interdisciplinary studies, but it is Patten's 1973 research paper which provides the most useful and comprehensive framework for analysing migration.⁴ Medieval migration is generally examined as rural to urban movement and discussed in the context of population and the growth of towns.⁵ Scholars examining commercialisation point to demographic factors affecting migration. For instance overpopulation in rural areas forced individuals into wage-labour and non-agrarian livelihoods, which brought them into urban centres seeking work; and that urban mortality was high and constant

⁴ Patten, *Rural-Urban Migration in Pre-industrial England*; J. Patten, 'Patterns of Migration and Movement of Labour to Three Pre-Industrial East Anglian Towns', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2 (1976), pp. 111-129; Clark and Soudens, *Migration and Society in Early Modern England*, pp. 11-48.

⁵ M. Anderson (ed.), *British Population History from the Black Death to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1996); L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (Oxford, 1986); D. Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City 1300-1500* (London and New York, 1997); D. Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City. From Late Antiquity to the Early Fourteenth Century* (London and New York, 1997); H. Swanson, *Medieval British Towns* (Basingstoke and New York, 1999); R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society. The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966), pp. 183-7.

immigration was necessary merely to maintain populations.⁶ Particular studies on English towns interpret various aspects of geographic mobility in light of social, political and economic conditions.⁷ Ekwall's seminal studies on the origin of the names of English settlements is a valuable source for identifying the places alluded to in placename surnames, as is Reaney's dictionary; McClure's method of working with surnames has contributed to better use of these as sources of indirect evidence.⁸ Various means have been used to analyse patterns of migration. Patten devised a methodology to improve the accuracy of tracking distance and direction; and in determining fields of migration and recording the expansion and contraction of the

⁶ R. Goddard, *Lordship and Medieval Urbanisation. Coventry, 1043-1355* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 137-155 at p. 138; Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 124-5, 128-9, 134-7; Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society*, pp. 23, 29-52, 102-127, 179-203; P. Basing, *Trades and Crafts in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 1990), pp. 47-8; Patten, *Rural-Urban Migration*, pp. 1, 24, 40; J. Kermode, 'The Greater Towns 1300-1540' in Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1, 600-1540 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 441-466 at p. 458; Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City*, pp. 181-2; Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, pp. 70, 113.

⁷ R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986); A. F. Butcher, 'The Origins of Romney Freeman, 1433-1523', *EcHR*, 27 (1974), pp. 16-27; E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The First Half-Century of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon' in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The English Medieval Town. A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 49-70; A. D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973); R. S. Gottfried, 'Bury St. Edmunds and the Populations of Late Medieval English Towns, 1270-1530', *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (1980), pp. 1-31; R. Holt, 'Gloucester in the Century after the Black Death' in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London, 1990), pp. 141-159; R. A. Holt, *The Early History of the Town of Birmingham, 1166-1600*, Dugdale Society Occasional Series, 30 (1985); Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter*; M. D. Lobel, *The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds* (Oxford, 1935); S. Penn, 'The Origins of Bristol Migrants in the Early Fourteenth Century: the Surname Evidence', *Trans. of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society*, 101 (1985), pp. 123-30; C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: the Port and Trading Community, A. D. 1000-1600* (London, 1973); D. Postles, 'An English Small Town in the Later Middle Ages: Loughborough', *Urban History*, 20/1 (1993), pp. 7-29; J. A. Raftis, *A Small Town in Late Medieval England: Godmanchester 1278-1400* (Toronto, 1982); S. R. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull, 1993); W. G. Rimmer, 'The Evolution of Leeds' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Early Modern Town. A Reader* (New York, 1976), pp. 273-91; G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989); A. Saul, 'English Towns in the late Middle Ages: the Case of Great Yarmouth', *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1982), pp. 75-88; K. P. Wilson, 'The Port of Chester in the Fifteenth Century', *Trans. of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 117 (1965), pp. 1-15.

⁸ Ekwall, *English Place-Names*; G. J. Copley, *English Place-Names and Their Origins* (Newton Abbot, 1968); Reaney, *Dictionary of English Surnames*; E. Ekwall, *Studies on the Population of Medieval London* (Stockholm, 1956); E. Ekwall (ed.), *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls* (Lund, 1951); E. Ekwall, *Variation in Surnames in Medieval London* (Lund, 1945); Darby and Versey, *A Domesday Gazetteer*; Darby, *A New Historical Geography of England*; E. McClure, *British Place-names in their Historical Setting* (London, 1910); McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames', pp. 80-86; McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', pp. 167-182; A. H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements* (Cambridge, 1956); A. H. Smith, *The Place-names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and the City of York* (Cambridge, 1937); A. H. Smith, *The Place-names of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (Cambridge, 1928).

primary catchment area in light of underlying demographic and economic conditions.⁹ The role of the market is seen as an important element in promoting rural mobility, and the commercial link between large towns and their satellite communities is addressed in terms of interregional trade and integrated markets.¹⁰ The two main reasons for migration are considered to have been 'forced by demographic and economic pressure' or 'planned for social and economic improvement' which Clark labelled 'subsistence' or 'betterment' migration.¹¹ Whatever the original motivation for migration, social, demographic and economic factors influenced the length of stay; for example intermittent periods of residency were characteristic of foreign merchants, permanent residency characteristic for those achieving urban success, and emigration for the unsuccessful.¹²

⁹ Patten, *Rural-Urban Migration*, pp. 33-4, 39-40; Goddard, *Coventry, 1043-1355*, pp. 141-150; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 212-5, 274-8; McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', pp. 176-7, 179-80; McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames', pp. 176-80, 180-2; Carus-Wilson, 'The First Half-century of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon', pp. 58-60; Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York', pp. 38-55 at pp. 41, 49, 53; Gottfried, 'Bury St. Edmunds and the Populations of Late Medieval English Towns, 1270-1530', pp. 22, 24-5.

¹⁰ Goddard, *Coventry, 1043-1355*, pp. 150-55; Kermode, 'The Greater Towns 1300-1540', p. 259; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 73; Palliser, 'A Regional Capital as a Magnet', pp. 111, 114, 117; C. M. Fraser, 'The Pattern of Trade in the North-East of England', *Northern History*, 4 (1969), pp. 44-66; C. Dyer, 'Small Towns 1270-1540' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 1, 600-1540 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 505-540 at p. 523; Hilton, *A Medieval Society*, pp. 177-183; Penn, 'The Origins of Bristol Migrants', pp. 127-8; A. Everitt, 'Marketing the Produce of the Countryside' in E. Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 3: 1348-1500 (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 324-430 at pp. 327-357; A. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce, 1500-1640' in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 4: 1500-1640 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 15-156 at pp. 16-26; J. Laughton and C. Dyer, 'Small Towns in the East and West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages: A Comparison', *Midland History*, 24 (1999), pp. 24-52 at pp. 36-43; Postles, 'An English Small Town in the Later Middle Ages: Loughborough', pp. 9-10, 21-2; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 222-277, 278-324; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp. 377-79.

¹¹ Patten, *Rural-Urban Migration*, pp. 8, 9-11; P. Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns 1580-1640' in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 117-163 at pp. 123-4, 126-9, 133, 135-9, 145.

¹² Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 280-304; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 291-321, 369-70; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 5-8, 109-114, 163-4, 199-215; M. Kowaleski, 'Port Towns: England and Wales 1300-1540' in D. Palliser (ed.), *Urban History of Britain*, pp. 467-494 at p. 493; T. H. Lloyd, *Alien Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* (New York, 1982), pp. 22-4; A. A. Ruddock, 'Alien Hosting in Southampton in the Fifteenth Century', *ECHR*, 16/1 (1946), pp. 30-37; J. Masschaele, 'Urban Trade in Medieval England: the Evidence of Foreign Gild Membership Lists' in R. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England V. Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1973* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 115-128; S. L. Thrupp, 'Aliens in and around London in the Fifteenth Century' in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds.), *Studies in London History Presented to Philip Edmund Jones* (London, 1969), pp. 251-274.

A. THE IMPLICATION OF PLACENAME SURNAMES

York mercers travelled for a variety of reasons including the necessity of purchasing new supplies of mercery and selling their residual stock at seasonal or occasional fairs; and depending on the scale of their trade, they might also attend weekly markets within a certain radius of their home base.¹³ During their lives they might reside abroad as a factor, work for a while as an itinerant chapman or move in stages from smaller to larger communities as they gained experience.¹⁴ For those of villein ancestry, the introduction to trade may have come via the feudal obligation to carry produce to market; and the legally free whose movements were less restricted may have participated from an early date as agents of trade in a market environment.¹⁵ It was within this mobile section of society that placename surnames were prevalent, reflecting not just their temporary movements from place to place, but permanent relocation or migration.¹⁶

Indeed the majority of York mercers bore placename surnames and these shed light on their movements from ancestral home or previous place of residence into York from the late thirteenth century. However this was seldom the case before the inception of the York freemen's register in 1272/3.¹⁷ The first known references to York-based mercers are recorded in the section of the Pipe Rolls that relate to Yorkshire, in 1164 to Ailsa *merciarius* and in 1175 to Adam le mercer.¹⁸ Witnesses to twelfth-century title deeds include Turgis le mercer and Nicholas mercer; and conveyances in the following century record Paulinus le *merciarius* and Robert le

¹³ W. R. Childs, 'Moving Around' in R. Horrox and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), *A Social History of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 260-275 at p. 260; N. Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller* (English trans by C. Hillier, Woodbridge, 1989, reprinted p/b, 1998), pp. 59-64.

¹⁴ Patten, 'Rural-Urban Migration', pp. 20, 33.

¹⁵ E. Miller and J. Hatcher, *Medieval England. Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348* (London and New York, 1978, 2nd impression 1980), pp. 44-5, 118-121.

¹⁶ McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames' pp. 81-3; Ekwall, *Studies in the Population of Medieval London*, pp. xxiv and xxix-lx; R. A. McKinley, *Norfolk and Suffolk Surnames in the Middle Ages* (London & Chichester, 1975), pp. 174-82.

¹⁷ *Dictionary of English Surnames*, pp. l-li; E. Miller, 'Rulers of Thirteenth Century Towns: the Cases of York and Newcastle upon Tyne' in P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England I. Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1985* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 128-141.

¹⁸ *Pipe Rolls, 11 Hen. II, 1164-5*, p. 48; *Pipe Rolls, 22 Hen. II, 1175-6*, p. 120.

mercier.¹⁹ Shortly thereafter according to the first entries in the freemen's register, the nomenclature for mercers expanded to include a surname and trade ascription. In 1272/3 there were Thomas de Thornton, John de Haxby and Walter de Pocklington enrolled as mercers in contrast to Abell, goldsmith, James le nailer and Hugo, servant of Robert de Ricale.²⁰

The implication of previous residence is clear for John de Crayke whose father was known as Thomas Howell de Crayke; and suggested for John de Gisburn and Robert de Ellerton whose fathers were John 'Rotenhering' and Roger Alcock.²¹ Stronger evidence can be compiled for Richard de Alverton, free in 1291, who was recorded in 1299 as Richard le mercer de Alverton on a conveyance of land in Alverton, the older spelling of Northallerton.²² He occurs in a subsequent conveyance dated 1314 as Richard de Alverton de York, mercer, a sequence which records his previous residence, current abode and occupation.²³

Certainly placename surnames seem 'responsive to movements from one place to another'; but perhaps of an ancestor rather than the new freeman, because surnames within the community of mercers were inherited at an earlier date than in the northern population at large.²⁴ Members of the Grantham family can be traced from 1292 to at least 1407; and sons might inherit the full name of their father. John de Beverley, free in 1301, conveyed a tenement with buildings in 1329 to his daughter with the reversion to his son, also named John de Beverley.²⁵ Robert de Eryholme, free in 1309, bore the same surname as his father Martin and uncle John; and in 1357 his

¹⁹ Farrer, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, 1, pp. 229-30, no. 297, 246-7, no. 334; YML, MA/XVI/A, Register of St. Mary's Abbey, 2, f. 3r; F. Drake, *Eboracum or the History and Antiquities of the City of York* (London, 1736, republished, 1978), appendix, p. xxi, no. 13; see also S. Rees Jones, unpublished York Property Data Base, nos. 1972-4, 1982 citing BL, Cott. Nero D3/203/1, 6, 7 (1200x1250, Walmgate), D3/205/2 (1160x1200, Walmgate, St. Margaret).

²⁰ [851]; [462]; [699]; *FR*, 1, pp. 1-2.

²¹ [407]; [328]; [250]; *FR*, 1, pp. 26, 34, 78; Reaney, *English Surnames*, pp. xii-xiii.

²² [6]; *Yorkshire Feet of Fines, 1272-1300*, p. 130, no. 23; C. M. Newman, *Late Medieval Northallerton. A Small Market Town and its Hinterland c.1470-1540* (Stamford, 1999), pp. 1-8, esp. p. 5; W. Greenwell (ed.), *Boldon Buke. A Survey of the Possessions of the See of Durham... 1183*, Surtees Society, 25 (1852), appendix, p. iv; Ekwall, *English Place-names*, pp. 6, 8.

²³ *Yorkshire Feet of Fines, 1300-1314*, p. 57, no. 295.

²⁴ McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames' pp. 81; Goddard, *Coventry, 1043-1355*, pp. 144-5; Reaney, *English Surnames*, p. 1i.

²⁵ [86]; [87]; *YD*, 6, p. 183, no. 595; *Yorkshire Feet of Fines, 1327-47*, p. 32, no. 56; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 269; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, pp. 112-4, nos. 185-191.

son, another John de Eryholme, was described as the younger to distinguish him from his great-uncle in a joint obit.²⁶ Thus inheritance of the surname suggests not only continuity of lineage, but memory of homeland; and it is significant that the children of Nicholas de Blackburn de Richmond were known as Blackburn implying ancestral origin in Lancashire rather than Richmondshire.²⁷ As an inherited surname was often linked with inheritance of property, the relationship of tenure and lineage was displayed through nomenclature, thus following the practice of the aristocracy and propertied classes.²⁸

Therefore the York evidence indicates that placename surnames imply previous residence though, perhaps, of an ancestor rather than the new freeman. This being the case, their surnames allude to 'sources of population', an interpretation which forms the basis for analysing the pattern of migration of mercers into York.

B. DISTANCE AND DIRECTION OF MIGRATION INTO YORK

The accuracy of using placename surnames to study patterns of migration has been improved by the wide-spread adoption of McClure's methodology; and his analysis of fourteenth-century migration into York has been cited for comparative purposes, recently by Goddard.²⁹ Bartlett also used placename surnames to trace the recruitment of York freemen during the period 1351 to 1500; Goldberg made use ecclesiastical court depositions for references to ancestral home of deponents; and Palliser examined extant sixteenth-century account books of the city chamberlains which recorded the previous residence of new freemen.³⁰ Their studies of migration into York from the fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries were used to weigh up a preliminary survey of the movements of York mercers. Here the impression was that mercers were drawn into York from a wide geographic area and from all directions; fields of migration extended from coast to coast and over 70 miles to the north and

²⁶ [337]; [336]; [335]; YCR, G.70: 8; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, nos. 52, 53, 54-5, 306-11, 570-4.

²⁷ [112]; YMB, 3, pp. 201, 214; FR, 1, pp. 100, 107, 131; McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames', p. 82.

²⁸ McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', p. 167; J. C. Holt, *Colonial England 1066-1215* (London and Rio Grande, 1997), pp. 183-6, 193-6.

²⁹ McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', pp. 168-175; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, pp. 149-151.

³⁰ Bartlett, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 207-243; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, Migration and Servanthood: The York Cause Paper Evidence' in P. J. P. Goldberg (ed.), *Women in Medieval Society* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 1-15; Palliser, 'A Regional Capital as Magnet', p. 113.

south. Places in North and East Yorkshire were more frequently alluded to in placename surnames, and others describe a route leading from the Carlisle area across the Pennines.³¹ This pattern was sufficiently similar to that found by McClure for the fourteenth century and by Palliser for the sixteenth; and it was felt that a closer look at placename surnames was justified, particularly those with double placenames which clearly implied movement from one place to another.³²

i. Type of Community and Commercial Reasons for Migration

Various studies of migration into urban centres show that migrants followed known routes from rural to urban areas which linked markets and fairs to the regional centre.³³ A useful source for detecting these routes are the double locatives borne by York mercers which glimpse stages in their migration into York and suggest commercial activity along the way.³⁴ Here the type of community from which mercers came is significant, because this would feature in the commercial reasons which may have impelled their migration, the range of marketing experience acquired and the network of connections forged before they settled in York.³⁵

The indications are that long distance migration into York was based on commercial links between York and particular places, for instance the long-established trading routes: from Ireland for Thomas Lagheles de Dyvelyn (Dublin), Henry de Dyvelyn and Adam Ireland; and John and William Wallis apparently came from Wales and Walter and William Scott from Scotland.³⁶ Mercers with continental roots would be drawn to York as a cosmopolitan centre probably for the distribution of mercery manufactured by their countrymen or to procure wool for their home industries and woollen cloth to market abroad.³⁷ John de Paris followed in the footsteps of other

³¹ Palliser, 'A Regional Capital as Magnet', pp. 111-2, 115-7.

³² McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames', p. 81.

³³ Kermode, 'The Greater Towns', p. 459..

³⁴ Reaney, *English Surnames*, p. xviii; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 152; Massachele, 'Urban Trade in Medieval England', p. 125.

³⁵ Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, pp. 143, 147-9, 150-2; Palliser, 'Regional Capital as Magnet', p. 117.

³⁶ [523]; [560]; [300]; [901]; [902] [759]; [760]; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 154; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 253; Smith, *Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York*, pp. 285-6.

³⁷ Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 154; Massachele, 'Urban Trade in Medieval England', pp. 117-19; Thrupp, 'Aliens in and around London', pp. 251-274.

Parisians in late thirteenth-century York, as did several generations of the le Fleming family.³⁸ Although John Tutbag qualified for freedom as 'John Milner de Hyst in Brabant' and became a denizen, Nicholas de Middelburgh remained part of a small group of resident aliens.³⁹

Inter-regional migration from southern counties is suggested by the surnames of Thomas Kent and Thomas Wiltshire, from the north by Thomas de Corbridge and Robert de Bamburgh and from coastal villages on the east and west for the ancestors of Walter de Dimlington and the Glasson (Glasyn) brothers.⁴⁰ Robert de Derby and William de Wirksworth were likely to have come from Derbyshire and John Hopkinson de 'Kirnyngton'.⁴¹ William Mitton de Newark would have travelled along the Great North Road, a long-established route linking York to London.⁴² Migration from the midlands is implied for Richard de Coventry, John de 'Neuton de Rocheford' (?Worcestershire) and Thomas Goodman de 'Brumpton in Herefordlith' (?Brampton Abbots).⁴³ Most of these mercers do not recur in York records and suggest that their freedom was purchased as a licence for occasional trade; and the experience gained in a major centre of trade and industry would enhance their skills, increase their commercial contacts and feed back to their communities. There would be customers in York for the typical small manufactures from the Midlands such as copper pins, needles and iron hardware and for lead mined in the Peak District.⁴⁴

Some mercers came from isolated communities, for instance John de Scawton and John Falconer de 'Thirnioston'; and others from the uplands of the Lake District such

³⁸ [680]; [361]; *FR*, 1, pp. 5, 7, 12, 13-16; Palliser, 'Regional Capital as Magnet', p. 116.

³⁹ [623]; [876]; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 234; Palliser, 'Regional Capital as Magnet', p. 112.

⁴⁰ [941]; [537]; [236]; [45]; [289]; [411]; [412]; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 153; Penn, 'The Origins of Bristol Migrants', pp. 123-30.

⁴¹ [285]; [949]; [500]; Ekwall, *English Place-names*, pp. 280, 328, 399; *Buildings of England. Nottinghamshire*, pp. 105-114.

⁴² [636]; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, pp. 152-153; *Buildings of England. Lincolnshire*, pp. 188-9; *Nottinghamshire*, pp. 105, 110.

⁴³ [245]; [659]; [420]; Ekwall, *English Place Names*, pp. 68, 60, 390; *Buildings of England. Bedfordshire*, pp. 80-1, 81-2; *Worcestershire*, pp. 251-2.

⁴⁴ Masschaele, 'Urban Trade in Medieval England', pp. 116-7, 122-4, 125; H. Bodey, *Nailmaking*, Shire Album, 87 (1983), pp. 2, 3, 7-8, 8; *Buildings of England. Worcestershire*, p. 108.

as the chapmen John Garlic and James Beck from Kirkby Kendale.⁴⁵ A lively trade took place between Durham and York and William Cornforth de Durham, John Brown de Acliffe and William Yotson de Dernton (?Darlington) would have travelled in the company of merchants with their packs and bundles and members of the Bishop's household.⁴⁶ Robert de Louth de Ormsby and William de Preston super Tees hailed from the north side of the river and Robert de Yarum or his ancestors from Yarm on the south side; and both may well have used York as a redistribution centre for the goods offloaded at these inland ports.⁴⁷ The double locatives for Robert de Pinchinthorpe de Cleveland and Robert de Ayton in Cleveland refer to villages on the western edge of the North York Moors, and William Vescy de Iburn came from the eastern edge near Whitby.⁴⁸ Proximity to moorland pastures and religious houses offered opportunities in the wool trade and York would be the financial centre for transacting large-scale purchases and sales.⁴⁹ John and Robert de Potto, Ralph de Romonby and Robert de Smeaton came from villages in the Vale of York and proximity may have engendered bonds as leading members of St. Mary's Fraternity.⁵⁰

Commercial experience in a variety of settings would be a benefit from migration in stages and again the type of community is suggestive.⁵¹ John de Bedale de Richmond moved from a market town (Bedale) to the regional centre (Richmond) and John Wetherby de Ripon from a rural community into a cathedral city.⁵² Thomas de Warter de Pocklington went a short distance from his village to a small town, whereas Robert de Killingwick (?Kildwick) de Holme exchanged one nearby hamlet for another and William de Leven de Hunmanby traversed a longer distance along a route

⁴⁵ [751]; [345]; *FR*, 1, pp. 216, 220; Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', p. 126; Darby, *Domesday Gazetteer*, p. 509 (Thurlstone, near Penistone); Ekwall, *English Place-names*, pp. 466-7, 471.

⁴⁶ [237]; [156]; [968]; M. Harvey, 'Travel from Durham to York (and back) in the Fourteenth Century', *Northern History*, 42/1 (2005), pp. 119-130 at p. 122; M. Bonney, *Lordship and the Urban Community. Durham and its Overlords, 1250-1540* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 172-3; Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-names*, pp. 122, 139; Reaney, *English Surnames*, p. 258; E. G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (Oxford, 1945, 2nd edition 1950), p. 172 (Jordan/Judd).

⁴⁷ [601]; [706]; [963]; *Buildings of England. County Durham*, p. 304-318, 433; Newman, *Late Medieval Northallerton*, pp. 101, 114-5.

⁴⁸ [692]; [35]; [408]; [883] Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-names*, pp. 21, 207, 261, 367.

⁴⁹ N. Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration in England* (London, 1963), p. 65.

⁵⁰ [700]; [701]; [801].

⁵¹ McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', pp. 175-6; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 151; Palliser, 'Regional Capital', p. 111.

⁵² [68]; [924] Ekwall, *English Place-names*, pp. 34, 386, 388, 510.

linking Beverley to the ports of Bridlington and Scarborough.⁵³ Each move would provide a trader with new contacts of producers, suppliers and customers; and when the time was deemed right, they would migrate into York with a viable network of connections in place.⁵⁴

Communities with formal markets and fairs not only provided inhabitants with a venue to buy and sell, but attracted traders from other communities, itself a main factor in promoting rural mobility.⁵⁵ Mercers might attend a series of markets; for instance John Ironside de Otley would be familiar with markets in the West Riding placed along the Wharfe from Ilkley to Harewood; and William de Burn de Burton and William Brown de Kilham could attend those in the East Riding at Constable Burton, Burton Agnes, Kilham and Beverley.⁵⁶ John le Long and William Hughlot from Doncaster would experience diverse marketplaces within a borough setting and John Yhole and John Jackson of Northallerton lived 'within a radius of at least twenty market settlements'.⁵⁷ William Brown de Pickering and William Jackson de Leeds came from transition zones between lowland and upland areas and their business might well involve the supply of diverse commodities for which York would be an ideal storage base.⁵⁸ These locales were the same places where the new fairs established in York during John Stockdale's mayoralty were to be proclaimed: to the north, northeast and northwest in Northallerton, Guisborough, Malton, Helmsley, Pickering, Scarborough, Ripon, Bedale, Richmond and even in Kendal; to the east in Beverley, Hull and Hedon; to the west in Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax and Skipton; and to the south in Pontefract, Doncaster and Rotherham.⁵⁹

⁵³ [911]; [547]; [574]; [924]; Ekwall, *Place-names*, pp. 246, 257, 275, 296, 369, 499; Skaife, *Kirkby's Inquest*, p. 512 (Kildwick).

⁵⁴ Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 152; Massachele, 'Urban Trade in Medieval England', p. 125.

⁵⁵ Everitt, 'Marketing the Production of the Countryside, 1200-1500', pp. 327-8, 335-7, 364-5; McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', pp. 175-7; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 151; Palliser, 'Regional Capital', p. 111; Platt, p. 96.

⁵⁶ [525]; [161]; [176]; Reaney, *English Surnames*, p. 249; R. H. Britnell, 'Boroughs, Markets and Trade in Northern England, 1000-1216' in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 46-67.

⁵⁷ [595]; [511]; [967]; [526]; Newman, *Late Medieval Northallerton*, pp. 98-100, 115.

⁵⁸ [162]; [528]; [468]; [469]; [470]; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 321-4.

⁵⁹ *YCR*, 2, p. 174.

A different dynamic is said to have operated between York and nearby communities in which movements into and out of the city were a daily occurrence and periods of temporary residence likely.⁶⁰ Giles de Fulford, William de Holgate, John de Escrick and John de Tockwith are recorded solely in the freemen's register and may have returned to their nearby villages.⁶¹ Other villages might be the source of mercers at long intervals such as Holtby from whence William migrated in 1334 and Robert in 1415; whereas John, Adam and Thomas de Bugthorpe came in sequence in 1327, 1334 and 1366.⁶² An intention to settle is indicated for Thomas and William de Dunnington, who became members of the Fraternity of St. Mary in the period 1357 to 1369; and permanence for John de Wheldrake and William Oubri de Stamford Bridge, who were taxed a quarter-century after their freedom.⁶³ The prospects of acquiring burgage tenements may have lured Richard de Towthorpe and Walter de Scorby to York and inheritance would contribute to keeping their descendents in the city.⁶⁴ The election of John de Knapton to civic office implies residency as does the admission by patrimony of Thomas de Skelton's sons; and William de Askham's will reveals a settled urban household involved in processing wool, brewing and the retail of imported mercery.⁶⁵

It seems reasonable to see commercial factors as the main impetus to the migration of mercers from rural communities into York and this suggests that most were impelled by a desire to improve their lot in life rather than being driven by poverty or forced by need. Not all migrants would realise their aspirations; indeed around 40% of the mercers enrolled as freemen in York between 1273 and 1529 cannot be traced further. Some may have returned home after training, but others may have lacked the capital and skills required to set up as independent masters and others would not be able to compete with established mercers. Emigration elsewhere was a possibility, particularly for those whose kinship bonds were weak, a factor which Clark thought was characteristic of the unsuccessful immigrant.⁶⁶ Finally an unknown number of

⁶⁰ Palliser, 'Regional Capital as Magnet', p. 114; Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', pp. 126, 134

⁶¹ [377]; [482]; [338]; [867].

⁶² [499]; [398]; [169]; [270]; [271].

⁶³ [308]; [309]; [931]; [676].

⁶⁴ [872]; [756]; [754]; [755]; [753]; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, pp. 238-9, 316, nos. 430, 581.

⁶⁵ [559]; [789]; [31]; YML, 2/, f.o 96; *FR*, 1, pp. 115, 130.

⁶⁶ Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', pp. 126, 132-5, 139-41, 143-5.

aspiring mercers would have succumbed to the ill effects of disease and malnutrition, died and disappeared from view.

ii. Ancestral Home and Bonds of Kinship

Migration impelled by opportunity fits into a pattern which Clark termed 'betterment migration' and which Patten described as planned, not random movement, 'encouraged by the hope of social and economic improvement'.⁶⁷ There is understandably more information about mercers whose urban success enabled them to establish permanent residency, hold civic office and raise their children. Clark's study of migrants in Kent found that the most successful had been bolstered through the 'many-stranded relationships of the kinship group' on the one hand and that the urban-based representative was expected to look after his rural kin, providing financial assistance, employment or marketing expertise, so fostering the viability of the extended family.⁶⁸

There is some evidence for York mercers retaining ties with their ancestral home which implies they did feel a sense of responsibility towards their kinsfolk. This can be seen in the will of Robert de Holme, senior, who had taken out his freedom in 1347, but had long been known as a merchant by his death in 1396.⁶⁹ He bequeathed 100s to the fabric of the church of St Peter in '*Howm ubi fui oriundus*'; and it is the dedication of the church that identifies his birthplace as Holme on the Wolds in East Yorkshire and not Holme on Spalding Moor or villages in North and West Yorkshire.⁷⁰ Presumably his brothers John and Thomas were also born in Holme and several relatives residing in Beverley are mentioned in his will.⁷¹ A kinsman Robert Holme served as MP for Hull during 1386-1421 and another Hull connection was forged when Thomas Holme married the daughter of Walter Frost.⁷² Patronage by gentry members of the kinship group is implied by the shared use of *chaplets* on coats

⁶⁷ Patten, *Rural-urban Migration*, p. 8; Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', pp. 134-8, 137, 145, 152.

⁶⁸ Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', pp. 135-7.

⁶⁹ [490]; BI PR 1, fo. 100 (1396, Holme).

⁷⁰ *Buildings of England: Yorkshire: York and the East Riding*, pp. 254-5; Ekwall, *English Place-Names*, p. 246.

⁷¹ [488]; [491]; BI, PR 1, fo. 82; BI, PR 3, fo. 254.

⁷² J. S. Roskell, L. Clark and C. Rawcliffe (eds.), *The House of Commons, 1386-1421* (4 vols., Stroud, 1993), 3, pp. 400-1; R. N. Swanson, 'Thomas Holme and his Chantries', *York Historian*, 5 (1984), pp. 3-7.

of arms by the Holme's whose seat was at Paull on the Humber Estuary and by Robert Holme in York.⁷³ Moreover it is likely that an extended kinship network underpinned the extensive York-based commercial enterprise.⁷⁴

The birth place of John Ince senior is also known from his will in which he bequeathed a silver chalice worth 40s to the Church of St Ellen '*apud Sefton in the country of Lancaster ubi natus fui*' which is a village not far from Ince Blundell.⁷⁵ John's will also reveals various relatives presumably dwelling near Sefton; and also the widow and daughter of his kinsman, John Ince junior, who resided in York.⁷⁶ Familiarity with the area is shown in legacies to the churches in Aughton and Ormkirk, villages slightly to the north of Sefton; and commercial activity is implied in bequests to maintain the bridges in Warrington and Frodsham, south along the route to Chester which passes the manor of Ince belonging to the Abbot of Chester.⁷⁷

The Collinson family came from farther north near Carlisle, and the first to qualify for freedom was Roger in 1417; and within a decade Robert and John were enrolled as freemen in 1426 and 1430.⁷⁸ Roger's long-term residency is indicated by his sons' admission by patrimony; and the family's commercial activity ran the gamut from retail sales of cutlery and mercery from shops on Ouse Bridge to the manufacture and finishing of woollen cloth which was exported abroad.⁷⁹ Robert was the main clothier and his will records testamentary bequests to spinners, weavers, fullers and dyers he employed in the countryside around York; but other bequests to poor relatives in the Carlisle area suggest his career had been initiated in marketing cloth woven by relatives in Cumberland.⁸⁰

⁷³ C. B. Norcliffe (ed.), *Flower's Visitation of Yorkshire in the Years 1563 and 1564* (London, 1881), pp. 162-3.

⁷⁴ *FR*, 1, p. 95; *BI*, PR 3, fo. 365.

⁷⁵ [520]; *BI*, PR 5, fo. 308; *Buildings of England. South Lancashire*, pp. 128, 129-30, 399-401, 411-18, see also plates 6-8, 25, 34.

⁷⁶ [521].

⁷⁷ *Buildings of England. North Lancashire*, pp. 51-2, 183; *Cheshire*, pp. 220-2, 248.

⁷⁸ [230]; [232]; [229]; [233]; [231]; Palliser, 'Regional Capital', p. 116.

⁷⁹ *FR*, 1, pp. 177, 179, 233; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 140, 192, 202, 213.

⁸⁰ *BI*, PR 2, fo. 378; Palliser, 'Regional Capital as Magnet', pp. 111-2.

John Asby de Richmond resettled in stages from Great Asby in Westmorland to Richmond before coming to York and enrolling as a freeman in 1439.⁸¹ Shortly thereafter he joined the Corpus Christi Guild and then the Mercers' where he held office as Constable in 1445; and he married Isabel, kinswoman of his York colleague Thomas Curtas.⁸² At his death in 1459, John requested burial in York, but his bequests show his links to Richmond were unbroken: his burgage properties and shops near the market place were legacies for his wife, married daughter, ordained son and the six children of his deceased son Thomas.⁸³ His moderate prosperity seems to have been based on the retail distribution of mercery in Richmond and York; and he clearly retained a sense of moral and financial responsibility for his dependent relations, thereby helping to sustain the viability of the kinship group.⁸⁴

The Norman family retained a connection with Malton over three generations dating from 1469 when John Norman, junior was enrolled as a merchant, and the following year his father was registered as John Norman de Newsom Bridge, chapman.⁸⁵ In the 1470s both became members of the York Mercers' Guild where the latter was known as elder or senior until 1493 when this changed to 'de Malton'.⁸⁶ At his death in 1395, John was described as a burgess of New Malton; and the villages and towns mentioned in his will describe a trading circuit from Malton to Scarborough and back.⁸⁷ John senior may have resided periodically in York whereas his son became firmly entrenched in the city; and the latter and his son were elected aldermen and served as mayors. Contact with their ancestral home is shown through marriage alliances and by testamentary cash bequests to relatives.⁸⁸

Clear evidence of the importance of connections to the ancestral home is shown in the curious case of defamation concerning Bartram, father of Thomas Dawson, who took

⁸¹ [28]; *Buildings of England. Cumberland and Westmoreland*, pp. 248-9.

⁸² [263], BI, PR 2, fo. 438.

⁸³ BI, PR 2, fo. 396.

⁸⁴ Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, p. 152; Masschaele, 'Medieval Urban Trade', p. 125; Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', p. 137.

⁸⁵ [666]; *FR*, 1, p. 188.

⁸⁶ YMAA, Mercers' Guild, Accounts 12-23 (1472-93); Skaife, 'Civic Officials', p. 537.

⁸⁷ BI, PR 5, fo. 467.

⁸⁸ Skaife, 'Civic Officials', pp. 537-8, 596-7; BI, PR 5, fo. 497; BI, PR 9, fos. 327, 383; *FR*, 1, pp. 219, 223.

out his freedom as a tailor in 1476.⁸⁹ Bartram held civic office as chamberlain in 1491 and sheriff in 1496/7, but in April 1506 a rumour went round the city that he was Scottish not English.⁹⁰ Thus, 'grievously hurt in his name and goods', he contacted those who could clear his name and six months later the city received letters testimonial which certified that he had been born in Warmeden [*sic*] in the parish of Bamburgh, Northumberland.⁹¹ These names reveal a complex social network: George, Abbot of Alnwick, Sir Ralph Grey of Chillingham, Edmund Crancester (now Cranster) the constable of Dunstanburgh, Ralph Carr of Newland, the vicar of Ellingham, Richard Crancester, gentleman and Bartram Fenkyll of Newham, yeoman, and his godmother from Shotton in the Cheviots.⁹² Thus, it behoved a freeman to remain in touch with folks back home. After the crisis died down, Bertram became an alderman and Thomas a councillor, the latter dying in 1539 and bequeathing houses, gardens and garths in several parts of the city.⁹³

It can be seen that it was beneficial for an immigrant mercer to remain in touch with folk back home, a contact which helped maintain his own identity and sense of belonging in a new place of residence. In return, the success of an urban member of the family would filter back to the kinship group, fostering its viability and strengthening or creating new social, commercial and credit connections.

Summary Remarks

All in all, the above survey has supported rather than cast doubts upon the use of placename surnames as evidence of previous place of residence and in some cases confirmed birthplace and ancestral home. Mercers migrated into York from all points of the compass, often from long distances and from diverse communities. Various factors would prompt migration, but the impression is that mercers were drawn into York in hope of bettering their prospects. Not every mercer prospered, some succumbed to death and others emigrated elsewhere; but those who did succeed became permanent residents, acquired urban property, joined local guilds and held civic office. An important element of urban success was the moral and financial

⁸⁹ *FR*, 1, p. 196.

⁹⁰ Skaife, 'Civic Officials', p. 204.

⁹¹ *YCA*, A/Y, fo. 340b cited Skaife, *CCG Register*, p. 105; *TE*, 5, no. 52, pp. 61-2, no. 52.

⁹² *Buildings of England. Northumberland*, pp. 64-75, 78-81, 123-6, 135, 140-2, 145; Ekwall, *English Place Names*, pp. 340, 420.

⁹³ [279]; *BI*, PR 9, fo. 39; *BI*, PR 11, fo. 403

support of the kinship group; and retained links with the ancestral home suggest a reciprocal responsibility for the viability of the kinship group. Moreover there was a strong impression that geographic mobility was the means by which mercers began to improve their social and economic standing; and evidence for this emerges in looking more closely at the social and occupational background of York mercers.

II

OCCUPATION AND SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

The second section looks at social mobility within an urban occupational hierarchy of freemen, in which mercers seem to have ranked higher than artisans but slightly lower than merchants. There is some evidence that artisan families aspired to raise their social and economic prospects by investing in their sons' future as traders; and though some mercers acquired their skills before migration to York, others served an apprenticeship with a York-based master. Mercers intent upon overseas trade often spent some time employed as a factor; and when sufficient capital had been accumulated, they would take out their freedom, set up in business and marry.

The general context for examining social mobility is social stratification or the internal divisions of society which produce a hierarchy of groups, 'each having specific life chances and a distinctive style of life'.⁹⁴ Scott discusses social standing in terms of levels of prestige, power of command and wealth, which are useful in assessing the social standing and economic class of urban-based mercers.⁹⁵ The social divisions of early medieval towns are considered to have been grounded in

⁹⁴ M. Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages 1348-1500* (London, 1990), pp. 19; 27-130; F. R. H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition. English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1970), pp. 61-79; P. Saunders, *Social Class and Stratification* (London, 1990); Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 1-16; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 285-376; C. Phythian-Adams, 'An Agenda for English Local History' in *idem.* (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850. Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester and London, 1993), pp. 1-23 at pp. 4-6; L. Stone, 'Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), pp. 16-55 at pp. 29-36; A. Everitt, 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), pp. 56-73; N. J. Smelser and S. M. Lipset (eds.), *Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development* (Chicago, 1966).

⁹⁵ Scott, *Stratification and Power. Structures of Class, Status and Command*, (Cambridge & Cambridge, MA, 1996).

feudal lordship and originally based on legal status and property tenure.⁹⁶ As towns became centres for manufacture and trade and the majority of residents were artisans and traders, urban hierarchy began to be based on occupation and notions of prestige and wealth.⁹⁷ Although the craft system provided the basis for social advancement, some urban studies point out the restrictions imposed on certain occupational groups, in particular the polarisation and conflict between mercantile élites and artisans.⁹⁸ Rappaport identified the two main 'factors which conditioned status attainment' as personal capabilities and the social and economic background of the family.⁹⁹ The shift in occupation between rural fathers and urban sons reflects parental aspirations for social mobility.¹⁰⁰ However, the choice of occupation for those apprenticed to urban masters depended on the premium a parent could afford, the continuing moral and financial support of kinsmen and friends, and the ability and patronage of the

⁹⁶ Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government', pp. 78-81; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, pp. 184-198, 203-6, 208-10; Reynolds, *Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, pp. 123-6; R. Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 22-44.

⁹⁷ R. Hilton, 'Status and Class in the Medieval Town' in T. R. S. Slater and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 9-19 at pp. 10-13, 17; R. H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society. A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 53-86; R. H. Hilton, 'Towns and English Feudal Society' in *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism* (London and New York, 1985, 2nd edition, 1990), pp. 102-113 at pp. 107-113; D. M. Palliser, 'Urban Society' in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes. Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994, reprinted 1996), 132-149 at pp. 140-2.

⁹⁸ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 104-112; Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 9-10, 150-4; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 2-3, 110, 113, 122, 165, 170-5.

⁹⁹ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 287, also pp. 215-284, 285-291; Saunders, *Social Class and Stratification*, pp. 68-84; W. E. Moore, 'Changes in Occupational Structure' in N. J. Smelser and S. M. Lipset (eds.), *Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 194-212 at pp. 195-6, 205; N. R. Ramsøy, 'Changes in Rates and Forms of Mobility' in N. J. Smelser and S. M. Lipset, *Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 213-234, at pp. 215-219, 221, 225; M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism. Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 108-110.

¹⁰⁰ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 232-37, 285-376, esp. pp. 304-6, 308, 321-2; M. J. Bennett, 'Education and Advancement' in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-century Attitudes. Perceptions of Society in late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994, reprinted 1996), pp. 79-96 at pp. 90-1; Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 210-222; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 47-53, 54-57; C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (London, 1976), p. 98.

master.¹⁰¹ The successful completion of apprenticeship was the first stage in the transition from youth to adult, the second would be enrolment as a freeman and the third marriage and the creation of a new household.¹⁰² Although marriage signified adulthood, the household function as a social and economic unit was subject to a degree of parental pressure depending on status, wealth and aspirations.¹⁰³ Although the groom and parents contributed to the viability of the household, the bride's marriage portion provided working capital in the form of cash and household furnishings, and influenced her choice as wife.¹⁰⁴ Equally important would be the dower of a widow which might include fixed assets as well such as real estate or rents.¹⁰⁵ Although marriage and remarriage increased a householder's responsibilities towards dependants and kinfolk, there would be benefits in the extension of social and commercial contacts and sources of credit; and for merchants, the marriage of

¹⁰¹ S. A. Epstein, *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval England* (Chapel Hill, NC and London, 1991), pp. 102-154, 155-206; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 133-5, 141; Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', pp. 135, 145-6; M. Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the late Fourteenth Century', *Mediaeval Studies*, 46 (1984), pp. 355-84; A. Hanham, *The Celys and their World. An English Merchant Family of the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 3-29; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 311, 329, 337-8; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 75-6, 104-5; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 110-1, 252; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 125-130.

¹⁰² Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 344-5, 365; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 199-222; Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government in the Later Middle Ages', pp. 74-6, 76-8; P. J. P. Goldberg, *Medieval England. A Social History 1250-1550* (London, 2004), pp. 12-29.

¹⁰³ A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840. Modes of Reproduction 1300* (New York, 1986, reprinted paperback 1987), pp. 79-102; P. Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2001); B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society. Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), pp. 49-51, 55; Poos, *A Rural Society After the Black Death*, pp. 131, 132-158; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 81-8; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Household and the Organisation of Labour in Late Medieval Towns: some English Evidence' in M. Carlier and T. Soens (eds.), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities. Italy and North-western Europe Compared* (Garant, 2001); pp. 59-70; B. A. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound. Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York, 1986), pp. 205-19; K. Dockray, 'Why Did Fifteenth Century English Gentry Marry?' in M. Jones (ed.), *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe* (Gloucester, 1986.), pp. 61-77 at 61-2.

¹⁰⁴ Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, p. 263; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 80, 96-7; Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 28-9; Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 179-183; Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition*, pp. 94-5, 96-8; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 86-88; V. B. Elliott, 'Single Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598-1619' in R. B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society. Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), pp. 81-100.

¹⁰⁵ S. S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1993); C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500* (London and Rio Grande, 1994); B. J. Todd, 'The Remarrying Widow: a Stereotype Reconsidered' in M. Prior, *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London and New York, 1985), pp. 54-92; M. Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families in Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 14 (1988), pp. 47-63 at pp. 49-51; Fleming, *Family an Household in Medieval England*, pp. 80-2.

their widows and children to sons and daughters of colleagues and friends enabled their capital to be retained within the mercantile community.¹⁰⁶

A. SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

i. Occupational Shifts Between Generations

Direct evidence of the social background of York mercers is limited, but there are references to the occupations practised by fathers or sons in the freemen’s register as well as indirect evidence of occupational by-names. Collating these references indicates that their fathers practised 58 different occupations which represented a cross-section of rural and urban crafts, professions, trades and services (Table 3.1).

TABLE 3.1
THE 58 CRAFTS OR TRADES PRACTISED BY THE FATHERS OF YORK MERCERS,
c.1300 to 1529

Building	Leather and Metal	Victualling	Clothing	Textile	Trade & Transport	Other	Professional and status
Mason	Cordwainer	Baker	Capmaker	Dubber	Booth	Barber	Chaplain
Plasterer	Tanners	Butcher	Chaperon-maker	Dyer	Catour	Chandler	Clerk
Sawyer	Skinner	Cook	Coucher	Tapiter	Chapman		Lawyer
Wright	Girdlers	Fisher	Draper	Walker	Haberdasher	Cooper	
Turner		Fishmonger	Embroider	Weaver	Mercer	Fletcher	Yeoman
	Armourer	Grocer	Hosier		Merchant	Painter	Gentleman
	Cutler	Saucemaker	Tailor		Shop[keeper]		Esquire
	Fourner	Taverner	Vestment-maker			Falconer	Knight
	Goldsmith	Vintner			Carter	Forester	
	Ironmonger				Mariner	Gardener	
	Marshall						
	Pinner						

Inherited surnames derived from occupation reflect the livelihood of the father or ancestor such as Armourer, [em]-Broiderer, Cooper, Goldsmith and Walker, as well as Spicer, an apothecary and Dubber, probably a clothworker.¹⁰⁷ A background in trade is implied in by-names such as Booth and Schop; Catour is from *achatour* a caterer or buyer; Storer, a custodian of a warehouse; and Taverner, often an

¹⁰⁶ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 146-152; D. Cressy, ‘Kinship and Kin Interaction’, *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), pp. 38-69 at pp. 44-9, 51-3, 59-65, 67-9; E. Bott, *Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families* (London, 1957), pp. 58-9, 102-3, 106-108, 114-158; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 80-1, 99-100, 115.

¹⁰⁷ Reaney, *Dictionary of English Surnames*, pp. xli-xlii , 143, 420; B. Sundby, ‘Some Middle English Occupational Terms’, *English Studies*, 33 (1952), pp 18-19; Fransson, *Middle English Surnames of Occupation*.

innkeeper, who retailed wine.¹⁰⁸ Civic positions are denoted by Bailey (bailiff), de la Chamber and Ward (guard); purchasing officers in a seigniorial household by Spenser (dispenser) and Wardrobe; and officials or attendees by Forester and Vicars (the vicar's man).¹⁰⁹

Direct references to the occupations of fathers reveal that some were masons, plasters, sawyers, wrights or carpenters and turners or joiners. The leather trades were represented by cordwainers, tanners, skimmers and girdlers and metalworkers by pinners, marshalls, cutlers and ironmongers. Victuallers included those who processed foods such as cooks, saucemakers, butchers and bakers and those who retailed imported groceries or wine. Some fathers wove woollen and worsted cloth, others finished it as walkers or dyers and there were capmakers, hosiers, tailors and vestmentmakers. There were service providers, professionals and a few miscellaneous trades such as coopers, fletchers and painters.

In considering the occupational shifts between generation, it seems reasonable to suppose that fathers had a crucial role in determining the occupation practised by their sons; and that the shifts reflected parental aspirations on the one hand, and an assessment of their sons' ability on the other. Therefore, the shift in occupation itself signifies social mobility up or down a hierarchy based on occupation, wealth and prestige. In an urban setting members of the mercantile élite ranked higher than artisans; professionals had greater prestige though less civic authority; and freemen had a similar social status to yeomen; and all but a few were outclassed by gentlemen, esquires and knights.

ii. Horizontal and Vertical Mobility

a. Mercers and Merchants

The sons of several mercers followed their father's trade such as John, son of Robert Gaunt de Duffield, William, son of Adam Tondu and Richard, son of Richard Billingham.¹¹⁰ A similar lateral shift would be to another mercantile occupation; for instance the sons of mercers William Brignall and John Peghan were a spicer and

¹⁰⁸ *Dictionary of English Surnames*, pp. 54, 87, 407, 429-30, 440.

¹⁰⁹ *Dictionary of English Surnames*, pp. 24, 89, 174, 276, 426, 467, 475, 476.

¹¹⁰ [398]; [399]; [870]; [869]; [99]; [98].

grocer respectively.¹¹¹ This worked in reverse for the mercer sons of Richard Langthorn and William Threpland, vintners, and for John Haliday whose father was a grocer.¹¹²

Although the 3 sons of Thomas Kirk, mercer were enrolled as mercers, John became known as a merchant, a switch usually associated with participation in overseas trade.¹¹³ For example, in the fourteenth century the Grantham and Scorby families became merchants as their wool trade expanded.¹¹⁴ From mid-century the export of woollen cloth drew in other mercers later known as merchants such as Robert Ward, Thomas Gare and Peter Bucksey.¹¹⁵ Indeed this was the pattern followed by the most prominent mercers, who were elected mayor: Roger de Morton, junior, John de Bedale, John de Bolton, Henry Preston, William Stockton and John Gilliot became known as merchants and their sons were merchants from the start.¹¹⁶

In common with other York citizens, mercers sought religious vocations for their sons which would raise them into the educated élite whose income was secured through a benefice or stipend.¹¹⁷ A kinsmen of John de Crome was a Vicar Choral and George Birtbeck's stepson, a Minster canon.¹¹⁸ The sons of Adam del Brigg, John Appleton and John Asby became chaplains, those of John de Beverley and Thomas Tanfield, monks and of William de Appleby and Thomas Bracebridge, friars.¹¹⁹ John Stockdale contributed 20s for a nephew at Eton whereas the money bequeathed by John del More and Nicholas Useflet for their respective step- and godson's 'exhibition' was probably at local schools.¹²⁰ A clerical career might be pursued in minor holy orders as seems the case for Master William Gilliot, son of William,

¹¹¹ [156]; [684]; *FR*, 1, pp. 130, 238.

¹¹² [562]; [859]; [444]; *FR*, 1, pp. 80, 104, 227.

¹¹³ [554]; [550]; [552]; [553].

¹¹⁴ [430]; [431]; [753]; [755].

¹¹⁵ [908]; [388]; [168]; *FR* 1, pp. 107, 110, 127, 129, 143.

¹¹⁶ [643]; [119]; [703]; [68]; [830]; [405].

¹¹⁷ J. H. Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 123, 132; Du Boulay, *Age of Ambition*, pp. 72-3.

¹¹⁸ [256]; [105]; YML 2/4, ff.39, 173; BI, PR 4, ff. 158, 206.

¹¹⁹ [145]; [20]; [28]; [89]; [843]; [18]; [136]; BI, PR 1, fos. 3, 72; BI, PR 2, fo. 396; BI, PR 3, fos. 109, 256, 487, 495; *FR*, 1, p. 142; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 111-2.

¹²⁰ [825]; [637]; [882]; BI, PR 2, fo. 58; BI, PR 3, fo. 10; BI, PR 6, fo. 185; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 111-2; J. H. Moran *Education and Learning in the City of York 1300-1560*, Borthwick Papers, 55 (1979), pp. 7, 18-19, 24, 26.

whereas John Tutbag's son and Thomas Catour's grandson were *litterati*, laymen probably acting as scriveners.¹²¹ Parents aspiring to gentry status would provide legal training for their sons: Simon Waghen allocated £9 to place his son at the law courts in London and the sons of Walter de Frothingham and Robert del Gare became lawyers in York.¹²² Robert, son of Miles Arume qualified as a lawyer and achieved the coveted status of gentleman; and this route may have been taken by John, son of John Easingwold, enrolled in the freemen's register as a gentleman in 1462.¹²³ It might take three generations to achieve this gentry status as in the Brignall family from Richard de Brignall, dyer, through his son Richard, mercer, to his grandson Richard, gentleman.¹²⁴ Further movement up the social scale is illustrated by the descendents of William Gilliot, bower whose son John was a mercer; and his grandson John was a merchant, who was dubbed Knight of the Bath by Henry VII.¹²⁵

John Wheldrake's father was a baker and his experience with suppliers may have prompted John's career as a trader, and likewise for William Brandsby and Thomas Foxgill whose kinsmen were butchers.¹²⁶ The Brereton family in the late fourteenth century were cooks, but two descendents became mercers, Thomas in 1397 and another Thomas in 1435, and the latter's brother Nicholas was a vestment-maker.¹²⁷ Inns and taverns were places where traders congregated and John Taverner may have picked up his skills as a mercer at his father Stephen Moton's tavern; and those involved in the carriage of goods would become acquainted with many aspects of trade such as William Trotter, mercer whose father and brother had been mariners.¹²⁸

¹²¹ [406]; [876]; [202]; BI, PR 3, fo. 526; BI, PR 5, fos. 38, 299, 467; *FR*, 1, pp. 199, 239; M. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990); N. Ramsey, 'Scriveners and Notaries as Legal Intermediaries in later Medieval England' in J. Kermode (ed.), *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-century England* (Gloucester, 1991), pp. 118-132, at pp. 118-20; C. R. Cheney, *Notaries Public in England in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 93-4.

¹²² [888]; [376]; [387]; BI, PR 1, fo. 141; BI, PR 3, f. 103; *FR*, 1, pp. 131; *YMB*, 3, p. 87; D. Dasef 'The Lawyers of the York Curia 1400-1435' (unpublished BPhil, (History), University of York, 1976), pp. 6, 27-31, 103, 106-9; C. I. A. Ritchie, *The Ecclesiastical Court of York* (Arbroath, 1956), pp. 45-9; C. R. Chapman, *Ecclesiastical Courts, their Officials and their Records* (Dursley, 1992), pp. 33-36.

¹²³ [26]; [317]; [244]; BI, PR 3, fo. 599; *YML*, 2/5, fo. 27; *FR*, 1, pp. 182, 225.

¹²⁴ [147]; [146]; *FR*, 1, p. 19; see Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 277.

¹²⁵ [405]; BI, PR 5, fo. 327; BI, PR 8, fo. 32; *FR*, 1, pp. 144, 203.

¹²⁶ [932]; [138]; [369]; *FR*, 1, pp. 97, 115, 240.

¹²⁷ [139]; [140]; *FR*, 1, pp. 97-8, 149.

¹²⁸ [844]; [874]; *FR*, 1, pp. 75, 227, 253; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 136; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, p. 252; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 277.

Evidence suggests that artisan fathers sought to promote their sons into mercantile trades and, for a building craftsman, a mark of extraordinary success would be their son's qualification as a mercer such as Richard Ase, son of a plasterer.¹²⁹ John and Thomas Crakall were the mercer sons of a highly skilled mason whose income was supplemented from his brewery and small holding.¹³⁰ The leather trades provided the background for Robert Holtby and William Middleton, sons of a girdler and tanner respectively; and mercers were also recruited from the clothing trades: William Belle was the son of a tailor and William Lully's father was a hosier.¹³¹ The fathers of John Madynstan, Robert Seaton, William del Castle and Robert Tirrell were weavers and tapiters and may have looked to their sons to market their woollen cloths and worsted coverlets.¹³² Retail distribution of embroidered panels may have prompted John Richardson's father to train him as a mercer; and likewise Henry Curtas would hope to sell his painted linen and decorated alabaster carvings through his son William, a haberdasher.¹³³

A few merchants became known as mercers during their working lives which suggests a contraction in the scope of their trading activities; for example Thomas Helmsley by 1381, William Thorp by 1478 and John Birkhead and Thomas Dawson before their deaths respectively in 1508 and 1539.¹³⁴ A downturn in fortunes is also implied in Benedict Arnald's shift from merchant to mercer and in his son's enrolment as a linen-weaver.¹³⁵ A more horizontal shift is indicated for Thomas Beverley, fishmonger, because dealing in saltwater fish was a branch of mercantile trade; but John, son of Thomas Moulton, took up a less prestigious occupation as a baker.¹³⁶ Here the choice of occupation may well reflect the lesser capabilities of the son; for instance John, son of Nicholas Middelburgh became a chandler and sauce-maker, and the sons of William Ripon and Robert Penreth qualified as capper and girdler respectively.¹³⁷ This seems the case in the sharp decline traced through the

¹²⁹ [27]; *FR*, 1, p. 110; *BI*, PR 3, fo. 410; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 127-149, 168.

¹³⁰ [246]; [247]; *FR*, 1, p. 65; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 19-24; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 89-92.

¹³¹ [498]; [633]; [71]; [605]; *BI*, PR 3, fo. 542; *BI*, PR 7, fo. 28; *FR*, 1, pp. 17, 63, 172, 229.

¹³² [608]; [769]; [201]; [866]; *FR*, 1, pp. 80, 83, 100, 196.

¹³³ [716]; [264]; *FR*, 1, pp. 115, 187.

¹³⁴ [471]; [858]; [100]; [279].

¹³⁵ [23]; *FR*, 1, p. 126.

¹³⁶ [90]; [648]; *FR*, 1, pp. 168, 184; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 18-20.

¹³⁷ [623]; [725]; [686]; *FR*, 1, pp. 140, 169, 198, 195.

descendents of Robert Plumpton, gentleman, an illegitimate son of Sir William Plumpton knight, who became Town Clerk in York and member of the Mercers' Guild.¹³⁸ His son Richard took up trade as haberdasher and goldsmith and moved abroad and subsequently married and died in Antwerp.¹³⁹ His will instructed the executors to find a suitable occupation for his minor son; and it turns out that Hancie Plumpton was apprenticed to a cooper in Hull implying both an insubstantial inheritance and inability to learn the skills of mercantile trade.¹⁴⁰

b. Chapmen, Haberdashers and Women

In the above discussion a simple method has been used to assess social standing in which mercer is 'better' than artisan and 'not quite so good' as merchant, but there is a greyer area between mercer and chapman or haberdasher which seems to depend on the scope and scale of their trade. For William Vescy and Alan Hammerton, free as chapmen, their eventual success in the wool trade promoted the switch to mercer and merchant.¹⁴¹ The marketing of woollen cloth probably lay behind the shift of John de Bristol to tailor, Roger de Burton to mercer and John Norman to mercer then merchant.¹⁴² Thomas Grissop shifted down from merchant to chapman, but retained a substantial investment of goods in his shop; and the chapman William Walker had a brother and a son who were mercers, presumably with shops, in Selby and York.¹⁴³ For most chapmen however, an itinerant lifestyle seems characteristic and their freedom would be a licence for occasional trade in the city markets, which had been ignored by a Henry Hanson who was caught selling salt by false measures and Robert Gilmyn who was fined for selling wool by retail.¹⁴⁴ It is the absence of chapmen as chapmen from civic office that signifies less social and economic potential; and it is significant that the chapmen sons of Thomas Spicer were not admitted to the Mercers' Guild although he had been a member for twenty years.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ *FR*, 1, p. 213; *TE*, 4, no. 149, pp. 258-60; *BI*, PR 6, f.225.

¹³⁹ [694]; *BI*, PR 13, fo. 105.

¹⁴⁰ *TE*, 4, no. 149, p. 258 note.

¹⁴¹ [883]; [448]; *BI*, PR 3, ff. 244, 266.

¹⁴² [151]; [185]; [666]; *YMB*, 3, pp. 17-18; *BI*, PR 1, fo. 55; *BI*, PR 5, fo. 467.

¹⁴³ [436]; [900]; [899]; [898]; *BI*, PR, 2, fo. 384; *YML*, 2/4, fo. 260; Stell and Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 151-9.

¹⁴⁴ Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, pp. 122-4, 146, 157; *YChA*, pp. 104, 146.

¹⁴⁵ [812]; [813]; *FR*, 1, p. 191.

Few haberdashers were admitted to the freedom before the sixteenth century when they temporarily replaced mercers suggesting higher status than chapmen.¹⁴⁶ Haberdashers often qualified with another occupation: Adam de Ireland as a cutler (1334) and William Bould, as a capper (1492); and in 1504 and 1505 several freemen were enrolled as haberdasher and chapman, smith, innholder, questor or vintner.¹⁴⁷ George and Henry Smith were haberdasher-yeomen and, more upwardly mobile, were Robert Hastings and William Cure as haberdashers and learned (*litterati*) and Robert Appleyard, a haberdasher-gentleman.¹⁴⁸ John Richardson and James Blades were haberdashers *cum* painter or draper and qualified for civic office; but the most notable ascent up the social scale was by Simon Vicars, who was chapman, haberdasher, mercer and merchant in turn and whose marriages and acquisition of property allied him with the landed gentry.¹⁴⁹

Women are recorded occasionally in the freemen's register indicating they had economic status as wives or widows.¹⁵⁰ Agnes daughter of Thomas Cotterell may have carried on his mercery trade with some financial help from Thomas and Alice Kirk; and Ellen Alne, daughter of a cordwainer, moved into the lower levels of the merchant class when she was enrolled as a chapwoman.¹⁵¹ Margaret Yarum's qualification as a chapwoman and admission to the Mercers' Guild implies a full-time occupation; whereas the daughters of two deceased members, Margaret Calton and Margaret Kirkby, may have sought to supplement their inheritance with occasional forays into trade.¹⁵²

Summary Remarks

It can be seen that York mercers were drawn from diverse occupational backgrounds, primarily artisan though some fathers were mercers or merchants. Thus decisions by fathers to train their sons in a different occupation reveal a combination of

¹⁴⁶ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 118-20; I. W. Archer, *The History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, 1991).

¹⁴⁷ [523]; *FR*, 1, pp. 216, 228-229.

¹⁴⁸ [456]; [260]; [802]; [803]; *FR*, 1, p. 226.

¹⁴⁹ [718]; [114]; [884]; *BI*, PR 11, ff. 11, 321.

¹⁵⁰ P. J.P. Goldberg, 'Women in Fifteenth-Century Town Life' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 107-128, at pp. 105, 113, 116, 121-2.

¹⁵¹ [11]; [238]; [239]; *BI*, PR 2, fos. 34, 121 (1446, Alice Kirk); *FR*, 1, pp. 142, 170.

¹⁵² [962]; [962]; [498]; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 214; *FR*, 1, pp. 153, 198, 237.

judgements concerning the capabilities of the son and the capital resources available for training; and in many cases reflects their aspirations to raise the social and economic prospects of the kinship group through their son's success as an urban-based mercer.

Success depended on many factors, but one would be how well the migrant was assimilated into urban society. The new immigrant to York would need to become part of the community of mercers; and mercers lacking local kin would be placed under the supervision of a reputable citizen and from there initiate contacts within the ward and parish.¹⁵³ For apprentices, the master would determine their circle of acquaintances or, in the case of those born in York, extend their existing networks.¹⁵⁴

B. CAREER, CAPITAL AND CONNECTIONS

i. Masters and Apprentices

Although the system of training by apprenticeship was long established in York, few medieval contracts or indentures survive. The earliest one known for a merchant is dated 1510 and offers only a vague summary of what was expected and no information about specific skills nor the premium paid.¹⁵⁵ The studies of Swanson and Kermode suggest that York apprentices experienced similar training and living conditions as apprentices in London.¹⁵⁶ The ordinances of the York Mercers' Guild cover the legal status of apprentices, length of service (at least seven years), exhibition of the apprentice and indenture before Guild officials, and presentation of the apprentice after completion of his term when deemed able to 'occupy as master and have a shop'.¹⁵⁷ The labour force under Guild regulations comprised four categories: apprentices, servants withalden [*sic*] as apprentice, servants and

¹⁵³ Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 140-1.

¹⁵⁴ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 75-7; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 128-33

¹⁵⁵ *YMB*, 3, pp. 247, 250; *FR*, 1, pp. 192, 216, 241; A. R. Myers, *English Historical Documents, 1327-1485* (London, 1969), p. 1072, no. 626 (1393, mercer indenture).

¹⁵⁶ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 33, 36, 73, 115-6; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 75-6, 81, 104-5, 208; Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, pp. 129-172; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 294-5.

¹⁵⁷ YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 11r-v, 13r, 14r, 15r, 156r, 159r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 91, 93-94, 105.

attorneys.¹⁵⁸ Mercer households were undoubtedly served by domestic servants, but in the context of trade the use of the word servant seems to mean a worker or assistant similar to an apprentice.¹⁵⁹ Servants and apprentices might accompany their master overseas or, from the 1430s, be sent alone where their behaviour and trading activities were scrutinized by a senior member of the Mercers' Guild.¹⁶⁰ Attorneys or factors were drawn from the ranks of fully qualified masters and employed to act in the name of their principal; and some might work for one employer for a number of years and reside in his household, whereas others were hired by several merchants on short-term contracts.¹⁶¹

It has to be assumed that in the course of training an apprentice would acquire the skills needed for buying and selling including those of basic numeracy and literacy for the casting of accounts and recording debts.¹⁶² As important would be experience in their master's branch of commerce, which for William Gutterswick would be Richard Collinson's retail distribution of mercery.¹⁶³ Nicholas Scorby would introduce Philip de Barton and Thomas Brown to the wool trade, and Robert Holme's apprentices including his kinsman Thomas would participate in the collection of wool, the finishing of cloth and the management of a shop.¹⁶⁴ The mercer-draper William Redhode involved his apprentice Richard in the manufacturing process of woollen cloth; and Robert Louth and his circle of mercer colleagues would acquaint John Eccup with shipping and marketing cloth abroad.¹⁶⁵ It would be useful to have an expertise in writing letters, commercial documents and accounts, which may be why William Wilkes's father apprenticed him with Richard Sawyer, a clerk turned

¹⁵⁸ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild', pp. 192-5; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 87-8, 90-2, 93-5, 104-6, 112, 181, 192-3; Smith, *Guide*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁹ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild', p. 194; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 113; Kermode, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 7-31 at p. 14; Goldberg, 'Household and the Organisation of Labour in Late Medieval Towns', pp. 59-70; Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 133-153.

¹⁶⁰ YMAA, Act and Ordinances 3; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 14r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 94.

¹⁶¹ BI, PR 2, fo. 68; YMB, 2, pp. 54, 55-6, 87-9; CPR, 1416-22, p. 86; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 207-211; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 81, 254; Carus-Wilson, *Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 81-3.

¹⁶² E. S. Hunt and J. M. Murray, *A History of Business in Medieval Europe, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 31-7.

¹⁶³ [231]; [440].

¹⁶⁴ [62]; [132]; [755]; [490]; BI, PR 1, fo. 100.

¹⁶⁵ [714]; [601]; [324]; BI, PR 3, fo. 265; FR, 1, p. 85.

mercator, whose executors were the Town and Mercers' Guild clerks.¹⁶⁶ More lucrative would be the trade of Notary Public, specially authorised to certify deeds and contracts, and William Cure's apprentice Anthony Young would be well acquainted with his master's fellow notaries at the Minster.¹⁶⁷

Rappaport thought the status of a master within a social or trade guild promoted the visibility of his apprentice as a likely recruit for future membership; for example John brother of Robert de Potto was apprenticed to John de Crome and his elders, who were leading members of the Fraternity of St Mary.¹⁶⁸ Many of the associates of Trinity Hospital in 1420 were linked by apprenticeship: Thomas Curtas who was affiliated with the Louth Family, apprentice of William Freeman and the master of John Denom who later became William Bedale's factor.¹⁶⁹ Within the Mercers' Guild the reputation and rank of the master was important for promotion; for example Thomas Folnetby, one of John Stockdale's apprentices, was admitted as a member before he qualified as a freemen.¹⁷⁰

Qualification for freedom depended on the master or another sponsor to vouch for the proficiency of the candidate, perhaps the service performed by Richard Killingbeck for his *famulus* John Skipwith.¹⁷¹ For apprentices whose master died during their terms, a friend may have stepped in such as John de Appleton, executor of Roger de Burton for John de Newland; and John, son of Richard Crull qualified by patrimony a few years after his master Thomas Kirk's death.¹⁷² Indeed friendship between masters would extend the support group for an apprentice, as shown by William de Askham's bequest to Robert de Ellerbeck, apprentice of Richard Storrer.¹⁷³ Robert then took over the remaining terms of Richard's young apprentice, Robert Swanland,

¹⁶⁶ [939]; [749]; BI, PR 5, fo. 190; *FR*, 1, p. 166; Ramsey, 'Scriveners and Notaries as Legal Intermediaries', pp. 118-131; G. Pollard, 'The Medieval Town Clerks of Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 31 (1966), pp. 43-76.

¹⁶⁷ [260]; BI, PR 9, fo. 264 (1523, Cure); *FR*, 1, p. 141; Cheney, *Notaries Public in England*, pp. 93-4; Ritchie, *The Ecclesiastical Court of York*, pp. 45-9; Dasef, 'The Lawyers of the York Curia 1400-1435', p. 104.

¹⁶⁸ [700]; [701]; [256]; YML, 2/4, fo. 39; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 235-6, 337-8.

¹⁶⁹ [263]; [374]; [36]; [281]; [70]; BI, PR 6, fo. 179; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild', pp. 94, 96 note 139.

¹⁷⁰ [825]; BI, PR 6, fo. 185; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild', p. 253; *FR*, 1, pp. 231, 231

¹⁷¹ [546]; [794]; BI, PR 3, fo. 466.

¹⁷² [20]; [656]; [185]; [554]; [258]; BI, PR 1, fo. 55; PR 2, fo. 34; *FR*, 1, p. 163

¹⁷³ [31]; [327]; [833]; YML, 2/4, fo. 126.

as did John del More for John de Southwell and John de Kirkby, apprentices of John de Stillington.¹⁷⁴

The bond between apprentice and master could develop into affection, for instance William Brounfield and Nicholas Usefleet remembered Thomas Scauceby and John Northby in their obits.¹⁷⁵ William Freeman entrusted Thomas Curtas with the custody of his minor children, and Robert Hasting was bequeathed real estate on condition he gave true and loving council to Richard Plumpton.¹⁷⁶ The onerous task of executor might be given to trust-worthy apprentices: Thomas Ruston appointed his former apprentice Richard Gamel, rewarding him with £3 in cash; and Simon Waghen appointed his nephew William de Waghen allocating him £5 for his labours.¹⁷⁷

ii. Masters as Patron and Employer

The master as benefactor is seen in a variety of testamentary bequests, for instance apprentices were bequeathed balances and scales by John del More and shop fittings and *mercimonia* by Thomas Curtas and bonnets by Richard Sawyer.¹⁷⁸ Cash bequests ranged from Robert Skipwith's legacy of 3s 4d to John Stanney's of £13; but more typical was the 40s left respectively by Richard Burg to his apprentice William and by Roger de Moreton, senior to John Osbaldwick.¹⁷⁹ John Derthington forgave John Lister half of an £8 debt, William Rumley remitted the terms of his apprentice's contract; Adam del Brigg released his apprentices from their indentures on condition that they cleared his debts; and Thomas de Wirethorpe stood to inherit £40 in goods if he collected and cleared John Crome's.¹⁸⁰ Indeed the collection of moneys due so concerned Robert Holmes that his will preserves detailed instructions to an array of servants and apprentices, who were to be rewarded upon success with money payments from £2 to £26 13s 4d according to seniority; the mercer William Fleming

¹⁷⁴ [840]; [637]; [823]; [807]; [557]; BI, PR 1, fo. 99; PR 3, fo. 10; YML, 2/4, fo. 124.

¹⁷⁵ [155]; [882]; [750]; BI, PR 2, fos. 619, 58; PR 5, fo. 30; *FR*, 1, p. 106.

¹⁷⁶ [374]; [263]; [456]; [694]; BI, PR 3, fo. 533; PR 4, fo. 149.

¹⁷⁷ [379]; [892]; [889]; BI, PR 1, fo. 41; PR 3, fo. 262; *FR*, 1, p. 91.

¹⁷⁸ BI, PR 3, f. 10; PR 2, fo. 438; PR 5, fo. 190.

¹⁷⁹ [795]; [820]; [173]; [642]; [872]; YML, 2/4, fo. 19; BI, PR 1, fo. 14; PR 3, fos. 85, 413.

¹⁸⁰ [286]; [586]; [737]; [118]; [948]; [256]; YML, 2/4, fo. 39; BI, PR 1, fo. 37; PR 3, fos. 73, 109; *FR*, 1, pp. 91, 107.

ranked mid-way with £10.¹⁸¹ However small these legacies might seem, they contributed to the capital assets needed to become a self-employed master.

It must be recognised that many of the apprentices mentioned in wills and half the mercers enrolled as freemen can be traced no further and some explanation is warranted. Some may have ventured into an itinerant life style, for example William Anty had been bequeathed a portion of a pack of mercery by his master William Vescy.¹⁸² Others would have returned home after completing their term, perhaps William Welles to Beverley, Thomas Hornby's apprentice; or moved elsewhere as did John Forth to Settrington having settling John Bowland's York estate.¹⁸³ A few migrated south: sons of Nicholas Blackburn and Thomas Bracebrig respectively to Kent and London; and it was in London in 1347 where John de Yarum, apprentice of Thomas de Sigston died.¹⁸⁴ However the main reason that these mercers cannot be traced is probably that they did not qualify as a master or that they could not afford to set up on their own and so faded into the background as journeymen.¹⁸⁵

The exceptions were the employees or factors of established mercers and merchants, who retained their visibility in both civic and guild records, such as William Agland, who was in Bruges in 1373 acting on behalf of Roger de Morton, junior.¹⁸⁶ This type of experience abroad would forge a network amongst younger mercers, for example John Leversdale died in Bruges in 1389 in the company of Thomas and John del Gare.¹⁸⁷ When the latter died in Calais in 1393, he had forged strong ties with Thomas Aldstanemore, who 40 years later requested burial beside John should he too die in Calais.¹⁸⁸ The mercers Robert Harome and Alan Sandholme were John Helmsely's companions at his death in Dordrecht in 1384; and when John Dunnock died in Gdansk in 1389, he was accompanied by his apprentice and Richard Sourby,

¹⁸¹; [490]; [316]; BI, PR 1, fo. 100.

¹⁸² [883]; BI, PR 3, fo. 266.

¹⁸³ [503]; [365]; [132]; BI, PR 2, fo. 506; BI, PR 2, fo. 570; PR, Adm. Acts (1442); Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 314-5, 330-3; Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp.22-3, 111-13.

¹⁸⁴ [785]; [959]; *YMB*, 2, p. 114; *YMB*, 3 p. 201; *YD*, 1, p. 161; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 76n, 142.

¹⁸⁵ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 107-8; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 329-334.

¹⁸⁶ [3]; [643]; [122]; [123]; BI, PR 2, f. 69; *Plea & Memoranda Rolls, 1364-81*, p. 154; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 332.

¹⁸⁷ [575]; [388]; BI, PR 1, fo. 1.

¹⁸⁸ [385]; BI, PR 1, fo. 58; PR 3, fo. 413.

mercier.¹⁸⁹ Thomas de Fenton's will was witnessed by six York merchants when drawn up in Gdansk in 1395; the same place where John Bristol died in 1444 and his witnesses were fellow brethren in the Mercers' Guild.¹⁹⁰ Other members working in Gdansk were Christopher and Richard Booth, formerly *famuli* of Henry Market, and William Bedale's factor John Denom who purchased a share in a Prussian ship.¹⁹¹ John Lofthouse resided so long in Prussia that his membership dues fell ever deeper into arrears; and Robert Kirk was living abroad when he sent back a partial payment of a £12 obligation with John Calton.¹⁹²

Summary Remarks

It can be seen that the future success of an aspiring mercer depended on a combination of factors including the quality of tuition and his own aptitude. The extent to which a master acted as sponsor, benefactor and friend would play a critical role, and equally important would be the network of contacts forged during apprenticeship and in paid employment. After qualification as a freeman and the acquisition of sufficient capital to set up in business, the next step would be marriage and the establishment of a household.

III

MARRIAGE AND HOUSEHOLD FORMATION

i. Capital Assets as Prerequisites for Marriage

The biographical information pertaining to York mercers suggests that most married and set up their household as a new social and economic unit.¹⁹³ The marriage itself indicates that the couple had acquired Macfarlane's four essential assets: 'somewhere to live, the furnishings for house and body, the prospects of an assured income and

¹⁸⁹ [451]; [742]; [468]; [311]; [806]; YML, 2/4, fo. 76; BI, PR 1, fo. 2.

¹⁹⁰ [351]; [152]; BI, PR 1, fo. 89; PR 2, fo. 72.

¹⁹¹ [122]; [123]; [70]; [218]; BI, PR 2, fo. 69; PR 3, fos. 459, 495; YMB, 3, p. 122.

¹⁹² [591]; [553]; [193]; YMAA, Guild Accounts 6-7; see bills attached to Guild Accounts 1.m.8-7.

¹⁹³ Goldberg, 'Female Labour, Service and Marriage', p. 28.

some ready cash to cover initial expenses.¹⁹⁴ The York evidence suggests each asset was accumulated and contributed by both partners and parents, the latter sometimes providing housing for the young couple and a prospective inheritance.¹⁹⁵

The groom's contribution was represented by his ability to earn a living and he may well have saved some cash from wages or acquired capital assets through trade. The younger Robert de Holmes was a beneficiary of household furnishings and real estate within a year of his freedom.¹⁹⁶ Robert Louth bequeathed his sons £10 each and Nicholas son of William Bedale inherited messuages in York while still a minor.¹⁹⁷ Thomas de Barnby came into his inheritance many years after his mother died and John Arnald waited for the reversion of a tenement until the death of the current tenant.¹⁹⁸ On occasion the bride brought an inheritance of land or rents such Joan Louth's tenement in Malton or Juliana Howden's messuage in Monkgate, York; but more often the main contribution to the 'conjugal fund' was the bride's marriage portion.¹⁹⁹ This comprised household furnishings and cash which, as 'moveable fluid assets' could be used immediately, in particular by the husband.²⁰⁰ Testamentary bequests to daughters, nieces, grandchildren and female servants show the type of goods a bride might have: *paraphernalia* (jewellery and personal items such as silk girdles), *jocalia* (silver spoons, silver plate and silver-bound masers); clothing; household furnishings such as bedding, furniture and kitchen utensils; and occasionally spinning and brewing equipment.²⁰¹ Thus the bride brought articles for her person, *jocalia* as a store of wealth and sufficient furnishings to set up an independent household.

The cash element of the marriage portion might include her child's portion, as well as a specific amount for her marriage: John del More bequeathed £40 as his children's 'right portion' whereas a century later John Stockdale considered £20 a suitable

¹⁹⁴ Macfarlane, *Marriage and Home in England 1300-1840*, p. 263.

¹⁹⁵ Macfarlane, *Marriage and Home in England 1300-1840*, pp. 263, 270-1, 276-7.

¹⁹⁶ BI, PR 1, fo. 100.

¹⁹⁷ BI, PR 3, fos. 265, 495.

¹⁹⁸ [56]; [25]; YMB, 3, pp. 81-2; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, no. 441, pp. 242-3.

¹⁹⁹ [601]; [506]; BI, PR 3, fo. 450; YMAA, Title Deeds, Monkgate 15-18.

²⁰⁰ Macfarlane, *Marriage and Home in England 1300-1840*, pp. 263, 264-9.

²⁰¹ BI, PR 1, fos. 88, 96; PR 2, fo. 578; PR 3, fos. 246, 400, 415, 600; PR 4, fo. 135; YML 2/5, fo. 5; TE, 1, no. 146, pp. 180-3.

amount.²⁰² Godparents might augment these sums; for instance Ivetta Burton left 5 marks for Ivetta de Rumlay and Thomas Bracebridge gave 6s 8d to Katherine wife of Richard Billingham.²⁰³ John Eghes allocated 10 marks of silver towards the marriage of his sister to John del Dike and the granddaughters of Thomas Gare were to receive 100 marks each for theirs.²⁰⁴ Eve Crome's £20 legacy to Isabel Halliwell was conditional on her living and marrying well; and Emma Preston left 10 marks to her servant, Alice Stede, if she remained a virgin.²⁰⁵ The marriage portions of Maud and Janet Johnson were greatly supplemented when their mother died; but Agnes daughter of William Talvais received only £5 having had to wait between her father's death in 1380 and her mother's in 1410.²⁰⁶ At the death of a husband, the widow was due her dower, as Thomas Gare detailed, 'the third part of the issues of his property...as the law required' which might well comprise real estate or rents.²⁰⁷ This might be augmented: for instance Robert, son of John Holme, gave his widow an additional £100 sterling and all the ornaments of his chamber; and William Vescy specified that Emma was to have 'all the goods of his portion not previously bequeathed' including linen and woollen textiles and the furnishings of his house.²⁰⁸

ii. Age of Marriage

Considering the length of apprenticeship and a period of paid employment, it is likely that York mercers qualified for freedom about age 21 and married in their mid- to late twenties.²⁰⁹ John Gare, free in 1385, died in Calais in 1393 bequeathing *omnia jocalia* to Katherine, daughter of John Thornton, probably his intended wife; and William Blaufront and William Barley joined the Corpus Christi Guild with their wives after respective intervals of 8 and 4 years after qualifying as freemen.²¹⁰ At

²⁰² BI, PR 3, fo. 10; PR 6, fo. 185.

²⁰³ BI, PR 1, fo. 88; PR 3, fo. 487.

²⁰⁴ [287]; [250]; [737]; BI, PR 1, fo. 57; PR 2, fo. 110; PR 3, fo. 400.

²⁰⁵ BI, PR 1, fo. 96; PR 3, fo. 60.

²⁰⁶ YML, 2/4, fo. 72; BI, PR, 3, fo. 60; PR 5, fo. 510; PR 6, fo. 227.

²⁰⁷ BI, PR 2, fo. 110; J. S. Loengard, 'Rationalibilis Dos: Magna Carta and the Widow's Fair Share in the Earlier Thirteenth Century' in S. S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 59-80.

²⁰⁸ BI, PR 3, fos. 247, 266.

²⁰⁹ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 111-113; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 8, 876-7; Elliott, 'Single Women in the London Marriage Market', pp. 83-88, 95-6; Macfarlane, *Marriage and Home in England 1300-1840*, pp. 263, 270-1, 276-7.

²¹⁰ [337]; [765]; [51]; [116]; BI, PR 1, fo. 58; *CCG Register*, pp. 28, 35.

their first marriage women may been close to 20 years old; for example Margaret, daughter of Simon Vicars, was born about 1500 and died in 1520 bequeathing a piece of silver to Robert White merchant 'that should have been her husband'.²¹¹ For other women the known length of their widowhood suggests they were married at a young age; such as Josiana Kirkby who died 54 years after her husband Roland; and Isabel Carr, who married four husbands in the period 1402 to 1457: William del Lee bower, Robert Gaunt mercer, Richard Russell vintner (the father of her children) and Thomas Carr draper.²¹² Agnes Osbaldwick seems to have remarried an older man, William Appleby; whereas Thomas Wharfe was probably younger than Joan, widow of William Brounfield.²¹³ Despite the incidence of remarriages between older and younger spouses, the overall impression is that marriage within the community of mercers adhered to the European pattern; age of bride and groom at first marriage were similar and in their 20s rather than their teens.²¹⁴

iii. Choice of Wife

It is accepted that there was an active market for single and widowed women in the late middle ages, and while parental approval was advantageous for both bride and groom, their mutual consent was a legal requirement for a valid marriage.²¹⁵ This is clearly revealed in a dispute brought before the ecclesiastical court in York which involved Agnes Huntington and an alleged marriage with John Bristol's son.²¹⁶ Agnes succumbed to pressure from her mother and step-father and married their choice and set up a home in the countryside near York. After a few years she fled back to York and sued for divorce alleging cruelty; but she complicated the proceedings by claiming she had previously been married to young John Bristol.²¹⁷

²¹¹ [976]; *FR* 1, p. 241; *BI*, PR 9, fo. 92.

²¹² [558];[400]; *BI*, PR 3, fo. 465; PR 5, fo. 185; PR 9, fo. 4; *TE* 2, pp. 92, 214, nos. 81, 170.

²¹³ [671]; [18]; [155]; *BI*, PR 1, fo. 3; PR5, fo. 30; PR 6, fo. 99; *FR*, 1, p.187.

²¹⁴ J. Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective' in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History* (London, 1965), pp. 101-43; J. Hajnal, 'Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation Systems', in R. Wall (ed.) *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 65-104 at pp. 73-82.

²¹⁵ Elliott, 'Single Women in the London Marriage Market', pp. 95-9; Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 24-27.

²¹⁶ F. Pedersen, 'Romeo and Juliet of Stonegate': *a Medieval Marriage in Crisis*, Borthwick Paper, 87 (1995), pp. 5-8.

²¹⁷ Pedersen, 'Romeo and Juliet of Stonegate', pp. 10-16, 16-21.

Apprenticeship might provide contact with a future wife and Robert de Harom married Marjory, probably the daughter of his master Thomas de Sigston.²¹⁸ John del More married Agnes, daughter of his master Hugh Dunnock; and remarried twice after her death, first Juliana, daughter of his partner John Stillington and then to Elizabeth, widow of John Topcliff merchant.²¹⁹ Membership of the Fraternity of St. Mary brought John Caperon and Robert del Gare into contact with the young widows of William Belle and John Freboys, who were subsequently mothers of their sons.²²⁰ Nicholas de Middelburgh married Joan, kinswoman of William Kirk, a fellow member of the Mercers' Guild, and William Catterick's second wife Agnes was the daughter of William Bedale.²²¹

Wives might be drawn from the artisan class, for instance William Attewater and Richard de Tickhill married daughters of Gaudin, the goldsmith.²²² Joan, daughter of Richard Knight, chandler married John Catterick and Joan, daughter of John Lofthouse, parchment-maker married John Lowland.²²³ These marriages would elevate the status of the bride's artisan father, whereas marriage to wives from merchant families had the potential to raise the social and economic standing of the groom. In the 1390s John de Osbaldwick shifted from mercer to merchant after his marriage with Katherine, daughter of Richard Marshall de Bilbrough merchant; and by the time Peter Robinson was elected chamberlain in 1532 he was known as a merchant and had married Elizabeth, daughter of alderman Robert Whitfield.²²⁴

Although mutual attraction and affection between couples should not be discounted, the choice of wife had an economic aspect, particularly marriage to a widow whose new husband would assume the management of any property or rents comprising her dower.²²⁵ Honourable intentions and financial consideration may have prompted

²¹⁸ [451]; [785]; BI, PR 1, fo. 48.

²¹⁹ [637]; [268]; [823]; BI, PR 1, fos. 79, 99.

²²⁰ [194]; [71]; Skaife, 'Civic Officials', p. 144; YMAA, St. Mary's Guild: Acct. Book, fo. 14v.

²²¹ [623]; [555]; [208]; [205]; [70]; BI, PR 2, fo. 620; PR 3, fos. 410, 495, 410.

²²² [37]; [862]; YMAA, Title Deeds, Monkgate 3-4, Walmgate, St. Edward 38; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 98, 117-8.

²²³ [204]; [592]; BI, PR 2, fo. 463; PR 3, fos. 303, 431; PR 5, fo. 123; *FR*, 1, pp. 112, 140.

²²⁴ [672]; [726]; BI, PR 3, fo. 15; PR 11, fo. 106; PR 13, fo. 604; *FR*, 1, pp. 79, 95, 155, 235.

²²⁵ Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, pp. 282-5; Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England*, pp. 37-41, 96-8; Loengard, 'Rationabilis Dos', pp. 59-80; S. S. Walker,

Miles Arume's acquisition of a licence to marry Dionisia, widow of Alexander Dawson.²²⁶ In contrast, greed seems the motivation behind John Roecliff's unseemly haste to marry Katherine, widow of William Yarum, especially in light of his attempt to appropriate William's goods and nullify the debts owed to the deceased by John's friends.²²⁷

There was also an advantage in marrying a widow with children in that the new husband had the use of her children's portions during their minority, which may have influenced Henry Preston's marriage to Emma, widow of William Talvais.²²⁸ William Cure did not live long enough to profit from remarriage to Beatrice, widow of George Evers whose children's portions would have augmented her widow's dower.²²⁹ Marriage to a wealthy widow with children might launch a career: for instance William Stockton's rapid ascent up the civic ladder began after marrying Alice, widow of Roger Selby spicer; and his second wife was the widow of fellow alderman Roger Collinson.²³⁰

Marriage into a gentry family was highly prized, but the hoped-for result could be disappointed; in John Glasyn's case there were no children from his marriage to Joan, daughter of William Neville esquire of Thornton Bridge.²³¹ Better future prospects over time resulted from William Holbeck's marriage to Agnes, daughter of John Aldstanemore a wool Stapler, such that William was accepted into their élite circle, rose rapidly in civic office and served as mayor on 4 occasions between 1449 and 1471.²³² His London contacts included gentlemen, one the father of his second wife; and their son William inherited both rank and property resulting in his status as

'Litigation as Personal Quest: Suing for Dower in the Royal Courts, *circa* 1272-1350' in S. S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 81-109; .

²²⁶ [26]; [278]; YML, 2/5, fos. 27, 380; Skaife, 'Civic Officials', p. 23.

²²⁷ [965]; BI, PR 3, fo. 467; *FR*, 1, p. 151; *ECP*, 1, pp. 130, 146 re. TNA, C1/15/179/193, 16/289.

²²⁸ [703]; [842]; YML, 2/4, fo. 72; BI, PR 3, fo. 60; Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England*, pp. 102-7; Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love*, pp. 273-4.

²²⁹ [260]; YML, 2/5, fo. 124; BI, PR 9, fo. 264.

²³⁰ [830]; [232]; BI, PR, 3, fo. 528; PR 4, fo. 173; PR 6, fo. 70; *FR*, 1, p. 105.

²³¹ [411]; BI, PR 5, fo. 75; Skaife, 'Civic Officials', p. 306 citing BI, Arch. Reg. Rotherham, fo. 31; A Gooder (ed.), *The Parliamentary Representation of the County of York 1358-1832*, 1, YASRS, 91 (1935), p. 196, no. 147.

²³² [480]; BI, RP 3, fos. 401, 406; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 82-3, fig. 1, 333; *YChA*, p. 157, note 21.

esquire and merchant of the Staple.²³³ However, William married a local girl and left testamentary instructions that their children be educated at school or ‘found to such business that [they] shall be most apt to have an honest and true living by’; in short, he had not acquired a sufficient income from land to abandon trade, despite the prestige of being recognised as an esquire.²³⁴

It can be seen that York mercers aspired to raise their own social and economic standing through the judicious choice of wives which brought them new sources of capital and extended their kinship and commercial connections. Mercers would also hope to influence their children into making similar beneficial choices of spouse.

iv. Marriage Alliances

There is some evidence that York mercers attempted to establish an inter-linked network through their children’s marriages which would be a means of retaining hard-earned capital assets within the mercantile community.²³⁵ Again, the close proximity within the household could foster mutual affection and trust between an apprentice and his master’s daughter, and no parental objections are evident in the marriage of Katherine daughter of John Spencer to his apprentice John Awne nor for Alice daughter of William Gilliot to John Hadlow.²³⁶ William Vescy seems to have actively encouraged his factor John Northby to marry his twice-widowed daughter Emma through a considerable cash bequest and the prospect of dower and inheritance.²³⁷ Intermarriage would reinforce a sense of identity amongst a group of mercers; for instance within the Fraternity of St. Mary where Richard de Waghen’s second wife was the daughter of John de Danthorpe, his sister Agnes was married to John Gaudin spicer and his daughter Alice to Adam del Brigg.²³⁸ Marriage also linked members of the Mercers’ Guild; for example William Freeman’s daughter Alice was the wife of Thomas Curtas whose kinswoman Isabel wed John Asby; John

²³³ BI, PR 5, fo. 22; PR 8, fo. 96.

²³⁴ BI, PR 8, fo. 96; PR 8, fo. 3; *FR*, 1, p. 174.

²³⁵ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 80, 87-8, 99-100, 115.

²³⁶ [810]; [442]; [406]; BI, PR 2, fo. 447; *FR* 1, p. 206.

²³⁷ [883]; BI, PR 3, fo. 266; Roskell, Clark & Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons 1386-1421*, 3, pp. 850-1.

²³⁸ [887]; [274]; [144]; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 72; BI, PR 3, fo. 109; *FR*, 1, p. 40; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, nos. 201-7, pp. 119-121.

