

Philip Knowles, 'Continuity and change in urban culture: a case study of two provincial towns, Chester and Coventry c.1600-c.1750'.

In recent years the significance of urban culture has become a principal theme in defining and conceptualizing the nature of life in early modern towns. Important as these historiographical shifts are, however, they have not yet resulted in complementary reassessments of explanatory models for the study of urban society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which still largely follow that sketched by Peter Clark and Paul Slack some twenty eight years ago in *Crisis and Order in English Towns* (1972). In its most basic form, their model presents the century between the Reformation and the Civil War as one of urban difficulties, realignments, and economic decline, especially in 'second rank' towns. In contrast, the century after 1660 was a dynamic phase for English towns: a time of steady population growth, economic renewal, and, more importantly the creation of a new urban identity, which was *urbane* (for it followed metropolitan fashions) rather than *civic* (something derived from the traditions of individual towns and the common values of their inhabitants).

Based as it was on emulation, interpretations of *urbane* culture often neglect the cultural production of townspeople themselves, who emerge only as passive followers of London-led provincial urban cultures. For this reason, we now know a great deal about assembly rooms, subscription libraries, and race courses, for example, but continuities in civic cultures have been under-emphasized. It is the intention of this work to explore both continuities and disruptions in two second rank towns, Chester and Coventry, over a long period of time, spanning the period of the Civil War which has been seen as a customary watershed in studies hitherto, and one which many urban historians have been reluctant to address or bridge.

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‘Continuity and change in urban culture: a case study of two provincial towns, Chester and Coventry *c.*1600-*c.*1750’.

Submitted for the degree of D.Phil., University of Leicester.
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Acknowledgements.

My interest in urban history was first stimulated in the Manchester Central Reference Library where I happened across a copy of Peter Clark and Paul Slack's *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* while writing an essay on Tudor rebellions. Although writing my PhD thesis has at times been arduous that interest in urban history and the role of the city in the wider society remains undiminished. I hope this thesis makes some contribution to our understanding of towns and their role cultural role. During its completion I have incurred many debts to individuals and institutions. Leicester University provided me with a scholarship, supplemented by the Economic History Society's Eileen Power fund. The staff at several libraries and record offices have been unstintingly helpful, Leicester University, Wolverhampton University, Senate House Library, The British Library, Cheshire Record Office, Chester City Archives and Coventry Record Office. In particular the staff at the latter two and the rare book librarians at Leicester University met my requests and enquiries with patience and goodwill. Parts of this study have been read at various conferences and seminars, and I have benefited from the comments of those who attended the sessions. Roey Sweet my supervisor was a perceptive reader who significantly eased the path to submission with her ever useful prompting. My sister, Caroline, was a thorough and accurate editor, who helped me speedily draw the final draft together, and James was a constant source of references and ideas. Finally, Tara, lived with this thesis for longer than she cares to remember and was a constant source of help and support.

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Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Book
Add	Additional Manuscripts
BL	British Library
Borsay, <i>Urban Renaissance</i>	Peter Borsay, <i>The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770</i> (Oxford, 1989)
CCA	Chester City Archive
CCRO	Cheshire County Record Office
Clark, <i>Country Towns</i>	Peter Clark (ed.), <i>Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England</i> (Leicester, 1981)
Clark, <i>Transformation</i>	Peter Clark (ed.), <i>The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800</i> (1984)
<i>Crisis and Order</i>	P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), <i>Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700</i> (1972)
CRO	Coventry Record Office
CS	Cheshire Sheaf
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i>
EcHR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>English Towns in Transition</i>	P. Clark and P. Slack, <i>English Towns in Transition 1500-1700</i> (Oxford, 1976)
Harl	Harleian Manuscripts
Groombridge, <i>Calendar</i>	Margaret J. Groombridge (ed.), <i>The Calendar of Chester City Council Minutes 1603-1642</i> (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 106, 1956)
Hart and Knapp, <i>Aunchant</i>	Steven E. Hart and Margaret M. Knapp, <i>The Aunchant and Famous Cittie: David Rogers and the Chester Mystery Plays</i> (New York, 1988)
<i>Hewitt's Journal</i>	John Hewitt, <i>The Journal of John Hewitt</i> (1779).
HJ	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HMC	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission</i>
JAAHSCNW	<i>Journal of the Architectural, Archaeological and Historic Society of Chester and North Wales</i>
JCAS	<i>Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society</i>
<i>Leet Book</i>	M. Dormer-Harris (ed.), <i>The Coventry Leet Book</i> (Early English Text Society, 105-109, 1907-13)
Morris, <i>Chester</i>	R. H. Morris, <i>Chester in the Tudor and Plantagenet Reigns</i> (Chester, n.d.)

P/Cowper	William Cowper, 'Collectanea Devana', 3 vols., CCA. P/Cowper.
Phythian-Adams, <i>Desolation</i>	Charles Phythian-Adams, <i>Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages</i> (Cambridge, 1979)
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>Prescott's Diary I</i>	J. Addy (ed.), <i>The Diary of Henry Prescott, LL.B, Deputy Registrar of Chester Diocese, Volume 1</i> (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 127, 1987)
<i>Prescott's Diary II</i>	J. Addy and P. McNiven (eds.), <i>The Diary of Henry Prescott, LL.B, Deputy Registrar of Chester Diocese, Volume 2</i> (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 132, 1994)
<i>Prescott's Diary III</i>	J. Addy, J. Harrop and P. McNiven (eds.), <i>The Diary of Henry Prescott, LL.B, Deputy Registrar of Chester Diocese, Volume 3</i> (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 133, 1997)
REED: <i>Chester</i>	<i>Records of Early English Drama: Chester</i> (ed. Lawrence Clopper Toronto, 1979)
REED: <i>Coventry</i>	<i>Records of Early English Drama: Coventry</i> (ed. R. W. Ingram, Toronto, 1981)
REED: <i>Norwich</i>	<i>Records of Early English Drama: Norwich, 1540-1642</i> (ed. David Galloway, Toronto, 1979)
RSLC	Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
TBAS	<i>Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society</i>
THSLC	<i>Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire</i>
UHYB	<i>Urban History Yearbook</i>
VCH	<i>Victoria County History</i>
VCH: <i>Warwickshire 2</i>	<i>The Victoria County History, Warwickshire, 2</i> (ed. William Page, 1908).
VCH: <i>Warwick 8</i>	<i>The Victoria County History, Warwick, 8</i> (ed. W.B. Stephens, 1969).

Chapter 1. Introduction: Provincial Urban Culture and the Urban Renaissance

Early modern provincial towns have become a focus of increasing academic interest over the last thirty years. In its earliest phase the concern was to delineate the structures of urban authority, profile the economy and the urban social structure. More recently historians have turned their attention to urban culture and in particular the period after the Restoration has been identified as a watershed in the development of urban culture. Generally, it is contended that provincial towns before 1660 were wracked by a series of crises precipitated by economic polarisation, rapid population growth, poverty, the impact of the Reformation, natural disasters such as plague and silting, and by warfare (foreign and domestic) which culminated in the disastrous civil wars of the 1640s. This series of crises affected all of the urban hierarchy but it was the metropolis and second-rank towns which were particularly badly affected. The consequences for urban culture were profound and provincial urban cultural life is characterised as backward and impoverished. Civic revenues fell as industry and trade declined and the growing demands created by large scale poverty forced urban authorities to largely abandon investment in civic culture and the urban fabric. This exacerbated a process already set in motion by the Reformation and together precipitated the demise of much of the ritual calendar and the attendant fraternities and guilds. The net effect was a period of cultural decline and stagnation which destroyed the cultural diversity and richness of the late-medieval town in a process which was not halted or reversed until the close of the Commonwealth in 1659-60.

Historians therefore present a very pessimistic picture of urban culture in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. Alan Dyer found it difficult to label any element of Worcester's culture as 'distinctly urban' and Peter Clark describes the process as 'the diminution of the organised sociability, and the sundering of the powerful cultural identity of the older, medieval city' and concludes that urban 'cultural independence was attenuated'.¹ The Restoration, however, ushered in a new phase of urban development. Towns entered a 'golden age', economically and culturally, benefiting from the expansion of overseas and internal trade which coincided with a slowing of demographic growth in the later seventeenth century and led to a period of sustained growth and prosperity. This new-found prosperity had a cultural reflection as towns developed a plethora of cultural and leisure services to cater for the classes of people who possessed this wealth - the gentry, pseudo-gentry and emerging middle class. In sum this economic and cultural regeneration was so wide-reaching that it has been described as an 'urban renaissance'.² This renewal of urban fortunes affected four principal areas of urban life - leisure facilities, the economy, the urban fabric and architecture - and the impact and timing of these changes is discussed below.

¹ Alan Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973), 253; Peter Clark, *Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth Century City* (Victorian Studies Centre, University of Leicester, 1986), 4; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), 13; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, 'Introduction', in Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order In English Towns 1500-1700* (1972), 19-23, 26; Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550', in *Crisis and Order*, 57-85; J. H. Plumb, 'The public, literature and the arts in the eighteenth century' in Paul Fritz and David Williams (eds.), *The Triumph of Culture: Eighteenth Century Perspectives* (Toronto, 1972), 27-31.

² The term 'urban renaissance' is first used in Peter Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance: the development of provincial culture c.1680-c.1760', *Social History*, 2/5 (1977), 581.

The first area of change was the development from the mid seventeenth century of leisure facilities, services and activities, such as assemblies, walks, pleasure gardens, sports, music and the arts. Assemblies were one of the earliest of the new leisure activities and Buckingham (c.1670) and Tunbridge Wells (1650s to 60s) possessed the earliest purpose-built assembly rooms. Assemblies became increasingly common features in provincial towns and by the early eighteenth century they were a nationwide phenomenon prompting Macky to comment that they existed 'in all the great towns of the nation'. The town increasingly became the focus for sports traditionally associated with the gentry and the countryside, such as horse-racing and hunting, and bowling and cockfighting. Not only was there a growth in the absolute number of race-courses from 112 in 1727 to 138 in 1739, they were also increasingly urban: in the 1730s between 74 and 80 per cent and by 1770 almost 90 per cent were urban-based. A limited number of towns also possessed hunts - Chester, Preston, York, Leeds, Liverpool, Beverley. More ubiquitous were bowling greens and by the end of the eighteenth century they were to be found in 'most country towns of any note', although county towns often had more than one green: Shrewsbury, Buckingham and Winchester all had two apiece in the later seventeenth century and Tunbridge Wells had four in 1697. On a par with bowling was cockfighting, a sport frequently associated with urban inns, although it became increasingly unfashionable in the eighteenth century as developing notions of civility censored it for its cruelty.³ The third area of leisure to expand was the arts. By the late 1720s the provincial theatre was beginning to establish itself and three town companies had emerged at Norwich, York and Bath. By the mid-eighteenth century permanent companies had been established in Bristol, Birmingham, Plymouth and Salisbury, and these companies served not only their host towns but a series of satellite centres to which they travelled. Musical concerts also took root, especially in cathedral towns, for example the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford which began around 1713 or the festival established at Salisbury from 1748; Newcastle began regular subscription concerts in 1736, Manchester 1744, Birmingham from at least the 1740s and the small town of Swaffham by 1745.⁴

The second significant area of change was the urban economy. It began to shift away from one almost wholly focused on the manufacture and marketing of basic necessities, to one concerned to a greater degree with the provision of luxury goods and services. Towns took advantage of the opportunities presented by the burgeoning consumer economy to diversify and the number of occupations rose commensurately: at Northampton the number of trades recorded rose from 45 in 1562-1601, to 83 in 1654-1705, to 114 between 1716 and 1776; at Warwick the range of occupations doubled between the late sixteenth and late seventeenth century. Not only did the urban economy diversify and become more specialised but the role of luxury services and luxury goods grew. Service trades such as those associated with personal grooming, barbers and wigmakers became more prominent, and the purveyors of luxury retail goods - confectioners, tobacconists, milliners - all flourished as part of the growing luxury economy. Among Shrewsbury's

³ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the English Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), 151-196.

⁴ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 117-127; Borsay, 'English urban renaissance', 584; Plumb, 'Public, literature and the arts', 42-4; Michael Reed, 'The cultural role of small towns in England, 1600-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *Small Towns in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1995), 135.

freemen the luxury trades, services and professions increased from 8.6 per cent of all occupations in 1650-1675, to 12.9 per cent in 1700-1725, to 17.3 per cent in 1750-1775. However, it was not only a question of scale or diversity. The eighteenth century has been termed the 'golden age of English craftsmanship' and is exemplified by the polyvariant clockmaker, gunsmith, enameller and blacksmith, Nicholas Paris of Warwick. Craftsmen such as Paris were highly skilled and versatile, catering to a widespread county clientele and urban craftsmen in general had a reputation for producing high quality goods.⁵

The third area to see significant change was the amenities which helped raise the quality of urban life. Schemes to provide piped water were introduced from the 1690s at Bristol, Norwich, Deal, Warwick, Stamford, Hereford and Newcastle. Comprehensive street re-paving programmes were initiated to provide an adequate road surface and were often preceded by street-cleaning programmes more extensive than hitherto, aimed at improving the condition of a town's main streets. Finally street lighting was regularised with the introduction of civic-backed programmes to provide oil lamps. Each of these elements was underpinned by an important administrative shift away from individual responsibility and towards some form of collective, organised provision, which according to Falkus and Jones opened the way for higher standards and greater efficiency.⁶ These improvements to the urban environment were accompanied by changes in building materials and the increased use of brick and tile, which not only reduced fire risk but together with other improvements to the urban environment reduced the problems associated with rats and timber and thatch buildings.⁷ Linked to these changes to the physical fabric of the town was a revolution in the form and nature of urban architecture.

Prior to the Restoration urban architecture had paid little attention to aesthetics or planning. The vernacular tradition militated against architectural uniformity, houses were idiosyncratic and thus houses fronting onto the same street did not relate architecturally to one another. Towns in different parts of the country followed separate vernacular traditions and consequently each town's architectural style differed and there was no identifiable urban architectural form.⁸ This changed in the later seventeenth century with the introduction of classical architectural styles. Urban classicism revolutionised the street frontage stressing symmetry and uniformity in the place of idiosyncrasy. This uniform facade enabled individual units (houses) to be much more readily incorporated into blocks thereby increasing the notion of the 'street as a street'. The impact of these improvements to the urban landscape was that parts of the town acquired a

⁵ Alan Everitt, 'Introduction', in Alan Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in Urban History* (Basingstoke, 1973), 1-15; Borsay, 'English urban renaissance', 584-6; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 34-5; Angus McInnes, 'The emergence of a leisure town: Shrewsbury 1660-1760', *P&P*, 126 (1990), see table 1 and 55-65; Jon Stobart, 'Shopping streets as social space: leisure, consumerism and improvement in an eighteenth century county town', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 10-12, table 1; John Rule, *The Vital Century: England's Developing Economy, 1714-1815* (1992), 98-9; Reed, 'Cultural role', table 6.1, 142.

⁶ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 60-79; Borsay, 'English urban renaissance', 588-90; E. L. Jones and M. E. Falkus, 'Urban improvement and the English economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in P. Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town* (1990), 116-58, esp. 127-31; M. Falkus, 'Lighting in the dark ages of English economic history: town streets before the industrial revolution', in D. C. Coleman and A. H. John (eds.), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England* (1976), 248-273.

⁷ Andrew A. Appleby, 'The disappearance of plague: A continuing puzzle', *EcHR*, 33 (1980), 163, 166; Paul Slack, 'The disappearance of plague: an alternative view', *EcHR*, 34 (1981), 472.

⁸ Compare for instance the timber framed rows of Chester with the knapped flint of Kings Lynn.

more 'urban' appearance and a national, shared aesthetic and architectural language emerged based on the reception of classical ideals.⁹ In totality the changes to the urban economy, leisure facilities, urban amenities and architecture lead to the cultural rehabilitation of the provincial town which by the 1770s was at the forefront of English cultural life. They were the focus of an open, gregarious social life and had emerged from their 'provincial backwardness' to become modernising and civilising forces within English society.¹⁰

But what were the processes which lay behind these changes: the social and economic forces which underpinned and gave rise to the urban renaissance? The primary catalyst was the growth of the national economy, from the mid-seventeenth century onwards inland and overseas trade expanded considerably. Economic growth coincided with a period of slowed demographic growth which led to a significant rise in per capita income and consequently surplus wealth.¹¹ This rise in incomes was not confined to the gentry or aristocracy and occurred across a fairly wide social spectrum, but three groups benefited disproportionately: the gentry and pseudo-gentry, and the emergent middle class. Recent studies of the gentry suggest that, as a class, it grew in the sixteenth century and quadrupled in size during the seventeenth century, and at the same time their opportunity to exploit developing markets increased and the amount of land they controlled rose from approximately 25 per cent in 1436 to between 45 and 50 per cent in 1688. A subsidiary of the gentry class, the pseudo-gentry, grew considerably after the Restoration as the emerging metropolitan markets for investment developed. However, the real drive was provided by expansion of the middling classes who are identified as a key group of consumers and participants in the urban renaissance, 'the dynamic and decisive force behind it [urban renaissance]'. The growth of the professions - the considerable increase in the numbers of lawyers, doctors, civil servants and clerics - was at the forefront of these changes. The expansion of the middling classes was also bolstered from the business sector - the manufacturers and merchants - who profited from the increased opportunities of inland and overseas trade. Outside of these groups, the tradesmen and craftsmen who benefited from the increased commercial opportunities of the urban renaissance and luxury economy were both beneficiaries and participants. Collectively these middling rank people generated a total demand to rival and eclipse their social superiors.¹²

The development of the new urban luxury economy and leisure facilities would have been impossible without the growth of the national economy and the increased personal expenditure funded by the rise in the numbers of people who possessed surplus wealth. Yet the expansion of incomes, although a precondition for greater luxury expenditure, does not provide an explanation of the mechanisms promoting social and cultural change. The decision to spend money on luxury is in itself a cultural choice. In Borsay's model

⁹ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 41-59.

¹⁰ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 311-9; R. M. Wiles, 'Provincial culture in early Georgian England', in Fritz and Williams, *Triumph of Culture*, 49-68.

¹¹ D. C. Coleman, *The Economy of England* (Oxford, 1977), 91-110.

¹² Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales* (Basingstoke, 1994), 10-12, 97-135; in contrast to Stone, Heal and Holmes do not attempt to 'guestimate' the gentry's income expansion and hint it was more modest than Stone's optimistic view, see L. Stone, 'Social mobility in England 1500-1700', *P&P*, 33 (1966), 23-4; A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 27-8, 254-6; Borsay, 'English urban renaissance', 591; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 199-211, quote 204.

wealth serves a social function, it was not simply the means to purchase more but the key to a different life style, 'surplus wealth allows entry to what may be called the world of social competition'.¹³ A growing number of people were engaged in the pursuit of status through the acquisition of goods, such as clothing, and attributes, such as civility and knowledge. Fuelling this competition was the changing nature of gentility and the move away from blood-lineage or service-based notions to those based on cultural and intellectual attributes. This change was captured perfectly by Miège in the 1699 edition of his *New State of England* where he described those attributes essential for gentility, 'anyone that without a coat of arms, has either a liberal, or genteel education, that looks gentleman-like (whether he be so or not), and has wherewithal to live freely and handsomely, is by courtesy of England usually called a gentleman'. In this new world of social competition, towns were essentially conduits providing access to cultural facilities such as libraries, newspapers, coffee houses and booksellers where the intellectual attributes of gentility could be acquired and the shops of luxury retailers and craftsmen to furnish the physical attributes - clothing, wigs, jewellery, etc. Towns were indispensable forums for social competition, race meetings, assemblies, coffee houses, providing the public arena in which participants in the new culture could engage in social display 'one of the primary functions of the new leisure facilities was that of personal display'.¹⁴

However, this urban cultural renaissance although based in the provinces was not provincial in origin. It is widely accepted that it was only after the 1760s that a truly 'provincial' culture or consciousness emerged, separate from, and at times antagonistic to the influence of London, emerging mainly in the industrial conurbations of the North and Midlands not the 'old' centres of the urban renaissance.¹⁵ The emerging urban culture of the post-Restoration was *urbane*, for it followed and embraced elite metropolitan fashions. In this model it is aristocratic values that are thought to have been hegemonic. Provincial townspeople did not possess an alternative or autonomous culture after the Reformation and as Dyer has suggested for sixteenth century Worcester there was little that could be described as a distinctively urban culture. In the century after the Restoration this new urbane culture dominated provincial towns and the two key processes which explain the expansion and domination of urbane culture after 1660 are emulation and permeation. First, wealth could be commuted into social status through cultural consumption. Manners, cultural attributes and fashionable possessions could be used to establish social position and in this way emulation was pursued culturally. Second, because of the hegemony of landed society and in particular the values connected with the Court and aristocratic West End London, anything associated with those activities and attributes was given social approval. These values permeated society and towns were one of the main entrepôts through which metropolitan values were transmitted. Ultimately provincial townspeople are seen

¹³ Borsay, 'English urban renaissance', 593.

¹⁴ Borsay, 'English urban renaissance', 582; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 225-32, 237-40; Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England*, 6-10, 16-19, argue the gentry 'were that body of men and women whose gentility was acknowledged by others'.

¹⁵ J. Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760-1800* (Manchester, 1977); D. Read, *The English Provinces* (1964); I. Inkster and J. Morrell (eds.), *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture 1780-1850* (1983).

as essentially passive consumers of a London-led culture, in which what is fashionable or desirable is determined by the metropolis and eagerly copied by the more culturally backward provinces.¹⁶

This vision of cultural change severely curtails the role of the urban middling sort and reduces them to passive consumers of a metropolitan culture, denying them any role as a culturally creative group in their own right. The urban renaissance model therefore builds on the long-standing Anglo-American historical tradition which seeks to understand early modern society in terms of bipolar classifications: elite and popular, patrician and plebeian. This model of early modern society, while important in debunking the notion of the inexorable rise of the middle class, denies the importance of any third group in English society before the Industrial Revolution. In the face of such a consensus, even the foremost champions for the importance of the middling sort and their role in the Civil War have retreated from their position.¹⁷ The main focus of discussions about the urban middling sort have concentrated on London merchants, and the purchasing of land by them and their provincial counterparts has traditionally been taken as an indication of their aspiration to (re)join the gentry class.¹⁸ The conclusions drawn from this practice are that the landed ideal as a cultural paradigm was dominant and its effect was to remove the wealthiest from urban society, depleting it of talent and capital and limiting urban patronage of the arts, thus inhibiting the formation of truly bourgeois identity as any potential leaders were constantly absorbed into the structures of landed society. Yet this characterisation needs to be questioned, not least because economic transactions make poor proxies for social and cultural values. Before the advent of other forms of investment (and insurance, stocks, etc.), land was the safest and only way to invest the sometimes large profits that could be made during a mercantile career.¹⁹ We also need to examine more closely the social and cultural activities of the urban middling sort before they are written off as culturally dependent consumers of landed values.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether the 'big bourgeoisie' of the metropolis are a good indicator of the strength or character of provincial bourgeois culture. The capacious nature of the middling sort, which included a wide range of people and occupations, highlights the problem of accepting the London mercantile elite as generally representative of the middling sort as a whole. In contrast to the metropolitan

¹⁶ Dan Cruickshank and Neil Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (1990), xiii; Falkus, 'Lighting in the dark ages', 248-9, 254, 259; Money, *Experience and Identity*, 102; R. Porter, 'Science, provincial culture and public opinion in Enlightenment England', in Borsay, *Eighteenth Century Town*, 251-3; Falkus and Jones, 'Urban improvement', 145-6; Jonathan Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-1780: urbane or civic?', in J. H. Pittock and A. Wear (eds.), *Interpretation and Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 1991), 205-9.

¹⁷ J. H. Hexter, 'The myth of the middle class in Tudor England', in his *Reappraisals in History* (1961), 71-116; E. P. Thompson, 'Patrician society, plebeian culture', *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), 382-405; E. P. Thompson, 'The patricians and the plebs' in his *Customs in Common* (1991), 16-96; H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (1969); J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985); C. Hill, 'Parliament and people in seventeenth century England', *P&P*, 92 (1981), 100-24.

¹⁸ The debate remains inconclusive but the most recent contribution to this debate concluded that landed status continued to appeal to leading London business families, see Henry Horwitz, 'The mess of the middle class' revisited: the case of the 'big bourgeoisie' of Augustan London, *Continuity and Change*, 2 (1987), 263-96; R. G. Lang, 'Social origins and social aspirations of Jacobean London merchants', *ECHR*, 2nd ser., 27 (1974), 28-47; N. Rogers, 'Money, land and lineage: the big bourgeoisie of Hanoverian London', *Social History*, 4 (1979), 437-54.

¹⁹ Jonathan Barry, 'Introduction' in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1994), 7. The argument that buying land illustrates the cultural dominance of landed values also ignores the possibility that merchants invested in land to achieve 'vertical integration' in their business and make any customs evasion difficult to detect.

mercantile elite, the provincial urban middling sort have received relatively little attention from historians, partially a reflection of the difficulties of defining the class.²⁰ The formal descriptions of the social structure by William Harrison and Thomas Smith identify a middle station, the yeomen, burgesses and citizens of corporate towns but recent work on the language of social description suggests that the term middling sort did not emerge until the 1620s and 1630s, and only became meaningful as a result of the conflicts of the 1640s, when the middling sort developed a distinct political identity.²¹

Given the supposed lack of an urban provincial middling sort with either a distinctive cultural or political identity and the general hegemony of landed values, it is not surprising that the historical consensus views provincial towns as culturally attenuated. Nor is it surprising, given the lack of an indigenous urban culture in which to root themselves, that townspeople were eager consumers of the new post-Restoration urbane culture, which effectively rescued them from their provincial backwardness. Yet this model misconstrues the nature of middling identity and under-emphasises the character of their social and cultural identities. Recent work on attitudes towards social mobility among the middling sort emphasises first that land acquisition was primarily a strategy of family sustenance and did not spring from the desire for personal profit or the aspiration to join the gentry. Second, the key concern of the middling sort was not upward social mobility but downward. Given this context, Mascuch stresses that middling autobiographers failed to take personal comfort from whatever wealth they possessed and their life strategies were intended to 'to repulse the prospect of his family's ignominious descent' - a position almost completely at odds with the vision of an individualistic and acquisitive middling sort.²² We therefore need to ask whether the model of a 'rational', acquisitive and individualist bourgeoisie is relevant (drawn as it is largely from nineteenth-century political theory), and to what extent this model can be 'back-projected' into early modern England?

Work on the political identity of middling townspeople in the eighteenth century and has noted their continued adherence to a moral economy, the notion of a 'just price' and their collective defence of such ideals until the late eighteenth century, which underlines the problems with the emulation model. The growth of societies and associations in the eighteenth century suggests the middling sort still sought collective solutions to the continued problems of social and economic flux. Barry argues that these forces

²⁰ For want of a compact, usable definition I will follow D'Cruze who defines the middling sort as 'independent trading households', see Shani D'Cruze, 'The middling sort in eighteenth century Colchester: Independence, social relations and the community broker', 181-207; Nicholas Rogers, 'The middling sort in eighteenth century politics', 160-2; Peter Earle, 'The middling sort in London', 141-5, all in Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort*.

²¹ Wrightson particularly sites the work of Derek Hirst on urban electoral disputes as evidence of the lack of distinctive middling sort, with a definable political identity, the conflict revealed by Hirst is usually between the 'meaner' and the 'better' sort of people, see K. Wrightson, 'Sorts of people' in Tudor and Stuart England', in Barry and Brooks, *Middling Sort*, 41-7. There is a flaw in this argument, first the language of sorts is a language of conflict, and second electoral sources do not make for unbiased reading. For instance the dispute at Chester in 1621, examined by Hirst, is between two factions and the source describing the canvassing of 'the baser sort' was in fact written by the losing side. It is therefore a hostile account, aimed at attacking their opponents and raising concerns in London about the populist nature of the winners and their associations with disorder, see D. Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1975), 197-8.

²² Michael Mascuch, 'Social mobility and middling self-identity: the ethos of British autobiographers, 1600-1750', *Social History*, 20 (1995), 58, 60-1; William J. Bouwsma, 'Anxiety and the formation of early modern culture' in his *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1990), 157-89.

were powerful stimuli for the middling sort to form associations to protect the household.²³ Although the macro-economic picture from the 1660s was good and demographic growth had slowed, the conditions of economic and social flux encountered by the urban middling sort did not change dramatically. The dropout rate among apprentices remained high - estimates suggest that less than half of those starting apprenticeships went on to become freemen. The business failure rate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was high. Capital thresholds for business entry were high, especially by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and there was little long-distance upward social mobility among manufacturers. The bursting of the South Sea Bubble in August 1720 had a long-lasting affect on the concerns and prospects of provincial traders and individual towns and sectors of the urban economy were not shielded from periodic downturn.²⁴ The cultural outlook of middling people therefore continued to focus on the protection of the household, political 'independence', support for and participation in collective solutions and aspects of the moral economy. This attitude is at odds with the notion of the individualistic bourgeoisie and an identity based on the emulation of polite culture. The focus on the growth of the national economy, identified as a major catalyst in the growth of the consumer economy, obscures the difficulties of establishing businesses, the transition from apprentice to independent trader, the continuing flux of the economy and the vulnerability of middling people to business failure.

It is the intention of this thesis to explore both continuities and disruptions to urban society over a long period of time, spanning the period of the Civil War which has been seen as a customary watershed in studies to date, and one which many urban historians have been reluctant to address or bridge. The study concentrates on the experiences of two 'second rank' towns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – Chester and Coventry. These two towns were selected partly because of the evident quality of their records and also for the interesting ways in which, traditionally, they have been interpreted to illustrate different strands of urban development. Chester is a good example of a county town which struggled to manage economic difficulty before 1660 but emerged after the Restoration as a centre of consumption and gentry sociability. Coventry, on the other hand, suffered prolonged setbacks until the eighteenth century when its fortunes again soared, not as a result of a newly-defined urban culture (a part which was played by nearby Warwick and Lichfield), but the rise of new specialist industries such as watch-making and ribbon weaving.

Two broad themes are tackled. First, what was the nature of provincial urban culture both before and after 1660. The notion of towns as culturally impoverished and backward before 1660 will be questioned and the extent to which the growth of urbane culture impacted on or modified existing cultural patterns.

²³ Steve Poole, 'Scarcity and the civic tradition: market management in Bristol, 1709-1815' and Simon Renton, 'The moral economy of the English middling sort in the eighteenth century: the case of Norwich in 1766 and 1767', both in Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (eds.), *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth Century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool, 1996), 91-114 and 115-136 respectively. Poole in particular argues that it was the changed context in the aftermath of the French Revolutionary wars that undermined middling support for the moral economy. Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois collectivism? Urban association and the middling sort', in Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort*, 84-112.

²⁴ Ronald M. Berger, 'Mercantile careers in the early seventeenth century: Thomas Atherall, a Coventry apothecary', *Warwickshire History*, 5 (1981), 37-58; John Rule, *The Vital Century*, 162, 168; J. Brewer, 'Clubs and commercialisation' in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (1982), 212.

The second theme examines to what extent an alternative model of urban identity existed. The current historiography suggests, provincial townspeople were eager, but passive consumers of a metropolitan polite or urbane culture, having little indigenous urban culture in which to ground themselves. This thesis argues an alternative model of identity did exist, based around civic traditions and the notion of independence. Townspeople were independent cultural actors and consequently the growth of polite culture after 1660 interacted with and modified existing urban cultures, but it did not replace them wholesale. To fully explore these questions, and in particular the vitality of urban culture and the existence of a middling urban culture between *c.*1600 and *c.*1750, the thesis concentrates on four main areas of urban life: ceremony, leisure, the urban environment and attitudes to the past. As we shall see, from a close examination and comparison of these two towns during this period the cultural richness and diversity of provincial towns has been underestimated and there are strong continuities in the development of urban culture from *c.*1600 to *c.*1750. Furthermore, an alternative model of urban identity did exist and the dominance of the landed ideal and landed values in urban society has been over-stated.

Chapter 2. The Economy of the Provincial Town: Chester and Coventry, c.1550-c.1770

2.i. Introduction

Chapter 1 explored the nature of the 'urban renaissance', the social processes which underpinned change from the later seventeenth century and posited an alternative model of cultural identity, based on a voluntarist, reciprocal and cooperative middling sort who sought to cushion the vagaries of economic and life cycle changes through the creation of institutions and practices to manage and limit their impact. Essential though these cultural mechanisms and changes were, the urban renaissance is buttressed by a temporal framework which characterises the period before the Restoration as one of cultural, economic and social stagnation and crisis. The period from the Reformation to the Restoration is depicted as one of difficult transformation, in which the social and economic role of towns underwent significant changes and realignments. At the close of this period towns emerged considerably altered, their economies more dependent on the service sector, more clearly orientated to providing a social arena, and as a stage for political and electoral contests among the gentry. Although the urban renaissance thesis does not examine the period prior to the Restoration, a fundamental element of the model is the acceptance of a pessimistic account of Tudor and early Stuart provincial towns, 'the debit side outweighed the credit'.¹ Consequently, the urban renaissance is predicated on the notion of an urban crisis before 1660 from which towns subsequently spectacularly recover.

The clearest exposition of this position is found in the work of Peter Clark and Paul Slack who argue that provincial towns suffered from three key problems, economic decline, demographic expansion and poverty, and natural disasters, which combined to produce a 'crisis' especially among second rank towns.² Towns faced a variety of economic problems - cloth towns declined as production migrated into the countryside from the late-fifteenth century onwards and the Reformation undermined the stability of the urban economy when the profits of the pilgrim trade were lost, together with the employment and purchasing power generated by local monasteries. The mercantile hegemony of London adversely affected the provincial outports - London accumulated the bulk of overseas trade and came to dominate this profitable sector of maritime activity.³ Contemporaneous to these economic changes was a significant expansion of urban populations, especially from the 1570s, and the combination of economic stagnation and demographic growth exacerbated the crisis and led to increased levels of urban poverty. The most

¹ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 11-16. It is important to note that Peter Borsay does not always accept this view of malaise and cultural decline and on occasion questions its veracity, see P. Borsay, 'All the town's a stage': urban ritual and ceremony 1660-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800* (1984), 229.

² What has been termed the 'Clark-Slack' thesis by Charles Phythian-Adams is at times difficult to pin down chronologically. The authors discuss a general urban crisis in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, but on other occasions they identify the 1520s, 1550s, 1620s and 1640s as the key crisis periods, see P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), 84, 99-103; P. Clark, 'Introduction' in P. Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), 4-5; P. Clark and P. Slack, 'Introduction', in Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (1972), 11. In contrast P. Slack, *English Urban History, 1500-1700: The Traditional Community Under Stress* (Milton Keynes, 1977), 28 defines the real crisis period as *after* the 1570s. Note how this coincides with Clark and Slack's view that urban populations increased most widely in the 50 years after 1570, see *English Towns in Transition*, 84.

³ Clark and Slack, 'Introduction' *Crisis and Order*, 10-14; Adrienne Rosen, 'Winchester in transition 1500-1700', in Clark, *Transformation*, 144, 147; D. Palliser, 'A crisis in English towns? The case of York, 1460-1640', *Northern History*, 14 (1978), 115-6, 118; *English Towns in Transition*, 102; D. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England Under The Later Tudors* (1983), 231; L. Stone, 'Elizabethan overseas trade', *EcHR*, 2nd ser., 2 (1949), 39, 50.

spectacular manifestation of the matrix of problems were the crises precipitated by natural disasters: the silting of rivers and havens, fire, plague and famine.⁴ The combined effect of these problems was increased social polarisation and a period punctuated by a series of crises in the 1530s, 1590s, 1620s and 1640s which hit second rank towns and the metropolis particularly hard.

The historical model that emerged almost 30 years ago therefore depicts a two-phase temporal framework for the early modern town: the first phase between the Reformation and the Civil War characterised by economic change and stagnation, rapid population growth, increasing urban poverty and a crisis of the older communal, late-medieval model of urban sociability and culture; the second phase, initiated by the Restoration which presaged wholesale economic revival, a slowing of demographic growth, and a significant reorientation and flourishing of urban culture. However, this contrast is overdrawn, both in its emphasis on crisis and stagnation in the first phase, and in the nature of the post-Restoration cultural revival. As more recent work on London has shown, the notion of crisis is problematic, Clark's unduly pessimistic conclusions about the scale of the crisis have been replaced by a more balanced view of the metropolis in the later sixteenth century.⁵ But a similar revision in the case of England's provincial towns has been slow to develop and as recently as 1992 at a conference held to mark 20 years of the crisis and order thesis Paul Slack concluded, 'that there has proved less need for a fundamental re-think of the core period 1540-1670'.⁶ The linked notions of an urban crisis followed by an urban renaissance have, almost without challenge and debate, become a paradigm into which subsequent work has been fitted.⁷ The following section reconsiders these current models of urban development in the light of two towns, Chester and Coventry, firstly because second rank towns are identified as having been the central focus of many of these changes, and secondly because each town illustrates different themes within the historiography and provide contrasting case studies.

2.ii. Chester and Coventry

Chester and Coventry were chosen primarily because of the ways they illustrate and highlight different strands in the historiography of urban development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The conventional depiction of Chester is as a county town which struggled to manage economic difficulty before 1660 and was adversely affected by the archetypal external forces. A situation aptly summed up, if a little overstated by John Patten, '[Chester provides] a useful compound picture of just how the forces such as fire, disease, warfare and the rest, could inhibit the fortunes of the preindustrial town'.⁸ Traditionally it is seen as

⁴ *English Towns in Transition*, 89, 99-103, 107.

⁵ P. Clark, 'A crisis contained?' in P. Clark and B. Pullan (eds.), *The European Crisis of the 1590s: Essays in Comparative History* (1985), 44-66. More recent work on London has downplayed the scale and threat of crisis, see I. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Oxford, 1991); S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989); Keith Lindley, 'The maintenance of stability in early modern London', *HJ*, 34/4 (1991), 985-90.

⁶ Peter Borsay reviewing the Pre-Modern Towns Group conference held in December 1992 and Paul Slack's contribution in *Urban History Newsletter*, 2nd ser. no. 14 (Spring 1993).

⁷ The only attempt to challenge the idea of the urban renaissance as a general process affecting all towns is Angus McInnes, 'The emergence of a leisure town: Shrewsbury 1660-1760', *P&P*, 120 (1988), 53-87; Carl B. Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England: Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces 1660-1780* (Manchester, 1998), more recently has denied the dominance of urbane or polite culture within rural hinterland. J. Barry, 'Introduction', in J. Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town 1530-1688* (1990), 2.

⁸ J. Patten, *English Towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone, 1978), 76.

the victim of economic stagnation primarily resulting from the Dee's silting, the consequent decline in trade, the failure to compete with its more vibrant neighbour Liverpool, and its inability to break out of its corporate straight jacket.⁹ In the century after the Restoration the city emerged as a model centre of consumption and gentry sociability and its commercial character was of a 'rather a secondary consideration'.¹⁰ In contrast Coventry suffered a massive crisis in the early sixteenth century, described by Phythian-Adams as the 'desolation' of the city brought about by the collapse of its staple industry and economic base. Accounts of Coventry's subsequent development differ, but the widely-held consensus leaves Coventry economically marooned for almost 200 years. Only in the later seventeenth century does the city flourish economically, as one of the newly-emerging centres of industrial manufacture, based on silk weaving, ribbon weaving and later watchmaking.¹¹ Thus both Chester and Coventry seemingly dovetail perfectly with the standard historiographical models of urban development reflecting the different processes towns endured and or prospered by: Chester contracting economically in the later sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century only to find salvation in its emergence as a social and cultural centre; Coventry economically stagnant after its high of the late-medieval period, only to be revived at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a result of the emergence of new economic and industrial specialisms.

Chester in the mid-sixteenth century was effectively a provincial capital.¹² The largest city for 80 miles with a population of over 5000 and the only major city in the north west, it exercised a dominance over this sparsely-populated region which belied its size.¹³ The city was the centre of the new diocese of Chester created in August 1541, the home of royal administration represented by the castle, the Palatinate and its courts, and it therefore possessed a high concentration of professional people and gentry. It was the main port for a coastal region stretching from Harlech to Carlisle and a vital staging post in the Crown's relations with Ireland. Its fairs brought an influx of traders from all over northern England and London, the port played a major role in trade with Ireland and was an entrepôt provisioning the North Wales ports such as Beaumaris, a distributive centre for the surrounding region and the largest manufacturing centre west of the Pennines.¹⁴ The picture 200 years later is very different - Chester's dominant position has been undermined by the spectacular growth of Liverpool and Manchester in the early to mid-eighteenth century; and within

⁹ C. Armour, 'The trade of Chester and the state of the Dee navigation, 1600-1800', (Unpub., University of London PhD, 1956), 23-4, 33; N. Alldridge, 'The mechanics of decline: population, migration and economy in early modern Chester', in M. Reed (ed.), *English Towns in Decline 1350-1800* (Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, Working Paper, no.1, 1986), ch.3; for Chester's failure to benefit from the main mineral resource of Cheshire see, T. C. Barker, 'Lancashire coal, Cheshire salt and the rise of Liverpool', *THSLC*, 103 (1951), 83-101.

¹⁰ J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country From Thirty Miles Around Manchester* (1795), 388; Jon Stobart, 'Shopping streets as social space: leisure, consumerism and improvement in an eighteenth century county town', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 3-21.

¹¹ Charles Phythian-Adams, *The Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), 31-67; R. M. Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries: The Mercers' Company of Coventry 1550-1680* (Pennsylvania, 1993), 1-12, 59-90; Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge, 1987), 12-16; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 144, 162-72; M. D. Lobel (ed.), *The Atlas of Historic Towns, Volume 2* (1975), 12; Peter Clark, 'Introduction' in Clark, *Transformation*, 18-20.

¹² Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 8-10. If the status of regional capital is defined as the 'unrivalled position[s] as a historically significant administrative or ecclesiastical centres and above all their geographical situations in relation to the communications systems', rather than on a simple size and wealth criterion Chester undoubtedly filled the function of regional capital in the mid-sixteenth century, see Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 15. Clark and Slack define regional capitals in very similar terms, but do not include Chester in their list, see *English Towns in Transition*, 46-61.

¹³ C. B. Phillips and J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (1994), 6; Alldridge, 'Mechanics of decline', 1-4.

¹⁴ R. C. Jarvis, 'The head port of Chester and Liverpool, and its creek and member', *THSLC*, 102 (1950), 69-84; Armour, 'Trade of Chester', 154-165. Rupert H. Morris, *Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns* (Chester, n.d.), 138; S. I. Mitchell, 'Urban markets and retail distribution, 1730-1815', (Unpub., Oxford University D.Phil, 1974), 49.

its economic region although outside its geographical hinterland, Dublin's growth dwarfed Chester and had spectacularly outstripped all English towns except London.¹⁵

Coventry, at its late-medieval high-point shot up the urban rankings from twelfth or nineteenth in 1334 to third in 1377. In 1434 the city's population peaked at 9,824 and the city's position as the dominant regional centre of the Midlands was unchallenged and its reputation as an international centre of cloth production secured. However, the city's pre-eminence was dramatically ended, following a series of economic blows which led to severe demographic contraction between 1500 and 1537. The city's population declined from its high of around 10,000, falling back to 8,500-9,000 by 1500, 7,500 in 1520, and bottoming out at between 4,000 to 5,000 in 1563.¹⁶ Many visitors observed and commented on the decline and in 1539 Leland described the city as 'decayed'. Others speculated on the causes of decline, alternately blaming the high costs of civic pageantry, or the imports of foreign goods especially those which competed with and replaced the famous 'Coventry blue' one of city's staple products.¹⁷ The decline of the economic mainstay left the town severely disadvantaged, poor communications prevented the town capitalising on its position on the border of the fielden and arden (woodland) areas of Warwickshire and inhibited economic recovery via the distributive trades.¹⁸ It was not until the early eighteenth century, after improvements to make the Avon navigable and the development of new industrial specialisms, that Coventry flourished once more.

2.iii. Trade and Manufacturing

The starting-point for any discussion of Chester's economic fortunes must be with the aspect most frequently cited as the principal cause of decline - the silting of the Dee and the port's subsequent decline. H. J. Hewitt suggested the port declined continuously from about 1400, 'after the close of the fourteenth century Chester's importance as a seaport was negligible', and these views have been frequently echoed.¹⁹ Concern with the state of the Dee and the ruin of the haven can be traced back to at least Richard II's reign when relief of the fee farm was granted and it is these pleas for fee farm reductions on which the case for Chester's late-medieval demise is built. The many visitors to the city in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries agreed with this prognosis and frequently commented on how the river's silting had driven trade away.²⁰ However, rumours of the port's demise have been overstated and the sixteenth century witnessed a renaissance in its fortunes, 'a period of modest prosperity for the mercantile community'.²¹

¹⁵ The growth of Dublin had been very rapid and placed the city in the second tier of European cities, from a population of c.10,000 in 1600, the city doubled or trebled by 1660 to 40,000, reached 60,000 by 1700 and trebled in the eighteenth century with 180,000 residents in 1800, Louis M. Cullen, 'The growth of Dublin 1600-1900: character and heritage', in F. H. A. Aalen and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Dublin City and County: From Prehistory to Present* (Dublin, 1992), 251; figures in Maurice Craig, *Dublin 1660-1860* (Dublin, 1980), 21, 84, 178, 34] appendix 5.

¹⁶ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 33-39, 197, 237.

¹⁷ John Nichols, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. 1 (1823), 447-8; Mary Dewar (ed.), *A Discourse of the Commonwealth of This Realm of England* (Folger Shakespeare Library, 1969), 124.

¹⁸ Berger, *Most Necessary Luxuries*, 1-12, 59-90; J. A. Chester, 'Poor relief in Coventry, 1500-1640', (unpub. University of Reading, M.Phil, 1981), 1-35.

¹⁹ H. J. Hewitt, *Medieval Cheshire* (Chetham Society, 88, 1929), 141-2; C. N. Parkinson, *The Rise of the Port of Liverpool* (1952), 18-20; D. Jones, *The Church in Chester, 1300-1500* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 7, 1957), 4; *English Towns in Transition*, 100; Gwyneth M. Haynes-Thomas, 'The port of Chester', *Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 59 (1947), 35-40.

²⁰ BL. Add. 39925, f.7v, 8r-v, Anon., 'A collection of the mayors who have governed the City of Chester'; CCA. CX/3 f.6v, David Rogers, 'A Brevary of some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'; CR469/542 f.10v, 11r, William Aldersey, 'A collection of the maiors who haue gouerned this Cittie of Chester'; E. Rideout, 'The Chester companies and the old quay', *THSLC*, 79 (1928), 141-74; Robert

Chester's overseas trade was conducted with a range of European countries, in particular France and Spain, but the primary focus was Ireland and principally trade with Dublin. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Chester acted as an entrepôt importing a diverse range of goods, in fairly small quantities from Europe, the Baltic, America and other English ports, and re-exporting them to Dublin and the Welsh ports of Beaumaris, Caernarvon and Conway.²² The early seventeenth century was a period of stagnation in continental trade and both imports and exports were at a low ebb. In the 1630s there was a recovery which peaked in the late 1630s, after which trade was cut short by the opening of hostilities in 1642, followed by a rapid revival in 1646 after the cessation of the First Civil War.²³ In spite of the modest scale of the port's trade it was nonetheless the pre-eminent wine port in the north west before the Civil War.

In the eighteenth century the city's overseas trade remained constant in volume, there was some growth in the mid-1710s, but little or no real growth over the whole century and possibly a slight decline at a time when nationally overseas trade was expanding rapidly.²⁴ The city continued to import Spanish and French wines and although this trade was still of some note locally, its position as the pre-eminent wine port of the north west had been usurped by Liverpool. In addition flax, hemp, timber and iron were imported from the Baltic and Scandinavia, skins and fruit from the Mediterranean, tobacco from Virginia and sugar from the West Indies.²⁵ The export trade was conducted on a similarly small scale and in much more limited range of commodities, principally tanned skins to France and Spain. This reflects one of the major inhibiting factors in the port's growth; Cheshire's underdeveloped and agrarian nature limited the range of locally-produced commodities available to export. The one significant area of export growth was lead. Small quantities had been exported throughout the seventeenth century and from the 1690s exports to the Low Countries, France, Spain and Portugal expanded to become a staple commodity until the late-eighteenth century when the trade began to decline.²⁶ Appendix 1, table 1 gives the number of voyages from Chester in the overseas trade and the estimated tonnage. As the table shows, Chester's overseas trade had always been on a modest scale, even during peak periods of activity. A relatively small numbers of ships and tonnage were engaged in the

Davies (ed.), *The Life of Marmaduke Rawdon* (Camden Society, 1st ser., 85, 1863), 167; William Stukeley, 'Iter Boreale', *Itinerarium Curiosum* (2nd edition, 1776), vol.1, 32.

²¹ W. B. Stephens, 'The overseas trade of Chester in the early seventeenth century', *THSLC*, 120 (1968), 23-34; D. M. Woodward, 'The overseas trade of Chester, 1600-1650', *THSLC*, 122 (1970), 25-42; D. M. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester* (Occasional papers in economic and social history, University of Hull, no. 4, 1970), 125; K. P. Wilson, 'The port of Chester in the fifteenth century', *THSLC*, 117 (1966), 1-15.

²² Armour, 'The trade of Chester', 183-217; Stephens, 'The overseas trade', 23; Woodward, 'The overseas trade', 29; T. S. Willan, *The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750* (Manchester, 1938), 105, also suggests that the city was a minor distributive centre for the region; Mitchell, 'Urban markets and retail distribution', 29-32 and table 2.2 for grocery exports to Wales in the eighteenth century; R. Craig, 'Some aspects of the trade and shipping of the river Dee in the eighteenth century', *THSLC*, 114 (1962), 108-115.

²³ Woodward, 'The overseas trade', 29-32, 40. The main import commodity was wine, principally from La Rochelle and Bordeaux, which developed from a relatively low base in the early seventeenth century to a peak in the late 1630s and thereafter fell back in the early 1640s. Conversely the most important element of Chester's continental trade, the export of tanned calf skins was at a low during the 1630s. W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *The Growth of English Overseas Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1969).

²⁴ Craig, 'Some aspects', table 1, 106; P. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982), table v, 36, shows that the tonnage of shipping owned in Chester fell slightly between 1709 and 1792.

²⁵ Armour, 'Trade of Chester', 88-217; Craig, 'Some aspects', 116-18; Daniel Lyson, *Magna Britannia*, 2, pt. 2 (1810), 606. In 1731 the reorganisation of the customs recognised the continued importance of Chester establishing the customs post of wine gauger there, a source of some irritation to Liverpool's customs officers. The Liverpool custom's officers were complaining in 1746 that the wine gauger should be based at Liverpool not Chester because, 'the importation of wine seems to decline at Chester and increase here,' see Rupert C. Jarvis (ed.), *Customs Letter-Books of the Port of Liverpool, 1711-1813* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 6, 1954), 66, letter 193 (19 August 1746).

²⁶ Armour, 'Trade of Chester', 189-194, 206, 208-9 and table on 192; Craig, 'Some aspects', 121-125. Lead was more important as a commodity shipped in the coastal trade to Bristol, Liverpool and London.

overseas trade in the later sixteenth century and this remained the pattern throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Only briefly in the early sixteenth century when Chester accounted for almost 10 per cent of all wine imports nationally did Chester appear as anything more than a port of local significance.²⁷

The mainstay of the port was the Irish trade and it accounts, in large measure, for the continued vitality of the port. In the early part of the seventeenth century the export of cloth grew as a by-product of recovery within the Irish economy. At a low ebb in the early decades of the century the cloth trade improved during the 1620s and expanded considerably in the 1630s, especially after 1632; old drapery exports had increased at least threefold, and new draperies at a similar rate. Chester imported and exported a range of other commodities to Ireland which showed corresponding levels of growth, particularly during the 1630s.²⁸ The Irish trade continued to expand until halted by the outbreak of the Civil War, although it did not recover with the rapidity of the Continental trade at the end of the First Civil War.²⁹ The most dynamic sector of the port's Irish trade in the mid-seventeenth century was the burgeoning livestock-coal trade in which Irish sheep and cattle were imported and coal shipped from the Flintshire coalfield to Dublin.³⁰ The scale of this trade increased dramatically in the 1630s, coal shipments grew by 112 per cent between 1632 and 1639, and livestock imports from under 6,800 head in 1632 to about 18,000 in 1639.³¹ Prior to the growth of this symbiotic trade Chester had for some time been involved in supplying coal to Ireland and Dublin, although Hatcher's suggestion that Chester ships had about half the Dublin coal market in 1640 seems unduly optimistic given the large number of shipments by Scottish owned vessels. Woodward's argument that the coal-livestock trade was of little economic benefit to Chester does appear to be of greater validity - the coal shipped near the pits at Mostyn off the Flintshire coast was effectively out of the commercial orbit of Chester's merchants and livestock imports were dominated by Irish traders.³²

After the disruptions of the Civil Wars, trade began to revive in the 1650s and had fully recovered at the Restoration, although whether the same patterns of control and shipment persisted is unclear. The passing

²⁷ Chester's overseas trade was of a similarly small scale in the fifteenth century see, Wilson, 'Chester in the fifteenth century', 13-14; Jenny Kermode, 'The trade of late medieval Chester, 1500-1550', in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1996), 296.

²⁸ Stephens, 'The overseas trade', 24-30 and tables 1, 4 and 5; Woodward, 'The overseas trade', 34, table 3 and in particular the imports of sheepskins, coneyskins, hides, wool, tallow and herrings illustrate this general pattern. Exports grew slowly and erratically in the 1610s, a solid performance in the early 1620s, a dramatic falling off in 1628 (in line with other provincial ports), a gradual increase in the 1630s, followed by faster growth in 1634 and 1635, and continued expansion until the Civil War. Imports followed a similar pattern of fluctuation, some growth in the 1620s, considerable growth in the 1630s and with a falling off in the early 1640s.

²⁹ Woodward, 'Overseas trade', 39. In February 1642 Henry Mainwaring the customs searcher at Chester complained, 'the Irish trade [is] so much decayed by reason of the rebellion, that the petitioner has not herewith to maintain himself...', *CSPD 1641-43*, 291. The port books for 1648 indicate that the trade continued at a low ebb despite the end of the war.

³⁰ Woodward, 'Overseas trade', 33; D. M. Woodward, 'The Anglo-Irish livestock trade in the seventeenth century', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18, 72 (1973), 489-523.

³¹ Woodward, 'Anglo-Irish livestock trade', Appendix A, Table 3.

³² CCA. ML/1/118 (1596); Woodward, *Elizabethan Chester*, table 6; J. Hatcher, *The History of the British Coal Industry: Before 1700: Towards the Age of Coal* (Oxford, 1993), 133, this point is not referenced and no distinction is made between the city of Chester and the head port and its members, so the comment remains somewhat opaque. In 1640-41 Chester was the third most frequent shipper of coal to Dublin from the Dee Estuary (accounting for 9 of 69 shipments), a tiny figure when compared with shipments made by vessels from Scottish ports, totalling 94 voyages or nearly 50 per cent of all coal shipments, see K. L. Gruffydd, 'The development of the Flintshire coal industry up to 1740' (Unpub., University College of North Wales, Bangor, M.A., 1981), 125, 185, appendix 13; Armour, 'Trade of Chester', 134, argues Welsh 'coal could be regularly shipped from the estuary without passing near or affecting the city'; Woodward, 'Overseas trade', 33 shares this pessimistic view; Woodward, 'Anglo-Irish livestock trade', 508, table 4, suggests this table under-represents the role of Irish traders in the trade.

of the Cattle Acts (1667) which prohibited the import of all Irish livestock appears to have radically altered the pattern of trade, halting one half of the bilateral coal-livestock trade and in all likelihood temporarily disrupting coal shipments from Flintshire to Dublin. Consequently the owners of the Flintshire pits had to quickly find alternatives for exporting their coal and Mostyn colliers were built and Chester ships were utilised.³³ The Flintshire coal trade continued to flourish in the later seventeenth century, surpassing its pre-Civil War height of 4355 chaldrons, it began to decline in the early eighteenth century but only after the early 1720s did its exports to Ireland fall off heavily under pressure from Cumbrian competition. The disruption wrought by the ending of livestock imports seems to have ended Scottish involvement in shipping Flintshire coals to Ireland and gave Chester shipowners the opportunity to become more heavily involved in the Irish coal trade. Thus when the Flintshire coal trade was at its height, boats owned and registered in Chester carried a sizeable proportion of the trade, in some years up to a third by volume.³⁴

A petition of 1702 apprises us of the city's reliance on the Irish trade, '[Chester] doth chiefly depend upon the Trade at sea, and particularly too and from the City of Dublin and other ports of the kingdom of Ireland'. During the eighteenth century the relative importance of the city's Irish trade increased in relation to the overseas trade which remained static and the dominance of Irish goods is revealed in Appendix 1, Table 1. Two trends are noteworthy: first the volume of exports grew from a fairly constant level of around 5,000-7,000 tons in the 1710s almost doubling by the end of the 1780s, followed by a decrease in subsequent years; second, goods exported to Ireland never fell below 70 per cent of all exports by tonnage and reached a high of 97 per cent in 1710. This amply confirms the petition of 1702 and underlines the dominant role of the Irish trade as the mainstay of the port throughout the period.

Alongside the Irish trade, Chester's coastal trade was an equally consistent and important aspect of the port's activities. The volume of coastal trade expanded considerably in the second half of the seventeenth century and continued to increase more slowly in the eighteenth century, see Appendix 1, Table 2.³⁵ Chester received and shipped a wide range of goods from all parts of England acting as an entrepôt for the ports of North Wales and to a lesser extent the north-west coast, and as a minor distributive centre for the region.³⁶ Goods were unloaded at Chester and transported inland, for example the cargo of the *William and John* was unloaded and then delivered by cart to Whitchurch and Oswestry, the Shuttleworth family frequently purchased imported wine and Spanish iron at Chester and then transported it by road to Gawthorpe Hall, and wine was supplied by Chester merchants to Congleton's vintners.³⁷ The main direction of trade was miscellaneous cargoes from London including haberdashery wares and groceries, and similarly variegated

³³ Gruffydd, 'Flintshire coal trade', 126-128; for evidence of Chester's growing involvement see Armour, 'Trade of Chester', 254.

³⁴ Gruffydd, 'Flintshire coal trade', appendix 10 and 24; Hatcher, *British Coal Trade*, table 14.9, 506; If 1680-81 is taken as representative Chester owned ships carried 2102 of a total 6729 chaldrons, or 31 per cent, Scottish ships have disappeared and are no longer listed carrying coal to Ireland from Flintshire.

³⁵ Willan, *Coasting Trade*, 181.

³⁶ Willan, *Coasting Trade*, 105; Woodward, *Elizabethan Chester*, 66.

³⁷ Margaret J. Groombridge, *The Calendar of Chester City Council Minutes 1603-1642* (RSLC, 106, 1956), 64 (28 May 1613); John Harland (ed.), *The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall in the County of Lancashire, 1582-1621* (Chetham Society, 1st ser., 35, 1856), 29; CCRO. W. S. Foulk Aldersey (1609); W. H. Chippindall (ed.), *A Sixteenth Century Survey and Year's Accounts of the Estate of Hornby Castle Lancashire* (Chetham Society, new series, 102, 1939), 115.

cargoes from Liverpool including groceries, tobacco, nails, cotton, wool and tobacco pipes. Chester sent goods to a considerable number of ports, some over long distances such as Rye, but mainly focused on the north-western ports of Whitehaven, Preston, Lancaster, Milnthorpe and Carlisle. Chester sent coastwise a range of commodities - cheese and lead to London, and miscellaneous goods to Liverpool including calamine and lead. The city's most significant role was supplying the Welsh ports of Beaumaris, Caernarvon and Conway with coal, wine, tobacco pipes, shovels, grocery goods, nails, etc., in return for large quantities of slate and agricultural produce including leather, bacon and pork.³⁸

Chester's coasting trade in the mid-sixteenth century was a relatively small-scale affair, see Appendix 1 Table 2, and consistently more goods were shipped coastwise than received, the shortfall in tonnage partially reflecting its role as an entrepôt with overseas and Irish commodities making good the tonnage deficit.³⁹ The trade underwent a modest expansion in the early seventeenth century, disproportionately focused on Chester's outward coastal shipments, followed by a major expansion in tonnage in the mid- to late-seventeenth century covering both directions of the coastal trade.⁴⁰ The eighteenth century witnessed modest growth, both in tonnage and total number of coastwise sailings. When a number of products capable of measurement are examined, the picture of substantial growth in the later seventeenth century is confirmed. The trade in slate between Chester, Beaumaris and Caernarvon grew steadily in the early seventeenth century, rapidly in the mid century and peaked towards the end of the century, followed by a steep decline into the mid-eighteenth century. A similar pattern can be shown in the coal trade with Beaumaris, but in contrast, the cheese trade with London witnessed significant growth in the early eighteenth century and steady continued growth thereafter.⁴¹

Rather than emphasising the failure of Chester's port and its continuous decline from a position as a major national port, the above discussion resituates Chester's trade in a more realistic light. Chester's overseas trade, the number of sailings, the tonnage shipped had never been of a considerable scale in any period of the port's history. According to a detailed listing of customs paid in 1594-95 the 'port of Chester' was twelfth in a total of 18 ports and this position was underlined by the tonnage of ships owned at Chester.⁴² The tonnage does not seem to have improved in the first half of the seventeenth century and

³⁸ Woodward, *Elizabethan Chester*, 68; Willan, *English Coasting Trade*, 49, 77, 98, 100, 105, 108, 109, 181-2, 188; G. H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales 1642-1780* (Oxford, 1993), 129. It has been suggested that in the early to mid-fifteenth century the north Wales ports were 'closely ... meshed into Chester's commercial orbit' see G. Williams, *Renewal and Reformation in Wales c.1415-1642* (Oxford, 1987), 28, 70; Jarvis, *Customs Letter Books*, letter 190 (7 March 1746).

