

THE TAILORS OF LONDON AND THEIR GUILD, c.1300-1500

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, Hilary Term 1994

by

Matthew P. Davies

Corpus Christi College

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the roles played by craft organisations or ‘guilds’ in medieval urban society through a case study of the tailors of London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Using the records of the City and of the guilds themselves, including the important early records of the Tailors, this study seeks to answer important questions about the nature of these organisations and the impact which they had upon urban society. Far from being the mere ‘agents’ of municipal governments, craft guilds often performed important and constructive functions on behalf of the artisans themselves. The first two chapters examine the extent to which voluntarism characterized the activities of many of these associations: the guild of London tailors, though unusual in the scale and scope of its spiritual and charitable provision, embodied widely shared principles of association which were not articulated solely through parish guilds. Subsequent chapters look at the ways in which the Tailors’ guild expressed and articulated other concerns of their members and those outside the ruling guild: in the sphere of City politics, for instance, the Tailors came to represent the aspirations of many poorer citizens through their struggle for civic prominence. Likewise, in the sphere of economic regulation, this thesis demonstrates the ways in which the Tailors’ guild, among others, was able to introduce flexible and pragmatic policies of enforcement, based upon the shared interests of those inside and outside the decision-making groups. The final section of the thesis then examines more closely the limitations of impressions of economic structures derived purely from guild statutes. First, the nature of apprenticeship and servanthood in medieval London is examined with particular emphasis upon the differing perceptions of these ‘life-cycle institutions’ by all concerned. Secondly, a systematic analysis of the structure of the tailoring industry in London is carried out and explores the remarkable diversity of economic life in the capital.

THE TAILORS OF LONDON AND THEIR GUILD, c.1300-1500

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, Hilary Term 1994

by

Matthew P. Davies

Corpus Christi College

LONG ABSTRACT

The study of the towns and cities of medieval Europe has benefitted from a resurgence of scholarly interest over the last thirty years which has sought to bring new approaches to bear on hitherto dormant areas of historical study. The heterogeneous nature of urban society in the middle ages is no better evidenced than in the diversity of urban production, and the myriad associations or ‘guilds’ established by artisans and merchants. This thesis seeks to reassess the nature and limits of the authority which pertained to these associations in towns in the light of the relationships between artisans and the guilds, and between the guilds and civic authorities in the middle ages. The unusually full medieval records of the guild of London tailors, known from 1503 as the Merchant Taylors’ Company, provides a rare opportunity to assess the variety of roles which these organisations played in late-medieval London, both for the artisans themselves and for the wider urban community; other sources too enable greater light to be shed upon the diversity of economic activities in which artisans were involved and the nature of the ‘workshop economy’ in the middle ages. This diversity, it is argued, could never be reflected in the ordinances promulgated by guilds which merely sought to establish a normative framework for the organisation of urban industry. The enforcement of these ordinances was not uniform and often reflected the preoccupations, not only of the guild authorities, but also of the majority of artisans who were not members of these elite institutions. Guilds it is argued, possessed representative capabilities which often had a positive impact upon economic development and innovation in the medieval town.

Chapter One of this thesis examines the origins and development of the guild of

London tailors, known from at least 1300 as the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist. Older studies of craft organisations have, on the whole, failed to appreciate the similarities which existed between ‘craft guilds’ and other guilds and fraternities, notably those which were attached to parish churches. More recently, however, the origins and functions of many craft organisations have been re-appraised by historians who have emphasised the common origins of these seemingly distinct associations and the continued importance of the social and religious functions and mutual obligations which underpinned their very existence. The Tailors’ fraternity was unusual in the range and scope of these functions which, it is argued, owed much to their social and political aspirations in the capital. This chapter examines first of all the evidence for the early development of the fraternity, the acquisition of a hall in present-day Threadneedle Street and of prominent benefactors and patrons. The physical and spiritual assets acquired by the Tailors during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are then considered in more detail. Papal privileges were granted on two occasions and the fraternity acquired the use of two chapels, one at their hall, and the other in St. Paul’s Cathedral. In addition, the fraternity received letters of confraternity from nine religious houses in and around London at the end of the fourteenth century. As well as being an association for the wealthiest practitioners of the craft, the fraternity admitted over 1,200 men and women from other walks of life, ranging from members of other London craft and merchant guilds to prominent churchmen, gentry and the nobility. The composition of the non-tailor membership is examined in detail and an assessment is made of the variety of impulses which led many of them to join the fraternity. This feature of the development of the Tailors’ fraternity is particularly notable and affords an unusual insight into the religious and social aspirations of wealthy Londoners, and the manner in which certain of the London guilds were viewed by prominent non-citizens, many of whom established business relationships with merchants and craftsmen in the capital.

Despite the surprisingly large non-tailor membership, the fraternity of St. John the Baptist was, like the other craft fraternities of London, a vehicle for the expression of craft identity. Chapter Two looks at two important ways in which the principles of *fraternitas* were exploited for the benefit of the tailor membership. First, the administration of *post obit* arrangements on behalf of benefactors is examined. By 1548 when the chantries were finally dissolved, the Tailors were administering thirteen chantries and twenty-seven obits in nine parish churches and religious houses in and around London, founded, in most cases out of

the income from lands and tenements left to the fraternity by prominent tailors. Wealthy London citizens in general, it is argued, often saw their craft fraternities as ideal administrators of such arrangements, despite their allegiances to their parishes churches or local fraternities. These foundations, moreover, yielded a 'profit' over and above the cost of the services specified by the benefactors. This income was ploughed back into the 'common box' of the fraternity and used for a variety of purposes whether connected with the supervision of the craft as a whole or the internal life of the fraternity. Certainly, as the chapter demonstrates, the Tailors' fraternity acquired considerable wealth as a result of its activities as a 'corporate executor' for its members. One of the uses to which such money was put was the provision of charitable assistance for tailor members of the fraternity, a central function pertaining to all lay fraternities, large and small in the middle ages. The chapter describes in detail the development and operation of mechanisms to help poor members, the criterion used to select almsmen and the various forms of assistance that were offered. The foundation of an almshouse for seven poor tailors and their wives in 1413 epitomised the importance of the charitable dimension to the fraternity's activities, and was the earliest such foundation in London. The chapter concludes with an examination of the shifts in pious behaviour which took place in the later fifteenth century in London and elsewhere, changes which appear to have affected the provision of charity by the Tailors' fraternity and the extent to which it continued to administer *post obit* arrangements. Increasing emphasis upon the parish, in particular, appears to have reduced the role played by fraternities of all kinds in the provision of charitable assistance.

Chapter Three takes a wider look at the functions fulfilled by craft organisations in urban society, and particularly at the relationship between guilds and municipal government. The argument that guilds were merely the 'agents' of civic authority is shown to be simplistic, and fails to take into account the ways in which craft organisations, though performing certain functions on behalf of urban governments, were able to represent and articulate the interests and aspirations of their members. In London the Tailors and other guilds were able to raise concerns in the Court of Aldermen, the Common Council and even in Parliament which reflected the needs of their members and, in many cases, the preoccupations of the majority of freemen who were not members of the ruling guilds. This representative role could also, it is argued, provoke conflict as well as achieve consensus. Dissension between the London crafts was normally dealt with by the Court of Aldermen but,

on three occasions in the period under consideration, the Tailors were deeply involved in disputes which were less easily resolved and consequently undermined urban stability. Civic ceremony was, on several occasions, a focus for conflict, particularly between those guilds attempting to consolidate or improve their positions among the greater crafts in fifteenth century London. The ambitions of the Tailors for civic prominence, denied to them, it is argued, because of the essentially artisan nature of their craft, resulted in the guild becoming embroiled in radical, and often violent, movements for reform of the City's developing constitution. Because of the prestige of their guild the Tailors were, it is suggested, perceived as among the natural leaders of movements which sought to increase the representation of lesser citizens in urban government, particularly on the Common Council and at shrieval and mayoral elections. The Crown too was dragged into these events through the charters which were acquired by craft guilds. These charters often represented the corporate aspirations of the London guilds and, on several occasions caused dissension when they were perceived to be contrary to the interests of other guilds, the civic authorities, or both.

Chapter Four turns to the regulation of the craft itself. The structure of the guild is examined to determine the criteria for the admission of tailors to the fraternity, and the implications of this for the ways in which guild ordinances were drawn up and enforced. It is argued that, despite the importance of wealth as a criterion for admission, there was a high degree of common ground between those tailors who were members of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist and the majority of freemen who were not. In particular, late-medieval London saw the development of 'yeomen fraternities' within many crafts, associations which are first glimpsed as 'illegal' fraternities of servants pressing for higher wages in the fifty years following the plagues of 1348-49. By the fifteenth century, it is argued, many of these associations, including the fraternity of yeomen tailors, consisted of all freemen outside the ruling guild, including many craftsmen who would subsequently join the senior fraternity of their craft. It is argued that the relationship between the 'livery' and 'yeomanry' of the Tailors was generally free of conflict, principally because of the shared economic interests of the two groups; such was not the case in those crafts where mercantile interests in the senior guild clashed with those of a predominantly artisan yeomanry. The chapter then examines the nature and limits of guild authority over craftsmen in the capital. The records of the Tailors' guild constitute an important source for the ways in which guild wardens enforced their regulations. It is argued here that, contrary to the static picture which emerges

from normative and idealistic ordinances, enforcement was often a pragmatic response to the practical difficulties of locating and fining craftsmen, and was based upon an understanding of prevailing economic conditions and opportunities. In the case of the Tailors, it is suggested, a policy of vigorous supervision of the activities of unenfranchised immigrant workers enabled the guild to take a more relaxed approach to the regulation of the activities of the freemen. Despite the large size of the craft in London, freemen tailors were subject to relatively few regulations, a policy which, it is argued, allowed them to take advantage of a flourishing market for new clothes in the capital. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the attitudes and policies of guilds in many towns were often more enlightened than has been assumed. Evidence for the detrimental effect which guild regulations had upon industrial expansion and innovation should, it is argued, be balanced by evidence for the ways in which guilds promoted competition and quality, either through active intervention or, where appropriate, through a prudent *laissez-faire* policy.

Chapter Five examines two of the central life-cycle institutions which are commonly elaborated and defined in the records of guilds. Apprenticeship is a subject which has traditionally been studied from the point of view of their masters, an approach which inevitably distorts the two-sided nature of the relationship and tends towards the idealisation of the apprenticeship 'system' as merely the first step along the civic *cursus honorum*. For some London tailors this was undoubtedly the case, revealing in many cases the close ties between master and apprentice and the importance of patronage throughout an apprentice's career. Most apprentices were immigrants to London and, for many, an apprenticeship did indeed provide a means of assimilation into urban society. Yet, it is argued, for every apprentice tailor who completed his term, and obtained the freedom of the City, two more abandoned their training, either to return home, or else to fall in among the growing ranks of unenfranchised yet semi-skilled artisans in the capital. After the requisite skills had been acquired, it is argued, the interests of masters and apprentices often diverged leading in many cases to the breakdown of the relationship or its exploitation by the master concerned. Servanthood is another so-called 'life-cycle institution' whose complexity, as this chapter argues, has not always been recognized. For some tailors, a few years as a journeyman was indeed merely an interlude prior to establishing a business and taking on apprentices. For many more, however, wage-labour was a more or less permanent state of affairs and was subject to remarkable variations in conditions of service, status and economic prospects.

Some crafts were more dependent upon unskilled, long term wage-labour, whereas others, including the tailors, required skilled workers prepared to work quickly to fulfill short term contracts.

The final chapter looks in detail at the structure of the tailoring industry in London. The century and a half following the plagues of 1348-49 saw a rapid expansion of the craft in London due to buoyant demand for new clothing and the popularity of new, more complex fashions. A symptom of this was the development of the West End of London as a centre for the production of high quality; important customers were attracted to the capital where an ever-increasing range of consumer goods were produced and sold. The chapter then examines the relationships between craftsmen in the urban economy and demonstrates the interdependence of tailors and members of allied trades, the transferability of tailoring skills, and the extent to which specialisation and sub-contracting were integral features of productive processes in London. The implications of consumer demand, rarely examined by historians, are considered in relation to notions of quality of workmanship and product differentiation in the clothing industry in the capital. The various strategies employed to ensure the survival of a business are then examined: partnerships, credit arrangements, and other tactics were common mechanisms through which tailors provided for the future or simply attempted to stave off bankruptcy. Finally the chapter considers the roles played by women in the workshop. It is argued that, although poorly represented in formal occupational structures, women played an important part in running tailoring businesses, often employing skills learned informally from their husbands. As widows, many women were able to expand and diversify their economic activities and were able to ensure the survival of their workshops by prudent exploitation of the opportunities available to widows in London.

THE TAILORS OF LONDON AND THEIR GUILD, *c.*1300-1500

by

Matthew P. Davies

Corpus Christi College

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Oxford, Hilary Term 1994**



THE TAILORS OF LONDON AND THEIR GUILD, c.1300-1500

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES, MAPS AND GRAPHS	v
ABBREVIATIONS	vi
INTRODUCTION	viii
CHAPTER ONE: THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRATERNITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, 1300-1500	1
I. 'Mistery' and 'Fraternity'	1
II. The Origins of the Tailors' Fraternity	4
III. The Development of the Fraternity, 1345-1500	9
IV. The Acquisition of 'Goostly Tresoure'	12
V. Symbolism and Ritual	22
VI. Membership	27
CHAPTER TWO: THE COMMUNITY OF THE FRATERNITY: <i>POST OBIT</i> SERVICES AND CHARITABLE PROVISION, 1400-1550	48
I. The Administration of <i>Post Obit</i> Arrangement	48
II. The Dissolution of the Chantries	63
III. Charitable Provision by the Tailors' Fraternity	67
CHAPTER THREE: THE TAILORS AND THE CITY GOVERNMENT, 1376-1504	87
I. Urban Oligarchies and Craft Guilds	87
II. Guilds and Civic Authorities in the Middle Ages	92
III. The Tailors and City Politics, 1376-1504	106
CHAPTER FOUR: THE SUPERVISION OF THE CRAFT	135
I. The Selection of an Elite	138
II. Livery and Yeomanry	147
III. The Court of Assistants	156
IV. The Enforcement of Ordinances	163
CHAPTER FIVE: APPRENTICESHIP AND SERVANTHOOD AMONG THE LONDON TAILORS	181
I. Apprenticeship Enrollments	183
II. Geographical and Social Origins	189
III. Drop-out rates: Perceptions of Apprenticeship	192
IV. The <i>Cursus Honorum</i> : Apprentices and Servants	203

CHAPTER SIX:	THE STRUCTURE OF THE TAILORING INDUSTRY IN LONDON	216
	I. Demographic Change and Production	216
	II. Competition and Quality	219
	III. The Workshop and the 'Productive Network'	226
	IV. Diversification and Specialisation	234
	V. The Workshop in Action	239
	VI. Strategies for Survival	250
	VII. Women and the Workshop	260
CONCLUSION		266
APPENDIX I	MASTERS OF THE TAILORS' FRATERNITY, 1398-1500	269
APPENDIX II	TAILOR OFFICE-HOLDERS, 1400-1509	273
APPENDIX III	INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF THE TAILORS' FRATERNITY, 1398-1474	275
BIBLIOGRAPHY		279

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In researching and writing this thesis I have been assisted by numerous fellow researchers and academic institutions. In particular I have benefited enormously from the scholarship and expertise of my supervisors, Caroline Barron and Gervase Rosser; their generous support, enthusiasm and critical attention over the past three years has been greatly valued. I am also grateful to the British Academy for the award of a Major State Studentship for 1990-93 and to the Scouloudi Foundation and the Institute of Historical Research for the generous award of a Research Fellowship for part of 1993-94. Various parts of this thesis have been read as papers at seminars and conferences in London and Oxford, and I would like to thank all those whose comments and suggestions have helped to clarify and develop the arguments advanced here. Special mention should be made of the seminar on Late-Medieval and Tudor London, held at the Institute of Historical Research, whose members have always given freely of their time and research findings. Various other scholars have also provided advice and encouragement, including Andrew Brown, Catherine Paxton, Thomas Charles-Edwards and Jane Sherwood. Finally, I am grateful to the Clerk and Court of the Merchant Taylors' Company for the generous loan of microfilms of the Company's medieval records and for allowing me to consult the originals at the Hall.

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
1.1	Admissions to the Tailors' Fraternity, 1398-1445, 1453-1473	28
1.2	Members drawn from the 'Great Twelve' Misteries	30
2.1	The Chronology of Foundations of Chantries and Obits	51
2.2	Alms Collections and Distributions 1400-1475	70
2.3	Funerals of Almsmen, 1398-1475	85
3.1	Aldermen and Mayors, 1400-1500	112
3.2	Office-holding by Tailors, 1400-1500	113
4.1	Shared Surnames among the London Tailors	144
4.2	'Sponsored mobility' among Tailors' Apprentices	145
4.3	Members of the Tailors' Court attending more than 20 meetings, 1488-1493	157
4.4	The Courts of 1436 and 1488	158
5.1	Length of Terms of Tailors' Apprentices, 1486-93	185
5.2	Origins of London Apprentices	189
5.3	Occupations of Apprentices' Fathers	191
5.4	The <i>Cursus Honorum</i> among the Tailors and Mercers	195
6.1	Social composition of Londoners' debtors, 1400-1500	255
6.2	Geographical origins of Londoners' debtors, 1400-1500	256

LIST OF MAPS

1 (a)	The Parishes of London, c.1400	44
1 (b)	The Parishes of London Tailors, c.1380-1500	46
2.	The Situation of Tailors' Hall and the Almshouse	47

LIST OF GRAPHS

1.	Enrollments of Apprentices by Tailors, 1425-45, 1453-69	215
2.	Apprentices into Masters	215

ABBREVIATIONS

AMB	Merchant Taylors' Company, Ancient Manuscript Books
Accounts	Merchant Taylors' Company, Accounts, I, 1398-45; II, 1453-69; III, 1469-84
Beaven, Aldermen	A.B. Beaven, <i>The Aldermen of the City of London</i> , 2 vols (London, 1908-13)
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i> (now <i>Historical Research</i>)
BL	British Library, London
<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i>	R.R. Sharpe ed., <i>Calendar of the Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London</i> , 11 vols, A-L (London, 1899-1912)
Clode, <i>Early History</i>	C.M. Clode, <i>The Early History of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist, London, with notices of the lives of some of its eminent members</i> , 2 vols (London, 1888)
Clode, <i>Memorials</i>	<i>Memorials of the Merchant Taylors' Company</i> , ed. C.M. Clode (London, 1875)
Court Minutes	Merchant Taylors' Company, Ancient Manuscript Books, vol.37: Court Minutes, I, 1486-87, II, 1487-93
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CFR	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i>
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
CPMR	<i>Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, 1323-1482</i> , 6 vols, ed. A.H. Thomas (i-iv) and P.E. Jones (v-vi) (Cambridge, 1926-61)
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CWCH	<i>Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London, 1258-1688</i> , ed. R.R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London, 1889-90)
EETS	Early English Text Society

<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>Ec. Hist. Rev.</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
GL	Guildhall Library, London
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
Misc. Ords.	Merchant Taylors' Company, Miscellaneous Ordinances 1429-55
<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary. A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles</i> , ed. J. Murray, (10 vols, Oxford, 1897-1928)
<i>PBA</i>	Proceedings of the British Academy
PRO	Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London
Riley, <i>Memorials</i>	<i>Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries</i> , ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1868)
RO	Record Office
<i>Rot. Parl.</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i> , 6 vols (London, 1783-1832)
<i>Statutes</i>	<i>Statutes of the Realm</i> , 9 vols (Record Commission, 1810-22)
Stow, <i>Survey</i>	John Stow, <i>A Survey of London</i> , ed. C.L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908)
Thrupp, <i>Merchant Class</i>	S.L. Thrupp, <i>The Merchant Class of Medieval London</i> (Chicago, 1948)
Unwin, <i>Gilds and Companies</i>	G. Unwin, <i>The Gilds and Companies of London</i> , 4th edn. (London, 1963)
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England</i>
WAM	Westminster Abbey Muniments

INTRODUCTION: CRAFTS AND GUILDS IN MEDIEVAL URBAN SOCIETY

This thesis examines the world of the crafts and guilds of late-medieval London with particular reference to the tailors and their guild, known from 1502 as the Merchant Taylors' Company. Using a variety of sources, including the records of the Corporation of London, the wills of London citizens and the records of the City Companies themselves, this study aims to describe and analyse the structures of urban society which grew up around, and were reflected in, the individual and corporate activities of the London tailors. In doing so this study seeks to raise and answer a number of questions concerning the variety of functions fulfilled by craft organisations in urban society and the structures and relationships which related to the manufacture and production of consumer goods in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Urban history and the Study of Craft Guilds

This study does, of course, need to be placed in its historiographical context, particularly in the context of the remarkable resurgence in 'urban history' over the last thirty years. The proliferation of academic journals, conferences, workshops and seminar series as well as the increasingly abundant secondary literature presents a dramatic contrast to the relative obscurity into which the subject had lapsed after a burst of enthusiasm in the nineteenth century. This is no less true of the medieval period as of later epochs. Nineteenth century fascination with the urban past, characterized by the publication of works such as Alice Stopford Green's *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*,¹ gave way to a period of some sixty years during which only a few 'pioneers' continued to work at the coal face of the medieval town. The impressive, and diverse, work of Henri Pirenne, George Unwin, Marion Dale and others certainly helped to keep the subject alive, although their innovative approaches were, in many ways, overshadowed by the wider preoccupations of historians generally.² This manifested itself in an overtly legalistic and 'constitutional' approach to

¹ 2 vols, London, 1894. This work remains an important survey of the late medieval town.

² H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities. Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton, 1925); G. Unwin, *The Guilds and Companies of London* (London, 1908 and subsequent editions); M. Bateson ed., *Borough Customs*, 2 vols., Selden Soc., 18 & 21, (1904, 1906); M.K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 4 (1933), pp.324-35;

urban development in the period 1000 to 1500 which emphasised the importance of borough charters and the rights and privileges acquired by towns and cities.¹ It is not surprising to note that these 'urban' historians were joined by the constitutionalists such as Maitland and Tait who viewed towns in the context of the wider development of governmental structures in medieval England and Europe.² This approach informed much of the urban historiography of the period from 1890 to 1940, and it certainly seems true to say that the preoccupation with 'constitutional niceties', despite the importance of the compilation and discussion of collections of municipal records, resulted in a period of stagnation in the field which lasted for close on thirty years.³ As one historian has put it, the fixation with legal structures is bound to fail 'accurately to embody the true character of particular societies in the past'.⁴ The appearance of Sylvia Thrupp's major work, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, first published in 1948, was a first step away from this constitutionalist approach to urban history.⁵ Yet this book was, in many ways, ahead of its time in its examination of the structures of everyday life, and the social mores of the merchants of medieval London, and of the nature of the communities to which they belonged. Like her earlier works on the Grocers' and Bakers' Companies, Thrupp drew upon the work of Unwin and the 'antiquarian' compilers of collections of printed sources, but also brought new approaches to bear on a wealth of primary sources, little used by historians to date.⁶

The recent revival of interest in the medieval and early modern town has, consequently, brought with it both a realisation of the remarkable contribution of Pirenne, his contemporaries and his successors, and a recognition of the limitations of their work. It has also resulted in an awareness of the possibilities for future research, based upon a

¹ For instance Mary Bateson's *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, 2 vols, (London, 1899-1901) and *idem*, *Borough Customs*.

² F.W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge, 1898); J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough* (Manchester, 1936).

³ R. Holt and G. Rosser, 'Introduction: The English Town in the Middle Ages', in *The Medieval Town, 1200-1540*, ed. R. Holt and G. Rosser (London, 1990), p.3.

⁴ G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster* (Oxford, 1989), p.1.

⁵ Michigan, 1948 and subsequent editions and reprints.

⁶ S.L. Thrupp, *A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Bakers of London* (London, 1933); *idem*, 'The Grocers of London. A Study in Distributive Trade', in E. Power and M.M. Postan eds., *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp.247-92.

profitable cross-fertilization between urban history and other strands of historical investigation and, indeed, other disciplines. Perhaps one of the most important landmarks in the development of a 'new' urban history in England was the publication of *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (1972), edited by Peter Clark and Paul Slack, a collection of essays which sought to pull together some of the emerging strands of inquiry in urban history. Soon afterwards, Susan Reynolds made a typically thought-provoking contribution with her book *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (1977). Since the appearance of these two books, and reflecting the diversification taking place in history more generally, historians of the pre-modern town have produced an ever increasing number of studies of individual towns which, though not yet as common as the ubiquitous post-McFarlane studies of local political society in the middle ages, are gradually adding to our knowledge of the structures of life, work and government in urban society.¹ Concomitant with these studies has been an explosion of interest in a variety of themes within urban history. The lively debate over the economic fortunes of English towns in the fifteenth century perhaps epitomises this: never before had the evidence from urban sources been subject to so much scrutiny and critical analysis, although that particular debate has, perhaps, now run its course.² In the meantime other areas have been opened up, many of them related to the changes in the economy and society of England in the aftermath of the Black Death: the role played by women in urban society; the nature of urban government and of 'popular' perceptions of participation; and the extent to which changes in urban living standards affected the production and consumption of consumer goods.³ The cross-fertilization between these investigations and the town studies can perhaps best be seen in the work of Charles Phythian Adams, as well as in the productive discussions of the social and governmental

¹ For example C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979); R.H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986); G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster* (Oxford, 1989); D.G. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: the City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993).

² For a survey of the debate see D. Palliser, 'Urban Decay Revisited', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J.A.F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988), pp.1-21.

³ Recent contributions to these debates can be found in P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy* (Oxford, 1992); S. Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy" in Late Medieval England', in *Towns and Townspeople*, ed. Thomson, pp.62-86; C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England 1200-1520* (Cambridge, 1989).

structures of late sixteenth century London by Steve Rappaport and Ian Archer.¹ The healthy state of the study of urban history in general and the medieval town in particular can be seen in the series of 'Readers in Urban History', which brought together some of the most influential contributions to the subject made over the last thirty years.² These essays provided, and continue to provide, an important impetus to the development of many areas of urban history, including the study of craft organisations, and their functions in urban society.

Indeed, the fortunes of the study of craft organisations in the middle ages has mirrored the development of urban history as a whole, and was subject to the same influences and preoccupations. Before the 1930s, associations of craftsmen in the pre-modern town had been a major subject of study for many historians of towns. The development of 'economic history' as distinct from constitutional history, in the nineteenth century was motivated by the prominence of debate on the issues of organised labour, and the relationships between employers and employees. The medieval guilds were examined by historians such as Brentano, Lipson and Unwin with an eye on contemporary developments in labour relations, and the origins of Trade Unions.³ This began the process whereby the study of craft organisations became separated from the study of parish guilds and fraternities.⁴ Preoccupation with the historical origins of the 'guilds' of later medieval Europe led to the term 'craft guild' gaining common currency, as historians such as Brentano, perceiving them as the 'quintessential form of guild', sought to trace the medieval organisations back to the 'gelda' of the Germanic past, failing to take into account the variety of associations which, at different periods, employed the principles of 'fraternitas' as the

¹ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*; S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989); I.W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991).

² Holt and Rosser eds., *The Medieval Town*. For the other collections in this series see J. Barry ed., *The Tudor and Stuart Town* (London, 1990); P. Borsay ed., *The Eighteenth Century Town* (London, 1990); and R.J. Morris and R. Rodger ed., *The Victorian City* (London, 1993).

³ L. Brentano, 'On the history and development of Gilds and the origin of trade unions', in T. Smith ed., *English Gilds*, EETS, 40, (1870); E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England: Volume I, The Middle Ages*, Ch. VIII, 'Craft Gilds' (London, 1915); Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*.

⁴ See Smith ed., *English Gilds* and H.F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Medieval England* (London, 1919).

basis for social organisation.¹ These broader studies drew upon, and in turn stimulated, studies of individual guilds, particularly the London livery companies. Charles Clode's study of the Merchant Taylors' Company, published privately in 1888, was a typical product of the late nineteenth-century genre of Company histories: it was entirely based upon the records of the Company, with occasional reference to published City records, and was primarily a description of the development of the Company as an institution.² Later studies, notably A.H. Johnson's massive work on the Drapers' Company, were more analytical in nature, drawing on the work and preoccupations of Unwin and his contemporaries to look at economic issues, as well as the institutional development of the Company.³ Guild histories, though still published privately, often at the expense of the guilds themselves, were now increasingly being written by professional historians and had fallen within the compass of mainstream social and economic history. Yet this brief flurry of interest in the development of craft organisations was to prove only temporary and the subject was doomed to be pushed to the margins of historical inquiry. There seem to have been two reasons for this. In the first place, the role of craft guilds in urban society had, to all intents and purposes, been studied to exhaustion. Constitutionalists and economic historians alike agreed that guilds were essentially agents of control, used to regulate economic and political activity by employers and City governments.⁴ Unwin's work in many ways reflects these preoccupations: his analysis of the development of the London companies is characterized by an emphasis upon their legal position, and the importance of so-called charters of 'incorporation', as marking the transition of the guilds from infancy into young adulthood, from 'fraternities', under the jurisdiction of the church, to 'livery companies', subject to secular authority. Yet at the same time he was keen to discuss both the struggles between merchants and artisans, the emergence and suppression of associations of wage-labourers, and the ever-changing

¹ See S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984), pp.70-2.

² C.M. Clode, *The Early History of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist, London, with notices of the lives of some of its eminent members*, 2 vols (London, 1888). This drew on his earlier collection of sources, *Memorials of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (London, 1875).

³ A.H. Johnson, *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1914-22).

⁴ See for instance L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1923) and S. Kramer, *The English Craft Gilds: Studies in their Progress and Decline* (New York, 1927).

relationship between the guilds and civic authority.¹ A second reason for the untimely demise of the study of craft organisations lay in the dramatic resurgence of interest in trade and commerce, conducted on a large scale by wealthy merchants. This led to the marginalisation of urban history as a whole: mercantile activity was less identifiably 'urban' in nature, and was much more obviously perceived as the well-spring of national prosperity in an era in which fluctuations in the 'international economy' were taking centre stage.² Towns and cities, particularly the ports, were therefore seen in the wider scheme of things, as nodes in the economic framework which also included methods of production and distribution in the countryside. The fortunes of an identifiably 'urban' history also contrasted markedly with the rapid strides being made in the study of agrarian history, landlords and the medieval peasantry.³

Looking back it is easy to see the weaknesses in the urban history of the early twentieth century which led to the stagnation in the subject as a whole, and in the historiography of the guilds in particular. The study of medieval guilds retained a preoccupation with the early-medieval and even antique past: Emile Coornaert's survey of medieval guilds and fraternities continued this theme but, writing in the 1940s, his work reflects the extent to which craft organisations, as opposed to socio-religious fraternities, had fallen out of favour and hence they were all but absent from his surveys. All that was left was a residual interest in the manifestations of the principles of association among men and women in the middle ages, characterized by the lay confraternity.⁴ Yet it was the survival of this strand of investigation which, in many ways, provided the stimulus for much of the

¹ Unwin, *Guilds and Companies*.

² See for instance many of the essays in Postan and Power eds., *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, and E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History* (Oxford, 1941).

³ For a bibliography see Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp.278-85.

⁴ E. Coornaert, *Les Corporations en France avant 1789* (Paris, 1941) and *idem*, 'Les ghildes médiévales (v^e-xiv^e siècles). Définition. Évolution', *Revue Historique*, 199 (1948), pp.22-55, 208-43. The debate over the germanic or antique origins of the medieval guilds has been current since the nineteenth century. Steven Epstein presents a comprehensive survey of the now discredited argument that the medieval guilds were descendants of the Roman 'collegia' in his *Wage Labor and the Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill and London, 1991), Ch.1.

modern historiography of collective organisation in the medieval town.¹ Consequently, tentative steps have been taken in the direction of looking afresh at craft organisations in the medieval period. Sylvia Thrupp's 1963 essay on the guilds of medieval Europe remains the only comprehensive modern survey of this subject, but suffers somewhat from the lack of progress made by other historians since Unwin. The prevailing interpretation was still of a formal 'craft system', articulated and imposed by guild and municipal authorities upon artisans.² Ordinances and regulations, particularly those which survive in municipal archives, were the basic fodder for those historians who continued to look at craft organisations in the medieval town. The collections of sources compiled and printed by the nineteenth century antiquarians continued to suffice for many, despite the insights which Thrupp herself had brought to the subject with her imaginative use of a wider range of guild records, and evidence for the lives of craftsmen and women in the medieval town. From the official governmental sources it was all too easy for historians to construct a picture of medieval craft guilds as bastions of restrictive practices: ordinances typically limited the size of workshops, controlled access to the civic franchise and the crafts through apprenticeship and other mechanisms, and forbade the introduction of labour-saving machinery. It is not surprising, therefore, that guilds have continued to be viewed as the 'agents' of civic authority, and that their impact upon enterprise and innovation has tended to be perceived in a negative light.

The renaissance in urban history over the last thirty years has certainly helped to effect a revival in the study of craft organisations in the medieval town and, more importantly, to bring new approaches and a broader range of evidence to bear on the subject. The principal difference between the old and the new historiography is that historians have, at last, begun to take up the challenges presented by Thrupp and others after the Second World War. Assumptions about the firm control exercised by the guilds over the crafts have

¹ For instance, Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*; R. Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders: the World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250-c.1650* (London, 1987); R.F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1982).

² S.L. Thrupp, 'The Gilds', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. III, ed., M.M. Postan, E.E. Rich and E. Miller (Cambridge, 1963), pp.230-80. Typically, the medieval town as a whole received scant treatment in this volume which dwelt principally upon matters mercantile and agrarian. A more recent survey by Steven Epstein fails to move the debate on significantly, primarily because he fails to answer many of the important questions he raises concerning the functions of guilds, and the nature of artisan production. This is despite an impressive, but traditional, analysis of formal craft structures using a wide range of European guild records, see Epstein, *Wage Labor and the Guilds*.

now been questioned as historians have begun to look at productive processes and the lives of the artisans themselves. Elspeth Veale's study of the English fur trade in the middle ages combined an analysis of the structures and functions of one of the London livery companies with a detailed analysis of the diversity and complexity of the 'workshop economy' itself, as seen through the lives of the craftsmen themselves. This study took the traditional 'guild history' into the modern era. Her subsequent article on the craftsmen on medieval London was an important, though necessarily tentative, starting point for the wider inquiry into the world of work: almost for the first time since Thrupp it was possible to look at the subject from the bottom up, to examine the sheer range and diversity of economic activities in which artisans were engaged in the middle ages.¹ On the continent the work of historians such as Bronisław Geremek similarly demonstrated the limits of the authority of craft guilds, and showed the complexity of the work relationships which existed in the urban economy, a complexity which could not be distilled into formal regulations. The margins of urban society, for instance, were, until recently, a much neglected aspect of urban history.² Work on the important role played by many women in the urban economy has similarly shown the unsatisfactory nature of a historiography which relies too heavily upon formal regulations.³ Finally, the contribution made by archaeologists has enabled historians to understand the nature of productive processes, although as yet there have been few successful attempts to assess the implications of these technical processes for the relationships between craftsmen and women in the urban economy.⁴

Yet, with the exception of Veale's early contributions, there has been an unfortunate tendency among historians of crafts and urban society once more to simplify, or even to nullify, the role played by craft organisations. In response to the commendable attempts to

¹ E.M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966); *idem*, 'Craftsmen and the Economy of London in the Fourteenth Century', reprinted in *The Medieval Town*, ed. Holt and Rosser, pp.120-140.

² B. Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1987); *idem*, *Le salariat dans l'artisanat Parisien au xiii^e-xv^e siècles*, (Paris, 1982).

³ See Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, and see the bibliography in M. Kowaleski and J.M. Bennett, 'Crafts, Gilds and Women in the Middle Ages', *Signs*, 14 (1989), pp.474-88.

⁴ See for example, J. Blair and N. Ramsay, *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques and Products* (London, 1991). Veale's book on the English fur trade remains one of the few successful fusions of technical expertise with an understanding of craft structures and of the roles played by craft guilds.

reconstruct the working lives and conditions of artisans there has been, in certain quarters, an attempt once more to characterize guilds as institutions which were created and controlled by municipal authorities. This indeed was the approach adopted by Heather Swanson in her otherwise well-considered analysis of a number of medieval crafts and their practitioners, centred on the craftsmen of York in the middle ages.¹ Craft guilds, for her, were merely the political tools of mercantile civic authorities; their representative, and even their regulatory, functions were merely empty rhetorical gestures. Yet it is the argument of this thesis that guilds were much more than 'agents' of urban government, and that their role in the affairs of their respective crafts was often pragmatic and constructive. There were, of course, limits to the authority exercised by craft guilds but, as will be argued, guild regulations had an fundamentally normative function; they were never designed to reveal the complexities of urban productive processes, and could not reflect the blurred distinctions between crafts, the role played by women, and the variety of strategies adopted to ensure the survival of a business. Guilds, it is argued here, adopted a pragmatic approach to the enforcement of regulations, the effect of which was, from the point of view of legitimate practitioners of the crafts, far from being restrictive.² At the heart of this argument lies the nature of the medieval craft guild itself. Once more, Elspeth Veale has made an important contribution with her analysis of the origins of the 'Great Twelve' London livery companies: in reviving the concept of the 'craft guild' as a 'fraternity', with important social, religious and charitable functions, her article raises important questions concerning the autonomy which guilds could possess and exploit on behalf of their members.³ A central aim of this thesis is to build on these findings using a variety of sources, not just the municipally enrolled ordinances used by Swanson and others, in order to assess the capacity of craft organisations to 'represent' in some way the wider interests of merchants and artisans, using structures they themselves had created and adapted.

¹ H. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England*, (Oxford, 1989). See also her 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), pp.29-48.

² See below pp.163-80.

³ E.M. Veale, 'The "Great Twelve": Mystery and Fraternity in Thirteenth Century London', *Historical Research*, 64 (1991), pp.237-63.

The Tailors of London and their Guild: Sources and Objectives

The period covered by this thesis saw the continuation and elaboration of many existing trends in urban development across Europe, and in London in particular. The gradual clarification of governmental structures and practices, for instance, can be seen in the *Liber Albus*, a compilation of predominantly early fourteenth century London customs, made by John Carpenter, who held the important office of City Clerk in the early fifteenth century.¹ An increasingly articulate and demanding laity, drawn from all but the poorest sections of society became a constituency to which both church and state began to pay attention, regardless of the fact that formal political power in towns continued to rest with small, usually mercantile, elites. The proliferation of guilds and fraternities in towns, many specifically concerned with a particular craft, others not, is one of the most potent symbols of this self-confidence. The records they left, if used correctly, provide an invaluable insight into the individual and collective concerns of townsmen in the later middle ages.

The historian of later medieval London is relatively well served for documentary sources, despite the loss, in the eighteenth century, of the financial records of the City Chamberlain which contained lists of admissions to the freedom, records used effectively by historians of other English towns.² Though not as extensive as the archives of many Italian towns and cities, for instance, the records of the City of London, whether it be the thousands of surviving wills, or the records of the City government itself, do provide an important framework within which to study the evolution of the guilds and the activities of their members.³ Indeed, as will be shown, information about the day-to-day activities of artisans can often be gleaned more readily from sources other than guild records: legal records, testamentary evidence and household accounts are vital sources for economic history at this

¹ See H.T. Riley ed., *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis* (Rolls Series, 12, 1859-62).

² For example R.B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Late Middle Ages', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, 23 (1973), pp.1-22; A.F. Butcher, 'The Origins of Romney Freemen, 1433-1523', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, 27 (1974), pp.16-27.

³ A history of London in the later middle ages by Dr. Caroline M. Barron is currently in preparation. For the records of the City and its government see her 'The Government of London and its Relations with the Crown, 1400-1450' (Unpub. University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1970). See also Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.18-32; and D.J. Keene and V. Harding, *A Survey of Documentary Sources for Property Holding in London before the Great Fire*, London Record Society, 22 (1985).

level.¹ As far as the guilds themselves are concerned it is important to be able to assess their functions in the light of the ways in which they were perceived by craftsmen, whether members or non-members; such sentiments can be found in sources as diverse as the proceedings of the Court of Aldermen and Common Council, or the numerous surviving wills of London citizens.² Indeed, the importance of testamentary evidence for the historian of guilds can be illustrated by reference to the will of a prominent tailor of London, John Brynchele. Brynchele described himself as citizen and tailor but was also the clerk of the tailors' guild, known as the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist, and seems to have been responsible for the compilation of the fraternity's accounts, the taking of minutes at meetings, and other administrative tasks. He was evidently a learned man, and consequently well-suited to his position. In his will, proved in 1420, he left several books, including three copies of Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy*, one of which was in Latin with the others written in English. Not averse to less intellectually demanding literature, he also left to the fortunate William Holgrave (a fellow tailor) 'librum meum vocatum Talys of Caunterbury'.³

The records kept by Brynchele and his successors constitute one of the best medieval archives of a London livery company. While, once again, overshadowed by the records left by their counterparts on the continent, the Tailors' archive is of particular value in that it was generated by the guild of a predominantly artisan craft; the other extensive archives belong on the whole to the mercantile companies, such as the Mercers, Drapers and Grocers.⁴ Analysis of the role played by the tailors' guild must, therefore, involve consideration of the ways in which the structures and functions of guilds took account of 'local' conditions within the respective crafts. The fraternity of London tailors is unusually well documented,

¹ See esp. Chapter 6 below.

² Those wills proved in the Husting Court of London are calendared in *CWCH*, I-II.

³ GL, MS 9171/3, f.64v. This appears to be the earliest mention in a will of a copy of the *Canterbury Tales*. A note on this is currently in preparation.

⁴ For the Merchant Taylors' Company in the later sixteenth century see N.V. Sleight-Johnson, 'The Merchant Taylors' Company of London, 1580-1645' (Unpub. London Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1989). Histories by Anne F. Sutton (Mercers) and Pamela Nightingale (Grocers) are currently in preparation. The more limited archives of the Goldsmiths and Skinners prompted the only 'modern' studies so far published, see Veale, *Fur Trade*; T.F. Reddaway, and L.E.M. Walker, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company* (London, 1975). See also I.W. Archer, *The History of the Haberdashers' Company of London* (Chichester, 1991) which covers the entire history of the Company but, despite the absence of early records, sheds important light on the medieval haberdashers and the origins of the guild. For the medieval records of other artisan guilds see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.43 n.96, 393-94.

principally because of its early establishment and rapid development.¹ Three main groups of sources survive from the fifteenth century, and each sheds light on the functions of the guild and the activities of its members. First, records of a legalistic nature, so beloved of the antiquarians, survive in the form of letters patent from six kings, and a short run of early fifteenth century ordinances. These records, it is argued here, present an essentially normative picture of the craft and the way in which it was supposed to be regulated. They should not, however, be rejected on these grounds but should be interpreted in the light of the ways in which guilds could and did attempt in some way to embody and 'represent' the needs and aspirations of the freemen of the craft by endeavouring to protect their employment opportunities and extend the jurisdiction of the guild into new areas.² A second source, which seems to reinforce this view, is the short series of minutes of the Tailors' Court (1486-93). As well as important apprenticeship records, specifying the social and geographical origins of would-be tailors, the minutes also contain details of the settlement of disputes between craftsmen, arbitrations by senior members of the guild and the punishment of offenders. It is suggested here that the Tailors' Court, although increasingly dominated by merchants, was an important forum for the fair settlement of disputes, and the articulation of concerns by craftsmen at many different levels.

The most extensive and fruitful of the surviving sources is the run of Wardens' Accounts which survive (with a gap 1445-53) from 1398 until 1484. Written in French until 1445, and in Latin from 1453, these are unusually full and record in detail items of income and expenditure for which the Fraternity was responsible. The fifteenth century saw the Fraternity acquire significant amounts of property in and around the City, such that its corporate income rose from £82 in 1398-99 to over £200 by 1460, of which well over half normally derived from property.³ Other regular sources of income included fees for the enrollment of apprentices (3s 4d) and entry to the fraternity (20s), and fines imposed for breaches of guild regulations. The fraternity spent money on such things as the salaries of officials (the clerk and the beadle) and the salaries paid to the numerous chantry priests employed to say mass daily for the souls of those who left properties to the Tailors. The

¹ See below, pp.4-9.

² See Chapter 3 below.

³ See Appendix III.

acquisition and maintenance of these properties entailed a great deal of expenditure, whether it was the hefty legal fees incurred to settle disputes, the regular repairs carried out to the properties, or the extraordinary expenditure, (usually funded through a levy of the membership) such as that undertaken for the construction of an almshouse in 1413.¹ Analysis of the Tailors' records, and particularly the Wardens' accounts, revealed that the religious and charitable functions of the tailors' guild were remarkably prominent, and were in fact more developed than those of most of the London craft organisations, with the possible exception of the Skinners. As will be shown, the Tailors expended a great deal of time and money in building up their 'spiritual assets', including a large and influential membership from outside the craft, links with religious houses, and two chapels. In turn the fraternity was perceived as a trustworthy administrator of charity and post obit arrangements.² These developments, it is argued here, were closely related to the Tailors' own desire for prominence in a City dominated by merchants. The successful creation of a corporate identity, through their wealthy fraternity, gave the tailors a means to seek wider goals: there is convincing evidence that the political and economic concerns articulated by prominent tailors did, in many ways, reflect the underlying tensions and expectations within the citizenry as a whole, particularly among the artisan classes. It is suggested, therefore, that craft guilds were not merely the tools of civic authorities but could act as the vehicles for the aspirations, not only of their own members, but also of a wider constituency of artisans in the capital. These 'representative' functions of guilds manifested themselves in various ways: in the case of the London tailors, the political turbulence of 1376-92 and 1439-44 facilitated the expression of concerns which, though initially related to their own craft, soon came to encompass a wider movement for political reform in the City. As an unusually prominent artisan guild, the Tailors were ideally placed to articulate these radical demands.³

Nevertheless, craft guilds did indeed fulfill important functions on behalf of municipal authorities, the most significant of which was the regulation of their respective crafts or 'misteries'. Yet even here it is clear that guilds could act with a flexibility which stemmed from their 'representative' attributes. Much depended upon the structure of a particular craft:

¹ See below, pp.79-81.

² Examined in Chapters 1 and 2.

³ See below, pp.106-134.

the tailors' guild, it is suggested, was better able than most to cater for the needs of all freemen because of the common economic experiences of members and non-members. Moreover, evidence from the tailors' records suggests that, where such common ground existed, craft guilds could be effective administrators of their crafts, but only because they made conscious and pragmatic choices about the ways in which they chose to enforce their ordinances. Using the City records and the Tailors' accounts it is possible to demonstrate the interaction of economic and social conditions in London with the collective thought processes of the guilds during the fifteenth century. Enforcement of craft ordinances was prompted by the concentration on certain issues: the successful containment of the economic threat posed by non-freemen, for instance, meant that not all guilds resorted to more draconian controls, such as the restriction of access to the formal structures of the crafts (particularly apprenticeship), in order to protect the opportunities for freemen. Such flexibility and pragmatism in the sphere of economic regulation could never be reflected in official craft ordinances which varied little from craft to craft in the middle ages and fulfilled an essentially normative function.¹

Similarly it is argued that the negative impact of guilds upon enterprise and innovation has been much exaggerated. In many spheres of the urban economy and craft regulation a *laissez-faire* attitude of sorts prevailed: the Tailors' guild made little effort to control or limit the enrollment of apprentices by their craftsmen, whereas other guilds introduced barriers in the form of limits on the size of workshops, or hefty enrollment fees in order to protect, in the long run, the interests of their freemen. One of the central arguments here is that the prevailing market conditions in London could sometimes render such controls unnecessary. In the clothing industry, for instance, it is argued in that a *laissez-faire* approach was influenced by a buoyant market for new clothing, stimulated by rising standards of living in the aftermath of the Black Death.² On the other hand, those guilds which did introduce more drastic restrictions on the activities of freemen were, it is suggested, not trying to frustrate innovation, but were endeavouring to encourage fair competition, and promote the quality of the training provided by masters and of the goods produced.

¹ Below, pp.163-80.

² Arguments outlined in Chapters 5 and 6.

This thesis also seeks to demonstrate the normative functions of guild ordinances, and the inherently simplified, and incorrect, picture of the craft described in such 'official sources'. The reconstruction of the careers of craftsmen has demonstrated the in-built bias towards those who completed their apprenticeships and ended up as masters in their own right or even as members of the guild itself.¹ Consequently the image of the 'independent artisan' with his workshop, family, apprentices and servants is one which is most obviously supported by guild records. Yet this study suggests that such a picture formed only one part of the overall structure of many urban crafts, including the London tailors. A variety of external evidence is employed to demonstrate the complexity and adaptability which existed in the work relationships between craftsmen. The diversity and specialisation in the nature of artisan production described by Veale can also be seen in the 'formal' structures of the craft: servanthood and apprenticeship, for example, were far from rigid concepts in the late-medieval period, and a more complex picture emerges when one looks beneath the rhetorical stipulations of guild ordinances at the reality of the so-called 'workshop economy'.² Servanthood, for instance, was widespread within the crafts of medieval London, but its extent within a particular craft often varied: the low cost of establishing a tailoring business, for instance, contrasted with the relatively high costs of the metal-working trades. Consequently, whereas there were large numbers of freemen working as wage labourers in these latter trades, servanthood within the tailoring industry may have been less prominent and more short term in nature. Similarly, although it is suggested that the tailors' guild essentially operated in the interests of the freemen of the craft, yet the fact that only about a third of tailors completed their apprenticeship means that any definition of a 'craft' must take into account those failed apprentices and unenfranchised immigrants working on the margins of the urban economy. The limitations of guild authority are most obvious in this area; it is argued here that, in the case of many artisan crafts in particular, apprenticeship was not in fact the means of assimilation into urban society.³

In the same way, the provisions of guild ordinances make little allowance for the fluidity and flexibility inherent in the urban economy, and in the production of consumer

¹ See below, pp.192-216.

² See Veale, 'Craftsmen'. An important contribution on this subject has been B. Geremek, *Le salariat*.

³ See below, pp.192-203.

goods. The diverse career paths taken by medieval artisans are examined: the blurred distinctions between occupations, and the transferability of skills in the urban economy, lent a dynamic to work relationships and craft identifications which historians have generally failed to emphasise.¹ This was particularly so in the cloth and clothing industry, but a similar picture can be seen in other sectors of the urban economy. Workshops were interdependent in ways which cannot be reduced to the theoretical dependence of one craft on another as suggested by formal guild structures; the putting out 'system', it is argued here was as much a product of a constant skill-based dialogue between craftsmen, as it was a means by which a few wealthier capitalists could control artisan production. Studies of other pre-industrial economies are suggestive: Michael Sonenscher, for instance, uses the term 'productive network' to describe work relationships in pre-revolutionary France, a model which should be borne in mind by historians of earlier urban environments.² The skills possessed by artisans are considered here in relation to the available archaeological and iconographical evidence, as well as documentary evidence for the employment of these skills on a variety of tasks. The thesis also aims to assess the economic implications of the important changes in fashions and garment construction which took place from the mid-fourteenth century; these had far-reaching consequences, not only for tailors and their work, but also for consumers whose demands and expectations appear to have become more prominent as a result of the improvement in living standards which was experienced by many town dwellers in the century following the Black Death.

This thesis, therefore, aims to make a contribution to the study of towns and cities in the middle ages, drawing upon the valuable work undertaken by historians over the last three decades as well as the pioneering efforts of Unwin and his contemporaries. The aim here is to approach this broad subject from below so to speak; to complement the work of historians of a later period, such as Archer and Rappaport, who were primarily concerned with governmental structures and urban stability, by examining the role played by craft guilds in urban society through the detailed examination of one craft, the tailors of London. Such studies are essential if urban historians are to begin to enlarge their understanding of the

¹ Although Swanson, in her *Medieval Artisans*, draws attention to this phenomenon.

² M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages. Natural law, politics and the eighteenth century French trades*, (Cambridge, 1989), pp.99-174.

functions fulfilled by these organisations, not only for the wider task of creating and maintaining urban stability, but also as vehicles for the articulation and representation of the preoccupations of citizens. In this sense the similarities between the Tailors and other crafts in London and elsewhere are as important as the differences: the argument advanced here seeks to portray guilds as organisations which were developed by their members along similar organisational lines, but which applied their regulations to the crafts in a flexible and responsive manner, inspired by an appreciation of the needs of craftsmen and an implicit understanding of the complex world of artisan production in the middle ages.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRATERNITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, 1300-1500.

I. 'Mystery' and 'Fraternity'

In 1603 John Stow, citizen and Merchant Taylor, described the origins of his company in typically authoritative style:

I find that King *Edward* the first...confirmed this Guild by the name of Taylors and Linnen armourers, and also gaue to the brethren thereof authority euery yeare at mid-sommer to hold a feast, and to choose vnto them a governour, or Mayster with wardens: whereupon the same yeare 1300, on the feast day of the natiuitie of saint *Iohn Baptist*, they chose *Henry de Ryall* to be their pilgrim, for the maister of this misterie (as one that trauelled for the whole companie) was then so called....and the foure wardens were then called Purueyors of almes.¹

Between 1200 and 1500 the governmental and institutional structures of urban communities in England underwent significant change. One of the most important was the development, within many urban trades and occupations, of craft organisations or 'guilds' which performed a variety of functions within urban society. In a recent invaluable contribution to the debate over the origins of craft organisations Elspeth Veale has rightly emphasised the variety of the groups set up by the craftsmen of London in the thirteenth century, the different forms which these took, and the multiplicity of motives which lay behind such foundations. Veale further emphasises the variety of paths which the 'organised misteries' of thirteenth century London took subsequently: some, like the Tailors, Skinners and Goldsmiths, founded large and active socio-religious fraternities, confirmed by the acquisition of royal charters; others, such as the Vintners and Ironmongers, saw no further organisational development beyond what was needed for the administration of their respective crafts. This latter role was common to most of these associations: by 1300 admission to the freedom of the City of London had to take place through one of the numerous crafts or 'misteries' and, with the increasing popularity of apprenticeship as a route to the freedom, some sort of organisational structure within the crafts became essential.² Equally, the order of this process could be reversed so that some existing parish fraternities, often dominated

¹ J. Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. C.L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908), i, 181.

² This was confirmed by the City's charter of 1319, see G.A. Williams, *Medieval London: from Commune to Capital* (London, 1963), p.283. Apprenticeship prospered at the expense of patrimony and redemption as a route to the freedom, see *CPMR*, 1364-1381, pp.xxvii-lix.

by practitioners of a particular craft, took on regulatory functions.¹ The chronology, and popularity of the 'fraternity' as an essential part of the development of craft organisations in Europe is well attested and raises a number of issues. Of particular importance is a recognition of the range of terms employed by contemporaries for their associations, coupled with a realisation that these could refer to more than one 'type' of organisation. The terms *fraternitas* and *gilda* did not correspond to our modern distinction between 'religious fraternities' and 'craft guilds', but were often used synonymously for organisations which cherished principles of brotherhood and mutual support often (but not always) expressed through religious, charitable and convivial activity. Such associations were founded with increasing frequency throughout western Europe from the early fourteenth century; the 'fraternity' was the natural organising unit for men and women who were not blood relatives but who wished to use the analogy of brotherhood in order to achieve corporate aims.² The emphasis such associations placed upon harmony and order, underpinned by religious values and attitudes, fitted equally well into the sphere of economic relations as into the religious context. Contemporaries did of course distinguish between the different sorts of fraternities, but it is just as important to stress the common ground between all these organisations. For instance, although the *arti* (the crafts) were clearly distinct from the *scuole* in renaissance Venice, the political and administrative functions of the former were inseparable from their devotional activities.³ In England, the guild returns of 1388-89 are equally clear about the attributes which the fraternities of crafts shared with those with no economic dimension to their activities.⁴ In late-medieval London, and in many provincial towns and cities, the need for the supervision and organization of the crafts or 'misteries' (from the Latin *ministerium* and the French *mestier*, meaning 'art' or 'calling') was often met by the utilisation of pre-existing principles of association among a small but influential elite among the practitioners

¹ Veale, "Great Twelve", pp.237-63.

² S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984) ch. 3, esp. pp. 67-75.

³ Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders*, p.44.

⁴ For those returns in English see T. Smith ed., *English Gilds* (EETS, 40, 1870), pp.1-122. Returns from London can also be found in R.W. Chambers and M. Daunt eds., *A Book of London English, 1384-1425* (Oxford, 1931), pp.41-60 and C.M. Barron ed., 'Four Newly-Discovered Middle English Guild Certificates of 1388-9' (forthcoming).

of a particular craft. The enforcement of ordinances, for instance, was of particular importance for craft fraternities and so wardens were given extra duties, such as the 'search' for sub-standard workmanship, whilst maintaining their ceremonial duties as collectors of alms. In a sense, it is true to say that many craft guilds were identified as such through 'the exploitation of the fraternity structure for other purposes', namely the regulation of the craft.¹ Furthermore, the fact that so many craft guilds began as such voluntary associations, often with no regulatory functions, must lead to the questioning of existing generalisations which assert that craft guilds were established by municipal authorities to serve their own goals of political, economic and social control.² This chapter provides a starting point for the wider inquiry into the position occupied by craft guilds in urban society by examining the origins and development of a guild by the London tailors, known as the fraternity of St. John the Baptist.

Throughout this thesis the terms 'guild' and 'fraternity' are used synonymously, to denote the exclusive associations of craftsmen which exercised jurisdiction over the crafts or 'misteries'. What did of course vary greatly was, first of all, the extent to which such 'clubs' were founded within crafts: many misteries merely retained a loose, often *ad hoc*, organisational structure, geared primarily towards the supervision of craftsmen on behalf of municipal governments. Secondly, where they did exist, these clubs also varied in the degree to which they were capable of providing religious and charitable services for their members, as their 'non-craft' equivalents did. Historians have often been guilty of a premature dismissal of the potential for action of these craft fraternities, preferring often to locate the focus for the religious lives of citizens exclusively in the parish.³ The weight of evidence for the religious and social activities of the London companies has, however, ensured that the fraternities they founded have been given a measure of consideration by historians such

¹ R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p.282.

² This view has been taken to its extreme by Dr. ^{H.}Swanson in 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English towns', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), pp.29-48. Here and in her *Medieval Artisans* (Oxford, 1989), the internal lives of the guilds are either ignored entirely or deprecated in favour of portraying guilds merely as the 'agents' of municipal authority .

³ Swanson 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-49; M. Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), p.250.

as George Unwin and Sylvia Thrupp.¹ The foundation of a fraternity by men of a particular craft was in many ways a process of 'going public': despite the exclusive nature of such organisations and their emphasis on the non-disclosure of the 'secrets' of the craft, the adoption of a patron saint and, later, the acquisition of a royal charter gave a craft an identity in the City, over and above their role as regulators of the misteries. Indeed, the 'fraternity' often acted as the persona of the 'mystery' in the wider urban context. Civic ceremonial, for example, provided an opportunity for the expression of identity, with the fraternities providing the means, both physically through the wealth they had built up, and conceptually through the symbolism generated by the devotion to a particular saint or feast day. Once an identity was created, occasions such as processions and ridings were indicators of the state of the civic hierarchy, and opportunities for adjustments to be made to it.² It is with this in mind that the extraordinary development of the Tailors' fraternity must be discussed. In particular, the dichotomy between the artisan nature of the craft and the relatively modest wealth of its practitioners, and the presence of the mystery in the 'Great Twelve' above many mercantile companies raises the possibility that status could be acquired through a conscious assertion of corporate identity through a large and successful fraternity.

II. The Early Years of the Tailors' Fraternity, 1267-1345

Evidence for collective action on the part of the tailors of London before 1300 is rare. Corporate spirit was certainly demonstrated in 1267 when tailors were engaged in running battles with goldsmiths through the streets of London, but the first indicator of a ruling body within the craft occurs in a will of 1278 in which one Robert de Mounpeillers left a quitrent and rent charge on a shop and solar, belonging to the Tailors, to two of his sons.³ Stow's evidence, quoted above, would seem to suggest that, by 1300, the Tailors had not only founded a fraternity, but had secured royal support for it. Henry de Ryall appears in other records between 1300 and 1305 as a prominent common councilman which lends credibility to Stow's account and suggests that, through the leadership of such men, the craft as a body

¹ See Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies*, ch. 8 and Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.19, 30-32, 256-7.

² C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The communal year at Coventry 1450-1550', in *The Medieval Town*, ed. Holt and Rosser, pp.238-64. The role of the tailors' fraternity in civic ceremonial and in urban politics is discussed in Chapter 3.

³ *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, ed T. Stapleton, Camden Society, 34, (1846), p.99; *CWCH*, 1, p.38.

was sufficiently well-knit to be able to support a fraternity. The Goldsmiths and Skinners, like the Tailors, appear to have founded fraternities by 1300 - in the case of the Skinners this was only thirty years since they first appear in the records acting collectively. Not all crafts saw such developments: the Fishmongers and Vintners do not seem to have founded fraternities as such although many individual vintners maintained close links with the parish of St Martin in the Vintry. The government of these crafts was conducted through much looser, less formally constituted associations.¹ The rare survival of a late twelfth-century agreement between the saddlers of London and the canons of St. Martin le Grand indicates that formal organisation into a fraternity attached to a religious institution could occur at an early date.² Veale suggests, however, that although corporate activity on the part of most of the 'Great Twelve' was very much a feature of thirteenth-century life, the process of establishing properly constituted fraternities was not really in full swing until the close of the century.³ The geographical concentration of crafts in certain parts of the City, for instance, may have meant, in some cases, that a formal craft organisation was superfluous given that disputes could be dealt with, and the craft supervised, at local level by the wealthiest and most influential members of the craft.⁴ The religious and social needs of local craftsmen may well have been fulfilled by a parish fraternity such as that of St. Botolph Aldersgate which, although counting a large number of brewers amongst its membership, never grew into the governing body of that craft.⁵ It must also be realised that in some cases it was a while before a fraternity founded by members of a particular craft came to have control of the affairs of the mystery as a whole. It was the fraternity founded by the drapers of Cornhill which came to govern the craft, not that of the 'burellers' in St. Mary Abchurch. The Skinners' fraternity, dedicated to the feast of Corpus Christi, was thriving in the early

¹ Veale, "Great Twelve", pp.240-52.

² G.H. Martin 'The Early History of the London Saddlers' Guild' in 'Towns and Townspeople in Medieval and Renaissance Europe', ed. B. Pullan and S. Reynolds, *BJRL*, 72 (1990), pp.147-52.

³ Veale, "Great Twelve", p.247. This revises the earlier view that the greater mysteries were headed by fraternities before the mid-thirteenth century - see Williams, *Medieval London*, p.60.

⁴ Veale, "Great Twelve", p.240.

⁵ P. Basing ed., *Parish Fraternity Register. The fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS. Fabian and Sebastian in the Parish of St. Botolph without Aldersgate*, London Record Society, 19 (1982), pp.xxii-xxiii.

fourteenth-century, but it was not until 1344 that it came to have full control of the mystery; before then not all prominent skimmers were members of the fraternity.¹

It is important, therefore, to examine the evidence for the existence of the tailors' fraternity in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Stow's account of the early years of the Tailors' fraternity is particularly valuable given the paucity of such evocative language in other sources. The City Letter Books, for example, contain many references to the crafts, but these rarely hint at the existence of a fraternity, concentrating as a matter of course upon the role of senior craftsmen as 'governors' of the mysteries. References to the Tailors of London in the first half of the fourteenth century are no exception: in 1328, for example, the names of the twenty four tailors elected to govern the mystery are listed; subsequent lists were regularly entered by City authorities keen to ensure that the mysteries were being effectively regulated.² A more complete picture of the functions and duties of some of these individuals emerges from the fortunate survival of a grant to the Tailors' guild, dating from the second quarter of the fourteenth century, of a quitrent, issuing from tenements in the parish of St. Martin Outwich.³ The grant, made by John de Totenham who was sworn in as a carpenter for the assize of nuisance in 1325, names five tailors one of whom, John Pecche, appears in the 1328 list, with the other four, William de Derby, Robert de Gyldeford, Giles de Westmill and Roger de Coloigne included in a subsequent list of masters of 1340.⁴ This grant moreover confirms the nomenclature used by Stow, for it refers to Pecche as the 'peregrinus', with the others being termed the 'collectores elemosinae' of what was obviously a fully fledged fraternity. The use of such terms is a clear indication of the extent to which those individuals who appear as governors of the mystery in some sources were just as active in other areas, such as the collection of alms from members of the fraternity and their distribution to the poor and needy. The term 'pilgrim' is particularly evocative of the contemporary prominence of crusading and pilgrimage, and its translation

¹ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, p.106; Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.107.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, E, p.234.

³ AMB, 9, p.12. The grant is wrongly dated as 7 Hen. V.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, E, p.201; *ibid.*, F, p.53.

into the principles and language of fraternities, whether or not they were associated with particular crafts.¹

Essential to the operation of these and other functions was the acquisition of some kind of physical space in which to conduct the business of the fraternity, and to administer the affairs of the mistery. Most of the craft fraternities founded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were initially located in religious houses or parish churches: the Saddlers were attached to St. Martin le Grand, the Skinners to St. John Walbrook, the Grocers to St. Antonin's and the Drapers became established first at St. Mary of Bethlehem (by 1361) and later at St. Mary le Bow. Even the Mercers, less active as a fraternity in the fourteenth century, were meeting in a room at the hospital of St. Thomas of Acon from 1347.² The tailors, however, appear to have taken a slightly different path in that there is no mention of any formal connection to a parish church in early fourteenth-century references to the fraternity, or in Stow's account. The most obvious reason for this lies in the fact that the tailors of London do not appear to have been concentrated in a particular area of the City, unlike the pepperers of Soper Lane who were the driving force behind the Grocers' fraternity, or the Skinners, many of whom lived and worked in the peltry which ran southwards from the church of St. John Walbrook.³ The surviving late thirteenth century subsidy rolls, for example, show that tailors were scattered throughout the city, although the wards of Cheap, Cripplegate (within) and Broad Street were better represented than most.⁴ No clue to a possible location for the tailors' fraternity can be found in the tantalizing reference to a shop and solar occupied by the tailors, contained in the 1278 will of Robert Mounpeillers cited above.

It is possible however that the Tailors were already based in the parish of St. Martin Outwich (see Map 2, p.47). Such a view would certainly fit in with what is already known

¹ See C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades 1095-1588* (Chicago, 1988), ch.10. Fraternities can be found providing funds for pilgrims in the late fourteenth century cf. Smith, *English Gilds*, pp. 157, 177, 180, 182 (the Tailors of Lincoln) and 231. There also existed a guild of 'palmers' at Ludlow, *ibid.*, pp.193-99.

² Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.95-107; Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp.258-259. See J. Imray, *The Mercers' Hall* (London Topographical Society, 1991), pp.11-14.

³ Veale '"Great Twelve"', pp.253-54; Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.44-7.

⁴ (1292), *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*, ed. E. Ekwall (Lund, 1951), pp. 85-6. The establishment of a concentration of wealthy tailors in Fleet Street was, as will be shown, a later development.

about the acquisition of Tailors' Hall in the mid-fourteenth century. Although the Tailors did not actually come to own their hall in 'Bradstrete' until 1392, it had been held by trustees on their behalf since at least 1345. In that year the lands were conveyed by John de Yakslee, the king's tentmaker, to John Aystwich who subsequently conveyed them to a more permanent group of trustees. Yakslee himself had acquired the estate from Edmund Crepin in 1332.¹ Two further pieces of evidence suggest that the fraternity was already based in the area by 1332, and may well have been renting premises from Yakslee before 1345. The prominence of pavilions as emblems in the first grant of arms to the Tailors in 1480 certainly recognized the debt owed by the fraternity to Yakslee, but this act of remembrance is unlikely to have represented gratitude to a mere vendor.² A more attractive explanation would be that Yakslee's grant of the lands and tenements to a trustee in 1345 was the culmination of a long standing association with the fraternity. This view receives a measure of support from the witness list of Crepin's grant of 1332. One of these witnesses was the same John de Totenham who was involved with the fraternity at about this time. His grant of a quitrent in the parish of St. Martin Outwich, combined with the eloquence of his description of the Master and Wardens of the fraternity, suggests a close connection. His appearance as a witness to the transfer of the properties from Crepin to Yakslee strongly suggests that the tailors' fraternity had built up some important relationships with local citizens well before 1345, and may indeed have begun life operating from premises owned by one of them.³ This does not, of course provide us with any clue as to the focus for the spiritual life of the fraternity; as will be shown, subsequent developments saw St. Paul's Cathedral established as the first spiritual home of the fraternity by 1370, but there is nothing to suggest that the tailors were involved there in the earlier part of the century when, as Stow implies, they were busy celebrating the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.⁴

¹ H.L. Hopkinson, *The History of Merchant Taylors' Hall* (London, 1931), pp.7-9; *Cal. of Letter Bks*, E, p.269.

² Clode, *Early History*, I, p.126.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, E, p.269.

⁴ (24 June) Stow, *Survey*, i, p.181.

III. The Development of the Fraternity, 1345-1500

The confluence of mystery and fraternity can be seen in several different areas of the development of the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist. The provision of charitable assistance and of *post obit* arrangements for members are discussed fully in the next chapter - the intention here is to examine the development of the structures which made such provision possible. In many ways the most important 'enabling device' for any fraternity was a grant of royal letters patent. In the context of late-medieval London these were essential: in the first place they confirmed, and often enlarged, the regulatory powers (such as the search for defective workmanship) which the City devolved to senior figures in the mystery. Secondly, as has been shown, they frequently located the source of this authority in a fraternity and, in addition, granted it collective powers which ensured the creation of a permanent and secure organisation. One charter was not always sufficient however: the tailors were themselves granted charters in 1327 (confirmed in 1341), 1390, 1408, 1439, 1465 and 1503.¹ Each grant was the product of circumstances and the current needs and preoccupations of those who governed the craft. Although the fraternity was probably in existence by 1300, the first charter, granted by Edward III, did not mention the fraternity, and the petition from the Master and Wardens, dated 10 March 1327, stressed merely the Tailors' desire to be granted the right to search for defective goods and to supervise workers, particularly aliens and other immigrants.² The same was true of the charters granted to the Skinners and Goldsmiths in the same year: rights of search were confirmed, but no mention was made of their fraternities and no steps taken to ensure their development.³ This does not, of course, mean that the fraternities were unimportant, just that no need was felt to establish them more publicly as the controlling bodies of the misteries.

By 1390 the situation was radically different. The development of fraternities of all kinds had come on apace since the thirteen-twenties and with it new needs, of which the ability to hold lands in mortmain was perhaps the most pressing for a corporate body intent on securing its long term future. This movement reached its peak in the late fourteenth

¹ See F.M. Fry and R.T.D. Sayle eds., *The Charters of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (London, 1937), pp.9-46.

² Clode, *Early History*, I, App. 2, pp.344-45.

³ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.20; Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.158-9.

century, a period which saw the acquisition of charters by several prominent London craft organisations. It is significant that this period also witnessed an increase in the level of suspicion, on the part of authorities, of associations of all kinds, culminating in the governmental enquiry of 1388-89. Firm action was taken against associations of servants and journeymen who met 'under a feigned colour of sanctity' in order to combine against their masters to raise wages.¹ This unfavourable climate made it essential for the existing craft fraternities to have their privileges confirmed, and further incentives were provided both by the inquiry of 1388-89 and, in particular, a mortmain statute of 1391 which made it clear that properties could not be acquired without royal licence.² As Sandra Raban has shown, the period following the promulgation of this statute saw a dramatic increase in the purchase of mortmain licences to a level not seen since the thirteen-thirties.³ It is not surprising, therefore, that the thirteen-nineties saw several prominent London craft fraternities acquire charters which contained clauses allowing them to hold lands in mortmain: the Goldsmiths and Mercers in 1394 and the Saddlers in 1395.⁴ The need for the Tailors to have such a charter would seem to have been just as pressing: Tailors' Hall was still at this time held on behalf of the fraternity by a group of trustees, and these developments would seem to constitute an obstacle to the acquisition not only of these premises, but any others that might be alienated to the fraternity. In the light of the events of 1388-92, and the popularity of the 'fraternity' among Londoners, therefore, it is interesting to note that the tailors had in fact acquired a charter in 1390, the year before the mortmain statute. These letters patent, moreover, did not contain a clause allowing the fraternity to hold lands in mortmain.⁵ Possibly the Tailors did not realise the determination of the authorities to press ahead with legislation, and were reacting to the threat posed by the inquiry of 1388-89: the Tailors' fraternity was among several London guilds which had to submit their charters for inspection

¹ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.542 (1396, saddlers), 495 (1387, cordwainers), and see below, pp.147-56.

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.20; (15 Ric. II c.5), *Statutes*, ii, pp.79-80. See also *The Westminster Chronicle, 1391-1394*, ed. L.C. Hector and B.F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982), pp.482-3.

³ S. Raban, 'Mortmain in Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 62 (1974), p.14 and graph on p.6.

⁴ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.158-9.

⁵ The fraternity had become, by this time, a well supported source for prayers for the souls of testators, as the twelve bequests made to it between 1368 and 1390 testify, *CWCH*, II, pp.113, 139, 148, 152, 154, 158, 181, 218, 248, 265, 272, 281; *CPR*, 1389-1392, p.321.

by the City authorities in 1389.¹ On the other hand, the failure of the fraternity to secure a mortmain clause in 1390 does not seem to have hindered its subsequent development as a property-holding association. Indeed, between 1390 and the grant of another charter in 1408, the Tailors benefited from three grants in mortmain, the first of which, made in 1392, saw the long-awaited transfer of the Hall and other premises to the fraternity.² It is possible that when the Goldsmiths, Mercers and Saddlers came to petition for new charters in the mid-1390s, circumstances had changed for the worse: the inquiry of 1388-89 may not have been considered as grave a threat, by the majority of the crafts, as the mortmain legislation and the deteriorating relations between the City and the Crown.³ This may have encouraged those crafts without recent charters to seek new guarantees.

Mention should also be made of the phrasing of some of these new charters which, in particular, allowed the crafts to establish a 'perpetual commonalty' of themselves. Unwin was quick to emphasise the legal significance of the 'incorporation' of the fraternities in the thirteen-nineties, but it is easy to draw too clear cut a practical distinction between the 'incorporated' fraternities and the rest.⁴ The Tailors' charter of 1390 did not contain such a provision, yet its ability to act as a corporate body was unimpaired. The fact that the later charters did contain such a provision may be once again an indication of changed circumstance which required a more explicit statement of corporate identity. Certainly, by 1408, when the Tailors became a 'sound perpetual and corporate fraternity' the 'incorporation charter' was the normal form of royal grant. In this charter, the right to hold land to the value of £100 was confirmed, the fraternity could have a common seal, and could plead and be impleaded.⁵

¹ *CPMR*, 1381-1412, p.149.

² *CPR*, 1391-1396, p.139. The final group of trustees was led by a prominent armourer of London, Simon Winchcombe, and three tailors; The remaining two grants were made in 1401, *ibid.*, 1399-1401, p.455, and in 1405, *ibid.*, 1405-1408, p.56.

³ C.M. Barron, 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London 1392-7', in *The Reign of Richard II: essays in honour of May McKisack*, ed. F.R.H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron (London, 1971), pp.179-82.

⁴ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.158-9.

⁵ *CPR*, 1405-1408, p.466. On the development of 'incorporation' see S. Reynolds, 'The History of Group Litigation', *UCLA Law Review*, 37 (1989), pp.421-431, a review of S.C. Yeazell, *From Medieval Group Litigation to the Modern Class Action* (New Haven and London, 1987). I am grateful to Susan Reynolds for referring me to this article.

The charters of the thirteen-nineties are perhaps most significant for the way in which the social and religious activities of the craft fraternities are bound up with their economic functions. Devices such as common seals, licences to hold lands and so on were designed as much to facilitate the provision of charity to poor craftsmen, or the furnishing of a chapel as to pay officials responsible for the annual search. The charter granted to the Saddlers in 1395, for instance, specifically mentioned the need for poor relief among members of the mystery, and the consequent need to obtain land to provide the necessary resources.¹ These documents were therefore a reiteration of the principles which lay behind the foundation of the craft fraternities: each successive charter of the Tailors confirmed the right to wear liveries, to meet as the fraternity of St. John the Baptist and to hold assemblies for the purpose of making ordinances for the governance of both mystery and fraternity. As the guild returns of 1388 show, these ordinances frequently included stipulations for attendance at the funerals of deceased members and on other occasions at which prayers and masses were said for the souls of the dead.² This provided a stimulus for bequests and a subsequent enlargement of the range of services provided. In the case of the Tailors this was given a dramatic boost by the fact that membership of the fraternity was not just confined to wealthy practitioners of the craft, but extended to senior members of other guilds and to prominent figures in public life.

IV. The Acquisition of 'goostly tresoure'.

As will be shown, the spiritual life of the Tailors' fraternity was both rich and vibrant. It was made all the more so by the large numbers of clergy, 148 in all, who joined the fraternity, paying the standard entry fee of 20s. Some of these had a particularly close relationship with the fraternity, not least the chaplains employed in the chapels at the hall and in St. Paul's. For the rest, several categories can be discerned from the lists of admissions. First, the fraternity appears to have forged links with certain incumbents in parish churches in and around London. The failure of the fraternity to attract their successors perhaps suggests that the relationship was more with the individual, in response to a particular service provided, than with the church itself. In 1422-3, for example, the parsons of Holy Trinity

¹ *CPR*, 1391-1395, p.560.

² See Smith ed., *English Gilds*, *passim*.

Aldgate, St. Mary le Bow, and St. Benet Fink were admitted.¹ A more systematic policy is shown in the regular admission of the bishops of London, beginning with Nicholas Bubwith in 1405-6, although, as shown below, the link with the bishopric may have been established in the late fourteenth century through a close association between the fraternity and Simon Sudbury, bishop from 1361-75.² Even such eminent clergymen were not exempt from the 20s admission charge, nor from the yearly obligation to pay a shilling into the alms-box. Robert Fitzhugh, bishop of London from 1431, evidently failed to pay any alms whatsoever: it was only after his death in 1436 that 19s was handed over 'pur sa almoigne arere par xix ans'.³

From the mid-fourteenth century the fraternity began to build up a series of formal links with churches and religious houses in and around London. In 1464-65 the fraternity paid 10s 1d to compose, write, illuminate and paint a table of indulgences and remissions granted 'per diversos papas archiepiscopos, episcopos ac alios prelatos'. This table was, apparently, to hang in the Tailors' chapel in St. Paul's.⁴ This remarkable document, decorated in red and blue, survives in the archive of the Merchant Taylors' Company and is an invaluable record of the privileges acquired by a fraternity, particularly when looked at in conjunction with the lists of admissions.⁵ The manuscript comprises copies of two separate documents: the first of these, a copy of a Papal Bull granted by Calixtus III in 1455, is discussed further below. The rest comprises a copy of a document prepared by John Prynce, master in 1455, and his wardens, who set out to describe the 'goostly tresoure' built up by the fraternity 'willyng all cristen people to be partiners of singular and all such indulgences pardons and remissions by oures of blessed memory precessours and predecessours of entier charitee purchased long tyme secrete'.⁶ The manuscript then includes extracts from what were almost certainly letters of confraternity issued by eight religious

¹ Accounts, I, f.134.

² Accounts, I, f.28v; Clode, *Early History*, I, 293.

³ Accounts, I, f.265v. 'maister Robert ffithugh clerk' had been admitted as a 'confrere' in 1417-18, *Ibid.*, f.101v.

⁴ Accounts, II, f.261. For this chapel see below.

⁵ AMB, 2, ff.10-20, printed in Clode, *Early History*, I, pp.110-119.

⁶ AMB, 2, f.17.

houses. In each case the name of the prior is given, thus providing a chronology for the establishment of the links. The first of these, granted by the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem at Clerkenwell between 1355 and 1377 is the fullest of the extracts, serving as the exemplar for the others:

Frere John Pavely of the holy hospital House of Seint John in Jerusalem Prioure of thordoure in England and all the brethern of the same hospitall to oures welbeloved in Crist all and singuler Taillours in the citee of London which are of the Fraternitee of Seint John the Baptist in the saide citee of London and to all others of the saide fraternitee brethren and sisters helth in oure Lorde Jesu. Advertisyng and brynging to mynde the grete zeale and ryght many benefyttes by you don to oure religion and trustyng to be don we yeldyng love for love have receyved and receyve you all and singular into oure fraternitee and of thole religion we admitte you withouten and grauntyng you to be partiners of Masses Mateins and other houres of prayers fastynges almesdedes hospitalitees abstynances watches pilgrimages goostly laboures and of all other goode dedes by the brethern of oure religyon don or to be don worlde withouten ende.¹

The other partnerships were established with the monastery of Our Lady near the Tower, Holy Trinity Priory Aldgate, the Hospital of Our Lady without Bishopsgate, the Hospital of St. Mary Elsyngspitall, St. Bartholemew's Smithfield, the Hospital of St. Mary Rounceyvale at Charing Cross, and the foundation of St. Briget of Syon in Middlesex. The names of the heads of these houses suggest that all these connections, apart from the latter one, were established between 1373 and 1400.² The issuing of such letters of confraternity is an important feature of the structure of relations between clergy and laity. No doubt the religious houses hoped to gain from the bequests of those lay individuals and institutions whom they admitted into such partnerships, and the laity were equally enthusiastic at the prospect of benefiting from the prayers of what David Knowles termed 'intercessors *par excellence*'.³ Indeed throughout Europe merely to be connected to a parish church was not enough for craft fraternities which drew their members from all quarters and strata of urban society. In Venice, for instance, fraternities forged similar bonds with religious orders, monasteries and convents, as well as with senior churchmen, in order to ensure the pooling

¹ *Ibid.*, f.17v.

² *Ibid.*, ff.18-20, printed in Clode, *Memorials*, pp.49-51; *VCH*, London, i, 464, 474, 480, 534, 537 and *ibid.*, Middlesex, i, pp.190, 200.

³ For lists of such letters see W.G. Clark-Maxwell, 'Some Letters of Confraternity', *Archaeologia*, 75 (1924-5), pp.19-60 and *idem*, 'Some further letters of Confraternity', *ibid.*, 79 (1929), pp.179-216; D.M. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England 943-1216* (London, 1940), p.475.

of good works and prayers.¹ Likewise the wills of Londoners demonstrate the enthusiasm which existed for the prayers of religious houses, an enthusiasm which was surely an important factor in ensuring that the Tailors' fraternity attracted a large and influential membership from outside the craft. As indicated above, most craft fraternities had links with at least one parish church, but the Tailors' spiritual assets were unparalleled, even by the fraternities of the goldsmiths and skinners which were founded at around the same time.²

These links continued to prosper well into the fifteenth century. The monastery at Tower Hill (St. Mary Graces) certainly continued in an active relationship with the fraternity: five abbots were admitted between 1419 and 1459.³ In 1432 Robert Mallory confirmed the relationship established by his predecessor as prior of the hospital of St. John's Clerkenwell; the same year he was admitted as a brother of the Tailors' fraternity.⁴ In 1439-40 his successor, Robert Botall was also admitted, indicating a further renewal of the ties between the two institutions. The relationship was further strengthened when the fraternity of yeomen Tailors, those freemen of the craft who were not members of the senior guild, came to use St. John's church at Clerkenwell for their own annual celebration.⁵

The admissions of clergy also show that links of a less formal nature were kept up with many other individuals and institutions. Bishops from fourteen sees became members, with three bishops of St. David's joining the fraternity between 1411 and 1435, to add to the five bishops of London. In addition, the parsons, vicars and rectors of twelve London parishes became members.⁶ Of the latter, the relationship between the fraternity and the

¹ B. Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: the Social Institutions of a Catholic State to 1620* (Oxford, 1971), p.48.

