Archetypes and Individuals: Reconstructing the Users of the Westminster Statute Staple Court, 1485-1532.

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Abstract.

This research aims to reconstruct the individual participants of the Westminster statute staple court between the years 1485 and 1532. It relies upon the insights of the certificates of statute staple, as well as a range of other supplementary materials, such as subsidy records, extents for debt and wills, so as to analyse these individuals through a dual statistical and prosopographical methodology.

In terms of key research questions, this project seeks to identify the defining social, cultural and economic characteristics relating to these individuals, both on a collective and an individual scale. It engages with important debates surrounding status, social transition and careerism. A dual methodological focus is adopted throughout, whereby statistical analysis of the wider, collective trends relating to these individuals is rendered in deeper, humanising detail through the use of prosopographical exemplars. Indeed, such reconstructive efforts are included in each chapter, highlighting the lives, activities and careers of selected individuals in especial detail, so as to demonstrate both the archetypal characteristics of these people, but also important points of difference.

As a whole, this project comprises six main research chapters, each examining a particular key aspect of the lives of the individuals discernible within the certificates of the Westminster statute staple. As prosopography emphasizes the reconstructive, collective narrative of groups of people, the themes and structure of the thesis will broadly reflect this, exploring their lives chronologically as well as thematically.

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Introduction.

Research Context and Questions.

This thesis seeks to explore the composition and nature of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English society. It considers to what extent traditional demarcations and societal structures persisted in this period. It poses important questions concerning the socio-economic categorisation of late medieval people, a contentious theme for contemporaries and scholars alike. These wider research themes have been fine-tuned into an important and comprehensive study of a selected sample of individuals, ultimately identifying the defining social, cultural and economic characteristics, both on a collective and an individual scale, of 3,593 business people between the years 1485 and 1532.

This selected sample of individuals has been drawn from the records of the statute staple court at Westminster, which was part of a wider network of fifteen towns designated as staple towns as a result of the 1353 Statute of the Staple.[1] These staple courts were designed specifically for debt registry, usually arising from commercial matters. The act of debt registration at a staple court necessarily produced records of these interactions, resulting in the certificates of statute staple, the primary record with which this research engages. These certificates, which will be discussed in detail later, provide an important macrocosmic view of a cross-section of late medieval society, including, but not limited to, merchants, artisans, knights, gentlemen, officials, yeomen and husbandmen, to name but a few. Indeed, the emphasis upon the records of such a prestigious court, situated in close proximity to London, necessarily ensures a comprehensive sampling of late medieval English society, effectively providing access to those

[1] M. R. Horowitz, 'A Country Under Contract: Early Tudor England and the Growth of a Credit Culture', *Essays in Economic and Business History*, 29, 1 (2011), p. 81.

people who occupied the blurred and sometimes confusing socio-economic space between the peasantry and the King.

Crucially, this research encompasses an important but contentious timeframe, ranging from the advent of Tudor rule in 1485 up until 1532, when the certificates cease to proliferate. Indeed, traditionalist scholarship has typically emphasized a fifteenth-century end for the medieval period, with most favouring 1485, believing that the ascension of the Tudor dynasty marks the start of a new 'Renaissance Dawn.'[2] However, more recent analysis of periodisation has re-examined this artificially imposed boundary, instead acknowledging the 'medieval' continuities exhibited in the reigns of the early Tudors.[3] G. Elton's assessment is easily the most well-known, in which he theorised a temporal break, should scholars feel the need to impose one, was more accurately located in the 1530s, following what he termed the 'Tudor Revolution in Government', whereby institutional overhaul resulted in the gradual birth of the Modern State.[4] Indeed, this Eltonian thesis has found wide acceptance, with scholarship now appreciating the alignment between fifteenth-century government and that of Henry VII. As such, this research contributes to this debate upon periodisation, exploring the continuities and differences within English society in this period, albeit adopting a social perspective rather than a political one.

In order to explore this central theme concerning the nature of late medieval society, this thesis takes the form of a prosopographical investigation of the lives, careers and activities of the

[2] See: J. L. Watts, 'Introduction: History, the Fifteenth Century and the Renaissance', in J. L. Watts, (ed.), *The End of the Middle Ages? England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Stroud, 1998), p. 12.
[3] See for example: R. Tittler, 'The End of the Middle Ages in the English County Town', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 18 (1987), p. 471, who argues that for the English town at least, the 'end of the Middle Ages' did not occur until the mid-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; J. Le Goff, *Must We Divide History into Periods?* (Columbia, 2015), p. 63, who goes further and identifies the existence of medieval continuities up until the mid-eighteenth century; J. Muldoon, 'Introduction: Bridging the Medieval-Modern Divide', in J. Muldoon (ed.), *Bridging the Medieval-Modern Divide: Medieval Themes in the World of the Reformation* (Farnham, 2013), p. 2.
[4] G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 4; Watts, 'Introduction', p. 16.

staple individuals selected for study, ultimately enabling engagement with important debates surrounding status, categorisation, social transition, careerism and also the ways in which we, as historians, attempt to measure such concepts. As such this research asks a range of narrower research questions to provide focus: who were these business people, on both an individual and a collective level? What defining characteristics can be extrapolated from detailed examination of their lives and careers? What was the connection between the measurable wealth of these individuals and their status in society? To what extent can these individuals be classed as socially mobile? How important was the notion of careerism to these people? Can these individuals be tentatively linked to ideas concerning the 'middling sort'? How far can these insights contribute to our understanding of status and categorisation, as well as society more generally in this period?

Historiography: Categorisation in Late Medieval Society.

To meet its research aims, this thesis explores a variety of themes, with chapters focusing upon social status and mobility, careerism, wealth and property, as well as raising questions about early Tudor society more broadly. As such, each chapter includes a specifically focused and comprehensive discussion of the relevant historiographical literature to contextualise the analyses of each. However, a review of the overarching historiographical debates relating to the wider, conceptual themes of this thesis is also relevant and will be outlined here. Therefore, this historiographical overview focuses upon the structure and composition of late medieval society, framing the debates which are particularly pertinent to this research.

Scholarly discussion of the structure and composition of late medieval society has generated much debate, particularly regarding the fifteenth century. Indeed, F. R. H. Du Boulay has described fifteenth-century England as 'a land in which men felt a sharpening self-

consciousness about their social status.'[5] Whilst traditional conceptions of late medieval society perceived it as one of somewhat rigid 'estates', increasing appreciation of the potential for fluidity and social elasticity has led to it becoming one of degrees of a single hierarchy, rather than simplistic, functional estates.[6] As a result, the traditional tripartite division of late medieval society came under increasing strain and, as the social division of labour became more advanced, additional status groups had to be included within this model.[7] As such, those social gradations, encompassing the gap between the peasantry and royalty, became much more difficult to define, owing to the frequency with which they now overlapped with one another.

Traditionalist scholars often neglect the late medieval period when discussing changes to social structure, usually perceiving such developments as characteristic of the early modern period. Indeed, J. Hexter, writing in the early 1960s, perfectly demonstrates this, as he argues that assertions of even the existence of upwardly mobile, socially fluid groupings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are inherently invalid. For Hexter, the evidence, already scanty and imperfect, has been overstretched and exaggerated, making social barriers appear far more elastic than in reality.[8] L. Stone favours a similar view, declaring such fluidity to be a feature of social change only from 1600 onwards, completely ignoring the late medieval period altogether.[9] These traditionalist views have proved difficult to shift, perhaps owing to the understandable allure of a simplified, dichotomous late medieval society, divided only into 'elites' and 'commoners', with no troublesome social groupings, occupying a complicated space between the peasantry and the nobility. Indeed, as D. Herlihy rightly points out, this

[5] F. R. H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1970), p. 61.
[6] K. Wrightson, 'Estates, Degrees and Sorts: Changing Perceptions of Society in Tudor and Stuart England', in P. J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 33-34; K. Wrightson, 'The Social Order of Early Modern England: Three Approaches', in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World we Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (Oxford, 1986), p. 179.
[7] R. H. Hilton, 'Ideology and Social Order in Late Medieval England', in R. H. Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History* (London, 1990), p. 174.
[8] J. H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (Aberdeen, 1961), pp. 74-77.
[9] L. Stone and J. C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), p. 408.

conception of medieval society as a closed system of estates, whereby social mobility was officially discouraged, was likely the result of contemporaneous writings produced by rulers and social commentators, which in turn convinced older scholars of the accuracy of this traditionalist viewpoint.[10]

Nevertheless, more recent revisionist efforts have sought to alter this distinctly one-dimensional perception of the late medieval period, by focusing upon the important societal developments of the fifteenth century and beyond. Examination of social composition and structure naturally leads to discussion of terminology and social vocabulary. K. Wrightson in particular has considered the usage of the 'language of sorts', pinpointing its development to the sixteenth century, when social commentators, such as William Harrison, began to describe the people of England in terms of 'sorts' in response to social change, employing expressions such as the 'better sort', 'the middling sort' and the 'meaner sort.'[11] H. R. French has also considered the language of sorts, arguing that these terms provide useful aggregate descriptions and 'societal reference points.' However, French does acknowledge the limitations of these terms, as they ultimately reduce our understanding of the complexity of social identities 'in an era before the hegemony of the language of class.'[12] Perhaps one of the most intriguing insights into these kinds of linguistic developments comes from C. Muldrew, whose discussions of the 'middling sort' perceives this term not to be representative of a homogenous class, but of a process of continual achievement.[13] In other words, describing individuals as 'sorts' of people provided an inherent judgement about their social worth. Thus, the successful 'better sort' were

[10] D. Herlihy, 'Three Patterns of Social Mobility in Medieval Society', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (1973), p. 624.
[11] Wrightson, 'Estates', p. 34; see also: P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London, 1991), pp. 3-13, for discussion of the rise of the term 'middling sort' in the seventeenth century.
[12] H. R. French, 'The Search for the Middle Sort of People in England, 1600-1800', *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), p. 292; H. R. French, 'Social Status, Localism and the "Middle Sort of People" in England, 1620-1750', *Past and Present*, 166 (2000), pp. 66-99.
[13] C. Muldrew, 'Class and Credit: Social Identity, Wealth and the Life Course in Early Modern England', in H. French and J. Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (London, 2004), p. 149.

praised and the 'poorer sort' were often generalised as being mean, rude and untrustworthy.[14] R. H. Hilton has also examined social vocabulary in the later medieval period, specifically within the social structures of towns, whereby a hierarchy of moral worth was often employed. In this way, the ruling groups of merchants were referred to as 'probi homines' or 'prud hommes' (worthy men) in chancery documents. Hilton also draws attention to linguistic variation, as social designations often differed from town to town, with, for example, Newcastle under Lyme referring to its elites as the 'best of the citizens', whilst administrative documents from Hereford opted for the 'better sort.'[15] Nevertheless, although such discussions of social vocabulary and terminology are necessary, P. Burke has rightly pointed out that it is ultimately not sufficient to completely understand social hierarchy. Instead we need to 'reconstruct collective identities and forms of consciousness', so as to fully comprehend the nature of society in this period, something undertaken in this thesis.[16]

This burgeoning discussion of social fluidity in this period has often focused upon certain, prominently overlapping groupings, namely the hotchpotch of individuals making up the 'middling sort', usually comprising gentry, yeomen, merchants and others. Perhaps one of the earliest forays into these socially mobile individuals of the fifteenth century comes from S. Thrupp, in her seminal work on medieval merchants. Whilst admittedly not the main focus of her monograph, Thrupp nevertheless discusses the appearance of the new gradation of 'gentleman' in the fifteenth century, theorising that this was the result of the Statute of Additions of 1413, which demanded the use of more precise social descriptors in administrative

[14] Muldrew, 'Class and Credit', p. 149.
[15] R. H. Hilton, 'Status and Class in the Medieval Town', in R. Slater and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 13; this is also discussed at length in I. Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton, 2018), pp. 100-103, 137-139, in which he outlines the emergence of terms such as 'probi homines' and also the kinds of people considered trustworthy men, such as merchants and community elites.
[16] P. Burke, 'The Language of Orders in Early Modern Europe', in M. L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe Since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London, 1992), p. 10.

documents.[17] In attempting to define what exactly was meant by 'gentleman', Thrupp acknowledges her own uncertainty, suggesting that it may well have been something as simple as an attitude of 'distaste for manual labour, which the yeoman would not yet have affected', resulting in a middling sort of people between labourers and true landed gentry.[18] Indeed, this particular, albeit rather vague, marker of gentlemanly status has proved a persistently popular concept, with even some of the most recent scholarship adopting it as a hierarchical guideline. For instance, C. Dyer, in his 2012 prosopographical study of the life and career of John Heritage, emphasizes the fact that Heritage was clearly a yeoman despite his mercantile dealings, owing to his inescapable reliance upon his farmland for survival, qualifying that a true gentleman's lifestyle involved no manual work.[19] A. Everitt, writing in the 1960s, also grapples with the question of how best to define this middling sort of people. Evidently aware of the important implications of lifestyle in determining one's status, Everitt goes further and utilises the term 'pseudo-gentry' to refer to those who led a leisured and predominantly urban existence, such as wealthy townsmen, merchants and officials, but who ultimately lacked a landed country estate.[20] J. Freeman considers the parish perspective with regards to these socially fluid individuals, determining the parochial elite to typically comprise gentlemen, but with the increasing inclusion of merchants, officials and lawyers within this bracket.[21] R. Storey provides perhaps one of the most illuminative insights into how best to define these middling individuals, who seemingly frequently overlapped with one another. For instance, Storey notes multiple occasions in royal pardons where merchants and lawyers were also described as gentlemen in the same document, arguing that these individuals were often

[17] S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948), p. 236.
[18] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 238.
[19] C. Dyer, *A Country Merchant 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 40-41.
[20] A. Everitt, 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), pp. 70-71.
[21] J. Freeman, 'Middlesex in the Fifteenth Century: Community or Communities?', in M. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 100.

engaged in civic or administrative work, elevating them socially.[22] Indeed, Storey labels these middling townsmen as 'gentlemen-bureaucrats', yet another example of a newly emergent social category in fifteenth-century England.[23]

As touched on above, one of the most persistent themes explored in connection with societal change in this period is the role of civic usefulness. For instance, I. W. Archer sees office holding as one of the major areas subject to social stratification, particularly as the wealthier inhabitants of towns were often reluctant to serve in lowlier civic positions. For example, in 1600, the vestrymen of the parish of St. Dunstan in the West expressed their concerns about the fines taken to excuse the 'better sort' from the humbler positions of constable and scavenger.[24] Similarly, P. J. P. Goldberg, in his broad-spectrum analysis of social structure in the later medieval period, has also emphasized the importance of civic engagement, particularly as a sign of status. Indeed, civic elites, such as mayors and aldermen, often identified themselves as of gentle status, as demonstrated in the case of Nicholas Blackburn, mayor of York in 1412, who is depicted in full armour in a window of his parish church.[25] Moreover, this emphasis upon civic involvement has strongly influenced the conception of tangible societal change as a largely urban based phenomenon in this period. R. Horrox, for example, has examined the ways in which urban occupations in the fifteenth century could also confer status, citing the example of service to the crown, such as the case of William Soper, whose successful career as a customs agent made him a burgess and esquire of Southampton.[26] This connection of the late medieval town with socially mobile groups in society has proved persistently popular, undoubtedly owing to its more fluid social hierarchy and manifold

[22] R. L. Storey, 'Gentlemen-Bureaucrats', in C. H. Clough (ed.), *Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England* (Liverpool, 1982), p. 97.
[23] Storey, 'Gentlemen-Bureaucrats', p. 101.
[24] I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 93.
[25] P. J. P. Goldberg, *Medieval England: A Social History, 1250-1550* (London, 2004), p. 116.
[26] R. Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century', in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), p. 29.

opportunities. For instance, A. Dyer, in his examination of sixteenth-century Worcester, sees the town as the natural place for the determined social climber, as it offered many opportunities for advancement in this period. In short, towns were catalysts for social change.[27] D. Palliser, in his analysis of late medieval urban society, goes even further and argues that the greater merchants, often safely ensconced in roles of civic importance, were treated as equivalent in status to rural gentry.[28]

In accepting the fluid state of late medieval social structure, particularly within towns and cities, scholarly debate began to polarise along a different set of battle lines. Chief amongst these was discussion of 'emulation', typically with regards to successful mercantile individuals, whose newfound wealth and status in the town would drive them to mirror the lifestyles of the provincial elite, effectively blurring traditional social barriers even further.[29] Typically such emulation involved the purchase of a country manor or estate, so that the successful urban merchant could become a provincial gentleman.[30] M. R. Hunt, despite focusing upon the seventeenth century, outlines the issues associated with this idea of emulation, finding it to be a persistently popular notion in post-war historiography, whereby the humble shopkeeper always aspires to be a gentleman but ultimately fails, which acted as an intellectual bulwark in the 1960s against the worrying idea of an upwardly mobile middle class.[31] Whilst Hunt acknowledges that emulation could on occasion be a real phenomenon,

[27] A. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973), p. 180.
[28] D. Palliser, 'Urban Society', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 140; this is also remarked upon in S. M. Jack, *Towns in Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 22.
[29] For discussion of social emulation see: S. Carocci, 'Social Mobility and the Middle Ages', *Continuity and Change*, 26, 3 (2011), p. 394, which argues emulation by 'subordinate classes' is a discernible trend in the medieval period; D. Cressy, 'Death and the Social Order: The Funerary Preferences of an Elizabethan Gentleman', *Continuity and Change*, 5 (1990), p. 108, which briefly references those individuals who sought to copy gentry funerals.
[30] For discussion of this phenomenon see: M. Mascuch, 'Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity: The Ethos of British Autobiographers, 1600-1750', *Social History*, 20 (1995), p. 45, which remarks that the 'conspicuous badge of success for a middle class man was the extensive purchase of land'.
[31] M. R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 1-2.

citing the example of merchants purchasing country homes, she stresses that this was by no means universal and only one of a number of impulses that animated socially mobile people.[32] Indeed, many scholars now perceive this social fluidity as entirely more complex than the pejorative connotations the term emulation would suggest. Rather than merely 'aping genteel culture', as argued by L. Stone,[33] these merchants sought advancement based upon individualised aspirations. Indeed, C. Barron, in her examination of mercantile funeral brasses, notes that, in spite of the proliferation of wealthy merchants depicted with swords, coats of arms and even armour, they were not simply aspiring to knightly status. Instead, they were eager to be seen as prosperous civilians, as demonstrated in the case of William Frith, a London stockfishmonger, whose funeral brass emphasized his identity as a wealthy merchant, despite the inclusion of a sword and a gown.[34]

Whilst there is clearly much debate concerning the structure and composition of late medieval society, its complexity and fluidity has largely been accepted by scholars. This appreciation of the various, often-overlapping categories of individuals occupying the space between peasantry and royalty has posed many questions concerning how best to characterise and understand these people, both on a collective and a more individualised scale. As such, it is clear that there is still much research needed into the issues surrounding the accurate categorisation and labelling of these social groupings, something which will form an important over-arching focus within this study.

[32] Hunt, *Middling Sort*, p. 4.
[33] Stone and Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 404.
[34] C. Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture in Medieval London', in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 237; this is also discussed in A. T. Brown, *Rural Society and Economic Change in County Durham* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 174-175, which points out that not all merchants sought a rural life, something reflected in their funeral brasses which show pride in their trade and urban connections.

The Principal Sources.

1. Certificates of Statute Staple:

The central source base collated for this research was the certificates of statute staple produced by the staple court at Westminster between 1485 and 1532. These certificates of statute staple were primarily an administrative document designed to enforce debt recovery, enabling creditors to seek financial redress from defaulting debtors, and in doing so injecting some level of security into these otherwise precarious credit transactions.[35] This was accomplished through the registration of the loan at a staple court, whereby a recognisance of statute staple would be issued as a permanent record of the transaction, with a copy given to the creditor and a copy kept by the court. In this way, should the debtor then default or refuse to repay the loan, the creditor could seek official backing in the reclamation of the outstanding monies.

Despite their similarities, the certificates of statute staple should not be confused with those of its predecessor, the statute merchant. The 1285 Statute of Merchants provided for the formal registration of mercantile debts along with a system for their successful recovery.[36] Merchants, likely concerned about commercial risks, could now register their debts and financial obligations with a number of courts presided over by a crown-appointed mayor and his clerks. This system was subsequently extended and improved in 1353 with the Statute of the Staple, which aligned itself with the newly developed staples and led to the creation of the certificates of statute staple which were enforced more directly by the Chancery.[37] Crucially, this statute

[35] J. I. Kermode, 'Money and Credit in the Fifteenth Century: Some Lessons from Yorkshire', *The Business History Review*, 65, 3 (1991), p. 484.
[36] Recognizance in the Nature of a Statute Merchant/Staple: https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/deedsindepth/associated/statute.aspx [accessed 05/05/2016]; see also: A. Beardwood, 'Bishop Langton's Use of Statute Merchant Recognizances', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 9, (1955), pp. 54-70, for discussion of the practical, contemporary uses of these documents.
[37] P. Nightingale, 'Money and Credit in the Economy of Late Medieval England', in D. Wood (ed.), *Medieval Money Matters* (Oxford, 2004), p. 63; R. Goddard, *Credit and Trade in Later Medieval England, 1365-1532* (London, 2016), pp. 4-5.

extended to everyone the right to have debts registered at staple courts, not just merchants, something perhaps particularly representative of changing commercial activity in this period.[38] Furthermore, under the Statute of the Staple, common law courts were prohibited from hearing disputes arising from within the staple markets, cementing not only the broad jurisdiction of the staple court, but also its attractiveness to businessmen.[39] Other important changes included the process of loan enforcement as more serious repercussions could be exacted against defaulting debtors, most notably imprisonment and the seizure of their goods and chattels.[40] As such these certificates were of crucial commercial importance, effectively providing a much needed degree of security in the provision of credit, something upon which the medieval economy was heavily reliant. However, whilst the certificates of statute staple were not officially abolished until 1863, they had nevertheless become largely obsolete long before then, coinciding with the decline of the staple system during the sixteenth century and effectively ending in 1532, when the Recognizances for Debt Act, enacted under Henry VIII, replaced the previous system for debt registry.[41]

The collection of documents used in this research comprises 2,428 Westminster statute staple certificates from the years 1485-1532, currently stored under two separate archival references within the records of the English royal Chancery at The National Archives: the larger and more commonly known collection being C 241 and the smaller, uncatalogued and unexamined collection, C 152. It should be noted that some documentary fine-tuning was necessary to compile this source base. Indeed, an additional 185 staple certificates originating from other staple courts from across England are also discernible in these collections, with debt

[38] Kermode, 'Money and Credit', p. 487.
[39] E. P. Stringham and T. J. Zywicki, 'Rivalry and Superior Dispatch: An Analysis of Competing Courts in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Public Choice*, 147, 3 (2011), p. 511.
[40] Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3773 [accessed 05/05/2016].
[41] Rolls and Entry Books on Recognizances of Statute Staple: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C10229 [accessed 05/05/2016].

registrations originating from Chichester, Bristol, Canterbury, and even the rather provincially obscure Cornish staple of Lostwithiel.[42] As such, these particular certificates, although archived alongside those produced by the court at Westminster, have been omitted from this study, producing the 2,428 certificates of statute staple used in this project. Furthermore, the certificates within the C 241 collection, previously translated by P. Nightingale, have received some scholarly attention, particularly with regards to the examination of mercantile debt and the monetarist perspective.[43] However, by comparison, the certificates within C 152, a collection of 986 certificates, undoubtedly isolated from their documentary brethren by the often haphazard and inconsistent approach of Victorian archivists, have as a result remained completely untouched, yielding a significant documentary lacuna to be filled with regards to this particular source material.

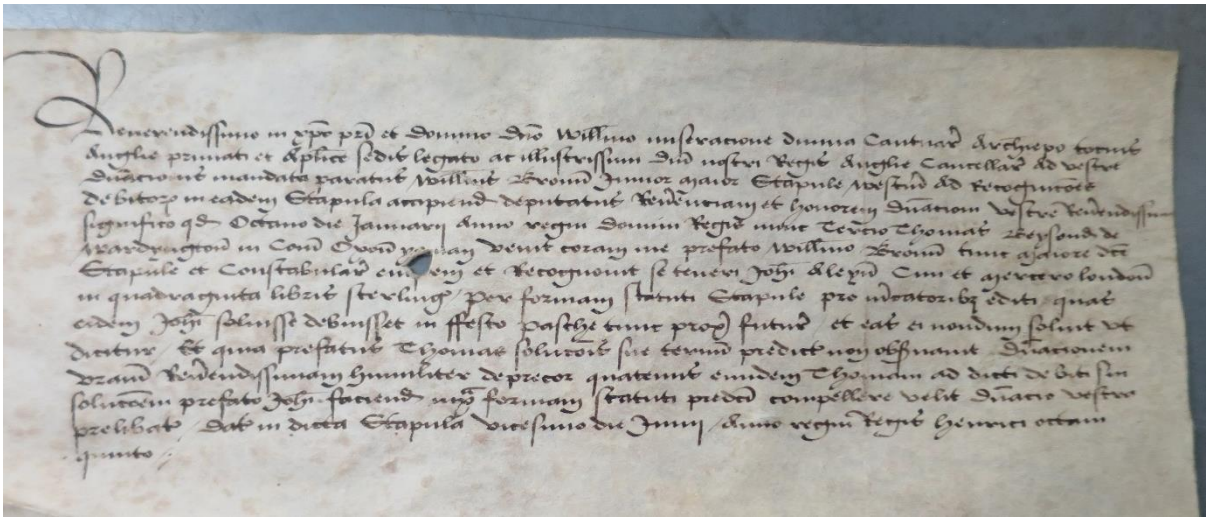
Visually these documents are easily recognisable, even before examining the content. The certificates of statute staple are usually small, rectangular in shape and written on parchment in Latin, as shown in figure 1.1 below. Typically, these documents are easily legible, undoubtedly owing to the practiced scribal hands used in their production at the staple court. Despite the fact that these certificates are highly formulaic, as with many officially-issued and administrative documents, they nevertheless contain a large quantity of personal and prosopographical information. Indeed, most of the certificates record the names of the officials involved in the registering of the certificate, such as the mayor, his constables and clerks, and

[42] Lostwithiel is often overlooked in analyses of the medieval staple courts of England, despite its provincially important role as the staple town dedicated to the sale of Cornish tin. For more information see: L. S. Woodger, 'Lostwithiel', in J. S. Roskell, L. Clark, C. Rawcliffe (eds.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1386-1421, volume 1* (Stroud, 1993), published online at http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/constituencies/lostwithiel#constituency-main-article [accessed 01/06/2018].

[43] See for example: P. Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants: Trade, Politics and the Gentry in Late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), pp. 36-62; P. Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit in Later Medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, 43 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 560-575; J. L. Bolton, 'Was There a ''Crisis of Credit'' in Fifteenth-Century England?', *British Numismatic Journal*, 81 (2011), pp. 152-154; Goddard, *Credit and Trade*.

also the staple court they were attached to. Also included are the names of the creditor, the debtor, their status, their occupation and their origin or place of residence, enabling researchers to utilise the certificates to reconstruct the lives, commercial activities and careers of these individuals. Lamentably however, some of the certificates of statute staple, particularly those archived under C 152, have suffered varying degrees of damage. Indeed, some of the documents have suffered fire and animal damage, owing to poor preservation techniques, as well as the unfortunate incidences where parts of the document have been torn off.

Figure 1.1 Certificate of Statute Staple, C 152/65/2/1.



In terms of historiographical exploitation of the certificates of statute staple, such scholarship is rather limited, both in terms of quantity and also in theme. Indeed, the few scholars who have engaged with this source material have tended to regard the staple certificate as simply an economic document, capable of contributing insight on various commercial and mercantile debates, but little else. Featuring most prominently among these is P. Nightingale, whose steadfast dedication to the certificates of statute staple as a source body has gone some way to move them from the murky shadows of academic neglect, into the light of recognition. Indeed, Nightingale has written multiple papers which utilise the certificates as the central source, most notably her 1990 article which examines the economic and commercial pursuits of the London

Grocers between 1330 and 1440, reconstructing what she terms a 'pyramid of debt' within the wool industry, which ranged from the clothiers and dyers through to the middlemen of the Grocer's company and then on to the capitalists at the top.[44] Nightingale effectively uses the evidence of these staple certificates to then engage with one of the key debates on credit, arguing that the evidence of the debts of the grocers supports the arguments of monetarists that credit supply expanded and contracted in line with bullion supply.[45] Nightingale's 2000 article, this time focusing more specifically upon the certificates of statute staple as a wholly mercantile source, explores the commercial interests of knights in the wool industry from 1284 until the 1430s, charting their fluctuating involvement throughout this period.[46] It is evident therefore, that Nightingale, despite making extensive use of these particular records in her analyses of mercantile debt, has only examined them from an economic perspective, drawing solely upon the certificates within the C 241 collection which date to before 1450, effectively neglecting the social dimension to these sources.

Furthermore, Nightingale's conception of the certificates of statute staple as purely mercantile documents has come under increasing attack. Indeed, even one of the very first scholars to examine these documents, the eminent economic historian M. M. Postan, believed the post-1353 certificates to be representative of more than the simple purchase of staple merchandise. For example, Postan posited the idea that these bonds could be used in property transactions, arguing that merchants constantly sought ways to convert capital into real property, both urban and rural, and as a result the certificates began to be used to enforce the transfer of such investments.[47] Writing in the 1990s, J. Kermode also makes mention of the certificates of statute staple in her discussion of the various legal instruments involved in debt recovery.

[44] Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction', p. 568.
[45] Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction', p. 574.
[46] Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants', p. 41.
[47] M. M. Postan, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', *The Economic History Review*, 1 (1928), p. 248.

Although Kermode does not linger long upon the certificates themselves, she voices her agreement with Postan's assertions that these bonds may well have been used in property transactions to convert land into working capital, quoting Postan's description of it as 'the mobilisation and demobilisation of capital.'[48] More recently, J. Bolton has grappled with this debate over function in his analysis of the medieval money supply. Indeed, Bolton perhaps goes furthest in his critique of Nightingale's work, asserting her arguments are not as solid as they initially seem, stating categorically that, from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the certificates were more commonly used by non-merchants to register loans and penal bonds rather than straightforward commercial debt.[49] Bolton even goes so far as to conclude that the recovery of actual debts was no longer the documents' main function, but instead sought to create a penal sum to ensure the performance of a contract such as a marriage settlement, property transfer or the terms of a will.[50] Finally, R. Goddard has produced the most recent examination of the certificates, using them as a means to understand the late medieval economy, particularly with regards to the wool and cloth trade and also as a tool for measuring patterns of credit expansion and contraction.[51]

Clearly, scholarly interest in the certificates of statute staple has been largely mono-thematic, typically focusing on the debate over their specific function and role in the medieval economy, with the result that the actual individuals within them, particularly those of seemingly non-mercantile origins, have been largely ignored, leaving much to be explored with regards to these businessmen themselves. With this scholarly deficit in mind therefore, the potential to exploit these documents as a source for social history naturally comes to the fore.

[48] Kermode, 'Money and Credit', p. 488.
[49] Bolton, 'Was There a "Crisis of Credit'' in Fifteenth-Century England?', p. 153.
[50] Bolton, 'Was There a "Crisis of Credit'' in Fifteenth-Century England?', p. 153.
[51] Goddard, *Credit and Trade.*

Wills:

The other principal source collection used in this research are wills, biographically rich documents chosen to complement the findings of the certificates of statute staple. Owing to their profoundly personal nature, wills often contain a variety of useful information about testators, their possessions and also their social networks, making them the obvious choice to better understand the business people extrapolated from the staple certificates. These wills, much like their modern counterparts, were legal documents designed to enable testators to record their *post mortem* wishes concerning the devolution of their property, wealth and goods. Testators would name trusted individuals as executors, empowering them to enact the bequests and wishes outlined in the will. Finally, once a will had been compiled, it had to be approved by and registered in an appropriate probate court, which granted the executors the legal right to carry out the testator's wishes and bequests in accordance with the will.[52] As a result, the registers of these probate courts usually provide the most complete records of wills for this period. However, owing to time constraints, and the need to maintain a manageable and workable sample size, the wills used in this thesis have been drawn from the registers of a single probate court, namely the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

The Prerogative Court of Canterbury was the foremost probate court in medieval England, in which wills, originating from testators who lived in the south of the country or in Wales, were collected together.[53] Not just anybody could register a will here however, and several important prerequisites had to be met. The testator, having died within the court's geographical

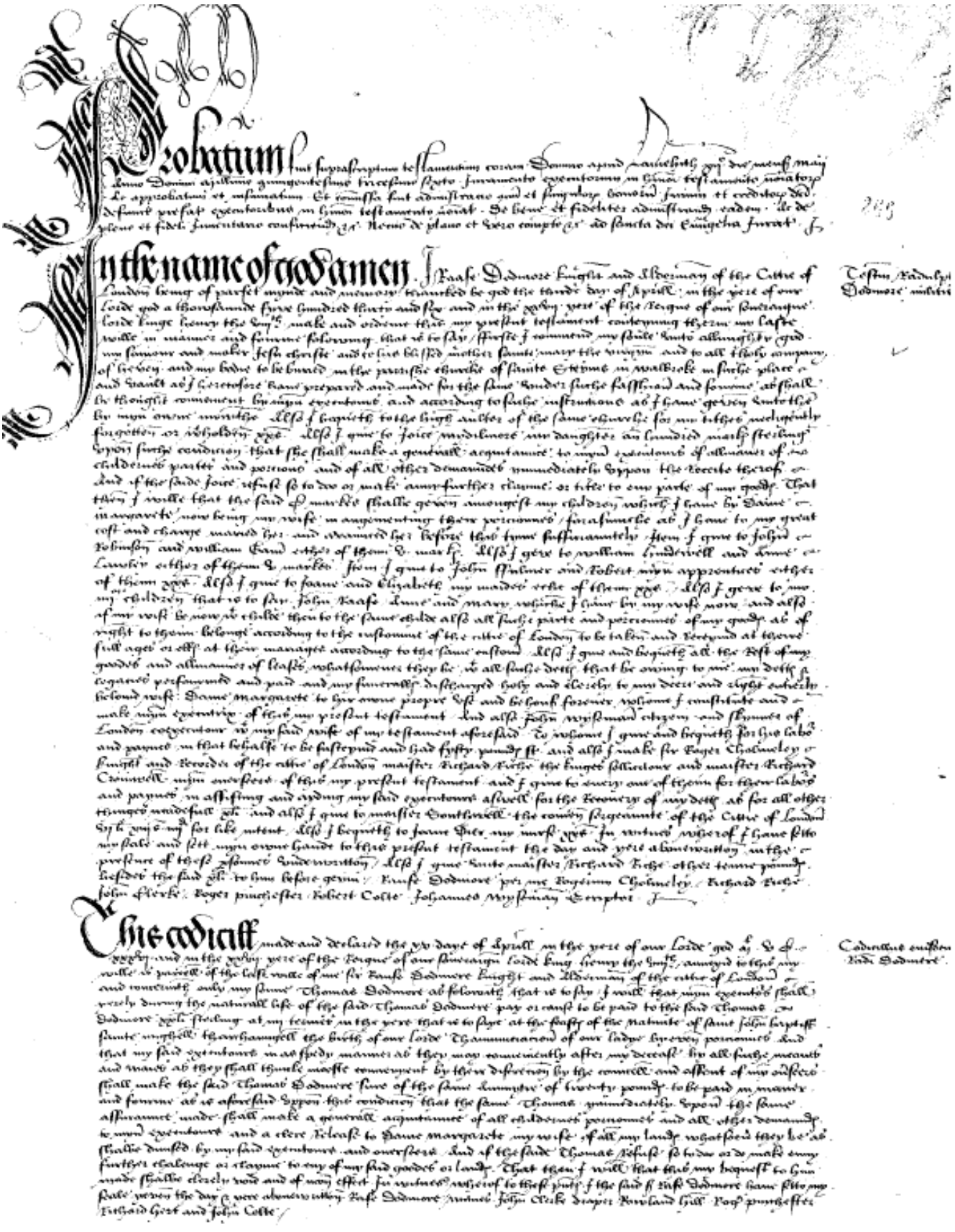
[52] R. E. Archer and B. E. Ferme, 'Testamentary Procedure with Special Reference to the Executrix', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), p. 7.
[53] K. Grannum and N. Taylor, *Wills and Other Probate Records* (Kew, 2004), p. 14. The Prerogative Court of Canterbury's 'southern' jurisdiction covered a large area, namely the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Surrey, Sussex, Suffolk, Wales, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire.

jurisdiction, was still required to have a certain degree of propertied wealth, either with goods located in more than one diocese, or which were valued at more than £5.[54] As a result of these geographical and economic requirements therefore, this court was the most sensible selection, as it was effectively the natural repository for many of the testaments of the particular individuals under study, owing to their wealth, status and commercial connections with Westminster. Therefore, a total of 428 wills have been collected for this study, all of which were produced by the business people located within the certificates of statute staple.

In examining the form of these particular wills, the majority are in good condition, with easily legible handwriting, as demonstrated in the exemplar below. This is likely related to the fact that these are registered copy wills, whereby the executor, once the probate process had been completed, could pay to have a copy of the will entered into the court's probate register.[55] Whilst these are therefore not the original wills, typically there are very few differences between the two, except for the handwriting and the omission of the testator's signature. Furthermore, in considering the collection of wills under study, they could vary significantly in length, with some documents amounting to little more than a few sentences, such as the will of George Cely, whilst others covered multiple pages in the register, such as the will of Michael Dormer, whose bequests and *post mortem* desires are spread across seven pages in small handwriting.[56]

[54] Wills or Administrations before 1858: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-or-administrations-before-1858/ [accessed 24/07/2018]. It should be noted that this prerequisite of £5 worth of property increased to £10 if such possessions were in London.
[55] Grannum and Taylor, *Wills and Other Probate Records*, p. 18.
[56] PROB 11/11/17; PROB 11/30/546.

Figure 1.2. Extract from the will of Ralph Dodmer, PROB 11/25/540.



Scholars have often used wills to examine religious belief, typically involving the quantitative study of the bequests made by testators and the pious formulae used in the preambles of the wills.[57] Indeed, in relation to this theme, one of the most prominent issues with regards to testamentary evidence is often emphasized. This relates to the contents of wills, as, by their very nature, they deal primarily with *post-mortem* provision. As such, wills arguably pose temporal challenges, simply owing to the fact that they emerge at the end of a testator's life. Perhaps their most well-known critic is C. Burgess, who, in examining the bequests of testators, warns that wills actually reveal very little about individual piety and that scholars should instead perceive them as 'detailed prescriptions of funerary services and little else.'[58] For Burgess therefore, wills are inherently problematic, given that they only record post-obit religious provisions, effectively remaining silent on a potential lifetime of pre-obit charity.[59] Whilst Burgess has by and large defended this controversial statement, his later work has shown an appreciation of the wider insights that testamentary provision can reveal. Indeed, in his prosopographical article published in 2002, Burgess examines the bequests in the pre- and post-Reformation wills of the parishioners of St. Andrew Hubbard in London, commenting upon their varied priorities, such as funerary provision, *post mortem* intercession and fraternity associations.[60]

Whilst previous scholarly inquiry has highlighted the temporal issues associated with using wills to examine piety, this research is not constrained by this particular limitation. The wills exploited in this study are used quantitatively to provide insight into the property and

[57] See for example: M. L. Zell, 'The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth Century', *Bulletin of Institute of Historical Research*, 50, 122 (1977), pp. 246-249, who examines the religious preambles of Kentish wills and finds some deviation from expected formulae. However, Zell ultimately argues a testator's religious beliefs are more likely to be conveyed through bequests than the preamble of his will.
[58] C. Burgess, "By Quick and By Dead: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol', *The English Historical Review*, 102, 405 (1987), p. 855.
[59] Burgess, "By Quick and By Dead', p. 840.
[60] C. Burgess, 'London Parishioners in Times of Change: St. Andrew Hubbard, Eastcheap, *c*. 1450-1570', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53, 1 (2002), pp. 47-51.

possessions of the testators, as well as prosopographically, to extract pertinent biographical details concerning the individuals under study. As such, they are combined with other records, such as the certificates of statute staple, to provide insight into these businessmen over the course of their lives, not just at their point of death, producing a much more comprehensive and balanced examination. Indeed, their usage in this study can be related to the growing scholarly appreciation of the will as an autobiographical narrative.[61] C. Barron's study of the will of Thomas Salter, a London merchant-turned-priest, is particularly demonstrative. She examines the contents of Salter's will within the context not only of his own life, but also the wider society in which he lived.[62] Similarly, K. Lewis, in her examination of the wills of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Somerset, conceives of them as an 'autobiographical act', effectively narrating the lives of the testators.[63] Evidently, wills, despite their temporal limitations, provide an invaluable insight into the private lives of testators. Therefore, although historiographical inquiry has typically sought to emphasize the varying religious aspects of late medieval wills, this research project will utilise them prosopographically, effectively drawing out any and all pertinent information to reconstruct the private and professional lives of individual testators. As such, they will form a key source, supplementing the personal details initially provided by the core source, the certificates of statute staple.

[61] See for example: J. M. Bennett, and C. Whittick, 'Philippa Russell and the Wills of London's Late Medieval Singlewomen', *The London Journal*, 32, 3 (2007), pp. 251-269, which details the will of Philippa Russell and compares with the testamentary evidence of other women of the period.

[62] C. M. Barron, 'The Will as Autobiography: The Case of Thomas Salter, Priest, Died November 1558', in M. Carlin and J. T. Rosenthal (eds.), *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron* (Croydon, 2017), pp. 213-264.

[63] K. J. Lewis, 'Women, Testamentary Discourse and Life-Writing in Later Medieval England', in N. J. Menuge (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Law* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 59.

The Supplementary Sources.

1. Extents for Debt:

Having collated a core source base of staple certificates and relevant wills, other source collections are used to provide supplementary biographical information, where applicable. In building a supplementary source body to the certificates therefore, the extents for debt, as an important part of the final step in the statute staple process, whereby the unpaid debts were actively pursued, are a sensible starting place. These documents were created after a debtor had defaulted and his creditor, as a holder of a staple certificate, returned to the staple court to begin the process of debt recovery. Next, writs of *capias et extendi facias* were issued to initiate the recovery of these private debts.[64] Usually addressed to the sheriffs of the relevant town or bailiwick, these officially-issued documents effectively enacted the penalties promised in the certificates of statute staple for default.[65] As such sheriffs were ordered to locate and imprison the debtors, value their goods and chattels and then hand them over to the creditor as recompense for the unpaid debt.[66] Once a debtor's goods and lands had been inventoried, the resulting extent for debt would then be sent to Chancery to await a second writ of *de libaracione*, authorising the transfer of the debtor's possessions to his creditor.[67] It is these extents for debt, containing the inventoried possessions of the debtor, which have been collected as supplementary source material in this research. In fact, in relation to the individuals under study, 495 of these businessmen are discernible within one or more corresponding extents for debt, producing a total of 1,030 extents for debt for analysis. These extents for debt

[64] Goddard, *Credit and Trade,* p. 16.
[65] P. Nightingale, 'The Intervention of the Crown and the Effectiveness of the Sheriff in the Execution of Judicial Writs, ***c***. 1355-1530', *The English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), pp. 7-8.
[66] For a good administrative background to these documents see: Chancery Extents for Debt, Series 1: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3689 [accessed 3/08/2016].
[67] Goddard, *Credit and Trade,* p. 17.

provide crucial insight into the tangible assets of those individuals who appeared as borrowers in the staple certificates, detailing not only their landholdings and immovable assets, but also on occasion the movable possessions within their homes and workplaces. As such, extents for debt not only provide continuity, yielding insight into the final steps of the staple process, but also a more complete picture of the wealth and property of borrowing businessmen in this period, particularly as such individuals can be overshadowed by their often more commercially successful crediting counterparts.

2. Lay Subsidy Records:

Records of crown-mandated taxation are also examined in the course of this research, namely the 1524-25 and the 1540-41 Lay Subsidies. These particular subsidies were selected because of their comprehensive approach to individualised taxation, something which had been previously abandoned in the fourteenth century in favour of collective assessment.[68] Indeed, from 1334, tax records supply only total assessments for each village or administrative area and as such do not provide a list of names of the inhabitants, or what they individually contributed in terms of tax.[69] This was changed in the sixteenth century however, whereby the 1524-25 and the 1540-41 Lay Subsidies now assessed eligible tax-payers individually, based upon either their landholdings, their movable goods or their wages, depending upon which of these would bring the crown greatest wealth.[70] In other words, these levies not only provide the names of the taxable population of an area, but also demonstrate which of their assets was estimated to be worth the most.

[68] R. W. Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records: A Guide for Users* (London, 1994), p. 3.
[69] J. West, *Village Records* (Chichester, 1982), p. 43; J. F. Hadwin, 'The Medieval Lay Subsidies and Economic History', *The Economic History Review*, 26 (1983), p. 201.
[70] Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records*, pp. 12-14.

The tax lists consulted in relation to these two Tudor subsidies are drawn from a combination of archival and published material. The records of the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy have been partially published in edited collections, usually focused upon a single county. These include the tax lists for Rutland, Buckinghamshire, Worcestershire, Northamptonshire, Sussex, Shropshire and also Exeter.[71] These published records are complemented by archival material collected at The National Archives, providing additional information relating to individuals taxed in the other counties of England. This archival material, catalogued under the reference E 179 and relating to lay and clerical taxation, provides subsidy records for various staple individuals discernible as residing in those counties not covered by the published records, with, for example, assessments drawn from Warwickshire, Kent, Hampshire and Cambridgeshire, to name but a few.[72] Owing to time constraints and the impossibility of collecting all tax data for both subsidies from across England, only published records of the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy for the city of London have been used.[73] Despite these geographical constraints, 239 of the staple individuals under study are discernible within the records of these two subsidies, providing important insight into their wealth, property and geographical spread across England.

3. Inquisitions *Post Mortem:*

This thesis also examines Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, which were local inquiries designed to discover the rights and incomes regarding crown lands and properties held by tenants-in-chief.

[71] See: J. Cornwall (ed.), *The County Community under Henry VIII: The Military Survey, 1522, and Lay Subsidy, 1524-5, for Rutland*, volume I (Oakham, 1980); A. C. Chibnall and A. Vere Woodman (eds.), *Subsidy Roll for the County of Buckingham anno 1524*, volume 8 (Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1950); M. A. Faraday (ed.), *Worcestershire Taxes in the 1520s: The Military Survey and Forced Loans of 1522-3 and the Lay Subsidy of 1524-7* (Worcestershire Historical Society, 2003); S. Swailes (trans.), 'Northamptonshire Tax Assessments: Tudor Lay Subsidies', published online at http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/subsidies/index.shtml; J. Cornwall (ed.), *Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1524-5*, volume 56 (Lewes, 1956); M. A. Faraday (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy for Shropshire 1524-7*, volume 3 (Keele, 1999); M. R. Rowe (ed.), *Tudor Exeter: Tax Assessments 1489-1595* (Torquay, 1977).

[72] For Warwickshire, see for example: E 179/192/139 rot 8; E 179/133/120/7; for Kent, see for example: E 179/124/187 rot 8d; E 179/124/187 rot 3d; E 179/124/187 rot 7d; for Hampshire, see for example: E 179/174/287 rot 17; E 179/174/287 rot 14 d; for Cambridgeshire, see for example: E 179/81/132 mem 5; E 179/81/161 mem 2; E 179/71/110 rot 4 mem 4.

[73] R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993). URL: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/xv-lxxvii [accessed 09/03/2018].

These Latin documents extend over four hundred years, surviving from 1235 until 1660, when feudal tenures were abolished.[74] The process began with the issuing of a writ of *diem clausit extremum* when such a tenant-in-chief died. This ordered an escheator to hold an inquisition in his county, whereby the value, extent and tenure of these lands would be determined by a jury composed of local men. The crown would then hold the lands until an heir could be found. If the heir was underage then he or she would become a ward and was taken into royal custody until they were old enough to inherit in their own right.[75] In terms of content, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* usually contain various identifying information such as the county in which the lands are situated, the name of the deceased and his death date, a description of the lands and properties under scrutiny, their estimated value and the type of tenure by which they were held from the King.

Inquisitions *Post Mortem* for this period survive in two parallel collections, owing to the process by which they were compiled and stored. The inquisitions themselves were returned to Chancery but copies were then produced and sent to the Exchequer as well. This replication of the documents acted as a safeguard for the escheator's accounts at audit. In other words, the Exchequer could examine the profits he had received on behalf of the King in the course of his duties as escheator and verify that all proceeds from the crown lands under review were present and correct.[76] Indeed, these copies are sometimes more legible than the original inquisition and are often employed by scholars to supply gaps where the Chancery versions are damaged or missing. Whilst these original Inquisitions *Post Mortem* are typically championed by historians, some also exist in published format. This is particularly pertinent to this research project, as Inquisitions *Post Mortem* between 1485 and 1509, the reign of Henry VII, are

[74] M. Hicks, 'Introduction', in M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 1.
[75] Hicks, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[76] M. Holford, 'The Exchequer Inquisitions *Post Mortem*', in L. Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century: Volume XIV* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 164.

published in English, although they have been shortened in some cases to reduce repetition.[77] Therefore, owing to their ready accessibility, these particular published Inquisitions *Post Mortem* have been cross-referenced with the Westminster staple individuals examined in this research, producing one hundred documents relating to fifty-six individuals.

Whilst there has been an increasing appreciation of Inquisitions *Post Mortem* as a source for the socio-economic history of late medieval England,[78] there are still limitations to acknowledge. Chief among these is the issue of reliability, owing to the procedural collation of the information contained by inquisitions. For instance, they rely heavily upon local memory, in the form of evidence taken from empanelled jurors, who may not be well informed about the financial condition and extent of the assets of the deceased.[79] As a result, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* are often subject to inconsistencies, with values which are either under-estimated or rounded-up. For example, M. Holford notes the corrections in the duplicate Exchequer Inquisitions *Post Mortem* as new, more accurate information became available, such as in the case of the manor of Didmarton in Gloucestershire which had actually been held in socage, rather than the initially vague assessment of 'tenure unknown', found in the original inquisition.[80] Indeed, Holford concludes from his assessment that there is a definite trend towards under-valuation, perhaps by as much as a third in the extents of original Inquisitions *Post Mortem*.[81]

[77] Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII* (London, 1898). URL: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1 [accessed 06/01/2017].
[78] See for example the various chapters devoted to Inquisitions *Post Mortem* and their applications to medieval history within M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012).
[79] B. M. S. Campbell, J. A. Galloway and M. Murphy, 'Rural Land-Use in the Metropolitan Hinterland, 1270-1339: The Evidence of *Inquisitiones Post Mortem'*, *Agricultural History Review*, 40 (1992), p. 5.
[80] Holford, 'The Exchequer Inquisitions *Post Mortem*', p. 171.
[81] M. Holford, 'Notoriously Unreliable: The Valuations and Extents', in M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 128.

Nevertheless, despite such issues associated with inaccuracy and the potential for under-estimation, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* should not be dismissed as wholly unreliable. Indeed, it is possible to examine the reliability of inquisitions through cross-referencing with other sources, where available, to certify the accuracy of the information they contain. Feet of Fines, as a record of land transfer, typically contain precise information regarding the land in question, making them a useful reliability test for Inquisitions *Post Mortem*. Indeed, M. Yates, who has done much to try and rehabilitate the reputation of these inquisitions, compares the descriptions of lands in inquisitions with those found in Feet of Fines. Using thirty-three examples of inquisitions extrapolated from Berkshire, Yates demonstrates incidences where the land descriptions in the inquisitions largely correspond with those found in the fines.[82] Furthermore, four of the inquisitions seem to have been exactly copied from earlier fines, not only demonstrating that escheators availed themselves of a wide range of sources when compiling their extents of the property of the deceased, but also going some way to improve the reliability of Inquisitions *Post Mortem* more generally. Clearly, Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, despite their limitations, are a useful source. Their contents and scope provide intimate insights into the landholding and property possession of tenants-in-chief, enabling detailed, reconstructive analysis of their lives. As such they will form a valuable part of the thesis, providing insight into the property portfolios of those individuals who held crown lands and estates.

Collective Biography as Methodology: Prosopography.

With the sources in place and the important research questions in mind, it is evident that this project requires a reconstructive methodology, in the form of prosopography. Prosopography, often called 'collective biography' by modern scholars, is the investigation of the common

[82] M. Yates, 'The Descriptions of Land Found in the Inquisitions *Post Mortem* and Feet of Fines: A Case Study of Berkshire', in M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 148.

background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives, such as their social origins, family ties, economic position and other such biographical details.[83] It is crucial to note therefore that prosopography is subtly different from that of simple biography, whereby only a single individual is analysed, often in painstaking detail, but typically not in connection with a larger group of people. Unsurprisingly therefore, this particular methodology is often favoured by medieval scholars in order to access the more obscure individuals within society, about whom, without broader analysis of a composite or sample group, little could be surmised.

In terms of its application as a methodology, medievalists have particularly made use of prosopography, owing to the often fragmented nature of surviving source material. Indeed, analysis of the broader, more generalised patterns across dozens of contemporary lives is typically, although not always, more feasible than reconstructing a single life in detail.[84] However, as with any methodology, there are limitations. Despite the fact that prosopography is designed to overcome the often peculiarly medieval problem of scarce and fragmentary records, it is crucial to acknowledge that this particular limitation will never be completely removed. Indeed, any kind of historical analysis will always be limited by the quality and quantity of the source material available. This issue of source scarcity is arguably thrown into sharper relief the further down the social scale one travels, particularly when reconstructing individuals of humbler socio-economic status, as they typically become less and less prominent within the documentary evidence. As a result, scholars, in their efforts to cling onto any relevant source evidence, may fail to make a measured consideration of just how pertinent such material truly is to their chosen individuals for research. For example, in J. L. Gillespie's analysis of Cheshire archers, he utilises a 1398 payroll to locate these particular members of Richard II's

[83] L. Stone, 'Prosopography', in L. Stone, *The Past and the Present* (London, 1981), p. 45.
[84] R. Fleming, 'Writing Biography at the Edge of History', *The American Historical Review*, 114, 3 (2009), p. 607.

retinue.[85] However, as Gillespie points out, it is then up to the diligent prosopographer to determine how applicable such a document is to his entire subject group, as it is was likely that those archers who are found to be giving recognizances and holding office were of a higher socio-economic status than their less well documented colleagues, potentially skewing the evidence for social categorisation.[86]

Whilst a general lack of documentary material can distort scholarly inquiry, as illustrated in the above example, a temporally uneven data set can prove just as problematic for the medieval prosopographer. Indeed, this particular limitation arguably emerges most strongly in analysing questions relating to social mobility and categorisation. As M. Bennett emphasizes in his analysis of Cheshire, medieval careerists, intent on climbing the socio-economic ladder, are typically best documented after they have achieved notability and professional success, usually later on in their lives.[87] As a result, determining the exact social origins of these individuals is often difficult or even impossible, depending upon surviving evidence relating to their early, and less notable, activities. For example, the successful careers of the merchants Philip Malpas and Hugh Wiche are clearly discernible through their associations with the guildsmen of the towns where they chose to do business, however there is little record of their origins.[88] Similarly, the evidence for the exalted career of the London goldsmith Edmund Shaa, who rose to the position of both alderman and mayor of the city, becomes less and less abundant the further back in time one travels. Ironically, in Edmund's case the last source relating to his life, his will, actually proves the most reliable in discerning his geographical and social origins, as, by a stroke of good fortune, it records a parish in Chester as his hometown.[89] Clearly a

[85] J. L. Gillespie, 'Medieval Multiple Biography: Richard II's Cheshire Archers', *The Historian*, 40, 4 (1978), p. 677.
[86] Gillespie, 'Medieval Multiple Biography', p. 677.
[87] M. J. Bennett, 'Sources and Problems in the Study of Social Mobility: Cheshire in the Later Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 128 (1978), p. 76.
[88] Bennett, 'Sources and Problems', p. 77.
[89] Bennett, 'Sources and Problems', p. 77.

prosopographical methodology, although arguably developed to counteract an inconsistent and fragmentary source base, cannot solve all of the medievalist's woes, requiring, in the words of J. Neale, 'increased ingenuity, critical capacity and imagination' on the part of the scholar in order to be successfully and appropriately applied as a methodology.[90]

Nevertheless, despite these minor limitations, prosopographical analysis is of central importance to this research. This reconstructive methodology, with its emphasis on collective analysis, is used to render the specific archetypal trends and characteristics of these staple individuals in deeper, humanising detail. Using the various source collections collated for this research, these Westminster staple individuals are tracked through other documents, building up a more detailed, collective picture of their lives and careers through their appearances in extents for debt, Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, lay subsidies and wills. This is then coupled with selected exemplars employed throughout this thesis, effectively demonstrating the various individual and collective insights uncovered in the course of prosopographical inquiry.

Chapter Summary.

This thesis comprises six main research chapters, each examining a key aspect of the lives of the individuals discernible within the certificates of the Westminster statute staple court. As prosopography emphasizes the reconstructive, collective narrative of groups of people, the themes and structure of the thesis will broadly reflect this, exploring their lives chronologically as well as thematically. As such, the first chapter, entitled 'Origin Stories', examines the geographical and ancestral beginnings of the individual users of the Westminster staple. It explores the geographical spread of these people across England and Wales, connecting this to the wider patterns relating to the wealth and status of these people. An examination of the ancestral dimension, where possible, is also undertaken in the form of tracing geographical

[90] J. Neale, 'The Biographical Approach to History', in J. Neale, *Essays in Elizabethan History* (New York, 1958), p. 230.

patterns relating to the parentage and grand-parentage of these individuals, so as to better understand these people within their wider familial context.

The second chapter is rather more statistically centred, collating the data for descriptors and social change in relation to these individuals. It sets out the composition of the sampling of staple individuals more generally, identifying the four main types of descriptor discernible, namely social, occupational, familial and official categories.[91] This chapter also explores the potential for social transition and mobility, owing to the fluidity with which many of these staple individuals applied descriptors and labels to themselves. Indeed, this chapter explores the ways in which sociological mobility models can be employed with regards to the various descriptors attached to the individuals under study, uncovering an important pattern of upwards vertical mobility, with downwards and lateral movements less common.

Balance is also important in this project, particularly when dealing with such a large sample size. Indeed, owing to the economic and commercial nature of the main source material, over-emphasis upon occupational or mercantile elites must be avoided. As such the third and fourth chapters examine some of the more problematic social categories uncovered within the Westminster staple, namely gentlemen, yeomen and husbandmen. Indeed, gentlemen form a major contingent of the staple, accounting for 926 of the individuals under study, meaning study of their social, cultural and commercial lives is especially important. By contrast, yeomen and husbandmen are far less well represented and have traditionally been seen as men of lesser means, making the collective reconstruction of their lives and careers a true test of the prosopographical methodology employed in this research. These two chapters ultimately act as demonstrative case studies therefore, compiling the collective patterns and traits relating to

[91] These descriptors refer to the quantifiable labels applied to these people in the records. They have been grouped into four categories: social descriptors, such as 'knight' and 'esquire', occupational descriptors, such as 'mercer' and 'goldsmith', familial descriptors, such as 'son' and 'widow', and finally official descriptors, such as 'alderman' and 'sheriff'.

these categories of individuals, so as to build a more accurate and detailed composite sketch of these elusive individuals.

The fifth chapter of this thesis explores the collective assets and wealth of these individuals, reconstructing their landholdings, cash wealth and movables. This chapter compiles data relating to the wealth of these individuals drawn from evaluations of cash, land and movables extrapolated from a range of sources, ultimately bringing these statistics together in the form of a 'comparative ranking system'. In this way, the collective assets of different categories of individuals can be compared, enabling their motives and priorities with regards to wealth more generally to be theorised upon. This chapter also considers the relationship between 'movables' and 'immovables', examining firstly the landed property portfolios of these people and secondly their movable goods, through the extrapolation of objects and personal possessions from wills and extents for debt. In this way, these more tangible markers of status and identity can be drawn out.

The final area of analysis relates more directly to the commercial nature of the certificates, examining the professional and business lives of these individuals. As such, chapter six emphasizes examination of official descriptors in great detail, reconstructing the careers of many of these staple individuals. Interestingly, examination of the professional lives of these people uncovers a clear binary pathway in terms of careerism: on the one hand the commercial purists, typically merchants or occupational elites, who sought success through business and moneylending alone, and, on the other, the dualists who actively combined staple engagement with the acquisition and holding of multiple civic and royal offices, undoubtedly bolstering their political positions.

Finally, it should be noted that a dual methodological focus is adopted throughout, whereby statistical analysis of the wider, collective trends relating to these individuals is rendered in

deeper, humanising detail through the use of prosopographical exemplars. Indeed, such reconstructive efforts are included in each chapter, highlighting the lives, activities and careers of selected individuals in especial detail, so as to demonstrate both the archetypal characteristics of these people, but also important points of difference.

Chapter 1. Origin Stories: Mapping Geographical and Ancestral Patterns.

1.1 Introduction and Historiographical Overview.

In seeking to explore this selected sample of staple individuals through a prosopographical methodology, the general structure of the thesis roughly reflects this focus, reconstructing their lives chronologically, as well as thematically. Indeed, this first chapter fulfils a dual function, primarily pinpointing the geographical and ancestral origins of the individuals in the Westminster statute staple group, as the natural starting point for any reconstructive analysis. Additionally, this chapter also outlines the wider regional trends relating to these individuals, such as their wealth, geographical mobility and social spread across late medieval England, to provide a more complete overview of the individuals under study, enabling the remainder of the thesis to focus upon the more intimate or individual details of their lives and careers.

In examining the literature devoted to broader regional patterns, basic geographical mapping of late medieval England often follows one of two main historiographical approaches. Some scholars elect to produce the widely encompassing county or regional study, which, despite its geographically ambitious nature, tends to lack intimate detail and focus upon more generalised themes, such as overall wealth or occupational structures across a wide area.[1] Indeed, on occasion such scholarship can be multi-authored, representing a collective pooling of focused geographical research into a wider regional study. A prime example is Laughton's, Dyer's and Jones's analysis of the urban hierarchy of the East Midlands, which aims to categorise the region's urban centres by size and commercial influence.[2] J. Kermode's study into medieval towns also falls within this historiographical category, as she focuses upon major urban centres

[1] Some examples include: W. G. Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1956), pp. 1-19; M. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500* (Woodbridge, 2007); T. R. Slater, 'The Urban Hierarchy in Medieval Staffordshire', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 11, 2 (1985), pp. 115-137; G. Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1985).

[2] J. Laughton, E. Jones, and C. Dyer, 'The Urban Hierarchy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of the East Midlands', *Urban History*, 28 (2001), pp. 331-357.

across England, exploiting lay subsidy records to determine urban populations. For instance, Kermode concludes that there were approximately twenty towns with two thousand taxpayers or more in 1377.[3] Conversely, other historians seem to prefer the singular town or city study, often angled towards detailed socio-economic reconstruction of a particular urban centre.[4] One of the most relevant studies to this particular research is C. Barron's exceptionally detailed monograph concerning the socio-political life of late medieval London. Indeed, Barron's work seeks to achieve a comprehensive degree of both individual and prosopographical reconstruction, including useful appendices of prominent Londoners.[5]

In connection with the wide-ranging geographical study and its various scholarly manifestations, the themes of regional mobility and ancestral transition have also been explored.[6] J. A. Raftis, writing in the 1970s, provides one of the earlier forays into the notion of geographical transience through his analysis of lay subsidy rolls. Raftis, looking at the 1327 and 1332 subsidy rolls for Huntingdonshire, attempts to track place-name surnames and compares their transition with a sampling from the lay subsidy rolls of the neighbouring counties of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, demonstrating the same patterns of migration and 'removing the old myth that medieval life was geographically static.'[7] One of the most well documented movement patterns in this period relates to London, with scholars often

[3] J. I. Kermode, 'The Greater Towns 1300-1540', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, volume I (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 441-466.

[4] Examples of focused urban studies include: C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, AD 1000-1600* (London, 1973); J. F. Pound, 'The Social and Trade Structure of Norwich 1525-1575', *Past and Present*, 34 (1966), pp. 49-69; G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989); M. Carlin, *Medieval Southwark* (London, 1996); A. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973); W. T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640: The Growth of an English Town* (Cambridge, 1958).

[5] C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (Oxford, 2004); C. Barron, 'London, 1300-1540', in D. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, I* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 395-440.