Gudale's sister married John Bosswell's father; and William Kirk's kinswoman Joan married Nicholas de Middelburgh.²³⁹

The aspect of marriage as a means to retain merchant capital within the group is indicated by the interconnections amongst the families of the most prominent York mercers and merchants.²⁴⁰ The sons of Robert Louth and Nicholas Blackburn married daughters of William Bowes, senior, and became part of the extended family and trading network of Aldstanemore, Bolton, Holbeck and Ormshead.²⁴¹ Mercers also married their daughters into aldermanic merchant families; for instance the stepdaughter of John Ince, senior became the wife of Thomas Scotton; and their daughter inherited the family land in Scotton which she brought to her marriage with John Dodgson merchant.²⁴² The daughters of Thomas Curtas married merchants and, after the death of their father and husbands, both inherited money, chattels and land.²⁴³ Alice had married John, son of Peter von Upstall and her substantial dowry, including property in Brabant, supported her as a *femme sole*.²⁴⁴ Margaret married John Marton and after his death remarried members of the Mercers' Guild, first John Ince, junior and second John Lightlop; a good illustration of preserving the capital assets acquired by her father and husbands within the mercantile community.²⁴⁵

The drive to ascend the social scale is especially apparent in the marriage alliances made by John de Bedale de Richmond for his daughters.²⁴⁶ Agnes the eldest is thought to have been the first wife of Robert, son of Robert Holme, senior; and her untimely death in 1400 meant she did not share his future commercial and civic success.²⁴⁷ Another daughter Joan was married to Robert, nephew of the senior Robert Holme; and when her husband died in 1406, she married Thomas Santon,

²³⁹ [374]; [263]; [28]; [437]; [129]; [555]; [623]; *FR* 1, p. 157.

²⁴⁰ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 80-6, 87-8; Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 7-8; C. M. Barron, 'Introduction: The Widows' World in Later Medieval London' in C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500* (London and Rio Grande, 1994), pp. xi-xxxiv at pp. xxvii-xxviii.

²⁴¹ [601]; [112]; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 605; PR 3, fos. 265, 450, 580; Kermode, pp. 80, 82-3.

²⁴² [520]; *BI*, PR 5, fos. 138, 308; PR 6, fo. 60; PR 10, fo. 47; *FR*, 1, pp. 178, 203.

²⁴³ [263]; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 438.

²⁴⁴ *BI*, PR 2, fos. 255, 633; *TE*, 2, pp. 8-9, no. 30.

²⁴⁵ [620]; [521]; [579]; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 589; PR 5, fo. 268.

²⁴⁶ [68].

²⁴⁷ [490]; *BI*, PR 3, fos. 48, 365.

junior and, after his death, the merchant John Doddington.²⁴⁸ A third daughter seems to have been Elizabeth, first wife of Thomas de Aton mercer; and his children were the recipients of large legacies from their grandparents.²⁴⁹

There was some movement into the gentry class; William Catterick's daughter Margaret married William Haliday gentleman and Thomas Coupland's daughter was free in 1462 as a gentlewoman.²⁵⁰ John Marshall's aspirations for social mobility can be seen in his marriage to the daughter of Richard Bugden a wool Stapler which initiated his own participation in the wool trade.²⁵¹ His son and heir William also qualified as a merchant of the Staple and married the daughter of a Selby landowner. William, junior died young, but left his daughter Mary a sufficient dowry to attract a husband from the gentry family of Conyers.²⁵²

There is no doubt that gentry alliances enhanced the social status of York mercers, but whether or not they retained this rank depended on luck, longevity, secure tenure, financial acumen and, most important, an heir. In this context, the most successful of upwardly mobile marriages were made by the daughters of John de Gisburn, whose fortune was based on wool exports.²⁵³ Isabel married Roger de Morton, junior and, after his death in 1382, William Frost whose service as mayor earned him esquire status.²⁵⁴ Roger and Isabel's son, John Morton, married Margaret, daughter and co-heir of John Barden merchant; and their daughter Alice became the second wife of the goldsmith Richard Warter from a minor East Yorkshire gentry family.²⁵⁵ Thus in the interval from father to granddaughter, Isabel was related to six prominent mayors of York and became kin to minor landed gentry.²⁵⁶ Her younger sister Alice caught the heir of a leading gentry family, Sir William Plumpton, and they married around 1382; at his execution in 1405 for supporting the Percy rebellion, Alice was left with

²⁴⁸ [748]; BI, PR 2, fo. 132; PR 3, fos. 247, 536; *FR*, 1, pp. 103, 106.

²⁴⁹ [36]; BI, PR 2, fo. 623; PR 3, fo. 535.

²⁵⁰ [208]; [244]; YMAA, Title Deeds, Fossgate 62-3; *FR*, 1, p. 182.

²⁵¹ [618]; BI, PR 2, fo. 209; PR 5, fo. 331; *FR*, 1, p. 122.

²⁵² BI, PR 5, fo. 424; PR 9, fo. 357; *FR*, 1, pp. 215, 237.

²⁵³ [408]; BI, PR 1, fo. 15; BI, PR 3, fo. 283.

²⁵⁴; [643]; Roskell, Clark & Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons 1386-1421*, 3, pp. 138-141.

²⁵⁵ BI, PR 1, fo. 95; BI, PR 3, fo. 400; BI, PR 4, fo. 115; *TE*, 2, no. 118, p. 136.

²⁵⁶ Kightly and Semlyen, *Lords of the City*, pp. 93-4.

8 minor children.²⁵⁷ In 1407 the eldest son Robert recovered his grandfather's estate and this passed after his death in 1421 to his son William; and other descendents can be traced through the sixteenth century down to Hancie Plumpton, the cooper apprenticed in Hull.²⁵⁸

Summary Remarks

After qualification as a master and the accumulation of sufficient capital the next step would be marriage, and both the capital brought by the bride and her kinship group would contribute to the success of the new social and economic unit. The marriages of children formed alliances generally within the mercantile community which helped retain hard-earned capital in a trading milieu. Some marriages raised the social status of the mercer or his descendents into the ranks of the gentry though this was not long-lasting nor was income from land sufficient to abandon trade.

CONCLUSION

The placename surnames borne by York mercers provide useful if circumstantial evidence for their previous place or residence, if not ancestral home. These locales suggest that mercers came from Yorkshire and beyond, from hamlets to market towns to European capital cities; and the type of community suggests various commercial reasons for migration. Double locative surnames imply stages of migration to gain marketing expertise and establish lines of supply and distribution before coming into York, a major centre of manufacture and trade. The evidence suggests that mercers were drawn into York in the hope of improving their social and economic prospects; and that the degree of success they obtained depended on several factors. For the 40% of mercers enrolled as freemen who do not recur in records, factors of age and life-cycle suggest that they returned home to set up in business; succumbed to an early death; entered paid employment; or were sent abroad. Those that achieved

²⁵⁷ T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton Correspondence* (London, 1839) new edition with introduction by K. Dockray (Wolfeboro Falls, NH, 1990), pp. vii, xxi-xcvi; Gooder, *The Parliamentary Representation of the County of York 1258-1832*, 1, p. 71, no. 54; K. R. Dockray, 'The Troubles of the Yorkshire Plumptons', *History Today*, 27 (1977), pp. 459-66; J. Taylor, 'The Plumpton Letters 1416-1552', *Northern History*, 10 (1975), pp. 72-87.

²⁵⁸ Gooder, *Parliamentary Representation of the County of York*, pp. 174-6, no. 128; Stapleton, *Plumpton Correspondence*, Dockray's introduction, footnote 40, pp. xxix-xxx, xxx-xxxii, xxxiii-xxxiv, xxxiv-xxxviii, xxxix-xlii.

urban success are more visible in the records; and a common factor seems to have been strong kinship support, retained ties to the ancestral home and a reciprocal sense of responsibility to maintain the viability of the kinship group.

Having established the geographic origins of York mercers, the rest of the chapter looked to their social origins and family background. Factors which contributed to social mobility were addressed in terms of an urban hierarchy based on prestige of occupation and wealth. The evidence suggests that most York mercers came from rural artisan households and that their parents aspired to improve their sons' social and economic prospects by investing in their training as urban-based mercers. The shift in occupation between generations provides a means to gauge the direction of social mobility: from artisan to mercer, mercer to merchant and merchant to professional would be upward. Shifts from mercer to vintner or grocer might be considered horizontal; but those from mercer to artisan would be downward and this might result from ill-health, bad luck or inability on the part of a son. The incidence of chapman and haberdasher becoming known as mercer and merchant suggests they were less prestigious occupations, except when practised by women when freedom in itself signified their rare, independent status. A few mercers managed to enter the ranks of the landed gentry, usually through the marriage of their children; but this did not allow them to abandon trade.

There would be a considerable parental investment in training a son into an urban-based mercantile trade, and the choice of master was an important component of eventual success. Not only would the master pass on his skills, but would introduce the apprentice to his friends and colleagues, particularly in a guild setting as a potential recruit. The master might also be a patron or benefactor of his former apprentice or employ him as a factor abroad providing the additional experience, capital and contacts required for overseas trade. Once the young mercer had acquired sufficient capital to set up as an independent trader, the next step would be to marry and establish a household. The capital required was contributed by the bride in her marriage portion of household furnishings and some cash; by the parents in housing and future inheritance; and by the groom in his ability to earn a living. Mercers married the widows and daughters of their masters, of their friends and their merchant and artisan colleagues; and a few achieved gentry status. The choice of spouse might not be totally their own and there is evidence of alliances being forged to extend social, political, commercial and credit networks. That is, marriage provided another

layer of cohesion and helped to preserve hard-earned capital within the mercantile community.

The overall impression is that York mercers clearly aspired to improve their social and economic standing. The degree of urban success depended on personal character and capability; good health and longevity; external help, instruction, training, moral and financial support; and good luck. The York evidence supports the statement that the 'pursuit of a craft or engagement in commerce...represent the most elemental forms of social mobility...[and that]...geographical mobility was in many respects a necessary preliminary to social advancement.'²⁵⁹ Therefore Chapter Four addresses the social advancement and achievements of York mercers in terms of self-perceptions of social standing and economic class.

²⁵⁹ Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p. 108.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDENTITY, AUTHORITY AND WEALTH

Perceptions of Social Standing and Economic Class

INTRODUCTION

Having discussed the aspirations of York mercers to improve their social and economic prospects, Chapter Four looks at their achievements in light of their perceptions of social status, of their display of authority in civic office and of their relative wealth as householders. There are three sections and each is introduced with a brief overview and a survey of the background context and secondary sources.

Part I discusses the arrangements for funeral and burial which provide insight into self-perceptions as being good men of the parish whereas the provisions for post-mortem commemoration records self-pride in individual achievement and wealth. Part II examines their social and political ambitions as revealed through membership of select societies and the visual display of identity, affiliation and corporate image. It would be their election to civic office as mayor which elevated their social standing to the top of the urban hierarchy, because the mayoralty was vested with authority as the king's lieutenant. Part III explores their wealth as heads of household using various measures of wealth: value of possession, size of household, liability for tax, disposable income from land and rents to endow chantries and the level of testamentary cash bequests.

The main sources have been detailed in the Introduction to this thesis, in particular the probate copies of the wills of York mercers and their wives and the chantry foundation deeds and certificates of dissolution; and Barnett's doctoral thesis and article on commemoration in York parish churches.¹

¹ Barnett, 'Memorials and Commemoration'; C. M. Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church: Identity and Social Class in late Medieval York', *YAJ*, 72 (2000), pp. 73-92

I

GOOD MEN OF THE PARISH

York mercers were freemen or citizens, and they were also parishioners; and it would be within the parish community that their reputation as good men would have its inception.² Facets of this reputation would define them throughout life and take on urgency in the face of death when restitution for past transgressions was judged to be essential for the weal of their soul.³ The last will and testament provided the medium for showing how pious, benevolent, generous, public-spirited, responsible and reliable they really were; in short, that they were *bon gens*, the worthy, solid citizens in their community.⁴ The will also gave testators a chance to arrange properly conducted funerals which adhered to personal notions of what was appropriate for their social estate and degree and also to provide for post-mortem commemorative services which was suited to their budget.⁵

In considering perceptions of social standing, it is important to consider the obscure or artisan background of most York mercers and to recognise that their ascent up the social scale had been as self-made men without lineage, landed wealth or lordship to bolster them. There may have been a lingering sense of insecurity which prompted

² B. A. Kumin, *The Shaping of a Community: the Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400-1560* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 53-6; K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 51, 99.

³ F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2 (Cambridge, 1895, 2nd edition 1898, reissued 1968, reprinted 1989), pp. 314-56; C. R. Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered' in M. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-33; C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066-1550* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 32, 36; M. Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 259-264.

⁴ P. Heath, 'Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: the Evidence of Hull Wills' in R. B. Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 209-34; M. Aston, 'Death' in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-century Attitudes. Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994, reprinted 1996), pp. 202-228 at pp. 213-4; M. M. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England* (Toronto, 1963), pp. 258-9.

⁵ N. Goose and N. Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source' in T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds.), *When Death do us Part. Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 38-71; D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death. Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 447-9; Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, pp. 51-2; P. Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses on the Four Fridays Next After my Decease'. The Care of Souls in Fifteenth-Century All Saints', North Street, York' in P. S. Barnwell, C. Cross and A. Rycraft (eds.), *Mass and Parish in Late Medieval York: The Use of York* (Reading, 2005), pp. 57-89 at p. 62.

their quest for acceptance and the conformity so evident in their wills. Their individuality comes across clearly however in terms of wealth or inequalities of wealth in testamentary provisions in which the greater the wealth, the greater the benefit to the soul. The prestige attendant upon wealth is reflected in the number and type of mourners in the funeral procession, of clergy celebrating various services and of candles and torches; and in the amount allocated for alms, funeral expenses, intercessory post-mortem prayers and tangible memorials. In other words, religious piety provided an acceptable platform upon which York mercers could display attitudes about their status, prestige, eminence and wealth.⁶

The general context used to examine the perception of mercers as respectable and good men is the religious beliefs embedded in medieval liturgy and ritual concerning death and the afterlife.⁷ The medieval response to dying is the focus of scholarly studies of rites and rituals and the social significance of the mass.⁸ The clearest explanation of religious motives and legal development of the last will and testament is set out in Pollock and Maitland; and more recent work has addressed the problems

⁶ W. Coster, *Kinship and Inheritance in Early Modern England: Three Yorkshire Parishes* Borthwick Papers, 83 (1993), p.1; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 449.

⁷ R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215-c.1515* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 225-34; R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989); P. Heath, 'Between Reform and Reformation: the English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 41/4 (1990), pp. 647-678; C. Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England, 1400-1530* (London, 1989); R. and C. Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages* (London, 1984); R. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London, 1970); D. M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*, *History of Lincolnshire*, 5 (1971); A. H. Thomson, *The English Clergy and Their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947); Kumin, *The Shaping of a Community*; French, *The People of the Parish*; C. Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England*, Borthwick Paper, 7 (1954); D. M. Palliser, 'Introduction: The Parish in Perspective' in S. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People. Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 7-28 at pp. 9-10.

⁸ Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*; D. J. Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief. The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites* (London and Washington, 1977); T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972); R. C. Finucam, 'Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion' in J. Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death* (London, 1981), pp. 40-60; S. Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead 100-1600* (Leicester, 1992); Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 379-474; C. Cross and P. S. Barnwell, 'The Mass in its Urban Setting' in P. S. Barnwell, C. Cross and A. Rycraft, *Mass and Parish in Late Medieval England: The Use of York*, (Reading, 2005), pp. 12-26; J. Bossy, 'The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700', *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), pp. 29-61.

encountered in using probate records as a historical source.⁹ The abundance of wills copied into probate registers has engendered a range of studies assessing different groups of testators in terms of their shared ideas about piety, charity, alms- and gift-giving, literacy, kinship responsibility and patterns of inheritance and wealth.¹⁰ The testamentary provision for post-mortem intercessory prayers attracts wide attention from scholars and is usually examined in terms of the belief in purgatory and the attendant role of the living in the care of souls.¹¹ The provisions made for obits and perpetual chantries are viewed in terms of the 'reciprocity between the living and dead' which provided a benefaction to the parish community and a means of

⁹ Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, pp. 314-56 at pp. 337-8, 356-63; T. Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law* (5th edition, London, 1956), pp. 737, 738, 739, 740, 725, 730; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 319-334; A. J. Camp, *Wills and Their Whereabouts* (London, 1974); Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention', pp. 14-33; T. Arkell, N. Evans, N. Goose (eds.), *When Death do us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000); P. Riden (ed.), *Probate Records and the Local Community* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 1-10; S. Coppel, 'Wills and the Community: a Case Study of Tudor Grantham' in P. Riden (ed.), *Probate Records and the Local Community* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 71-90 at p. 72-4.

¹⁰ C. R. Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead': Wills and Pious Provision in late Medieval Bristol', *English Historical Review*, 102 (1987), pp. 837-58; Heath, 'Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages', pp. 209-34; N. P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Studies and Texts, 66 (1984); J. C. Dickinson, *An Ecclesiastical History of England. The Later Middle Ages. From the Norman Conquest to the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1979), pp. 349, 354-63; M. Rubin, 'The Poor' in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 169-82; P. H. Cullum and P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: 'To the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor'', *Northern History*, 29 (1993), pp. 24-39; M. G. A. Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy Among the Yorkshire Gentry, 1370-1480*, Borthwick Papers, 50 (1976), pp. 1, 28; Moran, *Education and Learning in the City of York, passim*; Coster, *Kinship and Inheritance in Early Modern England*, pp. 1, 24.

¹¹ E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp. 338-376; C. R. Burgess, 'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented': an Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Late Medieval England' in W. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 56-84; R. Dinn, 'Death and Rebirth in Late Medieval Bury St. Edmunds' in S. Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead 100-1600* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 151-169; C. R. Burgess, 'Benefactions of Mortality: the Lay Response in the late Medieval Urban Parish', in D. M. Smith (ed.), *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, Borthwick Studies in History, 1 (1991), pp. 67-9; Swanson, *Religion and Devotion*, p. 214.

remembrance.¹² Changes in religious theory and practice as well as underlying social and economic conditions are examined as factors in the decline of chantry foundations and the decrease in amounts of cash bequests.¹³ Other sources are used to study medieval responses to death and dying, for example tangible memorials as recorded by antiquarians and modern surveys.¹⁴ Inscriptions reveal the self-consciousness of the donor's status within the community and their personal identity through the use of merchants' marks and coats-of-arms.¹⁵ Funerary monuments, paintings and manuscript illustrations reveal attitudes about death, the afterlife and memory which are interpreted by art historians and other specialists.¹⁶

¹² C. R. Burgess, 'A Service for the Dead: the Form and Function of the Anniversary in late Medieval Bristol', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society*, 105 (1987), pp. 183-211; C. R. Burgess, '“For the Increase of Divine Service”: Chantries in the Parish in late Medieval Bristol', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 46-65; M. Hicks, 'Chantries, Obits and Almshouses: The Hungerford Foundations, 1325-1478' in C. M. Barron and C. Harper-Bill (eds.), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 123-142; K. L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965); A. Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1979); Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 253-66; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 3-22; M. A. Riley, 'The Foundation of Chantries in the Counties of Nottingham and York', *YAJ*, 33 (1938), pp. 122-165, 237-285; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1 and 2.

¹³ W. J. Shiels, *The English Reformation 1530-1570* (London and New York, 1989); J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1964); Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 377-477; S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 216-377; N. P. Tanner, 'The Reformation and Regionalism: Further Reflections on the Church in Late Medieval Norwich' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 129-47; Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York', pp. 39-41; Kermode, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 24-5.

¹⁴ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 421-455, 456-474; C. Gittings, 'Urban Funerals in Late Medieval and Reformation England' in S. Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead 100-1600* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 170-183; Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, pp. 44-54; Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, pp. 1-22, 23-39, 40-54; Dickinson, *An Ecclesiastical History of England*, pp. 352-3; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, p. 379; Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church', pp. 73-92; S. Badham, 'Evidence for the Minor Funerary Monument Industry 1100-1500' in K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds.), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages. Contrasts, Contracts and Interconnections 1100-1500* (Leeds, 2005), pp. 165-196; M. Norris, 'Later Medieval Monumental Brasses: an Urban Funerary Industry and its Representation of Death' in S. Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead 100-1600* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 184-209.

¹⁵ F. A. Girling, *English Merchants' Marks. A Field Survey of Marks made by Merchants and Tradesmen in England Between 1400 and 1700* (London, 1964).

¹⁶ P. Binski, 'The Art of Death' in R. Marks and P. Williamson (eds.), *Gothic: Art for England 1400-1547* (London, 2003), pp. 436-455; P. Binski, *Medieval Death. Ritual and Representation* (London, 1996); J. Alexander and P. Binski (eds.), *Age of Chivalry. Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400* (London, 1987).

Equally important are the excavations and surveys of archaeologists and architectural historians of the tangible remains of the structure and disposition of funerary memorials, monuments and buildings.¹⁷

A. DEATH AND BURIAL

i. The Funeral Cortège

Processions would have been a common occurrence in late medieval York ranging from carefully choreographed city-wide receptions of royalty and visiting dignitaries to household groups wending their way to and from their parish church for marriages, baptisms, confirmations and burials.¹⁸ These were occasions of public ceremony which provided an opportunity for an outward display of prestige, importance and wealth.¹⁹ It is instructive to see how mercers responded, individually or collectively, in this type of processional display, and the funeral is a useful starting place because it took place in a public sphere.²⁰ Funeral arrangements were structured around the religious services comprising the Office of the Dead: *Commendation* would take place in the home, *Placebo* or *Vespers* would be an overnight vigil in the church, *Dirige* would take place at Matins early the next morning and would be followed by a sequence of *Requiem* Masses after which the corpse would be buried.²¹

¹⁷ Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York* (5 vols. London, 1972-81), henceforth, RCHME, *City of York*; *The Buildings of England. Yorkshire: York and the East Riding*, pp. 69-161; J. C. Cox, *English Church Fittings, Furniture and Accessories* (London, 1923); A. B. Barton, 'The Ornaments of the Altar and the Ministers in Late-Medieval England' in P. S. Barnwell, C. Cross and A. Rycraft (eds.), *Mass and Parish in Late Medieval York: The Use of York* (Reading, 2005), pp. 27-40; E. Gee, 'The Topography of Altars, Chantries and Shrines in York Minster', *Antiquaries Journal*, 64 (1984), pp. 337-350; G. H. Cook, *Medieval Chantries and Chantry Chapels* (London, 1947).

¹⁸ J. S. Purvis, *From Minster to Market Place* (York, 1969), pp. 70-80; *VCH, City of York*, p. 72; French, *The People of the Parish*, pp. 170, 184-6; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 435-7.

¹⁹ Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, p. 144; Swanson, *Church and Society in late Medieval England*, pp. 296, 297.

²⁰ Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 46-7; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 296-7.

²¹ Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 48-51; C. Wordsworth, *Notes on Mediaeval Services in England: With an Index of Lincoln Ceremonies* (London, 1898), p. 88; E. Daniel, *The Prayer-Book. Its History, Language, and Contents* (London, 20th edition, 1901), p. 506 and notes; W. G. Henderson (ed.), *Manuale et Processionale ad Usus Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis*, Surtees Society, 63 (1875), pp. 55-102.

The public aspect of the medieval funeral would begin when the shrouded corpse, perhaps laid in a coffin, was carried to church, a progress often termed 'the exequies' from *exequiae*, literally a train of followers; and manuscript illustrations show a procession comprising priests, pall-bearers and a string of mourners some carrying torches.²² The mercers John Freboys (1362) and John de Crome (1365) expected to be accompanied on their spiritual journey from this life to the next by their family, household and friends; and Thomas Dawson (1535) asked 6 fellow members of the Council of Twenty to be his pall-bearers.²³ The torchbearers used by Thomas Grissop (1446) were the beadles of 4 religious guilds: Holy Trinity, St. Mary, Corpus Christi and St. Christopher.²⁴ There were often a symbolic 13 paupers assigned to carry torches; for example Thomas Holme (1407) specified that his carry 13 torches weighing 12lbs each; and Richard Waghen (1386) designated his 13 as official mourners and left 50s for their garments and shoes.²⁵ The garment generally was a capacious gown with hood and might be black as chosen by Joan Louth (1435) for 6 paupers and by Peter Robinson (1550) for 12.²⁶ White tunics and hoods were specified by Thomas Scauceby (1471) or black hoods lined with white by John Gilliott (1484).²⁷

The officiating priest would be an important figure in the procession; and for John de Derthington, Robert de Duffield (1398) and his brother John (1400), he was their personal chaplain.²⁸ The only clergy mentioned by John Gaytenby (1334) and Isabel Grantham (1408) was the incumbent; and the importance of the parish priest as the main celebrant is reflected in larger bequests: John Crome (1364) left him 2s compared to 4d for other chaplains; George Birkbeck (1471) provided 6d and 4d

²² Aston, 'Death', pp. 207, 220; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 260; Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England*, p. 164; Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, pp. 131-9; H. Kingsford (ed.), *Illustrations of the Occasional Offices of the Church in the Middle Ages from Contemporary Sources* (London and Milwaukee, 1921), pp. 48-89.

²³ [373]; [256]; [279]; *YMB*, 3, pp. 146-7; *YML*, 2/4, fo. 30; *BI*, PR 11, fo. 403.

²⁴ [436]; *YML*, 2/4, fo. 260; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 151-9 at p. 159.

²⁵ [491]; [887]; *BI*, PR 3, fo. 254; *YMAA*, Cartulary, fo. 72; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 262.

²⁶ [601]; [726]; *BI*, PR 3, fo. 450; PR 13, fo. 604; Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, pp. 84, 136.

²⁷ [750]; [405]; *BI*, PR 4, fo. 169; PR 5, fo. 237.

²⁸ [286]; [404]; [301]; *BI*, PR 3, fos. 2; 35; PR 6, fo. 70.

respectively; and John Spencer (1484) slightly less at 4d and 2d.²⁹ Larger individual gratuities would encourage the attendance of chaplains such as the 2s allocated by Thomas Brereton (1429) or 1s by Eve Crome (1396), but even lesser amounts from 4d to 8d left by John de Beverley (1394) and John Gudale (1461) and William Barley (1467) were conditional upon attendance at the exequies, *Dirige* and requiem mass.³⁰ John de Gisburn (1390) felt 2s sufficient to ensure the clergy's attendance at both burial and octave, a week later; whereas Thomas Catterick (1433) provided 1s for each event and William Thorpe (1478) allocated only 4d for each of 12 chaplains.³¹ The parish clerk and under-clerk had various duties before and after death; and additional small bequests may have ensured their presence in the funeral processions of Roger de Moreton, senior (1390), John de Bolton, senior (1395) and Thomas and Alice Kirk (1442 and 1445).³²

A wider array of religious and secular representatives would be envisaged by those who aimed for a more spectacular send off, for example as detailed in the will of Ellen Stockdale (1507).³³ She requested that friars from each order carry her corpse to the church, every chaplain from 2 parish churches and those from the Corpus Christi Guild to be in attendance, every clerk, even those not in holy orders, and children from the parish. All were instructed to be present throughout the *Dirige* and *Requiem* masses where they would have been joined by Ellen's sisters, nieces, daughters, in-laws, servants and extended family from 3 marriages.³⁴

Therefore in the public eye the funeral procession would be assessed visually in terms of the number and diversity of participants which reflected the importance of the deceased; and as a 'celebration of family honour' this would confirm their standing in

²⁹ [401]; [425]; [256]; [105]; [810]; YML, 2/4, fos. 16, 39, 358; BI, PR 2, fo. 584; PR 4, fo. 158.

³⁰ [139]; [256]; [89]; [437]; [51]; BI, PR 1, fos. 72, 96; PR 2, fos. 442, 573; PR 3, fo. 83; PR 4, fos. 38, 189; YML, 2/4, fo. 358; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 297.

³¹ [408]; [207]; [858]; BI, PR 1, fo. 15; PR 3, fo. 410; PR 5, fo. 121.

³² [642]; [118]; [554]; BI, PR 1, fos. 14, 83; PR 2, fos. 34; 121.

³³ [825]; BI, PR 6, fo. 227.

³⁴ BI, PR 5, fos. 257, 510; PR 6, fo. 185; PR 9, fo. 94; YML, 2/5, fos. 165, 200.

society.³⁵ Probate inventories supplement the testamentary arrangements and provide a good idea of what constituted a decent burial and of the expenses incurred.³⁶

ii. A Decent Burial

York inventories show that the dying were tended in their final illness and after death were washed and tidied, wrapped in a linen shroud and laid in a wooden coffin; and presumably their family or friends would 'watch' over the corpse as a mark of respect until ready to carry to church.³⁷ There were other expenses incurred in purchasing a tombstone and paying a man to dig the grave, the town crier to announce the funeral, the parish clerk or his assistant to ring the church bells and a scribe or clerk to write and register the will and inventory.³⁸ As to the community of mercers, a single inventory survives for Thomas Grissop, chapman; and this adheres to the general pattern of expenditure: 2s 8d to a woman who looked after him in his illness, 4d for wrapping his body in a shroud, 2s 2d for a coffin and 1s for digging the grave.³⁹ His executors disbursed 1s 8d to the bellman and parish under-clerk for announcing his death and ringing the church bells; and 3s 8d was divided amongst the four guild beadles who carried torches in the funeral cortège.⁴⁰

An important aspect of membership of a social, religious or trade guild was the assurance of a basic, decent funeral should one fall into poverty and misfortune.⁴¹

³⁵ B. Gittos and M. Gittos, 'Motivation and Choice: The Selection of Medieval Secular Effigies' in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002, reprinted paperback 2003), pp. 143-169 at p. 144; J. Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 29, 57-62.

³⁶ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 421-455, 456-474; Dickinson, *An Ecclesiastical History of England*, pp. 352-3.

³⁷ [436]; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 23, 66, 71-2, 75-6, 127-8, 132, 149, 177, 233-4, 284, 290-1, 306, 319-320; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 425-6.

³⁸ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 23, 66, 71-2, 75-6, 127-8, 132, 149, 177, 233-4, 284, 290-1, 306, 319-320; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 421-5; Daniel, *Death and Burial*, pp. 45-6.

³⁹ [436]; Stell and Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 151-9 at p. 159.

⁴⁰ Dickinson, *An Ecclesiastical History of England*, pp. 352-3.

⁴¹ YMB, 2, pp. 279-80; Westlake, *Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England*, pp. 43, 234; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 281-3; Barron, 'Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', p. 27; Unwin, *Gilds and Companies of London*, pp. 92-3, 103-8, 159-60, 169-70.

Robert Yarum, first master of the Mercers' Guild was supported by the common fund during his final years and his death in December 1445 incurred an expenditure of 8s 9d 'for the bereyng'.⁴² Alice Yarum, Robert's wife died at the same time and, supposing the fee for burial alone was 3s 4d each (6s 8d), this would leave 2s 1d towards washing and wrapping their bodies in shrouds (8d), digging the grave (1s) and paying the beadle for carrying a torch (5d).⁴³ Alice Doncaster (1430), Christopher Booth (1466) and George Birtbeck (1471) allocated 3s 4d for their burials and Thomas Curtas (1461) and John Birkhead (1508) earmarked 6s 8d for theirs.⁴⁴

The Fraternity of St. Mary became involved at the point when the deceased was ready to be carried to church, and in 1368 a man was hired to invite brothers and sisters to the exequies of several members.⁴⁵ Earlier accounts record the carriage of a 'hearse' to bear the coffin which may have been a simple wooden pallet or bier fixed to staves; and a subsequent expenditure of 5s 6d on a 'palisade for the hearse'.⁴⁶ This suggests a more elaborate framework, probably incorporating sockets for candles, which would be placed around the coffin throughout the church services.⁴⁷ Thomas Bracebrigg (1437) left 135lbs of wax (a 15-year supply) for three candles to be placed in an iron candelabrum, apparently the harrow or triangular stand used at *Tenebrae* in Lent.⁴⁸ William Vescy (1407) provided 20s for the carriage of a hearse able to support five candles fashioned from 60 lbs of wax which suggests a different

⁴² [963]; YMAA, Guild, Accounts 2-3; BI, PR 2, fo. 118.

⁴³ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 159; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 429 (basic burial).

⁴⁴ [293.2]; [122]; [105]; [263]; [100]; BI, PR 2, fos. 438, 628; PR 4, fos. 131, 158; PR 7, fo. 57; YMB, 2, p. 279; Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ YMAA, St. Mary, Account Rolls 5; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 21-2, 24; Wordsworth, *Medieval Services in England*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fo. 16r (*liberum pro 2 lbs de waruuloun [sic] ad factura delle Hersse*); REED, *York*, p. 632 (1449/50, CCG inventory, *batelmentes super le bere*); Latham, *Medieval Latin Word-List*, p. 208 (a variation of *garillum*, eg *garuyllium* 1234, barrier, palisade).

⁴⁷ Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', p. 62; Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 44-54; Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 170.

⁴⁸ [136]; BI, PR 3, fo. 487; Aston, 'Death', p. 210; Baxter, *Sarum Use*, p. 47; Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 170.

structure, similar to that used by the Paternoster Guild or the iron framework still standing over the Marmion tomb in the church at West Tanfield, Yorkshire.⁴⁹

The devotional symbolism of illumination by candles and torches burning around the body of the deceased was also a visual signifier of the affluence and eminence of the deceased depending on the amount of beeswax, often imported.⁵⁰ Thomas Aton bequeathed 40 lbs. of wax for 2 candles of 5 lbs. and 2 torches of 15 lbs., and other mercers allocated sufficient amounts for 5 to 8 candles and for 2 to 12 torches.⁵¹ The accounts of the Fraternity of St. Mary and the Mercers' Guild also record purchases of wax, resin and wicks for candles and torches; and fifteenth-century prices show wax was valued between 5d to 6d per lb. and that torches weighed between 15lbs. and 20lbs. and cost about 7s each.⁵² This unit price agrees with William de Barnby's provision of 13s 4d for 2 torches whereas Adam del Brigg's 2 were more expensive at 10s each and William Barley allocated 13s 4d for 4, a unit price of 3s 4d.⁵³

It is curious that there is no reference to a pall cloth to drape over the coffin in the Mercers' Guild inventories when they were commonly used by London livery companies; those that survive show them to be silk velvet embroidered with arms and insignia.⁵⁴ There was a *baldkin de blew velwytt et bukesyn cum stellis auri* in Trinity Chapel which may have sufficed, because it was a *baldkin* of red and green cloth which John Gudale (1461) bequeathed for use in his parish church.⁵⁵ Hull testators

⁴⁹ [883]; BI, PR 3, fo. 266; PR 6, fo. 225; PR 9, fo. 327; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, p. 234; *Buildings of England. Yorkshire. The North Riding*, pp. 384-5; Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, p. 197, no. 2; Marks and Williamson, *Gothic Art in England 1400-1547*, pp. 244-5, no. 87.

⁵⁰ Dickinson, *An Ecclesiastical History of England*, pp. 352-3; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', p. 63; Duffy, *Stripping the Altars*, pp. 361-2.

⁵¹ [36]; BI, PR 2, fo. 623; see also PR 3, fos. 83, 109; PR 13, fo. 604; YML, 2/4, fo. 124

⁵² YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fos. 13r, 17v, 25r-v, 26r, 28r, 31r, 32v, YMAA, St. Mary, Accounts, 5; Guild, Accounts, 2, 5, 7, 10; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 25.

⁵³ [60]; [144]; [51]; YML, 2/4, fo. 150; BI, PR 3, fo. 109; PR 4, fo. 189.

⁵⁴ Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 170; T. S. R. Boase, *The York Psalter in the Library of the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow* (London, 1962), p. 24, plate 5; Marks and Williamson, *Gothic Art in England 1400-1547*, p. 455, no. 349; J. Marschner, 'Men of Trades and Sellers of Wares', *Costume*, 18 (1984), pp. 29-34, figs. 2, 3-5; Lang, *Pride Without Prejudice*, pp. 25, 26.

⁵⁵ [437]; BI, PR 2, fo. 442; YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 148v-150r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 96.

bequeathed pall cloths to the parish church which may have been available for hire, but it seems that York mercers and drapers supplied their own.⁵⁶ John Beverley (1397) requested 12 ells of blue cloth priced 26s 8d to be placed upon his *feretrum* and afterwards divided amongst 4 paupers; and the silk cloth bequeathed by Alice Waghen (1408) to the St. Christopher Guild was to be used at her anniversary obit, as was the black *chamlet* hearse-cloth given by Sir John Gilliot to the Carmelite Friary for his parents.⁵⁷

The final event of the funeral would be the gathering afterwards which John Freboys referred to as the 'calling together of friends'; or the 'convocation of friends and neighbours' referred to in the wills of John Stillington, William Barnby and John Touche.⁵⁸ There were several occasions in the period 1366-8 that the Fraternity of St. Mary shared a meal to mark the death of a member; the phrase used was *jantaculum factum fratribus et sororibus* which probably meant the breakfast after Matins.⁵⁹ The average expenditure was 7s 9d, about the same amount expended in 1401 on bread, wine, mutton and poultry for a meeting of the associates of Trinity Hospital.⁶⁰ The inventories of York artisans record expenses on funeral meals costing from 3s to £3; and Thomas Grissop's involved hiring a cook with assistants to prepare a meal using bread, cheese, fresh meat, sheep, piglets, capons, geese, doves and lapwings; and provided beer and wine to drink.⁶¹ His costs amounted to £2 15s 9½d, about half the funeral expenses; and if this proportion is applied to the other mercers, then the £20 allocated by Robert Louth (1407) and Margaret Blackburn (1435) implies a substantial meal costing about £10.⁶² William Barnby (1409) set aside £5 for a meal

⁵⁶ Heath, 'Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages', p. 218; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 432-3; Marks and Williamson, *Gothic Art in England 1400-1547*, pp. 56-7; Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp. 57-8.

⁵⁷ [88]; [892]; YML 2/4, fo. 118; BI, PR 3, fo. 275; YCA, G.70:39; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 447, 470 and index.

⁵⁸ [373]; [823]; [60]; [871]; YMB, 3, pp. 146-7; BI, PR 1, fo. 99; PR 3, fo. 85; YML, 2/4, fo. 150; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 443-7.

⁵⁹ YMAA, St. Mary, Account Roll 5; Account Book, fos. 24r-v, 28v; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 21-5; Wordsworth, *Medieval Services in England*, p. 88.

⁶⁰ YMAA, Miscellaneous. Assessments 7; Smith, *Guide*, p. 35; BI, PR 3, fo. 67.

⁶¹ [436]; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 23, 66, 71-2, 75-6, 127-8, 132, 149, 177, 244, 284, 306, 319-320.

⁶² [601]; [112]; BI, PR 3, fos. 265, 415.

and Alice Catterick (1440) £10 for a more substantial repast; and the £13 6s 8d allocated by Robert Collinson (1458) might provide a veritable feast.⁶³

The impression gained from probate and other records is that York mercers aimed for an impressive though not overtly ostentatious funeral, in accordance with their perception of themselves as good neighbours, devout parishioners and reputable citizens. This is tempered by clear anxiety about the afterlife, the state of their soul and the fear of being forgotten.

B. COMMEMORATION

i. Post Mortem Prayers

The common medieval response to the belief in Purgatory is the provisions made to ensure intercessory post-mortem prayers for the repose of souls.⁶⁴ Some bequests were pious works of charity in themselves such as the distribution of alms to the poor, blind and bedridden; and similarly John Dernington provided 1s to each anchorite and John Gilliot, senior, 3s 4d to each prisoner in the city.⁶⁵ Other bequests were reciprocal; for example Thomas Doncaster left 1s to each *maison dieu* and 2s to each home of lepers in the city and suburbs of York on the understanding that inmates would pray for his soul.⁶⁶ Adam del Brigg's bequest of 19s to Holy Trinity Hospital was conditional on the staff and patients praying for his soul, those of his parents, wife, kinfolk, benefactors and all faithful departed.⁶⁷

However, the religious services conducted by an ordained priest were considered more effective and powerful, and those who could afford it paid for multiple 'private' masses for their soul.⁶⁸ William Vescy left bequests to a score of religious houses in

⁶³ [60]; [207]; [436]; [232]; YML, 2.4, fo. 150; BI, PR 2, fo. 387; PR 3, fo. 600.

⁶⁴ Burgess, 'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented', pp. 56-84; Burgess, 'A Service for the Dead', p. 183; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 338-76; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', p. 57.

⁶⁵ [286]; [405]; BI, PR 3, fo. 73; PR 5, fo. 237.

⁶⁶ [292]; BI, PR 2, fo. 603.

⁶⁷ [144]; BI, PR 3, fo. 109.

⁶⁸ Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', pp. 57, 64, 65-8; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 284, 296.

Yorkshire in return for prayers, and Thomas Bracebrigg's bequests included 100s or 4d each for every rector and chaplain in the city and suburbs of York to pray especially for his soul.⁶⁹ Small amounts of cash were the usual medium of exchange: Ivetta Burton provided 1s for each chaplain who prayed for her soul, John Hadlow left 3s 4d to the Prioress and Nuns of Wilberfoss for reciprocal prayers and Alice Selby and Nicholas Usflete allocated 6s 8d to each of the 4 Orders of Friars dwelling in York.⁷⁰ Legacies in kind were also offered, such as Eve Crome's best brass pot to the Vicars Choral; Isabel Hammerton left an array of silver vessels to Selby Abbey; and Robert Collinson gave a covered piece of silver weighing 28 oz. to the Abbot and Convent of St. Mary's.⁷¹ Matilda Danby provided £7 for services a week after burial, the octave, and Thomas Catterick and Joan Louth earmarked £10 and £20 respectively, perhaps for more religious personnel.⁷² Roger de Moreton, senior left £5 for masses to be celebrated at the octave (the week's mind) and the anniversary; and the Fraternity of St. Mary paid for candles, bell ringers and chaplains at the anniversaries of John de Redhood and the wife of John de Lascel.⁷³ William Vescy stands out with a provision of £4 for masses at his death and burial and another £4 for 400 masses to be celebrated on the 4 subsequent Fridays.⁷⁴

The standard Low Mass for the soul could be enhanced by special services such as the trental, a set of 30 masses performed consecutively usually by friars.⁷⁵ The 5s fee provided by York mercers was the norm over a 100 year period from 1388 to 1482, for example by Richard Waghen, Thomas Hornby, John Bowland, William Kirk, Thomas Thornton, Thomas Walker and Joan Gilliott.⁷⁶ The more elaborate version of St. Gregory's trental took place over a year and the fee was correspondingly higher;

⁶⁹ [883]; [136]; BI, PR 3, fo. 266; PR 3, fo. 487.

⁷⁰ [189]; [442]; [770.A]; [882]; BI, PR 1, fo. 88; PR 2, fo. 58; PR 5, fo. 310; YML, 2/4, fo. 167.

⁷¹ [256]; [448]; [232]; BI, PR 1, fo. 96; PR 2, fo. 378; PR 3, fo. 345.

⁷² [272]; [207]; [601]; BI, PR 1, fo. 14; PR 2, fo. 595; BI, PR 3, fos. 410, 450; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', p. 67; Krieder, *English Chantries*, p. 8.

⁷³ [642]; BI, PR 1, fo. 14; YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fo. 32v-r (day of obit); also fos. 12v, 13r, 15v, 17v, 26r, 27r (carriage of hearse), 28r, 32r-v, 33r.

⁷⁴ [883]; BI, PR 3, fo. 266; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', pp. 66-7.

⁷⁵ Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 298; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', p. 68.

⁷⁶ [887]; [503]; [132]; [555]; [852]; [899]; [406]; YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 72v-73r; BI, PR 2, fos. 260, 384, 420, 506; 570; BI, PR 5, fo. 38.

for example Thomas Kirk bequeathed £5 to a chaplain for one year's performance and Robert Collinson left £15 for services in several locations over a 3-year period.⁷⁷ John Gilliot also made the funding of a 20-year obit conditional on the performance of St. Gregory's trental during the first year and left £1 to each order of friars for simultaneous celebrations.⁷⁸

A more common means to ensure multiple masses for the soul was the obit in which a chaplain was employed for a period of years.⁷⁹ This anniversary celebration was a popular choice among mercers and most wills record arrangements to pay a single chaplain annual stipends between 4 and 7 marks (£2 13s 4d to £4 13s 4d).⁸⁰ Agnes Thornton and William Brounfield paid 4 marks for half-year obits, the same amount Richard Burg had allocated in 1334 for one year's service.⁸¹ John de Appleton provided 8 marks annually for a 72-year obit should the chaplain live that long.⁸² The 2 chaplains specified by John de Bristol were to divide 12 marks (£8) and recite daily the *Commendation*, *Placebo* and *Dirige*; and John Freboys provided 6 marks (£4) each for a year's service, whereas John de Stillington assigned £10 to one chaplain for one year and £30 to another for 6 years.⁸³ John de Beverley obtained a licence for an obit in the Minster, and John and Eve Crome entrusted theirs to the Vicars Choral; but most others were celebrated in their parish church.⁸⁴ The presiding chaplain might be a kinsman; for example Robert Harome (1392) requested his son William;

⁷⁷ [554]; [232]; BI, PR 2, ff. 34, 378; R. W. Pfaff, 'The English Devotion of St. Gregory's Trental', *Speculum*, 49 (1974), pp. 75-90 at pp. 14-17; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', pp. 69-70; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 370-5; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 298;.

⁷⁸ [405]; BI, PR 5, fo. 237.

⁷⁹ Burgess, 'A Service for the Dead', pp. 183, 190-1; Hicks, 'Chantries, Obits and Almshouses', p. 131; Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 34-5; Krieder, *English Chantries*, p. 8; Cook, *Medieval Chantries and Chantry Chapels*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', p. 69; S. Townley, 'Unbeneficed Clergy in the Thirteenth Century: Two English Dioceses' in D. M. Smith (ed.), *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, Borthwick Studies in History, 1 (1991), pp. 38-64 at pp. 38-9, 55, 59-62.

⁸¹ [852]; [155]; [173]; BI, PR 2, fo. 430; PR 5, fo. 30; YML, 2/4, fo. 19

⁸² [20]; BI, PR 3, fo. 256; YMB, 3, pp. 27-8.

⁸³ [151]; [373]; [823]; YMB, 3, pp. 17-18, 146-7; BI, PR 1, fo. 99.

⁸⁴ CPR, 1391-96, p. 114; YML, VC 3/3/67; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, p. xxxiv.

and John Erghes (1391) named his son, a monk Thomas Catour (1495), a friend who was to celebrate immediately the 5 Masses of the Wounds of Christ.⁸⁵

These private religious services depended upon the living, and thus parishioners would be actively involved particularly at anniversary celebrations when they could follow along using a prayer book and would be expected to listen to the recitation of the parish bead or prayer roll and to pray for the names of deceased benefactors.⁸⁶ Admission to the Fraternity of St. Mary secured future prayers; in 1356 William Murdock and his mother gave £3 for their souls and in 1361 John de Danthorpe paid 20s for his soul and those of his wife, father and their parents, apparently all living.⁸⁷ Specific benefactors would be enrolled on a list of anniversary obits to be read out on the 'day of the obit for brothers and sisters', that is the patronal feast on the Assumption (15 August); and the newly deceased might be specially mentioned, such as Ralph de Romonby's wife in 1367.⁸⁸ The obituary of the York Corpus Christi Guild records the names of the wives or widows of William Tondu, William del Brigg, Robert Selby, John Howden; and as a married couple for Thomas Doncaster, John Waghen and Nicholas Blackburn.⁸⁹ The prayers within a religious house were sought by William Cure (1523) who left 40s for his name to be written into the mortilage book of the Convent of Melseby; and Robert Holme (1396) bequeathed 40 marks (£26 13s 4d) to be entered on the bead roll of the Convent of Warter.⁹⁰

The première choice however was the chantry, a permanent foundation endowed with property and rents which provided an annual salary for a chaplain and his successors to celebrate masses on a daily basis for the soul of the founders, their kin and

⁸⁵ [451]; [332]; [202]; BI, PR 1, fos. 48, 57; PR 5, fo. 467.

⁸⁶ Burgess, 'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented', pp. 66-7, 72-3, 77; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 217-8, 279, 280; T. F. Simmons (ed.), *The Lay Folks Mass Book*, EETS, original series, 11 (1879), p. 2; H. Littelhales (ed.), *The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book*, 1 (London, 1895), pp. 52-78; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 334; Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, p. 168.

⁸⁷ YMAA, St. Mary, Account Roll 2; Account Book, fos. 21v-22r at 22r.

⁸⁸ [729]; YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fos. 21r (obits); 32v (ale for paupers), 33r (bread).

⁸⁹ [870]; [145]; [770]; [506]; [292]; [886]; [112]; Skaife, *Corpus Christi Guild Register*, pp. 239, 240, 241, 242, 246, 248.

⁹⁰ [260]; [490]; BI, PR 1, fo. 100; PR 9, fo. 264.

benefactors, in theory, forever.⁹¹ There is evidence for 79 chantries in York of which a dozen were founded by mercers between 1308 and 1488.⁹² They arranged endowments to yield an annual salary from 4 marks to 10 marks, on average about 7 marks (£4 13s 4d), higher than the 1363 statutory requirement of 5 marks (£3 6s 8d), but hardly extravagant.⁹³ Most chantries were established in their parish church: Richard de Allerton's in St. Mary the Elder Bishophill and William Vescy's in All Saints' North Street, both on the west bank.⁹⁴ Nearer the city centre were those of Thomas Holme (St. Mary Castlegate), William de Grantham (St. Helen Stonegate) and Roger de Hovingham (Holy Trinity King's Court) and William de Burton reserved two altars in St. Saviour in Saviourgate.⁹⁵ The location of the Eryholme chantry was at an altar in St. William's Chapel on Ouse Bridge; and Alan Hammerton and Nicholas Blackburn, senior chose St. Anne's on Foss Bridge.⁹⁶ More notable were the chantries celebrated in purpose-built side-chapels such as John de Gisburn's in St. Martin Micklegate and Robert Holme, senior in Holy Trinity Goodramgate.⁹⁷

The founders would have planned their chantries before death, but it would be up to their executors to complete the financial arrangements, acquire the licences to

⁹¹ Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church', pp. 73-92 at 76; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries in Late Medieval York', pp. 267-284; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 30, 33, 34-5; Riley, 'Foundation of Chantries in the Counties of Nottingham and York', pp. 237-265, 281-5; Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, p. 25; Kreider, *English Chantries*, p. 5; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 184, 188-9, 259.

⁹² YCA, G.70:8, 14, 22-4, 26, 30, 31-2, 38, 39; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, pp. 45-6, 52, 59, 61, 64-5, 67-8, 72-3; CPR, 1313-17, p. 181; 1358-61, p. 200; 1361-64, p. 102; 1364-67, p. 98; 1367-70, p. 47; 1370-74, pp. 41-2; 1374-77, pp. 108, 349; 1381-85, pp. 273, 315, 318; 1385-89, p. 205; 1391-96, pp. 75, 114, 145, 597, 711; 1396-99, p. 588; 1401-5, p. 423; 1408-13, p. 52; 496; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', pp. 72-3.

⁹³ SR, 1, p. 373 (36 Edw. III, I, c.8); Townley, 'Unbeneficed Clergy in the Thirteenth Century', pp. 38-9, 55, 59-62.

⁹⁴ [6]; YCA, G.70: 14; Barnwell, 'Four Hundred Masses', pp. 72-3.

⁹⁵ [491]; [431]; [504]; [189]; R. N. Swanson, 'Thomas Holme and his Chantries', *York Historian*, 5 (1984), pp. 3-7; CPR, 1370-74, pp. 41-2; CPR, 1358-61, p. 200; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, pp. 64-5, no. 77, 68, no. 80.

⁹⁶ [335]; [448]; [112]; YCA, G.70:8, 30, 32; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 257.

⁹⁷ [408]; [490]; YML, 2/4, f. 39; CPR, 1391-6, p. 145; 1401-5, p. 496; J. N. Bartlett, 'Robert Holme, Citizen and Merchant of York', *Journal of the Bradford Textile Society* (1952-3), pp. 97-100; YMB, 3, pp. 149-51.

alienate the property in mortmain and appoint the chaplain.⁹⁸ This process might take years to accomplish; John de Eryholme proposed his chantry in 1308, but it would be 1331 before the foundation deed was registered.⁹⁹ The intentions might be altered by executors or sons, for instance John de Gisburn's chantry provision for 2 chaplains was reduced to one and Robert Holme's was established in his parish church and not in the Minster.¹⁰⁰ The endowment income might decline which happened within a generation for the Bossall chantry and within a century for John Acaster's; but this provided opportunities for Thomas Holme and John Gilliot to step in, augment the respective endowments and assume the foundation for themselves.¹⁰¹

It cannot be doubted that the motivation for founding a chantry was spiritual, but it depended on an income derived from freehold lands and rents, and the small number of mercer founders suggests that few had access to this source of income.¹⁰² Thus, it is significant that this small, select group were active overseas traders and that most were exporters of wool: Richard de Allerton, Nicholas de Blackburn, William de Grantham, John de Gisburn, Alan Hammerton, Robert and Thomas Holme, Roger de Hovingham and William Vescy.¹⁰³ Motivated by their own aspirations and ambitions, they would be typical of those citizens who commissioned public testimonials of their eminence and lasting memorials in the form of inscribed tombstones, brass plaques and painted glass windows.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ J. T. Rosenthal, 'The Yorkshire Chantry Certificates of 1546: An Analysis', *Northern History*, 9 (1974), pp. 26-47 at pp. 31-2; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 268-9; Wood-Leigh, *Perpetual Chantries*, pp. 16, 17-18, 322; E. E. Jacob, 'Founders and Foundations in the Later Middle Ages' in E. E. Jacob (ed.), *Essays in Later Medieval History* (Manchester, 1968), pp. 154-74 at p. 158; Unwin, *Gilds of London*, pp 181-2, 182-6; Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law* 1, pp. 333-4; A. W. B. Simpson, *An Introduction to the History of the Land Law* (Oxford, 1961, reprinted 1967), p. 53.

⁹⁹ [335]; [336]; YML, VC/3/vi/46; CPR, 1313-17, p. 185; YCA, G.70/8; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ [408]; [490]; YCA, G.70/22-4; CPR, 1391-96, p. 145; 1401-5, p. 496; BI, PR 1, fos. 15, 100.

¹⁰¹ [491]; [405]; Swanson, 'Thomas Holme and his Chantries' p. 3; YCA, G.70:18, 38a, 38; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 31; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 280-1.

¹⁰² Rosenthal, 'The Yorkshire Chantry Certificates of 1546', pp. 31-2, 39; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 276-7; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 33-4.

¹⁰³ [6], [112], [431], [408], [448], [490], [491], [504], [883].

¹⁰⁴ Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church', pp. 89-92; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 284.

ii. Memorials

A few memorials to York mercers, their wives and families survive in parish churches or the Minster and are listed in the York volumes of the *Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in England* and the *Buildings of England Series*.¹⁰⁵ Antiquarians records show that many more were commissioned than survive; and Barnett compiled the extant documentary and visual evidence in a recent comprehensive survey.¹⁰⁶ The wills of York mercers reveal their intentions for internment within their parish church, which meant that their shrouded corpse and/or coffin would be buried underground with the spot marked by a stone slab.¹⁰⁷ John de Bristol asked for a stone to cover his body and John Stockdale envisaged the priest standing on his *thru*gh when celebrating religious services.¹⁰⁸ Alice Selby asked for a stone to be inscribed with her name and those of 2 husbands'; and the inscription may have been similar to Robert Ward's in St. Denys Walmgate which began *hic jacet* and ended *cuius anime propitiatur Deus* with the relevant names and dates of death in between.¹⁰⁹ John Yhole designated a particular slab to be placed in St. Leonard's Hospital which is incised with a similar block of text above a shield with his merchant's mark (now in Holy Trinity Goodramgate).¹¹⁰

Marble slabs are specified in the will of John Eryholme in 1308 and later by John de Bolton and Adam del Brigg, and here the term marble refers to a stone with a brass inlay.¹¹¹ There is a large grey stone in Holy Trinity Goodramgate set with an inscribed brass plaque for Thomas and Matilda Danby; and a freestone slab in All Saints' North Street names Isabel Stockton and her husbands, Robert Collinson and

¹⁰⁵ RCHME, *City of York*, 3 and 5; *Buildings of England. Yorkshire: York and the East Riding*, pp. 69-161.

¹⁰⁶ Barnett, 'Memorials and Commemoration'; Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church', *passim*; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 284.

¹⁰⁷ RCHME, *City of York*, 5, pp. xlvii-xlviii, 7b, 48b.

¹⁰⁸ [151]; [825]; *YMB*, 3, pp. 17-18; *BI*, PR 6, fo. 185;.

¹⁰⁹ [770]; [908]; *YML*, 2/4, fo. 167; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 306.

¹¹⁰ [967]; *BI*, PR 1, fo. 43; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 7b; Girling, *English Merchants' Marks*, pp. 11, 12, fig. 3.

¹¹¹ [335]; [118]; [144]; *YML*, VC/3/vi/46; *BI*, PR. 1, f. 83; *BI*, PR. 3, fo. 109; N. Saul, 'Bold as Brass: Secular Display in English Medieval Brasses', in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002, reprinted, 2003), pp. 169-194 at p. 182, note 37.

William Stockton.¹¹² A black letter inscription records the dates of death of Roger de Moreton, junior and Isabel his widow, and there are indents in the slab for 4 shields (St. Saviour's, now in All Saints' Pavement).¹¹³ The floor slab used to commemorate Alan and Isabel Hammerton in All Saints' Pavement is said to have had a marginal inscription, corner medallions with symbols of the Evangelists and a shield of arms (*argent three hammers sable*).¹¹⁴ The most elaborate of the mercer memorials would have been John Gilliot's which incorporated a poetic epitaph, a portrait of John and his wife Joan kneeling in prayer and 4 shields with arms.¹¹⁵ These arms may have been the same as Master John Gilliot (*ermine on a bend sable three lucies' heads coupéd argent*) which are carved on a misericord and ceiling boss in All Saints' North Street.¹¹⁶

A more beautiful medium for commemoration was glass in which colour and light would enhance the inscription and the sheer beauty could make a lasting impression in the eye of the beholder, thus preserving the memory of the donor.¹¹⁷ A list of gifts to the Mercers' Guild records that Joan Ince and Thomas Finch gave new windows to Holy Trinity Chapel in 1490 in memory of departed kin and 'for the souls of all faithful departed'.¹¹⁸ A few years earlier, John Gilliot, junior had paid for a window with images of Ss. John and Thomas at the altar of St. Katherine, which seems a memorial for his late wife, Katherine, daughter of John Marshall.¹¹⁹ William Rumley commissioned a window pane for All Saints' Pavement before his death in 1391; and

¹¹² [272]; [232]; [829]; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 7b and plate 40; RCHME, *City of York*, 3, p. 7a and plate 36.

¹¹³ [643]; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 2b; Stephenson, 'Monumental Brasses', pp. 65, 67; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 311.

¹¹⁴ [448]; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, pp. 43a-b, 244.

¹¹⁵ [405]; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. xlvi; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 295.

¹¹⁶ RCHME, *City of York*, 3, pp. 5a, 7a, 10b, 132 and plate 19; *All Saints' North Street York* (York Civic Trust Guide, 1978, 2nd edition 1989), facing p. 9, 11-12, 14.

¹¹⁷ M. Michael, *Images in Light: Stained Glass 1200-1550* (London, 2002); M. Camille, *The Gothic Idol. Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 11, 17-25; R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England During the Middle Ages* (London, 1993), pp. 3-27, 59-91; F. Harrison, *The Painted Glass of York. An Account of the Medieval Glass of the Minster and the Parish Churches* (London, 1927).

¹¹⁸ [520]; [358]; YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 7r-8r; YMAA, Guild, Accounts 24 (1490); Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 82, 85-6.

¹¹⁹ [405]; BI, PR 5, fo. 331; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 7r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 86; YCA, G.70:39.

a panel with inscription urged the viewer to pray for his souls of William Stockton and Alice, his first wife, and of her previous husband Roger Selby and his first wife, Elizabeth (St. John Ouse Bridge).¹²⁰ A window in Holy Trinity Goodramgate depicts images of saints, a merchant mark and an inscription commemorating William Thorpe, Isabel his wife and their children; and a donor panel now in the Minster shows Richard de Brignal and Katherine his wife at prayer.¹²¹ A window in St. Denys Walmgate may depict the mercer Robert Skelton holding up his gift of a two-light window; and the remnants of painted glass in the north chancel aisle of St. Martin *cum* Gregory are thought to incorporate donor panels and scenes from the Old Testament commissioned by John de Gisburn.¹²² Portraits of the Blackburn family are preserved in the lower range of three panels in a window in All Saints' North Street which show kneeling figures of Nicholas Blackburn, senior and junior and of their wives, each couple facing inwards towards the Trinity.¹²³ The generations are distinguished by inscriptions, slightly altered in restoration, and in the top of each panel are two shields, one containing a capital letter 'B' and the other the Blackburn arms (*gules a lion rampant checky ermine and sable crowned or*) with the younger Nicholas distinguished by a *mullet*.¹²⁴

The most spectacular commemoration would be a personal chapel in which a chantry chaplain would preside and where the founder would be buried under an inscribed tombstone, the altar illuminated by painted glass windows displaying patron saints,

¹²⁰ [737]; [829]; BI, PR 1, fo. 37; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 3a; *City of York*, 3, p. 19a-b; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 279.

¹²¹ [858]; [146]; P. E. Sheppard Routh, 'A Gift and its Giver: John Walker and the East Window of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York', *YAJ*, 58 (1986), pp. 109-121 at pp. 115, 117, 118; RCHME, *City of York*, 3, p. 19a; E. A. Gee, 'An Architectural Account of St. John's Church, Micklegate', *YAYAS Annual Report* (1953-4), pp. 65-82 at pp. 65-7, 74; J. Toy, *A Guide and Index to the Windows of York Minster* (York, 1985), p. 15 no. 20(45); Drake, *Eboracum*, pp. 277, 279, 318.

¹²² [788]; [408]; Marks, *Stained Glass in England*, p. 12; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 18b; *City of York*, 3, p. 24b; Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, pp. 292-3, no. 231.

¹²³ [112]; RCHME, *City of York*, 3, plate 98, pp. 7b-8a; E. A. Gee, 'The Painted Glass of All Saints', North Street, York', *Archaeologia*, 102 (1969), pp. 151-202; P. J. Shaw, *An Old York Church, All Hallows' in North Street* (York, 1908), pp. 30-1.

¹²⁴ Gee, 'Painted Glass of All Saints', North Street', pp. 152, 153-7, 196; RCHME, *City of York*, 3, pp 7b, 8b, 132 (blazon); Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 277.

family portraits, merchants' marks and heraldic shields.¹²⁵ Most chantry chapels were built as collective endeavours, for example the Chapel annexed to Holy Trinity Hospital and later restored and enlarged with donations from benefactors such as Richard Storer and William Vesey.¹²⁶ Civic funds were used to build St. Anne's Chapel on Foss Bridge, but were augmented by contributions from the families of Alan Hammerton, Robert Holme and Nicholas Blackburn.¹²⁷ The construction of the side chapels of St. Nicholas in St. Martin Micklegate and of St. James in Holy Trinity Goodramgate were funded respectively by John de Gisburn and Robert Holme, senior and their descendants.¹²⁸ Some fittings remain in the chapel of St. James, for example a broken altar slab with consecration crosses, a damaged piscine, 2 plain cupboard recesses, a 3-light window of plain glass over the altar and 2 reset windows.¹²⁹ There are 2 small stone shields on either side of the arched opening, one carved with the arms of Holme (*argent a chevron azure between three chaplets gules*); and arms had also been displayed on a ceiling boss and embroidered onto the altar cloths.¹³⁰ An idea of the rich furnishings of these chantries is given in an inventory of Thomas Holme's chantry in St. Mary Castlegate which included silk vestments, linen and silk altar cloths and an array of altar ornaments also incorporating visual *l'aides memoires* such as initials, merchants' marks and armorial bearings.¹³¹

It can be seen that York mercers were familiar with a variety of tangible memorials: inscribed tombstones; marble slabs inlaid with brass letters, plaques and effigies; painted glass windows incorporating inscriptions, emblems and images; and separate

¹²⁵ Marks, *Stained Glass in England*, pp. 59-91; J. A. Knowles, *Essays in the History of the York School of Glass Painting* (London, 1936), pp. 158-179, 280-195; Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, p. 33.

¹²⁶ [883]; YML, 2/4, fo. 124; BI, PR 3, fo. 266; Seller, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 30-1.

¹²⁷ [448]; [490.B]; [112]; BI, PR 2, fo. 605; PR 3, fos. 244, 365; YCA, G.70:30,31, 34; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', p. 29; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 276-8;

¹²⁸ [408]; [490]; BI, PR 1, fos. 15, 100, 365, 400; RCHME, *City of York*, 3, p. 24b; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 273, 284.

¹²⁹ RCHME, *City of York*, 5, pp. 5b, 7a, 9b; Swanson, 'Thomas Holme and his Chantries', p. 5; Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 284.

¹³⁰ *Holy Trinity Church Goodramgate, York*, The Churches Conservation Trust, series 4/45 (1996), pp. 4, 6, 16; YCR, 3, p. 28.

¹³¹ [491]; YCA, G.70:24, 39; YMB, 1, p. 236; Swanson, 'Thomas Holmes and his Chantries', pp. 3-7 YCR, 3, pp. 28-30.

chantry chapels.¹³² Each type of memorial made a statement about the deceased; about perceptions of their social standing and eminence; and about their aspirations to be considered of gentry status in the use of armorial bearings.¹³³

Summary Remarks

The preservation of memory would vary depending on the type of commemoration and the intended audience. Family and kin would be expected to grieve and keep their kinsman in mind, perhaps through an entry in a book of prayers as Thomas Scauceby was remembered in the Bolton Book of Hours.¹³⁴ Recitation of the bead roll by the parish priest would remind parishioners of the names of the deceased and the chaplain of the source of his salary. Churchwardens who managed the estate and collected the rents would be mindful of the founder, and paupers given a food dole or gratuity at the anniversary might recall the occasion if not the person. Visual reminders would catch the eye and jog the memory; for instance the initials or coats of arms embroidered on vestments, depicted on altar cloths or inscribed on chalices. The most effective commemoration however would combine a permanent medium such as stone and the written word or a luxury medium such as glass in which there was an interplay between words, image, colour and light which would impress bystanders and lodge in their memory. These provisions for commemoration also display quest for identity and acceptance within the group; and this can be examined further in looking at the ways in which corporate image was projected and power and authority displayed.

¹³² Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church', pp. 76-9, 81-2; Aston, 'Death', pp. 226, 227.

¹³³ Barnett, 'Commemoration in the Parish Church', pp. 83-92; C. M. Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture' in P. Coss and M. Keen, *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 219-242 at pp. 235-7; Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy Among the Yorkshire Gentry*, p. 10, 23; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 252-3.

¹³⁴ [750]; BI, PR 4, fo. 169; YML, MS Add 2 (c.1405x1415, Bolton Hours); P. Cullum and J. Goldberg, 'How Margaret Blackburn Taught her Daughters: Reading Devotional Instructions in a Book of Hours' in J. Wogan-Browne, *etc.* (eds.), *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain. Essays for Felicity Riddy* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2000), pp. 217-236 at pp. 217, 220-1, 223, 225, 233.

II

GUILD MEMBERS AND CIVIC OFFICIALS

York mercers were associated as an occupation or mystery before 1430 when the Mercers' Guild was formally incorporated; and they were also affiliated with a number of social and religious organisations.¹³⁵ Whether or not their membership was voluntary, encouraged or enforced, it signified acceptance into select society and attested to their suitability and respectability.¹³⁶ Membership offered opportunities to participate in consensus and collective action and, if elected to guild office, they would develop organisational, financial and leadership skills. Moreover the economic privileges associated with a trade guild would 'enhanced a man's ability to accumulate wealth, and political power.'¹³⁷ Thus membership of a select society would be beneficial on several levels, particularly for those aspiring to civic office which required a combination of personal, financial and commercial expertise. It is apparent that York mercers aimed for inclusion in the ruling élite; after all it is their civic office which recorded on their memorials, for example that John Lightlop had been sheriff and Thomas Kirk mayor, not their positions in the Mercers' Guild.¹³⁸

The attraction of civic office was undoubtedly political power and the positions of sheriff and mayor were the most coveted, in part, because they presided in their own courts during their year. Although authority was vested in their office and not in their person as would be the case with a manorial lord, a degree of 'power of command' remained, particularly among the aldermen, the inner ruling council.¹³⁹ Furthermore the prestige of serving as mayor was unequalled; as personal representative of the

¹³⁵ Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 118-159; White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild of York*, p. 25, note 56.

¹³⁶ B. R. McRee, 'Unity or Division? The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities' in B. A. Hanawalt and K. L. Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, Medieval Studies at Minnesota, 6 (1994), pp. 189-207 at p. 190-1; G. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the late Middle Ages' in S. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People. Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 29-55 at pp. 36-7.

¹³⁷ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 214.

¹³⁸ [759]; [554]; Drake, *Eboracum*, pp. 298, 321; M. Stephenson, 'Monumental Brasses in the City of York', *YAJ*, 17 (1905), pp. 1-67 at pp. 12, 15.

¹³⁹ Rees Jones, 'York Civic Administration', p. 115; Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 17-18.

king, he was addressed in deferential terms which recognised his special status within society: *als honorable seignour meir de la citee, ulterior honorabilis dominus suus maior*, the right worshopfull...maieur or worshipful lord, the mayre.¹⁴⁰

The theme of privilege and authority accorded to select groups is addressed in the general context of the concept of good government.¹⁴¹ It is generally accepted that urban government was oligarchic in structure and increasingly dominated by a mercantile élite; but there is controversy about whether this reflected consensus of shared beliefs or generated conflict and resentment.¹⁴² The focus on higher civic office is challenged by scholars whose work on lesser positions of responsibility reveals two tiers of local government, providing opportunities for men from a wider segment of society.¹⁴³ The parish as one of the structures of society is seen as

¹⁴⁰ Palliser, 'Urban Society', p. 145; *YCR*, 2, p. 156; *YMB*, 1, pp. 150, 170, 186; *YMB*, 2, pp. 213, 246, 288, 291, 296, 297, 298.

¹⁴¹ Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy' in Late Medieval England', pp. 62-86 at p. 62; M. Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London and New York, 2002), pp. 116-140; R. E. Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 1995); R. E. Archer and S. K. Walker (eds.), *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (London and Rio Grande, 1995); G. Harriss, 'Political Society and the Growth of Government in late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 138 (1993), pp. 28-57; R. H. Hilton, 'Ideology and Social Order in Late Medieval England' in *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism. Essays in Medieval Social History* (London and New York, 1985, revised 1990), pp. 173-179; Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', pp. 14-23; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, pp. 168-9; Reynolds, *Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, pp. 118-139; Palliser, 'Urban Society', pp. 132-149; W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III. Crown and Political Society in England 1327-1377* (New Haven and London, 1990), pp. 171-196.

¹⁴² J. Laughton, E. Jones and C. Dyer, 'The Urban Hierarchy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of the East Midlands', *Urban History*, 28/3 (2001), pp. 331-357; Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', pp. 20-22; P. Fleming, 'Telling Tales of Oligarchy in the Late Medieval Town' in M. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 177-193; Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, pp. 89-91, 94-6; Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy' in Late Medieval England', *passim*; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 87-106; Kowaleski, 'Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy', pp. 355-384; A. B. Hibbert, 'The Origins of the Medieval Town Patriciate', *Past and Present*, 3 (1953), pp. 15-27; R. H. Britnell, 'Bailiffs and Burgesses in Colchester 1400-1525', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 21 (1990), pp. 103-109; C. M. Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals 1438-44' in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The English Medieval Town. A Reader in English Urban History* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 160-183.

¹⁴³ Carpenter, 'The Formation of Urban Elites', pp. 12-22; Shaw, *The City of Wells*, pp. 1, 167-76, 177-215; Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government', pp. 74-6; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 173-183; Hammer, 'Anatomy of an Oligarchy', pp. 1-27.

fundamental in establishing social cohesion.¹⁴⁴ The parish fraternity is credited with a role of integrating newcomers into the community, but also with creating élite divisions.¹⁴⁵ The regulation of behaviour in religious and craft guilds is shown to reinforce notions of hierarchy within society, and a link is recognised between civic office and membership of prestigious guilds.¹⁴⁶ The Parliamentary Acts referred to as Sumptuary Legislation detail the type and value of cloth and furs to be worn by different social classes.¹⁴⁷ Studies of heraldry, pageantry and ceremonial display discuss the outward display of group identity through the use of livery badges or

¹⁴⁴ Kumin, *The Shaping of a Community*, pp. 53-6; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, p. 378; N. Saul, 'Medieval England: Identity, Politics and Society' in N. Saul (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 1-24; S. Brigden, 'Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London', *Past and Present*, 103 (1984), pp. 67-112; J. A. Ford, 'Marginality and the Assimilation of Foreigners in the Lay Parish Community' in K. L. French, G. G. Gibbs and B. A. Kumin (eds.), *Parish in English Life 1400-1600* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 203-16; M. Rubin, 'Small Groups: Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages' in J. Kermode (ed.), *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1991), pp. 132-48; C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850. Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester and London, 1993); J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 83-89.

¹⁴⁵ Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', pp. 29-55; G. Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late Medieval England', *TRHS*, 6th series, 1 (1991), pp. 173-89; Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 124-7; J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 19-39; Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', pp. 13-37; H. F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (London, 1919).

¹⁴⁶ B. R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour in Late Medieval Towns' in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 108-22; S. Thrupp, 'Social Control in the Medieval Town', *Journal of Economic History*, 1, supplement (1941), pp. 39-52; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 118-24; Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 118-139, 140-7; M. Davies, 'Governors and Governed: The Practice of Power in the Merchant Taylors' Company in the Fifteenth Century' in I. A. Gadd and P. Wallis (eds.), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800* (London, 2002), pp. 67-84; B. A. Hanawalt and B. R. McRee, 'The Guilds of *Homo Prudens* in Late Medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, 7 (1992), pp. 163-79 at p. 175; G. Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town', *Past and Present*, 154 (1997), pp. 3-31 at pp. 7-8; Harris and Templeton, *Register of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry*, pp. xviii-xix, xxiv-xxv.

¹⁴⁷ W. H. Dunham, jr. and S. Pargellis (eds.), *Complaint and Reform in England 1436-1714. Fifty Writings of the Time on Politics, Religion, Society, Economics, Architecture, Science and Education* (New York, 1968), pp. 31-50; N. B. Harte, 'State Control of Dress and Social Change in Pre-Industrial England' in D. C. Coleman and A. H. John (eds.), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England. Essays Presented to F. J. Fisher* (London, 1976); E. M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966, 2nd edition, London Record Society, 2003), pp. 4-5, 11, 18, 136-7, 146-7, 192.

common dress.¹⁴⁸ The urban response to prestige and power is addressed in studies of guild and civic ceremony, most visible in processions in which precedence reflects perceptions of rank between freemen and civic officials.¹⁴⁹ Perceptions of a city's status is examined through the iconography of seals and heraldry, powerful symbols of political propaganda.¹⁵⁰ The ascending order of civic office is discussed as a *cursus honorum* with the mayoralty considered the 'pinnacle of urban success' whose position as the 'king's lieutenant', responsible for maintaining law and order, was visually proclaimed through livery, retinue and insignia of office.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ F. Lachaud, 'Dress and Social Status in England Before the Sumptuary Laws' in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 105-124; F. Piponnier and P. Mane (trans. C. Beamish), *Dress in the Middle Ages* (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 39-98, 114-141; A. Sutton, 'Dress and Fashions c.1470' in R. Britnell (ed.), *Daily Life in the Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 5-26; A. Sutton, 'Order and Fashion in Clothes: The King, his Household and the City of London at the End of the Fifteenth Century', *Textile History*, 22(2) (1991, issued 1993), pp. 253-276; Marschner, 'Men of Trades and Sellers of Wares', pp. 29-34.

¹⁴⁹ P. Coss and M. Keen, *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), *passim*; Hanawalt and Reyerson, *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*; S. Angelo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 104-6; R. Van Uytven, 'Showing Off One's Rank in the Middle Ages' in W. P. Blockmans and A. Janse (eds.), *Showing Status: Representation of Social Positions in the late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 1999), pp.19-34; M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and the Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past and Present*, 98 (1983), pp. 3-29; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550' in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700. Essays in Urban History* (London, 1972), pp. 57-85; G. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), pp. 430-46; McRee, 'Unity or Division? The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities', pp. 189-207; Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture in Medieval London', pp. 219-242.

¹⁵⁰ J. K. Hyde, 'Medieval Descriptions of Cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 48, (1965-66), pp. 308-40 at p. 310; B. Bedos-Rezak, 'Towns and Seals: Representation and Signification in Medieval France', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 72/3 (1990), pp. 35-48; W. Blockmans and E. Donckers, 'Self-Representation of Court and City in Flanders and Brabant in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries' in W. Blockmans and A. Janse (eds.), *Showing Status. Representation of Social Position in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 1999), pp. 81-111; A. Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda' in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 83-104; L. Jewit and W. H. St. John Hope, *The Corporation Plate and Insignia of Office of the Cities and Towns of England and Wales* (2 vols, London, 1895); W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology, Image, Text and Ideology* (Chicago and London, 1986), pp. 7-46; Camille, 'The Language of Images in Medieval England', pp. 33-40; A. C. Moore, *Iconography of Religions. An Introduction* (London, 1977); M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (London, 1979), pp. 15, 308-317.

¹⁵¹ J. R. Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450-1509* (London, 1980), pp. 21, 33-64; B. R. Masters, 'The Mayor's Household Before 1600' in A. Hollaender and W. Kellaway, *Studies in London History Presented to P. E. Jones* (London, 1969), pp. 95-116; T. H. Girtin, *The Lord Mayor of London* (Oxford, 1948); V. Hope, *My Lord Mayor. Eight Hundred Years of London's Mayoralty*, (London, 1989); Sutton, 'Order and Fashion in

A. FRATERNITY AND GUILD

i. Corporate Image and Identity

Participation in a fraternity or guild would ‘forge a sense of common identity’ which members interpreted as unique and which set them apart as a special or select group within the urban community.¹⁵² It would be important to have a public image which would reinforce their collective identity and solidarity, and in York there are references to a variety of symbols, emblems and images used by fraternities and guilds.¹⁵³

a. Emblems of Affiliation

The seal of the St. Christopher Guild portrayed a large man with the Christ child on his shoulders, holding a staff and standing in or striding through water.¹⁵⁴ This image illustrates the origin of their patron saint’s name (Christ bearer) and would feature as the main episode depicted on a hanging at the guild’s altar in the Minster.¹⁵⁵ Portrayals of St. Christopher and other patron saints of York guilds (eg. George, Martin and John the Baptist) appear in painted glass windows in the Minster and parish churches.¹⁵⁶ These reveal the colours, clothing and emblems that medieval artists used to distinguish one saint from another and record the major events of their extraordinary but still human lives.¹⁵⁷ It would be a bond of common humanity and

Clothes’, pp. 262-5; L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, by Robert Ricart (Camden Society, 1872), pp. xi-xii.

¹⁵² McRee, ‘Unity or Division?’, pp. 190-1, 192.

¹⁵³ McRee, ‘Unity or Division?’, pp. 192-3, 195.

¹⁵⁴ YCA, G.16 (1445, seal of St. Christopher Guild); White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, pp. 3, 4, 14; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, p. 82.

¹⁵⁵ J. Raine (ed.), *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, Surtees Society, 35 (1859), p. 280; White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁶ P. Gibson, *The Stained and Painted Glass of York Minster* (Norwich, 1979), p. 37; RCHME, *City of York*, 3, plates 104, 123; *City of York*, 5, pp. 20a, 29a, 57, plates 63, 198; Gibson, *The Stained and Painted Glass of York Minster*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁷ Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 101-2; McRee, ‘Unity or Divison?’, pp. 196, 199, 201.

admiration for their courageous martyrdom, that seems to account for their popularity as patron saints and the corporate image of 'loyal retainers'.¹⁵⁸

The Corpus Christi Guild used a silver seal matrix engraved with Eucharistic symbols: a chalice containing a consecrated Host standing on top of a large book.¹⁵⁹ These reflect the guild's dedication to the 'praise and honour of the most sacred body...of Christ' and refer to the notion of transubstantiation in which bread and wine were transformed into the body of Christ by the words and gestures of a priest.¹⁶⁰ The six standards used at funerals were painted with chalices and an array of banners and pennons was gilded with angels, chalices, maxims of the faith and shields of the faith [*sic*].¹⁶¹ The image thus projected is of a pious, liturgically aware and learned society, perhaps intellectually removed from the masses whose more literal interpretation of the bruised and bleeding body of the sacrificed Christ can be seen in the church windows in Holy Trinity Goodramgate and St. Martin Coney Street.¹⁶²

Around the foundation of their hospital in 1371, the Fraternity of St. Mary acquired a latten seal matrix, a pointed oval in shape with the Coronation of the Virgin engraved showing Christ and Mary, robed and crowned, seated side by side on a throne within a niche.¹⁶³ The female statue now headless may have been acquired at the same time and is likely to represent the Virgin Mary.¹⁶⁴ The Hospital was dedicated or rededicated to the Holy Trinity and the High Altar in the Chapel adorned with images of the Trinity inscribed on altar ornaments, embroidered onto textiles and painted

¹⁵⁸ Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 98-104.

¹⁵⁹ Skaife, *CCG Register*, frontispiece, p. xiv note j; REED, *York*, pp. 98-9, 637; W. de G. Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1 (London, 1887), p. 825, no. 4409.

¹⁶⁰ Skaife, *CCG Register*, pp. v-vi; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 207, 211, 232, 233-4, 237, 243-279; Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 5, 42-3, 160-195.

¹⁶¹ REED, *York*, pp. 27-8, 78-80, 97-8, 628-30, 631-3, 663-640, 755-7.

¹⁶² RCHME, *City of York*, 5, plate 46.

¹⁶³ YMAA, *Cartulary*, fos. 148-50; YORMA, 26 (14th C., seal matrix of the Hospital); Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the British Museum*, 1, pp. 24-5, no. 4407; see other depictions of The Coronation RCHME, *City of York*, 3, plates 102, 123.

¹⁶⁴ YORMA 365 (14th C. stone female figure, headless); RCHME, *York*, 5, p. 88a.

onto tablets or plaques.¹⁶⁵ Recently a medieval stone statuette of the Trinity has been placed in the Chapel, on loan from Holy Trinity, Micklegate.¹⁶⁶ This image of deity also featured on the common seal of the Mercers' Guild, a round latten matrix depicting the God the Father seated, holding the cross with the crucified body of Christ in his arms and his feet in a wavy sea upon which two, single-masted ships sail.¹⁶⁷ This is a complex assemblage of religious and secular symbols which implies the self-confidence of the membership, clearly able to internalise Christian doctrine and adapt the ideas and images to justify their own activities.¹⁶⁸

b. Public Display

The occasion when a fraternal society or occupational group would affirm their separate identity was the annual celebration on the feast of their patron saint which included a religious service, an anniversary obit for deceased members, communal meal and inaugural ceremony.¹⁶⁹ This celebration would feature a procession to and from the meeting place or guild hall to the parish church, and members would be arrayed in an orderly fashion, led by a beadle carrying a torch or mace, the members clad in common dress and ranked by seniority with the officers distinguished in their robes, hats and regalia.¹⁷⁰ This would be a strong visual display of affiliation and status which could be elaborated further with various accessories marked with their society's iconography, emblems and images.¹⁷¹ Isabel Carr bequeathed her Corpus

¹⁶⁵ YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 148-150; Museum Collection, YORMA 365 (stone female figure), 421-427 (altar stones).

¹⁶⁶ YORMA, Loan 1 (medieval stone statuette of the Trinity); RCHME, *City of York*, 3, p. 15a and plate 9.

¹⁶⁷ YMAA, Guild, Accounts, 1.m.4 (1435); YORMA 24 (1435, seal matrix of Mercers' Guild); Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the British Museum*, 1, p. 825, no. 4408; R. H. Hall, *English Heritage Book of York*, p. 93, fig. 72; Smith, *Guide*, p. 24.

¹⁶⁸ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 28, 240.

¹⁶⁹ McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp.191-2; Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast'; White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild of York*, pp. 15, 16-17; Unwin, *Gilds and Companies of London*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁰ Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', pp. 434-5, 438, 443-4; Phythian Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp. 60-3; Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, pp. 70-1.

¹⁷¹ Bedos-Rezak, 'Towns and Seals', pp. 35-6, 39-40, 45; Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, pp. 71, 79-80; Aston, 'Death', pp. 219-20; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 60-1, 235-6, 255.

Christi torch which seems to have been distinguished from other torches, perhaps with a plaque affixed to the stock; and the Mercers' Guild may have had emblems painted onto the framework at the top (castle) of theirs.¹⁷² Items imbued with symbolism would be carried: the wooden board written with 'the merits of the Lord's Prayer' by the Paternoster Guild; manikins or painted images of St. Christopher and St. George by their guilds; and the elaborate silver and silver-gilt shrine encasing the Host by the Corpus Christi Guild.¹⁷³ The military use of banners was adopted by civilian groups as a 'visible and functional sign of identity; and in processions fluttering banners would catch the eye of spectators and signal the approach of a distinct group.¹⁷⁴ The Mercers' Guild carried a large banner of red buckram with an image of the Holy Trinity 'beaten' or embossed in gold-leaf and trimmed with ostrich feathers, four smaller banners showing the Trinity on a background of rosettes and 24 canvas banners attached to the torches.¹⁷⁵

The symbols and emblems of societies could also be embroidered onto badges or fashioned into brooches and worn as livery, that is as signs of allegiance and affiliation.¹⁷⁶ Archaeological excavations at Trinity Hall in Fossgate turned up a gold, ring-brooch inscribed with the initials for Jesus of Nazareth which perhaps had been worn by a chaplain; and another find was a stone mould for pewter ampoules

¹⁷² *TE*, 2, p. 214, no. 170; YMAA, Guild, Accounts 1.m.6 (1437); Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 49; Blockmans and Donckers, 'Self-Representation of Court and City', pp. 94-6, figs. 1, 6.

¹⁷³ Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 91; BI, PR 7, fo. 26; White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, pp. 11, 16; REED, *York*, pp. 318-19; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 98.

¹⁷⁴ Blockmans and Donckers, 'Self-Representation of Court and City', pp. 84, 96-7; P. Arnade, 'Crowds, Banners and the Marketplace: Symbols of Defiance and Defeat During the Ghent War of 1452-1453', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 24 (1994), pp. 471-97.

¹⁷⁵ YMAA, Correspondence and Papers 5: Pageant Business; Guild, Accounts 1.m.6; Draft and Subsidiary Accounts 4: Pageant accounts 2:1 (1461); Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 49; REED, *York* 1, pp. 55-6, 91-2; A. F. Johnston and M. Dorrell, 'The Doomsday Pageant of the York Mercers, 1433', *Leeds Studies in English*, 6 (1972), pp. 29-34 at p. 34, no. 6; A. F. Johnston and M. Dorrell, 'York Mercers and their Pageant of Doomsday, 1433-1526', *Leeds Studies in English*, pp. 11-35 at pp. 17, 18; *YChA*, p. 113; J. T. Fowler (ed.), *Memorials of the Church of Ss Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, 3, Surtees Society, 81 (1888), pp. 132-2 and note 4.

¹⁷⁶ Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', p. 259; B. Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, Salisbury Museum Medieval Catalogue, 2 (1990), pp. 7, 8, 9-12, 95, 96 nos. 43-84, 97; Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, pp. 218-9, 220-4, 394-6, nos. 447-451.

embossed with a cross and chalice which could have been worn on a chain as a souvenir or badge.¹⁷⁷

Livery could also take the form of a uniform dress; either a hood or garment was used by lords to distinguish their retinue and also became characteristic of guilds and other societies.¹⁷⁸ The garment was often particoloured, that is fashioned from contrasting colours or patterns on each longitudinal half with one side a striped material (*raya* or *stragula*) and the number and direction of stripes might signify greater or lesser rank.¹⁷⁹ The wills of York mercers describe clothing in these terms, such as John Easingwold's *toga bipartita de albo et viridi*, John Skipwith's toga was *stragulata* and William Elwin's gown was of *musterdeveliers et raya*.¹⁸⁰ Another word which suggest livery clothing is *secta*; for example the phrase *secta indui* in the accounts of the Paternoster Guild and *toga de secta Prioris* in the will of John Waterhouse.¹⁸¹

In fact the Paternoster Guild purchased 8 whole cloths in 1399-1400 for which members contributed from 6d to 25s each for lengths from ¼ ell enough for a hood up to 12 ells; and the mercer Robert Brown's payment of 6s 3d for 3 ells may have been sufficient for a gown.¹⁸² In 1404 William Redhood bequeathed a *toga strangulata* to be worn at the feast of Corpus Christi; and in 1443/4 John Bampton's gown and cap of striped murray and meld was noted as the livery of the St. Christopher Guild.¹⁸³ John Preston's legacy of a toga and hood *viridis raya partita cum blodio* is a unique reference to the colour and pattern of the livery worn by associates of Holy Trinity Hospital; and the hood cloths presented to the chaplains in the 1430s may have been

¹⁷⁷ YORMA 496 (14th C, gold ring brooch; N. Rogers, 'Lost and Found', *Interim* 20/4 (1995), pp. 34-5; Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, p. 484, nos. 643, 644; Hall, *English Heritage. York*, pp. 112, 115, figs. 91, 96.

¹⁷⁸ Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', p. 265; Herbert, *Twelve Great Livery Companies of London*, pp. 60-4; Toulmin Smith, *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*; Marks, *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547*, p. 265, no. 124.

¹⁷⁹ Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', pp. 263-5, 266-7.

¹⁸⁰ [317]; [330]; BI, PR 1, fo. 76; PR 2, fos. 127, 289; PR 3, fos. 245, 406, 599; PR 4, fo. 144.

¹⁸¹ REED, *York*, 1, pp. 6-7 citing TNA, C47/46/454; BI, PR 5, fo. 413.

¹⁸² [158]; P. M. Hoskin (ed.), 'The Accounts of the Medieval Paternoster Gild of York', *Northern History*, 44/1 (2007), pp. 7-33 at pp. 8, 13, 26-28.

¹⁸³ [714]; BI, PR 2, fo. 78; PR 3, fo. 108; White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, p. 17; Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', p. 264.

similar.¹⁸⁴ The St. Christopher Guild continued to wear ray cloth in the sixteenth-century though it had long been out of fashion in London; and it is puzzling that there is no reference to a livery worn by the York Mercers' Guild whereas their London counterparts discussed the colour and cloth of livery year after year.¹⁸⁵

There are a few glimpses of the visual means by which fraternity and guild officers were distinguished, such as a reference in the accounts of the Fraternity of St. Mary to *chaplais* or garlands, possibly worn on the master's inauguration.¹⁸⁶ There were caps, a sword and tipstaff for the master of the combined guild of St. Christopher and St. George; and a dorsal, similar to the 'halling of picture' belonging to the Mercers' Guild, would be suspended behind the master on the high dais.¹⁸⁷ There is nothing recorded about the dress of the master (governor) of the Mercers' Guild, but late sixteenth century portraits show an adaptation of Elizabethan aldermanic dress: a fur-trimmed red cape with short sleeves and long lappets with a velvet tippet (a stole) draped over the shoulders.¹⁸⁸ The long-established use of other insignia of office suggests medieval counterparts: a seventeenth-century signet ring with the arms of the Merchant Adventurers of England worn by the governor during his year; a silver loving cup presented by a past governor; and an array of eighteenth-century maces, staves and tipstaffs.¹⁸⁹

It is apparent that a massed display of torches, banners and common clothing in a public procession would be a strong visual reinforcement of corporate identity and the use of religious iconography and liturgical images an outward display of collective piety and good intent.¹⁹⁰ These signs of affiliation would be sufficient to

¹⁸⁴ YML, 2/4, f. 122; YMAA, Guild, Accounts 1.m.1-3; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 39, 40, 43.

¹⁸⁵ White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, p. 17; Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', pp. 263-5; YMB, 1, p. 44; YCR, 2, p. 185.

¹⁸⁶ Marschner, 'Men of Trades and Sellers of Wares', pp. 31-2, fig.1; J. L. Nevinson, 'Crowns and Garlands of the Livery Companies', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 1 (1973-4), pp. 68-81.

¹⁸⁷ White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, pp. 7, 11, 16; BI, PR 2, fo. 138; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 8v; Sellers, *Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁸ Oil portraits: YORMA 154 (c.1630), 155 (c.1580); 343 (c.1597), 345 (c.1610), 342 (c.1633); Robes: YORMA 288, 408; non-Museum T17; see YCR, 5, p. 117 (tippets).

¹⁸⁹ YORMA 29 (gold signet ring), 1 (1635, silver goblet), 255-7, 340-1 (maces and tip-staffs).

¹⁹⁰ Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 5, 42-3, 160-195.

strength fraternal bonds, foster a sense of belonging and display a corporate identity, but do not seem a particularly strong 'statement of power and of...loyalties'.¹⁹¹ For that type of image it is necessary to look at the wider community and the iconography used by the corporation of York.

B. CIVIC COUNCILLORS AND ALDERMEN

i. Civic Corporate Image and Identity

The establishment of a gild merchant in eleventh-century York has been seen as evidence for cohesion within the burgess community.¹⁹² Thereafter a series of royal charters from the reign of Henry II granted further borough privileges, culminating in self-government c.1212 when a mayor and three bailiffs are recorded.¹⁹³ Visual signs of collective identity are shown in the iconography of the city's coats of arms which could be engraved on seal matrices, carved onto stone plaques and shields, painted on banners and embossed and incised on ceremonial regalia.¹⁹⁴

a. Emblems of Authority

A visual sign of collective identity is shown by a double-sided seal, appended to a document dated between 1191 and 1206, which is noted in the text as the 'common seal of the citizens of York'.¹⁹⁵ A slightly different seal is still in use, the thirteenth-century matrix made of silver, double-sided with three pierced lugs to ensure a precise impression; and, as an expensive and prestigious acquisition, expresses the

¹⁹¹ White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, p. 17.