² See Veale, "Great Twelve" and Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.203-6.

³ Accounts, I, f.113 (1419-20), 134 (1422-23), 151v (1424-25), 236v (1432-33) and II, f.152 (1458-9).

⁴ AMB, 2, f.17v; Accounts, I, f.226.

⁵ See below, p.150.

⁶ Accounts, I-II, *passim*. The sees represented were Canterbury (1 archbishop - Thomas Arundel), London (5 Bishops), Wells (dean), St. David's (3 bishops), Winchester (1 bishop), Norwich (1), Carmarthen (1 archdeacon), Worcester (2 bishops), Carlisle (1 bishop), Salisbury (2 bishops), Ely (2 bishops), Exeter (2 bishops) and Durham (1 bishop). The rectors of London parishes came from: St. Martin Outwich (4), St. Clement's (1), All Hallows the Great (1), Holy Trinity Christchurch (2), St. Mary le Bow (1), St. Benet Fink (1), St. John the Evangelist (1), St. Laurence Poulteney (1), St. Dunstan in the West (3) and St. Mary Wolnoth (1).

church of St. Dunstan in the West, Fleet Street appears to have been particularly close: the three rectors of the church appointed between 1435 and 1444 were each admitted as members.¹ The reason for this may lie in the fact that, in the mid-fifteenth century, many prominent tailors appear to have lived and worked in the parishes immediately to the west of the City wall, in St. Dunstan's and also in St. Bride's Fleet Street (see Map 1 (b) below p.46).² William Chapman, Master in 1428-9 and one of the sheriffs of 1437-8 typifies this link: in his will proved in 1446 he asked to be buried in the chancel of St. Dunstan's, founded a temporary chantry there and left 20s to the Carmelites in Fleet Street as well as bequests to the poor of both the parish and his craft. His executors included Thomas Gay, another prominent tailor parishioner, and George Adyff, the rector of the church who had been admitted to the Tailors' fraternity three years earlier.³ It is probable that the growth of a tailoring community in this part of the city in the fifteenth century was encouraged by the proximity of many large houses belonging to prominent clergy and noblemen and that the links between tailors and these residents led to many becoming members of the fraternity. The development of the inns of court in Fleet Street and Holborn may also have produced links with the tailors; 26 lawyers came to join the fraternity in the fifteenth century.⁴ Tailoring links with St. Dunstan's persisted into the sixteenth century with several tailors appearing as churchwardens.⁵

The most important bond established by the fraternity was in fact one of the last to be created. In 1405 John Churchman, a prominent London grocer, granted the fraternity the advowson of the church of St. Martin Outwich, close to Tailors' Hall, as well as four messuages and seventeen shops in the parish.⁶ Existing evidence for Churchman's life,

¹ Accounts, I, ff. 267 (1435-36), 294 (1437-38) and 373 (1443-44). See G. Hennessy, *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense* (London, 1898), p.137.

² The tailoring connection with the West End is discussed below, pp.224-26.

³ PRO, Prob.11/3, f.240-240v.

⁴ *The British Atlas of Historic Towns, iii: The City of London from Pre-historic Times to c.1520*, ed. M.D. Lobel (Oxford, 1989), maps 1-2.

⁵ See M. Sullivan, '"My Masters of the Parish": Religious practice and parish government in St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, London, c.1520-1558' (Unpub. University of London M.A. thesis, 1993), pp.15 (Thos Broke), 16, 22, 25 (John Fisher).

⁶ CPR, 1405-1408, p.56.

collated by Sylvia Thrupp, stresses, quite properly, his attachment to his home county of Norfolk. He was probably born in Necton, had a house in Norwich and established a perpetual chantry in the church of Heylesdon.¹ As a citizen and alderman of London, however, it is vital to take into account the nature of his connections and the loyalties he established in the city. His membership of the Tailors' fraternity is suggested in 1388, when he helped to resolve a dispute over a piece of land by granting a piece of garden to the trustees of the fraternity's tenements and lands in Bradstrete.² A deed in the possession of the Company shows that the relationship was still close in 1405 when the Master and Wardens granted to James Billingford two chambers which Churchman himself had occupied - these might have been in the hall itself, or perhaps in the tenements Churchman had just granted to the fraternity.³

Churchman's grant marked a new and important stage in the development of the fraternity. As will be shown, it enabled the fraternity to build accommodation for its almsmen, and provided a location, close to Tailors' Hall, for the administration of the chantries of deceased members (Map 2, p.47).⁴ The advowson itself provided the fraternity with an important local focus for worship. Ironically, given the other spiritual and physical assets of the fraternity, roots in a local parish church were the only thing the fraternity had lacked in its development in the fourteenth century. The association with the church enabled larger gatherings of the fraternity to take place than had been possible before: an ordinance of 1507 concerning the election of the Master and Wardens stipulated that all members of the fraternity, in their liveries, were to attend a solemn dirge at the church after dinner on the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and return there at nine o'clock the next morning for Mass.⁵

St. Martin's provided a forum for the public celebration of the life of the fraternity, just as the table of privileges was designed to make a public statement of its status. Bequests

¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, Appendix A, p.332.

² Hopkinson, *Merchant Taylor's Hall*, pp.53-54.

³ Merchant Taylors' Company, *Ancient Title Deeds*, III, 53.

⁴ See Chapter 2, pp.54-6, 79-81.

⁵ Clode, *Early History*, I, 357-8. The yeomen tailors too were required to attend services there on the feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist (29 August) from at least 1437: AMB, 2, f.8v.

to the church, ‘next the well with ii bockets’ (as it was often referred to), were made by some prominent tailors who displayed their loyalty to their craft fraternity and the links it had established, as well as making significant bequests to their own parish churches.¹ Yet the records of the Tailors’ fraternity show that the force of such external statements depended upon internal, more private rituals which celebrated the bonds of fraternity through devotion to their patron saint. The actual election of the new Master and Wardens, for instance, was carried out in secret by a select group of senior liverymen; the consequent transfer of authority was ratified by a mass held in the chapel at the Hall attended by just the new and old officials, after which the new Master and wardens were taken into the parlour ‘and sette in their romes and place by their next predecessours’ according to ancient custom.² It must be emphasised, therefore, that St. Martin’s was not the main focus for the regular devotional activities of their fraternity; these were centred upon the chapel at the Hall and the chapel acquired by the Tailors by the north door of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Use of the chapel at St. Paul’s, ‘halowed in thonoure of St. John Baptiste’, was granted to the Tailors by Simon Sudbury, bishop of London between 1361 and 1375, according to the table of privileges.³ Even if the Tailors had used the chapel since its foundation in 1349 it would not have acted as their physical base of their fraternity given that by then they were using the Hall in Bradstrete. As a result the origins of the fraternity remain obscure: possibly they were based in another part of St. Paul’s or else, as suggested above, in a tenement near the site of their Hall. Either way it was not long before the chapel was in full use as a means to express the identity of the fraternity. As early as 1389 an embroiderer, Thomas Carleton, gave lands to the fraternity asking that the master and wardens administer a chantry there in perpetuity.⁴ The wardens’ accounts appear to show that the priests who were employed to say masses daily for Carleton were treated as fraternity priests, rather than confined to the administration of his chantry. Consequently in

¹ See, for example, the wills of Thomas Brews (1472) and Henry Kellow (1493), GL, MS 9171/6, ff.120v-122v, PRO, Prob.11/10, ff.173v-174v.

² Clode, *Early History*, I, 357; See the election of 1493: Court Minutes, II, ff.70-70v.

³ AMB, 2, f.18. The chapel was founded as the chantry chapel of a draper, Sir John Pulteney in 1349, W. Dugdale, *The History of St. Paul’s Cathedral*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1818), p.22. The grant to the Tailors is not mentioned in Sudbury’s register.

⁴ *CWCH*, II, p.272.

1405, on the death of Thomas Sibsay, (master in 1392), the fraternity did not employ a new priest when Sibsay set up a temporary chantry in St. Paul's, but employed the services of the priest already *in situ*.¹ When, however, Lady Beatrice de Roos came to set up a perpetual chantry in the chapel in 1409-10, things were very different. An agreement between de Roos and the fraternity established that the Tailors would pay the priest out of an annual rent of twelve marks from various tenements to be given to the fraternity; the choice of the priest would lie with her descendants.² Thus the fraternity had little say in the actual arrangements: only in 1443, due to the minority of Thomas de Roos, did the Master and Wardens present a priest (John Winter) to this chantry.³

Although no new chantries were administered by the fraternity in St. Paul's after 1409 the fraternity remained deeply committed to the chapel in the cathedral. The decision to hang the table of indulgences in St. Paul's, rather than St. Martin's, testifies to their regard for the chapel, despite the fact that by 1464 the fraternity was administering five obits and a chantry in their local church.⁴ It also indicates an appreciation of the favourable publicity that the display of such a document in St. Paul's might bring. The Tailors' accounts reveal a strong desire to turn the chapel into a showpiece for the fraternity. Each year expenses are recorded for the 'floreshyng' of three torches in the hall and in St. Paul's, and for washing the altar-cloths and the vestments worn by the fraternity priests. The effort expended is typified by an entry of 1401-2 when the large sum of 47s 6d was paid to 'Moris steynour pur steynure des draps en le chapell a Poulis'.⁵ Other expenses included £4 1s for new pews in 1463-64.⁶ All of this gives the impression of a richly decorated chapel which was evidently still an important place of worship for the fraternity well into the fifteenth century.

¹ *Ibid.*, II, p.359. Sibsay also asked to be buried in the chapel itself, or failing that in his parish church of St. Thomas the Apostle. The will of his wife Alice, who died in 1408 shows that, for some reason, his first preference was not granted: PRO, Prob.11/2, f.132.

² Printed in Dugdale, *St. Paul's*, pp.354-7.

³ St. Paul's Chapter Acts 1411-62, GL, MS 25,513, f.212/218. I am grateful to Irene Zadnik for this reference.

⁴ Below pp.54-6.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.14. Moris Archer rented a large chamber and kitchen from the fraternity and was replaced as the fraternity's painter-stainer in 1438 by Roger Aleyn who also worked on the chapels, *ibid.*, I, ff.113, 17, 257v, 308v.

⁶ Accounts, II, f.247.

The Tailors were keen to have their right to use the chapel confirmed and amplified: at some point between 1375 and 1381 the archbishop of Canterbury and sixteen bishops had granted forty days of remission to those 'that put their helping hands to the laud of God in this chapel'; and in 1399 the fraternity obtained a grant from Pope Boniface IX of 100 days remission 'to all cristen people that wyll putte to their helping hands to the making of the said chapel or to the mayntenance of Goddes service in the said place', and to all those who visited the chapel on certain days and gave alms.¹ Such privileges set the seal on the devotional activities of craft fraternities which were not attached formally to a parish church: of the London crafts only the brewers (in 1466) obtained a grant of this kind, for the chapel of St. Mary in the hospital of St. Thomas of Acon.² As shown above, the Tailors' fraternity was also careful to maintain good relations with the see of London through the admission of the bishops, normally upon their election. An entry in the accounts of the fraternity for 1453-54 shows that the relationship was bearing fruit: in that year the bishop celebrated Mass in the chapel in St. Paul's on the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.³

Not content with the grant from Boniface IX, the fraternity continued to acquire privileges to an extent unknown among even the wealthiest craft fraternities of London. In particular, further papal privileges were acquired by the fraternity in 1455, this time in relation to the chapel in their hall. The grant of Calixtus III was copied into the table of indulgences, and constitutes one of the fullest statements of the aims and objectives of the fraternity.⁴ The Tailors' petition had stated that 'a number of faithful departed of their society or confraternity in which are many ecclesiastical prelates and nobles and divers other persons of both sexes in great number' had founded the chapel in St. Paul's 'for the great concourse of the members of their society.....celebrating masses and other divine offices therein for the souls of them and the men or brethren and sisters of their confraternity'. Subsequently, continues the grant, certain members of the fraternity 'considering that the members of their society and confraternity of both sexes had increased so much in number

¹ AMB, 2, ff.18-18v and see *Calendar of Papal Registers*, V (1396-1404), p.252.

² *Ibid.*, XII, p.453-4.

³ Accounts, II, f.19v. The fraternity paid for the bread and wine used on this occasion.

⁴ AMB, 2, ff.10-12 and *Cal. Papal Regs.*, XI (1455-1464), pp.240-1.

that the said chapel was too small to hold so many', a chapel was founded in 'the house or inn of their confraternity called Tailleur halle'. The petition then asked for permission to celebrate masses and other divine services in the chapel, and to celebrate anniversaries there also. This was granted by Calixtus who even allowed for bells to be rung, as long as the rights of the parish church of St. Martin's were protected.¹ In addition, the full version in the Tailors' records lists the indulgences granted in respect of the activities of the fraternity: the administration of eight chantries, and the payment of 17d a week to the almsmen and women.²

This grant implies that the chapel at the hall was founded in the mid-fifteenth century, and, as will be shown, the increase in the membership of the fraternity before 1450 would certainly have justified it. It is clear, however, that this was merely a confirmation of an existing practice: the regular use of the chapel at the hall from at least 1403 is indicated by the yearly purchase of torches and candles for both chapels, not just for the chapel at St. Paul's.³ What is certainly true is that the chapel at the hall did not benefit from the same degree of lavish expenditure as the chapel in St. Paul's. This remained the case until 1438-9 when the hall chapel was given a new lease of life. In that year a large quantity of 'flemish' cloth was bought for the chapel and Roger Aleyn, the fraternity's new painter-stainer, was paid to decorate the altar-cloth, two side cloths and the 'frontell' made from this cloth. The expenses continued with 16s 2d paid for the insertion of 'xxx fote whitglas for the wyndow'; a joiner was paid 20s for 'le crest en le chapel' and a painter completed the job by painting and gilding the crest and painting the chapel with 'steres of gold'.⁴ Four years later the finishing touches were put to the chapel when Aleyn was employed 'for makynge of the crucifixe'.⁵ The refurbishment of the Hall chapel, and the continuing investment in the chapel at St. Paul's meant that by 1450 the spiritual and physical resources of the fraternity were at their most impressive: religious privileges had been acquired; two chaplains were

¹ *Ibid.* The references to women as members of the fraternity are particularly significant as regards the broad nature of the fraternity's membership, discussed below.

² AMB, 2, ff.11v-12. For these services see Chapter 2.

³ Accounts, I, f.19.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.308v.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.351v.

employed in addition to several chantry priests; and, in their two chapels and St. Martin's, the fraternity had acquired three foci for the expression of their collective identity, through prayers and masses for deceased brothers and sisters, and the celebration of community.

V. Symbolism and Ritual: the Community of the Fraternity

Historians studying civic ceremonial and ritual have emphasised 'the importance of ritualized forms of behaviour as a symbolic thread which helped bind together the social fabric of the townscape'.¹ Whilst ritual occasions could also be opportunities for, and even causes of instability and tension, the potential function of ritual as a force for the creation of cohesion was reflected in the day-to-day operation of guilds and fraternities away from the public arena.² Obligations such as the payment of alms and the attendance at funerals or the annual feast, although onerous, fulfilled the valuable function of attempting to create a sense of community, often among groups of people with differing and often competing economic interests. Subsequent chapters will explore the ways in which the Tailors' fraternity, exploiting its wealth, prestige and sense of common purpose, was able to 'represent' the interests of the majority of craftsmen, for whom membership was never a possibility. The fraternity was, first and foremost, an organisation for senior craftsmen: membership was an essential step along the *cursus honorum* within the craft. As will be shown in the next chapter, the charitable assistance provided by the fraternity, and the chantries it administered were functions used primarily for the benefit of tailor members: the only non-tailor to be buried at the cost of the fraternity was Richard Reynold, a Vintner.³ Tailor members were, apparently, required to attend the funerals of all deceased brethren of their craft. The oath sworn by tailor members also specified that they should attend the obits of benefactors such as Thomas Carleton and John Churchman.⁴ That efforts were made to enforce attendance is shown, however, by the recording of fines for non-attendance at 'chivaches' (ridings) and at 'diriges'. While these do not specify which fines were for non-attendance at a funeral as

¹ M. Berlin, 'Civic Ceremony in Early Modern London', *Urban History Yearbook* (1985), p.15.

² Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp.57-86.

³ Accounts, I, f.196v.

⁴ AMB, I, f.2. As shown below, non-tailors do not appear to have been obliged to take part in the public, craft-centred rituals of the fraternity.

opposed to, for instance, mayoral processions, the ritual year of the fraternity was not merely composed of obits and civic ceremonial which were planned in advance, but also the unforeseen funerals of tailor members. The records of the London companies show that great care was taken to maintain the public image of the craft, channelled through the fraternity, at what was essentially a public ritual: the pewterers in the late sixteenth century insisted upon attendance 'in cleanly apparel and without their aprons', and in 1558 Henry Machyn noted the attendance of 'mony morners in blake, and many clarkes preste^s and all the Compene of the Marchand Tayllers' at the funeral of a member.¹ An inventory of 1512 shows that the fraternity was prepared for every eventuality, and could put on a lavish display on such occasions: a 'gret coffyn' is listed, together with three silk banners embroidered with the images of the Virgin, St. John the Baptist and 'tholy crosse and a dyademe in paper gilt'.² Post obit and charitable services were provided by all the greater guilds in London, thus removing the need for the Tailors' fraternity to cater for its non-tailor membership in this way.

That is not to say that the fraternity operated exclusively in the interests of the Tailor membership. From the beginning non-tailor members had obligations to their fellow members, as well as opportunities for involvement in the life of the fraternity. The admission ceremony was, of course, the first occasion for participation in the ritual life of the community. The surviving fifteenth century oaths of the Tailors' fraternity (1491) show the different categories of members, and the differing duties attached to each.³ Oaths were sworn by the master, wardens, the 'twenty four' (the Court of Assistants), the clerk, the beadle, the chantry priests, the rentgatherer and other officials, all of whom were tailors. The most frequently used oaths were, of course, those of the men and women who joined the fraternity of St. John the Baptist, and here a distinction was made between the oath of 'an hole broder admitted into the lyvere of the crafte' (a tailor) and that sworn by 'an oute broder of the said fraternitie' (a non-tailor).⁴ The main differences between the oaths revolved

¹ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, p.212; *The Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London from AD 1550 to AD 1563*, ed. J.G. Nichols, Camden Soc., 42 (1848), p.173.

² Clode, *Memorials*, p.85.

³ AMB, 1, ff.1-6 (1491).

⁴ Ibid., ff.1v-2v.

around civic ceremonial, the public expression of identity: the oath for tailor brethren insists upon attendance at quarter-days, ridings, processions and other assemblies, stipulating that ‘ye shall not refuse nor forsake the crafte of Tayllours for noon other that is to sey in clothyng goyng and rydyng’. The expression of the solidarity and identity of a craft guild in public was a right jealously guarded by their ruling bodies. Such thinking presumably lay behind the omission of such requirements from the oath for non-tailors: these individuals were not expected to affirm their membership in public and, in the case of members of other London craft guilds, were frequently subject to similar obligations by their own guilds. A potential conflict of loyalties and jurisdiction was thereby avoided. Similarly, non-tailors were not required to attend the annual feast. Other clauses were duplicated, however, indicating that non-tailors, though not privy to guild secrets, were equally part of the internal religious and social life of the fraternity. The requirement not to plead or implead any brother or any man of the craft in a court of law put non-tailors under the ‘local’ jurisdiction of the Master: any dispute had to go to arbitration before it was allowed to enter the public domain in order to protect the reputation of the fraternity.¹ Non-tailor members were required to contribute alms to the fraternity on midsummer’s day ‘as other brethren of other felaships within this cite are accustomed to do’. From 1453 onwards, however, a distinction was drawn in the accounts between alms received ‘de confratribus huius mistere’ and ‘de confratribus extra artem cissorum’. The wearing of liveries by non-tailors was another area of potential conflict and was probably confined to internal ritual occasions. It was normally expected that these liveries would be bought by the members at their own expense, as in most socio-religious fraternities, but on occasion, the fraternity did show its regard for certain individuals by giving them a hood; William Crowmer, the prominent draper and Mayor, received one in 1428-29.²

The expenditure on the Tailors’ chapels reveals that religious imagery and symbolism abounded in the decoration of the physical spaces occupied by the fraternity. Such symbolism was widely employed by the London craft guilds: funeral palls, for instance, were often elaborate and contained representations of figures and objects associated with the craft and the fraternity. The surviving fishmongers’ pall focuses on the person of St. Peter, whereas

¹ *Ibid.*, ff.2-2v.

² Accounts, I, f.197. Chapman’s hood was a relatively expensive one, costing the fraternity 6s 8d.

the Tailors' two palls, dating from the late fifteenth century, emphasise the life of St. John the Baptist and depict images of tailors' shears, and the Agnus Dei enclosed within suns.¹ The devotion of the Tailors' fraternity to St. John the Baptist stemmed from that saint's role as the harbinger of the Lamb, hence the legend 'Ecce Agnus Dei' by one of the figures. The representation of a tent is placed between the blades of one of the shears, recalling the fraternity's debt to John de Yakslee. The Grant of Arms of 1480 made a similar public statement of the associations of the fraternity, and echoes the themes depicted on the pall:

Silver, a pavilion between two mantles imperial garnished with gold in a chief azure, an holy lamb set within a sun; the crest upon the helm a pavilion, purple, garnished with gold, being within the same our Blessed Lady St. Mary the Virgin in a vesture of gold sitting upon a cushion azure, Christ her son standing naked before her, holding between his hands a vesture called tunica inconsutilis, his said mother working upon that, one end of the same vesture set within a wreath gold and azure, the mantle purple, furred with ermine.²

In the absence of tailoring implements, the depiction of Christ's seamless robe is a striking idealisation of the craft and its practitioners.

By 1464 the month of June had become a busy time for the fraternity, with the celebration of three obits on the eighth, eleventh and eighteenth of the month, all of which would require the attendance of at least the Master and Wardens, and often the entire tailor membership.³ The Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24th June) was the high point of the ritual year of the fraternity, and the opportunity for the reaffirmation of the Tailors' devotion to their patron saint, often in the presence of important guests.⁴ The annual feast was the most ancient of the activities of the fraternity, and in fact lay behind the foundations of most such associations: all the other activities and functions of fraternities arose from the practice of meeting together once a year to transact the business of the fraternity and to elect officers. By the fifteenth century, most fraternities, particularly those of the London crafts, had developed elaborate ways of celebrating their annual feast, and exploited fully the resources, both material and symbolic available to them.⁵ As the Tailors'

¹ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.214-5 and plate facing p.226; Clode, *Memorials*, p.133.

² *Ibid.*, p.126.

³ Accounts, II, f.260.

⁴ In 1464-5 the fraternity paid 4s for a barge to enable the master, wardens and brethren to go to Westminster to invite the King and Queen 'ad festum Sancti Johannis Baptiste', Accounts, II, f.261.

⁵ See Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.194-197.

accounts show, symbolism was all important: each year five torches were purchased, three for the hall and two ‘pur offrir a seint Johan’. Further expenses are recorded ‘pur peinture des v torches ove solailles et scheres’ - a yearly reaffirmation of the importance of these symbols for the fraternity.¹ Images of St. John the Baptist were commissioned: 40s was spent in 1401-2 on the carving and painting of one such image, and in 1435-36 another was received as a gift from the duke of Northumberland, Henry Percy, who had been a member since 1419.² An inventory of 1512 lists ‘an image of saint John Baptist, gilt, standyng in a tabernacle gilt’ and perhaps even more striking, ‘iii costrynges of red saye with borders steyned of the lyf of Saint John hangyng there the more part of the yere’.³

On the day itself three torches were hung before the image which stood in the hall which was decorated ‘cum grene bollis’, as if to complement the ‘jarlondis des rosis’ bought each year for the ‘mestres et maistreses’ attending the feast, and the rushes which were strewn on the floor.⁴ Minstrels were hired each year to play in the gallery and were provided with hoods at the cost of the fraternity. The feasts themselves were doubtless lavish, judging from the surviving records of other craft fraternities, and the Tailors certainly had the means to prepare them, as the expenses for building and enlarging the new kitchen between 1425 and 1432 testify.⁵ The Tailors’ records contain few references to the expenses for food on such occasions, despite the comprehensive nature of the surviving accounts. The main reason for this was the nature of the obligations entered into by brethren and sisters when they joined the fraternity: each member was required to pay an annual sum ‘for mete and alms’ at Midsummer: this acted as a membership fee as well as a contribution to the feast and to the provision made to the almsmen and women.⁶

¹ Accounts, I, f.127 (1421-22); the first grant of arms (1480) contained ‘an holy lamb set within a sun’, Clode, *Early History*, p.126.

² Accounts, I, ff.14, 271, 113.

³ Clode, *Memorials*, p.84. ‘Costryngs’ were side pieces or hangings.

⁴ These were standard items of expenditure, see for example Accounts, I, f.3.

⁵ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.194-97; £149 18s 5d was spent in 1425-6, £37 15s 10d in 1426-7, £71 19s 4d in 1430-31 and £36 9s in 1431-32, Accounts, I, ff.166v-169, 179, 221-222, 233. To assist in the planning of the enlargement, men were sent ‘for to see kennyngton kechyn roof’ in 1432-33, *ibid.*, I, f.242. The kitchen at Merchant Taylors’ Hall is still extant: see J. Schofield, *The Building of London* (London, 1984), p.117 *et seq.*

⁶ Court Minutes, II, f.21v (5 May 1490).

The ritual year of the fraternity encompassed a variety of events ranging from civic ceremonial, at which the identity of the craft with the fraternity came to the fore, to the simple celebration of masses in the chapels at St. Paul's and in the Hall. All aspects of the business of the fraternity were sanctioned by ritual and religious symbolism: the first entry in the ordinances of 1507 is a prayer which asks 'that we may often in Brotherly and true love assemble and meete together to thy glory and our mutall comforte in Christ Jesus'. The notion of the community of the fraternity lay at the heart of its existence and, in the same way that the fraternity acted as an extended family to all its members, the community was extended to include 'our good friends and brethren deceased' who were remembered at obits and the quarterly meetings of the fraternity.¹ The chantries and obits administered by the Tailors were a continuing celebration of the community of the fraternity, both living and dead; the feasts and other annual occasions were, in a sense, opportunities for the renewal of fraternal bonds in an atmosphere of piety and conviviality.

VI. The Membership of the Fraternity

The guilds^{and} fraternities founded by many of the crafts of London in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were primarily associations for the most senior craftsmen. Later these fraternities became known as the 'livery' of the craft to distinguish them from the 'yeomen' fraternities, formed within many misteries to cater for craftsmen of lesser standing, disadvantaged by financial circumstances and/or age.² Yet in some instances membership of the senior craft fraternities was extended horizontally^{to} individuals from other trades and occupations, or even to representatives of the clergy, gentry and aristocracy. In the case of the Skinners of London, for instance, the fraternity of the livery (dedicated to the feast of Corpus Christi) contained large numbers of brethren and sisters who were not members of the craft.³ On the continent the fraternity of Our Lady in the Snow, founded by the tailors of Bruges, possessed a large and influential membership from outside the craft, including Charles the Bold and his mother, Isabella of Portugal.⁴ Similarly their London counterparts,

¹ Clode, *Early History*, I, p.359.

² Below, pp.147-56.

³ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.114.

⁴ See R. Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford, 1990), pp.47-8.

from an early date, enjoyed good relations with non-tailors: the earliest known bequest to the fraternity was made in 1345 by a mercer, John de Aylesham, and both John Churchman, a grocer, and Simon Winchecombe, an armourer, figured largely in the affairs of the fraternity between 1390 and 1405.¹ Although the accounts of the fraternity no longer survive prior to 1398, it is likely that such people were in fact fully paid up members of the fraternity. A roll of ‘honorary members’ delivered to James I on his visit to Merchant Taylors’ Hall in 1607 listed the prominent noblemen and clergy admitted to the fraternity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the earliest being Roger Mortimer who was apparently admitted in 1351.² As the lists of ‘entres de confreres’ entered in the accounts demonstrate, the 1607 roll contains only the most important figures to have joined the fraternity in the fifteenth century; it ignores lesser clergy, for instance, as well as practitioners of other crafts in London. There seems every reason, therefore, to read back many of the conclusions which follow well into the fourteenth century. Before examining the composition of the non-tailor membership and their motives for joining, it is important to gain an impression of the size of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist, and the relative numbers of tailors and non-tailors. As Table 1:1 shows, in the period for which extant and legible accounts survive (1398-1445 and 1453-73) 1,883 individuals joined, the vast majority of whom paid the full admission fee of 20s. Of these a remarkable 1,228 (65.22%) were non-tailors.

Table 1.1. Admissions to the Tailors’ Fraternity, 1398-1445, 1453-1473

Years	Tailors	Non-Tailors	Total
1398-1445	487 (10.36)*	1031 (21.93)	1518 (32.29)
1453-1473	168 (8.4)	197 (9.85)	365 (18.25)
Total	655 (9.78)	1228 (18.33)	1883 (28.10)

* Numbers in brackets indicate the average numbers admitted each year.

As the table shows, the admission of non-tailor members was particularly prolific before 1445: during this period alone, 84% of the non-tailors who joined between 1398 and 1473 were admitted, at a rate of almost twenty-two each year. This was double the admission rate of tailors to the fraternity. After 1445 admission rates for non-tailors more than halved

¹ *CWCH*, I, p.484; *CPR*, 1391-96, p.139 (transfer of Hall); *Ibid.*, 1405-1408, p.56 (grant of properties in parish of St. Martin Outwich and the advowson of the church).

² Clode, *Early History*, I, pp.292-302.

whereas there was only a small drop in the numbers of tailors being advanced to the livery each year. The relative stability in the numbers of tailors admitted has important implications for the relationship between the fraternity and the craft as a whole, particularly at a time when the craft was expanding in London, a conclusion suggested by the increasing numbers of masters who enrolled apprentices in the fifteenth century. Subsequent chapters will seek to determine whether or not this relative contraction of the elite within the craft had a detrimental effect upon the ability of the fraternity to represent and cater for the interests of all craftsmen.¹

The consistently high level of the recruitment of non-tailors before 1450 was undoubtedly related to the extraordinary development of the fraternity, and in particular the acquisition of the two chapels, the link with St. Martin's Church, and the spiritual partnerships with religious houses in and around London. With this in mind it is possible to attempt an analysis of the various groups which made up the 1,228 non-tailors and make an assessment of the possible reasons lying behind their membership. All but 175 of them can be identified by occupation, and thus the Tailors' accounts constitute one of the largest and most complete membership lists for any English fraternity in this period.

Making up by far the largest sub-group (36.5%) of the non-tailors, were the 448 members of other London crafts, sixty occupations in all being represented. These included lone representatives of small, specialised misteries, such as the shear-grinders and mattress-makers, to middle-ranking craftsmen such as masons and carpenters through to members of what were to become known as the 'Great Twelve' guilds. As Table 1.2 demonstrates, the latter were particularly strongly represented, with the prominent mercer, William Cantelowe, and the skinner William Gregory, among the 223 members of the Twelve who joined the fraternity in this period.²

¹ Below, pp.138-47.

² Cantelowe joined in 1434-5, and Gregory in 1436-7, *Accounts* I, ff.258v, 280. For their careers see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.328, 447 and Beaven, *Aldermen*, II, pp.8-9.

Table 1.2. Members drawn from the ‘Great Twelve’

Grocers:	42
Drapers:	37
Mercers:	28
Vintners:	28
Fishmongers:	24
Skinners:	18
Goldsmiths:	17
Clothworkers ¹ :	16
Haberdashers:	5
Ironmongers:	4
Salters:	4
Total:	223

The prominence of such individuals enlarges our understanding of the devotional habits of Londoners in this period. It has been established that, for the most part, parish fraternities were the spiritual haunts, so to speak, of middle-ranking craftsmen, as evidenced in particular by the fraternity register of St. Botolph’s Aldersgate, the only surviving such register for London. Of the 667 members listed, Patricia Basing managed to identify about a third, of whom 124 were Londoners drawn, like the members of the Tailors’ fraternity, from a wide range of occupations (40). Brewers were the dominant craft, however: other occupations were poorly represented and of generally artisan standing.² Such was not the case with the fraternity of St. John the Baptist: although the middle-ranking crafts were fairly well represented, with 36 brewers, 17 embroiderers, 12 armourers and 11 wax-chandlers becoming members, the overwhelming impression is of a fraternity drawn from the upper echelons of London’s craft hierarchy.

Why did these Londoners join the fraternity? At one level, craft considerations were important factors in determining the profile of the membership of the fraternity. Eighty-eight practitioners of crafts closely connected with tailoring (drapers, skimmers, embroiderers, fullers and shearmen) were admitted to the fraternity in this period and it is highly likely that business links with tailors lay behind the membership of many of these people. In addition, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, distinctions between crafts were frequently blurred, despite the stipulations of City and guild ordinances. John Cavendish, Master of the Tailors’ fraternity in 1413-14, can be found in the accounts of the Great Wardrobe for 1418-19 as an

¹ 10 shearmen and 6 fullers. The two guilds were incorporated as the Clothworkers’ Company in 1528.

² *Parish Fraternity Register*, ed. Basing, pp.xxii-xxiii and see Barron, ‘Parish Fraternities’, pp.29-30.

embroiderer, working under William Tropenell the king's serjeant-tailor.¹ Cavendish may perhaps have moved into embroidery after his term as master, for he described himself as 'citizen and embroiderer' in his will of 1433 in which he left 20s to the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist.² Tropenell himself remained the king's tailor until at least 1422 during which time he also supplied the Great Wardrobe with cloth, and in the Account compiled for 1419-21 he is referred to as citizen and 'pannarius' of London.³ Of particular significance, therefore, are the bequests received from nine of the drapers who joined the Tailors fraternity in this period: these represent 36% of the bequests received from members of the 'Great Twelve'. In addition, five drapers made bequests to the fraternity in wills enrolled in the Husting Court before 1398.⁴ It is striking too that all the bequests from London drapers were made before the late 1430s, when a simmering dispute between the Tailors and Drapers finally came to a head after the Tailors acquired a new and controversial charter.⁵ This had a dramatic effect on the willingness of drapers to join the Tailors' fraternity: the period 1398-1439 had seen twenty-eight drapers pay their 20s fee, including some eminent aldermen; after this date only nine men of that craft joined, of which three were members of the same family.⁶

The connection of the forty-two grocers and twenty-eight mercers who joined the fraternity with tailoring is less obvious, although some were doubtless involved in supplying goods to the fraternity. It is important, therefore, to emphasise other factors which led to the membership of so many important Londoners. What is certain is that the Tailors' fraternity, and hence the craft as a whole, would have gained a great deal of prestige from an influential and wealthy membership. The roll compiled in 1607 fulfilled a particular function in a particular context, demonstrating to the monarch the extent of noble and royal support for

¹ *Accounts*, I, f.72v; PRO, E.361/6, m.5.

² PRO, Prob.11/3, ff.150v-151v.

³ PRO, E.101/407/1, f.3. Another prominent tailor, Robert Fenescles, appears in the same account as a draper.

⁴ *CWCH*, II, pp.139 (1369), 148 (1370), 158 (1372), 181 (1375) and 218 (1380).

⁵ For this dispute see Caroline M. Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals, 1438-1444', in Holt and Rosser eds., *The Medieval Town*, pp.160-183, and below, pp.120-27.

⁶ Walter Chirchsey joined in 1442-3, *Accounts*, I, 357v and Robert and Harry in 1444-5, *ibid.*, f.388. None of the others were particularly eminent drapers.

the fraternity over the ages. Two centuries earlier the same need existed in the local, urban context as much as in on the wider stage; as will be shown, the Tailors were certainly keen to improve their position in the civic hierarchy. This was met by the attraction of important and well-connected individuals to the fraternity, as well as through the building up of 'ghostly treasure'. On the other hand, grocers, mercers and other merchants possessed their own motives for joining which should not be deprecated merely because of the Tailors' political aspirations. Religion and social status were two of the principal concerns of London citizens, and indeed the two were frequently interconnected, as Colin Richmond has shown with respect to the devotional habits of the gentry in this period.¹ The accoutrements of worship, the physical space used, and the social standing of one's fellow worshippers were equally important for merchants in the urban context. On the whole, parish fraternities do not appear to have attracted such people: the three 'upper-class' fraternities which have been identified in London stand out because of the way in which they were taken over by wealthy merchants to provide a focus for collective worship with their peers.² Equally, when some of the most eminent tailors did become involved in parish fraternities it was normally on a grand scale: in 1475 one tailor, Thomas Gay, along with the bishop of Salisbury, Sir Walter Devereux and Lord Ferrers, was granted a licence to found a guild dedicated to the Virgin in St. Bride's, Fleet Street.³ This is not to say, of course, that the parish as a whole was unimportant in the lives of the wealthier London citizens. The parish provided the local focus for worship, as well as an opportunity for the assertion of status in the local community, whether in life through the occupation of a particular pew, for example, or in death with the establishment of a chantry and a prominent burial place. Fraternities such as those of the Tailors and Skinners, on the other hand, provided opportunities for the 'drawing-apart of the merchants as a superior social class' as Sylvia Thrupp termed it, through membership of a socially, but not geographically exclusive, body of fellow citizens.⁴ They were motivated by

¹ C. Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth Century Gentleman', in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R.B. Dobson (Gloucester, 1984), pp.193-208. For the 137 gentry members of the tailors' fraternity see below p.36 *et seq.*

² The guild of the Virgin in All Hallows Barking, the guild of the Name of Jesus in St. Paul's and the fraternity dedicated to St. Barbara at St. Katharine's Hospital: Barron, 'Parish Fraternities', p.30.

³ *CPR*, 1467-1477, p.523.

⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.29.

the vitality of the religious and social functions which were provided, and which could not be matched by London's parish fraternities, or indeed by most other craft fraternities in the City.

As Londoners such individuals were perhaps more likely to be active participants in the spiritual life of the Tailors' fraternity than members of some of the other groups described below. The bequests received by the fraternity show clearly that craftsmen and merchants did value their association with the fraternity, not seeing it solely as a badge of status. In all, bequests were received from fifty individuals representing 29 crafts. Of these, exactly half came from members of the twelve greater misteries. The will of the prominent draper and mayor of the City, William Crowmer, enrolled in 1433, perhaps exemplifies the extra-parochial attachments which wealthy merchants could develop. Crowmer asked to be buried next to his wife in the chancel of his parish church, St. Martin Orgar, where he also established a chantry. After making bequests to some of the London hospitals, he then singled out the fraternity of his own craft, to which he left £10, and the fraternities of the tailors and the skinners, each of which was left £5.¹ The bequest was duly received by the Tailors, and recorded in the accounts for 1433-34.² As Elspeth Veale has shown, the Skinners' fraternity of Corpus Christi was a similar forum for the coming together of London's merchant class and provided a similar range of spiritual services.³ Thus it is significant that William Gregory, the prominent skinner and mayor of London, did not forget the Tailors' fraternity despite leaving large bequests to the two fraternities of his own craft.⁴ The lack of comparable lists of members for many of the other craft and parish fraternities in London means that the picture of citizens' religious affiliations is governed largely by the evidence of such wills. The tendency is, however, to dismiss multiple bequests to fraternities as a form of almost random charity, directed to institutions with which the testator had no formal connection. However, the possibility that prominent citizens cultivated formal links with many religious associations, in addition to their parishes and craft guilds, should not be dismissed. In his will enrolled in 1457, the prominent salter, Thomas Beaumont left bequests

¹ PRO, Prob.11/3, ff.176-178v.

² Accounts, I, f.244v.

³ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.114.

⁴ PRO, Prob.11/4, f.123v. His bequest of 20s was received by the Tailors in 1467-8: *Accounts* II, f.311v.

to five fraternities, including that of the Tailors, as well as founding almshouses for poor members of his own craft.¹ No indications are provided of the testator's preferences for, or membership of, any of these fraternities: each received 20s, and the Tailors' fraternity, which he joined in 1434-35, is listed third, after the fraternities of St. Giles Cripplegate and Holy Trinity in St. Mary le Bow.² The prospect of the prayers of so many fellow citizens doubtless provided a stimulus to such activity, which should be seen in the same light as the foundation of a chantry or an obit: testators made long-term arrangements for their souls in a variety of ways, which testified to the richness of their religious and social lives.

For some members of the lesser guilds, membership of the Tailors fraternity doubtless afforded an opportunity for social mobility and the prospect of establishing contacts with some of these wealthy London citizens. Five of the men listed as overseers of the mystery of dyers in 1415 and 1416 subsequently became members of the Tailors' fraternity; similarly, two bowyer brethren, Robert Crulle and Philip Parker, were also at the top of their profession: both were Wardens of the craft and Parker became master of the king's bows.³ Membership of the Tailors' fraternity was thus a recognition of the status they had achieved within their own misteries, and enabled them to continue to accrue prestige which they could not obtain through their own guilds.

The fraternity was also open to craftsmen and merchants from outside London. A total of fifty-one such individuals were admitted between 1398 and 1473, including at least seventeen tailors, four drapers, two fullers and Geoffrey Winter, described as a clothman of Wales.⁴ The geographical links of these people can help to give an impression of both the reputation of the fraternity, and the extent to which citizens of other towns and cities not only travelled to London on business, but also managed to establish links with London institutions. It is interesting, for instance, that some of the tailors were from towns such as Bristol and

¹ PRO, Prob.11/4, ff.69-70.

² Accounts, I, f.258.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, pp.150, 173. The five joined in 1418-19, 1419-20, 1420-21, and 1428-29. Accounts, I, ff. 108v, 113, 118v, and 194v; Crulle joined in 1427-8 and Parker in 1444-5, *ibid.*, ff.184, 388. Crulle was named as one of the overseers of the bowyers in 1416, *Cal. Letter Bks.*, I, p.173. I am grateful to Barbara Megson for information concerning Crulle and Parker.

⁴ Accounts, II, f.228. The occupations of most of the others are unspecified.

Salisbury which had thriving fraternities for the craft, also dedicated to St. John the Baptist.¹ A London 'club' would have provided them with a familiar social and religious context while in London, and an opportunity to develop business contacts among other members of the fraternity. Most of the identifiable craftsmen were from the south of the country, only two men, a draper and a tailor, came from as far north as York. Three others were from the midlands (Coventry and Northampton). The rest, with the exception of one tailor from Bristol, one man from Gloucester and three from Salisbury, were from the home counties.

Among those joining from the home counties, several came from the suburbs of London. The six individuals described as residents of Southwark and the sole member to come from Westminster are of particular interest to the historian of suburbs. Four of the Southwark residents were tailors which suggests that, in the absence of a guild south of the river, they were seeking a connection with the craft in the city. On the other hand David Selly of Westminster probably joined for motives similar to those of the London merchants described above. He was certainly of a similar standing, being a warden of the Assumption Guild and a wealthy wine merchant.² This may well indicate a fundamental difference in the relationships which existed between London and these two suburbs: Southwark and its inhabitants were, on the whole, more dependent upon the London economy than residents of Westminster. At least one citizen and tailor of London, for instance, appears to have lived in Southwark from where he may have 'commuted' into the capital.³ Westminster, on the other hand, had attractions of its own as the seat of government, and the location of an important monastery and so was perhaps more self-contained, even self-sufficient, in terms of its spiritual as much as its economic life. The flourishing of Westminster's own fraternities is one indicator of this and may partly explain any reluctance to join London fraternities.

¹ Henry Sondford, 'taillour de Bristowe' joined in 1407-8, Accounts, I, f.39v. For the Bristol and Salisbury guilds see Francis F. Fox, *Some Account of the Ancient Fraternity of Merchant Taylors of Bristol*, (Bristol, 1880), C. Haskins, *The Ancient Trade Guilds and Companies of Salisbury* (1912), ch. ix pp.98-131 and A.D. Brown, 'Lay Piety in Late Medieval Wiltshire', Unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis (1990), pp.158-182.

² Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, p.397.

³ I am grateful to Professor Martha Carlin for referring me to the 1381 Poll tax return for Southwark, PRO, E.179/184/30, in which Walter Ludeney, tailor, appears. Ludeney's wife Emmot was admitted as a sister of the fraternity in 1400-1, Accounts, I, f.10, possibly indicating that her husband had been a warden or master of the fraternity in the late fourteenth century.

These attractions seem to have prompted some London traders to set up 'branches' in Westminster suggesting that the vill enjoyed a different relationship with the capital.¹

Two of these non-London craftsmen, both tailors, were certainly able to reap the benefits of membership in a very practical form when they were admitted as almsmen of the fraternity. One of these, John Bridgesthorn of St. Alban's began receiving alms in 1416-17.² The career of the other, John Staveley, one of the Salisbury tailors, is of particular interest as it seems to indicate a gradual shifting of the focus of his life away from his home town towards London. He joined the fraternity of London tailors in 1434-5, but the admission of his wife Christian two years later is a unique occurrence among the non-Londoners, and suggests a strengthening connection with the London fraternity.³ This is made all the more likely by subsequent events in the West Country. Staveley had evidently enjoyed a conventional and successful career as a member of the guild of Salisbury tailors, and was one of the two wardens of the guild in 1441.⁴ However, Staveley's loyalties to his parish, St. Thomas's, appear to have brought him into conflict with the Salisbury tailors between 1447 and 1449: both he and Stephen Hendy were accused of withholding vestments when a chantry was moved to St. Edmund's church and of trying to 'destroie the sayd chaunterie'.⁵ It is probable that, by 1453, his relations with the London tailors' fraternity were a good deal friendlier than those with his brethren in Salisbury. By that year Staveley was in need of charitable assistance, whether through poverty, old age or both, and significantly it was the London tailors who provided such assistance, paying him 44s 4d a year until his death in 1457-58.⁶

Another group of people who may have had good reason for establishing links with an important London fraternity were the 137 gentry who became members, as well as the 46

¹ Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, pp.283, 146; *idem*, 'London and Westminster: the Suburb in the Urban Economy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* ed. J.A.F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988), pp.45-61. For Southwark see esp. M. Carlin, 'The Urban development of Southwark c.1200-1550' (unpublished University of Toronto Ph.D. thesis, 1983).

² Accounts, I, f.96v.

³ Accounts, I, f.258 and f.280v.

⁴ Wiltshire RO, MS G23/1/1 ledger A f.125v. I am grateful to Dr. Andrew Brown for this reference.

⁵ Brown, 'Lay Piety', pp.178-9.

⁶ Accounts, II, f.16v.

men described as knights. Of the gentry, forty-eight were described as 'gentlemen' with the rest noted as esquires. There are perhaps two principal ways in which personal links could have been created between the fraternity and such men. First, it is clear that the London tailors did not confine their economic activities to London and its citizens. William Tropenell, the king's tailor, also worked for Sir Roger Salwayn of York: in his will of 1420, Salwayn reminded his executors to settle the bill which he owed Tropenell 'for makynge of a liverye of myn'.¹ Another tailor, Richard Colshill, was in the service of Sir William Bonville when the latter was appointed as seneschal of Aquitaine in 1449; in 1428-29 Bonville had himself been admitted to the Tailors' fraternity.² Analysis of the debt cases in the Patent Rolls, many presumably resulting from business transactions, shows the social composition and geographical origins of tailors' debtors. Of the 189 cases between 1400 and 1500, 98 involved people of gentry rank or above from many different counties, the south-west being particularly well represented. Membership of the Tailors' fraternity of London might have enabled such men to be sure of getting good service - items of clothing, and particularly liveries, were important indicators of status and it was doubtless important to have a good relationship with one's tailor.³

Non-economic factors should not be ignored however. As well as a place to stay on their visits to the capital, many gentry doubtless thought it important have a 'club' where they could be sure of the company of important citizens and partake of the spiritual and material benefits of membership of a wealthy fraternity. Here Colin Richmond's conclusions concerning the 'privatisation' of gentry religion ought, perhaps, to be modified somewhat.⁴ In her classic study of the merchant class in medieval London, Sylvia Thrupp explored the link between trade and gentility, the shared cultural affinities of London's merchants and the gentry.⁵ The possession of arms and seals, for instance, was indicative of aspirations of

¹ PRO, Prob.11/2, f.437.

² CPR, 1446-1452, p.300; Accounts, I, f.194v.

³ These findings are discussed in more detail below, pp.255-57.

⁴ Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth Century Gentleman', pp.193-208.

⁵ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, Chapter 6, pp.234-87.

gentle rank among London's wealthier inhabitants.¹ These affinities were such that London citizens can often be found calling themselves 'gentlemen': one tailor, Robert Hille, described himself as 'gentilman otherwise called Robert Hyll citizen and Tailleur of London' in his will of 1488.² Consequently it is not surprising that relations between merchants and gentlemen were often close, particularly given the need of many of the latter to come to London on legal or commercial business. As so often the Paston Letters shed some light on the relationships established by the provincial gentry with London citizens. In 1479, John Paston III wrote to his mother, saying that, on a recent visit to London, he had stayed at the house of one John Lee, tailor, within Ludgate.³ Paston's elder brother, Sir John, had joined the Tailors' fraternity in 1466-67, and was also connected with Lee 'my ryght trusty frends [sic]', as a letter of 1474 to 'Maistres Anne' reveals.⁴ Lee had been admitted to the livery of his craft in 1460-61, and was to go on to become an important figure in the fraternity, eventually being elected Master in 1483.⁵ The connection was a valuable one in several ways therefore: through Sir John Paston's membership of the fraternity, the family was able to establish a link with a prominent London tailor with whom John III was able to stay when in London on business. Secondly, Sir John would have been able to take advantage of membership of the fraternity in order to meet people of a similar standing in London, including lawyers and potential business associates. Thirdly, the reputation of the fraternity as a whole would have been enhanced: it is possible that the stock of the fraternity was already high in Norfolk given that Edmund Clere and Sir John Fastolf, two correspondents of John Paston I (d.1466), had been admitted to the fraternity in 1443-4 and 1444-5.⁶ The reputations of the majority of the gentry who joined the fraternity have not benefited from the survival of correspondence and so remain confined to relative obscurity. Some have only

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.249-56.

² PRO, Prob.11/8/13.

³ N. Davis ed., *The Paston Letters*, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1971), i, pp.617-18.

⁴ Accounts, II, f. 296; Davis ed., *Paston Letters*, i, p.590. Other letters from the Pastons which mention Lee are in *ibid.*, i, pp.592, 615.

⁵ Accounts, II, ff.296, 193v; *Ibid.*, III, f.169.

⁶ Accounts, I, ff.373, 388.

become well-known through the efforts of twentieth-century historians: one of the esquires admitted in 1431-32 was one John Hopton 'squier de Swylyngton'.¹

Although no other London fraternity appears to have been quite as successful as the Tailors' in recruiting from the ranks of the gentry, one example from the Goldsmiths' guild provides an instructive example of the advantages for the fraternity of gentry recruitment. The gentleman concerned was admitted because, it was claimed, he was 'a man of substance and in great favour with lords'.² The admission of esquires, gentlemen and knights would also have been important for the social contacts with the nobility and the Crown itself which they brought with them. The London craft guilds were thus able to tap into the networks of 'bastard feudalism' and enjoy access to the patronage and influence of prominent figures in public life. Connections with the nobility were not just indirect, however: many prominent people were evidently conscious enough of the mutual benefits of the patron-client relationship to view membership of a prominent fraternity as advantageous, particularly when it would bring them into contact with influential merchants and London citizens. Certainly, in the fifteenth century at least 123 members of the royal family, the nobility and their households were admitted to the fraternity. Indeed, the list of noblemen and women who joined reads like a roll-call of the English aristocracy: Nevilles, Percies, de la Zouches, Staffords and Beauforts were all admitted during this period. What is more, all paid the requisite 20s for their membership and, presumably, were obliged to make their annual alms payments: the concept of 'honorary membership' as employed by Clode and others is somewhat misleading. When viewed purely in terms of prestige, it is probably true to say that the fraternity profited most from the connection, yet the rights and duties of such individuals as brothers and sisters were the same, which argues once more for the importance of the pious motive in the actions of such people, and the perceived spiritual advantages of membership.

The admission of 'Nostre tres excellent seigneur le roi henri quinte' in 1413-14 is the only recorded instance of the monarch becoming a brother of the Tailors' fraternity.³ The explanation for this may lie in the fact that Henry V was the only monarch from whom the

¹ Accounts, I, f.226. See C. Richmond, *John Hopton: a Fifteenth Century Suffolk Gentleman* (Cambridge, 1981).

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.257.

³ Accounts, I, f.74.

Tailors did not secure a charter between 1327 and 1502. The grant of a charter may have been viewed as an act which not only confirmed the fraternity's privileges, but also linked the monarch personally to it through the royal prerogative. The admissions of noblemen also reflected political realities, and the attitude of the City as a whole to developments which could seriously affect the capital. The fact that only one nobleman was admitted between 1453 and 1460 is perhaps more a reflection of the cautious attitude adopted by the City of London as a whole during these turbulent years than of hostility to the Lancastrian regime.¹ Soon after the accession of Edward IV both Richard, duke of Gloucester and George, duke of Clarence, were admitted, presumably in an attempt to assure the new monarch of the support of an important association of London citizens. Two years later, in 1464, the Tailors obtained their fourth royal charter.² In general the admission lists reflect those who were in positions of power and influence at any one time, and who might prove useful to the fraternity. The best example of this was the Tailors' success in attracting the patronage of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester when the dispute with the Drapers was at its height.³ When the Tailors sought a new and controversial charter in 1439, £30 was paid to Gloucester and £8 to Adam Moleyns, the Clerk of the Council who, significantly, had been admitted to the fraternity the previous year free of charge.⁴ The chances of success were increased because of the strength of the connection between the fraternity and Gloucester. Between his admission in 1413-14 and the granting of the charter in 1439, three men were enfranchised 'al request del duic de Gloucestre' without charge to the duke, and in addition several members of his household were admitted as brethren, including Walter Sheryngton his secretary, admitted in 1424-25.⁵ The link was strengthened still further by the admission of Eleanor Cobham, duchess of Gloucester, in 1433-34, followed by her secretary in 1438-39.⁶

¹ See Caroline M. Barron, 'London and the Crown, 1451-1461', in *The Crown and Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century* ed. J.R.L. Highfield and R. Jeffs (Gloucester, 1981), pp.88-110.

² Accounts, II, f.228 (1462-3); CPR, 1461-1467, p.463.

³ Barron, 'Ralph Holland', p.64 and n.37 and see below, pp.120-27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, n.31 and Accounts, I, f.313v and 302; *ibid.* I, f.305v.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.74; Roger Laurence in 1415-16, Walter Washer in 1416-17 and Richard Buk in 1435-36, *ibid.*, I, f.89v, 95v f.265v; *ibid.*, I, f.151v (Sheryngton).

⁶ Accounts, I, ff.246, 305b.

This example shows the extent to which the non-tailor membership of the fraternity could be used to enhance the privileges of the guild, and prestige of the craft as a whole. Certainly, Gloucester was more than just a name on a roll of eminent members: quite what the draper brethren made of the exploitation of the fraternity's links with Gloucester in the 1430s will never be known; their position at this point must have been rather uncomfortable. All these connections could, in theory, be exploited by the fraternity's officers (all of whom were tailors) in their role as the governing body of the mystery, for the furtherance of its craft-centred aims in the City. This suggests that the non-tailor membership took little part in the decision-making processes of the fraternity. All who joined must, however, have been aware that their almsmoney would have been spent on tailors, and that any profits from tenements left to the fraternity, as well as any bequests made to the fraternity went into a common box used as much for the administration of the craft as for the payment of chaplains. There was no earmarking of revenues for particular items of expenditure, apart from money used to fund chantries. The Tailors' fraternity was engaged in a process designed to build up the prestige of the craft in the City in the first half of the fifteenth century and the recruitment of highly placed individuals was a central element in this strategy. After 1440 admissions of noblemen were less frequent, particularly between 1445 and 1460 which may well suggest that the fraternity was adopting a low profile during the civil wars. As shown above, however, the Yorkist succession brought a new drive for influential members, though on a less ambitious scale which suggests that, as with the acquisition of spiritual privileges and the chapels, the process of building up a large and powerful fraternity was felt to be largely complete.¹

In so far as the fraternity did admit purely 'honorary' members, this was done through the granting of cloth to prominent London citizens, and to the King and particular noblemen. Each year liveries were granted to the Mayor, Recorder, Sheriffs, and the Common Sergeant as well as to other prominent aldermen who were not necessarily members of the fraternity. This continued despite proclamations in 1415 and 1423 that the Mayor, aldermen and other City officers were forbidden from taking the liveries of any other craft apart from their own, and suggests a certain determination on the part of the Tailors to make their mark in the first half of the fifteenth century. Indeed, barely a year after the second of

¹ For the political dimension to the activities of the Tailors see Chapter 3 *passim*.

these proclamations a hood was given to 'le meir de loundrez'.¹ Usually, the fraternity spent between ten and fifteen pounds a year on allowances of cloth, but this practice seems to have declined in the late 1450s; thereafter the granting of liveries was confined to the Master and his wife, the wardens, and the clerk and beadle of the fraternity at a cost of, at most, eight pounds. It seems significant that this coincides with the drop in the recruitment of non-tailor members, and perhaps marks the end of the first phase of the development of the fraternity, during which, as will be shown, it endeavoured to cultivate important contacts in order to further the interests of the craft in the City.

Conclusion

An Haberdasher and a carpenter,
A Webbe, a Deyer, and a Tapiser,
Were all y-clothed in o livere
Of a solempne and grete fraternite.²

Craft fraternities in medieval London and indeed all over Europe can be viewed from a number of different angles. Whilst their primary role was the administration of the craft and the projection of an identity into the public arena, they performed another function through the provision of services for all their members drawn from other crafts and levels of society. The fraternity of Sant' Andrea de' Purgatori in Florence, for example, had a heterogeneous membership drawn from all quarters of the city. For the patricians and other citizens who joined, the fact that it was firmly controlled by 'Arte della Lana' (wool guild) was perhaps less important than the opportunities it provided for them to meet each other in a non-parochial social and religious context.³ Similarly, in London those crafts with successful fraternities, and which drew their members from other crafts and levels of society, were providing services on a City-wide basis of a sort which were typically provided, on a smaller scale, for middle-ranking craftsmen by parish fraternities. It has often been assumed that the merchant class simply withdrew into the halls of their own guilds; as the Tailors' records show, however, merchants and aspirant artisans frequently sought the company of

¹ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, p.138; Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, p.191; Accounts, I, f.154.

² 'General Prologue' lines 361-4, *The Canterbury Tales* ed. F.N. Robinson (Oxford, 1968), p.23.

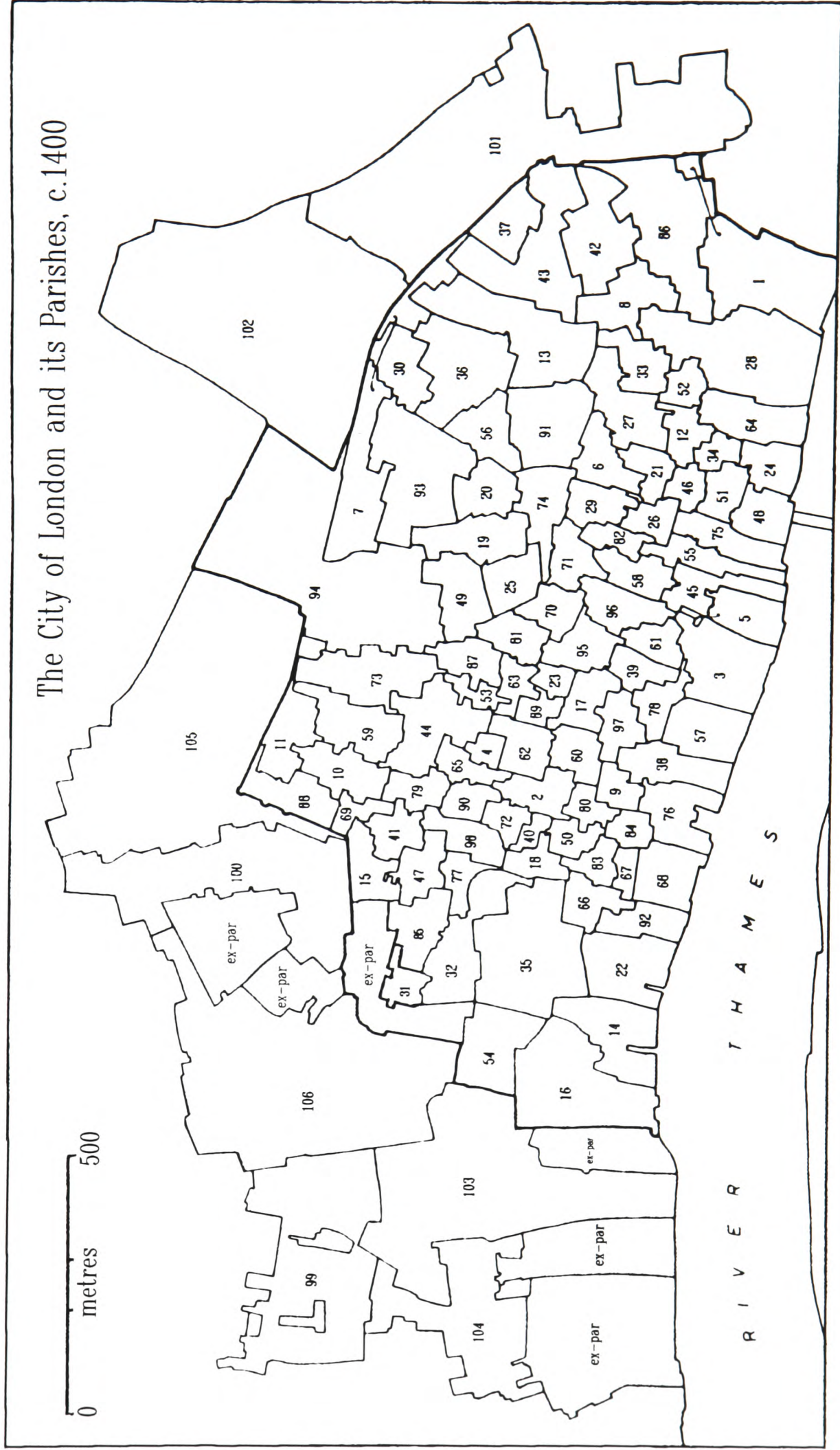
³ Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1982), p.65.

their equals in prayer, making up a rather more ‘upper-class’ version of the fraternity described in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*.

Chaucer was almost certainly describing a provincial fraternity such as the guild of the Holy Trinity in Coventry, which was not attached to any particular craft, but whose membership was similar in social composition to that of the fraternity of London tailors or that of their counterparts in Bruges.¹ The association of a fraternity with a craft introduces new questions over and above the function of the fraternity as a religious institution. As has been shown, the Tailors sought to exploit their links with the duke of Gloucester, a member of their fraternity, in order to further the interests of the craft. The artisan nature of the craft itself, for example, was brought home to the masters of the Tailors during the dispute with the Drapers, and it is possible that the Tailors had to try harder than most of the ‘Great Twelve’ to create a social context that would enable them to meet the great and the good of London society on something approximating to equal terms. This again serves to emphasise the autonomous nature of many craft associations which stemmed in many instances from their origins as voluntary organisations, independent of the supposed machinations of civic government. Subsequent chapters will seek to explore the nature of this autonomy in more detail, examining in particular the relationships between the guilds and the City and the ways in which guild authorities sought to enforce their ordinances among the crafts as a whole. What is clear, however, is that the crafts of London, and the Tailors perhaps most of all, were strikingly successful in the creation of a corporate identity, a process which exploited the symbolic language and principles of *fraternitas* and which, in turn, brought vitality and diversity to the religious and social life of the capital as a whole.

¹ *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry*, ed. M.D. Harris (Dugdale Soc., 1935). Like the Tailors’ fraternity, members included prominent noblemen and clergy such as the duke of Gloucester and his brothers, and Cardinal Beaufort. London citizens admitted included Richard Whittington the mercer and three-times mayor and John Churchman who, as shown above, was also a valued benefactor of the London tailors’ fraternity.

MAP 1 (a)



KEY TO PARISHES

Within the Walls

- 1. All Hallows, Barking
- 2. All Hallows, Bread Street
- 3. All Hallows the Great
- 4. All Hallows, Honey Lane
- 5. All Hallows the Less
- 6. All Hallows, Lombard Street
- 7. All Hallows, London Wall
- 8. All Hallows, Staining
- 9. Holy Trinity the Less
- 10. St. Alban Wood Street
- 11. St. Alphafe
- 12. St. Andrew Hubbard
- 13. St. Andrew Undershaft
- 14. St. Andrew by the Wardrobe
- 15. St. Anne Aldersgate
- 16. St. Anne and St. Agnes
- 17. St. Antholin
- 18. St. Augustine
- 19. St. Bartholomew by the Exchange
- 20. St. Benet Fink
- 21. St. Benet Gracechurch
- 22. St. Benet Paul's Wharf
- 23. St. Benet Sherehog
- 24. St. Botolph Billingsgate
- 25. St. Christopher le Stocks
- 26. St. Clement Eastcheap
- 27. St. Dionis Backchurch
- 28. St. Dunstan in the East
- 29. St. Edmund, Lombard Street
- 30. St. Ethelburga
- 31. St. Ewen
- 32. St. Faith

- 33. St. Gabriel Fenchurch
- 34. St. George, Botolph Lane
- 35. St. Gregory by St. Paul's
- 36. St. Helen, Bishopsgate
- 37. St. James, Dukes Place
- 38. St. James Garlickhithe
- 39. St. John the Baptist
- 40. St. John the Evangelist
- 41. St. John Zachary
- 42. St. Katherine, Coleman Street
- 43. St. Katherine Cree
- 44. St. Lawrence Jewry
- 45. St. Lawrence Pountney
- 46. St. Leonard, Eastcheap
- 47. St. Leonard, Foster Lane
- 48. St. Magnus the Martyr
- 49. St. Margaret Lothbury
- 50. St. Margaret Moyses
- 51. St. Margaret, New Fish Street
- 52. St. Margaret Pattens
- 53. St. Martin, Ironmonger Lane
- 54. St. Martin, Ludgate
- 55. St. Martin Orgar
- 56. St. Martin Outwich
- 57. St. Martin, Vintry
- 58. St. Mary, Abchurch
- 59. St. Mary Aldermanbury
- 60. St. Mary Aldermayr
- 61. St. Mary Bothaw
- 62. St. Mary le Bow
- 63. St. Mary Colechurch
- 64. St. Mary at Hill

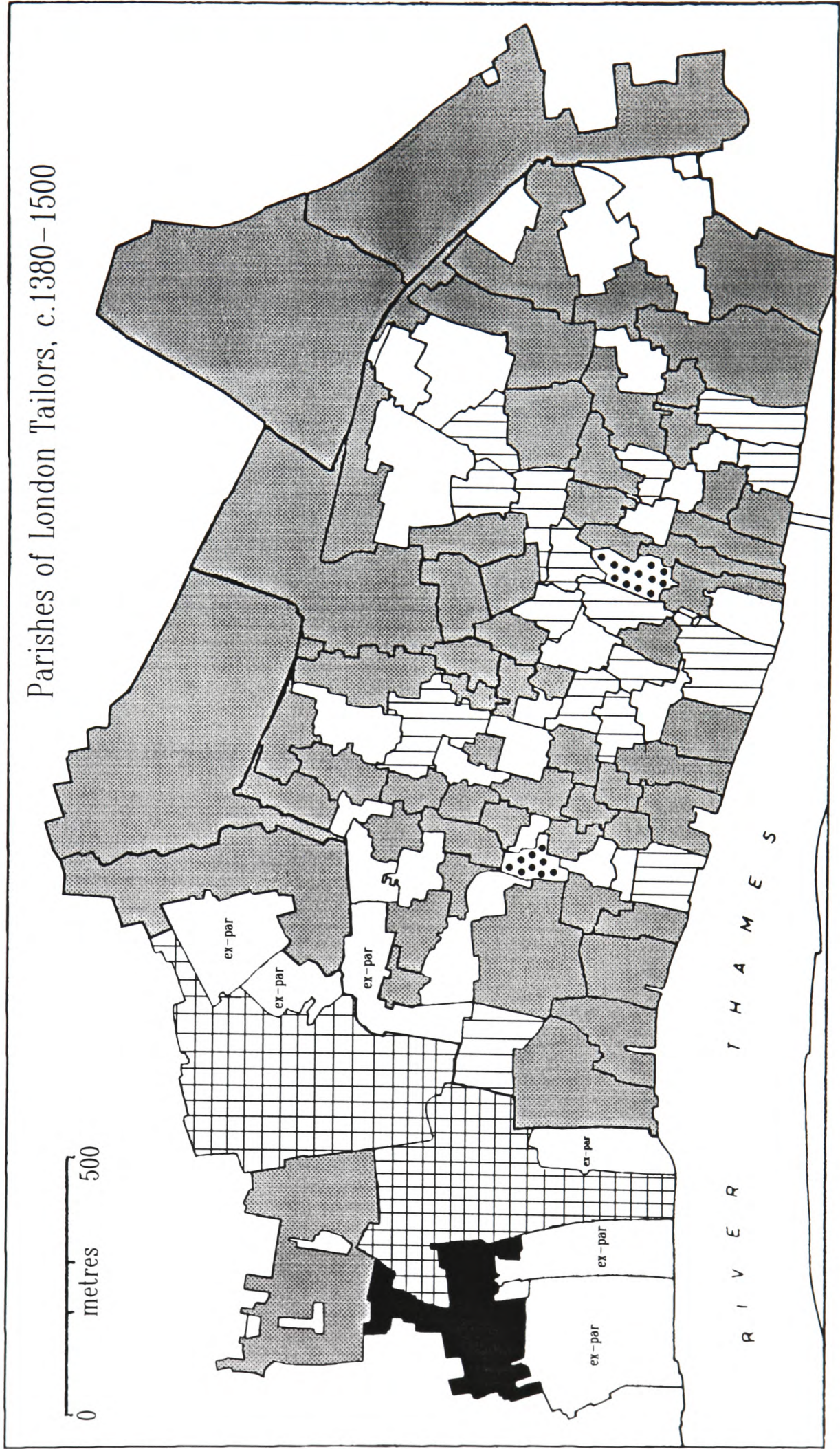
- 65. St. Mary Magdalene, Milk Street
- 66. St. Mary Magdalene, Old Fish Street
- 67. St. Mary Mounthaw
- 68. St. Mary Somerset
- 69. St. Mary, Staining
- 70. St. Mary, Woolchurch
- 71. St. Mary, Woolnoth
- 72. St. Matthew, Friday Street
- 73. St. Michael, Bassishaw
- 74. St. Michael, Cornhill
- 75. St. Michael, Crookedlane
- 76. St. Michael, Queenhithe
- 77. St. Michael le Querne
- 78. St. Michael Paternoster
- 79. St. Michael, Wood Street
- 80. St. Mildred, Bread Street
- 81. St. Mildred, Poultry
- 82. St. Nicholas Acon
- 83. St. Nicholas Cole Abbey
- 84. St. Nicholas Olave
- 85. St. Nicholas Shambles
- 86. St. Olave, Hart Street
- 87. St. Olave, Old Jewry
- 88. St. Olave, Silver Street
- 89. St. Pancras, Soper Lane
- 90. St. Peter, Westcheap
- 91. St. Peter, Cornhill
- 92. St. Peter, Paul's Wharf
- 93. St. Peter le Poor
- 94. St. Stephen, Coleman Street
- 95. St. Stephen, Walbrook

- 96. St. Swithin
- 97. St. Thomas the Apostle
- 98. St. Vedast, Foster Lane
- Without the Walls
- 99. St. Andrew, Holborn
- 100. St. Botolph, Aldersgate
- 101. St. Botolph, Aldgate
- 102. St. Botolph, Bishopsgate
- 103. St. Bride, Fleet Street
- 104. St. Dunstan in the West
- 105. St. Giles, Cripplegate
- 106. St. Sepulchre

- 1-5 testators
- 6-10 testators
- 11-20 testators
- 20-30 testators
- 30+ testators

MAP 1 (b)

Sources: GL, MS.9051/1 (Archdeaconry Court wills)
 GL, MS.9171/1-11 (Commissary Court wills)
 PRO, Prob.11/1-17 (Prerogative Court of Canterbury)



CHAPTER TWO. THE COMMUNITY OF THE FRATERNITY: POST OBIT SERVICES AND CHARITABLE PROVISION, 1400-1550.

Central to the existence and popularity of lay fraternities in the middle ages lay principles of 'caritas', of community and mutual obligation, principles which extended to include the dead as well as the living. As the preceding chapter demonstrated, craft fraternities, like their counterparts in the parish, owed their structures and functions as much to the elaboration of these principles as to the need for supervision of the various crafts. The aim of this chapter is to examine two of the most important functions fulfilled by lay fraternities, the provision of charity and the administration of chantries and obits, through the records of the Tailors' fraternity. These functions, it is argued, remained central to the aims of the fraternity, and were taken seriously by the Master and Wardens. This chapter will also look at the impact which wider developments in pious behaviour had upon the provision of such services by the London tailors.

I. The Administration of *Post Obit* Arrangements by the Tailors, 1380-1550

The notion of the community of the living and the dead lay at the heart of the services which were provided for the souls of the faithful departed with increasing frequency from the early fourteenth century. The doctrine of purgatory inspired the establishment of chantries, obits, and lights as well as acts of charity such as the repairing of roads and distributions to the 'maxime indigentes' of the town, parish or guild.¹ Various mechanisms were employed by individuals for the implementation of their *post obit* arrangements, and in London, as the chantry certificates of 1546 and 1548 testify, the livery companies played an important role in carrying out the wishes of their members. In 1548, for example, the commissioners found that the guilds were maintaining 61 chantry priests, 156 obits as well as many lights, distributions and other arrangements.² The implications of this are clear: first, any picture of religious life in late-medieval London is incomplete without an appreciation of the extent to which merchant and craft guilds, as well as parish churches and

¹ See for example C.R. Burgess, '"A fond thing vainly invented": an essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England', in S. Wright ed., *Parish Church and People* (London, 1988), pp.56-85.

² PRO, E.301/34, mm.36-39d, printed in C.J. Kitching ed., *London and Middlesex Chantry Certificate 1548*, London Record Society, 16, (1980), pp.81-95.

their fraternities, provided *post obit* services for their members. In particular the omission, by the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, church-wardens' accounts and most other sources, of the chantry priests and obits maintained by craft guilds in parish churches, does serve to obscure to some degree the richness of parish life, and the multiplicity of possible allegiances which, as already shown, could be held simultaneously by citizens.¹ Secondly, as a result of the impulse for the foundation of chantries and obits, the guilds acquired lands and rents which yielded a clear 'profit' over and above the charges on them, establishing the companies as major holders of property in and around London. In 1548 the lands and tenements held by the Salters of London, for instance, yielded £107 14s 8d *per annum*, the charges on them amounting to £34 6s 7½d.²

It is important to note, however, that the entire portfolio of lands and tenements held by the Tailors' fraternity was acquired as a result of the pious motivations of members, not merely those properties which were listed by the chantry commissioners of 1546 and 1548. The income yielded by those properties bequeathed to fund services, at a cost of just under £100, fell well short of the total rental value of properties held by the fraternity. The rental for the 1548 certificate, for instance, listed lands and tenements yielding £183 2s 8d, whereas the fraternity in fact received £440 17s 10d from its estates in 1546-47.³ This perhaps serves to emphasise the limited aims of the commissioners, and should not obscure the basic motivation behind all bequests of land to the fraternity, not just those used to found chantries or obits. Thomas Sutton, a tailor, left properties in the parish of St. James Garlickhithe to the fraternity in 1434, the income from which was to be used to enhance the amount paid to inmates of the almshouse by 2d a week. The almsmen and women were almost certainly required to pray for the souls of benefactors, and so Sutton was not only making a significant statement about his membership of the fraternity, but was also making provision for his soul. Sutton did not found a chantry and so the 'profit' arising from his tenements was all the greater: even if the seven almsmen in the almshouse had all benefitted from his charity, only

¹ See above, pp.30-4; *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter, 6 vols (London 1810-34). Vol. I contains the returns for parishes and religious houses in London and Middlesex. Even the strong connection between the church of St. Martin Outwich and the tailors is only occasionally evidenced by the churchwardens accounts of that parish (see below p.56).

² PRO, E.301/34, m.39d. The priests who performed these services received a stipend from the guilds and hence were unable to exploit the endowment, see Kitching ed., *Chantry Certificate, 1548*, p.xvii.

³ PRO, E.301/34, m.37d; LR.2/241, ff.7-19 (1546); Accounts, IV, ff.33, 66.

£30s 8d of the income yielded by his tenements (£10 12s in 1434) would have been employed.¹ This was less than the cost of a chantry (at least ten marks *per annum* for a priest in London), although more expensive than a simple obit (around 10s a year). The Crown was, however, more concerned with the more overt manifestations of false doctrines, intercessory institutions such as chantries and obits; this, and the Crown's desire not to destroy the wealthy London livery companies, led the commissioners to distinguish them from parish fraternities, a distinction which was based more upon convenience than upon a true appreciation of the common ground between all lay fraternities. Thomas Sutton was, however, somewhat unusual in not asking the fraternity to make any other provision for his soul, such as an obit or chantry. Another benefactor of the almshouse, Ralph Holland, was more typical: as well adding another 1d a week to the weekly rate, by his will of 1452, he also required the Master and Wardens to pay 13s 4d to the Rector and Churchwardens of St. Mary Aldermary each year for his obit, out of the revenues of his tenements left to the fraternity.²

The increase in the estates of the fraternity nevertheless went hand in hand with an increase in the *post obit* arrangements administered by it in the century and a half before the dissolution of the chantries. By 1548 this mutual dependence had resulted in a twelve-fold increase in the income from property donated for such purposes: from £15 6s 2d in 1400-1 to £183 2s 8d in 1548.³ This income was used to fund 13 chantries and 27 anniversaries, including a general obit for deceased members, eight temporary obits, and an obit for Henry VII, the grantor of their charter of 1503. Ten of the obits were celebrated in St. Martin Outwich, and the 13 priests were employed in five different parish churches in London. The total cost of these services was £123 5s 6d.⁴ By contrast, the chantry certificate of 1548 lists only twenty obits and eight priests funded out of the income from lands and tenements, though still more than any other company.⁵ The discrepancy seems to be explained firstly

¹ *CWCH*, II, p.480. Clode, *Early History*, I, p.409.

² *CWCH*, II, pp.525-6.

³ *Accounts*, I, f.9; PRO, E.301/34, m.37d.

⁴ In 1404-5 the fraternity received £38 12s 1d in rent, and from 1425 income from property regularly exceeded £100, see Appendix III.

⁵ PRO, E.301/34, m.37d.

by the temporary nature of some of the obits, and secondly by the fact that not all of the services were provided out of the revenues of lands and tenements left to the fraternity. The obit of Henry VII, for example, was celebrated by the fraternity in gratitude for the granting of the charter of 1503, and established by a written agreement between the fraternity and the king dated 3 December 1503. No lands were provided or specifically exploited for the anniversary, and like the general obit it was a purely voluntary foundation made possible by the burgeoning fortunes of the fraternity in the fifteenth century.¹

Virtually all the chantries and obits recorded in the Tailors' accounts for 1545-6 can be traced back to the date of foundation, and the construction of a chronology of these foundations yields interesting results (see Table 2.1). Of particular significance is the chronology of foundations of chantries: of the 11 recorded in 1545-6 that can be traced back, five (all perpetual) were founded before 1425 while the rest were early sixteenth-century foundations. The intervening seventy-five years saw a complete absence of new foundations of chantries of any kind, although ten new obits (three of which were temporary) were added to the four already celebrated.

Table 2.1. The Chronology of foundations of Chantries and Obits

Years	Chantries	Obits
1375-1400	1	1
1400-1425	4	3
1425-1450	-	2
1450-1475	-	6
1475-1500	-	2
1500-1525	3	3
1525-1550	3	4

This prompts a number of observations. First, the fact that no temporary chantries, and only three temporary obits, were administered by the fraternity in the fifteenth century suggests that the London craft guilds occupied a particular niche in the spiritual life of late-medieval London, being ideal administrators of permanent arrangements, funded out of large property endowments, rather than more short term chantries and obits, often funded with cash bequests. The popularity of the craft guilds for more permanent arrangements has obvious implications for the parish churches, who also sought such bequests; although these services were normally held in parish churches, the churchwardens had no claim upon the 'profit' arising from the properties being used to fund them. Thus despite the desire of

¹ Clode, *Early History*, I, pp.347-350.

testators to marry their dual loyalties to parish and craft, these foundations could potentially become a source of tension.¹

Secondly, despite the continuing uncertainty about the validity of devises in mortmain following the statute against 'uses' of 1391, there was evidently a healthy climate in early fifteenth century London for the foundation of perpetual chantries without licences, using craft fraternities as administrators.² It is interesting to note, however, that despite the clarification of the situation in 1434 and in 1457, whereby the City would scrutinize all such devises, no more perpetual chantries were administered by the fraternity in the fifteenth century.³ This may well reflect the city-wide decline in chantry foundations in the later fifteenth century, noted by John Thomson in his examination of wills enrolled in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.⁴ Certainly, many notable and wealthy tailors such as John Langwith (1467), Thomas Burgeys (1468), Robert Colwich (1480), and Alexander Basingthwayte (1493) preferred to establish temporary chantries of between three and five years in parish churches (not making use of their craft fraternity); others, such as Ralph Holland (1452), Richard Benton (1456) and Thomas Reymond (1464) were content to establish obits through bequests to the fraternity of land or money.⁵ Whilst partly attributing this to a greater survival rate of wills, particularly those of less wealthy citizens, Thomson uses Sylvia Thrupp's work to suggest that the greater survival of male heirs in the later fifteenth century resulted in a decline in the resources available to found perpetual chantries.⁶ Changing patterns of pious expenditure may also have had an effect upon these foundations; a shift towards parish-centred charitable provision, for instance, may have been a symptom of this.⁷ A similar decline in chantry foundations in the later fifteenth century has been noted

¹ See below p.61.

² H.M. Chew, 'Mortmain in Medieval London', *EHR*, 60 (1945), pp.8-15, and see S. Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church, 1279-1500* (Cambridge, 1982), p.182.

³ Chew, 'Mortmain', pp.14-15.

⁴ J.A.F. Thomson, 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), pp.178-195.

⁵ PRO, Prob.11/5, f.153v; 11/5, f.184v-85; 11/7, f.6-7v; 11/9, f.185-85v; *CWCH*, II, pp.525-26; PRO, Prob.11/4, f.62v-3; GL, MS.9171/3, f.518v.

⁶ Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp.191-192. see also Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.200-4.

