

Apprenticeship Indentures and Apprentices in Medieval England, 1250–1500

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Abstract

This thesis uses apprenticeship indentures to offer a novel insight into guilds and apprenticeship in medieval England. Indentures offer a unique view of idealised master-apprentice relationships, which are otherwise only visible in official records. A collection of 82 surviving indentures forms a starting point for exploring social, economic, and legal aspects of apprenticeship in medieval England, both within and outside the guild system. Chapter 1 outlines the content of indentures and provides a guide to their general form. Indentures developed gradually in response to social, economic and legal factors; these are explored in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the enforceability and enforcement of legislation pertaining to apprenticeship, as well as exploring the legal complexities of indentures as binding legal agreements made by minors. Chapter 3 considers apprenticeship in three ways in the context of the guild system: as a means of exploitation, as a means of exclusion, and as a means of providing technical training. No single model prevails, but the influence of each depends on geographical, economic, and temporal factors. Subsequent chapters provide an overview of the reality of apprenticeship. Chapter 4 discusses the use of behavioural clauses in indentures, which controlled apprentices' behaviour with the primary aim of protecting masters' reputations. Chapter 5 explores apprentices' expectations of the apprenticeship, including provision of training. Chapter 6 presents novel estimates, based on surviving records, of the cost of maintaining an apprentice, concluding that they were *not* 'cheap' labour. Historians have not previously considered this cost. Chapter 7 uses testamentary evidence to examine close master-apprentice relationships, highlighting the importance of fictive kinship. Civic enfranchisement and its relative importance is also discussed.

Overall, this thesis provides an original survey of apprenticeship in medieval England, based mainly on evidence from a previously neglected document type.

Declarations and Statements

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..Rhiannon Elaine Sandy..... (candidate)

Date ...10th May 2021.....

Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CP 40	Court of Common Pleas
<i>CPMR</i>	<i>Calendar of the Plea and Memoranda Rolls</i>
CUL	Cambridge University Library
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
KHLC	Kent History & Library Centre
<i>Letter-Book</i>	<i>Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London</i>
Leics RO	Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland
<i>Memorials</i>	<i>Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth Centuries: Being a Series of Extracts, Local, Social, and Political, from the Early Archives of the City of London. A.D. 1276–1419</i> , trans. and ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., by order of the Corporation of London, 1868)
MERL	Museum of English Rural Life
NLW	National Library of Wales
<i>PROME</i>	<i>Parliament Rolls of Medieval England</i> , ed. by Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005)
SALS	Somerset Archives & Local Studies
SRO	Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich
TNA	The National Archives
York Merchant Adventurers	Records of the Company of Merchant Adventurers of York, Merchant Adventurers' Hall, York
<i>s</i>	Shillings
<i>d</i>	Pence

Introduction

While guilds and apprenticeship have been a topic of regular study by historians since the late nineteenth century, surprisingly little attention has been given to apprenticeship indentures: the formal, legally binding contracts which set down the terms of the apprenticeship and the obligations of both master and apprentice. The majority of published works on medieval England contain index entries for ‘apprentices’ and ‘apprenticeship’, but apprentices are generally not the main research focus; they are mentioned in wider studies of subjects including childhood, education, craft guilds, and the urban economy. Thus, although plenty of literature touches on apprenticeship, it has tended to rely on general assumptions drawn by earlier historians rather than being a product of original research using documentary sources. For example, in *Growing Up in Medieval London*, the authoritative study of childhood and adolescence in England’s capital, Barbara Hanawalt stated that ‘in the early fourteenth century, fourteen was the usual age of entry into apprenticeship’.¹ Hanawalt cited Rosamund Mitchell and Mary Leys’ 1958 monograph, *A History of London Life*; Mitchell and Leys observed that ‘normally, the boys would be about fourteen years old, but in the *Early Chancery Proceedings* John Hill, draper, is found to have enrolled an apprentice at the age of eleven, in defiance of the City ordinance that laid down thirteen as the minimum age’.² The Chancery petition in question, dated 1452–4, mentioned a London ordinance which set a minimum age of thirteen for apprenticeship.³ It has not been possible to find any other record of this ordinance, and it should be remembered that such ordinances present an idealised version of reality.⁴ Consequently, academics commenting on the ‘usual’ age of apprentices have tended to refer back to either Hanawalt or Mitchell and Leys, or repeat their assertion with no reference.⁵ It is thus that assumptions about apprenticeship become accepted ‘fact’.

¹ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 113.

² R.J. Mitchell and M.D.R. Leys, *A History of London Life* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 64.

³ TNA, C 1/19/466. John Pye (aged fourteen) complained that his apprenticeship had been enrolled at the Guildhall when he was ‘then but xj yer’ old; Where as the orden^anc’ of the Cite Will’ [that] eny p[er]sone at his enrolyng be in age betwene xij [et] xiiij at the leste’.

⁴ A. Abram, *Social England in the Fifteenth Century: A Study of the Effects of Economic Conditions* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1909), p. 144. Annie Abram recognised that although it appeared that the municipal authorities tried to stop the apprenticing of very young children, it was not always effective in reality.

⁵ See, for example, Patrick Wallis, Cliff Webb and Chris Minns, ‘Leaving Home and Entering Service: The Age of Apprenticeship in Early Modern London’, *Continuity and Change*, 25 (2010), pp. 377–404, p. 380, which cites Hanawalt. E.D. Spindler, ‘Youth and Old Age in Late Medieval London’, *London Journal*, 36 (2011), pp. 1–22, p. 3, cites this ‘fact’ but refers to a section of Matthew Davies’ thesis (Matthew P. Davies, ‘The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 185), which actually comments on the length of apprenticeship and not the age at which it began.

This example from Hanawalt is merely the tip of the iceberg; other assumptions about apprenticeship are more fundamental. Many centre on the nature and function of apprenticeship, such as the use of apprentices as cheap labour (see Chapter 6). This thesis, therefore, examines established ‘facts’ about apprenticeship in medieval England by returning to the apprenticeship indentures themselves. Apprenticeship indentures, and the legal outcomes and implications of drawing up these indentures, have received little academic attention. Although apprenticeship indentures, like ordinances, presented an idealised image of apprenticeship, they can provide an insight into the everyday realities of masters’ and apprentices’ lives. At first sight, indentures appear largely formulaic, but closer inspection of a large number of such documents indicates that masters and apprentices negotiated the terms of the agreement. Personal preferences and experiences become visible – for example, one master used uncharacteristically specific language to prohibit the apprentice from committing fornication with his wife, implying that this concern was grounded in previous experience.⁶ Economic and social changes are also apparent. There is a notable change in indentures from the early fifteenth century, indicating that masters sought to recruit and retain apprentices with attractive terms, including gifts of goods and money at the completion of their term; this is discussed further in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. With close study, apprenticeship indentures can reveal a great deal about the realities of apprenticeship in medieval England, and these revelations sometimes contradict general assumptions about apprenticeship.

This thesis is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the diplomatic of apprenticeship indentures, to provide a greater understanding of the document’s development and its relation to other types of record. The second section examines the theory of apprenticeship, namely the theoretical models through which we can view apprenticeship, and the legal framework in which it existed. The third section explores the lived experience of masters and apprentices by studying indenture clauses concerning behaviour, the expectations of master and apprentice, and the conclusion of the apprenticeship. These sections are introduced in brief below, accompanied by a survey of the relevant literature surrounding apprenticeship in medieval England which mirrors the substantive body of the thesis.

⁶ Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3.

1. The diplomatic of indentures

The first chapter considers the diplomatic of indentures. Diplomatics (the study of documents) can assist in the identification, arrangement and description of individual documents, and aid the reader to reach a better understanding of the document within the broader contexts of creation and use.⁷ There are currently no published studies of the apprenticeship indenture as a distinct document type. This neglect means that all observations in this thesis are based upon a small number of extant documents, and secondary literature is necessarily drawn from studies of related document types. This thesis also seeks to address this neglect, by relating the apprenticeship indenture to indentures more generally. An indenture was a formal contract, which laid out the terms of the agreement and the expectations of all parties involved. In this case, these indentures concerned apprenticeship agreements. Indentures were usually bipartite, cut in half by a wavy line ‘being made in order that the parts when joined may be authenticated by the sameness of the cutting’.⁸ The jurist Edward Coke believed that only a deed thus indented counted as an indenture: ‘if a deed beginneth *hæc indenture, &c.* and in troth the parchment or paper is not indented, this is no indenture, because words cannot make it indented’.⁹ This was not universally true of apprenticeship indentures as a small number were not indented, and some indentures were also chirographs. This is discussed in Chapter 1.

Indentures and chirographs have garnered very little academic attention in recent centuries. Since the publication of Thomas Madox’s *Formulare Anglicanum* in 1702, only John Kaye has sought to advance the understanding of the use of chirographs, and Kaye’s work focused mainly on chirographs as a means of conveyancing land.¹⁰ Both Madox and Kaye agreed that indentures developed out of chirographs: Madox stated that ‘indentures were usually cut through the letters *Cirographum...indentwise*’, and Kaye also noted that

⁷ Charlotte Harrison, ‘Thomas Madox and the Origins of English Diplomatic Scholarship’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 29 (2008), pp. 147–169, p. 147.

⁸ Edward Coke, *The First Part of the Institutes and Laws of England, or a Commentary upon Littleton*, vol. 1, ed. by Charles Butler, 17th edn. (London: W. Clark & Sons, C. Hunter, and S. Brooke, 1817), s. 217, 143b., n. 3.

⁹ A.W. Brian Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract: The Rise of the Action of Assumpsit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 35; Edward Coke, *The First Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England, or A Commentary upon Littleton*, vol. 2, ed. by Francis Hargrave and Charles Butler, 18th edn. (London: J. & W.T. Clarke, R. Pheney, and S. Brooke, 1823), s. 370, 229a.

¹⁰ Thomas Madox, ‘*Formulare Anglicanum*’, *Or a Collection of Ancient Charters and Instruments of Divers kinds, Taken from the originals, Places under several Heads, and Deduced (in a Series according to the Order of Time) from the Norman Conquest, to the End of the Reign of King Henry VIII* (London: Jacob Tonson and R. Knappock, 1702); J.M. Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Charles Harpum, ‘A review of *Medieval English Conveyances* by JM Kaye, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 382 pp, Hbk £75, ISBN 9780521112192’, *King’s Law Journal*, 21 (2010), pp. 587–590, p. 587.

irregular cutting of chirographs from the thirteenth century ‘[led] to such deeds being called ‘indentures’’.¹¹ Chirographs, and subsequently indentures, developed from charters, and charters’ diplomatic features were mirrored in apprenticeship indentures. James Masschaele’s discussion of performative elements of charters provides a useful lens through which to consider apprenticeship indentures. Masschaele argued that charters used salutation clauses (such as ‘*Noverint universi quod in hunc modum convenit inter...*’, also found in early apprenticeship indentures) as a public address, indicating that charters were scripts for staged performances which notified others of the documentary agreement contained within the text of the charter.¹²

Although salutation clauses gradually fell out of use in apprenticeship indentures, the performative element persisted through public enrolments in civic or guild records, in a public space before an audience. The Coventry cappers’ 1496 ordinances, for example, demanded that apprenticeship indentures ‘be sealed before þe Maire & þe keepers of the Craft’.¹³ This made the apprenticeship indenture a matter of public knowledge, even if the majority of the audience was illiterate. Michael Clanchy’s monograph, *From Memory to Written Record*, highlighted the symbolic nature of publicly performed documents. Clanchy discussed how the increasing proliferation of written documents changed the significance of bearing witness by hearing and seeing.¹⁴ Public readings of documents, in both Latin and English, reached a wider audience; reading aloud permitted the ‘non-literate to participate in the use of documents’.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Clanchy stressed that lack of literacy did not mean that people were ignorant – they were as literate as the task required, and as the use of written documents increased, levels of literacy presumably also increased.¹⁶

2. Legal framework

The second chapter of this thesis considers the relationship between apprenticeship indentures and common law. Apprenticeship could be regulated on three levels: by statute

¹¹ Madox, ‘*Formulare Anglicanum*’, p. xxviii; Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances*, p. 9.