¹⁹² Palliser, 'The Birth of York's Civic Liberties', pp. 89, 90-91.

¹⁹³ Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 31-3, 32; Palliser, 'The Birth of York's Civic Liberties', pp. 93, 94, 95-6; A. Ballard (ed.), *British Borough Charters, 1042-1216* (Cambridge, 1913), p. xxxii (York, 1154x8 to 1212); A. Ballard and J. Tait (eds.), *British Borough Charters, 1216 to 1307* (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 10, 34, 172, 176-7, 359-60; M. Weinbaum (ed.), *British Borough Charters, 1307-1660* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 132-3.

¹⁹⁴ Hyde, 'Medieval Descriptions of Cities', p. 310; Bedos-Rezak, 'Towns and Seals', pp. 39, 44-5.

¹⁹⁵ Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the British Museum*, 1, p. 218, no 5542; Palliser, 'Birth of York's Civic Liberties', p. 92; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 313 and Appendix, p. ci, fig. xxiii; Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, p. 273, no. 193.

pride of the citizens and the symbolic importance of incorporation.¹⁹⁶ The legends on both seals are similar and, though reversed and slightly altered, the images are the same: on the front a 'large tower with overhanging crenulated battlements enclosed within a stone wall'; and on the back, a 'figure of St. Peter standing on a bracket, holding two keys in his right hand, two keys and a long cross staff in his left...[with] angels on either side...each holding a candlestick with tall taper'.¹⁹⁷ These are multi-layered, symbolic images, far more complex than those used by fraternities and guilds, conveying on the one hand that St. Peter, patron of the Minster, was the spiritual protector of the city and, on the other, that the secular, civilian fortifications were sufficient to withstand enemy attack.¹⁹⁸ The seal is thus redolent of power and might, of protection and defence and makes a strong statement of corporate authority.¹⁹⁹

The royal favour required for incorporation is apparent on the arms of the city which combine the cross of St. George with the lions of England: *argent on a cross gules 5 lions passant guardant or*.²⁰⁰ There are carved stone shields in the Lady Chapel of the Minster and on Micklegate and Monkgate Bars which date c.1361-c.1375 or about a generation after the inception of the Order of the Garter under the patronage of St. George.²⁰¹ The royal arms were also engraved on the mayor's private seal and on the mace and sword which were carried before him on all occasions, a constant

¹⁹⁶ T. A. Heslop, 'English Seals in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries' in Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, pp. 114, 115, 116, 117, 296-7, 273, no. 193, 316, no. 276, 397, no. 453, 399-400, no. 460, 400, no. 462; S. H. Hunter Blair, 'Medieval Seals of the Bishops of Durham', *Archaeologia*, 72 (1921), pp. 1-24 at pp. 538, 631, 634; H. Jenkinson, *A Guide to Seals in the Public Record Office* (London, 1953), pp. 9-10.

¹⁹⁷ Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the British Museum*, 1, p. 218, nos. 5542, 5543; 2, p. 218, nos. 5542-3; Jewitt and St. John Hope, *The Corporation Plate and Insignia of Office*, 1, pp. 445-78 at p. 466; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 99a, plate 92; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 313, 318, fig. 1 and Appendix, p. ci, fig. xxiii.

¹⁹⁸ Bedos-Rezak, 'Towns and Seals', pp. 39, 44-5; Bedos-Rezak, 'Civic Liturgies and Urban Records in Northern France', p. 44; C. Norton, *Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux and the Norman Cathedral at York*, Borthwick Paper, 100 (2001), pp. 14-28; Hall, *English Heritage York*, pp. 40-1, fig. 25.

¹⁹⁹ Bedos-Rezak, 'Towns and Seals', pp. 44-6; Jenkinson, *A Guide to Seals in the PRO*, p. 26.

²⁰⁰ H. Murray, 'The City's Shield of Arms', *York Historian*, 5 (1984), pp. 8-17 at pp. 8-9 and plates 2 and 3; H. Murray, *Heraldry and the Buildings of York*, YASAS, 3 (1985), pp. 2-3.

²⁰¹ Murray, 'The City's Shield of Arms', pp. 9-10; Murray, *Heraldry and the Buildings of York*, pp. 19-20; R. Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry* (New York, 1970, reprinted 1974), pp. 303-307; RCHME, *York*, 5, pp. 14a, 39a, 80a, 98b.

reminder of the special authority delegated to the mayor by the king.²⁰² The seal was formed from a small, silver, double-sided matrix: 'on the obverse the city arms in a shield between two ostrich feathers, surmounted by a coronet with the legend: *sigil + lum : secretum : officii : maioratus : civitat'*: *eboraci*; and on the reverse an image of the King above one of the lions of England.²⁰³

Thus the corporate image of York combined recognition of both spiritual and royal patronage and protection, and affirmed the city's allegiance to the king and its commitment to the defence of his realm.²⁰⁴ This message would be restated wherever the city arms were displayed: on the seals to official documents and private letters from the mayor; outside on the city bars and inside on roof bosses in the Guild Hall and on banners marking the stations of the Corpus Christi play or carried on military expeditions.²⁰⁵ It is the inclusion of royal devices on the civic swords, maces and regalia that makes the most powerful statement of civic corporate image and no fraternity, guild, society or lesser community could possibly compete.²⁰⁶

b. Civic Livery

York mercers had a share in this corporate image, by virtue of holding a good 25% of available civic offices from c.1350 to c.1530 and providing 26 mayors or 19% during this period. It is in their role as civic officials or *probi homines* that details emerge of the common dress that mercers would have worn; for instance in 1399, a civic ordinance refers to the summer livery and to 'garments of the same suit' worn by others in the Corpus Christi procession.²⁰⁷ The councillors and aldermen a century later were to be advised by the common officers as to the 'colour and clothing' they

²⁰² B. Dobson, 'The Crown, the Charter and the City, 1396-1461' in S. Rees Jones, *The Government of Medieval York. Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, Borthwick Studies in History, 3 (1997), pp. 34-55 at p. 37; *YMB*, 1, pp. 157-63 citing *CChR 1341-1417*, pp. 354-6, 358-60.

²⁰³ Jewitt and St. John Hope, *Corporation Plate and Insignia of Office*, 1, pp. 446-7; Murray, 'The City's Shield of Arms', p. 11; Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, p. 274, nos. 194, 195.

²⁰⁴ Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England', p. 99; Murray, 'The City's Shield of Arms', p. 10.

²⁰⁵ *YMB*, 1, pp. 51-2 (1399, *vexilla ludi cum armis civitatis*); *YChA*, pp. 4, 113, 165.

²⁰⁶ *YMB*, 3, pp. 123-4; Jewitt and St. John Hope, *Corporation Plate and Insignia of Office*, 2, pp. 448-9

²⁰⁷ *YMB*, 1, p. 44.

were to wear to general assemblies and processions.²⁰⁸ Other citizens probably wore their best clothes as instructions in 1487 and 1502 imply, whereby ‘the crafts and commons’ to wear ‘convenient array’.²⁰⁹ In 1483 on the special occasion of Richard III’s visit to York, artisans were directed to wear ‘blew violet and mustervivyles’; but it would not be until 1501 during John Stockdale’s mayoralty that the crafts were assigned a common clothing.²¹⁰

The civic funds were not used to purchase livery cloth for councillors, sheriffs or aldermen and this implies that they paid for their own outfits.²¹¹ However, mercers as mayors would be involved in the selection of colour, and accounts show they were given swatches of cloth to examine: in 1442, red cloth and gray *mustervivyles*, in 1445 violet and murray (mulberry) and in 1462 green.²¹² These woollen cloths would have been tailored into gowns and hoods and were likely to have been originally ‘parti-coloured’ garments which changed over time to single-colour gowns worn under a silk or fur-lined mantle with a hood or chaperon to match.²¹³

Mercers would also be involved as chamberlains in recording the purchase of cloths for the livery of the civic household; and the quantity and quality of cloth would depend on the position and rank of the recipients, another visual marker of status.²¹⁴ Civic livery followed the ancient custom of using different colours, cloth and styles for winter (Christmas) and summer (Whitsun); and local drapers or tailors would be

²⁰⁸ YCR, 2, p. 146; YCR, 4, p. 98; YCR, 5, p. 117.

²⁰⁹ REED, *York*, p. 154; YCR, 2, pp. 169, 171, 177; YCR, 1, pp. 56.

²¹⁰ [825]; YCR, 1, p. 77, note 3; YCR, 2, pp. 165, 185; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 117; Sutton, ‘Order and Fashion’, p. 258 note 24 (*mustervivyles*, a grey woollen cloth originally from Montevilliers in Normandy.)

²¹¹ C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *John Stow: A Survey of London. Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, 2 (Oxford, reprinted 2000), pp. 188, 189, 190, 193-5; Sutton, ‘Order and Fashion’, pp. 263, 265.

²¹² YChA, pp. 26, 35, 66, 83, 96, 116, 131; Sutton ‘Order and Fashion’, p. 263; F. Delamare and B. Guinear, *Colour. Making and Using Dyes and Pigments* (London, 2000, reprinted 2006), p. 39, illustration (15th C, French Mss, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, Paris).

²¹³ Marks, *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547*, pp. 265, no 124, 268-9, no. 130; Sutton, ‘Order and Fashion’, pp. 262, 264-5 and figs. 1, 2.

²¹⁴ Lachaud, ‘Dress and Social Status in England’, pp. 120-122; Sutton, ‘Order and Fashion’, p. 259; see Rothwell, *English Historical Documents, 1189-1327*, pp. 581-86, no. 118 (1279, Household Ordinance).

responsible for sufficient supplies of both plain and patterned woollen fabrics.²¹⁵ The tunics worn by 6 sergeants of the mace and the 3 waits (musicians) were generally green or green meld or motley for summer.²¹⁶ For winter it might be parti-coloured, in 1442 light blue and *ray* (striped) and in 1454 *blod* and murray *ray*, that is hues of dark red and mulberry.²¹⁷ In 1445/6 the average annual cost of livery for 6 sergeants was 10s 10d and for 3 waits 5s, a fraction of the 20s allocated for the Common Clerk's gown and hood using 5 ells of summer livery.²¹⁸ In most years the sub-clerk was provided with two gowns valued at 10s each whereas the hood alone for the civic lawyer cost 4s 6d (1433) and 6s 8d (1445).²¹⁹ The variation in cost depending on rank and position is clearly seen in 1444 when £8 was spent on clothing 16 people sent to London with garments for 9 valets priced about 4s 6d each compared to 18s for the mayor.²²⁰

The colour of the mantle or cloak worn by mercers in civic office varied according to their position; and this depended particularly on the amount of cochineal used as a dye in producing a range of red hues from scarlet, the most expensive, to crimson and red; and, if over-dyed with woad, shades of purple.²²¹ At the reception of Richard III in 1483 the mayor and aldermen wore scarlet, a term referring to the quality of cloth and the colour; whereas the sheriffs, town clerk, chamberlains and councillors wore the less costly red.²²² A wider colour range was employed in 1486 for the visit of

²¹⁵ *YChA*, pp. 15, 95, 111, 181; *YCR*, 2, pp. 121-2; *YMB*, 1, p. 101; Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', pp. 259, 267.

²¹⁶ *YChA*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

²¹⁷ *YChA*, pp. 14, 25, 33-4, 63-4, 75, 94, 111, 127, 153, 171, 188.

²¹⁸ *YChA*, pp. xxxiv-xxxv, 23-5, 32-3, 62-4, 74-5, 93-5, 109, 111, 125, 127, 153, 169-71, 188.

²¹⁹ *YChA*, pp. 13, 23-5, 32-3; *YCR*, 2, p. 170; *YCR*, 3, pp. 85, 89 (1523).

²²⁰ *YChA*, pp. 53, 56; *YCR*, 2, pp. 121-2.

²²¹ J. H. Munro, 'The Medieval Scarlet and the Economics of Sartorial Splendour' in *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wison* (London, 1983), pp. 13-70 at pp. 66, 70; Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', p. 262; P. Walton (ed.), *Dyes in History and Archaeology* 7 (1989), *passim*; P. W. Rogers, *The Archaeology of York: 17: The Small Finds: Fascicule 11: Textile Production at 16-22 Coppergate*, (York, 1997), pp. 1766-1771; P. Walton (Rogers), 'Appendix: the Dyes' in E. Crowfoot, F. Pritchard and K. Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing c.1150-c.1450*, Medieval Finds From Excavations in London, 4 (1992), pp. 199-201; J. Edmonds, *The History of Woad and the Medieval Woad Vat*, Historic Dyes Series, 1 (1998, reprinted 2000).

²²² *YCR* 1, pp. 51-2, 77-9; Drake, *Eboracum*, pp. 117, 121; Jewitt and St. John Hope, *Corporation Plate and Insignia of Office*, 2, pp. 141-3.

Henry VII: the mayor and aldermen were clad in scarlet; the sheriffs in crimson; the town clerk and the Council of 24 wore violet, the chamberlains, murray and the common councillors, red.²²³ In 1499 the Council of 24 and the aldermen were instructed to have cloaks of crimson, violet and murray, and the aldermen were also to have another one of scarlet.²²⁴ It is likely that the mayor decided which colours would be worn and scarlet and crimson were their preferred choices for ceremonial and processional occasions, apart from a short period around 1561 when post-Reformation practice dictated more 'seemly sad apparel'.²²⁵ The fur used to line or trim civic robes is not recorded, but would have varied according to rank; but several furs were available for lining the garments and hoods bequeathed by York mercers: marten, squirrel, beaver, otter, fitch (polecat), coney and black lamb's wool.²²⁶

ii. The Dignity and Authority of the Mayor

Mercers as mayors would be the most visible of civic officers and their dignity and authority would be signified by the full panoply of display: special clothing, insignia of office and a retinue.²²⁷ Most references to the mayor's clothing appear the same as fellow aldermen, but they would undoubtedly be decorated or marked to show his eminence.²²⁸ Drake refers to a crimson silk mantle worn in the eighteenth century and the current mayor in York wears a robe of black, silk damask elaborately ornamented with gold braid and trimmed with sable in contrast to the aldermanic red cape with sleeves trimmed with fitch.²²⁹ The splendour of mayoral dress is described on the occasion of a visit by the King's daughter in 1503: the mayor (John Gilliot, junior) rode on horseback, dressed in crimson satin with a gold collar of the royal livery about his neck; his saddle and horse-trapper were covered with crimson velvet

²²³ YCR, 1, pp. 152, 155-177; YCR, 2, pp. 186-9; REED, *York*, pp. 136-140, 154, 193-6, 272-3; YCR, 2, p. 179.

²²⁴ YCR, 2, pp. 146-7, 185; YCR, 4, p. 98.

²²⁵ YCR, 6, p. 17; White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, p. 17; YCR, 4, p. 98; YCR, 8, pp. 6, 41-3.

²²⁶ Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, pp. 9, 11-12, 17-20.

²²⁷ Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 70-1; Drake, *Eboracum*, pp. 181, 184-5, 196-7; Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture in Medieval London', pp. 219-142.

²²⁸ Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', pp. 262-3.

²²⁹ Marschner, 'Men of Trades and Sellers of Wares', p. 29.

and decorated with gold 'bolyon' (bobbles).²³⁰ The aldermen were dressed in scarlet gowns of fine woollen cloth and their saddles and trappers were bordered with black velvet and decorated with gilt bullions; and, less distinguished were the citizens dressed simply in their 'clothing'.²³¹

There are a few reference to a cap or hat worn by the mayor which would also be a distinctive feature, such as for example in 1396 to the *capelli* or caps of the mayor which were lined and repaired by a skinner in 1396; or the *pilius maioris* lined with half an ell of tartan silk in 1442 and a '*pilius...vocatus* 1 bever hatt' purchased in Prussia in 1445 for use by the sword-bearer.²³² There may have been 2 hats, a velvet one for use in summer and a fur one for winter similar to those worn by the mayor of London in 1432 and shown at the mayor of Bristol's fifteenth-century inauguration.²³³ Glass panels in the St. William window in York Minster portray a civilian, thought to be the mayor, wearing a red, ermine-lined cap, probably the predecessor of the red-velvet cap of maintenance worn later by the sword-bearer on his behalf.²³⁴ The caps of maintenance in other towns preserve antiquated versions of what had once been fashionable; and it is likely that most mayors wore something currently fashionable, which in mid-fifteenth century London was the chaperon.²³⁵

The silver collar or chain of office, so prominent a part of mayoral dress today, was not part of regalia in London until the sixteenth century; and in York, it would be 1612 before the current three-stranded gold chain was acquired by testamentary

²³⁰ [405.B]; *YCR*, 2, pp 184-5.

²³¹ Lachaud, 'Dress and Social Status in England', pp. 117, 118-9 (silk).

²³² *YChA*, pp. 6, 36; Nevinson, 'Crowns and Garlands of the Livery Companies', pp. 68-70 (red velvet); Letham, *Medieval Latin Word List*, p. 351 (*pilleus*).

²³³ Kingsford, *Stow's Survey of London*, 2, p. 193; Marks and Williamson, *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547*, p. 265, no. 124.

²³⁴ J. H. Bateson, 'The Cap of Maintenance', *York Historian*, 5 (1984), pp. 18-24 at pp. 18, 19, 22; Murray, 'The City's Shield of Arms', p. 12; French, *York Minster: The St. William Window*, pp. 69, figs. 9d, 10a; Knowles, *History of the York School of Glass Painting*, plate xxix facing p. 158.

²³⁵ V. Knight, *Portraits, Guildhall Art Gallery* (London, 1999), pp. 15, 26, 27, 53; Marks and Williamson, *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547*, pp. 268-9, no. 130a, b.

bequest.²³⁶ The gold collar worn by John Gilliot junior in 1503 would have marked his recent knighthood; and it is likely that other mayors provided their own chains or collars, as apparently did the civic waits.²³⁷

The most potent symbols of power however were the mace, sword and cap of maintenance which were borne before the mayor and served as a constant reminder that his first duty was to maintain law and order and defend the city on behalf of the king.²³⁸ The maces and swords retained their function as weapons and could be used to clear the way in front of the mayor's entourage or to ward off attack; and the sergeants of the mace functioned as police and bodyguard as occasion demanded.²³⁹ The sergeants carried ordinary maces, iron rods with a pointed flange at one end and a decorative conical head at the other; whereas the esquire of the mace carried a more elaborate version engraved with the royal arms and set with a diadem.²⁴⁰ Richard II is said to have presented William Selby mayor in 1389 with a sword, baldric and girdle; and in 1429 the city was given the great sword of Emperor Sigismund by a canon of Windsor and Howden.²⁴¹ The civic pride as recipients of royal favour is directly stated in civic records; and is shown in the care bestowed in keeping them clean and

²³⁶ Kingsford, *Stow's Survey of London*, 2, pp. 112, 115, 193; Jewitt and St. John Hope, *Corporation Plate and Insignia*, 2, p. 113; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 99 (civic regalia); BI, PR 32, fo. 72.

²³⁷ Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England', pp. 95, 97; Skaife, 'York Civic Officials', pp. 299-302; F. Pilbrow, 'The Knights of the Bath: Dubbing to Knighthood in Lancastrian and Yorkist England' in P. Coss and M. Keen, *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002, reprinted 2003), pp. 195-218; A. S. Cocks, *An Introduction to Courtly Jewellery* (London, 1980), pp. 6-8 and plate 1; J. Cherry, 'Dress and Adornment' in R. Marks and P. Williamson (eds.), *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547* (London, 2003), pp. 326-8 at 327; Sutton, 'Order and Fashion', p. 263; BI, PR 5, fo. 510; RCHME, *York*, 5, pp. 98-9; J. Merryweather, 'The York Waits' Chains', *York Historian*, 20 (1999), pp. 2-17 at p. 5 (1505, city wait's collar).

²³⁸ Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1464', pp. 115-122; Attreed, *The York House Books 1461-1490*, 1, p. xx; Bateson, 'The Cap of Maintenance', pp. 18-24 at pp. 18-19; R. Emmerson, *The Norwich Regalia and Civic Plate* (Norwich, 1984), p. 1; Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture', pp. 230, 235.

²³⁹ *YChA*, pp. xxi, xxii, xxxiii; Emmerson, *The Norwich Regalia and Civic Plate*, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ Marks, *Gothic Art for England 1400-1547*, pp. 265, 267, nos. 124, 128; Bateson, 'The Cap of Maintenance', pp. 19, 20; *YCR*, 2, p. 171; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 181.

²⁴¹ Dobson, 'The Crown, the Charter and the City, 1396-1461', pp. 37, 45; *YMB*, 1, pp. 157-163 at p. 160; Attreed, *The York House Books 1461-1490*, 1, pp. 196; *YCR*, 1, pp. 25, 31, 37; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 181; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 98a-b and plate 64.

refurbished with the silk, damask, cloth of gold or red velvet used to repair the sheaths and scabbards supplied by local mercers.²⁴²

The mayor's dignity was such that even a mayor-elect would have a silver-tipped wand of honour carried before him; and mercers as mayors could not stir abroad without their insignia of office and a number of attendants.²⁴³ Apart from the esquires of the mace and sword, other attendants included the 6 sergeants of the mace, the 3 waits, perhaps the town crier and various valets and grooms.²⁴⁴ A delegation to London in 1444 included the mayor, an alderman, the esquires of the mace and sword, a chaplain, the common clerk, 2 sergeants at mace, 4 valets and 6 grooms; and there would be a host of other officials, clerks and personnel directly involved with the mayor's specific duties.²⁴⁵ Most of these attendants dined at the mayor's table 'in accordance with the common medieval practice of a great lord victualling his retainers' and there would be domestic servants to feed as well.²⁴⁶ The mayor's lordship was visually reinforced from the 1530s through the arm badges worn by the waits which were embroidered with the city arms and those of the current mayor.²⁴⁷ This practice may have been employed earlier, for instance in 1471 when sleeves were embroidered for use by the esquires and sergeants; and in 1503 when the mayor's footmen wore green satin outfits depicting both his and the city's arms.²⁴⁸ The position of mayor incorporated all the 'trappings' of lordship: feudal homage and

²⁴² *YMB*, 3, pp. 123-4; R. Davies, *The State Swords of the York Corporation*, Yorkshire Philosophical Society, Annual Report (1868), pp. 27-32; *YChA*, pp. 6, 17, 20, 35, 67, 83, 121, 130, 156, 165; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. 98b.

²⁴³ *YCR*, 2, p. 65; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 181.

²⁴⁴ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 70; H. Murray, 'The Mayor's Esquires', *York Historian*, 6 (1985), pp. 3-23; Masters, 'The Mayor's Household', pp. 95-116.

²⁴⁵ *YChA*, p. 53; *YMB*, 1, pp. 137-9, 251-3, 261-66; Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1464', p. 111; Masters, 'The Mayor's Household', pp. 95-107.

²⁴⁶ Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 182; Masters, 'The Mayor's Household', pp. 105-7, 108 (quote); K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250-1600* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 5-6, 59.

²⁴⁷ Merryweather, 'The York Waits' Chains', pp. 2, 5-6, 7, 11-13; Jewitt and St. Hope, *Corporation Plate and Insignia*, 1, pp. 445-78 at pp 32-4; Kightly and Semlyen, *The Lord Mayors of York and their Mansion House*, p. 30 (photo).

²⁴⁸ *YChA*, p. 137; *YCR*, 2, pp. 186-7; Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture', pp. 228-9, 235.

allegiance to the king, the exercise of justice and responsibility to maintain law and order, and the personal rule over a large household of retainers.²⁴⁹

Summary Remarks on Precedence

Nowhere is the awareness of social hierarchy more apparent than in the orders of precedence devised for ceremonial or processional occasions.²⁵⁰ In 1411 when Nicholas Blackburn was mayor, a decree was issued detailing the relative positions of York civic representatives with legal and clerical personnel in the ecclesiastical courts. The mayor was given pre-eminence and the masters of the guilds of St. Christopher and St. George were slotted in between sheriff, proctors and chamberlains.²⁵¹ Better known is the order devised for the York Corpus Christi Procession in which 3 groups were separately regimented in ascending order: occupational guilds preceding the civic authority, the mayor and his entourage preceding the Corpus Christi Guild and the silver shrine containing the 'body of Christ' in the premier position.²⁵² Clearly the mayor ranked below the representatives of a superior spiritual authority and he would also take second place to a temporal lord on those occasions when royalty was welcomed to the city.²⁵³ Nonetheless the mayor's unique position in civilian society would be marked by the whole panoply of visual display of torches, banners, livery, insignia, regalia and retinue; and these outward signs of privilege and power would accompany him throughout his year in

²⁴⁹ K. Mertes, 'Aristocracy' in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-century Attitudes. Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994, reprinted 1996), pp. 42-61 at pp. 47, 50.

²⁵⁰ Myers, *English Historical Documents, 1327-1485*, pp. 1166-8, no. 687 (*The Boke of Nurture*, by John Russell, c.1450).

²⁵¹ Drake, *Eboracum*, Appendix, pp. xxiv-xxv (1411, order of precedence); White, *St. Christopher and St. George Guild of York*, p. 18; Attreed, *The York House Books 1461-1490*, 1, pp. xix, 558; Ritchie, *The Ecclesiastical Courts of York*, p. 51; Chapman, *Ecclesiastical Courts, their Officials and their Records*, pp. 33-36.

²⁵² *YMB*, 2, pp. 118 (1415, 1417x22 order of torches), 295 (c.1501, torches...how they should go in order); M. Stevens and M. Dorrell, 'The *Ordo Paginarum* Gathering of the *A/Y Memorandum Book*', *Modern Philology*, 72 (1975), pp. 45-59; Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 143-4; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 240-1, 263; Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', p. 63.

²⁵³ Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 143-4; A. F. Johnston, 'The Guild of Corpus Christi and the Procession of Corpus Christi in York', *Mediaeval Studies*, 38 (1976), pp. 372-84 at pp. 383, 384; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 241; Purvis, *From Minster to Market Place*, pp. 78-80 (royal shows); Lang, *Pride Without Prejudice*, pp. 135-144.

office, starting in January with a sequence of public and private events concerning his election and inauguration.²⁵⁴

It is little wonder that mercers strove to achieve the rank of alderman and then to be elected mayor, because it really was the pinnacle of urban success. The mayor had lordship over the civic household and the civilian population; and though his term of office was short, an element of the attributes of prestige and power remained and permanently raised his social standing above that of any other citizen. There is no doubt that mercers recognised that wealth was the main determinant of their civic success and it is instructive to look at their relative wealth from their own and external perspectives.

III

HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

The discussion so far has discussed the outward display of social standing and authority that accompanied the achievements of York mercers as good men of the parish and the most worthy of civic officials. The focus of Part III is to examine the essential component of urban success, that is their wealth: the type of capital available and their relative wealth as parishioners, within the community of mercers and amongst the land-owning section of society.

The extant taxation returns for the city of York provide different measures of wealth: the lay subsidy of 1327 on the value of possessions; the poll tax of 1381 on the size of household and ability to pay; and the income tax of 1436 on the annual return from lands.²⁵⁵ There is also evidence from foundation deeds and wills which reveal levels of disposable income from fixed and current assets used by mercers to endow their chantries and fund their testamentary bequests.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Purvis, *From Minster to Market Place*, pp. 70, 72-3, 78-80; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 181 (election day); Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp. 57-85.

²⁵⁵ Parker, 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III [1327]', pp. 160-171; Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 3, pp. 140-156; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', Appendix D (1436).

²⁵⁶ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 276-312.

In the following discussion it is useful to bear in mind the position of York mercers as heads of household in their parishes of residence, because this was the basis on which taxation was levied and estates administered at death.²⁵⁷ The special status of householder was originally based on the possession of an heritable, freehold property and permanent residency and this conferred a role in the neighbourhood or ward court which was responsible for maintaining law and order and enforcing local bye-laws.²⁵⁸ Not all married men qualified and this was especially the case as the criteria expanded over time to incorporate notions bound up with occupation and livelihood. That is, the ideal householder had to demonstrate his ability to master his trade, acquire the capital to become self-employed, develop the skills to train others, accept the responsibility to maintain his dependants and the authority to regulate their behaviour.²⁵⁹

Economic class is generally addressed in terms of inequalities of wealth, particularly of income derived from land.²⁶⁰ The work of many historians includes a discussion of the concepts of three parallel orders of feudal society (nobility, clergy and commoners) which attempts classification based on social function and responsibility (those who worked, prayed or laboured).²⁶¹ The diversity of society is reflected in contemporary legislation in which social groups were ranked according to estates, degrees and appropriate level of income, primarily from land, but acknowledging

²⁵⁷ Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', p. 137; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-Cycle*, p. 64.

²⁵⁸ Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government', pp. 73-4, 74-5, 76-8, 78, 80, 81.

²⁵⁹ Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 151-2.

²⁶⁰ Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 116-140; T. B. Pugh, 'The Magnates, Knights and Gentry' in S. B. Crimes, C. D. Ross, R. A. Griffiths (eds.), *Fifteenth Century England, 1399-1509. Studies in Politics and Society* (Stroud, 1995); pp. 86-128 at pp. 97-101; Hilton, 'Status and Class in the Medieval Town', pp. 9-20; R. Bendix and S. M. Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status and Power* (London, 1954); S. Payling, 'Social Mobility, Demographic Change and Landed Society in Late Medieval England', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 45 (1992), pp. 51-73; M. M. Postan and J. Hatcher, 'Population and Class Relations in Feudal Society', *Past and Present*, 78 (1978), pp. 24-37.

²⁶¹ G. Duby (trans. A. Goldhammer), *The Three Orders. Feudal Society Imagined* (1982 edition Chicago and London, 1980, originally published 1978); J. le Goff, 'A Note on the Tripartite Society' in J. le Goff (trans. A. Goldhammer), *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 43-52; Scott, *Stratification and Power*, pp. 1, 3-6.

alternative sources of wealth.²⁶² Wealth is seen as the main determinant in urban hierarchies where terms such as *potentiores*, *mediocres* and *inferiores* recognise degrees of prestige and power rather than lordship *per se*.²⁶³ Nonetheless, a heritable burgage tenure is regarded as a factor in the origin of the legal status of the 'householder', the respected resident of parish and ward whose responsibilities extended beyond the confines of the household.²⁶⁴ Indeed taxation was levied on heads of households, in urban areas in their parish or ward; and these records have been widely used to assess the distribution of wealth within communities and throughout the land, as well as to gauge the changes over time.²⁶⁵ The different types of taxation have been used to measure different types of wealth, for example the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century lay subsidies which were levied on the value of moveable possessions.²⁶⁶ A wider segment of society was assessed in the poll taxes

²⁶² Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 6-12; Hunt, *A History of Sumptuary Law*, pp. 295-324 at 303-321; Dunham and Pargellis, *Complaint and Reform in England 1436-1714*, pp. 31-50; Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 1, pp. xiv-xv (1379, schedule of charges); J. Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire. The Literature of Social Class and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge, 1973); R. Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1933), pp. 97-139.

²⁶³ Palliser, 'Urban Society', p. 140; Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 15.

²⁶⁴ Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government', pp. 74-6; S. Wallman, 'The Boundaries of Household' in A. P. Cohen (ed.), *Symbolising Boundaries, Identity and Diversity in British Cultures* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 50-70; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 35, 216-19, 244-50, 234-6, 385-7; Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, pp. 109-114; Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 133-153; Goldberg, 'Household and the Organisation of Labour', pp. 59-70.

²⁶⁵ Kumin, *The Shaping of a Community*, pp. 57-60; Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government', pp. 74-83; Jurkowski, Smith and Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales 1188-1688*; Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, pp. 171-196, 179-83; C. Dyer, 'A Redistribution of Incomes in Fifteenth-Century England' in R. H. Hilton (ed.), *Peasants, Knights and Heretics. Studies in Medieval English Social History* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 192-215; H. C. Darby, R. E. Glasscock, J. Sheail and G. R. Versey, 'The Changing Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England: 1086-1334-1515', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 5 (1979), pp. 247-262; J. Sheail, 'Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth in England during the Early Sixteenth Century', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 55 (1972), pp. 111-26; R. S. Schofield, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1549', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 18 (1965), pp. 485-510; J. Cornwall, 'The Early Tudor Gentry', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 17 (1965), pp. 456-475 at pp. 462-3.

²⁶⁶ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property 1290 to 1334; passim*; S. H. Rigby, 'Urban Society in Early Fourteenth Century England. The Evidence of the Lay Subsidies' in B. Pullan and S. Reynolds (eds.), *Towns and Townspeople in Medieval and Renaissance Europe: Essays in Memory of J. K. Hyde*, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester, 72(3) (1990), pp. 169-84; S. H. Rigby, 'Late Medieval Urban Prosperity: the Evidence of the Lay Subsidies', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 39 (1986), pp. 411-416; J. F. Hadwin, 'The Medieval Lay Subsidies and Economic History', *EcHR*, new series, 36(2) (1983), pp. 200-217; M. Curtas, 'The London Lay Subsidy of 1332' in G. Unwin (ed.), *Finance and Trade Under Edward III* (London, 1962), pp. 25-60.

of 1377, 1379 and 1381, and these returns have been analysed not only in terms of gradations of wealth, but for population, composition of households and occupational structure of communities.²⁶⁷ Taxes based on income from land reveal major divisions within the propertied classes and also the presence of lawyers and merchants whose investments in land might return annual incomes equivalent to the lower landed gentry.²⁶⁸ The acquisition and management of small estates are studied particularly as investment in land of profits of trade or professional office and as evidence of social mobility.²⁶⁹ Surveys of urban areas have focused on tenure, type and use of property and on levels of rent as recorded in rentals or allocated as chantry endowments, which shed light on relative wealth.²⁷⁰ There are few extant accounts for small urban

²⁶⁷ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 3, pp. 132-156 (York), 157-453 (Yorkshire); R. H. Hilton, 'Some Social and Economic Evidence in late Medieval English Tax Returns' in *idem*, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism* (London and New York, 1985), pp. 180-194; Goldberg, 'Urban Identity and the Poll Taxes', pp. 194-216; M. Carlin, *Medieval Southwark* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), pp. 136-142, 171-183.

²⁶⁸ H. L. Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436', *EHR*, 49 (1934), pp. 607-639; T. B. Pugh and C. D. Ross, 'The English Baronage and the Income Tax of 1436', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 26 (1953), pp. 1-28; J. P. Cooper, 'The Social Distribution of Land and Men in England 1436-1700', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 20 (1967), pp. 419-440; F. M. L. Thompson, 'The Social Distribution of Landed Property in England Since the Sixteenth Century', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 19/3 (1966), pp. 505-517; R. Tittler, 'Late Medieval Urban Prosperity', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 37/4 (1984), pp. 551-4.

²⁶⁹ D. Youngs, 'Estate Management, Investment and the Gentleman Landlord in Later Medieval England', *Historical Research*, 73/181 (2000), pp. 124-141; C. Dyer, 'A Small Landowner in the Fifteenth Century', *Midland History*, 1/3 (1971-2), pp. 1-14; R. H. Britnell, 'Minor Landlords in England and Medieval Agrarian Capitalism', *Past and Present*, 89 (1980), pp. 3-22; Payling, 'Social Mobility, Demographic Change, and Landed Society in Late Medieval England', pp. 51, 65-66, 68-9; S. J. O'Connor (ed.), *A Calendar of the Cartularies of John Pyel and Adam Fraunceys* (London, 1993), pp. 37-74; N. W. Alcock, 'The Catesbys in Coventry: A Medieval Estate and its Archives', *Midland History*, 15 (1990), pp. 1-36.

²⁷⁰ D. J. Keene, 'Landlords, the Property Market and Urban Development in Medieval England' in F. E. Eliassen and G. A. Ersland (eds.), *Power, Profit and Urban Land. Landownership in Medieval and Early Modern Northern European Towns* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 93-119; R. H. Hilton, 'Some Problems of Urban Real Property in the Middle Ages' in C. H. Feinstein (ed.), *Socialism, Capitalism and Economic Growth: Essays Presented to Maurice Dobb* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 326-37; R. H. Hilton, 'Rent and Capital Formation in Feudal Society' in *Second International Conference of Economic History. Aix-en-Provence 1962* (Paris, 1965), pp. 32-68; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 351, 353-5; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, pp. 214-248, 405-15; A. Butcher, 'Rent, Population and Economic Change in Late-Medieval Newcastle', *Northern History*, 14 (1978), pp. 67-77; Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 118-29; Rosenthal, 'The Yorkshire Chantry Certificates of 1546', p. 39.

households, but details of inequalities of wealth and different standards of living are revealed in inventory appraisals and testamentary cash bequests.²⁷¹

A. TAXATION ASSESSMENTS OF WEALTH

As in previous analyses of the taxation returns for York, the number of mercers refers to the number of members of the community of mercers both mercers and mercer-associates; and the numerical data is set out according to parish of taxation which are grouped into 7 locales based on the main thoroughfare or district in York:²⁷²

A. Petergate Area:	St. Michael le Belfrey, Holy Trinity Goodramgate and Holy Trinity King's Court.
B. Pavement Crossroads:	St. Saviour, St. Crux and All Saints' Pavement.
C. Central District:	St. Martin Coney Street, St. Helen Stonegate, St. Wilfrid with St. Leonard's Hospital, St. Sampson and St. Peter the Little.
D. Ouse Bridge Area:	St. Mary Castlegate, St. Michael Spurriergate and St. John Ouse Bridge.
E. West Bank:	Holy Trinity Micklegate, St. Martin <i>cum</i> Gregory, St. Mary Bishophill, St. Mary the Elder and St. Clement; and All Saints' North Street.
F. Eastern Edge:	St. John del Pike, St. Helen Aldwark, St. Andrew, St. Denys, Ss. Mary and Margaret, St. Peter le Willows and St. Michael.
G. Extra Mural:	Bootham, Monkgate, Layerthorpe with St. Cuthbert, Outside Walmgate Bar and down Fishergate.

i. The Value of Possessions

The first taxation to consider is the York return to the lay subsidy of 1327 which was levied at a rate of 1s in the £ on the value of personal possessions such as silver

²⁷¹ Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 188-210; D. Woodward, *Men at Work. Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 116-208, 209-249; D. Woodward, 'Wage Rates and Living Standards in Pre-Industrial England', *Past and Present*, 91 (1981), pp. 28-46; K. L. Wood-Legh, *A Small Household of the Fifteenth Century, being the Account Book of Munden's Chantry, Bridport* (Manchester, 1956); C. M. Woolgar (ed.), *Household Accounts from Medieval England*, 2 vols., Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 17 (1992); J. M. Jennings, 'The Distribution of Landed Wealth in the Wills of London Merchants 1400-1450', *Mediaeval Studies*, 39 (1977), pp. 261-289; M. Spufford, 'The Limitations of the Probate Inventory' in J. Chartres and D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of Joan Thirsk* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 139-74; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 121-9; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 102-119, 128-9.

²⁷² See above, pp. xii (Composition of the York Community of Mercers), xiv (Map One).

vessels, household furniture and furnishings and trading stock.²⁷³ The names of 817 taxpayers are recorded of whom 35 or just over 4% can be identified as members of the community of mercers. The amount of tax collected was 1,582s or £79 and mercers contributed 110s or 7%. Table 4.1 sets out the numerical data for the total number of taxpayers and the amount of tax collected in each group of parishes labelled A to G; and this is compared to the number of mercers, the tax paid and percentage of mercers in order to gauge their relative wealth. Indeed the first impression of the data is that mercers are 4% of taxpayers and they were liable for a disproportionate 7% of the tax suggesting they were wealthier than the norm.

TABLE 4.1
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS
AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES AS
PARISHIONERS LIABLE FOR TAX, 1327

Parish Band	Taxpayers			Tax Paid in shillings		
	N=	M	%	Total	M	%
A	149	11	7	318	30	9
B	147	7	5	306	26	8
C	147	4	3	259	12	5
D	165	6	4	325	15	5
E	124	5	4	209	25	12
F	65	2	3	103	2	2
G	20			62		
Total	817	35	4	1,582	110	7
Sources: J. W. R. Parker (ed.), 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III, North Riding of Yorkshire and the City of York' in <i>Miscellanea</i> , 2, YASRS, 74 (1929), pp. 104-171 at pp. 160-171 (City of York). M = member of the York community of mercers Parishes: A. Petergate Area B. Pavement Crossroads C. Central District D. Ouse Bridge Area E. West Bank F. Eastern Edge G. Extra Mural.						

The largest number and percentage of mercers, 11 or 7% of 149 householders, lived in the Petergate parishes and paid 30s or 9% of the 318s collected (Band A). Another 7 mercers or 5% of 147 parishioners were taxed in the Pavement Crossroads (Band B) and their contribution of 26s was about 8% of the 306s due. Four mercers lived in the Central District (Band C) representing 3% of 147 householders and paid 12s or 5% of the 259s due; and the 6 mercers in parishes on either side of Ouse Bridge were liable for 5% or 15s out of 325s (Band D). There were few mercer households on the West Bank (Band E), 5 out of 124 or 4% and their tax amounted to 25s or 12% of 209s, indicating their far greater than average wealth. In contrast the 2 mercers dwelling in the Eastern Edge parishes (Band F) represented 3% of 65 households and

²⁷³ TNA, E/179/213/3, printed in Parker, 'Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III [1327]', pp. 160-171; Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property*, pp. 3-4.

their tax of 2s was only 2% of the 103s due. It can thus be seen that the West Bank mercers (Band E) were the wealthiest members of the community of mercers within their parishes, followed by those in the Petergate Area and Pavement Crossroads (Bands A and B); and the poorest were those living in the parishes along the Eastern Edge (Band F).

Although the community of mercers in 1327 was numerically a minority group of householders, they paid more than an average amount of tax. However, in looking at individual tax levies, the majority of mercers were assessed for the smallest sums between 6d and 2s; for example Robert de Lindsey, William Belle, John Caperon and John de Walmsford.²⁷⁴ A few mercers were assessed on more valuable possessions and paid from 2s to 4s 6d such as Alan de Killum, Walter de Bulmer, Robert de Duffield, William de Hovingham and John de Barnby, all residing in the Petergate area.²⁷⁵ Larger amounts between 4s 8d and 6s were levied on John de Beverley, Gilbert de Arnald and Henry de Scorby who were among the highest 15 assessments; and the 9s levied on Richard de Tickhill and the 10s 8d on Richard de Allerton placed them in the top 10%.²⁷⁶ Although a brief survey, it is apparent that in 1327 there were considerable inequalities of wealth within the community of mercers; that most were ranked among the lowest taxpayers; and that only a handful could be considered wealthier than average in terms of the value of their household possessions.²⁷⁷

The implications of inequalities in wealth will be discussed further in subsequent chapters; and here it is sufficient to note that the parishes where mercers paid proportionately more tax were those aligned with or adjacent to the major thoroughfares into the city, from the north from Bootham Bar along Petergate and from the west from Micklegate Bar across Ouse Bridge into the Pavement and St. Saviourgate area. The overview of taxation in Chapter Two showed these to be the areas where mercers congregated, which suggested they were good locations for retail shopkeepers hoping to attract passing trade rather than the location of warehouses.

²⁷⁴ [585], [71-2], [194], [903].

²⁷⁵ [172], [539], [302-3], [505], [780], [827], [53].

²⁷⁶ [86-7], [24], [753], [862], [6].

²⁷⁷ Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 109-110.

ii. Ability to Pay and Size of Household

There were 3 poll taxes levied in the period 1377-1381, and unlike the lay subsidies which had been assessed on value of possessions they were levied on the individual. In 1377 this was a flat 4d rate. In 1379 a graduated rate was introduced; and in 1381 the tax was levied on all those over the age of 15 whether heads of household, servants, single men and widows, rich and poor alike.²⁷⁸ The standard rate of 1s per head was adjusted according to 'ability to pay' and no one was to be charged less than 4d nor more than 10s; and thus the total tax levied upon a household reflected the wealth of the head and the number of dependants he supported.²⁷⁹ The 1381 returns provide additional useful details such as forenames and descriptive terms for servants from which the composition of the household can be determined; and the occupational descriptions for heads of household provides evidence of shifts in commercial activity from the date of freedom.²⁸⁰

The extant York returns for 1381 record over 1,500 heads of household of whom 75 can be identified as mercers or mercer-associates. However the amount of tax levied is legible for only 52 and it is this smaller group which is used in the following analysis of wealth within the community of mercers. Table 4.2 sets out the total amount of tax levied on these households in 6 bands of distribution: the tax varies from 4d to over 20s and this corresponds to variable unit rates of 4d up to 10s (Bands I to VI). The community of mercers is subdivided into mercers and mercer associates and set out alongside the number of households with servants and the number of servants.

It is apparent that the unit rate imposed on 22 or nearly half of the 52 taxpayers was in two lowest of 4d and 1s; but various factors meant their tax liabilities covered a wider range from 4d to 3s. The lowest taxes were paid by 3 mercer-associates who were single and 3 married couples, none of whom had servants; and slightly higher amounts were levied on 2 mercer households who were assessed for 1 and 2 servants

²⁷⁸ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 1, pp. iii, xiv-xvii; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, pp. xxiv-xxxviii; Goldberg, 'Urban Identity, and the Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381', pp. 194-216, esp. pp. 195-6; Poos, *A Rural Society After the Black Death*, pp 294-299.

²⁷⁹ TNA, E179/217/16 printed Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, 3, pp. 140-156; Bartlett, 'The Lay Poll Tax Returns for the city of York in 1381', pp. 1-80.

²⁸⁰ Goldberg, 'Urban Identity, and the Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381', pp. 201, 207.

each (Band I). Of the 11 households assessed from 2s to 3s (Band II) 5 were headed by mercers and 6 by mercer associates and only one of each had servants. The low unit rate of assessment, either 4d or 1s and the general lack of households with servants imply that, whether a mercer or chapman, these householders earned a modest living, sufficient to support a wife but not adult servants.

Better prospects are suggested for the 15 householders or 29% whose liabilities ranged from 3s and 5s (Band III) based on unit rates of 1s 2d up to 2s 2d. Seven households had one servant, 3 mercers had 2 servants and another had 4. Larger amounts of tax were assessed on 14 householders in the range of 5s to 12s (Bands IV and V) which correspond to higher unit rates from 2s 10d up to 5s 10d. The chapman assessed in this bracket did not have any servants, but 7 of the mercer households had one, and 3 had 2, the latter seeming to reflect greater affluence. The 2 remaining mercers were assessed with their wives at the highest unit rate of 10s each and paid total amounts of 22s and 24s (Band VI); and it is not surprising that their households were the largest with 6 or 8 servants respectively.

TABLE 4.2
THE POLL TAX LIABILITIES OF HOUSEHOLDS WITHIN THE
YORK COMMUNITY OF MERCERS, 1381

Band	Tax Liability (shillings)		Community of Mercers					
			Taxpayers		Mercer ²		Mercer-Associate ³	
	Unit Rate ¹	Total Due	N=	%	N=	with servants	N=	with servants
I	4d	4d to 1s	4	8	1	0	3	
	1s	1s to 2s	6		3	1 @ 1 1 @ 2	3	
II	4d to 1s	2s to 3s	11	21	5	1 @ 2	6	1 @ 2
III	1s 2d to 2s 2d	3s to 5s	15	29	10	4 @ 1 3 @ 2 1 @ 4	5	3 @ 1
IV	2s 10d to 3s 10d	5s to 10s	10	20	9	4 @ 1 2 @ 2	1	
V	4s 9d to 5s 10d	10s to 12s	4	8	4	3 @ 1 1 @ 2	0	
VI	10s	over 20s	2	4	2	1 @ 6 1 @ 8	0	
		TOTAL	52	100	34	23 or 68%	18	4 or 22%
<p>Source: C. C. Fenwick (ed.), <i>The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381, 3: Wiltshire-Yorkshire, Unidentified Documents and Additional Data</i>. (Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 37, 2005), pp. 140-156 (1381, City of York).</p> <p>Notes: ¹ Unit rates are for married couples, there are single assessments from 1s to 9s ² Mercer: free as mercers, noted in 1381 as mercer, draper, innkeeper or merchant; ³ Mercer-associate: chapman or free as mercer or chapman, but noted in 1381 as the reverse</p>								

The main impression which emerges is that there were considerable inequalities of wealth within the community of mercers and that the size of household bore some

relation to the wealth of the householder.²⁸¹ Moreover, the combination of marital status, size of household and amount of tax paid is relevant in terms of occupation and occupational shifts. John Brown, Alan Danby and Thomas Santon, senior took out their freedom as mercers, but by 1381 were reckoned as chapmen and taxed in the lowest bracket without servants; they also cannot be traced further.²⁸² Conversely John Helmsley, free as a chapman, was noted in 1381 as a mercer and at his death abroad in 1389, as a merchant; and his fellow chapman William Vescy lived longer, became a wool stapler and was the wealthy head of a large household at his death in 1407.²⁸³ Roger de Moreton, senior remained a mercer throughout his working life and in 1381 had 2 female servants whereas his younger kinsman became a wool exporter, was elected mayor and in 1381 was known as a merchant with the largest household of male servants.²⁸⁴ These examples suggest that economic prospects were better for chapmen and mercers who had shifted respectively to mercers or merchants than *vice versa* and that a key factor was participation in overseas trade.²⁸⁵

iii. Income from Property

A series of new taxes were devised in the fifteenth century and the York returns survive for the 1436 'supplementary tax on income from land'.²⁸⁶ The returns for other counties and the enrolled accounts pertaining to baronial and non-baronial incomes were closely examined by Gray, who collated data for over 7,000 taxpayers whose annual incomes ranged from £5 to £3,300.²⁸⁷ In analysing the distribution, Gray used social categories of 'estates and degrees' set out in sumptuary and other legislation and recognised a composite group of yeomen, lawyers, merchants and

²⁸¹ Goldberg, 'Urban Identity, and the Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381' pp. 201, 208, 214.

²⁸² [156], [270], [747].

²⁸³ [468], [883].

²⁸⁴ [642], [643].

²⁸⁵ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 110.

²⁸⁶ TNA, E179/217/42, transcribed and summarised in Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', Appendix D; Jurkowski, *et al*, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales 1188-1688*, p. 295; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 113; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 278.

²⁸⁷ Gray, 'Incomes from Land in England in 1436', pp. 611, 620-1, 626-7.

artisans whose incomes were ‘appropriate’ to gentleman or esquire.²⁸⁸ Although his work has attracted some criticism, the distribution of wealth accords well with the York data and is used here at face value to gauge the position of York mercers and merchants within the land-owning section of society.²⁸⁹

Table 4.3 summarises Gray’s analysis of 7,184 incomes in which the distribution is set out in 6 social categories together with his calculations of average incomes and the number and percentage of taxpayers.²⁹⁰ In descending order of income, there were 51 barons or baronesses with annual incomes between £400 and £3,300, over 3-times as many or 183 (3%) were greater knights with annual incomes from £101 to £400 and there were 750 (10%) lesser knights whose incomes ranged between £40 and £100.²⁹¹ A large group of 1,200 (17%) had incomes ‘appropriate’ to esquires at £20 to £39, and they were slightly outnumbered by an assortment of 1,600 (22%) gentlemen, merchants and yeomen with annual incomes of £10 to £19; and at the bottom of the hierarchy were 3,400 (47%) lesser merchants, artisans and yeomen in receipt of £5 to £9 from land or rents.²⁹² Table 4.3 also incorporates the data extracted from the York return which names 120 taxpayers whose annual income from land ranged from £5 to £100. The distribution is sorted into Gray’s categories and the number and percentage of taxpayers is given in total and then broken down into subgroups according to status, occupation or gender: esquire or gentleman; clergy or clerk; mercer or merchant; other or unknown occupation; and women.

It is clear that within the small land-owning section of society, there were extreme inequalities of wealth and that 86% received less than £40 per year and this was more so in York with 96% of taxpayers. Indeed, in York 72% were assessed in the lowest income bracket of £5 to £10 annually compared to 47% of landowners in society at large (Table 4.3). The proportions were more similar in the next higher band of

²⁸⁸ Gray, ‘1436 Income from Land’, pp. 608, 623-5, 626, 626-9; Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 12-13; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 10-26; Rigby, *Medieval Society. Class, Status and Gender*, p. 190.; see also

²⁸⁹ Cooper, ‘The Social Distribution of Land and Men in England 1436-1700’, pp. 419-20.

²⁹⁰ Gray, ‘1436 Income from Land’, pp. 630-1.

²⁹¹ Gray, ‘1436 Income from Land’, pp. 614-8 (peers), 619 (barons and average income), 621-3 (greater knights), 623-4 (lesser knights); Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 27-48.

²⁹² Gray, ‘1436 Income from Land’, pp. 624-627 (esquires), 627-8 (gentlemen, yeomen), 628-9 (composite group), Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 31-2, 46-7.

annual incomes from £10 to £20, that is 17% for York and 22% for ‘society’, but thereafter the York representation drops sharply to a 7% in receipt of incomes between £20 to £40 and 4% from £40 to £100, a total of 11% compared to 27% of landowners elsewhere. No York taxpayers had income from land over £100 and only a few can be considered to have had incomes appropriate to esquires.

TABLE 4.3
COMPARISON OF ANNUAL INCOMES WITHIN LANDED SOCIETY:
THE SUPPLEMENTARY TAX INCOME FROM LANDS AND RENTS, 1436

Gray's Analysis of National Assessment ¹					York Returns ²						
Estate	Income		Taxpayers		Taxpayers		Subgroups				
	Range up to £	Aver £	N=	%	N=	%	Esq/ Gent	Clergy/ Clerks	M/ Mt	O/U	W
Lesser merchants, artisans and yeomen	10	7	3,400	47	87	72	5	47	14	14	7
Greater merchants, yeomen and gentlemen	20	15	1,600	22	20	17	1	3	10	4	2
Esquires	40	24	1,200	17	8	7	1		3	4	
Lesser knights	100	60	750	10	5	4	2	1	1		1
Greater knights	400	208	183	3							
Barons & Lords	3,300	865	51	1							
Subtotals			7,184	100	120	100	10	51	28	22	9
% York taxpayers					2		10	42	23	18	7
Sources: ¹ H. L. Gray, 'Incomes from Land in England in 1436' (<i>EHR</i> , 49, 1934), pp. 607-639. ² J. N. Bartlett, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of York in the later Middle Ages, 1300-1550' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1958), Appendix D (1436, Landowners in York). York Returns, Subgroups: Esq/Gent = esquires and gentlemen; Clergy/Clerks = chaplains and secular clerks; M/Mt = mercers and merchants; O/U = other and unknown occupations; W = women.											

Looking to the subgroups taxed in York, despite status, profession, occupation or gender, most received less than £10 annually from land. The largest representation of taxpayers with incomes equivalent to gentlemen were the group of 14 mercers, merchants and other occupations. Seven other traders had incomes between £20 and £40 which were appropriate to esquires. Of the 10 mercers recorded, John Easingwold, William Holme and Robert Holtby received £5 from land in the city and suburbs of York; and Thomas Preston received this amount from property in York and Yorkshire.²⁹³ John Forester's income of £6 derived from lands, rents and offices in the city and William Stockton and Robert Middleton were in receipt of £6 and £8 respectively from both urban and rural property.²⁹⁴ The estates of Thomas Coupland and William Bedale rendered £10 and £18 respectively; and the £26 from John

²⁹³ [317], [497], [498], [705].

²⁹⁴ [364], [830], [630]

Lilling's property was equivalent to the income of an esquire.²⁹⁵ The sons of Nicholas Blackburn and Thomas del Gare were merchants and were not noticeably better off with incomes in the £15 to £26 range; but the younger John Bolton was distinctly wealthier with £62 annually, sufficient for a lesser knight.²⁹⁶

It can be seen that most of York mercers were ranked in the lowest income bracket and had the minimum income liable to tax of £5; that is they were insignificant as landowners in society at large and within the city of York. Nonetheless the fact that mercers had any income from real estate is a sign of their personal achievements, especially the ability to acquire sufficient profits from trade to invest in land.

Summary Remarks

The extant taxation returns provide information pertaining to different measures or assessments of wealth, and they can be analysed to examine the distribution of wealth in various settings and at widely spaced intervals. However these assessments were taken at a particular moment in time and individual circumstances may have changed shortly before or afterwards. In order to counteract this limited view, it is possible to compile information from other sources which provide additional details about income and the distribution of wealth within the community of mercers. In particular it is possible to look at disposable income, first in terms of the anticipated income from lands and rents which endowed their chantries and second at the amount of cash they allocated in testamentary bequests.

B. DISPOSABLE INCOME

i. Chantry Endowments

A preliminary survey of the real estate tenanted by York mercers and mercer associates suggests that 48% held one freehold property, 23% can be associated with 2 properties, another 23% with 3, 4 or 5 and the remaining 6% with 6 to 9.²⁹⁷ In most cases, their estates are described vaguely as lands and tenements, tenements and

²⁹⁵ [244], [70], [580].

²⁹⁶ [112.1], [388.1], [119.1].

²⁹⁷ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 276-280.

messuages or rents and services; and more specific details are seldom recorded.²⁹⁸ However the deeds pertaining to the foundation or dissolution of York chantries provide details about the endowment property, in particular the level of anticipated income. Table 4.4 sets out a summary of the information pertaining to 11 chantries founded by mercers or close kin between 1308 and 1488. Annual income is given in both £'s and marks; and the estate is sorted into 3 categories: tenement/messuage, other and rents with subtotal of respective income given in shillings and pence. Some but not all of this information is discussed below.

TABLE 4.4
ANNUAL INCOME OF CHANTRIES ENDOWED OR AUGMENTED BY
YORK MERCERS AND THEIR KIN, 1308 to 1487

Name	Date	Annual Income		Tenement / Messuage		Other Property		Rents	
		Marks	£	N=	s/d	N=	s/d	N=	s/d
JE ¹	1308	4	£2 13s 4d	1	53s 4d			1	8s 0d
	1331	5	£3 6s 8d	2	66s 8d				
RA ²	1334	6	£4	6	80s 0d				
RH sr ³	1362	6	£4	1	80s 0d				
	1368	~2	£1 3s					1	23s 0d
	1395	~10	£6 9s 8d	4	103s 0d			1	26s 8d
	1396		£400						
WG ⁴	1471		£25						
			£5	4	100s 0d				
TH ⁵	1377	5	£3 7s 11d	2	46s 8d	2	21s 3d	2	21s 3d
	1407	~7	£5						
	1549	5	£3 7s 4d	4	47s 8d	9	19s 8d		
WB ⁶	1399								
	1549	9	£6 5s 6d	14	79s 4d	4	19s 6d	1	26s 8d
WB ⁶	1409								
	1549	9	£6 1s	9.5	88s 8d	2	5s 8d	1	26s 8d
AH ⁷	1412	~8	£5 5s						
NB sr ⁸	1424	8	£5 6s 8d	10	106s 8d				
		340	£226 13s 4d						
RH jr ⁹	1428	10	£6 13s 4d						
		500	£333 6s 8d						
JA ¹⁰	1386	10	£6 13s 4d	11	99s 4d	3	2s 0d	2	32s 0d
	1485	~3	£2						
JG sr ¹¹	1485	4	£2 13s 4d		53s 4d				
	1509	4	£2 13s 4d					1	53s 4d
	1549	~10	£6 16s 2d	5	34s 6d	1	16s 0d	4	85s 8d

Sources:
YCR, G.70 :8, 14, 22-24, 26, 31-2, 34-5, 38; *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, pp. 91, 92, 1892-3), pp. 45, 52, 59, 61-2, 64-5, 68, 72-3; *CPR, 1370-74*, pp. 41-2; VC 3/vi/46ii.; BI, PR 3, fo.254; PR 8, fo.32.

¹ John de Eryholme
² Richard de Allerton
³ Robert Holme, senior
⁴ William de Grantham

⁵ Thomas Holme
⁶ William Burton
⁷ Alan Hammerton
⁸ Nicholas Blackburn, senior

⁹ Robert Holme, junior
¹⁰ Isolda and John de Acaster
¹¹ John Gilliot, senior

²⁹⁸ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, p. viii; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, pp. 137-8..

The main draw on the endowment would be the salary or stipend for the chantry chaplain, and York mercers provided between 4 and 12 marks (£2 13s 4d to £8) which, on average, would be almost £5, a modest income but in line with that recorded for York chaplains in the 1436 taxation.²⁹⁹ Alan Hammerton's endowment was sufficient to return £5 5s per year (about 8 marks) and William de Burton arranged lands and rents to yield 9 marks annually for the chaplain at each of his 2 chantries.³⁰⁰ Robert Holme, senior established the finances for his chantry in stages with 6 marks in 1362, increased by almost 2 marks in 1368 and up to 10 marks in 1395; and a testamentary bequest of £400 was to fund a chantry in the Minster with a stipend of 12 marks per year.³⁰¹

Income from individual properties sheds light on different sized plots, complexity of buildings and values.³⁰² John de Eryholme's single tenement in Petergate was worth 53s 4d annually compared to the tenements held by Richard de Allerton which rendered from 4s for a tenement in Colliergate to 40s for his residence on Bishophill.³⁰³ Robert Holme expected a messuage and four shops to return annually 80s; and William Grantham valued four messuages in St. Helen Stonegate at 100s.³⁰⁴ The core of Nicholas Blackburn's endowment for 8 marks annually was a capital messuage in the Fish Shambles described as a complex of buildings including a dovecot and garden, 3 tenements on the east and 6 tenements with a lane and gardens on the north.³⁰⁵ In contrast the Acaster chantry was endowed with 13 messuages incorporating 19 shops; these were scattered throughout the city and rents varied from 2s for shops in Clementhorpe to 40s for a messuage with 7 shops near Thursday Market.³⁰⁶ A rental pertaining to John Eshton's chantry shows a 50s rent for a capital

²⁹⁹ Dobson, 'Chuntries and Citizens', p. 275.

³⁰⁰ [448]; [189]; YCA, G.70:30; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chuntries*, 1, pp. 64-5, 68, nos. 77, 80.

³⁰¹ [490]; YCA, G.70:22-24; BI, PR 1:100.

³⁰² Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, p. ix-x; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, pp. 155-165, 237-240.

³⁰³ [335]; [6]; YCA, G.70: 8, 14.

³⁰⁴ [490]; [431]; YCA, G70:22; *CPR, 1470-74*, pp. 41-2.

³⁰⁵ [112]; YCA, G70:31.

³⁰⁶ YCA, 38a; Barnett, 'Memorials and Commemoration', pp. 137, 141, 153, 156, Tables 3.1-2, 3.9-10.

message and smaller amounts from 4s to 22s for other properties variously described: *domus rentalis*, small houses near the cemetery, houses with chambers, shops or gardens, shops, small shops, shops with chambers and solars, a tile house and tenter-yards and gardens.³⁰⁷

A combination of demographic and economic factors would affect property values and the land market, and this would be reflected in the actual amount of income received.³⁰⁸ In the expanding economy of the 1380s, John Eshton's estate brought in over £10, more than twice that required for the chaplain's stipend, but in the recessive conditions of the early sixteen century, the income was so low that the parishioners appealed for its 'reformation'.³⁰⁹ The Acaster chantry originally endowed for 10 marks (£6 13s 4d) had fallen to £2 a century later and was revived by the Gilliot family with 2 investments of 4 marks in 1485 and 1509.³¹⁰ There was more stability for foundations entrusted to the civic authorities, who took over the management of the estate, collected the rents and paid the chaplain's stipends.³¹¹ The chaplains celebrating in St. Anne's Chapel on Foss Bridge for Alan Hammerton and Robert Holme junior received annual payments from the civic purse of £5 5s and £6 13s 4d from the 1430s to the dissolution of municipal chantries in 1536; and those serving the Blackburn chantry received £5 13s 4d until 1548.³¹²

The demographic decline and economic recession had an adverse affect on chantry endowments, which can be seen in the changes to the endowments recorded in the dissolution certificates of 1546.³¹³ The original 4 tenements of Thomas Holme had been subdivided into a capital message, 3 tenements, 8 cottages and a stable; and,

³⁰⁷ *YMB*, 1, pp. 47-8.

³⁰⁸ Payling, 'Social Mobility, Demographic Change and Landed Society in Late Medieval England', pp. 68-9; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 1, pp. 208, 243; Butcher, 'Rent, Population and Economic Change', p. 69.

³⁰⁹ *YMB*, 1, pp. 47-8; *YCR*, 2, pp. 190-1.

³¹⁰ [405]; *YCA*, G.70:38a-38; *BI*, PR 8, f.32.

³¹¹ Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 277, 279; *YChA*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

³¹² [448]; [490]; [112]; *YChA*, pp. 13-14, 23, 32, 62, 73-4, 92-3, 136-7, 168-9, 184-5, 202; A. G. Dickens. 'A Municipal Dissolution of Chantries at York, 1536', *YAJ*, 36 (1944-7), pp. 164-73 at pp. 169-70.

³¹³ Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 280-3; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 31-2; Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York', pp. 28, 30, 32; Butcher, 'Rent, Population and Economic Change in Late-Medieval Newcastle', pp. 73-76.

conversely, the multiple properties of the Acaster-Gilliot chantry had been merged into 5 tenements and 1 close.³¹⁴ William de Burton's endowment comprised 17 tenements and 3 chambers in the St. Saviourgate area and 7½ tenements in Bishophill, and were valued in the low range of 2s to 5s, obviously an array of small dwellings and single chambers.³¹⁵ A number of factors affected the pattern of land tenure in the years leading up to the dissolution, and perhaps a sign is the increased proportion of income from 'free' rents rather than from the freehold property itself; for example the Acaster-Gilliot chantry received 85s 8d as rents, almost 3 times that at its foundation.³¹⁶

It is difficult to determine what proportion of an estate was used to endow a chantry, but some idea of the investment required is forthcoming from the sums entrusted to the civic authority.³¹⁷ Nicholas Blackburn senior provided 340 marks to invest in property which would provide a suitable chaplain with 8 marks annually, and Robert Holme junior granted the city 500 marks towards the acquisition of lands and rents to yield 10 marks.³¹⁸ It is thought that 2% was the anticipated return on the purchase of urban property, but when the civic authority purchased a tenement for 100 marks they expected it to return 6 marks annually for the salary of Holme's chantry chaplain.³¹⁹ By the sixteenth century, the younger John Gilliot foresaw a lower return of 1.5% for his legacy of £400 to purchase lands to give his chantry chaplain £6 annually, another sign of the deepening economic recession.³²⁰

The decline in chantry foundations during the fifteenth century is attributed to the 'contraction in the number of sizeable mercantile fortunes' rather than lack of faith or

³¹⁴ [491]; [405]; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, pp. 45, 59, nos. 51, 70.

³¹⁵ [189]; Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, pp. 64, 68, nos. 77, 80.

³¹⁶ Page, *Certificates of Yorkshire Chantries*, 1, pp. 59, no. 70; Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 1, pp. 181, 197-233.

³¹⁷ Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 277.

³¹⁸ [112]; [490]; YCA, G.70:31, 34.

³¹⁹ YCA, G. 34 (memo on parchment tag); Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', p. 279 note 47; *YChA*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

³²⁰ [405.B]; BI, PR 9, fo. 32.

interest.³²¹ It is clear however that very few mercers at any time were able to acquire sufficient land to endow a chantry in the first place. Chantry founders represent a small, select group whose inheritance or marriage brought them real estate or whose trading profits had been invested in land.³²² Their freehold tenure would be valued for the prestige and status it conferred and for its use as collateral for securing loans, as inheritance for their children and to support a chaplain on a modest salary.

ii. Testamentary Cash Bequests

More common than an investment in land would be the storage of wealth as household assets such as silver plate and gems, furnishings, tools and other chattels and trading stock; and there would also be financial assets tied up in credit and debt transactions.³²³ Some idea of the value of this form of wealth can be gleaned from wills in which bequests of money reflect the testator's estimate of disposable income pertaining to his portion of the estate.³²⁴ The first draw on the estate would be clearing the debts owed by the testator, and executors had the task of determining which of the potential assets represented by debts due to the testator could be collected and which had to be written off as bad debts.³²⁵ Thomas Bracebrig specified that the goods pertaining to his portion be 'gathered into money', presumably collected in cash, and used to reimburse creditors, pay for funeral expenses and any remainder distributed to fulfil the legacies.³²⁶ Wills have been used variously to study aspects of occupational structure and relative wealth and the method used by Kermode to analyse 'testamentary estates' of northern merchants is

³²¹ Dobson, 'Citizens and Chantries', pp. 280-1 (quote), 283-4; Dobson, 'Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp. 34-5, 36-7.

³²² Payling, 'Social Mobility, Demographic Change and Landed Society in Late Medieval England', pp. 51, 53, 61, 63, 65-7; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 351, 353-5.

³²³ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 294; Goose and Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source', pp. 47-8, 71.

³²⁴ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 293-4 (own estimate of wealth).

³²⁵ N. and J. Cox, 'Probate Inventories: The Legal Background', *The Local Historian*, 16 (1984), pp. 133-45, 217-28 at pp. 222-6 (debts); Arkell, 'The Probate Process', pp. 9-10.

³²⁶ [136]; BI, PR 3, fo. 487; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 293-4.

adopted here, bearing in mind the limitations of wills as an historical source and the ‘inconclusive nature of the evidence’.³²⁷

Table 4.5 summarises the information extracted from the wills of 143 mercers and mercer-associates which record cash legacies in units of account (£, s, d) or by weight (marks). The testator’s bequest has been added together, the sum rounded up to the nearest £ and grouped into 4 Bands of distribution covering amounts from £2 to over £1,000. Each band is subdivided into a lower and higher range with the number of testators recorded although the percentage is calculated for the band as a whole; and the data is broken down by date of probate into half-century intervals, 1300 to 1549.

TABLE 4.5
DISTRIBUTION OF THE AMOUNTS OF CASH BEQUEATHED
BY YORK MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES, 1334 to 1549

Band	Range	Testators		to 1349		to 1399		to 1449		to 1499		to 1549	
		N=	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%
I	£2	25	43	1	40	5	44	7	29	8	49	4	71
	£10	36		1		10		7		12		6	
II	£25	25	30	1	60	5	26	8	35	11	32	0	7
	£50	18		2		4		9		2		1	
III	£100	19	23			4	24	8	28	5	19	2	21
	£200	14				4		6		3		1	
IV	£600	5	4			1	6	4	8				
	£1,500	1				1		0					
Total		143	100	5	100	34	100	49	100	41	100	14	99
% 143				3		24		34		29		10	

Looking first at the distribution as a whole, almost three-quarters of testators bequeathed less than £50: 43% in the lowest range from £2 to £10 (Band I) and 30% in larger amounts between £10 and £50 (Band II); with 36 testators in the upper range of Band I (£2 to £10) compared to 25 in lower (up to £2). Another 23% felt able to dispose of amounts between £50 and £200 (Band III); and the number of testators was roughly equal in the lower and higher ranges, £50 up to £100 and £100 up to £200. This was not the case for bequests in the top range from £200 to £1,500 (Band IV) where a much smaller group of 5 bequeathed £200-£600 and only one represented the range £600-£1,500.

So few wills survive before 1350 that it is difficult to interpret the results, but the limited distribution of bequests within the £2 to £50 range (Bands I and II) implies that these mercers had less disposable wealth than their later colleagues. A similar

³²⁷ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 297-302, 302-304; Goose and Evans, ‘Wills as an Historical Source’, pp. 50-2, 56-63.

lack of cash is the impression from the 44% of testators in the half century following the Black Death whose bequests were less than £10 (Band I); and even more so in the 100 years 1450 to 1549 when the proportion increased first to 49% and then to 71%.

Bequests in the next higher range from £10 to £25 (Band II) vary in a reverse order from a high of 60% before 1349 to a low of 7% in the first half of the sixteenth century with figures in the 26% to 35% range in the years 1350 to 1500. Larger amounts from £100 to £200 (Band III) were bequeathed by another quarter of testators in the years 1350-1449; but afterwards this level is no longer a middle range but the highest, though the representation remains curiously high at 19% in 1450-99 and 21% in 1500-49. The largest testamentary estates (Band IV) were recorded in the 100 years 1350-1450 when 8 mercers allocated amounts over £600. However, the senior Robert Holme was the outstandingly wealthy mercer with legacies amounting to about £1,200.

These results confirm that there were greater extremes of wealth within the community of mercers than is suggested by taxation evidence. The largest testamentary estates were recorded in the 100 years following the Black Death which suggests a period of greater prosperity; and the increase in smaller testamentary estates after 1450 suggests a period of less disposable wealth. It would be expected that a large proportion of testators would have relatively little disposable income (Band I) and that a few would accumulate large testamentary estates (Band IV). What is less predictable is the increase in disposable income for middle ranking mercers (Bands II and III) in the years 1350 to 1500 which was up to 20 times the amounts bequeathed by their poorer colleagues (Band I). The impression is that the middle-ranking mercers were the substantial core of the community of mercers; and in the aftermath of the loss of the upper band of wealthiest mercers, it was this core group that contracted from a majority to a minority.

Three inter-related notions about the community of mercers emerge from this survey:

1. The reduced number of wills in the first decade of the sixteenth century suggests that the community of mercers was smaller than previously.
2. The contraction in the size of testamentary estates suggests the community of mercers was poorer than previously.
3. The absence of middle-sized testamentary estates suggests the community of mercers was polarisation into rich and poor.

Summary Remarks

These impressions seem directly related to the near demise of the occupation of mercers in sixteenth-century York, and raise questions about the occupational structure of York and the erosion of the economic role of the typical mercer previously occupying the middle range in distributions of wealth. It is useful to refer to Bartlett's theoretical model of an expanding and contracting economy and to postulate that the testamentary estates reflected post-Black Death prosperity and were based on increased commercial opportunities, particularly participation in overseas trade. The wealthiest testators are known to have been involved in the export of wool and the middle-ranking ones in the export of cloth. It is likely that the least prosperous and those not recorded in wills remained retail shopkeepers involved in the distribution of imported mercery. The benefits of economic expansion would continue well into the fifteenth century and are reflected in the number of mercers still able to bequeath large sums; but the increasingly recessionary conditions are seen in the contraction of the amount bequeathed from mid-century. Bartlett refers to the loss of markets, conflict and competition with the Hanse merchants and London mercers and prolonged economic contraction, a situation which would affect the economic role of the mercer and contribute to the sharp drop in numbers and a widening gulf between rich and poor. It seems from testamentary evidence that the middle-ranking mercer was perhaps the mainstay of the occupation and thus their commercial activities warrant further examination.

CONCLUSION

Mercers, as new arrivals to the city and from diverse geographic and social backgrounds, would need to be accepted into the community as part of establishing their place in society. As aspiring and ambitious individuals they would seek to qualify first as freemen or full members of the civic community, and second to meet the criteria as householders and reputable residents in their parish. They would have to assimilate a number of ideas or *mores* about being good men and respectable citizens, dress appropriately and behave accordingly. There would be an uneasy alliance between conformity and individuality; and this would be reflected in various ways, particularly in outward displays of prestige, power and wealth.

The last will and testament was the means by which a mercer aimed to reconcile his spiritual and temporal affairs, and in so doing revealed certain shared ideas about piety, charity, public works, kinship, friendship and personal responsibility. Wills also record the type of arrangements deemed necessary for the funeral, a public event which marked the departure from life to the afterlife; and it is here that the notions of what was appropriate for a good man of the parish are made clear. It is the arrangements made for post-mortem commemoration that reflect individuality and pride in their own achievements with displays of greater than average wealth and eminence, particularly in endowing perpetual chantries and funding tangible memorials in the form of inscribed stone slabs, brass inlays, painted glass windows and chantry chapels.

Once established in their trade as freemen and good men of the parish, the aspirations of mercers turned to greater prominence and political power. An initial step was acceptance into a select society, a social and religious fraternity such as the Corpus Christi Guild and the Fraternity of St. Mary; and their association based on occupation, the Mercers' Guild. Membership conferred a sense of belonging, fostered fraternal bonds and extended commercial connections, but also provided an opportunity to acquire new skills concerned with finance, administration and leadership. The display of affiliation was a prominent feature of urban life; from the seal used to authenticate documents engraved with images and emblems of corporate identity, to the banners carried and the clothing worn in public processions. Here the order of precedence was a visual sign of differences within select societies based on rank, prestige and authority.

With experience gained over time in their own commercial pursuits and supplemented with financial and administrative skills from guild office, many mercers would meet the criteria for election to civic office. Evidence suggests that they aimed to ascend the *cursus honorum* from chamberlain, bailiff or sheriff and alderman to mayor. The emblems, symbols and other outward displays were similar to those of guilds, but signified a greater political power, because they combined royal, ecclesiastical and civic iconography. The particular role or rank of civic officials was marked by livery which varied in fabric, quality, quantity, colour and cut according to hierarchical divisions. The mayor was distinguished by special clothing, dress accessories and jewellery; and his person was surrounded by items of civic regalia replete with symbolism and attributes of office. In public he was accompanied by a retinue dressed in special livery and armed with real and symbolic

weapons, and musicians heralded his arrival or departure. Moreover the mayor was master of a large household of dependants whom he fed and lodged; and presided in his own court. Together these were attributes of lordship which extended over the civilian populace; and they conferred a level of prestige and authority greater than that accorded to any other freeman; and though his term in office was short, his elevated status remained.

It is obvious that York mercers recognised that wealth was the determinant of urban success and that inequalities of wealth created social divisions. Indeed their arrangements for funeral and commemoration expose a widely-held notion of the more, the better, the more expensive, the longer lasting; and their outward displays of affiliation and authority indicate attempts to set them apart from less wealthy colleagues. The taxation returns for the lay subsidy of 1327 record a few wealthier than average mercers, but do not show the community of mercers itself as outstandingly so; and, from the perspective of the parish, mercers were few in number and the value of their possessions moderate. Inequalities of wealth within the community of mercers are apparent in the poll tax of 1381 in that most mercers had larger households and were able to pay more tax than chapmen and other mercer-associates; but only two mercers ranked amongst the wealthiest heads of household. As to income from land, in 1436 there were only a handful of York mercers recorded with property which returned £5 or more per year; and they ranked in the lowest bracket compared to landed society as a whole.

In terms of disposable income, about a dozen mercers were able to endow perpetual chantries with rents from urban tenements, but this was on average less than £7 annually; and some foundations declined in value and were later augmented and assumed by other mercers. The size of testamentary estates was looked at in terms of the amount of cash mercers bequeathed, and this was based on the assumption their executors could collect debts due, clear the testators' debts and disperse the balance on funeral expenses and legacies. The distribution of the amounts bequeathed over time from c.1350 to c.1510 showed that the range contracted, the number of mercers leaving wills sharply reduced, and there was a polarisation between rich and poor mercers with none in the middle. This was a parallel trend of the near demise of the mercer both as new freemen and established residents; and seemed directly related to changes in the occupational structure of York particularly within the mercantile community, and to the altered economic role of the traditional mercer.

The self-perceptions mercers held of their social standing and economic class seem to reflect reality, albeit the distinctions they drew do not loom so large to the outside observer. They did have the ability to become known as good men of the parish, reputable citizens, worthy civic councillors and lord mayors; a few invested profits from trade in land which provided sufficient income to endow chantries; and a larger number of mercers accumulated current assets which could be converted into cash and dispersed as legacies at their deaths. Nonetheless by the sixteenth century there were fewer mercers in York and far fewer in civic office and they were individually and collectively poorer than they had been. To determine the likely causes of such a change, it is necessary to look more closely at their commercial activities and their capital resources. Therefore Chapter Five looks at the evidence for York mercers as regional traders and local shopkeepers; and Chapter Six looks at their capital assets invested in foreign trade.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRADERS, SHOPKEEPERS AND CUSTOMERS

The Scope of Inland Trade

INTRODUCTION

Having looked at the number of mercers in York, their social and economic aspirations and their social, civic and economic achievements, Chapter Five assembles the evidence for the participation of York mercers in inland trade.

The chapter starts with an investigation of regional trade and the evidence for opportunities of market exchange in York, Yorkshire and at major English fairs. The discussion then turns to informal market exchanges with personal contacts both suppliers and customers, particularly in Yorkshire as revealed in accounts of religious houses, wills and civic and guild records. Their commercial networks are examined in light of transportation, modes of carriage, bequests to repair and maintain the road system and bridges leading to and from York on the one hand, and their credit and debt transactions with customers, outworkers, partners and suppliers in Yorkshire and beyond and particularly in London. There is a longer section on local trade which begins with a survey of parish of residence of members of the community of mercers and of the demographic and topographic shifts over time. This continues with an examination of commercial premises available in York and their use by mercers for storage and for retail sales. This is followed by a discussion of the type mercery available for sale in York and the investment in particular ranges by representatives of the community of mercers. The last section looks at consumer demand for linen textiles, said to have been the main stock in trade of medieval mercers; and looks to the extant inventories of York artisans and ecclesiastics for the different types of linen used in their households and its appraisal values.

The role of towns as centres of manufacture and trade provides the general context for examining the market demand for mercery in York, which fits into the wider

scope of inland trade and the economy of towns.¹ The stimulus to the expansion of towns is seen as part of the commercialising process which took place after the Norman conquest in which urban areas became centres for manufacture and trade.² Population growth and consumer demand are seen as contributing factors to the expansion and development of commercial activity.³ For instance, large secular and ecclesiastical households required rare or luxurious material goods to display and maintain a high status lifestyle and home-grown food and basic clothing to sustain and equip their retinue and domestic staff.⁴ An increasing number of landless wage-labourers, artisans and traders would need to purchase their food, clothing and tools; and those with sufficient land to feed themselves would need to exchange their

¹ Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants and Markets*, *passim*; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 135-180; T. S. Willan, *The Inland Trade: Studies in English Internal Trade in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Manchester, 1976); J. A. Chartres, *Internal Trade in England, 1500-1700*, Studies in Economic and Social History (London and Basingstoke, 1977); A. Everitt, 'The Market Towns' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Early Modern Town. A Reader* (New York, 1976), pp. 168-204; R. H. Britnell, 'The Economy of British Towns 600-1300' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 105-126.

² G. D. Snooks, 'The Dynamic Role of the Market in the Anglo-Norman Economy and Beyond, 1086-1300' in R. H. Britnell and B. M. S. Campbell (eds.), *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 27-54; N. McCord and R. Thompson, *The Northern Counties from AD 1000* (London and New York, 1998), pp. 44-6, 51-5, 113, 117-119; E. King, 'Economic Development in the Early Twelfth Century' in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher, *Progress and Problems in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1-22; C. Dyer, 'Towns and Cottages in Eleventh-Century England' in *idem*, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London and Rio Grande, 1994), pp. 241-256; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086-1348*, pp. 18-38, 38-49, 49-50; J. A. Galloway, 'Town and Country in England, 1300-1570' in S. R. Epstein (ed.), *Towns and Country in Europe, 1300-1800* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 106-131; Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 121-173; Britnell, *Commercialisation of English Society*, pp. 23-4, 82, 127, 147, 156, 166-7; M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society. An Economic History of Britain in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, 1972, republished 1975), pp. 212-13.

³ J. I. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500* (London, 1980 reprinted 1985), pp. 45-81; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 137-143; C. Dyer, 'The Consumer and the Market in the Later Middle Ages', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 42/3 (1989), pp. 305-327; M. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001); Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, pp. 106-133; Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 124-5, 137-8.

⁴ C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London, 1999); D. Keene, 'Wardrobes in the City: Houses of Consumption, Finance and Power' in M. Prestwich, R. Britnell and J. Frame (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England VII. Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1997* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 61-79; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 27-48, 86-108; C. Dyer, 'Trade, Towns and the Church: Ecclesiastical Consumers and the Urban Economy of the West Midlands, 1290-1540' in T. R. Slater and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 55-75; K. D. Lilley, 'Trading Places: Monastic Initiative and the Development of High-Medieval Coventry' in T. R. Slater and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 177-208; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 139-141; Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society*, pp. 10, 19, 36-8, 42-7.

produce for manufactures or for cash in order to pay rents and taxes.⁵ Increased dependency upon market exchange is reflected not only in the proliferation of chartered markets and fairs, but in their frequent recurrence at seasonal, monthly or weekly intervals.⁶ The importance of the market is seen in improvements to ancillaries of trade such as market regulations, the money supply and the provision of credit.⁷ There were also improvements to the road network, in communications and in modes of transport and carriage.⁸ The end result was the stimulation of market exchange and production for the market; this in turn promoted division of labour and specialisation in both rural and urban settings, increasing the range of occupations

⁵ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 151-187, 211; Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 249-276; Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 124-5; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 396-7; Basing, *Trades and Crafts in Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 47-8.

⁶ R. H. Britnell, 'The Proliferation of Markets in England, 1200-1349', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 34(2) (1981), pp. 209-221; R. H. Britnell, 'English Markets and Royal Administration Before 1200', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 31 (1978), pp. 183-196; Britnell, 'Boroughs, Markets and Trade in Northern England, 1000-1216', pp. 46-67; Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 281-293; B. English (ed.), *Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto Rolls*, YASRS, 151 (1993-4), pp. 1-15, 736.

⁷ Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 137-9, 142-3, 146-9; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 137, 142-3, 144-9, 150-4; Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets*, pp. 189-212; Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society*, pp. 24-28, 90-97, 173-8; P. Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1988, reprinted 1989), pp. 240-266, 346-7; E. S. Hunt and J. M. Murray, *A History of Business in Medieval Europe 1200-1550* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 137-145, 212-6; J. Day, *The Medieval Market Economy* (Oxford and New York, 1987), pp. 1-54; Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit', pp. 560-75; M. M. Postan, 'The Rise of a Money Economy', *EcHR*, 14 (1944), pp. 123-134; *idem*, 'Private Financial Instruments in Medieval England' in *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 28-65; *idem*, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', *EcHR*, 1 (1927-8), pp. 1-27; Goddard, *Coventry 1043-1355*, pp. 256-289.

⁸ R. A. Pelham, 'Fourteenth-Century England' in H. C. Darby (ed.), *An Historical Geography of England Before A.D. 1800. Fourteen Studies* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 230-65 at pp. 260-265; F. M. Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', *EcHR*, 7/1 (1936), pp. 1-21; B. P. Hindle, 'The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2(1) (1976), pp. 207-221; B. P. Hindle, 'Seasonal Variation in Travel in Medieval England', *Journal of Transport History*, new series, 4 (1977-8), pp. 170-178; J. F. Willard, 'Inland Transportation in England During the Fourteenth Century', *Speculum*, 1(4) (1926), pp. 369-74; J. T. Flower (ed.), *Public Works in Medieval Law*, 2 vols., Selden Society, 32, 40 (1915, 1923); D. F. Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development, 1300-1800', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 45 (1992), pp. 240-61; J. Masschaele, 'Transport Costs in Medieval England', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 46/2 (1993), pp. 226-279; J. Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation: The Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1086-1500* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 61, 204-5, 225-9, 246-9, 282-9; J. Langdon, 'Horse Hauling: A Revolution in Vehicle Transport in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century England?', *Past and Present*, 103/May (1984), pp. 37-66; J. F. Willard, 'The Use of Carts in the Fourteenth Century', *History*, 17 (1932-3), pp. 246-250.

including agents of trade.⁹ Local trade itself depended on intermediaries between producers and consumers: hucksters or street traders; middlemen, agents and brokers; retailers and wholesalers.¹⁰ Details of the type of goods traded can be gleaned from several sources including byelaws, lists of tolls or, more rarely, local customs accounts which suggest the direction of trade in and out of the town.¹¹ Urban and rural producers depended on inter-regional marketing systems for regular supplies of raw and semi-processed materials and also for the marketing of the finished product.¹²

⁹ Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 128-30, 131, 134-7, 140-2; Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society*, pp. 23, 29-52, 102-127, 179-203; Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants and Markets*, pp. 33-56; Laughton and Dyer, 'Small Towns in the East and West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages', pp. 24-52 at pp. 43-5; M. Bailey, 'Peasant Welfare in England, 1290-1348', *EcHR*, 51/2 (1998), pp. 223-251 at pp. 228-233; I. Blanchard, 'Industrial Employment and the Rural Land Market 1380-1520' in R. M. Smith, *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 227-276; Britnell, 'Minor Landlords in England and Medieval Agrarian Capitalism', pp. 3-22; R. H. Hilton, 'Small Town Society in England Before the Black Death', in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The English Medieval Town. A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 71-96 at p. 75; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 324-330.

¹⁰ R. H. Britnell, 'Sedentary Long-Distance Trade and the English Merchant Class in Thirteenth-Century England' in P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England*, V: *Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1993* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 129-140 at 132-5; R. H. Hilton, 'Lords, Burgesses and Hucksters' in *idem*, *Class Conflict and the Crises of Feudalism. Essays in Medieval Social History* (London and New York, 1985, 2nd edition 1990), pp. 121-131 at p. 124, 128, 131; Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets*, pp. 130, 136; D. H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate. Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley CA and London, 1993), pp. 81-2, 95-9, 125-6, 201-4; F. Braudel (trans. S. Reynolds), *Civilization and Capitalism 15th - 18th Century*, 2: *The Wheels of Commerce* (Paris 1879, republished London, 1985), pp. 64, 73-5, 96, 136, 376-9, 380-1; Phythian-Adams, 'The Economic and Social Structures', pp. 5-39 at pp. 31-2; R. Doehaerd (trans. W. G. Deakin), *The Early Middle Ages in the West. Economy and Society*, Europe in the Middle Ages. Selected Studies, 13 (1978), pp. 149-166, 167-181; N. S. B. Gras, *Business and Capitalism. An Introduction to Business History* (New York 1939), pp. 33-50; R. B. Westerfield, *Middlemen in English Business, Particularly Between 1660 and 1760* (New Haven, CT, 1915), pp. 329-428.

¹¹ M. Prestwich, *York Civic Ordinances, 1301*, Borthwick Papers, 49 (1976); *VCH, City of York*, pp. 484-91; Sayles, 'Dissolution of a Guild at York in 1306', pp. 83-98; H. Richardson, *The Medieval Fairs and Markets of York*, Borthwick Papers, 20 (1961); Gras, *The Early English Customs System*, pp. 22-5; H. S. Cobb, 'Local Port Customs Accounts Prior to 1550' in F. Ranger (ed.), *Prisca Munimenta* (London, 1973), pp. 153-210; T. R. Adams, 'Aliens, Agriculturalists and Entrepreneurs: Identifying the Market-Makers in a Norfolk Port from the Water-Bailiffs' Accounts, 1400-1460' in D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance. Papers in Later Medieval History* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 140-157.

¹² Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets*, pp. 109-128, 147-164, 165-188; Laughton and Dyer, 'Small Towns in the East and West Midlands', pp. 32-3, 36-40; Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*; A. Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 32-43, 212-226, 444-449; C. Dyer, 'Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration, 1300-1600: A Summing Up' in J. A. Galloway (ed.), *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration c.1300-1600* (London, 2000), pp. 103-109.

Redistribution provided new opportunities for itinerant agents of trade and incentives to improve facilities for retail sales, particularly through the fixed shop.¹³ Architectural and archaeological studies of urban topography reveal the location of marketplaces and commercial premises; and surveys of title deeds and estate papers shed light on the structure, value and use of commercial premises.¹⁴ Probate inventories are an invaluable source for the type and value of goods which were used to furnish homes and were likely to have been sold locally; and there are also lists of possessions and consumer goods recorded in inquisitions or court proceedings.¹⁵ Most studies of consumer behaviour look to the years after 1600, but evidence suggests that in the late medieval period there was a steady demand for the items

¹³ Thirsk, *The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England*, pp. 122-5, 146-7; Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London', pp. 247-292; Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries: the Mercers' Company of Coventry*, pp. 5-12, 16-20, 29-32; O. Coleman, 'Trade and Prosperity in the Fifteenth Century: Some Aspects of the Trade of Southampton', *EHR*, 2nd series, 16 (1963), pp. 9-22 at pp. 1-16; N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman. A Study of Retailing, 1550-1820* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 1-16; G. Shaw and J. Benson, 'The Evolution of Retailing: A Regional Perspective', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 13/1 (1993), pp. 1-3; D. Collins, 'Primitive or Not? Fixed Shop Retailing Before the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 13/1 (1993), pp. 4-22; M. Spufford, *The Great Re-Clothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1984);.

¹⁴ D. M. Palliser, T. R. Slater and E. P. Dennison, 'The Topography of Towns 600-1300' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 153-186 at 175-8, 181-4; J. Schofield and G. Stell, 'The Built Environment 1300-1540' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 371-394 at pp. 384-392; J. Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London and Washington, 1997), pp. 165, 169, 171-4, 179, 180-9; J. Schofield and A. Vince, *Medieval Towns* (London, 1994), pp. 135-141; J. Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven and London, 1994), 12-13, 21-5, 55-6, 71-4; K. A. Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping. An Architectural History* (New Haven and London, 2003); Keene, 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London', pp. 29-46; D. Keene, *Cheapside Before the Great Fire* (London, 1985); D. F. Stenning, 'Timber-Framed Shops 1300-1600: Comparative Plans', *Vernacular Architecture*, 16 (1985), pp. 35-38; L. F. Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540. A Documentary History* (Oxford, 1952, reissued 1992, special edition 1997), pp. 418-9, 432-3, 441-3, 446-7, 478-80, 484-5, 555; W. A. Pantin, 'The Merchants' Houses and Warehouses of King's Lynn', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1962-3), pp. 173-81 at 177-181; N. Cox and C. Walsh 'Their Shops are Dens, the Buyer is their Prey': Shop Design and Sale Techniques' in N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman. A Study of Retailing, 1550-1820* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 76-115.