⁷ This possibly had implications for the provision of charitable assistance by the tailors, see below p.85, 86.

in studies of other regions, often caused by the financial problems of citizens or the foundations themselves which produced a climate of uncertainty as to the survival of perpetual foundations.¹

Yet the fourteen new foundations (six chantries and eight obits) administered by the Tailors between 1500 and 1537 certainly serve as a powerful reminder of the continuing strength of belief in the efficacy of masses and prayers for the souls of the deceased, and of the popularity of mechanisms to respond to this.² The vitality of 'traditional' piety in early sixteenth century London is confirmed in Susan Brigden's study of London wills of the period and in the chantry commissioners' reports.³ As far as the Tailors are concerned, however, these sixteenth century chantry foundations are not just indicators of the 'attachment of some Londoners, at any rate, to the old order in religion'.⁴ The dearth of foundations over the previous eight decades indicates that some sort of resurgence of interest in the fraternity as an administrator seems to have taken place in the early sixteenth century. An attractive explanation for this 'renaissance' would seem to be the buoyant mood of the fraternity in this period: in 1503 the Tailors were granted the title of 'The Fraternity of St. John the Baptist of *Merchant* Tailors' by their latest patron Henry VII. The Tailors acquired their first Lord Mayor in 1498, and members of the fraternity were clearly becoming wealthier and more prominent citizens.⁵

The numbers of priests and anniversaries maintained by the livery companies is not only an index of the vitality of religious life in late-medieval London, but also the extent to which the craft and merchant guilds had become highly regarded as administrators of the *post obit* arrangements of their members. Security was uppermost in the minds of testators, and

¹ See for example R.B. Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries by the citizens of medieval York', in *Studies in Church History IV*, ed. G.J. Cuming (Leiden, 1967), pp.32-33, and A. Kreider, *English Chantries: the Road to Dissolution* (Camb., Mass., 1979), pp.72-79. Dobson in particular cites the financial plight of chantries as a primary cause of a particularly steep decline in popularity. For London see R. Hill, '"A chaunterie for soules": London Chantries in the reign of Richard II', in Barron and Du Boulay eds., *The Reign of Richard II*, pp.242-55.

² The last chantry to be administered by the tailors was founded by a haberdasher, Henry Hill in 1529, *CWCH*, II, p.634.

³ S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), pp.385-89.

⁴ Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', p.191.

⁵ See Helen Miller, 'London and Parliament in the reign of Henry VIII', *BIHR*, 35 (1962), pp.128-49, and below, pp.127-32.

a corporate administrator was therefore an obvious choice for many Londoners. All the chantries administered by the Tailors' fraternity, for instance, were to survive until the dissolution. Like parish fraternities, the craft guilds of London developed mechanisms for poor relief and for prayers for the souls of deceased members; from the late fourteenth century they provided an alternative to parish churches and even religious houses as 'corporate executors' of the last wishes of citizens. Indeed, the London craft guilds, particularly the 'Great Twelve' owed their wealth and prestige to their success in attracting large bequests of property for the provision of masses and prayers for the dead. It is important, therefore, to look not only at the process by which members of the Tailors' fraternity made arrangements for their souls, but also at the subsequent administration of their wishes during the fifteenth century. Fortunately, the accounts of the fraternity record in great detail the arrangements made on behalf of deceased members from year to year. These arrangements are often hidden from view because they do not appear in the records of parish churches, nor in the registers of the bishops of London, where the names of chantry chaplains employed by parish churches and guilds are recorded. Similarly the arrangements made by benefactors frequently took place without the acquisition of mortmain licences: only three such licences were purchased by the fraternity in this period and, of these, two were merely concerned to endow 'certain works of piety', using the income accruing from tenements alienated by groups of tailors.¹ Using a combination of wills and the Tailors' accounts it is possible to reconstruct the relationships between benefactor and administrator, mutually beneficial relationships which emphasised the principals of reciprocity and community upon which chantries, obits, and indeed fraternities were founded.

This sort of relationship is no better manifested than in the establishment and maintenance of post obit arrangements on behalf of John Churchman, the prominent grocer and benefactor of the Tailors' fraternity. In 1405 the fraternity purchased a licence for Churchman to grant to them in mortmain four messuages and seventeen shops in the parish of St. Martin Outwich, 6s 8d rent from another tenement and the advowson of St. Martin's. In return the fraternity was to administer the chantry of Churchman in St. Martin's, pay five marks yearly to the chantry priest of William de Oteswiche and his family in the parish church they had founded, and pay Churchman and Richard Stacy, a jeweller, pensions of £10

¹ *CPR*, 1391-1396, p.139; *Ibid.*, 1399-1401, p.455. The former involved the final transfer of the ownership of Tailors' Hall and other properties from trustees to the fraternity following the granting of the charter of 1390.

per annum.¹ 'Le mortisement' was a major event for the fraternity from 1404-5 when the first payments were made in connection with the proposed grant. These included dinners, lawyers fees and payments relating to the inquisition *ad quod damnum*, held prior to the purchase and enrollment of the licence.² The next year the process was completed with the payment of the £40 fine and 22s 4d for 'le rollement del dit patent'.³ This was a significant event for the fraternity: the properties not only funded the services stipulated by the donor, but also enabled the fraternity to house some of its officials close to Tailors' Hall and, in the year following Churchman's death in 1413, to found an almshouse on the land granted by Churchman between the hall and the parish church.⁴

The grant of 1405 was of course merely the preamble to the actual task of carrying out the wishes of the donor following his death. The survival of this, and the other chantries described below, is testimony to the good judgement of individuals such as Churchman in entrusting their *post obit* arrangements to wealthy and influential organisations such as the London craft fraternities. It would not do, however, to underestimate the burden placed on the fraternity: the properties had to be maintained, tenants attracted, rent collected, priests found, and most importantly for the soul of the deceased, the fraternity had to ensure that the services specified were actually carried out. On 25 January 1413, Churchman's obit was observed for the first time, with the fraternity also providing the lamp and oil specified by the licence.⁵ That year John Davy also began his tenure as Churchman's chaplain in St. Martin's. He received £4 for three terms, thus beginning an unbroken succession of priests saying mass daily for Churchman's soul, the last being John Wilkinson who was employed in 1547-48.⁶ The success of these arrangements was reflected in the equally successful relationship between the fraternity and the church of St. Martin Outwich, cemented by

¹ CPR, 1405-1408, p.56 (15 July 1405). For Churchman see above, pp.16-17.

² Accounts, I, f.25. That year Churchman received his first gift of a livery hood costing 2s 4d, and continued to receive a hood each year until his death in 1413.

³ Accounts, I, f.30. In 1404-5 the £40 was taken out of the 'comon chatell' and handed over to the 'collectours del purchas et mortisement Thomas Bridlyngton et John Creek', who managed subsequently to raise nearly half the total from individuals. *Ibid.*, I, ff.26, 28v, 33v, 39v, 49v.

⁴ See below p.79 and Map 2, p.47.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.8.

⁶ Accounts, I, f.75, IV, f.104. Two years later the salary was paid 'to the king his grace' *Ibid.*, f.168v.

Churchman's grant of the advowson, and consolidated by the subsequent foundations of chantries and obits in the church. The granting of the advowson of the church was the 'official' dimension of this: the Tailors presented priests to the benefice from 1408-9, in place of Churchman himself.¹ Thus Churchman was not only providing security for his soul, but was attempting to provide the parish with a secure future: grants and bequests to individuals were inevitably accompanied by a degree of risk, and hence institutions were often favoured by citizens, as worthy and secure trustees. The Tailors were also entrusted with the payment of £3 6s 8d in augmentation of the salary of the chantry priest of the Oteswiches, founders of the church. This too was paid regularly, and payments from the company for 'halfe a prestes wages' are recorded in the surviving church-wardens accounts of the parish church from 1508-28.²

The Tailors' connection with St. Paul's Cathedral, discussed above, was strengthened between 1389 and 1410 by the establishment of two chantries and two obits in their chapel by the north door. Most notable of these was the establishment, in 1409, of a chantry by Lady Beatrice de Roos, for her soul and the souls of two of her three husbands, Sir Thomas de Roos (d.1384) and Sir Richard de Burley (d.1387). The chantry was established with the purchase of a licence to grant a chaplain a yearly rent of 12 marks from properties in London, and by an agreement with the Tailors dated 12 April 1409. Although the Tailors were to pay the salary, Beatrice's heirs were to present the chaplains to the chantry.³ The Tailors' fraternity was not mentioned by name in the entry in the Patent rolls, yet its involvement at all stages in the discussions is clear: expenses 'entour le conseil del dame de Roos' were recorded in the accounts from 1407-8 until 1412. The agreement appears to have involved the payment of £10 'promis par la dame de Roos' as well as the conveying of properties in Lymestrete to the fraternity.⁴ The terms of the agreement seem to have been fulfilled in 1411-12 when Beatrice paid 40s to the fraternity 'en plein paiement de sa promesse', three years before her death. Despite this, the fraternity appears to have committed itself from 1408-9, when William Whaddon the first 'chapeleyn de madame de

¹ Hennessey, *Novum Repertorium*, p.213.

² GL, MS. 6842.

³ CPR, 1408-13, p.40; Dugdale, *St. Paul's*, pp.354-57.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.42 (1407-8).

Roos' was admitted to the fraternity. The following year he received his first salary of £8, continuing as chaplain until 1417 when he was succeeded by Sir John Doyly.¹

It is probable that Lady de Roos' decision to employ the fraternity was based on some appreciation of the spiritual resources built up by the fraternity, and perhaps was prompted by the Tailors' existing involvement in the chapel of St. John the Baptist in St. Paul's. This was already the location for a chantry administered by the fraternity. An embroiderer, Thomas Carlton, left a rent charge on tenements in Wodestrete to the fraternity in his will dated 25 December 1382, and enrolled in the Husting Court in March 1389.² In this case, however, things did not go smoothly illustrating the tensions that could exist between heirs and such 'corporate executors'. Although the *post obit* arrangements were carried out faithfully by the fraternity, the rent yielded by the tenements was extremely irregular, and the accounts suggest that the fraternity had not yet acquired full ownership of the properties. Efforts were made to remedy the situation: in 1405-6 expenses were incurred 'entour la poursuit del rente de Thomas Carleton in Wodestrete', and from 1410-11 involved the payment of a pension of 40s a year to Agnes 'file et heir a meister Thomas Carleton'.³ The negotiations were protracted, however, and full ownership was not achieved until 1421-22. In that year, Thomas Corbet, husband of Agnes, was paid £20 'pur la purchase del rent en wodestrete pur sa feme'.⁴ It is probable that the process of the acquisition of the title to these tenements was not altogether amicable: Thomas Corbet had evidently been admitted to the fraternity sometime between Carlton's death and the commencement of the accounts in 1398, but in 1430-31 he ended his association with the fraternity, paying 33s 4d 'a discharges luymesme de la bretherhode de seint John Baptist et de la lyvere du dit fraternite'.⁵

Property was obviously vital for the funding of chantries and obits, and as the example above shows, the Tailors were keen to get their hands on the titles of properties, rather than relying on a rent charge. Before 1421-22, for instance, the Tailors spent very

¹ Accounts, I, ff.45v, 51v, 96v.

² AMB, 2, f.18; CWCH, II, p.272. Carlton specified that 10 marks should be paid to the chaplain and another 10s provided for his obit.

³ Accounts, I, ff.30v, 58.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.127.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.217.

little on repairs to the tenements in Wodestrete, presumably relying on the good sense and resources of the Corbets. After 1421 it is noticeable that capital investment increased: £43 15s 3d was spent in 1423-24.¹ Such investment was essential if the Tailors were to fulfill their obligations to their deceased members and benefactors, and naturally the Tailors preferred to have full control of the properties used to fund these obligations.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the fraternity was involved in further disputes. In 1455 Augustine Cavendish claimed the title to lands and tenements in Fenchurch Street and Walbrook which his cousin Hugh, a tailor, had left to the fraternity. In his will, Hugh Cavendish, the son of John, the Master of 1413, provided for the maintenance of an obit in St. Martin's, the distribution of 36 quarters of coals to poor members as well as a small allowance to the Master, Wardens, the clerk and the beadle, who were to attend the obit. Lawrence Peny, one of the fraternity's chaplains was the feoffee appointed by Cavendish, and on 23 October 1455, ale was provided for men assembled in Fenchurch Street to witness an agreement between Peny and the Master and Wardens regarding Cavendish's will. The same year the fraternity was forced to gather evidence and consult lawyers, and in 1457 even provided breakfast for the clerks at Guildhall when the tenement in Walbrook was under discussion.² More expenses are recorded over the ensuing years until 1465 when one of the fraternity's retained lawyers, Geoffrey Coytmore, received his last payment.³ This dispute appears to have proved to have been little more than an inconvenience to the fraternity, although it did lead to a delay in the implementation of Cavendish's last wishes: the observance of his obit and the distributions of coals did not begin until 1463-64, although the fraternity's officials had been in receipt of their payments since 1456.⁴

More often, however, the fraternity preferred to work with relatives and executors than against them. A perfect example of this is afforded by the case of a prominent tailor, John Creek whose executor, William Turnell, died in 1419. Turnell, a wax-chandler, was evidently close to Creek, and made arrangements in his will for the celebration of Creek's

¹ Accounts, I, f.146-46v.

² Accounts, II, ff.42-43; II, f.110v.

³ Accounts, II, f.261.

⁴ Accounts, II, ff.246, 247, 110v.

obit in St. Mary Abchurch, and the distribution of thirteen quarters of coals to poor parishioners. This was to be paid for out of the revenues accruing from a tenement in Tower Street which Turnell bequeathed to his wife Cecilie.¹ The default clause of Turnell's will, however, provided for the property to go to the Tailors' fraternity (of which Turnell was a brother), and in 1441-42, on Cecilie's death, this happened. Consequently the Tailors' accounts for that year recorded the celebration of 'lobit de John Creek et sa feme en abchurch', and the distribution of coals to 'xiii pore men'.² This emphasises still more the value placed on membership of a fraternity such as the Tailors' by testators: Turnell obviously preferred these arrangements to remain within his family while his widow was alive, but wanted to ensure the future security of the obit by entrusting its administration to the extended family of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist. The fraternity itself had recognized its responsibility in 1419 by taking the relatively rare step of paying for the enrollment of Turnell's will.³

Although the Tailors had a particularly close relationship with the church of St. Martin Outwich, it was essential that the fraternity was able to forge links with the other parish churches that were the locations for the chantries and obits of members. The drapers, for instance, funded 27 obits, founded between 1443 and 1535, in fifteen different churches in the capital, despite their close links with St. Mary le Bow.⁴ The obits and chantries funded by the Tailors were similarly distributed among London's parish churches, suggesting an obvious but essential point: that members of the craft and merchant guilds were often as closely attached to their parishes as they were to their occupational fraternities. These loyalties should not be seen as mutually exclusive: Londoners were capable of plurality in their loyalties and involvement in fraternal associations, clearly shown in the extensive non-tailor membership of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist. Success in the establishment of

¹ *CWCH*, II, p.417. Creek died in 1413-14, GL, MS. 9051/1, ff.308v-309v. Turnell was also one of the executors of Joan, Creek's widow. GL, MS.9051/1, ff.324-325 (enrolled December 1414).

² Accounts I, f.350v. Turnell had been admitted to the fraternity in 1403-4, *ibid.* I, f.19.

³ Accounts, I, f.114 (3s 4d). The property in Tower Street yielded 26s 8d p.a. from 1441-2, rising to 40s by 1455-56, *Ibid.*, I, f.340, II, f.60.

⁴ J.A.F. Thomson, 'Clergy and Laity in London, 1376-1531' (unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1960) pp.131-2, 136.

a good working relationship between the fraternity and the parish churches was thus bound to reflect, to some degree, the links built up by the individual testator with the two bodies.

The life of Peter Mason provides a good example of the way in which some individuals enjoyed success as parishioners, and as brothers or sisters of a craft fraternity. Mason was elected Master of the Tailors' fraternity in 1407-8, and as various sources testify, was also prominent in his parish, St. Peter Cornhill. In 1403 a licence was granted, 'at the supplication of the king's consort Joan', for the parson of St. Peter's and three others including Mason to found a perpetual chantry and guild, entitled to hold possessions in mortmain and to employ two chantry chaplains.¹ Mason's involvement continued, and in the year of his election as Master, Mason appears in the register of the bishop of London as one of those presenting a chaplain to the chantry of William Kingston, a fishmonger, in St. Peter's.² In his will dated 6 December 1412, Mason displayed his dual allegiance to parish and craft guild: he was to be buried in St. Peter's, and established a perpetual chantry in the same church. The latter was to be funded out of the revenues arising from tenements in the parish of St. Mary Colechurch, near the Great Conduit, which were left to the Master and Wardens of the Tailors' fraternity, who were then obliged to present a chaplain to St. Peter's and pay him a salary of £7.³ The first of the chaplains, Thomas Bradenham, took up his duties in 1412-13 and was to remain in the post until his death in 1461 making him the fraternity's longest serving chaplain, and doubtless contributing to a good and stable relationship between the fraternity and the parish.⁴ This relationship bore fruit in 1476 when Thomas Ashby, Mason's chantry chaplain from 1467-70, returned to St. Peter's as rector.⁵

Relations could sometimes become strained, however, and one dispute threatened the future of the chantry of John Buke, Master of the Tailors' fraternity for 1398-99. This chantry had been established in 1422 with the bequest of a brewery, 'le skut on the hope',

¹ CPR, 1401-1405, p.260 (26 April 1403); GL, MS. 4158 (Cartulary of the fraternity).

² GL, MS. 9531/4, f.28, Register of Richard Clifford (1407-21).

³ GL, MS 9051/1, ff.274-276. In 1546 the three tenements yielded £13 6s 8d whilst the charges on them amounted to £8 15s 8d, including quitrents, PRO, L.R.2/241, ff.12-12v.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.69. The fraternity received 35s from Bradenham's executors in 1461-62, *ibid.*, II, f.205v.

⁵ A.B Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1957-59), I, p.56.

in Gracechurch Street to the Tailors, the income from which was to be used to pay each year to the rector and wardens of All Hallow's a rent charge of ten marks for a chantry chaplain, and 3s 4d for three wax tapers.¹ The chantry appears to have been administered smoothly with the Tailors paying the £6 16s 8d each year from 1423 to 1445, but between 1445 (when the first volume of accounts ends) and 1450, tension appears to have risen in the parish. In 1450-51 John Many and Richard Langham, the churchwardens, submitted a petition to Chancery in which they recounted the arrangements made by Buke, and alleged that the parson, William Diolet, had 'levied and converted to his own use' the rent charge on the tenement, paid by the Tailors to the parish each year. The petition also suggests that Diolet had tried to cover his tracks by making 'iii severall receipts' to the Tailors, presumably stating that the money had been paid to a chaplain.² This example illustrates the importance of the mutual trust between administrators, executors and parish officials upon which the arrangements for *post obit* services relied. Two-stage arrangements such as Buke's, where the Tailors did not pay the chaplain directly, were relatively risky: it only needed the failure of one party to cause the demise of a chantry, carefully planned by the testator for the steady accumulation of masses for his or her soul. The usual type of arrangement made by benefactors using the Tailors' fraternity as an administrator, involved the payment and selection of the chantry chaplain by the fraternity itself, thereby missing out the parish authorities.

Having said that, it was undoubtedly impossible for the fraternity to fulfill its obligations properly without the co-operation of the parishes. The need for such co-operation can be seen in the nature of the services stipulated by testators. An obit, for example, could require expenditure on priests, clerks, bread and ale as well as torches and distributions to the poor, all of which would probably have to be coordinated with the rector and churchwardens. The prosperity enjoyed by some members of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist towards the end of the fifteenth century resulted in some particularly elaborate funerary and anniversary arrangements, which are useful indicators of the extent to which

¹ *CWCH*, II, p.445. The will is dated 26 January 1422, although it was not enrolled until 1427-28. The tenement yielded £11 13s 4d to the fraternity from 1430-31, although this was to decline to £9 by 1453, Accounts I, f.213v, II, f.1.

² *PRO*, C.1/18/186-187, printed in P. Norman, 'Abstracts of Documents Relating to London from Early Chancery Proceedings and from the Court of Requests, with explanatory notes', *London Topographical Record*, 6 (1909), pp.71-72.

co-operation between parish and craft fraternity was desirable and essential. The *post obit* arrangements made by John Percyvale, who became the first tailor Mayor of London in 1498, were suitably impressive, making full use of the fraternity as an administrator. In his will of 1503 Percyvale left twelve tenements, lying together on the north side of Lombard Street in the parish of St. Mary Woolnoth, to the Tailors to pay for a variety of services in the parish church including the payment of two chantry priests, the keeping of his obit, yearly payments to the church-wardens for the repair of bells and ornaments, and distributions to poor householders of the parish.¹ Percyvale's widow, Thomasine, in her first will, dated 12 February 1508, tied the Tailors even more closely to the church of St. Mary Woolnoth. Thomasine not only provided for the maintenance of two more priests and the augmentation of the salaries of her husband's chantry priests, but also stipulated that payments should be made to the churchwardens for the maintenance of 'a certayne lyght called the beame lyght', and for further distributions to the poor. The clerk of the parish was also obliged to keep an 'antempne' of St. John the Baptist at her husband's tomb, and the 'Lady Mase preste' of the church was to attend his obit.²

The involvement of so many parish officials and clergy was somewhat unusual in the context of the other chantries and obits administered by the Tailors, but the example does serve to make the basic point that, although the use of the fraternity as an administrator provided security in one sense, in another it placed as much of a burden on the fraternity as it would have done otherwise upon individuals, who might in fact have had closer links with the parish. The fact that such *post obit* services were carried out in parish churches meant that the onus was on the livery companies to prove their reliability as administrators if they were to continue to receive valuable bequests of land. Rosalind Hill has described the administrative problems of many London chantries in the late fourteenth century which resulted in amalgamations and even in collapse: the Tailors' fraternity suffered none of these problems, and established itself as a successful and reliable fraternity which consistently attracted large bequests of land that gave it the resources to administer a large number of *post*

¹ Clode, *Early History* II, pp.8-21; PRO, Prob.11/13, ff.191v-93v.

² *CWCH*, II, p.619. The details of both wills are given in Clode, *Early History* II, pp.18 n.3 and in M.P. Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale, "The Maid of Week"', in *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, ed. C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton (forthcoming, 1994).

obit arrangements.¹ The London craft guilds were not simply ‘collective chantries’ interceding for craftsmen who could not afford to establish chantries and obits; they performed an equally vital function before the Reformation in enabling wealthy members to set up effective mechanisms for intercessory prayers and masses, and those of their brothers and sisters, whilst displaying their twin loyalties to parish and craft.

II. The Dissolution of the Chantries, 1545-1550

The climate of religious opinion in early sixteenth-century London was evidently not one which was dangerously hostile to the foundation of chantries and obits, for it was this period which saw a resurgence in the popularity of the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist as an administrator of chantries and obits, the last of which were founded in 1529 and 1538 respectively. Indeed, in the 1530s, fraternities of all kinds were still popular targets for benefactions, as Susan Brigden has demonstrated.² Yet the climate was beginning to change, although renewed concern at the alienation of land into the ‘dead hand’ of the church was, at this stage, a more powerful force for change than doubts, which were, ominously, surfacing in the 1520s, about the efficacy of these ‘intercessory institutions’.³ Although total suppression was not yet on the agenda, the 1530s saw a succession of measures which effectively ended the era of the perpetual chantry: in 1532 feoffments to religious use were restricted to periods of 20 years or fewer, and a mere two years later the last licence was granted by the Crown.⁴

The Chantries Act of 1545 was, in many respects, a half-hearted attempt at dissolution. Its protagonists stressed the lax administration of many of these institutions and the poor stewardship of resources meant for alms and charity; as with the monasteries, dissolution was urged more as a solution to fiscal and economic difficulties than for the implementation of a programme of reformation of doctrinal error, despite an insistence that the revenues be used for ‘more godly and virtuous purposes’.⁵ Pre-emptive dissolutions had

¹ Hill, “A chaunterie for soules”, pp.242-55.

² Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p.389.

³ Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp.79-89, 93-104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁵ (37 Hen.VIII c.4), Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp. 165-186.

accompanied rumours of a move against chantries, and to some extent the framing of legislation was an attempt to prevent any further loss of revenues.¹

Nevertheless, the Act, and the subsequent activities of the commissioners, constituted a timely warning shot across the bows of the trustees of such intercessory institutions, even those purely lay fraternities and corporations which could not legally be dissolved under the terms of the Act. The Merchant Taylors, as they had become, were visited by the commissioners in early 1546, and payments were made for compiling their certificate, after which 8d was paid for 'a reffecion made at the mermayde taverne when we put in our boke to the sessers'.² The fraternity was not to emerge entirely unscathed, however, despite the limited aims of the commissioners and the death of Henry VIII. The Master and Wardens again met the commissioners at the Mermaid 'to take counceill to aunswere Mr. Mildmay and other the Kynges Comysioners touchyng the last will of Sir Stephen Jenyns'.³ The commissioners concern was that Jenyns' obit, and the obits of Hugh Acton and John Percyvale had been celebrated at the now dissolved Grey Friars priory, and as a result all rents left to the fraternity for that purpose were due to the Crown. Hence the same year the fraternity was obliged to pay 'to the Kings majesty in areages' £52 10s.⁴ This serves to show that, although there was generally a 'leisurely air' about the implementation of the 1545 Act, the Crown was not slow to act on the findings contained in the certificates if they proved that monies were owed as a result of earlier legislation.⁵

The death of Henry and the subsequent passage of a new Chantries Act in late 1547 brought a new rigour to the process of dissolution, a process which had hardly begun before the first Act was rendered void. Doctrinal reform was a much more visible motive behind the legislation which spoke of 'superstition and errors' and 'vain opinions of purgatory and masses', and the need for hard cash was as urgent as ever. Despite this, the Act was in fact more lenient than a proposed 'Lord's Bill' which had intended to seize all the assets of guilds

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.172-73.

² Accounts, IV, ff.5v, 18v.

³ Accounts, IV, f.18v.

⁴ Clode, *Early History*, I, p.143. The other *post obit* arrangements made by Percyvale (1503), Jenyns (1523) and Acton (1530) were unaffected by the Crown's actions.

⁵ Kreider, *English Chantries*, p.179. The surviving certificate is PRO, LR.2/241 f.7v-19.

and fraternities: instead the Act targeted those revenues used for ‘superstitious’ purposes.¹ The thoroughness of the commissioners sent out in 1548 resulted in a much more comprehensive certificate covering 32 London Companies, and recording 61 chantries and 156 obits administered by them at a total cost of £960 5s 0½d.²

The commissioners visited the London livery companies in early 1548, and the Tailors took the advice of the Recorder of London ‘in making of our booke of certificate as touchyng what prestes obitts lampes and lyghts was founde and kepte by the companye and what lande or other thyng was geven for the mayntenance thereof...’. Evidently realising the seriousness of the situation, the Tailors demanded another day to complete their return. The Commissioners, who were staying at Haberdashers’ Hall, were then presented with the certificate and entertained to dinner at Merchant Taylors’ Hall, in the presence of the Lord Mayor.³ The certificate returned by the well-fed commissioners for London and Middlesex listed twenty obits and nine priests funded in eleven parish churches by the Tailors at a total cost (including lights and quitrents) of £98 7s 11d.⁴ These charges were now due to be paid to the Crown and consequently the fraternity’s accounts record the payment of chantry priests up to the feast of the Annunciation, 1548, after which the rents were paid to the Augmentations office, in half yearly installments.⁵

This was only a preamble, however, to a measure which was far more damaging to the finances of the livery companies. Following the compilation of the certificate the decision was taken to require the companies to buy back their rents at a rate approximating to 2000%. Thus the total bill for the London companies, to buy back their rent charges of £960 5s 0½d, amounted to £18,817 4s 4d of which the Merchant Taylors were required to find £2,006 2s 6d.⁶ Whatever the doctrinal basis for the Act of 1547, this was a clear attempt to raise badly

¹ (1 Edw.VI c.14), Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp.190-191, 197.

² PRO, E.301/34, mm.36-40.

³ Accounts, IV, f.84 (1547-8).

⁴ PRO, E.301/34, m.37d. The rents of all the companies put together came to £1,050 4s 8d (m.39d).

⁵ Accounts, IV, f.104 ‘discharge of prestes’ (1547-8); £44 5s 11d was paid to one of the King’s collectors, *ibid.*, IV, f.137.

⁶ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p.390. Only the Mercers (£3,935 3s 4d) and the Goldsmiths (£2,125 6s 8d) were required to pay more.

needed revenue, and it required prompt action from the companies in 1550 to raise sums of this magnitude. The only feasible course of action, other than raising a loan or a levy, was to sell property, and in 1549-50 the accountant of the Merchant Tailors' Company reported that the sum of £2,133 3s 6d had been 'by hym received for the sale of the londes late belongyng to this mistery'. The purchasers numbered several wealthy and influential members, including Thomas White, Lord Mayor in 1553-54 and founder of St. John's College, Oxford, who purchased messuages and tenements in Watling Street, Friday Street and Tower Street for £410 6s 8d.¹ The company was then able to pay the required amount 'to the treasurer of the Kyngs Courte of Augmentations', after which the Crown granted the rents to three nominees appointed on behalf of the City and Commonalty.²

Throughout all this the Company appears to have tried to avoid significant damage to corporate finances. This was achieved by ensuring that the loss of rent, caused by the sale of property, would be approximately equal to the amount spent prior to the dissolution on *post obit* services. Remarkably a 'loss' of only a few shillings *per annum* was sustained: the properties sold had yielded £122 14s 2d in rent prior to the dissolution, whereas the fraternity, in 1545-46, had spent £123 5s 6d on chantries and obits, careful management indeed.³ In the years following the dissolution the long term effects of the changes became clear. The fraternity received only £307 13s 8d in rent in 1552-53, and less costly distributions to the poor now took place on the anniversaries of the deaths of some of the chantry founders.⁴

It was fortunate for the companies of London that the 1547 Act was not harsher in its treatment of craft guilds: parish guilds and fraternities were doomed, but the London livery companies were able to lobby successfully for the protection of the bulk of their assets, doubtless stressing their charitable activities as well as their crucial role as regulators of

¹ Accounts, IV, f.164. For White's career see *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 51, pp.76-8 and Clode, *Early History*, II, pp.98-194.

² Accounts, IV, f.168; *CPR*, 1549-1551, pp.386-401 (4 July 1550). A smaller grant, made in December 1549, included some of the Tailors' rent charges, *ibid.*, 1549-1551, pp.86-87.

³ Clode, *Early History*, I, p.371; Accounts, IV, ff.15-15v, 25v.

⁴ Accounts, IV, ff.265v, 270; *Ibid.*, IV, f.225.

London's industries.¹ Indeed, there is a danger in using the contrasting fortunes of the parish and craft guilds at the reformation to justify the playing down of the importance of the fraternities attached to the craft guilds of late medieval London. The Reformation divided what, in the context of late-medieval lay piety cannot easily be divided, particularly when craft and merchant guilds are seen in terms of the services which they provided and administered, often extremely efficiently, on behalf of deceased members.

III. Charitable Provision by the Tailors' Fraternity in the Fifteenth Century

Thomas Parker, citizen and tailor of London, made his will in 1470 'knowyng that no thing is more certaine than deth nor no thing is more uncertayn than is the houre of the comyng of hitt'.² Such trepidation was doubtless appropriate in an era when plague was a recurrent presence in the lives of Londoners, yet an untimely death was by no means the only cause of anxiety in the late medieval town.³ The highly specialised nature of the urban economy of London produced its casualties, even among the most successful merchants and craftsmen; the financial viability of many businesses balanced on a knife edge, dependent as they were upon the complexities and fluctuations of the productive and distributive processes. Credit loomed large in these processes: on the one hand it served to ensure the smooth completion of transactions, particularly when there was a shortage of hard currency, yet on the other it involved many town dwellers in a perpetual struggle to remain solvent.⁴ Some were successful, often through diversification: ale brewing, for instance, became a 'safe and profitable sideline' to the activities of many families, which brought in badly needed cash.⁵ Yet many more failed to keep their heads above water, and as a result became dependent upon whatever sources of assistance they could find. The lack of municipal systems of poor

¹ Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp.199-205.

² PRO, Prob.11/5, ff.243-243v.

³ For the London plagues see J.M.W. Bean, 'Plague, Population and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., 15 (1963), pp.427-31. The results of a study of property holding in Cheapside support the view that London's population may have continued to decline in the early fifteenth century, D. Keene, 'A new study of London', pp.18-19.

⁴ See M.M. Postan, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, I (1928-9), pp.234-61. Chapter 6 discusses the 'workshop economy' in more detail.

⁵ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.8.

relief in late-medieval London, and indeed in most towns and cities of Europe, has focused attention upon the efforts of individuals and institutions in the provision of charitable assistance. The resulting studies have emphasised that the mechanisms set up were the product of pious motives and as such were not intended to solve the problem of poverty but to ameliorate it, and thereby benefit the souls of the departed benefactors.¹ The growth of fraternities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries owed much to the principle of 'caritas' which emphasised mutual assistance through prayers for the souls of the dead and charity for the living. Such solutions were essentially 'local' in character: even the confraternities of Venice, founded specifically to care for the poor and sick, were limited in scope, providing help primarily for their own members.² Yet despite the fact that such institutions never formed part of wider schemes to help the urban poor, particularly those who could not afford to join fraternities, it is important not to dismiss their efforts which were often pragmatic and effective in their own way. As one historian has pointed out, successful mechanisms were created despite the fact that the inner, selfish motivations of donors seeking an eternal reward were 'not conducive to the efficient systematization of social care.'³

The efforts of craft guilds in the area of poor relief have often been dismissed owing to the continuing belief in some quarters that the religious and social functions of craft associations, though prominent, were incidental to their main purpose and thereby inferior to the facilities provided by parishes or parish fraternities.⁴ In England the parish, it is true, became the basic unit for poor relief through the sixteenth century poor laws and contributed in no small way to the lack of success of large scale foundations such as workhouses and hospitals before 1700, as compared with their continental counterparts.⁵ This development was certainly testimony to the durability of the ties of locality and neighbourhood which had earlier found their expression in the late medieval parish. On the other hand, a concentration

¹ W.K. Jordan, *The Charities of London, 1480-1660* (1960); J.A.F. Thomson, 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), pp.178-96; Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, pp.294-325. For regional studies see also the bibliography in Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp.315-353.

² See Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp.63-77, and Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders*, p.62.

³ Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, p.294.

⁴ For instance Swanson, 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-49; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p.250; J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), p.20.

⁵ P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), pp.131, 206.

upon the vitality of the late-medieval parish can result in a distorted and over-simplified view of urban piety in general, and mechanisms for poor relief in particular.

Though unusual in the size and scope of its membership and in the wealth that it was able to draw upon for its activities, the Tailors' fraternity affords a rare opportunity to see, in the context of a craft guild, the operation of the principles of community and mutual support which underpinned the existence of all lay fraternities, large and small. The returns made by scores of guilds to the governmental enquiry of 1388-89 are dominated by descriptions of mechanisms established to provide help for poor or infirm brothers and sisters, whether in the form of cash hand-outs, accommodation or food. The provision of funerals was also a common clause in the ordinances of fraternities.¹ It is illuminating to recall that the early wardens of the Tailors' fraternity were known as 'collectores elemosinae', a phrase which helps to emphasise that the officials of craft guilds were not solely concerned with the supervision of the craft but were also responsible for the social and religious services that were typically provided by fraternities in the late medieval period.² Alms, collected on each quarter-day during the year by the wardens and entered in a book, provided the Tailors with the bulk of the revenue they needed to satisfy the needs of the poor among them.³ Each brother and sister of the fraternity, both tailors and non-tailors, was required to contribute one shilling per annum. The large and heterogeneous membership made the task of collecting the alms-money a difficult one, particularly from those who were unlikely to spend much time at Tailors' Hall. As was shown, Robert Fitzhugh, bishop of London from 1431 until his death in 1436, failed to pay any alms at all during his time as a brother of the fraternity.⁴

At no time, however, did the fraternity lose its association with the craft of tailoring in the capital. All the officers and members of the court of assistants were tailors and as will

¹ For those returns in English see Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.1-122; Chambers and Daunt eds., *A Book of London English*, pp.41-60; and Barron, 'Guild Certificates'. For the London parish fraternities see Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities', pp.13-37. For a recent examination of the principles of community in action see B.R. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), pp.195-225.

² AMB, 9, f.12 and Stow, *Survey*, i, p.181.

³ In 1406-7, 2s 8s was paid 'pur xii pelles et un sourpel de parchemyn pur entier faire un livre pur almoigne', Accounts, I, f.32.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.265v.

be shown, virtually all the recipients of charitable assistance were members of the craft. A distinction was even drawn after 1453 between alms received ‘de confratribus huius mistere’ and ‘de fratribus et sororum extra artem cissorem’. Despite the decline in the level of non-tailor admissions to the fraternity in the later fifteenth century, described above, they continued to outnumber the tailor membership, a fact which was reflected in the amount given in alms by the two groups. In 1463-64 for instance, a total of £14 15s was raised, £9 of it from non-tailors with the remaining £5 15s collected from tailors.¹

Table 2.2. Average annual alms collections and distributions 1400-1475²

Years	Alms collected			Alms paid out			Recipients
	£	s	d	£	s	d	
1400-1410	16	14	0	30	1	5	15.2
1410-1420	15	12	2	32	7	1	14.3
1420-1430	16	18	2	30	0	2	13.8
1430-1440	14	17	8	25	1	6	12.5
1440-1445	15	9	11	35	3	2	13.4
1453-1460	17	7	10	26	10	5	12.0
1460-1470	14	7	2	17	16	2	7.3
1470-1475	13	5	0	19	17	6	8.5

Although the fraternity was normally able to raise at least £15 every year from alms collections, the actual payments made to almsmen almost always totalled far more than was raised through the regular alms collections alone. This is shown in Table 2.2. It was only in the early 1460s, when the number of almsmen being supported consistently numbered fewer than ten, that the income from official collections exceeded expenditure upon the needy.³ Work on the parish fraternities of London has drawn attention to a similar imbalance in income and expenditure upon poor members but it is important to remember that craft associations, particularly the most successful ones, had a variety of sources of income which could be tapped in order to meet demand.⁴ For instance, in addition to their quarterly alms donations, new members admitted to the Tailors’ fraternity each had to pay 20s to the common box on entry. With an average of twenty-eight new members (tailors and non-tailors) admitted each year in the fifteenth century, this constituted a valuable source of

¹ See above p.28; Accounts, II, f.278v.

² The account years 1445-53 are missing.

³ Between 1460 and 1465 an average of £14 9s 3d was collected, while distributions (to fewer than seven recipients) averaged £14 0s 7d, Accounts, II, *passim*.

⁴ Barron, ‘Parish Fraternities’, p.27.

income in the fifteenth century. Testamentary bequests were also received from many quarters: in 1433-34, for example, a total of £18 13s 4d was bequeathed by five individuals, including William Crowmer, the prominent draper and alderman, who left 100s to the fraternity.¹ Bequests such as these normally took the form of general donations, without being specific about the relief of poverty, but this was in keeping with the nature of the organisation - funds donated to the common box could thus be used for a variety of purposes connected with the aims of a lay confraternity, of which help for poor members was but one. Some testators were more specific, however: in 1397 John Levendale senior (a tailor) left 6s 8d to the fraternity as a whole and another 6s 8d to the almsmen.²

These were, of course, relatively small sums compared with the total annual income of the fraternity which doubled from £110 in 1400 to more than £220 by 1453. Normally about sixty percent of the revenue was derived from properties left to the fraternity by benefactors, many of whom who wished to establish chantries and obits to be administered by the Master and Wardens.³ As has been shown, the properties concerned generated more than enough income to pay for the services, salaries and lights specified by the donors, as well as any repairs to tenements, leaving a 'profit' which the fraternity could use to fund its other activities, including assistance for the almsmen and women. In some cases donors of lands and tenements were quite specific about the use to which income generated over and above charges for chantries and obits should be put. Thomas Sutton and Ralph Holland, both of former Masters of the fraternity, left property in several parts of London, the income from which was to be used by the Master and Wardens to increase the weekly amount paid to almsmen and women in the almshouse near the hall, by 2d and 1d respectively.⁴ To put it another way, charitable provision to the poor of the fraternity was not determined solely by the amount of money given in alms and could be augmented by the 'comon chatell' as the need arose. Income from all sources was, in theory, available for pious uses: there was no

¹ Accounts, I, f.244v. Crowmer was admitted to the livery of the fraternity in 1404-5, *ibid.*, I, f.22v. For his civic career see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, App. A, p.336.

² GL, MS. 9051/1, f.62.

³ See Appendix III.

⁴ Sutton left lands, tenements and a wharf in the Vintry to the fraternity, GL, MS. 9171/3, f.381v, while Holland left lands and tenements in several parishes, including Basset's Inn in the parish of St. Mary Aldermary, *CWCH*, II, pp.525-6.

‘earmarking’ of revenues in the accounts for ‘religious’ or ‘craft’ purposes; the Master and Wardens merely had to ensure that the craft was being supervised and that the fraternity was able to carry out its duties to its members both living and dead.

Before looking in detail at the range of services that could be provided by the fraternity as a result of both almsgiving and bequests, it is important to examine the social composition of those who benefited from them. The fifteenth century accounts of the Tailors of London provide a detailed record of those who were in receipt of alms because of their impoverished circumstances or illness. As an organisation for the senior members of the craft as well as for non-tailors of a similar standing, the fraternity was not in the business of helping poor tailors in general but those who had invariably enjoyed moderately successful careers and had since fallen upon hard times, whether through poverty or sickness and infirmity. This was a common pattern among the craft guilds of London, the aim being to maintain the status and dignity of liverymen, and their wives, rather than attempting the difficult task of helping all poor members of the mystery. The skinners, for instance, stipulated in an ordinance of 1472 that recipients of alms had to have been liverymen for at least seven years.¹ This was an implicit recognition of the status that came with membership of a fraternity, of the importance of both the horizontal bonds created between brethren and sisters and also of the vertical bonds inherent in such hierarchical and, indeed, gerontocratic organisations. Age and experience was valued in the context of the livery company: ordinances were typically ratified not just by the Master and Wardens, but also by the ‘twenty-four’ or ‘court of assistants’ which was composed of former Masters and Wardens, some of them extremely venerable, who would keep an eye upon their young successors. In return, these elder statesmen could be assured of maintaining their sense of dignity even in the most straitened of circumstances through the help provided by the fraternity. This dignity was not confined to the individual: the relief of indigent members facilitated the reinforcement of communal bonds and the collective dignity of the fraternity as a whole.²

The maintenance of status was a key element in the setting up of mechanisms for poor relief and it is clear that the financial help given to almsmen and women was itself only one part of this process. In 1430, for instance, a goldsmith, John Hille, provided for thirteen

¹ J.J. Lambert, *The Records of the Skinners of London* (London, 1933), p.90.

² See McRee, ‘Charity and Gild Solidarity’, p.224.

black gowns to be given to thirteen poor goldsmiths ‘in those years that the livery customarily have new clothing’, and a year later Andrew Hunt, a girdler, left two chambers near the entrance of the Girdlers’ hall to be inhabited by two ‘decayed persons of the livery’ who were each to have 7d a week and a hood of livery at the time of the granting of liveries.¹ Recipients of charitable aid were not only required to be liverymen; an emphasis upon the moral character of the poor was a feature of much charitable provision. One tailor, Hugh Cavendish, specified that the recipients of his charity were to be ‘such who may have been honourable and discreet men of the mysterie and afterwards by the visitation of God come to poverty’.² The ordinances of Richard Whittington’s almshouse, founded on his death in 1424, echo these sentiments: the thirteen ‘pore folke’ were to be ‘hable in converacion and honest in lyvyng’, wearing a livery ‘of esy prised cloth according to their degre’ and at meals to ‘absteyne thaime fro veyn and ydil wordes’.³

These sentiments certainly seem to be borne out by the evidence for the careers of those tailors receiving alms, and indicates that poverty could strike even the most successful. Many indeed were former Masters of the fraternity: William atte Rule, Master in 1384, received £6 a year for the eight and a half years that he remained an almsman from 1405-6.⁴ Another distinguished tailor and former warden, Geoffrey de Kent, was already a senior member of the fraternity when he went on the ‘crusade’ led by Bishop Despensers in 1385. Fifteen years later he appears in the fraternity’s accounts as an almsman and received three pounds a year until his death in 1401-2.⁵ Three more former Masters of the Tailors’ fraternity are numbered among the seven almsmen whose wills survive, suggesting that dependence upon the fraternity was perhaps only partial in some cases. All seven were still in receipt of alms at the time of their deaths and one of them, John de Ese, described himself in the preamble to his will as ‘citizen and tailor of London and poor man of the craft of

¹ 8th Report of the Charity Commissioners (H.M.S.O., 1823), p.320; 6th Report of the Charity Commissioners (H.M.S.O., 1822), p.258.

² Clode, *Early History*, I, p.121.

³ J. Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington: a history of the trust administered by the Mercers’ Company 1424-1966* (London, 1968), App. I, pp.111, 116.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.29.

⁵ PRO, Chancery Treaty Rolls, C.76/67, m.18. I am grateful to Colin Paine for this reference; Accounts, I, f.6v (1399-1400) and f.13v.

tailors'. For five of the seven, dependence upon the fraternity was only a reality for the last two or three years of their lives.¹ On the other hand, Robert Fenescles, Master of the fraternity in 1420-21, was an almsman for six and a half years along with his wife Christian, who survived him as an almswoman for another 11 years, probably indicating more long term economic or physical difficulties.² Fenescles, along with two other former Masters, possessed sufficient resources to provide for a funeral, but it may be significant that they chose to be buried in the Great Churchyard of St Paul's, rather than in their own parish church or cemetery. This was undoubtedly a lowering of expectations on their part: not one of the parishes to which they belonged was without a churchyard of its own and as senior members of a prominent craft guild they could normally have expected burial within the parish church itself.³

The emphasis upon respectability was also a factor in the legitimising of the fraternal and convivial activities of the 'yeoman' or 'bachelor' fraternities. These were organisations which, in the late fourteenth century, gained a reputation for subversion because of the attempts by journeymen of the saddlers, cordwainers and other crafts to push wages up through collective action.⁴ By the fifteenth century, however, some of these fraternities were well on the way to becoming integral parts of what would later be known as the 'livery companies', acting as organisations for freemen outside the livery, some of whom would go on to join the senior fraternity.⁵ By 1400, those London skinnners who were not members of the Corpus Christi fraternity had their own fraternity dedicated to the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin.⁶ Bequests to the Fraternity of Yeomen Tailors indicate the extent to which the yeomen built up their religious and charitable activities, alongside those of the senior fraternity. Several successful tailors indeed, made bequests to both fraternities, as if remembering the stages in their careers. Robert Colwich in 1480 left 'ii basyns of sylver with

¹ GL, MS. 9171/3, f.272v (de Ese); 9171/2, f.228v (Robert Ascowe, d.1412); 9051/1, f.292v (John Hamerton, 1413); 9171/3, f.156 (Simon Leef, 1426); and 9171/3, f.271v (Robert Crokehorn, 1430).

² GL, MS. 9171/4, ff.221v, 222v; Accounts, I, f.332 (1440-1); and II, f.16v (1453-4).

³ GL, MS. 9051/1, f.292v (Hamerton); 9171/3, f.156 (Leef).

⁴ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.250-51 (Shearmen, 1350), 495-96 (Cordwainers, 1387), 542-4 (Saddlers, 1396).

⁵ See below, pp.147-56.

⁶ Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.112-15.

myn armes in the bothom' to the Tailors' Fraternity and 66s 8d 'to the felaship called the yemanry of the same craft'.¹ Another tailor, Stephen Trappys, was more specific when he left 20s 'to the pore almesmen of the yomen taillours' in 1485.² It is probable also that alms were collected periodically as was the case with the senior fraternity and the potential for corporate action in respect of the poverty of members is therefore clear, although given that the fraternity does not seem to have possessed income-generating properties, the scope for action was doubtless limited.

Although women were active in many of the trades and occupations of medieval London, their position within the livery companies essentially depended upon the status of their husbands.³ Apart from wealthy and influential women from outside the craft, only the wives of Masters of the fraternity were admitted with any regularity. Occasionally the widows of liverymen were admitted, indicating both the status enjoyed by their late husbands and the extent to which women were involved in continuing to run their husbands' businesses. Female members appear to have enjoyed the same rights as men: 'sustren' are mentioned along with 'brethren' in many of the fraternity's ordinances and in the oaths sworn by new members. They could, for instance, attend the annual feast, when garlands of roses were ordered for the 'maisters et maistresses' of the fraternity.⁴ Status was transferable: an ordinance of 1490 recognized that men who married the widows of former Masters and Wardens were entitled to be admitted to the fraternity at any time, not just at the annual feast. The same applied to any other tailor who was 'promoted by maryage of eny other woman oute of the felaship'.⁵ The distribution of alms to women is an important aspect of the charitable provision made by the fraternity. In 1398-99, the first year for which accounts survive, Christian Wycham and Sara Lunt are listed as almswomen, the latter being the widow of Roger Lunt, a fairly wealthy tailor who died in 1388. It is not clear how soon after his death Sara became in need of assistance but she continued to receive help for another

¹ PRO, Prob.11/7, ff.6-7v.

² GL, MS. 9171/7, f.33v.

³ See K.E. Lacey, 'Women and Work in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century London', in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. L. Charles and L. Duffin (1985), pp.24-82.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.6 (1399-1400).

⁵ Court Minutes, II, f.21v.

eleven years, her funeral being paid for by the fraternity in 1410-11.¹ The usual pattern seems to have been for the husband to be the named recipient of the almsmoney but, occasionally, husband and wife are named together in the accounts, as in the case of John and Julian Whoton who both began receiving alms from 1420-21. John died in 1428-29 while Julian continued to receive alms for another five years.²

In addition to tailors and their wives, the fraternity occasionally aided its non-tailor membership and even brethren from outside the city. The numbers are small, which is no surprise given the services of a similar nature that would have been provided by other craft and parish guilds in London and elsewhere. It is probable too that the Tailors were keen to give members of the craft priority over other members of the fraternity, though such preference was never made explicit. On the other hand, the fact that individuals such as Nicholas Cook, a dyer, and Richard Reynold, a vintner (both from London), did receive alms from the fraternity is certainly an indication of the importance attached by members of other crafts to membership of a larger and more successful fraternity than their own.³ As already suggested, plurality in the allegiances of town-dwellers is perhaps an under-emphasised aspect of urban life in this period, and in London this applied as much to the fraternities established by the crafts as to parish guilds.⁴

Although over fifty craftsmen from other towns and cities were admitted to the fraternity (twenty-four of whom were tailors), it is almost certain that most of those who fell upon hard times would receive help from the craft or parish guild in their home town. The fact that two such craftsmen, John Bridgesthorn of St Albans and John Staveley, a tailor from Salisbury, became almsmen of the fraternity, the former in 1416-17 and the latter by 1453, is therefore both a significant indication of the standing of the Fraternity as compared with provincial guilds and a pointer to the extent to which the foci of peoples' lives could shift

¹ Accounts, I, f.3; Roger Lunt's will was enrolled in the Husting Court, *CWCH*, II, p.265 and in the Commissary Court, GL, MS. 9171/1, f.158; 6s 8d was paid for the funeral and 15d for a 'windyngcloth', Accounts, I, f.57.

² Accounts, I, ff.119v, 196, 248.

³ Cook received alms in 1416-17 and Reynold from 1423-24, Accounts, I, ff.96v, 135.

⁴ See above, pp.30-4.

during a career.¹ The career of Staveley has already been noted: after falling out with the guild of Salisbury tailors he was able to take advantage of the close links established with their London counterparts when he became in need of financial assistance, at some point between 1445 and 1453. It is possible that his quarrel with the Salisbury guild had a detrimental effect upon his business, and led him to seek help in London.²

The services provided to poor brethren of the fraternity and their wives were in a variety of forms, with the payment of a fixed annual rate the main item of expenditure. Some bequests to the fraternity, particularly those made by prominent tailors, are of special interest to the historian as they help to shed light on the nature of this financial provision and of distinctions made between different groups of almsmen and women. The bequests made by Thomas Sutton and Ralph Holland enabled the Master and Wardens to increase the maximum weekly amount paid to the almsmen and women by 2d and 1d respectively to 17d a week or £3 13s 8d a year, with 14d of it coming 'de antiqua elemosina'.³ This sets the Tailors' fraternity apart from most of the other craft fraternities of London which, like the Girdlers and Salters, generally had to rely upon individual benefactions for the entirety of their provision. In 1431 Andrew Hunt provided 7d a week for two girdlers and in 1454 Thomas Beaumond allowed the same for six salters dwelling in houses built by him.⁴ Only the charity of wealthy members of the greater guilds could result in rates of 2d a day or better: two foundations by goldsmiths in the 1450s, for example, provided 1s 2d a week for a total of nine poor goldsmiths.⁵ Whittington's charity, administered by the Mercers, allowed for the payment of 14d a week to those in his almshouse, out of the revenues of his impressive estate.⁶ The Tailors were able to adopt a flexible approach to charitable provision which was not constrained by the wealth or wishes of testators, only by the more substantial resources of the fraternity itself. The absence of a poor rate or any other city-wide system of charitable

¹ Accounts, I, f.96v; II, f.16v.

² See above, p.36.

³ Accounts, II, f.72v (1455-56).

⁴ 6th Report of the Charity Commissioners, pp.258, 325.

⁵ 8th Report of the Charity Commissioners, p.321 (John Patteslie, 1450 and William Walton, 1458)

⁶ Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington*, App. I, p.118.

assistance, means that the actions of parishes and craft fraternities take on a new significance, despite their limited scope. Christopher Dyer, in his analysis of standards of living in the middle ages, concluded that a sum of 1d per day, (close to the average guild stipend in this period) would allow the beneficiary 'a decent but sparse living with meat and ale to go with the bread'. Housing would require at least another 5s *per annum*.¹ Indeed, the provision made by the Tailors for their almsmen in the fifteenth century compares very favourably with the sums spent by the Grocers and Clothworkers in the mid-1590s, figures employed by Dr. Archer to demonstrate the contribution made by the livery companies in a period of population growth.² The maximum of 17d a week paid by the Tailors compares well with the 12d paid by the Goldsmiths in the later sixteenth century and the parish *pension* of 6d a week. What is perhaps striking about the later sixteenth century is the volume and scope of charitable activity, made possible by the diversion of funds previously used for chantries and obits, rather than by the implementation of principles of brotherhood and indeed pious duty which were a continuous feature of the development of craft and merchant guilds.³

Another indication of the developed and flexible mechanisms for poor relief made by the Tailors may be the fact that not all almsmen and women were paid the same amounts each year. Before 1450 this took the form of step-by-step increases in the amount received in alms each year, probably based on the seniority of the recipient as an almsman or woman. The career of John Martin, almsman from 1424 until his death in 1430, was typical: he received 40s a year for three years before benefitting from two successive increases of 10s, taking him to the then top rate of £3 *per annum*. Some, such as John Speke, started on the 'top rate' of £3, while others, including John Staveley, failed to get there despite at least five years as an almsman.⁴ In the first half of the century, therefore, most people received the full amount, perhaps as their dependence upon the fraternity grew. After 1453, however, the

¹ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp.208, 253. For an analysis of stipends paid by parish guilds see McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity', pp.195-225.

² Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.120-24. In 1595 the Clothworkers spent £12 7s 6d and the Grocers £12 11s 4d on their almsmen, *ibid.*, Table 4.1, p.124. These amounts were, however, increased more than six-fold by the payment of pensions to the elderly, £48 17s 6d and £62 5s 6d respectively, a more unusual occurrence in the fifteenth century.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.120-21.

⁴ Accounts, I, ff.153, 185, 196 (Martin); I, f.143v (Speke); II, ff.16v, 40, 73, 109, 135v (Staveley).

almsmen and women seem to have been more permanently divided into income groups with two or three receiving the full 73s 8d a year, another group getting 44s 4d and a third group 31s. There were exceptions to these categories but their introduction and, more importantly, the lack of mobility between them is indicative of a new system of alms distribution and a more rigid categorization of recipients according to need, status or a combination of the two.

The need for affordable accommodation on the part of the poor was obviously a pressing one and was answered by the foundation of almshouses, by lay institutions and individuals, with increasing frequency in the fifteenth century. These aimed to care as much for the spiritual as the physical needs of inmates who were seen as deserving of such individual attention because of their status and bearing. In the early years of the fifteenth century, some attempt was made by the Tailors to help those who had no means to afford a place to live, as in the case of Flora Cornewaille who survived her husband Nicholas for one term in 1403-4 and received 20d 'pur son hostel pur un terme'.¹ The opportunity for the establishment of more permanent arrangements came in 1405 when John Churchman made his important grant to the fraternity. As well as the advowson of St. Martin Outwich, Churchman granted four messuages and seventeen shops in the parish to the fraternity, in return for the establishment of a chantry in the church. The grant was made, according to Stow, 'in perpetuall almes, to bee employed on the poore brethren and sisters' and included a plot of land lying between Tailors' Hall in Broad Street and St Martin's, 'wherupon adioyning unto the West end of the parish church, the said maister and wardens builded about a proper quadrant or squared court, seaven almeshouses...'.² The building work did not in fact begin until 1413, the year of Churchman's death, which suggests that an agreement had been entered into in 1405 in which the Tailors undertook to erect the almshouses at their own expense as a memorial to their benefactor. Despite the delay, the Tailors' almshouse appears to have been the earliest such foundation in London, pre-dating Whittington's almshouse by eleven years.³

That preparations were underway in 1413-14 is clear from the accounts which record some of the preliminary steps taken to clear the site and pull down existing structures.

¹ Accounts, I, f.19v.

² Stow, *Survey*, I, p.181 and see Map 2, above p.47.

³ Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington*, p.111.

Expenses amounting to £32 3s 7d are recorded, the majority of which was spent on work done by a mason and a carpenter. It is interesting to note too that the almshouse was referred to as the ‘maison dieux’, a term which was used fairly frequently for such foundations, including Whittington’s own ‘goddeshous’.¹ Other payments included parchment for the indentures entered into by the Company with the craftsmen as well as ‘ii pell de parchemyn pur patrons’ (the plans of the building), drink and, significantly, ‘pain et vin al evesq de Norwich’.² The bishop, Richard Courtenay, also headed a list of donors who contributed £19 13s 4d to the ‘novel overage’ which appears in the accounts for the same year.³ It is likely that the bishop was chosen because of John Churchman’s strong links with Norfolk.⁴ The Tailors’ actions in enlisting the support of the bishop is highly suggestive of an attempt to recall Churchman’s dual allegiances to Norfolk and London and, through the services offered for his soul in perpetuity, and to establish the debt owed to him in the collective memory of the fraternity.

A year later the building work proper got under way and, to help pay for the initial outlay, £51 16s 6d was raised from the membership. Forty seven liverymen contributed to the levy, with Thomas Bridlyngton and Thomas Whitingham giving £15 and £20 respectively. All but one of the contributors were tailors, following the pattern set in earlier levies in 1406-7 and 1408-9.⁵ This once again highlights the different obligations placed upon the tailor and non-tailor sections of the membership and is consistent with the fraternity’s concentration of its charitable provision upon tailors. The cost of the building work carried out that year came to an impressive £96 16s 2d, and the very detailed entries for the work done by ‘maister Nicholl’, the carpenter, and Walter Holty, the stonemason, among others, give a few clues as to the construction and appearance of the almshouse. Holty, for instance, was paid £8 13s 4d ‘de paver le aley et le yerd ove hewen ragge’ as well as for work carried out on ‘le cloistre...chimeneis et le fonteigne’, features which help to

¹ Accounts, I, f.78v. Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington*, App. I, p.111.

² Accounts, I, f.78v.

³ Accounts, I, f.74. Courtenay joined the fraternity in 1411-12, *ibid.*, I, f.61v.

⁴ See above, pp.16-17.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.82. Sir John Doyly, one of the chaplains to the fraternity was the only exception; *ibid.*, I, ff.33v, 44.

bring Stow's description of 'a proper quadrant or squared court' to life.¹ By the middle of 1415 the work was largely completed and the next year saw the finishing touches put to the latest and most significant work of piety and charity carried out by the fraternity to date.² The construction of the almshouse enabled the Tailors to house the most indigent of their almsmen and women but, as the accounts testify, the fraternity continued to provide financial assistance to those living in their own houses or the houses of friends and relatives. Several testators recognized the particular needs of poor householders: Hugh Cavendish, for example, provided not only for the annual distribution of 36 quarters of coals to the poor and needy in the almshouse, but also help for those poor members who were 'receiving alms in houses or dwellings and not at the hall'. In similar vein another tailor, Stephen Trappys, left £5 to be distributed among poor householders of the fraternity in 1485.³

The absence of surviving ordinances for the Tailors' almshouse means that the rules and regulations by which its inmates had to live can only be inferred from scattered references in the fraternity's accounts and other sources. Those rules which can be reconstructed seem to be similar in tone and content to those which Whittington drew up for his foundation a decade later. Although no direct influence can be proved, the early date of the Tailors' almshouse meant that by 1424 it was still the only one of its kind in London, possibly acting as an exemplar for subsequent founders. For example, one of the requirements of Whittington's ordinances was that inmates should be 'destitut of all temporell goodes in othir places by the whiche he might competently lyve al be hit he were none of ye noubre of ye seide almeshous', and it may have been that a similar stipulation had prompted one tailor, William White, to divest himself of many of his worldly goods including a 'fedderbed', six candlesticks and two pewter pots in 1464-65, the year in which he began to receive alms from the fraternity.⁴ Other evidence, however, suggests that almsmen were allowed to keep at least some of their goods. Throughout the fifteenth century,

¹ Accounts, I, f.86v; Stow, *Survey*, I, p.181. For the subsequent popularity of this design see W.H. Godfrey, *The English Almshouse* (1955), pp.45-75.

² 22d was paid for a labourer to 'netter les maisons', Accounts, I, f.93.

³ Accounts, II, f.247; 17th Report of the Charity Commisioners (H.M.S.O., 1826-7), p.460. Trappys' will is in GL, MS. 9171/7, f.33v.

⁴ Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington*, App. I, p.114; Accounts, II, f.253. White gave the bulk of these goods 'ad opus eiusdem fraternitatem', while other items including towels and a tablecloth were sold.

the fraternity sold off the goods of deceased almsmen, the proceeds often being specifically allocated for the funeral. The amounts raised were generally small but some almsmen had evidently kept some quite valuable items: the sale of 'les biens de William Herford' realised £13 14s 9½d in 1412-13 and in 1473-4 the fraternity raised £6 2s 9d from the sale of Henry Ketelwell's possessions.¹

An illuminating example of the ways in which the fraternity helped its poor members occurs in the accounts for 1406-7, before the foundation of the almshouse. In that year the last illness and death of Simon Gairdner led the fraternity to pay 3s 4d for the rent on his house and, significantly, the same amount to 'une feme qui lui garda en sa infirmite'.² This was probably an informal arrangement and does not imply that any formalised system of nursing care was in operation. A more likely scenario, particularly after the construction of the almshouse, is described in Whittington's ordinances which required 'thei that ar myghty and hole of body of the seid Almeshous and specially wommen if ther by eny ther Inne helpe and ministre unto ye felawes of the seid hous that ar seke and feble'.³ The absence of any subsequent references to the hiring of nurses makes it a reasonable assumption that the running of the Tailors' almshouse made use of similar principles of mutual assistance and community. After all, the charitable activities of Londoners were not solely confined to the provisions of their wills: one tailor, William Mawere, was discharged from jury service in 1436 because of his 'constant attention to the poor mad inmates of the Hospital of St. Mary de Bedlam without Bisshopesgate'.⁴

The daily religious activities of the almsmen and women in the almshouse are less easy to trace but there seems little doubt that inmates were expected to pray regularly for their benefactors. One of the ordinances drawn up by the Tailors after the acquisition of their fifth charter in 1503 stipulated that all almsmen should be 'personally present' at St Martin's, in order to attend weekly services 'serving God and all his seintes' and praying daily for the King, Queen, and all members of the fraternity, living and dead.⁵ The close relationship

¹ Accounts, I, f.68; III, f.58v.

² Accounts, I, f.37v.

³ Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington*, App. I, p.117.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.194.

⁵ Clode, *Memorials*, p.48.

between the Tailors and St Martin's, and the role of John Churchman in founding the almshouse, makes it almost inconceivable that the latter was not remembered at these services and in the daily prayers of the inmates. Thomas Sutton, whose bequest helped to increase the weekly rate paid to almsmen, required them to 'pray devoutly' for his soul, and it is likely that Churchman, Sutton and Ralph Holland headed the list of those benefactors to be prayed for on a regular basis.¹ No mention is made in the accounts of a chapel attached to the almshouse, which is perhaps not surprising given the proximity of St Martin's, the strong links it had with the Tailors and, in addition, the existence of a chapel in Tailors' Hall itself.² It is almost certain that daily services were conducted in one of these two places by one of the three chaplains employed by the fraternity.

The picture of poor relief in the fifteenth century was not static. It shifted in response to changing needs and preoccupations on the part of citizens, and consequently the institutions to which they belonged. The extent and nature of the charitable provision made by the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist changed in key areas, the first of which was the actual number of people who received alms in any one year. Before the late 1450s an average of fourteen people a year were receiving financial assistance from the fraternity. After this date, as Table 2.2 showed, a significant decline in numbers occurred, whereby the average fell to eight or fewer. Subsequent entries in the minutes of the Tailors' Court show that the downward trend continued and in the mid-sixteenth century recipients numbered only about five each year.³ It is possible that this was the result of a decline in the total membership of the fraternity, shown in the records of the admission of members and reflected in the annual alms collections. This may have been achieved through a more selective admissions policy when tailors were for the first time beginning to achieve prominent positions in the city in the quarter century prior to the granting of the title of 'Merchant Taylors' by Henry VII in 1502. As an essentially artisan craft, the Tailors might have felt under pressure to make their fraternity more exclusively mercantile, in order to be able to compete with the

¹ GL, MS. 9171/3, f.381v (1434).

² For the hall see Hopkinson, *Merchant Taylors' Hall*, *passim*; Schofield, *The Building of London*, pp.117-9; and *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: London*, 5 vols, (1924-30), IV, pp.34-7.

³ Court Minutes, I, f.3v (1486-7); Accounts, IV, ff.4, 85, 164 (1545-7).

Mercers, Grocers and Drapers for offices.¹ An ordinance of 1490 seems to support this by suggesting that men admitted to the fraternity 'have bene in substaunce of goods as it hath bene supposed whereby they have lytely fallen into the almes of this fraternity to the grete charge of this fraternyte'.² This certainly indicates a concern among the elders of the craft that those admitted should be men of means, and is the sort of evidence often cited by historians seeking to portray craft associations as self-serving and self-selecting oligarchies. The rhetoric of such ordinances is not, however, reflected in the trend of admissions to the fraternity in the twenty years after 1450, when the numbers of almsmen on the fraternity's books experienced such a dramatic decline. As shown above, although annual admissions to the fraternity declined by nearly fifty percent in the second half of the fifteenth century, the drop in numbers was almost exclusively confined to the non-tailors who rarely benefitted from the fraternity's charity.³ The number of tailors admitted to the livery of the craft, though declining, did not do so anywhere near as rapidly as the numbers who received alms payments.

An alternative explanation for the reduced numbers of almsmen and women receiving assistance from the Tailors is suggested by the change which occurred in one particular area of charitable provision made by the fraternity. Perhaps one of the most important services provided by the lay fraternities, in the late-medieval period, was the burial of deceased almsmen and women. Lacking the resources to found an obit of any kind, or even pay for a rudimentary funeral themselves, the poor were dependent upon relatives, friends and the extended family of the fraternity for the maintenance of a degree of dignity in death and the prospect of the prayers of fellow liverymen. As Table 2.3 shows, the Tailors' fraternity was particularly active in the provision of funerals for deceased almsmen and women in the early decades of the fifteenth century. The picture changed, however, as the century progressed and a decline occurred in the proportion of funerals paid for by the fraternity, such that after 1430 only four out of sixty-six almsmen and women were buried at the fraternity's expense. In one or two cases it is clear that relatives were taking on the burden themselves but these

¹ See Barron, 'Ralph Holland', pp.160-83, and Miller, 'London and Parliament', pp.130-43.

² Court Minutes, II, f.21v (Quarter-day held on 5 May 1490).

³ See Table 1.1 above.

cases are too few to account for such a dramatic change and date with one exception from the first half of the fifteenth century.

Table 2.3. Funerals of almsmen paid for by the Tailors’ fraternity, 1398-1475

Year	Deceased Almsmen	No. of Funerals	%
1398-1430	79	43	54.4
1430-1475	66	4	6.1
Total	145	47	32.4

A possible explanation for these changes takes into account shifts in the patterns of bequests in the late fifteenth century and a consequent change in the range of services offered by lay fraternities of all kinds. It has already been shown that Londoners in general, and the tailors in particular, were increasingly reluctant to found perpetual chantries as the fifteenth century wore on: the Tailors’ fraternity itself administered no new perpetual chantries between 1425 and 1500, tailors preferring instead to establish temporary arrangements.¹ Preliminary research into the testamentary provisions of parishioners of two London parishes not only confirms this, but also suggests that testators were increasingly inclined to channel the resources freed as a result into charity and poor relief on a parish level, often specifying the funerals of poor parishioners.² The focus of the charitable bequests made by the gentry of Kent would also appear to have shifted in the later fifteenth century towards poor relief on a parish level.³ This shift towards individual, parish-centred charitable work is likely to have been related to a decline in the importance of the funerary dimension to the work of lay fraternities in general. This has been noted by Dr Barron in relation to the parish fraternities of London, where she suggests that the Black Death gave an impetus to the emphasis on funerals in the ordinances of the fourteenth century fraternities, whereas ‘by the late fifteenth century the concern for a decent burial had shrunk simply to one clause in twenty or thirty’.⁴ This was but one of the changes in emphasis which took place during the fifteenth century as the preoccupations and social needs of fraternity members evolved.

¹ Thomson, ‘Piety and Charity’, pp.191-92; see above, Table 2.1.

² I owe this tentative explanation to the comments of Dr. Clive Burgess, arising out of his preliminary work on the parishes of St Mary at Hill and St Andrew Hubbard in London.

³ Fleming, ‘Charity, Faith and the Gentry of Kent’, pp.45-6.

⁴ Barron, ‘Parish Fraternities’, pp.25-8.

An increasing tendency for testators to endow works of charity at a parish level may well have produced the decline in the numbers of almsmen described earlier. No longer was the fraternity seen as the obvious source of charitable assistance; instead the parishes began to develop their own mechanisms which may have been all the more attractive because they were local. Certainly, the evidence from the records of the Tailors' fraternity suggests that the hey-day of the fraternity as a provider of charitable assistance was in the first half of the fifteenth century. That period saw between twelve and sixteen almsmen and women on the fraternity's books at any one moment, the provision of funerals for at least two-thirds of them and, finally, the foundation of the almshouse. By the 1480s, by contrast, there were not even enough almsmen to fill these houses. This is not to suggest that the fraternity as a whole was in decline, or that it was in some way losing its original identity as a focus for the spiritual as much as the occupational loyalties of craftsmen, merely that it was reflecting a more general shift in the focus of charitable provision.

Corporate charity is a surprisingly neglected aspect of late-medieval piety. Concentration upon the efforts of individuals, particularly through studies of testamentary provisions, only reveals half the picture. For a fuller picture of the nature and extent of charitable assistance to emerge it is important to study the interaction between individuals and the variety of historical communities to which they belonged. Until relatively recently craft guilds have received little attention from historians of lay piety, let alone from those looking at charity in the late-medieval town. Yet to suggest, for example, that 'religious and charitable undertakings were adopted in occupational guilds' is to ignore the extent to which these undertakings underpinned the very existence of a large number of these institutions in London and elsewhere.¹ Robert FitzRobert, a London grocer, made provision in his will for distributions to be made to the poor of the 'artificiorum aurifabrorum grocerum et cissorum' in the city, specific bequests to three guilds which, from their inception, had articulated not only craft identities and loyalties, but also the popular enthusiasm for institutions where individual salvation could be sought through collective devotion and mutual assistance.²

¹ Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p.250.

² *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. E.F. Jacob (4 vols, Oxford, 1937-47), II, pp.510-11 (dated 27 October 1434, enrolled 1445-6).

CHAPTER THREE: THE TAILORS AND THE CITY GOVERNMENT, 1376-1504

The development of fraternities as the governing bodies of many of the crafts of London, and many other towns and cities of medieval Europe had important consequences for the relationship between crafts and municipal authorities. The creation of an identity in the urban context, through the mechanisms discussed above, placed craft guilds in a constant dialogue with their fellow guilds, urban governments, and with external sources of authority, particularly the church and the royal government. This chapter aims to explore the nature of this dialogue, looking first at the ways in which craft organisations fulfilled important functions on behalf of municipal governments, and secondly at the means by which the guilds themselves, though associations for the wealthiest freemen, were able to articulate and represent the concerns of a wider constituency of craftsmen to urban authorities. The records of the London tailors, and of the City government can be employed to determine the sort of issues which were raised by the guilds, and the extent to which the Court of Aldermen and the Common Council was able to achieve consensus despite the varying interests and aspirations of the various crafts. Lastly, this chapter aims to put these issues in the broader context of the debates which took place in the fourteenth and fifteenth century over the nature of urban government itself. The London tailors found themselves prominent in reform movements, principally, it is argued here, because their frustrated ambitions for civic prominence coincided with wider aspirations on the part of many artisans in the capital. Consequently it is necessary to begin by surveying the nature of the contemporary debate.

I. Urban Oligarchies and Craft Guilds in the Middle Ages

Urban elections were often controversial occasions. In October 1328 the Mayor and aldermen of London, together with the sheriffs, met to choose a new mayor. When they had reached a decision, the recorder went to inform the assembled commonalty that Hamo de Chigwell, a previous holder of the office, had been chosen. Initial reaction was favourable, and many of those present shouted their approval of the result. Others were less happy and an acrimonious exchange ensued between those shouting ‘Chigwell!’, and another group shouting ‘Fulsham!’, their preferred candidate. The assembly broke up amid great confusion; the election was quickly declared void, and the name of John de Grantham announced as the

new Mayor.¹ In this case a decision taken by the Court of Aldermen was effectively undermined by the failure of the commonalty to agree on their choice. Other incidents display a more overt testing of the political waters: after the removal of the newly elected mayor of Leicester, Thomas Davy, in 1489 the council's decision to replace him with Roger Tryng provoked the 'election' of Thomas Toutheby 'per comunitatem ville'. This expression of the 'vox populi' was frustrated when Toutheby was summarily expelled from the council, but only after Davy had been reinstated by order of the king.² The championing of Toutheby appears to have been directly related to the introduction of reforms in the elective process itself. In response to a petition from the Leicester elite, an order from Henry VII concerning the government of the town stipulated that because of the disorder caused by the attendance of the commonalty, both rich and poor, at mayoral elections the elective body was henceforth to comprise only 48 of the most substantial commoners who would be chosen by the mayor, bailiffs and the ruling council of twenty-four burgesses.³ These examples of disputed elections demonstrate the tensions which could emerge at elections and other formal occasions, and the extent to which the right to have a say in urban government was a matter for debate. Leicester was by no means alone in choosing to restrict attendance at, and participation in, elective and governmental processes during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While some municipal authorities did choose to enlarge their ruling councils, these were outnumbered by those towns where elections and access to political office were subject to increasingly strict regulation.⁴

What did these changes signify? As Dr. Rigby has argued, it would be inaccurate to see this as a transition from an era of 'popular democracy' to one of reactionary oligarchic rule. 'Government by the few' was a long established feature of most towns and cities by the later middle ages and, as Susan Reynolds has demonstrated, it was an integral part of the mentalité of town-dwellers, whether or not they were themselves part of the ruling elite. This

¹ CPMR, 1323-1364, pp.72-3. For Chigwell see Williams, *Medieval London*, pp.288-96, 302-5.

² M. Bateson ed., *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, 2 vols (London, 1899-1901), ii, pp.326-30.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.319, 324-5.

⁴ S.H. Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy" in Late Medieval England', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J.A.F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988), pp.62-86 (at pp.71-76). See, for instance, M. Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', in *The Medieval Town*, ed. Holt and Rosser, pp.184-215.

form of government arose from a consensus based upon shared beliefs, sentiments and values which determined inhabitants' attitudes towards the governance of their municipalities.¹ Officially articulated criteria for the selection of London aldermen in 1397, for example, emphasised the financial and moral qualities of the 'probi homines', concerns shared by the commonalty at large.² Contemporaries were clear about the difference between government by the few, ruling on behalf of the community, and government by the self-interested few who ruled in their own sectional interests. The distinction drawn by Aristotle between 'aristocracy' and its perversion 'oligarchy' was certainly reflected in late medieval notions of good government; for the purpose of this chapter, however, it is intended to use the term 'oligarchy' in its original, neutral, sense as meaning 'government by the few', as the opposite of 'democracy', rather than in its pejorative sense.³

There was, of course, a deliberate attempt on the part of municipal authorities to reinforce these attitudes through an emphasis upon the dignity of mayoral office, and the increasingly elaborate nature of ceremonial and the trappings of office.⁴ But, despite the obvious advantages for urban stability, these actions should perhaps be viewed as a response to contemporary conceptions of government, and the emphasis upon rulers as the representatives of the community, rather than the mere self-conscious creation and promotion of a 'dominant ideology' and false consciousness among the citizenry. While agreeing with Reynolds' analysis of the attitudes of town-dwellers, Rigby makes the important point that, despite such consensus over the principle of oligarchic rule, there was much debate over which groups of citizens should participate in elections or make up the ruling councils themselves.⁵ The urban conflicts of 1381 in York and Beverley are perhaps the clearest

¹ S. Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', *Urban History Yearbook* (1982), pp.14-23.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, H, p.436.

³ As in Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', p.70.

⁴ See C.M. Barron, 'The Government of London and its Relations with the Crown, 1400-1450' (Unpub. University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1970), pp.78-87.

⁵ Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', pp.63-67.

manifestations of such debates in the fourteenth century.¹ Conflict was not always based upon personal, moral, qualities which have generally been associated with definitions of 'oligarchy': as the case of Thomas Toutheby shows, many considered that all burgesses should be entitled to attend elections, whereas the elite believed that a more limited section of the population should be permitted a voice. As will be shown, the periodic instability which characterised London in the long fifteenth century owed much to the articulation of differing conceptions of how oligarchic rule should be defined.

Part of the problem for urban administrations was the very lack of formal rules and definitions of what constituted 'political society', and consequently who was entitled to a role in government. London perhaps exemplifies this: much of the political instability of the capital in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when compared with the sixteenth century, was the direct consequence of the vagueness of its constitution, which could be exploited by ambitious groups and individuals. As Sylvia Thrupp put it, the legacy of the thirteenth century was a constitutional framework which 'was little better than a confused accumulation of ambiguous precedent and privilege'. While citizens were recognized as a distinct group within London, with the right to appoint their mayor and sheriffs, the charters granted to the City, for instance, never defined the methods of election.² Before the later fifteenth century the right of attendance at City elections in London had generally been allowed to the 'more sufficient' men of the City, whose definition was never formally settled and hence became a focus for discontent among the wider body of freemen.³ The relative stability of the later sixteenth century, by contrast, was in part facilitated by the constitutional developments which had taken place over the preceding two hundred years.⁴ Election procedures were clarified and came to reflect a balance between the perceived rights and duties of the elite with participation by the more substantial citizens in mayoral elections and by all freemen

¹ See A.F. Butcher, 'English Urban Society and the Revolt of 1381', in *The English Rising of 1381*, ed. R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (Cambridge, 1984), pp.84-111; R.B. Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough, 1380-1381', in *ibid.*, pp.112-42. See also P.C. Maddern, *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia 1422-1442* (Oxford, 1992), pp.173-205 for factionalism in Norwich.

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.60-6. For the 1319 Charter see W. Birch ed., *The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London* (London, 1887), pp.45-51.

³ This definition was articulated on numerous occasions, such as in 1406 when apprentices and servants had caused disturbances at the election of the Mayor and Sheriffs, *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, p.34.

⁴ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.18-30.

in vestry meetings and wardmotes.¹ Concomitant with this was the growth in size of the Common Council which numbered 96 in the later fourteenth century, 187 by 1460 and 212 by the reign of Elizabeth.² The perceived status of the commoners appears to have risen in the fifteenth century and councilmen began to sit on important City committees: in 1440 a petition was addressed jointly to the mayor and aldermen and to 'the right sad and discrete Commoners of the Cite of London in this Commone counsell assembled'.³

The role of craft organisations and other varieties of guilds in the governmental structures of towns was subject to a similar process of clarification which reached its peak in the sixteenth century. In Florence, the late fourteenth century witnessed a prolonged debate between competing definitions of communal government; the lesser guilds, with the leadership of non-elite elements among the greater guilds, put forward a corporatist model, which envisioned a federation of equal and autonomous guilds, free to elect their own representatives. The collapse of the Ciompi regime and the beginnings of economic recovery led many members of the greater guilds, some of whom had supported the corporatist model, to make common cause with the elite families, who backed oligarchic rule obtained through consensus. Their disenchantment with corporatism was reflected in their membership of the 'Mercanzia', an association of like-thinking citizens which remained independent of the guild structure.⁴ In some respects Coventry adopted a similar type of oligarchic rule: the career cycle of the most successful citizens would involve membership of the Corpus Christi and Trinity Guilds, which drew upon the most important members of the senior craft guilds for their officers. This elite came to make up the ruling City council, with the Trinity guild dominating the positions of Alderman and Mayor.⁵

The government of London differed slightly from these models in that, by the sixteenth century, the Mayor and Aldermen of London were normally drawn from the 'Great Twelve' guilds, rather than from one or two dominant socio-religious guilds, such as the

¹ *Ibid.*, p.29.

² Barron, 'The Government of London', p.53; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p.30.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.241.

⁴ See J.M. Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp.3-17, 217-262.

⁵ Pythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp.118-27 and see Table 8 on p.126.

Trinity guild in Coventry or the Mercanzia in Florence.¹ In 1475 an ordinance placed greater emphasis on the status brought by membership of a guild within a craft by limiting attendance at mayoral elections to such 'liverymen'.² This was a similar step to that taken by the 'twenty-four' at Leicester in that participation in certain electoral processes was no longer to be accessible to all citizens. The evolution of the City's constitution and the defining of its ruling oligarchy was closely linked to the developments which took place within the crafts of the capital, in particular through the establishment of guilds as the governing bodies and representative institutions of particular misteries.³ This was particularly important after 1319 when the freedom of the City had to be formally obtained through one of the crafts, whether by apprenticeship, redemption or patrimony.⁴ Consequently, many of the disputes and controversies which accompanied the gradual defining of the City's ruling oligarchy involved the interests of the guilds, their members and the wider body of freemen. The fraternity of London tailors lies at the heart of this inquiry for the simple reason that its members were prominent in three of the most serious controversies which were to erupt in the capital: John of Northampton's reforms of 1376-84, the dispute with the Drapers and the City in the 1430s and 1440s, and finally the granting of the notorious charter of 1503 which conferred the title of 'Merchant' Tailors upon the guild.

II. Guilds and Civic Authorities in the Middle Ages

1. The Nature and Extent of Municipal Control

Relationships between guilds and municipal authorities were not static but reflected the constant process of realignments within urban society, prompted by many factors not the least of which was the development of craft organisations as wealthy property owning associations with dynamic internal lives, whose members were often among the most influential members of urban political society. Nevertheless, despite this picture of change and redefinition, the functions fulfilled by guilds within urban society have frequently been

¹ The Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, Haberdashers, Clothworkers, Goldsmiths, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners and Fishmongers.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.132.