³⁹ The outward journeys also dominate in the London-Chester coastal trade, in 1683 16 ships leave London for Chester, whereas there are 34 shipments from Chester to London, Willan, *Coasting Trade*, appendix 2, 203-6.

⁴⁰ Appendix 1, table 2 is based on estimates of tonnage from taking the number of voyages and multiplying this by Willan's figures for average sizes of coastal craft on the west coast in 1623 and 1749. The figures for 1688-89 are therefore given using both the 1623 and 1749 average shipment size. Taking the more conservative estimate (based on 1623) the coastal trade has more than doubled between 1622-23 and 1688-89. If the larger vessel size is used (1749) the volume of trade has risen over 15 times for the inward trade and over 10 times for the outwards trade.

⁴¹ Gruffydd, 'The Flintshire coal trade', appendix 15 and 16, 187-8. For the cheese trade see Willan, *Coasting Trade*, 86.

⁴² HMC: *Salisbury*, 5 (1894), 393; Woodward, *Elizabethan Chester*, 1. In 1560 Chester possessed only 2 of 76 ships with a capacity of over 100 tons, by 1582 this position was worse, the city no longer possessed any vessels in the larger class, 100 tons and over, and only 13 of the country's 1383 ships of less than 80 tons.

Corfield paints an equally bleak picture for Chester tonnage in the eighteenth century.⁴³ Apart from a brief moment in the early sixteenth century when the port was responsible for 10 per cent of wine imports nationally, the port never approached a volume of trade or a specialism in any particular commodity which made it a port of national importance. Even the mainstay of the port, the Irish trade, was mainly controlled by Dublin or Irish merchants or the goods were carried in Irish boats.⁴⁴ Woodward's conclusions that Chester's image as a port was a mirage as only a small proportion of the trade was carried in Chester boats or controlled by Cestrian merchants and therefore of little local economic benefit, are however unduly pessimistic. First, the later seventeenth century witnessed considerable growth in all branches of the ports trade and Chester's shipowners took control of a larger proportion of the Irish trade. Second, few ports, if any, are entirely dominated by their native merchants and by their very nature ports are 'open' conduits through which people and goods move. Third, the port supported a host of ancillary trades and occupations servicing the maritime economy, such as shipbuilding, labourers at the wharves and carriers to transport goods inland.⁴⁵ Finally, the continued importance of Chester's coastal and Irish trades can be seen in the continued investment in improving the navigation of the Dee and the port's facilities in the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁶

Coventry's economic demise in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century has been linked to the collapse of the cloth trade, exacerbated by the impact of civil and foreign wars, the consequential tax demands of the state and the coincidence of a series of major subsistence crises beginning in 1439. In turn this precipitated a now well-documented demographic collapse which saw Coventry's population fall by over 50 per cent between 1500 and 1563.⁴⁷ Although seventeenth and eighteenth century Coventry remains remarkably under-researched the general consensus is that the city failed to recover from these devastating blows and remained economically marooned until the early to mid-eighteenth century. This characterisation views the early seventeenth century as an extension of the travails of the sixteenth and a prolonged period of stagnation and poverty, 'prosperity did not return to Coventry until late in the seventeenth century'. Only in the early to mid-eighteenth century did the city recover from its 'desolation' and then on the basis of a reinvigorated cloth trade and the introduction of new products, ostensibly watchmaking and ribbon weaving.⁴⁸

⁴³ Stephens, 'Overseas trade', 33-4; Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, table 5. It should be noted the problems with tonnage registration, it is notoriously inaccurate and may reflect the tonnage in port the day the return was made, nonetheless in a return of shipping for 1618 15 vessels (383 tons) were registered at Chester and in 1626 this had fallen to just 9 ships.

⁴⁴ Stephens, 'Overseas trade', 31; Woodward, 'Anglo-Irish livestock trade', table 4; in the sixteenth century the Chester-Dublin trade was heavily concentrated in the hands of Dublin merchants, see Woodward, *Elizabethan Chester*, 26-34.

⁴⁵ Aikin, *Description*, 389, 391; J. H. Hanshall, *The Stranger in Chester: Giving an accurate sketch of its local history with chronological arrangements of the most interesting events connected therewith* (Chester, printed by J. Fletcher, 1816), 57-8; P. Broster, *The Chester Guide* (2nd edition, Chester, 1787), 28; C. Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1947), 179; 'The diary of Roger Comerbach', CS, 3rd ser., 34 (1939), no. 7671; CCA. AB/2 f.192r; AB/4 f.41v; AB/4 f.98r-v; Robert Craig, 'Shipping and shipbuilding in the port of Chester in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century', *THSLC*, 116 (1964), 39-68.

⁴⁶ CCA. AB/3 f.25r, 27v; CCA. P/Cowper, 'Collectanea Devana', vol. 1, 267; Broster, *Chester Guide*, 28; Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (ed. Pat Rogers, 1986), 393.

⁴⁷ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 33-68.

⁴⁸ *VCH: Warwick* 8, 163. The very pessimistic view of the seventeenth century was defined in the Victoria County History Volume for the city, before Phythian-Adams' ground breaking study of medieval Coventry. Following Phythian-Adams description of the crisis of the sixteenth century this pessimistic view of Coventry's fortunes has dominated historians views of Coventry. In spite of the fact that he found evidence of economic growth at the beginning of the seventeenth century, most historians simply 'add-on' the seventeenth century to his

It is easy to see why the economic history of Coventry has been written in this way - there is a considerable body of evidence to indicate continuing problems which were probably exacerbated by population growth fostered by poverty migration.⁴⁹ Constant complaints about the decay or deadness of trade, the poverty of the city, etc. were made by the city authorities and by a number of the guild companies in the early seventeenth century.⁵⁰ Yet such complaints should not simply be accepted at face value and must be tempered by strong evidence for a period of sustained if unspectacular growth in the early seventeenth century. The complaints about the large numbers of poor and their impact on the town, although impossible to ignore were a familiar problem for urban governors everywhere, but this should not be allowed to mask recovery.⁵¹ One problem is the relative absence of reliable, long-term economic indices and for this reason we are forced to fall back onto apprenticeship bindings and guild membership. The figures for guild membership tell a mixed story (see Appendix 2, Graph 1), the Carpenters' Company shows a small rise in the early 1610s and maintains these numbers down to the Civil War, the Cappers decline in the 1610s and the Company remains at a fairly low ebb for the rest of the period until the Civil War. But in the area where Coventry's depression is supposedly centrally located, the textile industries, these demonstrate a remarkable recovery. Both the Drapers' and Broadweavers' Company were accumulating new members by 1600, the weavers grew from a low point in 1600 to successive peaks of just under 30 members in 1615, the upper 30s in the mid-1620s, and this growth continued until 1660.⁵² More importantly there is evidence of rising output, the decennial bindings of weavers apprentices increased without fluctuation after 1590, reaching a height of 188 between 1640 and 1649.⁵³ The creation of the silk weavers company in 1627 further underlines the revival of Coventry's textile trades and the desire of the corporation to regulate this new sector of the economy.⁵⁴ Where it is possible to reconstruct their membership, between 1650 and 1680, it is evident that this sector of the textile trades was growing rapidly (see Appendix 1, Graph 1). From a base of 31 masters in 1650 the silk weavers company grew to 136 masters in 1679, more than quadrupling in the space of 30 years.

The impression of a limited recovery focused on the cloth trades is confirmed by more anecdotal evidence, in 1615 the Leet commented on the buoyancy of the textile trades and a consequent labour shortage, 'Whereas, clothinge in this Cittye (thanks be given to God) is now verie good, and that the

description of the sixteenth, see R. Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries*, 68; Lobel, *Atlas*, 12; Hughes, *Politics and Society*, 12-6; Chester, 'Poor relief in Coventry', 1-35. The notable exception to this is Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 281 footnote 2.

⁴⁹ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 237 footnote 27, a dearth census taken in 1587 shows that the town's population had recovered to 6502 and the Leet was complaining about the poor people who 'more and more resort to this Citie'; in 1588, 1603, 1616, 1622 and 1624 by-laws against strangers settling were passed or restated, see Chester, 'Poor relief in Coventry', 180, 274; BL. Add. 11364 f.15v, Anon., 'Annals of Coyentry 1278-1703', orders to remove 'Loose and unthrifty persons', dated 1625.

⁵⁰ In 1598 the city is described as 'much decayed, and greatly pestered with poor', *HMC: Salisbury*, 9 (1899), 486 letter from the Mayor to the Earl of Essex; *CSPD 1603-10*, 7 October 1609, 548, the Commissioners for aid at Coventry explain the delay in their proceedings and sent £42 which was all that they have gathered in this 'poor decayed city'; the clothiers company seem to have been particularly affected by the import of Gloucestershire cloths into the city, making similar complaints in 1608, W. G. Fretton, 'The memorials of the Fullers Guild', *TBAS*, 8 (1881), 27; *CSPD 1619-23*, 413; *APC*, 1598-9, 377.

⁵¹ Chester, 'Poor relief in Coventry', 46 argues the city elite were overtaken by the problems of the poor on a new scale.

⁵² See also Berger, *Most Necessary Luxuries*, 80, figure 2.2.

⁵³ CRO. Acc.100/6, 'Broadweavers' and Clothiers' Apprenticeship Indentures, 1550 - 1700'.

⁵⁴ Frank Warner, *The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom. Its Origin and Development* (1921), 107; Marie B. Rowlands, *The West Midlands from AD 1000* (1987), 148, suggests the silk weavers guild was established as early as 1610, but there is no evidence to support this.

clothiers of this Citie are very much hyndered by reason that theyre clothes are not sufficiently milled, thicked and burlled to their content. Enacted that any strangers being Walkers or Fullers may resort to this City and work without molestation'.⁵⁵ This upturn in the cloth trade benefited the fullers and the guild expanded to accommodate new members.⁵⁶ Perhaps most interestingly, an area generally attested as a key factor in Coventry's decline was experiencing a resurgence - Coventry blue. The Court Leet claimed in 1606 that the trade, 'hath of late and is present greatly growne out of request' and that it was 'very necessary and profitable' for both its distributors and the poor who were employed in its production.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, by the mid-seventeenth century Coventry had slipped down the urban hierarchy, falling from third to sixteenth place by the 1670s, but the catalyst for this slide down the urban rankings was most likely the sixteenth century crisis.⁵⁸ In the early seventeenth century the town had undergone a period of sustained growth, although not all sectors shared in this resurgence and the general problem of migration continued to trouble the town's authorities. Complaints of decay and poverty need to be treated with some caution, however, as both the claims of the clothiers and the council were rooted in self-interest.⁵⁹ Coventry in the first half of the seventeenth century cannot be described as stagnating or in decline - the severe crisis of the sixteenth century had bottomed out and the economy was showing signs of a healthy recovery, especially in particular areas of the textile trade.

The early eighteenth century is generally thought to have witnessed the resurgence of the city's fortunes when its fame as a textile centre was once again secured.⁶⁰ The silk weaving industry established successfully by the 1620s grew and the city became famed once more as a centre of textile production.⁶¹ Little is known about the fortunes of silk weaving until the 1650s when the records of the company demonstrate the spectacular growth of the trade. Warner suggests there was possibly a recession in 1672, however, the rapid growth of the company in this period would suggest the opposite, and the eighteenth century saw large numbers of silk weavers admitted to the city's freedom, a strong hint at the importance of silk weaving to the city's economy.⁶² By 1770 the city was renowned as a centre of silk ribbon production

⁵⁵ CRO. BA/E/F/37/2, 77, 'Leet Book II, 1587-1834'; see also Fretton, 'Memorials', 27.

⁵⁶ CRO. Acc.30/1, f.16r, 'Walkers and Fullers Order Book, 1475-1799'. On 24 February 1629 the Fullers Company asked the vestry committee of St Michael's church for the return of the pews they had formerly occupied because of 'they being increased in the number of their company'.

⁵⁷ CRO. BA/E/F/37/2, 40.

⁵⁸ Based on a comparison of the number of hearths taxed in Coventry, see W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (1967) 177; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 163; Patten, *English Towns*, table 2, 42.

⁵⁹ Berger, *Most Necessary Luxuries*, 91-118, argues that the Mercers' guild was essentially moribund. The Council were confronted with a major poor relief problem and were keen to keep taxation levels down as much as possible and therefore emphasised the city's poverty to government tax collectors. The Clothiers and Broadweavers company were involved in a long running dispute with the clothworkers and dyers over the importing, and dressing and finishing of Gloucestershire cloths in the city. The Clothiers and Broadweavers aimed to stop these imports and force the clothworkers and dyers only to finish Coventry made clothes. See Fretton, 'Memorials', 27; *CSPD*, 1619-1623, 413; *CSPD* 1627-1628, 203; In the early 1640s this conflict became more intense see *VCH: Warwickshire* 2, 255.

⁶⁰ James Brome, *Travels Over England, Scotland and Wales* (1707), 63; D. Defoe, *The Compleat English Tradesman*, 2 (1727), 61; Defoe, *Tour*, 404; Mark Wenger (ed.), *The English Travels of Sir John Percival and William Byrd II* (Columbia, 1989), 161; 'England Displayed in 1769', in D. J. H. Smith (ed.), *Coventry Through the Ages* (Coventry Historical Association, 1969), 12-3; John Macky, *A Journey Through England*, 2, (1724) 161; Thomas Pennant, *Journey from Chester to London* (1782), 141-2; Malachy Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, 2 (1751), 835.

⁶¹ However it was in the period between 1765 and 1857 that Coventry silk weaving was the dominant industry, *VCH: Warwick* 8, 168.

⁶² F. Warner, *Silk Industry*, 107, the order cited would seem to indicate, not a recession, but in fact a shortage of suitable labour. In 1733 there were 73 admissions to the freedom, 38 of whom were silk weavers, in 1734 there were 571 admissions, 82 were silk weavers, in 1747 71 admissions, 19 of which were silk weavers, see *VCH: Warwick* 8, 168.

and the trade was controlled by a number of large-scale silk manufacturers, when Thomas Pennant visited the city in 1782 he estimated that about 10,000 people in Coventry and its environs were employed in the trade.⁶³ The city also supported other new textile products and developed a specialism in the lighter and cheaper woollen cloths, especially shalloons and tammies which were introduced from Picardy.⁶⁴ However, this general picture of economic buoyancy can be misleading. First, traditional areas of the textile trade continued to contract and throughout the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century was prone to periodic crises, in the early 1670s, mid-1680s and first decades of the eighteenth century.⁶⁵ Second, the silk weaving trade was punctuated by periods of very sharp depressions in the 1720s and 1780s and characterised by a domestic system which left the city's journeymen 'wretchedly poor'.⁶⁶ The city was not simply a textile centre and boasted a range of other manufacturing trades such as glass-, clog- and glove-making and in the early 1740s the manufacturers producing silver- and gold-wire thread and lace were described as 'very much to the benefit of the City and to the advantage and maintenance of many families'.⁶⁷ The watch- and clockmaking trades began to first appear in the later seventeenth century and were to become one of Coventry's economic mainstays in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁸

Although both Chester and Coventry in the later sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century may seem superficially to fit the current historiographical framework, their economies were far from in crisis. Chester's maritime economy prospered in the sixteenth century, especially in the second half of the century, the subsequent mini-boom of the 1630s and the continued, if modest, growth, of the coastal and Irish trades in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, belies the pessimistic accounts of Chester's commercial performance. In concert with many other provincial ports the generally gloomy prognosis offered for the later sixteenth century is misleading and as Tittler's work on Poole emphasises that rather than consider all ports together there is a need to recognise their 'greater economic individuality'.⁶⁹ By the 1710s Chester's position as the most important port in the coastal trade of the north west had been usurped by Liverpool and the tripling of sugar and tobacco imports at Liverpool between 1713 and the mid century, established Liverpool as the leading port of the region.⁷⁰ Nevertheless Chester continued to play a

⁶³ *Hewitt's Journal*, 32. In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century the City was renowned for making cheaper, black ribbons, *pace* Defoe, however R. F. Prosser, 'Coventry a study in urban continuity' (Unpub., Birmingham University M.A., 1955), suggests that the city was noted for the quality of its ribbons contrary to Defoe's comment. However, it is probable that the manufacture of silk ribbons did not emerge until after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes when French Huguenot refugees from Lyons and Tours settled in Coventry. Pennant, *Journey*, 142. The reason for the very large numbers employed relates to the use of looms that only weave one breadth at a time, see Warner, *Silk Industry*, 109, another visitor commented that 'the greatest part of the poor both of the town itself and of the neighbouring villages' were employed making ribbons, 'A Northern Tour, 1768', *HMC: Verulam*, 241; *Jopson's Coventry Mercury*, 13 Jan. 1746.

⁶⁴ Defoe, *Tour*, 404 describes the manufacturing of tammies as the town's 'chief employ'; tammies were strongly associated with the city and often referred to as 'Coventry ware', Defoe, *Complete*, 2, 61; Postlethwayt, *Universal Directory*, 2, 835.

⁶⁵ CRO Acc.34/3, 27, 'The Broadweavers' Company Order Book', on 14 November 1687 described trade as 'dead'; BL. Harl. 7017 f.290r, Humfrey Wanley, 'Some Account of the City of Coventry', for 1688; *VCH: Warwickshire* 2, 255; William Basnett, *Sermon at the Warwickshire Meeting November 25 1679* (printed by T. Bassett, 1680).

⁶⁶ *The Case of the Weavers of Coventry* [1720?]; CRO. Acc.201 unfol., 'John Whittingham's Journal', entries for 7 Jan. 1775, 27 Jan. 1776; Lobel, *Atlas*, 12; CRO. Acc.15/2, f.302r, 318v, 322v, 'The Mercers' Company Minute Book, 1602-1760'.

⁶⁷ *Commons Journal*, 1742, 404.

⁶⁸ BL. Harl. 7017 f.291v-292r; *Moments in Time: The History of the Coventry Watch Industry*, vol. 1 (Coventry Watch Museum Project Ltd, 1995), 5; B. Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquities* (1870), 363-4; *VCH: Warwickshire* 2, 242.

⁶⁹ Robert Tittler, 'The vitality of an Elizabethan port: the economy of Poole, c.1550-1600', *Southern History*, 7 (1985), 95-113.

⁷⁰ Willan, *Coasting Trade*, Appendix 2, Appendix 7; Paul G. E. Clemens, 'The rise of Liverpool, 1665-1750', *EcHR*, 2nd ser., 29 (1976), 212-22.

significant role as a distributive centre and entrepôt for North Wales and Cheshire.⁷¹ Although many tourists and historians propose that Coventry's recovery was delayed until the early eighteenth century, this consensus is misleading. The first half of the seventeenth century should not be interpreted as a continuation of the travails of the sixteenth century and across the textile industry, Coventry blue, fulling and weaving there were indications of increased demand and growing employment opportunities. The later seventeenth century rather than being a period of unalloyed success witnessed depressions and contraction in the broadweaving trade, one area of particularly strong growth prior to 1660. In the eighteenth century new trades such as tammy and silk ribbon weaving emerged as the dynamic forces of the city's economy. However, the nature of the domestic system in the silk weaving industry created a small elite of merchant silk weavers and a dependent workforce of small masters and a large pool of journeymen, who in periods of trade depression such as the 1720s and 1780s were viciously impoverished.

2.iv. *The Service Economy*

The role of servicing their hinterland has been crucial to all towns throughout history and none could survive without trading with the surrounding countryside. Much of the discussion of the urban crisis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tacitly downplays the role of servicing and marketing, instead focusing on the decline of industry, such as cloth-making, the dominance of the port of London in overseas trade and the troubled years of the 1590s, 1600s and later 1620s when maritime trade was severely disrupted by war. It is widely accepted that the service economy in towns was underdeveloped and only began to emerge from the later sixteenth century and was therefore unable to compensate for the loss of traditional forms of employment or provide the necessary economic support to growing urban populations. However, this model obscures the importance of the 'basic services' to the urban economy and their vital role in the relationship between the town and countryside. The nature of local topography, the state of roads and the limited transport facilities produced towns with relatively small hinterlands, averaging about seven miles, and very few with areas of unrivalled influence.⁷² The relatively small size of most rural hinterlands enabled small towns to provide a range of services essential to the rural population: markets for the exchange of agricultural produce, markets and shops to purchase a range of goods unavailable in the countryside, and legal institutions and services to protect property rights and insure the smooth transfer or inheritance of property. However, the sixteenth to eighteenth century witnessed the rise of regional markets, a process which favoured larger towns as they increased their functional dominance.⁷³

⁷¹ At the end of the seventeenth century a local observer with experience of river navigation and trade commented on the continued role of Chester as a distributive centre 'for the River to Manchester is very capable of being made Navigable at a very small charge. And this would encourage all tradesmen (in Manchester, Stockport, Macclesfield, Congleton, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, some part of Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire) to come to Liverpool and buy their goods, instead of going to Chester, Bristol, or London;...', see Thomas Heywood (ed.), *The Norris Papers*, (Chetham Society, 1st ser., 9, 1846), letter 18 (8 Jan 1697); for comments on the author see T. S. Willan, *The Navigation of the River Weaver in the Eighteenth Century*, (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 3, 1951), 13, 43-4.

⁷² The figure of seven miles is taken from Alan Everitt, 'The market towns', in Clark, *Early Modern Town*, 193. Seven miles was the average distance travelled to any market in England in Wales, for the considerable variation of distances on the ground see table 8.1; S. H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull, 1993), 61-3; Joyce Young's, *Sixteenth Century England* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 70; M. Noble, 'Growth and development in a regional urban system: the country towns of eastern Yorkshire, 1700-1850', *UHYB* (1987), 3.

⁷³ Noble, 'Growth and development', 9-13; Alan Everitt, 'The Banburys of England', *UHYB* (1974), 35-6.

Chester's pre-eminent role and accumulation of functions as a regional capital fostered the city's service and retail sectors. From the sixteenth century if not earlier, the city was the major distributive centre of the north west, 'principally distinguished as a sort of provincial metropolis, not only to its own county, but to the neighbouring counties of North Wales' and its markets were 'well supplied with all articles of both necessity and luxury'.⁷⁴ Chester's mercers and drapers had a substantial trade among the gentry of North Wales, Sir William Brereton shopped in Chester in the 1530s and this trade expanded as the road communication with North Wales improved.⁷⁵ The gentry from across the north west utilised Chester's shops and markets from an early date - the Cheshire gentry were frequent visitors to the town's shops and luxury craftsmen and families from Lancashire included the Shuttleworths and Derby's, while the ninth Earl of Derby owed the tradesmen of Chester £265 in 1677.⁷⁶ By the mid-eighteenth century a central high-class shopping centre had evolved on the south side of Eastgate Street and Row to cater for these wealthy clients.⁷⁷ However, the city was not only a purveyor of luxury goods and a retail centre for the gentry, it also catered for the less wealthy inhabitants of the region and built its reputation partly on the supply of everyday items more cheaply than other towns in the north west.⁷⁸ There was also an active second-hand clothing and linen market conducted in the town's inns and fuelled partially by theft.⁷⁹ Chester's weekly markets and annual fairs attracted considerable numbers of people from a wide area - as far afield as London, Bristol, Pendleton and North Wales.⁸⁰ The volume of trade generated by the annual fairs, and in particular the sale of Irish linen cloth both retail and wholesale, led the Cathedral's Dean and Chapter to build linen warehouses for the Irish traders in 1755 and Corporation to build the Linen Exchange with 111 shops in 1778.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Aikin, *Description*, 388. Although some visitors were not quite so impressed by Chester's shops, 'you hardly see any shops, and those soe darke and dull, that they are nott worth the seeinge', see Robert Davies (ed.), *The Life of Marmaduke Rawdon of York* (Camden Society, 1st ser., 85, 1863), 167.

⁷⁵ E. W. Ives (ed.), *Letters and Accounts of William Brereton of Malpas* (RSLC, 116, 1976), 241; Joseph C. Bridge (ed.), 'The diary of Nehemiah Griffith, Esq., of Rhual, Mold, for the year 1715', *JAAHSCNW*, 15 (1909), 29, 31, 33, 35, 38, 44; E. A. Lewis, *The Welsh Port Books 1550-1603* (Cymmrodorion Record Series, 12, 1927), xxxvii; Ian Mitchell, 'The development of urban retailing 1700-1815, in Clark, *Transformation*, 262, 276, one shopkeeper even thought it worthwhile advertising for a Welsh speaking apprentice, *Chester Chronicle*, 14 August 1775, quoted in Mitchell.

⁷⁶ See n.37; B. Coward, *The Stanleys: Lord Stanley and the Earls of Derby 1385-1672: The Origins of a Landowning Family* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 30, 1983), appendix B, 209-212; 'Sir Willoughby Aston's Diary', *CS*, 3rd ser., 24 (1927), no. 5593, no.10795, no.10800; CCA. AB/3, f.224v-225v, 226v.

⁷⁷ CCA. CR63/2/133, Sketch plan of Eastgate Street by Peter Broster, c.1754; S. I. Mitchell, 'Retailing in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Cheshire', *THSLC*, 130 (1981), 46; Mitchell, 'Development of urban retailing', 271 shows that Chester paid around 65 per cent of the total shop tax for Cheshire and that within Chester Eastgate ward was the most highly rated; Stobart, 'Shopping streets', 3-21.

⁷⁸ Aikin, *Description*, 388; Mrs Bridget Richmond informs us that her brother had a wider and cheaper choice of pots and pans at Chester, 'where he hath ym [them] cheaper, & of wt [what] make he will', Richard Trappes-Lomax (ed.), *The Diary and Letter Book of the Reverend Thomas Brockbank 1671-1709* (Chetham Society, n.s., 89, 1930), letter 199 (2 April 1701); Chester's shoemakers all had retail premises and often carried quite large stocks of shoes and boots see, D. M. Woodward, 'The Chester leather industry, 1558-1625', *THSLC*, 119 (1967), 75-6.

⁷⁹ CCA. QSF/17 f.16r; Groombridge, *Calendar*, 7; Garthine Walker, 'Women, theft and the world of stolen goods' in Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker (eds.), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (1994), 92-3; CCA. QSE/15/106, Quarter Sessions Examination, 1765, theft from a stallholder at the fair of clothes that were then sold by a second hand clothes dealer in Northgate Street.

⁸⁰ For the large crowds see REED: *Chester*, 226, 297-8, 313, 318; Thomas Heywood (ed.), *The Norris Papers*, (Chetham Society, 9, 1846), 128; *Prescott's Diary I and II*, 21 and 448 respectively. Traders and customers came from as far afield as Ashton, London, Bristol, Kirkham and Rhual near Mold see Bridge, 'The diary of Nehemiah Griffith', 35; Joan Wilkinson (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Langton, Flax Merchant of Kirkham, 1771-1778* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 38, 1994), 131-2; William Sachse (ed.), *The Dairy of Roger Lowe of Ashton in Makerfield* (Yale, 1938), 99-100, 104, 112, 118; PRO. Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer Paper Pleadings, 16/133; Mitchell, 'The development of urban retailing', 267-8; Ives, *Brereton's Letters and Accounts*, 235-6. The 'pull' of Chester's fairs was considerable and their geographical hinterland large, from toll books it is possible to show where the purchasers of horses at the fairs originated: 42.5 per cent came from Cheshire and the remaining 57.5 per cent came from Yorkshire and the three northwest counties, see Peter Edwards, *The Horse Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1988), 30.

⁸¹ John Livesey, 'Taporley in 1755', *THSLC*, 64 (1913), 307; Broster, *Chester Guide*, 25.

Coventry was well-served with shops, markets and fairs, but in spite of Camden's claim Coventry's historic dominance of the region was limited: the administrative and social capital of the county was Warwick; the market towns of the south-west were orientated towards Worcester and the Severn; the main area of industrial development was to the west of the city in the prosperous iron-smelting region covering north-west Warwickshire and focused on Birmingham as its marketing and credit centre. The city exercised its strongest pull over the more densely populated, but under-urbanised and poorer north, and the east and south of the county.⁸² The city's fairs and markets certainly attracted traders and customers from all parts of the county - Ezekias Skarning of Wolvey regularly attended the city's markets - and from outside the region, William Caplyn steward to Sir Thomas Temple attend the city's cattle market. But Coventry failed to compete with the smaller markets of Warwick, Stratford, Alcester and Bidford-on-Avon in supplying the basic food needs of the rapidly growing Arden area.⁸³ There is some evidence of the city attracting customers from Warwick and its environs, and it possibly dominated the local market for luxury goods in the early seventeenth century, although the rapid growth of Birmingham in the eighteenth century undermined this position.⁸⁴

Coventry was from an early date situated at a nodal point on the road routes passing through the county. The town was centrally placed on the major north-south routes connecting London, the East Midlands, Yorkshire, Shrewsbury and Wales, the North West and Ireland, via Chester.⁸⁵ The town is frequently mentioned in the brokerage books of Southampton during the later middle ages and was situated on an

⁸² W. Camden, *Britannia* (1610), 567; Berger, *Most Necessary Luxuries*, 86 comments on its, 'impressive array of well outfitted shops'; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 30; Ann Hughes, 'Warwickshire on the eve of the Civil War: A county community?', *Midland History*, 7 (1982), 44-5; Philip Styles, 'The social structure of Kineton Hundred in the reign of Charles II', *TBAS*, 78 (1962), 96-117; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 21-30; Coventry's reputation as a 'second Geneva' or 'Fanatick town' seems to have put the local gentry off, Coventry unlike many other cities of a similar size had very few resident gentry, George Ornsby (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Cosin*, pt. 1 (Surtees Society, 102, 1868), 66, letter 39; P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967), 35; H. Robinson (ed.), *The Zurich Letters 1558-1579* (Parker Society, 1, 1842), 86-7; J. J. Hurwich, "'A Fanatick Town': The political influence of dissenters in Coventry, 1660-1720", *Midland History*, 4 (1977-8), 17-21; Sir Thomas Wilkin (1662), in Smith, *Coventry Through the Ages*, 8; *Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, 114.

⁸³ Hughes, 'A county community?', 45 and n.20, Skarning went as frequently to markets at Leicester and Hinckley as those of Coventry; Huntingdon Library, San Marino, Temple Correspondence, Box 4, Letter from William Chaplyn to Sir Thomas Temple (2 June 1619), I would like to thank Professor Michael Reed for allowing me to use his transcripts of the Temple Correspondence; M. J. Kingman, 'Markets and marketing in Tudor Warwickshire: the evidence of John Fisher of Warwick and the crisis of 1586-7', *Warwickshire History*, 4 (1978), 16-24; Thomas Kemp (ed.), *The Book of John Fisher 1580-1588* (Warwick, n.d.), 81; *Jopson's Coventry Mercury*, no. 1628 (26 October 1772). The city had six principal fairs: one between 21 and 23 October; two new fairs granted in 1621 on 21 April and 16 August; the Palm Sunday fair of coopers wares; the Great Fair (on Corpus Christi); and one on the second Friday after Ash Wednesday. By 1792 the number of fairs had been reduced to three economically active ones, the first three above. By 1792 the Great Fair had become largely entertainment based rather than economic although it continued to draw very large crowds, see Kilmartin 'Popular rejoicing'. There were also regular weekly markets such as the Friday market and the horse market held nine times per annum, see *VCH: Warwick* 8, 165-6.

⁸⁴ Kemp, *John Fisher's Book*, 41, 111-3. Interestingly an examination of Richard Cam by Warwick magistrates reveals that he sold six gold buttons in Coventry for 30s, this suggests Coventry was more involved in the luxury trade because Cam who was staying in Birmingham specifically rode to Coventry to sell the buttons. However, local gentlemen complained they were unable to buy the types of fruit and spices they wanted in the City, see letter from Francis Beaumont to Lady Newdigate Bedworth, 'If Coventree could have afforded either pomegranates or Lemmons I had sent them unto my friend, but what I could get that I send', Lady Newdigate-Newdegate (ed.), *Gossip From a Muniment Room* (1897), 97, dated 8 July (16097). The Newdigate family of Arbury Hall, patronised Nuneaton far more regularly than Coventry see, Eileen Gooder, *The Squire of Arbury* (Coventry and Warwickshire Pamphlet, 16, 1990), 60, 138, 151, 52, 58, 62 endnote 5, 181. The Willoughby's of Wollaton Hall, near Nottingham, bought fruit and spices in the city, but also shopped in Birmingham and other Midland towns see, *HMC: Middleton Manuscripts*, 69 (1911), 376, 380.

⁸⁵ William Smith's map of Warwickshire (1603) emphasises the nodal importance of Coventry and that the great highway running from London, through Daventry to Coventry, Coleshill, Lichfield and Chester is clearly shown, see P. D. A. Harvey and Harry Thorpe (eds.), *The Printed Maps of Warwickshire 1576-1900* (Warwick: Warwickshire County Council and Birmingham University, 1959), 6. Robert Morden's map (1695) further emphasises the importance of Coventry, the road from London splits at Coventry and feeds three routes to Wales, the North West and Yorkshire, see J. B. Harley (ed.), *The County Maps From William Camden's Britannia 1695*, by Robert Morden (Facsimile reprint, Newton Abbot, 1972), maps of England and Warwickshire; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 34.

inland trade route connecting Kendal with the southern ports.⁸⁶ From the north west came imported lamb-skins and clipped wool from Ireland en route for London. One of the major drove roads from North Wales passed through the city, and was known as the 'Welsh road', and travelling in the opposite direction local goods were carried to Chester by Coventry carters.⁸⁷ The city was not only situated nodally on the main north-south road network, by the sixteenth century it was nodally located on the road network linking all of Warwickshire's towns.⁸⁸ Chester shared a role as a thoroughfare town, situated on the road network linking London and Dublin, via either Holyhead or Hilbre and Parkgate. However the direct, main north-south route passed close by at Warrington, not through Chester. Ogilby's and Morden's maps also emphasises the city's strategic position on the national road network and as a hub for a series of secondary roads radiating to Wrexham, Warrington and Shrewsbury.⁸⁹

Both cities benefited from their position as hubs in the national and local road network. Chester was frequently described as the 'key to Ireland' and played a significant part in the control of Ireland. A staging post for the dispatch and supply of troops especially in the periods of major crisis, as a conduit for news, as a refuge for the large numbers of refugees who fled Ireland during rebellion in the 1640s and despite the occasional problem of disorderly troops it was very lucrative.⁹⁰ Alldridge suggests the Treaty of Limerick (1691) 'removed one of the City's best customers', this is overly-pessimistic as troop embarkation and supply to Ireland continued after the Treaty was signed.⁹¹ In 1635 Coventry was described as a 'great thoroughfare town', on the main road to Chester and Ireland, Coventry was also heavily involved in the state's policy of conquest, as a post town and witnessing large troop movements.⁹² From 1657 both towns

⁸⁶ O. Coleman (ed.), *The Brokerage Book of Southampton, 1443-1444*, 2 (Southampton Record Series, 6, 1961), xxxiv, 323-4; W. G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: King Henry's England, 1500-1547* (1976), 202; B. C. Jones, 'Westmorland packhorse-men in Southampton', *Transactions of the Cumberland, Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 49 (1960), 65-84.

⁸⁷ K. P. Wilson, 'The port of Chester', 5, 15; Kermode, 'Trade of medieval Chester', 292, 294; Eileen Gooder, *Coventry's Town Wall* (1969), 3; one of the main drove roads passed through Kenilworth and Southam, this route must have passed through Coventry because the only road access to Kenilworth from North Wales is via Coventry, see K. J. Bonser, *The Drovers, Who They Were and Where They Went: An Epic of the English Countryside* (1970), 193-5.

⁸⁸ Harvey and Thorpe, *Printed Maps of Warwickshire*, 6, 74, plate 2 William Smith's 1603 map of Warwickshire; Harley, *The County Maps From Camden's Britannia 1695*, Warwickshire map. Comparing the two maps, there are only minor differences, in the later map Coventry now has a direct road link to Sutton Coldfield. Berger, *Most Necessary Luxuries*, 59-90, argues Coventry's continued stagnation in the seventeenth century was partially a result of the failure of the distributive sector to foster recovery and facilitate a revival based on marketing and retail. Berger's argument assumes Coventry was at some point the dominant supplier of luxury goods within the county and subsequent changes in the county road network meant other Warwickshire towns became competitors to Coventry. All the cartographic evidence from the mid-sixteenth century onwards points to an already fully formed road network within and between Warwickshire's towns and Coventry's nodal position in the road links did not change.

⁸⁹ J. B. Harley, 'Ogilby and Collins: Cheshire by road and sea', *Cheshire Round*, 1/7 (1967), 213; Harley, *The County Maps From Camden's Britannia 1695*, Cheshire map; G. W. Place, 'Parkgate and the Royal yachts: Passenger traffic between the North-West and Dublin in the eighteenth century', *THSLC*, 138 (1989), 67-83.

⁹⁰ BL. Harl. 1989 f.6v, Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who haue gouerned this Citie of Chester'; Davies, *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon*, 167; M. Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1601-1714* (1996), 146; *HMC: Salisbury Manuscripts*, 9 (1899), 205; Jorevin de Rocheford, 'Description of England and Ireland in the seventeenth century' in Francis Grose and Thomas Astle (eds.), *The Antiquarian Repertory*, 4 (1809), 586. For soldiers disembarking for Ireland see, BL. Add. 39925 f.22r-23v, 24r, 25r, 26r, 27r; CCA. CR60/83 f.16r-18r, 20v, George Bellin, 'Manuscript list of Chester mayors and historical events, 1300-1620'; *HMC: Fifth Report* (1876), 349-50; BL. Harl. 2125, f.169v, Randle Holme(?), 'The Antiquity of the Anciente and Famous Cittye of Chester'; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 255; 'Roger Comerbach's diary', no.7544. Frequently Chester Corporation paid for boats, food, etc., for the troops and was reimbursed by the Treasury and the names of Chester merchants appear frequently among those demanding payment, e.g. Thomas Prenton, master of *The Grace of Chester*, paid to transport troops to Ireland, *HMC: Fifth Report*, 350, see also, *CSPD 1598-1601*, 94, 157. Large sums of money were involved in the supply and transportation of troops such as £1405 18s 1d paid out by the Corporation for keeping four troops of horse in Chester for 28 days in January 1642, *HMC: Fifth Report*, 351.

⁹¹ Alldridge, 'Mechanics of decline', 4; Joseph Taylor, 'Journey from Chester and Liverpool in 1705', *CS*, 10 (1914), no. 2249 saw troops continuing to disembark for Ireland from Chester.

⁹² CRO. BA/H/K/2/1, unfoliated, 'Book of Matters Touching Ship Money, 1635-77'; *HMC: Salisbury*, 9, 205, 486.

were linked by a national stagecoach system and Chester was the penultimate staging post en route to Dublin.⁹³ At times Chester was so busy with travellers for Ireland and London that the coach services were fully booked for weeks in advance and passengers landing in North Wales and the Wirral also fed back into the city to utilise the inns and coach services.⁹⁴

The economies of Chester and Coventry benefited from their position within land and river communication networks. This is especially true of Chester and its role as a conduit for news, goods, people and soldiers to and from Ireland helps explain the vigorous and early development of its service economy. Travellers and carriers provided a constant source of business to a city's service economy, the shoeing of horses was an essential service and for this reason smithies were often located near the city's gates where they could attract business. Alongside smithies there was a host of other basic service functions such as guest houses or inns and the sale of horse feed. The dissolution of the monasteries is thought to have reduced the amount of travellers and pilgrim visitors and thus adversely affected the urban service economy. Given the common practice of monastic shelter, the dissolution, conversely, may have provided a boost to urban inns and guest houses, as commercial travels such as carriers no longer had any choice about where to stay.⁹⁵ Towns were crucial staging posts in inland transportation networks which from 1637 witnessed significant growth both in the number of services and the volume of goods transported.⁹⁶

Beyond the essential service functions of marketing and retail, second-rank towns performed a multiplicity of other more specialised service functions providing legal, financial and medical services, and as educational centres. These activities were essential to the urban economy as they brought large numbers of people to a town who then utilised other services, inns, shops, etc. Urban governors were acutely aware of the value of holding county courts and the inhabitants of Dorchester blamed the temporary removal of the

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Chester dominated the passenger trade with Ireland. There were three potential points to embark for Ireland from the north west coast: Beaumaris, Holyhead and Neston/Parkgate in the Dee estuary. Chester's nodal position in both road and river links allowed the city to act as the conduit for visitors travelling to and from Ireland; because of the uncertainty of sailings due to the tide and wind, visitors for Ireland travelled first to Chester and found out where the next boat was to sail from. Lord Lieutenants travelling through Chester en-route to Beaumaris see, CCA. CR60/83, f.25r; BL. Add. 39925, f.23v. Jorevin Rocheford missed the packet boat for Ireland, so travelled on a merchant ship to Anglesey and then caught the Holyhead boat, see his 'Description of England', 587 (c.1672); John Comerbach came to Chester to travel to Ireland, 31 August 1692, intending to travel from Holyhead but was persuaded by Father Street to wait for the wind and go from Neston and on 4 September departs for Neston, see 'Roger Comerbach's Diary', no. 7631; Michael Harrison going to Ireland, arrived in Chester and heard the packets had arrived in Neston, but for some reason he goes to Ireland from Holyhead (presumably he thinks he will miss the packet by the time he gets to Neston?), CSPD 1700-02, 51-3, 75; see also Margaret Lady Verney (ed.), *Verney Letters of the Eighteenth Century* (1928), 1, 193.

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Lord Herbert arrived in Chester from Ireland to discover the coach was fully booked for two weeks, W. J. Smith (ed.), *The Herbert Correspondence* (University of Wales, History and Law series, 21, 1968), no. 629 (18 October 1687); Captain Therry who sailed from Dublin in a Welsh collier, landed at Masham and travelled to Chester for the stagecoach to London, CSPD 1700-1702, 180; Visitors could access Neston and Parkgate very easily either by boat down the Dee or along the Chester High Road to Parkgate, see Henry Hastings (1636) in D. M. Palliser, *Chester 1066-1971: Contemporary Descriptions by Residents and Visitors* (Chester, 1972), 13; Katherine Howard travelling to Parkgate by boat in 1728, Gibbs Payne Crawford, 'The diary of George Booth of Chester and Katherine Howards, his daughter of Boughton, near Chester, 1707-1764', *JAAHSCNW*, 28/1 (1928), 43.

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Ives, *Brereton's Letters and Accounts*, 222, 244-5; G. H. Martin, 'Road travel in the Middle Ages: Some journeys by the warden and fellows of Merton College, Oxford, 1315-1470', *Journal of Transport History*, n.s., 3 (1975-6), 173-6; E. T. Jones, J. Laughton and P. Clark, *Northampton in the Late Middle Ages* (Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, working paper no. 10, 2000), 81, 87.

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Chester had a weekly carrier service to and from the Blossoms Inn in St Lawrence Street, Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 69 and n.1; Coventry as nodal point on the main north-south route was connected by carrier services with London and Oxford, see Vivienne Larmine (ed.), 'The undergraduate account book of John and Richard Newdigate, 1618-1621', *Miscellany* 30 (Camden Society, 4 ser., 39, 1990), 164, 173, 188, 213; the carrying trade could be very profitable, see Michael Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth century Ipswich', in Clark, *Country Towns*, 107; J. A. Chartres, 'Road carrying in England in the seventeenth century: myth and reality', *EcHR*, 30 (1977), 75, 78-83.

county Assizes to Shaftesbury in 1535 for the 'outrageously decayed' state of the town. County towns and provincial capitals such as Winchester, Chester, York and Ludlow had established themselves by the sixteenth century as centres for legal services.⁹⁷ Towns also provided financial services - the gentry of Yorkshire often borrowed money from the merchants of York and Hull, resorted to using money lenders, or utilised towns as a cheap place to live away from the obligations of hospitality on one's estate.⁹⁸ Probably one of the most important, and neglected, aspects of the urban service economy was its role in providing education. Most incorporated boroughs had a grammar school - in Leicestershire ten of the counties 13 towns had schools by the early seventeenth century.⁹⁹ Although often called 'free' schools they were costly and access limited effectively to the urban bourgeoisie and the county gentry. Town schools were frequently heavily patronised by the local gentry - in the mid-sixteenth century Francis Brereton went to school in Chester, in the later sixteenth century the Welsh gentry family, the Wynn's, sent a son to Bedford school, Philip Sidney attended Shrewsbury school, Sir William Thorold of Lincolnshire sent his son to Melton Mowbray school and William Dugdale attended Coventry's grammar school. This process gathered pace in the seventeenth century and surviving school registers for Bury St Edmunds and Colchester indicate the numbers of gentry and aristocratic pupils were 52 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. It is impossible to tell whether this amounts to a gentry 'invasion' of town grammar schools in the seventeenth century or whether the sons of gentlemen had always occupied the majority of places. If the frequent complaints of townspeople are any guide, schoolmasters had long neglected the sons of townsmen admitted as free scholars, in favour the fee-paying scholars, principally made up of the gentry. It is generally accepted that the later seventeenth century saw the emergence of a wider range of urban educational establishments, such as writing schools and dancing masters, aimed at catering for the sons and daughters of the gentry and urban bourgeoisie.¹⁰⁰ But at both Chester and Coventry the numbers of singing schools, dancing and music masters changed very little, the only new development was the emergence of fencing masters.¹⁰¹

Evidence drawn from population growth at Chester and Coventry confirms the general picture of the slow growth in the seventeenth century. Chester's seventeenth century demographic regime witnessed short periods of rapid growth, largely due to immigration, followed by periods of slower growth underpinned by natural growth, concluded by a period of population contraction. Cheshire's population growth between 1563 and 1665 compared poorly with the nearby counties of North Wales and Lancashire and this operated

⁹⁷ D. Underdown, *Fire From Heaven: Life in a Seventeenth Century Town* (1993), 7. Rosen, 'Winchester', 152, 177; Reed, 'Seventeenth century Ipswich', 111-2.

⁹⁸ D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), 19; J. T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War* (1969), 145.

⁹⁹ Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Billesdon, Hallaton, Hinckley, Kegworth, Kibworth, Leicester, Loughborough, Lutterworth, Market Bosworth, Melton Mowbray. The only towns without schools were Castle Donnington, Mountsorrel and Waltham on the Wolds, see Joan Simon, 'Town estates and schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in Brian Simon (ed.), *Education in Leicestershire, 1540-1940* (Leicester, 1968), 3-4; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 139-40.

¹⁰⁰ Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966), 347, 364; Simon, 'Leicestershire schools', 17-9; D. Cressy, 'Educational opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England', *History of Education Quarterly*, 16/3 (1976), 309-11; Reed, 'Seventeenth century Ipswich', 97, 113; see also, C. H. Josten, (ed.), *Elias Ashmole, His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, His Correspondence and Other Contemporary Sources Relating to his Life and Work* (Oxford, 1966), vol. 1, 11; Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (ed. N. H. Keble, 1995), 39-41; 'Comerbach's diary', no.7588, 7593, 7597, 7619.

¹⁰¹ CCA. AF/10/53, George Cally's petition of 1615 names four other music teachers Thomas Squire, Richard Bell, Nicholas Webster and John Farrar; compared with Chester in the later seventeenth century the number of music and dancing teachers appears to have been static, see 'Willoughby Aston's dairy', no.5654; 'Comerbach's diary', no.7619; *REED: Coventry*, 364, 367, 370, 379, 382, 445.

to limit the pool of prospective migrants, a process exacerbated by the county's proximity to Ireland and what has been described as the 'greatest single emigration movement of the century', the colonisation of Ireland.¹⁰² In the eighteenth century the city appears to have recovered some of its economic pull and the city's population began to grow rapidly in the 1720s, rising from around 8,000 in 1725-1728 to 13,000 in 1775. This growth was almost certainly the product of migration as only two of five parish registers reported on by Alan Rogers show any net natural growth.¹⁰³ Coventry's population remained similarly static in the seventeenth century: in 1587 the city's population stood at 6,502 and by 1694 had only reached 6,710 at a time when the population of Warwickshire had grown by 95 per cent. From the early eighteenth century there is evidence of sustained population growth, there was a dramatic increase in burials and baptisms, and a surplus of burials over baptisms. The city was also facing problems of overcrowding, the city's gates and then the towers were brought into use to help ease the housing shortage. All this suggests a high level of immigration into the town, a product of new-found economic opportunity.¹⁰⁴

There is little evidence of a significant economic crisis in either town in the seventeenth century. Chester continued to fulfil its role as a regional centre, providing services, acting as an entrepôt for the region, and playing an important role in the Irish and coastal trades. At Coventry the first half of the seventeenth century was a period of modest prosperity and growth, especially in the textile trades, cloth-weaving and silk-weaving. This period of modest economic growth in both towns coincided with a period of net population stagnation. The picture in the eighteenth century, usually identified as a period of prosperity, a result of economic growth and slowed demographic growth, is more complicated. At Coventry the problems in the traditional sectors of cloth production, were exacerbated by periodic downturns in the newer sectors of the cloth trade in the 1670s, 1720s and 1770s. Yet in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century this coincided with a period of vigorous demographic growth, exactly the sorts of conditions thought to have existed in the later sixteenth century and identified as a major element of the urban crisis. At Chester, the city retained its commercial character in the eighteenth century, but its regional role in trade began to be eclipsed by Liverpool. The city continued to be an important service centre, but its manufacturing base also lost out to the new industrial conurbations of Lancashire. Yet at precisely the time Chester was losing out economically in the north-west it witnessed significant demographic growth.

2.v. An urban crisis?

Much of the provincial urban crisis of the later Tudor and early Stuart period has been located in the relationship between large-scale immigration, sluggish economic performance and a consequential growth

¹⁰² Alldrige, 'Mechanics of decline', 11-16; W. G. Howson, 'Plague, poverty and population in parts of north-west England 1580-1720', *THSLC*, 112 (1960), 53.

¹⁰³ I would like to thank Nick Alldrige for his helpful discussion of the demographic history of Chester and his readiness to supply figures for Chester's eighteenth century population, see F. R. Raines (ed.), *Notitia Cestriensis* (Chetham Society, 1st ser., 8, 1845) for 1725 figures; corroboration of this enumeration is provided in an enumeration of 1728, see *CS*, 3rd ser., 48 (1953), 57; Dr Haygarth's enumeration after a small pox epidemic, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 68 (1778), 139, this gives a figure of 13000 when the rural areas of St Oswald parish are excluded, most histories of Chester give a slightly higher figure, see Mitchell, 'Development of urban retailing', 260; Alan Rogers, *Approaches to Local History* (2nd edition, 1977), 20.

¹⁰⁴ J. M. Martin, *The Rise in Population in Eighteenth Century Warwickshire* (Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, 23, 1976), 14-15 and graph 2, argues growth was dependent on migration to off-set natural decrease; Rowlands, *The West Midlands*, 107-9, 171; Lobel, *Atlas*, 11; CRO. BA/E/F/37/2, 386, described the population in 1719 as having 'of late years become very numerous'.

in urban poverty, exacerbated by poor harvests, high prices and plague, all of which further disrupted the economy and, in the short term, increased the numbers of poor. However, reservoirs of under- and unemployed people had always existed in towns, in fact Braudel suggests the presence of a lowly and wretched proletariat was a *structural* feature of any town.¹⁰⁵ It is almost impossible to measure the level of poverty in medieval towns, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest they constituted a significant section of urban society: manual labourers most of whom were engaged in casual work, the old and infirm, the blind, the bedridden, expectant mothers who could no longer work, men and women burdened with large families which swallowed their meagre earnings. In the sixteenth century sources which provide reasonable measures of poverty suggest the problem was considerable: at Leicester around 30 per cent (1524) rising to 42 per cent (1544); Coventry 50 per cent (1522); Exeter 36.5 per cent (1522). There is a need to be cautious about these figures and accept Phythian-Adams' critique, nevertheless the poor constituted about 20 per cent of the urban population in the early to mid-sixteenth century well before the period of demographic growth from the 1570s onwards. Nor does this revised figure differ substantially from those suggested for medieval towns. In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century at the peak moments of crisis the level of poverty did not rise dramatically above these baseline figures: 25 per cent at Warwick in the 1590s; 33 per cent at Salisbury in 1635.¹⁰⁶ For the later seventeenth century, Arkell estimates 15 per cent of the population at large lived in destitution and 25 per cent could be classified as poor, and Ripley's study of post-Restoration Gloucester gives a comparable figure of 27 per cent.¹⁰⁷ In general it is therefore more accurate to recognise poverty as a structural feature of the pre-industrial economy, even during periods of economic growth. In pre-industrial towns there always existed a large population of poor and marginal people of whom a significant number were new migrants and as a recent study of early fourteenth century Norwich shows, incomers only 'increased the number of the urban poor'.¹⁰⁸ The experience of periodic downturns in particular sectors, such as Coventry's silk-weaving industry, or the impact of warfare on Bristol, in the eighteenth century warns us that towns could experience severe economic problems at a time of overall-national economic growth.¹⁰⁹ The particular association of high levels of urban poverty with a notional 'urban crisis' therefore ignores the degree to which poverty was a *structural* facet of the pre-industrial economy, in periods of demographic growth and contraction, and economic expansion. Towns suffered constantly with the problem of poverty and there is little to indicate that levels of poverty were substantially

¹⁰⁵ F. Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800* (1974), 27.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts, 1086-1348* (1995), 339-42, the scale of poverty in medieval towns is impossible to gauge but there is a general agreement that the majority of the population were too poor to be taxed. W. G. Hoskins, 'English provincial towns in the early sixteenth century', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Early Modern Town: A Reader* (1976), 101; W. G. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan provincial town: Leicester', in Hoskins, *Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History* (1963), 91-3. These calculations of poverty based on the Lay Subsidies have been shown to be too high, for more realistic levels see Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 132, 187-248, Table 30 taken from the 1523 census gives a figure for nil assessments, Hoskins' definition of 'poor' of 20.6 per cent; A. L. Beier, 'The social problems of an Elizabethan county town: Warwick, 1580-90' in Clark, *Country Towns*, 54, gives a figure of 25 per cent in bad times; Paul Slack, 'Poverty and politics in Salisbury', in *Crisis and Order*, 176, figures based on St Martins parish; A. L. Beier, 'Poverty and progress in early modern England', in A. L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 203.

¹⁰⁷ T. Arkell, 'The incidence of poverty in England in the later seventeenth century', *Social History*, 12 (1987), 23-47; Peter Ripley, 'Poverty in Gloucester and its alleviation, 1690-1740', *Transactions of the Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 103 (1985), 185-99.

¹⁰⁸ E. Rutledge, 'Immigration and population growth in early fourteenth-century Norwich', *UHYB*, (1988), 28; N. R. Goose, 'Decay and regeneration in seventeenth century Reading: a study in a changing economy', *Southern History*, 6 (1984), 53-74.

¹⁰⁹ J. Barry, 'Bristol pride: civic identity in Bristol c.1640-1775', in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton, 1996), 35.

higher during the notional crisis of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, than during the middle ages or the post-Restoration period.¹¹⁰

It is questionable whether the impact of natural disasters from the mid-sixteenth century onwards was as deleterious as Patten's conclusions regarding Chester would suggest.¹¹¹ Fires could cause significant amounts of damage to a town, disrupting trade and diverting valuable resources away from economic investment to the rebuilding effort. When the number of fires is examined the eighteenth century witnessed more fires than the previous two hundred years, and the peak decades for fire damage were the 1720s, 1730s and 1760s.¹¹² Plague visitations also severely disrupted the urban economy - the 'grass grew in the streets' was a frequently heard lament from towns suffering a plague visitation, as markets and everyday activity were halted and inhabitants fled for the relative safety of the countryside. Yet the longer-term impact is more difficult to substantiate. Urban communities recovered rapidly from visitations of plague as migrants stepped into the places of the dead (replacement syndrome), plague in particular affected the poorer suburban areas disproportionately and became known as the 'poor's' plague and consequently the wealthy-employer class escaped the worst effects of plague and were able to facilitate the speedy re-establishment of economic life once the visitation died down, or as they returned to town from the countryside. Furthermore, Slack's contention that plague and mortality crises occurred about once every sixteen years in larger towns, but only once every 37 years in market towns suggests that the largest section of the urban hierarchy, the smaller towns, were less prone to such disruptions.¹¹³ In general it is argued that the disappearance of plague from English towns in the later seventeenth century reduced the disruption to urban society as the scale of epidemics declined and that this contributed to the improving economic performance of towns and urban quality of life. However, the scale of disease mortality after the Restoration in those communities affected by outbreaks of influenza, typhus or small pox while not comparable to those affected by plague, was nonetheless high: Gloucester's high mortality in the early eighteenth century has been attributed to small-pox, reaching its peak in the epidemic of 1726 when it was responsible for 63 per cent of deaths; or Nottingham in 1741-42 when 1 in 13 of the population died, or Kenilworth where an epidemic in 1670 caused the number of burials to double.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ This certainly accords well with Paul Slack's more recent arguments. He advances the idea that schemes, legislation, etc., to deal with the poor were a product of periods of labour surplus and scarcity, consequently he suggests the growth of intervention from the mid-sixteenth was more closely related to the need to introduce labour market discipline see, Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531-1782* (Basingstoke, 1990), 11-3.

¹¹¹ Patten, *English Towns*, 76.

¹¹² 'Introduction', *Crisis and Order*, 7; *English Towns in Transition*, 199-100; E. L. Jones, S. Porter and M. Turner, *A Gazetteer of Urban Fire Disasters 1500-1900* (Historical Geography Research Series, 13, 1984), esp. Fig. 1. The Gazetteer shows the increased incidence of fire after 1660, although the authors put this down partly to better sources and recording of fires. However, even if the figures for fires between 1500 and 1660 were quadrupled they would only just reach parity with the number of fires between 1660 and 1800.

¹¹³ *English Towns in Transition*, 89, 98-9; P. Slack, 'Mortality crises and epidemic disease in England 1485-1610' in C. Webster (ed.), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), 9-59; N. R. Goose, 'Household size and structure in early Stuart Cambridge' in *Tudor and Stuart Town*, 84; C. Cipolla, 'The plague and the pre-Malthus Malthusians', *Journal of European Economic History*, 2 (1974), 277-84; T. S. Willan, 'Plague in perspective: The case of Manchester in 1605', *THSLC*, 132 (1983), 36-9; Alldridge, 'Mechanics of decline', 8.

¹¹⁴ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 17; Ripley, 'Poverty in Gloucester', 189-191; J. D. Chambers, 'Population change in a provincial town: Nottingham 1700-1800', in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History* (1965), 343; A. L. Beier, 'Poverty and progress in early modern England', in A. L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 225. Slack, 'Mortality crises', 19, gives a figure of 10 per cent or above for death by plague among urban population during a visitation. While Willan, 'Plague in perspective', 23, gives a figure of just over 20 per cent mortality among Manchester's population during the plague outbreak of 1605.

