

London and the Crown in the Reign of Henry VII

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Declaration

I, Samantha Patricia Harper, hereby declare that this thesis is purely my own work and is the written record of work carried out for the degree of Ph.D. at the Institute of Historical Research and has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date:

Signed:

Abstract

The reign of Henry VII suffers from academic neglect, partly as a consequence of its existence on the threshold of the traditional divide between the medieval and the early modern periods. These are frequently regarded as distinct areas of study, each with its own historiographical traditions shaped by the differing nature of the sources for each. Consequently a significant gap exists in the historiography of the development of both the City of London as a capital city and the English monarchy, and in particular the relationship between them. This thesis seeks to address this lacuna.

Using the records of the Crown, the City government and its institutions, this study focuses on the political interaction between the Crown and the City. The first two chapters explore the themes of expectation and political affiliation at the start of the reign and assess the changes and continuities from the Yorkist period. It is argued that Henry's unfamiliarity with the capital and vice versa led to mutual mistrust which resulted in a confrontation which shaped Henry's perception of the capital for the rest of the reign. Chapters Three to Five are thematic examinations of key aspects of the City-Crown relationship. Chapter Three explores the financial connections and argues that the relationship fundamentally changed when Henry became solvent and the City lost its leverage with the monarch, as medieval kings had traditionally relied upon finance from the capital. Chapter Four discusses the triangular relationship between the City, Crown and the livery companies. It is demonstrated that Henry favoured some livery companies and suggested that in so doing he sought to dilute the power of the mercantile elite. The mediums and means of communication between the Crown and the City are the subject of Chapter Five, with particular emphasis on key individuals within both the court and the City who facilitated communication between the two. The deaths of these individuals within a few years of each other arguably changed the character of City-Crown negotiations at the turn of the century and helped Edmund Dudley, a man with insider knowledge of the government of London, rise in the king's service. The final chapter is an examination of the last years of the reign, with particular reference to the key question of the extent of Henry VII's alleged 'tyranny'. This thesis reappraises the traditional view that London was particularly targeted in the fiscal

exactions perpetrated by the king's ministers, Empson and Dudley, and challenges the assumption that the subsequent persecutions were purely financially motivated.

This thesis argues that this was a reign which saw the reassertion of royal prerogatives and evolution of extant administrative machinery, but little, if any, innovation, at least in the sphere of Crown-City relations. The relationship was pliable and reciprocal, built upon the foundations of mutual need and flexible enough to adjust to the changing demands of Henry and his ministers as they sought to extend the royal prerogative. Claims that London was volatile, particularly at the end of the reign, and likely to rise against the king cannot be sustained.

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Abbreviations

<i>Acts</i>	<i>Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company, 1453-1527</i> , Laetitia Lyell and Frank Watney eds. (Cambridge, 1936)
Add. Ms.	Additional Manuscript
Beaven	Alfred Beaven, <i>The Aldermen of the City of London, Henry III-1912</i> , 2 vols. (London, 1913).
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BL	British Library
<i>CChR</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i>
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII</i> , 2 vols. (London, 1954, 1963).
<i>CFR</i>	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1399-1509</i> , 11 vols. (London, 1931-1962).
<i>CIPM</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII</i> , 3 vols. (London, 1898-1995).
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1476-1509</i> , 3 vols. (London, 1901-16).
EETS	Early English Text Society
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>GC</i>	<i>The Great Chronicle of London</i> , A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley ed. (London, 1938).
HMS	Harlaxton Medieval Studies
Jo.	Journal of the Court of Common Council of London, vols. 9-11 (LMA, COL/CC/01/01/009, 010 and 011).
<i>Kings Works</i>	<i>The History of the King's Works</i> , H. Colvin ed., 6 vols. (London, 1963-82)
<i>LBL</i>	<i>Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London</i> , vol. L, R. R. Sharpe ed. (London, 1912).
LBM	LMA, COL/AD/01/012, known as Letter Book M.
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
<i>LP Hen. VII</i>	<i>Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry II</i> , J. Gairdner ed., 2 vols. (London, 1861-3).

<i>LP Hen. VIII</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547</i> , J. Brewer et al. ed., 21 vols. (London, 1862-1932).
LRS	London Record Society
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , online edition, [http://www.oed.com , accessed 26 May, 2015].
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , online edition, (2004), [http://www.oxforddnb.com , accessed 26 May, 2015].
<i>PROME</i>	<i>The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504</i> , vols. 14 & 15, ed. Rosemary Horrox (London, 2005).
Rep.	Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, vols. 1 & 2 (LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001 and 002).
TNA	The National Archives
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
WAM	Westminster Abbey Muniments
Vergil	Polydore Vergil, <i>The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil A.D. 1485-1537</i> , ed. and translated D. Hay, Camden Society, 3 rd ser., lxxiii (London, 1950).
Vit. XVI	BL, Vitellius A XVI, published in <i>Chronicles of London</i> , ed. Charles Kingsford (Oxford, 1905), 151-263.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Two days after Richard III had been killed on the battlefield at Bosworth by the army of Henry Tudor, the Common Council of London met in the Guildhall to decide their response.¹ The meeting was uncommonly well attended and it was agreed that eight men would ride to the new king to offer the fidelity and support of the City.² Two months later Henry entered his capital, escorted from its outskirts, according to tradition, by the mayor, aldermen and liveried citizens.³ This was probably only his second visit to the capital, his first having taken place during the brief readeption of 1470-1 when he was a teenager.⁴ His knowledge of London was therefore predominantly second-hand, derived from conversations with fellow exiles familiar with the City. No English king since the conquest had been so unfamiliar with his capital.

The subsequent development of the relationship between Henry VII and his capital is the subject of this thesis. The political relationship between the entities of the Crown and the City will be the primary focus of this study and through the exploration of Henry's relationship with London, conclusions will be drawn about the king's approach to governing his kingdom, the management of power-bases and his conception of the royal prerogative.

This thesis aims to fill a significant gap in the historiography of both London's development and the history of the English Crown. Urban and political historians alike have largely neglected the subject of the relationship between Henry and his capital. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, the perpetuation of Francis Bacon's seventeenth-century portrait of Henry VII as an administrator king has led to the perception that this monarch was, as William Stubbs was to put it some three centuries

¹ Jo.9, f.84r.

² Jo.9, f.84r.

³ Jo.9, f.85v-86.

⁴ Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucester, 1985), 69-73.

later, emphatically dull.⁵ Such sentiments do not inspire further study. Secondly, the reign suffers from what Steven Gunn has termed ‘liminality’, in that it stands on the threshold of the traditional divide between the medieval age and the early modern one.⁶ The medieval era and the Tudor age tend to be seen by most historians as two separate areas of study, each with their own historiographical traditions shaped by the skill set each has developed in response to the differing sources historians are accustomed to using. Hence, the first Tudor king is frequently treated as ‘the coda to surveys of later medieval England or the prologue to studies of the Tudors’.⁷

Gunn’s argument dovetails with that of Christine Carpenter, who states that the ‘sources for Henry VII’s reign are essentially “medieval”, in that they are of the same kind as those for the previous two centuries’.⁸ Carpenter therefore attributes the lack of attention paid to the reign to laziness on the part of the Tudor historian, who prefers to devote his or her energy to ‘other better recorded reigns’ and the tendency of the medievalist to shy away from intruding ‘into an acknowledged post-medieval reign’.⁹ A consensus exists that the sources for this reign present a challenge. Geoffrey Elton complained that this was an ‘ill-documented period of history’, one of his few statements about the reign his nemesis in print, J.P. Cooper, agreed with.¹⁰ Sean Cunningham, in his biography of Henry VII, concurs that this is not an easy subject to study, for though the sources are, in the main, the same as for any other fifteenth-century king they are ‘scattered, more difficult to access, and harder to interpret... much of the material that does exist for his immediate predecessors has not survived.’¹¹ The problem of ‘liminality’ is also reflected in the secondary literature charting the development of the City of London: the invaluable surveys of medieval London

⁵ Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, ed. Brian Thompson (London, 2007); William Stubbs, *Lectures in Medieval History* (Oxford, 1886), 334-353.

⁶ Steven Gunn, ‘Henry VII in Context: Problems and Possibilities’, *History*, lxxxii, (2007), 301.

⁷ Gunn, ‘Henry VII in Context’, 301.

⁸ Christine Carpenter, ‘Henry VII and the English Polity’, in B. Thompson ed. *The Reign of Henry VII*, HMS, v (Stamford, 1995), 12.

⁹ Carpenter, ‘English Polity’, 13.

¹⁰ G.R. Elton, ‘Henry VII: A Restatement’, *Historical Journal*, iv (1961), 1-29; J.P. Cooper, ‘Henry VII’s Last Years Reconsidered’, *Historical Journal*, ii (1959), 103-29.

¹¹ Sean Cunningham, *Henry VII* (London, 2007), 3.

undertaken by Caroline Barron and Sylvia Thrupp terminate in 1485 or 1500 and few articles have addressed the subject.¹²

Yet this period has been identified as one of transition and evolution for both the Crown and City. David Grummit observed that ‘there is a sense that the political culture of early Tudor England was fundamentally different to that of its Yorkist and Lancastrian predecessors’, in other words, the England of 1509 was a different place to that of 1485, but, he laments, ‘identifying the precise nature and chronology of this change has ... proved elusive.’¹³ In London the change was equally marked, as Caroline Barron observed, in that the late fifteenth century was ‘the apogee of London’s success... in its ability to exercise effective self-government’, but any moves made by the capital towards autonomy were checked by the ‘centralising authority of the Tudors’.¹⁴

The overarching aim of this thesis, then, is to identify and assess changes wrought in the Crown-City relationship during this time of transition. Did the ‘centralising authority’ of the first Tudor king arrest the progress of London towards autonomy? Was the authority of the City’s ruling elite compromised by the Crown? And if so, was this a by-product of a wider policy to extend the royal prerogative or a deliberate attempt to curb the capital? What does the Crown-City relationship tell us about Henry’s rule on the one hand and the City’s expectations and ambitions on the other?

This introductory chapter will explore the Crown-City relationship in the late fifteenth century and examine its historiography. It will consider London’s place within the kingdom and relation to other urban centres and the historiography of the reign of Henry VII. An outline of the main sources employed in this thesis will follow and lastly the structure of the thesis will be briefly outlined.

¹² Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2004); Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Michigan, 1962, repr. 1989).

¹³ David Grummit, ‘Household, politics and political morality in the reign of Henry VII’, *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 393-412.

¹⁴ Barron, *London*, 305.

1.1. London and the Crown

It was only from the late thirteenth century, claims Derek Keene, that London can be said to have been England's capital city in the modern sense of the term, though London was before that date a place of prime importance for the Crown.¹⁵ An essential part of the process was the development of Westminster as the centre of bureaucratic, legal and administrative government and frequent base for the royal household. After brief migrations to York necessitated by the Scottish and Welsh wars of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Westminster had become the permanent home for the courts of the Exchequer, Common Bench, King's Bench and Chancery by the 1360s.¹⁶ Increasingly in the course of the fourteenth century Westminster became the venue for meetings of parliament until, after 1339, it was rare for parliament to be held elsewhere.¹⁷ The king, too, found it increasingly suited his purpose to be resident in Westminster, and consequently the royal council met frequently at the palace.¹⁸

As the government of the country became less peripatetic and the houses of royal household servants and lords temporal and spiritual came to be built in the space between London and Westminster, so the two urban centres began to become more closely entwined.¹⁹ Large merchant houses rivalled the houses of the ecclesiastics in size and splendour, many eventually becoming London residences for magnates as the nobility realised the advantages of having a property in the City, or hostels for visitors engaged in business in the City.²⁰ Westminster may have been the administrative centre but it was not equipped to fulfil the role of capital city, being simply too small and too

¹⁵ Derek Keene, 'Metropolitan Comparisons: London as a City-State', *Historical Research*, lxxvii (2004), 471.

¹⁶ G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989), 16-32, 36; D.M. Broome, 'Exchequer Migrations to York in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in Andrew Little and Frederick Maurice Powicke ed., *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout* (Manchester, 1925), 291-300.

¹⁷ Rosser, *Westminster*, 39-40.

¹⁸ Rosser, *Westminster*, 40.

¹⁹ Caroline Barron, 'The Later Middle Ages: 1270-1520', in Mary Lobel ed. *Historic Towns Atlas: The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c.1520* (Oxford, 1989), 49; Barron, 'Centres of Conspicuous Consumption: The Aristocratic Town House in London, 1200-1550', *London Journal*, xx (1995), 1-16.

²⁰ *Historic Towns Atlas*, 63-99.

under-populated to become the reflection of the king's magnificence that his foremost city was expected to be.²¹

The proximity of Westminster to London meant that the City and its immediate surrounds were where the king, his family, council and nobility spent much of their time. Kings were crowned at Westminster and Londoners were required to provide the requisite pageantry and acclamation of the new king. Citizens of the City would regularly trek to Westminster to lobby influential figures or parliament, seek redress of grievance in the courts there, attend meetings with the king and his council or attend state occasions.²² To the inhabitants of London the king, royal family and magnates of the realm were not distant figures but familiar ones, frequently to be seen riding on their streets, travelling on the river and attending masses at their cathedral.

The Crown and City had expectations of their relationship that had changed little since Londoners obtained the right to elect their own mayor from King John in 1215.²³ He needed it to be a peaceful, well-governed, law-abiding city; it needed to be a clean and healthy environment, not just for display purposes but as the occasional abode of the nobility and the royal family. The king needed also a capital capable of supplying his court with luxury goods and the basic needs of sustenance for those employed both in his administration and his household, which comprised hundreds of people.²⁴ It was also required to be capable of reflecting the magnificence of the person of the king, through elaborate displays and pageants, to impress and overawe foreign dignitaries and embassies. Most importantly, the king wanted access to the ready finance that the City mercantile community was able to provide, particularly in times of political turmoil or military need.

²¹ Rosser, *Westminster*, 18-27.

²² Rosser, *Westminster*, 27-29.

²³ *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, ed. and trans. H.T. Riley (London, 1861), 119; Barron, *London*, 30.

²⁴ For the likely numbers and composition of the household of the Yorkist kings see A.R. Myers, *The Household of Edward IV: The Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478* (Manchester, 1959) and Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III: a Study in Service* (Cambridge, 1989), 226-238.

The City also had its requirements of its ruler, other than justice, good governance and leadership as desired by all subjects. It wished to preserve its right to self-govern and elect its own officers; it wished for royal support in the maintenance of law and order; and it needed the maintenance of its legal and economic privileges that allowed it to hold its people accountable and trade unimpeded.²⁵

These expectations had been forged over the course of an occasionally difficult relationship. The privileges and liberties that the Londoners held so dear had been acquired through centuries of wrangling and negotiation. Henry I granted the City the right to elect its own sheriffs for London and Middlesex in return for an annual farm of £300 in 1131.²⁶ In the same charter the right of the City to hold its own court, that of Husting, once a week was confirmed, though the court itself had existed since before the Conquest.²⁷ Every medieval king thereafter confirmed and enlarged upon the privileges contained in the charter, some more than once. Henry III, in the course of his long reign, confirmed no less than nine charters for the City.²⁸ In May 1215 considerable progress towards self-government was made when the Londoners acquired from King John the right to elect their own mayor.²⁹ The grant of these privileges did not stop kings from interfering in City elections: Henry III did so regularly, rejecting the Londoners' choice of mayor in 1240, 1245, and 1254. In 1323 Edward II replaced the elected candidate with his own choice and Richard II made known his choice of mayor in six elections in the 1380s in a blatant contravention of the liberties of the City.³⁰ The office of mayor gradually grew in power and stature: in 1327 he became the royal escheator in the City and also was appointed to be one of the royal justices assigned to hear and deliver prisoners held in Newgate Gaol. In the fifteenth century these powers were further enhanced, as the mayor became a justice of the peace with the power to hear and determine cases in the aftermath of the artisan protests of 1438-44, an empowerment confirmed by royal charter by Edward IV in

²⁵ Barron, *London*, 30-42.

²⁶ *Liber Albus*, 114; C. Brooke, G. Keir and S. Reynolds. 'Henry I's charter for the City of London', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, iv (1973), 575-76.

²⁷ *Liber Albus*, 115.

²⁸ *Liber Albus*, 120-4.

²⁹ *Liber Albus*, 119; Barron, *London*, 30-1.

³⁰ Barron, *London*, 31-32.

1462.³¹ Caroline Barron summed up the paradox at the heart of the Crown-City relationship, in that ‘this was a City that demanded self-government and yet turned to the Crown to authorise the means of achieving this’.³²

The City was well aware that the Crown had the power not only to give but also to take away. Henry III deprived the City of its liberties over ten times for its support of the rebel barons under Simon de Montfort.³³ Edward I withdrew the City’s charter and imposed his own government upon the City for thirteen years, with a royally appointed warden taking the place of the mayor.³⁴ His son, apparently ‘bent on prising every privilege and penny’ out of the City, commissioned, in 1321, a six-month investigation into the running of the civic government resulting in the dismissal of the mayor and the appointment of another royal warden to take charge of the City.³⁵ The action taken by Edward I and Edward II forced the City to become more professional in its administration. The position of the Recorder was created in response to the need for legal expertise within the civic administration after the removal of wardens appointed by Edward I to administer the City in April 1298.³⁶ The civic bureaucracy was formalised in the charter of 1319. In partnership with the Crown this document provided a framework for municipal government, including detail about the means of obtaining the freedom of the City, the custody of the common seal, the administration of London Bridge, and the selection and duties of some of the City’s chief officers, including the chamberlain, common clerk and common serjeant.³⁷ Much of the charter’s content ratified customs that had evolved over the previous decades, but official recognition in charter form amounted to an effective constitution for the City.

³¹ Barron, *London*, 34.

³² Barron, *London*, 34

³³ Williams, *Medieval London*, 234-236.

³⁴ Williams, *Medieval London*, 254-5; Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London, 1988), 265; Barron, ‘The Later Middle Ages’, 42.

³⁵ Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England, 1272-1377* (London, 1980), 97-98; Barron, *London*, 33.

³⁶ Williams, *Medieval London*, 264-5.

³⁷ Williams, *Medieval London*, 282-3, Barron, *London*, 34.

Edward III, in the 1354 parliament, defined the circumstances that would lead to a revocation of the City liberties, presumably to reassure the citizens that such arbitrary action would not be taken without just cause. Richard II saw this statute merely as a set of procedures to be followed when he saw fit to take the City ‘into the king’s hand’ after the refusal of the City to make further loans to him in 1392. The court was briefly removed to York and liberties confiscated, recovered only once the City agreed to a fine of £10,000, proffered a further loan of 10,000 marks and held a spectacular pageant of reconciliation.³⁸ Never again was the City taken into the king’s hand though the fact that the king could do this remained long in the City’s collective memory: when Protector Somerset felt his grip on the realm to be threatened in 1547, he ensured that the citizens of the Common Council were reminded of the penalty for disloyalty to the king as paid by their forbears: ‘The liberties of the City were taken away [and] strangers appointed to be our heads and governors’.³⁹

Arguments between the Crown and the City in Henry VI’s reign centred mainly upon the favouritism demonstrated towards alien merchants by the king and the royal monopolisation of civic offices. A series of anti-alien riots was perpetrated by the apprentices and servants of merchants belonging to the Mercers’ Company, who were resentful of the privileges enjoyed by members of the Italian mercantile community.⁴⁰ The unrest contributed to the decision of the royal family to abandon the capital for the midlands in summer 1456, which in turn made it harder for the civic government to impose effective law and order.⁴¹ In May 1459 the king was prompted to threaten the City with suspension of its privileges after riots in Fleet Street, this time directed against the Inns of Court and lawyers therein.⁴² It is perhaps not surprising that City loans to

³⁸ Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (London, 1999), 259 & n.86, 343; Caroline Barron, ‘The Quarrel of Richard II with London, 1392-7’, in F.R.H. Du Boulay and Caroline Barron ed. *The Crown and Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1981), 178, 199 and ‘Richard II and London’, in Anthony Goodman and James Gillespie ed. *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), 150-3.

³⁹ Richard Grafton, *Grafton’s Chronicle, or History of England*, 2 vols. (London, 1809) ii, 523.

⁴⁰ R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (Stroud, 1981), 790-1; J.L. Bolton, ‘The City and the Crown’, *London Journal*, xii (1986), 1-24.

⁴¹ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 795.

⁴² Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 796.

the king in 1455-60 were little more than a quarter of those of 1450-55.⁴³ Thus it is apparent that the City-Crown relationship was one of necessity and, therefore, co-operation was profitable to them both.

The relationship between the Crown and the City functioned on a variety of levels. Semi-autonomous household and administrative departments had relationships with London citizens that existed independently of political Crown-City intercourse. The Great Wardrobe, which sourced and stored many of the goods used in the royal household, purchased luxury and other items in great quantities from London artisans and merchants. Situated since 1361 by Baynard's Castle in the west of the City, it was managed by a 'Keeper' who was 'assigned to kepe [his] office continually in London among merchauntz and artificers'.⁴⁴ By the end of the fifteenth century the Keeper, and the deputies he appointed, were in charge of the Wardrobe's budget, accounts and staff, and therefore functioned as an autonomous department within the royal administration with little political significance.⁴⁵ Similarly the Royal Mint also functioned as an autonomous part of the royal administration. Unlike the Great Wardrobe, though, the vast majority of the workers employed by the Mint came from only one company, the Goldsmiths, who benefitted from their close working relationship with the royal official, usually a senior courtier, appointed to oversee the Mint.⁴⁶ The merchant community of London would also have been familiar with the personnel of the Exchequer, whom they, or their servants, would have visited in Westminster to receive payment for goods or repayment of loans. A formal role in civic ceremonial was accorded to the Barons of the Exchequer, before whom the sheriffs and mayor swore their oaths of office.⁴⁷ The clerks of the Chancery would have been familiar figures to

⁴³ Caroline M. Barron, 'The Government of London and its Relations with the Crown, 1400-1450' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1985), 612.

⁴⁴ *The Great Wardrobe Accounts of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, ed. Maria Hayward, LRS, xlvii (London, 2012), xvi.

⁴⁵ *The Coronation of Richard III: The Extant Documents*, ed. Anne Sutton and P.W. Hammond (Gloucester, 1984), 58.

⁴⁶ T.F. Reddaway and Lorna E.M. Walker, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company, 1327-1509* (London, 1975), 176.

⁴⁷ Barron, *London*, 160

members of the civic administration as frequent communication took place between this administrative department and Guildhall.⁴⁸

The intimacy of the City and Crown relationship is reflected in rhetoric employed by both during the fourteenth century. London was referred to as the ‘king’s chamber’, an allusion to the qualities it shared with the king’s Chamber within the household. As such the capital functioned as a place of peace, refuge and security for the king as well as an entity that could be utilised for financial provision and administration, entertainment and material support.⁴⁹ The metaphor of the chamber, states Christian Liddy, was exclusively employed in times of political stress to invoke the intimate bond between the two entities, a reminder that theirs was a bond of necessity as well as proximity.⁵⁰ In imitation of the capital, York and Coventry both appropriated the metaphor of the chamber after the king’s court temporarily took up residence within their walls in 1392 and 1456 respectively.⁵¹

The City of London, in comparison with many of its counterparts on the continent, was a stable entity. It was rare that major incidents of unrest originated within its walls and threats of violence usually came from outside, rather than inside, the City. Both Steven Rappaport and Ian Archer have considered reasons for this stability in the late sixteenth century and compared Elizabethan London to its European peers, but similar comparisons have not been undertaken for the London of a century earlier.⁵² One reason for its stability may have been the centrality of the City to the English state; it was unequivocally the first city of the realm without competition from other regional centres for Crown attention, as was the case in the Low Countries. The structure of London’s civic administration also contributed to its stability. The civic bureaucracy comprised a well-defined hierarchy: a court of twenty-five aldermen (including the

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5, section 5.2.

⁴⁹ Christian Liddy, ‘The Rhetoric of the Royal Chamber in Late Medieval London, York and Coventry’, *Urban History*, xxix (2002), 329-332.

⁵⁰ Liddy, ‘Rhetoric’, 345.

⁵¹ Liddy, ‘Rhetoric’, 335, 340. Though Coventry was known as the queen’s chamber.

⁵² S.R. Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2002); Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 2003).

aldermanry of Portsoken, held *ex officio* by the prior of Holy Trinity) was headed by a mayor chosen from their number. Each alderman administered a ward of the City with the help of a staff of ward officers, usually comprising a beadle, constables, scavengers and rakers who would assist in law-keeping and keeping the ward presentable.⁵³ The livery companies also had a role in peace-keeping, for they had the ability to impose discipline upon their members by dispensing reprimands and penalties to members who failed to maintain craft standards or who behaved in a manner contrary to the honour of their craft or company. Watches, called by the Common Council at times of likely unrest, were usually arranged through the companies, with each contributing an allotted number of men.⁵⁴ Every person living within the City was near to a unit of civic administration. Three bodies of City government stood at the heart of the civic administration: elections took place within Common Hall, legislation within the City was made by the Common Council and executive decision and decrees were made in the Court of Aldermen.

The relationship between London and the Crown is a topic that would merit its own monograph. Very few studies have been undertaken upon the subject of interaction between the capital and any individual medieval monarch. The most extensive scholarly examination of London and the Crown in the medieval period is to be found within Caroline Barron's *London in the Later Middle Ages*, notably the first two chapters which analyse the needs and expectations the City and the Crown had of each other.⁵⁵ Gwyn Williams' *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* provides a chronological march through the development of the City's institutional and corporate structures with emphasis on the period between the Magna Carta and the start of the Hundred Years War, characterised by Williams as London's 'age of iron', for it was when the City's social and political structure 'assumed characteristic and distinctive form'.⁵⁶

London in the late fifteenth century suffers from particular academic neglect, especially the reign of Henry VII. Though the study of London itself has become more widespread

⁵³ Barron, *London*, 125-127.

⁵⁴ For example see Jo.9, ff.84-84v

⁵⁵ Barron, *London*, chapters 1 & 2.

⁵⁶ Williams, *Medieval London*, 9.

in the last thirty years, facilitated by the publication of many primary sources, most surveys of the medieval capital cease in 1485. The London Record Society has a disproportionate number of publications dedicated to London in the Middle Ages and yet still the London of the first Tudor reign lacks the scrutiny accorded other periods. On the other side of the 1485-1509 divide, John Oldland's work on the wealth of the London merchants in the early sixteenth century highlights how prosperous the City had become with the emergence of 'super rich' individuals, many of whom started trading during Henry VII's reign.⁵⁷ Guy Gronquist's thesis on City-Crown relations in Henry VIII's reign is a broad-brush overview of some of the issues that the Crown-City relationship faced at that time, though information about the relationship that Henry VIII inherited from his father is almost entirely absent.⁵⁸

Post-Reformation London is far better served. Susan Brigden's revisionist monograph on *London and the Reformation* not only considers the religious change within London at material and social levels, but also the relationship between the civic government and the Crown, or its representatives, during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary. What is apparent from her analysis is that London always remained acutely aware that what it gained from the Crown could always be taken away, for in the reigns of Edward and Mary the fear that the City could be deprived of its liberties was very real.⁵⁹ The works of Archer and Rappaport, as mentioned, argue the case for and against the stability of the capital respectively during the second half of the sixteenth century whilst that of George Ramsay maintains a fairly narrow focus upon the economic importance of the City in political relations at the accession of Elizabeth.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ John Oldland, 'The Wealth of the Trades in Early Tudor London', *The London Journal*, xxxi (2006), 127-155, 'London Cloth-making, 1270-1500' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2003) and 'The allocation of merchant capital in early Tudor London', *The Economic History Review*, lxiii (2010), 1058-1080.

⁵⁸ Guy Gronquist, 'The Relationship between the City of London and the Crown, 1509-1547' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1986).

⁵⁹ Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989).

⁶⁰ Rappaport, *Worlds*, Archer, *Stability*, George Daniel Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester, 1975). Additionally Ian Archer has published a plethora of articles on the subject of early modern London which are too numerous to list here.

Biographers of medieval monarchs have rarely yielded much space to a consideration of the Crown-City relationship and scholarly literature on the Crown-London relationship tends to take the form of essays narrowly focused upon particular events rather than a macro view of the relationship. Caroline Barron updated Ruth Bird's work with a couple of articles focused upon the reign of Richard II: the first considered the quarrel between the king and the City that erupted during his reign and the second considered the relationship Richard II had with his capital more generally.⁶¹ Discussion of the relationship between the Crown and the City in the fifteenth century has centred upon the role of the City in the dynastic wars that blighted the century. James Bolton and Caroline Barron both considered the relationship between the City and the Crown during the crisis that led to the seizure of the throne by Edward IV.⁶² Barron saw the divisions within the City as mainly social, with the ruling mercantile elite often at odds with the unfranchised masses, or 'mob', whose propensity for destruction often swayed the affiliation of the civic government, as when they demanded that the City continue to support the Yorkists in February 1461.⁶³ Bolton challenged this, stating that political divisions were not aligned with social strata, for the mercantile elite of the City were partisan in the 'politics of trade which were so vital to the well-being of the City and to their own prosperity'.⁶⁴ Bolton's article appeared to further the arguments of Charles Ross, writing a decade earlier, who observed that the Lancastrian government had 'alienated some sections of London society by its commercial policy', a policy which had favoured Italian merchants at the expense of native businessmen.⁶⁵ Bolton argued that a number of discontented merchants, after failing to receive redress of their grievances through parliament, orchestrated unrest within the City. The existence of such political divisions within the ruling elite of the City made it unlikely that the

⁶¹ Ruth Bird, *The Turbulent London of Richard II* (London, 1949); Caroline M. Barron, 'Richard II and London', in Anthony Goodman and James Gillespie ed. *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), 130-154 and 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London', 168-199.

⁶² Bolton, 'City and the Crown'; Caroline Barron, 'London and the Crown, 1451-61', in J.R.L. Highfield and R. Jeffs, ed. *The Crown and the Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1981).

⁶³ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 89. Barron later modified this theory her book, *London in the Later Middle Ages*.

⁶⁴ Bolton, 'City and the Crown', 12.

⁶⁵ C.D. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), 24.

deliverance of the City to the Yorkists in 1460-1 was purely a consequence of the violent demonstrations of the political preferences of the ‘mob’.⁶⁶

The extent to which political agency came into play in London’s involvement in matters of high politics is important. London’s ruling elite were, in the fifteenth century at least, rarely overtly factious for the City fathers sought to speak in concert and demonstrate a unity of action where possible, as is the nature of all corporate entities. It is impossible that political differences did not exist amongst the rich and powerful of the City, yet they were politically astute enough to realise that overt demonstration of political loyalty was unwise. The manifestation of such political feeling will be explored in this thesis, with the obvious caveat that the identification of covert political action is, by its very nature, difficult, if not at times impossible, especially if it was unsuccessful.

1.2. London, the Crown and other Urban Centres

Henry was fortunate in that the City of London was a docile entity compared to the towns and cities of the continent, where urban strife often took extremely violent forms, sometimes with the aim of overthrowing the established order.⁶⁷ It was, perhaps, after witnessing the struggles endured by Maximilian, king of the Romans, with his cities in Flanders, that Henry Tudor became determined to be the master of his own capital, the only city in his realm capable of offering a sustained challenge to his rule.

The worst uprisings in London tended to be little more than the brawling of apprentices and unruly young men; serious threats to the peace of the capital (as in 1381 and 1450) usually came from without, not within. London’s comparative stability when compared to its continental counterparts, apart from the reasons already listed, is partly attributable to the very different natures of England and her European neighbours. The diversity of laws, language, customs and trading ability even within polities governed, at least in name, by a single ruler resulted in a concentration of power within enlarged urban areas in many continental areas. The Burgundian polity, for example, comprised seventeen provinces in the mid-fifteenth century.⁶⁸ Consequently England’s experience

⁶⁶ Bolton, ‘City and the Crown’, 12.

⁶⁷ Rappaport, *Worlds*, 7.

⁶⁸ Archer, *Stability*, 8.

of city and state formation was very different to the European one, as it enjoyed a unity of culture and language and enjoyed a stability partly attributable to its geographical situation.

Derek Keene considered the question of whether London could be considered a city-state by comparing it to other European metropolises.⁶⁹ He concluded that though London did not fit the definition of a city-state, that is a city that had obtained a large degree of autonomy and regalian rights with the ability to directly influence foreign policy, as the principal cities of medieval Germany and Italy did, England's capital did display some characteristics of city-states. It exercised a high degree of informal influence over a wide area and its size and wealth was considerably larger than other English urban entities.⁷⁰ This authority was conferred by the Crown through rights and privileges both granted by charter and embodied in statute, and therefore the City never had the potential to accumulate powers that would challenge the authority of the king.⁷¹ This view is similarly expressed by Steven Gunn, David Grummitt and Hans Cools in *War, State and Society in England and the Netherlands, 1477-1559* with the claim that the city-state was a continental phenomenon, common in areas where autonomous principalities and duchies were the norm, such as Italy, Germany and the Low Countries and therefore London never had the potential to join their ranks.⁷²

In this London was perhaps more akin to Paris which, as effectively a royal creation, had never demonstrated any city-state aspirations.⁷³ Paris, as was expected of a capital city, was used as a mirror to the magnificence of the king through the provision of extravagant pageantry to celebrate royal occasions, impress visitors or entertain other state-heads.⁷⁴ It maintained this function through the brief occupation by the English,

⁶⁹ Keene, 'Metropolitan Comparisons', 459 – 480.

⁷⁰ Keene, 'Metropolitan Comparisons', 463, 467.

⁷¹ Keene, 'Metropolitan Comparisons', 473.

⁷² S. Gunn, D. Grummitt and H. Cools, *War, State and Society in England and the Netherlands, 1477-1559* (Oxford, 2007), 41-45.

⁷³ Keene, 'Metropolitan Comparisons', 463.

⁷⁴ Lawrence Bryant and Jacqueline Falquevert, 'La ceremonie de l'entrée a Paris au Moyen Age', *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, iii (1986), 513-542.

hosting elaborate celebrations in 1420, 1424 and 1431.⁷⁵ Paris, like London, had a civic government dominated by the mercantile classes and the same linear divisions in society between merchants and artisans as were apparent in the English capital.⁷⁶

London was the only English city of a size to rival its near European neighbours with nearly 50,000 people living within its jurisdiction in 1500; the next largest English urban centres, Bristol, Norwich and perhaps Newcastle provided a home for only 10,000-14,000.⁷⁷ By comparison, the Netherlands alone had five sizable cities: Antwerp (population 90,000), Amsterdam (30,000), Bruges (35,000), Brussels (40,000) and Ghent (50,000).⁷⁸ Moreover, England was a more centralised state than its counterparts on the continent and therefore London was able to rise as its unchallenged capital, free from the competition and jealousy experienced between rival urban entities across the Channel. Hence London's development and experience in the middle ages was markedly different to that of other European cities.⁷⁹

Perhaps more relevant for comparative purposes are recent studies of other English cities and towns. The publication of many source materials and the profusion of extant civic records pertaining to York in this period have led to a concentration of studies of this city.⁸⁰ Bristol, Southampton, Coventry and Norwich have also received academic

⁷⁵ Bryant and Falquevery 'La ceremonie', 514.

⁷⁶ Ronda Lamour, 'A Merchant Guild of Sixteenth-Century France: The Grocers of Paris', *Economic History Review*, xx (1967), 472. Simone Roux, *Paris in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jo Ann McNamara (Pennsylvania, 2009).

⁷⁷ Vanessa Harding, 'The King and the City in Fifteenth Century England', *Principi E Citta Alla Fine Del Medioevo*, vi (1996), 295-6.

⁷⁸ Gunn, Grummitt and Cools, *War, State and Society*, 41.

⁷⁹ Paul Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000-1994* (New Haven, 1995); Charles Tilly and Wim Blockmans ed., *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000-1800* (Boulder, 1994); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990-1990* (Oxford, 1990); J. Vries, *European Urbanisation, 1500-1700* (London, 1984); D. Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City, 1300-1500* (London, 1997).

⁸⁰ *York House Books, 1461-1490*, ed. Lorraine Attreed (Stroud, 1991); A. Raine, *Medieval York* (London, 1955); D.M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979); Sarah Rees-Jones ed., *Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter* (York, 1997).

attention.⁸¹ The publication in 2000 of *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. I, 600-1500* provided a comprehensive critique of the themes of the study of urban England, yet relations between English towns and the Crown figured in it only incidentally, mostly in the context of the granting of charters.⁸² Though much has been written on towns and cities in England, both individually and collectively, as well as urban development in England on the whole, no modern book existed on the subject of the relationship between towns and the Crown until the publication of Lorraine Attreed's study in 2001.⁸³ This book outlined and developed the traditional argument that the relationship between towns and the Crown pivoted upon the interplay between 'finance' and 'privilege', that is that the Crown would exploit urban wealth and resources in return for the confirmation and/or extension of charters of corporate liberties. Towns and cities prioritised their survival and protection of both their material goods and liberties and privileges above all else, runs the argument, and thus insulated themselves against outside political influences, particularly in time of turmoil, acting only when a sure winner was apparent.⁸⁴

Vanessa Harding's essay on 'The King and the City in the Fifteenth Century' is broadly in agreement with Attreed's argument. This study provides a valuable synthesis of views upon the relationship that English kings had with their larger urban entities.⁸⁵ Harding identifies three themes: firstly the Crown's commitment to the reciprocal relationship between itself and its towns; secondly the contribution towns made to the Crown's finances and lastly the way in which towns secured recognition of their

⁸¹ Maurice Keen, ed., *'Almost the Richest City': Bristol in the Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1997); D.H. Sachs, *Trade, Society and Politics in Bristol, 1500-1640* (New York, 1985); J. Sherborne, *The Port of Bristol in the Late Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1967); B. McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', *EHR*, xlii (1994), 831-66; C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979); C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: the Port and the Trading Community* (London, 1973); Alwyn Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton, 1270-1600* (Southampton, 1951).

⁸² D.M. Palliser ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁸³ Lorraine Attreed, *The King's Towns: Identity and Survival in Late Medieval English boroughs* (New York, 2001).

⁸⁴ Attreed, *King's Towns*, 298-300.

⁸⁵ Harding, 'The King and the City', 295-314.

interests in the policies of government.⁸⁶ Harding takes for granted that the towns were willing supplicants to the Crown, viewing themselves as suitors desirous of patronage. It is precisely this view that Christian Liddy, in his 2005 book sought to challenge. Instead, Liddy theorised, though a case might be made for the existence of the traditional interdependent relationship in the fifteenth century, the argument on the whole was reductive, failing to take into account the complicated political affinities and economic priorities harboured by urban areas.⁸⁷ He instead stressed that the Crown and its towns shared a number of common goals, which they worked together in partnership to achieve and their relationship was hence based upon ‘an underlying belief that government should be broadly collaborative and consensual’.⁸⁸

The relationship London had with the Crown, though, defied such characterisation and cannot be seen as merely a partnership or patronage arrangement, though it was, at times, both of these. No other English town had the multiplicity of relationships with the departments of royal household and government that London and its citizens had. Crown and City shared a truly inter-dependent relationship, entwined as they were economically, socially and politically, and therefore they had an accord entirely unique within the realm if not within the entirety of Europe.

1.3. Henry VII

This thesis will necessarily engage with key debates concerning the reign of Henry VII. It is indicative of the scholarly neglect of this reign by academics that the standard biography of Henry VII was written in 1972.⁸⁹ Stanley Chrimes wrote in detail about the administrative process, particularly with reference to fiscal and legal developments, but almost entirely omitted the politics of the era. Sean Cunningham, publishing his biography in 2007, provided a much needed, largely chronological, portrait of the reign, but his references are frustratingly abridged as is common in books written for the

⁸⁶ Harding, ‘The King and the City’, 296.

⁸⁷ Christian Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval Towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350-1400* (London, 2005), 4-7.

⁸⁸ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, 214;

⁸⁹ S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, 1972).

popular, rather than the academic, market.⁹⁰ Between the publication of these two works only a pamphlet-sized biography produced by Alexander Grant in 1985 can be said to approach academic standard.⁹¹ Of value is Steven Gunn's biography of Henry VII in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: written to give a summary of the reign rather than provoke historical argument, it reflects Gunn's considerable scholarship in this area, particularly with regard to the personnel of Henry's court.⁹² In 2012 a new biography aimed at the popular history market was published, Thomas Penn's *The Winter King*, which focused on Henry's last years.⁹³ One other monograph of note is Paul Cavill's recent work on English Parliaments.⁹⁴ Only seven parliaments took place during Henry VII's reign, leading many historians to conclude that Henry sought to undermine the authority of this institution, a theory that Cavill refutes, stating that Henry just simply had not the need to call parliament. The prominent personnel of Henry's court have received notable academic attention, especially from Margaret Condon and Steven Gunn.⁹⁵

Henry's reign has provoked two famous, long-standing historiographical debates, both of which connect with the aims of this thesis. The first, whether or not the advent of the reign of Henry Tudor can be said to have heralded a 'New Monarchy', has been the subject of argument since the end of the nineteenth century with the publication of J.R. Green's *Short History of the English People* in 1874.⁹⁶ Green defined this new

⁹⁰ Cunningham, *Henry VII*.

⁹¹ Alexander Grant, *Henry VII* (London, 1985).

⁹² S.J. Gunn, 'Henry VII', *ONDB*. See also Gunn's book *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England* (forthcoming - I am grateful to Dr. Gunn for advance sight of selected chapters of this book).

⁹³ Thomas Penn, *The Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England* (London, 2012).

⁹⁴ Paul Cavill, *The English Parliaments of Henry VII, 1485-1504* (Oxford, 2009).

⁹⁵ Margaret Condon, 'Ruling Elites in the Reign of Henry VII', in Charles Ross ed., *Patronage Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1979), 109-42 and 'From Caitiff and Villein to Pater Patriae: Reynold Bray and the Profits of Office', in Michael Hicks ed., *Profit Piety and the Professions in Late Medieval England* (London, 1979), 137-68; S.J. Gunn, 'Sir Thomas Lovell (c.1449-1524): a New Man in a New Monarchy?', in J.L. Watts ed., *The End of the Middle Ages? England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Stroud, 1998), 117-53, 'The Courtiers of Henry VII', *EHR*, cviii (1993), 23-49 and 'The Court of Henry VII', in Steven Gunn and Antheun Janse ed., *The Court as a Stage: England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006), 132-145.

⁹⁶ J.R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London, 1876).

monarchy as a more authoritarian style of rule that saw the country emerge from medievalism to become a modern nation-state, a process that started with the advent of Edward IV's second reign in 1471. Wilhelm Busch corrected the start of the 'new monarchy' to the start of Henry Tudor's reign and his view was reinforced by Frederick Dietz's claim that the evidence for a 'new monarchy' was to be found in administrative changes wrought by Henry, which saw a complete break-away from the medieval model and the initiation of an innovative, more modern financial solution to the problems of an unwieldy Exchequer by displacing it with the Chamber.⁹⁷ This view predominated until it was summarily dismissed in 1938 by K.B. McFarlane's pronouncement that the only 'New Monarchy' experienced in England occurred in 1066.⁹⁸ Geoffrey Elton agreed with McFarlane on this point, asserting that Henry adopted a plan already initiated by the Yorkists whereby the king's Chamber became the centre of royal finances once he discovered that the 'creaking machinery' of the Exchequer was unfit for purpose. England did not emerge from the medieval age, he expanded, until the onset of the Reformation and implementation of administrative reforms by Thomas Cromwell.⁹⁹

More recently the debate has centred upon whether the bureaucracy surrounding the Crown was indicative of a new style of government and whether reforms of the functional departments of the Crown, namely those responsible for financial and practical administration as well as those of the royal household, and consequent transition from medievalism to the early modern era, were initiated by the Yorkist kings, Henry VII or his son. Notions of 'New Monarchy' thus were discredited. Thereafter Henry was depicted as a typical medieval monarch and the focus of scholarly debate centred upon his competence, usually with reference to his

⁹⁷ Wilhelm Busch, *England Under the Tudors: King Henry VII* (London, 1895); Frederick C. Dietz, *English Government Finance, 1485-1558* (Illinois, 1920), 77.

⁹⁸ K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), 286.

⁹⁹ G.R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors* (London, 1956). For further arguments about whether use of the Chamber represented a Tudor innovation see G.L. Harriss and Penry Williams, 'A Revolution in Tudor History?', *Past and Present*, xxv (1963), 26 and B.P. Wolffe, 'Henry VII's Land Revenues and Chamber Finance', *EHR*, lxxviii (1964), 228.

management of the localities.¹⁰⁰ Anthony Goodman resurrected the idea of a ‘New Monarchy’ in the late 1980s, casting the distinction not in terms of administrative reform or innovation but vision, claiming that Henry Tudor’s government brought a ‘new sense of mission’ and a renewed determination to solve long-standing problems.¹⁰¹ John Watts took this a stage further and claimed a new ideology marked this as a new era, epitomised by the writings of John Fortescue.¹⁰² David Grummitt has recently revisited the topic of administrative reform by arguing that Henry’s renovations of extant governmental machinery were innovative and support the notion of a New Monarchy. Though the roots of his financial restructure can be found in Edward IV’s reign, Henry evolved the Yorkist model into a more effective machine, vital in assisting him to become England’s first solvent king.¹⁰³ Further progression into modernism came with Henry’s redefinition and extension of the role and function of the royal household, an innovation noted and promoted by David Starkey in the 1980s.¹⁰⁴ This contributed to the creation of a new ‘political morality’ in that loyalty was owed to the king rather than abstract concepts of the Crown and Commonwealth which overrode the traditional ties of service and so paved the way for the factional politics manifest at the court of Henry VIII.¹⁰⁵

The second debate, the extent to which Henry can be accused of subjecting his realm to tyranny and persecution for predominantly financial ends, has not generated as much controversy, for it had been widely accepted that the latter years of Henry’s reign were blighted by his avarice, since Vergil wrote about it in his account of the reign published

¹⁰⁰ Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c.1437-1509* (Cambridge, 1997), 219-51; Sean Cunningham, ‘Henry VII and Rebellion in North-Eastern England, 1485-92: Bonds of Allegiance and the Establishment of Tudor Authority’, *Northern History*, xxxii (1996), 42-74.

¹⁰¹ Anthony Goodman, *The New Monarchy in England, 1471-1534* (Oxford, 1988), 79-80.

¹⁰² John Watts, ‘A New Foundation of his Crowne’, in Benjamin Thompson ed., *The Reign of Henry VII*, HMS, v (Stamford, 1995), 31-54.

¹⁰³ David Grummitt, ‘Henry VII, Chamber Finance and the ‘New Monarchy’: Some New Evidence’, *Historical Research*, lxxii (1999), 229-243.

¹⁰⁴ David Starkey, ‘Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547’, in David Starkey ed., *The English Court* (London, 1987), 71-119.

¹⁰⁵ David Grummitt, ‘Household, Politics and Political Morality in the Reign of Henry VII’, *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 393-412.

soon after the king's death.¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Elton, writing in the mid-twentieth century, was the first to question this established view and put forward the theory that not only had Henry's alleged persecution of his subjects been overstated, but that though oppressive it had been legal.¹⁰⁷ His view was vehemently attacked by J.P. Cooper who claimed that Henry's tendency to tyranny had, if anything, been understated and perversions of justice had prevailed in the last years of the reign.¹⁰⁸ So aggressive was Cooper's attack that a defensive Elton felt obliged to issue a justification for his view, though not a retraction, a few years later.¹⁰⁹ The publication, in 1972, by C.J. Harrison of Edmund Dudley's petition, a document that purported to demonstrate Dudley's remorse for the plethora of unjust persecutions he implemented on behalf of his royal master, led to a reestablishment of a consensus among historians regarding the widespread oppression of Henry VII's last years.¹¹⁰ Henry's harsh treatment of his subjects has not been questioned since; in fact the opposite has happened in that the picture of the Machiavellian prince has been perpetuated. Christine Carpenter, Dominic Lockett, Mark Horowitz, Penny Tucker, James Ross and Sean Cunningham, have all provided case studies supporting the argument for Henry's tendency towards wide-scale oppression and fiscal tyranny in his later years.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Vergil.

¹⁰⁷ G.R. Elton, 'Henry VII: Rapacity and Remorse', *Historical Journal*, i (1958), 21-39.

¹⁰⁸ Cooper, 'Last Years', 103-29.

¹⁰⁹ Elton, 'A Restatement', 1-29.

¹¹⁰ C.J. Harrison, 'The Petition of Edmund Dudley', *EHR*, lxxxvii (1972), 82-99.

¹¹¹ Christine Carpenter, 'Henry VII and the English Polity', in Benjamin Thompson ed., *The Reign of Henry VII* (Stamford, 1995), 11-30; Dominic Lockett, 'Crown Patronage and Political Morality in Early Tudor England: the Case of Giles, Lord Daubeney', *EHR*, cx (1995), 589-93; Mark Horowitz, "'Contrary to the Liberties of this City": Henry VII, English Towns and the Economics of Law and Order', *Historical Research*, lxxxv (2012), 32-56; idem, 'Policy and prosecution in the reign of Henry VII', *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 412-459; idem, 'Richard Empson, minister of Henry VII', *BIHR*, lv (1982), 35-49; Penny Tucker, 'Reaction to Henry VII's Style of Kingship and its Contribution to the Emergence of Constitutional Monarchy in England', *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 511-526; James Ross, "'Contrary to the ryght and to the order of the lawe": New Evidence of Edmund Dudley's Activities on Behalf of Henry VII in 1504', *EHR*, cxxvii (2012), 24-45; Sean Cunningham, 'Loyalty and the Usurper: Recognizances, the Council and Allegiance under Henry VII', *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 459-482.

Crucially, Henry's treatment of his capital has often been examined in isolation from the behaviour of the citizens of the City, thus depriving the student of this period of a holistic view of cause and effect. Instances of persecution have been cherry-picked to illustrate Henry's heavy-handedness with the City without a full consideration of motives beyond the obvious financial one. Elton, Cooper, Helen Miller, Mark Horowitz and Thomas Penn employed case studies from the City to demonstrate that Henry VII was the perpetrator of a kind of fiscal tyranny.¹¹² All attributed Henry's persecution of prominent London citizens to avarice; only Anne Sutton has questioned whether Henry may have had deeper motives for his actions towards London's civic authorities in his later years, theorising that the actions of the mercantile community in the late 1480s created in Henry a desire for both vengeance and control.¹¹³

Other aspects of the City-Crown relationship during the reign have received scant scholarly attention. Though in the last ten years a number of studies have examined Henry's treatment of the localities there has been no comprehensive comparable study of Henry's rule in London.¹¹⁴ DeLloyd Guth tackled the important question of how Henry, a usurper with a tenuous blood-claim to the throne, was initially received by his capital and in doing so drew the surprising conclusion that 'the City could now begin to relax for the first time since Edward IV's death'.¹¹⁵ Sean Cunningham disagreed, and drew attention to the possibility that the sweating sickness, brought by the victor's

¹¹² Elton, 'Rapacity and Remorse' and 'A Restatement'; Cooper, 'Last Years'; Helen Miller, 'London and Parliament in the Reign of Henry VIII', *BIHR*, xxxv (1962), 128-49; Mark Horowitz, "'Agree with the King": Henry VII, Edmund Dudley and the Strange Case of Thomas Sunnyff', *Historical Research*, lxxvii (2006), 325-66; Penn, *Winter King*, 158, 267, 275-7, 326, 329, 347.

¹¹³ Anne Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot, 2005).

¹¹⁴ Sean Cunningham, 'The Establishment of the Tudor Regime: Henry VII, Rebellion, and the Financial Control of the Aristocracy, 1485-1509' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1995); idem, 'Henry VII, Sir Thomas Butler and the Stanley Family: Regional Politics and the Assertion of Royal Authority in North-Western England', in Tim Thornton ed., *Social Attitudes and Political Structures in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 2000), 220-241; Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992); Dominic Lockett, 'Henry VII and the South-Western Escheators', in B. Thompson ed., *The Reign of Henry VII*, HMS, v (Stamford, 1995) 54-64; Ross, 'Edmund Dudley'.

¹¹⁵ DeLloyd Guth, 'Richard III, Henry VII and the City: London Politics and the "Dun Cow"', in Ralph Griffiths and James Sherbourne ed., *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1986), 185-204, 198.

army to the City which killed hundreds of Londoners within a month of Henry's victory at Bosworth, was considered 'to be God's second thoughts about a Tudor victory.'¹¹⁶ Paul Cavill's thesis on Henry VII's parliaments considered London's relationship with this institution, and Matthew Davies' essay on the lobbying activities of the London Livery Companies highlighted the growing political sophistication of these interest groups towards the end of the fifteenth century.¹¹⁷ The triangular relationship between the City, the livery companies and the Crown has been a theme in much of Davies' published work and consideration of this topic forms an important strand of this thesis.¹¹⁸

This thesis aims to address the historiographical void outlined through the consideration of the reception of the new king by his capital, the expectations City and Crown had of their relationship at the outset and an examination of London's role in the establishment of his rule. The evolution of the relationship will be charted with particular reference to the themes of expectation, change and continuity.

1.4. Sources

Steven Gunn's argument that the reign of Henry VII is a victim of 'liminality' is most apparent in the transitional nature of the sources for the period.¹¹⁹ Predominantly the sources are 'medieval', but the gradual emergence of document series relied upon by scholars of the early modern period gives the impression that Henry's reign heralded, if not a new beginning, then perhaps a milestone in the development of governmental bureaucracy.

¹¹⁶ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 234.

¹¹⁷ Paul Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2005), 244-53; Matthew Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament: the London Livery Companies in the Fifteenth Century', *Parliamentary History*, xxiii (2004), 136-48.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild in Late Medieval London', in M. Davies and J.A. Galloway ed., *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London, 2012), 241-61 and 'Artisans, Guilds and Government in London', in R.H. Britnell ed., *Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1998), 125-50; Matthew Davies and Ann Saunders, *The History of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (Leeds, 2004).

¹¹⁹ Gunn, 'Henry VII in Context', 302.

Of the traditional or 'medieval' sources for the history of government, Issue Rolls, essential to the historian of the early and high Middle Ages, cease to exist entirely by this reign. Exchequer accounts, where they survive, are less complete than for the rest of the fifteenth century because of the emergence of the Chamber as the royal financial instrument of choice. The series of Patent, Fine and Close rolls continue uninterrupted throughout this reign but the Pipe Rolls, the staple of the student of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, fail to contribute as full a picture for this period. The Tellers' Rolls for Henry's reign are numerous, though not quite complete. The extant records of Henry VII's council are also, unfortunately, far from complete and are scattered in a variety of places and archives, though a selection of cases were usefully collected into a single volume, albeit an unfortunately slim one, in the middle of the last century.¹²⁰

The literary sources suffer the most for this reign, as many of the late medieval chronicles peter out before the end of the fifteenth century. Consequently very few full ones exist for this period, potentially presenting a hazard to the student of this period by necessitating a reliance, possibly an over-reliance, upon Fabyan's Chronicle and, in particular, The Great Chronicle of London, the latter being the most detailed of the reign.¹²¹ Matthew Payne has recently proved that the Great Chronicle, whose authorship has been much debated, was composed, for the period covering the years 1439 to 1512, by the Draper Robert Fabyan, who served as an alderman for much of the reign.¹²² The section covering the reign of Henry VII appears to have been written at two different points in time. The first, ending in 1496, was quite possibly written in 1503/4, and the second, ending in 1512, was probably written not long after the events it describes.¹²³ The second section appears far more critical of the government than the first, and this may possibly be attributed to Fabyan's close association during this period with many of those who suffered from the attentions of Edmund Dudley and his henchmen in London, in particular William Capell.¹²⁴ The chronicle in BL Cotton MS

¹²⁰ *Select Cases in the Council of Henry VII*, ed. G.L. Bayne and W.H. Dunham, Seldon Society, lxxv (London, 1958).

¹²¹ *GC*; Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. Henry Ellis (London, 1811).

¹²² Matthew Payne, 'Robert Fabyan's Civic Identity', in Hannes Kleineke and Christian Steer ed., *The Yorkist Age*, HMS, xxiii (Stamford, 2013), 275-86

¹²³ *GC*, lxvii-lxviii.

¹²⁴ *GC*, 258, 336.

Vitellius A XVI, transcribed and published by Charles Kingsford, contains much of the same information as the Great Chronicle, with occasional useful variations.¹²⁵ Otherwise the other chronicles of the time are brief and contain much of the same material. The non-London chronicles are useful, if partisan. Polydore Vergil's account of Henry's reign, commissioned by the king himself, contains the occasional error but is comprehensive in its coverage of the realm, containing snippets of original information acquired from the participants in the events related.¹²⁶ The later compositions of Hall, Grafton and Stow drew heavily upon the works of Fabyan and Vergil, rendering them of use only when their original source is lacking or a historical perspective is required.¹²⁷ The volumes of the correspondence of gentry families, such as the Pastons, Plumptons, Stonors and Celys, are diminishing by the opening of this reign.¹²⁸

To compensate for the gradual demise of source material usually available to students of the fifteenth century is the emergence of new sources. The Chamber books are a valuable source for the reign, easy to use and satisfying in their detail, though they do not cover the entire period. These contain the expenditure and receipts of the king's Chamber which became more active as an instrument of financial administration as the reign progressed. Five complete payment books, covering between them October 1495-April 1509, and three receipt books survive, together with one payment book for the Chamber accounts of Queen Elizabeth of York.¹²⁹ The receipt books are rather patchy

¹²⁵ Vit. XVI.

¹²⁶ Vergil.

¹²⁷ Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle: Containing the History of England*, ed. Henry Ellis (London, 1809); John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. C.L. Kingsford, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1908-27).

¹²⁸ *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman Davies, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971, 1976); *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*, ed. C.L. Kingsford (London 1919); *The Cely Letters, 1472-1488*, ed. A. Hanham, EETS (London, 1975); *The Plumpton Correspondence*, ed. T. Stapleton (Gloucester, 1990); *The Plumpton Letters and Papers*, ed. Joan Kirby, Camden Society (Cambridge, 1996).

¹²⁹ TNA, E101/414/6 covers the period October 1495 – October 1497; TNA, E101/414/16 covers Oct 1497 – Oct 1499; TNA, E101/415/3 covers Oct 1499 – Oct 1502; BL, Add. Ms.59899 covers Oct 1502 – Oct 1505. BL, Add Ms. 21480 is a copy of BL, Add. Ms.59899, with payments covering the period Oct 1504 – Oct 1505. It contains only 13 pages of payments and thereafter was used for memoranda of various items, primarily bonds. The last payment book, TNA, E36/214 covers Oct 1505 to May 1509.

in their coverage, encompassing between them the periods of July 1486 to September 1487, October 1489 to October 1495 and October 1502 to October 1505, though given the slenderness of the volumes it is unlikely that these were comprehensive.¹³⁰ Elizabeth's Chamber book covers only the last year of her life, March 1502 to March 1503.¹³¹ Information from earlier Chamber books exists only as a list of payments extracted by the nineteenth-century antiquary, Craven Ord, from both the five surviving books and others dating from 1491 not now known to exist.¹³² The yields from these sources encompass not just the financial minutiae related to the king's personal expenses, but also memoranda that the king wanted to keep close at hand. Recognisances, debts, obligations and general memoranda usually consume 50 pages or so in the back of each payment book.

Ambassadorial papers and letters also begin to emerge, and though not as informative or as numerous as later in the sixteenth century they do shed light on life at Henry's court. Those of the Italian ambassadors in particular grow in number through the course of the reign, as perhaps one would expect given the king's known enjoyment of their company.¹³³ The Spanish papers give insight into the protracted negotiations that surrounded the marriages of Arthur and Katherine, the young princess of Aragon, and her treatment after the demise of her husband.¹³⁴

Numerous legal records survive. Whilst these records are essential for piecing together grievances and unrest they can be problematic for precisely that reason. The nature of the evidence means that records are generated only when instances of grievance or unrest arose, giving the impression that such occurrences were widespread. The records of the King's Bench are of particular interest, not only as it heard cases pertaining to

¹³⁰ Three volumes of receipt books for the Chamber: TNA, E101/413/2/1 contains volume 1 which contains receipts from 7 July 1486 – 26 September 1487; TNA, E101/413/2/2 holds volumes 2 (Oct 1489 – Oct 1495) and 3 (Oct 1502 – Oct 1505).

¹³¹ Elizabeth of York's payment book, TNA, E36/210, covers the period March 1502 – March 1503.

¹³² BL, Add. Ms.7099. The list of payments are heavily abridged with occasional transcription errors.

¹³³ *Calendar of State Papers, Milan*, vol.I, ed. A.B. Hinds (London, 1912); *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, vol.II, ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1864)

¹³⁴ *Calendar of Letters, Dispatches, and State Papers Relating to the Negotiations between England and Spain*, vols.I & II, ed. G. Bergenroth (London, 1862).

matters of special concern to the king, but also as this was the criminal court of first instance in Middlesex and had appellate jurisdiction over the lesser courts. Many bonds have survived, so many in comparison to other reigns that it would be easy to conclude that Henry utilised this instrument of control on an unprecedented scale. He might indeed have done so, but the only in-depth analysis of these is to be found in Sean Cunningham's thesis, which concentrates heavily on their application in the Northwest.¹³⁵ Unsorted boxes of bonds of the period pack the store rooms of The National Archives, and their storage facility in Cheshire, which means that our current knowledge of Henry's bond policy is based upon merely a small sample of those extant.¹³⁶

The London sources for this reign are as problematic as the Crown ones. The records of the Sheriffs' and Mayor's Courts, save for those equity cases summarised in the Journals of the Common Council, have been entirely lost for the reign.¹³⁷ The accounts of the Chamber of the City have been lost for the entire medieval period, though something of its activities may be construed from information in the Journals and the Letter Books. The Letter Books of the City had ceased to be depositories for all information pertaining to the government of the capital near the beginning of the fifteenth century. By the opening of Henry VII's reign they had been relegated to being merely fair copies of selected information; usually the items entered in their pages were done so at the behest of the person or corporation it concerned, and they therefore primarily consist of recognisances, provision for orphans and livery company ordinances. Letter Book L, which ends in 1497, is the last to have been calendared and printed by R.R. Sharpe.¹³⁸ Letter Book M, which covers the period 1497-1515, contains very little material not in either the Journals or the Repertories.¹³⁹

The records of the proceedings of the Common Council and the Court of Aldermen were to transfer in the course of the fifteenth century from the Letter Books to the series

¹³⁵ Cunningham, 'The Establishment of the Tudor Regime'.

¹³⁶ I am grateful to James Ross for a tour of the storage areas of TNA.

¹³⁷ The records of the mayor's court survive from 1298 to 1482. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls 1324-1482*, ed. A.H. Thomas and P.E. Jones, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1924-61).

¹³⁸ *LBL*.

¹³⁹ *LBM*.

of Journals of the Common Council, which commenced in 1416, and the Repertories, which started in 1496.¹⁴⁰ The term ‘Journals of Common Council’ is misleading, as by the late fifteenth century the proceedings of the Common Council comprise barely a fifth of the bulk of the relevant volumes. As the Common Council met, on average, only around a dozen times a year and each meeting usually yielded only a couple of paragraphs, the Journals would be slim volumes indeed if this were their sole content. The rest consists mainly of brief summaries of proceedings in the Mayor’s Court, recognisances, arrangements regarding the care of orphans, livery company petitions addressed to the mayor and aldermen and, until 1496, the activities of the Court of Aldermen. The Journals are almost exclusively written in Latin in a manner that suggest that items were written up in haste: the civic clerks do not have the neatest of handwriting and employ a shorthand, particularly for regular business, that is peculiarly their own. The Journals and Letter Books fail to yield as much detail about both civic and national politics as they do for events earlier in the fifteenth century, as Caroline Barron has demonstrated.¹⁴¹ The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the Journals expanded during the course of the second half of the fifteenth century to encompass more of the day-to-day business of the Guildhall. The expansion of information therein eventually necessitated the creation of a new series of books. In 1495/6 a new series, the Repertories, commenced, and almost exclusively recorded the decisions of the Court of Aldermen, which usually met on a weekly basis, leaving the Journal as a diary of City business. The same shorthand found in the Journals is also employed in the Repertories, but the meetings of the aldermen tend to be recorded in English rather than Latin.

Caroline Barron found that the content of the majority of the Journals for the Lancastrian and Yorkist periods consisted of the proceedings of the Court of Aldermen. Examination of Journals five and seven, which cover the middle of the century, confirm that the nature of the information recorded in the Journals appears to have changed by Journal nine, which starts in 1483.¹⁴² The reason that the City records became more

¹⁴⁰ The Repertories series commenced in 1496, not 1495 as is commonly reported. The first meeting of the Court of Aldermen recorded in the first volume is 11 July 1496 and the recording of the proceedings of this body transitioned from the Journals to the Repertories over the following 2 months.

¹⁴¹ Barron, *London*, and ‘The Government of London’.

¹⁴² Barron, *London*, 5.

laconic is open to conjecture. It is possible that the civic authorities became generally more wary about committing to paper information that might prove incriminating. The fear of the aldermen that the content of their discussions might be disseminated to their detriment is apparent in a meeting of the Court of Aldermen, 23 January 1509, when all present were sworn to keep the court's secrets and not disclose anything spoken therein for the commonweal of the City.¹⁴³ The discretion of the Journals predates this meeting, though, and therefore might also in part be attributable to the preferred practice of the Common Clerk of the City, Nicholas Pakenham, who was appointed to that role in February 1490.¹⁴⁴

Many of the livery companies of the City have surviving records of some kind from this period, including many for the lesser companies that fail to survive for earlier reigns. Apart from charters and deeds of title, this mostly takes the form of account books, which are little more than annual summaries of expenditure and receipt and vary in the depth and quality of information they offer. Only the Mercers', Tailors' and Goldsmiths' Companies have extant minutes of the meetings of their courts. That of the Mercers survives only as a much-edited sixteenth century transcript yet it is by far the most comprehensive, giving valuable detail about the company's response to political situations.¹⁴⁵ It is arguably more useful in gauging responses within the City to national events on most occasions than the records of the corporation of London. The surviving Tailors' court minutes cover only 1486-1493 and give little detail on matters not immediately concerning them. They give an insight into the day-to-day business of a company, its relations with other companies and Guildhall and occasional glimpses of their lobbying activities, ceremonial duties within the City and the admission of honorary members.¹⁴⁶ Lastly, the minute books of the Goldsmiths' Company are, misleadingly, not true minute books but rather a series of annual reports. These are selective in reporting matters of interest and financial transactions. In 1492 a new, more detailed, minute book was created which ran in tandem with the original

¹⁴³ Rep.2, ff.57-57v.

¹⁴⁴ Jo.9, f.245v. The references given in this thesis for the journals relate to the pagination in ink on the top right of the page rather than the pencilled number at the bottom as these numbers are more consistent.

¹⁴⁵ *Acts*.

¹⁴⁶ *The Merchant Tailors' Company of London: Court Minutes 1486-1493*, ed. Matthew Davies (Stamford, 2000).

book until 1499, but even that gives little information about the discussions that may have taken place within the company meetings.¹⁴⁷ The Livery Company accounts supplement the information to be found in the civic records and occasionally provide a citizen's view of Crown-City negotiations.

