CHEPYNG WALDEN/SAFFRON WALDEN, 1438-90: A SMALL TOWN

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by

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ABSTRACT

There is scope for clarifying characteristics that distinguish small towns in the Middle Ages both from larger and lesser settlements and from each other. This will involve investigating their economy, their role in their area and their social structure and government.

The topic of urban decline in the period has been the subject of much debate and small towns, of course, are relevant to this, while potentially having features which make their experience distinctive. Chepyng Walden increased dramatically in wealth and population during the later Middle Ages and has an unusually large and rich corpus of contemporary documents in which to seek explanations.

It has been called a 'cloth town', yet in this period its relationship to the nearby cloth area which was very prosperous in the early sixteenth century was not overtly a primary generator of its expansion but the role of the saffron industry was publicly acknowledged at the time by clear references. Both the economic structure of at least parts of Walden's region and its opportunities in distant markets had distinctive characteristics in which an increasingly dominant and relatively close London played a significant part.

Though lacking the multiple layers of larger towns, the structures of society and government were clearly defined. A distinct elite, already evident by 1440, and in which mercers were particularly prominent, became more oligarchical, over the period concentrating its power in the Holy Trinity Gild, which by the early sixteenth century was the effective government. Nevertheless, the courts of the manor and borough struggled with considerable disorder and disregard for custom, which were doubtless influenced by the increasing population and notable disparities in wealth. There are signs, too, that though the burgesses' rights were limited, the elite themselves felt increasingly able to show disrespect for manorial institutions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

a	acre
AHEW	Agrarian History of England and Wales, ed. J. Thirsk
BARSEH	British Academy, Records of Social and Economic History
CCR	Calendar of Close Rolls
Cal. Fine	Calendar of Fine Rolls
Cal. IPM.	Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem
CPR	Calendar of Patent Rolls
CCRO	Cambridgeshire County Record Office
CEHE	Cambridge Economic History of Europe, ed. M. Postan
CMH	Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute for Historical Research, University of London
CUHB	Cambridge Urban History of Britain, ed. P. Clark
CUL	Cambridge University Library
cwt	hundredweight
D.D.	Doctor of Divinity
ECRO	Essex County Record Office
Ec.HR	Economic History Review
f./fols	folio/s
Fig.	figure
ft	foot/feet
IHR.	Institute for Historical Research, University of London
incl.	inclusive
ins	inches
Jan.	January (all months abbreviated similarly)
km.	kilometre
Kt	knight
lbs	pounds (weight)
£ s d	pounds, shillings, pence
m.	manuscript
n.s.	new series
O.D.	Ordnance Datum
O.S.	Ordnance Survey

p./pp.	page/pages
pers. comm.	personal communication
r	recto
S	saint
sq. ft	square feet
sq. m.	square metres
Tab.	table
TNA, PRO	The National Archives: Public Record Office
TEAS	Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society
Trans RHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
v	verso
VCH	The Victoria History of the Counties of England (London, 1900-in progress)

INTRODUCTION

Small town studies help us to understand the character of towns in general. Because they lie near to the frontier between town and country, they help us to answer the question, what was a town? We need to know more about the economy of small towns in the Middle Ages, their relationship with their hinterland, and their social structure and government. A study of Saffron Walden has the potential to throw light on all of these problems.

The time span chosen covers the years of the mid-fifteenth century depression and the subsequent period of potential recovery. It provides an opportunity exploit the churchwardens' accounts of Chepyng Walden parish, for the whole fifty years, which can be correlated with contemporary records of the manor court, property deeds and wills to allow a detailed picture of this small town's functioning in the later Middle Ages. Additionally, the first known reference to saffron at what was still called Chepyng Walden is in an agreement about tithes from 1444, so that a study of this period might enable clarification of the development of the industry.

Among the many attempts at definition of urbanism, some consensus has emerged. In relation to this study of a small town, it is particularly important to be able to isolate those features, now widely accepted as indicators of urban status, which distinguish even the simplest urban entity from those which lack them.

Most urban places of the period were small: with a minimum population, normally, of about three hundred, they might be smaller than some villages in the vicinity. This raises the point that size as an identifier is unsatisfactory; there were substantial settlements which, even if they had some sort of market function, fell short of urban status because although exchange, and hence a market, was the fundamental rationale of towns, distinct characteristics distinguish towns from lesser settlements. A consensus about these characteristics has been reached. Any town must have a permanent densely settled population engaged in a variety of predominantly non-agrarian occupations. Most small towns would have between twenty and forty different

occupations and towns are frequently referred to in the records of others. With at least this difference from the countryside, the town serves as centre for a rural area dependent on it for varied purposes, including the fundamental one of exchange.[1] This leads us to the question of identifying such an area.

Theorists of urban development have agreed on the recognition of a so-called 'sphere of influence', or 'hinterland', as the area with which the town interacts, primarily through its market function, but also for legal, social and cultural purposes.[2] At the most basic level, of serving as point of exchange for peasant surpluses, the basis of the medieval economy, for regular trade by artisans and wage earners and for supply of goods and expertise obtained from beyond the near surroundings, the town is the centre of a zone of intensive interaction, namely its primary hinterland. This is, typically, of about 10.5 km radius, because based on the distance that peasants might travel to market and return within the day. It is also, therefore, irrespective of the town's size. The nature and buoyancy of this 'client territory', with a symbiotic relationship to the town, will have a crucial effect on the town: that north Essex had large numbers of landless and smallholders implied both economic and social consequences for Walden.[3] A town's prosperity might be boosted by particular advantages, such as a raw material or distinctive product with wider appeal, or location on the interface between contrasting pays.

The need to consider the relationship between hinterlands of neighbouring towns has led to the development of 'central place' theory, which comprises the articulation of such hinterlands into a web where, while those of neighbours abut, or may overlap at their extremities, they are included in the larger hinterlands of successively larger towns, whose size reflects

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1 Sources discussing these topics include: C. Dyer, 'Market towns and the countryside in late medieval England', *Canadian Journal of History*, 31 (1996), pp. 17-35; A. Cowan, *Urban Europe, 1500-1700* (London, 1998); R. Britnell, 'Town life', in R. Horrox and W. M. Ormrod (eds), *A Social History of England 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 134-78; R. H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society* (Cambridge, 1992); P. M. Hohenberg and L. H. Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe* (London, 1995).

2 H. Carter, *The Study of Urban Geography* (London, 1972), pp. 69-87 and S. R. Epstein 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Town and Country in Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 1-29 discuss theory.

3 C. Dyer, "Small towns 1270-1540', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *CUHB I, 600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 503-37; L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 11-31.

success as a central place for a multitude of functions. As a result, in any particular study, clarification of the connections with neighbouring towns and with such local higher order centres is essential.

Apart from concerning the zone of primary intensive interaction, the reach of towns roughly corresponds to variations in their sizes. However, another important variation depends on the good or service provided. While contact may arise between pays with differing resources and a consequent need to trade for complementary products, any degree of specialisation in product, a characteristic which was increasing in the period, also implies longer-distance contact. Similarly, the accessing of specialist services, particularly legal and ecclesiastical, of commodities such as oils and dyestuffs, as well as matters of lordship, brings towns into the orbit of larger centres, potentially even regional capitals or the metropolis. In this way, the connections of a town can be viewed 'vertically': while serving as outlet and supply point for its own area, it connects to a more important town, a higher order centre, for purposes not available in its locality. An obvious implication of this is that neighbouring towns of a similar order have little reason to interact.[4]

The hypothetically even spread of primary towns proposed by central place theory is, of course, distorted by varied factors, even apart from the great variation in terrain and scope for exploitation of the surroundings. Additionally, towns have been characterised as deliberate political, economic and legal acts of lordship, rather than evolving spontaneously in response to locational advantages.[5] Many such towns were commercial gambles, aimed at providing revenue for their lord, and to survive they would have to carve and maintain a niche at least sufficient to support the essential minimum range of non-agrarian occupations. If a site was founded near to a manor house, castle or monastery, it might have been chosen mainly for prestige, defence or its

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4 J. A. Galloway, 'Town and country in England 1300-1570', in Epstein (ed.), *Town and Country*, pp. 106-31.

5 S. R. Epstein, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), p. 13.

religious associations, which might not be commercially advantageous. These factors are highly relevant to an assessment of Walden.

One locational advantage might be the opportunity to tap into a route connecting major centres. A small town's established contacts and mechanisms might in fact allow it to serve as relay for towns lacking these and, of course, if this role flourished, it might itself rise in the hierarchy. Such exploitation of routeways has been identified by the approach known as network analysis, which emphasises the importance of links between central places and draws attention to the opportunity for towns as exchange points, or even initially as service stations, to act as relays, nodes, junctions or outposts in the network.[6] While the importance of routeways was already evident, in the period on-going commercialisation and centralisation, as well as improvements in transport itself, increased their significance. Regarding Walden, its links to the nearby Stort-Cam corridor, part of the London to Norwich route, and to the Cam near Cambridge are very relevant. For the latter, and for much else, the churchwardens' accounts of Walden provide substantial evidence. They illustrate the obvious point that the engagement of a market town with others is affected by not only the other towns' status and the nature of the relevant product or service but by characteristics of the market town itself. Institutions within the town, such as the parish church, were likely to deal in relatively large quantities of goods, or have specialist needs, which demanded interaction at more distant points.

URBAN DECLINE

The role and contribution of towns as a whole, as of individual ones, was subject to variation. In this context, smaller towns have been drawn into the debate about urban decline in

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6 Hohenberg and Lees in *Urban Europe*, discuss network analysis.

the later Middle Ages.[7] While it is certain that, nationally, population had declined and the level was now broadly static, it is not clear that towns as a whole had declined relatively; a fundamental criterion of de-urbanisation is a shrinking importance.[8] While most larger towns, in common with rural areas, had lost population from the mid-fourteenth century and some can certainly be said to have declined, with urban rents decreased, fee farms reduced and houses abandoned, experience varied, with a few contrasting.

However, what of market towns, specifically? Did smaller towns have a different experience from larger ones in the later Middle Ages? We have seen that they were proportionately more highly dependent on their surroundings. Over time, various factors, such as changes in external demand, would impact on production in the hinterland, and on the composition of its labour supply, which had been affected economically and socially by the drop in population levels. Small towns in areas such as south Devon, with a flourishing industry in the period, certainly expanded, as was the case with some market towns in other areas with viable local industry.[9] Towns outside such areas but able to connect with them might be able to benefit. Walden's relationship to the Suffolk/Essex cloth area is, clearly, relevant here. In addition to this, those that were able to trade a specialist product might be able to tie into privileged outlets at home that remained relatively buoyant, or indeed, to exploit export demand.

The relevance of scale

The increasing prominence of large merchants, hence outsiders, might impact negatively on the small town's market role, though they might foster a specialism, as they had at

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7 R. B. Dobson, 'Urban decline in late medieval England', in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds), *The Medieval Town: a Reader in English Urban History 1200-1500* (Harlow, 1990), pp. 265-86; A. Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1640* (1991, Cambridge, 1995); C. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay in late medieval England', in P. Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (eds), *Towns in Societies* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 159-85; A. R. Bridbury, 'English Towns in the later Middle Ages', *Ec.HR*, 34 (1981), pp. 1-24; S. H. Rigby, 'Urban decline in the later middle ages: some problems with the statistical data', *Urban History Yearbook*, 6 (1979), pp. 46-59; D. M. Palliser, 'Urban decay revisited', in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1998), pp. 1-21.

8 C. Dyer, 'How urbanised was medieval England?', in J-M. Duvosquel and E. Thoen (eds), *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe: Studies in Honorem Adriaan Verhulst* (Ghent, 1995), pp. 169-83.

9 Dyer, 'Small towns', pp. 535-7.

Thaxted, largely by finance and organisation.[10] Smaller towns' proportionately greater involvement in a predominantly local exchange operation meant they were less likely to suffer the damaging effects of over-dependence on any specialisation. The latter increased vulnerability, as demonstrated by the depression of Coventry's textile/clothing industry between 1448 and 1476. Postles suggests that larger towns and boroughs were dependent on, but not part of, rural economies, possibly suffering more than those small towns which were able to remain integral to the countryside.[11] This hinterland's economic strength remained vital: the Midland grain area's towns suffered stagnation and decline following the need to convert to less-intensive pastoral farming, while the increasing wealth of peasants and rural artisans in their hinterlands helped some small towns maintain prosperity and some even grew, surely an indicator of buoyancy in a situation of overall population stagnation.[12] However, falling rents and fee-farms might, indeed, indicate economic, as well as population decline. For the fourteenth century, Astill finds small towns provide the best evidence for decline, though some had a fifteenth century revival.[13]

Opposed tendencies seem to be evident. Small towns in pastoral districts were able to weather labour shortage and with resources conducive to rural industries, particularly cloth, leather and, perhaps, metals, might flourish. Among countrysides enabling such diversity were areas where relatively 'open' industrialising settlements drew dynamism from as large a town as Coventry.[14] Advantaged towns included those at the interface of pays and so able to 'look' either way and also those able to develop a valuable specialism through, for instance, natural endowment, such as Droitwich, or enterprise and initiative, such as Thaxted. Alan Dyer adds to the perhaps predominant consensus in favour of the relatively positive experience of small towns:

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10 D. Keene, 'Small towns and the metropolis: the experience of medieval England', in Duvosquel and Thoen, *Peasants and Townsmen*, pp. 234-6.

11 C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 41; D. A. Postles, 'An English small town in the late Middle Ages: Loughborough', *Urban History*, 20 (1993), p. 29.

12 C. Dyer and T. R. Slater, 'The Midlands', in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* i, p. 634.

13 C. Dyer, 'Small towns', pp. 534-5; G. G. Astill, 'Archaeology and the late medieval urban decline', in T. R. Slater (ed.), *Towns in Decline, A.D. 100-1600* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 214-21.

14 Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, p. 282.

the experience of London and the small towns was 'more cheerful than larger towns'.[15] The increasing flourishing of London is accepted by all modern commentators.

THE BUILT FORM

Some, often very partial, indications of the built form may be gained from the survival and distribution of buildings of the period and from analysis of the street pattern. It may also be possible from the street plan to suggest the sequence of development of sectors of the town, shown by distinct units of the plan. The evidence of streets and buildings may be supplemented by material from contemporary documents such as surveys, rentals, deeds, wills and court rolls, which are likely also to suggest the location of industrial and commercial enterprises and whether these were associated with specific areas.

Within the relatively densely-built environment characteristic of towns, there is unlikely to be difficulty in identifying the core area, which normally accommodated the focal economic, governmental, religious and social functions. At the heart of this was the market, the economic hub, often very close to the church, in a small town the focus, normally, of a single parish, which included both the town and a rural area. The market might well house stalls, permanent or temporary, in addition to shops, though increasingly shops were replacing stalls on the same site, perhaps fossilising in the market plan the distribution of the more temporary structures. Shops were also likely to be found on a major route through the town, along which might be houses of the elite, which congregated near the core, too, in the most advantageous commercial locations. Close to the market would be a building where market tolls would be paid and disputes settled and near this was often a prestige building of a major socio-religious gild.

The manorial centre would form a distinct focus for administering the demesne and a meeting place for the lord's courts. Ordinary houses would be closely set, on narrow plots, with

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15 A. Dyer, *Decline*, p. 61.

buildings, used for a variety of domestic, commercial and industrial purposes, extending backwards.[16]

Within the overall complex of buildings, there might be signs of decay and abandonment. It will be important to recognise both signs of economic decline and other economic and perhaps social processes which might lead to such redundancy. Signs of new building, while apparently positive, might indicate recovery from earlier decay, rather than primary expansion.

THE ECONOMY

Any town's economic complexion is reflected in the types and range of its occupations. They clarify its essential activities, shed light on how it fits into the region and suggest what longer distance connections it might have. Importantly, this will test the relevance of theories of central place and networks, since the pattern of contacts can be mapped and the resulting distribution analysed. In Walden's case, this may help to elucidate the degree of its reliance on contact with Cambridge, as the nearest higher order centre, and with London, only 60 km distant, as well its relationship to the Stort/Cam corridor and its potential association with the Stour valley cloth area. Light should also be thrown on its contacts with similar-status towns. It is important to bear in mind, in relation to all these, that the context was constantly changing, for example in the distribution of wealth and property, the importance of London and the vitality of the cloth industry.[17]

Occupational evidence is, of course, likely to reveal specialisms, by comparison with those mundane ones, such as bakers, carpenters and shoemakers, identified as typical by a consensus of commentators. Major topics for investigation arise: apart from the need to clarify the

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16 J. Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (Leicester, 1997); S. Pearson, 'Rural and urban houses, 1100-1500: 'urban adaptation' reconsidered', in K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500* (Leeds, 2005), pp. 43-63.

17 R. H. Britnell, 'Urban demand in the English economy, 1300-1600', in J. A. Galloway (ed.), *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration 1300-1600*, CMH working papers, 3 (London, 2000), pp. 1-21; idem, 'The woollen textile industry of Suffolk in the later Middle Ages', *The Ricardian*, 13 (2003), pp. 86-99.

town's basic means of livelihood and whether it was declining, is it justifiable to call Walden a 'cloth town', as has been done, and what was the role of the industry acknowledged in the change in the town's name?[18]

THE REGION'S TOWNS

An area of radius about 40 km around Walden is centred on low upland. It includes fringe areas of four counties: north-west Essex, south Cambridgeshire, north-east Hertfordshire and south-west Suffolk and thirty-nine towns, including, at its borders, the major ones of Cambridge, Colchester and Bury St Edmunds. The lay subsidies of 1334 and 1524/5 allow Walden to be ranked in wealth among these towns. Lay subsidies provide statistics which, though too hedged with caveats for precise conclusions, allow 'best of a bad job' generalisations about relative vitality at a single date.[19]

The area's 1377-81 poll tax cover is too incomplete for comparative purposes and only the roughest idea of population is gained from the numbers of taxpayers in 1327.[20] Additionally, since several counties are involved in this study, a lesser consistency within the data is likely: commissioners potentially varied in rigour or susceptibility to corruption and dates of surviving records also vary: a 1307 return is used for Hertfordshire, which lacks 1327. As with 1334, which imposed a higher rate for royal boroughs and ancient demesne, for this analysis the rates for those towns taxed at a higher level in 1307 are made comparable to the rest.

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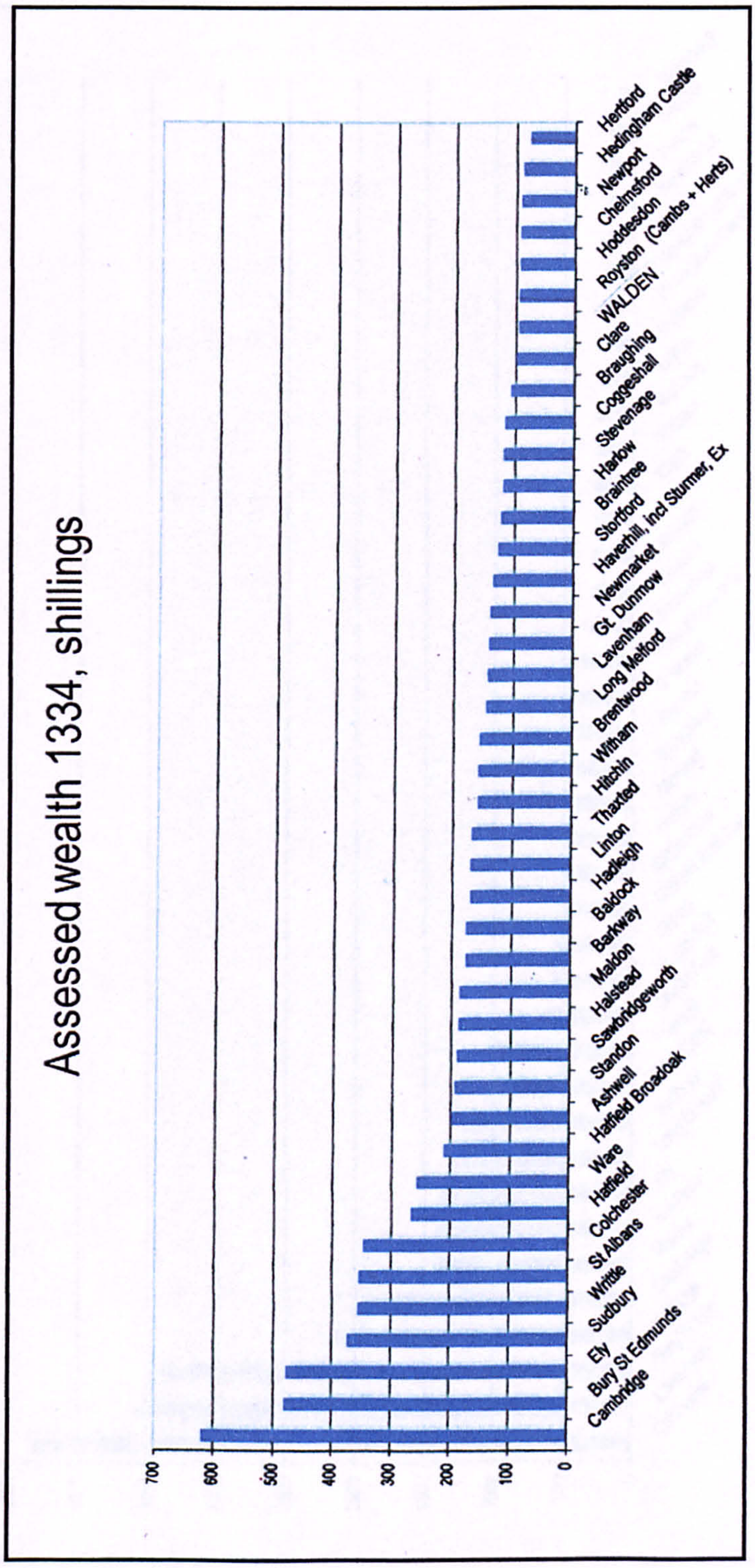
18 R. H. Britnell, 'The economy of British towns', in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* i, pp. 313-33; P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: the Grocers Company and the Politics and Trade of London 1000-1485* (London, 1995), p. 548.

19 For a detailed discussion of the urban hierarchy of the region, see Chapter One: The Regional Setting.

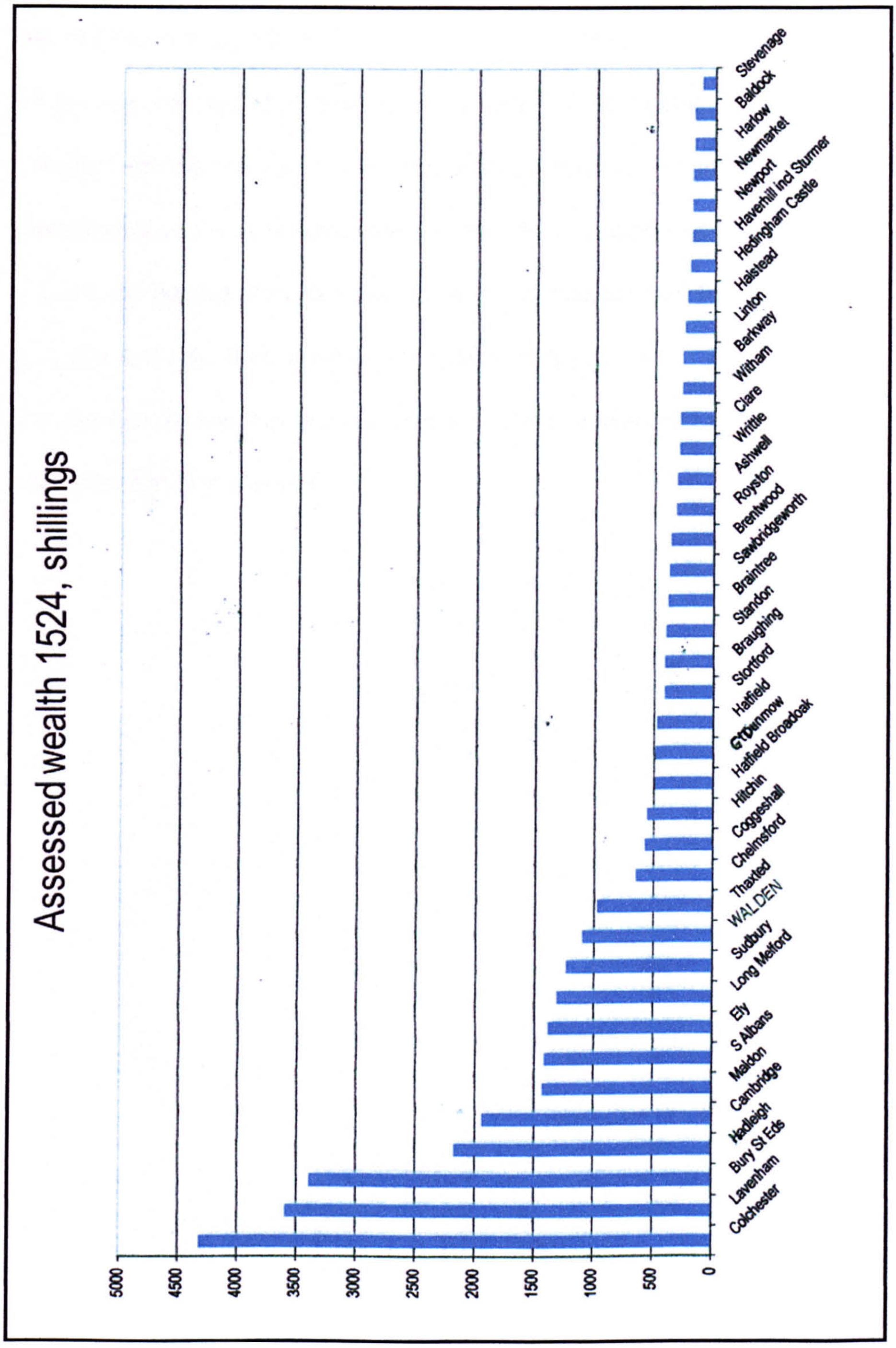
20 C. C. Fenwick (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, BARSEH n.s., 27 (Oxford, 1998-2005).

Fig. A. Walden's region towns 1334: assessed wealth



Source: R. E. Glasscock (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, BARSEH, n.s. 2 (London, 1975). Note: the graph shows the tax due and excludes Buntingford, with no formal status at this period.

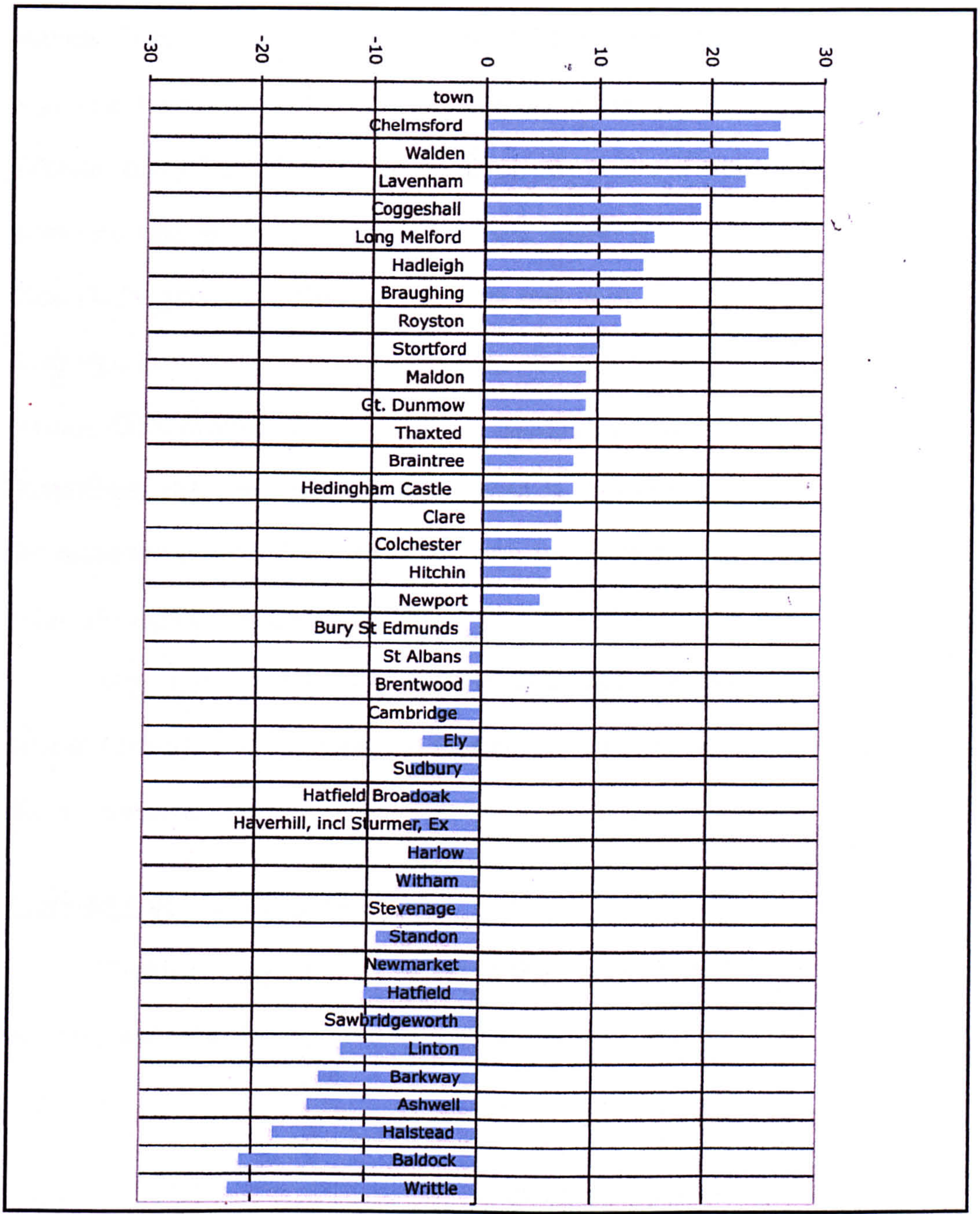
Fig. B. Walden's region towns 1524, assessed wealth



Source: R. W. Hoyle (ed.), *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns: J. Sheail* (Kew, 1998). Hoyle recommends the use of data from 1524, rather than a mixture of 1524 and 1525. In a few cases, e.g. Baldock, which lack 1524 figures, 1525 has been used instead.

By 1524 the towns with greatest wealth had increased their differential from lesser ones: they had seven or eight times the assessed wealth of the twenty-seven least, whereas in 1334 the top three had had about three times the wealth of the nineteen least. This seems entirely consistent with the increasing commercialisation and specialisation of the economy encouraging concentration on the more advantaged centres. It led to substantial gains for some, while the unsuccessful became more extremely so. A plot of standard deviation from a mean wealth for each date also indicates that values had become more polarised. In 1524 Colchester, Lavenham and Bury had between four and five times the average in assessed wealth, Stevenage, Baldock and Harlow less than a quarter of it.

Fig. C. Changes in wealth rank in the region's towns 1334–1524/1525



Source: Glasscock (ed.), Lay Subsidy; Hoyle (ed.), *Regional Distribution*. Note: The few towns taxed in 1334 at a tenth of the total assessed value of movable goods were converted to a fifteenth for comparability. Because of variations in the bases of taxes at differing dates, it is necessary to use the tax data for only relative, and not absolute purposes, hence the graph indicates approximate changes in relative status of the region's towns. A few, notably Ware, lack data and cannot, therefore, be included.[21]

The roll-call of those thirteen towns which apparently improved their ranking considerably, by over 10 points, suggests interesting patterns: after Chelmsford, Walden made

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21 The unit of the vill, on which data are based, usually included non-urban areas, while separate substantial settlements immediately adjacent will, of course, be unrepresented in these statistics. In 1525, Bocking was assessed at £20 16s, compared with £19 1s for the adjacent Braintree, and Sible Hedingham at £5 19s, compared with Castle Hedingham's £9 11s.

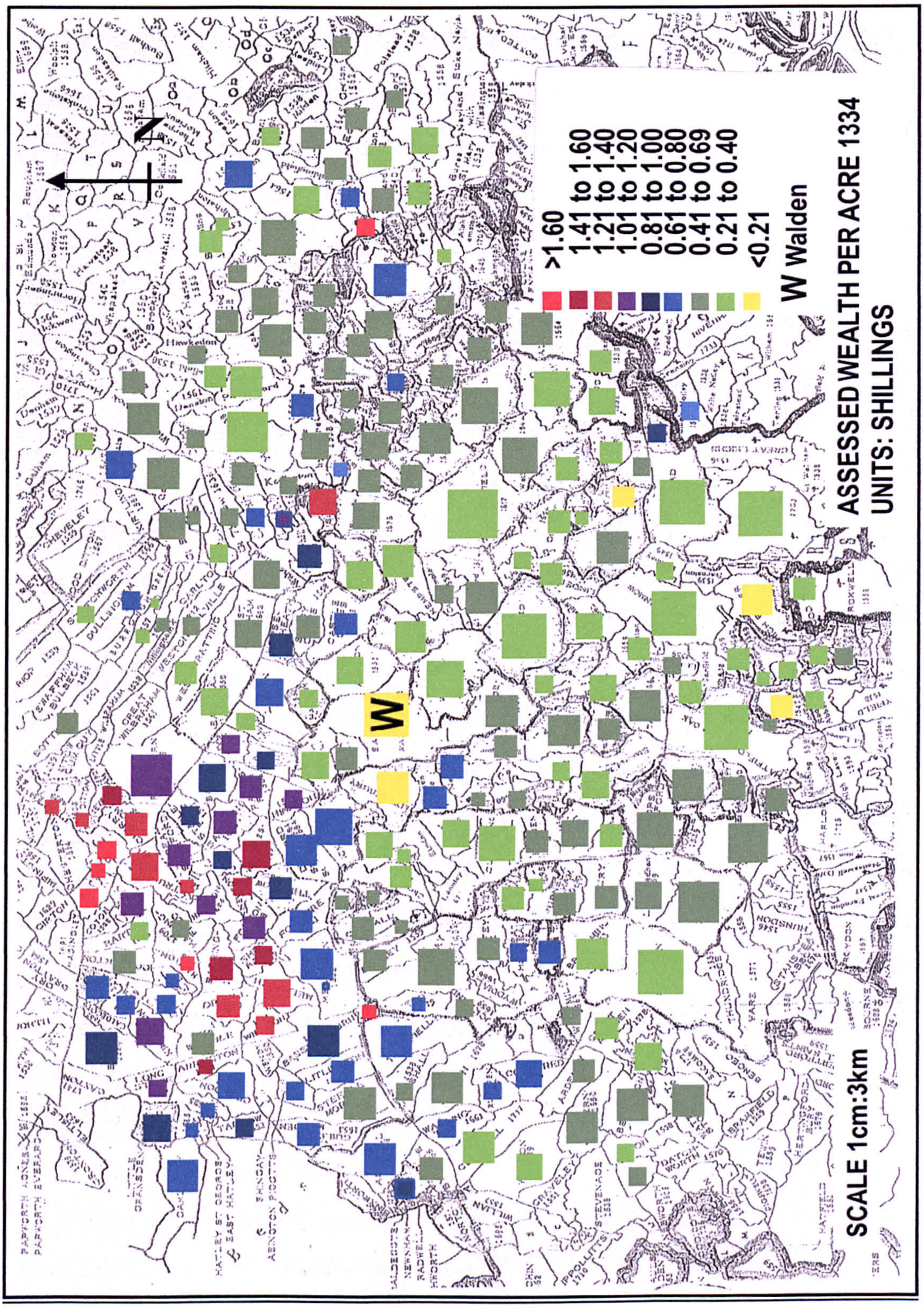
the most extreme gain in rank of all; next is Lavenham, which had risen dramatically as a cloth-producer. Of the remainder, Coggeshall, Hadleigh, Clare and Braintree, and its adjunct, Bocking, were all in the south Suffolk/north Essex cloth district, whose prosperity peaked in the early sixteenth century. Thaxted's rise suggests that the main decline of its cutlery industry had not yet taken substantial effect and emphasises the vital interest of its relationship to Walden's rise. Chelmsford's growth was predictable from its main road location, supplanting Writtle, and designation as county town, while its role in the cloth making was fundamental to Colchester's success. Great Dunmow may have been a staging-post between London and the booming Suffolk/Essex cloth area and was also involved in the expanding malting trade, for which Brentwood was a centre. Malting and a favourable location on the road system are likely to have ensured Royston's development.

Major losers in the period seem to have been Sawbridgeworth, Writtle, Standon, Ashwell, Barkway, Linton, Halstead and Baldock, most of which probably suffered, as Hertford did, from competition from neighbours better located in relation to routeways.

CHANGES IN THE REGION

Walden's rise must also be seen in relation to changes from 1334 in the distribution of assessed wealth and of population in the region as a whole.

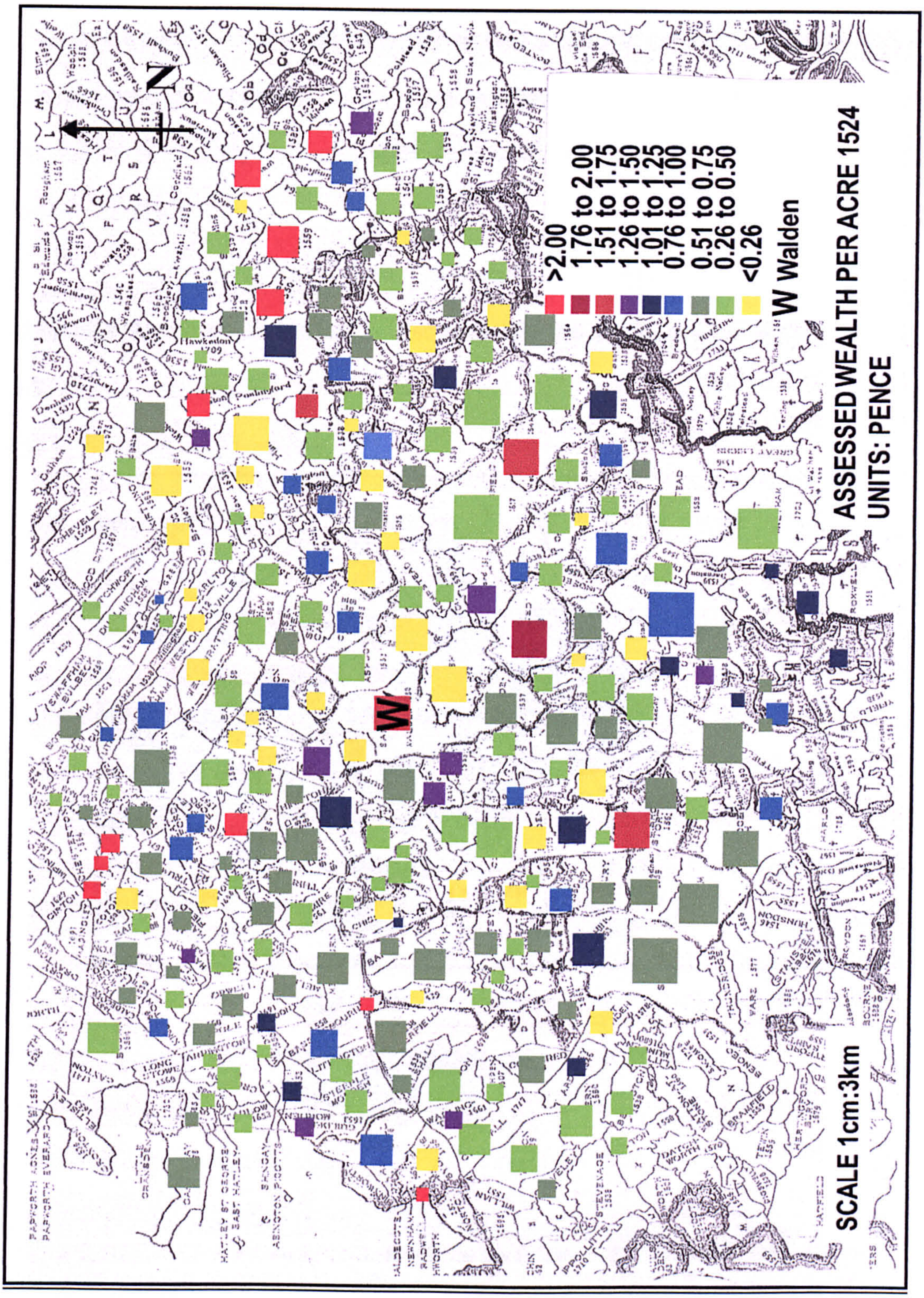
Fig. D. Assessed wealth, Walden's region 1334



Note: calculated on a vill-by-vill basis; actual size of coloured squares is not intended to be significant but merely to be roughly proportional to the area of the vill. Source: Glasscock (ed.), *Lay Subsidy*. Boroughs taxed at one tenth have been converted to one fifteenth, for comparability; parish acreages from *VCH* where possible, otherwise *Index to O.S. 6 ins to 1 mile, 1891,* all adjusted according to any evidence of changes as listed in F. A. Youngs, *Guide to the Local Administrative Units of England*, i (London, 1979).

The contrast in 1334 between the rich lowland area around Cambridge, in the north west corner of the map, and the large area of low wealth on the hills to the south east of Walden is immediately apparent. The boundary between richer and poorer areas follows closely the Icknield Way route along the edge of the escarpment. (Fig. 1.2) Within the hills, the route from Cambridge towards Colchester, passing Linton and Haverhill, links some settlements with moderate assessments.

Fig. E. Assessed wealth, Walden's region, 1524/5

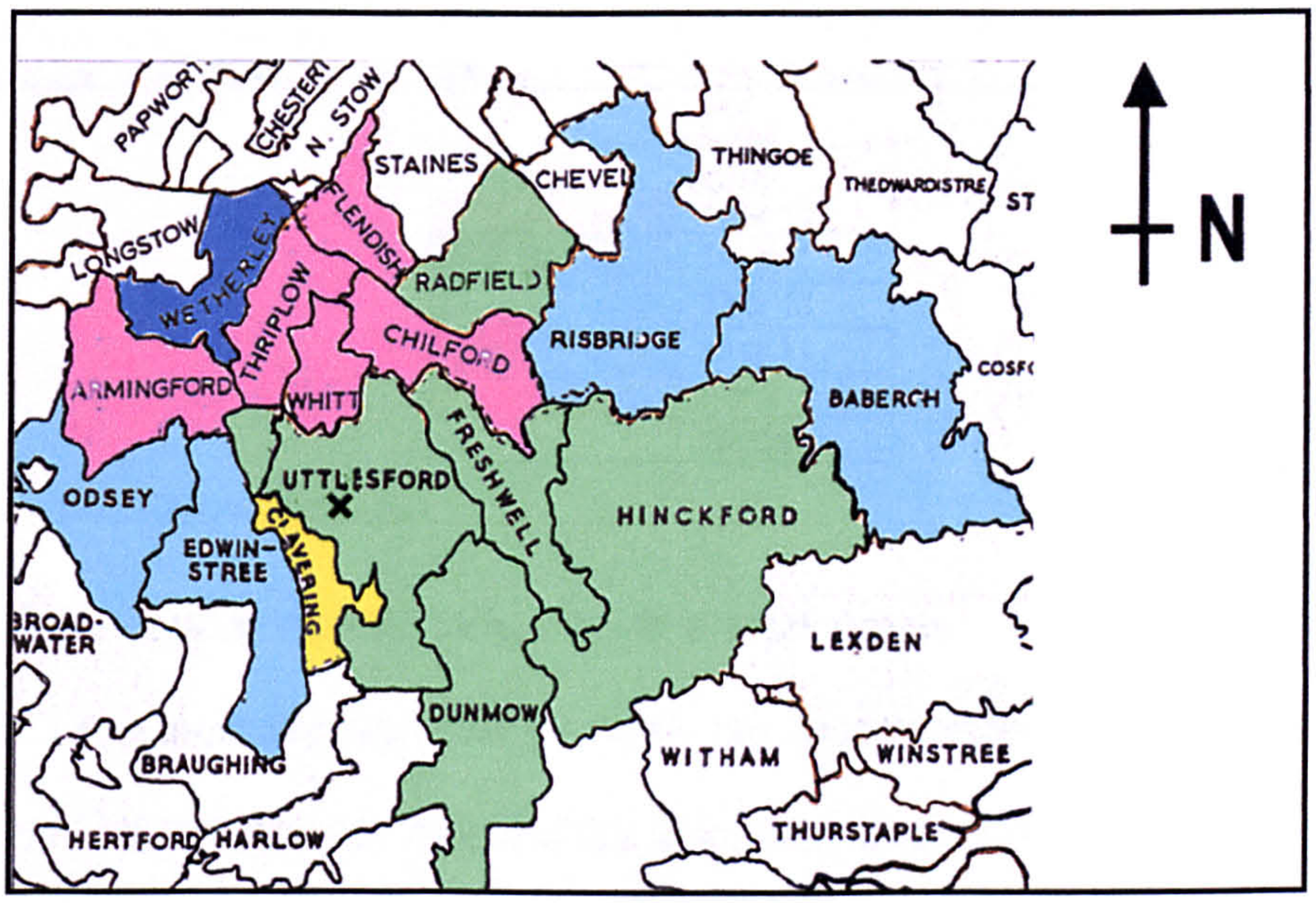


Note: calculated on a vill-by-vill basis; actual size of coloured squares is not intended to be significant but merely to be roughly proportional to the area of the vill. Source: Hoyle (ed.), *Regional Distribution*.

By 1524/5 the rich northern area's relative wealth was greatly reduced, while the Stour cloth area around Glemsford and Lavenham showed a particular concentration. Overall, large contrasts were more localised: the now quite prosperous areas near Walden contrasted with those close by with very low assessments. Parts of the south, and so nearest to London, had become considerably wealthier.

Walden's local area's increased relative wealth is reflected in a considerable increase in the density of taxpayers in Uttlesford hundred, especially, and also in Dunmow, as compared with 1327.

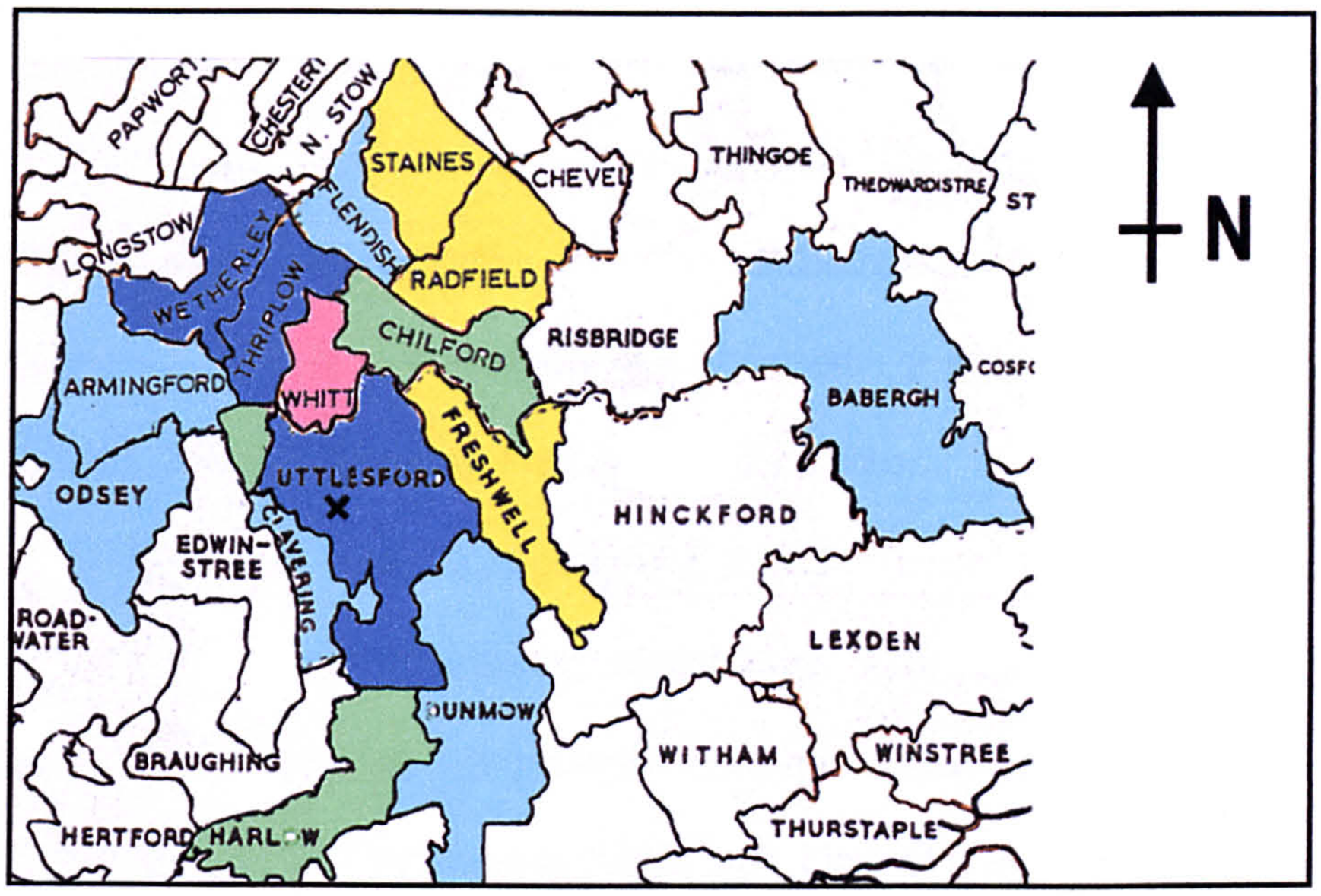
Fig. F. Taxpayers per square mile, 1327



KEY	
	>12.5
	10 to 12.5
	7.5 to < 10
	5 to < 7.5
	<5
X	Walden

Sources: C. H. Evelyn White (ed.), *Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely: the Lay Subsidy for the Year 1327* (PRO, 1900); J. C. Ward (ed.), *The Medieval Essex Community: the Lay Subsidy of 1327* (Chelmsford, 1983); J. A. Brooker and S. Flood (eds), *The Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1307 and 1334* (Hitchin, 1998); S. H. A. Hervey (ed.), *Suffolk in 1327: Being a Subsidy Return,* Suffolk Green Books, 9 (Woodbridge, 1906). Note: calculations based on the subsidy's data can give an impression, only, since two thirds of the population, or even more in towns, may have been excluded. (Dyer, 'How urbanised', p. 174).

Fig. G. Taxpayers per square mile, 1524/5



KEY	
	17 or 18
	14 or 15
	12 or 13
	10 or 11
	8 or 9
X	Walden

Source: Hoyle (ed.), *Regional Distribution*.

These taxation records, then, indicate a great increase in the relative prosperity of Walden and its surrounding area over the nearly two hundred years from 1334. Although the study period 1438-90 is towards the end of this span, there remain thirty-four years after it before the assessment of wealth in 1524. A fundamental question for the present enquiry is to what extent the relative growth is attributable to the span studied, rather than to the long preceding and short succeeding ones. It is, of course, also important that 'relative' is not equivalent to 'absolute' growth.

SOCIETY

Turning to urban societies, it has been noted that a small group of individuals and families, set apart by their high status, tended to dominate and that they associated through

business, political, cultural and, especially, marriage ties. Individuals in general regularly met in a series of overlapping groups beyond the household, their sphere circumscribed by neighbourhood, occupation, wealth, gender and life cycle. The framework for this interaction might be either formal, as in structures within the administration of courts and parish or legal mechanisms such as those concerning disposal of property, or informal, for example in some debt and credit relations or recreational and devotional practices.

The incidence of these groupings in small or medium market towns will be distinctive in both degree and kind. For example, the elite of such towns, in contrast to that of larger ones, will be composed primarily of traders in relatively mundane commodities in their own localities: tanners, dyers and butchers, for example. With a typical lack of production of, or considerable demand for, high value goods, there will normally be few substantial merchants, while numbers of such marginals as beggars and prostitutes will also be few, because extensive patronage will be lacking. That labourers and servants will, together, often form about forty per cent of the inhabitants emphasises the crucial importance of the town's role in relation to its rural area.[22] Permanent immigration was necessary in the period to maintain urban population size. Concerning this, even though a small town had advantages relative to larger ones in its absence of the regulation of working practices by trade gilds, it might be difficult to attract labour. For example, if the independent formation of new households were still eased by a continued availability of land, the level of entry fines for urban property, potentially twenty times that for rural areas, would be a serious deterrent. The small town might serve as a magnet for the under-employed but it typically had limited markets in potentially more prosperous areas at a greater distance. In Walden's case both aspects, the economic structure of at least parts of its hinterland and its opportunities in distant markets, had distinctive characteristics.

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22 C. Dyer, 'Small towns', p. 516.

POPULATION SIZE

Credible estimates of Walden's population size would help considerably in evaluating the state of the town in the period.

In 1327 sixty-six people paid the lay subsidy; given that probably eighty per cent in towns achieved exemption, some by manipulation of the tax system, this would suggest a population of between 1300 and 1600.[23] A check on the post Black Death size, by means of the 1377-81 subsidy, is not available here, though Alan Dyer estimates that it was 1976 then.[24] At the next data point, in 1524/5, Walden is ranked thirty-sixth in England in population, though only fifty-eighth in taxable wealth. Based on 380 taxpayers then, Alan Dyer suggests a population of 2470.[25] So, what of the fifteenth century population of Walden?

Walden's Elizabethan population is estimated by Poos from parish records as around 2600. On the basis of comparison with tithing records elsewhere in north central Essex, he suggests that it almost doubles in the century before Elizabeth's reign, which would give about 1400-1500 in the period 1450-75.[26] However, he also suggests that if the demographic growth rate paralleled those he derives from analysis of the tithing records, it is likely to have been 'essentially stationary' through the 1400s. If this was so, and if Alan Dyer's 1976 in 1377-81 is roughly correct, it would imply a notable decline by the early fifteenth century but also a considerable rise between about 1500 and 1524/5.[27] Is this likely?

Clearly, many of these estimates of the population size must be tentative. Along with other indicators of the overall state of the town in the period, they will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

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23 C. Dyer, 'Taxation and communities in late medieval England', in R. H. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 175-6; a household size of 4 or 5 is assumed; Walden's 66 taxpayer total compares with 58 at Stratford, 54 at Evesham and 75 at Birmingham.

24 A. Dyer, *Decline*, p. 72.

25 A. Dyer, 'Appendix: ranking lists of English medieval towns' in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* i, pp. 762, 766.

26 Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 126.

27 J. A. Galloway, 'Urban hinterlands in later medieval England', in Giles and Dyer (eds), *Town and Country*, pp. 119-120, suggests Walden's population around.1400 reached 'about 2,000'. This is not substantiated but presumably based on his study of contemporary Walden court rolls.

GOVERNMENT

Most small towns were ruled by lords, who might grant some rights of self-government, though often keeping close control. Privileges varied greatly between towns; the degree of freedom of the inhabitants was directly affected by the precise nature of the control and there is widespread evidence of attempts to gain more freedom.[28] A minority of the population of a borough, a status achieved by grant from a lord, might be granted the rank of burgess, with distinctly urban rights, crucially including advantageous conditions of tenure, with a considerable freedom in alienating or inheriting land at fixed rents allowing greater potential for raising capital. As a differentiator, money was increasingly important relative to feudal status, and although also there were many who held by villein tenure, so that they needed the lord's permission to sell, sub-let or grant, and such transfers were recorded by the manorial courts, many could bequeath without interference. Labour services, in particular week work, were by now largely superseded by payment of cash rents, fixed by custom.[29]

The possession of legal liberties became a marker of urban status. Although the lord's representative was in charge of court proceedings, the town's elite might well have gained the power to govern, in practice, through electing the crucial positions of juror, who decided which cases to bring, and assessor, who played a part, with the president representing the lord, in deciding on the level of dues and amercements to be paid. In view of this, the composition of this elite is clearly crucial and in this, as in other matters, change within the period might be significant: a widely observed feature is an increased tendency to oligarchy, with its implications for social polarisation and, potentially, even unrest.[30] Its importance suggests particular attention should be paid to it in detailed work on individual towns. Walden's varied and detailed records

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28 For example, see C. Dyer, 'Small-town conflict in the later Middle Ages: events at Shipston-on-Stour', *Urban History*, 19 (1992), pp. 201-3; S. H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 172-3.

29 Walden's social structure is discussed in Chapter 4.

30 J. Kermode, 'Obvious observations on the formation of oligarchies in late medieval English towns', in Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople*, pp. 87-106; S. H. Rigby, 'Urban 'oligarchy' in late medieval England', in Thomson, pp. 62-86.

will, again, give a substantial idea of the extent to which the same individuals were in authority in both the borough and parish administration and of their occupations and perhaps economic standing.

Another, related, characteristic is the tendency for the elite to reinforce their status by their membership and management of a fraternity, which might become powerful enough to serve as a shadow government, its strength perhaps enhanced by its acquisition of properties to let and consequent management of a notable estate within the town.[31]

The behaviour of town-dwellers, as evidenced primarily in the records of the courts leet, whose remit included considering petty offences such as assault, defamation, theft and contravening local ordinances, is important in seeking to understand both the town's prevailing atmosphere and whether changes in it are apparent which might reflect altered local economic, social or jurisdictional conditions, or, indeed, wider influences. Additionally, the leet jurors' initiatives, including the making of ordinances against activities seen as liable to sabotage fitness to work, may give indications of the local cultural as well as economic climate.

CULTURAL

To what extent was the cultural life of the town distinctively urban and can it be demonstrated that a 'wide spectrum of town dwellers' in fact found scope for participation?[32]

Contexts which were apparently corporate might provide opportunity to harmonise disparate sections of the population but might also illuminate divisions and so serve to strengthen factional allegiances. While varied social categories would take part in many calendrical events and some institutions, their role and experience in these would vary, both by design, in such processions as at Corpus Christi, and more casually in the impact on their lives. Categorisation

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31 C. Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford: a successful small town', in R. Bearman (ed.),*The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 43-64; J. Gross, *The Gild Merchant: a Contribution to British Municipal History* (Oxford, 1890).

32 G. Rosser, 'Urban culture and the church', in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* i, p. 337.

as urban, with a minimum size and range of population, would imply a relatively wide variety and number of institutions and result in an at least materially more substantial corpus of evidence of variety than would be found in village contexts.[33]

Many organisations and events served multiple purposes, both practical and ideological, which, of course, also adapted to changing needs and ideas. The ideals of charity had led to Walden's elite's foundation of an almshouse but at the same time they took the opportunity both to define a pattern of religious observance as a model and to reinforce their own status in perpetuity as the town's worthies. While plays would be enjoyable at 'face value', and at Walden raised funds for the church, a motivating force was probably, at least originally, didactic and moralising. The church was attended for business, legal, social and entertainment purposes, as well as for worship.[34] Its elaboration, in the building itself and its ornament, might provide a pleasing and devotional environment and would doubtless serve to impress outsiders and reinforce the settlement's prestige and claim to urban status.

Although a distinctively urban range of institutions with a cultural role has been identified, the ensemble characteristic of market towns will differ in scale but potentially also in kind from those found in larger towns: the typical absence of craft gilds from market towns is one marker of such difference which would have a significant impact on cultural life.[35] Are there cultural distinctions in both the numbers and types of marker characteristic of market town, as opposed to village environments?

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33 C. V. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry', in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History* (London, 1972), pp. 57-85; variety is discussed in Chapter Five, below.

34 K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001).

35 H. Swanson, *Medieval British Towns* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 97.

CONCLUSION

In summary, did modest market towns have a distinctive profile, comprising their built form, economic function, social, governmental and perhaps cultural characteristics? Certain features have been identified as typical. Their relevance to Saffron Walden will be discussed in the pages that follow.

STUDIES OF WALDEN

Although Walden in the late medieval period has lacked an extensive study, a major shorter contribution was made by Dorothy Cromarty, previously Monteith. Her careful study of the fields of the vill in 1400 was followed by one based on the court rolls of the town manor from 1381-1420, in which she discussed morphology, industries, the range of occupations, the limited privileges of the burgesses and their struggles both to gain more rights and to control order. She found little evidence for a textile industry but raised important questions about the context and mechanisms of the already vigorous dyeing industry, and concluded that by 1420 the economy was expanding.[36]

An investigation of the origins and early development of the town was made by S. R. Bassett, who pointed out that the large area enclosed by ditches as for expansion to the south of the core remained largely undeveloped until modern times. As potential explanation for this, he, too, emphasised the burgesses' limited privileges, seeing them as potentially a handicap in attracting settlement, and also suggested that loss of the lord's principal seigneurial residence emphasised the disadvantage that the town was located inconveniently far from the major local routeway.[37] More recently, excavators have noted a lack of fifteenth century evidence from the

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36 D. Cromarty, *The Fields of Saffron Walden in 1400* (Chelmsford, 1966); eadem, D. Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden 1381-1420: a study from the court rolls', *Essex Journal*, 2 (1967), pp. 105-13, 122-39, 181-6.

37 S. R. Bassett, *Saffron Walden: Excavations and Research, 1972-80*, CBA Research Report 45 (Chelmsford, 1982).

market site, and suggested an alternative development of the core's layout. They confirm that the marking out of the large area for expansion was over-ambitious.[38]

PRIMARY SOURCES

There is a large range of detailed sources for studying Walden in the period.[39]The records of between three and five Chepyng Walden courts per year are extant for all years except 1466-9, inclusive, though less well preserved and rather fewer after about 1480. The manor covers all the town area, and about half of the vill. The court rolls provide a great deal of evidence, both of litigation and of those involved in it. The main pleas pursued through the ordinary manor and borough courts concern debt and also broken contract and trespass. Much of the courts' time was taken up with transfers of land and holding without authority. Court records shed light on status, giving the names of those in office, those holding land and sometimes of their occupations. Each year, one of the courts was a view of frankpledge and one a 'general court', with leet. These enable a considerably fuller picture of society to be derived from details of office-holding, occupations, and enforcement of law and order.

The extant churchwardens' accounts consist of 149 folios beginning in 1438 and include almost all years up to 1490. They are kept annually, up to 1442 in Anglo-Norman French and then mainly in Latin, though from 1472-4, 1477-9 and 1486-9 in English. A few years' accounts, mainly c.1442-8, and some memos, have been bound, and subsequently microfilmed, out of sequence. A combination of methods has been used to address this problem.[40] In general, some sums represent combined payments for several purposes which are not separately defined. Though the record is very detailed, the lesser material for the final few years, as with the court rolls, of course places some constraints on the validity of comparisons over time..

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38 D. D. Andrews, C. Mundy and H. Walker, 'Saffron Walden: the topography of the southern half of the town and the marketplace', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 33 (2002), pp. 221-73.

39 For details see Bibiography.

40 See Appendix A.

A large body of deeds of free properties which came into the hands of the gild administering the almshouse includes some of the period; they give details of location in the vill, names, including of feoffees, occupations and places of origin of outsiders.

Most people did not make a will; extant wills 'allow us access to the religious norms of a minority of the inhabitants only ... a social and economic elite'.[41] Of the minority made that survive, only thirteen come from the period 1440-1490; if those dated up to 1520 are included, they total sixty-eight.

A rental of the main manor in 1524 will suggest some patterns in landholding, and can be related to individuals' assessments in the lay subsidy of 1524-5.[42] Its spatial coverage is incomplete, however, and since it records only direct tenants of the lord, it gives no evidence of subtenants, among them mainly the relatively poor.

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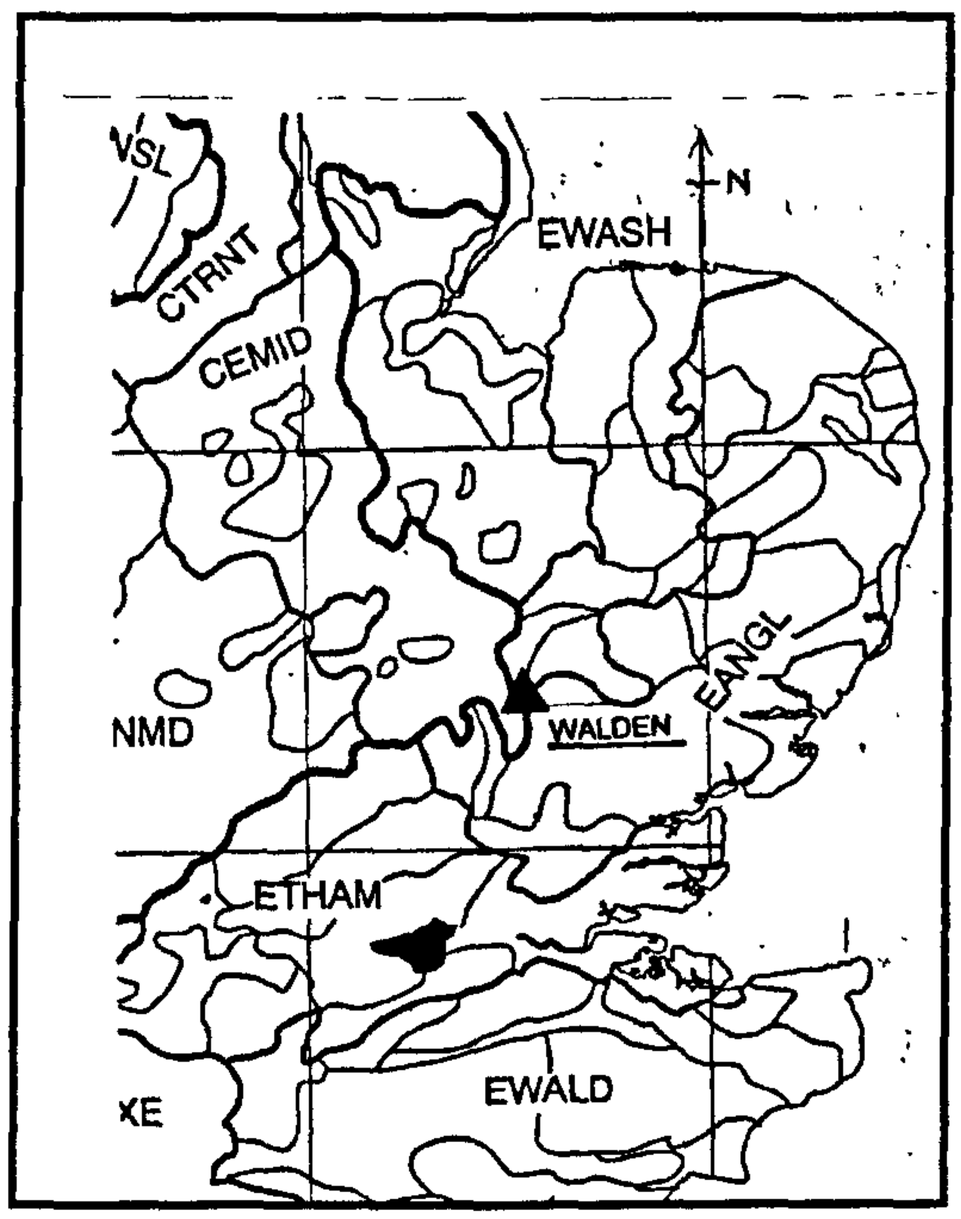
41 P Heath, 'Urban piety in the Later Middle Ages: the evidence of Hull wills', in B. Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage* (Gloucester, 1984), p. 212.

42 ECRO D/DBy m. 32; TNA, PRO E 179/108/155.

CHAPTER ONE: THE REGIONAL SETTING

The town is precisely on the interface between the nucleated settlement, open field, area of central England to the north west and one more characterised by wood pasture, dispersed settlement and ancient enclosure to the south east. This obviously gives a potential advantage from the scope for exchange of complementary products.

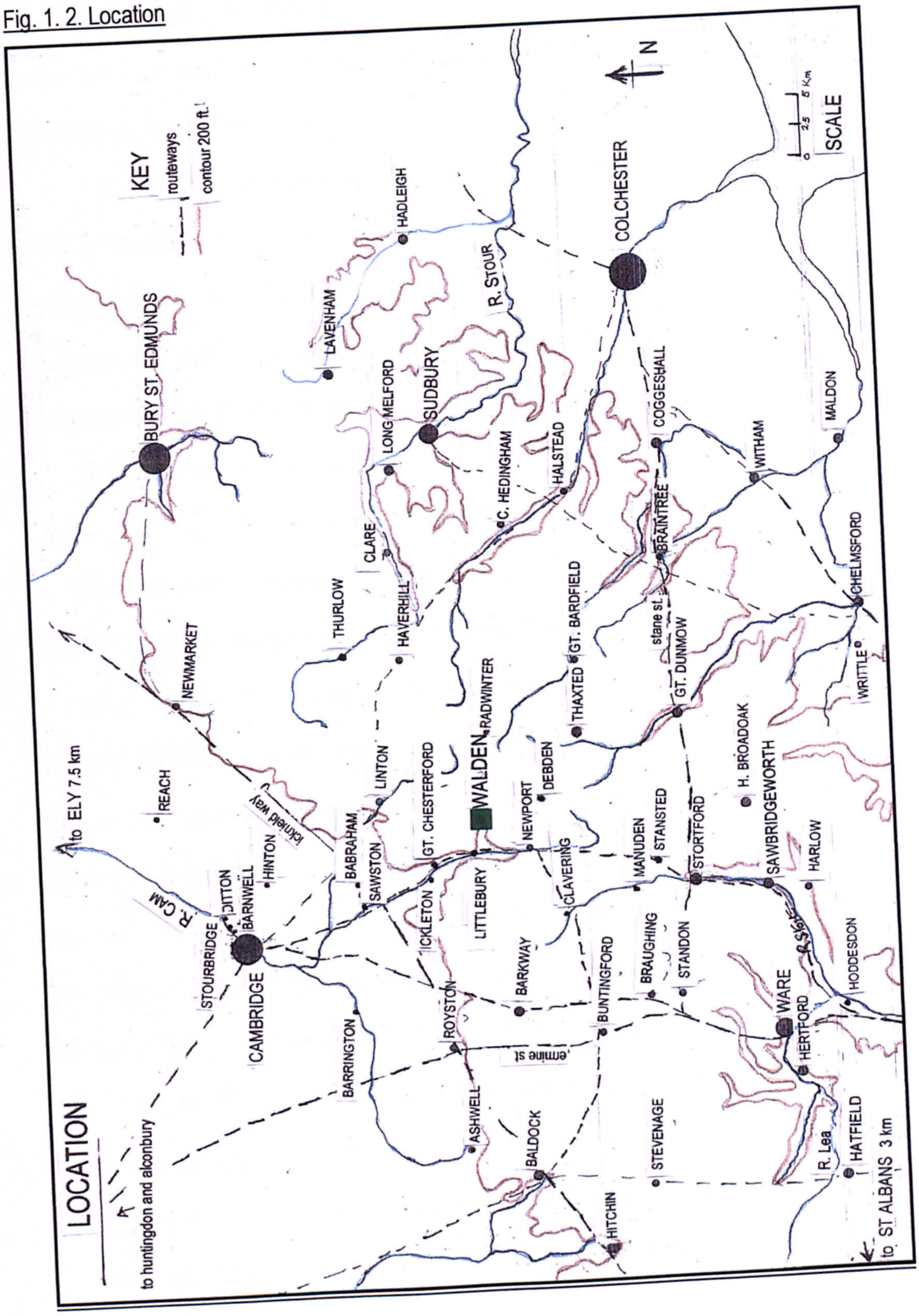
Fig. 1.1. The pays boundary location



Source: B. K. Roberts and S. Wrathmell, *Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (London, 2000), p. 2.

Walden is in the upper Cam valley, in an area of low upland, varying in altitude from 200 to 400 ft O.D., stretching broadly west, south and east. These hills in fact separate the valleys of the Cam, and therefore the Ouse, river system, draining the Fenland basin towards The Wash, from those of such rivers flowing southwards as the Stort and Lea to east London, and others south eastwards to the Suffolk and Essex coast.

Fig. 1. 2. Location



Around and to the north of Walden the chalk is exposed and settlement usually follows the spring line along the valleys, floored by sands and gravels. Elsewhere these hills are overlain by boulder clay, the Suffolk and Essex 'till plain'.

The several major routeways are important. Firstly, from London towards Cambridge, following the Lea/Stort/Cam valley, passing close to Walden then meeting the Icknield Way route which runs through Newmarket towards Norwich and Yarmouth. From Cambridge a link north westwards joins, north of Huntingdon, the 'A1 route', from London through Baldock. Ermine St, through Ware and Royston, was highly important for the settlements in east Hertfordshire.

The agrarian regimes varied, naturally, according to such factors as relief and soils. Contrasting with the timber, fuel, and cattle further south and east, the 'open field area', including the Cam valley north of Walden, characteristically produced wheat, barley and sheep. Grain cultivation had been dominant where there was good drainage, with limited meadow and pasture land. After 1350, wheat was grown on relatively heavy soils and barley on lighter, since, with increased prosperity, consumers preferred these to rye and oats for bread and ale, respectively. However, the well-known consequences of the approximate halving of mid-fourteenth century population included both lesser demand and higher costs for arable, which was relatively labour intensive, leading to falling profits, leasing of demesnes and some abandonment: north east Hertfordshire's heavy dependence on grain production, allied with poor water transport, much retention of onerous labour services and little non-agricultural employment led to particularly 'severe economic contraction' in the later Middle Ages.[43] Pastoral farming, with lesser labour demands and reflecting tastes for more, newly-affordable, meat, dairy products, wool and hides gained in importance, especially on heavier clay soils. A considerable provisioning trade included sending cheese and butter to London.[44] Castle Hedingham, Hadstock, Gt Bardfield and Haverhill,

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43 M. Bailey, 'Introduction', in J. Brooker and S. Flood (eds), *The Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1307 and 1327* (Hitchin, 1998), pp. xxi-xxvii.

44 J. A. Galloway and M. Murphy, 'Feeding the city: medieval London and its agrarian hinterland', *London Journal*, 16 (1991), p. 9.

all within 16 km broadly east of Walden, were already in the late fourteenth century centres of the livestock trade.[45] Pigs were common, in both towns and the wooded areas. After 1400, falling wool and mutton prices implied a need to maximise flock size in order to achieve ecomomies of scale but this was prohibitive for many small farmers.[46] By about 1450 wool prices were fifty per cent lower than in 1400 and exports had collapsed. In south west Suffolk, with mainly boulder clay soils, peasant sheep rearing declined by 1400 and dairying in the next fifty years, with cheese sales at their lowest around 1450 and the value of meadow reduced, though both dairying and beef stock fattening later revived.[47] Beef cattle's relative advantage was a lesser demand for labour; fattening beasts from northern and midland Britain for the metropolitan market became increasingly significant. Peasants might keep a small herd, as at Haverhill, for example.[48] Place-name surnames among London tanners point to a flourishing tanning industry around Bishops Stortford from as early as the twelfth century.[49] Though probably the bulk of hides was supplied from London and this industry may well have supplied bone and leather to Thaxted cutlers, it perhaps exploited the cattle trade using the Cam/Stort valley route through the relatively dry chalk upland.

The abrupt depopulation and agrarian contraction after 1350 encouraged both such non-agricultural occupations and industrial expansion. A broadly rising living standard brought about increased demand for manufactures, clearly relevant to town economies. In the hills east and south of Walden a distinctive trade in wood, including firewood, developed, embracing small towns and villages and serving such artisans as bakers, tilers and dyers and also the domestic

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45 R. Britnell, 'Urban demand in the English economy, 1300-1600, in J. A. Galloway (ed.), *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration 1300-1600*, CMH working papers, 3 (London, 2000), p. 6.

46 M. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: an Economic and Social History, 1200-1500* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 217.