The effect of silting of rivers and havens has generally been added to the list of natural disasters that engulfed provincial towns and contributed to their malaise. Yet there is little evidence to suggest silting was a greater problem in the later sixteenth century.¹¹⁵ While the complaints of town governors and requests for fee farm remission are legion, the relationship between silting and long-term economic decline is questionable. At York and Chester there is little evidence that the rivers were less navigable in the sixteenth or seventeenth century than they had been in previous centuries. Rye is the most clear-cut example of the negative impact of silting: Mayhew concluded the decline of the fishing industry was connected to the silting of the haven and the loss of a safe anchorage, but it 'had little practical consequences for trade'. Civic authorities dealt with the problem through various navigation and haven schemes - those at Rye bankrupted the corporation, whereas at Chester and Exeter the schemes were more successful and trade continued to flourish.¹¹⁶ When it comes to the navigation schemes of the eighteenth century there is a noticeable change in tone - navigation schemes of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century are described as desperate measures to prevent decline, whereas similar activities in the eighteenth century are taken as a sign of economic confidence and a town's attempt to 'capture' a greater part of the market.¹¹⁷ Yet as Chester shows amount of resources poured into the navigation of the Dee in the eighteenth century made virtually no difference to the depth of the river or improved the channel.¹¹⁸ Furthermore ports on smaller rivers or with shallow harbours were losing out and in the longer term their problems were exacerbated by the increasing tonnage capacity of ships. This growth effectively excluded many smaller ports from the profitable overseas trade and by the later eighteenth century a clear split had emerged with seven ports now accounting for 81.7 per cent of the tonnage involved in overseas trade.¹¹⁹

2.vi. Conclusions

Neither Chester or Coventry fit very easily into the overall temporal framework of stagnation and crisis, followed by renaissance. Chester experiences a period of sustained prosperity in the later sixteenth century underpinned by the growth of the overseas and Irish trade. While the early seventeenth century is not as buoyant, the economy is far from stagnant, from the 1620s overseas trade picks up and the 1630s a decade of prosperity. After the Civil War Chester's merchants came to play a larger role in the trade with Dublin and the role of the Irish trade became increasingly important to the city's maritime economy over the course of the eighteenth century. The coastal trade witnessed similar growth in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and was a mainstay of the port. In the wider context the role of the port ensured a modest prosperity

¹¹⁵ Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, 29-31 outlines the problems faced by the ports of Grimsby and Saltfleet Haven from silting in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

¹¹⁶ Rideout thought the 'new quay' was never finished because of lack of funds and subsequently all historians have followed this line. However, even if it was not completed the new quay construction had progressed far enough for it to be included on maps and for it to be used as a transshipment point for the following 150 years, see Rideout, 'The Chester companies and the old quay', 149, 150; R. A. Skelton, 'Four English county maps, 1602-3', *British Museum Quarterly*, 22 (1960), 47-50; A Hume, 'Outline of the sea coast of Cheshire', *THSLC*, 11 (1858-9), 222; D. King, *The Vale Royall of England* (1656), 38.

¹¹⁷ Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640* (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1958), 126-36; Robert Newton, *Eighteenth Century Exeter* (Exeter, 1984), 21-2; Graham Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (University of Sussex, Falmer, 1987), 263-9; Palliser, *Tudor York*, 186-8; W. T. Jackman, *The Development of Transportation in Modern England* (2nd edition, 1962), 165, 173-5, 196-200.

¹¹⁸ Bernard Rathmell, 'The river Dee reclamations and the effect upon navigation', *Liverpool Engineering Society Journal*, 51 (1930), 63-100.

¹¹⁹ J. Rule, *The Vital Century*, 225-8.

for the town, through by-employment, acting as a distribution centre for north Wales and Cheshire. But the port failed to keep pace with the growth of overseas trade and the spectacular growth of Liverpool between 1710 and 1730 which effectively dwarfed Chester's maritime role. However, it is important to note that Chester had never been a port of anything more than local significance and the growth of Liverpool merely confirmed this. The city's role as a distributive and service centre for the north-west was important and the city retained this role from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth century. From the sixteenth century the city attracted traders from Ireland, Wales and the north-west to its fairs. The gentry of the north-west and north Wales were buying goods, sending their children to school in Chester and attending to legal business in the city from the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century the city developed a reputation not only as a purveyor of high quality goods, but as one of the cheaper places to purchase most everyday items. Its position on the road route to Ireland allowed the city to dominate the passenger trade and the facilities for travellers were a major factor in the early development of Chester's service sector.

Coventry experienced modest growth and prosperity in the first half of the seventeenth century, witnessing a resurgence in traditional sectors of the cloth industry, broadcloth weaving and blue making. From the 1620s the development of the silk weaving industry gathered pace and emerged by the end of the seventeenth century as the city's main industry. The growing dominance of the silk industry left was both a benefit and a weakness, dependent on one industry the city was badly exposed to downturns in that industry in the 1720s and 1770s. These periods of economic downturn coincided with significant population growth in a combination of the classic ingredients of the 'urban crisis', trade depression, unemployment and population growth. The city's traditional cloth industries also suffered in the 1680s and 1690s as demand atrophied and unemployment grew. Although the city was well placed on the local and national road network, its geographical location limited the areas of Warwickshire it was able to dominate and the city never developed a major role as the regional centre. Both towns present a series of challenges to the current paradigm for early modern towns. The late sixteenth century in Chester was a period of prosperity, the first half of the seventeenth a period of modest growth at Coventry and one of fairly mixed fortunes at Chester. Although both cities benefited from the growth in the economy after 1660, especially Coventry, this did not see an end to economic problems in either city. Coventry, dominated by one trade was very exposed to periodic trade depressions. Chester's problems with the navigation of the Dee in the eighteenth century continued to adversely affect trade and the city became increasingly reliant on its role as service centre and the passenger trade with Ireland.

Chapter 3. Urban Ceremony c.1600-c.1750

3 i. Introduction: urban ceremony and the historiography of change, c.1600-c.1750

The ceremonial calendar of the later-medieval city and its importance to urban life has been the focus of a number of studies. These concentrate on civic-religious processions and drama, principally the Corpus Christi plays, the accompanying guild and civic processions of the fifteenth- and sixteenth centuries, presenting a picture of the city replete with a rich and diverse ceremonial life.¹ It is argued that this varied cultural matrix did not survive the impact of the Reformation, the growing economic crisis of towns and the subsequent social polarisation of the later-sixteenth century. The mid-to later-sixteenth century is therefore identified by many historians as the critical period witnessing the widespread decline of ceremony and calendar customs.² The destruction of such urban, 'communal' public ceremonial, especially in the form of the Corpus Christi processions, Midsummer Watches and other civic parades is well attested. Ipswich's Corpus Christi procession was laid aside in 1531, Norwich and Lincoln in about 1547, Hereford and York in 1548 and Coventry in 1579. Nor did other public ceremonies fair well - the Whitsun processions in London and Leicester were suppressed in 1548, the Canterbury watch and pageant on the eve of St Thomas the Martyr was dismantled following the removal of St Thomas in 1541, Gog and Magog in 1553-4, York's Yule procession in 1572, and undoubtedly this list could be added to remorselessly.³

Phythian-Adams in his study of Coventry provides a detailed narrative describing the almost wholesale destruction of public ceremonial and calendar recreations from the late-1540s to the terminus date of 1579, the year in which the Corpus Christi plays were suppressed. These changes are characterised as the modernisation of the late-medieval social and cultural framework, the triumph of the secular half of the year over the ritualistic, which saw practices such as May Day, Hock Tuesday and Midsummer emasculated, and most significantly 'the formal communal processions ... totally disappeared'.⁴ The consequence of such changes was twofold: first, impoverishing social relations through the removal of communal, organised sociability; second creating a vacuum at the heart of urban cultural life, leading historians to depict towns as culturally impoverished backwaters in the period before the Civil War.⁵ The provincial town from the later-sixteenth century until the outbreak of the Civil War is now viewed as being almost totally devoid of public ceremonial. The only surviving rituals are viewed as either attenuated relics of the past or part of a newly

¹ Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550', in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (1972), 57-85; Mervyn James, 'Ritual, drama and the social body in the late-medieval English town', *P&P*, 98 (1983), 3-29.

² R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1996), 121-3 for a general chronology for both town and countryside; Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 57; R. W. Ingram, 'Fifteen seventy-nine and the decline of civic-religious drama in Coventry', in G. R. Hibbard (ed.), *The Elizabethan Theatre VIII* (Port Credit, 1982), 114.

³ Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 74, 83; J. Brigstoke-Sheppard, 'The Canterbury marching watch', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 12 (1878), 38-9; Ingram, 'The decline of religious drama', 114; David N. Klausner (ed.), *REED: Herefordshire and Worcestershire* (Toronto, 1990), 119; A. F. Johnston, 'The procession and play of Corpus Christi in York after 1426', *Leeds Studies in English*, 7 (1973-4), 59.

⁴ Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 79, 80.

⁵ Quote from Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay in late-medieval England', in P. Abrams and E. A. Wrigley, *Towns in Societies* (Cambridge, 1978), 184; P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), 145-9; P. Clark, *Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth Century City* (Victorian Studies Centre, University of Leicester, 1986), 4; A. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973), 253; Peter Borsay, 'All the town's a stage: urban ritual and ceremony 1660-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (1984), 229 is much more circumspect about the scale of the impact on urban culture.

re-orientated calendar, falling in the 'secular' half of the year and focused exclusively on the civic elite, celebrating their power and authority.⁶ In sharp contrast, the years after the Restoration witnessed a rapid recovery from the ravages of warfare, siege and economic stagnation. This revival was particularly focused on the cultural and ceremonial life of the town - the development of new *urbane* seasonal leisure patterns were highly ceremonialised, civic ceremonies were once again thriving, and the theatre of electioneering with its processions and chairings expanded dramatically. The essentially functional interpretation is retained, civic ceremonies reinforced social ties albeit among the elite only, and more generally the ritual expression of conflict enhanced social stability. However, there is an important shift in the interpretational emphasis. Much of this ceremonial revival was intended to consciously re-position the town, locating it at the hub of the burgeoning metropolitan-led polite culture, and fostering links with the local gentry to focus custom and patronage on the town, hence the increasingly lavish receptions for local notables.⁷

This chapter deals almost exclusively with the authorised civic ceremonies which reflected and projected the authority of urban governors and does not discuss parish ceremonies or popular ritualised leisure activities.⁸ The intention of this chapter is to broadly re-examine the established temporal framework outlined above and highlight a number of problems with its chronology. One consequence of such a reappraisal is to question the scale of destruction visited on the ceremonial life of towns before the Civil War and the subsequent 'revival' after 1660. Second, to examine the post-Restoration revival and to what extent it represented a novel departure from earlier ceremonial traditions. Third, the study re-evaluates the social role of ceremony and attempts to move beyond the sterile debate about its socially functional or polarising effect. Early studies of late-medieval and post-Restoration ceremony share an understanding of its function, as a social cement and a way of absorbing social tension, whereas more recent work on late-medieval ceremony forcefully argues that it polarised society. Instead the study emphasises the interactive nature of ceremony, suggesting that this approach can reconcile existing explanatory models and provide a paradigm that applies equally to the later-sixteenth and mid-eighteenth century.

3.ii *The ceremonial calendar: Chester and Coventry c.1600-c.1750*

Chester and Coventry provide apposite examples, countering some of the inconsistencies and problems with the current historiography: Coventry exhibits a chronology which superficially confirms the historiography, with the removal of almost the entire ceremonial calendar in the later-sixteenth century followed by a post-Restoration revival epitomised by the creation of the Godiva Show in 1678. However, on closer inspection Coventry presents a series of challenges when the post-1678 Godiva Cavalcade is examined more closely and the continuation of ceremonies before the Civil War is considered. Chester too

⁶ P. Clark, 'Religious and cultural life, 1547-1640', in *VCH: Gloucestershire, City of Gloucester*, 4 (1988), 90; Michael Berlin, 'Civic ceremony in early modern London', *UHYB* (1986), 19-20.

Borsay, 'All the town's a stage', 228-9, 240-6; David Mills, 'Chester's midsummer show: creation and adaptation', in Meg Twycross (ed.), *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre* (Cambridge, 1996), 140-42, provides the most explicit articulation of this position arguing that the movement of Chester's midsummer show to Whitsun stripped the celebration of significance and demonstrates 'the desperate desire to increase trade'; Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 80; *English Towns in Transition*, 149.

⁸ The definition is from Robert A. Schneider, *The Ceremonial City: Toulouse Observed 1738-1780* (Princeton, 1995), 5. The focus in this chapter is on these civic ceremonies and not calendar customs and pastimes such as midsummer bonfires, wakes and revels.

follows the standard pattern established for the late-sixteenth century, the removal of Corpus Christi processions and the suppression of its famous Whitsun play cycle. But here the parallels end - Chester retained a vibrant ceremonial calendar throughout the seventeenth century, further attempts at reform were subsequently reversed and the calendar was extended by the addition of new ceremonies in the 1610s and 1640. After the Restoration most ceremonies were reintroduced, but they struggled to reassert themselves, and in the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century the calendar was remodelled when the Midsummer Show was abolished and the Shrove Tuesday and Easter ceremonies removed.

The removal of the whitsun play cycle in 1575 and the Corpus Christi procession in about 1548 clearly left a gap in Chester's ceremonial year. However the impact was blunted by the persistence of a vibrant calendar focused on October (the mayoral election and beginning of the civic year), Christmas, Shrove Tuesday, Easter week and Midsummer, all of which survived and prospered in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁹ The ceremonial year commenced in October with the election of the new mayor and the processions intended to publicise and solemnise the transfer of power and the beginning of a new civic year.¹⁰ The annual election was held on the Friday after the feast of St Denis (9 October), the electoral procedure was elaborate involving a series of stages in which the aldermen withdrawn from public scrutiny in the 'innermost pentice' effectively determined the outcome on the evening before the election. At successive stages, participation was widened to include members of the common council and in the final stage all freemen were entitled to vote. The most public part was the oath swearing, when the mayor was accompanied to the Pentice by the guild companies, after which the new mayor was publicly escorted by the aldermen, common council, civic officers and other wellwishers through the streets to his home to promulgate the transfer of civic power. The Civil War caused some interruption when mayoral elections were suspended by the Parliamentary authorities in 1647. They were quickly restored during the Commonwealth and after the Restoration became a focus of intensified ceremonial activity connected to the struggle for control of the corporation between the Whigs and Tories.¹¹

The Christmas Watch, annually celebrated on Christmas Eve was the next major event in the town's ceremonial calendar. First held in 1397, the Christmas Watch commemorated Welsh attacks on the city but by the sixteenth century had developed into a system to protect against the classic 'urban problems' of fire and disorder, calling forth the city's customary tenants to provide watchmen for the Christmas period.¹² The

⁹ Lawrence Clopper (ed.), *REED: Chester* (Toronto, 1979), liv, 67, 78, 97, 104-5, 109-110, the plays were performed erratically in the 1560s and 1570s, playing only in 1561, 1567, 1568, 1572 and 1575 due to internal divisions within the city about their efficacy and attacks on them. In 1572 the Archbishop of York intervened at the request of those on the Council who opposed the plays and forbade the performances. But it was not until 1575 that the performances were permanently halted when Sir John Savage (mayor 1574-75) was called before the Privy Council to explain why the plays were still being performed.

¹⁰ The impact of such ceremonies on the populace should not be underestimated see, D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), 64.

¹¹ CCA. P/Cowper, vol. I, f. 137v, 'Collectanea Devana'; BL. Harl. 2125, f. 147r, Randle Holme(?), 'The Antiquity of the Anciente and famous City of Chester'; CCA. G2/2, 'Barber-Surgeons' Company Book, 1692-1791', accounts 9 Oct. 1702; J. Addy (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Prescott, LLB, Deputy Registrar of Chester Diocese*, vol. I (RSLC, 127, 1987), 170; A. M. Johnson, 'Politics in Chester during the Civil Wars and Interregnum', in *Crisis and Order*, 214-8.

¹² By the sixteenth century the Watch had become a regular annual event, see *REED: Chester*, 45, 62, 142, 160, 163, 167-8, 187, 204, 212, 224, 257, 271, 277, 348, 385, 400, 439, 444, 460; Mayor Brerewood's speech before the Watch outlines its origins and development, *REED: Chester*, 142-3; BL. Harl. 2125 f. 100r.

aldermen and common councillors met at the mayor's house at 6pm and processed in their livery, accompanied by torchbearers, local gentlemen and fireworks to the Common Hall. Assembled there were crowds of onlookers and the Watch Court, the city's customary tenants, who were commanded to do service and symbolically handed the keys of the city.¹³ After summoning the Watch, the mayor, aldermen and sheriffs processed back to the mayor's house where a feast was held. The Watch was then repeated over the following two nights with the sheriffs presiding. The Watch was interrupted by the Civil War siege and subsequently re-instituted possibly during the Commonwealth, although it was probably only intermittently observed until 1672 when it was firmly re-established. Thereafter, apart from a brief hiatus during the Exclusion Crisis, it was held until 1831 when it was abolished.¹⁴

The cluster of calendar events following Christmas, focusing on the period between Shrove Tuesday and Midsummer were central to Chester's public image and economy, consisting of its most elaborate and large-scale public ceremonies. The first of these was the annual 'Homage to the Drapers' on Shrove Tuesday and the following two days. The shoemakers' and saddlers' guilds were required to pay 'homage', presenting gifts to the drapers in a series of processions; in return the drapers provided three days of feasting for the saddlers, shoemakers and the civic elite. The gifts given by the shoemakers and saddlers, known as 'gleaves' and a silver bell, were then used in a series of horse and foot races held on the Roodee and sponsored by the civic authorities.¹⁵ The Civil War siege halted the performance of the Homage but again this annual festivity was revived at the Restoration.¹⁶ However, the revival was beset by the problem of erratic and intermittent performances. A review of civic orders suggests the Homage was performed sporadically immediately after the Restoration, but had been fully restored by the late-1680s.¹⁷ However,

¹³ CCA. CR632/1, unfol., Broster(?), 'Miscellany of Printed and Manuscript Items'; L. G. Wickham-Legg (ed.), *A Relation of a Short Survey of Twenty Six Counties Observed ... By a Captain, A Lieutenant and an Ancient All Three of the Military Company in Norwich*, (1904), 51.

¹⁴ CCA. CR632/1, unfol., letter of mayor Richard Harrison (17 Dec. 1667). There seems to have been a concerted campaign beginning in 1667 and gathering momentum in the early-1670s to ensure the Watch was held annually, see CCA AB/2, f.175v, f.176v, f.177r, f.178r, f.187v. It was ordered that the nine mayors and sheriffs since the Restoration who had not kept the Watch should be fined, which would suggest that in some years between 1660 and 1675 the Watch had been kept, see AB/2, f.183r. BL. Harl. 2125, f.73v, George Bellin, 'Briefe Notes of the Antiquity of the famous Cittie of Chester', and BL. Harl. 2125, f.165v-166v state that no Christmas Watch was held in 1650, and 1666 to 1669. Randle Holme is silent about other years implying that it took place in those years not mentioned. Holme only seems to comment on events of note, such as the temporary suspension of a ceremony, contrast with his treatment of the Midsummer Show where he clearly states when the Midsummer Watch was not performed and when it was abolished after the Restoration. Even after the Watch had been re-instituted it still occasionally was not performed, in 1678-79 and 1681-82, see AB/2 f.189r, 191r, 195v, 196v. A review of useful by-laws to be revived was conducted in 1685 and no mention of the Christmas Watch was made (unlike the Shrovetide Homage which it recommended should be revived) which suggests the Christmas Watch was now running annually, see AB/3 f.2v-4v.

¹⁵ CCA. AB/2 f.6v-7r; REED: *Chester*, 237, 351; the processions of the guilds to and from the Pentice may have been introduced in February 1625 or 1626 as part of the civic authorities attempts to resolve an ongoing dispute about precedence and the order of the ceremony. The Homage was unique to Chester and David Rogers noted this, REED: *Chester*, 238, lines 9-11. The Shrove Tuesday Homage unlike many of Chester's other calendar customs was unknown in England outside Chester. Sixteenth-century Dublin was the only other city where a similar ceremony was held. The origins of this ceremony are obscure, the earliest references are the civic minutes which detail its reform on 10 January 1540, see REED: *Chester*, 41-2, 234-8, 320-22, 351-2; Steven E. Hart and Margaret Knapp, *The Aunchant and Famous Cittie: David Rogers and the Chester Mystery Plays* (New York, 1988), 177-179. It is interesting to note the strong trading and cultural connections between the Dublin and Chester and the possibility of common origins for both ceremonies.

¹⁶ The exact date of its revival is unknown, but definitely by Shrovetide 1673 when the city Treasurers were ordered to repay Mr Sheriff Edwards the £6 2s 6d outstanding for the plate he had provided for the Shrove Tuesday and St George's Day races during his mayoralty October 1672-3, CCA. AB/2 f.178v. The Homage may in fact have been revived in 1673, the Goldsmiths made an order regulating the making of gleaves, CCA. G12/1, 'Goldsmiths Company Minute Book, 1573-1725', order dated 23 January 1674/5.

¹⁷ A review of orders was commissioned to report on which by-laws should be revived, CCA. AB/2 f.198v. The commission reported on those they thought 'wholesome and profitable' which included the order of 17 February 1625/6 detailing the conduct of the Homage and the role of each company, CCA. AB/3 f.4r. For problems see fines for failure to attend or inappropriate behaviour on Shrove Tuesday and at the subsequent feasting on Ash Wednesday and Thursday by the Cordwainers, CCA. G8/10 'The Rough Minute Book of the Cordwainers and Shoemakers, 1679 - 1722', unfol. 29 Jan. 1687/8.

difficulties continued to blight the Homage, the drapers were fined for failing to attend the mayor in 1691, for '[their] neglect and contempt of the laudable immemorial customs of this City' and in 1698 they were ordered to resume their ancient ceremonies according to custom.¹⁸ The final demise of the Homage was signalled by the amalgamation, under civic direction, of the Shrove Tuesday races with the Easter horse races in March 1705/6.¹⁹

Easter Monday saw the Sheriffs' annual archery contest and breakfast feast, known as the Calves Head Feast or Sheriff's Breakfast. The contest, first held in 1511, survived attempts to suppress it in 1599-1600 and continued to be celebrated until at least 1642.²⁰ At the Roodee on Easter Monday each sheriff picked a team to compete in an archery competition and after the contest the teams processed through the streets to the Common Hall where both teams of archers and the city elite breakfasted on bacon and calves' head. In 1640 these ceremonies were enhanced when an annual Easter Tuesday horserace was added to the sports.²¹ Once again, the Civil War siege briefly interrupted these observances but their revival in 1665 signalled a further change in format. The archery contest was abolished and the monies used to support a new Easter Monday horse race. It is unclear whether the Tuesday races, instituted shortly before the Civil War in 1641 were revived in 1665, but they probably were, thereby creating the first element of a newly emerging post-Restoration leisure calendar centred around horse racing on Easter Monday and Tuesday. These changes (particularly the removal of the archery) met with some opposition, the contest was briefly reinstated in 1667 and a number of sheriffs were subsequently fined for holding the associated Easter Monday feast.²² In March 1705/6 the Easter horse races were further augmented when the St George's day races were moved to Easter Tuesday to create two major races on Easter Tuesday, in addition to the already existing Easter Monday race.²³ The development of the Easter races as a major focus of Chester's eighteenth century leisure calendar did not see the end of civic ceremonial associated with Easter. The races organised and sponsored by the guilds and civic authorities were opened annually by a civic procession from the Watergate to the starting chair at the Roodee, a practice that only ended in 1797.²⁴

On St George's Day 1610 a new element was added to Chester's ceremonial and recreational calendar - horseracing on the Roodee. The initial idea and sponsorship came from by Robert Amery, an ironmonger

¹⁸ CCA. AB/3 f.31v, f.62r this order suggests the Drapers had not been attending the Homage.

¹⁹ AB/3 f.140v.

²⁰ REED: *Chester*, 451; R. Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community c.1500-1640* (Oxford, 1991), 111 suggests the archery contests are of earlier provenance, but large numbers of the city's antiquarians agree on 1511, see CCA. CR60/83 f.9r, George Bellin, 'Manuscript list of Chester mayors and historical events, 1300-1620'; CR469/542, William Aldersey, 'A collection of the maiors who haue gouerned this Cittie of Chester'; P/Cowper, vol.1, 211; BL. Harl. 2125 f.33r; BL. Add. 11335 f.23r, Anon., 'The Antiquitie of Chester'. Only David Rogers suggests it had existed since time immemorial and the date of 1511 would also accord with the period in the early-sixteenth century when Chester's ceremonial calendar was initially created, see page 46 below.

²¹ REED: *Chester*, 322-3, 352, 451.

²² Harl. 2125, f.166v, 'The sheriffs and leavelookers would have the ould custome of shooting for a feast on black Monday'. It is interesting that in the year when the archery contest was revived one the officers responsible was the antiquarian Randle Holmes III; see also CCA. CR632/1 unfol. entry for 1676 for sheriffs being fined for holding the Calves Head Feast.

²³ CCA. AB/3 f.140v; Peter Broster, *The Chester Guide* (Chester, 2nd edition, 1787), 27; see guild accounts where money is given to defray the cost of the prizes, Maurice Ridgeway, 'Chester Goldsmiths from earliest times to 1726', *JCAS*, 53 (1956), 87.

²⁴ J. M. B. Pigot, *History of the City of Chester From its Foundation to the Present Time* (Chester, 1815), 137; J. H. Hanshall, *The Stranger in Chester: Giving an accurate sketch of its local history with chronological arrangements of the most interesting events connected therewith* (Chester, printed by J. Fletcher, 1816), 46.

and former sheriff, and 17 of the city's guild companies provided £36 8s 4d towards the prizes - three silver bells.²⁵ The inaugural races were opened with an elaborately choreographed pageant - Chester's Triumph in Honour of Her Prince on St George's Day, 1610, In the Aforesaid Cittie - in the following years the races were accompanied by a civic and guild processions to and from the Roodee.²⁶ The races were brought under civic control in 1613 and remodelled in 1624, when the length of the race, the size of the purse and the number of competitors all increased.²⁷ The St George's day races continued until the Civil War and were then revived immediately after the Restoration and in March 1705/6 moved to Easter to create a series of horseraces on Monday and Tuesday in Easter week.²⁸

The annual Midsummer Show, held on midsummer eve (24 June) was the centrepiece of Chester's ceremonial calendar and David Rogers' emphasises its importance 'it is most Comendable, rich, and beautifull, The like in few citties of this lande.'²⁹ The Show consisted of two parts, one supported by the civic authorities and essentially an expansion of the annual armed watch on midsummer eve, consisting of guards, four giants, the Mayor's Mount, the Elephant and Castle, four beasts, four hobby horses and the merchants' mount.³⁰ The second element, shows provided by the guild companies, originally drew on figures from each guild's respective whitsun play. In the later-sixteenth century the guilds began to replace them with a group of uniform figures, a mounted boy with two foot men - one to lead the boy and horse, and one to carry the guild banner.³¹ In the early-seventeenth century the shows were further reformed by mayor Henry Hardware (1599-1600) who 'caused the giants which used to go at midsummer to be broken. ... The dragon and naked boys he suffered not to go in midsummer show nor the devil for the Butchers, but a boy to ride as other Companies'.³² However Hardware's reforms were unpopular and met with resistance, 'he got great ill will among the commons', and suppressed elements such as the giants were permanently returned during the mayoralty of John Ratcliffe in 1601.³³ The two shows formed a procession which paraded from the Northgate Bar through the streets with the guilds in their traditional order and livery, dispensing charity to the prisoners of the Northgate and Castle jails, and terminating at St Oswalds church. The Midsummer watch had first been performed in 1498 and thereafter was performed annually to 1641, apart from years

²⁵ REED: *Chester*, 258, 323. Amery attempted to gain civic patronage to help defray the costs but his petition was turned down, REED: *Chester*, 261.

²⁶ Thomas Corser (ed.), *Chester's Triumph in Honour of Her Prince on St George's Day, 1610, In the Aforesaid Cittie* (Chetham Society, 1st ser., 3, 1844); REED: *Chester*, 287, 299, 307; CCRO. DCC/15/9, recto (23 April 1609), 'Proclamation upon the Roodee upon St George's day 1609'.

²⁷ REED: *Chester*, 273, 354, 360-61, 434-5.

²⁸ BL. Harl. 2125 f.165v; CCA. AB/3 f.140v. There is some question whether the St George's plate was in fact amalgamated with the Easter races, this requires further investigation, for evidence of its continuation see, CCA. AB/3 f.158v-159r, f.183v-184r, f.212r.

²⁹ CCRO. DCC/19, unfol., David Rogers, 'Breviary of Chester History', and REED: *Chester*, 323. The demise of the Whitsun plays, led to Chester's antiquarians upgrading the Midsummer Show arguing that it was 'as antiant as the whitsun playes, if not more antiant', however the origins of the midsummer watch were widely acknowledged to be 1498-99, see REED: *Chester*, 21, 252.

³⁰ REED: *Chester*, 481-2.

³¹ REED: *Chester*, 206 lines 6-7, 120 line 3, 253 marginalia, 469 lines 15-19, the linendrapers and brickmakers provided Balaam and his ass, the painters provided shepherds on stilts an allusion their production of the *Sheperds Play* from the whitsun-cycle, the butchers put forth the devil riding in feathers, the barber-surgeons show included Abraham and Isaac. After the reforms only two companies deviated from the general pattern, the painters whose show frequently contained a figure on stilts, and the mercers and ironmongers who set forth a boy and a lady on horse back see David Mills, 'Chester's Midsummer Show', 134-5.

³² REED: *Chester*, 197, BL. Harl. 1944, f.90r-v, David Rogers, 'Breviary of Chester History'.

³³ REED: *Chester*, 197-8, 206, 222, 263, 264, 275, 287, 299, 314, 368, 408, 443, 459.

when plague threatened, such as 1604.³⁴ The outbreak of the Civil War curtailed the show's annual performance and in spite of attempts to revive it during the Commonwealth in 1657-8 it was only restored in 1661.³⁵ It too shared the problems of other restored ceremonies, problems of non-attendance and possibly some resistance from the guilds due to the high costs of revival.³⁶ In 1671 the Show was moved to Whitsun, apparently a response to the problems and in particular the inconvenience of holding the show during one of the busiest trading periods of the year, the midsummer fair.³⁷ The Show continued to be performed at Whitsun until 1677, was cancelled in 1678 and ordered never to be performed again.³⁸

The annual Minstrels' Court was also held on Midsummer Day and added further pageantry to the occasion, at least until the Midsummer Show was moved to Whitsun in 1671. The origins of the Minstrels' Court was a siege of Ruthlin Castle at the end of the twelfth century by the Welsh. The siege was relieved by the Constable of Cheshire who raised an 'army' of fiddlers, players, 'merry Companions... & such routish Companions' from the people attending Chester's midsummer fair, who marching towards Ruthlin Castle appeared to be a great 'army' and so the Welsh took flight. The right to license minstrels was subsequently conferred on the descendants of the Constable, the Dutton family, and annually on Midsummer Eve a procession of minstrels from Chester and Cheshire rode through the city to St John's church, where the Dutton's continued to hold the court and license minstrels. In spite of pressure on the Dutton family to reform the minstrels court it continued uninterrupted until the outbreak of the Civil War, was revived by 1666 at the latest and performed annually until 1756.³⁹

The midsummer celebrations were usually the end of Chester's ceremonial calendar. However once every seven years in late September or early October the mayor and corporation rode around the city boundaries accompanied by local gentlemen, a large group of freemen and by children or the scholars from the Free School, 'to the end they might remember the same'. These septennial processions were large-scale affairs - in the first half of the seventeenth century between 72 and 125 people participated. In the later-seventeenth century it appears that the turnout dwindled and as a result attendance by the civic elite was

³⁴ REED: *Chester*, 21; compare the absence of Midsummer payments from guild accounts for 1604 with other years, see REED: *Chester*, 211-212.

³⁵ The guild companies petitioned the mayor that their attending him on midsummer eve should be revived and it was decided by a majority vote of the council that the midsummer show should be observed, CCA. AB/2 f.119r. This order was then revived and put into action successfully for the coming 24 June, AB/2 f.132r.

³⁶ CCA. G12/1, order dated 18 November 1664 enforced attendance at the Midsummer Show and fined those who failed to attend. The goldsmiths also reduced their expenses for the midsummer show from 35s in 1670 and set an upper limit of 20s per annum in 1674. For the stationers company see CS, 3 (1883), no.2010. CCA. AB/2, f.134r, 155r, f.161r the constant reiteration of the ordinance for the Show hints that there were problems reviving it. This is underlined by the complaints of an annalist commenting on the mayoralty of Arthur Walley (1660-61), "Although we were in a happy condition by reason of the enjoying of a Good & gracious Kinge yet this yeare the city of Chester underwent many sore & heavy taxations for citty affaires & other publicke concernments as pole money, plate money for St George's race, the contribution for repaire of the Giants wch had not gone since 1641 & an assessment for the souldiers wth severall other thinges," BL. Harl. 2125 f.162v.

³⁷ CCA. AB/2 f.171r-v, this order is somewhat confused giving two possible motives for the move: first large crowds would be attracted to the town during Whitsun, second the clash between the fair and the Show. In 1677 there seems to have been some attempts to move the Show back to Midsummer, AB/2, f.185r.

³⁸ CCA. AB/2, f.188r, f.190v, f.192r; *The Chester Guide* (Chester, 1852), 131, '1678: The city shows were entirely abolished'; Hanshall, *Stranger in Chester*, 194; Pigot, *History of Chester*, 318.

³⁹ 'The diary of Roger Comerbach', CS, 3rd ser., 34 (1939), no.7610, Comerbach rode with minstrel procession on 24 June 1692; REED: *Chester*, 486-9 gives the only full account of the licensing by Sir Peter Leycester in 1673; Broster, *Chester Guide*, 10, suggests the licensing had only recently stopped being performed; D. Mills, 'Bushop Brian' and the dramatic entertainments of Cheshire', REED: *Newsletter*, 11/1 (1986), 4.

made compulsory, and probably at the same time the freemen's participation became formalised in the attendance of the guild companies. The practice of riding the bounds continued until at least 1764, although when it was discontinued after 1764 is unclear.⁴⁰

Coventry provides a sharp contrast to Chester's experience - its calendar suffered considerably greater damage in the late-sixteenth century, witnessing the removal of the Corpus Christi plays (1579), Hock Tuesday plays (1576, after intermittent performances from 1561), the watch on St Peter's (1549) and the midsummer watches and bonfires (1563-64).⁴¹ This removed most of the late-medieval ceremonial calendar and the remnants of the calendar were re-orientated when the mayoral inauguration was moved from Candlemas to All Hallows' Day in 1556. The demise of Coventry's ceremonies is taken to be indicative of the general process in provincial towns, a decline in public sociability and large-scale ceremonial in the face of the dual threats of economic contraction and religious opposition in the later-sixteenth century.⁴² The impact was so great that when Princess Elizabeth visited Coventry in 1604 the civic reception consisted of a sermon and dinner, but in contrast to earlier royal receptions her only entertainment was the presence of the guild companies lining the route.⁴³

The removal of civic-religious drama and ceremonies therefore left a significant mark on Coventry's calendar, however a series of officially-sanctioned civic ceremonies were not removed, those retained were smaller in scale and focused on the annual transfer of power and civic rights. Coventry's seventeenth century ceremonial calendar opened with the mayoral election in late September, consisting of two parts, the private oligarchic selection in St Mary's Hall and the more public inauguration, including a public feast and entertainments, processions and the oath-taking ceremony.⁴⁴ The nomination of a new mayor by the aldermen took place on the Tuesday after Michaelmas (29 September) and was followed by 'Choice day' (15 October), when the nomination of the mayor and civic officers was formally approved by the Council.⁴⁵ The most public and elaborate part of the ritual was on All Saints' Day (1 November) and the Tuesday following, when a series of processions publicly pronounced the transfer of power. On 1 November the incoming mayor, attended by the new civic officers and council, processed to St Michael's church for a sermon, and then to St Mary's Hall where their oaths were sworn. A second public procession returned the old and new mayors to St Michael's to hear a second sermon and then on to the new mayor's home where a

⁴⁰ M. J. Groombridge, *The Calendar of Chester City Council Minutes 1603-1642* (RSLC, 106, 1956), 111-114, 181-184; CCA. AB/2, f.100r; CCA. CR60/83 f.15v; REED: *Chester*, 174-5; for problems of civic attendance and subsequent reorganisation see CCA. AB/2, f.181r, AB/3 f.5v; for the guilds accompanying the corporation, see CCA. G2/2, accounts for 1701 and 1708; CCA. G4/1, unfol., 'The Bricklayers Company Book, 1683 - 1895', accounts for 1750, 1757, 1764. Although the septennial perambulation continued in the eighteenth century and can be traced in guild account books, it is not mentioned in the Assembly Book after 1686, and as the guild account books become more erratic in the mid-eighteenth century it is difficult to establish what happens, although it certainly survived to 1764 and possibly later.

⁴¹ Ingram, 'The decline of religious drama', 114, 118-9; R. W. Ingram (ed.), REED: *Coventry* (Toronto, 1981), 181, 219, 227, the last payment for armed men on Midsummer Eve was made in 1564; F. Bliss-Burbidge, *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva* (Birmingham, n.d.), 68.

⁴² Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 79, 80; Ingram, 'The decline of religious drama', 115. Recently Hutton has pointed out some problems with this model, particularly in attempting to show a causal link between economic stagnation and ceremonial decline, but he does endorse the link between 'puritanism' and the decline of ceremonies, Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 67-8.

⁴³ REED: *Coventry*, 272-5, 276, 364-5, contrast this reception with the entertainment given to Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth castle in 1575, 'by certain good harted men of Couentre' who performed the Hock play.

⁴⁴ CRO. BA/F/A/23/1, f.269r-v, 'Humphrey Burton's Book'; Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 60-1.

⁴⁵ John Hewitt, *The Journal of John Hewitt* (1779), 22.

private feast was held for the civic officers.⁴⁶ The following Tuesday was a public feast to which the freemen and local gentry were invited, accompanied by public processions to and from the new mayor's house. By 1667 this final day had been removed and its public feast and processions amalgamated with those of 1 November. This became the focus of the mayoral inauguration and over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries its feast and attendant entertainments became increasingly elaborate.⁴⁷

The beginning of the civic year was followed by a series of ceremonial perambulations asserting the city's economic rights, declaring markets open and inspecting the city's land, property and walls. The first of these - the annual ceremonial inspection of the town walls - was conducted between the selection of the mayor and his public inauguration. Beginning in 1535 the mayor and his brethren perambulated the city walls on 20 October, accompanied by ringing bells and utilising the opportunity to dispense alms to the poor. This ceremony was halted in 1662 after the destruction of the city walls.⁴⁸ At Lent the mayor and aldermen annually inspected the city's lands and property, accompanied by the town's schoolmasters - again an opportunity to disperse cash alms. This was a fairly elongated perambulation, often taking place over two days and it continued throughout the seventeenth century.⁴⁹ This was followed by the opening of the Great Fair on Corpus Christi (see discussion below). Then on 1 August the city's extensive common lands, were symbolically opened to pasture on Lammas Day, when the Chamberlains annually rode the boundaries of the common fields. Lammas ridings are recorded from 1474 but participation was strictly limited to representatives of the wards.⁵⁰ The common lands were a constant source of conflict between the freemen and the civic elite and their allies, the clothiers and drapers. This gave an added importance to the annual Lammas Ridings because they were a way the wider city populace could ensure the commons were properly opened to pasture. Consequently, during the peak periods of conflict, the chamberlains could be accompanied by large crowds of between 600 to 700 people, over ten per cent of the town's population. The Lammas Ridings continued to be held until they were abolished in 1857.⁵¹

The annual 'Great Fair' at Coventry was opened by the mayor, the city officers, a trumpeter and armed guards sponsored by the guilds, numbering between 50 and 70, who paraded through the streets and

⁴⁶ BL. Harl. 7017, f.287r, Humfrey Wanley, 'Some account of the city of Coventry'; CRO. BA/F/A/23/1, f.269r-v.

⁴⁷ *Hewitt's Journal*, 22-32, shows the elaborate nature of his plans for 1 November 1755, including a feast with nearly 700 guests (over 500 from the town and more than 150 gentry and people from Warwickshire), and a ball and musical concert the following morning; *CSPD 1667-1668*, 4, suggests there were around 1000 guests at the feast on 1 November 1667; however we should be cautious about accepting that the eighteenth century feast was much more elaborate, it may in fact reflect better sources and earlier references stress it was a 'sumptuous' affair, see Wickham Legg, *Relation of a Short Survey*, 70.

⁴⁸ Eileen Gooder, *Coventry's Town Wall* (Coventry and Warwickshire Pamphlet, 4, 1967), 22; CRO. BA/A/A/26/2, 'Chamberlains' and Wardens' Account Book II, 1574/5-1635/6', 181, 340, 346, 351, 361, 372, 387, 394, 401, 418, 433, 441, 451, 466, 480, 502, 566, 657, 741, 821; BA/A/A/26/3, 'Chamberlains' and Wardens' Account Book III, 1636-1710', 1-2; Acc.2/3, 84, Anon., 'A compilation of matters including a history of Coventry'; Acc.2/4, f.23r, Anon., 'Manuscript concerning the history of Coventry'; Acc.2/5, f.48v, Anon., 'Annals of the City of Coventry'; BL. Add. 11364, f.20r, Anon., 'Annals of Coventry 1278-1703'.

⁴⁹ CRO. BA/A/A/26/2, 182, 332-3, 346, 351, 356, 368, 379, 395, 425, 455; BA/A/A/26/3, 609; L. Fox (ed.), *The Diary of Robert Beake* (Dugdale Society, Miscellany I, 1977), 132. Currently it is unclear when this ceremony ends, it is recorded in the third chamberlains book (CRO. BA/A/A/26/3) but this account book only continues until 1710, and thereafter no other Chamberlains' books survive.

⁵⁰ M. Dormer-Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book* (Early English Text Society, 105-109, 1907-13), 565, 843; W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (2nd edition, 1730), 151; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 201; James G. Kilmartin, 'Popular rejoicing and public ritual in Norwich and Coventry, 1660-c.1835', (Unpub. University of Warwick Ph.D., 1987), 81-107. From 1625 an annual feast hosted by the chamberlains was held to celebrate Lammas Day and some 200 guests attended.

⁵¹ *CSPD 1668-9*, 438; B. Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquities* (1870), 357.

proclaimed the market open at a number of central points - Cross Cheaping, Gosford Street and Much Park Street. The 'riding' had been in existence since the late-fifteenth century and survived the suppression of the attendant Corpus Christi plays and continued in its traditional form until the Civil War and was subsequently revived during the Restoration.⁵² In 1678 the Coventry Great Fair was opened with a new procession which built on the existing fair 'riding' adding new images and figures, most notably Lady Godiva, and inaugurated the later famous Godiva Cavalcade.⁵³ Although the original council order creating the Godiva Show is now missing, there can be little doubt that the initiative for the Godiva Cavalcade came from the civic authorities and mayor Michael Earle.⁵⁴

Although in certain respects 1678 clearly marks a significant break with Coventry's pre-Civil War ceremonial life, it is important to emphasise the initially modest nature of the Godiva Procession, its strong continuity with the fair 'riding' and the difficulties it encountered in its early days. Descriptions of the Godiva Cavalcade frequently rely on the pamphlet literature of the early-nineteenth century which describe the expanded and famous procession, but one which bears little resemblance to the Cavalcade between 1678 and 1717.⁵⁵ The 1678 Cavalcade was only slightly different from the earlier 'riding' as only two new elements had been introduced; first, each of the sponsoring guilds, the mayor, the sheriffs and the city each paid for a boy together with two men, one to accompany the boy and one to carry a banner, second, the figure of Lady Godiva.⁵⁶ Although the size of the procession was little different to the fair riding performed before 1678, the initial costs were high, £50 12s 5d was spent in London on the banners, in striking a commemorative medal, for clothing, and for Sir William Dugdale's fee of £42 13s to advise the city on the followers and the order of the procession.⁵⁷ In spite of such large financial investment the Godiva Cavalcade struggled to establish itself. There is evidence that in subsequent years rather than pay a boy to play Godiva, her portrait was carried and there was a marked reluctance by some guilds to bear the costs of the expanded procession. Seven years after the Show's inception the high costs led the Broadweavers to withdraw their financial support because the 'fair prooves more Expensive than the Company will back'. They subsequently re-joined the procession in 1688, but an order in 1692 capped their procession expenses at £5 per annum and every years the masters of the broadweavers would consult before agreeing to support the

⁵² Bliss Burbidge, *Old Coventry*, 55, suggests it was first performed in 1523, but guild payments for the armed guards show that the procession had begun by the late fifteenth century, see REED: *Coventry*, 58, 68, 71, 91 and *Leet Book*, 856-7.

⁵³ Some have suggested the Godiva procession was much older than 1678, see Edwin Sydney Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales* (1925), 74-76 although ambiguous on this point he favours an interpretation which suggests the procession was as old as the fair and that Godiva may well have been a part of the procession but during the period of 'puritan ascendancy' the show had been neglected or suppressed. In this scheme 1678 is merely a revival of the older procession temporarily suppressed by Coventry's puritan governors, see also VCH: *Warwick* 8, 247, and Joan Lancaster, *Godiva of Coventry* (Coventry, 1967), 61-71. There is no evidential basis to this point, there was clearly a fair procession in the sixteenth century but there is no mention of Godiva in any of the surviving records.

⁵⁴ A number of the guild companies all record the novelty of the Show and that it was initiated by the civic authorities, "Memorandum at the Request of Mr Maior & the Aldermen of this City, the Companie did Condise and agree, to set out a youth sutable to such an occasion, to Ride with Mr Maior at the Greate faire, the Charge wherof is as followeth." CRO. Acc.1494/20/1, f.209v, 'The Cappers' Account Book, 1495-1925', [emphasis added]; CRO. Acc.34/2, f.118r, 'The Broadweavers' and Clothiers' Account Book, 1636-1735'; CRO. Acc.8/7, f.35v, 'The Bakers' Company Account Book, 1660-1803'.

⁵⁵ This point was not lost on Coventry's local historians, including Reader, who universally acknowledge the limited scale of the early show and its subsequent development, Bliss Burbidge, *Old Coventry*, 56; William Reader, *The Origin and Description of Coventry Show Fair and Peeping Tom* (Coventry, 1826), 16; Poole, *Coventry*, 65.

⁵⁶ CRO. Acc.2/3, 88-9; Acc.2/5, f.52r; BL. Add. 11364, f.22v; Poole, *Coventry*, 64.

⁵⁷ CRO. BA/H/C/20/3, 304, 'Treasurers Books of Payments and Receipts, 1641-1690'; the guilds were called upon to make a significant financial commitment to the Show and in some cases this led them into debt, the Bakers overspent their 1678 accounts, 'the Overplus [overspend] money was Allowed by the Companie for the Charge of setting forth of the Follower', see CRO. Acc.8/7, f.35v.

Cavalcade, which suggests the question of participation was not fully settled.⁵⁸ Nor were the broadweavers the only guild questioning the efficacy of the Cavalcade and halting their involvement or capping their financial contribution.⁵⁹ The Show continued to be performed - visitors such as Celia Fiennes in 1697 and Sir John Percival in 1701 describe it as an annual event - but it appears unlikely that all of the guilds provided followers every year.⁶⁰ The procession's civic sponsors also faced financial constraints, imposed by the enveloping crisis in the city's finances. In 1717-18, under civic direction, there was a concerted attempt to re-launch the procession and it is clear from the surviving guild records that the mayor specifically requested each guild to provide followers.⁶¹ From this date the show began to develop into the famous procession as new figures were added such as Bishop Blaize and St George.⁶² Even once the procession had been revived problems continued and the show was re-launched in 1745. In the early-1770s rumours about its demise were rife, no procession was held in 1772 and in 1773 the show was revived only to be discontinued in the early-1780s and revived again in 1788.⁶³

In addition to the annual commemorative calendar there was a further layer of ceremony sponsored by the civic elite, the guilds and other voluntary societies. Provincial towns throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century provided lavish welcoming ceremonies for members of the royal family, important local notables and state officials. Both Chester and Coventry were on major road routes, from London to Ireland and the north west, and as such were frequently called upon to formally greet state dignitaries. These were elaborate and costly occasions - the greater the importance of the visitor the more time and money was spent preparing and choreographing the reception, for instance Coventry's welcome to James II in 1687 cost over £345. Chester's role as the gateway to Ireland meant the town frequently provided ceremonial receptions, about 20 between 1600 and 1700, and 15 between 1700 and 1750.⁶⁴ The building or inauguration of new civic amenities provided further opportunities for civic ceremony, for example the opening of Chester's Exchange in 1699, the cutting of the first sods for the Chester canal and its subsequent opening in 1772 or

⁵⁸ CRO. Acc.34/3, 'The Broadweavers' and Clothiers' Order Book, 1659-1741', 29, 44, 57; Acc.34/2, f.154r, 171v, 175r, 177v, 180v, 186r, 194r.

⁵⁹ CRO. Acc.15/2, f.249r, 271v, 'The Mercers Company Minute Book, 1602-1760'; Acc.99/4, 66, 'The Drapers' Company Minute Book, 1670-1755'; Acc.8/7, f.64r, f.70r, f.130r, 105r, 107r, in the years 1692, 1694, 1710-12 the Bakers' stopped paying for their Followers in the procession.

⁶⁰ C. Morris (ed), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1947), 114; Mark Wenger (ed.), *The English Travels of Sir John Percival and William Byrd II* (Columbia, 1989), 159.

⁶¹ CRO. Acc.15/2, f.293v, 296r, 298v; Acc.34/3, 83. All of the surviving guild accounts show continuous payments for the cost of the procession.

⁶² S. Markham, *John Loveday of Caversham, 1711-1789: The Life and Tours of an Eighteenth Century Onlooker* (Salisbury, 1984), 63.

⁶³ Anon, 'Old Coventry carnivals', in *The Coventry Herald* (3-4 July 1936); Ronald Clark and Patrick Day, *Lady Godiva: Images of a Legend in Art and Society* (Herbert Museum, Coventry, 1982), 24, 27; Kilmartin, 'Popular rejoicing', 354-7; *Birmingham Chronicle and Warwickshire Weekly Journal*, vol.2 no.60 (Thursday 31st May 1770); CRO. Acc.201 unfol., entries for August 1772 and May 1773, 'John Whittingham's Journal'; *Coventry Mercury and the Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Oxfordshire Advertiser*, no. 2627 (Monday, 10 May 1790).

⁶⁴ Chester's receptions see, CCA. CR60/83 f.25r, 27v, 28v, 32v; CCA. CR630/1 f.57r-58r, Anon., 'Manuscript History of Chester'; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 226, 229, 247, 251, 252, 253, 259, 260, 262, 264, 267, 268, 270, 274, 277, 281, 287; CCA. G2/1, Barber-Surgeons Company Book, 1606-1698', accounts for 1663, 1687, 1692; CCA. AB/3 f.92r, 108v, 171v, 186v-87r, 208v, 264r, 278v, AB/4, 13v, 33r, 82r, 113r, 121r; BL. Harl. 1944, f.93v; BL. Harl. 2125, f.61r, 61v, 65v, 169r; BL. Add. 39925, f.27r, Anon., 'A collection of the Mayors who have governed the City of Chester'; 'Comerbach diary', no.7627; 'Bishop Brian Walton', CS, 3 (1891), no.2171; 'A journey through Chester and North Wales in 1763', CS, 3rd ser., 22 (1927), no.5293; Frank Simpson, 'The guilds of Chester: The Smiths, Cutlers and Plumbers Company', *JAAHSCNW*, 19 (1912), 89, 90. For Coventry's receptions see, BL. Add. 11364 f.14v, 23r, 25r; BL. Harl. 6388 f.42r, H. Wanley(?), 'Collections relating to Coventry'; BL. Harl. 7017, f.287r, 290r, 294r; CRO. Acc.2/3, 86; CRO. Acc.2/5, f.35v, 37v, 53r, 57v; CRO. Acc.8/7, f.127r; CRO. Acc.34/2, f.147r; CRO. Acc.1494/20/1, f.221v, 223r, 227r, 241v.

the corner stones of the new Eastgate laid in 1768 after a procession including four lodges of freemasons and the corporation.⁶⁵ Electioneering was highly ceremonialised, the entrance of candidates to the city often replicated civic receptions, symbolically highlighting the issues of the campaign, such as Manley's entrance to Chester in 1733 when his followers carried boats to represent his support for the Dee Navigation Act.⁶⁶

These periodic inaugurations and receptions were buttressed by a further layer of regular small-scale ceremonies. The city's magistrates frequently paraded through the streets with the sword and mace carried before them - when attending divine service on Sundays, during Assize week, or before the mayor's weekly court - and Coventry's sheriffs were ordered never to leave their houses without being accompanied by their sergeants bearing the maces.⁶⁷ The guilds of Chester and Coventry regularly paraded through the streets of their respective cities. All held quarterly meetings and the masters were ordered to attend in their gowns or cloaks and at the end of each meeting Chester's skimmers and feltmakers would parade from the meeting house to the city centre, 'in order by two and two in Rancke till they come to the Milke Stoopes'.⁶⁸ Allowing for the fact that some guilds did not parade after their meetings, the existence of 26 guilds in Chester and 17 in Coventry, each holding 4 quarterly meetings, gives 126 and 68 meetings respectively and indicates the potential scale of guild ceremonies. Guild processions also filled the streets of provincial towns to celebrate important moments in the lives of their members, such as the chairing of new member's home after their reception feast or attendance at marriages and funerals of brethren's families.⁶⁹ Some guilds such as the Coventry Drapers annually perambulated the land and property they owned. The annual election of officers, initiated the guild year, transferred power and was an opportunity for sociability. The Coventry mercers dressed in their liveries accompanied the newly-elected master to church and then home, and Gloucester's weavers paraded the new officers through the streets accompanied by musicians and a great cake decked with flowers, silk ribbons and other ornaments.⁷⁰ The number of these small-scale ceremonies was considerable, and increases if the parades of freemasons, county societies and other clubs are added. The effect on urban society must have been that almost everyday the streets of provincial towns witnessed a ceremonial procession.

Chester, and Coventry in particular, have generally been taken to exemplify the current models of change to public ceremonies, therefore the divergence of both towns from that pattern poses a number of questions and problems. First, the development of Chester's ceremonial calendar is almost completely at odds with the dominant chronological framework. Chester's ceremonial calendar survived the later-

⁶⁵ Pigot, *History of Chester*, 127; Hanshall, *Stranger in Chester*, 35; CCA. G2/2, expenses May 29 1699; Frank Simpson, *The Town Walls of Chester* (Chester, 1910), 12, 22-3, 61.

⁶⁶ H. Taylor, 'An unpublished diary of the Reverend Peter Walkden in 1733-4', *JAAHSCNW*, 3 (1890).

⁶⁷ *HMC: 5th Report* (1876), 342; BL. Harl 2125, f.165v; Groombridge, *Calendar*, 161; *REED: Coventry*, 201.

⁶⁸ CCA. G4/1, unfol., order 5 (1681); G2/1 f.7r, order 2; CRO. Acc.1494/5/1 f.13r, 28th Jan. 1728, 'The Cappers' Company Book, 1670-1974'; quoted in F. Simpson, 'The guilds of Chester: the Skimmers and Feltmakers Company', *JAAHSCNW*, 21 (1915), 95; Donald Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), 32.

⁶⁹ CCA. CR63/2/131 f.64r, 'The Painters' Waste Minute Book'; CRO. Acc.100/4, unfol., orders 46 and 47, 'The Broadweavers' and Clothiers' Order Book, 1638/9'; Acc.625 unfol., order 21, 'The Carpenters' Order Book, 1686-1777'; CCA. G4/1 unfol., order 6; CCA. G2/1 f.10v.

⁷⁰ CRO. Acc.15/2 f.46r, f.76r-v, f.85v; William Bradford-Wilcox, *Gloucestershire: A Study in Local Government, 1590-1640* (New Haven, 1940), 146 n.23.

sixteenth century almost completely intact, apart from the loss of the Whitsun cycle. However, subsequent vigorous attempts at reform did not aim to suppress ceremony *per se*, only to remove certain elements or figures in ceremonies. Granted even this, mayor Henry Hardware met with popular resistance and his reforming mayoralty was immediately followed by the restoration of elements he removed from the Midsummer Show. In contrast to the standard, gloomy account of the period 1550 to 1640, Chester's ceremonial calendar not only survived, but prospered and developed before the Civil War. The addition of new calendar days, St George's day in 1610 and the addition of new sporting activities to the existing Easter sports, bolstered an already vibrant ceremonial calendar in 1640. In sum the period up to the Civil War must be regarded as one of vitality not decline. Coventry, provides greater support to current models of ceremonial decline and fits more closely the supposed general experience of provincial towns. This partially reflects the fact that Coventry was one of the earliest case studies and provided a corner stone on which the 'decline' model was built. The surviving ceremonies of the first half of the seventeenth century were of a smaller scale, there were less of them and they almost exclusively focused on celebrating civic authority. However, the focus on the decline of large-scale civic-religious ceremonies obscures the continuing practice of guild ceremonies, later augmented by the growth of clubs and societies, which meant that urban streets were still the venue for numerous ceremonial occasions.

The Restoration did not presage an immediate or straightforward revival of ceremony and the burgeoning of ceremonial life proves to be somewhat optimistic in both towns. Although the Godiva Cavalcade was first performed in 1678, it struggled to establish itself throughout the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century and there was a lack of enthusiasm from some guilds unwilling to bear the additional costs. The 'early' cavalcade actually differed little from the pre-Civil War market 'riding' and only after 1717-18 did the cavalcade begin to develop into the nationally-renowned Godiva pageant, but even this continued to be troubled by intermittent performances in the 1770s and 1780s. Surrounding the centre-piece Godiva cavalcade, all of the ceremonies revived at the Restoration were almost identical in form, content and scale to their pre-Civil War counterparts. At Chester almost the entirety of the pre-Civil War ceremonial calendar, with the exception of the Easter Monday archery contest, was reinstated within 12 years of the Restoration. However, all struggled to reassert themselves, suffering from problems of erratic performance, some resistance to the high costs and poor attendance. The later-seventeenth century therefore appears not as a period of revival but as a final phase in the reorganisation and ultimately removal of the ceremonial calendar that emerged in the first 50 years of the sixteenth century. Thus Chester's ceremonial declined in the later-seventeenth century and emerged in the eighteenth century slimmed down and reorientated with a new focus on the Easter race week.⁷¹

3.iii. English provincial towns and the ceremonial calendar, c.1600-1770

The experiences of Chester and Coventry alert us to a number of potential problems with the model of ceremonial decline. First, the static nature of the pre-Reformation ceremonial calendar and the attendant

⁷¹ Borsay, 'All the town's a stage', 229.

notion that the calendar was deeply rooted in provincial urban society. Chester and Coventry provide an important counter to this thesis and illustrate how the ceremonial calendar was constantly evolving. Coventry's calendar had developed in the fifteenth century - the Hock Tuesday plays were first performed in 1416, the watch on St Peters and Midsummer in 1421, the Lammas Ridings by 1474, the fair 'riding' prior to 1469, the Corpus Christi procession by 1392, and the perambulation of the town walls in 1535. At Chester the ritual calendar of the Reformation period had only fully emerged in the preceding 50 years, the Sheriffs Breakfast in 1511, the Midsummer Show in 1499, the Whitsun Plays in 1521; the only ceremonies that pre-date this were the Christmas Watch (1397), and possibly the Homage on Shrove Tuesday, whose origins are unclear but clearly pre-date 1540.⁷² In other words both calendars had only recently emerged - Coventry's during the fifteenth century and Chester's within 30 years of the end of the fifteenth century.