[6] Some examples of studies into regional mobility include: J. Patten, 'Patterns of Migration and Movement of Labour to Three Pre-Industrial East Anglian Towns', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2, 2 (1976), pp. 111-129; I. D. Whyte, *Migration and Society in Britain 1550-1830* (Basingstoke, 2000); P. McClure, 'Patterns of Migration in the Late Middle Ages: The Evidence of English Place-Name Surnames', *The Economic History Review*, 32, 2 (1979), pp. 167-182.

[7] J. A. Raftis, 'Geographical Mobility in Lay Subsidy Rolls', *Mediaeval Studies*, 38 (1976), pp. 387-388.

emphasizing the attraction of the capital for mobile individuals.[8] For example, C. Barron has remarked upon London's long history of immigration, often drawing individuals from the Home Counties, but also reaching further afield by the fifteenth century.[9]

C. Dyer has also addressed individual mobility, but crucially also acknowledges the potential ancestral dimension, specifically the way in which small towns acted as 'stepping stones for ambitious people', who went from their rural origins to nearby market towns, moving in the next generation to larger places which offered better opportunities. Dyer gives the illustrative example of John Hannes of Idlicote, who moved to Stratford in *c.*1430 and became one of the town's wealthiest traders and most important office-holders during the 1440s and 1450s. His son Thomas, undoubtedly taking advantage of his father's wealth and influence, became a London merchant, but remembered his birthplace in his will of 1502.[10] M. J. Bennett also emphasizes geographical transitions across multiple generations in his study of careerism, branding it 'wander lust.' Indeed, Bennett warns against underestimating the scale of mobility, with 'the tracks pioneered by one generation of adventurers becoming well-marked roads for their younger kinsman.'[11]

It is crucial to acknowledge that some scholars have noted the various problems in attempting to track the movement of late medieval individuals, perhaps explaining the limited dedicated literature. For example, J. Sheail, in his study of the distribution of wealth in the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy, acknowledges its unsuitability for tracing migration and movement as individuals are

[8] See for example: Whyte, *Migration and Society*, p. 64, who argues that the pattern of long-distance movement to London clearly discernible in the sixteenth century had already developed by the fourteenth century.
[9] Barron, 'London, 1300-1540', p. 399.
[10] C. Dyer, 'Small Places with Large Consequences: The Importance of Small Towns in England, 1000-1540', *Historical Research*, 75 (2002), pp. 18-19.
[11] M. J. Bennett, 'Careerism in Late Medieval England', in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 19-39.

listed only once in the place to which they 'had most resort' and the most prosperous elements in a community often held widely scattered investments. For example, in Babergh in Suffolk, Robert Byron, who was worth £22 in goods in the first survey, was absent from the second, leaving it entirely unclear as to whether this was the outcome of migration or simply a change in the ranking of his scattered sources of wealth.[12] Similarly J. Colson, who uses wills between 1374 and 1570 to map the occupational geography of Londoners, also recognises the issues connected with his chosen sources. For example, wills typically only provide evidence for the residences of the testator at the end of their lives, obscuring potential earlier movement from place to place.[13] Despite these issues, there are clear advantages to mapping the ancestral origins and potential transience of the individuals under study which, combined with analyses of geography, wealth and social patterning, can elucidate the general traits of these Westminster staple participants within the wider context of England as a whole.

1.2 Geographical Patterns: County Perspectives and Proportions.

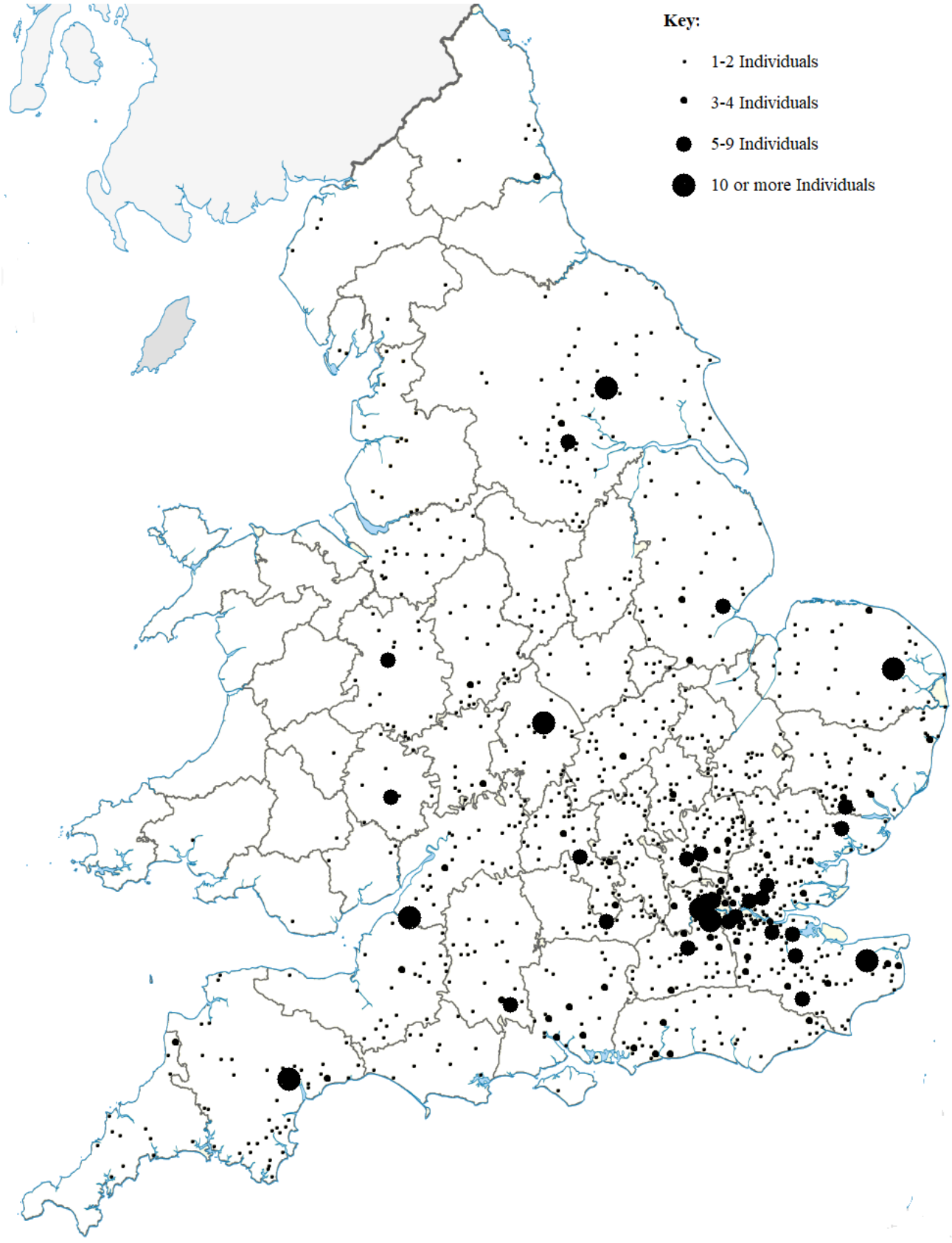
The phrase 'origin stories', employed in the title of this chapter, is both tantalizing and also methodologically perilous. Indeed, for this particular study, it is crucial to understand that an individual's origins mean very little if not properly contextualised, both in terms of his own life, but also the collective lives of the other staple participants. Rather than launching headlong into the simple mapping of birthplaces therefore, subsequent analysis will also briefly outline the wider regional, socio-economic and ancestral patterns of these individuals, in order to better frame their individual beginnings. The obvious starting point for mapping the geographical trends of these individuals are the residences listed in the certificates of statute staple. Of the 3,593 individuals extrapolated from the certificates, 3,162 of them, or approximately eighty-

[12] J. Sheail, 'The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as Indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London (1968), p. 58.
[13] J. Colson, 'Commerce, Clusters, and Community: A Re-Evaluation of the Occupational Geography of London, *c.* 1400-*c*. 1500', *The Economic History Review*, 69, 1 (2016), pp. 104-130.

eight per cent have a discernible residence listed. For example, Richard Marlott, a gentleman, recorded himself as being a resident of Westminster within the county of Middlesex in a certificate of March 1528.[14] Similarly, Richard Godfrey, husbandman, who borrowed £10 from a London weaver in 1485, resided in Cliffe in Kent.[15] Therefore the dot distribution map below (map 1.1) contains the plotted data relating to the residences of individuals extrapolated from the certificates, including the data relating to those people with multiple and alternate residences. For instance, the data relating to Buckinghamshire initially yields forty-three individuals residing within the county. However, when references relating to multiple residences are accounted for, there are in fact forty-five individuals originating from, or at some point residing within Buckinghamshire. As an exemplar, one of these transient Buckinghamshire residents was Walter Stonor, who was primarily recorded in the certificates as hailing from Rotherfield Pippard, an Oxfordshire settlement, but also made reference to his alternative residence in Wraysbury, a village within the medieval county lines of Buckinghamshire. In the interests of comprehensiveness therefore, the dot distribution map below includes these other residences, so as to generate a more complete picture of the geographical distribution of these staple individuals.[16]

[14] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, C 241/282/95.
[15] C 152/65/1/20.
[16] C 241/283/38; C 152/65/2/407.

Map 1.1 Dot Distribution Map Showing Residences of Individuals Appearing in the Certificates of Statute Staple.



Having outlined the methodology behind the collation of residence data, even a cursory glance at the map indicates several important geographical trends, such as the fact that certain counties yield a larger proportion of staple participants than others. For instance, outside of the capital, Kent and Essex boast the greatest quantities of staple individuals, with 160 and 145 residents respectively. By contrast, Westmorland, with just three individuals, and Rutland, with five staple participants, rank among the lowest counties by purely numerical proliferation, an altogether unsurprising statistic given their comparatively small regional sizes. Furthermore, in examining the actual settlements, certain towns and cities, often major trading and commercial centres, produce substantial quantities of staple traffic. Indeed, the eye is immediately drawn to the apparent dominance of Coventry in Warwickshire, owing to its midland positioning, which boasts fourteen staple users as residents, a statistic only rivalled by other prominent southern settlements, such as Southwark, or even Westminster itself. Clearly such obvious patterns reflect the commercial engagement of many of the individuals discernible within the certificates, particularly as many of the most densely populated residences are riverine or coastal trading ports, such as Exeter (ten), Bristol (eleven) and Norwich (eleven).

An overall general preference for the southern counties must also be acknowledged, particularly as London and its environs seem to exude a powerful ‘pull’ for our chosen individuals. Indeed, a total of 1,533 staple participants originate from the capital, which is approximately 48.5 per cent of the number of individuals who have discernible residences within the certificates. Additionally, a clustering effect is clearly demonstrated on the map, with several prominent urban centres around London also yielding high proportions of staple individuals, with settlements such as Westminster (sixteen), Southwark (twenty-one), Clerkenwell (five) and Islington (five) all featuring prominently. Of course, the simplistic explanation is the commercial importance of London and also its physical proximity to the

Westminster staple court, naturally attracting prominent businessmen from the capital and the surrounding area. Although this connection between geographical proliferation and the commercial sphere is clearly important, it is not the primary focus of this research and has been discussed in detail elsewhere.[17] Finally, it remains to mention the impressive regional representation demonstrated in the dot distribution map, as the majority of medieval counties yield individuals for this study, indicating not only the breadth of commercial and staple engagement but also the potential scope of the thesis. Indeed, only county Durham and some parts of Wales lack representation, making for a geographically wide-ranging study of a commercially-engaged grouping of individuals living in late medieval England.

Moving away from simple geography therefore, other wide-ranging patterns require discussion. In line with historiographical tradition, the socio-economic spread of these staple individuals can be mapped in similar fashion, indicating the ways in which wealth and status proliferated for this particular sampling. Beginning with measures of wealth, there are no wholly complete, universally applicable records to access the financial well-being of the staple individuals under study. For instance, although lay subsidies seem to offer broad spectrum coverage of the majority of English counties, only 239 of our chosen individuals have been located within them, limiting the extent to which the geographical spread of their wealth can be estimated using these particular sources alone. Nevertheless, there are other, more approximate methodologies available to us and in order to collate a rough estimation of an individual's wealth, the various cash assessments or valuations discernible in the main supplementary material have been collected and averaged by county, as shown in the choropleth map below (map 1.2). The patterns of estimable wealth outlined in the map have

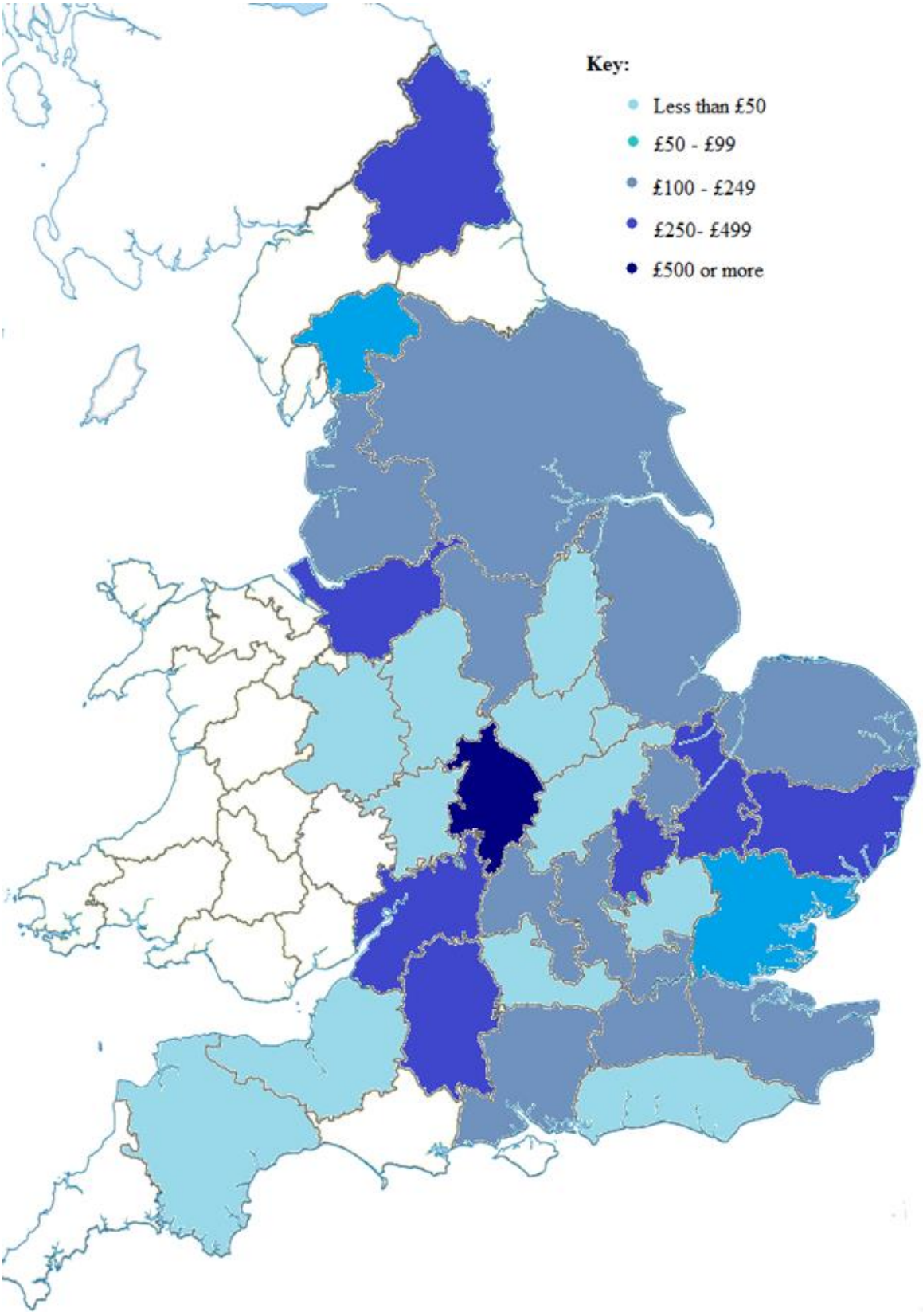
[17] I would refer the reader to R. Goddard, *Credit and Trade in Later Medieval England, 1353-1532* (London, 2016), pp. 195-242, specifically chapter five, which engages with the notion of London as a 'commercial powerhouse' and the impact the capital had upon the businessmen of the staple certificates. Indeed, the patterns outlined above broadly match those uncovered by Goddard, indicating that the individuals chosen for this study exhibit similar geo-commercial patterns.

been generated using the total individual cash bequests in wills and the estimated valuations included in many of the Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, as well as lay subsidy assessments where applicable in an effort to show approximate wealth for the Westminster staple individuals by county. As an exemplar, Lincolnshire yields eight individuals with wills, such as Robert Bate, a merchant from Navenby who left a total of £43 6s. 8d. in cash bequests and Richard Pinchbeck, esquire of Pinchbeck, who bequeathed £111 10s. 8d. in his will of 1492.[18] When all these cash bequests are collated, the Lincolnshire wills produce a mean of £296 10s. per person, due in large part to the enormous cash sum of £823 13s. 4d. left by Sir Christopher Askew in 1534.[19] Such collation of wealth can then be replicated for other relevant sources for Lincolnshire individuals, such as the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy, in which four staple men are discernible, ranging from the sizeable £100 estimation of William Mason to the humbler £16 assessment of the gentleman Christopher Cranwell, producing a mean valuation of £49.[20] Finally, as a county, Lincolnshire yields just two Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, one from Hugh Fordam of Boston and the other from Thomas Pinchbeck, a relation of the Richard Pinchbeck mentioned above, but only giving a mean total of £3 9s. per person.[21] As a result of the collation of these various estimations of individual wealth, Lincolnshire yields a mean of £160 18s. per person, accounting for both those of wealthy and moderate means and placing it in the £100 to £249 bracket on the map.

[18] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Wills 1384-1858, PROB 11/15/658; PROB 11/10/618.
[19] PROB 11/27/529.
[20] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer Particulars of Account and Other Records Relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation, E 179/136/312 rot 9 mem 3; E 179/136/341 rot 1d.
[21] 'Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, Henry VII, Entries 651-700', in C. Flower, M. C. B. Dawes and A. C. Wood (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 3, Henry VII* (London, 1955), pp. 371-388. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol3/pp371-388 [accessed 17/08/2017]; 'Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, Henry VII, Entries 151-200', in C. Flower, M. C. B. Dawes and A. C. Wood (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 3, Henry VII* (London, 1955), pp. 82-124. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol3/pp82-124 [accessed 17/08/2017].

However, the limitations of this methodology must be acknowledged, chiefly the inescapable problem of documentary scarcity and proportional representation. Indeed, none of the counties are particularly well represented by individuals with relevant supplementary records, limiting the extent to which we can attribute archetypal status to the trends uncovered in the choropleth map. For example, Cambridgeshire has twenty-nine staple individuals in total, but only two of them have lay subsidy assessments and a further two have estimable cash totals from wills, whilst none of the Cambridgeshire natives yield an Inquisition *Post Mortem* for analysis. Collating the wealth discernible in the wills and the subsidy assessments produces an average valuation of £298 4s., as demonstrated in the choropleth map, but unfortunately this estimation is technically only representative of 13.8 per cent of the total staple users from Cambridgeshire. Furthermore, in some instances there are no relevant records discernible for certain counties, such as Dorset, which yields no wills, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* or subsidy records for our particular sampling, preventing its inclusion in the estimable wealth map. Finally, it should be remembered that these particular sources are diverse and often unrelated to one another. Indeed, they arguably all measure different kinds of wealth, as for instance, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* inventory landed wealth, whilst the pure financials pulled from bequests in wills are wholly cash-based. Although the chosen financial brackets in the choropleth map have been selected with deliberately broad ranges, in an effort to somewhat counteract these varying measures of wealth, the inherently imperfect nature of the source material should nevertheless be acknowledged, demonstrating the difficulties in analysing such a large quantity of individuals through purely statistical analysis alone.

Map 1.2 Choropleth Map Showing Regional Spread of 'Average Estimable Wealth' of the Westminster Staple Group.



Despite such limitations, it is possible to compare these estimates of wealth with the findings of other regional studies, many of which typically remark upon the financial dominance of London and the southeast.[22] Interestingly however, this particular expected pattern for southerly dominance is only somewhat discernible in map 1.2. For example, the staple individuals of southern counties, such as Kent, Surrey and Hampshire, all yield a sizeable mean estimated wealth of £100 to £249, with Middlesex boasting an impressive mean of £218 19s. per person. However, when examining the choropleth map as a whole, there is only a rough correlation with this particular historiographical consensus in regional mapping for southern England to be generally "wealthier" than the north.[23] Indeed, outside of the aforementioned Home Counties, there seems to be a distinct level of variability in wealth across England, rather than the unchallenged southern dominance often uncovered in other studies.[24] For instance, the further north one goes, the more financially consistent the counties become, with, for example, Yorkshire, Leicestershire and Cheshire all yielding at least comparable estimations for wealth to the southern counties. Indeed, Northumberland stands out particularly strongly, producing a mean estimate of £309 10s. 8d. per person, resulting in its inclusion in the somewhat exclusive bracket of £250 to £499.

Moreover, some counties seem to buck all expected patterns for southern dominance, primarily Warwickshire, which emerges as the county with the highest mean estimable wealth, yielding a seemingly disproportionate £553 13s. per person. Indeed, upon closer inspection of Warwickshire's staple residents, this extraordinary wealth is found to be due in large part to Hugh Clopton, a Stratford-Upon-Avon born merchant who opted to divide his time between

[22] See for example: H. C. Darby, R. E. Glasscock, J. Sheail and G. R. Versey, 'The Changing Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England: 1086-1334-1525', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 5, 3 (1979), pp. 257-259; P. Nightingale, 'The Lay Subsidies and the Distribution of Wealth in Medieval England, 1275-1334', *The Economic History Review*, 57, 1 (2004), pp. 19-23.
[23] Darby, Glasscock, Sheail and Versey, 'The Changing Geographical Distribution of Wealth', pp. 257-259.
[24] See for example: Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, p. 188; C. Dyer, 'How Urbanized was Medieval England?', in J. M., Duvosquel and E. Thoen (eds.), *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe: Studia in Honorem Adriaan Verhulst* (Ghent, 1995), p. 181; A. D. Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns, 1400-1600* (Cambridge, 1991).

his birthplace and the capital, effectively distorting the county's otherwise typical financials. For instance, Clopton bequeathed the sizeable sum of £2,151 to various beneficiaries in his will of 1496, a figure vastly superior to those found in other Warwickshire wills.[25] Nevertheless, despite this potential for financial distortion, such patterning seems to indicate that the regional spread of estimable wealth for the staple participants does not happily correlate with expectation. Rather it would seem that the simple numerical dominance of individuals in the south, as shown in map 1.1, becomes somewhat inverted when mapping their actual financials, as shown in map 1.2. Whilst this patterning might initially seem contradictory and counter-intuitive, it likely reflects the socio-economic differences between northern and southern participants in the Westminster staple. Put another way, the expense in time and money to regularly utilise such a southerly court likely made financial and social prominence a necessary precursor for those further afield, whilst those hailing from the comparatively closer counties, for example Sussex and Gloucestershire which both yield averages of less than £50, did not require such socio-economic support.

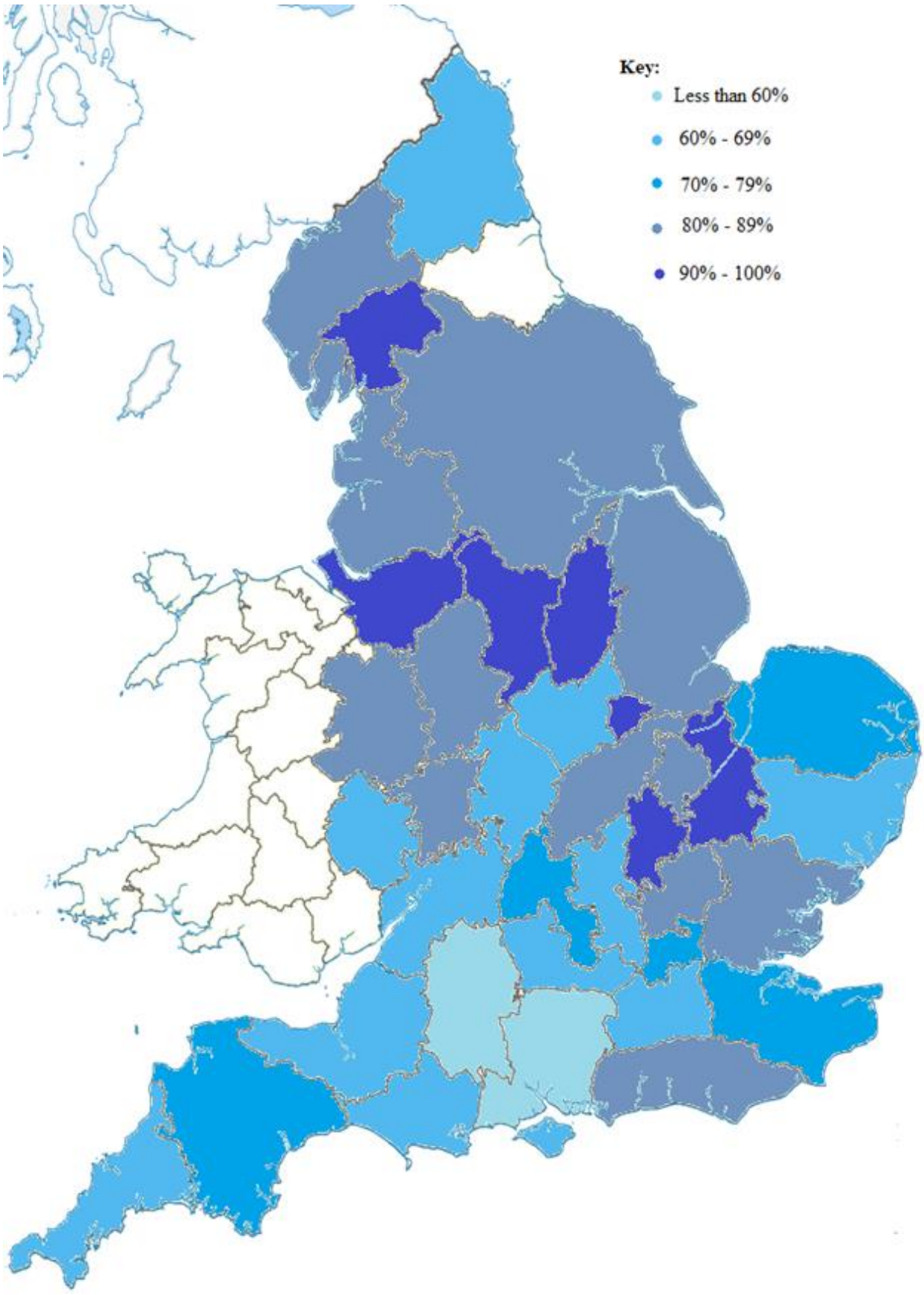
Indeed, this hypothesis can be tested to some extent by reproducing a similar methodology to roughly map descriptors applied to users of the Westminster staple. As such the choropleth map below (map 1.3) demonstrates the collation of the descriptors of the staple individuals by county and the percentage proportion of social descriptors discernible, namely identifiers including 'gentleman', 'knight', 'esquire' and so on, compared with occupational descriptors, such as 'merchant', 'dyer' and 'skinner'. For example, the darkest areas on the map indicate an almost complete percentage dominance of individuals with social descriptors, such as Cheshire, whereby seventeen of the eighteen staple participants originating from the county yield such identifiers (94.4 per cent). Conversely, the lightest areas of the map, covering the counties of Wiltshire and Hampshire, represent a more balanced relationship between

[25] PROB 11/11/66.

occupational and social descriptors. Indeed, Wiltshire has a comparatively low proportion of social descriptors (fifty per cent) with all such individuals, aside from the singular incidence of a husbandman, describing themselves as knights, esquires and gentlemen. In looking at the map as a whole therefore, it is clearly apparent that social descriptors proportionally dominate the further one travels from the Westminster staple, with many of the more northerly counties yielding a greater than eighty per cent proliferation. For example, eighty of the ninety-nine individuals from Yorkshire yield social descriptors (approximately eighty-one per cent) comprising forty-four gentlemen, twenty-five esquires, eight knights and five yeomen, with Edward Blount and Francis Hastings yielding multiple genteel descriptors, accounting for the slight numerical deviance in the expected total. In similar fashion, twenty of the twenty-five Lancashire individuals (eighty per cent) have social descriptors, specifically fifteen gentlemen, three esquires, two yeomen and a single knight, John Southworth. In examining such statistics therefore, it is clear that those staple participants residing at some distance from London and Westminster were proportionally more likely to have a social descriptor rather than an occupational one. Whilst the mapping of social status is not an exact science and the fluidity of such terms must be acknowledged,[26] the generalised patterns uncovered in map 1.3 nevertheless indicate the variation in social make-up between staple individuals in northern and southern counties. Furthermore, the greater proportions of knights, esquires and gentlemen appearing outside of London and its neighbouring counties roughly correlates with increasing average estimable wealth, strongly indicating such provincials to be the socio-economic elites, going some way to explain their participation and appearance in the certificates of statute staple.

[26] This fluidity in the application of descriptors will be explored in detail in chapter two of this thesis.

Map 1.3 Percentage Spread of Social Descriptors by County.



1.3 Mapping Movement: The Late Medieval Man was Not a Static Entity.

So far, this analysis has explored general and wide-ranging geographical and socio-economic patterns in an effort to contextualise the individuals under study. However, in line with historiographical assertion, such exploration requires acknowledgement of movement and the potential for significant individual mobility. Indeed, it would be erroneous to profess the residence data plotted in the maps above as representative of the true geographical origins of these staple participants, owing to the fact that medieval people did not live regionally static lives and often made multiple important movements. Whilst some individuals did indeed remain in their hometowns from cradle to grave, many others produce multiple settlements as their place of residence, suggesting a significant level of transience, both permanent and impermanent. A prime example is John Greenfield, a gentleman, who first crops up in Okehampton, Devon, in the early 1520s, which seems to be his ancestral home given that his two brothers, Richard and George, also reside there. Although somewhat suppositional, it would seem John was not the eldest, given that Richard Greenfield is the only brother described as 'son and heir' of their father Thomas.[27] Perhaps succumbing to the draw of the capital and its manifold opportunities for younger sons, John Greenfield from then on appears in the certificates alone and seems to alternate between residing in London and nearby Kensington in Middlesex from 1525 onwards, suggesting he had indeed moved.[28] Whilst this exemplar of Richard Greenfield's mobility is particularly comprehensive, owing to a combination of unusually detailed certificates and suppositional narrative construction, much of the transience uncovered in the certificates is typically rather vague, often obscuring direction and motivation, necessitating examination of supplementary material, where available, to attempt to precisely plot patterns of mobility.

[27] C 152/65/2/556.
[28] C 241/277/76; C 152/65/2/697.

Obviously the most chronologically sensible starting point for attempting to map mobility is with statistics relating to birthplaces, as the irrefutable geographical starting point for an individual. However, only on occasion can geographical movement be rendered in such chronological clarity, as references to individual birthplaces are scanty at best. Lamentably, of the 3,593 individuals in this study, only sixty-three have a clearly discernible settlement as their place of birth (1.75 percent). Indeed, the majority of these birthplaces have, somewhat ironically, been collected from wills, in the rare occurrence when the testator makes especial reference to their natal origins. For example, the prominent Londoner John Warde, successful grocer, alderman and eventual mayor of the capital, revealed his humbler origins outside of the city limits in his will of 1501, mentioning Hinxworth in north Hertfordshire as his birthplace.[29] Similarly, the wealthy London widow Margaret Capell, whose husband Sir William Capell dominated the political scene of the capital in the later fifteenth century, left behind a will which remembered her Cornish roots and more specifically her birthplace at Lanherne in Cornwall.[30]

Table 1.1 Geographical Movement from an Individual's Birthplace.

Transition from Provincial Birthplace to London	Transition from London Birthplace to Provinces	Transition from Birthplace within same County	Transition from Birthplace between Counties	No Transition from Birthplace	Transition Not Clear
46	0	0	4	5	8

[29] PROB 11/12/304.
[30] PROB 11/19/456.

Despite being few and far between, these statistics relating to birthplaces can nevertheless render patterns of geographical mobility in clearer, chronological context. Indeed, as shown in table 1.1, forty-six of the individuals with birthplaces are born outside of London but later move to the capital, presumably for careerist motivations. For instance, Miles Gerard, a London fishmonger, acknowledged his northerly origins in his will, referencing the settlement of Ormskirk in west Lancashire as his place of birth.[31] Similarly, Richard Colier and Roger Mone, a mercer and tailor of London respectively, are both shown to have their natal origins in the town of Horsham in Sussex, undoubtedly moving to the capital for occupational and commercial opportunity.[32] Moreover, the fact that none of the individuals actually born in London itself move away seems to further emphasize this seemingly irresistible pull of the capital, as those lucky enough to be born there, seem to remain there. Indeed, this is evidenced by the fact that four of the five individuals recorded as making no transition at all from their birthplaces, are in fact from London, such as Robert Fabyan, draper and chronicler, who was born, lived and died in the capital, as his parents John and Agnes had done before him.[33] Clearly basic birthplace statistics demonstrate an altogether unsurprising trend for young businessmen to leave their provincial hometowns for London, with the careerist motivations for such a trend somewhat mirrored in the immobility of those already born there. Indeed, this statistical analysis of birthplaces can be expanded through examination of the actual individuals involved, enabling a greater degree of theorisation regarding their motivations for mobility. As such the varying descriptors attached to these particular individuals with known birthplaces has been presented in the table below (table 1.2), with the omission only of those where geographical transition is obscured or unclear.

[31] PROB 11/20/418.
[32] PROB 11/24/320; PROB 11/12/64.
[33] M-R. McLaren, 'Fabyan, Robert (d. 1513)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9054 [accessed 17/08/2017].

Table 1.2 Descriptors Applied to Staple Participants with Known Birthplaces.

Descriptor(s)	Transition from Provincial Birthplace to London	Transition from Birthplace between Counties	No Transition from Birthplace
Clerk	-	1	-
Mercer	17	-	-
Gentleman	7	1	1
Merchant	3	-	1
Knight	11	1	2
Merchant Adventurer	1	-	-
Goldsmith	3	-	-
Skinner	3	-	-
Draper	7	-	2
Merchant of the Calais Staple	2	-	-
Merchant Tailor	2	-	-
Fishmonger	1	-	-
Lawyer	1	1	1
Baron	-	-	1
Widow	1	-	-
Lady	1	-	-
Tailor	1	-	-
Grocer	2	-	-
Esquire	-	-	1
Archbishop	-	2	-
Haberdasher	1	-	-

In examining table 1.2, occupational descriptors clearly predominate, particularly for those individuals moving from a provincial birthplace to London. Indeed, forty-four of the seventy-nine descriptors collated are occupational. For instance, seventeen of these individuals are

described as mercers, a further seven as drapers, with merchants, goldsmiths and skinners also featuring somewhat significantly. Although knights also feature strongly, yielding eleven individuals labelled as such, this particular pattern is most likely the result of descriptive distortion, owing to the fact that many successful London merchants attained a knighthood during the course of their careers. For example, Thomas Kitson, a mercer who conducted his business from his residence in the capital but was born further afield in Warton, Lancashire, was knighted because of his successful commercial and public career whilst in London.[34] As a result, the majority of the knights recorded above are in fact the same merchants and artisans, whose multiple descriptors necessitate more than one entry in the table. It would seem therefore that the earlier assumptions regarding the commercial and careerist motivations behind such a tendency are accurate, particularly as it is highly likely that many of these young, provincially-born individuals sought apprenticeship with London masters. Indeed, an unusually illustrative example is that of John Aleyn, another successful London mercer in the certificates, who was born *c.*1470 in Thaxted, Essex to an agrarian family of somewhat moderate means.[35] He did not remain in Essex however, as examination of livery records reveal that the now twenty-something John Aleyn was made free of his London master, Roger Bourchier, in 1497, indicating that he had to have made his transition to the capital to take up his apprenticeship at a fairly young age.[36]

Whilst analysis of birthplaces has uncovered a perhaps somewhat predictable tendency for up and coming provincial businessmen to transition to London, the geographical narrative does

[34] C. Welch, 'Kitson, Sir Thomas (1485–1540)', rev. I. W. Archer, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15833 [accessed 18/08/2017].
[35] C 152/65/2/1; C 241/281/45; E. L. Furdell, 'Allen, Sir John (*c.* 1470–1544)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/68011 [accessed 18/08/2017]; E. L., Furdell 'The King's Man in London: The Career of Sir John Allen', *Proceedings of the Montana Academy of Sciences*, 37 (1977), p. 185.
[36] Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*. URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEW1485 [accessed 18/08/2017].

not end here. Of the individuals in this study, 1,570 provide information relating to their current residence on more than one occasion, enabling a certain level of insight into geographical transition. Indeed, there are eighty-seven individuals with two or more different residences discernible in the documentation, of which fifty-eight have multiple residences listed within the certificates of statute staple, twenty-one demonstrate a change in settlement in their wills and a further eight demonstrate geographical transition in other, miscellaneous sources (table 1.3).

Table 1.3 Direction of Movement of Staple Individuals with Multiple Residences.

Transition from Provinces to Capital	Transition from Capital to Provinces	Transition within same County	Transition between Counties	Transition not Clear/permanent
6	24	29	17	10

Statistically speaking, these eighty-six individuals only amount to 5.5 per cent of the 1,570 staple individuals with more than one extant reference to their current residence. Although such statistics may therefore seem proportionally insignificant, it is important to acknowledge that even those individuals with multiple appearances are not immune to source limitations, as they may well transition during a time uncovered by the documentation. Regardless, these basic transition statistics are still highly illustrative and require further discussion, particularly as they buck the expected pattern, whereby the 'pull' of London outlined previously is not clearly discernible. Indeed, only six of the individuals transition from the provinces to the capital, such as William Arnold, a clothier residing in Alton Westbrook, Hampshire, in a certificate of 1503, who appears some twenty or so years later, now living in London, but still partaking in the cloth industry.[37] It would seem therefore that whilst many individuals moved to the capital in

[37] C 241/275/140; C 241/280/97.

early life, likely in pursuit of apprenticeships and patronage, this pattern did not continue, and instead became somewhat reversed in later life. Indeed, the prominence of individuals leaving London for other counties cannot be ignored, with twenty-four such transitions discernible in table 1.3. For instance, such a transition is visible in a certificate detailing the borrowing activity of John Shanke, crucially described as residing in Cricklade in Wiltshire but also 'formerly citizen and brewer of London'.[38] Perhaps one of the most illustrative examples of such movement is that of Richard Walker, a seemingly successful London grocer emerging in the certificates of the late 1480s, who is revealed to have moved from the capital by his death in 1494, as his will clearly described him as 'now parishioner of Lewisham in Kent.'[39] Indeed, such a pattern can potentially be linked with the debate concerning the mercantile purchase of landed estates and manors in this period.[40] Although by no means universal, the pattern uncovered here may well be representative of such individuals retiring to the country in genteel style abodes, having made their fortune in the capital some years previously. Supposition aside, it is evident Shanke and Walker, seemingly like many others, elected to leave the capital to reside elsewhere in later life, effectively reversing the earlier pattern outlined above, but nevertheless still opting to utilise the Westminster staple court, suggesting their business affairs continued to bring them to London on occasion.

Whilst such patterns of mobility seem initially straightforward, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential limitations, particularly when relying only on the residence evidence of the

[38] C 241/268/1.

[39] C 241/266/10; PROB 11/10/320.

[40] For discussion of this debate see: S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948), pp. 234-5, who sees it as one of the 'commonplaces of English social history to remark upon the successful merchant's traditional ambition to become a gentleman', often through the purchase of a landed estate; C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 121, who argues that some merchants did indeed buy manors but that they remained on the fringes of gentry society; S. O'Connor, 'Adam Fraunceys and John Pyel: Perceptions of Status among Merchants in Fourteenth-Century London', in D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 17, 20, 24, who notes the extensive purchase of manors and estates undertaken by the successful merchants Adam Fraunceys and John Pyel.

certificates, as they may mask impermanence. For example, William Draper, a prominent mercer, emerges multiple times in the collection of staple certificates, residing in the capital from his first appearance in 1504 up until September 1526, when, despite still being described as 'citizen and mercer of London', Draper is actually revealed to be 'now living in the parish of Cressall in Essex.'[41] Had Draper's staple activity ceased there, his individual geographical mobility would appear relatively straightforward, perhaps indicating a mercer buying property outside London to retire to in later life. However, Draper's movements are revealed to be much more complex and impermanent, with a later certificate of 1527 revealing he had in fact returned to London, presumably for business.[42] Evidently William Draper retained two residences, effectively moving back and forth from Essex and London in line with his various business demands, and demonstrating the issues associated with tracking the mobility of some individuals, particularly through staple certificates alone.

Nevertheless, other patterns of regional mobility outlined in table 1.3 require discussion, such as the proportionally large quantity of individuals moving about within the same county. Indeed, twenty-nine people exhibit such a transition, which is likely explainable simply as evidence of multiple property ownership in a given locale. For example, Francis Hastings, an esquire who borrowed 100 marks from a London draper in a certificate of 1525, is described as residing in Roxby in Yorkshire.[43] However, in 1528 the same Francis Hastings recorded his residence as Boynton, another settlement approximately forty-five miles south along the Yorkshire coastline.[44] It would seem likely that Hastings owned property in multiple places in East Yorkshire, enabling and perhaps necessitating a highly itinerant business lifestyle. Indeed, the intra-county movements of certain individuals confirm this notion, as in the particularly

[41] C 241/280/11.
[42] C 241/280/129.
[43] C 241/278/86.
[44] C 241/280/153.

detailed case of the Chamberlains of Oxfordshire. Sir Edward Chamberlain, who emerges fairly frequently within the certificates, held lands in multiple counties, but came to reside permanently in Oxfordshire, owing to the county connections of his mother's family. Indeed, Edward Chamberlain's very first appearance in the certificates in 1509 is alongside his maternal grandfather, Sir Richard Fowler of Rycote in Oxfordshire.[45] From 1509 onwards, Edward is recorded as residing at Shirburn in Oxfordshire, following his mother Sybil's acquisition of the manor in 1505.[46] However, Edward seems to have transitioned from his maternal residence at some point before 1520, when he is described in the certificates as 'Edward Chamberlain, knight of Woodstock, Oxfordshire.'[47] Moreover, it would seem that such a move aligned with Chamberlain's responsibilities, as, for instance, his appointment as lieutenant and keeper of Woodstock Park, whether the driving force behind, or the result of, his intra-county transition, evidently reflected his newfound focus upon and permanent residence at his estate in Woodstock. Indeed, upon his death in September 1543, Edward Chamberlain was interred at Woodstock, suggesting he did indeed reside there permanently for much of his life.[48] Interestingly, Leonard Chamberlain, eldest son and heir of Edward, who, despite conducting business with his father from their Woodstock residence in certificates of 1524 and 1527, ultimately seems to have returned to Shirburn at some point, as Leonard recorded the manor as his residence in his will of 1560.[49] Ultimately the Chamberlains seem to have regularly moved between their various Oxfordshire properties, producing a certain level of intra-county mobility, whereby the underlying motivations for such transitions were seemingly business or career related.

[45] C 152/65/2/315.
[46] L. MacMahon, 'Chamberlayne, Sir Edward (1480–1543)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5057 [accessed 22/08/2017].
[47] C 241/283/39.
[48] MacMahon, 'Chamberlayne, Sir Edward'. URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5057 [accessed 22/08/2017].
[49] C 152/65/2/756; C 241/280/32; PROB 11/44/304.

1.4 Complicating Matters? Introducing the Ancestral Dimension.

So far analysis of geographical patterns has outlined the somewhat simplified beginnings and movements of the individuals under study. However, examination of origins can be conceived in a more complex way, through recognition of the ancestral dimension. Indeed, as indicated by the multi-generational case of the Chamberlains outlined above, analysis of ancestral patterns relating to an individual's parentage and grand-parentage not only contextualises the various patterns already explored, but will also extend the breadth of this study, potentially demonstrating how, why and when such transitions occurred.

Therefore, in order to access the ancestral dimension and truly uncover the origins of the individuals under study, the number of staple participants with known parentage has been collated. There are 248 individuals with discernible parentage, which range from the exceptionally detailed, such as the information pertaining to Richard Fermor, a London grocer, who is revealed to be the youngest son of Thomas Fermor, an Oxfordshire wool merchant and his second wife Emma, to the distinctly vague parental overview of Francis and Thomas Wodmanry, both sons of an otherwise unspecified Thomas Wodmanry.[50] There are 148 individuals who yield at least one parental descriptor, enabling some level of generational reconstruction (table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Parentage Statistics for the Westminster Staple Group.

Individuals with Known Parentage	No. of Sample with Parental Descriptor (s)
248	148

[50] B. Morgan, 'Fermor, Richard (1480x84–1551)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9345 [accessed 22/08/2017]; C 152/65/2/142.

Whilst collation of these parental descriptors yields a degree of social and occupational variation, it is immediately apparent that those of genteel origin predominate. For example, of the 148 demarcated parents, forty are described as knights, with a further twenty-seven and twenty-two as gentlemen and esquires respectively. For instance, Thomas Brandon of Southwark, Surrey, a knight who borrowed 200 marks in 1499, was in fact the third son of Sir William Brandon, who died eight years previously.[51] Another strikingly similar example is that of Anthony Ughtred, Yorkshire knight and staple participant, who was also a third son, born to Sir Robert Ughtred of Stokesley.[52] Whilst this undoubtedly indicates something of genteel generational transmission patterns, it is crucial to acknowledge the fact that accessing an individual's parentage is highly reliant upon documentary prominence, and as a result the ancestral origins of socially elevated dynasties, such as knightly families, tends to be more easily discernible than their humbler counterparts. Therefore, this apparently overwhelming parental gentility is likely representative merely of source limitations, rather than the actual ancestral make-up of the majority of staple individuals under study.

Despite this potential for statistical distortion, this sampling of the parentage of staple participants is nevertheless abundantly useful. Indeed, setting aside simple proportional analysis, a wide diversity of parental descriptors is discernible, ranging from the modest yeoman, such as Thomas Holles, a member of the Warwickshire yeomanry whose successful progeny included William Holles, eventual alderman of London, all the way up to the King himself, who is revealed to have illegitimately fathered one of our selected individuals, Arthur Plantagenet.[53] Mercantile ancestries are also discernible, with twelve parents described as such,

[51] C 241/273/44; S. J. Gunn, 'Brandon, Sir Thomas (d. 1510)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3268 [accessed 23/08/2017].
[52] C 241/282/126; L. MacMahon, 'Ughtred, Sir Anthony (d. 1534)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27979 [accessed 23/08/2017].
[53] J. D. Alsop, 'Holles, Sir William (1471?–1542)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13557 [accessed 23/08/2017]; D. Grummitt, 'Plantagenet, Arthur,

including Nicholas Mores, a Worcestershire mercer, whose son John appears in a staple certificate of 1520, presumably continuing on in his father's commercial footsteps.[54] Indeed, this parental sampling demonstrates that the occupational heritage of the Westminster statute staple group was highly diverse, with a large variety of industries represented, such as grocery, masonry, drapery, baking and brewing, to name but a few. Some examples include William Hyron, whose father Richard was a London broiderer, and the case of the exalted Sir Reynold Bray, eldest son of Richard Bray, who was a gentleman and surgeon.[55] As such, parental descriptors demonstrate the ancestral diversity of the staple participants under study.

Furthermore, on occasion some of the individuals under study have information concerning their family origins which can relate to several previous generations, rather than just their parentage, significantly expanding the scope of this ancestral analysis. A prime exemplar is that of John More, a London gentleman who appears in a single certificate of 1530, but whose ancestry can be traced back a further three generations.[56] Indeed, John's father William More was a baker, his maternal grandfather John Joye was a brewer and his maternal great-grandfather was John Leycester, a chancery clerk, all of whom lived, worked and died in the capital before John himself.[57] Although such information can become less detailed the further back one goes, as in the case of Martin Bowes, a London goldsmith, whose paternal grandfather is only vaguely known to have been an unnamed sheriff of Yorkshire,[58] such analysis is nevertheless important for reconstructing an individual's ancestral origins. As an interesting

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Viscount Lisle (b. before 1472, d. 1542)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22355 [accessed 23/08/2017].

[54] C 241/283/5.

[55] C 152/65/1/21; M. M. Condon, 'Bray, Sir Reynold (*c.* 1440–1503)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3295 [accessed 25/08/2017].

[56] C 241/282/95.

[57] E. W. Ives, 'More, Sir John (*c.* 1451–1530)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19183 [accessed 24/082017].

[58] C. E. Challis, 'Bowes, Sir Martin (1496/7–1566)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3055 [accessed 24/08/2017].

generational case study therefore, the twelve individuals with discernible grand-parentage and the four individuals with great-grand-parentage have been extrapolated. Owing to the small sample size, pure statistical analysis of the multi-generational ancestral trends is not appropriate. Instead particular points of interest and commonality will be discussed, with one of the individuals selected for further prosopographical reconstruction in order to demonstrate some of the wider geographical and social trends already outlined previously in this chapter.

Table 1.5 Information Relating to Staple Individuals with Multi-Generational Ancestries Discernible.

Name of Staple Individual	Number of Known Generations	Early Family Origins	Earliest Known Ancestor
John More, Gentleman of London	4	London	Maternal Great-Grandfather
Arthur Uvedale, Esquire of Hampshire	3	Hampshire	Grandfather
Sir John Gresham, Mercer of London	3	Norfolk	Paternal Grandfather
Sir Richard Gresham, Mercer of London	3	Norfolk	Paternal Grandfather
John Vere, Earl of Oxford	4	Earldom of Oxford	Great-Grandfather
George Ryder, Gentleman of Southfleet, Kent	3	Kent	Grandfather
Thomas Boleyn, Knight	3	London	Paternal Grandfather
Edward North, Gentleman of London	3	Yorkshire	Grandfather
John Colet, Mercer of London	3	Buckinghamshire	Paternal Grandfather
Richard Colet, Gentleman of London	3	Buckinghamshire	Paternal Grandfather
John Paston, Esquire	4	Norfolk	Paternal Great-Grandfather
James Strangeways, Esquire of Whorlton, Yorks	3	Yorkshire	Paternal Grandfather
Edward Chamberlain, Knight of Woodstock, Oxon	3	Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire	Maternal Grandfather
Martin Bowes, Goldsmith and Alderman of London	4	Yorkshire	Paternal Great-Grandfather

George Monoux, Draper and Alderman of London	3	Worcestershire	Paternal Grandfather
Sir Richard Pole, Knight	3	Wales	Paternal Grandfather

First and foremost, several of the individuals in table 1.5 yield a relatively straightforward and seemingly unchanging ancestral heritage, such as John de Vere, whose family legacy has typically centred upon the Earldom of Oxford, with at least four paternal generations of his family holding the title and associated estates.[59] Somewhat unsurprisingly, a similar trend is discernible for the family origins of the majority of the genteel or ennobled individuals in the table, including Arthur Uvedale, an esquire and staple participant hailing from Hampshire, and also James Strangeways, an esquire from Yorkshire. Indeed, both Uvedale's and Strangeways's paternal ancestries demonstrate a certain degree of social and geographical stability, both retaining their gentle status and also remaining in Hampshire and Yorkshire respectively throughout the generations. Moreover, such ancestral stability roughly aligns with previous social and geographical analysis, given that provincial staple participants often bore genteel social descriptors and displayed a certain level of immobility, seemingly preferring to move about within the same county as opposed to taking up residence further afield, suggesting that such patterns were generationally ingrained.

However, despite the ancestral rigidity of many of the knightly staple participants, this exemplar case study uncovers certain individuals with far more changeable familial origins. Indeed, a particularly interesting point of comparison is the case of the two sets of brothers appearing in the table. Richard and John Colet, brothers who both appear in the staple certificates and therefore share an ancestral heritage, have seemingly strikingly similar

[59] J. Hughes, 'Vere, John de, Sixteenth Earl of Oxford (1516–1562)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28216 [accessed 28/08/2017].

ancestral trends to the Gresham brothers, also called Richard and John and both knighted mercers of London. Even a cursory glance at the table reveals significant similarities, particularly as both the Colet and Gresham brothers have three family generations discernible along the paternal line, have distinctly provincial family origins, but transition to London, and also have prominent mercantile careers. Although John Colet is somewhat unique, as he alone of the four individuals is described as 'gentleman' rather than mercer, he nevertheless is still found operating in the staple certificates alongside his sibling, suggesting a significant level of commercial activity.[60] Despite such initial comparisons, closer examination of the ancestries of these mercantilist pairs of brothers reveals important deviations. Most notably, the Colets and the Greshams differ in terms of generational transition patterns. Whereas the Greshams can confidently be determined to be the transitional generation in their family, as both brothers opt to leave their ancestral home and birthplace at Holt in Norfolk to pursue their careers in the capital, the family history of the Colets tells an altogether different story.[61] Indeed, these particular brothers,[62] who were undoubtedly comparably successful in their London pursuits, ultimately benefited from a forward thinking parent, namely their father, Henry Colet, a knighted mercer and mayor of London, who transitioned to the capital in his early years, leaving behind his geographical beginnings in Wendover, Buckinghamshire, and effectively enabling both his sons to prosper in the capital. Furthermore, such parental activity is discernible in other ancestries, as in the case of George Monoux, a draper and alderman of London, whose successful career enabled him to endow a grammar school in Essex,[63] but who ultimately benefited from his father's earlier decision to transition to the capital. In fact Richard

[60] See for example: C 241/273/63; C 241/273/37.
[61] I. Blanchard, 'Gresham, Sir Richard (*c.* 1485–1549)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (*Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11504 [accessed 28/08/2017].
[62] It should be noted that the Colet brothers were also related to the Knyvetts, a prominent Norfolk gentry family, through their mother Christine and her marriage to the merchant Henry Colet. For more information on the maternal ancestry of the Colets and this connection to the Knyvetts see: R. Virgoe, 'The Earlier Knyvetts: The Rise of a Norfolk Gentry Family', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 41, 3 (1992), pp. 256-257.
[63] PROB 11/30/66.

Monoux, presumably hoping to exploit the increased commercial opportunities, moved to London to take up occupation as a salter, in spite of his family's long-standing Worcestershire heritage.[64] Evidently therefore, such ancestral patterns demonstrate that geographical mobility and the 'pull' of London, as discussed previously, were indeed heeded primarily by entrepreneurial businessmen, but that it is crucial to recognise that this siren call of the capital could equally be felt by previous generations, not just the particular individuals under study.

1.5 Like Father, Like Son: The Ancestral Origins of Martin Bowes.

In selecting a reconstructive exemplar to elucidate the various trends and patterns outlined in this chapter, Martin Bowes, a London goldsmith, seems to be a particularly strong choice. Indeed, Bowes boasts recognisable geographical mobility, discernible parentage and ancestry, as well as biographically illuminating supplementary material, such as his will of 1566 and lay subsidy records. Initially Bowes, whose first and only appearance in the certificates of statute staple comes in 1526, when he lent the somewhat humble sum of £10 to John Nanseglos, an Essex gentleman, seems rather obscure and lacking in commercial prominence.[65] However, prosopographical reconstruction of his life and origins reveals a more complex narrative. Originally born in Peaseholme in York in *c.*1496, Martin Bowes seemed to have moved to London at a young age to take up an advantageous apprenticeship, a somewhat archetypal trend for many of our mercantile staple individuals. Indeed, Bowes is shown to have entered into gold-smithing, having been apprenticed to the prominent London goldsmith, Robert Amadas in 1513.[66] Following a successful career, Bowes became enormously wealthy and politically prominent, holding numerous public offices, such as alderman and sheriff of London, even

[64] A. F. Sutton, 'Colet, Sir Henry (*c.* 1430–1505)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5897 [accessed 28/08/2017].
[65] C 241/278/10.
[66] Challis, 'Bowes, Sir Martin'. URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3055 [accessed 24/08/2017].

becoming mayor of the capital itself.[67] Indeed, the Lay Subsidy of 1540-41 assessed Martin Bowes, currently residing in the parish of St. Mary Woolnoth, as worth £3,333 6s. 8d., clearly demonstrating the lofty heights attained by the Yorkshire-born goldsmith since moving to London.[68] Interestingly, Bowes's movement to the capital seems to have been permanent, given that his will, proved in 1566, requested he be interred in the church of the same parish of St. Mary Woolnoth in London.[69] Given that previous analysis uncovered the tendency for certain businessmen to move away from the capital in later life, it would seem Bowes was not among them, perhaps indicating something of his personal attachment to his London residence.

Whilst this simple reconstruction of Martin Bowes's life draws neat parallels with many of the patterns of geographical mobility outlined previously, whereby the ambitious provincial man sought wealth and success in the capital, this was by no means the full story. In fact, reconstruction of Bowes's ancestry, in particular his parentage, reveals such activity to be somewhat generationally ingrained. As in the case of the Colet brothers, Martin's father, Thomas Bowes, the son and grandson of a sheriff and a mayor of York respectively, seems to have been the true careerist pioneer of the family. Indeed, Thomas Bowes, also a goldsmith who moved to London, established himself commercially in the capital when he attained the freedom of the city in 1498.[70] However, despite the fact that Thomas Bowes was evidently successful in his London endeavours, he nevertheless seems to have retained some degree of connection with his Yorkshire origins, given that his son Martin was eventually born there. Indeed, it was precisely this geographical impermanence which enabled such generational repetition to occur, as Martin Bowes was able to mimic the path previously trodden by his

[67] A. P. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Henry III-1908* (London, 1908), p. 169.
[68] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Langbourn Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 87-95. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp87-95 [accessed 13/12/2016].
[69] PROB 11/49/14.
[70] Challis, 'Bowes, Sir Martin'. URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3055 [accessed 24/08/2017].

father, leaving his provincial birthplace to make a name for himself in the capital, the only difference being that Martin chose to remain there permanently.

1.6 Conclusion.

Overall therefore, this chapter has accomplished several important aims. It has successfully demonstrated the broad geographical scope of this study, uncovering a wide proliferation of staple individuals from across England, in spite of the southerly positioning of the staple court under consideration. Furthermore, important patterns concerning the spread and regional distribution of wealth and descriptors have also been uncovered, demonstrating the highly variable nature of the court's clientele, something which was clearly impacted by regionality and one's distance from the staple court in question. The proliferation of socially-defined individuals typically residing in greater proportions further away from the staple, when compared with occupational descriptors, is an especially important finding. This suggests that some kind of geographical divide existed within the staple and its participants, whereby its occupationally-defined users typically resided close to the staple, whilst those of social status, such as knights, gentlemen and esquires, tended to live comparatively further afield.

Discussions of transience and geographical mobility have also been undertaken, revealing some of the patterns discernible for individuals with birthplaces or points of origin. Among these, a clear pattern for individuals to elect to move from provincial birthplaces to London is detected, effectively demonstrating that the 'pull' of the capital, so often emphasized within the relevant literature,[71] was very much apparent for these staple individuals as well. This provides significant support to historiographical assertions of a transient, and often ambitious, cohort of individuals, typically detectable through their thoroughly provincial beginnings, but

[71] Goddard, *Credit and Trade*, chapter five; Barron, 'London, 1300-1540', p. 399.

whose drive for personal advancement was ultimately characterised by a decisive move to London to seek their fortune.[72]

Interestingly however, this correlation is by no means absolute, and the findings of this chapter provide a much more nuanced perspective upon such individual movements. Whilst initial movements from one's birthplace to the capital are clearly represented, the examination of multiple residences, to access movement at other points in the lives of these staple individuals, deviates from this pattern. Instead, a significant proportion of people are shown to leave the capital later on in the documentary record, often moving to provincial residences outside of London. Whilst this effectively aligns with the literature devoted to analyses of the phenomenon of merchants buying manors in the countryside,[73] this chapter bridges the gap between these two established patterns. In other words, the geographical mobility of ambitious provincials, which initially brought them to London in their youth, becomes reversed in later life, with many of these staple users electing to move to the country, presumably after a lengthy and successful commercial career. This demonstrates how these movements, so often discussed separately in the historiography, were actually part of a wider pattern of connected mobility which corresponded with people's lifecycles.

Finally, this chapter has also explored the notion of one's familial heritage and how this might impact upon the individuals extracted for analysis, particularly as the ancestral dimension is an important element of the literature devoted to the geographical mapping of medieval individuals.[74] This chapter has highlighted the progressive actions of many of the ancestors of staple individuals with discernible relations, with sixteen multi-generational families reconstructed for illustrative effect. In fact, it is the case of Martin Bowes and his forward-

[72] Dyer, 'Small Places', pp. 18-19.
[73] See for example: Thrupp, *Merchant Class,* pp. 234-5; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity,* p. 121; O'Connor, 'Adam Fraunceys and John Pyel', pp. 17, 20, 24.
[74] Bennett, 'Careerism in Late Medieval England', pp. 19-39.

thinking forebears which is especially illuminating, clearly demonstrating not only the individual motivations behind some of the geographical patterns outlined in this chapter, but also the importance of this kind of ancestral contextualisation, particularly as many of the tendencies exhibited by these staple individuals were evidently representative of wider patterns of movement and change in society more generally.

Chapter 2. Description, Composition, Transition: The Collation of the Individual Users of the Westminster Statute Staple.

2.1 Introduction and Historiographical Overview.

The prosopographical reconstruction of the Westminster statute staple as an entire composite group is a complex task, particularly as such analysis requires collation of biographical information in order to render individual and archetypal patterns in greater detail. Therefore, the descriptors applied to people are one of the major starting points for any reconstructive investigation and are an invaluable categorising resource. Fortunately, the majority of the individuals under study yield a descriptor at some point in their documented lives, with the result that 97.3 per cent have at least one discernible. As such this chapter will focus upon the different kinds of labels discernible for these particular individuals, collating the proportions of these descriptors to reconstruct the composition of the Westminster statute staple group more broadly, as well as employing them to track both individual and collective changes in status over time.

The historical literature relating to descriptors and their application in the late medieval period is extremely diverse and somewhat difficult to organise into coherent strands. As a starting point, some scholars have touched upon the developments behind improved and more accurate description in the late medieval period, often referring to legal and administrative changes. For instance, F. R. H. Du Boulay has noted how the usage of descriptors, especially those relating to social status and class, generally increased in the early fifteenth century, particularly after the Statute of Additions in 1413.[1] S. L. Thrupp also provides contextualisation to the growing importance of description in this period, noting that legal documents now had to contain an individual's 'degree', theorising that this may have resulted in the emergence of new social

[1] F. R. H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1970), p. 70.

terms, such as gentleman.[2] Although such developments aimed to more clearly categorise and define individuals, a certain degree of social confusion nevertheless remained. Indeed, P. Maddern has noted that exact identification of particular persons could still prove problematic, owing to the fact that individuals might have multiple descriptors attached to them. Maddern provides the illustrative exemplar of Geoffrey Walle from Norfolk, who was described as husbandman, franklin, yeoman and gentleman in the space of just five years between 1432 and 1437, thoroughly complicating any attempts at simplistic social categorisation.[3] Similarly, P. Burke has noted how even contemporaries often struggled with categorisation, particularly with regards to projecting a coherent social structure, whereby some used orders and some used estates for example, cautioning that this 'social vocabulary' was not an objective account.[4] Despite such methodological pitfalls, scholars have nevertheless continued to use the collation and analysis of descriptors in reconstructive analyses. From a more simplistic perspective, basic collation of descriptors can be used as the starting point for any selective analysis of a particular grouping or sector of society. For instance, occupational studies, such as P. Nightingale's detailed investigation of the Grocer's Company, T. F. Reddaway's examination of London goldsmiths at the turn of the sixteenth century and J. Lutkin's prosopographical reconstruction of the often-overlooked craft of joiners, to name some examples, are all united by their exclusive focus upon individuals who share a particular common occupational descriptor, often extrapolating the archetypal characteristics of such individuals.[5]

[2] S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948), p. 236.
[3] P. Maddern, 'Gentility', in R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (eds.), *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England* (Manchester, 2005), p. 22.
[4] P. Burke, 'The Language of Orders in Early Modern Europe', in M. L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe Since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London, 1992), pp. 9-10.
[5] P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: The Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London, 1000-1485* (London, 1995); T. F. Reddaway, 'The London Goldsmiths circa 1500', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (1962), pp. 49-62; J. Lutkin, 'The London Craft of Joiners, 1200-1550', *Medieval Prosopography*, 26 (2005), pp. 129-164; see also D. R. Bisson, *The Merchant Adventurers of England: The Company and the Crown 1474-1564* (Newark, 1993); J. Colson, 'London's Forgotten Company? Fishmongers: Their Trade and Their Networks in Later Medieval London', in C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds.), *The Medieval*

Moving away from simple compositional analyses, one of the most prominent ways in which historians have utilised descriptors is to explore the theme of mobility, owing to the potential to track and measure changing status. Such emphasis undoubtedly relates to the changing attitudes of many scholars towards the fluidity of status in the late medieval period, whereby traditionalist interpretations, which frame late medieval society as rigid and inflexible and social mobility as officially discouraged and rarely achieved, have undergone significant revision. Indeed, M. Bailey has noted that, whilst it was common for contemporaries to strive for rigid societal definition, the reality of social structure was actually one of diversity and fluidity.[6] Similarly, R. Hilton has argued that the traditional tripartite division of late medieval society was coming under increasing strain as new social and occupational groupings emerged, such as the rich, landowning merchants.[7] As a result, many scholars have subsequently embraced such revisionist efforts, now detailing the manifold avenues available for social elevation, as in the case of S. J. Payling's 1992 analysis, which outlines the potential for mobility through the exploitation of a legal career. Indeed, Payling notes that such movement can be pinpointed in contemporary writing, highlighting the references in John Leland's work to families who had risen through the law.[8]

Since then, more recent work on social mobility and transition has sought to construct theoretical models, aiming to categorise and track the different kinds of status movements in this period. A prime example is S. Carocci's 2011 analysis of social mobility, which outlines the distinction between 'structural mobility', characterised by technological and fundamental changes involving entire groups of people, and 'pure mobility' which was the result of free

Merchant: Proceedings of the Harlaxton Symposium (Donington, 2014), pp. 20-40; D. Leach, 'The Turners of Medieval London', *Medieval Prosopography*, 28 (2013), pp. 105-136.