1.5. Approach and Structure

Two main themes underpin this thesis. The first of these concerns the expectations which the City of London and its inhabitants on the one hand, and the Crown on the other, had of each other, for they provide the yardstick by which the success of the relationship can be judged and compared to other ruler-city relationships. This thesis will ask what these expectations were, whether they reflected the traditional relationship between the two and the extent to which these expectations were met or adjusted during the course of the reign. Not since the Conquest had an English monarch and his capital city been so unacquainted at the time of accession. Henry's expectations of his capital may have been shaped, in part, by his experiences in exile. As a spectator of European politics he would have been aware of the conflict between the city-states of the Netherlands and Maximilian, king of the Romans.¹⁴⁸ The City, as a corporate entity, may therefore have been perceived to represent a potential danger, an over-mighty subject in urban form, an entity in need of a firm hand.

The Londoners would have been similarly ignorant about their new king, perhaps knowing only that the support he enjoyed at Bosworth included only a few members of the nobility. The citizens may have surmised that Henry, as a usurper with little support, would have been in a vulnerable position upon his accession to the throne in his need for the financial resources that the capital city could provide: could the Londoners perhaps have anticipated an opportunity to acquire not only confirmation but enhancement of their privileges and liberties in exchange for financial assistance? Might they also have been somewhat wary of a king unfamiliar with their needs, especially their commercial concerns? Henry had obtained the throne with French sponsorship: did this represent a threat to profitable trade with the Low Countries, or

¹⁴⁷ Goldsmiths' Company, Ms.1520, Minute Book A, 1444-1516, and Ms.1521, Minute Book B, 1492-1499.

¹⁴⁸ Gunn, Grummitt and Cools, *War, State and Society*, 41-45.

the promise of an end to the interruptions of foreign trade that seemed ominously present in the last years of the Yorkist kings?

The expectations the Londoners ordinarily had of their monarch were not very different to those held by the rest of the polity. Though individual works of the ‘mirror of princes’ genre of literature differed on the finer detail a consensus largely existed over the desirable qualities of a king. ‘Mirrors’ served as exemplars for rulers, purporting to reflect the ideal mode of behaviour for a king towards his subjects and other nations. John Fortescue, a chief justice of the King’s Bench writing in the 1470s, retained the traditional requirements of a king laid out in mirror literature, albeit with some adjustment to accommodate lessons learned in the recent civil strife.¹⁴⁹ The king was required to be able to defend his realm against external and internal military threats, dispense justice, pay wages and rewards, cover the costs of his own household from his own coffers and deck himself, his court and his buildings magnificently so as to enhance his prestige.¹⁵⁰ Fortescue added that the creation of over-mighty subjects was to be avoided, obviously with the earl of Warwick in mind. Fortescue also considered it the duty of a king to make his realm, and his subjects, rich: ‘it is dishonour when he hath but a poor realm of which men will say that he reigns but upon beggars,’ he wrote, adding, ‘Nothing may make his people rise but lack of goods or lack of justice’.¹⁵¹ John Watts has argued that Fortescue’s work reflected a permanent shift of thinking regarding the powers and responsibility of the king. As Fortescue’s work was not merely an updated Mirror made relevant to the circumstances of the time and was of the same practical mind-set that was later to be adopted by Edmund Dudley in his *Tree of Commonwealth*, Watts states that it can be construed that Fortescue was conveying commonly held views rather than composing a conceptual work.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ John Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Anglie*, ed. S.B. Chrimes (Cambridge, 1949), ch. 13; *Twenty-six Political and Other Poems*, ed. J. Kail (London, 1904), 55; *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. Gerald Harriss (Gloucester, 1985), 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ John Fortescue, *The Governance of England*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1885), 116-9, 122.

¹⁵¹ Fortescue, *Governance*, 138-9.

¹⁵² Watts, ‘A New Ffundacion of is Crowne’, 31-54; Edmund Dudley, *The Tree of Commonwealth*, ed. D.M. Brodie (Cambridge, 1949).

Fortescue, as a medieval commentator, enunciated the needs of the kingdom in his treatise and his instructions for the rule of the kingdom reflected a widely accepted ideal. The merchants of London would have expected a ruler to wish to help increase their prosperity, for a prosperous nation enhanced the glory of the monarch as well as the more practical consideration that increased trade led to increased customs revenue for the Crown. The London mercantile community would therefore have hoped that the new king would maintain diplomatic relations with the rulers of the countries it traded with and police the seas around English shores to ensure the safety of its merchandise. The citizens also, like the rest of the kingdom, desired a strong monarch, able to enforce the law and subdue faction, reducing the likelihood of a return to civil war and its consequent disruption of commercial enterprise. Most of all, they wanted the preservation of their privileges and liberties which they held so dear. All the large towns sought regular confirmation of their charters of liberties, but few had their prosperity and livelihoods depend upon them to quite the same extent. This was an area of potential conflict between the City and the Crown, as much depended on what the monarch thought these liberties should encompass and whether he felt them to encroach upon his prerogative.

The second theme relates to the ‘New Monarchy’ arguments outlined earlier. For Henry VII’s accession to herald the advent of a ‘new monarchy’ the reign would have had to have witnessed the implementation of new thinking in matters of administration, policy and/or governmental practice. Is there evidence of a new approach in the Crown’s management of the relationship with the City? Was there a lasting change in the relationship as a consequence of deliberate action on the part of either the Crown or the City during the reign? Or is there more evidence of continuity, an acceptance, perhaps, that the relationship was once of interdependence that required the cooperation of both parties?

At the outset of the reign the relationship was one that defied characterisation. It was not a partnership, as Christian Liddy saw town-Crown relations in the fourteenth century, though the City and the Crown were able to cooperate in partnership on occasion towards common goals.¹⁵³ The relationship was also not merely a patronage

¹⁵³ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, 1.

arrangement, as Lorraine Attreed saw Crown relations with urban centres in the late medieval period.¹⁵⁴ Rather, the relationship was entirely unique within England, if not within Europe. It contained functional elements between autonomous departments of the royal administration and sections of London society, particularly regarding the provision of goods to the royal household. Though this did not directly influence the political relationship between the two entities the knowledge that City and Crown were intimately entwined encouraged a spirit of cooperation.

Political upheaval altered the equilibrium of the Crown-City relationship. The dynastic struggles of the previous fifty years had arguably altered the priorities harboured by the king by placing the security of his own regime above the commonweal. The king's alteration of priorities, together with the experience within living memory of Crown instability, led to an adjustment of those of the City. A desire to escape possible retribution for overtly supporting the wrong faction in political struggles became of paramount importance, though this did not exclude the possibility of occasional covert action. The London that Henry Tudor came to rule, then, was a place accustomed to working in partnership with its king towards common goals but also familiar with the selfish nature of kingship that subordinated the commonweal to personal ambition and self-preservation. The relationship was pliable, a consequence perhaps of its necessity, able to adapt to the individual personalities of the monarch and prevalent political, commercial and diplomatic currents. 'The relationship was reciprocal but not static', observed Vanessa Harding, 'even the financial relationship was characterised by negotiability and accommodation.'¹⁵⁵ How did the relationship adapt to the personality of Henry VII and the character of his government? Did the Crown attempt to steer the relationship or approach it in an innovative manner?

Henry and his ministers were keen to reinforce, and in some cases resurrect, the hereditary rights the king acquired along with the throne.¹⁵⁶ Royal prerogative rights that had lapsed over the course of the fifteenth century were reinstated, though as these drew on the resources of the king's subjects they were unpopular and thought unjust as

¹⁵⁴ Attreed, *King's Towns*, ch.4.

¹⁵⁵ Harding, 'King and the City', 314.

¹⁵⁶ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 135-7.

their fathers had not been subject to them. Agencies were created and specialised legal personnel employed to investigate the king's rights. Such appointments became formalised in the course of the reign: Richard Empson headed the Council Learned, the post of Master of the Wards was created for Sir John Hussey in 1501, whilst towards the end of the reign, Edward Belknap and Robert Southwell became Surveyor of the King's Prerogative and Surveyor of Crown Lands respectively.¹⁵⁷ Did Henry's reassertion of his prerogative rights affect his relationship with his capital? Did this assertion of royal rights fundamentally alter the Crown-City relationship at all?

Lastly, it is necessary to address the issue of how Henry's alleged avarice, displayed in the last years of his reign, affected the City. A king was expected to act for the commonweal, for, Fortescue wrote, 'when a king rules his realm only to his own profit and not to the good of his subjects he is a tyrant'.¹⁵⁸ 'Tyrant' seems a rather strong word when applied to the rulers of England, as it implies a rule of cruelty, illegality and despotism such as one associates with the likes of Caligula, Nero or, more recently, Stalin and Hitler. English kings were, since Magna Carta, subject to the law; they upheld the law rather than stood above it. To the English medieval observer, then, a tyrant might well be as Fortescue described: a monarch who acted illegally 'to his own profit' at the expense of the commonweal. Given that Henry VII was accused by his contemporaries of avarice was he also, therefore, considered a tyrant? It would be easy to gain the impression from secondary writing that the fiscal exactions of the last years were particularly heavy in London. Was this the case? Did London suffer as much as the rest of the realm? Was there a noticeable change in government in the last years of the reign as far as the capital was concerned? Were there consistencies with the rest of the realm in relations with the capital during the last years? Change and continuity in the Crown's relationship with the capital is therefore the second theme of this thesis.

This thesis will, through necessity, be selective in its approach and concentrate on the political interaction between the Crown and the City, defined in this context as the interaction between politically active entities and individuals within the Crown and the City. The political relationship was driven by a variety of factors, mainly connected to

¹⁵⁷ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 134.

¹⁵⁸ Fortescue, *Governance*, 117

the needs of the City and the Crown already outlined. These needs were not, in the main, conflicting or mutually exclusive, but often required balancing and negotiation. The forms this negotiation took comprise a key part of this study. This thesis is not intended to be an extension of the comprehensive survey of medieval London, completed by Caroline Barron in 2004, which has become a standard textbook on the subject, and nor will it seek to explore the lives of the citizens of the capital as Sylvia Thrupp did so expertly in 1948.¹⁵⁹ Hence issues concerning trade, health and maintenance, care of the poor and orphans, religious provision and law will only be addressed when they are pertinent to the City-Crown relationship. In matters pertaining to the City, the focus will be upon those within London who had a political voice: the freemen, or citizens, of the City. As the freedom of the City was usually obtained through the completion of an apprenticeship and subsequent admission to one of the livery companies only around 3,000-4,000 men were freemen from a population of perhaps as many as 50,000 in 1500.¹⁶⁰

The word ‘City’ will be capitalised when used to signify the municipality of the City of London but not when used in any other context. Similarly, the term ‘Crown’ will be capitalised when used to denote the king, his council, household and his courtiers engaged in administrative duties concerning the government of the realm. The medieval court was a nebulous body, the definition of which has provoked much historiographical debate.¹⁶¹ For the purposes of this study it will be defined as the immediate surroundings of the ruler, consisting of those who attended him. This is not to be confused with the royal household, the *raison d’etre* of which was to look after the immediate needs of the person of the king. The court was where the king feasted, entertained and dispensed patronage. Court and council were intertwined. The council was the body that ordinarily dictated policy. Councillors were also courtiers by virtue of their proximity to the king and therefore the court was understood by contemporaries

¹⁵⁹ Barron, *London*; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*.

¹⁶⁰ R. Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge, 1981), 51; Barron, ‘London and the Crown’, 88.

¹⁶¹ For a summary of the arguments herein see Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (London, 1997), 332-335 and Rosemary Horrox, ‘Caterpillars of the Commonwealth? Courtiers in Late Medieval England’, in Rowena F. Archer ed., *Rulers & Ruled in Late Medieval England: Essays Presented to Gerald Harriss* (London, 1995), 1-15.

to be wherever the king and his advisers were in residence, and whence the government of the realm emanated.

This thesis falls into three parts. The first, into which this and the second chapter fall, will explore themes of expectation and political affiliation. This part will explore the expectations that the capital and the king had of each other after Bosworth. The relationship that the City enjoyed with the Yorkist kings will be briefly considered in order to provide a context and a contrast for the reign of Henry VII. Did Henry arrive in the capital in October 1485 with fully formed expectations of his capital, or did they develop as he became acquainted with the City? How did these expectations differ from those held by his predecessors? James Bolton's argument that London merchants could not afford to be politically apathetic will be tested through its application to a comparison between the attitude of the Londoners to the Yorkist kings and to Henry Tudor during the first years of his rule with the intention of ascertaining whether any manifestation of political affiliation was apparent in the summer of 1485, or whether London's acceptance of the new king was entirely passive in acceptance of political reality. The battle of Stoke in June 1487 was a testing ground for Henry VII, being a large pitched battle against his rebels, aided by foreign mercenaries, in which he triumphed with the aid of his magnates. Did his victory have any effect upon the attitude of the Londoners towards the king? Did confidence increase in the royal government after Henry's victory?

The second part of the thesis, comprising Chapters Three to Five, is a thematic examination of the relationship. Chapter Three focuses on the financial relationship between the City and the Crown. To what extent did the relationship change as the king's financial needs changed? The chapter will also assess the overall financial contribution the City made to royal coffers, through trade customs and taxation. Chapter Four examines the triangular relationship between the livery companies, the government of London and the Crown which, unusually in the study of early Tudor Crown-City relations, has received a reasonable amount of attention from historians. Arguably this is partly because an interest in the origin and development of the livery companies has always been sponsored and promoted by the companies themselves, and research into this area is aided by the amount of extant company accounts. What has not been studied in as much detail is Henry's relationship with individual companies:

did he favour some companies over others, and if so, why? Chapter Five explores the channels of communication between the court and the City, both official and unofficial. These have been contemplated by researchers only as a by-product of other studies on diverse topics both connected and unconnected to Henry's rule, but not as a theme in itself. What form did communication take during the reign? What instruments, institutions and individuals facilitated such communication in both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances? Did any changes in the method or form of communication occur during the reign?

The last part of the thesis examines the last years of Henry VII's reign. Tradition, originated by Henry's contemporary official biographer, Polydore Vergil, has it that Henry indulged in a financially-motivated persecution of his subjects during this time. As already discussed, a consensus exists amongst historians that the persecution was widespread and the claim by the London chroniclers and Vergil that this was motivated by the king's avarice is unquestioned. As the extant sources for the reign are weighted towards providing evidence of widespread persecution, not just geographically but throughout the English polity, this is hardly surprising. The known expansion of the bond system by Henry and his government has left a paper trail that indicates the imposition of widespread financial burden upon all levels of society.¹⁶² Hence it is not difficult to find evidence of persecution if one seeks it, or contemporary accounts condemning his greed. Did this persecution represent a policy of fiscal tyranny motivated by avarice, or was it a politically-motivated suppression of specific targeted opponents? Can a consistent purpose be identified in the selection of 'victims'?

The concluding chapter revisits the themes of expectation, change and continuity. It will address the historiographical questions regarding 'new monarchy' and 'tyranny' and assess the changes that took place in the Crown-City relationship over the course of the reign.

¹⁶² TNA, C223/E114 (unsorted bonds) etc.

Chapter 2: The Accession of Henry VII and the Establishment of Power

The Crown-City relationship started, at the outset of Henry VII's reign, with both parties in a position of comparative ignorance about the other. Mutual expectations already existed, built over hundreds of years of institutional intimacy; the variable in 1485 was the person of Henry Tudor, whose style as ruler would have been entirely unknown and unknowable. This chapter explores the expectations Henry and London had of each other and assesses the relationship London shared with the Yorkist kings so an evaluation of change under Henry VII might be undertaken. Had the dynastic struggles of the last fifty years affected the institutional power of the Crown, or was it sufficiently strong that the monarch warranted obedience regardless of his background or the circumstances of his accession? This chapter will assess the extent to which London's mercantile community was divided politically and ask whether the king's victory at the Battle of Stoke effected a change in the attitude of the Londoners towards Henry's rule.

2.1 London and the Yorkist Kings

The support of the Londoners had been influential in the dynastic wars of the fifteenth century. The size and wealth of the City conferred a political power upon it that had to be handled carefully by the Crown. The governors of the City were generally cautious in times of political strife, for the consequences of supporting the wrong side were considerable. By the time Henry Tudor seized the throne the City's policy of visible caution had been well-established, ensuring that the City was, in appearance at least, as non-partisan as possible. Knowledge of the development and implementation of this policy enables a better understanding of the City's reception of news of Henry's accession.

2.1.1. Accession and Readeption.

The decision of the City of London to admit the earls of Warwick, Salisbury and March and their armies in July 1460 was one 'born of realism and self-interest, not of

principle,' according to Caroline Barron.¹ In other words, it was not a demonstration of preference or affiliation, but rather a practical response to an army at the gates. The natural inclination of the ruling elite of the City in times of political stress was to respond with 'conservatism and caution', but they could be overpowered by the 'mob' in times of unrest.² This 'mob' comprised the 10,000 or so unenfranchised, lower echelons of society: the apprentices, servants, vagrants and day workers.³ The Londoners were not, therefore, a homogenous mass, but comprised different strata of society, with horizontal divisions across London's population, 'separating the wealthy from the poor, merchants from artisans, citizens from the unenfranchised.'⁴ Hence the ruling elite, who had demonstrated their loyalty to the Lancastrian regime throughout the 1450s with a series of loans, only changed allegiance when circumstance and the demands of the 'mob' put the collective back of the Court of Aldermen against the proverbial wall. London's civic government was then obliged to continue to support the Yorkist cause not only for fear of reprisals by a potentially victorious and vindictive Lancastrian government, but also by the wholehearted Yorkist affiliation of the 'commons'.⁵

Professor Barron's argument presumes unity within the two identified strata of society, a premise which Professor James Bolton sees as simplistic and unrealistic. The City authorities, comprising as they did the great merchants and businessmen of the capital, were not 'political eunuchs with neither will nor opinion of their own', willing only to follow the politics of expediency: they could not afford to be, as the politics of trade were essential to their continued prosperity.⁶ These arguments are not entirely mutually exclusive. Though Bolton's refutation of Barron's argument that the City did not become Yorkist until 2 July 1460 is compelling, there is no denying that divisions between poor and rich co-existed with those apparent within the mercantile community.

¹ Barron, 'London and the Crown'.

² Barron, 'London and the Crown', 90.

³ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 89.

⁴ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 89.

⁵ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 90.

⁶ Bolton, 'City and the Crown', 12.

However, Barron's conclusion that 'in 1461 the aldermen were Lancastrian and the mob was Yorkist [and] in 1471 the aldermen were Yorkist and the mob largely Lancastrian' is open to question.⁷ The basis for her argument is the reluctance of the aldermen to fully embrace the Yorkist cause in 1461, as demonstrated by their preparations to send supplies to the queen's army in February 1461, a design overturned by the actions of the 'commons'. Barron's assertion that the 'commons' referred to by the Great Chronicle were the unenfranchised masses is by no means certain.⁸ The Great Chronicle states that the mayor and the commons favoured York over the Queen's party, but does not specify who the commons were. Gregory's Chronicle claims that carts of supplies intended for the queen's army were taken by 'men of London and comyns'. Could not the 'men of London' be merchants, or prominent citizens rather than the unenfranchised?⁹ The chronicles do not speak with the derision usually reserved for the lower sectors of society when referring to the commons, and one might conclude that this was merely a collective noun employed when writing about men of the City not individually influential.

Similarly the aldermen cannot be said to have been uniformly Yorkist in 1471. A faction that was Lancastrian in its loyalties asserted itself under the auspices of the disgraced alderman Thomas Cook and dictated the actions of the civic government during the reademption crisis of 1470-71.¹⁰ Cook and his supporters wielded power within the City 'to the hurt and Indempnyte of such as he knewe bare any favour unto kyng Edward.'¹¹ Once news of Edward's imminent return was circulated within the City Cook and his followers were quickly ousted. It is inaccurate to state that all

⁷ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 91.

⁸ A variety of spelling appears, such as 'comons'. 'comyns' etc. For similar statements see 'A Short English Chronicle: London under Henry VI (1422-71)', *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. James Gardiner (London, 1880), 58-78.

⁹ *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. James Gairdner (London, 1876), 210-239.

¹⁰ For the prosecution of treason against Cook and other prominent Londoners see M.A. Hicks, 'The Case of Thomas Cook, 1468', in his *Richard III and his Rivals: Magnates and Motives in the Wars of the Roses* (London, 1991), 419-27; Ross, *Edward IV*, 99-101; Anne Sutton, 'Sir Thomas Cook and his 'Troubles': An Investigation', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, iii (1978). For a purported eye-witness account of events see *GC*, 213-4.

¹¹ *GC*, 214.

aldermen were Yorkist in 1471, and the episode illustrates how the civic government could be manipulated by a small power-group when faced with difficult political circumstance.

2.1.2. Edward IV

The trading activities of Edward IV led to an unprecedented alignment of Crown financial and mercantile commercial interests.¹² Edward's interest in trade, which encompassed the trade in goods such as wool and tin, was one shared with other members of the nobility; his mother, the duchess of York, was granted a licence to export 775½ sacks of wool annually for two years and thereafter 258½ sacks a year free of duty to the Mediterranean.¹³ John, Lord Howard and Richard, duke of Gloucester, owned at least two ships each which were used to carry freight to the markets in the Low Countries.¹⁴ Edward promoted English ship building and demonstrated an interest in developing new markets for English commerce, encouraging merchants to trade with the Barbary Coast of North Africa, where the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly.¹⁵ It was he, not Henry VII as has been claimed, who introduced the practice of 'wafting', whereby royal ships were used to provide protection for English commercial vessels, and his government made a concerted effort to curb piracy in the English Channel.¹⁶ Edward's efforts in this regard were further supported by the Mercers' Company, which gave a gift of 100 marks to the king for the safekeeping of the seas in 1472.¹⁷ Hence a partnership with the mercantile community was formed whereby the Crown and the City worked towards the extension of commercial enterprise.

Not that the mercantile community always believed that Edward acted in their interests. The chronicler John Warkworth commented that 'many men said that King Edward

¹² M.E. Mallet, 'Anglo-Florentine Commercial Relations, 1465-91', *Economic History Review*, xv, (1962), 257- 260.

¹³ Mallet, 'Commercial Relations', 260.

¹⁴ *Acts*, 63-64. Rosemary Horrox, 'Richard III and London', *The Ricardian*, lxxxv (1984), 323.

¹⁵ Ross, *Edward IV*, 353.

¹⁶ Ross, *Edward IV*, 353, 366-7.

¹⁷ Sutton, *Mercery*, 268.

had much blame for hurting merchandise.¹⁸ In response to anti-alien feeling in the City, Edward attempted to pressure the Hansards to allow London merchants reciprocal trading privileges in their territories. Edward might have succeeded but for the decision taken in 1468 to arrest and ransom all Hanseatic merchants in England in response to the seizure of four English vessels by the Danish.¹⁹ The Hanse retaliated and trade with the league ground to a halt and only resumed after the redeption, though reciprocal trading terms were never satisfactorily established.²⁰

Relations between the City and the Crown during Edward's reign were not always harmonious. At a meeting of the General Court of the Mercers' Company in June 1478, the assembled men were informed that the king 'was gretely displeased with the Maire and the Citie for a fraye late made betwene certen of his household seruautes and diuers parsons of this Citie.'²¹ The intervention of the Queen and the Lord Chamberlain, William, Lord Hastings, helped restore cordial relations between London and Edward, and 'caused nowe the Kyng to be oure good and gracious lorde'.²² At a meeting of the Common Council soon afterwards the mayor dictated that no citizen was to provoke any member of the king's household or the household of any other lord in order to keep the king's peace.²³ That the mayor had to make such a warning is suggestive of continuing tensions between the men of the royal household and the City.

Edward himself had no hesitation in raising any grievances he had with the London citizens. In September 1479 he voiced his suspicion to the mayor and aldermen that the merchants of the City sought to defraud him of customs paid in the Port of London. The mayor summoned the wardens of the livery companies with members within the Fellowship of the Adventurers and it was agreed that every man should 'bryng yn his bill or treu content uppon his othe'.²⁴ A format for these bills was agreed at a meeting

¹⁸ *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth* by John Warkworth, Warkworth, *Chronicle*, ed. J.O. Halliwell, Camden Society, x (1839), 12.

¹⁹ Ross, *Edward IV*, 365.

²⁰ Ross, *Edward IV*, 368.

²¹ *Acts*, 106-7.

²² *Acts*, 106-7.

²³ *Acts*, 106.

²⁴ *Acts*, 118-9.

of the Court of the Adventurers and further advice sought from the barons of the Exchequer.²⁵ The creation of a pro-forma for the declaration of customs is suggestive of an awareness of accounting difficulties, as were the subsequent fines imposed by the Adventurers and the Mercers upon their members for false accounting.²⁶ The king demanded recompense of £2,000, though this was reduced to 2,000 marks after the intervention of the Queen on the Adventurers' behalf.²⁷ The king had further cause to complain again when, in 1483, attacks on Dutchmen in the City disturbed the king's peace. The mayor charged all the wardens of the fellowships to disseminate this information to their companies 'for that no parson shuld be excused of ignorance'.²⁸

These events illustrate the nature of the relationship between the City and the Crown. Whereas both entities, for the most part, cooperated towards the achievement of mutually desirable goals such as the safety of the seas, promotion of commerce and stability of the City and the wider realm, the king's political and diplomatic needs and desires usually prevailed. The king had the right to demand co-operation and admonish merchants when he saw fit; the merchants could only petition the king and his court for redress when they felt the need, without confidence that their concerns would result in a favourable outcome. It is therefore evidence that the City and the Crown relationship was very far from being one of equals. Edward's determination to enforce customs and protect his income was not dissimilar to that displayed by Henry VII twenty years later.

As Edward remained reliant upon financial aid from the Londoners for the majority of the reign, and utilised members of their community in his trading activities, it remained in his best interest to maintain good relations with them. Charles Ross claimed that Edward was well aware of this and so 'courted, honoured, flattered and rewarded the leading London merchants more assiduously than any king before him.'²⁹ Between 1461 and 1471 he knighted eighteen London citizens, whereas only eleven had been knighted before, the last of them in 1439. Five London aldermen were created Knights of the Bath at the coronation of Elizabeth Woodville and a further eleven, plus the

²⁵ *Acts*, 119.

²⁶ *Acts*, 123, 127-8, 139.

²⁷ *Acts*, 123, 127-8.

²⁸ *Acts*, 145.

²⁹ Ross, *Edward IV*, 353.

mayor and the Recorder, were knighted following the City's successful resistance to the attack by the Kentish army under the Bastard of Fauconberg.³⁰

Unprecedented levels of interaction between the court of Edward IV and the citizens of London paved the way for further interaction in subsequent reigns. Edward famously entertained the mayor, then William Heryot (who also served as his factor in his Italian trading enterprises), the aldermen and certain leading citizens on a hunting trip in Waltham forest.³¹ Intermarriage between members of the nobility and the City became more common, as well as less formal liaisons between the king and certain wives of the mercantile community.³²

By the end of the reign Edward had become more autocratic in his dealings with the merchants and they, in turn, had become somewhat disenchanted with him. Edward's fury with the French king's alliance with Maximilian and dismissal of the terms of the treaty of Picquigny resulted in a royal embargo imposed upon trade with France and brought with it the possibility of war, an event looked upon with dread by the mercantile community.³³ The discontent of the merchants, combined with a possible weariness of benevolences, was reflected in the difficulties Edward suddenly encountered in raising funds.³⁴ In February 1483 there was difficulty in collecting an agreed loan to the king of £2,000 by the aldermen and eighty commoners. Each alderman was to give 50 marks and the commoners, £15 each. Eleven commoners refused to pay and their names were forwarded to the king upon his demand.³⁵ Arguably eleven out of 104 men in total is not a large number of defaulters. Even so, the event shows that individuals were prepared to demonstrate their discontent with the monarch, though the governors of London sought to present a united front.

³⁰ Ross, *Edward IV*, 354.

³¹ *GC*, 228-9.

³² Anne Crawford, 'Howard, John, first duke of Norfolk (*d.* 1485)', *ODNB*; Anne Sutton, "'Serious Money': The Benefits of Marriage in London, 1400-1499', *London Journal*, xxxviii (2013), 1-17; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 266-8; Ross, *Edward IV*, 355.

³³ Sutton, *Mercery*, 263-272.

³⁴ Anne Sutton, 'Richard III, The City of London and Southwark', *The Ricardian*, xlvi (1975), 3-8.

³⁵ Jo.9, ff.14 & 14v.

2.1.3. *Richard III*

The reign of Richard III lasted barely over two years, yet is probably one of the most studied in English history. Charles Ross, in his 1981 biography of the king, claimed that ‘something has been written about [Richard III] in every single generation since his death almost five hundred years ago’ and the growth of the corpus of literature on the subject has, since then, gained further momentum.³⁶ Yet though the historical sources of the reign have been picked over time and again the relationship this monarch shared with his capital is usually accorded only a passing reference. This is particularly surprising as the two most debated events of the reign, the usurpation of Richard and the disappearance of his nephews, were played out in the capital and had a profound effect upon the citizens. Richard’s lack of popularity in the City is emphasised in the contemporary chronicles and is listed as a staple reason for his ultimate downfall in undergraduate essays on the subject, yet the reasons for this unpopularity are seldom subjected to scrutiny. Why would London not welcome the accession of a full-grown man, proven military commander with unquestionable royal blood rather than a young boy raised in the Welsh Marches by the *parvenu* Woodville family?

Paul Murray Kendall, in his rather romanticised biography of Richard III, stated that Richard was unknown to the Londoners at the time of his accession and his preference for northerners made the City hostile towards him.³⁷ Rosemary Horrox rejected this, and also dismissed the idea that Richard was unfamiliar with the City prior to his accession, revealing a number of contacts he had enjoyed within the capital as duke of Gloucester.³⁸ He had spent much time in the capital as duke when his, and his brother’s, political needs demanded. He owned at least two ships, and therefore may have engaged in business with members of London’s mercantile community.³⁹ He was acquainted with the man that the City selected to act as their Recorder, Thomas Fitzwilliam, who took office on 19 June 1483. Fitzwilliam was a Lincolnshire lawyer who had had contact with Richard as duke of Gloucester through his previous employment by the duchy of Lancaster and possibly also through his wife, who was

³⁶ Charles Ross, *Richard III*, (London, 1981), xxxv.

³⁷ Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard III* (London, 1955), 127.

³⁸ Horrox, ‘Richard III and London’, 323.

³⁹ Horrox, ‘Richard III and London’, 323.

perhaps a kinswoman of one of Richard's followers, Sir James Harrington.⁴⁰ That the City selected a man acceptable to Richard, argues Horrox, illustrates that the civic administration were aware of the practical benefits of courting Richard's favour.⁴¹ Horrox also noted the connections Richard had with the livery companies of London, forged during his brother's reign. The Tailors, ever with an eye to the future, initiated Richard and his brother George into their fraternity in 1462. In 1473 Richard had investigated, in his capacity as Constable of England, a matter of variance between two Goldsmiths, which the Goldsmiths' Company eventually had remitted to themselves to solve.⁴²

Richard's initial mishandling of the problem of piracy in the English Channel led directly to its increase and may have lost him support amongst the mercantile community. The government of Edward IV had some notable success in tackling the problems of piracy but early in Richard's reign it became a problem.⁴³ Pirates based mainly in Devon and Cornwall seized the opportunity presented by the change of monarch and took to the seas with devastating effect. The channel became more dangerous to mercantile shipping when Richard, alarmed by the support offered by the Breton Duke Francis to Henry Tudor, commissioned several privateer ships to attack ships from Brittany and France.⁴⁴ English acts of piracy led to retaliation by marauders from Brittany, France and the Netherlands and inevitably the occasional merchant ship was plundered. Richard made matters worse when he issued orders to mayors, sheriffs and port officials in London, Southampton, Bristol and London to seize ships from the places of origin of pirates that attacked English shipping, including the Netherlands.⁴⁵ Richard was later to take vigorous action against privateers, but the initial escalation of the situation had been in part a consequence of his own actions and policy.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Jo.9, f.26v; Horrox, 'Richard III and London', 324.

⁴¹ Horrox, 'Richard III and London', 324.

⁴² Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 151-2.

⁴³ Ross, *Edward IV*, 353 and *Richard III*, 194-5.

⁴⁴ Ross, *Richard III*, 197.

⁴⁵ *CPR*, 362, 366, 369, 402, 426, 465.

⁴⁶ Ross, *Richard III*, 197-8.

In addition to the pirates, trade with the Low Countries was blighted by the civil wars that had wracked the area in the aftermath of the death of Duke Charles the Bold in 1477. The situation became so dangerous that the Merchant Adventurers actually imposed its own embargo on trade with the Low Countries in August 1484 on its members.⁴⁷ The letters of William Cely, based in Calais, to his employers in London convey a mounting sense of panic. In May 1484 he wrote that war was imminent not only with France but also with Flanders, for ‘many man fear that Flanders will not be our friends long’.⁴⁸ The restraint upon trade ended after a couple of months when the Adventurers, with Richard’s support, sent embassies to the cities of Ghent and Antwerp to negotiate safe conduct for their merchants.⁴⁹ With the prospect of war disrupting the business of the Merchant Adventurers and Staplers alike, it is possible to see that the foreign policies of Richard’s government might not have been popular.

That Richard was personally unpopular within London is so widely reported in the contemporary, or near contemporary, evidence that it is rarely disputed. The duke of Buckingham’s recital of Richard’s claim to the throne before the livered citizens gathered at the Guildhall, according to the Great Chronicle, was given with rare oratorical skill but received only subdued acclamation. When the assembled citizens were exhorted to acclaim Richard as their king the few that did shout their approval acted ‘to Satisfye his myend more ffor fere than for love’.⁵⁰ Thomas More recounts the same episode, stating that the monologue was greeted with a stunned silence.⁵¹ The assembly of Londoners was aware of Richard’s claim already, for Ralph Shaa, the brother of the mayor, had preached Richard’s right to the throne at St Paul’s Cross two days previously.⁵² The citizens might well have been bemused, given the lengths to which Richard had gone to assure the mayor and aldermen of his loyalty to Edward V beforehand, even ensuring that the text of the oath the protector and his council had

⁴⁷ Sutton, *Mercery*, 272-3.

⁴⁸ *Cely Letters*, 216

⁴⁹ Sutton, *Mercery*, 273; *Cely Letters*, 225.

⁵⁰ *GC*, 232; Fabyan, *New Chronicles*, 669.

⁵¹ Thomas More, *The History of King Richard the Third*, ed. George Logan (Indiana, 2005), 88-89.

⁵² *GC*, 231-2; Ross, *Richard III*, 88-89.

sworn to the young king was read to the City fathers.⁵³ The civic government could have been forgiven for wondering what Richard's oath was worth and how far he could be trusted. That this came after the illegal executions of Woodville, Grey and Hastings, which would have shocked the citizens of London, may have contributed to the unpopularity of Richard's claim. William, Lord Hastings, was a well-known and popular figure in the City, described by the Mercers as 'oure verrey good speciall lorde'.⁵⁴ London was where he socialised and did business. More than one prominent citizen would have grieved for him.

A state of confusion existed in the City in the months after Edward IV's death which would not have endeared Richard, as protector or king, to the City inhabitants. Rumours of a 'crewe of men arerid in the North' set to march on London would have struck fear into the citizens, though Richard did attempt to reassure the Londoners by restricting the number of men in magnate retinues within the walls.⁵⁵ George Cely's note of June 1483 conveys some of the confusion and panic felt within the City: 'Ther ys grett romer in the Reme... Yff the Kyng, God safe his lyffe, wher dessett / The Dewke of Glosetter wher in any parell / Geffe my Lorde Prynse, wher God defend, wher trobellett / Yf my Lorde Haward wher slyne'.⁵⁶ The rumours of the deaths of the sons of Edward IV which were apparent in August 1483, which would be augmented the following year with rumours that Richard had poisoned his wife and intended to marry his niece, further damaged Richard's reputation in the eyes of the citizenry.⁵⁷

Richard's apparent lack of popularity ensured that by the time it was well-known in the City that Henry intended to claim the English throne 'the gentlemen and men of honour [knew] not which party to lend to'.⁵⁸ Yet Richard still managed to raise considerable funds from the City during his short reign. Two corporate loans were made by the City.

⁵³ Guth, 'Dun Cow', 188; Dominic Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard III*, ed. C.A.J. Armstrong (Oxford, 1969), 81-2.

⁵⁴ *Acts*, 123.

⁵⁵ *GC*, 231, 232; Mancini, *Richard III*, 95. Attitudes of the southerners regarding the northerners are examined by Anthony Pollard, 'North, South and Richard III', *The Ricardian*, lxxiv (1981), 384-389.

⁵⁶ *Cely Letters*, 185.

⁵⁷ *GC*, 232; Mancini, *Richard III*, 95

⁵⁸ *GC*, 237.

The first, in August 1484, was a loan of £2,400, to which the aldermen contributed £100 each. The following March the king requested remittance of repayment until the following Michaelmas, which the City granted.⁵⁹ In June it was agreed in Common Council that a further £2,000 would be lent for the ‘defence of the realm against his rebels’, to be raised by a tax of a fifteenth on the wards.⁶⁰ Neither of these loans was ever repaid. The Croyland Chronicler implied that many loans of this nature gathered around this time were not necessarily given voluntarily, but were little better than the benevolences levied by Richard’s late brother.⁶¹

In addition to the corporate loans a series of individual loans were requested and made in amounts ranging from £40 to £100, with collateral given for their repayment.⁶² The pledges, according to the Great Chronicle, were delivered by a ‘pryst namyd Master Chatyrton’, probably Edmund Chaderton, Richard’s Treasurer of his Chamber. It is likely that many, if not the majority, of these loans were paid into the king’s Chamber, for which we lack records, rather than the Exchequer. From the extant records it is apparent that Edmund Shaa lent at least £233 6s 8d and probably more, and also bought plate from Richard for £550 13s 4d.⁶³ Other aldermen who lent money include Thomas Hill (£100), Henry Colet (£50) and William Martyn (£45).⁶⁴ Richard Gardynere lent 100 marks secured on a salt of gold, a pledge redeemed on Henry VII’s behalf by John de Vere, earl of Oxford.⁶⁵ Other pledges offered were a heavily decorated helmet formerly owned by Edward IV, some cups of gold and twelve silver-gilt apostle spoons.⁶⁶ Giving pledges as collateral was not a novelty, and nor can it be read as indicative of the

⁵⁹ Jo.9, ff.56r, 85r.

⁶⁰ Jo.9, ff.78v, 81.

⁶¹ *Ingulph’s Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the continuations by Peter of Blois and anonymous writers*, trans. and ed. Henry Riley (London, 1854), 498.

⁶² *GC*, 235-6.

⁶³ Both Anne Sutton and Rosemary Horrox state that Shaa lent at least £500 to Richard whilst he was king, but this claim cannot be substantiated. Shaa lent £100 in June 1484 (TNA, E 401/950, m.6) and £133.6.8 in January 1485 (E401/951, m.8; *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, Rosemary Horrox and P.W. Hammond ed., 4 vols. (Gloucester, 1979), i, 163). Two further payments from the Exchequer to Shaa for 500 marks and £764 17s 6d may relate to loans (*Harleian 433*, ii, 110, 142).

⁶⁴ TNA, E401/950, m.6; TNA, E401/952, m.6.

⁶⁵ TNA, E404/79 no.55 shows the repayment to de Vere for this item and others.

⁶⁶ *GC*, 235-6.

merchants' regard for Richard's credit-worthiness; Edward IV had offered similar collateral for loans raised from syndicates of merchants in the late 1460s.⁶⁷ For their financial help the City was rewarded with a gold cup with a cover decorated with jewels and pearls.⁶⁸ This cup was later recorded as being in the keeping of Hugh Brice when he sought indemnity against its loss or theft.⁶⁹

The timing of these loans is debatable. Anne Sutton claims that the Great Chronicle is wrong to date these loans to late 1484-5 as they were made just after the rebellion of the Duke of Buckingham, a view shared by Paul Murray Kendall.⁷⁰ However, while it is true that the chronicler misdates the rebellion to 1484 rather than 1483, his dating of the loans is probably correct for three reasons. Firstly, there are no records of these pledges being redeemed during Richard's reign, as they might have been had the loans been made in 1483. Secondly, the chronicle states that the remittance of the £2,400 loan made by the aldermen happened at around the same time, if not before, the loans made by individuals upon pledges. This remittance, we know from the City records, happened in March 1485.⁷¹ Thirdly, Richard arguably had a greater need for the funds in 1485 than he did in 1483. Sutton's arguments appears to hinge upon the timing of the giving of the cup mentioned in the Great Chronicle, whereas it seems likely that this was merely one of at least two gold cups given by the king for the use of the commonalty at Guildhall.⁷² The other was given to the mayor, Robert Billesdon, at dinner on 6 January 1484.⁷³ At the same dinner Richard had made the extraordinary gesture of promising to the City the borough of Southwark and a gift of £10,000 towards walling the new acquisition.⁷⁴ That it took a week for the City to note the grant

⁶⁷ In 1469, for example, Hugh Brice orchestrated a loan by eight citizens of £1,676 13s 4d on the security of certain jewels. TNA, E404/74/1/148; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 285-287.

⁶⁸ *GC*, 236.

⁶⁹ Jo.9, f.114v.

⁷⁰ Sutton, 'City of London and Southwark', 5; Kendall, *Richard III*, 278. 483, n. 1.

⁷¹ Jo.9, f.68v.

⁷² *GC*, 236

⁷³ Jo.9, f.43v. Sutton, 'City of London and Southwark', 3-8. Sutton claims that these two cups are the same cup, but the descriptions given in the Journal of Common Council are distinct enough to suggest that they were different. The cup given at epiphany is described as gold (with no mention of a cover) and garnished with 'margarites' and lapis stones. I am grateful to Dr. Jessica Lutkin for her opinion.

⁷⁴ Jo.9, f.43; Horrox, *Richard III*, 313; Sutton, 'City of London and Southwark'.

in their records, and that no evidence exists that the City sought to further the claim, perhaps indicates that they never took the grant seriously. There is no mention of such a grant in the royal sources and the king had not the means to honour it, for Southwark was subject to several jurisdictions and the Crown had not £10,000 to give, facts the citizens would not have been in ignorance of.⁷⁵ Horrox speculated that the grant was so infeasible that Richard may have been drunk when he made the offer.⁷⁶ Even so, perhaps this episode proves that the will, if not the means, existed to please the citizens.

The perception that Richard was morally dubious, northern, unable or unwilling to engage in diplomacy helpful to the mercantile community, and unable to keep peace within the capital, kingdom or on the seas, may well have undermined support for Richard within the City. Elements within the mercantile community might have thought their interests better served with Henry Tudor upon the throne, who, though unfamiliar with the English polity and not blessed with a wealth of magnate support, could at least be expected to secure trade with France for the next few years. Expectation might also have been that a usurper would be greatly in need of the ready finance London could provide to bolster his position, which in turn could be expected to offer the City an opportunity to bargain for enhancement of trade privileges and liberties. Conversely, it could be argued that Richard's desperate need for funds provided an equally good opportunity, but he had already made the Londoners doubt his trustworthiness. Richard's attempt to purchase goodwill with empty promises would have done him no credit in the eyes of the Londoners. The prospect of a new king may have offered possibilities and opportunities; it is only with hindsight and knowledge of the personality of Henry Tudor that we know this was not the case.

The relationship the City had with the Yorkist kings demonstrates that the king had the upper hand in the relationship, even when in debt, both morally and financially, to the City. Crown and City shared common goals and the relationship was adversely affected when their goals were not aligned. While Edward shared the trading interest of his merchants their commercial needs would be placed at the forefront of policy. When the king's own interest took priority, as they did in his seizure of Hanse vessels in 1468,

⁷⁵ Horrox, *Richard III*, 313.

⁷⁶ Horrox, *Richard III*, 313, n. 184.

then mercantile interest was ignored. Similarly, Richard's policy of harassing Breton shipping to induce Duke Francis to give him Tudor made the seas unsafe for commercial shipping. The London that Henry Tudor was to inherit, therefore, was accustomed to working with the monarch towards common goals, but familiar with the selfish need of kings for security which often demoted their needs.

2.1.4. Possible Early Support in the City for Tudor

Margaret Beaufort, Tudor's mother, was committed to the care of her husband, Thomas, lord Stanley, and narrowly escaped attainder in the parliament of 1484 after being found guilty of conspiring against the king. The parliamentary indictment against her accused her, amongst other things, of making:

chevissancez of greate sommes of money, aswell within the citee of London as in other places of this roialme, to be employed to the execucion of the said treasoun and malicious purpose.⁷⁷

The mercantile community of London, being a source of ready cash, was the obvious contributor to Margaret's fundraising. The language of the indictment also suggests mercantile involvement. Chevissances (variously referred to as 'chevisance' or 'chevance') were, strictly speaking, financial bargains, though the term was often used to refer to arrangements whereby interest was to be paid.⁷⁸ The question is, then, with whom did she make these bargains? As the merchants were the richest men in the City it is not unlikely that some of their number were amongst the sponsors, though it is to be asked whether those merchants who gave money to this cause did so wittingly, and if so, why? And who were they? On what terms: as loans or as gifts?

Reynold Bray was in charge of the conspiracy to bring Tudor to the throne, according to Vergil, and therefore it is valid to suggest that he also played a major part in raising the requisite funding.⁷⁹ Thanks mainly to the scholarship of Margaret Condon, Bray's

⁷⁷ 2 Ric.III, c.6.

⁷⁸ K.B. McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), 75-77; *OED*, s.v. 'chevisance'.

⁷⁹ Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, ed. Henry Ellis, Camden Soc., 1st ser., xxix (London, 1844), 196, 215-6; M.M. Condon, 'Bray, Sir Reynold (c.1440-1503)', *ODNB*.

network within London after Henry's usurpation is known, but his contacts within the mercantile community prior to that can only be speculated upon. It is likely that he was familiar with many members of the Calais Staple, for his wife, Katherine Hussey, whom he married sometime in the mid-1470s, was the daughter of a former victualler of Calais.⁸⁰ He also was acquainted with the aldermen Henry Colet and Thomas Hill, who had regularly supplied Margaret's household with goods.⁸¹ Colet was, or at least became, a close friend of Bray's and served as one of the executors of his will of 1502.⁸² Colet acted as Bray's occasional feoffee and was involved with him in many business transactions.⁸³ Henry Colet is one of the few merchants listed in the Exchequer Receipt Rolls as a lender to the Crown in 1484.⁸⁴ This source, though, is not representative of either the number of merchants who lent funds to Richard or the amounts involved, for as previously mentioned most loans were paid directly into the king's Chamber. As well as being a friend of Bray's and acquainted with the household of Margaret Beaufort, Colet may have more reason than most to bear a grudge against Richard III, as he would have been made a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Edward V.⁸⁵ Colet, a Mercer, had been an alderman since 1476, though he was excused from his office for a year, from February 1482 – February 1483, owing to his continual absence in Calais.⁸⁶

That Colet is a likely candidate as an early supporter of Tudor is further suggested by the fact that he was honoured, with four other prominent merchants, on 6 January 1486 at Westminster by being knighted by Henry VII. The other four rewarded that day with Colet were Robert Billesdon, a Haberdasher who had served as mayor in 1484-5; John Broun, a Mercer, Adventurer and Stapler who had served as mayor in 1481-2; Broun's cousin, John Fenkill, a Draper who served as an MP in the 1484 parliament, and finally

⁸⁰ Condon, 'Pater Patriae', 138.

⁸¹ WAM, 12186, ff.4, 29, 50.

⁸² TNA, PROB11/13/26.

⁸³ Condon, 'Pater Patriae', 140; Anne Sutton, her in ODNB entry for Sir Henry Colet, states that a close friendship had existed between Bray and Colet since at least 1480, but I can find no firm evidence to support this. Anne Sutton, 'Colet, Sir Henry (c.1430-1505)', *ODNB*.

⁸⁴ Colet lent £50 in June 1484. TNA, E401/950, m.6.

⁸⁵ *Harleian 433*, iii, 11; W.A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, 2 vols. (London, 1906), ii, 21, 23.

⁸⁶ Jo.9, f.13, Beaven, ii, 15.

the Draper, William Capell.⁸⁷ No-one else was knighted with them, no big celebrations or feasting to honour the City took place and the event completely escaped the notice of the London chroniclers.⁸⁸ All five of those knighted in 1486 were senior within their crafts, having served or soon to serve as masters of their companies. All five were Staplers and aldermen, with two having already served as mayor. Therefore they were all politically engaged, commercially active, wealthy men with interests in English foreign and economic policy. It is plausible that they were being rewarded for funds given to Henry's cause before Bosworth, though this cannot be proved.

Beaven dates their knighthoods as 6 January 1487, but this can confidently be corrected to a year earlier, as from that time they are consistently referred to by their titles in the civic records.⁸⁹ The other honour of note distributed this day, significantly, was to the Breton, Philibert de Chandée, who was created earl of Bath for his assistance to Henry whilst in exile.⁹⁰ The charter creating Chandée an earl lists as present a rather illustrious crowd, including the archbishops of Canterbury and York and the bishops of Worcester and Exeter, all of whom held office in Henry's new administration; Jasper Tudor, duke of Bedford; John de la Pole, duke of Suffolk; John de Vere, earl of Oxford and Thomas Stanley, earl of Derby.⁹¹ Thus it seems likely that this was a day of reward and remembrance of past deeds.

The evidence to support the involvement of Colet, Billesdon, Broun, Fenkill and Capell in Bray's fundraising efforts is circumstantial at best, but enough exists to warrant conjecture. John Broun's family had suffered from Richard III's continuation of the war with Scotland. Originally from Northumberland, Broun's will made

⁸⁷ Shaw, *Knights*, ii, 23.

⁸⁸ Unlike when Ralph Astry was similarly knighted at an Epiphany feast (*GC*, 251).

⁸⁹ Jo.9, ff.128v, 130-131; Beaven gives January 1487 as the date of knighthood except in the case of Robert Billesdon, who he says was knighted in 1485, (Beaven, ii, 14-15, 17-18); Shaw seems uncertain as to when they were knighted, stating that it may have been 1485-6 or 1486-7. (Shaw, *Knights*, ii, 23). The date of January 1486 can further be substantiated by a privy seal warrant to Colet dated 5 April 1486 which refers to him as 'Henry Colet, knight', *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII from Original Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office*, ed. William Campbell, 2 vols. (London, 1877), i, 490.

⁹⁰ *Materials*, i, 246; ii, 152; Griffiths and Thomas, *Tudor Dynasty*, 129; Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 40

⁹¹ TNA, C53/199, m.18 (*CChR*, vi, 267).

provision for the payment of the ransom of two of his cousins, captured and held by the Scots.⁹² Fenkill, as Broun's cousin, may also have had links to Northumberland which might explain the grant to him of the keeping of Newbiggin in Northumberland in November 1485.⁹³ There is scant evidence of any further rewards given to these men: Colet received a grant in April 1486 of the free warren of six manors in Norfolk and Northampton, and at around the same time Capell was granted licence, with William Heryot and some merchants of Genoa, to export wools paying customs of only four marks per sack.⁹⁴

Knighthood was an easy reward for Henry to grant. It cost the king nothing, and to a rich London merchant it conferred honour and was a sign of royal favour.⁹⁵ While it is possible that these London merchants were rewarded for giving funds after Bosworth, there is no extant evidence to support this. It is possible that any sums received from these men went straight into the Chamber, in which case records of such payments are lost to posterity. However, loans and gifts from other merchants are recorded in the Exchequer records.⁹⁶ It is conceivable, therefore, that these men were being rewarded for giving funds before Bosworth.

Circumstantial evidence exists to suggest two other prominent members of the mercantile community might have offered support to Tudor before his accession. Hugh Brice and Edmund Shaa, both prominent Goldsmiths who worked within the Royal Mint, supplied goods of their trade to the court and were well connected within the elite of the City and the royal household, both had possible reasons to favour Tudor over Richard III.⁹⁷ Both worked closely with Lord Hastings when he was Master of the Mint and Brice and Shaa served under him as Master-Worker and Engraver respectively.⁹⁸ Brice's friendship with Hastings is evidenced by his commission from William Caxton of a book entitled *The Mirror of the World*, which he gave as a gift to the

⁹² TNA, PROB11/11/344.

⁹³ *Materials*, ii, 184.

⁹⁴ *Materials*, i, 490; II, 431.

⁹⁵ In fact it could be a burden, see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 275-277.

⁹⁶ TNA, E405/950-2.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 2, section 2.1.2.

⁹⁸ *CPR*, 1461-7, 113, 130; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 139-140, 286-306.

Chamberlain.⁹⁹ In a career that served as a prototype for that of John Shaa some decades later, Brice was a royal servant some years before he undertook civic duty. He went on foreign embassies for Edward IV.¹⁰⁰ As an individual he was one of the largest lenders of money to Edward IV, at around £3,800, not including his involvement in various syndicated loans.¹⁰¹ Between 1468-70 he appears to have orchestrated at least three, if not four, loans to Edward IV from a syndicate of London citizens, mostly Goldsmiths, and perhaps served as a conduit for more.¹⁰² He was rewarded for his generosity with the position of collector of the customs of tonnage and poundage in the port of London in the 1470s, a position which perhaps offered him some security on the loans he had given.¹⁰³ He served on diplomatic embassies for Edward IV in 1473 and 1478 and served as paymaster on some of the king's building projects.¹⁰⁴ There is no evidence that he served Richard III in the same way.

Brice was elected mayor 13 October 1485 and was inaugurated, according to tradition, on 28 October. On that same day, at the coronation of Henry VII, he was knighted, perhaps even inaugurated as a Knight of the Bath.¹⁰⁵ Was the individual or the City being honoured? This was some decades before mayors were habitually knighted in their mayoral year, or even usually so honoured on royal occasions. It was not without precedent to create Londoners Knights of the Bath, for Edward IV had made five Londoners such at the coronation of his queen in 1464.¹⁰⁶ Brice's friendship with

⁹⁹ Ross, *Edward IV*, 267; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 285.

¹⁰⁰ Cora L. Schofield, *Edward IV*, 2 vols. (London, 1923) ii, 457.

¹⁰¹ Penny Tucker, 'Government and Politics, London 1461-1483' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1995), 340, 427-8; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmith's Company*, 287 and Steel, *Receipt of the Exchequer*, 334-5, 345 give the lower figure of £2,850, but as Tucker itemises all of the loans given by Brice I have used her data.

¹⁰² TNA, E404/74/1/148, 1/92, 1/45 & 2/103; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 285-7.

¹⁰³ G.L. Harriss, 'Preference at the Medieval Exchequer', *Historical Research*, xxx (1957), 17-40; 'Introduction', *The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480-1*, ed. Henry Cobb (London, 1990), xi-xlvi [URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36072>, Date accessed: 13 May 2015].

¹⁰⁴ Schofield, *Edward IV*, ii, 457; J.R. Lander, 'Council Administration and Councillors, 1461-1485', *BIHR*, xxxii (1959), 173; Reddaway, unpublished notes; Tucker, 'Government and Politics', 368.

¹⁰⁵ Shaw, though he listed Brice as having been made a knight of the Bath with Reynold Bray and seven others, put a question mark by Brice's name. Shaw, *Knights*, i, 142

¹⁰⁶ Shaw, *Knights*, i, 134-5.

Hastings, affiliation to Edward IV and subsequent reward arouses suspicion that he might have worked covertly to bring about Henry's accession.

Edmund Shaa was a fellow Goldsmith and colleague to Brice at the Mint, and therefore would also have been well acquainted with Hastings. Shaa is usually assumed to have been a supporter of Richard's, for he is described by Thomas More as an ambitious man who saw in the situation his own advancement, which indeed happened when he was invited onto the king's council.¹⁰⁷ Whether Shaa actually did serve on the council cannot be ascertained from the extant evidence; he certainly played a prominent role in the usurpation of Richard III, but as mayor he had had little choice. Whilst true that he was rewarded for his role in the usurpation with a knighthood and that he lent large amounts to Richard, he was not necessarily a heartfelt supporter of the last Plantagenet.¹⁰⁸ Shaa's loyalties are apparent from at his will. One of the executors was his 'right especiall and tender loving frende' Reynold Bray. As this will was made in March 1487, a mere 18 months after Bosworth, it suggests a longer-standing friendship than one formed since Henry came to the throne.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, provision is made in Edmund's will for prayers to be said for Edward IV, Edward's sister Anne, duchess of Exeter, and Lord Herbert.¹¹⁰ His connection to the duchess and the Lord Herbert is unclear, but his loyalty to Edward is evident. Deposition of Edward's sons and the execution of a distinguished associate, if not friend, may have put him in the camp of Tudor's supporters.

The men named above, arguably, had not only commercial reasons to want a new government, but personal ones too. These men were well acquainted with each other, were involved in business ventures together and served as aldermen together. The kinship of Fenkill and Broun has already been mentioned. Shaa and Brice were well acquainted as fellow goldsmiths, joint lenders to the Crown during Edward IV's reign and colleagues at the Mint. Broun's son married Shaa's daughter.¹¹¹ Both Brice and

¹⁰⁷ More, *Richard the Third*, 68

¹⁰⁸ TNA, E401/950, June 1484, m.6 - £100; Jan 1485, m.8 - £133 6s 8d.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PROB 11/8/183. Though the will was made in March 1487 when he was mortally ill he did not die until early the following year.

¹¹⁰ TNA, PROB11/8/12.

¹¹¹ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 287.

Billesdon were closely acquainted with Dr Thomas Jane, dean of the Royal Chapel, who acted as executor for both of them.¹¹² Bray served as a common denominator between Colet and Shaa.

Whilst this evidence is circumstantial it suggests that a division in political feeling between members of the mercantile elite was not only possible, but probable. If one accepts Bolton's argument as applied to the situation in London in the 1450s that the London mercantile elite were not politically apathetic but capable of political action, albeit of a covert nature, then it is valid to look for such partisan behaviour in 1485.

The continental connections of the London mercantile community meant that the capital would have been aware of Henry Tudor's aspirations. It is likely that they were also aware of his failed invasion of November 1483. Calais Staplers would have brought news of the defection of Sir James Blount, steward of Hammes Castle in the Pale of Calais, and his prisoner, John, earl of Oxford, to Henry.¹¹³ Staplers and merchants who had traded with France and Brittany may have gathered news about the exile which could have been disseminated in the capital. Morton had spent part of his exile in Flanders and may have met with merchants there. It is possible, in this way, that the collective intelligence of the mercantile community exceeded that of Richard and his spies.

2.2. The Accession of Henry VII

The first few years of the reign of a usurper could be expected to be dangerous, with dissident Yorkists still to be subdued, the magnates of the realm to be wooed and won, and subjects to be simultaneously awed and tapped for funds. That Henry, a Welsh poor relation of the house of Lancaster, managed not only to survive as monarch, but go on to reign for twenty-four years in relative peace and successfully establish his dynasty, is astonishing, yet how he managed to establish and maintain power in the early years has merited little analysis from historians.¹¹⁴ Though it has been observed that by this point London was no longer able to act in a 'king-making' capacity, as arguably it had

¹¹² TNA, PROB11/11/2028 & 11/9/396.

¹¹³ James Ross, *John de Vere, Thirteenth Earl of Oxford* (Woodbridge, 2011), 81-2, 84.

¹¹⁴ For a localised study see Sean Cunningham, 'Henry VII and Rebellion'.

in 1461 and 1471, this has never properly been examined in terms of how the news of Bosworth was received by the Londoners and the way they regarded the new king.¹¹⁵

One of the few historians to address this issue directly is DeLloyd Guth, whose article about Richard III, Henry VII and the City relates in detail the circumstances surrounding both usurpations and theorises that by the time of the battle of Bosworth the City had only just ‘cautiously adjusted to Richard III’s two-year usurpation in time to face the prospect of another’s usurpation’.¹¹⁶ The suspicions harboured by the Londoners against the northerners in Richard’s regime and rumours surrounding the fate of the sons of Edward IV resulted in uneasy acceptance of his rule. By contrast, upon Henry’s triumphant entry into London ‘the city could now begin to relax for the first time since Edward IV’s death’, proved by the fact that by September 1485 the Common Council had turned its attention to the normal business of the City and ‘normalcy was about to return’.¹¹⁷ There are problems with this view: quite why London felt any more able to relax with the virtual foreigner, weak blood claimant and untried stranger, Henry, on the throne where it could not with the tried, tested and undeniably royal Duke of Gloucester, Guth fails to explain. Moreover the City’s desire to resume normal business was not indicative of a level of comfort with this situation; normal business never stopped, as is evident in the Common Council meetings held during the turbulent months of June-August 1483.¹¹⁸ As Keith Dockray has argued at this point: ‘The new king’s position was, in fact, notably weak even after Bosworth was won, perhaps even weaker than Richard III’s had been in the summer of 1483, since Henry lacked the kind of solid and seasoned body of supporters that Richard had had in the north’.¹¹⁹

Sean Cunningham, in his recent biography of Henry VII, saw the Londoners’ eagerness to greet the new king fresh from his victory at Bosworth as a demonstration of how the

¹¹⁵ Barron, ‘London and the Crown’, 91.

¹¹⁶ Guth, ‘Dun Cow’, 186.

¹¹⁷ Guth, ‘Dun Cow’, 198.

¹¹⁸ Jo.9, ff.82r & 84r.

¹¹⁹ Keith Dockray, ‘The Political Legacy of Richard III in Northern England’, in R.A. Griffiths and James Sherborne ed., *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages: a tribute to Charles Ross* (Gloucester, 1986), 207.

institutional power of the Crown had, by this time, developed to overcome personality politics, ‘The Crown warranted obedience, regardless of who wielded its authority’. The Londoners were realistic enough to know that a ‘usurping king backed by a victorious army had to be welcomed appropriately... to ensure that the power of the new Tudor monarch looked favourably upon London’s liberties’.¹²⁰ Cunningham saw the Crown-City relationship as far from relaxed, and emphasised the strains that initially affected the relationship in 1485, as the largely mercenary army that accompanied the new king to the City brought with it the sweating sickness which carried off two mayors, a number of aldermen and a fair proportion of the City’s inhabitants.¹²¹ It might well have been felt that God did not smile on the new regime, and the epidemic ‘was an inauspicious start ... and brought misery and suspicion to his early relationship with the capital’.¹²²

Stanley Chrimes, in what is still the most comprehensive biography of the king, did not dwell on the City’s reception of the new king, stating only that the ‘City fathers set about receiving the victor with proper ceremony’.¹²³ The inference is that the citizens of the City endured the minor inconvenience of the watch but otherwise life continued as normal, the advent of a new king impacting little upon their lives. To an extent this picture would not have been incorrect, disregarding the fact that the consequent coronation, parliament and pageantry would have been no small interruption of City life.¹²⁴

It is often supposed that not much may have been expected of Henry’s invasion, but London took the threat very seriously. Though Henry did not land in Wales until 7 August, the Common Council of the City took measures to muster a large watch within the City on 28 July, consisting of 3,178 citizens from seventy-three companies.¹²⁵ Common Council meetings took place on 19, 24 and 31 August, to discuss the situation

¹²⁰ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 233

¹²¹ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 233-4

¹²² Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 234.

¹²³ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 52

¹²⁴ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 53.

¹²⁵ Jo.9, ff.82r – 83r.

and all were well attended.¹²⁶ On 22 August, the day of the battle of Bosworth which saw the death of one king and reputed battlefield crowning of another, citizens were ordered that every householder and shop owner ‘shall go dayly in his harnes [i.e. armed]’, ready to do battle in the streets, ‘if any besynes of Frays happen to be’.¹²⁷ These extensive provisions were meticulously planned, with the organisation of the watch covered in great detail in the Journals of Common Council, but without reference to the wider political situation that merited such action.

The City’s passive acceptance of Henry Tudor as the new king after his victory at Bosworth was born of political reality; it was the only course of action open to it. Henry had beaten his foe in battle and, in the absence of any living legitimate heirs of the vanquished king’s body, was the only candidate presenting himself as rightful king of England, ensuring his position as *de facto* ruler. That London, and indeed the rest of the country, accepted him as such demonstrated that the sons of Edward IV were believed to be either dead or irrelevant. The change of monarch was heralded with much military preparation in the City, but little fanfare, at least at this stage. On 24 August, at a Common Council meeting attended by a great multitude of commons, eight individuals were selected to ride to greet the ‘highest lord, King Henry VII’ on his way back from the battlefield.¹²⁸ For many of those present at the meeting this would have been the first they had heard that they were subject to a new monarch. At the same meeting a night watch of 196 men around the Guildhall was arranged.¹²⁹

The choice of individuals who were to ride to the king was significant. The deputation was to be headed by Richard Gardyner, alderman and a former mayor, and the Recorder, Thomas Fitzwilliam. Two other aldermen were also in attendance: William Stokker and John Ward. Four commoners, from different trades, made up the rest of the group: Thomas Burgoyne, Mercer, John Fenkill, Draper, Hugh Pemberton, Tailor and John Stork, Grocer.¹³⁰ Quite why these men were chosen is unclear. It is possible

¹²⁶ Jo.9, ff.78d-84r. The Mercers’ Company records also state that a Common Council meeting also took place 17 Aug. (*Acts*, 288).

¹²⁷ *Acts*, 289-90.

¹²⁸ Jo.9, f.84r.

¹²⁹ Jo.9, f.84r.

¹³⁰ Jo.9, f.84r.

that some had connections to the likely servants of the new king. Gardyner, as a former mayor and long-serving alderman, might have added gravitas to the deputation. The Recorder, as the official mouthpiece of the City, would have been expected to be part of a welcome party, despite the Ricardian connections of the individual. No information about the selection process is given, though it was unlikely to have been random, as these men would have been responsible for the king's first impression of his capital and its citizens. Pemberton and Fenkill were later aldermen and prominent in their crafts, therefore men of means and influence and could well have been a natural choice for such a deputation.¹³¹ Thomas Burgoyne was a mercer and would become one of the wardens of that craft, and therefore can also be presumed to be in possession of wealth and influence.¹³²

The Common Council met again on 31 August, firstly to ensure that the watches were maintained in maximum numbers, as the new king would naturally be accompanied by soldiers and camp-followers, and secondly to make arrangements for an appropriate welcome for the king when he entered his capital. Four hundred and thirty-five men from sixty-five companies were to be present to greet the king.¹³³ The largest companies, the Grocers, Mercers, Drapers, Fishmongers, and Tailors were to provide thirty men each. The Goldsmiths were to send twenty-four men, and the Skinners and Haberdashers twenty each. All were to be dressed in murray gowns, with the mayor and aldermen in scarlet gowns and their attendants in tawny gowns.¹³⁴ Almost as a footnote to the proceedings of the meeting it is mentioned that the council agreed a gift to the king of 1,000 marks, to be raised through the imposition of a fifteenth tax upon the London citizens.¹³⁵ A further gift of 1,000 marks was agreed at the Common Council meeting of 19 October on the occasion of the coronation, according to tradition, again funded by a tax of a fifteenth.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Beaven, i, 17, 18.

¹³² Sutton, *Mercery*, 558

¹³³ Jo.9, f.85v.

¹³⁴ Jo.9, f.86.