¹⁵ T. Arkell, 'Interpreting Probate Inventories' in T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part. Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 72-102; M. Overton, 'Prices from Probate Inventories' in *When Death Do Us Part. Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 120-143; Spufford, 'The Limitations of the Probate Inventory', pp. 139-174; D. G. Vaisey, 'Probate Inventories and Provincial Retailers in the Seventeenth Century' in P. Riden (ed.), *Probate Records and the Local Community* (Gloucester, 1985), pp. 91-112; M. Carlin, *London and Southwark Inventories 1316-1650. A Handlist of Extents for Debts* (London, 1997), pp. vii-xvi.

known as mercery, because it was a type of consumer goods whose intrinsic value was enhanced by symbolic connotations, notions of prestige and fashion.¹⁶

I

REGIONAL TRADERS AND COMMERCIAL NETWORKS

A. MARKET EXCHANGE

i. Markets and Fairs

There is no doubt that York was a centre of local, regional and long distance trade from antiquity, but it is the development after the Norman Conquest which influenced the activity of the mercers under study.¹⁷ The city petitioned and received a number of chartered trading privileges from the twelfth century, such as the right to form a 'hanse' in England and Normandy and freedom from tolls throughout the Angevin empire; and there were a series of grants in the thirteenth century which reveal an active trading community.¹⁸ Miller's work on thirteenth-century York stresses the importance of the city as a major economic centre, with the manufacture of woollen cloth providing employment for numerous artisans and profits for agents of trade whose markets could be found throughout England and the Continent.¹⁹ There is

¹⁶ Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries: the Mercers' Company of Coventry*, pp. 55-57; L. Jardine, *Worldly Goods. A New History of the Renaissance* (New York and London, 1996, republished 1998), pp. 35-9, 91-132, 181-228, 275-330; L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London, 1988), pp. 1-5, 25-42, 75-84; L. M. Weatherill, 'Consumer Behaviour and Social Status in England, 1660-1760', *Continuity and Change*, 1 (1986), pp. 191-216; M. Spufford, *The Great Re-Clothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1984); S. A. M. Adshead, *Material Culture in Europe and China, 1400-1800. The Rise of Consumerism* (New York, 1997), pp. 17-30, 207; J. Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures* (1979, trans., London, 1998); D. Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 134-5; M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 199-246; D. Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (Cambridge, 1997, reprinted 1998), pp. 100-131, 131-147, 148-173; J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York, 1993); J. O'Shaughnessy, *Explaining Buyer Behaviour. Central Concepts and Philosophy of Science Issues* (Oxford and New York, 1992), pp. 209-230.

¹⁷ D. M. Palliser, 'Thirteenth-Century York – England's Second City?', *York Historian*, 14 (1997), pp. 2-9.

¹⁸ Palliser, 'The Birth of York's Civic Liberties', pp. 88-107; Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 31-3.

evidence for markets and fairs held in York from an early date; and a pattern of reciprocal attendance at regional markets and fairs is seen in the list of places where the new sixteenth-century city fairs were to be announced:²⁰

- to the north in Northallerton and Guisborough; to the north-east in Malton, Helmsley, Pickering and Scarborough; and to the north-west in Ripon, Bedale and Richmond extending on to Kendal in Cumbria;
- in East Yorkshire in Beverley, Howden, Hull and Hedon;
- to the west in Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax and Skipton;
- to the south in Pontefract, Doncaster and Rotherham.

However, there is regrettably little direct evidence for the presence of York mercers' at any regional market apart from the assault suffered by William de Duffield in Doncaster in 1367 when 'evil men' carried away his goods and threatened him such that he 'dared not come into the market place of that town or elsewhere to expose his merchandise for sale or make profit for himself'.²¹ Hence, the importance of assembling the circumstantial evidence of their placename surnames which allude to market towns and suggest trade routes and commercial networks; and, more important, their links to ancestral home and retention of burgage tenure and shop premises which imply their role in supply and distribution.

As to the attendance of York mercers at regional fairs, this too has to be assumed from a handful of later references; for instance in 1503 there was an incident in Boroughbridge in which a local worthy forcibly stopped York residents on their way home from Ripon Fair and seized their goods dragging them off the horses' backs.²² Subsequent civic records confirm the presence of York men at 19 Yorkshire fairs or markets, attending Stourbridge Fair in the 1560s and meeting up with London merchants at Howden Fair at the turn of the century.²³ Although no evidence has yet

¹⁹ E. Miller, 'Rulers of Thirteenth Century Towns: the Cases of York and Newcastle upon Tyne' in P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England*, 1, *Proceedings of the Newcastle Upon Tyne Conference 1985* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 128-141 at pp. 129, 133-4; E. Miller, 'The Fortunes of the English Textile Industry During the Thirteenth Century', *EcHR*, new series, 18(1) (1965), pp. 64-82 at pp. 67-8; P. Chorley, 'English Cloth Exports during the Thirteenth and early Fourteenth Centuries: the Continental Evidence', *Historical Research*, 61 (144) (1988), pp. 1-10.

²⁰ Richardson, *The Medieval Fairs and Markets of York*, pp. 15-19 at p. 17; *YCR*, 2, p. 174-6.

²¹ [306.2]; *CPR 1364-7*, pp. 432-3.

²² *YCR*, 2, p. 183.

²³ Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 181-3; D. M. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth. England Under the Later Tudors 1547-1603* (London and New York, 1983), pp. 267-9, 273, 275.

been unearthed for York mercers at fairs in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this pattern was well established in the thirteenth-century attendance of York men at the major English fairs.

The pattern of attending fairs to market local manufactures was well established in York in the thirteenth century in the extant records of the major English fairs held in Winchester, St. Ives and Boston.²⁴ These were seasonal fairs which attracted an international clientele seeking to purchase English raw materials and woollen cloth and to sell their imported textiles, mercery, wine, groceries, armour, pots and pans and industrial supplies. Large English households were accustomed to buying in bulk, particularly woollen cloth of domestic and foreign manufacture; and provincial traders had an opportunity to market their goods and to buy a range of utilitarian and small luxuries to resell to artisan producers or retail customers.²⁵ Significantly York had been designated as a place where wine for the royal household was to be stored and where purchases could be made for royal visits, another inducement for attendance at fairs with something to exchange.²⁶

It is not surprising that men from York attended all the major English fairs, and interesting that they did so as a municipal group, renting a row of 20 stalls at St. Ives and 16 contiguous booths at St. Giles.²⁷ They were caught up in a riot between denizen and foreign cloth merchants at Boston fair in 1241, and in 1244 were issued royal writs for their cloth purveyed there by the king's tailor.²⁸ In the 1240s the bailiffs and good men of York were instructed to deliver cloth to the wardens at particular fairs for purchase by the royal household; and during the period 1245-55 their cloth exhibited at St. Ives, Boston and Winchester was valued in total from £9

²⁴ Miller, 'The Fortunes of the English Textile Industry', pp. 67-8; Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 1-62.

²⁵ Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, p. 86.

²⁶ Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 54-5; Miller, 'The Fortunes of the English Textile Industry', p. 65; *CCR*, 1227-1231, pp. 6, 268-9, 299, 381; *CCR*, 1234-1237, pp. 448, 455; *CLR*, 3: 1245-1251, p. 321; *CLR*, 4: 1251-60, pp. 8-10, 14-15, 28, 50, 122, 225, 241, 242, 298-9, 372, 253; *CCR*, 1254-1256, pp. 120, 127-8, 131, 133, 139; T. D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli de Liberate et de Misis et Prestitis* (London, 1844), pp. 2, 9, 94, 119, 145.

²⁷ Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 146-51, 191-2 and Tables 13b, 15.

²⁸ *Curia Regis Rolls, Henry III (1237-1242)*, pp. 240-1, no. 1285; L. F. Salzman (ed.), 'A Riot at Boston Fair', *The History Teachers' Miscellany*, 6/1 (1928), p. 2; *CCR*, 1242-1247 pp. 262-5; Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 122-3.

up to £123.²⁹ York merchants were persuaded to pay the king's debt to Flemish merchants in the 1260s and a decade later the bailiffs of Boston fair reissued permission to have their hanse and gild merchant as previously.³⁰ However by the 1280s only one of the 20 units reserved for York men at St. Ives was rented; and though they paid for repairs to their stallage at Winchester in the 1290s, the structure blew down in the wind and shortly afterwards they ceased to attend the fair.³¹

Although the great English fairs declined as international emporia, the fair as a marketing institution continued to play an important role in inland trade and the overall economy.³² The main change was in the shift in the pattern of distribution and the opportunity for exchange away from a few times a year to monthly, weekly or daily markets, particularly in urban centres where resident artisans and traders were in a better position to determine the conditions of trade.³³

ii. Personal Contacts

Although evidence is slight, the extant accounts of a few religious houses in Yorkshire provide some information about commercial activities of York mercers in the wool trade.³⁴ Richard de Allerton sold grain to Bolton Priory in the 1320s and was one of the English merchants to buy wool in lieu of Italian merchants.³⁵ The Sessions of the Peace in the 1360s record purchases of wool by Henry de Scorby from Whitby Abbey, Roger de Hovingham from the parson of Langton Church, Hugh de Myton from Kirkham Priory and Adam de Escrick chapman from the Rector of Sutton on Derwent.³⁶ The Archdeacon of Richmond employed Robert son of Robert

²⁹ *CPR*, 1247-1258, p. 367; *CLR*, 2: 1240-1245, p. 303; *CCR*, 1253-1245, p. 46; *CLR*, 4: 1251-1260, pp. 174, 253; Moore, p. 25 and Table 1.

³⁰ Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 125 (1260s loans), 76, 84 and Table 11 (1270s), 103 (1275), 146, 150 and Table 13b (1280s); *CCR* 1272-1279, p. 165.

³¹ Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 191-2, 204, 213 and Table 15; Fraser, 'The Pattern of Trade in the North-East of England', p. 50.

³² Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England*, pp. 204-216, 217-224; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 173-176.

³³ Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, p. 175.

³⁴ B. Waites, 'Monasteries and the Wool Trade in North and East Yorkshire During the 13th and 14th Centuries', *YAJ*, 52 (1980), pp. 111-121; I. Kershaw, *Bolton Priory. The Economy of a Northern Monastery 1286-1325* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 79-93.

³⁵ Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 93.

³⁶ Waites, 'Monasteries and the Wool Trade', p. 119; Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, pp. 13-15.

del Gare as one of his lawyers and used Thomas Bracebrigg and Thomas del More as purchasing agents and appraisers.³⁷ During the accounting period 1416-17 Selby Abbey purchased stockfish from Robert Hayne, and herrings, saltfish and stockfish from William Muston, son-in-law of Roger de Burton.³⁸ Though the Abbey bought rice in York from the spicers Roger Selby and John Bouche, it looked to London for supplies of pepper.³⁹ The wardrobe of Durham Cathedral Priory was supplied with whole cloths of blue meld by John Marshall of York in the period 1449 to 1458 and Fountains Abbey paid for wine, iron, spices and cushions supplied by Thomas Armourer and Robert Collinson during 1456-7.⁴⁰ William bishop of Durham issued a proclamation in 1502 concerning the repayment of debts incurred for victuals and other stuff supplied by any mercer, grocer, draper or other merchant of York.⁴¹ Although a few religious houses sold wool to York mercers or made occasional purchases, there is no evidence that York mercers were major suppliers.

Glimpses of regional trade also emerge in other sources; for instance a legal dispute records John de Gisburn's purchases from Thomas de Westhorpe of Ebberston in the East Riding, a major wool grower and dealer.⁴² The Sessions of the Peace describe a group of York merchants brought before the justices in 1361-2 for using sub-standard weights for buying and selling wool, including the mercers William and John de Burn, William Cooper, John de Gisburn, William de Grantham, Roger de Hovingham, Roger de Moreton, William Oubri (Aubrey) and Thomas de Sigston.⁴³ The regulation of the lead trade features in York civic records, particularly that coming from Swaledale, Wensleydale or Craven through Boroughbridge before being transhipped down the Ouse through York to Hull.⁴⁴ John de Gisburn was licensed in 1381 to purchase 200 loads of lead in the counties of York, Nottingham and Derby

³⁷ [387]; [136]; [638]; Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 93; Stell and Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 35, 41-1; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p.183n, 184.

³⁸ [466]; [185]; *FR*, 1, p. 75; G. S. Haslop (ed.), 'A Selby Kitchener's Roll of the Early Fifteenth Century', *YAJ*, 48 (1976), pp. 119-133 at p. 124.

³⁹ Haslop, 'A Selby Kitchener's Roll', pp. 124-5; *FR*, 1, pp. 67, 105.

⁴⁰ [618]; [22]; [232]; J. T. Fowler (ed.), *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham, etc.*, 1, Surtees Society, 99 (1989), pp. 632, 636; J. T. Fowler (ed.), *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains*, 3, Surtees Society, 130 (1918), pp. 10-11.

⁴¹ *YMB*, 3, pp. 224-5.

⁴² Waites, 'Monasteries and the Wool Trade', p. 115.

⁴³ Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, pp. 14-15, 84-5.

⁴⁴ *YCR*, 2, pp. 138-9, 144, 159; A. Raistrick and B. Jennings, *A History of Lead Mining in the Pennines* (Newcastle, 1965, edition 1983), pp. 23-45, esp. pp. 30, 35, 37-9.

and convey them to London; and in the fifteenth century John Glasyn purchased 17 pieces of lead from a Nidderdale smelting mill.⁴⁵

Marriage alliances can reveal a regional network; for instance Richard de Wolveston married into the Shaw family of Dunkinfield near Manchester and their partnership involved the export through Hull of Lancashire cloth.⁴⁶ Testamentary bequests indicate commercial connections, for Robert Holme with poor wool growers in Yorkshire and for his brother Thomas with dyers in the Pontefract area.⁴⁷ Thomas Curtas used weavers and fullers in York and Stamford Bridge; and Robert Collinson's business as a clothier was far-flung as evinced from bequests to rural textile workers in the north from Richmond to Carlisle, to the west in villages from the Ainsty to Bolton in Craven and to the south in Pontefract.⁴⁸ Complaints against rivals also provide information about the regional trade, for example against the activities of the Hanse merchants *c.*1490 when the Mercers' Guild alleged that Easterlings were supplying shopkeepers between the river Trent and Carlisle, so taking business away from York mercers and merchants.⁴⁹ A related grievance states that Easterlings sailed into all havens, creeks and villages in order to sell Holland linen, silk textiles, spices and wines directly to customers and also at fairs and markets in contravention of ancient practice; and, worst of all, they bartered with clothiers for a lower price than their York counterparts could obtain.⁵⁰ There are also references in the civic records to Italian and Spanish merchants selling imported goods and wine in York and buying cloth and lead in West Yorkshire.⁵¹

Altogether this accumulation of direct and indirect references shows that the regional trade of some York mercers extended throughout Yorkshire and beyond, and this supports the circumstantial evidence of place-name surnames. Another source of

⁴⁵ [408]; [411]; *CPR, 1381-85*, p. 50; Raistrick and Jennings, *A History of Lead Mining in the Pennines*, p. 35.

⁴⁶ [953]; R. Cunliffe Shaw, 'Two Fifteenth-Century Kinsmen, John Shaw of Dukinfield, Mercer, and William Shaw of Heath Charnock, Surgeon', *Trans. Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 110 (1959), pp. 15-30 at pp. 15-16.

⁴⁷ BI, PR 1, fo. 100; PR, 3, fo. 254.

⁴⁸ [263]; [232]; BI, PR 2, fos. 378, 438.

⁴⁹ Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 107-9.

⁵⁰ Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 196-7 (misdated 1578); *YCR*, 2, pp. 123-4; *YCR*, 3, pp. 72-3. 78.

⁵¹ *YCR*, 3, pp. 15, 77-8; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 199.

indirect evidence of commercial networks is their involvement in transport and carriage, the maintenance of roads and bridges and credit and debt transactions.

B. COMMERCIAL NETWORKS

i. Transportation and Communication

Regional trade depended on a road network which linked communities to ports and on the carriage of goods along these routes; and the commercialisation of society points to improvements made to roads, bridges and vehicles.⁵² For mercers handling small quantities of light-weight cloth or small manufactures it would be possible to walk with a fardel of mercery on their backs, but greater quantities would have required the use of packhorses, horse and cart, ox-drawn wagon or river craft.⁵³ Civic records reflect York's position as a major market and the various modes of transporting goods into and within the city and the variable tolls imposed reflect different quantities carried by packhorse or cartload.⁵⁴ A series of civic bye-laws attempted to regulate both the supply and distribution of victuals, fuel, building materials and other commodities, and a few refer to carriage by porters or packhorse and by iron-bound wains and the damage done to the highways.⁵⁵ Ever more control was exercised over the use of the river with tolls levied on boats passing through, anchoring or tying up at the quay, which reveal a variety of boats in use including the civic barge and the balinger, both sea-going vessels.⁵⁶

The mode of carriage used by York mercers to transport their goods sheds light on their participation in regional trade and also in the types of goods traded; for example the horses carrying packs from Ripon Fair in 1503 would manage a load up to 200lbs,

⁵² Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, pp. 137-9, 142-3, 146-9; Miller and Hatcher, *Towns, Commerce and Crafts*, pp. 137, 142-3, 144-9, 150-4; Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets*, pp. 189-212; Pelham, 'Fourteenth-Century England', pp. 260-65.

⁵³ Langdon, 'Horse Hauling', pp. 37-66; Langdon, *Horse, Oxen and Technological Innovation*, pp. 60-1; Willard, 'The Use of Carts in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 247-8; Willard, 'Inland Transportation in England', pp. 363, 368-9, 369-72.

⁵⁴ *YChA*, pp. xxvii-xxix, 20, n27, 29, 36, 70, 86, 103, 120-1, 143, 174, n175, citing murage accounts *YCA C.59:1,2* (1422-3, 1445-6); *YCR*, 3, pp. 32-3; P. Hughes 'Staiths. The Early River Jetties of York, Hull and Howden', *YAJ*, 71 (1999), pp. 155-184 at pp. 162-9; Leach, *Beverley Town Documents*, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵ *YMB*, 1, pp. l-iii, 15, 18, 122-4; *YMB*, 2, p. 13; *YCR*, 2, p. 132; *YCR*, 3, pp. 66, 69, 90-1.

⁵⁶ *YMB*, 1, pp. l-iii, 17, 19-20, 30, 32-3, 42, 198; *YChA*, pp. 11, 18, 40, 44-6, 82, 104, 128, 131, 142, 154, 164; *YCR*, 1, pp. 9, 27-8; *YCR*, 3, pp. 69, 90; *YCR*, 4, pp. 54, 124.

but a horse-drawn cart could carry about a ton.⁵⁷ Different types and quantities of goods are reflected in the tolls levied for bringing variable quantities to market. In fourteenth-century York a load of salt was charged ¼d if carried by horse or 1d if by cart; and the early sixteenth-century murage accounts record ¼d for a fardel of mercery ware, 1d for a load of cloth and 4d for a ton of woad which was bulky or for a hundred-weight of heavy goods (*avoirdupois*).⁵⁸ A few extant free-passage accounts for 1520-36 show that cargoes of linen, silk, foods and industrial supplies were shipped upstream to Ripon and Bedale.⁵⁹ The type of boat is another indication of use; William Plovell's ketch (*cache*) might carry casks, vats and corn as did the large ketch in Beverley; and William Dale's small boat equipped with tackle was probably a river craft as was Thomas Hancelyn's *lembus* (pinnace).⁶⁰

The familiarity of York mercers with available forms of transport and carriage is clearly shown in the accounts of their corporate bodies. The Fraternity of St. Mary paid weekly for the carriage of building materials by porters, pack horses and carts; and some costs were met through contributions by the mercers John de Crome, Roger de Moreton, senior, Robert de Potto and Ralph de Romanby.⁶¹ Boats and barges were used to bring stone from Tadcaster down the Wharfe and up the Ouse, and logs were floated downstream from Thorpe Arch and Clifton to St. Mary's Landing and then hauled by men and horses to Fossgate.⁶² The fifteenth-century rentals pertaining to Trinity Hospital show similar expenditure on porters, sleds, pack-horses, carts and wagons, and in 1501 horses were used to haul over 350 loads of tile, clay, fire-earth, sand, stone, cobbles and lime.⁶³ The Mercers' Guild paid for barges, cogs and keels to transport goods to and from Hull; and in the sixteenth century it became more concerned with regulation of river transport.⁶⁴ Some members had direct access to shipping; for instance Simon Vicar's father-in-law was John Carter, shipman,

⁵⁷ YCR, 2, p. 183; Langdon, 'Horse Hauling', pp. 59-60

⁵⁸ YMB, 2, pp. 13-14; YCR, 3, pp. 32-3; Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development', p. 246.

⁵⁹ Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 188 citing YCA, C.2, C3 (free passage).

⁶⁰ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 21, 260; BI, Cause Papers, F. 249; Leach, *Beverley Town Documents*, p. 2-3; P. Kemp (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (London, 1976), pp. 447, 649.

⁶¹ [256]; [642]; [701]; [729]; YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fos. 1r-v, 9r-v, 11r, 13r-v, 15v.

⁶² YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fos. 8v, 9r-v, 10r, 12v-13r, 17r; YMB, 1, p. 33.

⁶³ YMAA, Rentals 7, 17; Guild Accounts 33.

⁶⁴ YMAA, Guild Accounts 12-31; Trade Correspondence 15, nos. 1-2; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 18-19; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 154-9.

William Jackson had a part-share in *The Margaret*, and the Gilliot family owned *The George of York*.⁶⁵

Despite easy access to the river Ouse and the navigable stretches of its tributaries, the versatility of the horse meant it was the premier choice for haulage and carriage.⁶⁶ A few examples of horses owned by mercers can be found, such as those bequeathed by John del More to his brother Thomas along with pack-saddles and pack-cloths; and Alice, widow of Peter van Upstall left her servant Adam her packsaddles, pack cloths and pack pricks.⁶⁷ Richard son of the mercer Richard Waghen owned a black horse with saddle and reins; and Nicholas and Simon Vicars were equipped with saddles, tunics, boots and spurs for riding their horses.⁶⁸ Probate evidence shows that Thomas Grissop had a saddle, bridle and red blanket and two horses in his stable; and Richard Bishop a mare, two pack saddles with *waymtoys* [*sic*] and packs.⁶⁹ The inventories of York artisans record stables for horses and their tack, that is saddles, packsaddles, bridles and reins.⁷⁰ It may be that York mercers simply hired a horse when the need arose from one of the many stables in York such as those listed in the Bridgewardens' accounts in Coney Street, Nessgate, Waterlane, Fossgate, the Fish Shambles and on Foss and Ouse bridges.⁷¹ Inns were another place where a horse could be lodged or hired, such as the Bull in Bootham which had 4 stables fitted with mangers and hay racks; in the late fifteenth century, the city required inns with 10 to 20 horses to have a sign over their door.⁷²

The speed of the horse made it ideal for individual journeys such as those from York to London along the Great North Road; the route taken in the early fourteenth century by the Exchequer and later by civic representatives and MPs.⁷³ John Lilling and John

⁶⁵ [884]; [405]; [527]; YMAA, Guild Accounts 16, 29, 31.

⁶⁶ Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation*, pp. 40, 60-1, 228; Willard, 'Inland Transportation', pp. 268-9.

⁶⁷ [637]; BI, PR, 3, fo. 10; *TE*, 1, no. 30, p. 8.

⁶⁸ [887.1]; [884]; BI, PR 1, fo. 86; PR 5, fo.355; PR 11, fo.118.

⁶⁹ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 157; *TE*, 4, no. 98, p. 191.

⁷⁰ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 20, 65, 132, 148, 233, 259.

⁷¹ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 90, 206, 301, 352, 354, 377-8, 391, 405-6, 427, 439, 443.

⁷² YMAA, Estate and Tenancy Papers, 1; *YCR*, 2, p. 182.

⁷³ D. M. Broome, 'Exchequer Migrations to York in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries' in A. G. Little and F. M. Powicke (eds.), *Essays in Medieval History Presented to T. F. Tout* (Manchester, 1925), pp. 291-300 at p. 294-6; *YChA*, pp. xx, xxxi, xxxv, 34, 39, 67-8, 84, 96, 112, 140, 166-7, 189; *YCR*, 1, pp. 50, 74, 77, 83, 86-7, 110.

Burnley rode this way to London in 1430 to procure the charter of incorporation for the Mercers' Guild, and paid almost £5 on the hire, replacement, feeding, watering and stabling of their horses, about 5% of a £93 expenditure.⁷⁴ The Guild also sent its beadle by horseback to deliver letters to Beverley, Lockington, Doncaster and London; and the member assigned to organise collective shipping would ride to Hull, as did John Ince and Thomas Scauceby in 1457-8.⁷⁵

Whether or not York mercers owned their own horses, there is no doubt that they had access to all the available means of transporting goods into and out of York. The choice of transport would be based on the type of goods to be carried, the length of the journey, the convenience and the cost; and would ultimately depend on the degree of integration of the tracks, roads and waterways.⁷⁶ Thus another glimpse of regional trade of York mercers is provided in their testamentary bequests towards the upkeep and maintenance of roads and bridges leading to or radiating from York.

ii. Roads and Bridges

Although the maintenance of streets within a city was partially addressed by a toll called *pavage* levied on goods brought into the city, it was theoretically the responsibility of the landowners along the route.⁷⁷ Neglect was prevalent and donations to repair and maintain highways and bridges became a 'pious and meritorious work', the subject of papal indulgences and the focus of certain religious fraternities such as the York guild of St. Christopher and St. George.⁷⁸ York mercers would bear piety in mind, but utility is more apparent in their bequests for specific roads, ways and bridges which indicate the routes they habitually used and maintained for their own commercial benefit and that of the community. Thomas Ruston and John Dernington bequeathed sums for the paving of Gillygate just outside the city walls on the north and William Vescy for repairs to the stretch from Gillygate

⁷⁴ YMAA, Charter of 1430, 2A, B, C.

⁷⁵ YMAA, Guild Accounts 16, 23; Trade Correspondence 14: Shipping, 1, 2.

⁷⁶ Hindle, 'The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales', pp. 207-221; Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', pp. 1-21; W. B. Taylor, 'A History of the Tadcaster-York Turnpike', *York Historian*, 12 (1995), pp. 40-61.

⁷⁷ CPR, 1307-13, p. 73; CPR, 1314-21, p. 395; CPR, 1322-30, p. 457.

⁷⁸ Flower, *Public Works in Mediaeval Law*, 2, pp. 239-360, esp. pp. 270-2, 285-6, 319-21; T. P. Cooper, 'The Mediaeval Highways, Streets, Open Ditches, and Sanitary Conditions of the City of York', *YAJ*, 22 (1913), pp. 270-286 at pp. 280-4; White, *The Saint Christopher and George Guild*, p. 2.

to the Horsefair.⁷⁹ John Crome's legacies were for the highways leading from 3 of the 4 bars of York, Bootham to Clifton, down Walmgate towards Green Dyke Lane and outside Monkbar; and Robert Holmes sought to improve the way beyond Monkbridge.⁸⁰ John Touche was concerned with the upkeep of Layerthorpe Bridge and the way to Heworth Moor to the north-east; Richard Penreth with the road between Acomb and Rufford to the west; and Roger Burton and William Vesey sought to maintain the common way or *calcetus* leading to Tadcaster towards the southwest.⁸¹ Generally this term was used in the plural *calceti* denoting the limestone paving of a track or narrow pathway, often a series of stone slabs set over marsh or moorland.⁸² Robert Louth bequeathed money to maintain the causeway across Heworth Moor, John de Gisburn for the *causy* of Norton by Malton, and Roger de Burton referred to the *parclose* across Hessey Moor which Robert Holme described as an area of 'bad ways and pitfalls'.⁸³ John Touche left money for the causeway at Ferry Bridge, the approach to a former ferry crossing; and bequests of John de Dernington and Robert Collinson for causeways in Dringhouses and the vill of Kexby suggest places which needed a firm surface, the former being a watering place for cattle.⁸⁴

Testamentary bequests were also to repair or maintain bridges crossing a number of Yorkshire rivers such as the Swale at Catterick and Thornton near Helperby named in the wills of John Gisburn, Robert Holme, Nicholas Blackburn and Robert Collinson.⁸⁵ John Norman left money for the bridge over the Derwent in New Malton, John Gisburn provided a sum for the historic Stamford Bridge, and Robert Holme and

⁷⁹ [739.1]; [286]; [883]; BI, PR 3, fos. 73, 262, 266; Cooper, 'Mediaeval Highways and Streets of York', pp. 285-6.

⁸⁰ [256]; [490]; YML, 2/4, fo. 39; BI, PR 1, fo. 100; Flower, *Public Works in Mediaeval Law*, 2, pp. 319-20.

⁸¹ [871]; [185]; [883]; BI, PR 1, fo. 55; PR 3, fos. 85, 266; Taylor, 'A History of the Tadcaster-York Turnpike', p. 40; Flower, *Public Works in Mediaeval Law*, 2, p. 359.

⁸² B. Breakell, *Stone Causeways of the North York Moors* (Hebden Bridge, 1982, republished 1982 as *Old Pannier Tracks*); A. Watkins, *The Old Straight Track. Its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sties and Mark Stones* (London, 1925, 4th edition 1948); Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development', pp. 248-9.

⁸³ [408]; [185]; [490]; [601]; BI, PR 1, fos. 15, 55, 100; PR 3, fo. 265.

⁸⁴ [871]; [286]; [232]; BI, PR 2, fo. 378; BI, PR 3, fos. 73, 85; Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development', p. 248; Cooper, 'The Mediaeval Highways', p. 282; Flower, *Public Works in Mediaeval Law*, 2, p. 317.

⁸⁵ [408]; [490]; [112]; [232]; BI, PR 1, fo. 15, 100; BI, PR 2, fos. 278, 605; Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development', pp. 245-6.

Nicholas Blackburn funded repairs to the bridge at Kexby further downstream.⁸⁶ Robert Holme bequeathed £4 for rebuilding the bridge between Elvington and Sutton on the Derwent, a project which continued to attract financial support in the period 1400-07 from John Duffield, John Touche, Adam del Brigg, Robert Louth, Thomas Ruston and William Vesey.⁸⁷ Roger Burton's legacy was for the bridge over the Wharfe in Tadcaster; and John Gisburn's was for Skipbridge over the Nidd at Green Hammerton which may be the Sketebridge mentioned by Nicholas Blackburn senior.⁸⁸ The maintenance of bridges further away attracted legacies from a few mercers which suggests commercial connections with their ancestral home, such as William Vesey's to the bridge at Uglebarnby and John Ince senior's towards the upkeep of bridges over the Mersey in Warrington and at Frodsham on the way to Chester.⁸⁹ John de Stillington's bequest to Santon Bridge suggests trading links with Cumbria, but the connection between Robert Collinson's trade and Greteham Bridge is unclear, if this refers to the village near Billingham north of the Tees.⁹⁰

It is apparent that most of York mercer bequests were for important crossings on main roads over major rivers, which studies of extant medieval bridges show to have been from 9ft to 15ft wide, sufficient for the passage of carts.⁹¹ Fewer bequests were for bridges on minor roads, which from extant examples were narrower, from 3½ft to 5ft wide and suitable only for the passage of pedestrians and packhorses.⁹² Again this suggests that the regional trade of some York mercers was focused on the transport of relatively bulky or heavy goods carried by cart either into York or to navigable stretches of the river Ouse from which goods could be shipped up or downstream.⁹³ This type of trade would require a network of commercial contacts, and some emerge in transactions of credit and debt.

⁸⁶ [666]; [408]; [490]; [112]; BI, PR 1, fos. 15, 100; PR 2, fo. 605; PR 5, fo. 467.

⁸⁷ [490]; [301]; [871]; [144]; [601]; [739]; [883]; BI, PR 1, fo. 100; PR 3, fos. 35, 85, 109, 262, 265, 266.

⁸⁸ [185]; [408]; [112]; BI, PR 1, fos. 15, 55; PR 2, fo. 605.

⁸⁹ [883]; [520]; BI, PR 3, fo. 266; PR 5, fo. 308.

⁹⁰ [823]; [232]; BI, PR 1, fo. 99; PR 2, fo. 378.

⁹¹ Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development', pp. 244-6.

⁹² Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development', pp. 247-8.

⁹³ B. F. Duckham, *The Yorkshire Ouse. The History of a River Navigation* (Newton Abbot, 1967), pp. 13-42, esp. pp. 14-15; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 186-9.

iii. Credit and Debt Transactions

a. Yorkshire and Beyond

The provision of credit allowed a limited supply of coined money to be used in more than one place at the same time; and the amount of available credit was a crucial factor in the scope and scale of a York mercer's trade.⁹⁴ There are several sources which record credit and debt transactions involving York mercers which refer to the place of residence of the other party, and they reveal commercial contacts in Yorkshire and beyond, as well as in London. Additionally records suggest various types of financial arrangements, primarily of delayed payment for goods and services, but also of outright loans and perhaps partnerships where death caused default of repayment.⁹⁵ The will of John de Grantham mercer of York records his daughter's legacy as the debt due to him from Thomas Brawby of Malton.⁹⁶ In 1389 Robert Holme was owed £6 by Henry Litster of Helmsley, and at his death in 1396, he forgave or cancelled the debts due from dyers in York, his kinsmen in Beverley and a supplier in Grantham.⁹⁷ Robert Ward and his wife were owed £8 by each of two men from Kirkby Kendal, debts indicative of their involvement in the finishing or production of cloth.⁹⁸ The mayor of Carlisle may have succeeded in collecting 2 obligations in which William Stockton was jointly bound; but John Catterick may not have been so fortunate in being repaid the £31 14s 8d due from William Rose merchant of Newcastle.⁹⁹ It seems that the executors of William Bedale agreed a bond for 100 marks specifically to avoid repaying his debts to 4 merchants from Berwick on Tweed.¹⁰⁰ Links to Lancashire are shown in Henry Preston's attempt to recover a bag with charters and other documents from John More mercer of Preston

⁹⁴ Poston, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', pp. 256-7; Bolton, *Medieval English Economy*, pp. 303-4; Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit', p. 560; Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages*, p. 72

⁹⁵ J. I. Kermode, 'Medieval Indebtedness: The Regions versus London' in N. Rogers (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford, 1994), pp. 72-88 at pp. 78-80; J. I. Kermode, 'Money and Credit in the Fifteenth Century: Some Lessons from Yorkshire', *Business History Review*, 65/1 (1991), pp. 475-501 at pp. 478-488; Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution*, pp. 74, 77.

⁹⁶ [424]; BI, PR 2, fo. 584.

⁹⁷ CPR, 1388-92, p. 66; BI, PR 1, fo. 100.

⁹⁸ CPR, 1391-6, pp. 253, 677.

⁹⁹ W. P. Baildon (ed.), *Select Cases in Chancery A.D. 1364-1471*, Selden Society, 10 (1896, reprinted 1964), pp. 150-1, no. 144; CPR, 1436-41, p. 457.

¹⁰⁰ YMB, 3, p. 125.

in Amonderness; and in the loan of 73s 4d from Nicholas Usfleet to Richard London spicer of Lancaster.¹⁰¹ Transactions to the south of York are seen in a loan of £8 19s from John Romonby to 2 men from Derby, and in John Burnley's debt of £6 13s 4d to John Atkins of South Leverton, Nottingham.¹⁰² Norfolk connections in the fourteenth century are shown in Richard Storrer's suit against the executors of a kinsman Richard Anabel of Salle for recovery of a bond and chest containing charters; John Anabel of Salle sued the York mercer John de Crayke for a debt of 60s; and Robert Chapman tried to collect £12 11s 8d from a John Maryot of Cromer.¹⁰³ Commercial contacts further away are seen in Thomas Holme's suit regarding money due from a dyer in Kingston-upon-Thames; and in the attempt made by John Leversdale's executors to collect £42 13s 4d from William Monford of Dartmouth.¹⁰⁴

Some of these credit and debt transactions would be in essence delayed payments for goods or services rendered, and others would be outright loans which would be secured with various types of collateral. The overall impression is that credit allowed York mercers to finance their activities in the manufacture, finishing and marketing of woollen cloth: from the purchase of wool, dyes and other supplies to their employment of wool processors, weavers, fullers and dyers. Other commercial ventures are suggested in the credit and debt transactions between York mercers and Londoners which show London as the provenance of the mercery sold in their shops.¹⁰⁵

b. London

John de Gaytenby's will proved in 1334 listed debts of £4 4s 4d due to York mercers John le Long and Nicholas de Scorby, but also 2s to James de Hayhesham of London and 13s 4d to a certain woman from London.¹⁰⁶ In the 1380s Robert Bekerton mercer of London tried to recover debts of £5 17s from Margaret widow of Thomas Watton

¹⁰¹ *CPR, 1436-41*, pp. 105, 458.

¹⁰² *CPR, 1385-89*, pp. 183; *CPR, 1436-41*, p. 440.

¹⁰³ *CCR, 1385-89*, p.140; *YMB, 2*, p. 37; *CRP, 1436-41*, p. 336.

¹⁰⁴ *CPR, 1377-81*, p. 523; *1388-92*, p. 425.

¹⁰⁵ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 40-1, 212-15.

¹⁰⁶ *YML, 2/4*, fo. 16.

mercator of York, and £9 from his colleague John Bessingby.¹⁰⁷ Around 1398 a London mercator extended credit of £7 to Thomas Whittick and in 1420 another lent £12 11s 3d to John Bessingby junior.¹⁰⁸ The younger John de Grantham died in London in 1391 instructing a load of herring be sold to cover his debts; and this was probably the reason why John Middleton released financial documents, goods and coin to the servant of the late Hugh Rose of London in 1398.¹⁰⁹ A suit to recover a debt was brought by John de Derfield acting for Robert and Thomas Holme in 1385 which caused the London merchant William Asburn to be imprisoned.¹¹⁰ London was the destination for lead purchased by John de Gisburn and William Wilsthorpe in 1381; and also for goods worth £1,000 which were shipped from Hull but seized by pirates off Great Yarmouth.¹¹¹ York men might use the port facilities of London before transshipping goods to Hull, as they did in 1388 with a cargo of Portuguese imports; and the availability of financial services would also be a draw.¹¹² In fact the bill of exchange drawn up in Bruges by William Agland was presented in London c.1373; and John Howden's bond for £201 arranged in 1398 was to be paid at the House of the Converted Jews of London.¹¹³

There are references to mercery purchased in London, for example a set of red velvet embroidered vestments for 120 marks (£80) which Bishop Skirlaw of Durham gave to York Minster in 1405.¹¹⁴ In the early sixteenth century, Thomas Worrell incumbent at St Michael's Ouse Bridge spent £3 10s 8d in London on 9 yards of flowered damask to make the white copes.¹¹⁵ The inventory of Thomas Greenwood canon at York Minster records silver made in London, and in 1446 the goods in Thomas Grissop's shop described as London ware comprised coffers, chests, glasses,

¹⁰⁷ *CPR, 1381-5*, p. 40; *CPR, 1385-89*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁸ *CPR, 1396-99*, p. 303; *CPR, 1416-22*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁹ *BI, PR 1*, fo. 45; *YMB, 2*, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ *CCR, 1385-89*, p. 111.

¹¹¹ *CPR, 1381-85*, p. 50; *CCR, 1381-86*, pp. 366, 373, 366; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 216.

¹¹² *CCR, 1385-9*, pp. 368, 371; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 253.

¹¹³ A. H. Thomas (ed.), *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls. A.D. 1364-1381* (Cambridge, 1929), p. 154; *CCR, 1396-99*, p. 416.

¹¹⁴ *TE 1*, no. 225, p. 308; Hogarth, 'Ecclesiastical Vestments and Vestmentmakers in York', p. 7.

¹¹⁵ C. C. Webb (ed.) *Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael's, Spurriergate, York, 1518-1548*, 1, Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 20 (1997), pp. 94, 115-16, 179, 250, 262-3.

belts and purses.¹¹⁶ Equally revealing is a memorandum that green woollen cloth worth £3 6s 8d was in the hands of Alice Gladman of London and that she owed Thomas 6s 8d, indicative of his involvement in the marketing of cloth.¹¹⁷ Thomas himself owed money to Londoners: £13 to Ralph Verney, £1 2s to Hugh Wyche, £1 10s 6d to a spicer and £2 to a cap-maker.¹¹⁸ York mercers also found industrial supplies in London, for example John Lilling purchased a batch of adulterated tin from a man whose name 'he wist nought'.¹¹⁹ The practice of sending apprentices and servants to London to buy and sell goods on behalf of their masters is expressed in a Mercers' Guild ordinance; and the emigration to London of the sons of Nicholas Blackburn and Thomas Bracebrigg is known from property deeds.¹²⁰ Londoners continued to extend credit to northerners; for example in 1434 John Gudale executor of Richard Bessingham of Wakefield was summoned to answer John Allen mercer of London touching a debt of £22 8s 2d.¹²¹ The law courts brought Richard Killingbeck to London c.1436 in a dispute over the release of debts due to William Yarum's estate; and likewise William Bedale's executors went to court there to recover 4 marks owed by John Denom.¹²²

Among the Londoners resident in York was Roger Glendour, a member of the Fraternity of St. Mary c.1360; and John Steal, a London draper joined the Mercers' Guild in 1489.¹²³ In 1474 Robert Bigas of London stored woad in the civic crane house; and slightly earlier William Holbeck's second marriage created an alliance with Henry Stork and Thomas Henryson gentlemen of London.¹²⁴ A kinsman John Stork was one of several London grocers, drapers, merchants and merchant-tailors residing in late fifteenth-century York, but claiming trading privileges as London citizens.¹²⁵ Indeed the increasing dominance of London in the medieval economy

¹¹⁶ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 83, 153-6.

¹¹⁷ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 157.

¹¹⁸ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 158.

¹¹⁹ Raine, *A Volume of English Miscellanies*, pp. 4, 5, 6.

¹²⁰ YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 15r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 95.

¹²¹ *CPR 1429-36*, p. 315.

¹²² *ECP*, 1, pp. 130 (15/179, 193), 146 (16/289); *CPR, 1441-46*, p. 87.

¹²³ YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fo. 3v-r; Guild, Accounts 23.

¹²⁴ R. Britnell, 'York under the Yorkists' in *idem* (ed.), *Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 175-194 at p. 179; [480]; BI, PR 5, fo. 22.

¹²⁵ *YCR*, 3, pp. 22-3.

generated conflicts in York.¹²⁶ A series of complaints in the late fifteenth century show the Mercers' Guild complaining of unfair competition of London merchant adventurers by marketing woollen cloth in the Low Countries; and civic officials complained about the increased participation of Londoners in the lead trade, in particular their general disregard for York bye-laws and customs.¹²⁷ Although these fears focused on the detrimental effect on the local economy from London competition, there is no evidence that they took over the retail sale of mercery in York.¹²⁸ Nonetheless London became and remained the main depot for imported mercery in general and the Mercers' Company held the monopoly of imported linen. Provincial mercers might continue to travel to London to purchase their own supplies, but the increased activity of London agents and chapmen in the provinces would have curtailed their role in regional distribution.¹²⁹

Summary Remarks

The overall impression of this accumulation of information about inland trade shows the supply networks which York mercers used in obtaining wool for export or use in domestic manufacture of cloth, and there is also a hint of involvement in the lead trade. The roads and bridges they helped maintain were major ones wide enough for cart loads and this suggests large quantities of relatively bulky or heavy goods rather than light-weight, compact packages of mercery. The mercers seem to have been supplying the city with some basic foods, raw materials and industrial supplies or accumulating their own consignments for export. Their credit and debt transactions reveal commercial networks in Yorkshire and beyond which tie into their regional supply and distribution. The greater number of contacts with London shows they turned to the capital for legal and financial services, particularly for larger amounts of

¹²⁶ Nightingale, 'The Growth of London in the Medieval English Economy', pp. 89-106; Barron, 'London 1300-1540', pp. 438-440.

¹²⁷ YCA, 3, pp. 30-1, 70-2; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 176v-177v; Trade Correspondence 11 (c.1510 grievances); Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 75-9 (1478), 122-6.

¹²⁸ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 252-3; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 199-225, 260-287; G. Unwin, 'London Tradesmen and their Creditors' in *idem* (ed.), *Finance and Trade under Edward III* (London, 1918, reprinted 1962), pp. 19-34.

¹²⁹ Nightingale, 'The Growth of London in the Medieval English Economy', pp. 89-90, 106; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 1-2, 12, 40, 43; E. J. Fisher, 'The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption' in E. M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), *Essays in Economic History*, 2 (London, 1962), pp. 197-207.

credit and for supplies of mercery for redistribution in Yorkshire or for retail sales from their shops in York.

Thus the information about the regional trade of York mercers attests to the expansion in the scope of their trade into wholesale supply and distribution of merchandise and into the production and finishing of cloth. Whether or not this garnered a sufficient income to abandoned their traditional role as retail shopkeepers is not known. Therefore the next section looks at aspects of local trade, at the shops of York mercers and the stock carried, the potential clientele and at the consumer demand for linen.

II

LOCAL TRADERS AND COMMERCIAL PREMISES

Although York mercers were engaged as wholesalers in their regional and long-distance trade, there is little evidence that they abandoned the retail distribution of mercery from a fixed sales outlet or shop. Title deeds and leases record shops in the tenure of York mercers detached from their residences, but they seem to have been let or sublet to generate rental income. It is assumed that most York mercers used the front part of their domestic dwellings as their shop, and other rooms or separate buildings on the same site would be dry and secure storage facilities.

The presence of shops and workshops had been a distinct feature of York from the Viking age; archaeologists and architectural historians have uncovered many details about houses and ancillary buildings constructed during the medieval period; and the 1852 Ordnance Survey map of York have shown that many properties retained their medieval outlines.¹³⁰ These investigations reveal that building plots were generally rectangular and varied in width from 35ft to 60ft at the street frontage, and in length depending on the abutment of other properties at the back or a physical feature of the landscape.¹³¹ The typical house in York was about 16.5ft (a perch) and the typologies

¹³⁰ See *Archaeology of York* fascicule series; RCHME volumes on the City of York; Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, p. xi.

¹³¹ S. Rees Jones, 'Historical Introduction' in R. A. Hall and K. Hunter Mann, *Medieval Urbanism in Coppergate: Refining a Townscape*, The Archaeology of York, 10/6 (2002), pp. 684-98 at pp. 686.

formulated by Pantin and Schofield help visualise its disposition in relation to the street frontage and the internal arrangement and use of rooms.¹³² There have been several surveys of commercial premises; an examination by Stenning of extant structures discovered several identifying features of shops including arched openings with low sills and internal rebates for shutters.¹³³ These studies provide a means of visualising the commercial premises used by York mercers.

A. PARISH OF RESIDENCE

The extant taxation returns for the city of York comprise nominal lists of taxpayers assessed in their parish of residence from which the names of mercers and mercer-associates can be identified at specific dates, 1327, 1332, 1377, 1381 and 1524/5. Testamentary evidence records the parish of residence at the deaths of York mercers, their widows and next of kin; and additional information is found in title deeds and rentals of the city, the Vicars Choral and the Mercers' Guild. Here the parish or district of residence has implications for the distribution of mercery within the city, the potential client, the size of the shop and the type of stock; and changes over time are likely to reflect underlying economic conditions. In the following table the parishes of residence are grouped into seven locales A to G which are based on a main thoroughfare, district or other feature:¹³⁴

A. Petergate Area:	St. Michael le Belfrey, Holy Trinity Goodramgate and Holy Trinity King's Court.
B. Pavement Crossroads:	St. Saviour, St. Crux and All Saints' Pavement.
C. Central District:	St. Martin Coney Street, St. Helen Stonegate, St. Wilfrid with St. Leonard's Hospital, St. Sampson and St. Peter the Little.
D. Ouse Bridge Area:	St. Mary Castlegate, St. Michael Spurriergate and St. John Ouse Bridge.
E. West Bank:	Holy Trinity Micklegate, St. Martin <i>cum</i> Gregory, St. Mary Bishophill, St. Mary the Elder and St. Clement; and All Saints' North Street.
F. Eastern Edge:	St. John del Pike, St. Helen Aldwark, St. Andrew, All Saints' Peaseholme; St. John Hungate; St. Denys, Ss. Mary and Margaret, St. Peter le Willows and St. Michael.
G. Extra Mural:	Bootham, Monkgate, Layerthorpe with St. Cuthbert, Outside Walmgate Bar and down Fishergate.

¹³² Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp. 165-171; W. A. Pantin, 'Medieval English Town-House Plans', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1962-3), pp. 202-239; Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 71-81, 90-3.

¹³³ Stenning, 'Timber-Framed Shops 1300-1600', p. 35; Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp. 172-3.

¹³⁴ See above, p. xiv (Map One).

Information has been assembled pertaining to the parish of residence for 401 households representing the community of mercers: 275 mercers, 31 chapmen or haberdashers, 55 kinsmen (generally drapers and merchants) and 40 wives or widows. The numerical data has been collated and sorted and is set out in Table 5.1 according to locale and in half-century intervals 1300 to 1549; and total figures are given for each locale (Bands A to G) and broken down into constituent groups, mercers (M), chapmen (Chp), kinsmen (K) and women (W). To weigh up the implications of topographic and demographic change over time percentages are reckoned for each interval and for each locale.

TABLE 5.1
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MERCERS OR THEIR FAMILIES,
BY LOCALE OF RESIDENCE, 1300-1549

Parish	1300-1349	1350-1399	1400-1449	1449-1499	1500-1549	Total	%	M	Chp	K	W
A	31	45	32	21	6	135	34	111	8	4	12
B	5	9	25	26	8	73	18	43	1	12	17
C	5	26	18	9	2	60	15	43	4	9	4
D	5	9	14	15	10	53	13	32	5	14	2
E	6	11	9	3	6	35	9	20	5	7	3
F	3	9	15	3	2	32	8	19	6	5	2
G	2	6	0	5	0	13	3	7	2	4	0
Total	57	115	113	82	34	401	100	275	31	55	40
% 401	14	29	28	20	9	100		68	8	14	10
M = mercer Chp = chapman or haberdasher K= kinsmen (drapers and merchants) W= wives or widows Parishes: A. Petergate Area B. Pavement Crossroads C. Central District D. Ouse Bridge Area E. West Bank F. Eastern Edge G. Extra Mural											

The largest concentration of households pertaining to the community of mercers was in the Petergate Area (Band A) where 135 or 34% were recorded between 1300-1549. This was more considerably more than the 73 (18%) living in the Pavement Crossroads (Band B) or the 60 (15%) in the Central District (Band C). Another cluster of 53 (13%) lived in the Ouse Bridge Area (Band D), but numbers were fewer on the West Bank (Band E) with 35 (9%) and on the Eastern Edge (Band E) where there were 32 (8%). The fewest households, 13 (3%) were found in Extra Mural parishes (Band G), an indication that for the majority an intra-mural residence was preferable. This survey confirms the impression from the taxation returns discussed in Chapter Two that the prime location for retail shops of mercery was along Petergate, from Bootham Bar through to its intersection with Goodramgate, the location of *le Mercery*; incorporating the 3 parishes of St. Michael le Belfrey, Holy Trinity Goodramgate and Holy Trinity King’s Court. Proximity to the public marketplaces in St. Sampson and All Saints’ Pavement parishes also attracted

merciers, and so to did the approaches to the river crossing over the Ouse in the parishes of St. John Ouse Bridge, St. Michael Spurriergate and St. Mary Castlegate.

In looking at the demographic and topographic changes over time, there was a significant increase from 57 to 115 in the number of households pertaining to members of the mercer community in the period 1350-99; and this is seen in particular areas: from 31 to 45 in the Petergate Area; from 5 to 26 in the Central District; and from 5 to 9 in both Pavement Crossroads and the Ouse Bridge Area. During the years 1400-49 the total number of households remained about the same, 113 and 115, but there were reductions in the Petergate Area from 45 to 32 and in the Central District from 26 to 18. In contrast there were increased mercer households in the Pavement Crossroads, the Ouse Bridge Area and the Eastern Edge parishes. This shift away from the Petergate corridor continued in the last half of the fifteenth century with a drop from 32 to 21 households in the Petergate Area; and numbers elsewhere dropped: from 18 to 9 in the Central District, from 9 to 3 on the West Bank and from 15 to 3 in the Eastern Edge. The Pavement Crossroads and Ouse Bridge Areas saw an increase of just one; and the largest rise was from none to 5 in the Extra Mural parishes. There were even fewer mercer households in the first half of the sixteenth century, with slightly more located in the Ouse Bridge Area (10) and Pavement Crossroads (8) than in the Petergate Area (6). This topographical shift does not suggest that the Petergate Area changed from a retail to a wholesale district, but rather that the area around the marketplaces and near Ouse Bridge became more attractive over time, particularly as the community contracted in size.

It is instructive to look at the composition of the mercer community and the favoured locations of residence; and because mercers were by far the largest constituent group, 275 or 68% of 401, their presence or absence in a parish or locale would be the main determinant. About 40% (111 out of 275) of mercers resided in the Petergate Area and much smaller proportions elsewhere: 43 (16%) in both Pavement Crossroads and the Central District; 32 (12%) in the Ouse Bridge Area; about 7% in both the West Bank and Eastern Edge; and 2% outside the city walls. Chapmen were distributed similarly with their largest numbers in the Petergate Area. Wives and widows were mostly found in the Petergate corridor down to its junction with Pavement; and it was the households of kinsmen, the draper and merchant sons of mercers, which were concentrated in the Pavement Crossroads and Ouse Bridge Areas.

In light of the diminished number of mercers living and working in York, the topographical shift from 1450 can be attributed both to fewer numbers and their own movements away from the Petergate Area. Moreover the tendency for mercers to promote their sons and younger kinsmen as wholesale merchants would account for their residences to be closer to the quayside and general markets and slightly further away from the retail shopping district. Nonetheless, as discussed above in Chapter Two, the taxation of 1524/5 showed that a proportion of sixteenth-century merchants had moved into the Petergate Area, assumed the premises and commercial role of the mercer and presumably embraced both wholesale supply and retail distribution.

Summary Remarks

Despite some demographic changes over time, concentrations of mercers were found along the Petergate corridor from Stonegate to the junction with Goodramgate known as *le mercery*, and further investigation is required to determine whether or not this was the premier retail precinct in York.¹³⁵ The presence of groups of mercers around Thursday Market is significant in terms of attracting market traders to their shops; and those living or renting premises on Ouse Bridge would have opportunities to sell their wares to all manner of visitors travelling to and from York. The location of their parishes of residence suggests their homes combined domestic and commercial premises; and details of the latter can be gleaned from archaeological excavations, architectural surveys and documentary evidence.

B. COMMERCIAL PREMISES

i. Storage Facilities

The size, structure and location of storage facilities would depend on the type of goods.¹³⁶ Those that were brought into the city by road could be delivered directly, but those transported by water would need to be unloaded and might be stored temporarily in a stall on the quayside or in the crane-yard, the latter in William Jackson's custody from 1478.¹³⁷ William Plovell had his own wharf with crane,

¹³⁵ Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 43; *YChA*, pp. 191, 106, 123, 191, 198.

¹³⁶ G. Sheeran, *Medieval Yorkshire Towns. People, Buildings and Spaces* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 112-119, 144-6.

¹³⁷ [527]; *YMB*, 2, pp. 65, 81-2, 299; *YMAA*, Petitions to the Governor and Company (Crayn masters byll); Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 200-1; *YChA*, pp. 90, 104,

tackle and warehouse and Thomas Holme leased *terra in Dyrt lane et super ripam aque Use* giving direct access to the main staithe.¹³⁸ Various types of other storage facilities are recorded in civic and guild records, storehouses, granaries, turf houses and enclosures on vacant land for fuel.¹³⁹ Individuals might use an outbuilding or open yard for industrial supplies or building materials; perhaps the use Hugh Dunnock and John Lilling made of leased vennels in St. Saviourgate and the Stonebow; and wool might be kept in storerooms within a house or inn or outside in a shed where Thomas Grisopp put his nine sacks.¹⁴⁰ It is curious that warehouses are seldom mentioned apart from William Plovell's and Joan Gilliot's which contained presses or chests for cloth and John de Beverley's for *res et utensilia*.¹⁴¹ The ordinances of the Mercers' Guild refer to members setting up both shops and warehouses, and evidence from King's Lynn and London shows these to be locations for wholesale transactions.¹⁴²

The underground cellar was another storage facility which in York might be sited near the street, and those fronting a corner property in Petergate and Loplane were partially below ground.¹⁴³ There was a large cellar under a range of 7 tenements in Skeldergate held consecutively by Richard de Allerton and John de Garriston; and there were small cellars under St. William's Chapel on Ouse Bridge and next to Richard le Mercer's shop.¹⁴⁴ Cellars were part of the tenement in Pavement conveyed

176, 205; YCR, 1, p. 170; YCR, 2, pp. 82, 138-9, 171-2, 181; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, pp. 240-2; RCHME, *City of York*, 2, p. 90a; 3, p. 100; 5: *The Central Area*, pp. 70, 72-3, 97-8, 169; VCH, *City of York*, pp. 210, 223.

¹³⁸ YCR, 3, p. 18; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 93; YMB, 1, p. 2; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, pp. 177, 202, 239, 252-3.

¹³⁹ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 149, 166, 172, 186, 188, 201, 224, 234, 261, 265, 340, 355, 367, 377, 380, 392, 405, 428, 439, 452, 453; YMAA, Guild Accounts 36; Estate Acquisition, Fossgate 48-51; Estate and Tenancy Papers 1; Fraternity of St. Mary, Account Book, fo. 5v; YMB, 2, p. 175; J. Kaner, 'Clifton and Medieval Woolhouses', *York Historian*, 8 (1988), pp. 2-10 at p. 6; YD, 8, p. 176, no. 512; *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, 1348-77, p. 210, no. 568; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 138 citing YCR, Ch. Accts. 1494, p. 62.

¹⁴⁰ YMB, 1, pp. 2, 174-5; YMB, 3, p. 60; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 43-4, 157; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 179, 185, 196, 217, 221.

¹⁴¹ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 93; BI, PR 5, fo. 38; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, p. 124, no. 214 (1392).

¹⁴² Pantin, 'The Merchants' Houses and Warehouses of King's Lynn', pp. 173-181; Keene, 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London', p. 43.

¹⁴³ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp. 180-1; Sheeran, *Medieval Yorkshire Towns*, p. 148, 150-1; Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. 39-45 (T.11).

¹⁴⁴ YD, 1, pp. 216-7, nos. 599-600, 602, 606; YMB, 1, p. 5; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, pp. 208-9; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 126, 141, 154, 177, 183, 193, 214, 238, 276, 285-6, 302, 315, 337, 364, 389, 417, 425, 444, 449, 453.

to Ralph de Romonby and John de Crome, and also the capital messuage lived in by Thomas Finch near the Shambles; and Richard de Brignall leased a cellar in a stone house in Micklegate for 10s annually.¹⁴⁵ The St. Christopher Guild stored wine in the cellars under the Common Hall in Coney Street; Adam del Brigg's tavern may have been a stone cellar and Robert de Selby supplied wine to a cellar tavern in Selby.¹⁴⁶ Ale was brewed and sold in tenements at the Common Hall gates; and stored in a cellar next to the entry of the Bull in Bootham and under a shop on Ouse Bridge.¹⁴⁷

The upper chambers of domestic residences, the solar, could be used as a dry and secure storage area; and if the gable were towards the street a hoist could be fitted to the window frame for handling bulky or heavy goods.¹⁴⁸ The recurrent phrase in property deeds to shops and solars or to shops, cellars and solars imply these might be separate commercial units.¹⁴⁹ A garret on Foss Bridge was let separately in 1376; and a solar in Glovergail was acquired by William de Durham and Adam de Pocklington, but not the lower storey shops fronting Petergate.¹⁵⁰ John de Doncaster's shop and solar in Feasegail were leased as a unit, and so too the shop with chamber above in Goodramgate sublet by John de Beverley to Robert Ward.¹⁵¹

Although not abundant, the evidence for storage facilities used by York mercers is sufficient to show the different types available; and long-established use of such facilities is evinced by an ordinance of 1603 forbidding the apprentices and servants of Merchant Adventurers to stand at corners or in the street calling out to passing

¹⁴⁵ YMAA, Estate Acquisition, Marketshire 1 A-3, 8-9; YMB, 3, p. 225; YD, 7, pp. 183-190, nos. 530, 533, 538, 544 and 546.

¹⁴⁶ White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, p. 3; YMB, 1, p. 2; BI, PR 3, fo. 109; F. Plunknett (ed.), *Year Books, 13 Richard II, 1389-90*, Ames Foundation (1929), pp. xlvi, 79-82; Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁷ E. White, 'The Tenements at the Common Hall Gates 1550-1725', *York Historian*, 6 (1985), pp. 32-42 at pp. 34-6; YMAA, Estate and Tenancy Papers 1; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, p. 302.

¹⁴⁸ Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540*, pp. 197, 430-1; C. Singer, E. J. Holmyard, A. R. Hall and T. I. Williams (eds.), *A History of Technology, 2: Mediterranean Civilizations and the Middle Ages, c. 700 B.C. to c. A.D. 1500* (Oxford, 1956), p. 388; D. Buttery, *The Vanished Buildings of York* (York, 1995), pp. 15, 81, 85; E. Brunskill, 'Two Hundred Years of Parish Life in York', *YASAS Annual Report* (1950-1), pp. 17-58, illustrations.

¹⁴⁹ YMB, 1, pp. 43-4; YMB, 3, pp. 25, 64, 110-11; Keene, 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London', p. 36; Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, p. 71; Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp. 173-5.

¹⁵⁰ YMB, 1, p. 11; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 49, 50-1, 53, 219; YMAA, Title Deeds, Glovergail 1.

¹⁵¹ YMB, 3, p. 28; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, pp. 52-3, 55-6, 124-5. nos. 87, 92-4, 213-4.

chapmen and enticing them into their masters' cellars and warehouses.¹⁵² In contrast shops or workshops sited on the street frontage would be clearly visible to those passing by and it is the shop which features in title deeds, leases and rentals.

ii. Shops

A number of sources reveal details about the shops used by York mercers and provide a glimpse of their physical appearance, construction, internal features and furniture. The shop sited at the front of domestic premises is clear from a deed concerning 4 shops in front of John Gisburn's tenement in Micklegate; and there was a shop annexed to a messuage in Marketshire conveyed to Ralph de Romonby and John de Crome.¹⁵³ The shops on Ouse Bridge were grouped and numbered sequentially in city rentals, which suggests they were short rows of shops under a single roof line and this is depicted on eighteenth-century drawings of Ouse Bridge.¹⁵⁴ The Petergate properties on the corners of Loplane and Glovergail were bordered on both frontages by shops some let separately to Adam and Geoffrey de Pocklington; others in pairs to Richard de Scruton; and the prime corner site was in the freehold tenure of John de Bristol and Henry de Scorby.¹⁵⁵ Shops would be acquired specifically to let or sublet, for instance John de Beverley's shop in Goodramgate was let to Robert Ward and his in *Le Mercery* to Robert Yarum and John de Osbaldwick.¹⁵⁶ These mercers seem to have lived elsewhere whereas John Freboys and John Tutbag lived over their shops in Petergate and Ouse Bridge.¹⁵⁷ The anxiety about living and working in a leased premise may have prompted the Mercers' Guild ordinance against the displacement of a previous inhabitant when leasing a shop.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² YMAA, Acts and Ordinances, 5, pp. 80-102; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 275-7.

¹⁵³ YMB, 3, pp. 72-3, 73-5; YMAA, Estate Acquisition, Marketshire 8-9.

¹⁵⁴ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 214, 230; B. Wilson and F. Mee, 'The Fairest Arch in England'. *Old Ouse Bridge, York, and its Buildings: The Pictorial Evidence* (York, 2002), pp. 56, 59, figs. 38, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. 39-45 (T.11), 138-46 (T.32).

¹⁵⁶ YCR, G70:8, 14, 22, 38a; YMB, 3, p. 37; Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, pp. 124-5, nos. 213-4.

¹⁵⁷ YMB, 3, pp. 46, 63.

¹⁵⁸ YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 13v; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 91.

a. Terminology for Shops

The terms stall, booth, seld and shop are used at different times for places where food and goods were sold and are likely to reflect different structures for different uses.¹⁵⁹ For example non-resident drapers were to use tables or stalls in Thursday Market for display and sale of cloth, and occasional traders such as Alice Oakburn silkwoman, Margaret seamstress and Beatrice Ripon chapwoman were fined 12d for use of stallage.¹⁶⁰ In 1420 a glover sought permission to set up a stall near the Minster Gates, and a stall in front of a tenement in Petergate provided the Carpenters' Guild with 6s annual rent for which Henry Preston was responsible in the 1420s.¹⁶¹ Repairs to the stallage on Foss Bridge required planks to be fitted to trestles, and the stallage on Ouse Bridge seems to have been a row of several tables hitched together and under a simple roof.¹⁶²

Booth is allegedly the origin of the street name, Bootham, from the huts of merchants or cattle sheds there; and this simple structure may describe the four *bothas* recorded c.1201 in front of a Petergate property on the corner of Grapeland.¹⁶³ Richard de Scruton released his claim to two booths (*bothas*) with solars c.1292 in front of the tenement in Petergate; and in c.1410 an inquisition refers to diverse shops and booths adjoining the capital messuage of Richard de Duffield gentleman in St. Saviourgate.¹⁶⁴ Noting that these references are to pairs of booths on corner properties, it is likely they were structures attached to the domestic premises with internal partitions each with a window opening.¹⁶⁵

Another word used is seld and there are references in the thirteenth-century spelled variously *sendae* and *soldae* to a seld with a solar in Petergate; and several other selds

¹⁵⁹ Sheeran, *Medieval Yorkshire Towns*, pp. 145-9.

¹⁶⁰ *YCR*, 2, pp. 90-1; *YChA*, pp. 105, 122.

¹⁶¹ *YMB*, 2, p. 92; *YMB*, 3, pp. 84-5.

¹⁶² *YMB* 1, p. 12; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 140, 153-4, 176-7, 182-3, 192-3, 213, 237; *YMB*, 3, p. 63.

¹⁶³ *EYC*, 1, pp. 207-111, 214; D. M. Palliser, 'The Medieval Street-Names of York', *York Historian*, 2 (1978), pp. 2-16 at p. 6; Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 261; Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, p. 78 (T.21); Sheeran, *Medieval Yorkshire Towns*, p. 148.

¹⁶⁴ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, p. 43 (T.11); W. P. Baildon and J. W. Clay (eds.), *Inquisitions Post Mortem Relating to Yorkshire of the Reigns of Henry IV and Henry V*, *YASRS*, 59 (1918), p. 85, no. 76.

¹⁶⁵ Stenning, 'Timber-Framed Shops', p. 36.

were in the tenure of mercers such as Richard de Scruton, Richard de Allerton, John de Bristol and the families of Eryholme and Scorby.¹⁶⁶ The selds fronting Glovergail were let separately from Adam de Pocklington's solar, but a tenement and 3 selds in Trichourland off Fossgate were transferred as a whole to Richard de Tickhill.¹⁶⁷ Rental income of 4s a year was returned from a seld in Fossgate c.1270, and a century later John de Beverley received 6s rental income from his selds in Petergate.¹⁶⁸ A seld under a stairway was used as a smelting house and the owner sub-let other units to metal-workers; and the seld of the cutler Adam de Newby contained stock appraised at £40 in 1368.¹⁶⁹

There was a certain interchange of these words; for instance the booths or cellars fronting Petergate near Loplane were described as selds and later as shops.¹⁷⁰ By 1352 the four booths on the corner of Petergate and Grapelane were in the tenure of Richard de Wressell and redeveloped into a row of twelve shops (*schoppae*) by 1364; and the nearby selds inherited c.1300 by Cecilia daughter of Richard de Scruton, had become a row of shops by 1378.¹⁷¹ The word shop begins to predominate in the fourteenth century which can be seen in a series of deeds pertaining to a property in Marketshire: *shoppae* in the 1335 indentures, *shopae* in the owner's will of 1349 and *schopae* in a 1362 conveyance, although in 1368 the term *seldae* was used.¹⁷²

b. Size and Commercial Value

The dimensions of stalls, selds and shops are occasionally revealed; for example a glover's stall in Petergate measured 1½ ells by ½ ell, about 5ft by 1½ft or the size of a narrow table.¹⁷³ A seld in Petergate was noted as being 5ft wide and extending back 10ft to the capital messuage; and there was a solar 12ft wide across the street frontage

¹⁶⁶ Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, pp. 223, 228, nos. 402, 412; Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. 39-45 (T.11), 109-110 (T.26), 122 (T.28), 138 (T.32).

¹⁶⁷ YMAA, Title Deeds, Glovergail 1, Fossgate 26-7, 33-4.

¹⁶⁸ CPR, 1377-81, p. 216; YD, 8, pp.173-4, no. 506.

¹⁶⁹ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. 43-5 (T.11); YML, 2/4, fos. 38,40-1, 48-9.

¹⁷⁰ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. xiii, 43-5 (T.11).

¹⁷¹ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. 78-82 (T.21), 109 (T.26).

¹⁷² YMAA, Estate Acquisition, Marketshire 1-12, Cartulary, fos. 86v-89r; *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, 3: 1348-77, pp. 238-9, no. 645.

¹⁷³ YMB, 2, p. 92.

and 14ft deep and this was described as being as wide as two selds.¹⁷⁴ Thus a seld could be 5ft to 8ft wide and 10ft to 14ft deep, sufficiently large to be subdivided internally into booths or a selling place and storage area.¹⁷⁵ A tenement set parallel to the street could have more commercial space than one set perpendicular, but this would depend on the size of the plot; and a corner property had the advantage of two frontages which could be seen and approached from two directions.¹⁷⁶

Other clues as to relative size are the adjectives used for shops, such as the large shop next to the *maison dieu* on Ouse Bridge or the four small shops next to the door of the Tollbooth in 1376; and the former was subdivided into two small and four large shops by 1400.¹⁷⁷ In the 1420s there was a row of new shops on the downstream side next to John Bessingby in contrast to the 'old shops' on the other side which would later be rebuilt and renumbered.¹⁷⁸ The commercial value of a shop would depend partly on its size but also on its appurtenances; for example John de Eshton's small shop next to Micklegate Bar returned 4s annually as did three shops in Davygate, but those with chambers returned about 14s each.¹⁷⁹ The location would also affect the value of commercial premises and this is reflected in varying rents; for instance in 1376 shops on Ouse Bridge rented from 3s for a small shop near the Chapel door to 36s for the large one next to the *maison dieu*, and Richard le mercer paid 8s for his under the Chapel and Joan the seamstress 10s for hers.¹⁸⁰ The rents for shops leased by the chapmen William and Adam de Bugthorpe in Nessgate and Coney Street were considerably higher at 25s and 26s 8d, within the range of 5s to £5 charged for tenements.¹⁸¹

During the fifteenth century, a number of mercers rented shops on Ouse Bridge; for instance in 1446 the row of shops at the end of St. William's Chapel was rented at 33s 4d by Roger Collinson for the 1st and 2nd and at 40s by Alice Tutbag for the 5th

¹⁷⁴ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. 44-5 (T.11); Tringham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, 1, pp. 223, no. 402.

¹⁷⁵ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, p. xii; *YMB*, 2, p. 92.

¹⁷⁶ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, p. 183.

¹⁷⁷ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 126-7.

¹⁷⁸ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 140-1, 153-4, 176-7, 182-3, 213-4, 238; *YMB*, 1, pp. 54-5.

¹⁷⁹ *YMB*, 1, p. 47.

¹⁸⁰ *YMB*, 1, pp. 2-12 at pp. 5-7 at p. 5.

¹⁸¹ *YMB*, 1, p. 8.

and 6th; and on the opposite side William Blaufront, Richard Garton and Robert Skipwith paid 20s for their shops and Robert Collinson 46s 8d for the 1st and 2nd of the new ones.¹⁸² In the 1450s the rents began to fall, ranging from 4s to 26s 8d: in 1458 the 4s due for the 1st shop by Richard Sawyer was not paid; Thomas Fynch paid half of 16d due for the 3rd shop; and only one of the Tutbag tenements was let at a reduced rent of 13s 4d, the same amount due for the 9th tenement held previously by Christopher Booth.¹⁸³ On the other side Robert Collinson paid 23s 4d for the 1st and 2nd of the ‘new shops’ and John Dring’s rent was 20s for the 12th tenement; but Thomas Hayles paid a reduced rate of 16s 8d for the 16th tenement and Thomas Glasyn had taken over one of his brother John’s tenement at 16s 8d down from 23s 4d.¹⁸⁴ The downward trend in rents was a general phenomenon, and the total income collected by the Bridgewardens’ fell from £92 in 1433/4 to £46 in 1454/5, a clear reflection of recessionary economic conditions.¹⁸⁵

c. External Appearance and Internal Fittings

A civic regulation of 1495 provides a vivid description of a shop with earthenware pots set out for sale, tar barrels, pike or freshwater fish in vessels and dishes with fruits in front of the shop, and hanging from the windows were ropes, halters, girthwebs and other things.¹⁸⁶ This detail is supplemented in an instruction to the Bridgewardens in 1504 to make an inventory of the ‘dorez, wyndowez, glase and other perclozez, benkez, synkez [and] lovers’ belonging to the civic estate.¹⁸⁷ There are references to the same external fixtures and internal fittings of shops tenanted by York mercers which helps visualise their appearance.

Civic ordinances of 1301 refer to the shop window where *regraters* were to place and sell their bread, butter, oil and fat; whereas poulterers were to sell their fowl on Ouse Bridge and not from their windows.¹⁸⁸ This window would be an enlarged sill similar to the butchers’ benches in the Shambles or to window ledges in *lez tolboth* repaired

¹⁸² Stell, *York Bridgemasters’ Accounts*, pp. 213-4.

¹⁸³ Stell, *York Bridgemasters’ Accounts*, pp. 285, 314-5.

¹⁸⁴ Stell, *York Bridgemasters’ Accounts*, pp. 286, 315-7.

¹⁸⁵ *YChA*, pp. xxviii, 214.

¹⁸⁶ *YCR*, 2, pp. 119-20.

¹⁸⁷ *YCR*, 3, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ Prestwich, *York Civic Ordinances*, 1301, pp. 11-12, 14.

in 1464.¹⁸⁹ The word window also refers to the opening in a wall which if unglazed would be closed by a shutter, hinged to open downwards and serve as a counter or showing board.¹⁹⁰ An inquiry into the fixtures in the shop of Simon Stele (perhaps a cardmaker) records a 'fall window towards the street'; there was a 'hanging window' at Matilda Waythman's tenement on Foss Bridge; and the planks and thakboards used to repair a shop window in Ousegate suggest a similar construction.¹⁹¹ The shop window's importance is shown by the civic practice of boarding it up as punishment for recalcitrant freemen, thereby preventing essential light for manufacture.¹⁹²

The items hanging from shop windows in 1495 indicate there were hooks, cords or rails attached to the window frame; the opening may have been arched; and there is architectural evidence for timber supports of canopies over windows in the Shambles.¹⁹³ The window or its shutter could be a decorative feature such as William Plovell's trellis window in his shop, Robert Skipwith's was glazed and Simon Stele had some of each type in his domestic quarters.¹⁹⁴ Renovations at John Tutbag's shop on Ouse Bridge included glass windows, and one of Thomas Darby's improvements to a Pavement tenement was a bay window in the shop.¹⁹⁵ The windows at shops of William Blaufront and John Lister were repaired with iron fastenings, staples and window bands, as were shops managed by the Mercers' Guild on Ousegate.¹⁹⁶

Corner shops may have had carved beams to draw attention, some doorframes would be ogee-arched and other doors would have carved canopies similar to the one refitted to Jacob's Well, off Micklegate.¹⁹⁷ A shop door in Ousegate with a pentice or

¹⁸⁹ RCHME, *City of York*, 5, pp. 212, 215, nos. 425-6; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, p. 405.

¹⁹⁰ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, p. 173; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 179; *TE*, 2, p. 16, no. 30.

¹⁹¹ Raine, *English Miscellanies*, p. 16; *FR*, 1, p. 65; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 230, 408; YMAA, Estate Management, Rentals 12.

¹⁹² *YCR*, 1, p. 91; 2, pp. 106, 121; *YCR*, 3, pp. 107, 109, 154.

¹⁹³ RCHME, *City of York*, 5, pp. 212, 215, nos. 425-6; Stenning, 'Timber-Framed Shops 1300-1600', p. 35.

¹⁹⁴ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 92; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 230, 405; Raine, *English Miscellanies*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, p. 302; YMAA, Estate and Tenancy Papers 2.

¹⁹⁶ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, p. 245; YMAA, Estate Management, Rentals 12.

¹⁹⁷ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, p. 183; RCHME, *City of York*, 5, p. lxxiii, 147, 214-5, 217-8, 225, 232, nos. 231, 424, 434, 437, 470, 485; *City of York*, 3, p. 109a/b, plate 191; H. Murrar, S. Riddick and R. Green, *York Through the Eyes of the Artist* (York, 1990), no. 83; Buttery, *Vanished Buildings of York*, pp. 43, 68, 79; *TE*, 5, pp. 61-2 (note of Henry Cave's drawing of Thomas Dawson's tenement on corner of Ousegate and Nessgate).

wooden awning was repaired in 1477 and 1500 with stanchions, fir spars, English 'tables', spikings, sharplings, crooks and doorbands; and planks, *fillets* and wainscot were purchased for the door of William Blaufront's shop.¹⁹⁸ There was a key for the door to Thomas Glasyn's *opella* on Ouse Bridge, and locks and keys for five doors were provided for the Tutbag premises there.¹⁹⁹ A lock and key were made for a cellar door in Goodramgate which may refer to a trapdoor; or to an entry at the bottom of steps such as the *grece* which Richard Thornton laid and fastened to a tenement at the North Street end of Ouse Bridge.²⁰⁰

A *parclose* was formed in the courtyard of Thomas Glasyn's tenement for use as a community store, but elsewhere the *parclose* was an internal partition or screen, for example in Thomas Darby's warehouse and at Simon Stele's between the entry and the shop.²⁰¹ John Tutbag had a *parclose* between the old hall and the shop on the right side 'as one enters', another on the left side and one within the chamber suspended on *clyntes* (?corbels).²⁰² *Selours*, probably wall panelling or ceilings, were other internal fittings of the Stele and Tutbag premises, and there were also built-in benches and shelves.²⁰³ Stele had a paved floor and hearth, and two louvres in William Gutterwick's shop suggest an open fire; drainage of water is indicated by the lead pipes and sinks at John Tutbag's, and by the lead spout which ran from Robert Collinson's inner chamber into his shop with the comment 'as is the custom'.²⁰⁴

d. Furniture and Equipment

Most furniture in shops would be used as containers for storing the mercery and other goods for sale. William Askham, Thomas Tutbag and Thomas Darby had *almories* and *aumbries* or wall cupboards in their shops, and the two-stage chest of Thomas

¹⁹⁸ YMAA, Estate Management, Rentals, 12; Guild Accounts 32; Murrar, Riddick and Green, *York Through the Eyes of the Artist*, no. 80; Buttery, *Vanished Buildings of York*, pp. 12, 15, 27; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 245, 302.

¹⁹⁹ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 299, 302.

²⁰⁰ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 31; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 84, 90, 98, 353; Raine, *English Miscellanies*, pp. 22-3.

²⁰¹ Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 299; YMAA, Estate and Tenancy Papers, 2; Raine, *English Miscellanies*, p. 16.

²⁰² Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, p. 302; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 135.

²⁰³ Raine, *English Miscellanies*, p. 16; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 302; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 231.

²⁰⁴ Raine, *English Miscellanies*, p. 16; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 230, 302, 356.

Curtas may have been a free-standing cupboard with shelves or a chest with compartments.²⁰⁵ George Birtbeck had a *hanipur*, perhaps a wickerwork basket like those in Thomas Baker's workshop.²⁰⁶ John Bowland used a long chest for storage and those in the shops of Alice Waghen and John del More were bequeathed to their niece and brother respectively.²⁰⁷ The children of Richard Waghen inherited a distinctive chest, John Crome's was described as joinery-work, and Prussian chests and coffers were owned by William Tallvais, Isabel Hammerton and Alice Tutbag.²⁰⁸ Robert Hindley and Joan Gilliot referred to their chests as pressers for cloth, and Thomas Scotton, Thomas Tutbag and William Plovell mentioned ware-chests.²⁰⁹

Although ledgers and account books do not survive for York mercers, some evidence of their financial and accounting practices is revealed in the extant accounts of the Fraternity of St. Mary and of the Mercers' Guild in ordinances concerning common funds secured in a locked coffer or common box.²¹⁰ There are glimpses of the storage of money in coffers such as one with clasps of iron belonging to Nicholas Blackburn; and some type of valuables would have prompted Robert del Gare and his wife to break into a chest at St. Leonard's Hospital.²¹¹ Thomas Bracebrigg had a securely locked chest for his records of debt, and Thomas Catour left his locked coffer with friends or in the Carmelite Friary when he travelled abroad.²¹² Thomas Darby's counting house was in his shop; and William Askham's counter with 'checker above' was probably used for casting accounts and would have been similar to the counter covered with green cloth in the city's exchequer on Ouse Bridge.²¹³ Mercers might store money in their bedrooms, perhaps an interior chamber in John de Eshton's

²⁰⁵ YML, 2/4, fo. 96; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, p. 302; YMAA, Estate and Tenancy Papers, 2; BI, PR 5, fo. 60.

²⁰⁶ BI, PR 4, fo. 158; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 135.

²⁰⁷ BI, PR 2, fos. 570, 575; PR 3, fo. 10.

²⁰⁸ YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 72-4; YML, 2/4, fos. 39, 72; BI, PR 2, fo. 296; PR 3, fo. 345.

²⁰⁹ BI, PR 3, fo. 531; BI, PR, 5 fos. 38, 60, 299; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 92.

²¹⁰ YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 12r, 15r.

²¹¹ BI, PR 2, fo. 605; *CPR 1364-7*, p. 146.

²¹² BI, PR 3, fo. 487; *YCR*, 2, pp. 75-6.

²¹³ YMAA, Estate and Tenancy Papers, 2; YML, 2/4, fo. 96; *YChA*, pp. xxi-xxii, 67 F. P. Barnard, *The Casting Counter and the Counting Board* (Oxford, 1917, reprinted, 1981); W. T. Baxter, 'Early Accounting: the Tally and the Checker-Board' in R. H. Parker and B. S. Yamey (eds.), *Accounting History. Some British Contributions* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 197-238.

shops; and Agnes widow of Thomas Thornton refers to a counter and chest standing in the summer hall.²¹⁴

Finally, there are the weights and measures which were used by York mercers such as those seized from William Huggate in 1396 by Robert Yarum and Roger Barton, searchers of the mystery of mercers.²¹⁵ John de Stillington left his balances with lead weights in the custody of John del More until his son was of full age and John bequeathed his to his brother Thomas.²¹⁶ Thomas Grissop owned a pair of balances bound in black leather and Richard Bishop had two pairs of balances and a pair of weigh-scales; their values of 4d to 16d imply they were small versions suitable for weighing out retail quantities of the sugar, pepper and spices they carried.²¹⁷ Thomas Curtas had pairs of small balances in each of his two shops, but there were also 2 iron balks with lead weights, the larger one for weighing up to 300lbs which implies he carried heavy goods quantified by weight.²¹⁸ The brass mortars with iron pestles in both his shops indicate grinding of spices and apothecary medicaments; and the chests with two stages would be suitable for bolts of cloth or the *mercimonia* he mentioned worth 22 marks (£14 13s 4d). The scope of his trade was obviously wider than that of a retail mercer and he had commercial connections with merchants, in particular his sons-in-law and his *famulus* Thomas Wrangwis, who inherited the large balk and contents of one shop.²¹⁹

Curiously there is no reference to the linear measures used for retail sales of imported cloth and other fabrics, but this may have been a length of knotted cord, a cheap wooden yard-stick or scored into the edge of their sales counters. Nonetheless the Mercers' Guild appointed searchers to inspect the yard-wands and ascertain 'whetyer thay be sufficient or noght'; and civic records refer to yard-wands sealed at both ends

²¹⁴ YMB, 1, p. 47; BI, PR 2, fos. 420, 430; H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and Their England. Studies in an Age of Transition* (Cambridge, 1922, reprinted 1995), p. 94; J. Gairdner (ed.), *The Paston Letters 1422-1509 A.D. A Reprint of the Edition of 1872-5, etc.* (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1910), 1, pp. 519, 537, nos. 352, 365; 2, pp. 37, 212, 295, nos. 352, 365.

²¹⁵ YMB, 2, pp. 8-9; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 13v.

²¹⁶ BI, PR 1, fo. 99; PR 3, fo. 10.

²¹⁷ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 155, 319; TE, 4, no. 98, pp. 191-3.

²¹⁸ BI, PR 2, fo. 438.

²¹⁹ Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', pp. 275, 302; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 33n, 37n, 38, 52, 114n, 150, 205, 346.

for use by freemen or foreigners.²²⁰ There is a brass yard-stick dated 1653 preserved in the Merchant Adventurers' Hall, and also a set of bell-shaped weights of 1588 and two large balance beams which had graduated weights for weighing from ¼lb-7½lb and 7½-14lb, indicating retail rather than wholesale quantities.²²¹

Summary Remarks

It is apparent that there were several types of commercial premises available for use by York mercers and mercer-associates. Storage facilities might be separate structures such as warehouses or part of the residential premises such as cellars and upper chambers (solars) and these might also be venues for wholesale transactions. Retail sales would be more likely to be transacted in their shop and this was generally sited on the street frontage of their residence, though separate premises were available elsewhere and might be let as 'shop, cellar and solar' or as individual units. Terminology suggests that stalls, booths, selds and shops were similar places for sale but not necessarily uniform structures: the stall was free-standing and typically found in market places for occasional sale, whereas booths and selds were generally the front range of a residence, and their dimensions and descriptions imply that they were subdivided internally into smaller selling places and that some were rows of selling places under a single roof. Although the shop gradually replaced booth and seld, other descriptions reveal relative commercial value. Using results from archaeological and architectural investigations it is possible to visualise the external appearance and internal fittings of shops; and other sources describe the furniture used for storing of stock and money, for casting accounts and the equipment for weighing and measuring goods. There is no doubt that the shops of members of the community of mercers were a well-established visible feature in York, particularly in the Petergate area, near Thursday Market and on Ouse Bridge. It remains to be seen what type of stock they sold from their shop windows and what clientele they hoped to attract.

²²⁰ YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 13v; Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', pp. 171-2; YCR, 2, p. 182; YCR, 4, p. 138.

²²¹ YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 13v; Administration, 5/6: Standard Weights (1790); YORMA, 6, 176, 180, 211-214, 335-6; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 92, 145, 287, 297-8, 309-10.

III

THE RANGE OF MERCERY FOR SALE IN YORK

The studies of mercers and the mercery trade in medieval London and early modern Coventry carried out by Sutton and Berger provide a firm foundation for examining the mercery available in York during the period 1272/3 to 1529.²²² The primary source is the extant probate inventories of the York Diocese, primarily those dated from c.1395 to c.1500, and other information is recorded in wills. Probate inventories record quantities of linen textiles used for sheets, tablecloths and towels in both secular and religious households, and the latter record garments and soft furnishings fashioned from cotton, fustian and silk. Wills are replete with bequests of plain linen for sheets, more decorative weaves for napery and fine linen with special finishes for headscarves and veils. Wills and inventories also reveal garments lined with cotton or silk and dress accessories such as silk girdles and purses. Household and guild accounts record the purchase of stationery supplies, paper and other miscellaneous small wares; and books are recorded in a variety of sources. Inventories pertaining to the furnishings of churches, chapels and chantries attest to the array of textiles used in ecclesiastical settings with vestments generally described in detail. In fact vestments are a special category of mercery comprising garments made from imported linen, fustian and silk which were embellished with embroidered panels using coloured silk, gold and silver threads, girthed and trimmed with narrow borders also fashioned from silk and metallic threads, and accompanied by specially fashioned collars, caps, hats, gloves and slippers.

Although probate inventories are a rich source for details and descriptions of mercery, they do not record the value of new articles, and only a few provide information about the resale price of used goods. It is the appraised value of the contents of shops which would give an idea of the purchase price of new items; and it is unfortunate that only one inventory survives for a known York tradesman, that is Thomas Grissop, originally free as a merchant, but a chapman at his death.²²³ There is an inventory taken c.1500 of the shop of an obscure tradesman, Richard Bishop, which lists a variety of imported textiles and small wares; and also a court case of 1422

²²² Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 21-31; Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries*, pp. 15-58.

²²³ [436]; BI, Dean and Chapter of York, Original Wills, 1383-1499; Stell and Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 151-9; YML, 2/4, fo. 260.

recording valuable stock of linen textiles allegedly stolen from John Bessingby, mercer of York.²²⁴

Using the information from these 3 sources together with the details from inventories and wills, a good impression can be gleaned of the type of mercery available in York from the mid-fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries and its use in secular and religious households. Moreover, the valuations provided in the inventories of their shop contents not only shed light on their personal circumstances and relative levels of investment, but on the potential clientele they hoped to attract. Part IV will carry the investigation of mercery further by examining the consumer demand for the linen textiles in York as reflected in wills and inventories. A further, separate study is foreseen on the consumer demand for cotton, fustian, silk, small wares and groceries.

A. THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF MERCERY

i. Mercery as a Household Possession

The intrinsic value of personal possessions and household furnishings is apparent from their use as the basis for taxation assessments and also as a means of repaying debts and as worthy legacies. The executors of Alice Coker held possessions worth £5 9s 7d in trust, of which bedding was valued at £1 17s (34%), kitchen utensils at 10s 6d (10%) and silver plate and other *jocalia* at £3 2s 1d (56%).²²⁵ A five year's rent arrears of £14 due to Holy Trinity Hospital by Alice widow of John Barnardcastle was partially repaid in kind with a whole woollen cloth dyed blue (40s), 2 old breviaries (26s 8d), a silver cup (20s), half a piece of *buckram* (8s), broken silver (3s 4d) and a baslard and dagger (2s).²²⁶ Thomas Rotherham recovered £3 11s 8d of a debt of £4 6s 8d through the attachment of household possessions: 34s 2d in items made from lead, iron and brass; 31s 6d in linen and worsted bedding and soft furnishings; and 6s in wooden furniture.²²⁷

Mercery is more evident in the list of goods stolen from John Buttercrambe in 1422, such as 2 coverchiefs of cloth of *lawn* (8s), a *crisp* coverchief (6s 8d), 2 *crisp*

²²⁴ [107]; [82-3]; *TE*, 4, no. 98, pp. 191-3; Stell, *Sheriffs' Court Books*, pp. 67-8.

²²⁵ *YMB*, 3, pp. 103-4.

²²⁶ *YMAA*, Draft Accounts: Miscellaneous Assessments, 8.

²²⁷ Stell, *Sheriffs' Court Book*, pp. 13-14.

coverchiefs like cloth of *lawn* (6s 8d), 6 kerchiefs great and small (12s), a broad thread *vollas* kerchief (6s 8d), 3 embroidered cushion covers (5s) and 3 lengths of coloured fringe (3s 4d).²²⁸ Nonetheless this mercery was valued at about a quarter of the silver and jewellery, £2 8s 4d compared to £8 17s 4d, and this proportion seems to be generally the case. Moreover, textiles wore out with use and the age and condition are more often noted than with pots and pans or furniture; for example 3 pairs of old sheets were valued at 6s compared to a new pair at 8s 4d.²²⁹

ii. John Bessingby's Claim for Stolen Mercery

John Bessingby brought a case before the Sheriffs' Court alleging that on 11 November 1421, the dyer Thomas Malton broke into his house and carried away £200's worth of goods and chattels, although the value of those itemised in the court proceedings came only to slightly more than £150.²³⁰ Bessingby was a mercer and most of the stolen goods can be classified as mercery: lengths of imported cloth (£74), linen head coverings (£12), worsted cloth and bedding (£13) and sewing accessories (£8); and there were also a few belts (£1), wooden coffer (£2) and cash (£40). It is instructive to look more closely at the descriptive terms used: *lawn* and *chaumpan* would be linens typical of those woven in Laon and Champagne; buckskin is probably the cotton fabric *bocasin*, and *fustian* is a cotton-linen blend with the appearance of corduroy.²³¹ The descriptive terms for kerchiefs suggest *crisps* would be starched linen and *pleasances* were probably a light-weight linen from Piacenza.²³² *Relevaunts* might be the sheer silk known as *relisaunces* or the framework to lift a veil off the hair (from the French *reliever*), and *lamps* the patterned silk called *lampas*.²³³ There was also 4lbs silk, the weight implying it was in raw silk or fibres and 12lb red thread, probably linen. Bessingby's range of small mercery is represented by belts, laces and metal-tipped points used to attach hose and sleeves to

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8; *FR*, 1, p. 92.