Hutton's more wide-ranging survey illustrates that this process was not unique - civic watches and Corpus Christi pageants were products of the late-fourteenth century and in general many of Tudor England's rituals and customs had been introduced or embellished within living memory.⁷³ The urban calendar on the eve of the Reformation had only emerged in the generations directly preceding it or in some cases within living memory. The morris was taken up in market towns from the 1500s onwards, the famous pageant of St Thomas the Martyr was introduced to the existing Canterbury midsummer watch in 1503-4, the Corpus Christi pageants of Louth (Lincolnshire) were introduced in 1520, only 20 years before they were suppressed at Ipswich. Even where Corpus Christi pageants were long established, such as at Chester and Exeter, they had both subsequently been moved to Whitsun week in 1521 and 1414 respectively.⁷⁴ The ceremonial calendar was therefore not static but constantly evolving, and many of the rituals removed in the later-sixteenth century were of relatively recent origin. Given that much of the pre-Reformation ceremonial calendar had recently been established it is difficult to represent the later-sixteenth century as a unique period of change and decline. This line of thought assumes the ceremonies removed were deeply-rooted and long established, and consequently their removal was a major blow to urban culture but the evidence for their more recent foundation leads us to re-think the proposition. Mervyn James suggests that some towns pre-Reformation ceremonies were poorly supported, for example the Beverley play cycle had little guild support and abruptly ceased in 1520, or Exeter's Corpus Christi procession which he suggests was an exclusively ecclesiastical rite.⁷⁵

The second problem is the tendency to equate the decline of civic-religious ritual with the wholesale removal of urban ceremony *per se*, which ignores the heterogeneous experience of provincial towns and the difference between civic-religious and civic ceremony. Standing alone Chester and Coventry prove little, being open to the challenge that they were exceptional, somehow bucking the trends that enveloped most

⁷² REED: Coventry, 1, 7-8, 48, 83-4; Gooder, *Coventry's Town Walls*, 22.

⁷³ Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 59-62.

⁷⁴ Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 59, 61; Brigstoke-Sheppard, 'Canterbury marching watch', 34; Corpus Christi play moved by order of the mayors' court 18 June 1414, see John M. Wasson (ed.), REED: *Devon* (Toronto, 1986), 82-3; Chester's play cycle was moved somewhere between 1471 and 1521, see D. Mills, 'Chester's mystery cycle and the 'mystery' of the past', *THSLC*, 137 (1987), 13.

⁷⁵ James, 'Ritual, drama and the social body', 13-4, 23-4; REED: *Devon*, xvi.

provincial towns. However, a steadily mounting body of evidence unearthed largely in the county surveys of the Records of Early English Drama reveals that authorised civic ceremonies not only persisted but thrived in many provincial towns from the later-sixteenth century. Collinson recently proposed a similar argument, that of provincial towns embellishing and developing a new 'slimmed-down, secular and increasingly civic-cum-martial festive culture'.⁷⁶ As Cressy argues in his survey of the developing national calendar of celebration 'civic and ecclesiastical authorities worked to suppress some observances and sponsor others'.⁷⁷ Thus, just as some ceremonies were found to be no longer useful or compatible to changing religious sensibilities, other already existing ceremonies were augmented or new ones created to replace those removed in the second half of the sixteenth century. Essentially two types of towns can be identified for the period from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century: a small number of towns retained the most significant elements of their annual ceremonial calendars, allowing for the loss of civic-religious ceremonies - Chester, Carlisle, Salisbury, Kendal and Maldon; a second larger group of towns, continued to support a calendar primarily focused on the authorised political ceremonies - Coventry, York, Nottingham, Kings Lynn, etc.⁷⁸ A unifying factor across both categories was the replacement of the losses created by the removal of civic-religious ceremony as new elements were added to ceremonial calendars.

Carlisle is an example of a town in the first category. After the Corpus Christi procession was removed the corporation continued to patronise and support a variegated ceremonial calendar beginning with the mayoral election, a few days after Michaelmas, and followed by Gunpowder Day, Christmas, Shrove Tuesday, Ascension Day, and St John's and St Peter's Eve. The mayoral election was marked by processions and trumpeters to publicly announce and mark the transition of power. Gunpowder Day was celebrated with entertainments, orations by the scholars of the Free School, music and juggling, and Christmas with similar festivities, including the appointment of a Lord Abbot.⁷⁹ Shrove Tuesday was lavishly supported by the civic authority's financial sponsorship of music and games, notably a football match.⁸⁰ The liberties of the city were ridden on Ascension Day by the corporation and guilds accompanied by musicians, and the day ended with a series of entertainments and fireworks.⁸¹ The civic year concluded with the watches on St John's and St Peter's Eve, and these were the only elements of Carlisle's ceremonial calendar which showed any sign of declining support on the part of the civic elite.⁸² Chester and Carlisle are two of the best-documented cases of towns in which the ceremonial calendar largely survived the reforms of

⁷⁶ Quote from P. Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in C. Durston and J. Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), 44, 42-6; Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 187, argues a similar case 'all parties looked benevolently upon the development of Protestant civic pageantry to replace that removed by the Reformation', 187; Berlin, 'Civic ceremony', 15-27 notes the revamping of the Lord Mayor's show to replace the midsummer watch and other pre-Reformation ceremonies; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (1989), ch.5.

⁷⁷ Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 13.

⁷⁸ With additional research the first group of towns would probably be expanded.

⁷⁹ Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (eds.), *REED: Cumberland, Westmorland and Gloucestershire* (Toronto, 1986), 68, 70-1, 75, 80, 82, 86-7, 90, 92, 96-8, 100, 103, 108-9, 114, 121, 124 (hereafter *REED: CWG*); Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 163; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 147-8.

⁸⁰ *REED: CWG*, 65, 67, 69, 71, 83, 87, 90, 93, 97, 101, 102, 106, 108, 115, 121, 123.

⁸¹ *REED: CWG*, 66-7, 68, 72, 77, 81, 83, 88, 90-1, 94-5, 98, 116, 119. Ascension day was also marked by guild festivities, the tanners company and merchants company held a feast after the ride, see *REED: CWG*, 73, 82, 85, 89, 92, 96, 99, 105, 110-11, 113, 114, 117, 120.

⁸² *REED: CWG*, 79, 104, 107.

the mid-sixteenth century onwards, but they were not unique - Burford, Salisbury, Shrewsbury, Kendal and Marlborough all retained the major elements of their ceremonial calendars.

The largest number of towns fall into the second category continuing to support a wide range of 'authorised' civic ceremonies. Often highly localised, each town supported a calendar celebrating specific rights, yet they were united in the celebration of common themes - the economic and political rights of each town: perambulating the boundaries, establishing river rights in aqua perambulations, opening common lands, opening fairs, civic elections and occasional ceremonies to mark civic achievements such as the building of a new town hall, and formal greetings for royalty and state functionaries. The most important of these was the annual mayoral election and public inauguration which was celebrated in a similar fashion in most corporate towns and generally marked the beginning of the civic year. Norwich celebrated the inauguration of its mayor with a procession which re-used some of the elements removed from the St George's day procession suppressed in 1559 - the figures of St George and the dragon were transferred to the inauguration procession probably at the end of the sixteenth century and the procession included armed guards, possibly a tableau depicting the fight between St George and the dragon, accompanied by a fool, and in the evening a firework display.⁸³ Many other towns held ceremonial mayoral inaugurations, which although perhaps not as elaborate as Norwich, included carefully-ordered processions to and from the church to hear a sermon, to the town hall for the swearing-in ceremony and feast, and at the end of inauguration day a civic procession accompanied by large numbers of well wishers to attend the newly elected mayor to his home.⁸⁴

The boundaries or jurisdiction of the city and its economic rights, common lands, the control of markets and levying of tolls constituted the second major element of 'authorised' civic ceremonial. Perambulations of the jurisdictional boundaries followed one of three patterns - they were held annually (Norwich), septennially (Chester) or on an irregular basis (Colchester). All follow a fairly standard model - a procession of councillors under the leadership of the sheriffs or mayor, musicians, the freemen or the guild companies, and young people so they could learn the boundaries of the city.⁸⁵ In similar manner, control and jurisdiction over rivers was symbolically enacted through aqua perambulations, 'fishing days' as they

⁸³ D. Galloway (ed.), *REED: Norwich 1540-1642* (Toronto, 1984), 47, 102, 159, 163, 178, 183-4, 195, 208. In fact the civic and guild accounts may not do full justice to the scale of Norwich's mayoral celebrations and the death of thirty three people in 1611 trampled during the evening firework display may be more indicative of the scale, see P. Browne, *The History of Norwich; from the Earliest Records to the Present Time* (Norwich, 1814), 33, '1611. The guild kept with great splendour: a grand pageant on tomblond, and in the evening a fire-work, some part of which breaking, the crowd of people was so great that no less than 33 persons were trodden down and pressed to death, on which an order was made, that no more fire-works should be played off on rejoicing nights.' Celia Fiennes visited Norwich just before the annual mayoral inauguration and comments on how elaborate the preparations were, householders in the same street as the mayor elect whitewashing their houses, *Fiennes' Journeys*, 149. For its further elaboration in the eighteenth century, see Kilmartin, 'Popular rejoicing', 290-334.

⁸⁴ For instance Bristol, Cambridge, Coventry, Exeter, Gloucester, Kings Lynn and York, see Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, 107; J. E. Foster (ed.), *The Diary of Samuel Newton: Alderman of Cambridge, 1662-1717* (Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1890), 23, 32-3, 52-3, 63-4, 67-9; Maurice Exwood and H. L. Lehmann (eds.), *The Journal of William Schellinks' Travels in England 1661-1663* (Camden Society, 5th ser., 1, 1993), 155; *REED: Devon*, 168-70; R. Newton, *Eighteenth Century Exeter* (Exeter, 1984), 7, 42-44; Palliser, *Tudor York*, 64; David Harris-Sacks, 'Celebrating authority in Bristol, 1475-1640', in S. Zimmerman and Ronald Weissman (eds.), *Urban Life in the Renaissance* (Cranbury, 1989), 191. For the difference between the more orderly processions earlier in the day and the one accompanying the mayor home after the inauguration swearing-in and supper, see *Samuel Newton's Diary*, 3 and *Prescott's Diary I*, 170.

⁸⁵ *VCH: Essex*, 9, 230; *REED: CWG*, p.66, 67, 72, 77, 81, 83, 88, 90, 91, 95, 98, 116, 119; *REED: Norwich*, 117, 119, 123-4, 125, 128, 130-1, 132, 155, 158, 161, 168, 186-7; Newton, *Eighteenth Century Exeter*, 28-9; Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 217.

were often known.⁸⁶ The right to hold fairs and charge tolls was often symbolised in a fair-opening procession made up of the usual figures plus, in a number of towns, a glove, the symbol of a fair, was carried on a pole in the procession or hung up to denote the fair opening.⁸⁷ The one element of this sanctioned ceremonial calendar that appears to be poorly observed and in decline was the marching watch, often held on Midsummer or St Peter's Eve.⁸⁸

In some towns the removal of ceremony led to the creation of new events or an existing festivity was extended. This process emphasises the dynamism of the urban ceremonial calendar and highlights how a period of removal and suppression was often followed by a phase of adaptation and invention.⁸⁹ This process cannot be identified in all towns, but a significant number attempted to fill the void left by the removal of midsummer watches and Corpus Christi processions - Canterbury, Carlisle, Coventry, Norwich, Plymouth and York all provide good examples of this practice.⁹⁰ The clearest example is Plymouth corporation's continued support for May Day until the 1590s, when it was gradually replaced by Freedom Day. Freedom Day (23 September) was first added to the town's calendar in 1589 and from the surviving financial accounts it appears that as support for May Day declined, the Freedom Day celebrations were expanded as a suitable replacement. By the early-1620s corporate sponsorship of May Day had ceased and Freedom Day had become the central focus of the civic calendar.⁹¹ Interestingly Plymouth corporation's

⁸⁶ For instance Cambridge, Chester, Colchester, Newcastle, York, Oxford, see *Samuel Newton's Diary*, 11; *VCH: Essex*, 9, 159, 231, *VCH: Essex*, 2 (1907), 435; *REED: York*, xviii; D. Palliser, 'Civic mentality and the environment in Tudor York, in J. Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town* (1990), 213; *VCH: Yorkshire, City of York* (ed. P. M. Elliot, Oxford, 1961), 179, 238; Chester's inspection of the river by the sergeant of the Dee was re-instituted in 1705, see William Ayrtton, 'Records relating to the river Dee, and its fisheries,' *JAAHSCNW*, 3 (1854), 242-4.

⁸⁷ At Cambridge, the Reach, midsummer, Bartholomew and Stourbridge fairs; Colchester's midsummer and St Denis' fairs; Coventry's Great Fair; Exeter's Lammass fair; and at Walsall all were opened by processions of civic officers which announced the town's jurisdiction over the fair, *Samuel Newton's Dairy*, 29-30, 31-2, 48-9, 51, 61; *VCH: Essex*, 9, 272-3; *REED: Devon*, 167; S. Shaw, *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire*, vol.2 (1801), 165.

⁸⁸ In the first half of the sixteenth century a large number of towns recorded holding midsummer watches - Barnstaple, Bristol, Carlisle, Chester, Coventry, Exeter, Gloucester, Liverpool, London, Nottingham and Totnes. Unlike many other civic ceremonies they disappeared in considerable numbers and in the period leading up to the Civil War only Burford, Canterbury, Chester, Exeter, Nottingham, Plymouth and York, continued to perform annual midsummer watches, although of these many seem to have been struggling in the early-seventeenth century and none survived the outbreak of the Civil War, see Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 40, 202. The Burford procession seems to have survived at least to the Civil War and possibly beyond, see D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987), 46-7. Canterbury's watch continued through Elizabeth's reign but began to falter in the early-seventeenth century, see *HMC: Ninth Report* (1883), 148-55. Exeter's payments for the midsummer watch stop in 1624, see *REED: Devon*, 154, 159, 160, 162, 165, 173, 174, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 184, 186, 187, 190, 192; for Plymouth's continued watch, see *REED: Devon*, 221, 238, 240, 241, 250, 261, 262, 263, 270. At Nottingham in 1609 it was noted that the St Peter's and Midsummer Eve watches were 'slenderly performed', fining those who refused to attend and abolishing the former watch, see Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 158, 163-4.

⁸⁹ Berlin, 'Civic ceremony', 15-27, makes a similar point - the ceremonial life of late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century London became more elaborate as the watch declined, the scale and importance of the mayoral inauguration grew.

⁹⁰ At Canterbury the Thomas Beckett procession and pageant was initially reformed and subsequently fell into disuse after 1554. The gap left in the ceremonial calendar was filled by a marching watch on Ascension Eve throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, by 1618 it had become a feast for civic officials and in 1625 there were attempts to revive the watch, *HMC: Ninth Report*, 157, 160, 162. York's Corpus Christi play cycle was suppressed in 1548 and the Christmas Yule procession in 1572. Between 1580 and 1583 the annual Sheriffs Riding on Midsummer was markedly altered, and expanded to provide a new focus to the ceremonial calendar. In the 1590s performances became more erratic and Hutton argues the show was last performed in 1606. However this appears to be mistaken - the Sheriffs Ride continues to be mentioned in the York House Books, but it is possible that it had become a much smaller scale affair, see A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson (eds.), *REED: York, Volume 1* (Toronto, 1979), 307, 323, 341, 392-3, 396, 399-400, 403, 405-12, 414-7, 419, 420, 423, 427, 429, 435, 439, 441, 444, 445, 448, 452-3, 458-9, 463, 468-9, 474, 475, 478-81, 485, 490-2, 495, 520, Palliser, 'Civic mentality and the environment', 213, *VCH: Yorkshire, City of York*, 179, Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 121, 158. Hutton's argument may reflect his source which is *REED: York* in which the editors drop references to the Midsummer Show after 1606 when the organisation of the muster passed from the control of the city to the Lord President of the North, *REED: York*, xv. Norwich added two new 'circumstantial commemorations' to the civic calendar Commotion Day, a celebration of the defeat of Kett's rebellion, and Armada Day, and from the later-sixteenth century began to expand the mayoral inauguration, see *REED: Norwich*, 117, 119-20, 122. At Carlisle the existing Shrove Tuesday revelry was embellished in the late 1620s when a cockpit was built on the Kings Moor and cockfighting, some form of gunnery or artillery contest introduced and in the 1620s horse races, see *REED: CWG*, 91-2, 98, 108, 112, 115, 119, 121, 123.

⁹¹ Freedom Day first appears 1588-89; thereafter the payments for Freedom Day and May Day compete with one another, but gradually the

continued patronage of both the May festivities, until the early-1620s, and Freedom Day highlight the problems with the over-worked causal link between ceremonial suppression and civic magistrates of a 'godly' persuasion.

In addition to the development of new local ceremonies, civic calendars were enhanced from the 1560s by the evolution of accession day (17 November), the anniversary of Elizabeth I's accession, popularly known as 'coronation day'. This celebration spread to provincial towns in southern England in the 1570s and the north by the middle of the decade. Bridgnorth corporation added a bonfire celebration in 1576, at Ipswich the schoolmasters presented pageants in 1583, and Oxford corporation began with a sermon in 1571, later adding organ music, fireworks, drummers and bonfires. Elizabeth's accession was not universally celebrated, notable exceptions were Newcastle upon Tyne and York, and even in towns where her accession was commemorated it was not always performed annually.⁹² From the later-sixteenth century England began to witness the evolution of a national Protestant ceremonial calendar drawn heavily on such national and dynastic anniversaries. The celebrations of 5 November, the delivery from popery, was patchy until the marriage of Charles I to Henrietta Maria transformed it and between 1625-40 it emerged as Bonfire Night.⁹³ The emergence of a national calendar again emphasises the fluidity of ceremony - successive monarchs and their anniversaries were celebrated, superseded by new celebrations, only to be revived again to suit political exigencies. Bishop Goodman explains the nature of this dynamism and its causes:

After a few years, when we had experience of the Scottish government, then - in disparagement of the Scots and in hate and detestation of them - the Queen did seem to revive. Then was her memory much magnified - such ringing of bells, such public joy and sermons in commemoration of her ... and, in effect, more solemnity and joy in memory of her coronation than was for the coming in of King James.⁹⁴

The chronology of ceremonial decline from the Reformation to the Civil War followed by a revival after the Restoration appears to be at odds with much of the research generated by the Records of Early English Drama county surveys and work on the developing Protestant national calendar. First the approach is a static one and ignores the constant evolution of the ceremonial calendar. Accordingly it is a mistake to see the ceremonies removed as deeply rooted expressions of community - they had not existed for 'time immemorial' and were on the whole of relatively recent foundation, created in the fifteenth and early-sixteenth century. The ceremonial calendar was therefore constantly changing and the idea of decline needs

Corporation begin to patronise May Day less, the last civic payments for morris dancers are in 1605 and the last time the Corporation contributes to the painting and erection of the May pole was in 1578. From the financial year 1602-3 Freedom Day clearly begins to replace May Day, in the years 1603-4, 1605-6, there are no payments for either event, however from 1606-7 to 1608-9 there are only payments for Freedom Day, in 1609-10 both events received civic support, then Freedom Day reasserts itself between 1610-11 and 1611-12. In 1612-13 payments for both reappear, but thereafter 1613-14 to 1621-22 and 1622-23 to 1641-42 payments are only made for Freedom Day, except in 1622-23 when payments are made for both, see REED: *Devon*, 247, 252, 259-60, 261-2, 263, 263-4, 264-77. 'Freedom Day' continued to be celebrated until 1792 see, Crispin Gill, *Plymouth: A New History* (Newton Abbot, 1979), 104 & 212.

⁹² This discussion is largely based on Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 146-151, and D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, ch.4-5.

⁹³ Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 183-87.

⁹⁴ Quoted in C. Haigh, 'Introduction', in C. Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 1984), 7-8.

to be situated firmly in this context. The later-sixteenth century did not witness the decline of ceremony *per se*, rather it is better characterised as witnessing the decline of civic religious ceremony. Equating the decline of civic-religious ceremony with the removal of all public ceremonial has obscured the distinct chronologies of these two types of ceremony and generated a misleading argument and chronology. Civic ceremonies, with the possible exception of marching watches, survived and in many cases expanded to fill the gaps created by the suppression of civic-religious ceremony, a process enhanced by the evolution of the national Protestant calendar from the later-sixteenth century. Finally the focus on the large-scale civic-religious ceremonies of Corpus Christi and Whitsuntide misrepresented the real character of provincial urban ceremony. Although this period witnessed the removal of a significant proportion of urban ceremony, it was disproportionately focused on the large-scale festivities. Beneath this layer existed a series of daily ceremonies embedded in the daily activities of civic authorities, parishes and guild companies. The elections of mayors, opening of fairs, court sessions, boundary perambulations, wall inspections, and the like continued to be symbolically celebrated and publicised. The guilds, parishes, and later clubs and societies, continued to celebrate the election of officers, the funerals of members, quarterly meetings, reception feasts and chairings, and parishioners continued to ceremonially perambulate the bounds. Beneath the public, large-scale ceremonies of the late-medieval town, was a layer of activity which barely figured in the decline model but its existence further demonstrates the continued relevance and vitality of civic ceremony.

Given this continued vitality and the expansion of the national calendar, the scale of any post-Restoration revival needs to be re-thought. Borsay argues there were three areas of 'elite' ceremony which prospered: receptions for dignitaries, the 'daily routine' of polite culture, and political rituals such as chairings; and two types which went into decline: civic ceremonies and cyclical commemorative events.⁹⁵ Chester's experience partially confirms this - the cyclical commemorative ceremonies of midsummer and the Shrove Tuesday Homage had been removed by the early-eighteenth century. However, other cyclical commemorative ceremonies, such as the Christmas Watch and licensing of minstrels continued alongside a robust calendar of civic ceremonies - the mayoral inauguration, riding the bounds, and those associated with the inauguration of new civic projects, the Exchange or the Chester canal - and a host of national events, monarchs birthdays, the coronation, military victories etc. Coventry retained a robust calendar of civic ceremonies, focused on the mayoral inauguration, the Lammes Riding and the celebration of national events. In contrast the Godiva show, usually taken as representative of the ceremonial revival of the later-seventeenth century, struggled to embed itself, suffering a faltering start, and only began to fully develop from the 1720s onwards. Both towns between approximately 1600 to 1750 held large numbers of receptions for state and royal dignitaries, there does not appear to have been any growth in this practice after the Restoration, although this may relate to their location on major road routes and consequently the already frequent visits of state dignitaries. On balance there seems to be little evidence of any real decline or revival in urban ceremonial after the Restoration, rather a continuation of the constant evolution of the calendar - after Chester removed the Shrove Tuesday Homage and Easter archery contest, the horseracing in Easter

⁹⁵ Borsay, 'All the town's a stage', 232, 230-234.

week became the new focus but this too was accompanied by a civic procession to open proceedings. Furthermore if we take into account the growth of new clubs and societies and the national calendar, the eighteenth century appears to witness as much evolution and change in its ceremonial calendar as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

3.iv. *Urban ceremony: participation and purpose*

Having discussed the ceremonial calendar and its survival, it is important to focus on why ceremony continued to be relevant to urban communities. It has already been suggested the later-sixteenth century should be characterised as a dynamic phase, witnessing the decline of civic-religious drama and the first phase in the development of a new Protestant civic ceremony. But this dynamism was inherent in the ceremonial calendar and therefore the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also witnessed the continuing evolution of the ceremonial calendars. Yet in the eighteenth century the relevance and importance of urban ceremony was increasingly being questioned. Critics such as Dean Tucker in Bristol rejected guilds, corporations and all things associated with them as irrelevant to the modern world, and in Birmingham William Hutton was developing similar arguments about the damaging effect of incorporation.⁹⁶ There is therefore a need to explain why ceremony continued to be relevant in particular towns and what was specific to these communities. This discussion rejects the neat, overarching teleology of cultural polarisation and the associated idea of ceremony's functional value, in favour of a model which emphasises that the complex relationship between ceremony and townspeople is rooted in the dynamics of individual urban societies. Currently urban historians present the history of ceremony as one of discontinuity and the historiography emphasises two phases of vigorous change in the role and scale of ceremony - the later-sixteenth and later-seventeenth centuries.

The earliest studies of urban ceremony concentrated on the late-medieval town, understanding its role as a mechanism for social solidarity. Corpus Christi processions, midsummer watches and whitsuntide, were described as largely collective enterprises, a communal activity which enabled diverse social groups to express a shared identity.⁹⁷ Although these studies recognised that participation was often limited to the 'restricted communal membership' the implications were obscured in favour of a more overtly functionalist interpretation of ceremony as a 'societal mechanism ... promoting social cohesion and controlling some of its inherent conflicts'.⁹⁸ In a highly mobile urban society ceremony helped foster common identities, provided opportunities for formal sociability and for expressions of social solidarity, 'a token of societie'.⁹⁹ It is generally thought the decline in ceremony from the mid-sixteenth century therefore had a significant impact on the quality of urban social relations and represents a major break with the 'communal tradition'

⁹⁶ J. Barry, 'Bristol pride: civic identity in Bristol c.1640-1775', in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton, 1996), 29; William Hutton, *A History of Birmingham* (2nd edition, Birmingham, 1783), 326; see also Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through The Whole Island of Great Britain* (ed. Pat Rogers, 1986), 362.

⁹⁷ Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 64-6; Berlin, 'Civic ceremony', 18; James, 'Ritual, drama and the social body', 9.

⁹⁸ It should be emphasised that many of the festivities which accompanied ceremony, such as bonfires on Midsummer and St Peter's Eve, are depicted as 'informal', i.e. spontaneous expressions of neighbourliness. These descriptions rely heavily on the nostalgia of John Stow and ignore the issue how the bonfires were organised and how the term 'neighbourliness' could be socially and ideologically shaped, see Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 58, 65, 69.

⁹⁹ REED: *Chester*, 351.

of the later-medieval period. Any surviving ceremonies are seen as attenuated relics, no longer the great communal celebrations of the medieval town which had been reorientated to become the preserve of the civic elite, acting as celebration of their power and authority.¹⁰⁰ The second major shift comes at the Restoration and deepens this dislocation between ceremony and the culture and identity of townspeople. The growth in ceremony after 1660 is broadly linked to two historical processes - the commercialisation of leisure and the emergence of polite culture. Civic ceremony has re-orientated to become a commercial tool, a way of advertising the town, generating trade and especially gentry custom which had little connection with its predecessors, 'the original purposes of the ceremony must have held little significance'. The most dynamic element of this ceremonial revival was the growth of polite, or *urbane*, culture, an exclusive arena of elite sociability. Thus the area of urban life witnessing the greatest revival of ritualised forms of behaviour was one which in fact emphasised the widening gap between ceremony and the culture of townspeople, and is generally held to illustrate the emergence of separate spheres of elite and plebeian culture. The new ceremonies of polite culture and commercialised leisure therefore had little relationship with the wider cultural values of most townspeople.¹⁰¹

If we turn first to examine the most obvious discontinuity in ceremonial function after 1660, its new found commercial role, a major factor leading to the revival of ceremony was its economic utility - Phythian-Adams describes the Godiva procession as 'an advertising stunt' and Mills argues Chester's decision to move the Midsummer Show to whitsun was motivated by a 'desperate desire to increase trade'. The aim of such ceremonial revivals was not the improvement of urban social relations, but to reposition the town to win the patronage and custom of gentry society.¹⁰² However, this was not a new phenomenon and had long been recognised as one of the benefits of ceremony, in the sixteenth as in the eighteenth century. Large crowds were not simply spectators but potential customers - Dugdale thought Coventry's play cycle brought a 'yearly confluence of people to see that show was extraordinary great, and yielded no small advantage to this City', and Chester's Midsummer Show and whitsun play-cycle were of comparable profit to the town's shopkeepers.¹⁰³ The crowds and gentry who flocked to towns on annual calendar days were all potential customers and the role of Robert Amery, an ironmonger, and John Brereton, an innkeeper, in the creation and extension of the St George's Day races points strongly to the connection between ceremony and trade.¹⁰⁴ Ceremonial occasions with their associated hospitality, entertainments and sports provided a perfect opportunity to cement relationships between urban governors and the local gentry, who despite occasionally uneasy relations were important power brokers locally and nationally.¹⁰⁵ But ceremony

¹⁰⁰ Clark, 'Religious and cultural life', 4, 90, 117.

¹⁰¹ Borsay, 'All the town's a stage', 246-9.

¹⁰² Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen', 80; Mills, 'Chester's midsummer show', 141; *English Towns in Transition*, 149; Borsay, 'All the town's a stage', 240-46.

¹⁰³ Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 116; REED: *Chester*, 27, 297-8, 418, 478. The painter's company excused any brother from the banquet in 1633 because 'midsomer eve is a bussie tyme for all our brethren eich desiring to follow his bussnesse'. CCRO. Acc.201, unfol., entry May 1773, explains the purpose of the Godiva Cavalcade, 'to draw company to the town to spend money'; *The Origin and History of the Coventry Show Fair, Lady Godiva and Peeping Tom* (pub. D. Lewin, Coventry, u.d), 21; *The History of the Coventry Show Fair* (Meridew and Son, Coventry, 1826), 4.

¹⁰⁴ REED: *Chester*, 258, 360-1; BL. Add. 39925 f.28v.

¹⁰⁵ The Earl of Derby, Lord Mounteagle and Lord Strange attended the Homage and horse races on Shrove Tuesday and were 'well enterteind' by the mayor in 1579, see REED: *Chester*, 126; see also REED: *CWG*, 98. Large numbers of local gentlemen attended Chester

provided more than just commercial opportunities and the chance to glad-hand with the local gentry. The preparation of ceremonial paraphernalia, giants, banners, clothing, the erection of fences, whitewashing of buildings and laying out race courses, provided extensive employment opportunities for tailors, painters, carpenters, labourers, musicians and entertainers.¹⁰⁶ The Restoration did not signal a re-positioning of ceremony, its commercial and employment benefits, as well as its potential as an occasion to cultivate the gentry had long been recognised. It is difficult, therefore, to ascribe ceremony's continued relevance after 1660 to its new-found commercial role.

It is clear that there were areas of continuity across the traditional watershed of the Civil War and Restoration. One objective of ceremony was to present a conscious and idealised vision of urban society in the closely-planned and carefully-choreographed displays.¹⁰⁷ For the civic elite it offered the opportunity to represent and propagandise their authority, through the control of civic buildings and the use of civic regalia, a representation which was clearly not lost on contemporaries.¹⁰⁸ It was also an opportunity to assemble in a coordinated manner the city as a whole, or at least those parts that had some formal identity - the guilds, freemen and civic elite. It was an official version of the social structure which exaggerated some elements and neglected others - women, the non-free, etc. This portrayal was an archaic one, fixed at some point in the sixteenth century and although new elements could be added, its basic structure was not be altered. This same fixed and hierarchical spatial patterning can be seen in most processions, Chester's Midsummer Show, the Godiva Cavalcade and the various civic receptions for monarchs and state dignitaries.¹⁰⁹ These elaborately choreographed displays and the vitriolic disputes over precedence, allude to the importance of constituting the social structure in this manner. But it was a depiction of the social structure which was increasingly irrelevant as the process of economic and social change radically altered urban society.

Ceremonies were not, however, merely expressions of civic power or idealised projections of the corporate social hierarchy. They also operated to confirm and embedded horizontal 'class' loyalties and this

and Coventry's mayoral inauguration, Chester's Easter archery contest and the Shrove Tuesday Homage, see CCA. CR632/1 unfol.; Wickham Legg, *Relation of Short Survey*, 70; CSPD 1667-8, 4; Hewitt's *Journal*, 23-7, 34.

¹⁰⁶ REED: *Chester*, 298, 308, 327, 308, 346, 477-8, 479-82; REED: *CWG*, 66-72, 76, 80, 82, 83, 86, 88, 90-3, 95, 97-8, 102-3, 109, 111, 114, 116, 121, 123-4; REED: *Devon*, 252, 257, 261-2, 264-9, 271-7.

¹⁰⁷ It is important to emphasise how carefully planned and elaborate preparations for ceremonial occasions were and this indicates the seriousness with which such events were treated. Houses re-painted, streets cleaned, pavements and public utilities repaired prior to visits by monarchs and other important visitors, see REED: *Chester*, 305, 408-9, REED: *Coventry*, 401, 403-4. For the huge costs associated with ceremony, see CRO. Acc.2/1 f.102r, Coventry corporation's expenses when King James II visited in 1687 totalled £345 4s 4d; pageants were carefully scripted and choreographed, see Corser, *Chester's Triumph* and BL. Harl. 2057, f.36r, Harl. 2059, f.1r and REED: *Chester*, 258-60. See also *Fiennes' Journeys*, 149; L. Attreed, 'The politics of welcome: ceremonies and constitutional development in later-medieval towns', Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, 1994), 208-31.

¹⁰⁸ A York midwife testified to the date of birth of a girl she had delivered eleven years previously by 'accomptinge of the yeres of theme that were lorde maiors'. At the time John Lewes had been mayor she 'many times did se the sword and the mace borne before hime that same yere' and also named correctly the two mayor's who preceded him, see Palliser, *Tudor York*, 64-5; Palliser, 'Civic mentality and the environment', 209; CCA. CR 60/83, f.32v.

¹⁰⁹ At Chester the companies lined the streets with their guild banners in a carefully-conceived hierarchy arranged to reflect the rank and status of each guild and the traditional order of ceremonial processions. 'With the Companies and their banners *in order* on both sides of the street' (emphasis added), see BL. Harl. 2125 f.65v, f.61r, 61v, 65v; BL. Add. 11335 f. 23v-24r, 24v; BL. Harl. 2133, f.47v; CCA. CR630/1, f.57r; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 219-20; REED: *Chester*, 413, 418, 466, 474-6; Bodl. Ms. Top. Warks d.4, f.30v-31r, 'A List of ye Mayors and Sheriffs etc of Coventry ... 1344, to ye year 1686'. Note the similarity of the order and route of the Godiva Show with Coventry's pre-Reformation processions, see *Leet Book*, 220; Poole, *Coventry*, 64; Bliss-Burbidge, *Old Coventry*, 57-8; Schneider, *The Ceremonial City*, 133.

has increasingly been recognised as one of its primary roles and an important reason for ceremonies continued relevance, especially within a highly-mobile urban society.¹¹⁰ Wickham's study of the London Lord Mayor's Show noted the pageants were 'performed to two distinct audiences simultaneously', the Lord Mayor and his cavalcade, the 'primary audience', and a 'secondary audience' of spectators who saw the entirety of the cavalcade, but only parts of the pageants.¹¹¹ Three groups, the civic elite, the freemen and the crowd, can clearly be identified in terms of their relationship to ceremony and their differential participation in the processions, the associated sociability, their clothing and the spatially-segregated nature of their participation.¹¹² The importance of this approach points to two related issues, first ceremony operated to reinforce horizontal ties, most obviously for the civic elite, and the forms of interaction seen in different types of civic ceremony can help us explain why certain ceremonies survived while others were abolished or fell into disuse.

The civic elite were the 'primary actors', in all corporate boroughs they were the key participants who dominated the physical centres around which ceremonies were organised and they were the primary audience to whom the pageants were directly performed. They were the most frequent participants and there was a group of civic ceremonies, such as court processions and attending the mayor to church, in which they were the sole participants. In many other ceremonies the elite were the most prominent group. They controlled the selection of the mayor and were the foremost participants in the series of processions announcing the transfer of power. At civic receptions for royalty, state officials and aristocratic patrons, the elite played the central role exchanging gifts or, in the case of the monarch, handing over the symbols of power - the civic regalia.¹¹³ This prominence was confirmed by their domination of the central ceremonial spaces, such as the church or town hall, and often their involvement was spatially-segregated. The town hall was the centre of mayoral 'elections' and the elite selected the mayor in exclusive, private rooms to which other participants could not gain access.¹¹⁴ In street ceremonies they occupied spatially-exclusive areas, enclosed or fenced off from the crowd and other participants. At York the aldermanic bench received the King inside the gates of the city in an area 'railed in' and 'made higher', and at Chester the mayor and aldermen received visitors on a scaffold adjacent to the Pentice, symbolically erected next to the seat of civic power and the High Cross, the physical heart of the city.

¹¹⁰ S. Lindenbaum, 'Rituals of exclusion: feasts and plays of the English religious fraternities', in Twycross, *Festive Drama*, 54-65; B. McRee, 'Unity or division? The social meaning of guild ceremony in urban communities', and Sheila Lindenbaum, 'Ceremony and oligarchy: the London Midsummer Watch', both in Hanawalt and Reyerson, *City and Spectacle*, 189-207, 171-88, respectively.

¹¹¹ Glynn Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1660* (1959), vol.1, 59-61. Obviously not all pageants or plays were performed while moving and this negates Wickham's point somewhat, however the basic analytical distinction is useful in making us think of the often overlapping but distinct audiences and performers in all ceremonies.

¹¹² Developing Wickham's nomenclature, to remove any notions of passivity which the term 'audience' suggests, I term the different groups 'actors', to more fully encompass their role as both participants and spectators.

¹¹³ REED: *Chester*, 305-6, 398, 466-67; REED: *York*, 1, 550-51; REED: *Coventry*, 364-5; CRO. Acc.2/5, f.55v, f.57v; BL. Harl. 6388, f.56v; 'A journey in 1763', CS, 3rd ser., 22 (1927), no.5293. Royal entrances were not all conducted in an identical manner and receptions varied between towns but they follow a general pattern. The visiting dignitary was met by a party of civic officials at or outside the boundaries and accompanied into the city where (s)he was formally greeted. The mayor, aldermen and recorder symbolically handed over the civic regalia, received them back, and then provided an oration and gifts.

¹¹⁴ CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, f.137v; BL. Harl. 2125, f.147r; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 17, 30, 46; J. T. Evans, *Seventeenth Century Norwich: Politics, Religion and Government 1620-1690* (Oxford, 1979), 57, the example of Norwich is slightly different the freemen met in the guildhall and nominated two candidates for the magistrates who had withdrawn to their chamber; Borsay, 'All the town's a stage', 230;

Occupying the central location they were also the primary audience, the key group for whom any procession, pageant, oration or entertainment was performed.¹¹⁵ The copious amounts of feasting and sociability associated with such occasions also reflected these divisions. After most civic ceremonies the elite feasted separately, the mayor and his brethren at Carlisle's Ascension Day perambulation feasted together 'in the highe chamber', or the opportunity was taken to entertain the local gentry and associate with county society.¹¹⁶ On the occasions when townspeople were invited to the feasting, they attended as witnesses not participants, young freemen who were beneficiaries of Offley's charity and their sureties watched the civic elite feasting so 'they might beare witnes of the faithfull and upright dealinge'.¹¹⁷ Finally these divisions were reflected in the carefully-controlled sumptuary codes. Materials and colours were graded to reflect age and status distinctions within the corporate socio-political hierarchy, 'There should be a distinction made between the wife of a patrician and plebeian'.¹¹⁸ Ordinances frequently reminded all members of the formal social structure of the necessity to wear their 'formalityes' when attending any calendar occasion, 'everie one of this citie [Coventry] that by place is to weare scarlet shall duly weare scarlett...'.¹¹⁹ In processions of civic officers, freemen and guildsmen the sumptuary regulations helped delineate one group from another. Chester's mayor and aldermen attended church every Sunday in their formalities accompanied by the city's almsmen dressed in their cloaks and badges, leaving no doubt in any onlooker's mind as to the patterns of authority and charity.¹²⁰

The 'secondary actors', the freemen, either represented individually or collectively through the guild or militia companies, were formal participants, but their role was subordinate to the 'primary actors'. Their role was to accompany the elite in processions, the annual perambulations of the boundaries, the fair opening, to line the streets at civic receptions, symbolically confirm mayoral elections and provide financial support for the pageants. They participated in areas spatially-segregated from the elite and as a consequence the secondary actors rarely witnessed the focus of the ceremony, its pageant, oration or sermon. Instead they lined the streets at civic receptions while the elite waited for the visitor at the central location on a raised scaffold or rode with the guest. In processions they marched in an order which reflected their status and their position in the social hierarchy could easily be identified from their location in the procession aided by carrying guild banners and symbols of their trade.¹²¹ They rarely participated in the central focus of ceremonies, the sermons, gift-giving and associated hospitality for dignitaries and guests, instead using the

¹¹⁵ See n.113 above and *Chester's Triumph*, 2-7; *REED: Chester*, 260; *REED: Coventry*, 364-5. York's Midsummer Watch pageants were performed peripatetically throughout the city and watched by the civic elite in a series of locations spatially separated from other spectators, in front of the Common Hall gates, outside the mayor's house, where the elite and their wives were feasting together, and from rooms rented in Thomas Colthirst's house, see *REED: York*, 406, 411, 418, 420.

¹¹⁶ *REED: CWG*, 66-7, 68, 82-3, 86, 96, 100, 108; *CRO. BA/F/A/23/1*, f.269r-v; *CCA. CR632/1* unfol.; *REED: Chester*, 253-4, 260, 324, 353, 418-9, 434, 451; *Hewitt's Journal*, 24-7, 34; Wickham Legg, *Relation of a Short Survey*, 70; *VCH: Warwick* 8.

¹¹⁷ *CCA. AB/2*, f.28r.

¹¹⁸ Massinger *The City Madam* (1659), quoted in J. R. Planché, *The History of British Costume from the Earliest Period to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (3rd edition, 1874), 320.

¹¹⁹ *REED: Chester*, 217-8; *CCA. AB/2* f.97v, 119r, *AB/3* f.92r, 143v; *REED: Coventry*, 232, 364, 435, 446; *CRO. Acc.1494/5/1* f.13r; *CCA. P/Cowper*, vol.1, 220; P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), 221-8; *REED: York*, 1, 549, 584, 600, 609, 613; *VCH: Essex*, 9, 112, 278; *VCH: Cambridgeshire*, 3 (1959), 43; *Samuel Newton's Diary*, 29.

¹²⁰ *CCA. AB/3* f.91r.

¹²¹ *REED: Chester*, 326, 332, 356, 448, 384, 407, 448; Ridgeway, 'Chester goldsmiths', 87; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), 238.

occasion as an opportunity to hold separate feasts or drinkings among each guild or society.¹²²

The final group of 'participants' who have largely been ignored are the spectators ('tertiary actors') who it has often been assumed made no contribution as they were not formal participants and therefore merely passive onlookers.¹²³ Despite their lack of a formal role they were an essential component of the ceremonial occasion, and rather than being passive they in fact interacted extensively with performances. Public ceremonies always drew large crowds from the town and surrounding countryside and the mere rumour of a monarch's visit at Coventry caused 'droves of people from adjacent towns' to flock to the city.¹²⁴ Large crowds presented opportunities and problems for urban authorities - commercial opportunities in conjunction with the problem of policing the city and preventing the authorised production of the ceremony from being subverted by large crowds. Civic authorities struggled to control the crowd adequately and they frequently spilled on to and blocked the main processional route. Armed guards were employed to keep the crowd back or to force a way through the crowd for the parade, fireworks were scattered 'abroad to maintain [the] way for the rest of the show [procession]' and fences were erected before ceremonial occasions.¹²⁵ Guild companies lining the processional routes served a double purpose, one utilitarian and one symbolic, keeping the crowd in check as well as representing the socio-political corporate hierarchy. The carefully-choreographed visual image intended to be projected by the procession and consumed by the onlookers was often compromised by crowd behaviour. Members of the crowd attacked the figure of Peeping Tom in the Godiva procession, these attacks were so hostile he was removed from the show after one actor was killed, but this did not stop the crowd annually assaulting the statue of Peeping Tom in the High Street.¹²⁶ The narrow streets of many early-modern towns, together with large crowds and significant numbers of mounted figures, pageants, carriages or footmen created congested city streets. The 'crush' in the streets must have been characteristic of many ceremonial occasions and provided ample opportunity for petty criminal activity, a constant source of complaint for the organising authorities.¹²⁷ To escape the *melée* at street level,

¹²² REED: CWG, 66-7, 68, 83. The references to guild sociability after the Chester midsummer show are too numerous to list fully this is based on just two companies the joiners and the shoemakers REED: *Chester*, 168-9, 200-1, 203, 208, 213, 217, 223, 228-9, 255, 264-5, 270, 282, 288, 293, 297, 300, 303, 309, 313, 315-6, 319-20, 328, 333-4, 341, 344-5, 347, 350, 357, 362, 363, 369-70, 377-8, 384-5, 389-90, 394-5, 399, 403, 410, 414, 418-9, 420, 424-5, 430, 438, 444, 449, 454-5, 459-60.

¹²³ Spectator crowds have generally received little attention as a consequence of the historical study of the crowd as a political phenomenon. See George Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (1995), 4, who excludes 'crowds assembled on purely ceremonial occasions or crowds taking part in religious or academic processions; or "audience crowds"....'. Mark Harrison has noted how Rudé's formulation has led to the linguistic conflation of crowd and riot, creating the impression that crowds are mobs, see *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), 12. There are a number of exceptions to this general treatment of the crowd, see Thomas W. Lacquer, 'Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions 1604-1868', in A. L. Beier et al (eds.), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 305-355; B. Klein, 'Between the bums and the bellies of the multitude: civic pageantry and the problem of the audience in the late Stuart London', *London Journal*, 17 (1992), 18-26, builds on Burke's analysis and attempts to show different forms of behaviour which relate to the two social groups in the same crowd; P. Burke, 'Popular culture in seventeenth century London', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Early Modern England* (1985), 43, stressed the spatial differences between the patricians in the balconies above the streets and the 'blue apron' crowd down in the street.

¹²⁴ CCRO. Acc.2/5, f.53r, 57v; BL. Add. 11364, f.23r, 25r; BL. Harl. 7017, f.287r, f.295r; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 116; CCA. CX/3, f.21v; Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 37; 'Bishop Brian Walton', no.2171; 'A journey in 1763', CS, 3rd ser., 22 (1927), no.5293; REED: *Chester*, 297-8; P. Browne, *History of Norwich*, 33; REED: *Norwich*, xxi; Richard Jago, *Edgehill* (1767); *The Morning Chronicle* (31 May 1788); *Coventry Mercury*..., no. 2627 (Monday, 10 May 1790); Day and Clark, *Images of a Legend in Art and Society*, 22.

¹²⁵ REED: *Norwich*, 166, 184, 334; REED: *Chester*, 275, 281, 286, 298, 308, 314, 327, 346, 408, 415, 443, 459, 479; REED: CWG, 83.

¹²⁶ Kilmartin 'Popular rejoicing', 341; CCA. QSE9/69 (Quarter Sessions Examination), 30 June 1610 refers to a fight between the city musicians and Mr Dutton's men, i.e. the licenser of the minstrel court, on midsummer's day during the Midsummer Show when Dutton's men tried to stop the waits performing.

¹²⁷ REED: *Devon*, 271; Kilmartin, 'Popular rejoicing', 352-7.

the patrician elements of the crowd, local county gentry, wives of aldermen and mayors hired rooms or balconies overlooking the processional route, leaving the street to Peter Burke's 'blue apron' class and replicating the spatial segregation of the formal participants.¹²⁸ Lacking sufficient coercive forces, civic authorities had little control over the crowd and were unable to prevent interactions that mocked or undermined the authorised image. Nonetheless crowds were an essential part of the experience, the congestion and their reaction to the processions were an important element of urban ceremonial and in this sense the crowd constituted an informal layer of participants.

Civic ceremonies performed a number of roles within urban society which helps explain their continued relevance in the face of growing criticism from some quarters. Civic rituals reproduced power relations, they represented the utopian ideal of a harmonious society while at the same time publicising and reminding citizens of the authority of the elite and their potential coercive powers. Of greater importance was the way in which ceremonies confirmed and cemented horizontal links, 'class loyalties'. For the guilds and societies who were the backbone of much ceremonial, these occasions were an opportunity to stress and enact symbolically their membership of these organisations. In the urban world of constant flux, assailed by disease, economic downturn, business risk and failure, these occasions offered a symbolic reaffirmation of a person's membership of such organisations. Membership of such corporate bodies helped buttress and secure an individual's standing in the community through their right to access all of the benefits the guild or society had to offer - loans, bulk-buying, fixed prices and wages, support and charity for their families. The growing number of clubs and societies in the eighteenth century which continued to symbolically enact membership in such ways attests to the continued power of this medium. A similar process was at work for the civic elite, the participation in these events and particularly their domination of and exclusive involvement in many elements of ceremonies confirmed their horizontal affiliations. This is not to suggest that corporate elites were harmonious or free from faction, but that ceremonial events provided a symbolic actualisation of unity. They also confirmed their status as urban governors and their authority through their domination of all aspects of ceremonial events. In essence the class affiliation model fits neatly with these two groups and their participation, illustrating the continuity of symbolic meaning across the early-modern period. Ceremonies might endeavour to represent a social wholeness in their authorised image, but the nature and patterns of participation demonstrate that one of its foremost objectives and achievements was the affirmation of discrete horizontal ties. The most difficult group to fit into this schema is the crowd and it is almost impossible to retrieve their thoughts and cultural outlook. There was undoubtedly a division within the crowd which refracted many of the horizontal alignments identified among the participants - a patrician crowd in the balconies and hired rooms with the street left to the 'blue collar' elements. Whether this division was replicated in terms of differing interpretations of ceremony is impossible to determine, although descriptions of street-level crowd activity emphasise their disorderliness and the constant endeavours of the elite to prevent the authorised message of civic ceremonies being subverted.

¹²⁸ 'A journey in 1763', *CS*, 3rd ser., 22 (1927), no.5293; *REED: Chester*, 80-1.

The continued relevance of urban ceremonial also depended on the balance of support elicited from the three different groups outlined above. The legacy of the Civil War left society in general deeply divided and after 1660 many ceremonies had a paradoxically nostalgic feel together with a new-found relevance in the light of the experiences of the Civil War. Urban elites wanted to represent civic society as an essentially consensual polity despite the reality of urban politics and the way in which the divisions of the Civil War fed into continued and bitter faction-fighting, fuelled initially by corporation re-modelling and later by party. The creation of the Godiva procession reflects exactly these sorts of tensions. Coventry, famed for its 'puritan' and later dissenting tradition was a bitterly divided city and politics throughout the later-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was highly-charged, confrontational and fuelled by denominational conflict.¹²⁹ The initial impetus for the procession came from the mayor, Michael Earle, during a brief period of Anglican ascendancy on the council. Sir William Dugdale a noted anti-puritan advised the council about the constituents and order of the procession, their costumes, banners, and so on. The parade built on the earlier fair riding and replicated many of the pre-Reformation parades such as the St George's Day parade.¹³⁰ This appears to have been a deliberate decision on the part of the Anglican oligarchy to recreate an idealised image of the city, consciously nostalgic, but also intensely political in the contemporary setting. Omitted from this vision of Coventry society was any conflict and any dissenters a significant part of Coventry's post Restoration history. As Ralph Hope, a Coventry Anglican, informant on dissenter activities and fellow traveller suggests, the desire was to recreate the past, a past without dissenters and show that Coventry 'retain[ed] some relics of our pristine gallantry', in spite of its more recent reputation as a 'fanatic' town. It is also perhaps worth pointing to the difficulties the procession faced up to the 1720s and relating them to the political nature of the Godiva Cavalcade. The broadweavers and other leading guilds were heavily permeated by dissenters and their reluctance to support the Godiva Show may relate to the contested meaning of the procession.¹³¹

The continued relevance of ceremonies related to the way they symbolically reaffirmed economic and political rights or expressed political messages, as with the Godiva Cavalcade. The best example of this in the economic setting is the Coventry Lammas Day Riding. Lammas Day had frequently been a focus of disorder as the freemen of Coventry endeavoured to enforce their economic rights against the crown, or the civic elite and their allies, the large-scale graziers.¹³² The elite vigorously attempted to prevent popular participation in the Riding, limiting participation to representatives of the wards in 1474 and 1495. This did not stop large numbers of freemen and inhabitants 'gate-crashing' the procession and accompanying the Chamberlains on the ride. Joining the Lammas Riding allowed the freemen to ensure the commons were

¹²⁹ T. W. Whitley, *The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry: From Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Coventry, 1894).

¹³⁰ CRO. BA/H/C/20/3, 304; compare the procession order in Poole, *Coventry*, 64 with *Leet Book* St George's Day procession in July 1498.

¹³¹ *CSPD 1667-68*, 4; for the general influence of dissenters, see Judith J. Hurwich, "'A Fanatic Town': the political influence of dissenters in Coventry, 1660-1720", *Midland History*, 4 (1977), 15-47. Hurwich shows that 58% of the two masters of the broadweavers between 1660 and 1720 were dissenters, for the mercers the figure is 43%, in the less important or high status guilds the proportion of dissenters is considerably lower, see 17 n.9. It is also interesting to note the coincidence of the broadweavers opposition to the Show and the very high number of dissenters in its ranks.

¹³² For a brief introduction to the history of the city's common lands and the conflicts between the freemen, the state and the civic elite, see *VCH: Warwick* 8, 199-204.

properly opened to pasture and when areas were not opened or were still in crop this often provoked further action, in the form of anti-enclosure riots.¹³³ What is interesting about this ceremony is the often antagonistic relationship between the different participants, formal and informal. For the civic elite opening the Lammas fields symbolised their control over this economic asset and their right to collect rents and tolls for animals commoned on the land. But they were also concerned to prevent popular participation and by preventing attendance at the Ride to limit the freemen's ability to independently scrutinise their management and renting of the lands. For the freemen, opening the commons was a hugely important act, a significant economic asset and also major constitutive factor of citizenship. Although the elite tried to exclude popular participation they did not attempt to suppress the Riding, despite the almost constant threat of disorder. The Ride survived and remained relevant exactly because it held and symbolised different things for each social group. Each group interpreted the meaning of Lammas Riding in different ways and it was this balance of interests between these forces which meant that Lammas Riding and common lands remained an essential part of civic identity in Coventry throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries.¹³⁴

The civic ceremonies that retained their relevance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were those capable of allowing different social layers to participate and locate their interest with the continuation of that ceremony. The categories that obviously fulfil this criteria are those which express the political and economic rights of citizens and the civic elite. For the freemen the important ceremonies were those that buttressed and confirmed their economic and political rights, e.g. fair openings, perambulating the bounds which fostered 'justice in the preservation of the bounds', rights that freemen continued to try to enforce legally as well. For the elite, civic receptions enabled them to express their links to the state and to local power brokers. Mayoral inaugurations propagandise the power of the civic elite, and for the freemen they could be used as a vehicle to express their status as citizens and as an opportunity to exercise those rights by refusing to endorse the 'selected candidate'.

3.v. Conclusions

The established chronologies of ceremonial decline and revival prove to be inadequate in the light of work on Chester and Coventry in particular, but also a range of other middle-ranking corporate towns. The argument for a period of widespread decline from the mid-sixteenth century is at odds with the growing evidence generated by the Records of Early English Drama and the work on the developing national calendar. Furthermore, the ceremony removed from the mid-sixteenth century needs to be reconsidered in two ways. First, the calendar had only emerged in succeeding generations and was not an age-old set of customs and practices that had existed for hundreds of years deeply enmeshed in urban society. Second, the chronology and causality is skewed by confusing the removal of civic-religious ceremony with the removal

¹³³ CSPD 1640-41; CSPD 1667-8, 435; CRO. Acc.2/3, 60; Acc. 2/4, f.17v, Acc.2/5 f.21r, 41r; REED: Coventry, 55, 83-4, 426; BL. Harl. 6388 f.46r; BL. Add. 11364 f.16v; Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge, 1987), 14.

¹³⁴ Peter Searby, 'Chartists and freemen in Coventry, 1838-1860', *Social History*, 6 (1977), 761-784; CRO. Acc. 15/2, f.270r; CRO. Acc. 1494/20/1, f.248r; Hewitt's *Journal*, 49; *An Enquiry Into The Reasons For and Against Inclosing the Open Fields* (Coventry, 1767); Poole, *Coventry*, 348-52.

of civic ceremony. The continued vitality and extension of guild and civic ceremonies alerts us to the weaknesses of such an argument. It is far more fruitful to think of the ceremonial calendar as a constantly-evolving entity through which the changing needs of urban society are reflected. The later-sixteenth century did not therefore witness an end to ceremony, but was the first phase in the development of a new Protestant, national ceremonial calendar. The post-Restoration period witnessed the continued development of this calendar rather than a revival. However, even under new pressures in the eighteenth century ceremony continued to play a similar role to its late-medieval predecessor, reinforcing horizontal ties among the citizens and the civic elite. The continued relevance of civic ceremony is connected to the relationships and balance of interests in specific localities between the three groups represented in civic ceremonies. This approach rejects the overarching historical themes of polarisation and the commercialisation of ceremony, and instead suggests that ceremonies continued relevance is best understood in terms of the way it could mobilise and express the interests of different sections of the urban community.

Chapter 4. Pastimes and Leisure.

4.i. Introduction

The discussion of urban leisure mirrors the wider framework of urban culture between 1600 and the later eighteenth century. Leisure is mainly discussed through the prism of traditional festivities, such as May Day, wakes, bull-baitings, and the games and activities associated with the ale-house, such as cards, dice and shovel-board. These activities were regarded with growing suspicion for a variety of reasons from the mid sixteenth century: a product of the problems of economic polarisation; a general fear of disorder shared by all urban magistrates; and a result of the developing 'puritan' sympathies of magistrates in particular towns such as Gloucester, Coventry, Dorchester and Rye.¹ Calendar customs, such as May Day, Shrove Tuesday are usually identified as a way of celebrating communal life. Nevertheless their association with disorderly behaviour, especially among some of the traditional games such as football, lead to their suppression. As we have already seen in the case of urban ceremony, their decline is associated with growing social polarisation and decreased opportunities for communal sociability.² The association of popular leisure activities with the alehouse, frequently identified as the seat of disorder, lead increasingly to the censorship of popular pastimes and the prosecution of many activities associated with the ale house.³ Beyond the discussion of the decline of communal sociability, neighbourliness and 'disordered' popular pastimes, the sociability and cultural activities of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century townspeople barely figure in the current historiography. This confirms the paradigmatic view of provincial towns as cultural backwaters because little attention is paid to the cultural activities and pastimes of townspeople outside calendar customs or the 'disorderly' alehouse culture.

In the century after Restoration the demand and market for leisure expanded rapidly. The growth of a middle class audience, coupled with rising levels of wealth, the increased use of the print media to disseminate fashionable ideas, created a level of demand which was open to commercial exploitation. Plumb argues the provision of leisure became much more commercialised, taking advantage of a socially emulative society, to develop into a significant sector of the economy.⁴ A whole range of leisure activities expanded and developed in provincial towns focused around sports and the arts. The performing arts grew markedly during this period, the theatre had been banned under the Protectorate but grew rapidly thereafter and by 1770 26 provincial towns had purpose built theatres, and many more hosted plays in guild halls, inns, town halls, etc. Musical performances diversified, by beginning to leave the churches and develop as a secular art-form. The most striking growth area was in public performances and a number of towns held musical

¹ D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987), 9-43; D. Underdown, *Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (1993); Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1996), 159.

² Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 28.

³ For prosecutions of 'behavioural' disorder, drunkenness, unlawful gaming see, Graham Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (University of Sussex, Falmer, 1987), tables 34 and 35.

⁴ J. H. Plumb, *The Commercialisation of Leisure in Eighteenth Century England* (Reading, 1972).

festivals by the early eighteenth century, for instance the Three Choirs Festival, shared between Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester, founded in about 1718.⁵ In other towns public concerts, assemblies and balls were organised around Assize or race week or a winter season. Sports developed in towns, especially those traditionally associated with the gentry and the countryside. Horse-racing became increasingly urbanised, and cock-fighting and bowling became ubiquitous urban pastimes. As the scale of leisure activities increased there was a need for venues to house these different performances and activities. In its earliest phases commercialised leisure adapted existing buildings, town and guild halls were used as venues for concerts or balls and inns for plays and lectures. But steadily towns began to develop purpose built facilities, assembly rooms began to proliferate for instance York's Blake Street assembly rooms built in 1732, costing some £5,000 or the cockpit erected at Manchester in the early 1750s which included a fighting arena, 200 pens and an assembly room above the pit, and a bowling green and public-house adjacent to the cockpit.⁶

The aim of this chapter is to re-examine the development of leisure in provincial towns from the later sixteenth century. In particular one aim of this chapter is to focus on those much neglected aspects of leisure in the first half of the seventeenth century. Emphasising that the alehouse and calendar customs were only one aspect of urban leisure culture and that many aspects, some sports, music, walking were not censured or suppressed. The chapter begins with a discussion of travelling players and entertainers, usually identified as a group who were vocally attacked and heavily policed by urban authorities. The second section turns to look at music and polite leisure and concludes with a discussion of urban sports. In the final section the chapter looks at the difference between the two periods pre- and post-1660 and the social groups who participated in different leisure activities.