[6] M. Bailey, 'Rural Society', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 152.

[7] R. H. Hilton, 'Ideology and Social Order in Late Medieval England', in R. H. Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History* (London, 1990), p. 174.

[8] S. J. Payling, 'Social Mobility, Demographic Change and Landed Society in Late Medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), pp. 66-67.

behaviours on the part of individuals.[9] Somewhat unsurprisingly, analyses of structural mobility are far more pervasive, perhaps due to the inescapable allure attached to the mapping of whole class movements or transitions, which seems to promise far more in the way of scholarly impact. Such a trend is demonstrated in the work of P. S. Bearman and G. Deane, who look at the structural mobility of the urban middle class of Norwich in the sixteenth century. In examining the occupational descriptors discernible, they find over 160 occupations recorded, as well as several important patterns for mobility. For instance, there is an almost completely uniform pattern for upward structural mobility for the sons of semi-skilled craftsmen, as they were 2.63 times more likely to become merchants than the offspring of the mercantile elite were to become craftsmen.[10] Whilst structural movements often receive greater scholarly attention, some studies have nevertheless examined the individual dimension. A prime example is D. A. Rice's study of several Northamptonshire families, which aims to explore the ways in which such groups of individuals actively sought and achieved social advancement. Indeed, her analysis of the Fermors, descendants of Richard Fermor, a Calais staple merchant, is particularly illuminative, outlining the family's path to social success, through sheep farming, mercantile activity and study of the law, in what Rice terms a 'three-pronged approach to acquiring wealth.'[11] As such this particular research will build on these analyses, exploring the ways in which the descriptors discernible within the Westminster statute staple group can be exploited to investigate the interconnected themes of description and transition.

[9] S. Carocci, 'Social Mobility and the Middle Ages', *Continuity and Change*, 26, 3 (2011), p. 375.
[10] P. S. Bearman, and G. Deane, 'Middle-Class Mobility in England, 1548-1689', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (1992), pp. 36, 49.
[11] D. A. Rice, 'Patterns of Progress and Social Mobility in Some Northamptonshire Families, *c*. 1460-1560', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leicester (1996), p. 165.

2.2 Looking for Labels: Reconstructing the Composition of the Westminster Staple.

In examining the users of the Westminster staple between 1485 and 1532, some 4,441 individual descriptors are discernible in relation to these particular people. For the sake of methodological simplicity therefore, these descriptors can be broadly categorised into four distinct groupings: social, occupational, familial and official descriptors. Whilst all four varieties of descriptor will be explored within this chapter, it must be noted that official descriptors, which denote royal, civic or ecclesiastical appointments, will be examined in greater detail in a later chapter, owing both to their powerful connection with careerism and individual aspirations, but also the increased degree of impermanence associated with their application.[12] Nevertheless, the statistics, trends and patterns relating to descriptors will be collated and analysed to access the general composition of the Westminster staple group under study. As a starting point therefore, examination of the proliferation of descriptors within the different kinds of source material is instructive, particularly when outlining the methodological approach used for individual categorisation and identification. As shown in table 2.1, there are seven key resources exploited to uncover prosopographical information about the individuals under study.

[12] Official descriptors will be examined in chapter six of this thesis.

Table 2.1 Source Locations for the Different Categories of Descriptor.

	Certificates	Wills	1524-25 Lay Subsidy	1540-41 Lay Subsidy	Extents for Debt	Inquisitions *Post Mortem*	Other Sources[13]
Occupational Descriptors	1,675	276	2	1	162	1	37
Social Descriptors	1,606	113	27	8	304	35	64
Familial Descriptors	254	3	0	0	49	1	3
Official Descriptors	183	75	4	4	11	2	175

In examining the source proportions outlined in table 2.1, certain expected patterns are clearly discernible, with social and occupational demarcations proving particularly prevalent. Outside of this however, other sources seem to overtly favour certain categories of descriptors, as, for example, occupational designations are found to be particularly pervasive within the corpus of wills available. For instance, the will of Thomas Addington, staple user and London resident, commemorated his status as a skinner when it was made in 1544.[14] Similarly, William Bacon's will, registered in October 1492, described him as alderman as well as haberdasher, suggesting his industrial affiliations were just as important as the official positions he held in establishing his individual identity.[15] A particularly illustrative exemplar are Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, which seem to be almost exclusively dominated by the social descriptor. Indeed, of the fifty-

[13] This refers to descriptors found within scholarly research into specific individuals and encompasses references found in original articles and monographs, but also entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and other online resources. As an example, John Skut, labelled as 'merchant tailor' in the staple certificates, is found to have also been a 'tailor', 'warden' and 'subsidy collector' over the course of his life, as uncovered in the research of M. Hayward for ODNB, see: M. Hayward, 'Skut, John (fl.1519-1547)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL:http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/93736.
[14] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Wills 1384-1858, PROB 11/30/48.
[15] PROB 11/9/228.

six individuals appearing in these documents, thirty-five are described socially, compared with twenty-one who are not, seventeen of which lack any descriptor at all.

With these source-specific patterns in mind therefore, the purposes behind each of these document types must be accounted for in analysing the proliferation of descriptors. Indeed, whilst wills are arguably the most intimate and individually produced documents listed in the table above, potentially enabling testators to personally select those descriptors most amenable to their own self-perception, other documents are far more clinical and administrative in design. For example, lay subsidy records, appearing in both the 1520s and 1540s, are produced solely to effectively tax the population, demanding efficiency and brevity in their listings, with the result that only 18.9 per cent of the staple individuals discernible in these records have a descriptor attached to them. Nevertheless, when descriptors were recorded in these tax returns, it is interesting that familial descriptors were completely omitted, with occupational and social descriptors evidently favoured. For instance, Thomas Woodward, a resident of Northampton, was listed as mercer, when his goods were assessed at £24 in 1523.[16] The 1540-41 Lay Subsidy mirrors this trend, as demonstrated by the examples of John and Richard Gresham, residents of Cripplegate Ward in London and both described as knight, when assessed as worth £666 13s. 4d. and £2,666 13s. 4d. respectively.[17] Whilst such a pattern might seem to suggest that familial affiliations were deemed less useful as identifying tools by the crown-appointed compilers of such documentation, the patterns shown in other administrative documents suggest otherwise. For instance, when compared with the extents for debt, documents which were also centrally produced and enforced, but with different motivations behind them, instead seeking to recover money and movables from defaulting debtors, this pattern is no longer

[16] S. Swailes (trans.), 'Northamptonshire Tax Assessment, 14-16 Hen VIII: Northampton', URL: http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/subsidies/transcripts/northampton16c.shtml#409 [accessed 09/01/2018].
[17] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Cripplegate Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 56-62. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp56-62 [accessed 14/12/2016].

discernible. Indeed, outside of the certificates themselves, familial descriptors are most commonly found within these extents, with forty-nine such incidences. Given that social and occupational descriptors still routinely occur, it seems that, perhaps unsurprisingly, accurate description played an especially important role in the cornering of recalcitrant debtors. Indeed, one could speculate that the collection of debts and confiscation of goods might well involve the pursuit of the defaulter's kin for information, should the true target of the debt elude justice, not only explaining this preponderance of familial descriptors, but also demonstrating the ways in which documentary intent can distort the collation of descriptors.

Finally, the consultation of other sources must also be acknowledged. As shown in the table, official descriptors appear most frequently in this particular resource, unlike all the other categories of descriptors. This is due in large part to the rarity with which individuals applied an official position as their principal descriptor, unless that office was directly related to the primary source in question. For example, the office of lay subsidy collector becomes, unsurprisingly, a comparatively popular designation within the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy, as in the case of Edward Sapcote, who was recorded as such in relation to his home county of Rutland.[18] As a result, such official obscurity has necessitated the scouring of scholarly references to official positions, as in the case of Ralph Fane, described simply as 'gentleman of Hadlow in Kent' in the staple certificates, but revealed to have also held the office of Chief Governor of Parks in J. A. Lowe's article for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.[19] Perhaps this reluctance to describe oneself officially is merely representative of temporal issues related to the impermanence of most offices, particularly when compared with the other varieties of descriptor listed. For instance, the shrieval office, despite being a prestigious and powerful

[18] J. Cornwall (ed.), *The County Community under Henry VIII: The Military Survey, 1522, and Lay Subsidy, 1524-5, for Rutland*, volume 1 (Oakham, 1980), p. 87.
[19] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, C 241/283/61; J. A. Lowe, 'Fane, Sir Ralph, (b. before 1510, d. 1522)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9141 [accessed 18/12/2017].

position, was usually only held for a single year,[20] potentially explaining why only Guy Woolston, sheriff of Northamptonshire, appeared within the certificates described as such.[21] Indeed, this speculation seems largely confirmed when one considers the far greater numbers of individuals actively described as aldermen appearing in the documentation, as this particular office was usually retained for much longer. For instance, Thomas Mirsin, John Rudston and John Mundy all made use of this descriptor across multiple years within the certificates, demonstrating the comparative longevity of their aldermanic status.[22]

Having outlined the source origins for the descriptors under study in this chapter, the general statistics relating to proliferation have been inputted into the table below (table 2.2). From here it is possible to explore the different kinds of categories of descriptors in greater detail, as well as extrapolating the patterns specific to them, rendering a clearer picture of the overall composition of the Westminster statute staple group.

Table 2.2 The Four Types of Descriptor Relating to the Individual Users of the Westminster Staple.

	Total Number of Individuals with Descriptor	**Total Number of Descriptors**	**Number of Different Descriptors Discernible**
Occupational	1,700	1,788	123
Social	1,658	1,802	13
Official	317	615	127
Familial	255	266	6

[20] N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: the Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), p. 137.
[21] C 241/267/33.
[22] See for example: C 152/65/2/3; C 152/65/2/101; C 241/278/92.

Beginning with the most numerically prolific, therefore, of the 3,593 individuals within the Westminster statute staple group, 1,700 of them yield at least one occupational descriptor at some point in their documented lives (47.3 per cent) the collation of which produces 123 uniquely identifiable occupations (table 2.2). Given that such descriptors are attached to just less than half the number of individuals in this study, it is evident that occupational status was acutely important. In terms of purely statistical prominence therefore, the most common occupations attached to our staple individuals tend to relate to the sale of finished cloth or wool products, most likely relating to the original intent behind the creation of many of the staples.[23] Indeed, mercers are the most frequently occurring occupation by some margin, with 277 individuals appearing, followed by the 133 individual drapers (table 2.3). Similarly, the other occupational groups which number fifty or more individuals also have strongly apparent connections with these industries, such as the merchant tailors, haberdashers and Calais staple merchants. Indeed, of the prominent occupational descriptors outlined in table 2.3, only the goldsmiths (sixty-six individuals) and the skinners (fifty individuals) lack any connection with the wool and cloth industries, clearly demonstrating the prevalence of such individuals within the Westminster statute staple group.[24]

[23] P. Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants: Trade, Politics and the Gentry in Late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), p. 44.

[24] Wool and cloth were England's chief product and export in this period and so this occupational connection with these industries aligns with this, particularly as the staple was the only way to export cloth. For more information on the wool and cloth industries of England see: J. L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy, 1150-1500* (London, 1980), pp. 267-272, 283-285; M. Bonney, 'The English Medieval Wool and Cloth Trade: New Approaches for the Local Historian', *The Local Historian*, 22 (1992), pp. 18-41; E. Power, 'The Wool Trade in the Fifteenth Century', in E. Power, and M. M. Postan, (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 39-90; E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Woollen Industry before 1550', in E. Crittall (ed.), *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 4* (London, 1959), pp. 115-147. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol4/pp115-147 [accessed 30/05/2018]; A. R. Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking* (London, 1982); J. Oldland, 'Making and Marketing Woollen Cloth in Late-Medieval London', *The London Journal*, 36, 2 (2011), pp. 89-108; J. Oldland, 'Wool and Cloth Production in Late Medieval and Early Tudor England', *The Economic History Review*, 67, 1 (2014), pp. 25-47; J. S. Lee, *The Medieval Clothier* (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 39-107.

Table 2.3 Most Common Occupational Descriptors.

Occupational Descriptor	Number of Individuals	Percentage of Occupational Total (%)
Mercer	277	16.3
Draper	133	7.8
Grocer	126	7.4
Merchant	114	6.7
Merchant Tailors	106	6.2
Haberdasher	74	4.4
Merchant of the Calais Staple	68	4.0
Goldsmith	66	3.9
Tailor	62	3.6
Skinner	50	2.9

Nevertheless, despite the prolific nature of certain occupations, it is crucial to acknowledge that such representation is by no means universal. In fact, the average number of individuals per occupation emerges as only 14.5, indicating that, more often than not, occupational groupings of staple users rarely exceeded twenty or so individuals. Examples of such occupations include the leather sellers and the bakers, who each have fourteen staple participants, the sixteen chapmen and the seventeen tallow chandlers. Indeed, this suggests that involvement within the staple was occupationally skewed, at least in terms of the descriptors used, as outside of the mercantile majority demonstrated in table 2.3, the typical number of individuals was much less. At the other end of the spectrum are the single incidences of an occupation, such as John Ryan, the lone fruiterer, and Richard Gadde, the only person described as 'fustian shearer.'[25] These infrequently appearing occupations, perhaps unsurprisingly, tend to fall into one of two categories: either appearing as manufacturers of

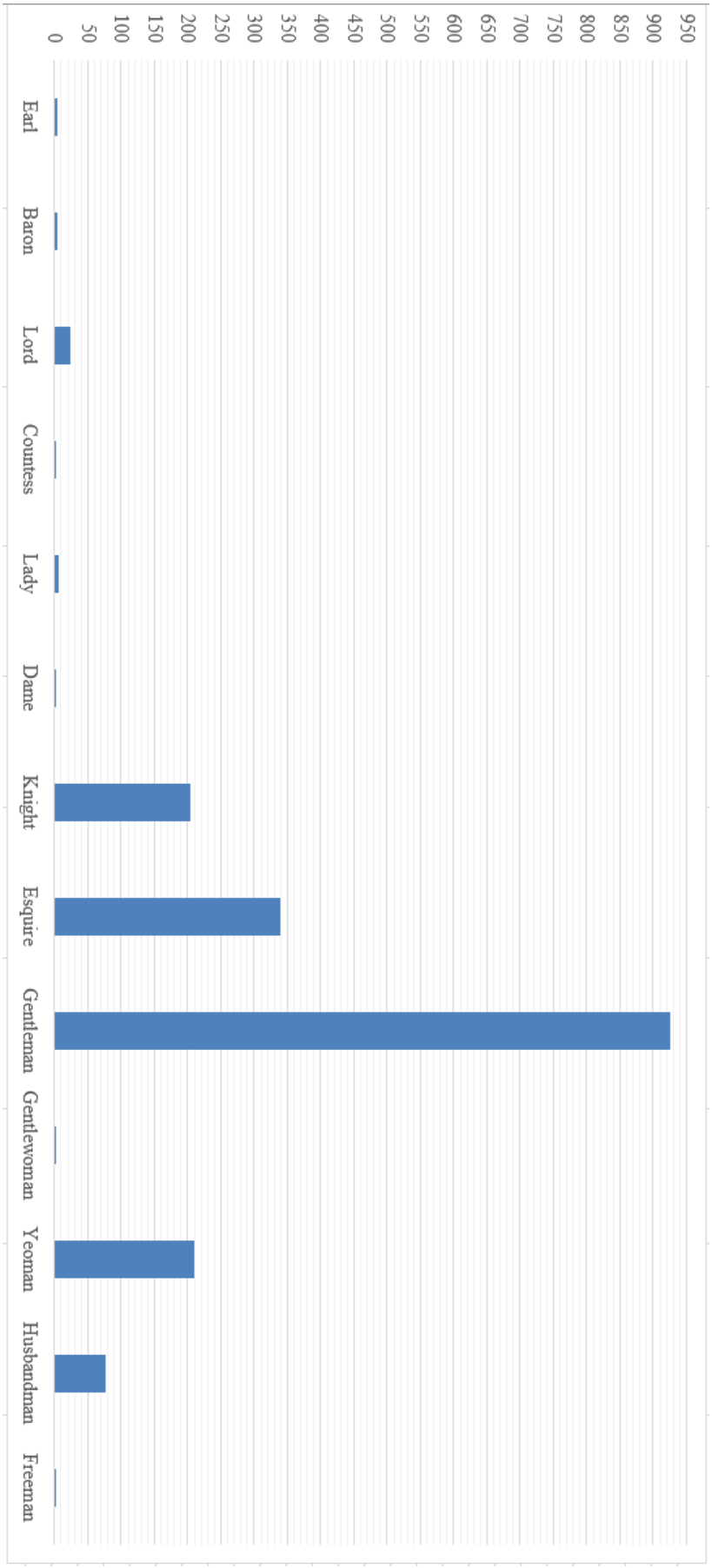
[25] C 241/280/119; C 241/273/50.

unique or niche luxury goods, such as John Clymhoc, a London organ-maker and Thomas Pye, a seller of books, or more usually as un-liveried occupations involved in the production of raw materials or the retail of their own manpower.[26] A prime example is Lawrence Colway whose singular appearance in the certificates, in which he borrowed £40, reveals his unique occupational status as 'labourer.'[27] Clearly, in briefly outlining the proportional make-up of occupational descriptors, the Westminster statute staple group was evidently a somewhat commercially elevated group as expected, with humbler occupations far less well represented.

Social descriptors, despite yielding just thirteen different categories, are also statistically prominent, with 1,658 individuals discernible, placing them just behind their occupational brethren (table 2.2). However, unlike the relatively straightforward analysis of occupational descriptors, social status is notoriously problematic to examine and is typically only measurable in comparison to others. As such, the graph demonstrates the relative numbers of each of the social descriptors discernible within the Westminster statute staple group in a rough approximation of traditional social hierarchies. For instance, the earls, barons and lords are listed first on the graph, reflecting their position at the apex of noble society, genteel categories, such as knights and esquires follow, whilst the yeomen and husbandmen, as traditionally individuals of lesser social status, feature towards the end of the graph (figure 2.1).

[26] C 241/281/76; C 152/65/2/533.
[27] C 241/280/89.

Figure 2.1 Proportions of Social Descriptors applied to Users of the Westminster Staple.



Numerically speaking, the social construction of the staple initially seems to reflect typical patterns for societal composition. Indeed, the very small number of aristocratic individuals shown in figure 2.1 is matched by the gradually increasing numbers of those of lesser social status, seemingly recreating the traditional pyramidal hierarchy often espoused by contemporaries and scholars alike.[28] For instance, both earls and barons yield just five discernible individuals each, whilst lords account for a slightly higher proportion of staple individuals, with twenty-three.[29] Knights, who are often seen as the top tier of the gentry, number 205 individuals, making them the first of the truly substantial groupings within the staple. This is then followed by the esquires, whose staple memberships amount to 340 individuals. Continuing along the traditional social ladder, the gentlemen discernible, although yielding nearly three times the number of esquires, with an impressive 926 individuals, are only rendered somewhat proportionally anomalous when compared with the far humbler quantities of their immediate social inferiors, the yeomen and husbandmen, with 209 and seventy-six individuals respectively. Indeed, something of a 'bulge' occurs around the gentlemanly contingent of the Westminster staple which is then followed by a sharp decline in subsequent individuals of lesser means. It would seem therefore that genteel individuals engaged with the staple particularly strongly, perhaps demonstrating a growing commercial emphasis in the lives of many gentlemen during this period, something not apparent to the same degree when examining other social categories. Setting aside the proportional dominance of gentlemen however, the collective prominence of certain categories, ranging from knights

[28] D. C. Coleman, *The Economy of England 1450-1750* (Oxford, 1977), p. 5; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (London, 2002), p. 13.

[29] These 'lords' relate to those individuals with this descriptor applied as a title, rather than references to lords of a manor. For instance, in a certificate of May 1504, Robert Willoughby was styled as 'Lord Brook', despite his ancestral title being that of 'Baron Brook', through his father, see: C 241/275/15; for his father see: D. Luckett, 'Willoughby, Robert, First Baron Willoughby de Broke (1452-1402)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29602 [accessed: 30/05/2018]. Although these lords are therefore likely barons also, their lordly designations have been retained in this analysis, in accordance with the descriptors actually applied to them.

through to yeomen, is particularly noticeable and potentially representative of wider societal developments of the time. Indeed, such individuals, given their traditional social positioning, could be regarded as members of the notoriously elusive 'middling sort', blurred at the social margins and problematic to define, but undeniably apparent and seemingly in substantial numbers.

Although these social descriptors are predominantly masculine, with the suffix of 'man' occurring rather frequently, some female users of the staple are nevertheless still discernible. For example, Agnes, Countess of Surrey, lent £30 6s. 8d. in her own right in a staple certificate of October 1509, whilst both wives of John Rokker and William Petite, Joan and Anne, appeared alongside their husbands in a transaction of 1493, which saw Rokker borrow £100 from the Petites.[30] However, as is evident from the graph, such female social descriptors are numerically rare, regardless of their social station. For instance, ladies and dames form the most populous contingent of female social descriptors, but amounting to just six and three individuals respectively. Furthermore, despite supposedly being the female counterpart to the prolifically represented gentleman, only a single gentlewoman is discernible within the staple, one Elizabeth Barbone, clearly demonstrating the disparity between proportions of male and female social descriptors.[31] Although frustrating in terms of pure societal reconstruction, such numerical divergence is altogether unsurprising and is likely representative of the general legal and documentary obscurity of women in this period,[32] at least in terms of social description. It would seem therefore that, overall, these descriptors and their numerical proportions, indicate not only that the social composition of the staple was regularly made up of gentry and rural

[30] C 152/65/2/38; C 241/275/306.
[31] C 152/65/1/10.
[32] This is largely related to the customary law of coverture, whereby a married woman became the legal responsibility of her husband, limiting the extent to which such women appear within the documentation. For further discussion see: R. Kittel, 'Women under the Law in Medieval England 1066-1485', in B. Kanner (ed.), *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present* (London, 1980), pp. 124-137; B. A. Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford, 2007), p. 192.

freemen, rather than being dominated by lords and aristocratic nobles, but also that such individuals might well be representative of a middling stratum of people, who demonstrated a significant degree of socio-economic agency.

Official descriptors, referring to those described as holding some kind of civic, ecclesiastical or royal appointment, such as alderman, archbishop or knight of the body, are the third most common category, with 317 individuals, accounting for 8.8 per cent of the staple (table 2.2). Despite seeming proportionally rare, especially when compared with the numbers of social and occupational individuals discernible, official descriptors are shown to be the most diverse, yielding 127 different demarcations.

Table 2.4 Most Common Official Descriptors (10 or more Individuals).

Official Descriptor	Number of Individuals	Percentage of Official Total (%)
Sheriff	106	33.4
Alderman	100	31.5
Mayor	50	15.8
Justice of the Peace	26	8.3
Lay Subsidy Collector	17	5.4
Rector	16	5.1
Member of Parliament	14	4.5
Esquire of the Body	13	4.2
Gentleman of the Household	12	3.8
Auditor	11	3.5
Knight of the Body	11	3.5
Privy Councillor	11	3.5
Esquire of the Household	10	3.2

As shown in table 2.4 above, which outlines the most common official descriptors discernible, certain prestigious civic positions, such as alderman and sheriff, unsurprisingly tend to

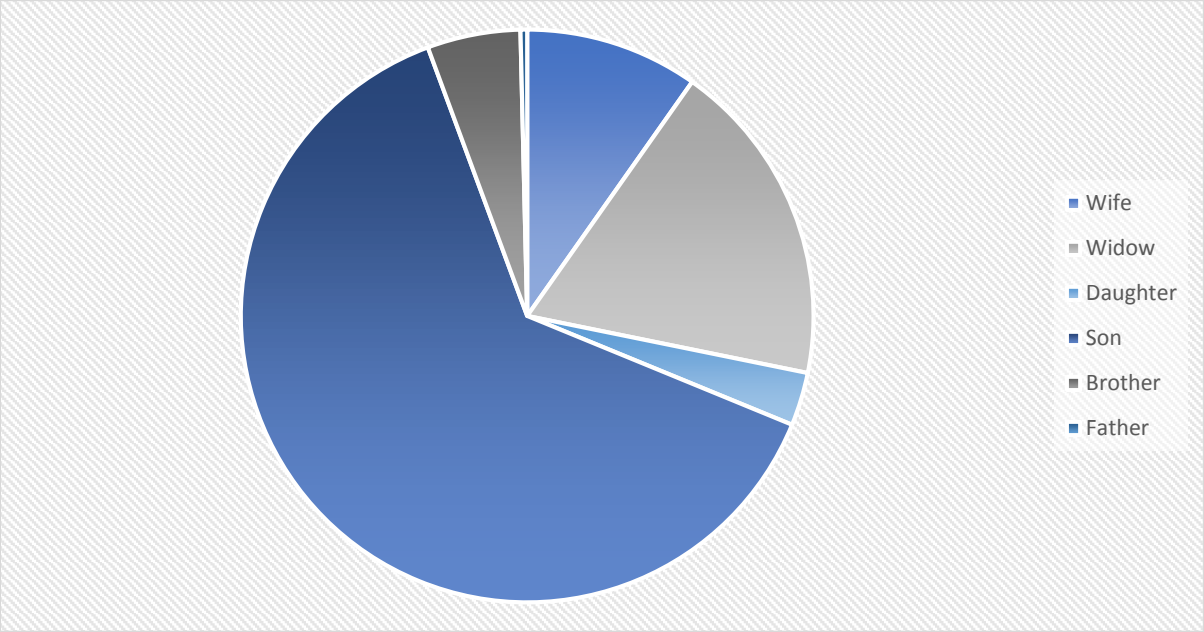
dominate, with one hundred and 106 individuals described as such respectively. For instance, the aldermanic status of both Michael Dormer and John Coots is directly referenced in their entries within the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy, whilst Lawrence Aylmer's stint as a member of the aldermanry is discernible in an extent for debt of 1524, when his apparent failure to repay £300 to Thomas Carter, a London draper, evidently caught up with him, in spite of his elite metropolitan status.[33] The descriptor of mayor, usually held in relation to the city of London, is the third most common official demarcation, with fifty separate individuals and accounting for just over fifteen per cent of individuals with an official descriptor. However, outside of these more prolific appointments, the number of individuals sharply declines, with the official descriptor of esquire of the household featuring as the last of the appointments yielding double figures, with ten individuals (table 2.4). Indeed, a whole host of more obscure official descriptors are discernible, demonstrating not only the diversity within the staple, but also the manifold career paths exploited by these particular individuals. For example, Richard Guildford and Thomas Brandon both received the royal appointment of Master of the Horse, whilst the position of 'royal cup-bearer' is discernible only in connection with a single individual, Charles Somersette.[34] These descriptors therefore, whilst still an important category of description, will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter six, which is specifically focused upon these diverse careerist ideologies.

[33] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Cripplegate Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 56-62. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp56-62 [accessed 14/12/2016]; '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Walbrook Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 111-113. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp111-113 [accessed 19/12/2016]; The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Extents for Debts, Series I, C 131/107/1.

[34] S. J. Gunn, 'Brandon, Sir Thomas (d. 1510)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3268 [accessed 09/01/2018]; S. Cunningham, 'Guildford, Sir Richard (*c.* 1450-1506)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11723 [accessed 09/01/2018]; J. Hughes, 'Somerset, Charles, First Earl of Worcester (*c.* 1460-1526)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26004?docPos=1 [accessed 09/01/2018].

Turning to the final category, familial description accounts for the smallest selection of individuals, with just 255 people described thus, comprising 7.1 per cent of the staple (table 2.2). Indeed, this proportional marginality is coupled with the smallest range of descriptors, with just six familial demarcations discernible.

Figure 2.2 Familial Descriptors Applied to Users of the Westminster Statute Staple.



Immediately apparent from figure 2.2 is the prevalence of sons, amassing a proportionally dominant total of 168 individuals. Such a trend is altogether unsurprising, not only indicating a generational component to the staple and its participants, but also the importance placed upon who one's father was, at least in terms of identification. For example, John Dryland, who appeared as a creditor in a staple certificate of 1491, was described only in filial terms, as 'the son of John Dryland, citizen and draper of London.'[35] Similarly, Benedict Trehan who lent £30 in 1498, was described as the son of a London brewer named George, without any further

[35] C 241/266/16.

identifying descriptors.[36] Such a trend is also reflected to a certain degree in the fact that 'daughter' also appears as a descriptor, which, although small in quantity with just eight individuals, is proportionally important given the low numbers of women appearing in total. One such example is that of Ursula Fitz-Herbert, who appeared in a staple transaction of 1504 alongside her husband Thomas, but was crucially also described as the daughter of John Colyns, who was once a mercer from the capital.[37]

Perhaps one of the most intriguing findings with regards to familial description, is the proportional prevalence of widows, who emerge as the second largest group of descriptors (figure 2.2). With forty-nine such women discernible, widows evidently participated within the staple to a comparatively substantial degree, particularly when compared to their closest female rivals, wives, who number just twenty-six individuals in total. Moreover, when one considers that there are only eighty women discernible within the staple sampling as a whole, the proportional dominance of widows is thrown into sharper relief, as they account for sixty-one per cent of staple women. Evidently, widowhood had its advantages, seemingly granting such women a hitherto unavailable degree of personal and legal agency upon their husbands' deaths, effectively enabling them to engage with the staple in greater quantities than their married counterparts. A particularly prominent example of such engagement is that of Beatrice Lavender, a London widow who acted as a staple creditor on four separate occasions, between 1517 and 1523.[38]

Having outlined the numerical make-up of the separate categories of descriptors available for analysis, one can speculate upon the broader patterns characterising the typical composition of the staple. First and foremost, the occupational dimension is particularly pronounced,

[36] C 241/275/269.
[37] C 241/275/51.
[38] C 152/65/2/15; C 152/65/2/83; C 152/65/2/199; C 241/277/33.

especially with regards to the involvement of the mercantile and artisanal elites, ranging from eponymously titled staple merchants, to goldsmiths and drapers. Whilst this is arguably to be expected and is strongly suggestive of a continued commercial element, the substantial numbers of members of the gentry, particularly esquires and gentlemen, cannot be ignored. Indeed, whatever socio-economic motivators governed the staple engagement of occupational individuals were evidently also profoundly felt by their genteel brethren, who, as a result, had begun to dominate proportionally within the staple. These commercial patterns are further interwoven with careerist motivations, as indicated by the numbers of officials appearing within the documentation, particularly sheriffs, mayors and alderman. It would seem therefore, that the Westminster statute staple of the later fifteenth century typically attracted a very specific kind of individual, one whose increasing engagement with the commercial sphere, regardless of individual demarcation or position, was coupled with an acute sense of personal opportunity, creating a distinct archetype, and one which could potentially be characterised as a kind of 'middling' identity.

2.3 Categorising Change: Descriptors and Patterns of Application in the Westminster Statute Staple.

Whilst the general composition of the Westminster staple group has been established through the collation of descriptors, by itself this presents a very one-dimensional perspective. Indeed, it is crucial to acknowledge that medieval individuals were not static in status or in description, with many staple participants yielding multiple descriptors during their recorded lives. For example, Thomas Tey, described as an esquire from Old Heath in Essex in a certificate of 1522, was later labelled as knight when he reappeared in 1524.[39] Other individuals yield an even more complex array of descriptors, such as John Sedley, described at various points in the

[39] C 152/65/2/657; C 241/277/68.

documentary record as gentleman, auditor of accounts, warden, esquire and finally as stationer in 1530, suggesting an individual's traceable status could fluctuate regularly.[40] Evidently therefore, these changes in description must be explored in order to truly understand who these people were, both individually and collectively.

Table 2.5 Individuals with More than One Datable Descriptor.

No. of Individuals	No. of Datable Descriptors	No. of Individuals with Datable Descriptors Actively Applied in Documents	No. of Datable Descriptors Actively Applied in Documents
509	1,481	414	997

Given the inherent complexity of any analysis of transition therefore, especially when dealing with large data sets, this section will focus only upon those individuals with multiple discernible descriptors, extrapolating the key patterns of change and providing insight into the ways in which status and position could fluctuate over the course of an individual's documented lifetime. Therefore, as shown in table 2.5 above, 509 individuals are discernible with more than one descriptor when both primary and secondary documentation is exploited. Whilst the examination of descriptors and the patterns produced by their application has the benefit of clarity and simplicity, like all methodologies, there are limitations. Perhaps the most noticeable of these are issues relating to the dating and application of these particular descriptors, something made all the more crucial given this analysis is exploring transition, which naturally involves a chronological component. Unfortunately, precise dating is not a universally apparent characteristic for all of these descriptors, as shown in the case of Richard Cavendish, whose status as an esquire is demonstrated in 1499, but who lamentably lacks a

[40] C 241/275/208; C 152/65/2/434; PROB 11/24/270.

precise date for his later knighthood.[41] Moreover, even when only those individuals with datable descriptors are extrapolated, of which 1,481 such descriptors are discernible in relation to the 509 individuals with multiple descriptors (table 2.5), methodological issues remain. Indeed, some of these datable descriptors are unfortunately still unlocatable in the primary documentation, raising the troubling issue as to whether these particular descriptors were ever actively used to describe the individual in question, or merely the result of later additions or scholarly assumptions. To counter this particular pitfall therefore, only descriptors which can be dated *and* located within primary documents will be used, yielding 414 individuals for analysis, who have a total of 997 descriptors discernible between them. A prime example of these precisely datable and actively applied descriptors is shown in the case of John Greenfield, a grazier, whose occupational status was demonstrated in a certificate of 1520, but who was later revealed to have joined the ranks of the yeomanry by the time he reappeared in the documentation just six years later.[42] As such, not only does this more statistically conservative approach produce a far more manageable sample size for study, but it also provides further assurances that these particular terms were indeed actively used to describe these individuals.

Methodological explanations aside, the most sensible starting point is with the ways in which these descriptors were applied, often providing insight into the potential motivations behind such changes with regards to the individuals under study. As such the application of descriptors can be grouped into four general patterns: 'singular' description, denoting the application of only one descriptor at a time in relation to an individual, 'multiple' description, whereby the individual always uses two or more descriptors to refer to themselves, 'cumulative' description, in which the individual consistently acquires descriptors over time without discarding earlier

[41] C 241/273/60; Cavendish's knightly status is briefly referred to in Adams' article concerning his son, also called Richard Cavendish: S. Adams, 'Cavendish, Richard (*c.* 1530-1601)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4941?docPos=1 [accessed 19/12/2017].
[42] C 152/65/2/322; C 241/279/15.

ones, and finally ‘reductive’ description, referring to individuals who discard multiple descriptors over time, typically to end up with just one.

Table 2.6 Modes of Application for Descriptors.

No. of Individuals with 'Singular' Description	No. of Individuals with 'Multiple' Description	No. of Individuals with 'Cumulative' Description	No. of Individuals with 'Reductive' Description
212	95	77	30

In examining table 2.6, unsurprisingly, singular description is the most common, with 212 individuals opting to apply only one descriptor at a time. For example, William Stone, described as a fuller in a certificate of 1526, seemed to have fully discarded this particular descriptor by the time of his will of 1530, instead supplying the label of clothworker to describe himself.[43] Other individuals are also shown to religiously adhere to singular description, seemingly undergoing various changes in description throughout their lives. A prime example is William Vampage, first recorded as gentleman in a certificate of 1479.[44] By 1494, Vampage had been appointed to royal office, something he was evidently keen to display, as he was now described as Knight of the King’s Body in the certificates.[45] Interestingly however, when his last discernible staple activity was recorded in 1501, a subtle change had clearly taken place. Indeed, Vampage’s only descriptor was simply that of ‘knight’, with no further embellishment, implying that he had left the King’s knightly inner circle, perhaps as a result of retirement from royal service, or alternatively because he had ultimately fallen from royal favour.[46] As shown in these exemplars, this preference for the singular application of descriptors clearly indicates

[43] C 241/282/82; PROB 11/27/606.
[44] C 152/65/1/12.
[45] C 241/273/72.
[46] C 241/275/144.

that accuracy and simplicity in description was often preferred, with the single most apt descriptor actively applied for the purposes of identification.

Furthermore, given the definitive nature of singular description, one might suppose that such a mode of application was often representative of immediate or permanent transitions, with little overlap between descriptors, or the status they represented. As such certain transitions would be expected to be especially prevalent, such as those reflecting the bestowal of a knighthood or the attainment of office, given the fact that such changes could be tied to a specific event or moment in time. Of the 212 incidences of singular description occurring within the staple, ninety-nine of these (46.7 per cent) were in some way connected to a temporally immediate transition in status. For example, forty-four individuals with singular description (20.7 per cent of the total), experienced a change in descriptors reflecting a knighthood, such as George Gilbert, described as esquire in 1527 and in 1528, but then as knight by 1530.[47] Similarly, the singular transitions of nineteen individuals were indeed explainable by election to civic office, as demonstrated by the example of Henry Dacres, labelled simply as merchant tailor in a staple certificate of 1520, but whose later demarcations reflected his ascension to the aldermanry of London by 1536.[48] Some examples are particularly demonstrative, as in the case of Katherine Addington, whose previous familial descriptor of wife in 1520 was replaced by that of widow in her will of 1552, evidently representing the immediate and fixed transition in her status which occurred upon the death of her husband.[49] However, although just under half of all singular changes in descriptors were marked by a clearly pinpointable event, a greater proportion were not. Indeed, somewhat surprisingly, one of the most common transitions for these remaining singularly applied descriptors was between traditionally vague social gradations, such as gentleman and esquire. For example, John Brockett, labelled as gentleman

[47] C 241/279/28; C 241/280/121; C 241/237/109.
[48] C 152/65/2/604; PROB 11/27/489.
[49] C 152/65/2/564; PROB 11/35/374.

in 1523, had singularly transitioned to the descriptor of esquire just three years later, appearing as such in a certificate of 1526.[50] In similar fashion, Hugh Croft, a man of gentlemanly status according to staple records of December 1503, had seemingly become an esquire by March 1504.[51] Perhaps therefore, such social changes were far more clear-cut and chronologically definitive than one might imagine, enabling these particular individuals to adhere to the demands of singular description, suggesting that they at least were acutely aware of the precise moments their status or societal position underwent change.

Returning to the application statistics in table 2.6, multiple descriptors are the next most common category, with ninety-five discernible occurrences. Although, not always representative of actual transition, important patterns for the simultaneous application of multiple descriptors are nevertheless clearly apparent. Indeed, this particular application pattern is largely characterised by incidences of crossover between distinct categories of descriptors, rather than outright transition. Among these, overlaps between social and familial descriptors are found to be particularly prevalent, with 39.1 per cent of individuals bearing multiple description opting to demarcate both their social standing as well as their relationship to other individuals, usually a father. For instance, John Middleton and Christopher Sokerman, despite having the differing social demarcations of gentleman and husbandman respectively, both also supplied the familial label of son, when registering their staple activities.[52] It would seem therefore that on occasion, multiple description was employed when two or more descriptors had equal importance in describing the individual in question, necessitating sometimes lengthy explanations of status and position. A prime example is found in a staple certificate of 1514, when the labelling of George Ryder seems especially extensive, describing

[50] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer Particulars of Account and Other Records Relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation, E 179/120/122; C 241/278/22.
[51] C 241/275/74; C 241/275/52.
[52] C 241/272/4; C 152/65/2/174.

him as gentleman, but also as the 'son of Thomas Ryder and Margaret, his wife, one of the daughters and heirs of Thomas Appledorefield.'[53] Evidently George's relationship to his maternal grandfather, Thomas Appledorefield, a gentleman from Linstead in Kent, was acutely important, either to this particular staple transaction, involving the borrowing of £200 from Richard Hunt of Northfleet in Kent, or perhaps simply in reinforcing his own claims to gentlemanly social status more generally. Despite the dominance of this particular socio-familial trend in labelling, some individuals with multiple self-expressions do not demonstrate such cross-category overlap in descriptors. For instance, some individuals are described in purely occupational terms, often involving two industries which are closely connected. Most notably, the various strands of mercantilist activity are often found to be interwoven in the multiple description of certain staple individuals. For example, both Andrew Fuller and William Mantell were described as mercers and merchants of the Calais Staple in certificates of 1514 and 1517 respectively, clearly emphasizing their involvement in the cloth trade, not only in retail, but also in export.[54]

The final two categories of application, cumulative description, which occurs in seventy-seven cases, and reductive description, with just thirty occurrences, are both especially illustrative of change, despite featuring rather more rarely than the previous two categories. Somewhat uniquely, cumulative and reductive description correspondingly reveal the patterns for the acquisition and abandonment of descriptors, providing crucial insight into some of the potential motivations behind such changes. Beginning with the individuals who demonstrate reductive description therefore, familial descriptors are the most commonly discarded, with eighteen incidences (sixty per cent of the total). For example, Edmund Conquest, described as gentleman and as the brother of Richard Conquest in a certificate of 1521, had seemingly discarded this

[53] C 152/65/2/343.
[54] C 152/65/2/547; C 152/65/2/66.

fraternal descriptor by the time of his will of 1549.[55] Interestingly, this example of Edmund Conquest is somewhat unique, given that every other familial reduction relates to filial description, with sixteen individuals electing to abandon the label of 'son.' As such, in complete contrast to the cogent familial emphasis within adherents of multiple description, reductive individuals typically rejected earlier filial demarcations, presumably in an effort to emphasize their independence as they progressed both commercially and chronologically. For example, Thomas Butler, labelled as an esquire, as well as the son of Thomas Butler, senior, a knight, in an extent of 1517, initially seems entirely typical of previous individuals with multiple descriptors, demonstrating his social and familial affiliations.[56] However, much later on, Thomas Butler the younger appeared in the certificates still described as an esquire, but without his erstwhile filial demarcation, evidently emphasizing his own individual status, irrespective of that of his father.[57] Such a pattern can perhaps be termed as 'coming of age' transitions, whereby certain individuals sought to shrug off the shackles of dependent kinship in order to operate in the staple in their own right, as well as within society more broadly.

Turning to cumulative description, characterised by the collation of descriptors over time, prominent motivating factors are also clearly apparent. Indeed, perhaps most strikingly and in similar fashion to the 'coming of age' transitions found within reductive description, cumulative description elicits its own unique, and proportionally dominant, reason for change in descriptors. Loosely termed in this thesis as 'commemorative accumulation', owing to the substantial proportion of individuals whose only employment of more than one descriptor occurred in their will, this particular cumulative change accounts for 55.8 per cent of the total. For instance, John Mundy, described variably as goldsmith, alderman and knight throughout his appearances in the certificates, seemingly opted to include all three of these descriptors

[55] C 152/65/2/688; PROB 11/32/565.
[56] C 131/104/19.
[57] C 241/283/62.

when composing his will of 1537.[58] Indeed, such an accumulation of descriptors, usually involving reference to one's occupation, office and social status, seems to indicate a degree of self-reflection and commemoration, aiming to preserve one's manifold lifetime descriptors in their last will and testament. As these brief, hypothetical breakdowns have demonstrated, in the instances where descriptors are actively added or removed, some insight can be gleaned into the potential motivations of the individuals behind these transitions, something arguably much harder to deduce from singular or multiple description patterns. Indeed, it is evident that judgements were actively made regarding the utility of certain descriptors, resulting in the emphasis or omission of certain labels, depending upon the needs and motivations of the individual who held them.

2.4 Measuring Mobility: Descriptors and Directional Movement in the Westminster Staple.

Whilst the previous section has explored the trends relating purely to the application of descriptors, the question of actual directional mobility remains. Sociological models often outline several key types of mobility, some of which can be explored when examining changes in descriptors. Based upon traditional hierarchies therefore, one can theorise that these individuals might transition vertically, horizontally, or not at all, depending upon the chronological application of their various descriptors. For example, Richard Fowler, who appeared in nine staple certificates and left behind a will, was variously described as gentleman, esquire and eventually knight at different points in his life, seemingly demonstrating a textbook ascension through the ranks of the gentry.[59] Some changes in the use of descriptors are less clear-cut, as in the case of Thomas Russell, whose status as an esquire seems assured when he

[58] C 241/275/216; C 241/278/91; C 152/65/2/101; PROB 11/27/118.
[59] C 241/275/314; C 241/275/211; C 241/275/216.

appeared in a certificate of February 1520 described as such.[60] However just four years later, Russell appears once more, only this time labelled as gentleman, potentially indicating either that Russell had experienced some kind of downward movement in his status, or else that certain closely related descriptors brought with them a profound sense of social confusion.[61] Evidently these directional patterns of transition are acutely important and require further analysis, and as such, the table below contains statistics relating to the basic movements of those individuals with datable descriptors (table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Mobility Vectors of Individuals with More than One Descriptor.

Horizontal Mobility	Vertical Mobility	No Change	Unknown
53	134	93	134

First and foremost, it is necessary to elucidate the issues associated with mapping directional movement patterns. As shown in the mobility categories in table 2.7, approximately one third of the 414 individuals under study are typified as 'unknown' in terms of their movement in descriptors. These are predominantly individuals whose descriptors are, unfortunately, hierarchically incomparable and so are not easily measurable in terms of vertical and horizontal mobility. For example, Robert Grubbe's social description as a yeoman in a certificate of 1522 does not readily compare with his later occupational labelling as a porter of the weigh house, some four years later.[62] Indeed, whilst some kind of change had evidently taken place, such variance in descriptors ultimately prevents an accurate assessment of any potential directional mobility in Grubbe's status. Some 'unknown' changes in descriptors prove especially frustrating, as in the case of John Cristemas, defined by his merchant status in 1517, but labelled as an esquire a decade later, a change which, although superficially could be perceived to be

[60] C 152/65/2/660.
[61] C 241/277/23.
[62] C 152/65/2/607; C 241/279/43.

vertical in terms of mobility, is unfortunately still theoretically incomparable, owing to the fact that parallels between occupational and social hierarchies are not easily drawn.[63]

Nevertheless, despite such hierarchical challenges, certain important directional movement patterns are still clearly apparent, reflecting the mobility trends of a substantial number of individuals. As a starting point, horizontal mobility, which represents a lateral movement in descriptors, whereby individuals affect a transition in description but do not actually change their overall status in societal hierarchies, is found to be the least common. Indeed, accounting for the movement patterns of just fifty-three individuals, this particular mobility vector initially seems largely atypical for the individuals of the staple (table 2.7). Nevertheless, in examining the actual trends in descriptors undergoing horizontal changes, such movement is found to be proportionally dominant in other ways, with the descriptors involved emerging as overwhelmingly occupational, representing a seemingly straightforward lateral movement between closely related occupations. For instance, several individuals affect a change between the descriptors of 'merchant' and 'mercer', as in the cases of Richard Hartwell and John Barnard, both of whom seemingly transition laterally to a more specialised, but crucially hierarchically comparable branch of mercantile activity.[64] An especially prevalent horizontal transition occurs between the occupational demarcations of 'tailor' and 'merchant tailor', with ten individuals undergoing such a change in descriptors. For example, John Bodyam, described as tailor in 1499, had become a merchant tailor by the time of his will of 1512.[65] In similar fashion, Thomas Howdon, a tailor in a certificate of 1487, had also become a merchant tailor

[63] C 152/65/2/22; C 241/282/92.
[64] For Barnard see: C 152/65/1/7; C 152/65/2/785; For Hartwell see: C 152/65/1/114; C 241/269/30. Indeed, this pattern is also discernible in L. R. Wheatley, 'The Mercers in Medieval York 1272/3 to 1529: Social Aspiration and Commercial Enterprise', University of York, unpublished PhD Thesis (2008), p. 117, in which she notes that certain of the mercantile individuals under study transitioned from merchants to mercers during their working lives, suggesting such a lateral movement represented a contraction in the scope of their trading activities.
[65] C 241/273/48; PROB 11/17/353.

by the time he reappeared in the documentary record in 1512.[66] Although the mercantile embellishment attached to the descriptor of 'merchant tailor' may seem to be an occupational step-up from simple tailors, thereby indicating a vertical change in occupational status, this was by no means the case. When contextualised, these particular occupational changes are found to perfectly match the wider, institutional developments taking place at this time, as their company, previously known as the Tailors and Linen Armourers, became the Company of Merchant Taylors by royal charter in 1503.[67] The impact of this name change is especially well demonstrated in the case of Hugh Acton, as he was described as a tailor from 1498 up until 1502 in the certificates, with his appearances after this date all accompanied by the descriptor of merchant tailor.[68] Clearly therefore, these changes in descriptors did not represent an actual transition in occupational status, merely a lateral movement in line with company policies. Other occupationally lateral movements are potentially representative of even more complicated company developments, such as company amalgamations, as exemplified by the absorption of the hat-makers by the haberdashers, to become the newly titled merchant haberdashers in 1502.[69] As a result, John Braybrook, operating under the descriptor of 'hat merchant' in 1484, had indeed become a haberdasher by 1510.[70] Indeed, such amalgamations seem to have been a fairly regular phenomenon in this period, as demonstrated by the merger of the separate companies of fullers and shearmen to become the Clothworkers' Company in 1528.[71] Accordingly, various transitions align with this particular institutional change, as demonstrated by the examples of Robert Bayly and Oliver Claymond, initially both described

[66] C 152/65/1/121; PROB 11/17/333.
[67] M. Davies and A. Saunders, *The History of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (Leeds, 2004), pp. 84-85.
[68] Chronological examples of Acton's changing descriptors include: C 241/272/43; C 241/275/103; C 241/279/17; C 241/280/10; C 241/280/44; C 241/282/151.
[69] I. W. Archer, *The History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, 1991), p. 16.
[70] C 241/269/31; PROB 11/17/143.
[71] 'The History of the Clothworkers' Company', URL: https://www.clothworkers.co.uk/History/Timeline.aspx [accessed 04/01/2018]; A. F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 335.

as shearmen, but later found to have acquired the descriptor of clothworker by 1533 and 1539 respectively.[72] Evidently therefore, the occupational mobility of certain individuals, whose sudden change in descriptors might otherwise seem entirely inexplicable, was in fact dictated by the institutional developments occurring within their chosen companies.

Returning to table 2.7, vertical mobility, characterised by straightforward upward and downward movement of individuals based upon established hierarchies, is the most prevalent, being discernible in 134 incidences. Although the impetus behind such hierarchical changes is often obscure, the upwards and downwards vertical movement patterns of these individuals can nevertheless be elucidated in further detail (table 2.8).

Table 2.8 Vertical Mobility Patterns for Different Categories of Descriptor.

Category of Descriptor	Upwards Vertical Mobility	Downward Vertical Mobility
Social	97	17
Occupational	8	5
Official	9	0
Familial	0	0
Total	**114**	**22**

In examining the statistics for vertical mobility therefore, initially the most striking trend appears to be the straightforward overall dominance of upwards transitions, amounting to 114 separate incidences, compared with just twenty-two discernible downward transitions. Indeed, such proportional representation cannot be ignored, suggesting that these particular staple individuals typically tended to experience a positive change in status, transitioning up the ranks of their respective hierarchies, rather than downwards. For example, John Hatche appeared as

[72] For Robert Bayly see: C 152/65/2/390; PROB 11/25/151; for Oliver Claymond see: C 152/65/2/625; PROB 11/28/56.

a husbandman when borrowing £20 in a certificate of 1522, but had seemingly transitioned upwards socially to attain yeoman status by the time he reappeared in the documentary record in 1524.[73] Furthermore, when focusing upon the actual transition statistics for the different categories of descriptors, other intriguing trends are also discernible. For instance, the proportional dominance of movement between social descriptors, with 43.7 per cent of upwards transitions and 53.1 per cent of downwards transitions occurring between individuals described only in social terms, is especially noticeable. For instance, the social descriptors applied to William Pikering of Oswaldkirk in Yorkshire demonstrate his rather straightforward upward movement, transitioning from esquire in 1522 to knight by 1530.[74] A prime exemplar of traceable downwards movement occurs in the case of Henry Noone, described as esquire in an extent for debt of 1511, but who appeared only as a gentleman in the staple certificates a decade later, indicating that some kind of adverse social change had taken place.[75] Moreover, examination of the actual social descriptors involved uncovers a clear emphasis upon the apparent transitory nature of the lesser gentry. For example, the most common downward change in social descriptors features esquires becoming gentleman, with fourteen incidences. Such a trend is mirrored by the individuals who transition upwards, where the reverse takes place, with forty-nine occurrences of gentlemen becoming esquires. Whilst such a trend could be seen to be representative of the fact that these particular individuals, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, were numerically dominant within the staple, seemingly tempering the social impact of such transitional trends to a certain degree, these proportions are nevertheless striking. Indeed, one could suppose that this apparent mobility between members of the lesser gentry was indicative not only of a highly mobile middling stratum of individuals, who frequently transitioned both upwards and downwards according to fluctuations in their

[73] C 241/276/8; C 152/65/2/764.
[74] C 152/65/2/695; C 131/249/19.
[75] C 131/101/16; C 152/65/2/523.

own individual social status, but also the elasticity of certain social barriers and descriptors more broadly.

Although comparatively more infrequent, other categories of descriptors do also yield vertical mobility patterns. For instance, occupational descriptors, with eight upwards transitions and five downwards transitions, are measurable by traditional hierarchies of industries. For example, John Cheryton, despite initially being described as a mercer, and therefore a member of London's foremost livery company, seemingly had experienced a downwards transition in his status when he appeared in a certificate of 1523, accompanied by the comparatively humble occupational descriptor of chapman.[76] Whilst it could be supposed that such a change in occupational labelling was merely representative of Cheryton's eagerness to engage with all aspects of the cloth industry, his rigid adherence to singular description nevertheless generates the impression of a definitive downward change in his occupational status. Fortunately, many of the incidences of upwards occupational mobility are more easily explainable, typically demonstrating how those occupational individuals engaged in the production of raw materials or the handling of unfinished goods strove to join the ranks of the livery companies and ultimately deal with the finished product. A prime example is that of Thomas Carter, a London dyer, who appeared as such in a certificate of 1525, when he borrowed £24 from George Tadlow.[77] However by the time of his will in 1530, Carter had seemingly become a draper, not only indicating his own ascension of the industry hierarchy, but also demonstrating his increased influence, as he now effectively sold the cloth he once helped to manufacture.[78]

[76] C 152/65/663; C 152/65/2/724.
[77] C 241/278/105.
[78] PROB 11/23/323.

2.5 Mobile Narratives: Providing Context to Changing Status through Individual Reconstruction.

So far, these analyses of the collation, composition and application of the descriptors ascribed to members of the Westminster statute staple group have remained largely statistical and thoroughly collective in approach. Although successfully uncovering a clear degree of fluidity in description and status, especially when tracked over the course of an individual's lifetime, such statistical patterns are nevertheless somewhat limited and can therefore be combined with prosopographical methods to produce detailed and illustrative exemplars of such transitions.

1) Robert Dormer: Social Ascension and the Mercantile Dimension.

Our first chosen exemplar is Robert Dormer, selected because of the seemingly archetypal nature of his general mobility trends, with his adherence to singular description matched only by his membership of that especially populous staple grouping, the gentry. Indeed, Dormer's actively applied descriptors seem to mark him out as an almost exemplary case of vertical social climbing, as he appeared in the staple certificates between 1513 and 1526, variously described as gentleman and esquire, and finally as knight in his will of 1552.[79] However this is only half the story and matters are somewhat complicated when an innocuous reference to his hitherto unknown mercantile origins, hidden at the end of the will of one of his associates, John Hosyer, disrupts the otherwise purely social trajectory of Robert Dormer's descriptors. Indeed, Hosyer's testament revealed Dormer's appointment as one of his executors, alongside William Bromwell and Michael Dormer, all three of whom were defined in solely occupational terms, namely as mercers.[80] As such Dormer's initially straightforward collection of descriptors becomes far more complex, effectively straddling both social and occupational hierarchies and

[79] As a gentleman: C 152/65/2/530; C 241/280/98; C 152/65/2/305; as an esquire: C 241/279/76; as a knight: PROB 11/35/330.
[80] PROB 11/20/128.

providing a tantalising individual perspective into one of the most controversial mobility models: the notion of the prosperous merchant who actively aspired to attain gentility.[81] Indeed, such a concept suggests a significant degree of socio-occupational overlap, something which previously proved ultimately too methodologically perilous to explore when considered in purely statistical terms.

In seeking further clarity regarding Dormer's early mercantile activities therefore, the most sensible starting place is with his traceable beginnings. He was born in *c.*1485 to William and Agnes Dormer, with the family originating from West Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.[82] In examining his immediate ancestors, Robert's associations with the mercery trade are easily explainable. Indeed Dormer's father William, described as a woolman, was evidently an important individual within the industry, given that a writ of 1499 recorded a deal made with the alien merchant John de Salvo, regarding the delivery of '127 woollen cloths of puce-colour' to William, each one worth £7.[83] Other Dormers were also shown to be prosperous wool sellers, such as Robert's uncles, Michael and Peter Dormer, who were particularly prominent staple merchants.[84] Indeed, uncle Michael appeared within the staple collection in his own right, also described as a mercer and lending no less than £649 6s. 8d. across eleven transactions.[85] In fact, when Robert's staple activities are compared with his uncle's, despite Robert's application of genteel descriptors, clear parallels can be drawn, with Dormer appearing in eight separate crediting transactions between 1513 and 1526, in which he lent a

[81] For an overview of this debate see: Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 234-5; S. O'Connor, 'Adam Fraunceys and John Pyel: Perceptions of Status among Merchants in Fourteenth-Century London', in D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance* (Stroud, 1994), p. 17.
[82] 'Parishes: West Wycombe', in W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 3* (London, 1925), pp. 135-140. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/bucks/vol3/pp135-140 [accessed 10/01/2018].
[83] C 131/249/24.
[84] M. K. Dale, 'Dormer, Robert (1485/6-1552) of West Wycombe and Wing, Buckinghamshire and London', in S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The Houses of Commons 1509-1558 (*London, 1982). URL: http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/dormer-robert-14856-1552 [accessed 09/01/2018].
[85] See for example: C 241/278/77; C 241/280/123; C 241/282/13; C 241/282/166.

total of £1,709 6s. 8d.[86] Evidently, Robert Dormer was prolifically active within the staple, and, supposing he was indeed conducting such transactions on behalf of the family business, one can assume that the Dormers' staple syndicate had successfully passed to the next generation.

Nevertheless, in spite of this clear mercantile heritage, at some point Robert Dormer was able to successfully transition and join the ranks of the gentry. In fact, his stint as a member of the gentlemanly contingent was especially well-marked, neatly spanning at least a decade, as demonstrated by the seven certificates listing this particular descriptor between June 1513 and June 1523.[87] Moving forward, Dormer's next traceable transition in status seemingly occurred at some point between June 1523 and December 1526, when he had become an esquire, indicating that some kind of advantageous change had indeed taken place, allowing him to vertically transition up the established social hierarchy.[88] Finally, after a long absence from the selected documentation, Dormer's will of 1552 attested to his further social successes, as he had ultimately reached the apex of traditional gentry society and become a knight, something records confirm he had in fact achieved in September 1535.[89] Unsurprisingly therefore, his surviving will includes abundant hints to Dormer's knightly status, mentioning various properties in Buckinghamshire, such as the manors of Abbots Aston, Eythrope ('Ethrop') and Cranwell ('Crendwell'), whilst the manor of Wing was revealed to have been that most genteel of possessions, his family's ancestral seat.[90] Superficially therefore, Dormer not only appeared to exhibit many of the archetypal features for transitional staple individuals, but his steady

[86] See for example: C 152/65/2/530; C 241/280/98; C 152/65/2/618; C 152/65/2/661.
[87] C 152/65/2/530; C 152/65/2/661.
[88] C 241/279/76.
[89] Dale, 'Dormer, Robert (1485/6-1552)'. URL: http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/dormer-robert-14856-1552 [accessed 09/01/2018].
[90] The names of manors were standardised using: A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire* (Cambridge 1925). URL: http://placenames.org.uk/id/placename/02/002695 [accessed 10/09/2018]; PROB 11/35/330; 'Parishes: Wing', in W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 3* (London, 1925), pp. 449-458. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/bucks/vol3/pp449-458 [accessed 10/01/2018].

ascension of the gentry hierarchy, coupled with evidence of his apparently knightly assets, convincingly generates a picture of unquestionable and seemingly long-standing gentility, with little hint of his erstwhile occupational beginnings.

In reconstructing his life and career therefore, Robert Dormer was evidently both a man of genteel status and a prosperous staple merchant, something not easily discernible from the social descriptors typically applied to him. Indeed, Dormer's engagement with mercery was somehow obscured within the documentary record, as occupational descriptors were clearly omitted from both staple certificates and his own will. Although one can speculate that such distortion in description was perhaps a conscious endeavour on his part, potentially suggesting a personal desire to emphasize his newfound gentility, Dormer's four discernible descriptors nevertheless shed crucial insight upon individual mobility. In fact, arguably one of the most striking aspects when one considers Dormer's descriptors was the clear chronological overlap in his status as both a mercer and a gentleman, considering Hosyer's will, in which Dormer was labelled as mercer, was composed in 1518, precisely at the time when Dormer was ascribing himself gentlemanly status in the staple certificates. Although never applied together, it would seem therefore that Dormer's mercantile status and his attainment of gentility existed concurrently, at least for a time, providing a unique opportunity to hypothesise upon the nature of hierarchical overlaps. In other words, Dormer did not cease to be one in becoming the other, potentially indicating that hierarchical parallels could be drawn between wealthy merchants and gentleman, suggesting that, despite their apparent differences, such individuals occupied a very similar societal position, one potentially characterised by their membership of that elusive grouping, the 'middling sort'.

2) John Sedley: Administration, Accumulation, Aspiration?

Continuing with the theme of cross-category description, John Sedley immediately stands out as an especially promising individual for reconstruction, boasting a proportionally dominant five applied descriptors across three categories, with official, social and occupational demarcations discernible. In terms of general mobility statistics, the chronological application of Sedley's discernible descriptors do indeed exhibit certain archetypal trends: they are applied in cumulative fashion and denote a vertical, upwards transition trajectory. Indeed, John Sedley's first appearance in the documentation came in February 1499, when he was described as a gentleman in a certificate of statute staple.[91] His penultimate appearance in the selected documentation, occurring some nineteen years later in a staple certificate of July 1518, demonstrated his position as a royal official, as he was now labelled as the auditor of the King's accounts.[92] Finally, Sedley's will, registered in 1532, proves especially illustrative, containing no less than four descriptors and seemingly revealing Sedley's desire for 'commemorative accumulation' when it came to description. Indeed, whilst his previous official descriptor of royal auditor remains, Sedley included three apparently chronologically new descriptors within his will, also describing himself as 'warden of the craft of Stationers', 'stationer' and 'esquire', supplementing his official capacity with additional social and occupational labels.[93] It would seem therefore, John Sedley was a complex character, at least in terms of description.