¹² James Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter in Thirteenth-Century England’, in *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Ben Dodds and Christian D. Liddy (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 199–216, p. 205; *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), p. 126.

¹³ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part II*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1908), p. 573.

¹⁴ M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 3rd edn. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p. 257.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 268 and 273.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

law; by local borough regulations and customs; and, more immediately, by guild ordinances and regulations. Apprenticeship also existed outside the guild system, so some apprentices were less regulated than others. The chapter focuses on two key areas – the statute law, which provided overarching control of apprenticeship in England, and the age of legal majority. The latter is a thorny issue and, as already noted above, many accepted ‘facts’ regarding the age of apprentices are merely assumptions. What is clear is that apprentices were able to enter into legally binding agreements with masters despite the fact they were below the age of majority. This chapter links the age of apprenticeship to the age of criminal responsibility rather than the age of legal majority, drawing on Phillipp Schofield’s work on frankpledge, Sylvia Thrupp’s study of fifteenth-century aliens, and Jeremy Goldberg’s research on life cycle, as well as contemporary legal records.¹⁷

It is important to consider the legal strength of apprenticeship indentures, and examine how they might be used in litigation. The indenture existed both as a means of clearly defining the master-apprentice relationship, and as specialty which might be used in subsequent legal actions. As Chapter 1 explains, apprenticeship indentures began as a memorandum of an agreement, but by 1321 they were considered a specialty in the central courts – that is to say, as a sealed document they were the only acceptable evidence of a covenant. Thus, they became the documentary witness of an agreement, rather than the record of an agreement; this is a subtle change, but an important one. John Baker’s *Introduction to English Legal History* explained this development in legal doctrine.¹⁸ Baker’s monograph also provides an invaluable source for understanding the legal framework in which indentures were formed, actioned, and occasionally prosecuted. The requirement for specialty in actions of covenant meant that, from the 1320s, indentures became increasingly important in order to make an apprenticeship legally binding: a plaintiff could only sue on an informal agreement, without a sealed deed, in local courts.¹⁹ This knowledge

¹⁷ Phillipp R. Schofield, ‘The Late Medieval View of Frankpledge and the Tithing System: An Essex Case Study’, in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, ed. by Zvi Razi and Richard Michael Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 408–449; Sylvia L. Thrupp, ‘Aliens in and around London in the Fifteenth Century’, in *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. by A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 251–274; P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Life and Death: The Ages of Man’, in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 413–434; ‘Exeter, Court Roll 21 (1288–9)’, *Borough Customs, vol. I*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1904), p. 157; *Year Books of the Reign of King Edward the Third. Years XI and XII*, ed. and trans. by Alfred J. Horwood, prefaced and indexed by Luke Owen Pike (London: Longman & Co., and Trübner & Co., 1883), p. 626.

¹⁸ J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 318–320.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

provides us with an understanding both of the importance of indentures, and of the legal avenues of redress open to apprentices in this period.

The legal position of apprenticeship indentures has been ignored by historians; most academic works discussing contracts focus on executory contracts, covenants, or the requirement of a specialty in actions of debt. Baker, an authority on the development of common law in the Middle Ages, provided the majority of information and explanation for the legal framework of apprenticeship and indentures. However, Baker did not explicitly mention apprenticeship indentures. More specific works, such as Brian Simpson's *History of the Common Law of Contract*, discuss other forms of indenture in more detail, and this information permits conclusions concerning the position of apprenticeship indentures to be drawn with a degree of certainty.²⁰ The main forms of action that were likely to be brought against a defendant on an indenture were actions of assumpsit (see below), debt, and trespass.

Baker stated that the law of contract governed expectations arising out of particular transactions between individual persons.²¹ This certainly suggests that actions concerning the fulfilment of apprenticeship indentures could be heard in contract. The word 'contract', however, possessed a very confined meaning; it denoted a transaction, such as a sale or loan, which transferred property or generated a debt, rather than an exchange of promises (such as an apprenticeship indenture). The sense of a contract as a legally binding agreement was conveyed by the word 'covenant'.²² Simpson described the theoretical function of covenant as making tortious and actionable any future conduct which would otherwise be lawful.²³ The action of covenant was particularly relevant for failure to fulfil the terms of an apprenticeship indenture because it could lie for both misfeasance (doing something badly) and nonfeasance. Nonfeasance might count when the defendant did nothing at all to perform the covenant, had disabled himself from performing it, or had not given the plaintiff full benefit of the covenant.²⁴ Additionally, Simpson stated, the action of covenant was regularly regarded as an action to recover unliquidated damages for wrongful or tortious breach of covenant.²⁵ Baker described it as an action which compelled performance where appropriate,

²⁰ A.W. Brian Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract: The Rise of the Action of Assumpsit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

²¹ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 317.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

²³ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 19.

²⁴ David J. Ibbetson, 'Words and Deeds: The Action of Covenant in the Reign of Edward I', *Law and History Review*, 4 (1986), pp. 71–94, p. 75.

²⁵ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 13.

and awarded damages where not.²⁶ Damages were awarded not in place of future performance of the covenant, but in compensation for the period of non-performance – after all, the focus of the plea was the *performance* of the agreement, not the agreement itself.²⁷

There is some disagreement among academics as to the scope of the action of covenant. Robert Palmer considered it mainly a mechanism for formalising conveyances of land, as opposed to a litigious action, and averred that ‘some few people did use covenant to enforce agreements but that use was rare’.²⁸ Simpson, conversely, believed that covenant did not operate as any type of transfer, and noted that the sort of agreement actionable by a writ of covenant did not confer any enforceable right to the possession upon either party, either immediately or in the future, of any definite thing including debts, lands or, most pertinently, persons.²⁹ Although others, such as Frederic Maitland, argued that the writ of covenant was originally restricted to agreements concerning land, the scope of the action had obviously expanded by the fifteenth century.³⁰ Thus Palmer was rather alone in his view. As early as 1321, Justice Herle remarked that a covenant was ‘nothing more nor less than an agreement between the parties’.³¹ Morris Arnold noted that personal relationships, including undertaking to receive another as an apprentice, could be guided by covenant, and believed that ‘the idea embodied in the word covenant had no limitations’.³² Baker asserted that the action of covenant was, on the face of it, applicable to all consensual agreements.³³ Similarly, David Ibbetson argued that covenant could, potentially, cover practically all actions arising from the breach of agreements – and the non-performance of an indenture by either party should fall under this.³⁴

Apprenticeship indentures were evidentiary – they were written evidence of a covenant. Specialty, in the form of a sealed written document, was essential to maintain an action of covenant at common law in the central courts.³⁵ This was particularly relevant with regard to actions brought for contravention of the terms of an apprenticeship indenture; as

²⁶ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 318

²⁷ Robert C. Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348–1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 66–67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²⁹ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 19.

³⁰ F.W. Maitland, ‘The History of the Register of Writs’, in *The Collected Papers of Frederick William Maitland*, ed. by H.A.L. Fisher, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), p. 141, cited in Ibbetson, ‘Words and Deeds’, p. 71.

³¹ Morris S. Arnold, ‘Towards an Ideology of the Early English Law of the Obligations’, *Law and History Review*, 5 (1987), pp. 505–521, p. 509.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 510.

³³ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 318.

³⁴ Ibbetson, ‘Words and Deeds’, p. 75.

³⁵ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 22; Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 319.

Chief Justice Finchden affirmed in 1371, ‘the action is taken on the deed, and without a deed it cannot be maintained’.³⁶ Palmer noted that actions of covenant were restricted to agreements evidenced by a specialty well before the Black Death.³⁷ However, initially this limitation applied only to the royal courts: by 1321 the royal judges had decided that a specialty was the only acceptable evidence of a covenant, meaning that plaintiffs with informal agreements were prevented from seeking justice in the central courts.³⁸ By 1346 specialty was also required for actions heard at the (itinerant) eyre.³⁹ After this date, plaintiffs without specialty could only seek remedy at local or borough courts. The requirement for specialty also affected defendants; in 1485, Justice Vavasour declared that, in an action of covenant against an apprentice, it was not a plea on the apprentice’s part to say that the master had discharged him from the apprenticeship, ‘since his action is founded upon a specialty, which requires a reply of an equally high nature as it is’.⁴⁰ Whether any such documents discharging apprentices exist is questionable; certainly, none have been found in the course of this research. However, legislation was enacted in the late fourteenth century which decreed that no servant or labourer, male or female, should depart from service at the end of their term without a sealed letter patent ‘containing the cause of his going’.⁴¹ Although the legislation did not explicitly apply to apprentices, this would suggest that Vavasour was relying on a precedent.

The requirement for a sealed document in the central courts probably explains why so many indentures were sealed, just in case there was a need to bring an action in future, even though many plaintiffs would have sought justice at a local level where specialty was not necessarily required. Cynthia Neville, whose study focused mainly on criminal litigation, suggested that legal knowledge might have been unofficially disseminated locally by law apprentice ‘drop outs’ returned from London.⁴² If legal knowledge from the capital was transmitted to the provinces, using a sealed indenture to bind an apprentice might have been

³⁶ *The Prior of Bradstock’s Case* (1371), cited in Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, pp. 22–23.

³⁷ Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death*, p. 64.

³⁸ Baker, *English Legal History*, pp. 319–320.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁴⁰ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 26.

⁴¹ 12 Ric. II, c. 3.

⁴² C.J. Neville, ‘Common Knowledge of the Common Law in Later Medieval England’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 29 (1994), pp. 461–478, pp. 473–474. Baker commented that the sons of the lesser nobility attended the Inns of Court ‘for social purposes and to acquire a general education, without any intention of practising law’ – J.H. Baker, ‘The English Legal Profession, 1450–1550’, in *Lawyers in Early Modern Europe and America*, ed. by W. Prest (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier, 1981), pp. 16–41, p. 18, cited in Neville, ‘Common Knowledge of the Common Law’, p. 474, n. 61.

perceived as the ‘right’ thing to do, even if it was not entirely necessary. This suggests there was a general understanding of what an indenture should look like, to the extent that sealed indentures were created even when they were not needed for litigation. Anthony Musson suggested that legal knowledge and concepts were acquired through attendance at public courts; masters might regularly attend local urban courts, which were generally responsible for specialised civil litigation including actions for breach of covenant, and this meant they might become familiar with the form and use of apprenticeship indentures.⁴³ Stephanie Hovland identified three surviving fifteenth-century formularies containing apprenticeship indentures, while sixteenth-century printed formularies contained apprenticeship indentures in both Latin and English, implying that these were commonplace documents.⁴⁴ The knowledge of how an indenture *should* look allowed the illiterate to understand the importance of the document, and participate in its creation. This also indicates that masters were aware of the potential use of indentures as specialty, and implies that they considered the potential for future litigation prior to the commencement of the apprenticeship.

Essentially, apprenticeship indentures did not need to exist. Therefore, it is surprising that at least 82 apprenticeship indentures (in various forms, but not including indentures in formularies) have survived, not least because apprenticeship indentures are ephemera. The inclusion of exemplar apprenticeship indentures in formularies indicate the frequency with which scribes were required to draw them up, and there are strong indications from other sources that many more indentures were created than have survived.⁴⁵ Cambridge University Library holds a scrivener’s notebook containing notes on 42 apprenticeship indentures produced at Bury St Edmunds around 1462.⁴⁶ There were probably multiple scribes in Bury: it was a sizeable town, with 2,445 taxpayers recorded for the 1377 poll tax (levied on

⁴³ Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasants’ Revolt* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 95, 97 and 104.