4.ii. *Leisure in Chester and Coventry, c.1600-c.1750.*

Plays and entertainers

One leisure activity thought to have been severely affected by the growing reformist zeal of urban magistrates and concerns with disorder were performances by travelling players and entertainers. From the later sixteenth century it is argued that such travellers became increasingly unwelcome and were often paid to leave the town without performing. No visiting troupe is known to have played in Cambridge after 1596-97 and payments not to play were common in many seventeenth century towns including Barnstaple, Leicester, Norwich and Southampton. At Dorchester the players were even ordered to leave town without compensation and jailed for refusing.⁷ However, the evidence for performances by travelling players and entertainers in provincial towns is more complicated and affected by a host of factors other than civic disapproval. Coventry a town of noted 'puritan' sympathies continued to host numerous players and

⁵ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 117-27, appendix 3.

⁶ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 177.

⁷ Alan H. Nelson (ed.), *REED: Cambridge Volume 2* (Toronto, 1989), 704; D. Galloway (ed.), *REED: Norwich, 1540-1642*, xxxii-iv, 198-9; Underdown, *Fire From Heaven*, 105; Sally-Beth Maclean, 'Players on tour: new evidence from Records of Early English Drama', *Elizabethan Theatre*, 10 (1988), 62; see also the dramatic reduction in the number of players visiting Rye before and after the Reformation, and the further reduction in the later sixteenth century, Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, table 6.

entertainers, not a year went by between 1600 and 1642 when the chamberlains did not pay out numerous cash sums for performances. From the large amounts of money spent on players by Coventry corporation it appears the city stuck to the traditional arrangement where the first performance was held in front of the mayor in the council house, paid from the civic purse and known as 'the Mayors play'. After receiving the mayor's approval the players were licensed to perform throughout the town, in inns such as the Angel, the Peacock, outside the mayor's house and at the High Cross.⁸ One factor which affects the presence and number of players visiting a town was geography and proximity to major road routes. It is clear from the county surveys by the Records of Early English Drama that towns on major road routes were visited more often than towns in areas which were less accessible. Carlisle and Kendal both on the main north-south road were visited at least 34 times between 1602 and 1639, and 40 times between 1585 and 1637, respectively. In general, travelling companies tended to cover one region as thoroughly as possible and each company broadly followed the same route each year. This means that we would expect to find the same towns visited on a regular basis, following a fairly standardised itinerary. Where access was difficult the evidence for players declines sharply. The Surrey towns of Farnham and Guildford experienced a positive dearth of visits by players, although closer to London, Guildford and Farnham were encompassed by the significant height of the North Downs which constrained access.⁹ The almost complete absence of players at Chester, relates not to any stated antithesis to travelling players, but is more likely to result from the city's position on the road network, although on the main route to Ireland, it was off on a limb from the main north-south route.¹⁰ A further factor affecting the number of performances was the proximity to a local, lesser notable who retained a company of players. Kendal and Carlisle made generous payments to the visiting troupes of the Baron Wharton and Sir Thomas Metcalfe both local dignitaries. It is possible that these companies travelled less, staying closer to their patron and visiting towns in their region.

After the closure of the London playhouses and the disintegration of their companies it would appear that during the troubled period of the 1640s and 1650s there were no visits by London based travelling players to the provinces and that the rule of the Major-Generals saw a period of rigorous enforcement against players and performers.¹¹ The re-establishment of the London playhouses at the Restoration did not lead to automatic or quick re-establishment of travelling companies. It was only in the early eighteenth century that provincial drama revived built around three types of company: London companies on tour; itinerant companies and companies based in provincial towns.¹² Plays and entertainers are recorded

⁸ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996), 39; *REED: Coventry*, 355-6, 439, 447; BL. Harl. 7017, f.288r, Humfrey Wanley(?), 'Some account of the city of Coventry'.

⁹ Maclean, 'Players on tour', 63-9; Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 44-6; Sally-Beth Maclean, 'Tour routes: "Provincial Wanderings" or traditional circuits?', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 7 (1993), 1-14.

¹⁰ Maclean, 'Players on tour', 65. There is no recorded civic antipathy to players at Chester, apart from an assembly minute from 1615, this banned players from performing in the Common Hall because it should only be used for 'solempne meeting and Concourse of this howse', and from playing after 6pm at night anywhere in the liberties, see *REED: Chester*, 292-3. Visits of travelling players are never recorded very frequently at Chester, for the few examples there are see, *REED: Chester*, 59, 60, 135, 159, 162, 166, 178, 219, 443.

¹¹ Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford, 1992), 110.

¹² Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 118-20. The period between the Restoration and late seventeenth century was probably something of a hiatus before new companies were formed and began to tour the country, J. Barry, 'The cultural life of Bristol 1640-1775', (unpub. Oxford University, D.Phil, 1985), makes a similar point about a late seventeenth century hiatus.

relatively frequently by diarists, at Chester five play productions are recorded in 1692 by Roger Comerbach, and in guild records where they players had hired the hall to use as their stage.¹³ But because players now rarely performed for the mayor upon arriving in town the best indices of performances disappear and notices of plays become rather intermittent.

The chronology of performances is also difficult to unravel. Some performances were tied into the civic and national-political calendar, such as the fencers paid to perform on 5 November, the fencers employed as part of the celebration of Prince Charles' failed marriage negotiations in Spain, or Lord Dudley's players paid to perform on 'Leet Day'. Although the performance of entertainments linked to civic events declined in the later seventeenth century. There was a concentration of activity between December and January, focusing on Christmas, and the numerous payments in May through to August suggests many players arrival coincided with Chester and Coventry's major fairs.¹⁴ The types of performances by players and entertainers before and after 1660 appears to have altered very little, freak shows, animals, jugglers, rope-dancers and Shakespearian plays were the staples of travelling companies throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century.¹⁵ The problem of using treasurers accounts to track payments to travellers in the first half of the seventeenth century is they tell only part of the story, even in towns like Coventry where players were welcome. The first problem is any public performance paid for by a collection will only be of interest to the players and will not be recorded in the civic records, only official performances before the mayor are recorded. Unless the civic authorities had some reason to intervene no record of a performance is left, unless they had forbidden players to perform in the city or the performance was associated with an outbreak of disorder. There is also the added issue of whether civic authorities were able to completely control or prevent players performing. At Dorchester, noted for its opposition to players, performances clearly took place without civic approval and the magistrates were unable to stop them, a diarist records seeing a 'freak' show, despite the authorities injunction against this performer. Examples of players being prosecuted after an illegal performance are relatively common and indicate the problems urban authorities had stopping performances, particularly in suburban areas or independent jurisdictions within the city. Furthermore, the circulation and possession of forged licences from the Master of Revels appear to have been very common enabling companies to continuing performing and give them some limited protection when they encountered civic opposition.¹⁶

¹³ 'The diary of Roger Comerbach', CS, 3rd ser., 34 (1939), no.7610, no. 7614; Joseph C. Bridge (ed.), 'The Diary of Nehemiah Griffith, Esq., of Rhual, Mold, for the year 1715', JAAHSCNW, 15 (1909), 29; CRO. Acc.99/4, 208, 'The Drapers Company Minute Book, 1670-1755'.

¹⁴ Accurately dating the arrival of players is complicated by the way in which the Chamberlains paid players and it is difficult to tell whether the date relates to when the players performed or were paid, and in many instances no date is recorded at all. As an example of the concentration on December January, seven groups of players were paid in this period of a total of eleven for the year 1600-01, see REED: Coventry, 355, 375, 397, 417; CCA. QSE/13/25.

¹⁵ Jopsons Coventry Mercury (22 June 1767); Jopsons Coventry Mercury (4 May 1772); compare REED: Coventry, 376, 384, 392, 396-7, 411-2, 417, 419, 425, 427, 429, 433, 434, 440, 442, 443, 444 with J. Jefferson Looney, 'Cultural life in the provinces: Leeds and York, 1720-1820', in A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, James M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 483-510.

¹⁶ Underdown, *Fire From Heaven*, 105; REED: Coventry, 355-6; REED: Norwich, 180-3. Strolling players visited Banbury in 1633 and were arrested for having forged a patent to play, but the Privy Council discharged the players, VCH: Oxfordshire, 10, 14; for similar case see Alan Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973), 250; Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 50-3.

The pattern of opposition to travelling players before the Restoration is complex and it is difficult to explain why towns within the same region responded very differently to travelling players. The standard formula connecting opposition to a 'puritan' magistracy actually begs as many questions as it provides answers. Why does Coventry remain such a strong patron of travelling players when the town was a noted 'second Geneva', in contrast Chester retains much of its ceremonial calendar, shows little tendency towards hotter forms of godliness, but very few payments to travelling companies appear in the civic records. The answer appears to lie in the conjunction of a number of factors, the key to which is the position of a town on the major road routes and consequently on the traditional tour routes taken by travelling companies. Once we know more about touring routes we should be able to identify towns where we would expect to find travelling performers and towns which were little touched by this activity. There are however, strong elements of continuity in the tradition of travelling players. The types of shows and plays, and the time of year they arrived in a town changed little over the period 1660 to 1750. There are also strong parallels in the suspicion with which players were sometimes met. In the period from the Reformation to the Restoration plays and players were often considered obscene, the cause of disorder and drew apprentices and journeymen away from their lawful activities. The language used about players after 1660 and complaints about the corrupting nature of plays persisted, a group of townspeople petitioned against the players and the playhouse at Winchester in 1715, using almost identical language to a petition from Chester exactly 100 years earlier, plays were 'very prejudicial and corruptive to the youth, servants and other inhabitants'. The response of the council was to ban players, rope dancers and the music men who accompanied them from performing in the town.¹⁷

Music, concerts and assemblies

The musical life of early modern towns remains a little studied aspect of urban culture, although it is generally accepted that it was less censured from the mid-sixteenth century than travelling players and entertainers.¹⁸ Music accompanied most calendar ceremonies, sports, holidays and fairs. Chester's waits played at the Homage on Shrove Tuesday, St George's day, the midsummer show and generally waits were ubiquitous participants in processions accompanying the mayor and civic elite on their various duties, at city courts and council meetings, etc. The waits also performed daily, perambulating the city streets in the morning and evening. At Norwich the waits held a weekly musical concert on Sunday evenings and on Holy days, from May to Michaelmas, but at some point in the later seventeenth century the practice was discontinued, only to be revived in 1714.¹⁹ Fawcett suggests that the Norwich waits had a 'virtual

¹⁷ REED: *Chester*, 292-3; REED: *Coventry*, 355-6, 394, 429; Paul Ranger, 'The lost theatres of Winchester, 1620-1861', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, 31 (1976), 67-8.

¹⁸ REED: *Cambridge*, Vol.2, 704; REED: *CWG*, 254. A notable exception is Trevor Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth Century Norwich and Norfolk* (University of East Anglia, 1979).

¹⁹ REED: *Chester*, 409, 443, 479; CCA. AB/2, f.175v, AB/3, f.193v; CCA. QSE/9/8, QSE/9/69; REED: *Coventry*, 389. The Coventry chamberlains paid the waits an annual salary to perform and after the Restoration this practice was re-established in 1674, see Benjamin Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquity* (1870), 56; Wickham-Legg, *A Relation of a Short Survey*, 49; REED: *Norwich, 1540-1642*, xxxviii; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth Century Norwich*, 2-3.

monopoly' of public performance, but in a cathedral city this seems unlikely as a number of other institutions provided support for and fostered music-making. At both Chester and Coventry the cathedral was a major musical resource, there was a singing school at Coventry, parish churches also employed 'singing men' and Chester corporation employed an organist at St Peter's.²⁰ Waits from other towns also regularly travelled around the county/region visiting performing in the towns en-route. Between 1603-3 and 1642-3 Carlisle was visited by waits or musicians from other towns on 126 occasions (see appendix 3). Coventry was regularly visited by the waits of Derby, Leek, Lincoln, Newark, Newcastle-Under Lyme, Nottingham, Ripon, Worcester, and occasionally by the waits of Gloucester, Hertford, Leicester, Preston, Southam and Shrewsbury.²¹

Beyond these public performances there was a huge amount of private and semi-public musical performances supported by the guilds, societies and private individuals. The guilds remained the most significant patrons of music throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. Many of their meetings, elections, feasts, admission dinners and other occasions of sociability were accompanied by music and the hire of musicians is an almost constant item of expenditure in guild accounts.²² Music was also performed in the privacy of peoples homes. Musical instruments, especially stringed ones, were 'quite common' among Worcester's probate inventories although only between one and three per cent of Bristol inventories included instruments.²³ Musicians such as George Cally, one of Chester's waits, set himself up as a music teacher, but his complaints of unfair competition indicate he was far from the only music teacher in the city in the first half of the seventeenth century.²⁴

The eighteenth century saw the emergence of a much more widely based public musical culture in provincial towns. At Coventry there was a music society in the city by the 1750s, concerts were held at the Bowling Green and Spires' Spring Garden in the 1740s, at the Drapers Hall and accompanied the celebrations of the inauguration of John Hewitt as mayor in 1755. The local church organist, Capel Bond was involved in promoting a series of concerts of Handel's *Messiah* and *Samson* in the city.²⁵ There were also a number of singing and dancing masters at Chester in the later seventeenth century, attended by the sons and daughters of the local gentry. However, it is questionable whether the number of such private teachers actually expanded in the later seventeenth century at Chester. Alongside the proliferation of musical performances was a growth in the number of assemblies and balls. They became increasingly regular at Chester and Coventry, focused around race week and the winter months. After problems at a

²⁰ REED: *Coventry*, 364, 367, 370, 379, 382, 445; REED: *Chester*, 226; CCA. AB/3 f.117r-v, 155r, 251v, AB/4 f.3r, 37r.

²¹ REED: *Coventry*, 358, 379, 386, 396-7, 410, 412, 414, 417, 429, 431, 434, 436, 437, 439, 440, 442, 443, 445, 446, 448.

²² REED: *Chester*, 201, 204, 220, 265, 295. These are just examples the total number of references are too numerous to give.

²³ Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, 252; Barry, 'Cultural life of Bristol', table 16, 363.

²⁴ CCA. AF/10/53, George Cally's petition of 1615 names four other music teachers Thomas Squire, Richard Bell, Nicholas Webster and John Farrar.

²⁵ Jopson's *Coventry Mercury* (26 May 1746); Hewitt's *Journal*, 23; Poole, *Coventry*, 394, 405; J Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands* (Manchester, 1977), 81; BL. Harl. 7017, f.294v, Humfrey Wanley, 'Some account of the city of Coventry'.

number of assemblies the Coventry corporation insisted that every application to hold a ball or assembly in St Mary's hall be vetted and at Chester the use of the Common Hall was limited to those prepared to post a bond of £20 against any subsequent damage.²⁶

Sports

Sports were a popular urban pastime and participants in some sports were drawn from across the social spectrum. A nationally popular sport from the sixteenth century was cock-fighting. The Earl of Derby built a cockpit in his leisure complex on the Roodee opened in 1619 and one was built at York in 1568. It was a sport frequently associated with inns and which developed and expanded over the course of the seventeenth century.²⁷ Although banned in some towns bowling was popular, purpose built bowling greens first began to appear in provincial English towns in the late sixteenth century and one was built at Chester by the Earl of Derby in 1619. Often they were built by innkeepers as a way of generating trade, even a small town such as Leominster or a larger town like Gloucester boasted inns with bowling alleys in the early seventeenth century. Bowling also took place informally and could be played outside purpose built premises, on Chester's Roodee or on the open space by St Anne's in Coventry.²⁸ The number of bowling greens certainly grew over the seventeenth century, permission was granted to build a second bowling green on the Roodee in 1663 and a third was built at the end of the seventeenth century between Horn Lane and Warrington Road, although a purpose built bowling green was not built at Coventry until the mid eighteenth century.²⁹ Less formally organised, although no less ubiquitous were sports such as shooting, hunting, dog-fighting, bear-baiting and football. Shooting and hunting appear to have been particularly prevalent and evidence for dog ownership and ownership of fowling pieces shows how socially widespread such activities were.³⁰ Bull-baiting at Chester was particularly resistant to reform and attempts to suppress the annual mayoral inauguration bull-bait were thwarted in 1599-1600, 1754 and 1776.³¹

One area which underwent a spectacular growth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was horse-racing. Chester's first horse races were recorded in 1539, held annually as part of the entertainment at the Homage to the Drapers on Shrove Tuesday, further races were added in 1610, these were then expanded in

²⁶ 'The diary of Sir Willoughby Aston', CS, 3rd ser., 24 (1927), no.5654; 'Comerbach's diary', no.7619; CCA. AB/3, f.157r, 176v, 268r, 271r, AB/4, f.4r, 20v; P. Broster, *The Chester Guide* (2nd edition, Chester, 1787), 69-70; Gibbs Payne Crawford, 'The diary of George Booth of Chester and Katherine Howard, his daughter of Boughton near Chester, 1707-1764', *JAAHSCNW*, 28 (1928), 48; Poole, *Coventry*, 399-400; CRO. BA/H/C/17/3, 126, 130, 'Council Minute Book, 1696-1725'; Thomas Pennant, *Journey From Chester to London* (1782), 160.

²⁷ Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 19; CCA. CR60/83, f.35v; 'Sir Willoughby Aston's diary', no.5596; BL. Harl. 7017, f.297r.

²⁸ Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, 228; CCA. CR60/83 f.35v, George Bellin, 'Manuscript list of Chester mayors and historical events, 1300-1620'; Anthony Fletcher, 'Factionalism in town and countryside: the significance of puritanism and Arminianism', in D. Baker (ed.), *The Church in Town and Countryside* (Ecclesiastical History Society, 1979), 296; *CSPD 1619-1623*, 78; *Leet Book*, 656.

²⁹ CCA. AB/2, f.146r-v, AB/3, f.78r; Broster, *Chester Guide*, 55; all three are shown on Alexander de Lavaux, *Plan of the City and Castle of Chester* (1745); P. Carrington, *The Book of Chester* (English Heritage, 1994), 99.

³⁰ CCA. QSE/7/2, QSE/8/29, QSE/11/29, QSE/11/71; CCA. CR/60/83 f.12r; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 211, William Cowper, 'Collectanea Devana'; Barry, 'Cultural Life of Bristol', 128-82.

³¹ CCA. CR60/83 f.36r; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 211; *REED: Chester*, 197-8; 'Comerbach's diary', no.7649; Peter Borsay, 'All the town's a stage: urban ritual and ceremony, 1660-1800', in Clark, *Transformation*, 247 suggests the bull-bait was abolished in 1754, in fact corporation patronage was removed, but the bull bait continued until 1803; Joseph Hemingway, *History of the City of Chester, From its Foundation to Present Times* (Chester, 1831), vol.1, 222-3.

1623, and races were added to the archery contests at Easter in 1640. After the Restoration the horse races at Shrove Tuesday, Easter and St George's day were all revived and the Easter races were transformed and expanded to become a race week on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Easter week from 1705. St George's day, Easter Monday and Shrove Tuesday featured not only horse races but a series of foot races and shooting competitions, however this aspect does not appear to have survived the Restoration.³² Horse races were added to the leisure calendar of other provincial towns in the seventeenth century. Carlisle introduced an annual race in 1619, although the chamberlains accounts suggest it was somewhat intermittent initially, at Hereford in 1609 the traditional May games were expanded with the addition of horse races. Horse-races were also introduced at Burford in 1621, Winchester 1595, Durham 1613, Clitheroe 1617, Leicester 1603, Stamford 1619, Berwick 1639, Newcastle 1621, Salisbury 1584, Doncaster 1595, York 1530.³³

Leisure Facilities

Long before the advent of 'commercial' leisure facilities, such as coffee houses and pleasure gardens, specific parts of the town were used as recreational and leisure facilities. In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century, this did not necessarily mean the construction of purpose built leisure facilities, but the use of existing urban amenities. Chester's walls from the 1620s at the latest had been converted into a walk to view the surrounding countryside, Welsh hills and sea, with footpaths a yard wide, 'you may go round about the walls, being a very delectable Walk'. A group of visitors in 1634 were conducted on a tour of the city using the walls to perambulate the city and summer evenings appear to have been a particularly popular time to walk the walls. Chester Rows were not only unique to the city, but much resorted to as a place to walk.³⁴ In many towns open areas inside and outside the walls were developed as leisure facilities from the mid-sixteenth century. At Canterbury the area known as the Dungill was 'a pleasant place within the walls for the Citizens and gentry to walke and recreate themselves in' and at Shrewsbury the Quarry was used for walking and for performances by travelling players.³⁵ The Roodee was Chester's main leisure facility from the mid sixteenth century and was used for shooting, walking by the banks of the Dee, bowling, horse and foot races, and citizens perambulated and dined there. During the Royalist occupation of the city during the

³² REED: *Chester*, 39-42, 128-9, 234-5, 255-6, 258, 261, 273, 360-1, 451; BL. Harl. 2125, 162v, 165v, 166v, Randle Holme(?), 'The Antiquity of the Anciente and Famous Cittye of Chester'; CCA. AB/2 f.178v, AB/3, f.42v, 140v, 158v-159r, 212r; CCA. CR60/83 f.21r; Prescott's *Diary I*, 40.

³³ Horse races had been run at Carlisle in the late sixteenth century, J. A. Wilson, 'Some early sporting notes relating to Cumberland', *Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, o.s. 12 (1891), 191-3; REED: CWG, 91; REED: *Herefordshire and Worcestershire*, 125-36, 280-2; Alan Everitt, 'Introduction' in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (Basingstoke, 1973), 1-15; A. Rosen, 'Winchester in transition 1500-1700', in Clark, *Country Towns*, 161-2; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, app.7.

³⁴ William Webb in D. King, *The Vale Royall of England* (1656), 17; L. G. Wickham-Legg (ed.), *A Relation of a Short Survey of Twenty Six Counties Observed in a Seven Week Journey Begun on August 11, 1634 By A Captain, A Lieutenant and an Ancient, All Three of the Military Company in Norwich* (1904), 49; Sir William Brereton, *Travels in Holland, The United Provinces, England, Scotland and Ireland* (Edward Hawkins (ed.), Chetham Society, 1st ser., 1, 1844), 89, 161; Ralph Thoresby in D. M. Palliser, *Chester 1066-1971: Contemporary Descriptions by Residents and Visitors* (Chester, 1972), 16; J. H. Hanshall, *The Stranger in Chester: Giving an Accurate Sketch of it Local History with Chronological Arrangements of the most Interesting Events Connected Therewith* (Chester, 1816), 32.

³⁵ Wickham-Legg, *Relation of a Short Survey*, 20; Maclean, 'Players on tour', 66.

Civil War Elias Ashmole even attended a joust there.³⁶ At Chester the range of leisure facilities did increase after the Restoration, coffee houses are first mentioned in 1681, the Exchange built in 1698 included a coffee house, assembly room and later a subscription library, the 'Bottoms' walk was formally laid out in the later seventeenth century, the Cherry Orchards at Boughton were used as an area for walking and Booth Mansion was converted into an assembly room in the 1740s.³⁷ At Coventry from the 1620s the park began to be converted into a leisure facility, tree lined walks were laid out in 1625, the skimmers were moved in the 1630s and the park cleansed. The park was used by the city's inhabitants as a place to recreate and walk, and the 'puritan' mayor, Robert Beake would go on the 'Lord's day...and observe(d) who idly walked there'. The condition of the tree lined walks had deteriorated by the 1680s when Rowland Davies visited the town, although this did not prevent the park being a place of fashionable resort.³⁸ In the later seventeenth century the city corporation instituted a policy to protect the remains of the city walls and endeavoured to create walks on their remnants. Although bowling had been recorded at Coventry in the mid sixteenth century, the first purpose built bowling green was only built in the 1730s and two more were opened in 1766 and 1779. Coffee houses were opened by the early eighteenth century, although no purpose built assembly rooms were built and St Mary's Hall, the Drapers Hall and various inns continued to host concerts, lectures and assemblies throughout the eighteenth century.³⁹

4.iii. *The middling sort and the growth of leisure in the eighteenth century*

It is generally argued that from the later seventeenth century the number of leisure opportunities open to the urban middling sort expanded, especially for women, who had been largely excluded from the formal sociability associated with guilds and corporate structures. While the range of leisure facilities did increase it is debatable to what degree there was a commensurate increase in middling participation. The cost of assemblies and balls was high in comparison with the income a master craftsmen or retailer might expect. The cost of three assemblies in Chester's race week was 10s 6d or 5s per night; the subscription for the Winter season assemblies on Thursday and Monday, £1 5s for a man and 12s 6d for a woman. Entrance to lectures, concerts and balls was equally expensive in other provincial towns.⁴⁰ As Borsay argues prices were

³⁶ King, *Vale Royall*, 16; Wickham-Legg, *Relation of a Short Survey*, 16; Henry Hasting in Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 13; CCA. QSE/7/12, the shooting butts are shown on maps of the Roodee and the Easter archery contest was held there see, REED: *Chester*, 253, 322-3, 352, 451; Richard Caulfield (ed.), *The Journal of the Very Reverend Rowland Davies* (Camden Society, 1st ser., 68, 1857), 109; 'Comerbach's diary', no.7597; *Prescott's Diary I*, 19, 21, 35, 37, 3, 39, 40; C. H. Josten, (ed.), *Elias Ashmole, His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, His Correspondence and Other Contemporary Sources Relating to his Life and Work* (Oxford, 1966), vol.2, 347.

³⁷ 'Sir Willoughby Aston's diary', no.5555; Carrington, *Book of Chester*, 99; the 'Bottoms' may in fact have been the area used by the banks of the Dee from the late sixteenth century and was coppiced in the first decade of the eighteenth century, not for the purpose of creating a walk but to protect the river bank and Roodee from collapse, see CCA. AB/3, f.141r, 144r.

³⁸ CRO. Acc.2/5, f.39r-40v, Anon., 'Annals of the City of Coventry'; BL. Add.11364, f.15r, 16r, Anon., 'Annals of Coventry 1278-1703'; T. W. Whitley, *The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry: From Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Coventry, 1894), 74; Levi Fox (ed.), *The Diary of Robert Beake* (Dugdale Society, Miscellany I, 31, 1977), 136; *Journal of Reverend Rowland Davies*, 104; C. Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1947), 114; VCH: Warwick 8, 6.

³⁹ S. Markham, *John Loveday of Caversham, 1711-1789: The Life and Tours of and Eighteenth Century Onlooker* (Salisbury, 1984), 63; *Jopsons' Coventry Mercury* (14 July 1766); *Jopsons' Coventry Mercury* (26 October 1772); J. Kilmartin, 'Popular rejoicing and public ritual in Norwich and Coventry, 1660-c.1835', (unpublished University of Warwick Ph.D., 1987), 79; VCH: Warwick 8, 223-4; CRO. Acc.99/4, 83; *Hewitt's Journal*, 23; Poole, *Coventry*, 130.

⁴⁰ Broster, *Chester Guide*, 69-70; Looney, 'Cultural life in the provinces', 494.

high to maintain exclusivity, yet given this it is questionable to what degree middling people, below the rank of manufacturers and merchants, were able to participate in such events. In contrast throughout the seventeenth century and eighteenth century the guilds had maintained a vigorous social round which involved both the master and on certain occasions their wives. Guilds were also closely involved in and supported civic sports, such as horse-racing at Chester, and were also major patrons of urban musicians. Although much is made of the subscription as a way of spreading cost and opening up access, it is arguable that guilds had through their structures of membership been performing a very similar role in urban society from the mid sixteenth century onwards.

4.iv. Conclusions

Chester had very highly developed leisure facilities by 1620. A bowling green and cockpit leisure complex by the Roodee owned by the Earl of Derby, formally laid out walks on the city walls, and the Roodee which acted as a race course, a place to walk, dine, plays bowls and which possessed shooting butts. Other provincial towns were also developing similar leisure facilities, the New Inn at Gloucester obtained a licence for a tennis court and bowling alley in 1604, and even inns in small towns such as Leominster possessed bowling alleys. Coventry was not as well endowed with leisure facilities, reflecting the way in which Lichfield and Warwick operated as the social capitals of the surrounding region. Although in the 1620s improvements were made to the park and a formal walk laid out. The focus on the decline of calendar pastimes and the disordered culture of the alehouse has meant that the cultural activities and values of many townspeople have even ignored. Many activities such as music, shooting, bowling were not censured by urban magistrates and were an essential element of urban leisure activities. Even in areas traditionally thought to have been increasingly viewed with concern, such as travelling players, there are complications. 'Puritan' magistrates at Coventry happily fostered and supported travelling players while the less 'godly' Cestrian magistrates appear to have ignored players. The role of touring and road routes to the geography of performance is now widely recognised and enables us to begin to understand why some towns were popular destinations for players while others were not. While there is a strong continuity in the types of travelling shows visiting towns between 1600 and 1750, and with concerns for their effect on order and morality, other areas of leisure changed significantly. In particular music and polite entertainments expanded considerably in the eighteenth century, but it is questionable how accessible these forms of entertainment were to many middling townspeople.

Chapter 5. The Urban Built Environment

5.1. Introduction: the urban built environment and the urban renaissance

The eighteenth century has frequently been held up as an unrivalled era of urban improvement when provincial towns achieved a hitherto unknown aesthetic coherence. The urban environment was steadily brought under control as disease, dirt and congestion were banished, streets plans were remodelled following renaissance ideals, streets re-paved, widened and lit and water directly supplied to householders. Domestic and civic buildings underwent a dramatic transformation with the introduction and spread of classical architectural models which helped create a more uniform and nationally recognisable urban form. This picture of the enlightened development, of early modern cities ridding themselves of the traditional scourges of fire, disease and dirt is a powerful one and has been termed 'their exit from medievalism', in turn powerfully suggestive of the notion of modernisation.¹

This model of urban renewal rests on two central pillars, the first centres on the actual arenas in which change took place: the house, the street, the town plan, the urban environment, public buildings and cultural amenities; the second relates to the mechanisms which delivered change, notably the evolution of governmental structures. Broadly, changes in domestic architecture brought in their wake significant alterations to the urban landscape as vernacular traditions were gradually replaced by classical town houses and civic buildings. The uneven facade created by the presence of projecting window cases and the practice of jettying, where the upper floors of houses stepped outwards, enclosed and darkened streets. Coventry's timber built houses projected so far forwards 'till in the narrow streets they were ready to touch one another at the top'. In many towns from the later seventeenth century this was replaced by the classical facade with a frontage constructed on a single plane, at right angles to the street and all projections from the building such as door cases and windows were kept to a minimum, helped by the development of the sash window. Underpinning many of these aesthetic changes was the use of new building materials, brick, tile and slate, as replacements for the more traditional materials of timber frames, wattle and daub infilling, and roofs of thatch. Alongside these changes came the development and improvement of the street. The visual integrity of the street was improved, classical houses built to clear rules no longer replicated the idiosyncrasies of vernacular architecture and each individual unit formed part of a larger uniform frontage. Second, broader, open streets became the norm as jettying was removed and houses rebuilt or re-fronted the 'closeness' of the street diminished, a process enhanced by the development of the flush facade. Civic authorities removed market stalls, shambles and town crosses in an effort to remove street obstructions and improve the integrity of the street. Streets were resurfaced, rubbish and dirt were dealt with on a more systematic basis and streets were increasingly well lit through the growing use of oil lamps at night. There were also some limited attempts at town planning where urban authorities endeavoured to lay out streets according to Renaissance ideals, or at the very least widen streets and ease traffic congestion, such as the improvements to Far Water

¹ E. L. Jones and M. E. Falkus, 'Urban improvement and the English economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in P. Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town* (1990), 145; Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies 1680-1780* (1998).

Lane and Blake Street, York in 1744 and 1729 respectively. Investment in public buildings, town halls, market halls, etc. increased and an entirely new category of public building emerged - those dedicated to cultural purposes, such as theatres and assembly rooms.²

The eighteenth century therefore stands out as a golden age in the history of urban architecture and the urban environment, as a period which bore witness to the remodelling of the urban landscape and in Borsay's view saw the emergence of a more clearly defined 'urban' form.³ However, the question of chronology remains less certain. Falkus and Jones argue that by 1750 few towns of any size 'had not experienced considerable reconstruction', represented by the replacement of timber by brick for residential buildings, while improvement to the urban environment was mainly a product of the second half of the eighteenth century. Borsay is more circumspect about the spread of new architectural fashions, noting how the chronology should not be telescoped because the speed with which the urban fabric altered varied considerably from place to place and in many instances innovation was slow. Despite some uncertainty about the precise chronology, there is a shared understanding of the administrative mechanisms that delivered urban improvement. First, the removal of individual responsibility, the creation of collective provision and the transfer of authority to subcontractors or permanent officials which permitted a greater degree of control and the enforcement of higher standards. Second, in the later eighteenth century, especially after 1760, the creation of new, wider powers by the various local parliamentary acts enabled urban governors to establish rating schemes to provide the finance necessary for thorough-going urban improvement.⁴

The intention of this chapter is not to attempt to reinvent the wheel or argue against a growing body of evidence which supports the notion of urban improvement. However, there are a number of areas where the linked ideas of improvement and modernisation telescope change and ignore aspects of continuity in the management of the urban environment and the urban landscape. The first part of the chapter examines the pace and scale of change. In particular the current historiography presents the Civil War as a significant divide in both attitudes towards and civic efforts to maintain the built environment. Linked to this more concerted effort to improve the urban environment, after the Restoration, is the notion of administrative change, which in effect underpins and enables urban authorities to bring about large-scale improvement. However, a number of problems with the current model are articulated in this chapter. First, the pace of change and extent of architectural renewal from the later seventeenth century is over-emphasised. Second, the Civil War does not neatly demarcate two periods with starkly differing attitudes, levels of effort or concern on the part of town governors in relation to the urban environment. Third, the significant change in mechanism, which is held responsible for the extent and pace of change, is largely delayed until the onset of

² Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (ed. P. Rogers, 1986), 404; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 51-9, 60-79; C. W. Chalkin, 'Capital expenditure on building for cultural purposes in provincial England, 1730-1830', *Business History*, 22 (1980), 51-70.

³ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 41-2.

⁴ Jones and Falkus, 'Urban improvement', 119-121, 127-31; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 45, 70-1.

the main period of applications for improvement acts in the 1760s. Fourth, the optimistic gloss put on efforts to repair, cleanse and light streets after 1660 is questioned, and the general continuity of mechanisms to deliver such improvement is emphasised. In the second section of the chapter, I explore the notion of the urban fabric as a historical entity, especially in light of the treatment of Chester's Rows. Most urban landscapes, except those affected by large-scale fires, develop organically and, as such, any urban built environment is an assemblage of buildings, streets and artefacts built at different times. In a period when classicism is thought to have been totally dominant, it is illuminating to study its introduction to an existing 'organic' built environment. The case of Chester and its Rows provides an informative example, one where the introduction of classicism was deliberately inhibited in Chester's four main streets as a way of retaining part of the city's unique architectural heritage and a noted, famous element of the city's public image. In the third section I examine the administrative mechanisms and systems utilised by urban authorities and how they developed over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The effectiveness of urban government and its solvency is highlighted as a major influence on the scale of urban improvement and accounts for the very different development of Chester and Coventry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

5.ii. The urban environment: pace and scale of change c.1600-c.1750

This section of Chapter Five examines the nature of change, focusing particularly on the Civil War and Restoration which are currently presumed to demarcate a significant shift in the quality of the urban environment. In an attempt to examine this profound change, the differing aspects of Chester and Coventry's urban fabric are examined in a way that endeavours to bridge this traditional divide. Rather than simply surveying the period up to the Civil War or after the Restoration, the chapter takes a diachronic approach to the period from the late sixteenth through to the mid-eighteenth century. Examining the different components of the built environment - the walls and streets - to elucidate changing levels of investment and activity, I argue the Civil War was not a watershed and in fact there is a high level of continuity across the whole period.

Town walls

A town's walls were an important indicator of urban status and clearly demarcated the urban from the rural. They had developed initially as a way of ensuring security, but also helped urban authorities to police the city and provided a physical barrier to help enforce legal and economic restrictions. Walls were a conspicuous architectural feature, often described at length by travellers and were an important indicator of urban status. Leland's description of Newcastle's walls illustrates how impressed contemporaries were by the scale of a town's walls 'the strength and magnificens of the wauling of this town far passeth al the waulles of the cities of England'. Walls also featured prominently in pictorial representations of the town, especially in city prospects.⁵ But the walls were a constant drain on civic resources, requiring huge amounts of money and effort be devoted to their upkeep. Their existence in politically troubled times could attract

⁵ E. T. Jones, J. Laughton and P. Clark, *Northampton in the Middle Ages* (Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, Working Paper 10, 2000), 34; Esther Moir, *The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourists 1540-1840* (1964), 18-9; L. Toulmin-Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543* (1910), vol.5, 60.

unwanted military attention, as the Wars of the Roses and Civil Wars amply testify.⁶ In 1520 approximately 146 towns in England and Wales were walled, but at the opening of the First Civil War only some 50 walled towns were to be found in England. The sustained period of domestic peace in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries clearly served to undermine their military utility to a point where their cost could not be justified; Totnes walls had been allowed to collapse by the time of Leland's visit in the 1530s and Dorchester's by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The tension of the early 1640s and the possibility of civil war saw the military utility of town walls briefly revived and those walled towns desperately attempting to rebuild and strengthen them.⁷

Given that walls were a perennial problem for urban governors from the late middle ages onwards, as the constant complaints of decay indicate, and as their military utility declined between 1520 and 1640, why did some 50 towns continue to maintain and spend significant fiscal resources on their walls? Many towns treated their walls with indifference once their military utility had waned, but others such as Coventry and Chester invested heavily in them and in the case of Coventry instituted an annual ceremonial inspection of the walls from 1539 to their destruction in 1662.⁸ In these towns there was clearly some other factor at work: while they no longer served a utilitarian purpose, they retained some cultural or historical importance which led to their continued upkeep. However, the example of Brecon, a walled town where the citizens pulled down the walls to forestall a siege in 1642, should warn us against any simplistic relationship between the survival of walls and the existence of some form of civic pride or identity with them. This section on Chester and Coventry's walls therefore examines two questions. First, in line with the current historiography, did the post-Restoration period witness any improvement in their condition or any greater efforts to maintain them, and was there any change in their use, becoming part of the burgeoning urban leisure facilities? Second, is there any evidence that the walls were a source of civic pride and hence repaired and maintained for this reason?

Only very infrequently, such as in Leland's description of Totnes or Miège's description of Gloucester after the Civil War, are a city's walls described as utterly decayed and then apparently only when they have completely collapsed. More often visitors describe a town as 'strongly walled', or enclosed by a 'good strong wall'. Yet simultaneously the authorities charged with their upkeep would describe them as 'ruinous' or 'far out of repair'. At Chester, both before and after the Civil War, the walls were variously described by different visitors as 'so fairly built', 'well walled', 'fine and high', 'kept in very good repaire', and yet a cursory examination of the civic records reveals an almost constant struggle against physical decay. The murengers, the officers charged with their upkeep, regularly describe the walls as 'far out of repair' or in

⁶ Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 40-50; Stephen Porter, 'Property destruction in the English Civil Wars', *History Today* (Aug 1986), 36-41.

⁷ D. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth* (1982), 206; Porter, 'Property destruction', 36; C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars* (1992), 164; Toulmin-Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland* (1907), vol.1, 218; D. Underdown, *Fire From Heaven* (1993), 1.

⁸ For details of Coventry's annual wall inspection see Chapter 3.

'great decay'.⁹ This contrast between visitors' impressions, generally optimistic, and civic concerns about their cost and repair, generally pessimistic, is hard to reconcile and makes it difficult to gauge any real change in the condition of the walls or the level of investment.¹⁰ Arguably in the period before the Civil War the walls were a relatively low priority for urban governors at a time of large-scale urban poverty, and frequent plague outbreaks. But this does not accord with the record of investment and works commissioned in Chester or Coventry. Coventry instituted a ceremonial inspection of the walls which also served the practical purpose of annually surveying the walls and was often closely followed by remedial repair work.¹¹ In some years much larger-scale programmes were commissioned, such as the £15 16s 8d spent in 1615, or £21 19s 10d in 1625 which included a payment for 236 feet of stone, more than £30 in 1630, followed by a further £20 in 1633.¹² At Chester the murengers were very diligent, they complained constantly about the state of the walls, instituted programmes of work and petitioned the corporation for additional funds. Between 1609 and 1629 the murengers were given a share of £240, raised by three assessments, to carry out repairs.¹³ However, the quality of some repairs was questionable; in 1608 sections of the walls commonly known as 'the broken walls' were repaired only to collapse in the following year.¹⁴ The heightened political tension of the early 1640s led to much larger-scale investment programmes in both towns, including a series of assessments and diverting merchants' debts for the import of prize wines to strengthen the walls and increase their defensive capability.¹⁵

The period of the Civil War and siege saw little discussion of the walls or their condition presumably because the civic authorities in Chester and Coventry were usurped in this area by the various military governors who assumed responsibility for the town's defences.¹⁶ After the Restoration, Coventry's walls were pulled down by the Earl of Northampton in 1662 as retribution for the city holding out against the

⁹ The murengers were the officers who were responsible for the walls and who raised money to pay for their upkeep through collecting the tax (murage duty) on Irish linens. William Webb in D. King, *The Vale Royall of England* (1656), 17-8; John Taylor, 'Part of this summers travels' in *Works of John Taylor The Water Poet* (Spenser Society, 7, 1870), 29; Jorevin de Rocheford, 'Description of England and Ireland in the seventeenth century', in Francis Grose and Thomas Astle (eds.), *The Antiquarian Repertory*, 4 (1809) 586; 'Joseph Taylor's visit to Liverpool and Chester in 1705', *CS*, 10 (1914), no. 2243; compare with Groombridge, *Calendar*, 17, 24, 41; CCA. AB/3 f.5v. A similar point can be made about Coventry: compare, John Taylor's comment 'The walls are very strong and no other town in England compare with them' and the chamberlains accounts which describe 'divers breaches' in the walls between Gosford Gate and Mill Lane, see Taylor, cited above, 13, and CRO. BA/A/A/26/2, 'Chamberlains' and Wardens' Account Book, II, 1574/5-1635/6', 656.

¹⁰ Reed also notes the contradiction between visitors' accounts of road conditions and the impression in the civic records, see Michael Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth century Ipswich' in Clark, *Country Towns*, 129.

¹¹ 17s 6d spent in 1600 on repairing the walls outside Friars Orchard, or the annual expenditure for cleaning ivy and brambles from the walls paid to the beadles, see CRO. BA/A/A/26/2, 326, 340, 351, 361, 372, 387, 401, 451, 466, 483, 567, 657, 821.

¹² CRO. BA/A/A/26/2, 558-61, 566-7, 739-41, 820, 869-70. The amount of work on the walls also necessitated the use of planks, presumably to cover breaches/areas of repairs, when the mayor etc. walked the walls, see above, 401, 820-1.

¹³ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 17, 24, 41, 81, 108, 134, 154; Frank Simpson, *The Town Walls of Chester* (Chester, 1910), 11.

¹⁴ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 41; CCA. CR60/83 f.20v, 29v, George Bellin, 'Manuscript list of Chester mayors and historical events, 1300-1620'.

¹⁵ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 211; £500 towards fortifications was levied, CCA. AB/2 f.61r-v; CCA. CR60/84, unfol. (1643), 'Manuscript List of Mayors and Sheriffs, 1242-1697'; *CSPD*, 1641-43, 382; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 23.

¹⁶ Ann Hughes, 'Coventry and the English Revolution', in R. C. Richardson (ed.), *Town and Countryside in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 1992), 80-1; A. M. Johnson, 'Politics in Chester during the Civil War and Interregnum', in *Crisis and Order*, 210-11.

King in September 1642.¹⁷ At Chester the walls escaped the Civil War siege fairly lightly: the only breaches were at New Gate and in the north wall near the Water Tower, caused by an attempted storming by Parliamentary forces in late-1645.¹⁸ The Civil War had led to record levels of investment in the walls and given the very low rate of artillery fire, it is quite probable that at the end of the First Civil War they were in their best condition of the whole seventeenth century. By 1686 the walls were once again being described as out of repair and breaches in the walls near the Eastgate were reported in 1689 leading to a programme of repairs in 1690 which cost £133 6s 6d and dealt with the remaining breaches. In the first decade of the eighteenth century a large-scale programme of repairs was begun, which it is claimed saw £1000 invested. By 1707 the walls had benefited from this work and were described by the murengers as being in a better condition than ever before in living memory.¹⁹

Just as the walls were drain on civic finances, so too were the gates and complaints about their ruinous state were equally common, such as the petition from the inhabitants adjacent to Chester's Eastgate who feared its imminent collapse in the 1630s. The Civil War siege caused far greater damage to the gates and their direct vicinity because they were the focus of a number of assaults, and consequently a programme of repairs was instituted in the 1670s to rectify siege damage: over £250 was spent on the Northgate, over £88 on the Eastgate, and the Watergate was rebuilt in 1712. The main period of redevelopment came in the late 1760s and 1770s when first the Eastgate was removed and completely rebuilt (1768), followed by the Watergate (1788-89), the Bridge Gate (1781) and finally the Northgate (1808). The rebuilding of the gates was part of an attempt to remove obstructions from the streets and reduce the bottlenecks created by the older, narrow, medieval gates.²⁰ In Coventry the Restoration destruction of the walls left the gates isolated but intact, and subsequently attempts were made to preserve the gates with regular inspections and repairs. Bradford's survey of 1748-49 shows twelve gates surviving, although in the later eighteenth century the main gates began to be removed, first New Gate (1762), Gosford Gate (1765), Spon Gate (1771), Grey Friars (1781), and the lesser gates before the end of the century.²¹

¹⁷ CRO. Acc.2/3, 84, Anon., 'A compilation of matters including a history of Coventry'; Acc.2/5 f.48v, Anon., 'Annals of the City of Coventry'; BL. Add.11364 f.20r, Anon., 'Annals of Coventry 1278-1703'; B. Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquities* (1870), 79; VCH: Warwick 8, 23.

¹⁸ Simpson, *Chester's Walls*, 29; Rupert H. Morris, 'The siege of Chester, 1643-46', *JCNWAHS*, 25 (1923), 72; Porter, 'Property destruction', 38-9, notes the limited effectiveness of artillery bombardment and the very low rate of fire, during the siege of Gloucester 450 artillery rounds were fired over a four week period, i.e. an average of 16 per day.

¹⁹ CCA. AB/3 f.5v, 21v, 26v, 45v, 145v-46r, 156r-v; Richard Trappes-Lomax (ed.), *The Diary and Letter Book of the Reverend Thomas Brockbank, 1671-1709* (Chetham Society, 89, 1930), 105; 'Joseph Taylor's visit', *CS*, 10 (1914), no. 2243; J. Loveday, *Diary of a Tour in 1732* (Edinburgh, 1904), 82; P. Carrington, *The Book of Chester* (1994), 102; Simpson, *Chester's Walls*, 30-1.

²⁰ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 85-6, 167, 169, 205; CCA. AB/2 f.170r, 184r; AB/3 f.204v; AB/4 f.256r-v; BL. Harl. 2125, f.166v, Randle Holme(?), 'The Antiquity of the Anciant and famous City of Chester'; CCA. CR632/1 unfol., John Broster, 'Miscellany of Printed and Manuscript Items'; J. M. B. Pigot, *History of Chester From its Foundations to the Present Time* (Chester, 1815), 124, 127, 130, 133; J. H. Hanshall, *The Stranger in Chester: Giving an accurate sketch of its local history with chronological arrangements of the most interesting events connected therewith* (Chester, printed by J. Fletcher, 1816), 35-6; P. H. Aledon, P. J. Harvey, and D. J. Robinson, 'The Eastgate, Chester 1972', *JCAS*, 59 (1976), 37-49.

²¹ CRO. BA/H/C/17/2, f.328r, 'Council Minute Book II, 1635-1696'; William Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curiosum* (2nd edition, 1776), vol.1, 49; Samuel Bradford, *A Plan of the City of Coventry, Surveyed in 1748 and 1749* (1750); VCH: Warwick 8, 23.

There is little evidence of greater levels of investment in Chester's walls after 1660 and the destruction of Coventry's walls prevents any comparison. The persistent efforts and money expended before 1640 are indicative of the continued commitment of the civic authorities in both Chester and Coventry, at a time when the walls' military use was negligible. The necessities of defence in the 1640s meant the walls received a major boost in investment and were rapidly repaired in anticipation of a siege. The immediate post-war period, the 1660s and 1670s, witnessed a programme of rebuilding, the Eastgate and Northgate at Chester, in-filling the breaches in the walls, and followed by a burst of activity in the final decade of the seventeenth century and the first decade of the eighteenth. Finally in the 1770s, the old city gates were removed to reduce traffic congestion. Coventry provides an inadequate comparison because of the destruction of the walls in 1662. However, the city did attempt to preserve the remains of the walls and the gates from the 1670s and at the same time as Chester it began to remove the old main gates from the 1760s onwards. As the military utility of Chester's walls declined so they were increasingly utilised in other ways. William Webb, a resident in the city in the 1620s, comments on the footpath a yard wide built on the walls and how 'you may go round about the walls, being a very delectable Walk, feeding the eye, on the one side, with the sweet gardens, and fine buildings of the City; and on the other side, with a prospect of many miles into the country of Chester, into Wales, and into the Sea'. Carrington suggests the promenades on Chester's walls were only laid out in the early eighteenth century, as part of the general 'urban renaissance' experienced by provincial towns. However, the evidence of Webb and numerous other seventeenth century travellers who visited Chester confirm that the walls had been converted into a leisure facility by the 1620s at the latest.²²

Chester's walls and gates were not maintained simply because they had become a tourist attraction and leisure facility, they fulfilled a far more important role locally. For the civic elite the walls provided an opportunity to express their control of the city's physical fabric, while advertising the scale of their good works and munificence. The walls were peppered with plaques on sections which had been repaired commemorating, the names of the mayors, aldermen and murengers who had been responsible for the work. These plaques enabled the civic elite to advertise their generosity and civic spirit, and to make unsubstantiated, lasting public claims about their generosity. The plaques were often commented upon by visitors to the city, as was the generosity of the city's elite, and they were carefully protected against vandalism.²³ But the walls and gates had an important part in local historical tradition being widely held to be of Roman origin, and therefore provided a direct connection with the city's ancient and glorious past.

²² King, *Vale Royall*, 17; L. G. Wickham Legg (ed.), *A Relation of a Short Survey of Twenty Six Counties observed in a Seven Week Journey... By a Captain a Lieutenant and an Ancient All Three of the Military Company in Norwich* (1904), 49; Sir William Brereton, *Travels in Holland, The United Provinces, England, Scotland and Ireland* (Edward Hawkins (ed.), Chetham Society, 1st ser., 1, 1844), 161; Carrington, *Chester*, 88, 102; Ralph Thoresby, in D. M. Palliser, *Chester 1066-1971: Contemporary Descriptions by Residents and Visitors* (Chester, 1972), 16; Gédéon Bonnivert, 'Chester in 1690', *CS*, 8 (1911), no. 1695; C. Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1947), 178.

²³ A number of plaques claim the civic elite spent over £1000 at the beginning of the eighteenth century repairing the city walls and laying out walkways, however there is little evidence in the city's records to substantiate this claims, see Simpson, *Chester's Walls*, 30-1; Loveday, *Diary of A Tour*, 82; George Skene in Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 22; CCA. Quarter Sessions Files, QSF/82 unfol. (1674-82), three men were prosecuted for 'obliterating the name of Alderman Poole [one of the murengers] inscribed on the city walls', in the same session file there are numerous other prosecutions of vandals, notably some are masons and presumably were stealing stone from the city walls.

When the Eastgate was pulled down in 1768, William Cowper argued against such a move on the basis of its antiquity and the way the history of the city and its walls and gates were intertwined. However, it is evident that as the eighteenth century wore on the historical importance of the walls and gates lessened and their function as a leisure facility grew.²⁴

Town streets

The paving, lighting and cleanliness of provincial town streets is generally held to have improved over the course of the eighteenth century as large-scale schemes, collectively administered and backed by greater levels of investment left their mark. Town governors had always been concerned about the streets, and maintaining thoroughfares was essential for trade and to control sanitary conditions in an age when urban authorities were acutely aware of the relationship between dirt and disease.²⁵ Carts with iron wheel rims were blamed for destroying road surfaces and from 1493 carts entering the city of York had to pay a toll of 4d towards the upkeep of the roads. In 1523-4 in York carts from the intra-mural area, Bristol followed suit in 1615 and in 1705 forbade the use of iron in the sledges dragged through the streets.²⁶ The eighteenth century, however, was not the only period of large-scale investment in roads and paving. At York in 1523-4 the main streets had been completely re-paved at great expense and at Chester the main intra-mural streets were all re-paved in a major civic project between 1567 and 1586.²⁷ Although these were ambitious and costly schemes for their time, it is doubtful that they matched the levels of investment of the later eighteenth century, for instance in the 1770s Southampton spent c. £4775. Nor did they incorporate the drains and pavements which made a significant difference to the condition of urban streets in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless town governors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shared similar ambitions to their Georgian counterparts, instituting large-scale schemes to surface roads and improve the condition of intra-mural streets.

In spite of such efforts complaints about the state of Chester and Coventry's streets were legion, and broken pavements and blocked ditches were regularly presented in the town's courts.²⁸ Post-Restoration Chester does not seem to have undergone any major programme of works aimed at improving the town's paving and it is impossible to gauge the impact of the Parliamentary Act of 1726. Yet in 1755 William Cole

²⁴ CCA. CX/3 f.2r-5r, David Rogers, 'A Breviary of some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'; Hanshall, *Stranger in Chester*, 35; Pigot, *History of Chester*, 2; Joseph Hemingway, *History of the City of Chester, From its Foundation to the Present Time* (Chester, 1831), vol.1, 335-6; B. Lepetit, *The Pre-Industrial Urban System: France 1740-1840* (Cambridge, 1994), 53-7; residents began to build summer houses on the walls in the eighteenth century, see CCA. AB/4 f.114r.

²⁵ *Leet Book*, 234, 777; D. Palliser, 'Civic mentality and the environment in Tudor York' in J. Barry (ed.), *Tudor and Stuart Town* (1990), 223; Alan Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973), 207.

²⁶ Jones and Falkus, 'Urban improvement', 136; D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (1979), 27.

²⁷ Palliser, *Tudor York*, 27; CCA. CR60/83 f.14r-15r; BL. Add. 39925 f.21r-22r, Anon., 'A collection of the mayors who have governed the City of Chester'; Harl. 2057 f.29v, George Bellin, 'A collection of the maiors who haue governed this City of Chester'; Harl. 1944 f.85v, David Rogers, 'A breviary of Chester history': Northgate St. Whitefriars Lane, Parsons Lane, Castle Lane (1567), Watergate Street (1579), Cowlane (1583), Eastgate Street (1584), Bridge Street (1586).

²⁸ CCA. QSF/55/23, 33, QSF/57 unfol., QSF/63 part 1 unfol., QSF/68 unfol., QSF/75 unfol., QSF/77 unfol., QSF/90 unfol., QSF/91-98 unfol.; Groombridge, *Calendar*, 41, 79; CCA. AB/2 f.91r; Levi Fox (ed.), *Coventry Constable Presentments 1629-1742* (Dugdale Society, 34, 1986).

described the city as 'better paved than any town I have visited'.²⁹ Coventry's streets fared much worse and the council decried their lamentable state in 1641. The intra-mural streets had been paved at the beginning of the fifteenth century and from the beginning of the seventeenth century surveyors of the highways were appointed annually for each ward, but little is known about their effectiveness. There appears to have been little civic drive and it was only in the last decade of the eighteenth century that the north side of Earl Street and east side of Burges street were rebuilt.³⁰ The central problem was the way in which authority for the streets was divided between the Leet, the council and the quarter sessions, in no clearly defined pattern. The Leet continued to issue by-laws and revived old by-laws in 1725, 1734 and 1754 affecting matters such as street repair and cleaning, but after 1754 the Leet no longer intervened in these matters. From 1756 to 1764 the quarter sessions became semi-dormant, little business was conducted and meetings were adjourned from week to week. Given the role of the Grand Jury in presenting overseers of the highways and property holders for failing to uphold by-laws governing road repairs and cleaning, and the Leet's role issuing by-laws, two major planks of the city's administrative machinery were effectively in stasis. The corporation had considered undertaking major street improvements in the mid-1720s, but backed off from this commitment and the impetus for change was lost. The almost universal description of Coventry's streets as narrow, dirty and uneven gives an indication of the authorities failure to significantly modify or improve this aspect of the urban environment.³¹

Keeping the streets clean was one of the most pressing tasks urban authorities faced, and without intervention streets would rapidly degenerate into quagmires of dirt and human detritus.³² Town governors came up with a series of strategies to manage and finance waste disposal: in 1615 Banbury levied a street cleaning tax on anyone who attended the markets or fair. Most frequently one of two basic methods was adopted. Individual householders were responsible for the section of pavement outside their house or workshop or towns appointed official scavengers whose duties were to remove waste from the streets. How successful this first system was is questionable, repeated complaints and frequent prosecutions against residents suggest it had a limited impact.³³ However, this system also devolved responsibility to institutions such as the trade guilds and parishes, and where those institutions were robust, such as in Coventry, they fulfilled their duties regularly employing labourers to clean and repair the pavements outside their guild halls.³⁴ The second strategy of introducing scavengers indicates a more communal approach. The

²⁹ Reviewing all the corporation assembly books and letter books there is no hint of any large-scale schemes for re-paving. Cole quoted in John Livesey, 'Tarporely in 1755', *THSLC*, 64 (1913), 308. This view is echoed by earlier travellers who visited Chester before the act was secured, see *Fiennes' Journeys*, 178; Defoe, *Tour*, 392-3; 'Joseph Taylor's visit', *CS*, 10 (1914), no. 2243.

³⁰ CRO. Acc. 2/3,46; Acc.2/5, f.8r; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 10.

³¹ CRO. BA/H/C/17/1, 'Council Minute Book I, 1557-1635', f.142r, 164r, 170r, 183v, 202v, 206r, 213v, 217v, 225r, 233v, 241r, 250r, 261r, 270r, 275v; BA/H/C/17/2, f.14r; BA/H/C/17/3, 314, 'Council Minute Book III'; BA/E/F/37/2, 'Leet Book II', 50, 149-50, 191, 396, 406, 428, 429; *VCH: Warwick* 8, 10, 271; Fox, *Coventry Constables*; Stukeley, *Itinerarium*, 19.

³² The problem of cleaning the streets was not simply an aesthetic consideration, the amounts of rubbish allowed to pile up at the Capplegate and the end of Dee Mills began to contaminate the Dee causing problems for the fishermen, see CCA. AB/2 f.153r-54r.

³³ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 56, 205; CCA. AB/2 f.72r, 153r-54r; Quarter Sessions File (QSF), QSF/55/21, QSF/75 unfol., QSF/77 unfol., QSF/91 unfol., QSF/92 unfol., QSF/94 unfol.; Fox, *Constable Presentments*.

³⁴ CRO. Acc.1494/20/1, 'The Cappers' Company Account Book, 1495-1925', 156r, 163r.

scavengers were paid by the householders to remove 'dunge, mucke and other filthe and duste oute of the streetes and lanes' and the general lack of refuse pits and the presence of stone-lined garderobes found in archaeological excavations of late medieval towns indicates this was a fairly common practice.³⁵ Coventry appointed scavengers for each ward from 1609, and Chester's corporation employed one from the later sixteenth century, but the task proved too great and in 1670 the scope of the scheme was extended. Three scavengers were appointed, each responsible for a different part of the city and paid by an assessment levied on all the city's inhabitants. The extended scheme in Chester coincides with the introduction of similar projects elsewhere, for example Leicester in 1686, Hereford in 1694 and Lincoln in 1707 (in the latter two cases paid by a special rate levied on inhabitants), although in other towns schemes were not introduced until much later in the mid-eighteenth century, such as Banbury in 1733.³⁶ However, Chester's scavenger system had collapsed by 1691 and the corporation reverted to a system of householder responsibility. Although its introduction did mark a departure in civic attempts to cleanse the streets it failed very quickly and it was not until the introduction of the Lighting and Cleansing Act in 1726 that this situation was rectified.³⁷

In tandem with improvements to the street surface and cleansing were attempts to increase street lighting. Most medieval towns had some form of lighting regulations, in which householders or the more substantial townspeople were ordered to hang lanterns outside their houses, usually from All Hallows (1 November) to Candlemas (2 February) between 6pm and 9pm. As Falkus has shown, these arrangements gave only a limited amount of street lighting both in terms of hours and over a very short season.³⁸ From the early eighteenth century towns began to improve their lighting provision. Two of the earliest lighting schemes were backed by parliamentary legislation at Bristol and Norwich (both 1700), and other towns followed suit Hull (1713), Liverpool (1718 and 1738), York (1724), Birmingham, Sheffield, Exeter (all by 1735), Wisbech (1715). The first sign of similar attempts at Chester was the insertion of a clause in all(?) leases from 1705 that householders must provide a convex lamp, similar to those used in London, between dusk and 10pm every night from 10 September to 10 March. The city also purchased the new style convex lamps to hang in a limited number of public places - the High Cross, the Exchange and the Pentice. However this only complimented the existing system and orders calling on householders and innkeepers to maintain their lamps were still regularly reissued.³⁹ In 1726 Chester's corporation petitioned Parliament for an act for lighting the streets which three years later was fully operational and in 1725 a ward-wide rate was

³⁵ Colin Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, 1000-1600* (1973), 99; Jones et al, *Northampton in the Middle Ages*, 31.