In examining John Sedley's applied descriptors, reconstruction of his professional life, both in terms of occupational and official capacities, is the most sensible starting place, as three of his five descriptors have careerist connotations. Although only mentioned in his will, one can assume that Sedley's occupation as a stationer effectively began his career, enabling him to

[91] C 241/275/208.
[92] C 152/65/2/434.
[93] PROB 11/24/270.

climb the administrative ranks. For instance, as a stationer, Sedley would have presumably exhibited a good degree of writing skill, effectively explaining his later auditing capabilities. Whilst his royal duties are evident from his applied descriptors, Sedley did not only audit for the King. Indeed, for example, his name appears on the accounts for Dartford Priory, where, incidentally, his daughter was a nun, as attested by the annuities laid out in his will.[94] It is clear therefore that Sedley's official descriptors neatly overlap with his chosen occupation as a stationer, particularly as he later acknowledged his position as the warden for the craft of Stationers. Turning to his remaining descriptors, both of which are social demarcations (gentleman and later esquire), Sedley evidently managed to transition vertically up the traditional social hierarchy, in similar fashion to our previous exemplar, Robert Dormer. Although no evidence of a knighthood exists, Sedley appears to have accumulated many of the hallmarks of gentility regardless, as shown in his extensive properties in and around London, which spread over at least four counties. Indeed, Southfleet in Kent became his base of operations, where his will attests to his establishment of a 'head tenement', a possession which could perhaps be linked with his status as an esquire.[95] John Sedley's cash assets were just as impressive, considering his will contained a total of £773 16s. 8d. in monetary bequests alone.[96] Perhaps the most illustrative indicator of Sedley's apparent social climbing was his commission of a monumental brass in *c.*1520, situated in St. Nicholas's Church in Southfleet, and in which he appeared alongside his wife.[97]

Although Sedley had evidently joined the ranks of the gentry by the time of his will in 1532, unlike Robert Dormer, he did not abandon his earlier descriptors. Indeed, Sedley's adherence to cumulative description in his last testament naturally generates overlaps in descriptors, not

[94] P. Lee, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society: The Dominican Priory of Dartford* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 52; PROB 11/24/270.
[95] PROB 11/24/270.
[96] PROB 11/24/270.
[97] C. R. Manning, *A List of the Monumental Brasses Remaining in England: Arranged According to Counties* (London, 1846), p. 45.

only demonstrating the complexity of Sedley's status as a staple individual, but also projecting an impression of personal pride in his lifetime achievements. Indeed, his attainment of royal office, as well as his craft affiliations, all appear to have remained acutely relevant within his life, coinciding with his acquisition of genteel status. As such, Sedley's successful career undoubtedly enabled his ascension of the social hierarchy, once more suggesting not only that cross-hierarchical fluidity was perhaps more prevalent than might be expected, but that potential parallels between the professional and social spheres extended beyond the popularly espoused gentlemanly merchant, with other occupations and careers proving equally socially prosperous.

2.6 Conclusion.

In conclusion, the themes explored within this chapter have demonstrated the diversity of the staple individuals under study. The statistical analysis of descriptors has uncovered important insights into the compositional and structural frameworks for the Westminster statute staple, as shown, for example, in the populousness of the gentlemanly contingent and the dominance of a mercantile elite, in effect rendering a collective image of the staple as a whole.

Whilst basic compositional analysis proved relatively straightforward, the fluidity and transitional nature of such people must be acknowledged, necessitating examination of the chronological component to individual description. This chapter significantly contributes to the growing corpus of literature devoted to the measurement of social mobility in the medieval period, particularly through the tracking of descriptors and their application. Indeed, the application of theoretical models has proved especially fruitful in recent scholarship, something the analysis within this chapter has adopted and enhanced.[98] Accordingly, the application of selected mobility models, as well as the novel experimentation of categorising descriptors into

[98] See for example: Carocci, 'Social Mobility', p. 375; Bearman and Deane, 'Middle-Class Mobility', pp. 36, 49.

modes of transition, namely ‘singular’, ‘multiple’, ‘reductive’ and ‘cumulative’, has demonstrated both the individual and archetypal mobility patterns for the users of the Westminster statute staple court.

These collective mobility patterns have shown the ways in which certain groupings within the staple tended to transition throughout the course of their lives, with some trends especially well-represented. For instance, the prevalence of upwards vertical mobility on the part of socially described individuals, such as gentlemen and esquires, is particularly noticeable, strongly indicating an established hierarchy of upwards social transition in this period. Furthermore, when considered in conjunction with the findings of this chapter regarding modes of application, ‘singular’ description, arguably the most definitive category of application, is found to be the most common, further enhancing this perspective upon social mobility. Indeed, it would seem that this apparent trend for vertical mobility was combined with, and reinforced by, the frequency with which such transitions manifested as permanent or immediate changes in status, with typical examples being the attainment of a knighthood or other clearly pinpointed life events.

This chapter has also produced important findings regarding more complex transitional patterns. For instance, certain staple individuals, although less well represented in numerical terms, exhibit a clear desire to showcase multiple descriptors at the same time, sometimes accumulating them over the course of their careers and lives. Such incidences are strongly suggestive of social and hierarchical overlap, and that definitive, upwards transition, although statistically common, was by no means universal. This more nuanced perspective upon social mobility and change is demonstrated in the reconstruction of the two selected exemplars of John Sedley and Robert Dormer. Indeed, despite yielding differing descriptors, these two individuals demonstrate some intriguing similarities, most noticeably their successful attainment of genteel status, which coincided with their continued occupational and official

affiliations. Evidently therefore, rigid adherence to traditional hierarchies is ultimately too simplistic, as certain individuals were especially mobile, not only transitioning within their respective hierarchies, but also laterally, effectively demonstrating the cross-category parallels in existence at this time.

Chapter 3. Problematic Categories: Gentlemen and their Place in the Gentry.

3.1 Introduction and Historiographical Overview.

The previous chapter has outlined the general composition of the staple through examination of descriptors and their application. In doing so, the largest identifiable category of individuals within the certificates of statute staple are described as 'gentlemen', with 926 people described as such, making for an important case study. However, despite their statistical prominence, these gentlemen are notoriously difficult to define, often sharing many of the typical traits of other members of the gentry, namely esquires and knights. As such, this section will explore these gentlemen users of the staple in greater detail, reconstructing their lives, possessions and activities to better understand this socially elusive grouping. Furthermore, alongside this prosopographical methodology, important comparative analyses with knights and esquires will be undertaken, effectively contextualising these gentlemen not only within the Westminster statute staple court, but within the wider, broadly-defined gentry as a whole.

Most scholars are in agreement concerning the first appearance of the term 'gentleman', often pinpointing its use to the early fifteenth century as a result of the 1413 Statute of Additions, which aimed to introduce greater precision in the descriptors applied to individuals in legal documents.[1] Indeed, gentleman now emerged as the term for the 'lowest of the well born', typically situated beneath the ranks of the other members of the gentry, but crucially above and separate from the peasantry.[2] As a result, historiographical analysis of gentlemen naturally rubs shoulders with the context of the gentry as a class of individuals, owing to the fact that gentlemen are usually counted amongst this vaguely defined grouping of the late medieval period. Some scholars, such as R. H. Tawney, have argued for a relatively uncomplicated social construction of the gentry, as the section of medieval society above the yeomanry and below

[1] C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (London, 2002), p. 340.
[2] C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 45.

the peerage, encompassing landed proprietors and wealthy professionals.[3] P. Coss concurs with this assessment to some degree, although he acknowledges that the term gentry is more vague than helpful, eventually coming to be used to cover the entirety of the lower strata of landed society once 'nobility' became restricted to the peerage.[4] C. Carpenter's analysis of the country community has also touched upon this problematic issue, stating that medievalists were 'probably safe' to place the cut-off for gentry membership at the lesser gentleman, linking this to access to the political world, which was largely the domain of those with manorial lordship over other men.[5] Writing in the 1980s, B. Coward noted the importance of recognising the differences between distinct social categories within the gentry, isolating county magnates from the lesser 'middling and parochial' gentry. Indeed, Coward argues that these differences are accurately reflected in the terms contemporaries used to describe themselves and others, with knights, esquires and gentlemen representative of a distinct hierarchy within the gentry itself.[6] Whilst it is evident that the conception of the late medieval gentry as a construct is vague and problematic at best, gentlemen seem nevertheless to have occupied the lowest rung of this particular core of individuals, perhaps on occasion overlapping with the yeomanry below them.

Undoubtedly as a result of these strong gentry affiliations, gentlemen are traditionally conceived of in distinctly armigerous terms, with the right to bear arms and wage war perceived to be a major defining feature.[7] Indeed, P. Earle, despite focusing largely upon the 'middling sort' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, still touches upon the roots of such social confusion, arguing that the major problem concerns the definition of the term 'gentleman', which was properly 'a man entitled to bear arms.'[8] However, as modern ideas about these

[3] R. H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', *The Economic History Review*, 11 (1941), p. 4.
[4] P. R. Coss, 'The Formation of the English Gentry', *Past and Present*, 147 (1995), p. 39.
[5] C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), p. 353.
[6] B. Coward, *Social Change and Continuity in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (New York, 1988), p. 43.
[7] M. Keen, 'Heraldry and Hierarchy: Esquires and Gentlemen', in J. Denton (ed.), *Orders and Hierarchies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 101.
[8] P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London, 1991), p. 5.

gentlemanly individuals have deepened and crystallized, this somewhat antiquated marker has been reduced in significance. Indeed, P. J. P. Goldberg has stressed how other skills, such as legal and administrative capacity, became more important to these lesser gentry as a sign of status, rather than warfare and arms.[9] Although this may seem to reflect a radical shift in contemporary notions of gentility, the central importance of service remains, albeit through an administrative role in local government, rather than on the battlefield.[10]

Nevertheless, by the later medieval period, it was apparent that the traditional markers of gentlemanly status were changing, with the armigerous lifestyle becoming increasingly obsolete. Many historians have sought to locate other methods of measuring or defining genteel status. Chief among these are economic demarcations, with assessments based upon landholdings and wealth by far the most prevalent. For instance, J. Cornwall has argued that the single most distinguishing feature for the gentleman was land, declaring that all gentlemen were landowners, whilst their closest rivals, the yeomen, were not always so. Indeed, Cornwall confidently ascribes a landed portfolio worth £5 to £10 annually as an indicator that its owner was indeed a gentleman.[11] These financial boundaries for gentlemanly status, although seemingly somewhat rigid, are nevertheless repeated elsewhere. For example, E. Acheson, in assessing the taxable wealth of the Leicestershire gentry, argues that gentlemen are easily discernible owing to their smaller assessed incomes, most of whom earned less than £5 a year. Acheson strongly contrasts this with the comparatively large assessments of the Leicestershire cohort of knights and esquires, whose wealth was typically valued at between £40 and £100 per annum.[12] S. M. Wright adopts a similar approach in examining the records for Derbyshire,

[9] P. J. P. Goldberg, *Medieval England: A Social History, 1250-1550* (London, 2004), p. 116.
[10] C. Carpenter, 'England: The Nobility and the Gentry', in S. Rigby (ed.), *Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 266.
[11] J. Cornwall, 'The Early Tudor Gentry', *The Economic History Review*, 17 (1964-5), p. 464.
[12] E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c. 1422-c. 1485* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 43.

isolating a typical range of £5 to £20 for a gentleman based upon tax returns and Inquisitions *Post Mortem*. Furthermore, Wright notes that this particular fiscal bracket, whilst almost never shared with knights or esquires, regularly included wealthy yeomen and merchants.[13] However, despite these apparently definitive fiscal assessments for gentlemen, some scholars have noted potential problems. For example, A. T. Brown, whose examination of rural society in County Durham includes examination of its gentry community, argues that such strict economic classifications assume that gentle status could be acquired through property acquisition alone, potentially rendering an inaccurate or problematic conception of gentility.[14]

Moving away from such economic measures therefore, other scholars have sought to grapple with the notion of what it actually meant to be a gentleman. F. R. H. Du Boulay, whose influential monograph of 1970 examined the ways in which medieval individuals aspired to better themselves, noted a 'sharpening self-consciousness' in the fifteenth century concerning one's social status. Indeed, this is particularly noticeable in relation to gentility, whereby gentle individuals must have an 'affected being' and behave in a certain way.[15] K. Wrightson, utilising the writings of contemporary commentators such as William Harrison in the sixteenth century, points to the idea that any man could become gentle, so long as he could 'live without manuell labour.' Wrightson concludes therefore that gentility was ultimately a combination of relative wealth and lifestyle, whereby successful lawyers and other professionals might well class themselves as gentlemen.[16] Indeed, many scholars have eagerly seized upon this notion of a gentlemanly lifestyle, particularly in connection with the myriad sumptuary laws peppering the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For instance, F. E. Baldwin, in her comprehensive analysis of such legislation, demonstrates the ways in which these laws can be used to determine markers

[13] S. M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, 1983), pp. 5-6.
[14] A. T. Brown, *Rural Society and Economic Change in County Durham* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 170.
[15] F. R. H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1970), p. 73.
[16] K. Wrightson, 'Estates, Degrees and Sorts: Changing Perceptions of Society in Tudor and Stuart England', in P. J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 39-40.

of status, as, for example, it was decreed that no man below the rank of gentleman could wear furs from abroad, providing a neat, albeit rather external, assessment of what a typical, law-abiding gentleman should be wearing.[17] One of the most intriguing insights into gentlemanly status comes from P. Maddern's critique of gentility itself, which acknowledges certain tangible features deemed gentlemanly, such as material possessions, servants and land, as well as activities such as hunting, but also elucidates the more abstract traits thought to be found in gentlemen, such as honesty, courage and courtesy.[18] Perhaps therefore true gentility is ultimately immeasurable, owing to the fact that it was an inward conception of one's self turned outward for all to see, as, in Maddern's words, to be a gentleman was to 'forever act out a role before a perpetual audience of peers.'[19]

3.2 Gentlemanly Financials: Wealth, Land and Economic Valuations.

Given that measurements based upon wealth and landed incomes are perhaps the most straightforward starting place in assessing gentlemanly status, table 3.1 contains the mean valuations drawn from a range of relevant sources. These assessment valuations have been collated based upon those individuals with descriptors of gentleman, esquire or knight in these sources. The bracketed numbers after each mean valuation indicate the numbers of individuals with relevant source evidence still extant.

[17] F. E. Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, 1926), p. 185.
[18] P. Maddern, 'Gentility', in R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (eds.), *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 30-31.
[19] Maddern, 'Gentility', p. 31.

Table 3.1 Financial Valuations for Gentry Social Categories Extrapolated from Lay Subsidies, Extents for Debt and Inquisitions *Post Mortem*.

	Mean Valuation in Inquisitions *Post Mortem*	Mean Valuation in Extents for Debt	Mean Valuation in 1523-24 Lay Subsidy	Mean Valuation in 1540-41 Lay Subsidy
Gentlemen	£32 1s. 7d. (10)	£16 7d. (128)	£31 3s. 7d. (33)	£233 10s. 5d. (16)
Esquires	£48 3s. 7d. (13)	£46 19s. 5d. (75)	£33 5s. 10d. (18)	/[20]
Knights	£58 5s. (17)	£73 12s. 1/4d. (26)	£113 6s. 8d. (9)	£1,790 14s. 5d. (18)

Whilst the historiographical literature outlines a rough £5 to £20 bracket for the typical taxable incomes of gentlemen, such fiscal parameters do not readily align with the discernible assets of the genteel members of the Westminster statute staple group. Indeed, only the data for the extents for debt falls within this range, with the mean valuation emerging as £16 7d. per person. For example, Thomas Arblaster, gentleman of Tendring in Essex, possessed three tenements assessed at £17 6s. 8d. in an extent of 1508, situating him neatly within the typical bracket outlined for gentlemen.[21] By contrast, other available financial sources, such as Inquisitions *Post Mortem* and two separate lay subsidies, reveal much higher mean wealth assessments for those individuals described as gentlemen. For instance, although the Inquisitions *Post Mortem* belonging to gentlemen yield a mean valuation of their lands of £32 1s. 7d., a figure only slightly above traditional estimates, the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy produces a seemingly atypical sum of £233 10s. 5d. per person, suggesting that gentlemanly wealth could on occasion far

[20] There is only one esquire with an assessment for the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy, namely William Purde, assessed as worth £66 13s. 4d. in goods. As such it is impossible to calculate a mean valuation for esquires from a single person, necessitating their omission from the table.
[21] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Extents for Debts, Series I, C 131/93/1.

exceed conservative assessments. Indeed, some of these particular subsidy returns amounted to impressive figures, such as the £666 13s. 4d. valuation of Thomas Edgar, gentleman of London.[22] Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that this mean valuation extrapolated from the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy is unlikely to be representative of gentlemen more generally, but instead provides insight into the wealth of the genteel metropolitan elite, owing to the fact that this particular subsidy relates solely to the inhabitants of the capital. Unsurprisingly, when we examine the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy, the returns of which are wholly more provincial in focus, recording the assessed taxable wealth of those outside of London, the gentlemanly mean of £31 3s. 7d. is much closer to the assessments found in the extents for debt and Inquisitions *Post Mortem*. With regards to the gentlemen users of the Westminster staple therefore, it is clearly apparent that they were on average somewhat wealthier than previous scholarly assessments would suggest, but that their economic position could vary widely, as demonstrated by the simple example of geography, with something of an urban London elite discernible at the apex of the gentlemanly social category.

This examination of wealth valuations can be further expanded through comparative analysis with other social categories from the loosely defined 'gentry', uncovering significant trends and providing important social contextualisation. As such, included in table 3.1 are the corresponding wealth valuations for knights and esquires, revealing to what extent financial assessments correlated with traditionally espoused models of the hierarchical structure of the gentry. Most noticeably, for every single assessment type, esquires are demonstrated to be wealthier on average than gentlemen, with knights surpassing both. For example, the landed assets of the thirteen esquires with Inquisitions *Post Mortem* is greater than that of their

[22] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Aldersgate Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 1-9. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp1-9 [accessed 19/12/2016].

gentlemanly counterparts, with an average valuation of £48 3s. 7d. A prime example is John Pympe, whose landholdings, which included some ten separate manors, are valued at £86 18s. 10d. upon his death in 1496, a figure well above the majority of staple gentlemen.[23] Although knights, who yield seventeen Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, have an average only slightly above esquires, of £58 5s., gentlemen are still firmly financially beneath the both of them. Furthermore, scholarly assertions placing the typical incomes of knights and esquires at approximately £40 to £100, are largely supported by the statistics in table 3.1.[24] Excluding the aforementioned 1540-41 Lay Subsidy, the various mean valuations for esquires range between £33 5s. 10d. and £48 3s. 7d. Similarly, knights, although more prosperous with a range of £58 5s. to £113 6s. 8d., also fall within this general financial bracket, suggesting that, unlike gentlemen, traditional measures of economic well-being for these particular members of the gentry do have some merit. Indeed, it would seem therefore that, despite a potential degree of under-assessment of gentlemanly wealth, the wider gentry hierarchy persists, with gentlemen ultimately at the bottom of the economic pile, some way financially beneath their knightly brethren.

3.3 Do Manors Maketh the (Gentle) Man? Reconstructing Genteel Property Portfolios.

Given the inescapable connection between membership of the gentry and substantial land ownership, collation of property portfolios is a useful tool for exploring where gentlemen fit within the social hierarchy. As such the table below contains statistics relating to the acreages and landed assets of the gentlemen, esquires and knights of the Westminster staple, extrapolated from those extents for debt and Inquisitions *Post Mortem* which make explicit mention of such property.

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[23] 'Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, Henry VII, Entries 1201-1258', in Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII* (London, 1898), pp. 535-565. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1/pp535-565 [accessed 22/10/2017].
[24] See: Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 43.

Table 3.2 Landed Property Portfolios for Gentlemen, Esquires and Knights.

Landed Property	Manors	Messuages	Acres	Virgates	Carucates	Bovates
Gentlemen (134)	103.33	744.5	30,575	0	0	34
Mean	0.77	5.56	228.17	0	0	0.25
Esquires (104)	223.75	979	71,388	62.5	3	397
Mean	2.15	9.41	685.94	0.60	0.03	3.82
Knights (54)	176.5	946	57,177	0	6	316
Mean	3.27	17.52	1,058.83	0	0.1	5.85

Although the methodology of counting manors has on occasion been regarded as somewhat limited in scope,[25] in the interests of this particular analysis into gentlemanly status it is nevertheless useful, owing to the traditional association of gentility with ownership of a manor or landed estate. Indeed, in examining table 3.2, the esquires and knights under study are clearly shown to typically possess a manor, with a total of 223.75 and 176.5 such properties respectively. In fact, the mean averages concerning manorial ownership, collated from those individuals with specific records of their landed assets, indicate that it was typical for these particular members of the gentry to own multiple manors, with knights yielding a mean of nearly three and a half manors per person and esquires typically possessing 2.15 (table 3.2). Individual examples clearly demonstrate this, as in the case of Robert Brandon, a Suffolk knight, whose ownership of the three separate manors called Cranes, Georges and Thuxtons was recorded in an extent for debt of 1501.[26] Similarly the esquire George Meyverell was forced to relinquish his Staffordshire manor of Tideswell and Derbyshire manor of Throwley, when the respective sheriffs came to call in 1524.[27] As such, manorial ownership was clearly

[25] A. J. Pollard, 'The Richmondshire Community of Gentry during the Wars of the Roses', in C. Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979), p. 44.
[26] C 131/85/31.
[27] C 131/106/28; C 131/106/37.

somewhat archetypal for the knightly class, as well as for esquires, suggesting their acquisition was in some way connected to the social hierarchy. However, in contrast to the multiple possessions of knights and esquires, the manorial statistics relating to gentlemen are less impressive. Indeed, there are only 103.33 manors discernible in the possession of the gentlemen under study, producing a mean of less than one manor per person (0.77), suggesting that a manorial estate was by no means the only criterion necessary for an individual to be labelled 'gentleman.' For instance, whilst the gentleman Walter Herbert had two manors listed in his Inquisition *Post Mortem* of 1507, neither Hugh Fordam nor Richard Vowell, both gentlemen, held any manors, just a handful of messuages, in their inquisitions of 1494 and 1499 respectively.[28]

In connection with this idea of the quintessential landed estate, is possession of substantial acreages, with the expectation that members of the gentry would typically hold vast swathes of land, alongside, or as part of, their manor (or manors).[29] It is immediately apparent in examining table 3.2 that the statistical pattern highlighted in the previous section, concerning the correlation between the traditional hierarchical composition of the gentry and various economic measurements, is once again discernible. Indeed, the mean size of acreage seems to directly correspond to an individual's social station, with gentlemen yielding a typical

[28] 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 851-870', in C. Flower, M. C. B. Dawes and A. C. Wood (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 3, Henry VII* (London, 1955), pp. 445-457. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol3/pp445-457 [accessed 30/10/2017]; 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 251-300', in Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 2, Henry VII* (London, 1915), pp. 169-197. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol2/pp169-197 [accessed 30/10/2017].

[29] In this instance, 'manor' refers to the unit of territorial organisation which consisted of lands under the jurisdiction of a feudal lord. Whilst this might indeed include a manor house, it was chiefly the status of this landlord being a tenant of the Crown which was important. For fuller explanations of manorial lordship see: J. Richardson, *The Local Historian's Encyclopedia* (New Barnet, 1974), p. 34; "manor, n.", in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/113622?redirectedFrom=manor& [accessed 30/05/2018]; C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), p. 353; Pollard, 'The Richmondshire Community', p. 45.

landholding of just 228.17 acres per person, esquires a somewhat larger 685.94 acre holding per person and knights with an impressive, and evidently substantial, 1,058.83 acres each (table 3.2). Similarly, messuages, which denote a building and the plot of land it was situated upon, follow the same pattern, with mean acquisition statistics once more correlating with the established social hierarchy of the gentry. For example, gentlemen are revealed to possess on average 5.56 messuages within their individual property portfolios, whereas knights, at the apex of gentry society, typically owned over three times as many, with approximately 17.52 such properties. Evidently, whilst all three social gradations typically held substantial landholdings, the property portfolios of gentlemen often had some subtle but important differences, namely on occasion the absence of the socially significant manor house, as well as smaller acreages with which to make a living.

3.4 'A Way of Being?': Personal Possessions as Markers of Gentility.

So far, this analysis of gentlemen, and by extension knights and esquires, has examined their wealth and landed assets, uncovering a significant adherence to the traditional hierarchy laid out for such individuals. However, given that contemporaries and historians alike have commented upon a so-called 'way of being' that defined true gentility, it is necessary to attempt to reconstruct the gentlemanly lifestyle in greater detail. Therefore, personal possessions, as some of the best evidence of individual social display still available to us, have been extrapolated for further analysis (table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Percentages of Different Social Groups Owning Specific Types of Personal Possessions Extrapolated from the Wills of Gentlemen, Knights and Esquires.

	Gentlemen (%)	Esquires (%)	Knights (%)
Clothing	31	35	58
Jewellery	19	23	38
Weapons and Armour	6	8	7
Books	6	12	11
Coat of Arms	3	4	3
Horses	19	4	11
Plate	42	46	45
Craft Tools	3	0	0

The above table includes a basic breakdown of the percentages of individuals possessing different items recorded in the wills of gentlemen, knight and esquires, with especial emphasis placed upon those which could be seen to have particular social associations, such as weapons, coats of arms, clothing and books. Given the traditional connection of the gentry with an armigerous lifestyle, it is unsurprising that references to the possession of weapons and armour are still discernible within their wills. For example, Roger Cholmeley, a London knight, made mention of his armour in his will of 1565, whilst Richard Fowler, also a knight, bequeathed a pole axe to his son Anthony.[30] Gentlemen are also shown to possess such martial items, as in the case of Randolph Spurstowe, who owned what he described as a 'great crossbow' when he made his will in 1535.[31] However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that weaponry and armour was by no means statistically pervasive within the wider context of the possessions of our

[30] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Wills 1384-1858, PROB 11/48/205; PROB 11/22/650.
[31] PROB 11/25/439.

genteel individuals, given that the wills of just six per cent of gentlemen, eight per cent of esquires and seven per cent of knights are recorded with arms. As such, it would seem that scholarly assertions concerning the declining significance of warfare as a marker of gentlemanly status do find traction, especially as some of the items above could well have been employed in hunting instead of on the battlefield. Indeed, it is not a stretch to imagine the aforementioned gentleman, Randolph Spurstowe, sat astride the 'great gelding' also listed in his will and wielding his trusty crossbow in pursuit of the day's quarry.[32] Nevertheless, continuing with the armigerous theme, other markers of such status are also discernible, most noticeably items with coats of arms upon them. However once again, despite being found within the wills of all three genteel categories, these particular items are comparatively uncommon, emerging in between three and four per cent of gentry wills. A rare example is found in the will of the knight John Rudstone, who bequeathed to his local church a blue velvet cope with his name and arms upon it, commemorating not only his own piety but also his social standing.[33] As a result, these proportions of armigerous items not only suggest that the traditional markers of gentility, such as coats of arms and martial prowess, were decreasing somewhat in importance, but, perhaps even more significantly, their possession was not distinct between the different gradations of the gentry, with these items emerging in gentlemanly wills at least as often as those of knights and esquires.

In examining the actual percentage occurrences of the items discernible in the wills of gentlemen, esquires and knights, a particularly interesting pattern emerges. Indeed, although the actual proportions of different possessions vary across the three social categories, their overall percentage ranking remains largely consistent across the board. For example, clothing

[32] PROB 11/25/439.
[33] PROB 11/24/106.

is shown to be the most common type of item bequeathed, with thirty-one per cent of gentlemen, thirty-five per cent of esquires and fifty-eight per cent of knights mentioning them in their wills. Similarly, for all three social groupings, bequests of plate feature as their second most prevalent possession, amounting to near identical proportional totals of forty-six per cent for esquires and forty-five per cent for knights, and approximately forty-two per cent of gentlemanly wills. Furthermore, given the fact that jewellery emerges as the third most common item, it is evident not only that the ownership patterns of the different gentry categories were strikingly similar, but that the most prevalent possessions were those that offered some kind of social statement. Indeed, these particular objects are powerfully connected with ostentatious display, especially as jewellery and clothing were worn upon the body, whilst plate would decorate the home and impress one's guests. For example, the gentleman Robert Ballard bequeathed £173 6s. 8d. in gold plate in his will, items which had presumably been used to impress visitors to his manor house at Barton in Kent.[34] Likewise, the esquire John Walsh of Olveston, Gloucestershire, possessed various jewellery and clothing, including a 'best gown, doublet and jacket', as well as £100 in silver plate, when he made his will in 1498.[35] Despite proportional variations, these individuals evidently prized similar possessions, which, although not ideal in seeking to isolate exclusively gentlemanly traits, does nevertheless suggest that these men exhibited shared perceptions and tastes, with particular emphasis placed upon those items which could project an image of one's social standing and gentility.

Nevertheless, in moving away from these rather more obvious markers of gentility, some items do reveal a tentative degree of gentlemanly uniqueness. Initially, book ownership seems to

[34] PROB 11/11/465.
[35] PROB 11/13/206.

have been the more common preserve of the gentry elite, with approximately eleven percent of knightly wills and twelve per cent of wills belonging to esquires containing such items. However, when the types of books are actually examined, gentlemen are found to be the more common owners of secular books, as in the case of Richard Tuke, a London gentleman, whose will of 1498 included a bequest to his son of various grammar and music books, mentioning one in particular which concerned the study of the clave cymbal.[36] Furthermore, many of these gentleman-owned books were frequently connected with a profession or commerce, such as those in the ownership of John Danyell, gentleman of Essex, who held books, presumably on accountancy, to aid him in the 'reckoning of his outstanding loans.'[37] In almost a completely converse tendency, knights are in fact the most frequent possessors of non-secular works, with the majority of such book-owning individuals bequeathing religious tomes within their wills. For instance, Thomas Exmewe, once a London goldsmith but knighted by the time of his will in 1528, possessed five separate velvet-bound Matins books, one bound with crimson, a second and third with green and blue and the last two in black.[38] In roughly reconstructing the contents of gentry households therefore, certain patterns do clearly emerge. Whilst the more traditional, armigerous markers of gentility are proportionally rare, ostentatious personal display, through clothing, jewellery and silver plate is still prominent, frequently emerging in all three categories of gentry wills. However, as demonstrated to a certain degree by the book-owning preferences of gentlemen, the possessions of these particular individuals do seem to be suggestive of an unconcealed connection with the professional sphere, eliciting a subtle tone of practicality, especially when compared with those of knights and esquires. Whilst it could be theorised that this related to the presumably greater opportunities available to knightly individuals to spend time on leisurely pursuits, increasing the likelihood that they would read for pleasure rather

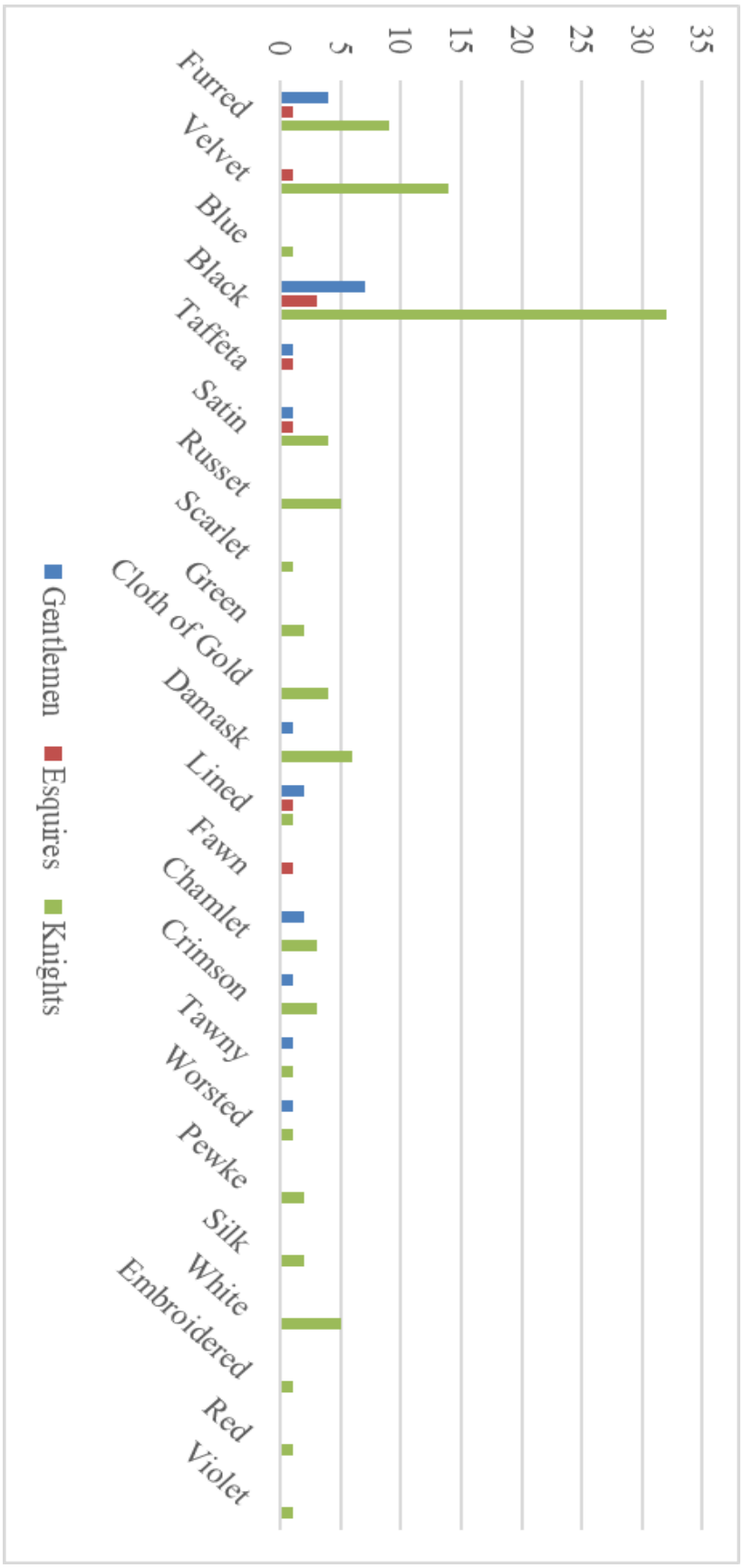
[36] PROB 11/11/592.
[37] PROB 11/19/189.
[38] PROB 11/23/55.

than practical instruction, this divide in reading preferences is nevertheless a subtle indicator of difference.

3.5 What the Well-Dressed Gentleman Should be Wearing: Some Comparisons with the Sumptuary Laws.

As previously demonstrated in the more general statistics outlined in table 3.3, highly visible items, such as clothing, are particularly prevalent in relation to the possessions of gentlemen, knights and esquires. As such, a sartorial case study can be used to reconstruct gentlemanly fashions, particularly when compared with contemporary sumptuary legislation, exploring the extent to which such clothing can be seen to draw distinctions between social categories.

Figure 3.1 Clothing Descriptors Extrapolated from the Wills of Gentlemen, Esquires and Knights.



There are twenty-three different descriptors relating to clothing in the wills of the genteel contingent of the Westminster staple group (figure 3.1). These descriptors relate either to the material used to weave the item of clothing, or else simply to its colour, giving some insight into the styles and hues within the typical gentleman's wardrobe. For example, William Henege, a gentleman resident of Middleton in Sussex, possessed a taffeta gown, a black satin doublet, a satin coat furred with rabbit, as well as a nightgown edged with both lamb and polecat.[39] In examining the data therefore, certain styles and materials are found across all three social demarcations, with the colour black proving particularly pervasive[40] and furred or velvet clothing also regularly emerging within gentry wills. For example, the knighted Robert Reed bequeathed velvet gowns in his will, whilst the gentleman William Salford left a bequest of his fox-fur gown upon his death in 1537.[41] However, aside from these expected parallels between the more common clothing styles, other sartorial trends are not so universally applicable. Indeed, as has been the pattern for much of this analysis, adherence to the traditional gradations of the gentry hierarchy seems to come to the fore once more, as demonstrated by the relatively limited range of clothing terminology found within gentlemanly wills, with just ten different descriptors, compared with the wills of knights, which yield twenty-one, potentially demonstrating something of the degree of variation in an individual's personal attire based upon social status. Furthermore, given the administrative changes of the time, sumptuary legislation, which aimed to enforce strict rules regarding what an individual could wear in relation to his social rank, seems to confirm such an assumption. Indeed, even a cursory glance at the data reveals a certain adherence to the demands of contemporary legislation, particularly with regards to clothing materials and styles deemed unfit for 'mere' gentlemen. For example,

[39] PROB 11/37/340.
[40] This pervasiveness of black clothing typically relates to black gowns, often bequeathed in wills for remembrance or as funeral garb. For a fuller explanation of this particular testamentary phenomenon, I would refer the reader to chapter five of this thesis, specifically p. 204. They have been included in this analysis but do not reveal much about clothing styles, as they are often *post mortem* commissions.
[41] PROB 11/19/190; PROB 11/27/116.

cloth of gold, as an expensive and luxurious material, was not to be worn by the humbler members of the gentry, and is accordingly absent from the wills of the staple gentlemen under study (figure 3.1).[42] Furthermore, early sixteenth-century legislation set social restrictions upon various colours, including scarlet and violet, hues which are indeed discernible only in the testamentary records of knights.[43] For instance, two knights owned scarlet-coloured clothing, whilst just a single knight, Sir Thomas Kneseworth, possessed purple garb, a violet gown which he bequeathed in 1513, a colour traditionally strongly associated with the aristocracy.[44] As such, some of the demands laid out in the sumptuary laws do seem to be reflected in the sartorial choices of the gentlemen under study, or at the very least what clothing they were publicly prepared to acknowledge ownership of within their wills.

However, despite this somewhat tentative correlation with sumptuary legislation, certain gentlemen appear to have actively flouted these laws, bequeathing clothes of colours and materials which were legally denied to their rank. A prime example is found in the particularly sumptuous attire found within the will of Richard Trees, a London gentleman, who appears to go into especially descriptive detail when it came to his clothing bequests. Indeed, although materials such as satin and damask, as well as colours such as crimson were supposed to be worn only by knights and above, Trees possessed, and subsequently gave away, two satin doublets, one black and the other crimson, a gown of black damask and a black satin jacket, to name but a few.[45] Perhaps most striking of all was Trees' possession of a black gown, edged with sable, a luxury fur which was supposedly denied to all below the rank of earl by Henry VIII's law of 1510.[46] Whilst Richard Trees's socially controversial apparel might simply be

[42] Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation*, p. 181.
[43] L. Kirtio, "The Inordinate Excess in Apparel': Sumptuary Legislation in Tudor England', *Constellations*, 3, 1 (2011), p. 21.
[44] PROB 11/17/410.
[45] PROB 11/27/127.
[46] Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation*, p. 179.

representative of the lacklustre enforcement of Tudor sumptuary legislation, enabling gentlemen to don clothing above their station without fear of reprisal, it is crucial to recognise continual administrative changes over the period under study. Indeed, Richard's will, made in July 1537, may well have coincided with the legal loopholes of the 1530s, when such clothing delineations became increasingly mitigated based upon an individual's income.[47] Perhaps therefore, Richard Trees was an exceptionally wealthy gentleman, enabling him to dress far more extravagantly and luxuriously than his humbler fellows and, in doing so, effectively blurring the sartorial boundaries between gentlemen and their social superiors.

3.6 The 'Gentlemanly Businessman': Commerce as Social Leveller?

So far, this analysis has explored the land, wealth and property of these gentlemanly users of the Westminster staple, typically uncovering a somewhat rigid gentry hierarchy, but on occasion hinting at the opportunity for genteel individuality, typically in relation to one's clothing and possessions. Nevertheless, one final major component of the gentlemanly lifestyle requires discussion, namely their affiliation with the professions and commerce more generally, an aspect frequently espoused within the historiography.[48] Indeed, given that these individuals all appear as users of the staple system, these gentlemen were clearly thoroughly commercially engaged, with the notion of the conscious 'gentlemanly businessman' a potentially important, if not archetypal, marker.

[47] Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation*, p. 204.
[48] R. L. Storey, 'Gentlemen-Bureaucrats', in C. H. Clough (ed.), *Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England* (Liverpool, 1982), p. 97.

Table 3.4 Commercial Statistics for the Knights, Esquires and Gentlemen within the Certificates of Statute Staple.

	Number of Individuals	Number of Staple Transactions	Transactional Mean	Amount Credited (Mean)	Amount Borrowed (Mean)
Gentlemen	926	1,451	1.6	£183 5s. 5d.	£144 9s. 9d.
Esquires	340	647	1.9	£331 7s. 5d.	£338 5s.
Knights	205	664	3.3	£675 15s. 10d.	£501 1s.

As a starting point for commercial analysis, the general commercial statistics extracted from the staple certificates have been input into the table above, demonstrating the frequency and financial intensity with which those identified as members of the gentry emerge within the documents. In examining table 3.4, the means relating to both quantities of transactions and the cash sums lent and borrowed in the certificates, seem to relegate gentlemen to a position of comparative commercial obscurity, when analysed alongside knights and esquires. For instance, in examining transactional averages, knights immediately emerge as the most frequent individual users of the staple, typically yielding approximately three certificates for commercial analysis. As an example, John Longvile, knight of Wolverton in Buckinghamshire, appears in three staple certificates, borrowing once and providing credit on two occasions.[49] By contrast, both esquires and gentlemen produce averages of less than two transactions per individual, indicating a certain degree of infrequency on the individual level when engaging with the staple. Furthermore, the crediting and borrowing averages mirror this pattern, with knights once more claiming the lion's share of measurable gentry staple activity, typically lending over £600 per person, a figure matched only by their evident creditworthiness,

[49] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, C 152/65/2/57; C 241/275/143; C 241/277/16.

considering they regularly amassed debts of just over £500 during their lives. The total cash transactions of gentlemen produce average figures some way below this, yielding a crediting and borrowing mean of £183 5s. 5d. and £144 9s. 9d. respectively. Although some gentlemen naturally fall far outside of these average parameters, such as Richard Crosby, a Coventry gentleman, who is shown to be collectively in debt to the tune of £1,491, or John Gelly, an Oxfordshire gentleman, who lent the sizeable sum of £566 13s. 4d., these averages nevertheless indicate that gentlemen were collectively unable to match the commercial clout of knights, and to a lesser degree, esquires.[50] However, despite a continued adherence to this traditional gentry hierarchy even within the commercial sphere, the business activity of gentlemen is nevertheless worthy of further discussion, owing to the simple fact that such individuals made up the largest proportion of staple users, with 926 discernible individuals. Evidently commercial engagement featured in the lives of many gentlemen, albeit at a lower level than the more individually intensive, but numerically inferior, knights and esquires.

In focusing upon gentlemanly business therefore, it is firstly crucial to recognise that, when left uncontextualised, such purely financial statistics can only be taken so far in reconstructing the actual commercial careers of the individuals behind them. The staple certificates themselves however, do provide a good starting point for such reconstructive analysis. Indeed, on occasion they yield tantalising insights into the ways in which certain gentlemen personally engaged with the statute staple, such as Robert Slugge, who described himself as both gentleman and merchant of Exeter, and Thomas Hales, whose gentle status went hand in hand with his activity as a Calais staple merchant.[51] Other individuals prove even more intriguing, such as the striking case of Nicholas Vyan, the gentlemanly tinner from Cornwall, and Oliver Leder, gentleman

[50] For Crosby's commercial activity see: C 241/278/31; C 241/278/46; C 241/281/51; for Gelly's commercial activity see: C 152/65/2/30; C 152/65/2/414; C 152/65/2/418.
[51] C 241/275/298; C 241/275/107.

fishmonger, who appeared within the certificates no less than twenty times.[52] Such examples hint at the various potential manifestations of these so-called 'gentlemanly businessman', suggesting that their individual commercial endeavours were far more diverse than simple statistical analysis would initially suggest. As such, reconstructive analysis is the most logical step forward, with the lives and careers of two selected prosopographical exemplars employed to further investigate the ways in which these staple gentlemen engaged with the commercial sphere.

1) Gentility in Business: The Success Story of William Billing.

The first chosen exemplar, William Billing**,** gentleman of Deddington in Oxfordshire, has been selected not only because of his commercial prominence, appearing in six separate staple certificates, but also his distinctly mercantile connections. Indeed, early mentions of William Billing describe him simply as 'merchant', as in a staple certificate of 1517.[53] Other clues to Billing's less than genteel origins emerge in analysis of his propertied assets, as his only discernible residence was an inn called the 'Red Lion' in the town of Deddington, a far cry from the manorial estate one might imagine.[54] Nevertheless, in turning to his commercial activity, William Billing lent a total of £570 during his discernible staple career, suggesting he was indeed a prominent businessman, actively providing credit to others. For instance, William's first traceable appearance came in 1513 when he lent £30 to William Fissher, a Northamptonshire gentleman.[55] On a later occasion he credited £20 to Edgar Malery, gentleman of Hertford, indicating Billing's commercial operations were usually financially

[52] C 241/281/104; for Leder's commercial activity see for example: C 241/278/24; C 241/280/19; C 241/280/41.
[53] C 152/65/2/327.
[54] A. P. Baggs, C. Colvin, H. M. Colvin, J. Cooper, C. J. Day, N. Selwyn and A. Tomkinson, 'Parishes: Deddington', in A. Crossley (ed.), *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 11, Wootton Hundred (Northern Part)* (London, 1983), pp. 81-120. URL*:* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol11/pp81-120 [accessed 07/11/ 2017].
[55] C 152/65/2/298.

consistent.[56] Furthermore, certain aspects of William's business activity are particularly worthy of note. First and foremost, Billing is shown to be commercially involved for quite some time, lending money in the certificates from January 1513 up until February 1531. Indeed, considering this particular type of document became obsolete in 1532, it is entirely likely that William continued on in this vein, only instead utilising other administrative methods to register his loans. Not only was Billing's business career apparently long-lived and successful, but his crediting activity is strongly suggestive of his involvement in the production and sale of goods, most likely wool. For example, William is found to be regularly conducting business with other members of this particular industry, such as Thomas Langriche, a London draper, with whom he dealt in 1517.[57] Similarly, Billing's involvement with John Webbe, a clothman from Tytherington in Gloucestershire, in which he provided £40 in credit, is perhaps also indicative of his engagement with this particular trade.[58] Such an assumption is seemingly confirmed in an even later certificate, in which his mercantile activity is given greater clarity, as he is described as 'merchant of the Calais staple', the well-known staple designated for wool and cloth exports,[59] when providing a loan to Humphrey Holwel in 1520.[60]

So far, Billing's personal and commercial narratives provide no hint of gentility, only of an inn-owning wool-merchant making conventional use of the staple. However, like any good story, Billing's gentlemanly status is only revealed at the last minute, when his final appearance in the staple documentation described him as 'gentleman' in 1531.[61] Evidently *something* had altered by that point for William to begin confidently ascribing gentle status to himself. In looking for records of the years in between therefore, aside from the staple certificates, the only

[56] C 152/65/2/328.
[57] C 152/65/2/23.
[58] C 241/283/105.
[59] P. Dunn, 'Trade', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds.), *Medieval Norwich* (London, 2004), p. 219; A. F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 329; G. F. Ward, 'The Early History of the Merchants Staplers', *The English Historical Review*, 33, 131 (1918), p. 309.
[60] C 152/65/2/342.
[61] C 241/283/105.

other major source containing information relating to William during this time is the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy. Whilst lamentably no descriptor is supplied for William Billing in these subsidy returns, he is assessed particularly highly, producing an evaluation of £220.[62] Indeed, Billing's showing in the subsidy records is provincially striking, emerging as the single largest assessment of all the staple individuals discernible in the Oxfordshire returns. For instance, his closest tax rival is none other than Adrian Fortescu, a knight, evaluated as being worth £200.[63] However, instead of being assessed upon his landed assets, which was often the more usual measure employed for genteel individuals, William Billing is instead assessed upon his movable goods. In the absence of other evidence therefore, two assumptions can be made. Firstly, if we assume that at least a proportion of this valuation relates to merchandise or goods intended for commercial purposes, we can once again theorise upon the motivations behind William Billing's business activities. Secondly, the only discernible constant in Billing's life was his seemingly fruitful commercial career, indicating that, despite lacking the typical trappings of gentility, such as a manorial estate, he was nevertheless able to join their ranks, clearly perceiving himself to be a true gentleman businessman, and a very successful one at that.

2) Not Everyone can be a Winner: The Unfortunate Case of Edward Birmingham.

Whilst the melding of one's commercial and social lives evidently proved thoroughly symbiotic and beneficial for William Billing, it is important to appreciate that this was not universally the case for staple gentlemen. Indeed, the toponymically named Edward Birmingham, a gentleman who seems to have gained his surname from his chosen Warwickshire residence,[64] is a good example. Initial forays into Edward's life and career seem

[62] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer Particulars of Account and Other Records Relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation, E 179/161/175 rot 5.
[63] E 179/161/208 mem 1d.
[64] Birmingham, although now part of the modern administrative county of the West Midlands, was originally part of the historic county of Warwickshire.

to yield an uncomplicated picture of a well-established and comfortable gentlemanly lifestyle. For instance, alongside his statistically prominent genteel descriptor, his relative wealth and regional standing is confirmed by inventories, in which he is revealed to possess the manor of Birmingham, thirty tenements, two thousand acres of land and pasture, a park called Rotton Park, two hundred acres of meadow, one hundred acres of woodland, two water-mills, as well as other properties in Birmingham when the survey was conducted in 1526.[65] Edward's staple credentials are also statistically impressive, particularly as he boasts five separate transactions to his name, often conducting his business alongside other provincial gentlemen. Superficially therefore, Edward seems to have been a wealthy Warwickshire gentleman, whose propertied investments and social standing enabled frequent involvement with the staple court.

However, when Edward's business life is reconstructed in greater detail, a more fiscally unstable picture emerges. Indeed, Edward's traceable career trajectory within the documentation spans only seven years, with his first emergence in June 1521, and from then on, he appears annually up until 1528. Edward's initial business transactions are revealed to be comparatively humble, as for instance in 1521, he borrows £40 from a local Warwickshire couple, Margaret and Walter Boulstrode, who were perhaps two of his own tenants.[66] By 1526 Edward is shown to be regularly engaging in loan arrangements with other local businessmen, such as Ralph Warley, a Staffordshire gentleman.[67] Whilst these particular transactions rarely amount to more than £200, as in the case of his joint borrowing with Richard Crosby of Canley in Warwickshire, there is nevertheless a distinct sense of growing desperation.[68] Indeed, Edward's transaction trajectory becomes increasingly erratic, often involving much larger sums of money, with ever shorter repayment periods. For instance, in late 1526 he borrows

[65] C 131/269/21.
[66] C 241/278/96.
[67] C 241/282/144.
[68] C 241/278/31.

£1,000 from a crediting syndicate of seven other men, by far his largest discernible transaction.[69] In fact, Edward Birmingham borrowed in total £1,533 6s. 8d. in less than a decade, which, considering staple certificates definitively record those loans which ended in default, was clearly a sum he was unable to repay. Whilst one could speculate that Birmingham initially exploited the degree of creditworthiness his gentility and landed collateral afforded him within his particular sphere of influence, enabling him to borrow ever larger sums, his financial woes likely stemmed from a lack of liquidity. Indeed, unlike his commercial counterpart, William Billing, whose investment emphasis was largely based upon movable, saleable goods, Edward Birmingham's landed assets ultimately failed to keep him sufficiently solvent. Such an assumption seems to be confirmed as, eventually, Edward Birmingham's commercial recklessness appears to have engineered his own undoing, when in 1546 he is revealed to have had the manor of Birmingham, that last bastion of gentility, taken from him and given to the Duke of Northumberland.[70] As such, it is clear that engagement with the business sphere was an important part of the lives of many of these staple gentlemen, but that success, whether commercially or socially, was ultimately never assured, even for members of the gentry.

3.7 Conclusion.

In conclusion, the gentlemanly cohort of the Westminster statute staple remain an elusive social category. The various external elements of their lives typically proffered in the historiography as a means towards social measurement, such as their property, possessions and wealth, seem to adhere to the traditionally espoused gentry hierarchy, with knights and esquires typically proving more economically substantial than their gentlemanly inferiors. For instance, the

[69] C 241/278/85.
[70] 'Birkenshaw - Birmingham', in S. Lewis (ed.), *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (London, 1848), pp. 255-263. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/england/pp255-263 [accessed 06/11/2017].

somewhat rigid economic demarcations discernible in the literature, namely the often-found assessment range for the landed property of gentlemen being worth between £5 and £20 annually,[71] finds traction in this analysis. Evidently therefore, the gentlemanly contingent of the Westminster statute staple court, in spite of their apparent commercial interests, ultimately continued to adhere to traditional landed conceptions of their place within the gentry.

This chapter has also explored the less tangible elements to gentility, commonly described in the relevant literature merely as a 'way of being'.[72] As such, discussion of their possessions and sartorial choices has shed some light upon gentlemanly lifestyles, particularly when examined in comparison with those of knights and esquires. Initial examination of their wills has shown that knights, esquires and gentlemen all possessed traditional markers of gentility, with, for example, horses, weapons, armour and coats of arms clearly discernible. Nevertheless, certain subtle deviations are detectable with regards to specifically gentlemanly possessions, most notably their apparent ownership of secular writings or practical works, often contrasting with the religious books found in the possession of knights and esquires.

Clothing has received particular attention within this analysis, owing to the importance placed upon it in previous scholarly investigations of gentility. Typically examined in comparison with sumptuary legislation of the period, apparel has often been used to loosely map social gradations, particularly as, in the words of R. Gilchrist, clothing can be viewed as a 'social skin.'[73] This chapter has therefore exploited examination of the descriptors attached to the sartorial possessions of these gentry individuals, uncovering a certain adherence to sumptuary law. However, as demonstrated in the detailed case of Richard Trees, certain gentlemen seem

[71] Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, p.5; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.30; Cornwall, 'The Early Tudor Gentry', p. 464.
[72] Du Boulay, *Age of Ambition*, p. 73.
[73] R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 68; A. F. Sutton, 'Order and Fashions in Clothes: The King, His Household, and the City of London at the end of the Fifteenth Century', *Textile History*, 22, 2 (1991), p. 253; Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation*, p. 185.

to have been able to consciously flout these laws, possessing and wearing clothing traditionally denied to their rank. Although suppositional, this analysis has therefore suggested that such individuals may well have occupied a kind of social limbo, with their wealth providing them a certain degree of social leniency, something which blurred the otherwise apparently clear-cut sartorial boundaries between gentlemen and their social betters.

Finally, detailed reconstruction of the commercial lives of these individuals has uncovered a refreshing degree of gentlemanly individuality, as demonstrated in the exemplars of the staple businessmen, William Billing and Edward Birmingham. These gentlemen are found to have regularly engaged with the commercial sphere, with many of these individuals perhaps more accurately defined as 'gentleman businessmen', something which significantly builds upon and confirms historiographical assertions of growing gentry involvement with trade and commerce more generally.[74] Ultimately therefore, perhaps the mark of the true gentleman, outside of the usual physical trappings of such status, was his willingness to openly engage himself commercially, raising both his financial and his social profile, but crucially never lowering himself to the degrading act of manual labour.

[74] Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants', pp. 29-40, 61.

Chapter 4. Problematic Categories: Yeomen and Husbandmen, the 'Lesser Men' of the Staple?

4.1 Introduction and Historiographical Overview.

Given that much of this research, by necessity rather than design, has focused upon socially or commercially prominent individuals, as demonstrated in the previous chapter devoted to members of the gentry, an appreciation of the 'lesser men' is crucial to provide balance. Accounting for approximately 7.9 per cent of the individuals under study, the involvement of yeomen and husbandmen with the Westminster staple court cannot be ignored. This chapter will therefore examine those men labelled as husbandmen and yeomen in the certificates, exploring the ways in which such individuals can be categorised, particularly in the context of traditional societal structures.

Scholarship typically identifies such individuals as upper members of the peasantry, as demonstrated in L. Stone's seminal survey of social mobility, whereby he proffers a 'sixfold status division' of English society, placing both husbandmen and yeomen together within the peasant classes, just above urban and rural labourers.[1] C. Dyer's analysis of the lower ranks of medieval society further elucidates this hierarchy, emphasizing that the emergence of terminology such as 'yeoman' and 'husbandman' was a fifteenth-century development and that contemporary records did differentiate between such individuals, whereby the yeoman's lands were extensive, but the husbandman had sufficient land only to support himself.[2]

Undoubtedly building upon the external measures of status found in contemporary records, historiographical analysis traditionally emphasizes the utility of wealth or the possession of land in examining an individual's social position.[3] For example, M. Campbell, who has

[1] L. Stone, 'Social Mobility in England 1500-1700', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), p. 18.
[2] C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (London, 2002), p. 15.
[3] Examples include: H. S. Bennett, *Life on the English Manor* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 63-73, in which he differentiates between gradations of peasants in roughly thirty acre groupings; R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the*

produced one of the few studies dedicated solely to the yeomanry, grapples with the problematic criterion for these individuals, citing the writings of medieval social commentators. For example, a yeoman was contemporaneously equated with the holding of forty shillings worth of free land, despite incidences of yeomen with no land.[4] In similar fashion, R. Hilton, in his analyses of contemporary literature, concludes that the term ploughman, discernible in many plays of the period, is not referring to an agrarian employee but a husbandman, who possesses a plough-team as well as 'a more or less substantial holding of land.'[5] M. Bailey defines both yeomen and husbandmen in terms of landholdings, describing the yeomanry as the apex of village society, who each possessed land totalling upwards of forty acres. By contrast, Bailey demarcates the more numerous husbandmen as peasants with holdings of around ten to forty acres, although he acknowledges that rural society was often far more fluid than such externally-assessed gradations would suggest.[6] Even focused geographical case studies employ such landed assessments, as demonstrated in J. A. Raftis' analysis of various Cambridgeshire manors in the fifteenth century. Despite touching upon the importance of other factors in determining yeoman status, such as one's involvement in village administration, Raftis nevertheless places great emphasis upon the possession of land. For example, this is demonstrated in his tripartite structure for the yeomanry, whereby individuals such as John Outy were members of the 'upper yeomanry' as he possessed about 114 acres collectively in Wistow and Heightmongrove by 1411. Middle ranking yeomen, such as Richard Baroun and Robert Ely of Wistow, held forty-five acres, and those 'who were barely yeomen', such as William Wodeward of Abbots Ripton, held only about thirty acres.[7]

Yeoman (Oxford, 1992), who maps the increasing acreages farmed by 'owner-occupiers', despite focusing largely on the seventeenth century.

[4] M. Campbell, *The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts* (London, 1960), pp. 22-24.

[5] R. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1975), p. 21.

[6] M. Bailey, 'Rural Society', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 151.

[7] J. A. Raftis, *Peasant Economic Development within the English Manorial System* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 92, 96.

This affiliation with land ownership, particularly as an external indicator of yeomanly status, has naturally led to discussion of potential connections with the landed classes and by extension the question of social mobility. For example, C. Carpenter, in her comprehensive examination of Warwickshire landed society, acknowledges the agrarian roots of many of the county's elite, through use of the terms 'husbandman', 'grazier' or 'franklin' to describe minor lords.[8] However, Carpenter does stress that the ability of such yeomen and husbandmen to break into Warwickshire landed society on agricultural profits alone was usually only possible under very favourable economic conditions.[9] G. E. Mingay, in his efforts to define the concept of 'gentility', describes the way in which successful yeomen or capitalist graziers could attain genteel status, citing the examples of the Gostwicks, who in 1529 acquired the Bedfordshire manor of Potton from the Mowbrays, and also the Francklins, who in 1493 obtained a lease of Glyntils manor from the Canons of Canons Ashby.[10] One of the more recent efforts to grapple with the characteristics and social position of these individuals is the study of R. Almond and A. J. Pollard into 'yeomanliness' through the cultural context of Robin Hood. Almond and Pollard argue that the description of Robin Hood as a yeoman indicated his transitional, intermediary status in which he 'stands on the threshold of the social divide between commonality and gentility.'[11]

More recently, there has been some prosopographical interest in tracking yeoman families, a methodological approach with has successfully uncovered other important characteristics, such as their involvement in the cloth trade and other mercantile activities. For example, D. Rollison, in his 1992 study of the Gloucestershire based Trotman family, describes them as a 'middle

[8] C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 135.
[9] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 135.
[10] G. E. Mingay, *The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class* (London, 1976), p. 8.
[11] R. Almond and A. J. Pollard, 'The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 170 (2001), pp. 55, 77.

rank kin coalition', with a multi-generational connection with the cloth trade. Indeed, both Henry Trotman and later his son Thomas, were yeoman clothiers, with the latter marrying the daughter of another leading clothier family.[12] Similarly, J. Smail's examination of the Stansfields of Halifax, although largely focused on the seventeenth century, does investigate their yeomanly ancestors, finding the first two generations of the family to be yeoman clothiers with moderate wealth and land ownership.[13] Easily the most detailed reconstruction has been conducted by C. Dyer in his study of the Warwickshire merchant and farmer, John Heritage. Described as a yeoman in 1507, Heritage owned and actively acquired lands, as well as keeping a meticulous account book, detailing his various agricultural and commercial enterprises.[14]

Whilst these external measures of status have long held sway, undoubtedly owing to the types of records typically available to historians, recent revisionist efforts have sought to access the late medieval yeoman in other ways. G. Batho touches upon an internal identifier for yeomen in his survey of late medieval landlords, as he theorises that the principal characteristic of a yeoman was his 'contentment with a simpler way of life, even when he could afford more comfort.' For example, even in the prosperous southeast, yeoman houses until the late sixteenth century were distinguished from lesser men's by the number of rooms, rather than by the quality of their furnishings.[15] Although still in the early stages of her research, L. Foroughi compares the Reynes and the Gottes manuscripts, each of which comprises various handbooks designed to aid their yeoman owners in their day to day lives. Crucially she uncovers an important set of core values, indicating something of an internalised yeoman identity. For example, the miscellanies demonstrate a preoccupation with education and learning, including

[12] D. Rollison, 'The Trotmans: A Middle-Rank Kin-Coalition, 1512-1712', in D. Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire, 1550-1800* (London, 1992), pp. 98-99.
[13] J. Smail, 'The Stansfields of Halifax: A Case Study of the Making of the Middle Class', *Albion*, 24 (1992), pp. 29-30.
[14] C. Dyer, *A Country Merchant 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 29-31.
[15] G. Batho, 'Landlords in England', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: Volume IV, 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 301-302.

handbooks on social etiquette, as well as Latin entries. A desire for practicality is juxtaposed with religiosity, as devotional texts and proverbs often appear alongside lists of their own personal business transactions.[16] Clearly this new strand of literature represents a determined effort to move away from purely external methods of categorisation, providing in the process a much more intimate picture of the late medieval yeoman. Lamentably, husbandmen are yet to receive such revisionist treatment.

As this brief historiographical overview has demonstrated, these 'lesser individuals' are somewhat problematic in terms of definition, with traditional perspectives favouring definitive land-based parameters and later research acknowledging the necessarily vague ideas surrounding the yeomanry, ranging from membership of the 'middling sort' to a loosely defined connection with the soil. Moreover, it is clear that scholarly inquiry has not been balanced, as shown in the comparative neglect of husbandmen as members of this category of individuals. As such, this analysis with regards to the individuals of the Westminster staple has a dual aim: to isolate and extrapolate the characteristics of yeomen and husbandmen and then compare these to traditional measures of categorisation, but also to attempt a certain level of reconstruction to ascertain the more intimate facets of their lives and activities.