47 Bailey, *Suffolk*, pp. 215-227.

48 Bailey, p. 224.

49 L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 49; D. Keene, 'Tanners' widows', in C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds), *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500* (London, 1994), p. 10.

needs of the landless.[50] Timber was supplied to Peterborough Abbey, and timber and wood products to both London and Cambridge, whose expanding university drew on specialist craftsmen, including from this area. In 1480 two men were 'to take carriage by land and water of timber for the building of King's College, Cambridge,... which the King has bought from the Abbot of Walden'.[51] King's' chief carpenter in 1443 came from Elsenham, near Stortford; in the mid-century woodworkers from Halstead, Dunmow and Braintree were employed in Cambridge, and charcoal and firewood were supplied.[52] Charcoal was produced in the Lea valley, including around Hatfield Broadoak.[53] Illustrating water transport's potential impact on the hinterland for heavy goods, as early as 1300 the river Stort may have extended to Ware the zone supplying faggots.[54] The 'export' of woodland products north westwards provides a counterpart to trading barley from the lighter soils of south Cambridgeshire and north east Hertfordshire southwards, for example from Royston. For the London market, grain had been sent from the early fourteenth century via Ware and malt was sold there to London brewers by 1339. Malting was a widespread industry, mostly localised, though both Ware and Royston increasingly traded malt in the fifteenth century.[55] Especially after 1450, the lighter soils of the south Cambridgeshire 'river valleys' area, with good arable and having reduced grain production from fourteenth century levels, developed saffron cultivation along with north west Essex.[56]

Poos finds that economic and commercial or industrial activity permeated the mid-Essex countryside and were not only characteristic of the larger market, or even village, centres but a

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50 J. A. Galloway, D. Keene and M. Murphy, 'Fuelling the city: the production and distribution of firewood and fuel in London's region, 1290-1400', *Ec.HR*, 49 (1996), p. 466.

51 CPR 1476-85, p. 203.

52 J. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: a Biographical Dictionary down to 1550* (1954; Gloucester, 1984), p. 256; J. S. Lee, *Cambridge and its Economic Region, 1450-1560* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 190.

53 Galloway, Keene and Murphy, 'Fuelling the city', p. 454.

54 Galloway, Keene and Murphy, pp. 458-9.

55 D. Keene, 'Medieval London and its region', *London Journal*, 14 (1989), p. 104; T. Crosby, 'The impact of industry on the market towns of east Hertfordshire' in T. Slater and N. Goose (eds), *A County of Small Towns: the Development of Hertfordshire's Urban Landscape to 1800* (Hatfield, 2008), pp. 376-7.

56 Lee, *Cambridge*, pp. 106, 51; D Keene, 'The south east of England', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* I, *600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 577-80.

fundamental constituent of its rural society.[57] Wage labouring and artisan's by-employment were long-established: in the early fourteenth century more than fifty per cent of householders had been smallholders or landless and even in the relative labour scarcity of 1350-1500 people might be seasonally underemployed, which, of course, prompted considerable geographical mobility, generally within 16-24 km.[58] Those working in textile trades formed an extensive network of individuals and spinning or weaving were prominent as by-employment.[59] While a small volume of broadcloths was produced in north east Hertfordshire, cloth working in the region was focused especially in southern Suffolk and also in the centre north of Essex, east of Chelmsford/Walden.[60] Many concerns were small scale, dealing with only one or two stages of production, in contractual agreements for weaving, dyeing and finishing.[61] The industry was not omnipresent in the region and prosperity among cloth centres varied.[62]

The largest towns are, unsurprisingly, located not within the upland itself but on the lower reaches of rivers, while in the upper valleys points where routeways cross the river were chosen: several significant towns lie on the early and important west-to-east Stane St, linking Ermine St and Colchester. (Fig.1.2) Others take advantage of valley routes, notably including the Stort/Cam. A location such as Walden's, involving a hilly detour from the main valley, might be a serious handicap. Others are essentially 'road towns', away from rivers but located to exploit passing traffic, for example where a minor road crossed Ermine Street, or on a branch from the latter towards Cambridge. The importance of routeways is clearly demonstrated by the shifting of both Coggeshall and Great Dunmow on to Stane Street, following which they flourished.[63] Others,

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57 Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 57.

58 Poos, pp. 9, 57.

59 Poos, pp. 10, 65, 72.

60 M. Bailey, 'A tale of two towns: Buntingford and Standon in the later Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), p. 364; Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 62.

61 Poos, pp. 64, 66.

62 R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 181-92.

63 M. R. Petchey, 'The archaeology of medieval Essex towns', in D. G. Buckley (ed.), *Archaeology in Essex to A.D. 1500: in memory of Ken Newton*, CBA Research Report, 34 (London, 1980), p. 113.

where the Icknield Way follows the foot of the chalk ridge, controlled points where major north-south routes cross it.

Towns planted in the twelfth and, especially, thirteenth centuries by both lay and ecclesiastical lords anxious to benefit from the contemporary expansion of the economy depended on carving a sphere of operations within the hinterlands of established towns. Baldock is one, developed by the Templars from 1138, at a major crossing.[64] Increasing dominance by London and commercialisation of the economy are likely to have promoted the relative prosperity of towns on major routeways at the expense of early ones on more minor routes, perhaps especially if, like Haverhill and Hedingham, the latter were at 'T junction' locations rather than crossroads. Some towns lay on small rivers which may have been more substantial in the fairly wet climate of the fifteenth century; maintaining a navigable draught, if only for short distances, was perhaps encouraged by increased transport costs after 1350.[65] Simcoe quotes: 'boats from Bilie Abbei beside Maldon into the Moor at Radwinter', presumably via the Blackwater and Pant, but no reference is given.[66]

THE URBAN HIERARCHY

This section considers the evolution and structure of the region's towns up to the early fourteenth century. Changes by 1524 will be reviewed in the 'Conclusions' chapter.

Definition of towns

In deciding which centres count as towns, a region defined by a radius of 40 km from Walden has been considered. Neither a market, a borough charter, evidently planned layout, nor burgage tenure would guarantee that urban functions would follow. Many settlements founded in

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64 M. W. Beresford and H. P. R. Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs: a Handlist* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 124.

65 On climate in the fifteenth century see C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200-1520* (1989, Cambridge 1998), pp. 258-273.

66 E. Simcoe, *A Short History of the Parish and Borough of Thaxted* (Saffron Walden, 1934), p. 12.

the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially the later ones, presumably often on less advantageous sites, failed to survive as towns, especially after 1350.

Consideration of the defining characteristics of a town identifies about forty settlements classifiable as such in the fourteenth or the sixteenth century or both.[67] Primarily as a result of industrialisation and the growing influence of London, however, the urban hierarchy in the area was unstable. Urban status might be temporary or debatable: Pleshey, like Walden founded in the twelfth century within an outer circuit of fortifications around a de Mandeville castle, gained urban functions briefly, if at all; Writtle, a borough with a market in 1199 and a very large rural parish, was third in the region in number of taxpayers in 1327 and fifth in wealth in 1334, though the non-urban area contributed considerably to both.[68] Writtle was subsequently eclipsed by the nearby plantation of Chelmsford on the main London to Colchester road; by around 1600 it was no longer a market town. Conversely, and emphasising unusual freedom from restrictive lordship, Buntingford was loosely urban by around 1350, with no grant of borough charter but well-located at a crossing of Ermine St. Despite a sluggish land market and only small-scale textile production, by the mid fifteenth century it was taking prosperity from both Standon and Braughing, whose market, founded by 1147, had failed by 1600.[69] This illustrates the essential role of a town's success in competing with others, especially neighbouring ones of broadly similar status and potential role in the urban network.

A pattern for assessing a region's urban hierarchy has been established for the East Midlands.[70] However, differing fundamentally from that region, the present study, rather than being defined by county units, centres on a small town in a borderland region. A result of this is

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67 Beresford and Finberg, *Boroughs*; S. Letters, *Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516* http://www.ihr.sas.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html:[Essex] (last updated Nov. 2006); *VCH Essex* viii, *Cambridgeshire* iii; iv; *Hertfordshire* ii; iii; iv; A. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW* iv, 1500-1640 (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 467-75.

68 K. C. Newton, *Manor of Writtle: the Development of a Royal Manor in Essex c. 1086-c.1500* (London, 1970).

69 Bailey, 'Two towns'; 1524/5 taxpayer numbers are lacking for seven towns in Hertfordshire.

70 J. Laughton, E. Jones and C. Dyer, 'Middle Ages: a study of the East Midlands', *Urban History*, 28 (2001), pp. 331-357.

that most major towns are marginal to the area and differing parts of the area will 'face' varied ways, producing some evidence of both economic and cultural divides.

Fig. A shows assessed wealth in 1334 for all those settlements for which data is available and which are classifiable as towns in at least one of the early fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.[71]

Cambridge was pre-eminent, though ranking only twenty-first nationally, with Bury twenty-sixth and Ely thirty-second. For comparison, Norwich, one of the very largest nationally, had about double Cambridge's wealth. A second rank, so classifiable as 'substantial towns' of the region, would include Sudbury, Writtle, St. Albans and Colchester. The most common category, of market towns, encompasses a great variety, including the ancient foundations of Ashwell, Newport, Hertford and the port of Maldon, the castle towns of Clare, Hedingham and Walden, and the 'thoroughfare settlements' of Royston, Baldock, Newmarket and Stevenage.

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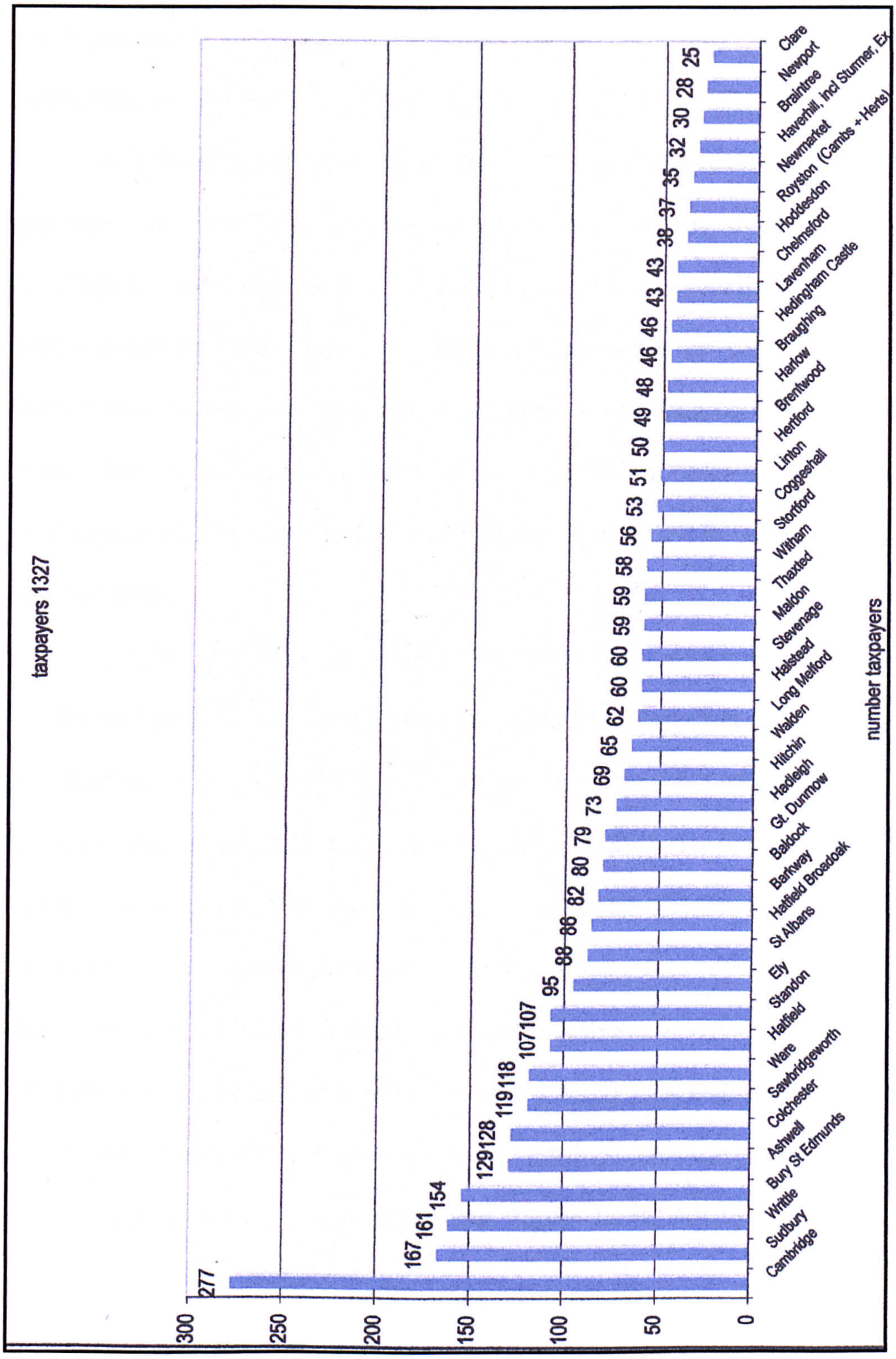
[71] Fig A is in Introduction.

Fig. 1.3. Taxpaying population of towns, 1327



Sources: J. C. Ward (ed.), *The Medieval Essex Community* (Chelmsford, 1983); H. Evelyn White (ed.), *Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely: the Lay Subsidy for the Year 1327* (PRO, 1900); J. Brooker and S. Flood (eds), *The Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1307 and 1334* (Hitchin, 1998); S. H. A. Hervey (ed.), *Suffolk in 1327: being a Subsidy Return* (Woodbridge, 1906).

In taxpaying population, Cambridge was, again, easily the largest, with Sudbury, Writtle and Bury apparently also substantial. The limitations of the 1327 subsidy are confirmed: a closer investigation has suggested 5,000-7,000 for Bury but for Sudbury only 2,500.[72]

Alan Dyer's calculations suggest that by 1377 Colchester had the largest taxpaying population, with nearly 3,000, compared with about 2,500 at Bury, a little under 2,000 at Cambridge and about 1,400 at Ely. At this time London had over 23,000 and Norwich almost 4,000.[73] Among the region's lesser centres, Thaxted and Writtle, with between six and seven hundred, were the largest recorded. They were perhaps in the uppermost rank of English small towns.[74] None of the listed major towns was a great regional centre such as Norwich but Cambridge, only 23 km distant, was, apart from London, likely to have by far the most substantial impact on Walden.

In 1334 London had 43 per cent of the total urban valuation of nine neighbouring counties and by the fifteenth century London had an effect on the structure of the urban hierarchy throughout the country, through its massive size and role as supplier of and market for specialist goods and services, in addition to its national legal and administrative role.[75] In Walden's area, especially in its more southerly parts, the proximity of London and the reach of its hinterland would bring contact that was especially frequent and, in some cases, in specifically non-specialist goods. Already by 1300 Great Bardfield, with only 24 taxpayers in 1327, may have supplied it with such basic commodities as butter and cheese, while by 1524 towns of a status including both Walden and the smaller Royston supplied it with such basic commodities as grain and malt.[76] Routeways linking London to the East Anglian textile industry and livestock trade

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72 Bailey, *Suffolk*, p. 129.

73 A. Dyer, 'Appendix: ranking lists of English medieval towns' in Palliser, (ed.), *CUHB* i, pp. 758-60.

74 D. Keene, 'Small towns and the metropolis: the experience of medieval England', in J-M. Duvosquel and E. Thoen, *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe* (Ghent, 1995), p. 228.

75 Keene, 'Small towns', p. 227.

76 Galloway and Murphy, 'Feeding the city', p. 580.

promoted the development of small towns.[77] Where other regions looked to regional capitals which, of course, fell below London in the hierarchy, here London served as both at once for some purposes. Naturally, London's relationship with small towns was asymmetrical: where they supplied both simple primary products and, potentially, both craft and agrarian specialisms of their area, the reverse flow brought in relatively precious manufactured and/or specialist products, such as spices and fine metal wares. A similar system operated around regional capitals but where London served as both, and as it increasingly brokered financial and specialist trades, including with overseas, its impact on the area would be marked. London's contact with Walden will serve as an example of its relationship with small towns in much of this region, though Londoners also traded with such a village as Ickleton, with only ninety-six taxpayers in 1524, but from which a smith and a husbandman were in debt to London ironmongers in 1455 and 1482, respectively.[78] Throughout the later Middle Ages, London's demand for basic supplies, its provision of goods and services, networks of craft production and the promotion of regional markets had effects in the region. The outreach of London's distributive system was large and growing rapidly from the early fifteenth century. Specialised industrial sites at a distance grew because of increased traffic on increasingly sophisticated networks and a wish to escape the high costs of manufacturing in the metropolis. Walden presents a variant on this: though 60 km distant, Londoners seem to have organised trade in and largely served as market for the town's production and processing of saffron, a primary product but a specialist high value good.

Turning to the development of the region's urban system, many of the towns, of varied size by the fifteenth century, had pre-Conquest origins. They include the burhs at Hertford, Witham and Maldon, estate centres with minster churches at Ashwell and Newport and five of the largest early fourteenth century towns in, or bordering, the region. In the later Saxon period borough status was granted at Cambridge from the eighth century, Colchester, recalling Roman

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77 Keene, 'Small towns', p. 236.

78 *VCH Cambridgeshire* vi, pp. 231.

period antecedents, from 917 and Bury by 1022, while Sudbury, Clare, Ashwell and Hatfield Broadoak also had burgesses by 1086.[79] Important abbeys at major shrines were crucial to urban development at Bury, Ely and St Albans, the latter founded at the abbey gate in the tenth century.[80] Bury's large and powerful abbey promoted a notable dependent planned town, focus of a Liberty controlling much of west Suffolk. It remained, however, under the abbey's control as a seigneurial borough. Indeed, of the forty three towns, Cambridge, Hertford and Maldon had full self-government and Colchester's system was evolving; following rapid growth of the town, the first council was formed by the 1372 constitutions and apparently took day to day government away from the borough court. However, the old assembly of all leading burgesses was still occasionally held; a second common council, created in 1462, is not, in fact, recorded until 1519.[81] Many of the remaining towns were seigneurial boroughs, though a number, including the substantial Hatfield Broadoak, the industrial centres of Hadleigh and Coggeshall, and Haverhill, Great Dunmow, Barkway and Royston remained manorial market towns.

Having administrative functions for an area is a clear indicator of high rank. Cambridge was county town from 1010, Hertford from 1011; like Cambridge, Sudbury, Maldon and Bury, Hertford had a pre-Conquest mint. Gaols were kept at Cambridge, Bury, Colchester and Hertford, and in twelfth and thirteenth century Newport, while Ely and Stortford had bishops' prisons.[82] Castles such as at Clare and Castle Hedingham, seats of the aristocracy, would foster provisioning and services, including relative specialities, and were sometimes, as in Walden's case, linked to the beginnings of urban development.

The range of physical size also reflects status: around 1300 Colchester occupied about 50 ha, Cambridge about 40, similar to the large towns of Leicester and Northampton and

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79 Sources concerning individual towns include, besides the appropriate *VCHs*, Lee, *Cambridge;* Britnell, *Colchester*; Slater and Goose (eds), *Hertfordshire*; R. S. Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds and the Urban Crisis: 1290-1539* (Princeton, 1982).

80 J. T. Smith, '900 years of St Albans: an architectural and social history', *Hertfordshire Archaeology*, 11 (1993), pp. 1-22; Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 24.

81 *VCH Essex* ix, p. 53.

82 R. B. Pugh, *Imprisonment in Medieval England* (London, 1968), pp. 57-68, 135-6.

contrasting with about 26 ha in medieval Ware and the 20 ha maximum typical of many market towns.[83] Large towns had evidence of development in several phases and complex street and economic and social patterns: Ely a mid-twelfth century shopping quarter, St Albans a French district in the fourteenth century, Bury a grid-plan layout and a Jewish community. These contrast with Stevenage's single street plan, widening for the market, and with Walden's two main plan units. (Fig. 2.3)[84]

Among early towns, choice as a centre of church administration suggests status, at least initially: apart from the see established at Ely in 1109, archdeaconries were centred on Colchester and Sudbury and deaneries at Sudbury, Clare, Newport, Witham, Dunmow, Harlow and Hedingham.[85] Major towns would be distinctive in having numerous parishes. Abbeys and priories would expand a town's potential and friaries are an important indicator of definitively urban status. Cambridge had houses of six orders of friars, a priory and three hospitals, Colchester an abbey, priory, two friaries and a hospital and Bury, besides its dominating abbey, five hospitals and a friary.[86] A much smaller presence in lesser centres confirms rankings by other indicators: the relatively large Hitchin had a priory and a friary and Royston, reflecting the prime importance of routeways, three hospitals in addition to its priory. Hoddesdon had merely one hospital.[87]

Occupational range is fundamental to urban ranking. The simplest level is exemplified by Buntingford, which, with no formal status and omitted from the subsidies, was urban but with simply basic crafts in the mid-fifteenth century. In fact, the region's towns show a considerable variety in not only the number but also the prevalence of particular occupations. The riverhead

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83 Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 23; M. D. Lobel (ed.), *The Atlas of Historic Towns: Cambridge* (London, 1975), map 3; Laughton, Jones and Dyer, 'East Midlands', p. 339; C. Partridge, 'Hertford and Ware: archaeological perspectives from birth to middle age', in Slater and Goose, *Hertfordshire*, pp. 127-158; Laughton, Jones and Dyer, p. 339.

84 *VCH Cambridgeshire* iv, p. 35; Smith, 'St Albans', pp. 1, 3; Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds*, pp. 21, 39; T. Slater, 'Roads, commons and boundaries in the topography of Hertfordshire towns', in Slater and Goose, *Hertfordshire*, p. 76.

85 *VCH Cambridgeshire* ii, p. 203, *VCH Essex* ii (map between pp. 84 and 85); D. Dymond and E. Martin (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (1988, Ipswich, 1989), pp.16-17.

86 *VCH Cambridgeshire* ii, pp. 197-9; *VCH Essex* ii, map between pp. 84 and 85; *VCH Suffolk* ii, p. 51.

87 *VCH Hertfordshire* iv, facing p. 364.

port at Ware clearly concentrated on the livestock and transport trades, with carters, taverners, smiths, sheepmen and cowherds. In 1307 Hertford, with a castle and county administration, had the specialist trades of cutler, mustarder, sauser and ironmonger, while the routeway town of Baldock attracted wheelwright, potager and carters. Standon's urban status in 1307 seems confirmed by its considerable range, including coleman and collier, corder, hosier, spenser, fan maker and spicer, while a goldsmith at Newport suggests its earlier prosperity.[88] Between 1441 and 1530 at Bury, whose large wealthy abbey would support specialist trades, wills were made by nine scriveners, six bladesmiths, three chaloners and twenty drapers as well as goldsmiths, parchment makers, limners and even a trumpeter.[89] 'Specialised towns', which might well attract some occupations normally characteristic of larger entities only, are a particular case: in the late fourteenth century the 'cutlery town' of Thaxted had two goldsmiths.[90]

Major towns had relatively more and further 'outside' contacts: members of a Cambridge gild about 1300 came from Warwick, Paris, Leeds, Pickering and Sledmere (east Yorkshire); St Albans taxpayers in 1307 included immigrants from Aylesbury.[91] Towns with especially good communications might have relatively distant contacts for their size: in 1307 Ware with Fotheringhay and Spalding, Baldock with Bristol and Rutland.[92]

The aristocracy might contribute to the range of wealth: at Castle Hedingham the de Vere lord paid 11s in 1327, the prioress of Hingham 6s; at Writtle the highest payment, 9s, came from the de Bohun lord.[93] However, the slight information available indicates variation in range between towns: whereas at Hadleigh 42 per cent of taxpayers paid 2s or more, at Castle

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88 Brooker and Flood, *Hertfordshire*, pp. 22-5, 13-15, 70-3, 25-8; J. C. Ward (ed), *The Medieval Essex Community: the Lay Subsidy of 1327* (Chelmsford, 1983), p. 51.

89 Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds*, p. 111.

90 K. C. Newton, *Thaxted in the Fourteenth Century: an Account of the Manor and Borough, with Translated Texts* (Chelmsford, 1960) p. 21.

91 M. Bateson (ed.), *Cambridge Guild Records* (Cambridge, 1903), p.1; Brooker and Flood, *Hertfordshire*, p. 126.

92 Brooker and Flood, pp. 22, 24, 72.

93 Ward (ed), *Essex*, pp. 59-60, 85-7.

Hedingham only 10.9 per cent did so.[94] Although a resident wealthy household ensured demand for services and some local provisioning, these do not necessarily imply the presence of other wealthy individuals, a few of whom typically contributed to upper market towns, while major towns had numbers of wealthy residents, many of them merchants. That Hatfield Broadoak's taxpayers' payments ranged from 14s 4d to 6d in 1327, with 25 per cent paying more than 2s, suggests its status as a successful market town.[95]

Though all the towns had a market for at least some, usually all, of the period, the number of market days and fairs varied. Predictably, the larger towns had more than the usual one market day per week: Colchester daily, Bury and St Albans twice, though Cambridge only once, on a Saturday, an especially favourable day, however; in the region, the only other known Saturday markets were at Walden, Buntingford, Ashwell, Coggeshall and Hatfield Broadoak.[96] In fact, simple economic forces surely caused the region's markets on any particular day to be spread out at intervals that both allowed each a minimum viability and permitted nearby town markets to survive on different days, allowing integration into circuits for traders doing the rounds.

Large towns might have several annual fairs: Colchester and Bury had several, Cambridge and Ely probably three and most towns held at least one. New towns such as Chelmsford, Royston and Newmarket on particularly important routeways would surely benefit particularly from theirs. Again, while most were held around feast days, spacing is fundamental: while Walden's original Pentecost fair lacks evidence in records of the period, and after 1542 its main fair was apparently at mid-Lent, Thaxted's was probably Ascensiontide, Royston's in Whitsun week, possibly influencing Walden's change from its original date, and Stortford's was perhaps June (Trinity Sunday). Neighbouring Buntingford's was, probably, 29 June, Walden abbey's was 25 July, Linton's 10 August, Haverhill's, perhaps following on from it, 15 August,

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94 Hervey (ed.), *Suffolk in 1327*, pp. 154-5; Ward (ed.), *Essex*, pp. 59-60.

95 Ward, pp. 39-40.

96 S. Letters, *Gazetteer*.

Dunmow's 29 August and Newport's 6 November.[97] Cambridge's famous Stourbridge Fair was pre-eminent, by 1516 lasting about five weeks from 24 August, though predominantly attracting major merchants. Its clientele, from widespread sources, included metropolitan and overseas consumers. It temporarily distorted the dynamics of the economic region by allowing relatively local contact with major merchants and an extremely wide range of goods. The Prior of Royston used it to provision his household for a year, Kings Hall bought fish, spices, cloth and hardware there.[98] Walden traders and artisans may have patronised it individually, as others from, for example, Sudbury and such small centres as Waldingfield did in the 1520s, but they were, surely, mainly served by middlemen while the churchwardens' need for specialist products was of sufficient quantity or value to justify journeying.[99] Specialisation, as in cattle trading at Newport, might attract an element of such fame and contact to lesser fairs.

Cambridge's role should be emphasised, partly because of its importance to Walden, including in its particular nature, influenced by the prominence of the University. The colleges' fifteenth century expansion increased demand for primary and some specialist products. In variety of occupations its economy was 'skewed', with, at least between 1500 and 1579, 47 per cent in victualling, clothing and housing. In the sixteenth century its manufacturing sector of 35 per cent contrasts with a norm for larger towns of at least 50 per cent.[100] Cambridge had numbers of ecclesiastics and lawyers, as well as building craftsmen and such specialists, typical of leading towns, as goldsmiths and printers. Its impact was considerably strengthened by two further distinct but related factors: location at the head of navigation of a major tributary of the Ouse, and so a link via Lynn to the North Sea, and Stourbridge Fair.

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97 Sources are Letters, *Gazetteer*; Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 116; Simcoe, *Thaxted*, p. 13; G. Edelen (ed.), *The Description of England by William Harrison (New York, 1968)*, pp. 393-6; Rowntree, *Saffron Walden Then and Now* (Chelmsford, 1952), p. 15, states that a mid-Lent fair was granted to the Gild in 1542.

98 Lee, *Cambridge*, pp. 131-2.

99 Lee, p. 125.

100 N. Goose, 'English pre-industrial urban economies', *Urban History Yearbook*, 9 (1981), pp. 24-25; Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 19.

Of the larger towns marginal to the region, Colchester's relative importance had increased considerably during the fourteenth century and its population to perhaps over 8,000. Its port functions were vital, trading with coastal regions of eastern England and taking long-distance commercial opportunities, especially in London and overseas. Though a major east coast port, immigration in the early and mid-fifteenth century diminished and town and port were vulnerable to the rise of London, a magnet for out-migration. Making and marketing cloth enabled it to remain relatively buoyant, however.[101] Colchester was probably several times the size of any other Essex town.[102]

CONCLUSION

Fundamental characteristics of the region by the start of the study period include a changing emphasis in production in response to a reduced population, changes in overseas market potential, improvements in domestic living standards and increasing commercialisation and specialisation, with the accompanying increasing dominance of London. The urban response to the resulting changing distributions and arteries serving them led to the addition to the fundamental market role of specialisation in manufacturing or processing products, on which the predominant influence was demand, and sometimes management, from London, and to serving the needs of growing numbers of travellers. In the north of the region, Cambridge exerted an important influence, especially as a centre of demand for provisions, fuel and building necessities but also for its reservoir of professional expertise and its link to the Ouse river system.

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101 Britnell, *Colchester*, pp. 266-7.

102 Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 41.

CHAPTER TWO: WALDEN IN 1440

INTRODUCTION

What was the character of Walden in 1440? This chapter considers the considerable evidence for Walden's earlier evolution and to this will be added a 'snapshot' of the years 1438 to 1440, derived primarily from the churchwardens' accounts and records of Walden manor court, assessing the evidence for size and physical development, prosperity and society as an introduction to the study of the town in the later fifteenth century.[103]

In 1440, the vill and parish of Walden contained two major manors, Chepyng Walden and Walden Abbey, and several minor ones. (Fig. 2.1)

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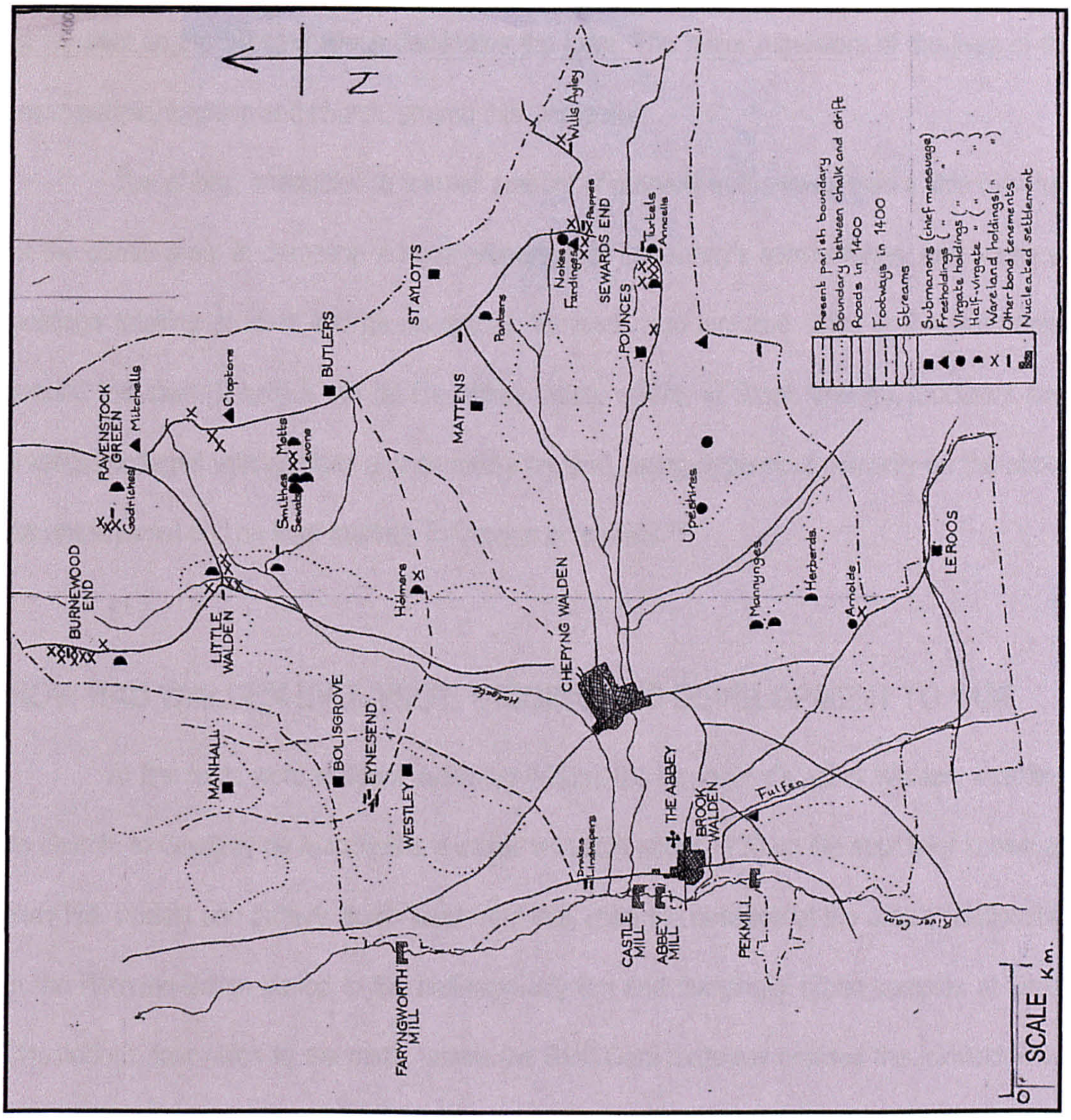
[103] Churchwardens' accounts: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 1-14; court rolls ECRO D/DBy m.5. Also property deeds ECRO D/B 2/1/-2/2/-, 2/3/-, 2/4/- and a 1400 survey of Walden Abbey manor's estates CUL Add. 7090. No 1377-81 poll tax data survive for Walden.

Fig. 2.1. The vill and parish of Walden c. 1400



From: D. Cromarty, *The Fields of Walden in 1400* (Chelmsford, 1966).

The main manor, Chepyng Walden, included the town's market as well as almost the whole urban area and most of the eastern part of the parish, with the hamlets of Little Walden and Sewards End but excluding St Aylotts and the sub-manors of Pounces and Mattens, which the Abbey purchased by the end of the fourteenth century; some of the more peripheral parts of the large parish of 7,499 acres had been sub-infeudated: knights' fees had become sub-manors, some with a right to hold their own courts, and those with their own demesne had attached hamlets of peasants working the lord's lands and settled on copyhold plots with a cottage and

four or five acres. In the town, the lord's influence was given physical expression by the location of his seat on the hill spur which dominates the town. The major regulators of the lives of the townspeople, lordship and church, shared this 'acropolis'.

The Abbey, in addition to a small amount of property in the town, held a little over half of the parish area: in demesne a large proportion of the abbey's surroundings, and scattered holdings totalling at least 400 ha elsewhere. Its lands also included strips in the open fields around the town. It held a mill by the abbey gates, where, in Brook Walden, labourers held freehold cottages with gardens and generally no land, being dependent primarily on the abbey for employment and on local markets for routine purchases.[104]

HOW HAD WALDEN EVOLVED?: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT TO 1438

At first lords were resident: following William the Conqueror's gift of Walden, including its church, to Geoffrey de Mandeville, a castle was built about 1120 on the spur later known as Bury Hill. Burials and pottery, south west from this, raise the question of the area's relationship in the Romano-British period to the half-legionary fort and marginally urban complex at Great Chesterford, four miles to the north, where the Stort-Cam routeway crosses the Icknield Way. (Fig. 1.2) A possible Romano-British village and elements of field systems may account for Walden's Saxon place-name, 'valley of the Britons or serfs'.[105] Of up to 200 burials discovered near Cuckingstool End (Fig. 2.3), most were Christian and a well-known Viking grave, containing a high status necklace, dated from 980 at the earliest. Burial might take place at a distance from major churches throughout the Anglo Saxon centuries and Newport, 5 km to the south west of Walden, was an important late Saxon royal manor, whose church was probably a minster. However, west of Walden's cemetery there was, in fact, Saxo-Norman settlement, with

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104 D. Cromarty, *The Fields of Walden in 1400* (Chelmsford, 1966).

105 S. R. Bassett, *Saffron Walden Excavations and Research 1972-80.* CBA Research Report 45 (London, 1982), p. 10; C. Fox, *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (Cambridge, 1923), p. 174.

a pottery sequence ending abruptly in the thirteenth century.[106] Surprisingly, no evidence of Saxon settlement on the Bury Hill spur has yet been found. The Domesday survey indicates a large population, of 120, but although occupation in the general area of the later town is likely to have been continuous from then, what proportion was concentrated actually in the later built area is unclear.[107]

After building the castle on Bury Hill, intended as the caput of the whole Honour and Earldom of Essex and his family seat, de Mandeville in 1139 established a Benedictine priory about a mile to the west, in the main Cam valley, and assigned to it the church of 'the Blessed Mary of Walden', with many others. The location of this earliest known church of the settlement remains unknown, though lack of relevant finds perhaps makes a siting on Bury Hill improbable. It may have been associated with the Saxon settlement, though not necessarily close to it. De Mandeville gained permission to divert to Walden from the royal manor of Newport both the market and the main road northwards.[108]

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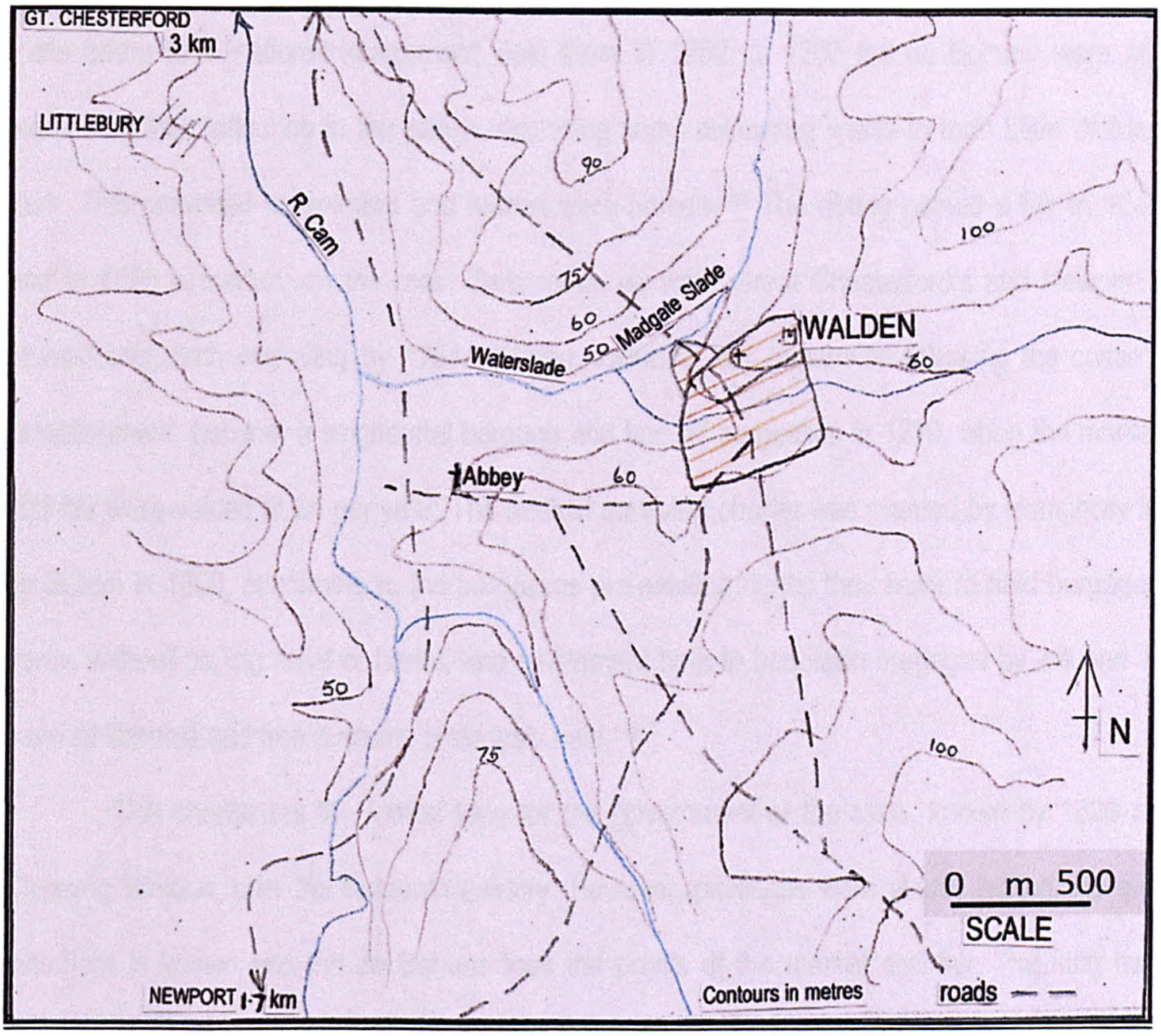
106 V. I. Evison, 'A Viking Grave at Sonning, Berkshire', *Antiquaries Journal*, 49 (1969), pp. 340-345; D. M. Hadley, *Death in Medieval England: an Archaeology* (Stroud, 2001), pp. 37-38; Bassett, *Saffron Walden*, pp. 13-14; S. R. Bassett, 'Notes on excavation', *Medieval Archaeology*, 17 (1973), p. 141.

107 *VCH Essex* I (1903), p. 512.

108 Bassett, *Saffron Walden*, p. 23; D. Greenway and L. Watkiss, *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Abbey* (Oxford, 1999), pp. xi-xx; the main road continues to divert to Walden from c. 2.5 km north of Newport in J. Ogilby and W. Morgan, *Essex Surveyed, with the Several Roads from London, etc*, (1678).

Fig. 2.2. Physical context of Walden.



Setting up the market must have caused an on-going tension as to the power of an important lord's caput not only to establish a 'normal' market hinterland but, specifically, to attract traffic from the main south-north Stort-Cam route. A road through Walden would be longer and hillier but less liable to flood. Much might depend on the vigour of rival markets in the Cam valley area; Newport's, at least temporarily, was suspended. An important question nevertheless remains about the extent to which in any one period Walden was successful in this respect.

In 1180 the de Mandevilles moved their principal residence to Pleshey, near Chelmsford, and in 1190 Walden priory achieved abbey status. The de Mandeville estates passed in 1227 to the de Bohuns, earls of Hereford and Essex, holders of many manors and

leading barons and Constables of England, and Walden must have benefited from this: Matthew Paris refers to a 'national tournament' held there in 1252. In 1263 the de Bohuns were still expanding their influence in the parish, enclosing some remaining waste to form Little Walden park. This provoked resentment and fences were broken.[109] The abbey gained a fair In 1248 and in 1295 a market, on the main Cam route, as were Great Chesterford's and Newport's revived one, both operating by 1254. Walden, including any expansion following the castle's establishment, became a seigneurial borough and had 57 burgesses in 1299, when the market and fair were valued at £4 per year. The earliest surviving charter was granted by Humphrey III de Bohun in 1300, confirming to the burgesses pre-existing rights: their heirs to hold burgages freely, without paying relief or heriot, and entitlement both to bequeath burgages by will and to have all liberties and free customs previously held.[110]

The charter set the formal tone for the government of the town, known by 1328 as Chepyng Walden, until the sixteenth century. However, privileges were strictly limited. No gild merchant is known and the de Bohuns took the profits of the market and fair. The king had confiscated Humphrey III's possessions after he died in rebellion in 1322 and in 1362 endowed John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, with them. A charter by Henry IV in 1402 to Duchy of Lancaster towns was accompanied by a letter specifying Walden's liberties as part of the Duchy: power to appoint a clerk of the market, to retain all fines from pie powder courts and freedom from some tolls.[111] The market bailiff or clerk was elected by the burgesses, only, rather than by the whole homage, and from among themselves. In 1425 they claimed that any of them elected bailiff and obliged to pay the allegedly customary £12 10s to the lord would desert his post and cause future desolation in the town. They were sufficiently strong to gain the concession that, in

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109 M. R. Petchey, 'The archaeology of medieval Essex towns', in D. G. Buckley, *Archaeology in Essex to A.D. 1500: in memory of Ken Newton*, CBA Research Report 34 (London, 1980), p.116; Cal. IPM 27 Edward I, m.8. Humphrey de Bohun.

110 S. Letters, *On line gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales 1516* http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html : [Essex] (last updated Nov. 2006); J. C. Ward, *The De Bohun Charter of Saffron Walden* (Saffron Walden, 1986), p. 9.

111 C. B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden Then and Now* (Chelmsford, 1952) p. 12; ECRO D/B 2/BRE1/25.

future, payments would not be greater than the profits of the office, which was, in fact, farmed for 10s by 1428. The manorial demesne was at farm by 1425.[112]

Morphology: evolution of the town plan

As with the seat at Pleshey, the outer defences around de Mandeville's castle may have been designed to contain a small urban community. Laid out east-west along the contours of the spur, the pattern of the immediately adjacent streets is dictated by them. Those established earliest were Castle St, Church St and Myddylton Place. (Fig. 2.3)[113] The date of the grid-like pattern to the south of these has been the subject of debate, and associated with the construction of the large enclosure discussed below.

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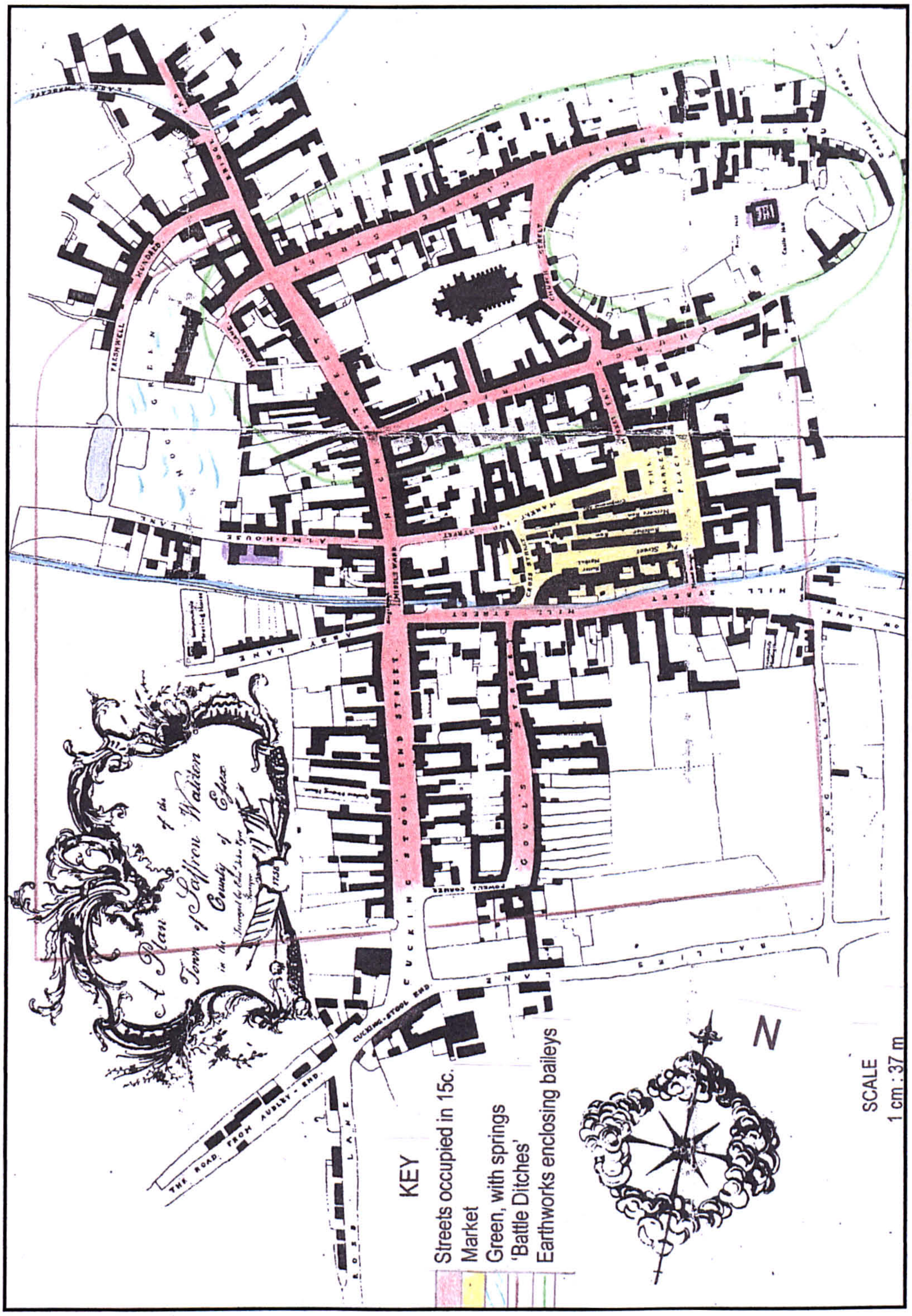
112 D. Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden 1381-1420: a study from the court rolls', *Essex Journal*, 2 (1967), pp. 136-8, 107.

113 Petchey, 'Archaeology', p.116.

Fig. 2.3. Plan of the town in the mid-eighteenth century, showing fifteenth century occupation



Note: based on *A Plan of the Town of Saffron Walden in the County of Essex*, surveyed by E. J. Eyre, 1758.

Modern property frontages on the north side of Castle St and the south of Church St conform, conspicuously, to 30ft, or an exact multiple. Walden's burgesses by 1299, and

probably much earlier, may have held burgage plots in Castle Street, Church Street and perhaps Myddleton Place (later, Horn Lane); The High Street, part of the main road through the town, cut through the west end of the outer defences, originally a ditch 4.5m deep by 6m, with internal bank at least 5m high; this would result, with the natural slope and a wooden palisade, in an obstacle over 12m high. Bassett proposed that the market, transferred from Newport, was set up on the hill, to the west of the church within the outer bailey, and that though the castle's establishment on the spur did not immediately dislocate the existing settlement, the town's focus was substantially shifting to the hill by the early 13th century, when use of the area near the cemetery declined rapidly. The outer bailey ditch was deliberately filled in in the late twelfth century. The church consecrated in 1258 was perhaps the first on the hill top site, though there was a twelfth century cross there.[114]

A great deal of mystery and controversy has attended the question of the nature and purpose of another set of earthworks, the Repell, Battle, or Paille ditches, which enclose the whole area of the late medieval town. The earthwork comprised a ditch about 20 ft wide and up to 10 ft deep, outside a 5 ft high bank on the old land surface. Since Bassett's suggestion that this large extension south of the hill might be associated with the first surviving borough charter, the latter has been definitively re-dated, from 1236 to 1300, but, since it is a confirmation of an earlier one, the expansion might be linked with the de Bohuns, lords from 1227 and perhaps likely to carry out a project commensurate with their prestige.[115] In another view, however, the ditches are contemporary with the original 1141 grant to de Mandeville of the right to bring the market from Newport; such town defences were unusual after the twelfth century and particularly appropriate in the anarchy period. This is apposite in that it was de Mandeville's supporting Matilda that forced him to surrender the castle in 1143, which was slighted by 1160,

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114 Bassett, Saffron Walden, pp. 23-6; M. R. Eddy and M. R. Petchey (eds), *Historic Towns in Essex: an Archaeological Survey of Saxon and Medieval Towns with Guidance for their Future Planning* (Chelmsford, 1983), p. 82.

115 A. Ravetz and G. Spencer, 'Excavation of the Battle Ditches, Saffron Walden, Essex, 1959', *TEAS*, 1 (1962), p. 150; Ward, *De Bohun Charter*, p. 3.

though still habitable around 1200; permission to crenellate a manor house on the hill was granted in 1347. Hedingham wares found beneath the town enclosure's bank are now thought to have circulated as early as 1140 and within the area enclosed pottery of the twelfth century also hints at use then, though of course it may have been deposited as rubbish. A small amount of early medieval ware in the area of the late medieval market place suggests that the market was in its eventual location in the twelfth century and never existed west of the church.[116] The castle, bailey and great enclosure may have been essentially contemporaneous.

A major challenge is to clarify development within this great enclosure, which was finally built up only within the nineteenth century. Phases of prosperity might well be succeeded by retrenchment. Naturally, development is the easier to trace: much was still agricultural in the fourteenth century but, for example, by 1331 a messuage and yard are recorded.[117]

The market area south of Bury Hill and the main south-north road to the west of it, including High St, became the commercial focus of the town, where, by the fifteenth century, sufficient economic vitality had been achieved for it to contain quite complex buildings: in 1412 Henry Scot transferred a messuage with houses in High St, including 'a room beyond the street' for his own use; John Hanham, the recipient, was to retain a room with upper storey and the two were to share the remainder of the messuage: hall, well and other rooms during Scot's life, with free entry and egress. In Daniel's (later Almshouse) Lane there was a two storey house, 'the Barn Place' in 1424 and in 1440 a messuage in Fullers Lane included an upper chamber.[118]

In the market area itself, the rows in 1400 were each named after a particular trade or commodity.

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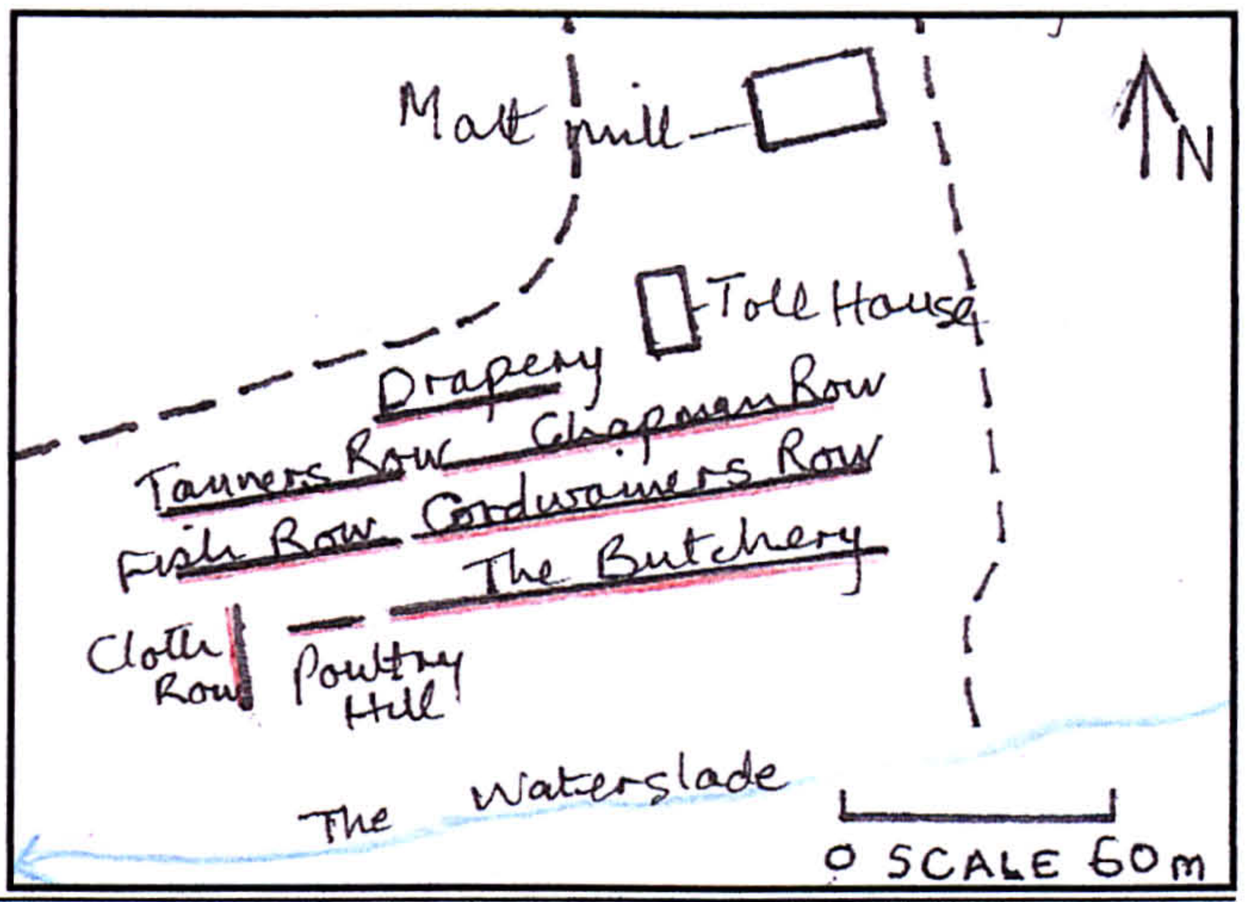
[116] D. D. Andrews and C. Mundy, 'Saffron Walden: the topography of the southern half of the town and the market place. Excavations and watching briefs 1984-87', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 33 (2002), pp. 265-6.

[117] Ravetz and Spencer, 'Battle Ditches', p. 153.

[118] D. Monteith, 'Saffron Walden: a study in the evolution of a landscape' (unpub). M.A. dissertation, University of London, 1959), p. 8; Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 125; ECRO D/B 2/1/104; 2/1/18; 2/1/220.

Fig. 2.4. Possible layout of the market in the fifteenth century



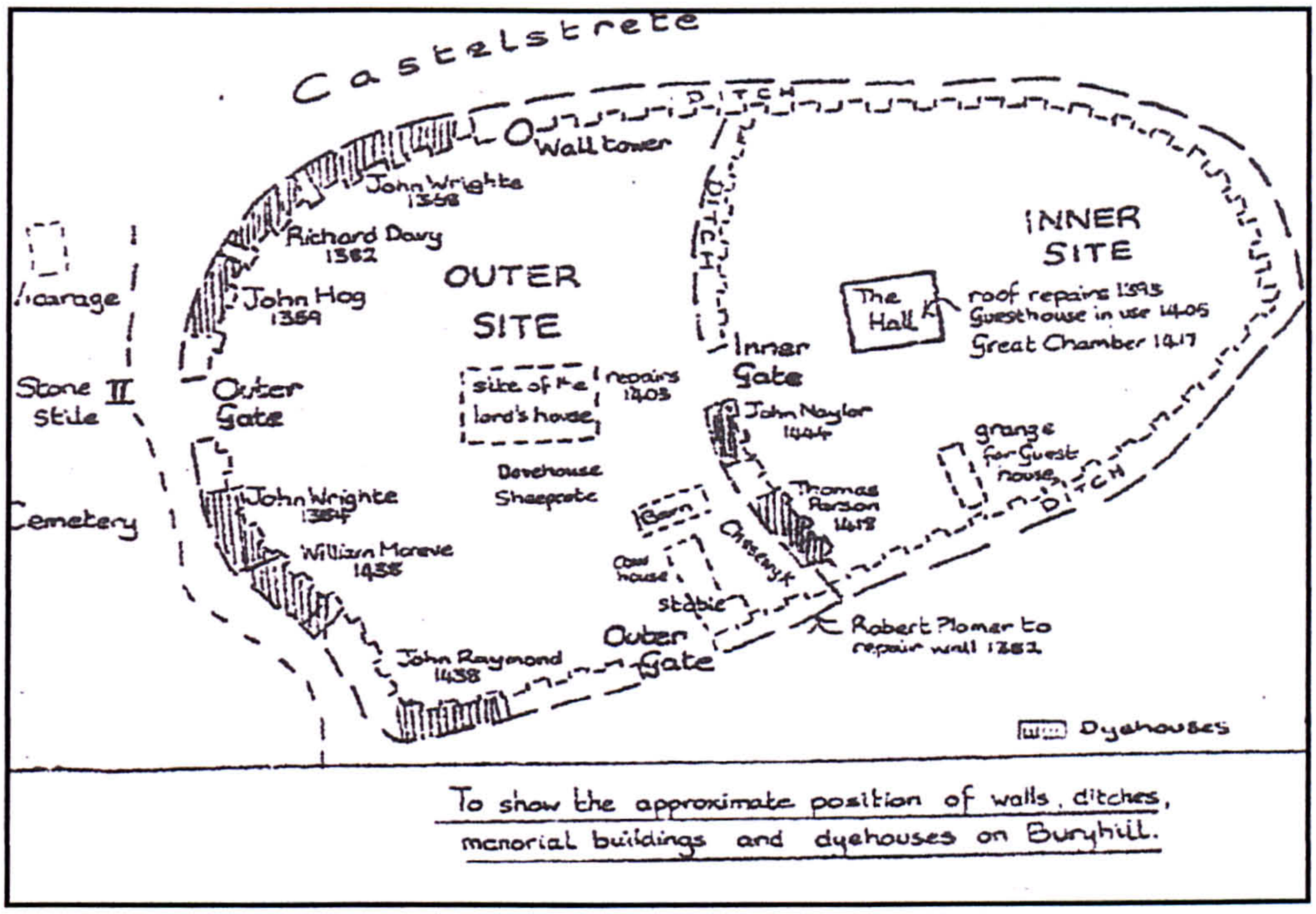
Note: Reconstruction by Cromarty from Chepyng Walden court rolls. Dashed line represents approximate boundary of market place. Source: Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 124.

There was a mixture of stalls and shops, of varied sizes, some with upper chambers. The term 'shops' could include workshops, in addition to selling space; this was probably the pattern in some non-market row locations known to have had shop fronts by around 1500, at the latest. Shops in East Anglian towns often fronted a workplace element, sometimes a courtyard with workshops and storage rooms.[119] The centre of market administration, the toll house, was within a broad area of 'corn market,' near the lord's malt mill.

On Bury Hill the inner bailey was divided into two parts. The inner, including the 'Hall', probably the former keep, had a great chamber used as a guest house; the outer had the manor house, with a house for the messor, barns, byres, sheepcotes and other appurtenances of the demesne farm. By 1400 its surrounding ditch accommodated dyehouses. Both vicarage and priests' house, probably identifiable with the 'college', were close by the parish church within the outer bailey's defensive works.

119 L. Alston (University of Cambridge), Lecture to Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Jun. 2004.

Fig. 2.5. Possible layout of the manorial centre



Note: reconstruction by Cromarty, from Chepyng Walden court rolls. Source: Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 106.

The economy: development to 1438

Most of the place-name surnames among the sixty-five from Walden paying the 1327 subsidy indicate recent in-migration from within 24 km. However, Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire, close to the main London to Norwich route, Wimpole, Cambridgeshire, on Ermine Street, Borham, near Chelmsford, Essendon, south of Hertford, and also Beverley are represented. In north Essex, migration was commonplace but localised, from communities generally near enough to suggest previous acquaintance.[120]

The subsidy explicitly states a few occupations and there are also a few surnames which at this date may still reflect the bearer's trade. The cattle/leather trades were represented by three tanners and one driver and there was one tailor, one weaver and one further potential cloth worker, plus one smith, one schoolmaster, two bakers, and one cupboard-maker. This, of course, represents the whole vill, including the considerable nucleus at Brook Walden, whose

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120 J. C. Ward (ed.), *The Medieval Essex Community: the Lay Subsidy of 1327* (Chelmsford, 1983), p. 48; L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 167.

workforce, even if employed in the abbey, might contribute to the town economy, at least as consumers.[121] Other than pointing up Walden's early provision of schooling, itself related to the abbey, nothing in the 1327 subsidy suggests an urban community. Nearby centres such as Thaxted and Newport, and even such villages as Ashdon, continued to affect its chances of prosperity. In comparison with the valuation of Walden's market and fair at £4 in 1299, in 1295 the market at Great Bardfield, east of Walden, yielded almost £2 and the one at Thaxted £3 7s 2d.[122] In the late thirteenth century Newport's flourishing trading community included vintners, perhaps suggesting both the predictable exploitation of sometimes wealthy passers-by and the supplying of large households, even the abbey, in the area. Recorded fines between 1197 and 1450 concerning free landless messuages indicate dependence on waged labouring and a hint of comparison with other towns: while Halstead had sixteen such messuages and Great Dunmow fifteen to Walden's seventeen, Thaxted, Colchester and Coggeshall had between twenty and thirty and Chelmsford and Maldon over forty.[123]

The surname 'Crok', listed in 1327, may be relevant to the debate on the origins of the saffron industry. Though saffron cultivation was, by tradition, introduced to England during Edward III's reign, those growing it in the fifteenth century were known as 'crokers'.[124] The first known reference to it in Walden is in a dispute of 1444, when the vicar was to receive the tithe of 'saffron, pepper and all spices grown in gardens outside the Abbey'.[125] The name 'Crok' may of course be a mis-spelling, of Crook, for example, or perhaps stand for 'crocker' (potter). A potters' row existed in the market at an unknown date but no local industry has been

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121 Court records of the manor of Walden Abbey, sometimes labelled as of Brook Walden, are extant for most of the study period.

122 B. Nurse, J. Pugh and I. Mollet, *A Village in Time: the History of Newport, Essex* (Newport, 1995), pp. 19-20.

123 R. H. Britnell, 'Burghal characteristics of market towns in medieval England', *Durham University Journal*, 42 (1980-81), pp. 147-151.

124 P. Willard, *Secrets of Saffron* (London, 2001), p.110; K. Neale, 'Saffron Walden: 'Crocuses and Crokers' in idem (ed.), *Essex 'Full of Profitable Thinges': Essays presented to Sir John Ruggles-Brise* (Oxford, 1996), p. 233.

125 *VCH Essex* ii, p. 360.

demonstrated; finds of medieval wares in market area buildings came from Hedingham and tiles supplied to the church after 1438 from Manuden and Radwinter.[126]

Vital questions about the economic history of the town concern its relationship to London and its role in the contemporary cloth industry, within the area and more widely. There is evidence of both. The so-called 'Woolstaplers' Hall', which was at a corner of the marketplace, may, from the style of surviving carved ornament, date from around 1400, though an alternative view suggests Edward IV's reign.[127]

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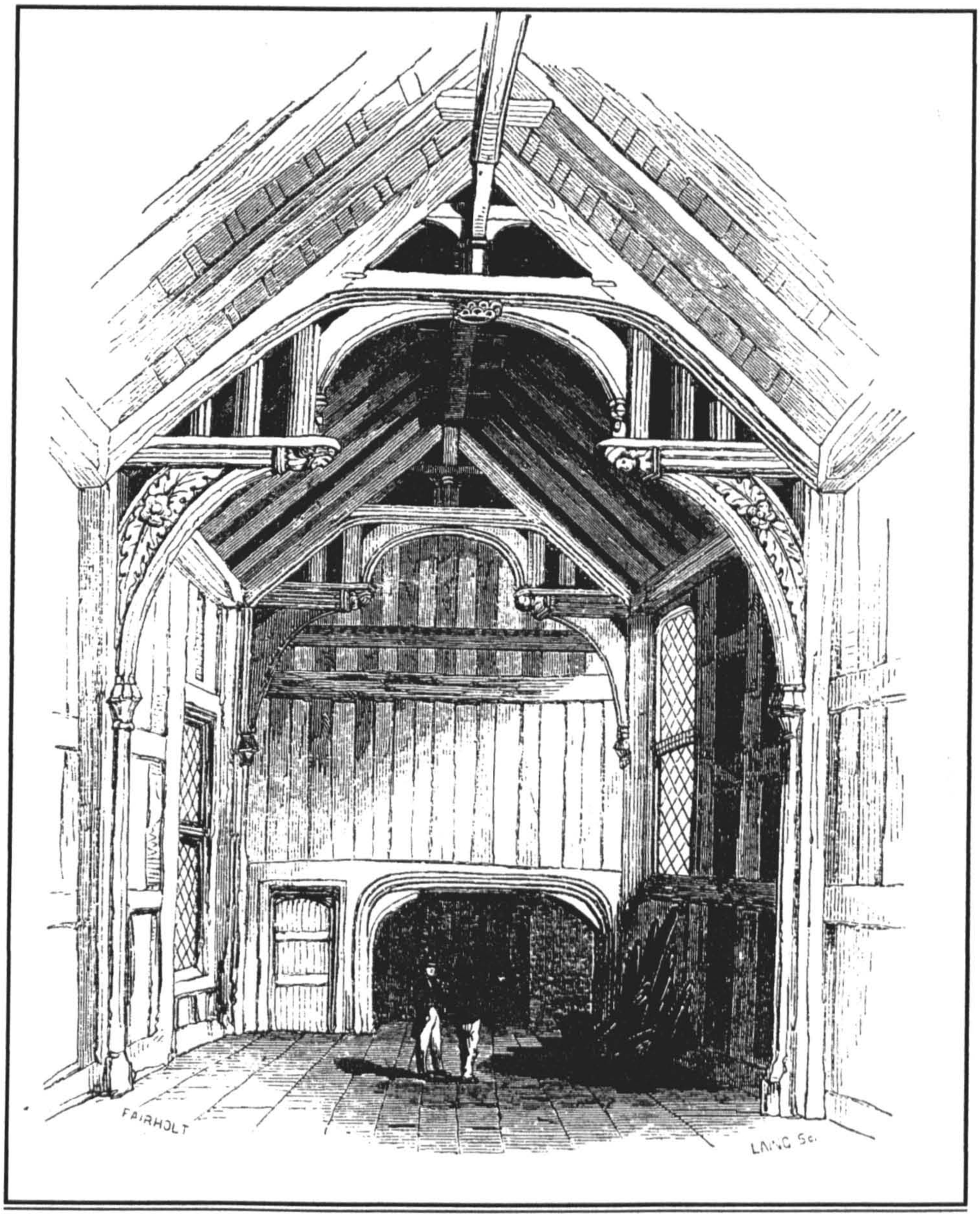
126 H. C. Stacey, 'Saffron Walden: derivation of street names', *Saffron Walden History*, 2 (1972), p. 10; Andrews and Mundy, 'Topography', p. 259.

127 M. Medlycott and D. Stenning, 'The Woolstaplers' Hall of Saffron Walden', *Essex Journal*, 36 (2001), p. 38.

Fig. 2.6. The 'Woolstaplers' Hall



Source: *The Builder*, July 1848, p. 331.

More certain evidence of Walden's textile trade links comes from 1389, when a London clothier, Herbert Hert, had a stall in Butchery row. In addition, around 1412 Richard Thresher was distrained by twelve yards of russets, which cost 2s per yard in contemporary Colchester.[128] Cloths processed included relatively cheap short narrow ones such as kerseys, made from fells, and says, a type of worsted, which perhaps needed no fulling. Production of small short cloths

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128 ECRO D/B 2/2/2; C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200-1520* (1989, Cambridge, 1998), p. 300.

may be influenced by structures of small-scale and part-time production, where little capital was available. This might well fit into north central Essex's employment pattern, with its unusually high proportion of smallholders and land-poor.[129]

Within Walden, dyeworks are first mentioned in 1359 and by 1400 were increasingly becoming established in the moat of the inner bailey. In 1415 a dyer of Clare was in debt to one of Walden, in turn debtor to a Cologne merchant. This may well have been mediated via London, given established mercantile links with Walden: in 1390 John Borewell, a Walden dyer, was sued by a citizen and merchant of London; three burgesses of London in 1418 took up a messuage with dovehouse in Castle St.[130] London pepperers may have had transactions with dyers from such towns as Walden in the 1350s.[131]

There were fulling mills on the Cam, probably near the abbey and certainly at Littlebury.[132] Adjoining Hogg's Green were plentiful springs and the adjacent lane was called Fuller St before 1415; fullers there must have worked by beating and treading the cloth.[133] By 1400 Walden may have developed specialist industrial areas in fulling and in dyeing. A John Hogg, fuller, had a dyeworks in the bailey's moat in 1384, as did Thomas Parson, fuller, in 1418; fullers may have been controlling the finishing processes, as Cromarty suggests.[134] Other water-dependent crafts used the Hogg's Green area: around 1438 two saddlers took a messuage there, while, perhaps tellingly, another transfer was witnessed by a skinner and a barker; by the eighteenth century Fullers Lane was called Horn Lane and there was a large tannery near the springs.[135]

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129 P. Walton, 'Textiles', in J. Blair and N. Ramsay (eds), *English Medieval Industries* (London, 1991), p. 352; Poos, *Rural Society*, pp. 9-57.

130 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', pp. 122-3; ECRO D/B 2/1/32.

131 P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: the Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London, 1000-1485* (London, 1995), p. 210.

132 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 112; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Spring 1447.

133 H. C. Stacey, 'Round Myddylton Place', *Saffron Walden History*, 2 (1974), pp. 22-3.

134 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', pp. 110, 111.

135 ECRO D/B 2/1/198; 2/1/219; Stacey, 'Myddylton Place', p. 22.

Walden brewers profited from the local specialisation in barley and in 1404 were dealing with their counterparts in London. It is clear that malt was produced in quantity but only one mill in the town is noted, the lord's horse-mill in the market place.[136]

The question of the town's economic health around the 1420s is raised by several sources. Cromarty found that landholdings were 'wasted'; in 1425 the burgesses refused to carry out their annual election of bailiff of the market on the grounds that its revenues were insufficient; in 1432, the houses and walls within the manor site were badly ruined.[137] The abbey, as a considerable landholder and employer, is unlikely to have been heavily dependent on the local town for the most essential goods and services and there was, surely, a conflict, potentially to the town's disadvantage, in that it might obtain even ordinary manufactured goods in larger quantities, more cheaply and at a higher quality from more distant suppliers. However, as noted below, by 1438 new rents were in fact being taken up in the commercial area.

The distribution of origins of 'outsiders' involved in debt cases in Walden's courts was plotted by Cromarty for 1381-1420. (Fig. 2.7) It shows a marked asymmetry, with very restricted contacts to the west; the large number of small towns there, not only Royston, Buntingford and Stortford but also Barkway, Braughing and Standon were, in any case, orientated to serving north-south traffic on major routes from London and their contact patterns may well reflect this.

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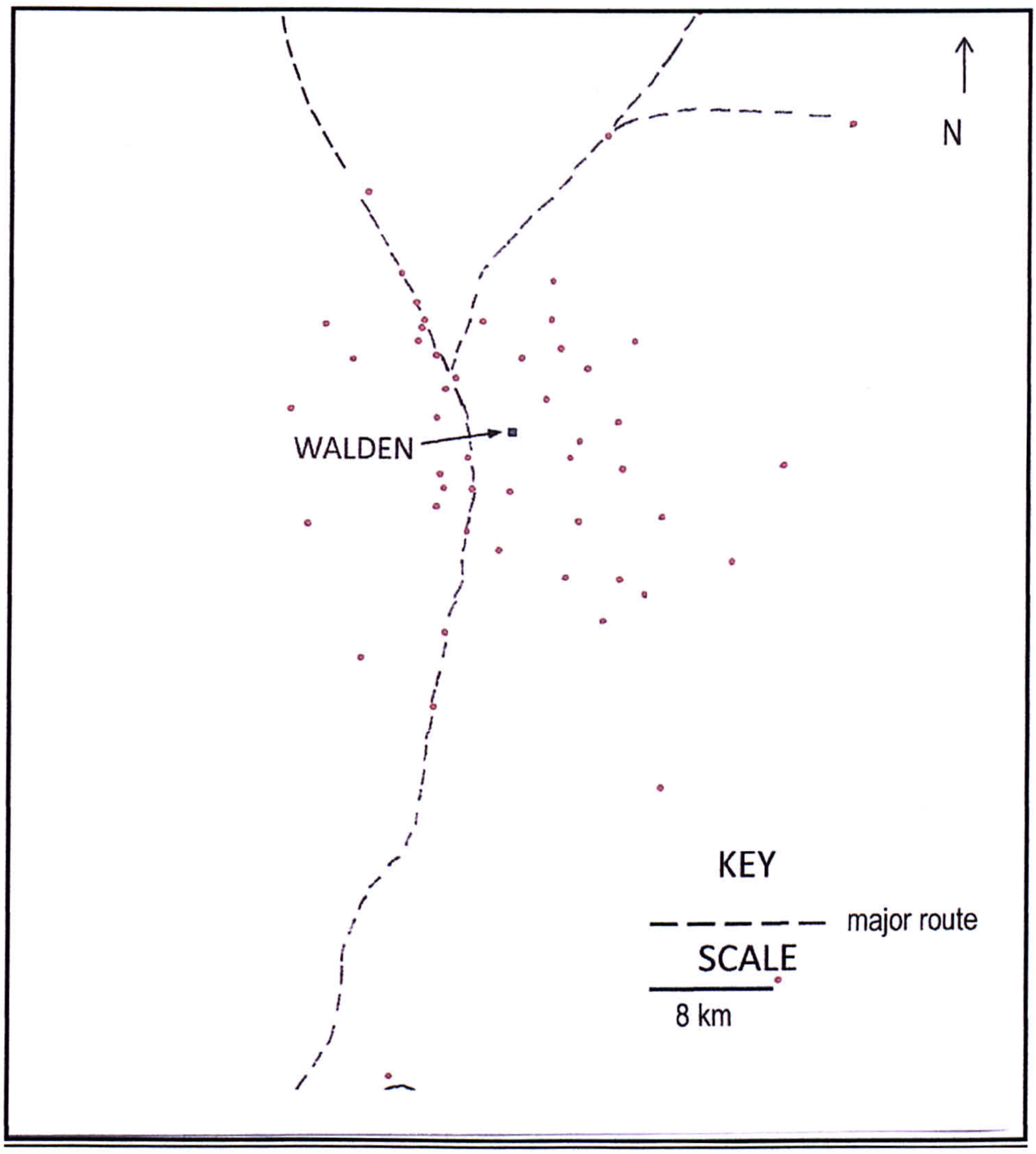
136 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 23.