⁴⁴ Stephanie R. Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), pp. 260–261; *An Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding aswel to Make as also to Perceyue the Tenour and Forme of Indentures, Obligations, Quittances, Bylles of Payment, Letters of Licence, Letters of Sale, Letters of Exchange, Protections, Supplycations, Complayntes, a Certificate, and the Copy of Save Condyte* (London: R. Grafton for J. Waylye, ca. 1550), ff. xii–xvi. This edition was published circa 1550. There is also an earlier edition, *An Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding as wel to Make as also to Perceive, the Tenour and Fourme of Inde[n]tures, Obligatio[n]s, Quittances, Bylles of Payme[n]t, Letters of Sale, Letters of Exchaunge, Protections, Supplications, Complayntes, a Certificat, And the Copy of Savecondyte* (London: Paules church yarde by Roberte Toye, ca. 1545). Both are later editions of a 1537 publication.

⁴⁵ Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London’, p. 27.

⁴⁶ CUL, MS Add. 7318.

every layperson over the age of fourteen).⁴⁷ Ten English towns, including Bury St Edmunds, recorded between 2,000 and 3,000 taxpayers in 1377.⁴⁸ If each of those towns had one scrivener producing 40 apprenticeship indentures per year, that would equate to 4,000 apprenticeship indentures per decade from just ten moderately large towns. In other words, far more indentures may have been produced, needlessly or not, than currently survive.

Nevertheless, some forms of action pertinent to apprenticeship did not require specialty even in the central courts. These were actions of trespass based on a tort as opposed to trespass *vi et armis* ('with force and arms'), namely trespass on the statute and assumpsit. In the aftermath of the Black Death, the Statute of Labourers (1351) sought to prevent labourers, workmen and servants of any 'estate or condition...retained in any man's service' from departing before the end of the agreed term 'without reasonable cause or license', as well as decreeing 'that no man pay, or promise to pay, any servant any more wages...than was wont'.⁴⁹ An action of trespass, in the form of breach of the Statute of Labourers, might not require specialty, as the (allegedly unlawful) apprenticeship was already evident and the content of the indenture would not disprove the allegation.⁵⁰ However, the Statute of Labourers applied only to the 'inferior' sort of labourer and, in 1431, Justice Cottesmore ruled that a writ on the Statute of Labourers could not be sued on an apprenticeship.⁵¹ An action of covenant for misfeasance, in which the complaint centred on a wrongful act rather than a failure to keep one's word, did not require specialty.⁵² This action, which looked like a trespass, became known as 'assumpsit', akin to 'undertaking' in English. The first known action of assumpsit, the 1348 Humber Ferry Case, concerned a ferryman who undertook to

⁴⁷ Alan Dyer, 'Appendix: Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns. 5: Ranking of towns by taxpaying population: the 1377 poll tax', in *The Cambridge History of Urban Britain: Volume 1 – 600–1540*, ed. by D.M. Pallister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 758–760.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 758. The towns are Colchester (2,951), Boston (2,871), Beverley (2,663), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (2,647), Canterbury (2,574), Winchester (?2,500), Bury St Edmunds (2,445), Oxford (2,357), Leicester (2,302), and Gloucester (2,239). Although the numbers assessed are much smaller, there is little difference in the ranking of towns by taxpaying population based on the 1524–1525 subsidy, so it is likely that this rough calculation would hold true for the 1460s – Alan Dyer, 'Appendix: Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns. 6: Ranking of towns by taxpaying population: Subsidy of 1524–1525', in *The Cambridge History of Urban Britain: Volume 1 – 600–1540*, ed. by D.M. Pallister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 761–764.

⁴⁹ 23 Edward III, Statute of Labourers (1349), c. 2 and c. 3.

⁵⁰ *Threlkeld v Cresvale*, TNA, CP 40/673, rot. 44; *R v Daubney*, TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 108. The burden of providing specialty fell to the plaintiff, who was complaining about the legality of the apprenticeship – it was down to the defendant to plead either that the apprenticeship did not breach the statute, or that it did not exist.

⁵¹ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 333; Kitrina Bevan, 'Clerks and Scriveners: Legal Literacy and Access to Justice in Late Medieval England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2013), pp. 204–205.

⁵² Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 329.

carry a mare across the Humber but so overloaded his ferry that the mare perished.⁵³ No specialty was required because the action concerned a tort, or wrong, which would be tortious even if no agreement existed between the parties, and the undertaking formed the basis of the action.

If a master undertook to teach an apprentice and failed to do so properly, this could be considered a misfeasance, which sounded in trespass even though there was no physical violence. Furthermore, in actions for misfeasance the undertaking was not necessarily promissory; it concerned the taking on of a task, not the agreement to do something in the future – this would be nonfeasance. A promissory undertaking, argued Baker, was the same as a covenant, and so an action for nonfeasance sounded in covenant rather than trespass.⁵⁴ As Ibbetson noted, nonfeasance might apply if the defendant did nothing to fulfil the covenant, or disabled himself from performing the covenant (by absenting himself from the workshop, for example).⁵⁵ However, inaction was not a trespass and Rede, serjeant at law, declared in 1487 that ‘an action on the case does not lie for nonfeasance, because for that the party shall have a writ of covenant’, and from 1321 covenant required specialty.⁵⁶

It is possible that in some actions of covenant, the court might decide to compel the parties to fulfil the covenant rather than award damages, although Baker observed that there was no difficulty awarding damages where compelling performance of the agreement would have been inappropriate.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, it became common from the fourteenth century, when parties chose to make a contract under seal, to use the form of a conditional bond, which had a secure remedy in debt rather than covenant.⁵⁸ Simpson noted that conditions and covenants were separated in medieval legal doctrine on the grounds that conditions could transfer rights while covenants could not.⁵⁹ By such logic, a documented agreement containing a penal or conditional clause could not be heard in covenant. Unlike the writ of covenant, the writ of debt was available on both formal and informal transactions, so long as a definite sum of money was owed.⁶⁰ Palmer stated that debt on a contract – that is, an action brought on a transaction rather than an agreement – was for plaintiffs who did not have

⁵³ *Bukton v Tounesende* (1348), in Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 330.

⁵⁴ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 334.

⁵⁵ Ibbetson, ‘Words and Deeds’, p. 75.

⁵⁶ *Anon.* (1487), in J.H. Baker, *Baker and Milsom Sources of English Legal History: Private Law to 1750*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 440.

⁵⁷ Baker, *English Legal History*, pp. 320–321.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 320–321.

⁵⁹ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 34.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

specialty, as long as the plaintiff had suit.⁶¹ This was true in Common Pleas before the fourteenth century, and remained the case in county courts thereafter. This form of action permitted the defendant to go to compurgation (wager of law), making it less likely that judgement would be given to the plaintiff.⁶² It was also a necessity, in actions where the plaintiff had no specialty, for there to be both *quid pro quo* and a sum certain (both discussed at length by William McGovern). Requiring *quid pro quo* in place of a specialty benefitted apprentices who lacked a sealed indenture: specialty was considered totally unnecessary in actions brought for non-payment of wages, as service was an obvious *quid pro quo*.⁶³ That being said, very few apprentices received wages (see Chapter 6).

With regard to debt on an obligation, or debt on a bond, however, the situation is less than clear. It is commonly acknowledged that prosecuting an action of debt on an obligation required a document under seal.⁶⁴ It is also accepted fact that the existence of a specialty limited the defendant's options; to quote Baker, a deed was of such a 'high nature' for evidential purposes that few parol (unwritten, or unsealed) defences were allowed against it.⁶⁵ The defendant could deny the validity of the document in a variety of ways (including alleging that the bond was a forgery, that it had been made under duress, or that it had been tampered with in some way), but where the defendant admitted the deed was valid, another deed was needed to support a plea that, for example, the sum mentioned in the bond had been paid.⁶⁶ However, surviving legal records suggest that this was not always how actions progressed. In Easter term 1428 Thomas Broune, goldsmith, brought an action on a writ of debt against his former apprentice Thomas Wakford, also a goldsmith, for damages of 20 marks. Broune alleged that Wakford owed him 10 marks by way of an indenture under Wakford's seal, which Broune presented to the court. In the indenture, made at Canterbury on 10 December 1398, Wakford bound himself to Broune as an apprentice from 6 January 1399 for a term of five years, 'obliging himself in the aforesaid 10 marks to fully hold to this agreement'. Broune brought the action because Wakford had 'totally infringed' upon the indenture, thus obligating himself to pay the aforementioned 10 marks, and leading Broune to

⁶¹ Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death*, pp. 69–70

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 70. Under compurgation, the defendant took an oath, and then a number of witnesses (typically twelve) would testify to the truth of the oath.

⁶³ William M. McGovern, 'Contract in Medieval England: The Necessity for Quid pro Quo and a Sum Certain', *The American Journal of Legal History*, 13 (1969), pp. 173–201, p. 176.

⁶⁴ Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract*, p. 88; Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 323; Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death*, p. 70.

⁶⁵ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 324. Parol in this case means word as opposed to deed, but also includes the written word if the writing is unsealed – *ibid.*, p. 324, n 39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 324; Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death*, p. 70.

claim damages of 20 marks.⁶⁷ Wakford's riposte was that Broune ought not continue the action because he, Wakford, had 'held faithfully to the terms of the aforesaid indenture' until 10 October 1423, 'from which day Broune was no longer able to provide Wakford with food or drink, and so he then withdrew from Broune's service at Canterbury as he had good licence to do'. Broune's response was that Wakford had actually left his services without good licence on 8 January 1423.⁶⁸

The issue put to the jury was whether or not Wakford had left Broune's service with good licence. On 3 January 1429, a jury at the Canterbury assize found that Wakford had withdrawn from Broune's service on 8 January 1423 without good licence, as Broune claimed, and therefore Broune was to recover damages of 33s 4d 'on the detention of the aforesaid debt of 10 marks'.⁶⁹ Although this particular case raises some questions (namely, what exactly were the terms in his indenture that led to Wakford remaining in Broune's service for nearly twenty-five years?) it leaves us in no doubt that it was indeed possible to bring an action for damages on an indenture using a writ of debt, and that challenging the validity of the indenture or alleging payment of the debt were not the defendant's only options. What is less clear is whether or not this would be possible if the indenture were not sealed. This question, which falls outside the scope of this thesis, can only be answered with further research.

3. Models of apprenticeship

Chapter 3 assesses the concept and practice of apprenticeship within the guild system by means of three theoretical models. The first model considers apprenticeship as an exclusionary practice, designed to limit the number of participants within an economic community. The second model perceives apprenticeship as a means of exploiting apprentices as cheap labour. The third model, founded on the work of Larry Epstein, considers apprenticeship as a means of ensuring technical expertise through work-based training.⁷⁰ William Cunningham suggested that apprenticeship was 'at first a private arrangement between a master, who was also a householder, and a youth whom he undertook to instruct in his business', and noted that apprenticeship 'had become a recognised institution before the

⁶⁷ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135 d.

⁶⁸ Ibid.; TNA, CP 40/670 rot. 307.

⁶⁹ TNA, CP 40/670 rot. 307.