³ See Veale, "Great Twelve", pp.237-63, and see Chapter 1 above.

⁴ Birch ed., *Charters*, pp.46-7; Williams, *Medieval London*, p.283.

reduced to simple formulae. The misinterpretation of municipal records, for instance, tends to reinforce a view of craft organisations which perceives them merely as extensions of municipal government, denying to them any autonomy as the articulations of the needs and preoccupations of artisans and merchants. Heather Swanson, for instance, presents a reductionist picture of the functions of craft guilds, perceiving them as the mere vehicles of civic policy, 'created' by merchant oligarchies in order to bring newly enfranchised artisans under the control of mercantile elites.¹ Such an impression of 'state control' is certainly one which is easily deduced from municipal records, and reflects the real desire on the part of municipal governments for a degree of control over trade and industry. This is an impression reinforced by the apparent variations in the degree of control which the governments of European towns and cities claimed over the crafts.² Yet such records are often contradictory: from the mid-thirteenth century, for instance, the crafts of Paris were formally under the control of the royal prévôt who would appoint officials to govern each guild. Yet this practice does not appear to have become an established one, for the guilds soon appear to have resumed choosing their own officials.³ In London it is clear that such 'controls' were introduced relatively infrequently and were often inconsistently and spasmodically enforced. The ratification of ordinances and the elections of guild officials by the City government reached a peak in the fourteenth century when the number of formal craft associations expanded dramatically.⁴ Thereafter, lists of senior craftsmen are recorded only infrequently in the City Journals and Letter Books. The statute of 1437 which required guilds to have their ordinances ratified by the local Justices of the Peace or the Mayor in the case of London had only a short term impact: the same year four saddlers were mainpernored to bring into the Court of Aldermen 'the book of the fraternity', and their charter of 1424 was examined to see if it contravened the liberties of the City.⁵ The fact that the Drapers and the Tailors acquired new charters, in 1438 and 1439 respectively, doubtless owed much to this

¹ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.110-118; *idem*, 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-48.

² Thrupp, 'The Gilds', pp.237-46.

³ G. Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work' (Unpublished paper, 1992), p.7. I am grateful to Dr. Rosser for allowing me to consult this paper, forthcoming in *Past and Present*.

⁴ Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp.237-63.

⁵ Barron, 'The Government of London', p.194.

legislation, just as the mortmain legislation of 1391, following on the heels of the governmental inquiry of 1388-89, had prompted many prominent London guilds to seek new charters in the 1390s.¹ Similarly, in the aftermath of the furore caused by the Tailors' charter of 1439 and the ensuing disturbances, it is not surprising that the Court of Aldermen was keen to record the names of the masters and wardens of the Tailors' guild on several occasions in the 1440s and 1450s.²

The regulation of trade and industry was perhaps the main area where guilds necessarily acted as the delegates of mayoral authority. Yet even here the relationship was not a simple one. As will be shown, the relative freedom afforded to the guilds in the election of officers and drawing up of ordinances was reflected in the ways in which the guilds went about the regulation of the misteries. In the sphere of apprenticeship, for instance, the guilds operated a variety of policies concerning enrollment fees and sizes of workshops. The City merely established the normative legislative framework by pronouncing on the minimum length of terms to be served and requiring apprentices to be enrolled at Guildhall.³ In the area of prices and wages, the interventionist approach of the City government in the fifty years following the plagues of 1348-49 gave way to a period when municipal legislation was noticeably absent. The City ordinance of 1350, for instance, which regulated the prices which tailors were to charge for various kinds of garments, was never repeated; the City's main concern in the fifteenth century was with the fair pricing of essential foodstuffs rather than consumer goods in general.⁴ Similarly, although the City claimed half the fines levied on craftsmen for offences against guild and City ordinances, there is little evidence to show that this requirement was consistently enforced by either the guilds or the City. It was only in 1463-64 that the Tailors' accounts recorded, for the first time, the payment of 21s to the City Chamber out of 42s collected from various offenders

¹ Above, pp.10-11

² CLRO, Journals, 4, f.222 (1448); 5, ff.40 (1450), 61v (1451), 116 (1453). For this dispute see below.

³ For the economic policies of the tailors, see Chapters 4 and 5. On the operation of the apprenticeship 'system' in London see *CPMR*, [364-381], pp.xl-xlv.

⁴ Riley, *Memorials*, p.254. In 1382, for instance, a London fishmonger was ordered to reduce the price of his herrings, *ibid.*, p.467.

detected by the Wardens.¹ It is possible that the craftsmen were expected to pay the City's portion direct to the Chamber: this is certainly implied in many craft ordinances and in some of the adjudications made in the Tailors' Court between 1488 and 1493.² If so then the records of payments made were almost certainly listed in the Chamberlain's accounts, destroyed in an eighteenth century fire. At most, therefore, the division of fines represented a theoretical balance between the interests of the City and the guilds rather than an active tightening of municipal control over the crafts. This balance can be best seen in the City's requirement that all citizens were to become free through one of the crafts or 'misteries'; although they would be registered at Guildhall, the development of the guilds as the representatives of the crafts ensured that the burden of registration was shared. This was particularly so when apprenticeship became the primary route to the freedom, and placed responsibilities on the shoulders of both parties.

There were of course several other areas where craft guilds did act as important delegates of municipal authorities. The raising of revenue through the assessment of citizens was normally carried out on a ward by ward basis, but occasionally the City was able to take advantage of the mechanisms for raising levies which had been established by the guilds, particularly the Great Twelve. In 1487-88, for instance, the crafts were required to contribute £4,000 for a loan to Henry VII. The Mercers, Grocers and Drapers were to pay £1,615 between them, the Goldsmiths, Fishmongers and Tailors £946 13s 4d and an unspecified number of the other guilds were to provide the remaining £1,438 6s 8d.³ The crafts were also drawn upon in the key areas of public works and defence, and the guilds were once again categorized according to their wealth and size. In response to a perceived threat to the City in 1370 from galleys lying off Thanet the Mayor and Aldermen ordered a daily watch to be kept by 40 men-at-arms and 60 archers from the crafts. The Drapers and Tailors were told to organise the watch on Tuesdays.⁴ In 1476-77 the Mayor, Ralph Joscelyn, required each craft to undertake the task of repairing a section of the City wall. His own company, the Drapers, managed to complete the section from All Hallows London Wall to Bishopsgate,

¹ Accounts, II, f.250.

² Court Minutes, I-II, *passim*.

³ C.L. Kingsford ed., *The Chronicles of London* (Oxford, 1905), p.194

⁴ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.344-45.

before the project lapsed under Joscelyn's successor.¹ The Tailors, possessing one of the largest and wealthiest guilds, were normally subject to the same obligations as the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers. When the City prepared its defences against the forces of Henry Tudor in 1485, 3,178 men were drawn from 73 crafts. The Tailors, Mercers and Drapers each provided 200 men with the Grocers raising a contingent of 220. When Henry eventually made his unopposed entry into the City these four companies as well as the fishmongers provided thirty horsemen to greet the new monarch.² The City also used the guilds as convenient units for the recruitment of armed contingents to be sent abroad in the king's service. In 1435, for instance, the mayor and aldermen received an appeal for help from their counterparts in the besieged city of Calais.³ By July the next year an expeditionary force led by Humfrey, duke of Gloucester was being organised and writs were sent to the sheriffs of London requesting them to make proclamations concerning the provision of weapons and food for the army.⁴ Meanwhile, 'by the good a-vyse and consent of craftys', the Mayor organised contingents of soldiers who were to join the force at Sandwich at the end of July.⁵ The Tailors played a full part in the expedition, which was ultimately unnecessary as Calais had already been relieved by Edmund Beaufort. The accounts of the guild for 1435-36 note expenses incurred 'for writyng of indentures and obligacions to Caleys', and then 'les paiements pur les soudyers a Caleys' which amounted to £28 6s 7d. These included payments to ten tailors, six of whom were listed as archers, for sixty days service at a rate of 16d a day.⁶ Peter Ferrers was one of those who went on the expedition: as a young freeman he was a member of the yeomanry of the craft until sometime between 1445 and 1453 when he was admitted to the senior fraternity. He presented his first apprentice in 1443-44 and in

¹ Kingsford ed., *The Chronicles of London*, pp.187-8.

² CLRO, Journals, 9, ff.81v-82, 85v. For the City's response to the events of these years see D.J. Guth, 'Richard III, Henry VII and the City: London Politics and the "Dun Cowe"', in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages: a Tribute to Charles Ross*, eds. R.A. Griffiths and J. Sherborne (Gloucester, 1986), pp.185-204.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.190

⁴ *Ibid.*, K, pp.205-6.

⁵ *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Soc., new ser., 17 (1876), p.178 (William Gregory's chronicle); *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.206.

⁶ Accounts, 1, ff.271v, 276v. A levy of £28 11s was raised from 230 tailors who contributed between 4d and 6s 8d each, *ibid.*, 1, ff.268-69v.

1462, on the death of Reginald Burgate, became beadle of the guild, an office he held until his death in 1477.¹ The surviving Grocers' accounts show that they made a lesser contribution, probably because of the smaller size of their craft. £14 1s 8d was spent on two 'speres' and four 'bowes', 'for the safe keeping of Calais against the false pretending Duke of Burgundy'.² Occasionally, in time of great need, the Crown appealed directly to the guilds. In 1459, just after the rout at Blore Heath, Henry VI ordered the Venetians, Florentines and the Wardens of the Gunners, Armourers, Bowyers, Fletchers, Mercers, Haberdashers, Joiners, Tailors and Upholders to come to Guildhall to hear his commands. Presumably the choice of these groups was based on the king's need for finance and vital supplies of arms, armour and clothing for the escalating conflict with York.³

2. The Settlement of Disputes and the Formulation of Civic Policy

The relationships between guilds and municipal authorities were essentially a series of dialogues rather than merely an exercise in state control. The government of London and, in particular, the Mayor and the Court of Aldermen were looked to by the crafts and their guilds as an important source of arbitration and justice. Similarly, as the Letter Books and the Journals of the Corporation testify, the Court was also the forum for the articulation of guild concerns and the consequent formulation of an agreed policy to place before the Crown and Parliament. Internal dissension was often the subject of mayoral intervention, particularly in cases when guild officials were unable to deal with the rebellious activities of some of their servants. In 1415, for instance, several servants of the tailors' craft were called before the Mayor, Thomas Fauconer, after it became apparent that the Master and Wardens of the guild had failed to deal with them using their own disciplinary mechanisms.⁴ The development of these mechanisms by the guilds was a necessary function of their position as the governing bodies of the misteries in the capital. The creation of a corporate identity, manifested through the trappings and language of a fraternity could, however, work against

¹ Accounts, I, f.387v; *ibid.*, II, f.230v, III, f.118.

² J.A. Kingdon ed., *Facsimile of the First Volume of the MS. Archives of the Worshipful Company of Grocers of the City of London, AD 1345-1463*, 2 vols (London, 1883-86), ii, pp.234, 236.

³ CLRO, Journals, 6, f.138. See Barron, 'London and the Crown', p.95.

⁴ Barron, 'The Government of London', p.195; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, p.136.

the operation of a 'two-tier' system of justice, in all but the most serious cases. The Tailors' guild was as conscious of its 'worship' and reputation as any other: one of the conditions placed upon those whose disputes the Tailors' court examined and arbitrated was that they should drop any actions in spiritual or temporal courts which they had taken out. One case, concerning a dispute between a tailor and his apprentice, concluded with the Master of the guild expressing his concern at the 'grete infamy' which would accrue to the craft if the case were to be 'publisshed and com to lyght affore the chamberleyn of this citee'.¹ Guilds wished to have control of the judicial processes for as long as possible and would only allow matters to progress to the mayor and the aldermen if the case proved utterly insoluble. Members of the Tailors Court were sworn to secrecy: in 1492, at an assembly of the guild, concern was expressed that 'the counsellis and secrets of the said crafte by some persones before tyme have ben disclosed and discovered oute of the said crafte wherby grete inconvenyents have ensued'.²

The Court of Aldermen also had to deal with many disputes between crafts during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Despite being drawn from the Great Twelve, however, the Court appears to have remained reasonably impartial, even when the wealthiest companies were involved.³ This was essential for the preservation of stability in the capital: as will be shown, when the Court of Aldermen or the Mayor failed to act in a neutral manner trouble was likely to ensue. The City records contain many examples of mayoral involvement in disputes between guilds: these often centred on areas of overlap between two particular crafts. In 1408, for instance, a settlement was reached between the Shearmen and the Drapers over the price to be paid for shearing various kinds of cloth; the same year the Cutlers were involved in jurisdictional disputes with the Sheathers and Bladesmiths over the joint searches which were in operation.⁴ Yet it is also clear that the wealthier companies were often keen to avoid the arbitration of the City government, particularly when there was an opportunity to extend their privileges by appealing to external sources of authority. The presence of Drew Barantyn, a goldsmith, in the parliament of 1404 may have inspired his guild to petition for

¹ Court Minutes, II, ff.60v-61 (1493).

² Court Minutes, II, f.44.

³ Barron, 'The Government of London', p.198.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, pp.67, 71.

a new charter which extended the rights of search of the wardens to the shops of cutlers. The Cutlers appealed against this charter but without success.¹ The main dispute involving the Tailors, apart from their rivalry with the Drapers, occurred in 1484 when the Mayor, Robert Billesdon, was required to settle a 'variaunce and controversie' between the Tailors and the Skinners.² This centred on the places occupied by the two guilds in civic processions, which is indicative of the extent to which the constitution and oligarchy of the City was becoming more clearly defined and formalised. The rivalry probably owed much to the structural similarities between the two crafts: both were predominantly artisan crafts with a relatively small mercantile element among the guild members themselves.³ As will be shown, however, the Skinners had enjoyed far greater success in gaining civic offices than the Tailors who, despite their best efforts, did not provide a mayor of the City until 1498. The Tailors were probably satisfied with the settlement, which became known as the 'Billesdone award': they were to take precedence over the Skinners in alternate years (Easter to Easter) in mayoral processions, except when a member of the craft was elected mayor in which case they would head the procession as was customary. With the finalising of the 'Great Twelve' in the early sixteenth century, therefore, the Skinners and Tailors took up the sixth and seventh places in processions. The award also required each guild to invite the other to dinner, once more in alternate years, on the appropriate patronal feast day - Corpus Christi day in the case of the Skinners and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist in the case of the Tailors.⁴

Apart from these disputes the Common Council and the Court of Aldermen were also asked to respond to petitions from the guilds concerning matters of City policy. In many cases these concerns were shared by several of the most senior crafts, which doubtless increased the chances of a joint policy being agreed which could be put to Parliament or the Crown. The surviving records of the Tailors show the extent to which the guild was concerned at developments in the City in a number of areas. The first of these was the influx of non-Londoners into the capital, both 'aliens' from abroad and 'foreigns' from elsewhere

¹ C.M. Barron, 'London and Parliament in the Lancastrian Period', *Parliamentary History*, 9 (1990), p.359.

² CLRO, Journals, 9, ff.50v-51 and see *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.212.

³ See below, pp.241-43.

⁴ CLRO, Journals, 9, ff.50v-51.

in England.¹ In 1432-33, for instance, the Common Council agreed that a petition should be sent to the Court of Aldermen which expressed great concern at the numbers of traders who arrived in the City, obtained the freedom by redemption, and then proceeded to avoid civic duties in their wards by living outside the City. Such men only ventured into the City in order to sell goods at low prices, undercutting other citizens. The response of the Mayor and Aldermen was sympathetic: they agreed to require such 'outedwellers' to live with their wives and children in the City or else to lose the franchise.² The Tailors were evidently keeping a close eye on these events and paid 40s for a copy of the ordinance.³ The following sixty years saw the Tailors at the forefront of efforts by the London guilds to curtail the activities of aliens and foreigners. As will be shown, the Tailors' primary concern was to maximise the employment opportunities for their own freemen, particularly for those who had just completed an apprenticeship and were looking for a temporary placement prior to setting up a business. In July 1451 the Tailors, like the Cordwainers, entered a petition asking that members of the craft who wished to employ aliens and foreigners should register them and pay 5s for each one. The request was granted by the Mayor and Aldermen.⁴ Forty years later the situation was evidently perceived in a more serious light by both the Skinners and Tailors who complained in separate petitions of the lack of opportunities for their freemen caused by the employment of non-London labour and, more generally, the threat posed by aliens and foreigners taking on work, contrary to a statute of 1483-84. The two guilds then asked for a ban on the employment of non-Londoners.⁵ The Tailors seem to have made several attempts to lobby the Court of Aldermen: in April 1493, three months before the Skinners' petition and over a year before their own, they sent the master of the craft and

¹ See S.L. Thrupp, 'Aliens in and around London in the fifteenth century', in *Studies in London History*, ed. Hollaender and Kellaway, pp.251-74.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.161-66.

³ *Accounts*, I, f.238.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.335-38.

⁵ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, pp.295 (Skinners, 1493), 302 (Tailors, 1494); (1 Ric.III c.9), *Statutes*, ii, pp.489-93.

three senior liverymen to see the Mayor to propose a bill 'for the reformation of all foreyns that they hereafter worke with no freman and citezein of this citee'.¹

Attitudes to aliens could vary, however. The employment of such men within the tailoring industry in London was widespread, and many were accepted as householders in their own right.² One particular example of the differing perceptions of aliens concerns the attitudes shown towards the Italian communities in the capital. The rioting which took place in 1456-57 was seemingly orchestrated by members of the Mercers' Company who were jealous of the Italians' wealth and trading success in the capital, derived in part from the trading privileges acquired from the Lancastrian regime.³ The violence was, according to the Journals, sparked off by an incident of April 1456 involving three mercers' servants and a merchant of Lucca, Alessandro Palastrelli, and gradually came to involve more senior mercers as well as grocers and skimmers. Despite the swift response of the City authorities, which included the brief imprisonment of the prominent mercer William Cantelowe, anti-alien feeling erupted once more in July 1457 when Galiol Centurioni, a prominent Genoese merchant, became one of the targets of a murder plot.⁴ These disturbances were extremely unsettling for the Italian community: one chronicler reported that many left the capital to go and live in Winchester and Southampton.⁵ On the other hand, it is clear that not all Londoners and their guilds were hostile to the Italian community and, in 1457-58, at the height of the troubles, the Tailors took the extraordinary step of admitting twenty-three prominent Italians to the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist.⁶ The fraternity seems to have acted as a haven for Italian merchants who wished to remain in London and forge links with more sympathetic groups. They would have gained a meeting place as well as the prestige

¹ Court Minutes, II, f.64.

² See Chapter 4.

³ For the events of these years see J.L. Bolton, 'The City and the Crown, 1456-61', *The London Journal*, 12 (1986), pp.11-24.

⁴ Cantelowe's involvement is surprising given his strong trading links with Florence, and with individual merchants and bankers who helped to finance his enterprises, see G. Holmes, 'Anglo-Florentine Trade in 1451', *EHR*, cvii (1993), pp.371-86; Bolton, 'The City and the Crown', pp.11-15.

⁵ Gairdner ed., *Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*, p.199

⁶ Accounts, II, ff.127-27v. Of the 23 Italians, 5 were from Venice, 3 from Florence and 15 from Genoa. I am grateful to Prof. George Holmes for his assistance in identifying many of these merchants.

and security associated with membership of a large and influential fraternity. Among the fifteen Genoese merchants admitted to the fraternity was Galiol Centurioni, one of the principal targets of the insurgents of 1457. Elsewhere attitudes could change, however. The Mercers' relations with the Italian community appear to have improved following the nadir of the riots and their self-imposed ban on trading links with Italian merchants in London.¹ In 1474-75, for instance, a case was prosecuted in Chancery by Gerard Canyzian who was described as a merchant, citizen and Mercer of London, and late factor and attorney of the fellowship of the Medicis of Florence.² Significantly, 'Gerard Canysan, florentyn' had been among those who had sought protection from the Tailors in 1457-58.

Opposition to Parliamentary legislation and the policies of the Crown was not always displayed through such interest groups and illegal methods. Perhaps the most important example of the ways in which the City expressed its collective will and defended its customary practices against external interference was over an Act of 1406 which prohibited parents from apprenticing their sons or daughters unless they were in possession of lands or rents which yielded at least 20s *per annum*.³ This statute was not only perceived as infringing the rights of freemen, but may also have been viewed in the City as detrimental to the interests of employers, concerned about the high price and poor supply of wage labour at this time. The aim of the statute had been to release more young men into the rural labour market by restricting apprenticeship in this manner, thus reinforcing the fourteenth century labour legislation.⁴ The Tailors appear to have been among the first to object to the statute, possibly because of the large numbers of apprentices taken on by craftsmen in the trade. Two years later, in 1408-9, the guild paid 3s 8d 'a les freres as ii foitz pur adnuller lordinaunce denrollement dapprentise'.⁵ This may not have been part of a concerted campaign, however, for it seems clear that the City's policy was simply to ignore the Act. This was possible until 1428 when one of the king's clerks brought an action against a prominent London scrivener

¹ November 1457, *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company, 1453-1572*, ed. L.L. Lyell and F.D. Watney (Cambridge, 1936), p.45.

² PRO, C.1/50/414.

³ (7 Hen.IV c.17), *Statutes*, ii, pp.157-58.

⁴ See below, pp.192-203.

⁵ Accounts, I, f.47. The identity of the 'freres' is not clear.

for breaching its provisions. This prompted the drawing up of a petition seeking an exemption for the City and its freemen.¹ Once more the Tailors were active participants: the accounts for 1428-29 record the payment of £4 'paie a le meir de Loundrez pur discharging del statute des apprentices vers le Roy'.² This may well have been the result of a general appeal to the guilds: the Grocers' accounts record the payment of 40s 'for costes of our parte off Repelyng off ye statut off prentyshodys'.³ Despite the rejection of a similar petition from the city of Oxford, the appeal of the citizens of the capital resulted in an amended statute which preserved the City's liberties.⁴

In the areas of apprenticeship and immigration a reasonable degree of unanimity between the guilds made the City's task a relatively straightforward one when it came to instructing members of Parliament. When these concerns coincided with wider national ones the results could be impressive. The statute of 1463 which banned the importation of a range of consumer goods appears to have emerged from the more narrowly focused petitions of some of the London crafts, probably supported by the City's four representatives.⁵ The Crown's generosity to alien merchants, on the other hand, was less popular among Londoners and, as Bolton argues, may have alienated a section of the oligarchy from the Lancastrian regime.⁶ There were, however, issues of City policy upon which the guilds did not agree, particularly when economic rivalries provoked defensiveness rather than a corporate spirit. As will be shown, the Mayor's right of search at St. Bartholomew's cloth fair became a political issue as a result of the Tailors' charter of 1439 which, the drapers argued, infringed mayoral rights. The subject of provincial fairs, and the rights of citizens to attend them, was one which appears to have split the leading guilds and hence the Court of Aldermen and the Common Council. This was not an issue which one would expect to be the cause of dissension: the importance of fairs, such as the St. Giles fair at Winchester, for

¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.215.

² Accounts, I, f.207v.

³ Kingdon, *Grocers*, ii, p.204.

⁴ For the City's petition see *Rot. Parl.*, IV, p.354; (8 Hen.VI, c.2), *Statutes*, i, p.547.

⁵ *Rot. Parl.*, V, pp.506-8; *Statutes*, ii, pp.395-97; Barron, 'London and Parliament', pp.360-61.

⁶ Bolton, 'The City and the Crown', pp.11-24; Barron, 'London and Parliament', p.359.

the merchants and craftsmen of London had been in decline from the mid-thirteenth century.¹ In part this was due to the growth of London as a centre of production and distribution, particularly in the textile industry. Candlewick Street and Cornhill, for instance, became important centres for the cloth trade in London.² Similarly, the Great Wardrobe began to buy supplies direct from Londoners rather than from provincial fairs; the capital was now able to satisfy most if not all the needs of its wealthiest customer. The final establishment of the Great Wardrobe in London under Edward III was confirmation of this change.³ Yet some Londoners were still interested in fairs as markets for their goods and as a result the guilds were keen to ensure that the quality was not below that of the goods sold within the City walls: the Skinners' charter of 1327, for instance, mentioned the 'searches' which the wardens of the guild were to make at various fairs including Winchester, St. Ives, Stamford and St. Edmund's.⁴ Similarly one of the provisions of a mayoral proclamation of 1383 was that all crafts were entitled to send their wardens to fairs to determine disputes.⁵

During the fifteenth century, however, an attempt was made to prevent citizens from taking their goods to fairs, on the grounds that the quality was inferior and hence harmed the reputation of the City. Such a step would also have the effect of forcing customers to buy from traders in the capital and thus further stimulating the retail trade in London. Much of the initial action was taken unilaterally: in 1420, for instance, the Grocers decided to stop their merchants from taking wares into the country to sell. The policy may have had only limited success for the Grocers continued to send their Wardens to Stourbridge Fair (Cambridge) each year.⁶ Later on, however, efforts were made to achieve a consensus among the crafts. The Mercers were at the forefront of this move: in 1477 they sent a bill

¹ E.W. Moore, *The Fairs of Medieval England* (Toronto, 1985), pp.214-16, 218. For the declining revenues from St. Giles and St. Ives fairs see *ibid.*, p.209. For St. Giles' fair see D.J. Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1985), ii, pp.1110-32.

² Veale, "Great Twelve", p.256.

³ Moore, *Fairs*, p.214-15.

⁴ CLRO, Letter Book E, f.183v.

⁵ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, H, p.222.

⁶ Kingdon ed., *Grocers*, pp.139, 185, 241, 262.

to the Common Council requesting that 'every freman and other dweller withyn this citie' should refrain from taking goods to be sold outside the City. Their concerns were not entirely altruistic, for it became clear that the Mercers were keen to prevent the upwardly mobile Haberdashers from encroaching on their country business. The Haberdashers were among several crafts which were securing a prominent place in the City as a result of their ability to absorb smaller, more artisan crafts, in their case the Hatters and Cappers. This 'take-over' provided retailing haberdashers with better access to the consumer goods which they could sell in London and at fairs.¹ The concerned Mercers sought to limit the Haberdashers' activities to the London market, so that customers would continue to come to the City where they might buy from mercers as well.² The representatives of the crafts were split on the issues raised by the Mercers' bill: 17 guilds 'granted gladly to refrain' from such trading while 11 others 'in no wise would be thereto agreeable'. With no decision being made the Mercers decided to allow their members to continue to trade at fairs rather than see their London trade further eroded.³ The Mercers continued to complain about fairs during the early 1480s and the weight of opinion does seem to have been with them, for in February 1486, the Common Council agreed to a seven year ban on freemen sending their wares to country fairs, with the quality argument once more taking pride of place.⁴ Yet again, however, the City found itself up against the will of the Crown and Parliament. Little more than a month after the Common Council's decision the ban was suspended and was later 'annulled by autorite of Parliament'.⁵ The Tailors' Court discussed the developments in the City on two occasions in 1486. In April, as part of an agreement concerning the sale of cloth at Backwell Hall, they and the Drapers decided to forbid their members to 'ride into the country for to buy woollen cloths'. This action would protect sources of cloth traditionally used by Londoners and help to ensure that the quality of cloth which was sold by London's

¹ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.167-68. Similarly the Armourers absorbed first the Bladesmiths and then the Brasiers.

² CLRO, Journals, 8, f.163; *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, p.xvii. For the Haberdashers and their encroachment on the territory of the Mercers, see Archer, *Haberdashers*, pp.7-8, 17.

³ *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, pp.115-16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.138-39, 143; CLRO, Letter Book L, ff.226-26v.

⁵ CLRO, Letter Book L, ff.232, 236; (3 Hen.VII, c.9) *Statutes*, ii, pp.518-19.

cloth merchants and used by its artisans was of good quality. In November the Tailors' Court turned to the selling activities of members of the craft and decided that 'no man of this worshipful fellowship shall not go to no markets nor feiers into the contre with waris the forto sell', a particularly tortuous way of expressing the wishes of the court.¹

The issue of attendance at fairs was never one which was likely to erupt into harmful factionalism among members of the Court of Aldermen. Yet it does represent the ways in which the guilds sought to convey the opinions of citizens on such matters to the Court of Aldermen and to their fellow guilds. It was up to the Aldermen to achieve some sort of consensus which could be used to put forward a proposal to the Crown or Parliament. There were occasions, however, when grievances could not be channelled through these formal mechanisms. This was particularly so when political and social aspirations determined guild policies and thereby threatened the stability of urban government.

III. The Tailors and City Politics, 1376-1504.

One of the most significant features of the development of craft organisations in English towns was the extent to which they began to look outside the urban community for patrons and prestige, and sought the ratification of their rights and privileges from external sources of authority such as the Crown and Parliament. One dimension of this was the development of personal links, such as those which the Tailors and Skinners of London established through the recruitment to their fraternities of individuals from outside their respective crafts, particularly from the ranks of the gentry and aristocracy. More common to the guilds of London and elsewhere, however, was the acquisition of Letters Patent which amplified and confirmed their existence and the theoretical powers which they were to have over their respective misteries. Sometimes the acquisition of a 'charter' was a reaction to a perceived threat from external authority: as has been shown, the governmental inquiry of 1388-89 and the mortmain legislation of 1391 led several of the London companies to seek additional guarantees of their rights.² Similarly, the statute of 1437 which required craft guilds to have their ordinances ratified by the local Justices of the Peace (or the mayor in the case of London) resulted in the obtaining of new charters by the Drapers and Tailors of

¹ Court Minutes, I, ff.3v, 9v.

² See above, pp.10-11.

London in 1438 and 1439 respectively.¹ Yet the actions of guilds in this area should not be perceived merely as knee-jerk reactions to the policies of the Crown or Parliament. As the representative bodies for specific communities within urban society they were engaged in the task of defining what they perceived to be their functions within urban society, seen in terms of their economic roles and their political profiles. The developing nature of urban constitutions in the later middle ages aided and abetted political instability, as guilds and individuals sought external help in their attempts to increase their influence.

The recourse to external authority could have serious consequences for urban stability. One of the best examples from England concerns the deteriorating relationship between the corporation of Exeter and the guild of Tailors in that city. This was sparked off by the granting of a charter to the guild in 1466 which allowed it extensive rights of search as well as incorporating it as a fraternity dedicated, like its counterparts in London, Salisbury and Bristol, to St. John the Baptist. No one was to have a stall or a shop unless a freeman of the city.² Opposition from the City corporation centred on the alleged infringement of mayoral rights, the intimidation used to force citizens to pay dues to the guild and, most importantly of all, the practice of recruiting members and even Wardens from outside the craft. It is possible that the guild was acting as a vehicle for prominent citizens, somehow excluded from political power: the Tailors certainly boasted of the 'good welthe' and reputation of guild members and of the fact that several brethren of the guild were members of the common council.³ In other words, the Tailors were not only asserting their right to form an association, but were linking it to their active participation in government. The corporation of Exeter appears to have had a much more 'centralised' perception of urban government than those town councils which were content to delegate many tasks to guilds and so resented the eventual settlement, imposed by the Crown, which failed to rescind the Tailors' charter and defined a balance between the rights of the City and those of the guilds similar to that in London. Even the most conservative of city corporations were swimming against a strong tide; as has been shown, guilds were being increasingly perceived as important associations for the articulation of the needs of town-dwellers. The corporation of Exeter, quite

¹ (15 Hen. VI, c.6), *Statutes*, ii, pp.298-99.

² For the sequence of events see Smith ed., *English Gilds*, pp.300-30.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.303-4.

reasonably, seems to have perceived the Tailors' charter as a first step towards the lessening of the corporation's authority over the crafts and, in particular, over access to the freedom.

In London, the fifteenth century saw several crafts, through their guilds, attempt to advance themselves with external help, incurring in the process the wrath of the established order. As has been shown, bickering between crafts was commonplace and involved a complex amalgamation of political and economic rivalries, often laced with a good dose of personal animosity. Elections were a particular focus for discontent, as well as fora for the debating of contrasting conceptions of civic government. But civic ceremonial too was an opportunity for the expression of corporate identity. Within the broader ideals of civic unity and social harmony, ceremonial provided an ideal forum for the public demonstration of wealth and status and the promotion of ambitions.¹ The secrecy surrounding so much of the private, internal lives of guilds was put aside in the self-conscious promotion of a corporate identity on the urban stage. With the 'appropriation' of the feast of Corpus Christi by the Skinners' Company, most of the ceremonial occasions in London were linked with secular rather than religious events. Royal entries were used by the Crown for propaganda purposes but were equally important for the City and the guilds. The entry of Margaret of Anjou into London in 1445, following her marriage to Henry VI was typical.² The importance of the event for both the Crown and the capital was emphasised by the commissioning of John Lydgate to write a series of celebratory verses describing the pageants which were set up along the processional route.³ As was usual by this date the guilds attended, and met the queen on Blackheath dressed in identical gowns (blue) and hoods (red or scarlet) in order to heighten the sense of civic harmony. The only concession to guild identity were the 'divers divisings' which they were allowed to embroider upon each gown.⁴ The Master, Wardens

¹ See C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550', in *The Medieval Town*, ed. Holt and Rosser, pp.238-64; M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past and Present* 98 (1983), pp.3-29; M. Berlin, 'Civic Ceremony in Early Modern London', *Urban History Yearbook* (1986), pp.15-28.

² R.R. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (London, 1981), pp.488-89.

³ Most of Lydgate's verses are printed in C. Brown, 'Lydgate's Verses on Queen Margaret's entry into London', *Modern Language Review*, vii (1912), pp.225-34.

⁴ Gairdner ed., *Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*, pp.185-6; Kingsford ed., *The Chronicles of London*, p.156; Flenley ed., *Six Town Chronicles*, p.119. For the entry of Henry VI in 1432, following his coronation in France, the guilds were clad in white with devices on their sleeves 'after the facultie of theyr mysterys or craftys', *The New Chronicles of England and France*, by Robert Fabyan, ed. H. Ellis (London,

and clerk of the Tailors were particularly concerned about this event: much thought was given to the 'device for the livery against the queen's coming'.¹ The fraternity's accounts also record fines received from thirty-nine guild members as well as from ninety-four yeomen tailors 'that Rod not ayens the quene'.² This may well be an indication of the seriousness with which the Tailors' officials viewed this occasion in the light of the turmoil which had surrounded their relations with the City over the preceding decade. Certainly, it seems to have been unusual for the yeomanry (i.e. all freemen not members of the ruling guild) to have been required to attend, and this zeal on the part of the guild masters, rather than exceptional apathy, may explain the large numbers of fines exacted.

On some occasions civic unity could break down as one or more guilds attempted to hi-jack an occasion for their own ends. In 1477 the Mercers' Court met to discuss the events surrounding the arrival of the ambassadors of France and Scotland in London. As in 1445, all representatives of the crafts forming the 'watch' or guard of honour, were to wear 'oon suet of pluncket blew'. The Tailors, never the most popular guild in the capital, were denounced by the angry Mercers who complained that 'the Tayllours had made them Jackettes of cremysyn'.³ This was certainly a provocative gesture: the Tailors could hardly have made themselves appear more distinctive on such an occasion. On the whole, however, the Tailors appear to have acted within the rules for these events. They did nevertheless treat every ceremonial occasion as important, doubtless recognizing that, without due care and attention, the outcome could result in the lessening of the craft's reputation in the city rather than its enhancing. From the coronation of Henry IV in 1399 to the visit of Edward IV's sister, Margaret, duchess of Burgundy, in the autumn of 1480, the Tailors regularly spent sums on minstrels, horses, barges and liveries whenever needed for such occasions.⁴ The guild was no less active when it came to the annual processions which accompanied the

1811), p.603.

¹ Accounts, I, f.398v.

² Accounts, I, f.387-87v. For the yeomen tailors see below, pp.147-56.

³ *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, p.97.

⁴ Accounts, I, ff.4 (coronation of Henry IV), 16 (marriage of Henry IV), 135 (funeral of Henry V), 282v (funeral of Queen Katherine, 1436-7), 398v (entry of Margaret of Anjou); II, f.211 (coronation of Edward IV); III, f.140 (arrival of Margaret, duchess of Burgundy).

elections of the Mayor and Sheriffs, which as shown above could be a source of controversy. Each year minstrels, livery hoods and refreshments were provided by the Tailors for the 'chivache du meir' on 29 October when the mayor and sheriffs went to Westminster to be sworn before the Barons of the Exchequer.¹ In 1416-17 a number of banners were made by members of the craft, including John Cavendish the king's embroiderer.² Although the Tailors were not to provide a Mayor until 1498, the elections of Ralph Holland, William Chapman and Richard Nordon as sheriffs in 1429, 1437 and 1442 respectively caused the guild to spend large sums of money on livery hoods, minstrels for the procession on 29 September, and on pipes of wine for the victorious candidate.³ From 1453, following a petition from the commonalty, the mayoral procession regularly went to Westminster by water.⁴ The Tailors' records reflect this change: in 1453-54 several barges were hired for such occasions as the anniversary of Henry V and the presentation of the Mayor and Sheriffs.⁵

It is clear from City records that the Tailors occupied a prominent place in processions which, by the fifteenth century, came to reflect the perceived ranking order of the London guilds. At the funeral of Henry V, for instance, the Tailors provided twelve torches, as did the Mercers, Drapers, Grocers, Skinners, Vintners and Fishmongers.⁶ These companies, along with the Goldsmiths, came to form the core of the 'Great Twelve', joined by the upwardly mobile Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers and, in 1528, the Clothworkers. This precedence over the other crafts was undoubtedly related to the wealth of these guilds and their members. The Tailors' fraternity, as has been shown, was among the wealthiest of the London craft organisations primarily because of the property which came to the fraternity, principally for the purpose of establishing *post obit* arrangements.⁷ The 1412 and

¹ Accounts, I, f.20v; Barron, 'The Government of London', p.79.

² Accounts, I, f.97.

³ Accounts, I, ff.211 (£19 11s 9d), 301 (£16 8s 2d), 365v (£14 5s 1d).

⁴ Barron, 'The Government of London', p.80; Accounts, I, ff.47, 82v.

⁵ Accounts, II, f.18v.

⁶ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.3. The Tailors paid 28s 2d for the torches and their bearers, Accounts, I, f.135.

⁷ For the fraternity's income see Appendix III.

1436 lay subsidy returns, for instance, show the gradual accumulation of property by the guilds. The Tailors' fraternity, for instance, was assessed at £44 3s 8d in 1412 and £77 in 1436, the Mercers at £13 18s 4d and £70, and the Goldsmiths at £46 10s ob. and £70.¹ The relative wealth of the companies was reflected in assessments for loans to be made to the Crown: in 1488 the Mercers' court reported the sums which each of the greater guilds was to contribute towards a loan of £4,000. By this date the Mercers appear to have increased dramatically their landed estates and were asked to pay £740. The Tailors were assessed at £386 13s 4d, in fourth place behind the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers who also appear to have overtaken the Tailors since 1412.² It is interesting to note that the chronicler who reported this loan listed the guilds in groups with the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers in the first group, followed by the Goldsmiths, Fishmongers and Tailors.³ In other words, although no guild paid exactly the same amount, they could be grouped together in divisions appropriate to their relative wealth and status. Hence just as the Tailors and the Skinners argued in 1484 over sixth place in the hierarchy, the Grocers and Mercers can be found squabbling over the standing places allowed to each guild near St. Paul's in 1477.⁴

In his study of civic ceremony in late-medieval and early modern Coventry, Charles Phythian-Adams argued strongly for the close relationship between the order of precedence in processions and office-holding in the city. Broadly speaking, London displayed a similar trend: the greater guilds supplied most of the Aldermen and Mayors in the fifteenth century with the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers established as the most successful misteries (see Table 3.1).

¹ J.C.L. Stahlschmidt ed., 'Lay Subsidy temp Henry IV', *Archaeological Journal*, 44 (1887), pp.56-82; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, App. B, p.386.

² *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, pp.187-88.

³ Kingsford, *The Chronicles of London*, p.194.

⁴ *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, pp. 101-2, 103-4.

Table 3.1. Aldermen and Mayors, 1400-1500.¹

Craft	1400-1450		1450-1500	
	Aldermen	Mayors	Aldermen	Mayors
Mercers	17	10	24	15
Grocers	14	9	17	9
Drapers	16	9	17	9
Fishmongers	10	5	5	4
Goldsmiths	8	2	8	4
Skinners	4	2	9	3
Ironmongers	4	2	3	-
Vintners	2	-	-	-
Tailors	1	-	7	1
Haberdashers	-	-	3	1
Salters	-	-	3	3

This Table reveals the principal changes in the guild hierarchy in the fifteenth century. The Vintners and Fishmongers (most successful in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), and the Ironmongers were destined to drop down the order in the fifteenth century, while the Haberdashers and the Salters made their entrances into the Court of Aldermen in the second half of the fifteenth century. The Tailors too witnessed an improvement in their fortunes although with only one of their eight Aldermen becoming Mayor, the Tailors were the least successful of any of these crafts. Their lack of success, particularly before 1450, is surprising. The wealth and prestige of the Tailors' fraternity had, as shown above, already enabled it to secure a prominent position in the guild hierarchy, a position which brought with it important civic obligations in the spheres of defence and taxation. Yet despite this no tailor was to become an alderman until the election of Ralph Holland in 1435. Moreover, the guild did not provide a mayor until Sir John Percyvale triumphed in 1498. This was not for want of trying: Ralph Holland was the losing candidate for the mayoralty on three occasions. Similarly Thomas Davy, master of the Tailors' guild in 1436-37, failed to become an alderman on five separate occasions between 1439 and 1451, standing in four different wards. This was despite his service in a number of other offices at ward and City level. The process by which aldermen were chosen was established in 1397. When a vacancy arose, four candidates were to be chosen by each ward for consideration by the mayor and aldermen. Almost all of the other losing candidates, apart from Davy, went

¹ From Beaven, *Aldermen*, ii, pp.1-20.

on to be elected on another occasion.¹ A similar story can be seen in the attempts made by another important London tailor, John Stone, to gain selection as an alderman for four different wards between 1458 and 1461.²

When more junior offices are considered it is clear that the fifteenth century did see more tailors taking the first steps along the civic *cursus honorum*. Table 3.2 shows the numbers of London tailors who held the offices of Auditor of the Bridge House Accounts, Warden of London Bridge, Sheriff, Chamberlain, alderman and mayor between 1400 and 1500. The first three of these offices were considered as useful stepping stones to the aldermanry and, ultimately, the mayoralty. Ralph Holland, Richard Nordon and William Chapman, the three tailors who became sheriffs between 1425 and 1449, had all at some stage served as Auditors of the Bridge House accounts.³

Table 3.2. Office-holding by Tailors, 1400-1500.⁴

	1400-1424	1425-1449	1450-1474	1475-1500
Auditor	2	3	5	12
Bridge Warden	-	2	3	1
Chamberlain	-	-	1	-
Sheriff	-	3	1	3
Alderman	-	1	1	8
Mayor	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	2	9	11	25

Participation in urban government could of course take many forms and occur at different levels, not all of which are revealed by municipal records.⁵ The delegation of administrative functions to guilds, wards and parishes is perhaps the most obvious way in which a wider body of people became involved in the day-to-day business of governing the town. Apart from their roles as guild officials, for instance, many tailors can be glimpsed in other guises: in 1422, for instance, London tailors can be found as the Constables of five

¹ CLRO, Journals, 4, ff.126 (Dowgate), 135 (Vintry); 5, ff.40 (Aldrichgate), 54 (Farringdon without), 62 (Farringdon without). Davy was an Auditor of the Bridge House accounts in 1443-44 and Warden of London Bridge between 1449 and 1459, see Appendix II.

² CLRO, Journals, 6, ff.192v, 204, 205, 274.

³ Appendix II below.

⁴ Sources: *Cal. of Letter Books*, I-L; Beaven, *Aldermen*, I-II. See Appendix II below.

⁵ R. Holt and G. Rosser, ‘Introduction’, *The Medieval Town* ed. Holt and Rosser, p.11.

wards in the City.¹ Similarly, Henry Dene appears to have been Warden of Ludgate prison for at least ten years in the first half of the fifteenth century.² Tailors were also active in their parishes: Henry Kellow was churchwarden of St. Mary-at-Hill between 1488 and 1490.³ Yet such offices were no substitute for the prestige and influence which mayoral office in particular could bring to a guild, particularly in a period when ever greater emphasis was being laid on the status and dignity of that position. Equally, the Court of Aldermen remained an exclusive body, membership of which was highly prized.

The Tailors certainly appear to have made every effort to secure representation at the highest level of the government of the City and it is striking that two successful and experienced tailors such as Stone and Davy should fail so often at the last hurdle. This appears to typify the extent to which the Court of Aldermen, having the right to choose from the four candidates, could close ranks to prevent undesirable candidates from holding office. This failure may have had a great deal to do with the artisan nature of a tailor's occupation. Such preconceptions of a man's suitability for office were demonstrated in Norwich in 1508 when a butcher, Robert Broun, was forced to join the Mercers' guild after his election as an alderman.⁴ In London the fifteenth century saw the hardening of a similar custom whereby only prominent members of the greater misteries could become aldermen. The Tailors were in a peculiar position: the guild was undoubtedly prestigious, yet the occupation itself may not have been. Evidence for this is suggested by popular attitudes towards tailors which, as will be shown, often centred on their alleged propensity to charge excessive prices for their garments.⁵ A more overt manifestation of such hostility was the appearance, probably in the fifteenth century, of the term 'prick-louse' as a derogatory name for a tailor.⁶ The term was

¹ Thomas Shragger and William Hertshorn (Cheap), Robert Fenescles (Cordwainer Street), Nicholas Birchill (Cripplegate within), Philip Selly (Langbourne), Ralph Shoklache and Thomas Thirlwynd (Walbrook), see Barron, 'The Government of London', pp.548-55.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.183 (1431), 254-55 (1441).

³ H. Littlehales ed., *The Medieval Records of a London City Church, AD 1420-1559*, EETS, 125, 128 (1904-5), p.144.

⁴ W. Hudson and J.C. Tingey eds., *The Records of the City of Norwich*, 2 vols (Norwich and London, 1906-10), p.107.

⁵ See below pp.174, 222.

⁶ See 'The Sowtar and Tailouris war', *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. W. Mackay Mackenzie (London, 1932), pp.123-26.

certainly in use in London in the sixteenth century: one victim of such verbal abuse was no less a person than John Stow, whose angry neighbour also accused him of writing a 'cronicle of lies'.¹ Respectability, perhaps, could only be acquired through mercantile activity, which in the case of tailors normally meant the buying and selling of cloth.

Such attitudes need to be borne in mind when examining the Tailors' efforts to secure greater representation in the City's government. Their exclusion, it is argued, put the Tailors at the head of a wider movement for constitutional change, made up predominantly of artisans, similarly excluded from a role in the government of the City.

1. Reform and Reaction, 1376-1392

This chapter has, so far, demonstrated that the guilds of London did play a prominent role in the government of the capital, both through the functions they fulfilled for the City authorities, and through the articulation of concerns, and the consequent formulation of City policy. As in Florence, however, the constitutional position of the guilds was the subject of debate in the fourteenth century, a debate linked to issues concerning rights of participation in governmental processes by all freemen, not just members of the wealthiest guilds. The composition of the Common Council, like so many other constitutional issues had been the subject of experiment on several occasions during the fourteenth century. On five occasions before 1376 it was decided to allow each mystery to send representatives to serve on the Common Council rather than prominent citizens from each ward, who tended to represent the wealthier occupations.² The failure of the City to adopt this broadening of the basis of the Common Council as a permanent solution to the constitutional uncertainties of the period seems to have been a direct reflection of the concern which the greater guilds felt about the possibility of a dramatic change to the character of this tier of the City government. In 1351, for instance, few of the prominent artisan crafts were allowed to send representatives to the Council of that year.³ As in Florence, a conscious and long-lasting alliance between

¹ M. Holmes, 'A Source Book for Stow?', in *Studies in London History*, ed. Hollaender and Kellaway, p.275.

² In 1312, 1326, 1351, 1352 and 1371, see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.66-73 and *Cal. Letter Bks*, E, pp.12-14; F, pp.237-38; G, pp.3, 80; *CPMR*, 1323-1364, p.15. For the crisis of 1299 to 1319 see G. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London, 1963), pp.264-84.

³ The Saddlers, Cordwainers and Butchers sent representatives, *Cal. Letter Bks.*, F, pp.238-39.

members of the greater guilds and the lesser crafts was essential if reform was to be anything other than temporary; political and/or economic crisis was an essential concomitant to such change.¹ The events of 1376-92 in London exemplify these principles, and the contradictions which ensured the failure of such movements. The reforms introduced by John of Northampton's regime between 1376 and 1384 constituted the most significant attempt to overturn vested interests and, potentially, to increase the representation of the lesser crafts. In constitutional terms this was an attempt to curb the powers of the Court of Aldermen and to make the City's rulers more accountable, first by switching once more to a Common Council elected by the misteries, secondly through the annual election of aldermen and thirdly through the election of the Mayor and Sheriffs by the 'commonalty' (i.e. all freemen).² The motivations of the reformers were, of course, far from simple: Northampton himself was as much part of the political establishment as those he was trying to upset. The conflict of economic interests has provided a long-standing interpretation of the events of these years, but instead of a victualling/non-victualling divide, recent commentators have emphasised the domination of the Court of Aldermen by Merchants of the Staple and the rivalries between individual crafts. Northampton, in particular, seems to have been as much concerned about the declining influence of his own guild, the Drapers, as he was with the extension of the franchise as such.³ Similarly, external circumstances, particularly the events of the Good Parliament and the 1381 revolt intensified scrutiny of the quality of the rule of particular elites in society.⁴

With the election of Nicholas Brembre, a grocer, as Mayor in 1383 the reforms introduced by Northampton were quickly reversed. Yet the short-lived nature of the regime should not obscure the fact that it undoubtedly touched a chord among many citizens, particularly, but not exclusively, among members of the artisan crafts. The dramatic events of 1383-84 which saw the election of Brembre and the arrest and trial of Northampton

¹ Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus*, p.10.

² For these events see R. Bird, *The Turbulent London of Richard II* (London, 1949), pp.30-43.

³ For the traditional interpretation see Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.127-141; Bird, *Turbulent London*, pp.75-81; P. Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional change in Late Fourteenth-century London', *Past and Present*, 124 (1989), pp.3-35.

⁴ G. Holmes, *The Good Parliament* (Oxford, 1975), pp.108-14; C.M. Barron, *Revolt in London; 11th to 15th June, 1381* (London, 1981), pp.13-14.

provide important evidence of the strength of feeling among certain crafts, and suggest that opposition to Brembre was not simply a consequence of faction fighting among members of the oligarchy, but a real desire for a say in the City government on the part of some of the emerging artisan guilds.¹ Particularly striking is the involvement of the Tailors in these events. The indictment against Northampton alleged that the participants in the disturbances which followed Brembre's election 'conspiraverunt apud ecclesiam Sancti Thome de Acon london et apud aulam scissorum prope ecclesiam Sancti Antonii london' and later 'in dicta aula scissorum et sub choro Sancti Pauli et apud aulam Aurifabrorum in parochia Sancti Iohannis Zakarie'.² This certainly implies an official endorsement of the opposition to Brembre by the Tailors and Goldsmiths and the reference to the church of St. Thomas of Acre may well imply that the Mercers were also involved, given their strong association with the church. These three crafts were strongly represented among those listed as Northampton's followers: one of the inquisitions named eight mercers, five goldsmiths and two tailors, as well as four cordwainers, four saddlers, three drapers and representatives of the leathersmongers, bladesmiths and bowyers.³ A few years later a long running dispute between a mercer, Thomas Austin and his apprentice, John Banham, referred to these events when Banham accused his former master of complicity with the Goldsmiths, Tailors and Cordwainers on the day of the election.⁴ The involvement of so many goldsmiths may be partly explained by the animosity which existed between Brembre and Nicholas Twyford, a goldsmith. In 1378 Twyford had been deprived of the office of sheriff after he had thwarted Brembre's attempts to deal with serious disturbances between the pepperers (later the grocers) and goldsmiths. Although Twyford was never named as a conspirator or as a follower of Northampton, his opposition to Brembre is suggested by his decision to stand against him for the mayoralty in October 1384.⁵ The nature of the Tailors' involvement is less clear. It is possible that the guild was linked with Northampton through the person of

¹ See Bird, *Turbulent London*, pp.73-83; *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.55-7.

² Bird, *Turbulent London*, pp.134-36.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.134-35. Many of these craftsmen were either past or future wardens of their guilds.

⁴ See P. Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: the Social Imagination of Fourteenth Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992), p.175.

⁵ For these disturbances see Riley, *Memorials*, pp.415-16; Bird, *Turbulent London*, pp.68-9.

Thomas Carleton, an embroiderer, who was named in one of the inquisitions as one of the 'principales conspiratores' with Northampton, along with John More, Thomas Usk, William Essex, and Richard Norbury. When Usk produced his famous 'Appeal' he did not accuse Carleton directly, but made it clear that, as Northampton's nominee for Parliament, Carleton was part of the Northamptons' party.¹ Carleton was, almost certainly, a member of the Tailors' fraternity: in his will, made in 1382 and proved in 1389, he established a chantry in the Tailors' chapel in St. Paul's to be administered by the guild out of an annual rent of ten marks from tenements in Wood Street.² It is possible that Carleton's election as an alderman in 1382 gave the Tailors a voice in the Court of Aldermen, and a direct link to Northampton's regime. Similarly, the Tailors were closely associated with an armourer, Simon Winchecombe, who was elected an alderman in 1382 and whose fellow craftsmen were at the forefront of the opposition to Brembre's election.³

Subsequent events drew the Tailors further into the conflict and confirmed their prominence at the head of a reform movement in the City. The arrest and trial of Northampton in 1384 served only to intensify opposition to Brembre. This came to a head at the mayoral election of that year in which Brembre triumphed once again, enabling him to begin the reversal of Northampton's reforms. The Plea and Memoranda rolls record the names of those bound over following disturbances at the October election. Once again tailors were prominent among the insurgents. William Rule, the master of the guild, handed over the names of thirteen members of the craft who had taken part in an assembly of craftsmen at St. Paul's on election day, before going to the Guildhall and creating an uproar. Prominent members of the guild were assigned to be mainpernors for seven of these men.⁴ Similarly, the wardens of the Goldsmiths, Mercers and Armourers also delivered up members of their respective crafts who were either involved in disturbances, had spoken ill of the mayor or

¹ E. Powell and G.M. Trevelyan (eds.), *The Peasants' Rising and the Lollards*, p.36; Chambers and Daunt eds., *A Book of London English*, pp.25-6. For discussion of Usk's 'Appeal' and other texts surrounding these events see Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, esp. pp.145-60.

² GL, MS. 9171/1, ff.173-74v, calendared in *CWCH*, II, p.272.

³ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.376; *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.55-69. Winchecombe was one of the trustees of Tailors' Hall in 1392, *CPR*, 1391-1396, p.139; It is striking that the three crafts most prominent in the disturbances in York in 1381 were the goldsmiths, tailors and armourers who represented the interests of the better off artisans, Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.122.

⁴ CLRO, Plea and Memoranda Rolls, A.27, mm.4b-5.

were found to have formed congregations. It was these crafts which seem to have formed the bedrock of the opposition to Brembre. As investigations continued more craftsmen were arrested and bailed, including more tailors, armourers and goldsmiths, but also several cutlers, cordwainers, saddlers and skinner.¹ In February 1385 William Wodecok, a tailor, was accused of coming to the Guildhall on election day and then going back to his shop to fetch a sword, buckler and poleaxe, 'hoping that a riot would arise'.²

It is certain, therefore, that several guilds in the City were clearly aligned against Brembre. The disturbances appear to have been planned and executed with the full cognizance of the officials of the Tailors and Goldsmiths (with the probable collusion of the Mercers) who provided elite leadership for many of the lesser crafts, the 'small people' named by Usk in his 'Appeal'.³ In 1386 the formal opposition of most of these companies was made explicit when they petitioned Parliament in protest at Brembre's election, and the allegedly tyrannical nature of his regime and that of his successor, Nicholas Exton, a fishmonger.⁴ One of the themes of these petitions was the importance of the right of all freemen to attend the election of the mayor: Brembre's policies, so they argued, led to the summoning a narrow and partisan group of citizens, those that 'were of his ordynance and after his avys'.⁵ The Tailors do not appear to have entered a petition on this occasion, but their animosity to Brembre is clearly shown by a petition which was heard before the king's council the same year. In it the guild claimed that Brembre had taken away their charter, granted to them by Edward III.⁶ Once more the London guilds had asserted their independence, this time by petitioning the king and parliament in order to defend their rights against a hostile City government. It also demonstrates the relative ease with which the Crown could be dragged into urban disputes.

¹ CLRO, Plea and Memoranda Rolls, A.27, mm.3b-6. Calendared in *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.59-67.

² CLRO, Plea and Memoranda Rolls, A.27, m.5b.

³ Chambers and Daunt eds., *A Book of London English*, p.27.

⁴ *Rot. Parl.*, III, pp.225-27 (Mercers and Cordwainers). Other petitions were entered by the Founders, Saddlers, Painters, Armourers, Pinners, Embroiderers, Spurriers and Bladesmiths, see Bird, *Turbulent London*, p.69, n.6.

⁵ *Rot. Parl.*, III, p.225.

⁶ *Select Cases before the King's Council, 1243-1482*, ed. I.S. Leadam and J.F. Baldwin, Selden Soc., 35 (1918), pp.74-6.

What did the Tailors hope to gain from their support for Northampton? It seems likely that the Tailors were as concerned as Northampton at the growing influence of some of the mercantile companies on the Common Council. The reforms of Northampton restricted all the greater misteries to six representatives and gave the Tailors a temporary prominence in the Common Council. Indeed, because the Tailors were considered as one of the premier guilds they secured equal representation with the Grocers, Fishmongers, Vintners, Mercers, Drapers, Goldsmiths and Skinners.¹ With the fall of Northampton the Common Council reverted to representation by the wards, cutting the Tailors' representation dramatically to well below that of the mercantile companies.² Consequently the Tailors may have had as much to complain about as the 'lesser' misteries such as the Cordwainers and Armourers who had also enjoyed a temporary increase in their influence on the Common Council. This perhaps led the Tailors to make common cause with these crafts as well as with the Goldsmiths and Mercers. Similarly, given the failure of any member of the craft to be elected as an alderman, the reforms to the elective process advocated by Northampton could only benefit the Tailors, particularly if they could be seen as taking on the concerns of the crafts in general, despite being one of the wealthiest of the London guilds. Indeed, what is most striking about these events is the way in which the Tailors, through their guild, appear to have represented the interests of many artisans who did not possess the means to articulate their concerns; the prestige possessed by the Tailors' fraternity put them in a unique position, and consequently, when allied with a seemingly 'popular' movement, they posed a serious threat to Brembre's attempts to reverse the reforms of Northampton.

2. The Tailors and the Drapers, 1435-1450

The relative absence of guild and municipal records for the turbulent years under Northampton and Brembre makes it difficult to discern the full extent to which the guilds and their members were motivated by constitutional principles as opposed to personal and corporate rivalries. For the fifteenth century, however, the records are much better and serve to show that concerns about participation in elective processes and in government itself did

¹ For the Council of 9 August 1376 see *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, H, pp.42-4.

² See for example *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.53-4 (council held 1384: Tailors had 4 members and were in 6th place); *Cal. Letter Bks.*, H, pp.237-44 (1384: 12, joint 7th); *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.84-9 (1384: 3, joint 10th); *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.54-5 (1384-5: 5, joint 5th); *CPMR*, 1381-1412, pp.91-2 (8 Ric.II: 4, 9th).

have a basis in ‘popular’ conceptions of urban government. The dispute between the Tailors and Drapers of London, examined in an important article by Caroline Barron, facilitated the articulation of ideas and concerns which went far beyond the relatively narrow economic rivalry between the two guilds.¹ These rivalries are, however, crucial to our understanding of how this dispute comes to have such significance for our understanding of urban oligarchies. As shown above, the prominence and wealth of the Tailors’ fraternity contrasted sharply with the lack of success enjoyed by its members in City politics. The mercantile nature of a typical draper’s business did, in theory, place him in a superior position to a typical tailor who would be forced to buy his cloth from such middlemen. Small wonder, perhaps, that three London tailors chose formally to translate their freedoms to the Drapers in the early fifteenth century.² Yet, despite these official boundaries between occupations, the association of members of an ostensibly artisan craft with the buying and selling of cloth was already well established by the 1430s. The accounts of the Great Wardrobe, for instance, record the names of several tailors who can be found supplying cloth as well as garments and who are described as ‘panarii’.³ Although few tailors were at this time involved in the import and export trade, their activity in the day to day buying and selling of cloth is well attested by the sources.⁴ The common ground between the two misteries was reflected in the numbers of drapers who joined the Tailors’ fraternity; as has been demonstrated, this trend was particularly marked before the deterioration in relations between the two guilds in the mid 1430s. These men included William Crowmere, William Norton, John Gedney, and John Norman, prominent drapers who became aldermen.⁵ Similarly, there were a few prominent tailors who had a formal association with the Drapers’ Company. Ralph Holland, for instance, enrolled an apprentice as a draper, and continued to contribute to the Drapers’

¹ Barron, ‘Ralph Holland’, pp.160-83.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.39, 224, 309.

³ PRO, E.101/407/1 (7-8 Hen.V), ff.3 (William Tropenell), 3v (Tropenell and Robert Fenescles). See Appendix I below.

⁴ See below, pp.243-49.

⁵ Accounts, I, ff. 22v (Crowmere, 1404-5), 39v (Norton, 1407-8), 68v (Gedney, 1411-12), 237 (Norman, 1432-33); Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, Appendix A, pp.336, 345, 357, 358.

funds even after his election as Master of the Tailors in 1419.¹ These cloth-dealing activities probably lent some tailors a status which, as suggested above, was probably denied to them through their essentially artisan occupation.

The ability of tailors to engage in minor trading in cloth in the early fifteenth century probably owed a great deal to the blind eye which appears to have been turned by the Drapers' guild, and the fact that no attempt seems to have been made by the Tailors' Wardens to encroach on the Drapers' rights of search. This was to change in the 1430s when a more aggressive approach was adopted by the Tailors. This was a period when members of the guild were starting to enjoy a certain amount of success in achieving civic office (see Table 3.2 above). Of particular interest are the three tailors who became sheriffs between 1429 and 1442, Ralph Holland, William Chapman and Richard Nordon. All three are described in various sources as drapers, but all served as Master of the Tailors' guild and maintained their loyalty to the guild throughout their lives.² While serving as City officials the three men were prominent elder statesmen of their guild, and were probably influential in the formulation of guild policy. From 1433 until at least 1444, for instance, the three men are listed as the 'gardeins des clefs' of the great chest or 'comon chatell' belonging to the guild in which funds were kept.³ This was an office whose symbolic currency appears to have been extremely high and, like the lavish expenditure on their shrieval processions described above, reflected their status within the craft. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was while these three individuals had such influence that the first clash with the Drapers occurred. In 1435 £14 4s 4d was spent by the guild upon lawyers' fees and refreshments in connection with a dispute over the rights of search of the two guilds.⁴

The intensification of the dispute in the late 1430s owed much to the statute of 1437 which required the London guilds to have their ordinances ratified by the mayor. This prompted the Drapers and Tailors to seek new letters patent, the Drapers in November 1438 with the Tailors' charter dated 24 February 1439.⁵ This seems to have been the opportunity

¹ Barron, 'Ralph Holland', pp.162-63.

² See Appendices I-II below.

³ Accounts, I, ff.243v-344v. A fourth key was held by the current Master.

⁴ Accounts, I, ff.258v-59v and see Barron, 'Ralph Holland' p.165.

⁵ Johnson, *Drapers*, I, pp.214-15; Fry and Sayle, *Charters*, pp.21-22.

the Tailors were looking for: as Barron has shown, the guild went to extreme lengths in order to secure this charter and its controversial clause which allowed the wardens the right to search the shops of craftsmen of all misteries for defective cloth, not just their own.¹ A total of £79 18s 3d was spent in the process: the duke of Gloucester, a member of the Tailors' fraternity and an important connection of Ralph Holland, received £30 while Adam Moleyns the clerk of the Council received £8 6s 8d and cloth worth £2.² This charter caused consternation among the Drapers who objected to it on the grounds that it infringed the rights of the Mayor who, in theory, was meant to appoint searchers himself (although he normally appointed the wardens of the mistery concerned).³ In response to the Drapers' attacks upon their new charter the Tailors spent more money over the next two years in order to get their charter confirmed. In 1441 the dispute flared up again when the Drapers, worried about the implications of the Tailors' charter for their traditional right of search at St. Bartholomew's cloth fair, complained to the Mayor and Aldermen. A compromise was enacted whereby the Mayor himself would conduct the search.⁴ Meanwhile, the Tailors had persuaded the King to lend his support in the form of a letter to the Mayor which requested that the guild be allowed to remedy defects in their craft, according to their letters patent. This letter was later to be countermanded by another in August 1442 in which the Tailors' letters patent were declared contrary to the rights of the City.⁵

Although a serious economic rivalry between the two guilds had flared up, the dispute did not take on a more 'constitutional' dimension until the mayoral election of 1441. Here Ralph Holland, probably the wealthiest member of the Tailors' guild and its sole representative in the Court of Aldermen, was making his third bid for the mayoralty, after having been beaten for the post in 1439 and 1440. Holland's own background made him a dangerous threat to the ruling oligarchy: though himself a member of the 'establishment', he had demonstrated his political credentials as early as 1426, when he was heard to have declared that writs made stipulating who was to be summoned to the mayoral and shrieval

¹ Barron, 'Ralph Holland', pp.165-66.

² *Ibid.*, p.167; Accounts, I, ff.313v, 302.

³ *CPMR*, 1437-57, p.33.

⁴ Barron, 'Ralph Holland', p.168.

⁵ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.260.

elections were fabricated and contrary to the custom of the City. Holland was wrong in his accusation: in his attempt to have some control over the composition of the electorate, and to avoid disorder, the Mayor was in fact drawing upon a writ of 1315 which was recorded in the City Letter Books; consequently Holland was sent to Ludgate prison.¹ This outburst in many ways echoes the concerns of the late fourteenth century reformers who had demanded greater access to government and the elective processes for the wider citizenry. The fact that Holland's opponent in 1441 was a draper, Robert Clopton, seems finally to have linked together the rivalry between the two crafts with the thirst for political influence on the part of the Tailors and other artisans. When the election of Clopton was announced to the waiting crowd great disturbances ensued caused 'by certeyn taillours and other Hand craftymen' who cried 'nay, nay, not this man but Rawlyn Holand!'.² The City Journals then record the names of six tailors and five skinners who were declared to have been responsible for breaching the king's peace and to have shouted 'Holand! Holand! Holand!' in support of their candidate.³ Some, like Henry Ketelwell, were probably young craftsmen out looking for trouble: Ketelwell was among the 97 yeomen tailors fined by the guild in 1445 for failing to turn up to greet Margaret of Anjou.⁴ Others, such as Walter Dolfyn and William White had been full members of the guild for several years.⁵ The participation of skinners in the disturbances is striking. Despite the civic success of prominent members of the guild, their craft, like that of the Tailors, was predominantly artisan in nature and this may have encouraged some of the younger and/or poorer craftsmen to join the Tailors.⁶

The mayoralty of Clopton saw a reaction against the Tailors and, in August 1442, their letters patent were declared by the king to be contrary to the liberties of the City.⁷ As

¹ Barron, 'Ralph Holland', pp.163-64; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, D, pp.24-6.

² Kingsford ed., *The Chronicles of London*, pp.154-55.

³ CLRO, Journals, 3, f.97v.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.387v.

⁵ Dolfyn, for instance, obtained the freedom by redemption in 1423-24, presented his first apprentice in 1427-28 and joined the livery in 1433-34, Accounts, I, ff.142, 182v, 246v.

⁶ On the similarities in structure between the two crafts see below, pp.241-43.

⁷ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.260. The Drapers spent £10 2s 11d on attempting to have the charter's controversial clause suspended, Barron, 'Ralph Holland', p.170.

Barron points out, this was a serious blow to the Tailors: their lack of influence over the Mayor through the Court of Aldermen meant that they could not guarantee that the Mayor would choose members of their guild to carry out the annual search. The Drapers, on the other hand, had always been strongly represented in government and could doubtless persuade the Mayor, especially if he was a draper like Clopton, to delegate his authority to their wardens.¹ In view of these political realities it is not surprising that the Tailors had appealed to an external source of authority in 1439 and were to do so again before their charter could be annulled completely. The Tailors therefore remained in the forefront of the 'radical' opposition to what was perceived as an entrenched and reactionary oligarchy. Their view would seem to have been reinforced by the City's new Commission of the Peace in 1443 which appears to have given the Mayor and Aldermen the power to hear and terminate, an addition to their existing power to imprison.² Once more this could be perceived as a reactionary move, in that it increased the powers of the narrow oligarchy and thereby restricted further the rights of the citizens as a whole. Ralph Holland certainly made no attempt to hide his opposition to the new Commission, declaring that it was a Commission 'not of peace but of war'. His attitude was reflected in what seems to have been a growing climate of sedition and discontent in the City which surfaced in a sermon delivered at St. Paul's Cross in 1442 where the preacher seems to have advanced the cause of the 'hand craftsmen'. A year later many of the issues surrounding these events came to a head: the election of the City Chamberlain, traditionally attended by all the freemen, was the scene of yet more controversy as the citizens refused to agree to the reappointment of John Chichele, a grocer. Instead, perhaps as a protest against the limitations being imposed on their rights, the lesser freemen present shouted for 'Cotisbrook!'. The object of their adulation, William Cotisbrook, another grocer, was later to display a copy of the 'Great Charter' of 1319 to his associates. This was doubtless to remind them of the historical basis of their claim that all freemen had rights and privileges which, in this case, had been confirmed by Parliament, whose authority was superior to that of the City government. The 'decision' of the crowd, like the 'election' of Toutheby in Leicester, was short-lived: the Mayor ordered the election to be held again, this time with only those who had been summoned taking part. This

¹ Barron, 'Ralph Holland', p.173.

² *Ibid.*

reversal seems to have spurred the radicals into action during the month which preceded the mayoral election on 13 October. An armed insurrection was rumoured to be in the offing, and a meeting was alleged to have been held at Friars Minors between men of various crafts including tailors, saddlers, skimmers, goldsmiths, and brewers, summoned by the beadles of the Tailors. The rising never got off the ground but, during the many court hearings held subsequently, Ralph Holland's leadership was again emphasised.¹

Perhaps the most significant statement made during the mopping up of this attempted revolt was made by another of the tailor conspirators, John Bale, who declared in court that the prosperity of the City depended upon the artisans and not upon the merchants.² Like Holland, Bale was in many ways part of the establishment. In 1445 he was described as 'citizen and merchant' a description which reflected his mercantile activities between 1439 and 1441.³ As in the disturbances of 1383-84 the Tailors appear to have provided the opposition movement with the kind of influential leadership which was essential if it was to have any hope of success. The dispute with the Drapers represented for the Tailors a clash between mercantile vested interests and an upwardly mobile and articulate section of the freemen in the capital. As in Exeter, the exclusion of prominent Tailors, despite the wealth of their guild and of many of its members, was for them a reflection of the outdated nature of the oligarchical government in London. This theme captured the imagination of a wider constituency of artisans when the rejection of Ralph Holland's candidacy for the mayoralty effectively closed the door on legitimate means of advancement within the existing structures and processes. Likewise, the guild's attempt to circumvent civic authority by acquiring a new charter only led to a clampdown by the establishment. Consequently, in their recourse to agitation the craftsmen of London, through their influential leaders, were raising a number of questions concerning the government of the capital which, as Rigby points out, do not sit easily with idealistic notions of urban harmony and uncontroversial definitions of urban oligarchy which are presented in works such as the *Liber Custumarum*. The concept of 'oligarchy' in its modern, pejorative sense, certainly existed and was invoked when

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.174-78.

² CLRO, Journals, 4, f.10.

³ CPR, 1436-1441, p.163; PRO, E.122/76/38, ff.1v, 3v (18-19 Hen.VI).

government was seen as becoming too narrowly based.¹ Like the political instability of the late fourteenth century the disturbances of the 1430s and 1440s in London raised issues such as the popular basis of authority, the extent of the civic franchise and, concomitant with this, the 'social value of the artisan'.² Indeed, throughout the fifteenth century it is possible to discern similar debates in other towns and cities: in King's Lynn, for instance, the decision to abandon the annual election of aldermen in favour of co-option for life enraged the 'mediocres' and 'inferiores' who forced concessions from the ruling council.³

3. From Tailors to Merchant Taylors, 1450-1504.

The rivalry between the Drapers and Tailors of London was not appeased by the compromises which the City government attempted to implement in the late 1440s. In January 1448 one tailor, John Locok, refused to allow the wardens of the Drapers into his shop to conduct a search. Luke Sewragh was even more stubborn and threatened to break twenty heads if they attempted to enter his premises.⁴ Likewise, the rivalry between the Tailors and the Skinners which led to the arbitration of Robert Billesdon may have been in its early stages in 1464-65 when Henry Clough was sent to Newgate 'pro verbis inhonestis' uttered 'de mistera pellipariorum'.⁵ The third quarter of the fifteenth century did not see the Tailors' guild achieve significantly greater political influence through any of the important civic offices. Although more tailors did become Auditors (5) and Wardens of London Bridge (3) only Robert Colwich (from 1474 until 1480) was able to represent the Tailors' interests in the Court of Aldermen.⁶ In other words, following the disqualification of Ralph Holland from office in 1444, the Tailors had to wait thirty years before gaining only their second representative in the City's upper chamber. It was perhaps appropriate that Colwich was himself a former apprentice of Ralph Holland and an executor of his will, although Colwich

¹ Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', p.70.

² *Ibid.*, p.69.

³ HMC, 11th report, Appendix pt. III, pp. 191-203.

⁴ CLRO, Journals, 4, f.205.

⁵ Accounts, II, f.261.

⁶ See Appendix II.

does not appear to have been as vociferous a critic of the establishment as his former master.¹ The last quarter of the century, however, did see the Tailors make great strides: between 1475 and 1503 twelve men held the office of Warden of London Bridge, three became sheriff and eight rose to become aldermen. Finally, in 1498, Sir John Percyvale became the first tailor to be elected Mayor of London.

John Percyvale's rise to prominence as a wealthy merchant and tailor in London was fairly uncontroversial. After ten years as Serjeant-at-Mace he presented his first apprentices as a tailor in 1469-70.² His experience as a City official seems to have stood him in good stead, as did his marriage to Thomasine Barnaby, the widow of two tailor liverymen, and in 1485, the year in which he was elected Master of the Tailors' guild, he became an alderman, first for Vintry and later for Langbourn.³ Two years later, according to Stow, he was 'made knight in the field by Henry VII'.⁴ As will be shown, this appears to have been the start of an important relationship between the London Tailors and Henry which was to have a destabilising effect upon political relations in the capital. In the meantime Percyvale proceeded to embark on a successful career as an alderman and as an elder statesman of the Tailors' guild.⁵ He can probably be counted among the first genuine 'merchant' tailors: few members of the craft appear to have embarked upon overseas trade on quite the same scale as Percyvale and some of his tailor contemporaries such as Hugh Pemberton, Stephen Jenyns (mayor in 1508-9), Thomas Randall, Thomas Petyt, and James Wilford.⁶ Progression to the Mayoralty would seem to have been an obvious step, and one which should not have proved too controversial. However the author of the *Great Chronicle*, possibly the draper Robert

¹ He became Holand's apprentice in 1440-41, Accounts, I, f.329; *CWCH*, II, pp.525-26; PRO, Prob.11/1/, ff.81-85.

² Barron, 'The Government of London', p.569; *CPMR*, 1458-1482, pp.22, 47. For this office see B.R. Masters, 'The Mayor's Household before 1600', in *Studies in London History*, ed. Hollaender and Kellaway, pp.95-114; Accounts, III, f.4v.

³ For Percyvale's career see Clode, *Early History*, II, pp.8-21; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.360; Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale' (forthcoming).

⁴ Stow, *Survey*, II, pp.187-79.

⁵ He and his fellow tailor alderman, Hugh Pemberton, were particularly frequent attenders at the Tailors' Court, see below p.158.

⁶ Several of these men appear in the Customs Account for 6-7 Hen.VII, PRO, E.122/78/9, ff.15-17v (Petyt, Jenyns, Randall).

Fabyan, who reported on Percyvale's election in 1498 saw matters in a different light. Percyvale, he suggested, had been a candidate on several occasions including the election of 1493 when, in consideration of 'his hote apetyte which he hadd yerely to that office', his candidacy was rejected. This, according to the chronicler, provoked a strong reaction from the tailors who 'had many Riottous and heynous werdys to the drapers' whom they accused of keeping Percyvale out of office.¹ When Percyvale was eventually elected the same author noted that he had been passed over in previous years by the Mayor and aldermen 'for as much as It was thowgth by theym that he was verray desyrus to have It In other maner than othir of his predecessour mayris beffore hym'.² When one turns to the evidence of the Journals it is clear that, at the very least, Percyvale was not one to give up easily. Indeed it is clear that he stood for the mayoralty on no less than four occasions prior to his successful bid of 1498.³ It is not clear whether Percyvale's defeats were indeed the result of the opposition of the drapers. Only one of his opponents, William White in 1491, was a draper and the other three were all mercers. Nevertheless the chronicler's testimony may indicate that some sort of rift had taken place between the two crafts. This was despite the fact that the Tailors and Drapers had cooperated on a number of occasions. In 1481-82, for instance, the two guilds presented a petition protesting at the short-comings of the City's shearmen.⁴ Similarly, the two guilds acted in concert in 1493-94 when the wardens of the Tailors met at Drapers' Hall 'for the graining of cloths and to have a potacion'.⁵ These incidents suggest that the Drapers had accepted, albeit reluctantly, that they could not prevent the cloth-dealing activities of the Tailors. On the other hand, the fact that both the Shearmen and Fullers were shortly afterwards to enroll their own ordinances may mean that the alliance was merely a temporary means of containing the threat posed by yet more upwardly-mobile artisans trying to achieve a greater role in the retailing of cloth.⁶ Consequently, as the chronicler suggests,

¹ *Great Chronicle*, pp.245-46.

² *Ibid.*, p.288

³ CLRO, Journals, 9, ff.239 (1489), 280v (1491); 10, ff.79 (1496), 108v (1497).

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, pp.196-97.

⁵ Johnson, *Drapers*, I, p.165.

⁶ The Shearmen and Fullers eventually amalgamated to form the Clothworkers' Company in 1528, thus completing the 'Great Twelve', Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp.44, 108.

the rivalry between the Tailors and Drapers may well have persisted into the 1490s and beyond.

Despite the criticisms levelled at Percyvale it is more than likely that, once again, it was the ambition of the Tailors' guild as a whole which so concerned the Drapers and some of the other guilds. The relationship between the guild and Henry VII, epitomised by Percyvale's knighthood, was perhaps the main factor which served to isolate the Tailors in the City. The Tailors, in their desire for self-advancement, once again found themselves turning to the king for help. In 1503 they secured new letters patent, dated 6 January which granted the guild the title of 'merchant' tailors and, more significantly, allowed the Master and Wardens to admit any number of Englishmen to the craft without reference to the other guilds as long as it was not prejudicial to the liberties of the Mayor.¹ This coincidence of the Tailors' frustrated ambitions with Henry's interventionist tendencies was to have far reaching consequences.² While the Tailors were more than happy with their new name, which 'has long lain in concealment and shade', the other crafts were concerned at these new privileges and at the threat they posed to their rights and the powers of the City. On the 30th of January, for instance, the Tailors' new charter was read out to the Mercers' Court which found 'dyvers thyngys theryn that was preiudiciall unto the corporacion of the Citie and also to all felisshippes in the said Cite'. The decision was taken to formulate a list of objections which would then be presented to the Mayor and Aldermen.³

The opposition to the Tailors' new charter was headed once again from the Drapers who, in early February, put their case before the Mayor and Aldermen. It was then agreed to inform the king 'of the grugges which is tayne by the hole body of thys cite by reason of his letters patent late graunted to the fealeship of taillors'.⁴ In a fit of pique the Aldermen decided to boycott the Tailors' annual feast, a decision which was revoked when it was found

¹ Fry and Sayle, *Charters*, pp.34-9, 41.

² For Henry VII and London see R.R. Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom* 3 vols (London, 1894-95), 1, pp.362-42; G.R. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1974-83), I, pp.45-65, 66-99.

³ *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, pp.259-60.

⁴ CLRO, *Repertories*, 1, ff.122, 129.

that some foreign ambassadors were to be present.¹ These and subsequent events have been described by Helen Miller in her analysis of the early sixteenth century relations between the City and Parliament. As Miller points out, the dispute was to have serious consequences for the authority of the Mayor and Aldermen with respect to the livery companies.² The City tried on two occasions in 1503 to have the Tailors' charter annulled.³ In December, for instance, £5,000 was offered by the City in return for the confirmation of its own charter and the annulling of the Tailors'; an offer which was not taken up by the Crown.⁴ Unfortunately the opposition of the City to Henry's interventionism only served to influence the debate in the Parliament of January 1504 which discussed the relationship between guilds and municipal authorities in general. The resulting statute asserted, to the surprise of the City, that the previous legislation of 1437 concerning the ratification of guild ordinances had lapsed.⁵ This seems to have caused great confusion and annoyance in the City: the new Act flatly denied the Mayor the rights over the guilds which had previously been taken for granted although, as shown above, they were not enforced with any consistency in the fifteenth century.⁶ Furthermore it declared that guild ordinances which had been made since the expiry of the 1437 Act were contrary to the king's prerogative. Future ordinances had to be approved by the Chancellor, Treasurer and two Chief Justices.⁷ This represented an upsetting of the uneasy balance which had existed between the Crown and municipal authorities during the fifteenth century as more and more guilds sought to extend the scope of their activities and interests through the obtaining of letters patent.

The changes introduced by the Statute of 1504 appear, therefore, to have owed much to the inquiry of the King's Council into the dispute over the Tailors' charter of the previous

¹ CLRO, Reps. 1, f.135 (21 May 1503).

² Miller, 'London and Parliament', pp.128-49, at pp.130-136.

³ See *Select Cases in the Council of Henry VII*, ed. C.G. Beyne and W.H. Dunham, Selden Soc., 75 (1956), pp.35-6.

⁴ Miller, 'London and Parliament', p.132; CLRO, Reps. 1, ff.148, 149, 150.

⁵ (19 Hen.VII, c.7), *Statutes*, ii, pp.652-53; (15 Hen.VI, c.6), *ibid.*, ii, pp.298-99.

⁶ The City, at least does not appear to have realised that the 1437 Act had 'expired', a fact suggested by the scattered examples of Mayoral confirmation and inspection to be found in the City records from the later fifteenth century, *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, *passim*.