4.2 Staple Peasants? General Statistics for Yeomen and Husbandmen.

Within the Westminster staple sample group, there are 209 individuals described as 'yeoman' (5.8 per cent) and seventy-six recorded as 'husbandman' (2.1 per cent), as shown in table 4.1. Although these proportions are ostensibly small, they are nevertheless highly intriguing, given that the participants of the staple are typically affluent or commercially-prominent individuals. Whilst the majority of these 'lesser men' rarely appear more than once in the certificates of statute staple, as demonstrated in the average numbers of appearances recorded below, a small

[16] L. Foroughi, 'Miscellany and Identity: The Manuscript Compilations of Late Medieval Yeomen', paper presented to Leeds International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 03-06 July 2017.

proportion do participate on multiple occasions within the staple court. Indeed, thirty-five yeomen and six husbandmen have several transactions attributed to them, with the yeoman Robert Atwode boasting eight separate appearances to his name.[17] In similar fashion, John Hatche, husbandman, participates in four separate staple transactions, beginning in July 1522, when he borrowed £20, and ending in July 1528 when he was lent £100 by a gentleman.[18]

Table 4.1 Staple Statistics for Yeomen and Husbandmen.

Yeomen in Certificates of Statute Staple	**Total Appearances in Certificates**	**Average Number of Appearances**	**Yeomen with Multiple Transactions**
209	265	1.3	35
Husbandmen in Certificates of Statute Staple	**Total Appearances in Certificates**	**Average Number of Appearances**	**Husbandmen with Multiple Transactions**
76	84	1.1	6

Such statistics can be enhanced through analysis of documentary prominence to better understand how these individuals proliferate within the records and also the scope for reconstruction of such a typically obscure sector of society. Aside from the certificates of statute staple, these particular yeomen and husbandmen are discernible in other supplementary records. Perhaps unsurprisingly, centrally administrated and socially encompassing documents yield the greatest numbers of these individuals. For example, the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy records provide assessments for seventeen of the yeomen and six husbandmen, whilst twenty-two yeomen and twelve husbandmen are locatable within the collection of extents for debt (table 4.2). Unfortunately, such numbers are not repeated within particularly biographically intimate

[17] See for example: C 241/280/106 in which Atwode borrows £20 from a leatherseller in 1521.
[18] C 241/276/8; C 241/281/145.

or detailed records, as, for example, only two of the sampled yeomen and just a single husbandman leave behind a will (table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Documentary Proliferation of Yeomen and Husbandmen.

	Certificates of Statute Staple	**Wills**	**Extents for Debt**	**1524-25 Lay Subsidy**	**Inquisitions *Post Mortem***
Number of Yeomen	209	2	22	17	0
Number of Husbandmen	76	1	12	6	0

In examining table 4.2, the issue of underrepresentation is immediately apparent. Neither yeomen nor husbandmen are particularly well represented in any of the supplementary sources available. Indeed, extents for debt offer the greatest correlation with the individuals under study, perhaps somewhat unsurprising given that they functioned as the next step in the staple process. Even then, only approximately 15.8 per cent of husbandmen are discernible, with the proportion even lower for yeoman, at around ten per cent (table 4.2). It is necessary therefore to acknowledge these particular limitations and recognise that the unfortunate obscurity of such individuals within the documentary record will place unavoidable constraints on the insights that can be drawn from the data. Indeed, it is possible, perhaps even probable, that the reconstructive efforts undertaken here may well not be representative of these groupings as a whole, rather of particularly prominent individuals, who stood out from their fellows both in life and in the records.

4.3 Traditional Measures: Wealth and Land.

In spite of such limitations, detailed analysis of the yeomen and husbandmen appearing in the certificates of statute staple can still be undertaken. The most straightforward method of

assessing the wealth of such individuals, landed or otherwise, is through the assessments of the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy (table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Estimations of Wealth for Yeomen and Husbandmen Extrapolated from the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy.

	Valuation in Goods	Valuation in Lands	Valuation in Wages	Valuation Type Unknown
Number of Yeomen Assessed	10	6	0	1
Assessment Total	£172 17s.	£33	0	£20
Mean	£17 6s.	£6 12s.	0	£20
Number of Husbandmen Assessed	2	0	1	3
Assessment Total	£18	0	£3	£8
Mean	£9	0	/[19]	£2 13s.

In examining table 4.3, the contemporary notion that individuals possessing £2 (40s.) in freehold land could be ascribed yeoman status seems to find traction.[20] Indeed, the average valuation of land for the yeomen under study is £6 12s., three times this amount, with many revealed to be substantially wealthier than this in terms of landed assets. For instance, the lands of George Wybourn are valued at £8, whilst the prominent yeoman Richard Bernard from Haddenham in Buckinghamshire boasts a property portfolio worth £15.[21] Moreover, at the other end of the spectrum, the lowest valuations are indeed shown to match contemporary assertions, as two individuals are assessed at £2, namely Hugh Barme and John Slough, yeomen

[19] There is only one husbandman with an assessment valuation based upon wages. As such it is impossible to calculate a mean valuation for husbandman from a single person, necessitating their omission from the table.
[20] Campbell, *The English Yeoman*, pp. 22-24.
[21] A. C. Chibnall and A. Vere Woodman (eds.), *Subsidy Roll for the County of Buckingham anno 1524* (Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1950), pp. 7, 5.

from Yorkshire and Worcestershire respectively.[22] It would seem therefore that this 40 shilling criterion meant *something*, even if it only functioned as a vaguely defined cut-off point for crown administrators, enabling them to externally identify an individual as a member of the yeomanry when he possessed at least £2 in lands.

In complete contrast, none of the husbandmen locatable within the subsidy are assessed on landholdings, only on their goods or wages. For instance, Thomas Smith, a husbandman hailing from Hertfordshire, possessed goods worth £10, whilst Thomas Sammesbury of Middlesex had £8 in movables at the time of taxation.[23] Moreover, the fact that the husbandman William Grene was assessed based upon wages of £3, despite residing in the prosperous southeast, indicates a continued component of waged dependency, at least in the lives of some of our husbandmen, something not apparent for their yeomen fellows.[24] Whilst it must be acknowledged that three of the husbandmen have an unknown valuation type, potentially obscuring assessments based upon land, the evidence that is available nevertheless suggests that many husbandmen either did not own their own land or that it regularly made up the smallest contribution to their overall wealth, given that the lay subsidy assessed individuals only on their most valuable asset.[25]

[22] E 179/212/108 rot 4; M. A. Faraday (ed.), *Worcestershire Taxes in the 1520s: The Military Survey and Forced Loans of 1522-3 and the Lay Subsidy of 1524-7* (Worcestershire Historical Society, 2003), p. 137.
[23] E 179/120/119 rot 6d; E 179/141/113 mem 8.
[24] E 179/141/113 mem 11.
[25] R. W. Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records: A Guide for Users* (London, 1994), p. 14.

Table 4.4 Types and Quantities of Property in the Possession of Yeomen.

	Number of Yeomen	Total
Acres	10	1,438
Messuages	8	15
Manors	2	2
Virgates	1	1
Crofts	1	1
Cottages	1	1
Tenements	3	5
Houses	2	2
Barns	2	2
Orchards	1	1
Gardens	2	4
Woods	1	1
Sheepfolds	1	9

Whilst the above analyses have outlined landholdings based upon their pecuniary worth ('quality') and uncovered a rather neat correlation with both contemporary and historiographical expectations, traditional measures of status also demand examination of landed property sizes ('quantity'). Indeed, wills and extents for debts can be used to extrapolate detailed descriptions of property portfolios, with thirty-seven yeomen having at least one of these records still extant, making for an important case study. In examining table 4.4, it is immediately apparent that the acreages appearing in the possession of yeomen were substantial, particularly as the average individual holding is revealed to be approximately 144 acres. Even when we actually examine acreages on the individual level the figures remain undiluted, for example, John Stephens has 230 acres, whilst Richard Creche boasts an impressive 405 acres

in his possession when the sheriff came to call on 31st October 1496.[26] Although some of the yeomen have smaller landholdings, such as the modest twenty-eight acre possessions of Simon Orwell, it is evident that the majority were indeed prominent land holders within the local community.[27]

However, acreages are not the only important landed measurements available to us. As the table shows, a proportion of our chosen yeomen hold buildings as part of their property portfolios, including messuages, tenements and cottages. Whilst the statistics initially suggest that for certain buildings, particularly residential properties such as houses, it was typical for yeomen to possess only what they and their families required for living, closer examination does indicate other patterns. Most tellingly, there are some fifteen messuages divided between just eight yeomen, indicating multiple property possession, and by extension potentially some level of propertied investment. Many of these instances appear to represent prominent yeomen farmers consolidating their holdings in their chosen geographical sphere, such as Richard Creche, the previously mentioned Sussex yeoman with 405 acres to his name, who also held a messuage and a cottage, all within the settlement of Peasmarsh.[28] However, some individuals seem to have spread their holdings even further afield. A prime example is Thomas Stodham, yeoman of Burford in Oxfordshire, who holds three tenements and a barn in Burford itself, presumably therefore his base of agrarian operations, but also a messuage in the settlement of Salford, some 13.2 miles to the northeast.[29]

[26] C 131/84/6.
[27] C 131/85/34.
[28] C 131/84/6.
[29] C 131/105/13.

Table 4.5 Types and Quantities of Property in the Possession of Husbandmen.

	Number of Husbandmen	Total
Acres	5	390
Messuages	5	10
Manors	0	0
Gardens	2	2
Virgates	1	5.5
Houses	1	1
Sheepfolds	1	9
Tenements	1	1

This detailed analysis of landholding can also be replicated for the nineteen husbandmen appearing in other documents aside from the certificates of statute staple, as shown in table 4.5. On initial inspection, the property averages and totals are much lower than those of their yeomen counterparts. Particularly noticeable is the lack of manors and, whilst this is entirely unsurprising, given the fact that possession of a manorial estate was usually the preserve of the community elite, it does contrast with the statistics for yeomen, suggesting not only that the latter regularly ranked higher than husbandmen, but also that landed assessments perhaps have some merit for assessing social status. However, despite these initial indications for a landholding divide between our yeomen and husbandmen, closer examination uncovers a more complex situation. Indeed, the traditional demarcation of the husbandman, which ranges from the rigid classification of possessing less than forty acres, to the more vaguely assigned notion of merely possessing less land than the yeoman, can be called into question.[30] Although the statistics place the average acreage for a husbandman at approximately half that of a yeoman,

[30] See for example: Bailey, 'Rural Society', p. 151.

at just seventy-eight acres, individual totals range from the forty acres held by William Sudbury to the 112 acres in the possession of William North.[31] Not only does this indicate substantial landed possessions, but also the potentially problematic nature of employing measures of landed assets as the primary demarcation of social status, particularly as many husbandmen appear to possess comparable land to yeomen.

Whilst examples such as William Dowling, a husbandman who possessed three messuages, five and a half virgates and fifty-two acres of land, seem particularly suggestive, especially when compared with yeomen such as John Kyse, who had just forty acres to his name, an alternative explanation must be acknowledged. Given the diverse geographical origins and residences of the individuals in this study, as outlined in chapter one, such divergence from traditional landed markers of peasant status may well be representative simply of differences at the specific settlement level. Indeed, only two of our 'lesser men' who appear in the extents for debt hail from the same town or village, namely Robert Knyght and Richard Stronge, both yeomen from Forde in Sussex, preventing effective comparison. In other words, the divergence from the expected landed possessions of yeomen and husbandmen uncovered in this study could simply be representative of geographical difference, as for instance, landholdings that befitted a yeoman in Yorkshire might barely be suitable for a husbandman in Kent, potentially distorting the data. As such, whilst these 'lesser men' were evidently prominent landholders, it is clear that for this particular study, previous social measurements based solely upon such landed possessions are inaccurate, or at the very least problematic.

4.4 Tied to the Plough: Sheep, Corn and other Earthy Pursuits.

So far, this study has outlined the landed possessions of the yeomen and husbandmen of the Westminster staple, revealing not only their individual diversity but also the seemingly

[31] C 131/85/21; C 131/111/3.

conservative estimates of contemporaries. Furthermore, given the quantities and kinds of land these individuals have been shown to possess, the nature of their agrarian activities becomes particularly pertinent. Indeed, the notion that yeomen and husbandmen have an inescapable 'connection with the soil and its interests' seems to be another powerfully defining attribute.[32] As such this section will attempt to reconstruct such activities and theorise upon the agricultural implications for social categorisation.

Table 4.6 Quantifiable Arable and Pastoral Products for Yeomen and Husbandmen.

	Number of Yeomen	**Total**	**Number of Husbandmen**	**Total**
Sheep	3	1,060	1	112
Lambs	3	226	0	0
Cattle	5	191	1	4
Horses	2	5	0	0
Oxen	3	9	0	0
Oats (acres)	1	20	0	0
Corn (acres)	1	20	0	0
Pigs	1	10	0	0
Chickens	0	0	1	26

In extracting quantities of pastoral and agrarian products (table 4.6), the extents for debt are particularly useful. Unfortunately, only a handful of such documents contain extensive inventories, meaning the proportion of yeomen and husbandmen represented is lamentably small. For instance, just four yeomen have exceptionally detailed lists of their animals and

[32] Campbell, *The English Yeoman*, p. 27.

movables attached to the extents. Indeed, it is far more common to have only vague descriptions, as shown in the record of the property of the Kent yeoman Christopher Henfelde, in which the constable merely attests to him owning 'goods and chattels worth £14 7s. 3d.'[33] Nevertheless, some insights can be drawn as to the agricultural activities of these particular individuals. In terms of specialisation, both husbandmen and yeomen seem to have favoured pastoral pursuits. Although this can perhaps be explained by the nature of the source material, as records of movables naturally lend themselves more readily to the quantifiable status of individual animals as opposed to fields of uncut corn, the statistics are nevertheless striking. For instance, sheep and lambs clearly proliferate as the animal of choice, particularly for yeomen, where 1,286 such ovines are discernible, as exemplified by the 280 strong flock of Richard Bernard.[34] This is strongly suggestive of involvement in the wool and cloth industries, even if only at the production level. This speculation is made all the more likely when we examine the certificates of statute staple, particularly as the occupational descriptors of the individuals involved in these transactions are indicative of wool trading and cloth production, with yeomen and husbandmen shown to be involved at all levels of the industry. For example, John Swetefir of Foots Cray in Kent, a yeoman, is shown to be operating in partnership with the London dyer John Gyll in a certificate of March 1488.[35] A particularly illustrative certificate of 1499 details the dealings of the Hertfordshire yeoman John Rolfe and his partner John Wymark, a London fuller, with John Hawe, a mercer from the capital.[36] Although the somewhat humbler figure recorded for sheep owned by husbandman seems to suggest their industry investment to be far weaker than their yeomen fellows (table 4.6), the staple certificates indicate otherwise. Indeed, the transactions of husbandmen elicit much the same patterns, as in the case of Thomas Smith and John Hawkins, both husbandmen from

[33] C 131/105/39.
[34] C 131/108/12.
[35] C 241/275/58.
[36] C 241/275/10.

Hertfordshire, who deal jointly with a merchant-tailor named William Legh.[37] Indeed, this involvement is confirmed by husbandmen with multiple descriptors discernible, such as William North, a husbandman, whose specialisation is revealed in an extent of December 1530, when he is referred to as 'woolman', suggesting the initial numerical divergence to be symptomatic of documentary scarcity, rather than degree of investment or social status.[38]

Whilst the rearing of sheep, and by extension involvement in the wool trade of England, seems to have been common for both husbandmen and yeomen, some potentially diversionary pastoral patterns are discernible (table 4.6). For instance, important farming animals, most notably those which provide traction and increased efficiency, are conspicuously absent from the inventories of husbandmen. Whilst it could be argued that the apparent yeoman monopoly on horses and oxen is merely representative of previously discussed source distortion, there are potentially other explanations. Given the significance of such animals, their ownership would likely be highly prized within the farming community and could easily be deemed a marker of status. Indeed, J. Langdon's study of peasant agricultural property in the later medieval period confirms this, demonstrating that the number of draught animals often correlated with the economic stratification of the village, with the most prosperous peasants owning multiples of these animals.[39] Such a trend is indeed reflected in the animal ownership of the staple yeomen, given that those with traction animals discernible typically have more than one. For example, Richard Bernard had four oxen when his property was inventoried in 1526, whilst Thomas Browne, a yeoman from Brocton in Shropshire, possessed 'two oxen of black colour' in October 1530.[40] Furthermore, this connection of socio-economic prominence with horses and oxen is also reflected in the assessments listed for such beasts. For example, William Noble's

[37] C 241/277/14.
[38] C 131/111/3.
[39] J. Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation: The Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066 to 1500* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 193.
[40] C 131/108/12; C 131/112/26.

two horses are valued at £1 6s. 8d., whilst his three oxen are worth £2 8s.[41] In similar fashion, the yeoman Richard Creche's single most valuable animal is one of his horses, worth 10s. on its own.[42] Perhaps therefore, there are some discernible agricultural differences between these particular gradations of the peasantry, but that these are related to access to particular animals, such as horses, rather than simply the quantity of their pastoral possessions.

Table 4.7 Summation of the Different Property Types Possessed by Yeoman and Husbandmen, including both Specific and Unspecific References.

	Land	**Livestock**	**Crops**	**Buildings**
Number of Yeomen	20	6	2	14
Proportional Average (of 37 Yeomen)	54.1%	16.2%	5.4%	37.8%
Number of Husbandmen	8	3	2	8
Proportional Average (of 19 Husbandmen)	42.1%	15.8%	10.5%	42.1%

In an effort to combat some of the limitations outlined above and also summarise the findings so far, table 4.7 includes statistics drawn not only from all sources, but also both specific and unspecific references to property. For instance, the writ of John Sowerby, a husbandman from Woodford in Essex, includes an extensive inventory of his household property but only vaguely refers to his landed possessions as 'divers messuages, lands and tenements' which lacks quantifiable specification and previously prevented their inclusion in earlier statistics.[43] Similarly, the only indicator that George Wybourn of Princes Risborough in Buckinghamshire engaged in arable production is the chance reference in the lay subsidy that his £8 assessment

[41] C 131/109/20.
[42] C 131/84/6.
[43] C 131/267/19.

in lands had been 'decayed by £1 in corn.'[44] As such, acknowledging these rather imprecise references can, paradoxically, generate a more accurate picture. Indeed, Sowerby can be counted in the table above as holding land, buildings and personal property, whilst Wybourn now provides evidence for arable engagement for our husbandmen. What is striking about these more generalised statistics (table 4.7) is the degree of proportional similarity between husbandmen and yeomen, indicating that a certain level of shared, archetypal characteristics can be assumed. Clearly therefore, a typical staple participant, drawn from these particular individuals of lesser means, owns his own land, usually of a sizeable amount, and likely dotted with a couple of buildings, both residential and agrarian. He dabbles in crop production, perhaps to feed himself or his animals, but his often large acreages are usually run with flocks of sheep, the wool from which he either sells on credit to his rural industry contacts, or else directly to London mercers. So far so similar, however when the taxman visits, or some other external assessment of social quality is required, some of these men seem to exude or possess something the others do not: an intangible 'yeomanliness'.

4.5 Towards an Internalised Conception of the Self: Reconstruction of the Lives and Lifestyles of Yeomen and Husbandmen.

In attempting to access yeomen and husbandmen on an individual level, particularly with regards to their personal lives, the most sensible starting point is to take a step inside their homes. Whilst much of the personal property recorded comprises only agricultural tools, such as carts and ploughs, as well as an incidence of a hay-wain, some sheriffs took it upon themselves to raid the cupboards, so to speak. Indeed, there are a handful of important or particularly unusual possessions discernible from the extents. Most noticeably, several individuals owned featherbeds, markers of both comfort and status. For example, John Fisher,

[44] Chibnall and Vere Woodman, *Subsidy Roll for the County of Buckingham*, p. 7.

a Middlesex yeoman, is shown to possess four such beds with accompanying bolsters and also three coverlets worth £4 2s. in total.[45] The value here is the least interesting element, although John could clearly afford expensive furnishings. Instead it is the quantities that are particularly telling, as John either owned multiple properties in need of bedding, or else his home was large enough to accommodate four featherbeds, with the latter assumption the most likely, given that the extent lists only the property named 'Mile End' as in his possession. Interestingly, the only household inventory still extant for a husbandman, one John Sowerby, also makes especial reference to bedroom furniture. However, whilst his homestead comprised at least three rooms and contained four beds, only one of them is described as a featherbed, worth 10s. Despite this, accompanying items in Sowerby's inventory still portray a comfortable, if not comparatively grandiose, master bedroom, as it lists a coverlet, three bolsters and four cushions, alongside 'two canopies, one of white cloth and the other of lined buckram.'[46] Other luxury items, such as silverware, are also discernible, as for example, Richard Bernard owned a three ounce silver vessel and six silver spoons, which were unfortunately seized upon his arrest for failure to pay a £20 debt.[47] Although such possessions seem to indicate a taste for the finer things in life, and by extension the wealth to support it, it should be acknowledged that this does not seem to have been universally sought by these individuals. Richard Creche serves as a prime example, whose personal property, in contrast to the inventories outlined above, gives the distinct sense of domestic practicality, given that alongside his animals, he lists a pair of sheets, a cauldron, some latten and a brass pot, rather routine, day to day items.[48] Evidently, this diversity in personal taste, as touched on above, indicates the potential insights to be gained from further individual reconstruction through chosen exemplars.

[45] C 131/107/3.
[46] C 131/267/19.
[47] C 131/108/12.
[48] C 131/84/6.

1) An Agrarian Empire of One's Own: The Case of John Gravener.

Given that this section aims to produce an intimate picture of yeomen and husbandmen, the possession of a will has naturally dictated the selection of exemplars. For our husbandmen this leaves only one option: John Gravener. Gravener initially seems entirely archetypal and typically obscure, appearing only once in a certificate of statute staple in May 1485 in which he jointly borrowed £134 16s., alongside an esquire and a gentleman.[49] Aside from the suggestion of apparently genteel partnerships, the only other biographically illuminative information discernible for John is his residence in East Bergholt in Suffolk and his description as a yeoman. Indeed, had Gravener's documentary record ended here, his yeoman status would have gone unquestioned. However, his will, made on 11th August 1486 and proved on 27th September that same year, crucially describes Gravener as 'husbandman', seeming completely at odds with his social position a little more than a year previously.[50] Turning to the contents of Gravener's will therefore, he is shown to be largely concerned with the devolution of his landed property, namely his various named sheepfolds and tenements. Indeed, he lists eight separate sheepfolds, such as the fold called 'holders croft' which he left to his nephew, Henry Rede. Despite his somewhat lengthy and Latin will, Gravener makes only a single religious bequest and leaves just 15s. in cash, indicating that his primary focus was his distinctly agrarian property portfolio. In fact, his will is entirely typical, with his landed assets divided between his son and his nephew, and his wife Alice appointed his executrix. From the initial picture generated here, Gravener could be seen to fit into either social category and a simplistic explanation would be that the descriptors of 'husbandman' and 'yeoman' were deemed interchangeable or overlapping in meaning, at least for Gravener and his local community. Indeed, a cynic might go even further and ascribe Gravener's apparent fluidity between

[49] C 152/65/1/67.
[50] PROB 11/7/355.

descriptors to be representative merely of the external impositions of chancery clerks and testamentary scribes, suggesting that they made their own assessments of Gravener's social status when recording his staple activity and writing his will. However, a more complex and perhaps romanticised explanation would be that Gravener understood and exploited social confusion and fluidity, presenting himself as a yeoman during business, possibly for the added social gravitas, but that he never truly left his origins behind. Perhaps, when it came to making his will, which, from a legacy perspective would be his last words to his friends and family, he thought of the personal agrarian fiefdom he had built up, with its numerous sheepfolds, and considered himself to be a husbandman still.

2) Genteel Designs? The Questionable 'Yeomanliness' of John Aleyn.

Whilst Gravener's will has posed important questions concerning social mobility, it has nevertheless indicated something of his conscious perception of himself. Such an obscure notion is also discernible in the other individual selected for detailed reconstruction: William Aleyn. There are many documentary similarities between Gravener and Aleyn, such as Aleyn's appearance in a single certificate of statute staple, registered on 18th of June 1492, in which he is described as a yeoman of Rayleigh in Essex.[51] Likewise Aleyn appears nowhere else until his will, which was enrolled some twenty-four years after his staple debut.[52] However, in contrast to Gravener, who seemed content to emphasize his position as a husbandman, Aleyn completely omits any descriptor for himself within his will, something distinctly atypical, considering approximately ninety-six per cent of the 428 wills used in this research include some kind of occupational or social description of the testator. Already there is a sense of Aleyn's character and self-perception and it appears entirely opposite to Gravener's social humility. Indeed, it could be theorised Aleyn deliberately omitted a yeomanly descriptor from

[51] C 241/266/2.
[52] PROB 11/18/520.

his last testament, in a not so subtle nod to his and his family's understanding of their own transitional status. For instance, there are clear indicators in Aleyn's will of his growing wealth and prominence in the local community of Rayleigh, especially as he refers to the newly constructed chapel, built and financed by himself, as his preferred burial place.[53] Not only this, but Aleyn's will is much more extensive than Gravener's, with more diversity in bequests, including various pecuniary gifts to different churches, including St. Paul's in London, as well as his possession and bequest of £30 in plate, reinforcing the idea that Aleyn was a member of the community elite. Perhaps most importantly of all, William Aleyn was one of our few yeomen in possession of manors, namely South Fambridge Hall and Condwyk, both in Essex. He gives some details of the composition of South Fambridge, which, considering it was bequeathed to his eldest son Richard, could potentially be described as his family's seat, despite the genteel connotations of such a notion. Interestingly, his younger son Thomas received Condwyk, indicating Aleyn's desire to provide handsomely for both of his sons. These snippets of William's local prominence and lifestyle seem to suggest some kind of social elevation taking place for the Aleyns, perhaps indicating the beginnings of a shift towards gentility. Indeed, there are further clues later on in the will, as William's son Thomas is mentioned again, this time described as 'Yeoman of the Crown', indicating involvement in royal service.[54]

Evidently as a family the Aleyns proliferated in Rayleigh and other Essex settlements, as, for example, William's will refers to multiple others, such as his two sons, his nephew Henry and also his great-nephew George Alen. In seeking to reconstruct the family further, the staple sample data yields just two other individuals from Rayleigh Essex, excluding William. Of particular mention is a John Aleyn, a gentleman who appears in the certificates and could perhaps be supposed to be some relation of William given his surname, although no reference

[53] PROB 11/18/520.
[54] PROB 11/18/520.

to him appears in William's 1516 will. However, the certificates date John's commercial activity to the 1530s,[55] suggesting that if the two were indeed related, at some point after William's tenure, members of the family did attain genteel status, perhaps explaining not only the extensive property and wealth found in William's will, but also his own personal reluctance to include the descriptor of 'yeoman', as he no longer perceived himself to be such.

4.6 Conclusion.

In conclusion, these 'lesser individuals' are not easily definable. The traditionalist methodologies of applying external measures of social status, such as landed possessions or propertied wealth, do seem to find traction with the analyses of this chapter. For example, historiographical assertions regarding the hierarchical nature of the landed assets of yeomen and husbandmen, whereby yeomen typically always possessed greater acreages than husbandmen,[56] are supported by the findings of this analysis of staple yeomen and husbandmen. Indeed, examination of acreages does indeed yield important insights into the potential status of these yeomen, as they are regularly found to possess substantial landholdings, undoubtedly giving them a prominent place in the local community.

This rather simplistic picture, developed from examination of quantifiable landed assets, has ultimately supported the historiographical consensus. However, this analysis has also gone further than most previous studies, which typically rely solely upon land acreages as a tool for measuring the hierarchical status of these individuals, instead exploring other potential characteristics for socio-economic measurement. For example, the examination of the arable and pastoral possessions of these individuals, taken from extents for debt, indicates some subtle, but important defining characteristics. For example, the possession of draught animals, such as horses and oxen, is unique to the yeomen under study, something which can be

[55] C 241/282/71.
[56] Raftis, *Peasant Economic Development*, pp. 92, 96; Bailey, 'Rural Society', p. 151.

connected with the economic stratification of the local community, owing to the importance and expense of these animals.[57] Interestingly however, when these statistics are collected together and proportional averages produced, the yeomen and husbandmen of the staple, at least in terms of their tangible assets, are found to be not all that dissimilar. Indeed, the proportional averages of land, buildings, crops and animals are all fairly consistent, indicating a certain level of shared characteristics and the potential for social overlap between these two categories of individuals, something otherwise masked by more individualised analyses. Although undoubtedly useful, perhaps such external measurements are ultimately too rigid, preventing appreciation of social fluidity and individuality on the part of these individuals.

As such the analyses of this chapter, although providing significant correlations with historiographical assertions regarding exogenous measures, do also suggest that yeomen and husbandmen seem to have regularly overlapped as gradations of the peasantry, routinely sharing many of the same traits and characteristics, ranging from agricultural investment to statute staple engagement, and often leaving the distinct impression that the final determination on definition was made by outsiders looking in. Following the example of more recent literature,[58] this chapter has therefore also considered how an internalised determination of these individuals might realistically be generated. Unsurprisingly, efforts to examine internalised notions of such status encounter problems too, most notably issues related to source scarcity, hampering effective prosopographical reconstruction. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the two illustrative exemplars of John Gravener and William Aleyn, these individuals were undeniably diverse and evidently strongly socially self-aware. Indeed, it would appear entirely reductive to continue insisting only upon the use of such external, and

[57] Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation*, p. 193.
[58] An excellent example of this is: Foroughi, 'Miscellany and Identity'.

even perhaps artificial, gradations, particularly as analysis and appreciation of the individual often yields much more in the way of workable evidence.

Chapter 5. Property and Wealth: Tangible Markers of Individual Identity?

5.1 Introduction and Historiographical Overview.

The vague notion of wealth has often been used as a categorising tool in order to differentiate between the various individual groupings within late medieval society. Indeed, analysis and reconstruction of the property and wealth of the individual users of the Westminster statute staple can contribute to this, providing insight into the assets of different socio-economic categories, as well as demonstrating individual and collective financial priorities. When applied as a measurement therefore, wealth can generally be seen to comprise three different aspects: cash, land and movables, all assets readily discernible in the inventories, wills and tax returns of the staple individuals under study. As such, this chapter will explore this complex notion of wealth, employing a dual reconstructive and comparative methodology so as to demonstrate the potential archetypal financial traits of these individuals through examination of their assets when analysed on a collective and an individual scale.

Historiographical interest in wealth has variably investigated three main aspects, namely cash, personal property and landed assets, typically in an effort to provide some kind of measure of 'worth', either on an individual or a collective level. Interestingly, scholarship typically focuses upon one of these three themes, with clear historiographical trends discernible for each. Beginning with the literature devoted to cash wealth therefore, the allure of using money to measure commercial exchange or bullion levels within the medieval economy has proved especially pervasive.[1] Unsurprisingly therefore, in terms of employing cash reserves as a measure of individuals and their social context, rather than of the wider medieval economy, the

[1] For examples of economic and monetarist studies of cash and the English economy see: J. L. Bolton., 'Was There a "Crisis of Credit'' in Fifteenth-Century England?', *British Numismatic Journal*, 81 (2011), pp. 148-149; P. Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit in Later Medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, 43 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 560-575; P. Nightingale, 'Money and Credit in the Economy of Late Medieval England', in D. Wood (ed.), *Medieval Money Matters* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 51-71; J. Hatcher and M. Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages: Economic Development in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, 2001), p. 191.

literature is comparatively scarce. Nevertheless, some scholars have examined the cash assets of socially prominent individuals to ascertain personal motivations, as demonstrated in C. Given-Wilson's work on the Earls of Arundel in the fourteenth century. Indeed, Earl Richard Fitzalan was one of the wealthiest men in England, possessing an impressive £60,240 in cash upon his death in 1376.[2] Given-Wilson postulates that such extensive capital was the result of shrewd investments, both through landed estates and the supplying of loans to other members of the nobility.[3] One of the most important forays into the social context of cash is C. Muldrew's 2001 article, which examines the cash reserves found within probate inventories. Indeed, rather than just employing cash to estimate shortages in coinage, Muldrew also examines social difference, noting that in a sample of one hundred inventories from Chesterfield in 1520-1600, only seventeen listed monetary assets. Similarly, Muldrew found the same pattern to be repeated in 124 inventories from Lincolnshire, where only twenty-two households possessed actual cash, with the majority in the hands of the wealthiest individuals.[4] As a result, Muldrew hypothesises that money evidently held social value for some individuals, as well as economic, whereby wealthy households might even keep money out of circulation as 'an aesthetic symbol of abundance.'[5]

In turning to the literature dedicated to landed property, one of the most straightforward trends is the divide between rural and urban landholdings. Indeed, many scholars elect to examine one or the other, usually in relation to their chosen body of sources. For instance, in terms of rural landholdings, the utility of Inquisitions *Post Mortem* has been strongly emphasized, owing to the extensive and detailed inventories of landed assets contained within them. One

[2] C. Given-Wilson, 'Wealth and Credit, Public and Private: The Earls of Arundel, 1306-1397', *English Historical Review*, 106 (1991), p. 1.
[3] Given-Wilson, 'Wealth and Credit', pp. 8, 19-21.
[4] C. Muldrew, "Hard Food for Midas': Cash and its Social Value in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 170 (2001), p. 107.
[5] Muldrew, "Hard Food for Midas", p. 109.

such example is C. Carpenter's work into the propertied possessions listed in the Inquisitions *Post Mortem* of lesser landowners over a five-year period between 1422 and 1427. Having collated the rural property portfolios of these individuals, Carpenter attempts a degree of social categorisation, supplying, for example, a tripartite ranking system for esquires based upon the propertied and prosopographical information contained within the documents.[6] Similarly, B. M. S. Campbell, J. A. Galloway and M. Murphy worked collaboratively in 1992 to produce a detailed quantitative survey of rural property in the counties around the capital. Whilst their main aim was to map rural land use, their analyses also produced useful property archetypes with regards to individual ownership, as for example the average capital messuage in the area under study was worth 3s. 4d., whilst the typical demesne comprised 180-190 acres.[7] In contrast to these rural studies, other scholars have emphasized the importance of the urban dimension, with the growth in private commercial properties proving especially important. Indeed, the rise of the urban landlord has been frequently remarked upon, with R. Britnell noting that such individuals often accumulated shops and lands in towns to rent out, as in the case of Henry fitzRobert fitzHenry in 1330, who owned no fewer than twelve shops in Northampton.[8] V. Harding, focusing upon the wills of Cheapside property owners in the early sixteenth century, has uncovered a similar trend, with certain prosperous individuals actively acquiring urban assets, citing the exemplar of Leonard Barker in the 1540s, an enterprising cloth merchant, who held Cheapside property as a business office and counting house.[9] Whilst certain studies have elected to focus upon either rural or urban landholdings, and in doing so

[6] C. Carpenter, 'The Lesser Landowners and the Inquisitions *Post Mortem*', in M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 50, 58-59.
[7] B. M. S. Campbell, J. A. Galloway, and M. Murphy, 'Rural Land-Use in the Metropolitan Hinterland, 1270-1339: The Evidence of *Inquisitiones Post Mortem'*, *Agricultural History Review*, 40 (1992), pp. 9-10.
[8] R. Britnell, 'Markets, Shops, Inns, Taverns and Private Houses in Medieval English Trade', in B. Blonde, P. Stabel, J. Stobart and I. Van Damme (eds.), *Buyers and Sellers: Retail Circuits and Practices in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout, 2006), p. 117.
[9] V. Harding, 'Houses and Households in Cheapside, *c.* 1500-1550', in M. Davies and J. A Galloway (eds.), *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London, 2012), p. 146.

potentially reinforcing an artificial, intellectual boundary between the two, some scholars have sought to explore landed wealth regardless of its geographic position. A prime example is C. Dyer, whose examination of the inventories of townsmen yields insight into the property holdings of merchants and other leading citizens, both within and beyond the town walls. For instance, Ralph Hornby's extent of 1428 revealed that he held thirty-four messuages and one tenement within the city of York, but that he had also acquired property in Hornby, a rural village and presumably his family's place of origin.[10] As such, this landed property acquisition requires further reconstruction, particularly with regards to urban and rural contexts.

Finally, in examining the scholarship relating specifically to movable property, a far shorter historiographical narrative is discernible, with much of the dedicated literature published post-2000. Whilst such prior neglect was perhaps due in part to the mistaken assumption that investigation of personal possessions yields far less in the way of broadly applicable analysis of wealth than studies of cash or land, more recent efforts have sought to address the importance of such physical objects in their own right.[11] A prime example is D. Hinton's 2005 monograph, in which he explores the artefactual history of England, encompassing an ambitious time period from the end of the Roman era to the start of the Reformation. Indeed, Hinton's interest in social status naturally leads to an emphasis upon jewellery and other luxury items. For instance, his analysis of 585 Lincolnshire wills in the early sixteenth century outlines the proportional appearances of jewellery, beads and plate, linking this with the varying socio-economic positions of his chosen testators.[12] In fact, certain categories of personal items have received

[10] C. Dyer, 'The Value of Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions *Post Mortem* for Economic and Social History', in M. Hicks (ed.), *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions Post Mortem: A Companion* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 110.
[11] Some examples of analyses of movables include: C. Richardson, 'Household Objects and Domestic Ties', in C. Beattie, A. Maslakovic and S. Rees Jones (eds.), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth and the Body* (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 433-448; E. Salter, 'Some Differences in the Cultural Production of Household Consumption in Three North Kent Communities, *c.* 1450-1550', in C. Beattie, A. Maslakovic and S. Rees Jones (eds.), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth and the Body* (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 391-407.
[12] D. Hinton, *Gold and Gilt, Pots and Pins: Possessions and People in Medieval Britain* (Oxford, 2005), p. 259.

especial attention from scholars, undoubtedly owing to their perceived intrinsic social or financial value, most notably clothing.[13] Writing in 2005, K. M. Burkholder uses 550 wills from between 1327 and 1487 to examine clothing and textiles to provide insight into social hierarchies. Indeed, Burkholder concludes that, in terms of social status, professionals, such as merchants and artisans, bequeathed more clothing than any other grouping under study.[14] One of the most detailed forays into domestic objects has been undertaken by L. Liddy, in her semi-prosopographical analysis of the owners of wills and inventories in York across two centuries. However, despite outlining the proportional representation of the different household items discernible, Liddy ultimately emphasizes those items felt to have had 'affective value', such as religious objects or those possessions which once belonged to the testator's body, such as jewellery or clothing.[15] Perhaps this scholarly fascination with certain objects is best explained by D. Smail, in his recent monograph dedicated to the comprehensive analysis of inventories of items recovered through debt default, in which he cautions against such methodological pitfalls, noting that 'voyeuristic interest naturally runs to luxury objects, rather than the mundane.'[16]

As outlined in this brief historiographical introduction therefore, investigation of wealth necessarily lends itself to analysis of one of the three key tangible measures associated with this concept: cash, land and objects. Within each of these aspects, certain trends are clearly apparent, most notably the overriding economic emphasis found within analyses of cash, an apparent divide between urban and rural landed property assets, as well as the comparative

[13] See for example: A. Sutton, 'Dress and Fashions *c.* 1470', in R. Britnell (ed.), *Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 5-26; E. Crowfoot, F. Pritchard and K. Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing, c. 1150-1450* (London, 1992).
[14] K. M. Burkholder, 'Threads Bared: Dress and Textiles in Late Medieval English Wills', in R. Netherton and G. R. Owen-Crocker (eds.), *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, volume 1 (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 134, 138.
[15] L. Liddy, 'Domestic Objects in York, *c.* 1400-1600: Consumption, Neighbourhood and Choice', University of York, unpublished PhD thesis (2015), p. 152.
[16] D. L. Smail, *Legal Plunder: Households and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe* (London, 2016), p. 35.

scholarly neglect of personal possessions. As such this chapter will not only aim to explore and analyse these measures of wealth, but also expand upon the various historiographical lines of inquiry outlined above.

5.2 The Three Categories of 'Wealth': Towards a Comparative Financial Ranking System.

First and foremost, in examining the available sources for the reconstruction of wealth, a degree of broad spectrum statistical analysis is possible through financial evaluations. Indeed, the fiscal 'worth' of all three discernible measures of wealth, namely cash, land and movables, is discernible within the documentary record to some degree, the examination of which can provide important insight into the individuals and socio-economic groupings under study. The possession of cash, as one of the most straightforward measures of financial well-being, will be examined first. In looking to measure the cash wealth of the individuals under study therefore, analysis of lay subsidy records initially seems the most straightforward method, whereby individuals were assessed upon either lands, goods or wages. Whilst the latter of the three assessment types would seem to represent the closest manifestation of physical cash routinely changing hands, lamentably very few individuals have assessments recorded for wages. Indeed, just five individuals register such assessments, as shown in the table below.

Table 5.1 Assessments in Wages in the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy.

Name	Descriptor	County	Assessment in Wages
Reginald Bray	Gentleman	Surrey	£3
Richard Grene	Husbandman	Middlesex	£3
William Bromwich	Gentleman	Worcestershire	£1
Richard Hunt	-	Kent	£1
Thomas Byllyngton	Esquire	Hertfordshire	£1

Although statistically frustrating, this dearth of waged assessments is altogether unsurprising when considering the kinds of individuals under study. Indeed, such a pattern seems to suggest that these people were indeed somewhat elevated, both socially and economically, given their apparent independence from waged labour. As a result, an alternative method of measuring cash wealth is necessary, requiring a more abstract approach through the collation of monetary bequests within wills. For example, William Appleton, draper of London, bequeathed a total of £28 3s. 4d. when he made his will in July 1512.[17] Similarly, John Boteler, of Waresley, Huntingdonshire, left £177 6s. 10d. in cash bequests in his will of 1521.[18]

However, when considering these monetary bequests as representations of cash wealth, certain caveats must be discussed. Perhaps most importantly, some individuals undoubtedly made these extensive cash bequests in their wills despite not possessing the necessary ready money at the time, instead expecting their landed assets to be liquidated upon their deaths to provide the required sums. Some examples of this are indeed discernible within the wills under study, as, for instance, Thomas Cavendish explicitly specified in his testament of 1524 that his lands and tenements in the county of Kent were to be sold for £120, which was then to be given out to his family.[19] Similarly, the mercer George Robinson earmarked his lands in Essex and Huntingdonshire for sale, stating that £200 from this was to go directly to his son, evidently accounting for a sizeable proportion of the £268 6s. 8d. in cash bequests in his will.[20] Interestingly, some of these wills elect to allocate the monetary proceeds from land liquidation to specific testamentary needs, such as the support of a priest or religious house. For example, the mercer Richard Colier requested that his messuages in London be sold to found and support a school in Horsham, Sussex, not to supply the £176 6s. 8d. in cash bequests in his will, money

[17] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Wills 1384-1858, PROB 11/17/365.
[18] PROB 11/20/157.
[19] PROB 11/21/404.
[20] PROB 11/28/618.

which, presumably therefore, he already had on hand.[21] Nevertheless, such precise specifications are rare, with the result that the majority of the wills under study which produce bequests of monetary sums do so without indication as to where or how such cash was to be sourced. In order to proceed therefore, a more nuanced understanding of 'cash wealth' is required. Rather than simply referring to the stocks of coins stashed in an individual's house, these monetary totals, taken from cash bequests in wills, should be understood as representative of an individual's liquidity at death, accumulated from a range of sources. In other words, it is indicative of the capacity of these will-makers to create ready money when needed.

Table 5.2 Cash Bequests within the Wills of the Individuals of the Westminster Statute Staple.

Number of Individuals with Cash Bequests	Total in Cash Bequests	Average Per Person
410	£107,365 14s.	£261 17s. 5d.

As shown in table 5.2, 410 individuals left behind monetary bequests in their wills which, when totalled together, amount to the impressive sum of £107,365 14s. In fact, some of these individuals are shown to have been particularly wealthy at their deaths, with, for example, Thomas Spring, a Suffolk cloth maker, leaving behind £2,377 in cash bequests when he made his will in 1523.[22] In similar fashion, the will of the mercer and alderman William Dauntesey contained £2,067 in gifts of cash when it was registered in November 1543.[23] Nevertheless,

[21] PROB 11/24/320.
[22] PROB 11/21/179; for further discussion of Spring and his pivotal role in the Suffolk cloth industry see: N. R. Amor, 'Merchant Adventurer or Jack of all Trades? The Suffolk Clothier in the 1460s', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 40 (2004), pp. 414-436; B. McClenaghan, *The Springs of Lavenham and the Suffolk Cloth Trade in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Ipswich, 1924); J. S. Lee, *The Medieval Clothier* (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 239-249; P. R. Schofield, 'Spring Family (*c.* 1400-*c.* 1550)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-55402 [accessed 20/02/2018].
[23] PROB 11/29/499.

despite these particularly impressive totals, the typical quantities bequeathed in the wills of these individuals are revealed to have usually been much less, with a mean of £261 17s. 5d. per person. As an example, Robert Pagett, who, like Dauntesey, was a London alderman whilst he lived, bequeathed a seemingly archetypal cash total of £255 3s. 4d. in his will of 1531, clearly demonstrating the variation discernible even within the testamentary records of individuals with similar societal status or position.[24] Such variation, whether based upon actual wealth at the end of one's life or merely upon individualised notions of generosity when it came to gift-giving, necessarily distorts the fiscal data drawn from the wills. Therefore, given the sizeable proportion of individuals with monetary bequests within their wills, it is possible to extrapolate the average quantities of cash found within the testaments of specific categories and groupings, not only reducing the impact of individual preference when compiling one's will, but also demonstrating to some extent how cash wealth, as a measure of liquidity, proliferated across different socio-economic hierarchies.

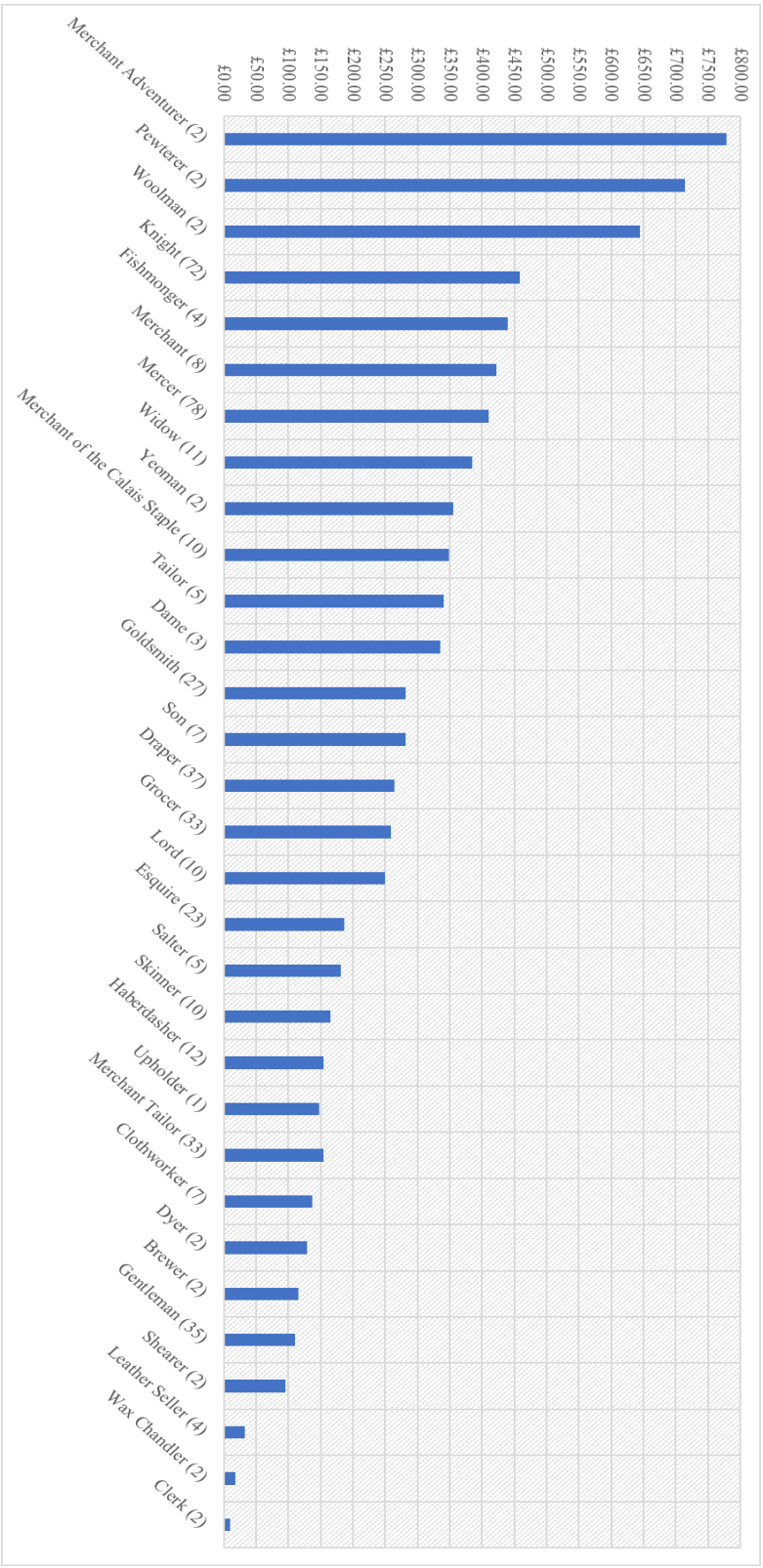
In examining the cash bequests of individuals, it is immediately apparent that a significant proportion of social and occupational categories are represented, with sixty different descriptors discernible within wills which yield at least one bequest in physical cash. A great diversity in cash wealth is initially evident, ranging from the £5,390 13s. 4d. in the will of the London grocer William Lane, to the comparatively humble 6d. bequeathed in the testament of a cloth worker, Robert Bayly.[25] However, in order to produce useable mean averages, categories of will-makers with only a single individual representative have been omitted. As such, figure 5.1 contains only those categories of individuals with multiple incidences of cash bequests, yielding thirty-one for analysis. Initial examination of the highest figures within the graph seems to indicate a somewhat surprising concentration of cash wealth within the hands

[24] PROB 11/29/58.
[25] PROB 11/35/414; PROB 11/25/151.

of certain unexpected categories, such as pewterers and woolmen, all of whom yield averaged totals above £500. For example, the wills of pewterers yield an average cash total of £713 15s. 5d., whilst woolmen gifted on average a total of £645 2s. 5d. (figure 5.1). Indeed, these particular groupings appear to produce enormous cash totals, above even those of knights, mercers and staple merchants, categories which would perhaps be expected to dominate in terms of their ability to liquidate assets to produce cash. Although such statistics are undoubtedly impressive, methodological limitations must be acknowledged. Indeed, the comparative rarity with which pewterers and woolmen made wills, whether due to their perceived lower occupational positioning or simply issues related to documentary survivability, has distorted their cash totals, given that just two individual will-makers are discernible for each of these categories. A prime example is John Parys, who left the enormous cash total of £1,082 2s. in his will of 1535, largely a result of his bequest of 1,000 marks 'in redy money' to his daughter Anne.[26] This figure is bound to distort the average for pewterers, as his testament represented one of only two pewterers discernible in the collection of wills, the other of which, belonging to Richard Tailor, bequeathed a seemingly far more typical sum of £364 10s.[27]

[26] PROB 11/7/19.
[27] PROB 11/25/386.

Figure 5.1 Mean Money Bequests in Wills.[28]



[28] The following categories have been omitted from figure 5.1 as they yield only one individual for analysis of monetary bequests and so cannot be used to produce a mean valuation: Clothmaker (1), Lady (1), Stationer (1), Brother (1), Fuller (1), Fellmonger (1), Upholder (1), Tanner (1), Plommer (1), Vintner (1), Weaver (1), Shoemaker (1), Father (1), Stockfishmonger (1), Tallow Chandler (1), Saddler (1), Scrivener (1), Baker (1), Girdler (1), Fletcher (1), Butcher (1), Clothier (1), Barber Surgeon (1), Cook (1), Brazier (1), Freeman (1), Husbandman (1), Grazier (1).

Setting aside these methodological issues however, certain cash wealth patterns are nevertheless discernible for those categories of individuals outside the anomalous figures outlined above. Indeed, of the fourteen categories of individuals which yield an average cash total at death of between £200 and £500, occupational descriptors account for nine of these. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such individuals seem to have been the commercial elite, whereby fishmongers, staple merchants, goldsmiths and mercers all appear within this range, producing strikingly similar quantities of cash within their wills. For instance, the four discernible wills belonging to fishmongers produced an average cash total of £439 9s., whilst the eight wills of individuals labelled as 'merchant' yielded an average of £412 19s. 10d. (figure 5.1). Such a pattern would seem to indicate that these occupational individuals were not only economically elevated, but also enjoyed access to significant sums of cash, either through actual reserves of ready money or the capacity to liquidate assets. Indeed, this is to be expected, considering such mercantile individuals would presumably have employed such cash assets in relation to the buying and selling of goods in accordance with their business activities.

However, it must be noted that certain social descriptors are also discernible within this cash wealth range. A prime example is that of knights, who yield an impressive seventy-two wills with cash bequests and an average of £458 8s. 5d., a total surpassing even that of the mercers, who yield seventy-eight wills and £410 5s. 7d. in mean cash wealth. Evidently therefore, the apparent fiscal affluence of knights, widows and other such social or familial categories complicates this otherwise straightforward commercial perspective, perhaps indicating a comparable degree of engagement in business endeavours on the part of these individuals. Whilst the existence of a cash-rich elite is evident, other individuals are revealed to have far smaller quantities of money available to them at their deaths. Indeed, towards the end of the scale, clerks, with a mean of £10 2s. 8d., wax chandlers with £18 7s. 7d. and leather sellers, with a mean of £32 11s. 5d. available on average in their wills, are comparatively less

financially solvent. Although not insignificant sums, the cash bequests of these particular occupational groupings pale in comparison to some of their wealthier mercantile counterparts, perhaps suggesting that, outside of these occupational and social elites, the possession of, and ability to generate ready money in very large quantities, was by no means a universal characteristic of these staple individuals.

Turning now to landed assets, although there are multiple sources which provide access to such possessions, only extents for debt, lay subsidy records and Inquisitions *Post Mortem* provide an estimated valuation for lands, enabling comparable analysis with other measures for wealth. For example, the lands of Francis Belwood, a gentleman from Lincolnshire, were assessed as worth £20 in the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy.[29] Similarly, a detailed inventory of the propertied possessions of William Merston, a gentleman from Horton in Surrey, was clearly outlined in an Inquisition *Post Mortem* of 1495, in which his lands were valued at £20 4s. 6d. in total.[30] As a methodological point, the statistics contained within figure 5.2 below have been collated by averaging the landed valuations found within all three of these sources. Such an approach not only enables the inclusion of far more individuals from multiple source bodies, but also serves to counteract some of the limitations of certain records. Most notably, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* are typically exclusive and tended to be representative of the very wealthy or prominent owners of crown lands. However, when combined with the property portfolio assessments from subsidy records, which are more inclusive by comparison, or extents for debt, which typically involved those individuals in a rather more precarious financial position, the average drawn from all three can provide crucial balance, with the result that valuations for the landed assets of 542 staple individuals are discernible. As has been done previously, those

[29] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Account and other records relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation, E 179/138/473 rot 5.
[30] 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 1151-1200', in Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII* (London, 1898), pp. 504-535. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1/pp504-535 [accessed 12/02/2018].

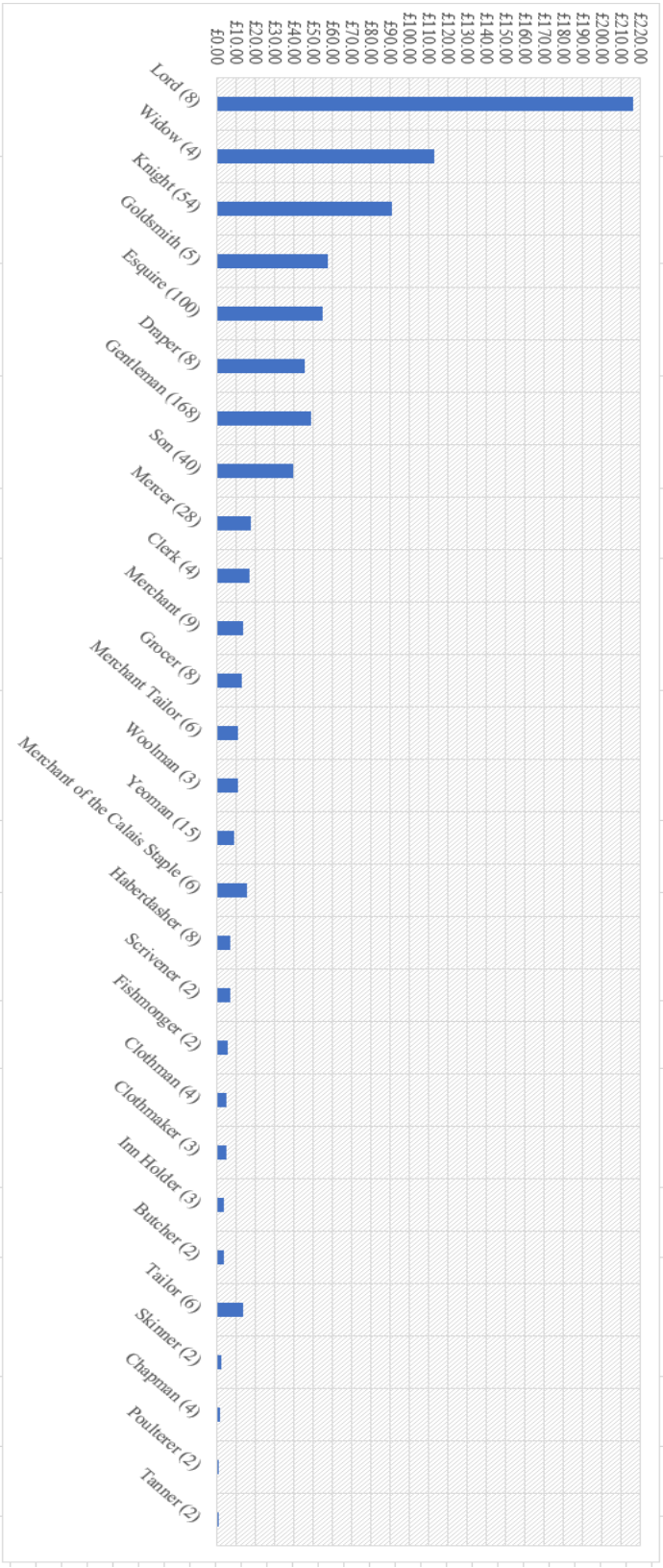
categories with just a singular individual represented have been omitted, producing a revised total of 517 staple users with a valuation of their landed assets, spread across twenty-eight descriptors.

As demonstrated in figure 5.2, it is immediately apparent that financial averages for lands are far smaller when compared with the cash quantities examined previously. Indeed, the majority of both social and occupational descriptors have a mean landed assessment below £20, with just eight categories of individuals with a mean above this. Nevertheless, the extrapolation of landed valuations produces rather more expected patterns than for cash wealth. For instance, lords have some of the highest mean averages for lands, not only reflecting traditional hierarchies, but also demonstrating where these aristocratic individuals invested their incomes and the type of wealth in which they, as a social grouping, placed most value. Indeed, such a presumption is well represented on the individual scale, as, for example, John Grey, styled 'Lord de Powys' in an extensive Inquisition *Post Mortem* made after his death in 1495, was found to be in possession of ten different manors across eight counties, valued at £410 19s. 2d. per annum.[31] Indeed, of the five categories of individuals with the highest mean valuations for land, four of these are definitively social or familial descriptors, suggesting that those individuals who typically defined themselves in such a fashion still had a strong attachment to landed estates. For example, the knightly contingent of the staple produced, on average, landed assets worth approximately £90 15s. 10d. annually, as demonstrated in the similar valuation of the Dorset-based knight, Thomas More, whose three manors and 3,838 acres were assessed as worth exactly £83 in 1523.[32] Similarly, esquires, fielding a substantial cohort of one hundred

[31] 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 951-1000', in Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII* (London, 1898), pp. 407-430. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1/pp407-430 [accessed 12/02/018]; 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 1151-1200', in Maskelyne and Maxwell Lyte (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII*, pp. 504-535. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1/pp504-535 [accessed 12/02/2018].
[32] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Extents for Debt, Series 1, C 131/105/29.

individuals for landed assessment, produce a mean asset total of £55 1s. 7d., placing them firmly alongside the wealthiest individuals in terms of immovable property.

Figure 5.2 Mean Assessments for Landed Assets.[33]



[33] The following categories have been omitted from figure 5.2 as they yield only one individual for analysis of landed assets: Lawyer (1), Earl (1), Baron (1), Father (1), Wife (1), Tinner (1), Cook (1), Hosier (1), Weaver (1), Grey Tawyer (1), Tallow Chandler (1), Blacksmith (1), Grazier (1), Leather Dresser (1), Dyer (1), Carpenter (1) Hat Merchant (1), Armourer (1), Surgeon (1), Labourer (1), Miller (1), Cooper (1), Barber (1), Shearer (1), Salter (1).

Whilst the landed dominance of the genteel elite is well marked within the data, occupationally defined individuals do nevertheless emerge as significant landholders in their own right. Interestingly, goldsmiths have the highest average landed assessments of those staple individuals with occupational descriptors, yielding a total of £57 6s. per person. Similarly, drapers, mercers and merchants also feature fairly prominently, with landed assets assessed worth on average over £10 a year, suggesting a conscious degree of property acquisition and investment during the course of their lives. For instance, Henry Huntley, a merchant from Haddenham in Buckinghamshire, owned lands worth £60 when the subsidy returns were compiled in 1524-1525.[34] A particularly illustrative example is that of the merchant Gregory Cause, who, despite residing in the city of Norwich, possessed twelve messuages, a watermill and over one thousand acres of land in various parts of Norfolk, worth in total £18 1s. 8d.[35] Perhaps therefore, these particular occupational individuals were a reflection of the growing socio-economic status of the more prominent liveried crafts, as their presumably successful commercial endeavours enabled them to purchase land, potentially sinking cash assets into firmer propertied investments. However, despite the apparent successes of these particular occupational categories, it must be acknowledged that this was by no means a universal pattern. Indeed, as was also demonstrated in the statistical analysis of cash assets, the lower end of the scale is shown to be mostly populated by individuals of lesser occupational status, such as tanners, chapmen and poulterers, with valuations of 8s. 4d., £1 11s. 8d. and £1 1s. respectively. It would seem therefore that a positive correlation between liveried status and landed opportunity existed, often resulting in extensive property portfolios for the occupational elite. However, it should also be noted that this was apparently by no means homogenously exploited, as suggested in the examples of the skinners, who, despite possessing membership

[34] A. C. Chibnall and A. Vere Woodman (eds.), *Subsidy Roll for the County of Buckingham anno 1524* (Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1950), p. 4.
[35] C 131/104/40; C 131/104/32.

of a liveried occupation, yield one the smallest mean assessments for land, with an average of just £2 3s. 5d. per person (figure 5.2). In fact, this can perhaps be treated as a sampling issue, as this particular valuation is based upon the landed property of just two men, namely the London skinner George Penson, whose landholdings were worth £3 when inventoried in 1522, and William Jevyn, a skinner whose propertied assets in Essex were valued as worth £1 6s. 8d. in 1510.[36] As such, the impression created is one of a vested landed interest for many of these staple categories, something discernible for both occupationally and socially defined individuals.

Our final statistical measure, movables, has been extrapolated from three major sources: the extents for debt, the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy and the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy. In total, 205 individuals are discernible within the records with a financial valuation relating to their movable assets (table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Assessments for Movables Extrapolated from Lay Subsidies and Extents for Debt.

Source	Number of Individuals	Total in Movable Assessments	Mean Assessment Per Person
Extents for Debt	45	£1,094 5s. 3d.	£24 6s. 5d.
1524-25 Lay Subsidy	39	£1,214 3s. 5d.	£31 2s. 7d.
1540-41 Lay Subsidy	121	£77,658	£641 16s.
Total	205	£79,966 8s. 8d.	£390 1s.