²³¹ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 156-7, 211-2, 301; V. A. Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', *Textile History*, 18/2 (1987), pp. 205-18 at pp. 212-3.

²³² Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', p. 113 note 61; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 156; Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles', p. 213.

²³³ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 301 note 168; E. Crowfoot, F. Pritchard and K. Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing c.1150-c.1450*, Medieval Finds from Excavations in London, 4 (1992), pp. 107-122 (*lampas*).

the main garment and thread. He also carried beds, that is bed-covers, and curtains which were embroidered or made from worsted and serge.

Table 5.2 sets out the details of Bessingby’s stock in four categories A to D, in invoice format so that unit prices can be calculated from the quantity and valuation and the relative values of fabrics and articles can be compared.

TABLE 5.2
VALUE AND UNIT PRICE OF MERCERY ALLEGEDLY STOLEN
FROM JOHN BESSINGBY, c.1421

Band	N=	Units	Item	Valuation			Sub-Total			Unit Price	
				£	s	d	£	s	d	s	d
A	20	piece	linen cloths	40	0	0				40	
	3	piece	lawn	6	0	0				40	
	3	piece	chaumpan cloth	7	0	0				46	8
	6	piece	terrey ²	6	0	0				20	0
	6	piece	fustian	4	10	0				15	0
	32	piece	buckskin ³	8	5	0				2	8
	4	lb	silk	2	13	4				13	4
							74	8	4		
B	2	doz	lampas ⁴	3	10	0				2	11
	3	doz	crisp kerchiefs	5	0	0				2	9
	12	piece	pleasances ⁵	0	18	0				1	6
	12	piece	relefaunt ⁶	0	18	0				1	6
	2	doz	relefaunt	1	12	0				1	4
							11	18	0		
C	10	piece	worsted	6	13	4				13	4
	6	beds	say (serge)	3	0	0				10	0
	8	beds	embroidered	3	12	0				9	0
							13	5	4		
D	6	doz	girdles	1	0	0					3½
	3	doz	crules ⁷	1	16	0				1	0
	40	gross	points	3	10	0				1	9
	6	gross	lacing points	0	3	6					7
	12	lb	red thread	0	16	0				1	4
							7	5	6		
			Total				105	36	14		
			Adjusted Total				106	17	2		
<div>Notes</div> <div><div>¹ laun, lawn</div><div>² terrery, not identified but probably linen</div><div>³ bocasin, generally considered a cotton fabric</div><div>⁴ lamps, not identified, probably not silk</div><div>⁵ pleasance, a light linen used for veils</div><div>⁶ relefaunt, perhaps relisance, a light silk or framework to lift a veil off the hair from relever</div><div>⁷ crules, probably belts of woollen yarn, crewel</div></div> <div>Sources:</div> <div>P. M. Stell (ed.), <i>Sheriffs' Court Books of the City of York for the Fifteenth Century</i> (York, 2000), pp. 67-8 (c. 1421, John Bessingby v. Thomas Malton).</div> <div>A. F. Sutton, <i>The Mercery of London. Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578</i> (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 156, (plesaunz), 301 (reliaunce).</div> <div>M. Sellers (ed.), <i>York Memorandum Book</i>, 1: 1276-1419 (Surtees Society, 120, 1912), p. 185.</div>											

It is significant that £74 or more than two-thirds of his investment of £106 was tied up in imported linen cloth (Band A). Fabric used for kerchiefs and veils came to almost £12 (Band B) and slightly over £13 was invested in worsted bedding (Band C); in total about a quarter of his investment with the remaining £7 or 7% tied up in dress accessories or thread (Band D). Looking at the distribution of unit prices, it is

apparent that Bessingby's main stock was 20 pieces of linen valued at £40, an average of 40s or £2/piece; and this was the same unit price as 3 pieces of *lawn* (Band A). Three pieces of *chaumpan* were less expensive at £1 6s 8d each and 6 pieces of *terrery* at £1 each; 6 pieces of *fustian* at a unit price of 15s. The 32 pieces of *buckskin* had much lower valuations at 2s 8d each which suggests they were smaller pieces, perhaps narrow strips of fabric rather than poorer quality.

The Band B textiles show a range of unit prices from a high of 2s 11d for *lamps* down to 1s 4d for *relefaunts*, with *crisps* at 2s 9d each, and *pleasances* at 1s 6d the same price as pieces of *relefaunts*. These unit prices are far less expensive than those for Band A textiles; and suggest again that they were smaller or narrower pieces of fabric or of different quality in weave, weight, finish or decoration.²³⁴ In contrast *worsted* bedding was nearly as expensive as the imported linen textiles about 13s/piece, *say* *beds* were 10s each and embroidered ones 9s each (Band C).

As for the dress accessories, Bessingby carried a low-price range of belts at 3½d each compared to the *crules* at 1s each which were probably belts woven from coloured yarn (Band D); The laces and points were counted rather than measured and unit prices varied from 7d to 1s 9d/gross or about ½d to 1¾d/dozen. The thread was weighed and raw silk was valued at 13s 4d/lb considerably more expensive than the red thread at 1s 4d/lb (Bands A and D).

B. THE MERCERY STOCKED IN TWO YORK SHOPS

It is apparent from Bessingby's stock that he specialised in imported textiles; and though he carried some small wares, their value was slight. The proportion of fine fabric to small wares would reflect the capital reserves of both the mercer and his prospective clientele and this is apparent in a comparison of Bessingby's stock with that of Thomas Grissop and Richard Bishop.

i. Thomas Grissop, chapman

Thomas Grissop's shop inventory recorded a fascinating array of small wares, some seldom recorded elsewhere such as swan-wing purses and New Year's gifts.²³⁵ Over

²³⁴ Crowfoot, Pritchard and Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing c.1150-c.1450*, pp. 107-122.

²³⁵ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp.151-9.

240 items are listed representing 30 different types of manufactured wares, and they can be collated into 8 categories. In order to compare the type and value of his stock with that carried by John Bessingby and Richard Bishop, it is necessary to survey briefly the stock in each category:

- Fine and Utilitarian Fabrics – imported cloth: 5 types of linen (*brabant, champagne, lawn, umple, lewyn*), 3 of cotton or cotton-linen mixes (*bocasin, buckram, fustian*) and two of silk (*tartarin, tissue*); and there were canvas and packcloth, probably of domestic manufacture.²³⁶
- Clothing Accessories - Head-coverings - fabric for kerchiefs, chaplets, caps (for children, boys, women, chaplains and priests, lined and unlined and red), bonnets (for men, lined and unlined, small and of various colours) and hats (knitted and felted); Belts – girdles (silk, thread, London ware, black and red), leather dog leashes; Bags - pauteners or bags (yellow leather, black *bocasin* and from Prussia), pouches for adults and children, purses (half pennyware, red, cloth of gold and for women) and special purses (true-love, embroidered, swan-wing and from London); Knives – pairs of bone knives and Doncaster-ware; Gloves – for women, men and horsemen (single, lined, fur-lined, leather and goatskin).
- Dress-Making Supplies - Lining or Trimming - dyed and undyed skins of sheep and goat, pelts of red and grey squirrels and otter; Sewing Equipment - thread (red and from Burgundy), silk ribbons, black key-bands and laces with metal tips, points, small metal items (pins, brooches, buckles; tin *chapes*; latten rings and eyelets).
- Gifts and Jewellery - tokens to mark the New Year, jet and brass hearts, rosaries, chains and lockers (loquets).
- Miscellaneous – locks, sea shells and maplewood bowls; toiletry articles (mirrors both barbers' and half-penny ware, combs, some of ivory, and spectacles).
- Stationery – paper (black, white, expendable, writing), inkhorns, painted papers, images, books.
- Housewares – glass tumblers (Londonware and large), trenchers, other vessels, spice plates and a cooper bowl; wooden furniture (chests from London and Flanders, Prussian coffers, boxes, 2 for powder).
- Grocery - 95lbs each of pepper and dried fruit, 5lb of sugar and about 40lb of spices (ginger, cinnamon, saunders, galingale, cloves, mace).

Thomas Grissop and his wife are known to have joined the Corpus Christi Guild in 1441 and the Mercers' Guild in 1444; he leased tenements outside Bootham Bar from the city from 1440-46; and a kinsman also named Thomas Grissop received payments from the Bridgewardens for supplying building materials from 1446-1468.²³⁷

²³⁶ YCR, 1, p. 9.

²³⁷ CCG Register, p. 41; Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', p. 258; Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts*, pp. 199, 208, 222, 249, 265, 293, 298, 301, 329, 354, 356, 376, 437.

ii. Richard Bishop, tradesman

Far less is known about Richard Bishop, who cannot be identified with certainty; but the supply of timber and nails in his household and shop suggests he may have been the carpenter of this name, free in 1446, searcher of the masons and wrights in 1474 and one of 25 carpenters named in their ordinances of 1482. His shop contents, similar to that of Grissop but less extensive, indicate his activities as a retail shopkeeper; and the chaplain Robert Bishop qualified for freedom in 1505 by patrimony as the son of Richard Bishop carpenter, a sure sign of upward social and economic mobility.²³⁸

The contents of Bishop's shop can be sorted into similar categories as Grissop's with the addition of ironmongery and merchandise and the deletion of miscellaneous:

- Fine and Utilitarian Fabrics – imported cloth: linen (not named) and linen-cotton mixes (*Fustian, Dornik*), silk (*Satin, Damask, Velvet, Sarsenet*), wool-silk mixes (*Chamlet*) and English woollens and worsted, mostly dyed.
- Clothing Accessories - Head-coverings – hair bands, bonnets (men's and women's) and hats; Belts – leather and yarn (crewel); Bags – (coarse linen, red, women's and with bullions); Knives –half- and penny-ware and Arm and Leg – cuffs, *sokes* [*sic*], sleeves and hose.
- Dress-Making and Sewing Supplies - thread (silk *inkle*, linen, coloured and burgundy), yarn (skein, crewel), cord (whip, pin, line), bow strings; narrow wares (tassels, tapes); laces and points; small metal items (pins, brooches, buckles); shears (tailors' and wool), wool cards.
- Precious Metals and Costume Jewellery – gold worth 40s, beads (half- and penny-ware), Milan bells, triacle boxes).²³⁹
- Stationery – paper and parchment.
- Housewares – glasses (farthing-ware), trenchers, wine bottles, coffers.
- Ironmongery – horse combs, rattles, wheel *qwarkes*; nails (gullet, horseshoe, scouring, *cyngall*), wains-clouts, tacks, studs, spikings (middle, double).
- Merchandise – 450 *aumes* iron, 1 barrel soap, 1.5 barrels pitch.
- Grocery – green ginger and pepper.

Before discussing the clientele Grissop and Bishop hoped to attract with their wide array of textiles, small manufactures and grocery, it is instructive to compare their respective investments. For this comparison the categories have been grouped into 5 ranges or bands and are set out in Table 5.3 as Textiles (A), Dress Accessories (B),

²³⁸ FR, 1, pp. 187, 229; YMB, 2, pp. 250, 277.

²³⁹ J. T. Fowler (ed.), *Acts of Chapter of the Collegiate Church of SS. Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon, 1452-1506*, Surtees Society, 64 (1875), p. 179n.

Miscellaneous (C), Merchandise (D) and Grocery (E) with relevant subdivisions. The value of each sub-category is give along with the percentage of total investment and then the percentage represented by the band. These results show that compared to Bessingby’s £108 investment in a limited range of imported textiles (above Table 5.2), Grissop’s £52 was half the investment and tied up in a much in a wider array of goods. Bishop had even less invested (£20) and his range of goods included fewer imported textiles, in smaller quantities and presumably of lesser quality.

TABLE 5.3
COMPARISON OF THE VALUE OF SHOP CONTENTS:
THOMAS GRISSOP, c.1446 AND RICHARD BISHOP, c.1500

Band	Category	Thomas Grissop ¹ , c.1466					Richard Bishop ² , c.1500				
		Valuations			%	%	Valuations			%	%
		£	s	d			£	s	d		
A	Imported Cloth	21	14	10.5	42	44	4	3	8	21	41
	Wool Cloth						2	5	7	12	
	Lining Cloth							13	1	4	
	Utility Cloth	1	1	2.5	2			13	9	4	
B	Head-wear	8	19	7.5	17	28	1	3	10	6	21
	Dress Accessories	3	1	10	6		1	0	9	5	
	Skin & Furs	1	1	0	2						
	Dress-Making	1	14	10	3		2	0	3	10	
C	Silver & Jewellery		5	8	0.5	8	2	3	4	12	15
	Miscellaneous		13	2	1			0	10	0.5	
	Stationery	1	8	8	3			2	8	1	
	Cooking & Eating		19	9.5	2			2	3	0.5	
	Coffers and Boxes		12	7	1			3	0	1	
D	Ironmongery						2	3	4	11	19
	Merchandise						1	10	0	8	
E	Grocery	10	8	6	20	20		16	0	4	4
TOTAL		52	1	9	99	100	19	2	4	100	100
Sources: ¹ P. M. Stell and L.Hampson (eds.), <i>Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500</i> (York), pp. 151-9 ² <i>TE</i> , 4, no. 98, pp. 191-3.											

Although their investments in Textiles (Band A) were similar, 44% to 41%, Grissop had twice as much (42%) tied up in fine cloth and had no cloths made from wool, whereas 20% of Bishop’s investment was in cloth made from wool or hemp (Band A). The proportion of their investment in dress accessories was similar at 28% and 21%; and the values of their gloves, hose, belts, purses and knives were the same, 5% and 6%. However Grissop’s stock of caps and bonnets represented 17% compared to Bishop’s 6%; and Bishop’s main range seems confined to dressmaking equipment (Band B).

A greater difference between the two shopkeepers is seen in their miscellaneous stock (Band C) with Grissop's valued at £4 representing 8% of his total investment, about half that of Bishop's £2 12s or 15% and the latter was significantly boosted by £2 in gold, apparently bullion as it is not described as plate or coin. None of Grissop's wares can be classified as ironmongery or merchandise (Band D) while Bishop had 19% of his investment in nails, bulk iron or barrels of soap and pitch which were appraised at £3 13s 4d. This proportion was nearly that which Grissop had in grocery (pepper, sugar and a range of spices), valued at £10 8s 6d or 20% of his total (Band E); and though Bishop did stock green ginger and pepper it was far less valuable at 16s and only 4% of his investment.

iii. Prospective Clientele

The general impression which this brief analysis gives is that Bishop's stock was more utilitarian in nature than Grissop's: more of his cloth was locally manufactured woollens or worsteds and there were fewer special linens for head-coverings; there were a greater range of sewing equipment and a separate range of building supplies; and a far less extensive range of spices and luxury foods. The iron and nails he sold together with the timber *speykes*, felled trees and boards in his yard support the tentative identification of Bishop as a carpenter, who had expanded into supply and distribution. His wool shears, wool cards and soap would be needed by wool growers, and girth buckles and horseshoe nails by horse owners and farriers whether they lived in the countryside or town.²⁴⁰ His inventory records bushels of wheat and rye in a granary, pitchforks and spades, a mare, cow and pig and, inside the house, there was a spinning wheel, rack, reel and yarn winder. It is likely that Bishop had a smallholding on which he raised some of his own food and that his household was involved in processing wool into fibre. His debts were 7s to a nail-maker and 10d to William Nicholson, perhaps a miller; and his packhorse and saddles show he was able to take goods directly to his customers and pick up some supplies on the way.²⁴¹ His shop stock seems suited to the demands of suburban or rural households, perhaps those which combined small-scale agrarian pursuits with a craft.

In contrast to Bishop's useful stock, that of Thomas Grissop seems destined for literate secular and religious personnel, who could afford some fine cloth, decorative

²⁴⁰ *TE*, 4, no. 98, p. 191.

²⁴¹ *FR*, 1, p. 240.

dress accessories and exotic seasonings for their food; and these would be found in the Minster precinct. His home was rented from the parish chaplain of St. Michael le Belfrey and he leased two tenements in Gillygate just outside the city walls to the north. The debt section of his inventory records sums of 4d to £1 12s 6d due from a Minster canon, the widow of a lawyer, a vicar, a chaplain, a sacristan and 3 monks, as well as from customers in Guisborough, Pocklington and Clifton. Grissop also supplied the York mercers, Thomas Marriot, John Glasyn and John Lightlop and a seamstress and spicer in Ripon. He purchased goods from Londoners, including a spicer and a capmaker, and the debts due to him from a spurrier, weaver, two dyers and a tailor imply his involvement in production, particularly of cloth. Indeed it seems he marketed his cloth in London through an Alice Gladman. The occupational description as chapman together with his horse and saddle suggests an itinerant side to his business, but perhaps conducted through hired carriers such as John Warter to whom he owed £1 18s 8d.

Thus the livelihoods of Grissop and Bishop were not earned solely as retail shopkeepers; the former was a *quasi* mercer and draper and the latter a smallholder. They lived in 2 different environments, one suburban if not rural and the other urban; and their standard of living or comfort suggests Bishop was less affluent than Grissop. In contrast, Bessingby had a more limited but more valuable stock, and evidence suggests he was a typical mercer whose livelihood was earned through retail sales of mercery from a shop on Ouse Bridge. He married Margaret widow of John Murdock spicer and as her executor was sued for £28 by Trinity Hospital to recover an old debt. Their son John was also a mercer. Although there is no evidence for participation in regional or foreign trade, his court case concerned the alleged theft of his goods by Thomas Malton dyer. This suggests that Bessingby had branched into the finishing of locally woven woollen cloth and that Malton was a dissatisfied outworker seeking to recover his expenses or wages.

Summary Remarks

It can be seen that despite the few inventories available, the livelihood of a mercer depended on several factors, and might be limited to retail sales of mercery, but might also be combined with the production, finishing and marketing of woollen cloth. This would launch the mercer into regional trade either to procure supplies or to make deliveries straight to the customer. The type of stock handled varied according to the capital reserves of the mercer, the market demand for particular wares and the

occupation, status and disposable income of the customer. The mercers with shops in the parishes adjacent to Petergate were in close proximity to the Minster which would warrant stocking expensive textiles and special dress accessories for ecclesiastical use. Mercers whose shops were near the public markets might stock less expensive textiles but a wider array of small wares and they would hope for a rapid turnover. The mercers on Ouse Bridge would hope to attract passing trade whether casual visitors, market traders, lawyers, civil servants or landed gentry; and their stock might cover the full range of imported fabrics and small wares such as the fabric and kerchiefs stocked by John Bessingby.

IV

YORK HOUSEHOLDS AND CONSUMER DEMAND FOR LINEN

A. TYPES OF LINEN

Probate inventories in the York Diocese dating between c.1395 and c.1500 record quantities of linen textiles, primarily used for sheets, tablecloths and towels in secular and religious households. Wills are replete with bequests of utilitarian linen for sheets, more decorative weaves for napery and specially finished fine linen for headscarves and veils. Inventories of the furnishings of churches and chapels attest to quantities of linen in various sizes and qualities for use as altar cloths, altar veils and garments. These references imply a steady market demand for different types of linen typified by place of manufacture in the Low Countries or northern France: the country of origin for Brabant, Flanders, Holland; or the town for Cambrai, Champagne, Nantes (*Dinant*), Laon (*Lawn*), Nivelles (*Nifles*), Paris and Rheims (*Reyns*).²⁴² Another type of linen was imported through Hull by Hanseatic merchants and called *lewyn* or *lewent*, and seems to have been an unbleached linen classified in

²⁴² Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 156-7, 211-2; H. S. Cobb, 'Textile Imports in the Fifteenth Century: The Evidence of the Customs' Accounts', *Costume*, 29 (1995), pp. 1-11; H. S. Cobb (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480-1*, London Record Society, 27 (1990); D. M. Mitchell, 'By Your Leave my Masters': British Taste in Table Linen in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Textile History*, 20(1) (1989), pp. 49-77 at pp. 50-1; Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', pp. 212-3.

the London customs accounts as Westphalian.²⁴³ Linen was also woven in England and is sometimes described as such in wills and inventories; and there would also be canvas woven from hemp fibres. Here domestic production was inferior to imported linen in quality, finish and prestige; and this is reflected in prices.²⁴⁴

i. Relative Value of Linen Fabrics

The first step in assessing consumer demand for linen in York is to ascertain the relative value of the particular types stocked by Bessingby, Grissop and Bishop by calculating unit prices from the quantities listed and the appraised values. The price reflected the fineness of the fibre, the complexity of weave, the type of finish and the dimensions of the material.²⁴⁵

Table 5.4 sets out the unit prices for linen measured by ell, *aune* or yard which for the present are considered near equivalents; and other unit prices are for the piece of indeterminate length and for the pleat of unknown width.²⁴⁶ For most of the lengths of linen in stock, a high and a low price can be determined and these are arranged in ascending order in the table. They are compared with the unit prices compiled by Munro for linen purchased for the Royal Wardrobe in 1438-9 which he recorded in fractions of shillings, but which are converted here into pence (*denarius*).²⁴⁷ The distribution clearly shows that *lewent* was the least expensive variety at about 1d/ell and Rheims the dearest at an average of 33d/ell; and that the more expensive varieties of Flanders, Champagne and Rheims were conspicuously absent from the inventories of Grissop and Bishop.

²⁴³ M. Twycross, 'The York Mercers' *Lewent Brede* and the Hanseatic Trade', *Medieval English Theatre*, 17 (1995), pp. 96-119, esp. pp. 96-100; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 156-7.

²⁴⁴ *YMB*, 2, p. 243-4; *YCR*, 1, pp. 6-7; *YCR*, 3, pp. 47, 65; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 37, 39.

²⁴⁵ I. Turnau, 'The Organization of the European Textile Industry from the Thirteenth to the Eighteenth Century', *The Journal of European Economic History*, 17/3 (1988), pp. 583-602 at pp. 589-594; N. Evans, *The East Anglian Linen Industry. Rural Industry and Local Economy, 1500-1850*, *Pasold Studies in Textile History*, 5 (1985), pp. 12-39.

²⁴⁶ Mitchell, 'British Taste in Table Linen', p. 72, footnote 20.

²⁴⁷ J. H. Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders: Urban or National?' in H. A. Miskimin, D. Herlihy and A. L. Udovitch (eds.), *The Medieval City* (New Haven and London, 1977), pp. 229-267, Table 13.3.

Grissop's largest investment (£3 6s 7d) was in the cheapest linen, *lewent* and comprised 44 ells and 312 pieces with unit prices ranging from 1d to about 1½d/ell and from 1¼d to 3d/piece. The *lewyn* appraised in Margaret Piggot's Ripon household was similar at 1d/ell, but her length of *harden* was 3d/ell implying that *lewyn* was a coarser grade; and similarly her *lewyn* sheets were 10d/pair and those of *harden* 4s/pair.²⁴⁸ Grissop's second largest investment (£3 10s 7d) was in *Brabant* linen of which he stocked 172 ells in 2 grades, 119 ells valued about 3¾d to 4½d/ell and the remaining 53 ells from 5d to 10d/ell. These prices compare well with Munro's range of 5d to 7d/yd and suggest that Bishop's stock of 68 yards of *lin cloth* was a middle-grade *Brabant*, priced between 4¾d and 9d/yd.²⁴⁹

TABLE 5.4
TYPES AND UNIT PRICES OF LINEN FOR SALE IN YORK WITH
REFERENCE TO MUNRO'S SCHEDULE OF LINEN PRICES, 1438/9

Type of Linen	York Inventories: Bessingby ¹ , Grissop ² and Bishop ³								Munro ⁴	
	Units	Valuation			Price/ell		Price/piece		Price/yd	
		£	s	d	low	high	low	high	low	high
<i>Lewent</i> ² 1	44 ells	0	5	4	1d	1½d				
<i>Lewent</i> ² 2	312 pieces	3	1	3			1¼d	3d		
<i>Brabant</i> ² 1	119½ ells	2	2	3	3¾d	4½d				
<i>Brabant</i> ² 2	52¾ ells	1	8	4	5d	10d			5d	7d
<i>Lin Cloth</i> ³	68 yards	1	12	0	4¾d	9d				
<i>Champagne</i> ² 1	93 ells	3	1	3	6½d	10d				
<i>Flanders</i>									12d	19d
<i>Champagne</i> ⁴ 2									20d	24d
<i>Linen Cloth</i> ¹	20 pieces	40	0	0				40s 0d		
<i>Champagne</i> ¹ 3	3 pieces	7	0	0				46s 8d		
<i>Holland</i>									28d	31d
<i>Rheims</i>									30d	36d
<p>1, 2 and 3 refer to different grades of the same fabric. Sources: ¹ P. M. Stell (ed.), <i>Sheriffs' Court Books of the City of York for the Fifteenth Century</i> (York, 2000), pp. 67-8 (c. 1421, John Bessingby v. Thomas Malton). ² P. M. Stell and L. Hampson (eds.), <i>Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500</i> (York), pp. 151-9 (1446, Thomas Grissop). ³ <i>TE</i>, 4, no. 198, pp. 191-3 (c. 1510, Richard Bishop). ⁴ J. H. Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders: Urban or National?' in H. A. Miskimin, D. Herlihy and A. L. Udovitch (eds.), <i>The Medieval City</i> (New Haven and London, 1977), pp. 229-267, Table 13.3: The Purchase of Textiles in the Royal Wardrobe of Henry VI, Michaelmas 1438-Michaelmas 1439.</p>										

Thomas Dalby Archdeacon of Richmond had pairs of *Brabant* linen sheets appraised in his inventory around 5d/yd, and a more expensive grade at 9d/ell was used in Thomas of Lancaster's household for breeches and sheets.²⁵⁰ A similar quality

²⁴⁸ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 295-6.
²⁴⁹ Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders', Table 13.3 (Brabant linen).
²⁵⁰ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 30; Woolgar, *Household Accounts from Medieval England*, 2, pp. 604-687, no. 28 at pp. 631-2.

Brabant was purchased by York chamberlains at 8d to 10d/ell for use as a standard depicting the city arms in 1463 and for banners marking the progress of Henry VII in 1485/6.²⁵¹ The 93 ells of *Champagne* linen in Grissop's shop was valued at £3 1s 3d or from 6½d to 10d/ell, about the same as his better-quality *Brabant*. A slightly finer quality *Champagne* at 10d to 12d/ell was used in the Lancaster household for chemises and night-kerchiefs and Munro's prices are higher at 20d to 24d/yd.²⁵² Archbishop Neville had a large pair of sheets made from *drap de Champeyne* and valued at 20s in 1388, perhaps similar to his tablecloths and towels of *drap de Parys* appraised at 14d/*aune*.²⁵³

Munro's schedule lists *Flanders* linen cloth priced between 12d and 19d/yd which was slightly higher than that purchased in the Lancaster household for use as sheets, chemises and lining for hose.²⁵⁴ Although not listed in the shop inventories, *Flanders* cloth was available in York: Margaret Blackburn had a tablecloth, Archbishop Bowet a tablecloth and twelve towels and Archdeacon Thomas Dalby several pairs of sheets appraised between 3d to 4¾d/yd.²⁵⁵ Archbishop Neville had lengths of *drap de Flaundres* and *de Henand* (Hainault) appraised respectively at 9d/*aune* and 16d/*aune* and pairs of sheets made from the same fabrics.²⁵⁶ Considering the variable unit prices for *Champagne* and *Flanders* linen, it is probable that Bessingby's stock of *Champagne* and unnamed linen, valued by the piece at 26s 8d and 40s respectively, would average from 14d to 20d/ell.

The higher-priced linens on Munro's schedule, *Holland* and *Rheims* were not stocked by Grissop and Bishop, but are named in other York sources. The Mercers' Guild used *Holland* cloth, reckoned by Munro at 28d to 31d/yd, for a washing towel; and their searchers seized an ell of *Holland* from Robert Skipwith as a fine for 'hanking' against their ordinances.²⁵⁷ John Redness, parson in York Minster, selected *Holland*

²⁵¹ *YChA*, pp. 113, 190; *REED, York*, pp. 145, 790.

²⁵² Woolgar, *Household Accounts*, 2, pp. 632, 660-1; Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders', Table 13.3.

²⁵³ [no editor named], 'Inventory of the Goods of Archbishop Alexander Neville, 1388', *YAJ*, 15, 1900, pp. 476-485 at pp. 481-2, 484.

²⁵⁴ Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders', Table 13.3; Woolgar, *Household Accounts*, 2, pp. 632-3; Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', p. 216.

²⁵⁵ BI, PR 3, fo. 415; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 104; The Latin Project, *Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby*, p. 23.

²⁵⁶ 'Inventory of the Goods of Archbishop Alexander Neville, 1388', pp. 481, 483.

²⁵⁷ Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders', Table 13.3; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 149v; Guild Account Rolls, 7, 9.

linen for a new pair of sheets measuring 2½yd wide and 3yd long; and Archbishop Bowet had a tablecloth of *Holland* in addition to several pairs of sheets appraised between 3s to 6s 8d/pair reflecting dimensions and degree of wear.²⁵⁸ The most costly linen on Munro's list was *Rheims*, valued between 30d and 36d/yd, and its quality is reflected in high appraisals of £2 for a very worn pair of sheets *de Rynes* used by Archbishop Bowet and another £2 for a well-used tablecloth and short towels.²⁵⁹ The *Rheims* linen used for Canon Thomas Morton's sheets and napery were appraised at unit prices from 20d to 45d/yd, again fairly high values for second-hand household linen, attesting to the quality of the fabric.

The absence of the more expensive linens from the shops of Grissop and Bishop implies that their clientele could not afford to pay more than 10d/ell for their household linen. The unit prices for Bessingby's stock however suggests his clientele were able to pay more for quality, appearance and comfort, because more expensive linens were woven from finer fibres, were softer to the touch and whiter from bleaching, although they may also have been starched for a crisp finish. It is apparent that imported linen was recorded in the York households of the higher-ranking clergy and seldom in those of artisans and traders. This impression is strengthened by looking at the appraisals given for linen bedding and napery in York inventories.

B. THE USE OF LINEN TEXTILES IN YORK

Testamentary bequests of bedding and napery imply that certain articles of linen had intrinsic and symbolic value as household possessions; and inventories of York residents reveal copious amounts of linen in both secular and religious households. Inventories provide a wide range of appraised values which varied according to the quantity of material, quality of weave, type of finish and degree of wear and tear. The first part of the following discussion surveys the relative prices of pairs of linen sheets and the second looks at table linen and towels.

²⁵⁸ The Latin Project, *Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby*, p. 137; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 96-7.

²⁵⁹ Munro, 'Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders', Table 13.3; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 96, 161-2; *TE*, 3, pp. 71, 78.

i. Sheets

Linen sheets were appraised as pairs whether or not they were single lengths of linen or a long strip folded in half; and inventories of York ecclesiastics occasionally provide dimensions showing that sheets might be as short as 3½yd or as long as 24yd and valued from 20d to 20s/pair.²⁶⁰ Width would affect the value and details are sometimes provided; for instance the new pair of John Redness were 2½yd wide and 3yd long, Margaret Blackburn refers to sheets of 1½ to 3-webbs wide and those belonging to the Minster Treasurer, Martin Collins, measured 3 or 5 ells wide and 5 ells long.²⁶¹ The inventories of York artisans and traders rarely provide details of dimension or the specific type of linen used, and the valuations are correspondingly lower from a few pence up to a couple of shillings.²⁶² Despite the considerable variation in the length of sheets and in their appraised value, it is possible to calculate low, high and average figures, and these are set out in Table 5.5 in ascending order according to types of linen and household, secular or religious.

The inventory appraisals for sheets in a dozen artisan households in York from 1395 and 1490 provide 7 price bands pertaining to fabric described as linen, *lewyn*, *harden* and *sameron*. The least expensive were valued between 2½d to 10d/pair with an average of 7d and this was less than the *lewyn* at 10d. Another grade of linen was valued at 12d to 18d/pair; this compares well with those called *harden* in John Colan's bedroom appraised at 12d or 20d, and the latter was the valuation given to his other pair of *sameron*.²⁶³ The English linen sheets in Canon Morton's chamber were also valued at 20d, and Margaret Piggot's pair of *harden* sheets at 28d was about the same as Archbishop Bowet's much worn pair of coarse cloth (30d).²⁶⁴

A higher value was given to six pairs of linen sheets owned by civilians which averaged about 27d/pair, but this was far lower than the 49d-58d averages of sheets found in ecclesiastical households. Again, the latter were made from distinct

²⁶⁰ The Latin Project, *Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby*, pp. 22-3; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 30, 96-7, 161-2; 'Inventory of the Goods of Archbishop Alexander Neville, 1388', pp. 476-485.

²⁶¹ The Latin Project, *Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby*, pp. 136-7; BI, PR 3, fo. 415; TE, 4, no. 163, pp. 277-307 at p. 284.

²⁶² Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 19-20, 44, 51, 69, 74, 125, 130, 140, 146, 152, 172-4.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 296.

varieties imported from the Continent, such as pairs made from Flanders and Holland linen which varied between 50d and 60d or 4 times that of civilian sheets; and those fashioned from Champagne and Rheims linen in the Archbishop’s household were appraised from 20s to 40s/pair. It must be noted that ecclesiastic households also had sheets of lesser value for bedding used by other members of their large households, but it is clear that the type and quality of linen reflected their higher social and economic standing.

TABLE 5.5
VALUATIONS OF LINEN SHEETS IN YORK
HOUSEHOLDS, SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS,
c.1390 to c.1490

Secular Households ¹			Religious Households ²			averages
Type	low	high	Type	low	high	
<i>linen 1</i>	2½d	10d				7d
<i>lewyn</i>		10d				
<i>harden 1</i>	12d	16d				
<i>linen 2</i>	12d	18d				14d
<i>sameron</i>		20d	<i>English</i>		20d	
<i>harden 2</i>		28d	<i>coarse cloth</i>		30d	
<i>linen 3</i>	20d	36d				27d
			<i>Flanders</i>	30d	8s 4d	58d
			<i>Holland</i>	36d	6s 8d	49d
			<i>Hainault</i>		18s	
			<i>Champagne</i>		20s	
			<i>Rheims 1</i>	17s	20s	
			<i>Rheims 2</i>		40s	
1, 2 and 3 refer to grades of the same fabric. Sources: ¹ P. M. Stell and L. Hampson (eds.), <i>Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500</i> (York, 2000), pp. 19-20, 44, 51, 69, 74,125, 130, 140, 146, 152, 172-4, 296, 316. ² Stell and Hampson, <i>York Probate Inventories</i> , pp. 30 (Dalby), 96-7 (Bowet), 161-2 (Morton); ‘Inventory of the Goods of Archbishop Alexander Neville, 1388’ (<i>YAJ</i> , 15, 1900), pp. 476-485.						

Inventories do not survive for mercer households, but there is testamentary evidence for different qualities of linen bedding which testators considered appropriate for different legatees, presumably according to social status. Cecilia Redhood bequeathed *schetys* and Josiana Kirkby *lynnyn sheyts*, rare uses of the vernacular, because the vast majority of wills use the term *lintheamentum* indicating a linen fabric but not the type or quality.²⁶⁵ In 1331 William Paunton considered his canvas sheets a worthy legacy to accompany his best silverware whereas in 1432 Margaret Blackburn’s 8 pairs were linen, 2 described as new and 2 noted as being 2½ or 3 webbs wide.²⁶⁶ Sheets made from *harden* were bequeathed by Agnes Bedford to her servant and by Elizabeth Swan to a friend, the wife of an embroider; and Joan

²⁶⁵ BI, P, 2, fo. 578; PR 9, fo. 4.

²⁶⁶ YML, 2/4, fo. 10; BI, PR 3, fo. 415.

Thurscross bequeathed *harden* sheets to the poor inmates of an almshouse.²⁶⁷ Isabel Kent left her daughter sheets of *harden* along with a chest of napery, and Katherine Smith and Thomas Lamb had sheets of *sameron*, a slightly more expensive variety.²⁶⁸ Chaplains and esquires were the recipients of sheets made from *panna de lake* from Agnes Kirkton and Hawisia Aske, and these may have been high quality linen dyed red; and another high-status gift would be the pair of white silk sheets sewn with white silk bequeathed by Agnes Bedford.²⁶⁹

ii. Napery

A similar distinction between the type of linen used for tablecloths and towels in secular and religious households is also apparent from inventories; and other details are provided in wills and documentation pertaining to the establishment of chantries. Grissop had a tablecloth and two towels for sale in his shop although it would be more usual for customers to select the desired grade of linen and have it cut and hemmed for use as tablecloths (*mappa*), towels (*tuella*), hand-towels (*manuterga*) or napkins (*napkin*).²⁷⁰ Many inventories record the dimensions of tablecloths which measured from 3 to 6 ells long and of towels which were from 2 to 10 ells long; and some were noted as wide or narrow. Although inventory appraisals reflect quality and wear, prices were reckoned by length which varied from 1d to 20d/ell for tablecloths and from ¼d to 12d for towels; a very wide distribution implying that ‘buyers could find just the right article to suit their purses and their practical needs’.²⁷¹

Table 5.6 sets out the appraised values for individual tablecloths and towels recorded in civilian and ecclesiastic households, that is, comparing those owned collectively by York artisans between 1395 and 1490 to those owned by Archbishop Neville (1388), Archdeacon Dalby (1400) and Canon Morton (1449). Linens were described by the structure of the weave: *plain* for tabby, *twill* for chevron pattern and *of work* probably an interwoven design; and Canon William Duffield’s tablecloth of *opera de twill* with

²⁶⁷ *TE*, 5, no. 183, pp. 234-7; *BI PR* 5, fo. 118; *PR* 9, fo. 272.

²⁶⁸ *YD*, 1, pp. 188-9, no. 510; *BI*, *PR* 9, fo. 226; *PR* 11, fo. 185.

²⁶⁹ *YML*, 2/4, fo. 151; *TE*, 2, no. 112, pp. 141-6; *TE*, 5, no. 183, pp. 234-7.

²⁷⁰ *BI*, *PR* 1, fo. 151.

²⁷¹ Thirsk, *Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England*, p. 114.

flowers delicately interwoven describes a linen damask with a floral design.²⁷² As would be expected, there is more reference to imported, decorative linens in ecclesiastic than secular households, albeit Archbishop Bowet had 8 tablecloths made from English linen in addition to those made from linen in the style of *Brabant, Holland and Flanders*.²⁷³ The tablecloths recorded in civilian households are seldom described and were presumably *plain* weaves; and appraisals suggest 2 qualities, one from 2d to 10d and the other from 12d to 20d; and *cloths of work* which were valued in between, from 6d to 12d. Archdeacon Dalby and Canon Morton had tablecloths of *plain* and *twill* valued in the same low range, but they also had some valued between 3s and 9s, and Archbishop Neville outdid them with more expensive cloths of *Nantes* and *Paris* linen valued from 15s to 42s.

TABLE 5.6
VALUATIONS OF LINEN TABLECLOTHS AND TOWELS IN YORK
HOUSEHOLDS, SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS, 1388-c.1490

Secular/Civilian ¹ 1395-1490			Archbishop Neville ² 1388			Archdeacon Dalby ³ 1400			Canon Morton ⁴ 1449		
T/C*	low	high	T/C	low	high	T/C	low	high	T/C	low	high
<i>linen 1</i>	2d	10d				<i>plain</i>	4d	16d	<i>plain</i>	4d	13d
<i>linen 2</i>	12d	20d				<i>twill 1</i>	6d	17d			
<i>work</i>	6d	12d									
						<i>twill 2</i>		42d	<i>work</i>	2s 4d	9s
			<i>Nantes</i>	5s	16s 8d	<i>Paris</i>	3s	12s	<i>Rheims</i>	5s	10s 6d
			<i>Paris</i>	15s 2d	42s						
Towel	low	high	Towel	low	high	Towel	low	high	Towel	low	high
<i>linen</i>	2d	10d				<i>plain 1, twill 1</i>	2d	18d	<i>plain 1, work 1</i>	1d	12d
<i>work, twill</i>	6d	12d				<i>plain 2</i>	2s	3s	<i>plain 2</i>		2s
						<i>twill</i>		3s 6d	<i>work 2</i>	1s	2s 4d
			<i>Nantes</i>		6s 8d	<i>Paris</i>		3s	<i>work 3</i>	8s	18s
			<i>Paris</i>	7s 7d	14s						
Notes: T/C = tablecloth Sources: ¹ P. M. Stell and L. Hampson (eds.), <i>Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500</i> (York, 2000), pp.19-20, 44, 61-2, 69, 74, 125, 130, 152, 140, 146, 152, 172, 316. ² 'Inventory of the goods of Alexander Neville, Archbishop of York, 1388', <i>YAJ</i> , 15 (1900), pp. 476-485 at pp. 480-2, ³ The Latin Project, <i>The Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby, Archdeacon of Richmond, c.1400</i> (York, 2000), pp. 18-39 at pp. 23-25 (<i>celarium</i>). ⁴ Stell and Hampson, <i>York Probate Inventories</i> , pp. 159-170 (Thomas Morton, Canon-Residentiary)											

Although valuations are difficult to equate exactly, the relative values show that civilian households did not purchase the more expensive linen for napery, but that ecclesiastic households did and they were presumably used as outward displays of

²⁷² Mitchell, 'British Taste in Table Linen', pp. 49, 57-9, 65-7; *TE*, 3, no. 32, p. 136; Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, pp. 201-2.
²⁷³ Stell & Hampson, *York Probate Inventories*, p. 104.

prestige reflecting their high social standing. The linen used for towels was similarly described as *plain*, *twill* and *of work*, and they show comparable unit values from as little as 2d up to 42d (3s 6d), those belonging to civilians falling into the 2d to 12d range and those of ecclesiastics in a higher range from 2s to 4s. The highest appraisals for towels *of work* were in Canon Morton's inventory, between 8s and 18s each; and Archdeacon Dalby and Archbishop Neville had towels made from *Nantes* and *Paris* linen valued at 3s, 6s 8d, 7s 7d and 14s.

Certain items made from linen which are bequeathed in the wills of York mercers, their wives and family suggest a nuance of prestige, although there is more evidence of their value as utilitarian or as necessary luxuries to adopt Berger's phrase.²⁷⁴ There are references to linen chests such as Isabel Kent's *kist with napore war* and chests with locks in which the napery owned by the York Corpus Christi and Mercers' Guilds was stored.²⁷⁵ John Derfield requested his napery be sold, presumably to clear debts or fund commemorative prayers, but the most usual bequest would be to furnish a new household; for example napery formed part of the marriage portion which John Dernington provided for his maid.²⁷⁶ A widow's portion might be augmented by specific legacies such as William Vescy's of all his linen cloth, and John Norman's widow was to have all *utensilia domus* including *lez napprez*.²⁷⁷

Wills reveal the vernacular words for tablecloths; for example Hugh Dunnock recorded four *bordcluthes* for covering the 'board' or dining table used by the Fraternity of St. Mary, Agnes Bedford referred to a meat cloth for the meat board and William Nelson bequeathed a counter in the parlour that the 'menzey eats upon'.²⁷⁸ Eve Crome had 2 cloths for the table; and William Hodgson's two were of *twill*.²⁷⁹ The inventory of the Corpus Christi Guild uses the word *mappae* for tablecloths in general and itemised them as *mappae mensales*; and the Mercers' Guild uses the vernacular *tabyll cloiths*.²⁸⁰ Margaret Blackburn had several tablecloths and her best one was woven in a diaper pattern with roses; she also had one of Flemish-work and

²⁷⁴ Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries*, p. 12.

²⁷⁵ YD, 1, no. 510, pp. 188-9; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 8v; REED, *York*, p. 640.

²⁷⁶ BI, PR 3, fo. 92.

²⁷⁷ BI, PR 3, fos. 73, 266; PR 5, fo. 467.

²⁷⁸ YMAA, St. Mary, Account Book, fos. 18v; TE, 2, pp. 84-5, 234-7, nos. 72, 183; TE, 5, pp. 198-201, no. 158.

²⁷⁹ BI, PR 1, fo. 96; PR 5, fo. 20.

²⁸⁰ REED, *York*, p. 629.; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 8v.

others of *plain* and *twill* weaves in lengths from 4½ to 5¼ ells.²⁸¹ The *twill* tablecloths of Matilda Danby and Joan Bielby were five ells long; the Corpus Christi Guild purchased enough linen in 1465 to make 5 new cloths each 16 ells long; and those owned by the Mercers' Guild measured from 5yd to 14½yd long and from ¾yd to 1¼yd wide.²⁸²

A tablecloth and towel might be a set of napery as was bequeathed by John Beverley, John Preston, Alice Upstall, Robert Easingwold and Thomas Brounfield.²⁸³ A tablecloth and 2 towels featured in the wills of Ellen Sigod, Alice Waghen and Joan Louth.²⁸⁴ Margaret Blackburn had an array of towels, some *plain*, others of *twill* and one with black edges; and these ranged from 3 to 18 ells long; and a towel bordered with twill used by the Corpus Christi Guild measured 14 ells long.²⁸⁵ The dimension of towels used by the Mercers' Guild varied from ¼yd to ¾yd in width and from 2yd to 14yd in length, and 2 of the 4 washing towels were of *Holland* cloth and measured ½yd wide and 18yd long.²⁸⁶ Contemporary illustrations show towels for drying hands might be long lengths draped over a bar above a basin and ewer; or worn over the shoulder and tucked into the girdle of a server in charge of hand-washing ceremonies.²⁸⁷ Although long lengths of linen were also used as communal napkins stretched across the lap of diners, the Corpus Christi Guild used individual napkins at the top table; and c.1450 they paid for a woman to make and hem 26 napkins which were valued c.1465 between ½d and 4d each.²⁸⁸

Table linen had other uses in the household, but the finest lengths might be set aside for religious purposes: John Carlisle gave a cloth of Nante to the kitchen at St. Mary's Abbey; Isabel Grantham intended a *mappa* of 6 ells long for the high altar of her parish church; William Vescy's chantry provisions included 24 ells of linen to be

²⁸¹ BI, PR 3, fo. 415.

²⁸² BI PR 2, fo. 595; PR 5, fo. 273; *REED, York*, pp. 639-40; YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 8v, 149v.

²⁸³ YML, 2/4, fos. 118, 122; *TE*, 1, no. 8, pp. 8-9; BI, PR 2, fo. 149; PR 6, fo. 206.

²⁸⁴ YML, 2/4, fo. 7; BI, PR 2, fo. 575; PR, 3, fo. 450.

²⁸⁵ BI, PR 3, fo. 415; *REED, York*, p. 629.

²⁸⁶ YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 8v, 149v.

²⁸⁷ Lang, *Pride Without Prejudice*, pp. 102-3; I. Linnik, *Western European Painting in the Hermitage* (Leingrad, 1984), Pl. 5 (R. Campin, *The Virgin and Child at the Fireside*, c.1433-35); H. Liebaers, *Flemish Art From the Beginning till Now* (London, 1985), pp. 116-7 (D. Bouts, *Last Supper*, 1467, Louvain, St. Peter's Church).

²⁸⁸ *REED, York*, pp. 629, 633, 640.

made into albs, amices and altar cloths; and Margaret Birtbeck bequeathed a towel of *twill* described as *treled cum crulez* to St. Crux.²⁸⁹

iii. Kerchiefs and Veils

The other main category of linen stocked by Bessingby and Grissop was used for head-coverings, such as coifs, close fitting caps, collars, the ecclesiastical amice, and in particular for the coverchief or kerchief worn by women in all ranks of society. The kerchief could be a single long piece of fabric draped and pinned in place or several pieces of different lengths and widths which covered the head, chin and sides of the face and neck.²⁹⁰ The most characteristic linen fabric used for the kerchief was classified as *lawn*, a light-weight, sheer, plain-weave cloth; but there were several varieties such as *umple* and *niefles* named in the sumptuary legislation of 1463.²⁹¹ These were often quantified by the pleat, and folded linen is thought to have inspired the decorative style of carving wooden panels.²⁹² Table 5.7 displays the type of linen recorded in the inventories of Grissop and Bishop and in the court cases concerning Bessingby and Buttercrambe. The quantities and valuations given in the sources are used to calculate unit prices per ell, pleat or piece; and arranged more or less in ascending order.

Grissop had 13s 4d invested in *umple* for kerchiefs which came in two grades: a length of 11½ ells priced at 6d to 8d/ell; and 2 ells at 20d/ell. He had 2 pieces of *lawn* valued at £1 each which was half the average price of Bessingby's 3 pieces; and also stocked *lawn* valued at £4 11s 4d. The *lawn* was quantified by the pleat into 3 price ranges: 20 pleats at 6d each, 9 pleats at 20d each and 9 pleats at 36d each. His least expensive was less than the lower limit of 12d/pleat set by sumptuary legislation for the kerchiefs worn by wives of labourers; but his other ranges would be suitable for women of higher social standing.²⁹³ The descriptions and unit prices of Bessingby's *pleasances*, *relevaunts*, *crisps* and *lamps* suggest they were specially cut, fashioned or finished to be worn as kerchiefs, wimples and veils; and a good idea of

²⁸⁹ *TE*, 1, no. 90, pp. 140-1; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 584; PR 3, fo. 266; PR 4, fo. 206.

²⁹⁰ M. Clayton, *Victoria and Albert Museum. Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs* (London, 1915, 2nd edition, 5th impression, 1979), pp. 21-25

²⁹¹ *SR*, 2, pp. 399-402 at p. 401.

²⁹² N. Lloyd, 'Medieval Wainscoting and the Development of the Linen Panel', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 53/308 (1928), pp. 231-237.

²⁹³ *SR*, 2, p. 401.

the value of the finished article is revealed in a claim made c.1422 by John Buttercrambe of kerchiefs stolen from him.²⁹⁴

TABLE 5.7
TYPES AND UNIT PRICES OF LINEN USED FOR KERCHIEFS
AND VEILS IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY YORK

Inventories/Court Cases: Bessingby ¹ , Grissop ² and Bishop ³							Bessingby ¹ and Buttercrambe ⁴		
Type of Linen	Units	Valuation			Price/ell/pleat		Specific Kerchiefs	Price each	
		£	s	d	low	high		low	high
Umple ² 1	11½ ells		10	4	6d	8d			
Umple ² 2	2 ells		3	4		20d			
Lawn ² 1	20 pleats		9	10		6d			
							relevaunt ¹	16d	18d
							pleasance ¹		18d
Lawn ² 2	9 pleats		15	0		20d			
							lamps ¹		35d
Lawn ² 3	9 pleats	1	6	3		36d	crisp like lawn ⁴	33d	40d
							lawn ⁴		48d
							crisp ⁴		80d
Lawn ² 4	2 pieces	2	0	1		20s 0d			
Lawn ¹ 5	3 pieces	6	0	0		40s			

1 to 5 refer to different grades of the same fabric.

Sources:

¹ P. M. Stell (ed.), *Sheriffs' Court Books of the City of York for the Fifteenth Century* (York, 2000), pp. 67-8 (c. 1421, John Bessingby).

² P. M. Stell and L. Hampson (eds.), *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500* (York), pp. 151-9 (1446, Thomas Grissop).

³ *TE*, 4, no. 198, pp. 191-3 (c. 1510, Richard Bishop).

⁴ P. M. Stell (ed.), *Sheriffs' Court Books of the City of York for the Fifteenth Century* (York, 2000), p. 76 (1422, John Buttercrambe).

Bessingby's *relevaunts* and *pleasances* were priced between 16d and 18d each and not quite as expensive as a pleat of Grissop's second grade *lawn*; but his kerchiefs of *lamps* were twice as expensive at 35d each. The latter was an average price for each of Buttercrambe's *crisp*-like-*lawn* kerchiefs; his *lawn* kerchiefs were slightly dearer at 48d each; and his *crisp* kerchiefs were most expensive at 80d each. The amount of material needed to fashion a kerchief cannot be determined, but the average price for a piece of *lawn* at 30s would be sufficient to make 9 kerchiefs at 40d each or 6 at 60d each. Moreover the quantification of *lawn* in pleats suggests that this was a standard measurement for a specific purpose such as the amount of material needed for a basic kerchief. Unlike household linens, kerchiefs and veils are seldom recorded in household inventories, but they are a recurrent feature in testamentary bequests; and in the wills of York mercers and their wives the terms *flammeolum*, *vela* or *volet* are used. The amount of fabric required is not known nor whether it covered the neck,

²⁹⁴ Stell, *Sheriffs' Court Books*, p. 76.

chin, top and back of the head; but it is possible that *volet* may refer to a special fabric suspended from a bonnet or framework to hang at the back of the head.²⁹⁵

Robert Savage left his widow all the apparel for her body and head which suggests she was not already entitled to her own paraphernalia, whereas most women seem to bequeath these personal items freely, in particular the kerchief which seems to have been imbued with special significance as a keepsake or token of affection.²⁹⁶ Indeed these articles of personal adornment were generally gifts to family, close friends or trusted servants; for instance Matilda Holbeck left a gown and 3 kerchiefs to her daughter-in-law, and Christiana Thirsk bequeathed pairs of kerchiefs to 6 female acquaintances.²⁹⁷ Roger Moreton, senior left 4 marks (£2 13s 4d) to his daughter for her nun's black veiling or entire habit; whereas Thomas Curtas allocated 20d for each of the *flammeolum* to be worn by his female servants on the day of his death which implies they were basic kerchiefs.²⁹⁸

Although the material of *flammeolum* is not specified in the wills of Matilda Bennetson, Margaret Bessingby, Ellen Dugthy, William Yarom or Joan Collinson, others describe the fabric or finish.²⁹⁹ Margaret of Knaresborough describes a *flammeolum* as cloth of lake, perhaps a red-dyed linen; and the enduring popularity of *lawn* is seen in Joan Bedale's bequests in 1438 and Miles Arume's in 1500.³⁰⁰ Agnes Aldstanemore bequeathed kerchiefs of *lawn* and of *crisp*, Margaret Blackburn left her servant 2 *crisp* coverchiefs, and this is the likely meaning of Alice Selby's kerchiefs of *latyn owt kirsp*.³⁰¹ The high quality of Katherine Smith's kerchief is evinced in its intended use as a corporal cloth to place under and over the communion bread; and there was a *flammeolum vocatum plesaunce* with silver-gilt balls at the corners in Holy Trinity Chapel which was used as a veil over the hanging pyx.³⁰²

²⁹⁵ Sutton, 'Mercery Through Four Centuries', pp. 111-14, 122.

²⁹⁶ BI, PR 3, fos. 17, 266.

²⁹⁷ BI, PR 3, fo. 225; PR 4, fo. 534.

²⁹⁸ BI, PR 1, fo. 14; PR 2, fo. 438.

²⁹⁹ TE, 1, no. 146, pp. 180-3; YML, 2/4, fo. 129; BI, PR 1, fo. 1; PR 3, fo. 466; PR 4, fo. 84.

³⁰⁰ TE, 1, no. 171, pp. 219-21; BI, PR 2, fo. 155; YML, 2/5, fo. 27.

³⁰¹ BI, PR 3, fo. 402; PR 3, fo. 415; YML, 2/4, fo. 167.

³⁰² BI, PR 9, fo. 226; YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 148v; Barton, 'The Ornaments of the Altar and the Ministers in Late-Medieval England', p. 33; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 30-1, 97.

Kerchiefs of *gremell* refer to the border which was ruched or crinkled as depicted in Van Eyck's portraits of Giovanna Arnolfini and his wife Margarethe.³⁰³ They were bequeathed by Margaret of Knaresborough (1397), Agnes Kirkton (1408) and Marion Bouche (1412); and were described in a London shop inventory in 1394 as 10 pleats of silk *crymyll* and 18 pieces of *crymyll* of thread.³⁰⁴ The London inventory also lists 8 pieces of *relisaunce of purl*, the term purl suggesting a crimped edge; and here it is possible that Bessingby's *relevaunts* were narrow, gathered strips of cloth which could be sewn as a border onto a larger piece of *lawn*.³⁰⁵ Wills also refer to kerchiefs of *cipres* or *cypress* a silk textile interwoven with gold thread originally from Cyprus which was used to fashion Cecilia Redhood's *corolyf* [*sic*] and Agnes Kirkton's *volet*.³⁰⁶ In 1305 Agnes Meek bequeathed a large *coverchef* of silk to her daughter Agnes; and in 1395 Ivetta Burton intended her kerchief of *cypress* to adorn the statue of the Virgin Mary in the church of Salle, Norfolk.³⁰⁷ Bessingby's *lamps* may have been a heavier, patterned silk; and Katherine Palmer refers to a kerchief of *lampas duk*, the same fabric used for Katherine Brownfleet's *volet*.³⁰⁸

Kerchiefs made from thread (*filum*) suggests a netted or knotted mesh which could encase the hair or be worn over a framework and this may be the meaning of the *calamandro ac housfe* listed by Margaret de Knaresborough.³⁰⁹ Kerchiefs of thread were bequeathed by Agnes Beverley and Isabel Hammerton; and Isabel Grantham refers to *flammeolum de filo* and a *thred volet* as if they were two slightly different items of apparel.³¹⁰ The *volet* and *vela* may have differed in shape from the *flammeolum*, but the materials were the same and the recipients were women. William Askham left veils of *crisp* to his female apprentice; Ellen Sigod and Isabel

³⁰³ L. Baldass, *Jan Van Eyck*, (London, 1952), Pls. 137, 140, 145-6, pp. 72-6, 78, 281, no. 22 (1434, *Wedding Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini*, National Gallery, London), 282, no. 27 (1439, *Margaret van Eyck*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bruges),.

³⁰⁴ *TE*, 1, no. 171, pp. 219-21; *YML*, 2/4, fo. 151; The Latin Project, *Testamentary Circle of Thomas de Dalby*, pp. 124-8, note 13; Thomas, *Select Pleas and Memoranda, 1381-1412*, pp. 224-7.

³⁰⁵ Thomas, *Select Pleas and Memoranda, 1381-1442*, pp. 224-7; Seiler-Baldinger, *Textiles. A Classification of Techniques*, pp. 3, 122-141; E. A. Posselt, *Textile Journal 1911* (August, 1913), pp. 34-36.

³⁰⁶ *BI*, PR 2, fo. 578; *YML*, 2/4, fo. 151; Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', p. 213.

³⁰⁷ *YMAA*, Estate Acquisition, Fossgate 7; Smith, *Guide*, p. 59; *BI*, PR 1, fo. 88; PR 2, fo. 541.

³⁰⁸ *BI*, PR 3, fos. 82, 283.

³⁰⁹ *TE*, 1, no. 171, pp. 219-21.

³¹⁰ *YML*, 2/4, fo. 108; *TE*, 2, no. 30, pp. 22-3; *BI*, PR 2, fo. 584.

Catclouth bequeathed veils of *cypress* and of *lampas*; and Katherine Brownfleet had a veil of *thread*.³¹¹ The sole male recipient of veils was John de Wirethorpe, executor of Eve Crome; and she left him all veils and kerchiefs not previously bequeathed and still in her shop and therefore would have been stock for his.³¹²

Summary Remarks

A separate study is warranted to examine the types of imported textiles available in York and their use in secular and religious households and by corporate bodies. Here it is sufficient to show that the higher quality linen woven in various foreign locales was recorded in higher ranking clergy households, most connected with the Minster or the Archbishop. The *lewent*, so prominent in the Hull Customs accounts, is occasionally recorded in inventories and wills, but without description it is not possible to determine if it was the principal linen used for the sheets, tablecloths and towels appraised in inventories of York citizens and bequeathed in their wills, or if English varieties were used or lesser grade Brabants. More apparent is the use of specialist fabrics for headscarves, *lawn* and *umple* with crisp finishes, but even so most are described as *flammeola* or *volets* or variants of cover-chief and the underlying material not described. What is clear is the widespread use of linen in York and there is little doubt that mercers procured their supplies in London, at fairs or in York from visiting London mercers or their agents.

CONCLUSION

The regional trade of York mercers was based on opportunities for formal market exchanges in weekly markets held in urban centres or market towns, regular fairs held within Yorkshire and seasonal cycles of the major English fairs. Mercers also made use of personal contacts for less formal exchanges with religious houses and wool growers; and their own activities in the production and finishing of woollen cloth brought them into contact with textile workers living and working in Yorkshire and beyond. The commercial networks required for regional trade depended on an integrated system of tracks, roads and bridges over rivers and the availability of

³¹¹ YML, 2/4, fo.96; YML, 2/4, fo. 7; *TE*, 1, no. 213, p. 291; BI, PR 3, fo. 283.

³¹² BI, PR 1, fo. 96; Latham, *Medieval Latin Word List*, p. 456 (*stuffum*, *stoffa* (Sc) 1340, stock, store).

carriage by man, beast, vehicle and boat. Testamentary bequests by York mercers for the maintenance of roads and bridges show which routes they used into York and suggest the direction of their trade, the modes of carriage they used and the type, weight and bulk of goods they transported. Records of credit and debt reveal commercial links with suppliers and outworkers in Yorkshire and Cumbria and with kinsmen and creditors further away towards the south. They turned to London for the legal, commercial and financial services available there and also for their supply of mercery which was not available locally. There is evidence of growing competition with Hanse and London mercers, particularly in the regional redistribution of mercery; and the decreased amount of credit extended by Londoners warrants further investigation of the local trade of York mercers.

The evidence compiled from property deeds, wills and taxation returns shows that the shops of most York mercers were an integral part of their homes; and therefore their parish of residence was the location of their commercial premises. Mercers lived throughout the city, but there were 3 areas of concentration: along the main route from the north down Petergate to the Pavement Crossroads; around the market places in St. Sampson and All Saints' Pavement parishes; and on Ouse Bridge the sole crossing from the west into the commercial district. There was a shift over time towards the grain market in Pavement, but the most notable change was in the reduced number of mercers and the presence of merchants and haberdashers in their previous haunts. The information that can be assembled about their commercial premises shows that mercers used a variety of storage facilities: warehouses, cellars, and upper stories; but that their main selling place was the shop, a permanent structure on the street frontage. There is some information about the dimensions of shops and whether or not they were single units, internally divided or a range under a single roof. Details of external appearance can be assembled which indicates the importance of the shop window and its function as a shutter, a counter and a display board. Internal fittings reveal partitions and benches; containers, cupboards and weights shed light on the type of stock carried; and counting boards for casting accounts and coffer for storing money and documents were essential furnishings.

There is little direct evidence for the type of mercery stocked by York mercers apart from 3 fifteenth-century inventories pertaining to fine linens allegedly stolen from a mercer, a wide array of consumer goods in a chapman's shop and a more utilitarian range stocked by a suburban small holder. Although the quantity, quality and value varied each carried a range of mercery: imported textiles of linen, fustian and silk;

especially finished linen for kerchiefs; clothing accessories such as belts, gloves, caps, purses and knives; dress-making and sewing supplies; and some grocery and spices. The investment each shopkeeper had tied up in certain types of goods depended on their own capital resources and those of their prospective customers; and the location of their shops suggested they aimed to attract the affluent visitor to York; the clergy and residents near the Minster able to afford the odd luxury and special food; and the rural householder interested in more utilitarian wares.

The main investment of the shopkeepers was in linen which came in different qualities which were reflected in a wide price range suitable for a broad customer base. In looking at the inventories of York residents, it was evident that linen bedding and napery was recorded in secular and ecclesiastical households; and using the quantities and the appraised values, unit prices could be calculated and various types of linen compared. Looking at the use of linen in the home, it became clear that the most expensive named varieties were found in the households of the higher ranking clergy and were conspicuous by their absence in households of artisans. The wills of York mercers suggested that their sheets were made from middle-range and moderately-priced linen; and though their tablecloths might be made from special weaves, they were not the same quality as used by the higher-ranking clergy. Mercers did however purchase small quantities of the specially finished linens used for headscarves or kerchiefs; and these they bequeathed in their wills as tokens of affection or esteem. The overall impression is that there was a steady demand for all grades of linen textiles, particularly those of foreign manufacture. Customs accounts indicate that the least expensive linen was imported through Hull by Hanse merchants; but evidence from London implies that the finer linen would be redistributed from there under the auspice of London mercers.

This evidence does not suggest that the near demise of the York mercer was due to a fall in demand for mercery. Nor does the growing dominance of London seem responsible, because London had long been the emporium for linen and other mercery. What seems more relevant is the credit relationship with Londoners and their increasing involvement in regional trade, which would have an impact on the other commercial activities of mercers and their commercial role as suppliers. This can be examined further in looking closely at the capital resources available to York mercers and their commercial enterprise in foreign trade, the focus of Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

CURRENT ASSETS AND COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE

Participation in Foreign Trade

INTRODUCTION

The aspirations of York mercers to improve their social and economic prospects has been examined in light of their geographic and social origins, occupation and marriage. Their achievements have been examined with reference to perceptions of social standing and economic class as good men of the parish, guild members, civic officials and heads of household. The scope of their inland trade has shown them to be involved in the supply of raw and industrial materials and in the retail distribution of mercery through their York shops. Chapter Six examines how they managed to do this by looking at their use of capital assets to finance commercial enterprises.

Fixed assets such as real estate and rents would generate an income and be used to secure loans; and assets represented by credit and debt transactions would be essential in underpinning commercial ventures. However the focus of Chapter Six is the current assets which mercers could convert readily into liquid or working capital, that is household possessions, available cash and trading stock. The type and value of each asset would determine the scope and scale of particular commercial enterprises; and the best evidence for this is found in records of foreign trade.

The chapter is organised in chronological order from c.1300 to c.1500 based on the date of the source which records a particular current asset and which can be related to commercial activity:.

1. Possessions as Capital Reserves (1297 to 1332)
2. Investment in the Wool Trade (1336 to 1373).
3. Investment in the Production, Marketing and Export of Cloth (1385 to 1395).
4. Continuing Investment in Foreign Trade (1400 to c.1440).
5. Declining Value of Foreign Trade (1453 to 1490).

Each section is introduced with a brief discussion of sources, but they can be summarised here as lay subsidies, records of crown loans, particular customs accounts through Hull, other related accounts and shipping documents. These sources have been selected because they provide both the names of members of the community of mercers in York as well as a range of payments or valuations that can be analysed as a distribution. Sources which record uniform payments have thus been excluded. Few of the sources selected record the same individuals or the same type of information; nor do the amounts of the payments or valuations cover the same range. This means that the participants, the type of current asset and the distribution is unique to each source and this makes it difficult to compare like with like or to determine trends. A simple methodology has been devised to minimise this difficulty by arranging the distribution in ascending order in six or seven bands/brackets. This allows the relative wealth or investment of individuals to be gauged in simple terms of less than average, average and better than average; and for changes in the proportional distribution to be assessed over time.

Bartlett's model of an expanding and declining economy in York provides the underlying framework for the chapter, because the overall impression from the type and level of assets revealed shows a strong correlation. Mercers are shown to have taken advantage of new opportunities to expand the scope and scale of their trade in the half century following the Black Death; and to show signs of reorganisation in the early years of the fifteenth century recession. The value of their foreign trade declines in line with their own numbers as the economy enters a period of prolonged contraction; and though merchants are affected, somehow their economic role remains more or less intact in stark contrast to that of the mercer.

The general studies of the English economy are particularly relevant as the contextual background for the commercial enterprise of York mercers.¹ The growth of domestic industry and manufacture particularly in urban areas provided a role for the middleman such as the mercer in supply and distribution of raw materials and semi-

¹ M. Jones (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 5: c.1198-c.1300 (Cambridge, 2000); C. Allmand (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 6: c.1300-c.1415 (Cambridge, 1998); Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500*; D. C. Coleman, *The Economy of England 1450-1750* (Oxford, 1977, reprinted 1989); Bridbury, *Economic Growth. England in the Later Middle Ages*; Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society, an Economic History of Britain, 1100-1500*; R. H. Britnell, *The Closing of the Middle Ages? England, 1471-1529* (Oxford, 1997), esp. pp. 208-227, 228-247; R. C. Dietz, *An Economic History of England* (New York, 1942), pp 57-157; J. H. Clapham, *Concise Economic History of Britain. From the Earliest Times to 1750* (Cambridge, 1949, reprinted, 1951), pp. 77-184.

processed industrial supplies, many imported.² Foreign trade was imbedded in these developments and not only attracted foreign merchants, but saw the Italian and Flemish handling the bulk of exports until c.1300.³ English merchants including those from York became more directly involved in foreign trade in the 1330s.⁴ The direction of trade was mainly to the Continent with the fairs in northern France and the Low Countries the emporia for goods produced from all over; and Scandinavia

² W. R. Childs, 'Commerce and Trade' in C. Allmand (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History*, 7: c.1415-c.1500 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 145-60; E. King, *England 1175-1425* (London and Henley, 1979), pp. 67-91; D. C. Coleman and A. H. John (eds.), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England. Essays Presented to F. J. Fisher* (London, 1976); E. B. Fryde, *Studies in Medieval Trade and Finance* (London, 1983); Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance*, pp. 92-23; G. Unwin (ed.), *Finance and Trade Under Edward III* (London, 1918, reprinted 1962); M. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century 1307-1399* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 349-383; E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century 1399-1485* (Oxford, 1961, reprinted 1987), pp. 346-384; S. M. Jack, *Trade and Industry in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1977); J. D. Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors 1485-1558* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 444-477; W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce During the Early and Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1882, 5th edition, reprinted, 1922), pp. 182-210, 298-335, 381-385, 392-395, 409-430, 434-440, 490-499, 541-549.

³ G. V. Scammell, *The World Encompassed. The First European Maritime Empires, c.800-1650* (London and New York, 1981); H. A. Miskimin, *The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe 1300-1460* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969), pp. 116-163; A. Beardwood, *Alien Merchants in England, 1350-77: Their Legal and Economic Position* (Cambridge, MA, 1931), esp. pp. 34, 58, 201; G. Holmes, 'Florentine Merchants in England 1346-1436', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 13 (1960), pp. 193-208; H. Bradley, 'The Datini Factors in London, 1380-1410' in D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance. Papers in Later Medieval History* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 55-79; E. B. Fryde, 'Italian Maritime Trade with Medieval England (c.1270-c.1530)', *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin*, 32 (1974), pp. 291-337; E. B. Fryde, 'Anglo-Italian Commerce in the Fifteenth Century: Some Evidence about Profits and the Balance of Trade', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 50 (1972), pp. 345-55; A. A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton 1270-1600* (Southampton, 1951).

⁴ Scammell, *The World Encompassed*, pp. 458-500; D. Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540* (Toronto, 1947, Newton Abbot, 1969); G. V. Scammel, 'English Merchant Shipping at the End of the Middle Ages: Some East Coast Evidence', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 13/3 (1961), pp. 327-341; V. Harding, 'Cross-Channel Trade and Cultural Contacts: London and the Low Countries in the Later Fourteenth Century' in C. Barron and N. Saul (eds.), *England and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1995), pp. 153-168; H. L. Gray, 'English Foreign Trade from 1446-1482' in M. M. Postan and E. Power (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd edition, 1951), pp. 1-38, 401-6; R. Davis, *English Overseas Trade 1500-1700* (London and Basingstoke, 1973); R. A. Pelham, 'Medieval Foreign Trade: Eastern Ports' in H. C. Darby (ed.), *An Historical Geography of England Before A.D.1800. Fourteen Studies* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 298-229; W. R. Childs, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull 1300-1500*, East Yorkshire Local History Society (1990); R. Davis, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull, 1500-1700*, East Yorkshire Local History Society (1964, reprinted 1978); J. F. Wade, 'The Overseas Trade of Newcastle-upon-Tyne', *Northern History*, 30 (1994), pp. 31-48; Coleman, 'Trade and Prosperity in the Fifteenth Century: Some Aspects of the Trade of Southampton', pp. 9-22; E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1964), pp. 182-201.

and the Baltic ports were also important with Iceland a fifteenth-century destination.⁵ Trade was variously organised by individuals, short-term partnerships and community and guild ventures; and the most enterprising merchants would employ agents to do the travelling while they stayed at home.⁶ The crown had a vested interest in foreign trade which was the impetus for the emergence of the customs system as a major source of royal revenue.⁷ The type, value and provenance of imports are separate fields of study, as is the role of alien merchants in the supply and distribution of utilitarian and luxury goods; and other scholars examine the distribution of semi-processed industrial supplies for English manufactures.⁸ A royal

⁵ J. H. Munro, 'Patterns of Trade, Money, and Credit' in T. A. Brady, H. A. Oberman and J. D. Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, 1 (Leiden and New York, 1994), pp. 147-196; J. Brutzkus, 'Trade with Eastern Europe, 800-1200', *EcHR*, 13/1/2 (1943), pp. 31-41; D. M. Nicholas, 'The English Trade at Bruges in the Last Years of Edward III', *Journal of Medieval History*, 5 (1979), pp. 23-61; N. J. M. Kerling, *Commercial Relations of Holland and Zeeland with England from the Late Thirteenth Century to the Close of the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1954); R. Davis, 'The Rise of Antwerp and its English Connection, 1406-1510' in D. C. Coleman and A. H. John (eds.), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England. Essays Presented to F. J. Fisher* (London, 1976), pp. 2-20; Sacks, *The Widening Gate. Bristol and the Atlantic Economy*, pp. 19-53; W. R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Age* (Manchester, 1978); W. R. Childs, 'Anglo-Portuguese Trade in the Fifteenth Century', *TRHS*, 6th series, 2 (1992), pp. 195-220; T. H. Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse 1157-161. A Study of their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. pp. 50-108; P. Dollinger, (trans. D. S. Ault and S. H. Steinberg), *The German Hansa* (1964, trans., London and Basingstoke, 1970); M. M. Postan, 'The Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse from 1400-1475' in M. M. Postan and E. Power (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd edition, 1951), pp. 91-154, 407; E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Iceland Trade' in M. M. Postan and E. Power (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd edition, 1951), pp. 155-182.

⁶ P. Spufford, *Power and Profit. The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London, 2002); Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, pp. 59-63; Britnell, 'Sedentary Long-Distance Trade', pp. 129-140; Gras, *Business and Capitalism*, pp. 67-81; W. Sombart, 'Medieval and Modern Commercial Enterprise' in F. C. Lane and J. C. Riemersma, *Enterprise and Secular Change. Readings in Economic History* (London, 1953), pp. 25-41 at pp. 27-32.

⁷ Gras, *The Early English Customs System*; R. L. Baker, *The English Customs Service 1307-1343: A Study of Medieval Administration*, Trans. American Philosophical Society, new series, 51/6 (1961); W. M. Ormrod, 'The English Crown and the Customs, 1349-63', *EcHR*, 40/1 (1987), pp. 27-40; Jarvis, 'The Archival History of the Customs Records', pp. 202-214; M. M. Postan, 'English Studies of the Customs Accounts' in *idem*, *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1973), 353-360; E. M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (Oxford, 1963); Gray, 'Tables of Enrolled Customs and Subsidy Accounts', pp. 321-360.

⁸ Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', pp. 205-18; Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton*, pp. 71-81, 86-9; M. K. James, 'The Fluctuations of the Anglo-Gascon Wine Trade During the Fourteenth Century', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 4/2 (1951), pp. 170-96; Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages*; W. Childs, 'England's Iron Trade in the Later Middle Ages', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 34 (1981), pp. 27-47; P. Musgrave, 'The Economics of Uncertainty: the Structural Revolution in the Spice Trade, 1480-1640' in P. L. Cottrell and E. H. Aldcroft (eds.), *Shipping, Trade and Commerce. Essays in Memory of Ralph Davis* (Leicester, 1981), pp. 9-22.

scheme was devised in the 1330s to raise loans by means of a monopoly of the export of wool; and a later development was the establishment of Calais as the wool staple.⁹ The wool trade provided opportunities for a range of middlemen to become involved at various stages: in collection, in distribution and in export; and a vast literature encompasses topics to do with every aspect from sheep, quality and price of fleeces and the mechanics of trade and profit and loss accounting.¹⁰ The English woollen textile industry is even wider in scope and studies range from processing fleece to fabric, the wages of workers and the organisation of the industry.¹¹ The facts and figures of the export trade of cloth are widely studied; and the involvement of

⁹ F. R. Barnes, 'The Taxation of Wool 1327-1348' in G. Unwin (ed.), *Finance and Trade under Edward III* (London, 1962), pp. 137-77; E. B. Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War, 1336-40' in T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (eds.), *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 250-69; E. B. Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly: A Fourteenth-Century Royal Trading Venture', *History*, new series, 37 (1952), pp. 8-24; E. B. Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants: John Goldbeter, William Acastre and Partners, 1336-1349*, Borthwick Papers, 29 (1966); E. B. Fryde, 'The English Farmers of the Customs, 1343-51', *TRHS*, 5th series, 9 (1959), pp. 1-17; G. Unwin, 'The Estate of Merchants, 1336-1365' in G. Unwin (ed.), *Finance and Trade under Edward III* (London, 1962), pp. 179-255; D. Greaves, 'Calais Under Edward III' in G. Unwin (ed.), *Finance and Trade under Edward III* (London, 1962), pp. 313-350; W. I. Haward, 'The Financial Transactions Between the Lancastrian Government and the Merchants of the Staple from 1449-1461' in M. M. Postan and E. Power (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd edition, 1951), pp. 293-320

¹⁰ T. H. Lloyd, *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1977); T. H. Lloyd, *The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England*, *ECHR*, Supplement, 6 (1973); M. M. Postan, 'The Medieval Wool Trade' in *idem*, *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 342-352; E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History* (Oxford, 1941); E. Power, 'The Wool Trade in the Fifteenth Century' in M. M. Postan and E. Power (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933, 2nd edition, 1951), pp. 39-90; P. J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962); M. L. Ryder, 'The Wools of Britain' in J. G. Jenkins (ed.), *The Wool Textile Industry in Britain* (London and Boston, 1962), pp. 51-64; D. Postles, 'Fleece Weights and Wool Supply, c.1250-c.1350', *Textile History*, 12 (1981), pp. 96-103; J. H. Munro, 'Wool-Price Schedules and the Qualities of English Wools in the Later Middle Ages c.1270-1499', *Textile History*, 9 (1978), pp. 118-169; J. H. Munro, 'The 1357 Wool-Price Schedule and the Decline of Yorkshire Wool Values', *Textile History*, 10 (1979), pp. 211-219; Hanham, *The Celys and Their World*, pp. 109-255; E. B. Fryde, *The Wool Accounts of William de la Pole*, Borthwick Papers, 25 (1964); E. B. Fryde, 'The Last Trials of Sir William de la Pole', *ECHR*, 2nd series, 15 (1962), pp. 17-30.

¹¹ J. G. Jenkins (ed.), *The Wool Textile Industry in Britain* (London and Boston, 1972); E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry' in M. M. Postan and E. Miller (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, 2: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 614-692; A. R. Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking. An Economic Survey* (London, 1982); H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries* (Oxford, 1920); J. H. Munro, *Textiles, Towns and Trade. Essays in the Economic History of Late-Medieval England and the Low Countries* (Aldershot, 1994); E. Lipson, *The History of the Woollen and Worsted Industries* (London, 1921); Turnau, 'The Organization of the European Textile Industry', 17/3 (1988), pp. 583-602; G. D. Ramsey, *The English Woollen Industry, 1500-1750* (London and Basingstoke, 1982); N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (eds.), *Textile History and Economic History: Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann* (Manchester, 1973).

merciers in marketing cloth abroad is linked to the rise of the Merchant Adventurers.¹² There are several studies of the fortunes of the English woollen and worsted industries and some focus on Yorkshire; and the decline in the economy of the city of York has been addressed in terms of the loss of markets for cloth, increased competition with London clothiers and the growth of the West Yorkshire industry.¹³

I

POSSESSIONS AS CAPITAL RESERVES

In assessing the relative wealth of York mercers in Chapter Four, it was apparent from the lay subsidy of 1327 that mercers were no wealthier than their artisan neighbours.¹⁴ Wealth was measured according to the value of possessions; and these were defined as livestock, grain, household goods and merchandise.¹⁵ A few personal items were exempt such as a garment for man and his wife, a drinking cup, food in

¹² W. Childs, 'The English Export Trade in Cloth in the Fourteenth Century' in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher, *Progress and Problems in Medieval England. Essays in Honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 121-147; H. L. Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', *EHR*, 39/153 (1924), pp. 13-35; Gray, 'English Foreign Trade from 1446-1482', pp. 13, 23-29; Chorley, 'English Cloth Exports During the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries', pp. 1-10 at p. 3; P. Wolff, 'English Cloth in Toulouse, 1380-1450', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 2 (1950), pp. 290-94; P. Wolff, 'Three Samples of English Fifteenth-Century Cloth' in N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (eds.), *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe* (London, 1983), pp. 120-125; F. Piponnier, 'Cloth Merchants' Inventories in Dijon in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries' in N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (eds.), *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe* (London, 1983), pp. 230-247; J. H. Munro, 'Bruges and the Abortive Staple in English Cloth: An Incident in the Shift of Commerce from Bruges to Antwerp in the Late Fifteenth Century', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 44 (1966), pp. 1137-1159; E. M. Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers. Collected Studies* (London, 1954), esp. pp. 143-182, 239-264.

¹³ J. H. Munro 'Industrial Transformations in the North-West European Textile Trades, c.1290-c.1340: Economic Progress or Economic Crisis?' in B. M. S. Campbell (ed.), *Before the Black Death. Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century* (Manchester and New York, 1991), pp. 110-148; Miller, 'The Fortunes of the English Textile Industry in the Thirteenth Century', pp. 64-82; Heaton, *Woollen and Worsted Industries*, pp. 146-9; Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses. Lay Society, War, and Politics 1450-1500*, pp. 72-3; Kermode, 'Merchants, Overseas Trade and Urban Decline', pp. 70-1; Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 173-134, 235-291; Nightingale, 'The Growth of London in the Medieval Economy', pp. 89-106; P. Corfield and N. B. Harte (eds.), *London and the English Economy, 1500-1700* [by] F. J. Fisher (London, 1990); A. Ruddock, 'London Capitalists and the Decline of Southampton in the Early Tudor period', *EcHR*, 2nd series, 2/2 (1949), pp. 137-151.

¹⁴ TNA, E179/217/3, printed Parker, 'Lay Subsidy Rolls. 1 Edward III [1327]', pp. 104-171.

¹⁵ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes 1290-1334*, pp. 3, 73-86, 110-137; Jurkowski *et al*, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, pp. xxix-xxx.

the larder, tools of the trade and other necessities for life. Possessions were in themselves a capital reserve which could be used to finance commercial activity by conversion into cash or as collateral to secure loans; and it is instructive to look again at the lay subsidies for Yorkshire and the city of York to gauge the relative position of rural and urban mercers at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The following survey starts with the Yorkshire returns for 1297 and 1301, looks at the tallage for the city of York c.1303 and then compares the lay subsidies of 1327 and 1332.

A. MERCERS IN YORKSHIRE AND YORK, 1297 to 1332

i. Yorkshire Mercers, 1297 and 1301

The returns for the city of York of the lay subsidy of 1297 (9th 25 Edward I) do not exist, because the money collected was assigned to support the army in Scotland.¹⁶ However there are extant returns for other parts of Yorkshire which record a handful of mercers residing in rural villages and small market towns.¹⁷ In the East Riding there were Adam le mercer and Richard Mercer in Garton whose respective taxes were 16d and 3s 11d in a range from 12d to 9s.¹⁸ Andrew le mercer made the highest payment in Caythorpe with 18d whereas William Mercer's 22d was the lowest in Mowthorpe.¹⁹ An idea of the type of possessions owned by mercers emerges in the West Riding returns; for instance, Richard le mercer from Flockton (south of Dewsbury) owned a cow (4s), a stirk (2s), four sheep (2s) and had four quarters of oats in store (3s).²⁰ Ralph le mercer from Burton in Londale had 2 oxen (10s), 2 cows (7s), 4 quarters of oats (4s), 1 quarter of barley (2s) and 2 cartloads of hay (1s 8d).²¹ Nicholas le mercer in Ingleton owned two cows (7s), a young ox (1s 6d), a quarter of oats (1s) and a cart load of hay (10d).²² Here Ralph's 2s 9d was about twice the average tax paid by 30 residents, but Nicholas's 1s 1¼d was slightly less than the average among 28 taxpayers; and Richard's 14d was the lowest of 4 in his

¹⁶ TNA E179/206/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 239/219; 202/1, 2, printed W. Brown (ed.), *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy. Being a Ninth Collected in 25 Edward I (1297)*, YASRS, 16 (1894), esp. pp. vii-viii, ix-xxix.

¹⁷ Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy, 1297*, pp. vii-xxix.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 147.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

community.²³ A glimpse of trading stock is seen in Roger Horn's merchandise worth 6s 8d; 4 residents in Wakefield were assessed on *mercimonia* valued jointly at 54s 6d; and merchandise was the only possession assessed for Robert Dernelove.²⁴ These possessions suggest their retail trade was occasional and that most of their capital was invested in livestock, grain and fodder.²⁵

The returns for the lay subsidy of 1301 (15th 30 Edward I) survive for much of Yorkshire, but again not for the city of York; and these record the names of 8 mercers described as *le mercer* or by the surname *Mercher* or *Merchier*, and 9 merchants as *mercator* or *marchaunt*.²⁶ They are the sole agents of trade amongst agricultural workers and a few artisans in diverse communities from hamlets with less than 10 taxpayers to small market towns with more than 40. Although details of their movable possessions are not given, their payments from 8d to 9s indicate possessions worth from about 10s to almost £7, which reflects great inequalities of wealth. Adam le mercer from New Malton paid the highest tax of 9s ¼d, but towards the low end were the payments from 11d to 23d made by Hugh le mercer in Great Cracknall, Roger le mercer in Snape and Robert Merchier in Hipswell.²⁷ Within their communities Galfridus le mercer was the poorest paying 3s 6d, the lowest tax in Theakston and William Mercer was the wealthiest paying 6s 9d, the highest in Cliff; but in Rycolf (a lost vill) a modest 4s 10d was sufficient for William le mercer to be seen as the most affluent of 6 taxpayers.²⁸ Relative wealth can also be gauged using average payments; for example the 9s in Aton and Northallerton which was considerably higher than the 2s 4d to 3s 4d paid by Hugh le mercer, Roger Marchaunt and Richard le mercer; although in Kereby (Cold Kirby), a poorer community with average tax of 3s 4d, William Mercher ranked above the norm with 3s 9d.²⁹ Thus it is apparent that mercers lived and worked in all types of communities with different potential clientele and this would affect their prospects and prosperity. As measured by possessions, some mercers were more wealthy than the average taxpayer, but most

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 10, 100.

²⁴ Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy 1297*, pp. xxiii, 23, 114-5.

²⁵ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes, 1290-1334*, p. 75.

²⁶ TNA E179/211/2, 4; 202/4; 211/5, printed W. Brown (ed.), *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy Being a Fifteenth, Collected 30 Edward I (1301)*, YASRS, 21 (1897), pp. 1-117 at pp. 3, 13, 32, 35, 37, 38, 39, 50, 53, 62, 69, 86, 90, 91, 101, 103, 109.

²⁷ Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy 1301*, pp. 53, 90, 101, 103.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 13, 50.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 69, 86.

were not; and either situation may have prompted migration into York in order to build on their success or to improve their prospects.

ii. Mercers in Colchester c.1300 and York c.1318

In the absence of comparable data from York, an idea of the type and value of possessions owned by mercers in urban boroughs can be gleaned from the returns for Colchester in 1295 and 1301.³⁰ In 1295 a distinction was made between mercery and merchandise in the text although the appraisals were similar and covered a wide range from 4s to 35s.³¹ More details emerge in the 1301 returns showing that residents were assessed primarily on the value of their household furnishings, clothing and luxury articles; but livestock, stores of grains and merchandise are also recorded.³² William Skyp had 3s in *merceria* and Robert atte Water's mercery included gloves, belts, purses and other minute things worth ½ mark.³³ The mercer William Gray had gloves, purses, belts and other mercery valued at 16s and Godfrey the merchant had diverse mercery and spices worth 1 mark (13s 4d).³⁴ John Edwards' possessions included woollen cloth (7s), silk and linen (20s), *flammeolum* and silk purses (24s) and small mercery (3s); and William de Saham had leather gloves, belts and purses, as well as verdegris and quick-silver valued together at 2s 6d.³⁵ Despite the evidence of merchandise for sale, the semi-rural nature of towns is also seen in Roger the dyer's cow (5s), bullock (2s), sow and piglets (2s 3d); and by Gilbert Agote's granary containing quarters of wheat, barley and oats.³⁶

A fragment of the York returns for the lay subsidy of 1319 (18th and 12th of 12 Edward II) records a similar array of household possessions and livestock, grain and fodder belonging to residents.³⁷ The malt, barley and oats belonging to the mercer Gilbert Arnald were assessed at 30s, more valuable than his other possessions worth

³⁰ *Rot. Parl.*, 1, pp. 228-236, 243-265; Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property*, pp. 75-6; Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy 1301*, pp. xvi-xxii.

³¹ *Rot. Parl.*, 1, pp. 230-1.

³² Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes, 1290-1334*, p. 75; Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy, 1301*, pp. xvi-xix.

³³ *Rot. Parl.*, 1, pp. 261a, 264b.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 247a, 254b.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 261a, 263a.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 243a-b.

³⁷ TNA, E179/242/95 cited Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes, 1290-1334*, p. 76 and another fragment has been identified TNA, 179/378/75.

24s: 2 robes (6s 8d), 2 feather beds (6s 8d), a mazer (3s), 4 silver drinking cups (2s 8d) and household vessels and utensils (5s).³⁸ The returns reveal an assortment of other kinds of possessions: a textile hanging (3s), cooking equipment (7s 8d), surplus lead (10s) and merchandise (50s).³⁹ No one however was as wealthy as Nicholas Fleming, mayor that year whose horses, other livestock, robes, silver plate and household furnishings were valued at £33.⁴⁰

Questions arise about whether goods were routinely undervalued or deliberately concealed, and on the different criteria for taxation on rural or urban household; but the evidence suggests that most mercers, rural or urban, had sparsely furnished homes, a few animals and some grain in store. They did not have much in the way of merchandise, and only a few had a store of wealth in silver spoons or vessels which could be converted into cash. Therefore these early lay subsidies convey an impression of inequalities in wealth as measured by the value of possessions belonging to Yorkshire mercers. Thus mercers migrating into York from diverse rural communities started with varying amounts of capital whether tied up in possessions or converted to cash. Although details of their possessions are rarely recorded, it is possible to analyse the relative wealth of York-based mercers using the extant taxation returns, in particular those for a tallage of 1303 and the lay subsidies of 1327 and 1332.

B. THE COMMUNITY OF MERCERS IN YORK, 1303 to 1332

i. The Tallage of 1303

There is a partial return for the city of York pertaining to a tallage of 32 Edward I which records payments for 281 residents; but as this records only £86, a fraction of the £400 paid into the Exchequer, it is obviously a fragment.⁴¹ Another fragment survives for an assessment of the same year, and though nearly illegible, the names of another 98 residents can be deciphered.⁴² The amounts recorded in both documents

³⁸ [24]; Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes, 1290-1334*, p. 76.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*

⁴⁰ *VCH, City of York*, p. 110.

⁴¹ TNA, E372/152B, printed in Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy, 1301*, pp. 117-121, also pp. vii, xiii, 177, note 1; J. F. Hadwin, 'The Last Royal Tallages', *EHR*, 96 (1981), pp. 344-318 at p. 318.

⁴² TNA, E179/217/1 [c.1303].

cover the same wide range from 5d to over £5; and thus they have been combined and used to compare the amount of tallage or tax paid by 379 York residents including 11 mercers. Table 6.1 sets out the amount of tax paid as a distribution of payments in 6 bands, the lower 2 encompassing payments up to 5s (I and II), the middle 2 from 5s to 20s (III and IV) and the top 2 from 20s to over 50s (V and VI). The number of mercers in each tax bracket is compared to the total number of taxpayers in each source and a composite figure is calculated; and percentages are given for taxpayers and for mercers.

None of the mercers was charged with less than 2s (Band I), and John de Haxby, assessed for 4s, is the sole mercer in Band II (2s-5s) which ranks him in the lower 63% of those tallaged or taxed.⁴³ William de Thorp and John de Scorby were assessed for 5s 4d and 6s 8d within the 10s bracket of Band III and Roger de Hutton’s 8s 9d nearly elevated him into Band IV. These sums are less than the 9s paid by Adam le mercer in New Malton in the 1301 lay subsidy for North Yorkshire discussed above.⁴⁴

TABLE 6.1
TALLAGE, CITY OF YORK, 1303:
DISTRIBUTION OF PAYMENTS MADE BY MERCERS

Band	Payment	Tallage ¹ 32 Edw. I		Assessment ² 32 Edw. I		Total	%	M	%
		N=	M	N=	M				
I	up to 2s	127	0	17	0	240	63	1	9
II	up to 5s	70	0	26	1				
III	up to 10s	39	1	30	2	110	29	5	45
IV	up to 20s	22	1	19	1				
V	up to 50s	18	3	5	0	29	8	5	45
VI	over 50s	5	1	1	1				
Totals		281	6	98	5	379	100	11	99
N = number of residents assessed M = number of mercers Sources: ¹ TNA, E372/152B/29 printed W. Brown (ed.), <i>Yorkshire Lay Subsidy Being a Fifteenth, Collected 30 Edward I (1301)</i> , YASRS, 21 (1897), pp. 117-21 (Tallage, City of York, 1303). ² TNA, E179/217/1.									