⁷ (19 Hen. VII, c.7), *Statutes*, ii, pp.652-53.

year.¹ The City eventually (in 1505) secured confirmation of its own charter but, once again, its provisions were less than satisfactory as it failed to guarantee the City's right to appoint to certain key offices.² This was not the end of Henry's interventions in the affairs of the City, however. In 1506 Henry secured the appointment of William Fitzwilliam, a tailor who was held responsible for the negotiation of the 1503 letters patent, to the office of sheriff. The City government expressed its opposition to this unwanted intervention and later tried, unsuccessfully, to force Fitzwilliam to serve again, claiming that his first appointment was invalid.³ Fitzwilliam probably owed the patronage of Henry VII to the fact that he was himself a former servant of Sir John Percyvale.⁴ Two years' later, in October 1508, Stephen Jenyns, another tailor, was foisted upon the City by Henry, as the Tailors' second mayor, this time without protest from the other companies.⁵ Given the importance of the relationship between the Tailors and Henry VII both for the Company, and for Henry's ambitions with regard to the capital, it is perhaps appropriate that, after the king's death in 1509, it would have been Jenyns and the Tailors who headed the civic procession to St. Paul's.

Conclusion: The Tailors and City Politics, 1376-1504

The civic disputes in which the London Tailors became involved witnessed the articulation of a number of issues central to urban government in the later middle ages. As an essentially artisan craft with an 'aristocratic' leadership, personified by individuals such as Ralph Holland and John Percyvale, the Tailors were ambitious seekers after political power, notably lacking to them despite the wealth and prestige of their guild. In their pursuit of power the predominantly artisan tailors found themselves at the forefront of movements which opposed moves to limit the civic franchise and asserted the rights of all freemen, not just those called to attend elections by a distrusted oligarchy. In a period when standards of

¹ Miller, 'London and Parliament', p.134.

² Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p.26.

³ *Great Chronicle*, pp.332-3; Miller, 'London and Parliament', pp.135-36.

⁴ PRO, C.1/166/5. This chancery case can be dated to 1506-7 as Fitzwilliam is described as 'nowe oon of the Shirefs of London'. See also Clode, *Early History*, II, pp.39-53.

⁵ CLRO, Repertories, 2, f.50; Miller, 'London and Parliament', p.135. For Jenyn's career see Clode, *Early History*, II, pp.22-38.

living for those in work were rising, it is not surprising that the 'mediocres' and 'inferiores' in towns should resent the pejorative implications of these labels.¹ It will be argued below that the thriving nature of the tailoring industry in London was a function of shifting patterns of demand, whereby newly prosperous artisans may have increased their expenditure on clothing, and even begun to crave new fashions, hitherto confined to the upper classes. Holland's failure to become mayor on three occasions could therefore be viewed as a frustration of the expectations of many artisans, who looked to Holland and the Tailors as the group most likely to represent their interests. The same had been true in 1383-4 when, for a variety of reasons, a number of influential citizens and their guilds found themselves spearheading the opposition to Brembre. Yet the failure of the reforms of 1376-83 and of Holland's bid for power in the 1430s demonstrates the resistance of the elite to any constitutional change not undertaken on their terms. In several towns and cities the fifteenth century saw the settlement of constitutional issues which, on the whole, tended towards greater exclusiveness. In Leicester and Northampton, for instance, disturbances at elections in 1489 resulted in smaller elective bodies.² In London, the disturbances at the election of the Chamberlain in 1442 prompted the Mayor and aldermen to request that those who attended were to be 'viri senes sapientes et solidii'.³ In 1475 attendance at the mayoral and shrieval elections was limited to guild-members, or 'liverymen', of the crafts, and the custom was to develop whereby the loser in the mayoral election would serve as senior alderman and then become mayor the year after. This latter change tended towards the 'depersonalisation of the magistracy' and, ideally, would dissipate forces of opposition within the Court of Aldermen.⁴ Simultaneously the Common Council was being enlarged in order to create a balance between popular involvement and the right of a small elite to act as the highest court in the City. On the whole, apart from moments of crisis such as the election of 1441, the Tailors tried to increase their influence through legitimate means. They were already one of the leading crafts: their presence in the 'Great Twelve', when its membership was finalised

¹ See C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200-1520* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.188-210.

² Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', pp.75-81.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.286-87.

⁴ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p.28.

in the early sixteenth century, was never seriously in question. What remained was the translation of this prestige into a strong voice on the Court of Aldermen. As part of their strategy the Tailors attempted to extend the jurisdiction of the guild into areas governed by the more 'respectable' drapers; this could only be achieved by appealing to external authority, namely the Crown. Consequently the Tailors raised the sensitive issues of the relationships between guilds and municipal authorities, and between urban governments and the Crown, while, at the same time, articulating wider concerns about the nature of the oligarchical form of government in late medieval London. The evolving nature of the City's constitution, and the ancient rights that pertained to the freedom of the City provided the ever-increasing number of artisan guilds with the political 'vocabulary' they required to pursue their goals. The popularity of royal letters patent, whether as defensive or offensive measures, served to undermine the efforts of urban authorities to maintain a hold over the citizens. The establishment of the 'Great Twelve' in London was not achieved without a fair amount of conflict between the guilds and the City, much of it derived from the challenge posed by the Crown to the City's authority: the coexistence of Henry VII's interventionism with the Tailors' ambitions was bound to have a destabilising effect. The Tailors had cultivated important and influential friends whose support was much more likely to produce results than reliance upon either artisan agitation or the good will of the Court of Aldermen. Nevertheless the Tailors' early radicalism should not be under-emphasised. It is clear that the Tailors were uniquely placed to represent the wider interests of artisans in the capital; through their agitation for an improvement in their own status, centred on elections and parliamentary lobbying, prominent tailors allowed themselves to be identified as the leaders of a popular movement seeking to integrate traditional values, particularly the rights of freemen, into the City's developing constitution. However, once political offices began to fall more often to prominent members of the craft in the later fifteenth century, the insecurity and thwarted ambition that led to their making common cause with the artisans may have begun to wane. Rivalries could now be worked out through the Court of Aldermen, on which the craft was beginning to secure a permanent presence, rather than on the streets of the capital.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CRAFT

The proliferation of occupational guilds and fraternities in the towns of late medieval Europe, and in particular the fortunate survival of many of their records, has led to a long tradition of historical writing which has sought to examine the role played by these associations in urban society. Until relatively recently the prevailing historiography of craft and merchant guilds was forthrightly one-dimensional, looking primarily at how the guilds fitted into the structure of municipal government.¹ This approach has found its expression in a number of widely-held 'truths' or dogmas which depend for their validity almost entirely upon the 'rhetoric of directive legislation', whether in the form of guild ordinances or municipal legislation.² The most fundamental of the claims made by historians has been that guilds were, legally and functionally, merely extensions of civic government. It has been shown here, however, that despite the varying degrees of legal subordination present in the directive legislation of medieval urban authorities, guilds often enjoyed a high degree of independence and performed a variety of religious, social and charitable functions for their members. Similarly, the attempts by civic authorities to create a sense of order in the urban community for the purpose of defence, raising taxes and maintaining peace should not be read as indications that guilds were simply dependent arms of government. On the contrary, despite the reality of state power and its manifestation in civic legislation, craft guilds can more usefully be seen as the articulation of the needs, desires and ambitions of groups of craftsmen and an expression of the relationships which they formed with one another in the urban community.³

It is in this context that the functions and activities of guilds need to be studied, and it is the purpose of this chapter to examine afresh the role played by the guilds within the economy and society of late medieval London. If guilds did not primarily exist to serve the interests of the 'state' then how far were they geared towards serving the interests of the minority of craftsmen and merchants who were actually members of these associations? Once

¹ See S.L. Thrupp, 'The Gilds' in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* vol. III, ed. M.M. Postan, E.E. Rich and E. Miller (Cambridge, 1963), pp.230-280 and S. Reynolds, 'The Writing of Medieval Urban History in England', *Theoretische geschiedenis*, 19 (1992), pp.43-57.

² Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work', p.6

³ See Chapters 1-3 above.

again the statutes and ordinances promulgated by guilds have been seized upon by historians who have categorized these institutions as self-serving, self-perpetuating oligarchies which exploited monopolistic positions in the urban economy to keep prices high, wages low and stifle innovation.¹ Yet there have been remarkably few attempts to try to prove such assertions through the closer examination of the activities of craft guilds, and the nature and limits of guild authority within their respective misteries. Sylvia Thrupp's essay on the guilds of late-medieval Europe still remains the definitive examination of these issues, but in many respects her analysis is deficient, principally because detailed examination of the practical application of guild policies was not possible in such a broad survey.² One recent attempt at revisionism has, quite rightly, questioned the usefulness of craft ordinances as a guide to craft structures, but Dr Swanson overlooks other evidence for the active and indeed positive roles which craft organisations could and did play in the urban economy.³ The task here is to assess the role played by the Tailors' guild and others in London in the regulation of the crafts, and to assess the motives which lay behind the framing and enforcement of legislation.

As has been shown, the fourteenth century saw the evolution of 'occupational fraternities' into elite associations responsible for the governing of their respective crafts or 'misteries'. By 1400 all prominent London skimmers were members of the fraternity of Corpus Christi, which was now the governing body of the craft; fifty years earlier membership was evidently not perceived as essential to civic prominence.⁴ A balance came to be struck between the City custom which allowed a freeman to practice any trade he wished, regardless of his training, and the desire on the part of the fledgling craft organisations and the City to exercise a degree of control over the practitioners of the various trades. This was reflected in the letters patent, granted to several guilds in the fourteenth century. The charter granted to the saddlers' guild, for example, stated that the guild had the right to exercise jurisdiction, particularly in the area of quality control, over all practitioners of a craft, whether or not they had obtained the freedom as saddlers.⁵ The absence of a

¹ See for instance L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (London, 1913).

² Thrupp, 'The Gilds', pp.230-280.

³ Swanson, 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-48.

⁴ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.107.

⁵ *CPR*, 1391-1396, p.560.

requirement that a saddler or any other craftsman should have obtained the freedom through the guild of his principal occupation is telling. As will be demonstrated the boundaries between occupations were frequently blurred because of the transferability of skills and the necessity for craftsmen to be flexible in the nature of the goods they could produce and/or sell. The shifting and complex world of the urban crafts is frequently forgotten by historians who see occupational labels and guild legislation as an accurate representation of what was taking place on the streets of towns and cities.¹ The statute of 1363 which confined artisans to one trade reflected the concerns of government rather than the realities of the urban economy.²

Nevertheless, whilst not forgetting the shifting sands of the urban crafts, it is true to say that in London and elsewhere, most craftsmen, especially freemen, identified themselves with a particular craft and often with a particular guild. The development of guild organisations in particular must account for many of the 'translations' between misteries, recorded in the records of the Corporation and the guilds themselves. From one point of view these translations could be interpreted as undermining City custom, as it would seem to imply that the City and the guilds were succeeding in preventing craftsmen from practising a particular craft unless they obtained their freedom through the relevant guild. Yet this fails to take into account both the fluidity of occupational labels and the motives of the craftsmen themselves in seeking to become affiliated formally to a particular craft guild. For many, translations should perhaps be seen as a ratification of the developments in guild structures which took place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The tailor's apprentice who declared that he had always dealt in mercery was allowed to join the mercers, doubtless cognisant of the political and social advantages which lay in doing so.³ In 1385, after protests from the Drapers, Richard Skynnere was deprived of the freedom he had obtained through the Tailors, 'his mystery being drapery and no other'.⁴ In this case financial considerations may have been important: it is possible that, as Thrupp suggests, Skynnere was motivated by the relatively low charges of the Tailors for the admission of apprentices

¹ Swanson, 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-48. See Chapter 6 below.

² (37 Edw. III c.6), *Statutes*, i, p.379.

³ Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London', p.287.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, H, p.240.

and other payments.¹ Similarly, it is possible to discern ways in which the activities of guilds could benefit all craftsmen, not just members of the livery; for many, guilds provided the means for the cheap settlement of craft disputes and, as has been shown, they could often provide a channel through which common grievances could be articulated to the urban community as a whole. After all, a craft could only become a coherent and effective force in urban society once a formal, 'representative' organization had been established.

I. The Fraternity of St. John the Baptist: the Selection of an Elite

The tailors of London were among the first to establish a craft fraternity in the capital, probably in the middle of the thirteenth century. From the early fourteenth century at least, the fraternity of St. John the Baptist of tailors and linen armourers, like the mercers, grocers, saddlers and others, began to be organised with the supervision of the wider mystery in mind, not just the physical and spiritual well-being of guild members. From an early juncture these guilds were exclusive, and members were distinguished from ordinary freemen by the livery suit which they had to wear on ceremonial and convivial occasions. The exclusivity of these associations has, more often than not, been perceived in a negative light. Guilds were, it is argued, essentially serving the interests of a small but wealthy elite when they promulgated ordinances concerning such things as apprenticeship and the size of workshops. Competition was kept at a minimum in order to protect the interests of an elite group of masters, and access to the guilds was strictly controlled by those in power. Before examining the effects and intentions of guild policies, therefore, it is important to assess the nature of the exclusivity practised by craft guilds, and the extent to which this was affected by the structure of a particular craft, such as that of the London tailors. The fifteenth century, in particular, saw the development of the characteristic hierarchies, structures and mechanisms within the myriad associations which had grown up within particular crafts. How far, for example, were fraternal ideals able to withstand the development of further tiers of government such as the Courts of Assistants which came increasingly to dominate the everyday decision-making processes of the London guilds? The issues thrown up are, in many ways, identical to those raised by studies of urban oligarchies in general.² What were

¹ Thrupp, 'The Grocers', p.286.

² Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', pp.62-86.

the criteria by which people were admitted to the ranks of the elite? What was the subsequent level of participation in decision-making processes enjoyed by such 'liverymen'? Discussion of the structure of the sixteenth-century companies has produced a variety of answers to these questions. Dr. Rappaport, for example, asserts that the sixteenth century livery companies maintained a healthy balance between individualism and the community values espoused in their ordinances. He stresses their integrative functions and the consensual nature of their government of the trades and occupations of the capital.¹ Rappaport was reacting to a long historiographical tradition, epitomised by the work of George Unwin, which emphasised the domination achieved by merchants in the trades of London.² Recently, Dr. Archer has sought to resolve this dichotomy in the perceptions of the nature of social relations in early modern London. The companies, he argues, varied greatly in their experiences of oligarchic government: the smaller associations, for instance, were less prone to antagonisms between opposing interests. Equally, like Rappaport, Archer argues that the hierarchical structure of even the largest guilds did not necessarily lead to the creation of a governing body that was out of touch and inherently hostile to the interests of artisans; indeed, pressure from below could be an influential factor in the determination of guild policies. There were of course limits to the extent to which a sense of community could be generated, but nevertheless the principle of oligarchic rule of the misteries in the late sixteenth century was rarely challenged; conflict where it occurred was generally over the ways in which such principles were put into practice.³

The work of Rappaport, Archer and others is rendered even more pertinent by the developing nature of the governmental and guild structures in the earlier period which, as has been shown, created a dynamic relationship between craftsmen, their guilds and the City government. The size and structure of a particular craft could have an important bearing on the nature of its ruling guild and its relationship to the mystery as a whole. Most practitioners of small and exclusive crafts, such as the bowyers, were probably members of the ruling guild, where one had been established. In the case of the larger misteries, however, particularly the Great Twelve, the 'livery' generally comprised only about a quarter of the

¹ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp.329-59.

² Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, and idem, *Industrial Organization*.

³ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.100-27, 140.

freemen as a whole.¹ For the Tailors it can be calculated that the livery (i.e. the tailor membership of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist) probably numbered around 150 for most of the fifteenth century, whereas there were probably at least 500 freemen tailors living and working in the capital.² Numerical similarities can conceal important differences in the composition of those inside and those outside the ruling guilds. Some predominantly artisan crafts came to be headed by a natural oligarchy of merchants who supplied raw materials to the rest of the freemen; this would appear to have been the case with the London skinners, although even here there was a degree of overlap.³ In many instances, however, the distinction between members of the ruling guild and those outside was much less clear: even in the late fifteenth century, relatively few members of the Tailors' guild had entirely abandoned tailoring for mercantile activities. Furthermore, the relatively low capital costs incurred in setting up and running a tailoring shop meant that a large proportion of the freemen as a whole were able to run successful businesses and train up apprentices.⁴ This was not the case in all crafts. In the similarly large brewing industry, for instance, the high cost of premises and equipment probably meant that a higher proportion of freemen were forced to work as wage labourers than was the case with the tailors or skinners. Consequently the acquisition of a business was a significant achievement which for many, if not most, brewers may have led to admission to the guild.⁵

Membership of the 'livery' of a craft brought with it both privileges and obligations in the public as well as the private sphere, and as such was normally highly prized by aspiring craftsmen and merchants. In 1475, for example, participation in the election of the mayor and sheriffs was confined to liverymen.⁶ The financial obligations of membership

¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.43-4.

² Calculated by multiplying the average number of tailors admitted to the livery each year (6.98) by the average length of time spent as a liveryman (21.73 years), *Accounts*, I-III.

³ Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.121-25.

⁴ See below, pp.220-21, 231-34.

⁵ Dr Rappaport suggests that approximately 71% of sixteenth century brewers remained as journeymen, partly because of the shift from ale towards beer brewing and the more complex processes which were introduced, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp.242, 275. This probably continued a pre-existing tendency within the medieval craft, indicated by the fact that only the wealthiest of craftsmen appear to have contemplated the establishment of a brewery.

⁶ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.132.

were not to be taken lightly: a liveryman was required to buy a livery gown and hood each year, make quarterly alms payments, and occasionally contribute to levies such as that raised by the Tailors in 1413-14 to pay for the almshouse.¹ In addition, attendance at 'chivaches et diriges' (processions and memorial masses) was often obligatory, with fines levied on those who failed to appear. In 1445, for instance, thirty-nine liverymen of the Tailors were fined an average of 3s 7d each for failing to turn up to welcome Margaret of Anjou to London.² Occasionally liverymen sought relief from the burdens of membership: in 1430 John Baynard paid the Tailors 3s 4d 'to be excused of the maistres clothyng thys yer', whilst the Mercers imposed a £10 fine on those men, deemed to be eligible, who refused to join the livery.³ It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that men who had obtained the freedom by redemption (through the payment of several pounds to the City chamber), were more likely to become liverymen than freemen by other routes. Between 1398 and 1445, for example, 69 (36%) of 194 redemptioners listed in the Tailors' accounts went on to join the livery.⁴ As will be shown, no more than fifteen or twenty per cent of those who had obtained their freedom by apprenticeship went on to join the livery.⁵ Wealth was therefore an important criterion for admission, and one which was frequently articulated formally. In 1490, for example, the Tailors' Court complained that some of those admitted to the fraternity had not in fact been 'in substaunce of goods as it hath bene supposed whereby they have lytely fallen into the almes of this fraternity'.⁶ Both the Fullers and the Carpenters of London, by no means the wealthiest of crafts, introduced property qualifications of 20 marks for admission to the Livery.⁷

The records of craft guilds do occasionally reveal more explicitly articulated criteria, laid down for membership. Hereditary preference, in particular, whether enunciated explicitly

¹ Accounts, I, f.82. £51 16s 8d was raised from 47 liverymen.

² Accounts, I, f.387.

³ Accounts, I, f.214; Imray, "Les Bones Gentes", pp.175-76.

⁴ Accounts, I, *passim*.

⁵ See below, pp.192-203.

⁶ Court Minutes, II, f.21v.

⁷ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.110.

or not, is often cited as clear evidence of the inward-looking and self-serving nature of guilds in European towns and cities.¹ Hostility to outsiders, particularly immigrants from the countryside, does on numerous occasions appear to have resulted in the introduction of preferential entry fees, 'le franc symbolique', for the sons of existing masters. Municipal legislation in Ghent in the early fourteenth century reflected concern at the influx and employment of cheap labour from the surrounding countryside, and the hereditary preference introduced by the brewers of that city in the fifteenth century seems to reflect a similar xenophobia.² Yet as Sosson and other historians have shown, legislation of this kind was not always implemented. Sosson's study of the barrel-makers of Bruges, for instance, demonstrates that, despite lower entry fees to the mastership, the sons of masters rarely exceeded fifty percent of the five or so masters admitted each year in the period 1375 to 1450. The latter half of the fifteenth century saw the proportion fall even further, almost to zero, such that far from being cornered by a handful of families, 'la maîtrise tend à se démocratiser'.³ This conclusion, Sosson admits, would be partially negated if it could be shown that the livery of the craft was monopolised by a few powerful families. But here too, figures showing the numbers of 'mandats' held by liverymen of the same families do not support such a hypothesis. Rather, Sosson makes an important connection between the prominence of individual holders of 'mandats' and their wealth as assessed for a levy in 1429. From this Sosson argues that whilst access to the mastership and livery was relatively open, wealth was the most important criterion by which individuals came to occupy positions of power.⁴

Sosson's caution leads him to state that his conclusions are 'applicables au seul métier des tonneliers'. The small size of the craft he examined must, of course, lead to caution when comparing his results with larger and more mercantile guilds such as some of those in

¹ See for example, H. Van Werveke, 'L'origine des Corporations de métiers', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 23 (1944), pp.506 *et seq.*

² D.M. Nicholas, *Town and Countryside: Social, Economic and Political Tensions in Fourteenth Century Flanders* (Bruges, 1971), p.111; W. Prevenier and W. Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Cambridge, 1986), p.164.

³ J.-P. Sosson, 'La structure sociale de la corporation médiévale: l'exemple des tonneliers de Bruges de 1350 à 1500', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 44 (1966), pp.457-78.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.472-75.

medieval London. Yet despite this, the trends he describes can be observed among the London crafts, including the Tailors. Hereditary preference was, on occasion, articulated as a formal policy among the London companies: in 1459, for example, the Mercers introduced a lower charge (2s) for the sons of their freemen who wished to be admitted to the freedom themselves.¹ Yet such legislation, and the prominence of a few wealthy families, can lead to unwarranted assumptions about guild policies. In fact, as Professor Thrupp has demonstrated, the overwhelming trend among the sons of aldermen was to follow an occupation other than that of their fathers. Indeed, London as a whole exhibited none of the dynastic tendencies of Italian cities such as Florence; there were few 'aldermanic families' in London.² Although the sons of lesser merchants and artisans probably had fewer opportunities, other evidence suggests that they too chose other paths, and that consequently any informal policy that did exist to keep sons in the trade was doomed to failure. Jean Imray's analysis of the membership of the Mercers' Company, for example, shows that only 155 out of 1047 freemen shared a surname with a fellow freeman. Admission to the freedom by patrimony accounted for very few of the Mercers' freemen and was itself in decline in the City at large from the mid fourteenth century.³ Corresponding figures for the Tailors are given in Table 4.1, which shows the prevalence of shared family names among those tailors who appear presenting apprentices, and those who joined the guild itself. Although identification by surname alone is not satisfactory, the figures do not seem to suggest that any one of these tiers in the craft hierarchy was a preserve of a few families. Even though 'family members' made up about a third of the masters and the liverymen, each surname accounts, on average, for only three individuals.

¹ *Acts of Court*, ed. Lyell and Watney, p.47.

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.205-6.

³ Imray, '"Les Bone Gentes"', p.160; *CPMR*, 1364-81, pp.xxviii-xxx.

Table 4.1. Shared Surnames among the London Tailors.¹

	Total	Shared Surnames	'Family members'
Masters of apprentices (1424-84)	1075	146	343
Liverymen (1398-1484)	510	56	130

This is not to say that family connections were unimportant. Among the London tailors there were, of course, some prominent tailoring families. John, Thomas and William Tropenell were all highly successful tailors who joined the fraternity between 1398 and 1403.² William was perhaps the most successful: he became Master of the Fraternity in 1411, Serjeant-tailor of the Great Wardrobe in 1413 and, along with John, supplied cloth and clothing to Thomas, duke of Clarence between 1418 and 1421.³ Yet it is significant that few family names survive beyond the second generation in the records kept by the guild. This seems to reinforce Thrupp's argument for the attractiveness of alternative careers, and provides a rationale behind the incentives offered by guilds to the sons of existing members.⁴ It also indicates that access to the *cursus honorum* within a particular craft was relatively free of bias, open to those who had managed to become successful artisans and merchants. In many ways the craft system, as defined in the statutes and ordinances of the guilds, provided members with an additional set of relationships, which operated alongside ties of family, neighbourhood and parish, and which could benefit young men in later life. One of the most important of these was the bond between master and apprentice which, as Table 4.2 suggests, could be an important factor in admission to the Tailors' fraternity. Those apprentices who were bound to liverymen appear to have enjoyed a distinct, and increasing, advantage over their peers, at each stage in their occupational careers, a conclusion similar to that reached by Rappaport in his analysis of the fortunes of sixteenth century apprentices.⁵ The result of

¹ Accounts, I-III. Enrollments of apprentices are only recorded from 1424-25.

² John joined in 1398-9, William in 1400-1 and Thomas in 1403-4, Accounts, I, ff.2, 10, 19.

³ Accounts, I, f.60; *CPR*, 1413-16, p.62; W[estminster] A[bbey] M[uniments] 12163. I am grateful to Dr. Caroline Barron for this reference.

⁴ Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work', p.14.

⁵ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p.349.

this was that 69% of 202 masters and 77% of 61 liverymen had themselves been bound to members of the livery.¹

Table 4.2. ‘Sponsored mobility’ among Tailors’ Apprentices

	Total		Future masters		Future liverymen	
Apprentices of livery men	893	(57.3 %)	139	(68.8 %)	47	(77.1 %)
Apprentices of non-liverymen	666	(42.7 %)	63	(31.2 %)	14	(22.9 %)
All apprentices	1,559	(100.0 %)	202	(100.0 %)	61	(100.0 %)

This also might be cited as evidence that the Tailors were pursuing a policy whereby apprentices of ordinary freemen were gradually squeezed out of the *cursus honorum*, thus ensuring the survival of a ruling caste. Yet, if so, it was a policy which was never formally articulated, and which makes no allowance for the other, more subtle, influences and tensions within urban society. The pattern described in the table is by no means unusual or surprising. For a start, those young men apprenticed to liverymen often owed their placement to the influence of well-connected parents. Similarly, liverymen were inherently more likely to possess the resources to set their former apprentices up as practising tailors, whether through the advancement of loans, the provision of sub-contracted work or other paid employment when times were hard. There was an in-built tendency for the well-connected to succeed, but this was a product of economic realities rather than a pre-disposition on the part of the guilds themselves. Unlike the ties of family, however, the impact of these bonds could often last for more than one generation. The controversial Ralph Holland presented Robert Colwich as his apprentice in 1440-41.² Colwich himself went on to have a distinguished career: he was elected Master in 1460, and served as City Chamberlain from 1463 until 1474 when he was chosen as an alderman.³ Colwich’s own apprentice, Walter Povy became Master of the Tailors’ fraternity in 1492 after a successful career, during which he became one of an increasing number of members of the livery to engage in overseas trade.⁴ For Povy and

¹ For further discussion of these findings see below, pp.203-5.

² Accounts I, f.329; For Holland’s career see Barron, ‘Ralph Holland’, pp.160-83.

³ Accounts II, f.189; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.35 *et passim*.

⁴ Povy’s apprenticeship began in 1457-8, Accounts, II, f.124v; Court Minutes, II, f.42. Povy had joined the livery in 1469-70, Accounts, III, f.6; H.S. Cobb ed., *The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480-1*, London Record Society, 27 (1990), nos. 498, 499, 571, 575.

Colwich, therefore, the status of their masters was almost certainly crucial to their subsequent success.

There is, however, an important qualification which must be made to these findings. Whilst the status of an apprentice's master was certainly important, only a small proportion of craftsmen did in fact reach the livery after following what historians usually assume was the conventional career path, in other words one that was entirely within the formalised craft structures set up by the Tailors' guild. Between 1435 and 1445, for example, sixty-four tailors joined the livery of the craft, yet only twelve of them can be identified with any certainty as the former apprentices of other tailors.¹ Another seven had obtained the freedom of the City as tailors by redemption, on payment of £3. Hence the origins of two-thirds of these liverymen would appear to lie outside the *cursus honorum* of the craft, emphasising the problems inherent in defining a 'mystery' purely in terms of the guild which exercised jurisdiction over it.² The numerous translations between misteries may have been attempts by craftsmen who had previously operated outside the formal structures of their chosen occupation, to identify themselves formally as 'tailors' or 'goldsmiths', and thereby place themselves in the running for admission to the guild of that craft at some future date. Many would not have bothered to translate their freedoms as the city custom theoretically allowed them to practise any craft, but would have affirmed their occupational loyalties later by joining the livery of a particular craft. Occasionally, however, it is possible to find examples of craftsmen transferring from the guild of one craft to another. The minutes of the Tailors' Court for 10 October 1492 record that Thomas Barbour, 'corsour', was granted leave to 'translate his copy of the felaship of corsours afforsaid to be a broder of this company which was graunted unto hym for viiis iiid'.³ In other words, unlike many of the non-tailor craftsmen who joined the fraternity of St. John the Baptist for religious and social reasons, Barbour was clearly identifying himself as a tailor.

Membership of the livery of a craft was therefore a function largely of wealth, combined with the moral qualities expected of someone who was expected to represent the craft in the urban community at large. It is also important to note that the fraternity was not

¹ Accounts, I, *passim*.

² Swanson, 'Craft Guilds', p.39.

³ Court Minutes, II, f.44v.

a preserve of the elderly: those who joined did so at a relatively young age, on average only five and a half years after presenting an apprentice for the first time. Such men would then spend an average of twenty-one years in the clothing before their deaths.¹ As will be shown, in so far as gerontocratic tendencies were exhibited by the Tailors' guild it was in the composition of the Court of Assistants rather than the livery as a whole.

II. Livery and Yeomanry: Community or Conflict?

The composition of the livery of the London tailors was, therefore, the product of a variety of influences, in which wealth and social status played a crucial role. The existence of such a select group at the apex of the craft structure is bound to raise questions concerning the aims of guild legislation, and the nature of the hierarchy itself. In particular, it is important to examine the role of what were generally known as the 'yeoman' or 'bachelor' fraternities which, by the sixteenth century formed an integral part of the craft structure. Were they, for example, simply a means by which the Master, Wardens and Court of Assistants of a particular craft could exercise a form of social control over craftsmen outside the livery? Historians such as Unwin and Lipson, certainly, saw the development of bachelor fraternities as the reflection of a divergence between the economic interests of liverymen and those outside the clothing.² In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this took the form of a polarisation of masters and journeymen, whilst in the sixteenth century mercantile domination of the livery companies resulted in the subordination of the interests of artisans. Such conclusions have been challenged by both Archer and Rappaport for the sixteenth century, and should also be examined critically with regard to the earlier period.³

The origins of the yeomen fraternities in London do, it is true, provide some justification for the view that the senior fraternities regarded them with suspicion, and sought to curtail their activities and ensure that they remained subordinate to the livery. The half century following the Black Death saw the formation in London of several organisations composed of wage labourers which, according to the City and guild authorities, were

¹ Accounts, I-III, *passim*; PRO, Prob.11/1-11; GL, MS 9171/1-7; 9051/1; *CWCH*, II, *passim*.

² Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.223-228; E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England: Volume I, The Middle Ages* (London, 1937), pp.392-408.

³ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* pp.108-12; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp.219-32.

attempting to force up wages through collective action. In 1350 the master shearmen complained that their workers were insisting on being paid 'by the cloth' rather than at the usual daily rates, 'and they do so greatly hurry over the same that they do great damage to the folks to whom the cloths belong'. At the same time, efforts were being made to punish retailers who were putting their prices up.¹ Thirty years later, the City made a proclamation against 'congregations, covins and conspiracies' which was cited in 1387 when the overseers of the mystery of Cordwainers complained that several wage-labourers of the craft had organised an illegal fraternity of 'like people' which met on the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin at Friars Preachers 'to the prejudice of the trade'. The ostensibly religious character of the organisation was enhanced by the presence of one Brother William Bartone who, allegedly, made an agreement with the journeymen to acquire Papal confirmation of their fraternity.² The subversive nature of these organisations seems clear, and is reinforced by the evidence from other towns and cities in Europe where similar organisations proliferated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in response to a variety of social, economic and demographic pressures. As early as 1285 the journeymen weavers of Rouen were accused of forming illegal *taquehans*, whilst in later fifteenth century Colmar the journeymen bakers were able to organise a major strike through an alliance with their counterparts in Strasbourg and Basel.³

While not denying their perceived subversive functions, the prohibitions of civic authorities and the guilds are of limited value as a guide to the intentions and motives of artisans in forming such associations. To begin with, as will be shown, the boundaries between masters and wage labourers were blurred: many employers themselves undertook paid employment to supplement their income.⁴ Probably only a small core of wealthy craftsmen was able to remain continuously on the employer's side of the wage equation. Secondly, despite the rhetorical insistence upon the 'feigned' nature of their religious

¹ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.250-1; *ibid.*, 253-4 (List of prices to be charged for various goods); CPMR, 1323-64, pp.228 (butchers and wine-drawers, 1349), 229-30 (cordwainers and curriers, 1349).

² Riley, *Memorials*, pp.495-6. For other such congregations see *ibid.*, pp.542-44; CPMR, 1323-64, pp.225-6, 231, 237; *ibid.*, 1364-81, pp.54-6, 291-94.

³ Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work', pp.18-22. See also Geremek, *Le Salarial*, pp.101-118.

⁴ See below, pp.205-215, 240-51.

activities, the fraternity was itself a popular method of association which employed the language of brotherhood to bind together people who were not blood relations. Hence, although yeomen fraternities were, on occasion, perceived as prejudicial to the interests of the masters, they were in many ways following the masters in using the structure of a fraternity to articulate common needs and concerns, and in addition to establish a common fund which could be used to help the poor and sick among them.

These points are well illustrated by the yeomen tailors of London. Like the associations of saddlers and cordwainers, the fraternity of yeomen tailors appears to have originated as an illegal, subversive organisation of wage labourers, prior to its assimilation into the guild structure in the later fifteenth century.¹ In 1415, a complaint was made to the Mayor and Aldermen about the behaviour of a group of servants and journeymen of the yeomen tailors who had 'consorted together in dwelling houses and behaved in an unruly manner, having assaulted among others Thomas Tropenell one of the masters of the Mistery'. The charge was investigated and the Master of the London Tailors, Thomas Whitynham was ordered to come to the Guildhall to answer for the behaviour of the yeomen. The ring leaders, David Brekenhok, John Stanbury and several others were ordered to leave a house in Garlickhithe, to stop living together, and finally to cease wearing liveries at unlawful assemblies.² Two years later the City took a similarly firm line when four members of the fraternity of 'yomantaillours' asked for permission to meet yearly on the feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist (29 August) in St. John's church Clerkenwell. Permission was denied by the Mayor and Aldermen, who feared that disturbances would result 'as similar assemblies of the same mistery had done before'.³

These two incidents would seem to support the assertion that yeomen fraternities were still frowned upon by the authorities in the early fifteenth century, and that, as A.H. Johnson put it, this was symptomatic of a 'cleavage between the masters and journeymen'.⁴ Yet it would be a mistake to see the relations between the yeomen and the senior fraternity purely in oppositional and class based terms. To begin with, there are many indications that the

¹ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, p.224.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, p.136.

³ *Ibid.*, I, pp.187-8.

⁴ Johnson, *Drapers*, i, p.23.

yeomen tailors were, by 1415, already an accepted organisation within the mistery as a whole. They had a common box from at least 1414 when John Creek, a wealthy and influential member of the livery left 20s to the alms of the 'valect cissorem'.¹ There are no indications in the records of the Tailors that there was any attempt made to suppress the yeomen. On the contrary, an entry in the accounts for 1417-18 shows that the senior fraternity provided financial support 'envers les vadlets de lour supplicacion direct as mair et aldermanis', at a cost of 53s 4d.² Further evidence for the relations between the yeomen and the senior fraternity reveals a similar picture. In 1431-32, for example, the 'compagnie des yeman taillours' contributed £6 13s 4d towards the new roof of the kitchen at Tailors' Hall.³ The fortunate survival of an ordinance of 1436-37 reveals that the yeomen were allowed to celebrate an annual feast and wear liveries, as long as the jollifications were conducted under the watchful eyes of the Master and Wardens of the Livery. The yeomen were to attend Mass at the church of St. Martin Outwich 'fast bi Taillourshalle' on the feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist. They were then to proceed to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell for their annual assembly 'under the rule and governaunce of the Maister and Wardens of the Fraternite of Seint John Baptist of taillours of London' prior to attending an election dinner at Tailors' Hall, at which four wardens were to be chosen for the coming year.⁴ These celebrations were officially sanctioned by the Livery therefore and made use of the strong links which the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist had with both St. Martin's and with the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem at Clerkenwell.⁵

The positive attitude of the Tailors' guild towards the yeoman tailors might seem to be at odds with the general hostility towards associations of wage labourers exhibited by the City and the guilds in the later fourteenth century, which re-surfaced in 1415. Unwin, for example, was convinced that these associations were essentially made up of 'journeymen on strike', and did not become 'respectable' organisations for young masters until the sixteenth

¹ GL, MS. 9051/1 ff.308v-9.

² Accounts, I, f.105.

³ Accounts, I, f.227.

⁴ Misc. Ords., ff.8v-9.

⁵ Above, pp.14-15.

century.¹ If so, it is unlikely that they would have been accorded the prominence in the formal structure of a craft organisation which was given to the yeomen tailors in the early fifteenth century. Changed circumstances may have been partly responsible. Although fifteenth-century combinations of wage labourers were still seen as a threat, as evidenced by a dispute between the bakers and their journeymen in 1441, incidents of this kind were certainly far less frequent than in the half century following the plagues of 1348-49, and the political atmosphere less highly charged.² This may have been reflected in the prominence of other issues, such as immigration to the capital, which came to preoccupy the minds of the the guilds. It is possible that fifteenth century London, despite continuing depopulation, witnessed the creation of a kind of equilibrium in the labour market. Increased economic opportunities, manifested at first in the demands for higher wages, may have resulted in the longer term advancement of many craftsmen to a position where wage labour was not the only source of income available. As will be shown, the relatively low cost of setting up as a tailor may have been responsible for the large numbers of workshops in the capital, and this implies a reduction in the numbers of permanent wage labourers, and an increase in the numbers of individuals for whom wage labour was either a stage in the *cursus honorum*, or a part-time activity. These changes would have served to undermine any sense of common purpose and rendered them less of a threat. Certainly, alliances of journeymen in the fifteenth century were often temporary and localised affairs, 'a function of age and the nature of the career cycle'.³ Groups of wage labourers contained individuals with a variety of experiences and expectations. The ordinances of the Bladesmiths, drawn up in 1408, were clearly referring to unskilled servants when they asserted that a master was not to teach a servant the secrets of the craft as he would his apprentice.⁴ On the other hand, a revolt of journeymen among the London goldsmiths in the 1470s was made up of at least ten men in their twenties who subsequently gained respectability as masters in the craft.⁵ The fifteenth

¹ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, p.224.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.263-6.

³ Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work' p.14.

⁴ Riley, *Memorials*, p.570.

⁵ Reddaway and Walker, *Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company*, p.154. Four even went on to hold office within the guild.

century yeomanries reflected a much broader range of economic circumstances and aspirations than Unwin allowed. It is even possible to see this diversity in the supposedly rebellious late-fourteenth century fraternities: a recently discovered guild return of 1388-89 from the 'yomanrie of curreiours', based in White Friars, shows that masters as well as servants were regulated by the Wardens.¹ Perhaps the best example is that of the Skinners where the 'yeman companye', dedicated to the feast of the Assumption, had been in existence since at least 1402; the class basis of this fraternity was much broader than that of the livery, some being artisans while others were clearly destined for membership of the livery.² The records of many guilds do, in particular, indicate a recognition that those outside the livery had often reached a specific stage in their careers: in 1430 the Grocers referred to 'howsholders and schoppholders that ar not inne the livere'.³ It is interesting to note also that, of a list of forty-two householders and shopholders among the grocers of 1431, half subsequently went on to join the livery. On the other hand, eighteen out of fifty householders of 1428 were in the service of others.⁴

A similar picture can be seen in the social composition of the yeomen tailors. In the case of the wage labourers, it seems significant that the record of the dispute of 1415 referred to them as 'servientes et allocati cissorum'. The 'allocati' may have been covenanted servants, and the 'servientes' casual labourers who possessed fewer prospects for advancement. These differences in opportunities and status may have been temporarily supplanted by a common purpose.⁵ However, it seems likely that such men represented at most half the total membership. In 1445, ninety-four yeomen, along with thirty-nine liverymen, were fined for failing to ride to greet Margaret of Anjou on her arrival in

¹ Bodl. MS. London Rolls 3. These masters were probably less-well off craftsmen, perhaps subordinated to the leather-sellers, see Barron, 'Guild Certificates' (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr. Barron for allowing me to consult a draft of her introduction to the returns.

² Lambert ed., *Skinners*, pp.74-5; Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.112-15.

³ Kingdon, *Grocers*, ii, p.178.

⁴ Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London', p.254.

⁵ CLRO, Letter Book I, ff.151-151v. A similar distinction can be discerned among the bowyers of York, and may be paralleled in the 'knecht' and 'knabe' of the skinners of Strashourg and Friebourg, see Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.100.

London.¹ Some, such as 'Martin Portman is man' and 'vicar is man', were clearly working as wage labourers. Many more, however, appear to have been established craftsmen, albeit in the early stages of their careers. Forty-six (or just over fifty percent) had already taken on their first apprentices, most of them during the preceding ten years. For a select few the yeomanry was a stepping-stone to admission to the livery itself: ten (or twenty-two percent) of the forty-six masters among the yeomen can be identified as future liverymen. One of them, Gilbert Keyes, was a model for fellow yeomen to admire: after presenting his first apprentice in 1441-42, he joined the livery at some point between 1445 and 1453, became Warden in 1465, Master in 1487 and was active both as a City official and as a cloth merchant.²

It is perhaps not surprising that proportionately fewer yeomen tailors went on to the livery than their counterparts among the grocers and mercers. The 1047 freemen listed in the mercers' accounts between 1391 and 1464 included 456 liverymen.³ These two crafts were already being organised into the classic form of the sixteenth century 'livery company', where the yeomanry was predominantly viewed as a society for young merchants-in-waiting.⁴ As with the sixteenth century companies, however, it is important not to generalise about the nature of the relations between livery and yeomanry among their fifteenth century predecessors. The composition of the yeomen tailors reflected the diversity of the craft as a whole which included a small mercantile element at its apex, yet was predominantly a large and essentially artisan mystery, with all the variations in economic circumstances which that entailed. This diversity, unlike the relative homogeneity of the smaller, mercantile crafts, and some of the more specialised mysteries, might seem to militate against the creation of a sense of common purpose and identity between the 'livery' and the 'yeomanry' of the Tailors. Despite the overlap between the two groups, was not the 'social separation' of yeomanry and livery bound to create conflict rather than harmony? This question is rendered still more

¹ Accounts, I, f.387v. Liverymen paid on average just over 3s 7d each (range 1s - 6s 8d), while the yeomen paid only 2s 2d (range 1s - 5s).

² CPR, 1461-1467, p.463; Clode, *Early History*, II, p.338 ; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, pp. 123, 133; Cobb ed., *Overseas Trade*, nos. 507, 573.

³ Imray, "Les Bones Gentes", p.176.

⁴ For the yeomen tailors in the sixteenth century see Sleigh-Johnson, 'Merchant Tailors' Company', pp.235-294.

important by the fact that, among the tailors at least, the livery seems to have shrunk still further as a total proportion of the freemen of the craft in the fifteenth century. It has been shown that annual admissions of tailors to the guild remained constant in the period covered by the accounts; it is equally clear that the same period saw the numbers of masters presenting apprentices rise from an average of around 40 *per annum* in the 1420s to eighty *per annum* in the late 1460s. To what extent was this increasingly narrow oligarchy able to create and maintain a sense of community within the craft?

From the point of view of liverymen, of course, the yeomanry represented an important stage in the *cursus honorum*. Many guild members left bequests to both fraternities as if remembering specific stages in their careers. In 1470, Thomas Parker left ‘my best standyng maser’ to the ‘maister taillours’ and ‘also I biqueth unto the felawship of the yomen my standyng maser next the best’.¹ Secondly, the existence of a structure and hierarchy among the yeomen, while facilitating the creation of a sense of community and a degree of autonomy, provided the Master and Wardens with an additional means through which the craft as a whole could be supervised. The yeomen had their own wardens from at least 1436, and in 1489 William Brounyng was elected as one of the ‘xvi ad gubernacionem de lez bachelers company’, an unusual reference to a Court among a yeomen fraternity in this period.² Such a large body may be an indication of the size of the yeomanry of the tailors, and the developed nature of its organisation and activities. It probably acted as a lower court for the Company, thus reducing the burden on the officials and Court of the livery. Like the sixteenth-century crafts, the representatives of the yeomen were used by the livery in the collection of fines and subscriptions, as well as seeking out wrongdoers: in 1486 John Barnard was brought before the Tailors’ Court for ‘occupieng of a freman of another craft’ for which he as fined 6d, of which 4d was paid to the ‘vewers of the yemen felaship for their labur in that be halfe for presentyng of the same’.³ This function of the officials of the yeomen seems to have evolved gradually during the fifteenth century, as a consequence of the desire of the Master and Wardens of the Livery to become more involved in their affairs, perhaps because of shrinking size of the senior fraternity compared with the numbers outside

¹ PRO, Prob.11/5, ff.243-43v.

² Court Minutes, II, f.12v.

³ Court Minutes, I, f.3v.

it. It was the Livery, through their Court of Assistants which determined in the autumn of 1488 that 'lez yoman tayllours' were henceforth to be known as 'le company de lez bachelers in hac mistere'.¹ Five years later, another entry in the minutes records that three wardens of the Livery attended a quarter-day held by the Bachelors, at which the Clerk of the Livery, Henry Mayour read out certain ordinances to those present.² Similarly, the subordination of the yeomen skinnners to the livery appears to have been tightened towards the end of the fifteenth century.³

The attitude of the yeomen tailors to these hierarchical developments is not clear. On the one hand there might have been a certain amount of resentment at the use of their officers as the delegates of the Livery. In 1452, for instance, the yeomen skinnners were forced to ask permission from the Court of Assistants before they could distribute alms, and were required to produce their accounts for audit each year.⁴ Yet it would be wrong to see this in purely oppositional terms; the diversity of the membership of the yeomanry of the tailors militated against the development of a coherent set of issues and grievances around which they could unite against the livery. Their fraternity was largely dedicated to the provision of religious and welfare services, rather than the promotion of specific economic complaints. For the upwardly mobile, the reinforcement of hierarchical values was perceived as no bad thing: election as a warden of the yeomanry was another office to aim for, and one which might speed their passage to the livery.⁵ Although yeomen fraternities only played a minor role in the formal life of the senior guilds, this does not mean that their views were unrepresented or regarded with suspicion.⁶ In 1493, three unspecified articles in a 'bachelers bill' were considered and ratified by the Livery of the Tailors, first at a normal meeting of the Court of Assistants, and then at a full quarter-day meeting. When they worked, these channels of communication were probably effective and conducive to the creation of a sense of

¹ Court Minutes, II, ff. 3v, 4v.

² Court Minutes, II, f.73.

³ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.114.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.114.

⁵ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p.108.

⁶ Representatives of the yeomanries were often invited to the annual feast of the livery, cf. Johnson, *Drapers*, i, p.149.

participation in the life of what were becoming known as 'companies', a term which included both livery and yeomanry. It is of course true that guilds and municipal corporations alike sought to strengthen their rule by emphasising their material and moral worth through ceremonial and display, but rather than representing the deliberate construction of a 'dominant ideology', this was a response to popular conceptions of government in urban society.¹

III. The Court of Assistants

1. Social Composition

Yet the argument still persists that guilds in towns and cities were invariably out of touch with, and unrepresentative of, the wider body of craftsmen, and that this was reflected in the policies they introduced. The records of the Tailors' Court, which survive for the years 1486-93, constitute an invaluable record of the nature of the government of a medieval craft by a small group of craftsmen and merchants drawn from the livery. The Courts of Assistants, which came to form the hub of the sixteenth-century livery companies, had their origins in the early fourteenth century. This period saw many misteries develop some kind of organisational structure, often, but not always, through the establishment of a governing fraternity. Common to most, if not all, of these organised misteries was the existence of a group of craftsmen which acted as a regulating body within each craft. The appointment of these men was approved by the City, and consequently the lists survive in the Letter Books. In 1328, for example, twenty-four tailors were said to have been elected to govern the mystery.² While the charters granted to the London guilds normally mention only the Master and Wardens in connection with the supervision of the misteries and the periodic searches for defective workmanship, these lists show that the principle of having 'assistants' to the Master and Wardens was well established. In 1379 six grocers were selected 'to be helping and counselling of the same wardens', and the Mercers' records show that an informal committee existed in the first half of the fifteenth century.³ In most cases it is clear that Courts of Assistants were becoming properly constituted bodies for the administration of the

¹ Rigby, "Oligarchy", pp.62-7.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, E, p.234.

³ Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, pp.218-9.

crafts: the Tailors had such a body from at least 1435-6, when a series of ordinances was agreed by the Master and Wardens,

and bi wyse discrecions and good avyse of my Maister Rauf Holand alderman, Richard Nordon, William Chapman, William Holgrave, John Knotte, John Legge, John Kyng, Roger Holbeche, Jeffrey Guybon, Thomas Davy, Piers Diker, Thomas Shragger, Richard Skernyng, John Westwode, John Arcall, John Locok, Poul Wylly, Thomas Gay.¹

The first nine of these assistants were former Masters of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist (the livery), while Thomas Davy and John Arcall held that office in 1436 and 1437 respectively; it was thus an extremely illustrious and wealthy group of elder statesmen.² The Tailors’ Court at that time numbered a maximum of sixteen, but by 1442 it had increased in size to twenty-four, and meetings of the Court were a regular feature of the life of the guild.³ Indeed, between 25 June 1488 and 9 August 1493 the Court held 290 meetings, including fourteen quarter-days, an average of more than a meeting a week. The ordinary meetings were normally held on Mondays and Fridays, with quarterdays confined to Wednesdays.

Table 4.3. Members of the Tailors’ Court attending more than 20 meetings, 1488-1493.⁴

Max. no. of meetings: 68 (12 quarter-days)

1. Hugh Pemberton	56 (10 quarter-days)	10. Gilbert Keyes	32 (8)
2. John Percyvale	51 (10)	11. Roger Barlowe	30 (6)
3. Robert Duplage	48 (9)	12. Stephen Jenyns	29 (3)
4. John Lee	46 (8)	13. Alan Hoberd	28 (4)
5. Richard West	44 (8)	14. John Swan	25 (3)
6. William Galle	37 (6)	15. Walter Povy	24 (4)
7. William Buk	36 (8)	16. Richard Adyff	24 (3)
8. John Heed	34 (8)	17. John Spencer	22 (6)
9. James Fitte	33 (4)	18. Owen Boughton	21 (3)

Of particular importance are the lists of those who attended the Court, lists which survive for 68 meetings, of which twelve were quarter-days. Meetings were reasonably well attended: both ordinary meetings and quarter-days attracted between eleven and twelve

¹ Misc. Ords. f.8.
² Clode, *Early History*, II, p.337.
³ Misc. Ords., f.9v.
⁴ Court Minutes II, *passim*. Roger Barlowe died in April 1493.

members. It is interesting to note that there were several prominent individuals who habitually turned up to a higher proportion of meetings than their colleagues, despite the fact that a total of thirty-six tailors served on the court at some point between June 1488 and August 1493 (see Table 4.3).

If these findings are applied to the entire 290 meetings recorded in the minute book, a ‘typical’ meeting of the Tailors’ Court might, therefore, have comprised the first eleven of these liverymen, Hugh Pemberton to Roger Barlowe, all of whom attended more than thirty of the sixty-eight meetings. Age, wealth and experience were clearly important factors in these attendance figures: all but one of the first eleven men on the list had already served as Master of the guild, James Fitte being the only exception.¹ Of the others who attended more than twenty meetings, four men (Jenyns, Povy, Spencer and Boughton) were elected to that office after 1488. The attendance rates of the two aldermen, Hugh Pemberton and John Percyvale are particularly impressive, given that their civic duties entailed attendance at numerous meetings of the Court of Aldermen. In terms of the age and experience of the Court members, the Court of 1436 bears a remarkable resemblance to that of 1488. As Table 4.4 shows, approximately the same proportion were past or future Masters of the guild, and the average length of service as a liveryman was very similar.

Table 4.4. The Courts of 1436 and 1488

Year	Number of Members	Former Masters	Future Masters	Av. Years in Livery ²
1436	18	9 (50%)	2 (11%)	22.2
1488	18	9 (50%)	4 (22%)	24.9

This suggests that, as former or future Masters, members of the Tailors’ Court were probably in their early fifties, much older than most liverymen who, as suggested above, tended to join in their early thirties. In this respect there would seem to be a clear difference between the opportunities available to liverymen in the fifteenth century, and their successors in the mid to late sixteenth, of whom approximately two-thirds went on to serve as Assistants. In the earlier period, membership of the Court was a reward for those who had served as Master, or else were marked down for that office, whilst a century later it had

¹ Clode, *Early History* II, pp.338-9.

² i.e. from the date of admission until 1436/1488.

become an essential part of the guild *cursus*.¹ Does this suggest that the fifteenth century court was less 'representative', that it was dominated by elder statesmen whose horizons and, more importantly, economic interests, were at odds with those of the majority of craftsmen?

In the light of this question, it is interesting to note that there was one way in which the composition of the Court changed over the half-century from 1436. While only Ralph Holland and one or two others in the earlier list can be found to have engaged in even limited cloth dealing activity, their successors of 1488 were predominantly a mercantile group. The activities of Pemberton, Percyvale, West and Keyes in the overseas cloth trade, in particular, were on a far greater scale than anything attempted by tailors in the early fifteenth century. Thus it could be argued that, in contrast to the picture in 1436, the government of a predominantly artisan craft, one of the largest in the capital, was in the hands of a relatively few wealthy merchants at the close of the fifteenth century.² In one sense this was precisely the impression which the Tailors wished to create in the City while they lobbied hard for John Percyvale's election to the Mayoralty and sought their new charter from Henry VII. Yet this also had the potential to alienate many artisans in the craft, including many liverymen, if the policies adopted by the Court served merely to further their own mercantile interests, through the monopolisation of the supply of cloth to artisan tailors, for instance. The available evidence, however, does not tend to support such a view. In the first place, the nature of the cloth market in London, as Thrupp argued, was not conducive to the creation of a monopoly by any guild, not even the Drapers.³ This was one of the reasons for the rise to prominence of the Clothworkers after the merger of the Shearmen and Fullers guilds in 1528. Conditions were different in Cologne, where the tailors were subordinate members of the Clothiers guild and were, in theory, supposed to buy their cloth from the cloth merchants in the same guild.⁴ A similar situation may have existed among the Skinners of London, where the Livery was attempting to keep the retail trade in skins in

¹ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p.359.

² See below, pp.243-49; Only five members of the court of 1436, Holland, Chapman, Legge, King and Davy, appear on the assessment for the subsidy of that year which assessed those with lands or rents worth more than £5 *per annum*, Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, Appendix B, pp.378-388.

³ Thrupp, 'The Grocers', p.262.

⁴ Epstein, *Wage Labor and the Gilds*, pp.86-7.

the hands of its members.¹ Secondly, as will be shown, the regular searches undertaken by the wardens of the London tailors seem to have been designed mainly to fine those who were selling sub-standard cloth, rather than to put artisans in their place. Finally, although the numbers of merchant tailors were growing, the mystery and, crucially, the livery, was still overwhelmingly artisan in composition; the buying and selling of cloth was, for most tailors, an occasional sideline to their clothing businesses, rather than a mainstream activity.²

2. The Settlement of Disputes

Further evidence for the relatively uncontroversial role of the Tailors' Court can be found in the numerous cases of arbitrations, and in the punishment of 'transgressours' against the ordinances of the craft. The authority of the Master, Wardens and the Court does not seem to have been subject to excessive criticism, although the nature of the surviving sources would tend to filter out dissatisfaction from below. As with much municipal government in general, complaints, when they arose, generally centred on the quality of government, not on the right of the wealthiest members of the craft to rule.³ In March 1493 the Court heard that the Master, Walter Povy, sent the beadle of the craft to the house of William Barton, commanding him to appear to explain why he had not enrolled his apprentice within the first year of his term. Barton did so but, during the course of his examination at Tailors' Hall, declared that 'Maister Jenyns served hym lyke a false Judas whan he was maister of this feliship'.⁴ Walter Povy was himself not popular with some of the tailors who were brought before the Court during his time as Master. In July 1493, after Povy had been succeeded by Thomas Randall, one tailor, William Gerveys, declared that 'Maister Povey dyd unto hym whan he was ruler of this worshipful fraternitee open wrong and treated hym lyke no good Maister', and added that Povy was 'the [most] covetouse man that ever was in his dayes governour of the said company'.⁵ This is not to say, however, that Jenyns and Povy were unpopular with the membership at large. While serving as Master of the craft, both were at

¹ Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.121-5.

² See below, pp.243-49.

³ Rigby, '"Oligarchy"', pp.62-7.

⁴ Court Minutes, II, f.62.

⁵ Court Minutes, II, f.71v.

the forefront of the administration of justice among the London tailors; they had to summon craftsmen to appear at the Hall, lead the questioning of witnesses, and take the initiative in the formulation of solutions to be put to the Court. It should be noted that William Gerveys was himself a noted dissenter: a week after his outburst, in response to an ordinance concerning the employment of 'foreyns', he announced ominously in front of the Court that 'there were some persones which have sitten here that were greteste maynteyners of foreyns other wyse than ever he dyd'.¹ His words do, however, suggest that some at least were not prepared to remain silent in the face of, in their view, blatant hypocrisy on the part of their governors.

Resentment occasionally surfaced in the aftermath of the numerous arbitration settlements which were arrived at, normally by one or two members of the Court who were sent away to consider cases in detail. Normally, however, the judgements were accepted, principally because of the seniority and standing of the arbiters.² When one or both of the parties were themselves wealthy ex-Masters of the guild, problems could arise if one party failed to cooperate with the arbitration process. This happened in October 1492 when an apprenticeship dispute concerning John Heed, Master in 1483-4, got out of control.³ Heed's failure to cooperate, and his rudeness to his accuser, John Darby, meant that there could be no immediate solution. The case was passed to two arbiters, Alan Hoberd and Richard Hill, neither of whom was ever to hold the office of Master. Through the Clerk, they asked Heed to meet them at St. Thomas of Acres, so that he could tell his side of the story. The location was a popular one, designed to heighten the solemnity of the proceedings.⁴ Heed refused, saying that he did not approve of the choice of arbiters. Consequently, Heed was ordered to come to Tailors' Hall where two more arbiters, William Grene and Nicholas Nynes were chosen, with, significantly, Stephen Jenyns as 'umpiere'. Despite this Heed refused to bind himself to their decision, declaring that 'Stephen Jenyns shuld not be his juge nor the Maister neither for Stephen Jenyns had caused him to lose xxxviii li.' An acrimonious exchange

¹ Court Minutes, II, f.72v.

² For craft arbitration see C. Rawcliffe, "'That Kindliness Should be Cherished More and Discord Driven Out': the Settlement of Commercial Disputes by Arbitration in Later Medieval England", in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth Century England*, ed. J. Kermode (Gloucester, 1991), pp.99-117.

³ The sequence of events is in Court Minutes II, ff.45-46v.

⁴ Rawcliffe, 'Arbitration', p.110.

ensued, in which Heed declared that because he himself had 'sitten in the rome' (the chair of office), the Master, Walter Povy, had no right to judge him. Povy responded, saying that it was a pity that Heed had ever been Master of the fellowship, to which Heed retorted that he was not alone in thinking that it was 'more pitee that ye sit in the rome that ye sitteth in'. After this Povy, perhaps wisely, brought the matter to a head by asking whether Heed was prepared to obey the ordinances of the Court. Heed answer was blunt: 'Sir I know thise ordynaunces as well as ye do but I woll not abide nor fulfill theym'. The Court had no choice but to refer the case to the Mayor, who 'seyng his obstynace wilfull presumpcion and continuell disobedience' put him in prison for five days. The spell behind bars was evidently effective: Heed returned, full of remorse, and begged the Master and Wardens to 'be good masters and frends unto hym'. He was fined 20s, and the arbiters were able to continue with their deliberations.

Many of the challenges to municipal government were similarly mounted by individuals drawn from the elite. As has been shown, Ralph Holland's standing as a wealthy Alderman undoubtedly made the radical movement he headed all the more dangerous. Such danger prompted the Tailors' Court to go to inordinate lengths in order to bring John Heed back into line, even though this meant involving the City authorities. On the whole the Court's decisions were respected, and it seems to have provided an important means of dissipating tensions between craftsmen without the need to involve the City authorities. Even in the case of prominent merchants with reputations and egos to protect, arbitration could be successful if handled correctly. In March 1490, John Spencer and Walter Povy were asked to arbitrate between fellow Court members Richard West, William Grene and Rauf Bukberd. All these men were past or future Masters. To avoid controversy, John Swan, John Percyvale and Stephen Jenyns, were appointed to supervise the arbitration.¹ The rhetoric employed by guilds and fraternities was, of course, designed to convey an impression of harmony and community: in a dispute over a debt, heard in February 1490, for example, the two parties were required by the Tailors' Court to 'take the other of them by the hande and to desyre that good love may be had bytwene them from hensforth'.² Yet it would be precipitate to dismiss such sentiments and expectations as unrealistic. Although it is difficult to assess the

¹ Court Minutes, II, f.21. See Appendix II for their careers.

² Court Minutes, II, f.19v.

level of participation in the spiritual and ritual life of a guild, and the sense of community thus generated, evidence from the sixteenth century does confirm the impression that it was the quality of rule which was normally challenged, rather than the right of a wealthy elite to formulate and implement policy.¹ There is a real sense, therefore, in which craft organisations often made a very tangible contribution towards the maintenance of urban stability.

IV. The Enforcement of Ordinances: the Nature and Limits of Guild Authority

Although one would not wish to take the argument too far, the records of the Tailors' Company do suggest that hierarchical values could often serve to reinforce the sense of community in the craft, rather than undermine it. Similar questions can be asked of the aims of guild policies, and their implementation, for the successful enforcement of ordinances necessarily relied upon a degree of consensus among craftsmen. Here the aims of the policy-makers are of crucial importance, and need to be viewed not simply through the legislation itself, but through the evidence for its execution. The theoretical control which guilds had over their crafts is much alluded to in the historiography of towns in this period, but the operation of these controls in practice is rarely discussed, principally due to the lack of studies of individual crafts, and the consequent reliance upon municipal records. Yet the jurisdiction enjoyed by guilds over the crafts had always been central to their very existence. The charters granted to many of the London Companies in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries specifically mentioned the periodic 'searches' which were to take place among all those who practised a particular craft. These rights were often the subject of bitter disputes between related guilds, and lay at the heart of the conflict between the Tailors and the Drapers in the 1430s and 1440s.

There were, inevitably, a number of practical obstacles which made the 'search' extremely difficult to carry out. The geographical location of craftsmen in the capital was one: by no means all skinners lived in Walbrook, Cornhill and Budge Row, as they were ordered to in 1365, which undoubtedly created problems for the wardens of the craft.² In any case, those areas which saw the establishment of craft fraternities in the fourteenth

¹ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p.140.

² Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.119.

century tended to be the locations of the shops and houses of wealthier craftsmen. In the case of the tailors this difficulty was compounded by the large size of the craft, and the fact that, until Fleet Street developed as an unofficial centre for the up-market end of the craft, there was no specific tailoring district within the capital.¹ Even the wealthier tailors, those whose wills survive, lived in over a hundred parishes in all parts of the capital. There were, in addition, many areas of towns and cities which were difficult if not impossible to regulate. Suburbs, such as Westminster and Southwark were ideal locations for the establishment of small-scale enterprises ready to serve the lucrative market for goods in the City, yet often out of reach of all but the most persistent of guild officials. Similarly, the privilege of sanctuary within the precincts of churches such as St. Martin le Grand, and Westminster Abbey could often create an 'island of ungoverned commerce'.² A second, related problem for many artisan crafts, particularly those which required little in the way of machinery, was the tendency of many newly qualified craftsmen to work hidden away in small chambers, because they could not afford to rent a ground floor shop. Such 'chambur holders' were the subject of several ordinances agreed by the Tailors' Court in 1450 and 1455, following complaints that the wardens were unable to make 'due serche and correccion upon their defautes'.³ Some had been fined in the past for such behaviour: in 1427-8, two 'sowers' were fined, one 'pur faisur dun gown en soun garet'.⁴ The concerns expressed in the ordinance do not, however, seem to have resulted in firm action, in the form of widespread fines. This may have been because enforcement was too difficult; on the other hand, as will be shown, the wardens were extremely active in other areas, which were considered more urgent.

Despite these problems, the records of the London crafts do indicate that the efforts of the wardens and officials were often effective. Dr. Veale, for example, cites the lack of evidence for the dyeing of furs as indicative of the effectiveness of the regulation of this outlawed practice.⁵ Similarly there is evidence to suggest that wardens did venture into the

¹ See below, pp.223-26.

² Rosser, 'London and Westminster', pp.56-7. See also Swanson, 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-48.

³ Misc. Ords. f.10 (1450).

⁴ Accounts, I, f.181.

⁵ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.120.

suburbs to enforce guild ordinances.¹ Positive evidence is also provided by the Tailors' records, which contain the names of scores of craftsmen fined for a variety of offences concerning apprenticeship, the quality of workmanship and the employment of 'foreyns'. As will be demonstrated, there were indeed limits to the effectiveness of guild officials, particularly in a large craft, but it is important to remember that the guilds themselves had priorities for enforcement based on a pragmatic understanding of their own capabilities and prevailing market conditions. The quality of workmanship is one area where the operation of the market should perhaps be given more credit than it has been.² The City records contain many instances of prosecutions, brought by customers who complained that the goods they bought were not of sufficient quality.³ Similarly, the records of the Exeter Tailors' guild contain instances of dissatisfied customers who complained to the guild about the wasting of cloth they had supplied to their tailor.⁴ The records of the Corporation of London provide many examples of fraudulent practices: dishonest bakers, for example, were found to have stolen pieces of dough, intended for customers' loaves, by means of a trap-door in the kneading board, underneath which crouched a small boy with a basket.⁵ Langland's description of Avarice's time as a draper's apprentice doubtless touched a nerve with many craft officials:

Amonge the riche rayes / I rendred a lessoun,
To broche hem with a pak-nedle / and plaited hem togyderes
And put hem in a presse / and pynned hem therinne,
Tyl ten yerdes or twelve / hadde tolled out threttene.⁶

In London, it is striking to note that the evidence for quality control over garment construction is remarkably slight, given the industry of the Tailors' Wardens in other areas, described below. One of the few examples concerned Robert Simond, who was fined 6s 8d

¹ The skimmers paid their wardens 1s 3d to search 'Dutchmen skimmers in Southwark' in 1491-2, Lambert ed., *Skimmers*, p.131.

² A recent exception is B. Gustafsson, 'The Rise and Economic Behaviour of Medieval Craft Guilds: an economic-theoretical interpretation', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 35 (1987), pp.1-40.

³ Riley, *Memorials*, *passim*.

⁴ Smith ed., *English Gilds*, p.321.

⁵ Riley, *Memorials*, p.163

⁶ William Langland, *The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. W.W. Skeat (EETS, 38, 1869), Passus B, V, l.211-14.

in 1436-7 'pur jackes faitz unsuffisauntly'.¹ The only concerted effort in this direction occurred in 1464 when, in the wake of the sumptuary legislation of that year, several tailors were fined for making tunics of what was considered an indecent length.² There are, significantly, few examples of tailors fined for wasting cloth, despite the demands of new, more complex fashions.³ In the case of the tailors the sheer size of the craft may well have encouraged competition based on quality, thus leaving the craft authorities to concentrate upon other matters. The concerns of the City government in different areas of the urban economy may also have played a part; in particular, the quality of food and drink was a matter of greater concern, as evidenced in the Assize of Bread and other regulations.⁴

What then were the areas of primary concern for the Tailors' guild, and how did these relate to the hierarchy and structure of the craft? As will be shown the fifteenth century saw the increasing involvement of tailors in the selling of cloth, from a select few who supplied the Great Wardrobe under Henry IV and V, to the day-to-day buying and selling at Backwell Hall.⁵ References to the searches conducted by the wardens of the guild reflect this trend. In 1427-28, for example, two tailors were fined 20d and 10s respectively for selling cloth which had not been fulled properly, or as the entry has it 'pur sellyng kendale unwet et autres draps'.⁶ Many similar offences were uncovered by the wardens in the years which followed: in 1463-64 John West was found with 'una pecia de unwet cloth' in his house by the wardens, who endured a torrent of 'verbis inhonestis' when they attempted to search the premises.⁷ As suggested above, it seems unlikely that these searches were in any way an attempt to restrict the cloth-trading activities of tailors, given the open nature of the market, and that only a small minority of members of the craft were merchants in the fullest sense

¹ Accounts I, f.278.

² (3 Edw. IV c.5), *Statutes*, ii, pp.399-402; Accounts, II, f.242v. For the implications of changes in fashion for tailoring see below, pp.218-19, 223.

³ See S.M. Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince* (Woodbridge, 1984) and M. Scott, *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: A Visual History of Costume* (London, 1986).

⁴ Thrupp, 'The Gilds', p.259; *idem.*, *Bakers*, pp.12-39.

⁵ See below, pp.243-49.

⁶ Accounts, I, f.181v.

⁷ Accounts, II, f.242v.

of the word. The principal concern of the wardens of the London Tailors seems to have been to seek out those who were trying to cut corners, and thus damage the reputation of the craft as a whole. From early in the fifteenth century, therefore, the Wardens were accustomed to searching for cloth as well as for clothing. To help in determining the correct length of pieces of cloth, they brought with them a cloth yard, first mentioned in 1419-20, when 14d was paid for 'i standard mesore seled'.¹ Their role became all the more important after the acquisition of the charter of 1439, which precipitated the dispute with the drapers. After this date, the Wardens, Clerk and Beadle of the guild were regular visitors to St. Bartholomew's cloth fair, held at Smithfield, the expenses for which were recorded in the accounts.

Perhaps the single most important concern which was articulated both by craft and municipal authorities in the middle ages was the perceived threat posed by immigrants from other towns, or indeed other countries. In London, as in Ghent, and many other towns and cities in Europe, action was taken on a number of levels to try and preserve the opportunities for native craftsmen.² In London, many immigrants were 'alientes' from the continent, particularly Flemings, Dutchmen and Germans, who may have comprised between two and four percent of London's population in the fifteenth century. In 1441 for example, the tax rolls indicate that there were approximately 1,500 aliens in the capital, more than the populations in Southwark and Westminster combined.³ Less quantifiable are the 'forinseci', the hundreds of craftsmen from other towns, cities and villages throughout England who entered London, but who never became formally part of the craft structures. The City and the crafts adopted a two-pronged attack in their efforts to minimise the competition from such workers. In the first place, 'foreyns' and aliens had to overcome numerous obstacles before they were allowed to practise a craft. The Goldsmiths, for instance, required craftsmen from the provinces to undertake an apprenticeship in London, regardless of the training they had already received, if they wished to become freemen. Servants from outside London were not to be enrolled for less than seven years. Finally, aliens were required to pay £20 for their

¹ Accounts, I, f.113v; The surviving silver cloth yard, now at Merchant Taylors' Hall, was made sometime between 1485 and 1509, see F.M. Fry and R.S. Tewson, *An Illustrated Catalogue of Silver Plate of the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors* (London, 1929), pp.5-7.

² Nicholas, *Flanders*, p.111.

³ See Thrupp, 'Aliens', pp.251-74.

freedom.¹ Such ordinances were bound to be ineffective if no effort was made to enforce them through the exercise of the right of search. In the case of the Goldsmiths, their concern was such that a statute, passed in 1478, explicitly rendered aliens living within two miles of the City liable to be searched by the London guild.²

Yet in many instances the attitudes towards strangers were ambiguous. This is exemplified in the case of the Tailors, for whom alien workers were both a useful source of skilled labour and a potential threat to their businesses and employment opportunities. It is clear from both the alien subsidy rolls and the Tailors' accounts, that many London tailors employed non-London craftsmen, particularly aliens, as servants. Robert Duplage, for instance, is listed in the return for Cordwainer Street Ward in 1483 as employing Robert Aleyn 'taillour theutonicus', while George Lovekyn, an alien himself and tailor to Edward IV and Henry VII employed four aliens in his house in Langbourne.³ Tailor employers were required to make an annual payment to the guild for each person taken on, and those who failed to pay were fined. Judging from the numbers of tailors who fined in this way, it seems clear that for many, aliens and foreigners were regarded as a convenient and cheap source of labour. Yet at the same time, the employment of large numbers of alien and foreign tailors was perceived as a threat to the prospects of young, London-trained tailors. In 1451, the Tailors guild complained to the Mayor and Aldermen that a 'great multitude of aliens and other foreigners of the said mistery come and resort to this city and daily sit and work openly in shops and upon stalls' as the employees of freemen of the craft. Consequently, they argued, those young men who had recently finished their apprenticeships were denied the expected opportunities to work as journeymen, 'and they move not but as vagabondes or else idle people under no rule nor governance gone about within this city and often times fall on riot and other misgovernance'. The City acceded to their request that freemen should pay a fine of 5s for each alien or foreign employed, and that defaulters should be presented to the Mayor and aldermen.⁴ Here the guild was clearly asserting the rights of its own apprentices

¹ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp.231-34 (late fifteenth century).

² (17 Edw. IV c.1), *Statutes*, ii, pp.457-58.

³ PRO E.179/242/25 mm.9d, 14d. For Lovekyn's career see A.F. Sutton, 'George Lovekyn, Tailor to Three Kings of England, 1470-1504', *Costume* 15 (1981), pp.1-12.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.337.

over those of aliens, despite the advantages which many employers saw in employing them. Significantly, the period after 1450 saw an increase in the numbers of masters fined by the Tailors' guild for not enrolling their servants, a reflection of the concern of the guild authorities. The surviving City records indicate that such concern continued to increase in the later fifteenth century. As has been shown, the Tailors and other guilds mounted a vigorous campaign to restrict further the opportunities available for aliens and foreigners.¹

As far as entry to the guild and the formal structures of the craft were concerned, the Tailors operated the familiar barriers of increased entry fees. Between 1398 and 1445, eighteen alien and foreign tailors were admitted to the freedom of the City by redemption. Two were English, one being a tailor 'de Tavystok in devensher', and only paid the normal rate of £3 or less.² The rest were required to pay sums ranging from £4 13s 4d to the £18 paid by James Florence 'de Utryght' in 1427-8.³ Yet such restrictions were not themselves able to prevent aliens and foreigners from setting up shop in the City. Once again, the alien subsidy rolls reveal that many immigrant tailors, particularly from the Low Countries, had acquired tenements and were themselves employing alien servants. A near neighbour of George Lovekyn, John Bracy, 'taillour theutonicus', himself employed four aliens, perhaps men he had brought with him from the continent.⁴ This clannishness was a feature of the activity of many of the 'Doche' in London: James Florence was among several alien tailors who became liverymen and were prominent employers of fellow aliens.⁵ Like Florence, many of these householders were probably legitimate tailors who continued to enjoy good relations with the authorities, perhaps due to the skills they brought with them from the continent.⁶ Many alien tailors were known as 'galymen', probably after the ships which brought them to London, and from which many may have begun to trade with the inhabitants

¹ Above, pp.99-102.

² Accounts, I, f.369v.

³ Accounts, I, f.182.

⁴ PRO, E.179/269/34, m.4v.

⁵ Thrupp, 'Aliens', p.265; Florence joined the livery in 1430-31 after gaining the freedom in 1427-28, Accounts, I, ff.216, 182. He employed four alien servants throughout the 1430s, at a cost of 20s *per annum* paid to the guild.

⁶ See Rosser, 'London and Westminster', p.54

of the capital.¹ In 1406-7, for instance, 51s 4d was received 'de iii shoppis des galymen', and thereafter the guild exacted regular 'forfets' and fines, primarily for the enrollment of their servants, but also to enable them to practise the craft: 23s 4d was received in 1434-5 'de Senter galyman pur luy et autres de ses servauntz'.² It is possible that many of these men arrived in London at a particular time each year, and were accustomed to seeking casual work during their stay. In 1425-26, for instance, Richard Welles was fined for employing two 'forein dutysch servauntz...pur le temps des galeys'.³ There were certainly limits to what was considered acceptable activity: in 1475 a City ordinance forbade 'galymen' to tout their wares around the streets of the City, rather than operating out of licenced shops.⁴ The Tailors of Southampton, in 1407, also sought to restrict the activities of alien tailors who came ashore from carraks and galleys.⁵ On the other hand, testimony to the skills and reputations of such men can be found in the records of the Mercers: in 1450-51 the large sum of £12 13s 4d was paid 'to a Galyman for a womannys gown of crymeson velvet playn'.⁶

What was more worrying for the guild were the numbers of less 'respectable' immigrants, whether described as 'galymen' or merely as 'foreins', who, like the 'chambur holders', worked hidden away, beyond the scrutiny of the wardens. Some crafts made an effort to confine the activities of immigrant workers to one part of the City: the skimmers in 1463 decided to designate 'Blanchampton', a manor in Aldgate, as a suitable place for them to work.⁷ The Tailors too were worried about the unsupervised activities of foreigners in London, and sent the Wardens, Clerk and Beadle out on many occasions to scrutinize their work: in 1429-30, for example, 13s 4d was spent 'as diversis foitz sur les serches del mistier

¹ Accounts, II, f.173v.

² Accounts, I, ff.33v, 255.

³ Accounts, I, ff.159.

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.135.

⁵ Historical Manuscripts Commission, 11th Report, Appendix pt. III (1887), p.11.

⁶ H.J. Creaton, 'The Wardens' Accounts of the Mercers' Company of London, 1347, 1391-1464' (Unpub. University of London M.Phil. thesis, 1977), II, p.144.

⁷ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.37. Blanch Appleton was a noted haunt of the unenfranchised, see Lobel ed., *Historical Atlas*, p.66. See also Barron, 'London and the Crown', p109, n. 48.

et autres homes pur warnyng des foreins pur son labour'.¹ In 1454-55, the wardens discovered a group of 'forinseci' who 'occupavit istam arte in hospiceo de la dragon iuxta magnam garderobam'.² The approach adopted by the guild was a pragmatic one. Rather than attempting to prevent aliens and foreigners from working at all, the officials of the craft sought to confine their activities to the refurbishment of second-hand clothing. A rigorous programme of enforcement resulted in scores of workers being fined for 'new work'. In 1432-33, for example, 40d was extracted from 'un forein in holborn pur faisur de nove werke diversis foitz', and two years later 'un dutyschman in birchenlane' was fined 12d for 'a nove doublet'.³ The Wardens were persistent: on one occasion 'un englich forein' was fined 20d, which was increased by two shillings when they found that he had continued to make new clothes regardless.⁴ As the numbers of fines for 'nove werke' increased, these strangers were often described as 'bochers'. It is possible that, even in the fifteenth century, 'bocher' was a derogatory term rather like 'lollard'; either way, it denoted the unfree status of a worker within the garment trade, who should not be allowed to compete with freemen tailors. The addition of a lining of 'nove bokeram' to an old gown cost one bocher 2s in 1425-6, and bochers were fined for making every kind of clothing: 'pur faisur dun kertel', 'dun nove doublet', 'pur i peticote of new russet coton', and 'pur un dagged gown'.⁵ The efforts made by the wardens of the Tailors certainly seem impressive, although it is probable that they were swimming against a strong tide, caused by the proliferation of workshops and the demand for consumer goods at all levels of society.⁶ This was, nevertheless, a concern which was common to many crafts, particularly those associated with the clothing trade.⁷ Yet even the legitimate activities of bochers could still harm the interests of some tailors,

¹ Accounts, I, f.207v.

² Accounts, II, f.33.

³ Accounts, I, ff.235, 255v.

⁴ Accounts, I, f.235.

⁵ Accounts, I, ff.159, 244 (1433-34), 255v (1434-35).

⁶ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp.188-210.

⁷ An ordinance of 1365, for example, forbade skimmers to mix old and new materials together, and even ordered those who worked on new furs not to buy or sell old furs, in case they were suspected of mixing them: Riley, *Memorials*, p.328. See also Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.123.

particularly when population pressures were increasing. In 1518, while complaining about the numbers of bochers who made 'new apparel', the guild pressed the cause of older tailors who, perhaps due to failing eyesight or infirmity, were no longer capable of making new clothes and 'are fain to fall to the said feat of botching' in order to make a living.¹

The preoccupations of the Tailors' guild are clear from the fines entered in the records. In the first place they wished to ensure that tailors who employed foreigners registered them with the guild. Second, they had a carefully controlled policy of admission to the formal structures of the craft for those deemed sufficiently qualified. Thirdly, they made every effort to keep the manufacture of new garments in the hands of the freemen of the craft, by searching the houses of strangers in many parts of the City. Such activity is an obvious way in which the Tailors' guild, like other craft organisations, sought both to limit competition and create a monopoly in the urban economy for their own freemen.² When one turns to the regulation of the activities of the freemen themselves, the picture is less simple. Assumptions about the motivations of the rulers of the misteries can lead to questionable interpretations of ordinances and statutes. The Tailors' ordinance of 1450, for instance, directed against 'chambur holders' required that all recently qualified craftsmen were to put themselves 'in service and covenant by the year with another freeman householder of the said mystery'.³ This could be seen as merely a cover for attempts to limit competition among craftsmen, by forcing freemen to become servants until they could afford to open shops; this despite the stated aim of merely rendering such workers subject to the scrutiny of the wardens. In fact, the two motives are not clearly distinct; the concern of the guild was to ensure that competition was fair, and this could only be achieved if everyone adhered to a minimum standard of workmanship. Such ambiguity is present in many of the ordinances and statutes produced by craft organisations. In 1471, for instance, the London Goldsmiths complained that several members of the craft had put 'their own profit before the common welfare' by opening two, three or even more shops in Cheapside. Consequently, they ordained that no member of the craft was to rent or hold more than one shop in the street.⁴

¹ CLRO, Journals, 11, ff.336-336v.

² See, for example, Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, II, pp.99-100.

³ Misc. Ords., f.10.

⁴ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p.258.

This could be viewed as an attack on excess profits through the stifling of capital investment and, ultimately, innovation within the craft. This seems to be reflected in the price controls which some craft and municipal authorities introduced. In 1433, for example, waxchandlers were ordered not to charge more than three pence a pound over the current price of wax.¹ Thirty years earlier, in the immediate aftermath of the Black Death, the London tailors were themselves ordered by the City to charge specified prices for their goods, including sleeves, hoods, and gowns for men and women.²

Yet a variety of motives lay behind such ordinances. The Goldsmiths, for instance, were probably more concerned to prevent the domination by a small elite of liverymen, by opening up competition to as many masters as possible along the prestigious Goldsmiths' Row in Cheapside, than to prevent investment and expansion in general. The opening up of the top end of the market would, in their view, have further established Cheapside as a showcase for their craftsmanship, as it certainly was in 1500, when a Venetian visitor wrote of the fifty-two goldsmiths' shops,

so rich and full of silver vessels, great and small, that in all the shops in Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence together it seems to me that you would not find so many of such magnificence as you would see in London.³

Similarly, price controls need not have been intended as a brake upon profit-making, investment and innovation. Here the interests of the consumer must be borne in mind. Mechanisms which tried to ensure that competition between craftsmen was fair, were also designed to maintain standards of workmanship and offer the customer value for money. The interests of consumers were sometimes reflected in satirical poems: the author of 'Richard the Redeles' complained about the prices charged by tailors around the royal court, often as much as 'pens ten duple / That the cloth costened'.⁴ Such criticisms were taken to heart by craft organisations: in 1493, the Tailors' Court met to consider the 'grete infamy and open

¹ L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (London, 1913), p.209.