As shown in table 5.3 above, forty-five individuals yield an extent for debt which includes a valuation of their movable goods, out of the 1,030 extents collated for this study. As an

[36] C 131/105/27; C 131/257/5.

example, Thomas Kelsall, a cloth maker from Berkshire, possessed household property worth £13 when his movables were inventoried in 1504.[37] Robert Kyrfote, a draper, also had financially assessed personal possessions worth £19 18s. 9½d., which included books, gowns, beds and a painted cloth of St. John.[38] As such, when the valuations provided for such personal possessions found within the extents for debt are collated, they yield a total of £1,094 5s. 3d., with an average of £24 6s. 5d. per person. In similar fashion to the extents for debt, only a handful of individuals with assessments based upon movable goods are locatable within the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy, with just thirty-nine discernible. For example, Nicholas Wagge, a yeoman from Tetsworth in Oxfordshire, had goods worth £4, whilst Thomas Abney, a York merchant, possessed £20 in movables when assessed for the subsidy.[39] When these subsidy assessments are collated, these individuals yield a total value of £1,214 3s. 5d. in goods, producing a slightly higher mean of £31 2s. 7d. per person than that found for the movables within extents for debt. Finally, in examining table 5.3, the proportional dominance of the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy is immediately apparent, with a total of 121 individuals who together yield an impressive total of £77,658 for their movable assessments. Such statistical prominence is easily explainable, as this later subsidy, in contrast to the tripartite assessment protocol of its earlier counterpart, was collated based upon just two measures of an individual's worth, namely 'income' and 'goods', with a preference for the latter.[40] Furthermore, the returns within this subsidy relate to the inhabitants of London, individuals who were often far wealthier than their provincial counterparts. For example, William Bowyer, a draper residing on Lime Street, was

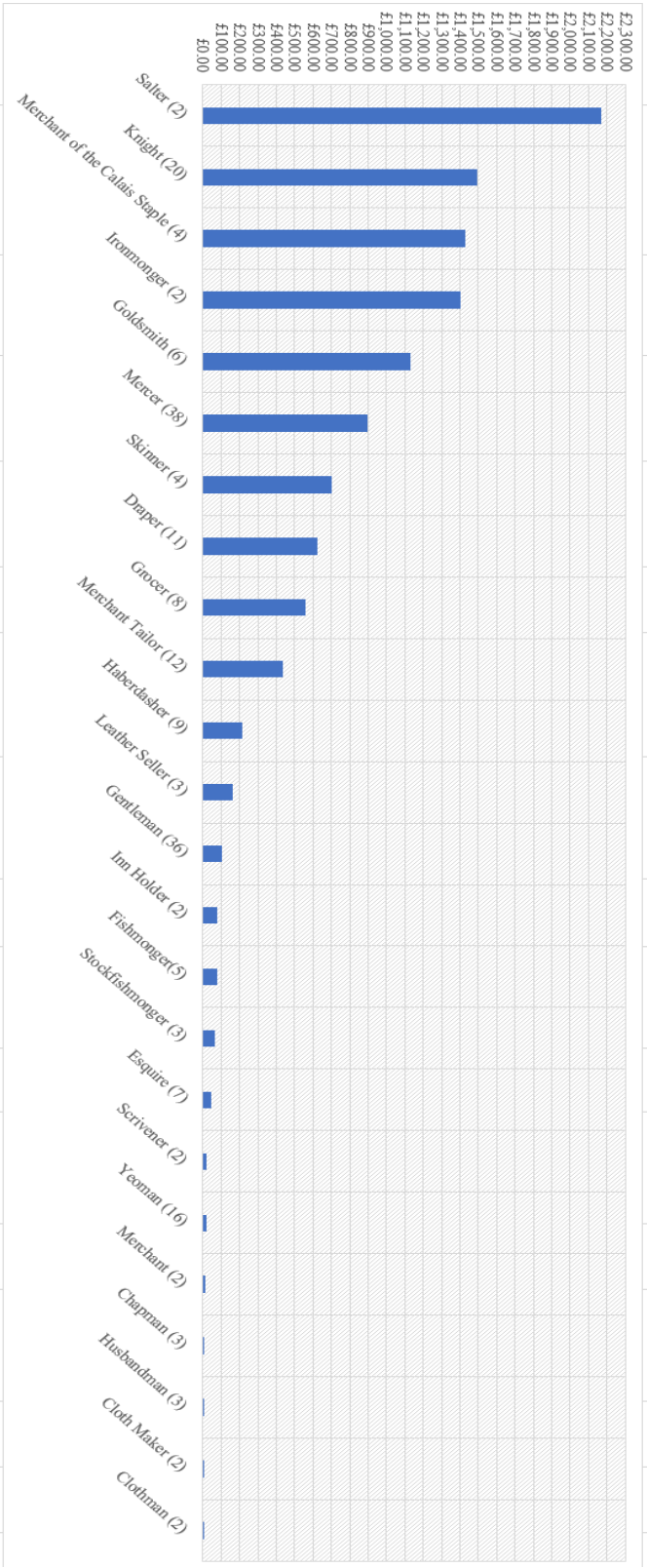
[37] C 131/87/3.
[38] C 131/247/28.
[39] E 179/161/200 rot 1d; E 179/217/92 mem 4.
[40] 'Introduction', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582*, (London, 1993), pp. xv-lxxvii. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/xv-lxxvii [accessed 09/03/2018].

assessed as possessing goods worth £2,666 13s. 4d.[41] Therefore, the movable assessments extrapolated from the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy were not only more numerous, because of changes in taxation methods, but also typically yielded much higher amounts, as a result of the metropolitan individuals under assessment. Nevertheless, when averaged together to yield an overall valuation for the 205 individuals with a goods assessment, the mean emerges as £390 1s. per person. Perhaps therefore, individuals such as Anthony Marler, a London haberdasher, were somewhat statistically archetypal in terms of their movables, as he was revealed to possess £400 in goods.[42]

When these individuals are broken up by social, familial and occupational categories, as has been done previously with the other two measures of wealth, twenty-four different descriptors, representing two or more staple individuals, are discernible with financial assessments for movables (figure 5.3).

[41] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Lime Street Ward', in in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 95-96. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp95-96 [accessed 08/12/2016].
[42] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Cripplegate Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 56-62. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp56-62 [accessed 14/12/2016].

Figure 5.3 Financial Evaluations for Movable Goods.[43]



[43] The following categories have been omitted from figure 5.3 as they yield only one individual for analysis of movable assets and so cannot be used to produce a mean assessment value: Widow (1), Pewterer (1), Protonotary (1), Cloth Worker (1), Wire Seller (1), Black Smith (1), Barber Surgeon (1), Glover (1), Butcher (1), Tanner (1), Monier (1), Vintner (1), Turner (1), Saddler (1), Fuller (1), Dyer (1), Cook (1), Brewer (1), Maltman (1), Grazier (1), Gunner (1), Surgeon (1).

In examining figure 5.3, the totals discernible for movable assets are highly variable, ranging from the valuation of £2,166 13s. 4d. for salters, to the comparatively humbler assessment of just £5 for clothmen. Whilst such difference is likely due to aforementioned documentary variation, as much as to individual movable worth, certain patterns are nevertheless worthy of comment. Firstly, the eye is immediately drawn to the nine categories of individuals who yield assessments in movables of over £500, valuations made all the more impressive when one remembers that the overall average was only £390 1s. per person (table 5.3). Somewhat unsurprisingly, eight of these prominent categories are occupational, including goldsmiths, mercers, staple merchants and other members of the professional elite, individuals who might necessarily be expected to have extensive stocks of movable assets. Outside of these occupational categories however, knights emerge as the sole non-occupational descriptor with a movable total over £500, producing a mean of £1,493 9s. 7d. from the valuations of twenty individuals. Such prominence seems to suggest that knights also invested a substantial proportion of their measurable wealth into movable assets. For example, the knight Robert Brandon was found in possession of sheep and cows on his estates worth £30 when he was assessed in 1501.[44] However, it must be acknowledged that the majority of the knightly individuals represented here are of a slightly different breed to the traditional image projected by the exemplar of Sir Robert Brandon. Indeed, fifteen of the twenty knights examined for financial valuations of movable assets also held an occupational descriptor, as in the case of John Champneys, a successful London skinner, whose membership of the urban elite had secured him a knighthood by the time of the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy, in which he was accordingly described as 'knight' and assessed as worth £1,333 6s. 8d. in goods.[45] With these 'occupational' knights in mind therefore, it would seem that significant investment in movable assets was

[44] C 131/85/14.
[45] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Tower Ward', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 102-108. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp102-108 [accessed 04/12/2016].

indeed dominated by, and therefore strongly representative of, individuals belonging to select occupational categories.

Furthermore, in considering the number of occupational individuals listed with substantial quantities of movable goods, it is possible to theorise upon the potential commercial agendas behind such possessions. Indeed, the notion of 'merchandise' is clearly apparent, particularly when one considers the kinds of occupations listed and the necessity of certain goods associated with this. Straightforward examples of such industry assets are not difficult to locate, as in the case of George Whelpeley, haberdasher of London, who was recorded in possession of £60 in movable goods in an extent for debt of 1523, including, but not limited to, twelve and a half pounds of wrought ribbons, fifty-four Venetian ribbons, ten pounds of coloured sewing silk, two pounds three ounces of black round lace and twelve ounces of wrought girdles made from Parisian silk, all items one would expect a haberdasher to supply.[46] Moreover, not all occupational individuals possessed movable assets related to simple retail, as in the case of inn holders, who, with an average assessment of £80 10s. 5d. per person in terms of movable possessions, had a substantial, but crucially slightly different type of investment. Indeed, a prime example is the detailed inventory of Christopher Arundell, inn holder of London, whose possession of goods worth £23 2s. 8d., included thirty featherbeds, thirty-one bolsters, twenty-nine wooden bedsteads and thirty pairs of sheets, among other things, clearly representing the necessary furnishings for his engagement with the hostelry business.[47]

Nevertheless, at the other end of the spectrum, the movable possessions of certain categories of individuals are shown to have been worth comparatively less, with one quarter of the categories of descriptors in possession of movables worth £20 or under. For example, the three chapmen discernible with measurable movables yield an average of £10 6s. 8d, whilst the two

[46] C 131/266/8.
[47] C 131/104/3.

cloth makers included in this analysis produce just £8 14s. 10d. in movables per person (figure 5.3). Although it must be acknowledged that many of these smaller averages have been drawn from fewer available assessments, it is nevertheless apparent that the categories represented were of somewhat lesser means. For instance, husbandmen, chapmen and other traditionally lower status categories of individuals are all discernible within this bracket, either suggesting that such individuals were not well represented within the source material, or that their movable assets, unsurprisingly, were unable to compete with the likes of the metropolitan elite.

Finally, despite having outlined and explored some of the patterns for differing financial evaluations of wealth, it is crucial to recognise that these three categories of wealth did not exist separately from one another. Indeed, a proportion of staple individuals yield financial valuations in relation to more than one category of wealth, as shown in the case of William Swanne, a gentleman whose lands were assessed as worth £60 in the subsidy returns and whose cash assets totalled £20 in his will of 1533, necessitating deeper comparative analysis.[48] Whilst, regrettably, such incidences of multiple measures of wealth in relation to a single individual are proportionally rare, this is most likely representative simply of documentary limitations, rather than reality. Therefore, a cross-category ranking system can address this issue to some extent, as the differing measures for wealth are directly compared against one another, demonstrating the relative investment emphasis placed upon these types of wealth by different categories of individuals, irrespective of individual assessment totals (table 5.4).

[48] E 179/124/187 rot 7d; PROB 11/25/193.

Table 5.4 Comparative Ranking System for the Three Main Measures of Wealth.[49]

Descriptor	Cash	Relative Position	Land	Relative Position	Movables	Relative Position	Highest Ranking Type
Gentleman	£109 16s. 7d.	19th	£49 1/4d.	6th	£106 13s. 10d.	11th	Land
Esquire	£186 1s. 9d.	15th	£55 1s. 7d.	5th	£49 5s. 5d.	14th	Land
Mercer	£410 7s. 5d.	5th	£17 4s.	9th	£896 8s. 7d.	5th	Cash/Movables
Yeoman	£354 19s. 1/4d.	7th	£9 2s. 5d.	17th	£19 7d.	15th	Cash
Knight	£458 8s. 5d.	2nd	£90 15s. 10d.	3rd	£1,493 9s. 7d.	2nd	Cash/Movables
Son	£281 19s.	10th	£39 6s. 5d.	8th	/	/	Land
Draper	£263 12s. 10d.	12th	£45 11s. 1/4d.	7th	£621 18s.	7th	Land/Movables
Grocer	£258 17s.	13th	£13 1/4d.	14th	£557 10s.	8th	Movables
Merchant	£421 19s. 10d.	4th	£13 13s. 7d.	13th	£13 6s. 9d.	16th	Cash
Merchant Tailor	£154 13s. 10d.	19th	£10 19s. 8d.	15th	£434 8s. 10d.	9th	Movables
Husbandman	/	/	£1 18s. 5d.	23rd	£9 10d.	18th	Movables
Haberdasher	£155 1/2d.	18th	£6 11s. 5d.	18th	£215 3s.	10th	Movables
Merchant of the Calais Staple	£348 1s. 10d.	8th	£15 14s. 10d.	11th	£1,430 15s.	3rd	Movables
Goldsmith	£281 16s. 5d.	11th	£57 6s.	4th	£1,130 12s. 5d.	4th	Land/Movables
Tailor	£340 1s. 5d.	9th	£13 15s. 5d.	12th	/	/	Cash
Skinner	£165 11s.	17th	£2 3s. 5d.	22nd	£699 3s. 5d.	6th	Movables
Widow	£384 19s. 9d.	6th	£113 1s.	2nd	/	/	Land
Clerk	£10 2s. 8d.	21st	£17 1/4d.	10th	/	/	Land
Fishmonger	£439 9s.	3rd	£5 15s. 5d.	19th	£78 6s. 8d.	13th	Cash
Clothman	/	/	£4 18s. 5d.	20th	£5	19th	Movables
Lord	£249 15s.	14th	£216 2s. 7d.	1st	/	/	Land
Salter	£181 9s. 7d.	16th	/	/	£2,166 13s. 4d.	1st	Movables
Inn holder	/	/	£3 12s.	21st	£80 10s. 5d.	12th	Movables
Chapman	/	/	£1 11s. 8d.	24th	£10 6s. 8d.	17th	Movables
Leather Seller	£32 11s. 5d.	20th	/	/	£163 6s. 8d.	7th	Movables
Woolman	£645 2s. 5d.	1st	£10 18s. 7d.	16th	/	/	Cash

This comparative ranking system, as outlined in table 5.4, includes only those descriptors with more than one assessment type discernible, so as to provide a comparative perspective. For instance, the woolmen yield mean valuations for land and cash, permitting their inclusion, however the bakers and wax chandlers, despite yielding more individuals in total for analysis, produce valuations only in terms of cash assets, preventing their inclusion in table 5.4. The actual methodology employed is a straightforward one, whereby the financial averages for each of the three types of wealth examined previously are ranked according to how they compare

[49] Table 5.4 has been compiled using specific parameters: only those descriptors which produce mean valuations for at least two of the three measures of wealth have been included. These mean valuations have been produced using the same methodology as before, whereby a minimum of two individuals must yield an evaluation to create a mean valuation for each of the three measures of wealth.

with other groups of individuals. For example, gentlemen, despite producing £109 16s. 7d. in average cash wealth, rank highest in land when this system is applied (table 5.4), even though such landed assets are only assessed as worth £49 ¼d. on average per person. This is because, when compared with other social and occupational categories with landed assessments, gentlemen are sixth highest overall, compared to their much lower ranking of nineteenth for physical cash. In other words, despite the actual figure for their monetary assets being far greater, on a wider, collective scale, gentlemen seem to have invested more substantially in land, when measured in comparison with the other staple individuals under study. In this way 'priorities' or 'emphasis' can be assessed with regards to wealth, an otherwise entirely intangible notion.

In examining the evidence of the comparative ranking system outlined in table 5.4 therefore, of the twenty-six individual categories exhibiting more than one wealth measurement, fourteen of them rank highest in terms of movables, followed by annual valuations of landed assets with eight categories, and finally measures of cash, with seven. These basic statistics seem to indicate a general, and perhaps surprising, preference for movable assets, with cash proving the least popular method of wealth accumulation. However, it should be remembered that the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy, from which much of the assessments for movables were drawn, focused upon the assets of the London elite, unsurprisingly producing much greater averages for individual wealth. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, there are some clear correlations with traditional expectations for certain categories of individuals. For instance, landed wealth emerges as the highest asset ranking for lords, with an average total of £216 2s. 7d, incidentally also ranking first overall when compared with all other categories. Similarly, gentlemen and esquires also demonstrate a degree of collective priority in the possession of landed assets, producing respectable rankings of sixth and fifth, despite also yielding valuations for both goods and cash. Land prioritisation was by no means the preserve of the social elites however,

as some occupational categories are found to have invested heavily in landed wealth. For example, despite exhibiting impressive liquidation capabilities to generate large quantities of cash in their wills previously, drapers and goldsmiths, when examined comparatively, are found to have emphasized immovable property to a greater degree than might have been expected. With rankings of fourth for goldsmiths and seventh for drapers in terms of landed assets, these particular individuals seem to have actively possessed and perhaps consciously invested in such property. Indeed, illustrative exemplars are not difficult to locate, as in the case of Robert Fenrother, a London goldsmith, whose will, whilst somewhat lacking in movable possessions and bequeathing only £66 13s. 4d. in cash, includes an extensive list of his landed assets. For instance, Fenrother owned a messuage in Silver Street in London, lands and tenements in Surrey, Hertfordshire and Middlesex, as well as the manors of Mawnds in Essex and Notting Barnes in Middlesex.[50] Similarly, the draper and chronicler, Robert Fabyan, was in possession of seven messuages and a tenement within the city of London in 1513, premises worth £40 per year, but bequeathed only £5 17s. 7d. in cash in his will registered in the same year.[51]

Interestingly, the traditional conception of the cash-rich merchant also finds traction as, along with several other occupational categories, including fishmongers, woolmen and tailors, merchants rank highest in terms of pecuniary assets discernible from their wills. Whilst such cash bequests could be drawn from a variety of sources, as discussed previously, this nevertheless indicates their ability to liquidate assets and produce substantial amounts of cash, presumably reflecting their engagement with the commercial sphere, perhaps in terms of the buying and selling of goods, or else the provision of credit to others. Indeed, this can be

[50] PROB 11/21/335.
[51] 'Inquisitions: Henry VIII (part 1 of 3)', in G. S. Fry (ed.), *Abstracts of Inquisitiones Post Mortem for the City of London: Part 1* (London, 1896), pp. 28-43. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/abstract/no1/pp28-43 [accessed 14/03/2018]; PROB 11/17/420.

expanded even further if one examines the three major mercantile descriptors listed within table 5.4, namely mercers, merchants and Calais staple merchants. The overall emphasis upon easily exchangeable or traded assets becomes clear, as all three of these occupational descriptors rank highest either in cash or in movables. With a ranking of fifth (£896 8s. 7d.) for mercers and third (£1,430 15s.) for staple merchants in terms of movable assets, coupled with a similar fourth place ranking for cash for merchants (£421 19s. 10d.), the commercial priorities of these individuals are strongly apparent. Perhaps most interesting of all, these three mercantile categories rank lowest in terms of landed assets, exhibiting comparatively smaller averages. For example, staple merchants possessed on average landed property worth only £15 14s. 10d., a total far removed from their other comparable wealth assessments. It would seem therefore, that mercantile individuals did indeed invest in landed assets, but that this should not be overstated, as their interests in movable wealth still dominated. As such, this unique ranking system has revealed on some level the asset priorities for different categories of staple individuals, irrespective of actual assessment totals.

5.3 Land and Buildings: Reconstructing the Immovable Assets of Staple Individuals.

Having outlined the broad-spectrum patterns relating to measures of wealth, the notion of 'immovables' and 'movables' and the ways in which such assets manifested within the possession of the Westminster staple group remains to be explored. As such the following sections will examine these categories of property, beginning with 'immovables', which were broadly defined as inalienable possessions, typically referring to land and buildings.[52] In seeking to collate landed property however, certain methodological constraints must be explained. Indeed, owing to the nature of the sources available for property analysis, quantitative and qualitative records of such immovable assets are discernible, with varying uses

[52] M. C. Howell, *Commerce Before Capitalism in Europe, 1300-1600* (New York, 2010), p. 50.

available for each. In relation to this analysis therefore, quantitative records of immovable assets refer to those sources which provide actual amounts of landed assets, such as the number of manors, acres or messuages in the possession of a particular individual. In contrast to this, qualitative records, such as wills, are much less statistically detailed, often only vaguely referring to 'lands and tenements' in a certain county.[53] Beginning with quantitative analysis therefore, extents for debt and Inquisitions *Post Mortem* provide specific references to the property assets of 441 staple individuals, as shown in table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 Individuals with Quantitative Records of Property Assets.

Individuals with Quantitative Landed Property (Extents for Debt)	**Individuals with Quantitative Landed Property (Inquisitions *Post Mortem*)**	**Total Individuals with Quantitative Landed Property**
373	68	441

Quantitative analysis produces broad spectrum patterns relating to a variety of property holdings. Indeed, there are twenty-seven different types of property discernible in the records, ranging from the proportionally common manors, acres and messuages, to the comparatively rare saltcotes, granaries and castles in the possession of the 441 staple individuals under study. As an example, the quantifiable assets of Thomas Skopham, a mercer, comprised three tenements adjoined by three gardens, with a barn, an orchard and a close in Southwark, Surrey in 1529.[54] Given the vast quantity of data extrapolated from the extents for debt and the Inquisitions *Post Mortem* therefore, this analysis will focus upon the most common types of landed property to construct a basic archetype for typical property portfolios. As such table 5.6

[53] This particular limitation of wills is noted in J. M. Jennings, 'The Distribution of Landed Wealth in the Wills of London Merchants 1400-1450', *Medieval Studies*, 39 (1977), p. 263.
[54] C 131/110/30.

contains the basic statistics relating to the quantities and proportional ownership of the most common property types across differing categories of individuals.

Table 5.6 Most Common Types of Landed Property (25 or More in Total).

Property Typing	Total	Number of Individuals with Property Typing	Individual Average
Acres	209,531	254	824.9
Messuages	3,923	302	13.0
Bovates	780	12	65.0
Manors	694.57	181	3.8
Gardens	372	60	6.2
Tenements	345.75	60	5.8
Cottages	311	37	8.4
Virgates	244.5	11	22.2
Tofts	226	18	12.6
Mills	72	29	2.5
Carucates	47	6	7.8
Crofts	32	11	2.9
Burgages	27	4	6.8
Barns	25	9	2.1

In examining table 5.6, somewhat unsurprisingly, acreages are revealed to have been the most commonly owned type of landed property, by some margin. Indeed, the 209,531 acres discernible are found to have been in the possession of just 254 individuals, producing an impressive individual average of 824.9 acres per person. Whilst such an average might seem erroneously large, some of these individuals did indeed possess impressive acreages, as in the case of John Zouche, a lord with a total of 10,900 acres recorded in a single extent for debt in 1494.[55] Indeed, although relating to the most basic measurement of land, the acre, such

[55] C 131/83/18.

statistics clearly demonstrate the substantial landholdings characteristic of many of the staple individuals under study. This possession of vast tracts of land is matched by the ownership of buildings, as, for example, the 3,923 messuages discernible within the records under study are divided between 302 individuals, ranging from the statistically dominant one hundred messuages in the possession of Thomas Clifford, esquire, to the singular messuage of Martin Harrington, an inn holder from Ware in Hertfordshire.[56] Similarly, other potentially habitable buildings, such as cottages and tenements are also well-represented, with totals of 311 and 345.75 respectively. Although the living space provided by such assets was undoubtedly a necessity for certain people, it is intriguing to note that the majority of staple individuals were in possession of more than one such property, with, for example, averages of 8.4 cottages and 13.0 messuages per person. Indeed, John Salmon, a Southampton merchant, owned eight messuages within the same town in 1522, whilst James Darell, a gentleman, was in possession of nine messuages and ten cottages across various Kent parishes.[57] Such a pattern therefore, would seem to suggest that the basic living functions provided by these properties were not the primary reason for their acquisition. Evidently, these particular staple individuals possessed the means to actively accumulate substantial quantities of such properties, presumably for commercial or investment purposes. A prime example are the recorded assets of William Buck, a merchant tailor of London, who possessed a capital messuage, presumably his own residence, but also four tenements in the parish St. Mary Aldermanbury, rented out to a shearman, a scrivener, a yeoman and also a 'singing man' named Thomas.[58] For Buck, conscious investment in rentable properties, in the capital no less, clearly formed an important part of his

[56] C 131/104/25; C 131/109/19.
[57] C 131/105/26; C 131/261/19
[58] 'Inquisitions: Henry VIII (part 2 of 3)', in G. S. Fry (ed.), *Abstracts of Inquisitiones Post Mortem for the City of London: Part 1* (London, 1896), pp. 43-60. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/abstract/no1/pp43-60 [accessed 21/02/2018].

business, whereby his occupational activity as a merchant tailor was perhaps complemented or bolstered by his role as an urban landlord.

Continuing with this notion of the specifically focused property portfolio, gardens also appear prominently, often in conjunctions with the habitable assets described above. Whilst such a pattern might initially seem to reflect the simple, practical need to grow foodstuffs to supplement one's diet, the proportional spread of such possessions seems to indicate something else. With 372 gardens discernible, and an average per person of 6.2, there is a suggestion of a leisure or luxury dimension to the property holdings of these individuals, perhaps indicating that their typical property portfolios included more up-market dwellings, particularly when situated in an urban setting. For example, an Inquisition *Post Mortem* inventorying the properties of Nicholas Alwyn, listed his possession of nine messuages and ten gardens in Bermondsey Street, lying within Southwark, the notorious playground of wealthy Londoners.[59] Such an assumption is particularly emphasized when one considers the kinds of individuals in possession of multiple urban gardens, with knights, esquires, gentlemen, mercers and goldsmiths dominating in terms of their ownership, effectively reinforcing the notion of these properties as fashionable assets for prosperous individuals. For example, forty-two gardens were owned by goldsmiths, who possessed an average of 8.2 gardens per person, perfectly exemplified by the assets of Henry Mundy, a goldsmith with eight discernible gardens listed in an extent for debt of 1519.[60]

Returning to table 5.6, manors are also well represented, with 694.57 such properties in the possession of 181 individuals, producing an impressive individual average of almost four

[59] 'Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, Henry VII, Appendix I: 1122-1171', in C. Flower, M. C. B. Dawes and A. C. Wood (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 3, Henry VII* (London, 1955), pp. 562-586. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol3/pp562-586 [accessed 19/07/2018]; 'The Borough of Southwark: Introduction', in H. E. Malden (ed.), *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 4* (London, 1912), pp. 125-135. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/surrey/vol4/pp125-135 [accessed 19/07/2018].
[60] C 131/103/16.

manors per person. Given that manors are typically associated with provincial gentility and possessed by those individuals with power and influence over others,[61] such statistics clearly demonstrate something of the socio-economic clout of many of these staple individuals. Indeed, whilst manorial ownership was by no means universal, it was evidently a characteristic for a statistically significant proportion of these individuals, likely representative of the substantial genteel contingent of the staple cohort, something previously discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis. For example, Adrian Fortescu, an esquire residing in Stonor, Oxfordshire, was in possession of no less than thirteen manors across seven counties, whilst Thomas Palmer, a gentleman from Kent, owned a distinctly archetypal total of four manors when inventoried after his death in 1506.[62] Evidently, the ownership of one or more manors was somewhat typical, potentially indicating a provincial component to the property portfolios of some of these individuals. Indeed, in considering such rural connotations of manorial assets, the simpler agrarian holdings present within the table, such as crofts, tofts and barns, appear to reinforce this, suggesting that property investment outside of the urban sphere was also a noticeable aspect of these portfolios. However, it must be acknowledged that the proportional spread of these particular landed assets is far less prolific. For instance, crofts, landholdings specifically designed for small-scale food production,[63] occur in relation to just eleven individuals, with an individual average of 2.9, whilst barns appear in the inventories of only nine staple individuals, suggesting that humbler agricultural assets were proportionally uncommon. Indeed, such a pattern is perhaps suggestive of something of a dichotomy in landed investment within the staple: on the one hand, an urbanised elite, with a propertied emphasis

[61] C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), p. 353.
[62] C 131/90/6; C 131/95/1; C 131/89/9; 'Inquisitions *Post Mortem*, Henry VII, Entries 401-450', in C. Flower, M. C. B. Dawes and A. C. Wood (eds.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 3, Henry VII* (London, 1955), pp. 250-273. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol3/pp250-273 [accessed 22/02/2018].
[63] J. Richardson, *The Local Historian's Encyclopedia* (New Barnet, 1986), p. 12.

which reflected this, and on the other a strongly perceptible genteel contingent who continued to set store by the manorial estate.

Whilst quantitative analysis has revealed some of the general trends relating to the possession of immovables, qualitative analysis can also be employed when investigating certain property types which suffer from a paucity of numerical detail. In selecting a demonstrative case study therefore, 'sites of commerce' prove particularly pertinent, with shops, inns and brew houses all appearing under the ownership of the individuals under study, but often with little quantitative description. Indeed, although certain individuals provide particularly detailed descriptions of their occupational assets, such as Edmund Not, fishmonger and citizen of London, who owned a brew house called 'the Hart's Horn' when he made his will in 1542,[64] it was comparatively rare for individuals to outline precisely the number of shops, warehouses or other such properties they possessed, often preferring to only vaguely mention them in passing. For instance, John Mason, a London grocer, merely refers to 'lands and tenements' within the city in his will of July 1498, preventing any further analysis into exactly what types of property he owned.[65] Indeed on occasion, such descriptions of propertied assets can be especially frustrating, as in the case of William Wilkinson, a mercer, whose will of 1543 does indeed refer to his possession of commercial sites, having left all his 'tenements with shops, cellars and solars' in London to his wife Joan, but ultimately failing to enumerate the actual quantities.[66] As a result, analytical emphasis is far more effective when focused upon the qualitative spread of these particular properties and the ownership differences between various categories of individuals, rather than simple quantitative analysis based only upon numbers of buildings (table 5.7).

[64] PROB 11/29/307.
[65] PROB 11/11/485.
[66] PROB 11/29/489.

Table 5.7 Number of Staple Individuals in Possession of Different Types of 'Sites of Commerce'.

Descriptors	Shop	Warehouse	Brew House	Cellar	Solar	Wharf	Water Mill	Mill	Wind Mill	Fulling Mill	Corn Mill	Inn	Millhouse	Dyehouse	Quay
Merchants	1				1	1	1								
Mercers	4	1		3	4							1			
Haberdashers															
Gentlemen	1		4	1		1	8	2			1	1			
Sons				1			2	4	1			1			
Grocers	1	2		1	1							1			
Merchant Tailors	3	2	1	1						1					
Scriveners			1			1									
Goldsmiths	3				1					1		1			
Esquires							5	5	2	1					
Knights	1			2			2	3		1					1
Merchants of the Calais Staple	2						1		1						
Widow	1	1						1							
Cloth Makers										1					
Lords							1								
Leather Sellers												1			
Brewers			1												
Drapers	1	1			1			3				1		1	
Pewterers			1			1									
Fishmongers	1		1			2									
Salters								1					1		
Cloth Workers	1			1	1							1			
Bakers				1	1			1							
Shoe Makers															1
Total Individuals	**19**	**7**	**9**	**11**	**9**	**6**	**16**	**17**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**8**	**1**	**1**	**2**

In examining table 5.7 above, certain patterns are to be expected, such as the fact that the ownership of shops seems to proliferate, particularly among the retailers of finished products, with mercers, merchant tailors and goldsmiths all yielding multiple individuals in possession of such sites of commerce. For example, an extent for debt issued in 1521 to inventory the assets of one Lancelot Latten, a Yorkshire goldsmith, described his possession of a shop which was found to contain 'thirteen and a half yards of linen' and, rather tantalisingly, 'chests of things.'[67] Similarly, the Exeter mercer, William French, possessed a shop with solars above it, worth 19s. per year in 1499.[68] Furthermore, it was not only externally produced documents which make note of such properties, with many occupational will-makers electing to specifically mention their shop-owning status. For example, Henry Clitheroe, a merchant tailor who left behind a will in 1545, mentions in especial detail his 'two shops...set, lying and being in the parish of St. Mary Woolchurch' and his decisions regarding their devolution, contrasting with his comparatively vague reference to his other landed assets, merely alluding to 'messuages, lands and tenements in the city of London and elsewhere in the realm of England.'[69] Although it could be argued that this apparent commercial emphasis within Henry's will was in fact simply representative of space constraints, perhaps because his other properties were seemingly too innumerable to mention individually, it is nevertheless crucial to note that his bequest of these shops was definitively separated from his other gifts of landed assets. Indeed, given the rarity with which such specifically commercial buildings were mentioned, one could argue that when they do appear within individual wills, it is potentially representative of their particular commercial importance to their owners, and, in the case of Clitheroe, perhaps as a way of emphasizing his own occupational identity.

[67] C 131/264/11.
[68] C 131/84/19.
[69] PROB 11/30/502.

Whilst expected occupational correlations are apparent, such as the fact that one of the owners of the wharves discernible in the documentation was the fishmonger Thomas Kneseworth, and the only commercial property found in the possession of a brewer, Edmund Hudson, was indeed a brew house, it is also pertinent to note that these buildings were by no means solely limited to specific occupations.[70] Indeed, the statistics in table 5.7 do suggest that these individuals, despite their application of a particular occupational descriptor, engaged in various other commercial pursuits. For instance, in looking at the spread of occupational buildings, drapers seem to have possessed the greatest diversity of commercial and industrial properties, lacking only wharves and brew houses from their portfolios. For instance, the draper William Dolphin owned and bequeathed an inn called the 'Sign of the Cock' in his will of 1556, indicating a level of occupational diversity in his propertied investments.[71] A particularly demonstrative example is that of Thomas Perpoynt, a draper who resided in London but who possessed, among other things, a mill in Greenwich, as well as a dye house in Coggeshall in Essex, strongly suggesting that he actively engaged with the production of textiles at all levels of the industry, not simply the sale of the finished product.[72] Although these examples of property ownership seem to indicate a prominent degree of occupational crossover, it is crucial to recognise that these properties could also be investments opportunities, pure and simple. Indeed, this is particularly well demonstrated in the detailed extent for debt concerning the court-scrivener, John Gerrard, who is revealed to have owned a brew house, called 'Le High Berebrewhouse', which contained all manner of brewing equipment, such as yeast tubs, a cleansing float and even a complete horse-mill, presumably for grinding the brewing grain.[73] Whilst this initially seems to suggest that John Gerrard dabbled in the brewing industry himself, in addition to his scribal duties, the extent for debt later revealed that Gerrard had in fact leased

[70] PROB 11/17/410; PROB 11/22/452.
[71] PROB 11/39/79.
[72] PROB 11/30/159.
[73] C 131/101/37.

the property to one John Scragge, who had a tenancy agreement of sixty-six years.[74] Evidently it was Scragge who actually worked as a brewer, with John Gerrard simply collecting the rent on the brew house, which was clearly a lucrative possession, but ultimately not one he himself employed industrially.

Whilst the dominance of individuals described in occupational terms is clearly apparent with regards to many of these sites of commerce, social and familial descriptors do appear on occasion. For example, the knight, John Brugge, owned a quay within the parish of St. Dunstan in the East, whilst the widow, Margaret Capell made mention of her two shops situated on Tawny Street in London.[75] However, it must be acknowledged that both of these exemplars are still coloured by the occupational sphere, as Brugge was in fact a knighted draper, whilst Margaret had previously been married to one.[76] With this in mind therefore, perhaps one of the most interesting patterns with regards to the social possession of commercially-orientated premises, is the apparent genteel dominance in the ownership of mills. Indeed, five different varieties of mill are discernible within the documentation, with water mills proving the most proportionally common. Furthermore, when examined statistically, approximately seventy-six per cent of the individuals recorded in possession of a mill of some description are described socially, with knights, esquires and gentlemen possessing the lion's share. Whilst such a pattern should not be overstressed, considering mills were by no means the universal preserve of the genteel elite, it is nevertheless indicative of the types of property typically favoured by these socially described individuals. Indeed, although not always the case, many of these mills were rurally-based, often situated on their own estates or else within small villages and settlements. For example, Henry Middleton, a Surrey-based gentleman, owned a single water mill on his

[74] C 131/101/3.
[75] PROB 11/23/358; PROB 11/19/456.
[76] For reference to Brugge's occupational status see: A. P. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Henry III-1908* (London, 1908), p. 340; for Margaret's husband, William Capell, see: PROB 11/18/292.

estate in Egham, whilst the knight Richard Guildford was in possession of two fulling mills, alongside extensive acreages and pasture in the rural parishes of Frittenden and Staplehurst in Kent, when inventoried in March 1505.[77] Perhaps therefore, some kind of divide did exist between rural and urban property holding, whereby mercantile individuals favoured those propertied markers of the urban scene, such as shops, solars and warehouses, whilst their genteel counterparts tended to possess those sites of commerce typically associated with a more provincial existence, such as wind and water mills.

5.4 Goods and Movables: What's in the Shed?

Having examined the patterns associated with the possession of immovable property, it remains to explore the movable assets belonging to these staple individuals. Such movables include a wide variety of items, usually personal in nature and ranging from beds and furniture to smaller valuables, such as jewellery and silver plate. For example, the will of a shearman, Reynold Eglisfield, contained an assortment of movable possessions, including a black velvet doublet, a best carpet and six silver spoons.[78] In similar fashion, the mercer, William Bromewell, bequeathed valuables which included a silver chalice, a gold ring set with a sapphire, as well as £100 in plate.[79] As demonstrated in the above examples, the movables recorded within wills are typically representative of an individual's most treasured or valuable items, both in a fiscal and a sentimental sense. By contrast, our other major source of movable goods, the inventories attached to extents for debts, typically yield more mundane or ordinary assets for analysis, owing to the previously discussed functions of such documents. For example, Mathew Swayne, a staple merchant, was recorded in possession of household movables including two cupboards and three bedsteads, but little else, when his residence in Northampton was inventoried in

[77] C 131/87/22.
[78] PROB 11/21/129.
[79] PROB 11/27/23.

1507.[80]As such, inventories of movables attached to extents for debt can provide some important balance when analysing and collating the movable assets of staple individuals, despite the fact that they are far less numerically prevalent than their testamentary counterparts.

However, there are important limitations to acknowledge when extracting the personal possessions listed in wills. It is crucial to understand that testamentary bequests of movables can on occasion be misleading. Indeed, it is common in these wills for the testators to bequeath black gowns, often in seemingly disproportionate numbers. For example, the mercer Nicholas Stathum, who registered his will in 1538 seems to have particularly favoured such garb, as he bequeathed one hundred black gowns to various friends and family.[81] However, this is deceptive. Stathum did not actually have all of these gowns hanging in his wardrobe but instead included them in his will with the intention that they be specially made for his nearest and dearest as a way of remembering him. Therefore, these bequests of black gowns had a dual function, not only indicating a will-maker's trusted inner circle, but also acting akin to a kind of invitation to the testator's funeral, presumably with the assumption that the recipient would dutifully don the bequeathed black garb as a sign of respect and mourning at the passing of the testator. Although, some testators do explicitly outline the differences between these tokens of remembrance which as yet do not exist, and those items actually owned by the testator, some do not, and so caution is required when collating the personal possessions in wills. Indeed, it is not only black gowns which reflect this particular testamentary quirk: gold rings were also popular *post mortem* commissions. An example of this is found in the testament of Martin Bowes, a goldsmith, who was evidently keen that his beneficiaries not only remembered him when they wore the ring specially made for them, but also that death was never far away. Indeed, Martin bequeathed thirty-seven gold rings to be made after his death and given to his

[80] C 131/91/12.
[81] PROB 11/27/344.

friends, each one inscribed with a death's head and the words 'remember the end.'[82] As such this subsequent analysis will omit these particular kinds of bequests, so as to produce a much more accurate picture of a testator's actual possessions at the time of their death (table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Movables Found within Wills and Extents for Debt.

Total Wills with Movables	Total Extents for Debt with Movables	Total Records with Movables	Total Quantifiable Movables
324	47	371	12,079

As shown in table 5.8, a total of 371 records include explicit mention of movables in the documentation under study, the majority of which have been extrapolated from wills, which yield 324 records, compared to the forty-seven extents for debt with movable assets. Collating the quantifiable movable assets within these records produces a total of 12,079 objects, including forty-eight individually discernible books, eighty-nine cushions, 421 items of bedding and 225 horses, to name but a few. Given the large quantity of data therefore, the statistics relating only to the most commonly appearing types of movable items have been collated in the table below. In this way, something of the archetypal or typical trends relating to the possession of movables can be analysed, as well as providing a tantalising glimpse of individual lifestyles.

[82] PROB 11/49/14.

Table 5.9 Percentage Proportions of Commonly Occurring Items Extracted from Wills and Extents for Debt (Possessed by 10 or More Individuals).

Descriptor	Total Quantifiable Items	Percentage of Occupational Individuals	Percentage of Social Individuals	Percentage of Familial Individuals
Clothing	1,394	32.6	26.3	50.0
Silver/Gilt Tableware	1,047	28.2	28.0	41.0
Plain Kitchenware	645	13.3	14.2	22.7
Bedding	421	11.5	19.4	18.1
Beds	230	9.3	18.3	22.7
Jewellery	163	13.0	15.4	31.8
Pastoral Animals	6,766	4.0	30.3	4.5
Plate	-	6.5	23.4	18.2
Horses	225	2.8	14.9	4.5
Cloths/Woollens/Textiles	112	10.2	0.6	4.5
Cushions	89	1.2	4.0	0.0
Books	48	4.6	7.4	4.5
Chests/Coffers	45	3.7	6.9	9.1
Arable Products	-	2.8	8.0	0.0
Weapons/Armour	30	2.5	5.1	4.5
Tables	25	2.1	2.3	4.5
Craft Tools	25	5.6	1.7	0.0
Cupboards	16	1.5	2.9	0.0
Carpets	15	0.6	3.4	9.1
Towels	24	0.6	2.3	4.5
Jewels/Unworked Gold	2	2.2	3.4	13.6

Table 5.9 contains the statistics relating to those movables discernible in the possession of ten or more individuals. In addition to the numbers of quantifiable items, the table also outlines the proportional spread of these objects with regards to the social, occupational and familial

descriptors attached to their owners.[83] In examining the table therefore, certain movables are found to have been favoured by individuals from all three description categories. Particularly prominent among these is clothing, with 1,394 individually quantifiable garments discernible and emerging in the possessions of 32.6 per cent of occupational individuals, 26.3 per cent of socially described people and half of all familial individuals. As an exemplar, the fishmonger Richard Brayfeld left only clothing in terms of movables within his will of 1535, bequeathing a fox-fur gown, a best doublet and a best jacket.[84] Whilst such apparel is clearly unmatched in terms of statistical dominance, it is interesting to note that other luxury items also feature prominently across the board, specifically silver or gilt tableware, jewellery and plate, all of which appear in roughly comparable proportions. Indeed, silver or gilt tableware is almost as well represented as clothing, with proportions of 28.2 per cent, twenty-eight per cent and forty-one per cent for occupational, social and familial individuals respectively. The proliferation of these types of luxury items, which often have a combined social and cash value, suggests that they were indeed favoured as a means to convey the wealth and status of their owners, either through being worn on the body, or else ostentatiously displayed in the home in the form of plate and silverware. For example, the will of the draper William Bracebridge recorded his possession of a gold and diamond ring and £200 in plate when registered in 1499.[85] A particularly illustrative instance is found in the will of William Buk, a tailor, who bequeathed plate worth 100 marks, four silver and gilt standing cups and four dozen silver spoons engraved with his merchant's mark, clearly all of which were items he not only personally prized, but were highly visible representations of his elevated status.[86] As such, the overall prevalence of these particular kinds of movables not only demonstrates that many of these individuals were

[83] As has been outlined previously in this chapter and in chapter two, official descriptors have been omitted here for two reasons: firstly because of their often impermanent nature and secondly because they will be explored separately and in detail in chapter six.
[84] PROB 11/25/399.
[85] PROB 11/11/687.
[86] PROB 11/12/299.

indeed exceptionally wealthy, with the possessions to match their elevated socio-economic status, but that they were keen to outwardly emphasize this, a desire ultimately discernible regardless of individual demarcation.

Outside of these especially prominent items, other objects are also discernible as consistently appearing across the board, although in fewer quantities and lesser proportions. Furniture and furnishings are also largely proportionally consistent, with carpets, beds, towels, tables and other such items all appearing in the possession of these individuals. For instance, beds, already markers of status and with 230 individually quantifiable examples discernible, are also prominent and are commonly of the feathered variety, with many individuals recorded in possession of more than one. For instance, the grocer Thomas Babham bequeathed two featherbeds in his will of 1490, whilst Richard Fowler, a knight, made mention of no less than five featherbeds in his will, replete with bolsters, hangings and sheets, as well as two headboards, one painted with trees and the other with owls.[87] Furthermore, other household items also feature prominently, most noticeably books, seemingly indicating a certain degree of education on the part of these individuals. Although discernible in less than ten percent of the possessions of occupational, social and familial individuals, these books are nevertheless worthy of comment, not least because of the forty-eight quantifiable examples discernible. Indeed, the books noticeable within these sources are an eclectic and fascinating bibliography in themselves. Although many are left untitled, as in the case of the will of Thomas Gibson, which merely recorded his bequest of 'books' upon his death in 1562, or Henry Fincham, whose inventoried goods included an intriguingly described 'French book', other individuals demonstrate far more literary concern.[88] A prime example is that of John Byglon, merchant tailor of London, whose bibliographical possessions reveal him to have owned a book of fables,

[87] PROB 11/8/491; PROB 11/22/650.
[88] PROB 11/45/187; C 131/87/2.

a book entitled *The Legends of the Saints*, as well as a copy of *The Canterbury Tales*.[89] Furthermore, although seemingly entirely mundane on their own, the prevalence of cushions and tables can also be connected to this, as items necessarily involved in such literate pursuits. Indeed, our resident book-worm, John Byglon, also possessed trestle tables, four cushions, a couch-bed, as well as a pair of playing tables, clearly demonstrating something of the comfortable surroundings within Byglon's residence.[90]

Having outlined the proportionally dominant or consistent items, attention can be turned to objects seemingly specific to particular categories of individuals. In looking at the objects typically favoured only by occupational individuals, craft tools, materials and textiles easily come to the fore. Indeed, 5.6 per cent of occupationally described individuals owned craft tools, compared with just 1.7 per cent of socially defined individuals. What is more, such items do not even appear in familial wills or extents for debt, further reinforcing their connection and possessionally archetypal nature for occupational individuals. Whilst such objects, utilised in the application of an individual's trade, might seem on occasion rather ordinary or unsurprising, as in the case of the four pairs of shears owned by the shearman Reynold Eglisfield,[91] their importance should not be overlooked. In fact, as has been cautioned by other scholars,[92] it is crucial to avoid becoming magpie-like in our focus upon those items deemed the most expensive or unusual, and ensure that other, more ordinary objects, such as craft tools and materials, receive equal attention. Indeed, in actually examining these objects, their relative importance to their occupational owners becomes immediately evident. For instance, it is sometimes the case that these tools, when they do appear, were the only movables bequeathed in a mercantile individual's will, as in the examples of Richard Tailor, a London pewterer,

[89] C 131/102/5.
[90] C 131/102/5.
[91] PROB 11/21/129.
[92] Smail, *Legal Plunder*, p. 35.

whose 'tools and moulds' relating to his profession were the only items recorded in his will of September 1535, and John Lee, a goldsmith, who bequeathed goldsmithing tools from his shop in London and nothing else.[93] Furthermore, some of these craft tools appear to have been somewhat unique or expensive, as in the case of the goldsmith Thomas Lupset, who bequeathed a whole range of practical items, including a spoon hammer, silver pairs of balances and a pile of weights, but also moulds of the twelve apostles.[94] Evidently therefore, practical movables were valued by occupationally-engaged individuals, particularly considering the relative frequency with which they were bequeathed in wills. Indeed, although not listed amongst the most commonly appearing movables in table 5.9, certain items are nevertheless especially illustrative of this particular pattern. For instance, weighing scales, brewing equipment and ships also feature in the wills and inventories of these people. Especially interesting are the several examples of named vessels discernible, as in the case of Thomas Wynnam, a London draper who owned a ship called the 'Barkara', and also the staple merchant George Cely, who bequeathed his ship called the 'Margaret Cely' to his brother.[95] Even more tellingly, John Mason, a grocer, was recorded in possession of 'a ship chest bound with iron', demonstrating not only its practical use in ocean-going activities, but by extension, Mason's involvement in overseas trade.[96]

In looking at the movables in possession of those individuals who are described socially, an emphasis upon arable products, animals and also horses is discernible. Indeed, eight per cent of individuals with a social descriptor are in possession of arable products, such as the oats, wheat and peas discernible in the testament of Ambrose Dauntesey, a Wiltshire esquire, or the quarter of barley bequeathed by the knight Edmund Walsingham in his will of 1549.[97] By

[93] PROB 11/25/386; PROB 11/13/616; for more on the Cely family see: A. Hanham, *The Celys and their World: an English Merchant Family of the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985).
[94] PROB 11/21/57.
[95] PROB 11/12/83; PROB 11/11/17.
[96] PROB 11/11/485.
[97] PROB 11/38/31; PROB 11/33/405.

contrast such arable items occur in the possession of just 2.8 per cent of occupationally described individuals, and not at all for those individuals with familial descriptors. This emphasis upon rural or agricultural movables is particularly noticeable with regards to the pastoral animals discernible, with an impressive thirty per cent of socially defined individuals owning such items. For example, the gentlemen Edmund Bowett was found to be in possession of various cows, oxen, pigs and chickens when inventoried in 1528, whilst Edward Sapcote, a knight, bequeathed twenty cows and a bull in his will of 1547.[98] Such a pattern seems to reinforce the traditional conception of these socially defined individuals as rural landowners, frequently in possession of those items strongly connected with the land and its cultivation. As was also discussed in chapters three and four, these would therefore seem to be their unique possessional markers of status, alongside the collective markers of wealth and status discernible for all categories of individuals.

Our final category of description, 'familial', is a rather smaller cohort with regards to those individuals discernible with movable possessions. Indeed, just twenty-two individuals yield relevant data for inclusion in this analysis, undoubtedly owing to the comparative rarity with which familial descriptors seem to have been applied within wills and extents for debt. Nevertheless, certain category-specific possessions are evident, such as the apparent emphasis upon jewels and unworked gold, with 13.6 per cent of these individuals owning such objects, especially considering just 3.4 and 2.2 per cent of socially and occupationally defined individuals possessed these items respectively. For example, the widow Elizabeth Skipwith bequeathed undefined loose jewels in her will of 1516.[99] Whilst such a pattern might seem unremarkable on its own, it should also be acknowledged that these familial individuals seem to have favoured items belonging to the body, such as jewellery and clothing, yielding truly

[98] C 131/109/18; PROB 11/32/106.
[99] PROB 11/18/429.

impressive percentage proportions (table 5.9). Indeed, it could perhaps be theorised therefore that these patterns were related to the concept of family heirlooms, particularly as many of these familial individuals were in fact widows, who would naturally act as care-takers of family wealth and status, conveying these movable treasures to the next generation. Whilst this is highly suppositional, the exemplar of Margaret Capell, a wealthy widow, is perhaps demonstrative, as she bequeathed sixteen items of jewellery in her will, most of which were described in precise, but distinctly impersonal terms, such as the 'gold chain with twenty-seven links' and the 'broken ring with a table diamond.'[100] However, Margaret's emotional attachment to a singular item of jewellery is clearly apparent, as she bequeathed to her daughter Paulet a ring with a table diamond in lozenge cut, to which she supplied an additional line of sentimental detail, describing it as 'the first ring her father gave me', revealing the emotive value that she, Margaret, placed upon this item, as it was likely a token of marriage or betrothal from her husband William and a truly treasured family possession.[101]

So far this analysis of movable property has demonstrated the varying patterns associated with the possession of such objects, uncovering a blend of practicality and luxury within the movable assets of these staple participants, as well as the items prized or emphasized by different categories of individuals. However, unlike the data relating to landed or cash wealth, which rarely provides further descriptive details, the movable property recorded in the documentation regularly includes illustrative descriptors for analysis. These descriptors, like the objects themselves, range from the mundane and practical, to the exotic and unusual. For example, John Cowper bequeathed several masers in his will, supplying identifying, proportional descriptors such as 'little', presumably for no other reason than to differentiate

[100] PROB 11/19/456.
[101] PROB 11/19/456; for more discussion on the uses of rings as matrimonial symbols see: R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 94-95.

between these similar items.[102] However, in contrast to this, the descriptors applied to the possessions of Elizabeth Warley seem all the more extravagant, such as her Turkish carpets, silver girdles, a 'gold fork for green ginger' and clothing of crimson velvet.[103] As such, examination of the descriptors attached to movable items, owing to the diversity in their application, can potentially provide further insight into these particular assets and, by extension, the personal priorities of the individuals who owned them.[104]

Table 5.10 Categories of Description Applied to Movables within Wills and Extents for Debt.

	Objects with Colour Descriptors	Objects with Material Descriptors	Objects with Proportional Descriptors	Objects with Geographical Descriptors	Objects with Miscellaneous Descriptors
Wills	1,060	1,363	115	21	126
Extents for Debt	38	402	71	13	143
Total	1,098	1,765	186	34	269

As demonstrated in the table above, the descriptors attached to items in wills and extents for debt can be broadly categorised into five approximate groupings, based upon their material, colour, proportions and geographical characteristics, with a final category for miscellaneous description.[105] As an example, the will of Leonard Johnson, a stockfishmonger, contained six

[102] PROB 11/21/547.
[103] PROB 11/24/83.
[104] This is briefly discussed in: C. M. Barron, 'The Will as Autobiography: The Case of Thomas Salter, Priest, Died November 1558', in M. Carlin and J. T. Rosenthal (eds.), *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron* (Croydon, 2017), p. 233, in which Barron notes that Thomas Salter's clothing was a personal priority, not because he had a lot of it, but because it was so meticulously described in his will.
[105] These categories have been inspired by the methodology employed in Smail, *Legal Plunder*, p. 71, to analyse the descriptors applied to the movable assets in inventories. However, the categories outlined in table 5.10 have been chosen in response to the sources used in this particular research and so differ from those employed in Smail's analysis.

descriptors applied to movable property, three of which referred to the material, two of which emphasized colour, and the final one a miscellaneous description of 'best', in reference to an item of gold jewellery.[106] In examining the general patterns of description contained in table 5.10 therefore, material descriptors are the most common, with 1,765 items described as such. Within this, there are forty-eight different kinds of material discernible from these descriptors in the records, ranging from pewter and iron to camel hair, crystal and chenille,[107] demonstrating not only the importance attached to the raw materials movables were produced from, but also the highly diverse and sometimes luxurious goods in the possession of these individuals. Given the sheer quantity of material descriptors therefore, a demonstrative case study can be extrapolated, utilising the statistics relating to the most commonly occurring materials, in this case, metals.

[106] PROB 11/29/288.
[107] Chenille was a kind of velvety cord used in the trimming and bordering of clothing and furniture, for more information see: "chenille, n.", in OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/31292?redirectedFrom=chenille#eid [accessed 22/03/2018].

Table 5.11 Metallic Descriptors Found in Relation to Movables.

Metal Descriptor	Total Objects	Number of Individuals (Extents for Debt)	Number of Individuals (Wills)	Total Individuals
Gold	101	0	47	47
Silver	803	4	112	116
Gilt	237	2	68	70
Bronze	1	0	1	1
Tin	1	1	0	1
Pewter	83	9	14	23
Brass	79	16	15	31
Copper	3	2	1	3
Lead	5	7	2	9
Iron	11	6	2	8
Latten	7	3	1	4

As shown in table 5.11, metal descriptors are particularly well represented. This is altogether unsurprising, given the nature of the objects commonly owned and bequeathed in table 5.9, with metallic items such as tableware, jewellery and plate, all featuring prominently. Particularly interesting however, is the proportional spread of specific metals, with, for example, 904 movables (51.2 per cent of those with material descriptors) described as being wrought from precious metals, with 101 and 803 descriptors of gold and silver items found in the ownership of forty-seven and 116 individuals respectively. Interestingly, gold, which traditionally carries positive connotations of wealth and value and was relatively more precious in the medieval period than today,[108] is often found in the possession of socially-elevated individuals. As an illustrative exemplar, Christopher Willoughby, a knight, made especial

[108] M. Campbell, 'Gold, Silver and Precious Stones', in J. Blair and N. Ramsay (eds.), *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London, 1991), p. 165.

mention of his evidently prized 'great chain of gold' in his will, which one can imagine hanging from his neck in life as an ostentatious display of wealth and status.[109] Similarly, silver objects also routinely occur within the recorded possessions of elevated social or economic groupings, with knights (sixteen), mercers (fifteen) and also drapers (eleven), most commonly owning such items. A prime example is Walter Mower, a draper whose will is positively packed with silver trinkets, including twenty-four silver spoons, two silver goblets, two silver salters and a silver cup decorated with a garland.[110] Returning to the precious metals in table 5.11, gilt, a descriptor usually referring to a thin layer of gold-coating on an object,[111] also features regularly, with a total of 237 objects described thus, belonging to seventy different individuals. When contrasted with descriptions of less expensive metals however, the wealth and status of these individuals comes to the fore once more. Indeed, descriptors for basic metals, such as lead, iron and tin, all feature rather more rarely. For instance, movables wrought from iron, a comparatively inexpensive metal, appear among the possessions on just eight staple individuals. Similarly, pewter and lead, both metal alloys with little intrinsic value,[112] account for only 4.7 per cent and 0.3 per cent of metallic objects discernible. Although such proportions should not be taken too far, as it is far too simplistic to make assumptions concerning the overall wealth of individuals based only upon the application of material descriptors, this simple examination of metallic objects nevertheless demonstrates something of the socio-economic importance attached to certain objects based upon their physical characteristics.

[109] PROB 11/11/675; a strikingly similar incidence is found in the will of Ralph Shirley III, who demonstrated his taste for the grandiose with a chain of solid gold just for his burial, which was worth £76, see: C. Carpenter, 'The Fifteenth-Century English Gentry and their Estates', in M. Jones (ed.), *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe* (Gloucester, 1986), p. 51.
[110] PROB 11/17/600.
[111] See: "gilt, n.1", OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/78318?result=1&rskey=Z2K6vd& [accessed 05/03/2018].
[112] R. F. Homer, 'Tin, Lead and Pewter', in J. Blair and N. Ramsay (eds.), *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London, 1991), p. 77.

Returning to table 5.10, descriptions of colour emerge as the second most common category, with 1,098 objects described as such in the documentation. A total of twenty different colour descriptors are discernible, usually attached to fabric or clothing items, such as the 'hanging of green say'[113] in the possession of John Harris, a London grocer, and the 'four pieces of crimson cloth' at the residence of the Suffolk mercer, Walter Man.[114] Given the diversity of colours discernible therefore, including, for example, descriptors of crimson, sorrel, orange and violet, it is analytically pertinent to group these various shades together in terms of 'collective hues.'

Table 5.12 Incidences of Collective Hues.[115]

	Number of Colour Descriptors	Total Incidences of Collective Hue
Browns	6	167
Greys	4	13
Reds	3	31
Yellows	2	5
Purples	1	18
Oranges	1	1
Greens	1	30
Blues	1	14
Blacks	1	263
Whites	1	577

[113] 'Say' was a light woollen fabric used in curtains and bedding in this period and often green in colour. For a fuller description see: OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/171586?rskey=3KfQAc&result=1#eid [accessed 08/03/2018].
[114] C 131/103/1; C 131/89/8.
[115] Categorisation of some of the more obscure or period-specific colours has been undertaken using definitions and descriptions within the Oxford English Dictionary. These are: 'Tawny', meaning a composite colour of brown, OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198256?rskey=KvbdFw&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, [accessed 16/03/2018]; 'Bay', a reddish brown colour used in reference to horses, OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/16391?rskey=Kgmxdw&result=9&isAdvanced=false#eid; 'Sorrel', a chestnut or reddish brown colour used in reference to horses, OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184927?rskey=9UMkjF&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid; 'Fawn-colour', a light yellowish brown, OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/68721?redirectedFrom=fawn+colour#eid4522594; 'Crane-colour', an ashy grey colour, OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43797?redirectedFrom=crane+colour#eid7976462; 'Dun', a light yellow or sandy colour used in reference to horses, OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/58439#eid6112941 [accessed 16/03/2018].

As shown in table 5.12, monochromatic tones seem to have been favoured, especially as white is revealed to have been the most prolific colour descriptor, appearing in relation to a total of 577 movables within the documentation and accounting for 52.8 per cent of colour descriptors. Examples include the 'great, white jug' bequeathed by Roger Cholmeley, or the two 'vestments of white damask' recorded in the will of John Brugge.[116] This penchant for white hues is followed by descriptions of black objects, with 263 objects discernible, such as the 'two gold rings, engraved in black enamel' given in the will of the mercer William Aleyn.[117] Moving away from the dominance of white and black objects however, other colours nevertheless yield multiple descriptors in the documentation, potentially indicating something of popular taste for the particular individuals under study, despite appearing in relation to far fewer objects overall. Of these, brown colours are shown to have been especially diversely represented, with six different shades discernible, including descriptors of 'tawny', 'bay' and 'fawn', perhaps reflecting textile changes in the later fifteenth century, when, for instance, tawny-coloured fabrics and materials became especially popular.[118] Brighter colours are also fairly commonplace, such as reds and greens, with thirty-one and thirty objects described as thus respectively, suggesting not only a degree of vibrancy in colour choices outside of the muted tones described above, but also diversity in individual taste. Indeed, it was not unusual for an individual to possess a wide range of coloured items, as in the example of the gowns of John Maynwaring, a knight whose will recorded his ownership of a black velvet gown, a damask gown of crane-colour, a green velvet jacket and a scarlet gabardine.[119]

[116] PROB 11/48/205; PROB 11/23/358.
[117] PROB 11/19/348.
[118] A. F. Sutton, 'Order and Fashions in Clothes: The King, His Household, and the City of London at the End of the Fifteenth Century', *Textile History*, 22, 2 (1991), p. 267.
[119] PROB 11/20/7; in this period a gabardine was a loose upper garment, usually of coarse material, see: OED Online, URL: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/75918?redirectedFrom=gaberdine#eid [accessed 16/03/2018].

Whilst hue and materiality were obviously acutely important when describing movable possessions, other categories of descriptors are also present, although to a lesser degree. Indeed, arguably more abstract or ambiguous descriptors, such as proportional categorisation which can only be understood in comparison to other similar items, or geographical description which is an otherwise intangible notion known only to the purchaser, are statistically rarer. In examining the statistics in table 5.10 therefore, proportional descriptors, which simply elucidate an object's dimensions, appear in relation to 186 movables. Examples include the 'great, gold ring' in the possession of Thomas Gale and the two chests owned by John Gerard, one described as 'great' and the other as 'smaller.'[120] Such proportional descriptors convey a clear sense of functionality, undoubtedly applied for identification purposes. In similar fashion, many of the geographical descriptors, despite being applied to only thirty-four discernible items, also convey a sense of identifying precision. Indeed, certain of these geographical descriptors relate merely to regions of England, such as the 'course, Suffolk cloth' bequeathed in the will of the merchant tailor, John Jakes, perhaps pinpointing the material's place of production.[121] Nevertheless, some geographical demarcations are far more exotic, as in the example of the 'Spanish spice box' recorded in the will of the knight Edward Darell, which was clearly a treasured possession.[122] Evidently therefore, in similar fashion to the luxury or unique movables discussed previously, some of the possessions of these staple individuals were imported from abroad, presumably at great cost.