Alan de Causton and Walter de Scorby were liable for greater sums of 1 mark (13s 4d) and 17s 9d which placed them in Band IV and, together with their Band III colleagues, they represented 45% of the mercers as a subgroup within 29% of

⁴³ [462].
⁴⁴ [857]; [754]; [517]; Brown, *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy, 1301*, p. 53.

taxpayers.⁴⁵ Three mercers paid 2 marks (£1 6s 8d) each (Band V): Richard de Allerton, Martin de Eryholme and John de Barnby; and greater wealth was evident for John de Eryholme and Thomas de Whitby whose liabilities were each four marks (53d 4d), placing them in the highest tax bracket (Band VI).⁴⁶ Not only were these 5 men ranked in the top 8% of taxpayers, but they represented almost half the mercers, signs that, at this date, they were amongst the most substantial residents of York.

As to the underlying factors of relative wealth, there are a few glimpses of the expanded scope of their trade; for example the 1301 civic ordinances record Roger de Hutton as a brewer and innkeeper and Thomas de Whitby as a taverner, indicating additional sources of income.⁴⁷ The urban success of Richard de Allerton and the Scorby and Eryholme brothers is shown by their acquisition of property and rents particularly of shops in Petergate.⁴⁸ This implies investment of trading profits arising not only from retail sales of mercery, but from the more lucrative trade in wool which was opening up to denizen merchants.⁴⁹ Indeed in the period 1298 to 1315 Yorkshire merchants handled the bulk of the wool trade through Hull, and in 1303 the average shipment of 29 York men was 11 sacks of wool.⁵⁰

ii. The Lay Subsidies of 1327 and 1332

These tentative signs of commercial enterprise become clearer from the 1320s and it is instructive to look at the York returns for the lay subsidies of 1327 and 1332.⁵¹ Thirty-four members of the mercer community can be identified as taxpayers in 1327 and 41 in 1332; and it is possible to assess changes in the distribution of their relative wealth by comparing the returns.⁵² The distribution of tax paid in both years was

⁴⁵ [210]; [756].

⁴⁶ [6]; [334]; [53]; [335]; [934].

⁴⁷ Prestwich, *York Civic Ordinances, 1301*, pp. 23, 26, 28.

⁴⁸ Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents', 2, pp. iii-xiv, *Gazetteer* nos. T.1-T.62; *Yorkshire Feet of Fines, 1272-1300*, pp. 112, 130, 131-2, nos. 23, 55; *Yorkshire Feet of Fines, 1300-14*, pp. 2-3, 57, nos. 12, 57; YML, VC 3/vi/46ii; Tringham, *Vicar Choral Charters*, pp. 17-19, 30-1, 50-1, 67, 139, 173-4, 238-9, 306-9, nos. 28-32, 52-5, 82-5, 116, 244, 259, 309, 430, 475, 570-2, 574; YD, 1, p. 215, nos. 594-5.

⁴⁹ Lloyd, *English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*, pp. 54, 65, 115.

⁵⁰ Lloyd, *English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*, pp. 128-9 and Table 13.

⁵¹ TNA, E179/217/5, printed but misdated Stell and Hawkyard, 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [1332] for York', pp. 2-14.

⁵² See above p. xii (Composition of the Community of Mercers).

similar ranging from 3d to over 20s and this has been arranged in six bands in Table 6.2, the lower two subdivided: 3d-12d and 12d-14d (I), 14d-2s and 2s-3s (II), 3s-5s (III), 5s-10s (IV), 10s-20s (V) and more than 20s (VI). The data for 1327 is set out in parallel to 1332 with the number of taxpayers given in each tax bracket although the percentage relates to combined bands for ease of comparison.

The inequalities of wealth within the taxpaying community shows that the majority or 81% paid less than 3s tax in 1327, and this reduced to 64% in 1332. Fewer mercers were assessed in the lowest tax brackets for sums up to 14d, 38% in 1327 and 12% in 1332 although the proportion paying sums between 14d and 3s was similar for both periods at 21% to 27%, not much less than for taxpayers as a whole. This suggests that mercers were not the poorest sub-group of taxpayers, but neither were they the wealthiest. Nonetheless there was a significant presence of mercers in the middle band paying from 3s to 5s and in 1332 a remarkably high proportion of 37% assessed for amounts from 5s to 20s. As to the highest amounts paid in tax, no mercers were recorded in 1327, but 3 were in 1332.

TABLE 6.2
LAY SUBSIDIES, YORK 1327 AND 1332: AMOUNTS OF TAX PAID BY MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES

Band	Tax	Lay Subsidy 1327 ¹				Lay Subsidy 1332 ²			
		N=	%	M	%	N=	%	M	%
I	3d-12d	257	59	5	38	144	34	1	12
	12d-14d	217		8		143		4	
II	14d -2s	150	22	6	21	102	30	10	27
	2s-3s	32		1		153		1	
III	3s-5s	95	12	10	29	132	16	7	17
IV	5s-10s	41	6.5	3	12	119	18	9	37
V	10s-20s	12		1		30		6	
VI	20s plus	3	0.5	0	0	20	2	3	7
Totals		807	100	34	100	843 ³	100	41	100
M= members of the community of mercers, mercers and mercer-associates Sources & Notes: ¹ TNA, E179/217/3 printed J. W. R. Parker (ed.), 'Lay Subsidy Rolls. 1 Edward II' in <i>Miscellanea</i> , 2, YASRS, 74 (1929), pp. 104-171 ² TNA, E179/217/5 printed P. M. Stell and A. Hawkyard (eds.), 'The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [1332] for York', <i>York Historian</i> , 13 (1996), pp. 2-14 ³ 843 legible payments out of 850 taxpayers									

Here the overall impression is that the community of mercers was wealthier in 1332 than it had been 5 years earlier in 1327. The reasons why this might have been are discussed below in light of social, demographic and economic factors which would effect changes in relative wealth. Old age and poverty may explain John de Haxby’s low tax of 6d in 1327, a fraction of his tallage in 1303; and likewise Robert Lindsey

and William Scott, both free in 1284, whose levies were amongst the lowest (Band I).⁵³ Young mercers were likely to have few possessions, a reasonable explanation for the low tax imposed in 1327 on William Belle and Thomas de Eastrington, not yet free of the city; and in 1332 on new freemen James Gafaire and John de Gisburn.⁵⁴ The low assessment for William Paunton is somewhat at odds with his testamentary bequests of silver plate, imported fabrics and 5s cash; but the fact that the chapmen John de Usburn and Roger de Tollerton do not recur in 1332 suggests a marginal status close to the minimum threshold.⁵⁵ John de Bugthorpe chapman and Richard Blake linen draper paid 12d tax in both years, their modest standing unaffected by the latter's move downstream from St. Martin Coney Street to St. Mary Castlegate.⁵⁶

The parish of residence and level of tax reflect degrees of commercial prospects, for example Thomas de Barnby's tax remained 1s, but he moved from St. John's Ouse Bridge into Holy Trinity King's Court which suggests he sought new clientele near the Mercery.⁵⁷ Alan de Kilham's removal was in the opposite direction into Walmgate St. Margaret and this, together with his reduced tax from 2s to 18d, implies a downturn in fortunes.⁵⁸ Other taxes in the lower range of Band II (15d to 20d) were paid by Adam de Fimmer chapman who lived in Walmgate St. Denys and by William de Bielby and William Brown residing in extra-mural parishes.⁵⁹ In the Petergate area, Walter de Bulmer was assessed 2s on goods worth 20s in 1327; and the same was levied in 1332 on John Bishopton, chapman and the mercers, William de Danton, John de Wheldrake, Richard de Coventry and John de Harewood.⁶⁰

Whatever the basis of taxation, there was a marked increase in tax from the 1s-3s range in 1327 up to 4s in 1332 (Band III) which suggests that John de Walmsford, Adam de Stockton and Robert Stanhope were more affluent than previously.⁶¹ Some newly qualified freemen had sufficient resources to be taxed at 3s (Band III) such as

⁵³ [462]; [585]; [759].

⁵⁴ [72]; [320]; [378]; [407].

⁵⁵ [683]; YML, 2/4, fo. 10; [879]; [867].

⁵⁶ [170]; [115].

⁵⁷ [56].

⁵⁸ [539].

⁵⁹ [356]; [97]; [161].

⁶⁰ [172]; [108]; [275]; [931]; [245]; [449].

⁶¹ [903]; [827]; [819].

Stephen de Kilham, John de Gamelton and Richard Burgess.⁶² The 3s assessment on William de Attewater seems low considering his kinship with Richard de Tickhill and his residence in Micklegate; and the atypical reduced tax for John de Beverley from 4s 8d (Band III) to 8d (Band I) may pertain to his son's liability.⁶³

A steady accumulation of wealth is seen for Gilbert Arnald whose possessions, valued at £2 13s in 1318, had doubled by 1327 to £5 for which 5s tax was due (Band IV).⁶⁴ Age and experience might be a factor of increased wealth and reflected in larger tax levies which placed mercers in higher tax brackets in 1332: from 3s or 4s (Band III) up to 6s (Band IV) for William de Thorpe, Robert de Duffield, Roger del Shires, John de Barnby and William de Grantham; and from 2s 6d (Band II) to 7s (Band IV) for William de Crauncewick.⁶⁵ Henry de Scorby's tax stayed in the same range of 6s-7s in 1327 and 1332, but Richard de Tickhill's rose from 9s (Band IV) to 16s (Band V).⁶⁶ He was joined by a younger William de Grantham, William de Hovingham and Robert de Skelton whose respective taxes had risen three-fold from 3s or 4s (Band III) up to 10s (Band V).⁶⁷ A greater difference was seen in the liabilities for John Caperon and William de Eastington which leapt the 1s-2s range up to 12s (Band V) suggesting their careers had suddenly taken off.⁶⁸ A more moderate rise was seen in Richard de Allerton's tax from 10s 8d to 16s 4d, but sufficient to place him in the highest tax bracket (Band VI); though here he was outranked by 2 two mercer-associates, Richard de Brignall and John de Bristol, whose liabilities for 20s in 1332 were 5 and 20 times the 4s and 1s levied in 1327.⁶⁹

Summary Remarks

The impression of a trend of growing prosperity within the community of mercers is supported by the increased presence of mercers in civic office from 1300-1340. Members of the Scorby family were elected chamberlain or bailiff from 1305 to 1332; and William Grantham senior in the period 1306-13 and William junior at the

⁶² [543]; [381]; [174].

⁶³ [37]; [85-6]; [87].

⁶⁴ [24].

⁶⁵ [857]; [302-3]; [780]; [53]; [430]; [248].

⁶⁶ [753]; [862].

⁶⁷ [431]; [505]; [788].

⁶⁸ [194]; [322].

⁶⁹ [6]; [146]; [151].

end of 1335-1340. Others held office in the intervening years, Richard de Allerton, Richard de Brignal, John de Bristol, John Caperon, William de Eastrington, Richard de Tickhill and William de Thorpe; and, as will be discussed below, a common factor was their participation in the wool trade. As early as 1306 Richard de Allerton was exporting wool and by 1333 would have shipped more than 60 cargoes comprising 330 sacks of wool, 1,500 wool fells and 9 lasts of hides.⁷⁰ Richard de Brignall also found his niche in the wool trade with exports of 16 sacks in the decade 1321-31 and, despite suffering a considerable loss of merchandise in Flanders in 1334, retained his position as MP.⁷¹

The participation of some mercers in the wool trade is significant, particularly in light of the commercial policies leading up to the establishment of the staple at Calais.⁷² In particular it was the temporary designation of York as a home staple in 1326-28 and again in 1332-34 which enhanced the role of the York-based middleman. This increased the number of merchants in the city and boosted the retail sales of shopkeepers; and the greater availability of wool benefited local cloth producers.⁷³ The mercer was well placed to take advantage of new commercial opportunities in all 3 areas and their financial success would be reflected in their higher tax liabilities.⁷⁴

II

INVESTMENTS IN WOOL

A. EDWARD III'S WOOL MONOPOLY, c.1337

In the 1330's Edward III devised a scheme to finance a proposed war against France with the proceeds from the export of wool, in which the crown would control the wool trade under the auspices of a company of English merchants which was granted

⁷⁰ [6]; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 333.

⁷¹ [146]; CCR, 1333-37, pp. 348-9; 1337-39, p. 327; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 336.

⁷² Power, *Wool Trade in English Medieval History*, pp. 86-103.

⁷³ Power, *Wool Trade in English Medieval History*, pp. 92-3.

⁷⁴ Lloyd, *English Wool Trade*, pp. 117-9, 129-30; Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, pp. 195-6.

a monopoly.⁷⁵ Merchants were appointed by the king to purvey wool throughout the country and there were also independent collectors, wool growers and merchants attracted by the prospects of high profits.⁷⁶ The first consignment of wool was dispatched in November 1337 to Dordrecht in the Netherlands, but shortly after arrival a dispute broke out between the merchants and the royal envoys responsible for collecting the monies.⁷⁷ Eventually the merchants agreed to surrender their wool for an immediate down payment of 40s per sarpler (large sack) and the promise of repayment in full.⁷⁸ These contract merchants were given indentures as receipts for the value of wool delivered; and eventually the actual owners of the wool were issued royal letters obligatory for compensation through the remission of customs on their future exports of wool until the debt was cleared.⁷⁹ The latter became known as the Dordrecht bonds, and unfortunately few merchants recovered the full amount due to them, because of a series of embargoes, reduced allowances for exemption and other tactics of delay.⁸⁰ Thus in 1343 a syndicate was created to buy up these outstanding bonds (at a discount), and so discharge the king's debts.⁸¹ A small group of prominent York merchants emerge as financiers to the king; but mercers also were involved in the original scheme and held Dordrecht bonds in varying amounts.⁸² The following discussion looks at their investments in wool in 1337 and their outstanding debts in 1343, and then at their activities as royal creditors.⁸³

i. The Dordrecht Bonds, 1338 to c.1343

The names of 6 York mercers and 16 merchants are recorded as recipients of Dordrecht bonds; and the writs issued in 1343 detail their retrospective claims which

⁷⁵ Lloyd, *English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*, pp. 144-152; Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly of 1337', pp. 8-24; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁶ Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly', pp. 8, 11-12, 13-14, 19; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions*, p. 6; Lloyd, *English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*, pp. 8, 146-7, 178.

⁷⁷ Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly', pp. 14-17, 18; Fryde, *The Wool Accounts of William de la Pole*, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly', pp. 9, 18; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ Lloyd, *English Wool Trade*, pp. 149, 150, 151, 175-6; Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly', pp. 20-3.

⁸⁰ Power, *Wool Trade in English Medieval History*, pp. 83-4.

⁸¹ Fryde, 'Edward III's Wool Monopoly', p. 9; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, p. 10; Fryde, 'The English Farmers of the Customs', pp. 3, 7-8.

⁸² Lloyd, *English Wool Trade*, pp. 129-30; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions*, pp. 3-4, 7-11.

⁸³ G. L. Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', *The Historical Journal*, 6/1 (1963), pp. 1-19.

amounted to more than £6,000 with individual sums ranging from £49 to almost £1,700.⁸⁴ The distribution has been set out in Table 6.3 in 6 bands according to amount, rounded up to the nearest £: £49 to £100 (I), £100-£200 (II), £200-£300 (III), £300-£500 (IV), £500-£1,000 (V) and over £1,000 (VI); and the sub-total for each band is given alongside the amount and percentage claimed by mercers. Unlike the lay subsidies based on the wealth of the household, the Dordrecht bonds represent simply the level of investment tied up in a shipment of wool; and the sums involved are much larger than taxation levies.

Overall it can be seen that York mercers represented nearly a quarter, 6 out of 22, of the York holders of Dordrecht bonds and that their claims amounted to £1,540 or 25% of the £6,095 recorded. Nor were the claims of York mercers in the lowest band, but 50% for amounts from £100-£200 (Band II) and two claims for £390 and £592 represented a respective 23% and 100% in Bands IV and V. However, the royal writs issued in 1343 show that mercers had recovered very little of the money due to them in the meantime, for example the partners William de Eastington and Robert de Skelton whose bond for £216 suggests each put in around £108 (Band II); they managed to recoup £16 or 7%, but were left with £200 due in 1343.⁸⁵

TABLE 6.3

**DORDRECHT BONDS: THE AMOUNTS OWED TO
YORK MERCERS AND MERCHANTS, 1338 to c.1343**

Band	Claimants, Range and Subtotals Due *				Mercer Share	
	N=	Mercer	Range	£	£	%
I	5	0	£40-£100	375		
II	8	4	£100-£200	1,122	558	50
III	3	0	£200-£300	669		
IV	4	1	£300-£500	1,669	390	23
V	1	1	£500-£1,000	592	592	100
VI	1	0	over £1,000	1,668		
Total				6,095	1,540	25
* sums rounded up to nearest £; and those of partnerships, divided equally						
Sources: CCR, 1337-39, pp. 424-32 (obligations); 1341-43, pp. 256-59 (indentures); 1343-46, pp. 135, 145-149 (writes of allowance).						

William de Grantham was in a partnership with William de Selby merchant and claimed about £312 with an average of £156 each and they did better in recovering

⁸⁴ CCR, 1337-39, pp. 424-34; 1339-41, pp. 316, 501, 589-90, 601, 614-15; 1341-43, pp. 256-9; 1343-46, pp.145-9, 159, 399.

⁸⁵ [322]; [788].

£82 or 26% of their investment; but the death of the latter before 1443 complicated collection of the £230 balance which left Grantham in the position of having to satisfy Selby's executors.⁸⁶ The wool monopoly left even a seasoned wool exporter such as Richard de Allerton out of pocket for £141 over a 5-year period in which he reduced his claim for £186 to £45 (Band II).⁸⁷ Richard de Brignal had been one of the purveyors responsible for the Yorkshire quota, but was removed for collecting it too slowly, perhaps because his efforts were concentrated on his own consignment valued at £390 (Band IV); and though he recovered 10% or £41 was left with an outstanding balance of £349.⁸⁸ The mercer with the greatest amount at stake was Henry de Scorby whose bond was for £592 of which just £34 or 6% had been recovered by his death; the residual bond came into the hands of John Goldbeter, who was the one to recoup £133 by exporting wool exempt from payment of customs.⁸⁹

There is no doubt that the repercussions of delay in recovering these debts would be felt by the wool suppliers, other creditors and York merchants themselves; and no doubt some could not afford to wait and sold their bonds at discounts to wealthier merchants.⁹⁰ However the evidence suggests that York mercers survived the long wait for repayment and continued to invest in wool for export; for example Nicholas de Scorby and William de Skelton and their respective partners were granted licences in 1341 to collect respectively 500 and 800 sacks of wool in the East Riding.⁹¹ Participation would have been prompted by fear of exclusion from the trade on the one hand and hope of eventual profit on the other; and thus pushed and pulled would endure the setbacks, restrictions, losses and liability for loans in order to take advantage of the occasional favourable terms offered by Parliamentary grants.⁹²

ii. York Mercers as Royal Creditors, c.1339 to 1351

The wool monopoly as originally envisioned may have collapsed, but the wool trade was still under royal control and the war continued to be financed from loans mostly

⁸⁶ [430]; [431].

⁸⁷ [6].

⁸⁸ [146];[147]; *CCR, 1337-39*, pp. 270, 274, 426; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 163.

⁸⁹ [753]; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions*, p. 10.

⁹⁰ Fryde, *Some Business Transactions*, p. 10.

⁹¹ *CPR, 1340-43*, p. 435; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 164.

⁹² Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, pp. 8-9; Kermode, pp. 162-3, 164; Lloyd, *English Wool Trade*, pp. 178-180, 182.

repaid through remission of customs on future exports of wool.⁹³ The element of compulsion behind loans to the crown cannot be ignored, but neither can a sense of mutual obligation, and thus the amount and conditions of loans would be agreed by representatives of those concerned at special meetings.⁹⁴ Wool merchants were summoned to an assembly in 1347 to raise a loan for defence of the realm based on individual levies; those who did not attend were re-summoned and others had their goods attached for failing to comply.⁹⁵ Liddy calculated that £450 was eventually raised from 25 York men, an average of £18 each.⁹⁶ A dozen mercers were involved including Robert de Skelton, William de Eastington, John de Bristol and Thomas de Sigston.⁹⁷ The elusive Stephen de Grantham appears with his kinsmen William de Grantham, junior and senior; and Robert and William de Scorby were listed along with their more prominent kinsman Henry.⁹⁸ The mercer, later draper Richard de Santon and his brothers Nicholas and William were named, as was the draper/tailor Robert Liddyate and the taverner William de Holme, who was probably the father of Robert and Thomas.⁹⁹

An idea of the variable assets of York mercers can be gained from the size of their loans as royal creditors in the period from 1339 to 1351. The records of Goldbeter and Company record the financial transactions of William de Skelton and William Attewater, and a crown loan of 1351 shows several York mercer as contributors.¹⁰⁰ William de Skelton was involved with three loans from the autumn of 1339: the smallest for £80 was based on a licence to export 80 sacks of wool which was recovered shortly thereafter with £20 interest.¹⁰¹ In December William and 6 others loaned £400 derived from the export of 400 sacks of wool; and a remarkable sum of

⁹³ Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War', pp. 150-69.

⁹⁴ Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', pp. 6-8, 13-14; Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 183-5; Ormrod, 'The English Crown and the Customs', pp. 27-40.

⁹⁵ *CCR, 1346-49*, pp. 284-6, 360-1, 374-80, 390-2; Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', pp. 15-16.

⁹⁶ C. D. Liddy, 'Urban Communities and the Crown: Relations between Bristol, York and the Royal Government, 1350-1400' (Unpublished DPhil Thesis (History), University of York, 1999), pp. 68-75; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 26, Table 2, 27-8, Appendix, Table 2.

⁹⁷ [788]; [322]; [151]; [785]; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, Appendix, Table 2; *CCR, 1346-49*, p. 377.

⁹⁸ [424]; [430]; [431]; [757]; [753]; *CCR, 1346-49*, p. 380.

⁹⁹; [746]; [490]; *CCR, 1346-49*, pp. 380, 389.

¹⁰⁰ Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, pp. 4-5, Appendix, Table I; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 26 Table 2; *CCR, 1349-54*, pp. 342, 344-5, 458, 571-2.

¹⁰¹ [790]; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, Appendix, Table I, no. 6.

£400 interest is noted.¹⁰² Later William and two partners loaned another £400 described as 'allowed in money due for royal wool' and in 1341-42 recouped the same amount. In May 1339 William atte Wartre and 3 syndicate members loaned £2,000 in return for a licence to export 1,000 sacks of wool, and recovered £2,994 within a year.¹⁰³

Although the individual amounts loaned in 1351 toward the defence of the realm were much smaller, the total amounted to £585, and mercers contributed £421 or 72%.¹⁰⁴ William Belle contributed the smallest amount at £10 and this was to be repaid through remission of customs on future shipping through Boston and London.¹⁰⁵ The partnership of John de Crome and Thomas de Sigston was liable for £45 or £22 10s each and documentation suggests they would be reimbursed in 2 stages from exports through the ports of Hull and London.¹⁰⁶ Robert de Lutton was a partner of Robert Holme and their loan of £53 was recoverable from customs remissions in Boston and London.¹⁰⁷ Closer to home, the Santon brothers were allowed similar exemptions in Hull for the repayment of their loan of £100, and this would be the port where Alice widow of William de Skelton collected the final instalment of his £214 loan.¹⁰⁸

Here the incidence of partnerships reveals a greater number of mercers involved in the wool trade than would be expected; and also their export through ports other than Hull. The variable amounts loaned reflect different personal circumstances and inequalities of available current assets and credit if not also wealth.¹⁰⁹ The difference between the syndicate members in 1339-40 and individual mercers in 1351 indicates that the latter were lesser wool traders, and though liable for loans to the crown had less assurance of repayment and little hope of interest. Other national and local records provide some evidence for their continuing involvement in the wool trade after the Black Death.

¹⁰² Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, Appendix, Table I, no. 9, 13.

¹⁰³ [37]; Fryde, *Some Business Transactions of York Merchants*, Appendix, Table 1, no. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 26 Table 2; *CCR, 1349-54*, pp. 342, 344-5, 458, 571-2

¹⁰⁵ [72]; *CCR, 1349-54*, pp. 342, 572.

¹⁰⁶ [256]; [785]; *CCR, 1349-54*, pp. 342, 458, 572.

¹⁰⁷ [490]; [606]; *CCR, 1349-54*, pp. 345, 571.

¹⁰⁸ [746]; [790]; *CCR, 1349-54*, pp. 344, 458, 572; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁹ Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', p. 11.

B. MERCHANTS OF THE STAPLE, 1353-c.1373

The designation of York as a staple town in 1326 was an early attempt to restrict the sale and purchase of wool to a limited number of places before being customed for export.¹¹⁰ This was a short-term venture, and though the merits were discussed at merchant assemblies, it would be 1353 before York regained its position as a home staple, part of new initiatives to regulate trade.¹¹¹ A mayor and two constables were appointed to govern the body of merchants involved in foreign trade, to weigh and seal all wool intended for export and to administer the law merchant in the Staple Courts.¹¹² Other judicial functions were to hear all pleas of debt, contract and covenant with the mayor 'empowered to seal recognisances of debts' under an innovative new procedure (Statute Staple) which was more direct and efficient than the old Statute Merchant.¹¹³ The commercial base of the membership became increasingly focused on mercantile status and most wool traders became known as merchants whatever their primary occupation had been; mayors of the staple became a 'new and important element in local government'.¹¹⁴

i. The York Staple, 1353-c.1373

Although it is seldom possible to gauge the level of investment, the increased participation of York mercers in the wool trade can be charted from direct and indirect evidence. Royal commissions were directed to known York wool merchants, for example Nicholas de Scorby who was to collect the customs on wool exported from York from 1339-41 and William de Grantham who was to assemble the sacks of wool levied in 1347.¹¹⁵ Others were appointed to collect the lay subsidies in the city and suburbs such as Henry de Scorby (1342-6), William de Eastrington (1347-8) and Robert de Lutton (1354, 1357-8).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 113; Lloyd, *English Wool Trade*, pp. 115, 117-9.

¹¹¹ SR, 1, p. 332 (Statute Staple); Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, pp. 190-4; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 110-14, 116.

¹¹² Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 114-5.

¹¹³ SR, 1, pp. 98-100; EHD, 1189-1327, pp. 457-460; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 115-6; W. M. Ormrod, 'The Origins of the *Sub Pena Writ*', *Historical Research*, 61 (1988), pp. 11-20 at pp. 14-15.

¹¹⁴ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 118, 123, 126-7.

¹¹⁵ [755]; [431]; CFR, 1337-47, pp. 149 (1339), 224; 1347-56, pp. 2, 9, 11, 13.

¹¹⁶ [453]; [322]; [606]; CFR, 1337-47, pp. 406, 474; 1347-56, pp. 46-7, 415; 1356-68, pp. 46, 64; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 115, 126, Appendix Table 2.

A sure sign of participation in the wool trade was the election as mayor of the York staple of John de Allerton (1356), John de Gisburn (1358-62) and Robert Holme (1364).¹¹⁷ Roger de Hovingham was abruptly replaced in 1354 by royal orders, but was assigned a new role in 1363 with John de Gisburn as aldermen of the new Calais Staple.¹¹⁸ No such disputes accompanied the appointments of the York staple constables, Hugh de Miton (1353), William de Beverley and William Frankish (1358-9), John de Knapton (1360-1) and Robert del Gare (1364 and 1368).¹¹⁹ It would be expected that mayors of the York staple would be able to represent the interests of local wool traders and growers, and they were duly elected as MPs: Roger de Hovingham (1358 and 1360), John de Gisburn (1360-1 and 1373), John de Alleton (1362) and Robert Holme (1365 and 1372).¹²⁰ There was a connection between the wool trade, royal appointments and MPs; and mercers serving in these positions can be assumed to have been wool traders such as John de Crakye, MP in 1352 or John Caperon and John Freboys, collectors of the lay subsidies in 1352 and 1353.¹²¹

The profits and experience gained in the wool trade and membership of the staple itself would help promote mercers for civic office; and a number were elected as bailiff: in the 1340s, John de Crayke, William de Hovingham, William de Skelton, William Belle and Thomas de Sigston; in the 1350s Roger de Hovingham, John Freboys, Robert Holme and William Frankish; and in the 1360s John de Crome, John de Knapton, Robert del Gare, Robert de Lutton, Thomas Holme, Roger de Moreton junior and William de Burton.¹²² Some wool merchants were elected mayor during this period such as Henry de Belton (1334-37), Nicholas Fouks (1342), John de Shirburn (1343-5), Henry Goldbeter (1346) and Henry de Scorby, junior.¹²³ However, before and after their stints, the mayoralty was dominated by Nicholas de Langton whose ancestors had been traders, but whose interests were now those of the landed patriciate.¹²⁴ In fact the conflict between staple and civic officials was played out for the position of mayor; and it would not be until 1364 that the new merchant

¹¹⁷ [6]; [408]; [490] Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 115-16, Appendix Table 2.

¹¹⁸ [504]; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 118, 129-30.

¹¹⁹ [634]; [88]; [371]; [559]; [387]; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 124-5.

¹²⁰ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 23, 137-8, 142-3, 146-50, 158-9.

¹²¹ [250]; [194]; [373]; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 94-6, 112, 115, 126.

¹²² YCR, Mss. D.1, fos. 291r-292v; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 124-5, Appendix Table 2.

¹²³ Kightly and Semlyen, *Lords of the City*, pp.15; 93.

¹²⁴ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 119-21, 23; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 56.

élite ousted the old regime.¹²⁵ Henceforth, the city's mayor was elected from the inner council of aldermen, most of whom were wool exporters with a few drawn from the community of mercers: Roger de Hovingham (1366), Robert Holme (1368), John de Gisburn (1370-1, 1380), Roger de Moreton junior (1373) and Thomas Holme (1374).¹²⁶

It is clear that the large-scale wool dealers held the most influential positions as MPs, mayors and royal agents and comprised a small select group; in 1359-7 for instance 7 contributed £666 13s 4d towards the Rheims campaign: William Gra, merchant; John Allerton and Henry Scorby, the merchant sons of mercers; Richard Wateby and Hugh Miton, originally drapers; and Roger Hovingham and John Gisburn, originally mercers.¹²⁷ Other mercers engaged in the wool trade did not have the average of £92 to loan; and despite their occasional appointments as royal agents or liability to crown loans, did not achieve the same social and economic standing.

ii. *Communes Mercatores Lanarum*, 1360-64

It would be expected that the membership of the York staple would comprise a mixed group of wool dealers whose relative rank within the membership depended on the scale of their business activities and their capital resources. Some were of the stature of financiers and others large-scale exporters able to raise loans on the security of customs; but mercers, for the most part, fit the profile of middlemen, buying from the wool grower and selling on to wool processors or export merchants.¹²⁸

As originally envisaged in 1353, the home staples promoted the inland trade of denizen wool merchants, and the extant Sessions of the Peace provide a glimpse of the dealings York mercers had with wool growers in North and East Yorkshire in the period 1360-62.¹²⁹ Amongst the cases heard by the justices were those concerning the use of non-standard weights by a number of York merchants, who upon examination declared they were *communes mercatores lanarum* and had purchased wool for the past 9 years using the stone of 12½lb and sack of 30 stones rather than

¹²⁵ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 122.

¹²⁶ [504]; [490]; [408]; [643]; [491].

¹²⁷ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 26 Table 2, 37-8.

¹²⁸ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 199-200; A. Hanham, 'The Profits on English Wool Exports, 1472-1544', *BIHR*, 55 (1982), pp. 139-147 at pp. 141-2.

¹²⁹ Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, pp. xxxii, xlv, 13 note 1.

the standard 14lb stone and 26-stone sack.¹³⁰ Here, the word *communes* implies they were the recognised or known wool dealers; and they may represent the York merchants of the staple.¹³¹ More than 40 York men are named in the text of whom 20 were members of the community of mercers; and some were well-established wool exporters; for example John de Allerton, John de Gisburn, William de Grantham, Roger de Hovingham, Roger de Moreton, junior, Henry de Scorby and Thomas de Sigston.¹³² Less prominent mercers included William Frankish and John de Knapton; and there were some new names, such as John and William de Burn, William Cooper, William Oubri and John de Potto.¹³³ There were interconnections between the well-known and the new; for instance John de Knapton weighed wool on behalf of Walter de Kelstern, Roger de Moreton junior was probably John de Gisburn's junior partner at this date and John de Potto was John de Crome's apprentice.¹³⁴

The interconnection between York men involved in the wool trade is clear, and their contacts with wool growers would have been a 'well-nurtured...important asset.'¹³⁵ It is also clear that there were opportunities in the wool trade to become directly involved in the supply of wool for the domestic manufacture of cloth; in 1338 Walter de Kelstern was purchasing wool to be made into cloth in York.¹³⁶ Kelstern was a prominent wool exporter, but he was linked through kinship to the Lidyate family of drapers and tailors and was admitted into the Fraternity of St. Mary in 1362 as part of a family group.¹³⁷ Several of the wool traders named in the Sessions of the Peace were also members of the Fraternity: the drapers John de Clayton, Hugh de Miton, Richard Santon and Richard de Wateby, and the mercers John and William de Burn, William Cooper, William Frankish, John de Knapton, Roger de Moreton junior and John de Potto.¹³⁸

¹³⁰ Connor, *The Weights and Measures of England*, pp. 130, 133-8, 141-3, 320- (1302/3, *Tractatus de Ponderibus et Mensuris*); Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, p. 85.

¹³¹ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 125-7.

¹³² [6]; [408]; [431]; [504]; [643]; [753]; [785]; Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, pp. 84-5, 98.

¹³³ [371]; [559]; [175]; [176]; [243]; [676]; [706]; Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, pp. 14, 37, 39, 84-5.

¹³⁴ [256]; Putnam, *Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace*, pp. 14, 37, 39, 85.

¹³⁵ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 201, 205.

¹³⁶ *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, 1307-49, p. 399, nos. 1628.

¹³⁷ YMAA, St. Mary, Accounts, 4; Account Book, fo. 2r; *FR*, 1, pp. 25, 38; *YMB*, 3, p. 3.

¹³⁸ [175]; [176]; [243]; [371]; [559]; [634]; [643]; [706]; [746]; *FR*, 1, pp. 39, 41; Skaife, *Mss.*, 'Civic Officials', p. 810.

The link between wool, cloth and membership of the Fraternity is not coincidental; mercers and drapers were the two largest occupational subgroups and commercial links would be forged and strengthened corporately. Marriage alliance linked drapers to mercers; for example William Belle's widow married John Caperon, John de Beverley's heir was the mercer John de Derthington and Thomas de Santon married William de Burton's daughter.¹³⁹ Drapers often stood as pledges for mercers when elected bailiff: Hugh de Miton and Richard de Wateby for John Freboys (1352/3); Nicholas de Santon for Robert Holme (1355); Richard de Wateby for John de Knapton (1361/2); John de Santon for Robert del Gare (1362); and John de Clayton for William de Burton (1368).¹⁴⁰ Further examination is warranted to discover the details of the commercial relationship between drapers and mercers in York, but the wool trade was certainly the common ground because it provided opportunities for various middlemen. As agents of trade, York mercers could be involved as suppliers, employers, carriers and silent partners in the manufacture, marketing and distribution of cloth; and it is not surprising that some mercers became known as drapers and others as merchants, the description depending on the main focus of their trade.

Summary Remarks

Looking at the data extracted by Bartlett from the particular customs accounts for Hull during the year Michaelmas to Michaelmas 1378-79, it is possible to identify 3 mercers out of a group of 13 York merchants.¹⁴¹ Seven merchants exported 642 sacks of wool with an estimated value of over £3,200 at £5/sack; and John de Gisburn and Roger de Morton junior were responsible for 57% or 369 sacks.¹⁴² Those involved in the export of cloth were a slightly different group of 7 whose shipments of 123 broadcloths were worth at least £184 at 30s/cloth; and again 77 cloths or 62% were handled by mercers, Robert de Duffield, John de Gisburn and Roger de Morton.¹⁴³ John de Gisburn was the sole mercer representative among 5 wine importers and at £4/tun his 15 tuns had a value of £60 which was above the average; and combined with his exports of wool and cloth, his overall investment in foreign trade was the highest, amounting to £1,127.

¹³⁹ [71]; [194]; [88]; [286]; [748]; [189].

¹⁴⁰ YCR, Mss. D.1, fos. 291v, 292r.

¹⁴¹ TNA, E122/59/1, extracts printed Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', Appendix C, tables 2-3.

¹⁴² [408]; [643].

¹⁴³ [304].

It is obvious that the capital tied up in wool was many times that of cloth or wine, and this goes a long way to explain the prominence of wool exporters in civic office, in particular John de Gisburn and Roger de Moreton junior. Although the wool trade provided an opportunity for mercers to engage in overseas trade, the extent of their participation was directly related to their capital resources. Capital also determined whether or not they were primarily wool or cloth exporters; that is a sack of wool had a minimum value of £5 and a broadcloth, £1 10s each; and subsequent customs accounts show that most York mercers were exporters of cloth suggesting that their current assets were far less than their wool staplers colleagues.

III

INVESTMENTS IN ENGLISH WOOLLEN CLOTH

The growth of manufacture of English cloth is often discussed as a by-product of the high export duty on wool; whatever the reasons, a corollary of increased production would be new or larger markets for distribution.¹⁴⁴ Calais became the destination for wool exports and though less restrictions were placed on where cloth was sent, in general this was to markets in the Low Countries and the Baltic.¹⁴⁵ However, political and commercial rivalries regularly disrupted trade, and there was a more or less permanent ban on the export of cloth to Flanders.¹⁴⁶

A. EXPANSION INTO THE BALTIC, 1385-88

English merchants began to venture into the Baltic in the last half of the fourteenth century, but Hanse merchants controlled the access to many of the port towns and

¹⁴⁴ Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', 13-35; Miller, 'The Fortunes of the English Textile Industry', pp. 79-82; Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry', pp. 614-92 at pp. 674-8.

¹⁴⁵ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 143-182, esp. pp. 143-4; Harding, 'Cross-Channel Trade and Cultural Contacts', pp. 153-158; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 137, 159, 235, 237, 242-3.

¹⁴⁶ C. Barron, 'Introduction: England and the Low Countries' in C. Barron and N. Saul (eds.), *England and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1995, p/b edition 1998), pp. 1-29 at pp. 3-10; Kerling, *Commercial Relations of Holland and Zeeland with England*.

there were continual conflicts resulting in periodic disruptions of the trade.¹⁴⁷ During a lull in hostilities in the 1370s, a residential base was set up in Gdansk. Within a decade mutual acts of piracy, capture and reprisals culminated in the capture of a Hanseatic fleet off the Zwin estuary in 1385.¹⁴⁸ The Hanse reacted with a prohibition of all foreign trade to and from England and seized the goods of English merchants which were found in Prussian territories. A large claim for loss was immediately lodged and over the next couple of years royal orders were issued for merchants to send details to the Council to help with recovery.¹⁴⁹ The loss of trade was detrimental to both sides, and the English proposed a conciliatory embassy to re-establish trade and recover the seized goods which was to be financed by the affected merchants whose contributions were proportional to the value of their goods.¹⁵⁰

In 1385 a group of 30 York merchants claimed a total loss of £1,617 which was reduced through negotiations to about £1,150; and all but 2 are named in 1388 as joint contributors of £95 to the Prussian embassy.¹⁵¹ It has been possible to relate the original claim with the payments to estimate a rate for the contribution:

$$£1,150 \text{ is to } 30 \text{ as } £1,073 \text{ is to } 28; \text{ and } £95 \div £1,073 = 0.88 \text{ or } 9\%$$

For use in estimating a likely value for their original claims, a slightly higher rate of 10% is used in the following analysis. That is, contributions varied from 6s 8d to over £12 which using a rate of 10% gives valuations from about £3 up to £120. The distribution is displayed in Table 6.4 arranged in six bands: 6s-£1 (I), £1 to £2 (II), £2 to £3 (III), £3 to £5 (IV), £5 to £10 (V) and over £10 (VI). The number of contributors, number of mercers and the sub-total of their contributions is given in each band along with estimated low and high valuations of the goods seized, amounts rounded up or down to the nearest £; and percentages are provided for mercers and the amount of their contributions.

¹⁴⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 50-109; Postan, 'The Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse from 1400 to 1475', pp. 91-154 at p. 96; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 181, 249-51.

¹⁴⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 62-4; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 135-6.

¹⁴⁹ CPR, 1385-89, pp. 2, 48, 54, 61, 67-8,, 146, 163, 194-5, 204, 481, 529; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 161.

¹⁵⁰ CCR, 1385-89, pp. 163, 403, 654-5, 572; Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 63-6; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 131, 136-7; YMB, 2, pp. 3-6.

¹⁵¹ CCR, 1385-89, pp. 565, 572; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 249-50; Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 136.

The lowest contribution of 6s 8d (Band I) was paid by William Vescy which suggests a cautious venture into the export of cloth for a chapman on his way to being a wool stapler.¹⁵² Slightly larger amounts were paid by John Dymick (?Dunnock) and John del More; and the death of the former in Gdansk the next year indicates he was resident there; perhaps they were both acting as Hugh Dunnock’s agents.¹⁵³ Richard de Sourby, one of the witnesses to Dunnock’s will, was back in Gdansk in 1389 having made a contribution of £1 4s 5½d (Band II) towards the recovery of his goods.¹⁵⁴ William de Witton paid about the same amount suggesting an investment of £12, and he had sufficient means to qualify for election as chamberlain the following year.¹⁵⁵ The brothers Thomas and William Ruston made respective contributions of £1 10s (Band II) and £2 10s (Band III) and both would prosper over the next decade serving in civic office and branching into the production of English cloth.¹⁵⁶

TABLE 6.4
PRUSSIAN EMBASSY, 1388: CONTRIBUTIONS OF
YORK MERCERS AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF LOSS

Band	Range	Contributors			Contribution		Estimated £ Valuation	
		N=	M	%	£	%	low	high
I	6s-20s	4	4	37	3	9	3	10
II	£1-£2	5	3		6		10	20
III	£2-£3	6	4	53	16	47	20	30
IV	£3-£5	8	6		29		30	50
V	£5-£10	3	1	10	18	43	50	100
VI	over £10	2	1		23		100	125
	Total	28	19	100	95	99		
M = member of the community of mercers, primarily mercers ¹ low/high estimated values based on 10% rate of contribution Source: CCR, 1385-89, p. 565 (1388. assessed sums).								

John de Newby recurs in 1391/2 as a major cloth exporter implying his business was not adversely affected by the 1385 seizure of goods for which he contributed £2 13s 10¾d (Band III).¹⁵⁷ Conversely John de Appleton who paid a similar amount in 1388 may have been more adversely affected, because the seizure came on the heels of the

¹⁵² [883].
¹⁵³ [311]; [637]; BI, PR 1, fo. 2; PR 3, fo. 10.
¹⁵⁴ [806]; *FR*, 1, p. 75.
¹⁵⁵ [952].
¹⁵⁶ [739]; [740].
¹⁵⁷ [655].

loss of cargo enroute to London when captured by the French in 1384.¹⁵⁸ Robert de Louth had a troublesome year in 1388, not only paying £2 18s 4d (Band III) towards the recovery of his goods seized in Prussia, but in rescuing his share of 151 sacks of wool and 300 woolfells on board a ship wrecked off the coast of Cromer.¹⁵⁹

Simon and William de Waghen were jointly assessed for £6 suggesting individual investments of £60 each (Band IV) which happened to be the same amount claimed by Simon in 1391 for a cargo on board a ship caught up in the weirs and fish-traps in the Ouse near Selby.¹⁶⁰ William Palmer and John de Bolton were assessed respectively for £3 8s and £3 15s (Band IV) and John de Danby and Robert Warde paid slightly more at around £4 5s each; and all but Danby recur in the 1390s in the context of the distribution and production of cloth.¹⁶¹ A higher amount of £5 5s (Band V) was paid by Roger de Weighton, one of the few York chapmen directly involved in overseas trade; and his estimated investment of £52 was about the same as William de Levesham's.¹⁶² William de Burton's £7 4s was over twice the average contribution in 1388 (£3 8s); and, if typical, his share would have been more than £63 for the £1,000's worth of cargo captured by the French in 1384.¹⁶³

The largest contributions of over £10 (Band VI) were made by John Wharrom and Richard Wolston whose biographical details suggest quite different livelihoods.¹⁶⁴ Wharrom was part of a York-based commercial network of mercers such as Richard de Waghen, John de Beverley, Robert Warde, Richard de Souby, John Selybarn, Adam del Brigg, John de Howden and William Palmer.¹⁶⁵ The trading contacts of Richard de Wolston (sometimes Ulleston) were linked to his ancestral home near Warrington and his partner John Shaw of Salford was related by marriage.¹⁶⁶ Their business was the distribution of cloth woven in Lancashire in both domestic and

¹⁵⁸ [20]; *CCR*, 1381-85, pp. 365-6.

¹⁵⁹ [611]; *CPR*, 1385-89, p. 464; *CCR*, 1385-89, pp. 377-8.

¹⁶⁰ [888]; [891]; Flower, *Public Works in Mediaeval Law*, p. 254.

¹⁶¹ [678].

¹⁶² [916]; [557]; *FR*, 1, p. 73.

¹⁶³ [189]; *CCR*, 1381-85, pp. 365-6; 1385-89, pp. 377-8.

¹⁶⁴ [928]; [953].

¹⁶⁵ YMAA, Cartulary. fo. 72; Estate Acquisition, Fossgate 49-50; Trigham, *Vicars Choral Charters*, nos. 192, 214, pp. 114-5, 124-5; BI PR 1, fo. 72; *CPR*, 1391-96, p. 256.

¹⁶⁶ Cunliffe Shaw, 'Two Fifteenth-Century Kinsmen', pp. 15-16, 25-6.

foreign markets, and York would be a convenient location for storage, packing and transshipment.

Although the average £12 contributions of Wharrom and Woolston suggest £120 worth of goods seized in Prussia, this is not large compared to the 369 sacks of wool shipped by John de Gisburn and Roger de Moreton in 1378 with a value of £1,845. A number of factors would affect the amount invested at any one time in foreign trade; but the impression from the losses in Prussia suggests this particular group of mercers did not have the same capital resources as those who exported wool. Nonetheless they were intent on expanding into overseas trade, accepting the risks involved, and most are named a few years later in the customs accounts for Hull.

B. EXPORTS OF CLOTH, 1391-92

There is no doubt that cloth required less capital investment and provided an opportunity for the aspiring overseas trader who had smaller capital resources; and it is instructive to look at the investment of York mercers in the export of woollen cloth recorded in the particular customs accounts for Hull from 8 December 1391 to Michaelmas 1392 which are printed in Lister's *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*.¹⁶⁷ The names of 36 York mercers can be identified, but not all entries are legible and adjustments have been required to reconcile the number of whole cloths with the valuation in the text, generally 30s/cloth; and other exports are excluded from this survey although mentioned in the discussion.¹⁶⁸

Collating the information shows that mercers exported from 3 to 108 broadcloths valued from £5 to £162 and totalling over £1,500 and the distribution is analysed according to number of whole cloths as displayed in Table 6.5 in six bands, the lowest subdivided: up to 2 cloths and from 3-10 (I); 10-20 (II), 20-40 (III), 40-60 (IV), 60-80 (V) and over 80 (VI) The number of consignments shipped in each band is given, as is the total number of cloths pertaining to mercers with percentages for both. Low and high valuations are calculated for consignments, which shows the minimum investment in cloth was about £1 and the maximum over £162 with a median figure of 18 cloths valued around £27 probably the most typical.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, E122/59/22, printed Lister, *The Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 10-24.

¹⁶⁸ Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 344; Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, p. 11 (30s valuation).

It is not surprising that the fewest cloths were exported by newly qualified mercers; John de Bedale and Peter Bucksy exported the fewest broadcloths during the year (Band I) as did William Easby and John de Whitgift, who were yet to be enrolled.¹⁶⁹ All would continue in overseas trade, and their small shipments from 3 to 8 broadcloths suggest their careers were launched with current assets of £4 to £12; or about the same amount invested by their older colleagues William Redhode, Robert Middleton and Walter Dimlington in their cloth exports.¹⁷⁰ John de Appleton had one cargo of 8 broadcloths accompanied by 200 *straits* and Robert del Hill shipped 8 cloths in 2 cargoes, one with 10 stones of feathers; and his kinsman William made one shipment of 10 cloths (Band II).¹⁷¹

John de Duffield and John de Osbaldwick were new freemen, but their shipments of 10 to 11 cloths (Band II) suggest that as sons and apprentices of York mercers, they had more starting capital than their peers.¹⁷² The participation of retail mercers in overseas trade is seen in William de Huggate's export of 11 cloths and Adam del Brigg's shipments of 10 broadcloths and an unknown number of *straits* and coverlets.¹⁷³ The expansion of Roger de Burton's trade from chapman to mercer is shown by his export of 12 cloths; and likewise for John de Spalding, originally a weaver, who shipped 17 cloths in 1391/2.¹⁷⁴ However the largest number of cloths in Band II was shipped by two otherwise unknown mercers, William Wirsop and Robert Squire, each responsible for 18 cloths.¹⁷⁵

The names of those shipping 20 to 40 cloths (Band III) are more familiar, for example Thomas Holme, Robert de Louth and his co-contributors to the 1388 embassy to Prussia, Richard de Sourby and William de Ruston.¹⁷⁶ The latter's 22 cloths were freighted on a Hanse ship, and it is likely that their cloth exports were destined for the Baltic along with those belonging to Henry de Preston, William Denyas and Hugh Spendlove.¹⁷⁷ Preston regularly imported Baltic products such as wainscot,

¹⁶⁹ [68]; [168]; [315]; [937].

¹⁷⁰ [714]; [629]; [289].

¹⁷¹ [20]; [479]; [479]; Lister, *Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 14, 17.

¹⁷² [301]; [672]; [304]; BI, PR 1, fo. 14.

¹⁷³ [509]; [144]; *YMB* 2, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴ [185]; [808]; *CCR*, 1389-92, p. 566.

¹⁷⁵ [815]; [950].

¹⁷⁶ [491]; [601]; [740]; [806].

¹⁷⁷ [703]; [284]; [811].

bowstaves and canvas, and Denyas would be one of the parties to agree the terms of a shipping arrangement in 1403 with a burgess from Gdansk.¹⁷⁸ Robert de Duffield continued to be involved in the export of cloth, shipping at least 43 with a minimum value of £65, about 3 times more than his share of a cargo lost in the fish weirs near Selby the same year.¹⁷⁹

TABLE 6.5
CUSTOMS ACCOUNTS 1391/2: NUMBER AND
VALUE OF CLOTHS EXPORTED THROUGH HULL
BY YORK MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES

Band	Number of Cloths	Consignments		Mercer		£ Valuation	
		N=	%	Cloths	%	low	high
I	up to 2	25	52	0	25	1	3
	3-10	106		9		5	13
II	10-20	73	44	10	47	15	27
III	20-40	37		7		30	55
IV	40-60	7	3	6	22	60	90
V	60-80	2		2		100	117
VI	over 80	2	1	2	6	135	162
	Total	252	100	36	100		
	Cloths	3,026		1,049			
	% Mercer				49		
Mercer = member of the York community of mercers, mercers and mercer-associates valuations 30s/broadcloth Sources: TNA, E122/59/22 printed J. Lister (ed.), <i>The Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade</i> , YASRS, 64 (1924), pp. 10-24 (Particular Customs Accounts for Hull, 8 December 1391 to Michaelmas 1392).							

The main cargoes of William de Burton and Thomas de Doncaster were their 40 broadcloths, but they also shipped a few coverlets and dozens of *straits* and bed-blankets.¹⁸⁰ William Palmer exported 44 cloths suggesting an investment of £66, double the amounte calculated for his goods seized in Prussia in 1385.¹⁸¹ However it is Thomas del Gare whose cargo of 53 cloths stands out, because he was a young mercer, free in 1385. He exported wool to Calais, was living in Bruges in 1389 and by 1392 employing factors in Gdansk to handle his cloth trade.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 342; Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, 3, pp. 136-7; YMB 2, p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ [304]; Flower, *Public Works in Mediaeval Law*, p. 254.

¹⁸⁰ [189]; [292].

¹⁸¹ [678].

¹⁸² [388]; CCR, 1385-9, pp. 377-8; CPR, 1388-92, p. 425; 1391-6, p. 233; 1396-9, pp. 167, 364; BI. PR 1, fo.1; Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, 2, pp. 158-9.

Robert Holme was an established wool stapler, but he also traded in English cloth, his 1391/2 exports amounting to 60 broadcloths and over 600 dozens *straits* (Band V); but in terms of numbers of cloth this was not much more than his factor John de Derfield's shipment.¹⁸³ John de Bolton, having served as bailiff in 1386, turned his attention to trade and his 3 cargoes comprised 78 cloths with a minimum value of £117.¹⁸⁴ Richard de Wolston and John de Newby were responsible for 2 of the 3 largest cargoes of 90 and 108 cloths respectively (Band VI).¹⁸⁵ They were co-shippers in December 1391 with William Denyas, William Palmer, Richard Sourby, John de Bolton, Robert Ward and Richard's partner, John Shaw from across the Pennines.¹⁸⁶ Robert Ward shipped 18 cargoes comprising 100 broadcloths, about 1,540 *straits* and a few mantles, calfskins and vats of fat.¹⁸⁷ Using estimated values of 30s per cloth and 4d for *straits*, Ward had £150 invested in broadcloths and £26 in narrow lengths, a clear example of relative value.¹⁸⁸ The homeports of the ships Ward used suggests the direction of his trade: to the Low Countries on the *Maudelyn* of Veere and the *Cristofre* of Middelburg; and to the Baltic on the ship of Herman, the German.¹⁸⁹

C. THE ALNAGE OF CLOTH, 1394-95

The extant accounts of the alnagers take the form of both enrolled totals and particular details of presenters. They have been used by historians to trace the development of the English woollen industry; show the relationship between cloths manufactured and exported; and expose the centres of manufacture.¹⁹⁰ The original task of the royal ulnager (alnager) was to measure and assess the quality of cloth exposed for sale and to confiscate all those that were not the correct legal size, that is about 1¾ yards wide by 26 to 28 yards long; and as many cloths presented for sale

¹⁸³ [490]; *FR*, 1, p. 72; *BI*, PR 1, fo. 100; PR 3, fo. 92.

¹⁸⁴ [119].

¹⁸⁵ [953]; [655].

¹⁸⁶ Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁷ Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 10-1, 13, 15-16, 18-19, 20, 22-3.

¹⁸⁸ Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 27-8, 28 note 6.

¹⁸⁹ Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22.

¹⁹⁰ Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 13-14, 9-7, 18-20, 21-4; E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Aulnage Accounts: A Criticism', *EcHR*, 2/1 (1929), pp. 114-123 reprinted, Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 279-291.

were narrower or shorter, a scale was devised to equate 3 *kerseys* or 4 *straits* or *dozens* as a whole cloth.¹⁹¹ English cloth had not been taxed or customed before 1347 when a tax was authorised by Parliament on broadcloths exported by denizens (14d) and aliens (21d).¹⁹² In 1353 new authority was given to the alnager, who was to keep a detailed record of the amount collected for:

1. measuring cloth and charging 1/2d for a whole cloth and 1/4d for a half cloth;
2. collecting the subsidy and charging a variable rate for whole and half cloths, that is:

cloths not dyed with grain or cochineal, 4d and 2d; and 1d for a quarter;
cloths dyed with grain 6d and 4d;
cloths half-dyed in grain 5d or 2½d;
3. sealing the cloth with a lead seal formed from a special die, thus showing it had been measured and taxed and could be exposed for sale.¹⁹³

A detailed alnage account survives for the city of York dated September 1394 to September 1395 which is printed in Lister's *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*.¹⁹⁴ The names of 414 men and women are recorded of whom 50 can be identified as York mercers, mercer-associates or their wives. Cloth was presented for alnage by the whole and half cloth, in lengths of a few ells and as *dozens* and *straits*; and the text provides conversions into an equivalent number of whole cloths.¹⁹⁵ Therefore it is possible to reckon a total of 3,250 whole cloths presented for alnage and to show that mercers were responsible for 1,032 of them or 32%; and the range varied from lengths a few ells long up to 100 whole cloths. Table 6.6 displays this distribution in

¹⁹¹ SR, 1, pp. 204-5, 269, 330, 396; 2, pp. 60, 154, 168, 403; Connors, *Weights and Measures of England*, pp. 90-96; Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. xix-xxxiii; Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 27-8, 28 note 6; P. Walton, 'Textiles' in J. Blair and N. Ramsay (eds.), *English Medieval Industries. Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London and Rio Grande, 1991), pp. 319-354 at pp. 337-8, 339-42.

¹⁹² Gras, *The Early English Customs System*, pp. 72, 414-434; Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 14-16; Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry', pp. 677-682.

¹⁹³ Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. xxii-xxxiii; Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', p. 14 note 3; W. Endrei and G. Egan, 'The Sealing of Cloth in Europe, with Special Reference to the English Evidence', *Textile History*, 13/1 (1982), pp. 47-76 at pp. 54-8.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, K.R. Accounts Various E101/345/16, printed Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 47-95 (alnage, York, Sep 1394 to Sep 1395).

¹⁹⁵ Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 27-8, 28 note 6.

6 bands with the lowest and highest subdivided: up to 1 cloth and from 1 to 5 (I), 5-10 (II), 10-20 (III), 20-40 (IV), 40-60 (V), 60-100 and over 100 (VI). The total number and percentage of presenters is given for each band and compared with the number and percentage of mercers; and the estimated value of the mercers' cloth is given using 30s/cloth.

The female members of most mercer households would be involved in preparing and spinning wool for yarn, and some of it may have been woven into cloth on the premises.¹⁹⁶ For example, William Tondu's wife had 6 ells of cloth alnaged which may have been her own handiwork and the 6-9 ell-lengths (Band Ia) presented by Thomas Dunnington, Thomas Garton and John Lister could have been woven at home.¹⁹⁷ John de Spalding, originally a weaver, may have woven his half broadcloth with an assistant, as the width required two sitting side by side at the loom; but Thomas Ferriby, John Foston and John Stillington were likely to employ weavers.¹⁹⁸

The production of a few undyed cloths might represent the first step of wholesale trade for new freemen such as William Danby, William Fleming and William Whittick, who presented 1½ to 2 cloths each (Band Ib).¹⁹⁹ Twice as many were alnaged for John de Grantham and they were described as *white* or *russet* referring to the natural colour of the wool.²⁰⁰ These basic cloths were the typical garb of labourer and rural agriculturalist, although more expensive dyed cloth would be purchased for special occasions.²⁰¹ A more affluent clientele is likely for the cloths presented by Beatrice wife of Robert Ward, Robert Potto and Thomas de Ruston which were dyed red, blue, *plunket* (light blue), *murray* (reddish purple) and *meld* (blended shades).²⁰²

The date at which cloth was alnaged would depend on the supply of wool, the production of sufficient spun yarn, the speed of the weaver, the availability of the cloth finishers and the length of time needed to dry the cloth after fulling and dyeing.

¹⁹⁶ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 31; BI, RP 1, fo. 24.

¹⁹⁷ [870]; [308]; [392]; [588]; [586]; Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, p. 68; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 35-6.

¹⁹⁸ [354]; [366]; [823]; [808]; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 26, 32, 34; Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking*, pp. 106-10; Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester*, pp. 54-63.

¹⁹⁹ [273]; [361].

²⁰⁰ [425]; BI, PR 2, fo. 584; Walton, 'Textiles', pp. 228, 341, 348; Gray, 'English Foreign Trade from 1446-1482', pp. 8-9; Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 213.

²⁰¹ SR, 1, pp. 380-1; Myers, *English Historical Documents, 1327-1485*, pp. 1153-5, no. 681.

²⁰² [908]; [701]; [739]; Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 54, 83.

Despite these uncertainties, the month when mercers presented their cloth suggests they aimed to meet seasonal demand; for example Robert Selby’s 6 blue cloths (Band II) were alnaged in 2 batches a year apart in September, but his wife Alice presented her white and russet cloths from mid-March to May.²⁰³ John de Garriston had 7 cloths alnaged in January, presumably to meet a late demand for winter garments; and John de Waghen’s 5 blue cloths alnaged in March would be the new range for spring.²⁰⁴

TABLE 6.6
ALNAGE ACCOUNTS, YORK 1394/5: NUMBER AND
VALUE OF CLOTHS PRESENTED BY MERCERS AND
MERCER-ASSOCIATES

Band	Number ¹	Presenters		Mercers ²		Estimated Value at 30s/cloth		
	Cloths	N=	%	N=	%	Cloths	£	%
I	a. up to 1	180	70	8	34	3	42	3
	b. 1-5	110		9		25		
II	5-10	35	19	5	26	34	211	14
III	10-20	43		8		107		
IV	20-40	31	9	13	32	408	812	52
V	40-60	5		3		133		
VI	a. 60-100	7	2	3	8	212	483	31
	b. over 100	3		1		110		
Total		414	100	50	100	1,032	1,548	100

¹ equivalents: for lengths measured in ells, the whole cloth is reckoned to be 26 ells long and from this a fraction of a whole cloth is calculated ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{3}{4}$); and the text provides conversions from *dozens* and *straits* into whole cloths.

² Mercers = member of the community of mercers, mercers and mercer-associates.

Source:
TNA, K.R., Accounts Various E101/345/16 printed J. Lister (ed.), *The Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, YASRS, 64 (1924), pp. 47-95 (Alnager Account, City of York, Sep. 1394 to Sep. 1395).

Referring to the customs accounts for 1391-2, the number of cloths exported and the dates of shipping, it is likely that the 5 and 6 cloths presented by John de Appleton and Thomas de Doncaster in August 1394 were intended for an autumn sailing.²⁰⁵ The death of Thomas de Fenton in Gdansk in 1395 implies this port was the market for the 10 dyed cloths previously alnaged; whereas the 8 to 15 undyed narrow cloths presented by John Howden, William Palmer and John Osbaldwick were probably destined for the finishing centres in the Low Countries.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ [770]; YML, 2/4, fo. 167.

²⁰⁴ [391]; [886].

²⁰⁵ [20]; [292]; Childs, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull*, pp. 25-27.

²⁰⁶ [351]; [506]; [672]; [678]; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 149; Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, p 11.

The chapman William de Hedon's 12 cloths alnaged in August would be ready for sale in the September fairs held in Pickering, Driffeld, Sherburn-in-Elmet, Malton, Helmsley and Scarborough; and regional trade may also have beckoned John de Dent and Roger de Barton each with 14½ cloths of white, russet, red, wine and blue.²⁰⁷ Family connections with York tailors suggest that William Redhood and Thomas de Newland supplied them with a colourful array of dyed cloths; and the red, wine, green, blue and *plunket* cloths presented by Adam del Brigg (19) and Richard Storrer (25) suggest use as civic liveries at home or abroad.²⁰⁸ Thomas Bracebrig, a weaver turned mercer, was well placed to organise production of cloth, and his 38 (Band IV) may well have been woven by colleagues; Alan Hammerton's shift from chapman to wool merchant implies he supplied the raw material for his 35 cloths.²⁰⁹ Family members in Helmsley may have woven or finished the 36 cloths presented by John Percy; and rural agriculturalists may have woven John de Newby's 39 cloths after the autumn harvest, because were presented in January and February.²¹⁰

Most of the mercers presenting large quantities of cloth can also be identified in the customs accounts in 1391/2 and later; and here there is a correspondence between dates of alnage and shipping to particular places.²¹¹ In March 1391/2 John Touche shipped cloths to the Baltic, probably the destination for his 39 dyed cloths alnaged in February 1394/5 (Band IV); and likewise the 20 to 25 dyed cloths alnaged by John de Bolton, Henry de Preston and Richard Hawkswell which could follow in April.²¹² Most of Richard Wolston's 52 cloths (Band V) were presented in August which, if shipped in September, could be sold or exchanged for herring in the Skania fair.²¹³ The seasonal marts in the Low Countries provided a wider range of commodities and the 30 and 41 cloths alnaged in the spring by John de Bedale and John de Yarum

²⁰⁷ [467]; [282]; [63]; English, *Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto Rolls*, pp. 184, 211, 258, 263, 272, 279.

²⁰⁸ [714]; [658]; [144]; [833]; BI, PR 3, fos. 35, 108.

²⁰⁹ [136]; [448]; Lloyd, *The English Wool Trade*, p. 116.

²¹⁰ [687]; [568]; [655].

²¹¹ Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 18-21, 27-30, 32-3; Childs, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull*, pp. 14-21, 25-27; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 139, 236; Nicholas, 'The English Trade at Bruges in the Last Years of Edward III', pp. 23-61 at pp. 25, 28, 35, 37, 45.

²¹² [871]; [119]; [703]; [460]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 73-4.

²¹³ [953]; Childs, *Trade and Shipping of Hull*, pp. 14-5; Postan, 'Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse' pp. 97, 142; *CPR 1381-85*, p. 505; *CCR 1392-96*, p. 200.

could be sold in the Easter mart in Bergen-op-Zoom.²¹⁴ Robert Louth and William de Levesham presented their respective 40 and 63 cloths in April and May which would be in the Low Countries in June, the optimum season for buying linen.²¹⁵ William Wirsop's 30 cloths and half of Thomas Holme's 60 were alnaged in late October and early November, and would be in time for the Cold Mart in Bergen-op-Zoom where madder, woad and new vintage wines were for sale.²¹⁶

Robert Ward and Thomas del Gare alnaged their respective 78 and 110 cloths (Band VI) throughout the year, and as active overseas traders would aim to meet demand in both the Baltic and Low Countries.²¹⁷ In 1392 both suffered the loss of cargo on board the *Mary Knight* loaded in Gdansk by their factors; and in the decade 1391-1401 customs accounts record their imports of wine, madder, woad and alum, more typical of Continental products.²¹⁸ About 25% of the cloth alnaged for Ward and Gare were the undyed, narrow widths called *straits*, a cheaper cloth characteristic of rural, upland weavers.²¹⁹ This implies a well-organised outputting system in which they exchanged cloth for new supplies or other goods, if not cash; arranged transport by packhorse over the Pennines into York; and financed its export and reaped the rewards of marketing and resale.²²⁰

Summary Remarks

The impression is that mercers were directly involved in the production and finishing of cloth and planned to market it at home and abroad in particular locales throughout the year depending on demand. The alnage accounts record a considerable number of mercers presenting only a few cloths, and this suggests a new enterprise on their part in response to commercial opportunities as they arose. The potential profit of direct

²¹⁴ [68];[960]; Childs, *Trade and Shipping of Hull*, p. 25.

²¹⁵ [601]; [557.1]; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 236.

²¹⁶ [950]; [491]; Childs, *Trade and Shipping of Hull*, pp. 16-17; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, p. 236.

²¹⁷ [908]; [388].

²¹⁸ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p.345; Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, 3, pp. 158-9; *ibid*, 4, pp. 771-2; *CPR, 1391-96*, p. 233; *CCR 1396-99*, p. 38 (shipwreck).

²¹⁹ Walton, 'Textiles', pp. 348, 349-353, Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry', pp. 679-81; Gray, 'The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', p. 32; Heaton, pp. 21-36.

²²⁰ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, 26-30, 32-38, 130, 133-4

involvement is implied by the election to civic office of those mercers who assembled the largest quantities of cloth for alnage.²²¹ The fact that mercers were involved in both production and marketing indicates a co-ordinated network of wool growers; children and women to process wool into fibre; a skilled labour force to weave and finish the cloth; reliable carriage and transport; and dry and secure storage facilities.²²² Thus the output of at least 3 full-time weavers and 5 to 10-ten times as many spinners were required to produce John Newby's 39 broadcloths; and as the estimated weight of a broadcloth was 66lb his 39 weighed 2,640lb, the fleece of 800 to 1,000 sheep.²²³ At a minimum value of 30s/cloth, Newby would need capital assets of at least £60 to finance production and export; but even so he was not in the same league as Thomas del Gare whose investment would be well over £160.

IV

FURTHER INVESTMENTS IN FOREIGN TRADE

A. THE VALUE OF IMPORTS, 1401

There is a portion of the particular customs accounts for Hull from April to July 1401 which records exports and imports for 30 York mercers.²²⁴ Of the 72 exporters named only 6 or 8% were mercers, but they shipped more than their share of the 670 broadcloths customed, that is 84 or 12½%.²²⁵ Henry Preston was responsible for 10 cloths and William Burton for 17 cloths, which were half the amounts they had shipped a decade earlier; and Robert Ward's 4 cloths were a fraction of his typical shipment.²²⁶ The partial nature of the return may be responsible for this anomaly, but

²²¹ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 129-30, 140-5; Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry', pp. 682-4, 685-9.

²²² Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 26-44; Heaton, *Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries*, pp. 332-345; W. Endrei, 'Manufacturing a Piece of woollen Cloth in Medieval Flanders: How Many Work Hours?', in E. Aerts and J. Munro (eds.), *Textiles of the Low Countries in European Economic History* (Leuven, 1990), pp. 14-23.

²²³ Ryder, 'Fleece Grading and Wool Sorting', pp. 3-22; Postles, 'Fleece Weights and Wool Supply', pp. 96-103.

²²⁴ TNA, E122/60/2, printed Frost, *Notices Relative to the Early History of the Town and Port of Hull*, Appendix, pp. 1-27.

²²⁵ TNA, E122/60/2, extracts exports printed Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 24-9.

²²⁶ [703]; [189]; [908]; Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons 1386-1421*, 4, pp. 771-2

the 3 and 4 cloths exported by John Waghen and William Easby seem to reflect less available capital and credit, certainly in comparison to their peer Thomas de Rillington who assembled 46 cloths and would soon be elected to civic office.²²⁷

Far more information about relative investment in foreign trade can be gleaned from the type and value of the imports of 28 York mercers during the same period whose cargoes were carried on ships with homeports in York, Hull, Gdansk, Bremen, Veere and Schiedam.²²⁸ The type of commodities on board suggests both purchases in Baltic ports and the international marts in the Low Countries.²²⁹ Individual investments ranged from £1 to £173 and this wide distribution is displayed in Table 6.7 in six bands: £1 to £4 (I), £4 to £10 (II), £10 to £20 (III), £20 to £40 (IV), £40 to £80 (V) and over £80 (VI). The subtotal of each band is given as an average and associated percentage, because these are the figures which provide the clearest impression of relative investment.

In the 4 months covered by the accounts, a small group of 8 mercers was responsible for 78% of the total amount invested in imports; and this pattern was likely to have characterised their shipping throughout the year. The presence of young traders with small-scale cargoes implies that there were opportunities available for those willing to accept the risks. The lowest valued shipments were made by young mercers such as Robert Yarum whose 3½ dozen coffers were valued at £1, the same amount recorded for William Barnby's last of bitumen (Band I); and this was half the value of another William Barnaby's Spanish iron and the canvas and linen sheets which apparently belonged to John Hoseden (?Howden).²³⁰ William Doncaster and Henry Wakefield had cargoes of Swedish osmonds, iron and wainscot customed at £2, compared to Richard Wakefield's single piece of wax which was reckoned at £5 (Band II).²³¹ The £4 invested by Thomas Aton in madder and Henry Moreton in osmonds and bowstaves may represent their first independent ventures; and though William Easby imported £5 worth of wainscot and oars on his own behalf, his son's livelihood would be earned as an agent working for others.²³²

²²⁷ [886]; [315]; [720].

²²⁸ Frost, *Notices Relative to the Early History of Hull*, Appendix, pp. 1-21.

²²⁹ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 181, 249-51.

²³⁰ [963]; [58]; [60]; [506].

²³¹ [292]; [896]; [896]; [895].

²³² [36]; [640]; [315].

The *Mary Knight* of Bremen carried John Newby's £9's worth of osmonds, wainscot and seals-fat (Band II); and *Godberade* of Veere, John Newland's £10's of red leather, bucklers and swords (Band III), the homeports recording the two main directions of trade.²³³ Henry Preston and John Whitgift shipped Baltic products such as osmonds, wainscot, bowstaves, potash and bitumen to the value of £12, and Richard Sourby extended this range to include wax and 300 pieces of copper worth £19.²³⁴ The soap, coffers and wax imported by Thomas Doncaster and Thomas Ruston may have come straight from the Baltic; but the rest of their £11 investments in madder, Spanish iron, small wooden combs, *lewent*, *stamyns*, *fustians* and canvas were carried on ships out of Veere.²³⁵ Other Continental products available in the Low Countries were Robert Dunnington's soap, seed oil, canvas, *mercimonia*, kettles and dishes valued at £21 (Band IV).²³⁶ William del Hill had £9's worth of black soap, madder, pouches, fustian, paper, red leather and spices; but the rest of his £34 invested in Baltic products, osmunds, copper, wainscot, bowstaves and herring.²³⁷

TABLE 6.7
CUSTOMS ACCOUNTS, 1401: THE VALUE OF
GOODS IMPORTED THROUGH HULL BY
YORK MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES

Band	Range	N=	%	Value £	Average £	%
I	£1 to £5	6	21	9	1.5	1
II	£5 to £10	5	18	27	5.4	2
III	£10 to £20	6	21	75	12.5	5
IV	£20 to £40	3	11	90	30.0	13
V	£40 to £80	6	21	351	58.5	25
VI	£80 to £200	2	7	244	122.0	53
		28	99	796	229.9	99
Source: TNA, E122/60/2 printed C. Frost (ed.), <i>Notices Relative to the Early History of the Town and Port of Hull. Compiled from Original Records and Unpublished Manuscripts</i> (London, 1827), appendix, pp. 1-24.						

Although most of Thomas del Gare's £34 (Band IV) was in a single shipment of Spanish iron, most mercers tended to distribute their cargo on several ships.²³⁸ For instance, John de Appleton and John de Bedale were co-shippers on three: the *Ellen* of Hull with cargoes of wainscot, wax and osmonds; the *Christopher* of Van Gowe

²³³ [655]; [657].
²³⁴ [703]; [937]; [806].
²³⁵ [292]; [739].
²³⁶ [307].
²³⁷ [479]; Frost, *Notices Relative of Hull*, Appendix, p. 10.
²³⁸ [388].

with Spanish iron, steel, wire; and the *Godberade* of Veere with woad, madder and herrings; and these shipments represented most of their respective investments of £47 and £54 (Band V).²³⁹ John Percy had 6 cargoes valued together at £59, most consisted of wainscot, bowstaves and osmonds, but 2 comprised copper, wax and oil.²⁴⁰ Some mercers concentrated on large quantities of particular commodities, William Burton and Robert Ward invested £30 respectively in 9 doliums of wine and 10 doliums of Brabant woad and another £30 in Spanish iron, oil and soap.²⁴¹ Robert Holme imported 16 doliums of Brabant woad at unit valuation of £3 10s or £56 in addition to £16's worth of spices and mercery such as pepper, saffron, ginger, purses, pouches, Cologne thread and fustian.²⁴²

Of John Bolton's total investment of £107 (Band VI), one consignment valued at £42 comprised a shipment of Ripland woad, a cheaper variety at £3/dolium; and the other valued at £65 was a miscellaneous cargo of mercery (paper, pack thread, pouches and linen), red leather, Spanish iron, soap and coffer and Baltic products (wax, osmonds, bowstaves, wainscot).²⁴³ Robert Louth had the highest value of imports in 1401 of £173 and his cargoes were freighted on 10 ships whose homeports were Bremen, Schiedam, Veere and York.²⁴⁴ They comprised a full range of typical Baltic products and Continental commodities with values ranging from £1 for 3 shocks of black hats to £36 for a large consignment of Spanish iron, white and black soap, alum, combs, canvas, herring and licorice. Interestingly he was the sole mercer to import mercery; a large quantity of linen and some *flammeolum*, the specifically woven or finished linen for kerchiefs and veils.

The range of goods imported by mercers fit into several different categories: food (herring, wine, seasoning and spices); mercery (textiles of linen and fustian, dress accessories, ie. purses, pouches, hats and small manufactures such as combs); and semi-processed industrial supplies (dye-stuffs, mordants, iron, steel, copper, soap, oil) and woodland products (bitumen, potash, wainscot, bowstaves, coffer). Most of these would be sold in varying quantities to artisans, craftsmen and other

²³⁹ [20]; [68].

²⁴⁰ [687].

²⁴¹ [189]; [908]; Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 112-119.

²⁴² [490].

²⁴³ [119].

²⁴⁴ [601].

manufacturers; and the mercer's commercial role would be that of wholesale supplier. Only a small proportion of imports would be ready to sell by retail directly to the customer from their own shops. However it is apparent that many mercers engaged in foreign trade lacked the current assets required to purchase high-value imports; and the fact that they took the risk of importing small quantities of relatively low value goods implies the lure of potentially high profits.

B. THE DIRECTION OF TRADE, 1400 to c.1440

In the absence of particular customs accounts, other sources provide information about the participation of York mercers in foreign trade, the type of commodities handled, the direction of trade and the type of problems encountered. A few continued to qualify as wool staplers such as Thomas del Gare and Nicholas Blackburn, who obtained licences from the late 1390s to export sacks of wool, hides and fells from Newcastle upon Tyne.²⁴⁵ The poorer quality of northern wool shipped from Newcastle was generally not under the control of the Calais staple, but this was where the younger Nicholas Blackburn resided in 1433 when he was acting agent for William Marshall and in charge of selling £54 of wool.²⁴⁶ John Pickering's bequest to the chaplain of St. Thomas of the Staple in Calais indicates his familiarity with the town and implies he followed in his master John de Appleton's footsteps as an exporter of both wool and cloth.²⁴⁷ William Agland's career took off in Bruges while working for Roger Moreton in the 1370s, but he was in Calais in 1405 when he and John Howden sealed a deed concerning a loan of £160 to Thomas Doncaster.²⁴⁸ One of the John Bolton's was part of a group of York merchants whose shipment of wool, hides and woolfells was totally lost when two Hull ships, the *Mary Knight* and *La Maria*, were wrecked and sunk en route to Calais in 1426.²⁴⁹

Financial disputes often reveal the short-term partnerships of foreign trade, for example in 1406 the executors of William Agland allegedly seized a shipment of Richard Alne's wool to clear an outstanding obligation.²⁵⁰ In 1401 John Touche

²⁴⁵ [388]; [112]; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 187 note 145, 335.

²⁴⁶ [112]; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 209 citing TNA, C1/44/277.

²⁴⁷ [690]; [20]; BI, PR 3, fo. 83.

²⁴⁸ [3]; [643]; [506]; [292]; *Cal. Plea and Mem. Rolls, 1364-81*, p. 154; *YMB*, 3, 36.

²⁴⁹ [119]; *CPR, 1422-29*, pp. 348-9.

²⁵⁰ *ECP* 1, 7/286, p. 50.

negotiated an agreement which relieved him of responsibility for any debts incurred while in partnership with John Wentworth; in particular John Wentworth and his new partner William Easby were to collect the relevant obligation of £80 from Richard Wakefield, John Waghen and William de Hornby.²⁵¹ Noting that Waghen and Touche presented cloths for alnage in 1394/5 and that Wakefield and Easby were small-scale importers in 1401, the bond was likely to be connected with the export of cloth.²⁵² The younger William Easby's struggle to earn a livelihood is suggested by his recurrence in 1415 as an agent working in Flanders for William Ward spicer; and he duly purchased £68 of merchandise and loaded it onto the *le Hulk* of Zierickzee.²⁵³ The ship was wrecked off the English coast and the cargo lost, but Easby tried to recover his 5% commission and went so far as to lodge a complaint in chancery which was investigated by the civic council. Among the jurors summoned were the mercers Thomas Aton, William Bedale, Thomas Bracebrig, Peter Bucksy, John Louth, Thomas del More, Thomas Newton, Richard Sourby and Robert Yarum.²⁵⁴ The outcome is unknown and Easby continued to work as a factor as did John Waghen; and around 1419 both were involved in a legal action originating in a Bruges court which concerned an outstanding payment of £23 for olive oil.²⁵⁵

Political upheaval adversely affected the trade of Nicholas Louth whose 25 half-pieces of cloth were seized from a warehouse in Middelburg in 1435 upon the declaration of war between England and Burgundy.²⁵⁶ Conflict between English and Hanse merchants was fairly constant, but York mercers persevered and in 1403 William Denyas drew up an agreement with some colleagues concerning the calculation of profits based on the value of individual cargoes.²⁵⁷ A quarter of a century later John Denom bought a quarter-share in the *James* from Jasper Grondman of Gdansk for a certain amount of cloth, £26 13s 4d in cash and all the fish in the ship at £7/last.²⁵⁸ William Bedale was less fortunate; first in 1413 he lost his share of 77 cloths and 27 beds freighted on the *Maria* of Beverley through forfeit to the king for

²⁵¹ [871]; [921]; [315]; [896]; [886]; *YMB* 1, p. 251.

²⁵² Lister, *Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade*, pp. 25, 27, 74; Frost, *Early Notices of Hull*, pp. 6, 13.

²⁵³ [316]; *YMB* 2, p. 56; *CPR 1416-22*, p. 86.

²⁵⁴ [36]; [70]; [136]; [168]; [598]; [638]; [661]; [806]; [963].

²⁵⁵ [316]; [886]; *YMB* 2, pp. 87-8.

²⁵⁶ [599]; Kerling, *Commercial Relations of Holland and Zeeland with England*, p. 25.

²⁵⁷ [284]; *YMB* 2, p. 10.

²⁵⁸ [281]; *YMB*, 2, p. 122.

being uncustomed; and his goods on board a ship returning from Gdansk were seized by pirates.²⁵⁹ John Doddington had suffered similarly c.1420 when two Scarborough men seized the *Maryknight* of Gdansk and all its cargo; and in 1440 John Catterick and Robert Collinson were part of a group of York men claiming damages of £1,200 inflicted on them by Hanse merchants.²⁶⁰

Complaints about losses in Scandinavian waters are recorded in the early years of the fifteenth century; for example the arrest in 1404 of 120 cloths belonging to Robert Gaunt and 4 other York men at Sanford in the sound of Norway.²⁶¹ Although the proceeds of sale may have been used to purchase Swedish osmunds and copper or Norwegian furs, equally likely would be herring from the Skania fairs.²⁶² The *Christopher* of York used by Robert Louth and John Percy in 1401 to carry Baltic imports was licensed in 1403 for the export of cloth and merchandise to Scone (Skåne, southern Sweden).²⁶³ Another licence was obtained in 1417 to reload cloth and merchandise as replacement for a previous cargo lost in a storm, and the destination of Bergen, the current staple for fish caught in Norwegian waters, suggests the return cargo was fish.²⁶⁴

The takeover of Bergen in 1410 by a Wendish group of Hanse merchants is said to have prompted the opening up of English trade with Iceland.²⁶⁵ When Nicholas Blackburn and John Lofthouse procured a licence in 1416 to 'go to sea to supply the king's household with fish', they may have headed for Icelandic waters where fish were abundant, especially cod which could be air-dried and preserved as stockfish.²⁶⁶ Iceland's lack of natural resources and arable land was a bonus to mercers providing a new opportunity to expand their export trade into food, fuel and consumer goods.²⁶⁷

²⁵⁹ [70]; *CPR, 1413-16*, p. 19; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 120.

²⁶⁰ [68]; [207]; [232]; *YMB*, 2, pp. 95, 98-9; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 121.

²⁶¹ [400]; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 117.

²⁶² Postan, 'Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse' pp. 91, 93, 97, 142, 144; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 250; Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 107-8; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 115.

²⁶³ [601]; [687]; Frost, *Early Notices of Hull*, pp. 5-6; *CCR, 1402-1405*, p. 101.

²⁶⁴ *CCR, 1416-1422*, p. 388; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 110.

²⁶⁵ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 108, 144; Postan, 'Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse', p. 151.

²⁶⁶ [112]; [591]; *CPR, 1416-22*, p. 52; Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 126, 132.

²⁶⁷ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 130-132.

John Lilling correctly surmised that ‘iron waxed scant and dear in Iceland’ and used this to justify his fraud in forging low quality ore into the shape of Swedish osmunds.²⁶⁸ A disregard for law and order seems to have characterised English ventures and in 1425 Thomas Crathorne was one of 23 men accused of violent acts.²⁶⁹ Thomas Danby’s shipment in 1431 of cloth, beer, osmunds and kettles on the *Cuthbert* of Berwick was less controversial, but in 1433 he, John Escrick and William Buckley (?Bucksy) were caught smuggling uncustomed goods worth £84 on board the *Katherine* of Hull bound for Iceland.²⁷⁰

C. CORPORATE SHIPPING, from 1432

The Mercers’ Guild was involved in collective shipping ventures from its inception and income from shipping is recorded for most years from 1432; certain members were delegated to charter and freight ships for overseas voyages and river transport.²⁷¹ The accounts and shipping ordinances make it clear that the direction of collective shipping was to the Low Countries, in particular to Flanders, Brabant, Holland and Zeeland; and it is occasionally possible to trace a ship freighted by the Guild in the Hull customs accounts.²⁷² Members continued to send cargo on ships sailing to and from Iceland and the Baltic, and to divide consignments on several ships to spread the risk whether or not they had been freighted as part of the fellowship.²⁷³

The Guild accounts thus provide information about the shipping of mercers in a period when particular customs accounts do not survive; for example in 1432 Thomas Kirk paid 6s 8d for shipping and Thomas Aton was in arrears for the same amount; in 1433 William Yarum and John Calton paid 10s for a joint venture.²⁷⁴ During 1435 Robert Chapman and John Denom contributed 3s 4d each for freighting ships, and

²⁶⁸ [580]; Raine, *A Volume of English Miscellanies*, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ Wheatley, ‘York Mercers’ Guild, 1420-1502’, p. 247; Bartlett, ‘Aspects of the Economy of York’, p. 111; Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 113-15.

²⁷⁰ [272]; [338]; [168]; *CPR 1436-41*, pp. 294-5; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 251; Bartlett, ‘Aspects of the Economy of York’, p. 111.

²⁷¹ Wheatley, ‘York Mercers’ Guild, 1420-1502’, pp. 208-220, esp. pp. 216-220.

²⁷² YMAA, Cartulary, fos. 11v, 14r, 156r; Guild Accounts, 10; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 24-5; Wheatley, ‘York Mercers’ Guild, 1420-1502’, pp. 208, 210-2, 215, Table 14; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 87, 93, 104.

²⁷³ YMAA, Meetings, 7; Wheatley, ‘York Mercers’ Guild, 1420-1502’, pp. 215-6; Smith, *Guide*, p. 8; Sellers, pp. 64-5.

²⁷⁴ [554]; [36]; [965]; [193]; YMAA, Guild Accounts, 1.m.1-m.2.

William Freeman and Thomas Curtas were credited 5s in 1436 for shipping and in 1440 Thomas handed over 11s 8d for ship freight.²⁷⁵ In 1443 the narrative reveals that payments reflected the size of vessel, 3s 4d for freighting a ship under 60 tons and 6s 8d for one over 60 tons; and therefore the 2s 6d received in 1445 from Robert Calton suggests a smaller ship.²⁷⁶ The rationale for payment is described in 1459 when John Ince paid 6s 8d *pro freightura unius dolii mercandisarum*; and in 1461 the phrase *de avantage cuiusdam navis* is used for receipts of 3s 4d to 7s 6d.²⁷⁷ In 1465 this advantage arose from freighting a ton of merchandise to or from Zeeland and similarly in 1472 from freighting a ton-tight there and back again; and similar entries are recorded henceforth for most years up to the seventeenth century.²⁷⁸

It has been said that the decline in overseas trade led to more formal organisation on the part of merchants.²⁷⁹ However evidence regarding the foundation of the Mercers' Guild shows that mercers rather than merchants were 'feeling the pinch'; and no doubt incorporation strengthened their cohesion and bolstered their commercial activity.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless in the early 1440s merchants began to join the Guild and share the benefits of collective solidarity in an uncertain economic climate; and after 1460 began to dominate the leadership. Thus it is instructive to compare the level of investments in foreign trade made by mercers and merchants as part of the Mercers' Guild.

V

THE DECLINING VALUE OF FOREIGN TRADE

A. THE VALUE OF IMPORTS, 1453 to 1459/60

There is a hiatus in the Mercers' Guild accounts in the 1450s, but 2 shipping documents survive which attest to their collective shipping ventures: one records the

²⁷⁵ [215]; [281]; [374]; [263]; YMAA, Guild Accounts, 1.m.4-7.

²⁷⁶ [193]; YMAA, Guild Accounts, 2-3.

²⁷⁷ [520]; YMAA, Guild Accounts, 8.

²⁷⁸ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 10-12; Cartulary, fo. 11r; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 87; Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping*, pp. 42-3, 90-4.

²⁷⁹ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 106.

²⁸⁰; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 126-146.

compensation for cargo jettisoned from the *Katherine* of Hull in 1457 and the other records the charges levied for consignments freighted on the *God's Knight* of Westenschouwen c.1459.²⁸¹ There is also a memorandum of a meeting held c.1457 at which Thomas Scauceby and John Ince were instructed to ride to Hull and freight 2 ships at the fellowship's cost; and attendees included the mercers John Gilliott senior, Thomas Curtas, John Marshall and William Brounfield whose cargoes are listed on either the *Katherine* or the *God's Knight*.²⁸² Another meeting took place c.1458 with the same mercers in attendance and, though the text is difficult to decipher, the tenor is the payment of charges to customs officials at Hull for searching and sealing packs of cloth.²⁸³ An extant portion of the Collectors' Account for Hull records the arrival of 31 ships between 6 April and Michaelmas 1453; and 28 members of the Mercers' Guild can be identified including 11 mercers, several of whom had similar commodities freighted on the *God's Knight*.²⁸⁴ It is possible to collate the data pertaining to mercers in these sources and so to compare the investments of York mercers with their merchant brethren; and the customs valuations provide a means of assessing the extremely small freight charges.

The names of 29 Guild members are recorded in the Hull customs account for 1453 and the cargoes of these 12 mercers and 17 merchants were valued from £1 6s 8d to £164 with an aggregate total of £645. The *God's Knight* documentation names 26 Guild members, 6 mercers and 20 merchants, and there were another 21 shippers including the captain and crew. The sum recorded against each name ranged from 1s 6d up to 40s and yielded an income of £31 which was sufficient to cover expenses of £26 13s 4d.²⁸⁵ The distribution of customs valuations is displayed in Table 6.8 in 6 bands: £1-£5 (I), £5-£10 (II), £10-£20 (III), £20-£50 (IV), £50-£100 (V) and £100-£200 (VI); and set alongside the number of Guild mercers and merchants whose cargoes were valued within these brackets. The distribution of freight charges is slotted into this framework with the number of shippers broken down into subgroups (Guild mercers and merchants and other non-Guild members) with the sub-totals of their contribution.

²⁸¹ YMAA, Trade Correspondence, 14: Shipping 1-2; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 59-63; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 18-19.

²⁸² YMAA, Administration, Meetings 1 (c.1457); *Guide*, p. 8.

²⁸³ YMAA, Administration, Meetings 4, (c.1458-9); *Guide*, p. 8.

²⁸⁴ TNA, E122/61/71 printed Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 1-14.

²⁸⁵ YMAA, Trade Correspondence, 14: Shipping 1; Smith, *Guide*, p. 18.

Looking first at customs accounts during the period April to Michaelmas 1453, John Gilliot had the least expensive cargo of £1 6s 8d (Band I), perhaps a last of bitumen which was about half the £2 10s for each half-last of flax shipped by Richard Booth and John Ince, junior at £2 10s.²⁸⁶ Thomas Curtas imported a pipe of oil and last of bitumen reckoned together at £4 and John Lofthouse invested £8 in flax and wainscot (Band II).²⁸⁷ John Marshall's sole shipment was a dolium and hogshead of wine worth about £5 and John Richardson had £8's worth of canvas, Brabant linen and felt-hats.²⁸⁸ John Spencer shipped 4 tons of iron valued at £13 6s 8d (Band III) and Robert Kirk's cargo comprised 2 tons of woad and a poke of madder valued at £12.²⁸⁹ Christopher Booth's £18 was divided between seal-blubber, oil and bowstaves carried on the *Anne* of Hull and a dolium of oil and barrel of mirrors on the *Trinity* of Veere.²⁹⁰ None of the mercers had goods valued in the £20-£50 range (Band IV) unlike their merchant brethren whose cargoes comprised oil, bowstaves, osmonds, iron and flax on ships returning from the Baltic, stockfish from Iceland and wine and mirrors from the Low Country marts.²⁹¹

Thomas Scauceby freighted the *Christopher* of Newcastle with pepper, ginger, almonds, alum, white soap and 200 ells of linen cloth (£15) and the *Trinity* of Veere with 10 dozen felt hats, 24 reams papers, 2 pokes madders and alum, oil and soap (£40).²⁹² This interesting array of grocery, mercery and industrial supplies was not matched by other Guild members; and though William Stockton's shipment was three times as valuable at £164, more than half was 19 tons of woad at £5/ton (£95) and the rest in 1 last, 1 pipe and 9 barrels of oil, 7 barrels soap, 200lb wax, 1 last potash, 1½ lasts flax and 400 ells canvas.²⁹³

The *God's Knight* payments are assumed to have been freight charges, although attempts to determine a unit rate per ton have been unsuccessful despite the references in the Mercers' Guild accounts to 3s 4d or 6s 8d for a ton-tight.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁶ [405]; [123]; [521].