¹³⁵ Jo.9, f.86v.

¹³⁶ Jo.9, f.91. For similar coronation gifts planned for Edward V and Richard III see Jo.9, ff.22 & 27.

Seven citizens were selected in the Common Council meeting of 17 October to attend the chief butler of England, together with the mayor and aldermen, on the day of the coronation to serve the lords and magnates of the realm both in the hall and the chamber according to ancient liberties. Thomas Burgoyn, Mercer, was the only one of the deputation who had ridden to the king at Kenilworth to attend upon the chief butler. Henry Cote, Goldsmith, and William Spark, Draper, also amongst the seven, had performed the same duty at the coronation of Richard III.¹³⁷ Whilst attending the king at the coronation banquet at Westminster Hall the mayor, if usual precedents were followed, would have offered the king wine in a gold cup with a gold ewer of water with which to dilute the wine, receiving the cup as a gift for his troubles.¹³⁸

That is as much as is said about the accession of Henry VII in the civic records. Normal City business then dominates the official records until the sweating sickness carried away two mayors and four aldermen.¹³⁹ Literary sources fill in the gaps, with the Great Chronicle describing how the new king, once welcomed into the City, rode to St. Paul's cathedral where he offered up his standards.¹⁴⁰ From there Henry was conveyed to the Bishop's palace, where he stayed. Prior to his entry into the City it is probable that Henry would have been schooled about his capital by the likes of bishop Morton, who had worked closely with the mercantile community of London in the reign of Edward IV, and Bray, with his merchant contacts, about the personnel and mechanisms of London. Though his entrance into London would have been a new experience for him it is unlikely to have held many surprises.

One of Henry's first acts as king was to call a parliament, with the purpose of legitimising and establishing the grounds for his rule and passing bills of attainder and an act of resumption. In total, in the last six months of 1485, the Common Council met sixteen times, more than the average annual figure of twelve meetings, a consequence not only the fear of unrest caused by the change of regime and the necessary aldermanic

¹³⁷ Jo.9, f.91; *LBL*, 208.

¹³⁸ As described at the coronations of Edward IV (*LBL*, 5-6), and Richard III (*LBL*, 208). No such description is given for the coronation of Henry VII.

¹³⁹ Beaven, ii, 17-18.

¹⁴⁰ *GC*, 239.

elections as discussed above, but also to make preparations for the parliament called for 7 November.¹⁴¹

Henry's position in late summer 1485, after his victory at Bosworth, was still precarious. A usurper with a tenuous claim to the throne through his mother's Beaufort blood, without first-hand experience of the English polity, fresh from having faced a number of magnates across a battlefield, Henry cannot have appeared to the Londoners as the man to end the recent dynastic feuds that had divided the country for much of the century. It cannot have seemed unlikely to them that a dissident Yorkist or rival with a superior blood claim might usurp the usurper, and indeed in the early years of the reign Henry did face such challenges. That Henry survived the first two years of his reign where his predecessor, a man of proven ability with a firm power base, failed, can be attributed in part to his political acumen. Henry's demand that his reign be dated from the day before the Bosworth battle allowed him to employ a policy of 'calculated clemency', enabling him to demonstrate mercy by offering amnesty to those who fought against him, with named exceptions, with the result that the majority of the nobility of England, on the whole, capitulated quickly.¹⁴²

Henry's ready welcome and acceptance by the Londoners is not indicative of their approval of the replacement of Richard III by Henry Tudor, but of the continued, and unaffected, institutional power and authority of the Crown. By the end of the fifteenth century, with remembrance of the lessons of the latter part of the previous century still in the collective consciousness, the City accepted the reality of the balance of power in its relationship with the Crown. The City needed the friendship of the Crown to continue to rule itself effectively with the authority vested in it by the Crown. In that respect, the wearer of the crown was irrelevant. At no juncture did London demonstrate any desire to play a larger role in events of high politics. If the Londoners no longer enjoyed their king-making role of the past, then there is an argument to be made that this was a role they relinquished through choice, that by maintaining a passive role in matters of high politics they could serve as a friend to all and be held accountable by

¹⁴¹ Jo.9, f.91v.

¹⁴² Dockray, 'Political Legacy', 207.

none. Sponsorship and approval of Henry's accession, if there was any, would have occurred at a personal level.

2.3. The Merchant Adventurers and the king

One of the most pressing concerns of the mercantile community must have been the likely foreign policy of the new king. The Low Countries were the source of much of the mercantile wealth within the City, particularly as cloth export took precedence over wool export in the second half of the fifteenth century, leading to a corresponding increase in the wealth of the fellowship of the Merchant Adventurers over that of the Staplers of Calais.¹⁴³ The Merchant Adventurers operated as a co-operative organisation comprising merchants from various guilds of the City, and other parts of the country, who traded in cloth and goods other than wool. This entity co-ordinated the charter of ships to the four great Antwerp markets, marshalled resistance to trade-threatening circumstances, such as the imposition of royal subsidies, and developed common trade polices.¹⁴⁴

Mercer domination of the Merchant Adventurers generated resentment amongst the other mercantile guilds of the City, who objected to being subject to Mercer governorship and administration, for, according to the author of the Great Chronicle, 'by that Reson It was thowgth unto alle the othir adventurers that the mersers hadd much more ffavour many & sundry wayes than othyr marchauntys of othyr mysteryes hadd'.¹⁴⁵ The clerks employed and the hall used by the Adventurers were those of the Mercers' Company. On a practical level this meant that the Mercer wardens frequently sent out summons to meetings of the Merchant Adventurers in the Mercers' hall to the wardens of other participating companies, thereby giving the appearance that the Mercers held a position of precedence over other members of the fellowship. Hypothetically, the Mercers also had the capacity to control trade and circumvent City law through their hold over an organisation which, because of its lack of formal identity within the City and the fact that it operated largely under the jurisdiction of foreign

¹⁴³ J.L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy, 1150-1500* (London, 1980), 287-319.

¹⁴⁴ E. Carus-Wilson, 'The origins and early development of the Merchant Adventurers' organisation in London as shown in their own medieval records', *Economic History Review*, iv (1933), 147-176.

¹⁴⁵ *GC*, 240; Vit. XVI, 193.

princes, was not subject to regulation by the civic authorities and therefore could be a law unto itself.¹⁴⁶ As Mercers were prominent within the ranks of the aldermen this tended not to happen, but the fact that it could added to the resentment of other participating companies.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, a formalisation of the Merchant Adventurers was initiated in 1486, with ordinances approved and enrolled, and thus the organisation was brought within the jurisdiction of the mayor.¹⁴⁸ To appease the non-Mercer members of the Adventurers the next two governors, based overseas in Flanders, were not Mercers, but a civil lawyer and then a Draper, though neither occupied the position for long and they were succeeded by John Pickering, a Mercer, who remained in the post for the next ten years.¹⁴⁹

1486 was not a comfortable year for the Merchant Adventurers. The timing of Henry's accession could not have been worse, for the rolling trade intercourse between England and the Low Countries, last renewed on 12 July 1478, was due to expire on 2 January 1486.¹⁵⁰ Henry VII, motivated in part by his distrust of the pro-Yorkist Low Countries and probably also deterred by the civil wars that periodically flared in the area, only renewed the treaty for a year. Thus he kept his options open and the Adventurers insecure. A diet with Maximilian, king of the Romans and ruler of the Low Countries, was planned for the latter part of 1486, and the king requested that the mayor select two Mercers and one from certain other fellowships to meet with his council to discuss the matter.¹⁵¹ Doubt over whether the diet would actually take place prompted the Adventurers to plan the safekeeping of their goods and debts overseas; in November 1486 the governor of the Adventurers wrote to his treasurers that they should seek to 'sett all your charges of goodes and dettes in suretie' until the situation between the two countries was more certain, and to ensure that they 'kepe all thing secrete and close

¹⁴⁶ Barron, *London*, 110; Sutton, *Mercery*, 321.

¹⁴⁷ Sutton, *Mercery*, 321.

¹⁴⁸ Jo.9, f.101.

¹⁴⁹ *GC*, 240; Sutton, *Mercery*, 321.

¹⁵⁰ Sutton, *Mercery*, 319. The treaty of 12 July 1478 was an extension of that of 24 November 1467, which was in turn a revision and renewal of that of 29 September 1439.

¹⁵¹ *Acts*, 294. Henry's intention to participate in a diet in November of that year at Calais was declared in his council in July (*Select Cases*, ed. Bayne and Dunham, 1).

to yourself for the trusce expireth the secunde daye of January next.¹⁵² Hence mutual distrust already tainted the relationship between Henry and some of the London merchants, particularly those engaged in overseas trading activities. The merchants did not trust the king to safeguard their interests and Henry, aware that Margaret of York's Burgundian court had become a refuge for Yorkist dissidents after Bosworth, viewed the merchants with frequent contact with that area with suspicion.

At the beginning of 1487 the treaty was renewed for another year, but, after the full extent of Margaret of York's complicity in the Lambert Simnel conspiracy was known, Henry cancelled the agreement and reduced the renewal period to six months, until 24 June 1487, and diplomatic relations with Maximilian ceased until early 1488.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, the governor of the Adventurers, John Pickering, in a bid to safeguard the interests of his merchants, had taken the audacious measure of seeking and obtaining a safe-conduct from Maximilian for a year, which, inclusive of the usual attached four month 'settling' period, carried the expiry date of 15 November 1487.¹⁵⁴ This initiation of diplomatic and trade relations without the consent and against the demonstrated wishes of the monarch understandably incurred Henry's displeasure. The Adventurers would have been naïve not to expect this, for not only had Henry already demonstrated a reluctance to engage in trade or diplomatic relations with the Low Countries, but the mayor, Henry Colet, 'remembering that there is no amytie between the king and the king of the Romans' had that summer warned the wardens of the livery companies who had members within the Adventurers that they should 'spare' shipping to the lands of the king of the Romans for fear of incurring the king's wrath.¹⁵⁵ The instrument of the king's wrath was to be Chancellor Morton, who, after learning about the safe conduct, summoned the wardens of the fellowships of the Merchant Adventurers, and berated them for how they dared to trade with the Low Countries without the king's licence and against his expressed wishes.¹⁵⁶ He also accused the Adventurers of employing rebels in their service, complaining that both their former governor, John Wendy, and

¹⁵² *Acts*, 296.

¹⁵³ Sutton, *Mercery*, 319.

¹⁵⁴ Sutton, *Mercery*, 319.

¹⁵⁵ *Acts*, 299.

¹⁵⁶ *Acts*, 300.

their clerk overseas, John Colet, had assisted the Simnel conspiracy.¹⁵⁷ This was not the first encounter between Morton and the Adventurers, for it was Morton who had been set the task of investigating customs fraud committed by the Adventurers in 1479-1480.¹⁵⁸

As Morton had declared that no future trade should take place with the Low Countries without royal licence, the Adventurers immediately sent a deputation of men, headed by Thomas Frowyk, the Common Serjeant and son and grandson of Mercers, to the king at Warwick to request the necessary licences. Unlike the chastisement by Chancellor Morton, this deputation was well attended, with wardens from eight London companies in attendance able to witness first-hand the king's displeasure with their actions.¹⁵⁹ As the deputation reported back to the council on 26 September, the king, after haranguing the merchants, conceded to pardon them and allow them to purchase licences to trade, provided that all business was to be concluded and they were home before the expiration of the safe conduct on 15 November.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the Merchant Adventurers were guiltier of underestimating the new king or of overestimating their own importance. To act without the king's knowledge or blessing can be perceived as a demonstration of naivety or stupidity, for no monarch could allow such an affront to his authority to go unpunished, and the mayor's warning of the king's likely displeasure illustrated that this was not a difficult conclusion to draw. Alternatively, the merchants' actions might be interpreted as a consequence of the cynicism that accompanied witnessing the tumultuous political events of the past few years. The new king, the fourth in the past three years, may not have been expected to maintain his position long. He lacked family, save his uncle, to bolster his position; was unmarried so it would be some time until he had sons to support him and ensure the succession, and he had only limited magnate support.¹⁶⁰ A twenty-four year reign may have seemed unlikely at this

¹⁵⁷ *Acts*, 300.

¹⁵⁸ *Acts*, 139.

¹⁵⁹ *Acts*, 301; Sutton, *Mercery*, 320.

¹⁶⁰ Henry quickly acquired military resources in the north-west through the backing of Lord Stanley, John Savage and Gilbert Talbot in the north-west, the newly restored earl of Oxford in East Anglia, and Jasper Tudor through his marcher lordship.

junction, and the merchants may have gambled on Henry being a temporary incumbent of the throne, or at least in such a weak position as to put him in need of their financial aid and requisite goodwill.

As the Adventurers had only recently become subject to the authority of the mayor, an authority delegated by the Crown, it is probable that the fellowship had not yet implemented a subsequent change either in working practice or attitude. This adjustment not having been made, coupled with a lack of faith in the new English king, it may have been natural for the Adventurers to prioritise their relationship with the cities and princes of the Low Countries, where they did business and where their governor was based. Such negotiations would have been quite usual for the merchants, for they were, of necessity, diplomats used to negotiating with foreign powers about their commercial concerns. What they underestimated was Henry's overwhelming (and not unjustified) sense of insecurity; it was to become a constant theme of the reign that threats to the king's security were deemed to merit harsh action domestically and provided the impetus to his foreign policy.

Anne Sutton, in her book on the Mercers' Company, hypothesised that Henry became determined to harass the London companies because of early demonstrations by the merchants of London, particularly those of the Merchant Adventurers fellowship, of their willingness to put trade considerations before the king's political needs and safety.¹⁶¹ This theory can be substantiated and developed, for it is apparent that the actions of the Mercer-dominated Merchant Adventurers in the first eighteen months of the reign threatened to destabilise Henry's fledgling government and undermined his diplomatic standing and regard of his fellow European country heads. The Adventurers' demonstration of diplomatic ability marked them as a body to be neutralised, and, as Henry's distrust of the mercantile companies became apparent as the reign progressed, he awaited the opportunity to deal with the threat he perceived they posed. For the duration of the reign members of the Mercers' Company failed to enjoy direct access to the king to sell their wares as selected Goldsmiths, Tailors and

¹⁶¹ Sutton, *Mercery*, 329.

foreign merchants did, and indeed as they had done in the days of the Yorkist kings.¹⁶² Hence Henry's enmity did not fall equally on all the companies, as shown by the favour he demonstrated to members of the Goldsmiths' Company, whom he welcomed at his court, and the Merchant Tailors, on whose behalf he was later to interfere in civic politics.¹⁶³

2.4. Rebellion and Challenge

Given Henry's lack of initial magnate support, his tenuous blood-claim to the throne and the circumstances of his usurpation, it is perhaps less surprising that Henry faced opposition to his fledgling regime than that he was not subjected to more of it. The first six months after his victory at Bosworth, though peppered with rumour of sedition and rebellion, were quiet enough that he was able to remain in the vicinity of the capital, consolidate his position and establish his government. No viable alternative put himself forward as a candidate for the throne, and when the first serious rebellion of the reign did eventually merit the attention of the king, it lacked a visible figurehead for the opposition to champion.

At Easter 1486 news reached Henry that Viscount Lovell and Sir Humphrey Stafford had escaped from sanctuary. Within weeks co-ordinated uprisings in Yorkshire and the west Midlands appeared.¹⁶⁴ Several rebels, according to their indictments at King's Bench, proclaimed 'A Warwyke, A Warwyke!', even though the young earl was at that time safely in the king's custody in the Tower of London.¹⁶⁵ C.H. Williams, in his 1928 essay, states an uprising against the king's liegemen took place in London at the beginning of May, with the rebels brandishing standards of the ragged staff and red rose. From this Williams concluded that the focal point of their rebellion was also the earl of Warwick, thereby allowing the obvious connection to be made between this

¹⁶² Though many London Mercers supplied the Great Wardrobe there are very few payments made to them in the extant Chamber books of the period, suggesting that they did not tend to do business directly with the king and his household.

¹⁶³ See chapter 4, section 4.3.6.

¹⁶⁴ For a comprehensive sequence of events see C.H. Williams, 'The Rebellion of Humphrey Stafford in 1486', *EHR*, xliii (1928), 181-89.

¹⁶⁵ Williams, 'Humphrey Stafford', 183.

uprising and those instigated by Lovell and Stafford.¹⁶⁶ What Williams fails to mention is that this ‘uprising’ consisted of only twenty-four men, making it a rather insubstantial rebellion, if indeed it can be called that, with the perpetrators wielding ‘ploughs, rokkes, clowtes, shoes and wolsakkes’ as well as the alleged standards of a red rose and a ragged staff.¹⁶⁷ The addition of the standards of the rose and ragged staff are somewhat surprising, as the other items they were brandishing were items associated with cloth finishing, making it likely that this ‘riot’ was not politically, but economically motivated. Soon after this event a number of bonds were taken before the Chamberlain of the City for good behaviour from members of the Shearmen’s and Fullers’ companies. It is therefore likely that this was one of a series of disturbances caused by members of these companies and not, as Michael Bennett has claimed, part of a nationwide co-ordinated initiative.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, this was the second small-scale riot experienced in the City that spring. The first had been equally small in scale, confined to a few minor livery companies, particularly the Shearmen and Fullers, and focused upon retrieving a man from jail on the night of 18 April.¹⁶⁹ This riot had been quickly contained by the civic authorities and the arrangement of a ‘secret watch’ perhaps suggests that further unrest was expected.¹⁷⁰ It is likely that these events represented the latest in a series of demonstrations by men involved in the cloth-finishing industry against the export of unfinished cloth.¹⁷¹ Motivation for these uprisings was therefore economic, rather than political.

The Crown’s response to the minor unrest in the City was, in light of the above, possibly an over-reaction. Nicholas Connell, a weaver from Bristol, and John Huet, Shearman of London, were accused of rebellion and insurrection against the king. In both cases the accused were not found culpable but for ‘divers considerations’ the king

¹⁶⁶ Williams, ‘Humphrey Stafford’, 184.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, KB27/900, mm.10 & 10d. The indictment stated that the gathering consisted of only 24 men, rather than 24 men were indicted.

¹⁶⁸ Jo.9, ff.108-110 show a number of the rebels were held in bonds for good behaviour; Michael Bennett, *Lambert Simnel and the Battle of Stoke* (Gloucester, 1987), 38

¹⁶⁹ High numbers of Shearmen in particular were held in bond to the City Chamberlain for good behaviour (Jo.9, ff.107r & 107v).

¹⁷⁰ *Acts*, 292.

¹⁷¹ In Oct. 1484 Shearmen, Fullers, Cappers and Tuckers threatened riot if ships loaded with wool and cloth left London (*Acts*, 159-160; Anne Sutton, *Mercery*, 336).

ordered that both remain in custody at the Marshalsea at his pleasure.¹⁷² Were they perhaps detained to make an example of them, to discourage further unrest in the City? Or had the government become oversensitive to perceived action against it in light of the recent Stafford rebellion? London was one of several areas to which commissions of investigators into treasons and conspiracies were sent that summer, but whereas those to Hereford, Warwick and Worcester, areas that constituted the heart of the rebellion, were dated days after the demise of the rebellion at the beginning of May, that for London was dated somewhat later, 5 July.¹⁷³ The commission failed to find anything truly noteworthy, but its existence suggests that London was an entity that Henry did not entirely trust.

Far more serious than the Stafford uprising was the one centred upon Lambert Simnel, the pretender who purported to be Edward, earl of Warwick. News of the pretender was already spreading around London as early as November 1486.¹⁷⁴ Though most of the events were played out some distance from the City and no mention of Simnel's existence is made in the civic records, the City fathers were accorded a minor role in the drama. In February 1487 the priest who had groomed Lambert Simnel for his part in the conspiracy was brought before convocation at St. Paul's Cathedral.¹⁷⁵ In the presence of the prelates, clergy and before the aldermen and sheriffs of the City the priest, an Oxford man named William Symonds, confessed to abducting the son of an organmaker (Simnel) and taking him to Ireland for the purpose of presenting him as the heir to the throne. After his confession the mayor and sheriffs were requested by John Morton, the archbishop of Canterbury, to take the prisoner to the Tower.¹⁷⁶ A couple of days later the earl of Warwick was presented to convocation and 'certain lords of the king's council...[and] the mayor, aldermen and sheriffs of London... so that he might be seen by everybody.'¹⁷⁷ In this context the City Fathers were

¹⁷² TNA, KB27/900, mm.10 & 10d. See also KB9/371 for the original indictment against Connell and Huet and three other London Shearmen.

¹⁷³ *CPR, 1485-1494*, 106-7.

¹⁷⁴ *Plumpton Correspondence*, 54; Williams, 'Humphrey Stafford', 183.

¹⁷⁵ *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, 3 vols. (Leeds, 1987), i, nos. 89-90.

¹⁷⁶ *Register of John Morton*, no.89.

¹⁷⁷ *Register of John Morton*, no.90.

representative of the king's subjects, acting as witness to both the confession of the false priest and the presentation of the true earl of Warwick, thereby receiving confirmation that he was safely in royal hands. If the king had hoped that they would then disseminate this information then there is little evidence that they did this effectively. There is no mention at all of convocation, let alone the presence of the mayor and aldermen, in the civic records and the only oblique reference to this course of events is in a royal proclamation, carefully recorded in the Journal on 24 April 1487, condemning the spreading of 'false tidings'.¹⁷⁸ The chronicles also entirely overlook this event. Even Vergil, who at least relates the priest's role in the affair, erroneously states that the priest was arrested after the failure of the rebellion.¹⁷⁹ It is possible that there was thought to be little point in publishing the display of the earl: he was a twelve-year-old boy who had been in close confinement for four years and few would have known what he looked like and almost certainly those that did would not have been amongst the lords, prelates and Londoners in attendance.¹⁸⁰ The role of the Londoners as witnesses, therefore, was merely symbolic.

Henry's victory at Stoke was a pivotal point in his relationship with his subjects. The battle fought on 16 June 1487 demonstrated that Henry had the support of the most prominent members of the nobility: Bedford, Oxford, Derby and the young earls of Shrewsbury, Devon and Wiltshire brought their retinues, as did the Lords Lisle, Scales, Strange, Hastings and Grey of Powis.¹⁸¹ That is not to say that the rebels were without supporters of standing, for Edward IV's widow, Elizabeth Woodville, her son, the marquess of Dorset, and Robert, bishop of Bath and Wells, were arrested in connection with this sequence of events.¹⁸² Any lingering threats to the new government were swiftly neutralised, at least for the next couple of years. No longer a fledgling king, a lucky usurper and isolated victor of Bosworth, Henry was now undisputed ruler of his realm, head of an effective government and force to be reckoned with.

¹⁷⁸ Jo.9, f.148.

¹⁷⁹ Vergil, 12-17.

¹⁸⁰ Bennett, *Stoke*, 44.

¹⁸¹ Bennett, *Stoke*, 83.

¹⁸² Bennett, *Stoke*, 53-54; Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 54-55

That the battle of Stoke, which saw the defeat and death of John de la Pole, earl of Lincoln and the most senior living Yorkist after the imprisoned earl of Warwick, the exile and disappearance of Lovell, and the capture of Simnel, was considered critical by the Londoners is demonstrated by their actions. According to the Great Chronicle, the mayor, the Mercer Henry Colet, upon hearing of the king's victory ordered 'Te deum' to be sung in the City churches.¹⁸³ At a meeting of the Common Council, 28 June, twelve days after the battle had been fought, a deputation of seven influential members of that body were selected to ride to the king at Kenilworth, bearing news that a gift of £1,000 had been granted to their sovereign by the council.¹⁸⁴ The gift is significant. It was customary to give the monarch a large financial gift (usually 1,000 marks) upon his coronation, and a smaller one at the coronation of his queen.¹⁸⁵ To award the king after the defeat of his foes in battle was without precedent, especially a gift larger than the one awarded at his coronation. Richard III did not receive a monetary gift upon his entry into the City after he had dealt with the rebellion of the duke of Buckingham, though his ceremonial re-entry into the City afterwards had been comparable.¹⁸⁶ Henry, re-entering the City in November 1487, was greeted at Hornsey Park by the mayor and aldermen, clothed in scarlet, their servants and 433 liverymen dressed in violet.¹⁸⁷ Here the king knighted the mayor William Horn, the Recorder, Thomas Fitzwilliam and John Percyvale, a tailor and alderman. Quite why Percyvale was knighted is a mystery. Stow states that he and Horn were 'knighted in the field', but this seems unlikely, as both were listed as having been present at a meeting of the Common Council on 28 June and Percyvale was present at a meeting of the court of aldermen 11 June.¹⁸⁸ Whilst Stoke was not so far away that they could not have been present at the battle, it would have been very strange had such prominent merchants decided to fight.

The Londoners demonstrated a further desire to ingratiate themselves with the king when, on 11 July, the Common Council granted the king a further £2,000 loan, bringing

¹⁸³ *GC*, 241.

¹⁸⁴ *Jo.9*, ff.150, 151.

¹⁸⁵ As was received by Henry VII and his queen, (*Jo.9*, ff.86v, 161).

¹⁸⁶ *Jo.9*, f.39.

¹⁸⁷ *Jo.9*, ff.150-151.

¹⁸⁸ *Jo.9*, ff.150 & 150v; Stow, *Survey*, ii, 178-9.

the total of loans accorded to Henry so far to £4,000.¹⁸⁹ Not all of this amount was outstanding; Henry was careful to build up his credit rating, to use modern parlance, and repaid loans swiftly, often just before taking out another.¹⁹⁰

The City had therefore decided that the king was a permanent fixture in so far as such things could be guaranteed. Whereas his position had appeared unsure at the outset of his reign, and certainly his position in the autumn of 1485 had appeared to be far more fragile than that of Richard III in his first autumn, it now had an air of permanence about it that had previously been lacking. Henry now had a wife, having married Elizabeth of York the previous year, a son, Arthur, born autumn 1486, and no living rivals save the imprisoned earl of Warwick and the de la Poles, whose leader had just perished at the battle of Stoke.¹⁹¹ This was not simply a case of the City Fathers once more identifying the winner and choosing to provide him with the resources he needed to establish his regime, as there was no power struggle to back Henry against, but an acceptance of reality and response to the need to foster close relations with the reigning monarch. It might also, in part, have been seen as an opportunity to compensate for the misbehaviour of Merchant Adventurers, particularly as renewal of the trade intercourse with the Low Countries was still outstanding. It may have been hoped that with Simnel in the king's custody the way might be seen to be open to resume diplomatic relations with Maximilian.

2.5. Conclusion

The coronation of Elizabeth of York in November 1487 was a cause for celebration on many levels. The houses of Lancaster and York were at last united through the bonds of marriage and in the blood of a new prince, born in the previous September. Henry had dispensed with all overt threats to his authority. Blood rivals in the form of the remaining de la Poles still remained, but for now they appeared to be a docile entity. What is surprising is not, perhaps, that he had faced challenges on such a large scale,

¹⁸⁹ Jo.9, f.151r. It is possible that the figure could be higher as small, short-dated loans were sometimes made by the City to the Crown but not recorded in the Journals.

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 3, section 3.5.

¹⁹¹ Excepting the aging and inactive John de la Pole, duke of Suffolk, who died in 1492.

including a pitched battle larger than that in which he won his throne, but that he had not faced more challenges.

It is interesting to compare London's reaction to the accession of Henry Tudor to that of York, a city that had strong links with Richard III. York had sent eighty men to fight for Richard as soon as word reached them that Richmond had landed in England and the sentiment of regret at the passing of the last Plantagenet king recorded in their civic records is well known and often quoted.¹⁹² This did not mean that York was not capable of accepting the realities of the situation once Richard lost, and the magnificent reception that York gave when Henry visited the city in April 1486 is evidence of a desire to cultivate the good-will of the monarch, even if he was not the king they would have chosen.¹⁹³

London's acceptance of the new king was passive, as had been its acceptance of the accession of Richard III. Neither king faced rebellion or uprising from the inhabitants of the City. No Londoner was attained after Bosworth. If we accept the likelihood of some support within London's political society for Henry in 1484-5, then it is reasonable to re-assess the reception of news about the new king from one of a resigned, passive acceptance born of political reality to something slightly more positive. The advent of another usurpation would not have been welcomed by all, but it is possible that it was by a section of London's mercantile community, some of whom may have played a minor role in its achievement.

Though it is true to say that the City depended upon the support and goodwill of the Crown and was realistic enough to befriend whoever was incumbent in that position, it would be a mistake to think that the citizens cared not on whose head it might reside. Impartiality was a luxury that particularly the wealthy merchants could not afford, for their economic prosperity depended upon the foreign policies favoured and adopted by the new ruler. A division, therefore, frequently existed between the official response of the City, carefully orchestrated by the City fathers, and the response of individuals who

¹⁹² Dockray, 'Political Legacy', 215.

¹⁹³ *The Herald's Memoir, 1486-1490: Court Ceremony, Royal Progress and Rebellion*, ed. Emma Cavell (Donington, 2009), 73-82; Dockray, 'Political Legacy', 216.

might act covertly upon their political affiliations. That the men involved in civic government were frequently the same men who acted covertly to their own political ends reflected the reality that members of the municipal administration appreciated the need to present a unified front. To demonstrate divisions between members of the civic government was to invite royal interference and, ultimately, control.

The first years of the reign had proved to be a testing ground for the Crown-City relationship. The actions of the Adventurers had demonstrated that the mercantile community were willing to put their own priorities of commercial continuance and expansion above those of the king and his realm. In so doing, the Adventurers adopted the behaviour of an over-mighty subject in acting above the authority of the king and seeking to pursue their own independent diplomatic relations. Consequently the government of London, with whom the Mercers and Merchant Adventurers were so closely linked, was identified as a collective subject to be mastered, rather than a community to be worked with. An awareness of this may have prevented the civic government from seeking confirmation of its charter, as was usual upon the accession of a new king. A new charter was not granted until 1505, and when it was its terms were not satisfactory to the City, as will be seen.

Chapter 3: The Financial Relationship between the City and the Crown

As soon as he became king, Henry had a pressing need to raise money. He had left hostages in Paris as pledges for money borrowed and a debt of 10,000 crowns to the Duke of Brittany remained outstanding.¹ Servants had to be rewarded, followers needed confiscated lands restored and his royal household needed to be outfitted in a style fitting to a monarch. In theory, the timing of the battle of Bosworth meant that Henry would have benefitted from the payment of the Michaelmas land rents due on Crown lands not long into his reign. In practice, though, this income was over-committed, with £4,700 of cash receipts from land revenues paid into the Exchequer for Michaelmas 1485 and Easter 1486 terms, and over £7,000 of assignments made on land revenues in the same time period.² Henry's urgent need for financial aid from his capital might have been expected to give the City leverage in negotiations to enhance their trading privileges or charter liberties, yet there is no evidence to suggest that Londoners sought to push their supposed advantage other than to request the traditional payment holiday of customs payments until they were formally granted to the king by parliament.³

The City's ability to provide financial aid to the government had been key to the interdependent relationship of the Crown and the City in the fifteenth century and earlier, and therefore it is logical that if and when the king no longer needed such finance, the relationship dynamic must have altered. Did the City's ability to provide finance give it leverage in seeking privilege or redress of grievance? If so, was the City disadvantaged once the Crown became solvent and no longer had a need of its financial aid? What motivation, if any, did the City, and individuals within it, have to lend to the Crown?

¹ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 202.

² B.P. Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne in English History: The Crown Estate in the Governance of the Realm from the Conquest to 1509* (London, 1971), 20.

³ TNA, PSO2/2, Feb 1486.

This chapter will discuss the financial relationship Henry VII had with the capital and examine how much, financially, the City was worth to the Crown in the course of the reign. After a brief examination of the secondary literature on this topic and the definition of ordinary and extraordinary income the subjects of customs revenue, taxes, gifts and loans from the City and its contribution to the 1491 benevolence will be explored.

3.1. Historiography and Sources

Caroline Barron perceived the City-Crown relationship as one underpinned by matters of finance, with the king's need for money versus the City's desire for self-government.⁴ 'These were not the only matters of debate and contention' between the City and the Crown, Barron writes, 'but they underlay many of the overt struggles and complex negotiations'.⁵ The nature and extent of the Crown's need for finance waxed and waned, and the relationship adjusted accordingly.⁶ Henry, as a new monarch, may have been expected to require the City's financial assistance immediately and the City demonstrated its willingness to support him in their initial presentation of a gift of £1,000 after Henry's victory at Bosworth.

The full extent of Henry's need, though, has not been quantified and no full coherent analysis of the financial aid Henry received from the City in the first decade of his reign has been undertaken by historians. Reginald Sharpe, writing in 1894, wrote about the loans made by the City to Henry VII, but his account did not cross-reference the City sources with those of the Crown and therefore his account is incomplete.⁷ The brief sentence summarising the loans made by the City to Henry in Frederick Dietz's book, *English Government Finance*, written in 1920, has been heavily relied upon by historians since its publication.⁸ His assertion that the City lent a total, corporately, of £15,000 in six tranches between August 1485 and 1490 is based upon his examination

⁴ Barron, *London*, 9.

⁵ Barron, *London*, 10.

⁶ See Barron, *London*, 10-16 for examples.

⁷ Reginald R. Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, 3 vols. (London, 1894), i, 328-331.

⁸ Dietz, *English Finance*, 52; W.C. Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration, 1485-1547* (Louisiana, 1952), Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 202-3.

of the Exchequer Receipt Rolls and a number of London chronicles.⁹ Unfortunately, Dietz's summary is neither entirely comprehensive nor accurate, and his more general misinterpretation of financial evidence has been highlighted by both Bertram Wolffe and W.C. Richardson.¹⁰

It is almost impossible to calculate Henry's income accurately for almost any point in his reign.¹¹ Wolffe estimated that Henry's land revenues in the last decade of his reign may have averaged as much as £42,000.¹² Assessing the king's income from customs has proved equally difficult. At the latter end of the nineteenth century, Georg Schanz attempted to quantify the total revenue to the Crown from customs, broken down by port.¹³ Dietz, utilising Schanz's figures, asserted that customs revenues in the first decade of the reign averaged £32,951 per year, increasing to £40,132 p.a. for the rest of the reign.¹⁴ Though the accuracy of Schanz's data has been called into question by Chrimes and Wolffe, no attempt has been made to correct his figures and therefore in the absence of more accurate data Schanz's figures, via Dietz's interpretation, continue to be employed by historians.¹⁵ A more accurate reconstruction of customs revenue from the port of London will be provided later in the chapter.

The evidence for governmental fiscal management during the reign is problematic, even though the survival of the relevant documentation is reasonably good. A selection of Exchequer and City sources has survived, enough to give a reasonably full picture of the financial relationship between the two entities, but not enough to provide a complete one. One problem is that this period saw the emergence of the Chamber as the preferred fiscal instrument of the king as he attempted to circumvent the cumbersome apparatus of the Exchequer. The Chamber account books do not survive for the entire reign: the extant payment books are clustered into the last few years and

⁹ Dietz, *English Finance*, 52.

¹⁰ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, ch. 7; Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration*, 158.

¹¹ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 214.

¹² Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 219.

¹³ Georg Schanz, *Englische Handelspolitik gegen Ende des Mittelalters*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1881), ii, 37-47.

¹⁴ Dietz, *English Finance*, 25.

¹⁵ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 196; Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 214.

only three slim volumes of the receipt books survive.¹⁶ As the Exchequer did not handle all financial transactions during the reign and the Chamber books only survive for a few years of it, the existence of a substantial lacuna in the extant evidence may be perceived.

There are other problems with the Exchequer records. No Issue Rolls survive for the reign, though the survival of a substantial number of Warrants for Payment helps to compensate for this lack, as does the survival of a near full set of Tellers' rolls.¹⁷ The Tellers' rolls are not without their problems; each Tellers' roll records separately the issues and receipts recorded by each one of the four individual tellers of the Exchequer for the two terms into which the Exchequer year is divided: Michaelmas term, running from Michaelmas day until Easter, and Easter terms from Easter until Michaelmas.¹⁸ As all payments are divided into the two terms it is difficult to gauge when, within a six month period, a financial transaction might have actually taken place. Moreover, not all the records of the individual tellers have survived and so we do not have a full record of all financial transactions undertaken through the Exchequer. The Receipt Rolls of the Exchequer, as the title suggests, record all receipts into the Exchequer (in triplicate) with a new series of rolls commencing at the start of each Exchequer term.¹⁹ Though incomplete, the advantage of this series is that the dates of individual receipts are included and often more detail is given about the receipts than is apparent in the Tellers' rolls.²⁰ Therefore, an analysis of both the extant Exchequer records and Chamber books for the reign still falls short of providing a full picture of all Crown revenue and expenditure. It is outside of the remit of this thesis to attempt a full reconstruction of Henry's finances, but the problems inherent in that Herculean task are also to be found, albeit on a smaller scale, in attempting to understand the full financial value of the City to the Crown.

¹⁶ See Chapter 1, section 1.5.

¹⁷ TNA, E404/79-86 & E405/75-81.

¹⁸ Herbert Berry and E.K. Timings, 'Spenser's Pension', *The Review of English Studies*, xliii (1960), 254.

¹⁹ TNA, E401/957-1010.

²⁰ No Receipt rolls exist for Oct. 1486-April 1487, April 1488 to Oct. 1488, Easter 1491 and 1492, Oct. 1494 to Oct. 1497, Easter 1498 to Easter 1499, Oct. 1499 to Easter 1501, Easter 1502 to Easter 1503 and Michaelmas terms of 1504 and 1507.

The City's Journals of Common Council recorded decisions made in that forum to grant financial gifts to the king and to acquiesce (or not) to the king's request for loans. Not every loan is recorded, for reasons outlined below, but they provide a cross-reference point with the Exchequer documents. Occasionally, an individual livery company's contribution to corporate loans may be included in their account books, though not always as often these amounts were collected directly from members without ever touching the finances of the company itself.

3.2. Ordinary and Extraordinary Income

It was an ideal generally accepted that a medieval king should 'live of his own', in that monarchs were expected to be able to meet their regular expenditure from the ordinary revenue they received.²¹ Edward IV echoed his predecessors, Henry IV and Henry V at the outset of their reigns, when he famously announced to the Commons of the 1467 parliament that he would henceforth 'live of his own' and not charge his subjects 'but in grete and urgent causes'.²² Yet achievement of this ideal largely eluded medieval monarchs, with Edward IV becoming the first monarch to be financially independent of parliament in over a century.²³ Henry VII became solvent in the mid-1490s and went on to become wealthy, capable of paying amounts in excess of £100,000 out of his chamber to the archduke Maximilian without needing to raise additional finance.²⁴

Stanley Chrimes questioned the validity of the use of the terms 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' when applied to royal revenues, as such a distinction was not drawn by fifteenth-century commentators, but by historians. Fortescue, he argued, used this distinction only with regard to expenses, not income.²⁵ While Chrimes instead preferred to use the terms 'certain and casual' to describe income, this thesis will utilise

²¹ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 9.

²² Maureen Jurkowski, 'Parliamentary and Prerogative Taxation in the Reign of Edward IV', *Parliamentary History*, xviii (1999), 274.

²³ Ross, *Edward IV*, 379-80.

²⁴ BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.85, TNA, E36/214, f.317.

²⁵ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 194.

the more descriptive and commonly used terms, 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary'.²⁶ Ordinary income, in this context, refers to the regular income of the Crown. Most of this was derived from the Crown lands after the estates of the duchy of Lancaster were subsumed into the Crown demesne in 1399.²⁷ In addition, customs dues payable on imported wine (tonnage) and other imports and exports (poundage and petty customs) were, by the second half of the fourteenth century, a regular part of the Crown's income and contributed around £30,000 per annum to the Crown's revenues.²⁸ Henry's first parliament granted him for life both the subsidy on wool and the revenues of tonnage and poundage for life. Only Richard III before him had successfully had these granted to him for life in his first parliament; Henry V had acquired them in 1415, Henry VI in 1454 and Edward IV in 1465.²⁹ Also to be classified as 'ordinary revenue' might be the fee farms paid by urban centres to the Crown, which in the case of the capital amounted to a mere £300 per year.³⁰ Extraordinary income refers, in this instance, to all income that cannot be said to be regular or expected, often derived from taxation, loans, benevolences and gifts.

Ordinary income was intended to meet the Crown's regular expenditure. Regular expenditure was described by Fortescue as being the running costs involved in the monarch's household and wardrobe, the wages of his servants and council, rewards for those who had done him good service and the maintenance of the security of his borders and the town of Calais.³¹ Extraordinary income was intended to meet extraordinary expenses. The considerable expenses incurred through war and the need to defend the realm from invasion and protect England's borders necessitated the raising of additional revenue. Taxation was the most common form of raising extraordinary revenue. This had to be granted by the Commons in parliament, a process which in itself could take several months. Benevolences, or enforced gifts, which did not require

²⁶ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 194. Chrimes terms as 'certain' revenue streams that were not regular, such as funds derived from feudal incidents, due to the king as overlord from tenants in chief, such as wardships, marriages, aids, escheats and bonds.

²⁷ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 194; Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 10.

²⁸ Barron, *London*, 11-12.

²⁹ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 195.

³⁰ TNA, E401/960, dated 26 May, 1487.

³¹ Fortescue, *Governance*, 121-123.

the authorisation of parliament, were a more unpopular way of raising funds and consequently were levied less frequently. The problems with traditional forms of ordinary and extraordinary income were two-fold: firstly, they took time to yield a return and secondly, they frequently were inadequate to meet the king's expenses. The ability of the City of London to raise large amounts of capital swiftly was therefore invaluable to the king.

Financially speaking, Henry VII enjoyed a number of advantages over his predecessors. Henry was a beneficiary of the Yorkist policy of conscious expansion of the royal demesne.³² The combination of the Crown's traditional lands, including the Duchy of Lancaster, with Edward IV's own Yorkist family estates and the estates he acquired through purchase and confiscation created the largest royal demesne ever held by a medieval king. This was added to by Richard III, who received an annual income of approximately £22,000-£25,000 per annum in land revenue.³³ Henry VII was eventually to increase this to an average of around £42,000 p.a. in the second decade of his reign.³⁴ Henry, upon his accession, had to restore estates confiscated by Richard III to their rightful owners who had supported him in exile, like the earl of Oxford, and create estates for those he rewarded, such as his uncle, Jasper, duke of Bedford. It was not until the subsequent resumption acts of 1487 and 1495 that Henry was able to greatly augment the landed wealth of the Crown.³⁵

Other revenue streams were added to Henry's ordinary income as his reign progressed. In November 1492, after Henry's short-lived campaign in France, peace was made with Charles VIII without military engagement having taken place. Henry benefitted handsomely, and received a pay-off worth 745,000 gold crowns and an annual pension of 52,000 crowns.³⁶ Given the heavy financial contribution of his subjects, some resentment may have been directed towards the king, who profited from this venture, as it was when his father-in-law had profited after the treaty of Picquigny in 1475.³⁷

³² Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 113-115.

³³ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 188-9.

³⁴ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 219.

³⁵ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 196-198.

³⁶ *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources*, ed. A.F. Pollard (London, 1914), iii, 6-25.

³⁷ Ross, *Edward IV*, 234-7.

Henry's income from feudal dues, forfeit bonds and trading activities is even harder to quantify than his other income streams. Suffice to say, it is probable that they added to an income already adequate to discharge his expenses. This source of extraordinary funds, though they added to his coffers, arguably cost him in terms of both contemporary goodwill and historical reputation.

3.3. Customs

Between 1503 and 1509 well over half of England's overseas trade of most commodities went through the port of London, including seventy-one per cent of the value of goods subject to the petty custom and fifty-one per cent of those subject to poundage.³⁸ Therefore the customs paid in London were a rich source of revenue to the Crown. It is also apparent that much of the trade out of Southampton was undertaken by London merchants, and so any assessment of customs revenue in London cannot be a complete picture of the contribution of the London mercantile community to this Crown revenue stream.³⁹

Since the mid-fourteenth century three different customs duties were levied in the port of London: the customs and subsidies on wool, woolfells and hides (wool customs hereafter); the new, or petty, custom; and tonnage and poundage.⁴⁰ The wool custom yielded the highest amount of customs revenue to the Crown. An agreement between the merchants of the Calais Staple and the Crown in 1466 saw the collection of the bulk of this custom in Calais, with the treasurer of Calais responsible for rendering his account of the collection at the Exchequer.⁴¹ Two collectors for the custom did remain in London, presumably to deal with wool that did not pass through Calais, but the accounts they rendered to the Exchequer were usually for sums not more than £10.

³⁸ Peter Ramsey, 'Overseas Trade in the Reign of Henry VII: the Evidence of Customs Accounts', *Economic History Review*, vi (1953-4), 179.

³⁹ A.A. Ruddock, 'London Capitalists and the Decline of Southampton in the Early Tudor Period', *Economic History Review*, ii (1949), 137-51.

⁴⁰ Cobb, 'Introduction', *Overseas Trade*.

⁴¹ See section 3.3.1.

The petty custom was a composite custom, comprising an *ad valorem* duty of three pence in the pound on all goods imported by alien merchants, with specific duties on wool, hides and wax imported or exported by aliens, and an additional cloth export custom on both denizen and alien merchants.⁴² Tonnage and poundage was granted for life to Richard III and Henry VII in the first parliament of their reigns, and continued to be so granted to monarchs thereafter. Tonnage was a duty imposed on all wine imports and poundage was an *ad valorem* tax on all goods imported or exported by all merchants.⁴³ The Hanse were exempt from all of these duties, except the petty custom, as a consequence of the treaty of Utrecht negotiated by Edward IV in 1473-4 which gave the Hanse generous trading terms in part recompense for their aid during his bid to reclaim the throne.⁴⁴

Each custom (wool, petty and tonnage and poundage) had two collectors and a controller at the port of London who submitted complementary accounts to the Exchequer. Of the collectors those of tonnage and poundage handled the largest customs receipts. Unfortunately there is not a single year, from 1461-1509, for which all three accounts survive, and there are a few years for which accounts of some duties are entirely missing.⁴⁵

The table below contains the figures of the receipts from the Petty customs and tonnage and poundage as recorded in the Enrolled Customs Accounts for the reign. Accounts are usually recorded per Exchequer year, running from Michaelmas (29 September) to Michaelmas. Occasionally accounts do not adhere to the Exchequer year (owing to the death of a collector or other occurrence) and in these cases entries for the relevant year have been amalgamated and, where necessary, averaged.

⁴² Cobb, 'Introduction', *Overseas Trade*.

⁴³ Cobb, 'Introduction', *Overseas Trade*.

⁴⁴ Ross, *Edward IV*, 368, 385.

⁴⁵ Cobb, 'Introduction', *Overseas Trade*.

Year (Michaelmas to Michaelmas)	Petty Customs			Tonnage and Poundage		
	£	s	d	£	s	d
1485/6	2781	7	1 ¼ *			#
1486/7	2781	7	1 ¼ *			#
1487/8	2781	7	1 ¼ *	2807	19	9 ½
1488/9	3251	1	2 ½	4796	2	2 ½
1489/90	3769	6	10 ¼	5035	15	7
1490/1	3604	15	3 ½	4905	17	5
1491/2	4037	4	7 ¼	4950	7	5
1492/3	3122	17	8 ½	4694	3	5
1493/4	2914	3	8 ¾	3621	2	0 ½
1494/5	1357	16	1 ¾ *	5030	9	5 *
1495/6	1357	16	1 ¾ *	4189	13	11
1496/7	1357	16	1 ¾ *	5050	4	9
1497/8	3923	13	2 ¾	5316	3	9
1498/9	3105	0	0 ¼	4250	11	9
1499/1500	4463	16	3 ¾	5612	19	3 ¼
1500/1	5162	8	3 ¾	6563	15	3
1501/2	4282	15	10 ½	6903	14	0 ½
1502/3	4461	18	9	6012	6	7
1503/4	4424	19	4 ¾	5708	17	9
1504/5	4625	16	9 ¼	5750	16	7
1505/6	5474	5	0 ¼	5848	12	0
1506/7	5190	11	6 ¼	7210	0	6
1507/8	4864	0	11 ¼	7739	5	4
1508/9			#	6959	0	10 *

Table 3.1 – London customs revenue throughout the reign of Henry VII.

Source: Enrolled Customs Accounts, TNA, E356/23 & 24.

* Adjusted to an average where the entries do not align with the Exchequer year.

Lost.

Much of the increase in customs paid was a consequence of an increase in imports, and though it is possible that this may reflect a successful reduction in the instances of fraud, it cannot be wholly attributed to any policy of government. The amount paid, nationwide, in petty custom dues rose by 68 per cent in the reign whilst that of poundage rose by 80 per cent.⁴⁶

It is apparent, from the above figures, that petty custom revenue, into which the cloth custom fell, was much reduced during the trade embargoes imposed upon trade with the Netherlands between summer 1493 and July 1497.⁴⁷ The economic impact of royal foreign policy upon the mercantile community would have been correspondingly high. These embargoes were only a temporary disruption of trade and cloth exports continued to grow, from an annual average of 50,878 cloths in the first six years of the reign to 81,835 in the last six, an increase of 61 per cent.⁴⁸

3.3.1. The Calais Staple

The merchants comprising the fellowship of the Staple at Calais were important to the Crown not only as generators and collectors of the wool subsidy paid on all wool that passed through the Staple, but as a source of funds and administration for the financing of the garrison of the Staple. The Act of Retainer ratified in parliament in 1473 was the epitome of a working partnership between the Staplers and the king. By this act the Crown retained the services of the merchants of the Staple in funding the defence of the Pale of Calais. This agreement, negotiated and implemented in 1466, was not formally enshrined in statute until 1504.⁴⁹ The terms of this agreement dictated that the Staplers were to collect the wool customs and subsidy paid on all wool exported from England that passed through the Staple and the 'ordinary' revenues arising out of Calais. From these revenues the Company of the Staple would make an annual payment

⁴⁶ Ramsey, 'Overseas Trade', 179.

⁴⁷ R.B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485-1588* (London, 1966), 67-8; E.M. Carus-Wilson and Olive Coleman, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (Oxford, 1963), 194-9. See the latter also for cloth import volumes during the reign, 68-113.

⁴⁸ Ramsey, 'Overseas Trade', 178.

⁴⁹ 19 Hen.VII c.22; David Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436-1558* (Woodbridge, 2008), 150.

of £10,022 4s 8d for the wages of the Calais garrison and further annual payments of £100 for the wages of the customers of the port of London and 1,000 marks for the wages of the royal judges.⁵⁰ Additionally, the merchants of the Staple were also committed to providing adequate funds for the safe conduct of the wool-fleet between England and Calais. A further £3,000 p.a. would be retained by the Staplers from the customs to pay off the debt of £32,861 that the Crown owed to the Staplers.⁵¹ Surpluses remaining after all of the Staplers' financial obligations had been met were paid to the Exchequer. Between 1467 and 1483 the Exchequer received an average annual surplus of £705 from the Staplers after the reckoning of their accounts.⁵²

In 1487 the Act of Retainer was renewed for sixteen years, but as it was noted that the Crown's debt had long been paid off, the merchants of the Staple would no longer be allowed to retain any of the customs and tax revenue paid on wool in Calais left after the financial obligations of the merchants outlined in the agreement had been met.⁵³ Two years later it was decided that the accounts for the Staple would no longer be declared to the Exchequer, but instead would be presented to the king's treasurer of his Chamber, where any surplus would be paid.⁵⁴

In the early years of the reign the members of the Fellowship of the Calais Staple, in common with other London merchants, were important lenders to the Crown. Stapler loans were generally repaid by assignment upon the surplus of the customs to be paid to the Crown under the Act of Retainer.⁵⁵ As loans from the Staplers were, in effect, advances upon the surplus due to the Crown, they did not necessarily impact greatly on the merchants' ability to provide loans either individually or through the corporation of London.

⁵⁰ Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town in France, 1347-1558* (Woodbridge, 2008), 86; Grummitt, *Calais Garrison*, 148.

⁵¹ Rose, *Calais*, 87.

⁵² Grummitt, *Calais Garrison*, 149.

⁵³ Rose, *Calais*, 115.

⁵⁴ Rose, *Calais*, 115. Until this point the Calais accounts had been presented at the Upper chamber of the Exchequer for audit and enrolled within the Foreign Accounts rolls (TNA, E364 & E358.)

⁵⁵ Descriptions of this arrangement can be seen in various warrants for payment: TNA, E404/79 dated 30 Jan 1486; TNA, E404/79, 4 Feb 1486; TNA, E404/79, 12 Feb 1487.

The Act of Retainer represented a partnership between the government of Edward IV and the merchants of the Staple of Calais. In return for adopting, where possible, a foreign policy favourable to the merchants, the Staplers took on the heavy responsibility of financing the Calais garrison and various Crown officials as well as responsibility for the financial administration of the Staple of Calais, including monitoring and facilitating the repayment of the king's debt to them. Once the debts of Edward IV had been paid off, the Crown benefitted handsomely from this source and the lack of complaint from both the mercantile community and the garrison suggests that they considered the settlement fair and this arrangement survived until the 1520s.

3.3.2. 1507 Book of Rates

In July 1507 a book of rates, giving standard valuations for a wide range of commodities, was devised in what may be seen as an attempt by the government to impose order and uniformity in the collection of *ad valorem* customs duties and to check fraud and collusion between customs officials and merchants.⁵⁶ Henry's VII's government had attempted to regulate and formalise the payment of customs in the port of London before the creation of the book of rates, for in October 1506 the governor of the Merchant Adventurers, John Sheldon, together with the Mercers William Buttry and William Southwod, were deputed to devise a 'supplycacion' or petition to the king regarding the 'discharging of wares after a form', suggesting that a move away from the declaration of wares by oath alone had been made.⁵⁷ Sheldon and his associates were also to approach Edmund Dudley, 'desyryng him to be a good Maister in the mater'.⁵⁸ The result of the petition is not known, as the relevant part of the Mercers' records has not survived, but discontent with the government's continued attempts to reform the customs continued. A 'Nwe Clamyd' addition to the rate of poundage was the subject of complaint in June 1506 and the aldermen Thomas Bradbury and William Fitzwilliam were sent with two Common Councilmen to the king 'to sue for a

⁵⁶ Henry Cobb, "'Books of Rates' and the London Customs, 1507-1558', *The Guildhall Miscellany*, iv (1971), 5; N.S.B. Gras, *The Early English Customs System* (London, 1918), 121, 694-696.

⁵⁷ *Acts*, 273-4.

⁵⁸ *Acts*, 273-4.

reformation therof'.⁵⁹ In the following January four aldermen were sent to the king 'to be assistants to the Merchants Adventurers in Sute to be made to the Kyngs g[ra]nce for the Rates of Custmnes'.⁶⁰ Quite possibly the solution employed was the creation of the Book of Rates which came into being in July the following year. This book had been created by the king's council with the advice of the surveyors, controllers and customers of the port of London together with that of 'the marchants advenrers of the same'.⁶¹

Assumptions have been made that this book was created for the sole purpose of increasing Crown revenue, yet this cannot be sustained when the valuations contained therein are compared to those found in the London Petty Customs Accounts of 1502-3 and 1506.⁶² It is therefore apparent that the book was largely based upon prices current in the port of London at the time. It is likely that this was an attempt to regulate the process of declaring customs and thus check fraud in the port.⁶³ These rates were to remain largely unchanged until the reign of Mary in the mid-sixteenth century.⁶⁴

Yet despite the involvement of the Adventurers in its creation, the corporation of the City still found cause for complaint. In December 1508, nearly eighteen months after the implementation of the rates book, four aldermen from different companies along with eight commoners were appointed by the Court of Aldermen to consult with legal advisers over the best course of action or suit to be 'made for the New Custmne'.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Rep.2, f.10.

⁶⁰ Rep.2, f.21v.

⁶¹ The Book of Rates has been reproduced by Gras, *English Customs*, Appendix C and amended by Cobb, 'London Customs', 13.

⁶² Cobb, 'London Customs', 5-6; Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, 49; J.R. Lander, *Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth-Century England* (London, 1969), 104. The valuations are also comparable to a list of goods in the port of London listed in Arnold's Chronicle, created not later than 1502/3. (*The Customs of London Otherwise Called Arnold's Chronicle* (London, 1811), 234-237).

⁶³ Cobb, 'London Customs', 6.

⁶⁴ Cobb, 'London Customs', 8-12; Gras, *English Customs*, 123-4.

⁶⁵ Rep.2, f.56. Of the 12 men, two were Mercers, two Drapers, two Merchant Taylors and two Fishmongers, with the remaining four being a Grocer, a Goldsmith, a Skinner and a Haberdasher. One might have expected more Mercers given their domination of the Merchant Adventurers, and it may

Given the timing and the lack of alternatives, it seems likely that this New Custom was that embodied in the book of rates. Around the same time Edmund Dudley pressed the Mercers' Company into accepting the new rates, demanding that two representatives of the company appear before him and give an answer as to what they and 'other whiche he had desired to drawe them together for the Custume wolde say'.⁶⁶ The representatives answered that they were not qualified to make such an answer and perhaps such a matter should be decided by a 'generall assemble'. Dudley was not pleased by this, and replied that if they would refuse to give an answer then 'he knewe well that the Kyng wold stop the clothes at the next shipping,' not to resume until their agreement was secured.⁶⁷

In January 1508 the Court of Aldermen appointed eight men, comprising the Recorder, three aldermen and four common councilmen, to go to the king 'for the reformation of the subside newe claymed'.⁶⁸ How this deputation was received is not recorded, but the City was not discouraged from pressing its point, for nine days later on 25 January 1508 yet another deputation was appointed to 'sue w[ith] the counncell of this citie to the kyngs g[ra]ce for the mater of subsidy'.⁶⁹ Finally, on 16 February, no less than twenty-three men, including the Recorder and twelve aldermen, were appointed to sue to the king for the reform of the book of rates.⁷⁰ Once again, the result of this action is not recorded, and perhaps the City was prevented from pursuing the case further by the death of Henry VII in April 1509.

That the City was overwhelmingly negative about the implementation of the Book of Rates is evident, but quite why is more difficult to determine. The delay between the book's creation in July 1507 (and one assumes that its implementation was not long after this date) and the first action taken by the City fathers against it suggests that perhaps the book had proved to be an administrative burden on the merchants subject

have been because of the Adventurers involvement in the creation of the rates book that they were not given their usual majority representation in this forum.

⁶⁶ *Acts*, 319.

⁶⁷ *Acts*, 319-320.

⁶⁸ Rep.2, f.56v.

⁶⁹ Rep.2, f.58.

⁷⁰ Rep.2, f.61.

to it. It may also, in practice, have resulted in the payment of more customs. There is no mention at all of the Book of Rates in the chronicles, nor does it appear to have been discussed in Common Council, suggesting that perhaps this was not as big an issue as the effort the Aldermen put into fighting it might suggest. Given that at the time the Court of Aldermen were being extra careful about what was recorded in their corporation records and concerned that secrets discussed within the Court of Aldermen were not discussed elsewhere, it might have been the case that discussion about rates was a relatively safe topic to record.⁷¹ Therefore, the recorded instances of discussions focused upon the matter of the Book of Rates may not reflect the amount of Aldermanic time devoted to it in relation to other issues.

Reform of the customs system was badly needed. In the late 1470s, Edward IV had complained that fraud was rife amongst the Mercers, and Henry VII had made similar complaints in the 1490s. Declaration of customs due by oath was an invitation to play bluff, and a lack of administrative control allowed corruption and smuggling to proliferate. The introduction of a formal book of rates altered the emphasis from fraud detection by the paid bureaucratic staff of the port of London to a means of formally assessing stock shipped through the port. It is an example of the increasing formalisation of the functions of Crown officers, a process that was to accelerate under Cardinal Wolsey in the next reign.

3.4. Taxes

In the fifteenth century the predominant form of lay subsidy, granted by parliament, was the ‘fifteenth and tenth’, a fractional tax levied on the movable goods of the king’s lay subjects.⁷² A fifteenth was levied in the countryside and a tenth in the boroughs and ancient demesne lands of the Crown. The tax was levied at a rate fixed from 1334 onwards, with each vill or borough assigned an overall quota, collected by the authorities within those entities, and therefore all taxes of this kind uniformly yielded about £37,000 for the entire realm.⁷³ Changes in inflation and geography eroded both the real and actual yield of the tax over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth

⁷¹ Rep.2, ff.57, 57v.

⁷² Jurkowski, ‘Taxation’, 271-290.

⁷³ Jurkowski, ‘Taxation’, 272; Dietz, *English Finance*, 13-14.

centuries, and in 1449 a rebate of £6,000 was introduced to make allowance for these changes, rendering the total yield to between £32,000 and £33,000.⁷⁴ The Crown's method of overcoming these problems was to request multiple grants of fifteenths and tenths. This model of taxation was rarely deviated from in the fifteenth century, partly as to do so was to invite administrative chaos and cost, and partly because any change in the system was resisted by the Commons.⁷⁵

London's contribution to the normal yield of a fifteenth and tenth was £618 3s 5d, nearly two per cent of the whole.⁷⁶ Though this amount was over three times as much as that paid by the next biggest urban centre, Bristol, it was still considerably less than might be expected, given London's assessed wealth was over seventeen times that of Bristol's in the 1520s.⁷⁷ This discrepancy was to be addressed with the introduction of the Tudor subsidy in 1510 and developed throughout the sixteenth century, so that London's contribution to the Elizabethan subsidies was between ten and twelve per cent of the total amount raised.⁷⁸ London, in common with the urban centres of Bath, Canterbury, Coventry, Gloucester, Leicester, Norwich, Oxford, Southampton, York and Bristol, was considered a borough, as opposed to part of a county.⁷⁹ Yet London was not taxed at the rate of a tenth, unlike the other borough towns and cities, but at a fifteenth. The reason for this was the traditional exclusion of the capital from payments of tallage, a predecessor of parliamentary taxation, an arbitrary royal tax levied on the royal boroughs. In place of tallage, the City was obliged to provide aid such as was asked from the king's tenants-in-chief.⁸⁰ Despite this, London had been frequently unsuccessful in avoiding the payment of tallage, but the right to pay the lower rate of tax stuck, and hence London remained under-taxed in relation to its wealth.⁸¹ Bristol paid the next highest amount, at £185 8s 1½d, and York £160 10s.⁸²

⁷⁴ Dietz, *English Finance*, 14.

⁷⁵ Jurkowski, 'Taxation', 272.

⁷⁶ Roger Schofield, *Taxation Under the Early Tudors, 1485-1558* (Oxford, 2004), 56.

⁷⁷ Barron, *London*, 45.

⁷⁸ Ian Archer, 'Taxation in Sixteenth-Century London', *The Historical Journal*, xlv (2001), 605.

⁷⁹ Schofield, *Taxation*, 55-6.

⁸⁰ Baron, *London*, 11-12.

⁸¹ The City records, where tax is mentioned, make reference to the grant and levy of a fifteenth only, e.g. Jo.10, f.99. Barron, *London*, 11-12.

⁸² Schofield, *Taxation*, 56.

In common with every vill and borough, London had allotted quotas to be raised for each fifteenth to each of its wards.

Ward	Contribution
Aldersgate	£7
Aldgate	£6
Bassishaw	£7
Billingsgate	£32
Bishopsgate	£13
Bread Street	£37
Bridge	£32
Broad Street	£27
Candlewick Street	£16
Castle Baynard	£12
Cheap	£52 16s
Coleman Street	£15 16s 9d
Cordwainer Street	£52 16s
Cornhill	£16
Cripplegate	£40
Dowgate	£36
Farringdon Within	£50
Farringdon Without	£35
Langbourn	£21
Lime Street	£1 19s 11d
Portsoken	£6
Queenhithe	£20
Tower	£26
Vintry	£16 13s 4d
Walbrook	£33 6s 8d

Table 3.2. Distribution of tax among the wards. Source: *The Great Chronicle of London*, 265-6.

Two taxes in the reign of Henry VII differed from the normal fifteenth and tenth model. The 1489 tax was directly modelled on that of 1472, with the overall sum to be raised capped at £100,000, including £25,000 to be levied upon the clergy.⁸³ Just over a quarter of the anticipated amount was raised, with the Great Chronicler blaming the

⁸³ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 147; Schofield, *Taxation*, ch.4.

inefficiency of the commissioners and the costs involved in levying the tax.⁸⁴ The subsidy was such a disaster that once the failure of the subsidy was acknowledged in parliament the king pardoned the outstanding amount, receiving in exchange a grant of a fifteenth and tenth.⁸⁵ In 1497, with war against Scotland pending, the Crown's need for funds was met by a loan of £120,000 sanctioned by the Great Council in lieu of a parliamentary grant of two fifteenths and tenths.⁸⁶ The taxation granted by this parliament was collected by specially appointed commissioners who assessed individual contributions, though unlike the tax of 1489 it had a fixed county quota.⁸⁷ In London, the Court of Aldermen appointed four of their number to assist the justices of the peace in the City in this assessment.⁸⁸ The aldermen were then responsible for the collection of the tax within their own wards.⁸⁹ The cancellation of the war with Scotland led to the cancellation of the second of the two grants made by parliament on this occasion.⁹⁰

In 1504 Henry VII sought from parliament a grant of two feudal aids, for the knighting of Prince Arthur and the marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to James IV of Scotland. Arthur had been knighted in 1489 and in 1504 he had been dead for nearly two years, whilst Margaret's marriage had taken place the year before. The motives of the king, therefore, were rather questionable, probably stemming from both a desire to establish and reinforce the boundaries of the royal prerogative and the financial windfall this might represent. Parliament did not dispute Henry's right to the aids, but it was apparent in the vigorous debates provoked by the request that the Commons feared that the consequent investigation into feudal tenures 'shuld be to theym doutefull, uncerteyn and gret inquietnes'.⁹¹ The aversion of the Commons to such investigations was not a new phenomenon: in 1472 Edward IV was granted an unusual subsidy to raise 13,000 archers, to be levied in the form of a tax of a tenth of all income derived from lands,

⁸⁴ *GC*, 243.

⁸⁵ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 148.

⁸⁶ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 199; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 186.

⁸⁷ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 200; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 186.

⁸⁸ Rep.1, f.13v.

⁸⁹ Jo.10, f.99; Rep.1, f.14v.

⁹⁰ Jo.10, f.112.

⁹¹ *PROME*, vi, 532-4; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 150.

tenements, rents, fees, annuities, offices, corrodies and pensions of all temporal possessions.⁹² The Commons ensured that records of individuals' income were not ever submitted to the Exchequer nor kept for future use.⁹³ Stanley Chrimes hypothesized that Henry's motive for requesting these aids was to initiate a far-reaching inquiry into tenure holdings and feudal rights as part of his wider policy of extending the royal prerogative.⁹⁴ To avoid such an inquiry the Commons offered a subsidy of £40,000, justifying it not only on the grounds of the feudal aids due, but also as necessary for the defence of the realm.⁹⁵ The king accepted the offer, and remitted £10,000 as a goodwill gesture. Thus he received approximately the equivalent amount of a fifteenth and tenth.