⁷⁰ S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History*, 58 (1998), pp. 684–713, p. 684. Epstein suggested that 'the primary purpose of craft guilds was to provide adequate skills training through formal apprenticeship'.

fourteenth century'.⁷¹ Certainly in London, the requirement to enrol apprentices existed at least as early as 1275.⁷² Nevertheless, guilds formalised a training system that must have already existed before the rise of craft guilds: the guild system, as Joel Mokyr noted, was 'neither necessary nor sufficient for the emergence of effective apprenticeship institutions'.⁷³

Although the practice of apprenticeship (both formal and informal) continued to exist outside the guild system, few urban apprentices would have worked without guild oversight, whether from a craft guild or a more general guild merchant, and apprenticeship was the usual means of entering a guild. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how historians have viewed and understood guilds in order to fully comprehend the practice of apprenticeship. A great many accounts and studies of the guilds have been produced since the publication of John Stow's *Survey of London* at the end of the sixteenth century, with the number increasing dramatically in the nineteenth century when London's corporate archives opened to outside scholars.⁷⁴ The accessibility of guild records was a product of 'developing civic consciousness and pious self-justification' by the companies in the face of investigation by Parliament, which culminated in the production of a report by the Royal Commission in 1884.⁷⁵ The studies of guilds produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be roughly divided into two schools: well-intentioned antiquarian works, and urgent political treatises.⁷⁶ Both focused almost solely on guilds; apprenticeship was not considered in its own right, and was only mentioned as part of the discourse on guilds, despite the fact that apprenticeship existed outside the guild system. It is only relatively recently that apprenticeship has begun to gain academic attention in its own right.

3.1 Antiquarian works

Antiquarian works fall into two distinct groups: compilations of documents, and company histories. The document compilations were often collections of manuscript transcriptions, not all of which related to guilds – for example, Joshua Toulmin Smith's

⁷¹ W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages*, 5th edn. (Cambridge: University Press, 1927), p. 349.

⁷² Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 197; *Letter-Book D*, p. 37, n. 1

⁷³ Joel Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 20–43, p. 33.

⁷⁴ John Stow, *A Survey of London: Reprinted from the text of 1603*, ed. by C.L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908).

⁷⁵ Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis, 'Introduction', in *Guilds, Society & Economy in London 1450–1800*, ed. by Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2002), pp. 1–14, p. 2 and p. 11, n. 3.

⁷⁶ Gadd and Wallis, 'Introduction', p. 2.

collection of documents, published by the Early English Text Society in 1870, contained ordinances from more than one hundred guilds, the ‘old usages’ of Winchester, ordinances of Worcester, and documents relating to the manor of Tettenhall-Regis, among others.⁷⁷ Organisations such as the Early English Text Society and the Surtees Society published transcriptions of such documents as the 1449 ordinances of the Lynn tailors, and the register of York’s Corpus Christi guild.⁷⁸ The antiquarians who compiled these documents sought to convey a positive moral message. Lucy Toulmin Smith’s introduction to her father’s publication explained his rationale: ‘he became convinced that...these old Records possessed a value for the men and women of England of the present day, which ought to be made known’. His work aimed ‘to put forth a true view of the early English Gilds, what they were, and what they did, by letting their own records speak for them’.⁷⁹ However, as Matthew Davies noted, such records were merely a ‘normative framework...drafted in the full knowledge that they could never distil work relationships and productive processes into a few statutes’. In isolation, ordinances reveal little about the means of enforcement or the prioritisation of certain regulations at the expense of others.⁸⁰

Company histories form a separate, distinct group of antiquarian works. Some were produced at the request of the company they related to, such as Thomas Reddaway’s history of the goldsmiths’ company.⁸¹ Some had explicit links to the guild: Randall Monier-Williams, who produced a multi-volume history of the tallow chandlers, was Clerk to the Company from 1928 and a master in 1962–63.⁸² Similarly, John Sherwell, who compiled the first edition of the London saddlers’ history, was Clerk of the Company, and the third edition

⁷⁷ Lucy Toulmin Smith, Joshua Toulmin Smith, Lujo Brentano and Early English Text Society, *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Guilds : Together With þe Olde Usages of þe Cite of Wynchestre; the Ordinances of Worcester; the Office of the Mayor of Bristol; And, the Customary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regis. From Original MSS. of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.* (London: Trübner, 1870)

⁷⁸ *The Gild of St Mary, Lichfield: Being Ordinances of the Gild of St Mary and Other Documents*, ed. by F.J. Furnivall (K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., for Early English Text Society, 1920), pp. 77–79; *The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi in the City of York; with an appendix of illustrative documents, containing some account of the Hospital of St Thomas of Canterbury, without Micklegate-Bar, in the suburbs of the city*, ed. by Robert H. Scaife (Durham: Andrews and Co., for the Surtees Society, 1872).

⁷⁹ Toulmin Smith, Toulmin Smith, Brentano and Early English Text Society, *English Gilds*, pp. xiii and xiv.

⁸⁰ Matthew Davies, ‘Governors and Governed: The Practice of Power in the Merchant Taylors’ Company in the Fifteenth Century’, in *Guilds, Society & Economy in London 1450–1800*, ed. by Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2002), pp. 67–83, p. 68.

⁸¹ T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths’ Company 1327–1509* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975).

⁸² Randall Monier-Williams, *The Tallow Chandlers of London: Volume One – The Mystery in the Making* (London: Kaye & Ward Ltd., 1970), information taken from Plate 1.

was revised by Lt.-Col. Laurie, ‘a Past-Master’.⁸³ Such histories might be influenced, consciously or not, by a certain agenda – to portray the company in the most positive light possible. A few guild histories seem to have been produced without influence from the guild in question, such as Frances Consitt’s work on the London weavers, which was originally conceived as a B.Litt. thesis (although the Weavers’ Company do receive an acknowledgment in the preface thanking them for their consideration and the use of their facilities).⁸⁴ Whatever the agenda, company histories were also influenced or hindered by the availability of records. For example, no Apprenticeship Books survive from the Goldsmiths’ Company prior to 1578, but this does not mean that the goldsmiths took no apprentices. Apprentices’ names were entered in the Minute Books from the 1330s, but entries were kept by one or more wardens on unbound sheets and only inscribed in the Minute Book at the end of the year – and then only if the clerk received the papers from the wardens.⁸⁵ Lisa Jefferson suggested that some gaps in the goldsmiths’ records could be attributed to uncertainties over which book they should be copied into.⁸⁶ Moreover, it must be remembered that surviving records were more indicative of guild aspirations than actual practice.

Although document compilations and company histories do not provide a great deal of critical analysis of guilds’ aims and modes of operation, they do help to preserve documents and records which might otherwise be lost. This enabled critical commentary by socialist and imperialist writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some of whom, like Toulmin Smith, sought to enlighten their contemporaries as to the value of the guilds (or gilds) of medieval England. Francis Hibbert, whose study of Shrewsbury’s guilds was published in 1891, had a very low opinion of contemporary craftsmen in comparison with their medieval counterparts:

‘Five centuries ago the workman was intelligent and skilled, he is now untrained and degraded: he was then able and accustomed to take a proper pride in his work, he is now careless and indifferent: he used to be provident and thrifty, now he is usually reckless and wasteful. It is not too

⁸³ J.W. Sherwell, *The History of the Guild of Saddlers*, 3rd edn., revised by Lt.-Col. K.S. Laurie (Chelmsford: J.H. Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1956), information taken from title page.

⁸⁴ Frances Consitt, *The London Weavers’ Company: Volume I – From the Twelfth Century to the close of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. v–vi.

⁸⁵ Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths’ Company*, pp. 63–64, n. 122.

⁸⁶ *Wardens Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths’ Mistery of London 1334–1446*, ed. by Lisa Jefferson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), p. xx. See pp. xiv–xxiii for a full discussion of the Goldsmiths’ various record books and their uses.

much to say that a great reason of this vast difference is to be found in the influence which the Gilds exercised'.⁸⁷

Hibbert's harsh opinion might have been influenced by the Romantic ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement, and his words echoed the thoughts of the architect and designer Charles Ashbee, also published in 1891: '...the workman, as I know him, is by nature capable and willing and thrifty, but the social and industrial conditions by which he is surrounded...in the traditions of his workshop, tend to dissipate his energies, to make him wasteful, callous, thriftless'.⁸⁸ Ashbee was a leading figure in the Arts and Crafts movement, whose members aimed to raise design standards, which they felt had been debased in the mid-nineteenth century.⁸⁹ Many of the Arts and Crafts movement's aims were, according to Alan Crawford, 'rooted in a Romantic sense of the past', and he described the movement as 'a brave and slightly foolish application of the spirit of Romanticism to the everyday world of work'.⁹⁰ There was a widespread belief in progressive circles that industrialisation had destroyed an admirable, traditional way of life, and James Thorold Rogers' work on wages (among others) provided support for this view – he identified the fifteenth century as the 'golden age of the English labourer'.⁹¹ In response to the Industrial Revolution's detrimental impact on traditional ways of life, critics such as John Ruskin argued for the redevelopment of rural industries.⁹² Mechanisation 'disturbed the contact between artizan [*sic*] and the object of manufacture'.⁹³ The architect William Lethaby (son of a skilled carver and gilder) praised 'the good old crafts where the hand and eye, individual judgment and experience, [had] not given way to wholesale production by machine'.⁹⁴ He also emphasised that 'it would be

⁸⁷ Francis Aidan Hibbert, *The Influence and Development of English Gilds: As illustrated by the history of the craft guilds of Shrewsbury* (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), p. 50.

⁸⁸ '2.2.2 From *An Endeavour towards the teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* by C.R. Ashbee, Essex House Press, London 1891, pp 39–40', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement: Writings by Ashbee, Lethaby, Gimson and their Contemporaries*, ed. by Mary Greensted (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2005), p. 30.

⁸⁹ 'Introduction', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 4.

⁹⁰ Alan Crawford, 'Ideas and Objects: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain', *Design Issues*, 13 (1997), pp. 15–26, pp. 17–18 and 24–25.

⁹¹ Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 2.

⁹² 'Introduction', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 6.

⁹³ '1.4.6 From 'Things Amiss with our Arts and Industries' by John D. Sedding, *Transactions* pp. 343, 344–5, 348–9', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Fiona MacCarthy, 'Lethaby, William Richard (1857–1931), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34503>> [accessed 18 December 2020]; '2.5.2 From 'Cabinet Making' by W.R. Lethaby in *Plain Handicrafts*, pp 7, 8–9, 10–11, 16', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 36.

quite vain to try to teach the practice of a craft in print; that can only be done by actual contact with a workman who holds it as a tradition received from some other, and so back and back'.⁹⁵ In other words, these skills were best transmitted through practical training, as in an apprenticeship.

In Hibbert's view, it was the guilds who had provided both the training and the regulations required to ensure that workers produced high-quality goods. It was Hibbert's firm belief that 'a study of the extent and nature of the influence which the Gilds exercised on the condition and skill of the working man in the past will help to solve the problem of his improvement in the present and in the future'.⁹⁶ Ashbee agreed; he had established the Guild of Handicraft in 1888, 'a body of men of different trades, crafts and occupations, united together' to 'promote both the goodness of the work produced and the standard of life of the producer'. Its objectives might have been recognisable to medieval craftsmen: 'to do good work, and to do it in such a way as shall best conduce to the welfare of the workmen'.⁹⁷ William Morris decried the 'very serious change which [had] taken place since those works of cooperative art were produced in the Middle Ages', while the architect John Sedding commented that if he wanted 'to test the artistic quality of English art...from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries', he would find a better specimen in 'the stamped pattern on the lead water-butt' of a medieval manor house than in the National Gallery.⁹⁸ Although the Arts and Crafts movement was not a socialist organisation, many of its leaders, such as Lethaby and Morris, were Socialists, and Ashbee praised 'the marriage between the stolid uncompromising co-operative force of trades unionism [*sic*], and the spirit that makes for a high standard of excellence in English Art and Handicraft'. Despite describing himself as a 'violent Tory', Ruskin established the Guild of St George in 1871.⁹⁹ Members were obliged to live and work according to religious and moral principles and contribute to guild funds in exchange for fair pay and shared ownership of communal farms and industries.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ '2.5.2', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, pp. 36–37.

⁹⁶ Hibbert, *The Influence and Development of English Gilds*, p. 51.