³⁶ CRO. BA/E/F/37/2, 50; Groombridge, *Calendar*, 24, 27; CCA. AB/2 f.169r-v; BL. Harl. 2125, f.166v; CCA. CR632/1 unfol., the annalists note the introduction of the new scavenger scheme and that the mayor rode the streets of the town every Thursday to ensure the streets were clean; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 70; VCH: *Oxfordshire*, 10 (1972), 82.

³⁷ CCA. AB/2 f.183r, 187r, 194r; AB/3 f.6r-v, 10r-v, 13r, 33r; AB/4 f.5v. At some point between 1677 and 1681 the scavenger system fell into abeyance, persistent but unsuccessful attempts were made to revive it in 1686 and 1687, but by 1691 it had been abandoned.

³⁸ M. Falkus, 'Lighting in the dark ages of English economic history: town streets before the industrial revolution', in D. C. Coleman and A. H. John (eds.), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England* (1976), 252; Palliser, *Tudor York*, 24; *Leet Book*, 777; CCA. AB/3 f.4v repeating an order of 1536/7.

³⁹ CCA. AB/3 f.46r, 128v, 131v, 139r, 168r-v; Falkus, 'Lighting in the dark ages', 257, 259-60; Jones and Falkus, 'Urban improvement', 134.

introduced in Coventry to pay for street lights.⁴⁰ The impact of these changes should not be exaggerated, the number of lamps erected was small and at Chester the scheme provided for well-lit main streets, but did little to light the side streets and back alleys.⁴¹

Town environment

Just as town governors took a proactive attitude towards the streets and walls, this applied equally to the urban environment, the supply of water, and the removal of noxious and dangerous industrial processes from the central areas of the town. Chester's governors did not have to remove industrial practices because from late medieval times the city's leather industry, its biggest polluter, had been extra-murally based: the tanning pits were situated in Love Lane and the skinners and glovers workshops were sandwiched between the river and walls on the western side of the city. In Coventry the corporation moved the skinners from the Little Park and the area was cleansed in the 1630s. Coventry appears to have been out of step with other provincial towns which by the sixteenth century had ensured that leather workers such as tanners were located outside the walls. The only areas of the economy in which Chester's governors intervened was the storing of flammable fuel used by the city's bakers, in particular gorse, and ordering the butchers not to kill animals at their shops but in the slaughter houses outside the city walls. This campaign began in the 1670s, continued intermittently over the next century and was enforced more rigorously in the 1780s when the butchers were pushed out of the main shopping streets.⁴² Both Chester and Coventry continued to suffer from the problem of swine wandering through the streets and inhabitants were frequently ordered to corral their animals. In Chester the city beadle was responsible for rounding up all itinerant pigs, impounding them in Northgate ditch to be released only on payment of a fine. Subsequently swine were banished from within the city walls but the frequent repeating of the civic order and the high levels of presentments by constables in both towns suggests such measures had a limited effect and the problem persisted into the eighteenth century.⁴³

The supply of water in many early modern towns was not exclusively a concern of government and was often a source of private employment for labourers who sold buckets of water to householders.⁴⁴ The mid- to later sixteenth century witnesses a significant effort by a number of towns to improve their water supply,

⁴⁰ CCA. AB/4 f.5v; CRO. BA/E/F/37/2, 396; Poole, *Coventry*, 344.

⁴¹ CCA. TCC/WP/65, 'Papers relating to corporation business'; Falkus, 'Lighting in the dark ages', 259; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 73, Preston erected only four convex lamps in 1699 the service appears to have deteriorated in 1700s and 1710s when only three lamps were being serviced, then nothing is heard until 1731 when the town bailiffs were ordered to buy eight new lamps. Even in larger scale schemes the number of lamps erected was quite low, e.g. Liverpool erected 45 lamps (1718), York at least 50 (1723-4), and Salisbury 22 (1727).

⁴² Carrington, *Chester*, 80; P. Broster, *The Chester Guide* (1787, 2nd edition), 23; CCA. AB/2 f.172v, AB/3 f.3r; S. I. Mitchell, 'Urban markets and retail distribution, 1730-1815' (unpub., University of Oxford D.Phil., 1974), 273. CRO. Acc.2/5, f.40v; BL. Add.11364, f.16r; A. Rosen, 'Winchester in transition 1500-1700' in Clark, *Country Towns*, 150; W. G. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan provincial town: Leicester', in W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History* (1963), 95-6; Peter Ripley, 'Poverty in Gloucester and its alleviation 1690-1740', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 103 (1985), 187.

⁴³ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 141, 160, 167; CCA. AB/2 f.95v, 125v, 172v, AB/3 f.3v; QSF/52/12, 18, 23-32, 34-42, QSF/53/67, QSF/54/47, 50-59, QSF/55/5-8, 10-19, QSF/68 unfol., QSF/75 unfol., QSF/77 unfol.; Fox, *Constables Presentments*. Although it is problematic to interpret the number of presentments as a direct indication of concern, because of the random nature of their survival, there does not appear to have been any greater effort to corral animals in the eighteenth century.

⁴⁴ Defoe, *Tour*, 394; 'Drawers of the Dee Company Book, 1572-1712'.

pipled water systems were introduced at Poole, Rye, Totnes, York and Worcester.⁴⁵ Attempts sponsored by the civic authorities at Chester began in the first half of the sixteenth century, but more concerted efforts were initiated in 1582 when a cistern was constructed at Boughton to pump water into a conduit at the High Cross, paid for by a city-wide collection. After an initially successful phase, raising the money and paying for the pipework, complaints began in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, the High Cross conduit was decayed and George Salt, the city's plumber's wages were in arrears.⁴⁶ As a result of the decay of the water cistern at Boughton a new scheme, subcontracted to John Tyrer to build and maintain, was begun in 1621 and completed in 1622. Tyrer used a tower on the Bridge Gate to pump water into the city conduits and direct to those households prepared to pay him.⁴⁷ Coventry had some form of piped water system from the later sixteenth century which the city governors attempted to improve in 1633, building an elevated tank system on the cathedral hill. This system possibly collapsed in the later 1660s and was replaced in 1704 when a pump was built by the spring outside Bishops Gate and a further pump in Cross Cheaping ward in 1724.⁴⁸ The siege and the neglect of those years left Tyrer's Chester waterworks in a state of disrepair and a number of unsuccessful attempts were made to resurrect the waterworks after the Restoration. In 1692 a new water pump was built by a consortium of local men with the engineer John Hadley and lead pipes were laid throughout the town to deliver water.⁴⁹ But this attempt to improve the water system, as with the extended scavenger scheme, was only partially successful. While Hadley might claim to be a famous engineer who had successfully piped water into other English towns, notably Worcester, local inhabitants found the water pressure too low, the pipes leaked and the supply was far from universal.⁵⁰

Conclusion

The changes and improvements to Chester and Coventry's environment and streets were very different in both timing and scale, although there are some common themes. The area of most marked success, in both towns, was street lighting facilitated by the acquisition of lighting acts in the 1720s, although the limited impact outside the main streets is evident from Chester. Neither town suffered from industrial

⁴⁵ R. Tittler, 'The vitality of an Elizabethan port: the economy of Poole, c.1550-1600', *Southern History*, 7 (1985), 97; Graham Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (University of Sussex, Falmer, 1987), 29; M. Laithwaite, 'Totnes houses 1500-1800', in Clark *Transformation*, 69; Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, 208; Dyer, *Sixteenth Century Worcester*, 206-7.

⁴⁶ King, *Vale Royall*, 40, 82, 202-3; CCA. CR60/83 f.14r-v; BL. Harl. 2057 f.29; BL. Add. 39925 f.21r; Groombridge, *Calendar*, 48, 74.

⁴⁷ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 104, 109, 118; CCA. CHD/1/13 (13 Sept 1622); CCA. CR 60/83 f.24r; Wickham Legg, *Relation of a Short Survey*, 50; King, *Vale Royall*, 17, 33. There is some dispute about exactly when Tyrer built the water tower, the civic records and deeds indicate the 1620s, but many histories, including Daniel King's, George Bellin's and William Cowper's all suggest 1601. It may be possible that Tyrer made two attempts to pump water into the town in 1601 and 1621.

⁴⁸ CRO. Acc.2/5 f.40r; BL. Add. 11364 f.15v; Joan Lancaster, *Saint Mary's Hall, Coventry: A Guide to the Building its History and Contents* (The Coventry Papers No. 3, 2nd edition, 1981), 14; Poole, *Coventry*, 341; Hewitt's *Journal*, 341; *Fiennes' Journeys*, 113; the council licensed a public water cart in 1669 which suggests the piped water system was either inadequate or had fallen into disuse/disrepair, see CRO. BA/H/C/17/2, 189r. It is very probable before this attempt to pipe water an earlier scheme had been tried in the 1620s, see CRO. Acc.2/5 f.38r; BL. Add.11364 f.15r.

⁴⁹ CCA. AB/2 f. 34v-35r, 102v, 176v; 'Comerbach Diary', CS, 34 (1939), no. 7532, 7604, 7610, 7638, 7649; Thomas Brockbank's *Journal*, 105; 'Joseph Taylor's visit', CS, 10 (1914), no. 2243.

⁵⁰ 'Comerbach Diary', CS, 34 (1939), no. 7662; compare with Defoe, *Tour*, 394; CRO. BA/H/C/17/1, f.190v, 235r; Reed, 'Seventeenth century Ipswich' in Clark, *Country Towns* (1981), 124-5 shows that only eight per cent of the town benefited from piped water in 1681.

pollution on the scale of Sheffield or Barnsley and as indicated above attempts to remove the most noxious processes (tanning and slaughtering) were relatively successful. Where both towns were markedly less successful was in cleaning and paving the streets and the supply of piped water. Concerted attempts to pipe water began in the mid-sixteenth century but it is clear that new schemes introduced in the late seventeenth century were neither more comprehensive nor much more efficient. The cleaning and paving of the streets is more difficult to assess as it is almost impossible to gauge levels of investment or the condition of the roads. At Chester the more extensive scavenging systems introduced in the 1670s, did not work well and had collapsed by the 1690s. Contrary to Stobart's optimistic claims, it does not automatically follow the introduction of the new schemes that street cleansing became more efficient, as the problems at Chester highlight.⁵¹ In contrast, Coventry's governors made only limited attempts to improve the streets and as a result they remained a constant source of complaint.

The later seventeenth and early eighteenth century record is therefore one of continuity, both in terms of effort, the very mixed results achieved and in the mechanisms and administrative systems underpinning civic efforts to control the urban environment. Falkus and Jones suggest that the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries witness the move away from individual to collective responsibility, with significant concomitant gains in efficiency and standards. However, examples from both Chester and Coventry show that civic authorities had from the sixteenth century been subcontracting work. John Tyrer the water engineer was a subcontractor of Chester corporation, the scavenging schemes were organised and subcontracted by both councils and paid for by assessments of each town's inhabitants. Corporations did not, however, end individual responsibility through the introduction of such schemes. On the contrary, urban governors encouraged the two to coexist, a kind of administrative belt and braces approach. Underpinning all of these efforts were collective assessments, levied either on specific groups of householders or across the whole town to pay for the scavengers, civic building projects, street repair and lighting. Coventry and Chester's governors were fully aware of their legal right to assess the town's inhabitants (although with varying degrees of success in each town), and spend that money on improving the urban environment.⁵² Consequently, until the 1760s when towns began to apply much more frequently for improvement acts, there was little change to the administrative structures and mechanisms utilised to maintain the urban environment.

5.iii. Remodelling the urban landscape: architectural change and street planning

Alongside improvements in the paving, lighting and cleansing of streets, it is generally argued the eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of a more defined public space as streets were widened, obstructions removed and areas formally planned or laid out. The opportunity for a planned street layout

⁵¹ J. Stobart, 'Shopping streets as social space: leisure, consumerism and improvement in an eighteenth century county town', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 15. Complaints about urban squalor and the problems of street cleaning, even in the central areas of provincial cities, continue throughout the eighteenth century, see Andrew Brice's comments on Exeter in *The Mobiad* c.1735 quoted in R. Newton, *Eighteenth Century Exeter* (Exeter, 1984), 2.

⁵² Edna Rideout, 'The Chester companies and the old quay', *THSLC*, 79 (1928), 141-74; Peter Lake, 'The collection of ship money in Cheshire during the 1630s: A case study of relations between central and local government', *Northern History*, 17 (1981), 44-71.

was most readily achieved in those towns redeveloped after a major fire - Northampton, Warwick, Blanford Forum - or in towns which underwent rapid growth and consequently developed on land previously under- or undeveloped, such as Bath, Liverpool and Whitehaven. Borsay argues that much of this planned development was initially formally controlled and resulted from the drive of a particular individual or institution, such as Lord Brooke at Warwick or the Lowther family at Whitehaven. In towns where development took place within an existing street pattern, formal control was more difficult to establish as a plethora of different landowners, authorities and craftsmen militated against formal planning. Although this area is under-researched, Borsay suggests uniformity in design and layout was brought about informally through widely-held cultural values. In other words from the later seventeenth century there emerged 'a shared building tradition which stressed the value of regularity' and which underpinned the redevelopment of towns and expressed this new aesthetic consciousness.⁵³ Few case studies of the redevelopment of an existing town layout or the introduction of classical houses have been conducted and Chester offers an unparalleled view of this process. The corporation exerted a powerful control over the town, was the single largest property owner, and had in place an effective administrative framework of constables to enforce building regulations and planning inspections, backed up by an active quarter sessions court. Second all redevelopment took place within the existing street plan, interacting with and modifying Chester's landscape, rather than replacing it wholesale.

The first element in the process of street redevelopment was the removal of obstructions, especially markets, and attempts were made to remove some of Chester's markets from the central area around the High Cross from the 1630s onwards. The herb and root sellers were the first to be removed from around the High Cross, followed by the swine market, moved from the central Eastgate Street to a site along New Gate Street adjacent to the walls in 1641. This was immediately followed by discussions about moving the linencloth and yarn market, and from the mid-1660s to the mid-1670s this market was moved from Bridge Street Row to Watergate Street Row on four occasions, finally ending up in the Row in Watergate Street. In a further burst of activity in 1677 and 1678, the horse market was moved from Northgate Street to the extra-mural section of Foregate Street and the coal market from Lower Bridge Street to Fleshmongers Lane adjacent to the town walls. By the 1680s the only market to be held in one of Chester's four main streets was the poultry, butter and cheese market in Bridge Street.⁵⁴ This appears to have been the limits of efforts to clear the streets and further attempts to remodel the streets or central area around the Exchange and Pentice were rebuffed by the council. Proposals from two resident gentlemen to transform the area around the Exchange into a clearly defined square, were met with procrastination and inactivity, leaving the original layout intact.⁵⁵

⁵³ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 85-101.

⁵⁴ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 207; CCA. AB/2 f.151v, 156v, 162r, 185r, 185v, 189r; AB/3 f.131r; AB/4 92r; Broster, *Chester Guide*, 21; Hemingway, *History of Chester*, vol.1, 418.

⁵⁵ CCA. AB/3 f.261r, 262v, 263r; Alexander de Lavaux, *Plan of the City and Castle of Chester* (1745). William Massey and Robert Crompton had proposed the removal of both shambles to create a better 'prospect' in the open area around the Exchange, although the corporation initially seemed interested, they turned it down only because they were unsure about Massey's plan for moving the Further

From 1661, and gathering pace in the 1670s, the corporation encountered a new problem which threatened the integrity of the streets. Paradoxically this threat came from the process generally cited as having contributed to widening streets - the creation of uniform house frontages. There had been some limited and early attempts to create uniform frontages in first half of the seventeenth century, but after the Restoration there was a considerable upsurge in activity.⁵⁶ Townspeople began to petition the corporation for land in front of their houses in order to rebuild their houses and extend them forward, thereby creating a uniform frontage with the adjacent properties. Martha Chadwick petitioned the corporation in October 1729, the adjoining shops in Watergate Street jutted two and a half feet further out into the street, obscuring her shop and prejudicing her trade. She requested the right to extend her property to be 'even in front' with the adjacent shops and contribute to the uniformity of the street.⁵⁷ Although this process brought architectural uniformity and frontages that metropolitan commentators would praise, it in fact operated to reduce the street's width as petitioners were extending their properties outwards to meet a line created by the house or shop that protruded furthest into the street.⁵⁸ A successful petition by one occupant of a street appears to have prompted subsequent petitions by their neighbours so all the adjoining houses would 'range even' as the petitioners requested.⁵⁹

The number of extant petitions from 1660 to 1750 is 26, although this is certainly an under-representation of activity; petitions frequently mention building activity by neighbours where the original petition cannot be found.⁶⁰ The corporation did not agree to all the petitions, of the 26, only 16 grants can be traced (62%) and from these grants it is possible to trace the pattern of streets which began to be rebuilt. Of the petitions granted, almost half concerned Bridge Street (7 of 16), and only one petition relating to Bridge Street was rejected. Archaeological surveys of Chester's standing buildings from the seventeenth and eighteenth century confirm that Lower Bridge Street and Castle Street were areas where classical re-fronting and rebuilding made significant inroads.⁶¹ Some rebuilding took place in Northgate Street and on occasion this took the form of adding classical columns to an existing house. In other examples it involved more extensive rebuilding, although about one third of the rebuilding took place in extra-mural Upper Northgate Street.⁶² More limited redevelopment took place in Watergate Street, Fleshmongers Lane,

Shambles. Subsequently nothing was done about these ideas, see Lavaux's map of 1745 which clearly shows the two shambles still *in situ* in Northgate Street.

⁵⁶ For a very early example see Groombridge, *Calendar*, 84-5. William Edwards petitioned to extend his shop so it would 'beautifie and adorne' the city by making 'a uniformitie of building with all the rest of the shopps from thence Northwards'.

⁵⁷ CCA. AB/4 f.25r. Chadwick's petition was not granted, see AB/4 f.27v.

⁵⁸ For other examples where houses are extended outwards to range evenly with the houses protruding further into the street see the following petitions: Charles Griffiths CCA. AB/3 f.72v, John Mather AB/3 f.75v and 76v, George Booth AB/3 f.79v, John Barnston AB/3 f.121v, Paul Kingston AB/3 f.124v. There are numerous other examples.

⁵⁹ For example Michael Hickocke's petition was sparked by his neighbour, Thomas Whitaffe's success, see CCA. AB/3 f.149r for Whitaffe's petition, for Hickocke's follow up see AB/3 f.150v, 151r. For other examples see Roger Barnston petition following Lawrence Gowther's successful one in Bridge Street, AB/3 f.171v-72r, 172v, 185r, 185v.

⁶⁰ It also under-represents the scale of activity because many petitions appear in the Assembly Files, which do not appear in the assembly minute book, and were dealt with outside of the council meetings by the mayor and aldermen acting in an executive capacity.

⁶¹ J. C. Grenville and R. C. Turner, 'Two timber-framed houses in Chester', *JCAS*, 69 (1986), 97-114; Carrington, *Book of Chester*, 93-4.

⁶² CCA. AB/2 f.189v, AB/3 f.124v, 125v, AB/4 f.115r, 116r, 118v, 124r.

Eastgate and Foregate Street⁶³ The geographical pattern of rebuilding exhibits three tendencies: first the focus of activity was in Lower Bridge Street; second there was only limited rebuilding in three of the four main streets, Watergate, Eastgate and Northgate Street which included some extra-mural activity; third a considerable proportion of rebuilding took place in extra-mural streets, Foregate Street, or in streets away from the four major thoroughfares: Fleshmongers Lane, Castle Street and Whitefriars Street.

Contemporaneous to this re-fronting was a further move towards classicism which again, rather than enhance the street space, encroached upon it. Chester's inhabitants applied for permission to erect 'palisado pales', an iron fence, in front of their houses. In certain cases this had little impact on the street: Margaret Holme of Bridge Street petitioned for the right to erect 'pales' before her house, but they were parallel with the balcony of the Row over her house and hence encroached no further into the street.⁶⁴ However, many petitioners asked for a sizeable piece of land, William Brock in Northgate Street was granted over four feet of the street, John Ince three and a half feet, and Thomas Williams one yard in Bridge Street.⁶⁵ Of the 22 extant petitions, 21 were granted (95%), the majority of these, whether extra-mural or intra-mural were away from the four main streets: one in St. John's Lane, one at Gorsestacks, three in Foregate Street, one each in Pepper Street and Nicholas Street, two in Fleshmongers Lane, and three in Whitefriars Street. The eight remaining grants relate to Chester's main streets: three in Bridge Street and five in Northgate Street, of which at least one was granted in Upper Northgate Street, near the higher Abbey Gate. Although there appears to have been no resistance from the corporation to these petitions, the intra-mural sections of the four main streets were less affected by such changes and the streets where re-fronting was most evident is confirmed, Whitefriars Street, Fleshmongers Lane and Foregate Street. What we are witnessing is the emergence of a planning policy by Chester's civic elite which allowed classical re-fronting away from the main streets, in extra-mural areas and in streets off the main thoroughfares but which deliberately set out to limit the impact of classical rebuilding along the intra-mural sections of three of the four main streets of the town - Watergate, Eastgate and Northgate. Although there was clearly some demand among a section of townspeople for rebuilding on classical lines, which would confirm some of Borsay's thesis about architectural change, simultaneously the civic elite prevented redevelopment and instead protected the indigenous architectural traditions of the town.

When considering Chester's most prominent architectural feature, the Rows, the finding that the civic elite acted to defend indigenous architectural traditions is confirmed and underlined. Frequently commented on by visitors, the Rows were a considerable source of antiquarian pride, interest and their origins an almost inexhaustible source of debate.⁶⁶ Ralph Thoresby commented on their uniqueness, 'it is a sort of building

⁶³ CCA. AB/2 f.192v, AB/3 f.121v, 242r-v, 243r-v, AB/4 f.32v, 33v, 40v, 51v; Carrington, *Book of Chester*, 99.

⁶⁴ CCA. AB/3 f.247r, 248v.

⁶⁵ CCA. AB/3 f.232r, 232v, 239v, 212v, 213r.

⁶⁶ CCA. CX/3, f.4v; King, *Vale Royall*, 20; Stukeley, *Itinerarium*, Iter III, 59, Iter Boreale, 310; Toulmin-Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland*, vol.2, 85; John Hewitt, 'Notes on the medieval architecture of Chester', *JAAHSCNW*, new ser. 1 (1887), 30-52; T. N Brushfield,

peculiar to this city, the like they say not being to be seen in Europe again', although for such a well-read antiquary, Thoresby seems surprisingly unaware of Leland's comments about similar structures in sixteenth-century Bridgnorth. From the sixteenth century the Rows came to dominate Chester's public image and the city became famous for them. William Smith, travelling through Cheshire in 1588 commented on their uniqueness and did much to popularise them after his account was published by Daniel King in 1656:

The Buildings of the City are very ancient; and the Houses builded in such sort, that a man may go dry, from one place of the City to another, and never come in the street; but go as it were in Galleries, which they call, *The Roes*, which have Shops on both sides, and underneath, with divers fair staires to go up or down into the street. Which manner of building, I have not heard of in any place in Christendome.⁶⁷

The first recorded reference to Chester's Rows appears in the Portmote Court, 4 November 1330 and other references suggest the Rows were well established by the fourteenth century.⁶⁸ However, it was not until much later that the Rows achieved the architectural uniformity associated with the late eighteenth century drawings of Cuitt and Batenham. In a rental of 1533-34 payments were made to the Treasurers for posts built before the doors of houses in Bridge Street - these posts must have supported upper storeys and contributed to the process in which the Rows were eventually roofed. An engraving from 1700 shows in some places the houses did not yet extend over the passage of the Rows.⁶⁹ The Rows were constantly evolving, their development was piecemeal and the creation of covered galleried Rows throughout the main streets was only completed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the new world of post-Restoration polite culture, the Rows were potentially threatened by new architectural fashions as vernacular architecture was increasingly condemned for its barbarity. A seventeenth century town house in Ipswich was condemned by one tourist in 1741, 'I can't think there's any beauty in it. It shows a very frantick taste in the architect' and the Rows were not insulated from similar criticism.⁷⁰ After the 1690s there is a noticeable shift in the attitude of visitors and a host of gentry and metropolitan tourists lined up to condemn them. They detracted from the street, they were of no ornament or 'ugly and inconvenient' according to Elizabeth Duchess of Northumberland and Aikin described them as 'disagreeably close and often dirty'. Before the 1690s the Rows were generally described in a favourable light, although the odd discordant note was struck by Henry Hastings and Marmaduke Rawdon, visitors in the 1630s and 1650s respectively. Thereafter the only visitors who showed any appreciation of the Rows were generally those of an antiquarian leaning.⁷¹ One would

⁶⁷ 'The Rows of Chester', 207-38, John Hewitt, 'The Rows of Chester', 277-98, E. W. Cox, 'The origin and date of the Chester Rows', 299-303, all in *JCNWAAS*, n.s. 5, parts 2-3 (1895).

⁶⁸ King, *Vale Royall*, 40; Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 16; Toulmin-Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland*, vol.2, 85; galleried rows may have been more common throughout early medieval England, but by the seventeenth century only Chester's survived.

⁶⁹ CCA. MR/30 m.3r, Portmote Court Roll; A. M. Kennett, 'The Rows in the city records', *JCAS*, 67 (1984), 47-54.

⁷⁰ CCA. AB/1 f.53r-57r; Morris, *Chester*, 288-94.

⁷¹ Moir, *Discovery of Britain*, 64.

⁷² Most visitors commented on and described the Rows, but not all gave positive or negative assessments, only those visitors who commented in a negative or positive way are noted here. For favourable views see: William Smith, BL. Harl. 1046 'County Palatines of Chester' reprinted in King, *Vale Royall*; William Camden, *Britannia* (1610) quoted in Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 12;

expect provincial townspeople, who historians believe readily embraced the new classical architecture to reject the Rows as barbaric and inconvenient, and rebuild or re-front the Rows with classical facades. Although some Cestrians petitioned to enclose the Rows and re-front them, the city corporation and other citizens rejected this approach and instead chose to protect the Rows from redevelopment.

The mayor and corporation controlled the development of the Rows from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century in tandem with the owners of the houses and undercrofts fronting onto the Rows.⁷² From the late 1660s the corporation began to receive petitions from residents for the Rows to be enclosed. Occupants of properties fronting onto the Rows petitioned to be allowed to enclose the Row, either enclosing the Row entirely, to enable them to re-front their house to range evenly with adjacent properties, or partially enclose the Row to extend the chamber fronting onto the Row, or to build a shop in the Row. The Corporation accepted numerous petitions requesting partial enclosure on condition the petitioner guaranteed to leave the 'passage way in the Row unhindered' often specifying the exact measurements required for the passage. Lawrence Gowther was granted the right to rebuild his house, range it evenly with his neighbours and encroach into the Row but leaving a passage in the Row two yards wide.⁷³ While Thomas Gibbons petitioned in 1674, he was 'desirous to build a Chamber in the Roe' and had gained the consent of his neighbours because the chamber would 'not bee any nusanace to the publicke but of ornament to the Street'.⁷⁴

The second group of petitioners, those requesting the right to enclose the entire Row and block off the passage way, appear to have been resisted by Chester's corporation, although at this stage there is need for caution with this finding. In the Assembly Minute Books from 1660 to 1750 there survive 70-plus references to petitions to enclose the Row either partially or entirely, and in the Assembly Files there are between 1500 and 1700 references to the Rows. From systematically examining references to the Rows in the Assembly Books it is clear the corporation attempted to prevent entire Row enclosures and only permitted them in the area of Bridge Street, and particularly Lower Bridge Street. While large numbers of petitions survive in the Assembly Files and provide far more detail, it has been beyond the remit of this research to link both sets of records together to provide a more detailed chronology and geography of change.⁷⁵

Taylor, 'Summer travels', 33; James Brome, *Travels Over England, Scotland and Wales* (1707), 235; Stukeley, *Itinerarium*, 31; George Skene in Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 22. For disparaging views see: Henry Hastings in Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 13; Robert Davies, *The Life of Marmaduke Rawdon of York* (Camden Society, 1 ser., 85, 1863), 167; *Fiennes' Journeys*, 178; 'Joseph Taylor's visit', *CS*, 10 (1914), no. 2243; Defoe, *Tour*, 392; Loveday, *Diary of a Tour*, 86; Livesey, 'Tarporley in 1755', 307; Elizabeth Duchess of Northumberland, 'A journey through Chester and North Wales in 1763', *CS*, 22 (1927), no. 5293; J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country From Thirty to Forty Miles Around Manchester* (1795), 386.

⁷² It is evident from their development many of the undercrofts were owned as separate properties from the space above, see A. N. Brown, J. C. Grenville and R. C. Turner, 'Watergate street: an interim report of the Chester Rows research project', *JCAS*, 69 (1988), 118.

⁷³ See CCA. AB/3, f.171v-172r. For similar examples see also, CCA. AB/3 f.124v, 125v, 186r, 232v-33r, 235v, AB/4 f.95v-96r, 97v, 100r, 130v, 138r.

⁷⁴ CCA. Assembly Files, AF/40f/35.

⁷⁵ I have examined some of the Assembly Files, working on a random sample and these cases appear in this chapter. However, I intend to systematically examine the Assembly Files and Corporation Deeds, and attempt to link cases together across the different corporation records

In the 1670s Lady Mary Calveley was permitted to enclose the entire Row before her house in Bridge Street and established the precedent. Subsequently Francis Skellern enclosed the Row on the west side of Bridge Street in 1697, and Robert Sparke and Roger Ormes were likewise granted the entire Row.⁷⁶ However, the corporation did not allow this practice to develop unsupervised - almost half of the petitions recorded in the Assembly Books between 1660 and 1750 relate to requests to enclosures or extensions into the Row in Bridge Street. Parts of the Rows were completely enclosed in other streets, i.e. Eastgate and Watergate Street, but currently the main area of activity appears to have been lower Bridge Street.⁷⁷ This pattern of Row enclosures did not happen haphazardly and reflects very conscious decisions by the civic elite about which Rows were to be kept open and those which could be entirely enclosed. To implement their decisions an elaborate inspection and enforcement machinery developed to police architectural change. First all petitioners' properties were viewed by a sub-committee of the Assembly, usually composed of any three of the Justices and the Treasurers; subsequently the sub-committee rechecked the property to ensure it complied with the Assembly's grant. As Paul Kingtson of Shoemakers Row discovered the sub-committee did re-examine properties: having enclosed one foot more of the Row than granted he was forced to remove the unlicensed area of enclosure.⁷⁸

It is difficult to fully document this process, but undoubtedly the pattern of civic protection is reflected in descriptions of those streets where the Rows survived at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hemingway provides a detailed description of where the Rows survived in the 1830s starting at the High Cross: in Eastgate Street to St Werburgh's Street on the north side, to Newgate Street on the south side; Watergate Street on the south side terminating at Weaver Street, and on the north side running for only half that distance; in Northgate Street on the west side a Row survived, Shoemakers Row, on the east side of Northgate Street, there is 'but the remnants of one of these ancient galleries' from Pepper Alley for about 50 feet; finally in Bridge Street on the east side from the corner of Eastgate Row to St. Michael's church and on the west side the Row ran from Watergate Street and continued without interruption until Whitefriars Street. Generally the Rows were to be found only in the very central areas by the 1830s: 'the Rows occupy a considerable portion of the four principal streets within the walls, nearest the Cross, but in no instance do they reach the gates'.⁷⁹ However, the last decades of the eighteenth century had witnessed considerable alteration to the Rows. The impression given by Ormerod and Hanshall writing some 15 to 20 years earlier was of more continuous Rows on both sides of the four main streets.⁸⁰

and thereby provide a fuller account of the Rows architectural change at a later stage. This work may modify my existing views on the nature of architectural change in the Rows.

⁷⁶ CCA. AB/2 f.184r, AB/3 f.58v, Corporation Deeds, CHD/2/42, CHD/2/55. For other examples see AB/3 f.160v, 162r-v.

⁷⁷ CCA. AB/3 f.181v, 183v; AF/49d/4-6 and this case can be followed up in AB/3 191r-v, 192r; Carrington, *Book of Chester*, 93-4; Hanshall, *Stranger in Chester*, 32-3, comments there was a thoroughfare on the west side of Lower Bridge Street which had been blocked up; for Watergate Street, see Brown et al, 'Watergate street: interim report', 124-5.

⁷⁸ CCA. AF/49e/49; AB/3 f.124v, 125v; see also QSF/78 unfol. for another prosecution of an illegal Row enclosure.

⁷⁹ Hemingway, *History of Chester*, vol.1, 384-6.

⁸⁰ Hemingway, *History of Chester*, vol.1, 387; Hanshall, *Stranger in Chester*, 32; George Ormerod, *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester* (3 vols., 1819), vol.1, 290. Ormerod is the more specific of the two: the majority of Eastgate, Watergate and Bridge Street still had Rows on both sides, but in Northgate Street the Rows were more irregular.

Why did the civic elite protect the Rows in Chester's four main streets? The Rows had loomed large in the city's public image from the sixteenth century and the nascent development of tourism and travel guides. The Rows also exercised an inordinate degree of influence over Cestrian's sense of identity, their leisure and social activities. The city's antiquarians developed a thesis to account for their development - they were a place of refuge, when attacked the citizens could retreat to the Rows, stand above their attackers and 'anoye our enemyse in the streetes'. This explanation was popular beyond the confines of the city's antiquarians and visitors to the city often report being told this tradition. In the eighteenth century it became increasingly common for antiquarian visitors to provide a new angle on the Rows origins, identifying them as remnants of Roman porticoes. Visitors to the city, whether they approved or disapproved of the Rows, were almost universally fascinated and commented on them extensively.⁸¹ In the later eighteenth century new ideas confirmed their unique status and benefit to the city. Written in the 1770s, Dr Haygarth's study of the city's demography and the impact of disease gave a new and contemporary importance to the Rows. Haygarth ascribed Chester's low mortality rate (in comparison with other provincial towns) to the Rows. He sought an explanation in the healthy effect of the Rows, those of a weak constitution were able to exercise without getting wet in winter, while in the summer they benefited from the shade and cool breeze.⁸² Many of Chester's inhabitants had pre-empted Haygarth's advice and the Rows were an important leisure facility, citizens walked in the Rows, perambulated the city in the Rows and consorted with one another there.⁸³ The Rows were therefore an important element of the city's heritage, a unique and local architectural invention, which could be connected to several foundation traditions (whether that be the Romans or the giant Leon Gauer). Then in the later eighteenth century they developed a new contemporary relevance when the healthy state of Chester's population was attributed to the Rows. As such the civic elite acted to defend a unique architectural tradition, which was closely connected to Chester's foundation, an important element in the city's public image, had a new found medical relevance in the later eighteenth century and had been an important leisure facility from the early seventeenth century.

As the case of Chester's Rows illustrates, the preoccupation with the 'modernisation' of the urban landscape in the eighteenth century tends to ignore such aspects of the urban landscape and the way in which some architectural features were defended for expressing continuity with the past or as a locally innovative architectural style. Town crosses were one such feature and although numerous crosses were removed, many such attempts met with opposition. At Banbury the removal of the High Cross and Bread

⁸¹ CCA. CX/3 f.6r; Stukeley, *Itinerarium*, 31, 59; George Quartermaine in Palliser, *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions*, 22; 'A tour in Wales, 1769', *HMC: Manuscripts of the Earl of Verulam* (1906), 270.

⁸² J. Haygarth, 'Observations on the population and disease of Chester in the year 1774-5', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 68 (1778), 131-9. Haygarth was in fact trying to dispel a local prejudice that the Rows were unhealthy to inhabit, which he 'most clearly refuted'.

⁸³ *Prescott's Diary I*, 33, 35 and many more examples; the shops in the Rows had signboards which must be hinged and therefore could be hung up at night to prevent accidents to people walking in the rows at night, see CCA. AB/2, f.176r, AB/4 f.3r; Hanshall, *Stranger in Chester*, 32.

Cross was met by vigorous, if unsuccessful, opposition resulting in a series of court cases.⁸⁴ Dugdale described Coventry's cross as 'one of the chief things wherein this City most glories' and in the 1640s it was defended against attack by the city's butchers. By 1771 the cross was very dilapidated and consequently dismantled, much to the horror of John Byng who considered the corporation 'blockheads' because had it been restored it would 'attract the attention of strangers'. Coventry's cross was not a victim of new architectural fashions, subject to very costly restoration after the Civil War, the corporation's commitment remained undimmed until in the eighteenth century it was undermined by the financial crisis brought on by sequestration and the administrative stasis of the mid-1750s to 1760s.⁸⁵ The attempted removal of Chester's High Cross by mayor Edward Partington in January 1705 was undone by an inventive opposition mustered by Alderman Allen, Henry Prescott and Mr Williamson the Yeoman of the Pentice, who were 'grevously affected' by its removal, and secretly returned it to its original position in the night, much to the surprise of the townspeople and the consternation of the mayor.⁸⁶

The urban built environment was only one aspect of what I have defined as the historical environment (see Chapter Six). The city's physical fabric was a medium through which the past was communicated to townspeople as the display of archaeological remains and use of story boards and plaques readily illustrates. Where urban oral traditions endured most strongly this can be linked to the presence of physical artefacts or archaeological remains which helped popularise and facilitate the traditions survival.⁸⁷ For example, Colchester's foundation by King Cole, the association with Helena and her grandson Constantine, the first Christian emperor, centrally placed the town in the 'grand sweep of sacred history'. A civic annal recorded the existence of the ruins of King Cole's castle beneath the city's Norman castle. The presence of these physical remains ensured the persistence of this oral tradition among the city's inhabitants and Defoe made a similar finding about Coventry's inhabitants for whom the Godiva story was 'held to be a certain truth'.⁸⁸ There is a strong link between towns where robust historical traditions were recorded by tourists and antiquaries and those towns where archaeological remains connected with those myths featured prominently in the urban landscape and consequently supported and underpinned the tradition. The urban fabric therefore was not simply a discrete series of utilitarian buildings and facilities, but physical artefacts had a

⁸⁴ VCH: *Oxfordshire*, 10, 7-8; P. D. A. Harvey, 'Where was Banbury Cross', *Oxoniensia*, 31 (1966), 83-106.

⁸⁵ William Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), 95; Wickham Legg, *Relation of a Short Survey*, 69-70; Taylor, 'Summer travels', 13-14; *Fiennes' Journeys*, 112; Stukeley, *Itinerarium*, 19; F. Bliss Burbidge, *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva* (Birmingham, n.d.), 42; C. Bruyn-Andrews (ed.), *The Torrington Diaries*, (1935), vol.2, 111; for repairs to the Cross see T. W. Whitley, 'Coventry Cross', in his, *Humorous Reminiscences of Coventry Life* (Coventry, 1888), 13, 14, 16-7 and BL. Add. 11364 f.14r, 21r, 23v.

⁸⁶ *Prescott's Diary I*, 33-4; for a similar example in Bristol where there was considerable opposition to its sale see Jonathan Barry, 'Bristol pride: civic identity in Bristol c.1640-1775', in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton, 1996), 30-1.

⁸⁷ D. R. Woolf, 'The "Common Voice": History, folklore and oral testimony in early modern England', *P&P*, 120 (1988), 36; Leslie V. Grinsell, *Legendary History and Folklore of Stonehenge* (St. Peter Port, 1975); Leslie V. Grinsell, *Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain* (Newton Abbot, 1976); Hilda Ellis Davidson, *Patterns of Folklore* (Ipswich, 1978); for an example drawn from seventeenth and eighteenth century Bath see John Clark, 'Bladud of Bath: The archaeology of a legend', *Folklore*, 105 (1994), 39-50.

⁸⁸ Gervase Rosser, 'Myth, image and social process in the English medieval town', *Urban History*, 23 (1996), 8; Maurice Exwood and H. L. Lehmann (eds.), *The Journal of William Schellinks' Travels in England 1661-63* (Camden Society, 5th ser., 1, 1993), 163; Defoe, *Tour*, 404.

wider symbolic and historical importance through which townspeople could learn about and identify with aspects of their city's past.

5.iv. Urban renewal and administrative change

Much of the discussion of architectural renewal focuses on the eighteenth century and is closely linked to the notion of a changing administrative and legal framework which in turn facilitated improvement. Historians agree that the main surge of administrative change came after the middle of the eighteenth century and in particular at the close of the Seven Years War (1763). Larger towns led the way, taking advantage of improved parliamentary access and the facility of local acts to constitute 'statutory bodies for special purposes'. The increasing use of local acts began in the 1760s and 31 were granted, ten more than in the period 1725-59. Through the 1770s and 1780s the pace of improvement was maintained, followed by a further upsurge in the decade after the Napoleonic Wars.⁸⁹ Consequently, the administrative structures became more flexible and comprehensive, facilitating a movement away from individual householder responsibility to one of collective provision where local authorities assumed control of activities such as street paving, cleansing and lighting. Second, collective provision backed up by local legislation confirmed the town governors' executive authority, giving them the power of compulsory purchase and therefore greater confidence to intervene in the difficult arena of private property, an essential power for street-widening projects. Finally, many of the administrative structures created by parliamentary acts were backed by the power to levy local rates to provide for properly funded street lighting and road repair projects. Collectively these measures provided the essential mechanisms and administrative framework to transfer such activities 'to the security of a full-scale service which could be publicly monitored'.⁹⁰

The administrative changes of the second half of the eighteenth century were relative latecomers in the already ongoing process of urban improvement. Many towns, especially county towns and provincial capitals, had already embarked on a process of improvements to the built environment, long before the advent of improvement commissions. Yet, the focus on the creation of local 'statutory bodies for special purposes' tends to conflate urban improvement with the modernisation of urban government and obscures variations in the timing and pace of improvement in different towns.

Chester clearly had four phases of improvement. The first of these was in the later sixteenth century, signalled by the first concerted efforts to pipe water to its inhabitants in 1582, the huge effort and financial resources poured into the new haven from 1541, the complete re-paving of the main streets from 1567, the appointment of a city paver in 1584 to maintain the streets and a scavenger to cleanse them in the late sixteenth century. The second phase, immediately before and after the Civil War, focused on removing markets from the streets in the 1630s and 1670s, the huge investment in the walls necessitated by the

⁸⁹ Falkus and Jones, 'Urban improvement', table 1, 139; R. Sweet, *The English Town 1640-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), 44-5.

⁹⁰ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 71; Falkus and Jones, 'Urban improvement', 130-31.

outbreak of the Civil War and subsequent repairs to siege damage, and the large-scale rebuilding of domestic vernacular houses in the years immediately following the siege. The third phase overlapped with the end of phase two and began in the 1670s with the creation of the extended scavenging scheme, reinvestment in civic buildings such as the Exchange (1699), the rebuilding of the decayed water supply, the continued rebuilding of the walls completed by the first decade of the eighteenth century and the re-fronting of domestic buildings on classical lines in certain areas of the town. The terminus of this phase came with the successful application for a paving and lighting act in 1725 which marked the beginning of the fourth and final phase. This final phase fits neatly with the 'Urban Renaissance' model, new administrative structures complete with new powers improved the condition of Chester's streets and its lighting, and was followed by the building of the General Infirmary (1755), the acquisition of an Improvement Act, and finally clearing of the gates in the 1770 and 80s.

Coventry offers a more pessimistic picture in which improvement was much more limited in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and almost non-existent in the eighteenth. The first phase from the 1610s to 1630s was marked by the appointment of a scavenger in each ward, the cleansing of the Park and planting of a tree lined walk, and the improvements to the water supply in 1633. Thereafter the built environment underwent little development although sporadic efforts were made, the water supply was improved in 1704, the remnants of the walls were preserved from 1686 and ward-based street lighting was introduced by 1724. Comparing John Speed's map of 1610 with Bradford's *Survey* of 1748-9 exposes how little urban renewal had taken place - there was no change to the street plan and only one new civic building, a market house, had been built.

What accounts for the very different experience of these two towns? Coventry lacked a unitary authority with responsibility for the urban environment. In Chester the corporation was a very powerful institution with no competing or overlapping authorities to duplicate or obscure where responsibility lay.⁹¹ In contrast Coventry had a series of authorities with overlapping and ill-defined responsibilities. The Leet, the parishes and the council, were active in street maintenance but none had overall responsibility. Furthermore Chester's corporation developed a very efficient and competent administrative arm capable of enforcing building regulations and improvement measures. Although it is unclear how the re-paving was funded in the 1580s, from the early seventeenth century city-wide assessments were levied to pay for the upkeep of the walls and streets. The corporation's authority to tax all the city's inhabitants was secured in a judgement from the Assize judges and in protracted disputes with the County over the right to levy ship money in the 1630s.⁹² Furthermore, the city's administrative structures were sophisticated enough to raise assessments selectively, for instance the levy for repairs to the free school was assessed solely on the freemen. Apart from a brief period in the 1690s and 1700s when the corporation had financially overreached itself during

⁹¹ Although Alldridge argues the parish vestries were open, offices were nonetheless frequently filled by corporation members, see N. Alldridge, 'Local identity in Chester parishes 1540-1640', in S. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750* (1988), 85-124.

⁹² Groombridge, *Calendar*, 130; Lake, 'Collection of ship-money', 44-71.

the building of the new Exchange, insolvency or a lack of funds was never a problem.⁹³ There were periodic complaints about the level of taxation and resistance to high demands, such as those levied at the Restoration. But, on the whole, the corporation very effectively enforced payment, recalcitrant taxpayers were taken to court, their goods distrained (or in a freeman's case he could be disenfranchised), and to ensure corporate officials pursued cases vigorously they were indemnified against possible prosecution.⁹⁴

Chester's administration was not only effective in terms of levying and collecting taxes, this extended to the enforcement of building regulations. Like many other towns, Chester's governors relied on informers (often aggrieved neighbours), to acquaint them with illegal encroachments or buildings erected without planning permission. William Hinckes' petition to build a shop in Eastgate Street was rejected, but disregarding this he built the shop provoking his neighbours to complain that the building annoyed them and was built illegally.⁹⁵ The corporation maintained a careful watch on all building work - all requests for land or the right to rebuild a property were scrutinised by a committee of three Justices and the Treasurers. After approval the site and completed work were inspected to ensure they met any stipulations laid down by the corporation. Where the corporation discovered work carried out illegally, without permission, or work that had broken the agreed terms, prosecutions and the removal of the offending structure often ensued. The corporation were not bowed by the threat of court action or the often protracted nature of such property cases. John Minshull illegally built a shop in the Bridge Street Row and was prosecuted, the case developed into a lengthy dispute and resulted in the corporation fining Minshull £5. On other occasions the corporation would simply take pre-emptive action and pull down encroachments and defend any subsequent action brought by the householder.⁹⁶ Any officer enforcing such decisions, pulling down illegal encroachments or buildings, was also indemnified at the city's expense.⁹⁷

Coventry's administrative and tax-levying powers had not developed to anything approximating the same degree. Although the city's quarter sessions and presentments by constables worked well, the city appeared to have more difficulty establishing the principle of city-wide tax levies, and from the 1670s was involved in a series of disputes about payments for the watch. Examinations of the Chamberlains and Warden's accounts show revenue sources remained constant and were drawn from the traditional areas of rents and charity monies. The ability of the council or any other body in Coventry to improve the urban fabric was undermined by the growing impoverishment of the council in the second half of the seventeenth century, and fatally damaged by the sequestration of the corporation's assets between 1712 and 1719.⁹⁸ It is

⁹³ CCA. AB/2 f.59v, 117v, AB/3 f.145v-146r, 148r, 156r-157r, 187v, 193r-194v.

⁹⁴ CCA. AB/2 f.70r-v, 72r, 140r, 152r-v, 172r; BL. Harl. 2125 f.162v; P. Slack, 'Poverty and social regulation in Elizabethan England', in C. Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 1984), 233.

⁹⁵ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 69.

⁹⁶ CCA. AB/3 f.33r, 34r, 46v; for other examples see AB/3 f.8v, 63v, 173r. In 1749 Henry Perkins sued the corporation for pulling down the 'pales', iron railings, in front of his house, see AB/4 f.132v.

⁹⁷ CCA. AB/3 f.44r, 44v.

⁹⁸ Legal tangles with the Crown between 1609-13 over Cheylesmore Park drained civic finances and there were orders to reduce civic expenditure, especially on entertainment in 1624 and 1635. The costs of the Civil War exacerbated matters and there were difficulties in

difficult to understand exactly how Coventry's governing structures failed to recover, but after the lifting of sequestration the situation worsened. Administrative stasis set in from c.1754, the Leet stopped issuing by-laws and the previously competent quarter sessions almost completely ceased functioning. When Coventry obtained its Amending Act (1790) to its Improvement Act, an organisation independent of the corporation was established with responsibility for the duties previously performed by the council and Leet. In this situation one might reasonably expect progress to have been made and the commissioners to have begun to make plans to widen and light the streets. But this commitment was undermined by poor attendance and in some years the commission conducted little business apart from the essential and profitable sale of dunghills. The result was Coventry entered the nineteenth century with its urban fabric and street plan virtually unchanged from the late sixteenth century.⁹⁹

Long before the age of improvement acts, the corporation of Chester had developed all of the powers necessary to improve the urban environment and the key moment came in the 1630s when the city's power to assess all its inhabitants was confirmed. Coventry failed to fully develop this power and this may relate to the highly divisive and contested nature of the elite's authority in the town.¹⁰⁰ From the early seventeenth century both towns were subcontracting work and appointing city pavers, scavengers and masons. The system of subcontracting and direct employment, as already suggested, coexisted alongside private responsibility and did not fully replace it until the 1730s at Chester, and not until the nineteenth century at Coventry, because of the particular administrative problems. The clear difference between the two cities and the cause of the much more proactive efforts at Chester was the financing of the corporation. Chester was a relatively wealthy corporation, with large amounts of land. Coventry's problems of corruption and sequestration left the civic elite with little financial ability to underpin any efforts, a point borne out by the complete absence of any civic building programme in the eighteenth century.

5.v. *Conclusions*

The conclusions of this chapter need a caveat, which is that the material is heavily biased towards Chester simply because the papers left by the corporation record much more fully their interventions and attempts to manage the urban environment. In contrast, Coventry's records in this area are poor and tend to confirm the impression from maps and visitors' accounts that the city changed little from the later sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. Both towns, however, present problems for the standard chronologies of early modern urban change.

First, one is minded to ask whether there was a crisis in later sixteenth and early seventeenth century Chester? Certainly the city dealt with an extensive poverty problem, but this did not inhibit or prevent a

collecting loan monies. Due to corrupt practices involving the town charities the corporations estates were sequestrated between 1712-19, and not effectively restored to them until 1723. As a result of financial melt down the city was forced to sell land and plate and from this point was unable to recover financially. See J. A. Chester, 'Poor relief in Coventry' (unpub. University of Reading M.Phil, 1981), 285; CRO. BA/H/C/17/3, 106, 114; Lancaster, *St Mary's Hall*, 14; VCH: *Warwick* 8, 266-8.

⁹⁹ VCH: *Warwick* 8, 272.

¹⁰⁰ Judith J. Hurwich, 'A Fanatick Town': The political influence of dissenters in Coventry, 1660-1720', *Midland History*, 4 (1977), 15-47; Defoe, *Tour*, 403-4.

very large programme of public works - the haven, paving the streets, repairs to the walls and gates, the construction of a bridewell and laying water pipes. This sort of programme is generally taken as a signifier of the 'urban renaissance' of the later seventeenth century, but the activities at Chester from the mid-sixteenth century prefigure this renaissance both in terms of the scale and the ambition of the civic authorities.

Coventry offers a stark contrast, but an equal challenge to the standard chronology. The focus of any improvement appears to be the first half of the seventeenth century - a ward-based scavenger scheme, the water supply improved, the park cleansed and high levels of investment in the walls. After the Restoration, beset by financial and administrative problems, Coventry at best stood still or at worst went backwards. Only one new civic building - a market hall - was constructed, the streets were left to deteriorate, the water pumps decayed and a water-carting system had to be reintroduced, before the water pump was restored in 1704. Rather, than embracing the general process of improvement, which is generally thought to have gathered pace in the later seventeenth century, Coventry went backwards as administrative chaos and a lack of political authority undermined any prospect of improvement. Most striking about Coventry in the eighteenth century perhaps is the uncoupling of the linked notion of economic growth and urban improvement. The consensus view of Coventry's eighteenth century economic history is a rosy one - the town again flourished as the trades of silk weaving, ribbon weaving and watchmaking ensured the town's resurgence. Yet, it is precisely as the town boomed that urban development ground to a halt. There is in fact no neat, linear relationship between economic growth and investment in the urban fabric because a host of other factors intervene - the powers of urban governors, the resilience of administrative structures and the solvency of the urban authority. An added dimension is the corresponding lack of change to the town's domestic architecture, only a small number of classical houses were built and the city's domestic architecture remained largely vernacular. Although there is little concrete evidence to explain why Coventry's domestic architecture remained in stasis, it again questions the relationship between economic growth, architectural change and the spread of classical ideals. Coventry's capitalist master silk manufacturers could certainly afford to rebuild their houses, yet classicism appears to have had an almost minimal impact on the city's housing. Coventry therefore poses a problem, not only of chronology, but also of causality, much is made of the emulation of metropolitan fashions by those who possessed the requisite wealth to buy these new fashions, including a newly fashionable classical house.

Both towns prefigure the urban renaissance thesis in a number of other ways, in the sphere of leisure facilities and the administration of the urban fabric. At Coventry the cleansing of the park coincided with the planting of a tree-lined walk and in Chester by the 1620s at the latest the city walls had formally laid-out walks on top of the battlements on which to promenade (for further discussion see Chapter 4). Also, in administrative terms, Chester (and Coventry to a lesser degree), prefigure many of the systems and mechanisms that underpinned improvement. Most towns had always subcontracted work and employed workmen directly, in an official capacity, as the town's paver, mason, etc. There was no major

administrative change in the period between the Restoration and the advent of the improvement acts in the second half of the eighteenth century. Many of the newly extended schemes for cleaning and repairing streets were in fact managed and administered in an identical form to the period before the Civil War. Individual responsibility was not replaced and instead continued to coexist alongside collective arrangements. Chester's lighting scheme and extended scavenging system alert us to the problem of associating new endeavours with improvement, the lighting scheme only covered the main streets and the scavenging scheme struggled for ten years and failed within twenty. Therefore, there is a need for caution in associating increased civic efforts with an improved urban environment.

Chester, in particular, illustrates how extensive a corporation's powers could be before the introduction of local acts. The corporation's combination of an effective administration, backed by the ability to enforce by-laws and a rigorous policing system, was a very powerful and proactive agency for urban improvement. Furthermore, few new powers that were not already being used were given to such a corporation by local parliamentary legislation. However, there is a need to endorse Borsay's caution about the extent of urban improvement outside corporate towns. A tour of northern England in 1768 visiting 30 towns highlights how little improvement had been made: six were described as not worthy of comment, eleven as ill built, ill-paved or dirty, ten as having handsome houses or being well-built, and in three no comment was offered on the urban fabric.¹⁰¹ When the larger provincial towns are removed from this tour (Derby, Manchester) it is evident that a large number of small towns visited were considered to be ill-paved and dirty. Recent work on Newark and Mansfield confirms the very late arrival of many of the elements associated with the urban renaissance, their implementation delayed because of a lack of the requisite powers, until a period between the late 1790s and late 1820s.¹⁰²

Chester's corporation had also proved itself to be very vigorous and interventionist when the city's heritage was at stake. The corporation regulated the areas in which domestic architectural change was permitted, retaining and defending the vernacular Rows. The corporation therefore ensured that the city's main intra-mural streets continued to boast this unique architectural feature. Although classicism was seemingly embraced by many provincial towns, the example of Chester's protection of its Rows and Coventry's almost total lack of any domestic classical architecture questions the extent to which provincial towns did embrace these changes. Coventry's 'resistance' to classical housing is impossible to interpret given the lack of sources. But one thing is clear some corporations, such as Chester, were prepared to defend elements of the urban landscape they believed were a unique architectural tradition and historically important.

¹⁰¹ 'A northern tour in 1768', *HMC: Verulam* (1906), 229-242. The towns in their respective categories were: Dunstable, Newport Pagnell, Ashborne, Mansfield, Wakefield and Stony Stratford; Buxton, Bakewell, Tadcaster, Scarborough, Thirsk, Leeds, Barnsley, Sheffield, Chesterfield, Coventry, Daventry; Market Harbrough, Nottingham, Derby, Manchester, Doncaster, York, Melton, Ripon, Lichfield, Birmingham; Leicester. Loughborough and Burton.

¹⁰² C. Smith, 'Image and reality: Two Nottinghamshire market towns in late Georgian England', *Midland History*, 17 (1992), 66-71.

Chapter 6. The Development of the Civic Historical Tradition

6.i. Introduction

The publication of Camden's *Britannia* in 1586, Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656 and the foundation of the Society of Antiquaries in c.1586, are all seen as landmarks in the development of historical studies. The period, between c.1580 and c.1730 was a 'golden age', witnessing the unrivalled development and popularisation of historical studies. Antiquarian scholarship, according to Parry, was at the forefront of this movement and the most productive field of historical research in this period.¹ In spite of these successes, nationally-renowned antiquarians and topographers were frequently dismissive of England's small towns and their equally 'small' histories. Humfrey Wanley, a native of Coventry and famous Anglo-Saxonist and bibliophile, was scathing in his criticism of the local Godiva myth.² The focus of historians on well-known antiquarian scholars and their lack of interest in 'urban histories' should not obscure the importance and prominence of the past in early-modern urban culture. Camden could dismiss Dorchester as 'poor and little' in *Britannia* and the town is barely mentioned in Leland's *Itinerary*, however, for its inhabitants, its history stretched back to before the Roman Conquest and was encapsulated in the monuments and archaeological remains that peppered the town's landscape. When in Charles II's reign the ruins of the 'Roman' walls were vandalised, a clear sense of loss was articulated by one townsman who commented, 'it was a pity that part of so ancient a monument of the town should be demolished'.³ Studies of this golden age of antiquarianism have increased our understanding of the development of historical research and the relationship between ideas about the past and contemporary society and culture. As the example of Dorchester suggests, there was a strong sense of identity with the past in provincial English towns.

How townspeople understood their past, the mediums through which a sense of history was disseminated, and the reproduction and use of the past within urban society are the focus of this chapter. The first section delineates the 'historical environment', a term used to indicate the way in which the past was present in all aspects of urban life and thoroughly permeated urban culture. Thus literary and oral traditions about the past did not operate in isolation but were buttressed by a wider cultural context. The second section examines the development of manuscript urban histories, when they first began to appear and how this related to the development of urban political rights. Then the chapter turns to the manuscript histories themselves, exploring the scale of production, their contents and the ideas expressed in them. In

¹ David Douglas, *English Scholars, 1660-1730* (2nd edition, 1951) argues this fine wave of antiquarian activity is dissipated by 1730, although R. Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997), 68-73 is less pessimistic about the mid-and later eighteenth century; Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995), 359; Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (Oxford, 1956); F. Smith-Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought 1580-1640* (1976), xxii, 1-25.

² On viewing the Godiva painting in St Mary's Hall, Wanley commented on 'the ridiculous legend of Lady Godiva riding naked through this city'. BL. Portland Mss, xxxiv (loan 29/205), Letter of Humfrey Wanley to Lord Harley.

³ D. Underdown, *Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (1993), 7.

the final section the relationship between manuscripts and urban society is examined focusing particularly on the question of why and for whom they were written, and what role they played within society.