137 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', pp. 131, 136-7, 107.

Fig. 2.7. Origins of 'outsiders' in debt cases, Chepyng Walden court rolls, 1381-1420



Note: based on Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 127.

In 1387, of eighteen butchers listed at the court leet, only four were from Walden. The others came from nearby places, especially to the east. This is unsurprising, in view of that pays' relative suitability for cattle raising. Following apparent restrictions on outsiders' access to the market, the total number of butchers at Walden had dropped to eleven by 1400 and in 1401-3 only seven families were involved.[138] By 1400 there were six tanners. Of thirty-one occupations in the period 1381-1420, there are hints of a 'sophisticating' economy in the presence of a goldsmith and a woolmonger. Ten occupations had more than two members and

[138] Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', pp. 20-2.

leather trades accounted for half of those employed in these more common trades.[139] At Thaxted in 1381 there were seventy-nine cutlers and eleven smiths but leather trades listed comprised only four sheathers, two barkers and two shoemakers; Walden may have supplied some of its needs in this respect, as well as more widely. In the period 1420-38, property deeds, probably excluding poorer artisans, show eighteen distinct occupations of men apparently of Walden, skinner, barker and saddler the most frequently.[140]

Ecclesiastical background

Walden was in the deanery of Sampford, archdeaconry of Colchester and diocese of London, whose bishop held the manor of Stortford and a nearby palace at Much Hadham.[141] From its origin in 1139, the priory held the rectory of the parish with two-thirds of all tithes, while a third was set aside for the parish church and a vicariate established. Following the death of many of its servants and tenants as well as storm damage, the abbey regained this third in 1366 on appeal, though ten years later the decision was reversed. The church was built on Bury Hill, perhaps from 1250, and consecrated, as was the chapel of the abbey's almshouses, in 1258. The plan of Walden church's extant crypt and the aisles' relationship to the transept arches suggest that this church was cruciform. A chapel at the hamlet of St Aylotts, first evidenced in a deed of 1249, was a dependency of the abbey in the mid-fifteenth century.[142] Three gilds were recorded in the chantry certificates of 1389 and in 1400 a Gild of Our Lady of Pity was founded 'by stronger men of the parish and vill by consent and help of all the commonalty' to establish an almshouse for some of the poor. These 'stronger men' were probably identical to the twenty-four of 'the most worshipful', who took charge of the project and would be likely to wield power in the

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139 Cromarty, Chepyng Walden', p. 25.

140 K. C. Newton, *Thaxted in the Fourteenth Century: an Account of the Manor and Borough with Translated Texts* (Chelmsford, 1960), p. 21.

141 *VCH Essex* ii, map between pp. 84 and 85; S. G. Doree (ed), *The Early Churchwardens' Accounts of Bishops Stortford, 1431-1558*, Hertfordshire Record Publications, 10 (Hitchin, 1996), p. 9.

142 J. R. Fancett, *The Story of Saffron Walden Parish Church* (1949), pamphlet in Saffron Walden museum; Deed no. 5, Confirmaciones Regum, 1249; Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), p. 168.

town beyond this specific remit. As well as serving as trustees, including managing all rents and goods provided for the charity, they, with two custodians, were to choose the thirteen to be accommodated, though only after counsel with 'three or four most discreet and wisest of the vill', apparently, then, worthy of even greater respect than were the 'most worshipful' twenty-four. [143]

The town may have been well endowed with priests, perhaps fifteen in the early fifteenth century.[144] In 1389 a Corpus Christi gild had a chaplain as did each of the gilds of Holy Trinity and All Saints, appointed to celebrate annually for their members.[145] Through John and Eleanor Butler in 1400, the Gild of Our Lady of Pity provided for a house to be built in the churchyard for a priest to serve its almshouse. This gild had both female and male members and provided a priest to say requiem and on Saturdays Mass of Our Lady in the parish church, as well as a weekly mass in the almshouse. For this he was to assemble three women: one from the parish church, one a gild member and one of 'a general type'. It is unclear whether this is because women were more biddable, more available to attend, or more appropriate to a Lady Mass. Almshouse inmates were to be encouraged to come to church, to pray for inmates, benefactors and friends. The priest would share his house with one or two additional ones, who would receive free accommodation and 6d per quarter to celebrate a Mass on Saturdays, probably chosen as being the day traditionally associated with the worship of Mary. The annual feast, following sung mass and sermon, saw social rituals of reversal merge with doctrines of 'the first shall be last' in the poor's being served first, by the most worshipful present.[146]

The abbot retained control of education, with the sole right of nominating schoolmasters. In 1423 abbot John Hatfield took issue with two chaplains of the parish church for instructing boys without his authority. In future, every priest officiating in the parish church

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143 It is unclear whether 'commonalty' refers to all townspeople; F. W. Steer ' The statutes of Saffron Walden almshouses', *TEAS*, 25 (1958), pp. 172-83.

144 Rev. J. Russell-Smith, pers. comm. The late Dr. Russell-Smith worked on the Register of Walden Abbey and was producing biographies of Walden clergy.

145 H. F. Westlake, *Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (London, 1919), pp. 151-2.

146 Steer, 'Statutes'.

should be allowed to teach one small boy the 'alphabet and graces' but not instruct him in 'superior books'.[147] By 1396, the church held town property, at least market stalls, of which the rent was assigned to maintaining a light in the church.[148]

Society before 1438

While the town's prosperity may have suffered from the loss, from 1327, of resident aristocracy and their circle, this may have given extra scope to the middling sort to wield power. There seems little detectable influence of established landed gentry; jurors, other court officials and churchwardens gained increased scope to become the social elite.

In addition to the court rolls and churchwardens' records as sources for gaining insights into the social structure by 1438, deeds and national records allow pointers to the identity of members of the wealthier groups and of those associated with them. For example, in 1436 Nicholas Bemers, holder of one of the lesser manors and of other lands in the town and fields, gave a yearly rent of four marks, for life, to Christina Benge for her good service.[149] Witnesses to free property transfers were likely to be themselves of a status which, though not necessarily equivalent to that of the holders, might make them trustworthy associates of such members of the elite, and their identities may well be traceable through the major sources. The terminology of the almshouse statutes of 1400 reveals the currency of recognition of social hierarchy: the three or four most discreet and wisest of the vill; the twenty-four 'of the most worshipful'; the thirteen poor: 'the more indigent, decrepit, blind, lame; the fifty-two poorer persons of the vill of Walden or elsewhere.' Such categories must, then, have had some currency. Contributions to support the almshouse were to be gathered 'door to door' from parish residents.

Concern about behaviour, formalised in the business of the courts leet, perhaps has in the almshouse ordinances a moral, as well as practical, tone: both inmates and the priest were

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147 Rowntree, *Saffron Walden*, p. 64; A. F. Leach, 'The history of education in England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 6 (1913-14), pp. 433-80; 'graces' was mistakenly translated by Braybrooke as 'Greek'.

148 Andrews and Mundy, 'Saffron Walden topography', p. 266.

149 CCR 1436, m.5d.

to be clean-living, he 'of good character' and they 'of good rule, not drunken, ribald, quarrelsome, evilly disposed'. Since concern is thus expressed, there may well, in some sense, have been room for it. The deacon, church clerk and clerk of the burgage were, 'as an example', customarily to attend Our Lady Mass weekly.

The five-mile radius from Walden within which the poor were to be visited through the Our Lady Gild is, interestingly, broadly comparable to the theoretical 6.66 mile primary hinterland of market towns; the source of known almshouse donors included Littlebury and it seems likely that a somewhat wider area is relevant. While several gave individual houses, in Church St and in Brook Walden, for example, two donations suggest their benefactors were particularly wealthy: nine houses in Goul St from John Hunt and £40 from John and Eleanor Butler.[150] An orchard in Daniel's (later Almshouse) Lane was provided as site for the project by Roger Walden, archbishop of Canterbury in 1398-9, his name incidentally serving to illustrate the possibility for young men from such a town to rise to very high office.[151] In fact such a trajectory is known to have occurred previously: in 1338, Thomas de Walden, citizen and apothecary of London, had loaned £30 to Peter de Benchesham of Surrey and in 1349 Thomas de Walden junior, possibly the same man, was Chamberlain of the City.[152]

THE TOWN IN 1438-40

Government

In 1440 the lord of Chepyng Walden was Henry VI, as Duke of Lancaster, following the death in 1438 of Queen Katherine, widow of Henry V, who seems to have held the manor in

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150 Steer, 'Statutes', pp. 185, 189.

151 Steer, p.185.

152 TNA, PRO C 241/126/28; A. H. Thomas (ed.), *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London* iv, *A.D. 1413-37* (Cambridge, 1943), p. 227.

dower. The town was a seigneurial borough. How much influence did the manor have on the life of the town?

Firstly, the privileges of burgesses were limited to freedom from relief, non-payment of heriot and the right to elect the bailiff of the market from among themselves. In 1440 this office was at farm but, unfortunately, no records of the market court, which would deal with disputes arising from market transactions, survive. A rare reference to it occurs in 1414, when the market bailiff took to the leet court a case unresolved by the market court.[153]

A manorial court, which included the business of the borough, was responsible for the operation of the jurisdiction. A steward, appointed by the lord, presided over the court but day-to-day running of the manor depended on a number of officials, elected by the court, among whom a messor or hayward had a major role. The steward appears to have been normally non-resident. Chepyng Walden's lord held the right to hold a leet court, as did the Abbot at Walden Abbey manor. Chepyng Walden's court records survive for nine sittings between September 1438 and August 1440; four of them included courts leet. The interval between these, the courts with rolls surviving, varies from 44 to 139 days. Though they were probably called as volume of business required, it seems likely that further courts were held, for example between 25 October 1438 and 24 February 1439. As to officers of the court, the messor's role would be crucial, though perhaps with a non-resident steward he might be more susceptible to local influence. Two to four affeerors (assessors), powerful because able to influence the levels of fines and amercements, were elected from those attending, perhaps giving suitors some discretion in the practical administration of the manor. The normal court sitting heard, as well as debt pleas, ones of trespass, detinue and broken contract and oversaw transfers of customary land. Distraint of nine tenants' lands in 1440 for non-performance of plough and harvest service suggests at least some aspects of the regime were unusually conservative.[154] The messor convened twelve or

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153 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 138.

154 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jan. 1440.

thirteen suitors as a jury to present cases and the steward did similarly as an inquisition to present to the leet and adjudicate in contested cases. The messor and steward were, consequently, in a powerful position to influence the administration of the jurisdiction.

At the leet courts, the background and frequency of service of the jurors, namely chief pledges, was important. Their responsibilities included attending royal and hundred courts but they were elected and served at the leets, controlling the system which required resident adult males to be in a tithing and handling minor offences, including nuisance, highway obstruction, assault and breaking trading regulations concerning bread, ale, meat, fish, leather and skins, and regrating. They elected the leet's affeerors from among themselves and decided which cases warranted referral to higher judicial authority. In the fifteenth century chief pledges were drawn primarily from the principal landholding tenants and would have an important influence on the regulation of the manor. Further light on social and economic matters is supplied by the annual election by the whole homage of other officers: constables, ale tasters, bread weighers and rent collectors. The burgesses' right to elect the bailiff of the market implies that the relationship between burgesses and non-burgesses must have had a considerable potential, distinct from that of the manor itself, to affect the everyday life of residents: William Gerard was to account for having insulted and disparaged 'with his reviling words' John Gerland, bailiff, carrying out his office in the market.[155]

While there is no evidence in these two years of the activities of gilds, the appointment in 1400 by the Gild of Our Lady of Pity of a self-perpetuating oligarchy of twenty-four of 'the most worshipful' established a body of townsmen who would develop experience of control.[156] The potential influence of an organised group of this sort on the development of the town's business and government represents one of the themes underpinning this study.

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[155] ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1438.

[156] Steer, 'Statutes', p. 181.

Economy

Pleas for recovery of debt were prominent in the business of the ordinary courts. There is no objective sign of the degree of difficulty that affected crop yields in northern England, in a very different physical environment, at precisely this time, but, certainly, debt case numbers were much higher in 1438 than in 1439.[157] While, intuitively, the number of pleas might be greater in a depression, as plaintiffs sought to recover dues, another view is that a large number of pleas indicates expansion, presumably since credit had been involved, at least fairly recently.[158] The number of debt cases and the income from the courts is shown in Tab. 2.1.

Tab. 2.1. 1438-40. Chepyng Walden manor: courts held, debt cases and income

COURT DATE	With leet	NO. DEBT CASES	TOT. INCOME
8 9 1438		32	16s 1d
25 10 1438	**	41	42s 1d
24 2 1439		38	23s 5d
24 5 1439		34	25s 3d
7 7 1439	***	22	21s 11d
8 9 1439		22	8s 1d
25 1 1440	***	19	74s 3d
20 3 1440		19	12s 3d
7 7 1440	***	17	66s 1d

Note: 'Total Income' excludes pasturage, sale of brushwood and such. Source: ECRO D/DBy m. 5.

Income from the courts also varied widely. It was derived from small amercements relating to the prosecution of suits concerning, primarily, debt, trespass and detinue, for settling out of court and for failing to keep property repaired, for example. Other contributions came from access to pasturage and, a considerable element, from fines for entry to customary land; in the manor court of 20 July 1448 the latter contributed 13s 6d of total court receipts of £1 1s 10d. Since the records of the leet were added to the business of a regular court and would include

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157 A. J. Pollard, 'The north-eastern economy and the agrarian crisis of 1438-40', *Northern History*, 25 (1989), pp. 88-105.

158 R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 208.

amercements for offences concerning trading, disorder and nuisance, for example, as well as an often considerable sum from the many paying to be absent from court, their revenues can be expected to be greater. From the court with leet in December 1440, which did not include prosecutions for disorder and nuisance and saw very few land transfers, receipts totalled £3 5s 9d, of which about £1 16s came from trading offences and 19s 2d from payments for absence. Over such a period as 1440-89, trends in totals may be apparent and, potentially, significant.[159]

In the years 1438-40, in most of the many court cases involving debts concerning individuals, the amount of the debt is not recorded. Manorial courts would normally handle pleas of up to 40s, only, but Augustine Dyer brought a suit for 62s, relating to 70 ells of kersey.[160] In twenty-five other cases the amount stated ranged from 6d to 20s, while the average was 8s 7d. Amounts levied by the courts included almost 9s from John Gerland, malter, to the use of each of four distinct people; in other cases the relevant sums vary between 10s and 20s, with an exceptional one almost £4, though the reason is not noted. Two suits by John Gerland 'chapman' concerned wheat, maslin, peas and oats and one by John Gerland 'malter', quite possibly the same individual, also oats. John Gerland, bailiff, may be identifiable with the chapman, and/or malter and/or a saddler.[161] Other suitors brought several distinct cases and there is again ample sign of trade in grain: Robert Semar brought eight suits, two of them against millers; in one of these he claimed 12s 6d for 2 quarters 3 bushels of wheat. John Wood brought five cases, once pursuing a debt of 15s 8d. Here, in the repeated role of debt plaintiff, and so of lender/supplier, and in the relatively large sums involved, there is a hint of superior status. Commodities traded, including barley and faggots, and a suit by John Beneit, barker,

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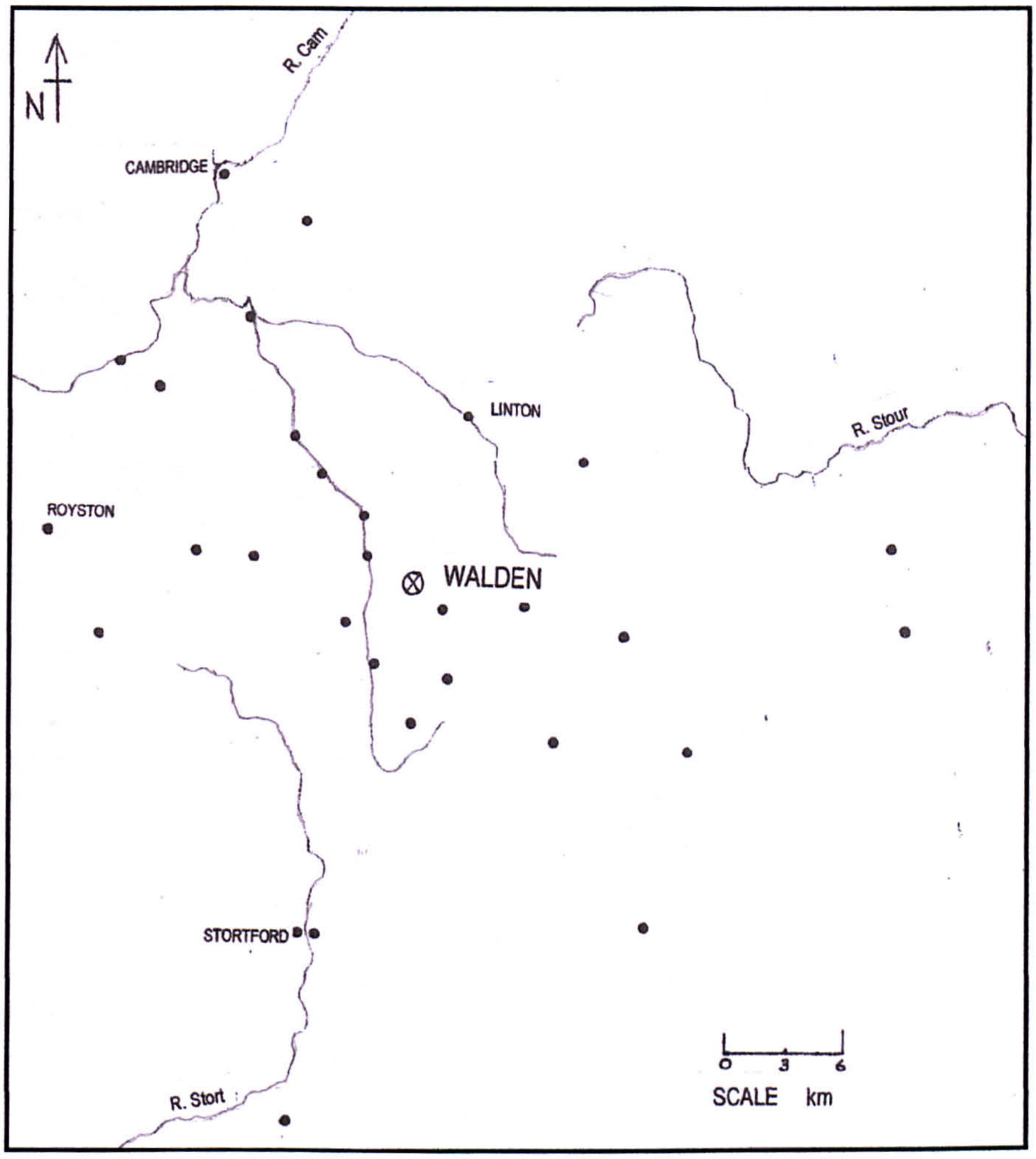
159 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1448; m.5 Dec. 40.

160 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440.

161 However, a William Gerveys was impleaded by John Gerland 'chapman' and also by John Gerland 'malter'. Citing a John Gerland 'saddler' and a John Henham 'saddler', who impleaded John Gerland 'malter', further illustrates the potential difficulty in identification.

concerning a shop in, appropriately, Barker's Row emphasise the dealings in the grain and leather trades, predictable in the local context.[162]

Fig. 2.8. Walden's hinterland, 1438-40, from court rolls and churchwardens' accounts,



Note: black dots represent places with which Walden people were in contact. Source: ECRO D/DBy m.5 all courts 1438-40; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 1-14.

In most cases, no origin of litigants is stated and they are taken to be from within the vill. On one occasion, both litigants were 'foreigners', John Cros of Duxford impleading a smith of Ickleton. These are local villages but the degree to which there are signs of links with a wider sphere will, of course, be important in evaluating Walden's position in the urban hierarchy. In these two years, one, tenuous, potential wider link is hinted at by an attack on a Richard Maldon

162 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jan. 1440.

by John Barker, who, intriguingly though, is a fisher, while Maldon is in fact marginally the nearest port to Walden.[163]

Further hints about the context of debt cases may be gained from the occupations of litigants. In these two years, in addition to those noted above, plaintiffs include a smith, dyer, saddler, schoolmaster, barker, fisher and two tailors. Among defendants there is a butcher, weaver, cooper, two millers and the same dyer. Concentrated in the food, textiles /clothing and leather/skin trades, these occupations are typical of small town economies. Between 1438 and 1440, twenty-three differing occupations are noted in the two major documentary sources.

Tab. 2.2. Occupations, 1438-40.

Food and drink	butcher, fisher, malter, miller
Wool, Textiles, Clothing	dyer, tailor, weaver, hosier
Leather and skins	barker, whitawyer
Construction	carpenter, labourer, layer, mason, sawyer, tiler
Miscellaneous	carter, chandler, chaplain, chapman, cooper, saddler schoolmaster, servant, shepherd, smith

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.5 courts 1438-40; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 1-14.

Among these, only tailor (4), labourer (4), butcher (3) and mason (7) describe more than two distinct people. The presence of a hosier suggests a degree of specialisation and the prevalence of masons reflects major building work at the parish church.

The fact that John Gerland, malter, broke the assize of bread, as did John Smith, of Market End, tailor and regrator of ale, emphasises that, especially within an urban context, by-occupations are likely to be commonplace. John Higham, saddler, may be identifiable with John Higham, butcher and regrator of ale.

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[163] ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jan. 1440; Jul. 1440.

Land transfers

Important clues to the economic health of the town are found in the recording of land transfers These mainly concern land beyond the built urban area. As typical of the East Anglian region, bordering Walden, land transactions overwhelmingly concerned very small parcels, of less than 2 acres. For example, in September 1438 William Campyon had surrendered out of court to his wife, Joan, divers parcels in the fields of Walden, 'of which 1 acre lies in a piece in Millfield, two half acres are part of a tenement called Hereberds, of which one half acre lies at Greenwayend and the other half acre lies in Galweyshot, and the said rood lies at Leveredmede'. As well as, or in quick succession to, holding these rural parcels, Campyon held a free tenement in Cuckingstool End.[164]

Death-bed surrenders were often to family, usually to widows, daughters or sons; others may, in fact, be to non-apparent family and any sub-tenants may be invisible in the court records. A single family might make many transactions: a John Constable was a collector for a church ale in 1438/9 and a namesake left 1.5 acres to Roger, his son, on whose death, in turn, it was sold for the health of his soul. After John's death, a toft and six acres as well as a piece 148.5 ft x 25 ft, newly enclosed from the town ditch, was claimed by John, another son. Son John shortly surrendered a cottage and six acres to Henry West and John Wood. Further holdings by John Constable, senior, of two tofts each with ten acres, were claimed by Thomas, a younger son.[165]

External tenants might take property within the vill: Henry Wright of neighbouring Little Chesterford a toft and six acres; John Philpot of Newport a tenement near Drapery Row; with two other men, William Marreve showed the charter by which they acquired from George of Stortford and two men of Walden a messuage in Cuckingstool End, plus a little arable in the

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164 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1438; Nov. 1438.

165 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f 2r; D/DBy m.5 May 1439.

town fields.[166] Some surrenders were specifically urban: John Herbert a plot on Castle Hill, 132 ft x 50 ft, with house, to the use of John Walker. Though any previous virgate system seems largely to have broken up, landholding on a larger scale did exist: John Reymond had a toft and virgate as well as a toft and 6 acres of customary wareland. He may be identifiable with John Reymond the dyer.[167]

During these two years new rents were paid for four pieces in the town: 3d for one in the exterior part of the manor site, taken by John Reymond, dyer, specifically for a dyehouse; 2d for a purpresture 24 ft x 13 ft near the Market Bridge; 4d for a purpresture 44 ft x 11 ft in the market, near the malt mill, with fine at a rate of £4 15s 3d per acre. William and Alice Morreve took 74 ft x 24 ft, of the 'waste of the vill' below the part of Bury Hill known as 'Tointereshill', namely 'dyers hill', at 1d, the rate of fine 12s 6d per acre.[168]

There was some increase in selling space in the market: two grants allowed the enlargement of shops in Fisher's row, by 34 ft x 3 ft and 27 ft x 3 ft; the 3 ft suggests a pentice, while the large other dimension may represent a block of shops to be modified, rather than single units.[169]

Several individuals were arraigned for failing to keep villein tenements in repair, most, perhaps, outside the town; since some of the defendants appear to have held multiple tenements, some relevant buildings may have been obsolete.[170]

A substantial number of property deeds provide, together, evidence of free tenure, lacking in the court rolls. Those lodged between 1400 and 1438 concern messuages with buildings in all streets of the town. In 1427, one in Fullers Lane had five houses and abutted the

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166 ECRO D/DBy m.5 May 1439; Jan. 1440; Sep. 1438.

167 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jan. 1440.

168 TNA, PRO DL 29/43/826; 29/43/829.

169 ECRO D/DBy m.5 May 1439.

170 Such tenements were held at the will of the lord, subject to dues such as entry fines and heriot, with proof of title recorded in the court roll.

Waterslade; in Goul Street three messuages with buildings and an adjacent croft were conveyed from a group of fifteen, perhaps the feoffees of the almshouse, to two priests.[171]

That a property sale might involve a considerable sum is shown by a plea of broken contract concerning a tenement in Walden for which £20 had been agreed between Nicholas Helvy and Robert Thake. Unfortunately, details of its size and location are lacking.[172]

While the court records suggest something of the economic activities of individuals, the income and expenditure of a large entity are shown by the churchwardens' accounts.

Tab. 2.3. Churchwardens' accounts summary, 1438-40

YEAR ENDS	RECEIVED	PAID
1439	£38. 11. 9	£42. 6. 10
1440	£15. 7. 7	£19. 7. 5

Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols. 1-14.

The main source of income was collections, usually recorded as 'for a 'May', that is a church ale, and made in both the streets of the town and in the smaller settlements within the parish.

[171] ECRO D/B 2/1/217; D/B 2/1/61.

[172] ECRO D/DBy m.5 Feb. 1439.

Tab. 2.4. Collections in the vill, recorded in the churchwardens' accounts, 1438-40 (2 years)

LOCATION	SUM COLLECTED £ s d
'town'	£1. 8. 9
one ward of High St	£1. 0. 0
Church St	£2. 0. 7
Castle St	£1. 13. 4
Market St	£2. 6. 8
Goul St	£1. 10. 0
Cukkingstool St	£2. 2. 8
'the great street'	£2. 0. 0
TOTAL FROM TOWN	£14. 1.11
Sewards End **	£2 6. 8
North End **	£3. 0. 2
Little Walden **	£1. 18. 0
Abbey End **	£4. 6. 8
TOTAL COLLECTIONS	£21. 13. 6
% from town of total collections	65
TOTAL INCOME	£53. 18. 5

Note: **: locations outside the urban area. 'the great street' must mean the remainder of High St/Bridge St. Collections form 40.2 % of total income. Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 14r, 14v.

The town streets listed are the most central ones. (Fig. 2.3) The non-town collections were made in the subsidiary settlements in the parish. (Fig. 2.1) That the town streets provided only 65 per cent of the total collections suggests that these settlements were rather substantial in population, wealth or both and emphasises the difficulty in apportioning estimates of the vill's population appropriately between them and the urban area. In 1400, Abbey End, including Brook Walden, the village at the gates of the abbey, had contained a shop and fifty-one

dwellings, apparently cottages with very little land, occupied by sixty-two of the abbey's tenants.[173]

The 'Mays' may have been a 'sweetener' to offset the perhaps obligatory contributions to the collection; no income is attributed to the Mays themselves, at least some of which were held in the church: 'John Hanham et William Hendeman qui font collez de Little Walden a le may en le glyse ...10s'; a list of nine other pairs of collectors producing similar amounts 'said day' names no other locations. In 1438/9 collections contributed in total £5 1s 1d to the £38 11s 9d receipts.[174] Most of those who had collected in the locations listed in Tab. 2.4 were involved in a second series, some in their original pairs.

Separately from these collections, in 1439-40 eighty-one names are listed as making annual payments to the church, ranging from 1d to 6s 8d and totalling £4 15s 3d. The basis of the variation is unclear, though some relation to status is suggested in that the largest sum is paid by some of those, like Robert Semar, who became powerful in the town's economy and government and also by John Warham, of Lynn, via an intermediary, while payers of 2d include John Mason, bedeman, and of 1d the only woman listed, plus John Synderford, possibly an immigrant.[175]

Among income from what Burgess and Kumin call 'the dead', other smaller and, naturally, variable funds came from bequests, in 1438-9 totalling £2 13s 8d and in 1439-40 £5 0s 4d. Rents yielded very little, 10s 4d each year, of which letting two shops in the butchery contributed about half. A high proportion of income in the parishes of large towns tended to come from rents from obit endowments, while in market towns and rural areas 'the living' characteristically provided most of their parishes' income by active fund-raising. In any case,

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173 D. Cromarty, *The Fields of Walden in 1400* (Chelmsford, 1966), p. 13.

174 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 1r; 1v; 2r; 2v.

175 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 9r; 9v; 10r; 10v.

'wealth appears a prerequisite for an endowment regime'.[176] Where, though a small town existed, the parish also received a substantial contribution from an extensive rural area with subsidiary settlements, it may be particularly likely to retain, even during any on-going urbanisation, a conservative funding regime, based on the customs and conviviality of the 'Mays', uniting parishioners from disparate manors. In any case, a major factor in the parish body's apparent lack of property to let is likely to be the existence of the almshouse, which, from its inception in 1400, was the object of numerous property bequests.[177]

Spending by the wardens at this time was dominated by the building project: £2 6s 8d for hard stone and £7 for the carpenter's 'bargain' for the roof, probably of the aisle. £6 7s 8d was spent on wages for cutting and transporting timber and providing the workers with a diet by no means minimal, including bread, cheese, meat and ale. Three loads of lime were bought at 15s each and, at 2s per day for the cart hire, brought 19 km. from Hinton, near Cambridge, at 1s 8d per load. Seven distinct masons, one layer and two labourers earned wages of from 2s to 3s 8d per week. In all, in 1438-9, costs of obtaining timber, lime and ironwork and of wages to masons for the new work amounted to £42 8s 1d, contrasting with the 'petits costages' of the daily running of the parish, which totalled £5 14s 10d. The rationale for this enormous investment in the new building demands investigation in relation to trends in the parish's population size and economic vigour.

Social structure

Who was running the town and what indications are there of its social structure, bearing in mind the likely effect of its size on the degree of complexity of its society? Some illumination is supplied by the annual election, by the whole homage, of constables, ale tasters,

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176 C. Burgess and B. Kumin, 'Penitential bequests and parish regimes in late medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44 (1993), pp. 617-21.

177 Steer, 'Statutes', p. 185-97; E. J. Erith, *Essex Parish Records 1240-1894* (Chelmsford, 1950), p. 217.

bread weighers and rent collectors, and by presentments for breaking the assize, for regrating, assault and failure to be in a tithing. Office-holding in Walden in 1438-40 is shown in Tab. 2.5.

Tab. 2.5. Office-holding in Walden, 1438-40

OFFICE	Total number serving in this office this period	Number serving in this office, only	Max potential occasions to serve	Max occasions actually served
affeeror	11	1	8	4
juror or on inquisition	38	25	12	11
collector for 'May'	29	25	n/a	n/a

Note: n/a: not clear; max = maximum. Data on chief pledges is unavailable at these dates. Sources: ECRO D/DBy m.5 all courts 1438-40; D/DBy Q18 fols 1-14.

There is a clear contrast between the operation of the powerful office of affeeror and that of collector for a 'May'. Disregarding the few cases where secure identification is impossible, while virtually all affeerors have experience as jurors or inquisition members, collectors tend to fill that role, only. Of course, as servants of the parish, their sphere is distinct from that of the courts but their lack of wider responsibilities may reinforce the notion that they are 'locals', employed to 'do the rounds' of their own area. Of jurors, about two-thirds serve as that only; of the others, apart from those also affeerors, five are collectors and, interestingly, are the ones among jurors who serve as jurors relatively frequently. It is clear that by this date some individuals were particularly powerful: John Brenge served eleven of twelve possible occasions as juror/inquisition member and also four out of eight possible times as affeeror; for John Drynkston the relevant figures were nine times and twice. William Hendeman was five times juror/inquisition member, twice affeeror and also a 'May' collector. Such individuals are likely to represent the more substantial families.[178]

It remains to be seen whether in the period 1440-89 there is substantial evidence of an elite fostered by long-distance trade. While many holding urban property were townsfolk, with multiple parcels scattered widely in the parish and possibly beyond, others were evident

[178] C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: the Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 368.

'foreigners', not living in the town, suggesting association likely to be through trade. If, indeed, the saffron trade became firmly established in fifteenth century Walden, specialised trading and, especially at only 60 km from the capital, the presence of London merchants would make such an elite element probable. Swanson's three other usual urban social groups are certainly present: one including small-scale merchants, stipendiary clergy and relatively elevated skilled artisans, earning £5 to £7 per year, and which at Walden might include hosiers and some fishmongers and tanners; a group with modest or low income but liable to tax and including the overwhelming majority of the people; finally, the sick, elderly, many widows and unemployed labourers, and some, including vagrants, prostitutes and the very poorest, in fact marginal to the recognised social order.[179] The poor as a class were acknowledged in the foundation of the almshouse, though this does nothing to lift the veil masking their identities. A hint of concession to them is found in the sum of 1s10$^{1/2d}$ paid in 1439-40 to the churchwardens for 'churching' (Purification) after childbirth by 'dyvers femyz que je ne ay trove lez nomez dyvers temps'; calculations, based on the proportions observed from years where all individual payments are listed, suggest that this is likely to include seven, of the probable forty-one total, paying at only half the standard rate.[180] The twenty-four 'probi homines' administering the almshouse surely belonged to the effective elite of the vill and were defended from erosion of their status by their own power to choose replacements for any among them who died.[181]

The churchwardens name women merely as, for example, 'the wife of John Kerver' and this and the total anonymity of the others emphasises the actual, as well as relative, obscurity of females, in the records of even a well-documented small town. Aside from the 'churching', the parish-based churchwardens' accounts make fifteen references to receipts from women in these two years: some are at marriage, others are from widow Jane Potter, who paid

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179 H. Swanson, *Medieval British Towns* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 116.

180 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.3r.

181 Steer, 'Statutes', p. 181.

in 6s 8d for a quarter of malt, and some are from bequests. Importantly, Margaret Child is the sole woman among the twelve pairs of collectors, each pair amassing about 10s. In addition, she is the sole person paid for baking and for brewing in the church.[182] Probably relevant is that a Roger Child, one of only five said to have a servant, was also a collector, in 'the great street', and is listed as one of the eighty paying a sum 'for the year' in 1439-40, in fact the second highest amount, 3s 4d. A Roger Child is recorded as a fishmonger.[183]

Women's strongest showing in the accounts is in bequests, of which they made seven out of thirteen. Single women left 1s and 1s 8d and one of three female servants listed left the notable 6s 8d. However, Joan, wife of Roger Constable, likely to be the son and heir of the wealthy John Constable, senior, left 20s.[184] Brewing ale presumably occupied numbers of women in Walden, though fines at the leet were imposed mainly on men. Of those arraigned for having ruinous villein tenements, about half were women, perhaps poor widows, or the neglect may result from combining properties into one holding.[185] In debt cases, Christine Benge appeared twice as plaintiff, once for 9s, while Joan Werham was a debtor, for 13s 4d. Women quite frequently received property, generally as widows and occasionally as daughters; these cases offer the best evidence of their landholding, though the difficulty of distinguishing which are urban parcels remains.[186]

By 1440, 'place-name surnames' may no longer indicate the place of origin of the current generation but William Taylor, alias Balsham, about 15 km. from Walden, was probably previously William Balsham, tailor. The occupational surname took over, too, in the case of Alex White, smith, who became Alex Smith. John Synderford retained a place-name surname, likely, because of distance from the Forest of Dean, to be unique in the district and so a potent

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182 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 3r; 2r; 7v.

183 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.9r; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1439.

184 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.11v.

185 for example D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440.

186 ECRO D/DBy m.5 May 1439; Feb. 1439.

identifier, intriguing because of that area's resources of iron and also because he contributed, of eighty listed, one of the smallest sums to the church for the year.

ECCLESIASTICAL AND CULTURAL CALENDAR

As suggested, an area otherwise fragmented between manors and settlements of varying size might achieve some cohesion through the activities of the parish. Dates of most street collections and also, surely, the associated ales, were evidently linked to major feast days: in 1438-40 they were made at Pentecost, around Trinity Sunday, at SS Peter and Paul, S. James, to whom the Abbey was dedicated, S. Lawrence and S. Luke.

Fraternities surely had an important role in the town's social and religious life. The three recorded in 1389 may have continued to function but generate no surviving documents of the fifteenth century. However, among them, the Corpus Christi Gild was surely associated with the processions held in 1444, when seven banners and the hearse were carried, bells rung and drinkings took place in the cemetery.[187] Such gilds might prove powerful sources of identity, for those able to afford the entrance fees, and would not only represent urban and rural interests within the vill but might have members from outside. Plays would draw in visitors from a hinterland which is unlikely to be coterminous with that of the town as market, since they have a differing rationale.

As to the calendar of community occasions, location on the border between pays might foster a more even spread than would occur in a pays overwhelmingly either pastoral or arable: Though annual payments in Walden focus on Michaelmas, as usual in grain-producing areas, harvest festivities might spread through late summer and the whole autumn, in the case of saffron perhaps into November, around the culmination of the pastoral year at Martinmas.

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187 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.29v.

CONCLUSIONS

By 1440 Walden was an important member of the network of towns in this area of upland between the Thames and Ouse basins. Pointers to its successes and limitations as well as to problems in following the course of its development have been hinted at in this chapter.

The town had a large and differentiated market space, some shops and some complex domestic buildings. The manorial and ecclesiastical centres shared the hill dominating the town and a school and almshouse were well established. Evidence of the state of the economy is varied: though the presence of a considerable number of 'the poor' was recognised and, at least in 1425, concern about the economic health of the town was expressed, new rents were being undertaken and in 1438-40 the parish was able to finance a large expenditure on the church, the considerable variation in individuals' contributions again suggesting wide variations in individual wealth.

The following chapters consider separately Walden's economy, society/government and cultural/ecclesiastical functions between 1440 and c.1490, finally considering the state of the town overall, almost at the end of the fifteenth century. Cromarty concludes her study of the 1381-1420 period by suggesting that, from documents after 1420, 'the increasing number of dyeworks, the rapid expansion in the growth of saffron and the increasing size of the sheep flocks is leading to a new period of economic expansion'.[188] She sees new prosperity in rural tenements but little early sign of increased powers of self-government. These topics will be among those examined in the chapters that follow.

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[188] Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 182.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ECONOMY

Was Walden's economy static, expanding or contracting in the mid-late fifteenth century?

INTRODUCTION

We have seen that by 1524 Walden had risen in the hierarchy, or rank order, more than any town in the region, except Chelmsford, since 1334. This occurred over the same period as a shift in the distribution of values per acre, calculated from taxes, from a great concentration of high ratings in southern Cambridgeshire to a more dispersed pattern further south, with concentrations particularly in the middle Stour valley but also in and near the Cam/Stort valley and in the south east, around Braintree. Building on the discussion, in the Introduction, of Walden's improving ranking among the region's towns, the current chapter seeks to examine its economy in the study period in the context of the changes also noted in the region and those occurring more widely. In view of the debate about town decline in the later middle ages, do we have here an instance of a town with improved, or at least sustained, prosperity over this period?

THE BACKGROUND

In general the fifteenth-century economy is characterized by stability in population size, a large proportion in employment and, compared with the earlier fourteenth century, more resources per head, more opportunity for employment for those without land and for the acquisition of land by the wealthier. High wage rates allowed improved diet, demand for a wider range of manufactured goods and expansion of the merchant class, with greater dependence on merchants from other towns. Traders based in London garnered an increasing share of internal trade. Though, with grain prices low, agriculture was generally both less intensive and less extensive than in the early fourteenth century, the effect of the widespread agrarian crisis of

1438-40 and the major downturn of the mid-fifteenth century might be mitigated for the peasant producers by increased specialisation and commercialisation, with opportunities for wage earning. This would be particularly appropriate: in north and north-central Essex's industrialised rural economy, 25 per cent of the population in 1381 were artisans or traders. A great imbalance in landed resources remained, with more than 50 per cent of householders around 1400 depending on smallholding or having no land at all, which made them dependent on by-employment or waged labouring.[189] Commercial activity, on a small scale at least, had permeated all levels of society and credit was often involved.

The state of the town's economy will be discussed by considering five distinct areas for which there is considerable evidence: landholding, specific occupations, the textile industry, saffron production and the building industry.

LANDHOLDING

We are concerned specifically with a town environment. While the wide range of source materials enables some insight into Walden landholding, court roll data are a 'precarious guide to the reality of landholding' and since available records concern both the manor of Chepyng Walden and the vill of Walden, they include parcels lying outside the built area, some held with urban ones; though not physically part of the town, these would, of course, contribute to the resources of both individuals and the town itself. The property market operated within a framework of business or family strategies, charitable preferences, and life-cycle constraints and landholders might have all or any of free, customary and leasehold in various combinations.

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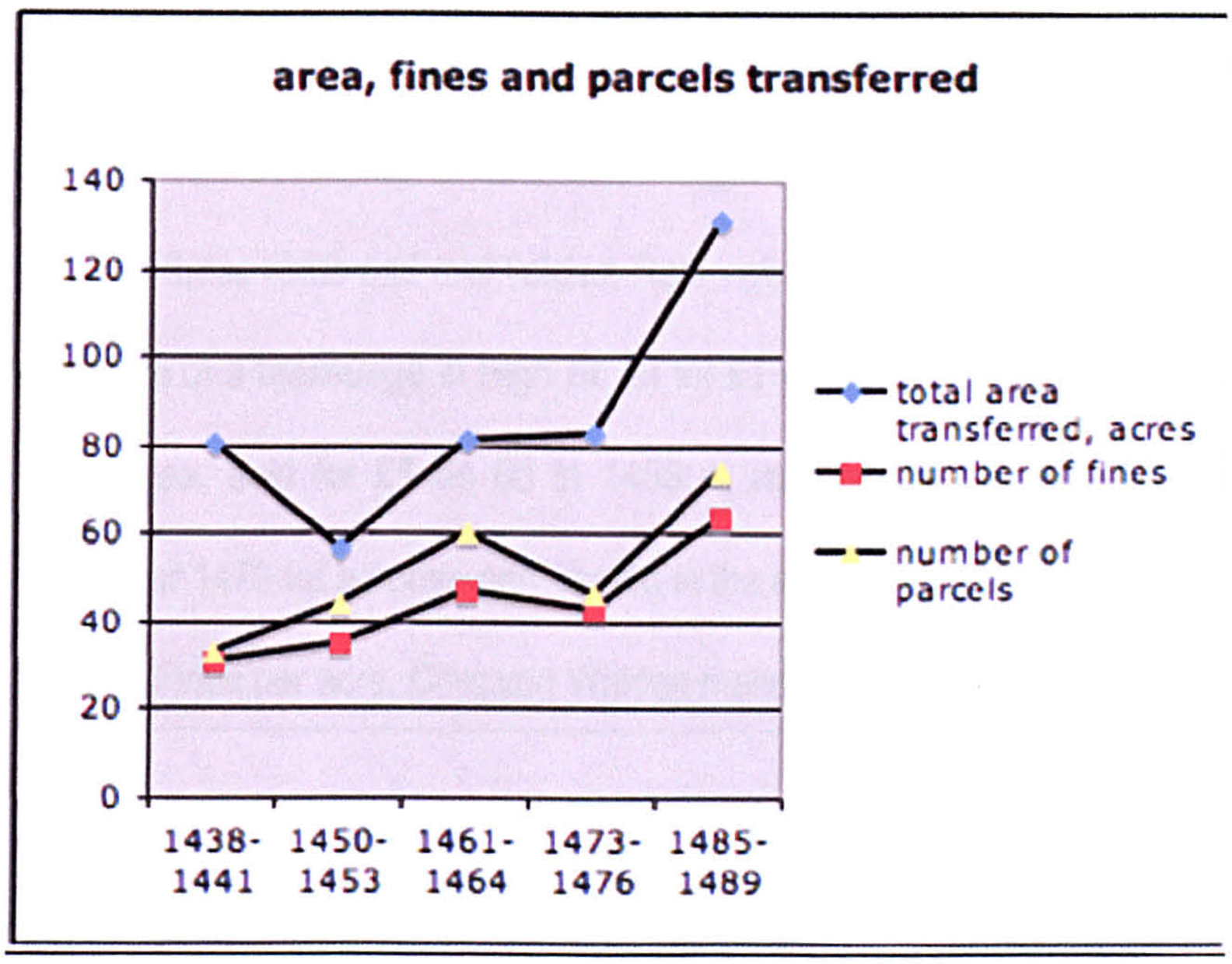
189 L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 24.

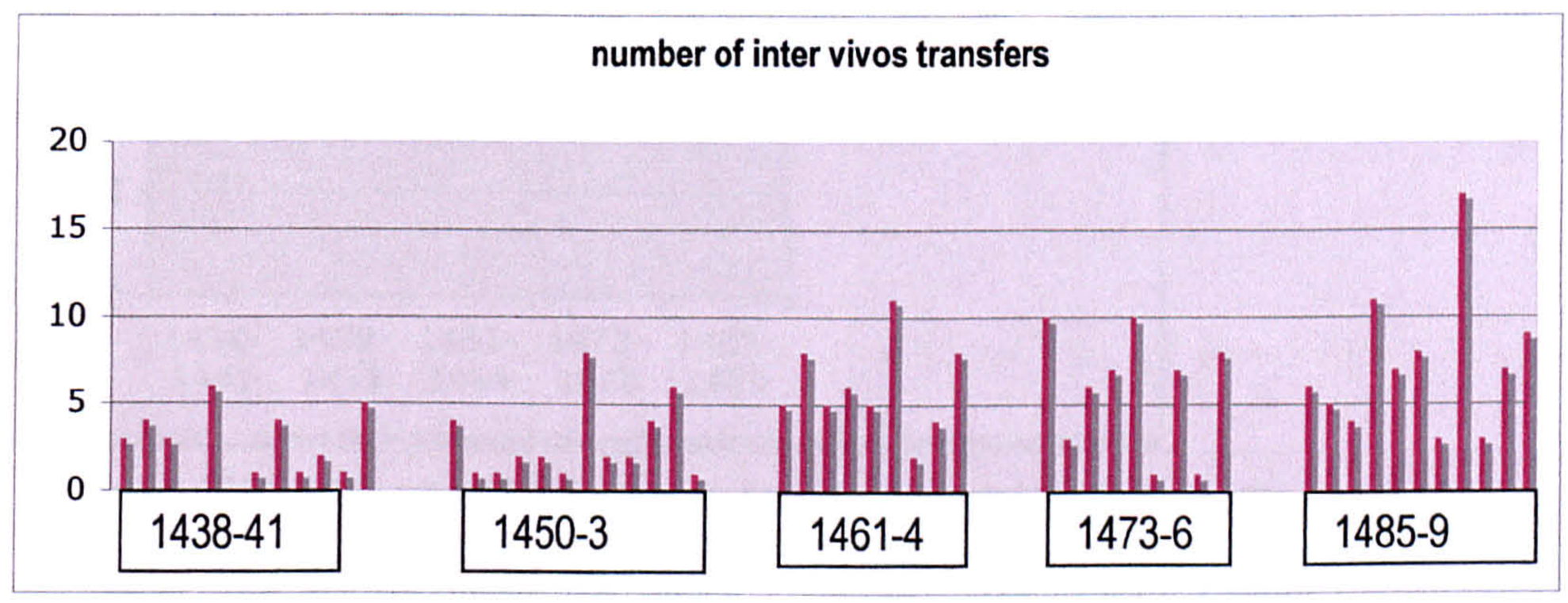
Following the mid-fifteenth century depression, in other parts of England demand for land revived from around 1470.[190]

Fig. 3.1. Area, fines and parcels transferred, Walden manor court, sample phases



Source: ECRO D/DBy m.5-m.10.

Fig. 3.2. Number of inter vivos transfers

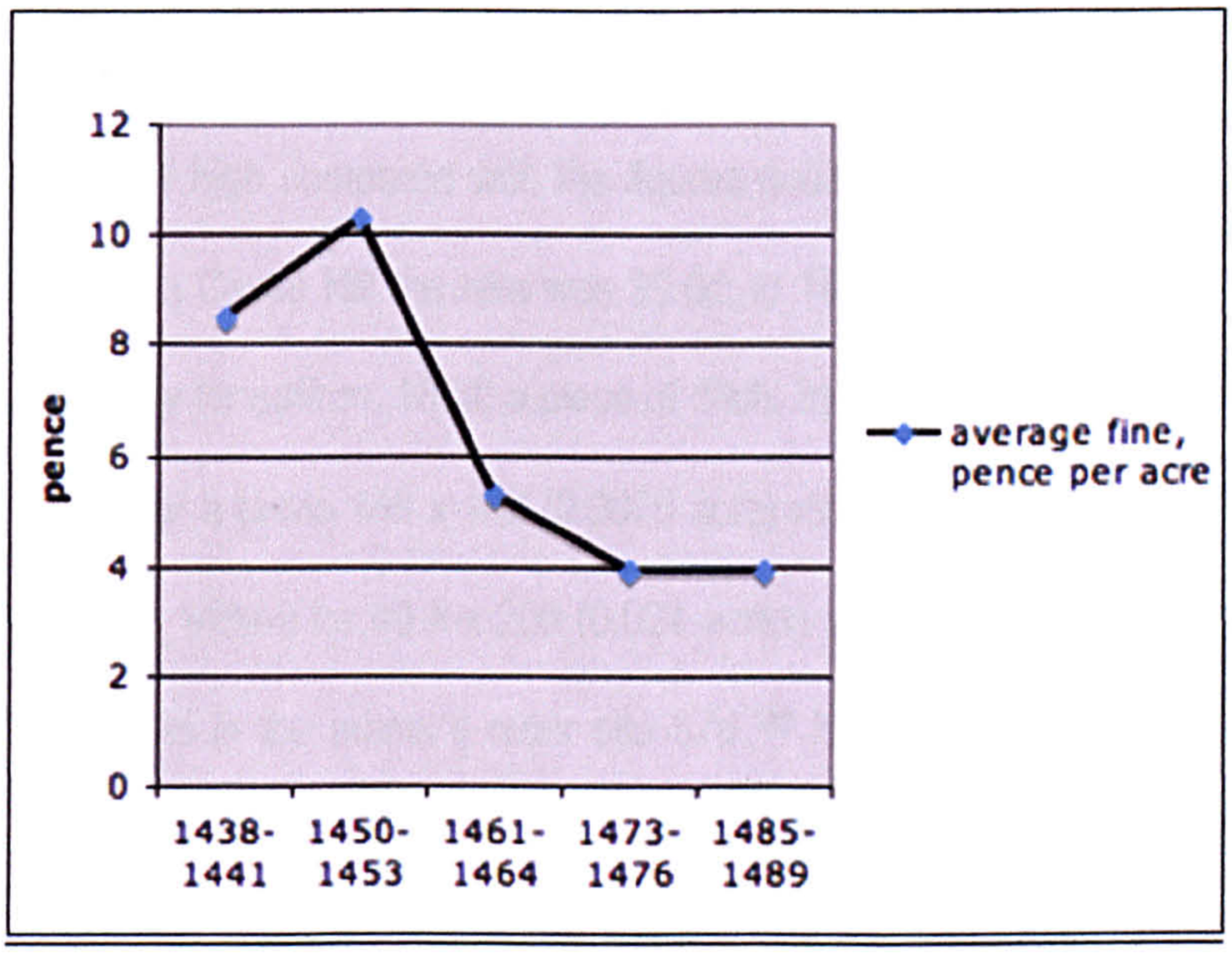


Source: ECRO D/DBy m5-m.10. Note: The number of inter vivos transfers, taken as excluding those to wives, daughters or sons, varied between 85 per cent and 97 per cent of all transfers, which totalled 34; 39; 59; 56; 88 in the phases, in sequence.

190 D. Keene, 'Landlords, the property market and urban development in Medieval England', in F-E. Eliassen and G. A. Ersland (eds), *Power Profit and Urban Land: Land Ownership in Medieval and Early Modern European Towns* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 93-119; M. McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: the Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 124.

While the level of inter vivos transfers indicates the vitality of the land market, entry fines provide a valuable indicator of the general health of the economy. Because the level of rents on customary lands was fixed by custom, when demand was reduced lords might lower fines to encourage tenancies. In times of expansion, on the other hand, with high demand and relatively low availability of land, fines might be increased to recover some of the difference between those rents and real values. Real values in Walden's urban area are suggested by the examples of a messuage in High St, let for £1 6s 8d in 1473, and 1.75 acres at the edge of the urban area, sold for £1 6s 8d in 1456; a rare relevant entry fine shows only 6d levied in December 1479 for a house and garden in the outer manor site which was sold for £3 13s 4d.[191]

Fig. 3.3. Fines per acre, Chepyng Walden manor court, sample phases



Source: ECRO D/DBy m5-m.10. Note: the use of sample phases may not reflect precise turning points.

A comparison of Figs. 3.1 and 3.3 reveals a predictable characteristic: a greater availability of land correlates with lower fines. The fluctuations are marked: from a high point of around 10d/acre in the early fifties, the level declined very sharply to the mid-seventies and then apparently stabilised at around 4d. This stabilisation, despite a great increase in total parcels transferred, suggests that a boost in demand prevented the level of fines from continuing to fall.

191 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1473; m.7 Jan. 1456; m.8 Dec. 1479.

Most of the transfers unspecified as to type of land will be of arable, outside the town limits. In 1438-41 and 1450-3 the fine was 12d or more per acre for all of these. However, in 1461-4, it was only 6d in over 50 per cent of instances; fewer than 30 per cent attracted 12d. In 1473-6, four of five one-acre parcels had a fine of only 4d, one 6d, though the average for nine half-acre pieces was little less, at 3.5d. Already in 1450-3 some half acres had attracted two thirds of the one acre rate. A relatively high rate might increasingly be levied on small parcels, possibly in parallel with increasing and intensive saffron cultivation. These contrast with a 20 acre parcel at 1.5d per acre in 1481. In the later eighties the fines level of the early seventies was at least maintained: fines remained at 4d for eighteen of twenty-four one acre pieces, with four at 6d.

Some very small pieces, measured in perches, are stated to be in urban locations and others may be so. These have not been included in Figs. 3.1 and 3.3. Their fines per acre were extremely high compared with the figures quoted previously: in 1439-41 for 0.15 acres, with a house, on Castle Hill the rate was 39.6d; in 1450-3 for a 0.75 acre garden, location unknown, potentially for saffron, 108d; a piece of ditch, by the castle, perhaps for a dyehouse, 26.8d.[192] In 1461-4 for a prime 14ft x 18ft (0.0025 acre) market site, in Poultry, a rate of £20 per acre was levied; in 1485-9 for 40 ft x 20ft (0.024 acres) in the open market area the rate was £1 and for 0.07 acres in the manor's outer site 57d.[193] It is difficult to discern trends among these very diverse parcels; with location and function, rates varied greatly, though small market plots were clearly still desirable, even in the 1460s, following evidence of greatly increased arrears of demesne rents in the early 1450s. Meadow land was, of course, valuable throughout: a 0.5 acre piece attracted 48d in 1439.

At Blunham, a rural manor in Bedfordshire, at least in the sixteenth century, entry fines for customary land were equal to a year's rent on a standard tenement. Evidence for Walden parcels, presumably rural, suggests some parallel to this by the end of the period: 4.5 acres was

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192 A perch is taken as being 16 ft. 6 ins.; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jan. 1440; m.6 Dec. 1451; Mar. 1452; Fig. 2.3 shows locations in the town.

193 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1462; m.10 Sep. 1485; Dec 1486.

rented for 1s 6d per annum in 1479, attracting a fine also of 1s 6d. Earlier, however, the rates of fine were higher: in 1464 a rood rented for 1d per year attracted a 2d fine and in 1441 for a pightle of 0.5 acres rented for 6d the fine was12d.[194]

Parcel size

Average parcel size might decrease, as it must have done in the phase up to 1450-3, but the significance of changes is unclear. In February 1484, of thirty parcels surrendered, twenty-five were under 4 acres, eighteen of them under 2 acres. Overall, the typical East Anglian pattern of tiny parcels, often of under 1 acre, even of only 1.5 roods, was characteristic; it might or might not reflect contemporary economic activity; it might result from much earlier fragmentation. Only seven virgate or half-virgate parcels were surrendered of around four hundred parcels in the five sample phases. Within the urban area, small parcels might reflect both the relative intensity of demand and the size appropriate both to craftsmen such as John Bate, tailor, with a cotagium in Hill St, and to dyehouses, for example in 1451 a piece 330 x 14 ft.[195] The many recorded gardens might, as usual in towns in the period, be used for food production but were also suited to saffron cultivation. The twelfth century burgage plots on Castle Hill measured approximately 30 ft. x 200 ft (0.14 acre), but by the fifteenth century, at latest, some had probably been split, sub-let and built over, while some substantial customary plots outside the town had, clearly, subdivided: in 1474 an enclosed croft containing 11 acres was part of a tenement and half-virgate called 'Nokes'.[196] In fact, extreme disintegration is sometimes evident: in 1440, 0.5 acres, 'part of the half-virgate 'Manning's'; in 1462, 3 roods, part of the tenement and 10 acres, 'Smythes'. The rather usual 6 acre plots perhaps represent a standard break-up of the original 36 acre virgate.[197] At Blunham, which can be quoted as a

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194 A. Jones, 'Bedfordshire: fifteenth century', in P. D. A. Harvey (ed.),*The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 179-252; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1479; Jul. 1464; m.5 Sep. 1441.

195 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Apr. 1448; Jul. 1451.

196 Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 Essex sheet lx. I, nos. 9.1; 9.5 (1877); ECRO D/DBy m.8 Mar. 1474.

197 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440; m.8 Spring 1462; Jun. 1478.

parallel, parcels of a messuage and 6 acres were apparently intact remains of half-virgates, while Cromarty suggests that Walden parcels of unfree wareland with 10, 6 or 4 acres might still in 1400 be fiscal units. [198]

An increasingly active land market, suggested by the volume of inter vivos transfers, would encourage the break-up of standard holdings, already well-advanced, at the same time that increasing commercialisation and specialisation fostered the building up of large holdings and the development of a superior property-holding class. Already by 1440 numerous disparate properties might be held: in 1438 John Constable had five, varying from ten acres to a piece of the town ditch. Larger holdings often contained both urban and rural parcels, also of mixed sizes and potential function: John Hereberd in 1451 had a messuage with 10 acres, 2 tofts totalling 17 acres, a house and barn, 6 acres, a tenement in Castle Street and a further 3 roods.[199] Accumulation, of both customary and free properties, increased in intensity through the period and while some might be managed 'in hand', by 1524 sub-letting was commonplace: residents from both Walden and elsewhere were substantial rentiers: William Barker, fishmonger, had twenty-one properties, John Rutland forty-two. Many held multiple urban tenements, whose peopling is unrecorded. Noteworthy is John Gardyner of London, with 'The Crown', presumably an inn, with dovecote, garden and 4.5 acres attached, plus twenty-four other properties of Walden manor, including 1 acre of crocuses, a cottage and arable ranging from 4 acres to 1 rood. Robert Dauncy's parcels included the messuage in High St that he 'lives in'.[200] As an investment, this active rentier sector presumably implies an expectation of at least minimal demand.

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198 Cromarty, *Fields*, p.12.

199 ECRO D/DBy m.9 Feb. 1484; m.5 Sep. 1438; m.6 Apr. 1451.

200 ECRO D/DBy m.32 fols 7b, 8a.

Tab. 3.1. Accumulation of parcels

DATE	NAME	PROPERTY	LOCATION
1453	William Hendeman	14 separate parcels, including cottages and houses, ranging from 0.25 acre to a toft with 14 acres. (None known to be urban)	L Walden
1474	Roger Pyrk	piece 216 ft x 66 ft	outer manor
		piece 66 ft x 33 ft 'The Barnyard'	outer manor
		waste 13 ft x 1.5 ft	market
		grove 1.5a	
		pasture >1 acre	
		pightle of pasture 1 acre	
		meadow 1 rood	
		7.5 acres 4 roods	in 6 parcels
1482	William Colwell	tenement with 3 houses + 0.5 virgate	
		toft + 0.5 virgate	
		toft + 0.5 virgate	
		10 other tenements	

Note: > = 'more than'. Source: ECRO D/DBy m.7 May 1453; m.8 Sep. 1474; Dec. 1482.

Customary tenure

Customary tenure was characterised throughout by non-contractual and heritable tenancies, in villeinage, with few references to copyhold, which at Leighton Buzzard late in the century was overwhelmingly characteristic.[201] Sometimes, customary land passed to multiple tenancy: Alice Constable in 1477 surrendered a croft to eight men and in 1478 John Colwell, glazier, a piece of arable to twelve men, in each case high status individuals. That large numbers of the relatively poor are absent from landholding records is predictable; their landholding was limited. Many named in Walden's leet courts for assault or regrating, for example, are never cited as holding property.[202]

Although by late in the century, customary land was 'casting off servility', at Walden some labour services were still being demanded: as late as 1474 Richard Shymmyng, a major

201 Jones, 'Bedfordshire', p. 233.

202 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Mar. 1477; Dec. 1478.

tenant with 1.5 virgates, was presented for failing for two years to meet his obligation to plough six acres of demesne for his tenement 'Makeles' and to mow nine acres of wheat and oats. He should also have helped lift hay in the lord's meadows with the other customary tenants. In the same court Thomas Robat was presented for failing to plough two acres one rood at three seasons for his tenement.[203] It seems surprising that such servile dues could be retained, given the contemporary low level of demand for land as indicated by the level of entry fines..

Those with trades or crafts in the commercialised areas of north central Essex frequently held land as an additional resource. Such tenants holding Walden customary land practised the more profitable occupations: a saddler, a malter, a hosier and a fishmonger around 1440, but in the 1480s five mercers, two tanners, a draper, a wheelwright and a butcher/grazier.[204] Their involvement was perhaps increasing. For those not in trade, or who needed to make an endowment, holding a property to let was advantageous and relatively secure, though less profitable than trade.[205]

By 1524, some individuals held considerable customary, as well as free, property. It was a versatile resource: relatively lowly tenants could raise cash or create rents by disposing of even a part, bolstered by poorer wage-earners' potential dependence on a sub-let for a dwelling: one example may be Alice Reynold, tenant of draper John Spilman, presented for breaking into a shop.[206] That at Birdbrook around 1400 a significant proportion of lessees of customary land had first entered the manor as servants is surely especially relevant to towns. Their tenure may have been temporary: even in rural Birdbrook during the fifteenth century some new lessees had means too limited to sustain the holding and a rapid turnover ensued.[207]

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203 ECRO D/DBy m.8 14 Jul. 1474.

204 From all courts m.5 Sep. 1438-Sep. 1441 and m.10 Sep. 1485-Dec. 1489.

205 Keene, 'Landlords', pp. 103-5.

206 R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986), p.149; ECRO D/DBy m.10 Jul. 1489.

207 P. R. Schofield, '*Extranei* and the market for customary land on a Westminster Abbey manor in the fifteenth century', *Agricultural History Review*, 49 (2001), pp. 1-16.

Cottages might well be sub-let by poorer artisans. Despite competition from the lord's leasing of the demesne, including in small parcels, sub-letting is confirmed by occasionally recorded licences to farm.

Tab. 3.2. Examples of grants of licence to farm customary land

PARCEL	DATE	LICENCE PAYMENT	TERM
0.25 acre	Jul. 1464	2d	18 years
0.75 acre	Sep. 1474	4d	20 years
5 acres, scattered	Dec 1474	1s	20 years
0.31 acre	Sep 1476	2d	7 years
0.75 acre	Sep. 1479	2d	
tenement +10a tenement+ 6a	Nov. 1484	8d	12 years

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.8 and m.10.

Tab. 3.3. Renting out customary land

DATE	PROPERTY	TERM, years	RENT per year
URBAN			
Mar. 1457	tenement in Walden	3	£1 0s 0d
Jun. 1471	market plot with 2 shops		2d
Dec. 1473	messuage in High St		£1 6s 8d
1485	messuage held by parish, Cuckingstool End		14s 0d
RURAL/ UNSPECIFIED			
Sep. 1441	0.5 acre pightle		6d
Jul. 1464	0.25 acre, rural	18	1d
Sep. 1464	Tenement and 18 acres		16s 0d
Dec. 1471	18 acres		6s 4d
Jul. 1474	1.25 acres	10	13s 4d
Sep. 1479	1 acre	12	3s 0d
Dec. 1479	1 acre		4d
Dec. 1479	4.5 acres		1s 6d
Mar 1482	1 acre		4d
Sep. 1482	croft + 3 acres	10	3s 4d

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.5-m.9; D/DBy Q18 f.140r.

The level of real rents is an acknowledged sensitive indicator of economic change. In Warwick in 1482 cottages were let for 4-5s, messuages in Castle St for 8s and in High St for £1 6s 8d, while in 1486 Coventry cottages brought in 4-12s and the tenements of great merchants over £4.[208] Considering Walden's small relative size, the examples in Tab. 3.3 suggest that its urban rent levels were quite high, though the very cheap rate for the market plot seems anomalous. While in Newcastle rents fell between 1450 and 1500, the admittedly non-urban data from Walden indicate that the predominant rate for small rural parcels remained at about 4d per acre from 1464 to 1487/1488, comparable to the 4d per acre of arable recorded at Willington, Bedfordshire, in 1498.[209]

For institutions, urban rent might be significant. Land and buildings were an effective means of securing revenue for charitable purposes and the almshouse, whose acquisitions included an enclosed croft and six acres surrendered to 'the confreres', must have competed with individual rentiers, many on a small scale. Walden Abbey manor's survey of 1400 shows only fourteen properties securely identifiable as in the town; four were messuages in Castle Street and five shops in the market but the abbot also rented market stalls and held a 'Poultryhouse'.[210] He is notable for arrears, however: in the 1440s and 1450s, first 2s 6d per year for market stall rents, then 15s 7d per year owing 'for many years' for cottages in Castle St.[211] Very few other pleas concern rent arrears.

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208 R. Hilton, 'Problems of urban real property', in idem, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History* (1985; London, 1990) p. 171; C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 132.

209 A. F. Butcher, 'Rent, population and economic change in late-medieval Newcastle', *Northern History*, 14 (1978), pp. 69-70; Jones, 'Bedfordshire', p. 201.

210 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1440; Survey of lands of Walden Abbey 1400 CUL Add. MS 7090; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1462.

211 e.g. ECRO D/DBy m.5 Mar. 1441; m.7 Sep. 1456.

Tab. 3.4. Examples of rent arrears

DATE	PLAINTIFF	PROPERTY		SUB-TENANT	RENT per annum	ARREARS
1457	Joan Aldebury	tenement	High St	William Hawkyn	£1	£1 15s
1460	John Semer	0.5 acre meadow		Thomas Malyn	3s 4d	3s 4d
1473	Joan Aldebury	messuage	High St	John Gyn	£1 6s 8d	£1

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.7 Mar. 1457; m.8 Sep. 1460; Dec. 1473; a William Hawkyn is a weaver.

The churchwardens, too, rented and leased: in the 1460s rents formed between 4.9 per cent and 12.7 per cent of their total income from rents and collections. In 1486 they paid 4d rent for two shops and 4d for a tenement in Cuckingstool End. Their small portfolio of properties included a few rural closes bringing 2s per year each, a house 1s 2d, a butcher's shop 4s.[212]

Surrenders and bequests occasionally reveal details of subtenants and very seldom of rents: in 1464 Nicholas Okeman demised to Thomas Colle a customary toft, croft and 6 acres, with 2s 8d per year, total, from seven sub-tenants, people named elsewhere in the courts. William Turtell's bequests to his son in 1488 included messuages occupied by a grandfather in Sewardsend and by William Janyn and John Boyton in Walden.[213] Geoffrey Symonds in 1481 bequeathed the house 'that Walter Glasyer lives in'; William Clerk lived in a tenement of John Pollard's. Saffron grounds, too, were leased: Edward Barker had an Abbey Lane tenement occupied by a sister-in-law and 'myn acre of land sette with safferon heddis that John Taylor the elder hath'.[214]

Illicit sub-letting was commonplace, as Kerridge also found: almost all Walden courts contain presentments for occupation without licence. Those accused were, overwhelmingly, named in the courts in 'regular' contexts such as holding other property, in debt or trespass cases or even as officials, who may, in fact, have been flouting manorial custom.[215] Though the

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212 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 137v; 135r; 135v.

213 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Spring 1464; D/B 2 MIS 2/6.

214 ECRO D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1, D/B 2 MIS 2/8, T/A 358/13.

215 E. Kerridge, *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After* (London, 1969), p. 50.

examples in Tab. 3.5 appear mainly rural closes, they demonstrably concerned urban residents and none is the name of a less 'established' person, emphasising the latter's commonplace lack of formal involvement, at least, in customary land. The fines for taking up a lease through the courts were presumably too high for many, unsurprisingly from the distribution of assessed wealth in 1524. (Fig.3.4) Presumably sub-sub-tenancy is implied. Hilton affirms that this undoubtedly occurred; it surely included multiple occupation of both tenements and houses.[216]

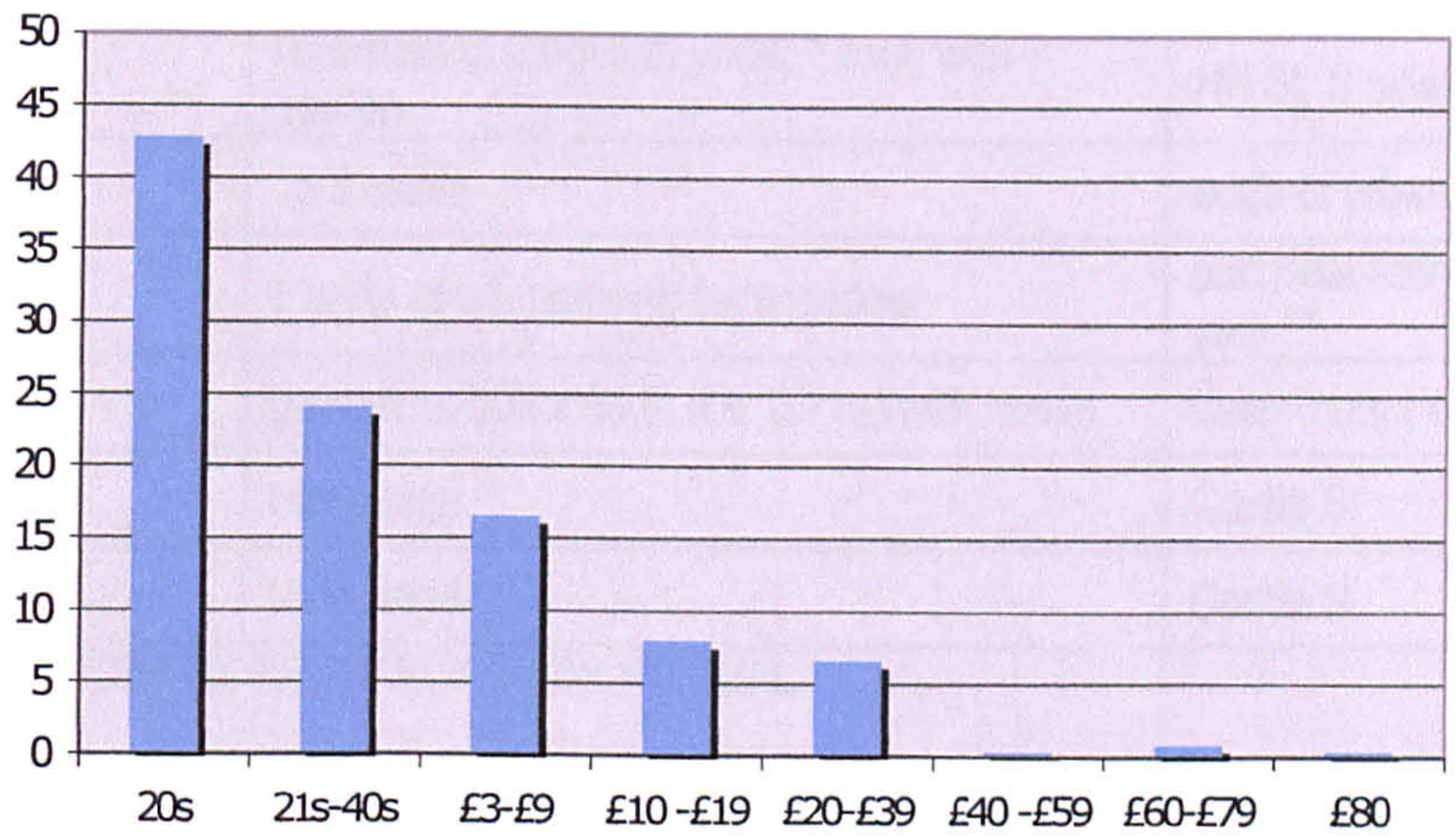
Tab. 3.5. Occupying without licence, Court of Palm Sunday 1464

OCCUPIER	PARCEL	PARCEL NAME	DEMISER
Wolston Rob	1 rood	at Sherehill, part of Mannynges	Malin T
Wakefeld Walt	0.5a	in Combridgefield	Godfrey J
Wakefeld T	toft + 10a	'Aldewykes'	Newton J
Lakedyn J	toft + 6a	'Potelles'	Wolston T
	toft + 6a	'Melles'	
Ailleghe W	toft + 6a	'Sabbes'	Marreve W
	toft + 3a		Ereswell R
	toft + 1a	'Erlondes'	Sweyn R
Picard J	tenement + 10a	'Cleyes'	Godfrey T
	tenement + 3 houses +10a	'Sadlers'	
	2a		
	1a, part of Sopers		
Stokiner Rich	tenement + 2 houses + croft with 2a		Godfrey S
Henham J	3a	In Usterdane	Cowper J

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.8 Spring 1464.

216 Hilton, 'Problems', p. 168.

Fig. 3.4. Lay subsidy assessment, 1524: distribution of individual assessed wealth; percentages by wealth categories



Note: 224 assessed; a further 10 entries are illegible. Source: TNA, PRO E 179/108/155; it is impossible to know the number omitted because having less than 20s from either wages or land or 40s from goods.

Sales of property allowed servile tenants, as well as freeholders, to raise capital. Despite a continuing need to register surrenders, eventually intervention by the lord became a formality and the market the major influence on decisions. Walden courts increasingly record sales of customary land comparable to those which Dyer found in Norfolk.[217]

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217 C. Dyer., 'The peasant land market in medieval England', in L. Feller and C. Wickham (eds), *Le marche de la Terre au Moyen Age*, Collection de l' Ecole Francaise de Rome, 350 (2005), p. 8; C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition?: Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005) pp. 181-2.