⁹⁷ '2.2.4 The Guild Book of Rules 1899 in *Craftsmanship in Competitive Industry* edited by C.R. Ashbee, Chipping Campden 1908, pp. 226–7', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 31.

⁹⁸ '1.4.7 From 'The Arts and Crafts of Today' by William Morris, 1889, reprinted in *Collected Works* Vol. XXII edited by May Morris, Longman, Green & Co., London 1914, pp 359, 366–8', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 23; 'Introduction', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, pp. 3–4.

⁹⁹ Crawford, 'Ideas and Objects', p. 25; Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 10; '2.2.1 From *Transactions of the School and Guild of Handicraft* edited by C.R. Ashbee, Vol. I, 1890, pp 19–22', in *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 29. John Ruskin was a self-described 'violent Tory of the Old School' – John Ruskin, *Praeterita* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p. 5, cited in Crawford, 'Ideas and Objects', p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, p. 14.

Craftsmen may indeed have taken more care, and had more pride in their work, in a time when, to quote Karl Marx, master and workmen stood close together socially.¹⁰¹ The Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley had also recognised this fifty years previously. He expressed the alienation of worker and capitalist in a society dominated by market relationships in poems such as *Queen Mab*; Tim Cloudsley suggested that, had Shelley not died in 1822, he would have found ‘a synthesis in Marxism’.¹⁰² Marx himself was a great admirer of Shelley, and (allegedly) referred to him as ‘one of the advanced guard of socialism’.¹⁰³ Romanticism was a current of anti-modernism, which challenged the developing economy, urbanisation, and industrialisation of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ The industrialist, capitalist nineteenth century was the antithesis of the Romantic ideal, and the Middle Ages offered an alternative that better suited Romantic sensibilities. The medieval guild system offered all members – apprentices, journeymen and masters – protection, both from each other and from external influences, by issuing regulations on behaviour, working practices, and pricing. In contrast, the *laissez-faire* capitalist ideology of the turn of the century denied the labourer the fruits of his work, and condemned him to a life of poverty and squalor.¹⁰⁵ David Cannadine noted that, in the thirty years preceding the First World War, ‘historical economists’ (as we might label Hibbert) favoured collectivism and rejected *laissez-faire* theories.¹⁰⁶ Medieval guilds offered a more positive economic model than modern capitalism, and this was eagerly seized upon by historians with socialist leanings.

¹⁰¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I – Book I: The Processes of Production of Capital*, trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. by Frederick Engels, reprint (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), p. 689.

¹⁰² Tim Cloudsley, ‘Romanticism and the Industrial Revolution’, *History of European Ideas*, 12 (1990), pp. 611–635, pp. 626 and 627. Paul Cantor noted that, ‘contrary to conventional opinion about the economic attitudes of the Romantics, [Shelley] attributes the problems not to the Industrial Revolution but to the financial policies of the British government’, particularly the reliance on paper currency (which he referred to as ‘fairy-money’) – Paul A. Cantor, ‘Shelley’s Radicalism: The Poet as Economist’, in *Literature and the Economics of Liberty: Spontaneous Order in Culture*, ed. by Paul A. Cantor and Stephen Cox (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009), pp. 225–261, pp. 238 and 236.

¹⁰³ Greg Ellerman, ‘Red Shelley, Once Again’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 68 (2019), pp. 104–105, p. 104; Cantor, ‘Shelley’s Radicalism’, pp. 225–226. The authenticity of this quote has been debated, but it was attributed to Karl Marx by his daughter and she was unlikely, according to Paul Foot, to have put his name to an ‘invented’ quotation – Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), pp. 227–228, cited in Cantor, ‘Shelley’s Radicalism’, p. 225, n. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Crawford, ‘Ideas and Objects’, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ David Cannadine, ‘The Present and the Past in the English Industrial Revolution 1880–1980’, *Past & Present*, 103 (1984), pp. 131–172, p. 137.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 137–138.

3.2 Political treatises

At the height of the British Empire, increased economic liberalisation prompted guilds, with their protectionist aims, to justify their continued existence. While antiquarians sought to highlight the values and worth of guilds through their own records, academic studies of guilds in this period were overtly political, emphasising guilds' central role in England's transition from a 'medieval' to a 'capitalist' society. Many agreed with Adam Smith's view that craft guilds were archaic institutions, 'a conspiracy against the public', and that 'though the law cannot hinder people of the same trade from sometimes assembling together, it ought to do nothing to facilitate such assemblies, much less to render them necessary'.¹⁰⁷ More socialist historians sought to offer a counter-argument to Smith's view, by emphasising the social uses of guilds – helping members through charity, and the public through price and quality regulations – and this formed the basis of an approach that remained central to the majority of later studies. All four of the works discussed below (by William Cunningham, George Unwin, Georges Renard and Rev. George Clune), contain clear indications that the authors were proto-socialists who considered the medieval guild system to have produced far superior working and trading conditions than those of a modern, capitalist society. All echoed Marx's view of guilds as organisations which fettered exploitation of workers by masters.¹⁰⁸

In William Cunningham's study of craft guilds, first published in 1890, he noted that their purpose was to regulate work in such a fashion that the public might be well served, and that trade might therefore flourish. Cunningham, a clergyman as well as an economist, claimed that guilds were not monopolistic, capitalist endeavours, and stated that 'the whole industrial life was governed by different ideas to those which are at present in vogue'.¹⁰⁹ He vehemently opposed the contemporary *laissez-faire* ideology which permitted capitalists an excuse for disclaiming responsibility for misery among their workers.¹¹⁰ Nineteenth-century capitalist manufacturers sought to produce low cost goods, thus encouraging sales by virtue of an item's cheapness. Medieval craft guilds, conversely, endeavoured to secure satisfactory production conditions in the form of skilled workers and 'honest materials', and ensured reasonable prices for both craftsman and customer. In the late nineteenth century, conditions

¹⁰⁷ S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds in the Pre-Modern Economy: A Discussion', *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), pp. 155–174, p. 155; Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, reprint (Guildford: Biddles Ltd. For J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1981), p. 117.

¹⁰⁸ Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 669.

¹⁰⁹ Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry*, p. 342

¹¹⁰ Cannadine, 'The Present and the Past', p. 138.

and quality of work tended to conform to the market price, but Cunningham believed that, historically, conditions of production were attended to first of all.¹¹¹ In his view, the conditions brought about by guilds were far superior to the contemporary capitalist economy, reflecting his protectionist outlook and belief in trade barriers and British imperialism.¹¹² He viewed guilds as ‘an organ of industrial regulation’, which functioned in three ways. First, guilds controlled their members and thus secured the safety and good order of the town.¹¹³ Second, they ensured the production of good quality wares. Third, they sought to obtain fair conditions for members of the trade, sometimes charging excessively high fees for apprenticeship in order to restrict admission and thus limit competition.¹¹⁴ Although guilds were recognised as the most effective means of regulating and administering industries, Cunningham blamed a gradually increasing failure to fulfil the aforementioned functions, as well as the rise of capitalism, for their decline.¹¹⁵

George Unwin, whose study of London guilds and companies was first published in 1908, regarded guilds as one of the main instruments of progress and order, stating confidently that ‘the political liberty of Western Europe has been secured by the building up of a system of voluntary organisations, strong enough to control the State’ – a strongly socialist view.¹¹⁶ Unwin emphasised guilds’ role in controlling the labour market by means of long apprenticeships, and by ensuring that apprenticeship did not automatically result in freedom of the city and entry to the guild.¹¹⁷ Indeed, Unwin contested that ‘it became usual in most companies to interpose a period of three years between the completion of apprenticeship and full mastership, and to require the aspirant to prove that his means were sufficient to enable him to set up for himself’.¹¹⁸ Although this period enabled journeymen to earn money, and masters to take advantage of skilled labour, few guild regulations explicitly imposed this period.¹¹⁹ Unwin also noted that, as early as 1271, the premium for apprentice

¹¹¹ Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry*, p. 342.

¹¹² ‘William Cunningham: British economist’, *Encyclopædia Britannica* online edition <<http://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Cunningham>> [accessed 4 May 2021].

¹¹³ Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry*, p. 509. This comment implies a certain understanding of what a town is, and of the function of both towns and guilds.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 512–513.

¹¹⁶ George Unwin, *The Guilds and Companies of London*, 3rd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), pp. 4–5 and 13–14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹⁹ It seems to have been usual for pinner and wiresellers to spend a few years as journeymen before entering the freedom once they could afford the fee, and the craft also offered a loan scheme to enable members to enter the freedom – *The Pinner’s and Wiresellers’ Book 1462–1511*, ed. by Barbara Megson, London Record Society vol. 44 (London: London Record Society, 2009), p. xix.

cordwainers was 40s, a restrictively costly sum.¹²⁰ High premiums might form effective barriers to social mobility, reinforcing the arguments of later writers, such as Georges Renard and Steve Rigby, that guilds were exclusive oligarchies and acted as exclusionary organisations (see below).¹²¹ Although exclusionary regulations might undermine Unwin's socialist view of guilds as instruments of progress and order, entry to the craft was not restricted to those who could afford high premiums; Unwin postulated that the majority of workers in cordwaining were not regularly apprenticed, so although they never enjoyed the privileges of master status, they had obtained craft-specific skills.¹²² This may have been of particular interest to Unwin, an innkeeper's son who left school at thirteen, but later won a scholarship to attend university.¹²³ This background could also explain Unwin's slightly contradictory stance, simultaneously praising guilds as socialist organisations whilst also drawing attention to their use of exclusionary measures.

Georges Renard's study of English and European guilds, published in English in 1918, summarised the three essential aims of guilds as economic, social and moral, and political.¹²⁴ Incidentally, Renard was editor of *La Revue Socialiste* from 1894–8, a publication which called for contributions from 'all those who, in the field of liberty and republican equality, work towards a society free from ignorance, from misery, from the last forms of servitude; towards the suppression of class war, by means of the social organisation of production and of the distribution of wealth'.¹²⁵ Renard believed that guilds sought to preserve craft monopolies, citing the case of a currier forced to forego his side-line of tanning, as well as noting the interminable disputes between tailors and the sellers of old clothes.¹²⁶ He argued that, from the thirteenth century, guilds closed their ranks and became narrow oligarchies which sought to limit personal gain. As well as echoing Marx, this view was shared by later historians such as Rigby, who argued that guilds exercised exclusionary tactics in order to limit the number of men entering the craft, while simultaneously restricting

¹²⁰ Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London*, p. 83.

¹²¹ Georges Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Dorothy Terry (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1918), pp. 40–41; S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 158.

¹²² Unwin, *Gilds and Companies of London*, p. 83.

¹²³ T.A.B. Corley, 'Unwin, George (1870–1925)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) online edition <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62701?docPos=1>> [accessed 29 November 2020].

¹²⁴ Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages*, p. 32.

¹²⁵ Martine François, 'RENARD Georges', Le CTHS online edition <<http://cths.fr/an/prosopo.php?id=100163>> [accessed 29 November 2020]; Florent Lazarovici, 'La Revue Socialiste', Cedias Musée Social Bibliothèque website <<http://cediasbibli.org/dossier/revue-socialiste-1885-1914>> [accessed 2 January 2016]. Translations my own.