² Riley, *Memorials*, p.254 (1350).

³ *A Relation of the Island of England*, ed. C.A. Sneyd, Camden Soc., 37 (London, 1847), pp.42-3. The 'strada' mentioned by the author, as Dr. Keene suggests, is unlikely to refer to 'The Strand', see D.J. Keene, 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London', in *Medieval Art Architecture and Archaeology in London* ed. L. Grant, British Archaeological Association, Conference Transactions, 10 (1990), p.31.

⁴ M. Day and R. Steele eds., *Mum and the Sothsegger*, EETS, 199, (1936), p.17, l.168-69.

sclaunder' which had accrued to the craft after a Lenten preacher at St. Thomas of Acre had declared that:

many and divers taillours of this citee occupying shapyng and makynge of
garmented bene worse extorcioners than they that lye in a wayte by a high
weyside in robberyng and spoillyng the kyngs liege people that passen furth by¹

The matter was considered serious enough for the Court to send the Master, Walter Povy, and other eminent liverymen to Greenwich, in order to speak to the preacher, presumably in the hope of persuading him to withdraw his accusation in his next sermon. In practice, the Tailors appear to have taken a fairly relaxed attitude towards the enforcement of price and quality controls, judging from the fines they demanded. But, as argued above, this may have been more a function of the operation of the market than any lack of concern *per se*. Indeed, the Tailors' attitude may well have been more typical of the day-to-day operation of price and quality controls in practice. The price lists of 1350 were almost certainly a short-term reaction to attempts to raise prices in the face of the dramatic depopulation and the shortage and cost of skilled labour. In the long run, the increased purchasing power of artisans in the urban economy seems to have boosted the craft as a whole, increasing competition and, probably, preventing prices from rising excessively.² Similarly, attempts to prevent artisans from under-cutting one another, as among the Carpenters of Coventry, need not be an indication that all price reductions were unacceptable (particularly if the quality was the same), or that such ordinances were rigorously enforced in a naturally competitive market.³ After all, price controls can themselves reveal nothing about the supply, sub-contracting, and distribution arrangements of artisans where it is clear that much more flexibility was possible. The traditional theory of the 'just price' regarded price legislation merely as a check upon undue fluctuations in the market price, particularly in times of inflation or demographic pressure.⁴

Many of the other concerns of craft organisations were similarly geared towards consumer protection, rather than to inhibit profit-making. Restrictions upon working on

¹ Court Minutes, II, f.64.

² See below, pp.219-26.

³ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p.108.

⁴ See R. de Roover, 'The Concept of the Just Price: Theory and Economic Policy', *Journal of Economic History*, 18 (1958), pp.418-34.

Sundays and upon feast days and civic festivals were enforced by craft organisations and municipal authorities partly in the name of religiosity and civic duty, but also to prevent workers from gaining an unfair advantage, often at the consumer's expense.¹ Hence consciousness of both civic and occupational pride lay behind the fining of John Shorter 'pur goddfriday', John Sherpe 'pur Crists day', and many other tailors 'pur ouverir le sonday'.² Night-working was also subject to strict control 'by reason that no man can work so neatly by night as by day'.³ Lying behind this was also a concern that the fading light encouraged shady craftsmen to attempt to pass off faulty goods as fit for use or consumption, and this appears to have been a primary motive behind the clamp-down on 'evechepyngs' (evening markets) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁴ Even during the day-time, it was important that a craft was practised out in the open: the London goldsmiths, like the tailors, were concerned that work should not be carried out in back alleys or in chambers, but 'only in the open...so that men can see that work is truly done'.⁵

This is not to say, of course, that craft organisations were necessarily effective in the implementation of such ordinances, merely that they were introduced more in the interests of the consumer and the reputation of the craft, than in the interests of a minority of powerful masters. As suggested above, craft guilds often had priorities in their enforcement and searching practices. This applies equally to the sphere of employment and apprenticeship. Many crafts introduced limits on the numbers of apprentices a master could take: the London mercers, for example, required that a master obtain a licence if he wished to take on more than one apprentice at a time.⁶ What then lay behind these restrictions? From one point of view, it could be argued that the guild authorities were attempting to limit the size of businesses, which would have a potentially depressing effect upon the ability of masters to expand, particularly in an era when apprentices were often perceived as a form of cheap

¹ Riley, *Memorials*, *passim*.

² Accounts I, ff.133v, 192v.

³ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.226, 243.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.246, 532.

⁵ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p.244.

⁶ Imray, '"Les Bones Gentes"', p.171.

labour.¹ Yet once again, the articulated motives of the crafts should not be dismissed. The London Founders, for instance, restricted masters to two apprentices each in 1453, but announced that this was because masters had been taking too many, 'whereby good mens children of the contrey have been gretely deceyved and this Cite disclaundered'.² A related factor was the limited availability of opportunities for newly qualified craftsmen. The Tailors were sufficiently concerned at the threat from aliens and foreigners to petition the City in 1451 and 1494, but it is probable that many craft guilds tried, in the first instance, to control access to the formal structures of the craft in order to ensure that as many freemen as possible could go on to set up a business. If this interpretation is correct, it once again demonstrates that exclusivity was not always practised for negative reasons by craft organisations. Interestingly, the Tailors did not themselves have any formal restrictions on the numbers of apprentices a master could take on each year, or the number a master could be training at any one time. This seems to represent a slightly different attitude to the apprenticeship question, but it would certainly be going too far to suggest that the guild was condoning the sort of practices which the Founders were trying to prevent. Indeed, the Tailors' accounts and Court Minutes contain scores of examples of craftsmen fined for a variety of apprenticeship offences, including the ill-treatment of their apprentices, the selling of their terms without a licence, and the failure to enroll them within a year of the start of their terms.³ Hence, beneath this ostensibly relaxed veneer, the guild was as keen as any other to ensure that its craftsmen were properly trained. This attitude and the dramatic increase in the numbers of masters in the craft may have reflected the increased opportunities available in a bouyant consumer market; there was enough work for those tailors who did make it to the end of their apprenticeships, and consequently the guild was prepared to let market forces operate. This relaxed policy could only be allowed to persist as long as the threat from aliens and foreigners was contained.

Despite the suggestion here that the intentions of craft guilds were not always in opposition to craftsmen outside the ruling elite, there is still much evidence which is cited to suggest that guilds played a negative role in the expansion of businesses, particularly

¹ See below, pp.181-89.

² *Calendar of Letter Books*, K, p.375.

³ See below, pp.192-203.

through the prohibition of new techniques and equipment. Examples from all over Europe are legion: the drapers of Liege, for instance, are recorded as voting against the introduction of new looms.¹ Similarly, in 1496 an Act was passed allowing the London Shearmen to stamp out the use of an iron shearing device.² Like the opposition to strangers, many of these ordinances were introduced to combat a perceived threat to the employment opportunities of craftsmen. This was particularly so in the cloth and metal industries where the introduction of machinery could have serious implications for workers, particularly in an age of demographic expansion: the masters of the London Clothworkers in 1560 decided against the purchase of a new fulling machine, offered to them by a Venetian inventor.³ Yet it is interesting to note that, in the case of the Cappers and Shearmen, the quality of the finished product was also mentioned. Caps which had been mechanically fulled were often 'deceitfully wrought', and it transpired that the iron fulling instrument did little more than raise the nap on the cloth, which was then burnt off to give the impression it had been sheared properly.⁴ Scepticism of such complaints should not be taken too far; many of these crafts, as we have seen, prided themselves on the calibre of their workmanship, and it was perhaps only natural that concern at the implications of machinery for quality would accompany trepidation at the prospect of unemployment. A clearer instance of thwarted innovation can perhaps be glimpsed among the Bristol tailors, who opposed the sale by outsiders of caps and hose, ready cut for sewing, 'a fourteenth century innovation which could have lent itself to large scale production by entrepreneurs'.⁵ Yet it is important also to cite the plentiful evidence for developments in techniques within many crafts. The changes in fashion which took place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are perhaps the most obvious ways in which tailors were able to refine and adapt their techniques.⁶ The tailors of Paris not only had to be competent craftsmen, but also cognisant of what was 'en cours...selon la mutation des

¹ Thrupp, 'The Gilds', p.273.

² (11 Hen. VII c.27), *Statutes*, i, p.591.

³ Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, p.117.

⁴ *Statutes of the Realm*, i, pp.473, 591.

⁵ Thrupp, 'The Gilds', p.274.

⁶ Scott, *A Visual History of Costume*, pp.16-18.

temps'. This ultimately limited the effectiveness of the authority exercised by municipal and guild authorities: it was probably in desperation that, in 1266, the podestà of Parma resolved to fine the city's shoemakers if they added any new styles to their already extensive range of fashionable footwear.¹

Conclusion: The Nature of Guild Authority

This chapter has primarily aimed to analyse the motivations of guild authorities in drawing up ordinances and to assess their success in putting them into practice. It has argued that, first of all, the Tailors and many other companies did manage to create a sense of community which was, on the whole, reinforced rather than undermined by hierarchic values. This was an essential precondition for the exercise of authority by craft organisations in urban economies throughout Europe: ordinances could not be enforced without a degree of consent from craftsmen, whether or not they were members of the ruling guild. This was particularly so in the case of crafts such as the London tailors where guild members represented only about a quarter of the freemen as a whole. In her attempt to revise traditionally negative interpretations of the functions fulfilled by craft guilds in urban society, Dr Swanson takes the argument too far by denying the guilds any role whatsoever in either the maintenance of stability, or in the regulation of the crafts.² As has been demonstrated, guilds had their own priorities which determined the vigour with which they intervened in certain spheres of the urban economy. In the case of the Tailors of London, the threat posed by foreigners seems to have dominated the activities of the wardens in the fifteenth century. They and the masters of the skimmers were keen to ensure that the manufacture of new garments remained in the hands of freemen of the craft. Rather than eliminate competition, most guilds sought to regulate it and ensure that it was fair. One of the primary concerns of guilds in all towns was the reputation of their respective crafts, particularly among consumers. Defensive protectionism was necessary in order to preserve a reputation for quality of workmanship, a much articulated, yet unjustifiably maligned, concern of many craft organisations. In Colchester, for example, there was a tendency, when times were hard,

¹ Thrupp, 'The Gilds', p.274.

² Swanson, 'Craft Guilds', pp.29-48.

‘for men to become more restrictive in their trading policies as a means of self-protection’.¹ Similarly, the view that economic regulation was purely in the interests of the governing bodies of crafts is not a fair reflection of their aims. Although mercantile interests among the London tailors did come to dominate the Court of Assistants by the close of the fifteenth century, the craft in general, and the Livery in particular remained overwhelmingly artisan. Furthermore, ‘merchant tailors’ were never likely to achieve a monopoly position in the supply of cloth to artisan members of the mystery, unlike their counterparts in the fur trade. Overall, it seems clear that regulation did not have a negative effect upon urban crafts, a fact most clearly evidenced by the thriving tailoring industry in London. Although the suburbs such as Southwark and Westminster were certainly popular haunts for craftsmen hoping to avoid regulation, they never came to challenge London as a centre of production.² On the contrary, many craftsmen, including aliens and foreigners perceived the advantages of citizenship via one of the London crafts, and were more than willing to submit themselves to the authority of the City and its guilds.

Yet Swanson, among others, is correct to point out that guild ordinances are but a poor reflection of the actual structures and operation of urban crafts.³ Such legislation was normative, drafted by an elite and inevitably represented the experiences and aspirations of those who drew them up: the concern for the promotion prospects of freemen, for instance, was typical of a mode of thought which centred around the *cursus honorum* as the ‘ideal’ career path for a craftsman to follow. The apprentice is seen as a future journeyman who, in turn, would go on to set up shop and present apprentices of his own. The guilds were aware of the high wastage-rate of apprentices and the uncertainties of economic life in general. Nevertheless, to ensure the proper training of craftsmen and the successful resolution of disputes, definitions of life cycle institutions were essential. For similar jurisdictional reasons, craft ordinances rarely reveal the overlaps between many crafts and the mutual dependence of individual workshops in the urban economy. The following two chapters, therefore, aim to examine the ways in which such life-cycle institutions and craft structures were articulated and adapted by the craftsmen and women themselves, looking particularly

¹ Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester*, p.240.

² See Rosser, ‘London and Westminster’, pp.45-61.

³ Swanson, ‘Craft Guilds’, pp. 29-48.

at the variety of paths which careers could take, and the complexity of the relationships which existed in the urban economy.

CHAPTER FIVE. APPRENTICESHIP AND SERVANTHOOD: CAREER PATHS AMONG THE LONDON TAILORS.

The nature and limits of the authority of craft guilds in the middle ages can be nowhere better seen than in the careers of craftsmen. In the preceding chapter it was demonstrated, for example, that many of those who came to join the fraternity of London tailors had never in fact served an apprenticeship as tailors but had transferred from one craft to another. The translations between 'misteries', recorded in the City records are only the most visible and formal indicators of such realignments in the urban economy. Most movement occurred informally and consequently only comes to light when the lists of admissions to the guild are examined. This is one sense in which the ordinances produced by guilds provide a misleading impression of the nature of a craftsman's career, and the following chapter takes this further by examining the interdependence of crafts in the urban economy and the transferability of skills. The purpose of this chapter, however, is to look in a little more detail at those stages in a craftsman's career which are most commonly treated in guild ordinances: apprenticeship and servanthood. Traditionally, these have been viewed in terms of the life-cycle of the craftsman: an apprentice is seen as a future journeyman who, in turn, is merely awaiting the opportunity to open a shop and establish his own business. The idealisation of apprenticeship and servanthood arise from the inherently normative role of guild ordinances, yet historians have often failed to inquire more deeply into these 'life-cycle institutions'.¹ The methodology employed in this chapter draws upon that of one historian who has endeavoured to discover more about the destinations and career paths of artisans. Yet in his detailed analysis of the sixteenth-century London companies Steve Rappaport himself made several assumptions which tended towards the idealisation of the career structures enunciated in guild ordinances. Apprenticeship, the main subject of this chapter was, he concludes, a means for the assimilation of large numbers of immigrants into urban society, a conclusion questioned by Ian Archer in his study of the mechanisms for the maintenance of stability in Elizabethan London.² It is the intention here to undertake a

¹ Phythian-Adams in his *Desolation of a City*, for instance, provides an excellent analysis of the formal groupings and life-cycle institutions of late medieval Coventry, but is not alone in failing to consider the variations from these norms, particularly with regard to the crafts.

² Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, esp. Chs. 7 and 8; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.100-48.

similar analysis of the fortunes of the apprentices enrolled in the Tailors' accounts in the fifteenth century. Apprenticeship, it is argued here, has to be examined from the point of view of both master and apprentice; tensions between the two parties, the product of differing perceptions of the nature and purpose of the relationship, can often be obscured by guild regulations and the 'success stories' among the ranks of the guildsmen themselves. The low completion rates among craftsmen in London tell another, less optimistic, story; the relative paucity of studies of life on the margins of urban society is a significant indicator of the extent to which historians have remained faithful to the minority of craftsmen who were assimilated into formal craft structures.¹

Likewise, the question of wage labour in towns and cities is one which has only been addressed relatively recently by historians of the later middle ages. Their role in the 'craft system' is rarely alluded to in guild records, and has thus been greatly under-estimated. Although an extreme example, between a third and a half of the Florentine workforce in the later fourteenth century is estimated to have been made up of wage labourers.² Similarly, in early sixteenth century Coventry nearly one in four of the population was described as a servant.³ Despite this, servanthood has generally only been viewed as a transitory stage in the life-cycle of a craftsman, and as will be shown, for those tailors who became masters in their own right, it was indeed a temporary situation. But for many former apprentices, and indeed some who were erstwhile shop-owners, life as a servant was far from temporary, and it is this group within the workforce which epitomises the complexity of the relationships which existed in the urban economy. Given the relative dearth of literature addressing these questions for the medieval period, the work of historians such as Michael Sonenscher provides some valuable insights and new approaches to the study of pre-industrial urban economies. Sonenscher, in his examination of the eighteenth-century French trades, attempts to 'transpose a variant of modern micro-economic theory' to the crafts and craftsmen he examines.⁴ Instead of looking at 'artisans' and 'corporations' he urges historians to look at

¹ An exception is B. Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1987).

² S.K. Cohn, *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980), pp.69, 206.

³ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p.204.

⁴ M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages. Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth Century French Trades* (Cambridge, 1989), p.3.

markets, prices and profits, and to emphasise the fluidity of relationships over time rather than a rigid divide between masters and journeymen.¹ For the medieval period the work of Bronislaw Geremek provides a valuable survey of the world of wage labour viewed from below, rather than solely from the point of view of the authorities.²

I. Apprenticeship Enrollments

First, however, it is important to examine the extent and nature of apprenticeship among the London tailors in the fifteenth century, and the opportunities which existed for upward mobility within the craft. By 1420 apprenticeship in London, like most towns and cities, had become subject to a number of rules and regulations promulgated by the Crown, the City and by the crafts themselves. Apprentices had to be of free condition, of English birth and, by a statute of 1388, had to be at least twelve years old. A 20s property qualification for the parents of apprentices was introduced in 1406-7 but, as already described, was repealed in 1430 after petitions from the City.³ From the early fourteenth century at least, apprentices had to be enrolled within a year of the date of the indentures drawn up between the two parties, and a register was to be kept by the City of the names of all apprentices. The minimum term to be served by a London apprentice was, from an early date, set at seven years, after which the apprentice could be presented at Guildhall by his master in order to become a citizen of the capital.⁴ The survival of such regulations, and the failure of historians to take advantage of other sources, have ensured that apprenticeship has been viewed from the point of view of the masters of the crafts, and the municipal authorities. The establishment, by 1300, of a minimum seven-year term probably owed a great deal to the desire of the City government to restrict access to the freedom at a time when population pressures necessitated some kind of control over the size of the labour market. Similarly, the statute of 1406 was designed to free up large numbers of would-be apprentices at a time when the ravages of the fourteenth century plagues had produced a

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

² B. Geremek, *Le salariat dans l'artisanat Parisien au xiii^e-xv^e siècles*, (Paris, 1982).

³ *CPMR*, 1364-1381, pp.xl-xli; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, pp.87, 105. See above, pp.102-3

⁴ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, B, p.146, 241; *ibid.*, D, p.xi; see also Jenny T. Ryan, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London, 1200-1500' (unpublished University of London M.A. thesis, 1992) pp.1-3, 14-18.

shortage of agricultural labourers. Yet within these regulations the guilds themselves enjoyed a large amount of flexibility, and in many cases decisions were based on the requirements of a particular craft. Apprentice paviors, for instance, had to be at least eighteen years old due to the physical strength needed for their craft. Guilds also imposed restrictions on the number of apprentices a master could train at any one time, as well as setting minimum terms longer than the City's own requirement. While these measures can also be perceived as restricting access to the freedom other motives were also involved, not least the importance of the training itself and the demands which a large number of apprentices would make upon a master.¹

The Tailors' guild seems to have been fairly orthodox in its apprenticeship regulations, but in several areas there was a flexibility and freedom which is generally underplayed in analyses of guild practices in the middle ages.² The City's requirement that all apprentices were to be English by birth was reiterated by the guild on several occasions in the fifteenth century. In January 1493, for example, William Cokke 'beyng destitute of apprentice not presently knowyng the lawes of this lande and good ancient rules of this noble citee' was brought before the Tailors' Court having taken Richard Locan, the son of Thomas Locan of Berwick upon Tweed 'that tyme beyng scottyshe and under thobeysaunce of the kyng of scotts' as his apprentice. The indentures of apprenticeship were brought in to the Court and then cancelled.³ The accounts of the Tailors' fraternity contain the names of over 2,500 apprentices, but give no more details other than the names of the master and his apprentice and the enrollment fee paid by the former. The Court Minutes of 1486-93, on the other hand provide valuable evidence of the social and geographical origins of apprentices as well as valuable information about the length of the terms which they had to serve. This latter information is available for eighty-two apprentices, of whom exactly half were bound to serve the minimum term of seven years (see Table 5.1).

¹ Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', pp.14-18.

² See for instance, Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.115-16.

³ Court Minutes, II, f.57v.

Table 5.1. Length of Terms of Tailors' Apprentices, 1486-93.

Years	Number	%	
7	41	50	
8	21	25.6	
9	14	17.1	
10	3	3.7	
12	2	2.4	
14	1	1.2	
Total	82	100.0	Average term = 7.9 years.

The fact that only half of these apprentices were bound for seven years is significant. These figures are in fact very similar to those calculated by Jenny Ryan for craftsmen of many different trades who appear in various printed sources for the period 1313 to 1482.¹ The actual length of time that a craftsmen needed in order to attain a minimum level of competence must have varied, but it can rarely have been longer than four or five years. In mid-thirteenth century Bologna, for example, where there was no minimum length of term imposed by the City, the Tailors specified that an apprentice under ten years old was to serve five years, and an older child just three.² The later years of an apprenticeship were undoubtedly of greater value to a master than the first few years, when an apprentice would have been learning the basics of the craft and carrying out menial tasks for his master. The thirteenth century *Livre de Métiers*, for instance, provides examples of apprentices who had to 'faire les courses' in the early years of their terms.³ The apprentice who had completed four or five years was thereafter a potential source of cheap labour for the master: there is certainly at least one case of a master known to have altered the date on the apprenticeship indenture in order to gain an extra year's service.⁴ For an apprentice at the start of his term, the prospect of serving even eight or nine years must in many cases have been daunting. What must have been in the mind of the unfortunately named Rowland Lytilskill, son of John Lytilskill of Hexham, who was apprenticed to William Hewelet, citizen and tailor, in 1486

¹ Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', p.18.

² *Statuti delle Società del Popolo di Bologna*, ed. A. Gaudenzi, 2 vols (Rome, 1896), II, pp. 269-70.

³ G.B. Depping ed., *Règlements sur les arts et métiers de Paris...connus sous le nom du Livre de Métiers d'Étienne Boileau* (Paris, 1837), no. LXXXIX.

⁴ *CPMR*, 1364-81, p.248.

for the term of twelve years?¹ It is likely that such long terms, particularly in a craft which did not require a long training, reflected the degree to which parents often had to pay a sum of money to the prospective master: the failure to do so may have led to the addition of a year or two's service in lieu. The options open to apprentices not prepared, for a variety of reasons, to complete their terms were essentially limited. Those with sufficient resources of their own, or from elsewhere could purchase the freedom of the City, as Thomas Daubeney 'ove Richard Skernyng' did in 1430-1, probably with the assent of his master.² This, however, pre-supposed a desire to remain in the City as a legitimate practitioner of the trade; as will be shown, the drop-out rate of apprentices indicates that huge numbers simply absconded, either to return home or else remaining in London as unenfranchised craftsmen.

The long length of some terms can, in many cases, be indicative of the exploitative potential of apprenticeships as well as the desire further to restrict access to the freedom. Equally, limitations on the number of apprentices a master could take, and the high level of enrollment fees charged by some crafts can also viewed as evidence of restricted access to the freedom.³ There is undoubtedly some truth in this interpretation, although it is important not to read the wrong messages into the actions of the crafts. The Mercers' decision to raise their apprentice binding fees from 20s to £3 6s 8d in 1457-58 may indicate a superfluity of potential apprentices and a pragmatic realisation of the problems of coping with large numbers of trainees, rather than a 'conspiracy' to restrict access to the mastership.⁴ Likewise, the reduction in enrollment fees for the apprentices of goldsmiths and drapers do not have to be seen in politico-economic terms as a widening of the franchise, so to speak, but as a genuine response to a dearth of apprentices in the early fifteenth century.⁵ The Tailors in this period had among the lowest enrollment fees of the London crafts, which remained at 3s 4d throughout the fifteenth century. In addition, like the Skinners and, for most of the fifteenth century, the Goldsmiths, the fraternity did not set a ceiling on the

¹ Court Minutes, I, f.6v.

² Accounts, I, f.214v.

³ Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', p.20.

⁴ Imray, '"Les Bones Gents"', p.178.

⁵ Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', p.20.

number of apprentices a master could take.¹ Like the Goldsmiths, nearly half (496 out of 1079) of all tailor masters appear to have taken on only one apprentice during their careers; the gaps in the accounts of both guilds do mean, however, that the figures are certainly skewed. Indeed, despite the gaps, 270 tailors presented four or more apprentices as did 84 out of 457 goldsmiths. In the case of the Tailors, 168 of these 270 masters were liverymen.² A further indicator of the relaxed attitude adopted by the Tailors is the fact that the guild did not even begin to record the names of masters and their new apprentices in the accounts until 1425.

The low enrollment fees of the Tailors had important implications for the overall level of admissions of apprentices, and hence for the size of the craft as a whole. It can be seen from Graph 1 (below p.215) that there was a gradual increase in the numbers of apprentices being enrolled by tailors in the fifteenth century from an average of sixty *per annum* in the late 1420s to 110 *per annum* in the mid to late 1460s. This was not simply a product of masters taking on more apprentices, however, for the number of masters whose names appear in the accounts kept step with the increase in apprentices. In 1425-26, for instance, 42 masters enrolled 48 apprentices, whereas in 1465-66 the numbers were 133 and 157 respectively.³ This reflects a general expansion in the craft as a whole in the fifteenth century which, it will be argued, owed much to the flourishing market for new clothing in the capital.⁴ This demand also meant that the Tailors could afford to leave the market for second-hand clothing to unenfranchised immigrants until late in the fifteenth century.

The general upward trend was, however, punctuated by fluctuations in the levels of enrollments. Between 1425 and 1445, for example, there were dips in 1429-30, 1438-40 and 1443-45. After 1453 admissions began to fall consistently for the first time; this lasted until the early 1460s when the trend recovered before suffering another dramatic one-year fall in numbers in 1467-68. A variety of suggestions can be made concerning these fluctuations. First, as has been shown, the period after 1450 was one in which the guild became more

¹ In 1449 the tailors' fee of 3s 4d was described as 'after old usage', Misc. Ords., f.10; Veale, *Fur Trade* p.94; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp.90-1, n.54.

² Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp.90-1 n.54.

³ Accounts, I, ff.159v-160, II, ff.274v-76v.

⁴ See below, pp.216-28.

concerned about the threat posed by aliens and foreigners to the opportunities of former apprentices. Possibly it was decided to discourage masters from enrolling apprentices. Yet if such a decision was taken it was never translated into formal barriers such as higher enrollment fees or longer terms; rather, the *laissez-faire* attitude of the guild seems to have persisted. Another, more speculative, reason can be found in the chronology of the London 'plague years' of the fifteenth century, and the deterrent effect which plagues in the capital may have had upon potential immigrants.¹ This theory holds better for the period after 1453 when the major outbreaks in 1454 and 1467 appear to have been followed by sudden drops in the number of apprentices enrolled by tailors. Before 1445, only the outbreak of 1437 coincides with a significant downward trend. There is, however, some supporting evidence to be found in the fourteenth century records of the Goldsmith's Company: the seven years following the plagues of 1348-49 saw the intake of apprentices fall from an average of 21 each year to roughly half that figure, before rising again towards the turn of the century.²

There is also supporting evidence of a more qualitative kind that London in the 1450s and 60s was at times perceived as being a dangerous place. It is well known that, in 1454, William Paston proposed to flee London to escape the plague, but many others too were keen to escape for a time into the country where conditions were generally more favourable.³ In particular, masters, evidently keen to avoid the task of replacing, and training up a new apprentice, sent their young pupils into the country. One tailor, Thomas Bygham, the apprentice of Edward Davy, was licensed by his master 'in the tyme of pestilence to go & abide w^t his frendis at hereford the est till it were seassed'.⁴ If Londoners were keen to send their apprentices out of the capital during serious outbreaks of pestilence it would be odd if they actively encouraged immigration into the capital by making arrangements with parents in the provinces. Yet these fluctuations, whether caused by plague, economic recession or guild policies, should not obscure the dramatic expansion which took place in the craft in the

¹ Bean, 'Plague, Population and Economic Decline', pp.429-30. Plagues were recorded in London in 1426, 1433, 1437, 1445, 1449, 1454 and 1467. In addition, national plagues were said to have affected the capital in 1434 and 1464.

² Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp.6, 28, 78.

³ 'Here is gret pestelens. I purpose to fle in to the contre', 6 Sept. 1454, *Paston Letters*, ed. Davis, I, p.156.

⁴ PRO, C.1/61/478. Bygham was enrolled by Davy in 1456-7, Accounts, II, f.99v.

fifteenth century. This expansion, and the attitude of the guild, may have had a price, however: as will be shown, the completion rates of tailors' apprentices were probably among the lowest in the capital.

II. Geographical and Social Origins of Apprentices

Most of the apprentices enrolled by Londoners were immigrants. The late fifteenth century records of the Skinners and the Tailors reveal that only twenty-two (13%) out of 175 apprentices were the children of Londoners, with another three coming from Westminster and Southwark. Another 26 (14%) came from the Home Counties, while the remainder were drawn from all parts of the country, the northern counties especially well represented.¹ Jenny Ryan, using a cohort of 316 apprentices from a variety of mostly printed sources from 1313 to 1482 found that just under 24% of the 214 apprentices, whose origins are recorded, were London born, with another 28% from the Home Counties (see Table 5.2).²

Table 5.2. Origins of London Apprentices³

	1. 1313-1482		2. Skinners 1496-1500		3. Tailors 1486-87	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
London	50		13		9	
Southwark	1	23.8	1	12.5	0	17.5
Westminster	0		0		2	
Home Counties	60	28.0	15	13.4	11	17.5
Eastern Counties	43	20.1	19	17.0	8	12.7
Midlands	19	8.9	11	9.8	5	7.9
Northern Counties	25	11.7	47	42.0	24	38.1
South and West	14	6.5	5	4.4	2	3.15
Other	2	1.0	1	0.9	2	3.15
TOTAL	214	100.0	112	100.0	63	100.0

¹ Court Minutes, I, ff.3-19v, extracted along with the origins of the skinners' apprentices in Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, App. C, pp.389-92.

² Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', p.9.

³ Column 1 abstracted from Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', App. A, pp. 61-2.

Analysis of the records of the Tailors and Skinners led Sylvia Thrupp to suggest that the fifteenth century saw a widening of the net of migration and recruitment by the London crafts such that London became 'more truly a national melting pot.'¹ Yet Ryan's figures for the period 1313-1482 indicate that Thrupp's view must be moderated somewhat. There was certainly a widening of the migration field, but the Skinners and Tailors were not typical of the London crafts in general who still drew over half of their members from London and the Home Counties and another 20% from the eastern counties. The Skinners and Tailors, by contrast, appear to have had particularly good links with the north, and with Yorkshire most of all, probably as a result of the declining cloth trade, and consequent lack of economic opportunities in that county.²

The Skinners' and Tailors' records also provide information about the social origins of these apprentices, stating in many instances the occupation of the father. Common to both crafts was a large number of apprentices, around a third, whose fathers were already engaged in some form of industry or trade (see Table 5.3). Relatively and absolutely more apprentices of tailors (6) than those of skinners (3) were following the trade of their fathers, but these numbers are not large enough to indicate that this was a major factor in the choice of craft. The large number of apprentices whose fathers were described as 'yeoman' presents more of a problem, given the difficulty of defining this term in the late-medieval period, particularly when a number of those described as such were from towns. There does not appear to have been any particular bias towards trades connected with the cloth or clothing industries even amongst the sons of Londoners, or any particular connection between one occupational category and a region. There is also no noticeable correlation between occupation and the length of term served by the tailors' apprentices: the only person to be covenanted to serve for fourteen years with a tailor was in fact the son of a shearman from Northumberland whose skills perhaps came the closest to those needed by a tailor.³ As suggested above, many of these apprentices were probably working off debts owed to their masters.

¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.208.

² Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', p.10; J. Patten, 'Rural-urban migration in Pre-industrial England', *Oxford University, School of Geography Research Papers*, 6 (1973), p.30.

³ Court Minutes, I, f.4v.

Table 5.3. Occupations of Apprentices' Fathers.¹

	Tailors 1486-7		Skinners 1496-1500	
	No.	%	No.	%
Crafts/Merchants	26	41.3	46	41.1
Gentlemen	5	7.9	20	17.9
Yeomen	27	42.9	21	18.7
Husbandmen	3	4.8	23	20.5
Other	2	3.1	2	1.8
TOTAL	63	100.0	112	100.0

Tailors and the skimmers, therefore, drew a significant proportion of their apprentices from outside London and the south-east. We know little of the process by which the apprentices came to be in London, whether their parents had entered into agreements with their future masters or if they simply arrived in London to ‘make their fortunes’. It is probable that the sons of wealthy merchants and gentry would have been more likely to have come to London as the result of a carefully negotiated agreement. Contacts may have been established by parents who were in London on business, and such contacts may be reflected in the large numbers of gentry who joined the Tailors’ and Skinners’ fraternities in the fifteenth century, compared with the few non-London craftsmen; unfortunately, records for admissions to the Tailors’ guild do not survive much beyond 1470 and so consequently it is difficult to find links between tailors and the fathers of their apprentices. It is possible, however, to trace one or two of the fathers mentioned in the Tailors’ Court Minutes. Thomas Leke, for example, was enrolled as an apprentice by Stephen Jenyns, a prominent tailor who, in 1508, became the second tailor mayor of London. Leke’s father, also named Thomas, was a prominent gentleman of Granby in Nottinghamshire, who served on several commissions of the peace and of array in the 1480s.² Jenyns would seem have been the ideal person for Leke senior to place his son with, whether or not he expected him to remain in London as a tailor, or return to Nottinghamshire with broadened horizons.

¹ Abstracted from Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 389-92. Figures for the tailors checked with the Court Minutes, I, ff.3-19v.

² Court Minutes, II, f.5v; for Jenyns see Clode, *Early History*, II, pp.22-38; *CPR*, 1476-1485, pp. 395, 400, 489, 569; 1485-1494, pp.241, 407, 496.

Finally, it should be mentioned that none of the apprentices enrolled by tailors in 1486-87, or any of the 2,552 recorded in the accounts of the fraternity, was female. This does not of course mean that women did not learn the craft, the most obvious examples being those widows who were able to continue their husband's businesses, and appear in the Tailors' records presenting male apprentices. Geoffrey Guybon, a former Master of the craft died in December 1443, and early the next year Agnes 'la feme de Geffrey Gybon' presented Henry Wolmer as her apprentice.¹ Female apprentices are mentioned in the wills of male tailors, but it is never made clear if they were learning the testator's craft or that of his wife: Henry Bovington left bequests to two female apprentices in his will proved in 1456, but none of the names were entered in the Tailors' records.² The custom of London allowed wives of citizens to train apprentices as long as the latter were bound to both husband and wife.³ The role played by women was much less visible, principally because many of them learned their crafts informally, but their contribution to, and involvement in the workshop should not be underestimated.⁴

III. Drop-Out Rates: Perceptions of Apprenticeship in Late-Medieval London

Analysis of the fortunes of London's sixteenth century apprentices led Rappaport to draw two principal conclusions. In the first place he saw capital cities as fulfilling an essential function as the training centres for national economies. Of the 823 apprentices who, on average, either died or abandoned their training each year in the later sixteenth century, he estimates that more than 700 went home after having acquired sufficient skills to be competent at a particular craft.⁵ This, Rappaport argues, enlarged the opportunities for those apprentices who chose to complete their terms and remain in London. His second conclusion, therefore, argues that, for those who remained in London, apprenticeship was the 'means of

¹ GL, MS. 9171/4, f.129v-130; Accounts 1, f.370v.

² GL, MS. 9171/5, f.209v.

³ Bateson, *Borough Customs* pp. 229-30.

⁴ See below, pp.261-67.

⁵ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 314-315.

assimilation into London society'.¹ Rappaport paints an essentially rosy picture of apprenticeship in urban society, one which has become subject to criticism, most notably by Ian Archer who stresses rather more the failure of these mechanisms to integrate many apprentices into London society, and presents a less idealised view of the nature of the relationship between master and apprentice.² This is a problem which has been little studied for the medieval period, but is one which is just as relevant given the large numbers of young men who came to London each year to embark on an apprenticeship. Much of it is a matter of interpretation and emphasis: how much weight should historians give to disputes between masters and their apprentices, to accusations of ill-treatment, or conversely to craftsmen who chose to remember their masters in their wills? Similarly it is important to consider carefully the fortunes of those who dropped out of their apprenticeships: what sort of opportunities lay in wait for former apprentices on the margins of London's economy?

In order to attempt to answer some of these questions, it is important first to discover the patterns of mobility of those who were apprenticed to tailors in fifteenth century London. In particular, how many failed to complete their terms? The analysis carried out by Rappaport is essentially the model for what follows here, but it is particularly important to remember that the fifteenth century London crafts, despite the regulations they drew up, were in fact far less rigorous in noting the various stages of a craftsman's career. In the sixteenth century, the livery companies tracked their members at every stage in the *cursus honorum*: apprentice, freeman, shop-holder, liveryman, member of the Court of Assistants and so on. The fifteenth century guilds, by contrast, rarely kept such complete records of the careers of their craftsmen, which perhaps says something about their role in administering the craft in general. The Tailors' records, among the most complete, only record the enrollments of apprentices and admissions to the livery of the craft. The category of 'shop-holder' only appears to have become a formal one from the later fifteenth century, as was the case with the mercers and most other crafts.³ Nevertheless, it is important to be able to attempt to use these records to reconstruct the careers of apprentices, and for this purpose a cohort of 1,559

¹ *Ibid.*, p.294.

² Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.216-8.

³ The Tailors began to collect payments for the opening of a shop (10s) from 1471-2, Accounts, III, f.35v; Imray, "Les Bones Gents", p.173.

identifiable apprentices enrolled over a twenty-five year period, 1425-45 and 1453-58, has been chosen and followed through the records of the guild, and then compared with the career patterns seen in the Mercers' records. A major problem is the absence of records, either in the Corporation archive or amongst the records of the Tailors, for craftsmen who completed their apprenticeships and went on to obtain the freedom. The Mercers' accounts record both the 'entry' and 'exit' fees for apprentices, indicating a more rigorous approach to the administration of the craft. It is, however, possible to estimate the completion rate for the tailors' apprentices. Rappaport found that there was relatively little variation among the majority of crafts in sixteenth century London: of the larger ones (Drapers, Skinners, Grocers, Merchant Taylors, Brewers and Vintners) the figures ranged from 32.7% for the apprentices of Brewers to 47.2% for the Vintners. The Merchant Taylors fell in the middle with 40.5% of a massive 10,048 apprentices obtaining the freedom.¹ For the fifteenth century we are hampered by the absence of similar calculations for crafts of a similar size, and with a similarly low enrollment fee. As Table 5.4 shows, less than one in seven tailor apprentices successfully completed their terms *and* went on to present apprentices of their own, as compared with one in four mercers. The discrepancy between the two figures undoubtedly owes much to the status and wealth of the London mercers, their high enrollment fees and consequently the greater importance probably attached to the fulfillment of the contract by both parties. This difference between the two crafts must also inform any estimates of the proportion of tailors who finished their apprenticeships. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that around 35% of tailors' apprentices went on to obtain the freedom, compared with 50% of mercers. This would mean that there was a 'drop out' rate of approximately 65% at each stage in the *cursus honorum*, as against 50% for the mercers. Table 5.4 shows the implications of this assumption: it can be seen, for instance, that of the 1,559 tailor apprentices, an estimated 545 completed their terms and became freemen, 202 came to enroll apprentices of their own ('Future masters'), and 61 came to join the guild itself and wore the livery of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist. One can therefore suggest that around 545 tailors' apprentices (20 *per annum*) completed their terms and became free, and that over 1,000 (40 *per annum*) gave up their apprenticeships.

¹ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, Appendix 2, Table A2.1 pp.394-5.

Table 5.4. The *Cursus Honorum* among the Tailors and Mercers¹

1. Tailors' apprentices

Years	Apprentices	(Freemen (%))	Future masters (%)	Liverymen (%)
1425-45	1,093	(382 (35.0))	146 (13.36)	42 (3.84)
1453-58	466	(163 (35.0))	58 (12.45)	19 (4.08)
Total	1,559	(545 (35.0))	202 (12.96)	61 (3.91)

2. Mercers' apprentices

Years	Apprentices	Freemen (%)	Future masters (%)
1391-1464	1,937	979 (50.54)	476 (24.57)

Why did so many apprentices fail to complete their terms? A certain number must, of course, have died whilst still in the service of a master. However, it is unlikely that much more than fifteen percent or so of apprentices who commenced their terms in any one year failed to survive the next seven or eight years. The drop-out rate among apprentices was on a far greater scale than can be accounted for by even the most gloomy of assessments of mortality in the fifteenth century.² Part of the answer must lie in the motives of the apprentices themselves. Migration was certainly a youthful phenomenon, undertaken for a variety of reasons, most commonly for betterment or just subsistence.³ For some, migration was not a once and for all re-location, but a long term state of itinerancy. Geremek, in his study of marginal groups in late-medieval Paris, emphasised the more informal nature of migration in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when young men moved from town to town picking up skills before eventually arriving in the capital. A tailor, for, instance, came to Paris from Corbin near Besançon; on the way he stopped off and worked for a short time in Langres and Bar-sur-Aube. As the shoemakers of Troyes put it in 1420, travelling was

¹ Sources: Accounts, I-II, *passim* and Imray, ‘“Les Bone Gents”’, pp.155-78.

² Crude death rates at Christ Church Priory, Canterbury averaged 30 per 1000 during the fifteenth century, see J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530* (London, 1977), pp. 29-30; see also Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p.313 for age-specific mortality in the mid-late sixteenth century when 10% of apprentices are estimated to have died during their training.

³ Patten, ‘Rural-urban migration’, pp.8, 16.

undertaken 'pour apprendre, cognistre, veoir et savoir les uns des autres'.¹ Such immigrants, whether in Paris or London were doubtless regarded with suspicion at first, unless they had already secured a place in the workshop of a craftsman. Associations with an unsavoury trade could prove detrimental to an immigrant's prospects: the London Goldsmiths were initially opposed to the admission of a former beggar as an apprentice, despite the fact that he was a younger brother of a member of the craft.² Suspicion could be based on a more basic hostility to immigrants: the most notable examples of disturbances generally concerned aliens from the continent, but those from other parts of England were also seen as a threat to the livelihoods of the citizens. Once engaged as an apprentice, however, there is no indication that young men were suddenly drawn into the 'exclusive' world of the London crafts, despite the rhetoric of craft ordinances which necessarily assumed that they would complete their terms. Part of the reason for this lies in the attitudes of the apprentices. Without doubt, historians such as Rappaport and Ilana Ben-Amos are right to suggest that large numbers of apprentices were indeed in the capital for the sole purpose of acquiring skills they could then take home with them.³ As has been shown, the optimum time for leaving was probably after three, four or possibly five years, when the basics of the craft would have been learned. After such a period of time it is probable that apprentices were more conscious of the skills they had acquired, whilst their masters were now able to derive greater benefit from their unpaid labour. At this point the interests of master and apprentice might begin to diverge.

It is probably fair to assume, therefore, that possibly a majority of failed apprentices (i.e. around 500 of the cohort of tailor apprentices) did in fact leave the City to return home, or settle elsewhere to practice a craft learnt in the capital. The surviving letters from the Mayor and Corporation of London from the mid to late fourteenth century show that efforts were made on behalf of masters to secure the return of apprentices who had absconded to other towns and cities. Three of the forty-eight letters sent to the authorities in other towns concerning runaway apprentices involved tailors: in March 1365, for instance, the 'mayor, bailiffs and good folk' of the town of Northampton were asked to locate Thomas Catworth,

¹ Geremek, *Margins of Society*, pp.260, 258.

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.217.

³ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 314-5; I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Failure to become freemen: urban apprentices in early modern England', *Social History*, 16 (1991), pp.155-72.

originally from that town who, four years previously, had been bound as an apprentice to Robert de Bexford for eight years.¹ Ryan notes, however, that only six of the forty-eight cases concerned apprentices actually returning to their place of origin. Many indeed chose to go in the opposite direction, and ended up many miles from their birth-places.² Whilst some entries do not specify the town of origin, it is clear that familial and/or known economic opportunities at home were not as strong factors as Ben-Amos, in particular, suggests in her survey of apprentices in early-modern Bristol. Going home was not always an option for apprentices: Thomas Bygham, the tailor's apprentice who returned to Hereford because of the plague in London, did not receive a particularly warm welcome. Once there, Thomas proceeded to make 'such garments as he needed' in his cousin's shop, much to the annoyance of the local tailors who had him arrested and imprisoned.³ Emigration may in fact have helped some towns to stave off the worst effects of economic downturn; it is not surprising, therefore, that a prodigal son could receive a less than enthusiastic welcome from his brother craftsmen.

The destinations of runaway apprentices are not easy to trace, but it seems likely that large numbers continued to live in London or its suburbs as unenfranchised craftsmen. Even if as many as two-thirds of the estimated 1,000 failed tailor apprentices left the City, over 300 would have remained, to add to the estimated 550 freemen admitted over the twenty-five year period. In the light of such realities, and the expectations among apprentices that economic opportunities were better in the capital, it is important to assess the extent to which the high wastage rate among apprentices was a product of the nature of the apprenticeship system itself.

The wills of craftsmen provided perhaps the main evidence in support of an essentially sympathetic view of apprenticeship as a means of assimilating young men and women into London society. Robert Colwich, former apprentice of Ralph Holland, the first tailor Alderman, established a temporary chantry to pray for the souls of his parents and 'my maistre Rauf Holand'. Colwich was generous to his own apprentices, leaving them cash

¹ *Calendar of Letters from the Mayor and Corporation of the City of London c.1350-1370*, ed. R.R. Sharpe (London, 1885), p.133. The two other instances concerned apprentices who had absconded to Langley and Oxford: *ibid.*, pp.167-8, 138.

² Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', pp.46-7.

³ PRO, C.1/61/478.

bequests and remitting one of them the rest of his term beyond seven years.¹ Significantly, Colwich had himself been an executor of his former master's will.² Provision was made for the terms of apprentices to be transferred to suitable people on the death of the testator: in 1446 William Chapman left the terms of his apprentices to his wife Alice as long as she continued to practice the same craft. In the event that she did not, they were to be passed on to his other executor, John Giffard, a former apprentice who had, by that time, established his own business.³ Such references, combined with the evidence of the surviving indentures of apprenticeship, serve to construct a picture of apprenticeship which emphasises the reciprocal and patriarchal nature of the contract. The sentiments expressed in a surviving indenture for a London tailor, dated 20 December 1451, are typical:

John Harrietsham contracts with Robert Lacy to serve the said Robert as well in the craft and in all his other works and doings such as he does and should doe, from Christmas day next ensuing for the term of seven years. He is to receive 9s 4d at the end of the term, and he is to work one year after the seven at the wage of 20s. Robert is to find his apprentice in all necessaries, food, clothing, shoes and bed, and to teach him his craft in all its particulars without concealment. During the term the apprentice is to keep his master's secrets, to do him no injury, and commit no excessive waste on his goods. He is not to frequent taverns, not to commit fornication, in or out of his master's house, nor make any contract of matrimony nor affiancé himself without his master's leave. He is not to play at dice-tables or chequers, or any other unlawful games, but is to conduct himself soberly, justly, piously, well, and honourably, and to be a faithful and good servant, according to the use and custom of London. For all his obligations Robert binds himself, his heir and executors, his goods and chattels, present and future, wherever found. Signed, sealed and delivered by the two parties.⁴

Apprentices were often provided with some form of rudimentary education, although few guilds insisted upon it: an anchorite at London Wall apprenticed his ward to a London tailor in the hope that the boy would be taught to 'rede write and lay Accomptes suffisauntly'.⁵ This picture is reinforced by other evidence for the trust which could exist between many apprentices and their masters. Although apprentices were still *in statu pupillari*

¹ PRO, Prob.11/7, f.6.

² PRO, Prob.11/1/, ff.82-84v.

³ PRO, Prob.11/3, f.240-240v; Giffard was enrolled as an apprentice by Chapman in 1428-9, and presented the first apprentice of his own in 1441-2, Accounts, I, ff.193, 342.

⁴ Printed in Clode, *Early History*, I, p.344. The original appears to be lost.

⁵ PRO, C.1/66/66. The Goldsmiths were one of the few crafts in London which formally required their apprentices to be literate, Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp.261-62.

they were permitted to trade on behalf of their masters, and there are many instances of apprentices acting as the agents of their masters in England and abroad.¹ It was even possible for apprentices to open shops as long as these were 'branches' of their masters' businesses: in 1443-4, a tailor, John Edward, was granted a licence by the master and wardens of the craft for his apprentice to 'tenir shoppe a son meistes profit within his terme' at a cost of 33s 4d.² The legal subordination of apprentice to master does not in fact represent accurately the constant dialogue which took place within the context of the 'workshop economy' where relationships could be redefined when necessary, to allow for partnerships, sub-contracting and specialisation.

Yet what is abundantly clear from the high wastage rate of apprentices is that, for various reasons, these relationships were prone to fail far more often than they were to succeed. Some partings between masters and apprentices were doubtless amicable, others the result of the apprentice absconding after acquiring the skills necessary to practice the craft. On the other hand, a great many contracts failed for other reasons which left those apprentices who remained in London vulnerable; as Ian Archer puts it: 'a classic route into vagrancy was the breakdown of the master-servant relationship'.³ The disputes recorded in the Plea and Memoranda Rolls in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are illuminating; Jenny Ryan has found that the master was to blame in far more cases than the apprentice. In the fifteenth century, for example, 85 out of 101 cases were brought because a master had either left the City (74), or had breached the covenant with his apprentice in some other way (11). In half of the seventy-four cases where the masters had left the City, they had additionally failed to enroll their apprentices within the first year, as required by the City. Another fourteen suits were brought because of non-enrollment alone.⁴ As Ryan admits, however, this fails to take into account those masters who pursued their apprentices through other legal channels: the sixty-eight masters between 1350 and 1370 who, in a period of labour shortages, received the help of the Mayor and Corporation of London to find runaway

¹ e.g. *CPMR*, 1382-1412, p.162 and see *ibid.*, 1364-1381, p.xliii.

² *Accounts*, I, f.169.

³ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp.206-7.

⁴ Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', p.33.

apprentices are a case in point.¹ There would also have been many masters who did not bother, confident they could secure a new apprentice from the ranks of immigrants in London, particularly when the population level in the capital began to recover. The absconding of masters should not be minimised either: financial difficulties led many masters to seek sanctuary in privileged places such as St. Martin le Grand or Westminster Abbey.² John Thomas, an immigrant from Cornwall, had been apprenticed to John Davy, tailor, before the latter's death sometime before 1430. His second master, Henry Goof, subsequently absconded 'to the privileged place of Westminster', leaving him once more without someone to teach him the craft. Fortunately Thomas was soon able to secure a new master, Stephen Piers, an example of the support mechanisms could exist for stranded apprentices.³

Of the disputes recorded in the Tailors' Court Minutes, only a few appear to have been brought by a master. William Ashby was one of these; he complained in 1493 that his apprentice, John Hebblethwaite, refused to obey him and 'used the company of a woman which was to his grete losse and hynderyng for asmoch as he was so affectionate and resorted daily unto hyr'. This complaint is a significant one: the sheer drudgery of an apprenticeship, and the restrictions placed upon the freedom of the individual apprentice doubtless led many to abandon their training.⁴ On closer examination by the Court, however, the master's complaint was found to be merely an attempt by the master to rid himself of an apprentice who was preparing to reveal his malpractice. Ashby, so Hebblethwaite alleged, had made a contract with him 'by fraudelent meanes' under which Hebblethwaite was to receive a wage of 32s *per annum* 'which is contrary to the old ancient custumes of this said citee and the good ordenaunces of this present place'. Two witnesses were found to back up Hebblethwaite's story, and the apprentice was dismissed from Ashby's service.⁵ The nature of the breach raises an important issue, the extent to which apprentices were indeed treated as a form of wage labour. The patriarchal relationship enunciated by indentures can be set

¹ See above p.196 and *Calendar of Letters*, ed. Sharpe, *passim*.

² See I.D. Thornley, 'Sanctuary in Medieval London', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 2nd ser., 38 (1932-33), pp.293-315 and Rosser, 'London and Westminster', pp.50-1.

³ *CPMR*, 1413-1437, p.238.

⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.192-3.

⁵ Court Minutes, II, ff.60v-61.

against evidence from Paris which suggests that apprentices were often treated as little more than unskilled, lowly paid workers.¹ Further evidence for the blurring of distinctions between the categories of 'servant' and 'apprentice' can be found in an indenture of 1505, in which Robert Iden was bound as a covenanted servant to Robert Sidlyng, a Westminster tailor. Iden was to serve Sidlyng for six years, a long term for a servant; like an apprentice he was to be provided with bed, board and clothing by his master, and like Hebblethwaite was to receive a nominal yearly wage, 4d in his first year, rising to 10s in the final year.² It is probable that Sidlyng possessed greater freedom to set his own conditions of service at a time when the supply of labour had improved dramatically.

Perhaps the most dramatic of the cases brought by an apprentice of a tailor was that of Thomas Godfrey the apprentice of Robert Archer. In June 1492 Godfrey came before the Tailors' Court and complained that his master had failed to provide him with food and clothing, and also that Archer had failed to find him a school, contrary to the indentures between the two parties.³ Archer was summoned to appear before the court and was examined, after which Godfrey was ordered to continue his service to Archer. Some time later Godfrey repeated his complaints but was again sent back to his master. Soon afterwards Godfrey once again came to Tailors' Hall 'piteously compleyning' that Archer had 'with a mete yerd sore bete hym about the hede...and also upon the naked body'.⁴ He also complained of 'unclene kepyng as foule shirtyd above his midyll and full of vermyn..'. The Court, seeing that Godfrey was an orphan of 'tendre age', dismissed him from Archer's service and committed the latter to ward.⁵ Complaints could, in some cases, be lodged by the parents or the guardian of an apprentice. William Lucas the 'ancre recluse' at London Wall attempted to take his complaint to Chancery when he discovered that his ward, Walter

¹ Geremek, *Le Salariat*, pp.29-35.

² WAM, 5960. I am grateful to Dr. Caroline Barron for this reference.

³ Court Minutes, II, ff.41-v.

⁴ A 'mete yerd' was a rod used to measure lengths of cloth.

⁵ Court Minutes, II, f.41.

Andrew, had been threatened and beaten by his master, Richard West, with whom Lucas had placed the boy to learn the craft of tailoring.¹

It is clear that such cases, which ranged from harsh words spoken by a master to his apprentice to physical abuse, were the tip of an iceberg. It is probable that, just as the length of the term served was not conducive to a high completion rate, bad conditions and ill-treatment were likely further to increase the numbers dropping out. The Tailors' Court certainly fulfilled an important function in the settlement of disputes between masters, but what is clear from the minutes is that most of the disputes between apprentices and their masters were insoluble. Even if the fault was found to lie with the master it was rare for the relationship to be renewed, and even less common for the apprentice to be found a new master. Only in the event of the death or disappearance of a master was an apprentice likely to find another placement, either with the widow or with another master. With the population level in the capital about to recover, it is likely that there was no shortage of would-be apprentices.² This attitude was reflected in the relative freedom which masters had to buy and sell the terms of apprentices. This was, in many ways, the shadow side of the generosity shown by those testators who remitted their apprentices the last months or years of their terms. Financial expediency probably lay behind many of these sales which were supposed to be confirmed by the City Chamber.³

The apprenticeship 'system' in London, therefore, was far from being a means of assimilating immigrants into urban society. From the point of view of the masters of the craft this was probably all to the good: given the low completion rates among the tailors there was no need for the guild to impose restrictions upon apprenticeship in order to preserve opportunities for their own craftsmen. Rather, as has been shown, the Tailors maintained a constant vigilance upon the activities of unenfranchised artisans, particularly immigrants. This was a difficult policy to pursue: competition from freemen could, on the whole, be regulated, but the activities of craftsmen on the margins, probably including many runaway apprentices, were much less visible. In London, informal groups associated with the manufacture of

¹ PRO, C.1/66/66-9 (1475-85), printed in P. Norman 'Abstracts of Documents Relating to London from Early Chancery Proceedings and from the Court of Requests, with explanatory notes', *London Topographical Record*, 6 (1909), pp.73-6.

² Court Minutes, I-II, *passim*.

³ See below, pp.258-60.

clothing appear occasionally in the sources: in 1321 a large number of craftsmen, including tailors, upholders, hosiers and skimmers were summoned to appear before the mayor for selling their goods at fairs held on Cornhill and in Cheapside. Described as ‘mediocris populi’, few of these were tax-payers, and a large number came from some of the poorer areas outside the walls of the City.¹ A.H. Thomas estimated that for every adult freeman there were another three men who were unenfranchised, and it is probable that such people included large numbers of former apprentices who had, for a variety of reasons, abandoned their training and drifted into a less formally regulated sphere of the urban economy.² The ‘bochers’, whose activities the Tailors’ guild was keen to regulate, may have included runaway apprentices: John Williamson was apprenticed to John Motrewayn in 1429-30, but may have dropped out by 1434, when a ‘bocher’ of the same name was fined for making new clothes.³ Such references are rare: as runaways most apprentices would have kept a low profile. The margins of London’s economy and society deserve greater attention from historians than they have so far received. In Paris, for example, legitimate sellers of second-hand clothing (who had their own guild) were frequently involved in disputes with itinerant dealers who were viewed as vagabonds by the established groups of craftsmen.⁴

IV. The *Cursus Honorum*: Apprentices and Servants

1. Sponsored Mobility

Of the cohort of 1,559 tailors’ apprentices, it has been suggested that around 550 completed their terms and 202 of these then proceeded to become masters in their own right. For these men, the apprenticeship experience was largely a successful one in which they learned their craft, acquired patrons and eventually the hard cash needed to set up shop. Robert Colwich, the apprentice of Ralph Holland, was one such success story. Born in Colwich in Staffordshire, he came to London in about 1440.⁵ By 1453 Colwich had successfully completed his apprenticeship, set up shop and presented his first apprentice,

¹ Veale, ‘Craftsmen and the Economy of London’, p.124.

² *CPMR*, 1364-1381, p.lxii.

³ *Accounts*, I, ff.203v, 255.

⁴ Geremek, *Margins of Society* p.263-7.

⁵ *Accounts* I, f.329; for Holland’s career see Barron, ‘Ralph Holland’, pp.160-183.

William Stubbs. His career continued to progress rapidly within the craft and in 1460 he was elected Master of the fraternity.¹ His activities then, as with many prominent London craftsmen, switched to the sphere of City politics, starting with his election as Chamberlain in 1463.² He was subsequently re-elected to that office every year until 1474 when he became an alderman, first for Farringdon Ward (without), and in 1476 for Coleman Street ward.³ He died in 1480, probably aged about sixty, and was generous in his bequests to the Tailors' fraternity and to his own apprentices.⁴ Colwich's career illustrates the importance of patronage as a factor in social mobility in late-medieval London. As in early modern London, the status of an apprentice's master appears to have been a crucial factor in determining future career patterns. It has already been shown that apprentices of liverymen enjoyed a distinct and increasing advantage over their fellow apprentices at each stage in their careers. Of the 202 apprentices (of the cohort of 1,559) who became masters, 139 (69%) were the former apprentices of liverymen. When the sixty-one apprentices who went on to join the fraternity are considered, the proportion rises still higher to forty-seven (77%). This can be compared with the 58% of all apprentices who were bound to liverymen (see Table 4.2).⁵

Furthermore, it is clear that the vast majority of these successful apprentices had been taken on when their masters were *already* members of the fraternity. This accounted for 103 of the 139 masters and 40 of the 47 liverymen in Table 4.2. It was therefore a distinct advantage to be placed with an existing liveryman, an advantage which became more apparent as a craftsman's career progressed. These proportions are not as dramatically biased in favour of the apprentices of liverymen as those which Rappaport discusses for the sixteenth century crafts. He suggests that the opportunities for those who served with liverymen were around three times greater than for those who served with ordinary householders.⁶ This

¹ Clode, *Early History*, II, p.338.

² Accounts, II, f.3; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.35.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.55, 60, 66-7, 72, 80, 86, 91, 97, 107, 111; Beaven, *Aldermen*, II, p.15.

⁴ PRO, Prob.11/7 f.6.

⁵ Accounts, I-II, *passim*.

⁶ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p.349.

discrepancy might indicate that the liveries of the sixteenth century crafts had achieved a much greater status and influence over patterns of mobility than their fifteenth century predecessors. Rappaport also demonstrates that the social origins of apprentices did not themselves affect the length of term served or the chances of progressing to the mastership. Nevertheless, the status of an apprentice's master does appear to have been an important factor affecting mobility within the craft. Indirectly, therefore, the social origins of apprentices must also have had an effect. Prominent gentry families, for instance, were probably better able to place their sons with well established members of the craft.¹

2. Servanthood among the London Tailors.

It is important now to discuss the fortunes of those who were fortunate enough to make it to the end of their apprenticeships. Another plank in Rappaport's argument that economic opportunities in early modern London were in fact relatively good, is that many of those who did complete their apprenticeships *also* left London. Hence, for those who became freemen and remained in London, becoming a householder and having a shop was a 'reasonable expectation'.² This analysis seems over-optimistic, whether it is applied to the London of the sixteenth century, or the earlier period. The competitiveness of the urban economy is testified to in the sources: as early as 1435 the Girdlers complained that too many apprentices were taken on by their freemen such that, despite the drop-out rate, there were too many freemen competing for the available work.³ Concern at the threat posed by aliens and foreigners has already been examined: in 1451 the Cordwainers complained that many of their freemen were unable to secure paid work because of the refusal of alien freemen to employ them. Consequently many freemen found work in 'Blanchapultone', a favourite haunt of vagrants and the unenfranchised.⁴ The world of wage labour has received little attention from historians of English towns in the later medieval period, although the work of historians such as Geremek, Sonenscher and Cohn on European towns and cities has helped to shed

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.343-4.

² *Ibid.*, p.340.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.200.

⁴ *Ibid.*, K, pp.335-37.

light on this problem.¹ Wage labour was certainly widespread in medieval towns and cities, and no less so in London. The wills of many tailors in the late medieval period refer to servants as well as apprentices: William Hill left his former servant Adam Dawson some items of clothing 'which I weryd in werkdayes'.² Many crafts required their new free men to become servants for a period of time to prevent them from setting up too soon in competition with householders: in 1449 and 1450 the Tailors ordained that all newly qualified craftsmen were to put themselves in covenant with 'a noder freman householder' for a period of a year unless they could afford to establish a proper business which could be subject to the scrutiny of the Wardens.³ Some masters also required their own apprentices to continue to serve them as journeymen after the completion of their terms: one tailor, Robert Lacy required his former apprentice to work for him for a year at wages of 20s.⁴ The traditional approach adopted by historians has in general been to emphasise the transitional nature of wage labour. Rappaport, for instance, sees servanthood as merely a phase in the life-cycle of a craftsman. He does not examine the nature of the phenomenon itself or contemplate the possibility that many more freemen than he allows were destined to remain as journeymen for most if not all of their lives.

This narrowly focused view of wage labour is certainly suggested by much of the available evidence, which naturally tends to concentrate upon servanthood as a stage in a craftsman's career. As in the case of the apprentices, historians have tended to take the line of least resistance, looking at the careers of the most visible craftsmen, in other words those who managed to become householders and masters. An example of how this sort of approach can be applied to those tailor apprentices who became masters can be seen in Graph 2 (below p.215). A sample of 135 apprentices who became masters in their own right has been used to establish that the average length of time taken by an apprentice to complete his training and take on an apprentice of his own was 11.1 years. Bearing in mind that the average length of term to which tailor apprentices were bound was 7.9 years (the minimum was seven years), a number of suggestions can be made. First, as the graph suggests, a number of

¹ See Geremek, *Le salariat*, Sonenscher, *Work and Wages* and Cohn, *The Laboring Classes*.

² GL, MS. 9171/7, f.136v (1488).

³ Misc. Ords., f.10.

⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.112-15; see above p.198.

tailors managed to become free and present an apprentice apparently before the end of their terms. This almost certainly indicates that they were able to purchase the freedom of the City, and had sufficient resources to be able to set up shop without too many problems. Most of these were the apprentices of liverymen. Secondly, more than three-quarters of former apprentices managed to establish themselves as masters within thirteen years of being enrolled themselves, and hence five years after completing their terms. Thirdly, from these figures it can be suggested that the average master had taken 3.2 years to establish himself, after completing his apprenticeship. Remarkably, this is exactly the same as the period of time Rappaport calculates that sixteenth century freemen spent as journeymen.¹

Such people, therefore, would comprise one group of wage labourers in late-medieval London, for whom service in one capacity or another was indeed merely a preliminary to setting up shop. Many former apprentices probably had debts to pay off to their masters: in 1394 one tailor, William Waterton, asked his executors to remit his three apprentices the rest of their terms once the debts they owed to him had been paid, a common condition in the wills of craftsmen.² In addition they needed funds and patronage in order to pay for the lease on a shop, whether on their own or in partnership with one or more fellow craftsmen.

Late last century Alice Green wrote that the labour question, as she termed it, was 'inarticulate through its very magnitude'.³ In many ways it is not the number of wage-labourers which is important, although certainly the size of this group within urban society has generally been underestimated. Rather it is the complexity of the relationships between masters and their journeymen which is most striking. As with the apprentices, the sources give an impression of subordination which does not, as Michael Sonenscher points out with regard to the trades of pre-revolutionary Paris, reveal the varying nature of the relationships people had with one another: 'corporate statutes and corporate decisions were cryptic summaries of a number of more extended dialogues: between masters and journeymen, between different groups of master artisans, and between journeymen themselves'.⁴ Many master craftsmen in medieval London must, at times have undertaken paid work for fellow

¹ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp.340-1.

² GL, MS. 9171/1, f.315v.

³ Green, *Town Life*, I, p.98.

⁴ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, pp.40, 99.

craftsmen, whether as part of a sub-contractual arrangement, or out of necessity due to financial difficulties. In 1444 John Lacy was engaged by Thomas Cokland, citizen and tailor, for 16 weeks, receiving a wage of 14d a week. Lacy was in fact a master tailor in his own right and had enrolled apprentices in 1437-38 and 1441-42: unfavourable circumstances may have forced him to undertake paid work.¹ The world of wage labour was not homogeneous therefore. As well as young men just out of their apprenticeships, paid work was sought by established craftsmen down on their luck, as well as freemen who were never able to set up a business but who nevertheless remained in London. The employment of many immigrant workers by tailors in the fifteenth century lent further heterogeneity to the world of wage labour in the capital. The taking-on of such servants was heavily regulated by the Tailors' guild, as by most of the London guilds. An annual fee, normally 6s 8d, was payable to the guild for each alien or foreign servant from at least 1425, whereas the pressure on employment opportunities did not require such a formal enrollment procedure for 'native' tailors until much later in the fifteenth century.² A tailor had to pay this fine each year if he wished to continue to employ such workers: James Florence employed several alien workers between 1429 and 1440, including John up Hevyr and his brother Peter, who both served him from 1430 until at least 1435. Each year Florence had to pay a fee of 5s for each servant.³ Florence's own story is remarkable: in 1425 he was himself employed as an alien servant by a tailor, John Barbour. Two years later his origins are revealed when, through the payment of a hugely inflated fee of £18, he obtained the freedom of the City by redemption, described as 'de utryght'. In 1431-2 his rise to prominence was complete when he was admitted to the livery of the craft.⁴ He appears to have presented only one apprentice, John Glasyer in 1457-8, and died in 1462, a resident of the parish of St. Mary Wolnoth. One of his executors was a fellow alien, Arnold Hoffman, a goldsmith from Southwark.⁵ For most of the fifteenth century relations between the aliens and 'native' London tailors ^{were trouble-free} Certainly, there do not appear to have been any serious disputes between the two groups, mainly it

¹ CLRO, MC.1/3/251; Accounts, I, ff.293v, 342.

² Accounts, I, f.160v.

³ Accounts, I, ff.215v, 225v, 236v, 245v, 257v.

⁴ Accounts, I, ff. 160v, 182v, 216.

⁵ Accounts, II, f.125v; GL, MS. 9171/5, f.331v.

seems, because the foreign workers were, as has been shown, confined by the guild to the manufacture of second hand clothing. One of Florence's servants, for instance, was fined 3s 4d in 1431-2 'pur faisur de nove werke'.¹ A distinction was certainly made between these men who were only rarely, like Florence, made free of the craft, and 'free sowers' who were normally former apprentices and who frequently went on to establish their own businesses. Yet as has been demonstrated, there was a conflict of interest between the two groups which was articulated through the increasingly urgent efforts made by the Tailors and other guilds to control the employment of immigrants in the fifteenth century.²

While the skilled workers among the alien and foreign tailors posed one kind of threat, it is clear that many of them were only semi-skilled and joined the large numbers of artisans in the capital who had abandoned their training mid-way through or who had never had any training at all. Masters were not encouraged to take on the latter because of their lack of training but, nevertheless, provision was made by several guilds, and not simply by those such as masons and carpenters who probably needed more unskilled labour. In 1380 the Cutlers produced an ordinance to the effect that a journeyman who was not free, or who had not completed an apprenticeship, was not to be allowed to work in the trade unless he was tried by the overseers of the craft to see 'how much he is deservyng to take by the day, by the week, or for a whole term'. A penalty was imposed for any master who paid more than the sum determined.³ In the aftermath of the Black Death and the labour legislation of the later fourteenth century it was obviously important to determine which craftsmen were attempting to take advantage of the demand for labour, by concealing their lack of skills, in order to obtain higher wages.

The regulations contained in the records of municipal corporations and the guilds themselves rarely hint at the variations in the nature of servanthood in the middle ages. In the case of the London tailors most can be discovered about servants who entered into formal covenants with masters and who, in many cases, lived and worked under the roofs of their employers.⁴ In 1490, arbitrators appointed by the Master and Wardens delivered their

¹ Accounts, I, f.224.

² See above, pp.99-102, 167-72.

³ Riley, *Memorials*, pp. 438-42. The founders promulgated a similar ordinance in 1389, *ibid.*, pp.512-5.

⁴ See Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.114

judgement in a dispute between Rowland Hymeston and his servant John Langryk. Langryk certainly seems to have lived in his master's house for he was ordered to remove 'all his wor[k]yng gere and stuf' from there. In this case the relationship was evidently irreparable as Langryk was dismissed from his covenant for his offences.¹ By contrast, George Lovekyn, a prominent tailor who became tailor to Henry VII in 1486, got on well with the apprentices and servants in his workshop.² In his will proved in 1503, Lovekyn left his apprentices some fine items of clothing, and his servant Stephen Jasper all the bedding he used to lie on.³ The blurred boundaries between apprenticeship and servanthood have already been discussed: wages could be augmented by food, accommodation, clothing and other non-monetary rewards. The journeymen shearmen of London in 1350 were said to earn 3d a day plus their 'table' during the winter and autumn, and 4d plus 'table' in the summer months.⁴ At the other extreme, as has been shown, it is the temporary nature of much wage-labour which is most striking. Such mobility within the labour market was a feature of the 'pre-industrial' urban economy: indeed, Dr. Sonenscher found that journeymen employed by the wig-makers of Rouen between 1783 and 1791 spent on average 118 days, just over sixteen weeks, with an employer.⁵

A case heard in the Tailors' Court in 1489 provides further evidence of the level of wages paid to some tailors' servants. The dispute involved William Shotteswold and his servant William Ashwell. Ashwell was ordered to 'beseche the said Shotteswold to be his good master and submytte hym self as a servaunt... and to aske forgevenes all false ungodeley langage as he hath ayenst the said William Shotteswold'. The wages were set at 40s a year by the arbitrators, to be paid quarterly.⁶ These wage levels appear, at first glance, to have been at the low end of the spectrum, but it is important to bear in mind the length of the working year. The Cappers of Coventry, for instance, stipulated in 1496 that wage-

¹ Accounts, II, f.37v.

² See Sutton, 'George Lovekyn', pp.1-12.

³ PRO, Prob.11/14, f.48v.

⁴ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.250-1.

⁵ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, p.153.

⁶ Court Minutes, II, f.15.

labourers were to receive 12d a week which, given that the working year probably consisted of at most 270 days due to Holy days, Sundays and half days, also works out at an annual wage of approximately 40s.¹ Building workers, on the other hand, appear to have received between four and five pence a day in the fifteenth century. Although an extremely valuable measure of the changes in wage rates in the late medieval period, there are many senses in which building workers' wages and work patterns are not typical; for example, on some occasions wages paid to them included payments for raw materials.²

The relationships between masters and their servants were not static, not least because of the changing economic conditions in the century and a half following the Black Death. The potential for dialogue between employers and employees is evidenced most clearly by the sheer quantity of legislation in late medieval England and in particular by the City authorities in London, which attempted to peg wages at a uniform rate. This was exemplified by the Statute of Labourers of 1351 and the concern expressed by masters at the combinations of wage-labourers which appeared in the late fourteenth century.³ The regulation of the actual process of hiring labour was one particular way in which such principles could be put into practice: in 1449 the Tailors' guild stipulated that every 'free sower', who did not immediately become covenanted to an existing master was

to inhabite hym in the comons among other servauntes sawers
of the seid mistiere....that other fremen householders at tyme
of necessite may lewfully require and have suche servauntes
sawers for competent wages by the day or by the garment.⁴

This was clearly an attempt by the Tailors to establish hiring houses, much like the lodging houses of eighteenth century Paris, and to prevent their wage-labourers from working hidden away in chambers and solars where they produced 'untrewe and deceyvable werkmanship'.⁵ In the medieval period such lodging houses for journeymen do not appear to have been particularly common. Open-air hiring places or 'places d'embauche' were certainly common

¹ M.D. Harriss ed., *The Coventry Leet Book*, EETS, 134, 135, 138, and 146 (1907, 1913), II, pp.572-4; Dyer, *Standards of Living* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.222-27 and Geremek, *Le Salariat*, pp.82-4.

² Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp.215.

³ As shown above, pp.147-56.

⁴ Misc. Ords., f.10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, f.10; Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, p.169.

in late-medieval Paris: the Place de Grève was where the building workers assembled each day to secure employment, and an ordinance of 1354 had ordered all workers to present themselves at the 'places des lieux accoustumez à louer les ouvriers'.¹ The rationale behind hiring places was clear. In the first place, contracts were to be concluded on the spot, in front of the other masters of the craft, to prevent masters from concluding agreements with journeymen in the privacy of their own workshops. Secondly, the craft authorities saw this as the only way of keeping track of craftsmen who were not already owners of a business, or in employment. There was, however, something of a calculated risk involved in the establishment of such hiring places. To the employers of late-medieval London, and indeed throughout Europe in the later middle ages, the danger of combinations of workers seeking to raise wages was infinitely worse than the problem posed by masters and servants agreeing terms in private. The Tailors must have been particularly sure of themselves in 1449: it was only thirty years since the Master and Wardens had to answer for a group of 'servientes et allocati' of the craft who had 'consorted together in dwelling houses and behaved in an unruly manner', assaulting a senior member of the craft in the process. The ring-leaders were summoned by the Mayor and aldermen and ordered to stop living together and wearing liveries at unlawful assemblies.²

This was, of course, merely the latest of a series of disturbances involving wage labourers who had combined against their masters. In the late fourteenth century there were a series of such disputes, centring upon the level of wages and the method of payment. These all took place at a time when, in the aftermath of the plagues of 1348/9, servants of all kinds sensed that their bargaining power was greatly increased. The first of these in 1350 concerned the Shearmen who complained that their journeymen were insisting on being paid for each cloth rather than by the day, 'and so they do so greatly hurry over the same that they do great damage to the folks to whom such cloths belong'.³ The argument for quality of workmanship dominates the opposition to piece rates in all periods: in 1750 the tailors of Marseilles prohibited payment 'à la tâche' because 'un ouvrier emprésser de finir les pièces

¹ Geremek, *Le Salarial*, pp.126-129.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, p.136 and see above, pp.149ff.

³ Riley, *Memorials*, p.251.

dont il est chargé ne s'applique point a leur donner la perfection nécessaire'.¹ Payment by the piece does not often appear in the statutes and ordinances of crafts, but this does not mean that it did not occur. Indeed, hiring a labourer to work on a specific item gave the master a great deal of flexibility, and the craftsman an incentive to complete the job. The Tailors' ordinances seem to echo this concern by leaving it to individual masters to decide whether to pay servants by the garment or by the day, but in practice, daily rates seemed to have been the norm.²

Commenting on the activities of the London servants, Geremek wrote that 'le processus de l'émancipation sociale des valets coïncide avec le développement des associations des compagnons'.³ This picture of an increasing 'polarisation' between masters and wage labourers in fourteenth century London is perhaps slightly overstated. Whilst demographic pressure was certainly an important factor leading to the creation of organisations of journeymen, the interests of all such people did not necessarily coincide. As has been demonstrated, some members of the emergent 'yeomen' fraternities were doubtless destined to remain journeymen all their lives, whilst others hoped to be able to open shops and to have apprentices and servants of their own. Whilst the yeomen fraternities of the later fourteenth century aroused fear and suspicion among many masters, due to the bargaining power possessed by wage labourers, their fifteenth century counterparts became an integral part of the structure of the 'livery companies'.⁴

It is clear, therefore, that the world of wage labour was a complex one which should not simply be viewed from the point of view of the masters of the crafts. Reddaway, for instance, cites the ordinances of the Goldsmiths and their emphasis on the strict control of their servants as evidence that wage-labourers rarely worked free-lance and were firmly under the control of the craft authorities.⁵ This plainly was not the case. Ordinances were rarely promulgated without reason, and whilst they do not necessarily indicate that there was

¹ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, p.189.

² Misc. Ords., f.10, quoted above; in Paris too, piece-rates do not appear very often, but were probably an important, if invisible dimension to the world of work, Geremek, *Le Salariat*, p.62.

³ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁴ Above, pp.147-56.

⁵ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p.92 n.80.

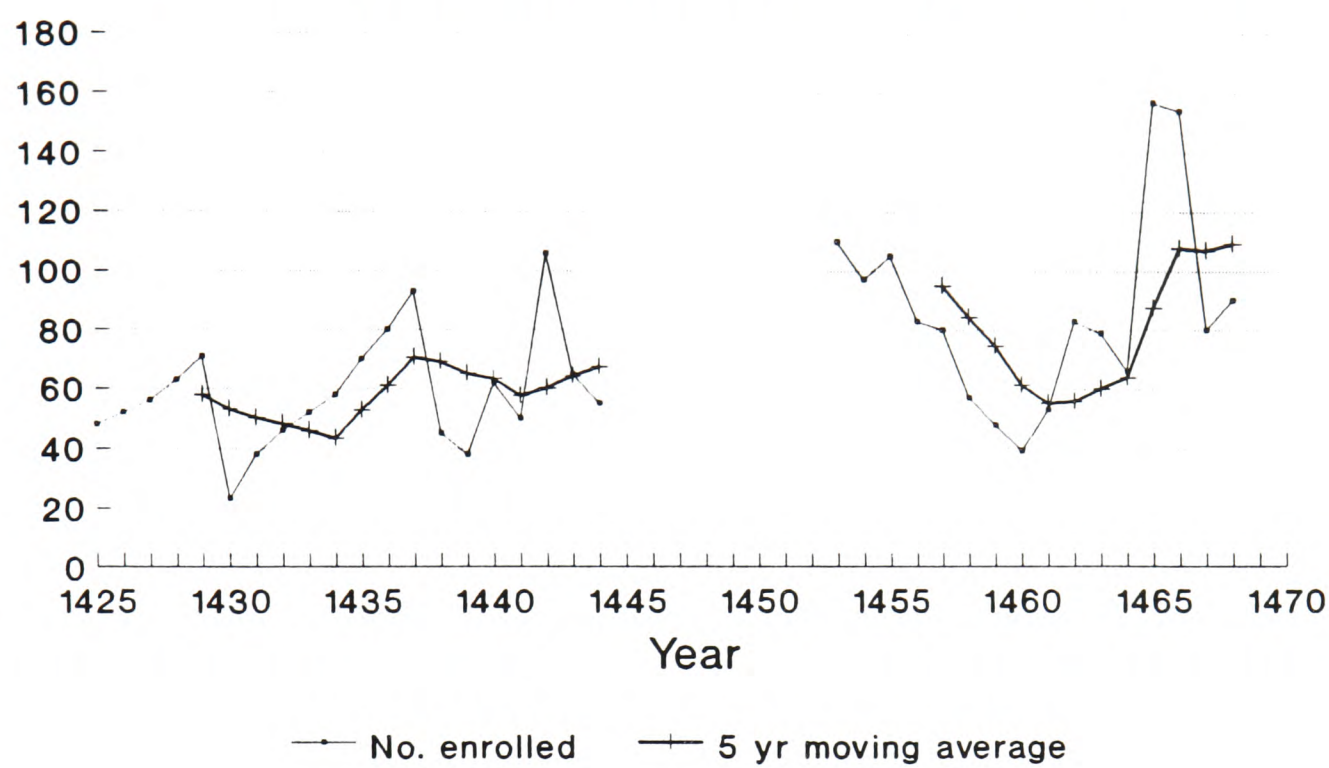
a 'problem' in any fundamental sense, they should serve to alert the historian to areas of the urban economy which were difficult to regulate. Unskilled labour, for instance, was a reality, whether in the form of apprenticeship, or through the employment of artisans who had completed no training. The London Bladesmiths in 1408 specified that no craftsman was to teach a journeyman the secrets of the craft 'as he would his apprentice', suggesting that some crafts depended upon unskilled labour more than others.¹ The Tailors seem generally to have preferred skilled labour in order to maintain the quality of the finished product, and it is probable that the nature of the craft meant that unskilled labour was employed only rarely. Beneath the regulations and ordinances, the relationships between masters and their journeymen were doubtless also subject to great variation. The basis upon which journeymen were paid, for instance, appears as an issue which fundamentally divided employers and employees, yet piece-rates were a flexible method of payment which reflected the vagaries of the market, seasonal fluctuations and the short term nature of many contracts.