Finally, 269 objects belong to the miscellaneous category listed in table 5.10, as their descriptors are otherwise not easily classifiable. Owing to the eclectic mix of descriptors within this inherently broad category, one can be forgiven for assuming that little in the way of definitive patterning can be extrapolated. For example, such descriptors include objects

[120] PROB 11/28/348; C 131/262/4.
[121] PROB 11/39/72.
[122] PROB 11/23/285

described as ‘counterfeit’, ‘new’, ‘course’, and in the case of the lambs of John Sone, ‘castrated.’[123] Nevertheless, when one examines the different kinds of descriptors included within this umbrella category in terms of positive and negative judgements made about an object, intriguing trends emerge. Negative descriptors, such as ‘old’ or ‘broken’ occur rather more frequently within the extents for debt, attached to a total of sixty-three objects, compared with just four objects in wills, and reflecting the impersonal nature behind the composition of these inventories. In contrast to this, the miscellaneous descriptors found within wills seem rather more intimate and positive, often describing objects as ‘best’, ‘second best’ or ‘fine’, evidently denoting a testator’s most treasured possessions. For example, William Broke, a mercer, bequeathed only a single item in his will, a ‘best, gilt standing cup’, clearly demonstrating the item’s intrinsic value to its owner.[124] As such, in considering the personal nature of wills and by extension the items described within, something of the ‘affective value’ of these items can be theorised upon.[125] Indeed, the descriptor of ‘best’, by which an object has been judged to be of the greatest calibre compared with similar items, occurs in relation to no fewer than forty-six movables within the testamentary context, something made all the more conspicuous considering such a descriptor does not appear at all within the inventories of the externally produced extents for debt. It would seem therefore, many of these items had both financial and sentimental value, suggesting that, even among the very richest staple individuals, whose wills were packed with luxurious and expensive objects, certain items held a different kind of intangible ‘worth’.

[123] C 131/111/35.
[124] PROB 11/29/327.
[125] This concept of ‘affective value’ has been inspired by analyses of the personal attachments to objects bequeathed within wills: Liddy, ‘Domestic Objects in York’; L. C. Orlin, ‘Empty Vessels’, in T. Hamling and C. Richardson (eds.), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 299-308; it also relates to A. B. Weiner’s anthropological discussion of certain possessions ‘imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners’ in A. B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Oxford, 1992), p. 6.

5.5 Propertied Archetypes: Exploring Priority in Individual Wealth.

Having outlined the various patterns relating to the property and wealth of these staple individuals, it remains to select illustrative exemplars for prosopographical reconstruction. Whilst a whole host of diverse trends and archetypal behaviours have been uncovered in relation to cash, land and movables, the exemplars below elucidate some of the most important, with particular emphasis upon investment priority.

1) William Stathom: Mercery, Money and Movables.

Our first exemplar, William Stathom, a London mercer, has been selected for a number of reasons. Not only does he exhibit some of the key patterns relating to wealth and propertied assets outlined previously, but his will, made in 1524, contains qualitative and quantitative evidence for all three types of wealth. Beginning chronologically therefore, William Stathom was born in the village of Bleasby in Nottinghamshire but left his provincial beginnings behind to seek success in the capital, joining the ranks of the Mercer's Company as an apprentice to John Thomas and attaining the freedom in 1514.[126] Stathom then set up shop in the parish of St. Martin in Ironmonger Lane, as indicated by a singular reference to this shop space in his will, which apparently comprises the entirety of Stathom's discernible property portfolio.[127] Although seemingly not as extensive, nor as impressive as some of the landed assets possessed by other mercantile staple participants, William Stathom's portfolio was undoubtedly thoroughly urbanised and occupationally-orientated. Indeed, his will demonstrated this urban practicality, as Stathom requested that the 'goods, wares and implements' in his shop be sold after his death.

[126] Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*. URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM2946 [accessed 23/03/2018].
[127] PROB 11/21/501.

Instead, William Stathom's personal priorities with regards to wealth seem to have been focused upon movable property and cash assets, rather than the consolidation of an extensive landed estate. Indeed, Stathom was evidently cash-rich, at least in terms of liquidity at the time of his death, as he bequeathed a total of £1,797 6s. 8d. in his will, placing him well above the average cash gifts found in the testaments of other mercers, at a total of £410 5s. 7d. per person.[128] Moreover, many of these bequests were for sizeable amounts, as in the one hundred marks bequeathed to his brother Henry Stathom and the £100 given to his sister Margaret. Unsurprisingly, some of the most substantial bequests of cash were reserved for Stathom's progeny, with each of his three children, namely his daughters Alice and Katherine, alongside their unborn sibling, to receive £300 each in money. Whilst such cash bequests to family were entirely expected, Stathom also gave money to many non-familial associates. Indeed, one apprentice, John Wylde received £20, whilst William Hall, another apprentice, was given £10 by his master. Perhaps most intriguingly of all, Stathom took pains to ensure his kitchen boy, Robert Lewes, also received a pecuniary remembrance of £10, accompanied by the instruction that this should be used to apprentice him to 'a craft as they (his executors) shall think best.' Interestingly, Robert Lewes appears in the 1540-41 Lay Subsidy, nearly two decades later, described as a 'wire seller' and crucially with goods assessed at £60, not only showing that Stathom's promise to his erstwhile kitchen boy was kept, but that the careful distribution of his cash wealth, even with regards to the more humbler sums, could ensure the success of all manner of Stathom's dependents.[129]

Such cash reserves were seemingly matched by Stathom's emphasis upon movable property. Stathom's will, as the major source relating to his assets, seems to have emphasized luxury

[128] PROB 11/21/501.
[129] '1541 London Subsidy Roll: Cheap Ward', in R. G. Land (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 45-49. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29/pp45-49 [accessed 04/12/2016].

items, as was the case for many of these staple individuals. For instance, Stathom bequeathed a gilt jasper cup to his father-in-law, John Barnard, evidently an expensive and somewhat unique object with regards to this particular study, given the fact that this is the only discernible incidence of jasper as a material descriptor. Stathom, perhaps unsurprisingly given his textile-centric occupation, seems to have had a particularly complex relationship with clothing. For instance, he bequeathed 'apparel belonging to his body' to his brother, Henry, garments, given their associations with his physical body, one might expect to have been lavishly described, reflecting their intrinsic and affective value. However, Stathom provided no further descriptive details of these clothing items, perhaps indicating that he expected his brother to recognise these movables without further identifying embellishment. Interestingly however, Stathom took especial care to emphasize other clothing items, with no fewer than forty-eight black gowns individually enumerated and bequeathed to various and presumably intimately important persons within his will. For instance, family members such as Nicholas, Margaret and Henry Stathom, as well as business associates such as Thomas Crisp and Richard Jarveys, mercers of London, along with their wives, and many others were to receive these black gown cloths, each worth 6s. 8d, whilst those given to his children and servants were each valued at 5s.[130] Such a preference for black gowns has been noted previously as a prominent feature of the wills of many staple individuals. Indeed, Stathom's intentions behind such bequests are made instantly clear, as he stipulated that these black gowns were to be worn on 'the day of my burying', seemingly demonstrating the funerary connotations of these particular items, as they were presumably to be made in preparation for his death.[131] Finally, one of the most telling insights into the quantifiable movable wealth of William Stathom appears, ironically, long after his death. Indeed, William's name appears in the Orphan Book of 1541, alongside an 'Elizabeth

[130] PROB 11/21/501.
[131] PROB 11/21/501.

Stathom', who was likely the niece he mentioned in his will and also Richard Gervis, a fellow mercer, who had been appointed as recognitors to protect the financial interests of an orphan of William Stathom.[132] Given the fact that almost two decades had passed since he made his will, the orphan in question was likely to have been the third of William's children mentioned in his will, the child described as still *in utero* at the time of its composition, as his two older daughters would at least be in their twenties and presumably married. Following the custom of the City of London therefore, orphans were entitled to one third of their father's estate in goods, in this case, yielding a sizeable assessment of £741, providing some insight into the movable estate amassed by William over the course of his life and career.[133] It would seem therefore that William Stathom was indeed a wealthy individual, particularly in terms of money and movables, both assets typically favoured by men of his profession. Whilst his immovable propertied investments seem to have been few and entirely functional with regards to the demands of conducting his business, Stathom's overall affluence is clear to see.

2) Esquires and Estates: The Propertied Assets of William Swanne.

Whilst the case of William Stathom has exemplified many of the patterns associated with mercantile individuals, particularly with regards to cash and movables, our second exemplar will provide balance, focusing upon those individuals who typically emphasized landed assets. As such, William Swanne the elder, an esquire from Southfleet in Kent, has been selected because of his strongly archetypal propertied assets, coupled with access to three different measures of his wealth, namely his will, an extent for debt and also an appearance in the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy. As a starting point therefore, some contextual information of the Swanne (or Swan) family should be outlined. William Swanne, first appearing in the documentation in

[132] 'The 1541 Orphan Book of London', in R. G. Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol29 [accessed 23/03/2018].
[133] B. A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 128-129.

1510, died in 1533, at the time residing in Southfleet in Kent and leaving behind at least two sons, Thomas Swanne, his eldest male heir, and also William Swanne the younger. It is interesting to note that the later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century descendants of William Swanne are seemingly more notable, often included in discussions of genealogy and heraldry in this period. Indeed, the family's success seems to have peaked in 1666, when a much later Sir William Swanne was made a baronet.[134]

As has been outlined previously, esquires and other individuals of similar social description typically emphasized landed property, often in the form of a manorial estate. Indeed, when considering that the esquires analysed using the comparative ranking system are shown to have typically possessed landed assets with a mean value of £55 1s. 7d., William Swanne is distinctly archetypal. This is demonstrated in the 1524-25 Lay Subsidy, whereby William Swanne was not only assessed on his landed properties, indicating them to have been his most substantially valuable asset, but crucially they were estimated as worth £60.[135] In seeking to reconstruct Swanne's apparently valuable property portfolio therefore, it is sensible to begin with the earliest documentation discernible, namely a single extent for debt, dated to 1510, which describes Swanne's possession of the Manor of Nobright in Godstone, Surrey, estimated as worth £10 a year.[136] This was by no means Swanne's only manorial possession however, as demonstrated in his will of 1533. Indeed, Swanne makes especial reference to his 'mansion house' at Hook in Southfleet, Kent, with accompanying lands and tenements, an estate which

[134] J. Burke and J. B. Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England* (London, 1841), p. 541. It should be noted however that this baronetcy was by no means long lived and became extinct in 1712.
[135] E179/124/187 rot 7d.
[136] C 131/101/33; Swanne's family held this particular manor until 1630, when his descendants conveyed it to John Evelyn, see: 'Parishes: Godstone', in H. E. Malden (ed.), *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 4* (London, 1912), pp. 283-291. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/surrey/vol4/pp283-291 [accessed 19/07/2018].

was undoubtedly his family's ancestral seat.[137] Furthermore, Swanne's will lists other manors and lands in Kent, Surrey, Herefordshire and also the Welsh Marches, but unfortunately without further identifying details.[138] Although this seemingly limits the extent to which Swanne's other propertied assets can be explicitly identified, there are some subtle clues. Indeed, his will also makes mention of his desire to provide funds for the repair of highways, specifically those in Southfleet, Northfleet and Swanscombe, all parishes in Kent.[139] Reasoning that a testator would most likely wish to aid civic works in areas they themselves had resided, or at least held property within, it can perhaps be surmised that these are the other 'manors and lands' in Kent to which Swanne was referring. Indeed, in examining the ownership history of the manor of Swanscombe for example, at some point it transferred in the reign of Edward IV to an unnamed 'Swan of Hook-house in Southfleet', an individual one might assume to be either William Swanne himself or one of his forebears.[140] Speculation aside therefore, it is clear that William Swanne, originally styled as 'gentleman', but proudly displaying the descriptor of 'esquire' by the time of his last testament, was of substantial propertied wealth, with an emphasis upon agrarian and manorial assets, spread across at least four different counties.

Although his extensive lands were clearly of particular importance to Swanne, the contents of his will nevertheless shed some light upon the kinds of movable possessions he deemed valuable, or at least worthy of mention. Indeed, in accordance with the patterns uncovered previously, many of Swanne's movables were agrarian in nature, with bequests of wheat and barley, as well as ten ewes, three horses and several cows discernible.[141] Not only does this

[137] PROB 11/25/193; 'Parishes: Southfleet', in E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 2* (Canterbury, 1797), pp. 421-440. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol2/pp421-440 [accessed 19/07/2018].
[138] PROB 11/25/193.
[139] PROB 11/25/193.
[140] 'Parishes: Swanscombe', in E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 2* (Canterbury, 1797), pp. 399-421. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol2/pp399-421 [accessed 21/07/2018].
[141] PROB 11/25/193.

provide some insight into the kinds of arable and pastoral production taking place on Swanne's estates, but also the importance he attached to such movables, as they were specifically recorded within his will. Finally, Swanne also included £20 in cash bequests in his will, some of which was earmarked to pay for gifts to his local churches, such as that of St. Thomas Southfleet where William wished to be buried. For example, his will includes bequests of four streamers of stained cloth, one decorated with the image of St. Antonin, one with the four evangelists, one with St. Uncumber and the other adorned with St. Hilford, all of which were to bear his arms at a cost of 4s. each.[142] Considering that the mean cash bequests discernible for other staple esquires was £186 1s. 9d., it would seem that in this regard William Swanne was somewhat atypical. In fact, when one remembers that much of the cash bequests given in wills were representative of liquidity, often through sales of land or property, Swanne's apparent attachment to his immovable assets is further enhanced. Rather than liquidate his landed assets for extravagant displays of wealth within his will, Swanne instead explicitly bequeathed all of his estates to his eldest son Thomas, not only keeping them within the family, but also taking pains to extensively describe their devolution should the male line fail. As such, this brief reconstruction of the property and wealth of William Swanne, esquire, has not only outlined some of the important patterns for individuals of his particular social standing, but also the importance he personally attached to his landed possessions, likely going some way to explain the later ennobling of his descendants.

5.6 Conclusion.

This examination has explored the three main categories of wealth associated with these staple individuals, namely cash, land and movables, so as to better understand the connection between an individual's measurable economic status and their position within society. Previous

[142] PROB 11/25/193.

investigation has typically focused upon just one of these three categories of wealth as a tool to measure status.[143] As such, this chapter has drawn together these strands of inquiry, in the form of the comparative ranking system developed and employed in this analysis. The patterns uncovered using this ranking system are found to largely reinforce traditional conceptions of late medieval English society, at least in terms of measurable property and wealth. For example, certain expected, broad-spectrum patterns are discernible, such as the apparent liquidity of mercantile individuals, who typically bequeathed large cash sums in their wills, or the emphasis upon landed assets discernible within the records relating to certain categories of individuals of elevated social status, such as lords, esquires and knights.

This analysis has also examined the more tangible markers of wealth in greater detail, investigating indications of personal and also collective preference through the reconstruction of property portfolios and inventories of movables. In examining landed property, certain patterns are entirely unsurprising, such as the strong correlation between socially described individuals, usually of the genteel variety, found to be in possession of agrarian assets, such as manors, extensive acreages and mills. Similarly, other individuals are found to commonly possess assets related to their occupational status, as well as substantial numbers of shops, warehouses, cellars and other urbanised sites of commerce appearing regularly in their property portfolios. The implications of these findings are clear, suggesting that, despite their shared commercial endeavours, social and occupational categories of individuals often still favoured more traditional spheres of influence when it came to the possession of landed property. Indeed, members of the gentry still preferred assets which intimated a more provincial existence, whilst

[143] See for example: Muldrew, "Hard Food for Midas'', pp. 107-109, for an examination of how physical cash reserves correlated with individual social status; Carpenter, 'Lesser Landowners', pp. 58-59, for a tripartite ranking system for esquires based upon landed assets; Hinton, *Gold and Gilt*, p. 259, for an overview of how luxury items convey social status.

their occupational and mercantile counterparts often sought out propertied markers of the urban scene.

This chapter has also examined movable property, through the detailed examination of wills and extents for debt. A substantial total of 12,079 quantifiable movables is extrapolated, enabling a degree of insight into the personal and professional lives of these people. Indeed, certain kinds of items are seemingly favoured by different categories of individuals, providing an important comment on the connection between status and movable property. For instance, the status of socially described individuals, such as gentlemen and knights, is seemingly reflected in the frequency with which their wills and inventories are shown to contain pastoral animals and arable products. In similar fashion, a preponderance of craft tools and materials is found to be a prominent marker of the wills of mercantile and occupational individuals. Furthermore, this analysis of movables has gone further and examined the descriptors attached to them. Examination of colour, materiality and other aspects of description has revealed the subtler connections between these people and the items recorded in their possession. For example, analysis of colour and hue, typically relating to clothing items, has been linked with the wider sartorial trends of the time, such as the popularity of tawny-coloured fabrics in the later fifteenth century.

As such, this analysis of property and wealth has demonstrated the relationship between measurable wealth, in all its forms, and status, supporting many of the expectations and assertions of scholars,[144] but also going further, demonstrating how new approaches to the ways in which we examine property and wealth can enhance our understanding of these people and the social hierarchy in which they found themselves. Although these collective patterns do correlate with the externalised measurements of status and socio-economic position which are

[144] See for example: Hinton, *Gold and Gilt*, p. 259; Muldrew, "Hard Food for Midas'', p. 109; Carpenter, 'Lesser Landowners', pp. 50, 58-59.

often championed in the literature, it is crucial to acknowledge that there is also an important element of individual and collective priority. Indeed, as shown in the reconstructive exemplars of William Stathom and William Swanne, there is a clear sense of personal choice. Whilst Stathom is shown to seemingly emphasize liquidity and investment in movable property, likely in accordance with his mercantile status and the importance he evidently attached to easily transferable or movable capital, Swanne is rather more traditional in his measurable wealth, building up a landed property portfolio, not to liquidate at the end of his life, but rather to pass on to his heirs in a grandiose display of genteel status.

Chapter 6. Professional Lives: Commerce, Business and Office Holding.

6.1 Introduction and Historiographical Overview:

This chapter will focus upon the professional careers of the staple individuals under study, providing important balance to the more private aspects of their lives explored previously. Careerism is an extremely broad concept and typically conceived of in tripartite terms, namely through commercial endeavour, military prowess, the holding of office, or else a combination of these.[1] However, this chapter will focus specifically upon only two of these key avenues for success, namely office holding and commercial endeavour, reflecting the careers of the individuals under study. Indeed, given the inescapable commercial connections of these individuals, through their shared affiliation with the Westminster staple, the role of commerce and staple activity will be explored, analysing the commercial agendas and career trajectories of these business people. Some of these staple businessmen also held appointed office and as a result the collation and examination of official descriptors can shed light on the varying office holding patterns of these particular careerist individuals. As such, the bipartite focus of this chapter will produce a more comprehensive reconstruction of the varying manifestations of a 'professional life' for these users of the Westminster staple.

The literature devoted to commerce and business in the late medieval period has often focused upon occupational or mercantile elites. Indeed, the successful medieval businessman is typically conceived of in the guise of the rich merchant or prosperous clothier.[2] As such,

[1] See: M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London, 1983); M. J. Bennett, 'Careerism in Late Medieval England', in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 19-39; J. Laughton, 'Successful Careerists from South-East Cheshire in the Years 1383-1403', *Cheshire History*, 57 (2017-2018), pp. 8-29, for discussion of the various distinct avenues for success available to ambitious individuals; G. M. Bogner, 'The English Knights of 1434: A Prosopographical Approach', *Medieval Prosopography*, 25 (2004), pp. 178-216, for a composite analysis of the tripartite careers of medieval knights, which usually involved military service, the holding of office or personal activity in the form of shrewd estate management.

[2] See for example: E. B. Fryde, 'Some Business Transactions of York Merchants: John Goldbeter, William Acastre and Partners, 1336-1349', in E. B. Fryde, *Studies in Medieval Trade and Finance* (London, 1983), pp. 3-27; A. F. Sutton, 'Caxton was a Mercer: his Social Milieu and Friends', in N. Rogers (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth*

prosopographical or biographical case studies of successful mercantile businessmen have something of a long-standing tradition, with, for example, E. Power selecting the commercial power-houses of Thomas Betson, a staple merchant, and also Thomas Paycocke, an Essex clothier, for in-depth reconstruction in her enormously influential monograph, *Medieval People*, published in 1924.[3] More recent scholarship has also emphasized such individuals, as in the joint endeavours of M. Casson and C. Casson, who outline the key traits deemed to be 'entrepreneurial', by modern standards, and then pinpoint their existence in the character profiles of important medieval businessmen, such as the fourteenth-century merchant, William de la Pole and the Norfolk cloth trader, Richard Spynk.[4] As a result of such historiographical emphasis, whether consciously or not, commercial success seemingly becomes the preserve of the mercantile and occupational elite in this period. Indeed, studies devoted to analyses of credit and commercial involvement are unsurprisingly often particularly merchant-orientated.[5] For example, C. McNall, in his discussion of debt registries, notes that merchants and tradesmen were involved in as much as two thirds of the recognisances under study, a proliferation clearly reflected in McNall's categorisation of creditors, demarcating the appearances of 'foreign merchants', 'domestic merchants', 'all merchants' and 'others.'[6] Whilst these mercantile or occupational careerists have found especial favour among historians, growing recognition of

Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium (Stamford, 1994), pp. 118-148; M. K. James, 'A London Merchant of the Fourteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 2, 8 (1956), pp. 364-76; R. C. Shaw, 'Two Fifteenth-Century Kinsmen: John Shaw of Dukinfield, Mercer, and William Shaw of Heath Charnock, Surgeon', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 110 (1959), pp. 15-30.

[3] E. Power, 'Thomas Betson, a Merchant of the Staple in the Fifteenth Century', in E. Power (ed.), *Medieval People* (London, 1924) , pp. 145-184; E. Power, 'Thomas Paycocke of Coggeshall, an Essex Clothier in the Days of Henry VII', in E. Power (ed.), *Medieval People* (London, 1924), pp. 185-212.

[4] M. Casson and C. Casson, *The Entrepreneur in History: From Medieval Merchant to Modern Business Leader* (Basingstoke, 2013); see also: M. Casson, and C. Casson, 'The History of Entrepreneurship: Medieval Origins of a Modern Phenomenon', *Business History*, 56, 8 (2014), pp. 1223-1242; also see: M. J. Thornton, 'Two Village Entrepreneurs in Late-Medieval Rockingham Forest', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 58 (2005), pp. 17-36.

[5] See for example: J. Oldland, 'The Allocation of Merchant Capital in Early Tudor London', *The Economic History Review,* 63, 4 (2010), pp. 1058-1080; H. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 147-148.

[6] C. McNall, 'The Business of Statutory Debt Registries, 1283-1307', in P. R. Schofield and N. J. Mayhew (eds.), *Credit and Debt in Medieval England, c. 1180-c. 1350* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 74-75.

the commercial careers of other categories of individuals has begun to come to the fore. Indeed, one of the most important of these revisionist studies comes from P. Nightingale, in her pivotal discussion of knightly commercial endeavour in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Drawing upon evidence from certificates of statute merchant, Nightingale notes that, although a transition to a monopoly of urban merchants was noticeable by the fourteenth century, knights and lords continued to trade wool on credit, increasingly describing themselves as merchants in these documents, regardless of their actual social standing.[7]

Turning to the literature devoted to office holding, similar trends are discernible. For instance, traditionalist studies of office holding, often emphasize an elitist perspective. A prime example is the traditional conception of civic office, characterised by position in urban government, as thoroughly oligarchic. This approach is, arguably, traceable to Henri Pirenne's landmark *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (1927), in which he argued that the growth in European trade and the subsequent crystallisation of a mercantile elite contributed to the rise of their natural habitat: the town, which, unsurprisingly, they then came to dominate.[8] Subsequent scholars have built upon this, examining the development of town councils, from which urban officials would be elected, usually from a closed mercantile elite, but sometimes from an older class of dominant lesser nobles and gentry.[9] For example, J. Kermode's

[7] P. Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants: Trade, Politics and the Gentry in Late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), pp. 41-43.

[8] For the full Pirenne thesis on the early development of medieval urban centres see: H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton, 1927).

[9] See for example: J. Tait, 'The Origin of Town Councils in England', *The English Historical Review*, 44 (1929), pp. 183-184, 190; A. B. Hibbert, 'The Origins of the Medieval Town Patriciate', *Past and Present*, 3 (1953), p. 23; H. R. Frost, 'The Urban Elite', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds.), *Medieval Norwich* (London, 2004), pp. 235-253, for discussion of Norwich's 'select group of the rich and prosperous'; A. Rogers, 'Late Medieval Stamford: A Study of the Town Council 1465-1492', in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), pp. 16-38, for an occupational overview of Stamford's largely mercantile governing core; M. Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', in R. A. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London, 1990), pp. 184-215, for discussion of the ways in which access to the Exeter freedom was restricted by the town's ruling elite or oligarchy; A. Hanham, *The Celys and their World: An English Merchant Family of the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1985), p. 240, in which she notes that mayors of the Calais Staple were usually chosen from the mercantile oligarchy of London; B. Breslow, 'A London Merchant and the Governance of Medieval

comprehensive comparison of the town governments of Beverley, York and Hull is particularly illuminating. Although she admits there was some access to the oligarchy for all burgesses, ultimately it was dominated by a recognised core of experienced men. For instance, she provides the case study of the Coppendale family, which was active in the government of Beverley for at least 150 years, through a combination of wealth, status and nepotism.[10] S. Reynolds's various studies into medieval town government are particularly important and as a result her views on oligarchy are frequently referenced in the works of other scholars.[11] Whilst Reynolds actively criticises the use of careless terms, such as 'patrician' and 'oligarchy', branding them as anachronistic and thoroughly ambiguous, she nevertheless ultimately acknowledges the existence of an elite urban stratum, typically populated by merchants and wholesalers, but emphasizes the need for deeper investigation and reconstructive effort.[12]

Whilst the traditional conception of civic office has largely insisted upon mercantile monopolisation, other categories of office holding have played host to a different type of inquiry of the elite. Undoubtedly a reflection of the often restrictive inner-circle maintained by the monarch, certain studies of royal appointees typically emphasize the wealthiest or most prominent members of the court.[13] A particularly early example is A. P. Newton's study of the

England', *Medieval Prosopography*, 25 (2004), pp. 101-113, which reconstructs the civic career of the merchant Gregory de Rokesle, whose political career at the forefront of government spanned nearly thirty years; P. Fleming, 'Telling Tales of Oligarchy in the Late Medieval Town', in M. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 177-193, for discussion of the ruling civic elite of Bristol.

[10] J. I. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late Medieval English Towns', in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 95-96.

[11] See for example S. Alsford, *The Men Behind the Masque: Office-Holding in East Anglian Boroughs 1272-1460* (2003), published online at http://users.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/mcontent.html#menu, which outlines Reynolds' theories on urban democratic process.

[12] S. Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban Society and the History of Political Thought', in S. Reynolds (ed.), *Ideas and Solidarities of the Medieval Laity in England and Western Europe* (Aldershot, 1995), p. 2; see also C. I. Hammer Jr., 'The Oxford Town Council in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Journal of British Studies*, 18, 1 (1978), pp. 12-14, whose study of Oxford finds the council to be less oligarchic than expected and relatively 'open', especially at the lower levels.

[13] See for example: R. C. Braddock, 'The Rewards of Office-Holding in Tudor England', *Journal of British Studies*, 14 (1975), pp. 29-47, which outlines the lucrative returns attainable from crown-appointed positions for certain favoured individuals; H. M. Pierce, 'The King's Cousin: The Life, Career and Welsh Connection of Sir Richard Pole, 1458-1504', *Welsh History Review*, 19, 2 (December, 1998), pp. 187-225; S. Gunn, 'Sir Thomas

inner circle of Henry VII, first published in 1917, which sought to explore the career paths of four prominent members of the King's chamber. United by their occupation of the position of Treasurer of the Chamber at various times, Thomas Lovell, John Heron, Henry Wyatt and Brian Tuke form the focus of Newton's efforts to reconstruct the office holding practices of some of Henry Tudor's most trusted advisors.[14] S. J. Gunn's work on royal courtiers is one of the most prominent contributions within this field. Indeed, his 1993 article, which focuses upon officials operating specifically under Henry VII, selectively examines 'those noblemen who combined the king's confidence with great office at court.' As such, Gunn's semi-prosopographical analyses of these men demonstrates the ways in which such courtiers accumulated wealth, power and, perhaps most importantly, the ear of the king.[15] However, despite the predominance of major lords in the Tudor court, such as Charles Somerset and Giles Daubeny, Gunn does acknowledge an alternative type of careerist, citing, as an example, William Smith, an apparently humble page of the Chamber in 1486, but who ultimately found himself appointed as the King's escheator for Lancashire in 1498 and Searcher for the Ports of Chester and Beaumaris in 1502.[16]

Nevertheless, as with studies of commercial careerism, the conceptualisation of late medieval office holding has since undergone extensive revision. In a far cry from the elitist standpoint, many scholars now emphasize the role of the individual careerist and the fact that they were not necessarily part of a fully homogenous, oligarchic entity. Given the sources available to late medievalists, scholars have begun to turn increasingly to prosopography in order to collectively analyse such officials, usually employing records of wealth and occupation in their

Lovell (*c.* 1449-1524): A New Man in a New Monarchy?', in .J. L Watts (ed.), *The End of the Middle Ages? England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Stroud, 1998), p. 117-154.

[14] A. P. Newton, 'The King's Chamber under the Early Tudors', *The English Historical Review*, 32, 127 (1917), pp. 348-372.

[15] S. J. Gunn, 'The Courtiers of Henry VII', *The English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), pp. 23-49.

[16] Gunn, 'The Courtiers of Henry VII', pp. 31-32.

studies and often uncovering an eclectic range of individuals attaining office, motivated by a variety of personal agendas.[17] For example, D. N. Lepine's prosopographical analysis of Exeter's ecclesiastical officials explores the origins and social position discernible for many of the canons selected in the fourteenth century, comparing them to laymen of gentlemanly status and highlighting their variable career paths.[18] Perhaps one of the most ambitious studies, given its geographically and chronologically broad focus, is S. Alsford's analysis of urban office holding in East Anglia between 1272 and 1460. Indeed, Alsford outlines not only the commercial connections of civic office, as many of his chosen towns had trading networks and therefore a proliferation of merchants, but also more subtle elements, such as the variations in office holding patterns between different urban centres. Having assessed the data collated by complex prosopographical reconstruction, Alsford laments a complete lack of any discernible collective patterning, ultimately concluding that 'individual inclination' was the greatest factor in determining civic office holding trends.[19] This emphasis upon the notion of individualism, and the potential for determined careerists to rise through the ranks of offices previously assumed to be open only to a select few has also impacted royal analyses.[20] For example, F. Kisby, in her detailed study of the Chapel Royal during the reigns of the first two Tudor monarchs, explores the departmental structure and hierarchy of the body of appointees who

[17] For examples of prosopographical studies of urban officials see: S. Sagui, 'Mid-Level Officials in Fifteenth-Century Norwich', in L. Clark and C. Rawcliffe (eds.), *The Fifteenth Century XII: Society in an Age of Plague* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 104, 108; C. Carpenter, 'The Formation of Urban Elites: Civic Officials in Late-Medieval York, 1476-1525', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of York (2000), pp. 49-51, 57-58; L. C. Attreed, *The King's Towns: Identity and Survival in Late Medieval English Boroughs* (Oxford, 2001), p. 46, who notes how the financial obligations attached to certain positions impacted the appeal of civic office.

[18] D. N. Lepine, 'The Origins and Careers of the Canons of Exeter Cathedral 1300-1455', in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 95, 97. For other examples of ecclesiastical careerism see: R. O'Day, 'The Anatomy of a Profession: The Clergy of the Church of England', in W. Prest, (ed.), *The Professions in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), pp. 29-31, 40-41.

[19] Alsford, *The Men Behind the Masque*, published online at http://users.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/mcontent.html#menu.

[20] For examples of prosopographical studies of royal careerists see: P. Webb, 'John and Jasper Horsey: Two Tudor Opportunists', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society*, 99 (1977), pp. 28-32; R. Virgoe, 'Sir John Risley (1443-1512), Courtier and Councillor', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 38, 2 (1982), pp. 140-148.

performed religious and musical services within the chapels of royal residences.[21] Despite dealing with lower-level officials, Kisby uncovers an almost identical pattern of promotion within the Chapel, whereby individuals entered at the lowest ranks and steadily ascended the office hierarchy. For instance, Henry Stephenson first entered at the level of Yeoman of the Vestry in 1503 but by 1509 he had become a Gentleman on an annual wage of £11 7s. 14d.[22]

In connection with these revisionist ideas, these two careerist themes of commerce and office holding, seemingly kept artificially separated when one considers some of the studies outlined above, can actually be examined through a dualist approach. E. L. Furdell, in her reconstruction of the career of John Allen, emphasizes such duality, noting that Allen's holding of civic office in London was simultaneously coupled with 'constant and lucrative' business dealings.[23] A particularly illuminative example is S. Harper's 2016 study of London goldsmiths, which outlines their 'double lives' as civic officials and royal appointees, alongside commercial activity. Hugh Brice, for example, retained close ties with the royal court of Edward IV, serving not only as royally appointed deputy master of the mint from 1462-85 but was also one of the largest lenders of money to the king, with personal loans totalling about £3,800.[24] Evidently determined careerists could exploit something of a 'muddled path', as success was not necessarily the preserve of the commercial or office holding purist. Therefore, there is scope to develop these ideas further, exploring commercial careerists and office holders active in the staple from a more individualised perspective.

[21] F. Kisby, 'Officers and Office-Holding at the English Court: A Study of the Chapel Royal, 1485-1547', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 32 (1999), pp. 1-2.
[22] Kisby, 'Officers and Office-Holding', p. 15.
[23] E. L. Furdell, 'The King's Man in London: The Career of Sir John Allen', *Proceedings of the Montana Academy of Sciences*, 37 (1977), pp. 185-186.
[24] S. P. Harper, 'Royal Servants and City Fathers: The Double Lives of London Goldsmiths at the Court of Henry VII', in M. Allen and M. Davies (eds.), *Medieval Merchants and Money: Essays in Honour of James L. Bolton* (London, 2016), pp. 180-181; for other examples of dualists see: C. M., Barron, 'Richard Whittington: The Man Behind the Myth', in Hollaender and Kellaway (eds.), *Studies in London History Presented to P. E. Jones* (London, 1969), pp. 209-215.

6.2 Commercial Longevity: Chronologies of Staple Careers.

In seeking to examine the commercial careers of the 3,593 individuals in the staple certificates in this study, there are various ways of measuring success in the professional lives of these staple users. The most sensible starting point is with the chronology of staple careers to explore approximately how long such commercial engagement lasted. As such, there are 987 individuals who appear in more than one certificate of statute staple, providing an opportunity to estimate, albeit on a somewhat limited scale, the chronological breadth of an individual's staple activity. Therefore, the table below shows the length of time between the first and last appearance in the certificates for all the individuals who appear at least twice.

Table 6.1 Number of Years between First and Last Staple Appearances.

	One Year or Less	**2-5 Years**	**6-10 Years**	**11-20 Years**	**21-30 Years**	**Over 30 Years**
No. of Individuals	355	266	179	110	45	16
Percentage (%)	35.9	27.0	18.1	11.1	4.6	1.6

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge the limitations connected with this methodology, most noticeably the fact that only those transactions which ended in default are discernible, potentially producing a truncated impression of an individual's length of staple career. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the 355 individuals with a discernible staple career of one year or less, as many of these particular staplers appeared only twice in the documents, effectively revealing the problems connected with estimating career lengths. For instance, Miles Parkin, a London skinner, had a gap of just two months between his first and last

discernible appearances in the staple in March and May 1531 respectively.[25] Whilst it can be assumed that he would likely have been in business much longer than these data would suggest, the nature of the source material, in that it is limited to only the unsuccessful credit arrangements, has distorted this to some degree. Nevertheless, a substantial number of individuals produce staple careers of sizeable lengths. In fact, 350 individuals, 35.7 per cent of the total, had a career in the staple which lasted over five years, suggesting that ongoing usage of the staple, and by extension engagement with the commercial life of late medieval England, was an important part of the business careers of many of these individuals.

However, it should be noted that only sixteen (1.6 per cent of the total) individuals appear with a gap between their earliest and latest staple certificates of over thirty years, perhaps indicating something of the nature of established business lives. Setting aside the obvious source limitations, the fact that so few people achieved such a long span of years in the staple might suggest one of a number of things. The most obvious explanation is mortality and the negative impact it had upon career length, cutting short the commercial endeavours of many individuals. Alternatively, it might be supposed from this chronological evidence that it took time to establish oneself in the commercial sphere and then arrive in the position to be able to partake successfully in the credit system, something perhaps particularly relevant with regards to occupational individuals who had to undergo sometimes lengthy apprenticeships before forging out on their own. Finally, this paucity of particularly long-lasting staple users, at least within this particular sampling, could simply indicate that these individuals had varied careers, which were not only centred on staple activity, but also embraced other careerist avenues. Indeed, whilst this final supposition might seem thoroughly conjectural at this point, it is interesting to note that most of the sixteen individuals appearing in the staple for over thirty

[25] C 241/283/62; C 241/284/3.

years were mercantile individuals, with seemingly 'purist' business agendas. As an example, the appearances in the staple certificates of William Botry, a prominent mercer, spanned thirty-nine years, from August 1490 until July 1529, whilst, Hugh Acton, a merchant tailor, consistently produced staple certificates for thirty-two years.[26] Interestingly, many of these particularly long-lived staple careerists were seemingly also commercial purists, in that no office holding activity or alternative career avenues were discernible. This potentially sheds light on why these particular individuals appear in the staple for so long, as they exhibited a unique blend of fortuitous survival and fastidious devotion to commerce.

Considering the diversity of individuals discernible within the staple certificates, as discussed in detail in chapter two, these estimated career lengths can be refined by descriptor to enable comparisons in terms of staple longevity. As has also been discussed previously in chapter two, these individuals often possessed fluctuating descriptors across their discernible documented lives, and as such not all 987 individuals with multiple appearances can be included in this particular analysis. Indeed, some individuals might only have one incidence of a particular category of description, before switching to another. As an illustrative example, Thomas Baldry, appearing in ten separate certificates, was variously described as alderman, mercer and knight whilst using the staple.[27] Although Baldry was described as a mercer and as an alderman in multiple staple certificates, effectively producing data for occupational and official career lengths, he was only described as a knight in one certificate, presumably reflecting his newly knighted status.[28] As a result, in terms of social description, Baldry must be omitted from the

[26] For the staple career of William Botry see: C 241/266/31; C 241/267/38; C 241/272/38; C 241/275/201; C 241/275/132; C 241/275/135; C 241/275/134; C 241/276/3; C 241/276/18; C 241/278/15; C 241/280/40; C 241/282/131; C 152/65/2/594; C 152/65/2/603; C 152/65/2/667; C 152/65/2/668; C 152/65/2/727; C 152/65/2/49; C 152/65/2/355; C 152/65/2/398; C 152/65/2/420; C 152/65/2/456; C 152/65/2/347; C 152/65/2/348. For the staple career of Hugh Acton see: C 241/275/103; C 241/277/40; C 241/277/6; C 241/278/41; C 241/279/17; C 241/280/10; C 241/280/20; C 241/280/44; C 241/281/69; C 241/281/101; C 241/282/88; C 241/282/87; C 241/282/151; C 241/272/43.

[27] C 241/283/59; C 241/273/40; C 241/277/64.

[28] C 241/282/132.

data for such career lengths, as he lacked at least two datable certificates containing listed social status with which to generate a timeline. Therefore, the data extrapolated for the staple career lengths based upon description relates only to those individuals with more than one staple transaction in which the relevant category of descriptor was present in at least two incidences.

Table 6.2 Staple Career Lengths by Category of Description.

	A Year or Less	**2-5 Years**	**6-10 Years**	**11-20 Years**	**21-30 Years**	**Over 30 Years**	**Total Known**
No. of Individuals with Social Descriptors	160	133	56	48	16	4	417
Percentage of Total Known (%)	38.4	31.9	13.4	11.5	3.8	1.0	/
No. of Individuals with Familial Descriptors	20	5	2	5	0	0	32
Percentage of Total Known (%)	62.5	15.6	6.25	15.6	0	0	/
No. of Individuals with Official Descriptors	22	10	10	4	0	0	46
Percentage of Total Known (%)	47.8	21.7	21.7	8.7	0	0	/

No. of Individuals with Occupational Descriptors	172	135	92	40	24	5	468
Percentage of Total Known (%)	36.7	28.8	19.7	8.6	5.1	1.1	/

It is apparent from table 6.2 that staple career lengths did vary for different categories of individuals. First and foremost, it is immediately noticeable that social and occupational individuals are shown to be the most chronologically persistent in the staple overall, not only dominating in terms of numbers of individuals in each chronological category, but also producing careers which could last for over three decades. By contrast, individuals defined in familial and official terms were less pervasive, with no calculable staple careers which lasted longer than twenty years and only a handful discernible for longer than a year. Superficially therefore, such seemingly clear-cut statistical differences between description categories seems to confirm a number of assumptions regarding the commercial careerists in the staple, namely that it was dominated by an occupational elite, of which many were mercantile, who flourished unchecked for long periods of time as staple power-houses, at least in terms of longevity, whilst other categories of individuals, namely those of familial and official designation, were less enduring, and by extension less successful commercial careerists.

However, when considering alternative interpretations of the data, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential distortive effect of the differing quantities of individuals in each bracket, particularly as the most chronologically resilient categories, namely social and occupational descriptors, also have the largest samplings, with 417 and 468 staple individuals respectively. Indeed, when compared with the far humbler thirty-two and forty-six familial and official

individuals, this particular statistical limitation is confirmed. As such, the inclusion of percentages for each description category can alleviate this to some degree. Indeed, when examined proportionally rather than simply through numerical dominance, these four description categories seem to demonstrate a certain degree of individual chronological preference. For example, in terms of proportional representation, those individuals with familial descriptors, despite numbering in the minority overall, are the most proportionally prominent in terms of staple careers which lasted between eleven and twenty years, accounting for 15.6 per cent of them. Similarly, official descriptors also seem to have often enjoyed mid-length staple careers, with a proportionally dominant 21.7 per cent of them lasting approximately six to ten years. Whilst this should not be overplayed, particularly as especially long careers, typically spanning over two decades, were undoubtedly the preserve of the social and occupational elites in the staple, it is important to acknowledge that official and familial categories of individuals, despite their numerical minority, nevertheless carved out a niche for themselves in terms of medium length careers, becoming proportionally dominant in the categories outlined above.

Having considered the typical staple career lengths for these different staple users, occupational individuals also yield a unique opportunity to reduce some of the source limitations discussed above. Indeed, a certain degree of chronological refinement is possible to extrapolate more accurate careers for occupational individuals through the use of livery records.

Table 6.3 Refinement of Commercial Career Lengths for Occupationally Described Individuals.

No. of Individuals with Apprenticeship Date	No. of Individuals with Freedom Date	No. of Individuals with Both Dates	Mean Length of Apprenticeship (Years)	Mean Length of Staple Career (Years)
53	98	40	2.6	17.5

As shown in table 6.3 above, fifty-three occupationally described individuals have an apprenticeship date discernible in the livery records available, whilst ninety-eight have a freedom date. Of these, forty individuals have both dates available. As an example, Thomas Lincoln, a London draper, was apprenticed to Edmund Brugge in 1512 and then made free eight years later in 1520.[29] If we theorise that most of these individuals only began their staple careers after they had been admitted to the freedom of their respective craft, ninety-eight individuals can provide greater clarifying information with regards to estimating the true length of their commercial careers. Therefore, by combining these freedom dates with last appearances in the certificates, these individuals produce a mean career length of 17.5 years, not only demonstrating the negative impact of source constraints upon chronological estimations, but also confirming that the typical commercial career, for occupationally described individuals at least, regularly spanned more than a single decade. For instance, Thomas Kempe, a mercer made free from Roger Bonyfant in 1490, first appeared in the

[29] Records for the Company of Drapers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=drp&event_id=DRHT2031 [accessed 05/05/2018]; Records for the Company of Drapers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=drp&event_id=DRHT2032 [accessed 05/05/2018].

certificates in 1502 and made a final appearance in 1518, producing a potential commercial career of twenty-eight years.[30]

Furthermore, such statistics can be exploited in other ways when considering commercial career lengths. Indeed, in looking at the forty individuals with both a start date for their apprenticeship and subsequent freedom dates, the mean length of apprenticeship is revealed to have been only 2.6 years, a figure much lower than expected, considering scholarly estimates have placed the typical length of time for such apprenticeships at approximately eight or nine years.[31] This is revealed to have largely been the result of a surprising phenomenon of chronological overlap, whereby many of these individuals with an occupational descriptor have an apprenticeship date and freedom date in the same year, almost as though their acceptance and membership of their chosen occupation was expedited. Indeed, this is found to have been the case for twenty-nine of the forty individuals with both dates discernible, 72.5 per cent of the total. For example, Richard Reynold's apprenticeship seemingly both started and concluded in 1504, when he was admitted to the freedom of the mercers through apprenticeship to John Reynold, his father.[32] Similarly, Edward Lightfoot, another up-and-coming mercer, was apprenticed and made free in 1513.[33] Whilst certain of these individuals did nevertheless take the long road to occupational autonomy, such as Pancras Colred, a draper whose apprenticeship to Richard Charlys lasted eleven years, it would seem that this was by no means universally

[30] Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM1579 [accessed 30/04/2018]; C 241/275/71; C 152/65/2/54.

[31] Hanham, *The Celys*, p. 248, in which she suggests that most mercantile apprenticeships lasted approximately nine years; R. S. Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in the Records of the Goldsmiths' Company of London, 1444-1500', *Medieval Prosopography*, 24 (2003), p. 96, whose analysis uncovers an average apprenticeship of eight years.

[32] Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEB2409 [accessed 30/04/2018]; Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM2575 [accessed 30/04/2018].

[33]Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEB1916 [accessed 30/04/2018]; Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM1783 [accessed 30/04/2018].

followed.[34] Perhaps, therefore, these individuals were especially well connected or already commercially involved in some way in order to merit such truncated apprenticeships. Indeed, it is telling that many of these rapidly franchised individuals were either apprenticed to an already established family member, as in the case of Richard Reynold, or else to a prominent member of the craft, as demonstrated in the example of Edward Lightfoot above, whose short-lived apprenticeship was to William Browne, an important and wealthy mercer who routinely held public office.

6.3 Persistence and Prominence: Determined Staplers as Commercial Careerists.

Whilst rough approximations of staple career lengths have been examined above, persistence and perseverance in the commercial sphere can be examined in other ways. Indeed, tenacity and commercial prominence has often been cited as a sign of the successful businessman or entrepreneur and those individuals who displayed especial staple dominance will be examined in greater detail. Indeed, as has been demonstrated in previous chapters, the diversity of the staple is unquestionable and it was evidently no longer the preserve of merchants and occupational groups alone. Instead, there are the four major types of descriptors to bear in mind when considering commercial agency and activity (table 6.4). Whilst individuals do fluctuate in terms of description throughout their documented lives (as was also noted in chapter two), in order to accurately assess their 'business lives' only the descriptors actively applied within the certificates of statute staple have been used in this analysis. As a demonstrative exemplar, there are 104 merchant tailors discernible when all of the relevant documentary evidence is considered as a whole. However, just ninety-six of these are actively described as thus in the certificates, meaning only these particular individuals can be knowingly assessed upon their

[34] Records for the Company of Drapers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=drp&event_id=DREW10454 [accessed 30/04/2018]; Records for the Company of Drapers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*, URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=drp&event_id=DREW10455 [accessed 30/04/2018].

staple activities as merchant tailors. Similarly, 926 gentlemen in total are discernible, but only 915 of these are discernible as such in the certificates, suggesting that the other eleven attained genteel status after their business activities ended, or else, perhaps even more importantly, did not apply this descriptor when conducting their affairs in the staple. Either way, only those described as gentlemen in the certificates will be counted in this subsequent analysis. Furthermore, it should be noted that some descriptors do not appear at all in the certificates, either because they are found only in other types of sources, as in the case of the label 'freeman' which is discernible only in the wills under study,[35] or because they are particularly uncommon, something noticeable in relation to certain obscure offices, such as clerk of the hanaper, parliamentary speaker and royal cup-bearer.

[35] See: PROB 11/28/273 and PROB 11/20/213, for the wills of Robert Smith and Pancras Colred, the only individuals under study with the descriptor of freeman applied in the documentation.

Table 6.4 Staple Transactions by Description Categories.

Description Category	Occupational	Social	Familial	Official
Total Individuals Assessed	1,674	1,607	244	182
Total Crediting Individuals	885	394	56	106
Total Borrowing Individuals	872	1,261	194	86
Total Lent	£164,188 5s. 8d.	£107,448 5s. 10d.	£7,247 18s. 10d.	£60,722 19s.
Average Lent	£185 10s. 5d.	£272 14s. 3d.	£129 8s. 8d.	£572 17s. 3d.
Total Borrowed	£80,450 11s. 11d.	£226,946 14s. 3d.	£44,396 1s. 8d.	£9,245 15s.
Average Borrowed	£92 5s. 3d.	£179 19s. 5d.	£228 17s.	£107 10s. 3d.

Basic examination of numbers of creditors and debtors by category of description can potentially indicate something of the wider trends for the balance in commercial power. If we associate the ability to lend with financial influence, certain categories of individuals seem to come to the fore. For instance, only official individuals yield an overall greater number of creditors than debtors, with 106 and eight-six lending and borrowing individuals respectively. By contrast, occupational, social and familial individuals are comprised of more borrowing individuals. Indeed, social descriptors, as an example, yield just 394 creditors compared with 1,261 debtors. Initially therefore such statistics would seem to suggest that individuals operating in an official capacity held commercial sway, producing creditors far more regularly

than the other three categories of description. However, when mean borrowing and lending averages are considered, the picture is altered somewhat. Indeed, occupational descriptors, despite producing marginally more debtors than creditors, lend on average more than double what they typically borrowed, suggesting they too also held crediting prominence in the staple. Unsurprisingly therefore, examples of occupational individuals providing credit to debtors defined by social or familial status are commonplace, as demonstrated in the staple action of Henry Danvers, a mercer, who lent £100 to Thomas Durem, an esquire.[36] Similarly, the London grocer Gerard Leder, was particularly prolific in this regard, lending in total £163 12s. 8d. across five separate staple transactions, all of which appear to have bankrolled provincial gentry men, such as John Huntley, John Walsh, Henry Seward, all esquires from Somerset, Christopher Norton, a Yorkshire gentleman, William Stapleton, a gentleman residing in the capital, Thomas Routhall, a Gloucestershire based gentleman and also a Devonshire gentleman named William Sachefild.[37]

Interestingly, given the emphasis in the historiography upon the traditional conception of the dominant merchant businessman, it is somewhat surprising to note that proportional lending seems to have actually been concentrated within the hands of official individuals, with £572 17s. 3d. lent on average, compared with just £185 10s. 5d. for occupational descriptors. Such a pattern however, is perhaps easily explainable as it was often the most successful merchants who attained civic office in this period, undoubtedly going some way to explain this apparent commercial dominance of official individuals. For example, the draper John Rudston, who lent £1,850 in eleven different staple transactions between 1513 and 1531, was often identified by his aldermanic status in certificates registered from November 1521 onwards.[38] Despite this, it should be noted that these statistics are suggestive of a dualistic rather than a purist route for

[36] C 152/65/1/34.
[37] C 241/277/54; C 241/280/64; C 241/280/151; C 241/282/40; C 241/237/117.
[38] See for example: C 152/65/2/591.

truly determined careerists. Given the limited number of official individuals and the proportionally large amounts of cash they lent, it could be theorised that staple success for such dualists, was indeed the preserve of the cash-rich elite, whose successful business careers provided the solvency required to engage with the public sphere. Perhaps therefore, at least for certain enterprising individuals, initial commercial purism later bred careerist dualism.

Whilst the commercial statistics for these four collective categories of description are illustrative with regards to the balance of commercial power within the staple more generally, examination of the prominent lenders and borrowers on a more individual scale is also important. Indeed, certain individual descriptors are shown to have been especially prominent with regards to the quantities of cash flowing in and out of their possession. As a starting point therefore, the table below includes the most prolific staple lenders in the staple, with the prerequisite that they lent on average £300 per person in the course of their commercial careers.

Table 6.5 Most Prolific Staple Lenders by Descriptor (Mean Lent of £300 or more).[39]

Descriptor	No. of Crediting Individuals	Total Lending Transactions	Mean Lending Transactions	Total Lent (£sd)	Mean Average Lent (£sd)
Mayor of the Staple	3	20	6.7	£3,505 6s. 8d.	£1,168 8s. 11d.
Constable of the Staple	5	24	4.8	£5,425 6s. 8d.	£1,085 1s. 4d.
Esquire of the King's Household	3	8	2.7	£3,220	£1,073 6s. 8d.
Earl	2	3	1.5	£1,526 13s. 4d.	£763. 6s. 8d.

[39] The following descriptors have been omitted from the table because they yield only a single individual for analysis, despite lending a total of £300 or more: Fustian Shearer, Prothonotary, Sheriff, Remembrancer of the Exchequer, Porter of the King's Chamber, Lawyer of the King, Groom-porter of the King's Chamber, Chamberlain of the King, Treasurer of the King's Chamber, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, Gentleman Usher.

Alderman	44	259	5.9	£33,054 11s. 7d.	£751 4s. 10d.
Lord	4	6	1.5	£3,000	£750
Knight	58	235	4.1	£42,352 11s. 10d.	£730 4s. 3d.
Lawyer	2	5	2.5	£1,067	£533 10s.
Merchant Haberdasher	3	12	4.0	£1,408 6s.	£469 8s. 7d.
Hat Merchant	3	12	4.0	£1,262 10d.	£420 13s. 4d.
Merchant of the Calais Staple	34	107	3.2	£13,832 3s.	£406 16s. 7d.
Esquire	78	128	1.6	£27,291 9s. 10d.	£349 17s. 10d.
Barber Surgeon	3	30	10	£1,034 13s. 4d.	£344 17s. 3d.
Goldsmith	41	124	3.0	£13,798 18s. 7d.	£336 11s. 3d.
Baron of the Exchequer	2	3	1.5	£645 8d.	£322 10s. 4d.
Dyer	5	6	1.2	£1,510	£302
Mercer	190	656	3.5	£57,041 2s. 3d.	£300 4s. 3d.

As shown in table 6.5, there is an interesting mix of descriptors discernible with regards to the most prolific lending participants of the staple. Of the seventeen prominent descriptors discernible, eight are occupational creditors, five are official and four are of social demarcation, with familial individuals the only category not represented. Beginning with the prominent occupational lenders, the immediate impression is one of mercantile dominance, with staple merchants, goldsmiths, merchant haberdashers, mercers and other occupational elites well

represented. This is entirely expected given their prolific numbers within the staple and also the nature of their commercial influence. Indeed, such mercantile lending power-houses include some of the most prolific individuals in the entirety of the staple, such as Richard Gresham, the London mercer with twenty-two crediting actions to his name, worth £6,413 6s. 8d. in total, William Capell, a draper whose lending of £4,556 8d. was spread across thirty separate transactions, and the £4,633 5s. 8d. found in the twenty-five staple certificates of the goldsmith John Mundy, to name but a few.[40] However, it should also be noted that occupations typically deemed to be of 'lesser status' also feature, namely dyers and barber surgeons, whose crediting individuals yield an average total lent of £302 and £344 17s. 3d. respectively. Indeed, easily the most prominent of these was Thomas Twyn, a London barber surgeon whose lack of a mercantile descriptor did not seem to have prevented his conscious and determined career as a staple lender, if his twenty-seven crediting transactions are anything to go by.[41] As such, although the crediting hegemony of London's mercantile elite is undeniable, other occupational individuals seem to have found themselves, on occasion, among their ranks, a phenomenon which will be discussed in further detail at the end of this chapter.[42]

[40] For the staple activity of Richard Gresham: C 152/65/2/406; C 152/65/2/477; C 152/65/2/685; C 152/65/2/692; C 152/65/2/699; C 152/65/2/768; C 241/279/117; C 241/280/32; C 241/280/148 C 241/281/15; C 241/281/68; C 241/281/124; C 241/281/125; C 241/281/126; C 241/281/127; C 241/282/104; C 241/282/133; C 241/283/10; C 241/237/113; C 241/237/114; for the staple activity of William Capell: C 152/65/1/8; C 152/65/1/62; C 152/65/1/63; C 152/65/1/67; C 152/65/1/68; C 152/65/1/123; C 152/65/1/138; C 152/65/1/163; C 241/266/37; C 241/269/17; C 241/269/37; C 241/269/40; C 241/269/41; C 241/270/23; C 241/271/14; C 241/271/23; C 241/271/36; C 241/271/41; C 241/272/11; C 241/272/20; C 241/272/25; C 241/273/71; C 241/275/296; C 241/275/276; C 241/275/260; C 241/275/211; C 241/275/212; C 241/275/72; C 241/275/11; C 241/275/12; for the staple activity of John Mundy: C 152/65/2/101; C 152/65/2/147; C 152/65/2/148; C 152/65/2/151; C 152/65/2/152; C 152/65/2/154; C 152/65/2/273; C 152/65/2/274; C 152/65/2/441; C 152/65/2/540; C 152/65/2/546; C 152/65/2/547; C 152/65/2/615; C 241/273/54; C 241/275/216; C 241/275/89; C 241/275/76; C 241/275/28; C 241/278/91; C 241/278/92; C 241/280/110; C 241/282/72; C 241/283/40; C 241/283/38; C 241/283/39.

[41] For the staple activity of Thomas Twyn: C 152/65/2/71; C 152/65/2/135; C 152/65/2/138; C 152/65/2/175; C 152/65/2/183; C 152/65/2/185; C 152/65/2/187; C 152/65/2/194; C 152/65/2/201; C 152/65/2/202; C 152/65/2/239; C 152/65/2/244; C 152/65/2/252; C 152/65/2/369; C 152/65/2/385; C 152/65/2/389; C 152/65/2/438; C 152/65/2/457; C 152/65/2/489; C 152/65/2/491; C 152/65/2/573; C 152/65/2/627; C 152/65/2/733; C 241/277/43; C 241/278/6; C 241/278/71.

[42] The commercial career of Thomas Twyn has been reconstructed in greater detail at the end of this chapter, highlighting not only his occupational uniqueness, but his steadfast commercial purism.

In looking at the social descriptors present, knights immediately stand out, owing to their comparatively sizeable number of mean crediting transactions per person, producing a figure of 4.1 for the fifty-eight knightly creditors appearing within the certificates across 235 lending transactions. Although, lords and earls also feature, with larger lending averages of £763 6s. 8d. and £750 respectively, such figures are representative of only six individuals across nine transactions, suggesting that for many of these social elites, prominent commercial engagement was neither the norm nor statistically consistent. Although it should be acknowledged that a proportion of these knightly staplers were in fact mercantile businessmen masquerading as traditional gentility, as in the case of Bartholomew Reed, a goldsmith who was knighted in the course of his career and lent £2,095 in the staple,[43] the majority do in fact seem to have come from long-standing provincial stock. For instance, of the fifty-eight knightly creditors listed in the table, only twelve have a discernible occupational descriptor at some point in their documented careers (20.7 per cent). Instead, it is far more common to find prominent knightly creditors such as Hugh Conway, a royal office holder of Welsh heritage through his father, who lent a total of £1,046 13s. 4d. in the staple in this period.[44] It would seem therefore, that whilst socially defined individuals were typically not among the most prolific crediting businessmen of the staple, knights were the exception, seemingly aligning with P. Nightingale's earlier analysis of staple activity in the thirteenth century.[45]

Finally, in turning to the officially described individuals in table 6.5, these particular creditors seem to yield particularly sizeable average lending totals, typically coupled with a substantial

[43] C 241/266/1; C 241/269/24; C 241/269/36; C 241/273/8; C 241/273/30; C 241/275/227; C 241/275/188; C 241/275/179; C 241/275/123; C 241/275/124; C 241/275/125; C 241/275/68.
[44] N. Orme, 'Conway, Sir Hugh (*c.* 1440-1518)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/109666 [accessed 11/05/2018]; C 152/65/1/128; C 241/275/121.
[45] Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants', pp. 39-40. Nightingale highlights the important role of provincial knights in the staple in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

mean number of transactions per individual. For example, the forty-four aldermen appearing on average in 5.9 lending transactions each, lent the third highest collective total of £33,054 11s. 7d., with an impressive average of £751 4s. 10d. per person. Moreover, mayors of the staple, although fewer in number, not only appear most frequently as creditors on average, with 6.7 transactions each, but also lend the largest sums of cash, producing a mean of £1,168 8s. 11d. Such a pattern is perhaps to be anticipated, considering that two of the most prolific official descriptors are directly related to the staple itself: mayors and constables. The appearances of such individuals in the certificates is not surprising therefore but does seem to confirm that official careers and commercial business often went hand in hand. In other words, those individuals who made frequent use of the staple on a day to day basis could perhaps reasonably expect to be appointed to act within the staple in an official capacity, should they so desire it.

Table 6.6 Most Prolific Staple Borrowers by Descriptor (Mean Borrowed of £300 or more).[46]

Descriptor	No. of Borrowing Individuals	Total Borrowing Transactions	Mean Borrowing Transactions	Total Borrowed (£sd)	Mean Average Borrowed (£sd)
Knight	96	228	2.4	£55,509 5s. 3d.	£578 4s. 5d.
Lord	18	31	1.7	£8,901 18s.	£494 11s.
Merchant of the Calais Staple	31	40	1.3	£11,064 11s. 5d.	£356 18s. 5d.
Esquire	253	482	1.9	£88,864 9s. 3d.	£351 4s.

[46] The following descriptors have been omitted from the table because they yield only a single individual for analysis, despite producing a total of £300 or more: Bailiff of the King, Esquire of the King, Baron of the Exchequer.

A similar statistical breakdown can be conducted for prominent borrowers on the basis of individual descriptors (table 6.6). It is immediately noticeable that there are far fewer descriptors that emerge with a mean average of £300 or more borrowed per person. Indeed, just four categories of individuals are discernible that fulfil these parameters, three of which are social and one of which is occupational. Whilst it is perhaps not surprising to find social categories such as lords and esquires amongst the most prominent borrowers in the staple, owing to the patterns outlined previously, the appearance of merchants of the Calais staple is rather more unexpected. These staple merchants, accounting for thirty-one individuals, appear as the third most prominent category of borrower, with a mean average of £356 18s. 5d., across 1.3 borrowing transactions per person. A particularly representative exemplar would be William Haddon, a merchant of the Calais staple, whose only involvement at the Westminster staple was to borrow £400 from the mercer Thomas Browne in April 1522.[47] Evidently therefore, despite their appearance in table 6.5 as prominent lenders, producing a slightly higher average of £406 16s. 7d., these staple merchants were also active consumers of credit. Whilst it is difficult to say with certainty whether these mercantile individuals were on the commercial back foot, as one could easily speculate that this borrowing activity was actually the result of purchasing goods on credit, it does suggest that the careerist motivations behind lending and borrowing within the staple was by no means clear-cut.

Given the dominance of genteel borrowers in table 6.6, such as knights and esquires, closer examination of their staple activities is required, particularly as evidence of conscious commercial strategies through borrowing are nevertheless detectable. The case of William Reed, a knight from Boarstall in Buckinghamshire, is particularly illustrative of this, if a little extreme. Emerging as the singular most prominent consumer of credit in the entirety of the

[47] C 152/65/2/450.

staple sampling, both in terms of number of borrowing transactions, with nineteen, and also amount borrowed, with a total of £9,786 8s. 3d., Reed was evidently reliant upon the staple. In looking at his staple trajectory, Reed first emerges as a debtor in the certificates in 1504, thereafter appearing fairly regularly until 1511.[48] After an absence of eight years, Reed appears in an extent for debt of 1519, this time in debt to a high-profile creditor, John Heron, the Treasurer of the King's Chamber, for 400 marks.[49] Thereafter Reed continued to appear in similar cases up until 1526, when he defaulted upon his debt to Robert John. Indeed, this particular extent shows that the manor of Boarstall, where Reed was always described as hailing from, had been confiscated and seized into the King's hands.[50] Whilst his earlier defaults had resulted in the confiscation of property, up until this point his ancestral lands in Boarstall had remained untouched. Perhaps such an important loss therefore was indicative of Reed's financial desperation, as he seems to have constantly borrowed, despite the ever-worsening consequences. However, when William Reed reappeared in 1529 he was in default alongside Anthony Seyntamond (also called Wroughton), for £1,000 owed to the Bishop of Rochester. William Reed is recorded as having no lands or chattels in the county and so Anthony, his fellow debtor, had his property confiscated instead, land which was worth £18 annually.[51] As a result Anthony's lands were forfeited to repay the debt instead of Reed's. Although, the mystery of Reed's repeated defaulting is still somewhat unclear, the above reconstruction nevertheless reveals several important clues. For instance, Reed seemed to be in dire financial trouble, repeatedly borrowing from various creditors, perhaps to finance his estates or knightly lifestyle, but ultimately failing to repay them time and again. In relation to this Reed seems to have held substantial properties, forfeiting various lands to the sheriffs until

[48] See for example: C 241/275/95; C 241/275/88; C 241/275/75; C 241/275/76; C 241/275/63; C 241/275/11; C 131/97/18.
[49] C 131/102/30.
[50] C 241/278/47.
[51] C 131/111/18.