¹²⁶ Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages*, pp. 37–38.

the growth of capitalism by regulating masters' working practices.¹²⁷ For example, members were forbidden to buy up raw material for their own profit; all should profit equally. Likewise, it was forbidden to seek an advantage by taking on more than the regulated number of apprentices, or by enticing away another master's workmen with the promise of higher wages.¹²⁸ This reinforced the 1351 Statute of Labourers (see above), which sought to prevent workers from departing before the end of an agreed term of service 'without reasonable cause or license'.¹²⁹ The fact that the guilds regulated this in addition to the statute suggests that the practice of poaching workers continued unabated. In Renard's view guilds' social and moral aims were secondary to their economic aims, namely controlling the labour market and the prevention of excessive personal gain. Perhaps it is telling that Renard believed that medieval guilds offered solutions to more modern industrial problems.¹³⁰

Rev. George Clune, writing in the 1940s, stated that 'the economic and industrial purposes of the craft guilds were those of mutual aid associations [with] a Christian outlook'.¹³¹ He described their four-fold aims as: (1) protection of guild members against non-members; (2) insistence on fair wages and reasonable prices for the producer; (3) insistence on sound materials, proper workmanship and reasonable prices for the consumer; (4) wide distribution of private property.¹³² At the same time, 'guilds learnt the social and economic teaching of the Gospel, and they had the decency and the manliness to apply it'. They fulfilled a role as charitable organisations, supporting poorer members because 'they knew that it was not right that one man should feast whilst another was starving'.¹³³ Clune's opinions were made wonderfully clear in a tirade against a modern, godless society in which self-interest dominated, culminating in a declaration that 'the result was that the guildsmen prospered and that they and the society in which they lived achieved a high degree of happiness'.¹³⁴ In addition to the obvious influence of Clune's religious vocation, it is worth noting the situation in his Irish homeland during the 1940s, where a 'mad race' of 'higher wages followed by higher costs, higher prices and again higher costs' was coupled with rising

¹²⁷ Marx, *Capital*, p. 216; Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 158.

¹²⁸ Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages*, p. 40–41.

¹²⁹ 23 Edward III, Statute of Labourers (1349), c. 2 and c. 3.

¹³⁰ Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages*, p. ix.

¹³¹ George Clune, *The Medieval Guild System* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan Ltd., 1943), p. 47.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

unemployment due to a significant decline in most areas of industry.¹³⁵ Attempts to introduce a Wages Standstill Order resulted in industrial action in February 1940 by members of the Irish Municipal Employees' Trade Union and ten other unions, which in turn led the government to attempt to limit the power of the unions.¹³⁶ Irish labour politics flourished at a grassroots level and the Labour Party were fleetingly successful, although the Communist Party of Ireland dissolved in 1941. The British model of trade unionism was deemed inappropriate in Ireland, partly because of the rural nature of the society and partly due to what Brian Girvin called 'the nationalist basis of economic and social policy'.¹³⁷ It is highly likely that Clune's writing was influenced by the political and economic situation of the time.

3.3 Modern works

The overall position of craft guilds remains unclear, and post-war historians, particularly those focusing on continental Europe, have long viewed guilds as part of an economic system that prevented the European economy from realising its full economic potential.¹³⁸ Writing in 2002, Ian Gadd and Patrick Wallis asked: 'were [guilds] monopolistic cartels exploiting artisans for the benefit of proto-capitalists, or, alternatively, socially beneficial economic regulators – proto-trades unions?'¹³⁹ Since the 1980s a shift in opinion has resulted, generally, in a more positive view of guilds' effects on the medieval economy than previously acknowledged, and a greater emphasis on the place of apprenticeship within the guild – not just as method of exclusion used to restrict the labour market. Ulrich Pfister opined that craft guilds 'promoted the development of human capital' in the form of transferable skills.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, Larry Epstein suggested that, rather than simply regulating trade, guilds' primary purpose was providing adequate skills training

¹³⁵ Finbarr O'Shea, 'A Tale of Two Acts: Government and Trade Unions during the Emergency', in *Ireland in World War Two: Diplomacy and Survival*, ed. by Dermot O'Keogh and Mervyn O'Driscoll (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), pp. 211–229, p. 212; Brian Girvin, 'Politics in Wartime: Governing, neutrality and elections', in *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance*, ed. by Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 24–46, p. 32.

¹³⁶ O'Shea, 'A Tale of Two Acts', pp. 213 and 218–222.

¹³⁷ Donal Ó Drisceoil, 'Keeping the Temperature Down: Domestic Politics in Emergency Ireland', in *Ireland in World War Two: Diplomacy and Survival*, ed. by Dermot O'Keogh and Mervyn O'Driscoll (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), pp. 173–186, p. 174; Girvin, 'Politics in Wartime', p. 38.

¹³⁸ S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak, 'Introduction: Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy, 1400–1800', in *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy, 1400–1800*, ed. by S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1–24, p. 1.

¹³⁹ Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis, 'Introduction', in *Guilds, Society & Economy in London 1450–1800*, ed. by Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2002), pp. 1–14, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ Ulrich Pfister, 'Craft Guilds, the Theory of the Firm, and Early Modern Proto-Industry', in *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy, 1400–1800*, ed. by S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 25–51, p. 26.

through formal apprenticeship.¹⁴¹ He insisted that, although craft guilds undeniably took responsibility for quality enforcement, credit provision, and welfare support, these were insufficient reasons for guilds to emerge and survive for centuries.¹⁴² This view was recently countered by Mokyr, who argued that the guild system was not the only mechanism to regulate apprenticeship, and that the institution of apprenticeship functioned perfectly well outside the guild system.¹⁴³

Epstein argued that a craft guild's primary purpose was to enforce contractual norms – the length of terms, expectations of behaviour, punishments, and provision of food, clothing, and training – in order to reduce opportunism by both masters and apprentices and share out the unattributed costs and benefits of training amongst its members. Thus guilds were cost-sharing, as opposed to price-fixing, cartels.¹⁴⁴ He believed that, instead of restricting the labour market, long apprenticeships actually operated as a restraint on apprentices' opportunism. This is reflected in social histories of apprenticeship: Deborah Youngs suggested that, after training for three to five years, apprentices felt they had absorbed the basics of the craft and might decide to leave their master.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, long apprenticeships ensured that apprentices were protected from opportunism by masters who saw them as a source of cheap, legally bound labour – Epstein noted that 'because apprentices learned craft-specific skills within oligopsonistic labour markets, they suffered serious loss if they were discharged early or were poorly trained'.¹⁴⁶ Epstein's views, however convincing, are quite difficult to reconcile with those of other economic historians, who viewed guilds as protectionist organisations. Rigby, for example, cited long apprenticeships as a means of exclusionary closure, limiting access to the labour market, while limits on the number of apprentices and journeymen each master might employ, as well as efforts to ensure that apprentices received the training they were promised, acted as a check on the use (and abuse) of their labour for personal gain.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that apprenticeship was an effective means of transmitting craft-specific skills, either through imitation and learning by doing, or by means of what Esther Goody termed

¹⁴¹ S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Pre-Industrial Europe', in *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy, 1400–1800*, ed. by S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 52–80, p. 52.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁴³ Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', pp. 33 and 29.

¹⁴⁴ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', p. 56.

¹⁴⁵ Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 113.

¹⁴⁶ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', pp. 61–62.

¹⁴⁷ Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 158–159.

‘monitored participation’, whereby the apprentice learned by carrying out increasingly more complex tasks.¹⁴⁸

Whether guilds’ main purpose was to regulate trade or to ensure the future survival of the craft through adequate training, it cannot be denied that efforts were made to protect both apprentices and members from abuse. Steven Epstein argued that long apprenticeships, and the payment of wages to apprentices, had the effect of keeping them out of the labour market and, possibly, dragging down the level of wages in general.¹⁴⁹ This benefited masters by making labour cheaper and reducing competition. Additionally, masters could reclaim their investment costs by requiring the apprentice to work for below-market wages once a set level of skill had been attained – this is discussed further in Chapter 7.¹⁵⁰ Conversely, however, one aspect of this practice more easily reconciled with the socialist views of guilds is that poorer apprentices might work for their master at below-market wages in order to pay for their training once the apprenticeship had been completed.¹⁵¹ Thus, those who were unable to pay for their apprenticeship upfront would not be disadvantaged. As Unwin suggested, there were clear incentives to abuse the practice of apprenticeship in order to maintain an abundant supply of unwaged, secure labour, and so regulations were enforced on the number of apprentices each master was permitted to take. There was obviously a limit on the number of apprentices who could be properly trained by one master, and poor training, as Larry Epstein noted, put apprentices at a disadvantage.¹⁵² Furthermore, excessive competition reduced journeymen’s wages to ruinous levels, making it difficult for them to cover their living expenses, and thus rendering it impossible for them to accrue enough capital to set themselves up in business. Finally, a large number of apprentices would result in a greater number of possible future competitors in the same trade.¹⁵³ Ephraim Lipson argued that, although limiting the number of apprentices one master could take acted as a check on expansion and progress within the guild, if apprentices became too numerous it would be to the detriment of all: in 1435, the London girdlers alleged that there was such an abundance of

¹⁴⁸ Mokyr, ‘The Economics of Apprenticeship’, p. 24; Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 49, cited in Mokyr, ‘The Economics of Apprenticeship’, p. 23; Esther N. Goody, ‘Learning, Apprenticeship, and the Division of Labour’, in *Apprenticeship: From Theory to Method and Back Again*, ed. by M.W. Coy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 289, cited in Mokyr, ‘The Economics of Apprenticeship’, p. 24.

¹⁴⁹ Steven A. Epstein, *An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1000–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 120.

¹⁵⁰ Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change’, p. 60.

¹⁵¹ Pfister, ‘Craft Guilds, the Theory of the Firm, and Early Modern Proto-Industry’, p. 26.

¹⁵² Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change’, pp. 61–62.

¹⁵³ Clune, *The Medieval Guild System*, p. 88.

apprentices in the craft that many freemen ‘became water-bearers and labourers, and some of them gone home again to their own country, and gone to cart and plough and left this city forever’.¹⁵⁴ However, the inflation in agricultural workers’ wages from the second half of the fourteenth century (a result of the shortage of tenants and labourers after the Black Death), alongside the decline of towns for similar reasons, implies that an abundance of apprentice girdlers was not necessarily the only reason why freemen might be tempted to give up the craft to return to the countryside.¹⁵⁵

4. Lived experience of apprentices

The third section of this thesis focuses on the lived experience of apprenticeship, through the lens of the clauses contained within the apprenticeship indenture. These outline the master’s expectations of the apprenticeship (mainly in terms of the apprentice’s behaviour), the apprentice’s expectations of the apprenticeship (in terms of training and material provision received from the master), and the end of the apprenticeship. Chapter 6 also provides an initial estimate of the cost of apprenticeship, something which has not previously been attempted. This section of the thesis follows a similar approach to that used by Hanawalt in her 1995 monograph, *Growing Up in Medieval London*; Hanawalt used legal sources, alongside an understanding of contemporary social and economic conditions, to illustrate the reality of childhood and adolescence in fourteenth and fifteenth century England.¹⁵⁶ Fundamentally, this thesis is an exploration of one facet of adolescence in medieval England. Apprenticeship was an important liminal stage between childhood and adulthood, during which young men and women were moulded into respectable adults.¹⁵⁷

It is important to note at this point that apprentices and masters are generally referred to as ‘he’ throughout this thesis, except in instances where specific female apprentices or female masters are under discussion. Guild regulations generally assumed that guild masters and their apprentices were male, so for the sake of consistency male pronouns have been used

¹⁵⁴ E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England: Vol. 1 – The Middle Ages*, 5th edn. (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1929), p. 287.

¹⁵⁵ Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 175.

¹⁵⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 13–16; Kristine Rabberman, ‘Barbara A. Hanawalt. *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. 300 pp. \$12.95 (paper) ISBN 0-195084055.’, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 33 (1997), pp. 313–316, pp. 314–315.

¹⁵⁷ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 10.

throughout this thesis except where the subject is specifically female.¹⁵⁸ This should not be taken to mean that women were not involved with the guilds, or that women did not take or become apprentices – this is entirely untrue, and the existence of apprenticeship indentures naming both female apprentices and female masters corroborates this. Nevertheless, they exist in far smaller numbers, and the majority of indentures and records used in this thesis name male apprentices and masters.