3.4.1. Civic Taxation

In addition to the taxation imposed upon the City by parliament and the customs charges made upon the merchants, Londoners were occasionally subject to civic taxation. Civic taxation was not generally imposed for the usual expenses of the City, for these were normally met by the revenues of the City chamber and the Bridge derived from property, City tolls, apprenticeships and freedom fees.⁹⁶ Large expenditure on civic projects, however, occasionally necessitated taxation to raise the necessary funds. In 1493 civic taxation of a fifteenth was levied to fund the repair of the aqueduct on Gracechurch Street after a two year investigation into its condition had been undertaken.⁹⁷ The 5,000 marks payable to the king for the renewal of the City's charter in 1504 was also raised by a fifteenth. This was to be raised in five tranches, each of 1,000 marks or £666, and thus five fifteenths were necessary to raise the full amount.⁹⁸

Civic taxation was commonly employed to raise money for costly pageantry for the celebration of royal occasions. It was decided in Common Council as early as May 1500 that a fifteenth and a half would be levied upon the inhabitants of the City to pay

⁹² Jurkowski, 'Taxation', 275.

⁹³ Jurkowski, 'Taxation', 276.

⁹⁴ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 200.

⁹⁵ For a full explanation of the significance of this see Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 150.

⁹⁶ Archer, 'Taxation', 603.

⁹⁷ Jo.9, f.227v, Jo.10, ff.7v.

⁹⁸ Jo.10, f.335.

for the celebrations expected upon the arrival of Kathryn of Aragon in London prior to her wedding to Prince Arthur.⁹⁹ In July 1501, four months before Kathryn's arrival, the money was still being collected and auditors were assigned to deal with the expenses incurred by the pageant.¹⁰⁰ Similarly a levy of a civic tax of one and a half fifteenths was agreed by the Common Council to fund the City's contribution to the celebrations surrounding the coronation of Henry VIII.¹⁰¹ In addition to having to contribute towards a civic tax to pay for such events, citizens might also have to pay small amounts towards their own livery company's role in royal occasions. The accounts of the Drapers, Ironmongers and Leathersellers, for example, reflect the costs incurred for hiring and decorating a barge to greet the king in 1485.¹⁰² The Drapers' Company was later to spend a total of 5s 11d on barge hire and decoration on the occasion of the Queen's coronation.¹⁰³ The costs of the demands for pageantry and celebration represented yet another royal drain on the wealth of the citizens.

3.5. Gifts and Loans

The decision of London's Common Council to send representatives of the City to Henry VII after his victory at Bosworth set the initial tone for the relationship between the City and the monarch. In a display of deference, loyalty and fealty, not to mention self-preservation and pragmatism, the capital sent leading citizens in a deputation to the king to assure him of the support and good faith of the City. Just as importantly, a gift of 1,000 marks was given to the king in tacit acknowledgement that the City would provide practical support in future by providing the ready cash that a new monarch would undoubtedly need.¹⁰⁴ This was a spontaneous gift given in addition to the usual 1,000 marks given by the City towards the coronation expenses of a new monarch.

⁹⁹ Jo.10, f.187v.

¹⁰⁰ Rep.1, ff.89v, 91 & 91v.

¹⁰¹ Jo.11, f.80.

¹⁰² The Drapers' Company, WA2, f.35v; The Ironmongers' Register of Accounts (LMA, CLC/L/IB/D/001/MS16988/001), f.52; The Leathersellers' Hall, ACC/1/1, f.56.

¹⁰³ Drapers' Company, WA2, f.41.

¹⁰⁴ Jo.9, f.86v.

Though Henry was to use the financial services offered by the City, he did not take advantage of them as much as did his predecessors. Between 1448 and 1460 the ailing government of Henry VI received fourteen loans or gifts from the corporation of London.¹⁰⁵ Edward IV, in the nine months between July 1460 and April 1461, received a total of £11,000 in corporate loans and gifts from the capital.¹⁰⁶ This amount was unprecedented and perhaps reflected the desperation of the Londoners to ensure that once they had committed themselves to support Edward's bid for the throne their candidate succeeded and thus save them from the vengeful wrath of the Lancastrians.¹⁰⁷ Henry VII received the same amount in loans over the first four years of his reign, not including the three 1,000 mark gifts he received on the occasions of his accession and his and his queen's (separate) coronations.¹⁰⁸

Loans from Londoners to the king came in three forms: corporate loans from the inhabitants of the City of London, loans from the fellowship of the Staple of Calais, or directly from individuals. As the merchants involved in these loans were frequently the same, a large loan from one of these sources might impinge on the ability of the others to offer finance. Rarely were loans made directly by the livery companies, though this had happened in 1460-1 when the Drapers and the Grocers lent £200 each to the future Edward IV and the Fishmongers a further £133 6s 8d.¹⁰⁹ The Mercers objected when Henry VII sent letters to the Livery Companies directly to request loans in January 1486/7, resolving to request the Common Serjeant to suggest to the Lord Treasurer that the king redirect his request to the 'hole Citie' via the mayor.¹¹⁰ They were forced to capitulate when, at a meeting of the fellowships at which the Treasurer was present, the Goldsmiths stated that they would be prepared to acquiesce to the king's request, an

¹⁰⁵ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 93. Not all the amounts of the fourteen awards are known as only £2,000 in loan and £1,000 in gifts can be definitely identified.

¹⁰⁶ Though it is to be noted that Edward only formally ascended the throne in March 1461. Barron, 'London and the Crown', 102-4.

¹⁰⁷ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 97.

¹⁰⁸ Jo.9, ff.84, 91, 161. See table 3.3 below.

¹⁰⁹ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 107, *n.66*.

¹¹⁰ *Acts*, 296.

act attributed in the Mercers' records to the desire of the Goldsmiths to 'have sureties certen lordes and bisshoppes to them bounden'.¹¹¹

Frederick Dietz, after an extensive search of the receipt rolls of the Exchequer for the first year of Henry's reign, concluded that a total of £10,121 17s 4d had been received in loans during this time from a combination of individuals (including prelates, magnates, and various foreign and indigenous merchants) and the City of London.¹¹² All of these loans were paid off within the year. The Londoners provided a large proportion of this amount, including at least one corporate loan of £2,000, just over £1,000 from the Staplers of Calais and at least £1,000 from individual members of the London mercantile community.¹¹³ Therefore, over two thirds of the amount calculated by Dietz was gathered from the capital, unsurprising given the ability of the City to raise ready finance. Given the faults with Dietz's methodology highlighted by Wolffe and Richardson, this figure can be used for indicative purposes only as the minimum amount that the Crown received in loans in his first year, as allowances must be made for loans paid directly into the king's Chamber, for which we do not have records during this vital time.

3.5.1 Corporate loans

Ordinarily, a corporate loan from the City would be requested by the king in a letter explaining his need for financial aid.¹¹⁴ On rare occasions, when the king's need was particularly pressing, this request would be presented to the mayor and aldermen by senior members of the king's council or administration. Early in 1486 the Lord Treasurer, John, lord Dinham, Reynold Bray, and 'other honourable personagis' went to the mayor to ask for a loan of 6,000 marks. The mayor then assembled the aldermen

¹¹¹ *Acts*, 297.

¹¹² Dietz, *English Finance, 1485-1558*, 51-52.

¹¹³ TNA, E405/75 & E401/957. It is probable that more than the above figure was received in loan from individuals within London, for many loans are recorded as being from Bray as per letters (possibly loans requested by signet letters and collected by Bray) or loans to be repaid into the hands of Bray, which he would then pass on to the lender. It is highly unlikely that all the loans recorded as being from Bray (or Dinham and Cornborough) were from him but rather were procured by him from contacts within the City.

¹¹⁴ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 91.

and Common Council to discuss the request.¹¹⁵ Similarly, in November 1496, Bray and other members of the king's council approached the mayor and 'his brethir' to deliver the king's request for a loan for £10,000 to defend the realm against the Scots.¹¹⁶ The mayor, again, assembled the Common Council at which Bray made a personal appeal on the king's behalf and the commons agreed to lend £4,000, which 'was well and thankfully takyn' by the king.¹¹⁷ As the 1486 loan was the first requested by the king of the City and the 1496 one was an unusually large amount it can be concluded that requests delivered by high-ranking personnel were reserved for when the stakes were higher than usual. That the exact approach taken by the king in his request of other loans during the reign is not recorded, either in the chronicles or in the Journal of the Common Council, suggests that the usual form of a letter was used. Once a request for a loan had been received, the mayor would then assemble the Common Council to approve and agree the size of the loan.¹¹⁸ The method for collecting the loan would then be decided and individuals appointed to collect the funds.¹¹⁹

In addition to the large corporate loans it is apparent that the king also used the civic administration's ability to provide ready finance for short-term loans. These were usually small in amount, limited to a couple of months in duration and not ordinarily recorded in the civic records. The reasons for this can be guessed at: it is possible that because of their small size they could be raised through a few select members of the Court of Aldermen or other members of the civic administration. Occasionally they were raised on a relatively informal basis through the companies. The minutes of the court of the Mercers' Company records how in March 1489 the king requested from the corporation of London a loan of £1,400 for the term of two months to fund the provision of 1,000 men of war to Calais.¹²⁰ The mayor's request of the Mercers' Company's assistance in raising this amount was not met with enthusiasm, for after

¹¹⁵ *GC*, 240.

¹¹⁶ *GC*, 274-5.

¹¹⁷ *GC*, 275; Vit. XVI, 212. The civic journal records only the Common Council's approval of the loan. Jo.10, f.80v.

¹¹⁸ Jo.9, ff.114, 151, 191v, 232, 251v, 273v, 274; Jo.10, f.80v.

¹¹⁹ Jo.9, f.224v.

¹²⁰ *Acts*, 189. No corresponding entry appears in the Journal of Common Council, and therefore it is likely that Common Council approval was not needed in this instance.

‘remembering’ that they had only recently given to the collectors their contribution of £760 towards a corporate loan of £4,000, the Mercers agreed to the new loan only after the seven aldermen of their company agreed to contribute £70 towards their company’s allotted contribution of £170 so that no other individual within the fellowship would have to contribute more than 40s.¹²¹ In compliance with the established norms of financial negotiation with the City the king did not receive the full amount that he had requested, receiving on this occasion only half.¹²² The loan was duly repaid after two months and no record of it was made in the Journals of the Common Council.¹²³ A similar small loan was made in August 1489 of £1,000 and levied upon the livery companies.¹²⁴ That the civic administration had co-ordinated this loan is confirmed by an entry in the Goldsmiths’ Minute Book, which states that the company was to deliver £70, its contribution to a loan of £1,000 to the king, by 6 July that year.¹²⁵

An entry in the Journals of Common Council records the appointment of six men in July 1486 to collect various unspecified sums of money granted to the king.¹²⁶ This does not appear to relate to the only corporate loan then outstanding, delivered to the Exchequer in February of that year, nor to the gifts of money made on the accession and coronation of the king, as claimed by Guth, as the City was too efficient to wait almost a year to arrange the collection of such amounts.¹²⁷ It is suggestive, therefore, of one or more of the many smaller loans made by the City and received directly into the king’s Chamber.

Unlike his father-in-law, Henry was careful to repay loans promptly, usually a year after they were given, thus maintaining, to use modern parlance, a good credit rating.¹²⁸ Edward IV, by contrast, only absolved himself of the £11,000 debt incurred at the beginning of his reign in 1478, when he sold certain City monopolies and lands for the

¹²¹ *Acts*, 189.

¹²² The loan was only £700 in total, TNA, E401/964.

¹²³ TNA, E405/75, m.51d.

¹²⁴ TNA, E401/966; Goldsmiths’ Company, Minute Book A, f.303.

¹²⁵ Goldsmiths’ Company, Minute Book A, f.303.

¹²⁶ Jo.9, f.114

¹²⁷ Guth, ‘Dun Cowe’, 204 *nz*.90.

¹²⁸ *GC*, 240, 242, 243, 244, 274, 287.

sum of his indebtedness.¹²⁹ Henry's loan repayments were made in cash rather than by assignment and were repaid to representatives of the City selected by the Common Council, and the amount was then given to the City Chamberlain who would oversee its distribution to the contributing parties.¹³⁰ Repayments were sometimes made in instalments: a payment made out of the Exchequer in 1490 of £2,009 was the final instalment of repayment of a £4,000 loan made by the City in February 1489.¹³¹

There is no evidence that interest was paid on any of the loans made by the City to the king. The amount approved in the Common Council meetings is always the same as that received into the Exchequer, thus McFarlane's supposition, that the Exchequer received an amount lower than the loan amount agreed to take account of interest due on the sum, is not applicable to corporate loans made by London to the Crown during Henry's reign.¹³² Nor was interest attached to the loan upon repayment. The question of why corporations and individuals were willing to lend for no financial gain has been ably answered by Gerald Harriss who argues that loans were an expression of the subject's obligation to provide aid to the Crown in times of necessity and therefore by their very nature they were interest-free.¹³³ The subject was expected to help the king in his plight, not profit by it.

Though Henry was to receive a total of £19,000 in loans approved by the Common Council during his reign, not including small, short-dated loans, only one corporate loan from the City of London was made prior to the battle of Stoke in June 1487, for the sum of £2,000.¹³⁴ Even considering the two gifts of 1,000 marks each made at

¹²⁹ See chapter 2, section 2.1.2.

¹³⁰ E.g., Jo.9, f.224v; TNA, E405/75, m.4.

¹³¹ TNA, E405/78, m.5d. The payment appears under the heading of Michaelmas term, 1489, but it could refer to a payment made by the Exchequer anytime up until the end of February 1490. Given that £4,000 was lent to the king in February 1489 (Jo.9, 191b; TNA, E401/964) it makes it likely that payment was a year later.

¹³² K.B. McFarlane, 'Loans to the Lancastrian Kings: the Problem of Inducement', in his *England in the Fifteenth Century*, 63-65.

¹³³ G.L. Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', *Historical Journal*, vi (1963), 17-18.

¹³⁴ GC, 240; TNA, E405/75, E401/957. Some companies had already received payment of their share of the loan from the first instalment; the Mercers received £730 in December 1489. (*Acts*, 198) The Mercers and the other mercantile companies were probably prioritised; the Carpenters had to wait until later in

Henry's accession and coronation by the City, the king's need for financial help after the battle of Bosworth renders this surprising. The willingness of the City to provide financial help after the battle and possible reasons for this have already been discussed, but the lack of help before Stoke is marked if compared to that given to Edward IV or even Richard III in the first eighteen months of their reigns.¹³⁵ Two possible arguments can be made for the lack of loans taken from the City prior to the battle of Stoke. It is conceivable that Henry was reluctant to indebted himself to one corporate body, particularly one with political influence in its own right, until he felt he had firmly established his own authority. He may also have been reluctant to ask the mercantile community for funding when he was determined to impose his will upon them in diplomatic matters.¹³⁶ Alternatively, the City of London may have considered the king a bad investment, and demanded collateral or terms for loans (unrecorded) that the king found unacceptable, terms that were removed after the battle of Stoke when Henry appeared to be more secure in his position. After Stoke, the stream of finance from the City to the Crown became more regular. A £4,000 loan was approved in December of 1488, £2,000 was lent in 1489 and the same amount the year after. £3,000 was lent in 1491 and a final corporate loan of £4,000 was given in 1496.¹³⁷

1490 to receive the £8 they contributed to the 'Grette loan': *Records of the Carpenters' Company*, ed. Bower Marsh (Oxford, 1914),ii, 83.

¹³⁵ Jo.9, ff.56, 78v, 81, 85.

¹³⁶ See Chapter 2, section 2.3.

¹³⁷ See Table 3.3.

Year	Date	Amount	Source
1486	Jan/Feb	£2,000	<i>GC</i> , 240 TNA E401/957
1487	Jul/Aug	£2,000	Jo.9, f. 151 TNA E101/413/2/1 f.4v
1488/9	Dec/Jan	£4,000	Jo.9, f. 191v TNA, E401/964
1489	Jun/Jul	£2,000	Jo.9, f. 232. Agreed to lend until 30 Dec. TNA E36/124, f.19
1490	June	£2,000	Jo. 9, f. 251v TNA, E405/78, m.17
1491	June	£3,000	Jo. 9, ff.273v, 274
1496	Nov	£4,000	Jo. 10, f. 80v TNA E36/14, f.339

Table 3.3. Loans extended to the Crown by the City.

Note: This table does not include small, short-dated loans not approved by the Common Council.

There is no record in the civic records of the first loan on this table. This loan was received into the Exchequer 23 February 1486 and, as discussed, the king's request for the loan had been conveyed to the Guildhall by Bray and Dinham personally.¹³⁸ As it was the first loan to be raised by allocation to the Livery Companies rather than the wards 'ffor the more ease of the pore people' it is possible that it was decided that approval was required only by the wardens of the companies, rather than the Common Council.¹³⁹ The only reference to this loan extant in the City records is in the approval of a loan in July 1487 which, it was stated, was to be levied in the same way.¹⁴⁰

All of the loans made 1486 and 1490 were levied upon the companies, whereas those of 1491 and 1496 were levied on the wards.¹⁴¹ Raising funds by company was probably preferred as the companies were organised administrative units capable of collecting money from their members quickly, but using them omitted many elements of society,

¹³⁸ TNA, E401/957; *GC*, 240.

¹³⁹ *GC*, 240. On 24 Jan 1486 a meeting in the Guildhall took place with the mayor and aldermen and the masters and wardens of the companies and their assistants in attendance. Though no details of the meeting were recorded it is likely that this assembly approved the loan request. Jo.9, f.95.

¹⁴⁰ Jo.9, f.151.

¹⁴¹ Jo.9, ff.151, 191v, 232, 251v, 273v-4; Jo.10, f.80v.

not just the poor, as the Great Chronicle claimed, but also aliens, employees of the royal household or other noble households, women, servants and members of the gentry. Administratively raising funds through the livery companies might have been easier, as money raised by the wards was done so with the imposition of a tax of a fifteenth, or however many fifteenths were required to make up the requested sum. As each fifteenth in the City raised just over £630, raising a few thousand pounds was not an exact science. The 1491 loan, approved by Common Council in June for £2,000, highlights this problem.¹⁴² Negotiation must have taken place between the City and the Crown administration as soon as Common Council approval was given, as three days later another meeting was called to approve raising the amount of the loan to £3,000.¹⁴³ It appears likely that the collection of funds had already commenced in the City, and that raising the extra £1,000 presented some logistical problems, for the Exchequer received only £2,802 8s 7d.¹⁴⁴ To account for the discrepancy between the amount expected into the Exchequer and the amount received, a crossed out payment of £197 11s 4d, noted as part of a £3,000 loan from the City, appears in the Tellers' rolls with the marginal note that not all of the expected £3,000 had been received.¹⁴⁵ Further evidence of difficulty raising the sum is to be found in a receipt in which the mayor, Hugh Clopton, acknowledged a contribution towards the loan by the Abbot of St. Augustine of Canterbury of £186 13s.¹⁴⁶ It is doubtful, given the financial resources of the City, that this type of arrangement was a frequent occurrence and how it came about is a matter of conjecture; possibly it was brokered through the contacts of one of the aldermen.

The reason for switching to levying the loans by ward rather than company is perhaps that by 1491, and certainly 1496, when the last two loans were made, heavy financial demands had already been made upon the citizens. These demands did not just take the form of loans on both the City and individuals but also in the form of taxation, benevolences and sums involved in the provision of pageantry for royal occasions.

¹⁴² Jo.9, f.273v.

¹⁴³ Jo.9, f.274.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, E405/78, m.29.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, E405/78, m.34d. The record of the repayment of this loan also makes reference to this discrepancy; TNA, E405/78, m.41. The error in calculation was the tellers' own.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, uncatalogued item, unnumbered X-box, dated 14 May 1491. I am indebted to Dr. James Ross for this reference.

Opting to raise money through the wards would have increased the number of taxpayers and so reduced the burden on those who had already contributed large amounts.

Henry VII was never refused a loan, unlike Henry VI, who on seven occasions between 1448 and 1460 was met with excuses of diplomatic poverty by the City.¹⁴⁷ That does not mean that the City always gave financial aid willingly to Henry VII. After it was decided that the £4,000 loan of 1496 was to be levied upon the wards, assessors were appointed for each ward, and they and their assistants had to swear to assess the citizens in their jurisdiction ‘sparyng no man for favour nor grevyng no p[er]sone for hate’.¹⁴⁸ That the loan was not popular is suggested by the apparent reluctance of some aldermen to pay their share. On 10 January 1497 aldermen were reminded that their contribution to the loan was due by the 25th of that month.¹⁴⁹ Yet in March some of the sum was still outstanding and it was agreed in the Court of Aldermen that those who further defaulted would be committed to ward until the money was paid.¹⁵⁰ Ominously it was added that this would apply to the Recorder as well as to the aldermen, suggesting that Robert Sheffield had also been reluctant to pay his share. The loan, because of its size and perhaps also because of the truculence of the citizens, was paid into the Exchequer in two tranches, of £1,600 and £2,400.¹⁵¹

This loan was not a usual corporate loan, but rather was a part of the so-called ‘forced-loan’ of 1496, authorised by the Great Council that met in October that year in Westminster. The council authorised a loan of £120,000, to be raised throughout the country on the security of a forthcoming grant of taxation by parliament, and was to be employed in the defence of the kingdom against the Scots.¹⁵² Individuals, not only in London but throughout the country, were approached for funds, though few London merchants contributed in addition to the corporate loan. John Shaa, the London

¹⁴⁷ Barron, ‘London and the Crown’, 93.

¹⁴⁸ Jo.10, f.83; *GC*, 212.

¹⁴⁹ Rep.1, f.10v.

¹⁵⁰ Rep.1, f.13.

¹⁵¹ TNA, E36/14, ff.226, 286, 339.

¹⁵² Hannes Kleineke, ‘Morton’s Fork? – Henry VII’s ‘Forced Loan’ of 1496’, *Tant D’Emprises – So Many Undertakings: Essays in Honour of Anne F. Sutton*, ed. Livia Visser-Fuchs (Bury St. Edmunds, 2003), 315-328

Goldsmith, contributed £333 6s 8d, the same amount the City of Norwich paid as a whole.¹⁵³ The only individuals to contribute larger amounts were Reynold Bray, the Archbishop of Canterbury John Morton and John, Lord Dinham, at £666 13s 4d each.¹⁵⁴ Like London, the civic leaders of other major towns and cities such as Bristol, Norwich, Southampton and Canterbury were approached personally by a royally appointed commissioner.¹⁵⁵ Bristol corporately gave £638 6s 8d.¹⁵⁶ In other cities such as Exeter, York and Lincoln commissioners negotiated with individual men for their personal contribution.¹⁵⁷

The application of the epithet ‘forced’ to this loan has been questioned by some scholars. K.B. McFarlane, Gerald Harriss, Stanley Chrimes and Hannes Kleineke all pointed out that this loan was not ‘forced’ in the modern sense of the word, but rather the pressure exerted on individuals and corporations to contribute was a moral one.¹⁵⁸ Chrimes makes the point that loans invited by Signet letters, as this one was, might be difficult to refuse, but none the less resulted in loans that were made by agreement rather than under duress.¹⁵⁹ The sums requested were just that, they had to be asked for, usually with a justification outlining the need of the monarch. Amounts asked for were not assessed, were generally rather small, were requested from rich individuals and usually repaid. In this instance ‘bills of *mutuum*’ were promised as security for repayment.¹⁶⁰ London’s mayor handed the City’s bill to the City’s Chamberlain for safekeeping, and the careful recording of this event suggests that it was exceptional to receive such a receipt, though one would expect that the City would have received some sort of formal memoranda from the Exchequer acknowledging the receipt of all loans from the City to the Crown.¹⁶¹

¹⁵³ TNA, E36/14, ff.226, 286; TNA, E179/265/32, ff.14 & 60.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, E36/14, f.226; TNA, E179/265/32, ff.60 & 61.

¹⁵⁵ Kleineke, ‘Morton’s Fork?’, 320.

¹⁵⁶ TNA, E36/14, ff.286.

¹⁵⁷ Kleineke, ‘Morton’s Fork?’, 320.

¹⁵⁸ McFarlane, ‘Loans to the Lancastrian Kings’, 59; Harris, ‘Aids, Loans and Benevolences’, 8-9; S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 202-3; Kleineke, ‘Morton’s Fork?’, 319.

¹⁵⁹ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 202-3.

¹⁶⁰ Kleineke, ‘Morton’s Fork’, 317.

¹⁶¹ Rep.1, f.19.

3.5.2. *Individual loans*

The complaint recorded in the Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company that the king had requested loans directly from various members of their company has already been mentioned. The exact content of that complaint is worth relating. In January 1486 the Mercers complained that:

the kyng hath sende his letters myssyves unto dyuers parsons of oure felyshipp of the mercery and also unto certen parsons of dyuers & many other felyshippes to have certen mony by mean of prest [loan or advance], that is to witt of sum parson xl li. & sum xx li.¹⁶²

No precedent existed for such a demand, continued the complaint. This is incorrect, as the practice of requesting loans from individuals through the medium of letters from the king under the seal of the signet was well established and had recently been employed by Richard III.¹⁶³ It is possible that the amounts requested were unprecedented or that the scale was unprecedented, or perhaps the letters were not couched in usual terms. It was eventually agreed that each company would be set an amount to lend, and it is probable that in this manner the loan of £2,000 given to the Crown in 1486 was agreed and raised, and this may account for its absence in the civic records.¹⁶⁴

The king was not deterred from approaching individuals for loans, and was to do so successfully later that same year. Over 100 individual Londoners lent sums ranging from sixty shillings to the £33 6s 8d given by each alderman.¹⁶⁵ Just over £1,000 was received by the Exchequer in total from this source between December 1486 and March 1487.¹⁶⁶ The loans were of short duration, with most repaid during the following terms, with the exception of twenty-two of the aldermen, who received half the repayment in

¹⁶² *Acts*, 297.

¹⁶³ Hannes Kleineke, 'The Commission De Mutuo Faciendo in the Reign of Henry VI', *EHR*, cxvi (2001), 5; *Harleian 433*, i, 128-133.

¹⁶⁴ See section 3.5.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, E405/75, Mich. 1486, Easter 1487 and Mich. 1487; TNA, E36/125, ff.22v-41.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, E36/125, ff.22v-41.

the Easter term of that year and the other half during the Michaelmas term.¹⁶⁷ The amounts given in loan by individuals at this time may serve as an indication of their wealth relative to each other. Londoners were not the only ones to be approached in this way; over a dozen Bristol merchants also gave loans ranging between £3 and £20, though they had to wait two years for repayment.¹⁶⁸ The prioritisation of the repayment of City debts over others may be indicative of Crown policy to maintain an exemplary financial relationship with the capital and its citizens.

Why Henry chose to raise money in this way rather than request a loan from the Corporation of London is unclear. Requesting, gathering, recording and repaying loans from individuals involved a heavy administrative burden. One corporate loan of £2,000 was outstanding at the end of 1486, when the first of the individual loans was received by the Exchequer, but given that this sum was repayable in February 1487, and the total due from the individual loans was not realised until March 1487, it begs the question why another corporate loan was not requested. It is conceivable that smaller loans were given by the City on a short-dated basis, but there is no evidence for this in the Exchequer records, which, whilst not entirely intact for this period, have no major gaps. Was the fact that Henry took only one loan from the corporation of London before 1487 indicative of his reluctance to be indebted to the City, or symptomatic of the City's wariness of the new king? Is it possible that the king felt he could not berate the merchants for pursuing their own diplomatic relations with the Low Countries whilst in debt to them financially? Either way, whatever reason prevented the king from acquiring finance in this way before June 1487, it no longer existed after the battle of Stoke.

A few individuals consistently lent money to the Crown, though lost relevant Chamber and Exchequer records makes construction of a complete picture of individual lending impossible. Despite this, regular lenders can be identified. The three biggest lenders in the first year of the reign by a large margin were Thomas Wyndowte, Edmund Shaa and his nephew John Shaa. Thomas Wyndowte, a Mercer, lent over £1100 in total

¹⁶⁷ TNA, E405/75, mm.20d & 21. William Martin and William Capell were the aldermen who received full repayment during Easter term, 1487.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, E405/75, Mich. 1486 & Mich. 1488.

during Michaelmas term 1485, of which at least £760 was repaid the following term.¹⁶⁹ He went on to lend £400 at least in Easter term 1489 and over £300 in 1493.¹⁷⁰ Why he might have been willing to lend such amounts remains a mystery; he was not knighted nor received any obvious rewards for his provision of financial services. He was possibly closely associated with Reynold Bray, who he named an executor of his will, and was prevailed upon by Bray to lend.¹⁷¹ He was perhaps offered benefits in kind, such as the opportunity to become a large supplier of goods for royal occasions, as he was to receive payments totalling at least £650 for goods supplied for the Queen's coronation.¹⁷²

Sir Edmund Shaa lent at least £833 to the king in the first year of his reign.¹⁷³ This is considerably more than we know he lent to Richard III over the same space of time, yet he is considered to be one of the most generous lenders to the Crown during that short reign.¹⁷⁴ Edmund is also known to have lent Edward IV £635 at least, again less than the amount lent to Henry VII in 1485/6.¹⁷⁵ John Shaa lent around £100 that can be traced in the records in the first year of the reign.¹⁷⁶ In 1489 he lent at least £866, followed by a minimum of £300 the following year, £350 in 1491 and £300 in 1493.¹⁷⁷ In all likelihood John Shaa lent a lot more but deposited his loans into the Chamber, as his position in the port of London as Searcher would have enabled him to acquire repayment quickly and easily, and many repayments for him are noted as being assigned on money collected by him at the port of London.¹⁷⁸ Other lenders gave smaller amounts: Sir Henry Colet lent around £132 in 1485 and £333 6s 8d in 1489.¹⁷⁹ Thomas Riche and Thomas Fuller both lent over £100 in the first year of the reign.¹⁸⁰

¹⁶⁹ TNA, E405/75, mm.4d, 6d, 7, 12d, 48d,

¹⁷⁰ TNA, E405/75, mm.48d, E405/78, mm.3, 10, 64.

¹⁷¹ TNA, PROB11/12/52.

¹⁷² TNA, E405/75, mm.26d & 28d. Wyndowte was not a regular supplier of goods to the Great Wardrobe.

¹⁷³ TNA, E405/75, mm.6d, 11, 13d, 14d, 32.

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter 2, section 2.1.4.

¹⁷⁵ Tucker, 'Government and Politics', 432.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, E405/75, mm.4d & 20d.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, E405/75, mm.4d, 20d, 48d; TNA, E405/78, mm.2, 4, 4d, 24d, 29, 32d, 28, 29d, 53, 60d, 64.

¹⁷⁸ See for example TNA, E405/78, m.4d.

¹⁷⁹ TNA, E405/75, mm.4d, 21; TNA, E405/78, m. 4.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, E405/75, mm.4d, 8d, 9; TNA, E401/958, June 1486; TNA, E401/959, 17 July 1486.

This is by no means a long list of individual lenders to the Crown and if one supposed that the extant Exchequer records contained the sum of all individual loans to the Crown then the unlikely conclusion could be drawn that Henry VII lacked influential and wealthy supporters within the City. An alternative reading could be that it is another indication of Henry's reluctance to be indebted to one individual or body, and perhaps he chose to spread his debt further than a handful of rich, powerful members of the London mercantile community. One of the extant Chamber receipt books covers the period July 1486 to September 1487, and again few loans from members of the mercantile community are to be found therein.¹⁸¹ It is possible that additional loans were received into the king's chamber outside of this period, but we can only speculate what logic dictated which loans were to be received where. It is perhaps the case that receipts were shared between the two entities on a need basis. The plethora of small loans given by individuals in 1486 would have been too administratively onerous to be paid into the Chamber and therefore were received into the Exchequer.

It is likely not only that many loans from individuals were received into the Chamber, but also that many trusted individuals within the Crown administration received money on behalf of the king. In the first decade of the reign there are many loans recorded in the Exchequer records from Reynold Bray and the Treasurer, John, Lord Dinham and his under-treasurer, Robert Lytton. These are often rather large and possibly represent not direct loans from these individuals but a consolidation of loans from their various contacts.¹⁸² Supporting this theory is the number of wealthy individuals that do not appear to have lent money to Henry VII yet are likely, given their connections to the court, to have been approached for funds. Hugh Brice, who lent over £3,800 to Edward IV by himself and just under £1,000 in syndicated loans, appears in the Exchequer records to have only lent money to Henry VII at the same time as many other high-worth individuals in 1486.¹⁸³ Given his obvious wealth, his previous generosity to the Crown and that he had been knighted by Henry in October 1485 one would have expected him to have been a contributor to the king's coffers. Also nearly entirely

¹⁸¹ TNA, E101/413/2/1.

¹⁸² For example, TNA, E405/75, mm.23, 34d; TNA, E401/962, dated 10 & 17 February 1488.

¹⁸³ TNA, E405/75, m.9; Tucker, "Government and Politics", 340.

absent, except for their contribution to the individual loans of 1486, are the merchants William Capell, John Broun, John Fenkill and Robert Billesdon who were to be knighted by Henry in January 1486.¹⁸⁴

It is not recorded whether any security was provided for loans by individuals. No evidence survives to suggest that it was, yet both Edward IV and Richard III frequently gave high value jewels or plate to individuals as collateral. Exceptions to this were loans given by merchants who held positions within the port of London, presumably as they could hold customs or money acquired through their role as security for their loans or secure payment by assignment against customs income. The Queen, on the other hand, did give jewels as security for loans, as evidenced by Henry's redemption of her loans outstanding after her death.¹⁸⁵

One last source of loans from the mercantile community of the City came from the fellowship of the Staple of Calais. These worked slightly differently to the above described loans, in that a system of repayment from the taxes and customs the merchants paid on wool exported through the Staple had already been devised in the reign of Edward IV, as described above.

3.6. The Benevolence of 1491

The term 'benevolence' is derived from a 'benevolent loan', given as a token of the subject's goodwill.¹⁸⁶ In effect, the king, when requesting a benevolence, was offering to accept out of his good will a monetary contribution towards the costs of defending the realm in lieu of military service.¹⁸⁷ In real terms the difference between a benevolence and a loan was that a benevolence was not expected to be repaid. In effect it was a subsidy, but not granted by the authority of parliament. The resentment caused by the 1473 and 1481 benevolences levied by Edward IV to fund his expeditions to

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter 2, section 2.1.4.

¹⁸⁵ BL, Add. Ms.59899, ff.23, 85. That these loans were outstanding long after Henry became solvent suggests that the Queen found her allowance from Henry far from sufficient.

¹⁸⁶ Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', 8.

¹⁸⁷ For this see Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', 9-10.

France and Scotland prompted Richard III to outlaw the practice in the parliament of 1484.¹⁸⁸

The benevolence of 1491, like that of 1473, was justified by the king's intention to invade France and secure the borders of the realm. The benevolence was presented to the realm as a necessity for the security of the realm and imposed a moral obligation upon the subjects. The Great Chronicle describes how the London mayor, John Mathew, responded to this appeal in a time of need when he was summoned 'afftyr he [the king] had ffelt the good wylls of his noblys'. Henry, apparently, 'soo handelid hym by his grete policy, that he caused hym to graunte toward his good spede, If his grace yood in propyr persoon CCLI.'¹⁸⁹ This was certainly a more positive response than the one Edward IV received in 1473 from the then mayor, Robert Drope, who offered only £30. Mathew's apparent willingness to contribute to the cause, with the caveat that he offered the money if the king would lead an army into France as he claimed he would do, indicates that this was not a 'forced' contribution, but one given in recognition of a good cause. Consequently all the other aldermen felt obliged to follow suit, though not all of them shared Mathew's enthusiasm, for 'Sundry of theym w'held the payment, term of theyr lyvys and then paid by theyr executours.'¹⁹⁰ Sir William Horne was one such alderman who paid posthumously: his executor, John Stork, Grocer, settled the debt in March 1497.¹⁹¹

Reluctance to pay may have been a consequence of the heavy financial burden imposed upon the City in that year, for as well as the benevolence the City also made a corporate loan of £3,000 to the king, as authorised by Common Council in June 1491.¹⁹² Whilst some of the elite of the capital, or indeed the realm, may have objected to the benevolence, such disapproval was not universal. No personal objections or refusals to pay the benevolence are recorded in the civic records, unlike in 1496.¹⁹³ The Great

¹⁸⁸ Ross, *Richard III*, 189; Kendall, *Richard III*, 283.

¹⁸⁹ *GC*, 244.

¹⁹⁰ *GC*, 244.

¹⁹¹ TNA, C146/872. As Horne actually only died in 1496 it is curious that the debt was still outstanding in 1497, which raises questions as to how vigorously non-payers were pursued.

¹⁹² Jo.9, ff.273v, 274.

¹⁹³ Rep.1, f.13.

Chronicler pointed out that by visiting neighbouring counties and requesting money in person, Henry VII, like Edward IV before him, was able to raise greater sums, perhaps as much as he could have raised through the levying of four fifteenths but ‘wyth lesse grudge of hys commons, ffor this charge payd noon but men of good substaunce.’¹⁹⁴

Once the aldermen had made their contributions then the crafts and livery companies of the City were divided amongst various of Henry’s ministers (or commissioners) who then extracted benevolences from them, supposedly after assessing their ability to contribute.¹⁹⁵ No consistent *modus operandi* was employed by the commissioners, and thus the unlucky members of the Drapers’ Company, who came under the auspices of Dr. John Morton, archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, paid between £10 and £40 each whereas the Mercers, who fell into the bishop of Winchester’s remit, had to pay only 40 marks each at the most.¹⁹⁶ The Exchequer records confirm that the financial burden did not fall upon the companies according to their ability to pay; the Tailors paid a total of £334 whereas the richer company of the Mercers paid £160.¹⁹⁷ Hence Fabyan, the author of the Great Chronicle and himself a Draper, was to complain of the ‘hard dealyng of the lord Chaunceler’ and so the benevolence was nicknamed the ‘malyvolence’.¹⁹⁸

Morton appears to have played a prominent role in the benevolences of both 1473 and 1491. In 1473 the Great Chronicle states that the equivalent of two fifteenths was raised by the king’s own labour and that of ministers he assigned in his stead, the only one named being ‘Bysshopp of Ely then doctor Morton’.¹⁹⁹ The infamous ‘Morton’s Fork’, which asserted that those who spent little must have saved and therefore could make a considerable contribution to the king’s cause, and likewise those who displayed their wealth had money to spare, may or may not have been an invention by John Morton but his ‘hard dealing’ suggests it would not have been out of character.

¹⁹⁴ *GC*, 245.

¹⁹⁵ *GC*, 244.

¹⁹⁶ *GC*, 245.

¹⁹⁷ TNA, E36/285, f.17.

¹⁹⁸ *GC*, 245.

¹⁹⁹ *GC*, 223.

Few individuals appear to have been approached for contributions over and above those that may have contributed via their companies. John Shaa, listed in the Exchequer notebook for the benevolence amongst the knights and personnel of the royal household rather than with those of the City, gave £100. Henry Colet doubled the £200 he was obliged to give as an alderman, the only alderman to contribute further funds to the king.²⁰⁰ John Wyngar and Laurence Aylmer, both later to serve as aldermen and mayors, gave £40 and £20 respectively.²⁰¹ In total the City was to contribute £9,682 to the 1491 benevolence, nearly a fifth of the total amount raised of over £48,000.²⁰² Retrospective authorisation by parliament for the collection of the benevolence was provided in 1495, when an act was passed to allow for the legal enforcement of the collection of arrears, both from individuals and collectors of the benevolence.²⁰³

3.6.1. Redemption of Richard III's pledges

In a rather weak mitigation of the Benevolence of 1491, the Great Chronicler noted that Henry strove to repay some of the loans made to Richard III and thereby reclaimed items of jewels and plate that had been given as collateral. This particularly impressed Fabyan as 'by hys [Henry's] Royall power he mygth have cawsid to have been Restorid unto hys Tresory wythowth payment for theym.'²⁰⁴ Henry was also fair in his dealings with the creditors, 'he of his goodnesse allowid unto alle such as hadd any of the sayd pledgys all such Summys as they hadd layd ffor theym.'²⁰⁵

Whilst the claims made in the chronicle can be substantiated, it would appear that Henry had striven to repay Richard's debts earlier in the reign rather than in a bid to distract from the unfairness of his benevolence. Richard Gardiner, alderman, had received 100 marks from the earl of Oxford sometime before mid December 1485 which Gardiner had lent to Richard upon the security of a gold salt.²⁰⁶ At the same time

²⁰⁰ TNA, E36/285, f.17.

²⁰¹ TNA, E36/285, f.12.

²⁰² Dietz, *English Finance*, 57; Roger Virgoe, 'The Benevolence of 1481', *EHR*, civ (1989), 29.

²⁰³ Michael Bush, 'Tax Reform and Rebellion in Early Tudor England', *History*, lxxvi (1991), 388; Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 204.

²⁰⁴ *GC*, 245.

²⁰⁵ *GC*, 245.

²⁰⁶ TNA, E404/79, 12 December 1485.

Gardiner received £100 as his share of the £2,400 lent to Richard III.²⁰⁷ Quite how Gardiner was able to secure repayment at this time is not clear. It may be that he had established a connection with the earl of Oxford, perhaps based upon lands Gardiner held in or near his home town of Exning in Suffolk.²⁰⁸ Evidence is lacking for the details of repayment of other amounts lent to Richard, but it is probable that Reynold Bray repaid at least some of the loans with money paid to him by the Exchequer in 1485/6 for that purpose.²⁰⁹

3.7. Financial pressure and the crisis of 1497

Though effective financially, politically Henry's taxation of his realm was problematic, resulting in two armed rebellions in 1489 and 1497.²¹⁰ Not since Richard II's reign had a monarch's fiscal policy been met with violent resistance. Complaints about heavy taxation were by no means unusual: the rebel manifesto of 1469 listed the burden of taxation among its grievances, but two tax rebellions within the same reign was unprecedented.²¹¹

The 1489 rebellion, provoked by the grant of taxation by the parliament of that year, had been preceded by intensive lobbying for local exemptions from payment of the second part of the 1487 taxation due and contributed to the death of the earl of Northumberland.²¹² Difficulties in collecting taxes persisted throughout the reign, particularly in the north, where payments were repeatedly late and incomplete.²¹³ Sixty-two per cent of actions prosecuted in the Exchequer by tax collectors against non-payers during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII were brought during the 1490s.²¹⁴

²⁰⁷ TNA, E404/79, 12 December 1485.

²⁰⁸ TNA, PROB11/8/491.

²⁰⁹ TNA, E405/75, m. 1; TNA, E404/79, 4 July, 1487

²¹⁰ Paul Cavill has suggested that an armed rising at Ackworth in 1492 may also have been a tax protest. Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 185.

²¹¹ Jurkowski, 'Taxation', 275.

²¹² *GC*, 242; Michael Bennett, 'Henry VII and the Northern Rising of 1489', *EHR*, cv (1990), 55-58; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 183-5.

²¹³ R.W. Hoyle, 'Resistance and Manipulation in Early Tudor Taxation: Some Evidence from the North', *Archives*, xx (1993), 158-9.

²¹⁴ Schofield, *Taxation*, 46-51.

This is not to say that objection to taxation was universal, for Schofield concluded that the greater part of tax revenue due in the early Tudor period was collected and paid into the Exchequer promptly.²¹⁵

There is no evidence of any serious objection to taxation in London during the reign, though protest about the heavy financial burdens placed upon the realm in 1496-7 was played out upon the doorstep of the capital. In May 1497 the actions of a tax collector in the west of Cornwall provoked a protest which quickly manifested itself as a widespread rebellion encompassing much of the south-west.²¹⁶ In June at Blackheath, almost ten years to the day since the battle of Stoke, the king once more faced down rebels in battle. The Londoners fought with the king, though their most recent battle experience was confined to fighting off the forces of the bastard of Fauconberg in 1471.²¹⁷

This was primarily a practical response on the part of the inhabitants of London rather than a demonstration of political affiliation. Rebels on the outskirts of the City presented a very real threat to the homes, businesses and lives of the Londoners, and therefore necessitated the organisation of a military response by the City. By 7 June the mayor and aldermen, with the Common Council and the wardens of the fellowships, met at Guildhall to discuss the threat, agreeing that every able-bodied man was to be prepared to defend the City at a moment's notice.²¹⁸ By 10 June the Common Council was informed that the rebels from Cornwall were currently at Guildford, making safeguarding the City a necessity.²¹⁹ Orders were sent out to the wardens of the fellowships that read:

²¹⁵ Schofield, *Taxation*, chs. 7–8.

²¹⁶ Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy, 1491-1499* (Stroud, 1994, repr. 2009), 240-1.

²¹⁷ Ross, *Edward IV*, 173-4.

²¹⁸ *Acts*, 630. There is an entry in the Journal of the Common Council pertaining to a meeting on this date with the mayor, aldermen, Common Council and wardens in attendance, but the only business noted as having been discussed was the appointment of a new coroner, thus demonstrating the reluctance of the civic administration to commit potentially contentious decisions to paper. Jo.10, f.99v.

²¹⁹ *Acts*, 631.

Purwith of yor fealship as many p[er]sones as ye may make defensibly harneised and arrayed . . . for defence of this Citie and the worship of yor said fealship to wayte uppon us at Ledenhall uppon Tuesday next comyng at ix of the clocke afore none not failing hereof in any wise.²²⁰

Men were thus told that they must act for the defence of the City and the worship of their company, with no mention made of the king and the need to defeat those who rebelled against the Crown. The priority of the civic fathers was thus apparent: the City must be defended by force of arms. That the civic fathers and inhabitants of the City were motivated by self-preservation mattered little to the king, who after the battle knighted the mayor, John Tate, and his sheriffs, Richard Haddon and John Shaa, as well as the Recorder, Robert Sheffield, for their part in the fray.²²¹

Ian Arthurson has questioned whether this was purely a protest against the taxation policy of the government, stating that political motives underpinned the actions of the rebels. The scale of the repercussions of the rebellion, coupled with the fact that Cornishmen did not feature heavily amongst the individuals singled out for punishment, is suggestive of government belief that the root cause of the rebellion was a desire to dethrone Henry rather than merely an expression of dissatisfaction with taxation policy.²²² This premise is contested by Paul Cavill, who is inclined to take the accounts of contemporary commentators at face value when they claimed that the rebels' intention had been to punish those of the king's advisers who had persuaded him to seek taxes.²²³ That Londoners were disinclined to participate in the unrest on the side of the rebels might be explained partly by the City's natural reluctance to involve itself in national politics and so risk negative royal attention, and by its ability to pay the taxes demanded of it. No organised protest against government taxation took place in the capital and the only sign that the inhabitants may have considered the Crown's demands to be high is the reluctance of some individuals to contribute to the agreed corporate loans.

²²⁰ Jo.10, f.100. No detail of the meeting is given in the journal, except administrative details concerning to watch to be mustered two days hence (Jo.10, f.100v).

²²¹ *GC*, 277.

²²² Arthurson, *Warbeck*, 245

²²³ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 187-8.

If one accepts Cavill's argument, then it is possible that the Londoners did not have much sympathy for the 1497 rebels. The burden of taxation did not hit the capital hard, contributing a total of just under £4,330 as its share of the seven grants of fifteenths and tenths collected between 1487 and 1497. As a proportion of the total yield of taxation in this time (£217,000 gross, £203,000 net) London's contribution represents barely two per cent, which is utterly disproportionate to its size and wealth.²²⁴ That is not to say that the Londoners were happy with their financial lot, for some of the aldermen had contributed to the 1496 corporate loan of £4,000 only reluctantly, indicating that perhaps some of the elite of the City at least were not far from the end of their financial tethers.²²⁵ However, given the Crown's propensity for repaying promptly they are likely to have been in the minority.²²⁶ Arguably, until this point in time, the City had only been subjected to what might be termed 'financial extortion' once, and that was when a total of £9,682 17s 4d was raised from the City for the 1491 benevolence.²²⁷ Given that the total yield of the benevolence was around £48,000, London's portion of the total sum extracted from the realm was more in keeping with its wealth.²²⁸ Compared to the rest of the realm London had financially not fared badly in the first seventeen years of the reign.

3.8. Conclusion

Henry is reputed to have left full coffers for his son, Henry VIII, to squander. Few historians, even in the absence of firm evidence, have questioned this and Henry's solvency after the first decade of his reign is taken as fact, evidenced, amongst other things, by his extravagant expenditure upon jewels, plate and huge amounts of money paid out of his Chamber to the Netherlands.²²⁹ Henry's 'rapacity' is the subject of another chapter, but there can be little doubt that he reformed the finances of the Crown and much of his solvency was a consequence not of his supposed avaricious nature but

²²⁴ Schofield, *Taxation*, 178; Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 197.

²²⁵ Rep.1, f.13.

²²⁶ Jo.10, f.80v; TNA, E36/14, f.339.

²²⁷ *GC*, 245.

²²⁸ Dietz, *English Finance*, 57; Virgoe, 'The Benevolence of 1481', 29.

²²⁹ BL, Add. Ms.59899, ff.85, 100v; TNA, E36/214, ff.86, 158, 317.

simply of more efficient and effective financial machinery operated by administratively talented personnel.

It is perhaps indicative of Henry's personality that he had taken little advantage of the finance London could offer in the first two years of his reign. His receipt of only one corporate loan of £2,000 between the battles of Bosworth and Stoke raises some interesting questions. Was the City perhaps reluctant to offer Henry finance as little was known about him, his support network or likelihood to remain upon the throne? This is surely unlikely, for the City, once it had decided to lend its support to a candidate for the throne, ordinarily did all it could to ensure that candidate remained on the throne. London had already demonstrated its support for the new king at Kenilworth in August 1485, and though relations between the mercantile elite of the City and the king had been upset by the determination of the merchants to continue trade with the Low Countries in contravention of royal wishes, at no point does it appear that support for the rebels gained traction within London.

As no record exists of the king having requested a loan in this time it is more likely that Henry did not wish to take on debts that he could not service. Smaller loans from individuals were requested instead which were more easily paid back as and when the Exchequer was able. The vast majority of the loans that Henry had in the course of his reign, not just those from the City, were repaid within a year, demonstrating not only Henry's determination not to be indebted, financially or morally, to any corporate body, but also that the engine of the Exchequer was at last working effectively.

This desire to not be indebted to anyone may have come from the king's wish to be his own man, able to make decisions independently from any obligations or responsibilities to lenders. No entity or individual was to gain a financial hold over him in the same way that the City of London gained financial leverage over the Yorkist kings. No loans of any description were taken out in the king's name after the Great Loan of 1496.

Though the rest of the country was to feel the strain of the heavy financial burdens placed upon them in the first decade of the reign there is no evidence to suggest that the Londoners felt similarly burdened. Protest against heavy financial demands took the form of foot-dragging by the elite, not popular unrest by the masses. This benign

response was a consequence of the ability of the City to absorb royal financial demands with relative ease.

With the ending of the Crown's need for the financial help from the City, which most medieval kings had depended upon, it could perhaps be expected that the City might have lost some of its bargaining power. If one were to categorise the Crown-City relationship as a patronage arrangement then it is logical to assume that without the Crown's need for money, London had lost its bargaining chip and therefore was subject to the whim of the monarch. To assume this, though, is to believe that the City was little more than a royal banking facility. As will be seen, this was far from being the case.

Chapter 4: The Livery Companies

The livery companies were an essential part of the fabric of the life of the City, controlling access to the freedom of the City and the political, social and economic advantages that entailed. They were also crucial in the business life of the City, regulating the trades and crafts, and providing a mouthpiece for the economic needs of merchants and artisans. Livery companies regularly petitioned the Crown and parliament directly, creating a triangular aspect to the Crown-City relationship, and therefore their actions and pursuit of their ambitions effected the Crown-City relations. This chapter will seek to assess the impact that the relationship of the Crown and the companies had on the relationship of the City and the Crown. The members of the Court of Aldermen came from these companies: did the composition of the aldermanic court affect its relations with both the Crown and the commonalty as a consequence? Can the Court of Aldermen be said to have been representative of the interests of the City as a whole? Were the companies capable of acting as political interest groups, and if so how were they perceived by the Crown?

The triangular relationship between the livery companies, the City and the Crown has, unusually for this period, received a reasonable amount of scholarly attention as a consequence of the interest the livery companies still maintain in their histories. Research in this area is aided by the abundance of extant company records. This chapter will commence with a summary of the historiography of the subject followed by a brief explanation of the development of the companies. It will then explore the relationship the companies shared with the Crown, and will consider issues pertaining to parliament, the acquisition of royal charters and regulation. Finally, the chapter will discuss the controversy surrounding the grant of the Merchant Taylors' charter in 1503 and will offer possible explanations for the actions and theories regarding the motivations of those involved.

4.1. Historiography

The continued relevance of the Livery Companies to life in the City of London has ensured that that they are one of the few areas of London history to have been

consistently researched over the last couple of hundred years. The companies themselves have, from an early period, commissioned histories of their crafts and corporations. Not all of these have been written by historians, but by company clerks, guild members or other interested parties and therefore they tend to vary in quality. George Unwin, in 1908, was the first to undertake a comprehensive comparative study and highlighted for the first time the link between crafts and their religious guilds.¹ His work was relied upon heavily and developed by Sylvia Thrupp fifty years later in her ground-breaking work on the mercantile class of the City. Thrupp brought to light the abundance of extant documents for medieval London, particularly those generated by the guilds, and paved the way for others to explore this previously untapped wealth of information about the capital.² Caroline Barron's book on late medieval London successfully drew together more recent research undertaken upon individual companies to update the picture previously painted by Unwin and Thrupp.³ Both Barron and Thrupp stopped short of extending their surveys into the reign of the first Tudor king, a constant theme when one looks at the historiography of this period.

Several individual company histories not only illuminate the development of their subject company but also serve to contribute to the overall picture of the interaction between the companies, City and Crown. Of particular note is Anne Sutton's extensive study of the Mercers' Company in London, which also yields an abundance of information about the Mercer-dominated fellowships of the Staple and the Merchant Adventurers, including their diplomatic activities.⁴ Pamela Nightingale's account of the Grocers' Company and Elspeth Veale's of the Skinners and the Fur Trade both fix their chosen subjects firmly within the context of the prevailing economic and political circumstances of the time, with examinations of the full sphere of relations of these companies with the City and Crown, though Nightingale's account ends in 1485 and Veale only skims the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century.⁵ Matthew Davies has

¹ George Unwin, *The Guilds and Companies of London* (London, 1908).

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*.

³ Barron, *London*.

⁴ Sutton, *Mercery*.

⁵ Pamela Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: The Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London, 1000-1485* (London, 1995); Elspeth Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966; repr., LRS, London, 2003).

recently developed his work on the companies of the City from an examination of the Tailors' Company to broader investigations into their political behaviour and the interactions between the companies, the City and the Crown.⁶ His argument, that by the fifteenth century the companies had become politically well informed and consequently developed sophisticated apparatus to facilitate lobbying activities, has been accepted and adopted here, and extended to examine the repercussions in detail upon the triangular relationship between the City, companies and the Crown.

4.2. The Development of the Livery Companies

There is evidence that craft guilds existed in the City in Saxon times, but they cannot be said to have become coherent social and economic units until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷ Most originated as cooperative interest groups of men practising the same trade who would often live in the same neighbourhood and worship at the same parish church and hence they developed religious and social functions. In return for a fee, members could expect prayers and masses to be said for their souls, aid if they fell upon hard times and participation in the annual mass and feast held to honour the fraternity's patron saint.⁸ These religious associations had a more practical purpose too, in that through them craft guilds were able to enforce trade regulations with oaths, thus allowing use of the ecclesiastical courts should they be broken.⁹

By the fourteenth century membership of a craft or guild became the customary way to obtain entry into the freedom of the City and become a citizen after a period of apprenticeship.¹⁰ As the companies essentially controlled access to the freedom of the City, they were by now crucial to the regulation not only of the crafts but also of the citizenry.¹¹ In legal documentation it became normal practice to define a person by both

⁶ Davies and Saunders, *Merchant Taylors' Company*, Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild' and 'Lobbying Parliament'.

⁷ Barron, *London*, 199.

⁸ C. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', in C. Barron and C. Harper-Bill ed., *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Boulay* (Woodbridge, 1985), 13-37.

⁹ Veale, *Fur Trade*, 46.

¹⁰ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 3. The other methods were by redemption or through patrimony, which were far less common in the fifteenth century.

¹¹ Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild', 243.

his place of denizen and his craft, a clear demonstration that membership of a craft was an essential aspect of a citizen's identity.¹² Though the crafts controlled the freedom to the City and therefore, indirectly, the electorate of the civic administration, London's electoral unit was the ward. Between 1376 and 1384 a constitutional experiment was implemented whereby the Common Councillors were selected by the misteries, but this proved so problematic that the wards were reconstituted as the basic political unit of election.¹³

The need to regulate the crafts on behalf of the City government necessitated the drafting of rules and regulations. Ordinances became a requirement of these institutions and, though they varied from craft to craft, normally made provision for the election of wardens, inspection of work produced by members, training of apprentices and for excluding non-members, particularly foreigners. In the fourteenth century at least thirty-seven crafts brought ordinances before the mayor and aldermen for ratification and enrolment into the City's records.¹⁴ Barron notes that it was mostly the artisan crafts that submitted their ordinances for approval by the civic authorities in this way. The mercantile crafts of the Mercers, Grocers and Goldsmiths had ordinances, from 1348, 1345-8 and 1364 respectively, but though these were copied into the Letter Book they did not feel the need to seek the formal approval of the mayor and aldermen. As most of the members of the Court of Aldermen were derived from the ranks of the mercantile companies it was perhaps felt to be a redundant formality to regulate themselves.¹⁵

4.2.1. The Livery Companies in the Fifteenth Century

The diversification in England's export market throughout the course of the fifteenth century and success of the cloth trade led inevitably to an increase in the wealth generated by the London merchants and a corresponding increase in the differential in

¹² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 4.

¹³ For a full discussion of the political circumstances that led to this innovation see Nightingale, *Grocers' Company*, 245-317. An abridged version of events can be found in Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 60-80.

¹⁴ Barron, *London*, 224.

¹⁵ Barron, *London*, 224.

wealth between the mercantile elite of the City and the manufacturing majority.¹⁶ As the vast majority of the mercantile elite belonged to the mercantile companies, namely the Mercers, Grocers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths and Drapers, and most craftsmen to the lesser companies, this differential was one between the mercantile and the artisan companies.¹⁷ Few changes took place to the hierarchy of the companies after the fourteenth century, with the exception of the political emergence and growth of the Tailors' and Haberdashers' companies. The order of precedence amongst the 108 companies of the capital was not formalised until January 1515, and though it received adjustment in 1528 with the merger of the companies of the Fullers and Shearmen to form the company of Clothworkers, the order of the companies heading the list, known as the Great Twelve, has remained unchanged ever since.¹⁸

By the end of the fifteenth century it had become increasingly rare for those from non-mercantile companies, and even from the lesser companies of the Great Twelve, to become aldermen. Only one man from an artisan craft, Henry Pountfreyt, Saddler, served as an alderman in the fifteenth century, from 1403 to 1411.¹⁹ The ironmonger Thomas Bretton was the first of his trade to qualify financially as an alderman in twenty years when he was elected to the ward of Aldersgate in 1483; thereafter it took the Ironmongers another thirty years to see one of their own elected.²⁰ Richard Chawry, Salter, was another exception who qualified for a seat in the aldermanic court.²¹ In 1503 the Armourer, John Warner, was obliged to translate to the Grocers' Company upon

¹⁶ Bolton, *Medieval English Economy*, 290-305. For a discussion about the expansion of the wealth of London merchants in the early sixteenth century see Oldland, 'Merchant Capital', 1058-1080.

¹⁷ To this list can be added the Merchant Taylors and Haberdashers during the reign of Henry VII.

¹⁸ The twelve companies, from 1528, were, in order of precedence, The Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners and Clothworkers. The Tailors and the Skinners took turns to be sixth and seventh in the order after 1484.

¹⁹ Barron, *London*, 230.

²⁰ Beaven, ii, 17; Anne Sutton, 'Agnes Don-Bretton, Merchant Stapler, Widow and Matriarch of Southampton and London', *The Ricardian*, xxii (2012), 59-93. Though one of the 'Great Twelve', the Ironmongers was never a company of predominantly merchants in the same way that the Mercers, Drapers, Goldsmiths, Fishmongers and Grocers were.

²¹ Beaven, ii, 16.

his election as alderman to the ward of Aldersgate.²² Over the course of the sixteenth century it became established that any person from a lesser company elected alderman had to be translated to one of the Great Twelve companies.²³ The lesser companies, never politically prominent in the City, consequently lost all opportunity for representation at the highest municipal level in this narrowing of the ruling economic groups.

The Mercers' Company provided the most mayors during the fifteenth century by a large margin: twenty-five of the eighty-two (30 per cent) different men that served in that capacity whilst the Grocers and the Drapers had sixteen mayors (20 per cent) each.²⁴ This pattern was to persist throughout the reign of Henry VII. The Mercers fielded nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of the aldermen that served during the reign of Henry VII, the Grocers 19 per cent, and the Drapers 16 per cent.²⁵ For the mayoralty under Henry VII, the picture is slightly different. The Mercers still provided by far the most: nine out of the twenty-four different men who served in this reign, equating to 38 per cent, but the Grocers only had one mayor elected during the reign, who served only a month, and the Drapers had three.²⁶ The Goldsmiths had three mayors during Henry's reign, all men who were familiar in court circles.²⁷

That a handful of companies dominated the Court of Aldermen is a reflection not upon the agency of the companies but simply that these institutions had as their members a comparatively large number of wealthy men. The non-mercantile companies may have had merchants among their ranks, but few of them were able to meet the £1,000 qualification in movable goods required for election to the Court of Aldermen, as set

²² Beaven, ii, 20.

²³ Archer, *Stability*, 18-19.

²⁴ These figures are derived from Barron, *London*, 336-350.

²⁵ A total of 74 men served as aldermen during the reign of Henry VII, not counting the *de jure* alderman of the ward of Portsoken, the Prior of Christ Church. Data derived from Beaven, ii, 1-34, and an analysis of the Journals of Common Council.

²⁶ John Warde, Grocer, was elected in Sept. 1485 after the deaths of the two previous mayors (one of whom was a Draper) sweating sickness days before.

²⁷ Of the seven Goldsmiths who served as mayor in the fifteenth century all but one had significant connections with the royal court. Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths', 314-61; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 275-316.

in 1469.²⁸ The mercantile companies may have benefitted from their dominance of civic government but did not usually engineer it, though they did seek to preserve it as their opposition to the elevation of the Tailors to mercantile status demonstrated.

In addition to the divide between the greater and lesser companies, internal divisions of hierarchy became commonplace within some of these institutions, firstly in the mercantile companies and gradually, by the mid fifteenth century, in the lesser companies, whereby ‘liveried’ members were elevated over their fellow members. Only the senior members, usually the economically dominant of the company, were admitted to the ‘livery’, embodied by the award of a livery, or clothing, in the company colours to wear upon formal occasions.²⁹ Between 1394 and 1461 the Mercers’ Company admitted 1,047 men to its membership, of whom 456 (44 per cent) reached the livery.³⁰ In 1501, the livery comprised only sixty-six men out of a membership of around 273.³¹

The surviving evidence does not, unfortunately, lend itself to an assessment of the number of members each company had until well into the sixteenth century.³² A list of the number of liverymen for each company, compiled in 1502, does survive, though, which assessed the liveried population of the City at 1,376.³³ Thrupp infers that this figure represents the size of the mercantile class of the City, but this presumes not only that all liverymen from these companies were merchants but also that the sole qualification into the livery was a high degree of wealth, though the bar for entry probably varied from company to company.³⁴ It would be surprising if this was the case in companies such as the Shearmen (fifty-one liveried members), Carpenters (thirty)

²⁸ *LBL*, 85.

²⁹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 12-13; E.M. Veale, ‘The “Great Twelve”: Mystery and Fraternity in Thirteenth-Century London’, *Historical Research*, lxiv (1991), 237-63.

³⁰ Barron, *London*, 215; Jean Imray, ‘“Les Bones Gentes de la Mercerye de Londres”: A Study of the Membership of the Mercers’ Company’, in A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway ed. *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), 174.

³¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 43; Oldland, ‘Merchant Capital’, 1058-1080.

³² Thrupp attempted an exercise of this nature but had to conclude that the surviving evidence was insufficient for the task (Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 41-47).

³³ Jo.10, f.373-373v.

³⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 42-43.

and Weavers (thirty).³⁵ Seventy-five liveried Brewers constituted 35 per cent of the membership of the company; if all of them had been wealthy men it is probable that the standing of the company would have been much higher.³⁶ Similarly, if the Carpenters' thirty liverymen had all been wealthy it is probable that the company would have been able to contribute more to the £4,000 loan made to Henry VII than the £8 they received as repayment in 1490.³⁷

The role of the liverymen in municipal politics increased in the course of the fifteenth century. In 1467 the wardens of all liveried companies, in addition to common councillors, were permitted to attend the elections of the mayor and sheriff in Common Hall.³⁸ In 1475 wardens were further empowered to select additional 'good men' of the livery of their companies to participate in the same and it was declared that henceforth the two aldermen put forward as candidates for the mayoralty should not be from the same company, which limited the opportunity for one company to pack the election with supporters for its mayoral candidate.³⁹ The fundamental composition of the electorate was not altered and remained the preserve of the more prosperous elite of the City. In fact these measures reinforced the exclusion of those lesser companies who lacked a liveried section, of which, in 1501-2, there were twenty-eight.⁴⁰ The wealthy elite of the City, therefore, governed the artisans, creating a two-tier citizenry, and the mechanisms for their election awarded them effective control over the entry into the City's government.⁴¹

It would be simplistic to claim that the division between the wealthy and the non-wealthy citizenry was purely a product of a divide between the greater and lesser

³⁵ Jo.10, f.373.

³⁶ The Brewers had 165 members and 75 liverymen in 1501 according to their own membership lists, but 65 according to the list in Journal 10. I accept Thrupp's argument that the membership lists, where they exist, are more likely to be accurate than the list in the Journal. Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 42-46.

³⁷ *Records of the Carpenters*, ii, 70. The Mercers and Grocers contributed £1,615 between them (*GC*, 242).

³⁸ *LBL*, 73.

³⁹ *LBL*, 83, 132. This practice was especially prevalent in the late fourteenth century. Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 83.

⁴⁰ Jo.10, f.373v.

⁴¹ Barron, *London*, 207.

companies. Companies such as the Tailors, Skinners and Haberdashers consisted of a relatively thin top layer of merchants who assumed the livery and governed the company, and a lower, far more numerous, tier of artisans.⁴² As the companies tended to be controlled by their most prosperous members, the wardens and the court of assistants of these institutions usually comprised merchants responsible for the regulation of craft activities in which they were frequently not involved nor commercially concerned. This disconnection between the livery and the yeomanry in such companies was to become a larger issue towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁴³

Susan Reynolds advises caution in labelling London's government an oligarchy.⁴⁴ If oligarchy is defined, she argues, as rule by the self-interested few then London does not fit the description, for the Londoners perceived themselves as governed by aristocracy (i.e. rule by a better sort). The language of the selection of men for councils, (Common Hall and Common Council) supports this, for the phrase 'good men' is often employed in the description of who should be selected to these bodies.⁴⁵ The move to widen the City electorate (Common Hall) in 1475 to encompass men from lesser companies implies that the City fathers were not ignorant of or unsympathetic to the desire for political participation held by less prosperous members of the citizenry.⁴⁶ There are problems with this theory: whilst in principle rule by aristocratic means was accepted as desirable, the narrowing of the economic pool from which the Court of Aldermen was drawn inevitably led to a closer alignment of interests of the members of that body, to the exclusion of the concerns of the wider electorate. Consequently, by the end of the fifteenth century, a disjunction existed between the ideals promoted by the civic authorities and the realities of their composition. London was ruled by an oligarchy, whether it perceived itself to be so or not.