²⁸⁷ [263]; [591].

²⁸⁸ [618]; [716].

²⁸⁹ [810]; [553].

²⁹⁰ [122]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 3, 12.

²⁹¹ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 3, 5, 12, 14.

²⁹² [750].

²⁹³ [830] Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 12-13.

²⁹⁴ Burwash, *Merchant Shipping*, pp. 90-4; YMAA, *Guild Accounts*, 10-12.

However, considering the quantity, nature and inherent value of certain commodities, it is reasonable to assume that freight charges would vary according to weight, bulk and value and, in some cases, the ability to pay. This might explain the charge of 1s 6d (Band I) for a roll of wax shipped by Thomas Scauceby which was half the amount imposed on John Gilliot for 2 roundlets of glassware; that is a light, fragile cargo needing special handling and storage incurred a higher charge.²⁹⁵

TABLE 6.8
VALUE OF GOODS IMPORTED THROUGH HULL, 1453 BY MEMBERS OF
THE YORK MERCER'S GUILD; AND FREIGHT CHARGES FOR THE
GOD'S KNIGHT OF WESTENSCHOUWEN, c.1459

	£ Value of Imports,1453 ¹					Freight Charges in shillings re: the <i>God's Knight</i> ²						
Band	Range	York Mercers' Guild				Range	Guild Members and Other Shippers					
		M	£	Mt	£		M	s	Mt	s	O	s
I	£2-£5	4	10	1	3	1s-5s	2	6	3	14	10	20
II	£5-£10	3	22	3	19	5s-10s	1	5	3	24	4	26
III	£10-£20	3	43	6	69	10s-20s	1	16	4	65	5	60
IV	£20-£50	0	0	5	118	20s-30s	1	28	8	186	1	25
V	£50-£100	1	55	2	142	30s-40s	1	35	0	0	1	30
VI	£100-£200	1	164	0	0	40s-50s	0	0	2	80	0	0
	Sub total	12	294	17	351		6	90	20	369	21	161
	Average		£24		£21			15s		13s		8s
Notes: M = mercer Mt = merchant O = other, non Mercers' Guild member												
Sources: ¹ TNA, E122/61/71 printed W. R. Childs (ed.), <i>The Customs Accounts of Hull 1453-1490</i> , YASRS, 144 (1984), pp. 1-14 (6 April to Michaelmas 1453). ² YMAA, Administration, Correspondence 14: Shipping 1 (<i>Godes Knecht</i> of Westneschouwen).												

William Barley's 6 barrels of soap and a poke madder incurred a charge of 5s 3d (Band II) whereas Thomas Curtas paid 16s for a much larger shipment comprising barrels of herring, soap, oil, alum, a poke of [onion] seeds and ton containing at least 17 dozen hats (Band III).²⁹⁶ John Marshall paid the second highest levy of 27s 6d for a heavy load of 720 ends of iron (6 tons), 5 barrels of soap and alum and a piece of wax.²⁹⁷ John Ince had been responsible for organising the freighting of the *God's Knight*, but was still liable for 35s (Band V) to cover his cargo of 4 tons iron, 1 barrel sheet metal, 1 poke madder, 2 barrels alum, 3 barrels rape oil, a sack of onion seed, a sack of hemp and 8 barrels of raisins.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ [750]; [405].

²⁹⁶ [263].

²⁹⁷ [618].

²⁹⁸ [520].

The non-Guild members divided into two groups: those tentatively identified as merchants and others as crew members from the size and type of their cargoes.²⁹⁹ The two highest payments of 40s (Band VI) were made by John Thirsk and William Barker, merchants and members of the Mercers' Guild. Thirsk shipped a huge cargo of 11 tons of woad which would have a customs valuation of £55. This seems a likely value for Barker's consignment of wine, ends of iron, barrels of soap, oil, herrings and raisins, bales of madder, rolls of wax and *maundes* or baskets of unspecified goods.³⁰⁰ John Ince came a close second to his merchant brethren, but the tide was beginning to turn against the mercer.

B. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONFLICT AND COMPETITION

i. Polarisation Between Guild Mercers and Merchants, 1460 to 1468

The continuing participation of mercers in overseas trade is evident from both Guild and customs accounts and, in particular, from the memoranda of four meetings held during the 1460s.³⁰¹ Six of the mercers in attendance were new freemen: George Birkbeck, John Hadlowe, Roland Kirkby, John Lightlop, Thomas Marriot, and Thomas Winton.³⁰² Other attendees were Thomas Catour and William Thorpe, slightly older, but new participants in overseas trade; and they were joined by William Brounfield, John Richardson and John Spencer.³⁰³ The meetings were organised by their older and more experienced colleagues such as John Ince, John Gilliot senior, John Marshall, Thomas Scauceby and William Stockton, and they are the mercers named in the customs accounts.³⁰⁴ At this date they were likely to have been sedentary merchants employing their younger brethren as factors or agents to accompany the goods in transit; and testamentary evidence reveals that George Birtbeck, John Hadlow, John Lightlop and William Brounfield had been apprentices or factors of John Gilliot, John Ince and Thomas Scauceby.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping*, pp. 42-3.

³⁰⁰ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, p. 54.

³⁰¹ YMAA, Administration, Meetings 2 (c.1462), 3 (c.1465), 5 (c.1461), 6 (c.1460); Smith, *Guide*, p. 8.

³⁰² [105]; [442]; [558]; [579]; [615]; [945].

³⁰³ [202]; [858]; [155]; [717]; [810].

³⁰⁴ [520]; [405]; [618]; [750]; [828].

³⁰⁵ BI, PR 2, fo. 237; PR 4, fos. 158, 169; PR 5, fos. 30, 268, 308, 310.

There is a good series of particular customs accounts for Hull from 1 January 1460 to Michaelmas 1468 and from November 1469 to Michaelmas 1473, and 62 and 58 Guild members can be identified respectively.³⁰⁶ Table 6.9 displays the data pertaining to the value of their foreign trade in these 2 periods comparing the £ value of mercers to merchants based on a distribution from £2 to over £1,000 arranged in seven bands: £2-£10 (I), £10-£30 (II), £30-£50 (III), £50-£100 (IV), £100-£200 (V), £200-£500 (VI) and £500-£1,200 (VII). It is clear that merchants greatly outnumber mercers, 51 to 11 in the 1460s and 52 to 6 in the 1470s; and that there is an increasing polarisation within the community of mercers between those shipping goods valued below £50 and above £100.

Overall the lowest valued cargo pertaining to mercers was John Spencer's £4 (Band I) of cloth and malt which he shipped to Iceland in May 1460; this was much less than the £14 (Band II) invested by John Giles in 1½ tuns Spanish wine and 6 barrels of soap, or the 10 broadcloths exported by Thomas Curtas worth £15.³⁰⁷ Thomas Wells had £26 tied up in four cargoes: £5 in stockfish arriving in Hull in August 1460, £5 in cloth, malt, rye-meal and osmonds sent to Iceland in June 1461 on the *Mary* of Hull which returned in September with another £5 of stockfish; and £11 in 7 cloths exported in September 1466.³⁰⁸ In 1460 William Brounfield shipped 10 cloths valued about £30 on both the *Mary* of Hedon and the *Peter* of Hull (Band III); and 2 shipments recorded for Christopher Booth came to £40, an export of 11 cloths (£16) in 1460 and an import in 1463 of 6 tuns Spanish wine.³⁰⁹ Thomas Scauceby's foreign trade may have reduced in his final years, but in 1463 his single consignment of 4½ tuns Spanish wine, 3 lasts osmonds, 2 lasts flax and 6 pokes madder was valued at £48, slightly less than his son William's 5 doliums woad and 4 ton-tights iron.³¹⁰

About 40% of their merchant brethren shipped cargoes valued under £50, comprising similar small quantities of the same array of imported commodities typical of Iceland, the Baltic or the Low Country marts, purchased with proceeds of sale primarily of cloth. However there were 10 merchants whose foreign trade was valued between

³⁰⁶ TNA, E122/61/74, 75; 62/1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, printed Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 18-126 (1 January 1460-Michaelmas 1468), 126-187 (17 November 1469-Michaelmas 1473).

³⁰⁷ [801]; [403]; [263], Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 22, 23, 25, 62.

³⁰⁸ [920]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 26, 33, 36, 114.

³⁰⁹ [155]; [122]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 23, 26, 62.

³¹⁰ [750]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, p. 63.

£50 and £100 (Band IV), a bracket with no mercer representation; whereas the little-known John Birdsall had £97 invested during the decade: in 1460, 12 cloths (£18); 1463, 1 last osmonds, 1 tun wine (£8) and 4 tuns Spanish wine (£16); 1465, 1 pipe oil and 3 tuns wine (£15); 1467, 4½ tuns wine (£26) and in 1468, 1 ton iron, 1 poke madder and 6 barrels soap (£14).³¹¹

TABLE 6.9
VALUE OF FOREIGN TRADE OF MEMBERS OF THE YORK
MERCERS' GUILD, 1460 to 1473: MERCERS v. MERCHANTS

Band	Range ¹	£ Value, 1460 to 1469 ²				£ Value, 1469 to 1473 ³			
		Mercer v. Merchant				Mercer v. Merchant			
		M	£	Mt	£	M	£	Mt	£
I	£2-£10	1	4	4	12			5	28
II	£10-£30	3	55	8	113	3	58	16	260
III	£30-£50	3	118	8	279	1	43	9	349
IV	£50-£100			10	698			4	309
V	£100-£200	2	274	9	1,513			8	1,091
VI	£200-£500	1	250	6	1,622	1	327	6	1,860
VII	£500-£1,200	1	512	6	4,331	1	674	4	2,747
	Total	11	1,213	51	8,568	6	1,102	52	6,644
	Average £		110		168		184		128
M = mercers Mt = merchants ¹ Values include all exports and imports, using £5/sack of wool, 30s/broadcloth, £4/dolium wine and recorded values for imports rounded up to the nearest £ Source: ² W. R. Childs (ed.), <i>The Customs Accounts of Hull 1453-1490</i> , YASRS, 144 (1984), pp. 18-126 (1 January 1460-Michaelmas 1468) ³ <i>ibid</i> , pp. 126-187 (17 November 1469-Michaelmas 1473). re: TNA, E122/61/74, 75; 62/1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19.									

However, a pattern of frequent shipping also characterised the larger aggregate investments of mercers such as William Thorp whose 12 shipments were valued together at £108 (Band V). He exported a total of 25 broadcloths during 1461 (£12), 1464 (£18) and 1467 (£7 10s) and imported 3 lasts and 900 stockfish in 1461 (13s 4d), 1462 (£20) and 1465 (£14). In January 1462/3 four cargoes valued at £23 arrived on separate ships which comprised industrial supplies (wax, osmunds, iron and soap), food (salted herring, nuts and dried fruit), Rhenish wine and 2 dozen felt hats.³¹² John Ince occurs 11 times during the decade with similar cargoes except for stockfish, implying that his trade was not directed to Iceland; and his investment of £166 implies there were more lucrative markets on the Continent. His recorded exports were 39 cloths (£58 10s) or a third of the value of his imports which

³¹¹ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 235; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 23, 46, 62, 78, 105, 123.

³¹² [858]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 34, 49, 52-5, 67, 83-4, 112.

comprised the typical array of industrial supplies (flax, hemp, oil, seal-blubber, soap, osmonds and iron) and more unusual bars of steel and brass cauldrons.³¹³

John Gilliot was recorded for 13 shipments worth about £250 (Band VI) and was distinguished from the other mercers by the export of 11 fothers lead valued at £38 in addition to 58 broadcloths at £87.³¹⁴ He invested another £125 in wine, soap, oil, alum, madder, iron, osmunds and salted herring; as also in 9 sets of 3 cauldrons, 400 ells canvas, 2,000 white wooden trenchers, 60 dozen felt hats and 70 dozen *copul* hats.³¹⁵ John Marshall was the sole mercer representative amongst wool staplers and during the 1460s exported approximately 65 sacks of wool with an estimated value of £325.³¹⁶ His imports were more limited than his colleagues', consisting of 7 tuns wine (£28), 14 dolium woad (£70) and £89 in iron, osmonds, seal-blubber, wax and potash; but the £512 he had invested in foreign trade was twice that of John Gilliot's. Marshall was however outranked in value of foreign trade by 5 merchant brethren of whom John Kent's 43 cargoes represented an investment of almost £1,150.³¹⁷

Members of the Mercers' Guild imported a similar array of industrial supplies and mercers were not differentiated from their merchant brethren apart from being outnumbered. Some mercers had specialist interests; for example John Ince in steel and copper-alloys, John Gilliot in kitchen, dining ware and haberdashery, and John Marshall in woad. More telling is the range of mercery and small wares handled by merchants from the 1450s: Thomas Beverley imported mirrors, papers of pins, combs, laces, thread, Brabant and Holland linen, buckram, fustian and bolting cloth; John Ferriby imported beads, pins, brushes, paper and writing paper; and John Kent, linen from Tournais and felt hats.³¹⁸

³¹³ [520]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 23-5, 35, 46, 48, 52-4, 75, 100.

³¹⁴ [405].

³¹⁵ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 24-6, 35, 48, 53-4, 63, 67, 99, 101.

³¹⁶ [618]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 27, 29, 54, 104, 116-8.

³¹⁷ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 266; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 24-5, 30, 34-5, 43-4, 46, 48, 51-3, 62-3, 66-8, 70-2, 74, 78, 83, 85, 91, 99, 102, 104, 110-11; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 340.

³¹⁸ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 46-8, 53, 101, 161, 171; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 234, 252, 266.

ii. External Conflict and Competition, from 1468

A series of crises affected the overseas trade of York merchants, but the worst was the escalation of conflict with the Hanseatic League in the 1460s.³¹⁹ York Guild members were directly affected in 1468 when the *Valentine* of Newcastle was attacked by 400 armed men from Gdansk, Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar and Stralsund and amongst those claiming damages of £5,000 were John Gilliot senior and John Ince.³²⁰ A blockade on shipping to the Baltic ensued and, though there was a formal cessation of hostilities in 1474, access continued to be problematic; and York merchants tried to compensate for the loss of this market by increasing their trade to the Low Countries.³²¹ In fact it is during this period that Guild accounts record an increased emphasis on attendance at the seasonal fairs held in Antwerp in midsummer and autumn called the *Synkson* and *Balmes* marts, and in Bergen-op-Zoom in spring and early winter known as the *Paske* and *Cold* marts.³²² It was agreed at a meeting in 1474 with John Gilliot, John Ince, John Norman and John Kirk in attendance to freight the *Laurence*, *Hilda* and *Little George* of Hull for voyages to and from Zeeland; and to load the *Hilda* specifically for the *Synskon* mart.³²³ In 1476 payments were received for the *Juliana* sent to the *Synkson* mart in Antwerp and the *Cold* mart in Bergen-op-Zoom or *Barow* which was where Richard Cockrell and Thomas Wrangwish had purchased a pair of organs in 1472.³²⁴ A ship of Henry Awkbarow was freighted for the *Barow* mart in 1478 and the *Hilda* to the *Synkson* mart in 1478 and 1481; and a list of ships sent to the *Cold* mart in 1523 survives.³²⁵ By 1510 an exchange of correspondence reveals that York and other northern merchants had been excluded from attending the Easter and Whitsun marts under pressure from the

³¹⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 173-134, esp. pp. 200; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 121, 131.

³²⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 200-234; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 121; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. xxxii; Postan, 'Economic and Political Relations of England and The Hanse', pp. 132-4.

³²¹ Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp.121-2; Postan, 'Economic and Political Relations of England and The Hanse', pp. 1346, 137-8.

³²² N. J. M. Kerling, 'Relations of English Merchants with Bergen op Zoom, 1480-1481', *BIHR*, 31 (1958), pp. 130-141 at p. 131; G. D. Ramsay, *English Overseas Trade During the Centuries of Emergence. Studies in Some Modern Origins of the English-Speaking World* (London and New York, 1957), pp. 1-33.

³²³ YMAA, Administration, Meetings, 7; Guild Accounts, 13; Smith, *Guide*, p. 8 (misdated 1473); Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 64-5.

³²⁴ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 12 (1472), 15.

³²⁵ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 17-18 (1478, 1481); Trade Correspondence, 14, Shipping, 3; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 18, 29.

London-based Merchant Adventurers, a power struggle which had risen to the surface in the 1470s.³²⁶ In turning their trade solely to the Low Countries in the 1470s, York merchants suffered an increasing amount of competition with their London counterparts, the largest, most influential group of English merchants trading there.³²⁷

Conflict came to a head by 1478 when the Mercers' Guild wrote a letter to the king complaining about the oppressive manner and behaviour of the London mercer John Pickering towards the northern merchants trading in the Low Countries.³²⁸ Pickering had been appointed governor of all the English merchants trading to Brabant, Flanders, Zeeland and Holland; and northern merchants were aggrieved that he had disallowed the customary practice of a second governor to represent northern merchants, and had raised the fees for trading.³²⁹ He also required northern cloth to be sold alongside that exposed for sale by Londoners such that 'the clothe of the north parties sall apeare wers, and their clothe to apere the better'.³³⁰ They alleged that this practice reduced the sales price from £24-£30 to £16 for a pack of the best dyed cloth and from £18 to £20 down to £9 for a pack of undyed; and concluded that, if the king did not intervene and restore their ancient privileges, all the parts of the north country would be impoverished.³³¹ There was an element of truth to this claim and their plea was taken seriously by Edward IV, who instructed Pickering to behave towards the northern mercers in 'thos parts beyonde the see, with all favour and honestee, according to the auncient custumes'.³³²

There was however no turning back the tide and in 1505 the loose confederation of English merchants trading to the Low Countries was consolidated at the English Merchant Adventurers. Henceforth a Londoner was annually elected as governor and

³²⁶ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 17-18 (1478, 1481); Trade Correspondence, 12; Smith, *Guide*, p. 18; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 122-6.

³²⁷ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 271, 321-3, 341-2.

³²⁸ YMAA, Trade Correspondence, 1; Cartulary, fos. 176v-177v; Smith, *Guide*, pp. 17, 50; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 75-80.

³²⁹ Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 262, 271-3, 306, 310, 321-2, 327-8; Kerling, 'Relations of English Merchants with Bergen op Zoom', p. 136.

³³⁰ Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 77.

³³¹ Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 77, 79.

³³² YMAA, Cartulary, fo. 176r; Smith, *Guide*, p. 50; Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 79-80.

York men took up a 'subordinate position in English trade'.³³³ The adverse affect this had on the fortunes of York merchants is graphically portrayed in the two particular customs accounts of Hull in the 1480s, a decade characterised by the dominance of merchants and the low value of their foreign trade.

iii. The Dominance of Guild Merchants, from 1480

Four of the 6 extant Guild accounts for the 1480s record payments arising from shipping and the average for each of these years is 19s or two-thirds less than the £3 annual average in the 1470s.³³⁴ There were fewer collective shipping ventures during the decade; and most had been organised by the merchant members of the Guild, for example John Dodgson and Thomas Folnetby who were responsible for freighting the *Hilda* and *George* of Hull for shipping to the *Synkson* mart in 1481.³³⁵ Three ships in 1485 were freighted for return voyages from Zeeland to Hull and in 1486 a different 3 were used for the outward journey with only the *Trinity* of Coppendale hired to carry cargo there and back.³³⁶ The payments varied from 6s to 7s 6d for a single sailing to 11s for outward and return; and lower amounts from 1s to 2s were received for river craft freighted by the merchants William Colvell and John Metcalf which sailed from York to Hull and back.³³⁷ The payments for keels ranged from 6d to 12d and the sons of 2 mercers were involved, Edward Kirkby in 1481 and John Catour in 1489; but there were no shipping entries in the 2 years 1487-8 when the mercer Thomas Finch was master.³³⁸

The impression is that the economic situation in the 1480s was worse than before and conditions for direct participation in foreign trade were less favourable, resulting in fewer collective ventures and more need to control river transport.³³⁹ The situation improved in the 1490s in terms of the number of collective shipping ventures (40 compared to 15), but the income received was a shilling less (18s) than in the 1480s and the quantities referred to are no longer tons, tuns or *dolium*, but the half or quarter

³³³ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 175-80; Sutton, *The Mercery of London*, pp. 327-35; Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', p. 129.

³³⁴ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 18-23.

³³⁵ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 18; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp.250, 253.

³³⁶ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 19-20.

³³⁷ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 18; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 247, 276.

³³⁸ [556]; [202]; [358]; YMAA, Guild Accounts, 18, 21-2. 23.

³³⁹ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 212-3.

volumes known as pipes and hogsheads.³⁴⁰ William Jackson, perhaps the mercer of this name, paid 5s for 3 hogsheads to be carried in 1493 to Zeeland in the *Mary*; and may have owned the *Margaret* credited with 5s in 1496.³⁴¹

The particular customs accounts for Hull provide confirmation that members of the Mercers' Guild had been badly affected by the disruption to their trade in the wake of the closure of the Baltic and the competition with London Merchant Adventurers. In the 1480s only 2 Particular customs accounts for Hull survive, a partial year April to Michaelmas 1483 and a full Exchequer year from Michaelmas 1489. The value of cargo shipped by Guild mercers and merchants ranged from £1 up to £135, a more restricted range than in previous decades; and this distribution is set out in Table 6.10 arranged in 5 bands from under £10 up to £200. Of the 64 Guild members identified, 9 were mercers and most were new participants in foreign trade; and none had investments of more than £50 compared to 60% of their merchant brethren. The total value of the foreign trade of Guild members was £1,569 down from £7,742 in the period 1469-73 (above Table 6.9).

TABLE 6.10
VALUE OF THE FOREIGN TRADE OF MEMBERS OF THE YORK
MERCERS' GUILD, 1483 to 1490: MERCERS v. MERCHANTS

Band	Range	£ Value ¹ : Mercer v. Merchant				Guild Master		Civic Mayor	
		M	£	Mt	£	M	Mt	M	Mt
I	£2-£10	4	26	12	50	1	2	1	2
II	£10-£30	3	58	24	436	2	4	1	5
III	£30-£50	2	76	8	302	1	5	0	4
IV	£50-£100			5	363	0	2	0	2
V	£100-£200			2	258	0	1	0	1
VI	£200-£500								
VII	£500-£1,200								
	Total	9	160	51	1,409	4	14	2	14
	Average £		18		28				

M = mercer Mt = merchant
¹ Values include all exports and imports, using £5/sack of wool, 30s/broadcloth, £4/dolium wine and recorded values for imports rounded up to the nearest £.
Source:
² TNA, E122/63/1, 8 printed W. R. Childs (ed.), *The Customs Accounts of Hull 1453-1490*, YASRS, 144 (1984), pp. 188-201 (9 April to Michaelmas 1483), 202-224 (Michaelmas to Michaelmas 1489-90).

Looking at individual investments, John Birkhead's foreign trade was the least valuable at £4 (Band I) and comprised mercery and grocery: a piece of bolting cloth, 3 dozen painted cloths, 3 gross laces, 2 reams writing paper and a dry hogshead of

³⁴⁰ YMAA, Guild Accounts, 24-31; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 254-6.

³⁴¹ [527]; YMAA, Guild Accounts, 27, 29.

pepper.³⁴² Other small investments were George Nicholson and Thomas Wells with 4 and 4½ cloths worth about £6; whereas Edward Kirkby's two cargoes were valued at almost £10, 1½ fothers lead (£5) and 3 cloths (£4 10s).³⁴³ Robert Levesham had £15 (Band II) tied up in foreign trade during this period; his exports of 5 cloths were valued at £7 10s, a fother of lead at £3 6s 8d and the rest in imports of armour (elbow plates called *splentes*), litmus (a mordant), 3 pieces of buckram, 3 reams of paper, grocery (pepper, ginger, cloves) and a quantity of malt.³⁴⁴

Thomas Finch is recorded for export of lead and cloth valued at £21; and John Stockdale's trade was worth about £22 comprising imports of 23 bundles of cork, 4 sheaves teasels and several hundred pounds of Bay salt, and exports of 3½ fothers lead and 4½ cloths.³⁴⁵ Alexander Dawson invested £38 (Band III) in foreign trade, with exports of 21 cloths (£31 10s) and imports of wool-oil (£6); and John Norman exported 22 cloths valued at £33 and imported bitumen and potash valued at £6, representing a total investment of £39.³⁴⁶

Few Guild members, mercer or merchant, had the capital resources to handle as much as £50 in trading stock; and the balance of trade seems unfavourable as well; for example the merchant Richard Beverley's £60 (Band IV) was divided into exports of lead worth £26 and imports worth £34.³⁴⁷ Nicholas Regent's £126 (Band V) was distributed into £84 of cloth exports, but only £42 of imports which included Gascon wine, herring, hops, iron, madder, litmus, oil and soap.³⁴⁸ John Marshall's son William was a merchant of the Staple with £100 invested in wool exports; but this was likely to have been less than Richard York's trade, the leading Stapler who is not recorded in this fragment.³⁴⁹

³⁴² [100]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, p. 203.

³⁴³ [662]; [920]; [556]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 198, 213-14.

³⁴⁴ [577]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 203, 210, 213, 216.

³⁴⁵ [358]; [825]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 203, 213-4.

³⁴⁶ [278]; [666]; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 203, 214, 216.

³⁴⁷ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 234; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 197-8, 209-10, 215-6.

³⁴⁸ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 284; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 197-8, 204-5, 208-10.

³⁴⁹ [618]; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 271; Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 213, 221-3.

The largest investment recorded in this customs account was made by John Gilliot, now known as a merchant whose £135 included exports of cloth and lead amounting to £86; and this would finance his imports of wool-oil and iron (£25) and oil, soap, potash, bitumen (£24). His individual consignments in 1383 and 1389-90 were more valuable than the total trade of 75% of his brethren, but was far less than Robert Louth's at the turn of the century over a mere 3-month period.

Clearly something quite drastic had happened during the fifteenth century to reduce the level of investment in foreign trade, not just for mercers but within the whole mercantile community of York. Indeed this is the implication of the commodities of foreign trade which for Guild merchants was similar to that for their mercer brethren; for example John Shaw imported 3 barrels of rape oil (£3) and John Lincoln exported a fother lead and 10 cloths (£18).³⁵⁰ Ottrell Portington and Thomas Darby respectively invested £38 and £49 in exports of lead and cloth and in imports of iron, madder, hops and bay salt.³⁵¹ However merchants also imported some mercery: John Metcalf a chest of combs; Ottrell Portington, 3 pieces of Brabant cloth; Robert Thorne, a dozen painted cloths; and John Elwald, bench covers, serge, *tuke*, thread, paper and boxes.³⁵² As in the period from 1450 to 1479 when leading merchants handled mercery, this evidence suggests a continuing role in both the supply and distribution of mercery. In other words merchants had incorporated a retail side to their business; and it is hard to avoid concluding that this was an adaptation to worsening economic conditions when it was no longer possible to earn a livelihood solely through wholesale transactions.

Summary Remarks

It can be seen in Tables 6.9 and 6.10 that the average investment in foreign trade made by members of the York Mercers' Guild declined in the period from 1460 to 1490. The average mercer investment rose from £110 (1460s) to a high of £184 (1470s) and dropped drastically to a low of £18 (1480s); and this pattern was similar for merchants falling from an average £168 (1460s) to £28 (1480s). The high

³⁵⁰ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 203, 213, 215; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 271, 288.

³⁵¹ Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 204, 213-4; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 249, 283.

³⁵² Childs, *Hull Customs Accounts*, pp. 203-4, 208-9; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 251-2, 276, 283, 294.

valuation for mercers rested on the wool and cloth exports of two individuals, John Marshall and John Gilliot, senior; and after their deaths their trade was assumed by their merchant sons.³⁵³ There were a few mercers admitted to the freedom during the latter quarter of the fifteenth century; and some held office as master of the Mercers' Guild: Thomas Finch (1477-8), John Birkhead (1504) and John Stockdale (1498, 1505). Stockdale and Birkhead were also known as merchants when elected as mayor in 1501 and 1507 respectively, a long-established pattern for prominent mercers.³⁵⁴ The sixteenth-century Guild saw the rise of the haberdasher who filled positions previously held by mercers; but few traversed the *cursus honorum* of the city and merchants continued to predominate in city and guild. Even so, merchants 'could not control the extraneous forces which undermined the fortunes of York'.³⁵⁵

In light of the prolonged recession in York and the near demise of the occupation of mercer, it is proposed that merchants, in order to retain their share of the market had to take on the commercial role of the retail shopkeeper, the mercer. It is likely that their greater prominence in civic office enabled them deliberately to exclude competitors; perhaps in particular the specially trained mercer seeking admission to the freedom. The tendency for the York mercer to become a merchant on the one hand and the economic climate forcing the merchant to incorporate the retail role of a mercer contributed to a blurring of distinction between commercial roles; and this might explain the apparent demise of the mercer as a distinct occupation. What needs further elucidation is the severe reduction in the value of foreign trade experienced by both mercers and merchants suggesting decreased amounts of available credit.

CONCLUSION

The lay subsidies for 1297 and 1301 showed that mercers in Yorkshire lived in all sizes of communities from hamlets to market centres. Their moveable possessions were seldom above average value and consisted primarily of livestock and stores of grain as did their neighbours. There are few references to merchandise or mercery and the appraised value was very low, implying that their commercial enterprise was occasional and not sufficient to earn a living. This would be a factor of migration

³⁵³ [618]; [618]; [405]; [405]; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 256, 274 ; BI, PR 5, fos. 237, 331, 424; BI, PR 9, fos. 32, 347.

³⁵⁴ [358]; [100]; [825]; Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 235, 252, 291-2.

³⁵⁵ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 106.

into York, and improved prospects are indicated in the tallage of 1303 which shows some mercers contributing the highest amounts. The lay subsidy of 1327 however displayed the inequalities of wealth within the community of mercers; and the impression is that the majority had moderate amounts of capital reserved in moveable possessions and that their commercial enterprise was modest and limited to retail shopkeeping. The lay subsidy of 1332 showed that inequalities remained, but the higher amounts of tax paid at a higher rate indicated increased overall prosperity, especially so for those in the upper tax brackets. The likely reason for this was the selection of York as one of the domestic staples for the collection and sale of wool destined for export, which stimulated the economy and provided new opportunities for mercers to become involved in the wool trade. Indeed some of the wealthiest had already become wool exporters and others would become so in the next decade; and there seemed to be a direct relationship between the value of household possessions, the level of available current assets and commercial enterprise. Here the level of current assets invested in trading stock provided a means to gauge the scope and scale of the commercial enterprise of mercers engaged in foreign trade.

There were a few York mercers involved in Edward III's wool monopoly in 1337; and when their consignments were seized by the king's agents in early 1338, they were issued Dordrecht Bond for the value of their loss. These bonds were to be repaid through exemptions of customs on future export; but there were various setbacks and some mercers died with the sums outstanding. The potential profits of the wool trade however attracted other mercers who also became royal creditors, and the size of loans reflected the current assets they had available; again displaying inequalities within this small section of the community. The aftermath of the Black Death provided unexpected opportunities and when York was again selected as a domestic staple in the 1350s, a number of mercers became involved for the first time in the wool trade; these included members of the Fraternity of St. Mary, both mercers and drapers. The large quantities of wool involved in export, the high value of investments, the international scope of the trade and the new system for collecting mercantile debts, meant that most mercer participants became known as merchants; and the most prominent and successful were elected as staple and civic mayors.

Another aspect of post-Black Death recovery was the increased manufacture of woollen cloth which provided opportunities for the marketing of cloth at home and abroad. An early venture was to the Baltic where the goods (probably cloth) belonging to York mercers had been seized in 1385; and inequalities in the level of

their current assets is seen in the contributions to fund an embassy to Prussia which were proportional to the value of their goods. Most of this group of mercers were also recorded in the customs accounts for Hull as exporters of cloth in the early 1390s. Again, it is apparent that there was a huge difference in the current assets they had available to invest in cloth, some mercers exporting a single cargo of a few cloths and others several consignments over the year of over 80 cloths. The names of ships suggest the direction of trade was primarily to the Low Countries and the Baltic ports; and the dates of sailing suggest attendance at seasonal fairs. Although cloth was theoretically more valuable than wool, the evidence from the customs accounts is that only those mercers with substantial capital reserves were exporters of wool. Nonetheless there were potential profits in the export of cloth which drew in new participants, especially mercers with fewer capital reserves. This situation can also be seen in the alnage accounts of 1394/5 which record the names of mercers and a few wives who presented various quantities of cloth to be taxed or alnaged before exposure for sale. The description as dyed or undyed, short lengths, narrow widths and whole cloths indicates the range of woollens available in York; and the timing of presentation and the quantities suggested different destinations for marketing cloth at home and abroad; and this notion was supported by the customs accounts.

In looking at the type, quantity and value of the goods imported by mercers in 1401, most can be classed as semi-processed industrial supplies or basic foods and very little was mercery or small wares. A clear picture emerged of their intention to supply metal-workers with iron and cloth-workers with soap, oil, dyestuffs and mordants; and the latter would tie in with their involvement in the production and finishing of the cloth which they exported. Again, the distribution of investments displays a wide divergence from under £5 to about £200; and obviously the profit margin was on average greater than the risk of loss or the expense involved in foreign trade. An assemblage of information can be compiled for the continuing participation of mercers in foreign trade; but the incorporation of the Mercers' Guild in 1430 suggests that a corporate approach was sought as a means to bolster their commercial enterprise particularly in foreign trade. Henceforth most mercers free of the city were members of the Mercers' Guild, and in the 1440s merchants joined in increasing numbers; and from the 1450s most of the York men named in the customs accounts for Hull were primarily members of the Guild.

Attention turned to the relative value of the foreign trade of Guild mercers compared to their merchant brethren; until the late 1460s a small number of mercers held their

own and shipped some of the most valuable cargoes. During the 1470s the number of mercers declined and a growing polarisation could be seen in the amount they invested in foreign trade, with very few mercers in the higher brackets. The loss of Baltic markets, conflict with the Hanse, increasing competition with London mercers at home and in the Low Countries, and political upheaval of the Wars of the Roses were all factors which disrupted their trade. By the 1490s the total value of foreign trade was far less than previously: there were few mercers and their trading stock was low in value; and though there were more merchants, most invested only modest amounts. Mercers were marginalised within the group of overseas traders and it is at this point the occupation virtually disappears, but merchants did not escape unscathed and their collective investment in foreign trade declined drastically.

In weighing up the evidence it was proposed that the York merchants, in order to retain their share of the market was forced to take on the commercial role of the retail shopkeeper, the mercer. The greater prominence of merchants in civic office enabled them deliberately to exclude competitors, particularly the specially trained mercer seeking admission to the freedom. Thus a combination of mercers to become known as merchants and for merchants to incorporate the retail role of mercers blurred the distinction between commercial roles. While this might explain the near demise of mercer as a separate occupation; but what needs further elucidation is the severe reduction in the value of foreign trade experienced by both mercers and merchants.

York's Economic Decline

There were a combination of obviously social, demographic, political and economic factors which diminished the commercial role of the York mercer during the fifteenth century; and whatever the exact cause, the effects sent shockwaves through the mercantile community. Bartlett showed this graphically in his analysis of foreign trade through Hull in which the proportion and value of that handled by York merchants declined dramatically.³⁵⁶ At the end of the fourteenth century they had accounted for £10,400 of the £25,000 recorded, but in each of the exchequer years Michaelmas to Michaelmas 1466-67 and 1471-72, this dropped by half to about £5,000. The situation for York mercers was much worse in that the average value of their foreign trade between 1378 to 1401 had been £2,465, but during the period 1453 to 1490 fell by over 95% to £127. Bartlett felt the 3 main reasons were exclusion

³⁵⁶ Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 145-9, 151-55, Tables X and IX.

from the Skania fisheries; the loss of English possessions in Gascony which disrupted the wine trade; and outright war with the Hanseatic League.³⁵⁷ York merchants tried to increase their trade to the Low Countries, but ultimately could not compete with the entrenched and powerful position of their London rivals.³⁵⁸ He also saw the crisis in the wool trade as a significant factor in the beginning of the recession, and the failure of York merchants to compensate by increasing their cloth exports as instrumental in the prolonged economic contraction.³⁵⁹

The stagnation of York's cloth industry from the 1460s raises a series of linked questions about production, supply, labour and marketing; and these have been examined by Miller, Swanson, Kermode, Pollard and Palliser; and their work provides a foundation for further investigation into the altered commercial roles of the York mercer and merchant.³⁶⁰ It would be instructive to look more closely at the connection between mercers and drapers whose numbers enrolled as freemen declines in parallel; and also at the commercial activities of Londoners resident in York. Kermode has argued convincingly that the 'shortage of investment, either through cash or credit' contributed to the decline of York's domestic manufacture and foreign trade.³⁶¹ Here it would be profitable to investigate the personnel involved in credit networks, taking into account Nightingale's analysis of credit and economic recession in which the amount of credit available depends on the supply of bullion, the level of currency in circulation, the resources and willingness of the lender and the reputation or credit rating of the borrower.³⁶² In a prolonged economic contraction and a decreasing amount of available credit, the greatest toll would be on the trader whose current assets had always been marginal. This certainly was the case for many York mercers whose human capital and aspirations far outstripped their current assets; but why the entire occupation was affected requires further, future investigation.

³⁵⁷ Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 121, 131.

³⁵⁸ Bartlett, 'Aspects of the Economy of York', pp. 149-50, 152-54.

³⁵⁹ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. xv-xxxiv and Table between pp. xxii-xxiii.

³⁶⁰ Miller, 'Medieval York', pp.89-90; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 142-4; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 315-19; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 199, 209-11; Pollard, *North-Eastern England during the War of the Roses*, pp. 56, 71-3, 77-9.

³⁶¹ Kermode, *Merchants, Overseas Trade, and Urban Decline*, pp. 63-4; Kermode, 'Medieval Indebtedness: The Regions *Versus* London', pp. 72-88; D. Keene, 'Changes in London's Economic Hinterland as Indicated by Debt Cases in the Court of Common Pleas' in J. A. Galloway (ed.), *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration c.1300-1600* (London, 2000), pp. 59-83

³⁶² Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit', pp. 570-4; P. Nightingale, *Trade, Money, and Power in Medieval England* (Abington, 2007).

CONCLUSION

The Conclusion to this thesis provides an overview of the topics covered in the chapters, looks at how the core questions were answered, discusses the results of testing the hypotheses and concludes with a section on topics to investigate further.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter One surveyed the definitions and documentary references in British sources to the words mercer and mercery which were not used in Old English but were widely used after the Norman Conquest from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries. References to mercers were examined in light of date of occurrence and of their civic and commercial activities and reputation. Mercery was examined as a category of foreign trade which comprised small wares for personal use and fine fabrics for clothing and household furnishings. Various references implied mercery had inherent value and the array of articles described as mercery suggested different qualities and prices which would suit dealers and customers with variable capital resources. Mercery was man-made or manufactured, it was small, light and compact and ready to use, and would be visually distinct from merchandise which was heavy, bulky and needed further processing.

Chapter Two analysed numbers of mercers admitted to the freedom from the inception of the freemen's register in 1272/3 up to 1549. This was followed by a survey of the number of mercers recorded in three other settings: as members of the Fraternity of St. Mary and its successor the Mercers' Guild, as civic officials and as taxpayers. The pattern of admissions to the freedom was of increasing numbers up to 1400, a steady decrease to 1450 and then a sharp decline such that none were enrolled between 1502 and 1514. Mercers reappeared, but their admission was infrequent and numbers remained low; and this situation was mirrored in sources relating to established mercers. Lines of inquiry were explored to explain this near demise which generated hypotheses to test and themes to address in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Three explored the geographic and social origins of the York mercer. The indirect evidence of placename surnames helped to track the pattern and direction of migration. Consideration was given to the familiarity gained in movements from market to market or into York; to the establishment of lines of supply; and to the

retention of links to their ancestral home. Their social origins were viewed in terms of family occupational background: generational shifts of occupation as signs of social mobility; the investment artisan fathers made in training their sons as urban mercers; and the importance of the master as patron, friend and employer. Marriage and household formation brought new sources of capital and extended social, commercial and credit networks; and the marriage of children created family alliances which ensured that hard-earned capital remained within the mercantile community.

The social and economic success achieved by mercers is examined in Chapter Four in terms of the mercers' perceptions of their own social status which are revealed in the arrangements made for their funerals and commemorations. The outward displays of affiliation and authority are examined through the signs, symbols and livery clothing attendant upon their membership of fraternities and guilds, and in their position as civic officials, especially as mayor. Economic class is discussed as inequalities of wealth measured by value of possessions, size of household, income from land and disposable income. The relative wealth of mercers is looked at within their parish, within the community of mercers and in landed society; and the impression is that while a few mercers were wealthy and many others were no wealthier than artisans, there was a substantial number with moderate affluence attesting to reasonable urban success.

The scope of inland trade features in Chapter Five. Regional trade is looked at through contact with suppliers and rural outworkers; familiarity with modes of carriage; and bequests to maintain roads and bridges. Credit networks extended through Yorkshire, to the west, to the south and especially to London, the main depot for imported mercery and other categories of foreign trade. This suggested that Londoners were a main source of the stock purchased by York mercers. The commercial role of mercers in local trade is deduced from the location of commercial premises, the external appearance of shops, and the internal fittings, furniture and weights and measures. The range of mercery available for sale is investigated in light of three inventories, showing that mercers had different capital reserves and customers had different needs and incomes. Consumer demand for linen is investigated through inventories which confirm widespread use as bedding, napery and for kerchiefs, and confirms the view that there were different clients for different qualities and prices.

Chapter Six is a chronological survey of the participation of mercers in overseas trade. The capital resources available to mercers are re-examined and the inequalities of wealth within the community of mercers related to the amount they invested in the commodities of foreign trade. The opportunities of an expanding economy are shown through the increasing number of mercers involved in the export of wool and cloth and the large value of their foreign trade between 1350 and 1420. Thereafter a decreasing number of mercers and a sharp fall in the value of their foreign trade reflect the adverse economic conditions in a prolonged fifteenth century recession. The community of mercers becomes increasingly polarised between a few wealthy and a few poor mercers. After 1490 mercers are virtually eclipsed by merchants, that is mercers become less visible in the Mercers' Guild and soon disappear from the freemen's register. Among the various social, demographic and economic factors which contributed to the demise of the occupation of mercer, two stand out: the long established tendency for prominent mercers to become known as merchants and train their sons and apprentices as such; and the attempt by the merchants to retain their share of the market in a prolonged recession by incorporating a retail side to their trade. These trends would blur the distinction between occupations of mercer and merchant and this led to a decrease in numbers of mercers admitted to the freedom.

Answering the Core Questions

What was the difference between a mercer and a merchant in medieval York?

How did a York mercer earn a living?

Why did the occupation mercer almost but not quite disappear from the York freemen's register by the sixteenth century?

The most direct evidence for the commercial activities of York mercers was found in sources recording their overseas trade as exporters of wool and woollen cloth and as importers primarily of industrial supplies such as iron and steel; soap, oil and blubber; dye-stuffs and mordants. Other imports included timber and woodland products, wax, wine, salted or dried fish, dried fruit, nuts, pepper and spices; but mercery is conspicuous by its absence apart from small, infrequent consignments of linen, headwear and dress-making supplies. In this context mercers were not distinguishable from merchants, apart from the fact that they became fewer in number during the fifteenth century and shipped far less valuable cargo by 1490. Within a dozen years, mercers disappear as a separate occupation in the freemen's register; and merchants are clearly the dominate mercantile trade.

The evidence for the regional trade of mercers again suggests that their commercial activities were similar to those of merchants, buying large quantities of wool and lead and supplying materials to rural cloth-workers such as spinners, weavers, fullers and dyers. Accounts of religious houses record a few purchases from mercers of wine, woollen cloth and fish, another indication of their similarity to merchants. Their presence at regional markets and fairs is undocumented between the late thirteenth- and mid-sixteenth centuries, but their tenure of shops in Richmond, Ripon and Malton implies redistribution of mercery. Testamentary bequests record their maintenance of roads and bridges on routes leading to and from York, and other sources show familiarity with modes of transport and carriage. Credit and debt transactions attest to their credit network extending within Yorkshire, to the west and south and especially to London, a major emporium for mercery.

However very few York mercers can be traced in records of regional, long-distance and foreign trade; and most of those that cannot be traced as regional traders retained their occupational designation as mercers. This implies that their livelihood was primarily that of an urban, retail shopkeeper whose stock in trade was mercery. There is sufficient evidence in title deeds, leases, rentals and court cases to show their tenure of shops in most intra-mural parishes, but particularly concentrated along the main routes into the city from the north, on the approaches to the sole crossing over the river Ouse and near the central market places. There are details of the external appearance of shops which distinguish them from market stalls; and of the internal fittings, furnishings, storage containers and weighing apparatus which distinguish them from workshops. Although few, the shop inventories that do survive show that a large array of mercery was available for sale in different qualities and prices which would be available for a wide range of customers. The quantity, quality and range of stock carried would vary according to the capital assets of the mercer; and thus there would be opportunities for different types of retailers: some operating from a single shop; some involved in small-scale finishing; some with shops in more than one location; and others involved in supply and distribution as wholesalers.

Testing the Hypotheses

The analysis of the numbers of mercers and merchants indicated that freedom of the city was a largely financial system and that numbers admitted would vary according to the attitude and policy of the civic authority at particular times. The trend towards increased admissions before the Black Death was seen as deliberate policy to increase

revenue; and afterwards as an attempt to replace population. Anxiety about regulating trade in an expanding economy might lead to a greater number of residents being registered, and a reduced population in the fifteenth century would reflect a smaller workforce generally and fewest mercers in particular.

The near demise of mercer as an occupation could also be a change in the terminology related to a change in tasks performed. However there is no evidence that the activities of mercers as retail shopkeepers changed nor that there was a change in the articles comprising mercery. As for the mercers involved in regional and long distance trade, there is no evidence that this required new skills; and there had long been a tendency for such mercers to shift their occupational designation from mercer to merchant.

The non-recurrence in records of 40% of mercers after their enrolment as freemen can be explained by a combination of early deaths and career changes. Life expectancy for younger people was short for young people in general and some mercers would have succumbed to an early death. Others having qualified as independent masters would return to their place of origin to set up in business; and those with insufficient funds to set up as independent masters may have entered paid employment. Most aspiring overseas traders would have started their careers working as factors or attorneys, and been sent abroad where some died. Emigration elsewhere was likely for those with weak kinship support or inadequate training to cope with competition. Finally some mercers would not intend to reside in York, but purchased their freedom as a licence for occasional trade within the city or to benefit from the chartered rights to trade free of toll elsewhere.

In the years after the Black Death, mercers were admitted to the freedom in the greatest numbers; and this was the period when mercers become more visible as civic officials, royal creditors and founding members of the Fraternity of St. Mary. Some unexpectedly inherited property from distant kinsmen and friends, and others married widows or daughters thus boosting their capital resources. With the fear of another possible epidemic, there seems to have been a tendency not to save money but to spend it on food and consumer goods and raise standards of comfort and living. Thus there was an increased demand for mercery such as linen household textiles, articles of personal adornment and luxury foods such as dried fruit, nuts and spices. An equal demand for woollen clothing and worsted furnishing fabrics might prompt mercers into greater involvement in the production and finishing of cloth. Those already

engaged in the wool trade would now have 2 sides to their business, in local supply and in export; and would have an added inducement to import the industrial supplies needed for dyeing and finishing cloth. Here the general increase in demand from the manufacturers and consumers would encourage other artisans into supply and distribution, which would result in their shift of occupation from draper, dyer, innkeeper and chapman to mercer, so evident in the 1381 poll tax returns. The consequences of high rates of mortality and falling population had detrimental economic repercussions for York. Freemen admissions decreased from 1400 and there is evidence that immigration was not sufficient to halt a fall in population. The fifteenth century saw the growth of the West Yorkshire woollen industry at the expense of York-based production; and it was this shift in location that had most serious repercussions, restructuring networks of supply and distribution; redistributing population and wealth; and altering the economic role of the York mercer and merchant.

The pattern of increasing and decreasing numbers of mercers in York mirrored the model set out by Bartlett, and extended by Miller and Kermode, of an expansion in the fourteenth century, recession in the fifteenth century and prolonged contraction into the sixteenth century. York mercers were among the first denizens to export wool in the early years of the fourteenth century, and the designation of York as a temporary home staple in the 1320s provided opportunities for more mercers to participate. The wool trade was risky, but lucrative and the greater than average tax paid by mercers in 1332 suggests that the wool trade had been beneficial in raising their individual wealth. Indeed the records of Edward III's wool monopoly shows that a dozen York mercers had been drawn to this scheme, becoming royal creditors with their loans based on wool and the remission of customs due on future exports. In 1353 the wool staple was again temporarily established in York; and prominent mercers became Staple merchants and officials; and most of the mercers elected henceforth as civic aldermen and mayors were wool exporters.

The high customs duty imposed on wool contributed to a decline in its export as a raw material and its replacement by woollen cloth, thus increasing domestic manufacture of cloth. Here was another opportunity for mercers to expand their commercial horizons; many became involved in the marketing and export of cloth, if not also in its production and finishing. Increased production required new customers and York mercers were among those to take advantage of the new Baltic markets; and they exported cloth to the Low Countries and in the fifteenth century sent mixed

cargoes to Iceland. Having sold their wool and cloth, the usual practice seems to have been for mercers to purchase foreign commodities as return cargoes, in particular the industrial supplies used by metal and cloth workers rather than mercery for their own shops.

It is not surprising that most mercers involved in foreign trade considered themselves merchants. They also seem to have expanded the training of their apprentices to prepare them for the more complicated organisational and financial skills required for overseas trade. Indeed there is evidence that apprentices, having successfully completed their terms, entered paid employment as factors and often resided abroad thus extending the period of their training, acquiring greater experience and accumulating some capital. Having established themselves in business, become members of select societies and reaped some financial rewards, mercers would qualify for higher civic office, and their positions as alderman and mayor would give them a decisive role in regulating trade and controlling the size of the workforce. They could restrict the admission of those considered competitors in favour of their apprentices; and may even have coerced candidates for the freedom into less prestigious occupational designations such as haberdasher or chapman.

The foundation of the Mercers' Guild can be viewed as an attempt by less successful mercers to bolster their social, political and commercial standing. The founding members were a group of mercers of whom the older were yet to reach higher civic office despite long-term participation in overseas trade and the younger were their apprentices, factors or protégés.¹ Corporate identity had beneficial effects and members and Guild officials moved quickly into civic offices. The training of apprentices was better regulated and supervised; and their participation in foreign trade was bolstered through collective shipping ventures. The foundation mercers provided leadership until the mid 1460s by which time they and their apprentices were generally known as merchants; and from the 1440s merchants in their own right began to join the Guild and soon outnumbered other occupational groups and dominated the leadership. These developments blurred the distinctions, but did not eliminate the presence of mercers as freemen or Guild members, albeit their numbers were far fewer.

¹ Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', pp. 94-100.

From the 1450s there was a series of disruptions to English foreign trade which adversely affected York mercers and merchants: the final loss of English possession in Gascony which disrupted the wine trade; conflict and war with the Hanse which resulted in the loss of Baltic markets. There was also the political and social disorder caused by the Wars of the Roses. These factors combined to alter the composition of the Mercers' Guild, and in 2 decades 1470-89 a large number of new members were grocers, vintners, hardwaremen, drapers, tailors and dyers. This seems to have been an attempt by leading members to control the distribution of imported food, wine and industrial supplies so that they could retain their position as suppliers.² It is also a sign of increased commercial rivalry with both Hanse and London merchants present in the north of England and similarly engaged in distribution of foreign imports. The extent of the crisis can be gauged by the huge drop in the quantity of wool and cloth exported from Hull and in the commensurate decline in the value of York's foreign trade. It is at this point that the mercer as a distinct occupation seems to have been marginalised both within the Guild which they founded and as freemen.

The mercantile community was forced to retrench and reorganise in the face of the loss of both inland and foreign markets. The larger number of merchants and their greater relative wealth suggests that their main efforts would be to retain their share of the market by restricting the presence of rivals and incorporating a retail side to their business, actions which would compete with the mercer. Once the economy recovered sufficiently to allow the merchant to focus again on large-scale transactions, there would once more be an opening for the retail shopkeeper, if not the enterprising mercer. At this juncture the composition of the Mercers' Guild altered again, becoming more or less the preserve of the merchant engaged in overseas trade, apart from a few haberdashers who seem to have supplanted mercers. Mercers joined the Guild from 1515, but in very small numbers and never regained their influence; possibly because most merchants could not abandon retail trade; and mid-sixteenth century documents imply that this was still the case.³

Finally there is the question of commercialisation to consider in the rise and the near demise of the mercer. The increase in market exchange and commercial activity presented new opportunities for middlemen or agents of trade, who neither produced nor made what they bought or sold, but acted as intermediaries between growers,

² Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1502', p. 11, Table 2.

³ Sellers, *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 210, 221, 230, 234.

processors, manufacturers, other agents and final consumers. The mercer seems to have been originally an urban retail shopkeeper who bought imported mercery from a supplier with connections to its port of entry, if not also to the place of manufacture. As a trader already dealing with high-value, low-weight and compact goods carried over long distances, the mercer was well placed to branch into supply and distribution of larger than retail quantities. At this point the mercer would take on the economic roles of the traditional merchant or wholesaler, who operated at two or more stages of production, buying raw materials from the grower and selling them to a processor, and conveying semi-processed goods from one processor to another or from the final manufacturer to the retailer. There would be commercial roles for other traders; agents employed by principals, chapmen in carrying goods directly to the customer and brokers arranging deals between buyers and sellers.

The market provided potential for mercers to expand the scope and scale of their retail trade according to their own capabilities, connections and capital resources. It is the amount of capital available to mercers at various times in their working life which would determine the scope and scale of their trade and upon this depended their designation as merchant, mercer or chapman. Here, the inequalities of wealth within the community of mercers is apparent, whether in value of possessions, size of household, income from land, available cash, investment in trading stock and tied up in credit and debt. Those with the largest capital reserves would have a head start, but there would also be opportunities in an expanding economy for mercers with little capital, but good skills, determination and frequent turnover. In a prolonged recession, it would be more difficult for up and coming mercers with less capital reserves to compete against those mercers or merchants in an established position, even though the latter were also faced with the credit crunch.

The Way Forward

As noted in the thesis introduction, there were some subjects which could not be adequately discussed and which required separate in-depth treatment. This included the population of York, the proportion of mercers living and working in the city compared to the numbers admitted as freemen and the estimated size of their customer bases. Although property tenure and income from land have been briefly discussed, further work is warranted on the mercers' individual use of land and their corporate management of the endowment of Trinity Hospital. Having looked at the consumer demand for linen, it would be instructive to examine the value, use and

consumer demand for other types of mercery, particularly the ecclesiastical use of *fustian* and silk textiles and secular use of small luxuries of attire. Further investigation would be profitable into the redistribution of wealth in York and Yorkshire, the alterations to networks of supply and distribution, the restructuring of consumer industries and the development of retail shopkeeping in the provinces. Sufficient evidence is also available for a study of standards of living in northern households using corporate records to supplement probate evidence. Most important is an examination of mercantile financial skills, the use and management of money, accounting and recording debt; and especially the declining level of credit available to York mercers and merchants, possibly a major cause of the economic decline in York. Equally important would be further investigation of the importance of London as the main port of entry for imported mercery, and the depot from which provincial mercers procured their supplies either through shopping expeditions to the capital or through a retailing network involving regional chapmen. Finally a layman's guide to medieval commerce and currency would be extremely useful to assess better the economic role of various agents of trade and to comprehend the complex factors affecting the supply of money, the circulation of coins, the essence of credit and the commercial inter-dependency of York with its rural hinterland.

APPENDIX A

ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, 1272/3 to 1549

A. COLLECTION OF NUMERICAL DATA

In order to assess how many mercers there were in late medieval York, it was necessary to identify and count their names in select groups of sources of which the York freemen's register was the prime repository.¹ The names of those enrolled as mercers, the date of enrolment and other details were duly extracted and sorted into alphabetical and chronological lists and counted in decades.² Attempts to relate these figures to those derived by Bartlett and Miller proved problematic and therefore a new analysis was carried out which involved counting every freeman and sorting them into occupational groups.³ Occupations were sorted into 10 categories with reference to other studies of urban occupations: Building, Leather, Mercantile, Transport, Metal, Provision, Textile, Other Trades; with Uncertain Trades for those whose trade cannot be recognised and Unknown Trades for those enrolled without a trade.⁴ Apart from the Unknown Trades, each occupational category was subdivided into artisan, service and trader reflecting the manufacturing, ancillary and mercantile sides; and 308 separate occupations were slotted in as thought appropriate. The number of individuals in each occupation was counted by admission per year and summed into decadal totals (*ie.* 1300-1309); and these figures were summed into half-century subtotals 1300-1549 with a shorter interval for the period 1272/3-1299. A total figure was calculated for each separate occupation and these summed into subtotals for 9 occupational groups and the category for those enrolled without a trade

¹ YCR, MS. D.1, fos. 32r-191v, 194v-209r; printed Collins, *Register of the Freemen of the City of York*, 1: 1272-1588.

² Woodward, 'Sources for Urban History 1: Freemen's Rolls', p. 90; Pound, 'The Validity of the Freemen's Lists; Some Norwich Evidence', 48-59; Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 33-4, 41.

³ Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York in the Later Middle Ages', *EcHR*, 12(1), 1959, 17-33 at pp. 21-23; Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 114-16.

⁴ Woodward, 'Freemen's Rolls', pp. 89-95; Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', pp. 129-14; A. J. and R. H. Tawney, 'An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century', *EcHR*, 5 (1934), 25-64; Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', pp. 68-85.

(Table A.2). The subtotals for each of the 10 groups were collated and are set out as a summary table (Table A.1).

**B. ANALYSIS OF ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, BY
OCCUPATION AND OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY, 1272/3 to 1549**

TABLE A.1

**TOTAL ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF YORK
BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES, 1272/3 to 1549**

CATEGORY	1272/3- 1299	1300- 1349	1350- 1399	1400- 1449	1450- 1499	1500- 1549	TOTAL
BUILDING	6	96	365	393	248	219	1,327
LEATHER	88	408	729	555	433	386	2,599
MERCANTILE	25	235	604	595	337	271	2,067
TRANSPORT	5	95	188	182	152	109	731
METAL	59	307	554	482	377	317	2,096
PROVISION	89	458	521	619	583	587	2,857
TEXTILE	36	256	1216	918	734	517	3,677
OTHER TRADES	8	123	359	690	546	289	2,015
UNCERTAIN TRADES	1	25	18	17	5	1	67
SUBTOTAL	317	2,003	4,554	4,451	3,415	2,696	17,436
UNKNOWN TRADE	180	596	354	397	54	37	1,618
GRAND TOTAL	497	2,599	4,908	4,848	3,469	2,733	19,054
Source: F. Collins (ed.), <i>The Register of the Freemen of the City of York from the City Records, 1: 1272-1558</i> , Surtees Society, 96 (1897).							

TABLE A.2

**ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF YORK
BY OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY, 1272/3 to 1549**

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
BUILDING										
1.	Artisan	Building	Alabasterer, marbeller	0	0	0	1	7	1	9
2.	Artisan	Building	Carpenter	1	24	45	109	66	55	300
3.	Artisan	Building	Wright	0	01	66	5	0	9	81
4.	Artisan	Building	Carver	0	0	4	19	13	28	64
5.	Artisan	Building	Cooper	2	11	31	33	18	21	116
6.	Artisan	Building	Dubber, waller	0	10	4	1	0	0	15
7.	Artisan	Building	Earth potter	0	0	6	2	3	0	11
8.	Artisan	Building	Glass wright	0	0	8	0	0	0	8
9.	Artisan	Building	Glazier	0	4	8	22	22	17	73
10.	Artisan	Building	Joiner, jouene	0	3	23	20	2	8	56
11.	Artisan	Building	Mason	2	20	48	51	23	9	153
12.	Artisan	Building	Pageant maker	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
13.	Artisan	Building	Plasterer	0	2	16	24	5	0	47
14.	Artisan	Building	Sawyer	0	3	25	38	28	10	104
15.	Artisan	Building	Slaterer, thacker	0	0	2	3	0	0	5
16.	Artisan	Building	Tilemaker	0	0	0	13	8	7	28

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
17.	Artisan	Building	Tiler	0	5	37	35	42	46	165
18.	Artisan	Building	Tiler-plasterer	0	0	0	9	2	0	11
19.	Artisan	Building	Toundour, turnour	0	13	28	3	6	4	54
20.	Service	Building	Labourer	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
21.	Service	Building	Sand porter, lime porter	0	0	4	3	3	4	14
22.	Service	Building	Lime man	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
23.	Service	Building	Worker, overour	1	0	5	1	0	0	7
	TOTAL	Building		6	96	365	393	248	219	1,327
LEATHER										
24.	Artisan	Leather	Allutarius, tawer	6	7	9	0	2	0	24
25.	Artisan	Leather	Boteller, bottle maker	0	2	4	2	0	5	13
26.	Artisan	Leather	Cobbler	0	0	0	9	20	6	35
27.	Artisan	Leather	Cordwainer	2	129	225	170	120	101	747
28.	Artisan	Leather	Currier	1	7	32	25	17	19	101
29.	Artisan	Leather	Glover, gaunter	10	19	61	46	55	57	248
30.	Artisan	Leather-horn	Horner	0	8	7	4	9	7	35
31.	Artisan	Leather	Leash maker	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
32.	Artisan	Leather	Parchment- maker	3	7	18	10	13	18	69
33.	Artisan	Leather- wood	Patten maker	0	0	8	10	6	0	24
34.	Artisan	Leather	Pouch-maker	0	3	21	0	2	2	28
35.	Artisan	Leather- wood	Saddler	3	30	71	37	29	24	194
36.	Artisan	Leather	Sheather	0	5	13	4	1	0	23
37.	Artisan	Leather	Skinner, furrier	13	60	124	115	27	18	357
38.	Artisan	Leather	Sutor, shoemaker	10	16	2	0	34	26	88
39.	Artisan	Leather	Tanner, barker	40	115	134	123	98	102	612
	TOTAL	Leather		88	408	729	555	433	386	2,599
MERCANTILE										
40.	Trader	Mercantile	Chapman	0	23	84	97	58	6	268
41.	Trader	Mercantile	Haberdasher	0	0	3	3	12	38	56
42.	Trader	Mercantile	Huckster	1	0	0	2	1	0	4
43.	Trader	Mercantile	MERCER	23	147	333	186	50	17	756
44.	Trader	Mercantile	Merchant	1	64	184	306	216	204	975
45.	Trader	Mercantile	Stationer	0	1	0	1	0	6	8
	TOTAL	Mercantile		25	235	604	595	337	271	2,067
TRANSPORT										
46.	Service	Transport	Crane man	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
47.	Service	Transport	Packer	0	2	2	0	0	0	4
48.	Service	Transport	Carrier	0	0	1	13	5	8	27
49.	Artisan	Transport	Cart wright	0	3	14	8	13	9	47
50.	Service	Transport	Carter, catour	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
51.	Service	Transport	Ferry man	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
52.	Service	Transport	Mariner	2	69	102	29	9	23	234
53.	Service	Transport	Pannier man	0	0	0	1	6	9	16
54.	Service	Transport	Porter	1	10	43	34	36	20	144
55.	Service	Transport	Shipman	2	7	11	66	41	14	141
56.	Artisan	Transport	Shipwright	0	2	12	12	12	10	48
57.	Service	Transport	Sledman	0	0	0	17	21	10	48
58.	Service	Transport	Stevenour	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
59.	Artisan	Transport	Wheel wright	0	1	1	0	2	1	5
	TOTAL	Transport		5	95	188	182	152	109	731
METAL										
60.	Artisan	Metal	Armourer	0	13	14	24	15	24	90
61.	Artisan	Metal	Arrowsmith	1	0	2	0	0	0	3

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
62.	Misc	Metal	Batour	0	3	2	0	0	0	5
63.	Artisan	Metal-leather	Bellows maker	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
64.	Misc	Metal- Leather	Belter	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
65.	Artisan	Metal	Blade smith	0	0	8	11	11	11	41
66.	Misc	Metal	Bradsmith	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
67.	Artisan	Metal	Brazier	0	0	0	0	3	4	7
68.	Misc	Metal	Cam[b]smith	0	1	4	3	2	0	10
69.	Artisan	Metal-leather	Card maker	0	0	18	17	11	6	52
70.	Artisan	Metal	Coiner	0	0	0	0	5	5	10
71.	Artisan	Metal	Copper smith	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
72.	Artisan	Metal	Cutler	1	54	40	27	15	7	144
73.	Artisan	Metal	Faber, smith, blacksmith	1	20	60	49	46	61	237
74.	Artisan	Metal	Ferroure, farrier	4	32	57	2	1	0	96
75.	Misc	Metal	Finer, gold finer	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
76.	Artisan	Metal	Founder	0	1	14	17	23	17	72
77.	Artisan	Metal	Furbour	2	16	18	1	0	0	37
78.	Artisan	Metal-leather	Girdler	31	51	62	47	28	15	234
79.	Artisan	Metal	Goldbeater	1	4	7	0	0	0	12
80.	Artisan	Metal	Goldsmith	1	16	57	62	43	29	208
81.	Trader	Metal	Hardwareman	0	0	0	3	2	3	8
82.	Artisan	Metal	Heumer, helmetmaket	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
83.	Trader	Metal	Ironmonger	1	13	7	5	1	2	29
84.	Artisan	Metal	Jeweller	0	0	0	5	1	0	6
85.	Artisan	Metal	Latoner	0	9	2	1	2	0	14
86.	Misc	Metal	Ley smith	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
87.	Artisan	Metal	Locksmith	1	1	7	10	9	20	48
88.	Artisan	Metal	Lorimer	5	14	11	8	3	0	41
89.	Artisan	Metal	Marshall, horse marshall	0	0	0	46	27	4	77
90.	Artisan	Metal	Metal man	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
91.	Artisan	Metal	Moneyer	0	0	4	3	0	0	7
92.	Misc	Metal	Nailer	1	2	6	0	0	0	9
93.	Misc	Metal	Needler, aguiler	3	8	0	0	0	0	11
94.	Artisan	Metal	Pewterer	0	1	7	26	49	36	119
95.	Artisan	Metal	Pinner	0	0	33	33	7	10	83
96.	Artisan	Metal	Plumber, leadbeater	1	10	14	21	16	9	71
97.	Artisan	Metal-leather	Point maker	0	0	0	0	6	2	8
98.	Artisan	Metal	Potter, bell-maker	3	22	42	22	13	22	124
99.	Artisan	Metal	Riveter	0	1	8	1	1	0	11
100.	Misc	Metal	Shear smith	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
101.	Artisan	Metal	Spurrier	1	4	33	23	19	18	98
102.	Artisan	Metal	Stethy maker	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
103.	Artisan	Metal	Tinkler	0	1	1	6	6	2	16
104.	Artisan	Metal	Wiredrawer	0	7	15	3	9	6	40
TOTAL				59	307	554	482	377	317	2,096
PROVISION										
105.	Service	Provision	Apothecary	0	0	0	0	3	5	8
106.	Service	Provision	Baker, pestour	36	76	129	130	109	95	575
107.	Service	Provision	Beer Brewer	0	0	0	6	3	10	19
108.	Service	Provision	Brewer	0	3	5	27	22	4	61
109.	Victualler	Provision	Butcher	15	102	120	142	92	103	574
110.	Victualler	Provision	Cheeseman	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
111.	Service	Provision	Cook, pottager	8	52	63	59	45	37	264
112.	Trader	Provision	Corn chap- man/merchant	0	0	0	2	15	34	51
113.	Victualler	Provision	Fisher	4	83	48	52	86	85	358
114.	Victualler	Provision	Fishmonger	1	1	27	53	52	35	169

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
115.	Victualler	Provision	Fowler	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
116.	Victualler	Provision	Fruiter	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
117.	Victualler	Provision	Grease monger	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
118.	Victualler	Provision	Grocer	0	0	0	2	18	13	33
119.	Service	Provision	Hosteller, herberer	01	0	2	9	14	0	26
120.	Service	Provision	Innkeeper	0	0	0	0	5	41	46
121.	Service	Provision	Malster, malt grinder	0	2	3	1	1	1	8
122.	Service	Provision	Miller, millwright	2	6	30	35	74	65	212
123.	Service	Provision	Meal, Oat- meal maker	0	1	1	3	4	0	9
124.	Victualler	Provision	Poulterer	3	13	1	11	3	0	31
125.	Victualler	Provision	Salter	5	8	0	0	1	1	15
126.	Service	Provision	Sauce-maker	1	13	17	16	1	1	49
127.	Victualler	Provision	Spicer	4	33	50	32	15	3	137
128.	Service	Provision	Taverner	8	59	16	1	0	0	84
129.	Service	Provision	Victualler	0	0	0	1	2	42	45
130.	Service	Provision	Vintner	0	0	6	36	17	12	71
131.	Service	Provision	Waferer	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
132.	Service	Provision	Wine drawer	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL				89	458	521	619	583	587	2,857
TEXTILE										
133.	Artisan	Textile	Arras maker	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
134.	Misc	Textile	Botoner, buttoner	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
135.	Clothing	Textile	Cap maker, capper	0	0	13	13	36	32	94
136.	Clothing	Textile	Cape-woman	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
137.	Artisan	Textile	Carder	0	2	1	5	0	0	8
138.	Artisan	Textile	Chaloner	1	6	29	0	0	0	36
139.	Clothing	Textile	Cloth maker	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
140.	Trader	Textile	Cloth seller	0	2	3	0	0	0	5
141.	Clothing	Textile	Clothier	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
142.	Misc	Textile	Coucher	0	0	6	8	2	1	17
143.	Artisan	Textile	Coverlet- weaver	0	0	14	3	3	1	21
144.	Trader	Textile	Draper	0	17	108	63	23	16	227
145.	Artisan	Textile	Dyer	0	25	138	100	79	23	365
146.	Misc	Textile	Embroiderer	0	0	5	4	0	2	11
147.	Artisan	Textile	Freser	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
148.	Artisan	Textile	Fuller, walker	3	5	90	66	73	22	259
149.	Clothing	Textile	Hatter	0	11	7	3	19	7	47
150.	Clothing	Textile	Haubergour	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
151.	Clothing	Textile	Hosier	1	17	7	4	8	19	56
152.	Trader	Textile	Linen draper, merchant	0	2	1	0	0	2	5
153.	Artisan	Textile	Linen weaver	0	0	6	9	14	22	51
154.	Clothing	Textile- Leather	Parmenter	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
155.	Furnishings	Textile	Pavillioner	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
156.	Furnishings	Textile	Quiltmaker	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
157.	Artisan	Textile	Seamstress	0	0	0	8	4	2	14
158.	Misc	Textile	Setter	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
159.	Artisan	Textile	Shearman, shearer	0	2	43	48	46	7	146
160.	Clothing	Textile	Tailor	9	116	393	288	227	198	1231
161.	Clothing	Textile	Tailor-Draper	0	0	0	0	4	3	7
162.	Artisan	Textile	Tapiter	0	0	53	59	51	107	270
163.	Clothing	Textile	Vestment- maker	0	0	1	3	4	9	17
164.	Artisan	Textile	Weaver, wool weaver	0	29	275	200	121	37	662
165.	Artisan	Textile	Woader, waider	21	12	2	0	0	0	35
166.	Trader	Textile	Woad-man, woad seller	0	1	2	2	0	0	5

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
167.	Trader	Textile	Wool man	0	0	4	24	8	1	37
168.	Service	Textile	Wool packer	0	1	11	1	0	0	13
169.	Service	Textile	Wool worker, wool winder	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
170.	Artisan	Textile	Wool-linen weaver	0	0	0	0	9	2	11
	TOTAL	Textile		36	256	1,216	918	734	517	3,677
OTHER ARTISANS										
171.	Artisan	Other	Basketmaker	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
172.	Artisan	Other	Book binder	0	1	1	2	3	2	9
173.	Artisan	Other	Boller, bowl maker	0	3	8	0	0	0	11
174.	Artisan	Other	Bowyer	1	15	58	59	25	17	175
175.	Artisan	Other	Brush maker	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
176.	Artisan	Other	Buckler maker	0	0	3	6	1	0	10
177.	Artisan	Other	Chape maker	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
178.	Artisan	Other	Codam maker	0	0	1	1	2	0	4
179.	Artisan	Other	Fletcher	0	1	26	26	17	16	86
180.	Artisan	Other	Fufster	3	4	8	1	1	0	17
181.	Artisan	Other	Hairster	0	2	7	3	1	3	16
182.	Artisan	Other	Illuminator, luminer	0	1	2	7	3	0	13
183.	Artisan	Other	Last maker	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
184.	Artisan	Other	Mould maker	0	0	3	1	0	0	4
185.	Artisan	Other	Net maker	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
186.	Artisan	Other	Painter, colour-maker	0	10	16	11	15	21	73
187.	Artisan	Other	Pannier maker	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
188.	Artisan	Other	Roper	0	1	1	8	8	7	25
189.	Artisan	Other	Shear grinder	0	1	2	3	1	0	7
190.	Artisan	Other	Slaymaker	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
191.	Artisan	Other	Soapmaker	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
192.	Artisan	Other	Stainer	0	0	1	19	7	0	27
193.	Artisan	Other	Stringer	0	0	7	3	6	0	16
194.	Artisan	Other	Upholsterer	0	0	0	8	1	1	10
PROFESSIONS										
195.	Musician	Other	Harper, harpmaker	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
196.	Musician	Other	Minstrel	0	0	1	1	8	14	24
197.	Musician	Other	Organister, organ maker	0	1	0	2	5	2	10
198.	Musician	Other	Piper	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
199.	Musician	Other	Trumpeter	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
200.	Musician	Other	Wait	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
201.	Professional	Other	Attorney	0	0	2	1	0	1	4
202.	Professional	Other	City Clerks	0	0	0	1	2	5	8
203.	Professional	Other	Clerk	2	29	83	128	43	9	294
204.	Professional	Other	Lawyer	0	0	2	7	0	4	13
205.	Professional	Other	Litteratus, scholar	0	0	0	0	7	13	20
206.	Professional	Other	Notary	0	0	1	0	7	3	11
207.	Professional	Other	Parish Clerk	0	0	0	0	17	14	31
208.	Professional	Other	School master	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
209.	Professional	Other	scriptor, (text) writer	0	0	0	5	13	2	20
210.	Professional	Other	Scrivener, scriptor	0	0	19	6	10	9	44
211.	Ecclesiastic	Other	Chapeller clergymen	0	1	0	4	3	2	10
212.	Ecclesiastic	Other	Chaplain	0	1	0	58	61	25	145
213.	Ecclesiastic	Other	Monk, friar, prior	0	0	0	1	6	0	7
SERVICE PROVIDERS										
214.	Fuel & Light	Other	Chandler	0	8	10	17	4	2	41
215.	Fuel & Light	Other	Collier	0	2	2	3	3	0	10

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
216.	Fuel & Light	Other	Wax chandler	0	0	0	0	6	16	22
217.	Health	Other	Barber	0	17	27	63	50	36	193
218.	Health	Other	Barber-Surgeon	0	0	0	3	2	4	9
219.	Health	Other	Barber-waxchandler	0	0	0	3	3	10	16
220.	Health	Other	Medicus, leech, physician	1	2	7	13	3	4	30
221.	Health	Other	Surgeon	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
222.	Health	Other	Treacler, tooth-drawer	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
223.	Agricultural ist	Other	Husbandman	0	0	0	28	19	1	48
224.	Livestock	Other	Bull man	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
225.	Livestock	Other	Common herd	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
226.	Livestock	Other	Grass man, gresman	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
227.	Livestock	Other	Horse dealer	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
228.	Livestock	Other	Neat-herd	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
229.	Livestock	Other	Styward	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
230.	Service	Other	Ashburner	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
231.	Service	Other	Filer	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
232.	Service	Other	Grinder	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
233.	Service	Other	Messenger	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
234.	Service	Other	Mower	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
235.	Service	Other	Muck drawer	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
236.	Service	Other	Pavier	0	0	4	7	13	1	25
237.	Service	Other	Water leader	0	2	14	14	7	5	42
INDIVIDUALS										
238.	Official	Other	Maunciple	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
239.	Official	Other	Precentor	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
240.	Official	Other	Recorder	0	0	0	1	3	1	5
241.	Official	Other	Wardens, janitors	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
242.	Official	Other	Wardrober	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
243.	Official	Other	Civic esquires	0	0	0	2	5	0	7
244.	Official	Other	Sergeant	0	1	9	14	1	0	25
245.	Official	Other	Toller	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
246.	People	Other	Chuller	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
247.	People	Other	Custos Pecorum	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
248.	People	Other	Foreigners	0	1	1	0	4	0	6
249.	People	Other	Forester	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
250.	People	Other	Gardiner	0	1	4	0	0	0	5
251.	People	Other	King's secretary	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
252.	People	Other	Out rider	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
253.	People	Other	Pardoner	0	0	1	0	5	4	10
254.	People	Other	Parker	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
255.	People	Other	Purcevant	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
256.	People	Other	Purser	0	2	0	0	1	0	3
257.	People	Other	Questor	0	0	5	13	12	2	32
258.	People	Other	Summoner	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
259.	Rank/Status	Other	Yeoman	0	0	0	52	66	0	118
260.	Rank/Status	Other	Esquire	0	0	0	17	3	1	21
261.	Rank/Status	Other	Gentleman	0	0	0	38	45	13	96
262.	Rank/Status	Other	Knight	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
263.	Servant	Other	Butler, valet, man's man	0	0	0	6	1	0	7
264.	Servant	Other	Maid	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
265.	Women	Other	Single woman, spinster	0	0	0	0	4	7	11
266.	Women	Other	Widow	0	0	0	2	5	3	10
	TOTAL	Other Trades		8	123	359	690	546	289	2,015

	Type	Category	Trade	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total
MISCELLANEOUS/UNCERTAIN										
267.	Misc.	Uncertain	Aker	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
268.	Misc.	Uncertain	Bellman	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
269.	Misc.	Uncertain	Biller	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
270.	Misc.	Uncertain	Blekster	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
271.	Misc.	Uncertain	Bocer	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
272.	Misc.	Uncertain	Boundour	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
273.	Misc.	Uncertain	Bourserman	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
274.	Misc.	Uncertain	Buckler player	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
275.	Misc.	Uncertain	Can'	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
276.	Misc.	Uncertain	Cosour	0	5	2	1	0	0	8
277.	Misc.	Uncertain	Counereour	0	0	0	7	1	0	8
278.	Misc.	Uncertain	Couvereour	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
279.	Misc.	Uncertain	Cursor	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
280.	Misc.	Uncertain	Deter	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
281.	Misc.	Uncertain	Furner	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
282.	Misc.	Uncertain	Getour	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
283.	Misc.	Uncertain	Gourder	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
284.	Misc.	Uncertain	Gyterner	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
285.	Misc.	Uncertain	Herc'	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
286.	Misc.	Uncertain	Houner	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
287.	Misc.	Uncertain	Keller	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
288.	Misc.	Uncertain	Lacer	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
289.	Misc.	Uncertain	Laud	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
290.	Misc.	Uncertain	Lyner	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
291.	Misc.	Uncertain	Maler	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
292.	Misc.	Uncertain	Motle maker	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
293.	Misc.	Uncertain	Numailer	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
294.	Misc.	Uncertain	Oblet maker	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
295.	Misc.	Uncertain	Parkendyn maker	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
296.	Misc.	Uncertain	Patelerer	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
297.	Misc.	Uncertain	Rouler	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
298.	Misc.	Uncertain	Segerstane	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
299.	Misc.	Uncertain	Sekker	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
300.	Misc.	Uncertain	Sponer	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
301.	Misc.	Uncertain	Sproce dresser	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
302.	Misc.	Uncertain	Synyar	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
303.	Misc.	Uncertain	Thrawer	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
304.	Misc.	Uncertain	Thuneler	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
305.	Misc.	Uncertain	Tistour	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
306.	Misc.	Uncertain	Wampayn	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
307.	Misc.	Uncertain	Whernbill	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
308.	Misc.	Uncertain	Winter	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	TOTAL	Miscellaneous/Uncertain		1	25	18	17	5	1	67
UNKNOWN TRADE (No Trade Given at Enrolment)				180	596	354	397	54	37	1,618
Source: F. Collins (ed.), <i>The Register of the Freemen of the City of York from the City Records, 1: 1272-1588</i> , Surtees Society, 96 (1897).										

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHICAL REGISTER OF THE COMMUNITY OF MERCERS IN YORK, 1272/3 to 1549

A. COLLECTION OF NOMINAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

i. Prosopography and Nominal Linkage

The method used to collect the nominal and biographical data pertaining to York mercers fits under the umbrella of prosopography, the name given to the study of the common characteristics of groups of people.¹ Elite groups are often the focus of prosopographical studies, for instance those elected to civic office or those appointed successively to positions of authority and responsibility in a religious, secular and royal context.² The usual practice is to collect data about each member of the group including personal attributes such as training, education, occupation and career, and in addition information which pertains to their family, friends and patrons.³ The aim is to reconstruct individual careers or, in some cases, the family group or historical community and, in so doing, to explore the social, economic and political affiliations which structure society.⁴

Collection of this type of data requires tracing 'individuals through or across a set of records' using a process called nominal linkage; that is attempting to link the historical evidence with the names that occur in each source and striving for

¹ Carpenter, 'The Formation of Urban Elites', p. 41; L. Stone, 'Prosopography' in *idem*, *The Past and Present Revisited* (New York, 1987), pp. 45-78.

² Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 143-157; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 5, 334-6; J. B. Freed, 'The Prosopography of Ecclesiastical Elites: Some Methodological Considerations from Salzburg', *Medieval Prosopography*, 9/1 (1988), pp. 33-59 at pp. 38, 40.

³ R. Mathisen, 'Medieval Prosopography and Computers: Theoretical and Methodological Consideration', *Medieval Prosopography*, 9/2 (1988), pp. 73-128 at pp. 73-75; J. M. Bennett, 'Spouses, Siblings and Surnames: Reconstructing Families from Medieval Village Court Rolls', *Journal of British Studies*, 23/1 (1983), pp. 26-46 at pp. 29, 33-4.

⁴ Bennett, 'Spouses, Siblings and Surnames', pp. 31-2; A. Macfarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge, 1977); Carpenter, 'Formation of Urban Elites', p. 41; E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, 'Nominal Record Linkage by Computer and the Logic of Family Reconstitution' in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People in the Past* (London, 1973), pp. 64-102 at p. 68.

confirmation of identity.⁵ Each link represents an event in the life of a person and it is important to 'disentangle single personalities and assign the correct data to the correct individual'.⁶ Needless to say, identification is not based solely on the name, but also on additional information which confirms or negates identity; and this must be collected from sources that are considered reliable and representative.⁷

ii. Selection of Sources and Information Provided

It was felt that a prosopographical study could be carried out for the members of the community of mercers in York; and that it was possible to select reliable and representative sources for nominal linkage. The criterion for selection was that the source provided a dated context, existed as a series of records over a number of years, and contained information about other York residents so that mercers could be isolated for comparative purposes. Four major sources met these requirements:

1. The freemen's register which provides the names of York residents recorded as mercers admitted to the freedom from 1272/3 to 1549 and beyond.
2. Although the freemen's register contains chronological lists of civic officials, this information is supplemented by dated references in other civic records and in title deeds and leases.
3. The accounts and other records pertaining to the York Mercers' Guild, its predecessor the Fraternity of St. Mary and its successor the York Company of Merchant Adventurers.
4. The taxation returns pertaining to the lay subsidies of 1327, 1334 and 1524/5 and the poll taxes of 1377 and 1381.

There were 4 other sources which provided a dated context, but were not as complete or as comprehensive: wills; title deeds; the register of the Corpus Christi Guild; and the customs accounts for Hull. The aim has been to use printed sources when available, as well as the original documents and manuscript copies in archival collections. There are a number of common problems in using manuscript sources including the difficulty of reading the text and the researcher's errors attendant on

⁵ D. Herlihy, 'Problems of Record Linkages in Tuscan Fiscal Records of the Fifteenth Century' in E. Q. Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People in the Past* (London, 1973), pp. 41-46 at p. 47; R. Gorski, 'A Methodological Holy Grail: Nominal Record Linkage in a Medieval Context', *Medieval Prosopography*, 17/2 (1996), pp. 145-179 at pp. 145 note 2, 146; Wrigley and Schofield, 'Nominal Record Linkage by Computer', pp. 64-102.

⁶ Gorski, 'Methodological Holy Grail', p. 151; Bennett, 'Siblings, Spouses and Surnames', pp. 36-41, esp. 37-8; Wrigley and Schofield, 'Nominal Record Linkage by Computer', p. 68.

⁷ Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 336-7, 343-7; Wrigley and Schofield, 'Nominal Record Linkage by Computer', p. 64.

transcription and translation; and there are faded entries, portions cut or nibbled away and sections lost. Parts of the freemen's register had been compiled in the past from earlier documents which presents a range of uncertainties and possibilities of misunderstanding on the part of both compiler and reader. When there are two copies of the same text, these have been consulted to ascertain whether or not different words are significant; and overall a cautious approach has been adopted in order to weigh up the primary source and the evidence as judiciously as possible.

The most comprehensive source was the freemen's register which not only recorded the names of mercers enrolled as freemen but, for several, the names of their fathers, brothers, sons, daughters, masters and apprentices. For the vast majority of mercers under study, the date of freedom was their first recorded occurrence and has been taken to mark the beginning of their working lives. The date of probate of their wills provided a dependable terminal date for a quarter of the mercers under study; otherwise the last dated occurrence has been used to mark the end of their working life. As for the events in their lives, a compilation of information from all the sources provides details about: ancestral home and previous residence; parents and kin; wives, members of the household and children; occupation and occupational shifts; apprentices, masters, patrons, employers and employees; neighbours, friends and enemies; colleagues, customers and suppliers; transport, communication, storage facilities, shops and trading stock; capital assets and wealth; social, civic and commercial activities and positions of responsibility. A methodology was devised to extract, sort and collate this information and is described below; and select information has been collated into a tabular Biographical Register (Table B.2).

iii. Methodology

To carry out a process of nominal linkage 2 assumptions were made: first that 20 years was a reasonable estimate for the length of a working life; and second that the preposition *de* before placename surnames reflected migration from a previous place of residence.⁸ For example Richard de Alverton's ancestral home was Allerton and, as a new freeman in 1291, might still be living and working in York in 1311; or William de Brunne was probably from a place named Burn, but William Brunne's surname was derived from the nickname Brown. Here the surveys of English placenames, British surnames and rural-urban patterns of migrations have been

⁸ Gorski, 'Methodological Holy Grail', pp. 162-3, 170.

invaluable; in particular Ekwall's study of the origins of the names of settlements and placename-surnames; Darby and Versey's gazetteer of Domesday settlements; Reaney's dictionary of surnames; Patten's work on rural-urban patterns of migration; and McClure's methodology for using surnames to track migration.⁹

The first task was to create a chronological list of freemen enrolled as mercers. The second task was to decide on the spelling of surnames so that an alphabetical list could be composed for greater convenience in linking names from one source to another. It was decided to regularise the spelling of forenames and also of surnames; in particular to use modern spellings for placenames such as Brignal for Briggenhale, Dublin for Dyvelyn, Eryholme for Erium, Garriston for Garsten/Gertheston and Scruton for Scruveton. Other changes were to replace 'y' with 'i' (Fynch to Finch); 'ru' to 'ur' (Brunby to Burnby); 'v' to 'u' (Vsburn to Useburn, although Ouseburn would probably be more accurate). 'Feld' was expanded to 'field'; 'flete' altered to 'fleet'; 'ene' shortened to 'n' (Bareneby to Barnby); and 'uo' replaced by 'l' (Houom to Holme). The spelling of some surnames has been retained because it is uncertain which of 2 choices might be more accurate: Brounfield rather than Brownfield or Broomfield; and Derthington (sometimes Darnington) rather than Darlington or Darrington. There are a few anomalies in that Denom, Glaysn and Yarum are not altered to Denham, Glasson and Yarm because these are the spellings used in other studies of York merchants. Despite these changes, it is felt that the surnames can still be recognised from the manuscript or original text; and it is the adjusted spellings used in the Biographical Register below.

The next step was to begin a search for the names of freemen mercers in other sources; and a simple though time-consuming scheme devised whereby each new entry was considered in the light of all previous ones, weighing up the probability of each link. The uncertainty of surnames was a major consideration, but as biographical information accumulated, there was a sense that mercers bore inherited surnames at an earlier date than the population at large and this helped to strengthen

⁹ Ekwall, *English Place-Names*; Ekwall, *Studies on the Population of Medieval London* (Stockholm, 1956); Ekwall, *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*; Darby and Versey, *A Domesday Gazetteer*; Darby, *A New Historical Geography of England*; Reaney, *Dictionary of English Surnames*; Patten, *Rural-Urban Migration in Pre-industrial England*; McClure, 'Surnames from English Placenames', pp. 80-86; McClure, 'Patterns of Migration', pp. 167-182.

or weaken tentative identification.¹⁰ The date of the enrolment as freemen was an essential element in this process, helping to distinguish one generation from the next; but the source and its setting had also to be judged appropriate for an urban-based mercer. Here the other personnel recorded helped to establish the setting; and if several were mercers, this made it likely that the individual in question was also a mercer. This required confirming the identity of the others in a similar backwards and forwards process of weighing up the evidence as likely, probable or improbable.

There were fewer than expected cases of 2 mercers with the same fore- and surname in the same 20-year interval from freedom, give or take 5 years on either side. In most cases the similarity of occupation and name suggested kinship; and when there was a 20-year gap between dates of freedom, a father and son relationship seemed likely. The Biographical Register differentiates mercers with the same names with a superscript number according to date of freedom (John¹ de Barnby, free 1311 and John² de Barnby, free 1348) and this distinction is also reflected in the sequential numbering of the entries (John¹ de Barnby's number is 53 and John² is 54).

iv. The Community of Mercers: Mercers and Mercer-Associates

In the process of tracing mercers from the date of entry in the freemen's register through other sources, it became clear that the majority retained their occupational description of mercer throughout their working life. However a sizeable proportion were described in other sources as merchant, draper or chapman; and a few drapers and chapmen became known as mercers. It also became clear that in the sixteenth century haberdashers admitted to the Mercers' Guild assumed the places previously held by mercers. It was at this point that the focus of the thesis expanded from mercers to the community of mercers which encompassed several types of mercer-like occupations.

It was recognised that the commercial activities of mercantile occupations would overlap at times but, according to evidence of social standing and occupational hierarchy, there were distinctions based on notions of prestige and wealth. Therefore throughout this thesis the mercer has been treated as a separate occupation with a distinct commercial role as a retail shopkeeper of mercery; the merchant is assumed

¹⁰ Bennett, 'Siblings, Spouses and Surnames', pp. 28-9; Gorski, 'Methodological Holy Grail', pp. 150-1, 166-7; Carpenter, 'Formation of Urban Elites', pp. 293-4.

to have concentrated on wholesale, long distance trade; and the chapman is thought to have had a mostly itinerant lifestyle. Therefore a scheme was devised to look more closely at the community of mercers in York; and it was felt that there were two main groups: (1) **mercers** enrolled as such in the freemen's register; and (2) **merc**er-associates or those known at some point in their working life as mercers. The latter included several sub-groups: freemen not given a trade when enrolled; individuals not enrolled as freemen, but known as mercers from other sources; merchant freemen known later as mercers; other freemen known later as mercers; chapmen known sometimes as mercers; chapmen recorded in taxation returns; haberdashers admitted to the Mercers' Guild; and others closely associated with mercers.

The original search turned up 963 members of the community of mercers in York from the inception of the freemen's register in 1272/3 up to 1529; and it was decided to add in 5 mercers free between 1530 and 1549. Table B.1 shows numerically the changing composition of the community over time with **Mercers** counted according to date of freedom and **merc**er-associates by the date of first occurrence.

TABLE B.1
COMPOSITION OF THE YORK COMMUNITY OF MERCERS, 1272/3 to 1549:
MERCERS AND MERCER-ASSOCIATES

CATEGORIES	to 1299	to 1349	to 1399	to 1449	to 1499	to 1549	Total	sub Total
MERCERS								
A – mercers enrolled in freemen’s register	22	137	283	149	43	16	650	756
B – mercers, freemen later known as merchants	0	8	39	33	5	1	86	
C – mercers, freemen later known as drapers, innkeepers, chapmen, vintners, etc.	1	2	11	4	2	0	20	
MERCER-ASSOCIATES								
D – no trade given as freemen, but known as mercers from other sources	3	12	16	17	2	1	51	212
E – not enrolled as freemen, but known as mercers from other sources	1	12	24	5	3	0	45	
F – merchants, freemen known later as mercers	0	1	8	8	10	1	28	
G – other freemen known later as mercers	0	4	7	3	1	0	15	
H – chapmen known sometimes as mercers	0	2	9	6	5	0	22	
I – chapmen recorded in taxation returns	0	4	20	6	2	2	34	
J - haberdashers admitted to Mercers’ Guild	0	1	0	0	3	9	13	
K – others closely associated with mercers	0	2	1	0	1	0	4	
TOTAL	27	185	418	231	77	30	968	
The Biographical Register is arranged in alphabetical order with each of the above given a number between 1 and 968. Subsequently a few other mercer-associates have been identified, and these are slotted into the alphabetical order.								