Tab. 3.6. Land sales recorded in Walden manor courts, 1438-88

TOWN	PROPERTY	LOCATION	PRICE
1439	Tenement	'in Walden'	£20
1448	tenement of 2 houses under 1 roof, with garden	Hill St, S side	£4
1456	1a 3 roods	edge of urban area	£1 6s 8d
1462	2 parts of a tenement; 1a; meadow	part near manor gate **	£7 13s 4d
1479	garden, c. 50ft x 60 ft. (i.e. 0.71a) with house	outer manor site	£3 13s 4d
1482	Messuage	Castle St	£8 6s 8d
1482	Messuage	Castle St	£16
UNSPECIFIED, PROBABLY MAINLY RURAL			
1453	1.5a enclosed croft 'Werkhousecroft'	L Walden	£1
1454	cotagium with house + garden	*	£2 3s 4d
1462	tenement + 3a		£1 1s 8d
1464	toft + 14a, part virgate, scattered		£2 13s 4d
1464	toft + 6a, toft + 3a, toft + 1a		£5 6s 8d
1473	66 x 42 ft	*	13s 4d
1474	tenement with 2 houses + 3a 1 rood		£1
1475	toft + croft with 7a		£4 13s 4d
1479	tenement with 3 houses + 6a		£2 11s 6d
1479	2 x 0.5a		10s
1480	9a		£2 10s
1481	1a	*	£2 13s 4d
1482	cotagium with 2 houses		£1 3s 2d
1483	tenement + 1a, 1/2a		13s 4d
1484	1a		£1
1486	tent with ho + barn + 6a; 2a in Northfield		£4 3s 4d
1487	croft 1a, 2 x 0.5a, tenement + 3 houses, 6a	croft in L Walden **	£5
1488	1a		13s 4d
1488	3a		11s

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.5-m.10. Notes: * from prices, probably urban; some estimate of relative values in space as well as time would be valuable; the number of available examples is insufficient to show more than that town values are considerably higher; ** 'mortgaged', potential sale; for plan of town see Fig. 2.3; all available information as to location is included.

Sales that are presumably rural include one acre for 13s 4d, another for £1, 9 acres for £2 10s, a tenement and 3 acres £1 1s 8d, a toft and croft with 7 acres £4 13s 4d and, certainly, the 1.5 acres, perhaps significantly named, 'Werkhousecroft' in Little Walden, £1.

For most of those who sold customary land and who would normally have been paying to the manorial lord a modest rent in place of customary services, selling provided an opportunity to realise a sometimes large capital sum. The burdens of customary holding were diminishing, in general, reducing the differential from free land, where, even in mid-century, sales potentially achieved fifteen or twenty times the rental value. Many held outside the urban area: as well as holding a main house and bakehouse in the town, John Betys was tenant of numerous parcels outside it. The central area values contrast with those outside, emphasising Walden's clearly urban character and may even hint at the relatively wide connections of the town, which would follow from any contemporary rise in the urban rankings. As in Norfolk, entry fines at Walden are tiny compared with the values realised on sale: urban examples include 1s 8d fine for a tenement of two houses with garden in Hill St, sold for £4, and a messuage in Castle St sold for £16, for which the entry fine was only 2s.[218] Also as in Norfolk, prices varied greatly between holdings, though Walden's non-urban parcels generally reached nowhere near the values that Dyer found at Blickling: even the 1 acre 3 roods at the town margin realised in 1456 only 15s 3d per acre, compared with Blickling values of 25-36s in the mid-fifteenth century.[219] This points the contrast with an area that was rich and highly commercialized, despite Walden's evidence both of expanding saffron production and involvement of Londoners in the land market.[220] Dyer quotes relatively high prices of between 20s and 52s 6d per acre in Suffolk in 1454 and 1486. Mate found 12s 6d and 13s 4d in rural fifteenth-century East Sussex,

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218 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Apr. 1448; m.8 Mar. 1482.

219 Dyer, *Transition?*, pp. 182-4.

220 See Appendix B. Walden's saffron production is discussed later in the current chapter.

even for large parcels. Though Walden's levels seem not to be high, neither do they imply a depressed economy.[221]

Some apparent mortgaging occurred: the toft and croft with seven acres surrendered by Richard Shymmyng to the use of Agnes Synderford, to whom he would pay a rent of 2s 4d, though if he paid £4 13s 4d within a year Agnes would surrender all rights in the property; if John Everard paid 20s he could re-enter one acre surrendered to Thomas Cleydon.[222]

Again as in Norfolk, payment in phases might be possible: Thomas Cranefeld was to pay 13s 4d per year for his 32 acres, including three houses, until £2 13s 4d had been paid.[223]

Tab. 3.7. Sales of customary land: phased payment

DATE	PROPERTY	LOCATION	TO PAY	RATE per annum
TOWN				
Apr. 1448	tenement 2 houses, garden	Hill ST, S side	£4	13s 4d
	messuage	Castle St	£8 6s 8d	£1 8s 4d
Mar. 1482	messuage	Castle St	£16	£2
UNSTATED				
Sep. 1440	tenement 3 houses, 6a		£2 11s 8d	17s 3d
Jul. 1464	toft + 14a, scattered		£2 13s 4d	£1 6s 8d
Sep. 1464	toft + 6a, toft + 3a, toft + 1a		£5 6s 8d	13s 4d
Sep. 1479	tenement 3 houses, 6a		£2 11s 8d	17s 3d
Jul. 1480	9a		£2 10s	10s
Dec. 1481	1a		£3 13s 4d	13s 4d

Source: ECRO D/DBy m 5-m.8.

Farm of demesne land

The area within the defensive enclosures around the ruined castle on Bury Hill was central to the lord's administration of Chepyng Walden manor. While the hall in the inner bailey was apparently kept in hand and in repair and may have accommodated visitors, in 1438/9 and

221 Dyer, *Transition?*, p. 182; M. Mate, 'The East Sussex land market and agrarian class structure in the later Middle Ages', *Past and Present*, 139 (1993), pp. 51-2.

222 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1475; m.9 Sep. 1484.

223 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1482.

1439/40 'all pasture' there, as well as the entire outer bailey site, including a range of buildings, and all demesne meadows and pastures was leased, to more than one lessee. Additionally, small pieces, some less than an acre, were leased separately. While the 'farm of demesne lands' was worth £18 per annum in both 1438/9 and 1439/40, over the year arrears increased from £19 0s 6d to £28 10s 9d. In 1454/5, however, they reached £133 17s 7d. Since the level of fines was then only beginning to fall rapidly this apparently anticipates the onset of unfavourable economic conditions and may indicate relative difficulty in attracting tenants for the demesne. Farmers, who dealt with relatively large areas and employed labour, were perhaps affected by adverse conditions first.[224] Certainly, demesne conditions were not buoyant: also by 1454/5, the main farm had decreased to £17 per annum, the farm of the horse mill by 7.5 per cent and the windmill brought only £2 11s 8d, not the £4 16s 8d of 1438/9. In another hint of declining demand, an urban parcel was surrendered in 1460 specifically because the rent of 8d was too high. It was re-let at 4d. Unwanted tenements lying in the lord's hands would affect the values and availability of land in general.[225]

In the mid-late fifteenth century, demesnes were generally leased for 20, 30 or 40 years. The longer terms were few at Walden and applied to large parcels, such as one of 33.5 acres in 1447 and 1477, and occasionally to small pieces, for instance 1.25 acres in 1472, while more usual terms were 20 or 24 years.[226] Lords generally committed to a shorter span when they might wish to retain flexibility or thought prospects might improve. In Walden, at least, specialised use and varying demand might affect the term: 12 acres of meadow for 12 years in 1454, though for 24 in 1464, when the land market was more active; 0.11 acre for a dyehouse in 'the greenery' on Bury Hill for 9 years in 1451; the warren for 7 years in 1464.[227]

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224 D. Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden 1381-1420: a study from the court rolls', *Essex Journal*, 2 (1967), p.168; TNA, PRO DL 29 42/825; 43/826; 43/829.

225 ECRO D/DBy m.7 May 1460.

226 C. Dyer, *Transition?*, pp. 201-2; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Spring 1447, m.8 Mar. 1477, Sep. 1472.

227 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jun. 1454, m.8 Spring 1464, m.7 Sep. 1451, m.8 Dec. 1464.

Demesne rents were often stable during the second half of the century and for arable Walden's were usually 24d or 22d per acre, much higher than the 6d to 8d around 1450 noted by Poos for rural demesnes. However, larger parcels fetched proportionately much less than this, while parcels both tiny and 'specialised', such as the dyehouse's 0.11 acre at a rate of 327d, or 0.02 acres, also in 'the greenery' at 200d, many times more.[228] For meadow, rates were 53d in 1454, 78d and 100d in 1464, 64d in 1485; for pasture, known for 1484 only, 60d.[229]

Free holdings

Leasing, potentially considerable in an area under some urban influence, applied to free holdings, too, being 'arguably the only practicable way' of running scattered freehold properties.[230] The breaking up of former burgage tenements would contribute to the stock, as would grants by deed of properties eventually belonging to the almshouse, which provide the bulk of the evidence for this type of transfer; most involved groups, often of four or six, presumably feoffees. By this period villeins, as well as freemen, were acquiring free land by charter and were occasionally required to prove title: William Waryn was to show evidence relating to seven parcels, each of 2 acres or less; Richard Savage in 1470 was to prove whether he held freely or 'by roll'.[231]

Outsider landholders were very important in the Lea valley between 1480 and 1520. At Cheshunt, Londoners neither resident nor themselves farming the land kept holdings intact and passed them on by sale, often to another Londoner.[232] At Birdbrook two significant sources of external capital were the local rural cloth industry and local gentry. In the commercialising and relatively urban environment of Walden the involvement of traders from higher order centres

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228 B. Harvey, 'The leasing of the abbot of Westminster's demesne in the later Middle Ages' *Ec.HR*, 22 (1969), pp. 17-27; L. R. Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 50; ECRO D/DBy m.7 Mar. 1452.

229 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Mar. 1454; m.8 Spring 1464; m.10 Sep. 1485; m.9 Feb. 1484.

230 Keene, 'Landlords', pp. 104-5; Harvey, *Peasant Land Market*, pp. 1-28.

231 ECRO D/DBy m. 7 Mar. 1453, m. 8 Jul. 1470.

232 P. Glennie, 'In search of agrarian capitalism: manorial land markets and the acquisition of land in the Lea valley c.1450-c.1560', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), pp. 23-24.

might be expected and, indeed, there is evidence of outsiders, including a few Londoners, having interests in free tenements before 1440, especially in two main areas: the market and, interestingly, Hoggs Green and Freshwellhundred, previously Fullers Lane, adjoining the main springs.[233] (Fig. 2.3) A lack of rentals makes it difficult to say when this pattern evolved. No Londoners dealt in customary land in the courts of the five sample phases; indeed, the very few outsiders doing so came from nearby settlements, except for Ware and Hatfield Broadoak in the mid-1480s. Outsiders named in deeds were almost all feoffees, for example Londoners Thomas Scherewynd, mercer, and John Roke.[234] The rental of 1524 shows some substantial investment by some, such as John Serle of Cambridge, with nine properties, and, particularly, John Gardyner of London, as previously noted.[235] Others, from, for example, Horseheath, Linton, Bardfield and Thaxted also held in Freshwellhundred, Hoggs Green and the market. Often of high status, outsiders held rural land, too: in 1440 John Sturmyn of Elstow, Bedfordshire, two acres previously held with a pelterer of Cambridge; in 1487/8 five London citizens, namely a mercer, two goldsmiths, a hurer and a scrivener, 1.5 acres in Holywellfield.[236] In the late fifteenth century at Birdbrook, only 18 km from Walden and surely part of a similar phenomenon, 'outside' capital funded accumulation.Those buying customary land were often from outside the manor and, increasingly, a significant proportion was non-resident. Jones found London grocers, mercers and drapers prominent in buying property in Bedfordshire in the fifteenth century, too.[237]

Both free and customary tenants were increasingly taking lands adjacent to their existing parcels, as has been noted elsewhere.[238] In a single court in 1471 this occurred in five of fourteen surrenders; in 1475 instances include Thomas Westley's 0.5 acres, enclosed, near

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233 e.g. ECRO D/B 2/2/2; 2/1/32.

234 Schofield, 'Extranei', pp. 3-7; ECRO D/B 2/2/18; D/B 2/1/224.

235 ECRO D/DBy m. 32.

236 E.C.R.O. D/B 2/1/107; 2/2/148.

237 Schofield, 'Extranei', pp. 1-16; Jones, 'Bedfordshire'.

238 Mate, 'Sussex land market', pp. 56-7.

the Waterslade and Thomas and Alice Cleydon's 1.5 acres from Alice Avenannt.[239] Since they are unlikely all to represent engrossment, such apparent attempts to build up a holding on a single spot might involve disposing of property elsewhere and certainly included swapping, as in Sussex: in 1484 Richard Venour and Walter Cokerell each received an acre of land adjacent to their existing, demised by the other.[240] Occasionally, consolidation and accumulation, together, hint at the developing strength of a particular family: in 1460 John Byrd received 2 acres of customary land adjoining his existing property. In a single court in 1484 he, or a namesake, took six pieces, five of 2 acres or less, from five different people. By 1524 William Byrd, mercer, had, at £80, by far the highest wealth assessment.[241]

It is difficult to assess Walden landholding in relation to the general mid-century downturn. Land market activity was increasing through the period, in the 1450s, and particularly steeply from about 1470.[242] The number of debt pleas increased substantially from the mid-1450s, the period of high numbers including the years of the mid-century depression.

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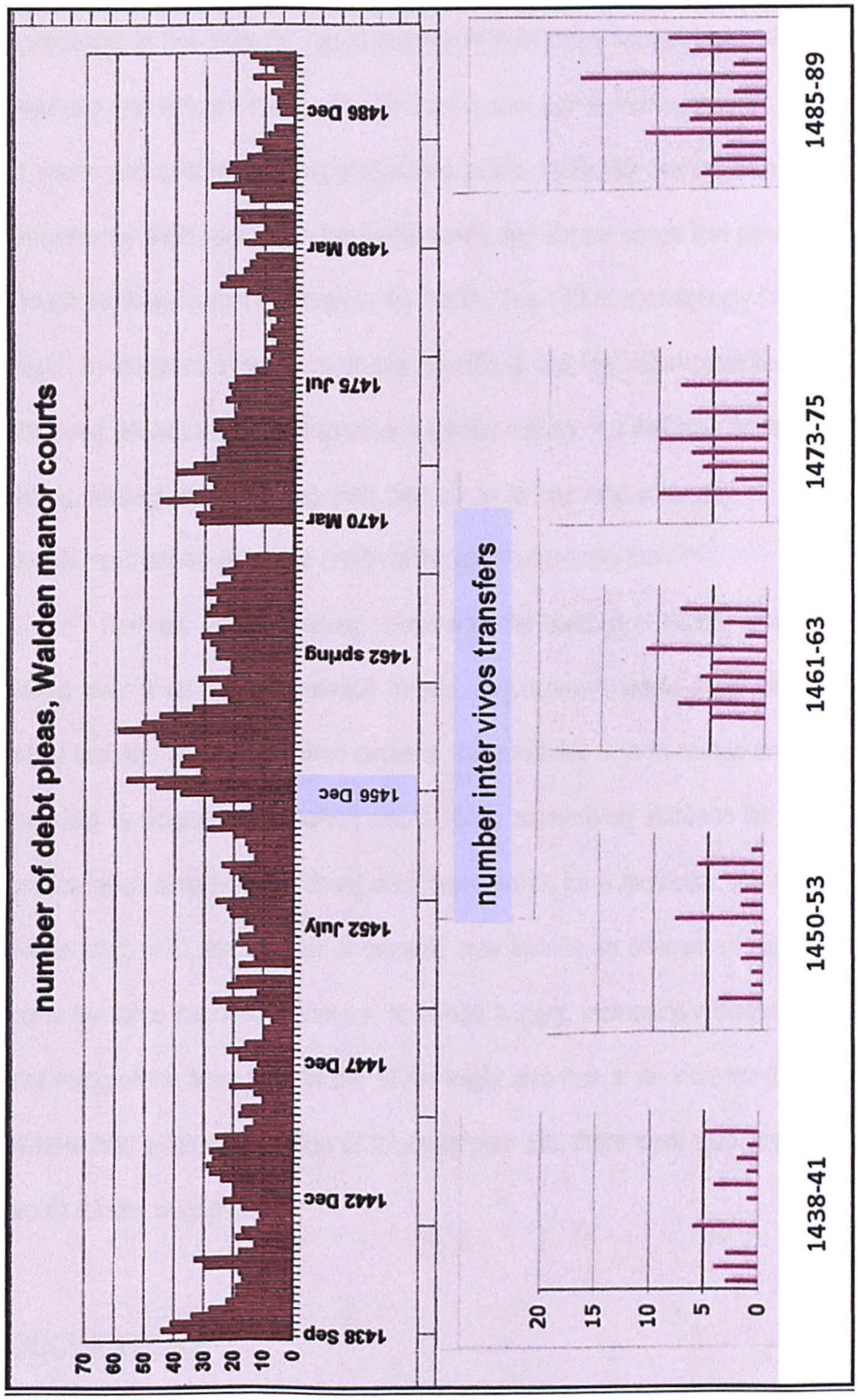
239 ECRO D/DBy m. 8 Dec. 1471; Dec. 1475; Jul. 1475.

240 ECRO D/DBy m.9 Sep. 1484.

241 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Mar. 1460; m.9 Feb. 1484.

242 See Fig. 3.5.

Fig. 3.5. Number of debt pleas and inter vivos transfers



Throughout most of the period fines were falling sharply, clearly reflecting an over-supply of land in relation to demand and suggesting that the economy cannot have been

booming. Although increased indebtedness has been seen as marking growing economic confidence, in this case the raised number of debt pleas from the late 1450s was quite short-lived and may reflect a credit crisis.[243] Such a downturn is also suggested, despite some pieces of waste and new rents being undertaken in the 1450s, by the increased arrears to Walden demesne by 1455, parcels in the lord's hands and vacant shops and plots around the market, though the latter remained, even in the 1480s. The 1480s' contrastingly low level of debt pleas might, by contrast, indicate improving conditions and, as noted previously, the level of fines stabilised. However, the increased land market activity, if it indicates adversity, with the poorer selling, leasing or mortgaging their land so as to buy food or to pay off debts, suggests that doubts must remain about the health of the town's economy then.[244]

Perhaps, with increasing polarisation, the balance of factors prompting land transfers varied over time: for the upwardly mobile, engrossment would imply acquiring plots; others might take the opportunity when demand was relatively high to realise on dispensable pieces, including by fragmentation, which would, itself, cumulatively increase the stock available. The consolidation already noted could also, presumably, be a motivator. If the economy remained fragile after 1470, the transfer of property may include an element of more desperate selling, some by those becoming landless, to a land hungry, increasingly distinct elite. However, the stabilising of the fines level in the 1470s might also hint at an increasing population; by 1524 Walden had a large proportion of relatively poor and there were also sizeable holdings which would require waged labour.

OCCUPATIONS

What light does Walden's occupational structure shed on the functions, economic vitality and contacts of the town?

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243 Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 208.

244 J. Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk, 1440-1580* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 176-7.

Broadly, the greater the population size, the greater the variety of occupations: Hedon, with over 1,000 people, had twenty-eight, Gloucester, with over 5,000, over fifty.[245] However, intense specialisation, such as at Thaxted, is likely to limit this range. In Walden, which perhaps had about 1500 people in the mid-fifteenth century, thirty-four distinct occupations were identifiable between 1438 and 1441 but over most of the study period there was an average of about twenty-three. Inconsistency in the survival and detail of records and lack of occupational identifiers means that the true total is surely higher. The rural area produced a wide range of crops, livestock, raw materials and manufactures and Walden was able to exploit contrasting pays.[246] Many of its occupations typify small towns of the period: tailors, bakers, carpenters, tanners, for instance. This section concentrates on either less routine or particularly well-represented ones.

Glaziers

Both labourers and specialist craftsmen worked on the church building The town's overall occupational structure was, naturally, affected by whether or not workers were resident permanently. Masons are recorded sporadically: eight in all sources 1438-41 and none in the other sample phases, though two in 1469-70, when the new south porch was being built.[247] Glaziers, however, are present in all sample periods before the 1480s. During the 1440s four, in 1450-3 four, plus three in 1457 are named in the court records. The churchwardens around 1440 give details of their work and later major building projects also cite them. Already in 1424 two were certainly 'of Walden': John Betys and Geoffrey Glasyer, each sued in the Court of Common Pleas for a considerable £12. Glaziers from Dunmow and Halstead worked at Westminster Abbey in the mid-fourteenth century and by the fifteenth there was sometimes one

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245 C. Dyer, 'Market towns and the countryside in late medieval England', *Canadian Journal of History*, 31 (1996), p. 23.

246 Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 9.

247 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 79v; 81r.

in even minor towns and villages.[248] If Walden were a successful centre, its glaziers were probably in demand for other buildings in the area, such as manor houses, given the increasing domestic use of glass. Since no small town individually had enough work to occupy them permanently, their range as a specialist trade would extend well beyond the primary hinterland: one from Walden is recorded at Stortford in the 1430s and another as working on a church window at Billericay, about 60 km distant, in 1457, when the payment of £2 8s, to include the glass 'and all necessities', suggests that he was a master. In 1463-4 a Walden glazier was employed at Hinton, only 6 km from Cambridge, which at the time had a high demand for specialist craftsmen.[249]

Trades working animal skins

These trades, represented here by barkers, saddlers, cordwainers, skinners, whitawyers, glovers, hosiers and collarmakers, form a very constant and significant proportion of all trades, namely 18 per cent in all three phases 1438-41, 1450-3, and 1461-4 and 16.2 per cent in 1473-6, rising to 24 per cent in 1485-9. While whitawyers, glovers and some cordwainers would use the skins of sheep, goat, pig and some calf, cattle skins dominated as the material used by the remainder. A concentration of leather industries in the Stort/Cam valley, particularly around Stortford, has been noted.[250] In Walden leet courts an average of five butchers apparently from the town was amerced, while others, especially from Thaxted and from Newport, appear from time to time. For comparison, Chester's population, 3,500 in 1462-3, had supported nine butchers in 1410, but up to sixteen was more usual.[251] By the 1480s some at Walden had become graziers, as commonly occurred, acquiring medium-sized parcels, not only

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248 IHR CP40 1424 m.588d; R. Marks, 'Window glass', in J. Blair and N Ramsay (eds), *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London, 1991), p.277.

249 S. G. Doree (ed), *The Early Churchwardens' Accounts of Bishops Stortford, 1431-1558*, Hertfordshire Record Publications 10 (Hitchin, 1996), p. 5; ECRO D/DBy m.7 May 1457; J. S. Lee, *Cambridge and its Economic Region, 1450-1560* (Hatfield, 2005), p.191.

250 D. Keene, 'Small towns and the metropolis: the experience of medieval England' in J-M. Duvosquel and E. Thoen (eds), *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe: Studies in Honorem Adriaan Verhulst* (Ghent, 1995), p. 235; Doree, *Bishops Stortford*, p. 10.

251 J. Laughton, *Life in a Late Medieval City: Chester 1275-1520* (Oxford, 2008), p. 135.

in Walden but probably also in neighbouring vills such as Wimbish.[252] In 1479, John Danbury was amerced as butcher, chandler and fishmonger and between 1487 and 1489 a John Danbury, with a tenement in High Street, acquired at least a stake in three separate parcels, one an enclosed croft of 20 acres from another butcher; butcher/graziers might rent land in the area on which to keep stock before slaughtering. It is perhaps a sign of the times locally, however, that John Danbury, butcher, in 1509 left only 7 acres in land but also the 'profites of my saffron'.[253]

The increase in meat eating in the later Middle Ages must have encouraged expansion and diversification in leather-working, and the rise in living standards generated demand for greater variety and sophistication. While Walden's few hosiers and more common saddlers perhaps supplied local needs only, making horse collars was apparently a specialisation: three collarmakers were active within a year between 1444 and 1446; from 1473 to 1476 collarmakers formed more than 10 per cent of all named occupations; in 1479 four were involved in a single court's proceedings.[254] In 1463, John Semer sued William Pope for failing to stuff sixty horse collars in time for Easter. Since in the1440s a collar cost 4d, a pair of shoes 5d or 6d, this was hardly a luxury trade, so would surely not have had a wide market, but the use of horses in Essex and East Anglia was exceptionally common and in Walden's area distance from water transport surely emphasised carting. In fact the two occupations were sometimes combined: John Semer, collarmaker, sued William Mergret in 1480 for unpaid dues for carrying hay at Pentecost and clay and underwood from Radwinter.[255]

The rural area's butchers and leather workers possibly supplied the Thaxted knife industry with bone and horn for handles and leather for sheaths. Fullers Lane, alias Freshwellhundred, near the springs west of the centre, was later called Horn Lane. (Fig. 2.3)

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252 as did Richard Fan, butcher of Thaxted, in 1487: ECRO D/B 2/3/18.

253 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1479; m.10 Jul. 1487; Jun. 1488; Sep. 1489; D/ACR 1/161.

254 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1444-Jul.1446, m.8 Sep. 1479.

255 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Feb. 1463; J. Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation: the Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066 to 1500* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 93-8; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Nov. 1480.

Property was held there in 1438 by William Hunt, saddler, and John Smith, hosier, and by 1442 by John Beneit, barker.[256] Plentiful bark was available locally. In 1474 two collarmakers transferred a messuage at nearby Hogg's Green and in 1488 William Barker, tanner, and John Nicoll, draper, took one in Fuller 'Street'. Already by 1440 there was a Barkers Row in the market.[257]

The local tawed skin trades had links to London: in 1470 Thomas Dalson, citizen and glover, sued John Aldebury, chapman, for £2. William Walhed, glover, allegedly owed £4 13s 4d to John Pelham, mercer of London, in 1489. Still more distant connections may be implied by Robert Drover's 1485 suit for broken contract against butcher John Tailor. Walden's ability to exploit its location by the Cam-Stort droving route seems confirmed when in 1482 butcher John Danbury was pledge of Thomas Dyer of Great Staughton, impleaded by John Cator, shoemaker of Walden.[258] Great Staughton, Huntingdonshire, is close to a main droving nexus at Alconbury, where routes diverged, reaching London via Barnet or Royston. (Fig. 1.2) An alternative route passed St Ives, near which cattle were fattened on fen pastures in Defoe's time, and which drew cattle from Norfolk and from Scotland. It then led towards Walden past Cambridge, where hundreds of cattle shoes were found by the road in later centuries.[259]

Innkeeping

Victualling trades tied in closely with the market, serving a town and its hinterland. If Monteith is correct that the High Street formed part of the main London to Norwich and Cambridge thoroughfare, they would be boosted. Bakers of horse bread, a mark of innkeeping, totalled five in 1440, six in 1464 and five in 1482. By 1600 there were six inns.[260] In 1442 the

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256 H. C. Stacey, 'Around Myddylton Place', *Saffron Walden History*, 2 (1974), p. 22; ECRO D/B 2/1/195; 2/1/191.

257 ECRO D/B 2/1/200; 2/1/233; D/DBy m.5 Jan. 1440.

258 CPR 1467-77; ECRO D/DBy m.10 Dec. 1489; Sep. 1485; m.8 Mar. 1482.

259 K. J. Bonser, *The Drovers: Who They Were and How They Went: an Epic of the English Countryside* (London, 1970), pp. 130, 60.

260 D. Monteith, 'Saffron Walden: a study in the evolution of a landscape' (unpub. M.A. dissertation, University of London, 1958), p. 137.

churchwardens recorded payment at the 'house' of John Shymmyng, surely an inn: his frequent amercements for baking concerned horse bread only; 'Shymmyng's Corner' was on the High Street and was clearly a prestigious location; contracts and expenses were often settled there, sometimes with visitors such as men 'of the new screen' for an altar, and the lawyer Kneesworth was plied with wine, a superior offering, by his hosts there in 1444.[261] Innkeepers often had a second occupation, frequently in the cloth trade; John Hawkyn, weaver, was Shymmyng's servant. Overall, Shymmyng had many concerns: in 1444 he surrendered a capital messuage with three shops and Thomas George, a prominent butcher, owed him £1 6s 8d of a large sum for twelve beasts.[262] In 1457 he sued for 13s 4d, a year's rent of a Walden tenement, and at his death his holding included a messuage and virgate plus a tenement with 6 acres. His widow, Juliana, most unusually for a woman, became rent collector in 1461 for 'Harlewynes', probably the virgate parcel, whose subdivision is referred to in later courts. Her role may, though, reflect his social, as well as economic status. Shymmyng perhaps typifies middlemen innkeepers, operating between local and regional traders: that he, or perhaps his father, had been owed £23 6s 8d in 1424 by a husbandman of Luton hints at the scale and range of his dealings.[263]

Fishmongers

The more prosperous among a town's tradesmen often included fishmongers, who necessarily had connections outside the area and London fishmongers visited Walden: a John Child, citizen and fishmonger of London, was sued for trespass in 1451. Some could be relatively local: Thomas Carter, perhaps, who regularly appeared in the court records and in 1441 was amerced for regrating eels and other freshwater fish. In John Tailor's alleged debt for £4 in 1472 to a burgess of Cambridge, and of Robert Stistede's to a Cambridge draper for £5 1s

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261 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 24r; 17r; 22r; 26r.

262 McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p. 257; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1442; Jul. 1444; Sep. 1444.

263 ECRO D/DBy m.7 May 1457, Dec. 1459; m.8 Dec. 1461; IHR CP 40 dbf 1424 m.577 case 2159.

8d in 1424, the subject of the debt is unclear.[264] Also in 1472 Tailor accused William Barker, another fishmonger, of stealing thirty-eight eels, value 2s. However, their dealings illustrate some fishmongers' relatively wide contacts, both spatially and socially: in 1464 Tailor had given 8s to Barker to buy sea fish at Yarmouth, but received nothing. Barker, however, now brought a plea of debt against Tailor, which included 4s given by him to Tailor to buy fish at Newmarket, incidentally emphasising its interesting role as breaking point on a well-worn route from Yarmouth to London, near the branch towards Cambridge, where the market for fish was surely considerable. Londoners had long been accustomed to pass through Bury with cartloads of herrings from Yarmouth.[265] The fact that both Tailor and Barker placed their orders at Michaelmas fits with the herring fishing season, September to December. In 1442 the churchwardens provided herrings for building workers. London fishmongers visited Walden: a John Child, citizen and fishmonger of London, was sued for trespass in 1451.[266]

Malting

John Gerland, malter, active from 1438 to 1451, is perhaps the single most cited person in the contemporary Walden documents. He bequeathed 100 quarters of malt to his wife, Cristina; three other testators between 1488 and 1502 left over 30 each.[267] It is unclear whether he is identifiable with John Gerland, chapman. The fact that the two occupational descriptions are recorded in the same document suggests not. Even so, Gerland malter had dealings with many people and the malt trade was undoubtedly important to the town. Malt in bequests, in the stores held and accounted for by churchwardens and in debt cases reflects the extensive barley-growing area especially to the west and north. Supplying malt to London dominated the

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264 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1451; m.5 Jul. 1441; CPR. 1472; IHR CP40 dbf 1424 m.488d.

265 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jun. 1472; D. Farmer, 'Marketing the produce of the countryside', in E. Miller (ed.), *AHEW* iii, *1348-1500* (Cambridge,1991), p. 326.

266 A. J. F. Dulley, 'Four Kent towns at the end of the Middle Ages', in M. Roake and J. Whyman (eds), *Essays in Kentish History* (London, 1973), p. 72; ECRO D/DBy Q 18 f.24v; D/DBy m. 6 Jul. 1451.

267 ECRO T/A 358/4; T/A 358/15; T/A 358/10; H. Montagu Benton, 'Essex wills at Canterbury', *TEAS*, 21 (1937) pp. 254-5.

trade of Standon, 22 km to the south-west, and, when London had a shortage, its wider area.[268] The trade apparently endured: in 1488 John Hervy bequeathed 58 quarters; the churchwardens held 44 in 1477; Monteith shows four maltings in 1600.[269] It raises the question of the role of Geoffrey Symond, originally of Ringland, Norfolk, and described continually as 'heyreman'.This trade usually supplied the strainers used in malting but perhaps here he also provided the hair cloth frames, or 'strained canvases', according to Harrison used in drying saffron stamens over kilns. Though Symond's holding of a house and barn in Hill St, two saffron gardens, 20 acres and two further houses may of course witness to fingers in many pies, perhaps it suggests that he had found a 'niche' role in both the malt and saffron trades.[270]

Chapmen and mercers

The trade of chapmen such as John Gerland may have evolved into that of the mercers, active increasingly over the period. Nightingale thinks that during the mid-century depression chapmen turned away from provincial urban suppliers to London wholesalers; with them they could barter locally produced cloth for raw materials and luxury goods imported through London.[271] Whether or not cloth was a major element in Walden's chapmen's London dealing, it may be that, especially so close to London, this process 'invited' mercers into increased dealing in the town. An example would be John Pelham 'of London, now of Walden', who in 1501 bequeathed 'all my tenements in the town'. Certainly, in the later fifteenth century the town's chapmen often dealt with London merchants: John Byrde in 1469 apparently owed £2 to London mercer Robert Barley; in 1470, London glover Thomas Dalson sued John Albery for £2; Robert Ramesey, chapman and barber, was indebted in 1476 to tailor Robert Carnys of

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268 for example, ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1438; M. Bailey, 'A tale of two towns: Buntingford and Standon in the later Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), p. 367.

269 ECRO T/A 358/10; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.110v; Monteith, 'Saffron Walden: landscape', fig. 11.

270 K. Neale, 'Saffron Walden: 'Crocuses and crokers" in idem (ed.), *Essex 'Full of Profitable Thinges': Essays presented to Sir John Ruggles-Brise* (Oxford, 1996), p. 225; G. Edelen (ed.), *The Description of England: the Classic Account of Tudor Social Life by W. Harrison* (New York, 1968), p. 350; ECRO D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1.

271 P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: the Grocers Company and the Politics and Trade of London, 1000-1485* (London, 1995), p. 103.

London.[272] In all the Walden sources in the early 1450s and early 1460s a single mercer is listed. However, early in both the 1470s and 1480s there were several, and more than one draper, one of whom in 1516 left £50 worth of cloth from his shop and made bequests to a 'loader'; both he and John Spilman clearly had a considerable business.[273] This increasing presence suggests a growing mercantile role, which, while it may merely conform to the overall commercialisation, suggests Walden's potential, at least. Wealthy London mercers or their fathers sometimes originated in Walden: William Lamberd, probably son of Thomas, active in Walden in the 1480s, in 1515 left £247 3s, including lands in Walden and money for the poor there. In contrast, and at a smaller scale, John Hervy was also 'mercer', his pack horse and hackney horse confirming his trade. He lived in Walden, had a shop and in 1488 bequeathed fifty quarters of malt and sums to several local churches.[274] Hervy's role may have included that of both mercer and chapman; the fact that he traded malt reinforces the possibility that the Gerland chapman and Gerland malter, noted earlier, are identical. Certainly they disappear from the records at about the same time.

THE SEASONALITY OF WORK

For those many stated occupations that did not in fact imply full time work, for those who fell on hard times or for those wishing to take advantage of short-lived opportunities, the scope for wage earning, whether supplementary or total, would vary with the calendar of the local economy. Complementarity in the rhythms of the differing pays must have offered relatively varied seasonal employment, while fairs and religious festivals would, naturally, provide welcome, sometimes essential, scope for selling and or buying. Tab. 3.8 represents an attempt to plot the seasonal activities relevant to many of the products of the area.

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272 ECRO T/A 358/14; CPR 1469-70; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1476.

273 ECRO T/A 358/23; 358/12.

274 ECRO T/A 358/22; 358/10.

Tab. 3.8. Seasonal activities, Walden's locality

January	ploughing, including saffron grounds; sowing barley; cutting timber while leafless
February	lambing; dried and salted fish acquired by now
LENT	Dairying and egg laying begin; fish trade boosted; meat trade in suspension; Mid-Lent fair
March	lambing; ploughing saffron grounds; sowing wheat
EASTER	victualling trades boosted
April	lamb and calf skins to market
May	selling sheep and wool; manuring and ploughing for saffron; wool processing; May day celebrations; Pentecost festivities
June	shearing; haymaking; gathering underwood; ploughing saffron grounds Midsummer festivities; Cambridge Midsummer Fair
July	making butter and cheese; saffron corms turned and replanted Walden Abbey fair
August	barley harvest; malting peak ?
	Cambridge Stourbridge Fair – dealing, carrying
September	saffron weeding and hoeing; annual rents and payments due; ? sowing winter wheat, rye; labour contracts
	heavy rent-paying season, Sep. 29 to Nov. 30
October	saffron harvesting and drying; raising saffron corms for winter; pigs, cattle to market; sales of grain, cider, flax, cheese
November	knackering and salting; preparation of skins, sales of grain, cider, flax, cheese; cutting timber; Newport Coll fair, sales of cattle, perhaps horses, saffron
December	leather industries peak; cutting timber for building; sales of grain, cider, flax, cheese; Christmas victualling

Many of the patterns in this chart were observed at Melton Mowbray, also a pays interface location but with important differences for the economy in a lesser emphasis on arable and a greater distance from London. J. Laughton and C. Dyer, 'Seasonal patterns of trade in the later middle ages: buying and selling at Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, 1400-1520', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 46 (2002), pp. 162-184.

Labourers and others needing additional income might find paid work in the fields at sowing, ploughing, shearing, haymaking and harvest and potentially not only locally, within Walden's primary hinterland of around 16 km; workers travelled more than 24km from Warwick and Coventry. No doubt travelling became a way of life for some: in 1487 a 'haltyng smith' made a clapper for Walden's church's big bell. Some victuallers from the town went into the hinterland: a baker visited Whittlesford.[275] These activities would spread information, itself an important commodity, about need for workers. In processing and trading some primary products the threat of deterioration or problems of storage would often demand urgent attention: saffron, for

[275] ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.138v; Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 95.

example, was dried and compacted immediately after harvest, creating a huge demand for labour in both picking the flowers and extracting the stamens, ideal work for women and children; this in an area, including the town, with a high proportion of wage earners must have provided welcome opportunity at a season when a lull in the arable cycle and shortening daylight hours were otherwise reducing scope.

Market traders, providing for town and hinterland, including as outlet for peasant surpluses, would hope to profit from seasonal 'highs'. Some produce would by-pass them: wool from local flocks, for instance, was probably sold by contract and to mongers, many from elsewhere. Local producers' surplus grain might be bought by corn mongers. Some processing itself occurred outside the town: work at the point of production was demanded by the need to reduce the weight or bulk of products from the woods: faggots and charcoal, potentially traded over a wide area, would be brought for smiths and dyers, for instance, as also bark for tanners and poles, hurdles and timber for building.

Seasonal fairs within reach were important, introducing opportunity to access specialist goods such as stone, lead and fine fabrics or deal with potential buyers, as of saffron. Such fairs enabled surpluses to reach a wider market. Though the more distant, such as Stourbridge Fair, dealt mainly in larger value transactions, individuals would engage with local fairs, at Walden Abbey and the 'Coll' Fair at Newport.[276]

Overall, the town was apparently able to take advantage of a fortunate location in relation to potential livelihoods. Its glaziers, leather trades, innkeepers, malters, fishmongers and chapmen/mercers were able to exploit existing networks, including access to London, Cambridge and the Cam, in a context of intensifying commercialisation and centralisation.

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[276] It may be relevant that 'coll' can mean a beast with no horns. By 1772 there was a fair at Newport 'for horned cattle': *The History of Essex by a Gentleman* iii (1772), p. 40; Harrison in 1577 records a mid-Lent fair at Walden, 'seemingly from his own experience': G. Edelen, *Harrison*, pp. 392-3 and C. B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden Then and Now* (Chelmsford, 1952), p. 15, ascribes its origin to a charter of 1542. Fairs with evident impact on Walden are noted in Tab. 3.8.

THE CLOTH TRADE

Introduction

In 1462-5 a short-term cloth making crisis occurred throughout England. However, increased demand by peasants and artisans for the cheaper types of cloth was able to offset this to some extent and exports increased from 1470, after the mid-century depression in overseas trade. Britnell shows that in the 1450s and 1460s, prior to the break with the Hansa in 1468, German merchants made direct contact with inland villages and towns, to some extent supplanting merchants from Colchester in regional trade, as also occurred at Southampton. Significantly, in 1416 Thomas Hykedon, of Walden, had been in debt to Otto Kogell of Cologne, the major German centre. Internal trade in the area was promoted by specialisation in type of cloth and might also carry non-textiles such as grain.[277] Demand, increasingly over considerable distances and served by developments in mercantile networks, encouraged economies of scale, involving dependence of craftsmen on employers and encouraging manufacturing to concentrate, and in particular centres: Lavenham would supersede Clare, and dynasties of clothiers such as the Paycockes of Coggeshall arose. In north Essex production networks were more 'loosely welded' than in an archetypal putting-out system. The Suffolk area's industry continued to expand until the later 1400s but the Essex centres' output remained roughly constant. Dependent on urban enterprise, wool marketing became more urban.[278]

How important to the town was the late fifteenth century cloth trade? While it is demonstrable that Walden accommodated various processes in woollen cloth production, was it involved in the economy of the nearby south Suffolk/north Essex cloth-producing area? What were the mechanisms of any such involvement? If it was relatively closely tied into this area's production, did this help foster prosperity in the period 1438 to 1489? Was there specialisation

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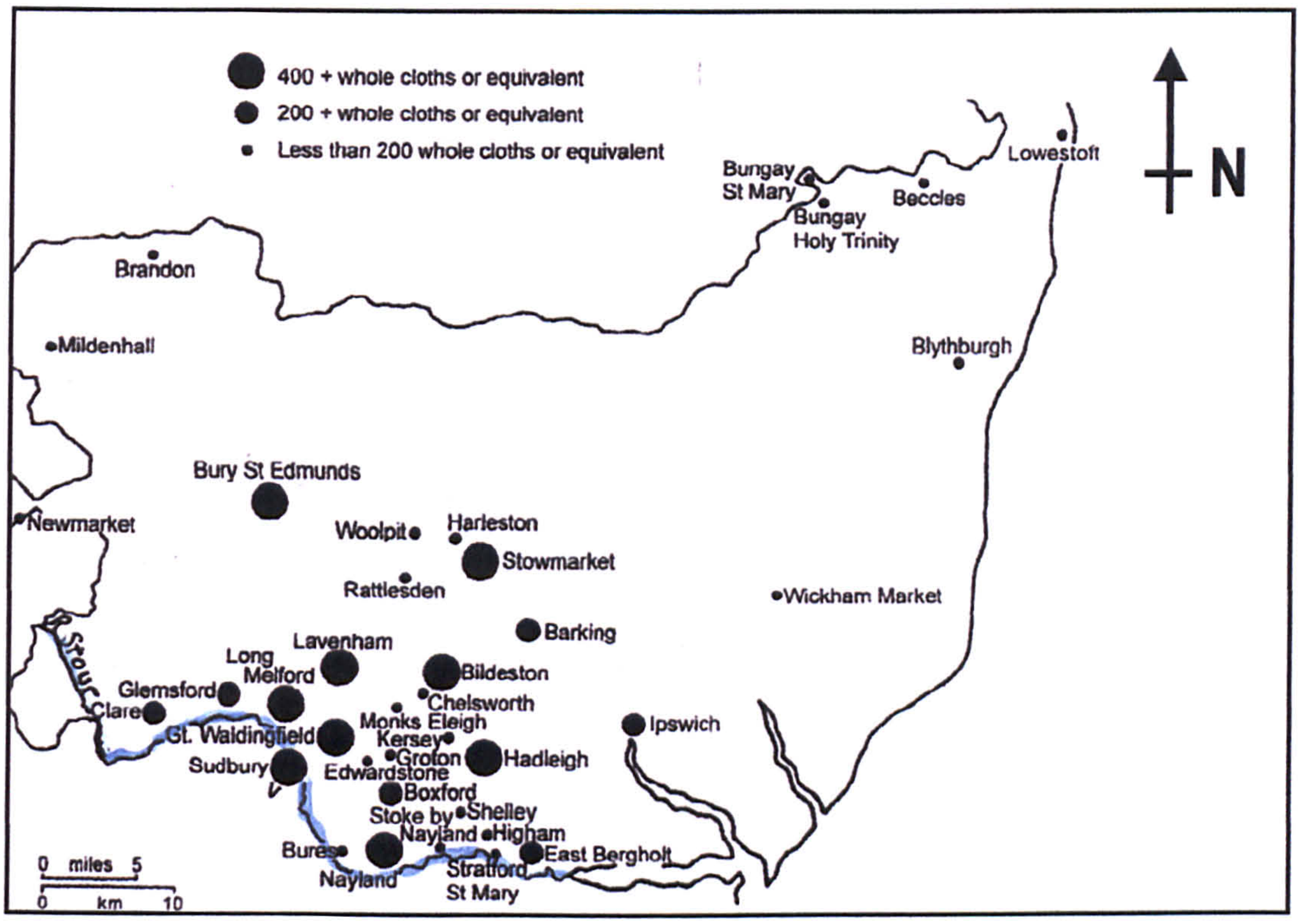
[277] Keene, 'Debt cases', pp. 74, 76; Britnell, *Colchester*, pp. 184, 209, 172-3, 81.

[278] R. H. Britnell, 'Urban demand in the English economy, 1300-1600', in J. Galloway (ed.), *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration, c. 1300-1600*, CMH Working Papers, 3 (2000), pp. 14-15; Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 72; Britnell, *Colchester*, pp. 188-9.

here? In whose hands was the organisation of the various cloth-producing processes? What were the connections with relatively distant centres, such as Colchester and London?

The industry was established in the Stour valley towns, the nearest less than 30 km from Walden, before 1350 and in the fifteenth century there was 'a remarkable concentration of industry along the Stour, involving almost all villages on the Essex and Suffolk banks and on tributaries, as well as outlying centres such as Halstead and Braintree'.[279] Was Walden such a centre?

Fig. 3.6. S.W. Suffolk: Output of cloth towns 1465/6-68/9



Source: Bailey, *Suffolk*, p. 273, after N. R. Amor, 'Merchant adventurer or Jack of all trades? The Suffolk clothier in the 1460's', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 40 (2004), pp. 414-36.

Walden's immediate area, on relatively light soils, carried large sheep flocks: in 1419, 2,700 animals were held, 'according to returns from local landlords and Walden Abbey'; flocks of 300 may have been familiar: in September 1444 two are cited in the court rolls, others in 1442,

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279 M. M. Postan, 'The trade of medieval Europe: the north', in M. M. Postan and E. Miller (eds), *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, *CEHE* ii (1952; Cambridge 1987), p. 241.

1446 and 1459, though, interestingly, sheep are not recorded after this.[280] Local wool was poor and so would be traded over a limited area. Clothiers, normally dealing in wool, yarn and dyestuffs, relied in the Suffolk cloth area on the superior East Midland wools for their higher quality cloth, which sold for 3s per yard around 1500, whereas cheaper cloths might fetch only 1s.[281]

By the 1390s, the Suffolk cloth area's focus was shifting eastwards. Hadleigh had become the main centre of production, with the Upper Stour valley, relatively near to Walden, losing dynamism. Nevertheless, its links to Walden continued: in 1416 a Clare dyer, John Berymelle, was in debt to the Thomas Hykedon of Walden, himself in the same year in debt to Kogell of Cologne. It cannot, however, be shown that Walden in the study period had as direct contact with such merchants as is recognised for other inland settlements before the break with the Hansa in 1468.[282]

Towns such as Hadleigh, Long Melford, Sudbury, Clare, Colchester, Halstead and also Haverhill, only 16 km from Walden, provided 'a vital nexus' with rural hinterlands. From at latest 1350 merchants and traders 'visited the surrounding countryside, buying wool and increasingly organising cloth production'. Contractual agreements for weaving, dyeing and finishing formed an extensive network.[283]

Walden and the main cloth area continued to be linked in a network of textile trades: in the 1440s William Grene of Thurlow, on the upper Stour, supplied Walden customers with various, mostly woollen, cloths: his actions against them involved 11s 3d for linen of burnet colour and 7 yards of mixed colour woollen cloth, a speciality of the Suffolk area. John Gerland,

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280 e.g. ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jun. 1454; M. White, *Saffron Walden's History: a Chronological Compilation* (Saffron Walden, 1991), p. 30; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1444.

281 J. Munro, *Textiles, Towns and Trade: Essays in the Economic History of Late Medieval England and the Low Countries* (Aldershot, 1994), p.147; Dyer, *Transition?*, p. 167.

282 R. H. Britnell, 'The woollen textile industry of Suffolk in the later Middle Ages', *The Ricardian*, 13 (2003), pp. 88-90; D. Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 122.

283 Schofield, 'Extranei', pp. 1-16; M. Bailey, seminar talk on the Suffolk textile industry (Cambridge University History Faculty, 2005); Amor, 'Merchant adventurer', p. 426; Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 66.

malter, owed him 5s for 5 ells of green cloth and Richard Sawyer 1s 4d for 'wool cloth'.[284] In total, Grene acted against eight distinct men of Walden between 1444 and 1449; once, John Donnyng, woolman, served as pledge. There is no clear evidence that Greene was connected with production processes in Walden, though in 1447 he sued John Rolf, fuller, for debt.[285] A William Grene was executor of John Shymmyng, the innkeeper/merchant, and so with typical long distance contacts. In other links to the Suffolk area, in 1447 a Walden merchant sold wool to John Bury of Waldingfield; in 1478 Margaret, widow of Richard Shymmyng, was married to Thomas Brownsmyth of Hadleigh. In the 1460s a John Brownsmyth was among Suffolk's ten leading clothiers.[286]

A significant staging post to the Stour cloth area may be indicated by the activities of men from Ashdon, half way to Haverhill, dealing with Walden men, presumably under contract, for fulling as well as for weaving and dyeing: in 1410 William Webbe, probably weaver, of Walden had sued John Parkyn of Ashdon for two dozens of blue cloth. In 1440 Parkyn acted against Austin Dyer of Walden for detinue, probably of 70 yards of kersey, which should have gone on to William Fuller for fulling.[287] In 1445 the fuller John Rolf, a frequent defendant for debt, was sued by Walter Vale of Ashdon. He may have defaulted on loans against the completion of contracts. In 1448 action against him, this time by William Grene, ceased because of his felony.

In 1456 another Walden fuller, John Nailler, was prosecuted for 12s concerning two dozens of white cloth.[288] Fulling must have been practised here much earlier: Fullers Lane, bordering the springs, is recorded in 1349. (Fig. 2.3) There being no mill, cloth was presumably either trampled or beaten. However, there were mills on the Cam: in 1447 12 ells of blanket,

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284 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1444, Sep 1446; J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the countryside', in F. J. Fisher (ed.) *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, in Honour of R. H. Tawney* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 75.

285 e.g. ECRO D/DBy m.6 Mar. 1444; Spring 1447.

286 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.43r; m.6 Dec. 1447, m.8 Dec. 1478; Amor, 'Merchant adventurer', p. 426.

287 A dozen measured 12 yards x 2 ft. 7$^{1/2}$ ins; Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p.123; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Spring 1440.

288 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1445; Sep. 1448; m.7 Spring 1456.

another cheaper cloth, had been taken to John Miles, at the Littlebury mill, to full for 6s. Littlebury, 2.4 km. from Walden, is on the Cam, as was a mill at Great Chesterford and one, probably several, at Brook Walden.[289] Several weavers are cited in Walden but there is no sign of a specialism such as characterised some vills.[290] They were probably engaged in piece work, though with two looms, valued at 1s 8d in 1472, John Pese may have been more independent.[291]

Walden had its own dealers in various aspects of the textile trades. Examples are John and Richard Downyng, woolmen, drapers John Bright and John Spilman and John Hervy, mercer. These roles may overlap, though woolmen were essentially middlemen, collecting wool, perhaps travelling with the dealers to growers. Mercers, as general merchants, might trade in many categories, including wool and various textiles, such as the 54 yards of linen cloth, woven for 3s 4d by John Skelyngham, and the coarse woollen 'wadmole', that Richard King supplied to John Semer, collarmaker, surely for use as stuffing. Drapers, whose agents travelled, bought cloth from clothiers, a broad class, including both Merchant Adventurers and 'Jacks of all trades'.[292]

As to ports, Suffolk cloth makers used Colchester/Ipswich or, later in the century, London increasingly. Any export quality cloths handled in Walden may have been drawn into the orbit of Colchester/Ipswich in the 1440s and 1450s, when there is clearest evidence of connection with the Stour area, though links were in fact maintained: in 1461 a Walden constable was excused the escape of Peter Bate of Stoke by Clare, tailor, arrested for felony, and as late as 1488 John Hervy bequeathed £1 each to William Parker and his wife, also of

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289 Monteith, 'Saffron Walden', p. 86; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Spring 1447; Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', pp. 112-3.

290 See footnote 407.

291 D. Dymond and A. Betterton, *Lavenham: 700 Years of Textile Making* (Woodbridge, 1982), p. 25; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1472.

292 E. E. Power, 'The wool trade in the fifteenth century', in eadem and M. M. Postan (eds), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp. 51-4; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1481, Dec. 1475.

Stoke by Clare.[293] Little selling of finished cloths is apparent, at least from the 1467/8 aulnage accounts, but cheaper cloths were excluded from taxation. In any case, contact with London cloth merchants had existed considerably earlier: they were among those dealing in Walden land, from at latest 1389, and in 1424 John Pope, shearman of London, sued John Venour, Walden draper, for £4 10s.[294] Close links apparently continued: William Draper of London witnessed John Hervy's 1488 will; in 1479 Hugh Clopton, the famous mercer, held property with Walden's mercer John Bird and draper John Spilman.[295] Such Londoners perhaps had involvement in the textile trades here. If Londoners indeed supplied dyestuffs to Walden and handled the marketing of the town's increasing specialisation in saffron, as seems likely, and since they were increasingly involved in the direct supply of imports to consumers and middlemen and in marketing rural manufactures, this might be still more probable.[296] Whatever the detail, there was clearly sufficient in Walden's textile environment to interest London merchants. The link was surely reinforced when Walden men themselves became London mercers; some, such as Thomas Walden, who died in 1473, and Edward Barker, who died in 1497, were freemen of the Staple of Calais.[297]

By 1467-8 cloth output was concentrating in fewer centres. Lavenham, having risen spectacularly, was already by then second to Colchester as a cloth market for the eastern counties and reached a peak of prosperity around 1520.[298] Britnell doubts whether the area's smaller centres were enjoying industrial growth. Locally specific circumstances, including specialisation, might generate considerable variation and 'certain small towns' enjoyed late

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293 Britnell, 'Woollen textile industry'; CPR 1461, m.14; ECRO T/A 358/10.

294 Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 189; A. Betterton and D. Dymond, *Lavenham: Industrial Town* (1982, Lavenham, 1989), p. 37; IHR CP40 dbf. 1424 m. 403.

295 ECRO T/A 358/10; D/B 2/3/75.

296 Saffron production is discussed later in the current chapter; Galloway, 'Town and country', p. 130.

297 ECRO T/A 358/8; T/A 358/13.

298 Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 189; Betterton and. Dymond, *Industrial Town*, p. 334.

medieval prosperity.[299] This is suggested by their change in wealth ranking. (Fig. C) Of approximately forty towns within Walden's region or probably near enough to impact on it, nearly all those with the greatest increase, which include Walden itself, were in, or close to the cloth area. (Fig. 1.2)

Dyeing

There were dyehouses in the ditches surrounding the manorial site on Bury Hill by 1359, at latest. (Fig. 2.5) Some dyehouses were taken up in the period: John Nailler's piece of 125ft by c.28ft in 1443 was on the site of the manor's former dovecote; he took another parcel 'in the greenery' to farm in 1451, also for a dyehouse, for 20 years at 2s per year.[300] Nailler was a fuller and may, then, have held at least two dyehouses simultaneously, this supporting the view that fullers were bringing the finishing of cloth into their own hands.[301]

Perhaps typical of a prosperous dyer's holding is one surrendered in 1445 by Emma, widow of Augustine Osborn, alias Austin Dyer, namely a tenement in Market End, with land and a dyehouse beneath the manor, this apparently later surrendered to John Barrow, dyer, whose son John in 1474 also claimed a newly-built dyehouse below the Bury wall.[302] Cromarty proposes that cloth was dyed in vats in the former moat's ditches but notes a water supply problem: there was a single well on the hill and it produced water she considers rather too hard. However, dyeing 'in the wool' surely needed relatively little water, and a lesser investment in equipment, significantly allowing its practice by men less prosperous than usual, perhaps even temporarily, or as a by-occupation. Among the cloths produced were russets, known to have been dyed in the wool at Colchester, as was blue cloth at Lavenham, and the prosecution of

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299 J. A. Galloway, 'Town and country in England, 1300-1570', in S. R. Epstein (ed.), *Town and Country in Europe, 1300-1800* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 125.

300 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Spring 1443; Jul. 1451.

301 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 112.

302 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1445; m.7 Apr. 1456; m.8 Sep. 1474.

John Reymond for keeping a balance 'to weigh wool of divers liege subjects of the King, taken to him for dyeing' is good evidence for the practice.[303]

Dyeing also occurred in the west of the town, using the two streams, considered too polluted by Cromarty.[304] However, both the moat and the streams may have been used: in 1447, John Reymond, with a dyehouse in the exterior manor site and one of several 'below the lower manor site', was amerced specifically for polluting by 'his craft' the watercourse outside his tenement in Almshouse Lane, near the main stream.[305] Additionally, the draper John Spilman had a dyehouse at Bridge End, by the more northerly stream, in 1477.[306]

The question of the supply of dyes is suggested when John Northwych of London in 1390 impleaded John Borewell, dyer, of Walden, who was outlawed in London in 1394 with John Saunder of Halstead, dyer.[307] The main cloth area imported dyes via Ipswich.[308]. Nightingale says that 'the number of [London] pepperers involved in credit transactions with dyers from cloth-making towns, such as ...Coggeshall, Stortford...Walden...shows that they were making every attempt to expand their distributive trade to any area where the cloth industry flourished'.[309] Easy access to London must have been an advantage, especially since the saffron trade was apparently largely conducted through it. The hinterland represented by the debts of dyer John Berymelle of Clare to a Walden dyer in 1416 and of two men of Fowlmere, near Royston, to William Dyer of Walden for white and black russets in 1451 might then be expanded or amplified by secondary dealing in dyes, based on the town.[310] Of course, if saffron was in fact used as a dye and potential dyers could themselves grow it, the overheads would be considerably reduced, enabling a broader economic class to practise the trade.

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303 A debt case concerned russets in Dec.1451; Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 55 ; Dymond and Betterton, *Lavenham: Textile Making*, p. 16; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1448.

304 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', pp. 111-112.

305 ECRO D/DBy m.5 May/Jun. 1439; m.7 Sep. 1453; m.6 Jul.7 1447.

306 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1477.

307 Cal. IPM Misc. v, 1387-93.

308 Cal. IPM Misc. vi, 1394; Britnell, 'Woollen textile industry', p. 92.

309 Nightingale, *Grocers Company*, p. 548.

310 Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 122; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Dec. 1451.

SAFFRON PRODUCTION [311]

Was saffron cultivation a major factor in the town's relative advance by 1524?

Saffron cultivation

Saffron, known in the Indian subcontinent and used by the Greeks in the classical period, was brought from Cilicia by Byzantine traders. It was a staple of the Levant and may have been introduced into Spain by the Moors. Hakluyt mentions its use recorded in English leech books of the tenth century. It was grown in Aragon and France, Austria and eastern Tuscany in the medieval period and traded by, for example, merchants in Cracow, which served as entrepot between Italy and Flanders. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Italy was the dominant producer, especially the Abruzzi, where Aquila was centre of the trade and a great commercial hub, frequented by northern Italians, Germans, Dutch and Dalmatians.[312]

Trading in England

Already in the later fourteenth century, there is evidence of the saffron trade in England, for example, in 1372 two bales of saffron, with madder, alum, almonds and pepper, were to be delivered to Lambert Tolle, of Zeland, at Kingston upon Hull.[313] As an outstandingly expensive product, it was used predominantly by wealthy households and for such special occasions as gild feasts: in the 1380s expenses for a London banquet included dates, ginger, almonds and saffron; saffron was bought by the steward of John Dynham's household in Devon in 1383 and an accounts book dated 1444-56 shows that it was obtained for John Hopton's household at Blythburgh, Suffolk.[314] In 1410-11 the Gild of the Holy Cross at Stratford on Avon

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311 and see Appendix B.

312 A. Clark, 'Saffron and Walden', *Essex Review*, 19 (1910), p. 57; S. Runciman, 'Byzantine trade and industry', in Postan and Miller (eds), *Trade and Industry*, p. 143; J. Clarke, 'Notes on the saffron plant and in connection with the name of the town of Saffron Walden', *Essex Naturalist*, 1 (1887), p. 9; Malowist, 'Trade of Eastern Europe', pp. 556, 560; G. Maw, *A Monograph of the Genus Crocus* (London, 1886), p. 61.

313 CCR 46 Ed.3 Mar. 1372.

314 TNA, PRO AR/37/41/1; AR/37/44 (Cornwall County Record Office); HA 30/369/46 (Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich).

bought some for their annual feast, as it did in 1442-3, and it was bought by the Grocers' Company in London by the half pound for a feast in 1462.[315]

Examples of trading include the 1429 sale of a sack of saffron, worth £30, by John Garro to London grocer Robert Otteley; in 1446 a York chapman, Thomas Grissop, sold 3lbs at 12s per lb in his shop.[316] In the 1510s and 1520s Londoners Richard Mynton, grocer, and Henry Warde,corser, had contracted to receive saffron at Ely and a London saddler asked £10 for 20 lbs but was offered £7 maximum.[317] Seasonal fairs brought producers and traders, including middlemen, together: a Hertfordshire haberdasher planned to buy saffron from Grantchester, near Cambridge, to sell to a London grocer at Newport's Coll Fair, where, by the mid-sixteenth century, traders from a wide area of East Anglia dealt in it. A boost to the industry may have been the Grocers' Company's 1471 relaxation of its rules limiting access to purchasing saffron.[318]

Local cultivation

English saffron was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the most highly esteemed and most valuable in Europe. The Walden area had both physical and socio-economic advantages for its cultivation.[319]

The soil is a temperate dry mould, typical of the chalk base, and having the least rainfall in Britain was a particular advantage for cultivating a crop originating in semi-arid regions.[320] Charcoal, the preferred agent for drying the harvest, was widely produced in the local area. The timing of saffron's harvest and processing fitted in well with the characteristic arable cycle of the area and with other occupations with quite different seasonal demands. Work

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315 TNA, PRO BRT 1/3/25; 1/3/50 (Records of Stratford on Avon Corporation); Nightingale, *Grocers Company*, p. 384.

316 A. H. Thomas (ed.), *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London* iv, AD 1413-37 (Cambridge, 1943), p. 226; Nightingale, *Grocers' Company*, pp. 440.

317 TNA, PRO C 1/442/43; C 1 /398/9.

318 A. Young, *A General View of the Agriculture of Essex* ii (London, 1807), p. 57, gives 'coll' as an alternative name for coriander; Lee, *Cambridge*, pp. 116-117; Nightingale, *Grocers' Company*, p. 548.

319 *VCH Essex* ii, p. 364.

320 *Essex by a Gentleman* ii (1772), p. 343.

was necessary in July and especially early October.[321] In 1457 John Colwell bought 4 quarters of crocuses and in 1476 Richard Grant 1 quarter 5 bushels of 'saffron heads', namely corms, for 4s 4d, both to be delivered before August 1.[322] In August the corms were finally replanted, after turning in July. In 1454 John Pinchbeck's sheep ate 1 bushel of flowers after the feast of St Edward, perhaps the Translation on October 13th.[323] In the 1470s the churchwardens paid William Rekever, smith, for making a measuring cup 'at the time of collection of crocuses'.[324]

An intensive harvest season demanded large numbers of workers: those needing more than family labour, particularly those with 'saffron grounds' measured in acres, must have employed a deal of labour temporarily. Overall, the cultivation provided opportunity for a wide section of the community. Men ploughed, using dung as fertiliser, and shovelled to raise beds three or four inches and to cover the corms planted by women and children. Appropriate tasks for female and child labour included, after harvesting the flowers, itself delicate work, the further one of separating out the stamens. More work was involved in then spreading them on paper on haircloth over a kiln to dry them, turning them frequently.[325] In summer following the third crop roots were raised and transplanted. In the common fields, as at Barrington c.1500, hurdles separated plots; fencing was necessary before common grazing began after 1 August. After the saffron harvest cattle grazed the remains of the plants.[326]

The saffron 'grounds'

Because seventy-five per cent of the costs were for labour, Lee is surely correct that the crop's large labour demand, coupled with the small average acreage of plots and the fifteenth century's high wages, suggests saffron's extreme suitability to peasant holdings, using

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321 see Tab. 3.8.

322 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1457; m.8 Dec. 1476.

323 ECRO m.7 Dec. 1454.

324 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.106v.

325 J. Douglas, 'Observations on the cultivation of saffron, 1723/4', *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 35 (1724), p. 566.

326 see Appendix B; *VCH Cambridgeshire* v, p.152.

mainly family labour at no extra cost. It was 'supremely labour-intensive' and commanded a very high price at market.[327] The area already had many smallholders and labourers and the Walden evidence indicates cultivation by artisans and traders, too. Its high value allowed worthwhile production on very small plots: at Great Chesterford through the seventeenth century these varied from one rood ten perches to five perches.[328] It was grown in gardens and in closes as well as in the common fields.

Both the elite and many artisans took rather small plots: in 1453 one of 115 x 25 ft 'for a garden'.[329] Larger plots apparently reflected the standing of those who held them: Juliana Shymmyng, widow of John, the innkeeper/merchant, in 1463 left 2 acres and Edward Barker, burgess of London and freeman of the Calais staple, 3 acres of saffron heads plus an acre and a garden of saffron in 1497.[330]

According to Douglas, one rood (a quarter-acre) could produce five or six pounds of wet chives (stamens), generating one pound of dry saffron, though Harrison suggests that in a good year an acre might produce a dried crop of 20 lbs.[331] Given that saffron cost 12s per pound in York in 1446 and 4s for a half pound for a Grocers' Company feast in 1462, very small areas could generate substantial sums.[332] Importantly, too, grounds could be cultivated for three years only, with barley normally following for the considerable period of eighteen to twenty years.[333] This, in itself, would, of course, add to the pressure to find new sites for planting.

Many 'gardens' were taken up, both before and after the first reference to saffron in Walden. It cannot be assumed that they were for producing saffron but the high incidence in the

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327 J. Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: a History* (Oxford, 1997), p. 68; Lee, *Cambridge*, pp. 115-116; Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p. 16; Nightingale, *Grocers' Company*, p. 73, says 75,000 crocus flowers were needed to yield 1 lb. saffron; Lee, pp. 115-116.

328 M. Deacon, *Great Chesterford: a Common Field Parish in Essex* (Saffron Walden, 1983), p. 27.

329 ECRO D/DBy m.7 12 May 1457; Sep. 1453.

330 ECRO T/A 358/6; T/A 358/13.

331 J. Douglas, 'Observations', p. 566; Edelen, *Harrison (New York, 1968)*, p. 348.

332 Nightingale, *Grocers' Company*, pp. 384, 440.

333 Edelen, *Harrison*, p. 351.

period, sometimes more than one to a single tenant, suggests a specific motive.[334] In 1465, that 'pigs are not to wander and destroy crocus and grain in the gardens and fields of neighbours' hints that a correlation between crocus and gardens was normal and some references are specific: already in 1450 John Hervy had leased a garden planted with crocuses; in 1482 'John Spilman's large sow often goes into the saffron gardens of men of this town'; a 1484 court case refers to a lane 'leading into crocus gardens'.[335] Overall, the fever for cultivation is shown in 1457 when John Epford, perhaps the glazier recorded in the 1440s by a manor court and by the churchwardens, was accused of enclosing part of a footpath for the purpose.[336]

A wide variety of Walden residents either had saffron gardens or dealt in the corms: occupations represented, in addition to woolman, dyer, mercer and draper, include innkeeper, butcher and barker, suggesting that many who could afford to did, in fact, grow crocuses and that it was clearly seen as a profitable enterprise. John Colwell, glazier, sued concerning four quarters of 'heads', or corms, in 1457 and Richard Grant, the smith, bought one quarter five bushels for 4s 4d in 1476.[337]

Although before 1440 the court rolls do not refer to saffron, it was the subject of a tithe agreement between the Abbot and vicar of Walden in 1444-5. Lee plausibly suggests that tithe agreements mark the beginning of cultivation in an area.[338] By the mid-1450s many held grounds, for example Thomas Carter, John Rede, John Epford 'and others' in 1456.[339]

Trading Walden's saffron

Hard evidence of Walden's involvement in marketing is lacking. One factor is surely that the town's adoption of a cash crop, seemingly grown under contract to merchants, would bypass the local market place. Soon after 1490, when the crocus's image was being

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334 As noted, Geoffrey Symond, hairman, bequeathed two saffron gardens in 1481 (D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1).

335 ECRO D/DBy m. 8 Jul. 1465; Jul. 1482; m.9 Mar. 1484; m.7 12 May 1457.

336 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Dec.1440; D/DBy Q18 f.21r; D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1457.

337 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1457; m.8 Dec. 1476.

338 Cromarty, 'Court rolls', p. 109; *VCH Essex* ii, p. 360; Lee, *Cambridge*, p.108.

339 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1456.

incorporated in the church building, the king's commissioners' tightening up of the tolls and dues for trading was said to threaten a decline of Walden's market, eventually prompting a petition to the King in 1513.[340] There is no record that London merchants dealt in saffron in Walden itself, though its drapers' and mercers' links with Londoners may have served to foster contracts appropriately The scope of predominantly London-based entrepreneurs with established networks in the area, including at Thaxted, with property or mercantile interests in Walden, and long-established in supplying dyes to the region, might extend to involvement in the organisation of the production and marketing of saffron. Already in 1368, Thos Grenehod, a Walden dyer, owed £20 to two citizens of London, presumably for dyestuffs. In 1410 John Orgor owed £28 2s to a citizen and mercer of London.[341] The high value saffron crop, with implicitly affluent, mainly distant, customers, would help raise the profile of the market town and probably foster links subsequently exploited for other purposes: in 1460 a spicer owed £10 to a London draper; in 1478 a grocer was resident.[342]

Associated with the chartering of the Holy Trinity Gild, Walden's own Ursula Fair was founded in 1514, perhaps influenced by the rise of saffron cultivation, especially in view of its date of 21 October. Indeed, it was possibly an attempt to pre-empt business at Newport's Coll fair, around 7 November. The latter's importance to Walden's contemporary economic life is suggested when the churchwardens' accounts cite 'Sunday after the Colle fair'.[343]

The demand for saffron

The use to which Walden's saffron was put is nowhere stated. A consensus suggests that a medicinal use was pre-eminent and promoted a notable spread of its cultivation in the sixteenth century. Its price rose, as it was thought effective against jaundice and plague; the first

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340 Rowntree, *Saffron Walden*, p. 13.

341 TNA, PRO C 131/17/8; C 241/205/13.

342 TNA, PRO C 241/244/22; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1478; that a grocer was resident is likely to have strengthened Walden's mercantile role; see C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People* (Oxford, 2004), p. 231.

343 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.146r.

of the three years' harvests was much the smallest but considered especially effective for this.[344] It is tempting to see saffron's cultivation, perhaps from the end of the fourteenth century, as a response to the on-going threat of pestilence. It was well known in England for many centuries, with a high reputation as a drug, but this was lost by 1792.[345] The Irish apparently used it as a prophylactic against lice and in 1536 Henry VIII forbade the wearing of it in shirts and smocks.[346] Its redundancy has been seen as due to the decline of smallpox; by 1790 farming ceased because it was realised that its medicinal value had been exaggerated.[347] Maw asserts an almost superstitious regard for crocus and saffron in the medieval period and notes its use as perfume.[348]

In addition to its widespread use for cooking in wealthy households and for special occasions, it was used at weddings and churchings, while Walden churchwardens bought it, with other spices, for 'the Pentecost tart'.[349]

In view of the local dyeing and textiles industry, it is sometimes assumed that Walden produced saffron as a dye. While Irish women and some in the Western Isles did use it as a dye, in textiles any use of saffron 'cultivated in East Anglia from the fourteenth century' seems limited.[350] Despite its widespread local production it cannot be assumed that it 'fed' the local dyeing industry. There is in fact no evidence that saffron was used for dyeing in this area, though a dyer is among those many artisans holding saffron gardens. Merchants with established connections to the area, including for distributing woad, and dealing in saffron, for whatever purpose, may have widened the scope of local dyers. Thirsk, Walton and Dyer think

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344 Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p. 66; M. Harrison, *The History of the Hat* (London, 1960), pp. 48-9; A. Petino, *Lo Zafferano nell' Economia del Medioevo*, Studi di Economia e Statistica, Universita di Catania, 1 (Catania, 1951), p. 25; Malowist, 'Trade of Eastern Europe', p. 560; *Essex by a Gentleman*, p. 343, suggests that the first year yielded only one twelfth as much as subsequent ones, others suggest one sixth.

345 Maw, *Monograph*, p. 62; T. Martyn *Flora* Rustica, i (London, 1792), no. 58.

346 H. C. Coppock, *The Saffron Crocus in Cherry Hinton and Other Areas of Cambridgeshire* (Saffron Walden, 1983), p. 4; Clark, 'Saffron and Walden'.

347 H. Cranmer Byng, *Scenes from Old Walden* (Saffron Walden, 1910), p. 26; Clark, 'Saffron and Walden'.

348 Maw, pp. 68, 70.

349 Edelen, *Harrison*, p. 354; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.49r.

350 Coppock, *Crocus*, p. 4; Maw, *Monograph*, p. 69; P. Walton, 'Dyes and dyeing' in Blair and Ramsey (eds), *Industries*, p. 334.

saffron's use in the textile industry was limited. Its extremely high cost, arising from the intensity of labour input necessary for marketable quantities, would have been a severe constraint. However, perhaps safflower, also known as bastard saffron, was used to dilute a saffron dye, though even if the considerable local dyeing industry used mainly wool in the yarn, the latter would need to be of high quality, so not local, to justify using saffron.[351] An alternative yellow dye, weld, was grown close by, centred mainly on Haverhill, though apparently principally used to produce green on cloth already dyed blue with woad. Though saffron cultivation was well-established by Chaucer's life time, his classification of weld, madder and woad as the three principal dyestuffs in use in fourteenth century England is perhaps relevant.[352]

Another potential use was as a substitute for gold leaf in illuminating manuscripts.[353]

Cultivation in the region up to c.1550 [354]

Saffron was apparently grown in the garden of King's Hall, Cambridge, in 1374-5, seventy years before Walden's tithe agreement. In the 1450s and 1460s there are further references to growing it in college gardens; in 1467-8 it was grown north west of Bedford. From the mid-fifteenth century, it was increasingly cultivated in Cambridgeshire, perhaps established in the 1470s at Linton and Thriplow. In the 1480s and 1490s Londoners held saffron plots in south east Cambridgeshire; it was increasingly obtained from country producers.[355] By the early sixteenth century it was grown over a wide area east and south of Cambridge, extending to Reach and Snailwell on the edge of the Fens.[356]

Walden was, clearly, central to the Cambridgeshire/Essex saffron-growing area.

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351 Power, 'Wool trade', p. 270; Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p. 67; Walton, 'Dyes', pp. 332-7; C. Dyer, pers. comm.

352 *VCH Essex* ii (1907), p. 366; N. T. Wills, *Woad in the Fens* (Spalding, 1970), p. 3; Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p. 66; J. Edmonds, *Medieval Textile Dyeing* (Little Chalfont, 2003), p. 61; D. Duke and R. Edlin-White, *The Medieval Dye Pot* (Nottingham, 1993), p.19; Chaucer lived c. 1343–1400.