⁴² Veale, *Fur Trade*, 183-185.

⁴³ Archer, *Stability*, 100, 103.

⁴⁴ Susan Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', *Urban History Yearbook* (1982), 14-23.

⁴⁵ *LBL*, 73, 82.

⁴⁶ *LBL*, 73.

Stephen Rigby concludes that an oligarchy was prevalent in fifteenth century London, but for quite different reasons.⁴⁷ He argues that the existence of oligarchy in the City was, in large part, facilitated by the active support and interference of the Crown. His argument hinges on his belief that the provisions of the charters granted to the City reinforced the principles of oligarchy by empowering the City's officials as Justices of the Peace.⁴⁸ This extension of 'their policing and economic powers' was seen in London 'as a means of undermining the customary good rule of the City to the detriment of its artisans'. This argument may be questioned. The policing of the City had always been within the remit of the mayor and aldermen and no material difference to this was made by empowering them as JPs except to give them formal recognition and allow for their participation in due judicial process. In policing the City the mayor and aldermen deputed all livery companies to conduct a watch of the capital, including the artisan crafts.⁴⁹ The economic narrowing of the companies of origin of the aldermen was of far greater significance in the creation and endurance of a ruling oligarchy in London and hence the effect of Crown intervention upon the creation of an oligarchy in London was negligible. Whereas Henry VII was actively involved in the promotion of oligarchic governments in other urban centres of the realm, such as Exeter and Bristol, the ruling oligarchy of the City was already firmly established before his accession.⁵⁰ In fact, Henry arguably tried to widen the oligarchic power-base of the City through his promotion of the Tailors and the Haberdashers to mercantile status, as will be seen.

The practice of utilising the livery companies as peace-keeping units was well established by the fifteenth century. Arrangements for the watches called to enforce curfews, impose law-enforcement and ensure the peace were often carefully recorded in the Journals of the Common Council. Watches were called in times of unrest or when there was a perceived likelihood of riot within the City.⁵¹ This enlisting of the help of

⁴⁷ Stephen Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy' in Late Medieval England', in J.A.F. Thomson ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), 60-83.

⁴⁸ Rigby, 'Urban Oligarchy', 80.

⁴⁹ Jo.9, ff.81v, 84.

⁵⁰ James Lee, 'Urban Policy and Urban Political Culture: Henry VII and his Towns', *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 499-501.

⁵¹ Watches were called at both the accession and the death of Henry VII, (Jo.9, f.81v-84; Jo.11, f.66v).

the livery companies at times of social disorder helped restore discipline in three ways: firstly, and obviously, by policing the City. Secondly, members of the companies from the richest merchants to the poorest artisans were involved in keeping the peace and therefore had a vested interest in the maintenance of law and order. Hence the citizenry were subject not only to the imposition of order by the watch, but also by their company who, deputed by the mayor to police the City, would have been expected to address harshly any law-breaking by their members in addition to seeing them subject to the usual due process. Lastly, frequently the protagonists of disruptions within the City were young men, apprentices or journeymen, and therefore members of the companies involved in the watch were the masters and employers of these men.⁵² Both a practical and moral obligation would have been set upon the masters and employers to bring these young men into line.⁵³

This obligation of the companies to keep their members in order was sometimes used in an attempt to prevent unrest. In December 1491 the wardens of the companies were called to a meeting at Guildhall where they were commanded to ‘see that good Rule be kept amonge their fealiships and that the maisters and wardeyns shall calle their fealiships afore theym and to shewe theym the same comandement ... that they kepe due ordre for the[m] and their [servants].’⁵⁴ It would seem that this command was successfully applied, for no record of riot exists for this time, nor indeed of the perceived threat of one.⁵⁵ The rivalries of the livery companies had the potential to explode into violence, as will be seen in the next section, but, perhaps paradoxically, the companies were also a key component in the stability of the City.⁵⁶

⁵² Archer, *Stability*, 1-9.

⁵³ It is possible that on occasion these young men were used by their masters to create social disruption to make a political point, See Bolton, ‘City and the Crown’, 11-24.

⁵⁴ Jo.9, f.282.

⁵⁵ It is possible that there was still the potential for brawling in the aftermath of the election of Hugh Clopton as mayor (*GC*, 246).

⁵⁶ This statement is also true a century later (Archer, *Stability*, 100-148).

4.2.2. *Livery Company Rivalries*

The discrepancy in civic political and economic influence between the greater and the lesser crafts was a source of tension within the City. Long-standing rivalries also existed between companies that engaged in similar trades. The extent to which Henry and his council were aware of these long-standing rivalries and whether they, consciously or not, exacerbated them, has implications in the examination of the early Tudor government's policy towards interest-groups and perceived power-bases. What impact did the rivalries and mergers of this period have upon the City and did the Crown exploit the economic and social situation underlying these issues for its own ends?

Perhaps the longest-running and most consistent of rivalries was that between the Tailors' and Drapers' Companies, with episodes resulting in actual or near violence in 1425, 1440, 1442, 1443, 1452 and 1491.⁵⁷ The Drapers resented the growing political influence and economic status of the Tailors' Company, which, for much of the fifteenth century, had been little more than an ambitious artisan company with few aldermen and no mayor among its ranks.⁵⁸ The desire of the Tailors to break into the profitable cloth market and the claim of the Drapers to the right of search of all cloth sold in the City by Tailors were obvious causes of strife.⁵⁹ The Drapers' Company was a large, wealthy, mercantile guild with several aldermen amongst its numbers, but its members were frustrated in their attempts to bring the Tailors to heel by the number of friends amongst the aristocracy, possibly customers, the latter company enjoyed.⁶⁰ A patent granted to the Tailors in 1439 gave them the right of search over the shops of members of the Drapers' Company, which naturally led to lobbying by the Drapers' for its repeal.⁶¹ The Tailors regularly enlisted the support of other small textile crafts such as the Shearmen and Fullers, thereby creating the potential for physical conflict,

⁵⁷ *LBK*, ff.40v, 205v & 214; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 85.

⁵⁸ The Tailors had only 2 aldermen between 1350 and 1450 (Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths', 272).

⁵⁹ Barron, *London*, 210.

⁶⁰ See section 4.3.5.

⁶¹ Matthew Davies, 'The Tailors of London and their Guild, c.1300-1500' (unpublished DPhil. thesis, Oxford, 1994), 122-124. The patent was, in 1442, declared contrary to the rights of the City and repealed.

which indeed did occur when a Draper, Robert Clopton, was elected mayor over the Tailor candidate, Ralph Holland.⁶²

Rivalry between the Tailors and the Drapers extended into the reign of Henry VII and beyond. The Great Chronicle of London described the second time the Tailors sought to have one of their own, Sir John Percyvale, elected as mayor in 1491. With the assistance of the Fullers, Shearmen and Dyers they conspired to have Percyvale run for election against Hugh Clopton, who, though a Mercer, was unlikely to be elected as he was new to the Aldermanic court. The Aldermen apparently thought that Percyvale was unsuited to the job, considering his ‘hote apetyte which he hadd yerely to that offiyce’, and therefore turned him down for the second time.⁶³ The discontent of the Tailors manifested itself as

many Rittous & heinous words by the ffelyshypp of the drapers, saying that for malice which they awght unto the Taylours They kept hym yerely ffrom that ooffice, By mean of which wordys grete Rumour & noyse was that day In the halle, and afftyr the malice of Sundry & meane personys of those ij ffelyshyppys grewe.⁶⁴

Percyvale was the losing mayoral candidate a total of four times, and succeeded only on the fifth occasion after the king wrote to the Court of Aldermen requesting that he should be elected.⁶⁵ He was the first member of the company to become mayor.

Friction between the Tailors and Drapers did not make cooperation impossible upon matters of concern common to both companies. The companies presented a joint petition to the Common Council in September 1482 complaining about the poor quality of the work completed by the Shearmen and others involved in the finishing of woollen

⁶² C.M. Barron, ‘Ralph Holland and the London Radicals, 1438-1444’, in A.L. Rowse and C.M. Barron ed., *A History of the North London Branch of the Historical Association, Together with Essays in Honour of the Golden Jubilee* (1971), 60-80.

⁶³ *GC*, 245-6; Jo.9, f.280v. The first time had been in 1489, when he lost out to William White, a Draper (Jo.9, f.239).

⁶⁴ *GC*, 246.

⁶⁵ *GC*, 288; Jo.10, f.141v. Percyvale’s other attempts had been in 1496 and 1497, (Jo.10, ff.78v & 108v).

cloths.⁶⁶ Their request for tighter controls and powers of search over such work was granted, an example of economic expediency prevailing over persistent rivalry.

The Tailors' Company appear to have been a particularly argumentative body, for they were also involved in a dispute with the Skinners' Company in 1484 over which should take precedence in civic processions. The mayor, the Haberdasher, Robert Billesdon, was forced to arbitrate and resolved the issue by dictating that henceforth the Tailors and Skinners would annually alternate the positions of sixth and seventh in the processions common on City occasions, which they still do to this day.⁶⁷ The Tailors' ambitions and talent for making influential friends made the mercantile companies of the City especially wary, and perhaps accounts in part for the reaction of the City to the Tailors' achievement of these ambitions in the early part of the sixteenth century, as will be expanded upon later.

Resentment over the amount of control wielded by the mercantile companies over trade reached boiling point in 1484 when men from the Shearmen, Fullers, Tuckers, and Cappers crafts unloaded unfinished woollen cloths from ships bound for Calais.⁶⁸ Crisis was averted when the mayor and aldermen, fearing a riot, 'assembled in harness goyng toward the waterside, whiche so heryng, the forsaide Riottours with their compeny departed & fledde'.⁶⁹ The Shearmen succeeded in obtaining attention for their cause, for in December of that year a royal proclamation stated that export of unfinished cloth valued at over forty shillings was banned, and this was later confirmed by Act of Parliament.⁷⁰ The discontent of the Shearmen was to continue through Henry VII's reign. Two uprisings occurred in London, in April and May 1486, the first of which enjoyed the support of the Fullers and Tuckers who were similarly affected by this

⁶⁶ *LBL*, 196-7.

⁶⁷ For information on the Billesdon award, as the Tailors-Skinners agreement was known, see Matthew Davies, 'Governors and Governed: The Practice of Power in the Merchant Tailors' Company in the Fifteenth Century' in *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800*, I.A. Gadd and P. Wallis ed. (London, 2002), 219.

⁶⁸ *Acts*, 159.

⁶⁹ *Acts*, 160.

⁷⁰ Sutton, *Mercery*, 335.

issue.⁷¹ Though these demonstrations were small they were indicative of their discontent. In 1495 many Shearmen and Fullers were bound to keep the peace in bonds ranging from £5-£100 to the Chamberlain of the City, indicating that there had been, or was threat of, some disturbance from these men.⁷²

Most minor rivalries left little trace or impact upon the development of the companies. Conflict between the Leathersellers and the Glovers in the dying days of Edward IV's reign, the Haberdashers and the Hurers in 1500 or the Dyers, Haberdashers and the Tailors at about the same time were resolved through the arbitration of the mayor and aldermen.⁷³ Each company zealously guarded its position, liberties, rights and privileges, particularly against perceived encroachments from other companies. It was because of the vigour with which they did so, according to Thrupp, that though the companies were highly organised groups they did not, unlike their counterparts in some other European cities, become the primary unit of administration and representation within the capital.⁷⁴

4.3. Crown, City and Company

A triangular relationship existed between the Crown, the Civic authorities and the companies: guilds in London had long enjoyed a direct relationship with the Crown and frequently sought its authority for the grant of desired rights and privileges, especially in the form of letters patent. The motivation of the Crown in encouraging such approaches is less transparent than that of the individual companies and differed according to the company involved, as will be demonstrated. The question to be addressed here is the extent to which Henry perceived that the London companies were not homogenous units but individual social, economic and political entities, each with its own set of priorities and differing agendas. This in turn raises further lines of enquiry, the most obvious being whether he regarded these companies as a threat in any way, and if so, which ones and why? How did the relationships between the individual companies and the Crown affect the Crown-City relationship?

⁷¹ See Chapter 2, section 2.4.

⁷² Jo.10, ff.46-47v.

⁷³ *LBL*, 168; Rep.1, ff.77, 82v, 96, 110v.

⁷⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 73.

4.3.1. *The King, the Court and Individual Companies*

The Mercers, as already examined, were regarded with some suspicion by Henry VII on account of their close identification with the Merchant Adventurers and the latter's establishment of independent diplomatic relations with the Low Countries in 1486-7. Even so, the Mercers had friends at court: Richard Fox, bishop of Exeter, Bath and Wells, Durham and Winchester successively during Henry's reign as well as Keeper of the Privy Seal, and Giles, Lord Daubeney, together with Sir Richard Nanfan requested to join the fellowship in February 1490.⁷⁵ Some Mercers were honoured with knighthood, though fewer, proportionally, than in Edward IV's reign. Henry Colet, a known close friend of Reynold Bray, was knighted in 1486 with fellow Mercer John Broun.⁷⁶ Richard Haddon and John Tate were the only other Mercers knighted during the reign, both for their roles in the 1497 uprising that culminated at the battle of Blackheath when they served as sheriff and mayor respectively.⁷⁷ Henry knighted a total of fifteen aldermen during his reign, six of them during their terms as mayor. Given the numbers of Mercers who served at the highest levels of civic government, one might arguably have expected to have seen a higher proportion of them knighted.⁷⁸ This did not reflect well upon the esteem in which the mayor, aldermen and political community of the capital were held by the Crown, for as the Mercers dominated the Court of Aldermen throughout the reign, they became inextricably entwined, in the minds of Henry and his council, with the government of the capital.

A combination of the unpopularity of the Mercers' Company at court and the popularity of the Tailors was perhaps, at least in part, responsible for the replacement of Mercers and Drapers by Merchant Taylors as leading suppliers to the Great Wardrobe in the

⁷⁵ *Acts*, 201.

⁷⁶ Condon, 'Pater Patriae', 151.

⁷⁷ Shaw, *Knights*, ii, 30. The Recorder, Robert Sheffield, was knighted at the same time along with the other serving sheriff, John Shaa.

⁷⁸ The number of mayors quoted does not include William Stokker, who served only for a matter of days before his death in Sept. 1485 or John Warde, who served for a month in 1485. Of the 70 different men who served as aldermen during the reign, 17 were Mercers, 13 were Grocers, 12 were Drapers, 9 Goldsmiths, 7 Tailors, 4 Fishmongers, 3 Skinners, 2 Haberdashers, and 2 Salters.

course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁷⁹ Many of the items purchased by the Wardrobe would have been ordered by the King's Tailor, who may have recommended to the Keeper of the Great Wardrobe suppliers of such goods; naturally he would have favoured fellow Tailors. Otherwise the mandate to supply the wardrobe was in the gift of the Keeper and unlikely to have led to contacts within the court or royal household.⁸⁰

The position of King's Tailor was one that required personal contact with the person of the king and others who were dressed with provisions by the Great Wardrobe.⁸¹ Items would have been made at the workshop of the King's Tailor with his oversight, and as Henry VIII's personal warrants recorded an average of 277 items per year, a tally that cannot have been far off for his father, the position was thus lucrative and desirable.⁸² The King's Tailor not only attended upon the king and his household but also held the formal position of Sergeant Tailor of the Great Wardrobe, a position that paid 12d per day with 100s allowance for the rent of a house within the City as well as a summer and winter livery.⁸³ Only two men held this position in Henry VII's reign: George Lovekyn, who had served in the same capacity for Edward IV and Richard III (the latter only briefly), and, after his death in 1504, his former apprentice, Stephen Jasper, who continued in this position until his death in 1511.⁸⁴ These men, even though they were not Englishmen, were senior members of the Tailors' Company; Lovekyn served a company warden in 1486-7.⁸⁵ They may well have been able to assist the interests of their company, even if only by obtaining the good will of the great men they served, including the king.⁸⁶ It is also possible that their connections to the king aided their ascent within the company.

⁷⁹ Davies and Saunders, *Merchant Taylors' Company*, 62, 64-6; *Great Wardrobe*, xxix.

⁸⁰ *Great Wardrobe*, xxx.

⁸¹ *Great Wardrobe*, xxxiii.

⁸² *Great Wardrobe*, xxxiii.

⁸³ Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII* (Leeds, 2007), 320.

⁸⁴ Hayward, *Dress*, 320.

⁸⁵ See Anne Sutton, 'George Lovekyn, Tailor to Three Kings, 1470-1504', *Costume*, xv (1981), 1-12; Hayward, *Dress*, 320.

⁸⁶ The regard in which the king held Lovekyn is evidenced by the gift made by Henry upon Lovekyn's second marriage of five yards of 'good scarlet' (Hayward, *Dress*, 320).

These were not the only Tailors familiar with the court, for Stephen Jennings, a prominent merchant of the Staple and senior member of the Tailors' company, regularly appears in the Chamber book receiving payment for supply of goods and one entry for £100 for the 'plegging of certain of the queen's jewels'.⁸⁷ That Jennings was personally known to the king is further evidenced by the king's letter on his behalf requesting his election as mayor in 1508.⁸⁸ It is probable that he was involved in at least some of the negotiations for the incorporation of the tailors as the Merchant Taylors in 1502.

Throughout the late medieval era few merchants were as numerous or influential at court as the Goldsmiths. Goldsmiths were exceptional, not only in that they were often to be found at court in comparison to other London merchants, but in that many of them became trusted royal servants. Two of the most prolific suppliers of goldsmiths' work to Richard II's court, Drew Barantyn and Nicholas Twyford, were charged with purveying essential items for military campaigns, whilst another, John Brydd, carried messages to the continent for both Richard II and Henry IV.⁸⁹

Three reasons can be given for the prominence of men of the Goldsmiths' Company at court. Firstly, the nature of the goods they supplied required direct interaction between the vendor and the customer. High-value items of precious metals and jewels were subject to taste and so sight before purchase was desirable, and commissioned bespoke items required cooperation between the craftsman and the customer. It was not just luxury items that fell into the remit of the goldsmith, but also everyday items. Plate required frequent replacement and repair, as did more delicate items of jewellery worn as part of clothing.⁹⁰ The sale and the creation of goldsmiths' work required a level of expertise that excluded other merchants and tradesmen from engaging in it, and hence the goldsmiths maintained a monopoly in this area. Therefore, it was common for a large number of goldsmiths with a varying range of specialities to supply royal and aristocratic households. Secondly, by virtue of their expertise, Goldsmiths enjoyed a

⁸⁷ BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.23v.

⁸⁸ Rep.2, f.50.

⁸⁹ Jessica Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths and the English Royal Court, 1360-1413' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2008), 11, 277-8.

⁹⁰ Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths', 196.

virtual monopoly of control over the Mint and the king's Exchange within the Tower of London.⁹¹ Finally, Goldsmiths tended to be rich men with large supplies of ready cash. Naturally they were not unique amongst the mercantile community of the City in this, but many of them assumed a quasi-banking role, providing loans of ready cash to men connected to the court.

It is evident from the extant Chamber books of the reign that the above held true for the court of Henry VII. The Chamber books contain numerous payments to goldsmiths, but remarkably few to other merchants, with the exception of a handful of mainly Italian foreigners. Four Goldsmiths in particular stand out in the frequency and breadth of their relations with the Crown: Hugh Brice, Edmund Shaa, John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede. These men successfully amalgamated the roles of royal servant with that of City father, arguably to the benefit of both institutions, as will be seen.

Though appearance in the Chamber book does not necessarily denote personal contact between the king and the vendor, it suggests that goldsmiths often received commissions directly from the royal household rather than via the Great Wardrobe. Payments for metal work supplied for the king's clothes were generally made from the king's Chamber and the goods were delivered directly to the officer of the Wardrobe of the Robes, who for most of the reign was John Fligh.⁹² Regular payments appear to Piers Danyell, described as a 'Frenchman of Paris' and a 'jeweler' which would obviously have had to have been made via a go-between.⁹³ Craftsmen, or at least the master of craftsmen, like John Arnold, described as 'the King's Goldsmith' in the Chamber books in 1507, also possibly did not enjoy a personal relationship with the

⁹¹ The post of Warden of the Mint was a purely political appointment and therefore usually awarded to royal servants. Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 176.

⁹² Payments to John Vandelf, who specialised in gold wire for clothing, were made regularly from the Chamber between 1497 and his death in 1504 (TNA, E101/414/6, ff.61v, 63v, 67, 72v; TNA, E101/414/16, ff.31v, 52, 54v; TNA, E101/415/3, ff. 28v, 53, 53v, 55, 56v, 65v, 73v, 82v, 83, 92, 93; BL, Add. Ms. 21480, ff.3v, 7v, 26v, 44v, 45v). All but 5 of these payments were for embellishments for clothing, and most were made via John Fligh.

⁹³ TNA, E101/414/16, ff.54v, 61, 62. Other payments were made for jewels bought in France, possibly from Danyell, thus confirming that such purchases were regularly made through a third party. TNA, E101/415/3, ff.19, 24v, 51; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.52; TNA, E36/214, f.118.

monarch.⁹⁴ Arnold's work consisted mainly of items of craftwork and maintenance, such as mending the king's dagger or embellishing harnesses, suggesting he maintained a close proximity to the royal household and a correspondingly close working relationship with its personnel. It is possible that he held a permanent position within the Great Wardrobe, though it is apparent the position of King's Goldsmith was not typical of that of other royal artificers. The position was not confirmed by letter patent, and therefore lacked a formality that the King's Tailor and Skinner, for example, enjoyed. The King's Goldsmith did not work out of the premises of the Great Wardrobe as other royal artificers did. The position was also not exclusive as relationships with other goldsmith merchants were maintained and the volume of business transacted with them often exceeded that with the King's Goldsmith. Royal artificers were ordinarily craftsmen, yet goldsmith merchants frequently were described as the 'King's Goldsmith', as John Shaa was in 1492.⁹⁵ It was therefore more of an honorific title and not a formal salaried position. Arnold did not keep his position for long as he only received payments between January and July 1507, receiving a total of £123 1s 2d in that time.⁹⁶ It is unlikely, given the amount he was paid and his probable resultant wealth, that he was amongst the lower social echelons of his craft. The same was true for Robert Amadas, who served as King's Goldsmith to Henry VIII but was a prominent merchant and active within the Goldsmiths' Company.⁹⁷

It is likely that royal purchases of expensive jewels and New Years' gifts, which were often bought in bulk from a single goldsmith, were done with the personal input, or at least supervision, of the king.⁹⁸ Gold and jewels were of importance to Henry VII, contrary to his reputation as a miser, for between 1491 and 1509 it has been estimated that he spent at least £200,000 on jewels and plate, more, it is likely, than the luxury-loving Edward IV.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ TNA, E36/214, f.158; TNA, E36/285 ff.19, 74 & 81.

⁹⁵ TNA, E36/285 f.79.

⁹⁶ TNA, E36/214, ff.125, 147, 155, 158, 163, 165, 169, 172, 174.

⁹⁷ Amadas' wealth is apparent from an inventory of his goods made upon his death: (*Two London Goldsmiths*, ed. R. Locke, Notes and Queries Index (1930)). By comparison, Stephen Jasper, the King's Tailor, was noted to own goods in 1511 amounting to not more in value than £20 (Hayward, *Dress*, 320).

⁹⁸ TNA, E101/414/16, f.53v; TNA, E101/415/3, f.79v; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.5.

⁹⁹ Ross, *Edward IV*, 264.

Contact with the king may have depended upon the status of the individual goldsmith. Rich merchants who dealt predominantly in high-value luxury items like Thomas Exmew, John Mondy, Nicholas Warley and Robert Amadas, who each provided Henry with goods totalling over £500 in value, were regular, preferred, suppliers and probably personally acquainted with the king for reasons outlined above. These men were also suppliers to other members of the royal family: John Mondy supplied Margaret Beaufort with items of his trade, firstly in tandem with Sir John Shaa and later, after Shaa's death, on his own.¹⁰⁰ The forenamed Goldsmiths were frequently named as sureties in bonds concerning individuals with whom they very likely did not have a personal connection, implying that they were men with ready cash willing to provide financial services.¹⁰¹

Henry VII may have favoured individual Goldsmiths but that favour did not necessarily extend to the Goldsmiths' Company, for they were treated no more favourably than other mercantile companies. Its acquisition, in 1505, of a letter patent that confirmed its powers of nationwide search, came after the deaths of John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede, who had enjoyed successful careers as royal servants as well as merchants, and therefore the influence of these powerful men was unnecessary in securing such a grant. The ability to pay for the honour was probably more influential, as the company paid a total of 300 marks for the charter.¹⁰² The Goldsmiths exercised their new rights through a series of summer tours of the provinces, demanding that goldsmiths resident in these areas swear an oath to observe the ordinances of the London Goldsmiths' Company. A two-shilling fee was collected from those who took the oath, amounting to £51 8s in 1507 alone.¹⁰³ The company was also cautious about the possibility of incurring royal

¹⁰⁰ St. John's College, Cambridge, D102.2, ff.3, 5, 5v; D91.17, ff.3, 67; D91.20, ff.55-67; 191; D91.21, ff.24, 29, 41, 61, 67; D91.22, f.84 (this list is not comprehensive). Mondy was also a visitor to Margaret at Hatfield, on one occasion receiving 3s 4d as a reward for his attendance there in September 1505: (D91.21, f.128).

¹⁰¹ For Example, TNA, E101/414/16, f.98; TNA, E101/415/3, ff.153, 202; BL, Add. Ms.59899, ff.133, 138v; TNA, E36/214, 391.

¹⁰² This large amount was possibly for both the charter and the pardon of 1505. BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.2; TNA, E36/214, f.457.

¹⁰³ It may be deduced that over 500 goldsmiths were so sworn. T. Reddaway, 'The London Goldsmiths Circa 1500', *TRHS*, xii (1962), 51-2.

displeasure, for it was felt prudent to purchase a pardon for the company in the same year.¹⁰⁴ Reddaway dismisses this purchase as merely ‘one of the periodical royal pardons for trade offenses’, but the timing, coming soon after the company had lost Rede and Shaa, its two most influential members, the payment of 300 marks and naming of fifty-five individual Goldsmiths and six widows indicates that the company members were perhaps feeling vulnerable.¹⁰⁵

Various members of the royal administration had their own connections with individual Livery Companies. The Tailors admitted Reynold Bray and Robert Rede, the Sergeant-at-Law (later Chief Justice of Common Pleas), as brothers of its fraternity in May 1490 without charge.¹⁰⁶ Help was sometimes solicited from influential members of the court by the companies for their aid in law suits, petitions or quarrels. James Hobart, the attorney general, was courted not only by the Drapers’ Company whilst they opposed the Merchant Taylors’ patent, but also by several smaller institutions, such as the Carpenters who paid £1 for his assistance in smoothing their bill through the 1497 parliament.¹⁰⁷ The Drapers sought the friendship of Edmund Dudley, paying him a gift of £10 in 1504 and admitting him and his servant, William Bukkyll, into the company the following year.¹⁰⁸ Thomas Lovell was a patron and a brother of the Grocers’ Company and endowed it with properties worth £15 10s per annum. He also bought and rebuilt the Weighhouse in Cornhill for their use at a cost of £300.¹⁰⁹ Lovell was closely connected with many senior members of the Grocers’ Company both during and after the reign of Henry VII: John Wyngar, mayor 1504-5, sent him gifts, as did John Ward, the alderman, who bequeathed to him a standing cup.¹¹⁰ Hugh Denys, Henry VII’s Groom of the Stool, benefitted from his association with the Grocers: in

¹⁰⁴ *CPR*, ii, 398.

¹⁰⁵ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, 181; TNA, E101/413/2/2, f.91v; BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.2.

¹⁰⁶ *Merchant Taylors’ Court Minutes*, 157; J.H. Baker, ‘Rede, Sir Robert (d.1519)’, *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷ Gunn, *The New Men*; Davies, ‘Lobbying parliament’, 144.

¹⁰⁸ Drapers Company, WA2, f.79; Records of London’s Livery Companies Online, [URL: www.londonroll.org, accessed 19 June, 2015].

¹⁰⁹ Stow, *Survey*, i, 192; *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings*, ed. R. Sharpe (London, 1890), ii, 635-6; Gunn, *New Men*.

¹¹⁰ Gunn, *New Men*. Gunn provides further examples of close associates among the company’s ranks in the reign of Henry VIII.

July 1505 the Grocers, as was in their gift, recommended three men for the position of garbeller in the City, of which Denys was admitted into the role.¹¹¹ This was one of the City offices that Henry VI had granted by royal patent to a royal servant as a reward in 1442, leading to various attempts by the City to regain control of the office in perpetuity.¹¹² It was not until 1478 that this was achieved, when Edward IV sold to the City the offices of cloth-packer, garbeller, gauger and wine-drawer for £7,000.¹¹³ It is intriguing, then, that the Grocers selected a royal servant for this position in 1504, and had obviously identified Denys, in his capacity as a senior member of Henry's Privy Chamber staff, as a man of influence worth courting. The issue seems to be that the City sought to control its own sources of patronage, rather than to keep control of the office itself.

4.3.2. The Companies and Parliament

London's proximity to Westminster gave its inhabitants and corporations a distinct advantage, both in terms of ease of travel and in the fluidity of information. It also gave the London companies the opportunity to lobby not only parliament, but also members of the governmental administration, and indeed several company accounts show expenses incurred by deputations to government officials.¹¹⁴ It was not rare for even the smallest of the livery companies to lobby the king and his council or parliament directly.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, only the petitions that were enacted by parliament were recorded upon the parliament rolls and therefore it is near impossible to see the full extent of the lobbying activities by these institutions. The unenrolled petitions that have survived, as Matthew Davies has illustrated, serve to give a picture of politically aware and astute corporate bodies within the City who were not only conscious of political events but also of political process.¹¹⁶ Increased legal activity led to a requirement for the employment of appropriately knowledgeable personnel. Company clerks, key

¹¹¹ Rep.1, f.172v.

¹¹² Barron, 'London and the Crown', 90-1, 99.

¹¹³ Barron, 'London and the Crown', 99-100.

¹¹⁴ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 139. Barron, 'London and Parliament in the Lancastrian Period', *Parliamentary History*, IX (1990), 344-5.

¹¹⁵ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 137.

¹¹⁶ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 136-148.

members of company bureaucracy, were increasingly men with legal knowledge and experience, a necessary development as their remit frequently included dealing with matters of litigation, drafting of bills, petitions, ordinances and property transactions and associated documentation

Davies suggests that the London MPs may not have been of much help to lobbying companies.¹¹⁷ The belief that a single MP, acting in his company's interest on his own, was unlikely to be able to make much of an impact may have deterred companies from seeking their intervention. Moreover, it was usually the landed knights and gentry who were accustomed to taking the lead in parliament rather than the burgesses.¹¹⁸ Naturally an MP might have done what he could to further the interests of his own company and here the mercantile companies were, once more, at a political advantage, for thirty-seven of the fifty-three men returned as City MPs between 1422 and 1460 were from the companies of the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers. The remainder were drawn from the Fishmongers, Ironmongers and Salters, themselves among the 'Great Twelve'.¹¹⁹

Instead of seeking support from their local MPs, it appears that companies preferred to court the support of those who were lawyers or men of influence, often the Speaker or some other official. The Pewterers lobbied for a statute to be passed in the 1487 parliament against itinerant craftsmen who made and sold inferior goods.¹²⁰ Despite paying the clerk of the parliament house, Thomas Bayne, 6s 8d to speed the reading of their bills and providing the Speaker with a large, decorated, pewter vessel worth 27s 4d, they were unsuccessful, and only obtained their desire in the last parliament of the reign.¹²¹ The Pewterers were forced to adjust their ambitions over the course of several redrafts before they finally obtained their act. An initial bill had requested the power of search over Pewterers in all parts of the kingdom, but its final form vested the authority

¹¹⁷ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 143.

¹¹⁸ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 59.

¹¹⁹ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 143.

¹²⁰ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 142.

¹²¹ *PROME*, vi, 549; Accounts of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers, London Guildhall, MS 7086/1, ff.93, 148v; For a full reconstruction of the pursuit of the bill by the Pewterers see Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 118-122.

to organise such searches in local JPs and other borough officials.¹²² They also enlisted the Pewterers of York as co-petitioners and bought the aid of John Mordaunt, the king's Serjeant 'to stope heym that vose [*sic*] a genste vs' for ten shillings.¹²³ The two MPs from York, the clerk of the Commons, the clerk of the market and the warden of the Armourers' Company were among those wined and dined by members of the Pewterers' Company in the taverns of Westminster, and gifts of money and wine were given to Chancery clerks, the Speaker's clerk and the Speaker (Edmund Dudley) himself to ease the passage of the bill through the commons.¹²⁴ Members of the Lords were then lobbied, a submission was drawn up and delivered to Chancellor Warham, and Thomas Frowyk, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was given a pike.¹²⁵ The tenacity of the Pewterers in pursuit of their statute paid off, and this case illustrates that even the smaller companies of the City were capable of employing a sophisticated knowledge of parliamentary procedure and personnel to further their cause.

The Carpenters, in 1497, similarly gained success in parliament in their quest for the repeal of a statute passed two years previously, which limited the wages and working hours of building craftsmen and other labourers.¹²⁶ The Upholders, in 1495, complained to parliament about the use of false materials in the filling of cushions and featherbeds, but this petition failed.¹²⁷ Both companies, like the Pewterers, invested money to employ personnel to research and draft the appropriate bills, requiring no small outlay of funds as well as a modicum of political acumen. The same could be said for the London Silkwomen, whose lobbying resulted in five statutes enacted by parliaments between 1455 and 1504 which restricted imports of silk wares.¹²⁸ It is thus apparent that the size or status of the company did not necessarily influence the chance a petition had of success.

¹²² Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 119.

¹²³ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 119.

¹²⁴ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 120.

¹²⁵ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 120.

¹²⁶ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 144. A payment of 20s in the Carpenters' accounts to the King's council in 1497 indicates that at some point they may have lobbied more directly on the matter. *Records of the Carpenters*, 72.

¹²⁷ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 138.

¹²⁸ Though their connections to the Mercers' Company may have helped. Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 138.

The large companies were no more successful than the small ones in acquiring acts passed in their favour. At the 1487 parliament a Common Council ordinance that prohibited the retail of goods at fairs outside London by Londoners was successfully opposed by other cities and towns of the realm.¹²⁹ It is probable that the ordinance had already met opposition within the City, for it was suspended in March 1487, a month after it was first made, until the September of that year.¹³⁰ The ordinance stated that the practice of freemen selling their wares across the realm was to the harm of all concerned: Londoners failed to get the best price for their goods and the merchants and artisans of other towns suffered as a consequence of increased competition.¹³¹

The ordinance was probably the creation of the Mercers, who had persistently tried to prevent freemen of the City, particularly the Haberdashers, from selling items of mercery at provincial fairs.¹³² In 1484 they had petitioned the mayor, arguing that freemen of the City should ‘fordo goyng to fayres’, without success.¹³³ The Drapers and the Tailors may have supported the Mercers in this endeavour as they desired all provincial clothiers to come to London and use Blackwell Hall, established in 1395 to control the sales of woollen cloth by non-citizens of the capital, for their retail needs. It is probable that the Goldsmiths also lent their support, as at assemblies in 1498 and 1500 they were to prohibit their members from attending fairs.¹³⁴ The seven-month delay in the implementation of the Common Council ordinance suggests that it encountered initial opposition from inside the City itself. Between them, the companies of the Mercers, Drapers, Tailors and Goldsmiths had thirteen aldermen in 1487 and the mayor, Henry Colet, was a Mercer, and so one might assume they held enough

¹²⁹ Jo.9, ff.133v-134. That the act named as fairs affected as those of Oxford, Cambridge, Nottingham, Ely and Coventry it seems probable that were the act’s sponsors (Cavill, ‘Henry VII and Parliament’, 245).

¹³⁰ Jo.9, f.143; *LBL*, 245. In Sept. 1487 the ordinance was reinstated and stipulated that no citizen of London was to go to fairs and markets outside the City to sell wares during the next seven years upon pain of a £100 fine (Jo.9, f.157).

¹³¹ Jo.9, f.133v; Cavill, ‘Henry VII and Parliament’, 245.

¹³² *Merchant Taylors’ Court Minutes*, 39-40; Sutton, *Mercery*, 214-226.

¹³³ *Acts*, 157-161.

¹³⁴ Goldsmiths’ Company, Minute Book A, ff.369, 392, 400 and Minute Book B, f.353; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, 194.

influence between them to implement their collective will.¹³⁵ Though these companies did eventually manage to enforce their ordinance, at least until it was overturned by parliament, the episode illustrates that the larger mercantile companies could not ride roughshod over the interests of the other companies and unpopular measures could not be forced through the Common Council.

Parliament, in response to the Commons' petition, overruled the authority of the mayor and aldermen and annulled the ordinance on the basis that it allowed Londoners to retain control over the distribution and pricing of goods.¹³⁶ The Mercers, optimistically, tried to revive the ordinance by petitioning parliament in 1491, but as there is no record of it in the parliamentary rolls it may be safely assumed that it was one of many petitions not passed.¹³⁷

In both the City and other parts of the realm, parliament can be seen to have functioned effectively as a means for redress for constituents and cooperatives. Parliament may have been the avenue of choice for smaller companies who felt their needs were not perhaps given due consideration by the mercantile elite that ruled the City. Nor was the lobbying of parliament the preserve of the City companies: in 1504 the Shearmen of Norfolk submitted a bill requesting the repeal of a bill made in the 1495 parliament which had favoured shearers not of the craft company.¹³⁸ Companies outside the capital may have lacked direct access to influential people but they were far from ignorant when it came to seeking redress for matters that concerned them, including, upon occasion, complaining about the Londoners themselves.

4.3.3. Regulation

It is apparent that the livery companies of the capital had come to be regarded with suspicion by men from other parts of the realm, particularly those visitors who were subjected to alleged high prices whilst attending parliament at Westminster. In the 1487 parliament a complaint was lodged against the livery companies of the City:

¹³⁵ Eleven aldermen if one counts the Draper, William Issac, who was elected in the March of that year.

¹³⁶ 3 Hen.VII,c.9; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 245.

¹³⁷ *Acts*, 219-20; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 245.

¹³⁸ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 239.

...for selling of dere stufte exceedyng price reasonable, saying that by mean of ordenances whiche that everyche withyn them self by reason of their incorporacions do make ordenances & statutes in comen hurt of the Kynges liege people, with muche saying on the same more to grete rebuke of this Citie.¹³⁹

Complaint must have been made directly to the mayor and aldermen, though via what channel is unclear, for their response was decisive. A demand was issued, in December 1487, by the Court of Aldermen that all company ordinances were to be submitted for their approval. Thereafter, all ordinances were to be recorded in the Letter Book, and those not so approved and recorded were to be cancelled.¹⁴⁰

The demand of the mayor and aldermen for the submission of ordinances was given whilst parliament was sitting, and therefore was presumably intended to give a visible appearance of taking the complaint seriously. This was no small inconvenience to the companies, the mayor and aldermen and the administrative staff of the Guildhall. The last comparable occasion was the guild inquiry demanded by the Crown in 1388.¹⁴¹ It was with some reluctance, it may be construed by the amount of time elapsed between the initial request and eventual compliance, that the Mercers' Company submitted their ordinances to the mayor and aldermen for approval in October 1488, one of the last to do so.¹⁴² A possible reason for this is that in the past the large mercantile companies had not felt the same need as lesser companies to submit their ordinances for approval to the mayor and aldermen as the aldermen were largely derived from their number. To confirm their own ordinances may have been seen as an unnecessary formality. Alternatively, it may have been that they were only now willing to have their ordinances committed to scrutiny, as the newly elected mayor, Robert Tate, was a mercer.¹⁴³ So eager, in fact, had the Mercers been to keep some of their ordinances covert that they created a 'new' book of ordinances to comply with this ruling, so

¹³⁹ *Acts*, 183.

¹⁴⁰ Jo.9, f.162; *LBL*, 246.

¹⁴¹ Barron, *London*, 208-9.

¹⁴² *Acts*, 183; Jo.9, f.162; *LBL*, 246

¹⁴³ Sutton, *Mercery*, 353.

allowing them to omit possibly offensive ordinances from the old book.¹⁴⁴ The ordinances were returned, fully approved, in mid-December.¹⁴⁵

Not all of the ordinances submitted as part of this exercise were approved.¹⁴⁶ The Saddlers' Company complained in 1490 that the cancellation of unauthorised ordinances had left them without ordinances with which to govern the craft.¹⁴⁷ The Coursors similarly were left without ordinances, whilst those initially presented by the Waxchangers and Pewterers were deemed inadequate.¹⁴⁸ Yet at no point was the authority of the mayor and aldermen to approve and ratify such ordinances disputed, as it was seen as the natural route for all guilds wishing to adjust their current ordinances, make new ones or incorporate an extension to their powers of search into their crafts within the City. Through the approval of ordinances the mayor and aldermen delegated the business of the regulation of trade, quality of goods, and behaviour and employment of apprentices to the crafts and companies of the City. The very process of approving ordinances reinforced the authority of the mayor as the business head of the City.

By the opening of Henry VII's reign, therefore, and for most its duration, the authority of the mayor and aldermen to regulate the City companies and guilds was unquestioned, as it was in other cities, such as York and Norwich, with similar corporations. It was only after the City questioned the royal prerogative as a by-product of their fight to repress the ambitions of the Merchant Taylors that the authority of the mayor and aldermen over the companies was queried and confiscated as part of a wider policy to extend the royal prerogative right up to the boundaries of his rights.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Sutton, *Mercery*, 353.

¹⁴⁵ *Acts*, 186.

¹⁴⁶ For those that were recorded and approved see Jo.9, ff.133, 152-156v, 160-164, 167v-173v; *LBL*, 248-65. The civic records do not provide a comprehensive record of all ordinances approved, as it apparent by the omission of those of the Mercers' Company.

¹⁴⁷ *LBL*, 273

¹⁴⁸ Jo.9, ff.160, 163, 186; *LBL*, 265.

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.6.

4.3.4. Royal Charters

Royal approval of guild practices and privileges was regularly sought, particularly from the fourteenth century, and this approval manifested itself in the form of royal charters (or, strictly speaking, letters patent). The desire for and acquisition of such letters patent can be considered, as Matthew Davies states, as ‘a significant theme in the ... histories of the London companies.’¹⁵⁰ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the crafts had sought the protection and security of a royal patent only infrequently, but this practice became far more common from the fourteenth century.¹⁵¹

This was partly as a result of the Mortmain Act of 1391, which required all guilds acquiring lands, through the bequests of their members, to obtain a royal licence each time at considerable cost. To avoid this, the crafts obtained charters that allowed them to hold lands up to a certain yearly value in mortmain, and most of these enterprising institutions took the opportunity to gain various rights and privileges at the same time. Royal patents, from 1391, constituted statements of incorporation for they granted guilds the right to have a ‘perpetual commonalty’ and to plead and be impleaded in common.¹⁵² This meant that the patent provided a guild, or rather a company, with status, and conferred a legitimacy and security over and above that that could be obtained from the City authorities. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the 1390s saw a flurry of patents granted to guilds: the Skinners and Grocers obtained theirs in 1393, the Goldsmiths and Mercers in 1394 and the Saddlers in 1395.¹⁵³

The acquisition of letters patent was obviously seen to be advantageous, for they were regularly sought thereafter despite their cost.¹⁵⁴ Thrupp suggested that the main reason for seeking a royal patent was to provide the company members with protection against the competition of country workers outside the mayor’s jurisdiction who sent their goods for sale in the capital, so frustrating the desire of the company to regulate produce

¹⁵⁰ Davies, ‘Crown, City and Guild’, 11.

¹⁵¹ Barron, *London*, 208.

¹⁵² Barron, *London*, 209.

¹⁵³ Veale, *Fur Trade*, 109.

¹⁵⁴ The Mercers costs for their patent of 1394 were over £87; the Tailors paid over £79 for theirs of 1439 and that of the Pewterers’ Company, 1468, cost over £100 (Barron, *London*, 210).

of their craft within the City.¹⁵⁵ Whilst this may have been a consideration for many of the manufacturing companies it was not usually the prime motivation of most of the livery companies. Rather, these patents were used to secure rights that the companies held to be important: a common livery, power to hold assemblies and elect officers to rule the company according to their ordinances, and the right to hold land, albeit of a specified annual value, in perpetuity. Occasionally patents might be sought when the privileges desired were unlikely to be granted by the civic bureaucracy, such as extension of the rights of search, either geographically or over other guilds, or, as Thrupp pointed out, over workmen outside the City.¹⁵⁶ Hence these patents highlighted the limitations of civic authority and, occasionally, undermined it, by granting companies the ability to establish regulations that may have contravened the authority of the mayor and aldermen in addition to circumventing civic regulation.¹⁵⁷ To prevent this, a commons petition was presented to parliament and enacted in 1437 to ensure that all livery company ordinances, even those approved by letters patent, should be approved and enrolled by the relevant municipal authority before their implementation, thus ensuring that the regulation of City companies remained firmly in the jurisdiction of local government.¹⁵⁸ Not all the guilds felt the need to seek legitimation via a letter patent in this way; for many approval of the mayor and aldermen and enrolment of their ordinances within the Letter Book was usually deemed to be sufficient.

Royal letters patent were frequently sought and obtained by companies into Henry VII's reign and beyond. The Bakers became one of the last of the crafts extant since the beginning of the century to become incorporated by letters patent in 1486.¹⁵⁹ It was unusual for such patents to contain anything controversial or against the perceived liberties and privileges of the City or authority of the mayor. In 1502 the Haberdashers, Cappers and Hatters sought and obtained a patent incorporating them as the Merchant Haberdashers. The mayor and aldermen were unhappy with the grant, elevating as it did the status of the Haberdashers' company to a mercantile rather than an artisan institution, but formal complaint was not made and the new title was adopted with little

¹⁵⁵ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 20.

¹⁵⁶ Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild'; Barron, *London*, 15-6.

¹⁵⁷ Barron, *London*, 209.

¹⁵⁸ 15 Hen.VI. c.6; Barron, *London*, 209.

¹⁵⁹ *CPR*, i, 116.

fuss.¹⁶⁰ The Merchant Haberdashers' enjoyment of their new status was temporary as under pressure from Guildhall they were forced to relinquish the merchant title in a new patent granted by Henry VIII in 1510, though the aldermen did pay forty marks for the Haberdashers' administrative costs in effecting this change.¹⁶¹ No reason for this insistence was recorded in the City's official records, but it can be construed that the dignity of the title was deemed unsuitable for the company and such delusions of grandeur were not to be tolerated. The Haberdashers, therefore, served as an exemplar to deter other companies from seeking such honours and potentially creating a headache for the City equal to that caused by the Merchant Taylor grant of 1503.

4.3.5. The Merchant Taylors' Company

After a series of secret negotiations between prominent members of the Tailors' company, its wardens and members of the king's council, the Tailors and Linen Armourers of London were granted letters patent dated 6 January 1503. These not only incorporated them as 'Merchant Taylors', but also authorised the master and wardens of the company to increase their membership by admitting an unlimited number of Englishmen without regard to any other craft or guild in the City, and to ordain and execute ordinances without mayoral approval as long as these were not prejudicial to the laws of the realm or the mayor of London.¹⁶² This was considered by the Tailors to be recognition of their progression to a mercantile company, putting them on an equal footing with the wealthier companies of the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers.¹⁶³

The Merchant Taylors' company patent conferred by royal prerogative a status and privileges that the Tailors must have been aware would not have been approved by the mayor and aldermen. The secret nature of the negotiations suggest that the Crown was also not entirely ignorant of the City's likely objections. To promote the Tailors' guild from a company composed of mainly artisans that only had its first mayor in 1498 to one with mercantile status a mere four years later could be predicted to cause resentment. It was rare for the Crown to act in a manner prejudicial to the authority of

¹⁶⁰ Rep.1, ff.98, 99.

¹⁶¹ Rep.2, f.110; Archer, *Haberdashers' Company*, 17.

¹⁶² Miller, 'London and Parliament', 130.

¹⁶³ Davies, 'Governors and Governed', 219.

Guildhall and for it to do so provides reasonable grounds for speculation that the government may have had motives other than a mere fondness for the Tailors, or the £200 they paid for the patent.¹⁶⁴

The mayor and aldermen initially responded to the Merchant Taylors' grant in 1503 by consulting learned counsel and sending a delegation of four aldermen and the Recorder of the City, Robert Sheffield, to the king to express their unhappiness with the patent and request its repeal.¹⁶⁵ That they felt the need to take formal action against the grant, whereas they had reluctantly accepted a similar grant to the smaller Haberdashers' Company a year earlier, is interesting. Their objection centred on the encroachment upon the jurisdiction of the mayor, thereby going against the ancient rights and privileges of the City. Possibly the combination of the new privileges granted to the Taylors and the aggressive ambition of the company made the other mercantile companies feel uncomfortable.

The Crown's response, in November 1503, was that the clause in the Merchant Taylors' patent safeguarding the rights of the mayor applied only to the article which specified that the ordinances made by the new company should not be prejudicial to the rights of the mayor. Furthermore, the mayor and aldermen were commanded to appear before the king and council and show why the Merchant Taylors should not enjoy the effect of their grant and, more ominously, why the king should not, by his prerogative, make such a grant.¹⁶⁶ The royal council demonstrated at this meeting that they were aware how unpopular the patent was with the citizens of the capital, for it warned the mayor and aldermen that they would be held responsible for any disturbances in the City under the pretext of the patent granted to the Merchant Taylors.¹⁶⁷

At this juncture it is worth noting the significance of the mayoral election on 13 October that year, when the Draper, William Capell, was elected. As usual the Common Hall of London had presented two candidates to the serving mayor and aldermen to choose

¹⁶⁴ BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, ff.16, 18v.

¹⁶⁵ Rep.1, ff.122, 129; Miller, 'London and Parliament' 132. Much of the following account of events is derived from Miller's article.

¹⁶⁶ *Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Dunham, 35; Miller, 'London and Parliament', 131.

¹⁶⁷ *Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Dunham, 36.

from, and despite having rejected him the previous four years, the Court of Aldermen selected Capell over the Haberdasher, William Welbeck.¹⁶⁸ It is likely that on this occasion Capell's agenda - to see the Tailors relegated to their rightful, more humble place - was aligned with that of the rest of the civic government, whereas a Haberdasher, in light of the recent patent awarded to that company, may have been considered to lack the vigour the City sought in the repeal of the Tailors' patent.

Even before Capell's tenure as mayor, the Drapers had thrown much of their resources and influence into securing support to lobby for a repeal of the patent. Officials within both the bureaucracy of London and at court were retained by the Drapers, at great expense. Robert Sheffield, the City Recorder, was paid a total of £5 6s 8d for his support against the Tailors; James Hobart, the king's attorney, and John Hale, clerk of the mayor's court, found themselves in the Drapers' pay at various times fighting for their cause.¹⁶⁹ Three yards of black velvet were given to a master Mattock 'to solyst M[aster John] Shaa ayenst the Tailo[r]s'.¹⁷⁰ As Shaa, the Goldsmith and alderman, was known to stand in high favour with the king his support was worth having.¹⁷¹

The City pursued the matter long after common sense dictated that discretion might be the better part of valour. In December 1503, it was decided by the mayor, William Capell, and the Court of Aldermen to try and persuade the king to repeal the patent by offering 2,500 marks to annul the Merchant Taylors' charter and a further 5,000 marks, payable over five years, for the confirmation of the City charter.¹⁷² John Shaa was selected in his absence to take this offer to the king, along with the Recorder.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Jo.10, f.294v.

¹⁶⁹ Drapers' Company, WA1, f.74v.

¹⁷⁰ Drapers' Company, WA1, f.74v. The total expenditure of the Drapers in 1503 on the Tailor's matter exceeded £22, a substantial sum when one considers that the annual expenditure of the company rarely exceeded £30. Master Matlock (or Mattock) was Nicholas Mattock, a fishmonger who was either a very close friend of Shaa's or served him in some capacity. An inventory of the 'Old Ford', Shaa's residence in Middlesex, refers to a room known as 'Master Mattock's chamber' (TNA, E154/2/11) and Shaa's will lists Mattock and his wife amongst the close friends to be given gold rings worth 40s (TNA, PROB 11/14/156).

¹⁷¹ *GC*, 320.

¹⁷² Rep.1, f.149.

¹⁷³ Rep.1, f.149.

Unfortunately, Shaa was absent because he was on his deathbed. As it was his lack of intervention was probably irrelevant, as it became apparent when parliament opened in the New Year that the king and council had decided to put an end to the argument by removing municipal oversight of company ordinances.

The significance of this episode is manifold. It is a rare example of the Court of Aldermen failing to present a unified front in its dealings with the Crown. The unity of purpose of the aldermen had been, was usually and would be again, remarkable when the differing interests of the individuals concerned are considered.¹⁷⁴ Livery company rivalries and differing economic interests which may have tainted the personal relationships between individual aldermen were exposed, and one can imagine that the agents of the Crown took note.

4.3.6. The Livery Companies and the Statute of 1504

Early in the 1504 parliament an act was passed which bit into the jurisdiction of all municipal authorities, not just that of the capital. The bill presented to the Lords in the form of a commons petition, though it was undoubtedly government-sponsored, explained that many civic ordinances had been made which were contrary to the king's prerogative, to his laws, and to the commonweal.¹⁷⁵ In the rehearsal for the bill it was explained that the 1437 act which had allowed corporate bodies to have their ordinances approved by the relevant municipal authorities or justices of the peace, had expired. Hence, in future, no ordinances were to be made, executed or enrolled without the approval of the Chancellor, Treasurer and two chief justices, or any three of them, or alternatively by the judges of assize on their circuit, on pain of a £40 fine for every infringement.¹⁷⁶ Francis Bacon was later to refer to this law as one necessary to 'restrain the by-laws or ordinances of corporations, which many times were against the prerogative of the king, the common law of the realm, and the liberty of the subject,

¹⁷⁴ For the cohesiveness of the Court of Aldermen in the later sixteenth century see Archer, *Stability*, 39-58, 257

¹⁷⁵ 19 Hen.VII, c.7; Paul Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 248. Edmund Dudley was the Speaker in this parliament, a fact not lost on the Drapers, who gave Dudley £10 'of the benevolent good minds of this place to be friendly to the same.' (Drapers' Company, WA1, f.79).

¹⁷⁶ 19 Hen.VII, c.7; 15 Hen.VI, c.6; Miller, 'London and Parliament', 132.

being fraternities in evil'.¹⁷⁷ This act, theoretically at least, undermined the authority of the mayor and aldermen, depriving them of the ability to regulate the corporate bodies within their cities by effectively removing these institutions from municipal jurisdiction. Thus the mayor and aldermen were effectively demoted to mere foremen with responsibility over the companies only for the day to day business of quality and behavioural monitoring. For the second time in the reign the livery companies were ordered to submit their ordinances for approval, this time to the authorities named in the statute, an immediate sign their subjugation to royal control was not intended to exist on paper only.

In questioning the royal prerogative, particularly at a time when a policy of consciously extending the royal prerogative was being pursued, the City fathers had virtually invited, if not pushed, the king and his council to clarify the situation, which, characteristically, they took the opportunity to do in their favour. To suppose that the patent was the sole cause of this attack upon municipal authority by the Crown would be to take too London-centric a view of the situation, though London's challenge to royal authority may have acted as the catalyst.¹⁷⁸ Given the king's previous disputes with the Mercer-dominated Merchant Adventurers, he may well have seen it desirable to bring such bodies under his direct oversight. The imposition of such a heavy administrative burden upon key personnel within the government combined with the inevitable unpopularity of such a measure throughout the realm suggests that this was not undertaken as a knee-jerk reaction to London's challenge to the royal prerogative but rather the expression of a broader agenda.

Rappaport offers a different argument for the imposition of the 1504 act. He claims that the act 'served to enhance, not dilute, the powers of the livery companies in the early modern period', by providing the companies with the sanction of not only the municipal authorities but also of the central government.¹⁷⁹ This argument fails not only to consider that many companies already enjoyed the official sanction of the Crown, conferred in the form of letters patent, but also does not take account of the context in

¹⁷⁷ Francis Bacon, *Henry VII*, 149.

¹⁷⁸ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 248. Cavill argues that the probable impetus behind the act was the City's objections to the Crown patronage of the Merchant Taylors.

¹⁷⁹ Rappaport, *Worlds*, 186-8.

which the statute was created or the wider policies of the early Tudor administration. Had the companies felt that this act enhanced the reciprocal relationship Rappaport claims they shared with the Crown then it is unlikely that they would have petitioned for its repeal in 1509 and 1512.¹⁸⁰ The encroachment upon the City's prized self-government may have been considered too high a price to pay by the companies for the re-enforcement of their direct connection with the Crown, particularly as, in practical terms, they had little to gain by it.

The final episode in the Merchant Taylors' grant was the agreement made at a Common Council meeting on 22 May 1504 to offer the king £5,000 for the confirmation of the City's charters and repeal of the patent, with the sum to be renegotiated if the patent was not repealed.¹⁸¹ The king, unsurprisingly, refused, and the City, the following March, agreed to pay 5,000 marks, in five yearly instalments, for the confirmation of the City's charter only.¹⁸² Two points, though seemingly obvious, deserve emphasis: firstly, that the City could reduce the amount payable so drastically, once it became clear that the patent would not be repealed, demonstrates that it maintained some bargaining ability. Secondly, Henry turned down a large sum of money, proving that his primary motivation was not financial, but principle was more important.

Henry's motivation in supporting the Merchant Taylors against vehement City opposition may have been two-fold. Firstly, as previously discussed, the Mercers and other mercantile companies that comprised the membership of the Merchant Adventurers had been identified as dangerous power-bases early in the reign and had proved themselves willing and able to prioritise their own economic profit above Henry's political safety. This impression would not have been enhanced by the plethora of merchants caught flouting the trade restrictions imposed upon trade between England and the Low Countries in the 1490s.¹⁸³ The mercantile elite who controlled the civic government of the capital were politically and economically capable of providing practical support to would-be pretenders and therefore could have been perceived to constitute an over-mighty elite. Such a threat was in need of neutralising,

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 6, section 6.5.

¹⁸¹ Jo.10, f.312v; Miller, 'London and Parliament', 135.

¹⁸² Jo.10, f.333v; BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.4v; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.176; TNA, E36/214, f.441.

¹⁸³ Sutton, *Mercery*, 323-335.

or at least diluting, when the opportunity presented itself. The Tailors' ambitions presented just such an opportunity, allowing Henry to employ a 'divide and rule' tactic by promoting the Tailors to a position where they might obtain equal standing with the mercantile companies of the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers and Fishmongers, thus diluting the power and influence of these companies and winning for the Crown support amongst the mercantile elite. Arguably, dilution of the mercantile pool within the capital may also have been Henry's aim with his earlier grant to the Haberdashers. That Henry had proved happy to promote companies with only a handful of merchants in their ranks to mercantile status may have provided an impetus to the City's objections to the Merchant Taylors' grant; one elevation to such a status might be grumbled about but generally overlooked by the City, a second demanded action lest a precedent be set. Secondly, once the City challenged the royal prerogative the Crown was obliged to defend it, and it was naïve of the City to believe otherwise.

4.4. Conclusion

The Livery Companies were not perceived by Henry and his government as a homogenous group but rather as individual entities with their own political and economic interests. Some of these interests were perceived to be contrary to those of the king and his council, whereas others could be manipulated to aid in the achievement of long-standing goals. Consequently, though a consistent policy had to be followed in the regulation of such entities, the treatment and favour shown to them was not uniform. Royal sponsorship of the Merchant Taylors was possibly not originally intended by the king and his council to become so overt, but was perhaps intended, like the grant made a year earlier to the Haberdashers, to dilute the oligarchic control the great mercantile companies had over the civic administration. The elevation of companies friendly to the king and their active promotion within the municipal bureaucracy also ensured that if the king did not have spies within the Court of Aldermen, he at least had well-disposed allies therein. What Henry and his council cannot have anticipated was the reaction of the City, but even that was manipulated by the king and his council into an opportunity to extend the royal control.

If Henry's original aim in supporting the elevation of the Tailors' Company to full mercantile status had been to dilute the influence of the other mercantile companies,

particularly the Mercers, upon the City's politics and economics and assert the royal prerogative in areas traditionally within municipal jurisdiction, neither strategy enjoyed long-term success. The Mercers remained the pre-eminent power in the City for the duration of the sixteenth century and maintained their influence over the Merchant Adventurers. The London authorities probably sought repeal of the 1504 act in the first parliament of Henry VIII's reign, but even if so this and other subsequent attempts failed.¹⁸⁴ In 1512 the Merchant Taylors' Company refused to support the companies of the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths and others in the presentation of a petition to parliament requesting a repeal of the 1504 act.¹⁸⁵ Henry VII's intervention on their behalf had therefore earned a loyalty that outlived him. As it transpired this was to become largely irrelevant, for by the 1520s the act was largely ignored by the companies which reverted, without fanfare, to submitting their ordinances to the mayor and aldermen for approval and enrolment. That they did so without challenge from the government is possibly a reflection both on the administrative burden it had placed upon already busy personnel, and the fact that the act only theoretically, and not in practice, extended the prerogative of the Crown.

The only reference to a violation by the companies of the 1504 act was made in the preamble of an Act of 1531 that dictated that the maximum a company could charge an apprentice for his entry into the freedom would be 2s 6d.¹⁸⁶ No mention was made in relation to the apathetic attitude adopted by the companies towards obtaining the appropriate approvals for their ordinances, only that they had enacted ordinances that allowed the inflation of freedom fees 'in disheritaunce or diminucon of the p[re]rogatyffe of the king, nor of other, nor ageynste the comen p[ro]fite of the people'.¹⁸⁷

The reign of Henry VII saw the erosion of municipal power in the regulation of Livery Companies, but the companies themselves emerged relatively unscathed. They remained essential to the fabric of the capital, socially, economically and politically, and the reign witnessed their continued evolution but no great alteration of their

¹⁸⁴ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 251.

¹⁸⁵ Rep.2, f.146; Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, 337.

¹⁸⁶ *Statutes of the Realm*, ed. A. Luders *et al.*, 11 vols. (London, 1903-1911), ii, 652-3; iii, 321.

¹⁸⁷ Stats., ii, 652-3; Rappaport, *Worlds*, 48.

circumstance, with the exception of the Merchant Taylors. The companies emerged from the reign of Henry VII with their individual rights, privileges and regulations intact; the demotion of the civic authorities had little effect upon them, and that it did have was temporary in nature. Mergers, rivalries, disparity between the merchants and the artisans, charitable functions of associated fraternities all carried on as before and would long after. Little changed until the Reformation dispensed with the doctrine of Purgatory and rendered many functions of the religious fraternities associated with the guilds redundant as it removed the impetus of charitable action as a remedy to the soul for earthly sins.¹⁸⁸ Yet what Henry VII's actions did achieve was the destabilisation of the City's expectations of the Crown, born of the security Londoners had enjoyed under the Yorkist monarchs, that the king would protect the liberties and privileges it held dear. Any progress towards independence and autonomy the City had been making during the fifteenth century was arrested and the citizens were sharply reminded that everything they held they did so at the king's pleasure.

¹⁸⁸ See Clive Burgess, "A Fond Thing Vainly Invented": An essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in late medieval England', in S.J. Wright, ed. *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750* (London, 1988).

Chapter 5: Communication and Interaction

This chapter explores the nature and use of channels of communication by the Crown and the City in the reign of Henry VII. Written, verbal and visual communication will be examined, with a particular focus on political communication, which in this instance is defined as communication that took place between the politically active agents and individuals within the City and the Crown for a range of purposes connected with governance, trade and other matters.

This chapter will first consider the role of ‘non-political’ communication in the City-Crown relationship. This is followed by an exploration of the chief means by which the Crown communicated with the capital and vice versa. The chapter will then assess how effective and important pageantry and ceremonial was as a method of communication to a mass audience in an age where much communication was visual and ritualised. Parliament’s role as a conduit for communication between the capital and the king will be considered next. Lastly, it will be asked what role individuals, within both the Crown and City administrations, played in the facilitation of communication and whether the character or tone of communication changed as a consequence of the personalities involved.

5.1. Non-Political Communication

Communication between the City and the Crown took place on a multitude of levels and for a variety of reasons. While the communication necessary to facilitate the provision of goods and services to allow the royal household and its personnel to subsist is not the primary focus of this thesis, the capital’s role as supplier and the royal household’s as consumer was an essential element in the Crown-City relationship.¹

Though the royal household department of the Great Wardrobe, for example, epitomised the interdependent relationship of the City and the Crown, its role in the

¹ For a study of this relationship in a later period see Ian Archer, ‘Conspicuous Consumption Revisited: City and Court in the Reign of Elizabeth I’, in Davies and Prescott ed., *London and the Kingdom*, 38-58.

relationship by this point was strictly economic rather than political. Similarly the Royal Mint functioned as an autonomous part of the royal administration. By the late fifteenth century the Great Wardrobe and the Mint had only limited political significance, though the Mint brought individual goldsmiths into close contact with certain courtiers and the king. The Mint was headed by a court official, who usually held the position of Master-Worker with a member of the Goldsmiths' Company either holding the position jointly with him or working directly under him.² From the start of Henry VII's reign this post was held by Giles, Lord Daubeney, with the Goldsmith Bartholomew Rede. From 1492-3 Rede held the position jointly with fellow Goldsmith, John Shaa, an indication, perhaps, of how highly the king regarded Shaa. Thereafter Rede held the position on his own until his death in 1504.³ The lesser offices of the Mint – the clerkship of the Mint, the exchange, the keeper, the assayer, the engraver and the controller - all fell to goldsmiths.⁴

The Mint implemented any change in coinage and therefore recoinage brought the goldsmiths working there into close contact with the king and his council. Giles Daubeney and Bartholomew Rede headed the commission charged with making the new sovereign coin in 1489.⁵ On at least two occasions John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede attended upon the king's council, presumably to give their advice about the forthcoming recoinage.⁶ Once Rede was put in sole charge of the Mint he had more regular contact with the king: a receipt for 2 January 1506 states that Rede paid £20 of the profits from the Mint into the Chamber less £10 'delivered to the king's grace', implying that he paid the king in person.⁷ It was not a department that facilitated political communication but it was one of the ways in which London was connected economically and personally with the Crown.

² Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 176.

³ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 177, 303, 307-8.

⁴ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 176.

⁵ TNA, C66/570, m.6(30)d; *CPR, 1485-1494*, 319.

⁶ TNA, E405/75, m.24; *Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Durham, 31.

⁷ TNA, E101/413/2/2, vol.3, f.93.