6.ii. The 'historical environment'

The writing of urban histories was not isolated from broader currents within urban society and was underpinned by a wider context which can only be termed the 'historical environment'. The past permeated almost every aspect of urban life, and written histories were only one manifestation of the articulation of and interest in the past. Appeals to a generalised past, representations, relics of a town's past and local historical traditions permeated and suffused almost every aspect of urban life - from the language of civic and guild constitutions to civic rhetoric, oral traditions, urban ceremonial and the urban built environment. The 'historical environment' forms an essential backdrop, it was an integral part of daily town life through which a sense of the past was continuously disseminated to townspeople, visualised in the profusion of archaeological remains in the urban landscape, propagandised in ceremonial occasions and held as part of the collective memory in local oral traditions. Historians have tended to examine the different elements of the 'historical environment' in isolation, following a long intellectual tradition of understanding 'oral' and 'literary' representations of the past as socially and culturally distinct traditions.⁴ But, this obscures the way different elements within the 'historical environment' interacted to foster, elaborate and fix past consciousness among townspeople.

The past provided a continual source of legitimisation and was often used to furnish the 'new' with the necessary antiquity to provide legitimacy and facilitate acceptance. Guild constitutions underwent constant revision yet the new constitutional arrangements were invariably described as 'according to the Ancient use and Custome heeretofore used by the said Fellowship'.⁵ The past was a storehouse of information, a guide to current procedure and a legal bulwark. Guilds and civic authorities realised the importance of record-keeping to establish past practice and for defending their customary and ancient legal rights. When Cambridge's mayor died midway through his term of office the councillors 'considered and perused the old Common day book what had been formerly done in the like case', and when Colonel Whitley, a non-resident with little prior contact with Chester or understanding of civic traditions was elected mayor of that city, he requested Roger Comerbach 'to procure him an account in writing of the Solemnitys, Ceremonys and Customs to be performed' throughout the year.⁶ Above all else the importance of a written historical record relates to the necessity of defending in law the city's tolls, liberties, market rights, etc. Civic archives

⁴ A. Dyer, 'English town chronicles', *Local Historian*, 12/6 (1977), 285-92; P. Clark, 'Visions of the urban community: Antiquarians and the English city before 1800', in D. Fraser and A. Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (1983), 105-24, neither mention oral. For an exception see, D. R. Woolf, 'The 'Common Voice': history, folklore and oral testimony in early-modern England', *P&P*, 120 (1988), 34 where the problem of 'feedback' is addressed.

⁵ CRO. Acc.100/4, unfoliated, order 2, 'Broadweavers and Clothiers Order Book, 1638/9'.

⁶ J. E. Foster (ed.), *The Diary of Samuel Newton: Alderman of Cambridge, 1662-1717* (Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1890), 116; 'The diary of Roger Comerbach', *CS*, 3rd ser., (1939), no.7660; civic records were frequently searched to help resolve questions of how things had been done in the past, see also, T. S. Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 27, 1980), 6; Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England* (University of London, 1983), 1-2.

were frequently trawled and records taken to defend cases in the courts at London.⁷ In this way the past was practical and functional – as a guide to by-laws, the right to levy tolls, the level at which those tolls were set, how the constitution worked in the past, and providing the legal basis of the town's privileges.

Yet the sense of the past extended far beyond the merely functional. 'Past sense' also suffused the rhetoric of civic officials and references to the city's antiquity and its prominence in the nation's history pervaded the public speeches of MPs and civic officials. When political turmoil over the charter engulfed Chester, William Williams urged his listeners at the Christmas Watch to stand firm, appealing to the city's history and its stand against the *quo warranto* brought by Henry VII.⁸ Civic ritual disseminated ideas about the city's past and added to the mediums through which 'past sense' was elaborated. Civic ceremonies were stocked with figures and images from the city's past, Dekker's *Triumphs of Re-United Brittania* featured characters, including Brutus, drawn from London's mythical foundation, while at Bridport King Lud the mythical founder of the town featured prominently in celebrations at the opening of the new guildhall. At Chester the giants carried in the midsummer show were thought to represent the giants who founded the city, a topic frequently referred to during the Christmas Watch oration by the Recorder.⁹

The physical urban fabric also played a crucial role in the development and dissemination of ideas about the city's history. The past figured prominently in the physical urban fabric - archaeological remains, statues, artefacts, plaques and story boards peppered the urban landscape and provided a constant source of information about the city's past, reaffirming and reinforcing ideas transmitted through other mediums. In an environment of demographic and social mobility, civic heraldry expressed the continuity of institutional structures and their permanence in a highly-mobile society. Civic and ecclesiastical buildings were adorned with personal and civic heraldry to emphasise continuity with the past. Given the demographic regime of early-modern towns the development of a permanent, dynastic, urban elite was almost impossible and the use of personal heraldry allowed the elite to develop a common 'class identity' by reference to a fictitious shared past. Pictures of former mayors and an inscription about Henry Peyto were to be found in the windows of St Mary's Hall in Coventry. At Chester the heraldic arms of former mayors, together with their name and year of office were placed on boards or 'fixed in the windows of the old Town Hall, in the Pentice, and in other public edifices'.¹⁰ Civic amenities often carried the civic and personal heraldry of

⁷ Groombridge, *Calendar*, 144, 165, 172; CCA. AB/2, f.87r.

⁸ T. W. Whitley, *The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry: From Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Coventry, 1894), 41. REED: Coventry, 233; CSPD, 1683-84, 165-6.

⁹ J. Knowles, 'The spectacle of the realm: civic consciousness, rhetoric and ritual in early modern London' in J. R. Mulryne and M. Shewring (ed.), *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1993), 173-4; Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Community, c.1500-1640* (Oxford, 1991), 153; L. G. Wickham-Legg (ed.), *A Relation of a Short Survey of Twenty Six Counties Observed... By A Captain, A Lieutenant and an Ancient, All Three of the Military Company in Norwich* (1904); REED: Chester, 198-9. For the explicit connection between the giants in the midsummer show and the giants who founded Chester see the tour of England by Norwich militia soldiers. Perhaps this explains why mayor Henry Hardware was so unpopular when he removed the giants from the midsummer show in 1599-1600.

¹⁰ Joan Lancaster, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry: A Guide to the Building its History and Contents* (The Coventry Papers No.3, 2nd edition, 1981), 39, 48, 59-61; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 288, 'Collectanea Devana'. The sign boards were according to Cowper taken down and placed in the windows of private houses in Chester. The arms of the first recorder, John Birkenhead, were also placed in the common hall window, see CR630/1, f.48r, Anon., 'Manuscript history of Chester'.

benefactors, those institutions and people who had provided financial support for such projects, most strikingly seen on Chester's walls and gates.¹¹ Such heraldic motifs and symbols were widely understood in the seventeenth century and, Johnson argues, deliberately deployed to create a link with the past.¹² For the less-sophisticated viewer, unable to decode heraldic motifs, there were visual histories to reinforce 'past sense'. On the west side of St John's church in Chester, was a statue of King Ethelred and a white hind commemorating the legend that Ethelred founded a church where he saw a white hind. Statues of the mythical founders of Bristol, the kings Brennus and Belinus, adorned St John's gate in the city, the images of Gogmagog were carved on to the Hoe at Plymouth, and a statue of Lady Godiva was placed in the high cross at Coventry.¹³ Signboards on civic buildings informed the reader of their foundation, history and eulogised their benefactors, such as the story boards on Bond's almshouse and the Greyfriars hospital, Coventry. At Bath signboards in the Hot Bath told the story of the city's foundation by king Bladud and lists of a city's mayors could be found in numerous buildings, town halls, guild halls and parish churches.¹⁴ The writing of urban histories cannot therefore be treated in isolation as they formed only one element of the wider nexus of the 'historical environment'. The interaction between different elements of the historical environment and their cumulative impact on townspeople's sense of the past must be stressed. The civic past appeared as an almost permanent backdrop to everyday life, the built environment, civic and legal language, calendar ceremonies all were permeated with symbols and images of the past. In this way, townspeople were constantly bombarded with images and messages about civic history, which operated to inculcate a strong sense of the past among townspeople. It is noteworthy that where urban oral history traditions endured most strongly, the presence of physical artefacts or archaeological remains was a catalyst for their survival and a major factor in their continued strength.¹⁵

¹¹ P. Broster, *The Chester Guide* (2nd edition, Chester, 1787), 21; W. Thompson Watkin, *Roman Cheshire* (Liverpool, 1886), 99; BL. Add. 29779, f.61r, George Bellin, 'Briefe Notes on the Antiquity of the famous City of Chester'; F. Simpson, *The Town Walls of Chester* (Chester, 1910), 30, 51.

¹² Michael MacLaggan, 'Genealogy and heraldry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in Levi Fox (ed.), *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Dugdale Society, 1956), 31-48; David Starkey, 'Ightham Mote: politics and architecture in early Tudor England', *Archaeologia*, 107 (1982), 153-163; Matthew Johnson, 'Meanings of polite architecture in sixteenth century England', in B. J. Little and P. A. Shackel (eds.), *Meanings and Uses of Material Culture* (Historical Archaeology, 26:3, 1992), 45-56.

¹³ C. H. Josten (ed.), *Elias Ashmole, His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, His Correspondence and Other Contemporary Sources Relating to His Life and Work*, 3 (1966), 951; John Loveday, *Diary of a Tour in 1732* (Edinburgh, 1904), 85; Broster, *Chester Guide*, 52; J. Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-1780: urbane or civic?', in J. H. Pittock and A. Wear (ed.), *Interpretation and Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 1991), 218; REED: *Devon*, 212, 215-6, 218-223, 225, 229, 233, 244; BL. Harl. 6388, f.43r, Humfery Wanley(?), 'Collections Relating to Coventry'.

¹⁴ W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), 117, 124; John Clark, 'Bladud of Bath: The archaeology of a legend' *Folklore*, 105 (1994), 45-6; Lancaster, *St Mary's Hall*, 56; parish churches often had boards listing parishioners who had been mayor for instance St Johns church, Chester see, CS, 2 (1883), no.1605 and CS, 3rd ser., 28 (1933). Story boards also appeared frequently in medieval churches, and there is some evidence, as in the case of St John's Chester (above) that this tradition continued into the seventeenth century, see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, vol.2, c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (1982), Appendix E; Gordon Hall Gerould, '"Tables" in medieval churches', *Speculum*, 1:4 (1926), 429-440.

¹⁵ Woolf, 'The "Common Voice"', 35-6; Leslie V. Grinsell, *Legendary History and Folklore of Stonehenge* (St. Peter Port, 1975); Leslie V. Grinsell, *Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain* (Newton Abbot, 1976); Hilda Ellis Davidson, *Patterns of Folklore* (Ipswich, 1978); for an example drawn from seventeenth and eighteenth century Bath see Clark, 'Bladud of Bath', 39-50; Thomas, *Perception of the Past*, 3-4.

6.iii. The development of urban antiquarianism

The proliferation of printed town histories in the second half of the eighteenth century demonstrates that by the later-eighteenth century at the very latest, there clearly existed, a fascination with the past and a developed market for town histories. This interest was not a product of the later-eighteenth century and pre-dated the growth in printed histories.¹⁶ Towns had been home to vibrant and diverse historical traditions, and oral, visual, and to a more limited degree, literary representations of the past existed in numerous medieval towns. The written representation of the past generally emerged towards the close of the medieval period. Vernacular manuscript urban histories, often but not exclusively in the form of annals or lists of mayors, first began to appear in London in the early-fifteenth century and subsequently in provincial towns in the latter half of the fifteenth and early-sixteenth century.¹⁷ Coventry's first mayoral roll can be dated to approximately 1461, Chester's to 1497, Lincoln's to 1505 and Northampton's to 1461.¹⁸

This first wave of manuscript urban histories coincides with an upsurge in civic record-keeping and some early histories were clearly part of an officially sanctioned project initiated under civic auspices - Robert Ricart's *The Marie of Bristowe is Kalendar* was begun at the behest of the mayor, William Spenser in 1479.¹⁹ In Chester and Coventry, records pre-dating this period are scarce and there appears to have been a concerted effort on the part of the civic elite to retrospectively 'create' an archive complete with records. Coventry built a secure archive to store its records in 1451 and in the later-fifteenth or early-sixteenth centuries amalgamated and collated earlier records to create what is now known as the First Leet Book 1421-1555.²⁰ There is no evidence that the manuscript histories of Chester and Coventry were officially sponsored or sanctioned but they should be situated in this wider context of a growing concern with civic record-keeping and recognised as only one aspect of the project to strengthen and create links with the past. The catalyst was the development of urban political rights and government which initiated the surge of activity in record-keeping and history-writing. Coventry became a county in its own right in 1451 and

¹⁶ Sweet, *Writing of Urban Histories*, 9-10, 74-99.

¹⁷ Gervase Rosser, 'Myth, image and social process in the English medieval town', *Urban History*, 1/23 (1996), 5-25; Mary-Rose McLaren, 'The textual transmission of the London chronicles', in Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (eds.), *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, vol. 3 (1992), 38-72; R. Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles of England* (Oxford, 1911), 29; Clark, 'Visions of the urban community', 107; Dyer, 'English town chronicles', 286.

¹⁸ CRO. Acc.351/1, 'Roll of the Kings of England and mayors of Coventry', a mayoral annal from 1345 to 1461, this is a copy the original is held among the Earl of Aylesford's papers; Trinity College Library (TCD) Ms. 512 is a Chester annal from 1272 to 1497, see Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles*, 32 n.2, Lawrence Clopper in *REED: Chester* misses this version of Chester's mayoral annals; a roll of the mayors of Lincoln from 1422 to 1505, see J. W. F. Hill, 'Three lists of the mayors, bailiffs and sheriffs of the city of Lincoln', *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, 39 (1928-9), 218-9; TCD. Ms. 432, a roll of the mayors and bailiffs of Northampton from 1381 to 1461, see Flenley, 28 n.4.

¹⁹ Lucy Toulmin-Smith (ed.), *The Marie of Bristowe is Kalendar By Robert Ricart* (Camden Society, new series, 5, 1872), i-xxi.

²⁰ The civic archive complete with five separate locks and keys was created in 1451, see *Leet Book*, 267; Coventry's earliest Leet Book, 1421-1555 appears to have been copied retrospectively from earlier records, only after the 1460s does it become a contemporaneous account. Ingram suggests this retrospective writing of the Leet Book took place in the early-sixteenth century, see *REED: Coventry*, xxxii and *Leet Book*, ix-xvi. Apart from the Leet Book the only civic records of similar or earlier date are CCA. Acc. BA/A/A/26/1, 'The Chamberlains Account Book I, 1499-1573'. Chester provides a similar case, in the mid- to later sixteenth century attempts were made to forge more secure connections with the past which led to the retrospective creation of CCA. AB/1, 'Assembly Book 1, 1532-1603', see also D. Mills, 'Chester ceremonial: re-creation and recreation in the English medieval town', *UHYB*, (1991), 5, and *REED: Chester*, xxii-xxxvi. The only civic records that pre-date the Chester Assembly Books are the Mayors' Books and five fifteenth century Treasurers Rolls. It should be noted that Randle Holme transcribed the surviving fifteenth century treasurers rolls but described them as decayed and disordered, in other words prior to the sixteenth century there was little attempt to look after civic records and Randle Holme copied them to preserve them, see BL. Harl. 2158 and *REED: Chester*, xlvii-xlix; for a general discussion of the growth of record-keeping see Smith-Fussner, *The Historical Revolution*, 26-59.

before this had been organising to enlarge the franchises and liberties of the city. Chester was granted its 'Great Charter' in 1506 and Norwich's constitutional settlement of 1417 coincides with the creation of *The Liber Albus* and other civic records.²¹ Tittler notes a similar process in relation to the development of civic architecture and town halls, their building did not follow the economic cycle, but the growth of urban political rights.²²

This first wave of provincial urban manuscript histories had largely run its course by the mid-sixteenth century and was followed by something of a hiatus, when it appears few manuscript histories were written during the mid-century, possibly reflecting the social, economic and political upheaval of the Reformation. From the later-sixteenth century, the situation changed dramatically as large numbers of manuscript histories began to be written and it is from this period onwards that multiple copies of manuscript urban histories exist for a number of provincial towns.²³ This second wave of records was more independent of the civic authorities and was largely the work of private individuals working independently of civic patronage. Table 6.1 attempts to demonstrate the extent of the urban manuscript history tradition and identifies those towns where copies are extant. It is not a systematic study of all provincial towns, relying as it does on printed sources- It is therefore important to recognise these as absolute minimum figures, and where additional research has been carried out, on Chester and Coventry, the number of manuscripts located usually increases. For instance Lawrence Clopper previously located 27 extant annals for Chester, whereas work for this thesis has uncovered 37, with a possible additional one as yet unchecked, and Coventry's tally has likewise risen.²⁴ While not all towns had a manuscript history tradition, the Table highlights the close correlation between incorporation and the development of a manuscript history tradition. All of the towns in Table 6.1 are incorporated boroughs, generally drawn from the second tier of the urban hierarchy and reflects from two possible processes. First unincorporated towns never developed a history writing tradition, which would fit neatly with the notion of the evolution of manuscript histories in tandem with the accretion of corporate rights. The second possibility is that unincorporated towns lacking a centralised archive are more likely to have lost any manuscript histories.

²¹ *VCH: Warwick* 8, 262-3; John T. Evans, *Seventeenth Century Norwich* (Oxford, 1979), 26-7 and *REED: Norwich*, lviii; Gloucester's records become much fuller after 1483 when the city received a new charter, see *REED: CWG*, 252.

²² Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, 73-97.

²³ Clark, 'Visions of the urban community', 110, notes that from the 1570s annals, often multiple copies, can be recorded for about 30 provincial towns.

²⁴ *REED: Chester*, xxxvi-xli; I have conclusively identified 37 manuscript histories, and a further one has not yet been properly examined. Ingram listed 11 mayors' lists for Coventry, see *REED: Coventry*, xxxix-xli. In subsequent research I have discovered a further 3 annals, see CRO. Acc. 535/1, Anon., 'The History of Coventry' and two further annals recently found at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, which I have not been able to examine yet. For a full list of the manuscript histories of Chester and Coventry see Appendix 3.

Table 6.1. Towns with a manuscript history tradition c.1500-c.1700

Town	Extant ²⁵ number. of histories
Beverley	1
Bristol	20 (at least)
Cambridge	3
Chester	38
Colchester	1
Coventry	14
Derby	1
Exeter	6
Gloucester	1
Great Yarmouth	1
Grimsby	1
Hull	4 or 5
Ipswich	1
Kendal	1
Leicester	3
Lincoln	3
Ludlow	3 to 5
Lynn Regis	1
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2 (minimum)
Northampton	2
Norwich	3 or 4
Nottingham	1
Okehampton	1
Plymouth	1
Ripon	1
Salisbury	1
Sandwich	1
Southampton	1
Shrewsbury	5
Stamford	1
Tenterden	1
Tewkesbury	1
Wallingford	1
Worcester	1
York	2?

²⁵ S. Seyer, *Memoirs Historical and Topographical of Bristol and its Neighbourhood* (Bristol, 1821), x-xi; Charles Gross, *Bibliography of British Municipal History* (1897), xxi-ii, xxxiii; G. Rosser, 'Myth and social process', 8; Robert Simpson, *A Collection of Fragments Illustrative of the History and Antiquities of Derby, Volume 1* (Derby, 1826), 63; M. M. Rowe, 'Some seventeenth century annals', *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, 33 (1974-77), 20-22; Bodl. Ms. Top. Gloucs.c.3, Abel Wantner, 'Manuscript history of Gloucester; Henry Manship', *The History of Great Yarmouth* (ed. Charles John Palmer, Great Yarmouth, 1854); Abraham de la Pryme, *The History of Kingston upon Hull* (Kingston upon Hull City Council, 2 vols., 1986); N. Bacon, *The Annals of Ipswich* (ed. William H. Richardson, Ipswich, 1884); R. Wharton, *Chronological Table* (Kendal, 1724), Wharton's annals were based on an earlier list in the Kendal Book of Record; James Thompson, 'The rolls of the mayors of Leicester', *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, 12/2 (1873-74), 261-274; Hill, 'Three lists of mayors of Lincoln', 217-56; Thomas Wright, *The History of Ludlow and its Neighbourhood* (Ludlow, 1852), 486-501; Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles*, 28 n.4; W. B. Bridges, *Some Account of the Town and Barony of Okehampton* (Tiverton, 1889), 78; *The Antiquary*, 32 (1896), 19, 178, 212; Dyer, 'English town chronicles', 291; Clark, 'Visions of the urban community', 111; W. A. Leighton, 'Early chronicles of Shrewsbury, 1372-1603', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (TSANHS)*, 3 (1880), 239-352; R. Leighton, 'Extracts from a manuscript in the library at Sweeney Hall', *TSANHS*, 4th ser., 7 (1918-19), 109-30; Alan Rogers, 'Introduction', in Alan Rogers (ed.), *The Making of Stamford* (Leicester, 1965); Valentine Green, *A Survey of the City of Worcester* (Worcester, 1764), 110 n.196, 211; for Coventry and Chester see Appendix 4.

6.iv. *The contents of manuscript urban histories*

The wide variety of manuscript urban histories makes it necessary to provide some definitions and identify those manuscript histories which will be discussed. Urban antiquarians produced three main types of manuscript history, but not all towns where a manuscript history tradition flourished produced this full range. The type of manuscript history which has received most attention from urban historians is the annal or mayors' list.²⁶ An annal is defined as a narrative of events organised chronologically, usually following the civic year beginning with the election of the city's principal officer, the mayor, bailiff, etc. It is often assumed that annals were only lists of corporate officers with variable amounts of historical information about the *cursus honorum*, public works, national events, etc., arranged chronologically.²⁷ The second type of manuscript history focuses on a particular institution or custom, such as the origins of a town and its development of government. Good examples are the history of Chester Cathedral, or a history of a guild such as Alderman Clarke's notes on the history of St George's guild.²⁸ The third group of manuscripts closely replicates the earlier custumal books, consisting of copies and/or originals of important documents, such as collections of charters, early ordinances, descriptions of common lands and their boundaries.²⁹ This third group, the antiquarian compilation, will largely be excluded from the discussion. But for the purposes of this discussion the term 'manuscript history' is used as a general term covering all three varieties. This is done partially to recognise the fluidity of these 'types' and to emphasise the interrelationships and overlap between the different types of manuscript histories.

The earliest discussions of these histories by urban historians although important in alerting us to the potential of such manuscripts, also tended to foreclose discussion. From differing perspectives, Clark and Dyer's almost exclusive focus on annals ignored the wider context - the historical environment, oral traditions, but most importantly the production of other types of historical works and the relationship between these different types of manuscript histories. Dyer in common with numerous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians saw annals as a valuable source which provide 'a unique record of local events before the advent of the newspaper', but regarded them as unworthy of study in their own right as a significant aspect of urban society and culture.³⁰ Clark simultaneously moved the discussion on by

²⁶ Clark, 'Visions of the urban community'; Dyer, 'English town chronicles', 285-292; Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles*; McLaren, 'London chronicles', 38-72.

²⁷ Dyer, 'English town chronicles', 285; Clark, 'Visions of the urban community', 107, 110.

²⁸ CCRO. DCC/4 and DCC/6 continuous, William Cowper, 'History of Ecclesiastical affairs in Chester'; *REED: Norwich*, lxvi.

²⁹ It is important to note that collections of documents and notes which formed the necessary initial, pre-cursory, stage to writing a 'history'. It is difficult to stipulate a clear dividing line between the 'pre-cursory' collection of notes and the third type of manuscript history outlined above. The distinction I make is that to describe the manuscript as a history it must be organised into a series of sections, chapters, in a narrative manner, to inform the reader about a particular subject, in other words to be didactic in its purpose. The 'pre-cursory' collection of notes, are simply the antiquarians/historians research notes which have yet to be organised, systemised and written into the format of a 'history', see also Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 16 on this question.

³⁰ Dyer, 'English town chronicles', 285. Successive generations of historians from the seventeenth century onwards have mined local manuscript histories for information to 'fill out' their work in a similar vein to Dyer's argument. For instance sections of William Aldersey's Chester annal were later printed in Daniel King, *The Vale Royall of England* (1656) and William Hale's manuscript history of Coventry's mayors appears in Dugdale, *Antiquities*. Historians in the later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries likewise recognised their indebtedness to these manuscript histories, drawing on them freely, Ormerod commented, 'the obligations which the author is under to these or other MSS. have been uniformly acknowledged in the references', see George Ormerod, *The History of the County Palatine of Chester* (1819), vol.1, 293; Broughton, *Survey of Worcester*, 110 n.196, 211.

acknowledging their importance to the study of 'urban mentalités' but he underscored Dyer's approach and dismissed annals because of their limited historical scale, characterising them as '... notable mostly for their literary and historical mediocrity ... discursive, badly organised, inaccurate and pock-marked by pretension'.³¹

Consequently the impression left by early studies of manuscript urban histories was that annals were the only form of historical writing and they were generally rather crude, having a limited focus on the *cursus honorum*, the city's physical fabric, elections and some national occurrences.³² However, early modern towns were home to a much more diverse range of historical studies. At Chester there are 38 extant annals in addition to a range of other manuscript histories, a history of ecclesiastical development and the Cathedral of Chester, two eighteenth-century abridged copies of Rogers' 'Breviary', a collection on the early history of Chester, and a volume by Randle Holme II and Randle Holme III on the history of England.³³ While there are annals which simply list the mayors and sheriffs and provide little or no additional information.³⁴ This more limited 'simple annal' was far out weighed by the more ambitious and complex manuscript histories common in both Chester and Coventry. In both towns, the annal was often only one chapter of a larger history, which would include chapters on the origins of the city, the development of civic offices, the granting of charters, the origin of civic liberties and so on.³⁵

One of the principal preoccupations of manuscript histories was to examine and determine a town's origins. In the case of Chester and Coventry this did not mean attempting to arrive at a definitive date for

³¹ Clark, 'Visions of the urban community', 106.

³² The notable exception is London where the manuscript history tradition has received much more detailed treatment. This characterisation of annals as 'narrow', is highly misleading and based on a thin evidential base. Clark provides an example from Chester of the William Aldersey annal which is taken to be generally representative of the format of all town annals. The entries in the annal from 1580 to 1609 were categorised and enumerated in tabular form and given percentages, thereby demonstrating that local events and the *cursus honorum* dominated its contents. From this characterisation flows the description 'narrow', see Clark, 'Visions of the urban community', 110 and Table 5.2. However, there are significant problems with the source utilised and consequently the description. Rather than consulting the manuscript version, a transcript of the Aldersey annal from *The Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd ser., 29 (1934), 1 *et seq.*, and 3rd ser., 30 (1935), 1 *et seq.* was used. The transcriber failed to point out that this copy of the Aldersey mayors' list was in fact part of the David Rogers, 'Breviary of Chester History', now in Liverpool University Library, Ms. 23.5. The transcriber only noted and transcribed the annal, but the David Rogers' 'Breviary', of which five versions survive, is a complex and sophisticated ten-chapter history of Chester of which the list of mayors and sheriffs is only one chapter. It should be further noted that the original Aldersey mayors' list that Rogers' subsequently copied into the Breviary, is an equally elaborate history and not only a simple annal list of mayors. It begins with a discussion of the development of Chester's legal privileges and charters and the origins of the mayoralty and again the annal is only one section, albeit a substantial section, of the Aldersey history, see CCA. CR469/542, William Aldersey, 'A collection of the maiors who haue gouerned this Cittie of Chester'. Through reliance on a 'bastardised' transcript Clark was led to characterise annals as very narrow, whereas consultation of either the Rogers' or Aldersey' history would have shown how much more complex manuscript urban histories were. Jonathan Barry makes a similar point, the printed sources give a misleading impression of Bristol's history traditions and to compensate the manuscript sources must be consulted, see Barry, 'Provincial town culture', 212.

³³ CCRO. DCC/4 and DDC/6; BL. Add. 11335, Anon., 'The Antiquitie of the most Antient and Famous Cittie of Chester', c.1724; BL. Add. 29780, Anon., 'The Breviaryes of the most antient and famous City of Chester', c.1771. Both Add. 11335 and 29780 are similar and essentially abridged copies of Rogers' 'Breviary of Chester History'; CCRO. DCC/5, William Cowper, 'Some Collections concerning the City of Chester', this history discusses the origins of the city and in particular its Roman beginnings, but by far the largest section is dedicated to a history of the Earls of Chester; BL. Harl. 2014,, 'Randle Holme Collections', Chapter 1 of this volume is a history of the early development of Chester.

³⁴ CCA. CR60/84, 'Manuscript List of Mayors and Sheriffs, 1242-1697' a simple mayors' list with no historical detail; BL. Harl. 2105 f.87r-97r, 'Randle Holme III Chester Collections'.

³⁵ For examples see CR469/542; see any of the five copies of David Rogers, 'The Breviary of Chester History', CCA. CX/3, BL. Harl. 1944, BL. Harl. 1948, CCRO. DCC/19, Liverpool University Ms. 23.5; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 2 and 3. CRO. Acc.2/3, Anon., 'A compilation of matters including a history of Coventry'; Acc.2/4, Anon., 'Manuscript concerning the history of Coventry'.

the city's foundation, rather it allowed the antiquarians to present and speculate about all of the possible foundations. Many of Chester's histories open with a section with a title such as 'The Antiquitie of the most Antient & Famous Cittie of Chester collected by learned and Experienced Authors of great Antiquitie, being here borne and laboured much in this Worke in their times' or a similar chapter.³⁶ Such discussions followed the widely-used practice of etymological speculation, where different names were connected to particular foundation myths.³⁷ Chester's early history was relatively clear to its historians and 11 names and foundation origins were identified including Neomagus (connecting the foundation of Chester with the repopulation of the post-diluvian world by Noah's offspring), Carleile, or the City Leile (after the king Leile who loved the city), or Loegira (a name which connects the city with the division of Brute's kingdom among his three sons, Lochrine, Albanet and Camber).³⁸ Rather than an uncritical repetition of each foundation myth, this opening chapter provided the reader with the references and supporting authorities for each tradition in turn, together with a commentary on their validity. In this way Chester's antiquarians demonstrated their thoroughness to the readers, presenting all the possible evidence, testing each tradition and guiding their readers to a conclusion of the city's antiquity and its central place in the narrative history of England.

Coventry's historians were less certain about their city's origins reflecting Coventry's absence from histories of the Roman Conquest and from the 'myth of British history'. This absence of a clear, unambiguous foundation origin troubled local historians and proved to be equally problematic to the 'father' of local history, William Dugdale, 'whence I conclude that the first plantation here, hath been of *very great antiquity*, though when, or by whom made I cannot expect to discover, having so little light of story to guide me through those elder times.'³⁹ It is not surprising that Dugdale remained convinced of Coventry's venerable antiquity in spite of the lack of evidence - he was educated in Coventry by Phillemon Holland and was reliant on the manuscript histories circulating in Coventry to guide his studies.⁴⁰ Coventry's historians also fell back on the tried and trusted techniques of etymological speculation, suggesting the town owed its

³⁶ Quote from BL. Add. 11355, f.2r, Anon., 'The Antiquitie of the most Antient and Famous Cittie of Chester'; BL. Harl. 1989, f.6r, Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who haue gouerned this Citie of Chester'; BL. Harl. 1944, f.4r-6v, David Rogers, 'Breviary of Chester history'; BL. Harl. 1948, f.20r-24r, David Rogers, 'A Breviary or some Collectiones of the anchant and famous Cittie of Chester'; BL. Harl. 2057, George Bellin, 'A collection of the maiors who haue gouerned this City of Chester'; BL. Harl. 2125, f.5r-v, George Bellin, 'Briefe notes on the Antiquity of the famous Cittie of Chester'; BL. Harl. 2125, Randle Holme(?), 'The Antiquity of the Anciant and famous City of Chester'; BL. Harl. 2133, f.3r-6r, Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who have gouerned the Cittie of Chester'; BL. Add. 29779 f.1r-10r; CCA. CX/3 f.2r-3v, David Rogers, 'A Breviary of some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'; CCA. CR630/1, f.2r-4v; CCA. CR692/1, Edward Fletcher, 'Chester chronicle'; CCA. P/Cowper Vol.2a, f.2r-3r; CCA. CR607/1 f.1r-3r, Anon., 'The Antiquity of the Antient City of Chester gathered out of learned and experienced authors'; CCRO. DCC/1, Anon., 'Brief Notes of the Antiquity of the Famous City of Chester with the succession of the mayors'.

³⁷ The difficulty for all antiquarians and historians was how to fit the past together - the Bible, Roman and Greek histories were all unimpeachable sources, but how did pre-historic and pre-Roman history fit into this picture? Antiquarians therefore frequently fell back on the method of etymological speculation, a practice followed adopted by urban antiquarians when trying to uncover the origins of their city. For a discussion of this see, Stuart Piggot, 'Antiquarian thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in Levi Fox (ed.), *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Dugdale Society, 1965), 93-100; Stuart Piggot, *The Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination* (1989).

³⁸ See n.36 for the list of histories that include this chapter. The 11 names were: Neomagus, Civitas Legiour, Deva Devana, Carthleon or Carlegion, Caer Iheon ardour dwy, Uxcellum or Oxcellum, Carleile, Lochrinus, Legecestria or Carthleon, Westchester, and Chester.

³⁹ Dugdale, *Antiquities*, 85, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ For Dugdale's early education in Coventry, see Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 219; for his frequent use of Coventry's manuscript histories see his *Antiquities*, 95.

origins to two Danish captains who made a covenant here, or from a giant tree that bore a strange fruit ('Quient'), but most antiquarians agreed the likeliest origin of the name was from the Convent found there by Saint Osburg and the subsequent growth of the town in the time of Canute.⁴¹

A characteristic of all forms of manuscript urban histories was a concern with the origins of all aspects of the city, its customs, liberties, common lands, and civic amenities and buildings, such as the walls, gates, conduits and the town hall.⁴² In particular antiquarians concentrated on uncovering and debating the origins of civic government, the development of civic offices and the legal powers and rights which underpinned corporate power. The origins of Coventry's government was dated to 1344 when 12 men purchased corporate rights for the town and created the office of mayor. Subsequent additions and developments to the governing institutions were carefully recorded, such as the creation of the office of sheriff and the acquisition of greater powers of self-government, when the city was made a county in 1451.⁴³ Chester's historians displayed a similar fascination with the development of civic government, how the city was governed prior to the establishment of corporate institutions and the origins of local customs. In fact Chester's antiquarians developed a tradition which linked the origins of civic government - in the shape of the office of mayor - with the origins of the local and famous mystery play-cycle.⁴⁴

Clopper suggests there were two competing theses relating to the origins of Chester's mayor - one version held Sir John Arneway to be the first mayor in 1328, and the second placed Sir Walter Linnet as the first incumbent in 1242.⁴⁵ The tradition which identified Sir John Arneway was dominant for much of the sixteenth century and its origins probably lie in an officially-sanctioned mayors' list drawn up in 1539-40 under the auspices of the reforming mayor, Henry Gee, and recorded in the first assembly book.⁴⁶ The earliest group of manuscript histories were written between the 1560s and 1580s. They are all similar, in their dating of mayors and the content, and consequently it is difficult to identify which was the original version and it is possible that all of them were copied from the officially-sanctioned mayors' list in the First Assembly Book.⁴⁷ This officially-sanctioned version was challenged by William Aldersey in his 'History of

⁴¹ All the manuscript histories that discuss the towns foundations agree in their interpretation see, BL. Add. 11364, f.2r, Anon., 'Annalls of the City of Coventry, 1278-1703'; BL. Harl. 6388, f.1r; CRO. Acc.2/5, f.1r, Anon., 'Annalls of the City of Coventry'; CRO. Acc.535/1, f.1r; Jesson's manuscript history, no longer extant, was printed by T. Hearne in Fordun, *Scotichronicon*, appendix.

⁴² Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 9 suggests a concern with origins was a constant preoccupation and hallmark of an antiquarian. For the origins of different civic amenities see, CRO. Acc.2/3, 42, 46, 48, 49, 57, 70; CRO. Acc.2/5, f.2v, 7r, 8v, 9v, 19r, 23v, 29r; BL. Add. 11364, f.2v; BL. Harl. 6388, f.8r.

⁴³ CRO. Acc.2/5, f.11v; CRO. Acc.2/3, 51.

⁴⁴ CRO. Acc.2/3, 41; CRO. Acc.2/5, f.1v-2r; BL. Add. 11364, f.2v; BL. Harl. 6388, f.6r; CCA. CR60/83, f.1r, 3r, 8v, 9r, 21r; CCA. CR630/1, f.48r; BL. Add. 11335, f.23r, 25r; BL. Add. 39925, f.8v, Anon., 'A collection of the mayors who have governed the City of Chester'; BL. Harl. 1944, f.17r; BL. Harl. 2057, f.26r; BL. Harl. 2125, 33r, 93v.

⁴⁵ REED: *Chester*, xli-xlii.

⁴⁶ CCA. AB/1, f.11r, 'Assembly Book I, 1532-1603'. This hypothesis may have to be altered in light of a further manuscript history I have recently discovered in Trinity College's library, TCD Ms. 512. This history pre-dates all other Chester histories and could prove to be the source of the tradition recorded in the Assembly Book, but as yet I have not examined this history fully.

⁴⁷ It is impossible to establish which list is the original as they are all very similar, the group consists of BL. Add. 29777, Anon., 'List of the Mayors and Sheriffs of Chester', written at some point after 1584 and owned by William Bird or William Baxter; BL. Harl. 1046, William Smith, 'County Palatines of Chester', written in c.1585 and probably copied from the official version in AB/1 when Smith conducted his visitation of Cheshire in 1585; BL. Harl. 2105, 'Randle Holme III Chester Collections', written between 1566 and 1580,

the Mayors of Chester' begun in 1595 and continued until 1616.⁴⁸ Aldersey's first intention was to correct the erroneous attribution of Arneway as the city's first mayor and challenge this frequently-repeated claim, 'as the manifold bookes thereof now extant doth wittnes and declare'. His second intention was to provide an accurate and defensible date for the origins of the mayoralty, which researches lead him to identify as Sir Walter Linnet in 1242, quoting as evidence a deed in the hands of Mr Gamull, the then recorder.⁴⁹

Aldersey's revisions were to have a wide-ranging impact, not least of all in spurring on new historical research and the early- to mid-seventeenth century witnessed a period of intense activity. More significant was its impact on the local tradition of Sir John Arneway as the city's first mayor and the initiator of the local 'mystery cycle'. Chester's famous play-cycle had in its earliest form been a rather limited, one-day production attached to the celebration of Corpus Christi, under the overall control of the ecclesiastical authorities. The earliest evidence suggests the Corpus Christi play was established by 1422 at the latest.⁵⁰ After 1471-72 the evidence for performance of the Corpus Christi play disappears and there is a long gap in the records. When the play re-emerges in 1521 it is conducted under civic auspices, the processional route has changed and it has metamorphosed into a three-day performance held on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Whit Week. The re-emergence of the plays was accompanied by a fictitious, invented 'history'. The Banns, a series of proclamations advertising the plays, publicly disseminated this 'invented tradition' and identified Henry Francis, a monk, as the author, Sir John Arneway as the mayor at the time and dated the first performance to 1328. This 'invented tradition' simultaneously tied the creation of the plays with the origins of civic government because Sir John Arneway was widely credited as Chester's first mayor in 1328. This 'invented tradition' is further developed in the post-Reformation Banns. Arneway is attributed the idea of producing the cycle processional at the expense of the guilds and the author is changed. The famous local monk, Ranulf Higden, and author of *Polychronicon* is substituted in place of Henry Francis. Mills argues that this strengthened the link between the city and the plays, emphasising the common origins of civic government and the play-cycle. The plays therefore become a collaboration between the city's 'enterprising first mayor and a scholarly monk of Protestant persuasion'.⁵¹

Aldersey's 'History of the Mayors of Chester' overtly questioned this tradition by altering the date the office of mayor first appeared and replacing Arneway with Sir Walter Linnet, who Aldersey argued was mayor in 1242. This broke the link between the creation of the mystery plays and the origins of civic government. Aldersey's research had a huge impact on the question of the origins of civic government and the mayoralty, seventeen of the annals written after his discoveries faithfully follow him and replace

probably the earliest version; John Rylands Library Ms. 202, 'Hassall Commonplace Book', which includes a list of Chester's mayors, it is the latest of this group and written c.1602.

⁴⁸ CCA. CR469/542, this version was not available to Clopper as it was subsequently deposited in the Chester City Archive, instead he had to rely on a later copy of the Aldersey history now BL. Add. 39925. For comments on the original Aldersey history, the process of writing and construction see, D. Mills, 'William Aldersey's "History of the mayors of Chester"', *REED: Newsletter*, 14/2 (1989), 2-10.

⁴⁹ CCA. CR469/542 f.15r.

⁵⁰ *REED: Chester*, 6-7.

⁵¹ David Mills, 'Chester ceremonial: re-creation and recreation in the English medieval town', *UHYB*, 18 (1991), 7-9.

Arneway with Linnet, dating the origins of the office to 1242.⁵² Only four histories post-dating Aldersey continue with the tradition of Arneway as the city's first mayor in 1328.⁵³ The impact on the tradition linking the origin of the plays and civic government was not so clear cut. Paradoxically, this 'invented tradition' received its fullest and most elaborate treatment as Aldersey's findings were beginning to circulate among Chester's antiquarians. There are three groups of manuscript histories which continue the tradition, some ignore Aldersey's findings, while others modified it to accommodate Aldersey's research and endeavoured to reconcile the invented tradition with Aldersey's empirical research. The first group of manuscript histories produced by David Rogers gave the fullest and most elaborate account of the common origins of the play and civic government:

In the time of the first mayor of Chester who is thought to be Sir John Arneway
the Whitson playes were made by a Monk of Chester, and was by the said mayor
published and set out at the charges of every company with their pageants ...
And the said Rondolph who did make the saide playes ...⁵⁴

Rogers wrote five editions of his 'Breviary of Chester History' over a period spanning more than 20 years between 1609 and the late-1630s. As a result his ideas were not consistent throughout and show signs of development as he incorporated new research into his work. The two earliest versions (now Chester City Archives, CX/3 and British Library Harleian, 1944) follow the traditional account most closely: Ranulf Higden is identified as the author, Arneway the first mayor in 1328 and under his direction the plays were performed.⁵⁵ Later editions of the 'Breviary' (Harleian 1948) credit Arneway with producing the plays but no longer explicitly support the claim that he was the first mayor.⁵⁶ Rogers' final edition of the 'Breviary' produced in the late-1630s (now Liverpool University manuscript 23.5) was the version most influenced by Aldersey's work. In the fourth chapter which discusses Chester ceremonies, Rogers credited Higden as the author and Arneway in 'about' 1328 with their production, but again he does not explicitly accord Arneway the status of the first mayor of Chester. However, in the tenth chapter, the annal of mayors and sheriffs, he updated his earlier mayors' lists working from Aldersey's list, beginning in 1242 with Sir Walter Linnet and this in turn leads him to reassign Arneway's mayoralty to the eight years between 1268 and 1276. Rather than reject the tradition which linked Arneway to the plays, Rogers' attempted to reconcile Aldersey's research with the older tradition by simply reassigning the year the plays were first performed to

⁵² The 17 mayors' lists are, CCA. CR60/83; CCA. CR60/84; CCA. CR630/1; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1; CCA. CR692/1; CCRO. DCC/2 and DCC/3 continuous, William Cowper(?), 'Chester collections'; CCRO. DCC/11, Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who haue governed this Cittie of Chester'; CCRO. DLT/B 37, 'Tabley Liber N'; BL. Harl. 1989; BL. Harl. 2057; BL. Harl. 2125 mayors' list 2; BL. Harl. 2133 mayors' list 1 and mayors' list 2; BL. Stowe 811, 'Antiquite of the ancient and famous Cittie of Chester'; Liv. Uni. Ms. 23.5, Toronto College Ms, listed in *REED: Chester*, xl; there is a further facsimile copy of Aldersey not included in this list see, BL. Add. 39925. It is interesting to note that A. M. Kennett, *The Origins and Early History of the Mayors of Chester: A report on historical research conducted between August 1984 and February 1986* (CCA. unpub. report, ref. 942 714 352 008 KEN) largely vindicates Aldersey's work.

⁵³ CCA. CX/3; BL. Harl. 1944; CCRO. DCC/1; CCRO. DCC/19, David Rogers, 'A Breviarye of Chester History'.

⁵⁴ There are five surviving copies of the Breviary and given his productivity it is not beyond the realms of possibility that more were originally produced. Quote from *REED: Chester*, 254.

⁵⁵ CCA. CX/3 f.18v, 105r; BL. Harl. 1944, 67r.

⁵⁶ BL. Harl. 1948, f.64r, 'The time they [the plays] weare firste sett forthe, and played was in anno: 1339 Sr John Arneway being Mayor of Chester:'.

1276, 'the whitson plays invented by one Rondell Higden monke in Chester' and the last year of Arneway's now reassigned mayoralty.⁵⁷

David Rogers was not the only Chester antiquarian to continue to link the creation of the plays to Ranulf Higden and Sir John Arneway's mayoralty, or to endeavour to reconcile it with Aldersey's research. George Bellin, clerk to several guild companies and Holy Trinity parish, emerges as a key figure in the perpetuation of the tradition, albeit in a new modified form. In 1622 he wrote a history, 'Brief notes on the Antiquity of the Famous City of Chester' which although drawn from existing manuscript histories broke with both of the main traditions, the earlier sixteenth century mayors' lists and Aldersey's subsequent revisions. Following Aldersey, Bellin identified the first mayor as Linnet, but crucially he altered the date of the first mayoralty, relocating it from 1242 to 1317. This allowed him to maintain the date of Arneway's mayoralty in 1327-8, because Arneway was mayor for about ten years, and therefore to retain the connection between Arneway, Higden and the creation of the plays in 1328.⁵⁸ His ascription of Linnet as Chester's first mayor in 1317/8 was not due to ignorance of the Aldersey/Linnet version, but it reflected a conscious decision to retain the link between Arneway, 1328 and the play-cycle. Bellin was not unaware of the revisions and had in fact produced two almost direct copies of Aldersey's original manuscript. In 1601 he wrote British Library Harleian 2057 and in c.1613 Chester City Archives CR60/83, both of which are almost direct copies of Aldersey. So, having produced two faithful copies of Aldersey, which re-dated the origins of the mayoralty to 1242 and consequently removed the link between the origins of civic government and the creation of the plays, Bellin attempted to reconcile the differences. He subsequently wrote two new histories which accepted the need to alter the date of the origins of the mayoralty but retained the link between the play's invention and Sir John Arneway's mayoralty. Bellin undoubtedly had a more general interest in the plays, in their text and their performance, not simply their origins. It is largely due to him that the play 'was preserved as in no other English town', having made two copies of it.⁵⁹ Bellin therefore emerges not only as an antiquarian with a particular interest in the play-cycle but as a key figure in the reconfiguration of the 'invented tradition' which attempted to reconcile the plays creation, with the famous monk, author Ranulf Higden, and John Arneway's mayoralty, thus retaining key elements of the earlier tradition in spite of Aldersey's research.

Other antiquarians similarly attempted to reconcile Aldersey's findings with the idea of the early origins of the plays. British Library, Harleian 2125, written around 1658, possibly by Randle Holme II, adopts a similar method to Bellin. It accepts Sir Walter Linnet as the first mayor in 1242, and reassigns Sir John Arneway to 1269 and transfers the creation of the plays to 1269.⁶⁰ In the eighteenth century attempts to reconcile Linnet with the origins of the play gathered momentum. William Cowper, Chester's pre-eminent

⁵⁷ Liv. Uni. Ms. 23.5; Hart and Knapp, *Aunchant*, 169-86.

⁵⁸ BL. Harl 2125 f.23r-v; Bellin makes an almost identical second copy of this history see, BL. Add. 29779 f.1r-54v.

⁵⁹ Mills, 'Chester ceremonial: re-creation and recreation', 10.

⁶⁰ BL. Harl. 2125, f.91v.

eighteenth century antiquarian followed the now dominant tradition and dated the origins of the mayoralty to 1242 and Sir Walter Linnet. But like Bellin and Holmes he simply moved the creation of the plays to coincide with, the now re-dated mayoralty of Sir John Arneway in 1276.⁶¹ The dominant history tradition of the eighteenth century continued to link the creation of the plays with Ranulf Higden and John Arneway's mayoralty, although its link to the origins of civic government had now been removed.⁶² Aldersey's history had destroyed the possibility of simultaneously linking the origins of civic government and the play-cycle, by moving the origins of the mayoralty to 1242. However, in the early-seventeenth century, in the work of David Rogers and George Bellin, there was a concerted effort to protect this tradition and salvage as much as possible. Aldersey not only re-dated the origins of the mayoralty, but was also completely uninterested in the origins of the play-cycle, which is not discussed at all in his history. However, although most antiquarians accepted his re-dating of the first mayor, they rejected his approach to the play-cycle. Through the eighteenth and into the first half of the nineteenth century, the connection between Arneway and the plays was retained. In this way Chester's antiquarians continued to lay claim to a unique first - the city had the earliest known mystery cycle, initiated under civic auspices.

Coventry's historians were much less exercised by the question of the direct origins of civic government which was generally understood to have been established with the grant of a royal charter in 1344.⁶³ But the wider question of the origins of the city's liberties and privileges combined powerfully with the popular, local Godiva myth. The development of the myth powerfully illustrates the interaction and relationship between popular or oral traditions, the 'historic environment' and written representations of the past. The consensus among Coventry's antiquarians was that the city was made free in 1056 by Godiva's famous ride.⁶⁴ This myth did not originate from the pens of Coventry's antiquarians, although ultimately it was to find its fullest expression in their work. Its origins are much older and can be traced back to Roger Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* and subsequently to Matthew Paris. These two accounts provide the basic framework for the Godiva story which was developed and embellished in the later-sixteenth century by Richard Grafton in his *Chronicle or History of England* (1569). In this version Godiva informed the civic magistrates prior to her ride, they ordered all inhabitants indoors and to keep their windows closed. Grafton was an MP for Coventry in 1559 and 1563, and his source was local to Coventry. Citing 'Gaufride' who has been identified as Geoffrey, Prior of Coventry (1216-35), author of a chronicle which is no longer extant, but was certainly known to Dugdale.⁶⁵ Grafton's chronicle also attests to the prevalence of the oral tradition

⁶¹ CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 141.

⁶² BL. Add. 11355; BL. Add. 29780; CCRO. DCC/1; CCA. CR630/1; CCA. CR607/1; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.2a; CCA. CR608/11b, 'Chester Antiquities ... extracted from the M. S. of Archdeacon Robert Rogers'.

⁶³ CRO. Acc.2/5, f.1v; CRO. Acc.2/3, 41; Acc.535/1, f.1v; CRO. Acc.2/4, f.6v; BL. Add. 11364, f.2v; BL. Harl. 6388, f.6r; Dugdale, *Antiquities*, 91; VCH: Warwick 8, 258.

⁶⁴ For example CRO. Acc.2/5, f.1v; BL. Add. 11364, f.2r; BL. Harl. 6388, f.6r.

⁶⁵ William Reader, *The Origin and Description of Coventry Fair Show and Peeping Tom* (Coventry, 1826), 4; F. Bliss-Burbidge, *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva* (Birmingham, n.d.), 27; Joan Lancaster, *Godiva of Coventry* (Coventry, 1967), 43 *et seq*; Edwin Sidney Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales* (1925), 72-3. All of them speculate about where Wendover picked up the story but none of the accounts of the early genesis of the myth are particularly credible and all are highly speculative. Whitley, *Parliamentary Representation*, 53-4; VCH: Warwick 8, 242; Dugdale, *Antiquities*, 100.

locally and one of his sources was oral testimony. Certainly the ideals behind the myth, of civic freedom, had a popular currency and were used in the rhetoric of political discourse during the constitutional struggles of the fifteenth century.⁶⁶

The story now had in place all of the elements essential to the introduction of Peeping Tom whose addition may have been an accidental by-product of civic attempts to foster the story in the later-sixteenth century. A painting of Lady Godiva commissioned by the corporation in 1586, had a small, middle-aged, bearded figure in a window at the top right hand, probably intended to represent Earl Leofric.⁶⁷ This painting was often seen by visitors to the city, hanging in St Mary's Hall, and is probably responsible for the genesis of Peeping Tom. References to Tom first begin to proliferate in the early-seventeenth century, shortly after the painting was finished - a description of the city from this period is the first written account which embellishes the story and includes the figure of Peeping Tom, although he is not mentioned by name.⁶⁸ In 1634, three militiamen from Norwich visited Coventry and their account of the Godiva painting in St Mary's Hall appears to refer to Peeping Tom when they commented 'her fayre long hayre much offend the wantons glancing eye' (emphasis added). In 1659, another visitor John Jeynson, recorded seeing a statue placed in a window in High Street and when he asked a citizen who it was, he was told the story of Godiva and of a person who broke the injunction, looked upon her and was struck down dead.⁶⁹ Almost simultaneous to Jeynson's visit was the publication of Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656 which discussed the famous ride. However, the version printed in Dugdale makes no mention of Peeping Tom and carefully follows the original version of Wendover. Given Dugdale's considerable scholarly reputation and his knowledge of local sources, the use of the older version is odd, especially in light of his access to the 'Gaufride' manuscript. The addition of new elements, the injunction to stay indoors and the person who illicitly looked on Godiva was clearly gaining wider currency, and Daniel King's *The Vale Royall of England* also published in 1656 gives an account of Godiva which includes all the new elements, except no punishment was visited on the man infringing the magistrates order.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Grafton often uses the term 'as the common fame telleth' in relation to the Godiva story, Woolf notes this term is shorthand for a received oral tradition. In 1495 verses were pinned to the door of St Michael's opposing the levying of a tax on wool and cloth complaining 'this cite shuld be free & nowe is bonde. Dame good Eve made it free', see *Leet Book*, 567.

⁶⁷ When undergoing cleaning in 1976 the painting revealed the figure in the window. The curators of the Herbert Museum concluded that the figure was an original feature of the painting and was probably intended to be Earl Leofric to whom Godiva returned following the ride in the original story. Clark and Day bring a significant amount of evidence together to support their view that this was intended to be Leofric, not Peeping Tom, from the earliest versions of the story, Grafton's account, to the similarities with the Leofric character depicted in the stained glass window in Holy Trinity Church see, Ronald Clark and Patrick Day, *Lady Godiva: Images of a Legend in Art and Society* (Herbert Museum, Coventry, 1982), 16.

⁶⁸ Harl. 6850, f.34r, 'Miscellaneous Papers on State Affairs, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries'. Describes how the account was seen on the walls of St Mary Hall, i.e. the painting and that everyone was ordered in doors but one person looked out, 'as she was riding it chanced her horse did neigh wherupon one opened his window'. The description is problematic because its provenance is unknown, nothing is known about the author or when it was written, although it ultimately came into the Harleian collection from Humfrey Wanley's personal collection.

⁶⁹ Wickham-Legg, *A Relation of a Short Survey*, 70; Camden, *Britannia* (1610 edition), 568, for the marginal hand-written notes on his visit to Coventry by John Jeynson see BRL. copy F094/1610/8.

⁷⁰ Dugdale, *Antiquities*, 86; King, *Vale Royall*, 128-9. Dugdale's omission is even stranger given that King worked for him as an engraver for *Monasticon*, see Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 234-5. The omission may relate to the way the project originally came about and the extensive use of Sir Simon Archer's antiquarian papers gathered before the Godiva story received its fullest expression, this is underscored by Dugdale's career in the 1640s when his focus shifted to recording Cathedral monuments, see P. Styles, *Sir Simon Archer, 1581-1662* (Dugdale Occasional Papers, 6, 1946), 34-9 and Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 221-2.

The story receives its fullest expression in the work of Coventry's antiquarians, the majority of whom were working in the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century. The earliest history that mentions the new version of the Godiva story is written c.1674, although the figure who breaks the injunction and looks on Godiva is still nameless, but his actions are used to account for the retention of tolls on horses.⁷¹ All the subsequent histories, which post-date the creation of the Godiva Cavalcade, recount the same story and note the annual ceremonial commemoration.⁷² What the development of the Godiva myth illustrates most clearly is the interaction between the 'historic environment', oral traditions, visual and written representations of the past. The Godiva myth was a strong local oral tradition in the sixteenth century and used by Grafton utilised in his account of 1569. But in the later-sixteenth century the civic elite made a conscious decision to utilise the image, commissioning a painting of the ride in 1581, writing verses celebrating Godiva's actions on the walls of St Mary's Hall in 1586 and placing a statue of her in the High Cross in 1609.⁷³ Thereafter the evolution of the story became independent of the civic elite's attempts to control and develop the myth. The painting of 1586 unintentionally contributed the origins of the figure of Peeping Tom, an element of the story which appears to have developed as part of the oral tradition first and is recounted by a visitor to Coventry in Harliean 6830 a manuscript of unknown provenance, but probably dating from the early-seventeenth century. Peeping Tom was then more firmly incorporated into the story when the statue of him was placed in High Street, by 1659 at the very latest. These developments informed the written articulation of the story shown by Daniel King's much fuller version which included all of the new elements. The post-Restoration political climate speeded the further development and manipulation of the story. The civic elite instituted the Godiva Cavalcade in 1678 and in 1681 commissioned a further painting of the famous benefactress.⁷⁴ I have already suggested in Chapter 3 the reasons for the creation of the show in 1678 and the continued development of other aspects of the Godiva story - the manuscripts histories, the statue and the paintings can all be situated in this same political context. However, as the earlier history of the story's development shows, it was difficult to control and prevent it from being used in different ways or appropriated by opponents. The fifteenth century had seen the image of Godiva mobilised to defend the idea of civic freedom against an aggressive, oligarchic elite and the later-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was no different. The myth was popular locally and closely identified with by the townspeople of Coventry who deployed it in their struggle against the civic elite.⁷⁵

6.v. *The readership and circulation of histories*

Any assessment of the importance of urban histories rests crucially on the question of how widely they were circulated, who had access to them and who was the intended audience. Most discussions of

⁷¹ CRO. Acc.2/4, f.6r. A slightly earlier history initially started in c.1660 does not originally mention Godiva, but the person who takes up the continuation of the history from 1661 onwards, notes the origins of the Godiva Cavalcade in 1678, see CRO. Acc.2/3, 88.

⁷² CRO. Acc.2/5, f.1v, 52r; CRO. Acc.535/1, f.28v; BL. Add. 11364, f.2r, 22v; BL. Harl. 6388, f5r-6v.

⁷³ Clark and Day, *Lady Godiva: Images of a Legend*, 12, 18; Lancaster, *St Mary's Hall*, 8, 46; BL. Add. 11364, f.14r; Harl. 6388, f.43r.

⁷⁴ Clark and Day, *Lady Godiva: Images of a Legend*, 12, 18; CRO. Acc.2/3, 88-9; CRO. Acc.2/5, f.52r; BL. Add. 11364, f.22v.

⁷⁵ D. Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (ed. Pat Rogers, 1986), 404; *Leet Book*, 495; BL. Add. 27379, 'Papers Relating to Coventry'.

manuscript histories ignore this problem and leave us to speculate about whether they were intended for entirely personal consumption, or for wider circulation. This is a complex question made more difficult by the absence of concrete evidence about the circulation of manuscript histories, their readership and their reception. While the contents of urban histories tell us much about the nature of urban identities, without some sense of their social locale these histories remain interesting but essentially semi-detached from the wider urban culture. In the case of printed town histories the task is somewhat easier - the historian can use subscription lists, the number of editions of a book and where possible look at the scale of a print-run. The conclusions of this discussion can only be tentative, however there is sufficient evidence to suggest that manuscript histories circulated widely among townspeople and constituted an important element in the cultural identity of freemen.

Before print became the dominant medium, in the mid- to later-eighteenth century, unpublished manuscripts were frequently used as a way of circulating information, news and gossip. Manuscript newsheets and letters were on the increase from the 1620s and were eagerly passed among friends and neighbours.⁷⁶ A variety of works circulated in manuscript partly to avoid the eye of the censor, but also because of the significant cost advantage over printed works, scandalous libels, travel diaries, sermons, academic and political treatises. The sources indicate that this practice was widespread among the social and political elite.⁷⁷ It is more difficult to identify how far down the social scale this practice occurred, although certainly the manuscript transmission of news was widespread. Manuscripts newsletters were transmitted by networks of friends and neighbours, and as a case from Wigan illustrates, news could travel widely and quickly: Mathew Mason, an apprentice in London, sent his father a letter containing news from the capital, his mother subsequently 'lent it out' to the neighbours and copies of the letter were made and read out in the streets of Wigan.⁷⁸

Among antiquarians the circulation of manuscripts, loaning of records and artefacts was a common practice.⁷⁹ Authors of manuscript histories frequently acknowledge their debt to the other manuscripts they have read and consulted, referencing sections in their manuscripts to other histories in circulation. One Coventry historian acknowledged his reliance on other annals and that his own work was largely 'taken out

⁷⁶ Richard Cust, 'The circulation of news', *P&P*, 112 (1986), 60-90; Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration* (1985), 88 notes the Caernarfonshire gentry were eagerly passing around a letter from Mock to the corporation of London.