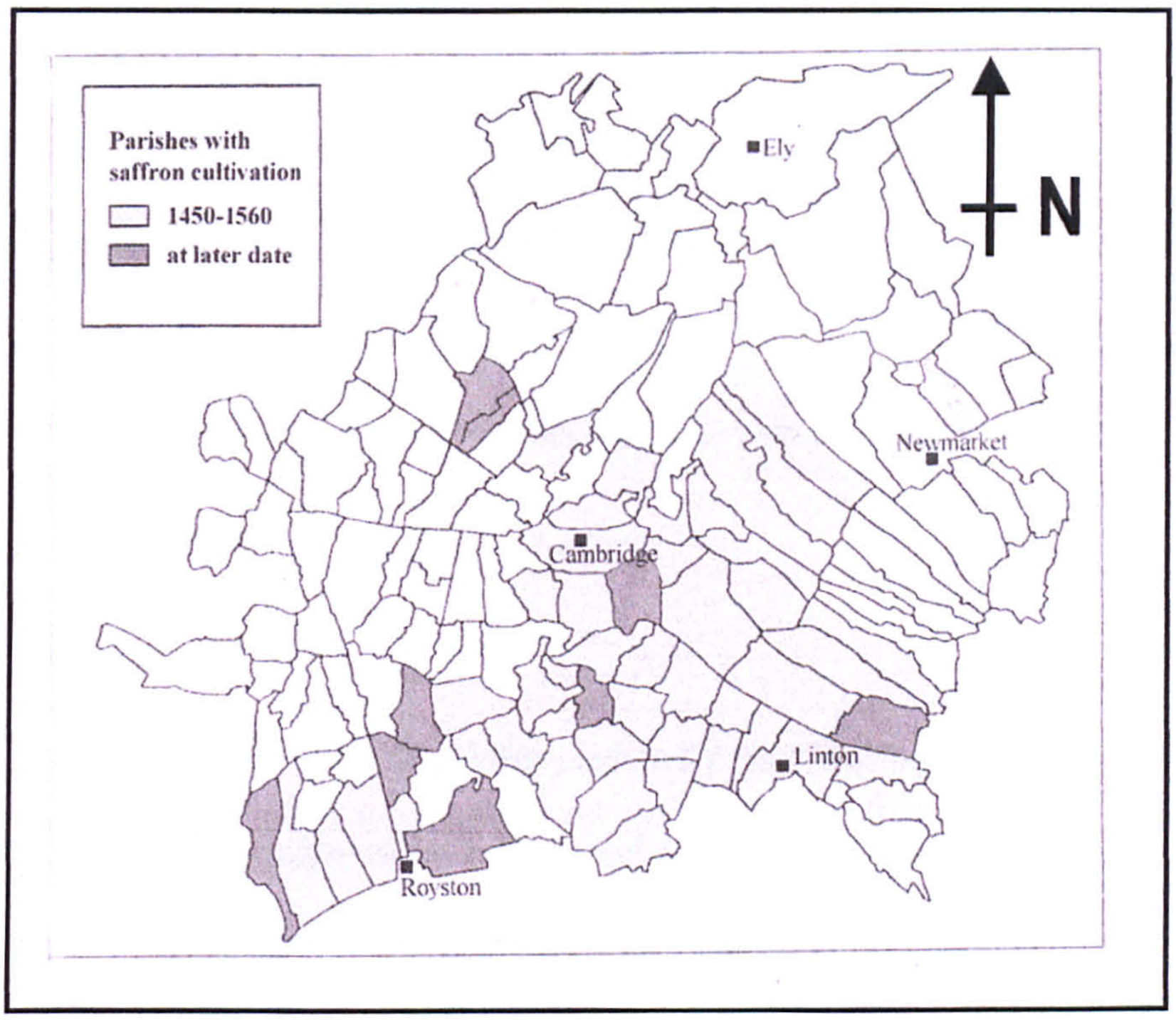
353 Petino, *Zafferano*, p. 24.

354 for details and references see Appendix B.

355 Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 108.

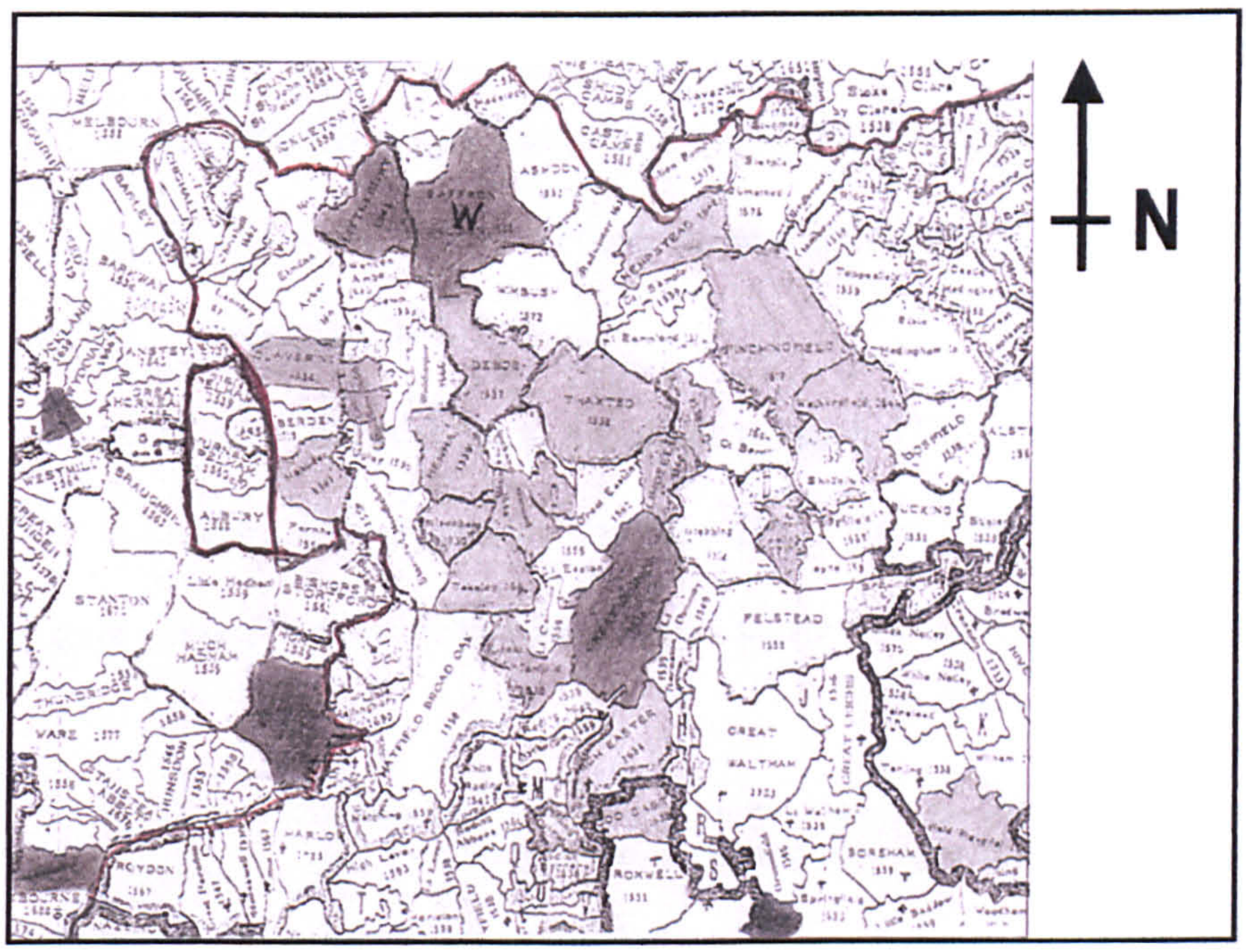
356 *VCH Cambridgeshire* x, pp. 226, 483.

Fig. 3.7. Saffron cultivation in Cambridgeshire



From Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 107.

Fig. 3.8. Saffron cultivation in north west Essex



Key: W: Walden; dark grey: evidence of cultivation before 1560; light grey: evidence, from extant field names, of cultivation at some date, potentially including pre-1560: Sources: see Appendix B; W. C. Waller, 'Essex field names' *TEAS,* 5 (1895), p.173; 7 (1900), p. 319; 8 (1903), p. 212; 9 (1906), pp. 69, 94. Note: *VCH* lacking for NW Essex parishes.

Saffron was also grown in Suffolk, was a specialised crop in the extreme east of Hertfordshire, bequeathed by a merchant at Buntingford, for example, and large quantities were grown at Sawbridgeworth, though here it declined and was replaced by grain by the early sixteenth century.[357] It was bequeathed at Newmarket and produced in north Norfolk, at Burnham and Wighton in the sixteenth century, and also at Walsingham The eastern counties did not have a monopoly, however, as it is recorded at Hereford, in Hampshire and before 1550 in Wiltshire.(Appendix B)

Later history

After 1600 saffron was still planted abundantly near Walden, in 1653 in the common fields, for example.[358] Camden, around 1600, said that Saffron Walden fields looked pleasant with saffron.[359] In the mid-eighteenth century it was grown at Walden, Hinton, Chesterford and Hatfield Broadoak.[360] Although in 1770 Cambridgeshire saffron was sold at Newport fair, by 1790 saffron cultivation had 'gone' from Walden's neighbourhood and was confined to a very small area just south of Cambridge. It is finally noted, at Duxford, in 1816.[361]

In 1807 cultivation was very scarce in England but continued in, for example, Italy, Spain and Germany. Foreign saffron was cheap but may have been adulterated with bastard saffron (safflower), or marigolds.[362]

Thirsk describes Walden's area, especially between Walden and Cambridge, as a niche one for its production. It appears the heartland of cultivation within England. There is no doubt that those involved in its production represented a wide span of occupations, nor is it clear

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357 J. Thirsk, 'Farming techniques', in eadem (ed.), *AHEW* iv, p. 175; P. D. A. Harvey, 'The Home Counties', in E. Miller (ed.), *AHEW* iii (Cambridge, 1991), p. 260; Report on excursions, *East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society Transactions*, 12 (1945-9), p. 155; *VCH Hertfordshire* iv, p. 214.

358 P. May, *Newmarket: Medieval and Tudor* (Newmarket, 1982); Martyn *Flora*, no. 58.

359 G. S. Gibson *The Flora of Essex* (London, 1862), p. 312.

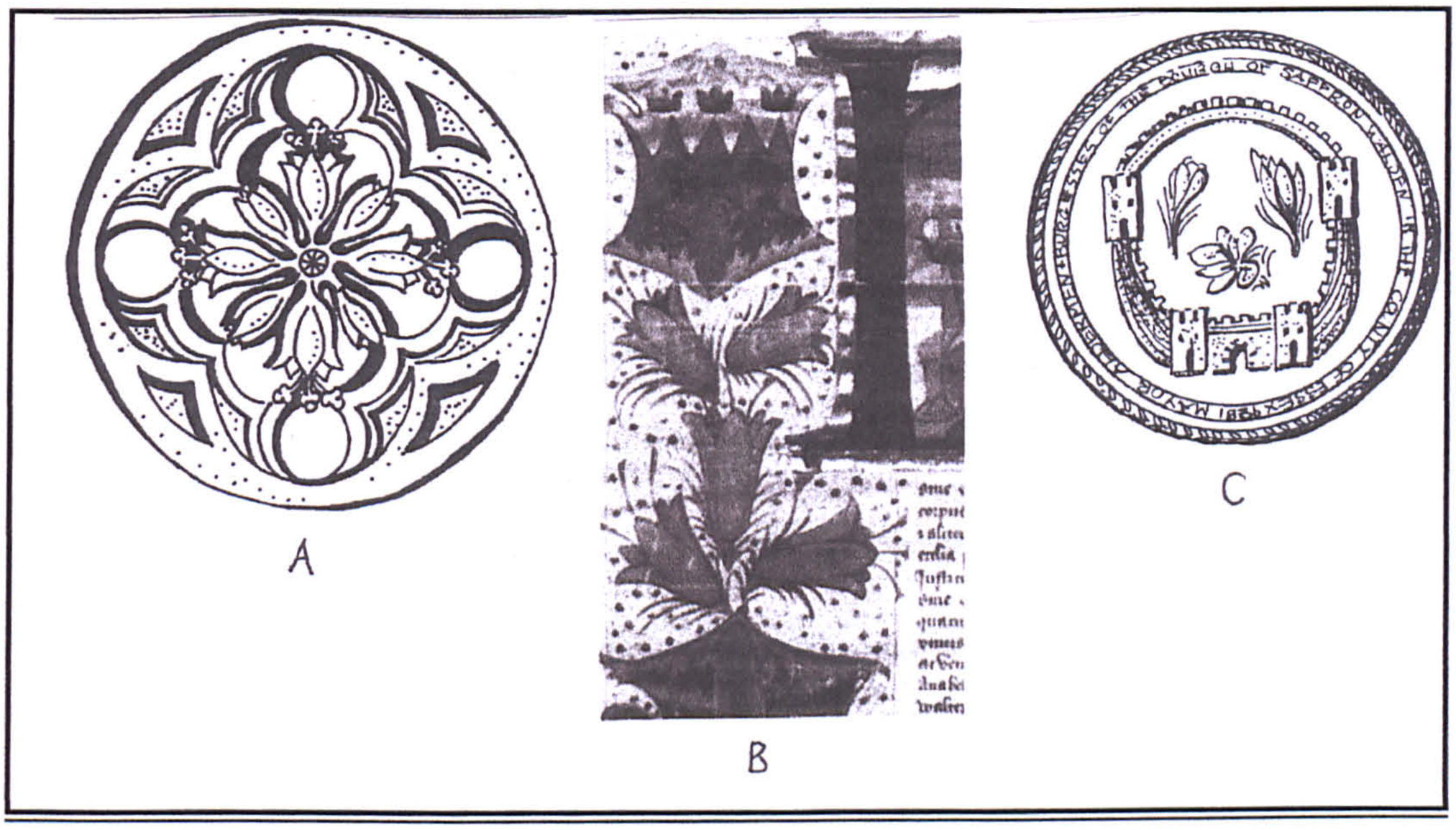
360 Coppock, *Crocus*, p. 3; *VCH Essex* viii, p. 174.

361 Coppock, *Crocus*, p. 5; Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), p. 146; Martyn, *Flora*, no. 58; J. Humphries, *The Essential Saffron Companion* (London, c. 1996), p. 24.

362 Martyn, *Flora*, no. 58.

that the town 's actual role in its production was distinctive. It is likely to have profited from being one of the first vills, apparently, to adopt its cultivation and from remaining central to the main English production area. Might London's rapid expansion and demand for basic supplies have promoted, relatively close to the metropolis at Sawbridgeworth, the sixteenth-century change from growing large quantities of saffron to producing grain? This might foster the production in Walden of saffron, which, as a much more specialised crop, and of lighter weight, was particularly compatible with longer-distance trading? Was this one of London's 'distinct structural effects' on the region?[363] The relationship between saffron cultivation areas and London, over time and space, needs clarification.

Fig. 3.9. Images of saffron in Walden



A: decoration of the south aisle, about 1490; B: Holy Trinity Gild charter, 1514, border decoration; C: borough seal, 1549. Sources: J. Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p. 67; Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 112.

THE BUILDING TRADES

Walden's population may have grown considerably around or soon after the end of the fifteenth century, eventually generating demand for new building, but since much extant in the

363 *VCH Hertfordshire* iii (1912), p. 346; D. Keene, 'Changes in London's economic hinterland as indicated by debt cases in the Court of Common Pleas', in Galloway (ed.), *Trade*, pp. 59-81.

central streets is now dated after 1500, it is unlikely that extensive new work was done in the later fifteenth century, though maintenance of the existing stock would provide employment. However, considerable building work was undertaken at the church in the period. How important to the town's economy was this industry? What variety of trades was involved? How regular was employment in it?

The church would differ from domestic buildings in the balance of building skills needed. Given the lack of good building stone, domestic projects would not concern masons: foundations and lower courses used flint nodules and for repairs, which leave no record, the primary demand would be for carpenters and plasterers for the timbered lath and plaster buildings, often pargetted, still characteristic of the area's historic buildings.

Though there might be some self interest in decisions made by the elite to undertake major construction works at the church, they would surely expect that the costs could be covered. The churchwardens' accounts provide considerable detail of these, as well as of maintaining the building and its surroundings. In the first construction phase, from 1439 to about 1443, £8 7s 7d was paid for ironwork for the windows, £3 10s 9d for items including stone and boards and £2 6s 8d for hard stone. The 9s 8d for nails 'for the roof' suggests its scale, while lead to cover over 650 square feet cost £10 1s 8d.[364] Carrying, though costing much less, accounts for roughly half of all payments in these years, with consequences for employment. In a second phase of building works, between 1467 and 1470, £7 was paid for hard stone 'for the chapel of St Nicholas' and a new porch.[365] A third phase started in 1485, when a major reconstruction was planned and the churchwardens met Simon Clerk, master mason at King's,

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364 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 4r-5r; 16r; 25r; 21r; 24r; L. F. Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540: a Documentary History* (Oxford, 1967), p. 263: 1 fother (approx. 1 ton) covers c.160 sq. ft.

365 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 74r-79v.

Cambridge, and John Wastell.[366] The works themselves post-date the surviving accounts, though in 1488 forty-five tons of stone cost £7.[367]

Financing the works

How were the works financed? There was apparently considerable flexibility in the parish's providing funds. In the 1440s the high costs were addressed by the many collections, targeted for 'May' ales, made in the streets in turn and in all the subsidiary settlements: they totalled £47 7s 7d in 1442.[368] Between 1467 and 1470 costs were much less, only £18 16s 4d. Collections were now taken in the church itself, smaller sums gathered at plays and a few individuals made major contributions: John Constable junior bequeathed £5.[369] The later project's costs and funding are little recorded in the regular accounts but 14s 10d went in 1487 to 'the resceyveres for the new work of the south aisle' and most testators in the 1480s and 1490s made relevant bequests: Edward Barker in 1497 to 'the newe werke ... so that it be begonne in making within ... ten years'.[370]

Names of those donating 'as promised to the fabric' are listed, twice only: in 1445 the twenty-three sums recorded totalled £9 16s and ranged from 4d to one of 15s from John Lamberd, churchwarden 1441-3; in 1446 twelve of these paid again, considerably less.[371] Before the late 1480s, a very few, mostly very small, bequests or gifts targeted work on the fabric: in 1473 'of Gervys wife to the reparacion of the church: 3s 4d'; in 1483 'of the devotion of various for the new room in the tower: 2s'.[372] Selling off materials, new or used, contributed,

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366 J. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: a Biographical Dictionary down to 1550* (1954; Gloucester, 1984), p. 316.

367 K Dixon, *St Mary's Saffron Walden: a History and Guide* (Saffron Walden, 2000); Harvey, Architects, p. 59.

368 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.17r.

369 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 74r-84r, 15v.

370 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.140v; T/A 358/13.

371 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 27r; 23r.

372 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 86r; 126r.

including 4s for old glass and 8s for a large copper cauldron. Some gave items: Joan Warham, widow, an old lead vessel weighing forty lbs.[373]

The labour force

Turning to the labour force, over the period the largest category of worker was 'labourer'; even excluding those alternatively described as 'paver', eighteen are noted. There were sixteen carpenters, ten or eleven of each of sawyers, masons and plumbers, and the five glaziers. Pavers and tilers totalled twelve. Apart from masons, mainly present temporarily, in fifty years ninety-seven building workers were named; adding one third of the masons makes about a hundred. Assuming an average operational span of about twenty years, so allowing an 'overlap', sixty years' work was available. In any average twenty year period, then, thirty-four workers might be employed, representing, in a town of about 1650, over eight per cent of households, a little less if allowing for juveniles and some non-residents but rather more than the typical five per cent or so. At Exeter, with an expanding economy in the late Middle Ages, building workers formed ten per cent of householders.[374]

In terms of their activities, repairs provided the most regular scope for building workers, aside, perhaps, from masons. In the 1450s and up to 1466 repairs dominated expenditure, employing plumbers, glaziers, tilers, carpenters, plasterers and labourers, with additional work on paving, the clock solar, the hoist, gates and weathercock. Interior walls were whitewashed. In the new works specific trades were particularly important. Masons worked irregularly, as projects arose, but a 'house called lodge' was built in 1440-1; 5000 flat and 50 roof tiles cost £1 9s 10d.[375] This scheme was, patently, an ambitious one: already in the 1440s several masons 'in the works of the King' at Cambridge, were employed as masters. William Glanforthe worked on the porch and on the Cambridge Schools in 1467. The link with King's was re-established

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373 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 17r; 17v.

374 C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200-1520* (1989; Cambridge, 1998), p. 220; M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 164.

375 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 16r; 22r; 14r.

with an indenture and 'oblygacion' for the major rebuilding in 1485, just as John Wastell became master mason there.[376] The south aisle was completed between 1485 and 1491 but Edward Barker's 1497 will shows the new nave and clerestory work not yet started; their style and proportions closely match other grand designs, at Great St Mary's Cambridge, where Wastell is known to have worked, and at Lavenham.[377]

Building workers' supplying raw materials might expand income from wages alone. Masons' 'bargains' may have included supplying materials, though at least sometimes the churchwardens paid directly: John Wolman took £2 6s 8d to Lincolnshire to buy hard stone; for '45 tonne ston' in 1487, 'the mason' was paid out of the 'bagge' of the rood loft. Masons' 'servants' were paid direct: John Cokat had at least two simultaneously.[378] Lead was supplied by a specialist, Thomas Nolle, 'the leadman' from The Peak.[379] Though Swanson suggests that very few masons were in a position to act as independent contractors, the practice was widespread, varied between trades and was more common if the task were small. In 1467 a 'bargeyne' for the porch was made with two masons, paid for at least three months' work at a rate of about 7d per day; through them, others were paid and stone purchased but there is no evidence that their bargain required them to supply, independently, either labour or materials.[380] In the 1440s wage rates varied, presumably reflecting masons' hierarchy of skills; only one, John Wheteman, 'leyer', was distinguished according to role.

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376 Harvey, *Architects*, pp. 117, 316.

377 ECRO T/A 358/13; J. Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style* (London, 1978), pp. 217, 230.

378 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 16r; 140; 22r; 22v.

379 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.21r.

380 D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 44; H. Swanson, *Building Craftsmen in Late Medieval York*, Borthwick Papers, 63 (York, 1983), pp. 8-9; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.75r.

Tab. 3.9. Wages of masons and assistants

WAGE (pence per day)	DATE	ROLE	NUMBER IN ROLE	WAGE RANGE (pence per day)
7.46	1439-1445	master mason	3	7.3 – 8.0
6.05	1439-1445	mason	4	4.8 – 7.3
4.75	1439-1445	labourer	10	3.2 – 6.6
6.58	1454-1467	mason	5	5.6 – 7.4

Note: pence per day calculated from payment for stated number of days. Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 5v-6v; 43r-76r.

Masons were paid for seventeen, eighteen and even twenty-two weeks and rates evidently changed little over time. The only consistent increase, paid to John Cokat, can probably be explained by increased seniority. Labourers were paid on average a little over the 4d per day typical of the late fifteenth century, while many skilled craftsmen received 6d. These rates accord precisely with the often quoted 2:3 ratio, though Woodward suggests that this might become 1:2.[381]

For carpenters, 6d per day seems standard and was paid even to the undoubted master, John Thorner, in 1439 and 1440, though he received 8d in 1441. In 1440 twelve anonymous man-days' sawing was also paid at 6d per day. Carpenters apparently had superior prospects: masters might work both on commission and for a wage. John Thorner received £7 in 1440 in part payment for his 'bargain of the roof', with a further £6 3s 4d in 1441.[382]

Tab. 3.10. Payments to John Thorner, master carpenter

DATE	TOTAL PAID
1439	8s 8d
1440	£7 12s 3d
1441	£7 4s 4d
1442	£9 19s 5d

Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 4r-25r.

381 Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 207.

382 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 7r; 8r; 14r; 14v; 16v.

Thorner received sums 'for work and in final payment' and small amounts for extra tasks, such as hewing oak. In view of the 'bargeyn', his large receipts and, in contrast to the masons' situation, the lack of reference to carpenters and assistants commensurate with the scale of the works, Thorner surely employed his own workmen. His final mention was in 1448, though, interestingly, a Felicia Thorner supplied timber costing 8d in 1452.[383]

In 1489, the church tower was mended by 'a man from Newport' and 'Sturgeon and his man' were paid 7s for repairs plus 2s for boards. Sturgeon's 'man' emphasises Thorner's lack of stated assistants. 'The house that Sturgeon had' is noted. Thomas Sturgeon, chief carpenter at King's College, Cambridge, in 1443, had lived at Elsenham and perhaps, from 1460, at Newport.[384] A John Sturgeon in 1489 supervised felling for King's, at Halys Wood, Ashdon.[385] Walden church's strong connection with the masons who worked on King's was perhaps matched by the hiring of carpenters and strengthens the evidence for the prestige of the Walden project.

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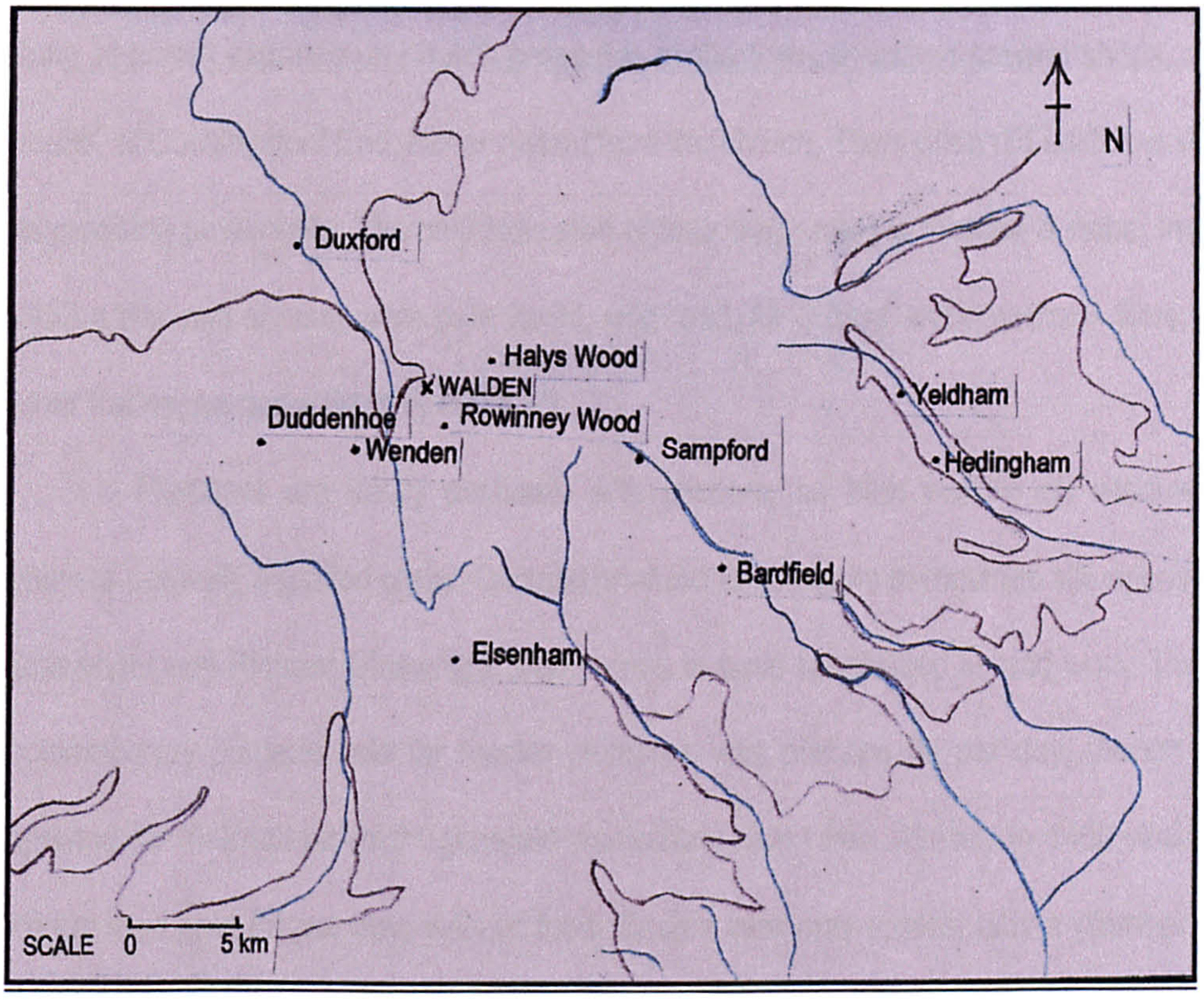
383 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.41v.

384 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 141v; 145v; Harvey, *Architects*, p. 290.

385 Lee, *Cambridge*, p. 190.

Fig. 3.10. Woods supplying timber for the church works



Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18.

Walden was well served by local woods but carrying timber, necessarily by land, was nevertheless costly: for two men carrying from Stansted and Newport in 1466 4s, plus 1s 3d expenses. Carts were generally hired and carrying was, overall, a frequent expense; the largest sum paid was 18s in 1459 plus 4s 7d expenses, for bringing nine cartloads of hard stone from Ditton.[386] In 1439 18 skeues, specially shaped stones, cost 15s, wharfage and custom was charged and William Adam earned 3s 8d for carrying two loads back.[387]

The widespread use of 'tiles' for church, houses and shops exploited the Essex clays, the sole suppliers to Walden church in the period John de Manuden and Harry Reymond of Radwinter.[388] Tilers were paid frequently for small tasks, such as work on two shops for 2s, and

386 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 71r; 53r.

387 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.7v.

388 H. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: an Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 85; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.127v.

on the north door and the lodge. In 1490 'Sym' tiled the church house for 1s 8d.[389] Work was done at parish expense on church properties in the town, including several shops, and also a house, at Cuckingstool End, rather distant from the church. Tilers often did such low-skilled work as repairing pavements. The only indication of their wage rates in Walden is rather imprecise: in 1483 a tiler and servant were paid 1s 9d, with food, for 2 days' work; perhaps tilers, like many other trades, earned a 6d daily wage.[390]

Plumbers are easily confused with glaziers, as both worked on windows, though glaziers normally supplied glass. Occupational surnames were sometimes still apposite: Walter Glaswright and Richard Glaswright, who seems to have specialised in lead work. The standard contemporary summer rate for master plumbers was perhaps 6d per day, though an erratic demand for their labour might generate particularly high rates. Already in 1456 Walden's John Ponde was paid 8d per day, without food. Such a rate may explain why a plumber, paid 12d daily in 1476 for 'mending leads', came from Thaxted, seven miles away.[391] They apparently came an especially long distance during major construction phases: from Mildenhall in 1440, Cambridge in 1489, and from Colchester, William Plummer, in 1465.[392] This may represent a specialist class of 'master plumbers', working mainly higher in the urban hierarchy, as some masons did: Walden's prestige projects presumably prompted the employment of a plumber of status exceptional for this size of town, whose mobility might be comparable to that implicit for a much more specialised trade: 'clockmakers' came from Newmarket, Biggleswade and Colchester.[393] Of course, Walden specialists worked elsewhere, for example glaziers at Hinton and Billericay.[394] Frequent, often repair, work on windows sometimes involved considerable

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389 ECRO D/DBy Q18. f.148v.

390 ECRO D/DBy Q18. f.127v.

391 ECRO D/DBy Q18. fols 48r; 109v.

392 Swanson, *Artisans*, p. 95; Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 43; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 12r; 141r; 67r.

393 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 109v; 91r; 61r.

394 Lee, *Cambridge*, p.191; ECRO D/DBy m.7 12 May 1457.

sums: 8s in 1444 and 6s 8d in 1450. Richard Rekefer, the smith, was paid 13s 4d in 1442 for 'ironwork for the new west window', presumably of the new aisle, later pargetted.[395]

'Foreign' workers' employment questions the adequacy of the resident supply. Were the same small groups of craftsmen employed year after year, as Woodward suggests of institutions? Of course, names may be duplicated but the maximum number of years' employment recorded is thirteen: Richard Glaswright, soldering and working lead, and Thomas Rede, paving, repairing battlements and digging buttress foundations. Next are John Pollard, mason, eight years, William Tyler, paving, five years and William Benyte, sawyer/labourer, five, but most names appear in no more than three or four.[396] Availability must be relevant to the frequent changes of manpower: labouring was, in any case, often undertaken temporarily and the abbey's building works might draw to some extent on the same pool of labour, while smaller employers could not pay such consistent wage rates, though they might pay in kind.[397] Do the changes reflect an ample choice among large numbers available for work? Presumably there was a tension between known and trusted workers and, with increasingly mobile labour and high real wages, some from elsewhere. Competition with Cambridge probably raised rates, at least for the sufficiently highly skilled and/or specialised. While a standard rate applied to most skilled building craftsmen in contemporary northern England, the 1444/5 Act's provision of a maximum of 5.5d in summer, without food, for freemasons and master carpenters and of 4.5d for others was, clearly, exceeded at Walden. Ultimately, in 1495, de facto rates were recognised, laying down for all building craftsmen a maximum 6d per day in summer, though master carpenters with six or more men could get 7d.[398]

Though most workers were hired by the day, the many masons employed for a term were paid weekly: John Wolman for 17 weeks 4 days received 3s 8d per week. A six day week

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395 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 26v; 38v; 21r; pargetting is plastering, sometimes decorated.

396 Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 207, 164.

397 Dyer, *Standards*, pp. 220-1.

398 Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 40.

was normal: John Charman, labourer, worked a total of 4 weeks 5 days at 2s 0d per week and was paid 9s 8d. John Pollard's 'helper', perhaps more skilled, was paid 6d per day. When demesne farmer John Rutland in 1484 thatched a barn, the roofer received 6d per day, the assistant 4d. Additional 'perks' included gloves for a plumber.[399]

The 1445 Act forbade payment for holidays, which perhaps affected the pattern around 1440, when John Wolman was paid for, for example, a week, five days, three days, a week, perhaps fitting with holy days in that year. Longer days naturally allowed more work in summer, though perhaps winter conditions raised rates. Which complementary occupations could, in practice, be pursued locally in winter? Consumer spending would have most potential but also many calls on it after harvest, including the relatively short days from mid-November onwards. The skin and leather processing crafts would be active; there would be extra victualling for Christmas, with by-employment in brewing anyway commonplace; in mid-fifteenth century York it involved both glaziers and masons.[400]

Builders, among the poorest urban craftsmen, sometimes received the large bonus of food and drink. Twice this is noted for Walden men working away: in the 1440s at the woods including Halys (Ashdon), Hedingham, and Sampford, bread, ale, meat and cheese were provided at a cost of £2 18s; at Bardfield and Duddenhoe, bread, mutton, ale, beef and cheese cost 13s 1d. (Fig. 3.8) Celebrations also brought material blessings: for the 'raising' of the lodge 'the carpenter of the church' received 3s 11d for 41 bushels of malt to brew, plus small amounts for wheat, bread, oatmeal and salt, and, later, sums varying from 5d to 3s for herring, stockfish, butter and meat.[401] That it was September when such a significant point was reached conforms with the dates of making payments, before the more difficult conditions of late autumn: none was made in the winter. In 1442, dates ranged from 11 June to 29 September. In 1445 John

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399 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 5v; 6v; 56v; 25r; D/DBy m.9 Sep. 1484.

400 Swanson, *York*, p. 31.

401 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 13r; 13v; 24v.

Cokat was paid for three weeks' work 'before autumn' and on 13 September, 16 October and around 1 November.[402]

No pattern emerges in individuals' pay in relation to food. Some payments were expressly without: 8d per day to John Ponde for repairing plumbing. In others an unspecified rate included food: carpenter John Pygge received £1 16s 4d 'with food' for making a cross on the bell tower.[403] However, Thomas Cowper, cutting timber, received 10d plus 6d for food; two men 1s 7d plus 8d for food and John Maygood 6s 2d, plus 3s 2d for food, for setting up gates. These represent increases of 60 per cent, 42 per cent and 51 per cent respectively, in the case of Maygood transforming his 4d wage rate into the equivalent of 6d without food.[404]

The building industry: conclusion

How significant was the building industry for the town's economy in this period? As well as the obvious importance of work on the church building, some must have been needed to maintain private houses and the almshouse and to build the apparently few new properties or extensions in the town as a whole, including a small number of shops and stalls for the parish.[405]

The financing of large and high quality building works testifies to availability of funding among the townspeople, even if initially on a credit basis. That support was broadly based is demonstrated by the large sums collected in the streets and even by the few pence from individuals. The impact of making the improvements must have been quite distinct as between, broadly, the workers and the elite. For craftsmen and labourers routine work on the building provided intermittent employment but the three substantial construction phases would significantly boost their prosperity, with even a daily rate of 4d more than adequate to feed a family of four. For the elite, with 'outside' connections, a major advantage of the church

402 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 22r; 22v.
403 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 48r; 48v.
404 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols. 20v; 45v; 46r.
405 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 20r; 139v.

improvements would be a boost to the town's and hence their own prestige, which also, though less immediately, would serve to promote their economic interests.

CONCLUSION

From the varieties of evidence considered, what conclusions can be drawn about the state of the town's economy, in particular by 1489?

Walden's natural advantages of location in relation to routeways enabled easy access to London and Cambridge and the diverse pays of its hinterland allowed the mitigation of the relative decline of arable by focusing on the barley malt trade and exploiting the livestock and leather trades, which were particularly buoyant in the area. Though the textile trades are evident, they seem insufficiently dominant to categorise it a 'wool town'. In the Suffolk cloth area, individual vills within the large cloth-producing area developed dominant specialisms: Boxford and Bures, for example, concentrated on particular processes: Boxford has been described as a specialised weaving centre.[406] At Walden, while the number of those described as 'dyer' is unremarkable, the existence of numerous dyehouses, some in the hands of fullers, suggests that the actual process of dyeing formed a major constituent, perhaps specialism, of the textile trades there.

The town's locational advantages included tying into established trading networks, some already controlled by Londoners. Such 'foreigners' associated, surely including in the gild, with the local elite, including mercers and drapers, and are very likely to have managed the burgeoning production of saffron, traded outside the town, but whose impact is clearly witnessed in the use of its image from the late fifteenth century by parish, gild and town. The high cost of this definitively cash crop implied specialist and prosperous customers and this, along with the

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[406] At Bures, six sevenths of 'cloth households' were fullers and Boxford had thirty-seven weavers, compared with only fourteen among cloth occupations at Lavenham, a much bigger town. Betterton and Dymond, *Industrial Town* , p. 39.

town's location within the area most suited to its production, seems likely to have played a prominent part in improving Walden's economic standing among the region's towns.

Walden's debt plea numbers were much higher from the late 1450s. This relatively short-lived phase probably reflects a credit crisis and the period of general mid-century depression. The decreased numbers in the 1470s would then suggest a degree of recovery.[407] Many of the factors considered suggest Walden was well placed in terms of diversification and contacts. However, land market activity continued to increase throughout the period: its distinct trajectory might represent a mixture of motives, allowing for the poorer selling, leasing or mortgaging their land so as to buy food or to pay off debts, including mortgages.[408] If the timing of the phase of many debt pleas represented depression, the land market's response to it continued after trading activity had recovered.

The undertaking of major church building work suggests confidence by an elite and was perhaps a deliberate attempt to boost the economy, the latter characterised by the intensification of saffron production, investment by outsiders, particularly Londoners, and the increasing role, surely including in networking, of the gild.[409] Saffron trading in fact provides an extreme example of the increasing intervention by London merchants in the hinterlands of provincial centres, which fostered specialisation, as it had done at Thaxted and Wycombe, but which may have weakened their influence over their natural hinterlands, so limiting their market's scope; at Walden this may well have helped prompt the 1496 appeal and reference to competition from Newport.[410] That the prime production area was, necessarily, limited assured some prosperity, so long as specialised, relatively buoyant markets elsewhere existed, thus reducing the town's dependence on the condition of its client area, much of which was ideally

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407 Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 208; Dyer, 'Peasant land market'.

408 Whittle, *Agrarian Capitalism*, pp. 123, 175-7.

409 The long-established Gild of Our Lady of Pity apparently ceded precedence to the Holy Trinity Gild at the latter's foundation in 1514.

410 D. Keene, 'The south-east of England', in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* i, p. 564; Galloway, 'Town and country' , p. 130; Rowntree, *Saffron Walden*, p.13.

suited to saffron production, however. The elite, whose power was recognised by the gild's incorporation in 1514, acknowledged the significance of saffron by the ornament of its charter.[411]

[411] The role of the gild is discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION

Society of the period has been characterised either as predominantly stable, orderly and self-regulating or as reflecting significant tension and conflict.

Those emphasizing stability in late medieval society point to an acceptance of just rule by the better sort, to the role of traditional bonds of lordship and deference and to craft and household loyalties as potentially countering tension. The hierarchy was reinforced by religious structures, which supported a coherent ordering of society, and so in fact underpinned social and political inequalities. While those best able to bear the cost administered justice, gilds helped resolve conflict by arbitration among those of status to belong, while avoiding the courts. The entrepreneur's role, perhaps particularly prominent in the cloth industry, might be a harmonizing force: relating to masters in other occupations cut across the formality of social structure, though this surely both acted within a limited social range, only, and was more relevant to larger towns.[412] Townspeople's sense of community fostered involvement in both fraternities and parish, potentially mitigating tensions; when, as at Walden, there were several manors and few formal institutions, the parish was an important common context in social, ritual and fund-raising activity. At Walden a major church building programme provided scope for involvement by many, from donors and testators, contributing widely varying amounts, to carvers and glaziers and also carters and labourers.

Various sources of conflict in late medieval urban society have been identified. Discrepancies in wealth and status threatened social stability and values were not shared.

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412 Those seeing stability and order include S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977); C. V. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979); G. Rosser, 'The essence of medieval urban communities: the vill of Westminster 1200-1540', *Trans RHS*, 34 (1984), pp. 216-238.

Allocation of taxes and election to office might well be divisive. Alehouses and lesser inns might foster disorder and so sabotage discipline within the labour force.

The scale of the town is relevant. Within small-town society the implicit personal contact, through making a living and, for example, in ale houses, games and informal groups, was likely greatly to influence social relations, for better or worse. Places such as Pershore (Worcestershire) had lost the solidarity of peasant communities without yet developing the means of social control operative in urban societies.[413]

In the mid-late fifteenth century Walden's character was evolving, with changes in landholding and the economic base surely challenging the status quo and potentially increasing tensions, in the short term, at least.There was an increasing number of external contacts: a comparison of the number of 'outside' vills named in the court records of the years 1439-45, 1459-6 and 1479-85 suggests that while in each of the first two periods about 100 names were cited, this number rose to about 125 in the 1480s span. Furthermore, of these, fifty per cent related to vills that do not border Walden, whereas only forty per cent did so in the two previous periods; a particularly noticeable increase was in contact with London and Cambridge. Additionally, the number of those coming into the town, at least temporarily, and including many relatively poor, would be boosted by saffron production and likely to put pressure on existing structures and interpersonal relations.

GOVERNMENT AND OLIGARCHY

Rigby suggests that self-regulation and stability were associated with urban growth, while tension and conflict, with oligarchy and close corporation, characterised decline. He

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413 Commentators stressing conflict include; R. H. Hilton, 'The small town as part of peasant society' in idem, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 76-94; idem, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society* (Cambridge, 1992); C. Dyer, 'Small towns 1270-1540' in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* I, *600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 505-537; idem, 'Small-town conflict in the later middle ages: events at Shipston-on-Stour', *Urban History*, 19 (1992), pp. 183-209; H. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: an Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 107-26; eadem, *Medieval British Towns* (Basingstoke, 1999); S. H. Rigby, 'Urban "oligarchy" in late medieval England', in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 62-86.

proposes that government was an uneasy alliance of rule by the rich and authority drawn from the community: custom implied the tacit consent of the people, with town by-laws and ordinances demanding burgesses' explicit assent. Was there, at this period, less scope for at least some degree of supervision of rulers, government becoming more oligarchical, promoting exclusion and potential for dissent?[414]

At Walden, firm administrative control, despite the physical remoteness of the lord, may have been encouraged by recent and current Lollard activity locally and by changes in the economy. Any population expansion, enabling the lord to keep both rents and servile obligations at a relatively high level, would strengthen the position of jurors.[415]

The popular power whose impact was demonstrated by Walden's burgesses' successful 1425 challenge to the lord's assertion of custom notably excluded non-burgesses.[416] Furthermore, one might expect the dissatisfactions so evident here in 1381 to have on-going repercussions, perhaps exacerbated in Walden since, thirty years before the Holy Trinity Gild formally assumed power, a fraternity, influential through owning considerable property, may already have been making decisions implemented through the lord's officials and court, as at Stratford.[417] Walden may echo the phenomenon of gilds merchants' assumption of governing powers leading inevitably to domination by their interests: Hilton finds that they wanted close control of craftsmen, who supplied their demands and enabled them to serve as middlemen in long distance trade. Walden's Holy Trinity Gild's rise to power seems to parallel that of specialised saffron production, where merchant middlemen formed a crucial link between producer and consumer.[418]

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414 C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition?: Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), p. 56; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, p. 137; S. H. Rigby and E. Ewan, 'Government, power and authority 1300-1540', in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* i, pp. 291-312; S. H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull, 1993), pp. 109-112.

415 Evidence for assessing Walden's population is discussed in Chapter Six.

416 see Chapter Two.

417 C. Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford: a successful small town', in R. Bearman (ed.),*The History of an English Borough:Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 43-64. At Stratford, the gild invested in houses and shops and spent on public buildings. It became the town's shadow government: its leaders formed most of the lord's administration.

418 Hilton, 'Small town' pp. 76-94; idem, *English and French Towns*, pp. 58, 72.

Government structures and lordship in Walden

In 1438 Chepyng Walden was a seigneurial borough of the Duchy of Lancaster under Henry VI and under his successors was vested in the Crown. Lordship was exercised via a steward through Chepyng Walden's manorial court, with jurisdiction over the borough as well as 'the foreign'.[419] The urban boundaries must have been clear to contemporaries: assault occurred 'infra burgum'; an ordinance prohibited knackering within the town limits.[420] While the churchwardens' 'the town is agreed [funds] should go to the work of the new aisle' might be an imprecise reference to the parish as a whole, a formally distinct structure is suggested by the churchwardens' 1451 payment of 20d: 'data per concilium ville clerico de Storteford'.[421] The 'burgage', the body of burgesses established by the borough's charter, whose clerk was mentioned in the almshouse ordinances of 1400, could not, presumably, be described as a council. The body of chief pledges, perhaps equivalent to the 'probi homines', seems a more likely candidate.[422] When serving as leet jurors, in deciding what presentments to make, and distinguishing any concerns demanding referral to the hundred court or the royal justices, they were powerful influences in social control. At Walden, they apparently both chose the leet's affeerors from among themselves and elected not only ale tasters, bread weighers and supervisors of meat and fish but also constables, with separate ones for Little Walden, and perhaps Sewards End, which have discrete sections in the leet records. Manorial court affeerors were chosen from those attending that court. For established disputes the steward called an inquest jury representing the whole homage, while new cases arising were selected and judgement on them made by presentment juries of about a dozen mainly unfree tenants, appointed by the messor.

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419 M. White, *Saffron Walden's History: a Chronological Compilation* (Saffron Walden, 1991), p. 27.

420 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Nov. 1438, m.9 Jul. 1483.

421 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 139v, 40r.

422 F. W. Steer 'The statutes of the Saffron Walden almshouses', *TEAS*, 25 (1958), p. 181; probi homines: the acknowledged trustworthy.

In the later fifteenth century the formal privileges of Walden's burgesses, as such, were strictly limited: from 1402 the right to elect the bailiff of the market, now at farm, from among themselves, retention of fees from the pie powder court and freedom from toll, relief, and heriot.[423] Extant records of Walden manor/borough court include a July view of frankpledge with assize of bread and ale and election of chief pledges and affeerors and a December 'great court', with assize, election of lesser officers and appointment of rent collectors. The steward, appointed by the royal lord, was, unsurprisingly, an 'estate official', based elsewhere, for example in 1461 Thomas Montgomery, kt, also at Havering, 1461-72.[424] A common fine of £1 12s was recorded consistently, so could not now represent a levy on every male in the frankpledge, despite the churchwardens' reference to 'headborough silver'.[425]

Contrary to trends elsewhere, payment of chevage, heriot and merchet occurred throughout the period, as did suit of mill and demand for some labour services.[426] Though only in 1549 did Walden become a corporate town, with treasurer, two chamberlains, twenty-four assistants and full control of the market by burgesses, the charters establishing the Holy Trinity Gild in 1514 and granting privileges in the market and mills suggest that in the later fifteenth century a gild, probably the Gild of Our Lady of Pity, which controlled the properties granted for maintaining the almshouse and to which several testators bequeathed, may already effectively have served the more prosperous as a rehearsal for government.[427] In towns without constitutional means of self-government, the elite, with their influence over the courts, especially as chief pledges, might in the gild establish both policy and perhaps some spirit of community and strengthen their autonomy from the lord's steward.[428] While potentially both building

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423 eg. ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1452; D. Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden 1381-1420, a study from the court rolls', *Essex Journal*, 2 (1967) pp. 104-113, 122-139, 181-186.

424 M. K. McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: the Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 271.

425 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.89r.

426 eg. ECRO: merchet: D/By m.7 May 1460; heriot: D/By m.7 Dec. 1459; suit: D/By m.10 Sep. 1488.

427 White, *Saffron Walden*, p. 36; ECRO D/B 2/BRE1/8; D/B 2/BRE1/5; D/B 2/BRE1/6. These properties passed to the corporate town after 1549. Geoffrey Symond, 'heyreman', bequeathed to Our Lady of Pity Gild in 1481: ECRO D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1.

428 R. H. Hilton, 'Medieval market towns and simple commodity production', *Past and Present*, 109 (1985), pp. 3-23.

solidarity and defusing situations of conflict, the gild was, however, surely likely to reinforce social and political distinctions.

The practice of government in Walden

The exercise of power might be affected by both individuals and wider influences. In a small town, the omnipresent visibility of the de facto rulers hints that personal acquaintance might be exploited by vested interests, affecting the impartiality of judgements. In contrast to Westminster, where the Abbey's economic patronage sapped any impulse to rebel against its role as seigneur, Walden's lordship's overall impact on its economy is unclear.[429] Might its physical remoteness, along with its large scale, potentially have allowed governors, or dissidents, or both more discretion and hence more power?

Predictably, wealth-based national legislation led to prosecutions: Thomas Clerk for keeping ferrets, John Lord and John Reche for keeping hunting dogs while lacking property worth 40s per annum.[430] Exceptional circumstances led to referral to the lord's council, for instance concerning breaking his liberty or privilege: a chapman of Thaxted arrested a Walden tenant, without any warrant; John Burgh, husbandman, unjustly imprisoned Thomas Stoneley, tenant of the Earl of Essex. A serious lack of respect for the authority of the court was another trigger: those ordered to leave the town because of Lollard activities failed to do so and the court chamber in the manor house, at farm, was neglected and became 'ruinous'.[431]

In this period the self-confidence of the burgesses and attitudes to lordship might be influenced by both the memory of victory in 1425 and the fact that the steward had authority over many manors, which might discourage him from focussing his attention on Walden and its problems. There is no evidence of the potential conflict that Rigby finds in both the election of

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429 G. Rosser, 'Westminster', p. 222.

430 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1478; Jul. 1472.

431 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Dec. 1457; May 1458; m. 8 Jul. 1465; Sep. 1477.

officers and assessing lawful charges, and in the degree of popular involvement in town government, though it may lie hidden below the surface.[432]

Conflict with lordship remained, however. The lord defended his rights. In 1488 four of the elite, namely the farmer of Walden demesne, William Bird the prosperous mercer, the hayward/messor and the farmer of the windmill were presented for failing to pay their dues to the Duchy.[433] There were further breaches of the lord's liberty: in 1458 the bailiff of Ashdon had summoned William Stokiner to appear in the hundred court to respond to Thomas Colle concerning trespass. This seems an instance of a jurisdictional conflict of interest, the leet seeking to defend its right to distinguish a minor from a major offence. In other such breaches of the lord's liberty, Walden men brought prosecutions in Cambridge's Stourbridge Fair court, while Thomas George senior used the ecclesiastical court 'against the ordinances'. In many places Briggs has found in this period an increased incidence of new by-laws against pursuing prosecutions elsewhere.[434]

A disregard for authority is a further sign of assertiveness, causing conflict. There were physical attacks on officers: on a constable, on the messor attempting to distrain goods and on the bailiff of the market. John Everard used a bow and arrow against John Epford, who was serving as night watchman.[435] Unsurprisingly, officials were frequently abused verbally: Henry Caron, a night walker, vilified Thomas Chapman and other summer night watchmen; John Wakke, messor, was insulted by John Lyon, tailor and by three men together and was assaulted by another. Other challenges queried the probity of the leet's elected jurors: in a single court Thomas George said Robert Semar, John Barker, fisher, and other jurors committed 'falsehood and perjury' for finding against him in a suit for arrears; John Gerland, guilty of trespass and

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432 see Chapter Two: 'Walden in 1440'; Rigby, 'Urban oligarchy'.

433 CCR 1488.

434 ECRO D/DBy m. 7 Jul. 1458; m.6 Jul. 1448; m.7 Dec. 1456; C. D. Briggs, 'Seignorial control of villagers' litigation beyond the manor in later medieval England', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), pp. 399-422.

435 ECRO D/DBy m 5 Jul. 1440; m.6 Jun. 1446; m.8 Jul. 1470; m.6 Jul. 1448.

previously amerced 3s 4d, said that all on the inquisition were false. Both were in contempt.[436] In 1464 John Reymond, dyer, making a similar challenge, was amerced 12d. He was a particularly troublesome tenant, with numerous amercements between 1442 and 1472 and exemplifies the potential, in a relatively small town, for a few individuals to make a relatively large impact.[437]

Attempt at distraint by officials of the manor court was often unsuccessful: Thomas George recovered 9s worth of meat taken by the messor for the receiver of the Duchy. The market bailiff's authority was challenged, as when John Taylor repossessed a horse, seized by John Henham because of an unpaid debt.[438]

Following either warning or an actual penalty, for example for non-attendance as a juror, playing handball or gaming, there were many failures to amend behaviour: John Reymond, dyer, continued unlawfully to keep balances for weighing wool; in 1489, after previous warning, sixteen people were amerced 6s 8d each and three 10s each for using their hand mills and horse mills, respectively, instead of the lord's mill. These may effectively have been licence payments, as with those for brewing, for example. The offenders included such members of the elite as William Middleton, chief pledge, receiver for the new work of the south aisle in 1488 and churchwarden in the 1480s, John Taylor, chief pledge 1488, and Christine Rutland, probably wife of John, yeoman, bailiff of the Honour of Mandeville, who had a shop in the market in 1489.[439]

The jurors, mainly from the upper ranks of Walden's artisans and traders, and, with a vested interest in the town's efficient functioning, prosecuted on public health grounds for failure to maintain drainage ditches, for polluting streams or blocking roads. Thomas Burneby, whitawyer, was amerced for making pits for fetid skins. A widespread trend developing as cause

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436 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1465; m.8 Spring 1474; Feb. 1468; m.6 Jul. 1445.

437 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1464.

438 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1462; Jun. 1472.

439 ECRO D/DBy m.10 Sep. 1489; C. Dyer, pers. comm; e.g. ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.123r; ECRO D/DBy m.10 Sep. 1488; Jul. 1489.

for concern was reflected in 1447 when Thomas Cooper, common labourer, would not work unless paid 4d per day.[440]

Consistent with a general fifteenth-century increase in use of by-laws, the chief pledges responded to breaches of regulations and standards of behaviour and to threats to peace and order by making new ordinances, some as instances arose. They tried, for example, to control pigs wandering or to prohibit knackering within the town limits, under a penalty of 6s 8d.[441] Though there may be an actual rise in numbers of matters of concern, increased zeal by prosecutors may have caused the rise in number of stated offences.

New ordinances elsewhere usually state 'ordained by common consent' or 'ordered by all inhabitants of the vill'. Here, in contrast, we have the comparatively autocratic, 'all the chief pledges', specifically, though once, in 1480, prefaced 'by agreement of the whole community of the town'. Notably, quoting an existing ordinance may cite 'the whole homage', in 1485, for example.[442] Of six new ordinances recorded in the extant rolls, only those of 1478 and 1484 addressed order issues: in 1478 an amercement of 20s was established for anyone asked by the constables to keep the peace or to help them and 'not willing to do so', this acknowledging that the authority of the courts had been seriously challenged. The 1484 issue, possibly related, concerned gaming. Although such matters as scolding, unruly houses, immigrants and eavesdropping led to prosecutions, at Walden they were not the subject of new ordinances.[443]

The level of amercements might be expected to reflect the seriousness of the offence, the track record of the offender and the court's view of it, which might change.[444] Minor amercements, as usual, applied to theft and hamsoken, mostly 3d or 4d; scolding 2d to 4d; night walking, despite connotations sometimes seen as threatening, 3d or 4d; hedge breaking 1d or 2d, allowing for presumably poor defendants. Nor was common assault punished severely: of

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440 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1453; Jul. 1454; m.8 Jul. 1476; m.6 Jul. 1447.

441 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1465; m.9 Jul. 1483.

442 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1480; m.10 Jul. 1485.

443 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1478; m.9 Jul. 1484.

444 In this section, the response of government is analysed. In 'Misbehaviour', trends in patterns of offence are considered.

two hundred distinct amercements between 1440 and 1488, almost all were for 1d to 4d. The few for 6d related to attacks on a constable and a visitor from another vill.[445] However, challenging authority was dealt with more severely: vilification of officials attracted a 12d penalty, as did failing for three weeks to keep the watch. The breaking of the stocks to release their captive, so subverting a very evident symbol of authority, also attracted 12d and, in imposing an amercement of 3s 4d, the court clearly viewed seriously both eavesdropping on the leet's affeerors in council and participating in or harbouring gaming, against a recent ordinance. Its concern about sexual licence is shown by a threatened penalty of 20s for a 'whore' to leave the town, for about a week, and against keepers of a bawdy house.[446]

In general, where the nature of offences remained constant, little change in amercement levels is evident over the whole period. From 1450 to 1480 no prosecutions were brought for either outdoor games or indoor gaming, but amercements for playing handball in the 1440s, 2d to 6d, were matched by those in the 1480s for playing cards and other 'illicit games' indoors, even though these might seem more threatening because more covert. However, the parliamentary Statute of 1477/8 had addressed widespread new concern. Harbouring gamers subsequently attracted severe punishments, presumably, as McIntosh suggests for other places, reflecting Walden's chief pledges' anxiety about public order and that prosperity might be threatened by gambling and loss of working time: in each of the three years 1484-6 either penalties of 20s were threatened or amercements of 3s 4d imposed.[447]

Common assault was presented throughout the period. However, the number of cases per court in the sample years 1480-8 is much smaller than in 1440-8 and 1458-65, suggesting a change in official attitudes. Average amercements in the 1480s regained the levels of the 1440s.

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445 e.g. ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440; m.9 Jul. 1484.

446 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1445; m.8 Jul. 1464; m.6 Jul. 1448; m.10 Jul. 1486; m.8 Jul. 1481; m.10 Jul. 1488.

447 M. K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 96-101; ECRO D/DBy m.9 Jul. 1484; Jul. 1485; Jul. 1486.

Tab. 4.1. Assault cases

Date	No. of courts	No. of assaults	Assaults per court	No. of amercements	Tot. charged, pence	Av. amercement, pence
1440-8	9	91	10.1	88	248	2.82
1458-65	7	67	9.57	75	170	2.26
1480-8	7	38	5.43	42	118	2.80

Source D/DBy m.5-10. Note: no. - number; tot. - total; av. – average.

The effectiveness of government

The elite may have had very limited resources for imposing order, as suggested at the town of Westminster by a great repetition of charges, demonstrating problems in enforcing rules.[448] Walden's records may also be tested in this respect.

Twenty-three debt cases were heard in December 1474. Eighteen of these had been heard before: for two this was the eighth time, for one each the sixth, the fifth and the fourth and for four the third. This persistence occurred despite distraint and attachment to respond.

In 1485, John Plomer allowed 'illicit' games in his house, against the by-laws of 1484 forbidding them under a penalty of 20s; he was amerced only 1s 8d. Again, in 1486, he, with three others, played illicit games in John Lawsell's house. Each, including the host, was amerced 3s 4d this time, perhaps a deliberate tightening up but still the 20s penalty was not imposed.[449]

Throughout Walden's records, occupying property without a licence prompted amercement. In 1481 it was applied to many apparently for the first time, including many who had held office between 1470 and 1475.[450] There is no apparent difference in status between those not paying the due entry fine, even for fourteen or seventeen months, and those,

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448 Rosser, 'Westminster'.

449 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1474; m.9 Jul. 1484; m.10 Jul. 1485; Jul. 1486.

450 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1481.

sometimes the same people, who paid at what is apparently the next, or next but one, court, so in perhaps three or six months' time.

Tab. 4.2. Entry fines for occupying property

Date	Number of courts with records extant	Total number cases	Of total cases, number paying entrance fine	Number paying fine at apparent next court	Average delay, fine eventually paid, months	Number cases incomplete	Minimum delay, incomplete cases, months
Jan. 1440-Dec. 1441	10	12	7	3 of 7	5.14	5	7.2
Dec. 1461-Sep. 1464	11	19	17	7 of 17	5.88	2	10
Mar. 1480-Dec. 1482	11	27	13	9 of 13	4.77	14	10.29

Note: no. - number; min. - minimum; There may have been courts whose records are not extant. Source: ECRO D/DBy m 5-m.10.

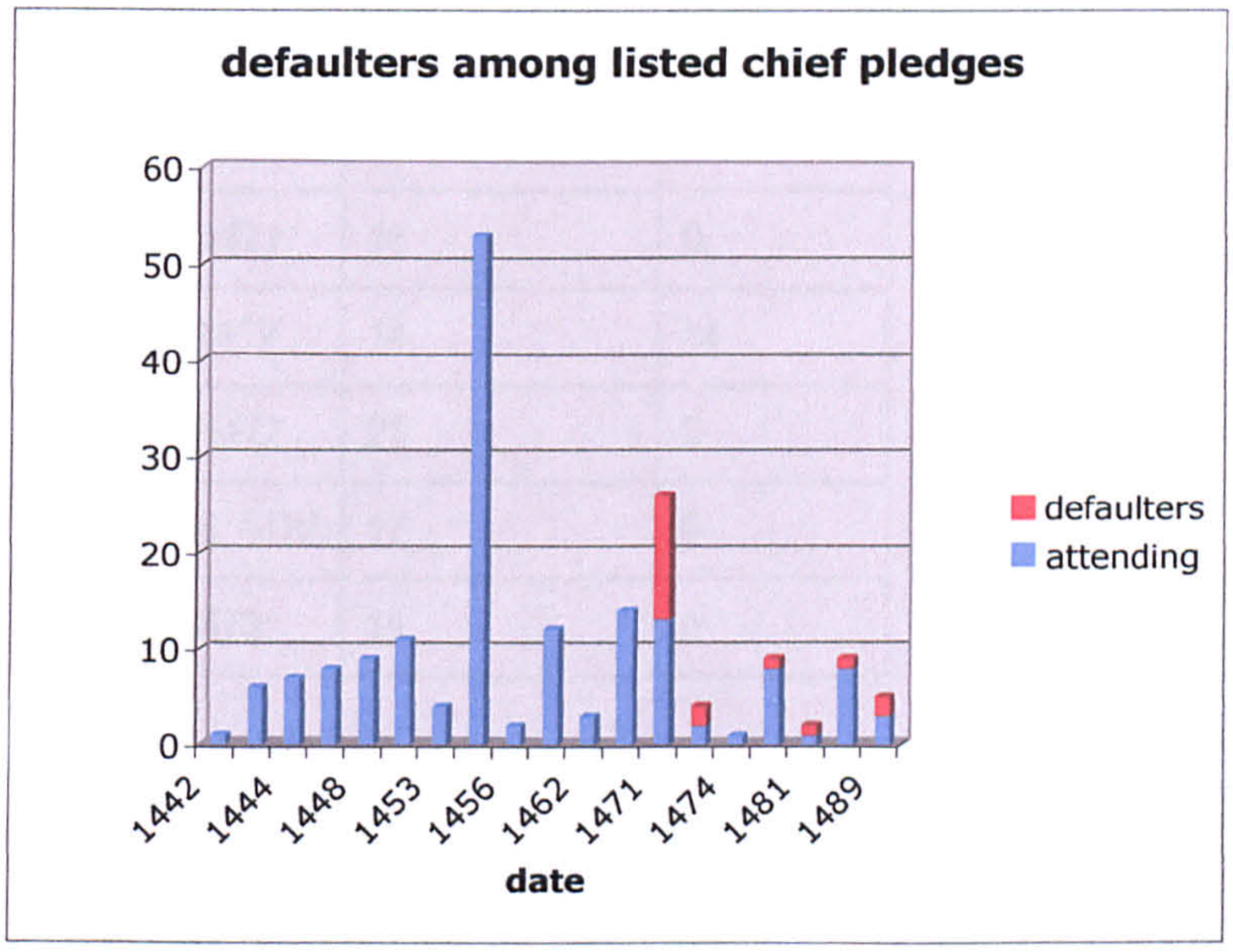
While this may suggest that by this stage the effectiveness of the courts in extracting such dues was decreasing, there appears also to be an increased polarisation, between the number paying at the succeeding court and the number holding out for a lengthy period.

A weakening in the power of established structures is demonstrated by a rise in absenteeism among jurors. Chief pledges, who made presentments, were named very intermittently, in very variable numbers.[451] In 1471 six defaulted, including Robert Wolston, innkeeper, and John Newton senior, glazier, high status figures, as were such subsequent defaulters as John Bird, mercer, and John Bright, barber; seven others elected at the previous leet failed to attend to take up the office. Members of the latter group were amerced variously,

[451] J. Kermode 'Obvious observations on the formation of oligarchies in late medieval English towns' in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 87-106; while at leet courts elsewhere a jury of twelve adjudicated, the relationship between jurors and chief pledges in Walden is unclear: in surviving rolls, jurors are not clearly distinguished. In 1455 (ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1455), fifty-three chief pledges are listed, unusually within the roll itself; possibly ten are marked out distinctly as jurors. In 1523 (ECRO D/DBy m.18 Mar. 1523), however, all twenty-three names heading the roll are annotated 'juror'.

from 6d for John Barker, fishmonger, to 3d for Thomas Carow, turner.[452] While before 1470 none was recorded as defaulting, it seems that in the 1470s and 1480s the court's prestige and the power of the lord's steward had become less secure and the chief pledges had the confidence to disregard them.

Fig. 4.1. Chief pledges defaulting



Source: ECRO D/DBY m.6-m.10.

452 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1471.

Tab. 4.3. Manor court jury defaulting

Court date	Number in jury	Number attending
Mar. 1470	27	0
Jul. 1470	16	0
Sep. 1470	16	0
Jun. 1471	14	11
Sep. 1471	15	0
Dec. 1471	18	0
Jun. 1472	14	14
Sep. 1472	21	0
c. Dec. 1472	17	0
Jul. 1473	15	0

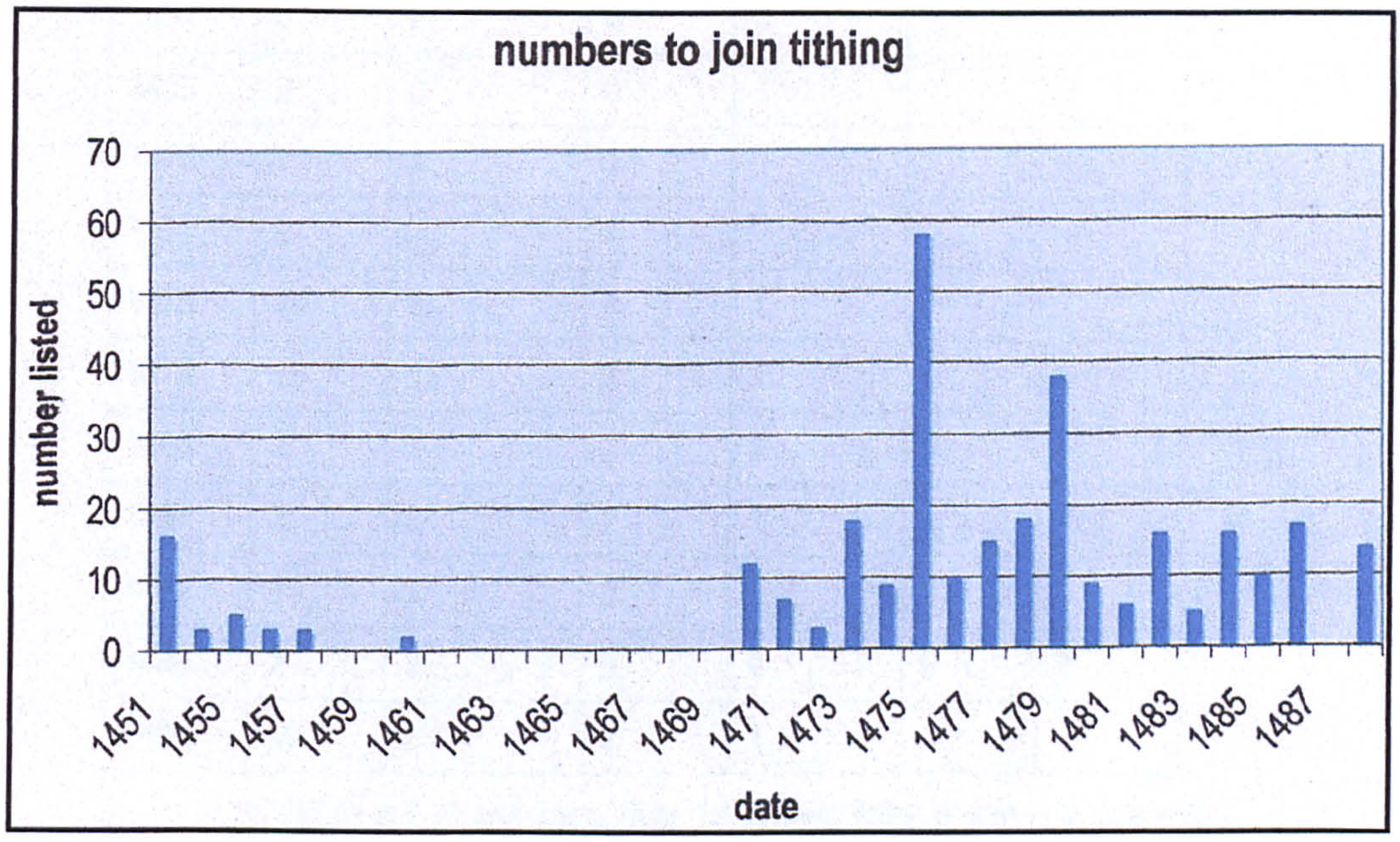
The manor courts' means of administering justice in the period relied substantially on the decisions of presentment juries, appointed by the messor. However, there were numerous occasions when a whole jury failed to appear and an order of habeas corpus was imposed for the next court, for instance in both March and July 1470. In neither case did the jury for the next court then attend. Though many members then were new, several had served at the previous court. In September 1473 habeas corpus was served for the next court, in December, on the twenty-one jury members. Nine of these named individuals still failed to attend then, including many repeatedly holding office in the courts' administration: for example Richard Henham, affeeror on five previous occasions and again three times in 1474 and 1475.[453] Defaulting as juror seems no impediment to being elected affeeror. Robert Dauncy, chief pledge in 1471, defaulted as juror in December 1473, in 1476 was one of the 'fidei dignorum', the recognised trustworthy, and in March 1477 farmer of thirty-three acres of demesne. This behaviour by

[453] ECRO D/DBy m.8 Mar. 1470; Jul. 1470; Sep. 1473; Dec. 1473; Mar. 1474; Dec. 1474; Jul. 1475.

members of the elite apparently shows lack of respect for authority and perhaps indicates a changing balance of power between the lord and the customary tenants.[454]

It is clear that safeguarding the tithing system also caused considerable problems for the courts. Males not yet in tithings were pursued via the leet to join, particularly after 1470, when vigilance by the courts seems to have increased: in 1475 as many as fifty-six were named.

Fig. 4.2. Numbers listed as to join tithings



Source: ECRO D/DBy m.6-10, leet courts.Court records are lacking for 1466-9, inclusive.

However, often it was necessary to list again, in successive years, the names of those still failing to join. While some, in both sample periods 1451-5 and 1476-84, were listed only once, a considerable number were cited again the next year. Some needed further listing, the maximum a sixth time. In 1479, of thirty-six listed, only four were sworn in at the succeeding leet. Of the remainder, seven joined the following year, two the next and one in each of the following three years. By 1484 sixteen of the thirty-six had joined. While some names were perhaps omitted, the non-appearance of some of the remaining twenty may largely testify to the

454 ECRO D/DBy m. 8 Jul. 1471; Dec. 1473; D/DBy Q18 f.105v; D/DBy m.8 Mar. 1477.

extreme mobility of young men. Regarding others, and since many were either servants or sons of inhabitants, the delay in joining seems to imply, again, a lack of respect for authority.[455]

Tab. 4.4. Listing of individuals to join tithing

Date	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth
1451	8	8	0			
1452	4	5	5			
1453	1	3	3			
1454	0	0	0	1	2	
1455	2	0	0		1	2
1476	7	3				
1477	9	3	3			
1478	15	9	1	1		
1479	16	11	8	1		
1480	2	3	2	2		
1481	3	0	2	1		
1482	10	3	0	1	2	
1483	2	2	0	0	0	1
1484	10	2	2	1	1	

Source: ECRO D/DBy m.6-10, leet courts. Note: 1st, 2nd etc. listing in relation to date stated.

In all these ways, the efficiency of the courts is apparently called into question. In extracting dues for taking up property, in prompt resolution of debt cases and in enforcing joining a tithing, very partial success was achieved and offenders included those of high status, or were their responsibility. Severe limitations in the courts' power are suggested by failure to impose penalties formulated for the purpose, by non-attendance by both messor's presentment juries, sometimes as a whole, including former and future court officers, and despite the imposition of habeas corpus, and, later, by chief pledges, themselves members of the elite.

[455] ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1475; Jul. 1479; sample years are the widest range with sufficient data.

Oligarchy

Kermode decides that checks on autocratic tendencies in medieval towns were generally absent. Non office-holding burgesses, that is the commonalty, were to approve the oligarchs' decisions and not to challenge them. With a smaller pool of potential leaders, the small town might have to allow oligarchs a relatively large amount of power. Reynolds suggests that, in general, government by the rich was accepted: social and political inequality were seen as inevitable.[456] In Walden, only two lists of chief pledges survive, numbering fifty-three and forty. The total of relevant males in the manor would determine the number of tithings, hence the number of chief pledges. All those who served in Walden as chief pledge between 1522 and 1525 were prosperous, at the latest by 1524/5.

Tab. 4.5. 1524: Chief pledges and wealth

Assessment 1524	Percentage, all known chief pledges 1522-55
£20 +	52.2
£10 +	90.2
<£10	9.8

Note: Total number of known distinct chief pledges, 1522 to 1525: 41. Of all people assessed at £10+ in 1524, 89.47 per cent were chief pledges between 1522 and 1525. Source: Lay subsidy: TNA,PRO E/179/108/155.

The 90.24 per cent of chief pledges with £10 or more compares with 16.6 per cent among town residents overall; the 52.2 per cent with £20 or more compares with town 8.6 per cent. Particularly significant is that around 90 per cent of the affluent served as chief pledge during the sample years 1522-25, while others may have done so outside those dates.

In our period known chief pledges and others, some perhaps chief pledges also, in fact, frequently held additional offices.

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[456] Kermode, 'Observations', pp. 88-9; Reynolds, *Introduction*, p. 171.

Tab. 4.6. Multiple office-holding, 1443-8 and 1470-5 (both inclusive)

(Per holder, average number of various offices held)

Date	Chief pledge	Affeeror	Messor's juror	Churchwarden	Overall
1443-8	1.52	2.45	2.25	2.14	1.33
1470-5	2.11	3.02	1.54	2.33	1.98

Note: other offices held include the relatively minor constable, ale taster, bread weigher and supervisor of meat and fish. In 1443-8 total office-holders: 102, total distinct offices (i.e. not occasions of office-holding) held by them: 136; 1470-5 total office-holders: 130, total distinct offices held by them: 258. Source:ECRO D/DBy m.6; m.8; D/Dy Q18.