The Exchequer played both practical and ceremonial roles in the life of the City. The sheriffs and mayor swore their oaths of office before the barons of the Exchequer.⁸ Many of the merchants (or at least their trusted servants) would have been familiar with the personnel of the lower Exchequer, otherwise known as the Exchequer of Receipt, where the four tellers issued them with payments, receipts or tallies for financial transactions involving the Crown. William Kebill, Goldsmith, who died in 1509, is unlikely to have been the only Londoner to have named Exchequer staff in his will. Among Kebill's beneficiaries were John Heron and Thomas Fowler 'of the king's receipt' and their wives.⁹

Personnel of the Chancery had long been familiar figures to members of the civic administration. The Journals of the Common Council contain many copies of letters from various Chancery clerks on behalf of the king excusing old and / or infirm citizens from serving on juries or other civic duties. Chancery clerks occasionally had to visit the Guildhall on business: in December 1504 Richard Boldey, Chancery clerk, wrote in the City's Journal a notice of his receipt of the City's charter, as confirmed by Richard III, from Nicholas Pakenham, the Common Clerk, so that a new letter patent could be made.¹⁰ Occasionally Chancery scribes were employed by the City to copy required items of legislation or produce copies of letters patent pertinent to the capital. In November 1505 John Studde of the Chancery was granted the freedom of the City 'with any felaship of this citee' in return for the 'diligent labour and besynes that he hath taken and sustained about the great charter', and in December 1507 it was agreed to pay Studde £20 for his labour in writing and enrolling the same charter.¹¹

Communication between citizens and the central law courts was not of itself 'political', though the procedure and outcome of various cases might on rare occasion have political repercussions. Jurisdictional alterations and their impact as well as the persecution of individual Londoners in the course of the reign will be considered elsewhere, but the inhabitants of the City had a functional relationship with the law courts as the place where they sought redress of grievances. The two busiest central

⁸ Barron, *London*, 160

⁹ TNA, PROB 11/16/594.

¹⁰ Jo.10, f.330v.

¹¹ Rep.1, f.176v; Rep.2, f.37.

courts, Common Pleas or Common Bench, and King's Bench, were more accessible to the citizens of London than to those from other parts of the realm simply by virtue of their location at Westminster. The court of Common Pleas dealt mostly with actions concerning land disputes, matters of account and debt of over forty shillings, trespass and, in common with the King's Bench and Exchequer Courts, matters brought on breach of royal statute and trespass.¹² The original function of the King's Bench was to deal with matters pertaining to the king's interest, though long before the fifteenth century it had come to be mainly a criminal court with unlimited criminal jurisdiction throughout England, including the supervision of all inferior courts.¹³ It was also the criminal court of first instance for Middlesex, though the employment of the fictitious trespass called the 'bill of Middlesex' allowed access for those in other areas of the country who wished to use the court in the first instance.¹⁴ This fiction, and the increased volume of debt cases it took, allowed it to eventually overtake the court of Common Pleas as the busiest court in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ Attorneys working at these courts often lived in the City and employed Londoners as scriveners and notaries, and law professionals who practised within them often trained at the Inns of Court, adjacent to the City.¹⁶

The focus of this chapter is the political communication between the Crown and the City. It is evident that the City-Crown relationship functioned on a number of highly sophisticated social, economic and functional levels. This highlights an intimacy the Crown shared with the capital that it did not have with any other urban centre.

5.2. Communication from the Crown to the City

By Henry VII's reign four main channels had been long established through which the king communicated with his towns and cities. He could make a proclamation, which

¹² Margaret Hastings, *The Court of Common Pleas in Fifteenth Century England* (New York, 1947), 3-5.

¹³ Marjorie Blatcher, *The Court of the King's Bench 1450-1550* (London, 1978), 1.

¹⁴ Penny Tucker, *Law Courts and Lawyers in the City of London* (Cambridge, 2007), 359; Hastings, *Common Pleas*, 26.

¹⁵ Hastings, *Common Pleas*, 27.

¹⁶ Matthew Frank Stevens, 'Londoners and the Court of Common Pleas' in M. Davies and J. Galloway ed. *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London, 2012), 243.

was usually addressed to all subjects of the realm and left to the civic authorities of the king's towns and cities to disseminate its contents to the people. He could write a letter which would usually be addressed to the mayor, aldermen and commonalty. Occasionally he would send a deputation of trusted courtiers with a request to the mayor and aldermen of the City. Lastly, he could summon the mayor and aldermen, or other representatives of the City, to his presence. As shall be demonstrated, Henry employed these traditional methods extensively, although the absence of comparable studies makes it difficult to undertake a quantitative comparison with earlier reigns. It is, however, clear that his day-to-day use of these channels deviated little from established practice.

What differentiated communication via these channels with the capital as opposed to other urban centres was the proximity of the centre of government at Westminster to London, and the comparative financial and political importance of the capital to the Crown. London was usually the first place to receive news, usually two days before York. The City was used as a sounding board for royal policy and provided the acclaim needed for accessions and coronations on behalf of the kingdom, as famously demonstrated when representatives of the City were coerced to be present when the crown was offered to Richard III at Baynard's Castle in 1483.¹⁷ As a consequence of the proximity of the City and the Court the mayor and aldermen, or other Londoners, were more likely to be addressed in person, either by being visited by representatives of the king or summoned to the presence of the king or members of his council, than citizens of other towns. Political dealings were therefore more personal than with other urban centres; the king and his council were personally familiar with more members of civic government than they would have been with those of other cities.

Proclamations, defined by Hughes and Larkin in the introduction to their volumes of Tudor proclamations as 'a public ordinance issued by the king, in virtue of his royal prerogative, with the advice of his council, under the Great Seal, and by royal writ', had been used since the fourteenth century.¹⁸ The breadth of subject matter addressed

¹⁷ *GC*, 232; More, *Richard III*, 88-89.

¹⁸ *Tudor Royal Proclamations, The Early Tudors 1485-1553*, ed. P. Hughes and J. Larkin (New Haven and London, 1964), xxiii.

by them was considerable, covering matters of foreign policy, such as the making of truces or declaring of war; the broadcasting of statutes or ordinances; summons to Parliament; prohibition of certain practices or inviting subjects to have charters confirmed, join royal armies or other such activities.¹⁹ Some were directed towards a particular geographical area and occasionally a proclamation would be made at the request of a particular interest group.²⁰ These royal writs, issued by Chancery, contained orders to local officials, usually sheriffs but often including mayors, justices and bailiffs, to proclaim the contents.²¹ The contents would then be proclaimed in a variety of public places, such as county courts or market places.²² In London the Common Crier proclaimed the king's will in a variety of prominent places, such as the Standards in Cheap, Leadenhall, St Magnus in Bridge Street, St Martin in Vintry and the main entry ways into the City.²³

The instructions that accompanied the proclamations that ordered City officials to publicise the content as widely as possible were initially short, Latin missives.²⁴ Edward IV replaced these instructions with English texts that went to great pains to explain and justify royal policy.²⁵ Henry followed this practice and also sought to justify policy through these lengthy prologues. The letter that accompanied a proclamation announcing the betrothal of the Princess Mary to the Castilian prince Charles, in June 1508, outlined at length the benefits of the match. Both the proclamation and the letter were carefully copied into the Journal of Common Council, suggesting that it had been read before that assembly.²⁶ On the same day, it was noted in the Journal, the Common Seal of the City, 'by thassent of the ... mayer aldermen and the Comon Counsell ... at the instance and request of our said sovereign lorde

¹⁹ James Doig, 'Political Propaganda and Royal Proclamations in Late Medieval England', *Historical Research*, lxxi (1998), 254.

²⁰ For examples see *Tudor Proclamations*, 15, 19, 28, 30 and 32.

²¹ Doig, 'Political Propaganda', 256.

²² J. Masschaele, 'The Public Space of the Market Place in Medieval England', *Speculum*, 77 (2002), 383-421.

²³ Doig, 'Political Propaganda', 257, 260, 277; Barron, *London*, 190-1.

²⁴ Doig, 'Political Propaganda', 260.

²⁵ S. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558*, 189.

²⁶ Jo.11, ff.37v-39.

king', was affixed to the bonds sealing the marriage treaty.²⁷ The participation of the City and the trade implications of the treaty explain why this proclamation was copied into the civic records whereas that of 1502, announcing the marriage of Henry's other daughter, Margaret, to king James of Scotland, was not.²⁸ The Scottish alliance was noted by the London chronicles but held no direct relevance to the City government, illustrating the narrow focus and consequent limitations of the municipal records.²⁹

The frequency with which medieval kings sought communication with their capital often directly correlated with their financial situation, and this held true for Henry's reign. It has already been established that the usual method for the king to request a loan from the City was to write a letter addressed to the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the City.³⁰ In 1486 and 1496 John Dinham the Lord Treasurer, Reynold Bray and unspecified others took the king's request for a loan to the mayor and aldermen.³¹ The chronicles do not make clear where the 1486 deputation met the mayor, nor do the civic records mention the delivery of the request by Dinham and Bray. In 1496 Bray and 'othir of the kyngs counsayll' met the mayor and his 'brethren' after the City governors had attended mass at St. Paul's.³² John Mathew, mayor 1490-1, was summoned before the king so that a benevolence could be extracted from him and his fellow aldermen.³³

The king's desire to influence civic elections was also a catalyst for communication from the Crown to the City. The extent of the king's interference in civic appointments will be explored in the next chapter, but Henry was not the only one to write letters of support for candidates for posts in the civic administration. The letter from the king in 1498 to the mayor and aldermen that, according to the Great Chronicle, expressed his wish that the Tailor John Percyvale should be chosen as mayor, echoed an earlier

²⁷ Jo.11, f.44.

²⁸ *Tudor Proclamations*, 56-57.

²⁹ *GC*, 317.

³⁰ Chapter 3, section 3.5.1.

³¹ *GC*, 240.

³² *GC*, 274; Vit. XVI, 212. Chapter 3, section 3.5.1.

³³ *GC*, 244.

request from Thomas Savage, bishop of London.³⁴ Cardinal Morton wrote to the mayor and aldermen and requested that one Richard Staverton should be granted the next vacancy for an attorney that arose within the sheriff's court.³⁵ This was granted on the proviso that 'this grante be ta[k]yn for no p[re]sident'.³⁶ William Seint, Shearman, was made a sheriff's servant at the request of the Chief Justice of the King's Bench, John Fyneux, even though it meant that sheriff Richard Shore would then have one more than the permitted eighteen servants to assist him.³⁷ This sort of patronage was nothing new and would only become a problem for the City in the next reign.³⁸

Royal letters were frequently sent to the City for information purposes. In September 1497 letters were exchanged between the king and the Common Clerk, Nicholas Pakenham, on behalf of the City, regarding the arrival in and progress through the West Country made by Perkin Warbeck. Warbeck, masquerading as the second son of Edward IV, had been proclaimed by his followers as King Richard IV. This posed a very real threat to Henry: it was supported by Margaret, dowager duchess of Burgundy, and the king of Scotland.³⁹ Warbeck's landing in England had been a much anticipated event, for Henry had arrived and taken the throne in not dissimilar circumstances nearly a decade previously. At least two letters were sent from the king in September 1497 regarding the progress of Warbeck and his eventual capture.⁴⁰ These letters were read out at meetings of the Common Council, as were a number of letters from the king which established Warbeck's true origins on 12 October, a mere week after Warbeck's submission to Henry at Taunton.⁴¹ By supplying his capital with information the support of the City was secured and possible panic averted once it became apparent that there was no danger of another battle, uprising or, even worse, usurpation. Though information missives from the Crown were not uniquely sent to London, the capital

³⁴ Rep.2, f.50; *GC*, 288. Savage was named by Percyvale as overseer of his will for which duty Savage was to receive six goblets of silver, suggesting that a relationship existed between the two men (TNA, PROB 11/13/447).

³⁵ Rep.1, f.42.

³⁶ Rep.1, f.42.

³⁷ Rep.1, f.179.

³⁸ Gronquist, 'London and the Crown', 67-69, 81-94.

³⁹ Vergil, 89-91; Arthurson, *Warbeck*, 219-221, 227.

⁴⁰ Jo.10, ff.104v, 105,

⁴¹ Jo.10, f.108; *GC*, 282-28.

was probably kept better informed than the rest of the country, given that this was the king's primary source of funds and seat of government as well as the place that such rebels were eventually imprisoned and, if necessary, tried and executed.⁴²

As not all letters received were noted in the civic records we cannot be certain that London did not receive threatening missives from Henry VII like that received by York after reports of unrest in the city in summer of 1488, when the king stated that should the authorities fail to punish wrong-doers he would punish the city so severely as to make a 'feirfull' example of them.⁴³ However, it is likely that if London had received such letters then the chroniclers would have noted it even if the civic records did not. Given the proximity of the City it may well just have been more convenient for the king to administer rebukes in person rather than by letter.⁴⁴

The chronicles often serve to supplement our knowledge of royal letters received or summons issued that are not recorded in the civic records. The Great Chronicle recounts how a letter from the king regarding the peace made with France in 1492 was read before the mayor, aldermen and Common Council, though no account of it appears in the civic records.⁴⁵ Similarly absent from the civic sources was the content of a newsletter sent from the king to the City in August 1497 justifying and explaining the need to send an army into Scotland.⁴⁶ It is apparent from the Great Chronicle that these letters were not always delivered to the Guildhall, but often were given to the mayor and 'his brethren' on a Sunday whilst they attended mass at St. Paul's Cathedral. Such was the case in June 1500 when a letter was given to the mayor with an update on the king's meeting with Archduke Philip at Calais, though once again this letter makes no appearance in the civic records.⁴⁷ It is therefore impossible to assess how much Crown-City intercourse was conducted via this medium, though it seems probable that the majority of business would have been so, given the limitations of the alternatives. Summons to discuss situations, requests for deputations to be sent to the king and his

⁴² For examples of information missives sent to York see *York House Books*, ii, 550, 555, 557-8.

⁴³ *York Books*, ii, 609.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2, section 2.3.

⁴⁵ *GC*, 247.

⁴⁶ *GC*, 278-281.

⁴⁷ *GC*, 292-294.

council to consult on matters concerning the City and invitations of various kinds were all likely to have been initiated or arranged by letter.

On rare occasions the king issued a social invitation to the mayor and aldermen. Mayor Ralph Astry and his aldermen were invited to a Twelfth Night feast at the Palace of Westminster, though it was presided over by the Lord Chamberlain, Sir William Stanley, rather than the king himself.⁴⁸ After dinner the mayor and his company were ushered into the king's presence, where Henry dubbed Astry a knight, and then remained for the evening's entertainment at the king's bidding.⁴⁹

Hence it can be seen that Henry utilised all the traditional methods of communication employed by his predecessors. Perhaps one area in which he differed from other medieval kings was in his use of the relatively new printing press for political purposes, which Henry used to disseminate information in his last years on the throne. The first printed broadside of a statute for the purposes of broadcasting over a wide area dates from 1504.⁵⁰ Henry also used print for propaganda purposes, for he 'caused to be putt In prynt the pedygrew [pedigree]' and confession of Warbeck, and hence the London chronicles were able to include fairly accurate copies.⁵¹

5.2.1. The Role of St. Paul's in the Dissemination of Information

Since the early thirteenth century St. Paul's Cross had been a place where announcements were made, sermons (often with political undertones) were preached and political events enacted.⁵² It was here that Dr. Ralph Shaa, brother of Lord Mayor Edmund Shaa, preached his infamous sermon declaring the sons of Edward IV to be illegitimate.⁵³ At the choir door to the cathedral, opposite the cross, Cardinal Morton informed the gathered mayor and aldermen along with 'a grete multytude of Cytyzynes

⁴⁸ *GC*, 251-2; BL, Add. Ms.6113, f.169.

⁴⁹ *GC*, 251.

⁵⁰ Dean Rowland, 'Orality and Literacy: Proclaiming and Understanding Legislation in Late Medieval England', unpublished paper. My thanks to the author for giving me a copy of this work.

⁵¹ *GC*, 284-286; *Vit. A XVI*, 219-221.

⁵² C. Barron and M. Rousseau, 'Cathedral, City and State, 1300-1540', in D. Keene, A. Burns and A. Saint ed., *St. Paul's, The Cathedral Church of London 604-2004* (New Haven & London, 2004), 44.

⁵³ *GC*, 231-2.

In theyr lyvereys' in April 1492 that Granada had been liberated from the Moors by 'valyant powar of the kyng of Spayn'.⁵⁴ Te Deum was then sung and then a sermon was preached from the cross in which it was revealed that in that same year a piece of the true cross had been found in Rome.⁵⁵ Later that year Morton once more delivered tidings from the steps of the choir door when he told a 'grete audience' the news that peace had been concluded with France and the king was to receive a great pension from the French king.⁵⁶ The betrothal of the Princess Margaret to the king of Scotland was announced from the pulpit of St. Paul's cross in January 1502, followed by the obligatory recital of Te Deum and celebratory fires set around the City. The announcement of such events from the cathedral in the heart of the City became a key to both the dissemination of the information and the means by which the Crown initiated celebration.

The cathedral fulfilled other propaganda and public relations functions for the Crown. The public reading of a bull of excommunication and its subsequent execution by a preacher at St. Paul's cross of Edmund de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, would have helped Henry in his quest to discredit and discourage support for the rebel.⁵⁷ It was at the North door of St. Paul's cathedral that Henry VII offered his battle standards after his entry into the City following his victory at Bosworth.⁵⁸ The marriage of Prince Arthur and Kathryn of Aragon took place at the cathedral and, just months later, the mayor and aldermen attended two days of solemn obsequy for the young prince.⁵⁹

5.3. Communication from the City to the Crown

The City, when it wanted to communicate with the Crown, ordinarily did so as a petitioner and often relied on the intercession of senior courtiers or councillors. This

⁵⁴ *GC*, 246.

⁵⁵ *GC*, 247.

⁵⁶ *GC*, 247.

⁵⁷ *GC*, 320-1, *The Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, ed. J.G. Nichols, Camden Soc. liii (London, 1852), 27.

⁵⁸ *GC*, 238-9.

⁵⁹ *GC*, 310, 318.

section will look at how the City approached matters it wished to discuss with the Crown.

5.3.1. *The Recorder*

The Recorder was the only person with an official role as a key intermediary between the City and the Crown. His most important task was to act as the official mouthpiece of the City:

...the mayor and aldermen have been accustomed commonly to set forth all other matters touching the City in the presence of his Lordship the King and his Council, as also in the Royal Courts, by the mouth of the Recorder.⁶⁰

Hence, continued John Carpenter, the Common Clerk of the City in the early fifteenth century, the man appointed to the post should be ‘conspicuous for the brilliancy of his eloquence’.⁶¹ It was the Recorder who welcomed and addressed the king on behalf of the City at ceremonial royal entries and other official occasions. He also was usually attendant in deputations from the City to the king and often served as one of the four City MPs returned to parliament.⁶²

The Recorder’s job and role in Crown-City relations was well established by the reign of Henry VII. In 1488 Thomas Fitzwilliam, Recorder, and Henry Colet, alderman, presented to the Court of Aldermen a revision of the oath that the Recorder was required to swear.⁶³ Much of the text was obviously copied from the oath recorded in the *Liber Albus*, indicating that the post had changed little, if at all, since the early fifteenth century.⁶⁴ As before, he was expected to swear to be good and true to the king and his heirs and to do all in his power to maintain the franchises and customs of the City.⁶⁵ His official duties ranged from keeping the secrets of the civic government, responding

⁶⁰ *Liber Albus*, 38.

⁶¹ *Liber Albus*, 38.

⁶² An exception to this being in 1488, when the Recorder, Thomas Fitzwilliam, served as MP for Lincoln (Jo.9, ff.157v, 224).

⁶³ Jo.9, ff.219v-220.

⁶⁴ *Liber Albus*, 39-40.

⁶⁵ Jo.9, f.219v.

to a muster in times when the City required defending, and acting as returning officer in mayoral elections.⁶⁶ Much of the Recorder's duties were of a legal nature in offering the City counsel and sitting with the mayor in the court of Husting, where he enrolled and recorded pleas, and the Mayor's Court.⁶⁷ The Recorder was accorded a status commensurate with that of the aldermen, for he attended meetings of the Court of Aldermen and wore aldermanic livery, with his clerk accorded the right to wear the same livery as the sergeants who served the Chamberlain.⁶⁸ Only one minor addition was made: that the Recorder would contribute to taxes and 'all other charges to you to be leyd within this citee during your office lyke as citezens of this Citee shall doo for their p[ar]te'.⁶⁹ This was probably invoked when the collection of the 1497 loan to the king became so problematic that it was recorded that aldermen who refused to pay their share would be committed to ward and that this applied as well 'to M[aster] Recorder as to other aldermen'.⁷⁰ No other reforms were made and there is no evidence to suggest that the £66 13s 4d salary that the Recorder received in the early fifteenth century had been increased.

Three men served as Recorder during the reign of Henry VII: Thomas Fitzwilliam, from 1483 to 1494, Robert Sheffield, 1494-April 1508 and John Chaloner who resigned in 1510.⁷¹ None of these men were Londoners though it is probable that all three studied within one of London's Inns of Court.⁷² It is apparent, therefore, that the civic administration selected the Recorder according to his experience and professional connections rather than any connection to the City. Thomas Fitzwilliam's connections to Richard III's government probably served to bring him to the attention of his potential employers.⁷³ The long tenure of office of Fitzwilliam and Sheffield is proof

⁶⁶ Jo.9, f.220; Barron, *London*, 175.

⁶⁷ *Liber Albus*, 38; Jo.9, f.220.

⁶⁸ *Liber Albus*, 42-43; Barron, *London*, 174.

⁶⁹ Jo.9, ff.187-188.

⁷⁰ Rep.1, f.13. Robert Sheffield was Recorder at the time.

⁷¹ Jo.9, f.26v; *LBL*, 308; *LBM*, f.146v; Rep.1, ff.44v & 45.

⁷² Fitzwilliam and Sheffield studied at Inner Temple. Chaloner's place of legal training is unknown. S.J. Payling, 'Fitzwilliam, Sir Thomas (*d.* 1497)', *ODNB*; Julian Lock, 'Sheffield, Sir Robert (*d.* 1518)', *ODNB*; H. Miller, 'Chaloner, John, of Yorks and London', in S.T. Bindoff ed. *The History of Parliament 1509-1558* (London, 1982).

⁷³ Jo.9, f.26v.

in itself of the satisfaction of the City in their performances of the role. Only one criticism exists on record: Robert Sheffield was condemned for failing to serve the City as well as he should when MP for the City in the 1504 parliament by the clerk of the Merchant Taylors' Company. The clerk attributed the passing of the 1504 statute which made the Livery Companies subject to the oversight of royal officials, to Sheffield's 'great labour, subtle wit and crafty means'.⁷⁴ His argument was that the act gave company members free access to the courts rather than requiring them to seek the arbitration of their companies, to the gain of all London lawyers.⁷⁵ The clerk was either attempting to divert attention away from the role his own company had played in recent events or was misguided, for it was both implausible that the Recorder could promote his own interests at the expense of the City and not be in some way censured by the civic government and impossible that one MP could get such an act passed for his own gain. Sheffield received 40s per year pension from the City after he left office in 1508, increased to five marks annually when he became Speaker in 1512, and it is likely that Fitzwilliam received a similar pension, though no record of it survives.⁷⁶

John Chaloner's appointment was not entirely meritocratic, for Dudley recorded in his notebook the day after Chaloner's appointment that the Recorder had paid £100 in ready money 'for the king's most gracious favour showed him in that room'.⁷⁷ This does not necessarily mean that Chaloner was imposed upon the City: the civic administration had been anxious to curry favour with Dudley as recently as the previous December when they agreed that Dudley should receive an annuity of £3 6s 8d, so they may have been happy to accommodate Dudley's wishes in this matter.⁷⁸ That Chaloner survived the witch hunt conducted by William Capell during his second tenure as mayor which ousted men foisted upon the City's administration, and served as Capell's feoffee in August 1510, suggests that he was an acceptable choice to even the most

⁷⁴ Miller, 'London and Parliament', 132.

⁷⁵ Miller, 'London and Parliament', 132.

⁷⁶ Rep.2, f.130v. Fitzwilliam's resignation and Sheffield's appointment are also absent from the civic records.

⁷⁷ BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.59.

⁷⁸ Rep.2, f.37

irascible within the civic government.⁷⁹ Chaloner's resignation in July 1510 on the grounds of ill-health might therefore be taken at face value.⁸⁰

The Recorder was expected to attend all meetings of the Common Council and Court of Aldermen and to be loyal to his employer. Fitzwilliam's appointment as an MP for Lincolnshire after his selection as a London MP in December 1488 was probably only tolerated as he needed a county, rather than a borough, seat to be eligible for the position of Speaker in parliament.⁸¹ The civic government considered this of benefit to the City and rewarded Fitzwilliam with a gift of ten marks, though the capital reaped no tangible benefit as no legislation was passed in the City's favour in that parliament.⁸² Robert Sheffield narrowly missed out on being selected as Speaker in the 1497 parliament, when Sir Giles Daubeney tried to buy the position for him but was outbid by Reynold Bray for his candidate, Thomas Englefield.⁸³

As the Recorder was expected to act as an intermediary between the Crown and the City with a foot maintained in both camps, he became, of necessity, familiar with the king and the personnel of the court. This was reflected in the further careers of men who had served as Recorder. Those who had held the position during the reign of Edward IV reached high positions within the government administration: Thomas Billing ended his career as Chief Justice of the King's Bench and Thomas Urswyk and Humphrey Starkey both became Chief Barons of the Exchequer.⁸⁴ The Recorders

⁷⁹ Capell served as mayor between January and October 1510. Miller, 'Chaloner, John'.

⁸⁰ Rep.2, f.93.

⁸¹ Payling, 'Fitzwilliam, Sir Thomas'.

⁸² Jo.9, f.241. He was almost certainly a royal nominee for the role of Speaker (Payling, 'Fitzwilliam, Sir Thomas'). There is also evidence to suggest that Fitzwilliam sat on the king's council in the summer of 1495 (*Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Durham, xxi). Evidence for Fitzwilliam's membership of the council exists in only one of the five extant sources of the membership and activities of Henry VII's council, that being a list by the statesman and antiquarian Sir Julius Caesar, made circa 1598 (BL, Lansdowne Ms.160, ff.307-309v).

⁸³ TNA, E101/416/6, f.128v; Lock, 'Sheffield, Sir Robert'.

⁸⁴ Thomas Billing was Recorder of London 1450-1454, Thomas Urswyk from 1454 until 1471 and Humphrey Starkey, 1471-1483. Nigel Ramsay, 'Billing, Sir Thomas (d. 1481)', *ODNB*; Henry Summerson, 'Urswyk, Sir Thomas (c.1415-1479)', *ODNB*; C.L. Kingsford, 'Starkey, Sir Humphrey (d. 1486)', rev. Rosemary Horrox, *ODNB*.

of Henry VIII's reign were frequently appointed at the king's request and recruited into royal service after they had rendered service to the City, suggesting that the king used the position as a proving ground for talented lawyers.⁸⁵ The three Recorders who served in Henry VII's reign did not go into royal service, but it is probable that was a reflection on the individuals who held the position rather than a break with traditional practice. Thomas Fitzwilliam was an old man by the time he took the position of London's Recorder, Robert Sheffield fell out of favour with Henry VIII's government and John Chaloner had resigned on grounds of ill health.⁸⁶

5.3.2. Negotiations and Committees

London's civic government ordinarily followed the same procedure when it wanted to discuss a matter with the king. Initially a committee was created, composed of members of the Common Council and, occasionally, men deemed to be particularly knowledgeable in the subject to be discussed. The committee would then be told to investigate the matter and make a formal report back to either the Common Council or to the Court of Aldermen. A deputation of aldermen and common councillors would be formed which would then approach the king, his council or his representatives. The Recorder would head the deputation and deliver the wish of the City orally. Paperwork regarding the matter would often be left with the Crown and follow-up meetings would be arranged. This was precisely the course of events when a dispute about the liberties of Portsoken ward was brought before the king and his council in 1508. A committee, headed by the mayor and composed of seven aldermen, including the Prior of Holy Trinity in his capacity as *ex officio* alderman of Portsoken ward, met with the king's council and even went with Sir Thomas Lovell on a 'perambulation' of the ward.⁸⁷

Some cases were far more involved and took several meetings over a space of a number of years to resolve. One such involved the regulation of brokers, particularly alien brokers, active within the City, which had historically been a problem for the civic authorities. The solution applied in Henry VII's reign, though it proved to only be temporary, is a fine illustration of Crown-City cooperation. Repeated attempts to limit

⁸⁵ Gronquist, 'London and the Crown', 101-6.

⁸⁶ Lock, 'Sheffield, Sir Robert'.

⁸⁷ Rep.2, ff.43, 43v, 48v.

the number of brokers active in the City enjoyed limited success at best.⁸⁸ The rehearsal to an ordinance passed by a meeting of the Common Council in March 1485 stated that:

the mair and the aldermen of this citee of London have often tymes afore this in divers comon counseills ben grevously vexed and troubled by the grete compleyntes made unto theym upon the grevous losse and damages incomp[ar]able the which not only the said citee of London but also the com[mon]altie of all the realme of England susteyneth and suffreth and of very necessite in tyme to come is likely to susteyn... thurgh the grete subtiltie and deceite of the grete multitude of brocours aswell English as aliens.⁸⁹

Furthermore, the complaint continued, these brokers, particularly alien brokers, inflated the price of merchandise and made false bargains to the harm of all of the king's subjects.⁹⁰ Alien brokers tended to acquire merchandise at a beneficial price which, upon departing England, they would then distribute 'among[st] the enemyes of the kyng our sov[er]aign[e] lord'.⁹¹ The ordinance therefore dictated that henceforth the number of brokers should be limited to twenty-six Englishmen named and chosen by the crafts of the City.⁹²

In practice this, like previous attempts to limit brokers, proved difficult to enforce. The Great Chronicle's account of action taken by the City during the reign of Henry VII is somewhat confused and not much supplemented by the civic records. It is apparent that the system of regulating alien brokers had so broken down by the second mayoralty of Sir Henry Colet (1495-96) that the City was forced to bring actions against certain alien brokers which were then removed to the king's council.⁹³ The Great Chronicle claims that there were by this time so many stranger-brokers that when it came to their regulation 'the alyauntis [aliens] Rulis as much In this mater as the mayre & the bench'.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ *LBJ*, 12-13, 60, 63-4, 85, 131, 264. ff.7b, 8, 63, 66, 172, 275, 275b; *LBK*, 350-352; *LBL*, 40, 162, 164, 220.

⁸⁹ Jo.9, f.68v.

⁹⁰ Jo.9, ff.68v-69.

⁹¹ Jo.9, f.69.

⁹² Jo.9, f.69v-70v.

⁹³ *GC*, 289-90.

⁹⁴ *GC*, 290.

In February 1497 the king's council requested to see all such 'sta[tutes] and other records as the Cite haith to shewe for their right as touchyng the forfeates of foren[s] byyng and sellyng'.⁹⁵ Two months afterwards four aldermen were appointed to go 'with the brokers' to the Lord Chancellor.⁹⁶ That John Morton, the Lord Chancellor, was heading the council's negotiations indicates that the Crown recognised the importance of the matter to the City. In the absence of more information it might be speculated that these 'brokers' were citizen brokers who wished to petition to have aliens prohibited from practising brokerage in the City, as they were to do early in the next reign.⁹⁷ Another deputation of four aldermen went to Morton in February 1498 to discuss the 'mater of brokers and for the nombre of strangers brokers', indicating that negotiations had reached a stage where they were able to discuss specifics, including various legal matters, as might be implied by the attendance of the Chief Justice, John Fyneux.⁹⁸ Specific, though unnamed, alien merchants were invited to the Guildhall in July to submit the names of prospective brokers for their nations to the tune of two Venetians and three men each from Genoa, Florence, Lucca and Spain.⁹⁹ A further meeting between the Chancellor and a delegation of aldermen took place in the November, presumably to report upon the stranger-brokers selected to be sworn and to fine-tune the details of the arrangement.¹⁰⁰

The matter was not finally settled until March 1499, when the mayor issued a proclamation on behalf of the king stating that no man, stranger or denizen, was to engage in acts of brokerage before being sworn and admitted to the said occupation by the mayor and aldermen upon pain of disenfranchisement for denizens or imprisonment 'and fferther punysshement according to the anncyent custmnes granntes'.¹⁰¹ Invoking the name and authority of the king may have lent weight to the pronouncement, though ultimately this did not make this solution to the problem of broker-strangers any more

⁹⁵ Rep.1, f.12v.

⁹⁶ Rep.1, f.14v.

⁹⁷ TNA, STAC2/30/8.

⁹⁸ Rep.1, ff.34v, 37v.

⁹⁹ Rep.1, f.40.

¹⁰⁰ Rep.1, f.43v.

¹⁰¹ Jo.10, ff.152, 156 & 157; *Acts*, 111.

durable than past ones and the next decade would see the problem return.¹⁰² Details of the arrangement were added to the Letter Patent granted to the City by Henry in 1505.¹⁰³

According to the Great Chronicle, the entire negotiations took three years (though the civic records suggest it was two), which was of no little inconvenience to the City.¹⁰⁴ Yet the matter of stranger-brokers had become an issue too unwieldy for the City to deal with by itself as past attempts to impose regulatory ordinances had proved to be temporary. The City had been desperate enough to seek a legal solution to the problem and though Crown involvement may not have been sought initially, cooperation between the two entities did serve to create a workable solution, albeit not an original one.¹⁰⁵

It is difficult to see what the Crown had to gain by involving itself in this matter. It is possible that the king had been petitioned by alien merchants though no evidence exists to suggest this. It may simply be that in this instance the Crown sought to give good governance in seeking a workable solution for the good of the City. This was not without precedent, for the governments of Henry VI and Edward IV had worked with the City to tackle the problem of illegal nets and weirs in the Thames.¹⁰⁶

5.3.3. Trade, Diplomacy and Unrest

Cooperation between the City and the Crown was not restricted to when the City needed assistance. The Crown regularly requested the help of the City and the expertise of its merchants on matters pertaining to trade and diplomacy, notwithstanding the presumption of the Merchant Adventurers in negotiating their own safe-conduct with Maximilian in the early years of the reign. In January 1496 the Lord Privy Seal, Richard

¹⁰² *Acts*, 475.

¹⁰³ Walter de Gray Birch, *The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London* (London, 1887), 94. Birch erroneously dates the charter to 22 August 1485, mistaking the backdating of the grant of the office of gauger as the date of the charter.

¹⁰⁴ *GC*, 290.

¹⁰⁵ *GC*, 290.

¹⁰⁶ Barron, 'Government of London', 358-365.

Fox, requested that the Merchant Adventurers should forward to him remembrances of their grievances and wishes prior to the arrival of ambassadors from the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ The Adventurers then put together a committee of twelve men to consider the matter.¹⁰⁸ The resulting treaty of 1496, often known as the *Intercursus magnus*, saw a resumption of trade on almost identical terms to the previous intercourses that had been in operation since 1447, yet the City was not prepared to compromise its principles to make it happen.¹⁰⁹ It was noted in the king's council proceedings, 29 April, that communication was to be had with the mayor, aldermen and Common Council of the City to persuade them to agree to 'bind' to the said charter.¹¹⁰ This concerned the City's reluctance to affix its Common Seal to the charter, as it had been agreed that sundry of the main towns of both lands would do. This was more pertinent to the towns and cities of the continent than London, which were far more likely to find themselves at variance with their rulers and therefore extra assurance of their intention to abide by the charter was desirable.¹¹¹ The Common Council had been assembled and resolved not to affix its seal to the treaty, whereupon they were ordered to assemble again by the king, who sent Bray, Lovell, Dinham and others to reason with them, and hence this may have been the 'communication' referred to in the council minutes.¹¹² According to the Great Chronicle, 'long debatyng' of the matter ensued between the king's council and the Common Council which was only resolved when the mayor, Henry Colet, agreed to fix his personal seal to the document.¹¹³

Further debate between king's council and the mercantile community came later that year with the imposition of the 'Andrew Guilder', a toll imposed upon each piece of imported English cloth into the Netherlands.¹¹⁴ The Recorder and the alderman Robert

¹⁰⁷ *Acts*, 593-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Acts*, 594.

¹⁰⁹ The only innovation in this treaty was Henry's extraction of promises from Maximilian and Phillip that rebels would not be harboured in their lands, particularly with Warbeck still at large (Sutton, *Mercery*, 327-8).

¹¹⁰ *Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Dunham, 29. Typically no record of this exists in the civic records.

¹¹¹ *GC*, 263; Vit. XVI, 209.

¹¹² *GC*, 263; Vit. XVI, 209. The latter chronicle adds Thomas Stanley earl of Derby to the delegation sent by the king.

¹¹³ *GC*, 263-4; Vit. XVI, 209-10. The text of the bond is printed in both chronicles.

¹¹⁴ Sutton, *Mercery*, 330-1.

Fabyan rode to the king with certain unnamed commons in September to ask for the king's help, and the king duly sent a letter to the archduke requesting the repeal of the new toll.¹¹⁵ Trade was not forbidden at this time (though it was later to be) but cloth was to go via Calais until the situation had been resolved.¹¹⁶ The situation was still unresolved in January 1497, when the Recorder was sent to the king to discover the king's pleasure as to how the merchants should proceed when trading cloth and the imposition was not lifted until July.¹¹⁷

The exemption of the Hanse merchants residing in the City from the embargoes imposed upon English merchants at various points in the reign understandably caused resentment, which led to the most unsettling instance of unrest within the City walls during the reign. Unrest, always the most basic way subjects had of communicating their grievance to the authorities, was perpetrated by a group of young men who the Great Chronicle described as being servants of members of the Mercers' Company. They broke into the Hanse enclosure, known as the Steelyard, to 'ryfle & to spoyle such Chambyrs & othyr howsys as they mygth wyn Into'.¹¹⁸ The crowd quickly dispersed as soon as it was known that the mayor was making his way there. A watch was arranged, which apparently lasted seventeen days, and the wardens of the companies were told to keep the peace.¹¹⁹ The ringleaders were apparently two servants of the Mercer John Pykton, and through them were implicated some eighty more, all servants or apprentices.¹²⁰ Their grievance was common to their masters, that:

The Restreyntys made by the kyng soo long & soo offtyen, cawsid the adventurers Into Flaundrys to decay ... The Estyrylyngys ... were at theyr lyberte had had all theyr trayt Into those partyes.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Rep.1, f.5v; *Acts*, 610.

¹¹⁶ *Acts*, 610.

¹¹⁷ Rep.1, f.11; Sutton, *Mercery*, 330.

¹¹⁸ *GC*, 248.

¹¹⁹ *Acts*, 588; Drapers' Company, WA1, f.58.

¹²⁰ *GC*, 249; *Acts*, 588-92. The plethora of recognisances taken for Mercers and their servants in the early Autumn of 1493 substantiates this. (Jo.10, ff.20-22v).

¹²¹ *GC*, 249.

It is valid to wonder if the young men were encouraged in their action by their masters, who had too much to lose to riot themselves. Such acts had precedent and merchants might have felt unable to do much to bring their plight to the attention of the king.¹²² Certainly Chancellor Morton, who summoned the wardens of the Mercery to him the following day, required assurance that this was not the case, charging the wardens to ensure that henceforth all such ‘inconvenient Ryott’ be avoided, both by masters and those in their charge.¹²³

The king and his council acknowledged that the best way to remain informed about trade relations with the Low Countries was to be briefed by the mayor and aldermen, many of them Adventurers themselves. A note in the council minutes dated 6 November 1498 stated that the mayor and his brethren were to advise the king’s grace ‘upon this entercourse betwene England and the Dukes Landes’.¹²⁴ Possibly this was early preparation for the diet held at Calais the following April which produced a new treaty that addressed many of the more practical problems recently experienced by the Adventurers.¹²⁵ Henry and Archduke Philip attended the diet in person and amongst the king’s attendants was one prominent Londoner, the Goldsmith John Shaa. Shaa, as well as acquiring prominence in civic life, was a royal servant at this time and was the only one of thirty-four knights there without a formal household position and the only merchant in the gathering.¹²⁶ He was accompanied by the Common Clerk of the City, Nicholas Pakenham.

Despite the fact that many Staplers were also Adventurers, relations between the two fellowships were not always cordial. Richard Fox, then bishop of Durham, Giles Lord Daubeney, Lord Dinham the Lord Treasurer and Lord Audeley were involved in

¹²² For precedents see Bolton, ‘City and the Crown’.

¹²³ *Acts*, 589.

¹²⁴ *Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Dunham, 30.

¹²⁵ Sutton, *Mercery*, 330-1.

¹²⁶ *LP Hen. VII*, ii, 87-91; *The Chronicle of Calais in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII to 1540*, ed. J.G. Nichols, Camden Soc. xxxv (London, 1846), 3. The same year the Draper Robert Draper and grocer John Payne were sent with the king’s ambassadors to Flanders, possibly to fine-tune the details (GL, Accounts of the Worshipful Company of Skinners (Ms.30727/001), f.109v.)

mediating between the two fellowships in 1490.¹²⁷ It was probably in gratitude for their assistance that the Mercers admitted Fox and Daubeney into their company.¹²⁸ The removal of the cloth trade by the king to Calais in 1494, 1496-7 and 1505 led to further confrontations. In 1504 the king and council, meeting in the Star Chamber at Westminster, stated that both parties, when making use of the privileges of the other, 'should be subject to all the regulations and penalties by which the other is bound'.¹²⁹

The interdependent nature of the relationship between the City and the Crown found true expression in trade matters, for the king utilised the diplomatic and other knowledge of the merchants to inform his foreign policy, and the merchants needed the king and his ministers to orchestrate embassies and treaties to facilitate their trade. Yet in this, as in other matters, the king's will always prevailed over City interest. Mercantile expression of frustration with foreign policy was minimal, suggesting that they saw the need for the embargoes that they were subject to, erupting into small-scale violence only when it was apparent that denizen and alien merchants were not subject to the same restrictions.

5.4. Parliament

From the mid-fourteenth century London returned four Members of Parliament (MPs), normally two aldermen and two members of the Common Council.¹³⁰ London's members, along with the two from the City of York, were traditionally accorded seats of honour beside the privy councillors on the front bench of the House of Commons.¹³¹ By Henry VII's reign the City's Recorder was usually returned as one of London's MPs in place of one of the aldermen.¹³² These men were appointed at meetings of the Common Council.¹³³

¹²⁷ *Acts*, 198-201. I have accepted Anne Sutton's dating of this entry (Sutton, *Mercery*, 339).

¹²⁸ *Acts*, 201.

¹²⁹ *CPR, 1494-1509*, 388.

¹³⁰ Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, iii, 469.

¹³¹ Miller, 'London and Parliament', 128.

¹³² Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 57.

¹³³ Jo.9, ff.91v, 157v, 190, 224, 279; Jo.10, ff.58v, 83v, 301-301v; Jo.11, f.90; Rep.1, f.151. London's status as an urban county elections required elections to be held in the court of Husting, the City's

London's engagement with parliament was characterised by a centrally orchestrated programme by the civic government. The members of the Common Council were frequently asked for suggestions regarding bills that could be promoted for the commonweal of the City. The Court of Aldermen occasionally created committees to investigate the capital's needs. Such committees were appointed in 1489 and 1497 to assist the London MPs and help compose 'such articles as they thynk wold be spoken in the next parliament for the weale of this Cite'.¹³⁴ No other parliamentary borough is known to have made such thorough preparations for parliamentary meetings, nor did they present bills to parliament with the same regularity as the City did.¹³⁵ The success rate of London's corporate parliamentary programme, however, though higher than any other borough at three acts over seven parliaments, was far from being absolute. The committee of 1497 failed to secure any acts and in 1504 a drafted proposal for the reform of the Church's testamentary jurisdiction within the City disappeared without a trace.¹³⁶

Parliament was also a forum in which other boroughs sought redress against perceived abuses perpetrated by the capital itself. The mayor and aldermen felt compelled to conduct an audit of all company and craft ordinances after accusations were levied in the 1487 parliament that the livery companies colluded to inflate prices.¹³⁷ The City may have felt justifiably under attack in the 1504 parliament, for not only was oversight of the livery companies removed from the jurisdiction of the mayor and aldermen, but the City's right to levy 'scavage' was also undermined.¹³⁸ Scavage, a custom levied on imported goods sold by non-citizens of London, was understandably unpopular with other urban centres but most recently had been the subject of complaints by the cities

equivalent of a shire court, though in actual fact only the formal ratification of the selection of MPs took place in Husting and the election took place in Common Council.

¹³⁴ Jo.9, f.224; Rep.1, f.10v.

¹³⁵ Miller, 'London and Parliament', 128; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 252.

¹³⁶ Rep.1, f.154; Miller, 'London and Parliament', 134; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 252.

¹³⁷ Jo.9, f.162; *LBL*, 246; *Acts*, 183.

¹³⁸ Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 248.

of Salisbury and Exeter.¹³⁹ Parliament passed an act that declared that henceforth scavage was only to be levied upon aliens, though the City did manage to secure a concession that permitted it to levy the toll upon denizens' goods if the consent of the king and council was obtained.¹⁴⁰

Individual London citizens and livery companies appear to have been somewhat more successful in their lobbying of parliament than the civic government.¹⁴¹ The Mayor and Aldermen may have sought to have knowledge and control of all bills put before parliament by London citizens. In April 1497 the Court of Aldermen assigned two men to view a bill the Upholders' craft intended to put before parliament.¹⁴² Not all the bills presented by livery companies and crafts leave a trace in the civic records so it is impossible to judge how successful the civic administration was in coordinating City parliamentary activity.¹⁴³

London's ability to transform petitions into legislation did not improve in the next reign. Attempts early in the reign to repeal the acts passed by the 1504 parliament regarding the regulation of livery companies and the levying of scavage both failed.¹⁴⁴ Attempts to regain control of the City offices of garbeller, common weigher and keeper of Blackwell Hall were equally unsuccessful.¹⁴⁵

Londoners were also invited to participate in the Great Councils of the reign. Hugh Brice and John Pickering were nominated by the Common Council in November 1488 to attend upon the king in his council on the tenth of that month, which given the timing was undoubtedly the Great Council that took place then.¹⁴⁶ The focus of the meeting

¹³⁹ Rep.1, f.68, 147v; *Select Cases before the King's Council in the Star Chamber, 1477-1509*, ed. I.S. Leadam, Selden Society, xvi, 2 vols. (London, 1903, 1911), 71-2; Miller, 'London and Parliament', 134; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 247-8.

¹⁴⁰ Rep.1, ff.159v, 161v; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 248.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.

¹⁴² Rep.1, f.17v.

¹⁴³ Davies, 'Lobbying Parliament', 139.

¹⁴⁴ Miller, 'London and Parliament', 138; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 248.

¹⁴⁵ Miller, 'London and Parliament', 141.

¹⁴⁶ Jo.9, f.221v; *GC*, 243; Peter Holmes, 'The Great Council in the Reign of Henry VII', *EHR*, ci (1986), 844, *n.* 7.

was the state of affairs in Brittany, and the choice of Pickering as a City representative indicates that matters of trade were foremost in the minds of the Aldermen, since he was the governor of the Merchant Adventurers. A further six men were chosen to attend with Brice and Pickering two days later.¹⁴⁷ Whether this was on the City's initiative after discovering that they were no better represented than Ipswich, Norwich or Reading, or at the king's behest, is unknown.¹⁴⁸ The City's priorities were still firmly focused on trade, for among the new attendees were the aldermen, Mercers, Merchant Adventurers and Staplers, Hugh Clopton and Nicholas Alwyn, and the Stapler and Grocer Richard Nonneley.¹⁴⁹ That Nonneley and Pickering were selected to serve as MPs for the City the following month reinforces the impression that the City looked to its trading interests.¹⁵⁰ At a Common Council meeting held 4 November 1490, the Recorder Thomas Fitzwilliam, alderman Hugh Clopton and Mercer Thomas Grafton were appointed to attend the king and his great council in Windsor.¹⁵¹ No further details about the meeting appears in the civic records.

5.5. Pageantry and Celebration

John Stow, in his *Survey of London*, written at the end of the sixteenth century, recounted London's tradition of celebrating royal arrivals, marriages, victories and entries with pageants of varying degrees of magnificence.¹⁵² The first recorded was that of the reception provided by the City for Eleanor of Provence, bride of Henry III, in 1236, when the City was adorned with silks, pageants were performed and 260 citizens clothed in garments embroidered with gold and silks rode to meet the royal couple.¹⁵³ Pageants became more elaborate as time passed: that for the victory of Edward I over the Scots in 1298 involved several pageants organised by the crafts.¹⁵⁴ In the course of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century these proceedings contained common, customary elements: the mayor, aldermen and citizens wore special clothing and

¹⁴⁷ Jo.9, f.222.

¹⁴⁸ Holmes, 'Great Council', 848.

¹⁴⁹ Jo.9, f.222; TNA, STAC2/9, f.21.

¹⁵⁰ Jo.9, f.222.

¹⁵¹ Jo.10, f.264.

¹⁵² Stow, *Survey*, i, 95-99.

¹⁵³ Stow, *Survey*, i, 95.

¹⁵⁴ Stow, *Survey*, i, 95-96.

processed with song along symbolically important routes, houses were decorated with tapestries or textiles, elaborate pageants and wine flowing from the conduits became a recognised part of City-based ceremonies.¹⁵⁵

By the fifteenth century these events were becoming more frequent and elaborate. Pageantry increasingly came to serve a political purpose in transmitting the legitimacy, ambitions and image of the monarch and his family.¹⁵⁶ Consequently the considerable amount of organisation required by royalty meant that these events were rarely spontaneous or voluntary.¹⁵⁷ That is not to imply that the City was coerced rather than complicit in the provision of such displays as it was to the glory of the capital to be seen as the seat of a strong and glorious monarch, and at the same time to assert its own civic identity.

5.5.1. Small Events

Anne Lancashire observed the importance of distinguishing between major royal entries into the City and smaller civic events such as visits by ambassadors or minor royal entries, when the king might return from an extended stay away from the City and required little more than ‘courtesy civic escorts through the City’.¹⁵⁸ Visits by ambassadors, papal emissaries or other dignitaries came somewhere between the two, requiring an impressive display by the capital to awe the visitors, usually involving decorated streets, citizens turned out in full livery company regalia, musicians and an escort through the City. Henry received the papal cap and sword of maintenance from three different popes during his reign and each occasion was marked with two days of solemn ceremony, the cost of which was met by the City.¹⁵⁹ Present at the first of these occasions in 1488 were the ambassadors of Castile, Brittany, Flanders and from

¹⁵⁵ Barron, *London*, 18-22.

¹⁵⁶ Jennifer Loach, ‘The Function of Ceremonial in the Reign of Henry VIII’, *Past and Present*, cxlii (1994), 44.

¹⁵⁷ Barron, *London*, 21.

¹⁵⁸ Anne Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: Civic Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (Cambridge, 2002), 130.

¹⁵⁹ Innocent VIII in 1488, Alexander VI in 1496 and Julius II in 1505. *Heralds’ Memoir*, 162-165; *GC*, 274, 329; *Vit. XVI*, 211-2, 261.

Maximilian, the King of the Romans, thus providing the opportunity to impress once more upon these visitors the magnificence of the monarch and his capital.¹⁶⁰

The civic celebrations provided for ambassadors depended upon the status of the individuals within the ambassadorial parties, the aim of the embassy and the result of any negotiations. The ambassadorial party sent from Maximilian in 1503 included a bishop, a marquis and a count with ‘other knyghtis and men of ffame’ who were, with their great company of servants, richly dressed.¹⁶¹ Oaths of amity were sworn between the king and the ambassadors, on behalf of their master, and the event was celebrated with great fires in the City and pipes of Gascon wine made available for the citizens to drink.¹⁶² The visit of the Scottish ambassadors to London for negotiations regarding the marriage of their king to the king’s daughter, Margaret, took place just after the civic celebrations for the marriage celebrations of Prince Arthur and Kathryn of Aragon.¹⁶³ Even so, they were duly met and escorted to their lodging in Smithfield and probably attended some of the jousts and other festivities that occurred in the following weeks.¹⁶⁴ The mayor, John Shaa, hosted a dinner for the ambassadors at which the guests appeared to have gone to great pains to praise the City. A ‘Scottysh preyst Syttyng at oon of the syde tablys’ created a ballad which included praise for the mayor:

Thy famous mayer... Noo lord of parys, venyze or Floraunce / In dygnyte or honour,
gooth to hym nyy / He ys exampler, loodster and Guy / Pryncypall patron, & Rose
orygynall / Above all mayrys, as mastyr most worthy / London thou art. the fflowyr of
Cytees all.¹⁶⁵

The priest is thought to be the celebrated Scottish poet and courtier William Dunbar.¹⁶⁶ It is possible that this flattery may have been a reflection on the fact that Shaa was known to be uncommonly intimate with the king and his court, though we cannot know

¹⁶⁰ *Heralds’ Memoir*, 165.

¹⁶¹ *GC*, 322.

¹⁶² Rep.1, f.130; *GC*, 323.

¹⁶³ *GC*, 315- 316.

¹⁶⁴ *GC*, 315-316.

¹⁶⁵ *GC*, 317; Vit. XVI, 253.

¹⁶⁶ For questions about Dunbar’s authorship see Curt Bühler, ‘London Thow Art the Flowre of Cytes All’, *The Review of English Studies*, xiii (1937), 1-19.

how likely it was that Shaa's standing with the king was known in Scotland. More probable is that the ambassadors were keen to curry favour with their hosts, which almost certainly included members of the king's inner circle, as they identified the monarch closely with his capital.¹⁶⁷

The cost of smaller celebrations for royal entries into the City after the monarch had spent an extended period away from the capital was often absorbed by the livery companies. The Drapers' Company accounts record that they paid 21s for the hire of a barge to join the City flotilla that met the king at either Fulham or Sheen after his return from his northern progress of 1486.¹⁶⁸ Expenses for bargemen, musicians and food and drink for the occupants of the boat amounted to a further 10s 4d.¹⁶⁹ The Tailors spent a total of £1 4s 10d, including provision for an organ and singing children in the barge on the same occasion and the accounts of the Ironmongers and Leathersellers reflect similar expenditure.¹⁷⁰

In the first two years of Henry's reign there were five royal entries with associated celebration and street decoration; it is unlikely that Edward IV had enjoyed so many in his entire reign.¹⁷¹ The mayor, aldermen and citizens in their liveries met the king at Hornsey Park and accompanied him into the City via Shoreditch after his victories at Bosworth and Stoke.¹⁷² Henry's entry into the City by barge in 1486 has already been mentioned. The entries prior to Henry's and Elizabeth's coronations in 1485 and 1487 respectively were the other two. This profusion of civic provision for royal events in the early years of the reign perhaps set Crown expectations of future City generosity

¹⁶⁷ The Great Chronicle and Vit. XVI assert that the Lord Chancellor was present at this feast, but this position was vacant between Morton's death in Sept. 1500 and Warham's appointment in 1504. It is likely that someone of equivalent importance from the court was in attendance. (*GC*. 317, Vit. XVI 253).

¹⁶⁸ Drapers' Company, WA2, f.35v.

¹⁶⁹ Drapers' Company, WA2, f.35v.

¹⁷⁰ Merchant Taylors' Court Minutes (LMA, CLC/L/MD/B/001/MS34008/001); Ironmongers' Register of Accounts (LMA, CLC/L/IB/D/001/MS16988/001), f.52; Leathersellers' Hall, Leathersellers' Accounts and Inventories (ACC/1/1), f.56.

¹⁷¹ Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 188-9. Lancashire lists only two for the reign of Edward IV, but it is likely that there were others, such as on the occasion of his return from France in 1475 and celebrations for the visit of Margaret of Burgundy to the City in 1480 (Ross, *Edward IV*, 283).

¹⁷² *GC*, 238; Jo.9, f.157v.

high. The large number of royal events in the first few years of the reign correlates with the insecurity of Henry VII's position at this time and perhaps reflects the City's eagerness to win the favour of the new king and the king's desire to visibly reinforce his legitimacy and authority. London was not the only city to do this: when the king entered York in spring 1486 the citizens of York put on an extravagant royal entry into the city with four pageants established at various points within the city walls despite the 'povertie, decay and ruyn of this citie'.¹⁷³

As well as the regular pomp and ceremony it provided for royal occasions, London did enjoy a number of purely civic occasions, though perhaps not on the scale of the annual Corpus Christi plays celebrated by York and Coventry.¹⁷⁴ Midsummer Watch was celebrated sporadically and in varying degrees in the City. This was originally a marching event and varied from year to year in its scale, sometimes including pageants.¹⁷⁵ It is hard to discern if such events took place with any regularity. Evidence exists for watches arranged in 1503, 1504 and 1507 but few details remain.¹⁷⁶ The processions accompanying the mayor and the sheriffs for their oath-takings in front of the barons of the Exchequer became gradually more elaborate in the course of the fifteenth century, though they did not reach their zenith until well into the sixteenth century.¹⁷⁷ By the mid-fifteenth century it was tradition for the mayor, aldermen and other senior Londoners to walk from the Guildhall to an inn called the Crane, where they would board a barge to Westminster.¹⁷⁸ The livery companies, also in barges, would accompany the mayor upriver to Westminster. John Shaa, when he decided that the party escorting him to his barge would ride, gained the derision of the Great Chronicler who disapproved of the expense involved in purveying horses and attributed

¹⁷³ *York Books*, ii, 474, 478-81. Hereford, Gloucester and Bristol similarly greeted the king with pageantry and display on his progress of 1486, *Heralds' Memoir*, 89-98.

¹⁷⁴ Barron, *London*, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Drapers' Company, WA2, f.77; LMA, Grocers' Ordinance and Account Book (CLC/L/GH/A/006/MS11570A), f.101; Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 155.

¹⁷⁶ LMA, Brewers' Wardens' Accounts (CLC/L/BF/D/001/MS05442/001), iii, f.11 and iv, f.6; LMA, Carpenters' Wardens' Accounts (CLC/L/CC/D/002/MS04326/001), f.223; Drapers' Company, W.A.2, ff.75v, 77, 85v; GL, Skinners' Accounts, f.210; GL, Ironmongers' Accounts, f.91v; LMA, Bakers' Audit Book, (CLC/L/BA/D/001/MS05174/001), f.43; LMA, Jo.10, f.314; LMA, Rep.1, f.160.

¹⁷⁷ Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 154.

¹⁷⁸ *GC*, 296; Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 145.

Shaa's whim to the fact that he was 'lytill of Stature' and therefore would look more impressive on a horse.¹⁷⁹

5.5.2. Coronations and Funerals

Coronation entries into the City were large-scale occasions that took place over at least a couple of days. On the first day the king (or queen) would be met outside the City by the mayor, aldermen and liverymen, usually at London Bridge and then escorted to the Tower, where they would stay at least one night prior to the coronation itself.¹⁸⁰ Usually a pageant of greeting would be at the Bridge, marking it as the entrance to the capital.¹⁸¹ The day of the coronation the king was taken on a route traditionally used for royal entries: through the City via Gracechurch Street, Cornhill, Poultry, Cheapside and on to Westminster.¹⁸² This gave the citizens the opportunity to see the monarch and took the king through the richest, widest parts of the City. Cheapside, in a crowded City, was an area of rare openness and space, being the broadest and longest of London's streets.¹⁸³ At both ends were conduits which were frequently the sites of pageants, as was the cross and standard in the middle of the street. At the west end, adjacent to the little conduit, was the entrance into St. Paul's churchyard which was often the termination point of City entries and ceremonies.¹⁸⁴ Cheapside was lined with rich houses and fine shops which were decorated with textiles, tapestries and rich hangings during civic celebrations and hence was an area of wealth and finery.¹⁸⁵

Royal funeral and coronation ceremonies were closed affairs, but the Londoners had rare access and a role in the accompanying celebrations. Between seven and eight leading Londoners were selected to attend upon the Chief Butler at the coronation feast and the mayor had the honour of serving the king wine at the end of the feast, for which

¹⁷⁹ *GC*, 296.

¹⁸⁰ Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 135.

¹⁸¹ Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 135. Unusually Elizabeth travelled to the Tower by barge, and therefore was met on the water by the mayor and citizens.

¹⁸² Processions not associated with coronations ceased at St. Paul's. Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 132.

¹⁸³ Vanessa Harding, 'Cheapside: Commerce and Commemoration', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, lxxi (2008), 78.

¹⁸⁴ Harding, 'Cheapside', 78-79.

¹⁸⁵ Harding, 'Cheapside', 82-83.

he received the cup used by the king and the ewer that held the water used to temper the wine.¹⁸⁶ Both cup and ewer were borne before the mayor as he and the aldermen exited after the feast through Westminster Hall.¹⁸⁷ In royal funeral ceremonies, the mayor would make his offering during the service itself directly after the lords temporal and members of the episcopate, but before the chief justices and lesser justices, the knights of the royal household and the barons of the Exchequer. The aldermen of the City would follow the Exchequer barons.¹⁸⁸ Hence in royal ceremonial occasions the predominance of the capital over the other urban centres of the realm was made plain, as was the status of the mayor and aldermen in the social hierarchy.

Though the cost incurred by the capital on these occasions was by no means small it was mostly expended upon craftsmanship, materials and goods sourced within the City. Ian Archer has calculated that for Henry VII's funeral approximately 20,772 yards of black cloth was purchased from fifty-seven merchants at a cost of £3,952.¹⁸⁹ Other expenses included 5,113 pounds of wax and £898 worth of torches provided by forty-two waxchandlers, and a payment of £709 to sixteen painters.¹⁹⁰ This accounts for only a small portion of total expenditure within the City for this event. The funeral of Elizabeth of York in 1503 was smaller in scale but still represented a considerable economic boost to the merchants of London: 9,485 yards of black cloth costing a total of £1,483 15s 10d was purchased from thirty-nine suppliers.¹⁹¹ Though these are considerable sums what is not known is the mark-up on these goods, and therefore the profit made by the Londoners from such events is impossible to quantify. The short-term financial gain experienced by some of the citizens upon the occasion of the queen's funeral would have been negated by the loss of a valuable customer for the London merchants of the queen's household, representing some 130 persons of various

¹⁸⁶ Jo.9, f.91; *Coronation of Richard III*, 288.

¹⁸⁷ *Coronation of Richard III*, 288.

¹⁸⁸ *Coronation of Richard III*, 20, 37. This was also the same order of precedence observed in the procession escorting the body into the Abbey (*GC*, 321-2).

¹⁸⁹ Ian Archer, 'City and Court Connected: The Material Dimensions of Royal Ceremonial, ca. 1480-1625', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, lxxi (2008), 169.

¹⁹⁰ Archer, 'City and Court', 169-170.

¹⁹¹ TNA, LC2/1, ff.39-46.

social standing.¹⁹² A dead king would soon be replaced by a successor, but there was no assurance that a queen would be so readily replaced.

Economically speaking, there were more gains to be made than just direct expenditure by the Crown. Magnates, dignitaries and other attendees of royal occasions would require suitable apparel, including jewels, decorations and trappings for horses and other accessories. The Great Chronicle, recounting some of the gold collars worn by some of the noble attendees of Kathryn and Arthur's wedding celebrations, was able to record accurately the value of such items as he had 'report of Goldsmythis & othir werkmen that theym wrought & delyverd'.¹⁹³ Such events gave London's craftsmen and merchants an opportunity to display their artistry and wares to visiting foreign dignitaries, nobles and royalty. The rich textiles that house owners hung outside their houses on Cheapside, for example, may have served a secondary purpose of advertising the luxury wares on sale from that property.¹⁹⁴ Shopholders and inn keepers would have enjoyed additional business generated by the influx of visitors who desired food, a place to stay and perhaps souvenirs and trinkets.¹⁹⁵

5.5.3. The Marriage of Arthur and Kathryn

The largest and most impressive royal-civic celebration of the reign, that of the entrance into the City of the bride of Prince Arthur, Kathryn of Aragon, in 1501, has received much scholarly attention.¹⁹⁶ This pageant was a substantial organisational achievement that required the close cooperation of representatives of the Crown and the City. In November 1499, two years before the pageant was eventually to take place, a committee of eight men were appointed 'to have [conversation] from tyme to tyme w[ith] the kynges comyssioners touchyng preparacion to be made for receyvyng of the

¹⁹² Figure based upon the number of Queen's Household servants provided with black cloth in the funeral accounts, TNA, LC2/1, ff.63, 64, 75.

¹⁹³ *GC*, 311.

¹⁹⁴ Harding, 'Cheapside', 85.

¹⁹⁵ Barron, *London*, 22.

¹⁹⁶ *The Receypt of the Ladie Kateryne*, ed. Gordon Kipling, EETS (London, 1996); Sidney Anglo, 'The London Pageants for the Reception of Katherine of Aragon: November 1501', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxviii (1963) and *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969), 57-60; Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 131.

prynces that by godes g[ra]ce shall coym oute of Spayne'.¹⁹⁷ Seven of the men were aldermen and the eighth was the Recorder, the status of its members reflecting the importance the City accorded this task and possibly the expected status of the Crown committee.¹⁹⁸ It is impossible to know who was actually responsible for devising the pageants or even how much input the relative committees of the Crown and City had.¹⁹⁹ The official plans devised to be read and followed by magnates and courtiers attending the event, though incredibly detailed in all matters pertaining to the princess's journey from the south coast to London and the royal ceremonies and festivities thereafter, skims over the London pageants by stating that there would be 'such pageantes and cerymonies as thei [i.e. London's civic government and citizens] have devised for thonor of the citie', thus implying either that the Londoners had been largely left to their own devices as they were well practised in such displays, or that the author of the plan was unaware of or unconcerned with the details of the procession through London.²⁰⁰ The plan suggests that George Neville, Lord Bergavenny, acted as a liaison between the court and the City, for he was charged with informing the mayor and his brethren of the details of the feast and their role after the wedding had concluded.²⁰¹

Francis Bacon claimed that Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, oversaw all arrangements for the marriage, a claim which may be substantiated by the notations in Fox's hand on the official plans devised for court use.²⁰² The pageants to be placed along the traditional procession route through the City were carefully set out in these plans, including the presence of the mayor, aldermen and liverymen of London at the cross in Cheapside.²⁰³ It was here that the mayor and the Recorder approached the princess and the Recorder welcomed her in the name of the City and presented her with a gift of 500 marks.²⁰⁴ This was also where the king, queen, the earl of Oxford, the king's mother, the French ambassadors and various magnates chose to view the

¹⁹⁷ Rep.1, f.63.

¹⁹⁸ Rep.1, f.62v.

¹⁹⁹ Anglo, 'Reception', 55.

²⁰⁰ *LP Hen. VII*, i, 411.

²⁰¹ *LP Hen. VII*, i, 411.

²⁰² *LP Hen. VII*, i, 404-419; Bacon, *Henry VII*, 141-2.

²⁰³ *LP Hen. VII*, i, 411; Jo.10, f.238; Vit. XVI, 246.