⁷⁷ Travel diaries circulated among friends see, John Morrill, 'Sir William Brereton and England's wars of religion', *Journal of British Studies*, 24 (1985), 314; Esther Moir, *The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourists 1540-1840* (1964), 1. Sermons and political treatises were also circulate in manuscript see, Keith Wrightson, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1995), 162; Ann Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1991), 111. A group of nobles was prosecuted in 1629 for possessing a manuscript on military despotism see, Derek Hirst, *England in Conflict, 1603-1660: Kingdom, Community and Commonwealth* (1999), 131-2. For scandalous libels Sir Bengamin Backbite in School for Scandal says 'tis very vulgar to Print, and as my little Productions are mostly satires and Lampoons on particular people I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the Friends of the Parties', Cecil Price (ed.), *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford, 1973), vol.1, 367 (emphasis added).

⁷⁸ Adam Fox, 'Rumour, news and popular political opinion', *HJ*, 40 (1997), 609-10 and for a similar case in Norwich in 1627.

⁷⁹ G. Parry, 'John Stow's unpublished "Historie of this Iland": amity and enmity amongst sixteenth century scholars', *English Historical Review*, 102 (1987), 633, 640; Moir, *Discovery of Britain*, 17; Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (1994), 41.

of [eight] manuscripts'.⁸⁰ While it is clear that a community of antiquarians existed in Chester and Coventry this sheds little light on the question of the wider readership and circulation. One indication of the scale of distribution is that most histories were not the product of one antiquarian - often started by one writer they were subsequently passed around and continued by other interested reader-authors. Of Chester's 37 manuscript histories 19 were written by only one person,⁸¹ nine were written by two people,⁸² five by three persons,⁸³ and one by four or more people.⁸⁴ Just under 50 per cent of all Chester's manuscript histories passed out of the hands of the original author and were subsequently continued or annotated by other reader-authors. A good example of this practice is George Bellin's 'Brief notes on the antiquity of the famous City of Chester'. Bellin wrote two different histories of Chester and copied each version twice: British Library Additional 29779 and Harleian 2125 annal 1, the first pair; Chester City Archives CR60/83 and British Library Harleian 2057, the second pair. After Bellin's death in 1623, three of the four histories passed to new owners who continued the histories, updating the lists of mayors and appending historical information. Additional 29779 was continued from 1623 to 1644, Harleian 2057 was continued from 1601 to 1658, Harleian 2125 from 1624 to 1650. In the case of Harleian 2125 the history became the property of Randle Holme and he subsequently made additions, corrections and annotations to the manuscript text.⁸⁵ Similarly Additional 29779 passed into the hands of Peter Goose and he briefly annotated the text entering his and his son's names and their dates of birth. The manuscript then passed to another person who continued the mayors' list from 1623 to 1644.⁸⁶ Of the four versions, only the copy now held in Chester City Archives CR60/83 was not continued or added to by other Cestrians after Bellin's death. The treatment of Bellin's manuscripts was far from unique - his manuscript histories were passed around after his death, as can be seen from the way in which three continued after his death in 1623 - and if manuscripts circulated after a person's death there is no reason to believe they were not loaned out during his lifetime.⁸⁷

It also appears from the construction of many histories that the original author expected someone else to continue the work adding each new mayor and significant events to the annal. A number of annals had

⁸⁰ 'Here David Roger booke ended', see BL. Harl. 2125, f.150r; BL. Harl. 2125, annal 2, f.111v refers to both George Bellin and David Rogers' histories.

⁸¹ CCA. CX/3; CCA CR60/83; CCA. CR60/84; CCA. CR607/1; CCA. CR630/1; CCA. CR692/1; CCA. P/Cowper, vol.2a; CCRO. DCC/1; CCRO. DCC/2 and DCC/3; CCRO DCC/4 and DCC/6; CCRO. DCC/5; Liv Uni Ms. 23.5; BL. Harl. 2125 annal 3; BL. Harl. 1046; BL. Harl. 2133 annal 2; BL. Harl 1989; BL. Add. 29777; BL. Add. 29780.

⁸² CCA. CR60/8/11b; CCA. CR687/1, 'Manuscript History of Chester From mr Daniell King's Vale Royall of England and others'; CCRO. DCC/11; CCRO. DCC/19; BL. Harl. 1948; BL. Harl. 2057; BL. Harl 2105; BL. Add. 11335; BL. Add. 29779.

⁸³ CCA. CR469/542; BL. Harl. 1944; BL. Harl 2125 annal 1; BL. Harl. 2133 annal 1, Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who have governed the Cittie of Chester; BL. Add. 39925.

⁸⁴ BL. Harl. 2125 annal 2.

⁸⁵ BL. Harl. 2125 is initially by Bellin from 1317 to 1623, it is then continued by an unknown author from 1624 to 1650, and Randle Holme II makes additions to the history. It is impossible to tell in which order this took place, but I assume that the manuscript was passed to Randle Holme II after the additions 1623 to 1650 were made.

⁸⁶ BL. Add. 29779 f.26v, 27r and 35v, respectively. 1576 'in this yere. I Peter Goose was borne... on 28 october'; 1578 'in this yere my brother Richard Goose was borne'; 1609 'this yere my sun Richard Goose was borne'.

⁸⁷ For a similar example drawn from Coventry see Bodleian, Top. Warwickshire d4, 'A list of ye Mayors and Sheriffs etc of Coventry... 1344, to ye year 1686'. It was written by three different people, two of whom subsequently continued the sections of the manuscript completed by the original author: the list of mayors begins in 1348 and is continued by the same hand until 1629/30; a second hand begins adding details from 1608, then takes over the writing from 1629/30 to 1675/6; a final, third hand writes the last ten years of the annal from 1675-6 to 1685-6.

blank pages marked out for continuation at the end of the sections written by the initial author. These pages were laid out following the original author's format so anyone in possession of the history could fill in the succeeding mayors and sheriffs in the same way as the initial author.⁸⁸ Many manuscript histories are also heavily annotated by later readers, pointing out the original author had got a particular mayor's name wrong, correcting the date assigned to a particular mayor's year of office or adding new information about events in that year.⁸⁹ William Aldersey's 'History of the Mayors of Chester' was copied by an unknown antiquarian. This unknown copyist made an almost perfect facsimile copy of the manuscript, perfectly laid out with few crossing outs and corrections, and it was clearly intended as a final copy for circulation.⁹⁰ Once the copy of 'The History of the Mayors of Chester' began to circulate it accumulated additional comments and annotations by its readers - a second hand makes additional notes throughout the history and then a third, and different, hand continues the history of the mayors from 1623 to 1634 where the history ends. In sum, this tells us that authors expected their manuscript histories to be circulated and after they had finished working on it, some other reader-author would continue it. This copying, continuation and annotation means that far more than 38 or 14 antiquarians in Chester and Coventry, respectively, were involved in writing such histories.

A number of authors prefaced their histories with statements about why and for whom they wrote. In the section addressed 'To the Reader', David Rogers suggests he was writing for an extended audience and not for his own personal consumption when he expressed the hope that it will 'be delightful to *many* that desire to hear of antiquity' (emphasis added).⁹¹ A suggestion borne out by the physical construction and condition of the five versions of his 'Breviary'. While three versions were working copies, with crossing outs, corrections and only rough illustrations, two were near perfect, highly-decorated and carefully-illustrated editions clearly intended for circulation.⁹² William Aldersey's 'History of the Mayors of Chester' begins in a similar vein commenting some may think his project 'frivolous and vain' given the history of Chester's mayors was so well known. But Aldersey argues that his historical research, which corrects many errors was required reading for every citizen, 'I have set down some other collections worthy to be known of all Citizens both of the Antiquity of the City and of the priviledges and grants to the same'.⁹³ Although we

⁸⁸ The best three examples from Chester are BL. Harl. 1944; CCA. CR692/1; CCRO. DCC/2; for Coventry the best example is CRO. Acc.2/3; McLaren, 'London chronicles', 62, makes a similar point about the London chronicles and pages left blank or marked out for the next owner-author to continue filling in.

⁸⁹ For example see George Bellin's history, Harl. 2125, f.24r, entry for 1340, where a later hand comments that Bellin has the name different in one of his other histories and f.23r entry for 1327 which points out that many catalogues have Arneway's date wrong. Throughout this history someone (probably Randle Holme II) is making corrections and adding notes to Bellin's original text. Other manuscripts where someone has made additions and corrections are, Chester: BL. Harl. 1944; BL. Harl. 2125 annal 1; BL. Harl. 2057; BL. Add. 39925; BL. Harl. 2133 annal 1; BL. Add. 29779. Coventry: CRO. Acc.2/3; CRO Acc.2/4; CRO. Acc.535/1; BL. Harl. 6388.

⁹⁰ There are no interpolations, crossing outs and perfectly and consistently laid out in the same manner, see BL. Add. 39925.

⁹¹ Rogers, Breviary, CCA. CX/3 unfol. 'To the Reader', see also the version in the other four editions of the Breviary, BL. Harl. 1944; BL. Harl. 1948; Liv. Uni Ms. 23.5; CCRO. DCC/19; and the collation in *REED: Chester*, 232-3.

⁹² BL. Harl. 1948; CCRO. DCC/19; Liv. Uni. Ms.23.5 are the three working copies. BL. Harl. 1944 and CCA. CX/3 the two most decorated, in CX/3 Rogers employed an artist to paint the heraldic shields. See also Hart and Knapp, *Aunchant*, 13-33.

⁹³ William Aldersey, CCA. CR469/542 unfol. preface, he also sees his work as an encouragement to others to continue examining the origins of civic government, 'that all my labour should not be lost and to give others encouragement ... I have in the mean time set down this as a witness to my endeavours.'

might question how inclusive the term citizen was, in Chester the commonly-accepted use of the term denoted a freeman.⁹⁴ Both Aldersey and Rogers give the impression that they were writing for an audience interested in such questions as the origins of civic government and both believed the potential audience to be the 'many' in Rogers' language or 'citizens' in Aldersey's. William Cowper's act of censorship in his 'Collectanea Devana' suggests that he too believed enough people would read his work for it to be potentially embarrassing to some members of the civic elite unless certain facts were censored.⁹⁵

It therefore appears that manuscript histories circulated quite widely. First, a significant number of people were involved in their writing. While some histories were not circulated, it is evident - from the large amounts of annotations, the continuation of the lists of mayors and the expectation on the part of the original author that their history would continue - that many others were. Of those not written for personal consumption but intended to be passed around, the physical condition marks out some as working copies and others as finished, and in certain cases, highly-decorated presentational or final circulation copies. Secondly, the selection and inclusion of material implicitly conveyed to readers a sense of what was important. The contents focused on issues primarily of concern to the freemen, discussing at length the origins of legal rights, the evolution of civic freedoms, common lands and the franchise, etc.⁹⁶ These were important economic and constitutional rights, jealously guarded by the freemen and any past traditions which validated contemporary claims were crucial to the defence of the customs and rights of the freemen.⁹⁷ This impression is confirmed by the language used by William Aldersey - his target audience was the male 'citizens' or freemen.⁹⁸ Furthermore, literacy was not a bar to reading these manuscripts. Although rates of illiteracy were high in the overall population, rates among urban craftsmen were relatively low: in northern cities only 28 per cent of craftsmen were illiterate in the mid-seventeenth century and by the end of the century this had dropped to 10 per cent. Although we might question the reading ability of some freemen who were probably only 'functionally literate', others were very capable and one Coventry apprentice stayed with his master only until he had finished the printed chronicle his master owned.⁹⁹ In general the content of manuscript histories was highly relevant to the freemen and their defence of their rights, and their higher level of literacy meant they able to access such a medium.

The contemporary relevance of history and the need to understand the origins of rights and liberties was not lost on freemen or the civic elite. It has been noted by a number of historians that conflict frequently

⁹⁴ Court and civic records frequently distinguish between inhabitants and citizens, i.e. freemen.

⁹⁵ CCA. P/Cowper, vol.1, 248. They were accused by William Dugdale of bearing of arms to which they had no right, 'the list of these persons is not inserted here, as the descendants of several of them, are now resident Citizens of Chester.'

⁹⁶ Thomas, *Perception of the Past*, 3; Smith-Fussner, *The Historical Revolution*, xvi.

⁹⁷ L. Toulmin-Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary of John Leland, 1553-1543*, (1964), vol.1, 66, vol.2, 88. Leland records a conversation similar conversations at Scarborough and Bewdley, 'I asked a merchant there of the antientnesse of the towne, and he answered me that it was but a new towne, adding that they had libertys granted by K. Edward.'

⁹⁸ I intend to discuss the use of the term citizen in a separate paper I am preparing.

⁹⁹ R. A. Houston, 'The development of literacy: northern England, 1640-1750', *ECHR*, 35 (1982), 199-216, esp. Table 9; Arise Evans, *A Voice From Heaven to the Commonwealth of England: A Narration of the Life, Calling and Vision of Arise Evans* (London, 1652), 10.

encouraged interest in the past as antagonists searched for precedents and documents to support their competing claims.¹⁰⁰ The past could provide an important defence against rapacious county gentry or county authorities keen to subjugate urban magistrates, or help civic authorities to prevent other separate urban institutions, such as a cathedral, attempting to assert their independence or precedence over the town authorities. Research into the past and the creation of written records was therefore an essential form of self defence and Oxford's mayor in 1636 gloomily predicted the town's lawyers would be outdone by 'the antiquary who maketh nothing else his study ... one of the chiefest actors in causing these controversies'.¹⁰¹ Coventry's freemen benefited from the recording of their rights both in manuscript histories and from sign boards. Their sense of history was heightened at times of intense conflict over the common lands and a brass memorial tablet in St Mary's Hall outlining the gift of the common lands was frequently copied during the disputes with Sir Robert Townsend in the later-1680s. The grant of the common lands, the extent of the common lands, etc., detailed in the manuscript history of c.1690, was copied and printed during the conflicts of the 1770s when the freemen were trying to prevent their enclosure.¹⁰²

Interest in history was widespread and not confined to a select group of antiquarians or the freemen. Nehemiah Wallington informs us that his mother committed to memory the English chronicles, Aubrey of his nurse singing a ballad of the history of England and William Harrison, a Lancashire cleric, decried his flock's interest and knowledge of history.¹⁰³ As a result of this widespread interest in history, towns were able to utilise their past as a way of generating trade, not dissimilar to the earlier pilgrim trade. Tourists were frequently guided round a town by locals keen to introduce them to all of the local historic monuments, Roman remains, tombs, statues, places where famous people had stayed, etc.¹⁰⁴ One group who emerge as key interpreters and keen proponents of the 'historic environment' and in particular its physical remains, were innkeepers who played an important part in the dissemination of historical myths, collecting and displaying collections of 'relics worthy of the notice of the antiquary'.¹⁰⁵ As the first port of call for visitors, innkeepers were an important group of historical interpreters, disseminating ideas and stories about the

¹⁰⁰ Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford, 1988), 145-7; Styles, *Sir Simon Archer*, 16, 20, 22.

¹⁰¹ Toulmin-Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland*, vol.2, 87-88; Alan Crossley, 'City and University', in N. Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford, iv, The Seventeenth Century* (1997), 110; REED: *Norwich*, lviii, *Norwich's Liber Albus*, begun in 1426 records the growing conflict between the City and Cathedral.

¹⁰² BL. Harl. 7017 f.290r; *A Particular and Authentic Account of the Common Grounds of and Belonging to the City of Coventry...* (1778), this text is wrongly attributed to Humfrey Wanley, he owned it, but is not the author; Poole, *Coventry*, 348-51.

¹⁰³ Paul Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (1985), 74; Woolf, 'The "Common Voice"', 50. Harrison is a hostile witness when he comments on their inability to remember doctrine when compared to their knowledge of history, 'Impart them a piece of doctrine and they (his flock) forget it ... report to them an *human historie*, tell them some strange newes ... they will keepe it well enough, and at any time, and in any company will relate it readily'. Quoted in Fox, 'Rumour, news and popular political opinion', 601, emphasis added. See also Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 365.

¹⁰⁴ W. Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curiosum* (2nd edition, 1772), vol.1, 19, 31-3, 34, 59; Robert Davies, (ed.), *The Life of Marmaduke Rawdon of York* (Camden Society, 1st ser., 85, 1863), 167; C. Bruyn-Andrews (ed.), *The Torrington Diaries* (1935), vol.2, 111; 'Dr Johnson and Boswell at Chester', CS, 3rd ser., 18 (1923), no.4249; Thomas Pennant, *Journey from Chester to London* (1782), 144; Wickham-Legg, *A Relation of a Short Survey*, 49, 52; Ralph Thoresby, in D. M. Palliser, *Chester 1066-1971: Contemporary Descriptions by Residents and Visitors* (Chester, 1972), 16.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (1983), 234; J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles around Manchester* (1795), 384; J. H. Hanshall, *The Stranger in Chester: Giving an Accurate Sketch of its Local History with Chronological Arrangements of the Most Interesting Events Connected Therewith* (Chester, printed by J. Fletcher, 1816), 74.

town's past - one innkeeper at Coventry told his guests 'a perfect account (and did soe) of that Citty from its infancy'.¹⁰⁶ Innkeepers therefore emerge as a key group situated at the point of contact between the commercial economy and the civic past.

6.vi. Conclusions

In provincial towns there was a strong interest in the past and travellers frequently record local traditions imparted to them by interested townspeople when visiting towns. The representation of the past was very prominent in the early modern town and ideas about the past were disseminated to townspeople through a variety of mediums: the written text, oral traditions and the 'historical environment'. The past played a number of vital roles in early modern urban society. First, it provided a sense of continuity and permanence in a society which was by its very nature was fluid and impermanent. Traditions about the origins of the city, famous persons or events connected with the city enabled townspeople to develop a fictitious and shared past. Manuscript histories also served a number of very practical functions, providing a repository of knowledge about past practice and the legal basis of urban jurisdiction, the right to levy tolls and the central place of any particular town in both the narrative of world and national history. However, the key concern of urban antiquarians was the origins of civic customs, the development of civic government, legal and political rights. These issues filled the pages of manuscript histories and the selection and inclusion of material strongly communicated to readers a sense of what was important, the political and legal rights of the city and freemen. The contents spoke most directly to the freemen and antiquarians are probably best understood by the use of the Gramscian paradigm of the 'organic intellectual', expressing the political and cultural outlook of their social peers.

Manuscript histories were one part of this wide interest in the past and it is evident from the construction and these histories that they circulated among a fairly diverse group of people. The number of extant copies alludes to the circulation and copying of these histories, and it is possible to find traces of histories that are no longer extant. The way in which the original authors left sections of the manuscripts blank, for others to continue and the widespread practice of annotating and continuing histories, points to the informal circulation of these manuscripts. Many such histories have clearly passed through numerous hands as the changing hand-writing of the different compilers of the yearly annals indicates. From the way authors wrote it is evident they expected their histories to be read and William Aldersey was clear about who his intended audience was, the citizens, i.e. freemen of Chester.

The manuscript history tradition was important because of the way in which it operated to underpin the political and economic rights of freemen. There is a strong relationship between the contents of the histories and the needs of freemen and the civic elite to understand the development of the town's legal powers and political rights. At times of political conflict the past was an essential resource and guide and sources of

¹⁰⁶ Wickham-Legg, *A Relation of a Short Survey*, 67; Woolf, 'The "Common Voice"', 48, points out the role of the local innkeepers of Glastonbury in perpetuating the tradition concerning Joseph of Arimathea.

historical information were carefully checked to use in defence of these legal rights. At Coventry the brass plate commemorating the foundation of the common lands was frequently copied when the conflict between the freemen and Sir Robert Townsend was at its height, subsequently in the eighteenth century, sections of a manuscript history describing the grant of the common lands were printed as a tract at a time when the freemen and civic elite were locked in conflict over the common lands. The past could also be made to serve a commercial purpose, attracting visitors to the town. The Godiva myth fascinated visitors to Coventry, as did the search for Roman 'remains' at Chester. Innkeepers emerge as key group operating in area between the commercial economy and the civic past, propagating historical traditions as a way of entertaining and engaging visitors and generating business.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Early modern urban culture has in recent years become a subject of increasing academic interest and debate. This thesis is a contribution and response to that debate, examining the fortunes of two provincial towns Chester and Coventry over a period from c.1600 to c.1750. In the current historiographical framework second rank towns, of which Chester and Coventry are good examples, are generally thought to have experienced economic and social difficulties from the mid sixteenth century to the eve of the Restoration. It is argued that second rank towns in particular were affected by a series of problems, some external and others endogenous, but with debilitating results. The urban economy entered a phase of realignment and transition. This was brought about by the decline of traditional industries such as cloth making which migrated into the countryside where production costs were lower. The overseas trade of provincial ports was adversely affected by the mercantile hegemony of London and further undermined by a series of slumps caused by the disruption of European wars to traditional trade routes to the Iberian peninsular and the Spanish-Netherlands. The Reformation caused further dislocation as the consumer demand of monasteries was wiped out and the profits of the pilgrim trade lost as shrines and monastic houses were suppressed. From the 1570s the increased tempo of population growth led to higher levels of rural-urban migration, much of which was poverty migration. In addition to these structural changes to the economy and demographic regime of the later sixteenth century, towns were hit by a succession of temporary natural disasters: the silting of rivers and harbours, fire and plague. The totality of these problems induced what has been described by some historians as an 'urban crisis' especially in the 1530s, 1590s, 1620s and 1640s. More generally towns are characterised as suffering a prolonged period of stagnation and difficulty from the mid-sixteenth century to the close of the Commonwealth in 1659/1660. The blows to urban society were of such a magnitude that they undermined urban culture, the priorities of urban governors were dealing with the high levels of poverty in their towns and the increased threat to order social polarisation brought in its wake. Consequently investment in the urban fabric and the traditional structures of urban society, the guilds, fraternities and communal pastimes and ceremonies were undermined. Towns therefore entered a phase of cultural stagnation as the structures of late medieval urban society were swept aside and towns became culturally impoverished.

This period of stagnation and cultural collapse was terminated by the revival of urban fortunes which coincided with the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In the hundred years after the Restoration towns underwent such a thorough-going revival it has been termed the 'urban renaissance'. The national economic outlook had begun to improve from the 1650s due to a coincidence of factors. Overseas and inland trade had begun to flourish at a time when demographic growth had begun to slow. This reversed the main trend of the previous 100 years, where price inflation had outstripped wage inflation, and consequently England entered into a period of growing prosperity. As major elements in the international and national trade networks towns were particular beneficiaries of this economic growth. This new found prosperity also affected urban culture and towns increasingly became the focus of a new service based economy. Towns

developed a host of leisure and cultural services to cater for the classes of people who benefited from England's prosperity. The urban economy shifted away from satisfying basic needs to the provision of luxury consumer goods and services. Leisure facilities developed to cater for growing demand, assemblies, inns, coffee houses, pleasure gardens, and the most obvious manifestation the development of leisure towns and resorts such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells. The urban environment and landscape were re-modelled. The problems of urban life, sanitation, dirt, refuse, appalling quagmire streets and the like were increasingly brought under control as urban authorities invested heavily in improving urban amenities. Linked closely to this was a revolution in urban architecture. The introduction of classical ideals and building designs revolutionised the urban aesthetic and created a more uniform urban form.

Although this urban renaissance was provincial in its location, in that the changes profoundly re-shaped provincial urban society. It was not provincial in its origins. The catalyst for these changes came from the imitation of fashionable, aristocratic, west end London. In a society dominated by the ideals and values of landed society a highly emulative culture developed. The hallmark of gentility, was not legal distinctions as in much of Europe, but culturally defined and obtainable attributes and possessions. These desirable values and attributes were those of the aristocracy. Thus, provincial townspeople wished to cultivate the cultural attributes of the elite, and purchase their fashions, architectural styles and generally ape the lifestyle of the elite. In this sense the urban renaissance reinforces the notion of an aristocratic hegemony in which provincial townspeople are not seen as culturally autonomous or productive but instead passive consumers of a gentry led culture.

The key question is to what extent this matches the experience of the two case studies, Chester and Coventry. Two key problems for the current model of urban change has been the way in which the urban renaissance after 1660 is built on the idea of the disjuncture of the Civil War, a divide urban historians have been reluctant to address. Together with the linked notion of a period of urban stagnation and realignment before 1660, which looks increasingly dated in the light of more recent studies. To overcome this problem this thesis deliberately treats the period from the late sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth as whole in an attempt to draw out the continuities, rather than emphasising the scale of change. This brings its own drawbacks, not least the long time frame and the tendency to try and identify continuities, an approach which needs to be treated with some caution.

Chapter three examines the development of urban ceremony. Largely regarded as an attenuated relic of the medieval past, the urban ceremonial calendar of the later sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century is thought to have been in sharp decline. However, the evidence drawn from Chester, Coventry and a sample of other provincial towns questions this. First, the overall scale of destruction is exaggerated. The focus on the large scale civic-religious ceremonies of the late medieval period and their suppression, obscures the continued vitality of civic ceremony, the smaller scale everyday ceremonies of guilds, parishes and later clubs, and the development of the national-Protestant calendar from the later sixteenth century.

Second, the relatively recent foundation of many of the ceremonies removed in the sixteenth century and the limited nature of participation brings in to doubt the impact of their decline on urban social relations and how deeply rooted in urban culture they were. The case of the Corpus Christ processions and plays is a good example, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the processions were mainly ecclesiastical affairs, controlled and organised by the church, and in some cases such as Louth the plays were of very recent foundation in the 1520s or at Chester they had re-emerged in the 1520s as a play-cycle at Whitsun. The very limited nature of participation undermines the extent to which such ceremonies can be described as communal and the consequential argument that as they declined so it follows did the quality of urban social relations. The similarity between the ceremonies of the late medieval period through to the eighteenth century highlights the static nature participation, although it is important to recognise this is partly a product of the processional form itself. However, ceremonies did continue to act as an important conduit for urban sociability and reinforced horizontal 'class' affiliations among the different groups of actors well into the eighteenth century. The much vaunted transition from communal celebration to commercial opportunity proves to be similarly overstated. While undoubtedly commercial considerations did inform the decision to revive ceremonies after the Restoration, this was equally true for the earlier period. The addition of new calendar ceremonies at Chester in the first half of the seventeenth and Coventry in 1678 was underpinned by a widely held opinion that ceremony and the crowds it attracted was a benefit to urban trade, especially among a towns shop- and innkeepers. Finally and perhaps most importantly ceremony continued to be relevant to urban society because of the way it could symbolise and bring to life important political and economic rights. Ceremonies prospered because they were of commercial benefit, but also because they could simultaneously express the interests of disparate groups and re-confirm their sometimes competing, but also over-lapping interest in the defence of such rights as common lands, and the legal, economic and political rights of citizenship.

Chapter four looks at the changing nature of urban culture in relation to the leisure activities and pastimes of provincial townspeople. While very little has been written specifically about urban leisure, the perspective generally adopted follows that outlined for calendar ceremonies. The main focus on leisure has been on two elements, one the traditional holidays and their associated revelry, and second the 'disordered' culture of the alehouse. This thesis has little to say about this much traversed area because in pursuing evidence of the conflict between elite and plebeian forms of culture many aspects of the leisure activities of townspeople have been ignored. The chapter examines four main areas: sports, plays and entertainers, music, and leisure facilities. While this aspect of the thesis is by no means complete it does indicate some potentially fruitful areas for further work. The most important point is to emphasise the diversity and vitality of urban leisure in the first half of the seventeenth century and second, the genesis of some of the key elements of eighteenth century urban leisure can be found in pre-Civil War provincial towns. Provincial towns from the later sixteenth century were home to relatively developed urban leisure facilities, the Gloucester New Inn with its bowling alley and tennis court, or the Earl of Derby's cockpit and bowling alley at Chester. Innkeepers emerge as a group already alert to the commercial possibilities of developing leisure

facilities in tandem with their existing core business. Both the Chester and Coventry corporations also pre-figured some of the developments usually associated with the eighteenth century with their pro-active involvement in the creation of leisure facilities, the park at Coventry, the Roodee and walls at Chester. Beyond these early examples of the commercial opportunities of creating leisure facilities and of corporation involvement, there was clearly a wider matrix of urban culture and pastimes. At the heart of this matrix was music. Public performances, by the civic waits were sponsored in most towns, although Norwich developed the earliest public concerts. Guilds were major patrons of urban musicians and individuals were involved in music-making as a leisure activity. It is from these foundations and this interest in music that the concert life of the eighteenth century town later emerges. The picture in terms of sports and plays is more complex. Certain sports were censored, because of their association with disorder, bull-baiting, football, while others were encouraged horse-races and shooting. David Rogers suggests the latter were encouraged because they fitted closely into the image of a free citizenry able to bear arms and engage in military activities, not simply because they were opportunities to draw in gentry customers. The scale of the provincial theatre increased significantly in the eighteenth century although players and entertainers were still met with suspicion because of their supposedly corrupting influence. Even here there were elements of continuity on which the post-Restoration growth was built, the times of the year plays were performed, the types of itinerant shows visiting towns and the staple content of the player repertoire changed little in one hundred and fifty years.

Chapter five concentrates on the urban landscape and the attempts by urban authorities to improve the urban environment. The period after the Restoration is thought to have ushered in a renewed and more successful drive to improve the urban fabric and environment of the city. Large-scale schemes to pave, light and cleanse the streets were introduced which linked to the changes in architectural style and building materials revolutionised the urban built environment. However, there are very few studies of the impact of the introduction of classical architecture on to an existing urban landscape. Most studies have concentrated on towns that underwent extensive re-building after a fire, or where new developments did not affect an existing town plan. The introduction of classical styles to Chester's four main streets was in fact carefully controlled and limited by the civic elite. Rather than allowing piecemeal development to destroy the unique, vernacular architecture of the Rows the civic elite limited the areas where re-fronting was permitted and in this way protected the Rows from re-development. Where re-fronting and re-building was permitted, the introduction of classical architecture had a paradoxical effect. It is generally acknowledged that classical re-fronting helped to create wider, more open streets through the removal of jettying. But at Chester, the process had the opposite effect and in fact reduced the street width. The process of re-fronting was not accompanied by any attempt to widen the streets and as householders petitioned to re-front their houses, they were given the right to encroach further into the street so their houses would range evenly with their neighbours. At Coventry classical architecture made almost no impact at all, apart from a few houses and the drapers hall. The lack of records of Coventry's landscape leave us with little clue to why the city was relatively untouched by such developments. But the presence of a wealthy manufacturing elite does question the causal link between economic growth, wealth and the construction of classical style houses. In general a

very positive view of attempts to improve the urban landscape and amenities has been taken towards eighteenth century improvement. At Chester the whole period is characterised by concerted civic attempts to improve the urban environment, the supply of water, street cleaning, and were backed by a very capable and efficient administration. However attempts to improve street cleaning and refuse removal founded in the later seventeenth century were not particularly successful and the city was forced to return to a system of personal responsibility alongside collective provision. The lighting scheme, backed by Parliamentary legislation, certainly improved the lighting in the main streets, but the corporations records show it had an almost negligible impact on side streets and alleys. In contrast Coventry went backwards in the eighteenth century as administrative chaos after the sequestration of the corporations assets in 1712 and then stasis overcame the main administrative structures in the middle of the century.

The wider question of the timing and impact of the urban renaissance needs to be addressed. At both Chester and Coventry there are many developments characteristic of the urban renaissance but which pre-date the Restoration. Civic efforts to improve the urban environment are one example, a second is the development of leisure facilities such as the Park, Roodee, walls and cockpit and bowling alley. In a number of ways the urban renaissance was not so much a break with the past as a continuation of developments already in train by the later sixteenth century. The origins of many facets of the urban renaissance was not therefore London, but can be found in the existing culture of townspeople, for instance the musical culture of pre-Civil War towns. The more difficult question is to gauge to what extent provincial townspeople were emulative and passive, or whether an alternative model of identity existed. Certainly the emphasis on the dramatic change of fortunes between the two periods is over-emphasised and profoundly affects the way we understand provincial townspeople. The scale of the urban 'crisis' has undoubtedly been over-stated, as chapter two shows, and although the national economy was booming in the eighteenth century, this did not end the conditions of flux many middling townspeople faced. There is therefore much continuity in the economic and social conditions townspeople faced between *c.*1600 and *c.*1750. Middling townspeople did have an alternative model of cultural identity, one that stressed collective forms of response and the studies of political identity in the eighteenth century show middling people were profoundly concerned to maintain their political and economic independence.

Appendix 1. Chester's Overseas and Coastal Trade, c.1600-c.1770.

Table 1. Ships Leaving Chester in the Overseas Trade, 1565-1790/91.[†]

Year [‡]	Total no. ships leaving Chester	Total tonnage	No. of ships: Overseas	Tonnage: Overseas	Number of ships: Ireland	Tonnage: Ireland	% of total tonnage shipped to Ireland
1565-6	37	976*	17	646*	20	330*	34%
1576-7	75	-	10	-	65	-	-
1582-3	60	1770*	15	735*	45	1035*	58%
1584-5	71	-	15	-	56	-	-
1585	94	-	14	-	80	-	-
1587	73	-	12	-	61	-	-
1588	48	-	4	-	44	-	-
1589	58	-	6	-	52	-	-
1592-3	92	2177*	11	638*	81	1539*	71%
1602-3	139	4156.5*	6	366*	133	3790.5*	91%
1710	151	7736	3	235	148	7501 tons	97%
1711	143	7539	15	1230	128	6309 tons	84%
1712	176	8411	17	1281	159	7130 tons	85%
1713	157	6990	18	1358	139	5632 tons	81%
1714	183	9366	33	2550	150	6816	73%
1715	154	7922	23	1795	131	6127	77%
1716	198	9411	34	2259	164	7152	76%
1717	163	7572	29	2194	134	5378	71%
1775	144	-	-	-	126	-	-
1789-90	158	13,367	9	1097	149	12,270	92%
1790-91	146	11,639	15	1933	131	9,706	83%

Data.

1576 to 1603: Taken from D.M. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, App.1, Bii, 131.

1710 to 1790/91: Taken from R. Craig, 'Some aspects', table 3, 109 and table 5, 112.

Key.

The hashed line represents the change of source from Woodward to Craig.

[†] In this case shipments to the Isle of Man, included by both Woodward and Craig, have been excluded from this table. The Isle of Man was legally an overseas port, but in my discussion of Chester's trade it is treated as part of the coastal trade.

[‡] It should be noted that the years in the table are not uniform as neither Woodward or Craig indicate if the year is based on the calendar or some arbitrary year used by the port book collectors, or the calendar year.

* The figures with a * against them are estimates, calculated by taking the average size of vessel used in the trade and multiplying it by the number of voyages, see Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 131.

Table 2. The numbers of coastal shipments in and out of Chester, 1576 - 1749.

Year	Total no. of coastal shipments to & from Chester	No. of shipments coastwise to Chester	Estimate of total tonnage coastwise to Chester	No. of shipments coastwise from Chester	Estimate of total tonnage coastwise to Chester
1576-77	10	4	45.6	6	68.4
1582-83	18	-	-	18	205.2
1584-85	11	1	11.4	10	114
1586-87	14	7	79.8	7	79.8
1592-93	54	25	285	29	330.6
1595 (6 months)	29	6	68.4	23	262.2
1598 (6 months)	18	9	102.6	9	102.6
1602-3	88	22	250.8	66	752.4
1622-23	88	31	353.4	57	649.8
1688-89	198	85	969 or 5329.5	113	1288.2 or 7085.1
1748-49	228	110	6897	118	7398.6

Sources:

1576-77 to 1602-3: From D.M. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester* (Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History, no.4, 1970), Table 15, 66.

1622-23 to 1748-49: From T.S. Willan, *The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750* (Manchester, 1938), 181-2.

Taking Willan's figures for the average size of ships trading on the west coast, the numbers of ships in and out of Chester are multiplied by this to arrive at the estimated tonnage.

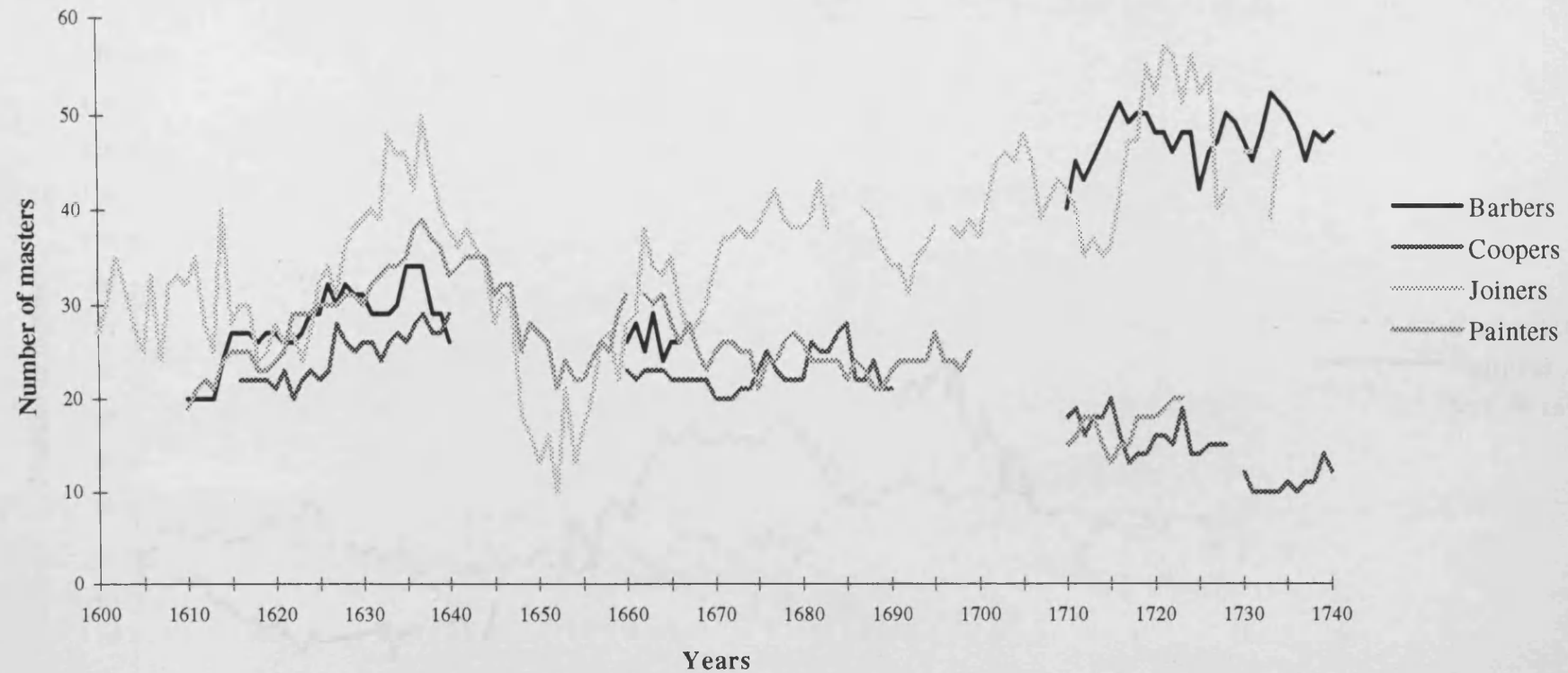
1623: 11.4 (average size of a coaster)

1749: 62.7 tons (average size of a cheese shipment)

(See Willan, *Coasting Trade*, 13).

NB. The dates: Willan's figures are for the year Christmas to Christmas; Woodward does not specify and I assume he is using the calendar year, January to January.

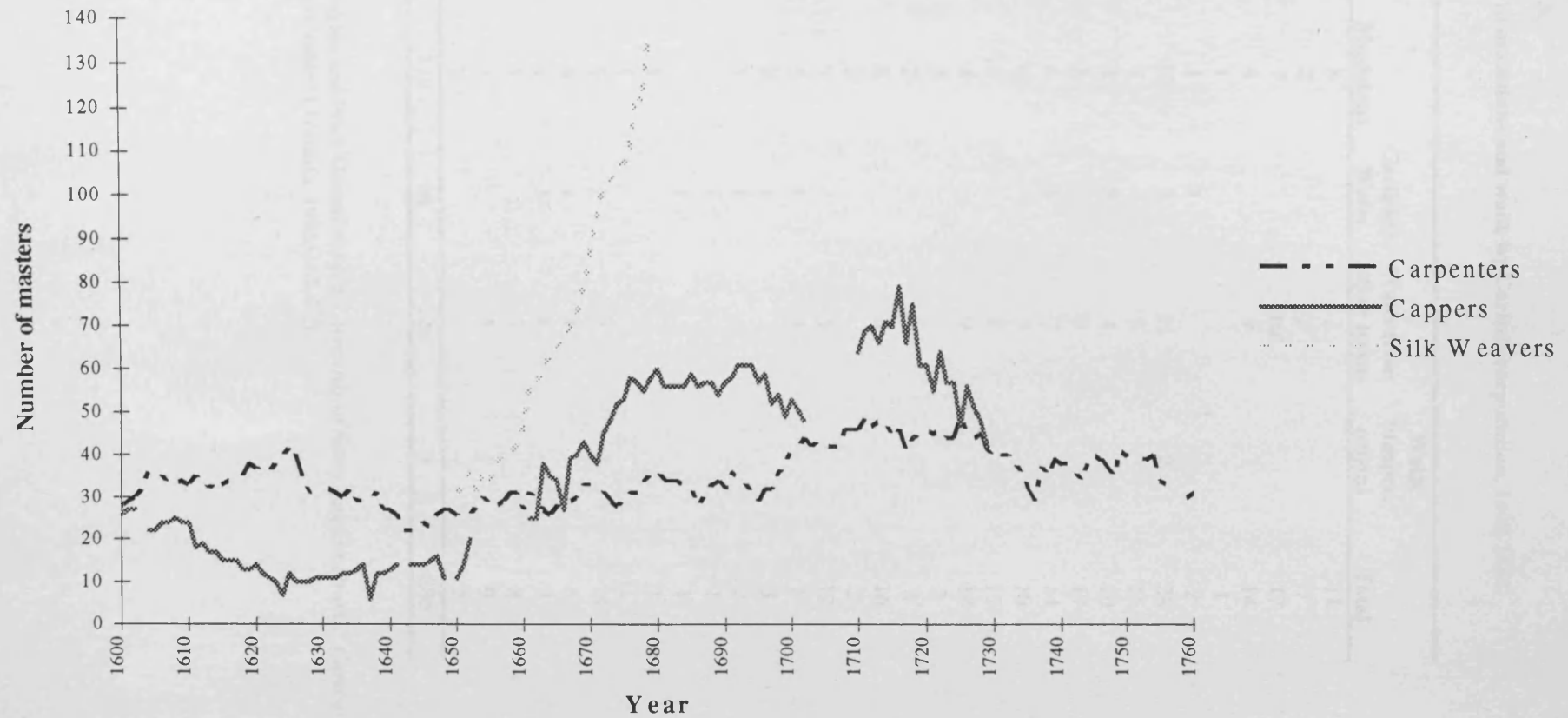
Figure 1. Chester: Guild membership, 1600-1750



Sources.

- CCA. G2/1, 'Barber-Surgeons' Company Book, 1606 - 98'.
- CCA. G2/2, 'Barber-Surgeons' Company Book, 1692 - 1791'.
- CCA. G7/29, 'Coopers', Fletchers', Bowyers' and Stringers' Company Account Book, 1616 - 1650'.
- CCA. G7/30, 'Coopers', Fletchers', Bowyers' and Stringers' Company Account Book, 1651 - 1697'.
- CCA. G7/31, 'Coopers', Fletchers', Bowyers' and Stringers' Company Account Book, 1697 - 1777'.
- CCA. G14/1, 'Joiners', Carvers' and Turners' Company Book, 1576 - 1756'.
- CCA. G17/1, 'Painters', Glaziers', Embroiderers' and Stationers' Company Account Book, 1567 - 1691'.
- CCA. G17/2, 'Painters', Glaziers', Embroiderers' and Stationers' Company Account Book, 1620 - 1866'.

Figure 2. Coventry: Guild Membership, 1600-1760



Sources.

CRO. Acc.117/1, 'Worsted and Silkweavers' Company Order Book, 1650 - 1679'.

CRO. Acc.3/1, 'Carpenters' Company Account Book, 1478 - 1664'.

CRO. Acc.3/2, 'Carpenters' Company Account Book, 1665 - 1840'.

CRO. Acc.1494/20/1, 'The Cappers' and Feltmakers' Company Account Books, 1495 - 1925'.

Appendix 3.

Payments to musicians and waits by Carlisle corporation, 1602-1642.

Year	Musicians	Carlisle's Waits	Waits from other towns	Waits (unspec. origin)	Total
1602-3	8		3		11
1604-5	2		5		7
1608-9	7		10		17
1610-11	4		9	1	14
1611-12	1				1
1612-13	1	1			2
1613-14	12	3	11	2	28
1614-15	7		9		16
1616-17	4	2	4		10
1617-18	8		9		17
1618-19	6	1	7		14
1619-20	12		7		19
1620-21	9		8		17
1621-22	4		9		13
1622-23	2				2
1623-24	2				2
1624-25	8		8		16
1625-26	2				2
1626-27	7		5		12
1627-28	3	1	4		8
1628-29	2	1			3
1629-30	1	1			2
1630-31		1			1
1631-32		1			1
1632-33	1				1
1633-34	1				1
1634-35	5	2	7	1	15
1635-36	4	1	1		6
1636-37	4	1	4		9
1638-39	5		3		8
1639-40	5		3	1	9
1642-43	2				2
Totals	139	16	126	5	286

Source:

Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmorland and Gloucestershire* (Toronto, 1986), 63-125.

Appendix 4.

Chester: Manuscript History's With a Mayors/Sheriffs List.

Mss. Ref.	Brief Description	Number of Hands	Date Started/ written
BL. Harl. 1944	David Rogers, 'A Breviary or some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'.	3 hands: 1. David Rogers, 1328 - 1638. [There is also a hand adding the odd additional note in this section]. 2. Second unknown hand 1638-41. A CHRONOLOGICAL GAP, 1641-50. 3. Third unknown hand, 1651-1652.	Begun 1609. Finished in c.1637.
CCA. CX/3	David Rogers, 'A Breviary or some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'.	1 hand? David Rogers Possibly 2 see last entries in annal 1615-18?	Begun 1609. Finished c.1619.
CCRO. DCC.19	David Rogers, 'A Breviary or some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'.	2(?) hands: David Rogers Randle Holmes. (1 other?).	Written between 1619 and 1642.
Liv. Uni. Ms. 23.5	Rogers, 'A Breviary or some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'.	2 hands: David Rogers. (1 other?)	c.1637
CCA. CR60/83.	George Bellin, 'List of Chester Mayors and Historical Events, 1300-1620'.	1 hand: George Bellin.	Begun 13 August 1613 and finished c.1620.
BL. Harl. 2125 Annal 1	G. Bellin, 'Briefe notes of the Antiquity of the famous City of Chester'.	3 hands: George Bellin. Additions by Randle Holme. Continued by a third hand.	1622
BL. Add. 29779	G. Bellin, 'Briefe notes of the Antiquity of the famous City of Chester'.	3 hands: George Bellin. Continued by unknown hand. Additions made by Peter Goose.	"this note taken 1621" (f.10r.).
CCA. CR469/542	William Aldersey, 'A Collection of the Mayors who have governed this City'.	3 or more hands: William Aldersey. Various hands, unknown. 1 unknown unhand continues the annal.	1594 for the first Aldersey section.
BL. Harl. 2057	'A collection of maiors who have governed the City of Chester...Collected by Mr Aldersey'.	2 hands: George Bellin. Randle Holme.	c.1601 for beginning of mss. and finished post 1658.
BL. Add. 39925	'A collection of maiors who have governed the City of Chester.'	3 hands: First hand - Unknown. A 2nd hand is making additions throughout the early part of the Mss. Third unknown hand continues from 1624.	c.1623.
BL. Harl. 2125 Annal 2	'The Antiquity of the Anciant and famous Cittie of Chester'.	4/5 hands: Randle Holme. 1 hand/possibly 2, very difficult to tell. From 1658 a new, unknown hand continues. From 1705 a new, unknown hand takes over.	Mid-C17th (1651 - from continuation point).
BL. Harl. 2125 Annal 3	'Such maiors as ... have governed the City of Chester.'	1 unknown hand only. REED: Chester suggest Randle Holme, but this is an incorrect attribution.	Early C17th (1610s).

Mss. Ref.	Brief Description	Number of Hands	Date Started/ Written
BL. Harl. 1046	'Maiors and sheriffs of Chester'.	1 hand only.	Late C16th (c./post 1586).
BL. Harl. 2105	A simple list of mayors and sheriff (no title).	2+ hands: 2/3 unknown hands which are difficult to distinguish.	Late C16th (c/post 1566).
BL. Harl. 2133 Annal 1	'Hereafter followeth the names of such Maiors as ... have governed this Cittie ..'.	3 unknown hands.	1615. See f.47v where the time expired column is reversed at the year 1615.
BL. Harl. 2133 Annal 2	A simple mayors list, untitled.	1 hand: Randle Holme.	Early C17th.
BL. Add. 29777	'Mayors & Sheriffs Of Chester'.	1 Unknown hand	Post 1584, but probably later because torn.
CCA. CR692/1	Edward Fletcher, 'Chester Chronicle'.	1 hand: Edward Fletcher.	Begun in 1640 and finished c.1651.
CCA. CR630/1	'The Antiquities of the most antient and famous Cittie of Chester'.	1 hand only, unknown.	Written post 1771.
CCA. CR687/1	'From Mr Daniel King's Vale Royall'.	2 unknown hands.	First written c./post 1709 and then continued until 1749/50.
CCA. P/Cowper	William Cowper, 'Collectanea Devana' (2 vols).	1 hand: William Cowper	c.1750
CCRO. DCC/1	'Brief Notes of the Antiquity of the Famous City of Chester...'	1 unknown hand.	Early C18th.
CCRO. DCC/3 & DCC/2	'Chester Collections'	1 hand: William Cowper?	Mid-C18th, post 1748.
CCRO. DCC/11	'A collection of the Maiors who haue governed this Cittie of Chester'.	2 unknown hands.	1615 according to the time expired column and then continued to 1651 by the same hand.
CCA. CR60/84	'Manuscript List of Mayors and Sheriffs, 1242-1697'.	1 unknown hand only.	Written c./post 1697.
Harl. 1989	'A Collection Of The Mayors Who Have Governed This City'.	1 unknown hand.	1625 according to the time expired column.
BL. Stowe 811	'Antiquitie of Chester'.	1 unknown hand.	Mid-C18th.
CCRO. DLT/B 37	Tabley Liber N	1 unknown hand.	Mid-C17th.
Toronto College Ms	??	2 hands? William Ince and 1 unknown hand.	c.1618?
JRL. MS.202	Hassall Commonplace Book	1 unknown hand	c.1602.
CCA. AB/1	Assembly Book 1 Mayors List	Numerous hands. 1 hand from 1326 to 1567-8. Continued by various civic scribes.	
CCA. CR60/8/11b	'Chester Antiquitie'.	2 unknown hands.	Mid-C18th.

Coventry: Manuscripts History's With a Mayors/Sheriffs Lists.

Mss. Ref.	Brief Description	Number of Hands	Date Started/ Written
BL. Add. 11364	'A Brief History of ye City of Coventry, from ye most early acct's of it'.	2 unknown hands.	1701?
BL. Harl. 6388	H. Wanley(?), 'Collections Relating To Coventry'.	2 unknown hands.	c.1689/90?
CRO. Acc.2/3	'A compilation of matters including a history of Coventry'.	6+ hands:	Later C17th.
CRO. Acc. 2/4	'Manuscript concerning the history of Coventry'.	2 unknown hands.	?
CRO. Acc.2/5	'Annalls of the City of Coventry'.	1 unknown hand.	Early C18th.
CRO. Acc. 351/1	'Roll of the Kings of England and Mayors of Coventry'.	1 unknown hand.	?
CRO. Acc. 535/1	'The History of Coventry'.	3 unknown hands.	c.1713.
BRL. 115915	'A list of Coventry citizens entitled to wear swords'.	?	Mid-C17th.
BRL. 273978	'Coventry Mayors'.	1 unknown hand.	Early C18th.
BL. Harl. 6402	'Collections out of Sir William Dugdales Antiquities of Warwickshire'.	1 hand: Humfrey Wanley?	c.1690.
Bodl. Ms. Top Warwickshire d.4	'A list of ye Mayors & Sheriffs &c of Coventry... to ye year 1686'.	3 unknown hands.	c.1629/30.
	Thomas Hearne (ed.), <i>Johannis de Fordun Scotchicron Genuinum...</i> (5 vols., Oxford, 1722).	Contains a mss. history owned by Thomas Jesson and contains matter not found in any of the extant mss. histories. I presume it is now lost/destroyed.	
		Two additional Coventry Manuscript histories have recently been found at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. They were found too late to be included in this study.	

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13 January 1746; 26 May 1746; 14 July 1766; 22 June 1767; 4 May 1772; 26 October 1772.

Bodleian Library (Bodl)

Top. Gloucs.c.3 Abel Wantner, 'Manuscript history of Gloucester'.

Top. Warks d.4 'A list of ye Mayors and Sheriffs etc of Coventry... 1344, to ye year 1686'.

British Library (BL)

Additional Mss

- | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11335 | Anon., 'The Antiquitie of the most Antient and Famous Cittie of Chester'. |
| 11364 | Anon., 'Annals of Coventry 1278-1703'. |
| 27379 | 'Papers Relating to Coventry'. |
| 29777 | Anon., 'List of the Mayors and Sheriffs of Chester'. |
| 29779 | George Bellin, 'Briefe Notes on the Antiquity of the famous Cittie of Chester'. |
| 29780 | Anon., 'The Breviaryes of the most antient and famous City of Chester'. |
| 39925 | Anon., 'A collection of the mayors who have governed the Cittie of Chester'. |

Harleian Mss

- | | |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1046 | William Smith, 'County Palatines of Chester'. |
| 1944 | David Rogers, 'Breviary of Chester History'. |
| 1948 | David Rogers, 'A Brevarie or some Collectiones of the anchant & famous Cittie of Chester'. |
| 1989 | Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who haue gouerned this Citie of Chester'. |
| 2014 | 'Randle Holme Collections'. |
| 2057 | George Bellin, 'A collection of the maiors who haue governed this Cittie of Chester'. |
| 2105 | 'Randle Holme III Chester Collections'. |
| 2125 | George Bellin, 'Briefe Notes on the Antiquity of the famous Cittie of Chester'. |

2133	Randle Holme(?), 'The Antiquity of the Anciant and Famous Cittye of Chester'.
6388	Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who have governed the Cittie of Chester'.
6850	Humfrey Wanley(?), 'Collections relating to Coventry'.
7017	'Miscellaneous Papers on State Affairs, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries'.
	Humfrey Wanley, Book of Contemporary Events, including 'Some account of the city of Coventry'.

Portland

XXXIV	Letter from Humfrey Wanley to Lord Harley.
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Stowe

811	'Antiquitie of the ancient and famous Cittie of Chester'.
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Chester City Archive (CCA)

Corporation Records

AB/1	Assembly Minute Book, 1532-1603.
AB/2	Assembly Minute Book, 1603-1685.
AB/3	Assembly Minute Book, 1685-1725.
AB/4	Assembly Minute Book, 1725-1755.

AF/10/53	Assembly Files
AF/40f/35	Assembly Files
AF/49d/4-6	Assembly Files
AF/49e/49	Assembly Files

ML/1/118	Mayors Letters (1596).
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CHD/1/13	Corporation Deeds.
CHD/2/42	Corporation Deeds.
CHD/2/55	Corporation Deeds.

TCC/WP/65	'Miscellaneous papers relating to corporation business'.
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Court Records

MR/30 m.3r	Portmote Court Roll.
QSE/7/2	Quarter Sessions Examination,
QSE/9/8	Quarter Sessions Examination, October 1609.

QSE/9/69	Quarter Sessions Examination, 30 June 1610.
QSE/11/29	Quarter Sessions Examination, 30 January 1611.
QSE/11/71	Quarter Sessions Examination, 22 September 1612.
QSE/13/25	Quarter Sessions Examination, 29 June 1613.
QSE/15/106	Quarter Sessions Examinations, 1765.
QSF/49-99	Quarter Sessions File, 1600-01 to 1748-49.

Guild Records

G2/1	The Barber-Surgeons' Company Book, 1606-1698.
G2/2	The Barber Surgeons' Company Book, 1692-1791.
G4/1	The Bricklayers' Company Book, 1683-1895.
G7/29	The Coopers', Fletchers', Bowyers' and Stringers' Company Account Book, 1616-1650.
G7/30	The Coopers', Fletchers', Bowyers' and Stringers' Company Account Book, 1651-1697.
G7/31	The Coopers', Fletchers', Bowyers' and Stringers' Company Account Book, 1697-1777.
G8/10	Cordwainers and Shoemakers Company Waste Book, 1679-1722.
G12/1	The Goldsmiths' Company Minute Book, 1573-1725.
G14/1	The Joiners', Carvers' and Turners' Company Book, 1576-1756.
G17/1	The Painters', Glaziers', Embroiderers' and Stationers' Company Account Book, 1567-1691.
G17/2	Painters', Glaziers', Embroiderers' and Stationers' Company Account Book, 1620-1866.
CR63/2/131	The Painters, Glaziers, Embroiderers and Stationers' Waste Minute Book, 1624-1651.

Private Accessions/Family Collections

CR60/8/11b	'Chester Antiquities ... extracted from the M. S. of Archdeacon Robert Rogers'.
CR60/83	George Bellin, 'Manuscript list of Chester mayors and historical events, 1300-1620'.
CR60/8/11b	'Chester Antiquities...extracted from the M.S. of Archdeacon Robert Rogers'.
CR60/84	'Manuscript List of Mayors and Sheriffs, 1242-1697'.
CR/63/2/133	Sketch plan of Eastgate Street by Peter Broster, c.1754.
CR469/542	William Aldersey, 'A collection of the maiors who haue gouerned this Cittie of Chester'.
CR607/1	'The Antiquity of the Antient City of Chester gathered out of learned and experienced authors'.

CR630/1	Anon., 'Manuscript history of Chester'.
CR632/1	Broster(?), 'Miscellany of Printed and Manuscript Items'.
CR687/1	'Manuscript History of Chester From mr Daniell King's Vale Royall of England and others'.
CR692/1	Edward Fletcher, 'Chester chronicle'.
CX/3	David Rogers, 'A Brevary of some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester'.
P/Cowper	'Collectanea Devana', 3 vols.

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DCC/2 and	William Cowper(?), 'Chester collections'.
DCC/3	cont. pagination.
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DCC/6,	cont. pagination.
DCC/5	William Cowper, 'Some Collections concerning the City of Chester'.
DCC/11	Anon., 'A collection of the Maiors who haue governed this Cittie of Chester'.
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BA/A/A/26/3	Chamberlains' and Wardens' Account Book III, 1636-1710.
BA/A/E/F/37/2	Leet Book, II, 1587/8-1834.
BA/F/A/23/1	Humphrey Burton's Book.

BA/H/C/17/1	Council Minute Book, 1557-1635.
BA/H/C/17/2	Council Minute Book, 1635-1696.
BA/H/C/17/3	Council Minute Book, 1696-1725.
BA/F/C/30/1	Council Minute Book, 1698-1725.
BA/H/C/17/4	Council Minute Book, 1702-1722.
BA/H/C/17/5	Council Minute Book, 1722-1738.
BA/H/C/17/6	Council Minute Book, 1728-1758.

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BA/H/C/20/4	Treasurers Books of Payments and Receipts, 1690-1733.
BA/H/K/2/1	Book of Matters Touching Ship Money, 1635-1677.

Guild Records

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Acc.3/2	The Carpenters' Company Account Book, 1665-1840.
Acc.8/7	The Bakers' Company Account Book, 1660-1803.
Acc.15/2	The Mercers Company Minute Book, 1602-1760.
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