By the 1470s the average number of posts held by chief pledges, probably supplying the leet jurors, deciding which laws to enforce and so imposing standards directly on those beneath, had increased considerably. This occurred in parallel with a reduction in the number held by the messor's jurors, in the manor court. The increased influence of chief pledges occurred in parallel with signs of decreasing respect for the court system. It may have reflected the rise of the gild, serving as an alternative discussion forum for the elite, and effectively taking over some of the courts' functions by the early sixteenth century. A further detail is that whereas of chief pledges 50 per cent served as that alone in the 1440s period, in the 1470s only 30 per cent did so and while in the 1440s 52.5 per cent of affeerors were also jurors, the parallel in the 1470s is 78.9 per cent. Hilton's observation that self-perpetuating oligarchies of the rich excluded the lower orders, controlled the market, prosecuted and made by-laws resonates here.[457] Interestingly, increasingly oligarchical government at Havering is ascribed to the growing number of manorial officials recruited from among chief pledges. There the men who held parish and manorial office were members of lay fraternities and by 1500 lay leaders were heavily involved in religious affairs.[458]

[457] 53 in ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1455; TNA, PRO E 179/108/155; Hilton, 'Market towns'.

[458] McIntosh, *Autonomy*, pp. 237-8.

A prominent gild potentially fostered the influence of the 'greater' sort.[459] Within the presumably high degree of personal acquaintance characteristic of the smaller town, social distinctions must have been very obvious: while at Havering by 1500 the same families wielded power in both the courts and the parish, the power of Grimsby's governors was reinforced by both religious authority and civic ceremony.[460] As at Sandwich, at Walden the same men filled the highest offices: here as churchwardens, jurors, chief pledges and, surely, gild officers; they exerted influence through the leet and the manor/borough court, the parish and as employers and rentiers. They probably included the twenty-four of 'the most worshipful', governors of the almshouse, self-perpetuating since replacements were to be chosen by the remainder. The almshouse 'confreres' in 1440, such as John Wood, probably innkeeper-carter and, between 1441 and 1449, churchwarden, feoffee, and three times constable, and Robert Chapman, constable, feoffee and four times affeeror, were clearly members of the elite.[461] In a small town, with lesser scope for alternative 'parties', the influencing of electors might help produce a system as self-perpetuating as suggested elsewhere by the election of new aldermen by existing ones in closed committee.

Between 1443 and 1448 the seventy-six distinct families holding any office in Walden held an average of 4.74 offices each; between 1470 and 1475, 104 families held 8.22 each. An oligarchic tendency may have been increasing; Havering was in the 1490s more oligarchical than in the 1440s and 1450s. There authority remained with well-established local families, despite many newcomers to town.[462] At Walden, 47.6 per cent of all families serving as at least one of chief pledge, affeeror, juror or churchwarden between 1470 and 1475 were recorded as

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459 No contemporary gild records survive but the newly-chartered Holy Trinity Gild's control of the market and mills in 1514 hints that gild influence may well have been increasing in the later fifteenth century. Gilds are discussed further in Chapter Five.

460 McIntosh, *Autonomy*, pp. 237-8; Rigby, 'Urban oligarchy'.

461 Swanson, *Towns*, pp. 126-7; Steer 'Statutes'; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1440.

462 'any office' here includes chief pledge, messor, manor court juror, churchwarden, affeeror, constable, bread weigher, ale taster and supervisor of meat and fish. 'Family' is defined as sharing a surname; McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p. 249.

present in both 1440-1 and 1480-1. Of these 'established' families, 63.9 per cent were in 'high office' for at least some of the period 1470-8.[463]

The extent to which the elite as individuals held multiple office is also clearly relevant. Two six-year periods have been evaluated. While many individuals held only two offices, and there are minor indications of an at least temporary social ranking, some serving within the six years as aletasters only, some as jurors only, others filled several posts: John Wood, as noted, in the 1440s and Robert Mayhew, between 1470 and 1475 chief pledge, affeeror, juror and churchwarden. In 1477 he bequeathed a total of £12 to his offspring. His widow, sister of the elite William Middleton, left £9 6s 8d in 1486.[464]

At Walden the pattern of multiple office-holding was reinforced in the 1440s by collecting for May ales: collectors included John Barker, fishmonger, member of a messor's jury, and John Smith, hosier, a churchwarden.[465] In fact, of thirty-six distinct collectors, two thirds also held important office between 1443 and 1448; they included four as affeeror, one as messor, eight as manor court juror and five as churchwarden. The market bailiff and the custodian of the almshouse, though without other office, and a farmer and a major innkeeper were presumably associates of this class of officials. By the 1470s street collectors for May ales were redundant but those collecting for or keeping the rood loft light were, again, major office holders.[466]

Although a few of the more prosperous in Walden did not hold office, some, such as Richard Gibson, suing for £10, were presumably among the elite and perhaps associates of the gentry.[467] That wealth impacted on the development of oligarchy seems probable and we have seen that by 1524 chief pledges were overwhelmingly affluent.

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463 Data on chief pledges are relatively scarce. 1441-81 allows the widest span for which they exist. The period 1470-8 is the latest of such length in the study period for which there is adequate material.

464 eg. ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.33r; ECRO D/B 2/MIS 2/3; D/B 2/MIS 2/5.

465 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 17v; 31v.

466 eg. Ralph Bate, chandler, four times juror 1473-4, keeper ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.92r; at Walden, men might become bread weigher or constable after being chief pledge or affeeror: no tendency to a cursus honorum is identifiable within the limited span of six years, but tracing the citing of an individual for longer might produce differing evidence.

467 CPR 1478.

Conclusions on government and oligarchy

Walden supports Hilton's observation that their base in the borough courts apparently guaranteed the rule of richer families, providing jurors and chief officials who controlled the market, issued by-laws and adjudicated between individuals. However, consistently with its small scale, the town's intensifying oligarchy included few demonstrably classifiable as such merchants as Hilton describes as all-powerful ruling oligarchs. Many among the chief pledges and probably also almshouse and or gild governors were master craftsmen, relegated in larger towns to 'toothless councils', predominantly with no voice. The implications of this for the incidence of tension and conflict are unclear. Did the lack of rulers of very high status embolden the ordinary, recognising the lack of differential? Artisans and labourers mixed in non-work activities, while officers were occasionally prosecuted for failing in their duty and jurors defaulted.[468] Evidence for some measure of tension/conflict is, of course, to be found in the private suits for debt, trespass, detinue and contract recorded in the manor/borough court. However, the bringing of debt cases might serve principally to record transactions and the courts' volume of business and use by outsiders testifies to some degree of respect for their potential to redress grievances, address disorderly conduct and selfish violence and deal with property transactions.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In towns in general, 'sharply differentiated' social hierarchies remained by 1522-5, underpinned by organised religious structures. Journeymen, apprentices and other wage earners would not be burgesses. Small towns had a less complex society and less nuanced hierarchy, with a smaller gap between the better-off and the rest.[469] Lacking extremes such as

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[468] Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p.150; eg. ECRO D/DBy m.6 Apr. 1445.

[469] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, p. 137; Rigby, 'Urban oligarchy'; Swanson, *Towns*, p. 115; Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 58.

aristocrats and numerous beggars, they usually had few resident gentry or merchants. Their elite, enjoying judicial and political control, was dominated by major traders dealing locally. Artisans and small retailers formed a large social group, as did labourers, servants and, probably, irregularly employed skilled workers. In smaller towns, characteristically lacking craft gilds, wealth, which was essential for social ascent, and an occupation's prominence in the economy were key factors in social standing.[470] The impact of these factors was likely to be great in Walden, given the specialised industrialised economy, with much part-time work and occupational fragmenting.

Walden's social structure

Although we focus here on the town, in 1525 the four minor settlements were significant, contributing 25.12 per cent of the assessed tax and 35.2 per cent of the taxed population of the vill. Brook Walden was the largest and Little Walden supplied, for example, Walter Cokerell, messor, a crucial figure in Walden manor's government and surely a member of the elite. It is undeniable that the settlements contributed, to some degree, to the town's economy, to the parish and to aspects of society and government.[471]

General characteristics

In 1400, in establishing government of the almshouse by twenty-four of 'the most worshipful' parishioners and that the 'most discreet and wisest of the town' be consulted in selecting inmates, there was overt acknowledgement of social hierarchy. If commercialisation and specialisation gathered momentum in Walden's region in the later half-century, this gave increasing opportunities for merchants to draw apart as a superior social class. Mercer John Byrd and draper John Spilman, residents of Walden, were co-feoffees of Walden property with

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470 C. Dyer, 'Small towns'; R. H. Hilton, 'Low-level urbanization: the seigneurial borough of Thornbury in the Middle Ages' in Z. Razi and R. M. Smith (eds), *Medieval Society and the Manor Court* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 482-517; Swanson, *Towns*, pp. 114-23.

471 TNA, PRO E 179/108/171, the 1525 figures are used here because data for the subsidiary settlements are lacking for 1524; ECRO D/DBy m.10 Feb. 1487.

Hugh Clopton, the outstanding London mercer of the later fifteenth century. William Dauntsey, London mercer, was executor of William Lamberd, also London mercer, probable son of Thomas, Walden churchwarden about 1471. These testify to the social status of these undoubted elite of the town.[472]

Spaces at the top of society might be created by mortality and upward mobility could relieve tensions. This might be relatively significant for a small town, whose governors surely represented a comparatively large proportion of the population.[473] Sometimes the lowly appear to climb the social scale. For example, Robert Cade, who was servant of John Shymmyng, innkeeper and apparently general dealer in 1453, by June 1463 was due to supply three quarters and four bushels of barley, for which Thomas Edward had paid 20s; between 1471 and 1474 Cade served as both juror, three times, and keeper of the rood loft light (if all refer to the same man).[474]

Wealth, occupations and office-holding serve as pointers to social structure.

Wealth

In 1327, In the vill overall, of sixty-six assessments, the highest, the de Bohun lord's, was 5s 6d; three others contributed between 2s 6d and 4s, thirteen between 1s and 2s; the remaining forty-nine 1s or less. The next data on assessed wealth come from the 1524/1525 lay subsidy, thirty-five years after the study period's end. In Norwich, 6 per cent of those assessed in 1525 had 60 per cent of the taxable wealth.[475] In Walden, the data for the built area of the town, only, is considered here. About half Walden's assessed wealth was ascribed to the is considered here. About half Walden's assessed wealth was ascribed to the wealthiest few: a

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472 Steer, 'Statutes'; S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948), p. 29; ECRO D/B 2/3/103; A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs (eds), *The Book of Privileges of the Merchant Adventurers of England, 1296-1483* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 33-4; ECRO T/A 358/22; D/By Q18 f.83r.

473 Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, pp. 142-5; C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (1989, Cambridge, 1998), p. 277.

474 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1453; m.8 Jun. 1463; eg. Dec 1471; D/DBy Q18 f.100r.

475 TNA, PRO E 179/107/13, r.11d; Reynolds, *Introduction*, p.161.

mere 8.5 per cent of the 224 taxpayers had 52.6 per cent or, at the very top, 1.3 per cent had 18.7 per cent of assessed wealth. Tab. 4.7. shows the distribution in more detail.

Tab. 4.7. Walden: wealth of town population, 1524

Assessed wealth category	No. people	Percentage of the 224 people assessed
£80	1	0.45
£60 to £79	2	0.9
£40 to £59	1	0.45
£20 to £39	15	6.7
£10 to £19	18	8.04
£3 to £9	37	16.52
21s to 40s	53	24.11
20s	96	42.86

Note : A further 10 entries are illegible; no. - number. Source: TNA, PRO E179/108/155.

Over 40 per cent had £1 only; Swanson's general estimate of about 70 per cent of the taxable population with goods or wages under £5 per annum fits very well here, where the figure is around 74 per cent and would include cottagers, low-paid labourers, skilled workers in irregular employment, and a few apprentices and servants, usually paid also by an element of board. All these were probably dependent on wages to a greater or lesser degree and though the mobile and variable nature of their occupations makes it impossible to suggest their numbers definitively, they are likely to be at least as high as suggested by an average of known percentages for wage dependency: 38 per cent of the taxed population in York in 1524; in

Leicester 44 per cent, Southampton 50 per cent.[476] At Havering the proportion was also of this order. Dyer cites high proportions in textile centres such as around Stroud, with 46 per cent, and Kidderminster, 44 per cent. Industrial and commercial centres in the countryside might also have concentrations: Redditch with 40 per cent, for example.[477]

While Poos found three north central Essex hundreds to have 43 per cent of all taxpayers wage-dependent, Walden's built area assessment of 67 per cent at 40s or less, not forgetting the potentially considerable numbers too poor to be taxed at all, seems to suggest a very high percentage over all wage dependency for all or a substantial part of incomes. In contrast, 8.5 per cent had £20 or more, as compared with Havering's 10 per cent and Cambridge's 4.7 per cent.[478] We have seen that, as usual in the period, 'assistants' in various types of building work, mainly with master masons and carpenters, generally earned 4d per day, or, allowing Swanson's 100 days 'lost', £4 8s 4d per year. This, of course, is calculated on the basis of full employment, whereas in reality much work would be temporary, if not casual. Distinguishing the status of independent craftsmen working with simple tools from that of piece-workers, hence wage labourers, is problematic.[479] Although known to employ assistants at times, some independent craftsmen also seem to have earned, from their main trade, 4d per day: from Walden Abbey, Richard Rekever, smith, was due £1 6s per quarter, namely two shillings per week. However, while this may in theory represent a six day week, an apparent 4d daily fails to allow for non-work days, so his rate is surely higher; in any case this is very unlikely to represent his only income.[480]

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476 Swanson, *Towns*, p.117; Swanson, *Artisans*, p. 152.

477 McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p. 233; Dyer, *Transition?*, pp. 231-2.

478 L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge,1991), pp. 28-30; McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p. 233; J. S. Lee, *Cambridge and its Economic Region, 1450-1560* (Hatfield, 2005), p. 44.

479 In Chapter Three, 'The Economy'; Swanson, *Artisans*, pp. 150-171.

480 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jun. 1471.

Predictably, wage demands generated conflict: Walter Lawe impleaded Richard Sawyer for 12s for malt supplied but soon afterwards Sawyer sued for 14s 10d wages due from Walter for harvesting oats. Rekever, too, campaigned for payment, to the extent that adjudicators for both sides were appointed.[481] Swanson calculates that even among artisans assessed on goods in 1524/5, most made a fairly modest living, with a wide range of prosperity within any given craft.

Evidence of landholding shows that while many total holdings, predominantly in multiple parcels, were increasing in size, a large class, mainly of small traders, craftsmen or husbandmen, with perhaps £3-£9 in 1524/5, others with £10-£19, had modest property portfolios, often both urban and rural. Individuals' total holdings cannot be recovered with certainty: some surely held from the Abbey manor; many, including artisans and small retailers, also held some free property and, of course, testators could dispose of property in advance. A considerable variety of fortunes is apparent. Occupants were to show title 'to certain lands and tenements, free and customary', which the deceased John Boyton had held in addition to 7 acres recorded as customary, plus a tenement adjoining the manor gate. In 1483 Thomas Edward, carpenter, surrendered two tenements, two houses and 11 acres. In 1453 William Hendeman made a deathbed surrender of 41.25 acres in at least twenty parcels, mostly, with his house, in Little Walden but within Walden manor, in the government of which he played an important role. These two factors make him appear among the most successful of this class.[482] Others seem less prosperous: Ralph Parker in 1459 left 10.25 acres to his widow and William Robat a messuage, toft and 4 acres to his. The many small unspecified pieces held by Richard Kyng included some meadow. Since he was also a mercer with a shop in Walden market, his total portfolio probably puts him into a wealthy minority.[483]

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481 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1445; Dec. 1446; m.8 Mar. 1472.

482 ECRO D/DBy m.9 Nov. 1484; Sep. 1483; m.7 May 1453.

483 ECRO D/DBy m.10 Dec. 1486; m.7 Jul. 1459.

At the upper end of the scale, evidence is, of course, much more plentiful. An extreme is represented by John and Joan Breton who in 1447 quitclaimed three messuages, 400 acres of arable, 20 acres of meadow, 20 of wood and 20s rent.[484] That Richard Shymmyng, son of John, the innkeeper/chapman, asserted title to the manor of Westley in 1467 suggests upward mobility. His widow's marriage, by 1478, to John Brownsmyth of Hadleigh, probably identifiable as a known mercer in that increasingly prosperous 'wool town', typified the tendency for the more affluent to remarry 'out'.[485]

Wealth and goods

Bequests might indicate both capital and high value possessions. Thomas Semer, yeoman, by 1499 had furred gowns, silk girdles and a silver-gilt maser. John Hervy, mercer, in 1488 left over £30, his shop with wares, both pack and hackney horses, fifty-eight quarters of malt and an acre of saffron. Nevertheless, from his will, his orbit seems rather local, particularly focusing on villages towards Cambridge.[486] John Byrd, mercer, left £33, including £20 to a granddaughter, as well as thirteen tenements, and his beneficiaries included a London church, illustrating the elite's metropolitan links. The William Lamberd of London who was perhaps originally of Walden and held lands and tenements there, in 1516 left £247, including to Walden's almsmen and poor, as well as establishing an obit there and bequeathing to a son of resident Thomas Lamberd. [487] John Spilman's bequests in 1495 totalled £97 13s 4d and John Nicolls, also draper, in 1516 left cash and goods worth over £50, besides £50 in cloth from his shop. These clearly represented a wealthy elite of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Spilman had a public role as tax collector in the 1460s and in 1476 was one of the 'fidei dignorum', a distinct group at the top of society, and surely in the gild.[488]

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484 CPR 1478; P. H. Reaney and M. Fitch (eds), *Feet of Fines for Essex* iv, (Colchester, 1964), p. 38.

485 CCR 1467; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1478.

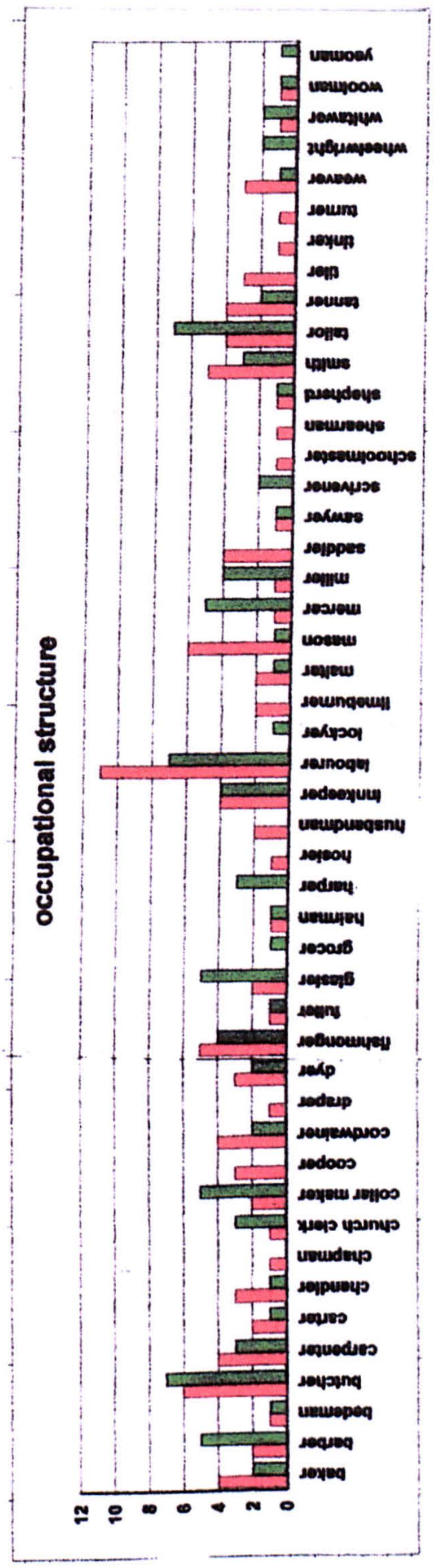
486 H. Montagu Benton, 'Essex wills at Canterbury', *TEAS*, 21 (1937) pp. 254-5; ECRO T/A 358/10.

487 ECRO T/A 358/9; 358/22. William's own father was called Thomas.

488 ECRO T/A 358/23; 358/12; Cal. Fine 1461-71; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.105v.

Occupational structure

Fig. 4.3. Occupational structure, 1443-8 and 1470-5



Note: red columns 1443-8; green columns 1470-5

All stated occupations from all records for two periods, in the 1440s and 1470s, are included though those even of men prominent in the town are frequently not stated and one can comment on the basis only of such evidence as there is. Care is necessary to avoid arguing from absence.

Sources: ECRO D/DBy m.6; m.8.; D/DBy Q18, fols : see Appendix A; relevant deeds and wills.

In the 1440s there were many labourers but also occupations which, with farmers, were typically found in the governing class of a small town: fishmongers, innkeepers, smiths and tanners. Members of each were prominent in Walden at various times: John Benet, tanner, was between 1444 and 1446 tax collector, juror and plaintiff for £3 4s 8d debt; members of the Barker family, fishmongers throughout the period, held positions in the court; Thomas Warde, an innkeeper, rendered the minister's account to the Duchy in 1455, was bailiff of the market in 1459, churchwarden in 1462 and in 1472 arbitrator in the court for Richard Rekever against the Abbot.[489] More mundane occupations are noted, too: chandler, cooper, cordwainer, tailor, tiler, weaver. Some members of the 'ordinary' trades of course had 'servants' and were, perhaps, of similar status to 'master' masons such as John Gerard and carpenters such as John Thorn and Thomas Spurgeon, each involved in major building projects. Entrepreneurship might evolve, as with fullers in some towns, perhaps exemplified by John Nailler, with his dyehouse in 1451 and description as fuller in 1452.[490]

By the 1470s specialist occupations, such as glazier, harper and barber, seem to be more prominent, perhaps reflecting higher living standards and disposable wealth. Since barbers, especially, depended on consumers' increasing purchasing power, Walden was indeed, perhaps, at least at some levels, reasonably prosperous. It is difficult to ascribe particular social status to these 'specialists' over all. However, mercers were much more prominent here by the 1470s; with John Vernon, described in 1482 as a scrivener, they represent an elite with typically widespread outside contacts.[491]

The importance and prestige of the leather trades was maintained, though by the 1470s 'collarmaker ' seems to have supplanted 'saddler', perhaps merely a change of emphasis in the trade, and possibly hinting at an increased importance of carting.

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489 Cal. Fine 1445; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1444; TNA, PRO DL 29/43/829; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 52r; 61v; D/DBy m.8 Jun. 1472.

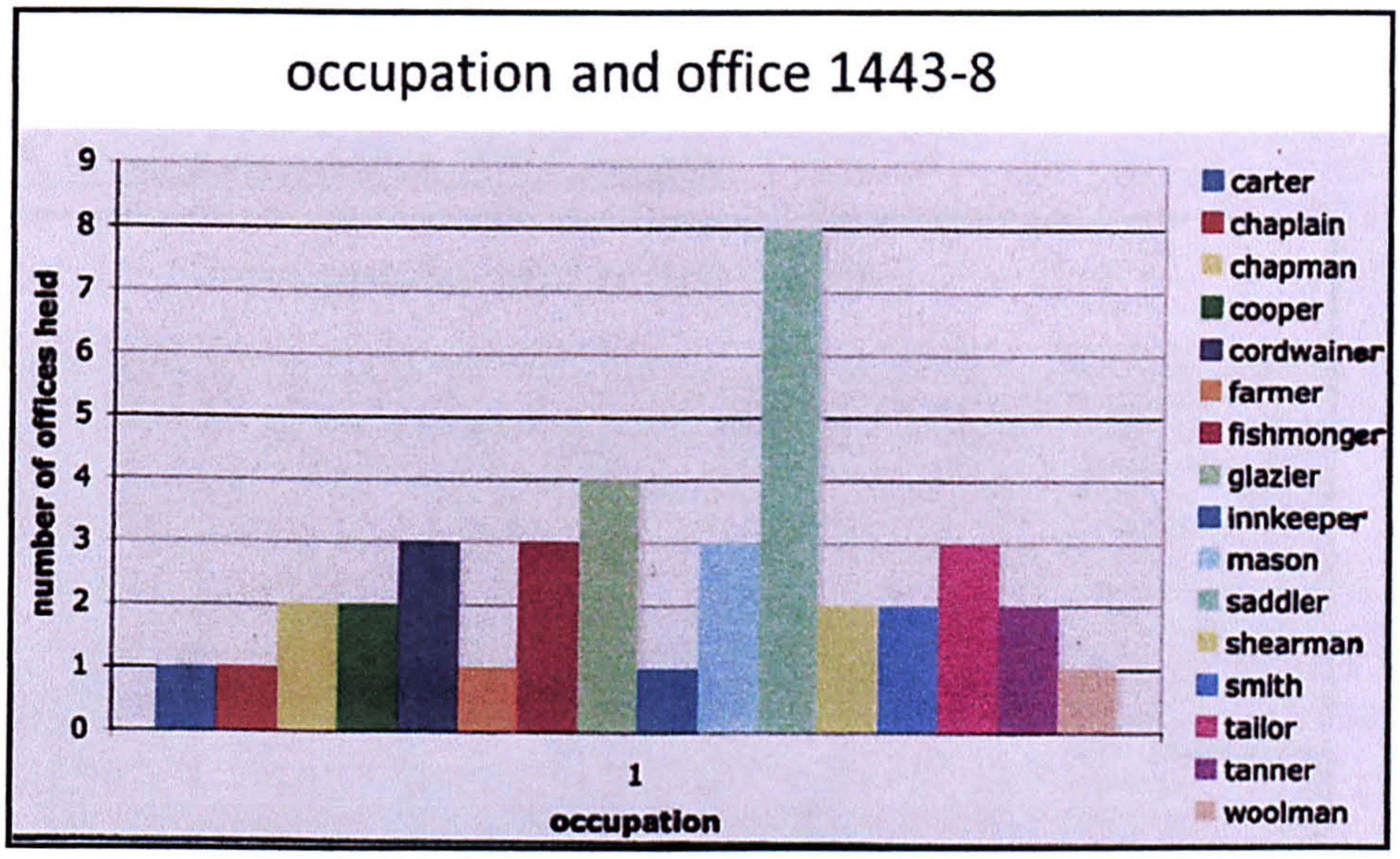
490 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1451; Dec. 1452; ECRO D/B 2/1/230; Swanson, *Towns*, pp. 56-7.

491 Swanson, *Artisans*, p.152; ECRO D/DB 2/1/230.

Office-holding

The incidence of any given occupation's holding major office has been reviewed for 1443-8 and 1470-5. In terms of suitability, belonging to an 'established' family apparently had a positive impact, as already noted.

Fig. 4.4. Occupations and office 1443-8, inclusive



Sources: ECRO D/DBy m.6; D/DBy Q18 fols: see Appendix A. Note: major office includes messor, chief pledge, affeeror, juror and churchwarden. Chart shows distinct offices held: repeats are not counted.

In the mid-1440s the four saddlers were very prominent, filling eight 'slots': one messor, two churchwarden, one chief pledge, four juror. Surely because of the considerable work on the church building, glaziers were notable, as affeeror, chief pledge and juror. Fishmongers duly held high office, as did the two smiths, both chief pledges. The 'snapshot' nature of such a short time span must be acknowledged: though John Gerland held no major office in these years, a John Gerland had been farmer of the market tolls, 1438-9, a John Gerland, malter, was chief pledge in 1451 and in 1452 John Gerland senior left over £20 and 100 quarters of grain.[492]

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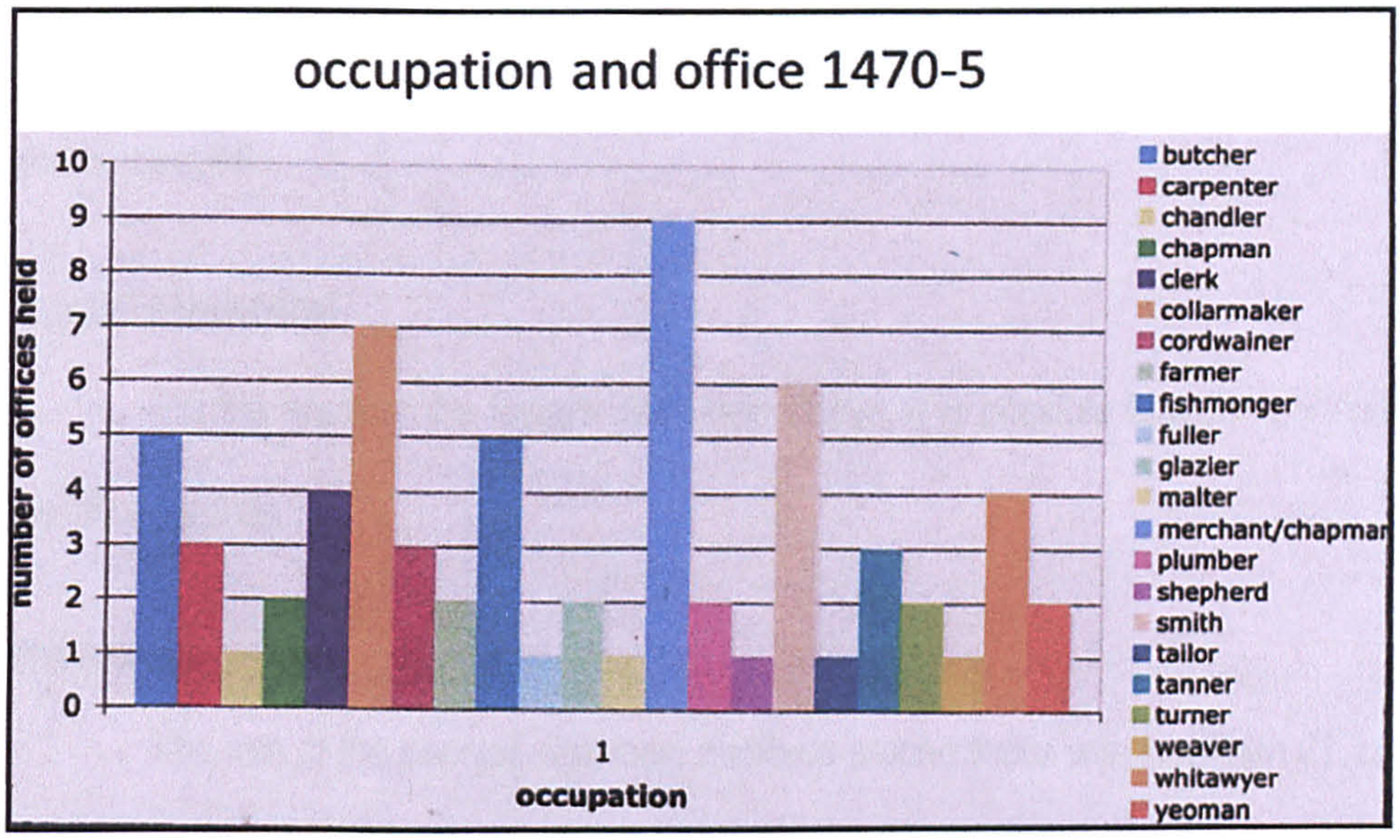
492 TNA, PRO DL 29 42/825; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1451; T/A 358/4.

Farmers were in Walden a demonstrably high status group: John Draper, farmer of Walden demesne, farmed the market tolls and fairs in 1440-1 and was bailiff of the market. Roger Child, previously farmer of a minor manor and also a fishmonger, accommodated the leet affeerors in council.[493] Farmers filled only one 'slot' above, as affeeror, but their prestige is reflected, as with many holders of high office, in roles as feoffee and witness to deeds conveying free property.

Fig. 4.5. Occupations and office 1470-5, inclusive



Sources: ECRO D/DBy m.8; D/DBy Q18 fols 78v-100r. Note: major office includes messor, chief pledge, affeeror, juror and churchwarden. Chart shows distinct offices held, repeats are not counted.

By 1470-5 the occupational composition of the group holding high office had apparently changed: victuallers had become much more influential, as typically with town expansion. Whereas in the 1440s eighteen butchers, fishmongers and innkeepers held only four offices, in the 1470s thirteen filled seventeen roles. At Walden, butchers' prominence perhaps reflected the expansion of their role to include grazier and their likely benefiting from the local demand for leather.[494] Leather trade specialists themselves remained significant and smiths, typically, were now prominent. Notable were the five mercers, who all served as juror. Although

493 TNA, PRO DL 29 43/826; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1439; Dec. 1440; m.6 Jul. 1446; Jul. 1447.

494 Swanson, *Artisans*, pp. 170-1; extensive recording at the leets makes their identification relatively secure.

in this period one, only, acted as churchwarden and one as affeeror, John Hervy was affeeror fifteen times between 1464 and 1488, John Byrd minister's rent collector in 1485 and Thomas Lamberd and Roger Pyrk, apparently mercer, chief pledge in 1451 and 1455.[495] The varied roles must have varied considerably in their demands. To be churchwarden or messor, even chief pledge or affeeror, would require on-going time commitment; that both Pyrk and Lamberd served as churchwarden much later, in 1466-8 and 1470-2 respectively, when probably at their most prosperous, suggests an involvement here of the local mercantile elite which is not characteristic of large towns. Here the relatively 'upper sort' were indeed engaged in government.[496]

Social hierarchy

On the basis of the factors discussed above, it is possible broadly to identify several social categories.

The poor

The role of the poorest, unknown numbers among those with less than £1, can only be surmised. Many would be totally absent from the records as individuals and perhaps represented only as a class, as almshouse inmates or beneficiaries of bequests. The poor included the sick, the elderly, vagrants, some widows and those with little employment. The large proportion of landless, wage-dependent people would promote mobility and is reflected by the lists of tithing men at the adjacent Walden Abbey manor in 1473. Of 139 named, 93 are crossed through. Though the date of the amendments cannot be known, they surely represented change over a limited time; eight had died. Among the ninety-three were church clerk, tiler, barber, organ player, two labourers and eight servants; twenty-four were sons of

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495 eg. ECRO D/DBy m.8 Mar. 1464; Jul. 1455; Jul. 1451; CCR 1488.

496 eg. ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 73r; 83r.

named men. Of twenty-one replacement names, seven are crossed through.[497] Those mainly young who might be attracted to the town initially perhaps for temporary employment would at first have no status and perhaps be stranded by rising prices in the 1470s and 1480s, as Butcher suggests. They might polarise behaviour patterns and raise tension by confronting seigneurial, clerical and civic authority. Some were, surely, among the 'unknown' names in, for example, leet court actions; some would, at least temporarily, be marginals.[498] In 1484, for example, numbers of unknowns were prosecuted for debt and trespass. Hedge breaking was an offence of the poor, often older women, obliged to find fuel locally, and this may well be reflected in amercements of only 1d or 2d.[499] In Walden's rare lists of women paying for purification between 1485 and 1487, of approximately one hundred differing surnames from all classes about one third are unfamiliar from all other extant sources, 1438-1489. Probably, then, the relevant males not only held no office in manor or parish but were involved neither in land transactions, litigation, nor other activities, victualling or acts of disorder, for example, subject to regulation by the courts.[500] Many might be landless labourers, some immigrant, some even marginals. Immigrants included 'an Irishman, servant of John Spilman, draper', this label highlighting the susceptibility of newcomers to being classed as 'other', at least temporarily, as with 'a soldier', attacked on market day, and 'a stranger', assaulted.[501]

Contemporary reference recognises the poor and marginal: the churchwardens offered a halfpenny to 'a poor man'; John Hervy, mercer, bequeathed a short gown to a poor woman living beside the churchyard; Thomas Coll's wife was excused even a halfpenny purification

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497 ECRO D/DBy m.149 (1473).

498 A. F. Butcher 'The origins of the Romney freemen, 1433-1523', *Ec.HR*, 27 (1974), p. 24; McIntosh, *Misbehavior*, pp. 162, 167-8, 175-8, 253, 259; Poos, *Rural Society*, p.164.

499 ECRO D/DBy m.9 Mar. 1484; M. K. McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p. 257. Of twenty-one people listed at Walden in 1478 for hedge breaking sixteen are labelled 'wife'. In 1463 and 1488 females, only, are cited: in 1463 five of seven are termed 'wife', in 1483 only one. ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1478; Jul 1463; m.10 Jul. 1488. 'Wife' may in fact include widows.

500 ECRO D/DBy Q 18 fols 132v; 136r.

501 ECRO D/DBy m.9 Jul. 1483; m.5 Jul. 1441; m.6 Jul. 1453.

payment 'because poor'; Joan Wynter, widow of Richard, once almshouse custodian, surrendered 1 acre 'to farm for the poor in town'.[502]

'The poor', though not the poorest, included servants and apprentices, as well as labourers, some skilled, and poorer artisans and tradesmen supplementing their income by waged labouring, generally on an irregular basis, and who might in due course, or intermittently, join the ranks of the artisans/small retailers. Examples might be William Benet, in 1440 sawing, felling, digging gates, 'labourer' in 1442 and in 1444 'sawyer' and Roger Crecy, a tinker, sued for debt in 1444 and in 1447 for entertaining night walkers after hours. In 1448 a Margaret Crecy, probably his wife, was a fish seller, while before 1470 a Margaret was servant to Roger Pyrk.[503]

Servants and apprentices

The context of servants and apprentices, in the household of a particular master and therefore under his authority, makes them a special case among the poor. Generally living in, they received remuneration in kind and occasionally were demonstrably better-off: a 'servant' of John Danbury, butcher, had a wife who paid the larger of the two usual amounts for purification.[504]

Hilton suggested that in 1381 thirty-three to fifty per cent of taxpayers in market towns were servants but Goldberg suggests that, present in a third of urban households, they constituted twenty or thirty per cent of the taxed population.[505] At Walden, the Abbey, with its own manor court, leet and separate attached settlement had a largely distinct social structure.[506] In 1524, though many servants were excluded from the tax, some were probably among the more than forty per cent of Walden town taxpayers assessed at £1. Certainly, 'servants' feature

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502 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.49r; T/A 358/10; D/DBy Q18 f.102r; D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1463.

503 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1444; Jul. 1447; Jul. 1448; T/A 358/7.

504 ECRO D/DBy Q 18 f.93v.

505 Hilton, 'Market towns', p. 9; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Urban identity and the poll taxes 1379-81', *Ec.HR*, 43 (1990), p. 211.

506 Cromarty, *Fields*.

prominently in Walden's records: apart from being pressed to join tithings, with newcomers and sons of residents, they were frequently prosecuted for assault.

The records, other than wills, fail to distinguish between servant and apprentice, using 'servant' for both. Apprentices lived 'in' or attended daily, and servants also normally lived 'in' with families of artisans and small retailers, and in the households of the elite. Servants seem, as normally, to have been employed on annual contract: John Serle's master was in 1450 John Colwell, in 1451 John Southbrook; John Shymmyng, the innkeeper, employed Robert Cade for a year.[507] Servants moving away after one year would not join a tithing but presentments of servants were made at the leet for such offences as assault and night walking. The occupations of employers of those servants with 'unknown' surnames were smith, butcher, farmer, draper, collarmaker, vicar and yeoman of the crown, perhaps reflecting the obvious 'outside' contacts of these livelihoods. Servants/apprentices were sued for debt and trespass but were also able to sue: Thomas Stokiner claimed £1 4s 7d, of which 16s was wages and, unusually, 4s livery allowance, in the service of William Cokswete.[508]

Female servants were paid little: in a late fifteenth-century gentry household they probably received around 13s 4d per year; in towns virtually no women were taxed on 20s wages. Some servants, and apprentices too, received bequests from employers demonstrating that they might be held in affection: at one extreme, Agnes Faldo, servant of prosperous draper John Spilman, received £3 6s 8d and Agnes Burges, servant of a gentry wife, £2 13s 4d.[509] In contrast, three female servants of Roger Pyrk received 3s 4d each. Some servants received goods, only: John Clynt, vicar, left three robes, one furred, to 'Peter'; John Spilman gave beds and their accoutrements to two apprentices.[510] These legacies of course point to a wealth ranking among the town's servants, perhaps suggested by the five female servants' recorded

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507 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1450; Jul. 1451; m.7 Jul. 1456.

508 ECRO. D/DBy m.8 Jun.1472.

509 M. Mate., *Daughters, Wives and Widows after the Black Death: Women in Sussex, 1350-1535* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 37-49; ECRO T/A 358/12; D/ACR 1/31.

510 ECRO T/A 358/7; T/A 358/5; T/A 358/12.

bequests to the parish: Alice, servant of Roger Child, former farmer of the manor, contributed 6s 8d, the others 1s 8d or less. This may, however, be influenced by Child's wife's particular engagement with the church, in collecting funds and as the only wife cited as baking and brewing.[511]

Characteristic contexts of servants/apprentices

Over the study period, twenty-eight of the eighty-two named men with 'servants' were chief pledges and so among the most influential in the town; among their known occupations are six butchers, six smiths, five farmers and four carpenters. Demonstrably apprentices were Alex White, to Richard Rekever, smith; Henry George, perhaps son of an established butcher George, to butcher Richard Gille. Thomas George, butcher, had two apprentices contemporaneously in 1448.[512] Other 'servants' were tied to Walden's specialism of collarmaker. Such 'servants' became full members of the household: in 1446, Peter Soper, his wife and a servant all attacked John Pynner in William Cooper's house.[513]

Their situation implied that most servants would be single. In towns, those in service were generally females; they served women, a Christine Langley, for instance, as well as men such as Roger Pyrk. John Spilman bequeathed much more to Agnes Faldo than to two apprentices; John Hervy, mercer, made bequests to both a maid and a former apprentice.[514] Since Pyrk, Spilman and Hervy all had retail outlets, their female servants were probably engaged, in parallel with wives in lesser households, in front-line contact with the public.

Many male servants were pursued to join a tithing, alongside others labelled sons, who might be servants, too. In 1475, of fifty-eight defaulters recorded, twelve were stated to be servants: four with Walden surnames of the period, four unknown and so perhaps either

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511 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols11v; 2v; 7v.

512 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1441; m.8 Jul. 1479; m.6 Jul. 1448.

513 ECRO D/By m.6 Jul. 1446.

514 ECRO D/ACR 1/31; T/A 358/7; 358/12; 358/10.

incomers or from families too lowly to have appeared in the records, and four with just a first name, perhaps more lowly still.[515]

The relationship to non-servants, outside the work context, perhaps illuminates their social life: William Reynold and Peter Soper were prosecuted as responsible for 'men and servants' playing handball on workdays; John Hawkyn and Joan 'maintain and permit' various named men 'and other servants on workdays on which they are concerned at their craft, to play handball against the statutes'.[516] Handball evidently provided an important context in building identity among apprentices and male servants and relating to men of varied occupations. Perhaps in some ways this served as a poor man's fraternity, a valuable source of solidarity and security in the face of potential discrimination, seen by Hilton as stemming from the acute fifteenth century fear of subversion. Notably, such identity and solidarity might sometimes also be gained from neighbourhood: Agnes Waryn 'keeps vigils in her house for divers servants of her neighbours beyond the customary time'.[517]

Labourers

Labourers without ties of land were highly mobile, 'an essentially rootless sub-class'. In Essex in 1381 significant numbers of males remained single. Their status was emphasized by statute: liable to prosecution for specific offences through having neither lands nor tenements worth 40s per annum.[518] Building work at the church employed many on a daily basis, paid often 4d, as with Thomas Woodward's son for removing bark from trees. Stephen Brown received 3.5d per day for 'labouring', Richard Croye 4d for collecting four cartloads of stones.[519] Others were named assistants of skilled artisans. That their names were mostly absent from the court records hints at the numbers who remained anonymous. Rare additional glimpses occur:

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515 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1475.

516 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1443; Jul. 1448.

517 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1452; Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 148.

518 P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender in later Medieval England', in idem and F. Riddy (eds), *Youth in the Middle Ages* (York, 2004), p. 91.

519 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 20v; 19r; 24v.

William Carter impleaded William Rekever for detinue of wages; William Benet served as juror and John Bright had land in Shop Row.[520] Thomas Semer, yeoman, employed the husbandman Thomas Freman of Shudy Camps, Cambridgeshire, from 1481.[521] The likelihood of varied ascriptions of status must be noted: we have seen that William Benet, labourer, was apparently sometimes described as sawyer. Wage earners were prominent in disorderly behaviour: a frequent combatant, John Hawkyn, weaver, hence likely to be employed in piece-work, attacked and imprisoned John Clerk, extorting 8d.[522]

A group of twenty-four amerced in 1446 for taking lead and ironwork from the manorial buildings 'for playing handball' included, significantly, both unknowns and, named, a collarmaker, cordwainers, a glazier, a chaplain, John Lawsell, paid 6d per day in 1442 for cutting timber, and, interestingly, Nicholas Pyrk, elected constable at the same time, his son Roger, and John, son of Robert Semar juror in 1444.[523] Such non-work activities might erode both perceived and, surely, real barriers and so caution against over-rigidly categorizing the social structure, at least in the small town. A mass trespass by labourers and husbandmen, to cut wood in the manorial park, further shows a potential for informal groupings, again a counterpoint to the gild, to supply a corporate strength to individuals.[524]

Artisans and small retailers

The possibility of moving between social categories, over time or more irregularly, is relevant to distinguishing the more prosperous artisans and tradesmen both from the less prosperous, in danger of joining the poor, and from those describable as marginally wealthy. With Walden's engrossment of holdings, commercialisation and metropolitan influence, its social structure may have been starting to grow closer to Exeter's, where the elite, there mercantile,

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520 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1472; Sep. 1471; m.5 Sep. 1439.

521 ECRO D/B 2/TDS 5/33.

522 ECRO m.7 Jul. 1457.

523 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1446; D/DBy Q18 f.20v; D/DBy m.6 Sep. 1444.

524 ECRO D/DBy m.5. Jul. 1441.

was separated by a chasm from small-scale merchants and skilled artisans in full employment.[525] The smaller scale of a town such as Walden, with nevertheless a need for a group sufficiently large to cope with running the manor and parish, implied that the few relatively wealthy were joined as members of the elite by numbers of artisans/retailers. Variation in status of artisans/tradesmen according to occupation is suggested by the tendency for particular occupations to dominate office-holding in the sample years 1443-8 and 1470-5, with others holding office to a lesser degree, as discussed earlier in the present chapter. Those without office in these periods included millers, besides tilers and limeburners.

Is it possible to distinguish variations in status within occupations, even if perhaps they were only temporary distinctions? The case of two smiths, whose distinctive names reduce the probability of confusion, other than within their families, emphasises the difficulty of doing this, given that the records stress the roles of the relatively powerful at the expense of the majority. Both smiths had 'servants.' Thomas Kent was in the 1450s chief pledge and, with a priest and a barker, co-feoffee for dealers in free property, who were, surely, at least moderately prosperous. His other sets of co-feoffees included William Marreve, apparently a merchant, and John Chalk, bailiff of the franchise. Additionally, Kent was churchwarden 1464-6, in the 1470s frequently a juror and in 1481 executor with John Rutland, yeoman and bailiff.[526] Richard Grant, also a smith, was in the 1470s affeeror, juror, supervisor of meat and fish, feoffee and witness with Thomas Burneby, himself between 1470 and 1475 juror twenty-seven times and once each chief pledge and affeeror. Grant became chief pledge in 1488.[527] Arguably, Kent was in fact a member of the elite and Grant surely a moderately prosperous artisan, with prominent associates and a role in government. Crucially, of course, status would probably vary during a lifetime. A smith perhaps

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525 M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 126.

526 ECRO D/DBy m. 7 Jul. 1455; D/B 2/3/93; D/B 2/4/34; e.g. D/DBy Q 18 f.66r; e.g. D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1472; D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1.

527 ECRO e.g. D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1473; eg. D/B 2/3/197; D/DBy m.10 Jul. 1488.

of lower status, at least in 1471, was Richard Rekever, who sued the abbot for £1 6s 8d owed to him for three months' work, but held no office between 1470 and 1475.[528]

In 1483 a deed made by Richard Kyng, mercer, Richard Grant and others named among co-feoffees John Rutland, already noted, probably churchwarden in 1472, and John Chapman, collarmaker, who may be the John Chapman will maker of 1501, leaving £1 to Our Lady of Pity Gild and small amounts to both the church and a relative in Linton; these were bequests on a modest scale.[529] Perhaps distinct from him was John Chapman in 1495 citizen and mercer of London and son of Walden's Thomas Chapman, deceased. The 1483 deed suggests that in serving as a feoffee, the collarmaker, a moderately prosperous artisan, was sufficiently well-regarded to be counted on by the elite.[530] Though feoffees were consistently of at least moderate status, witnesses to deeds included the ordinary artisan: around 1450 John Janyn received 4d as a lockyer but in 1451 witnessed a deed with the powerful Robert Semer, previously confrere of the almshouse, and Henry West, churchwarden; he was also to pay 23d per annum rent for a tenement and two purprestures in the market, plus a further 50ft x 62ft elsewhere.[531]

Of course, a clear distinction in social status existed between master and apprentice: an artisan such as John Lyon, tailor, with a 'servant,' was, as an affeeror, well respected. The relationship was sometimes, unsurprisingly, paralleled by the relative prestige of their offices: Richard Rekever, smith, perhaps father of his namesake of the 1470s, was chief pledge in 1444 and affeeror in 1447, while Alex White, his 'servant', became aletaster in 1446.[532]

The relative intensity of interpersonal relationships in a small town might affect the degree of tension and conflict, whether increasing or decreasing it. Outside peer contact by all, including the middling artisans, surely occurred formally, as with court officials, and less formally

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528 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1471.

529 ECRO D/B 2/3/197; D/DBy Q18 f.90r; D/ACR 1/4.

530 ECRO D/B 2/3/199.

531 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.38r; D/B 2/2/188; D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1440; D/DBy Q18 f.9r; D/DBy m.6 Dec. 1451.

532 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1444; Jul. 1447; Jul. 1446.

through associates of apprentices and household members, occupational contacts and social activities. Besides associations in their working lives, just as the elite who intermingled in court and parish office and as feoffees were of varied status, so 'lower' level artisans mixed with the poor in activities such as games and gaming, which were liable to engender prosecution. Patently, occupational contact might lead to conflict, whether within a single trade or cluster, as in John Danbury the butcher's plaint of trespass and debt against William Walhed, alias Glover, whitawyer, or more widely. An adversary such as William Grene of Thurlow, who frequently sued for debt, including pleading against, for instance John Rolf, fuller, might fuel less tension as an outsider than would a resident plaintiff.[533]

The elite: gentry, merchants and wealthier artisans

Four main topics will be discussed in this section: firstly, the role of the gentry; secondly, wealth, status and office as defining the top rank; thirdly, the wide horizons of the top people; fourthly, the interconnectedness of the elite.

Walden had few resident gentry and among them none was dominant. Hower, the contacts of the town's elite included gentry from the region, some in such pivotal positions as steward and bailiff: the knight Thomas Montgomery, steward, and John Leventhorp, esquire of Sawbridgeworth, the Duke's bailiff in 1485.[534] John Mordon of London represented more remote gentry, serving as feoffee together with residents John Shymmyng and John Benet, barker. Resident gentry included Thomas Stukeley, who made a recognizance of £40 to quitclaim a Walden tenement and paid £16 to take up a messuage in Castle St.[535] Gentry status might be attainable, through such occupations as lawyer and scrivener, which was unusual in small towns: one of Walden's two contemporary 'scriveners' was also described as clerk.[536] Certainly

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533 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Nov. 1480; Dec. 1446.

534 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1461; McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p.271; ECRO D/DBy m.9 Jul. 1485.

535 ECRO D/B 2/1/193; CCR 1458; D/DBy m.8 Mar. 1482.

536 ECRO D/B 2/1/230; D/DBy m.9 Feb. 1484.

a visitor was the lawyer John Kneesworth, probably from Royston. Townspeople went further afield to consult lawyers, to Cambridge in particular.[537]

Elite status might be suggested, too, by a combination of wealth, occupation and holding high office. Commonly, elite roles were cross-linked: leet jurors were generally the top landholders; as at Sandwich, some were churchwardens.[538] It is sometimes impossible to identify securely a single individual: the name 'John Henham' applied in the 1440s to a messor and to a draper who was farmer of Walden demesne; also to a senior John Henham, a saddler, who was churchwarden and member of a manor court jury and inquisitions; also to a saddler who was in a single court cited as aletaster, inquisition member and affeeror; one was described as mercer, while a Henham junior was also aletaster, inquisition member and affeeror.[539] If John Draper, farmer of Walden demesne in 1439-40, so in fact possibly identical to John Henham, draper, was in fact, as described, a husbandman, while also bailiff of the market in 1440 and farmer of its tolls and fairs, it would suggest the shallowness of Walden's social structure: that power was wielded by people with occupations of modest status.[540] A farmer of the warren, Robert Chapman, was within the 1440s affeeror and a 'confrere' of the almshouse, namely, perhaps, one of its governing twenty-four. Such confreres, among the town's elite, included, from families consistently prominent throughout, John Lamberd and Robert Semer, who in 1445 contributed the largest sums to the church fabric.[541]

The usual prestige occupations were often demonstrably prosperous and had several roles: John Beneit, barker, tax collector and juror, sued for substantial sums and had a shop in Fish Row, as did Richard Wynter, governor of the almshouse, who was perhaps a merchant, operating at least locally: he supplied wax, was owed £3 18s 2d and impleaded John Bury of

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537 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 26r; e.g. 72v.

538 Swanson, *Towns*, pp. 126-7.

539 TNA, PRO DL 29/42/825; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.28r; D/DBy m.5 Spring 1440; m.6 Sep. 1448; Jul. 1447.

540 TNA, PRO DL 29/43/826; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Dec. 1440; and see Dyer, *Transition?*, p.196.

541 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1440; D/DBy Q18 f.27r.

Waldingfield for £1 3s for wool.[542] John Wode, carter and probably innkeeper, a confrere in 1440, was in 1448 churchwarden and constable.[543] John Danbury, butcher/grazier in the 1470s, was also a chandler and a chief pledge. Mercers with high status included Thomas Lamberd. That the setting for a May at Pentecost in 1465 is described as being 'outside his house' suggests the latter's prestige and Lamberd became churchwarden from 1470-2. William Lamberd of London, perhaps an ambitious son, made bequests which totalled £247 3s in 1515.[544]

Contacts of the elite were predictably widespread: a schoolmaster of Our Lady of Bow, London, witnessed the will of Robert Dauncy senior, whose brother was abbot of Bourne; John Hervy, mercer, bequeathed to many churches in the area and the four main Cambridge friaries; a witness was William Draper of London.[545] Typical of London contacts shown in Walden mercers' wills between 1488 and 1524, John Byrd left £13 6s 8d for the rood loft in Cornhill.[546] In 1467, the beneficiaries of Richard Semer, citizen and fishmonger of London, included John Semer of Walden, mercer. John Leche, vicar of Walden from 1489 to 1520, who, with his sister, Lady Joan Bradbury, achieved the chartering of the Holy Trinity Gild as the effective town government in 1514, may, in their bid to create it, have benefited from her marriage to the Lord Mayor of London. However, his metropolitan orientation is demonstrably typical of the uppermost levels of the town's society.[547] Their characteristic emigration to London and even beyond was exemplified at one extreme by the family which then took the name Walden: Thomas Walden, gent, died in 1471, burgess and merchant of the staple of Calais, 'late of London, late of Walden, late of Deptford'. Burgess and freeman of the Calais staple Edmund

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542 Cal. Fine 1445; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Dec. 1444; Jan. 1446; m.5 May 1439; m.6 Jul. 1443; D/DBy Q18 eg. f.25v; D/DBy m.5 Spring 1440; m.6 Dec. 1447.

543 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Sep. 1440; D/DBy Q18 f.33r.

544 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1475; e.g. Sep. 1472; D/DBy Q18 fols 70r; 83r; T/A 358/22.

545 ECRO T/A 358/11; 358/10.

546 ECRO T/A 358/9.

547 CCR 1467; A. Sutton, 'Lady Joan Bradbury', in C. Barron and A. Sutton (eds), *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500* (London, 1994), pp. 209-38.

Barker was also apparently rooted in the town: in 1497 he left £6 3s 4d to the church works and the large sum of £7 to establish a house in Goul St, where his brother, John, lived, probably one of the long line of Barkers fishmongers there.[548] Some 'outside' merchants dealt in Walden land: feoffees in 1488 for Henry Woodcock, citizen and scrivener of London, and Thomas Barker of Walden included two goldsmiths among four London citizens. Walden's elite, too, invested 'out': Thomas Stukeley, gent, quitclaimed an inn and three tenements in London. The role of the gild was likely to be increasingly important for the elite, fostering connections, visible particularly in land dealings, with Londoners especially, reinforcing and promoting the town's potential for specialisation.[549]

In any case, the 'upper sort' associated closely: John Chyssel's will in 1467, leaving £10 to his wife, Joan, had five witnesses, all serving at various times as churchwarden; three served also as juror and or affeeror; one as market bailiff. In 1462 the churchwardens recorded expenses 'at Warde's', with Thomas Lamberd, juror and churchwarden 1453-5, and 'Dauncy', chief pledge, juror and, in 1476, one of the 'fidei dignorum'.[550] Warde, presumably an innkeeper, was affeeror and juror and, with Thomas Semer, arbitrator for the electors in Rekever's case, while Dauncy and Spilman were arbitrators for the abbot. John Shymmyng, innkeeper and probably merchant/chapman, travelled on parish business with Thomas Barker, currently churchwarden, John Lopham, juror and breadweigher within the year, and Robert Semer, juror and confrere of the almshouse. Re-marriage by widows reinforced status links: Christine, widow of John Gerland, malter and/or chapman/merchant, married Thomas Holme, farmer of the manor.[551]

Walden's occupational and economic elite usually supplied the churchwardens and apparently the collectors for the Mays, who included mercer, yeoman, draper, barker, innkeeper

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548 ECRO T/A 358/8; T/A 358/13; e.g. D/DBy m. 6 Jul. 1447.

549 ECRO D/B 2/2/148; CCR 1465; no contemporary gild records are extant.

550 ECRO D/B 2/MIS2/1; D/DBy Q18 f.61v.

551 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jun. 1472; m.7 Mar. 1455; D/DBy Q18 f.22r.

and fishmonger, among them such prosperous individuals, noted earlier, as Roger Pyrk, Robert Mayhew and Thomas Semer. Though in the two sample periods none of the fourteen collectors became affeeror and only one served as chief pledge, half were jurors and a few inquisition members. Over the whole study period, of forty-two wardens, twenty-three became chief pledge and nineteen affeeror. While this illustrates the prestige of the wardens' role, that some held both court offices may suggest a ranking among churchwardens: ten took up neither office, twenty-two took one, ten both.[552]

Women and household

The household, the fundamental unit of production, consumption and labour, made up the larger systems, among them the neighbourhood. It fundamentally comprised the conjugal unit, with children, and in early sixteenth century Coventry 3.8 persons on average, though a substantial minority of households was much bigger, generally because servants and or apprentices were included.[553] Its make-up was impermanent, through high mortality, short servant contracts, fixed-term apprenticeships and children departing into service from about twelve years old. Perhaps parents sometimes helped materially in setting up a son in a trade: John Beneit, barker, bought from Harsent, the smith, 'all the artillamenta (equipment) of the craft of smith in his workshop'. Later a John Beneit, smith, was recorded.[554] Without craft fellowships, the parish and household remained the only formal milieus for the relatively humble, while those of higher status might, in Walden, belong to a socio-religious gild.

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552 Of thirty-six named collectors, 1443-8, more than two-thirds held major office: sample periods, six years each, mid-1440s and early 1470s, investigated in detail. The 1470s office-holders might, of course, be sons of the 1440s collectors.

553 Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, pp. 94-5.

554 ECRO D/DBy m.7 May 1453; m.8 Sep. 1482.

Women's roles

Three main roles for women were relevant: as wives, as widow heads of household, alone or with children, and as servants. Importantly, however, many, especially the poorer, are invisible in the records.

The social status of wives generally depended mainly on that of their husbands. With no craft gilds, women may have had more scope to define their own status, especially where, as with the saffron industry, many tasks were particularly suitable for them and, indeed, for children. These would include the relatively, and appropriately, delicate tasks of planting, weeding, and harvesting. Poos noted north central Essex's mobile female harvest workforce. With such improved work prospects, women might earn independently.[555] A few, named, elite wives were recorded as taking independent action: Joan, mercer John Byrd's wife, sold thirty gallons of ale. A few were buried in the church, for example Margery Semar, wife of the yeoman, Thomas.[556] Widows might continue their husband's trade, deal in land or make bequests: Joan Semer, widow of Robert, was paid 4s for wood for the church doors, Joan Wynter, widow of Richard, 19s 8d for supplying wax; Cristina Hervy paid £7 13s 4d for land; Margaret Mayhew left £6 to her daughter.[557]

Social rank might be reflected in burial rites: wax for candles cost 2d for 'the wife of Kele', 10d for Nicholas Chapman's wife and 24d for the elite William Middleton's mother.[558] For mercer Roger Pyrk, himself, it cost 40d, while for John Boyton, including at seventh and thirtieth day observances, 93d.[559]

Women of varying social status were employed by the parish. Some tasks extended the domestic: occasional brewing or baking, washing altar cloths, making and repairing vestments. These involved the wives of men themselves frequently in the records, and so

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555 Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 227; Dyer, *Standards*, p. 305.

556 ECRO D/DBy m. 9 Nov. 1484; D/DBy Q18 f.94r.

557 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 41v; 65v; D/DBy m.8 Feb. 1471; D/B 2/MIS 2/5.

558 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 93v; 118r; 90r.

559 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 93v; 131r.

mostly not the poor or marginal. Funds collector Margaret Child also baked and brewed, and the wife of John Clerk, probably the carpenter, was employed. However, also involved were 'a washerwoman', and the wives of the unknowns 'Oxnell' and Richard Hobard.[560] Other women apparently managed businesses: Katherine Semer, later a founder of the Holy Trinity Gild, supplied cloth; Margaret Wright, a widow, brass sheeting for bells. In a rare detail of unskilled labour, Sabine Everard and Thomas Frykke's wife collected stones, probably for the construction works.[561]

Despite interesting glimpses of such locally mobile lives as that of Matilda Whitehead, apparently a labourer, suing for wages earned in other vills, women were recorded here most commonly as brewers and regrators; both the access to relevant equipment and their husbands' occupations suggest brewers' relative prosperity.[562]

The possibility of labelling a woman merely as wife of a named man allows differential recording of the sexes and of women. Wives of those with status are sometimes, though inconsistently, given their full name: Alice Warde as a brewer in 1473; in 1474 she took over land with her husband, Thomas, probably innkeeper. In 1473, Alice Hynde was named; in 1476 she and her husband Robert, apparently a clerk, surrendered 4.75 acres. In contrast to these, a suit for debt named Walter Lawe's son Roger, while Walter's wife was described merely as 'wife of Walter'. Such practice might not contribute to conflict and tension but in its denial of identity it both reflects and supports evidence from other situations.[563] The names of definitely high status women were reliably fully recorded, for example the rent collectors Joan, who, as widow of John Godfrey senior later surrendered ten acres, and Juliana Shymmyng, widow of John. When widows and wives of 'unknown', surely poor, men were amerced for hedge breaking, no consistent pattern as to citing their names emerges. However, merely two of eighteen female

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560 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 7v; 125r; 141r; 142r; 21v.

561 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 116v; 90v; 68r; 81v.

562 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1465; eg. m.9 Jul. 1484.

563 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1473; 14 Jul. 1474; Dec. 1476.

regrators amerced in 1474 were given their full name; that one of these frequently washed and sewed for the church may bear testimony to the fact that in a small town a single role might be adequate to serve as an identifier in the overall context of the vill.[564]

A special category of females, namely girls, or 'maidens', gained some formal recognition and perhaps extra-household solidarity: 'the maidens of the Middle Ward' and 'the girls of the High Street' and of Castle Street raised funds for the parish. That these were recorded as for 'banners', may suggest an interesting, and understandable, seeking of recognition of their identity as a distinct unit.[565] Such activities might foster either a reassuring community of interest, or, perhaps, unrest. For young males in Walden the alehouse might provide the closest parallel, though actual evidence for their extra-household and non-working community comes from tithings, assault prosecutions and games and sports. In general, women's solidarity beyond the immediate household surely depended largely on informal groupings, on such work activities as washing and saffron picking, on adherence to specific devotional foci such as lights in the church, on family connections and on life-cycle community.

Women were important in the creation and dispersal of urban estates, bringing land into a new marriage or dealing independently as widows in the property market. Instances include Margery Hale, widow of Richard, brazier, and Margery Cotyngham, widow of John, citizen and fishmonger of London.[566] While Joan Payn, spinster, surrendered one acre and Margaret, daughter of John Elys, was granted licence to farm out five acres for ten years, some had an ample holding: Idonia Parker at least forty-three acres; widowed Sabina Eyre surrendered a half-virgate.[567] Property might provide security for old age: widow and rent

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564 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1471; Dec. 1461; Jul. 1474; D/DBy Q18 e.g. f.113v.

565 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 73r; 64r; 36r; young gender-based groups contributed similarly in Ashburton: see A. Hanham (ed.), *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580* (Torquay, 1970).

566 Swanson, *Towns*, p.121; in e.g. ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 63, many women's claims to property are examined; ECRO D/B 2/2/188; D/B 2/2/147.

567 ECRO D/DBy m.10 Feb. 1487; m.8 Dec. 1474; m.6 Jan. 1446; m.8 Sep. 1465.

collector Joan Godfrey surrendered a tenement and ten acres to her five daughters, on condition that she occupied it for her lifetime.[568]

While women heads of household with customary land owed suit, women's court actions usually concerned debt or trespass and perhaps detinue. In 1474, four of sixteen debt plaintiffs were female. Some may have been widows like Margaret Roter, who sued for 8s 4d for malt, perhaps continuing her husband's trade.[569]

Women were usually executor, perhaps alone, of their husband's will and sometimes of others': of thirty-four wills from before 1520 which mention a living wife, she was an executor in 76.5 per cent; in 29.4 per cent of the thirty-four, she was sole executor. In 1467 Blanche Colwell was apparently executor of John Shymmyng; prosecuting her in the ecclesiastical courts cost almost six shillings. Subsequently 6s 8d 'of her debt' was paid.[570]

Widows of the upper sort frequently re-married and within the same status group: Alice Vynter, widow of William, market bailiff in 1465 and farmer in 1470, had shops in Fish Row and by July 1471 married Thomas Warde, variously chief pledge, churchwarden and constable.[571] Joan Hendeman, whose husband was a collector of the Minister's rents in 1438-9 and held over 40 acres in 1453, married John Newton, probably chief glazier and between 1443 and 1448 twice chief pledge. Other widows married 'out': Juliana Shymmyng to Over, north of Cambridge and, as noted, Margaret, widow of Richard Shymmyng, to Hadleigh.[572]

Neighbourhood contact might promote a sense of place, selfhood and therefore identity. Street units within the town were the fundamental locus of parish collections and play performances, as well as of the young women's groups. Though relatively immobile over a long distance, most women's working context implied mobility within the town. In parallel with wives from modest households, female servants often engaged in front-line contact with the public,

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568 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1471.

569 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1474.

570 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 72v; 70r; 73r.

571 ECRO D/DBy m.8 20 Jul. 1465; Sep. 1470; Jul. 1471.

572 TNA, PRO DL 29/42/825; ECRO D/DBy m.7 May 1453; eg. m.6 Jul. 1446; m.8 Dec. 1478; T/A 358/6.

though while male 'servants' were frequently involved in disorder, no such prosecution related to female ones. This suggests not only that the females were less disorderly but that male heads of household were, unsurprisingly, more willing to assume responsibility for young females than for males.

Women and misbehaviour [573]

Women's working as retail traders among their peers, customers, traders and officials generated a characteristic range of conflict situations: Margery Sweyn was prosecuted for 'contumelious words' against John Skynner, supervisor of fish, reprehending John Bolte selling mackerel. McIntosh regards this expression elsewhere as particularly aggressive. Frequently, additional general characteristics were alleged: in Walden, 'furthermore she is a common scold and disturbs the peace'. Often these appear gratuitous, as in both instances of theft by Isabel Wakke: of a garment, and of two capons from Simon Fuller.[574] 'Common scold' was added to charges of fighting, also, such as against Margaret Saddler in 1443, and was used more frequently of women than of men. In 1456, assault presentments labelled the only two women 'common objurgatores' (scolds), but of almost twenty men, only one was so described. Kowaleski suggests that as increasing economic opportunities made women more independent and assertive, jurors elaborated indictments to ensure support.[575]

Locality is relevant again in the context of the hue and cry, raised solely by women, suggesting another parallel to the tithing mechanism, with women taking responsibility, typically, for small scale practical action in their immediate vicinity.

Two of the five defendants charged in 1465 with Lollard activity, including ignoring a penalty to leave the town, were wives and, interestingly, of men not in the group; they included

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573 Women are discussed here rather than in the wider discussion of 'Misbehaviour', below, because 'misbehaviour citings' contribute a considerable proportion of the evidence for women's roles.

574 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1445; McIntosh, *Misbehavior*, p. 60; ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1454; Jul. 1457.

575 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1443, m.7 Jul. 1456; M. Kowaleski, 'Scolding', Cambridge University History Faculty seminar talk, 30/01/2002.

Margaret Payn, whose husband William had the specialist occupation of hosier. Phythian-Adams noted the prominence of women heretics in the Coventry area. In 1456, Alice Richard of Walden, a single woman, was presented for 'learning heresy and Lollardy'. All her goods were to be seized.[576] Making a living as an independent woman may have brought her into contact with external influences, and being single she was probably both a more likely and an easier target: that single women without regular jobs were seen as threatening is a commonplace.

In general, sexual misdemeanours became a greatly increased cause for concern towards the end of the century; jurors, in market centres especially, portrayed them as a threat to good order. At Walden, concern about the impact of numbers of incoming strangers, especially at harvest time, may have exacerbated this concern. Apart from a single reference to 'a concubine' in 1449, prosecution was, indeed, concentrated in the 1480s, with four cases. Expulsion from the community, a particularly severe punishment, was applied to Agnes Laurence, a 'whore', for about one week, under a penalty of 20s, and to Joan Epford for about five weeks, for 'keeping riotous women'; a concubine, whose keeper was amerced merely 4d, was to be taken from the town 'so that the court shall hear no more about it'.[577] That, contemporaneously, Thomas and Agnes Butler, actually keeping a bawdy house, were ordered simply to mend their ways by Michaelmas under a penalty of 20s raises the question whether the severity of punishment varied with gender. Also to be 'removed' was Alice, the wife of a tenant of John Spilman, the draper's, who stole from John Rutland's shop in 1489.[578] Her threatened penalty of the cuckingstool is the latter's sole citing. The severity of her potential punishment begs the question as to whether, at least by this late date, the status of the victim was also relevant. With increasing oligarchy, the leet jurors may have been tending to close ranks with others of the elite. John Rutland, churchwarden in 1472-4, was, before 1489, bailiff of

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576 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1465; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, p.181; ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1456.

577 McIntosh, *Misbehavior*, pp. 159-160; ECRO D/DBy m 6 Jul. 1449; m.8 Jul. 1481; m.10 Jul. 1489; Jul. 1488.

578 ECRO D/DBy m.10 Jul. 1488; Jul.1489.

the Honour of Mandeville, farmer of the demesne and yeoman.[579] In 1442 Margaret Saddler, a skinner's wife, had stolen from John Skynner, feoffee and witness in property deeds, and was merely amerced 4d.

Anxieties about order at night time rendered women hosts particularly suspect: charged in 1452 with keeping vigils at home 'beyond the customary time', Agnes Waryn was then also accused of eavesdropping; perhaps a tendency to prosecute further, perhaps victimise, someone already 'on the ropes'?[580]

MISBEHAVIOUR

Defence of reputation, credit and good name were vital: they were fundamental to being a trusted member of the community and closely allied, of course, to the primary purpose of functioning effectively in the market. Local leaders would wish to promote harmony for its impact on the economic buoyancy of the town. For this reason, threats from troublemakers, such as gossipers, eavesdroppers, gamblers, brawlers or those refusing to work, could prompt prosecution. Of 255 towns and villages throughout England, between 1420 and 1499, studied by McIntosh, 112 reported no offences of any kind; only two, including Walden, had four or more different types of offence in as many as three of four twenty-year periods. While many communities were presumably able to use entirely informal means to address the problems considered here, Walden's society in the period appears particularly heated and volatile.

As usual, presentments at the leet concerned public issues such as maintaining watercourses and sanitation and standards in brewing, baking and selling meat, fish, candles and leather. Inter personal animosities fostered by these must sometimes have amounted to explosive cocktails in the closely knit society. Apparent trivia provide light relief: Rob Thirland,

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579 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.90r; CCR 1488.

580 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1442; m.7 Jul. 1452.

barber, 'knowingly ate two stolen geese'. However, these causes of trouble, along with the perennial occurrence in the manor courts of private suits for debt, trespass, detinue, and contract, will be disregarded in this discussion in favour of attempting to address other, overt, signs of tension and conflict in challenges to community order, stability and perceived wellbeing. It seems self-evident that when the leet jurors, predominantly from the wealthiest class in the town, decided which matters to present, they might wish to protect their own interests. They surely feared not only threats to good order and economic viability but a weakening of their control, with consequent change in the status quo, where they were nicely placed. They may also have had some concept of the common good.

Obvious candidates for being seen as potentially destabilizing and subversive include those outside the authority of either lord, master or husband, thus including the young, transients and those without fixed employment. Some would be among those presented for disorder who appear nowhere else: several among twenty-two men presented in 1465, one simply 'a certain man called 'Litelbode'.[581]

At Havering, behaviour patterns became more polarised, with heightened tension. Poor migrants potentially confronted seigneurial, clerical and civic authority. Immigrants and young labourers, generally landless, rootless and unmarried and without the usual household responsibilities, were potential troublemakers and perhaps easier targets, with a lesser potential for retribution. Labels such as the 'stranger' or the 'Irishman', attacked on market day, served as a reminder of their susceptibility to hostility or at least suspicion.[582] The increase in the 1470s and 1480s in numbers listed to join tithings probably reflects increased concern, and perhaps increased total numbers. (Fig. 4.2) The new ordinances, within the period almost all from the 1480s, apparently responded to new challenges with both a growing assertiveness on the part

581 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1477; Jul. 1465.

582 McIntosh, *Autonomy*, p. 253; ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1453; m.9 Jul. 1483.

of the chief pledges and an added confidence, perhaps derived from the increasing power of the gild.

Interpersonal physical conflict was commonplace. The number of assaults and of their initiators remained almost constant at around ten per court from 1440 to 1450 and eleven or twelve from 1458 to 1465. However, from 1480 to 1488, the rate of both recorded was little more than half of these, which would seem unlikely if there were any increase in total population, even if the regime in the later period were more laissez-faire, or there were more evident sanctions against violence. Of the forty-two amercements for fighting in the 1440s, the average, 2.78d, closely matches the 2.80d in the 1480s but of seventy-five cases from 1458 to 1465 it is only 2.26d. The level does, therefore, rise later in the century, as McIntosh found. The three assaults on messor or constable attracted, unsurprisingly, the much higher sum of 6d.[583]

Extreme assault cases involved drawn daggers and swords. Trade connections, overt or presumable, led to fights: John Harsent attacked Richard Grant; both were smiths. John Osbern, weaver, attacked another weaver, butchers attacked a chandler.[584] John Pese, a weaver, was cited for breaking and entering, for assault and hamsoken, also as a nightwalker and disturber of the peace. In 1472 he withdrew from suit because of felony and was in the custody of John Chalk, bailiff of the franchise.[585]

Outdoor games provoked nine presentments in total. Walter Lawe, in 1442, was amerced 4d for playing handball on festal and ferial days outside the customary vigil time and despite serving on juries and inquisitions at around this time. He was an affeeror in 1445. In 1448 his widow, Joan, hosted games.[586] In 1443 two presentments concerned handball on workdays, the one involving both 'men and servants' perhaps especially alarming. The host was particularly punished. The fact that the twenty-four who in 1446 stole from the manor equipment

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583 eg. ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440.

584 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1449; Jul. 1445; m.8 Jul. 1465.

585 e.g. ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1477; Jul. 1472.