²⁰⁴ *GC*, 307; Vit. XVI, 246; Rep.1, f.87.

proceedings, apparently commandeering the use of the house of a Haberdasher, William Geffrey, to ensure a prime view.²⁰⁵

Later in the week the wedding party took barges to Westminster accompanied by the mayor, aldermen and livery companies, also in barges. The barge of the Mercers' Company, though, was 'not garnysshid and apparaylid accordyng unto theyr worshyp, nor so well as othyr which were of lasse auctoryte' and therefore they were sent away and later fined.²⁰⁶ A certain standard commensurate with the perceived dignity of both the company and the City was expected and policed by the civic authorities. Appropriate display was a civic duty.

The scale of these pageants was unprecedented in the fifteenth century, if ever their like had been seen in the City.²⁰⁷ The Londoners appear to have regarded the celebrations as exceptional and unlikely to be repeated, for rather than keep elements of the pageants for future use, the same citizens who had been charged with oversight of the creation of the individual pageants were given the task of selling the materials that went into their construction.²⁰⁸ For a monarch who is traditionally viewed as personally abstemious of entertainments and luxury, the reign of Henry VII might be said to have represented a high point of civic pageantry. It is probable that Henry VII enjoyed more civic ceremonial for royal occasions than any of his predecessors in the fifteenth century and it was not to be equalled until Elizabeth's coronation.²⁰⁹

The staging of large celebrations was not cheap and taxation was the usual means of raising the funds necessary. A tax of one fifteenth and a half was imposed by the City upon its citizens to finance the pageant that celebrated the arrival of Kathryn of Aragon

²⁰⁵ *GC*, 306; Vit. XVI, 245.

²⁰⁶ *Acts*, 249-50; *GC*, 312.

²⁰⁷ Anglo, 'Reception', 88.

²⁰⁸ Rep.1, f.101, May 1502.

²⁰⁹ Anne Lancashire's appendix listing the royal entry celebrations of the fifteenth century seems to suggest this is the case, though as she points out, records do not survive for all royal entry celebrations and therefore it is impossible for such a list to be comprehensive (Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 185-191). Anglo, *Spectacle*, 294.

into the City.²¹⁰ Each of the seven pageants cost approximately £120 each.²¹¹ The last pageant was, according to the Great Chronicle, ordered and devised by the king's commandment, 'the Cityzynes thereof noo thyng made of counsayll' but which the City was expected to pay for.²¹² It is possible to read bad feeling into the chronicler's refusal to describe this last tableau after supplying lengthy descriptions, complete with accounts of the prose spoken, of the other six pageants, though it is also possible that Fabyan had access to the text of the speeches of the City pageants but not to this one.

Such display was effective two-way communication: it impressed upon the monarch the City's loyalty and desire to serve whilst simultaneously projecting and reinforcing the legitimacy and authority of the new king upon all witnesses. Later in the reign the pageants became more elaborate and the king's agenda took on a more outward-looking demeanour. The pageant for Kathryn was not primarily for the young bride's benefit but to impress upon the dignitaries from Spain accompanying her the magnificence of the Tudor royal line and that it was a worthy player in the game of international politics.

5.6. The Role of Individuals in Crown-City Communication

Ian Archer observed that relations between the Crown and the City were 'lubricated to a far greater extent than has been appreciated by a variety of informal contacts between members of the business elite and the government'.²¹³ Certainly rich merchants who were financially useful to the king had always played a role in facilitating relations between the monarch and his capital. The Mercer Richard Whittington was a useful intermediary between the Crown and the City when the relationship became fraught in the last years of Richard II's reign; the Goldsmiths Drew Barrentyn and Nicholas Twyford served both the City as mayors and aldermen and the Crown as royal servants during the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV.²¹⁴ Henry VI and Edward IV similarly

²¹⁰ Jo.10, ff.187v, 190v.

²¹¹ Anglo, 'Reception', 54, n.5.

²¹² *GC*, 310.

²¹³ Ian Archer, 'The Government of London, 1500-1650', *London Journal*, xxvi (2001). See also James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: the Bristol Elite, the Urban Community and the Crown, c.1471-c.1553' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of the West of England, 2006), 103-138.

²¹⁴ Caroline Barron, 'Richard Whittington: the Man behind the Myth', in A.E.J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway ed. *Studies in History Presented to P.E. Jones*, 197-248; Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths', 277-8.

enjoyed close relationships with London merchants who both provided them with finance and held high civic office, notably the Mercers William Eastfield and William Cantelowe in Henry VI's reign and the Goldsmiths Hugh Brice and Edmund Shaa in Edward IV's.²¹⁵

This section will look at the power-brokers, defined in this instance as those capable of deliberately affecting the distribution of political power, within the London elite with particular reference to the means by which they garnered the attention of the personnel of central government and the role they fulfilled within both Court and City circles. Given the significance of individuals in facilitating communication between the king and his capital, how did the nature of communication change with the turnover of these power-brokers?

5.6.1. Personal Networks between the Personnel of the Crown and the City.

Few members of Henry's inner circle were Londoners by birth and many were new faces within the City when Henry came to the throne. Reynold Bray, one of Henry's principal administrators along with Sir Thomas Lovell and John Morton, archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, apparently enjoyed a reasonably extensive network of associates within the City prior to Henry's accession. Bray had raised money for Henry amongst the capital's mercantile elite in the lead up to Bosworth, and it may have been at this time that he made the acquaintance of Henry Colet and Edmund Shaa, who became close friends as well as business allies.²¹⁶ Bray and Shaa were already business associates by early summer of 1486 when they, along with Edmund's nephew, John Shaa, were granted the wardship and marriage of John Wrytell.²¹⁷ Both Shaas and Colet regularly acted as feoffees for Bray alongside men who had served with Bray in the household of the king's mother.²¹⁸ Edmund was to make Bray an executor of his

²¹⁵ George Holmes, 'Eastfield, Sir William (d.1446)' and 'Cantelowe, Sir William (d.1464)', *ONDB*; See Chapter 2, section 2.1.2.

²¹⁶ Anne Sutton claims that Colet had shared a close relationship with Bray from at least 1480. Whilst this may be true I have found no evidence to substantiate this statement. Anne Sutton, 'Colet, Sir Henry (c.1430-1505)', *ODNB*.

²¹⁷ Wrytell was later married to John Shaa's daughter, Audrey. *CPR, 1485-1494*, 98 & 268; TNA, PROB11/14/156.

²¹⁸ Condon, 'Pater Patriae', 151.

will, made in March 1488, referring to him as his ‘right especial and tender loving Frende’.²¹⁹ Thomas Wyndoute, who lent considerable amounts to Henry VII in the early years of the reign, also named Bray as an executor of his will.²²⁰

John Shaa and Bray entered business arrangements together, including the purchase of at least two wards, shipments of wool, collaboration on Bray’s building works at his manor of Heggecote, and cooperation within the Mint and upon the reform of the coinage in the late 1490s.²²¹ Evidence of affection between the two men might be construed from the presence in the post-mortem inventory of Shaa’s properties a number of cushions bearing the arms of Reynold Bray.²²² Moreover, Shaa’s second son was given the reasonably uncommon name of Reynold, raising the possibility that Bray acted as his godfather, though there is no direct evidence of this.²²³ Shaa was also named as an executor of Bray’s will.²²⁴

Bray was not the only member of Henry’s intimate circle to enjoy City connections. Giles Daubeney had served Edward IV as a knight of the body and therefore had been required to spend long periods resident in the royal household at Westminster. His links with the mercantile community were substantial, not least because his brother-in-law was the wealthy and prominent Draper, William Capell.²²⁵ Thomas Lovell enjoyed relations cordial enough with the Goldsmiths and aldermen Sir John Shaa and Sir Bartholomew Rede to be named overseer of their wills, the latter in conjunction with Edmund Dudley.²²⁶ John Ward, alderman and Grocer, referring to Lovell as ‘my master’, bequeathed him a cup of silver gilt and gold with a ring to his wife.²²⁷ The

²¹⁹ TNA, PROB11/8/187. Bray and his wife were also beneficiaries of Hugh, Edmund’s son, receiving a ring of gold each. TNA, PROB11/8/657.

²²⁰ TNA, PROB11/12/1952 & 11/8/187.

²²¹ *CPR, 1485-1509*, 81; *CCR, 1485-1500*, no.910; TNA, E122/142/11, ff.27v-29; TNA, E122/142/12 m.8; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.146v; TNA, E101/413/2/2, f.87v; TNA, E101/415/3, ff.6, 14v, 28, 296, 299; TNA, E101/414/6, f.104v; TNA, E101/414/16, f.117. Condon, ‘Ruling Elites’, 128.

²²² TNA, E154/2/11.

²²³ TNA, PROB11/14/156.

²²⁴ TNA, PROB11/13/608.

²²⁵ *GC*, 258.

²²⁶ TNA, PROB11/14/156 & 11/14/763.

²²⁷ TNA, PROB11/12/168.

alderman and former mayor John Mathew named Sir Richard Empson as his overseer.²²⁸

Members of the episcopal bench were popular choices as overseers of wills: the aldermen Nicholas Alwyn, Robert Drayton, John Percyvale and John Broun named the Bishops of Winchester (Richard Fox), London (William Warham), the Archbishops of York (Thomas Savage) and Canterbury (John Morton) respectively as overseers.²²⁹ Percyvale went further to state that Savage had been influential in his decision to establish a grammar school.²³⁰ One assumes that the other Londoners also had more than a passing acquaintance with the churchmen in order to ask them to perform the duty, even though a small bequest in the will as compensation was usual. Lord Chancellor John Morton was a familiar face in the City, having served Edward IV for many years and being at the forefront of mercantile-government negotiations in the 1470s.

Many courtiers and magnates made use of the credit services some merchants were able (and willing) to provide. The bishops of Norwich, Ely and Lincoln received financial aid from John Shaa in paying for the temporalities of their new sees.²³¹ Between May and October 1501 Margaret Beaufort received from Shaa a total of £586 in ten payments, mostly via the hands of his trusted colleague, John Mondy.²³² It is not noted what the payments pertain to, nor does it make clear whether they were given as a loan, but it seems likely that they were connected with the refurbishments taking place at Margaret's residence in Croydon prior to the anticipated stay there of Kathryn of Aragon. The queen took loans from merchants such as William Bulstrode and William Capell, and many of the loans were still outstanding at her death.²³³ The former also

²²⁸ TNA, PROB11/11/546.

²²⁹ TNA, PROB11/15/25, 11/14/37, 11/13/447 & 11/11/344. Savage had previously served as bishop of London, and during his tenure inevitably made connections within London society.

²³⁰ TNA, PROB11/11/344.

²³¹ TNA, E101/415/3, ff.186v, 202; TNA E101/413/2/2, f.87v.

²³² St. John's College, Cambridge, D102.2, ff.3, 5-5v; Michael Jones and Malcolm Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), 161, 166.

²³³ TNA, E36/210, f.35; BL, Add. Ms.59899, ff.60, 85, 85v

orchestrated some of the queen's gift-giving.²³⁴ William Capell also lent money to the earl of Kent and Richard, Lord Beachamp and others.²³⁵

5.6.2. *The Goldsmiths*

Through their trade in often bespoke high-value goods, ability to raise finance swiftly and involvement in the Royal Mint, medieval goldsmiths enjoyed access to the court and royal household not shared by merchants of other professions. Their privileged access to the royal household brought particularly talented individuals to the king's personal attention. Four goldsmiths in particular can be identified as being both close to the royal administration and prominent in the civic life of the capital in Henry's reign. Edmund Shaa, Hugh Brice, John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede were remarkable in the breadth of duties they were to undertake for their royal master and were key contacts for a monarch who sought information about the mechanisms of civic government and the personnel therein. All four men appear to have prioritised their duties as royal servants over civic duty. All became aldermen after they became royal servants, though naturally they would have served some years on the Common Council before reaching the Aldermanic Court, all served as mayor and all were regular suppliers of items of their craft to the king and his household, all were knighted and died very wealthy men.²³⁶

The intimate relationships that Edmund Shaa and Hugh Brice shared with the court of Edward IV have already been described.²³⁷ Edmund continued to be a supplier of goods of his trade and lender to the Crown under Henry VII and Hugh Brice was honoured by being made a knight of the Bath at Henry VII's coronation, perhaps in recognition of his recent election as mayor, though it is possible that he had already come to Tudor's

²³⁴ TNA, E36/210, f.83. A page was sent to Bulstrode with the gift of two bucks to be given to the duchess of Suffolk and to John Vandelf, Goldsmith.

²³⁵ TNA, C1/84/33; TNA, C1/227/45

²³⁶ BL, Add. Ms.7099, ff.21-24; TNA, E101/414/6, f.61v; TNA, E101/414/16, ff.13, 35, 53v; TNA, E101/415/3, ff.10, 45, 94v, BL, Add. Ms.59899, ff.22v, 26v, 49, 50, 62r, 92r-93r; TNA, PROB11/11/2028, 11/8/187, 11/14/763 and 11/14/156; *Cal. IPM., Hen. VII*, (i) 20, (ii) 679, 719, 863, (iii) 29, 42, 51-3, 62, 63, 70, 94, 103, 123-4, 200, 207-8, 358, 425, 677; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 285-288; Beaven, ii, 15.

²³⁷ See Chapter 2, section 2.1.4.

attention in some other way.²³⁸ Close connections between Edmund Shaa, Brice, John Shaa and Rede imply that Edmund Shaa and Hugh Brice, a generation older, paved the way to royal service for John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede. John was both the nephew and apprentice of Edmund and Rede had served as Brice's apprentice. Rede was a close friend of James, Brice's son, and was godfather to James's son.²³⁹ John Shaa was named as executor to both his uncle and Brice. Similarities in the provision for the establishment of schools in the wills of Edmund Shaa and Rede suggest that the two were intimate enough acquaintances to have discussed the matter in detail.²⁴⁰ Rede and John Shaa were also close, for Rede was named in John's will as his executor and as guardian of his eldest son.²⁴¹

Of the four Goldsmiths, arguably the most influential was John Shaa. The Great Chronicle of London described him as a man

...of a sharp wytt and therwyth of a good and bold spyryt by Reson of the ffavour that he stood In wyth the kyng and Quene & many othir astasis [sic] of [th]e land In soo much that he was sworn of the kyngis counsayll as the ffame went.²⁴²

Regrettably it cannot be proved that he was appointed to the king's council as evidence survives for only one attendance, with Rede, to discuss the matters related to the Mint.²⁴³

The value the king placed upon John Shaa's ability and willingness as a financier is eloquently expressed in a warrant for payment demanding that the Exchequer pay an outstanding debt to Shaa of £4,000 from the first money available, 'considering his kind and ready disposition always to serve our pleasures in laying out his money'.²⁴⁴ Shaa appears to have fulfilled the role of financial handyman for the king, and was

²³⁸ For discussion on this point see Chapter 2, section 2.1.4.

²³⁹ Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 177, 307.

²⁴⁰ TNA, PROB11/8/187 and PROB11/14/763; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths' Company*, 180.

²⁴¹ TNA, PROB11/11/2028, 11/8/187, 11/14/156; Shaa also acted as feoffee for Rede, *CCR, 1485-1500*, nos.986, 1087.

²⁴² *GC*, 320.

²⁴³ *Select Cases*, ed. Baynes and Durham, 31.

²⁴⁴ TNA, E404/81, dated 12 April, 1493.

trusted with a variety of tasks unconnected with his trade or work within the City. Of thirty-two payments totalling £10,297 9s made to him from the Chamber in the ten year period of 1494-1504, only eleven payments, totalling nearly four thousand pounds, could possibly be related in any way to his trade.²⁴⁵ Six payments were made between May 1496 and March 1501 for the building works at Windsor and one for works at Richmond, implying that he held some sort of supervisory capacity there, possibly as paymaster.²⁴⁶ During Henry's reign such supervisory roles were more usually awarded to clerics connected to the royal household.²⁴⁷ Two payments relate to the provision of currency exchange services, from French Crowns into Sterling.²⁴⁸ Two further payments saw Shaa receive money with which to pay the household allowance of 125 marks per month of the widowed Kathryn of Aragon for the months of July to October 1502.²⁴⁹ In 1492 Shaa was appointed Searcher of the Port of London, a post he held until his death.²⁵⁰ This was a potentially lucrative role, not only for the office holder but also for the Crown, which gained half of all goods seized by the searcher. The award of such a position can be perceived not only as a reward and sign of royal favour, but also one to be given to a man who could be trusted to give the Crown its financial due.

Perhaps the most curious payment, and one that illustrates the trust placed in him by the king, was for over £650 made to him in October 1495 to reimburse Shaa for money he had laid out

²⁴⁵ Of the £3,800 for possible goldsmith work an unspecified amount was payment for works at Windsor and amounts for unitemised bills of reckoning, which may not have related to goldsmiths work.

²⁴⁶ TNA, E101/414/6, ff.31, 36; TNA, E101/414/16, ff.7, 36v; TNA, E101/415/3, f.45; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.27v; TNA, E404/81 & 82; *King's Works*, iii, 1485-1660, pt.1, 14.

²⁴⁷ Subsequent payments for the works at Windsor were paid to John Seymour, a canon of St. George's chapel, Windsor. *King's Works*, 14.

²⁴⁸ TNA, E101/415/3, ff.59v, 62v.

²⁴⁹ TNA, E101/415/3, ff.101, 101v. A similar payment was made in Oct. 1503 (BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.27v).

²⁵⁰ *CPR, 1485-1494*, 372; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.118; TNA, E36/214, f.382.

...for th[e] enterment and byriall of oure dought[er] Elizabeth late passed out of this transitory lif[e] as also in sending the residue of the same sune unto us at oure last being at Chestr comprised more at large in a bill which he hath delivered unto us.²⁵¹

The four year old princess was, according to the Great Chronicle, buried on the north side of St. Edward's shrine in Westminster, with some ceremony with livery company representatives in attendance.²⁵² The implication is that Shaa had direct involvement in the arrangements, which begs the question why? If finance was needed for the burial the more usual route would have been for the Lord Treasurer, Lord Dinham or Bray to act as a middle-man.

A clue to Shaa's standing within the hierarchy of the court and royal household can be found in the account book of William Cope, cofferer and deputy of the treasurer of war, Reynold Bray, for expenses incurred during the French campaign of 1492.²⁵³ The first part of the book details receipts from various individuals and collectors of the benevolence. The list commences with the money gathered by county, not including the capital, then progresses to individual members of the episcopate and other senior clergy, followed by members of the royal family and Lords Temporal.²⁵⁴ Next follows, beside the margin note of 'Sundry members of the lai fee' what appears to be a list of royal servants and household members. Reynold Bray and Thomas Lovell top the list, donating £500 and £400 respectively. Various household knights follow, and then two thirds of the way down, fourteenth on the list, is Shaa, not even yet a knight at this point, paying £100. Significantly, he is not listed with the Londoners, but with the court personnel. The second part of the document details expenses incurred in the preparations for the campaign, and Shaa again features heavily. Referred to as 'the King's Goldsmith', he received just over £1,970 for the garnishing of the 'king's hede peces and salads'.²⁵⁵ In addition he received two large amounts, of £17,392 12s 5d and £6,396 9s 11d, at the Mint for the coining of new money.²⁵⁶ His position on the list of

²⁵¹ TNA, E404/82 warrants dated 23 and 26 October 1495.

²⁵² *GC*, 260; Drapers' Company, WA2, f.61b.

²⁵³ TNA, E36/285.

²⁵⁴ TNA, E36/285, ff.3-15.

²⁵⁵ TNA, E36/285, f.79.

²⁵⁶ TNA, E36/285, ff.19, 84.

royal servants and the vast sums Shaa is trusted with suggest he was seen by the court, and indeed by the king, as far more than merely ‘the King’s Goldsmith’.

That Shaa was key to facilitating City-Crown relations is demonstrated by the frequency with which his intercession with the king was sought by citizens and companies. In 1502 the Drapers’ Company sought Shaa’s help in their quest to have the Merchant Taylors’ charter repealed.²⁵⁷ This was not the only time the Drapers had tried to invoke Shaa’s help, for in the same year £6 13s 4d was spent on a tun of wine for Shaa to be minded to aid their candidate in his quest for position of overseer of Blackwell Hall, the place used for cloth trading.²⁵⁸ Nor were those seeking Shaa’s help all within the City: Henry Frowyk, when seeking the position of Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1501, sought the help of Shaa, who wrote to Reynold Bray offering 500 marks on Frowyk’s behalf for the post.²⁵⁹ Sir John Raynesford, a retainer of the earl of Oxford who was later to become prominent in prince Henry’s household, sought Shaa’s help with securing assent for his marriage to Amy, Lady Grey in 1498.²⁶⁰

The City government also sought to use Shaa’s access to the king to its advantage. He was appointed to take part in a number of deputations to the Lord Chancellor, John Morton, and other members of the government administration to discuss matters of trade.²⁶¹ He was appointed as MP twice, though he died before he could serve in the 1504 parliament.²⁶² In December 1503 he was appointed, in his absence, to go to the king to offer £5000 for the renewal of the City charter and repeal of the Tailors’ patent, though Shaa died before he could undertake this task.²⁶³

The deaths of Shaa, at the end of 1503, and Rede, in 1505, deprived the king of two conduits of information about the civic government and the City of potential intermediaries. Coming as they did at a time of flux in the personnel of both the court

²⁵⁷ Drapers’ Company, WA2, f.74v; TNA, E154/2/11; TNA, PROB11/14/156.

²⁵⁸ Drapers’ Company, WA2, f.77.

²⁵⁹ TNA, E101/415/3, ff.299; TNA, E101/413/2/2, f.89; BL, Add. Ms.59899, f.146v.

²⁶⁰ TNA, E101/414/16, f.134v; Ross, *John de Vere*, 186, 194.

²⁶¹ Jo.10, f.24v, 238; Rep.1, ff.34v, 44, 63, 72v.

²⁶² Jo.10, f.58v; Rep.1, f.151.

²⁶³ Rep.1, ff.149, 151.

and the City and as changes in the structure of the royal household led to access to the king becoming more restricted, these deaths were to have wide repercussions that have not previously been examined.

5.6.3. The change in personnel in the City and central government

The turn of the sixteenth century saw the deaths of many of those closest to the king. Of particular note were Cardinal Morton (1500), John, Lord Dinham, the Lord Treasurer (1501), Reynold Bray (1503), Thomas Stanley earl of Derby and Sir John Mordaunt (1504).²⁶⁴ Most disastrous was the loss of members of his own family, including his uncle, Jasper Tudor duke of Bedford (1495), his eldest son, Arthur (1502) and his queen (1503).²⁶⁵ John de Vere earl of Oxford and Margaret Beaufort were becoming increasingly absent from the court, thus leaving no one at court willing, or most likely able, to rebuke as well as influence the king, as Vergil claims Bray did.²⁶⁶ Dinham, Bray and Mordaunt had perhaps been the best connected of Henry's courtiers within the City. Dinham and Bray have been examined already, but it was the vacuum left by the death of Sir John Mordaunt, Steven Gunn theorised, that Edmund Dudley filled, at least initially.²⁶⁷ Whilst this may be true in the sense that Mordaunt's unexpected death left a vacancy, this was filled in a large part by Richard Empson, who assumed his responsibilities as head of the council of the duchy of Lancaster.²⁶⁸ Dudley's early patronage by Reynold Bray, expertise as a lawyer and, crucially, his intimate knowledge of the capital's government and personnel, made him invaluable to the king in light of the loss of a number of servants with established City connections.

Over approximately the same time period as the higher echelons of the royal court experienced substantial turnover of personnel, the civic government suffered from the same phenomenon. Of the twenty-eight aldermen who served during the year 1499 (not

²⁶⁴ To this list might be added John, Lord Cheyne and John, Viscount Wells (1499), Robert, Lord Willoughby de Broke (1502) and George Stanley, Lord Strange (1503). Gunn, 'Henry VII (1457-1509)', *ODNB*.

²⁶⁵ One might also include his third son, Edmund, who died in 1499.

²⁶⁶ M.M. Condon, 'Bray, Sir Reynold (c.1440-1503)', *ODNB*; Vergil, 128.

²⁶⁷ S.J. Gunn, 'Dudley, Edmund (c.1462-1510)', *ODNB*.

²⁶⁸ This was initially in the capacity of keeper of the seal of the duchy until promotion a year later to chancellor of the duchy. M.M. Condon, 'Empson, Sir Richard (c.1450-1510)', *ODNB*.

including the alderman of Portsoken) seventeen had either died or been excused from their post by the end of 1504, with the deaths of a further three aldermen the following year. Amongst the dead were men well known to the royal administration, including Henry Colet, John Fenkill, John Percyvale, Bartholomew Rede and John Shaa. The influx of new personnel largely unknown to the Crown administration accentuated the hole left in Henry's City intelligence network by the death of men like Bray, Rede and Shaa. Unknown, that is, except to Edmund Dudley.

- Aldermen who died 1505
- Aldermen who died 1499-1504

Name	Occupation	From	To	Notes	Reference
Nicholas Alwyn	Mercer	1496	1506		
John Broke	Grocer	1488	1502	Discharged	Rep.1, ff.94, 96v.
William Capell	Draper	1485	1515		
Richard Chawry	Salter	1481	1509		
Henry Colet	Mercer	1476	1505	Died	
Henry Cote	Goldsmith	1490	1505	Died	
Robert Fabyan	Draper	1494	1503	Discharged	Rep.1, f.137v, 138.
John Fenkill	Draper	1485	1499	Died	
Richard Haddon	Mercer	1499	1516		
William Issak	Draper	1487	1503	Discharged	Rep.1, f.141v
Stephen Jennings	Merchant Taylor	1499	1523		
John Mathew	Mercer	1482	1499	Died	
William Martyn	Skinner	1483	1505	Died	
Hugh Pemberton	Tailor	1491	1500	Died	
John Percyvale	Merchant Taylor	1485	1503	Died	
William Purchase	Mercer	1492	1502	Discharged	
William Remington	Fishmonger	1485	1511		
Bartholomew Rede	Goldsmith	1498	1504	Died	
John Shaa	Goldsmith	1496	1503	Died	
John Tate	Mercer	1485	1515		
Robert Tate	Mercer	1479	1500	Died	
Robert Tilney	Grocer	1485	1499	Died	
John Warde	Grocer	1479	1501	Died	
William Welbeck*	Haberdasher	1492	1504	Discharged	Rep.1, f.167
William White	Draper	1482	1504	Died	
Thomas Wood	Goldsmith	1496	1504	Died	
Thomas Wyndoute	Mercer	1499	1500	Died	
John Wyngar	Grocer	1498	1505	Died	

Table 5.1: Aldermen sitting from January 1499.

Source – Beaven unless otherwise stated.

Edmund Dudley was the man who would step into the vacuum created by the loss of personnel who had facilitated City-Crown communication earlier in the reign. Dudley's rise within the king's service was swift. As a lawyer who probably studied at Gray's Inn, Dudley would have spent many years living in London.²⁶⁹ After serving as an MP twice and on various commissions of the peace in Sussex he was appointed, in 1497, to be one of two undersheriffs of London, serving with Thomas Marowe, and remained in that post with Marowe until March 1502.²⁷⁰ He was Speaker of the House of Commons in the first quarter of 1504 and sworn of the king's council in October that year, becoming president of that body by July 1506.²⁷¹ To the king's other, long serving, councillors such as Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester and Lord Privy Seal, Sir Thomas Lovell and William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, Dudley's rise in royal service must have seemed meteoric.

Dudley's duties as undersheriff included serving with the sheriffs in their courts, and in this capacity he would have worked alongside many of the new aldermen made at the turn of the century as well as consolidating his relationship with some of the older ones. Certainly Dudley managed to cultivate some friendships during this time: Bartholomew Rede, who was sheriff in 1497-8, named Dudley as an overseer of his will. Also serving as sheriff at this time were Thomas Wyndoute, who had given Henry funding in the first few years of the reign; Stephen Jennings, who was to become mayor at the king's behest in 1508; and James Wilford, who became an alderman in 1500 but was suspended from the Court of Aldermen for a year and reinstated after the king's intervention.²⁷² It is possible that Dudley also made enemies during this time: one of the sheriffs he served with, Laurence Aylmer, was imprisoned on spurious charges late

²⁶⁹ D.M. Brodie, 'Edmund Dudley: Minister of Henry VII', *Transactions of the Royal History Society*, xv (1932), 136.

²⁷⁰ Jo.10, f.268v. Marowe resigned as undersheriff in Nov. 1502 (Jo.10, f.273). Dudley and Marowe were rewarded for their service the following December by the City with an annuity of 20s each and a livery (Rep.1, f.119).

²⁷¹ Though he may have been active in the king's service prior to this. J.A. Ross, "'Contrary to the right and to the order of the lawe": New Evidence of Edmund Dudley's Activities on behalf of Henry VII in 1504', *EHR*, cxxvii (2012), 24-45; S.J. Gunn, 'Dudley, Edmund'.

²⁷² Rep.1, ff.129, 154v, 155.

in the reign, though there is evidence to suggest that this was more at the behest of Richard Empson than Dudley.²⁷³

Dudley would have spent many years living in the City by the time he became Speaker of the House of Commons in January 1504, and worked with and possibly legally represented or given advice to many members of the mercantile community. This combined with likely patronage from Reynold Bray made him the perfect man to become Henry's source of information about the City and its personnel after the loss of intermediaries such as Bray and Shaa.

5.7 Conclusion

A variety of factors made London and the Crown's communication unique, namely the proximity of the two entities, the multitude of points of contact, the need to service the economic needs of the royal household and London's role as a centre for royal ceremonial. Ritualised communication between departments of the government and civic government, such as occurred when the sheriffs and mayor were sworn in by the barons of the Exchequer, served to emphasise strong links between the two and reiterate the uniqueness and intimacy of the relationship. Communication between the Crown and the City took place in many different forums and for a variety of reasons, and the mediums of exchange in the reign of Henry VII did not differ from those used previously. Though it is impossible to gauge whether communication between the City and the Crown took place more frequently than it had in previous reigns, it can be confidently stated that during Henry VII's reign communication was regular, driven by a variety of factors including the king's need for finance, matters of trade, Crown interference in civic elections or planning for large scale royal celebrations.

The demands made upon the City for pageantry on occasions of royal celebration were more frequent than at any other time in the previous century, with five royal entry pageants in the first two years of the reign. Possibly this was driven by Henry's perceived need for legitimation and acclamation in light of his weak blood-claim to the throne. The pageant to celebrate the arrival of Kathryn of Aragon in London

²⁷³ See Chapter 6, section 6.4.2.

represented the highpoint of such entertainment in the City and was not matched until the reign of Elizabeth. The agenda this time was to impress upon the royal visitors the magnificence and status of the ruling house and its worthiness of a prominent role on the world political stage.

Parliament was used by the Londoners in much the same way as it was by the rest of the realm, though as it sat on the doorstep of the City the citizens had more opportunity to lobby influential individuals or enlist the cooperation of other MPs. Though it did not affect Crown-City communication directly, the presence of parliament at Westminster led to an influx of personnel into the capital, facilitating intercourse between the citizens and the gentry and magnate classes who would have been present for its sitting. Naturally Londoners would have enjoyed some economic benefit from the influx of visitors, from the vendors of luxury goods to the innkeepers and the craftsmen. The frequency of parliament reduced towards the end of the reign, with the last held in 1504, as the king no longer needed grants of taxation from this assembly. Though this may have inhibited London's legislative programme it did not affect the quality or quantity of Crown-City communication.

The changes in the structure in the royal household that took effect after around 1495, with the establishment of the Privy Chamber, meant that access to the king became more difficult.²⁷⁴ Merchants, even Goldsmiths, were rarely found in the king's inner circle after the deaths of Rede and John Shaa, and the new royal domestic arrangements meant that they would not be replaced either. Yet with the deaths of Bray and Shaa in particular the king was bereft of insider knowledge of the civic government and intermediaries with personal contacts and networks within the capital. Dudley, with his knowledge of the City administration and its personnel, including the new men within the Court of Aldermen, was able to step into this void. In short, the deaths of Bray and Shaa, and the king's need for a new 'London man' meant that Dudley was the right man at the right time, propelling his rise in government.

²⁷⁴ David Starkey, 'Intimacy and Innovation: the Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1558', in David Starkey ed., *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (Harlow, 1987), 71-119.

Once Dudley was established as the Crown's main intermediary with the City the character of City-Crown relations changed. When Shaa and Rede worked with the likes of Bray and Morton, neither appeared to have been outwardly divided in their loyalties to either the City or the Crown. In contrast, as will be seen in the next chapter, Dudley saw his duty as lying firmly with the Crown and his previous service with the City worked very much to the king's benefit at the expense of the capital. Subjugation, rather than co-operation, became the defining characteristic of Crown-City relations once Dudley became the focal point of relations between the two entities.

Chapter 6: The Last Years, 1502-1509

In the last chapter it was shown that both the City and the Crown experienced a turnover of personnel shortly after the beginning of the new century. This chapter will explore the implications of that change and discuss whether the historical perception that the City was oppressed by the likes of Empson and Dudley is borne out in reality.

Historians of this period have had a tendency to ‘cherry-pick’ stories of persecution from the City, particularly those told in the Great Chronicle, to substantiate their arguments regarding the tyranny of the reign, usually without setting them in context or telling the tale in its entirety; this chapter will provide some of the missing context. A reappraisal of the alleged persecution of the City will follow after a brief consideration of the careers of Empson and Dudley and the relationship each had with the City. Lastly, it is essential to consider the immediate aftermath once Henry VII died and the state of the relationship upon the accession of his son, Henry VIII.

6.1. Contemporary and Near-Contemporary Perceptions of Henry’s Reign

Henry VII had been seriously ill many times in the years leading up to his death, giving his ministers time to plan for the event of his demise. The account of the king’s death by Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King of Arms from 1505 to 1534, makes it clear that Henry’s death was concealed from the court by the grooms of the Privy Chamber and certain of the old king’s leading ministers until the succession could be secured and orders made for the arrests of Empson and Dudley.¹ This action seems to suggest that these ministers were not only unpopular with the general public but also with their colleagues, who appeared ready to sacrifice them in order to emphasise the break with the old regime that the new reign was to represent.

A common theme in the complaints made of underperforming medieval kings was that they had fallen victim to ‘evil counsel’, offered by men, usually of low birth, who sought to oust the king’s natural counsellors, the magnates of the realm. The two

¹ S.J. Gunn, ‘The Accession of Henry VIII’, *Historical Research*, lxiv (1991), 279-288.

medieval English kings who had lost their crowns, Edward II and Richard II, had both endured the execution of their favourites prior to their own depositions. In the fifteenth century Henry VI and Edward IV had both been presented with manifestos during their respective reigns demanding the removal of favoured ministers, named as ‘false traytours’ whose intentions were their ‘own promotion and enrich[ment]’.² Henry VII himself had been accused of surrounding himself with ‘caitiffs and villains of simple birth’ in the manifesto of Perkin Warbeck.³ It therefore was natural that the ministers surrounding Henry VIII upon his accession, who had faithfully served the old king, would seek scapegoats for unpopular policies of the last reign, and thus protect themselves and preserve the reputation of their former master and their sovereign’s father. In keeping with the long tradition of blaming royal favourites for unpopular royal policy and preventing the king’s natural counsellors from advising the monarch, Empson was accused at his trial of attempting to ‘separate and remove all the Dukes, Earls, Barons and other Magnates of England from the favour and council of the king’.⁴

The author of the Great Chronicle, believing that he had witnessed a time of tyranny and oppression, stated that the worst of the financial exactions were perpetrated by Empson and Dudley. Referring to a season of ‘gret sorwe thorw the land’, Fabian laid the blame for this misery at the feet of ‘a fewe ungracious personys which namyd theym self the kingis promoters’, meaning Empson, Dudley and their network of London henchmen.⁵ That is not to say that he thought the king blameless, for after praising the late king’s wisdom, cunning, eloquence and prudence Fabian stated that the old king had no vice but avarice, which ‘was a blemysh to his magnyficence’.⁶ Polydore Vergil, in his 1513 manuscript of his English history, accused the king unequivocally of avarice, a charge he toned down somewhat in the printed edition of his work in 1534.⁷

² Ralph Griffiths, *Henry VI*, (1981, repr, Stroud, 1998), 628-640; Ross, *Edward IV*, 97.

³ *Henry VII from Contemporary Sources*, i, 152-3.

⁴ TNA, KB8/4; *Third Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1842), 227.

⁵ *GC*, 334.

⁶ *GC*, 338-9.

⁷ Vergil, 128-130; Gunn, ‘Henry VII’, *ODNB*

Stephen Hawes, a groom of Henry VII's Chamber and a poet, writing in celebration of the accession of Henry VIII, sought both to acknowledge and excuse the 'avarice' of the late king:

Our late Soverayne his fader excellent
I knowe ryght well some holden oppynyon
That to avaryce he had entendement
Gadrynge grete rychesse of this his region
But they lytell knowe by theyr small reason
For what hye entente he gadered doutles
Unto his grace suche innumerable ryches⁸

Hawes went on to justify the king's hoarding of riches by stating his belief that they were intended to fund a crusade against the Turks.⁹ Furthermore, he praised the new king's sense of justice in prosecuting those who had gathered those riches.¹⁰ John Skelton, again writing in celebration of Henry VIII's ascent of the throne, stressed the evils of the last reign and the restoration of natural order. In an allusion to Empson, Dudley and their henchmen, Skelton referred to wolves and bears that 'brought England in woe'.¹¹ Thomas More added that 'Now it is a delight to ignore informers. Only ex-informers fear informers now'.¹²

Despite the crown-sponsored promotion of the notion that the fiscal oppression of Henry VII's reign was the work of Empson and Dudley, they were not tried for these crimes. Both were found guilty of treason: Dudley was accused of gathering a 'great force of men and armed power' so that he might 'hold, guide and govern the king and his council against the wishes of the king,' and if the new king refused to cooperate

⁸ Stephen Hawes, *The Minor Poems*, ed. Florence Gluck and Alice Morgan, EETS, cclxxi (Oxford, 1974), 86.

⁹ In a letter to the Grand Master of Rhodes, Henry VIII stated that his father had wished to assist in the crusading effort against the Turks (*LP Hen. VIII*, I, 77 no.540).

¹⁰ *Minor Poems*, 88.

¹¹ John Skelton, *The Complete English Poems of John Skelton*, ed. John Scatergood (Harmondsworth, 1983), 9.

¹² Sir Thomas More, *The Complete Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed., C.H. Miller and others (New Haven, 1984), vol. 3.2, 100-113.

then Dudley planned to ‘completely destroy the king and to depose, remove and deprive him from his royal authority’.¹³ Empson was similarly accused of seeking to govern the new king against his will.¹⁴ It is likely that these accusations were fabrications, designed to see the downfall of the ministers popularly blamed for Henry VII’s fiscal exactions, though Steven Gunn argues that these charges of treason cannot be dismissed out of hand for, in the knowledge of their own unpopularity within the City, Empson and Dudley may have sought to protect themselves by gathering their retainers in the event of the old king’s demise.¹⁵ Either way, it would have been impractical to bring them to trial for alleged crimes committed on behalf of their royal master as their defence was likely to be that they had merely followed the late king’s wishes and which would destroy the fiction constructed to protect the memory of the new king’s father.

The chroniclers of Henry VIII’s reign mostly maintained this narrative. Hall’s chronicle, printed a year after the author’s death in 1548, states that Empson and Dudley were sacrificed ‘to shifte the noyse, of the straight execucion of penal statutes in the late kynges daies, by a punishment of those persones, and other promoters, for to satisfie and appeace the people’.¹⁶ It was an end they deserved, argued Hall, for ‘these two ravenynge wolves’ had enriched themselves and the king through the perversion of the law to their purpose.¹⁷ The Grafton and Holinshed chronicles, based in large part upon that of Hall, agreed, as did Stow, who erroneously claimed that Empson and Dudley were imprisoned after a flood of complaints were made to the king’s council about the injustices wrought in the last reign.¹⁸

Yet despite the best efforts of Henry VII’s former ministers to shift the blame onto Empson and Dudley, ever since Vergil accused the old king of avarice a consensus has existed amongst historians that a period of oppression was attributable largely to Henry’s financial greed. Bacon, writing an otherwise complimentary portrait of the

¹³ *Third Annual Report*, 226-227.

¹⁴ *Third Annual Report*, 227.

¹⁵ Gunn, ‘Accession of Henry VIII’, 286.

¹⁶ *Hall’s Chronicle*, 505.

¹⁷ *Hall’s Chronicle*, 502-3.

¹⁸ *Grafton’s Chronicle*, 231; Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London, 1808); Stow, *Annals*, 834.

king, confessed that avarice was a defect in the king's character.¹⁹ More recently Geoffrey Elton and J.P. Cooper famously argued about the extent of Henry's financial exactions upon his subjects in the last years of his reign and any consequent remorse shown; though they disagreed on a number of subjects, particularly the legality of some actions undertaken in the king's name, both accepted that oppression prevailed as a consequence of Henry's desire for riches.²⁰

Labelling a king 'avaricious' excuses the historian from seeking any other motivation, political or otherwise, for any persecutions that took place. Avarice has become a convenient cover-all for all actions in which the Crown stood to gain financially, but to indulge such greed on a wide scale would have been dangerous. Henry was not politically inept and therefore it should be asked whether there may have been other motives for the spate of prosecutions that occurred within the City. It is important first of all to consider the involvement of Empson, Dudley and their associates and then the extent to which the mercantile community of London warranted the measures taken against them.

6.2. Edmund Dudley, Richard Empson and the Promoters

The official line adopted after the death of Henry VII was that the oppressions of the reign were the work mainly of two men, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley who, according to Vergil, 'competed in gaining greater favour with their sovereign, and from the beginning, armed with a crew of tattle-tales who would denounce men by name'.²¹ It is apparent that Dudley was far more active in London than Empson, partly as a consequence of his familiarity with the City and partly because Empson had a far wider remit. Empson was primarily concerned with the Duchy of Lancaster, of which he was made chancellor in 1505, and the expansion of duchy-style equity proceedings in the formalities of the Council Learned and General Surveyors.²² Empson served as

¹⁹ Bacon, *Henry VII*, 150-151.

²⁰ Elton, 'Rapacity and Remorse' and 'A Restatement'; Cooper, 'Last Years'.

²¹ Vergil, 46.

²² Empson was a leading member of the duchy council under Bray's chancellorship. Bray's place was taken by Mordaunt, who died in 1504. Empson was initially made 'keeper of the duchy seal' on Mordaunt's death and granted the chancellorship in October 1505. Horowitz, 'Richard Empson', 40-41.

Recorder of Northampton in 1490 and of Coventry by the end of the following year, suggesting that his focus was the Midlands and North-West rather than the South.²³ Though he retained chambers in the Middle Temple until at least 1503 he only acquired a substantial base in the City, in the parish of St. Bride's, in 1507.²⁴ This was a key year in the career of Empson and Dudley, for the king's increasing incapacity from this time meant that they became more visible in acting on his behalf.²⁵

The geographical division of duties between Empson and Dudley was acknowledged at the time of their respective treason trials, for Empson's took place in his native Northamptonshire whilst that of Dudley was held at the Guildhall and presided over by Stephen Jennings, mayor of London.²⁶ There is little evidence to suggest that they worked any more closely together than any other of Henry's ministers, though their names are frequently linked. Stow's story of their meeting in their adjoining gardens to discuss business is probably fictitious as Dudley's house in Candlewick Street and Empson's in St. Bride's were not close enough to make this possible.²⁷ Though a number of bonds name the two ministers as counterparts, few, if any, show them acting without a clutch of other royal servants. The prosecution of Thomas Sunnyff is a rare example of their cooperation in such matters.²⁸

Dudley's close association with the capital is apparent in the way in which the City courted him when he became prominent in the royal administration. Dudley's role within the City as undersheriff has already been mentioned, a position he resigned in March 1502 and for which the City rewarded him with a pension and a livery gown.²⁹ Interestingly the City waited until after the resignation of Dudley's colleague, Thomas Marowe, as undersheriff, before bestowing their gift.³⁰ Whether the City had known of

²³ M.M. Condon, 'Empson, Sir Richard'.

²⁴ Condon, 'Empson, Sir Richard'. This property was leased from Westminster Abbey.

²⁵ Horowitz, 'Richard Empson', 43. Henry was gravely ill in March 1507, recovered in July and relapsed the following March.

²⁶ *Third Annual Report*, 226-228.

²⁷ Stow, *Survey*, i, 224.

²⁸ Horowitz, 'Agree with the king', 327.

²⁹ Jo.10, f. 119.

³⁰ Jo.10, f. 273.

Marowe's intention to resign in advance of his actual resignation or it was thought that a reward could not be given to Marowe without remembering the service done by Dudley is a matter of speculation. Either way, it is strange that Dudley had to wait nine months after his resignation to be so remembered. A hint that the City may not have been entirely satisfied with Dudley's performance as undersheriff came in October 1503 when a petition, addressed to the mayor, aldermen and Common Council, stated that in times past the undersheriffs of the City had 'for the most parte... been given and granted to stranngers neither beyng fremen nor frends of this Citee lytyll or nothing regarding the lib[er]ties of the same' and therefore they had not always acted in the City's interests.³¹ The petition went on to request that henceforth the position would only be given to 'hede officers undre the mayor or sheriffs' or to men who have dwelt in the City for at least four years who were likely to be sympathetic to the needs of the City.³² As Marowe had been a Londoner by birth and heritage and Dudley's and Marowe's successors, Richard Broke and Ralph Legh, were still serving it is tempting to believe that the petition was presented with Dudley in mind.³³

The annuity paid by the City to Dudley was increased in 1507 to £3 6s 8d per year.³⁴ Dudley successfully petitioned the City in autumn 1507 for permission to have a waterway off an existing City conduit into his house, requesting that the mayor, aldermen and Common Council take 'in consideration the grate zele love and favour that [he] hath heretofore borne, now bereth and faithfull[y] and contynuelly entendeth to bere unto this Citie'.³⁵ The livery companies of the City also sought to court Dudley; the Drapers' Company gave a gift of £10 to Dudley in 1504/5 so that he might be 'friendly' towards them and admitted him to their company.³⁶

³¹ Jo.10, f.296v.

³² Jo.10, f.296v.

³³ Dudley had lived and studied at Gray's Inn, but he was not a citizen and the Inns were not part of the City proper.

³⁴ Rep.2, f.37. This annuity replaced an 'old fee' of 26s 8d, implying that his annuity had been raised since 1502.

³⁵ Jo.11, ff.20v-21. The City promptly put together a commission to investigate the feasibility of the proposal and the request was granted. It passed to Henry Marney when he was granted Dudley's house in October 1509 (Rep.2, f.73v).

³⁶ www.londonroll.org, site accessed 23 June, 2015.

6.2.1. The Promoters, Informants and Corrupt Juries

Though the presence and activities of informers, who sought information for the Crown for personal profit, within London is most commonly associated with the ascendancy of Empson and Dudley, royal informers were active within the City long before 1504, the year Dudley was sworn of the king's council. Both John Baptist Grimaldi and Henry Toft were active as king's informers in the 1490s, probably working in close association with the king's attorney, James Hobart. A report from Toft to the king directly, written probably at the end of the 1490s, demonstrated that Toft was engaged in the prosecution of a number of actions, mostly regarding breaches of penal statutes.³⁷ Toft was also active in Star Chamber and Chancery, where he brought actions against Sir William Capell amongst others.³⁸

Toft's focus appears to have been mainly the home counties and the Midlands, whereas Grimaldi was based in London. Grimaldi's work for the king concentrated upon identifying and giving information about customs offences. On occasion he worked with Toft: a recognisance dated June 1495 held Grimaldi in a bond of £1,000 on the condition that he assist Toft to seize £500 worth of luxury textiles within the port of London.³⁹ Quite how this was to be achieved when neither of them held a formal post in the port of London is not clear, especially as part of their brief was to identify an officer complicit in fraudulent activities in the City's port.⁴⁰ Ten years later, in autumn 1505, Grimaldi was rewarded for the 'good and faithful service done to us' with the right to claim one of every four pennies seized of the increase in revenue generated by cloth seizures over the next three years, thus implying that his work in that area had been consistent over that time period.⁴¹

³⁷ TNA, STAC1/2/124. This document is undated but reference to a statute made in the 1496 parliament places it after that date.

³⁸ For example, TNA, C1/227/45, C1/53/300 and C1/346/32; TNA, STAC2/18/138.

³⁹ TNA, E159/272, recorda, Trinity 1496, rots. 18-19, recto.

⁴⁰ This may have been part of a wider effort to crack down on corrupt customs officials. 134 informations were laid against customs officials in the Exchequer court in Henry VII's reign. DeLloyd Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement, 1485-1509' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1967), 140, 228-33.

⁴¹ TNA E159/284, Mich. 1505, recorda, rot. 45, dorso.

As an unofficial informant operational in the port of London, Grimaldi would have been a familiar figure to the mercantile community. Certainly he was known to Sir William Capell, as Robert Fabyan, the author of the *Great Chronicle*, blamed Grimaldi's 'malice' for Capell's series of prosecutions in the court of the Exchequer in 1494.⁴² Fabyan was disgusted when, at the end of the reign, Grimaldi escaped punishment by taking sanctuary at Westminster.⁴³ Describing him as the 'most crewell and subtyllst wreech' of all the promoters active in London, Fabyan stated that Grimaldi had taken sanctuary after Empson, 'wyth whom he was Reteynynd', was arrested.⁴⁴ Fabyan's hatred of Grimaldi was so fierce that he was prompted to include in his text a fourteen-page ballad condemning the Genoan for, amongst other things, usury, sabotaging mercantile ships, perjury, murder, fratricide, serial adulteries, and taking his own daughter's virginity.⁴⁵

Grimaldi was also well known in court circles. The Spanish ambassador, Rodrigo de Puebla, had in 1507 suggested to Ferdinand that he use the Genoese Grimaldi banking firm as one of their London agents, John Baptist, enjoyed 'great credit' and was 'well known to the king of England'.⁴⁶ It was Grimaldi's cousin, Francesco, who orchestrated payment of Kathryn of Aragon's dowry.⁴⁷ It was perhaps in the knowledge of this 'great credit' John Baptist enjoyed with the king that he disregarded the authority of the City officials and failed to appear to answer a summons to the court of Husting in 1508, for which the king pardoned him.⁴⁸

Promoters were also to be found within the civic administration itself. John Camby was a member of the Grocers' Company, a serjeant in the sheriffs' house and keeper of the Poultry Compter.⁴⁹ The *Great Chronicle*, after a description of how Dudley exercised mayoral authority within the City, stated that Camby served as the equivalent of

⁴² *GC*, 258.

⁴³ *GC*, 337.

⁴⁴ *GC*, 337.

⁴⁵ *GC*, 352-364.

⁴⁶ *CPSP*, Supp., no. 19.

⁴⁷ *LP Hen. VIII*, i, nos.3, 5, 9 and (i), no.39.

⁴⁸ *CPR 1495-1509*, 564.

⁴⁹ *Rep.2*, f.72; *GC*, 349.

Dudley's chief alderman and 'fferre In auctoryte above any of the Shyreveys To whom of Rygth he awgth to have been subject and servaunt'.⁵⁰ Fabyan continues to describe Camby as a brothel keeper who survived in civic office despite complaints of bribery and 'forecible Injuries', and was eventually rewarded with the office of weigher of wools in the port of London, though he had to pay £100 for the position.⁵¹

Richard Page was a servant of Dudley's and an active informant within the City.⁵² Originally from Kent, Page may have enjoyed connections to the duchy of Lancaster, and particularly to Bray and Empson.⁵³ He was named in Dudley's trial as the messenger in the alleged treason plot between his master and other conspirators.⁵⁴ William Smyth and 'Mitchell' were also mentioned by the Great Chronicler as promoters who worked closely with Edmund Dudley.⁵⁵ Smyth was named by Fabyan as 'of kyng Henryes wardrobe' and thereby in good favour with Henry VII.⁵⁶ Smyth certainly was well rewarded by Henry, receiving grants of tenements near the Barbican in London, and various stewardships of royal lands.⁵⁷ He was exempted from Henry VIII's royal pardon of 1509 but appears to have re-emerged at court as a Chamber usher a year later.⁵⁸ 'Mitchell' was probably Thomas Mitchell, whom Dudley described as 'late my clerk' in his will and who was also exempted from the royal pardon.⁵⁹ A number of other names appear in the civic records who may have been cooperating with Dudley but little evidence of their activities remains and most are traceable only by the action taken against them after Dudley's fall. Robert Hall and Thomas Bate, keeper of Ludgate gaol and bailiff of Billingsgate respectively, were deprived of their offices at the same time that Camby was ejected from his post as keeper of the Poultry

⁵⁰ *GC*, 349.

⁵¹ *GC*, 349; *CPR, 1495-1509*, 470; BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.13.

⁵² TNA, STAC2/25/8; *CCR, 1500-1509*, no.774; *GC*, 337, 348, 365; Cooper, 'Last Years', 121.

⁵³ Cooper, 'Last Years', 121 & n.113.

⁵⁴ *Third Annual Report*, 226-228.

⁵⁵ *GC*, 337, 365.

⁵⁶ *GC*, 365.

⁵⁷ *CPR, 1495-1509*, 8, 16, 496.

⁵⁸ *LP Hen. VIII*, I, i, nos. 11 (10); *GC*, 455.

⁵⁹ *LP Hen. VIII*, I, i, nos.11 (10), 559.

Compter, thereby implying their involvement in activities detrimental to the citizens of London.⁶⁰

These men doubtless served a role in gathering information for Dudley. Collecting information in this way allowed Dudley to identify appropriate ‘victims’ rather than selecting them arbitrarily. Those prosecuted for misdemeanours by Dudley and his associates had usually already merited legal attention, as will be seen.

6.3. The ‘Persecution’ of the City

Helen Miller reflected the views of many of her contemporary historians when she wrote: ‘The closing years of the reign of Henry VII were marked by a series of incidents which, to Londoners at any rate, bore the impress of tyranny.’⁶¹ Acts of fiscal persecution against the City as a whole are frequently given as evidence of Henry’s rapacity. Most commonly cited are four cases in which the king and his ministers are deemed to have acted in a particularly harsh manner: first, that confirmation of the City’s charter was obtained only after the payment of 5,000 marks was extracted from the City; second, that the king, his ministers and their ‘promoters’ embarked on a campaign against the mercantile community in the Court of the Exchequer; third, that the king and his ministers sought to undermine the administration of City justice; lastly, that the king interfered in the appointment of civic officials. This section examines whether there is sufficient extant evidence to justify these conclusions.

6.3.1. The City Charter

J.P. Cooper claimed that Henry VII procrastinated in granting a charter to the City confirming its traditional liberties and privileges, and when he did eventually do so it was ‘at the price of 5,000 marks, in a charter that did not wholly satisfy the City.’⁶² Elton, in his riposte to Cooper’s article, did not deny this but instead perceived ‘conflict between Henry and the City over its charters and liberties’ as part of a wider

⁶⁰ Rep.2, f.72.

⁶¹ Miller, ‘London and Parliament’, 128-49.

⁶² Cooper, ‘Last Years’, 110.

governmental effort to ‘trim the powers of franchise holders everywhere’.⁶³ These statements cannot be denied, yet the story of the charter is not as straightforward. It was not simply that the king sold the City a unsatisfactory charter for an extortionate price.

A deputation of six aldermen and six members of the Common Council were sent to the king, in January 1504, to negotiate the repeal of the Merchant Taylors’ charter and the terms of renewal for the Great Charter of the City.⁶⁴ Whether the civic administration had wanted to make any changes or enhancements to the liberties enshrined in the most recently granted charter is not specified, but it is likely that the delegation went with a list of requests of additions to the charter, as was traditional, including formal acknowledgment in the charter of the earlier negotiated restrictions on foreign brokers.⁶⁵ The king had already been offered 5,000 marks for the renewal of the charter and a further 2,500 marks for the repeal of the Merchant Taylors’ charter, an offer that was reiterated in May 1504.⁶⁶ The king agreed only a new City charter, and by March 1505 negotiations had been concluded and the City agreed to pay the king 5,000 marks in five tranches for the new charter.⁶⁷

The terms of the charter were clearly not what the City had hoped for. It was not a renewal of the most recent one with the customary addition of clauses that further enhanced the privileges of the City, but confirmed instead those of Edward III in 1376 and Richard II in 1396.⁶⁸ In theory, therefore, the additional privileges granted by Henry VII’s fifteenth-century predecessors were thereby invalidated. Some additional privileges granted by subsequent charters were also included, such as the right for the mayor and select aldermen to act as justices of the peace and there was a new addition regarding the restriction on foreign brokers.⁶⁹ However, the City lost more than it gained. For example, the City offices sold by Edward IV to the City for the sum of

⁶³ Elton, ‘A Restatement’, 15-16.

⁶⁴ Rep.1, f.151.

⁶⁵ Rep.1, f.151.

⁶⁶ Rep.1, f.149; Jo.10, f.312v.

⁶⁷ Jo. 10, ff. 330v, 333v; BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.4v.

⁶⁸ Birch, *Charters*, xxxii.

⁶⁹ J.E. [sic], *The Charters of the City of London* (London, 1745), 56-58; Birch, *Charters*, 94-96.

£7,000, enshrined in the fourth charter that Edward granted to the City in 1478, were resumed by the Crown except for that of gauger, which was specifically stated to belong to the City.⁷⁰

It is possible that the City had sought to re-establish its authority and safeguard its existing privileges from further Crown encroachments, in which case the Crown sent a clear message in restricting the traditional privileges of the City. The new charter was a sharp reminder to the City that all of its privileges and liberties it held were at royal sufferance. That this charter did not satisfy the City did not affect the agreed price and the City had to levy five fifteenths in civic taxes to raise the 5,000 marks it had agreed to pay in five tranches.⁷¹ Yet it should be stressed that the City volunteered to pay this sum. It was not demanded by the Crown but once offered the king may have been determined to see it delivered. It may even have represented a point of principle to the king, proof that the City was subject to his authority and would be subjugated to his will. This was particularly important after the City had challenged the royal prerogative over the Merchant Taylors' charter. That principle, not money, was the prime driver for the king in this matter is demonstrated by his refusal to repeal the Merchant Taylors' charter, for which he would have received 2,500 marks. The City had sought to solve a problem by throwing money at it and was stumped when it transpired that money was no longer the answer to their problems.

Record of a meeting of the Court of Aldermen on 28 April, 1509, a mere matter of days after Henry's death, shows that the City felt that Henry VII's charter deprived them of their traditional liberties. It was agreed that the 'whole council of the City' was to be gathered and 'with gud deliberacion and diligence oversee all the Articles of the charter', most importantly, 'such Articles of libertes as the Citizens been enterupted of' were to be recorded in a book that was to be shown to the mayor and aldermen to allow them to 'sue for a remede thereof.'⁷²

⁷⁰ That is, the offices of packer, garbeller and wine-drawer. Birch, *Charters*, 90-93, 96.

⁷¹ Jo.10, f.333v, 335.

⁷² Rep.2, f. 66.

It was not until 1518 that a new City charter was granted. Two possible reasons exist for the City's uncharacteristic patience. Firstly, for many years the Crown administration consisted of many of the same personnel that the City negotiated the 1504 charter with, and therefore reinstatement of the missing liberties was unlikely. Secondly, it may have been that in practice the missing privileges did not alter the *modus operandi* of the City, and in the same way that livery companies slowly began to ignore the statute that dictated that they have their ordinances approved by Crown officials rather than the mayor and aldermen, so too did the usual privileges of the City begin to reassert themselves.

It should be noted that the City was not the only body to pay a large amount for a charter. The county of Cheshire was charged £2,000 for a charter of liberties in 1507; the main city of that county was Chester, which had paid £50 the previous year for a charter that was superseded by this new one.⁷³

6.3.2. *The Court of the Exchequer*

This charge stems from the often quoted passage in the Great Chronicle, where Fabyan condemned the prosecution of William Capell and others in the Court of the Exchequer, stating that 'many unleffull and fforgetyn statutis and actis made hunderyth of yeris passid were now quykenyd and sharply callid upon to the grete Inquyettesse of many of the kyngis Subgectis'.⁷⁴ The derision shown by the chronicles for this court has led to claims that it became a weapon of persecution against the mercantile community of the capital.⁷⁵

The remit of the Court of the Exchequer was to prosecute matters pertaining to the king's interest and specifically in cases of breach of statute or violation of royal proclamation where the penalty incurred was financial.⁷⁶ Certainly the prosecution of

⁷³ Horowitz, 'Henry VII, English towns', 42.

⁷⁴ *GC*, 334; Horowitz, "'Agree with the King'", 345; Cavill, *English Parliaments*, 97.

⁷⁵ Sutton, *Mercery*, 343; Sidney Anglo, 'Ill of the dead: the posthumous reputation of Henry VII', *Renaissance Studies*, i (1987), 27-47; P.R. Cavill, 'The Enforcement of the Penal Statutes in the 1490s: Some New Evidence', *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 482-492.

⁷⁶ Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement', 9-11.

breaches of penal statutes escalated in the course of the reign, with 37 per cent of actions brought in the reign falling within its last five years.⁷⁷ The fourteen actions brought against Capell in the Exchequer court are often taken to epitomise the attacks on the mercantile community undertaken in this forum.⁷⁸ Yet this was not as exceptional as is often claimed. John Marchall, Mercer, also faced fourteen actions in the Court of the Exchequer in 1479 for offences committed at least ten years previously, suggesting that he may have been selected to serve as an example to other customs dodgers, of which, if the complaints of Edward IV to the Mercers' Company at around that time are to be believed, there were many.⁷⁹ Like Capell, Marchall was fined £2,500 but whereas Capell was able to get his fine reduced to £1,615 after the intervention of his wife's brother-in-law, Giles, Lord Daubeney, there is no evidence to suggest that Marchall was similarly blessed.⁸⁰ The Great Chronicle, written by Capell's business associate and fellow Draper, Robert Fabyan, claimed that the architect of the charges brought against Capell was the Genoese merchant, John Baptist Grimaldi.⁸¹ Yet in this instance, at least, Fabyan's allegation was not entirely accurate: Grimaldi was involved in two of the cases, but as the counter-party, not the bringer of the informations.⁸²

A clamp-down upon the activities of the mercantile community was probably merited. Edward IV had struggled with customs evasion and brought a total of 312 actions in the court of the Exchequer for alleged customs evasions in the Port of London.⁸³ Henry VII, in a reign of a similar length to that of Edward IV, brought only 230 such actions.⁸⁴ Nearly all of the actions in Henry VII's reign were brought by customs officials, which

⁷⁷ Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement', 284-5.

⁷⁸ TNA, E159/271, Mich. 1494. Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement', 134; Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 237; Elton, 'A Restatement', 7; Penn, *Winter King*, 267.

⁷⁹ *Acts*, 118-123, 139.

⁸⁰ Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement', 223-5. The Great Chronicle gives the figure owed as £2,743, (*GC*, 258). Capell paid at least £898 11s 7d over the following three years in instalments of £294 8s 10d (TNA E101/414/6, f.117, E101/414/16, f.91r and E101/415/3, f.276v).

⁸¹ *GC*, 258. Fabyan was named as one of the sureties of Capell's fine (TNA, E101/414/6, f.117, E101/414/16, f.91r and E101/415/3, f.295). It is therefore somewhat surprising that Fabyan gets the amount of Capell's fine and the amount finally paid wrong.

⁸² TNA, E159/271, Mich. 1494, recorda, v-viii.

⁸³ Cobb, 'Introduction', *Overseas Trade*.

⁸⁴ Cobb, 'Introduction', *Overseas Trade*; Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement', 142.

suggests that the number of actions brought was, at least in part, a consequence of an increased efficiency of the paid bureaucracy that regulated foreign trade rather than any covert attack upon the mercantile community.

This undermines the argument that a large proportion of the cases presented in this court were brought by private informants hopeful of a reward shared with the Crown if the action was successful. Though Henry's government did encourage informing for profit, it is unwise, argues Paul Cavill, to 'assume that Henry's reign broke new ground' in the employment of professional informers or 'promoters' given that the statutory division of forfeitures pre-dated the reign.⁸⁵ DeLloyd Guth, in his analysis of the Exchequer cases brought in Henry VII's reign, concluded that 'the notion of an army of private informers is pure myth, at least for Henry VII's Exchequer.'⁸⁶ A full investigation into the activities of royal informers in the port of London before 1485 has not yet been undertaken, but it may be noted that the proportion of cases brought by private individuals in Edward IV's reign at the Exchequer court was again higher than that of Henry VII's reign.⁸⁷

Paul Cavill argues that Henry's enforcement of penal statutes should be seen in terms of good governance and a determination to enforce neglected areas of the law, as opposed to a means for fiscal advancement.⁸⁸ Cavill presents the instance of a statute, passed in Richard III's parliament of 1484, addressing the fraudulent finishing of cloth as further evidence of this point. In a proclamation addressed to the sheriffs of London in the mid-1490s the king stated his intention to enforce the said statute, but gave a period of grace, indicating both a desire to implement the law and a fair-mindedness in notifying his subjects 'not willing rigourously without due monycioun to put theyme to eny losse or daunger'.⁸⁹ Cavill's point is two-fold, firstly, that by giving a period of grace the king did not press his financial advantage, and secondly that an emphasis on

⁸⁵ Cavill, 'Penal Statutes', 482.

⁸⁶ Guth, 'Exchequer Penal Law Enforcement', 277.

⁸⁷ 95 of the 312 actions for alleged customs evasion in the port of London brought in Edward IV's reign were brought by private individuals, though to my knowledge these have not been examined for evidence of a professional body of informers (*Overseas Trade*, xi-xlvi).

⁸⁸ Cavill, 'Penal Statutes', 488.

⁸⁹ Cavill, 'Penal Statutes', 482-8.

law enforcement was apparent earlier in the reign than its last decade. That the fiscal fruits of the labour of this enforcement only entered the royal coffers once the central bureaucracy had mastered its application in the latter years of the reign perhaps contributed to the contemporary perception of these years as a time of fiscal oppression.

6.3.3. City Justice and the Crown

The third accusation commonly levelled at the Henrician government during its last years is that the king and his ministers sought to undermine the administration of City justice. Mark Horowitz, in his article about the unfortunate Draper, Thomas Sunnyff, stated that ‘summary imprisonments... seem to have been ubiquitous during the reign’ and quotes as his evidence a Common Council meeting of 1502 in which it was noted that through the City courts ‘divers and many p[er]sones daily been and tyme past have been arrested atte div[er]s mennes su[i]ts uppon div[er]s and sev[er]all playnts and accons’, many of which failed to proceed to judgement.⁹⁰ Horowitz’s argument is that imprisonment was used as a ‘coercive means to settle royal matters with cash payments and obligations’. What Horowitz failed to mention was that the passage he quoted from the Journals of Common Council was an extract from a petition heard before the Common Council for the reform of such practices in the City courts. This cannot be taken as a reflection of the practices of the central government of the time and it does not demonstrate that imprisonment was used to coerce debtors.⁹¹ However, such practices did happen, as will be seen later in the cases of Capell, Sunnyff and Kneseworth, but there is no evidence to suggest they were widespread.