1526, when he finally ceded his favoured manor of Boarstall. Perhaps therefore his continued access to credit was rooted in his possession of extensive collateral, enabling him to persuade sympathetic creditors to lend, owing to the security his property offered such loans. Whilst one could hypothesize therefore that Reed's access to credit should have dried up once his last manor was repossessed, this was clearly not the case. Indeed, Reed continued to borrow, although he now relied upon others, entering into loan agreements with landed individuals such as Anthony Seyntmond, Thomas West and even his own son Leonard Reed. Perhaps a highly suppositional explanation for Reed's continued access to credit therefore was his ability to manipulate others, firstly his debtors and then his borrowing partners, persuading them to forfeit their own properties as loan collateral when he had nothing left. Although perhaps an extreme case, the borrowing trajectory of William Reed reveals how, at least in terms of lending and borrowing power, it was not just prominent creditors who could wield significant influence within the staple.

6.4 The Dualists: Office Holding as Conscious Career Path.

As discussed in the historiographical literature at the beginning of this chapter, office holding was an important route for many late medieval careerists. The staple users under study were no different and some of these commercially engaged individuals also yield an official descriptor at some point in their discernible professional lives. In examining the descriptors applied to the users of the Westminster Staple within the certificates therefore, a total of 180 individuals are revealed to hold some form of office at the time of registering one or other of their debts. For example, in 1492, Guy Woolston, a Northamptonshire knight, loaned £500 to a local gentleman, but also crucially provided further information regarding his current official role as sheriff.[52] When this is expanded through analysis of supplementary material, office

[52] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Certificates of Statute Staple and Statute Merchant, C 241/267/33.

holding is shown to have been even more pervasive, with a further 136 individuals attaining such positions at some point during their professional lives, producing a sample group of 316 staple participants, or 8.8 per cent of the total. In terms of the individuals under study there are four main discernible types of office within the documentation and, as shown in the table below, this is comprised of royal, civic, craft and ecclesiastical offices or positions (table 6.7).

Table 6.7 Numbers of Individuals in Each Office Holding Category.

Number of Office Holding Individuals	Civic Office	Ecclesiastical Office	Royal Office	Craft Office
316	156	41	151	26

The most pervasive are civic office holders, with 156 individuals occupying at least one such position. For the purposes of this particular study, civic office refers to those individuals who held elected and usually urban positions, such as alderman, mayor or sheriff of a particular town or city. For example, Richard Nayler appeared as an alderman in a staple certificate of 1483 and William Bacon as sheriff of London in 1480-1.[53] This is closely followed by those who attained royal office, whereby the individual was either appointed directly by the crown, usually in an administrative capacity, or else was connected to the royal household in some regard, which often included attending to the needs of the monarch or his family.[54] Examples include the various appointees to the King's household, such as Owen Eyton and Edward Salisbury, both described as 'esquires of the King's household' in July 1502.[55] Despite seemingly operating within the urban sphere, lay subsidy assessors and collectors, including William Spenser, a knightly assessor for Warwickshire during the taxation of 1523-7, were

[53] C 241/275/277; A. P. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Henry III-1908* (London, 1908), p. 154.
[54] Kisby, 'Officers and Office-Holding', p. 1.
[55] C 241/275/193.

ultimately crown representatives and so have been counted within this bracket.[56] Those who sought ecclesiastical or religious office appear less frequently, with forty-one such individuals across the entire sample group. Such positions range from the humble rector, as in the case of William Mote of the parish church of St. Gabriel Fenchurch in London, all the way to the lofty ecclesiastical heights of Archbishop of Canterbury.[57] Finally, individuals who held craft office, characterised by appointed position within one's mistery, such as warden or master, account for just twenty-six office holders. For instance, William Fitz-William, a merchant tailor, held the company position of warden twice in 1494 and 1498 and also the position of master in 1499.[58] Although it might be tempting to read more into this disproportionate spread, it is likely that the comparative paucity of craft and ecclesiastical positions may well relate simply to the material under study, as, for example, lay individuals tend to predominate in the certificates over their ecclesiastical counterparts. Indeed, these proportions are repeated in analyses of actual offices (table 6.8), accounting for the fact that one individual could have multiple positions over their lifetime.

Table 6.8 Total Numbers of Offices for the Users of the Westminster Statute Staple.

Civic Offices	Ecclesiastical Offices	Royal Offices	Craft Offices	Total Number of Offices
320	68	248	46	682

Once again royal and civic offices predominate, with 248 and 320 individual positions discernible within the documentation, confirming that secular careerists were indeed much more common users of the Westminster staple than their ecclesiastical counterparts. However, collation of the numbers of offices can also provide mean averages for the quantity of offices

[56] The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Account and other Records relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation, E 179/133/120/7.
[57] C 152/65/2/780; C 152/65/2/512.
[58] M. Davies, 'Fitzwilliam, Sir William (1460?-1534), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9662?docPos=1 [accessed 30/04/2018].

held by such careerists. In total, 682 offices are discernible in relation to the 316 office holding individuals under study, producing an average of 2.2 official positions per person. Such proportions can be extrapolated for the separate categories of office also, with an average of 2.1 offices for civic officials, 1.6 for royal officials, 1.7 for ecclesiastical appointees and 1.8 for craft individuals. It would seem therefore that civic officials not only predominated in terms of individuals operating within the staple, but also in the average numbers of offices these staple careerists typically held. Therefore, subsequent analyses will focus particularly upon these non-ecclesiastical careerists, owing to their individual and collective prominence within the staple.

6.6 Commerce and Office: The Perks of Position.

Having outlined the varying proportions of different office holders utilising the Westminster staple court, it is naturally important to examine the ways in which these particular careerists engaged with the staple process and how such potentially commercially motivated activities connected with their public careers. In the interests of focusing upon the most important and actively discernible office holding trends, craft positions, although relating to twenty-six individuals, will not be included in subsequent analyses, owing to a paucity of supplementary information and omission from the staple certificates themselves.

Table 6.9 Lending and Borrowing Statistics for Civic and Royal Office Holders Extrapolated from Certificates of Statute Staple.

	Small-Scale Borrowers (£50 or less)	**Mid-range Borrowers (>£50-£250)**	**Large-scale Borrowers (>£250)**	**Totals**
Royal	38	28	17	83
Civic	7	11	9	27
	Small-Scale Lenders (£50 or less)	**Mid-range Lenders (>£50-£250)**	**Large-scale Lenders (>£250)**	**Totals**
Royal	16	26	25	67
Civic	32	60	36	128

The above table demonstrates collective lending and borrowing statistics for the two major types of office holders. Royal office holders universally emerge as the most common type of borrower when compared with their civic counterparts. This royal domination across all three borrowing categories most likely relates to the kinds of commercial activities these individuals were regularly tasked with in the course of their crown-appointed duties, particularly as members of the King's entourage were often involved in provisioning the royal household or else financing the monarch's lifestyle.[59] As a result these royal officials would regularly take out loans or purchase goods on credit to accomplish these tasks. Indeed, this is perhaps best shown in their predominance as mid-range borrowers, appearing twenty-eight times, as monetary sums ranging from £50 up to £250 could easily be representative of the purchase of household items and other luxury goods suitable for royal tastes. For instance, Gabriel Josselyn,

[59] G. W. Bernard, 'The Rise of Sir William Compton, Early Tudor Courtier', *The English Historical Review*, 96, 381 (1981), p. 756. Bernard demonstrates Compton's day to day expenses on behalf of the King, including the purchase of jewels.

described as a gentleman of the King's Household and appearing in two staple certificates registered in 1527, first borrowed £30 from Oliver Leder, a fishmonger, and then £24 from William Botry, a mercer, amounting to a borrowed sum of £54.[60] Given the amount owed and the occupations of Josselyn's creditors, it is not outlandish to assume he was in fact purchasing goods on credit in line with his royal obligations. Indeed, on both occasions Josselyn was borrowing jointly with Henry Palmer, another gentleman of the King's Household, suggesting that the pair of them actively worked together to fulfil their royal duties.

Whilst lending activity on the part of royally-appointed officials is far less common, there are still a significant proportion who do provide credit on occasion. Indeed, the fact that twenty-five royal officials fall into the large-scale lending bracket strongly suggests that such positions were in themselves highly lucrative, or else were usually attained by the already independently wealthy. Such crediting individuals range from Robert Reed, one of the King's personal lawyers and later a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, who lent in total £567 across four transactions, to the well-known Sir John Heron, who held various royal offices, including Treasurer of the Chamber, and lent £3,400 across eight separate certificates.[61] In fact, John Heron not only emerges as the leading royally-appointed lender, but is also the sixth largest creditor in the entirety of the sampling under study, demonstrating both his wealth and also the important financial components to his offices. Moreover, considering the majority of these particularly prominent creditors held important or prestigious royal positions, as opposed to the comparatively lowly crown-appointed offices of their borrowing counterparts, it would suggest that such wealth and lending ability was achievable only after significant royal service. As such it is clear that a royal career had its benefits, something which is reflected in the

[60] C 241/279/112; C 241/280/40.
[61] For the crediting activity of Robert Reed see: C 241/269/13; C 241/269/39; C 241/271/3; C 241/271/7. For the crediting activity of John Heron see: C 241/280/25; C 241/280/160; C 241/281/66; C152/65/2/80; C152/65/2/85; C152/65/2/86; C152/65/2/89; C152/65/2/268.

generalised lending and borrowing statistics in table 6.9, but that determined crown officials would nevertheless have to thoroughly commit themselves to attaining such lofty goals.

Civic office holders, in examining their lending and borrowing statistics, produce a particularly interesting pattern, routinely emerging as infrequent borrowers but also the most common creditors. Indeed, only twenty-seven civic office holders borrowed money within the certificates, suggesting these individuals could boast a certain level of financial solvency. This is compounded by the fact that civic officials routinely lent to others, with ninety-six such individuals providing over £50 in credit (table 6.9). A prime example would be William Isaac, a draper and alderman of London, who lent £100 across two certificates registered in August 1494.[62] It would seem therefore that civic office was by far the most commercially dominant, typically attracting individuals with significant wealth or else prominent business activities. However, unlike their often equally wealthy royal counterparts, the duties associated with their particular selected offices do not seem to have required extensive borrowing or purchase of goods on credit. Instead, it would seem these civic careerists were able to maintain a certain level of crediting activity, despite their elected obligations, as demonstrated by their continued lending. Indeed, on rare occasions the certificates of statute staple provide evidence to this effect as they sometimes explicitly state the reason for the loan. For instance, in June 1513, John Rudston, a London draper, but also sometime sheriff, mayor and alderman of the capital, lent £50 to Christopher Hillyard a Yorkshire esquire, stating the money was 'for merchandise purchased from him at the same staple' ('pro mercandisis ab eam eadem stapula').[63] Clearly Rudston was continuing his business activities as a draper, presumably selling cloth and other

[62] C 241/269/6; C 241/269/7.
[63] C 152/65/1/135.

textile products through the Westminster staple, despite also acting in some of London's most prestigious civic positions.

6.7 Career Trajectories of Office Holding Staplers.

Mirroring the analysis undertaken for the commercial activity of these individuals, the lengths of the careers of those staple users who also held public or appointed office is also important in understanding the longevity of dualistic careers. It is possible to calculate the mean length of careers for each of the three major categories of office holder, namely royal, ecclesiastical and civic individuals, based upon the chronological patterns of their respective time in office.

Table 6.10 Career Lengths for the Three Major Types of Office.

Mean Average Official Career Length (Years)	Mean Average Civic Career Length (Years)	Mean Average Royal Career Length (Years)	Mean Average Ecclesiastical Career Length (Years)
14.9	15.3	19.4	23.3

As such, the above table (table 6.10) relates to the 169 individuals with estimable career lengths discernible. In looking at the mean career lengths for the different categories of office holders, it is intriguing to note the apparent longevity of ecclesiastical careerists, compared with civic and royal officials. Indeed, the average church-appointed official in the staple could expect to reasonably remain in office for just over two decades, whilst civic officials in the employ of the city, averaged only 15.3 years from start to finish. Despite this, when the careers of all 169 official individuals are collated, regardless of official demarcation, the overall discernible average length of public career for these individuals lasted approximately 14.9 years from beginning to end. Initially, this seems somewhat low considering the expectation would be for

the truly determined individual to devote their entire adult life to a career in elected or appointed office. The most obvious explanation would be the entirely unpredictable effect of mortality, which would necessarily prematurely end one's career regardless of years of service. Indeed, it was quite typical for such individuals to die whilst in office, initially suggesting that, for the determined careerist, office holding was indeed a lifetime investment. For example, William Bacon's traceable public career lasted a mere three years before his untimely death in 1483 but, by contrast, William Capell's comparatively mammoth thirty year tenure in civic office was ended only by his death in 1515.[64] However, the incidences of dismissal, discharge and even 'retirement' cannot be ignored, as outlined in the table below.

Table 6.11 Statistics for the Termination of Official Careers.

Number of 'Premature' Career Ends	Death in Office	Average No. of Years Elapsed Between Office and Death	Known Discharges	Potential Retirements	Other
71	98	10.1	17	47	7

Of the 169 individuals with dateable official careers, seventy-one such individuals seemed to have ended their careers before their date of death, compared with ninety-eight who died whilst in office. Of those individuals who, for whatever reason, experienced a premature end to their public career, the average number of years elapsed between their last dateable official appointment and their death, was approximately a decade. Indeed, such action could well be perceived to have been a result of retirement, something confirmed in the forty-seven potential retirees in the data set. For example, James Hobart, a lawyer who amassed substantial royal favour and held discernible office from 1466 until his resignation in 1507, did not die until

[64] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 154; PROB 11/18/292.

1517.[65] One can assume that after forty-one years of service, Hobart elected to end his public career on his terms and enjoy his remaining twilight years. Other office holding careerists appear to have been less fortunate in the latter days of their public careers, with seventeen known discharges from office, usually for civic officials and under humiliating circumstances. As an example of the former, John Caunton was permitted discharge from his duties as alderman in 1528, after serving only five years, on a plea of extreme poverty.[66] Perhaps the most extreme example is William Lamberd's civic career, which lasted less than one day, having been appointed an alderman in March 1510 but discharged from his duties that same day on a fine of 500 marks.[67] Finally, the 'other' category listed in the table is typically characterised by those officials whose public careers were cut short due to other reasons, such as imprisonment or execution. Seemingly unique to the royal officials under study, a certain number of such careerists seem to have found themselves suddenly lacking in royal favour and losing more than just their official positions in the process. For instance, John Hussey's thirty-seven years in royal service, which included appointments as Master of the Wards, Privy Councillor and Justice of the Peace, was abruptly ended when he was executed for treason in June 1537.[68] Nevertheless, fifty-six of the 169 individuals (33.3 per cent) survived long enough and in good health to produce a public career which lasted twenty or more years. John Brugge is a prime example, with a career spanning twenty-eight years, from 1502 until 1530.[69] Easily the most prolific careerist in term of years served was George Monoux, clocking up half a

[65] E. W. Ives, 'Hobart, Sir James (d. 1517)', in L. Goldman (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13392 [accessed 11/05/2018]; R. Somerville, 'Henry VII's 'Council Learned in the Law'', *The English Historical Review*, 54, 215 (1939), p. 437, which mentions Hobart's role as a councillor of the king.
[66] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, pp. 35, 199.
[67] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 207.
[68] R. W. Hoyle, 'Hussey, John, Baron Hussey (1465/6-1537)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14266 [accessed 11/05/2018].
[69] For the public career of John Brugge see: E. E. Rich, 'List of Officials of the Staple of Westminster', *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 4, 2 (1933), p. 193; Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 168; H. Miller, 'Brydges (Brugges), John (by 1470-1530) of London', in S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509-1558* (London, 1982). URL: http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/brydges-%28brugges%29-john-1470-1530 [accessed 11/05/2018].

century in public office, both in Bristol and in London.[70] As such it is clear from analysis of these general office holding trends that these civic careerists not only actively sought to balance their commercial business with their political aspirations, but that for many, elected office was truly a lifelong commitment.

In order to explore office holding careerism in greater depth, the data relating to the 156 civic officials has been used for further reconstruction, owing to the comparative glut of information relating to the office holding activities of these particular individuals (table 6.12).

[70] For the public career of George Monoux see: G. F. Bosworth, *George Monoux: The Man and his Work* (Walthamstow Antiquarian Society, 1927), pp. 7-8, 10, 12-13; Rich, 'List of Officials', p. 193; Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 18; B. Morgan, 'Monoux, George (b. in or before 1465, d. 1544)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38558 [accessed 11/05/2018]; it should be noted that in 1524 George Monoux agreed with his colleagues that, in exchange for a Southwark tenement which he gave to the city, he could remain an alderman but not be expected to attend the court except on urgent occasions, effectively reducing his civic obligations somewhat. For more on this see: C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (Oxford, 2004), p. 143.

Table 6.12 Number of Individuals per Civic Office Holding Position.

Civic Offices	No. of Individuals	Percentage of Civic Officials (%)
Sheriff	106	67.9
Alderman	100	64.1
Mayor of a city	50	32.1
MP	14	9.0
Auditor	11	7.1
Constable of the Staple	7	4.6
Mayor of the Westminster Staple	6	3.8
Chamberlain of a city	6	3.8
Serjeant at Law	4	2.6
Recorder of a city	4	2.6
Churchwarden	4	2.6
Bailiff of a city	3	1.9
Undersheriff	2	1.3
Mayor of the Calais Staple	1	0.6
Common Clerk of London	1	0.6
Mayor's Sword-Bearer	1	0.6

In examining table 6.12 above, which contains statistics relating to the proliferation of individual civic offices, certain key areas of prominence are immediately apparent. For instance, the most common position attained was that of sheriff, usually of London, with 106 of the 156 individuals under study achieving just that. This was followed by incidences of aldermen, with 64.1 per cent of these individuals reaching the aldermanic circle at some stage in their professional careers, suggesting this to be a thoroughly archetypal trait for this particular group of individuals, particularly as such a position was undoubtedly an aspiration for many of them, acting as an outward show of civic success. For example, Robert Fenrother, a London goldsmith, had been elected as alderman of the city by the early 1520s and swiftly

discarded his erstwhile occupational descriptor of goldsmith in favour of this new prestigious title, as shown in a certificate registered in 1524, when he lent 200 marks.[71] Finally, ascendancy to the mayoralty proves to have been the third most frequently attained civic position, with 32.1 per cent of the sample group reaching, arguably, the pinnacle of the civic career ladder at some point in their careers. Lawrence Aylmer and John Champneys are two such examples, both of whom were elected Mayor of London in 1508-9 and 1534-5 respectively.[72] Interestingly, many of these civic careerists were frequently knighted upon ascending to the mayoralty or, on rarer occasions, the aldermanry, demonstrating just one of the perks of elevated urban office. For example, Thomas Baldry was elected Mayor in 1523 and knighted in the same year.[73] In similar fashion, the knighting and mayoral election of Nicholas Lamberd both took place in 1531.[74] Clearly therefore, for the determined careerist, office holding provided a prime opportunity to ascend not only the civic ladder, but also the social one too.

Furthermore, attainment of these particular civic offices tended to follow a certain pattern, namely that of sheriff, then alderman and finally Mayor of London. For example, Richard Haddon was elected sheriff as early as 1496, became an alderman in 1499 until his death in 1516 and was made mayor of London both in 1506 and again in 1513.[75] Similarly, Rowland Hill began his civic career as sheriff in 1541-2, before ascending to the aldermanry in 1542 and finally becoming mayor in 1549-50.[76] Whilst such a definitive pattern seems to indicate a well-trodden path to civic success, it should also be acknowledged that these statistics are affected by the relevant documentary prevalence of different offices. For example, records of members of the aldermanry and the mayoralty are naturally more easily discernible than city

[71] C 241/281/4.
[72] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, pp. 47, 115.
[73] Rich, 'List of Officials', p. 193; Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 115.
[74] Rich, 'List of Officials', p. 193; Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 24.
[75] Rich, 'List of Officials', p. 193; Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 57.
[76] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, pp. 91, 218.

chamberlains or mayoral sword-bearers. Indeed, as shown in table 6.12, reference to such a sword-bearer can de definitively located just once within the entirety of the Westminster staple group, namely in relation to the civic career of Richard Berwick, who attained this rather obscure position in 1522.[77] If therefore the civic careers of these prominent creditors did commence with far less prestigious office, this is unfortunately difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain, particularly when their visibility in the documentation often goes hand in hand with their socio-economic success.

Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that the offices of alderman, sheriff and mayor were common career steps for many of these careerists, something potentially demonstrated by the average number of offices per civic individual.[78] Indeed, 2.1 per person seems surprisingly low, considering many of these individuals actively sought civic success. Whilst the aforementioned limitations on office holding records naturally play a role in the distortion of these figures, there nevertheless seems to have been a certain reluctance to hold more civic offices than was deemed necessary to reach the top of the urban hierarchy. Perhaps therefore, this may well indicate something of the financial and temporal burdens of elected office, as these individuals were still crediting businessmen, actively participating in the commercial sphere. In fact, evidence of the onerous nature of certain civic positions is found in an extent for debt relating to the prominent civic office holder Thomas Kneseworth dated to 1511. The extent, relating to the otherwise unrelated debt of £100 lent to Richard Cox by John Kyme, lists an extensive inventory of the property currently in the possession of Cox, largely consisting of various shops in London. Among these is a building in Bridge Street, described as 'the shop of Thomas Kneseworth, citizen and alderman of London.'[79] Given that the premises are still recorded as belonging to Kneseworth, and both he and Cox were fishmongers by trade, it is entirely likely

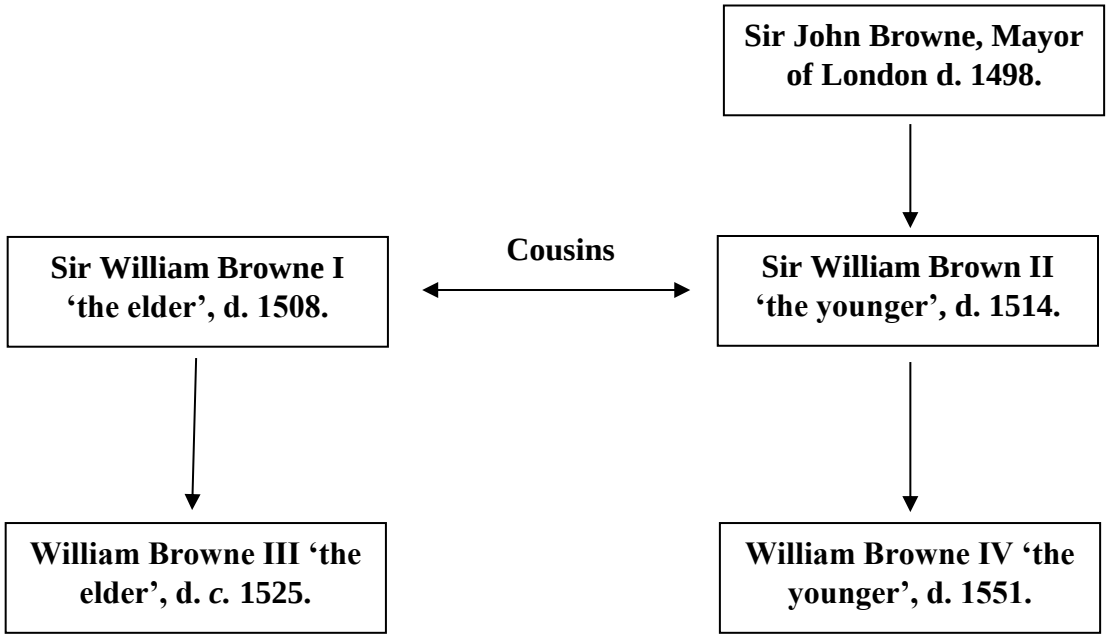
[77] Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 365.
[78] Refer to page 258 of this chapter for data relating to mean averages of offices per person.
[79] C 131/97/6.

that Thomas Kneseworth lent or rented out his place of business to a fellow trader whilst acting as an alderman, perhaps owing to the demands of office, both financial and temporal. The suggestion is therefore that, for individuals opting for a dualist career path, a balance between civic and commercial activity was necessary, as, unsurprisingly, single-minded devotion to just one would have a detrimental effect on the other, something seemingly consciously understood by these most successful of urban office holders.

6.8 A Tale of Four Brownes.

This need to balance the demands of one's commercial activity and one's political career is perhaps best exemplified by the demonstrative, but easily confusing, careers of the 'William Brownes', four related mercers with thoroughly interchangeable descriptors. In the interests of ease of explanation therefore, each William Browne has been assigned a number one through four in order of birth, as shown in the streamlined family tree below:

Figure 6.1 Simplified Family Tree of the Later Brownes.



The story of the 'Four Brownes' begins with their most prominent shared family member, Sir John, who was elected Lord Mayor of London, as well as to other civic positions, including various stints as Mayor of the Westminster staple court.[80] Both his son, William (II), and nephew, also called William (I), followed in his footsteps, becoming knighted in the process of scaling the civic career ladder. Indeed, both became sheriffs, aldermen and eventually mayors of London, just as John had done before them.[81] Owing to their overlapping periods of activity, the nephew and the son are described as 'the elder' and 'the younger' respectively in the certificates, presumably to prevent contemporary confusion in identification. For example, in a certificate dated to August 1492, concerning a loan of £40, Sir John's nephew is labelled 'William Brown the elder', whilst his cousin, John's son, is known simply as William Browne 'the younger' in an election certificate of 1501, in which he was appointed constable of the staple.[82] Moreover, both William Browne I and William Brown II appear very rarely in the staple certificates despite being prominent wool-selling mercers and merchants of the Calais staple. For instance, William II only appears as a creditor twice and his cousin just the once, incidentally both collectively lending a total of £140.[83] This limited staple involvement seems to suggest that continued office acquisition, particularly in relation to the capital, placed constraints, whether financial or temporal, upon an individual's ability to continue their chosen commercial ventures upon embarking on a determined civic career. Such an assessment is compounded by the evidence for the legacies of their progeny, as both their sons, also called William, do not appear to hold office to the same prominence of either of their fathers or shared ancestor, Sir John Browne. Conversely, they appear far more frequently as creditors in the certificates. Indeed, William Browne III, who appears alongside the descriptor 'the elder' in

[80] He is discernible as Westminster Staple Mayor as early as 1480, as shown in C 241/264/53 and C 152/65/1/205, which refer directly to his re-election as Staple Mayor in 1492.
[81] Rich, 'List of Officials', p. 193; Beaven, *The Aldermen*, pp. 115, 175.
[82] C 241/266/41; C 241/275/340.
[83] C 152/65/1/82; C 241/266/41; C 241/275/52.

the documents, owing to the deaths of both his father and uncle, the erstwhile 'elder Brownes', lent money six times, generating a total of £690 6s. 8d. in loans. Likewise, his kinsman, William Browne IV, had an impressive twelve certificates registered to him, amounting to a loan total of exactly £4,352. Whilst it could be argued in the case of William Browne IV that his civic career may have begun after the purview of this study, as he did not die until 1551, this is most definitely not the case for his kinsman, William Browne III, who died around 1525, well inside the temporal constraints of this research. Indeed, William III's only traceable office was the comparatively lowly station of staple constable, held in the year prior to his own death and likely the result of his extensive commercial connections with that particular court.[84] It would seem therefore, that this second generation of William Brownes had different priorities, perhaps choosing to concentrate more heavily upon their mercantile careers and involvement in the highly lucrative staple process, rather than embarking upon the costly and time-consuming task of attaining and holding elected office in the capital, as their paternal ancestors once did.

6.9 A Binary Path for Professional Success? Commercial Purists vs. Office Holding Dualists.

Examination of the professional lives of the staple individuals under study has uncovered a seemingly dichotomous emphasis, whereby determined careerists either elected to emphasize their commercial endeavours, seemingly exploiting the staple constantly and consistently for many years, or else actively sought office holding opportunity, whether in the civic, royal or ecclesiastical spheres. As such, the two reconstructive exemplars used to conclude this chapter will outline both of these seemingly competing careerist strategies.

1) Surgery and Merchant Shipping?: The Curious Case of Thomas Twyn.

[84] C152/65/2/735.

Our first chosen exemplar, Thomas Twyn, was a particularly interesting staple user. Not only was he the third most prominent lender discernible in the staple certificates in this time period, with twenty-seven separate transactions to his name, but his occupation was noticeably non-mercantile, at least in the traditional sense of the word. As one of only five barber surgeons in the entirety of this sampling, his chosen occupation, coupled with his evidently determined commercial engagement, makes Thomas a prime candidate for reconstruction. However, despite his prominence within the staple certificates, there is little else discernible in the documentary record with regards to the life and career of this businessman. Indeed, in terms of a public career, Thomas does not appear to have ever attained elected office, suggesting he opted for a purist route to professional success, focusing upon his commercial business above all else. Although such purism was indeed a known trait for many of the staple individuals in this study, it could be theorised that in this case, Twyn may well have been restricted in this particular sphere by the perceived lowliness of his chosen occupation, something seemingly confirmed by the fact that the first record of a barber surgeon ever becoming an alderman of London was not until 1550, sometime after Twyn seems to have been most active.[85]

Nevertheless, returning to Twyn's comparatively prominent commercial career, his twenty-seven lending transactions in the staple produced an impressive cash total of £961 6s. 8d. It would seem therefore that when Thomas was not treating his patients, he was lending cash, or even, perhaps combining the two and offering his medical services on credit. Further reconstruction of Thomas' life and career yields even greater insight into his business strategies with regards to the staple. Perhaps contrary to expectation, given his transactional dominance, Thomas's traceable career trajectory within the documentation spanned only seven years, with his first emergence in the certificates dated to June 1518, and from then on appearing fairly regularly up until about 1525. In collating the surviving material relating to Thomas's business

[85] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 350.

in these years, judicial writs and extents for debt are easily the most pervasive, as such documents were sent on behalf of Thomas to value the property of his various debtors. Interestingly, several of these writs clearly reveal Twyn's heavy investment in merchant shipping ventures, something perhaps unexpected given his occupation as a barber surgeon. For instance, on one occasion two of Thomas's debtors, the stockfishmongers William Ingold and Simon Pilgrim, failed to repay him, resulting in the valuation and seizure of their goods and assets to be handed over to Thomas as recompense.[86] This would be entirely unremarkable had the goods in question not been a full-size merchant ship called 'Le Mighell', complete with all kinds of sailing equipment and rowing boats. Even more intriguing is the fact that these boats were delivered to Thomas, having been valued at exactly £40, the amount of the original loan. This seems suspiciously convenient, either indicating that the sheriffs only vaguely estimated the worth of the vessel to match the debt, or else that Thomas had in fact been involved in financing this particular fishing venture from the start, perhaps lending the cash to enable William and Simon to purchase the vessels in the first place and then receiving these particular assets when his debtors defaulted.

Whilst this particular incidence seems to align with the image of a cold-hearted businessman, mercilessly stripping the assets of his various debtors, such a two-dimensional rendering of Thomas's character arguably does not stand up to scrutiny. For example, in September 1522 records from the Court of Chancery reveal how Thomas Twyn had graciously agreed to a repayment plan with two of his other debtors, John Reve and William Bogyn. Thomas agreed that if John and William pay him or his attorney £10 in July 1522, and then £10 in December 1522, the penalty of £30 for default would be waived. Indeed, William Bogyn is revealed to have met his first repayment of £10 when summoned before Chancery on the 13th of October 1522. Whilst it also revealed that John Reve had unfortunately died by this point, perhaps going

[86] C 131/265/18.

some way to explain Thomas Twyn's clemency towards his remaining surviving debtor, this case is nevertheless demonstrative of the various ways individual creditors chose to deal with defaulting debtors. Rather than immediately seizing goods and demanding they be imprisoned, Thomas elected to negotiate a repayment plan, allowing his debtors more time to reimburse him. As such, this brief example career reconstruction clearly demonstrates the complex crediting activity of Thomas Twyn, a man who apparently had a varied business portfolio built upon his personal relationships with an assortment of different debtors. Evidently, for businessmen such as Twyn, a public career was surplus to requirement and instead commercial purism was not just an alternative option for many of these staple individuals, but one which could be consciously and meticulously exploited with great success.

2) Rich, Welsh and Taking London by Storm: Sir James Yarford and Civic Success.

As demonstrated in the second part of this chapter, office holding careerists, usually of the civic variety, often intertwined their commercial activities with their aspirations for elected office. Indeed, extrapolation of archetypal characteristics has demonstrated the prevalence of civic careerists, usually acting as wealthy creditors and occupying multiple positions in an orchestrated climb to the top of the urban elected hierarchy. James Yarford, as a selection for illustrative reconstruction, was an archetypal office holder in many respects, but also boasted a few unusual traits. Indeed, one of the most striking was his claim to be the first welsh Lord Mayor of London upon his election in 1519.[87] Nevertheless, James is shown to have been an adept dual careerist, combining commercial success with political ambition.

James Yarford's first discernible appearance in the records came in 1485, when he was officially made free of the Mercer's Company, having up until that point been apprenticed to

[87] Beaven, *The Aldermen*, p. 168.

Stephen Gibson.[88] This corresponds with the evidence of the certificates of statute staple, as Yarford's first appearance in the certificates did not occur until the late 1490s, when he was described simply as a mercer, seemingly making regular use of the staple court now that his own business was up and running. For example, in August 1499 he lent £200 to John Tasburgh, a fellow London merchant.[89] Indeed, Yarford boasted an impressive lending history within the certificates alone, with eight crediting transactions, worth a total of £1,055 6s. 8d., traceable within the documentation and placing him squarely amongst the wealthy mercantile elite so often discussed within this chapter.[90] This kind of crediting activity on the part of Yarford, sometimes in conjunction with other merchants, occurred frequently up until 1507, when he appeared as a humble mercer in the certificates for the last time.[91] It was around this time that James Yarford's public career (table 6.13) seems to have truly begun in earnest, as his earliest office appears to have been Master of the Mercer's Company, a position he was elected to in 1506.[92] Indeed, such an appointment is unsurprising given Yarford's close company affiliations in the several years prior to this appointment, as shown in examination of various London property records, where he seems to have routinely acted as a company agent. For instance, in 1505 a tenement in St. Mary Colechurch, comprised of shops, cellars and solars, was granted to James Yarford, who had pursued the property at law on behalf of the Mercer's Company.[93] Having attained occupational prominence, Yarford's next career move was his first definitively civic position, when he was elected to the aldermanry in 1509, an office he retained until his

[88] Records for the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*. URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEW2997 [accessed 8/05/2017].
[89] C 241/273/4.
[90] For James Yarford's crediting activity see: C 152/65/2/112; C 152/65/2/212; C 241/269/29; C 241/273/4; C 241/273/58; C 241/275/204; C 241/275/136; C 241/275/71.
[91] C 152/65/2/212.
[92] Records of the Company of Mercers, *Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO)*. URL: http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEB2196. [Accessed 08/05/2017].
[93] D. J. Keene and V. Harding, 'St. Mary Colechurch 105/11', in *Historical Gazetteer of London Before the Great Fire Cheapside; Parishes of All Hallows Honey Lane, St. Martin Pomary, St. Mary Le Bow, St. Mary Colechurch and St. Pancras Soper Lane* (London, 1987), pp. 456-461. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-gazetteer-pre-fire/pp456-461 [accessed 25/08/2016].

death in 1527. Indeed, this ascension to London's civic inner circle is demonstrated in a certificate registered in October 1511, as Yarford was now described as 'citizen and alderman of London.'[94]

Table 6.13 James Yarford's Office Holding Career Path.

First Office	Second Office	Third Office	Fourth Office	Fifth Office	Traceable Career in Years
Master of the Mercers' Company	Alderman	Sheriff	Mayor of Westminster Staple	Mayor of London	18

Having taken his first steps as an elected official, Yarford next appeared as sheriff of London in 1514-15, as demonstrated in an extent for debt dated to July 1514, when he was tasked with imprisoning Robert Weston over an unpaid debt of £30.[95] He appeared for the last time as sheriff in the extents on the 14th February 1515, when he arrested Richard Hill for defaulting on his loan of £140.[96] James Yarford's next career move is revealed in the extents for debt, as he was elected Mayor of the Westminster staple for the first time on the 27th January 1515.[97] Furthermore, certificates detailing the official appointments of the staple court reveal that Yarford was re-elected in *c.*1520, retaining this position until his death some seven years later. For example, in July 1524, one such document describes the election of Yarford as Mayor of the staple, alongside William Browne III and William Hynde as his constables.[98] From this point on, whilst acting in the capacity of Mayor of the Westminster staple, Yarford ceased to appear as a creditor in the certificates. A simplistic explanation would ascribe this changed

[94] C 152/65/2/112.
[95] C 131/260/21.
[96] C 131/260/30.
[97] C 131/101/17.
[98] C 152/65/2/735.

behaviour to the demands of office, reasoning that Yarford's mayoral position prevented him from legally participating in the staple process as a creditor. Whilst this is entirely plausible, analysis of Yarford's previous crediting activity provides further clarity. For instance, Yarford appeared on a number of occasions in a crediting partnership with another prominent merchant, William Botry, with the pair of them actively pooling their finances to lend to various debtors. For example, in 1505 he and Botry jointly lent the sizeable sum of £540 to William Albrough, another mercer.[99] Indeed, from 1515 until his death, Yarford was consistently elected as Mayor of the Westminster staple and consequently disappeared as a creditor, neither discernible within the certificates nor extents for debt. William Botry, however, continued to appear as a prominent lender, registering his debts before his erstwhile business partner James Yarford. Indeed, Botry, rather unusually, never sought elected office, perhaps suggesting that he and Yarford had some kind of symbiotically beneficial arrangement, whereby Yarford retained his position as mayor, registering their shared loans through the staple, but manipulating the system by using Botry's name alone. Indeed, such a theory, whilst highly suppositional, would explain both Yarford's fluctuating crediting behaviour and also how he was able to retain office for so long, regardless of the financial drain of such a position. Supposition aside, James Yarford was clearly a successful careerist. Indeed, his eighteen years in public office attest to his financial and social resilience, something compounded by his attainment of the pinnacle of civic office, the mayoralty of London, in 1519-20.[100] At this point Yarford seems to have reached the height of his political career, something reflected in his knighthood of 1519, representing not only the scale of his own political ambition and achievements, but also mirroring many of the career trajectories of his fellow civic office holders outlined previously.

[99] C 131/102/20.
[100] Rich, 'List of Officials', p. 193.

6.10 Conclusion:

The careers and business lives of these users of the Westminster staple court were evidently highly individualised and multi-faceted in their approaches, longevity and successes. Whilst a whole range of diverse patterns are apparent in examining these careerists, the development of a seemingly binary path to professional success is arguably the most evident. This chapter has therefore examined these two careerist elements, exploring those individuals who seemingly opted for a solely commerce-focused career and those who actively sought elected office in addition to their staple activities.

Beginning with those staple individuals who displayed steadfast devotion to commercial endeavour, this analysis has uncovered a wide range of important patterns and characteristics. Examination of the longevity of staple careers has revealed the length of time these individuals were active in the staple, with some of the more resilient businessmen discernible for several decades. Indeed, when these career lengths are compared with the different categories of descriptor discernible for these individuals, the dominance of those individuals described in social and occupational terms is uncovered. This examination of commercial careers has then been further developed through investigation of actual staple activity, exploring the lending and borrowing habits of different categories of descriptors. Whilst the traditional viewpoint has been one of mercantile dominance, with the successful medieval businessman typically portrayed as a member of the occupational or mercantile elite,[101] the analysis undertaken in this chapter has enhanced this conception of medieval businessmen, demonstrating that mercantile involvement in staple commerce was by no means universally dominant, drawing out the equally important role of socially described individuals, most notably knights, esquires and gentlemen. Indeed, this strongly supports the findings of P. Nightingale, in her study of the

[101] See for example: Casson and Casson, *The Entrepreneur in History*; Power, 'Thomas Betson', pp. 145-184; Power, 'Thomas Paycocke', pp. 185-212; Fryde, 'Some Business Transactions', pp. 3-27.

commercial potential of knights in the fourteenth century.[102] As such, a far more nuanced picture of the successful medieval businessman emerges, characterised by one's commercial longevity and crediting clout, rather than simply one's identification as a merchant.

This chapter has also explored the 'dualists' within the staple, referring to those businessmen who sought a career involving both commerce and appointment to elected office. In collating the staple statistics relating to the different types of office holder discernible within the staple, this analysis has uncovered the dominance of civic and royal officials, electing therefore to focus more fully upon these particular office holding categories. Indeed, the investigation of the most prominent careerists, namely holders of civic office, has demonstrated how they often invested their commercial wealth and influence into the pursuit of appointed position, typically becoming sheriffs, aldermen and even mayors of London in the process, following a seemingly well-established path to professional success.

Previous historiographical inquiry has emphasized the oligarchic nature of the late medieval town, arguing that a select group of individuals, usually the mercantile elite, came to control the most senior elected positions in urban government, often for many years.[103] As such, this chapter has explored this theme further, mapping the official career trajectories of these individuals, demonstrating the lengths of time some individuals spent in office, as well as the reasons such careers might end. Interestingly, this analysis has revealed that it was royal and ecclesiastical careers, not civic, which lasted on average the longest, suggesting that long-lasting oligarchic forms of civic office holding were perhaps not as strongly perpetuated by those using the staple, as has been shown in other standalone studies of towns. This is compounded by the exploration of the reasons such officials left office, with many individuals

[102] Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants', pp. 41-43.
[103] See for example: Frost, 'The Urban Elite', pp. 235-253; Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy', pp. 184-215; Breslow, 'A London Merchant', pp. 101-113; Fleming, 'Telling Tales of Oligarchy', pp. 177-193.

in civic positions either retiring after a long and illustrious career devoted to public service or else, completely conversely, pleading poverty or illness so as to be discharged of their duties early. This chapter has argued that this complex and confusing situation with regards to civic office holders was potentially the result of the onerous nature of elected office, whereby some individuals readily embraced such responsibility, comfortable in the knowledge of their own financial security, whilst others sought to escape it. This aligns with scholarly thought regarding the 'flight from office', suggesting this phenomenon to occur at all levels of medieval society.[104] Indeed, the reconstruction of the careers of the four William Brownes has demonstrated this in greater detail, showcasing the different careerist motivations for different generations of the same family.

Finally, this chapter has drawn together these various competing strands of research relating to careerism through the two reconstructive exemplars of Thomas Twyn and James Yarford. The exemplar of Thomas Twyn has demonstrated some of the solely commercial tendencies of certain careerists, as well as the often-complex relationships which could exist between an influential creditor and his various debtors. Other individuals favoured a dual approach to career progression however, exploiting both the commercial and public spheres in pursuit of personal success. Indeed, as demonstrated by the illustrious career of James Yarford, staple power-house and subsequent mayor of the capital, commercial success often went hand in hand with civic influence. Nevertheless, whilst a strongly influential, and often mercantile, elite is undoubtedly detectable, particularly in examining the especially long or successful careers of individuals such as James Yarford, it is clear that the staple was a much more inclusive forum in this period, now exploited by provincial gentry, artisans, royal appointees, to name but a few, all of whom had a determined and individualised strategy for professional success.

[104] For a fuller explanation of this phenomenon see: J. I. Kermode, 'Urban Decline? The Flight from Office in Late Medieval York', *The Economic History Review*, 35, 2 (1982), pp. 179-198.

Conclusion.

This research began with a very broad question in mind: what can the detailed investigation of the lives of a selected sample of individuals contribute to our understanding of late medieval society? The reconstruction of these individuals, searching for patterns, trends and shared characteristics, has resulted in two major research outputs. On the one hand, a detailed portrayal of the structure, composition and people of the Westminster statute staple court between the years 1485 and 1532, exploring their lives, careers and activities. On the other hand, this analysis has also produced a significant cross-section of late medieval society, as this study can ultimately be treated as a composite representation of the nature of society in this period, using a selected sample of relevant people to demonstrate the key, collective patterns, trends and debates.

This study is comprehensive in terms of the individuals included for analysis, omitting only the peasantry and the King from its scope, and examining the various socio-economic categories in between them, effectively providing access to the contentious and often confusing 'middling strata' of people. The use of the staple court at Westminster is another important factor attached to this research. The emphasis upon this court acted as a sample controller, ensuring access to a substantial cohort of individuals, all connected together by their engagement with staple commerce, but also allowing for significant diversity in terms of the individuals extrapolated for this study. In this way, we are provided with as close to a workable cross-section of late medieval society as possible, without resorting to the 'town-based' study, which would necessarily have limited the scope of this research geographically.

To achieve this aim of reconstructing the individuals of the Westminster staple in as much detail as possible, this research also relied upon a range of more sharply focused questions throughout the thesis to provide structure and guidance to the research project. These focusing questions related to the debates surrounding categorisation, careerism, social status and

mobility, to name but a few. As such, the six chapters of this thesis have explored the key, defining elements of the lives of these people, examining their origins and beginnings, their status and social mobility, the categorisation of selected groupings as demonstrative case studies, for example gentlemen and yeomen, their property and wealth and finally their business lives in general. In this way a comprehensive picture of the individual users of the Westminster statute staple court has been created, highlighting their points of commonality and difference, and in turn providing important insight into the nature of late medieval society more broadly.

Finally, prosopography, as the methodology employed in this thesis, necessarily demands close attention to detail and a willingness to collate, transcribe and translate as many resources as possible in relation to the individuals under study. Despite this, it is still a reliable, workable methodology, which could easily be applied to other studies or research projects. It provides an otherwise inaccessible level of detail both individually and collectively, something demonstrated in the reconstructive exemplars included in each chapter of this thesis.

Key Chapter Findings.

Each of the chapters explored a particular set of research questions attached to it, with the ultimate goal of producing a comprehensive and cohesive analytical narrative of the lives of these staple individuals. Obviously, questions concerning the nature of these people and where they were from were important, particularly in relation to a study aiming to produce a detailed portrayal of late medieval society in general. As is explored in chapter one therefore, the geographical scope of this study is far broader than a concentration on the statute staple court at Westminster might initially suggest. Although a large proportion of the 3,593 individuals in the sample are indeed drawn from London and its environs, most of the other counties of England are also represented. In considering this wide geographical proliferation therefore, it

is interesting to note the subtle but important patterning discernible in relation to the regional spread of wealth and also applied descriptors. Rather than simply being of a single ilk, the users of the staple are found to vary widely, both in terms of their measurable wealth and also the proliferation of social and occupational descriptors, something seemingly based upon, or at least impacted by, their distance from the staple court. Indeed, the further afield an individual originates, the wealthier they tend be, regularly producing substantial mean averages for valuations in tax records, Inquisitions *Post Mortem* and even the quantities of cash they left behind in their wills. Additionally, these wealthy provincials typically sported social descriptors, often of genteel quality, such as knight, esquire and gentleman, something which emphasizes the changing nature of the staple and its users, with a growing engagement of gentility with commerce, albeit from further afield. The merits of this mapping methodology are clear, not only uncovering important insights into the kinds of individuals frequenting the staple at Westminster, but also shedding light upon geographical and ancestral mobility patterns, an important theme which will be discussed in detail later on.

In considering who these people were, the composition of the staple is examined in chapter two, outlining the numbers of individuals exhibited within the sampling from different socio-economic categories. A wide variety of individuals is uncovered through examination of the descriptors applied to them, labels which can be broadly categorised into occupational, familial, social and official demarcations. This was undoubtedly a result of the 1413 Statute of Additions, at least in terms of centrally produced documentation such as the certificates of statute staple. Certain categories of individuals are better represented within the staple than others, as in the case of gentlemen, and to a lesser extent esquires and knights. Particular occupational groupings are also prevalent, notably mercers, merchant tailors, staple merchants and goldsmiths, all united by their membership of the mercantile elite. In this way, an outline of the composition of the staple is developed, revealing the still persistent mercantile feel to its

activity, but also the prominent engagement of other social groupings, most notably those individuals often labelled as the 'lesser gentry.' Whilst historiography has touched upon the increasing role of genteel individuals in commerce,[1] this examination confirms and enhances this, showcasing not only the importance of this study of Westminster as a staple court, but also its value as a representation of wider society.

Finally, this chapter also employs an interdisciplinary approach, demonstrating the nuanced insights discernible from examination of the seemingly straightforward application of descriptors. This methodology contributes to the growing historiographical interest in the application of sociological models to explore social mobility, often in an effort to render collective patterns of social movement.[2] This chapter considers the impact of established sociological transitions, such as vertical and horizontal movement patterns for individuals, but also goes further, producing an entirely novel and experimental approach of categorising 'modes of application' for descriptors. In this way, a more nuanced perspective upon social mobility is created, theorising upon the subtle motivators behind differences in the ways descriptors were applied by these individuals. As such, these individuals, and the labels recorded with them, tell an important story, reflecting not only the importance of accurate categorisation in society, but also the potential for social mobility, two major themes which will be addressed later on in this conclusion.

Arguably, one of the most contentious historiographical debates with which this thesis engages concerns the gentry, or more accurately its composition and structure. Primarily addressed within chapter three, but also alluded to in various reconstructive exemplars throughout this thesis, the elusive label of gentleman is still difficult to definitively quantify. Reliance upon

[1] P. Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants: Trade, Politics and the Gentry in Late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), pp. 41-43.
[2] See for example: S. Carocci, 'Social Mobility and the Middle Ages', *Continuity and Change*, 26, 3 (2011), p. 375; P. S. Bearman and G. Deane, 'Middle-Class Mobility in England, 1548-1689', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98, (1982), pp. 36, 49.

external measures, usually of the economic or financial variety, such as tax assessments and land valuations, has traditionally dominated historiographical discussion of genteel individuals.[3] The typical gentleman is therefore considered to be the lowest demarcation of the gentry, possessing landed assets and wealth below that of esquires and knights. This research has largely confirmed this notion, demonstrating that many of the gentlemen under study were typically less financially affluent than their social superiors, reinforcing this traditional tripartite conception of the structure and hierarchy of the gentry typically proffered in the historiography. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise subtle elements of difference, such as the level of engagement such individuals enjoyed with the commercial sphere. Whilst P. Nightingale has commented upon knightly engagement with staple commerce,[4] this analysis has enhanced this perception to more thoroughly include the business contributions of gentlemen, demonstrating that perhaps for these particular genteel individuals, commerce was in fact something of a defining feature in their lives. Indeed, the concept of the 'gentleman businessman' has been well demonstrated in this research, not only through selected reconstructive exemplars, such as Robert Dormer and William Billing, but also through the interplay of descriptors, whereby it was not uncommon for an individual to describe himself as both 'gentleman' and also 'merchant.'

In contrast to the abundant scholarship devoted to discussions of genteel categorisation, other social groupings suffer from comparative neglect. Addressed in chapter four, the yeomen and husbandmen of the staple are found to be equally elusive and complex. Although a certain degree of adherence to traditional demarcations is once again discernible, with for example, yeomen and husbandmen typically possessing quantities of land and wealth in accordance with

[3] See for example: J. Cornwall, 'The Early Tudor Gentry', *The Economic History Review*, 17 (1964-5), p. 464; E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c. 1422-c. 1485* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 43; S. M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, 1983), pp. 5-6.
[4] Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants', pp. 41-43.

hierarchical expectation, there is also a sense of social fluidity and overlap. This produces interesting implications for our understanding of late medieval society: on the one hand, traditional, externalised gradations of status are found to be valid, with many of these social groupings forming a seemingly neat hierarchy of status based upon measurements of land and wealth. On the other hand, however, these gradations are found to be permeable barriers, with social elasticity a common theme. Indeed, like their gentlemanly counterparts, these, for want of a better word, 'lesser individuals' often overlapped with one another, or even, as the case of William Aleyn has demonstrated, aspired to gentility, perfectly demonstrating this fluidity in social status.

Considering that one of the major methods employed by scholars and contemporaries alike to measure status involves assessment of an individual's wealth and property, chapter five engages with this important element accordingly. The three measures of wealth discernible in relation to the individuals under study, namely cash (as a measure of liquidity), landed property and movable property, are not necessarily easily comparable, particularly as valuations and assessments of such sources of wealth were often drawn from different records. As such the fashioning of the comparative ranking system within chapter five sought to overcome this particular challenge, effectively demonstrating the collective patterns concerning the relationship between how different categories of individuals preferred to display or invest their wealth. Interestingly, the general patterns uncovered for the individuals of the Westminster staple are surprisingly straightforward, with, for example, an emphasis upon landed assets for socially defined individuals, such as gentlemen and knights, and a focus upon movable wealth, such as cash or movable objects for many of the occupationally labelled individuals, such as merchants. The implications of these findings are clear, suggesting that different categories of individuals emphasized or prioritised particular kinds of measurable wealth, depending upon their socio-economic status.

Finally, the commercial and business lives of these people naturally feature strongly in this research. Indeed, a successful business career was a strongly archetypal feature of many of these individuals, and not only for those of mercantile status. Interestingly, a binary path towards careerist success is one of the most overt patterns to emerge from the analyses in chapter six. Certain staple individuals seem to have focused their attention solely upon commercial endeavour, engaging with the staple consistently and frequently. The analyses of crediting activity and career longevity of these staple businessmen undertaken in this chapter have enhanced our understanding of these people. Whereas scholars have often perceived the 'typical', successful medieval businessman to be of mercantile ilk,[5] this chapter has demonstrated the variety of individuals operating commercially. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the prominence of socially described individuals, such as knights and gentlemen, providing credit in the staple is a particularly important statement on the nature of commerce in this period.

Returning to the binary focus of this chapter, other staple individuals demonstrated a preference for dualist careerism, actively participating in the civic, royal or ecclesiastical office holding spheres, alongside their commercial activities. This research has elected to focus largely upon the civic officials discernible in the staple, such as aldermen, sheriffs and mayors, uncovering a well-trodden path to the top, with many of these careerists following similar office holding paths to achieve civic success. Whilst certain of these civic careerists were undoubtedly members of an oligarchic elite, in accordance with the assertions of many scholars,[6] this was

[5] See for example: M. Casson and C. Casson, *The Entrepreneur in History: From Medieval Merchant to Modern Business Leader* (Basingstoke, 2013); E. Power, 'Thomas Betson, a Merchant of the Staple in the Fifteenth Century', in E. Power (ed.), *Medieval People* (London, 1924), pp. 145-184; E. B. Fryde, 'Some Business Transactions of York Merchants: John Goldbeter, Willaim Acastre and Partners, 1336-1349' in E. B. Fryde, *Studies in Medieval Trade and Finance* (London, 2004), pp. 3-27; E. B. Fryde, *William de la Pole: Merchant and King's Banker* (London, 1988).

[6] J. I. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late Medieval English Towns', in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1998), pp. 95-96; P. Fleming, 'Telling Tales of Oligarchy in the Late Medieval Town', in M. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 177-193.

by no means universal. Indeed, certain office holders actively sought to escape civic duty, either through pleas of poverty or illness, something this chapter has speculated might well relate to the financial and temporal burdens of elected office. As such, a far more nuanced picture of the careers of these businessmen is constructed, one which builds on previous historiographical inquiry, but also uncovers elements of difference and contradiction.

Wider Implications: Representations of Late Medieval English Society.

The question remains as to what can be understood from these various research findings. As such there are three major themes discernible throughout the course of this thesis which can be used to tie these findings together and therefore require further discussion. These themes, namely categorisation, social mobility and the question of archetypes, will be discussed below, exploring the insights they provide into late medieval English society.

Beginning with the categorisation of these staple individuals therefore, examination of the ways in which these individuals defined themselves and others has been an ongoing theme. The application of descriptors has been shown to have been a consistent motif, with the majority of individuals yielding at least one discernible label within the documentation. In considering what this means for society more broadly, an acute sense of self-awareness is apparent, with individuals evidently keen to showcase their position and status. This is clearly demonstrated throughout the thesis, but particularly so in chapters three and four, which are dedicated to the reconstruction of the gentry, yeomanry and husbandmen of the staple. Indeed, these individuals are shown to often correlate with the external parameters used to demarcate these social categories, producing a surprisingly neat, hierarchical impression of late medieval social structure. Furthermore, wealth, in its various forms, has been shown to be an invaluable categorising tool. Employed by scholars and contemporaries alike, measurements of status based upon cash, property or movables are sometimes the only distinguishing factors available

to us when seeking to differentiate between individual members of different socio-economic categories. As shown in the detailed reconstructions of the tangible assets belonging to these individuals in chapter five, landed property portfolios and inventories of movables are typically powerfully reflective of an individual's status and position in society. In terms of categorisation therefore, these externalised measurements are evidently of crucial importance and, in spite of the growing historiographical emphasis upon the internal and the intangible,[7] they are often still the best resource available to us.

As such, this research has demonstrated that the categorisation of late medieval people, at least in terms of the descriptors applied to themselves, was something acutely well-known. As a result of this, this research has largely supported the findings in the wider historiography concerning what constituted the different categories discernible in society and how they were labelled. Undoubtedly because of the precision and clear self-knowledge these people possessed with regards to describing themselves and others, scholars have also confidently demarcated these categories, at least in terms of the tangible, measurable and often external factors, such as land possession and wealth assessment.[8] Ultimately therefore, despite some nuanced and subtle differences, categorisation in this period followed traditional conceptions, making for an interesting comment upon medieval society more generally.

One of the major themes within this thesis relates to social mobility and the ways in which these people traversed the socio-economic hierarchy. Examination of the application of descriptors, as undertaken in chapter two, immediately demonstrates the potential for

[7] See for example: L. Foroughi, 'Miscellany and Identity: The Manuscript Compilations of Late Medieval Yeomen', paper presented to Leeds International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 03-06 July 2017; P. Maddern, 'Gentility', in R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (eds.), *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 30-31; R. H. Hilton, 'Status and Class in the Medieval Town', in R. Slater and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 13-14.

[8] See the literature on external categorisation of gentlemen, yeomen and husbandmen for example: Cornwall, 'The Early Tudor Gentry', p. 464; Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 43; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*, pp. 5-6; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (London, 2002), p. 15; J. A. Raftis, *Peasant Economic Development within the English Manorial System* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 92, 96.

individual change in status and position. These individuals were by no means static in description, often applying multiple labels to refer to themselves over the course of their lifetimes. These patterns of change are thrown into sharper relief through the application of basic social mobility models, exploring the directional trajectories of those staple individuals who exhibit more than one descriptor across their documented lives. Upwards vertical mobility is revealed to be the most commonplace, with individuals typically transitioning 'up' the established hierarchy, whether that be social or occupational. These directional mobility models are limited by our understanding of hierarchy and sometimes it is ultimately impossible to establish with certainty the directional movement of an individual's descriptors, particularly if they are hierarchically incompatible. For instance, the relatively common transition of a mercantile individual to gentility is well documented in the data, but difficult to classify as upwards mobility, owing to the blurred hierarchical relationship between these two categories.

Nevertheless, it is evident that these individuals were highly mobile, often demonstrating fluidity in status and description. The assumption that such changes were somehow purely external, or the result of outside interpretations of an individual's status, for example through scribal addition or centralised demands for categorisation of the populace, does not find traction. Whilst the impact of legislation, such as the Statute of Additions cannot be overlooked, it was by no means the sole motivator behind accurate labelling. This investigation of descriptors, and the people who applied them, has shown something of the conscious, internalised understanding of one's place in the wider structure of society. Indeed, analysis of the ways in which descriptors where applied, resulting in the experimental methodology employed in chapter two to categorise modes of description, has demonstrated this almost innate, personal understanding of description. The four main modes uncovered, namely 'singular', 'multiple', 'reductive' and 'cumulative' description, neatly exemplify some of the less tangible driving forces affecting these people, when it came to description, definition and

categorisation of the self. For example, many of the staple individuals showcasing 'reductive' description, whereby labels are shed, sometimes gradually, sometimes abruptly, over the course of a person's life, are often found to be driven by a desire to step out from the shadow of kinship, discarding descriptors, such as 'son', which bound them to familial superiors. Similarly, the opposite mode of 'cumulative' description, whereby an individual actively collected descriptors, typically involved the ostentatious showcasing of these labels in a person's will, as their final statement upon their life and its achievements. Two important elements can be taken from this therefore. Firstly, these individuals were highly mobile, at least in terms of traceable descriptors. Secondly, this mobility was consciously understood and perhaps even personally influenced, depending upon the desires of the individual. If these insights into fluidity are understood to be ultimately representative, then one must assume that late medieval English society on a wider scale also exhibited these mobility patterns.

This research has also considered 'mobility' from other perspectives. As investigated in chapter one, these staple individuals were by no means static, either in terms of status or in their geographical residences. Birthplace analysis has proved especially fruitful, highlighting the movements many of these individuals undertook, often with careerist or aspirational motivations in mind. In particular, this analysis has significantly contributed to scholarly debate concerning the 'pull' of London for young, ambitious provincials,[9] demonstrating similar trends for these individuals. This pattern should not be over-stressed as a uniquely defining feature of these particular staple individuals however, as demonstrated in the contextualising analysis of ancestry. These highly mobile and successful individuals are revealed to have often had like-minded ancestors, sometimes benefiting from forward thinking relatives, who also sought social success through a move to the capital. Moreover, other patterns of geographical

[9] R. Goddard, *Credit and Trade in Later Medieval England, 1353-1532* (London, 2016), chapter five; C. Barron, 'London, 1300-1540', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, volume 1 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 399.

mobility are also clearly discernible, with some of these individuals then electing to move away from the capital in later life. Whilst this is something remarked upon in the literature, namely in the form of the debate concerning the mercantile purchase of genteel-style manors in the countryside, procured with the profits of business,[10] these patterns of movement have rarely been fully connected together, as a wider statement upon the medieval businessman's lifecycle and the geographical movements associated with this. As such, the connection between social mobility and geographical mobility is well represented, with many of our more provincially-bred individuals moving to London in search of personal betterment and socio-economic advancement, before retiring to the countryside in later life, often after long and successful commercial careers.

It is evident therefore that late medieval society was highly fluid, as shown in the patterns for social mobility, geographical and ancestral movement and careerism explored in the course of this research. However, this is something which initially seems wholly paradoxical, considering that this conclusion has already commented upon the clear-cut and well-established categories discernible within the socio-economic hierarchy. As such, this fluidity needs to be understood within the context of categorisation, as one does not necessarily preclude the other. On the contrary, increased or frequent social mobility reconfirms the characteristics ascribed to different categories of individuals, as one would necessarily need to understand the desirable traits required in order to change one's status or position. As such, this research strongly supports more recent scholarship on fluidity and mobility,[11] reflecting the utterly permeable,

[10] See for example: S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948), pp. 234-5; C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 121; O'Connor, 'Adam Fraunceys and John Pyel: Perceptions of Status among Merchants in Fourteenth-Century London', in D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 17, 20, 24.

[11] See for example: M. Bailey, 'Rural Society', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 152; R. H. Hilton, 'Ideology and Social Order in Late Medieval England', in R. H. Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History* (London, 1990), p. 174; Carocci, 'Social Mobility', p. 375.

but nevertheless sharply defined, membranes which characterised late medieval English society.

The third major theme in this research is the notion of 'archetypes' and the extent to which over-arching patterns, trends and characteristics, uncovered in the course of this research, can be effectively humanised. As has been undertaken in each research chapter, the key archetypal patterns have been elucidated in greater detail through selected reconstructive exemplars of chosen individuals. These archetypal exemplars are crucial, showcasing not only the collective patterns connecting these individuals together, but also reflecting the fact that social history is concerned with people. In this way, the reader is able to develop a more intimate and nuanced portrait of these individuals, something which is difficult to achieve from pure statistical analysis alone. These archetypes also have a secondary function, particularly with regards to understanding the nature of late medieval society. In a sense, they can be perceived as a guide, demonstrating how to succeed in late medieval society, as many of these archetypal exemplars showcase clear success stories. One final comment should be made: these reconstructions have shown how it is ultimately impossible to construct a single archetypal representative of these staple individuals, as to do so would be to render an incomplete and inaccurate picture of these people. Instead, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, there are in fact many archetypes discernible, exhibiting a whole range of characteristics, aspirations and agendas, not only powerfully demonstrating the complexity and diversity of late medieval society, but also the fact that the successful medieval businessman was often so much more than simply a rich merchant.

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