586 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1442; 23 Apr. 1445; Jul. 1448.

for their handball-playing included two glaziers, two cordwainers, a collarmaker and a chaplain suggests that order was threatened by other than the lowliest:[587] Lack of respect for the offices of the church resulted in a 1445 presentment for playing during vespers. A parish chaplain, Roger, was, nevertheless, amerced for playing in 1453.[588]

Already at Walden in 1447 four sitting 'at table in the house of Roger Crecy, tinker, outside the customary time' was sufficient basis for presentment, as was in 1453 Robert Cade's playing 'pennyprick' in a private close at night.[589] However, the 1477/8 Statute, no longer banning outdoor games but apparently prompted by anxiety about the young and poor's gambling and wild behaviour, brought in severe penalties for hosting gaming. By 1484 a sub poena of 20s defended against games and cards outside certain times.[590]

Since, on almost all occasions, scolds were said to be disturbers of the peace, too, it is interesting that all six cases occurred before 1457, so concentrating, like outdoor games cases, early in the period. Possibly flux in the population, including numbers of incomers, even if only temporary, later produced new areas of concern, apparently more pressing.

Cases of both night walking and eavesdropping were relatively numerous in the 1470s. Night walking of course might suggest revelry, which threatened order and might reduce the offender's fitness to work. Occasionally specific charges were added: a servant of John Danbury, the butcher, was accused of eavesdropping and Thomas Blume was said to have played dice out of hours. Associated theft added to the concern: Thomas Stukeley was a snooper, a thief and a disturber of the peace.[591]

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587 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1443 Jul. 1446.

588 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1445; m.7 Jul. 1453.

589 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1447; m.7 Jul. 1453.

590 McIntosh, *Misbehavior*, pp. 99-100; ECRO D/DBy m.9 Jul. 1484.

591 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1477; Jul. 1476; Jul. 1472.

It is interesting that the single mention of the cuckingstool concerned not sexual misdemeanours but theft: the burglary of John Rutland's shop by Alice Reynold.[592] Theft prosecutions, which occur throughout, especially early in the period, concerned such items as £1 8s 4d from a chest in the church, crocuses from neighbours' gardens, a gold half noble, a chemise and salmon. A mother and daughter were described simply as 'common thieves'.[593]

Certain individuals and families caused problems repeatedly: in 1448, of 13 assault cases, John Hawkyn was the assailant in two, William in four. In 1457 John Hawkyn, weaver, attacked and imprisoned John Clerk 'against the law and custom of the king', extorting 8d.[594] John Reymond, dyer, was frequently prosecuted: in 1448 he was amerced the large sum of 3s 4d for eavesdropping on the leet and was twice alleged to keep illegally a balance for weighing wool. He defaulted as chief pledge; with his wife, Agnes, he was a common troublemaker: they called the hue and cry, still prevalent in Walden in the 1440s, and frequently fought against others; their children threw stones; Agnes was 'a concubine'; John vilified the messor, was amerced 1s for stating that the jurors adjudicated falsely, and in 1465 his failure to abjure the town as directed because of Lollard practices warranted referral to the King's Council.[595]

Two contrasting instances of apparent vandalism may represent resentments fermenting more generally, though: the precise motive for the violation of an altar in 1443 is elusive; the wrecking of a communal latrine in 1472 might suggest disaffection among the poor and under-employed.[596]

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592 ECRO D/DBy m.10 Dec. 1489; McIntosh, *Misbehavior*, p. 64, considers Walden's 1490-1 reference to a cuckingstool pit 'surprisingly early'. However, Walden's street name 'Cuckingstool End' was current in the later fourteenth century, at latest, and Poos, *Rural Society*, p.274, refers to many places with cuckingstools by the 1400s. That Walden's device was suspended over water is the sole such instance in McIntosh's 255 small communities.

593 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1445.

594 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1448; m.7 Jul. 1457.

595 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1448; e.g. m.7 Jul. 1454; m.6 Jul. 1449; m.8 Jul. 1464; Jul. 1465.

596 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.19v; D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1472.

CONCLUSION

As was characteristic of small towns, a substantial minority of the wealthier managed the machinery of government in their own favour. Walden's court and parish were, indeed, administered by an oligarchy, likely to have been reinforced by members' roles within the gild, but which was broadly based. Before the gild formally gained privileges in 1514, it probably resembled the major gild at Stratford, which, having absorbed others and owning much urban property, became the effective social and political organisation behind the legal front provided by the borough court.[597] Meanwhile, the power of Walden's established structures was weakening as, for example, tenants asserted their independence, juries increasingly failed to attend, despite the use of habeas corpus, individuals might be 'not willing to go' to help officials, unwilling to keep the peace when asked or refuse to pay an entry fine.[598] Perhaps the degree of disorder evident at Walden was to some extent typical of a low, broad social spread? The consequent empowering of the middling sort might well predispose to confidence, self-assertion and challenge to the existing order.

Increased pressures on the town's society, whether through a changing, sometimes faltering, economy, population turnover, especially, perhaps, if temporary, or a wish to attract outsiders to invest would demand that the labour force should be disciplined. The material gap between newcomers and established families, in a context of increasing polarisation of wealth and concentration of power, could be expected to foment discontent. Newcomers, suspiciously unknown, were likely to be particularly closely scrutinised, especially if poor.

The social structure was quite shallow: a few of those playing a leading role in the town were really rich, but numerous artisans and traders attained middling wealth, and a majority can be described as poor. The fluid economic context of the town would affect occupations

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597 Hilton, 'Small town', p. 83; C. Gross, *The Gild Merchant: a Contribution to British Municipal History* (Oxford, 1890), p. 84; Dyer, 'Stratford', pp. 43-64.

598 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1478; Jul. 1482.

differentially, resulting in, in addition to Dyer's 'discrepancy in wealth and opportunity', inconstancy in relationships and tensions between individuals and groups over time. Typically, potential tension and conflict might be mitigated by 'reinforcing' corporate activities, such as the plays, May ales, games, other communal projects, including meals during building and on completion, and various informal associations.[599]

Walden in the mid-late fifteenth century cannot be taken as demonstrating an entirely stable and harmonious self-regulation. In the period it was particularly, and patently, disorderly, with assault and numerous petty offences at many levels. In fact, violence, trespass, theft, defamation/vituperation and need for arbitration characterised the 'heated and quarrelsome' atmosphere. Walden exemplifies Hilton's observation that on the whole many towns' courts hardly coped.[600]

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599 Swanson, *Towns*, p. 123; C. Dyer, 'The political life of small towns', IHR seminar talk, Jan. 2005; e.g. ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.24v.

600 C. Dyer, 'Small towns', p. 529; Hilton, 'Small town', p. 91.

CHAPTER FIVE: CULTURAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL ASPECTS

INTRODUCTION

In what ways can it be said that Walden had an urban culture? Was Walden in the fifteenth century a truly urban entity? Late medieval towns can be interpreted as dominated by the cultural values of a tiny elite, for whom culture provided a means of exercising power. Urban culture, however, can also be seen as reflecting the interests and activities of a wider spectrum of town dwellers. Small-town inhabitants repeatedly demonstrated that they were different from the rural world, despite their contact with its agricultural rhythms and the peasantry. A distinctively urban range of political and cultural institutions, such as hospitals, chantries and fraternities, has been identified. Urban characteristics include civic pride, common purpose and a role as a centre for a hinterland. The clergy, associated with fraternities, chantries and subsidiary chapels, as well as the parish church, fostered a relatively literate climate. Towns formed centres for 'education, pilgrimage, processions, plays and prostitution'. Collective planning and action promoted community identity, while 'notions and rituals' might be relatively influential on the character of a small, potentially unstable town environment.[601]

VIRTUE AND CIVIC PRIDE

All urban authorities attempted to maintain peace and order by enforcing the law and providing for the settling of disputes. Threats to public amenity and order were countered by ideals of virtue and civic pride, while collective urban identity provided some stability for

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601 Commentators on these topics include: G. Rosser, 'Urban culture and the Church, 1300-1540', in D. M. Palliser, (ed.), *CUHB* i, *600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 335-369; C. Dyer, 'Small towns', in Palliser(ed.), *CUHB i*, pp. 505-37; D. M. Palliser, 'Urban society', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 132-49; K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001); R. H. Britnell, 'Town life', in R. Horrox and W. M. Ormrod (eds), *A Social History of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 134-178.

individuals, whose own situation was potentially unstable. Many towns legislated to create a clean and safe environment, as a moral emphasis was applied to questions of protecting the inhabitants from pollution. Towns also attempted to regulate 'marginal' social groups, such as beggars and prostitutes. The complexity and mobility of urban society defied characteristic attempts to define a core urban culture: categories including foreigners, prostitutes and the permanently poor were labelled as such.

Civic pride, with confidence in Walden's growth, apparently justified the expense and commitment evident in expanding or rebuilding large parts of the church. The prominent so-called 'Woolstaplers' Hall', probably a Gildhall, may date from the early fifteenth century, and certainly several gilds were listed in 1389.[602] Public buildings, as in the case of display in private dwellings, may speak to a concern, not only to impress those outsiders who might benefit the town economically or sense an appropriate dignity of place but also to reinforce townspeople's confidence, identity and pleasure in belonging. Links with the sophisticated world of London would foster this pride and self-confidence.

'Civic virtue' is surely relevant to the establishment of the almshouse in 1400 and to its insistence that the principles of propriety and concern for civilised living apply to the character of its priest, to be 'of good name and clean living', and even to the future conduct of its inmates, 'the more indigent', who were to be 'of good rule and clean living', not drunken, ribald, quarrelsome, or evilly disposed.[603]

Concern for public amenity, to facilitate the practical mechanisms of Walden's daily life and to maintain its dignity and reputation, led to concern that streets and watercourses should remain clean. The major south-north route brought visitors with valuable commodities and contacts, whom the authorities would be anxious to encourage. John Gerland, saddler, was prosecuted for obstructing the highway in Cordwainers Row with faggots and underwood. John

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602 M. Medlycott and D. Stenning, 'The Woolstaplers' Hall of Saffron Walden', *Essex Journal*, 36 (2001), pp. 37-41; TNA, PRO Chancery Miscellanea C 47/39/58; 47/39/59; 47/39/60.

603 F. W. Steer 'The statutes of the Saffron Walden almshouses', *TEAS*, 25 (1958), pp. 172-83.

Kyng of Chesterford was presented for obstructing the common way below the park, outside the town's built area, which was used 'by all passing', and also as the processional way at Rogationtide for all parishioners of Walden.[604] Many suits concerned safeguarding watercourses, which was made more urgent by the area's low rainfall and nevertheless important dyeing and tanning industries. Several wells are mentioned but their location is unclear, apart from the extant one in Freshwellhundred. Though sand was used as protection on the ground at the butcher's shop, pollution by both butchers and dyers was commonplace: butchers sent blood into the Waterslade, bordering the market. John Reymond, dyer, was sued for 'raising and spoiling' water from the Madgate Slade, 'which is needed for people and beasts'.[605] There were both public and private latrines: Thomas Lawny, dyer, polluted both the Madgate Slade from his craft and the street from his latrine. This was clearly of concern in high-density contexts, as it was that Thomas Burneby, a glover, buried fetid skins in his close.[606] The courts' attempt to regulate pollution of watercourses led to the citing of John Dawes for constructing a latrine in the Waterslade, and of Thomas Warde for wrecking the communal one on Betonesbridge.[607]

The many prosecutions for pollution and obstruction followed from the characteristically urban features of high density commercial and domestic use, especially in the large market area, and from the varied industrial activities. The high value density of the saffron crop made the threat from wandering pigs here, specifically, acute: 'John Spilman's large sow often enters the saffron gardens of men of this town, causing damage and against the statutes and ordinances made by the whole town'.[608]

This self-conscious anxiety to care for reputation is reflected, too, in the prosecution of troublemakers, considered in Chapter Four in discussing the significance of conflict within

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604 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440; m.6 Sep. 1445.

605 see Fig. 2.3; ECRO D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440; m.6 Jul. 1448; D/DBy Q18 f.99r.

606 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1474; m.7 Jul. 1454.

607 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1463; Jul. 1472.

608 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1482.

society. Identifying the imposition of social controls, Dyer notes, besides a 'heated and quarrelsome atmosphere', that implicit in the intensity of small-town life was a threat from the 'unruly and idle'; Bailey suggests that population mobility and availability of alcohol were contributory factors.[609]

The treatment of such marginals as prostitutes helps define the cultural context. We have seen that penalties relating to prostitution were relatively severe, with sanctions of banishment from the town for a week. 'Foreigners' were labelled as such, sometimes, surely, because of their uniqueness in the community, using the locative apparently in preference to an occupational naming: Thomas of Kent, later Thomas Kent, was a smith. Others were simply 'stranger' and the 'Irishman' employed by John Spilman, the draper, was identified only in this way.[610] Both were mentioned only in the context of being sued for assault, perhaps suggesting an anxious elite's defensive reluctance to acknowledge their presence within the community and a wider antipathy.

The poor, in contrast, merited special attention, particularly because of the influence of the doctrine of purgatory, with its emphasis on works of charity directed at the poor and their reciprocal prayers, which eased the passage of the dead soul. The poor's prayers were considered especially effective. This had a clear influence on both corporate and individual charitable provision in Walden. The almshouse of the purposely established gild of Our Lady of Pity, built, as usual, at the edge of the town, continued to support thirteen poor men, to be chosen dispassionately, 'in God's name and pure charity' as being 'lame, crooked, blind and bedridden ... and most at need', and was sustained throughout the period by gifts and bequests of properties to let.[611] At Wells, inmates were licensed to go out and seek alms. A broad scale of reciprocity is demonstrated when the Walden inmates in general were urged to pray for all

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609 ECRO D/DBy m.9 Jul. 1482; Dyer, 'Small towns', p. 529; M. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: an Economic and Social History, 1200-1500* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 146.

610 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jan. 1456; m.9 Jul. 1483.

611 E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 301-3, 360; C. Dyer, 'The archaeology of medieval small towns', *Medieval Archaeology*, 47 (2003), pp. 85-114; Steer, 'Statutes', p. 173.

benefactors and, when well, to pray in church.[612] Some individual testators made a specific accompanying request for prayers, as when Edward Barker gave 2.5 acres of arable in 1497.[613] Although the dates of many such donations are lost, many donors' names appended to the almshouse's statutes match those of prominent Walden residents such as William Higham, witness to several wills and a deed feoffee, whose donation of a croft is recorded in 1444. He was also among benefactors to be prayed for, recorded in the 1550 version of the governing statutes.[614] Walden's respect for the almshouse project is shown by the description of the twenty-four governors as 'fidei dignorum'. Five of the almshouse's 'confreres', to whom a croft was transferred in 1440, held other responsible positions: one as churchwarden, two as constables, one of the two affeeror to courts at five distinct dates, while most served as feoffees and all witnessed deeds.[615]

The almshouse statutes of 1400 invoked the support of the wider community by establishing that not only the deacon and the church clerk but also the 'clerk of the burgage' should come to the Mass of our Lady.[616] Both communities, the fraternity members and the almshouse poor, were to be served by the fraternity's priest, with a house 'ordained and made' in the churchyard, paid six pounds per year and assisted at the weekly mass of Our Lady by two additional priests. At the Assumption occurred a presumed highlight of Walden's cultural and social life: the fraternity's feast, following a sung Mass, at which a sermon was preached. The feast included entertaining the almshouse poor and, importantly, others that lived 'in the town'. This suggests recognition of poverty as a serious and widespread problem, to which the response has an ethical dimension and a formal organisation, perhaps typical of an urban rather

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612 D. G. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: the City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), p. 247; Steer, 'Statutes', p. 175.

613 ECRO T/A 358/13.

614 Steer 'Statutes', p. 193; ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1444; m.5 Sep. 1440.

615 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.105v; D/DBy m.5 Jul. 1440.

616 The 'clerk of the burgage' is not referred to elsewhere. The burgage' seems to suggest the whole body of burgesses.This was, presumably, distinct from the 'council of the town', referred to by the churchwardens in 1451, which, as suggested in the section 'Government structures and lordship', above, might relate to the body of chief pledges. '

than rural environment. The numbers of poor were not only invited to the feast but also were to be served, in a typical 'reversal' ritual, by the 'most worshipful' present, presumably of the twenty-four previously described, vested with the government of the charity.[617]

The almshouse both itself practised charity and made a public display of it. Importantly, its remit was not limited to Walden itself: those chosen as most needy might be of Walden 'or else in another place', as judged appropriate by the charity deed's governors. Additionally, the governors were, once a year, to distribute alms to the bedridden people within five miles, indicating that Walden saw itself as the focus for its rural surrounding area, and as having a characteristic urban function. Furthermore, it was outward looking in accommodating and treating sick transients, including pregnant women, on condition that they were not suffering from long-term illness.[618]

The parish as a unit made a small occasional gesture towards the poor, such as the gift of a half pence 'for a poor man'.[619] The poor benefited, too, from individuals or their descendants, who, perhaps having left Walden and 'made good', remembered the church and or almshouse in their will: one was London mercer William Lamberd, whose son-in-law was a Dauntsey and whose godson William Clopton, both likely to be of families famous as mercers.[620] Walden residents John Hervy, mercer, and Edward Barker left, respectively, 'a short gown to a poor woman living at the church gate' and a quarter of malt to 'a poor woman's son living at the Bury gate' in 1488 and 1497.[621] Possibly there were chambers in these gates which the poor used.

Of a total of forty-three extant wills of the period up to 1510, eleven made bequests to the almshouse. These included an acre of saffron, ten shillings specifically 'for prayers' and £2

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617 Steer, 'Statutes', pp. 179, 181, 183.

618 Steer, 'Statutes', pp. 173, 175.

619 ECRO D/DBy Q18 e.g. f.49v.

620 ECRO T/A 358/22; Lamberd's Walden connections were discussed in Chapter Four.

621 ECRO T/A 358/10; 358/13.

13s 4d for repairs.[622] There were the usual inducements of pence to the poor to attend the funeral and offer prayers. In their anxiety to shorten their time in purgatory, individuals might wish to distribute alms and perform 'other works of charity' for the soul. Joan Wynter, widow of a former 'keeper of the almshouse', made a life-time gift of an acre to be farmed 'for the poor in the town of Walden'.[623]

In total, these varied instances speak to a notable presence of the poor, predictable in urban environments, where they might anticipate more 'pickings.' Just as there were more poor, there was also a range of responses to the problem of poverty, through which the affluent townspeople could express the collective social sense of responsibility.

Roughly one fifth of testators contributed to highway maintenance, a work which might affect the economy's vigour: Geoffrey Symond, 'heyreman', allocated thirteen acres to this. Several others, some with particular reason to appreciate road improvements, including John Gerland malter/chapman and John Turtell, apparently a husbandman living in Sewardsend, provided one or two pounds each.[624]

URBAN INSTITUTIONS

In discussing medieval public buildings, Giles proposes a classification based on their foundation, history and function. Municipal buildings might consciously and ambitiously imitate aristocratic structures, so promoting civic pride, but Walden's lack of a town hall is not surprising in view of its lack, also, of incorporation and a formal 'town council'. Giles' second category includes both the gildhalls of religious fraternities and those of craft fellowships, found, unlike the

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622 ECRO T/A 358/18; T/A 358/14; H. Montagu Benton, 'Essex wills at Canterbury', *TEAS*, 21 (1937) pp. 254-5.

623 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1463.

624 ECRO D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1; ECRO T/A 358/4; D/B 2/MIS 2/2.

former, in urban contexts, only, though this does not imply that a smaller settlement without them could not be urban.[625]

An almshouse, though not an exclusively urban phenomenon, was a characteristic institution of a small town, so bolstering Walden's overall claim to that status. Those involved in its establishment and control were the twenty-four 'most worshipful' townsmen. It was a high-status project, showing, and perhaps reflecting, not only the elite's concern with the morality, discipline and godliness of those under their control but also their determination to oversee it. The almshouse's status as an urban marker must depend on a need for charity of a scale beyond that in a simpler settlement and the existence of sources of wealth adequate to satisfy it, as well as the desire to be seen to have such an institution.

Within the public space considered by Giles part of material culture are urban marketplaces and streetscapes. The juxtaposition of Walden's large marketplace, focus of a wide range of functions, both economic, cultural and socio/political, and the gildhall is a typically urban phenomenon. The building's origins are unclear: although the Holy Trinity Gild, dominant from 1514, is said to have met in the chamber over the church's south porch, this cannot have been adequate for full-scale gatherings. The main gild may well have used this gildhall earlier as it rose in importance and became the effective government. For Giles, such a building's powerful statement communicates an all-important impression of economic prosperity and political stability, even if in fact masking underlying uncertainty. Such an impression would impact on both perception of status and a necessarily urban potential for successful competition with neighbouring small towns. In Walden, by the early sixteenth century, prestigious Holy Trinity Gild members included the king.

This consciousness of status is paralleled by the ambitious expansion and rebuilding of the church. Typically of a small town, in the sense of accessibility to the public and of Rosser's

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625 K. Giles, 'Public space in town and village, 1100-1500', in eadem and C. Dyer (eds), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500* (Leeds, 2005), pp. 293-311.

wide spectrum of people who had personal creative involvement in it, it was a public building and certainly a focus in cultural life.[626] The church building works in particular phases consumed large sums relative to parish revenue: between 1439 and 1443 a total of approximately £107 on materials, labour and carrying; total income in 1439 was £42, in both 1440 and 1443, £19. In the two years 1466 and 1467 together, £28 16s was paid for building works; in 1466 income was £10 3s 2d and in 1467 £9 2s 7d.[627]

By the criterion of accessibility to the public, Giles includes, in her overview, shops and inns, also cited by Britnell as urban markers. At least six inns existed by 1600 and in the later fifteenth century the numbers of bakers of horse bread, along with references to entertaining important visitors with wine, also points to several inns, as does the incomplete rental of 1524.[628]

THE CHURCH: ARTICULATION AND RITUAL

Brown emphasises the urban parish's relatively dense concentration of people and wealth and its adaptability to new and more richly diverse ceremonies and processions.[629] In Walden the parish church dominated the settlement from its location near the castle on the 'acropolis' above the market. During the period, it absorbed considerable financial and material contribution and organisational effort. As it served the laity of the whole parish, some input was made by non-townspeople, who, as we have seen, contributed significantly to the wealth and organisation of the parish and town.[630]

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626 H. C. Stacey, 'The meeting place of the guild or fraternity of the Holy Trinity over the south porch of the parish church', *Saffron Walden Historical Journal*, 4 (1974), pp. 18-20; Rosser, 'Urban culture', p. 337.

627 Approximate because of some difficulty in distinguishing from maintenance spending. For 1441 and 1442 dating uncertainty precludes reliable estimation; ECRO D/DBy Q18: for folio numbers for these date ranges see Appendix A.

628 R. H. Britnell, 'Town life', pp.139-40; D. Monteith, 'Saffron Walden: a study in the evolution of a landscape' (*unpub.* M.A. dissertation, University of London, 1958); ECRO D/DBy m.32: e.g. f.7.

629 *A. Brown, Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: the Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 90-1.

630 The subsidiary settlements contributed 25.12 per cent of the assessed wealth of the vill in 1524/5; eg. Walter Cokerell of Little Walden, *messor* in the 1480s.

The organisation of the church/cemetery was complex. A summary of expenditure on the porch dates from 1467; there was a chapel above it by 1475 and a charnel house beneath in 1484. Another chapel, of St Nicholas, adjoined the choir and there was an image of the Virgin in a Lady chapel, as well as at the high altar. There were additional altars, of the Holy Trinity, and of the Holy Cross, at least. By 1474 a north aisle existed, 'the new work of the south aisle' was cited in 1487 and some testators from 1494 onwards provided for the 'new clerestory', others for 'the new building of Walden church'.[631]

The church contained many images, some three-dimensional, some painted, on banners and doubtless other surfaces. In 1463 a 'large tree' was bought for making an image of the 'Blessed Mary', while other known images are of S. Anne, S. George, S. Mary Magdalene, S. Katherine, S. John and S. Christopher. There were also lights of The Salutation and of S. Etheldreda.[632]

Ritual activities included processions: banners were carried on S. Mark's day, the date of the dedication of the abbey church, as well as at Rogationtide and around the town, predictably, at Corpus Christi, when seven banners and the hearse were carried, bells rung and drinkings took place in the cemetery. There were 'standard-bearers of the town at the Purification', among them the son of John Gerland, malter, Roger, who, interestingly since the abbey was rector, had a role of 'abbot', and Gerland owed for four red skins 'for shoes for dancers at the feast'.[633] Ales, or 'Mays', especially at the feast of Pentecost, and the secular bonfires and probable games and merrymaking of midsummer around the feast of the Nativity of S. John the Baptist, with their potential for reinforcing corporate identity, were perhaps also connected with the many prosecutions for assault and general disorder then.[634] Ritual fires, essential to the Vigil of Easter, were lit also at the feast of the Dedication, and the secular rites

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631 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 73v; 95v; 129v; 61v; 63r; 92r; 140v; eg, ECRO T/A 358/13.

632 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 106r; 49r; 88r; 49v; 114r; 123r.

633 *VCH Essex* ii, pp. 110-115; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 20r, 29v, 38r, 51v, D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1450.

634 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.70r; R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 37-8.

of Hock Monday contributed to church funds. For a social high-point around the feast of Pentecost in 1456, bread and cake, 'the Pentecost tart', using saffron, pepper, cloves, mace and butter, were baked and two quarters of barley brewed.[635]

Varied rich accoutrements and ornaments sustained ritual and much effort went into maintaining its requisites: missals were bound, a grail book written, a breviary and other service books mended. The churchwardens frequently acquired candles and oil: in 1439 a barrel of lamp oil for the year; while the choir was supplied with tallow candles, wax ones were used at the altars and for 'the harrow in Tenebris'.[636]

The visual was further elaborated: a painted tabernacle was made at Norwich. Fine textiles included a white silk chasuble for an altar, a velvet cope with gold leopards was bought and vicar John Clynt left items including a bible, sold by the churchwardens for the considerable sum of £4 14s 4d.[637] The Mass of Recorder was written on parchment, the liturgy of The Visitation on vellum and many items were painted: a figure of Christ, other images and the pulpit, crosses, the high altar frontal, a pax, banners and even a chest for storing surplices.[638]

A COMPLEX ADMINISTRATION

French sees the parish as focus of both ecclesiastical authority and moral instruction. It administered moral correction and extracted material support for the clergy. Obligations and

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635 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 105r; 66r; 49r.

636 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 7r; 56v; a 'harrow' was a spiked stand, holding candles, gradually extinguished during Tenebrae, the celebration of the Office on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of Holy Week, when the abandonment of Christ was commemorated: R. Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End: to which are appended Notices of the Town and Parish of Saffron Walden in the County of Essex* (London, 1836), p. 222.

637 ECRO D/DBY Q18 fols 56r; 127r; 96r; T/A 358/5; D/DBy Q18 f. 76v; Regarding the availability of bibles, see R. Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 104-114. The bible in English was very popular in the early fifteenth century but a licence may have been needed to use one and the one sold may well have been a precious old one, in Latin. From his bequests of money to the church, Clynt was apparently wealthy: see p. 229, below.

638 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 118v; 136v.

collective and individual religious concerns combined to form unique local religious cultures based at the institution of the parish.[639]

The role of churchwarden required skill and energy of its occupant. Walden was especially demanding: in contrast to many urban churches, its parish included the whole settlement: it was the main ecclesiastical/social focus. Physically, ecclesiastically and socially it was dominant. As a result, the wardens had not only to deal with the routine maintenance of a fitting environment but also with ritual, social and fundraising activities. French describes wardens' rendering of the accounts as a community-defining local drama, providing the framework for the annual cycle of activities.

The annual income and expenditure managed by Walden's churchwardens is known for some years. For comparison, the income of the manor/borough court can also be shown.(see Tab. 5.1) It is clear that in particular periods the parish handled sums that were considerable in relation to those raised by Walden's courts, those handled in the small town of Ashburton and in the large Cambridgeshire village of Bassingbourn.

639 French, *Parish*, pp. 1-17.

Tab. 5.1. Walden's annual parish expenditure and income, with comparisons

YEARS	TOTAL YEARS	PARISH	AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE, approx.	EXCEPTIONAL YEARS
1483-1490	8	Ashburton	£4 - £9 each of 6 years	£13; £19
1508-1510	3	Bassingbourn	£4 - £5	
1515-1521	7		£4 - £6 each of 5 years	£22; £17
1439-1443	3	Walden		£42; £19; £19
1450- 1466	5		£6 - £10	
1486-1487	2		£5	
1489	1			£33
AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME				
1440-1488		Walden parish	£9 10s 4d	
1440-1480	9	Walden courts	£4 - £8 each of 8 years	£16

Sources: A. Hanham (ed.), *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580 (Torquay, 1970);* CCRO P/11/5/1; ECRO D/DBy Q18; D/DBy m.5-m.8. Note: approx.: approximately. Dates are as available, whole year or near.

The obviously exceptional expenditure at Walden in the years at the beginning and end of this series of accounts resulted from ambitious building projects, which necessitated dealing with specialists from a distance and handling big money: in 1445 the churchwardens rode 'to Cambridge for masons in the work of the king there'; in 1443, they paid £8 3s 4d for 34 cwt 2 lbs of lead and dealt with 'the leadman of The Peek'; in 1475 they dealt with the mason Henry King of Careby in Lincolnshire.[640] A summary of expenditure on 'the porch', written in 1467, totalled £11 9s 11d, while the exceptional total in 1489 included lead costing £23 18s, with carting in addition. They dealt with gifts or promises of timber from the abbot of Walden and oaks, specifically, from the chancellery of the Duchy of Lancaster, which were 'pursued' in London,

[640] ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 22r; 21r; 19r; 97v.

implying gifts and expenses. They employed numerous masons, plumbers, carters, glaziers, labourers and carpenters; some from elsewhere had to be boarded.[641]

Another considerable task involved financing and acquiring objects for ritual purposes, employing, for instance, painters and carvers. The single most special commission concerned the making of the tabernacle by Norwich craftsmen: its maker, Richard at Dam, was paid £2, William Grene, painter, £3 18s 8d, John Dawes, for 'making a Christ' on it, 10s and William Webbe, for carrying it back, £1. The fact that 'the town' made an 'allowance' of £1 to at Dam suggests that the civic government was prepared to support a prestige project, presumably viewing it as appropriate to the dignity of Walden.[642]

The routine ritual demands implied spending 20s 4d on the barrel of lamp oil for the year; a year's 'waste', namely use, of wax amounted to 23 lbs; 26 lbs of wax was used to make the Paschal and other candles. Maintenance of appropriate texts was of course part of the wardens' remit, too: in addition to the Mass of Recorder, written on parchment, the 'Mass of Jesus' was written by William Wright and 3s 1d was paid to 'a writer for writing off ye servys off ye Visitation off or Lady and his mette and hys drynk and vellum'.[643]

The wardens dealt with, presumably oversaw, such subsidiary officers as the keepers of the rood loft light, and the light of the Salutation of the Virgin. Besides recording the very many gifts and bequests, including those noted as from 'lez mortes pour quest de testament', they must have seen to providing the numerous exequies and annual obits, plus some trentals and chantries, endowed by testators and also those for the deceased who made no will.[644]

They had various legal concerns: an 'oblygacion' had to be shown to the lawyer Kneesworth 'at Shymmyng's', involving paying for victuals. They again paid expenses at an inn while seeking representation 'regarding John Betys'; they paid Master Thomas Stafford,

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641 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 73v; 145r; 12r; 122r.

642 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 56r; 58v; 59r; 59v; 62v; 58v; 59r.

643 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 7r; 61v; 145v; 118v; 91v; 136v.

644 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 92r; 3r.

procurator of the court, concerning recovering a debt from John Buk, chaplain; in 1481 they paid Master John Darby for entering a plea in the spiritual court.[645]

To address these costs, they employed a wide range of strategies. Of course, because there were many, the varied gifts and bequests contributed substantially: they included an old lead vessel weighing 40 lbs; a fother (19.5 cwts) of lead from Alice Fisher; maidservants gave 20d or 12d, John Semer £3 6s 8d.[646] Sometimes they were specifically directed, perhaps for commemoration: for the souls of Henry Syker and his son John, William Payn gave 6s 8d towards mending the new bells. Many objects received were sold off: two rings of silver and copper from William Roberd's wife fetched 16d, an 'old noble' was worth 8s 9d. Also sold were such obsolete items as iron gates from the cemetery, an old image of S Mary and window glass, which raised 8s.[647] Market shops were both let and rented and the parish apparently had saffron grounds: it paid to make a measuring cup, presumably for assessing volume, at the time of the collecting of crocuses and for John Reid's labour in picking 5 ounces of crocus heads.[648]

During 1440, eighty-two people were named as giving money to the church, the amounts ranging from a half pence, from John Parker's wife, to 6s 8d each from six men; this perhaps represented some sort of levy and totalled £4 15s 3d. Church rates for parochial purposes were certainly levied by the late fifteenth century. In 1445 twenty-one promises 'to the fabric of the church', ranging from 15s to 1s 8d, may not have been entirely voluntary.[649]

Collections relating to 'May' ales, made frequently between 1439 and 1443, raised annual sums ranging from £25 1s 4d to only 19s 2d. After this they were recorded in only four years, in the fifties and sixties, producing from £1 to £7 1s 8d. In the five of the years that state the parish's annual income, their contribution varied from 64.9 per cent in 1439 to only 27.7 per

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645 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 26r; 21v; 121v.

646 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 27r; 51v; 57r.

647 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 27r; 60r; 135r; 42v; 43r; 3v.

648 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 64r; 38r; 106v; 145v.

649 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 9r-11v; R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 218; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f. 27r.

cent in 1443, after which it never exceeded 20 per cent. In 1439 collections for Mays, made in the major streets and subsidiary settlements in sequence through the year, seem carefully planned.[650]

Tab. 5.2. Collections for May ales made in 1439

LOCATION	DATE	SUM COLLECTED (s. d.)	SUM IN MARKS (as decimal)
High St	Pentecost	20.0	1.5
'Town'	31 May	28.9	
Little Walden	Pentecost	20.0	1.5
Castle St	Trinity Sunday	33.4	2.5
Market St	Corpus Christi	46.8	3.5
Goul St	18 June	30.0	2.25
Cuckingstool St	Ss. Peter and Paul	46.8	3.5
'The great street'	17 July	40.0	3.0
Sewards End	24 July	46.8	3.5
North End	10 August	60.2	4.5
Abbey End	Michaelmas Eve	86.8	6.5
Church St	18 October	40.7	

Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 1r-2r. Note: the ales are described as 'Mays', no matter when they occur.

The variation among these sums is surely influenced by seasonal fluctuations in prosperity and by the size and wealth of the various elements of the parish; the subsidiary hamlets, especially the largest, Abbey End (Brook Walden), contributed substantially. As virtually all sums are in multiples and fractions of a mark and some are duplicated, it seems possible that they again represent some sort of levy. However, other years' collection amounts differ from these in varying proportions: in 1442 Castle St yielded 49s 4d and Goul St 70s 0d.[651] Gathering quite specifically at the May, as in 'from a May before Thomas Lamberd's house,

650 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 18r; 18v. From f.2v, 'of Little Walden to the may in the church', it seems the May was held in the building; f.2r 'qui font collez pour un may en le Northend' is ambiguous; from f.43r 'received from a may in Castle St' and from f.70r, it was apparently held in the streets.

651 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.17r.

40s', may be paralleled in the case of plays: from the play of Little Walden 20s in 1467; from the play of the market in 1468 33s 5d.[652]

Making other collections, such as in 1439, groups of two to four collectors worked in distinct locations, seemingly those where they lived, in specific streets as well as in the minor settlements. This recalls the practice employed in tax collection, where two men from each street made the assessment, as at Wells in 1334. In other years collectors are not named but the main through road was sub-divided for the purpose. After 1443, though the minor settlements continued to contribute throughout, individual streets are seldom mentioned, except in 1456, when the amounts paid in from them were only a fraction of those received earlier.[653]

Tab. 5.3. Amounts collected, 1442 and 1456

STREET	1442	1456
Castle St	49s 4d	5s 4d
Church St	93s 4d	3s 6d
Market End	139s 4d	7s 0d
Goul St	70s 0d	3s 5d
MINOR SETTLEMENT		
Abbey End	80s	4s 4d
North End	80s	
Sewards End	53s 4d	1s 8d
Little Walden	60s	3s 4d

Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 17r; 17v; 47r.

Later in the period, the wardens depended on collections made in the church itself, mainly on Sundays. In 1475, for instance, fourteen Sunday collections, spread through the year from Low Sunday to Passion Sunday, yielded amounts ranging from 4s to 7s 3d, while the Holy Week and Easter congregations produced 29s.[654]

652 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 70r; 73r; 76v.

653 Shaw, *Wells*, p. 135; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 1r-3v; 17r.

654 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 93r-94v.

Income from 'the dead', namely from rents of properties bequeathed, as opposed to money from contemporary collections and ales, was slight: the proportion of rent income to collection income varied from 5.2 :100 to 14.5 :100. If such a regime was characteristic of a rural rather than urban context, as Burgess and Kumin suggest, this will be important in assessing the degree to which Walden was urban. Certainly, commitment by the living does not appear, on this basis, to run the risk that Brown identified of being diminished by substantial reliance on funding by the dead. However, Walden's more substantial parishioners' support of the almshouse by donations of property for rent perhaps redressed the balance towards the normal urban pattern, at least a little.[655]

A CLERGY CLUSTER

The existence of a cluster of clergy would exceed the 'more than one cleric and usually more than one priest', which Swanson says every parish probably needed.[656] Liturgical practice demanded two assistants, who might be in priestly orders and involved in the parish in other capacities. However, most clergy never obtained a proper benefice and depended on short-term posts: within the parish in dependent chapelries, if a large area; attached to gilds - if not as a full benefice, as temporary employment; in temporary chantries, increasingly on short-term contracts; in other casual posts. The great mass of urban clergy was poor and vulnerable. Duffy emphasises that clergy numbers were swelled by the dominance of concern with the fate of the soul after death and particularly by the belief that the Mass was effective in easing its passage through purgatory. 'Even private chantry priests assisted in the religious activities of the parish

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655 C. Burgess and B. Kumin, 'Penitential bequests and parish regimes in late Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44 (1993), p. 621; Brown, *Piety*, p. 241.

656 Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 46.

at large, many in key roles, such as training the choir, playing the organ and writing out liturgical books or the wills of parishioners'.[657]

In Walden there is considerable evidence both of scope for the employment of clergy and of the presence of clergy in the parish. Three gilds were recorded in the chantry returns of 1389, including one of the Holy Trinity. In the later fifteenth century, the 'almshouse' Gild of Our Lady of Pity, of 1400, was the sole one cited by a testator, in 1481, and in 1501 John Chapman left £1 for a purple cover for the image of Our Lady of Pity.[658] It was through this gild that the elite seem to have exercised power until the foundation of the new Holy Trinity Gild of 1514.[659] The latter followed from the response by the vicar John Leche, his sister Lady Joan Bradbury and four others to the king's refusal to accept an offer, in 1513, of large sums to redeem his manorial tolls; since 1494 the town was said to be tending towards 'decay and ruin' because of the king's renewing an ancient right to them.[660] The 'four others' were trustees of Katherine Semer's 1510 will and the six used its provision for a chantry to establish the new Holy Trinity Gild, to which tolls and manorial rights could be granted by the king. It is unclear why the Our Lady Gild was not used. Solely the new gild now received bequests. It perhaps took over all the functions of the Gild of Our Lady of Pity and deterred continued associated observances: in 1514 itself Christine Coksey assigned £6 for a year's masses at Our Lady of Pity altar, 'if it may be suffered, or else at some other altar'.[661] Deeds of properties given over time to support the Our Lady of Pity Gild's almshouse became the property of the 'Town'; Holy Trinity Gild became the Town Council in 1546.

There is no contemporary record of a chaplain. However, the Our Lady of Pity Gild had provided for two priests, to live without charge in the churchyard house with the almshouse's

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657 Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 46-50; Duffy, *Altars*, p. 301.

658 TNA, PRO Chancery Miscellanea C 47/39/58,59,60; ECRO D/ACR 1/4.

659 A. Sutton, 'Lady Joan Bradbury', in C. Barron and A. Sutton (eds), *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500* (London, 1994), pp. 225-6.

660 Rowntree, *Saffron Walden*, p. 13.

661 eg. wills ECRO T/A 358/22; D/ACR 2/51; D/ACR 2/52.

priest, and receive sixpence each per quarter to assist with the weekly Lady mass. The house was apparently the one called 'the college', by the churchwardens and located near the north porch of the church.[662]. Katherine Semar was later described as 'principal founder of the preest which singeth before the Trinity'.[663]

Post-mortem commemoration in total must have provided considerable, though intermittent and often temporary, clerical employment. Of the forty-two wills from before 1511 a few chose only a requiem in the abbey, and five others chose other institutions outside the town. While these included friaries in Cambridge or London, fourteen provided for service chantries in Walden, with a standard endowment of eight marks for a whole year, chosen by half; half opted for six months. Anniversary obits were established by six testators, usually with 3s 4d per year, or sometimes an endowment such as an acre. One provision was for a trental in Walden; only the vicar John Clynt ordained merely 7th and 30th day observances, though some wills failed to stipulate any commemoration in Walden.

The living itself attracted some vicars of high status in the period. John Clynt, serving for ten years until his death in 1462, left books, cloths for draperies at four altars, a gown ornamented with silver and robes which were beaver furred, black furred or red and tartan. In addition to the bible sold for £4 14s 4d in 1468, a coverlet he had owned produced £1 6s 8d in 1465. In 1488 or 1489, a total of £6 5s 10d 'of Clynt's money' was delivered to the wardens by ten men, while an additional eight contributions are illegible.[664] The Walden living formed a staging post in the high-profile career of Thomas Jan D.D., with a background of Winchester and New College, Oxford, Archdeacon of Essex from 1480. He was at Walden for just one year from 1484, became in 1497 Dean of the King's chapel, Windsor, and in 1499 Bishop of Norwich. John Leche, vicar from 1489 until his death in 1521, was highly educated, again possibly at

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662 Steer, 'Statutes', p. 179; ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.65r.

663 J. Weever, *Antient Funeral Monuments* (London, 1767).

664 ECRO T/A 358/5; D/DBy Q18 fols 70r; 76v; 146v.

Winchester, with powerful connections, including a Lord Mayor of London, second husband of his sister Dame Joan Bradbury.[665]

Some priests, even in subsidiary roles, were of sufficient status to serve as feoffees in transfers of free property. The most active in this way, John Orvey, was involved in five such transactions, concerning messuages in the built area between 1442 and 1458, and also achieved the status of churchwarden for two consecutive terms, from 1447 to 1451.[666]

The clergy's connection with ordinary members of society, noted by Swanson, can also be seen: the alleged theft of items from the manor to use for playing handball involved chaplain William House, with a tailor, a cordwainer a glazier and others. Roger, 'parish chaplain', was amerced for playing games and for assault. These cannot, therefore, be characterised as belonging to a clerical class apart. Clerics of their kind, perhaps employed for liturgical purposes as deacon or subdeacon, might also celebrate Mass: in 1487 'sir Thomas' was paid half a mark for celebrating the morrow Mass for half a year.[667] Some, at least, surely had additional occupations in the parish, probably on an annual basis for relatively low wages.

Clerks are much in evidence in the churchwardens' records. Owen describes them as 'presumably local men in minor orders, with duties not entirely clerical'. Their activities included looking after the church goods, guarding the church at night and ringing the bells, for example for funerals and obits. They were under the supervision of the parish's leading men and might teach the rudiments of the faith.[668] In 1472 the wardens received from the town 23d 'overplus more than John the clerk's wages are'. The meaning of 'town' is unclear. It seems to suggest some involvement of the secular government in providing for the church clerks. In any case, whether referring to a contribution by the secular government to a parish expense or expressing a lack of distinction between 'town' and 'parish', this seems an interesting combination of the

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665 Braybrooke, *Audley End*, p. 184; *VCH Essex* ii (1907), p. 518; Sutton, 'Lady Joan', pp. 209-238; M. White, *Saffron Walden's History: a Chronological Compilation* (Saffron Walden, c.1992), p. 33.

666 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 138r, 33r-40v.

667 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1446, m.7 Jul. 1453; D/DBy Q18 f.138v.

668 D. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1971), pp. 102-31.

secular and the religious. Apparently some of the subsidiary settlements had their own clerk: the holy water clerks of Sewardsend and of Little Walden. Indeed, Nicholas Pyrk's will, in 1502, referred to a clerk's tenement in Little Walden, 'beyond the chapel', perhaps identifiable with St Aylotts.[669] Routine activities of clerks included washing vestments, cleaning the church and dismantling the sepulchre. More rarely, they are noted as playing the organ at Christmas but they rang for the bishop's visit and wrote out the accounts, presumably of the parish, at least sometimes: in 1471 an 'account clerk for the whole year' was paid 2s. Occasionally, clerks from other towns, Thaxted and even Long Melford and Baldock, played the organ or dealt with linens in the vestry.[670]

SCHOOL

After 1350 new grammar schools were established in several small Suffolk towns close to Walden: Stoke by Clare, Long Melford, Clare and Lavenham. In Walden there was already a schoolmaster in 1327, under the control of the Abbot, and one is recorded again in1423. The subject of education illustrates the sometimes uneasy relations between the town and Walden Abbey, which were echoed in some minor economic discord in the 1440s and 1450s.[671] The abbot retained control of education, with the sole right of nominating schoolmasters. In 1423 a concerted, and surely urban, advocacy of education is implied in the response to the suspension of the two chaplains of the parish church for teaching in the town without a licence from the abbot and convent: some inhabitants, with the vicar, emphasised their wish to have boys taught, leading to the agreement allowing every priest celebrating in the church to teach 'alphabet and graces, but not higher studies', to one small boy of every inhabitant. The priests had apparently

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669 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 86v; 74r; T/A 358/15.

670 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.53r; 67r; 138r; 77r; 85r.

671 Bailey, *Suffolk*, p. 249; J. C. Ward (ed.), *The Medieval Essex Community: the Lay Subsidy of 1327* (Chelmsford, 1983), p. 49; in 1455, the Abbey was asked to cease failing to pay Walden's lord a toll of 2s 8d when the Abbey's fair occurred on the town's market day, Saturday, because of potential detriment to income: ECRO D/DBy m.7 Sep. 1455. It also regularly withheld rent of 2s 6d for market stalls, e.g. m.5 Dec. 1441; it had arrears of 15s 7d rent for its cottages in Castle St., e.g. m.7 Sep. 1456.

been usurping the right of the grammar school master alone to teach grammar.[672] Perhaps such priests were among the 'priest or two of honest name' to be accommodated with the almshouse's priest. According to Orme, the 'school' ceased to function in 1440 and there are no references to one in documents of the study period.[673] Following the 1514 chartering of the Holy Trinity Gild, with its own priest, the vicar, John Leche, wished to provide a second priest, a schoolmaster, to teach grammar after the form of Winchester or Eton; Rosser cautions against underestimating the educational ambitions of such small schools but surely here Leche's own status is relevant to this plan, as to the standing of Walden more generally. Having built the school, with priest's residence, in Castle St, close to the churchyard, with his sister, she in 1525 provided a £10 salary for the priest which the gild accounts of 1546 show was in place.[674] The supervision of the project by a gild is typical of small towns. In addition, it seems reasonable to suggest that by the early sixteenth century Leche's commitment in this, as in campaigning about market tolls and promoting the gild, not only benefited from his connections but also reflected awareness of and concern for the status of Walden as an urban place and may be testimony to contemporary expansion of the town's size, or at least ambition. Urban status is implied, in any case, by the very existence of the school.[675]

VARIETY IN RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK

Both the vigorous diversity of late medieval urban religion and a degree of choice in lay religious practice have been considered markers of urban life.[676] To what extent were these characteristic of Walden?

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672 *VCH Essex* ii, p. 518.

673 N. Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), p. 314.

674 Sutton, 'Lady Joan'; Rosser, 'Urban culture', p. 357; ECRO D/B 2/GHT 2/1.

675 Britnell, 'Town life', p.169.

676 Rosser, 'Urban culture', pp. 349-50.

The most obviously dissenting view in the period is represented by the two cases in the leet courts which refer to Lollard practices: in 1456 Agnes Richard, singlewoman, with some consequent implications about occupation and vulnerability, 'confessed' to the constables that she was learning 'heresy and Lollardy...that the sacrament...at the Mass is not the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, against the faith of the church'.[677] She had apparently been taught by 'a certain Richard Barker, formerly at Hoggs Green in the town of Walden'. All her goods within the town were to be seized. Only nine years later, contempt of a ban for heresy was alleged by a leet prosecution. It concerned two women and three men, including a William Barlow, presumably the same who was burned in 1467.[678] The five had not only failed to abjure the town, perhaps with implications for the latter's attitudes more generally, but 'afterwards on several occasions met and communicated Lollard matters'. Walden apparently supports Swanson's view that Lollardy 'appears generally dispersed to smaller towns and rural areas based on small cells where women are noticeably active'.[679] It depended on fragile links maintained by mobile individuals. Family tradition was important in perpetuating Lollardy and marginality to diocese and county, both relevant here, was itself potentially a reason for the survival of a community. Aston's view that Lollards flourished along the main roads may, of course, also be apposite.[680] Thomson thinks that vigorous communities of Essex Lollards probably had connections with Kent; he notes some parallel between anticlerical disorders in Essex and Cade's rebellion of 1450. Particularly significant for Walden may be the proximity of and demonstrably close links with Thaxted, whose 'William the chaplain' was active in 1414 and 1438; he may have been the leading figure in Lollard communities in north Essex. Also

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677 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1456.

678 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul 1465; J. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), p. 133.

679 Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 342.

680 M. Aston, 'Lollardy and sedition', *Past and Present*, 17 (1960), pp. 1-44.

potentially influential were a group at Cambridge, known from 1457, and that Thomas Bagley, vicar of Manuden, only 16 km from Walden, had been burnt at Smithfield in 1431.[681]

The religious views of the majority are not recoverable, partly because their relative poverty prevented them from joining a gild, making a will or establishing a chantry. However, although they survived unpredictably and make no reference to important aspects of pious practice, extant wills might provide hints, at least, of any lack of conformity with the church as an institution and in its practices. Preambles were often formulaic and frequently written by scribes; there are, consequently, well-known caveats about inferring testators' views from them.[682] Bequests of money or property to the church may be significant: Christine Coksey left £1 and an altar cloth; Thomas Spurgeon, churchwarden 1485-7 and master carpenter, bequeathed 40 tons of stone; John Byrd, mercer, paid £13 6s 8d for a new rood loft in London.[683] Among the fifty-six testators between 1451 and 1518, thirteen did not specify bequests to Walden church at all, despite the religious obligation, by the fifteenth century, to promise to give to church purposes such as the building works.[684]

Testators may well, nevertheless, have made life-time gifts. The extant churchwardens' accounts record very numerous gifts and bequests, some specifically, and many more, surely, associated with requests for commemoration. These, incidentally, name many, mostly women, whose lives are otherwise unrepresented in the records: in 1440 Alice Avennant, daughter of Stephen, and Jane, servant of John of Kent, provided 12d each and Roger Constable's wife £1; in about 1489 there was 6s 8d 'of Modyr Sponer of gyft'.[685] Such gifts continued: in the 1470s 10s was bequeathed by both Joan Wynter and Richard Mynot, and 6s 8d by both John Rumbold

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681 Thomson, Lollards, pp. 120; 132; 119; 122.

682 C. Burgess, 'Late medieval wills and pious convention: testamentary evidence reconsidered', in M. Hicks, (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 16-18.

683 ECRO D/ACR 2/52; D/DBy Q18 e.g. f.135r; D/ACR 1/38; T/A 358/9.

684 French, *Parish*, p. 42.

685 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 11v; 146v.

and Isabel Waryn. Contributions by Thomas Stok varied between 8d and 1s 8d.[686] However, no wills survive for these and for most donors probably never existed. In fact of the eight surviving wills of their time span, the accounts record only Roger Pyrk's £1 for 'the work of the church'. Though Margaret Mayhew and John Hervy each left £1 to the church, the accounts record only the 'waste' of candles at their exequies.[687]

Among both 'bequeathers' and 'non-bequeathers' to Walden church some orientation towards other institutions, apart from the almshouse, is suggested: some left money or goods to Walden Abbey; others to friaries, particularly in Cambridge but also in London, sometimes specifically for obits; some wills mention churches elsewhere, too, presumably reflecting previous or current mobility. A few testators required a requiem in the abbey, rather than in Walden church, despite contributing substantially to the church building fund, as in the case of the mercer Nicholas Pyrk's £3 6s 8d in 1502.[688] The nunnery at Ickleton was chosen, unusually, by John Gerland senior, malter/chapman, leaving 3s 4d for distribution among the nuns. His sole other non-personal provision was his £2 for highways. In 1516 John Nicolls senior, draper, established a chantry and requested prayers at the almshouse, as did John Pelham, mercer, as his sole request for commemoration.[689] The prosperous Katherine Semer's final will, of 1514, is noteworthy because her endowments for commemoration included the perpetual chantry in Walden church, basic to the Holy Trinity Gild's foundation, still maintained after 1546. She left a croft to the almshouse and all other lands to the gild, in whose establishment she had been instrumental. She illustrates, if on a grand scale, the situation where widow testators had fewer constraints in allocating their resources than did that majority of men who had to take their widow into account. Of course, the widow might need to fulfil the conditions of her late

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686 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 84v; 86r, 93v; 115r; eg.121r.

687 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.93v; ECRO D/B2 MIS 2/5; T/A 358/10; D/DBy Q18 f.140r.

688 Thomas Semer was a lay brother of two Cambridge friaries: for his will see H. Montagu Benton, 'Essex wills at Canterbury', *TEAS*, 21 (1937) pp. 254-5; Geoffrey Symond, 'heyreman', ECRO T/A 358/15, bequeathed £13 6s 8d for vestments in his home village, Ringland, near Norwich; ECRO T/A 358/15.

689 ECRO T/A 358/4; 358/23; 358/14.

husband's will: Joan Colwell left an acre of arable for this purpose but her sole concern otherwise was the allocation of her possessions among her large family.[690]

A small number failed to establish commemoration at all: Nicholas Adam left £10 for 'charitable deeds' instead. The most extreme was John Boyton: in 1510 he dispensed with a preamble and mentioned neither Walden church nor obit provision but left a half acre to the almshouse. This contrasts with an earlier John Boyton, one of the elite, who provided for burial in a painted tomb and bequeathed to the church the messuage in Cuckingstool End, later a source of 14s per year rent income.[691] Perhaps, over all, wills evidence hints that the role of 'works' was increasingly powerful.

The laity's establishing gilds and chantries providing extra priests may show a commitment to the local church. However, in some cases, the motivation to endow for salvation of the soul might, perhaps, be largely a self-seeking one, simply using the relevant established mechanism. This is not to question that extra priests brought benefit to the church but to suggest that it is difficult to be precise about testators' commitment. Also debatable is how much the community as a whole would benefit from donations to a gild. John Chapman left 13s 4d, spread over eight years, for repairs at Walden church, but £1 for a purple velvet cover for Our Lady of Pity, whose image might, of course, be to some degree accessible to all. What, however, of John Burgess's £1 for the Trinity Gild in 1516 or Christine Coksey's £1 for a bell for it? This point might be particularly relevant here, since both practically and symbolically, such donations would serve to reinforce the gild's impact.[692]

Another variant in practice, if not in outlook, relates to the potential to choose the 'best' burial locations: for the richer, usually the church rather than the churchyard, though some are

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690 Katherine Semer will copy in Gild of the Holy Trinity papers, Saffron Walden museum: ECRO D/B 2/GHT 2/1 f.2r; ECRO CR1/154.

691 ECRO T/A 358/20; 358/18; D/DBy Q18 fols 131r; 140r.

692 ECRO D/ACR 1/4; D/ACR 2/51; D/ACR 2/52.

more specific, perhaps stipulating locations desirably close to the Host: John Spilman, draper, before the altar of the Holy Trinity; John Pollard 'in the middle alley place, next my seat'.[693]

Little reliance as to the devotion of the donor can be placed on the evidence of large gifts or bequests to the church, since they may indicate a lesser commitment than smaller ones which represent a larger proportion of the donor's assets. However, a particular devotion is hinted at occasionally: in 1477 Robert Mayhew left a red silk cope, worth £5 6s 8d, so that the church could reserve existing special ones for use on the greater feasts. The theft of £1 8s 4d which was 'outside the chest in the church', may suggest a certain disrespect but a more serious instance, even some antagonism, appears to be suggested by the violation of an altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that a cloth had to be supplied to cover it.[694]

So, is there vigorous diversity and choice in religious practice here? Overall, some variety of practice, and probably of attitude, to religion seems apparent. Donations display a considerable variety, which partially reflect variety in Walden's social and spatial context. Their orientation to the abbey, the almshouse and, in numbers, to the more specialized and urban environment of the friaries in Cambridge and London and to the latter's city churches and, presumably, gilds demands assessment of Walden as at least to some degree urban. The Lollard group's presence is likely to have been fostered by the more numerous and wider ranging contacts with 'outside' influences that characterise a relatively urban context.

STYLE

Discussing the code of conduct of the elite in medieval society, Giles suggests that they viewed urban life as a 'game of appearances': display was fundamental to both individual and corporate reinforcement of status. Was this added to functional considerations to produce here buildings of a distinctly urban form and quality?

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693 ECRO T/A 358/12; D/B2-MIS 2/4.

694 ECRO D/B 2/MIS 2/3; D/DBy Q18 fols 40v; 19v.

In the fifteenth century individual houses in both town and country might have two storeys, and be jettied. However, in an urban context these characteristics would be important in the overall ensemble of buildings in the central streets, at least, responding vertically and horizontally to the essentially urban pressure on space at street level. As in villages, in small towns buildings were being renewed in the fifteenth century, especially between 1430 and 1490, the period of this study.[695] Certainly here there is evidence of newly built property, latterly, at least: in 1481 a 'parcel now built on' in Castle St; the rental of 1524, perhaps earlier, mentions several newly built tenements, including at the Cambridge end of High St; in 1493 a messuage on Hoggs Green belonging to William Middleton, then deceased, surely the churchwarden of the early 1480s, had recently been rebuilt.[696] Two factors suggest the high status of the extant building: it displays closely-spaced studding, a sign of wealth, and certain unusual jointing techniques resemble some at King's College, Cambridge, where construction work paused in 1485. Perhaps King's then supplied carpenters to both the church and other prestige buildings in Walden.[697] Fig. 5.1 shows the distribution of examples ascribed to the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries among Walden's notable number of standing buildings of around this period.

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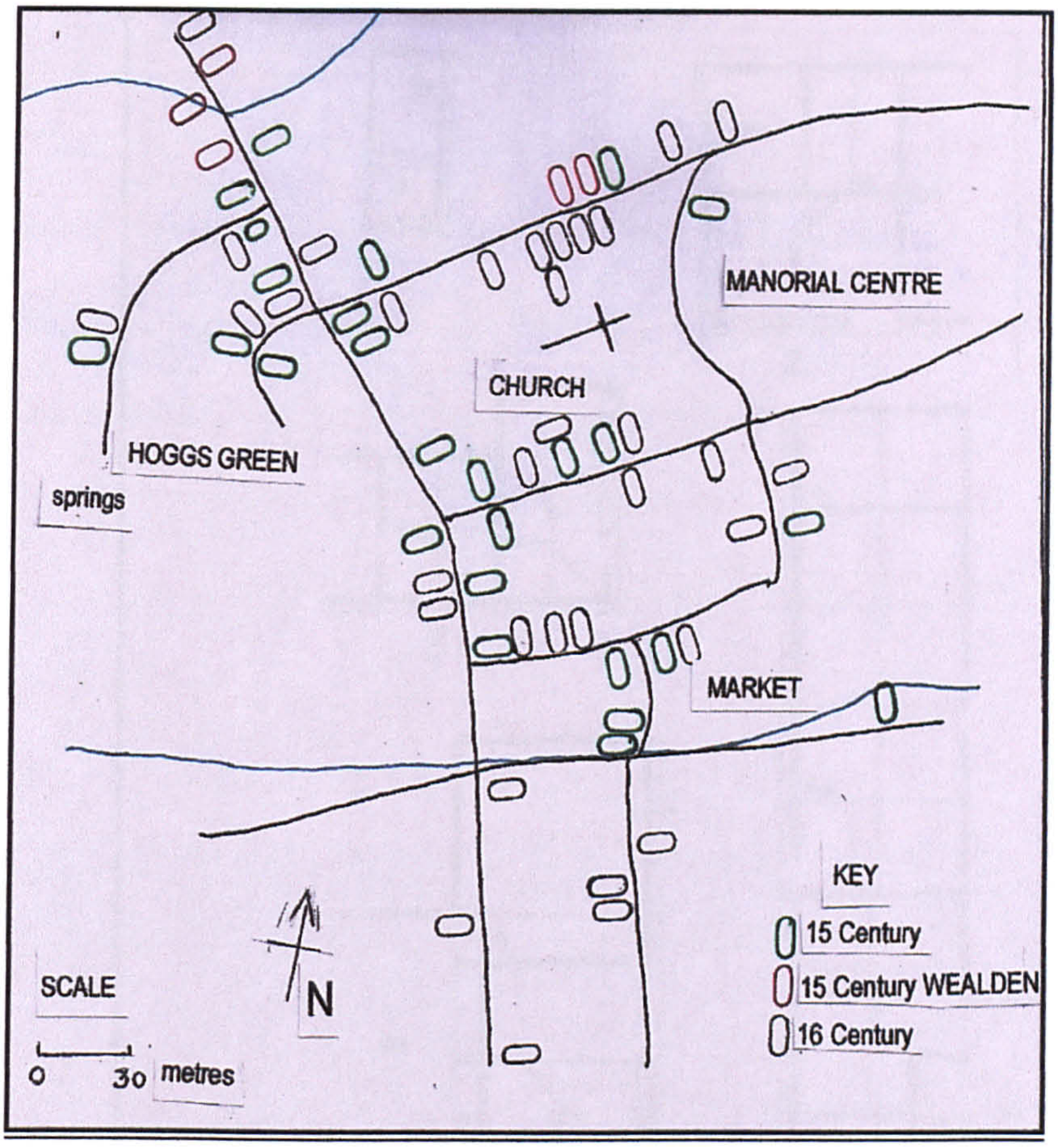
[695] C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition?: Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), p. 154.

[696] ECRO D/B 2/1/37; D/DBy m.32 fols 4v; 20v.

[697] M. Everett and D. Stewart, *The Buildings of Saffron Walden* (Saffron Walden, 2003), pp. 54-59; A. Gibson (ed.), *Revised list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, District of Uttlesford, Essex* (London, 1994).

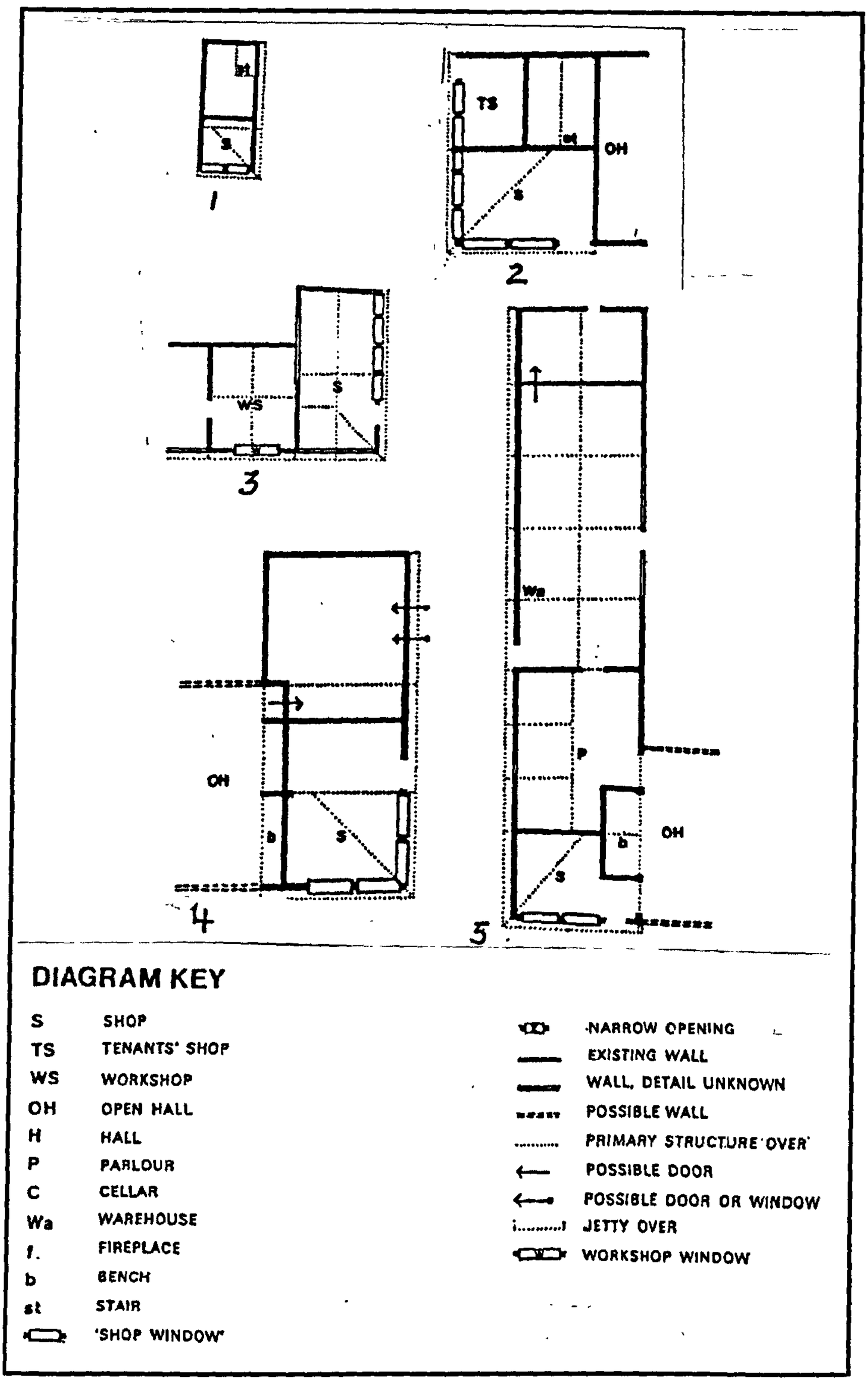
Fig. 5.1. Extant buildings of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries



Source: A. Gibson (ed.), *Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, District of Uttlesford, Essex* (London, 1994).

Clearly, the central streets had, if not a continuous built frontage, at least numbers of buildings in fairly close proximity. But what was the form and quality of these? Five Walden examples showing evidence for use as shops have been found in fifteenth or sixteenth century buildings; their plans vary considerably.

Fig. 5.2. Fifteenth / sixteenth century shops in Walden: ground floor plans



Note: not to scale; Source: D. F. Stenning 'Timber-framed shops 1300-1600: comparative plans', *Vernacular Architecture*, 16 (1985), pp. 35-9.

They have in common the use of a front room at street level as a shop or workshop, while storage space might be found to the rear or perhaps above. All of numbers 2, 3 and 4

have shops on corner sites, one with a second shop adjacent and another an adjoining workshop. The fact that in numbers 2, 4 and 5 the open halls are along the street suggests the limited scale of commercial pressure as compared with that in important towns, where they lie behind the commercial front. In addition to these examples, number 19 High Street has a fifteenth-century rear courtyard with a shop to the front and parlour behind. It is described as an urban plan form designed to maximize a restricted site and an additional prestige indicator is in the use of sophisticated and flamboyant carving.[698]

Constraints were imposed by the typically urban narrowness of a plot in a row of similar ones.

Fig. 5.3. Intensive use of narrow central building plots

Note: extant buildings to the rear of High St. Though the buildings shown are mainly of later date, they indicate the intensive use made of a deep but very narrow plot running back from the commercial frontage.

A complex of rooms without any commercial element is sometimes suggested: in 1412 a house in High Street contained a room beyond the street, an upper storey, a hall and other

698 S. Pearson 'Rural and urban houses 1100-1500: 'urban adaptation' reconsidered', in Giles and Dyer (eds), *Town and Country*, pp. 43-63; C. Thornton, *Saffron Walden: Historic Towns Project Assessment Report* (Essex County Council, Chelmsford, 1999).

rooms. Other examples had 'a lower room at the southern end of the capital domus' or were 'part of a messuage with one chamber and one upper chamber'. Number 9, Church Street forms part of a high quality fifteenth century open hall, with, interestingly, a wall painting of what may be the saffron crocus, while Edward Barker in 1497 left 'the tenement that Ralph Stowell lives in, with the gatehouse there belonging'.[699] Existing buildings might be extended, as when Thomas Page, probably collarmaker, added a porch 4ft by 5ft to his house in Bridge End, close to the stream where there was at least one dyehouse in the period.[700]

Numbers of the essentially urban Wealden house, common in Kent, must have characterized Walden, given that five examples from the fifteenth century are extant in the northern part of the centre. (Figs 5.4; 5.5)

Fig. 5.4. 'Recessed' Wealden

699 ECRO DB 2/1/104; 2/1/220; Gibson (ed.), *Revised List*; ECRO T/A 358/13.

700 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1478; Jul. 1477.

Fig. 5.5. Wealden open hall house

One Wealden has a Kentish crown post, suggesting building here contemporary with the peak period for the building of Kentish houses: 1440 to 1500.[701]

Highly significant for the contemporary status of Walden must be the fact that thirty-eight houses, used as sixty at the present day, are recognised as being from the sixteenth century, nine of them apparently early sixteenth.[702] That so many, and in central locations, were built or rebuilt in the sixteenth century raises the question of the precise scale of any building boom in the fifteenth and the amount and quality of pre-existing stock. Though already in 1406 there were many messuages in High Street, the question of their degree of sophistication remains. Among buildings with fourteenth century elements is the famous former Sun Inn in Church St, part-datable to 1350.[703] (Fig. 5.6)

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701 C. Dyer, *Transition?*, p. 152.

702 Gibson (ed.), *Revised List*.

703 For example, ECRO D/DB 2/1/102 refers to many messuages with houses on in High St.

Fig. 5.6. The former Sun Inn, fourteenth-sixteenth centuries

To conclude, the latter years of the fifteenth century apparently saw a spate of rebuilding and new building which lasted throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. The number of permanent commercial premises and of relatively sophisticated houses indicates, overall, an urban rather than rural assemblage.

CLOTHES AND HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS: VARIETY AND SOPHISTICATION

Is there evidence among these of the variety and sophistication to be expected of an urban context?

Peasants, according to Dyer, usually had garments totalling about nine yards in cloth, at three yards per gown and a value ranging between one and three shillings per yard. He points out that wills probably cite only the more valuable items.[704] While Dyer's Yorkshire peasant with a modest landholding in 1468 had three garments, namely a tunic and two gowns, of total value 7s 4d, the new demand from a relatively wealthy minority meant that they might

704 Dyer, *Transition?*, p. 149; detail of the clothing of contemporary urban artisans and labourers seems elusive.

own as many as nine. Walden has no inventories of this period but among the twelve wills between 1451 and 1516 to mention clothing, it seems unsurprising, both in general and in the particular context of Walden, that mercers and drapers should be prominent. In 1495 John Spilman, draper, left six gowns of unspecified quality, but in 1488 John Hervy, mercer, also bequeathed six, including a rayed one, a best blue and a long sanguine as well as a tippet of sarsenet and a sleeveless coat. In 1501 another mercer, John Pelham, previously of London, mentioned only two, but these were each worth 20s and so necessarily of a very fine cloth and/or ornament. By 1516, however, he was outdone by John Nicolls, draper, who, in addition to his 'best' gown had, among eight others, a tawny furred, a molet, a violet, and a black, lined with Cyprus satin, besides two doublets, a cape with worsted, jackets of chamelet and musterdyvylers and a black hat.[705] Notably, this, of course, post-dates the study period and the question of the prosperity before 1490 of people of such status is highly relevant. Thomas Semer, husbandman/yeoman, in 1499 had the relatively modest number of three gowns, but that two were furred and he had two silk and silver girdles is perhaps more consistent with his status as husband of Katherine, the prosperous benefactor of the Holy Trinity Gild. Edward Barker, in 1497 freeman and burgess of the staple of Calais, listed only two gowns and a leather doublet, among much property and money, and Thomas Spurgeon, probably the master carpenter, in 1501 left a rather modest collection: his best gown, doublet, cap, hose and purse. At least he presumably had several examples of each.[706] Though all four female testators bequeathed household objects, one referred to clothing: Margaret Mayhew had a silk gown ornamented with silver. She was widow of the Robert, prosperous leet juror in 1470 and churchwarden 1474 to 1476, who in 1477 bequeathed the special silk cope.[707]

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705 ECRO T/A 358/12; 358/10; 358/14; 358/23.

706 Montagu Benton, 'Essex wills', pp. 254-5; ECRO T/A 358/13, D/ACR 1/38.

707 ECRO D/B2-MIS 2/5; D/B m.8 Jul. 1470; D/DBy Q18 f.(e.g.) 96r; D/B 2/MIS 2/3.

Among weapons, which may serve as a status symbol, daggers were bequeathed by three men: Spurgeon, Semer and, in 1451, John Gerland, the malter/chapman, leaving both a silver-ornamented dagger and a silvered gown.[708]

Most peasant householders had linen tablecloths and towels, bedlinen and wool coverlets. Alice Chapman and Christine Coksey mentioned nothing more than these. Margaret Overlege, with mortar stone, chest and spinning wheel, mentioned strictly utility articles, only, as did, in 1513, John Writ, who was perhaps a cook, as his goods included skillet, gallon pot, colander, spit and kettle.[709] However, in 1505, along with the equipment of his trade, perhaps dyer or tanner, as he had 'vats, vessels and liquors', Richard Turner had more sophisticated possessions: silver spoons and a salter with a silver cover, as did the husbandman/yeoman Thomas Semer, who also owned a maser with a silver-gilt foot. John Spilman, the draper, had a grander repertoire of spoons, leaving twelve 'second best' silver ones but, again, the draper John Nicolls had, at least by 1516, Walden's grandest array of goods, the most special a 'standing maser', apostle spoons and six silver spoons with gilt knobs.[710]

In summary, then, the array of items specified suggests the presence of a small percentage of households with relatively sophisticated goods, a few even luxurious. They seem, unsurprisingly, to be those of non-peasants, who were familiar with more expensive, fashionable and refined tastes. Those bequeathing such items were a small number of wealthy people.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

Neighbourhood ties were indicated in fifteenth century Bodmin by the existence of two girls' gilds, of named streets, and Walden matches this with 'the maidens of the Middle Ward'

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708 ECRO T/A 358/4,

709 Dyer, *Transition?*, p.149; ECRO D/ACR 1/42; 2/52; 1/104; 1/215.

710 ECRO D/ACR 1/126; Montagu Benton, 'Essex wills', pp. 254-5; ECRO T/A 358/12; 358/23.

and 'the girls of Castle St', showing that there were small units of social organisation within the parish.[711]

Within a large context, Brown sees a role for gilds to capture the intimacy of smaller parishes.[712] Where a particular gild became extremely dominant, so providing the large context, this phenomenon might, surely, be paralleled by the emergence of sub-groups, which might enhance harmony and charity by being able to siphon off tensions.

Economic zoning, indicated here by the subsidy of 1524, would contribute to sub-town identity: there was a large difference in average wealth between Cuckingstool End and Castle St, for example.[713] Such an identity, focused, in a settlement of Walden's size, on a limited area, with a high level of personal acquaintance, would form a more substantial element in the composition of the town's overall profile, than in a large town. Local identity would also be strengthened by the collecting of funds at street and minor settlement level, as well as by the holding of Mays and plays in such locations.

SELF-CONSCIOUSLY URBAN

The social and economic variety within town populations and the density of urban living fostered a pressing need for civic harmony and unity. Palliser sees addressing this as an explicit purpose of pageantry, in particular at Corpus Christi. Hutton suggests that Corpus Christi celebrations recorded by churchwardens must be a parish, rather than a gild, responsibility and are thus characteristic of places like Ashburton and Walden, which were local social and marketing centres.[714] Certainly at Walden a hearse, banners, the reliquary and sacrament, with cloth above and 'torches' with flags around, were carried and all the bells rung and it is surely

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711 J. Mattingly, 'The medieval parish gilds of Cornwall', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, 10 (1989), pp. 290-329; ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 73r; 36r.