The various subgroups within the community of mercers provide a base for carrying out various comparisons; for example in their relative wealth, social standing and the extent of commercial enterprise. Shifts in occupation between fathers and sons were

a means of assessing parental social aspirations; and shifts within their working lives
a means to look closer at underlying economic conditions.

In compiling individual chronologies of first and last date of occurrence in the records, it has been possible to estimate the length of their working lives: 40% occur once; 16% from 1-10 years; 15% from 11-20 years; 11% for 21-30 years; 10% for 31-40 years; 5% for over 40-50 years and 2% for more than 50 years.¹¹ In other words, out of 968 members of the community of mercers, 577 or 60% can be traced from one to over 50 years from their date of first occurrence. For 31% their working life span of one to 20 years agrees with the original estimate; another 21% occur in records from 20 to 40 years; and a good 7% for between 40 to about 55 years. This surprising longevity of some mercers meant that earlier tentative identifications had to be reassessed in light of the possibility that two mercers bore this name at that time. However, age and authority were characteristic of urban elites, and as aldermen were appointed for life, a mercer in holding this rank was likely to be elderly, so confirming identity. Although it became apparent that it would be difficult to discuss the typical or average mercer, it was hoped that scrutiny of the evidence would provide a better idea of the different livelihoods which might be encompassed by the designation mercer.

Having created an alphabetical list and obtained a first and last date, it was possible to devise a Biographical Register of the members of the community of mercers in York from 1272/3 to 1549; and each entry was given a number from 1 to 968. Although care was taken during the process of nominal linkage to confirm the identity of members of the community of mercers, uncertainties remain. Moreover since the Biographical Register was devised several more mercer-associates have been identified; and their names are slotted into the alphabetical order but without a number. Therefore the Biographical Register should be considered a preliminary record of some of the basic information about members of the community of mercers in York; and it is intended to publish in the future short biographical profiles.

¹¹ Carpenter, 'Formation of Urban Elites', p. 294; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 1, 155-8, 168-9; H. C. Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry in Late Medieval York' (unpublished DPhil (History), University of York, 1981), pp. 405-12; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 70-72.

B. NOTES FOR USING THE BIOGRAPHICAL REGISTER

The Register is an alphabetical and numbered list of members of the community of mercers from 1 to 968; and there are a few late entries slotted in without a number.

i. The Table Headings

PERSONAL

Surname (s)	The placename or other surname borne by members of the community of mercers, without the preposition <i>de</i> or <i>del</i> except in the 2 nd element of double locatives; and any alternative name is placed in brackets.
Name	The first or Christian name.

TRADE & FREEDOM

Trade	The primary trade when enrolled as a freeman (or at first documented occurrence), including the absence of such a designation (no trade); separated by a hyphen (-) from a later occupational designation.
Date	The date of enrolment in the freemen's register or the first documented occurrence.
FR pg	The page number in the first printed volume of the freemen's register [see sources below].
Other	The method of qualification for freedom: by patrimony or <i>per patres</i> , abbreviated <i>pp</i> with pp S signifying the son and pp F the father; and by apprenticeship or <i>per servitude</i> , abbreviated <i>pser</i> with app signifying the apprentice and master, the master. Also included is a note of whether they were an apprentice or master.

HOUSEHOLD

Wife	The name of the wife or wives in chronological order
Family	A summary of the family members for which some information is known: father, mother, siblings, bro (brother), sister, son, dau (daughter), childrn [<i>sic</i>] (children), step-s or step-d (step son or daughter), and kin.

TAXATION

Date	The date of the tallage (1303), lay subsidies (1327, 1332, 1524/5) and the poll taxes (1377, 1381).
Source	The printed versions edited by Brown, Parker, Stell and Hawkyard, Fenwick and Peacock [see below in sources].

GUILDS

Guild	The Fraternity of St. Mary (1357-c.1371), the Corpus Christi Guild (from 1408); and the York Mercers' Guild (from 1420).
Date	The first date of association or membership.

CIVIC OFFICE

Cham	The year of office when chamberlain (coinciding more or less with the modern calendar year)
Bail/Sh	The year of office as bailiff (until 1396) and as sheriff from then on, both offices overlapping two calendar years from Michaelmas
Mayor	The year of office as mayor coinciding with the calendar year

WILL

Archive	Borthwick Institute, University of York (BIPR); York Minster Library Archives (YML); the Cartulary of the York Company of Merchant Adventurers (YMAA); civic records (YMB, 3); and the printed volumes of <i>Testamenta Eboracensia</i> (TE, 1-5).
Reg. & Folio	The Borthwick Institute Probate Registers numbered sequentially from 1-13; and the YML, probate registers 2/4 and 2/5 are cited here as ‘1’ or ‘2’.
Last Date	The date of probate of the will or the last date of occurrence in the sources searched.

ii. Sources

FR	F. Collins (ed.), <i>Register of the Freemen of the City of York from the City Records</i> , 1: 1272-1588 Surtees Society, 96 (1897)
Brown	W. Brown (ed.), <i>Yorkshire Lay Subsidy Being a Fifteenth, Collected 30 Edward I (1301)</i> , YASRS, 21 (1897), pp. 1-117
Parker	J. W. R. Parker (ed.), ‘Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1 Edward III’ in <i>Miscellanea</i> 2, YASRS, 74 (1929), pp. 104-171 at pp. 160-171 (City of York).
Stell	P. M. Stell and A. Hawkyard (eds.), ‘The Lay Subsidy of 1334 [1332] for York’, <i>York Historian</i> , 13 (1996), pp. 2-14.
Fenwick	C. C. Fenwick (ed.), <i>The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. 3: Wiltshire-Yorkshire, etc.</i> , Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 37 (2005), pp. 133-4, 135-140.
Peacock	E. Peacock (ed.), ‘Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty’, <i>YAJ</i> , 4 (1877), pp. 170-201.
CCG	R. Skaife (ed.), <i>The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi in the City of York, etc.</i> , Surtees Society, 57 (1872).
Mercers’	L. R. Wheatley, ‘The York Mercers’ Guild, 1420-1502: Origins, Organisation and Ordinances’ (unpublished MA Thesis (History), University of York, 1993), Appendix (Biographical Register). A List of Members 1420-1581 is forthcoming and will be lodged with the York Company of Merchant Adventurers.
St. Mary	A membership list of the Fraternity of St. Mary is forthcoming; and will be lodged with the York Company of Merchant Adventurers..
Civic Office	The most easily accessible source for civic officials remains: York City Supplemental Year Book, 1928 and the manuscript volumes of R. H. Skaife, ‘Civic Officials of York and Parliamentary Representatives’, lodged in York City Archives.

TABLE B.2

ALPHABETICAL AND NUMBERED REGISTER OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY OF MERCERS IN YORK, 1272/3 to 1549

PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date					
1. Acle	Roger	merc	1358	52												1358
2. Adlingfleet	Adam	merc	1366	63												1366
3. Agland	William	merc-merchant	1371	68	app							1381/2				1405
4. Alan	William	merc	1485	209	pser app	wife	father, son	1484		Mercers'						1488
5. Allerton	John	merc	1393	92												1393
6. Allerton	Richard ¹	merc	1291	5		Beatrice, Dionisia, Agnes	son?	1303 1327 1332	Brown,119 Parker, 169 Stell, 13			1307/8				1344
7. Allerton	Richard ²	merc	1351	44			father?					1362				1362
8. Allerton	Richard ³	chapman	1351	44												1351
9. Allerton	Robert	merc	1391	89												1391
10. Allerton	Thomas	merc	1395	95												1395
11. Aline	Ellen	chap-woman	1446	186	pp D											1446
12. Alnwick	Richard	merc	1396	97												1396
13. Alnwick	Robert	merc	1364	57												1364
14. Amias	William	chapman	1381					1381	Fenwick, 148							1381
15. Ampleforth	John	merc	1390	88												1390
16. Ampleforth	William	merc	1389	86												1389
17. Appleby	Thomas	chapman	1376	74												1376
18. Appleby	William	merc	1347	40		Ellen Alice, Agnes	son step-s	1381	Fenwick, 148	St. Mary	1357	1358		BIPR	1:3	1390
19. Appleton	John ¹	chapman	1365	61												1365
20. Applelton	John, ² jr	merc	1374	71	pp F, Master	Alice, Joan	son	1381	Fenwick, 148			1383	1385/6	BIPR	3:256	1406
21. Arkenden	Robert	merc	1310	12												1310

TABLE B.2

PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
22. Armorer	Thomas	merc	1437	151		Alice				CCG Mercers'	1441 1442						1357
23. Arnald	Benedict	merchant-merc	1386	83	pp F		son										1386
24. Arnald	Gilbert	merc not in FR	1300				son	1319 1327	Willard, 76 Parker, 165			1300	1302/3				1327
25. Arnald	John	merc not in FR	1331				father										1355
26. Arume	Miles	vestment-maker	1464	183		Margaret Dionisia	dau								YML	2:27	1500
27. Asby	John	merc-merchant	1439	154		Isabel	sons, dau			CCG, Mercers	1440 1440				BIPR	2:396	1459
28. Ase	Richard	merc	1421	131	pp S	Katherine	father			CCG	1447						1447
29. Asgardby	Thomas	merc	1394	93													1394
30. Askelby	William	merc	1341	35													1341
31. Askham	William	merc	1369	66		Emma		1381	Fenwick, 153	St. Mary	1357				YML	1:96	1390
32. Astynby	William	merc	1413	118													1413
33. Aton	John	merc	1393	92													1393
34. Aton	Roger	merc	1350	44			son										1407
35. Aton in Cleveland	Robert	merc	1389	87													1389
36. Aton	Thomas ¹	merc-merchant	1401	104	pp F, app	Eliz	master father sons dau			Mercers'	1420	1410	1421/2		BIPR	2:623	1432
37. Attewater, de Ebor	William	merc	1334	29		Mariota		1332	Stell, 11								1349
38. Atwick	John	chapman-merchant	1365	61		Ellen		1381	Fenwick, 148								1381
39. Auckland	William	merc	1354	49				1377	Fenwick, 138	St. Mary	1357						1377
40. Aughton	John	merc	1369	67													1369
41. Aycliff	William	merc	1359	96													1359

TABLE B.2

PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD			TAXATION		GUILD		Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	WILL
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date						
42.	Bailey, de Malton	merc	1356	50													1356
43.	Bainton	merc	1343	36													1343
44.	Bainton	merc	1376	74				1377	Fenwick, 136								1377
45.	Bamburgh	merc	1352	47													1352
46.	Bampton	chapman-merchant	1362	56		Agnes		1381	Fenwick, 156								1381
47.	Barleby	merc	1391	89													1391
48.	Barley	merc	1332	27													1332
49.	Barley	merc	1326	23													
50.	Barley	merc	1391	89													1391
51.	Barley	merc	1432	145		Joan Agnes Alice				CCG	1437 1440 1438	1448	1450/1		BIPR	4:189	1467
52.	Barnby	merc	1301	8													1309
53.	Barnby	merc	1311	14				1303 1327 1332	Brown, 120 Parket, 163 Stell, 8								1334
54.	Barnby	merc	1348	40		Isabel				St. Mary	1357						1398
55.	Barnby	merc	1277	3													1277
56.	Barnby	merc	1328	24			father	1327 1332	Parker, 168 Stell, 7								1384
57.	Barnby	merc	1393	92													1393
58.	Barnby of Petergate	merc	1283	4		Mary	sons										1305
59.	Barnby	merc	1383														1383
60.	Barnby	merc-merchant	1350	43		Agnes, Joan	Fathers on					1396			YML	1:150	1409
61.	Barningham, ?Birmingham	merc	1399	102													1399

TABLE B.2

PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL			
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
62. Barton	Philip	merc	1334	28	pser app												1334
63. Barton	Roger	merc	1385	82	pp F		son										1401
64. Barton	Thomas	merc	1440	155						Mercers'	1443						1458
65. Barton	William ¹	no trade- ?merc	1413	119	pp S		father					1432					1432
66. Barton	William ²	chapman- haberdash	1504	228													1504
67. Beauchamp	John	merc	1430	143													1430
68. Bedale, de Richmond	John	no trade merc- merchant	1391	90		Agnes	sons, daus					1401	1404/5	1419			1420
69. Bedale	Nicholas	chapman/ merchant	1443	161	pp S		father										1443
70. Bedale	William	merchant- merc	1403	107	pp F (2x)	wife Alice	sons daus			CCG Mercers'	1423 1420				BIPR	3:495	1437
71. Belle	William ¹	no trade- ?merc	1317	17		Alice	father	1327	Parker, 166								1327
72. Belle	William ²	merc	1335	29			bro son?			St. Mary	1357	1348	1349 /50				1350
73. Bellesis	Richard	merc	1373	70													1373
74. Bennetson	John	merc not in FR	1357			Agnes				St. Mary	1357						1371
75. Bennetson or Marshall	William	merc not in FR	1357			Matilda				St. Mary	1357						1371
76. Bennington	Robert	merc	1374	72													1374
77. Benson	John	merc	1499	223		Joan				Mercers'	1500						1508
78. Bentley	Robert	merc	1383	80													1383
79. Benton	Robert	merc	1372	69													1372
80. Bergh	John	merc	1393	92		Ellen											1407
81. Berridge	Thomas	chapman	1465	185		Joan				Mercers'	1463						1465

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
82.	Bessingby	John, sr	merc- merchant	1393	92		Margaret	son					1410					1422
83.	Bessingby	John, jr	merc	1412	116													1422
84.	Beverley	Henry	spicer- merc	1392			Eve*											1394
85.	Beverley	John ¹	merc	1300	8			son										1300
86.	Beverley	John ²	no trade- merc	1302	9	pp S (2x)	Ellen ?Alice	father son	1327	Parker, 167				1313 /14				1343
87.	Beverley	John ³	merc not in FR	1329				father sister	1332	Stell, 11								1343
88.	Beverley	John ⁴	taylor- draper	1351	45		Agnes	son			St. Mary	1357	1371	1372/3		YML	1:118	1398
89.	Beverley	John ⁵	merc not in FR	1357			Joan Margaret	Sons	1381	Fenwick, 150						BIPR	1:72	1394
90.	Beverley	John ⁶	merc	1425	136	pp F		father son			CCG	1435						1435
91.	Beverley	John ⁷	merc- merchant	1427	140	pp S	Alice, Agnes Ellen	father			CCG	1435						1435
92.	Beverley	John ⁸	merchant- merc	1477	200	pp S	Katherine Anne				Mercers'	1481						1486
93.	Bielby	Adam	merc not in FR	1362	56													1362
94.	Bielby	John ¹	merc	1362	56		Joan Alice	father	1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 150	St. Mary	1357				YML	1:87	1386
95.	Bielby	John ²	cutler- merc	1387	63													1386
96.	Bielby	Robert	merc	1368	66													1390
97.	Bielby	William	merc	1348	40		Alice	son?	1332	Stell, 11								1368
98.	Billingham	Richard ¹	no trade- merc	1410	113		Alice* Ellen	sons								BIPR	3:451	1436
99.	Billingham	Richard ²	merc not in FR	1436			Katherine	father								BIPR	3:459	1436

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
100.	Birkhead	John	no trade-merchant-merc	1480	202	pp S, pp F	Katherine	bro, son dau			CCG Mercers'	1489 1480	1492	1498/9	1507	BIPR	6:57	1508
101.	Birkhead	Nicholas	no trade-merc	1507	231	pp S												1507
102.	Birkin	Thomas	merc	1377	74		Agnes Margaret		1381	Fenwick, 143								1407
103.	Birkland	John	merc	1310	12													1310
104.	[duplicate]																	
105.	Birtbeck	George	merc	1465	184		Margaret	bro steps stepd			Mercers'	1462				BIPR	4:158	1471
106.	Birbeck	Robert	merc	1472	192						Mercers'	1473						1476
107.	Bishop	Richard	carpenter-merc	1468	187	pp F										TE 4	no.98 pp. 191-3	1500
108.	Bishopton	John	chapman	1332					1332	Stell, 7								1332
109.	Blackburn	Edmund	merc	1411	114													1411
110.	Blackburn	Laurence	merc	1374	71													1374
111.	Blackburn	Nicholas	merc	1378	75													1378
112.	Blackburn, de Richmond	Nicholas, sr	merc-merchant	1397	98	pp F (2-3x)	Margaret	sons, daus, s-son,							1412	BIPR	2:605	1432
113.	Blackburn	Thomas	merc	1371	68													1371
114.	Blades	James	haberdash-draper	1507	230		Alice		1524	Peacock, 178	Mercers'	1507	1515	1523/4				1531
115.	Blake	Richard	linen draper	1324	29				1327 1332	Parker, 160 Stell, 5								1334
116.	Blaufont	William	no trade-merc	1420	129		Isabel	son			CCG Mercers'	1428 1420				BIPR	2:157	1447
117.	Blyth	Richard	merc	1366	63													1366
118.	Bolton	John, sr	merc-merchant	1352	47		Agnes, Margaret	sons dau	1381	Fenwick, 152	St. Mary	1357	1380			BIPR	1:83	1395

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
119.	Bolton	John, jr	mercier-merchant	1374	72	pp F (2x)	Joan	sons					1384	1386/7	1410			1424
120.	Bolton	Richard	mercier	1329	25													1329
121.	Bolton	Robert	mercier	1338	32													1338
122.	Booth	Christopher	mercier-merchant	1432	145	pp F	Agnes Alice	son			Mercers'	1432	1454	1459 /60		BIPR	4:131	1467
123.	Booth	Richard ¹	merchant-mercier	1445	163						Mercers'	1443						1453
124.	Booth	Richard ²	mercier	1517	240													1517
125.	Boram	Roger	mercier	1345	38													1345
126.	Boro'bridge	Robert	mercier	1342	36						St. Mary	1357						1371
127.	Borrowby	John	mercier	1381			Sibela		1381	Fenwick, 150								1381
128.	Bosswell	John ¹	merchant-mercier	1403	107											BIPR	3:123 7223	1404
129.	Bosswell	John ²	mercier	1457	176						Mercers'	1461				BIPR ?Gdan	4:135	1469
130.	Bowes	John ¹	mercier	1342	36													1342
131.	Bowes	John ²	mercier	1391	90													1391
132.	Bowland	John	mercier	1421	130		Isabel	dau								BIPR	2:570	1429
133.	Boynnton	Adam	mercier not in FR	1357							St. Mary	1357						1369
134.	Bracebrigg	John	mercier	1424	135	pp S	Julliana	father bros										1437
135.	Bracebrigg	Robert	mercier	1408	111			bro										1437
136.	Bracebrigg	Thomas	weaver-mercier-merchant	1393	93	Pp F	Isabel Ivetta	bro sons dau					1412	1416/17	1424	BIPR	3:487	1437
137.	Bramley	William	mercier	1415	122													1415
138.	Brandsby	William	mercier	1423	134	pp S		father son?			CCG	1426						1426
139.	Brereton	Thomas ¹	mercier-merchant	1397	98		Alice	dau					1420			BIPR	2:573	1429

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
140. Brereton	Thomas ²	merc-merchant	1435	149	pp S	Agnes	father bro			CCG Mercers'	1435 1443				BIPR	2:279	1453
141. Bred	William	merc	1296	6													1296
142. Bridd	John	merc	1408	111													1408
143. Bridford	William	merc	1384	81													1384
144. Brigg	Adam	merc-merchant	1364	59	pp F, mas (3x)	Alice Joan	sons? dau sister	1381	Fenwick, 149	CCG obit	1408	1398	1402/3		BIPR	3:109	1404
145. Brigg	William	merc	1409	112		Joan				CCG	1409						1409
146. Brignall	Richard ¹	dyer-merc-merchant	1321	19		Katherine		1327 1332	Parker, 167-8 Stell, 11			1329	1329/30				1347
147. Brignall	Richard ²	merc	1338	32		Gillian	father bro son										1376
148. Brignall	Richard ³	merc-gentleman	1381			Marjorie	son?	1381	Fenwick, 153								1400
149. Brignall	Robert	merc	1410	114	pp S		father										1410
150. Brignall	William	merc	1365	62	pp F (2x), master	Joan	sons	1377 1381	Fenwick, 136 Fenwick, 149						BIPR	3:83	1402
151. Bristol	John ¹	chapman-?tailor	1314	15		Margaret Joan	son, dau	1327 1332 1381	Parker, 163 Stell, 9 Fenwick, 148	St. Mary (widow)	1357		1334/5		YMB 3	pp. 17-19	1349
152. Bristol	John ²	merc-merchant	1432	145		Joan	mother			Mercers'	1443				BIPR Gdansk	2:72	1444
153. Brotherton	John	merc	1393	92													1393
154. Brouderer	John	merc	1364	59													
155. Brounfield	William	merc	1450	170	pp S ppF	wife, Joan	son daus, siblings			Mercers'	1458				BIPR	5:30	1482
156. Brown, de Aycliff	John	merc-chapman	1355	49		Matilda		1377 1381	Fenwick, 136 Fenwick, 145								1381
157. Brown	Richard	merc	1485	208						Mercers'							1400

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date	
Brown	Robert	merc	1398	100						Pater-noster	1399						1400	
Brown	Thomas ¹	merc	1334	29	pser A		son	1377	Fenwick, 138			1383					1383	
Brown	Thomas ²	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1441												BIPR	2:25	1441	
Brown, de Kilham	William ¹	merc	1339	34				1332	Stell, 11								1339	
Brown, de Pickering	William ²	merc	1395	95													1395	
Brown	William ³	merc	1411	115		Agnes				CCG	1416						1416	
Bryan	John	merc	1427	139													1431	
Bryan	Thomas	merc	1473	193													1473	
Bubwith	William	merc	1283	4													1283	
Buckden	John	merc	1343	36													1343	
Bucksey	Peter	merc-merchant	1392	91	pp F (3x)	Margaret	sons			CCG & Obit	1414 1432	1408	1411 /12	1426	BIPR	2:612	1429	
Bugthorpe	Adam	no trade-chapman	1334	28	ppS												1376	
Bugthorpe	John	chapman	1327					1327 1332	Parker, 170 Stell, 13								1332	
Bugthorpe	William	chapman	1376			Ellen		1381	Fenwick, 141								1381	
Bulmer	Walter	merc	1321	19				1327	Parker, 163								1327	
Burg	Richard	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1336			wife	dau sisters								YML	1:19	1336	
Burgess, de Tickhill	Richard	merc	1330	26				1332	Stell, 7								1332	
Burn	John	merc	1356	50			bro	1377	Fenwick, 137	St. Mary	1357						1381	
Burn, de Burton	William ¹	merc	1345	38													1345	
Burn	William ²	merc	1346	39		Agnes	Bro	1377 1381	Fenwick, 139 Fenwick, 145	St. Mary	1357						1381	

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
178. Burnley	Christopher	merc	1441	157													1441
179. Burnley	John ¹	merc	1411	115			sons										1411
180. Burnley	John ²	merc	1420	129		Margaret	son			Mercers'	1420						1443
181. Burnley	Thomas	merc	1427				father, son								BIPR	2:511	1427
182. Burthan	Thomas	merc	1423	133						Mercers'	1420						1423
183. Burton	Adam	merc-merchant	1357			Gillian				St. Mary	1357						1398
184. Burton	John	merc-draper	1356	51		Agnes, Emma	7bro	1381	Fenwick, 142						BIPR	1:58	1393
185. Burton	Roger	chapman-merc	1372	69		Joan, Margaret Matilda	sons, dau, step-ss	1381	Fenwick, 148						BIPR	1:55	1393
186. Burton	Simon	chapman	1381			Alice		1381	Fenwick, 151						BIPR	1:31	1391
187. Burton	Thomas	merc	1397	98													1397
188. Burton	William ¹	hosier-draper	1342	35		Ellen				St. Mary	1357	1339	1354/5				1390
189. Burton	William ²	merc	1357	51	pp S	Isabel, Ivetta, Agnes	father, daus	1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 151	St. Mary	1357	1367	1368/9				1409
190. Burton	William ³	no trade-merc	1429	143			father son					1433	1436-7				1437
191. Burton	William ⁴	merc	1454	174		Emma				CCG Mercers'	1451 14						1454
192. Cadwald	John	merc	1283	4													1284
193. Calton	John	merc	1424	134		Cecilia	son?			Mercers'	1420						1460
194. Caperon, de Scotton	John ¹	merc-merchant	1316	16		wife Alice	son	1327 1332	Parker, 171 Stell, 10	St. Mary	1357		1334/5				1371
195. Caperon, de Ripon	John ²	no trade-merc	1341	35	pp S		father										1341

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date	
196.	Caperon	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1357			Isabel	father			St. Mary	1357						1377	
197.	Cardew	merc	1377	75													1377	
198.	Carter	merc	1417	125													1417	
199.	Castlethorpe	merc	1309	12													1309	
200.	Castle	merc	1361	55													1377	
201.	Castle	merc	1422	132	pp S		father										1422	
202.	Catour	merc- merchant	1441	158	pp S; pp F	wife; Margaret	son, dau	1446 1458		CCG Mercers'	1446 1458	1462	1465/6		BIPR	5:467	1495	
203.	Cattall, de Ellerton	merc	1375	73	pp S		father	1357		St. Mary	1357						1375	
204.	Catterick	merc	1425	137	pp S	Joan*	father son dau	1447 1420		CCG Mercers'	1447 1420	1440	1443/4	1453			1459	
205.	Catterick	merc	1440	156			father son?										1461	
206.	Catterick	merc	1429	142	pp S		father								BIPR	3:554	1438	
207.	Catterick	merc	1401	104	pp F (3-4x)	Alice	sons, dau	1420		Mercers'	1420	1429	1430/1		BIPR	3:410	1435	
208.	Catterick	merc	1429	142	pp S	Alice, Agnes	father, dau, sons	1437 1435		CCG Mercers'	1437 1435						1459	
209.	Catton	merc	1344	37													1345	
210.	Causton	merc	1320	19				1303	Brown, 118								1320	
211.	Causton	merc	1313	14													1313	
212.	Causton	merc	1341	35													1341	
213.	Chamber	merc	1395	95													1395	
214.	Chandler, de Malton	merc	1355	49													1355	
215.	Chapman, de Snape	no trade- merc- merchant	1424	134		wife		1437, 1420		CCG Mercers'	1437, 1420						1443	
216.	Cheswick	merc	1428	140				1420		Mercers'	1420						1428	

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
217.	Clay, de Ponte	merc	1323	21													1323
218.	Clayton	merc	1473	193													1473
219.	Cleasby	merc	1376	74													1376
220.	Clerk	merc	1540	260													1540
221.	Clerk, de Acomb	merc	1355	49	pp S		father										1355
222.	Clerkson	merc	1462	182													1462
223.	Cliff	merc	1357	51													1357
224.	Coates	chapman	1381			Beatrice		1381	Fenwick, 156								1381
225.	Coates	merc	1425	136													1425
226.	Coates	merc	1399	102													1399
227.	Coatham ¹	merc	1339	34													1339
228.	Coatham ²	merc	1392	92													1392
229.	Collinson	merc-cutler	1430	143		Elizabeth, Beatrice	bro			CCG CCG	1441 1455						1455
230.	Collinson	merc	1417	125	pp F (3x)	Matilda	sons			CC G Mercers'	1442 1438						1456
231.	Collinson	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1459	179	pp S master		father bro			Mercers'	1459						1459
232.	Collinson	Mercer-clothier	1426	137	app	Isabe;	son?, siblings			CCG Mercers'	1420 1438	1442	1445/6	1457	BIPR	2:378	1458
233.	Collinson	merc	1440	156			father, bros										1440
234.	Collinson	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1479			Alice				CCG	1479						1479
235.	Conning	merc	1469	190													1469
236.	Corbridge	merc	1376	74			father										1376
237.	Cornforth, de Durham	merc	1470	190													1470
238.	Cotterill	no trade	1441	158	pp D		father										1446
239.	Cotterill	no trade-merc	1408	111	pp F	Agnes	son dau										1408

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date	
240.	Cottingham	merc	1347	40													1347	
241.	Cottingham	merc	1337	32													1337	
242.	Couper	chapman- ?merc	1458							Mercers	1458				BIPR	5:113	1477	
243.	Couper	merchant-merc	1352	46						St. Mary	1357		1367/8				1371	
244.	Coupland	merc	1420	128	pp F		son dau										1420	
245.	Coventry	merc	1322	20				1332	Stell, 10								1332	
246.	Crakall	merc	1415	123	pp S		father										1415	
247.	Crakall	merc	1415	123	pp S		father										1415	
248.	Crancwick	merc	1319	18				1327 1332	Parker, 160 Stell, 5								1334	
249.	Crathorne	merc	1381	78			son, bro										1409	
250.	Crayke	merc not in FR	1334					1332	Stell, 11				1340/1				1352	
251.	Crayke	no trade- ?merc	1340	34	pp S		father										1340	
252.	Crayke	merc	1366	63		Agnes	father	1381	Fenwick, 145								1409	
253.	Crayke	no trade-merc	1357	52	pp F		son						1358/9				1383	
254.	Crayke	merc	1368	66	pp S		father										1368	
255.	Crofton	merc	1396	97													1396	
256.	Crome	merc-merchant	1349	41		Eve	son?	1381 Eve	Fenwick, 150	St. Mary	1357	1356	1360/1		YML	1:39	1364	
257.	Croxton	merc	1406	109													1406	
258.	Crull	merc-merchant	1422	132	pp F	Alice				CCG	1449						1449	
259.	Cundale	merc	1425	136													1425	
260.	Cure	haberdash-merc-merchant	1503	228	pser master	wife Beatrice	sons dau step-d	1524	Peacock, 171	CCG Mercers'	1497 1513	1508	1510/1	1511	BIPR	9:264	1523	

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
261.	Curtas	merc	1386	83													1386
262.	Curtas	merc	1400	103													1400
263.	Curtas	merc-merchant	1421	130		Alice	sister daus			CCG Mercers'	1422 1420	1444	1449/50		BIPR	2:438	1461
264.	Curtas	haberdash	1507	231	pp S		father	1524	Peacock, 174								1507
265.	Dale	merc	1386	84													1386
266.	Dalton	merc	1412	115		wife, Beatrice				CCG CCG	1423 1430						1430
267.	Dalton	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1357				bro?			St. Mary	1357						1389
268.	Dalton	merc	1382	79		Agnes Joan	father bro?										1400
269.	Damisel	merc-?cutler	1349	41		Margaret											1386
270.	Danby	merc-chapman	1377	74		wife		1381	Fenwick, 146								1381
271.	Danby	chapman	1371	72		wife		1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 146								1388
272.	Danby	merc	1424	134		Matilda	dau			Mercers'	1442	1438	1439/40	1452	BIPR	2:364	1458
273.	Danby	merc	1393	92	pp F	Alice	son			Mercers' beadle	1432						1433
274.	Danthorpe	merc	1353	47			inlaws, parents			St. Mary	1357						1371
275.	Danton	merc	1326	23				1332	Stell, 7								1334
276.	Darcy	merc	1413	117													1413
277.	Darton	merc	1358	52													1358
278.	Dawson	merc	1467	186		Cecilia, Dionisia	siblings kin			Mercers'	1469	1485	1489/90		YML	2/5: 380	1493
279.	Dawson	merchant-merc	1503	228		Agnes, Katherine	father son daus	1524	Peacock, 177	Mercers'	1503	1516	1517/8		BIPR	11: 403	1539
280.	Dawtre	merc	1423	132													1423

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
281.	Denom	John	mercier-merchant	1433	147	app		sons?			CCG Mercers'	1438 1434						1448
282.	Dent	John	mercier	1392	91											YML	1:124	1400
283.	Denton	John	mercier	1364	59													1364
284.	Denyas	William	mercier	1391	90													1403
285.	Derby	Robert	mercier	1353	48													1353
286.	Dernington	John	mercier not in <i>FR</i>	1357			Matilda		1381	Fenwick, 148	St. Mary	1357	1371	1377/8		BIPR	3:73	1402
287.	Dernington	William	mercier not in <i>FR</i>	1357							St. Mary	1357						1378
288.	Dike	John	merchant-mercier	1366	62		Cecilia, Joan		1381	Fenwick, 150								1391
289.	Dimlington	Walter	mercier	1355	50													1401
290.	Doncaster, de Stretton	John	no trade- ?mercier	1390	88		Margaret											1391
291.	Doncaster	Robert	mercier-merchant	1421	131	pp S	Margaret	father bro son								BIPR	2:610	1432
292.	Doncaster	Thomas ¹	mercier	1377	75	pp F	Alice	bro sister sons	1381	Fenwick, 151	CCG & obit	1426 1431	1397	1399/ 1400		BIPR	2:603	1432
293.	Doncaster	Thomas ²	no trade- ?mercier-merchant	1410	114	pp S	Agnes	father			CCG	1435				BIPR	2:335	1436
294.	Doughty, de Sherburn	Richard	mercier	1353	47													1353
295.	Driffield	John	mercier-merchant	1367	63													1367
296.	Driffield	Thomas ¹	mercier	1344	37						St. Mary	1357						1371
297.	Driffield	Thomas ²	mercier	1361	54													1361
298.	Dring	John	mercier	1452	171		Margaret	master			CCG Mercers'	1455 1458	1465					1465

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
299.	Dubber	John	merc-merchant	1425	136						Mercers' beadle	1446						1446
300.	Dublin	Hen	merc	1361	55													1361
301.	Duffield	John	merc-merchant	1393	92			kin								BIPR	3:35	1400
302.	Duffield	Robert ¹	merc	1308	11				1327 1332	Parker, 163 Stell, 7								1332
303.	Duffield	Robert ²	merc	1314	15													1314
304.	Duffield	Robert ³	?merc-merchant	1375		pp F, master	Ellen, Isabel	sons daus					1375			BIPR	3:2	1398
305.	Duffield	William ¹	merc	1312	14													1312
306.	Duffield	William ²	no trade-merc	1335	30													1367
	Dunnington	Robert	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1401														1401
307.	Dunnington	Thomas ¹	merc	1333	27													1333
308.	Dunnington	Thomas ²	merc	1350	42													1401
309.	Dunnington	William	merc	1349	41						St. Mary	1357						1371
310.	Dunnock	Hugh	merc	1357	51		Agnes	son daus	1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 151	St. Mary	1357	1370	1378/9				1390
311.	Dunnock	John	merc-merchant	1382	79	app	Alice	father son. daus?								BIPR Gdansk	1:2	1389
312.	Dunnock	Robert	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1389				son										1389
313.	Dycon	Thomas	merc	1404	108													1404
314.	Earby	Robert	merc	1362	56													1362
315.	Easby	William ¹	merc	1393	92		Alice											1401
316.	Easby	William ²	merc	1414	120													1417
317.	Easingwold	John	merc-merchant	1414	120	pp F	Joan	mother siblings son			Mercers'	1420	1422	1431/2		BIPR	3:599	1440

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild		Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
318.	Easingwold	William	merc-merchant	1414	120			bro										1420
319.	Eastrington	John	merc	1373	70													1373
320.	Eastrington	Thomas ¹	merc	1328	24				1327	Parker, 169			1340	1342/3				1343
321.	Eastrington	Thomas ²	merc	1374	72		Alice											1405
322.	Eastrington	William ¹	merc	1319	18				1327 1332	Parker, 163 Stell, 6			1329	1332/3				1353
323.	Eastrington	William ²	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1340														1360
324.	Eccup	John	merc	1413	119	app. 1407		master										1413
325.	Eckford	Robert	merc	1408	111													1408
326.	Egton	William	merc	1365	60													1365
327.	Ellerbeck	Robert	merc	1396	97	app		master										1400
328.	Ellerton	Robert	merc	1380	78	pp S		father										1380
329.	Ellingholme	John	merc	1315	15													1315
330.	Elwin	William	merchant- ?merc	1459	178			Siblings								BIPR	5:402	1491
331.	Erghes	Hugh	merc	1349	41		Wife	son			St. Mary	1357						1390
332.	Erghes	John	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1391				father, sisters								BIPR	1:57	1391
333.	Erghes	Richard	merc	1352	47													1352
334.	Emerick	Stephen	merc- merchant	1407	110	bond 1404												1407
335.	Eryholme	John	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1301			Gillian	bro son	1303	Brown, 120						VC	53, p. 31	1308
336.	Eryholme	Martin	merc	1301	7			bro son	1303	Brown, 119								1314
337.	Eryholme	Robert	no trade- ?merc	1309	12		Agnes	son										1343
	Escrick	Adam	no trade- chapman	1349	41													1362

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date					
338. Eserick	John	mercier-merchant	1436	150						CCG	1437					1437
	Eshton	no trade-merchant	1315	16		Emma	son			St. Mary	1357	1341/2				1384
339. Eshton	Roger	mercier	1314	15												1314
	Estoft	tailor-mercier	1331	27				1332	Stell, 6							1334
340. Etton	William	mercier	1419	128												1419
341. Everingham	Thomas	mercier	1399	102												1399
342. Everthorpe	Thomas	mercier	1357	not in			parents			St. Mary	1357					1371
343. Fadmore	John	mercier	1352	46												1352
	Faite, de Corbridge	no trade-?mercier	1359	53			son?									1359
344. Faite	William ²	chapman	1392	90			father son dau									1397
345. Falconer de 'Thimioston'	John	mercier	1344	37												1344
346. Faxfleet	John	mercier	1397	98												1397
347. Featherler	Ad	mercier	1361	54												1361
348. Felton	Richard	mercier	1373	70												1373
349. Fenrother	Robert	mercier-merchant	1401	104										BIPR	2:556	1429
350. Fenton	Robert	mercier	1422	131			kin									1437
351. Fenton	Thomas	mercier-merchant	1393	92			kin							BIPR Gdansk	1:89	1395
352. Fenton	William	mercier	1433	147												1433
353. Fenwick	William	mercier	1408	111			kin									1420
354. Ferriby	Thomas	mercier-chapman	1360	54		Joan		1377	Fenwick, 137							1401
								1381	Fenwick, 146							
355. Ferry	William	mercier	1417	125												1417

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
356.	Fimmer	Adam	chapman	1313	14		Agnes	son	1327	Parker, 162, 170								1329
357.	Fimmer	Richard	merc	1337	32			father?										1337
358.	Finch	Thomas	merc	1469	189	pp S	wife, Lora	father			CCG Mercers'	1470 1471	1480	1484				1504
359.	Fisher	Nicholas	merc-merchant	1476	196		Agnes	sisters dau			CCG Mercers'	1478 1478				BIPR	5:318	1487
360.	FitzRichard	William	merc	1436	150													1436
361.	Fleming	William	merc	1395	95													1428
362.	Fordon	William	merc	1352	46													1352
363.	Forester	Godfrey	merc	1414	119		Alice				CCG	1416						1420
364.	Forester	John	merc	1408	111		Alice				CCG	1446						1446
365.	Forth	John	merc	1429	142		Alice				Mercers'					BI	Adm.	1442
366.	Foston	John	merc	1364	58													1399
367.	Fournier	John	merc	1415	122													1415
368.	Fox, de Cornburgh	William	chapman-taverner	1324	21								1338					1338
369.	Foxgill	Thomas	merc	1545	266	pp S		father								YCR	Adm.	1562
370.	Foxholes	Thomas	merc	1372	69													1372
371.	Frankish	William ¹	no trade-?merc	1346	39		Ellen				St. Mary	1357						1362
372.	Frankish	William ²	merc	1379	76													1392
373.	Freboys	John	merc-merchant	1338	33		Agnes, Emma	mother bros			St. Mary	1356	1351	1352/3		YMB, 3	pp. 46-7	1362
374.	Freeman	William	no trade-merchant-merc	1406	109		wife, Isabel	sister bro sons			CCG Mercers'	1437 1432				BIRP	3:533	1438
375.	Frodesham	Adam	merc	1337	32			son?										1337
376.	Frothingham	Walter	merc	1364	59	pp F	Katherine	son	1381	Fenwick, 145								1396
377.	Fulford	Giles	merc	1283	4													1283
378.	Gafaire	James	merc	1328	24				1332	Stell, 7								1332

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
379. Gamel	Richard	chapman-mercer	1400	103													1400
380. Gamel	William	mercer	1390	89		Elizabeth											1390
381. Gamelton	John	mercer	1328	24				1332	Stell, 7								1332
382. Ganthorpe	John	mercer	1443	161													1443
383. Gardener	Robert	mercer	1417	125													1417
384. Gare	John ¹	mercer	1359	53													1393
385. Gare	John ²	mercer-merchant	1385	82	pp S	Katherine	father								BIPR Calais	1:58	1393
386. Gare	Nicholas	mercer	1350	42													1350
387. Gare	Robert	mercer-merchant	1356	50		Emma	son	1381	Fenwick, 148				1363/4				1391
388.	Gare	mercer-merchant	1385	81	pp S; pp F (2x)	Katherine	father bro sons daus?			CCG & CCG obit	1408 1435		1394/5	1420			1435
389.	Gare	mercer	1343	36	pp F (2x)		sons										1343
390.	Garriston	merchant-mercer	1350	43		Denise	son					1357					1367
391.	Garriston	mercer not in FR	1391		pp F	Alice	father son										1422
	Garriston	no trade-merchant	1428	121	pp S		father										1428
392.	Garstell	mercer	1525	246													1525
393.	Garton	mercer	1393	92													1401
394.	Garton	mercer	1353	48													1353
395.	Garton	mercer-merchant	1392	91													1392
396.	Garton	mercer	1355	49													1401
397.	Gascoigne	mercer	1418	126	pp S		father										1418
398.	Gaunt	mercer	1357	51	pp S		father										1357

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
399. Gaunt, de Duffield	Robert ¹	merc	1351	44	pp F		son										1351
400. Gaunt	Robert ²	merc-merchant	1396	97	app	Agnes, Isabel	Father Dau					1404	1408/9		Drake	p. 321	1407
401. Gaytenby	John	merc	1322	20		Agnes	son dau	1327	Parker, 163						YML	1:16	1334
402. Gaytford	Richard	merc	1412	115													1412
403. Gile(s)	John	merchant-merc	1463	182		Margaret	daus			CCG Mercers'	1482 1467				BIPR	5:332	1487
404. Gilliot	John ¹	merc	1398	101													1398
405. Gilliot	John ² , sr	merc-merchant	1439	153	pp F	Joan, Joan	mother sons dau			CCG Mercers'	1455 1442	1451	1451/3	1464, 1474	BIPR	5:237	1484
406. Gilliot	William	merc-chapman	1444	162	Master	Joan	sister son dau			CCG Mercers'	1449 1443	1457			BIPR	2:447	1471
407. Gisburn	John ¹	merc	1331	26	pp S		father	1332	Stell, 12								1371
408. Gisburn	John ²	merc-merchant	1347	39		Ellen	daus	1381	Fenwick, 153	St. Mary	1357	1353	1357/8	1371-2, 1380	BIPR	1:15	1390
409. Gisburn	William	merc	1357	51						St. Mary	1357						1371
410. Givendale	William	merc	1348	4													1284
411. Glasyn	John	merc-merchant	1436	150		Ellen, Joan	dau			CC G Mercers'	1449 1433	1452	1452/3		BIPR	5:75	1483
412. Glasyn	Thomas	merc	1452	172		wives	sister sons dau			CCG Mercers'	1467 1455	1468	1469/70		BIPR	5:139	1479
413. Godsalue	Henry	merc	1338	33													1338
414. Godson	John	merc not in FR	1400		pp F		son										1400
415. Golding	William	merc	1360	54								1374	1381/2				1382
416. Goldsboro'	Robert	merc	1351	44													1377

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL	
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date	
417.	Goldsmith	Edmund	merc	1466	185		Agnes				CCG Mercers'						1481	
418.	Goldsmith	Robert	merc	1470	189		Margaret, Agnes				CCG Mercers'				BIPR	6:2	1499	
419.	Goodman	Jeremy	merc	1353	48												1353	
420.	Goodman, de Brompton in Hereford	Thomas	merc	1356	50			kin									1362	
421.	Gosford	John	merc	1353	48												1353	
422.	Granby	Henry	merc	1350	43		Alice				St. Mary						1371	
423.	Granby ?Cranby	Hugh	merc not in FR				Julian				St. Mary						1371	
424.	Grantham	John ¹	merc	1357	51		Agnes, Alice	father									1376	
425.	Grantham	John ² , sr	merc-merchant	1359	53	pp S	Isabel	father master daus							BIPR	2:269	1407	
426.	Grantham	John ³ , jr	merc-merchant	1371	69	pp S pp F	Alice	son daus							BIPR London	1:45	1391	
427.	Grantham	Thomas ¹	dyer-?merc	1349	41												1370	
428.	Grantham	Thomas ²	no trade ?merc	1352	46	pp S & pp F (2x)	wife	father									1371	
429.	Grantham	Thomas ³	merc	1392	91	pp S		father									1392	
430.	Grantham	William ¹	merc-merchant	1306					1327 1332	Parker, 167 Stell, 12		1306	1312/13				1332	
431.	Grantham	William ²	merc not in FR	1328			Maud		1332	Stell, 8	St. Mary	1335	1339 /40				1369	
432.	Gray	Robert	merc	1396	96												1396	
433.	Grayhair	Alan	merc	1338	33												1338	
434.	Green	Nicholas	merc	1394	94												1394	
435.	Grisby	John	merc	1370	67												1370	

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
436.	Grissop	Thomas	merchant-chapman	1420	129		Margaret	Dau			CCG Mercers'	1441 1444				YML	2/4:26 0	1446
437.	Gudale	John	merc	1417	125		wife, Ellen	siblings son dau			Mercers'	1432	1441	1443/4		BIPR	2:442	1461
438.	Gudale	William	merc	1314	15													1314
439.	Gunby	John	merchant-chapman	1373	70		Joan		1381	Fenwick, 143								1381
440.	Gutterswick	William	merc	1459	179	app	wife	master			Mercers'	1459	1465					1465
441.	Hackford	Henry	merc	1353	47													1353
442.	Hadlow	John	merc-merchant	1465	185	app	wife, Agnes	master, sons step-s			CCG Mercers'	1470 1463	1479			BIPR	5:310	1487
443.	Hailes	William	merc	1457	176						Mercers'	1458						1359
444.	Haliday	John	merc	1526	248	pp S		father	1524	Peacock, 181	CCG	1527						1527
445.	Haliwell	John	merc not in FR	1381	78	pp S		father dau										1395
446.	Hallbarn	Robert	merc	1402	106													1402
447.	Hallington	Walter	merc	1312	14													1312
448.	Hammerton	Alan	chapman-merchant	1375	73		Isabel	son					1405			BIPR	3:244	1406
449.	Harewood	John	merc	1324	22		wife	son	1332	Stell, 10								1352
450.	Harlsey	Richard	merc	1422	131													1422
451.	Harome	Robert 2	merc-merchant	1352	47	Pser App	Marjorie	master son step-s			St. Mary	1357		1371/2		BIPR	1:48	1392
452.	Harrington	Adam	merc	1422	132													1422
453.	Harrington	John	merc	1417	125													1417
454.	Harrison	Thomas	merc	1525	246													1525
455.	Hassock	Robert	merc	1394	94													1394
456.	Hastings	Robertt	literate-haberdash	1504	228	pp S		father										1505
457.	Hathaway	Richard	merc	1392	91													1392

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
458. Hathelsey	John	no trade- ?merc	1300	8			son					1318	1319/20				1320
459. Hathelsey	William	merc	1335	29	pp F		son										1335
460. Hawkswell	Richard	merc- merchant	1382	82		Alice	?son			CCG	1412						1412
461. Haxby	Henry	no trade- ?merc	1407	110		Joan				CCG Mercers'	1414 1420						1444
462. Haxby	John	merc	1272	1				1303 1327	E179/217/1 Parker, 168								1327
463. Hay	Roger ¹	merc	1374	71													1374
464. Hay	Roger ²	merc	1401	105			kin			CCG	1430						1430
465. Hayne	Robert ¹	merc	1388	86	app		master son?										1407
466. Hayne	Robert ² , jr	merc	1397	98			father?										1422
467. Hedon	William	chapman	1388	86													
468. Helmsley	John ¹	chapman- merc- merchant	1375	73			father kin								YML Dor- drecht	1:76	1384
469. Helmsley	John ²	merc	1397	98								1405					1407
470. Helmsley	John ³	no trade- ?merc	1437	152	pp S		father			Mercers'	1443						1452
471. Helmsley	Thomas	merchant- merc	1354	48		Agnes		1381	Fenwick, 150								1381
472. Heming- brough	John	merc	1337	31						St. Mary	1357						1371
473. Hewick	John	merc	1384	81	pp F		kin son					1396	1397/8				1422
474. Hewick	Thomas	merc	1425	137	pp S		father										1425
475. Hexham	Richard	merc- merchant	1386	83	pp F (2x)		son										1386
476. Hexham	William	merc	1367	64													1367
477. Hilderwell	William	merc	1371	69													1371
478. Hill	John	merc	1393	92													1413

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD			CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date	
479. Hill	William	merc	1386	83													1401	
480. Holbeck	William	merc-merchant	1425	135		wife, Agnes, Margaret	sons dau			CCG Mercers'	1429 1420	1435	1439/40	1449, 1458, 1470 -1	BIPR	5:22	1477	
481. Holgate	Nicholas	merchant-merc	1430	143	pp S, pp F	Agns* Alice*	father			CCG Mercers'	1446 1440	1445	1448/9	1459			1474	
482. Holgate	William	merc	1308	12													1308	
483. Holland	Nic	merc	1335	29													1335	
484. Holland	Thomas	merc	1381	78													1381	
485. Holthwaite	Richard	merc	1349	41	pp S		father										1349	
486. Holme	Edward	merc	1523	245													1523	
487. Holme	Godfrey	chapman	1373	70		Joan		1381	Fenwick, 145								1381	
488. Holme	John	merc	1368	64	pp F (2x)		son								BIPR	1:82	1392	
489. Holme	Ralph	merc	1371	68													1388	
490. Holme	Robert ¹ , sr	merc-merchant	1347	40	master xx	Katherine, Marjorie, (Beatrice)	bro son					1353	1355/6	1368	BIPR	1:100	1396	
	Robert ² , jr	no trade-merchant	1395	95	master	Agnes, Joan, Margaret	son dau						1398/9	1413	BIRP	3:365	1433	
491. Holme	Thomas ¹	merc-merchant	1354	49		Mary, Katherine	bro kin	1381	Fenwick, 140				1366/7	1374	BIPR	3:254	1406	
492. Holme, de Beverley	Thomas ²	merc	1374	72	app		father, master son?										1396	
493. Holme	Thomas ³	merc-merchant	1399	102	pp S		father										1430	
494. Holme	William ¹	merc	1351	44		Annabel?				St. Mary	1357						1371	
495. Holme	William ²	merc	1361	55													1361	
496. Holme	William ³	merc	1387	85	pp F		?father ?sons										1387	

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
497. Holme	William ⁴	merchant-merc	1433	147	Emma, Alice	father sons			CCG	1431				BIPR	2:25	1441
498. Holtby	Robert	merc	1415	123	Agnes	sons dau			Mercers'	1420				BIPR	3:542	1438
499. Holtby	William	merc	1334	29												1334
500. Hopkinson, de Kirmington, Lincoln	John	chapman-?merc	1470	190	Joan				CCG Mercers'	1482 1497						1504
501. Hornby	Adam	merc	1427	139		father										1427
502. Hornby	Thomas ¹ , jr	no trade-?merc	1398	100		sons daus										1398
503. Hornby	Thomas ²	merc	1408	111	Marjorie	father								BIPR	2:506	1426
504. Hovingham	Roger	merc-merchant	1350		Gillian, Agnes	sons dau						1351/2	1365			1371
505. Hovingham	William	merc	1318	17				Parker, 163 Stell, 7				1344/5 ?1345/6				1346
506. Howden	John	merc-merchant	1364	59	Gillian	son dau	1381	Fenwick, 144				1374/5	1386/7			1406
507. Howsham	John	merc	1343	37												1343
508. Hudson	Thomas	merc	1455	174												1455
509. Huggate	William ¹	merc-chapman	1374	72		master	1381	Fenwick, 150								1400
510. Huggate, de Stamford Bridge	William ²	no trade-?merc	1393	92	Agnes											1409
511. Hughlot, de Doncaster	William	merc	1347	39												1347
512. Humbercolt	William	merc	1357	51	Katherine	son			St. Mary	1357						1399
513. Hunmanby	William	merc	1343	36												1343
514. Hurlock	Hugh	gentleman-?merc	1437	151					Mercers'	1438						1446
515. Hutton	John ¹	merc	1353	47			1377	Fenwick, 139								1377

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
516. Hutton	John ²	merchant-merc	1472	175		Annabel, Margaret				CCG Mercers'	1467 1474				BIPR	5:105	1481
517. Hutton	Roger	merc	1299	7													1299
518. Hutton	William	merc	1367	63				1377	Fenwick, 136								1377
519. Ince	John ¹	merc	1414	120			?kin										1414
520. Ince	John ² , sr	merc-merchant	1436	150		wife Joan	sibling kin step-d			CCG Mercers'	1437 1437	1448	1455/6		BIPR	5:308	1487
521. Ince	John ³ , jr	merc-merchant	1448	168		Margaret	step-d			Mercers'	1455						1461
522. Ingolf	Thomas	merc	1392	90													1392
523. Ireland	Adam	haberdash-cutler	1335	30				1377	Fenwick, 139								1377
524. Irish	Henry	Chapman	1386	83													1386
525. Ironside, de Ottley	John	merc	1334	29													1334
526. Jackson, de Northallerton	John	merc	1501	225		wife									BIPR	6:139	1506
527. Jackson	William ¹	merc-merchant	1469	188		wife, Elizabeth, Joan	son daus			CCG Mercers'	1470 1469				BIPR	6:74	1504
528. Jackson, de Leeds	William ²	merc	1472	193		Alice				CCG	1473						1473
529. James	Robert	merc	1515	238						CCG Mercers'	1518 1513						1523
530. Johnson	John	merc-hardware man	1499	223		wife, Joan	mother daus			CCG Mercers'	1512 1499				BIPR	9:82	1519
531. Jolifberd	Ralph	merc	1315	15													1315
532. Jopson	Miles	chapman-?merc	1469	189		wife, Alice				CCG Mercers'	1470 1474						1490
533. Kay	Simon	merc	1355	49													1355
534. Kelfield	Robert	chapman	1366	62				1381	Fenwick, 152								1381

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
535.	Kelloe	Henry	merc	1436	150													1436
536.	Kendal	Peter	merc	1426	150													1426
537.	Kent	Thomas	merc	1391	90	app		master kin								BIPR	2:4	1397
538.	Keswick	Bertram	merc	1352	46													1352
539.	Kilham	Alan	merc	1323	21		Maud	father master sister dau	1327 1332	Parker,163 Stell, 11								1332
540.	Kilham	John	merc	1350	43													1350
541.	Kilham	Peter	merc	1338	32													1338
542.	Kilham, del Wald	Robert	merc	1381	78													1381
543.	Kilham	Stephen	merc	1323	21				1327	Parker, 171			1335					1342
544.	Kilham	Thomas	merc	1336	31			kin?										1361
545.	Killing	John	merc	1355	50													
546.	Killingbeck	Richard	merc	1425	136	master	Joan, Katherine	app			Mercers'	1420				BIPR	2:150	1447
547.	Killingwick, de Holme	Robert	merc	1361	54													1361
548.	Killingwick	William	merc	1359	53		Agnes											1359
549.	Kilpin	Thomas	merc	1350	42		Ellen?	kin?			St. Mary	1357	1363					1369
550.	Kirk	John ¹	merc-merchant	1430	144	pp S	Margaret	father bros			Mercers'	1437				BIPR	2:482	1463
551.	Kirk	John ²	merc	1471	191		Margaret	son			CCG Mercers'	1471 1474						1480
552.	Kirk	Nicholas	merc	1441	159	pp S		father bros			CCG Mercers'	1445 1451						1476
553.	Kirk	Robert	merc	1441	159	pp S	wife	father bros			Mercers'	1442						1450
554.	Kirk	Thomas	merc	1411	115	pp F (3x) master	wife, Alice	bro sons dau			CCG Mercers'	1427 1420	1430	1432/3	1441	BIPR	2:34	1442

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
555.	Kirk	William	merc	1413	117		wife, Agnes	bro dau			CCG	1431				BIPR	2:620	1432
556.	Kirkby	Edward	merchant-merc	1482	294			father										1500
557.	Kirkby	John	merc	1401	104	app		master					1415					1415
	Kirkby	Margaret	no trade-?merc	1514	237			parents siblings	1524	Peacock, 174								1525
558.	Kirkby	Roland	merchant-merc	1457	176	pp F	Josiana	son daus			CCG Mercers'	1455 1459				BIPR	5:185	1480
559.	Knapton	John	merc	1349	41								1359	1361/2				1362
560.	Lagheles, de Dyvelyn	Thomas	merc	1361	54													1361
561.	Lancaster	John	merc	1352	47													1352
562.	Langthorn	Richard	merc	1438	153	pp S		father bro										1438
563.	Langtoft	Stephen	merc	1355	49													1355
564.	Lascels	Robert	chapman	1418	16													1428
565.	Lascy	Robert	merc	1371	67													1371
566.	Lasset	Richard	draper-merc	1439	155		Ellen				CCG	1442						1450
567.	Lax	William	merc	1361	54													1461
568.	Laxton	John	merc	1385	82		Agnes											1425
569.	Leconfield	Thomas	chapman						1381	Fenwick, 148								1381
570.	Leeds	William	merc	1397	98													1397
571.	Leek	John	haberdash	1502	226	app		master			Mercers'	1504						1505
572.	Leget	Nic	merc	1390	88													1390
573.	Lenne	Walter	merc	1337	31		Ellen*				St. Mary (widow)	1357						1334
574.	Leven, de Hundmanby	William	merc	1343	36						St. Mary	1357						1371
575.	Leversdale	John	merc-merchant	1385	82											BIPR Bruges	1:1	1389

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date					
576.	Leversdale	merc	1362	56												1362
577.	Levesham	merc	1482	203			?kin	1481		Mercers'						1504
	Levesham	spicer- ?merc	1371	68		Katherine	kin									1392
578.	Lewer	merchant- merc	1374	71		Emma		1381	Fenwick, 142							1381
579.	Lightlop	merc	1463	183		Margaret	son step-d	1470 1461		CCG Mercers'		1467	1470/1		BIPR	5:268 1485
580.	Lilling	merc	1394	94	pp F	Diot	son	1438 1420		CCG Mercers'		1418	1420 /21			1440
581.	Lilling, also Dyker	merc	1441	157		Alice		1442		Mercers'				BIPR	2:117	1445
582.	Lilling	merc	1370	67												1370
583.	Lincoln	merc	1427	139			kin									1427
584.	Lindsey	merc	1447	166												1447
585.	Lindsey	merc	1283	4		wife		1327	Parker, 161			1304	1305/6			1327
586.	Lister	merc	1385	82		wife										1399
587.	Lister	merc	1438	153		wife				CCG Mercers'	1447 1443					1453
588.	Lister	merc	1449	169		wife										1495
589.	Liverpool	merc	1378	75		Margaret		1381	Fenwick, 148							1381
590.	Loft	merc	1353	48												1353
591.	Lofthouse	merc- merchant	1432	145		Margaret				CCG Mercers'	1433 1433					1452
592.	Lolland/ Lowland	merc	1447	166		Joan								BIPR	5:123	1478
593.	Lonsborough	merc	1355	50						St. Mary	1357					1371
594.	Lonsborough	merc	1352	47												1352
595.	Long, de Doncaster	merc	1311	13				1332	Stell, 10							1334
596.	Lonsdale	merc	1317	17												1317

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
597. Lotherton/ Luterington	John	chapman	1381			Alice		1381	Fenwick, 142								1381
598. Louth	John	no trade- ?merc	1407	110		Joan	father, bros					1414	1424/5				1433
599. Louth	Nicholas	merc	1426	138	pp S	wife	father, bros			CCG Mercers'	1423 1420						1443
600. Louth	Richard	merc	1415	123	pp S	Katherine, Alice				CCG Mercers'	1415 1420	1423	1425/6				1435
601. Louth, de Ormsby	Robert ¹	merc	1368	66	pp F (4x)	Katherine, Joan	sons dau			CCG obit	1408		1388/9		BIPR	3:265	1407
602. Louth	Robert ² , jr	merc	1426	138	pp S	Katherine	father, bros daus			CCG (twice)	1423 1428						1437
603. Louth	William ¹	merc	1368	65													1368
604. Louth	William ²	merc	1415	123	pp S	wife, Isabel	father, bros			CCG	1428						1428
605. Lully	William	merc	1533	253	pp S		father, bro								BIPR	14: 221	1554
606. Lutton	Robert	merc	1347	40								1356	1364/5				1365
607. Macblith	Robert	merc	1516	239	?pp S		father			CCG Mercers'	1511 1513						1522
608. Maidstone	John	merc- vintner	1403	107	pp S		father										1405
609. Mallom	John	merc	1423	133		Elizabeth				Mercers'	1420						1436
610. Manchester	William	merc	1391	90													1391
611. March	John	merc	1397	98													1397
612. Marfleet/ Merflete	William ¹	merc	1367	64													1367
613. Marfleet/ Mirflete	William ² sr	merc	1384	81													1399
614. Marriot	Robert	merc	1467	187			father bro										1467

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
615. Marriot	Thomas	merc	1461	181		Ellen	father bro son			CCG Mercers'	1470 1460	1466	1473/4		BIPR	5:122	1478
616. Marriot	William	merc	1427	139			sons?										1427
617. Marrais	John	merc	1387	85	pp S		father										1387
618. Marshall	John	merc- merchant	1445	163	pp F (2x)	Agnes, Joan	sons, dau			CCG Mercers'	1450 1458	1455	1457/8	1467, 1480	BIPR	5:331	1489
619. Marshall	Roger	merc	1386	84													1386
620. Marton	John	merchant- ?merc	1428	141	pp S	Margaret	Father					1447	1449/50		BIPR	2:589	1463
621. Meile	Stephen	merc	1517	240				1524	Peacock, 185								1525
622. Mendam	William	merc	1343	36													1343
623. Middelburgh	Nicholas	merc	1398	99	pp F	Wife, Joan	bro son			CCG Mercers'	1427 1420						1435
624. Middelburgh	Richard	merc	1401	104													1401
625. Middleton	John ¹	merc	1363	57				1377	Fenwick, 136								1377
626. Middleton	John	merc	1365	60				1381	Fenwick, 146								1381
627. Middleton	John ³	merc	1367	63													1404
628. Middleton	Martin	merc	1415	123													1515
629. Middleton	Robert ¹	merc	1384	81		Katherine	son?										1410
630. Middleton	Robert ²	merc- vintner	1396	97		Matilda	father					1405	1418 /19		YML	1:241	1437
631. Middleton	Robert ³	merc- merchant	1451	170	app		master										1457
632. Middleton	William ¹	merc	1390	88													1390
633. Middleton	William ²	merc	1486	209	pp S	wife, Alice	father dau			CCG Mercers'	1481 1486				BIPR	7:28	1508
634. Miton	Hugh	draper- ?merc- merchant	1346	39		Katherine		1381	Fenwick, 154	St. Mary	1357	1349	1351/2				1367
635. Miton	William ¹	merc	1314	15													1314
636. Mitton de Newark	William ²	merc	1478	199													1478

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
637. More	John	merc-merchant	1382	79	app & master	wife, Agnes, Elizabeth	siblings son dau step-s					1395	1396/7		BIPR	3:10	1398
638. More	Thomas ¹	merc	1395	95		Agn	bro	1410		CCG		1406	1410/11				
639. More	Thomas ²	no trade-?merc	1398	100	pp S		father								BIPR	2:102	1445
640. Moreton	Henry	no trade-?merc	1401	105		pp S	father								BIPR	3:283	1439
641. Moreton	John	merc-merchant	1398	101		Margaret	father, son dau						1408/9	1418	BIPR	3:400	1434
642. Moreton	Roger ¹ , sr	merc	1351	44	pp F master	Agnes	sons? daus g-daus son	1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 146	St. Mary	1357	1364	1366/7		BIPR	1:14	1390
643. Moreton	Roger, ² jr	merc-merchant	1362	56		Isabel	son daus	1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 151	St. Mary	1357		1368/9	1373			1382
644. Morland	John	merc	1354	48		wife		1377	Fenwick, 136								1377
645. Morley	William	merc	1381	78													1381
646. Morpeth	John	merc	1420	129													1420
647. Morsby	Simon	merc	1408	111													1408
Morton	Agnes	chap-woman	1441	158	pp D		father										1441
648. Moulton	Thomas	merc	1422	132	pp S		father										1422
649. Mudford	William	merc	1364	58													1364
650. Murdock/Mordock	William	merc	1355	50		wife	mother son			St. Mary	1357						1371
651. Muston	Ralph	merc	1439	154													1439
652. Muston	Thomas	merc	1433	147													1433
653. Muston	William	merc	1339	34													1339
654. Newbold	Thomas	merc	1397	98													1397
655. Newby	John	merc	1381	79													1399
656. Newland	John ¹	merc	1393	93	app		master										1400

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
657. Newland	John ²	merc	1397	98		wife	bro			CCG						1423
658. Newland	Thomas	merc- merchant	1392	90		Ellen	siblings chilldm							BIPR	3:35	1400
659. Newton de Rochford	John	merc	1355	49												1355
660. Newton	Robert	merc	1272	1												1272
661. Newton	Thomas	merc	1407	110		wife, Agnes	sons daus			CCG				BIPR	3:538	1438
662. Nicholson	George	merc not in FR	1492				father			CCG Mercers'						1499
663. Nicholson	John	chapman	1448	167			son									1448
664. Norham	Nicholas	merc	1407	110												1407
665. Norham	Thomas	merc	1394	94												1394
666. Norman, de Newsom Bridge	John	chapman- merc- merchant	1470	190		Isabel, wife	sons daus			Mercers'				BIPR	5:467	1495
667. North	William	merc	1347	39												1347
668. Ormerod	John	merc	1469	188		wife				Mercers'						1499
669. Ormsby	Robert	merc	1321	20												1321
670. Ormsby	Robert	merc	1355	49												1355
671. Osbaldwick	John ¹	merc	1356	51		Agnes	sons									1385
672. Osbaldwick	John ² , jr	merc- merchant	1391	89	app	Katherine	father master son							BIPR	3:15	1398
673. Osbaldwick	Roger	merc	1340	34								1352/3				1353
674. Otteyway	Richard	merc	1365	50												1365
675. Ottrington	John	merc	1364	59			kin									1364
676. Oubri, de Stamford Bridge	William	merc- chapman	1354	49		Joan		1381	Fenwick, 147							1381
677. Palmer de Osbaldwick	Thomas	chapman	1389	87												1423

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date	
678.	Palmer	William ¹	merc-merchant	1371	68		wife, Margaret		1381	Fenwick, 146		1391			BIPR	3:247	1406	
679.	Palmer	William ²	merc	1417	125												1417	
680.	Paris	John	no trade-merc	1275	2												1292	
681.	Patterdale de Westmorland	Henry	merc	1345	38												1345	
682.	Paulin	William	merc	1437	151			father?			Mercers'						1437	
683.	Paunton	William	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1327			Alice		1327	Parker, 163					YML	1:10	1331	
684.	Peghan	John	merchant-merc	1480	199	pp F		son			Mercers'				YML	1:42	1505	
685.	Pennyman	Thomas	merchant-merc	1492	216						Mercers'						1502	
686.	Penreth	Robert	merc	1450	170	pp F		son									1450	
687.	Percy	John	merc	1391	90			father, bro									1407	
688.	Pickering ad Pontem	Alan	merc	1311	14												1311	
689.	Pickering	David	merc	1319	18												1319	
690.	Pickering	John	merc	1392	91	app		master							BIPR	3:83	1402	
691.	Piggot	Ralph	merc	1354	48												1354	
692.	Pinchenthorpe de Cleveland	Robert	merc	1354	49												1354	
693.	Plasterer	John	merc	1467	186												1467	
694.	Plumpton	Richard	haberdash goldsmith	1504	229		wife, Wallie	father son			Mercers'				BIPR	13: 105	1545	
695.	Plumpton	Robert	merc	1353	48												1353	
696.	Pocklington	Adam	merc	1273	1							1299					1314	
697.	Pocklington	Godfrey	merc	1273	1												1288	
698.	Pocklington	John	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1300													1300	
699.	Pocklington	Walter	merc	1273	1												1273	

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
700. Potto	John	merc	1368	64	app	wife	bro	1377	Fenwick, 136								1399
701. Potto	Robert	merc	1348	40		Ellen, Christiana	bro			St. Mary	1357		1363/4				1371
702. Potto	William	merc	1386	84													1407
703. Preston	Henry	merc-merchant	1381	78	pp F (2x?)	Emma, Alice	sons dau step-d					1400	1403/4	1422	BIPR	3:337 2:19	1434, 1441
704. Preston	Robert	merc	1433	146	pp S		father										1441
705. Preston	Thomas	merc-merchant	1422	132	pp S	Katherine	Father			CCG	1440						1440
706. Preston, super Tees	William	merc	1384	81													1384
707. Radcliff	Robert	merc	1476	196													1476
708. Rainton	Alan	merc	1330	26													1330
709. Ramshead	Hugh	chapman	1379	76													1381
710. Randolph	Ralph	merc	1391	89													1391
711. Rasen	John	merc	1422	132													1422
712. Rayner	William	merc	1361	54													1361
713. Redhood	John	merc	1371	68													1371
714. Redhood	William	merc-draper	1354	49	pser master	Cecilia	app kin	1381	Fenwick, 142	St. Mary	1357	1378	1396/7		BIPR	3:108	1402
715. Reed	Simon	merc	1370	67													1370
716. Richardson	John ¹	merc	1438	153	pp S		father										1453
717. Richardson	John ²	haberdash not in FR	1460		?pp F	Elizabeth	son			CCG Mercers'	1482 1463						1494
718. Richardson	John ³	haberdash -painter	1507	230		wife	dau	1524	Peacock, 185	Mercers'	1502	1525	1527-8		BIPR	11: 321	1538
719. Rigton	Adam	merc	1353	48													1353
720. Rillington	Thomas	merc-merchant	1391	90								1402					1402
721. Ripon	John	merchant-?merc	1334			Alice				St. Mary	1357	1356	1356/7				1369

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
722. Ripon	Thomas	no trade- ?merc	1477	198	pp S	wife	father			CCG	1423						1477
723. Ripon	William ¹	merc	1297	6													1297
724. Ripon	William ²	merc	1373	70		Agnes		1381	Fenwick, 154								1381
725. Ripon	William ³	merc	1414	121	pp F (2x)		son			CCG	1423						1423
726. Robinson	Peter	merc- merchant	1519	241		Elizabeth	daus	1524	Peacock, 180	CCG Mercers'	1518 1515	1533	1538/9	1544	BIPR	13: 604	1550
727. Rokeby	William	merc	1362	56													1379
728. Romanby	John	merc- merchant	1367	64		Agnes	childm	1377	Fenwick, 136						BIPR	1:3	1389
729. Romanby	Ralph	merc	1342	36		wife	son			St. Mary	1357	1361					1378
730. Romanby	William	merc	1336	31													1336
731. Rotherham	John	Mercer	1357							St. Mary	1357						1371
732. Rotherham	Richard	merc	1342	36	pp F	Isabel, Agnes	mother son	1377 1381	Fenwick, 138 Fenwick, 146	St. Mary	1357						1398
733. Rotherham	Thomas ¹	merc	1339	56													1388
734. Rotherham	Thomas ²	no trade- ?merc	1397	99	pp S		father					1424	1432/3		BIPR	3:357	1433
735. Roucliff	Thomas	merc	1353	48													1353
736. Rumley	Nicholas	merc- merchant	1417	125		Emma	son dau			CCG	1441				BIPR	2:42	1442
737. Rumley	William	merc	1377	75	master	Katherine	parents sons, childm	1381	Fenwick, 151			1390			BIPR	1:37	1391
738. Ruston	John	merc	1354	48		Cecilia	sons	1377 1381	Fenwick, 136 Fenwick, 145								1381
739. Ruston/ Roseton	Thomas	merc	1383	80		Alice	father bro										1393
740. Ruston	William	merc	1374	72			father bro					1393					1407
741. Sampson	John	merc not in FR	1430			Alice				CCG	1430						1430

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
742. Sandholme	Alan	merc	1366	63													1388
743. Santon/ Sancton	Godfrey	merc	1320	19													1320
744. Santon	Henry ¹	merc	1336	31													1336
745. Santon	Henry ²	merc	1355	50	pp S		father										1355
746. Santon	Richard	merc- draper	1346	39		Joan	father bros	1357		St. Mary					BIPR	3:13	1389
747. Santon	Thomas ¹	merc- chapman	1359	53		Joan		1381	Fenwick, 145								1381
748. Santon	Thomas ² jr	merc- draper	1370	67	pp F (2x)	Beatrice, Joan	father bros son dau	1381	Fenwick, 142			1399	1402/3	1414			1423
749. Sawyer	Richard	clerk- merc	1446	165	master	Agnes				Mercers'	1462	1470			BIPR	5:190	1477
750. Scauceby	Thomas	merc- merchant	1429	141	pp F	wife, Marion Isote	father? sons			CCG Mercers'	1438 1420	1443	1446-7	1463	BIPR	4:169	1471
751. Scawton, in Fishergate	John	merc	1398	99													1398
752. Scorborough	Robert	merc	1372	69													1381
753. Scorby	Henry	merc- merchant	1322	20	Master		father	1327 1332	Parker, 171 Stell, 10			1327	1332/3				1343
754. Scorby	John	merc	1307	11			father bros	1303	E179/217/1			1315	1321/2				1322
755. Scorby	Nicholas	no trade- merc	1315	15	pp F master (2x)	Marion	apps bros son	1327 1332	Parker, 171 Stell, 10			1326	1327/8				1351
756. Scorby	Walter	no trade- merc	1292	5			sons	1303	E179/217/1				1313/4				1321
757. Scorby	William	merc	1304				father bros					1304					1321
758. Scott	Walter	merc	1387	85													1387

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
759.	Scott	William ¹	merc	1283	4				1327	Parker, 169								1327
760.	Scott, de Micklegate	William ²	no trade- ?merc	1343	36													1343
761.	Scotton	Margaret	merc	1368	65													1368
762.	Scotton	Roger	merc	1337	32													1337
763.	Scotton	William	merc	1335	30													1335
764.	Scowch, de Redness	Richard	merc	1356	50													1356
765.	Scredington	John	merc	1357	52													1381
766.	Scruton	Richard	merc	1286			Alice	son										1319
767.	Seamer	John	no trade- ?merc	1348	40	app		master										1348
768.	Seamer	Thomas	merc	1352	47													1352
769.	Seaton	Robert	merc	1419	128	pp S		father										1419
770.	Selby	Robert	merchant-merc	1388	86		Alice				CCG	1411						1415
771.	Selybam	John	merc	1364	59		Isabel	dau	1377	Fenwick, 145						BIPR	2:13	1398
772.	Settrington	John	no trade-merc	1359	53	pp S		father	1377 1381	Fenwick, 137 Fenwick, 146						YML	1:123	1400
773.	Settrington	Simon	merc	1359	53						St. Mary	1357						1371
774.	Sharp	Giles	merc	1457	177													1457
775.	Sharp	Nicholas	merc	1547	268													1547
776.	Sharp	Thomas	merc	1486	210													1486
777.	Sherburn	William	merc	1337	32									1334/5				1345
778.	Sherwood	Thomas	merc	1398	101	pp S		father										1398
779.	Shipton	Richard	merc	1347	40													1347
780.	Shires	Roger	merc	1327	23				1327 1332	Parker, 163 Stell, 9								1332
781.	Shop	John	merc	1348	40													1348
782.	Short	John	merc	1417	125													1417
783.	Sigston	Richard ¹	merc	1339	33													
784.	Sigston	Richard ²	merc	1372	69													

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
785.	Sigston	Thomas	merc-merchant	1331	26	pser master	Katherine	app childm					1339	1349/50		YML	1:60	1374
786.	Skelton	John	chapman	1420	130	pp S		father bro										1420
787.	Skelton	Richard	no trade-?merc	1411	115	pp S		father bro										1411
788.	Skelton	Robert	merc	1326	23				1327 1332	Parker, 161 Stell, 6			1336	1338/9				1347
789.	Skelton	Thomas	merc	1379	76	pp F (2x)		sons										1379
790.	Skelton	William	merc-merchant	1334	29		Alice	son						1347/8				1352
791.	Skidbrook	John	merc	1346	39		Alice											1360
792.	Skipton	Evered	merc	1297	6													1297
793.	Skipton	Henry	merc	1345	38													1365
794.	Skipwith	John	merc-merchant	1441	158	app	wife, Agnes	bro dau*			CCG Mercers'	1476 1445	1464			BIPR	4:144	1468
795.	Skipwith	Robert	chapman-merc	1442	159	app		master bro son										1468
796.	Skirbeck, ?Skirpenbeck	Richard	merc	1376	74				1381	Fenwick, 145								1381
797.	Skirwith	Rog	merc	1340	34													1340
798.	Sledmere	Robert	merc	1359	53													1359
799.	Sleight, de Portington	William	merc	1304	9													1304
800.	Smalbayn	William	merc	1392	91													1392
801.	Smeaton	Robert, jr	cutler-merc-merchant	1334	28			dau			St. Mary	1357						1371
802.	Smith	George	yeoman-haberdash	1490	215	pp S	Beatrice	father bro kin			CCG Mercers'	1503 1501						1523

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
803. Smith	Henry	yeoman-haberdash	1480	202		Matilda	father bro			CCG Mercers'	1509 1501						1509
804. Sotheron	Richard	merc	1352	46						St. Mary	1357						1371
Sourby	John ¹	merchant	1332	27			son	1332	Stell, 13								1338
Sourby	John ²	merc	1338	33			father										1338
Sourby	Richard ¹	merc	1365	62		Agnes	son	1381	Fenwick, 150								1400
Sourby	Richard ²	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1401				father?					1416					1416
Southwell	John	merc	1398	101	app		master										1398
Spalding	John	weaver-merc	1385	83													1395
Spaldington	John	merc	1364	59		Gillian		1381	Fenwick, 153								1392
Spencer	John	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1460		pserv master & pp F	Elizabeth Alice	father bros sons			Mercers'	1460				YML	1:358	1484
Spendlove	Hugh	merc	1389	86													1400
Spicer	John	chapman	1506	230	pp S		father bro										1506
Spicer	Thomas ¹	merchant-merc	1471	191		Ellen	sons			CCG (twice) Mercers'	1470, 1479; 1474				BIPR	6:208	1505
Spicer	Thomas ²	chapman	1506	230	pp S		father bro										
Sprot	John	merc	1412	116													1412
Squire	Robert	merc	1366	63													1400
Stable	John	merc	1425	136													1425
Stainton	Peter	merc	1351	44													1351
Stainton	Thomas	merc	1362	56													1362
Stanhope	Robert	merc	1322	20				1327 1332	Parker, 167 Stell, 10								1334
Stanney	John	merc	1394	94	app		master										1402
Stertford	Richard	merc	1467	186													1467

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
822.	Stighbayn	merc	1346	39													1346
823.	Stillington	merc	1364	59	pp F; master	Matilda, Gillian	app son					1385	1387/8		BIPR	1:99	1396
824.	Stillington	merc	1403	107	pp S		father										1403
825.	Stockdale	merc-merchant	1476	196		wife, Joan, Ellen	bro daus childrn			CCG (twice) Mercers'	1477 1485 1476	1487	1491/2	1501	BIPR	6:185	1507
826.	Stocking	merc	1422	132													1422
827.	Stockton	merc	1324	22				1327 1332	Parker, 163 Stell, 10								1332
828.	Stockton	merc	1416	123		Agnes	sister			CCG	1445						1445
829.	Stockton	merc	1369	66		wife											1414
830.	Stockton	merc-merchant	1420	129	pp F	Alice, Isabel	sons daus			CCG Mercers'	1432 1420	1434	1438/9	1446, 1461	BIPR	4:173	1471
831.	Stoke	no trade-chapman	1377	75				1381	Fenwick, 148								1396
832.	Storer	merc	1500	224		Helen				CCG Mercers'	1501 1500						1529
833.	Storer	merc not in FR	1381		master	Agnes	app bro son								YML	1:124	1400
834.	Stradbrook	merc	1439	154													1439
835.	Studley	merc	1410	113													1410
836.	Studley	merc	1412	117													1412
837.	Sutton	chapman	1372	69													1372
838.	Sutton	no trade-merc	1358	52		Beatrice	son?	1381	Fenwick, 145	St. Mary	1357						1400
839.	Swan	merc	1443	161		Margaret				CCG	1445						1445
840.	Swanland	merc	1403	107													1403
841.	Tailor	merchant-merc	1482	204		Isabel				CCG Mercers'	1481 1486	1496			BIPR	8:83	1512
842.	Tallvais	merc	1369	66		Emma	dau								YML	1:72	1380

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
843.	Tanfield	John	merc- merchant	1397	98		Agnes, Ellen	son dau step-d			CCG Mercers'	1430 1420				BIPR	3:495	1437
844.	Tavemer	John	merc	1418	127	pp S		father										1418
845.	Tavemer	Robert	merc	1432	145													1432
846.	Tavemer	Thomas	merc	1414	120													1414
847.	Teesdale	John	merc	1355	49		Joan?	dau?										1335
848.	Thornton	John ¹	no trade- merc	1365	62	pp S		father bro dau										1400
849.	Thornton	John ² , jr	merc	1403	106		Joan	father? sons								BIPR	2:514	1427
850.	Thornton	Nicholas	no trade- merc	1441	159	pp S pp F		father childrn								BIPR	5:116	1478
851.	Thornton	Thomas ¹	merc	1272	1													1272
852.	Thornton	Thomas ²	merc	1432	145		Agnes	step-d			CCG; Mercers'	1453; 1444				BIPR	2:420	1459
853.	Thornton	William ¹	no trade- merc	1358	52		Cecilia	sons			St. Mary	1357						1371
854.	Thornton	William ²	merc	1397	98		wife	father			CCG	1416						1416
855.	Thorpe	Robert ¹	merc	1357				son?			St. Mary	1357						1371
856.	Thorpe	Robert ²	merc	1377	74			father?										1377
857.	Thorpe	William ¹	merc	1314	15				1303 1327 1332	Brown, 119 Parker, 165 Stell, 9			1331					1332
858.	Thorpe	William ²	merchant- merc	1442	160		Isabel	son			CCG; Mercers'	1470 1451				BIPR	5:121	1478
859.	Threpland	William	merc	1438	153	pp S	Isabel	father										1438
860.	Thwing	Robert ¹	merc	1313	14								1332					1332
861.	Thwing, de Gisburn	Robert ²	merc	1366	62													1366
862.	Tickhill	Richard ¹	merc	1301	8		Isabel	son dau	1327 1332	Parker, 162 Stell, 6				1325/6				1349

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
863.	Tickhill	Richard ²	merc	1322	20			father sister										1322
864.	Tidmarsh	Richard	merc not in <i>FR</i>	1357							St. Mary	1357						1365
865.	Tiplady	James	merc	1520	242													1520
866.	Tirrell	Robert	haberdash	1507	231	pp S		father										1507
867.	Tockwith	John	merc	1343	37													1343
	Tollerton	Roger	chapman	1332	20				1327	Parker, 170								1327
868.	Tolleson	Robert	merc	1432	146													1432
869.	Tondu	Adam	merc	1352	47			son								BIPR	1:80	1395
870.	Tondu, de Beverley	William	no trade-merc	1352	46		Agnes	father	1377	Fenwick, 137	CCG obit (wife)	1413	1365	1370/1		BIPR	3:13	1398
871.	Touche/ Tuche	John	merc	1371	68	master		father app	1381	Fenwick, 150				1390/1		BIPR	3:85	1402
872.	Towthorpe	Richard	merc	1283	4		Maud											1305
873.	Towthorpe	William	chapman-merchant	1355	50													1362
874.	Trotter	William	merc	1542	263	pp S		father										1542
875.	Turner	John	merc	1412	117													1412
876.	Tutbag/Milner	John	no trade-merc-merchant	1398	101	pp F	Alice	son			CCG Mercers'	1431 1420				BIPR	3:526	1438
877.	Tymondson, or Arnoldson	Lambert	merc- hardware- man	1467	186		Katherine	sister sons daus			CCG Mercers'	1474 1483				YML	1:370	1488
878.	Upsall	John	merc	1283	4													1283
879.	Upsall	Thomas	merc	1298	7													1298
	Useburn	John	chapman	1321	19				1327	Parker, 161								1327
880.	Useburn	William	merc	1429	141		wife, Ellen	childm			CCG Mercers'	1450 1442						1459
881.	Usecliff	Thomas	chapman	1433	147						Mercers'	1455				YML	1:296	1461
882.	Usefleet	Nicholas	merc-merchant	1412	116		Matilda	bros, son			CCG Mercers'	1431 1420	1427	1433/4	1438	BIPR	2:58	1443

TABLE B.2

PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
883.	Vescy, de Yburn	chapman-mercier-merchant	1376	74	master	Marion, Emma	apps dau	1381	Fenwick, 151				1392/3		BIPR	3:266	1407
884.	Vicars	chapman-haberdash-mercier	1499	224		wife, Joan, wife	sons dau kin	1524	Peacock, 176	CCG Mercers'	1513 1502	1511	1513/14	1521	BIPR	11: 118	1534
885.	Waghen	sheather-cutler-mercier	1382	79		Agnes	father son										1417
886.	Waghen	chapman-mercier-merchant	1394	93		Ellen, Katherine	dau			CCG & CCG obit	1422, 1431	1413	1416/17				1432
887.	Waghen	mercier	1353	48	pp F	Margaret, Agnes	parents siblings son dau	1381	Fenwick, 150	St. Mary	1357	1366	1370/1		YMAA	Cart., fo. 72	1388
888.	Waghen	mercier	1353	48	master	Alice	app sons dau?	1377 1381	Fenwick, 136 Fenwick, 145	St. Mary	1357		1381/2		BIPR	1:41	1391
889.	Waghen	no trade-merchant-mercier	1413	119	pp S		father bros										1439
890.	Waghen	no trade-mercier	1413	119	pp S		father bros										1413
891.	Waghen	mercier	1365	61		Beatrice	sons	1381	Fenwick, 150								1388
892.	Waghen	mercier not in FR	1391		pp F (2x)	Alice	app sons dau										1398
893.	Waghen	mercier	1412	116			father bros										1412
894.	Wainfleet	mercier	1362	56													1362

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
895. Wakefield	John	merc	1420	130	pp S		father bro										1420
896. Wakefield	Richard	merc-merchant	1396	97	pp F		sons										1415
897. Wakefield	William	merc	1428	140			father bro										1428
898. Walker	Richard	merc	1460	180	pp S		father										1460
899. Walker	Thomas	chapman-merc	1449	169			bro								BIPR Selby	2:384	1458
900. Walker	William	chapman merc	1449	169	pp F		son bro										1449
901. Wallis/Waleys	John	merc	1364	59													1364
902. Wallis/Waleys	William	merc	1418	126													1418
903. Walmsford	John	merc	1313	14				1327 1332	Parker, 171 Stell, 10								1334
904. Wansford	Adam	merc	1357	51													1357
905. Wansford	Thomas	merc	1365	61	pp S		father										
906. Ward	John	merc-merchant	1403	107	pp S; pp F (2x)	Rosa	father bros sons			CCG	1423		1424/5		BIPR	2:15	1440
907. Ward	Nicholas	merc	1393	92						CCG	1412						1412
908. Ward	Robert	merc-merchant	1368	66	Pser A; pp F (3x)	Beatrice	sons					1376	1380/1		BIPR	3:234	1405
909. Wardrobe	John	merc	1415	122						CCG	1416						1416
910. Warmfold	Richard	merc	1408	111													1408
911. Warter, de Pocklington	Thomas ¹	merc	1347	39		Emma				St. Mary (widow)	1357						1347
912. Warter	Thomas ²	merc	1394	94													1394
913. Wascher	Stephen	merc	1351	44													1351
914. Watton	Thomas	merc	1365	62		Margaret											1381
915. Weighton	John	merc	1371	68													1371

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	PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
	Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
916.	Weighton	Roger	chapman-merc	1375	73													1388
917.	Welburn	Adam	merc	1355	50													1355
918.	Well	Robert	merc	1379	76	pp S		father dau										1379
919.	Wells	Henry/Hugh	merc	1445	163		Katherine				CCG Mercers'	1446 1443						1450
920.	Wells	Thomas	merchant-merc	1464	184		Alice				CCG Mercers'	1461 1466						1490
921.	Wentworth	John	merc	1397	98	app		master										1401
922.	Wert	John	merc	1369	67													1369
923.	Westwood	Thomas	merc	1392	91													1392
924.	Wetherby, de Ripon	John	merc	1420	128													1420
925.	Wetwang	John ¹	merc	1307	11													1307
926.	Wetwang	John ²	merc	1310	12													1310
927.	Wetwang	John ³	merc	1423	133													1423
928.	Wharrom	John	merc-merchant	1359	53		Margaret		1381	Fenwick, 150						BIPR	1:72	1394
929.	Wharrom	Robert	merc-merchant	1429	141													1429
930.	Wharrom	Roger	no trade-?merc	1296	7													1296
931.	Wheldrake	John ¹	merc	1310	12				1332	Stell, 7								1334
932.	Wheldrake	John ²	merc	1436	150	pp S	Elizabeth	father sister kin			CCG; Mercers'	1437; 1442						1452
933.	Whitby	Peter	merc	1277	3													1277
934.	Whitby	Thomas	merc-taverner	1275	2		wife						1294	1298/9				1302
935.	White	Thomas	merc	1443	161													1443
936.	Whiteacres	John	merc	1454	174													1454
937.	Whitgift	John	merc	1394	94													1401

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM				HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL		
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
938. Whitick	Thomas	merchant-merc	1387	85		wife											1396
939. Wilkes	William	merc	1479	201	pp S; app		father master										1479
940. Wilton	John	merc	1401	105		Alice	father								YML	1:211	1422
941. Wiltshire	Thomas	merc	1370	67													1370
942. Winfield	John	merc	1412	115													1412
943. Winkburn, de Gillygate	William	no trade-merc	1397	99			father kin					1407					1407
944. Winter	William	merc	1336	31		Helen				St. Mary	1357						1371
945. Winton	Thomas	merc	1457	177						CCG Mercers'	1455 1459						1472
946. Wintringham	Richard	merc	1402	106			son										1402
947. Wirethorpe	John	merc	1354	49			son			St. Mary	1357						1396
948. Wirethorpe	Thomas	merc	1365	61	app		father master										1371
949. Wirkworth	William	merc	1385	82													1401
950. Wirsop/ Worsop	William	merc	1385	82													1400
951. Wisebiri	Adam	merc	1329	25													1329
952. Witton	William	merc	1362	56		wife		1377	Fenwick, 136			1389					1389
953. Wolston/ Ulleston	Richard	merc	1373	70				1377	Fenwick, 136								1395
954. Wood	John	merc	1393	93													1393
955. Woolly	Thomas	Mercer	1416	123													1416
956. Wrelton	Alan	Mercer	1309	12													1309
957. Wressell	Richard	merc	1344	37													1344
958. Wressell	Stephen	merc	1364	59													1364
959. Yarum	John ¹	merc	1342	36	app		master										1347
960. Yarum	John ²	merc	1385	81	pp F		son					1402					1402
961. Yarum	John ³	merc	1410	114	pp S		father								BIPR	3:366	1433

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PERSONAL		TRADE & FREEDOM			HOUSEHOLD		TAXATION		GUILD		CIVIC OFFICE			WILL			
Surname(s)	Name	Trade	Date	FR pg.	Other	Wife	Family	Date	Source	Guild	Date	Cham	Bail/Sh	Mayor	Archive	Reg: folio	Last Date
962.	Yarum	chapman	1475	195	pp D		father bros			Mercers'	1477						1481
963.	Yarum	merc	1389	87	pp F (2s)	wife, Alicia	sons dau			CCG Mercers'	1425 1420	1403	1417 /18		BIPR	2:118	1445
964.	Yarum	merc	1403	107													1403
965.	Yarum	merc	1412	117	pp S	wife, Katherine	parents siblings sons			CCG Mercers'	1427 1420				BIPR	3:466	1436
966.	Yhekmund	merchant-merc	1427	139													1429
967.	Yhole, de Allerton	draper-merc	1356	50	master	Agnes	dau	1381	Fenwick, 147	St. Mary	1357	1364	1366/7		BIPR	1:43	1391
968.	Yotson	merc	1478	199						Mercers'	1479						1487

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Deeds and Leases
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