The accusation of fixed juries is on firmer ground. The author of the Great Chronicle complained that Empson and Dudley ‘hadd they theyr ffalse Juryes soo ffyxid unto theym that they were assurid they they wold not passe agayn theyr meyndis’.⁹² The City had made an attempt to address the problem of corrupt juries in 1505, when it was declared that six men who had committed ‘detestable perjury’ would henceforth ‘in nowise be putte or somoned in any juries or enquest to be somoned w[ith]in this

⁹⁰ Mark Horowitz, ““Agree with the King””

⁹¹ Jo.10, ff.246-246v.

⁹² *GC*, 334.

Citie'.⁹³ Whether these men had been active in the City or central courts, or both, is impossible to ascertain. It is entirely possible that they had come to the attention of the City authorities in their capacity as jurors on cases in the central courts on cases concerning Londoners.⁹⁴ Three years later three of these men served upon the presenting juries for three trials brought against Sir William Capell and one against Laurence Aylmer at the King's Bench.⁹⁵ It would surely have been known within the law circles at Westminster that certain jurors still employed by the central courts had been censured by the City. The City eventually succeeded in punishing the offending jurors after the death of Henry VII when, along with other corrupt jurors, the three men who had both been accused of perjury in 1505 and had served on the juries that indicted Capell and Aylmer were disenfranchised and sent to the pillory.⁹⁶

6.3.4. Crown Interference in Civic Appointments

The fourth charge, that Henry VII and his government interfered in the appointment of civic officers, cannot be denied.⁹⁷ If anything Crown inference is, unusually, understated as collectively Henry's interference in civic elections appears to constitute the most blatant royal intervention in the capital's civic appointments since Richard II's reign.⁹⁸ Two mayors and three sheriffs were appointed at the king's behest, one disgraced alderman was reinstated and a clutch of more minor appointments were made.

John Percyvale became the first Tailor to become mayor after the king wrote to the City requesting his election to the post in 1498.⁹⁹ Though there was no overt opposition

⁹³ Rep.1, f.172v.

⁹⁴ It is likely that they all served in the court of Common Pleas as well as in the King's Bench. Two of the men condemned by the City in 1505, for example, John Wright, alias Derby, and John Bramston, served as jurors in the court of Common Pleas (TNA, CP40/951, rot.461).

⁹⁵ TNA, KB9/961/54, KB9/961/4. The three men in question were the Bowyer, John Wright, William Simpson, Fuller and Richard Smith, Carpenter.

⁹⁶ TNA, KB9/961/54 and KB9/961/4; Jo.11, f.74v; Rep.2, f.69v; *GC*, 337.

⁹⁷ See Cooper, 'Last Years', 110; Horowitz, 'Henry VII, English Towns', 50; Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 239.

⁹⁸ See Barron, 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London', 173-201.

⁹⁹ Jo.10, f.141v; *GC*, 288.

to the king's wish it is likely that Percyvale was not a popular choice, for he had been the losing candidate in mayoral elections on four previous occasions.¹⁰⁰ Percyvale was not unique in this – William Capell was also rejected four times – but it does perhaps illustrate both his unpopularity and possibly a reluctance to elevate the Tailors by having one of their number as mayor.

Two more Tailors were to benefit from the king's sponsorship in civic elections. At a meeting of the Court of Aldermen in October 1508 it was agreed to gather the wardens of every fellowship 'to th[e] entent that the kyngs letter adresid for the eleccion of M Jennings to th[e] office of maraltie shalbe redde to theym'.¹⁰¹ If there were objections they were not recorded and Stephen Jennings was duly elected mayor. There is no evidence that Jennings paid for the support of the king in this matter and he was to find himself in the peculiar situation of sitting on the commissions into the abuses of his patrons.¹⁰²

The king's request for William Fitzwilliam to be elected sheriff in 1506 caused far more controversy. On 19 September 1506 the wardens of the crafts were assembled at the Guildhall to have the king's letter regarding his wish for Fitzwilliam's election read to them.¹⁰³ The Great Chronicle states that it was the king's wish that the commons should elect Fitzwilliam as their choice of sheriff as the outgoing mayor, also at the king's behest, had chosen William Copynger, Fishmonger.¹⁰⁴ The commons rebelled and chose instead the Goldsmith Robert Johnson who was sworn and admitted into the position.¹⁰⁵ The barons of the Exchequer, who took the oaths of the sheriffs of London, refused to accept Johnson, though Johnson continued with his duties for a number of days thereafter.¹⁰⁶ The king commanded that a new election should be held, which it

¹⁰⁰ Jo.9, ff.239, 280v; Jo.10, ff.79, 108v.

¹⁰¹ Rep.2, f.50.

¹⁰² *Third Annual Report*, 226-228.

¹⁰³ Rep.2, f.14.

¹⁰⁴ *GC*, 332, Fitzwilliam was to 'be Joynyd with William Copynger whom the othyr mayer ffor the kyng hadd namyd'.

¹⁰⁵ Jo.10, f.364v.

¹⁰⁶ *GC*, 333.

was, with Edmund Dudley in attendance to ensure that the king's will was obeyed.¹⁰⁷ Fitzwilliam was elected, though many of the commons 'a while w'stood, saying It was an uttyr derogacion unto the lybertees of the Cyte'.¹⁰⁸ Royal assistance in such matters did not come cheap, though, as Fitzwilliam had to pay £100 'for the king's gracious favour for being sheriff'.¹⁰⁹ The king's sponsorship of William Copynger in this election is not noted in the civic records, and perhaps did not need to be as Copynger became the choice of the outgoing mayor, Thomas Kneseworth, for sheriff rather than that of the commons. This raises the possibility that the king had made similar requests of other outgoing mayors, and if so the true extent of his interference in civic elections is unknowable.

The opposition to Fitzwilliam's election is in direct contrast to the muted response of the London commons to the king's earlier interference in a shrieval election. On that occasion, in September 1504, it was William Copynger's election as sheriff that was overturned in response to a letter from the king declaring his preference for William Brown, Mercer.¹¹⁰ Given the king's sponsorship of Copynger in 1506, the object was obviously to get Brown in post rather than oust the incumbent. Copynger had been the commons' choice to serve as sheriff but his replacement at a meeting of the Common Council a matter of days after his election appears to have passed unnoticed by the London chroniclers and unchallenged by the commons. Why was the election of Fitzwilliam resisted by the City whereas the Brown one was not? The answer probably lies in the personal unpopularity of Fitzwilliam and the general unpopularity of the Tailors. Fitzwilliam had been instrumental in negotiating the unpopular charter of the Merchant Taylors. His motives for seeking the role were apparently suspect and he was accused of a desire to 'put in question the franchyse of the Cyte' or to demonstrate to his peers how high he stood in the king's favour, 'that he mygth opteyne of his Grace that many othir mygth nott'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *GC*, 333.

¹⁰⁸ *GC*, 333. A meeting of the Common Council was held 15 Oct. 1506, and though no details of the meeting were recorded it seems likely that this may have been the one Dudley attended (Jo.10, f.366v).

¹⁰⁹ BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.31.

¹¹⁰ Jo.10, f.324v.

¹¹¹ *GC*, 333.

The reinstated alderman was another Merchant Taylor, James Wilford. Wilford had been absent from the aldermanic court for a year after insulting the then mayor, William Capell.¹¹² Upon his readmission to the court in February 1505 he was asked by the Recorder if he had anything to say, to which Wilford replied that the mayor ‘knew the kyngs mynde welynough and therfor he desirid to knowe the mayors pleasure and theruppon he wold make relacion to the Kyng’.¹¹³ The entry carries on to note that Wilford at no time spoke any ‘words of submission’ and that Wilford’s presence was tolerated only because of the king’s intervention, though what form that intervention took is unrecorded.¹¹⁴

It was not just civic governmental offices that Henry interfered with. A letter from him to the Merchant Adventurers in April 1496 stated that John Pickering, Mercer and former governor of the Adventurers, was once more their governor, but this time by royal appointment rather than free election.¹¹⁵ John Challoner, who replaced Robert Sheffield as Recorder of London in 1508, paid £100 for the king’s favour in securing the position.¹¹⁶

What was Henry trying to achieve by interfering with City appointments? This thesis has argued that his sponsorship of the Merchant Taylors was an attempt to widen the oligarchic base of the civic government and dilute the hold of the mercantile companies on the capital’s administration.¹¹⁷ Seeking the promotion within civic government of individuals from this company can be seen as part of this strategy. This is particularly striking when one considers that this policy was contrary to Henry’s efforts in other urban centres, where, according to James Lee, his primary aim was to narrow the oligarchic municipal power-bases into groups of ‘smaller, royally-approved group[s] of individuals’ and ensure they had the means to provide ‘crown-sponsored self-government’.¹¹⁸ Henry’s actions in championing the Merchant Taylors did exactly the

¹¹² Rep.1, ff.154v-155.

¹¹³ Rep.1, f.154v.

¹¹⁴ Rep.1, f.155.

¹¹⁵ *Acts*, 597.

¹¹⁶ LBM, f.146v; BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.45.

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.5.

¹¹⁸ Lee, ‘Henry VII and his Towns’, 499-500, 504.

opposite to what he had done in York, Exeter, Bristol, Leicester and Northampton, where he had taken an active part in reforms of the civic constitutions allowing them to reshape their civic administrations using London as a model.¹¹⁹ That he broke with this practice in his relations with London substantiates the theory that he sought a counter-balance to the mercantile companies of the Mercers, Drapers and Grocers.

6.4. 'Persecution' of Individuals

Edmund Dudley was sentenced to death in July 1509, a mere three months after the death of the king he had served, but it was a year until his sentence was carried out.¹²⁰ Sometime in the month following his sentence he wrote a petition, addressed to his former colleagues on the King's Council, Richard Fox bishop of Winchester and Thomas Lovell, which listed all those he felt had been wronged by his actions on behalf of the late king.¹²¹ This list has been itemised by its editor, C.J. Harrison, and comprises eighty-four articles, of which one, number eighty-three, is further broken down into seventeen separate cases, making a total of 101 men, women or institutions listed as having been particular victims of Henry's fiscal exactions applied through Dudley. Of these 101 cases only sixteen relate to London institutions, residents or citizens. This raises a number of questions. Was perhaps Dudley not as active in London as is often stated, though it does seem apparent that he was more involved in London matters than Empson? Is it possible that Dudley did not feel his conscience sufficiently pricked by London cases? The list comprises only those he felt were hard done by; William Capell, for example, is not on the list, suggesting that Dudley may have felt that the merchant's treatment was not unwarranted.¹²² Whatever the reason, 16 per cent is a small fraction of the total, given the population and concentration of wealth in the capital at the time. One would have expected the richest pickings were to be found in London if the primary aim was simply to enrich the king.

¹¹⁹ Lee, 'Henry VII and his Towns', 499-503.

¹²⁰ *LP Hen. VIII*, I, ii, app.2.

¹²¹ Harrison 'The Petition of Edmund Dudley', 82-99.

¹²² See section 6.4.1. below.

6.4.1. *Sir William Capell*

The persecution of individual Londoners, particularly rich ones, has featured heavily in secondary literature about the period and the case of Sir William Capell has been frequently used as an example of extortion.¹²³ Yet Capell's case is not so straightforward. He had brought himself to the attention of the king during his tenure as mayor through his leadership of the City in pursuit of the repeal of the Merchant Taylors' charter. He may not have been found guilty in all the actions brought against him in the Court of the Exchequer in 1494, but he was still culpable for many.¹²⁴ He was certainly guilty of the illegal practice of usury contrary to the statutes of 1487 and 1496.¹²⁵ His *modus operandi* in such deals is revealed in a Chancery case brought against him by Richard, Lord Beauchamp. As is the nature of such petitions the document is undated, but its address to 'John, archbishop of Canterbury and Chamberlain of England', places it before Morton's death in 1500.¹²⁶ Through the mediation of a friend Beauchamp had arranged to borrow from Capell £200 'under such forme of wynnyng as he had delte wt other lords and gentlemen'; that is that Capell would receive £120 for every £100 he lent. Capell apparently showed Beauchamp writings of such arrangements he had entered into with the Lord Audeley and others of the peerage. Repayment was to be doubly secured on certain of Beauchamp's property and an additional bond made before the mayor of the Westminster Staple, Sir John Brown for £300. The latter bond would be declared void once Capell received £240. Unfortunately, though, Beauchamp claimed he never received the £200, which was meant to be delivered by one Henry Rabet as Capell did not want to give the money himself for fear that he would be accused of usury. However, that did not stop Capell from pressing for payment of the £300 bond. Capell answered the case by stating that the bill of complaint was insufficient and 'none other but matter subtly and craftily imagined' in order to debar Beauchamp from paying his true debt, which was for a monstrance of gold and jewels he had purchased.¹²⁷ The outcome of this case is unknown. The case of Beauchamp is only one of many brought in Chancery against Capell accusing him of usury. Henry Toft brought to the attention

¹²³ Elton, 'A Restatement', 15-16; Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 242; Penn, *Winter King*, 267, 347.

¹²⁴ See section 6.3.2.

¹²⁵ 3 Hen.VII, c.5 and 11 Hen.VII, c.8.

¹²⁶ TNA, C1/84/33.

¹²⁷ TNA, C1/84/34.

of the Chancery court Capell's loan of £400 to Sir Edward Burgh and Capell was also one of the earl of Kent's many creditors.¹²⁸

Capell's tenure as mayor in 1503/4 drew much controversy. As well as drawing attention to himself in the matter of the Merchant Taylors' patent he also apparently questioned the king's jurisdiction in his own capital. A case brought in the Court of Requests just after Capell completed his year as mayor, if the plaintiff can be believed, is suggestive of Capell's cavalier attitude towards royal authority. John Tucker, a coriour, or curer of hides, aged 74, complained that in May 1504 goods of his trade to the value of £300 had been confiscated from his house by John Halle, one of the sergeants of the mayor, upon the commandment of mayor Capell and the then chamberlain of the City, William Milborne. Tucker was then imprisoned. When Tucker complained to Capell and Milborne about his treatment and argued that he had a royal licence to go about his business, Capell apparently stated that the king had no authority to grant or give such a licence within the City.¹²⁹ Tucker fled to sanctuary and filed a suit against the executors of the now deceased John Halle, who defended themselves by stating that Tucker had been found guilty of fouling waterways by the Fleet, by dyeing his hides there, and therefore the case against Halle ought to be dismissed and Tucker fined and imprisoned. Tucker, then, may not be the most reliable witness, but whether Capell did question the king's authority in this case or not it is unlikely that such an accusation would have gone unnoticed.

In 1508 three cases were brought against Capell at the Kings Bench for three very different misdemeanours. The first alleged that Capell had spoken to one Thomas Kyme on 4 April 1507 'in words false, malicious and against the honour and dignity of the king':

¹²⁸ TNA, C1/227/45. Kent appears to have been embroiled in an arrangement similar to that of Beauchamp, as he entered into a bond to Capell before William Brown, Mayor of the Staple of Westminster, in Feb. 1507, a debt that Capell was determined to pursue (TNA, C131/94/12, C131/256/19, C131/91/10, C131/91/3, C131/91/19).

¹²⁹ *Select Cases in the Court of Requests, 1497-1569*, ed. I.S. Leadam, Seldon Soc, xii (London, 1898), 7-9.

... that the king's grace hath had of me oon thowsand pounds for my son as wrongfully [as any] prince had of man And also two thowsand marc[s] in a nother mater as wrongfully as the [one thousand] And also that the king had of hym since... he was king [£10,000] or marks as wrongfully as eny prince had of any man.¹³⁰

He then went on to add that such a donation did him little good! The £1,000 was an obvious reference to the pardon of May 1500 for Capell and his son, Giles.¹³¹

The second case is the one most widely reported, for it is the reason given by the Great Chronieler for the persecution of Capell at this time, and saw the former mayor accused of letting a coin-shaver go at large whilst he was in office. The third indictment stated that on the last day of September 1508 William Capell argued with Richard, Earl of Kent:

[Capell said] My Lord ye have undon[e] me Whereunto the said Erle then and there answerd It was not so And then and there the said [Sir] William answerd and said by godds body ye and the kings grace have undon[e] me And the said Erle Answerd hym and said the kings grace undoyth no man And yf the kings grace had not beyn ye and suche other had undon[e] me Whereunto the said [Sir] William then and there answerd and said that thenne the king doth for you that he doth for few men for and yf I had beyn a Frenchman or a horeson Lombard I might have lyved in rest as other doo.¹³²

Capell's accusation to Kent that he had 'undone him' was possibly a reference to information Kent gave to the king back in 1501, pertaining to Capell's involvement in the practice of usury, for which Kent received the sum of five marks.¹³³

All three inquests were held at Guildhall. The first two were in July and October respectively and were presided over by the mayor, Laurence Aylmer. The third was in November of the same year, by which time the mayor was Stephen Jennings. Though separated by a number of months, all three cases share a remarkable number of the

¹³⁰ TNA, KB9/961/54.

¹³¹ *CPR, 1495-1509*, 414.

¹³² TNA, KB9/961/54 for all three cases.

¹³³ Kent was paid for 'shewyng of usury don unto him by [Sir] Willi[am] Capell', TNA E101/415/3, f.295; BL, Add. Ms.21480, f.181r.

same jurors, and many of these jurors also sat in judgement upon Laurence Aylmer and his sheriffs in January the next year.¹³⁴

It is apparent that Capell was not targeted simply because of his wealth. He had started the reign in royal favour; can he be seen to be, was he ultimately the architect of his own downfall? He hit many raw nerves with the Henrician government: his extensive involvement in the practice of usury, a sin particularly frowned upon and legislated against by Henry VII, is inferred from the plethora of entries in the Close Rolls regarding legal actions initiated by him against debtors. He apparently failed to prosecute a coin-clipper whilst mayor, even though the prosecution of those engaged in such practices was a priority given the government's attempt to control the bullion supply and implement fully the recoinage programme started early in the reign. He had led the City in a campaign to see the repeal of the Merchant Taylors' charter, which was perceived by Henry and his council as an assault upon the king's prerogative. Lastly, he allegedly spoke seditiously and publicly of his treatment by the king. Capell's cavalier attitude towards authority and law was perhaps too blatant to be allowed to go unpunished.

The veracity of the charges against Capell will never be known, but he was imprisoned in the Tower, rather than any of the City prisons, until after the death of Henry VII. That he was excluded from Henry VIII's general pardon implies that the new king's ministers considered that there may have been some justice in the treatment of Capell.¹³⁵ It was not until January 1510 that John Yong, Master of the Rolls, was informed that Capell had leave to sue for pardon.¹³⁶

6.4.2. The 'Victims' of Empson and Dudley

The cases of Laurence Aylmer and Thomas Sunnyff are two genuine examples of persecution and wrongful imprisonment. Both cases have been written about, the latter

¹³⁴ TNA, KB9/961/4.

¹³⁵ *LP Hen. VIII*, I, i, no.11(10).

¹³⁶ *LP Hen. VIII*, I, i, no.357(22).

in great detail recently by Mark Horowitz.¹³⁷ The aim here is to examine a few of the most commonly recited cases in detail to illustrate that there are often two sides to the story and that ‘victims’ frequently were not entirely innocent of all wrongdoing.

Laurence Aylmer, who served as mayor March-October 1508 was arrested soon after his mayoralty ended and tried together with his sheriffs, William Butler and John Kirkby, for allowing an arrested felon, one Gabriel Pynell, to go at large during his tenure.¹³⁸ They were imprisoned and, like Capell, remained so until the end of the reign.¹³⁹ At the time of his arrest Pynell had warned that the mayor and sheriffs had no authority over him, for he ‘had a master that was a gret gentilman borne which payed the king CC li a yere for custome... as for the maire and the benche were but beggers to them’.¹⁴⁰ Who this gentleman might have been is unclear. It could have been one of the Italian merchants that did profitable business with the king as it is possible that Pynell himself was an Italian.¹⁴¹ It is possible that it was John Baptist Grimaldi, who frequently acquired funds for the Crown through his role as an informant of customs infractions. The Great Chronicle stated that Grimaldi had been retained by Richard Empson, whom Fabyan blamed for Aylmer’s predicament.¹⁴² It is unlikely that Pynell was referring to Empson himself, as to describe him merely as a man who paid £200 annually in customs to the king would be a profound understatement. Evidence of Empson and Grimaldi’s involvement is to be found in an indictment of conspiracy brought in 1510 against Empson, John Camby, John Baptist Grimaldi and Pynell for

¹³⁷ Horowitz, “‘Agree with the King’”, 325-366; Elton, ‘Rapacity and Remorse’, 15; Cooper, ‘Last Years’, 109-110, 120-1.

¹³⁸ TNA, KB9/961/4.

¹³⁹ *GC*, 336.

¹⁴⁰ Rep.2, f.47r; TNA, KB9/961/4. This was not the sum of the insults that Pynell offered to the mayor and aldermen, for he also ‘bade the devillys corde in all their clothes’ and those who had caused him this trouble he would ‘make them, their wiffs and all their children to wepe’.

¹⁴¹ Though Pynell is described as a broker of London in the King’s Bench records the wide variation in spellings of his name (‘Pennell’ in the civic records, ‘Pynell’ and ‘Rynell’ in the court records) suggest a surname unfamiliar to the clerks of the period. It is possible that he was foreign in origin and ‘Gabriel’ was not an uncommon christian name in Italy.

¹⁴² *GC*, 336-7.

having induced Aylmer and his sheriffs to release Pynell and then imprisoning and fining them for doing so.¹⁴³ This, then, appears to be a case of entrapment.

The case of Thomas Sunnyff has been examined in some detail and therefore the following only briefly summaries the details. The unfortunate Haberdasher and his wife were accused by John Camby of murdering a baby. Sunnyff was brought before Empson and committed to the Fleet for six weeks before being taken before Dudley who demanded payment of a £500 fine.¹⁴⁴ In Dudley's 1509 petition he claimed that Sunnyff's fine was payable 'for light matters onely upon surmyse of a lewd queane'.¹⁴⁵ The 'lewd queane' or prostitute in this case was one Alice Damston, who had initially testified against the Sunnyffs in a case of child murder.¹⁴⁶ This case appears to have particularly bothered Dudley's conscience, for whilst imprisoned in the Tower he wrote to Sunnyff begging for his forgiveness and stating that 'ther ys no matt[er] [tha]t I have more remorse yn'.¹⁴⁷ Elton claims that the case of Thomas Sunnyff was 'the only one known in which a man seems to have suffered quite innocently' though he acknowledged that it was 'not likely to have had no companions'.¹⁴⁸ Cooper refuted this and gave a number of other examples, including that of Aylmer above, though his account of that episode was erroneous.¹⁴⁹ Few writers thereafter have given Henry and his ministers the benefit of the doubt. Yet many of the most often recited cases against individuals fail to tell the entire story.

¹⁴³ TNA, KB9/453/456 & 458.

¹⁴⁴ Cooper, 'Last Years', 120-121. Horowitz connects this fine to an outstanding recognisance made before the Chamberlain of London, though this is unlikely as it supposes that Dudley or his servants had open access to the civic records and could collect on a bond not made to the king (Horowitz, "'Agree with the king'", 340-1, 351). Had such searches of the civic records taken place it almost certainly would have been remarked upon by Fabyan, who used the records in the compilation of his chronicles. Moreover, the other men party to the bond were not similarly pursued.

¹⁴⁵ Harrison, 'Petition', no. 76. Though the named unfortunate is 'Simmes' I agree with Horowitz that this is likely to be Sunnyff (easily misread – 5 or 6 minims, 's' for 'f') as the amount, location and occupation of the man fits with Sunnyff's case.

¹⁴⁶ Horowitz, "'Agree with the King'", 332.

¹⁴⁷ WAM, 12249, quoted in full in Horowitz, "'Agree with the King'", 336-7.

¹⁴⁸ Elton, 'Rapacity and Remorse', 15.

¹⁴⁹ Cooper, 'Last Years', 109-110.

Thomas Kneseworth, another former mayor imprisoned with his sheriffs, was accused, according to the Great Chronicle, of having ‘mysusid the charge of their offycis’.¹⁵⁰ There may have been some truth in the accusation, for Kneseworth and his sheriffs were audited in 1507 and the relevant entry in the civic records suggest that irregularities may have been found.¹⁵¹ Nor was it the first time that Kneseworth’s financial integrity had been called into question: two aldermen were selected to audit the shrieval accounts of Kneseworth and his colleague Henry Sommer in 1497.¹⁵² Kneseworth’s colleagues in the Guildhall were willing to at least investigate the possibility of acting on his behalf. In December 1507 the chamberlain of London was charged with the task of approaching Dudley in order that he:

shall fele M[aster] Dudley[‘s] mynde wheder it will stande w[ith] the kyngs pleasure that the mayer [and] aldermen shuld macke labor and sute to his gr[ac]e for m[aster] Kneseworth and other aldermen that been audited And also to understande his mynde touching a gen[er]all pardon.¹⁵³

This implies that even if Kneseworth had been guilty of any financial impropriety the City did not seem to feel that it merited interference or punishment by the central government. Kneseworth had certainly been released from wherever he had been imprisoned by 17 February 1508 when he attended his first meeting of the Court of Aldermen of the year.¹⁵⁴ The requisite pardon did not come cheap: Kneseworth paid £1,133 6s 8d and the sheriffs £500 each.¹⁵⁵ Dudley himself was later to confess that this was unjust, that they paid large amounts ‘for a light cause’.¹⁵⁶ Sheriffs and mayors who served after this might have worried about the scrutiny their accounts might be subjected to in the future.

¹⁵⁰ *GC*, 336; *Arnold’s Chronicle*, 44

¹⁵¹ *Rep.*2, f.37v.

¹⁵² *Rep.*1, f.23.

¹⁵³ *Rep.*2, f.37v.

¹⁵⁴ *Rep.*2, f.40. It is likely that Shore and Grove were released around the same time, though Shore did not attend the Court of Aldermen until 24 February (*Rep.*2, f.41) and Grove, 14 March (*Rep.*2, f.42.)

¹⁵⁵ BL, Landsdowne Ms.127, f.56.

¹⁵⁶ Harrison, ‘Petition’, 90.

The case of Richard Gittens, like that of Kneseworth, concerns a victim who was not entirely unblemished. Gittens, a Mercer and Stapler, had an action of trespass brought against him and his deputy, Thomas Popelot, by the Chamberlain of London at the beginning of 1506, at the behest of the mayor and aldermen, for falsely occupying the office of Common Meter within the City.¹⁵⁷ Both men were then committed to ward. Apparently Gittens had served as executor to William Norton, the late Common Meter of woollen cloths, and in this capacity had assumed the role, established Popelot as his deputy, and taken the proceeds of the office.¹⁵⁸ This would have brought Gittens to the attention of the law if not Dudley directly. Gittens was still in prison in July 1506 when he was once more brought before the Court of Aldermen. He was accused of having married the widow of one William Fowler, Dyer, and failing to give Fowler's children their portion of the inheritance. Additionally, it was found that he had failed to perform his duties as Constable of the ward of Breadstreet or make his contribution towards the Breadstreet share of the 1,000 marks paid to the king at Pentecost.¹⁵⁹ In October Gittens was held in a bond with three sureties for £60 to ensure his attendance before the mayor's court and that he kept the peace against one Giles Claybroke.¹⁶⁰ This bond, though it was made in the Guildhall, was made to the king rather than the City Chamberlain as was the norm, implying that the king's agents, probably Dudley, had become interested in Gittens's fate, especially as the entry goes on to state that Gittens already owed the king £40 for a previous forfeited recognisance.¹⁶¹ It is probable that Gittens failed to appear at the mayor's court as Dudley's notebook records that Gittens was fined £120 for failing to honour a bond.¹⁶² It is possible that the total amount he paid came to more, for Dudley was later to write that Gittens was 'longe in prison and payed much money upon a light surmise.'¹⁶³ Even so, whilst Gittens may have been

¹⁵⁷ Rep.2, ff.1, 4.

¹⁵⁸ Rep.2, f.1.

¹⁵⁹ Rep.2, f.12. The 1,000 marks was one of five instalments the City owed to the Crown for the new charter.

¹⁶⁰ Jo.10, f.366.

¹⁶¹ Jo.10, f.366.

¹⁶² BL, Landsdowne Ms.127, f.59. The entry in Dudley's notebook makes it clear that this was for the breaking of a bond made at the Guildhall, which makes it likely that it relates to the bond described above. The £120 may have accounted for the amount forfeited by Gittens' sureties as well as himself.

¹⁶³ Harrison, 'Petition', no.58. Gitten's story was not to have a happy end: he had various suits brought against him in Chancery (TNA, C1/313/54, C1/413/60, C1/393/32 & 33) and tried to sue William

innocent as far as Dudley was concerned he was certainly a flawed character who had attracted legal censure on several occasions.

It is worth briefly perusing the other London victims mentioned in Dudley's petition. Robert Hawkyns was a Hattermerchant who, according to Dudley, paid 100 marks for a light matter 'upon a surmyse of a lewd fellowe'.¹⁶⁴ Yet once again there is more to this than the exploitation of a rich merchant. Hawkyns was involved in a dispute with William Capell in 1497, though before the case could be fully investigated by the aldermen Hawkyns was confined to Newgate gaol for 'divers contempts done by hym agaynst the autorite of the mayre and aldermen'.¹⁶⁵ The conclusion of the dispute is unknown.¹⁶⁶ Hawkyns later paid 200 marks for a pardon for his part in the death of a man and entered into a bond of £100 for his allegiance and good behaviour.¹⁶⁷ It is possible that the incident involving a man's death was the one to which Dudley was referring, but his previous imprisonment does not speak well for his character.

Also in the petition were Richard Haddon, the alderman and Mercer, who paid heavily for his role as beneficiary and executor of his friend, Thomas Wyndout.¹⁶⁸ Fellow alderman Henry Kebill was charged 1,000 marks for a pardon.¹⁶⁹ Sir William Martyn, together with Nicholas Milborne, Chamberlain of London, paid 400 marks by obligation 'for the forfeiture of Clopton's wools'.¹⁷⁰ This is likely to be related to the estate of Hugh Clopton, the former mayor and alderman, who died in 1496 and for whom Martyn and Milborne served as executors.¹⁷¹ Hugh Acton, Merchant Taylor, was

Fitzwilliam, the sheriff who arrested him in 1507, for trespass in 1515. He died a poor man, according to his will (TNA, PROB11/19/393).

¹⁶⁴ Harrison, 'Petition', no.12, he is referred to in the petition as a Draper, but his occupation is clearly stated in the civic records. Rep.1, f.29.

¹⁶⁵ Rep.1, ff.29, 30. Aldermen John Percyvale and Thomas Wood were appointed to investigate the matter.

¹⁶⁶ The matter was brought before the mayor's court but evidence thereafter is lacking (Rep.1, f.32).

¹⁶⁷ BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.3v; *CPR, 1495-1509*, 396; *CCR, 1500-1509*, no.425.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PROB11/12/1952.

¹⁶⁹ BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, ff.2, 15, 16v, 17, 33v, 44; LBM, ff.81v-83, 105; Harrison, 'Petition', 90, 98; *CPR, 1495-1509*, 516.

¹⁷⁰ Harrison, 'Petition', no.83(i) & (j); BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, ff.5v, 45v, 59.

¹⁷¹ TNA, PROB11/11/2026.

confined to the Tower and paid £100 for his discharge, though the details of this case are not apparent.¹⁷² Lady Thomasine Percyvale, the widow of the Merchant Taylor John Percyvale, paid £1,000 for a pardon which Dudley later explained was ‘for a light matter onlie upon the surmyse of a lewd Priest.’¹⁷³ Not named by Dudley in his petition but mentioned by the Great Chronicle is the alderman and Mercer, Christopher Hawes, who died in October 1508 apparently after being harassed by the king’s ‘promoters’.¹⁷⁴

Two cases seem to suggest that there were occasions when Dudley had knowingly acted on perjured evidence. William Curties, customer of London, paid £500 for a pardon for offences committed whilst in office, which in the petition Dudley states was deemed payable ‘upon the light information of an untrue man’.¹⁷⁵ James Yarford, Mercer, and future alderman, paid 100 marks in cash and was bound to pay a further 400 marks in January 1508 for a pardon regarding an indictment of felony, in which matter, Dudley later confessed, ‘my conscience was untrue’.¹⁷⁶ Why these men would have been targeted is not quite so clear. Certainly an effort was made in the reign to cut down on fraud by customs officials, and therefore Curties may have been used as an example to would-be fraudsters. Yarford’s case requires further investigation.

This is not a comprehensive list of members of the mercantile elite who were subject to Henry VII’s financial exactions; we do not have any evidence of those financially investigated by Empson, for example, but from it two observations can be made. The first is that, given the size of London’s population and its proportion of the realm’s wealth, this is a reasonably short list. As a list of individuals one could compare it to the crop of merchants Edward IV persecuted in the late 1460s for no discernible motive other than financial gain.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Harrison, ‘Petition’, no.83(1).

¹⁷³ Harrison, ‘Petition’, no.90.

¹⁷⁴ *GC*, 335-6. The only suggestion that Hawes might have come under financial scrutiny is an entry in Robert Southwell’s audit book stating that Hawes appeared before him in March 1505 to answer for duty owed. (TNA, E315/263).

¹⁷⁵ Harrison, ‘Petition’, no.84; BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, ff.17v, 22. The former entry in Dudley’s notebook states that Curteis paid 500 marks, but the later entry and the petition both agree that it was £500.

¹⁷⁶ BL, Lansdowne Ms.127, f.53v; Harrison, ‘Petition’, 89, 97; *CPR, 1495-1509*, 592.

¹⁷⁷ Hicks, ‘Case of Thomas Cook’, 419-435.

Secondly, the majority of those on this list merited legal investigation of some manner into their activities. Capell, Kneseworth, Aylmer, Gittens, Sunnyff and Hawkins came into the crosshairs of the promoters for reasons other than their wealth, though their wealth was exploited thereafter. They all warranted some legal investigation and therefore were exposed to scrutiny. With the exception of Gittens, these were rich men prominent in London society, and their treatment would have made examples of them within the capital, deterring other citizens from law-breaking or failing to observe the rights of the king. The punishment meted out may have been disproportionate to the crime, but this may have been part of a deliberate policy to deter would-be wrongdoers.

Doubtless not all of the Londoners that feature in Dudley's petition were guilty of a crime or misdeed: several times Dudley, in his petition, claimed that an individual had paid much 'on a light surmise', implying that prosecution had taken place on the strength of an allegation not firmly based in evidence.¹⁷⁸ It is not possible to discern the motive for the pursuit of all of these people by Dudley and his agents, but where it has been possible to uncover the full story motive for the persecution appears to be based at least as much on a desire to uphold the law as to obtain money.

At a time where an institutionalised policing body did not exist, measures such as the creation of such exemplars and holding men in high-worth bonds for good behaviour, were effective law-keeping expedients. That the punishment was frequently disproportionate to the crime added to the deterrent. The promoters were exploiters of information and extant situations and distributors of rough justice, but not generally creators of fiction. It would be too broad a generalisation to state that this was always the case but it is worth making the point that, in the City at least, persecution did not come out of nowhere and 'victims' were not arbitrarily chosen.

¹⁷⁸ Seven of the 16 London-related items express this sentiment. Many of the others appear only in a list of names (no.83).

6.5. Epilogue

The king's promoters were imprisoned shortly after the death of Henry VII; not just Empson and Dudley, but also Henry Toft, William Smith, Richard Page and John Camby amongst others. Camby, together with Robert Hall, keeper of Ludgate gaol and Thomas Bate, bailiff of Billingsgate, were forbidden to hold further office within the City.¹⁷⁹ Grimaldi, much to Fabyan's disgust, fled to sanctuary and so escaped punishment.¹⁸⁰ Toft and William Smith were amongst twelve informers imprisoned 'for such unlawful demeanours as they used in the time of our dearest father' who were released on bail from prison in December 1509.¹⁸¹

Just over a month after Henry VII's death the jurors who indicted Capell in 1508 were prosecuted and found guilty of perjury. On May 22 1509, Thomas Young, Saddler, was committed to Newgate gaol for various crimes contrary to the liberties of the City.¹⁸² In June 1509, John Derby, William Simpson, Richard Smith and Henry Stokton were disenfranchised and sentenced to the pillory.¹⁸³ Later that month Robert Jakes, Christopher Rothery and George Jackson were also accused of perjury and held in bond for £200 pending their appearance before the mayors' court.¹⁸⁴ They too were later disenfranchised.¹⁸⁵ Thomas Chycheley presented to the mayor and aldermen letters of pardon from the new king and so escaped punishment.¹⁸⁶

In January 1510 the mayor, Thomas Bradbury, died. Capell was elected to replace him, despite it being less than the regulation seven years since he last served, though not without notable opposition.¹⁸⁷ George Hayward, a tailor, was brought before the Court of Aldermen for having objected to the election on the grounds that Capell was 'far in

¹⁷⁹ Rep.2, f.72; Robert Hall was later charged with dishonestly extracting an obligation of £40 from one William Conystrre 'by crafty means and of pure malice' (Rep.2, f.74).

¹⁸⁰ *GC*, 337.

¹⁸¹ TNA, C82/343/1/615.

¹⁸² Rep.2, f.68

¹⁸³ Jo.11, f.74v; Rep.2, f.69v. Simpson and Jackson were later exiled from the City (Rep.2, f.69v, 74v).

¹⁸⁴ Jo.11, ff.80v, 81, 81v.

¹⁸⁵ Rep.2, f.71

¹⁸⁶ Rep.2, f.69v.

¹⁸⁷ An account of Capell's election does not exist in the civic records. Vit. XVI claims licence had been given by the CC for him to serve, (Vit. XVI, 263).

danger with the king', a reference to the fact that Capell had been exempted from the General Pardon granted by Henry VIII upon his accession and had only that month obtained a pardon.¹⁸⁸ Five witnesses testified to derogatory words spoken by Hayward, who was consequently imprisoned in Newgate and fined a total of £20.¹⁸⁹ Hayward's dislike of Capell was probably fuelled by the long-standing enmity between the Tailors and the Drapers, as was Hayward's subsequent harsh treatment. Hayward was not the only one who was opposed the new mayor: later in the year it was reported to the Court of Aldermen that one William Grownynge had called the mayor a whoreson and churl, a story verified by three witnesses.¹⁹⁰ This was particularly extraordinary as reports of outspoken insulting language against an incumbent mayor were rarely recorded in the civic records at this time.

Capell used his time in office to deal with those deemed to have acted contrary to the City in the previous reign. Capell gave vent publicly to a grudge he still held against the Tailor, James Wilford. Wilford had been temporarily suspended from the aldermanry in 1503 for insults given to Capell when he was first mayor.¹⁹¹ In October 1510 it was recorded that during a meeting of the Court of Aldermen, the mayor had said to Wilford, 'some men have lost their heads that have not done so much harm to this City as ye have done.'¹⁹²

William Fitzwilliam, the sheriff imposed upon the City against opposition at the instance of Henry VII in 1506, was elected sheriff a second time in 1510.¹⁹³ The financial imposition of the post meant that it was unusual for a man to serve as sheriff twice. It was argued that Fitzwilliam should serve again as he had not been duly elected the last time he had served as sheriff, as indeed he had not. The aldermen strongly suspected that members of the electing body, the Common Hall, had been coerced by the mayor, Capell, into electing Fitzwilliam, and so summoned the wardens of the mercantile fellowships of the Mercers, Grocers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths,

¹⁸⁸ Rep.2, ff.79, 80, 86v &87; *LP Hen. VIII*, I, i, no.357(22).

¹⁸⁹ Rep.2, ff.86v, 94v.

¹⁹⁰ Rep.2, f.100v.

¹⁹¹ Rep.1, ff.129, 154v, 155.

¹⁹² Rep.2, f.99v. Wilford was later to resign as alderman (Rep.2, f.122v; *GC*, 378).

¹⁹³ Rep.2, ff.14, 98, 100v; Jo.11, f.120v.

Haberdashers and Skinners so that they could be ‘examined whether my lord mayor laboured unto them to make M[aster] Fitzwilliam sheriff’, to which they replied that he had not.¹⁹⁴ That the aldermen saw fit to question the mayor’s integrity demonstrated their distrust of this man. Fitzwilliam refused to serve and so was disenfranchised and fined 1,000 marks.¹⁹⁵ It was only after the intervention of Wolsey that the fine was diminished and his citizenship restored, though he chose to go into Wolsey’s service rather than resume his seat in the Court of Aldermen.¹⁹⁶

The wardens of the Merchant Taylors eventually came to realise that universal unpopularity within the City was undesirable, and sought to make amends. An entry in the records of the Court of Aldermen for February 1511 states that the wardens of the ‘Tailors’ [sic] came before the mayor and aldermen desiring their good lordship and ‘said if thei hadde offended thei wulde make amends’.¹⁹⁷

6.5.1. The Early Years of the New Reign

One of the first acts of the new king was to issue a new general pardon.¹⁹⁸ The pardon rolls make interesting reading. Londoners appear to make up a small proportion of the total of those suing for pardon, and of those the majority tend either to have held civic office, to be holders of lands in other counties or to have served as executors of wills.¹⁹⁹ This suggests that the citizens did not perceive themselves to be in peril of accusations of wrong-doing, an assumption possibly based upon experience and a knowledge that those in the provinces were more at risk from the attention of those still investigating the feudal and prerogative rights of the king. More interesting is the list of those exempted from the pardon alongside Empson and Dudley. Sir William Capell comes fairly near the top of the list. The promoters Henry Toft, John Baptist Grimaldi, John Camby, and Richard Page are in the body of the text, as are the false jurors William

¹⁹⁴ Rep.2, f.100. Note the omission of the Merchant Taylors. The Great Chronieler believed that the mercantile fellowships had acted out of revenge (*GC*, 366-367).

¹⁹⁵ *GC*, 367

¹⁹⁶ Rep.2, ff.107v, 108, 108v, 109v.

¹⁹⁷ Rep.2, f.107.

¹⁹⁸ *LP Hen. VIII*, I(i), no.11.

¹⁹⁹ *LP Hen. VIII*, I(i), 203-273.

Smith, John Derby, Richard Smith, Robert Jakes and Henry Stockton.²⁰⁰ Capell was eventually allowed to sue for a pardon in January 1510 and Grimaldi and William Smith in February.²⁰¹

The general pardon covered ‘all things except debt’.²⁰² Consequently the outstanding bonds from the last reign were not voided by the king’s death but were still, in many cases, pursued. Eleven were cancelled as, after examination, it was found they had been made ‘without any cause reasonable or lefull’ and by the ‘undue menes of certeyn of the lerned counsell of our late father... contry to all lawe and good consciens to the manyfeste charge and perell of the soule of said late father’.²⁰³ Of these only two were Londoners, Sunnyff and Sir Robert Dymmock.²⁰⁴ Further recognisances were cancelled without the same preamble. Capell and his son Giles were to have two of their recognisances cancelled and Capell a further one, suggesting that at least some of the money taken from him was deemed to have been unfairly extracted.²⁰⁵ As J.P. Cooper pointed out this was not many at all, but there may well have been more as these cancellations only relate to recognisances enrolled in Chancery.²⁰⁶

This raises a central question: did the Londoners experience much of a change in their relationship with the Crown after the accession of the new king? The optimistic citizenry might well have anticipated an age of more enlightened rule and an end to the financial exactions of the last reign. A general commission of oyer and terminer was established to look into the abuses of Henry VII’s reign, and the removal of Empson and Dudley served to underline the intention that the new reign would be of a different character to the old one. Yet, with largely the same personnel serving the new king as sat on his father’s council fundamental change was unlikely. The civic administration

²⁰⁰ *LP Hen. VIII*, I(i), no.11 (10).

²⁰¹ *LP Hen. VIII*, i(i), nos.309, 357 (22), 381 (6) and 381 (28).

²⁰² *LP Hen. VIII*, I(i), no.11 (1).

²⁰³ TNA, C82/361/2/452; Cooper, ‘Last Years’, 113.

²⁰⁴ TNA, C82/360/731/20 and C82/365/804/49.

²⁰⁵ *LP Hen. VIII*, I(i), no.587 (21 & 22). Four other Londoners also were to have their bonds cancelled, but it is unclear whether this was because their recognisances had been deemed unjust or were cancelled for other reasons (*LP Hen. VIII*, no.632 (70)).

²⁰⁶ Cooper, ‘Last Years’, 114.

still treated with the same governmental personnel and still courted the same councillors.

The City government fell foul of Henry VIII early in the reign. In August 1509 the Lord Treasurer, Thomas Howard earl of Surrey, sent a servant to the mayor to relay his displeasure that many merchants importing goods into the country were refusing to declare their wares for customs in anticipation of the grant of the usual exemption from tonnage and poundage that followed the death of a monarch until its grant to the new king.²⁰⁷ The mayor summoned the wardens of the mercantile companies to discuss the matter and it was decided to petition Henry for an exemption from the payment of customs until the revenue was granted to him by parliament as the previous grant of tonnage and poundage had expired with the death of Henry VII.²⁰⁸ Moreover, they sought to have the exemption added to the bill granting customs to the king, along with a request that henceforth the rates paid should be no higher than those paid in the fourth year of Henry VII's reign.²⁰⁹ In vain they sought the help of the bishop of Winchester, Richard Fox, Thomas Lovell and the Lord Treasurer, only to be told that to pursue the matter would run the risk of offending the king.²¹⁰ The parliament granted the subsidy to the king without the exemption period, and consequent payment holiday for the merchants, from the death of the old king until the formal grant of the subsidy by the new parliament.²¹¹ Unwisely a petition was put to the king for pardon and reinstatement of the exemption, and the goodwill of various members of the court was aggressively pursued, so aggressively, in fact, that it had the opposite effect. The king eventually chose to remit only a third of the amount due that was traditionally exempted.²¹² A clear message was sent to the City, that though there was a new king on the throne, his council was proceeding with business in the same fashion it had done in the previous reign.

²⁰⁷ *Acts*, 326-7.

²⁰⁸ *Acts*, 327, 346-7.

²⁰⁹ *Acts*, 347-9.

²¹⁰ *Acts*, 349-59.

²¹¹ *Acts*, 349-60; Sutton, *Mercery*, 344.

²¹² *Acts*, 372, 380-81; Sutton, *Mercery*, 345.

The long-standing problem of the City monopolies also came to the fore early in the reign. Though the office of gauger was specially stated to belong to the City in the 1505 charter, whereas the other City offices sold back to the City by Edward IV were not, it was awarded to William Pawne in 1510 as a reward for his services overseas.²¹³ This was to become more of a problem as the reign progressed with many City offices distributed through royal patronage.²¹⁴

Thomas More was eventually to enter royal service by a similar route to that taken by Edmund Dudley. Initially a lawyer who represented various livery companies in legal matters, work which eventually gained him the freedom of the City as a member of the Mercers' Company, he became an undersheriff of the City before becoming a royal servant.²¹⁵ A biographer of More has claimed that the king recruited him as he desired 'a man on the council who had the confidence of the City and who could represent the royal interests among merchants and professionals who directed City affairs'.²¹⁶ It is outside of the remit of this thesis to attempt to verify this statement, but it is an interesting parallel with the career of Dudley.

6.5. Conclusion

There can be no denying that the Londoners considered themselves harshly dealt with by the late king and his ministers, but the existence of the information-rich sources of the London chronicles, coupled with the absence of nationwide chronicles for this period, tends to give the impression that the City suffered more than the rest of the kingdom. London chronicles are, not surprisingly, focused upon London events and therefore the prosecutions they detail tend to become commonly quoted as examples of a fiscal oppression. The temptation is to take these stories of prosecutions and believe them to be entire: they are not, as supplementary information garnered from the judicial and civic records of the time clearly demonstrates.

²¹³ Birch, *Charters*, 96; *LP Hen. VIII*, I (i) no.449 (2), April 1510.

²¹⁴ Gronquist, 'London and the Crown', 81-92.

²¹⁵ *Acts*, 320; G.D. Ramsay, 'A Saint in the City: Thomas More at Mercers' Hall, London', *EHR*, cxlvii (1982), 269.

²¹⁶ Richard Marius, *Thomas More: A Biography* (London, 1999), 14.

There is evidence to suggest that London and Londoners suffered the ‘fiscal tyranny’ far less than other parts of the realm and even, in proportion to the capital’s wealth and population, escaped lightly. The enforcement of Crown feudal rights and extension of the royal prerogative affected the gentry and nobility, particularly tenants in chief of the king, more than it did the citizen. Urban centres, though they tended to be concentrations of wealth, did not suffer as much as those in the localities or who possessed old, landed wealth, probably because the legal basis for land-owning made it easier for the king’s agents to follow appropriate paper trails to establish the boundaries of his prerogative rights. Professor Lander estimated that only a quarter of English peerage families escaped Henry’s financial threats in 1509; it is unlikely that proportion of the mercantile elite who suffered in this way was anywhere near as high.²¹⁷

The king and his ministers were preoccupied with the enforcement of law and order, after a period of over fifty years when old statutes and laws had been neglected. This reassertion of law and the royal prerogative generated discontent and complaints of unfair treatment, but, as Margaret McGlynn has recently observed, it is natural that complaint was forthcoming from ‘those whose behaviour was being modified and whose pockets were being tapped’.²¹⁸ The Londoners who were targeted by Empson, Dudley and their promoters were not, in the main, selected for their wealth or by arbitrary means but had, as shown, already engaged in activities that had merited legal scrutiny. The king’s primary motivation in financially penalising members of the mercantile elite was not to fill his coffers, but rather to restrict and control behaviour and provide exemplars of high profile individuals to deter others from wrong-doing.

Did the City and the Crown consider themselves at odds in the last few years of the reign? The evidence suggests not. City and Crown still cooperated, without impediment, on a number of issues. Henry VII, when putting in place complex arrangements for commemorations and provisions for his soul, relied upon the City as a guarantor of his wishes. In 1504, when Sir William Capell was mayor, the City

²¹⁷ Lander, ‘Bonds, Coercion and Fear: Henry VII and the Peerage’, in J.G. Rowe and W.J. Stockdale ed. *Floreligium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson* (Toronto, 1971), 292.

²¹⁸ Margaret McGlynn, ‘Standards of Conduct for Henry VII’s Chamber Officials’, *Historical Research* (2009), 548.

undertook to act as guarantors for the foundation of a chantry, an anniversary and other services centred on the new Lady Chapel in Westminster built to house the bodies of Henry VII and his queen.²¹⁹ This was a potentially onerous duty, burdening the City with policing the observance of the pious elements of the king's will in perpetuity.²²⁰ Two years later the wardens and fellowship of the major livery companies unanimously agreed, in perpetuity, to participate in an annual commemorative service held in the king's chapel in Westminster after the annual appearance of the mayors and sheriffs at the Exchequer to swear their oaths of office.²²¹ This is not the action of a City at odds with its ruler, or the result of a request by a ruler unsure of his capital's loyalty.

²¹⁹ Rep.1, f.161; Margaret Condon, 'God Save the King! Piety, Propaganda and the Perpetual Memorial', in Tim Tatton-Brown ed. *Westminster Abbey: The Lady Chapel of Henry VII* (Woodbridge, 2003), 66, 78

²²⁰ Condon, 'Perpetual Memorial', 79.

²²¹ Rep.2, f.10v; Condon, 'Perpetual Memorial', 79.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Bishop John Fisher, in his eulogy at Henry VII's funeral, claimed that before his death the late king had made three promises to his confessor, the first being 'a true reformation of all them that were officers and ministers of his laws to the intent that Justice from hence forward truly and indifferently might be executed'.¹ This was a clear reference to the 'fiscal judges', as Polydore Vergil had called them, Sir Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, who at the time were languishing in the Tower of London.² Fisher's inference, that Empson and Dudley had overreached their authority and thus were in need of reform, exonerated Henry to some extent of the financial oppression of his people. Hence started the crown-sponsored vilification of these men.

Elton, and more recently Paul Cavill, argued that the tone of Henry's rule did not change in the last few years of the reign, but rather there was a continuity in policy, that policy being primarily the extension of law-enforcement and the royal prerogative.³ This thesis argues likewise in that it demonstrates that the king and his government had a vision of law-enforcement and extension of royal control that they sought to impose upon the capital from the earliest years of the reign. However, whilst in broader terms Henry's rule may have remained consistent, the timbre of the City-Crown relationship did alter in the latter years of the reign.

The king's determination to establish his unquestioned authority was felt early in the reign by the City. Though the City's acceptance of the new king was passive and his reception was warm, the mercantile elite displayed a lack of confidence in Henry's ability to conduct a foreign policy that would serve their needs, and a lack of respect for his position in conducting their own negotiations with the Low Countries contrary to the king's wishes. Mutual distrust was the inevitable result, and this may account for the king's apparent reluctance to take financial aid from the City, preferring instead to take finance from individuals rather than become indebted to any corporate body. This

¹ *The English Works of John Fisher*, John Mayor ed., EETS (London, 1876), i, 271

² Vergil, 129-130.

³ Elton, 'Rapacity and Remorse' and 'A Restatement'; Cavill, 'Henry VII and Parliament', 95-97.

episode was the first of two key events that served as a catalyst for change in the City-Crown relationship in the reign of Henry VII. It may well have been the actions of the Merchant Adventurers, in 1486-7, that convinced the king that the ruling mercantile oligarchy was a dangerous interest-group that should be neutralised when the opportunity arose.

The tenor of the City-Crown relationship became more amiable after the battle of Stoke in June 1487. The king's position was visibly more secure than it had been in autumn 1485. Henry had not only vanquished his enemies, but by now had a young heir, a fertile wife, papal acceptance, and broader magnate support. The City was more certain of Henry's ability to retain his throne and administer effective rule. Henry was extended finance, which he took care to repay within a year in contrast to his fifteenth-century predecessors. To a large extent the City-Crown relationship functioned the same as before. The king and his ministers were accessible to even the smaller livery companies, who sought royal charters to obtain powers and validation that the mayor and aldermen could not. The cooperation of the mercantile community was sought once again in the formulation of foreign policy. This was a matter of practicality, for the diplomatic knowledge and expertise of the mercantile community of London exceeded that of the government. It also served to secure the patience of the merchants whose livelihood was affected by the trade embargoes imposed in the middle of the reign. Channels of communication were established, some traditional, some through key individuals who facilitated Crown-City relations. The close relationship of Bray with leading merchants, such as the Goldsmiths Edmund and John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede and the Mercer Henry Colet, was to the benefit of both the Crown and the City. Shaa and Rede in particular came to play dual roles as royal servants and aldermen, and there is no evidence to suggest that they felt a conflict in their duties. The City used these men to intercede on its behalf, and the Crown took their advice on matters pertaining to the capital.

Once the king became solvent in the late 1490s the City lost its main bargaining chip, and the king was able to deal with the City more forcefully than he had before, particularly in negotiations surrounding the Merchant Taylors' charter and the renewal of the City charter, the second key series of events in terms of City-Crown relations. The opportunity to provide a counter-balance to the narrow faction of the City's

mercantile ruling elite was presented by the incorporation of the Merchant Taylors' Company. Through the promotion of the Tailors (and, a year earlier, the Haberdashers) to mercantile status the king and his ministers may have hoped to dilute the overwhelming influence in the City of the existing mercantile companies, particularly the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers. To this end individual members of the Merchant Taylors' Company were sponsored in election to civic office. There is no evidence to suggest that Henry's promotion of the Merchant Taylors was part of a long-conceived plan to widen the City's oligarchy, but rather it is likely that Henry was able to make the most of the opportunity provided by the Tailors' ambitions. It is possible that the Crown was aware that such a grant would be divisive, and that a 'divide and rule' strategy coexisted in the Crown's plan alongside that to expand the ruling oligarchy. This was the antithesis of Henry's usual urban policy, where he and his ministers strove to help towns and cities establish oligarchic governments modelled on that of London, and consequently 'a greater degree of urban autonomy was witnessed during the reign'.⁴

The opposition to the Merchant Taylors' charter by the City, led by the Drapers' Company, was perceived as an assault on the king's prerogative and pushed the king to centralise oversight of the livery companies, which affected all municipal authorities. The City was penalised in another way: instead of receiving a new charter confirming its traditional liberties and privileges, recently granted by Richard III, it received a far more limited version which, by default, resumed many of the liberties granted in the fifteenth century. The 1505 charter was a pivotal point in City-Crown relations, crucial in understanding why the London of 1509 was a different place, politically, to that of 1485. It fundamentally altered the Crown-City relationship, for though it had always been clear that the Crown was the senior force in the relationship the City had believed that it was entitled to Crown-granted privileges. Henry reminded the City that what the king granted could also be taken away. City progress towards autonomy was arrested for the first time since the reign of Richard II.

An agglomeration of factors and events served to make the king a more imposing figure to the citizens of the capital in the last decade of the reign. This period saw measures

⁴ James Lee, 'Henry VII and his towns'. 496.

initiated earlier in the reign come to fruition, the most relevant of which to the City was the tighter imposition of statute law, and its prosecution through the Court of the Exchequer, and the increased efficiency of bureaucratic personnel within the government's financial departments and the port of London. A substantial turnover of personnel occurred around the turn of the century in both the king's intimate circle and in civic government, removing men who had facilitated City-Crown relations on both sides. Morton and Bray, who apparently had the ability to rebuke as well as serve the king, were replaced by men who were perceived to be more grasping on their master's behalf. The innovation in the royal household of the Privy Chamber meant that access to the king became harder and citizen-royal servants such as Shaa and Rede were not replaced. Henry's need for a servant with connections and knowledge of his capital led to the employment of Edmund Dudley, who had served as the City's undersheriff. These factors contributed to the impression that the Crown squeezed its subjects for monetary gain.

The City felt the effects of this increased efficiency and personnel change, but as its inhabitants tended, on the whole, not to be tenants-in-chief of the king (unless they held land elsewhere), or subject generally to the king's traditional prerogative rights, they did not suffer from the king's financial exactions as much as members of the peerage or those of the populace who resided in more rural areas. The extant evidence yields a relatively short list of names of merchants in London who paid financial penalties at this time. This may have been, in part, a consequence of the king having less leverage over the merchants than he did over the peerage and therefore he took his opportunity to hold individual merchants in bond when they were exposed to legal scrutiny.

The literary sources of the reign can be misleading. The most voluminous extant chronicles are written by Londoners, the most substantial example being *The Great Chronicle*. This thesis has demonstrated that these accounts of the fiscal oppressions of the Londoners are frequently quoted by historians without qualification or cross-reference with other sources. The overwhelming impression given is that the persecution of prominent Londoners was arbitrarily focused on rich merchants with the aim of obtaining a portion of their riches. This thesis argues that those who became the focus of prosecution had merited legal investigation and the majority cannot be seen to have been entirely innocent of some wrong-doing.

The intimacy of the Crown-City relationship made it impossible for changes to be made by the Crown without them having a profound effect upon the City. The relationship had always been a multi-tiered, interdependent one that functioned on many levels, economic, social and political. The breadth of the ties between the two entities was such that the relationship cannot be categorised as a patronage-arrangement or partnership, though it contained elements of both, but was instead unique within the English polity. It was far from being a relationship of equals: the City's self-government was crown-sponsored, and whilst the king had the ability to command obedience (though it was not always sensible to do so), the City, when it desired the king's cooperation, could only approach the monarch as a petitioner. The reign of Henry Tudor did not change any of this. The relationship remained equally important to both participants. The monarch needed his capital, and London's location, function as entrepôt for the kingdom and consequent concentration of wealth made it impossible for an effective capital to be located elsewhere, as Richard II discovered when he moved his court to York in 1392.⁵ The changes wrought in the reign, rather, prepared the way for further change and erosion of City liberties that were to take place under the rule of Henry's son and grandchildren.

Henry's relationship with his capital was not characterised by innovation. Like Edward IV before him, Henry attempted to enforce the law and extinguish practices of smuggling and customs fraud which had become problematic. Henry's solvency meant that he was able to do this without worry that he was biting the feeding hand. Where Henry differed from his father-in-law is in his ability to recognise and utilise an opportunity when it was presented to him, and his patience in awaiting for such opportunities. When the City, or its inhabitants, attempted to circumvent royal authority, as it did in 1486-7 and again in 1505, the Crown was forced to act decisively, and ultimately had little choice but to curtail the privileges the City had been accumulating in the course of the previous century. The City had metaphorically given Henry both a stick to beat it with and the reason to use it.

⁵ Saul, *Richard II*, 259 & n.86, 343; Barron, 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London', 178, 199 and 'Richard II and London', 150-3.

To return to John Fisher: his claim that the king had felt remorse on his deathbed was a tacit acknowledgement that the government was aware that the realm's subjects felt themselves to have been subject to an unaccustomed harshness of rule. Yet though lip-service was paid to the commencement of a new reign free from the oppressions of the last, no effort was made to change the direction, policies or even the personnel of the government, with the exception of the removal of the unfortunate Empson and Dudley. Henry VII himself became the ultimate scapegoat. His efforts in re-establishing the law and royal prerogative made him unpopular as men paid long-forgotten fees and dues that their immediate forbears had not. The government of his son benefitted, and was not censured for continuing, and developing, the policies instituted by Henry Tudor, whilst the old king himself became enshrined in history as the avaricious bean-counter, more interested in his account books than courtly entertainment.

Appendix: The Aldermen of London, 1485-1509.

Name	Company	Dates as Alderman	Sheriff	Mayor	MP	M / W*	K*	Ex*	Died
Acheley, Roger	Draper	1504-1521	1504	1511		2x			1523
Ailwyn, Nicholas	Mercer	1496-1506	1494	1499 1491	1491	1x			1506
Astry, Ralph	Fishmonger	1485-94	1485	1493			1494		1494
Aylmer, Lawrence	Draper	1504-1524	1501	1508		4x	1497	1524	
Billesdon, Robert	Haberdasher	1471-1492	1473	1483			1486		1492
Boteler, William	Grocer	1507-1534	1507	1515		8x	1516		1534
Bradbury, Thomas	Mercer	1502-1510	1498	1509 1495	1495	1x			1510
Breteyn, Thomas	Ironmonger	1483-1485	1484						1485
Brice, Hugh	Goldsmith	1476-96	1475	1485		3x	1485		1496
Broke, John	Grocer	1488-1502	1489			4x		1502	1511
Broun, John	Mercer	1470-1498	1472	1480		4x	1486		1498
Browne, William	Mercer	1500-1508	1491	1507		2x			1508
Browne, William	Mercer	1505-1514	1504	1513		2x			1514
Capell, William	Draper	1485-1515	1489	1503 1510	1491 1512 1514	7x	1486		1515
Chawry, Richard	Salter	1481-1509	1481	1494	1497				1509
Clopton, Hugh	Mercer	1485-1496	1486	1491	1483	1x			1496

Surname	Company	Dates as Alderman	Sheriff	Mayor	MP	M / W*	K	Ex*	Died
Colet, Henry	Mercer	1476-1505	1477	1486 1495	1487 1489	4x	1486		1505
Copynger, William	Fishmonger	1505-1513	1506	1512					1513
Cote, Henry	Goldsmith	1490-1505	1490			4x			1513
Don, Angel	Grocer	1506							1506
Drope, Robert	Draper	1468-1487	1469	1474		2x			1487
Exmew, Thomas	Goldsmith	1508-29	1508	1517		2x	1518		1529
Fabyan, Robert	Draper	1494-1503	1493			2x		1503	1513
Fenkill, John	Draper	1485-99	1487		1483 1484	3x	1486		1499
Fitzwilliam, William	Merchant Taylor	1504-11	1506			1x	1515	1511	1534
Gardynner, Richard	Mercer	1469-1490	1469	1478	1478				1490
Graunger, Thomas	Skinner	1503-10	1503			2x			1510
Grove, Roger	Grocer	1505-9	1505			1x			1509
Haddon, Richard	Mercer	1499-1516	1496	1506 1513		2x	1497		1516
Hardyng, Robert	Goldsmith	1483-1490	1478			3x		1490	1504
Hawes, Christopher	Mercer	1506-1508	1503			1x			1508
Hawes, John	Mercer	1501-10	1500			2x		1510	1517
Hill, Thomas	Grocer	1473-1485	1474	1484		3x	1484		1485
Horn, William	Salter	1480-1496	1476	1487			1487		1496
Issak, William	Draper	1487-1503	1488			5x		1503	1518

Surname	Company	Dates as Alderman	Sheriff	Mayor	MP	M / W*	K	Ex*	Died
Jennings, Stephen	Merchant Taylor	1499-1523	1498	1508		1x	1509		1523
Johnson, Robert	Goldsmith	1506-7	1506						1507
Kebyll, Henry	Grocer	1502-1517	1502	1510		3x			1517
Kneseworth, Thomas	Fishmonger	1503-13	1495	1505					1513
Martyn, William	Skinner	1483-1505	1483	1492		5x	1494		1505
Mathew, John	Mercer	1482-1499	1482	1490		1x			1499
Mirfyn, Thomas	Skinner	1509-23	1511	1518		5x			1523
Monoux, George	Draper	1507-41	1509	1514	1523	6x		1541	1544
Northland, Thomas	Grocer	1481-85	1483			1x			1485
Nynes, Nicholas	Merchant Taylor	1501-4	1502			1x			1504
Pemberton, Hugh	Tailor	1491-1500	1491		1487	1x			1500
Percyvale, John	Merchant Taylor	1485-1503	1486	1498		1x	1487		1503
Purchase, William	Mercer	1492-1502	1492	1497		1x		1502	1503
Rawson, Richard	Mercer	1476-1485	1476			2x			1485
Rede, Bartholomew	Goldsmith	1498-1504	1491	1502		1x	1503		1504
Remyngton, William	Fishmonger	1485-1511	1487	1500					1511
Rest, John	Grocer	1508-1523	1510	1516		3x			1523
Revell, Robert	Grocer	1490-1	1490						1491
Shaa, Edmund	Goldsmith	1473-1488	1474	1482		1x	1483		1488

Surname	Company	Dates as Alderman	Sheriff	Mayor	MP	M / W*	K	Ex*	Died
Shaa, John	Goldsmith	1496-1503	1496	1501	1495, 1503	1x	1497		1503
Shore, Richard	Draper	1504-10	1505			1x			1510
Stede, William	Grocer	1504-6	1500			2x			1506
Stokker, John	Draper	1479-1485	1477			1x			1485
Stokker, William	Draper	1470-1485	1473	1485		1x	1471		1485
Swan, John	Tailor	1483-92	1485			1x			1492
Tate, John	Mercer	1485-1515	1485	1496 1514			1497		1515
Tate, Robert	Mercer	1479-1500	1481	1488	1483, 1491	3x			1500
Tilney, Robert	Grocer	1485-1499	1488			3x			1499
Warde, John	Grocer	1478-1501	1479	1485	1478, 1485, 1495	6x			1501
Warner, John	Armourer / Grocer	1503-1511	1494			2x			1511
Welbeck, William	Haberdasher	1492-1504	1492					1504	1510
White, William	Draper	1482-04	1482	1489	1489	5x			1504
Wood, Thomas	Goldsmith	1496-1504	1491			3x			1504
Wylford, James	Merchant Taylor	1500-1511	1499			1x		1511	1527
Wyndout, Thomas	Mercer	1499-1500	1497		1497	1x			1500
Wynger, John	Grocer	1498-1505	1493	1504		3x			1505

- * 'M/W' – Served as Master or Warden of Company
- * 'K' – Knighted
- * 'Ex' – Exonerated or discharged from Office

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