Conclusion

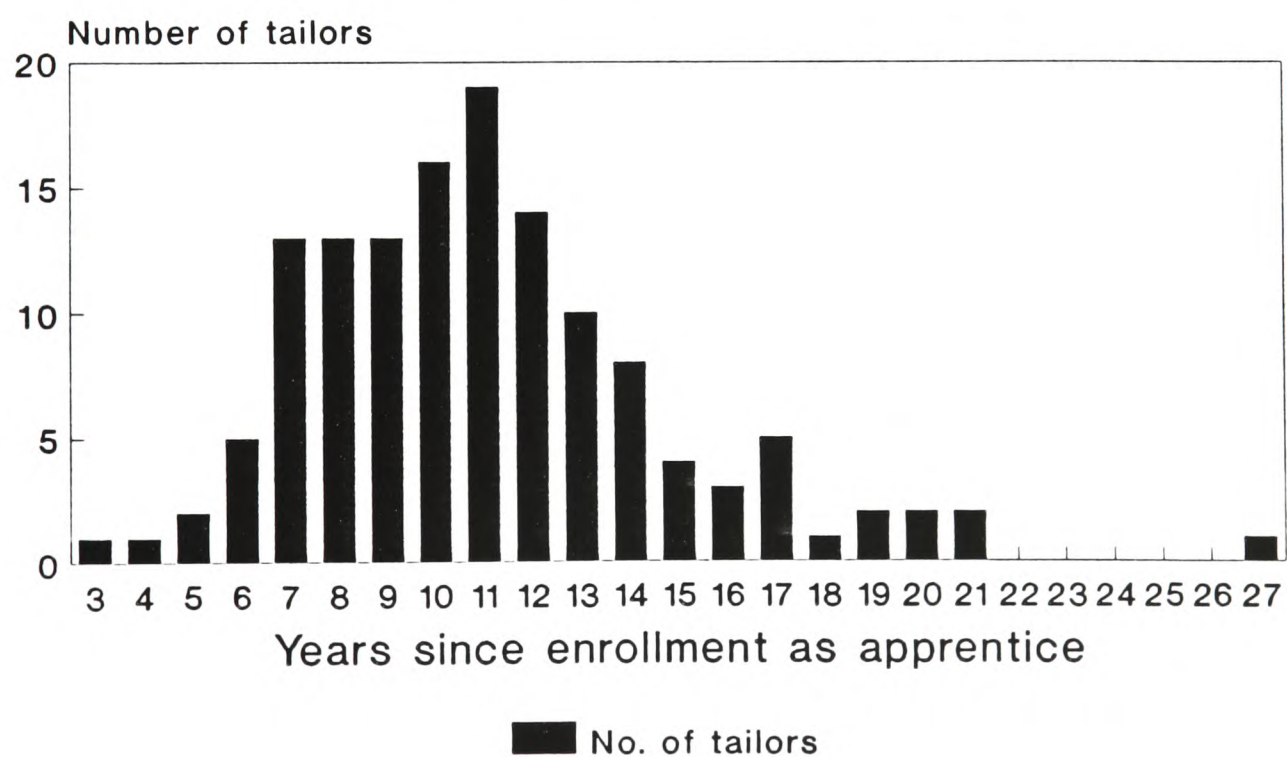
The traditional approach to the structure of medieval crafts had linked apprenticeship and servanthood together through the institution of the craft guild and the *cursus honorum*. Apprentices are seen as future masters who arrived at that stage after a relatively short period of 'work experience' as a journeyman in the shop of a fellow master. This chapter has also aimed to link the two together, but in a different way. Apprenticeship and servanthood were experiences which produced a variety of outcomes and relationships, which in many ways epitomises the complexity of urban society in the later middle ages. It is this variety and complexity which needs to inform any discussion of the nature of the 'workshop' itself in the urban context. Can we indeed speak of a single workshop, or were business partnerships and informal 'putting out' arrangements such that the traditional image of the workshop, a master, his wife and their apprentice, so prevalent in guild records, is in need of redefinition? Chapter Six will attempt to test the traditional picture of an artisan business in the light of evidence from a variety of sources which help to shed light on the working practices of the tailors of London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

¹ Riley, *Memorials*, p.570.

Graph 1
Enrollments of Tailors' Apprentices



Graph 2
Apprentices into Masters



Sample of 135 master tailors, 1425-1458

CHAPTER SIX. THE STRUCTURE OF THE TAILORING INDUSTRY IN LONDON: THE PRODUCTIVE NETWORK IN THE URBAN ECONOMY, 1350-1500.

I. Demographic Change and Production

Som tyme, afer men myghten lordes know
By there array, from other folke; but now
A man schal stody and musen a long throwe
Whiche is whiche: O lordes it sit to yowe
Amende this for it is youre prowre
If twixt you and youre men no difference
Be in array, lesse is youre reverence.¹

The century and a half following the great plagues of 1348-49 in England was characterized by a dramatic and continuing decline in the population levels of many towns and cities. London, for instance, probably experienced a decline from a pre-plague peak of 80,000 to 100,000, to around 40,000 by 1400. This was not reversed until well into the sixteenth century.² Despite the evidence offered for economic decline in certain towns of late-medieval England it is generally accepted by historians that, for those in employment, these were relatively prosperous times: real wages rose to unprecedented levels, and employment opportunities for artisans increased, particularly for women, many of whom were drawn into the paid workforce for the first time.³ Yet statistics showing the rise in real wages in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries are themselves only of limited value in assessing the wider effects of depopulation upon the lives of town-dwellers in late medieval England. As Joan Thirsk pointed out in her important study of the development of the consumer society in early modern England, it is vital to explore beyond wages indexes and to study product differentiation as evidence of expanding consumption.⁴ Similar work

¹ F.J. Furnivall ed., *Hoccleve's Works III. The Regement of Princes* (EETS extra ser., 72, 1897), p.17, lines 442-448.

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.41-2; Keene, 'A New Study of London', pp.11-21.

³ See Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy*; Dyer, *Standards of Living* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.188-210 and E.H. Phelps Brown and S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the price of consumables compared with builders' wage rates', in E.M. Carus-Wilson ed., *Essays in Economic History*, 3 vols (London, 1954-66), II, p.186; Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*.

⁴ J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: the Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978), pp.130-1. See also her 'The Fantastical Folly of Fashion: the English Stocking Knitting Industry, 1500-1700' in *idem*, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London, 1984), pp.235-59.

on the production of consumer goods in the post-Black Death economy is slowly advancing and indicates that, though not on the scale of the diversification and specialisation which took place in the seventeenth century, significant changes had occurred in production and consumption patterns. This period saw the acceleration of post-conquest developments in the production of goods. By the fourteenth century the names of consumer goods had frequently replaced the names of materials in occupational designations, reflecting the specialisation and diversification which had taken place over preceding centuries and the perceived advantages of product differentiation. The post-conquest production of combs, for instance, was normally in the hands of comb-makers, rather than distributed among workers in bone, horn and antler. They might use any one of these materials depending upon the taste and purchasing power of the customer.¹ The effects of depopulation, particularly the rising standards of living, may have accelerated this trend towards specialisation and differentiation in the urban economy, and the growth of new markets among artisans and merchants. The huge range of occupations and consumer goods in fourteenth century London has been vividly described by Dr. Veale, and work carried out by Professor Dyer, for instance, has charted the growth of a flourishing post-plague market in household goods of a relatively cheap variety, including pewter vessels and painted bed and wall hangings.² London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a renowned centre for the production and distribution of goods of all kinds. This was epitomised by the development of Cheapside as the capital's main shopping street, where a consumer might buy almost anything, from buttons and purses to expensive gold and silver vessels.³

Hoccleve's words remind us that the clothing industry was an obvious sphere of the urban economy where product differentiation could take place. Because of the range of available materials, servants could look like their masters without spending huge sums of money. This can be seen in the increasingly popular testamentary practice of asking executors

¹ A. MacGregor, 'Antler, Bone and Horn', in *English Medieval Industries*, ed. J. Blair and N. Ramsay (London, 1991), p.367. A similar trend can be seen in the case of the London Cutlers who produced knife handles using a variety of materials.

² Veale, 'Craftsmen and the Economy of London', pp.120-140; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp.188-210.

³ D.J. Keene, 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London', in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London*, ed. L. Grant (British Archaeological Association, Conference Transactions, X, 1990), pp.29-46. See also the contemporary description of the bustling markets of London in 'The London Lyckpeny', *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose*, ed. D. Gray (Oxford, 1985), pp.16-19.

to provide clothing of a cheaper variety for the poor. A one-time Mayor of London, Sir John Percyvale was meticulous in his testamentary provisions: money raised from the sale of his goods and clothing was to be used to purchase russet cloth from Suffolk or Northampton, 'for those colours be moost sure'. The cloth was then to be made into garments for poor householders with the womens' garments to be made 'after the fasshion of my wiffs sloppe'¹ Criticisms of the 'outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their degree and estate' abounded, and led to the formulation of sumptuary legislation aimed at restricting the sums which artisans, in particular, spent upon their clothing, and the sorts of materials which could be used.² Yet such legislation in many ways missed the point which Hoccleve and other commentators were making, for it was the very availability of a range of materials, combined with the increased purchasing power of artisans, which rendered upper-class fashion accessible to the lower orders. The closely related development of fashions in fur for the linings of the robes and hoods of the upper classes was paralleled by the growth of a large market for cheaper furs worn by prosperous artisans and even servants.³

These fashions were themselves the object of ridicule by Hoccleve and others: long, close-fitting gowns known as 'houpelonds' were becoming common at the close of the fourteenth century, but their 'pendant sleeves doune on the grounde' meant that a lord had 'but litel need of broomes to swepe away the filthe out of the street'.⁴ By the mid fifteenth century, the indecently short doublets worn by men of all ranks was a matter of concern for those who drafted the sumptuary legislation of 1463.⁵ These concerns were a reflection of the rapid developments which had taken place in tailoring techniques and fashion since the mid fourteenth century. The 'fitted' nature of garments, in particular, had important implications for tailors who now had to 'shape' their cloth rather than simply cut out

¹ Proved in May 1503, PRO, Prob.11/13, ff.191-193v. A 'sloppe' was an outer garment worn as a loose jacket, tunic, cassock, mantle or gown, *OED*, ix, pt.1, p.230.

² (37 Edw. III cc.8-14), *Statutes*, i, pp.379-82; (3 Edw. IV c.5), *ibid.*, ii, pp.399-402; (22 Edw. IV c.1), *ibid.*, ii, pp.468-70.

³ Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.1-21, 133-55.

⁴ *The Regement of Princes*, ed. Furnivall, pp.17 (lines 423-4), 20 (lines 533-34).

⁵ (3 Edw. IV c.5), *Statutes*, ii, pp.399-402.

rectangles and sew them together.¹ Tailoring had become a 'struggle to develop mastery over cloth' which, by 1400, had resulted in a great diversity of styles being developed, adapted and discarded to make way for others.² The fact that such fashions were now available to, and desired by, newly prosperous artisans, encouraged product differentiation in the clothing industry and hence further experiments in design.

Yet despite the many archaeological and iconographical studies of the consumer goods made by medieval craftsmen, there have been few attempts to perceive them in terms of the interrelationship between the demands of consumers and the productive processes set up by craftsmen. Indeed the study of artefacts such as combs or leather shoes has frequently become entirely divorced from the lives of craftsmen. Similarly the activities of craftsmen have all too frequently been studied through the rigid framework of guild ordinances. This chapter aims to look at the structure of the tailoring industry in London, and to demonstrate that the complex structures of urban crafts owed more to the prevailing market conditions and productive processes than the statutes of craft guilds.

II. Competition and Quality.

The skills which tailors possessed, combined with the purchasing power enjoyed by many artisans as well as their social superiors, seems to have resulted in a thriving tailoring industry in the capital. While this is perhaps not at all surprising, given the permanence of demand for clothing, the sheer size of the craft does seem to indicate that the market was a large and thriving one. As has been shown, the craft was expanding in the fifteenth century: the numbers of masters and apprentices appears to have doubled between 1425 and 1465, while the membership of the livery remained roughly the same. Estimates of the numbers of artisans practising a particular trade are notoriously problematic. The method employed by Sylvia Thrupp in her analysis of the London crafts involved the use of 'snapshots' taken from lists of subscribers to levies, tax assessments and so on.³ Thus in 1408 the Tailors' guild

¹ V.J. Scattergood and J.W. Sherborne eds., *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1983), pp.15-16; Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince*, pp.3-4.

² Scott, *A Visual History of Costume*, pp.16-18.

³ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.41-52.

raised £21 13s from 232 craftsmen to help pay for their new charter.¹ However, these lists are frequently skewed towards the members of the guild (the 'livery'), composed of the wealthiest artisans. As has been shown, only 47 out of 202 master tailors (whose apprenticeships are recorded) came to join the fraternity itself.² Given that the livery failed to grow in size in the fifteenth century it is important to look at the 957 masters who enrolled 2,552 apprentices between 1425-45 and 1453-69.³ Although not particularly respectable as a statistical exercise, it is nevertheless possible to attempt to estimate the numbers of master tailors who lived in London at any one point in time. In order to do this, a figure of 20.54 years has been used as the average career span of a master tailor, in other words the gap between the first recorded enrollment of an apprentice by a master and the date of his death.⁴ If this figure is applied to the 957 masters who appear over a period of thirty-seven years (i.e. *25 per annum*) it produces an average figure of just over 530 master tailors living and working in London in any one year. Static completion and 'promotion' rates for apprentices ensured the continued expansion of the craft such that there may have been around 700 master tailors in London in the 1460s.

The problems with these figures are obvious: the average career span was measured using tailors who tended to have rather more successful careers than most, presenting between three and four apprentices during their lifetimes. On the other hand, there were many tailors in fifteenth century London who were never able to present apprentices and hence do not appear in the Tailors' records, yet were able to establish some sort of business. Of course it must also be emphasised that fortunes could change dramatically; a craftsman who presented an apprentice one year might find himself looking for work as a servant the next. The designation 'master tailor' is therefore highly misleading. Taking all the problems of the data into account, however, an average figure of at least 400 tailors with workshops

¹ Accounts, I, f.44.

² See above, Table 5.4, p.196.

³ Accounts, I, 1425-45, II, 1453-69 *passim*. This works out at 68.97 apprentices each year with each master presenting an average of 2.66 apprentices during his career. Volume III of the Accounts, 1469-84 is badly damaged and so consequently lists only 122 new masters and around 250 apprentices. These later lists have only been used where they provide information about the careers of tailors who appear in the first two volumes.

⁴ This was calculated using a sample of 124 masters whose wills were proved in one of the ecclesiastical courts of London or in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

in fifteenth century London would seem to be a reasonable estimate. This figure for the tailoring population would mean that there was certainly one established tailor for every hundred people in fifteenth century London.

These figures are of course merely estimates based on assumptions about the length of careers of masters, and the proportion of apprentices who remained in the capital. What they do indicate, however, is the large size of the craft compared to many others. The mercers accounts, for instance record the names of only 509 masters and 1,937 apprentices in the longer period 1391-1464.¹ If exactly the same calculations were undertaken with these figures, they would suggest that there were approximately 150 mercers with established businesses. Each mercer, however, enrolled nearly four apprentices, compared with the 2.66 enrolled by each tailor. Given the nature of, and demand for, the products produced by tailors, few crafts can have been as numerous. While the brewing industry, for instance, was certainly of a similar size, it is important to note that a large proportion of brewers were wage-labourers employed by those masters who could afford to buy the necessary equipment. This contrasts with the large number of tailors who were sufficiently wealthy to afford to take on apprentices and manage their own shops. This was doubtless partly a function of the relative ease with which a tailor might set up a business compared with the capital expenditure needed by a brewer, but the fact that the market was able to support so many tailoring establishments is significant.²

A further indication of the flourishing nature of the tailoring industry in London can be found in the shape of the numerous strangers, whether 'foreyns' from elsewhere in England or 'aliens' from Europe, who settled in and around London without necessarily becoming free via one of the London crafts.³ As has been shown, the attitude taken by the guild was not always a hostile one. In the first place, the Tailors allowed a number of 'foreyns', mainly from northern Europe to become free of the craft, thus rendering them subject to the scrutiny of the master and wardens. A number of them were doubtless wealthy

¹ Imray, "Les Bones Gentes de la Mercerye", pp.155-78.

² In 1418 the brewers had 234 members paying annual dues to the company, and a census of the City in 1420 counted 269 practitioners of the trade, Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.42; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, pp. 233-35. The shift from ale to beer brewing in the sixteenth century may have led to larger breweries and hence increased the numbers working as journeymen, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp.242, 275.

³ Thrupp, 'Aliens', pp.251-275.

men whose connections and skills the Tailors would have found useful. With the artisan majority, the guild was content to limit rather than eradicate their involvement in the industry. Aliens and foreigners were allowed to practice as tailors as long as they confined their activities to the refurbishment of second-hand goods as 'bochers', and did not attempt to make 'new werke'. The Tailors' vigour in enforcing this requirement does indicate that the market for new clothes was a limited one, but at the same time it suggests that the guild was content to leave the second-hand clothing industry to all-comers until the early sixteenth century.¹

This is not to say that life as a London tailor was an easy one. One important implication of the large number of tailors, or indeed of any craft in London, is illustrated in a dispute brought to the attention of the Lord Chancellor in the mid to late fifteenth century. In his petition, William Nicolson, tailor of London complained that he had been falsely accused by another tailor, William Geffrey, of stealing away the latter's customers. Nicolson declared that he 'never procured eny man to bryng hym werk but hadde resonable occupacion as a taillour by meanes of there own free will by reason of his demeanyng and his old acquaintance which shall be proved of good disposition'.² Competition had to be fair, whether it was for customers or for labour, and many ^{artisans were} punished by the guilds after going to extreme lengths in order to protect their interests. A girdler's servant complained that, despite having 'verray knowleche in his craft', his master refused to let him out of his service and 'take a shop by hym self within the citee of London'.³ The 'encouragement' of customers through financial or other incentives was forbidden, just as masters were not supposed to entice, or come to private arrangements with journeymen. In 1429, for example, the London Tailors set the penalty for enticing away customers at 40s.⁴ Yet this did not mean that competition between masters was somehow 'stifled' either by the City or by the craft authorities. The quality of workmanship may well have been a crucial factor in the decision of a customer to turn to a particular workshop for his new set of clothes. William Nicolson had clearly asserted that Geffrey's customers had patronised him because of his reputation. Similarly,

¹ See above, pp.171-72.

² PRO, C.1/78/5.

³ PRO, C.1/67/169.

⁴ Misc. Ords., f.8.

there is nothing to suggest that the large numbers of tailoring businesses in the capital encouraged craftsmen to adopt the more unscrupulous methods of undermining a competitor's business. Indeed, many tailors seem to have made a reasonable living from their trade, to such an extent that concern was expressed about the prices they were charging. In 1350, for example, the City laid down the prices to be charged by tailors for various items of clothing, ranging from 4d for a pair of sleeves to 2s 6d for an elaborate woman's gown.¹ The timing of this ordinance, appearing just after the plagues of 1348-9, is a telling insight into the success which many tailors were enjoying, and suggests that there was no shortage of customers to go round. Although there was to be no subsequent reiteration of price controls over clothing, the power of the consumer continued to be expressed in a variety of ways. The author of the satirical poem 'Richard the Redeles' asserted that among the tailors in the court milieu

...ther is a profitt in that pride / that I preise evere
For thei for the pesinge / paieth pens ten duple
That the cloth costened / the craft is so dere.²

It is likely that criticism of the prices charged by tailors was as much a topos in the popular culture of the period as the scorn heaped upon the 'frivolous' fashions they developed. Such complaints, however, reveal indirectly the thriving and discriminating nature of the demand for clothing. The reputation of the practitioners of a particular craft depended as much upon the standard of the workmanship produced as the prices they charged. At the top end of the market the tailors of London seem to have gained a reputation for manufacturing high quality clothing. Wealthy gentry, such as Sir William Mountford, who bought most of their household goods close to home, would still arrange to buy their clothes in London.³

The geographical proximity of craftsmen in London was doubtless also a factor in the creation of an atmosphere of competition between men who were also members of the same companies and craft fraternities. The overlapping nature of affiliations, loyalties and social networks in urban society meant that inhabitants stood in a variety of relationships with each other. A neighbour could be a business competitor as well as a close friend. As has been

¹ Riley, *Memorials*, p.254.

² *Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. Day and Steele, p.17, lines 167-69.

³ C. Dyer, 'The Consumer and the Market in the Later Middle Ages', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., 42 (1989), p.313.

pointed out, the tailors did not lend their name to any single area of the capital. Despite being the present-day location of Merchant Taylors' Hall, the name 'Threadneedle Street' is certainly a later addition to the street map of London, and probably had nothing whatever to do with tailoring.¹ It has already been shown that the Tailors' fraternity does not appear to have been focused upon a particular parish, and that the subsidy rolls of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries indicate that there were at that time no noticeable 'tailoring areas' in the capital, although the wards of Cheap and Broad Street were better represented than most.² The practical requirements of the craft did not demand that workshops were close to a water supply or a particular source of raw materials given that it was common for customers to bring their own cloth to be made up into garments. By the fifteenth century, however, a particular section of the craft had indeed established itself firmly in the western part of the City. It has been demonstrated that the Tailors' fraternity enjoyed particularly close relations with the parish of St. Dunstan in the West. Indeed, sixty-eight out of 412 tailor testators who died between 1388 and 1512, lived either in this parish or in the adjoining parish of St. Bride's Fleet Street (see Map 1 (b) above p.46).³ What is most notable about the sixty-eight, which is, after all, only a small proportion of the total number of master tailors, is that they were among the wealthiest members of the craft. The forty-five tailors resident in St. Dunstan's parish, for example, presented an average of five apprentices each during their careers, double the figure for masters in general.⁴ Twelve of these forty-five tailor men also served as Master of the Tailors' fraternity during their careers.⁵

Lying behind this unusually strong, and hitherto unrecognized concentration of wealthy tailors were not any structural requirements of the craft *per se*, but a desire on the part of a particular section of the craft to be in close proximity to a potentially lucrative market for clothes. The topography of Fleet Street was dominated by the houses of the rich

¹ See E. Ekwall, *Street-names of the City of London* (Oxford, 1954), p.70.

² Ekwall, *Subsidy Rolls*, pp.276-302.

³ See above, pp.7-8. Wills enrolled in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PRO, Prob.11/1-17, the Commissary Court of London, GL, MS. 9171/1-11, the Archdeaconry Court of London, GL, MS. 9051/1, and in the Husting Court, *CWCH*, II, *passim*. 42 tailors were apparently residents of St. Dunstan's with another 23 living in St. Bride's.

⁴ Accounts, I-III, *passim*.

⁵ For their wills and masterships see Appendix I.

and famous; clergy such as the bishops of Bath and Wells, Salisbury and Exeter had their great houses or 'inns' along the street itself or streets leading off it. The inns of court, the legal training grounds for the sons of the gentry and nobility, were also close at hand.¹ The establishment of such residences is testimony to the pull which London was beginning to exert on those who were looking for luxury goods and supplies.² As the lists of those joining the Tailors' fraternity in the fifteenth century show, the gentry and clergy were particularly well represented among those who wished to retain some link with a prestigious London fraternity. The links themselves probably, in many cases, owed a great deal to tailoring connections. The Fleet Street tailors seem to have been particularly well connected through their trade. Henry Galle, for instance, appears to have been the principal supplier of garments to Sir John Howard, later duke of Norfolk, in the mid 1460s.³ Four other tailors of Fleet Street, Alan Hoberd, Roger Tego, Richard Jenkins, Thomas Gay are also listed in the Howard household accounts as suppliers of cloth and clothing in the same period; Sir John appears to have had a particularly good relationship with Tego, and on one occasion employed the latter's wife to settle an account with an unnamed London saddler.⁴ It is not surprising perhaps that many unauthorised tailoring businesses were established in Fleet Street, particularly by aliens or non-London craftsmen hoping to cash in on the area's wealthy clientele. In 1432-3, for example, fines were extracted from 'un forein in holborn' and 'un forein in fletestrete' who were attempting to make and sell new garments in competition with citizen tailors.⁵ Of course, the tailors of Fleet Street only represent a small proportion of the craft as a whole. Competition amongst them would have been for a relatively restricted market, stimulated no doubt by the presence of the royal court at Westminster, and was no doubt intense due to the high standards which their wealthy clients would have expected from their suppliers of clothing.⁶ Reputations mattered: in

¹ See Lobel ed., *Atlas*, maps 1-2.

² Dyer, 'The Consumer and the Market', pp.308-9.

³ *The Household Book of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk 1462-1471*, ed. A. Crawford (Gloucester, 1992), I, no. 299, II, nos. 321, 354, 356, 375-6, 411-12, 596, 606, 618.

⁴ For these tailors see *ibid. passim* and I, no. 247 (entry dated 13 March 1464).

⁵ Accounts, I, f.235.

⁶ See Rosser, 'London and Westminster', pp.45-61.

Northampton, for example, it was said that ‘full many gentlemen and other people of our lord the kynge for the shapyng of their clothyng and of their servauntes and of their lyvereys’ were attracted to the town, and London tailors, particularly the Fleet Street elite, had to compete for such custom.¹

III. The Workshop and the ‘Productive Network’

When considering the structures and relationships within the crafts themselves, guild statutes have been no less easy to misuse, provoking as they do assumptions about the nature of the urban economy and the role of the workshop within it. The ‘ideal’, represented in guild statutes, of a single, independent workshop, run by a master craftsman assisted by his wife and one or two apprentices, is certainly misleading in the sense that it does not reflect the realities of the urban economy where specialisation, sub-contracting and credit served to render most artisans thoroughly dependent upon fellow craftsmen. Dr. Sonenscher, in his analysis of the French trades in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, suggests the use of the term ‘productive network’ to describe the interdependence of craftsmen and the variety of the relationships that could exist between them.² A workshop was rarely a small scale version of a factory where all the processes involved in the production of a particular good were carried out under the same roof. Even the Great Wardrobe, where tailors, skimmers, embroiderers and tentmakers worked in the same building, ‘put out’ a great deal of work when necessary. The Dereham farmer who set aside a long room on the upper floor of his house for a dozen tailors to work side by side, producing goods for the Norwich market, is a rare example of entrepreneurship on a large scale.³ The mistake made by many historians has been to assume that workshops, whether large like the farmer’s, or small such as those inhabited by the vast majority of craftsmen, were in any sense ‘independent’ units of production. Even the largest workshops in late medieval London, which employed up to twenty people, were unlikely to be able to undertake all the many processes involved in the production of a particular item: all workshops, however large, were dependent on outside agencies whether sources of supply, stall-holders who sold their goods in market places, or

¹ VCH, Northamptonshire, iii, p.28.

² Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, pp.140-1.

³ Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, II, p.105 n.2.

subsidiary workers carrying out sub-contracted work.¹ In other words, although the ordinances and statutes of guilds in the towns of medieval Europe lay a great deal of stress upon the family workshop and the subordination of both apprentices and servants, the reality was that the physical unit of the workshop constituted merely a node in a larger network of varying and complex relationships. As one historian has recently put it: 'the traditional image, preserved in nostalgic urban folklore of the qualified, self sufficient master craftsman at work in his shop which is also home to both his family and the apprentice whom he trains was never more than a small element in the mesh of labour relations.'² Finance was, as will be shown, one area in which an artisan was rarely 'independent': Thrupp suggested, for example, that although a stock of goods worth at least £40 was desirable in order to start up a business, many managed with less, suggesting that cooperation and mutual assistance was a necessity.³ Indeed, it is probable that most craftsmen existed within networks of credit for their entire working lives because of the specialisation within many crafts which required a good deal of sub-contracting of work. Writing of the post-medieval period, Sonenscher talks of an 'undergrowth of credit' arising from sub-contracting, and the subsequent use of promissory notes to defer payment.⁴ The actual definition of what is generally termed the 'productive unit' is one which operates in several spheres, and cannot be tied down merely to the family unit and the physical workshop.

This is not to say, of course, that the physical space of the 'workshop' is no longer worthy of study by the historian. In order fully to appreciate the nature of the productive network within the tailoring industry of London it is vital to begin by looking at the premises which were rented or owned by craftsmen, and at the limitations they imposed upon the size of individual enterprises. Shops were generally small and numerous, particularly in fashionable shopping streets such as Cheapside where many were only four or five feet wide. A single window at the front often contained a counter over which goods were sold, and the generally cramped nature of such shops probably encouraged transactions in the street rather

¹ The largest enterprise found by Sylvia Thrupp was a pewterer's business which employed eighteen people, seven of whom were servants, *Merchant Class*, p.9.

² Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work', p.10.

³ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.103-4, 108.

⁴ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, p.134.

than in the shop itself.¹ For the well established craftsman, premises typically comprised buildings of two or three storeys of which the first was given over to the actual workshop, and the rest used as living quarters for the family and any servants or apprentices.² Away from the main shopping streets, houses and shops were larger. A surviving building contract of 1383 provided for the construction of five such buildings in Adlane in the parish of St. Alban Wood Street: these were each to be twelve feet wide and extended fifty feet beyond the street. The ground floor, containing the shop and a parlour, was nine feet in height, the first floor eight feet and the top floor seven feet.³ The tenements, which subsequently passed to the Tailors' fraternity, had a variety of craftsmen as tenants: in 1454, for instance, they included a pinner, a dauber and a wiredrawer.⁴ In the case of the wealthiest craftsmen, such as those tailors who lived and worked in Fleet Street, a tailoring business often comprised more than a single tenement, whether owned or rented, but frequently comprised several shops and other premises where goods were produced and stored. Thomas Petyt, for example, owned two tenements in London, each with a shop and a warehouse where he stored large quantities of cloth and other merchandise.⁵ These 'branches' were often run by members of the family, but also by those apprentices who were sufficiently well qualified and trusted to act on their masters' behalf. John Edward, for example, was evidently keen to expand in 1443-44 when he obtained a licence from the Master and Wardens of the Tailors' Company for his apprentice to 'tenir shoppe a son meistes profit within his terme' at a cost of 33s 4d.⁶

The aversion shown by the guild of London tailors and other companies towards craftsmen working hidden away in rented upper rooms indicates the importance ascribed to the performance of a craft out in the open, where the authorities, customers and fellow craftsmen could be satisfied on a day-to-day basis that no untoward practices were being

¹ Keene, 'Shops and Shopping', p.34.

² J. Schofield, *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (London, 1984), pp.88-9.

³ M. Tatchell, 'A Fourteenth Century London Building Contract', *Guildhall Miscellany*, 2 (1962), pp.129-131.

⁴ Accounts, II, f.26v.

⁵ PRO, Prob.11/11 ff.160-162.

⁶ Accounts, I, f.169.

indulged in. In Paris a ground floor workshop with a window onto the street was considered essential, and became enshrined in guild regulations.¹ The main problem as far as craftsmen were concerned was the cost of renting such premises: a top floor garret in London or Paris was much cheaper to rent than a room on the ground floor with a window overlooking the street, and thus many craftsmen in towns were forced to retreat upstairs.² Windows were also important in giving craftsmen enough light to work by, particularly when the working day frequently began at dawn and did not finish until dusk.³ William Peverel, tailor to Queen Philippa, complained that his next door neighbour, Maud atte Vigne, had built a cellar and a solar blocking the light to the windows in his tenement in the parish of St. Clement Candlewickstreet. A 'wolmongere', John Beaufront and his wife Margery made a similar complaint about Geoffrey Mareschall of Wodestrete who had built a forge with a pentice above it with the result that hardly any light penetrated into their house so that craftsmen were unable to carry out their duties.⁴

The high cost of renting shops, particularly in the principal shopping streets of London such as Cheapside and the Poultry, encouraged many artisans to set up stalls in off street bazaars, known as selds. These could be rented far more cheaply than most shops. In Cheapside a shopper might come across the entrance to a seld every eight yards or so. They were often solid structures, normally single storeyed and could contain as many as twenty plots, each with a chest or counter. Frequently selds would become associated with particular occupations: the London tanners, for instance had 18 stations for members of the craft in 1300, with tables on which hides were laid out.⁵ Stalls, whether located in selds or not, were generally a popular means of selling goods as the numerous references to street traders in the 'London Lyckpeny' testifies.⁶ In 1375 a jeweller and his wife were granted a ten year lease on a moveable stall beneath the gate of Ludgate at a cost of 40s *per annum* payable to the

¹ Geremek, *The Margins of Society*, pp.78-9.

² *Ibid.*

³ See the ordinances of the Spurriers of London, Riley, *Memorials*, pp.226-27.

⁴ H.M. Chew and W. Kellaway eds., *London Assize of Nuisance, 1307-1431* (London Record Society, 10, 1973), pp.103, 138.

⁵ Keene, 'Shops and Shopping', pp.38-9; *idem*, 'A New Study of London', p.14.

⁶ 'London Lyckpeny', pp.16-19.

City Chamberlain.¹ Tailoring examples can also be found. In 1491 the Tailors' Court pronounced judgement in a dispute concerning Rowland Hymeston and his covenanted servant John Langryk. John was to return 'a peyre sheres which the same John toke from the stall of the said Rowland'.² The City's desire to regulate such stalls is again shown in the case of John Clerk, a tailor, who was indicted by the Wardmote of Bredestrete in January 1422 for a 'faux' stall, probably one which took up too much room along the street.³ In Bristol the operation of illicit stalls seems to have been a matter of concern for the guilds: in 1489 the Tailors ordained that no member of the craft should sell hose 'whatever it be mens or womens in the markett commonly called the Hie strete or market place upon bordes or tressels'.⁴ The ownership of a stall by a tailor, who also had a workshop within a tenement, implies that the craftsman was not simply in the business of making garments to order, but had sufficient resources to be able to produce a run of 'ready-to-wear' garments which could be stocked on a daily basis. Such tailors would probably not have relied upon customers to supply them with the cloth necessary to complete a particular garment but would have bought it direct from a supplier. The evidence from Cheapside furthermore suggests that the depopulation of the area from the mid-fourteenth century onwards made selds increasingly attractive options for craftsmen. In 1400, for instance, a plot within a seld could be rented for 0.16s a square foot compared with a real value of twice that in the thirteenth century. Rising standards of living nevertheless ensured a lively demand for such sites, often rearranged into full-scale shops or warehouses.⁵

After the acquisition of a lease on a tenement and/or a stall, a craftsman needed tools and equipment with which he or she could begin to produce goods. Some crafts, particularly the metal-working trades, required a much more significant outlay of capital to acquire the necessary equipment. Others also required proximity to a source of raw materials, a water supply or water-borne transport. Such factors could affect the geographical location of a particular craft in the City. By the fourteenth century the skimmers were centred around the

¹ Riley, *Memorials*, p.382.

² Court Minutes, II, f.37v.

³ *CPMR*, 1413-1437, p.136.

⁴ Fox, *Merchant Taylors of Bristol*, p.17.

⁵ Keene, 'Shops and Shopping', pp.42-3.

Peltry in west Cheap, the pepperers (later the grocers) in Soper Lane, and the mercers in the 'mercery', also in Cheapside.¹ The reasons behind these concentrations varied. The Peltry lay close to the hall of the Hanse merchants who provided raw materials for the skinnners.² The Vintners too lent their name to a particular part of London, because on the necessity of locating their shops and warehouses near to the Thames. For some crafts, a supply of running water was essential and could be the subject of controversy, as witnessed by a long running dispute involving the Haberdashers and the Cappers. The latter were accustomed to using mills to full their caps but in 1482 an Act of Parliament decreed that hats, bonnets and caps were only to be 'thicked by mens strength'.³ It may also have been the case that landlords were reluctant to let their properties to craftsmen who would require heavy machinery: the Tailors themselves, at a quarter-day meeting of their Court in October 1486, granted a new twenty-year lease on a tenement to Richard Derby on the condition that he did not sub-let it to a pewterer, fuller, shearman, blacksmith or founder.⁴

Tailoring, certainly, did not require a water supply, heavy machinery, furnaces or other equipment such as that used by goldsmiths, fullers or brewers. This gave a tailor much greater freedom in setting up a business than was the case in some other crafts. The equipment needed by a tailor was not expensive although some items, particularly tailors' shears, were perceived by many members of the craft as worth mentioning in their wills. In 1470, for example, Benedict Genetas left a pair of 'taylours scheres' to Robert Wadlok, as well as a fine doublet of 'musterdveliers' and a 'cote of coton russet'.⁵ A further argument for the perceived value of such items is James Atkinson's mention of 'mea optima paria de sheres' which he left to his brother Christopher along with a fine gown and a doublet. He left two more pairs of shears to another brother, Laurence, and to his apprentice Christopher Hornby.⁶ Archaeological and iconographical evidence indicates that there were in fact two

¹ Veale "Great Twelve", pp.247-59.

² *Ibid.*, p.247.

³ Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, II, p.90 and Stat. 22 Edw.IV c.5.

⁴ Court Minutes, f.8.

⁵ GL, MS. 9171/6, ff.72-72v (1470).

⁶ GL, MS. 9171/8, ff.272-272v (1479).

sorts of cutting implement in use by those who cut cloth. Shears were, strictly speaking, made up of a single piece of iron bent in the middle to form the two arms and blades; large versions of these were commonly used by Shearmen to smooth the surface of pieces of cloth.¹ Scissors, on the other hand, were essentially the same in the later middle ages as they are today, two pieces of metal joined by a pin to form a central pivot. Scissors occur only rarely in documentary sources, although they were frequently used as emblems, such as on the tomb of a thirteenth century glover in St. John's church, Chester, or in pictorial representations of tailors.² One of the few documentary references to scissors occurs in the inventory of the goods of a London tailor, Robert de Kesteven, carried out in 1383-4: he was found to have two pairs of 'siores' in his shop along with large quantities of cloth, garments, and pewter vessels.³ It is possible that the numerous bequests of 'sheres' in wills in fact mask the fact that the term could signify both sorts of implement: scissors were certainly perceived as the symbol of the craft, as indicated by their depiction on funeral palls belonging to the Tailors' fraternity, but the descriptions of the chapel at Tailors' Hall refer to candles and other items decorated 'ove soleils et scheres' possibly indicating a degree of fluidity in the use of the term.⁴ The iconographical representations of scissors suggest that many tailors had signs hanging outside their shops with scissors painted on them in order to distinguish their businesses from those of other craftsmen and to attract potential customers.⁵

The lack of heavy equipment within the shop meant that there was relatively more storage space for cloth as well as room for several tailors to make up or repair garments. Apart from shears/scissors, needles, thread and 'shaping boards' were the only other vital pieces of equipment needed. Given their low value it is not surprising that items such as needles and thread are not listed separately in wills or inventories, although many tailors referred to the 'utensilis' of their craft. A rare exception is the inventory of the goods of

¹ For some iconographical representations see E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Significance of the Secular Sculptures in the Lane Chapel, Cullompton', *Medieval Archaeology*, 1 (1957), pp.104-17.

² J.B. Ward Perkins, *London Museum: Medieval Catalogue* (London, 1940), pp.150-157; see, for example, the fourteenth century illuminated manuscript, BL, MS. Harl. 6563.

³ PRO, C.131/31/19. I am grateful to Prof. Martha Carlin for this reference.

⁴ Unwin, *Gilds*, plate facing p.226; Accounts, I, f.127 (1421-22).

⁵ A tailor of Westminster used the emblem on his seal, see Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, p.145.

Thomas Shavebury, tailor, drawn up by the sheriffs in 1392-3 after he had incurred debts of £8 16s. Among the goods listed are 'i porcion de thred'.¹ Boards, used to aid the cutting or 'shaping' of a piece of cloth in particular ways are more commonly found: in his will of 1503, George Lovekyn, tailor to Henry VII, left several 'shapyng boards' to his servants and apprentices.² The total cost of a tailor's tools was minimal when compared to the cost of purchasing the cloth to be used to make up the garments: the sixteenth century inventory of John Lumberte, a Southampton tailor, valued his tailoring tools (three pairs of shears and two 'pressing irons') at 2s 6d while his stock of cloth was worth £9 5s 6d. The only furniture in the shop was a set of shelves and a 'shop-board' (worth 3s) on which a tailor would sit, cross-legged, while stitching together pieces of cloth.³ Artisan skimmers likewise needed few tools: knives, scissors and a three-legged stool were ubiquitous items in skimmers' workshops.⁴ The small size of many workshops meant that conditions were cramped and the work involved prolonged periods of sitting still, although tailors would have suffered none of the acute discomforts which accompanied metal-working and other 'heavy' industries. Working conditions are rarely revealed by late-medieval sources, except as has been shown, through the complaints of servants and apprentices; hence it is instructive to look at some of the conclusions drawn by one C. Turner Thackrah, in his inquiry into working conditions in Leeds in the early 1830s. In his study, Thackrah found that tailors, though suffering far less than most other craftsmen, were physically affected by the nature of their work: 'we see no plump and rosy tailors; none of fine form and strong muscle' he wrote after observing tailors who spent their days sitting cross-legged on their boards, lifting heavy pieces of cloth. The principal ailments suffered as a result included curvature of the spine which brought on stomach and bowel disorders. The nature of a tailor's work, so Thackrah concluded, 'undermines rather than destroys life'.⁵

¹ PRO, C.131/43/20.

² Sutton, 'George Lovekyn', p.12 and PRO, Prob.11/17, f.48v.

³ *Southampton Probate Inventories, 1447-1575*, ed. E. Roberts and K. Parker, Southampton Records Series, 34-5 (1991-92), pp.270-275 at p.273.

⁴ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.85.

⁵ C. Turner Thackrah, *The Effects of the Principal Arts, Trades and Professions and of civic states and habits of living on Health and Longevity* (London, 1831), pp.15-18. Thackrah's particularly recommended dancing, 'an excellent winter's evening amusement', as a means for artisans to improve their health.

IV. Diversification and Specialisation in the Garment Trade

The occupational designations of craftsmen given in sources are a useful entry point into the interdependence of many crafts in the urban economy. Descriptions such as 'citizen and tailor of London' should be treated with some caution, given the variety of activities which such labels hide. In particular, it should not be assumed that a young man who had finished an apprenticeship to a tailor would necessarily go on to make and sell clothing. In his will proved in 1496, Richard Tomasson 'citizen and tailor' left each of his six apprentices 'a peyr of shereman is sheres' worth 13s 4d on the condition that they remained with his wife until the end of their terms. Once their terms had been completed, Tomasson's wife was to make them free of the craft of shearmen of London.¹ Tomasson's actions must be seen as an indication of the range and transferability of the skills which many craftsmen were able to acquire and pass on, regardless of their apparent affiliation to a particular craft. Conversely, there are many examples of members of other crafts with little or no connection with the garment trade who subsequently became tailors. William Parker came before the mayor and aldermen in 1437 claiming that although he had originally been made free as a smith in 1423, he had in fact practised as a tailor for some time.² Parker's assertion is confirmed by the Tailors' records which show that he enrolled apprentices at Tailors' Hall in 1427-8 and 1430-1, and it is not surprising therefore that the Tailors agreed to an official ratification of Parker's occupation.³ The Tailors' records for 1437-8 list three translations to the craft from other misteries: one of the men was a hosier, moving into the mainstream of the garment trade, but the other two were former apprentices of a pinner and an ironmonger.⁴

These latter examples are, it has to be said, relatively unusual compared with the many instances of craftsmen whose cutting and stitching skills, learnt while an apprentice, were clearly transferable between crafts. This is shown by a case which came before the Mayor's Court in the late fourteenth century. The case concerned John Bartlett, an apprentice who had started off with a glover, John Parker, before being transferred to a

¹ GL, MS. 9171/8, ff.116-116v.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.214.

³ Accounts, I, ff.182v, 215.

⁴ Accounts, I, ff.291-291v.

tailor, William Bramston and latterly a weaver, Robert Hobbok.¹ Evidently it was assumed that the apprentice would be able to cope with the different demands of the three crafts, perhaps because he was still at a relatively early stage in his training but doubtless also because the skills needed were, to some extent, universal within the cloth and clothing industry. The repertoire of stitches which had to be learned by craftsmen in this period was not a large one, as the surviving fragments of garments testify and, once allied with a degree of expertise with the scissors, a craftsman could turn his hand to many things.² Significantly, such skills seem to have remained transferable well into a craftsman's adult life; although guild ordinances appear to define a craft in clear cut terms, the actual demarcation between occupations was less clear to individuals, and is reflected in a certain degree of fluidity in the occupational designations which appear in the sources. Richard Frepurs, for example, was apprenticed to an upholder, William Baldok, in 1418. The same year he came before the mayor and aldermen asking to be translated to the Tailors' mistery as he had long practised that craft. The Tailors agreed and his admission to the freedom of the City by redemption is recorded in the their accounts for the same year.³ Both upholders and embroiderers were members of relatively low-status crafts whose activities overlapped with those of tailors, who as we have seen possessed a wealthy and influential fraternity. John Cavendish was employed in the Great Wardrobe as the king's embroiderer from at least 1419 until at the mid 1420s when he can be found embroidering garters with the emblem of St. George for members of the distinguished Order.⁴ He was in fact a well-established member of the Tailors' fraternity: he had joined in 1398-9 and was elected Master in 1413.⁵ Unlike Frepurs, however, Cavendish seems to have viewed his association with embroidery as an asset; his appointment to a position in the Great Wardrobe was certainly a great accolade and was probably a reflection of a reputation for fine workmanship built up over many years. In his will, proved

¹ CLRO, MC.1/1/18.

² E. Crowfoot *et al* eds., *Textiles and Clothing c.1150-c.1450. Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 4* (London, 1992), p.153.

³ *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, I, p.198; *Accounts*, I, f.101.

⁴ PRO, E.361/6, m.5d (6 Hen.V); PRO, E.101/407/13, f.21v (1-2 Hen.VI).

⁵ *Accounts*, I, f.2; Clode, *Early History*, II, p.336.

in 1433, Cavendish remembered the fraternity of St. John the Baptist with a bequest of 20s, but significantly did not describe himself as a tailor, but as 'civis et brouderer London'.¹

Similarly, those craftsmen normally described as tailors were themselves capable of producing a variety of goods. Wardrobe accounts of royal and noble households provide some of the best evidence for the range of activities in which tailors were involved. The privy purse expenses of Elizabeth of York, for instance, reveal that two London tailors were paid to make coverings for chairs and cushions, as well as doublets for some of the footmen.² The Great Wardrobe, in particular, encompassed a great many activities. Under Henry IV, for instance, John Drayton the king's tentmaker employed London tailors, as well as carpenters and other craftsmen, for the manufacture of tents for the king's visits to various parts of the kingdom, including the Parliament held at Gloucester in 1407. Significantly, Drayton's successor from 1409 was John Cony, a London tailor, who held the office until his death in 1419.³ The connection between the London tailors and this part of the Great Wardrobe undoubtedly owed much to the hundred years' war and the need for tents, pavilions, liveries and, in particular, garments which could be worn underneath the heavy armour worn by soldiers. The fraternity of St. John the Baptist, from its first charter, obtained in 1327, was the body which administered the craft of tailors and 'linen-armourers', a name which survived until the acquisition of the charter of 1503 which incorporated the fraternity as the Merchant Taylors' Company. The demands of war probably played only a relatively minor part in the lives of most London tailors, yet its symbolic currency was of the highest value. The incorporation of pavilions into the arms of the fraternity in 1480 recalled the debt owed to John de Yakslee, the former owner of their hall in Bradstreet, who was the king's tentmaker in the early fourteenth century. Another connection can be seen in the person of John de Coloigne who was employed in the Great Wardrobe as the king's armourer, or 'armator' in the 1330s and 1340s, and made beds, clothes and embroideries. He was almost certainly related to Roger de Coloigne, named as one of the masters of the London Tailors in 1340. Linen-armourers also took a hand in making tents, and there seems

¹ PRO, Prob.11/3, ff.150v-151v.

² *The Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York and Wardrobe Accounts of Edward the Fourth*, ed. N.H. Nicolas (London, 1830), pp.27-8, 69 (June/Nov. 1502).

³ PRO, E.101/404/21 (4-5 Hen.IV); 405/14, f.13v (8-9 Hen.IV); 405/22 (9-10 Hen.IV); CPR 1408-1413, p.68; GL, MS. 9171/3, ff.41-41v.

no reason to doubt that the staff of the Great Wardrobe could be employed on a variety of tasks depending on the skills they possessed.¹ The requirements of war resulted in the full exploitation of these skills: tailors and a pavilioner were employed for the Black Prince's expedition of 1355-7 to Guienne.² There were limits to the capacity of the Great Wardrobe, however. In 1334, for instance, the Crown purchased cloth for gowns and hoods for mounted troops going to war in Scotland, and provided money to have them made by London tailors in their own workshops rather than in the Great Wardrobe.³

The Great Wardrobe is very much the exception which proves the rule. Here a wide range of skills were available under one roof, and a high degree of specialisation meant that each occupation was distinct. However, the fact that tailors can be found in so many guises is a reflection of the workshop rather than the factory economy, where tailors could turn their hands to a variety of tasks, or else find someone else to carry out the work. Tailoring skills were useful in a variety of, ostensibly distinct, occupations: in late-medieval Cologne, for example, weavers can be found making mattresses and pillow covers, just like their tailor cousins in the English Great Wardrobe.⁴ There is convincing evidence, too, that tailors were also involved in other industries such as hat making, and particularly in the use of furs for clothing, theoretically the responsibility of skimmers. The London cappers were doubtless not keen on work of this kind being done by tailors in the capital who made or repaired hats. In 1465 one of the Fleet Street tailors was employed by Sir John Howard for 'byndyng of a hatt with velvet'.⁵ In the mid sixteenth century, William Bonyvaunt, citizen and merchant tailor, was found to have nearly 200 hats 'in the shop on the strete side' including caps for children, velvet hats for women and a satin night-cap as well as seventeen pairs of gloves and thirteen sword girdles.⁶ Hats, gloves and girdles were all essential dress accessories to which an enterprising tailor might turn his hand.

¹ Veale, 'Craftsmen and the Economy of London', p.132 n.55; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, F, p.53.

² H.J. Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition of 1355-7* (Manchester, 1958), pp.22-3.

³ CLRO, Letter Book E, f.1 (not included in the printed calendar).

⁴ Epstein, *Wage Labor and the Gilds*, p.52.

⁵ Crawford ed., *Household Books*, I, no. 294.

⁶ PRO, C.239/15/10 (1550-1), C.239/16/16 (1551-2). Bonyvaunt owed a joiner £300, perhaps for the construction of shelves and display cabinets.

It is clear that tailors were capable of employing their skills to produce a variety of goods in order to satisfy the needs and aspirations of their customers. Equally, there is much evidence for the specialisation which craftsmen might tend towards within a particular trade. The occupational designations of craftsmen concealed great variations in wealth and the scope of the work carried out, and this lent local economies a complexity which cannot be appreciated by referring solely to guild ordinances. Evidence for specialisation tends to arise in the form of occupational descriptions of a more 'informal' sort than those which merely indicate the mystery in which a craftsman became free: unlike late medieval Toulouse, for instance, where a guild of trouser-makers existed alongside that of the tailors, the London Tailors' fraternity had theoretical jurisdiction over all aspects of the manufacture of clothing.¹ Nevertheless, where evidence can be found, it supports the notion of an expanding urban economy where individuals could afford to concentrate upon one area of the market in clothes due to the high level of demand. In 1378, for instance, John Tilneye's particular speciality seems to be indicated by his description as a 'paltok maker': two years before in 1376 he had been elected as a Common Councilman representing the Tailors.² A few years later, in 1383, John Chapman also described himself in the preamble to his will as a 'paltockmaker'.³ These two men were trained tailors who appear to have specialised in the manufacture of closely-fitting, fashionable garments for the upper body, although they were doubtless capable of making a wider range of clothing if necessary. The records of the Bristol tailors indicate that such specialisation could be formalised and thus related to the level of skill attained by a craftsman: in 1489 four tailors were assessed by the Master and brethren in order to ascertain which garments they were qualified to make. John Addon was granted leave to make 'a coat, a kyrtyll, a womans gown, hose and doblet and none other but these'; Thomas Hopkyn, on the other hand was only allowed to make men's garments while David ap Howell was confined to the refurbishment of second-hand clothes.⁴ The London Tailors do not seem to have had such a regulated system of correlating skills with

¹ M. Mulholland ed., *Early Gild Records of Toulouse* (New York, 1941), p.xiv.

² *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, H, pp.67, 42. A 'paltock' was a short coat, sleeved doublet or 'jack' worn by men: *OED*, VII, pt.1, p.408.

³ GL, MS. 9171/1 f.104.

⁴ Fox, *Merchant Taylors of Bristol*, pp.17-18.

types of garments; their main concern was with preventing unqualified tailors and/or non-freemen from working on new garments. Evidence for specialisation within the garment trade is not easy to find and, in fact, the multi-purpose nature of the skills possessed by tailors would perhaps count against the assumption that each tailor necessarily had his own speciality. Sources listing garments made and supplied by individuals provide suggestive, though not conclusive, evidence of specialisation: in 1393-4 John Creek, an influential London tailor, supplied Roger Mortimer, earl of March with hose ('caligarum') and socks ('chauxseables'), rather than gowns, which were supplied by another tailor.¹ The skills required for both sorts of garments were identical: between 1440 and 1442, for instance, John Belham supplied 164 pairs of hose as well as thirty-two doublets to the Great Wardrobe.² Indeed, few tailors probably concentrated exclusively upon one item of clothing: a perfect instance of the intermingling of diversification and specialisation in the urban economy is afforded by the case of Richard Bishop, who, in 1446, was described as a 'doubletmaker alias hosyer alias taillour' when in the service of John Langton, a king's clerk.³

V. The Workshop in Action: Sub-contracting and the Interdependence of Urban Crafts

What is striking about many of the entries in the accounts of the Great Wardrobe and those of other important households is the sheer size of many of the orders which tailors undertook, successfully, to fulfill. John Belham's delivery of 164 pairs of hose translates into approximately eighty-two days' work, whereas a doublet might take anything from one to six days to complete, depending upon its complexity and the nature of the lining used.⁴ Thus the total cost, viewed in terms of working days, of supplying the hose and the thirty-two doublets might conceivably have amounted to 274 days. Allowing for Sundays, feast days and other holidays, the official working year in the middle ages can rarely have exceeded 260 days in length, hence if he had been working alone, Belham's order would have taken at least

¹ W. Paley Baildon, 'A Wardrobe Account of 16-17 Richard II, 1393-4', *Archaeologia*, 62 (1911), pp.503-14.

² PRO, E.101/409/6, f.9 (19-20 Hen.VI).

³ *CPR*, 1441-1446, p.484.

⁴ For these schedules see Crowfoot et al., *Textiles and Clothing*, p.151.

twelve months to complete.¹ Of course it is extremely unlikely that Belham was working on his own. As well as the help provided by apprentices, servants and members of his family it is highly probable that a certain amount of the work was sub-contracted to other craftsmen, not necessarily living on site. The putting-out of work was a normal feature of the economic life of late-medieval towns, and not simply a part of the subordination of artisans to the interests of wealthy capitalists.² Katherine Dore, a 'silktroster', commanded her servant Joan Wolbarowe to deliver £6 worth of silk to two silkwomen in Soper lane, 'custumers and werkers to the said Katerine'.³ The phrase used is an extremely important one encapsulating as it does the ambiguous nature of the relationship between Katherine and the two silkwomen: on the one hand, Katherine was acting as a supplier to two established silkwomen, but on the other, she was clearly expecting to have the finished product returned to her so that she could sell it on to tailors and embroiderers. Some occasions demanded a particularly rapid and large scale mobilisation of craftsmen: in 1334 John de Coloigne was charged with making gowns for a hundred foot-soldiers who were to go on the Scottish campaign of that year. Although Coloigne was paid £11 15s 8d for making them it is inconceivable that he was much more than a coordinator of the work of a great many individual workshops.⁴ These workshops in turn may well have put out work to other reliable tailors, possibly even so-called 'servants', thus altering the nature of the relationship between employer and employee. In York, certainly, the Tailors forbade servants to hire wage-labourers of their own, which surely suggests that some servants were accustomed to playing a fuller part in the productive process than their ostensibly subordinate position would imply.⁵

Sub-contracting was also a consequence of the interdependence of crafts within the garment trade as a whole. Here the ideal of the 'independent artisan' is most clearly shown

¹ See B.F. Harvey, 'Work and *Festa Ferianda*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 23 (1972), pp.289-308 and Geremek, *Le Salariat*, pp.82-3.

² For an example of this interpretation see C.R. Friedrichs, 'Capitalism, Mobility and Class Formation in the Early Modern German City', in *Towns in Societies*, ed. P. Abrams and E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge, 1978), pp.187-213.

³ PRO, C.1/75/106 (late fifteenth century).

⁴ CLRO, Letter Book E, f.1, printed in Riley, *Memorials*, p.190.

⁵ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.44.

to bear little relation to an urban economy where artisans were continuously dependent upon each other, either in the supply of raw materials or in the productive processes themselves. The necessary division of labour between workshops is illustrated by an entry in the Tailors' records, listing expenses incurred for providing arms and armour for the ten members of the craft who were to travel to Calais in the military expedition led by Humfrey, duke of Gloucester in 1435. William Lynde, for instance, was to have a 'harneys of armur' made for him at a cost of 10s. An additional 4d was paid 'for beryng of the harneys to dyvers places to have it made'.¹ Perhaps the best example as far as the craft of tailoring itself is concerned is the relationship between members of the craft and the London skimmers. The similarity in structure between the two crafts is striking. While most skimmers were engaged in sewing skins together to make large furs, a minority were involved in the fur trade itself, importing furs and supplying them to the artisan members of the craft.² Likewise, the tailors who were concerned with the manufacture of clothing greatly outnumbered the wealthier members of the craft who engaged in small-scale mercantile activity. At the mercantile level the interests of the tailors (cloth) and skimmers (furs) rarely clashed. That is not to say that tailors never dealt in furs: in 1424 John Grimsby received an assignment from the king's wardrobe for furs which he had supplied, and in 1479, Stephen Eburton and John Philip, London tailors, were both involved in a large transaction with a Genoese merchant, John de Salvo, concerning calf skins and alum worth £124.³

At the artisanal end of the crafts, however, there was much more scope for both cooperation and conflict: well before the fifteenth century, furred garments had become items of high fashion.⁴ The records of the Great Wardrobe for the coronation of Queen Katherine in 1421 show clearly how this fashion had taken root; large sums were spent on garments furred with expensive furs such as minever, gris, ermin, and martron.⁵ The Wardrobe accounts of Joan of Navarre show that more everyday garments did not require such

¹ Accounts, I, f.276v. For this expedition and the Tailors see above, pp.96-7.

² Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.80.

³ CLRO, Journals 2, f.23v and see *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, K, p.39; PRO, C.1/59/205 and CCR, 1476-1485, p.140.

⁴ Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp.1-21, 133-55.

⁵ PRO, E.101/407/4, ff.62-69d.

expensive materials: among the items supplied were gowns 'furrate cum pellis agnellis'.¹ In the wardrobes of the nobility, skimmers normally carried out the actual task of attaching furs to garments. Indeed, in the Great Wardrobe skimmers worked alongside tailors, under the supervision of the king's tailor. In general, however, skimmers were employed on a more casual basis than tailors, given that the furring of a garment did not take long and was one of the last processes to be carried out. Many followed the example of the Black Prince whose tailor was allowed to hire skimmers to fur garments when he needed them, usually for just a few days.² Ralph Barton, a relative of Henry Barton the prominent London skimmer, was paid 3s 4d 'pro furra i toge pro corpore regine' by the officials of Queen Joan.³ This was production geared very much to the interests of the customer: the manufacture of clothing took place in the workshop of the consumer who employed craftsmen when they were needed and ordered materials from the appropriate suppliers. The wardrobe accounts of Roger Mortimer, earl of March are interesting in this respect as they show a relatively small wardrobe attempting to control the level of expenditure by buying raw materials direct. Payments were made to drapers for supplying cloth, shearmen for finishing several lengths of cloth and even to Matilda Baleye 'selkwyffe' for 'filii Londonie' and 'serico Londonie'. Tailors and skimmers were employed when necessary and used the materials provided by their employers; as a result the tasks each carried out were clearly differentiated.⁴

At the level at which most artisan tailors and skimmers operated, however, the distinction between the two crafts was sometimes less than obvious. Garments were generally manufactured in the workshop of the individual tailor who, in theory, was supposed to subcontract work to skimmers who would sew on the furs; it is probable that many tailors had formed business links with nearby skimmers for this purpose. Garments would therefore be transported physically between workshops as they underwent each process. On the other hand, a tailor, although less likely than a skimmer to be preparing or dealing in furs,

¹ A.R. Myers ed., 'The Captivity of a Royal Witch: the Household Accounts of Queen Joan of Navarre, 1419-21', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 26 (1941-2), pp.87-90.

² Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.81.

³ Myers ed., 'Household Accounts', p.90.

⁴ Baildon ed., 'Wardrobe Account', pp.503-14.

undoubtedly possessed the skills necessary to attach them to garments.¹ As a result there was the potential for a certain amount of competition between tailors and skinners: in York, certainly, there were periodic tussles between the tailors and the skinners over the right to work furred garments, and it is probable that the dispute over civic precedence between their London counterparts in 1484 owed something to the overlapping nature of their trades.² Implicit in the attempts of tailors to work with furs is their ability to secure the furs themselves direct from merchant skinners. In doing this, a tailor would avoid paying an inflated price to an artisan skinner who would doubtless have attempted to make a profit on furs he bought from a fellow skinner. Indeed, a tailor who was himself unable to work with furs might only approach an artisan skinner once he had secured the relevant materials from another source.

Similar questions emerge when considering the relationships between artisan tailors and those who bought and sold cloth. It is normally assumed that tailors bought their cloth from drapers who in turn dealt with weavers and cloth finishers, but the available evidence shows that the picture was far more complicated. In particular it is clear that, in many cases, customers actually brought cloth with them to a tailor's workshop; such consumers, as the satirical literature suggests, were conscious of the danger of being forced to pay inflated prices for raw materials and consequently decided to buy direct from cloth merchants. The concerns of customers are a surprisingly neglected facet of the world of the late medieval crafts: notions of 'value for money' doubtless concentrated the minds of many artisans upon the quality of their workmanship and the efficient use of raw materials such as cloth for their work. In 1480-1 a tailor of Exeter was fined 11s by his guild for wasting a quarter of a yard of cloth 'for lacke of konnyng'. The complaint was instigated by the customer, one Sir John Wallington, and was not the product of a 'search' of the man's workshop.³ In this case, as in several others recorded in the records of the Exeter Tailors, the cloth was provided by the customer who therefore had an interest in ensuring that none was wasted. The tailors of Bristol were also cognizant of this and advised that 'every tailor shall be better advised to

¹ Veale, *Fur Trade*, p.33.

² Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.48; *Cal. of Letter Bks.*, L, p.212.

³ Smith ed., *English Gilds*, p.321.

cut well and sufficiently the cloth that is unto him delivered to be cut'.¹ These concerns revolve around the fact that the art of tailoring lay more in the cutting or 'shapyng' of the cloth prior to sewing than in the process of sewing the pieces of cloth together. The importance of this skill increased with the changes in fashion which, from the mid fourteenth century, required clothes to be more 'fitted' and meant the end of the natural rectangle as the basis on which garments were fashioned.² This was an inherently more difficult method of garment construction, and so the craftsman had to be constantly on his guard against the 'lackyng of his cloth'. An ordinance promulgated by the London Tailors in 1429 stated that no one was to set up shop unless he was 'of good name fame....and able to schape and serve the craft truly'. An incompetent craftsman was to be 'put fro the ocupacion of schapyng unto the tyme that he be able for to schape and also amytted bi the maister and wardens'.³ Tailors involved in making up the new styles may well have relied heavily on pattern-books, such as those which survive from the sixteenth century, in order that they should know how to get the most from a piece of cloth.⁴ It is probable also that many unscrupulous tailors exploited the complexity of the new styles to their advantage and tried to blind their customers with science when it came to settling up. Where possible, an artisan tailor would prefer to purchase lengths of cloth himself before passing the inflated cost on to the customer. Whether tailors actually charged twenty times the cost of the raw materials, as the author of 'Richard the Redeless' suggested, is another matter. The tension between the interests of tailor and customer is aptly demonstrated by the example of Alice Osteler who in 1368 asked William Kele of London to make her a coat. Kele agreed but obliged his customer to buy two ells of blue and red medley cloth from him which he would then use to make the coat. The contract was not entirely one-sided, however, for Alice herself provided the cloth for the lining of the coat.⁵

¹ Fox, *Merchant Taylors of Bristol*, p.13.

² For this change see Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince*, p.3.

³ Misc. Ords., f.8.

⁴ See I. Petraschek-Heim, 'Tailors' Masterpiece books', *Costume*, 3 (1969), pp.6-10. A York glazier left his apprentice 'all my bokes that is fitte for one prentesse of his craffte to lerne by', D.M. Palliser, *Tudor York*, (Oxford, 1979), p.172.

⁵ CLRO, MC.1/1/45.

It is probable that, as Heather Swanson suggests, tailors found it difficult to make large profits through the manufacture and sale of garments alone. This doubtless owed something to the shrewdness of many customers who were not prepared to have the wool pulled over their eyes by persuasive urban tailors wanting to charge exorbitant prices. The proliferation of retail outlets in London doubtless also encouraged craftsmen to diversify into other areas. Tailors turned to the cloth trade itself. Perhaps the most basic kind of enterprise was demonstrated by some Bristol tailors who were found to have bought up large pieces of cloth which were then cut up into smaller pieces for re-sale to hosiers and cappers.¹ Excavations in London have shown that purses were frequently made from such off-cuts, thus ensuring that the maximum revenue was derived from a piece of cloth.² A similar kind of activity was undertaken by many London tailors and was frowned upon by the craft authorities: in 1427-28, for example, Robert Brown and Richard Atkins were fined 2s 4d and 3s 4d respectively for 'sellyng de shredes'.³ This suggests that many poorer tailors saw the selling of small pieces of cloth as the only way in which they could add to their relatively meagre incomes from tailoring. This again may be related to the demands of the new fashions: offcuts were probably more plentiful and could be re-used or else sold on.⁴

The involvement of London tailors in larger scale cloth-dealing enterprises did not please the Drapers, particularly when the Tailors' fraternity itself acquired extensive rights of search in their charter of 1439.⁵ A similar tension existed in York but there the tailors prevailed, primarily because, despite their high status, the drapers did not possess a guild and hence the potential for collective action.⁶ In Bologna and Cologne, however, the tailors did not have things entirely their own way: in Bologna the craft faced competition from merchants who took to importing cheap clothing from the countryside. In Cologne tailors belonged to the Clothiers' guild which had a theoretical monopoly of the entire industry,

¹ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.47.

² Crowfoot et al., *Textiles and Clothing*, pp.176-7.

³ Accounts, I, f.181v.

⁴ For some off-cuts found near the Great Wardrobe at Baynard's Castle see P. Walton, 'Dyes on Medieval Textiles', in *Dyes on Historical and Archaeological Textiles*, iii, (1984), pp.30-4.

⁵ Above, pp.120-127.

⁶ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans* p.49

leaving tailors subservient to, and dependent on, clothiers.¹ The process by which their London counterparts branched out into the cloth trade seems to have been well under way by the fifteenth century: individuals described as tailors in their wills, or who appear in the records of the Tailors' fraternity, can be found elsewhere supplying cloth to noble households. John Creek was an eminent tailor who left property to the fraternity in his will of 1414; in 1393-94 he supplied £25 worth of cloth for garments for Roger Mortimer, earl of March.² William Tropenell, master of the Tailors' fraternity in 1411-12, was appointed as the king's tailor in 1413 but was also a major supplier of cloth to the Great Wardrobe under Henry V and Henry VI. Between 1419 and 1421, for instance, Tropenell supplied cloth worth nearly £90 and is described along with a fellow tailor, Robert Fenescles, as a 'pannarius' of London.³ The designation of known members of the Tailors' fraternity as drapers is of particular interest in showing that such terms were subject to a degree of flexibility, and more importantly did not necessarily imply membership of, or any particular loyalty to the Drapers' guild. The most famous tailor/drapeer of London was Ralph Holland, who represented the interests of the tailors against the drapers in the late 1430s but who was himself an extremely wealthy cloth merchant and sometime member of the Drapers' guild. Between 1418 and 1421, for example, Holland is listed as a drapeer, supplying cloth to Thomas, duke of Clarence.⁴

The accounts of the Great Wardrobe list increasingly large numbers of tailors supplying cloth during the fifteenth century. Between 1439 and 1446, for example, seven tailors supplied cloth to the Great Wardrobe for their fellow tailors to make into garments for the king and his household. Significantly, six of the seven were either ex-Masters of the Tailors' guild or were to be elected subsequently to that office.⁵ Clearly only the most

¹ Epstein, *Wage Labor and the Gilds*, pp.83, 86-7.

² GL, MS. 9051/1, ff.308v-309v; Baildon ed., 'Wardrobe Account', pp.503-4, 505-7, 510-11.

³ *CPR*, 1413-1416, p.62; Accounts, I, f.60v. Clode mistakenly lists William's brother (?) Thomas as the master for 1411-12: *Early History*, II, p.336; PRO, E.101/407/1, ff.3-4 (7-8 Hen.V); E.101/407/13, ff.5v-7; Fenescles was elected Master of the London tailors in 1420, see Appendix I.

⁴ See Barron, 'Ralph Holland', *passim*.; WAM, 12163. I am grateful to Dr. Caroline Barron for this reference.

⁵ PRO, E.101/409/2, ff.6v-7v (George Asshton and Richard Reynold), E.101/409/6, ff.4v-5 (Roger Holbeche, Richard Skernyng and Geoffrey Guybon); 409/12 ff.12-13 (Holbeche, Skernyng, Richard Tolle and John Belham). For the dates of their Masterships see Appendix I.

successful members of the craft were able to compete with ‘official’ London drapers such as Simon Eyre, who were the main suppliers of drapery to the Great Wardrobe.¹ Such evidence, however, does not do justice to the true scale of some tailors’ involvement in the cloth trade. As early as 1389 John Barton, ‘tailleur’ of London, took 28 dozen woollen cloths from London to Sandwich and thence to Calais.² A more ambitious enterprise was mounted by Nicholas Mille and Richard West in December 1470: West was to deliver £400 worth of woollen cloth to Mille to enable the latter to trade with it over the course of the following twelve years. Mille was to provide an annual account of each year’s transactions and was to receive a third of any profits in return.³ Such transactions indicate the extent to which some London tailors were involved in the import and export trade by the later fifteenth century: the London port book of 1480-1, for example, lists several tailors who, as merchant adventurers, were regular exporters of cloth to the continent.⁴ This was indeed a period when the wealthiest tailors were acting as general merchants: Sir John Percyvale had dealings with a Spanish iron merchant, ‘Ochoa Martines de Orindo’, and his fellow alderman Hugh Pemberton took delivery of a large quantity of raw silk from a Venetian merchant, Philip Trivisano, in 1483.⁵

These are, however, untypical of the usual, day to day cloth-dealing in which tailors were involved. Like many drapers, members of the Tailors’ fraternity can be found selling much smaller amounts of cloth to gentry and noblemen in the fifteenth century. William Knotte, for example, made a claim for debt against the executors of John Wayte, the ‘reseyvour’ of John, earl of Oxford in respect of cloth worth seven marks. Likewise, Richard Nordon ‘draper’ (though a former Master of the London tailors) made a claim against the

¹ Eyre, an alderman of the City from 1444-48, is listed in the Wardrobe account for 22-23 Hen. VI along with other London drapers and the tailor/drapers already mentioned: PRO, E.101/409/12, ff.11-11v. For Eyre’s career see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, App. A, p.339.

² CCR, 1385-1389, p.579.

³ PRO, C.1/59/165.

⁴ Walter Povy was one, see Cobb ed., *Overseas Trade*, nos. 498, 499, 571, 575. Povy also supplied £124 16s 6d worth of cloth to the Great Wardrobe for the coronation of Henry VII, L.G. Wickham Legg ed., *English Coronation Records* (London, 1901), p.199.

⁵ PRO, Prob.11/13, f.191v-193v. Martines owed Percyvale the monetary value of 55 tons, 3 quarters and 1 pound of iron, probably of the order of £280 at 1487 prices, see W.R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester, 1978), pp.112-19; CCR, 1476-1485, p.305. Pemberton supplied cloth worth £75 for the coronation of Henry VII, Wickham Legg ed., *Coronation Records*, p.199.

estate of Thomas Carmynowe of Ashwater in Devon regarding cloth worth £20 1s 6d which he had supplied to Carmynowe.¹ The household accounts of Sir John Howard show that as well as ordering items of clothing from London tailors, Howard patronised many of them in order to secure supplies of cloth: in June 1465 Thomas Gay of Fleet Street was paid £6 13s 4d out of a total of £22 1s 10d owed to him for fine cloth including 25½ yards of 'crimson engreyned' which cost just under 12s a yard.² Another of Gay's customers was John, Lord Dynham to whom, on the eve of the battle of Towton in March 1461, he supplied a woollen cloth of crimson worth 78s 'for the king's use for signs and bends for knights and esquires going with the king to the conflict'.³ An important centre for the cloth trade in London was Blackwell Hall, situated near the Guildhall, which had been in existence as a market place for cloth from at least 1398.⁴ By the later fifteenth century Blackwell Hall was used by both tailors and drapers to buy and sell cloth, and the Tailors' Court Minutes for 1486 record an agreement between the two guilds regulating trading activities there.⁵ Nevertheless, many tailors built up large stocks of cloth in their warehouses, some of which would doubtless have been made into garments, and some sold on to other craftsmen. A poignant example of this is afforded by the career of Roger Shavelock. Shavelock followed a classic career path: he was apprenticed as a tailor to Thomas Gresill in 1455-6, and within ten years had completed his training and acquired sufficient capital to open a shop and take on his first apprentice, William Wynslowe.⁶ Membership of the livery of the craft duly followed in 1469-70, and the last reference to him in the Tailors' records shows him enrolling two apprentices in 1476-7; business was seemingly good.⁷ His dramatic death in 1491 would have remained unremarked had it not been for the writer of the Great Chronicle, probably the draper Robert Fabyan:

¹ PRO, C.1/19/107; C.1/18/61.

² Crawford ed., *Household Books*, I, nos. 293-4.

³ CPR, 1467-1477, p.558.

⁴ Riley, *Memorials*, pp.550-2.

⁵ Court Minutes, I, f.3v.

⁶ Accounts, II, ff.62, 274v.

⁷ Accounts, III, ff.6, 101.

In thys mayers tyme a Taylour namyd Roger Shavelok Dwellyng w'yn ludgate and holding there a shopp well storid wyth drapery, kut his awne throte, wherof heryng the shyrevys In all haast sped them thydyr and albe yt that much of his short stuff was by his wyfe and servauntys conveyed a syde, Yit they possessid much cloth & othyr stuff to the valu of a thousand mark or nere abowth...¹

Those who bought and sold cloth on such a scale were inevitably dependent on those craftsmen who were engaged in the various processes which constituted the preparation of cloth. After weaving, cloth first had to be fulled. This involved trampling the cloth in water filled with soap or fullers' earth until the surface of the cloth became felted. It was then washed and stretched on a 'tenter' frame before it was sheared, a process whereby a nap of loose fibres was raised which was then sheared off to impart a smooth finish.² Langland's description of these processes is typically vivid:

Cloth that cometh fro the wevyng / is nougt comly to were,
Tyl it is fulled under fote / or in fullyng-stokkes,
Wasshen wel with water / and with taseles cracched,
Ytoked, and yteynted / and under tailloures hande.³

The interdependence of those who finished cloth and their customers, the tailors and drapers, is best shown by the amalgamation of the fullers, shearmen and tailors of Coventry into one guild, and in Shrewsbury where the shearmen were under the control of the drapers' guild.⁴ The usual pattern was for dealers in cloth to sub-contract cloth, bought from weavers, to craftsmen who would finish the cloth for them. This probably reduced the scope for fullers and shearmen to assert themselves as suppliers of cloth in their own right. Richard Nayler, a London tailor, sent 'certain wullyn clothes to be fulled to oon John Stokton of Suthwerk fuller'.⁵ The choice of a Southwark fuller rather than a member of the craft in the capital itself seems to indicate that tailors and drapers enjoyed a high degree of freedom in

¹ *Great Chronicle*, pp.243-4.

² See A.R. Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking* (London, 1982), and P. Walton, 'Textiles', in *English Medieval Industries*, ed. Blair and Ramsay, pp.319-54.

³ Langland, *Piers the Plowman*, ed. Skeat, Passus B: XV, lines 444-47.

⁴ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp.100-1 and Swanson, *Medieval Artisans* p.40. The Coventry fullers remained with the tailors and shearmen until 1448: for the dispute which led to their departure see PRO C.1/16/490(a) and (b).

⁵ PRO, C.1/64/886.

sub-contracting such work, and is perhaps indicative of the relatively low status of fullers and shearmen. One London tailor may even have been able to do such finishing work himself: in 1483 Nicholas Devias was employed by Sir John Howard for various processes including ‘barbyng of vi clothes of blew’, ‘scheryng of vi peces of rede’ and ‘sowyng and planyng of vi blewys’.¹ It was certainly important for tailors and drapers to maintain close relations with such craftsmen: in his will, proved in 1485, Stephen Trappys, a wealthy London tailor, pardoned a dyer, a fuller and a shearmen the debts they owed him.² The responsibility lay with the tailor to ensure that any cloth he sold had been properly finished, as shown by the many instances in the Tailors’ accounts of craftsmen fined for selling ‘unwet cloth’, in other words cloth which had not been correctly fulled. William Botle was fined ‘pur sellyng kendale unwet & autres draps’, and John Sharp ‘quia vendidit blanket kersy unwet’.³ In contrast to fullers and shearmen, dyers had a much higher profile in English towns than fullers or shearmen, doubtless because of the skilled nature of the craft, the high cost of the materials involved, as well as the status associated with certain colours in liveries and other garments.⁴ Thus another London tailor, Bartholomew Donne, was able to buy ‘as many cloths of various colours as comes to lxxii li.’ from William Hewet, a Colchester dyer.⁵

VI. Strategies for Survival

The preceding sections have demonstrated that the urban economy was a complex network of varying relationships between artisan and artisan and between artisan and customer. The workshop, as a node in this network, was subject to a variety of influences, whether it be pricing policies of the suppliers of raw materials, the bargaining power of sub-contractors or the demands of the customers themselves. The preoccupations of craft ordinances have led historians to concentrate upon the physical workshop and the family, whereas in reality the productive process was rarely confined to one physical space and to

¹ Crawford ed., *Household Books*, II.407.

² GL, MS. 9171/7, ff.33v-35.

³ Accounts, I, f.181v (1427-8), II, f.2 (1453-4).

⁴ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.42-3.

⁵ PRO, C.1/64/561. Colchester gained a reputation for the high quality of its dyed cloth, particularly russets, the staple material for cheaper garments, see Britnell, *Colchester*, pp.54-7, 74-7.

one family. It has already been demonstrated that many tailors attempted to by-pass the 'normal' modes of supply by becoming involved in the cloth trade themselves, and it is now important to look in a little more detail at the operation of the workshop, and at the expediciencies employed in the struggle to remain solvent.

One of the most interesting series of documents to survive among the records of the London tailors is an agreement recording the transfer of a business from one tailor, Stephen Piers, to his son John between 1467 and 1471.¹ Stephen had enjoyed a successful career in the craft: in 1425-6 he became a liveryman and he was master to at least eight apprentices over the course of the next forty years.² His success as a businessman may be indicated by a 1459 reference to a debt of £14 5½d which he was owed by Sir Robert Colet, a knight of Suffolk and Shropshire; certainly, by the time he took the decision to retire the value of his 'divers goods wares and dettours' came to £220.³ His son John seems to have been similarly successful: he too joined the fraternity of his craft (in 1464-5) and presented at least nine apprentices between 1445 and 1474.⁴

In 1467 Stephen took the decision to retire, perhaps due to illness or infirmity, leaving his son in charge of his business. The first document records the arrangements which were to be made: the house belonging to Stephen and his wife Julyan in Buckelersbury in the parish of St. Mary Colchurch was signed over to John, 'reservyng unto my selfe and Julyan my wyf allwayes the chaumber that I lye in called the whyte chaumber and an other annexed to the same called the Rede chaumber'.⁵ Stephen and Julyan were to be cared for by John, his wife and their children and paid a pension of £10 a year, which was increased to £13 6s 8d in the additions made to the agreement in 1469 and 1470 and ratified by the Master and Wardens of the Tailors. This money was to come out of the stock of goods worth £220 which John was 'to by and sell with in the best wise that he can to his moost profite and encrease'. In return, Stephen promised that 'I duryng my lyf nor none of my executours in tyme to come nor none other persone in my name shall never interupt nor encumber my said

¹ AMB, 37, ff.21v-22, printed in Clode, *Early History*, I, pp.367-70.

² Accounts, I, f.117v; *ibid.*, I, f.160v *et passim*.

³ CPR, 1452-1461, p.520; AMB, 37, f.21v.

⁴ Accounts, II, *passim*, and f.255v.

⁵ AMB, 37, f.21v.

sone John Piers of the said goods wares and dettours from this day and yeer aforesaid unto the ende of the world'. This 'hands off' approach only went so far however, for Stephen also specified that every year between Christmas and Candlemas John was to make a 'due rekenyng' of the goods 'that in comfortyng of myself I may know that he goeth forthward & encrease the wych shall be to me grete pleasure'. In his response to the proposals, John agreed and in addition stated that if the value of the goods was found to be less than £200 'than it shall be lefull for my fader to enter in to my goodes wares and dettours where so ever they my be found and so to kepe my said goodes wares and dettours in his owne possession till i sett hem in very suerte of his duete'.¹ In other words, a loss of just under ten percent on the value of the goods was acceptable, but no more.

These arrangements did not simply transfer the business from father to son, they established a business partnership which would benefit Stephen and his wife in their old age.² A further clause in the agreement puts this beyond any doubt: in the event that Stephen subsequently came into some money or acquired goods of any value, John was to 'ley it in his shop and so to occupie it in merchaundising in the best wise he can' as long as he rendered to Stephen half the profit made on any transactions.³ In other words, before Stephen's death in early 1473, father and son were technically partners, hence the need for a formal agreement between them. This attempted to ensure the continued profitability of Stephen's business and paved the way for the final transfer of ownership to John in March 1472 when Stephen died.⁴ Since Postan's important article on credit in medieval trade, loans, partnerships and credit in the economy of the later middle ages have rightly been emphasised as essential elements of the day-to-day transactions of traders.⁵ Some partnerships were essentially sub-contractual relationships in which each party provided a

¹ AMB, 37, f.21v.

² For another example of provision for the elderly see *CPMR*, 1364-1381, p.294. On this subject see also E. Clark, 'Some Aspects of Social Security in Medieval England', *Journal of Family History*, 7 (1982), pp.307-20.

³ AMB, 37, f.21v.

⁴ Stephen's will was proved on the 5th of March 1472, GL MS. 9171/6 f.129v. The scant details contained in the will serve as a useful reminder of the fallibility of testamentary evidence, and the importance of *pre-mortem* arrangements.

⁵ Postan, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', pp.234-61.

particular service or skill during the productive process, and obtained a cut of the profits rather than a payment for each task. The difference between the two is rarely perceptible in the sources yet it does indicate the variety of relationships that could exist in the urban economy. A tailor might form a partnership with a skinner whereby the latter would sew furs on to garments made by the former; the two would then share any profits. The same tailor might, however, employ a button maker to sew buttons on, paying him a fixed rate for each garment.

Other partnerships, as Postan demonstrated, involved the investment of a small amount of capital by a 'sleeping' partner, such as an orphan or a widow, which could then be employed by a merchant in conjunction with other merchandise in order to realise a return for the investors. More common, however, were partnerships of a more continuous nature whereby money or stock was delivered by one partner to another on a more or less permanent basis; most of these partnerships were formed between merchants.¹ The partnership between Nicholas Mille and Richard West, cited above, is one of the clearest examples of this kind of activity. The partnership was established along classic lines: in December 1469 West undertook to deliver to Mille £400 worth of woollen cloth which Mille was to trade with for twelve years. Each year Mille was to make a 'true account' of his transactions and was to receive a third of the profits. At the end of the twelve years the stock was to revert to West or his executors.² The partnership broke up after Mille claimed that West was trying to recover more stock than he had ever invested in the enterprise. The key word here is investment; as Postan again points out, the partnership was a favourite means of investing capital in the short to medium term. It was not a loan as it involved both parties being associated in the performance of a single business. Loans were short term solutions to financial difficulties which often led to craftsmen being involved with unscrupulous money-lenders: William Bury, a London mercer was charged in 1421 with false chevisance and usury, three years after he had lent a tailor, Alexander Cheyne, £18 on the understanding that Cheyne would repay him £21 within three months. By way of a pledge, Cheyne had handed over a gold cloth which Bury had sold at the end of the three months.³

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.251-2.