712 Brown, *Piety*, p. 143.

713 This zoning is discussed further in Chapter Six.

714 Palliser, 'Urban society', p. 147; Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 41.

probable that the 'probi homines' use the occasion to demonstrate and reinforce their own prestige.[715]

Though Walden has no town walls, in 1549, when the burgesses gained full control of the market and a treasurer, two chamberlains and twenty-four assistants were appointed, it used a pun on 'Walden', with an image of a saffron plant 'walled in', to create the town seal; the new administration seems to have wished to make at least an allusion to the settlement as an urban place.[716]

In Chapter Four, references were noted that suggest that authorities in Walden viewed the settlement as distinct from the rural part of the vill: there were aletasters for town and for foreign; there was to be no butchering within the town limits; the 'council of the town' granted funds to another town.[717] These, however, fall short of showing that the nucleated settlement was urban.

Palliser's plentiful evidence that town communities were self-aware and proud includes that they attempted to expand their privileges. The success of the confidence and solidarity of Walden's burgesses in 1425 was noted in Chapter Two. Palliser draws attention to 'the wholeness of many parts' as an urban characteristic, a self-conscious desire for civic harmony and unity among a heterogeneous population informing ecclesiastical plays and processions, pre-eminently at Corpus Christi.[718] The 'wholeness of many parts' is, indeed, symptomatic of a quantitative distinction, which he identifies as becoming qualitative, between urban and village life.

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715 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 21r; 38r; 96v; 82r; 43v.

716 White, *Saffron Walden*, p. 36.

717 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Nov. 1938; m.9 Jul. 1483; D/DBy Q18 f.40r.

718 D. M. Palliser, 'Urban society', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 144-9.

DRAMA

The regular performance of plays was a normal part of the period's urban life, emphasising towns' 'central place' role. The churchwardens, who controlled parish spending, frequently also served the civil administration as officers in the manor and leet courts. Their provision for the plays, especially as they were performed in the public streets, suggests they were seen as presenting a worthy image of the town. Rosser suggests that secular, as well as clerical, authority claimed responsibility for moral welfare.[719]

Play performances seem to have been widespread in Essex in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Dunmow held one at Corpus Christi. In fifteenth-century Maldon the town bailiffs provided for local village players to perform in the market place and the Earl of Essex's troupe visited in 1469. There were players at Coggeshall and Chelmsford. Walden was reputedly a centre of drama and regular visits by touring companies in the following century perhaps hint at an established tradition.[720] In any case, the churchwardens refer to plays three times: in 1467 one pound income collected 'de ludo de Little Walden' and in 1468 (or 1469) £1 13s 5d 'de ludo mercati', while in 1475 receipts 'of the play', £4 12s 8d, compared very favourably with the £1 1s 4d from the Easter collection at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1480 and with the £1 12s 2d total from Easter Day in 1483.[721] In 1475, £1 13s 4d 'de pecunia ludi' was paid for making torches and 4d was paid to John Spilman, probably the draper, for madder used in the play. Owen found that plays were performed mostly at Corpus Christi and the Assumption, though with some evidence for Christmas, Candlemas and S.Matthew.[722] From their place in the sequence of entries within the three relevant years, one of the Walden plays

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719 Rosser, 'Urban culture', pp. 352-3.

720 W. A. Mepham ' A general survey of medieval drama in Essex: the fifteenth century', *Essex Review*, 53-5 (1944-5), pp. 52-8.

721 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 73r, 76v, 93v, 118r, 126v.

722 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 99r, 99v; Owen, *Church and Society*; Corpus Christi in June, Assumption 15 Aug., Candlemas 2 Feb., St Matthew 21 Sep.

certainly occurred in August, which includes the Our Lady of Pity Gild's feast day at the Assumption, the others probably in August, or September if not.

That in a run of almost fifty years' accounts by the churchwardens, and so at parish level, plays were mentioned in only three seems to suggest that their performance was not a regular, and so, characteristically, urban, occurrence. There might be others, perhaps the responsibility of a gild and recorded elsewhere, though. The precise expression of extant entries, 'from the play of X', appears to indicate that plays were performed in the streets and hamlets named. The evidence, noted earlier, that May ales might also be held in the streets inevitably suggests that the events described as plays were perhaps only the most formally structured extreme of a repertoire of entertainment, some in the streets, much of it home-grown, but following established and 'theatrical' formulae. Aspects of many of the events in the community's annual round might be relevant: ritual processions; feasts, which, at least at Candlemas (the Purification), included at Walden an element of drama with an 'abbot' and dancing; Hocktide, with ritualised interaction and specifically local context; May Day; midsummer bonfires; the 'Mays', themselves, about which little other than consumables is known but which perhaps included simple dramas such as Robin Hood plays and some dancing. Bailey sees in a rich culture of 'entertainment', a distinctively urban social experience.[723]

MUSIC

The scope for personal involvement in music at most social levels in the late medieval town is said to be greater than frequently assumed: Boston S. Mary Gild had an excellent musical life, with a 'socially diverse membership within the town and beyond' and all members able to consider themselves patrons. There were, too, sophisticated musical environments in

[723] ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.66r, 1s 11d was collected on Hock Monday in Cuckingstool End; Robin Hood plays themselves were lacking in East Anglia, according to Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 31; M.Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p. 148.

Oxford, London, Westminster and Coventry. A lesser town, Louth, had a taste in Flemish organs and a civic choir performing numerous polyphonic Masses, as indicated in the early sixteenth century Churchwardens' book.[724] Walden had no scope for a choir describable as 'civic' but the churchwardens frequently cite payments for seating and tallow candles in the choir and payments on Rogation Days included, in the late 1480s, sums not only for bearing banners but for choirs, too.[725]

The organ was clearly important to the parish church. In 1454 a payment of 8s was made 'for costs and carriage of the organ and to John Hundene, organ maker, and his assistant'; locks were made to secure it. Others who mended and maintained it in the period included some from neighbouring towns: it was tested by John Tracy of Thaxted, for example.[726] The commonplace connection between the organ and the office of clerk is evident: in 1472 'John' was described as 'clerk of the organ'; in 1459 Thomas Lowe, also a clerk, was paid 'for the organ at Christmas'. Br. John Taylor played during Easter week.[727] In 1482 5s 5d was spent on glue and leather for the bellows and in 1487 2s 3d paid to Wood, 'the organ maker', for repairs.[728]

Dyer notes that most small-town records refer to a resident musician, a harper most commonly. A lively non-ecclesiastical musical environment is suggested by the mention of three named harpers in Walden's court records of the 1470s. Dancers at the feast of Candlemas presumably imply music, too, and it is surely likely that other feasts, particularly the main gild ones, and the Mays had musical elements, some simply as entertainment. It can be assumed that, certainly in the early sixteenth century, the Holy Trinity Gild, with its power and connections, would at least hire musicians commensurate with its status.[729]

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724 Rosser, 'Urban culture', pp. 363-4.

725 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.148r.

726 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.43v.

727 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 85r; 53r; 43v.

728 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 124v, 141r.

729 C. Dyer, 'Small towns', p. 534.

CONCLUSION

Was Walden's cultural and ecclesiastical life characteristic of an urban entity? Marshall states that around 1500 there was a 'very close weaving of religion into every aspect of life: cultural, political, even economic'; this was a fundamentally religious culture.[730]

Walden in the fifteenth century had many markers of urban status: almshouse, school, several chantries and a college, shops, a high status centrally-located gildhall and a varied calendar of ritual and entertainment, with a suitably, and increasingly grand, complex and ornate church. Importantly, it was seen as a central place, for specialist purposes, by other small towns or large villages: it was among the four towns from which Stortford's churchwardens most often received 'outside' goods and services; its specialists serving the local countryside included artisans whom we would regard as artists. In 1522 the carver Robert Ives drew clients such as the churchwardens of Bassingbourn, near Royston, who ordered a costly image of S George, plus figures of a king and queen.[731]

Rosser suggests that individuals and groups found means within the dominant 'cultural language' to experience their urban role as positive. Walden surely had more varied identities than existed in lower-status settlements: its scale and diversity allowed scope for groupings defined by gender and locality together, not only separately, as well as those based, probably increasingly, on differentials in wealth. French proposes that sub-groups contributed to harmony and charity by siphoning off tensions; in the fluid and heated social context of Walden, cultural activities seem likely to have exerted a relatively harmonising influence.

In the later fifteenth century its elite seem to have had a belief in the town's urban status, either real or projected, and the balance of the evidence for its cultural and ecclesiastical life lends support to the contention that in the later fifteenth century this was a small urban

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730 P. Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480-1642* (London, 2003), p. 1.

731 S. G. Doree (ed.), *The Early Churchwardens' Accounts of Bishop's Stortford 1431-1558* Hertfordshire Record Publications, 10 (Hitchin, 1994), p. Intro. x; D. Dymond (ed.), *The Churchwardens' Book of Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire 1496-c.1540* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 120.

centre which was driven by contacts with other towns and particularly London and acquired increasingly sophisticated and urban characteristics.

CHAPTER SIX: WALDEN'S HINTERLAND, THE TOWN IN c.1490 AND CONCLUSIONS.

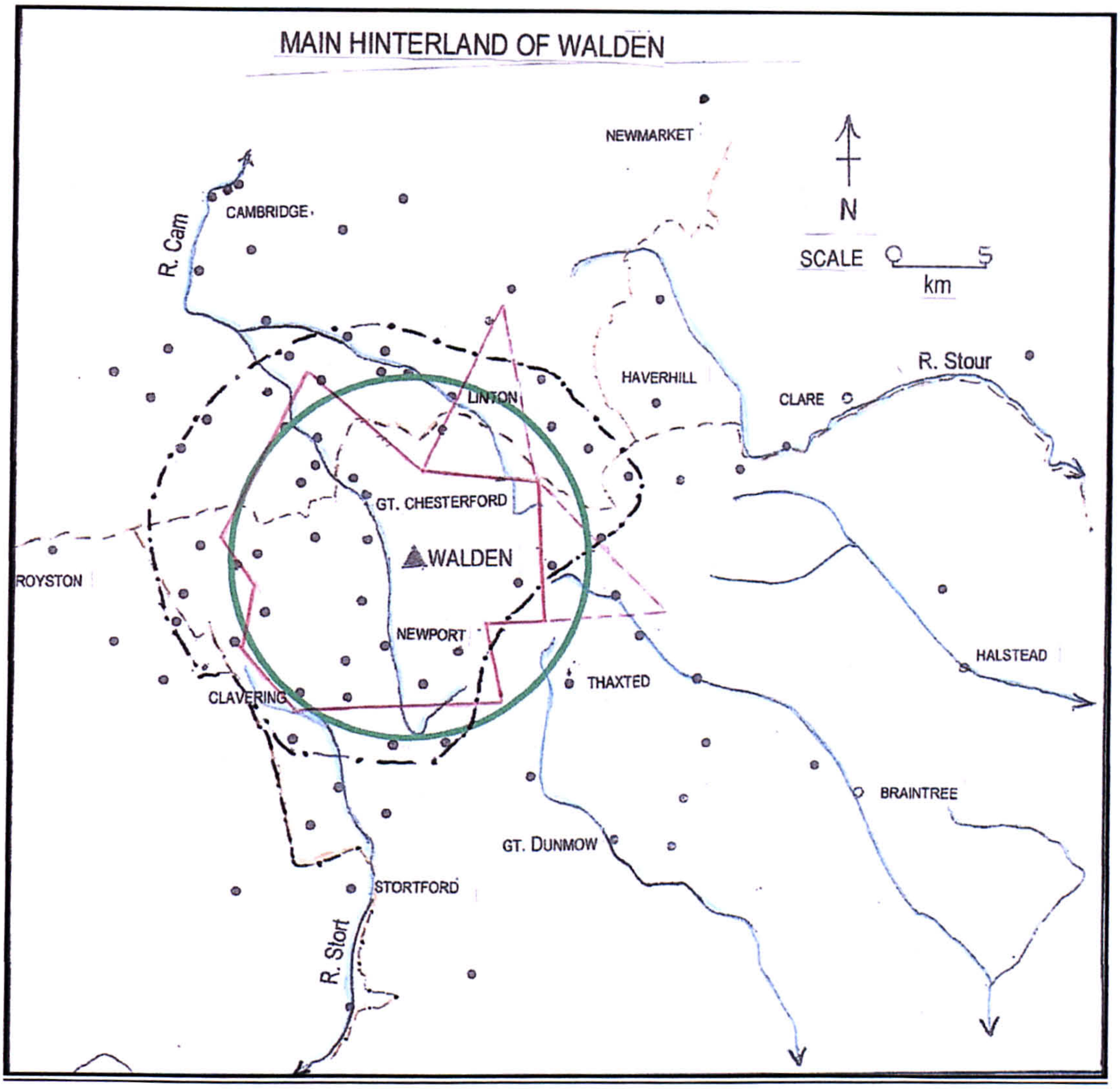
WALDEN'S HINTERLAND AND RELATION TO THE NETWORK

How did Walden relate to the surrounding rural area, to other small towns and to larger, more distant centres? Factors influencing the basic evolution of hinterlands were discussed and the urban hierarchy reviewed in the Introduction.

The hinterland itself

The size of Walden in relation to its hinterland and the distribution within it of vills of varying sizes accounts for many of the dynamics of small-scale interchange that are recorded in our sources. Fig. 6.1 shows the 10 km radius around the town which typically characterises the zone of intense interaction between a market town and its hinterland. An area defined by marking the midway point between Walden and all its neighbouring towns is also shown. The fact that the areas so defined are largely congruent bears witness, in relation to the distribution of market towns, to the power of the 10 km maxim, especially to the west. It is least relevant to the south east, with Thaxted only 10 km distant.

Fig. 6.1. Main hinterland of Walden, 1438-90



KEY

- ● Places with which Walden people were in contact
- ○ For location, only
- 10 km radius
- Boundary of main hinterland
- Theoretical hinterland, defined by half-way point to neighbouring market town
- County boundary

Sources: churchwardens' accounts, 1438-1490 (ECRO D/DBy Q18); court rolls 1440s and 1480s (ECRO D/DB m.5-m.6 and m.8-m.10); all deeds and wills of the period 1438-1490.

By 1525 Walden probably had almost a quarter of the population within the 10 km radius, which includes twenty-five vills, with a probable total population, including the town, of a little over eight thousand.

During the study period, the zone of intense relatively regular interaction apparently extended beyond the 10 km radius to the west, north and north east and included both branches of the upper Cam valley and the chalk upland west and south west of the town.

The hinterland's border coincides to a striking degree with the boundary with north east Hertfordshire, where a number of small market towns competed for trade. Since several are similarly distant from Walden, at less than 20 km, it is unsurprising that the area beyond this 10 km 'line' would be beyond Walden's reach for 'everyday' contact. Chronicling the varying fortunes of relevant small towns during Hertfordshire's late medieval recession, Bailey found some revival around 1500. Between them, they apparently coped with local demand: while Walden had varied connections, including ecclesiastical and legal, with Royston and Bishops Stortford, there is virtually no evidence of contact with this group of towns.

Northwards, Walden's hinterland overlaps Cambridge's. To the north and north east of Walden 'its' territory appears challenged only by Linton, whose market was in decline.[732] To the south east there is no sizeable settlement within the 10 km radius and this upland pays contains far fewer villages. In fact, the watershed between the Cam and the river systems flowing south eastward probably fostered a 'hinterland watershed'. Beyond it, Great Dunmow's influence was decreasing relative to Walden's; certainly by 1524 Walden was much the wealthier. Importantly, however, much of the eastern part of Walden's potential hinterland is also within roughly 10 km of Thaxted.

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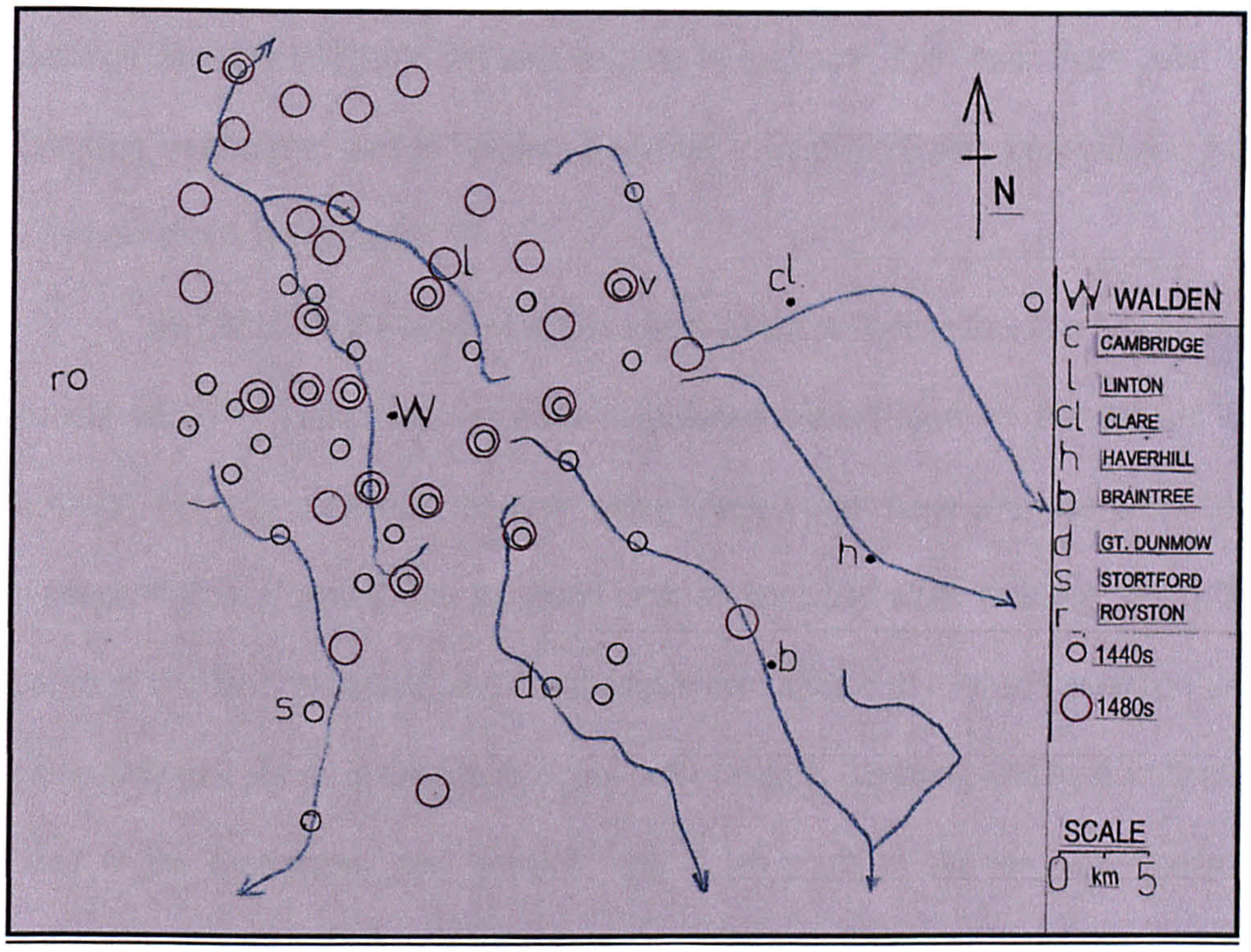
732 M. Bailey, 'A tale of two towns: Buntingford and Standon in the later Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), pp. 351-371; A. Clapham, 'A thirteenth century market town: Linton, Cambs', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 4 (1933), pp. 194-202.

The distribution of places cited in the court rolls of the 1440s and the 1480s separately might suggest change in the hinterland during the study period at this low value level of contact alone.

Fig. 6.2. Hinterland from Walden courts, 1440s and 1480s, shown by contact points



Note: W - Walden, L- Linton, Hv - Haverhill, Cl - Clare, H - Halstead, B - Braintree, D - Great Dunmow, S - Stortford, R - Royston, C – Cambridge. Source: ECRO D/DBy m.5-m.6 (1440-1449, incl.); m.8-m.10 (1480-1489, incl.)

The 1440s distribution is little different from Galloway's mapping for around 1400.[733] However, while there was an overlap zone with Cambridge, the 1480s distribution overlaid on the 1440s one reveals an interesting shift northwards. In parallel with a very considerable rise in Walden's ranking in the urban hierarchy of its region by the early sixteenth century, Cambridge's ranking was falling. This seems to have enabled Walden to make inroads into Cambridge's hinterland at this basic level. To the south, the signs are more equivocal: London's acknowledged increasing influence may have constrained Walden's impact, both directly and by strengthening aspects of the economies of some of its competitor towns, though among 'new'

[733] J. A. Galloway, 'Urban hinterlands in later Medieval England', in K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500* (Leeds, 2005), p. 120.

places mentioned in the late 1470s and 1480s in Walden's overall corpus of records are villages just north of Stortford. Broadly, the 'reach' of the town's hinterland was expanding, particularly to the east, to villages north and south of Haverhill, which suffered some decline in ranking between 1334 and 1524/5, as did its neighbour, Linton.[734] Relatively distant contacts in property dealings illustrate Walden's advance relative to Dunmow: from near there John Godyng of Stebbing surrendered land in Walden, a relative at Bardfield Saling inherited and the Abbot of Tilty held shops in the market.[735]

By 1524/5, of the twenty five vills within 10 km of Walden four had around five hundred people each.[736] Linton was an early established market town on the eastern Cam. (see Location, Fig. 1.2) Ickleton, in the main valley towards Cambridge and, with Great Chesterford, a concentration of almost one thousand near an important route crossing, lay in the overlap between Walden's hinterland and Cambridge's own sphere of intense interaction and so was particularly well placed in relation to higher order centres. Clavering was on a route crossing the head of the Stort valley and Newport, only 5 km south of Walden, was dominant in the immediate area before Walden's foundation and had been assessed at 136s wealth in 1334, compared with Walden's 95s.

Lesser market centres had their own small hinterland, serving the most immediate and small scale needs of a very local area. Some had had either a prescriptive market or, more usually, a market grant, frequently from the thirteenth century. Many may never have flourished; many ceased trading after the Black Death and it is impossible to be sure how many were functioning in the study period.

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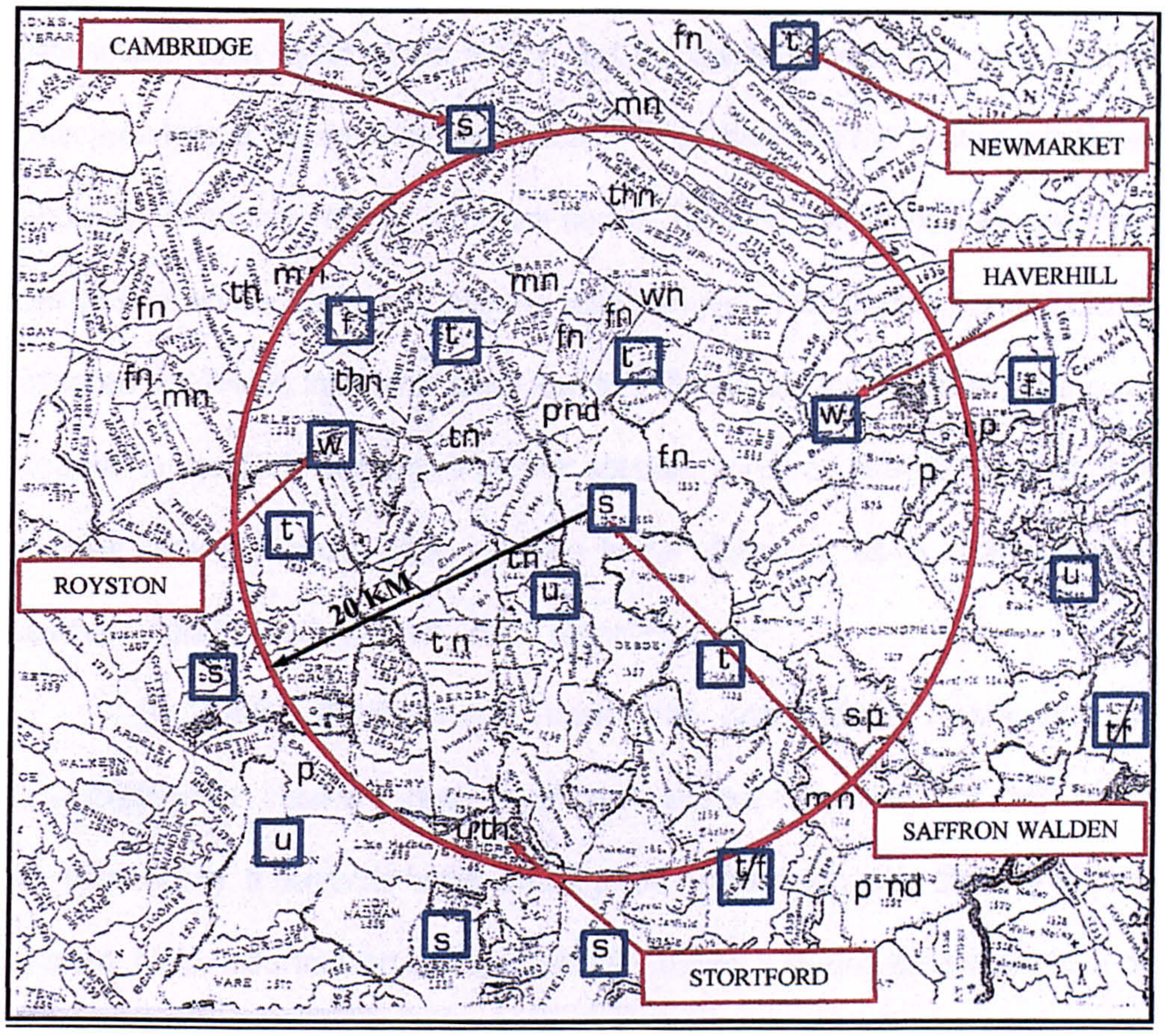
[734] See Fig. C; Linton is discussed in Clapham, 'Market town'.

[735] ECRO D/DBy m.6 Dec. 1444; m.10 Sep. 1489; m.6 Mar. 1450.

[736] To allow for evasion or exemption, 33.3 per cent has been added to the number of taxpayers, and a multiplier of 4 then used to calculate population.

Fig. 6.3. Distribution of market centres, 1438-90



KEY: blue squares indicate markets operational in the period - t: Tuesday; w: Wednesday; th: Thursday; f: Friday; s: Saturday; u: functioning but weekday unknown. p indicates possibly functioning; nd: weekday unknown; n: not functioning in the period. Main sources: S. Letters, *On-line Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516* http://www.ihr.sas.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html>:[Essex] (last updated Nov. 2006); *VCH Essex* viii, *Cambridgeshire* v, vi, viii, *Hertfordshire* iii, iv; R. H. Britnell, 'Essex markets before 1350', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 13 (1981), pp. 15-21; J. S. Lee, *Cambridge and its Economic Region 1450-1560* (Hatfield, 2005), p. 87.

Beyond the primary hinterland: connections to other small market towns in the network

There were intermittent contacts with various market towns within 20 to 30 km, including Baldock, which supplied a clerk 'for the organ' and Biggleswade and Newmarket, which supplied clock repairers.[737] His living relatively close to the shrine at Ely is suggested by John Rede of Newmarket's gift of 2s 'for S. Etheldreda'.[738] Very occasionally, plaintiffs from Linton sued in Walden's courts and dealt in free property. Banners were carried to Stortford and

[737] ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 85r; 98r; 109v.

[738] ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.123r.

the churchwardens note a payment to 'the clerk' from there.[739] At Royston the Walden pattenmaker John Reder rented a shop and the lawyer Kneesworth, much consulted by the churchwardens at Walden, was also visited.[740] That there was little contact with Dunmow is not surprising, given that Thaxted lies much nearer. The interrelations between towns at this level can be seen on the whole, and over the period, as reciprocal: plumbers and clockmakers were 'imported' to Walden from other small towns, while Walden itself supplied such craftsmen, for example to Stortford. Naturally, a greater speciality, such as Walden's glaziers, generated a primarily outward spread, often involving longer distances, as in Stortford's employing a vestment maker from Coggeshall, 35 km distant.[741]

By 1524/5 both Walden and Thaxted had increased their ranking from 1334 levels. The relationship between them is of vital interest, especially for any indications of complementarity. It demands further investigation.[742] The intervening distance is only 10.7 km. Thaxted, highly industrialised and specialised, provides a striking early example of developing craft industry in response to the London market and with the backing of London capital. Its cutlery industry was at the peak of its prosperity in the fourteenth century.[743] In Walden, that Thomas of Kent was a smith, who in 1456 worked an iron spindle for the church's weathercock, might just hint at iron trade links across the Thames estuary to The Weald. The Walden surname Synderford suggests another iron source.[744]

In 1334 Thaxted was assessed at £126; the mean value of small towns around London was £71. By 1349 there were at least 126 houses or shops and in 1381 possibly more cutlers working there than in London: of 130 residents with known trades 79 were cutlers and 11 smiths. In 1525 its population was perhaps still over 1100, though in 1334 possibly around

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739 ECRO D/DBy m.7 Jul. 1458; D/B 2/1/20; D/DBy Q18 f.38r.

740 ECRO D/ACR 1/110; D/DBy Q18 f.26v.

741 S. G. Doree (ed.), *The Early Churchwardens' Accounts of Bishop's Stortford, 1431-1558*, Hertfordshire Record Publications, 10 (Hitchin, 1994), p. 7.

742 contemporary court rolls for Thaxted survive.

743 Keene, 'Small towns', pp. 234-6. There was, however, a broadly-based iron working industry in the thirteenth century.

744 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.48r; D/DBy m.8 Sep. 1463.

2,000.[745] How was its 'unbalanced' economy accommodated within the proximate urban network? Did its specialist presence foster a compensatory flourishing of 'ordinary' urban functions in nearby towns, intensifying inter urban trade? That by 1462 Thaxted used ivory bought in London confirms a long established metropolitan mercantile link from very close to Walden.[746] It is surely likely that London traders might include Walden with Thaxted in a single trip. While Thaxted's substantial status is suggested by its supplying Walden church with a plumber and men testing the organ and writing a breviary, their primary hinterlands remained distinct despite the proximity.[747] In a total twenty years in the 1440s, 1460s and 1480s few Thaxted men are cited in Walden: three for assault, three as debtors and three for selling fish or as fraudulent butchers. Property deeds, too, show little connection: in the relevant fifty years: only a Thaxted butcher with a Walden market stall, though they note two Walden men with Thaxted property.[748] With such sparse sign of dependence of Thaxted on Walden, there is little evidence of significant difference in their economic status. However, the prosecution at Walden, rather than at Thaxted itself, of cases between Thaxted residents and others from elsewhere raises questions. In 1525 Walden had 380 taxpayers to Thaxted's 222 and assessed wealth of £55 15s 8d to Thaxted's £40 17s 6d.[749]

Links to relatively distant towns

The much more distant connections involved in specialist commodities such as bells, fine vestments and saffron linked Walden to higher order centres, were dominated by London and were well established by the fifteenth century.

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745 Keene, 'Small towns', p. 229.

746 E. Simcoe, *A Short History of the Parish and Borough of Thaxted* (Saffron Walden, 1934), p. 55.

747 eg. ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 99r; 43v; 16r.

748 ECRO D/B 2/2/20; 2/3/18; 2/2/115.

749 TNA, PRO E 179/108/155.

Londoners were, of course, mainly plaintiffs: in 1403, John Killyk, vintner, had acted against John Page of Walden for £4 6s 8d; in 1424 Walden draper John Venour was sued by London shearman John Pope for £4 10s 4d; Henry Jordon, London founder, made loans to such local men as John Byrd in 1453.[750]

Cambridge, too, had long-established credit relations with Walden men: in 1424 Robert Lincoln, draper of Cambridge, sued Walden fishmonger Robert Stistede for £5 1s 8d. This pattern persisted: John Tailor was sued in 1472 by Robert Dauncy of Cambridge for £4.[751] Fishmongers from Cambridge, exploiting its advantages in obtaining fish, including location on the Ouse river system and possibly economies of scale in purchases from Yarmouth, emphasised Cambridge's superior status by making loans to those in Walden. Cambridge traders could easily reach the Newmarket breaking point on the herring supply route from Yarmouth to London, as did Walden dealers directly.

The churchwardens' spending on behalf of the parish, and so commanding relatively large sums, led during the period to engagement with higher order centres, including obtaining the new tabernacle from Norwich and having bells repaired by men from Bury.[752] Colchester supplied plumbers and clock repairers. Though not yet large, on the road from London to Colchester Chelmsford's status as county town and seat of sessions extended the range of its impact: two Walden men were summonsed to appear there for appropriating from the road.[753] Obtaining specialised building supplies implied longer-distance contact with non-urban sources: lead from The Peak district and, most importantly, hard stone from Lincolnshire via the Ouse river system. In 1475 this came from Careby, near Stamford, part of the Clipsham group, which served Kings College from 1477.[754] Baltic timber came via Lynn to Stourbridge: in 1442, 6d was

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750 IHR CP40 dbf 1403 m.217; CP40 dbf 1424 m.403; ECRO D/DBy m.7 Sep. 1453.

751 IHR CP40 dbf 1424 m.588d; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jun 1472.

752 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 58v; 71v.

753 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 67r; 61r; D/DBy m.10 Jul. 1489.

754 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.97v; J. S. Alexander, 'Building stone from the East Midlands quarries: sources, transportation and usage', *Medieval Archaeology*, 39 (1995), pp. 114-55.

paid for carrying from 'the water fair' to 'the land fair'. Obtaining stone or masons or seeking legal representation in Cambridge might well generate other contact at lesser, intermediate points, as when carters stopped for refreshment at Sawston.[755]

As with ivory handles for Thaxted, London supplied some specialist materials, for instance for the church's use in ritual. This points up the fact, relevant to considering local networks and the urban hierarchy, that for this area, in addition to its metropolitan role, London served as regional capital to some extent, for example as a diocesan centre: the bishop visited in 1465. Other purposes were ecclesiastical, too: buying or repairing a copper cross, a chalice and vestments.[756] There were intermittent visits for legal services and to the Duchy of Lancaster's chancellery, as in 1441 when 13s 4d was spent on expenses and gifts.[757] Overall, London's supremacy in demand and supply of specialist goods and services provided a substantial rationale for contact. London merchants such as John Cotyngham, fishmonger, in 1451 and John Ros, cutler, who died about 1478, held Walden properties, as did John Gardyner, with twenty-five in 1524, including an inn in High St.[758] Londoners William Lamberd and Richard Semer had roots in Walden. In contrast, a local mercer's sphere is indicated in John Hervy's dealings: he forgave a debt of £3 owed by John Parker from Stoke by Clare, 20 km distant, beyond the 'every day' hinterland; he left his packhorse to William Holden, of nearby Great Chesterford, and malt to William Draper of London.[759]

Walden men loaned to men from other distant vills, generally lesser centres than was Walden itself: in 1424 a husbandman of Luton owed £23 6s 8d to John Shymmyng and while William Higham took action for £13 6s 8d against William Pluckrose of Bartlow, near Linton, he also impleaded labourers from Berners Roding and Dagenham, at 26 km and 58 km

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755 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 24v; 26r.

756 ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 67r; 121v; 46r; 31r.

757 ECRO D/DBy Q18 e.g. fols 19v; 20r.

758 ECRO D/DBy m.6 Jul. 1451; m.8 Jun. 1478; m.32 fols 7; 8a; 8b.

759 Cal. Close 1467; ECRO T/A 358/10.

respectively, for £3 10s and £2.[760] Other distant connections are shown by Walden wills: apart from numerous London churches and individuals, friars at Oxford and the Gild of Our Lady at Boston benefited.[761]

WALDEN IN ABOUT 1490

Socio-economic zoning

The wealth assessment of individuals in 1524/5 enables the approximate assessed wealth structure of the population to be plotted for that date.[762] The distribution of these assessments by streets indicates that by 1524, at latest, there was some socio-economic zoning.

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760 IHR CP40 dbf 1424 m.577; m.225d; m.439d.

761 D. Farmer, 'Marketing the produce of the countryside', in E. Miller (ed.), *AHEW iii, 1348-1500* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 343; ECRO T/A 358/9; D/ACR 2/38.

762 See Fig. 3.4.

Fig. 6.4. Assessed wealth of individuals, 1524, by streets

Source: TNA, PRO E 179/108/155. Note: for location of streets see Fig. 2. 3.

In Cuckingstool End/Gould Street, of 100 assessed, seventy-nine per cent had £1 and only 3 per cent £10 or more; this relative poverty is typical of a suburban development of the later Middle Ages. Gould St seems to have had a varied profile: the Barker family of fishmongers was based there earlier in the study period but in 1497 the prosperous Edward

Barker bequeathed the large sum of £7 to set up a new house there. Interestingly, Cuckingstool End/Gould Street is where the poorer chief pledges of 1522 and 1525 lived. Also by then in 'Cuckingstool End/Abbey Lane' were a cottage held by a carpenter, a messuage newly built and several crofts. In 1487 the parish let its messuage in Cuckingstool End for 14s per year.[763]

A contrasting profile, in Market End/Hill Street, shows only 5.3 per cent with £1, but of only nineteen assessed there, 37.4 per cent had £10 or more. The wealth of Market End is demonstrated within the study period, too: Tab. 5.3. shows that in collections made in the town, Market End produced a great deal more than any other street; in 1454 the executors of John Wood, of Market End, paid to the parish his relatively large bequest of 20s; in 1480 a messuage there was held by John Spilman, probably the prosperous draper, while Nicholas Pyrk held a tenement in Hill St in 1524, probably inherited from the wealthy mercer.[764]

Since property holders, only, are listed in the 1524 rental, the sub-tenancy implied by multiple holding is, of course, masked. The largest number of messuages was held by such members of the elite as a yeoman, a fishmonger a butcher, a John Nicolls, probably the son who inherited £50 in cloth from the shop of the wealthy draper in 1516, and a John Rutland, also likely to be related to his namesake, farmer of the manorial demesne in 1484.[765] Subtenancy is occasionally indicated in other sources: the Nicholas Pyrk who bequeathed £20 to named individuals in 1502 left to his unborn child 'the messuage in High Street that Nicholas Adam lives in', next to Pyrk's mother's house. This Nicholas was perhaps heir of the Nicholas Adam whose will in 1511 shows that he held five shops in the market, some in Tanners Row. His status as subtenant in High St may be representative of the substantial proportion there who were

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763 Names of chief pledges, ECRO D/DBy m.18 Mar. 1523 and Sep. 1524, can be related to individual assessments in the 1524/5 subsidy; ECRO D/DBy m.32 f.29r; D/DBy Q18 f.140r.

764 ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.43r; D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1480; D/DBy m.32 f.29r; T/A 358/15.

765 ECRO T/A 358/23; D/DBy m.9 Sep. 1484.

assessed at only £1. In John Benne's second High St messuage, opposite his own dwelling, lived Thomas Malin.[766]

The wealthier, such as John Spilman, the draper, John Chalk, bailiff of the franchise and William Barker, fishmonger, had houses and shops in commercially advantageous locations and also sometimes meadow, as was the case with Thomas Spurgeon, master carpenter, and John Hervy, mercer.[767] The six in the town with the largest number of messuages all held some in High St, the main through road; nearly 25 per cent of taxpayers there had £10 or more in 1524 and those chief pledges of 1523 and 1524 with over £20 also congregated in High Street and Bridge End. However, John Reder, a pattenmaker, in 1505 leaving just one house, on which £5 was to be paid over five years, perhaps hints at a group of middling wealth, consisting of some principal tenants and the better-off sub-tenants.[768]

Church St may have housed many exempt from the subsidy: only twelve were assessed for tax there in 1524; they included Isabelle Stubbarde, widow, assessed at £4 and Mother Jacobbe at 40s.

Although the bulk of these data refer to 1524/5, we have seen evidence that these distinct profiles did not develop entirely after 1490.

Functional zoning

Spatial zoning by function also characterised the period. It seems likely, given its water dependence, that tanning was concentrated in the area of Freshwellhundred and Hoggs Green, near the springs downstream of the main town area and too far from it to cause nuisance. It was evident there by 1440 and continued through the period. William Glover polluted the watercourse in Freshwellhundred in 1479; Richard Kyng, barker, polluted the northern stream.

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766 ECRO T/A 358/15; 358/20; D/By m.32 f. unnumbered but after 33r.

767 especially near the market and along the main through road; ECRO D/DBy m.10 Feb. 1487.

768 ECRO D/ACR 1/110.

Possibly other noxious trades located there: a Richard Brasyer held there before 1442.[769] This would conform with evidence of cottages in the area, in Almshouse/Daniel's Lane, near to the southern stream, and at Hoggs Green. They were held by, for example, Richard Grant, smith, and John Gardyner of London, part of his large and varied portfolio in 1524.[770]

Such fulling as was done in the town surely also occurred in this area at Freshwellhundred, alias Fuller St, where the 'Ladywell', too, was located. There was precious meadowland, in addition: a half acre piece surrendered to the use of John Danbury, almost certainly the butcher/grazier, passed to John Byrd, probably the accumulating mercer.[771]

Dyeing seems to have used every suitable site: besides the concentration on Bury Hill, alias Teintoreshill, it certainly occurred in Almshouse Lane and at Bridge End, by the northern stream, where Thomas Lawny, dyer, lived in 1474, perhaps working the draper Spilman's, dyehouse. The dyer John Reymond polluted a pond, 'the Auncell'.[772]

Granaries, too, were a feature of this western area, at Almshouse Lane, and there were small domestic kilns elsewhere besides the one for malting two quarters within a town tenement in Market End. One at the church gate, by 1524, had a 'shop' belonging to it.[773]

Shops, the term including, of course, workshops, were distributed more widely than merely in the market, which in the later 1400s had a Tanners/Barkers Row, Butchery alias Gut Row, Chesehill, Poultry Hill and the malt, or horse, mill.[774] There were also Fish Row, Mercers Row, Cordwainers Row, where John Gerland, saddler was a tenant, Drapery Row and 'the Crone market', for ewes, certainly by 1529.[775] The 'Rows' were not necessarily limited to the trades or even trade groups named: a butcher of Chese Hill is recorded. Butchers traded in 1470 in 'Shop' row, perhaps in fact in High St, and in Hill St and Goul St, which in 1489 had a

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769 ECRO D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1479; Jul. 1481; D/B 2/1/193.

770 ECRO m.32 fols18; 29.

771 ECRO D/DBy m. 9 Jul. 1485; m.8 Mar. 1476; May 1479.

772 ECRO D/DBy m.5 Nov. 1438; m.8 Jul. 1477; Jul. 1474; m.7 Jul 1459.

773 ECRO D/DBy m.32 f.18; m.6 Dec. 1442; m.32 f.20.

774 ECRO D/B 2/MIS 2/8; D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1476; D/DBy Q18 f.121r; D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1482.

775 ECRO D/DBy m.8 4 Jun. 1478; m.7 Jul. 1454; m.8 Jul. 1470; D/B 2/2/30.

saw pit, perhaps for their purposes. As noted, fishmongers, especially the Barker family, also had messuages there.[776]

Small shops closely match in size those of Stratford on Avon. They included a new one on a market plot 14ft x 8ft in 1482, a piece 10 ft x 7ft in Shop Row, one 7ft 5ins x 12ft in Chesehill, and one 9 ft x 8ft 'in the market' in 1462. A stall established in 1454 was on a similar scale. Their small size confirms the pressure on the prime commercial site, suggested by the entry fine at a rate of £20 per acre for the 14ft by 8ft piece in Poultry in 1464.[777]

CONCLUSIONS

While approximately a hundred years elapsed between the taxation of 1334 and the beginning of the period, the 1524/5 lay subsidy provides data on the town's standing at a point relatively close to the end of it. These data indicate that by 1524/5 Walden's ranking among the region's towns had risen spectacularly as compared with 1334. The question arises as to whether the 1524/5 data are indicative of the town's situation in 1490 or whether they represent a substantiallydifferent settlement.

We have seen that between 1334 and 1524 the pattern of density of assessed wealth in the wider region shifted in Walden's favour in that not only did its local area become more prosperous but particular gains were made in localities with which Walden had particular contact: vills en route to London and in the Suffolk cloth area. Walden's dramatic rise in the rankings over that period made it, especially in terms of population, a substantial town in the early sixteenth century.[778] The outstanding degree of this rise is likely to have been influenced

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[776] ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.121r; D/DBy m.8 Jul. 1470; Jul. 1464; Jul 1477; m.10 Jul. 1489; e.g. m.6 Jul. 1447.

[777] C. Dyer, ' Medieval Stratford: a successful small town', in R. Bearman (ed.),*The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon, 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 43-61; ECRO D/DBy m.8 Dec. 1482; Dec. 1461; Jun. 1478; Spring 1462; Dec. 1464.

[778] A. Dyer, 'Appendix: ranking lists of English medieval towns' in Palliser (ed.), *CUHB* I, pp. 761-70.

both by the notable rise of towns involved in the cloth trade, with which it had contractual arrangements, probably including in its long-established dyeing industry, and by the demonstrably also outstanding characteristic of intensive involvement in saffron production.

What was the varying impact of London as market and as mercantile drive behind saffron's overall production, whose rapid expansion at Walden, from about 1450, may have been a response to the mid-century depression? That saffron, in any case, became a significant focus of economic activity is clear from the court records and from wills and its formal acknowledgment in the iconography of the church building, gild charter and borough seal. All these indicate that by the early sixteenth century it was important. The area's particular suitability for it has been noted: climate, soils, location in relation to markets in London and Cambridge, the local agrarian calendar, abundant land-poor and established mercantile contacts.

From this timetable of the trade's development it is noteworthy that though it was important to the town by 1524/5 and must then have been a mainstay of its economy, it had by no means clearly had a substantial effect on it by 1490. A more precise timing is difficult to gauge. The greatest phase of the church's rebuilding had not begun in 1497, though confidence was already demonstrated by expensive work in the 1460s and by the building of a number of extant houses in central locations late in the century. In 1482 messuages in Castle St were sold for as much as £8 6s 8d and even for £16. Saffron was apparently normally cultivated under contract to 'outside' dealers; it is clear both that it would provide a supplementary livelihood for a broad range of population, to the benefit of the local markets, and that middlemen would take their profit from the trade, to the town market's disadvantage. Such contractual dealings would, in any case, by-pass the market, while perhaps forging links and prosperity for Walden's small mercantile elite and possibly intensifying polarisation of wealth.

In view of the changes in Walden, it is unfortunate that more precise indicators of its population size in the period are unavailable. Poos's use of tithing records data has limited validity in relation to Walden, firstly because it asserts a community of experience across large, small, rural and small-urban communities and secondly because for many of the communities the tithings time series does not correspond to the study period. Those supplying substantial data from 1440-90 comprise only four rural manors and the town of Writtle.[779] They do suggest that populations in the four rural sources remain constant through the period but it is central to this study to illustrate the urban nature of Walden and its connection to influences beyond its primary hinterland. Writtle contrasts markedly with Walden in that it made the biggest fall in wealth ranking among towns in the region between 1334 and 1524/5; in taxpayers; though it had 166 to Walden's 66 in 1327, it had only 48 to Walden's 330 in 1524/5. Its economy and population declined in the later Middle Ages, even though Poos found its tithing numbers in 1460-80, the only period comparable to Walden, to be constant.[780]

Walden's very rare information on numbers of women attending the ritual of purification following childbirth was also used by Poos in his finding that the mid/late fifteenth-century population level was likely to be static. Poos's average annual total of 44 'churched' in six years between 1439 and 1488 masks variation in numbers which is considerable but dismissed by him as stochastic.

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779 Poos, *Rural Society*, pp. 96-103, rural communities: High Easter, Margaret Roding, Great Waltham and Birchanger.

780 K. C. Newton, *The Manor of Writtle: the Development of a Royal Manor in Essex, c.1086 - c.1500* (London, 1970), p. 77.

Tab. 6.1. Numbers 'churched' at Walden and estimated population

YEAR	NO. 'CHURCHED'	ADDING 5% FOR EVASION	POPULATION *
1439-40	41***	43	1433
1474-5	56	59	1966
1475-6	49	52	1733
1484-5	36	38	1266
1485-6	46	48	1600
1486-7	38	40	1333

Source: ECRO D/DBy Q18 fols 3, 92v-94v, 102-3, 132v, 136. Note: *** calculation by Poos, including inference from proportions in payment categories from years where they are known. He suggests a maximum under-counting for maternal mortality of two per cent but does not allow for evasion; a further three per cent have been added for this. * calculated at 3% birth rate per annum. No.- number.

In the mid-seventies numbers 'churched' were 55.3 per cent higher than a decade later. These figures seem to indicate that it is unsatisfactory to propose an average number and thence population over the whole span. Some variation in population is surely implied.

A hint of population size can also, perhaps, be gained from the overall number of distinct surnames occurring in all available records. While such a simple head count will be imprecise in, for example, counting all members of a family as one and in including the relatively few names of visitors from elsewhere, the former will apply to all phases and the number of the latter is likely to be broadly proportional to the population size and unlikely to cause major distortion to the result. While in 1440-4 333 names occur, the number in both 1460-4 and 1480-4 is 292, namely 12 per cent smaller.

In 1415 there were sixty-four chief pledges, as compared with a maximum of fifty-three in the study period, in 1455.[781] It may be that some decline, also suggested by Cromarty's finding of hardship before 1426, continued through the mid-fifteenth century.[782] Indeed, while in

[781] A. Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1640* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 72; J. Galloway, 'Urban hinterlands', in K. Giles and C Dyer (eds.), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500* (Leeds, 2005), pp. 119-120; D. Cromarty 'Chepyng Walden 1381-1420: a study from the court rolls', *Essex Journal*, 2 (1967), p. 181.

[782] Cromarty, 'Chepyng Walden', p. 128.

the early 1460s, despite the fall in total number of names, there were eighty-nine 'new' ones as compared with the early 1440s, so suggesting a considerable turnover, in the early 1480s only nineteen were new as compared with the early 1460s, reinforcing the evidence of decline in churching numbers in the 1480s as compared with the 1470s, certainly not, overall, evidence of positive growth.

The 1524/5 lay subsidy may, in fact, be a poor reflection of Walden's population numbers at that date because of the numerous smallholders and landless who will have been omitted. Britnell estimates Colchester's population on the basis of a 33-50 per cent omission. He thinks Colchester unlikely to have shared Coventry's exclusion rate of 50-55 per cent because at Colchester the number of taxpayers was high in relation to the total tax payment.[783] At Walden in 1525 the number of taxpayers in relation to the tax total was about twice that at Colchester. Perhaps, therefore, at Walden a correction for exclusions of 33 per cent should be regarded as giving the very maximum likely level. Applied to the figure of 383 taxpayers in 1525, it gives a total of 511 and a multiplier of 4, taken as average number per household, results in an estimate of total population here in 1525 of 2044, considerably less than Dyer's 2470. If a smaller percentage were excluded, clearly it would be less still. Given Poos's estimate of 1400 or 1500 in 1450-75, if the population was, in fact, broadly static in the mid/late 1400s, this would imply notable gain after 1500, which, on balance, seems more probable than in the study period.[784]

Is the period 1438-90, overall, likely to have contributed to the great rise in Walden's wealth ranking between 1334 and 1524/5? Factors impacting on the town's prosperity have been discussed. The widespread depression of the mid-century seems reflected here in the contemporary increase in arrears in rent to the demesne, followed by a decline in the level of entry fines. A debt crisis is suggested by the high level of pleas in the 1450s. By the 1480s, in

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783 R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 201.

784 TNA, PRO E 179/108/171; L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 126.

contrast, the debt plea level was low and at the same time land market activity increased. Signs of growth are equivocal. The fall in number of new names in the early 1480s as compared with twenty years earlier, a reduction in the numbers churched in the 1480s compared with the 1470s, the fact that the major building works, subject of the 1485 contract, had not yet begun in 1497 and the plea in 1496 concerning the level of market tolls for trading suggest that the level of prosperity achieved by 1524/5 was probably not reached by 1490. While, during the study period, factors contributing to Walden's prosperity are present, in the early sixteenth century some of these may have strengthened; the saffron industry's flourishing continued, at least; campaigns by prominent inhabitants led to the chartering of the Holy Trinity gild and to newly founding a school, while the prosperity of prominent 'cloth towns' in the orbit of Lavenham was increasing In 1490 Walden was still a substantially different settlement than it had become by 1524/5.

During the period, the town's elite became more oligarchical, as it was composed of fewer families, strengthened its hold on power and attempted to protect the town's environment. Increasing pride in Walden as an urban place, reflected in high quality buildings both ecclesiastical and domestic, would be particularly relevant in promoting precious 'outside' trading connections, notably with London. The Holy Trinity Gild's contemporary rise is perhaps both a symptom and a generator of this. It is unclear how inclusive its membership might be. Many among the increasingly powerful laity, as such officers as churchwarden, as feoffees, money-lenders and arbiters of charity, were merely ordinarily prosperous artisans and traders, a broad elite; their ready recognition throughout the small town must have had consequences, both commercial and administrative. It may in any case have compromised their efficiency in running the courts. However, the lack of commitment of some of the elite may suggest that, in a context where they were not forced to attend, some engaged in high value trading may have

had little interest in the manor courts, especially, and may have seen local office as primarily a means of reinforcing their own status.

The large proportion assessed in 1524 at £1, only, and the presumable numbers exempt from the tax altogether, in tandem with the fragmentation and parallel accumulation of tenements, must inevitably have promoted sub-tenancy. Many must have lived in overcrowded conditions, including of sub-sub and multiple tenancy, with inherent potential for provoking disorder, whether planned or spontaneous. That many surnames appeared newly between the 1440s and 1460s suggests an influx of newcomers, prompted by the mid-century depression, which was probably also a factor in the large increase by 1454/5 in arrears in the farm of the demesne. Hope of work in the newly-establishing saffron production may have drawn wage-dependent from the local area, who are likely to have been affected by widespread unemployment in the textile industry in mid-century. Indeed, saffron production may have been promoted partly in response to their numbers.[785] Such an influx, seasonally boosted by the prospect of temporary work, would make Walden's exceptional degree of unruly behaviour unsurprising.

The numbers of new names in the 1460s would affect landholding patterns if now fewer were able to pay, as appropriate, to take up a property. The fall in demand for land, reflected in the steep fall in level of fines per acre from the 1450s is reinforced by the many prosecutions for occupying without licence and consequent failure to pay entry fines, whether through disrespect for the courts, lack of enforcement by them or actual inability to pay.

Socially, despite evident pressures, particular forces may have tended to promote integration. Since very small plots were apparently adequate to produce viable quantities of saffron, and so allowed small town gardens to be used, there might be an unusual community of interest between urban and rural inhabitants, which would be supported by the distinctive

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785 R. H. Britnell, 'The woollen textile industry of Suffolk', *The Ricardian*, 13 (2003), p. 89.

cultural assets of the town, formally, as in seasonal festivities and the play performances, and casually in the range of leisure opportunities of a growing centre.

Walden would benefit from the opportunity that saffron, as a high value product, would provide to connect to specialist distant markets, not all of which had been affected by the mid-century depression. With general signs of recovery from about 1470, it was well located in relation to the increasing dominance of London and improvements in transport. However, prosperity was fragile and disadvantages of locally inconvenient access probably assumed greater importance once cheaper foreign saffron supplanted the home industry and the town's advantages in wider markets were lost. The large area to the south of the market place, defined long before the fifteenth century as for a large expansion, was not built up until the nineteenth century.

APPENDIX A

WALDEN CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS (ECRO D/DBy Q18): 1438-90

A few years' accounts, mainly c. 1442-8, and some memos, have been bound, and subsequently microfilmed, out of sequence. A combination of methods has been used to address this: the statement of the regnal year, given on each year's first page; the names of wardens, noted at the beginning of each year; the totalling of receipts and payments for the page and year, with balance carried forward to the following year; the sequence of recorded events, including on feast days, within a single year; some changes in handwriting style. Only a few folios remain difficult to place.

APPENDIX A : CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS : SUGGESTED DATING

Accounting year is Easter to Easter

* uncertain date

FOLIO	DATE	FOLIO	DATE
1r	1438/9	24r	1441/2
1v	1438/9	24v	1441/2
2r	1438/9	25r	1441/2
2v	1438/9	18r	1442/3
3v	1438/9	18v	1442/3
4r	1438/9	19r	1442/3
4v	1438/9	19v	1442/3
5r	1438/9	28r (part) ?	1442/3
5v	1438/9	20r	1442/3
6r	1438/9	20v	1442/3
6v	1438/9	21r	1442/3
7r	1438/9	21v	1442/3
7v	1438/9	28r (part)	1443/4
8r	1438/9	28v	1443/4
8v	1438/9	29r	1443/4
9r	1439/40	29v	1443/4
9v	1439/40	26r	1443/4
10r	1439/40	26v	1443/4
10v	1439/40	27r	1444/5
9Ar	1439/40	27v	1444/5
9Al	1439/40	22r	1444/5
11r	1439/40	22v	1444/5
11v	1439/40	25v *	1444/5
12r	1439/40	23r	1445/6
12v	1439/40	23v	1445/6
13r	1439/40	30r	1445/6 or 1446/7
13v	1439/40	30v	1445/6 or 1446/7
14r	1439/40	31r	1445/6 or 1446/7
14v	1439/40	31v	1445/6 or 1446/7
15r	1440/1	33r	1447/8
15v	1440/1	33v	1447/8
35r *	1440/1	34r	1447/8
16r	1440/1	34v	1447/8
16v	1440/1	35r *	
32r	1440/1	35v *	
28r (part)	1440/1	36r	1448/9
32v *	1440/1	36v	1448/9
17r	1441/2	37r	1449/50
17v	1441/2	37v	1449/50

FOLIO	DATE	FOLIO	DATE
38r	1449/50	58v	1460/1
38v	1449/50	59r	1460/1
39r	1449/50	59v	1460/1
39v	1450/1	60r	1461/2
40r	1450/1	61r	1461/2
40v	1450/1	61v	1461/2
41r	1451/2	62r	1461/2
41v	1451/2	62v	1462/3
42r	1451/2	63r	1462/3
42v	1452/3	63v	1462/3
43r	1453/4	64r	1463/4
43v	1453/4	64v	1463/4
44r	1453/4	65r	1463/4
44v	1453/4	65v	1463/4
45r	1454/5	66r	1464/5
45v	1454/5	66v	1464/5
46r	1454/5	67r	1464/5
46v	1454/5	67v	1464/5
47r	1455/6	68r	1464/5
47v	1455/6	68v	1464/5
48r	1455/6	69r	1464/5
48v	1455/6	69v	blank
49r	1455/6	70r	1465/6
49v	1455/6	70v	1465/6
50A *	unsure, c, 1456-8	71r	1465/6
50Ar *	unsure, c, 1456-8	71v	1465/6
50Av *	unsure, c, 1456-8	71A	(page sideways)*
50Br *	unsure, c, 1456-8	72r	1465/6
50Bv *	unsure, c, 1456-8	72v	1465/6
50r *	unsure, c, 1456-8	73r	1465/6
50v	unsure, c, 1456-8	73v *	1439/42
51r	unsure, c, 1456-8	74v	1466/7
51v	1458/9	75r	1466/7
52v	1458/9	75v	1466/7
53r	1458/9	76r	1466/7
53v	1458/9	76v	1467/8 or 1468/9
54r	1459/60	77r	1467/8 or 1468/9
54v	1459/60	77v	1467/8 or 1468/9
55r	blank	78r	1467/8 or 1468/9
55v	1459/60	78v	1469/70
56r	1459/60	79r	1469/70
56v	1459/60	79v	1469/70
57r	1460/1	80r	1470/1
57v	1460/1	80v	blank
58r	blank	81r	1470/1

FOLIO	DATE	FOLIO	DATE
83r	1470/1	103r	1475/6
81v	1470/1	103v	1475/6
82r	1470/1	104r	1475/6
82v	1470/1	104v	1475/6
83v	blank	105r	1475/6
84r	1470/1	105v	1475/6
84v	1471/2	106r	1475/6
86r	1471/2	106v	1475/6
86v	1471/2	107r	1475/6
85r	1471/2	107v	1475/6
85v	1471/2	108r	1476/7
87r	1471/2	108r	1476/7
87v	1471/2	108v	1476/7
88r	1471/2	109r	1476/7
88v	1472/3	109v	1476/7
89r	1472/3	110r	1476/7
89v	1472/3	110v	1476/7
90r	1472/3	111v	1477/8
90v	1472/3 or 1473/4	112r	1477/8
91r	1472/3 or 1473/4	112v	1477/8
91v	1472/3 or 1473/4	113r	1477/8
92r	1472/3 or 1473/4	113v	1477/8
92v	1472/3 or 1473/4	114r *	memo
93r	1474/5	114v *	memo
93v	1474/5	115r	1478/9
94r	1474/5	115v	1478/9
94v	1474/5	116r	1478/9
95r	1474/5	116v	1478/9
95v	blank	117r	1478/9
96r	1474/5	117v	1478/9
96v	1474/5	118r	1479/80
97r	1474/5	118v	1479/80
97v	1474/5	119r	1479/80
98r	1474/5	119v	1479/80
98v	1474/5	120r (part)	1479/80
99r	1474/5	120v	1479/80
99v	1474/5	121r	1480/1
100r	1474/5	121v	1480/1
100v	blank	122r	1480/1
101r	1475/6	122v	1480/1
101v	1475/6	123r	1481/2
102r	1475/6	123v	1481/2
102v	1475/6	124r	1481/2

FOLIO	DATE	FOLIO	DATE
124v	1481/2	146v *	1488/9 or 1489/90
125r	1481/2	147r *	1488/9 or 1489/90
125v	1481/2	147v	blank
126r	1482/3	148r	1488/9 or 1489/90
126v	1482/3	148v	blank
127r	1482/3	149r	1488/9 or 1489/90
127v	1482/3		
128r	1482/3		
128v	1483/4		
129r	1483/4		
129v	1483/4		
130r	1483/4		
130v	1483/4		
131r	1484/5		
131v	1484/5		
132r	1484/5		
132v	1484/5		
133r	1484/5		
133v	1484/5		
134r	1484/5		
134v	memo		
135r	1485/6		
135v	1485/6		
136r	1485/6		
136v	1485/6		
137r	1485/6		
137v	1485/6		
138r	1485/6		
138v	1486/7		
139r	1486/7		
139v	1486/7		
140r	1486/7		
140v	1485		
141r	1487/8 or 1488/9		
141v	1487/8 or 1488/9		
142r	1487/8 or 1488/9		
142v	1487/8 or 1488/9		
143r	1489		
143v	blank		
144r	1487/8 or 1488/9		
144v	1487/8 or 1488/9		
145r	1487/8 or 1488/9		
145v	1487/8 or 1488/9		
146r *	1488/9 or 1489/90		

APPENDIX B : SAFFRON: REFERENCES TO PRODUCTION AND DEALING		
REFERENCE (m. numbers: ECRO D/DBy m. 6 - m.10)		
SAFFRON AT WALDEN	**DATE**	
VCH Essex ii, p.360	1444	'Compositio de decimis' -saffron in gardens and fields outside Abbey precinct to be tithable for the vicar.
m.6 Apr. 1448	1448	John Gerard, draper, sued by Thomas Trusse for 1 oz crocuses, cost 11d
m.7 12 May 1457	1450	ref. in 1457 to a John Hervy's lease in 1450 of a garden planted with crocuses, 20 yr term
m.7 12 May 1457	1452	ie ref. in 1457 to a debt concerning delivery in 1452 to Thomas Holme by John Baker of 1 lb crocuses for sale.
m.7 Sep. 1453	1453	Thos Holme broke hedge of garden below outer wall of manor and took 1 qr 4 bushels saffron heads
m.7 Dec. 1454	1454	John Pynchebek's sheep, pastured in crocus garden, ate 1 bushel of flowers after feast of S Edward
m.7 Jan. 1456	1456	Thomas Mason sues John Nailler for 3s 4d for damage by pigs in crocus gardens
m.7 Jul. 1456	1456	Epford J+Carter T+ Rede J, and 'others' have gardens planted with croci
ECRO D/DBy Q18 f. 49r	1456	churchwardens buy saffron for 'the Pentecost tart'
m.7 Jul. 1457	1457	John Colwell, glasier, sues for 4 qrs of heads of crocuses to be received from Stephen Gyn before 1 Aug.
m.7 Jul. 1457	1457	John Epford enclosed part of a pedestrian way for planting crocuses
ECRO T/A 358/6	1463	Juliana Shymmyng leaves 2 acres saffron
m.8 Jul. 1465	1465	ordinance made that pigs are not to destroy crocus and grain in gardens and fields of neighbours
(NO COURT RECORDS 1466-9, inclusive)		
m.8 Jul. 1470	1470	John Semer sues John Chirche because pigs trample half a rood of crocuses at Cuckingstool End
m.8 Jul 1472	1472	crocuses stolen from neighbours' gardens
ECRO D/DBy Q18 f.106v	1476	churchwardens pay for making a measuring cup 'at the time of collection of crocuses'
m.8 Dec. 1476	1476	Richard Grant, probably the smith, bought 1 qr 5 bushels saffron heads for 4s 4d for delivery 1 Aug.
m.8 Dec. 1477	1477	William Marreve is owed 8s 4d for 'divers heads' of croci, sold at the feast of S Lucia (13 Dec.)
m.8 Feb. 1479	1479	cow ate crocuses in Richard Sampson's saffron garden
ECRO D/DB 2/3/64	1479	1 acre part set with saffron in the field 'Stonybrode'
ECRO D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1	1481	Symond will - 2 'saffron gardens'
m.8 Jul. 1482	1482	John Spilman's large sow often goes into the crocus gardens of men of this town, causing damage
m.8 Dec. 1482	1482	John Boyton's 2 pigs entered John Benne's close and destroyed 1 acre crocus heads
m.9 Mar. 1484	1484	a lane leads into crocus gardens
m.10 Sep. 1485	1485	sheep in crocus garden
ECRO D/B 2/MIS 2/5	1486	Margaret Mayhew, widow, leaves a saffron garden to the highest bidder
TNA, PRO C1/95/21	1486-93	concerns land in Walden part-set with saffron
m.10 Jul. 1488	1488	pigs invade crocus gardens of divers' tenants of the manor
m.10 Sep. 1488	1488	Executors of Thomas George, (probably butcher), are sued regarding 3 ozs crocuses
m.10 Sep. 1488	1488	John Carter's pigs in Robert Cleydon's crocus gardens
ECRO D/DBy Q18 f. 145v	1489,c.	John Rede is paid 12.5d for picking 5 ozs saffron
ECRO D/DBy Q18 f. 146v	1489,c.	churchwardens pay John Rede 60d for 5ozs saffron from 'Almanys garden'

AT WALDEN AFTER 1490		
Walden church	1495 c.	S aisle: crocus emblem used, suggesting (*VCH Essex* ii, p. 361) remarkable.impact of crop
ECRO T/A 358/13	1497	Edward Barker leaves 3 acres land set with saffron heads in a saffron garden in a field and 1 acre of saffron heads and 1 acre saffron on Windmill Hill
ECRO T/A 358/10	1501	John Hervy leaves 1 acre saffron heads
ECRO T/A 358/15	1502	Nicholas Pyrk leaves 1 acre saffron
ECRO D/ACR 1/42	1502	Alice Chapman bequeaths 'all my saffron'
ECRO D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1	1509	John Danbury, butcher, bequeaths ' the profits of the saffron'
ECRO T/A 94/17	1514	Holy Trinity Gild charter, Walden, border ornamented with images of saffron
ECRO D/ACR 2/22	1515	James Bodley leaves 1 lb saffron to his mother as will overseer
ECRO D/ACR 2/37	1515	John Waterman leaves half an acre of saffron
ECRO D/Dby m.32	1524	road leading to crocus gardens
ECRO D/Dby m.32	1524	1 acre crocuses, near Cuckingstoolend, belongs to John Gardyner, of London
	1549	image on Walden borough seal
VCH Essex ii, p. 364	late 16c	saffron frequently presented by Walden officials to visiting dignitaries
VCH Essex ii, p. 361	late 16c	Harrison, Camden, Norden refer to extensive saffron cultivation around Walden
VCH Essex ii, p. 361	late 17c	much of saffron grown around Walden was sold at Newport Fair
VCH Essex ii, p. 365	1768	saffron had gone from Walden, according to Morant
VCH Essex ii, p.365	1803, by	saffron cultivation long abandoned

PRE 1550 REFERENCES TO GROWING SAFFRON ELSEWHERE IN WALDEN'S REGION		
*****See 1) at foot of table	1374 - 1375	Cambridge: King's Hall grew saffron in college garden
*****See 1) at foot of table	1454	Cambridge: Pemboke College grew saffron in college garden
*****See 1) at foot of table	1466 - 1467	Cambridge: King's College grew saffron in college garden
J. S. Lee, *Cambridge and its Economic Region, 1450-1560* (Hatfield, 2005), p. 108	1473	Linton: saffron included in tithes
***** See 2) at foot of table	1473	Chelmsford: a brewer's widow grew saffron
Lee, p. 108	1475	Thriplow: saffron included in tithes
Lee, p. 110	1483	Ickleton: saffron plot held by a Londoner
VCH Cambridgeshire x, p. 145	1490s	Fulbourn: part demesne leased by Londoner for saffron. Locals also growing it by 1520
AHEW iii, p. 260	15c	Sawbridgeworth: large quantities saffron grown; declining by early 16c
East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society Transactions, 12 (1945-9), p. 155	1500	Buntingford: merchant bequeaths 1 acre of saffron in field
W. Palmer, *Cambridgeshire in the Sixteenth Century, (Cambridge, 1935)*, pp. 23-5	c. 1500	Chesterton: closes newly planted with saffron
VCH Cambridgeshire v, p. 152	c. 1500	Barrington: saffron introduced, grown in fenced strips in open fields and in closes
ECRO D/ACR 1/154	1507	Littlebury: John Colwell, husbandman, leaves at least 2 beds of saffron
ECRO D/ACR 1/223	1514	Maude Serle leaves a rood of saffron
VCH Cambridgeshire x, p. 239	by 1520s	Stow: saffron in open fields
VCH Cambridgeshire x, p. 324-5	1520s	Little Wilbraham: saffron in enclosed gardens, in plots in open fields and on pasture
Lee, p. 108	1524	Hinxton, tithes of saffron
VCH Cambridgeshire vi, p. 108.	by 1527	Pampisford: saffron grown
TNA, PRO C1/578/5	early 16c	Hoddesdon: saffron close
VCH Cambridgeshire vi, p.10	from early 16c	Abington, Great and Little: saffron grown
VCH Cambridgeshire ix, p. 21	by 1530s	Bottisham: vicar claimed tithe of saffron
VCH Cambridgeshire x, p. 287	by 1530s	Swaffham Prior: saffron in open fields
W. M. Palmer, *Cambridgeshire*, p.17	by 1530	Hauxton: saffron grown; newly tithed
Palmer, *Cambridgeshire*, p. 17	1530s	Babraham: saffron grown
TNA, PRO C1/1054/8	c. 1540	Gt Dunmow: saffron grown
Lee, p. 109	1540s	Cambridge, saffron grown in fields

Lee, p. 109	1549	Suffolk and Norfolk: saffron closes tolerated in context of protest at enclosures
P. May, Newmarket: Medieval and Tudor (Newmarket, 1982), p.54.	16c	Newmarket: 4 testators bequeath saffron grounds
OUTSIDE THE REGION		
J. Ridgard, *Medieval Framlingham: Select Documents 1270-1524* (Woodbridge, 1985), p. 101	1385-6	Framlingham Castle, Suffolk, 12 lbs crocuses bought
R. I. Jack, *The Grey of Ruthin Valor* (Sydney, 1965), p. 80	1467-8	Harrald (c. 15km NW of Bedford), half a garden occupied by saffron
TNA, PRO C1/320/22	E16c	Burnham, Norfolk, saffron to be planted
TNA, PRO C1/868/58	1530s	Wighton, Norfolk, saffron planted
TNA, PRO C1/1055/75-6	c.1540	Hereford saffron garden
AHEW iv, p. 175	date unspecified	saffron a speciality around Walsingham.
T. Martyn, *Flora Rustica (London, 1792)*, no. 58.	date unspecified	saffron grown in Hampshire
GENERAL EVIDENCE OF TRADING, 14c and 15c		
TNA, PRO AR/37/41/1	1381-2	expenses for London banquet include dates, ginger, almonds, saffron.
TNA, PRO AR/37/44	1383	bought by his steward for John Dynham's household in Devon
TNA, PRO BRT 1/3/25 (Records of Stratford on Avon Corporation)	1410-11	saffron, with pepper, ginger, and cloves, bought for Holy Cross Gild, Stratford
Household Book of Dame Alice de Bryene of Acton Hall, Suffolk **** See 3) at foot of table	.c1412-13; 1419	1 lb saffron bought for 13s at Stourbridge fair; 0.5 lb saffron bought for 7s 6d.
******See 4) at foot of table	1429	a sack of saffron sold to London grocer Robert Otteley
TNA, PRO BRT 1/3/50 (Records of Stratford on Avon Corporation)	1442-3	(1 quatron saffron, 3s 6d), with milk, honey, eggs, pepper, bought for Holy Cross Gild
TNA, PRO HA 30/369/46	1440s-50s	bought at Blythburgh, Suffolk
York inventory **** See 5) at foot of table	1446	saffron 12s for 1 lb
York inventory **** See 5) at foot of table	1462	saffron 4s for 0.5 lb, for Grocers' Company feast

'GARDENS' at WALDEN		
ECRO D/B 2/2/97	1473	garden made in field called Leytonstedeleys
m.8 Dec. 1473	1473	J Ailleghe taking up a second garden
m.8 Dec. 1475	1475	enclosed garden in exterior site of manor
ECRO D/DBy Q18 f. 103r	***	garden rented from parish at end of town for 0.5d per year
m.8 Jun. 1463	1463	garden 'The Chirswyk' in the manor site
m.8 Spring 1462	1462	garden in/adjacent to exterior manor site
LATER HISTORY IN THE REGION		
H. C. Coppock, *Saffron Crocus*, p.1	up to c. 1750	Hinton - many references to saffron cultivation
Coppock, p. 3	mid 18c	Walden – saffron still cultivated
Coppock, p. 4	1819	upland near Hinton - saffron still cultivated
Coppock, p. 5	1770	Cambridgeshire saffron sold at Newport fair
M. Deacon, *Great Chesterford: a common field parish in Essex* (Saffron Walden, 1983), p. 27	up to 18c	Saffron commonly grown through 17c, just into 18c

***1) R. Willis and J. W. Clark, The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge, iii (Cambridge, 1886), pp. 578-80.

***2) H. Grieve, The Sleepers and the Shadows: Chelmsford - a town, its people and its past (Chelmsford, 1988-94), p. 74.

***3) V. Redstone (ed.), The Household Book of Dame Alice de Bryene of Acton Hall, Suffolk, September 1412-September 1413, with Appendices (1931, Bungay, 1984), p. 120.

***4) A. H. Thomas (ed.), Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, AD 1413-37 (Cambridge, 1943), p. 226.

***5) P. Nightingale, A Medieval Merchant Community: the Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London 1000-1485 (London, 1995), pp. 384, 440.

Note: Walden wills are listed only up to 1520. There is evidence of cultivation continuing there - including from 1521.

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Court rolls Walden Abbey manor D/DBy m.146-m.152

Rental Chepyng Walden manor D/DBy m.32

Wills T/A 358/- ;T/A 359/- ; D/B 2/MIS 2/- ; D/B 2/TDS 4/1/1 ;D/ACR 1/- ; D/ACR 2/- .

Deeds D/B 2/1/- ; 2/2/- ; 2/3/- ; 2/4/-

Holy Trinity Gild: account book D/B 2/GHT 2/1; gild charters: D/B 2/BRE1/8, D/B 2/BRE1/5, D/B 2/BRE1 /6

Charter Henry IV, 1402: D/B 2/BRE1/25

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