Early pioneers of women's history, such as Alice Clark and Ivy Pinchbeck, sought to highlight positive images of women in their research, and emphasise the strengths of medieval women's lives rather than the restrictions.¹⁵⁹ They portrayed the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a 'golden age' for women, and, like the socialist historians discussed above, believed that the move to a capitalist society devalued women's contribution to the family economy.¹⁶⁰ Clark argued that capitalism 'condemned a large proportion of...craftsmen to remain permanently in the position of journeymen or wage-earners'.¹⁶¹ In a labour market where men and women struggled against each other to secure work and wages, journeymen gained an advantage by limiting their own numbers by restricting apprenticeship, while women were confined to working for wages in 'unprotected' trades.¹⁶² Pinchbeck noted that married women lost their economic independence as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Medieval women contributed to the household economy by selling surplus food, ale, and textiles, and by working alongside their husbands or on their own accounts. After the Industrial Revolution, unless married women became wage earners *outside* the home, they ceased to contribute to the family purse and thus became financially dependent on their

¹⁵⁸ For example, 'that no man of the trade shall take an apprentice, unless he be free of the City; and if he be free, he shall take no one for less than seven years' – 'Articles of the Girdlers, 18 Edward III. A.D. 1344', in *Memorials*, p. 216.

¹⁵⁹ Maryanne Kowaleski and Judith M. Bennett, 'Crafts, Gilds, and Women in the Middle Ages: Fifty Years After Marian K. Dale', in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O'Barr, B. Anne Vilen and Sarah Westphal-Wihl (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 11–25, pp. 24–25.

¹⁶⁰ Deborah Simonton, 'Women Workers; Working Women', in *The Routledge History of Women in Europe Since 1700*, ed. by Deborah Simonton (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 134–176, p. 136; Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1919), pp. 297–299.

¹⁶¹ Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1919), p. 297.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 298 and 299.

husbands.¹⁶³ This argument was repeated more recently by Martha Howell, in her work on the Low Countries.¹⁶⁴

Others sought to find strong female role models in the Middle Ages. Marian Dale wrote the authoritative work on London's silkwomen, an anomaly in England in that they formed a craft group completely devoid of men. Dale stated that although the 'mystery and craft' of the silkwomen followed the usual practices of crafts at the time, they were not recognised as a craft guild.¹⁶⁵ They received apprentices, employed workers, and undertook formal business transactions, but had no ordinances and never sought to regulate their standards of work. Dale attempted to explain this lack of organisation and regulation: silkwork, 'being more of an art than a craft', could not be submitted to standardisation of quality and prices, and thus silkwomen did not require their own guild (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of the development of the language used to describe crafts).¹⁶⁶ This explanation is rather weak, particularly when one considers that a driving aim of most craft guilds was to regulate standards of work (see above). Furthermore, in the Parisian *Livre des Métiers*, at least five *métiers* appear to have been wholly in the hands of women.¹⁶⁷ Restrictions aimed to 'keep the work done up to the mark', and E. Dixon noted that silkwomen were particularly 'open to the temptation of turning a dishonest penny by selling or pawning...the raw silk given out to them to spin, and clandestinely substituting inferior material'.¹⁶⁸ In Paris, ribbon-making was a woman's craft, and they were forbidden to warp their thread with silk 'for such work is false and bad, and must be burnt if found'.¹⁶⁹ Flax dressing, another predominantly female craft, was not to be undertaken under artificial light or at night.¹⁷⁰ It seems more likely that the London silkwomen were unable, rather than unwilling, to regulate their work; Anne Sutton noted that they were subordinate to the London mercers, who kept records of all entrants into the craft.¹⁷¹ The silkwomen's failure to convert economic gains

¹⁶³ Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750–1850*, reprint (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 312.

¹⁶⁴ Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 43, 176 and 180–181.

¹⁶⁵ Marian K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 4 (1933), pp. 324–335, p. 334.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 335. Furthermore, the religious and social needs of the women would be satisfied by the guilds or companies of their husbands.

¹⁶⁷ E. Dixon, 'Craftswomen in the *Livre des Métiers*', *Economic Journal*, 5 (1895), pp. 209–228, p. 209.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 209 and 221. The existence of a guild did not mean the craft was lucrative or high status, and Dixon commented that 'very poor and undeducated persons, the conditions of whose existence is not productive of self-respect, are especially liable to fall victims to the temptation of petty pilfering' – *ibid.*, p. 221, n. 2.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁷¹ Anne F. Sutton, *Wives and Widows of Medieval London* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2016), pp. 23–24.

into political power or organisation rendered them singularly ill-equipped to defend themselves when their position came under threat towards the end of the fifteenth century; by 1555, silkweaving had come under the control of the weavers' guild, which forbade any women to be taken on as apprentices.¹⁷²

The Middle Ages appeared a 'golden age' for women only in contrast to what came before and after. It was not, as Eileen Power argued, a period of 'rough and ready equality'.¹⁷³ Judith Bennett observed that the inaccurate idea of a medieval 'golden age' for women reflected the historical tendency to romanticise the past. It was also indicative of Clark and Pinchbeck's feminist beliefs; economic sexual inequality was modern, and therefore neither profound nor enduring. The 'golden age' offered an image of a world which was lost, but which it was possible to regain.¹⁷⁴ Power observed that, even during the 'golden age', women's wages were often lower for the same work, and male workers lived in fear of being undercut by cheaper female labour.¹⁷⁵ Guilds responded to adverse economic conditions by restricting the employment of women, pushing them out of the urban economy.¹⁷⁶ Jeremy Goldberg and Maryanne Kowaleski both concluded that the frequent appearance of women in borough court records indicated that women were forced into undesirable or illegal work, such as prostitution or regrating (buying goods and re-selling them once scarcity had driven up prices), because they lacked other opportunities to earn a living (in part because they had less access to capital).¹⁷⁷ As Goldberg noted, this demonstrated the limited availability of work for urban women, rather than indicating an underlying preponderance of women in early fourteenth century towns.¹⁷⁸

Much research on medieval women, particularly in the period after the Black Death, has tended towards a very narrow focus, often concentrating on a particular county or town, such as Mavis Mate's study of Sussex women and Kowaleski's work on women in

¹⁷² S.H. Rigby, 'Gendering the Black Death: Women in Later Medieval England', *Gender & History*, 12 (2000), pp. 745–754, p. 748; Kowaleski and Bennett, 'Crafts, Gilds, and Women in the Middle Ages', p. 23, n. 34.

¹⁷³ Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. by M.M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 52.

¹⁷⁴ Judith M. Bennett, 'Review: "History That Stands Still": Women's Work in the European Past', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988), pp. 269–283, p. 270.

¹⁷⁵ Power, *Medieval Women*, p. 34.

¹⁷⁶ Kowaleski and Bennett, 'Crafts, Gilds, and Women in the Middle Ages', p. 16.

¹⁷⁷ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'The Public and the Private: Women in the Pre-Plague Economy', in *Thirteenth Century England III: Proceedings of the Newcastle Upon Tyne Conference 1989*, ed. by P.R. Coss and S.D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), pp. 75–89, p. 85; Maryanne Kowaleski, 'Women's Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 145–164, p. 158; Judith M. Bennett, 'Review: "History That Stands Still": Women's Work in the European Past', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988), pp. 269–283, p. 274.

¹⁷⁸ Goldberg, 'Women in the Pre-Plague Economy', p. 85.

fourteenth-century Exeter.¹⁷⁹ Derek Keene's research was even more specific, focusing on London tanners' widows.¹⁸⁰ Although such close studies are not without value, the restricted focus and use of anecdotal evidence limits the strength of any conclusions. In the case of Mate's work on Sussex, everyday realities were inferred through analogies with other locations for which more evidence exists.¹⁸¹ Similarly, Kay Lacey's study of London's female workers drew largely on anecdotal evidence, and thus Lacey could not compare women's work opportunities to those of men from a similar background. For example, it was not possible to say whether a fifteenth-century female bookbinder entered the trade through apprenticeship or by marriage, or whether she was paid as much as her male counterparts.¹⁸²

Caroline Barron undertook a very detailed study of two female bell-founders who ran workshops in one London parish in the mid-fifteenth century. Both women were widows who took over their late husbands' businesses, along with their apprentices and workers, and continued to actively and successfully manage their foundries during their widowhoods.¹⁸³ However, it is impossible to say whether these women were unusual. Although widows were *expected* to carry on their husbands' businesses and continue training their apprentices, they might marry a man from the craft and transfer the apprentices' training to him, or leave the craft entirely (to remarry or set up as a widow in a different trade) and assign the apprentices to a new master (see Chapter 7).¹⁸⁴ The surviving records do not reveal the proportion of widows who chose to carry on the business and training themselves, how many did so successfully, and how many remarried or left the trade – all of the surviving evidence is

¹⁷⁹ Mavis E. Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows after the Black Death: Women in Sussex, 1350–1535* (Boydell: Woodbridge, 1998) – see S.H. Rigby, 'Gendering the Black Death: Women in Later Medieval England', *Gender & History*, 12 (2000), pp. 745–754; Maryanne Kowaleski, 'Women's Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 145–164.

¹⁸⁰ Derek Keene, 'Tanners' Widows, 1300–1350', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 1–27.

¹⁸¹ Rigby, 'Gendering the Black Death', p. 751.

¹⁸² Kay E. Lacey, 'Women and Work in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century London', in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. by Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 24–82 – see Bennett's review, 'History That Stands Still', p. 276.

¹⁸³ Caroline M. Barron, 'Johanna Hill (d. 1441) and Johanna Sturdy (d. c. 1460), Bell-Founders', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 99–111, pp. 105 and 110.

¹⁸⁴ Caroline M. Barron, 'Introduction: The Widow's World in Later Medieval London', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. xiii–xxxiv, p. xxviii. Transferring the apprentices to a new master within the same craft might be encouraged if the widow married a man from outside the craft. For example, Elizabeth Jones, the widow of a fletcher who married a skinner; she seems to have transferred the apprentice to her new husband, leading to a complaint from the apprentice about the lack of training he received from the new master – Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 160.

incidental or anecdotal. Such narrow works make it difficult to conclude whether individual experiences were indicative of wider trends.

Apprenticeship was a reciprocal arrangement. Masters expected their apprentices to behave appropriately, and might receive financial recompense for providing the apprentice with food, accommodation, clothing, and training. In return for their labour, the apprentice expected to receive adequate food and clothing while boarding with the master, as well as high-quality technical training. Chapter 4 outlines what apprenticeship indentures can reveal about master's expectations of apprenticeship, specifically with regard to apprentices' behaviour. It argues that the main motivation of these behavioural restrictions was to protect the master's reputation from harm, as well as that of the apprentice. In the eyes of the civic authorities, the guilds, and the law, the master was responsible for the behaviour of his whole household – spiritually, socially, economically and legally – including apprentices and servants.¹⁸⁵ James Davis' monograph *Medieval Market Morality* provides context for this chapter; Davis emphasised that trust and reciprocity were fundamental components of business transactions in a largely credit-based economy.¹⁸⁶ This is supported by guild and civic regulations, which sought to protect the reputation of craft and community with harsh punishments for 'detractions or false scandals'.¹⁸⁷ Loss of social credit could disrupt lines of financial credit, and both Hanawalt and Frank Rexroth cited anecdotal examples of the damage caused by loss of reputation.¹⁸⁸ Rexroth particularly stressed the importance of retaining '*bona fama*' ('good fame'), as reputation could affect the success of legal actions.¹⁸⁹ Candace Gregory's study of medieval female conduct literature echoed this, highlighting warnings, aimed at women, of the dangers of slander in close-knit communities.¹⁹⁰ Shannon McSheffrey and Ruth Karras both commented on how (alleged or actual) sexual incontinuity

¹⁸⁵ Candace Gregory, 'Raising the Good Wife: Mothers and Daughters in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Douglas L. Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 145–167, p. 156; Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, p. 211.