² PRO, C.1/59/165.

³ CPMR, 1413-1437, p.105.

Partnerships were one way in which merchants could finance their activities, and in the case of most tailors such transactions generally involved trading in cloth rather than clothing. Conceivably, of course, a wealthy tailor might be able to produce garments in sufficient quantity to attract investment, but Swanson is probably right to suggest that profits were rarely great in the clothing industry: it has been shown how tailors resorted to selling 'shredis' of cloth in order to boost their takings. Credit was, however, a feature of the urban economy which was not confined to the activities of merchants; the evidence of debts from a variety of sources from towns in the later middle ages proves beyond doubt that 'credit was demanded and allowed at every stage through which the goods passed from importer or producer to consumer'.¹ A shortage of ready cash led to the popularity of credit, and the dependence of a great many trades and industries, demonstrated by the failure of the Act of 1430 which sought to regulate credit sales to aliens.² The complexity of the pre-industrial urban economy owed much to what Sonenscher describes as 'a nexus of credit, sub-contracted work and marketing arrangements'; the reputation of a tailor did not derive solely from the quality of the goods produced, but also from his credit worthiness.³ This in turn affected the flexibility or otherwise of a craftsman's own business arrangements: if a tailor was, for example unable to buy cloth on credit from a draper, he might be forced to ask his own customers to pay with cash rather than allowing them the option of giving him a promissory note. The importance of credit should not therefore be under-estimated: Gilbert de Maghfild, a fourteenth century London ironmonger, sold two-thirds of his goods on credit.⁴ Similarly, eleven out of twelve wool transactions conducted by the Celys in the fifteenth century involved credit. Even the wealthiest merchants rarely had large sums in cash on their persons: in 1482 George Cely listed his current assets as £50 in cash, £200 in goods and nearly £900 in debts owing to him.⁵

¹ Postan, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', pp.239-40.

² J. Day, *The Medieval Market Economy* (Oxford, 1987), pp.1-55, esp. pp.16-18.

³ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, pp.132-135.

⁴ M.K. James, 'Gilbert de Maghfild, a London Merchant of the Fourteenth Century', in *Studies in the Medieval Wine Trade*, ed. E.M. Veale (Oxford, 1971), pp.203-4.

⁵ Postan, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', p.255.

Table 6.1. Social composition of Londoners' debtors, 1400-1500¹

	Tailors	%	All citizens	%
Gentry	96	50.8	181	49.2
Yeomen	11	5.8	13	3.5
Craftsmen	33	17.5	94	25.5
Merchants	8	4.2	63	17.1
Clerks	8	4.2	-	-
Clergy	12	6.4	9	2.5
Others	21	11.1	8	2.2
Total	189	100.0	368	100.0

The most common form of credit was, of course, the sale of goods where payment was delayed for a specified period of time. In other words the ‘flow’ of credit was from the seller to the buyer. This is effectively demonstrated by the many references to debts owed to London tailors, which appear in the Patent Rolls in cases where the debtors received pardons for outlawry. The breakdown of the 189 cases listed in the Patent Rolls between 1400 and 1500 provides an important record of the nature of the clientele for which a section of London’s tailoring community catered. Table 6.1, for example, shows the social composition of the debtors of tailors, compared with those of London citizens in general. The preponderance of gentry among the debtors of tailors and indeed most Londoners is perhaps not surprising, given their purchasing power, and reflects the general flow of credit from London to the countryside as well as the popularity of London’s markets.² The amounts owed to tailors varied a great deal. Some were probably for consignments of cloth and other goods: among the four debts recorded as owed to William Latoner, for example, is a debt of £200 owed by Gerard Wyderyngton an esquire of Wyderyngton in Northumberland.³ Such large transactions almost certainly concerned sales of cloth rather than items of clothing alone: at the other end of the scale Robert Colson, a London tailor, petitioned Chancery to recover a debt of £11 3s owed by the executors of Nicholas Carew, esquire. The petition lists over thirty gowns which were supplied to Carew and various members of his family and

¹ The figures for the tailors’ debtors are taken from the pardons for outlawry contained in the Patent Rolls. Those for the London citizens were compiled using Table 21 (Staple Court debtors, 1390-1459) in E.Z. Bennett, ‘Debt and Credit in the Urban Economy: London, 1380-1460’, (Unpub. Yale Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1989), p.171.

² Bennett, ‘Debt and Credit in the Urban Economy’, pp.186-87.

³ *CPR*, 1452-1461, p.380.

household.¹ It may have been more common for customers to pay for their clothing with cash than to ask for credit, except where expensive garments were required, or where a tailor was a regular supplier to a household. Sir John Howard seems to have paid his regular tailor, Henry Galle, fairly promptly: between 1465 and 1467 Galle’s workshop received payments on nine separate occasions. On Friday 23 May 1466 Howard’s accountant recorded that ‘my mastyr rekened wyth Herry Galle taylour’ for five gowns costing 33s 6d which Galle was paid the same day.² On the other hand George Lovekyn, tailor to three kings of England laid the blame for his financial problems on his debtors among ‘grete estates’.³

The geographical origins of the debtors of tailors and other Londoners, shown in Table 6.2, provides another important sidelight on the relationships between craftsmen and their customers, particularly when this is combined with consideration of their social origins.

Table 6.2. Geographical origins of Londoners’ debtors, 1400-1500⁴

	Tailors	%	All Citizens	%
London/Home Co’s	57	30.2	784	66.4
Southern Counties	10	5.3	43	3.6
Eastern Counties	29	15.3	105	8.9
Western Counties	49	25.9	108	9.2
Midland Counties	17	9.0	104	8.8
Northern Counties	27	14.3	37	3.1
Total	189	100.0	1181	100.0

It is not surprising that London and its immediate hinterland are well represented: twenty-one of the gentry in debt to tailors are described as from places in London, Essex or Kent. Similarly, a high proportion of the craftsmen who owed sums to tailors and other citizens were from the capital. What is more significant is the large number of tailors’ debtors who originated from further afield, particularly the west of England and the northern counties. By contrast, the links between Londoners in general and these areas were no stronger than their connections with other areas outside the capital. The strong connection

¹ PRO, C.1/88/41.

² Crawford ed., *Household Books*, I, no. 299 (Aug. 1465), II, nos. 321 (Christmas 1465), 354 (23 May 1466), 356 (28 May 1466), 375-6 (11 Nov. 1466), 411-1 (5 July 1467), 596 (24 Mar. 1467), 606 (5 July 1467), 618 (5 July 1467); *ibid.* II, nos. 354-5.

³ Sutton, ‘George Lovekyn’, p.12; PRO, Prob.11/14/6, f.48v.

⁴ The figures for the tailors’ debtors as in Table 6.1. Those for Londoners in general are extrapolated from Table 45 (Staple Court debts) in Bennett, ‘Debt and Credit in the Urban Economy’, pp.257-258.

between the Tailors' fraternity and the West Country has already been noted - craftsmen from Bristol, Gloucester and Salisbury, most of them involved in the thriving cloth or clothing industry, became members of the fraternity during the fifteenth century.¹ Likewise, several individual tailors seem to have been particularly active in the south-west. Richard Nordon was one: between 1433 and 1454 he appears as a creditor in the Patent Rolls no less than ten times. Although at one stage he was owed nearly eight pounds by two Cambridgeshire gentlemen, the remainder of the debts were owed by two Gloucestershire gentry and by five inhabitants of Devon and Cornwall, including Robert Treage of Kilquit and John Mayowe of Smallhill, both in Cornwall.² Another tailor with strong links in the south-west was Thomas Gay senior who was owed a total of £29 9s 5d by seven individuals from Somerset, Gloucestershire, Devon and Cornwall between 1452 and 1472.³ Whilst it is probable that substantial merchants such as Gay and Nordon would have travelled round the country from time to time in order to deliver goods and visit creditors, many of their customers would have made their initial approaches in London. It is interesting to note that Richard Banastre, a gentleman of Bowlee in Lancashire, named in the Mayor's Court in 1439 as owing Richard Bisshop, tailor, the huge sum of 1,200 marks, was listed as owning property in London in the 1436 subsidy roll, assessed at £10.⁴

It certainly seems to have been common practice to pay for goods on account: Sir William Stonor bought satin and rich cloth from William Parker, one of the Fleet Street tailors, at a total cost of £7 16s 8d 'of the wyche sum I deliver Richard Elys Parkers servant £5 in party of payment of thys. Sir William Stonor'. Interestingly the bill of sale was countersigned by Elys on behalf of his employer.⁵ The vigour with which many tailors pursued their debtors through the courts does however, indicate the extent to which individual craftsmen were caught up in a web of credit relationships. In order to pay for their own raw materials, and supplies, they needed to be sure that they had cash available in order to

¹ See above, pp.34-6.

² *CPR*, 1436-1441, pp.5-6; *CPR*, 1429-1436, pp.310, 430; *ibid.*, 1436-1441, pp.10, 13, 103, 216; *ibid.*, 1452-1461, p.131.

³ *CPR*, 1452-1461, pp.3, 521; *ibid.*, 1461-1467, pp.509-510; *ibid.*, 1467-1477, pp.76, 149, 323.

⁴ CLRO, MC.1/3/18; PRO, E.179/238/90, printed in Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp.378-88.

⁵ PRO, C.47/37/9, no.37.

maintain their own credit worthiness. Even the smallest sums were pursued: in 1367 John Walsshe sued Elys Mymphe, an embroiderer, for 4s 8d owed for tailoring work Walsshe had carried out in his shop in Cheapside.¹ In the event that cash was not obtainable, goods could be used to keep the wolves at bay - William Kele, for instance, defrauded a customer by using cloth, which he was supposed to employ to make a coat for a customer, to satisfy a creditor.² Those unable to come up with such expedients sometimes resorted to desperate measures: in 1383 the Mayor's Court was told how Andrew Sewardby, a London tailor, had attempted to murder a creditor, Philip Fretheby, who was travelling to Bridlington in Yorkshire. Walter, Sewardby's servant followed Fretheby on his journey and, shortly before getting to Lincoln, he attacked Fretheby, leaving him for dead.³ Some attempted to avoid the credit nexus altogether: Thomas Humbilton in 1395 received a pardon for stealing £20 worth of cloth from the shop of a prominent fellow tailor, William Spaldyng.⁴

Such was the precarious existence of many businesses, depending as they did upon good will as much as on a good supply of ready cash, that other strategies had to be employed from time to time to stave off disaster. Although debts were counted as assets they were difficult to liquify at short notice, and indeed were frequently the root cause of any problems, as seen in the numerous examples of craftsmen seeking sanctuary in Westminster or St. Martin le Grand to escape their creditors.⁵ This was made worse when the buyer of a craftsman's goods was merely an intermediary rather than the final consumer, the latter being more likely to pay in hard cash. It is possible that, as in pre-revolutionary France, tailors suffered less from the recalcitrance of intermediaries given that their goods were often made to order for customers.⁶ Given the small size of the individual enterprises which made

¹ CLRO, MC.1/1/102.

² CLRO, MC.1/1/45.

³ *CPMR*, 1381-1412, p.47. The Tailors' records show that by 1412 Sewardby had achieved a certain degree of respectability in his old age when he was admitted as an almsman of the Fraternity, Accounts I, f.69.

⁴ *CPR*, 1391-1396 p.648.

⁵ M.B. Honeybourne, 'The Sanctuary Boundaries and Environs of Westminster Abbey and the College of St. Martin le Grand', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 2nd ser., 38 (1932-33), pp.316-333; Thornley, 'Sanctuary in Medieval London', pp.293-315. In 1430 Henry Goof, a London tailor, was noted as having 'withdrawn to the privileged place of Westminster', *CPMR*, 1413-1437, p.238.

⁶ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, p.133.

up the productive network in the urban economy, economies of cost rather than scale were the usual means employed to put a business on a surer footing. It was suggested above, for instance, that the perception of the role of apprentices was not as straightforwardly patriarchal as suggested by guild ordinances: the long length of terms served by some apprentices may be an indication of their masters' desire to ensure a supply of cheap labour in the aftermath of the Black Death.¹ Similarly when the supply of labour was more plentiful, as seems to have been the case by the early sixteenth century, a master was in a position to demand more from his wage-labourers as well, such that the boundaries between the two categories became blurred. In 1505 Robert Sidlyng, a tailor, required his servant to stay with him for six years at a nominal annual wage; the servant was provided with bed, board and clothing, like most apprentices.²

If times were particularly hard, a master might come to the conclusion that even the cost of maintaining apprentices could not be sustained. A fairly common solution was the to sell the term of apprenticeship to another craftsman in order to raise a small amount of capital; in theory this had to be carried out with the permission of the apprentice.³ The sums to be raised varied, but they were not insignificant: John Lambard, a London goldsmith had taken his apprentice Ralph Bruggis on for seven years but, after Bruggis had served four, Lambard sold the remaining three years of the term to another goldsmith, Humfrey Aubrey for £4.⁴ At the other end of the scale, 3s 4d was all that William Bramston was able to get for the term of his apprentice, John Bartlett, which he sold to a weaver.⁵ This was entirely legal and was less complicated and more profitable than trying to get rid of an apprentice by alleging malpractice. Another strategy, employed from time to time, was to persuade an apprentice to enter into an agreement whereby he would pay his master a certain sum at the start of the term which would be returned when the apprentice obtained the freedom. Unscrupulous and/or penurious masters would then exploit these agreements: John Wyllys, an apprentice tailor of London, complained that he had been bound in such an obligation of

¹ See above, pp.181-203.

² WAM, 5960 and see above, pp.205-16.

³ Ryan, 'Apprenticeship', pp.22-3.

⁴ PRO, C.1/113/5.

⁵ CLRO, MC.1/1/18.

£3 13s 4d, but his master 'by his crafty delyng' tried to prevent Wyllys from becoming free and recovering the 'deposit'.¹

VII. Women and the Workshop

When considering the fortunes of craftsmen and workshops in the urban economy, an important subject for consideration is the role played by women in the production of goods, training of apprentices and running of workshops. The study of women in the medieval town in Europe is one which has benefited from an explosion of interest which has produced a huge volume of literature since the pioneering work of Abram, Dale, Dixon and latterly Eileen Power.² Women formed a vital element in the network of economic relationships within urban society, yet despite the important contributions made by historians of continental towns, studies of women's roles in the towns of medieval England are still few and far between. Kowaleski's examination of women's work in fourteenth century Exeter, and the studies by Dr. Barron and Kay Lacey of women in late medieval London are still among the only attempts to look in detail at the nature of the contributions made by women to the social and economic fabric of English towns.³ Recently, Dr. Goldberg has sought to widen the frame of reference by studying the position of women in the medieval English town in the context of the economic and demographic changes in the later middle ages. English towns, he argues, unlike their Mediterranean European counterparts were characterised by a late, companionate marriage regime for both sexes, which enabled women in particular to enter upon a period of service prior to marriage, and thence to continue to be active participants in the production and distribution of goods.⁴ Goldberg suggests, moreover, that single women comprised a large majority of immigrants into many English

¹ PRO, C.1/60/216.

² A. Abram, 'Women Traders in Medieval London', *Economic Journal*, 26 (1916), pp.276-285; M.K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 4 (1933), pp.324-35; E. Dixon, 'Craftswomen in the "Livre des Metiers"', *Economic Journal*, 5 (1895), pp.209-28; E. Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. M.M. Postan (Cambridge, 1975); see the bibliographies in Kowaleski and Bennett, 'Crafts, Gilds and Women in the Middle Ages', pp.474-88 and Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp.385-99.

³ M. Kowaleski, 'Women's Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', in B.A. Hanawalt ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington, 1986), pp.145-64; C.M. Barron, 'The "Golden Age" of Women in Medieval London', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1990), pp.35-58; Lacey, 'Women and Work', pp.24-82.

⁴ Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p.6.

towns and hence came to outnumber men in the late fourteenth century Poll tax returns.¹ This analysis has the advantage of not being static in its points of reference: the process by which women were drawn into the labour force during the later fourteenth and early fifteenth century is the context for an examination of the increasingly abundant evidence for the availability of economic opportunities for women in London in the 150 years following the plagues of 1348-49.

The best evidence for the activities of London women derives from widows whose legal status enabled them to 'take over' their husbands' citizenships and continue their businesses. Yet it is important to realise that widows rarely started without any knowledge or experience of running a workshop and producing goods for sale and distribution. The custom of London itself allowed women to acquire such experience in a formal way by electing to trade as *femmes soles*: they were allowed to take on and train apprentices and were effectively treated as single women as long as their businesses were separate from those of their husbands.² In practice the crafts of husband and wife might have a great deal in common: many of the wives of London tailors set up as embroiderers or silkwomen. Apprentices of married women had to be bound to serve both husband and wife, and thus Elizabeth, daughter of John Eland an esquire of Lincolnshire was 'placed' as an apprentice to John Langwith, tailor of London, and his wife Elene, a silkwoman, in July 1454.³ As Goldberg and others have shown, women were commonly involved in the clothing trade in some capacity, and indeed, it was the silkwomen of London who provided one of the strongest manifestation of collective action by female craft-workers in late-medieval England.⁴ Embroidery, though less completely feminised than silk-spinning, was a craft in which women played an important role, probably due to the intricate needlecraft required. A York vestment-maker, Robert Loksmith, employed the embroidery skills of Alice Legh, and it is probable that women were employed along with men in the workshops where *opus*

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.283-292.

² Barron, 'The "Golden Age of Women"', pp.35-58; for the customs of other towns relating to women see Bateson, *Borough Customs*, II, pp.c-cxv, 102-129.

³ Bateson, *Borough Customs*, I, pp.229-30; PRO, E.210/D1176. John Langwith died in 1467, PRO, Prob.11/5, f.153v.

⁴ Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p.123; Dale, 'The London Silkwomen', pp.324-35.

anglicanum was produced.¹ The combination of an embroiderer with a tailor was undoubtedly a useful one, and it facilitated the transmission of tailoring skills from husband to wife in a more informal manner than through apprenticeship, thus leaving her fully capable of taking over the workshop on his death. Agnes Baron 'brawdester' was married to John Baron, a London tailor, when she took on Margaret, daughter of William Hardelowe, another tailor, to learn her craft.²

Although there are no instances of female apprentices enrolled by London tailors, there are occasional instances where women are explicitly identified as tailors. Emmot Irland, who made her will in 1408, described herself as a tailor, as did Isabel Sampson who was training a male apprentice despite then being married to a cordwainer.³ For the most part, however, the skills which women had learned, usually whilst married to a tailor, have to be inferred from other evidence. The wills of craftsmen are in fact a useful starting point as they frequently indicate the degree to which women had already proved themselves important elements in ensuring the continuation and success of a business. William Chapman was an extremely prosperous tailor of Fleet Street who died in 1446. In his will he left the terms of his apprentices to his wife Alice as long as she continued to practise the same craft.⁴ The implicit recognition that the widow would be capable of continuing the training of apprentices is a common feature of the wills of the London tailors. An apprentice was frequently left a sum of money by his master 'so that he be trew to my wiffe and myn executours and serve the termes of his apprenticehode comyng at my decease'.⁵ Indeed as far as the tailor testators are concerned it is more unusual to see tailors making other arrangements for those apprentices who had not completed their terms.

Most townsmen in the later middle ages were, it appears, survived by their wives.⁶ The wills of the widows themselves indicate the extent to which many of them exploited the

¹ Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p.123.

² *CPMR*, 1413-1437, p.176.

³ GL, MS. 9051/1, f.208; CLRO, MC.1/1/50.

⁴ PRO, Prob.11/3, ff.240-40v.

⁵ Will of John Snowdon, citizen and tailor, proved in 1464, GL, MS.9171/5, ff.367v-68.

⁶ Maryanne Kowaleski calculated that in Bristol, between 1382 and 1405, 82% of male testators died before their wives, 'The History of Urban Families in England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 14 (1988), pp.47-63.

freedoms and privileges brought by widowhood, particularly in London where provisions concerning dower and *legitim* left them in a better financial and legal position than their counterparts elsewhere.¹ Margaret, widow of Ralph Bate, a former Master of the Tailors' fraternity, made a large number of bequests in her will of 1467 which were to be administered after the sale 'of the stok of my shop and warehous'.² Agnes Buttele died in 1416, the widow of William, a London tailor. In her will she left her son all her goods 'cum utensilibus in shopa mea de draperie' which she had maintained since the death of her husband. She then made bequests to four apprentices, three of whom were female.³ There are in fact numerous examples of widows who, at the time of their deaths, were training apprentices both male and female, and who evidently ran successful businesses. One of the best examples concerns Thomasine Percyvale who died in 1512 after three marriages, all to London tailors, the last of whom was Sir John Percyvale, the first tailor Mayor of London.⁴ The fortunate survival of her will and the wills of her three husbands affords a rare opportunity to see how important women could be in ensuring the continuity of a business. Her first husband, Henry Galle, tailor to Sir John Howard in the early 1460s, died in late March or early April 1466, leaving Thomasine £100 in cash, £100 worth of cloth and the terms of his apprentices.⁵ Such implied faith in Thomasine's ability to continue to run the business seems to have been justified: the Howard household books record seven payments made between April 1466 and July 1467 to 'Herry Galles man', the largest of which was for £4 11s 2d, comprising eighteen gowns and other items, over a year after Galle's death.⁶ By March 1467 Thomasine had in fact been married for a second time, and widowed again. In his will, Thomas Barnaby named his wife as his executor and asked her to continue to carry out the provisions of the 'ultima voluntatem henrici Galle nuper mariti Thomasine uxoris

¹ For these provisions see Barron, 'The "Golden Age of Women"', pp.35-58.

² PRO, Prob.11/5, ff.146-147, printed in *Bedfordshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1383-1548*, ed. M. McGregor, Bedfordshire Historical Record Soc., 58-9 (1979-80), pp.21-25.

³ GL, MS. 9171/2, ff.347v, 355.

⁴ Thomasine was born in Cornwall and founded a school in the parish of her birth, Week St. Mary, see Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale'.

⁵ GL, MS. 9171/6, f.1.

⁶ Crawford ed., *Household Books*, II, nos. 354, 356, 375-6, 411-2, 596, 606, 618.

mei'.¹ The successful transfer of Galle's business to Thomasine and thence to Barnaby is indicated by Barnaby's actions in respect of his apprentices. One of them, Henry Whitefeld was in fact Galle's former apprentice, enrolled in 1465-6, whereas the other, William Smyth had been enrolled by Barnaby six years before that.² In 1467, therefore, a successful merger had taken place between the two tailoring enterprises. The reliance of Galle and Barnaby upon Thomasine's own skills as a craftworker and businesswoman seem to be implicit in these events, and her personal involvement in the craft is clearly shown in her own will, proved in 1512, in which she left substantial bequests to Thomas Roche, John Husbonde and Ralph Walker 'whiche be nowe apprentices with me' and to eight other men 'which have been servants and apprentices with me'. Ever cognisant of her legal status she had, in an earlier testament, referred to herself as 'citizen and freewoman of London'.³

Conclusion

The security and solvency of individual enterprises owed a great deal, therefore, to the participation of all members of the family in the productive process, and to their ability to adapt their skills, or adopt new ones when required. Brewing on a small scale, for instance, became a 'safe and profitable sideline' to the activities of many households.⁴ Artisans were engaged in a constant dialogue with other craft workers within the urban economy, a process which resulted in the periodic redefinition of relationships. The Venetian master-draper who undertook piece work for others in the thirteenth century had his counterparts in all periods and countries where flexibility was a prerequisite for financial security.⁵ The aim of this chapter has been to attempt a refutation of the myth of the 'independent artisan', a fiction which has prospered essentially because, until relatively recently, historians have proved reluctant to apply 'modern' concepts to the pre-industrial era, and have failed to appreciate the complexities of the local economies of crafts because

¹ GL, MS. 9171/6, ff.31v-32.

² Accounts, II, ff.172, 276v.

³ PRO, Prob.11/17, ff.218-221v; *CWCH*, II, p.618 (1508).

⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p.8. John Buke left a brewery called 'le scut on the hope' in Gracechurch Street to the fraternity in 1427 for the establishment of a chantry, *CWCH*, II, p.445.

⁵ Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Organisation of Work', p.18.

of their reliance upon guild statutes. As has been shown, the actual role played by craft guilds was both less interventionist and less negative than has often been assumed. In many ways it was impossible for craft organisations to reflect the complexity of work relationships; their task was to provide structures which could protect both craftsmen and consumers from sub-standard workmanship and the labour of immigrants. Rather, craftsmen were left pretty much to their own devices in the establishment of productive networks with fellow workers from related crafts, suppliers of raw materials, and financiers, and were thus much more responsive and adaptable to changes in market conditions brought on by demographic change. The apparent flourishing of the tailoring industry in late medieval London owed a great deal to this flexibility in the face of a wider demand for fashionable clothing among Londoners and non-Londoners of all social classes.

CONCLUSION

Gae mind your seam ye prick the louse
An' jag the flae¹

This thesis has aimed to shed light on the nature and purposes of the associations established by artisans in the towns of medieval Europe through the important records of the London Tailors. The functions of craft guilds, it has been argued here, stemmed as much from the expectations and demands of artisans as from the well-attested need on the part of civic authorities to delegate many of the functions of urban government. It was this interaction of 'ascending' aspirations and 'descending' obligations which shaped the development of organisations which, while sharing important structural characteristics, were often able to respond flexibly and pragmatically to the particular needs of artisans and merchants. The development of religious and social functions by craft organisations was one way in which autonomy could be expressed albeit, in most instances, to serve the spiritual and charitable needs of the wealthiest craftsmen. Yet, as has been shown, the fraternity established by the Tailors came to take on an added significance when it was used as a vehicle for the corporate ambitions of the craft in a City where mercantile interests continued to dominate the Court of Aldermen. The ability of the wealthiest guilds in London to gain the assistance of external sources of authority, particularly through the acquisition of royal charters, paved the way for the development of well-tried mechanisms by which grievances could be brought to the attention of the Crown and Parliament.²

In a similar way the example of the London tailors suggests that a lack of conflict between the 'livery' and the rest of the freemen could facilitate the implementation of policies, both political and economic, which were in the interests of the artisan majority. The threat posed by non-freemen to the livelihoods of artisans was a common concern among the crafts in London, increasingly so in the later fifteenth century. Yet this threat was perceived and dealt with by the Tailors in a strikingly constructive and pragmatic way, by endeavouring to confine such craftsmen to the refurbishment of second-hand clothing.³ Action in this

¹ Robert Burns, 'Answer to a Tailor', *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. J. Kinsley, 3 vols (Oxford, 1968), i, pp.278-80, ll.10-11. 'jag the flae' = 'pierce the flea' = 'prick-louse'.

² For the sixteenth century lobbying of the Privy Council and Parliament by the London companies see I.W. Archer, 'The London Lobbies in the Later Sixteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), pp.17-44.

³ The Tailors took a similarly firm line with aliens in the later sixteenth century, see Sleight-Johnson, 'Merchant Taylors' Company', p.329.

sphere was balanced by a relaxed attitude in other areas, particularly in the area of quality control and economic expansion where an appreciation of the buoyant demand for new clothing in the capital, facilitated by this *laissez-faire* attitude, appears to have resulted in an expansion in the tailoring industry. The manner in which guilds chose to enforce their regulations, and the impact of demographic and social change upon guild policies, are subjects in which more research is required: clearly, the interests of guild members did not always coincide with those of the majority of craftsmen and further investigation should enable historians to begin to come to terms with the different ways in which guilds intervened in the lives of craftsmen in medieval towns and cities.

The limitations of guild authority are no better revealed than in the inadequacy of guild regulations as a guide to working practices and relationships in the urban economy. An appreciation of the diversity of goods produced in large centres of population in the middle ages can only be a starting point for a more thorough analysis of the complexity of productive and distributive processes. The implications of the skills possessed by artisans is one area in which more research is needed: this study has pointed to a remarkable degree of mobility between related occupations, facilitated by the transferability of the skills of cutting and stitching. It is probable that the interdependence of workshops in the urban economy has in fact been underplayed here: the manufacture of clothing in the medieval period could be carried out under one roof, assuming that a tailor was capable of adorning the garments with buttons, buckles and furs bought from other workshops. In other industries, the cloth-making industry being the most striking example, occupational distinctions were firmly based upon the distinct nature of the different productive processes and the variety of skills and technologies required, for instance, for weaving, fulling, shearing and dyeing cloth prior to sale.

The working arrangements of craftsmen in towns were undoubtedly more complex than guild regulations would suggest. The realities of apprenticeship and servanthood in the urban economy were subject to variations in attitudes and practices which cannot be deduced from legislative formulae. Apprenticeship, in particular, can be viewed from a number of angles and points of view: it was clearly not a great success in assimilating large numbers of immigrants into the formal structures of urban society, but neither was it a one-sided relationship which operated purely in the interests of the masters of the crafts. Indeed, the emergence of London as a 'national training centre' for provincial craftsmen paralleled its

increasing prominence as a market for goods and services in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. An apprenticeship served in London may have enabled many craftsmen to establish themselves in their home towns, assuming that economic conditions were favourable. The nature of the training programmes established by guilds and implemented by masters is an important subject of current research on early-modern London: the perceived benefits of craft organisations for artisans can be seen in the ways in which such skills and techniques were viewed and adapted by all concerned.¹

Indeed, despite the limitations pertaining to guild authority in the middle ages this thesis has, above all, sought to emphasise the important, and often constructive, roles played by these organisations in the economy and society of medieval towns. The formal requirement that citizens of London obtain the freedom through one of the crafts or 'misteries', for instance, should not devalue the craft loyalties expressed by individuals, particularly in their wills. In many cases these sentiments reveal much about the importance of craft guilds for their members. In 1502 Walter Povy, citizen and tailor 'sore seke of body', asked the Master and Wardens of the Tailors to distribute much of the cloth from his shop to young men of the craft in order, perhaps, to launch them on their careers as qualified craftsmen. In addition the Master, Wardens, Beadle and Clerk of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist were to attend Povy's funeral, when he was to be buried in the church of St. Mary Aldermary, 'afore the Rood there in the myddle of the said churche atte the hedde of the buriall of master Rauf Hollande late alderman deceased'.² As has been shown, Povy was Holland's 'occupational grandson', but it is likely that this act of remembrance was not simply a product of these personal bonds, important though they evidently were.³ The coming together of the great and the good of the Tailors' fraternity at Holland's tomb, fifty years after his death, doubtless served to remind them of the extent to which Holland, through the medium of the guild, had embodied the aspirations of many practitioners of the craft earlier in the fifteenth century.

¹ M. Berlin, 'The Decline of the Guilds', unpublished paper, delivered at a conference of the Society for the History of Medieval Technology, St. Catherine's College, Oxford, March 1994. Dr. Berlin and others are investigating 'The Growth of a Skilled Workforce in London, c.1500-1750', a project currently in progress at the Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research, under the direction of Dr. Derek Keene.

² Registers of Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury, F, ff.200-1.

³ See above, pp.145-46, 203-4.

APPENDIX I.

MASTERS OF THE TAILORS' FRATERNITY, 1398-1500

The office of Master of one of the London guilds was, for many wealthy Londoners, an important first step along the civic *cursus honorum*. Of particular note here is the increasing number of Masters of the Tailors' fraternity whose wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PRO, Prob.11) as opposed to one of the London divisional courts (GL, MS etc.). This upward mobility was reflected in the number of tailors who began to hold City offices in the later fifteenth century (see Appendix II). In addition, twelve of the Masters were parishioners of St. Dunstan in the West while two others expressed some sentiment for that parish in their wills.

Year of Election ¹	Died	Will	Parish	
1398	John Buk			
1399	Clement Kirton			
1400	John Fauconer			
1401	John Ballard			
1402	Robert Eland	1415	GL, MS 9051/1, ff.327-27v	St. Chris.
1403	Richard Lynne	1432	PRO, Prob.11/3, ff.131-31v	St. M.Ab.
1404	Simon Leef	1426	GL, MS 9171/3, f.156	St. M.Ab.
1405	Robert Queldrik	1418	GL, MS 9171/2, ff.387-87v	St. D.W.
1406	John Colbroke			
1407	Peter Mason	1413	<i>CWCH</i> , II, p.397	St. P.C.
1408	Thomas Sutton	1434	GL, MS 9171/3, ff.381v-82	H.T.L
1409	John Fulthorp			
1410	John Marchall	1419	GL, MS 9171/3, ff.40v-41	St. T.Ap.
1411	William Tropenell			
1412	William Waryn			
1413	John Cavendish	1436	PRO, Prob.11/3, ff.150v-51v	St. Mg.Loht
1414	Thomas Whityngham			
1415	William Jowderell	1448	PRO, Prob.11/1, f.96	St. M.Ab.
1416	John Weston	1410		
1417	William Holgrave			
1418	Ralph Bate			
1419	Ralph Holand	1452	PRO, Prob.11/1, ff.81-85	St. M.Ald.
1420	Robert Fenescales	1447	GL, MS 9171/4, f.221v	St. M.O.
1421	Ralph Shoklache			
1422	Richard Nordon			
1423	John de Bury	< 1432	GL, MS 9171/3, f.345v ²	St. D.W.
1424	Alexander Farnell	1440	<i>CWCH</i> , II, p.490	St. Mich.Cr
1425	Richard Reynold			

¹ From Accounts, I-II *passim*.

² Will of widow, Joan.

1426	John Caston			
1427	John Knotte	1448	GL, MS 9171/4, f.227	St. Bot.Bill
1428	William Chapman	1446	PRO, Prob.11/2, ff.240-240v	St. D.W.
1429	Philip Possell	1441	GL, MS 9171/4, f.80	St. Sep.
1430	John Thorne	1449	GL, MS 9171/5, ff.5-5v	St. Mich.Q.
1431	Geoffrey Guybon	1443	GL, MS 9171/4, ff.129v-130	St.D.W.
1432	Roger Holbeche			
1433	John King			
1434	John Legge	1461	GL, MS 9171/5, f.308	St.Mg.M.
1435	John Peche	1449	PRO, Prob.11/1, f.140	St. D.W.
1436	Thomas Davy			
1437	John Arcall	1442	GL, MS 9171/4, f.288v	A.H.L.
1438	John Bale			
1439	John Locock	1455	GL, MS 9171/5, ff.210-10v	St. M.Ab
1440	Peter Saverey	1457	PRO, Prob.11/4, ff.67v-68	St. Mg.Sthk
1441	Richard Skernyng	1445	GL, MS 9171/4, f.164v	St. Bride
1442	William Fyge			
1443	William Auntrous	1449	PRO, Prob.11/3, f.272	St. D.W.
1444	John Langwith	1467	PRO, Prob.11/5, f.153v	St. M.Ab.
1453	William Knotte	1462	GL, MS 9171/5, f.323	St. D.W.
1454	John Belham	1469	Almsman - no will	
1455	George Ashton			
1456	John Prince			
1457	John Jurdan			
1458	William Boylet			
1459	William Langdon			
1460	Robert Colwich	1480	PRO, Prob.11/7, ff.6-7v	A.H. Bred.
1461	John Derby			
1462	William Person	1473	GL, MS 9171/6, ff.132v-33	St. D.W.
1463	Roger Tego			
1464	John Fairford			
1465	John Stodard			
1466	John Phelip			
1467	Thomas Burgeys	1468	PRO, Prob.11/5, f.184v	St. D.W.
1468	Walter Baron			
1469	William Parker			
1470	John Swan	1492	PRO, Prob.11/9, ff.130-31	St. B.F./D.W. ¹
1471	William Galle	1497	PRO, Prob.11/5, f.58v	St. D.W.
1472	Roger Waryng			
1473	Gilbert Keys	1500	PRO, Prob.11/12, f.44	St. Matt.
1474	Richard Bristall			
1475	Richard Nayler	1483	PRO, Prob.11/7, ff.52-2v	St. M.O.
1476	Richard Warner	1476	GL, MS 9171/6, ff.216-6v	St. Aust.

¹ Swan asked to be buried in St. Benet's but had strong ties with St. Dunstan's and its important fraternity and may well have been a parishioner.

1477	Robert Middleton	1479	PRO, Prob.11/7, ff.1-2	A.H. B.
1478	Roger Barlowe	1493	PRO, Prob.11/9, f.192	St. M.Wool.
1479	John Materdale	1498	PRO, Prob.11/11/27	St. Mich.Bass.
1480	Robert Duplage			
1481	Hugh Pemberton	1500	D&C Canterbury, reg.F, f.21	St. M.O.
1482	John Lee			
1483	John Heed	1494	GL, MS 9171/8, ff.73-73v	St. K.C.
1484	John Stodard			
1485	John Percyvale	1503	PRO, Prob.11/13, ff.191v-93v <i>CWCH</i> , II, p.605	St. M.Wool.
1486	Thomas Cotton	1487	PRO, Prob.11/8, f.53	St. Bot.Alg.
1487	Gilbert Keyes (see under 1473)			
1488	William Buk	1514	PRO, Prob.11/17, ff.273-273v	St. M.Alb.
1489	Stephen Jenyns	1523	PRO, Prob.11/21, ff.60-61	St. M.Alb.
1490	John Spencer			
1491	William Herte	1493	PRO, Prob.11/10, ff.6-6v	St. D.W.
1492	Walter Povy	1503	D&C Canterbury, reg.F, f.200	St. M. Ald.
1493	Thomas Randall			
1494	James Wilford	1527	PRO, Prob.11/22, ff.102v-5v	St. Bart.
1495	Owen Boughton	1505	PRO, Prob.11/14, ff.249-49v	A.H.Bred. ¹
1496	Nicholas Nynes			
1497	Thomas Petyt	1498	PRO, Prob.11/11, ff.160-62	St. Magn.
1498	Thomas Bromefield	1500	PRO, Prob.11/13, ff.105-5v	St. D.W.
1499	William Fitzwilliam	1534	PRO, Prob.11/25, ff.113-16	Not Known ²
1500	John Doget	1513	PRO, Prob.11/27, ff.217-17v	St. John

Key to Parishes

A.H. B.	All Hallows Barking
A.H. Bred.	All Hallows Bredstrete
A.H. L.	All Hallows the Less
H.T.L.	Holy Trinity the Less
St. Aust.	St. Augustine Watling Street
St. B.F.	St. Benet Fink
St. Bart.	St. Bartholomew the Less
St. Bot.Alg.	St. Botolph Algate
St. Bot.Bill	St. Botolph Billingsgate
St. Bride	St. Bride Fleet Street
St. Chris.	St. Christopher
St. D.W.	St. Dunstan in the West
St. John	St. John the Evangelist

¹ Torches to St. D.W. and St. Bride's Fleet Street.

² Fitzwilliam asked to be buried in Northamptonshire and expressed no particular parish affiliations in London.

St. K.C.	St. Katherine Cree
St. Magn.	St. Magnus the Martyr
St. M.Ab.	St. Mary Abchurch
St. M.Alb.	St. Mary Aldermanbury
St. M.Ald.	St. Mary Aldermary
St. M.O.	St. Martin Outwich
St. M.Wool.	St. Mary Woolchurch
St. Matt.	St. Matthew Friday Street
St. Mg.Loith	St. Margaret Lothbury
St. Mg.M.	St. Margaret Moses
St. Mg.Sthk	St. Margaret Southwark
St. Mich.Bass.	St. Michael Bassishaw
St. Mich.Cr.	St. Michael Crooked Lane
St. Mich.Q.	St. Michael Queenhithe
St. P.C.	St. Peter Cornhill
St. Sep.	St. Sepulchre
St. T.Ap.	St. Thomas the Apostle

APPENDIX II.

TAILOR OFFICE-HOLDERS, 1400-1509

Auditors of the Bridge House Accounts

John Creek	1409-11	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> , I, pp.75, 88.
Richard Nordon	1430-32	<i>ibid.</i> , K, pp.112, 123
Ralph Holland	1434-35	<i>ibid.</i> , K, p.183
Thomas Davy	1440-41, 1444-45	<i>ibid.</i> , K, pp.248, 299
John Stone	1464-65	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.55
William Person	1464-65	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.55
Thomas Gay jnr.	1465-67	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.60, 67
Roger Tego	1468-70	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.80, 86
John Jurdan	1469-70	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.86
William Galle	1471-73	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.97, 107
Gilbert Keyes	1474-76	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.123, 133
John Stodard	1476-78	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.144, 151
Richard Nayler	1477-79	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.151, 157-58
Thomas Swan	1480-81	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.174
John Swan	1481-82	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.181
John Materdale	1482-84	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.195, 210
Roger Barlowe	1484-86	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.215, 225
Hugh Pemberton	1484-86	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.215, 225
Walter Povy	1488-90	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.261, 270
William Hert	1492-94	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.289, 297
Nicholas Nynes	1495-97, 1499-1501	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.303, 309
William Fitzwilliam	1500-2	Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , II, p.20 Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , II, p.21

Wardens of London Bridge

Thomas Davy	1443-44 1449-59	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> , K, pp.287, 329, 332, 340, 348, 361, 366, 370, 381, 391, 395
John Stone	1463-64	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.35
William Galle	1474-87	<i>ibid.</i> , L, 123, 133, 144, 151, 157, 166, 174, 181, 195, 210, 215, 225, 235

Chamberlain

Robert Colwich	1463-74	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> , L, pp.35, 55, 60, 66-7, 72, 80, 86, 91, 97, 107, 111
----------------	---------	--

Serjeant-at-Mace

Thomas Newport	c.1437	<i>CPMR</i> , 1437-1457, p.2
John Percyvale	1462, 1467-68	<i>ibid.</i> , 1458-82, pp.22, 30, 47, 53

Sheriffs

Ralph Holland	1429-30	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> , K, p.102
Richard Nordon	1442-43	<i>ibid.</i> , K, p.274
John Stone	1464-65	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.55
Robert Colwich	1475-76	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.133
John Swan	1485-86	<i>ibid.</i> , L, p.225
John Percyvale	1486-87	Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , II, p.17
Hugh Pemberton	1490-91	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> L, p.277 ¹
James Wilford	1499-1500	Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , II, p.20
Nicholas Nynes	1502-3	<i>ibid.</i> , II, p.20
William Fitzwilliam	1506-7	<i>ibid.</i> , II, p.21

Aldermen

Ralph Holland	1435-44	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> , K, p.193
Robert Colwich	1474-80	<i>ibid.</i> , L, pp.122; Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , I, pp.109, 154; II, p.15
Richard Nayler	1482-83	<i>Cal. of Letter Bks.</i> , L, p.195; Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , I, p.199; II, p.16
John Swan	1483-92	<i>ibid.</i> , I, p.199; II, p.17
John Percyvale	1485-1503	<i>ibid.</i> , I, pp.168, 207; II, p.17
Hugh Pemberton	1491-1500	<i>ibid.</i> , I, pp.10, 155; II, p.18
Stephen Jenyns	1499-1523	<i>ibid.</i> , I, pp.91, 138, 175; II, p.19
James Wilford	1500-1511	<i>ibid.</i> , I, p.10; II, p.20
Nicholas Nynes	1501-1513	<i>ibid.</i> , I, pp.35, 155; II, p.20
William Fitzwilliam	1504-1511	<i>ibid.</i> , I, p.72; II, p.21

Mayors

John Percyvale	1498-99	Beaven, <i>Aldermen</i> , II, p.17
Stephen Jenyns	1508-9	<i>ibid.</i> , II, p.18

¹ In Feb. 1490 on death of Robert Ryvell

APPENDIX III.

THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF THE FRATERNITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, 1398-1474

Vol.I (1398-1445)

Year	Income (Total)			Income (Property)			Expenditure		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
1398-99	82	12	8		-		67	12	11
1399-1400	133	2	8	12	1	9	119	17	10
1400-01	110	12	6	16	6	2	86	8	6
1401-02	92	13	6	21	2	10	79	19	8.5
1402-03	96	1	9.5	29	3	10	67	8	7
1403-04	154	15	10.5	23	18	2	73	8	9
1404-05	187	1	3.5	38	12	1	156	18	4.5
1405-06	95	17	10	22	18	8	92	1	0
1406-07	155	17	1	36	18	6	133	18	10
1407-08	160	24	7	31	11	0	152	19	3
1408-09	140	13	9	37	19	4	122	0	1
1409-10	162	6	8.5	42	17	7	108	5	3
1410-11	116	18	0	46	0	8	106	18	7.5
1411-12	153	5	1	58	4	9	144	1	9
1412-13	135	19	9	75	8	6	140	4	20.5
1413-14	243	16	4.5	98	12	3	180	7	6.5
1414-15	299	0	7	83	1	4	348	1	7.5
1415-16	174	19	1	78	16	6	145	10	8
1416-17	188	0	0	88	8	9	139	0	7

1417-18	278	1	3	102	14	5	128	0	9
1418-19	232	7	8	78	5	2	169	0	6
1419-20	351	8	8	80	2	7	288	3	11
1420-21	199	8	2	73	19	9	142	4	9.5
1421-22	224	9	6	93	18	3	162	19	3
1422-23	208	7	2	83	0	11	137	4	2
1423-24	210	5	1	91	13	11	207	16	3
1424-25	173	7	11	97	2	10	143	12	4
1425-26	200	9	8	105	17	4	153	7	6
1426-27	192	11	6	98	11	10	173	2	11
1427-28	257	10	7	100	0	6	184	6	3
1428-29	235	8	3	99	17	6	143	14	0
1429-30	183	9	7	95	9	9	168	1	1
1430-31	206	3	9	76	16	7	204	8	11
1431-32	197	18	1	108	2	10	166	19	3
1432-33	150	8	10	78	19	10	147	5	9
1433-34	238	1	10	89	7	6	222	6	4
1434-35	178	18	4	98	16	6	153	0	1
1435-36	209	3	3	103	2	8	197	14	8
1436-37	207	4	0	100	10	6	186	7	2.5
1437-38	197	18	1	97	16	2	169	0	2
1438-39	261	8	5	99	14	0	261	8	5
1439-40	227	16	1	88	6	2	226	14	5
1440-41	158	19	11	96	6	7	164	2	6

1441-42	198	6	8	98	4	3	179	16	2
1442-43	193	16	2	101	9	10	191	19	10
1443-44	244	16	0	101	1	10	207	15	1
1444-45	189	18	0	105	3	10	189	9	7
Vol.II (1453-69)									
1453-54	220	0	7	156	12	8	165	13	0.5
1454-55		-		167	10	8		-	
1455-56	241	18	8	163	6	2	232	0	4.5
1456-57	275	13	9	164	5	4	238	2	8.25
1457-58	238	9	8	164	11	8	203	8	5.75
1458-59	230	5	9	162	7	0	209	19	2
1459-60	201	19	4	164	9	0	195	14	8.5
1460-61	219	12	4	156	16	4	147	18	6
1461-62	259	18	2	157	10	4	201	0	3
1462-63	238	13	10	147	19	8	209	15	3
1463-64	228	10	9	155	14	8	242	12	8
1464-65	233	14	8	155	4	8	206	15	4
1465-66	263	18	4	154	18	0	184	19	6.25
1466-67	283	7	2	142	11	4	209	9	5.5
1467-68	201	4	0	151	19	4	204	14	0.5
1468-69	212	9	0	152	1	0	171	0	5.5

Vol.III (1469-84)¹

1469-70	243	12	6	142	17	10	195	14	6
1470-71 ²		-		151	2	0		-	
1471-72	217	18	8		-		149	19	11
1472-73	??5	18	4		-		154	7	5
1473-74		-			-		162	16	10

¹ Volume III is increasingly damaged and/or illegible after 1472-73.

² Page torn, but there was a surplus of £60 10s 3d.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Merchant Taylors' Company, London

Wardens' Accounts, 1398-1445, 1453-1469, 1469-1484, 1545-55
Ancient Manuscript Books, 1-9
Ancient Manuscript Books, 37 (Court Minutes, 1486-1493)
Miscellaneous Ordinances, 1429-1455

Guildhall Library, London

Ecclesiastical Records

MS 9531/3-6 Registers of the Bishops of London, 1382-1448

Parish Records

MS 5090/1 All Hallow's London Wall, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1455-1536
MS 4158 Cartulary of the Fraternity of St. Peter Cornhill
MS 1279/1 St. Andrew Hubbard, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1454-1524
MS 2968/1 St. Dunstan in the West, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1516-1608
MS 1239/1 St. Mary at Hill, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1422-1505
MS 6842 St. Martin's Outwich, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1508-28, 1537-46
MS 4071/1 St. Michael Cornhill, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1455-1608
MS 645/1 St. Peter Westcheap, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1435-1451, 1513-1601

Probate Records

MS 9051/1 Register of Wills enrolled in the Archdeaconry Court of London
MS 9171/1-9 Register of Wills enrolled in the Commissary Court of London (London Division)

Livery Company Records

MS 11,571/1 Grocers' Company, Wardens' Accounts 1454-60, 1461-71
MS 11,592 Grocers' Company, Presentments of Apprentices 1457-1505; Admissions of Freemen, 1447-1504

Miscellaneous

MS 2480 'Jewson's Monumental Inscriptions'
MS 23,734 Anonymous Draper's bill of Sale, 1497, 1497-98

Corporation of London Record Office

Bridge House, Rentals, 1404-75

Bridge House, Accounts, 1381-1405

Journals of the Court of Aldermen and Court of Common Council, 1-10 (1416-1506)

Repertories of the Court of Common Council, 1-2

Letter Books, A-M

Recognizance Rolls of freemen and their sureties, 13-25 (1437-97)

Plea and Memoranda Rolls

MC 1-3, Mayor's Court, files of original bills

Public Record Office

C.1	Early Chancery Proceedings
C.47	Chancery, Miscellanea
C.66	Chancery, Patent Rolls
C.131	Chancery, Extents on debts
C.239	Chancery, Extents on debts
E.101	Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Wardrobe and household accounts
E.122	Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Customs accounts
E.151	Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Inquisitions <i>ad quod damnum</i> .
E.179	Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Subsidy Rolls
E.210	Exchequer, Ancient Deeds
E.301	Exchequer, Court of Augmentations, Chantry certificates
E.361	Exchequer, Wardrobe and Household Accounts
L.R. 2	Chantry Certificates
Prob.2	Probate Inventories
Prob.11	Register of Wills enrolled in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1-23
S.C.1	Ancient Correspondence

Bodleian Library, Oxford

MS Tanner, 221	Records of the Fraternity of 'Jesus in the Crowds', St. Paul's
MS Gough, Gen. Top. 5	Extracts from a MS. belonging to the Great Wardrobe, 1483

B. PRINTED SOURCES

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

Abstracts of Inquisitions Post Mortem Relating to the City of London in the Tudor Period,
ed. G.S. Fry, 3 vols (London, 1896-1908)

The Accounts of the Churchwardens of the Parish of St. Michael Cornhill in the City of London from 1455 to 1608, ed. W.H. Overall (London, 1883)

- Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1453-1527*, ed. L.L. Lyell and F.D. Watney (Cambridge, 1936)
- Hugh Alley's 'Caveat': the London Markets in 1598*, ed. I.W. Archer, C.M. Barron and V. Harding (London, 1988)
- The A to Z of Elizabethan London*, ed. A. Prokter and R. Taylor (London, 1979)
- Baildon, W. Paley ed., 'A Wardrobe Account of 16-17 Richard II, 1393-4', *Archaeologia*, 62 (1911), pp.503-14
- ed., 'The Trousseaux of Princess Philippa, wife of Eric, King of Denmark, Norway and Sweden', *Archaeologia*, 67 (1916), pp.163-188
- Bedfordshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1383-1548*, ed. M. McGregor, Bedfordshire Historical Record Soc., 58-9 (1979-80)
- A Book of London English, 1384-1425*, ed. R.W. Chambers and M. Daunt (Oxford, 1931)
- Borough Customs*, ed. M. Bateson, 2 vols, Selden Society (1904-6)
- Brown, C. ed., 'Lydgate's Verses on Queen Margaret's Entry into London', *Modern Language Review*, 7 (1912), pp.225-34
- Calendar of Close Rolls* (London, 1902-)
- Calendar of Early Mayor's Court Rolls AD 1298-1307*, ed. A.H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1924)
- Calendar of Fine Rolls* (London, 1911-)
- Calendar of the Letter Books preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London*, ed. R.R. Sharpe, 11 vols (London, 1899-1912)
- Calendar of Letters from the Mayor and Corporation of the City of London, c.1350-1370*, ed. R.R. Sharpe (London, 1885)
- Calendar of Patent Rolls* (London, 1901-)
- Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, 1323-1482*, 6 vols, ed. A.H. Thomas (i-iv) and P.E. Jones (v-vi) (Cambridge, 1926-61)
- Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London, 1258-1688*, ed. R.R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London, 1889-90)
- Catalogue of Ancient Deeds* (London, 1890-1915)

The Charters of the Merchant Taylors' Company, ed. F.M Fry and R.T.D. Sayle (London, 1937)

The Chronicles of London, ed. C.L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1905)

Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London AD 1188 to AD 1274, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1863)

Clark-Maxwell, W.G ed., 'Some Letters of Confraternity', *Archaeologia*, 75 (1924-5), pp.19-60

ed., 'Some further letters of Confraternity', *Archaeologia*, 79 (1929), pp.179-216

Consistory Court Wills, 1492-1547, ed. I. Darlington, London Record Society, 3 (1967)

The Coventry Leet Book, ed. M.D. Harris, EETS, 134-35, 138, 146 (1907, 1913)

De Antiquis Legibus Liber, ed. T. Stapleton, Camden Soc., 34, (1846)

The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London from AD 1550-AD 1563, ed. J.G. Nichols, Camden Soc., 42, (1848)

Dyson, A.G. ed., 'A Calendar of the Cartulary of the Parish Church of St. Margaret Bridge Street', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 1 (1974), pp.163-91

Early Gild Records of Toulouse, ed. M. Mulholland (New York, 1941)

English Gilds, ed. T. Smith, EETS, 40 (1870)

The Eyre of London, 14 Edw.II (1321), ed. H.M. Cam, Selden Soc., 85 (1968)

Fascimile of the First Volume of the MS. Archives of the Worshipful Company of Grocers of the City of London, AD 1345-1463, ed. J.A. Kingdon, 2 vols (London, 1883-6)

Fitch, M. ed., *Testamentary Records in the Commissary Court of London (London Division), Volumes I & II, 1374-1488, 1489-1570*, British Record Society, 82, 86 (1969-73)

ed., *Testamentary Records in the Archdeaconry Court of London, Volume I (1363)-1649*, British Record Society, 89 (1979)

Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae etc., ed. T. Rymer (London, 1704-35)

Gli Antichi Statuti delle Arti Veronese, ed. L. Simeoni, 4 vols (Venice, 1914)

Hennessy, G., *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense* (London, 1898)

- The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London*, ed. W. de Gray Birch (London, 1887)
- The Historical Collections of a London Citizen in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Soc., new series, 17 (1876)
- Historical Manuscripts Commission, 11th Report, Appendix, pt. III (London, 1887)
- Hoccleve's Works III: The Regement of Princes*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, extra ser., 72 (1897)
- Household Accounts from Medieval England*, ed. C.M. Woolgar, Records of Social and Economic History, 17-18, 2 vols (Oxford, 1992-93)
- The Household Book of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, 1462-1471*, ed. A. Crawford (Gloucester, 1992)
- London Assize of Nuisance 1307-1431*, ed. H.M. Chew and W. Kellaway, London Record Society, 10 (1973)
- 'The London Lyckpeny', in *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose*, ed. D. Gray (Oxford, 1985), pp.16-19
- London and Middlesex Chantry Certificate 1548*, ed. C.J. Kitching, London Record Society, 16 (1980)
- The London Surveys of Ralph Treswell*, ed. J. Schofield (London, 1987)
- Lord Mayors' Pageants of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, ed. R.T.D. Sayle (London, 1931)
- The Making of King's Lynn*, ed. D.M. Owen (Records of Social and Economic History, IX, Oxford, 1984)
- The Medieval Records of a London City Church: St. Mary-at-Hill AD 1420-1559*, ed. H. Littlehales, EETS, 125, 128, (London, 1904-5)
- Memorials of the Goldsmiths' Company*, ed. W.S. Prideaux, 2 vols (London, 1913)
- Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1868)
- Memorials of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, ed. C.M. Clode (London, 1875)
- Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. M. Day and R. Steele, EETS, 199 (1936)
- Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, ed. H.T. Riley, Rolls Series, 23-6, (1859-62).

Myers, A.R. ed., 'The Captivity of a Royal Witch: the Household Accounts of Queen Joan of Navarre', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 26 (1941-2), pp.82-100

The New Chronicles of England and France, by Robert Fabyan, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1811)

Norman, P. ed., 'Abstracts of Documents Relating to London from Early Chancery Proceedings and from the Court of Requests', *London Topographical Record*, 6 (1909), pp.65-90

The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480-1, ed. H.S. Cobb, London Record Society, 27 (1990)

Parish Fraternity Register: the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS Fabian and Sebastian in the Parish of St. Botolph without Aldersgate, ed. P. Basing, London Record Society, 18 (1982)

The Paston Letters, ed. N. Davis, 2 vols (Oxford, 1971)

The Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York and Wardrobe Accounts of Edward the Fourth, ed. N.H. Nicolas (London, 1830)

Quellen zur Geschichte de Stadt Köln, ed. L. Ennen and G. Eckertz, 2 vols (Cologne, 1860)

Records of the Borough of Leicester, ed. M. Bateson, 2 vols (London, 1899-1901)

The Records of the City of Norwich, ed. W. Hudson and J.C. Tingey, 2 vols (Norwich and London, 1906-10)

The Records of the Skinners of London, ed. J.J. Lambert (London, 1933)

Records of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters, ed. B. Marsh, J. Ainsworth and A.M. Millard, 7 vols (Oxford, 1914-68)

The Register of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry ed. M.D. Harris (Dugdale Soc., 1935)

The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-43, ed. E.F. Jacob, 4 vols (Oxford, 1937-47)

Réglemens sur les arts et métiers de Paris connus sous le nom du Livre de Métiers d'Etienne Boileau, ed. G.B. Depping (Paris, 1837)

A Relation of the Island of England, ed. C.A. Sneyd, Camden Soc., 37 (1847)

6th Report of the Charity Commissioners (London, 1822)

8th Report of the Charity Commissioners (London, 1823)

- 17th Report of the Charity Commissioners* (London, 1826-27)
- 23rd Report of the Charity Commissioners* (London, 1830)
- 32nd Report of the Charity Commissioners* (London, 1837-38), pt.II
- Rickert, E. ed., 'A Leaf from a Fourteenth Century Letter Book', *Modern Philology*, 25 (1927-28), pp.249-61
- Roll of the Drapers' Company*, ed. P Boyd (London, 1934)
- Rotuli Parliamentorum*, 6 vols (London, 1783-1832)
- Select Cases before the King's Council, 1243-1482*, ed. I.S. Leadam and J.F. Baldwin, Selden Soc., 35 (1918)
- Select Cases in the Council of Henry VII*, ed. C.G. Beyne and W.H. Dunham, Selden Soc., 75 (1956)
- Six Town Chronicles of England*, ed. R. Flenley (Oxford, 1911)
- Southampton Probate Inventories, 1447-1575*, ed. E. Roberts and K. Parker, Southampton Records Series, 34-35 (1991-92)
- Stahlschmidt, J.C.L. ed., 'Lay Subsidy temp Henry IV', *Archaeological Journal*, 44 (1887), pp.56-82
- Statutes of the Realm*, 9 vols (Record Commission, 1810-22)
- Statuti delle Societa de Popolo di Bologna*, ed. A. Gaudenzi, 2 vols (Rome, 1896)
- Stow, J., *A Survey of London*, ed. C.L. Kingsford 2 vols., (Oxford, 1908)
- Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Soc., new ser., 28 (1880)
- Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*, ed. E. Ekwall (Lund, 1951)
- Two Italian Accounts of Tudor England*, ed. V. Malfatti (Barcelona, 1963)
- Valor Ecclesiasticus*, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter, 6 vols (London, 1810-34)
- Wardens' Accounts of the Worshipful Company of Founders of the City of London, 1497-1681*, ed. G. Parsloe (London, 1964)
- The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394*, ed. L.C. Hector and B.F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982)
- The Works of Thomas Deloney*, ed. F.O. Mann (Oxford, 1912)

2. SECONDARY SOURCES

- Abram, A., 'Women Traders in Medieval London', *Economic Journal*, 26 (1916), pp.276-85
- Abrams, P. and Wrigley, E.A., *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1978)
- Archer, I.W., 'The London Lobbies in the Later Sixteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), pp.17-44
- The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991)
- The History of the Haberdashers' Company of London* (Chichester, 1991)
- Barron, C.M., 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London, 1392-7', in *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. Du Boulay and Barron, pp.173-201
- The Medieval Guildhall of London* (London, 1974)
- The Parish of St. Andrew Holborn* (London, 1980)
- Revolt in London: 11th to 15th June 1381* (London, 1981)
- 'London and the Crown, 1451-1461', in *The Crown and Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J.R.L. Highfield and R. Jeffs (Gloucester, 1981), pp.88-109.
- 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', 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.13-37
- 'The "Golden Age" of Women in Medieval London', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1990), pp.35-59
- 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals, 1438-1444', in Holt and Rosser eds., *The Medieval Town*, pp.160-83
- Bean, J.M.W., 'Plague Population and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., 15 (1963), pp.423-37
- Beaven, A.B., *The Aldermen of the City of London*, 2 vols (London, 1908-13)
- Beier, A.L., 'Engine of Manufacture: the Trades of London', in *London, 1500-1700: The Making of the Metropolis*, ed. A.L. Beier and R. Finlay (London, 1986), pp.141-67

- Ben-Amos, I.K., 'Failure to become freemen: urban apprentices in early modern England', *Social History*, 16 (1991), pp.155-72
- Benbow, M., 'The Court of Aldermen and the Assizes: the Policy of Price Control in Elizabethan London', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 4 (1980), pp.93-118
- Berlin, M., 'Civic Ceremony in Early Modern London', *Urban History Yearbook* (1986), pp.15-28.
- Bird, R., *The Turbulent London of Richard II* (London, 1949)
- Blair, J. and Ramsay, N., *English Medieval Industries. Craftsmen, Techniques and Products* (London, 1991)
- Bolton, J.L., *The Medieval English Economy, 1150-1500* (London, 1980)
- Bouïard, M. de, 'De la Confrérie Pieuse au Métier Organisé: La Fraternité des Fèvres de Caen (fin du XII^e siècle)', *Annales de Normandie*, 7 (1957), pp.165-77
- Brentano, L., 'On the history and development of Gilds and the origin of trade unions', in T. Smith ed., *English Gilds*, EETS, 40 (1870), pp.xlix-cxcix
- Brigden, S., 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), pp.37-67
- London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989)
- Britnell, R.H., *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986)
- Brooke, C.N.L. and Keir, G., *London 800-1216: The Shaping of a City* (London, 1975)
- Burgess, C.R., '"A fond thing vainly invented": an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in Later Medieval England', in *Parish, Church and People*, ed. S. Wright (London, 1988), pp.56-84
- 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions*, ed. Hicks, pp.14-33
- Butcher, A.F., 'The Origins of Romney Freeman, 1433-1523', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, 27 (1974), pp.16-27
- Carew, R., *The Survey of Cornwall* (London, 1602)
- Carus-Wilson, E., 'The Significance of the Secular Sculptures in the Lane Chapel, Cullompton', *Medieval Archaeology*, 1 (1957), pp.104-17
- Champion, B.A., 'The Gilds of Medieval Beverley', in P. Riden ed., *The Medieval Town in Britain*, Cardiff Papers in Local History, 1 (Cardiff, 1980), pp.51-66

- Chew, H.M., 'Mortmain in Medieval London', *EHR*, 60 (1945), pp.1-15
- Clark, E., 'Some Aspects of Social Security in Medieval England', *Journal of Family History*, 7 (1982), pp.307-20
- Clark, P. and Slack, P., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972)
- Clay, R.M., *The Medieval Hospitals of England* (London, 1909)
- Clode, C.M. *The Early History of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist, London, with notices of the lives of some of its eminent members*, 2 vols (London, 1888)
- Cohn, S.K., *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980)
- Coornaert, E., *Les Corporations en France avant 1789* (Paris, 1941)
- 'Les ghildes médiévales (v^e-xiv^e siècles). Définition. Évolution', *Revue Historique*, 199 (1948), pp.22-55, 208-43
- Crowfoot, E., Pritchard, F. and Staniland, K., eds., *Textiles and Clothing c.1150-c.1450. Medieval finds from Excavations in London: 4* (London, 1992)
- Dale, M.K., 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 4 (1933), pp.324-35
- Davies, M.P., 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale, "The Maid of Week"', in *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, ed. C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton (forthcoming, 1994)
- Day, J., *The Medieval Market Economy* (Oxford, 1987)
- Dobson, R.B., 'The Foundation of Chantries by the Citizens of Medieval York', in *Studies in Church History IV*, ed. G.J. Cuming (Leiden, 1967), pp.22-38
- 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Late Middle Ages', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, 26 (1973), pp.1-22
- 'Urban Decline in Late Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 27 (1977), pp.1-22
- ed., *The Church, Politics and Patronage* (Gloucester, 1984)
- Du Boulay, F.R.H. and Barron, C.M. eds., *The Reign of Richard II: essays in honour of May McKisack*, (London, 1971)
- Dyer, C., *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: social change in England 1200-1520* (Cambridge, 1989)

'The Consumer and the Market in the Later Middle Ages', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, 42 (1989), pp.305-27

Egan, G., 'A Shearman's Hook from London', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, new series, 30 (1979), pp.190-92.

Ekwall, E., *Street names of the City of London* (Oxford, 1954)

Emden, A.B., *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500* 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-9)

Epstein, S.A., *Wage Labor and the Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill and London, 1991)

Fox, F.F., *Some Account of the Ancient Fraternity of Merchant Taylors of Bristol*, (Bristol, 1880)

Fraser, D. and Sutcliffe, A. eds., *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983)

Friedrichs, C.R., 'Capitalism, Mobility and Class Formation in the Early Modern German City', in *Towns in Societies*, ed. P. Abrams and E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge, 1978), pp.187-213.

Fry, F.M. and Tewson, R.S., *An Illustrated Catalogue of Silver Plate of the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors* (London, 1929)

Geremek, B., *Le salariat dans l'artisanat Parisien au xiii^e-xv^e siècles* (Paris, 1982)

The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1987)

Godfrey, W.H., *The English Almshouse*, (London, 1955)

Goldberg, P.J.P., 'Women in Fifteenth Century town life', in *Towns and Townspeople*, ed. Thomson, pp.107-28

'Womens' work, Womens' role in the late medieval North', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions*, ed. Hicks, pp.34-50

ed., *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society, c.1200-1500* (Gloucester, 1992)

Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy (Oxford, 1992)

Goss, C.W.F., 'The Parish and Church of St. Martin's Outwich', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, New series, 6 (1929-32), pp.1-91.

Green, A.S., *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols., (London, 1894)

- Griffiths, R.R., *The Reign of Henry VI* (London, 1981)
- Grimes, W.F., *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (London, 1977)
- Gross, C., *The Gild Merchant*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1890)
- Gustafsson, B., 'The Rise and Economic Behaviour of Medieval Craft Guilds: an economic-theoretical interpretation', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 35 (1987), pp.1-40.
- Hadley, G., *Citizens and Founders: A history of the Worshipful Company of Founders, London, 1365-1975*, (London, 1976)
- Harte, N.B. and Ponting, K.G. eds., *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E.M. Carus-Wilson* (London, 1983)
- Harvey, B.F., 'Work and *Festa Ferianda*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 23 (1972), pp.289-308
- Haskins, C., *The Ancient Trade Guilds and Companies of Salisbury* (1912)
- Hatcher, J., *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530* (London, 1977)
- Hazlitt, W.C., *The Livery Companies of the City of London* (London, 1892)
- Heath, B., *Some Account of the Worshipful Company of Grocers*, 3rd ed. (London, 1869)
- Heath, P., 'Urban Piety in the later Middle Ages: the evidence of Hull wills', in *The Church Politics and Patronage*, ed. Dobson, pp.209-34
- Herbert, W., *The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies*, 2 vols (London, 1837)
- Hewitt, H.J., *The Black Prince's Expedition of 1355-7* (Manchester, 1958)
- Hicks, M., *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990)
- Hill, J.W.F., *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1965)
- Hill, R., '"A Chaunterie for Soules": London Chantries in the Reign of Richard II', in *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. Du Boulay and Barron, pp.242-55
- Hollaender, A.E.J., and Kellaway, W., *Studies in London History Presented to P.E. Jones* (London, 1969)
- Holmes, G., 'Florentine Merchants in England, 1340-1436', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, new ser., 13 (1960), pp.193-208

- ‘Anglo-Florentine Trade in 1451’, *EHR*, 107 (1993), pp.371-86
- Holmes, M., ‘A Source Book for Stow?’, in *Studies in London History*, ed. Hollaender and Kellaway, pp.275-85
- Holt, R. and Rosser, G. eds., *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London, 1990)
- The Early History of the Town of Birmingham, 1160-1600*, Dugdale Soc. Occasional Papers, 30 (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1985)
- Hopkinson, H.L., *The History of Merchant Taylors’ Hall* (London, 1931)
- Horrox, R.E., ‘The Urban Gentry in the fifteenth century’, in *Towns and Townspeople*, ed. Thomson, pp.22-45
- Imray, J., *The Charity of Richard Whittington: a History of the Trust Administered by the Mercers Company 1424-1966* (London, 1968)
- ‘“Les Bones Gentes de la Mercerye de Londres”: a study of the membership of the Medieval Mercers’ Company’, in *Studies in London History*, ed. Hollaender and Kellaway (London, 1969), pp.155-80
- The Mercers’ Hall* (London Topographical Society, 1991)
- James, M., ‘Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town’, *Past and Present*, 98 (1983), pp.3-29.
- Jennings, J.M., ‘London and the Statute of Mortmain: Doubts and Anxieties among Fifteenth Century London Testators’, *Medieval Studies*, 36 (1974), pp.174-78
- Johnson, A.H., *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1914-22)
- Johnson, D.J., *Southwark and the City* (Oxford, 1969)
- Jones, P.E., *The Butchers of London* (London, 1976)
- Jordan, W.K., *The Charities of London, 1480-1660* (London, 1960)
- Jupp, E.B. and Pocock, W.W., *An Historical Account of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters* (London, 1887)
- Keene, D., ‘A New Study of London before the Great Fire’, *Urban History Yearbook* (1984), pp.11-21
- Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1985)

- and Harding, V., *A Survey of Documentary Sources for Property Holding in London before the Great Fire* (London Record Society, 22, 1985)
- The Walbrook Study: a summary report and Appendix* (Social and Economic Study of Medieval London, 1987)
- and Harding, V., *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire, I: Cheapside* (Microfiche, Cambridge, 1987)
- ‘Shops and Shopping in Medieval London’, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London*, ed. L. Grant, (British Archaeological Association, Conference Transactions, 10, 1990), pp.29-46
- ‘Continuity and Development in Urban Trades: Problems of Concepts and the Evidence’, in *Work in Towns, 850-1850*, ed. P.J. Corfield and D.J. Keene (Leicester, 1990), pp.1-17
- Kellaway, W., ‘John Carpenter’s *Liber Albus*’, *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 3 (1978), pp.67-84
- Kermode, J. ed., *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth Century England* (Gloucester, 1991)
- Kingsford, C.L., ‘Historical Notes on Medieval London Houses’, *London Topographical Record*, XI (1917), pp.28-82
- Kipling, G., ‘The London Pageants for Margaret of Anjou’, *Medieval English Theatre*, 4 (1982), pp.5-27
- Kowaleski, M., ‘Women’s Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century’, in B.A. Hanawalt ed., *Women and Work in Pre-industrial Europe* (Bloomington, 1986), pp.145-64
- ‘The History of Urban Families in England’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 14 (1988), pp.47-63.
- ‘The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century’, in *The Medieval Town*, ed. Holt and Rosser, pp.184-215
- Kowaleski, M. and Bennett, J.M., ‘Crafts, Gilds and Women in the Middle Ages’, *Signs*, 14 (1989), pp.474-88
- Kramer, S., *The English Craft Gilds: Studies in their Progress and Decline* (New York, 1927)
- Kreider, A., *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Camb. Mass., 1979)

- Lacey, K.E., 'Women and Work in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century London', in *Women and Work in Pre-industrial England*, ed. L. Charles and L. Duffin (London, 1985), pp.24-82
- Lobel, M.D. ed., *The British Atlas of Historic Towns, III: The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c.1520* (Oxford, 1989)
- MacGregor, A., 'Antler, Bone and Horn', in *English Medieval Industries*, ed. Blair and Ramsay, pp.355-78.
- Mackenney, R., *Tradesmen and Traders: the World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250-c.1650* (London, 1987)
- McKisack, M., *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1971)
- McRee, B., 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), pp.195-225
- Maddern, P.C., *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia 1422-1442* (Oxford, 1992)
- Martin, G., 'The Early History of the London saddlers' guild', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 72 (1990), pp.145-54
- Masters, B., *The Chamberlain of the City of London, 1237-1987* (London, 1988)
- Mathew, G., *The Court of Richard II* (London, 1968)
- Miller, E., 'Medieval York', in *VCH, Yorks: The City of York*, pp.25-116
- Miller, H., 'London and Parliament in the reign of Henry VIII', *BIHR*, 35 (1962), pp.128-49
- Monier-Williams, R., *The Tallow-Chandlers of London*, 4 vols, (London, 1971-7)
- Moore, E.W., *The Fairs of Medieval England* (Toronto, 1985)
- Muir, E., *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, 1981)
- Newton, S.M., *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince* (Woodbridge, 1984)
- Nicholas, D.M., *Town and Countryside: Social, Economic and Political Tensions in Fourteenth Century Flanders* (Bruges, 1971)
- Nicholl, J., *Some Account of the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers* (London, 1851)
- Nightingale, P., 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional change in Late Fourteenth-century London', *Past and Present*, 124, (1989), pp.3-35

- Palliser, D., 'The Trade Guilds of Tudor York', in Clark and Slack eds., *Crisis and Order*, pp.86-116
- Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979)
- 'Urban Decay Revisited', in *Towns and Townspeople*, ed. Thomson, pp.1-21
- Patten, J., 'Rural-urban migration in pre-industrial England', *Oxford University, School of Geography Research Papers*, 6 (1973)
- Petraschek-Heim, I., 'Tailors' Masterpiece books', *Costume*, 3 (1969), pp.6-9
- Phelps Brown, E.H. and Hopkins, S.V., 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables compared with Builders' Wage Rates', in E.M. Carus-Wilson ed., *Essays in Economic History*, ii (London, 1962), pp.179-96
- Phythian-Adams, C., 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550', in Clark and Slack eds., *Crisis and Order*, pp.57-85 and reprinted in Holt and Rosser (eds.) *The Medieval Town*, pp.238-64
- Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979)
- Pirenne, H., *Medieval Cities. Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton, 1925)
- Platt, C., *Medieval Southampton: The Port and the Trading Community* (London, 1973)
- The English Medieval Town* (London, 1976)
- Postan, M.M., 'Credit in Medieval Trade', *Ec. Hist. Rev.*, 1 (1927-28), pp.234-61, reprinted in *Essays in Economic History*, ed. E.M. Carus-Wilson, i, pp.61-87
- Powell, E. and Trevelyan, G.M., *The Peasants' Rising and the Lollards* (London, 1899)
- Power, E., and Postan, M.M., *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933)
- Prescott, A.J., 'London in the Peasants' Revolt: a Portrait Gallery', *London Journal*, 7 (1981), pp.125-43
- Prevenier, W. and Blockmans, W., *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Cambridge, 1986)
- Pullan, B., *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: the Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Oxford, 1971)
- Raban, S., 'Mortmain in Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 62 (1974), pp.3-26

- Mortmain Legislation and the English Church 1279-1500* (Cambridge, 1982)
- Rappaport, S., *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Rawcliffe, C., 'The Hospitals of Medieval London', *Medical History*, 28 (1984), pp.1-21
- '"That Kindliness Should be Cherished More and Discord Driven Out": the Settlement of Commercial Disputes by Arbitration in Later Medieval England', in *Enterprise and Individuals*, ed. Kermode, pp.99-117.
- Reddaway, T.F. and Walker, L.E.M., *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company, 1327-1509* (London, 1975)
- Rees, J. Aubrey, *The Worshipful Company of Grocers: an Historical Retrospect 1345-1923* (London, 1923)
- Reynolds, S., *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977)
- 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', *Urban History Yearbook* (1982), pp.14-23
- Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984)
- Richmond, C., 'Religion and the Fifteenth Century Gentleman', in *The Church Politics and Patronage*, ed. Dobson, pp.193-208
- Rigby, S., 'Urban "Oligarchy" in Late Medieval England' in *Towns and Townspeople* ed. Thomson, pp.62-86
- Roover, R de., 'The Concept of the Just Price: Theory and Economic Policy', *Journal of Economic History*, 18 (1958), pp.418-34.
- Ross, C., *Edward IV* (London, 1974)
- Rosser, G., 'The Essence of Medieval Urban Communities: the vill of Westminster 1200-1540', *T.R.H.S.* 5th ser., 34, (1984), pp.91-112
- 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages' in S. Wright (ed.) *Parish Church and People* (London, 1988), pp.29-55
- 'London and Westminster: The Suburb in the Urban Economy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Towns and Townspeople*, ed. Thomson, pp.45-61
- Medieval Westminster* (Oxford, 1989)
- Rubin, M., *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987)

- Rubinstein, N., *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1968)
- Salzman, L.F., *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1923)
- Saul, N., 'The Religious Sympathies of the Gentry in Gloucestershire, 1200-1500', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society*, 98 (1980), pp.99-112
- Scarisbrick, J.J., *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984)
- Scattergood, V.J. and Sherborne, J.W. eds., *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1983)
- Schofield, C.S., *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols, (London, 1923)
- Schofield, J., *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (London, 1984)
- Scott, M., *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: A Visual History of Costume* (London, 1986)
- Sharpe, R.R., *London and the Kingdom*, 3 vols (London, 1894-95)
- Shaw, D.G., *The Creation of a Community: the City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993).
- Slack, P., *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988)
- Sonenscher, M., *Work and Wages. Natural law, politics and the eighteenth century French trades*, (Cambridge, 1989)
- Sosson, J-P., 'La structure sociale de la corporation médiévale: l'exemple des tonneliers de Bruges de 1350 à 1500', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 44 (1966), pp.457-478
- Les Travaux Publics de la Ville de Bruges, XIV^e-XV^e Siècles* (Brussels, 1977)
- Southern, R.W., 'Between Heaven and Hell', *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 June 1982, pp.651-52
- Strohm, P., *Hochon's Arrow: the Social Imagination of Fourteenth Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992)
- Sutton, A.F., 'George Lovekyn, Tailor to Three Kings of England, 1470-1504', *Costume*, 15 (1981), pp.1-12

Swanson, H., 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), pp.29-48.

Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England (Oxford, 1989)

Swanson, R.N., *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989)

Tatchell, M., 'A Fourteenth Century London Building Contract', *Guildhall Miscellany*, 2 (1962), pp.129-31

Thakrah, C. Turner, *The Effects of the Principal Arts, Trades and Professions and of civic states and habits of living on Health and Longevity* (London, 1831)

Thirsk, J., *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978)

'The Fantastical Folly of Fashion: the English Stocking Industry, 1500-1700, in *idem*, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London, 1984), pp.235-59

Thomas, K.V., 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), pp.205-48

Thomson, J.A.F., 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), pp.178-95

ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988)

Thornley, I.D., 'Sanctuary in Medieval London', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 2nd ser., 38 (1932-33), pp.293-315

Thrupp, S.L., *A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Bakers of London* (London, 1933)

'The Grocers of London. A Study in Distributive Trade', in E. Power and M.M. Postan eds., *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp.247-92

The Merchant Class of Medieval London (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1948)

'The Gilds', in M.M. Postan, E.E. Rich and E. Miller eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol III (Cambridge, 1963), pp.230-80.

'Aliens in and around London in the fifteenth century', in *Studies in London History* ed. Hollaender and Kellaway, pp.251-74

Trexler, R., *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980)

Unwin, G., *Industrial Organisation in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1904)

The Gilds and Companies of London, 4th edn. (London, 1963)

Vale, M.G., 'Piety, Charity and Literacy among the Yorkshire Gentry 1370-1480', *Borthwick Papers*, 50 (1976)

Veale, E.M., *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966)

'Craftsmen and the Economy of London in the Fourteenth Century', in *Studies in London History*, ed. Hollaender and Kellaway, reprinted in *The Medieval Town 1200-1500*, ed. Holt and Rosser, pp.120-140

'The "Great Twelve": Mystery and Fraternity in Thirteenth Century London', *Historical Research*, 64 (1991), pp.237-63

Walton, P., 'Textiles', in *English Medieval Industries*, ed. Blair and Ramsay, pp.319-54

Ward Perkins, J.B., *London Museum: Medieval Catalogue* (London, 1940)

Weissman, R.F.E., *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1982)

Welch, C., *The History of the Cutlers' Company of London*, 2 vols (London, 1916)

Westlake, H.F., *The Parish Gilds of Medieval England* (London, 1919)

White, L., *Medieval Religion and Technology: Collected Essays* (London, 1978)

Wickham, G., *Early English Stages 1300-1600* (London, 1980)

Wickham Legg, L.G. ed., *English Coronation Records* (London, 1901)

Williams, G.A., *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London, 1963)

Wright, S. ed., *Parish, Church and People* (London, 1988)

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND PAPERS

Barron, C.M., 'The Government of London and its Relations with the Crown, 1400-1450' (University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1970)

Bennett, E.Z., 'Debt and Credit in the Urban Economy: London 1380-1460' (Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1989)

- Brown, A.D., 'Lay Piety in Late Medieval Wiltshire' (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1990)
- Carlin, M., 'The Urban Development of Southwark c.1200-1550' (University of Toronto Ph.D. thesis, 1983)
- Creton, H.J., 'The Wardens' Accounts of the Mercers' Company of London, 1347, 1391-1464' (University of London M.Phil. thesis, 2 vols, 1977)
- Paxton, C., 'The Nunneries of London and its environs in the Later Middle Ages' (University of Oxford D.Phil thesis, 1992)
- Rosser, G., 'Crafts, Guilds and the organisation of work in the Medieval Town' (unpublished paper, 1992)
- Ryan, J.T., 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London 1200-1500' (University of London M.A. thesis, 1992)
- Sleigh-Johnson, N.V., 'The Merchant Taylors' Company of London, 1580-1645 with special reference to politics and government' (University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1989)
- Sullivan, M., '"My Masters of the Parish": Religious practice and parish government in St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, London, c.1520-1558' (University of London M.A. thesis, 1993)
- Thomson, J.A.F., 'Clergy and Laity in London, 1376-1531' (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1960)