¹⁸⁶ James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 205.

¹⁸⁷ 'Orders of Merchants and Mercers [1494]', in *Beverley Town Documents*, ed. by Arthur F. Leach (London: Bernard Quaritch, for the Selden Society, 1900), p. 78; *Memorials*, p. 233; *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London compiled A.D. 1419, by John Carpenter, Common Clerk [and] Richard Whittington, Mayor*, trans. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1861), pp. 521 and 524; 'fol. cxliii', *Letter-Book H*, p. 181.

¹⁸⁸ Barbara A. Hanawalt, '*Of Good and Ill Repute*': *Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 28; Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 213.

¹⁸⁹ Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 213.

¹⁹⁰ Gregory, 'Raising the Good Wife', pp. 154–155.

could damage reputations; Karras noted that female honour and virtue was primarily sexual, and even rumours of licentiousness could be detrimental to *bona fama*.¹⁹¹

In exchange for their continued good behaviour, apprentices expected to be sufficiently trained. Mokyr's recent study of the economics of apprenticeship stressed that apprenticeship was a means of imparting tacit knowledge; apprentices observed and imitated masters 'who already possessed the requisite competence and were willing and able to teach it'.¹⁹² As noted above, Larry Epstein argued that apprentices might suffer serious loss if they were poorly trained, because they learned 'craft-specific skills within oligopsonistic labour markets'.¹⁹³ Certainly, apprentices who were poorly trained were able to seek redress from the guilds, and were generally turned over to other masters to complete their apprenticeships (see Chapters 3 and 5). However, apprenticeship indentures can only tell us so much about the provision of training, and it is difficult to supplement this with information from other sources because so few details of the technical training survive.

The historiography of medieval education has largely ignored apprenticeship, focusing instead on the spread of literacy, the availability of Latin education from the thirteenth century, and the growing prevalence of vernacular literacy from the mid-fourteenth century. In 1914, Arthur Leach rejected the entrenched nineteenth-century idea that medieval education was mainly monastic, and argued that the availability of schools was greater in proportion to the population than in the nineteenth century, although he denied the existence of female education.¹⁹⁴ As noted above, early twentieth-century historians frequently perceived the Middle Ages as a 'golden age' in comparison with the industrialised present, but many of Leach's contemporaries nonetheless disagreed with his conclusions – one observed that he was 'not only highly prejudiced but also ill informed'.¹⁹⁵ The first substantive challenge to his work was Joan Simon's two-part article, published in the *British*

¹⁹¹ Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 175–176; Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 26 and 30.

¹⁹² Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', pp. 21–22.

¹⁹³ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', pp. 61–62.

¹⁹⁴ Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran Cruz, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340–1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicization In Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 3–4; Jo Ann H. Moran Cruz, 'England: Education and Society', in *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by S.H. Rigby (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2003), pp. 451–470, p. 451. F.W. Maitland noted (with regard to Leach's edition of the Beverley town documents), that Leach sometimes 'gives the rashest judgement about the most disputable matters' – Moran Cruz, *The Growth of English Schooling*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ Moran Cruz, *The Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 4–5.

Journal of Educational Studies in 1955, which sparked intense academic discussion.¹⁹⁶ Nicholas Orme's 1973 monograph, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, highlighted the significant growth of public secular schools (as opposed to private monastic or household schools) between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Orme called this 'one of the principal achievements of English civilisation'.¹⁹⁷ Despite their underlying disagreement as to the form in which it was provided, Leach and Orme both stressed the availability of education in medieval England.

Although a handful of apprenticeship indentures promised that the apprentice would learn to read and write, literacy was, for the majority of the period 1250–1500, significantly less important than numeracy (see Chapter 5). For burgesses' sons, basic numeracy was often a requirement for legal majority.¹⁹⁸ Jim Bolton's monograph, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, highlighted the importance of numeracy in day-to-day business. England used a duodecimal currency system, and units of account (pounds, shillings and marks) which were unrepresented by appropriate coins, making the ability to perform basic addition a necessity.¹⁹⁹ While Latin represented a *lingua franca* among the literate, Karl Menninger observed that the ubiquity of tally sticks in northern Europe enabled international trade even in the absence of a shared language.²⁰⁰ In the majority of crafts there was no real requirement for literacy, although some prestigious guilds (such as the London goldsmiths) attempted to use literacy requirements as a means of restricting entry in the late fifteenth century.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, in most cases literacy was encouraged but not necessarily rigorously enforced, whereas the prospect of an innumerate apprentice was unimaginable.

Chapter 5 also considers the use of trial years and trial periods at the beginning of the term of apprenticeship. Trial years fell out of favour in response to changing economic and demographic conditions – as it became more difficult to obtain and retain a worker, apprentices (secured by legally binding apprenticeship indentures) became an attractive

¹⁹⁶ See Moran Cruz, *The Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 7–11 for a full summary of Simon's findings and their reception by the academic community.

¹⁹⁷ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 194, cited in Moran Cruz, *The Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 11–12.

¹⁹⁸ Ranulf de Glanvill, *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England commonly called Glanvill*, ed. and trans. by G.D.G. Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 82, cited in Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe*, p. 127; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and Death: The Ages of Man', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 413–434, p. 422.

¹⁹⁹ Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, p. 29.

²⁰⁰ Karl Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols: A Cultural History of Numbers*, trans. by Paul Broneer (Cambridge, MA, and London: M.I.T. Press, 1969), pp. 224–226.

²⁰¹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 82.

source of labour. Chris Dyer, Shulamith Shahar and Peter Earle, among others, have espoused the idea that apprentices were a cheap source of labour, but this is an oft-repeated assumption rarely corroborated by source material.²⁰² This assumption is interrogated in Chapter 6, using a basket of consumables, made up of clothing, bedding and food (a less sophisticated version of the basket used in Robert Allen and Jacob Weisdorf's calculations of basic consumption and living standards, necessarily using only items noted in apprenticeship indentures) and costs drawn from available legal and administrative records.²⁰³ The resulting estimates indicate that this assumption is largely incorrect – at times apprentices might have been a *cheaper* source of labour than a waged worker, but they were certainly not 'cheap'. The continued prevalence of apprenticeship as the main source of non-agricultural training in pre-industrial England suggests that it must have greater significance than merely providing cheap labour.²⁰⁴ Apprenticeship existed within a wider social context; Llinos Smith's work on fictive kinship practices in Wales offers a model through which we can interpret apprenticeship.²⁰⁵ It provided intangible benefits in the form of future business associates with ingrained loyalties, as discussed in Chapter 7. Taking an apprentice also provided social cachet – only guild masters could take apprentices, and therefore it acted as a demonstration of status and, given the cost of providing for an apprentice, an indicator of prosperity.

The final chapter explores the end of apprenticeship. The first part focuses on apprenticeships prematurely ended by the death of the master. Few apprenticeship indentures detailed arrangements for continuing the apprentice's training if the master died, and therefore it is likely that customs for 'turning over' apprentices were already established at a local level in the fourteenth century. This chapter also expands on Smith's idea of fictive

²⁰² Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 232; Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 233; Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660–1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 100; Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change', p. 691; Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 93; Pfister, 'Craft Guilds, the Theory of the Firm, and Early Modern Proto-industry', p. 27; William F. Kahl, *The Development of London Livery Companies: An historical essay and a select bibliography* (Harvard, MA: The Kress Library of Business and Economics, 1960), p. 1; Clune, *The Medieval Guild System*, p. 88; Patrick Wallis, 'Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England', *Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence: How Well Do 'Facts' Travel?*, 22/07 (2007), p. 19 <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/22515/1/2207Wallis.pdf>>.

²⁰³ R.C. Allen, and J.L. Weisdorf, 'Was There an 'Industrious Revolution' Before the Industrial Revolution? An Empirical Exercise for England, c. 1300–1830, *Economic History Review*, 64 (2011), pp. 715–729. See p. 717 for details of the contents of the basket.

²⁰⁴ Chris Minns and Patrick Wallis, 'The Price of Human Capital in a Pre-Industrial Economy: Premiums and Apprenticeship Contracts in 18th Century England, *Explorations in Economic History*, 50 (2013), pp. 335–350, p. 349.

²⁰⁵ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Fosterage, Adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 16 (1992), pp. 1–35, pp. 2, 5 and 13.

kinship, exploring the evidence for close master-apprentice relationships found in contemporary wills – the focus is largely limited to London, predominantly due to the availability of printed sources, namely Reginald Sharpe’s calendar of wills enrolled at the Court of Hustings.²⁰⁶ There was a notable increase in the number of bequests to apprentices in the 1350s and 1370s – in both cases these decades followed major outbreaks of plague. Although any conclusions are based on the (difficult-to-prove) premise that wills provide evidence of intangible and unfathomable personal relationships, testamentary sources can be illuminating. Anthony Musson’s work on lawyers’ wills concluded that the choice of executors revealed personal friendships and professional relationships.²⁰⁷ Sandro Carocci and Alex Brown highlighted fears of downward social mobility, and perhaps those masters who tasked apprentices with caring for their widows and orphans sought to mitigate against the possibility of social decline for their immediate family.²⁰⁸ Brown described fears of social decline as ‘[coalescing] around specific, often urgent matters, particularly concerning debt and destitution’, which made this fear particularly pertinent to deathbed bequests.²⁰⁹ This is a distinct change of tack from that taken by Francis Du Boulay’s 1970 monograph, which dubbed the later middle ages an ‘age of ambition’.²¹⁰ The reality probably lay somewhere in between, depending on the individual and their immediate social and economic context. Bequests to apprentices indicate that some masters sought to help their apprentices to enter the guild and franchise, and set themselves up in business, thus enabling upward mobility.

Chapter 7 also considers why an apprentice might wish to attain the freedom at the end of their apprenticeship – or not. Rodney Hilton’s monograph on English and French towns, alongside Heather Swanson’s study of York’s medieval artisans, provides much of the context for this discussion.²¹¹ Swanson argued that regulations did not necessarily equate to

²⁰⁶ *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part I, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1358*, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1889); *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part II, A.D. 1358–A.D. 1688*, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1890).

²⁰⁷ Anthony Musson, ‘Medieval English Lawyers’ Wills and Property Strategies’, in *Planning for Death: Wills and Death-Related Property Arrangements in Europe, 1200–1600*, ed. by Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 121–152, p. 150.

²⁰⁸ Sandro Carocci, ‘Social Mobility and the Middle Ages’, *Continuity and Change*, 26 (2011), pp. 367–404; A.T. Brown, ‘The Fear of Downward Social Mobility in Late Medieval England’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 45 (2019), pp. 597–617.

²⁰⁹ Brown, ‘The Fear of Downward Social Mobility’, p. 599.

²¹⁰ F.R.H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Nelson, 1970).

²¹¹ R.H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

practice, but in towns such as Norwich citizenship was a prerequisite for trading within the local economy, and entrance by redemption (as opposed to apprenticeship) could be costly.²¹² Therefore, short apprenticeships might be used as a means of obtaining entrance to the franchise for the purpose of opening up new trade opportunities. The low rates of enfranchisement found in surviving guild and civic records also warrant consideration. Steve Rappaport's figures for sixteenth-century London – when nearly 60 percent of apprentices failed to enter the freedom – are perhaps the most regularly cited, but Jean Imray and Matthew Davies provided similar figures for earlier centuries based on the available evidence for specific London guilds.²¹³ Gervase Rosser observed that the suburban economies of medieval London, such as Westminster, provided '[islands] of ungoverned commerce, where no questions could be asked about guild membership'.²¹⁴ Building on Rosser's work, there are alternative explanations for these high attrition rates. Although mortality or poor master-apprentice relationships accounted for the failure of some apprenticeships, it was also entirely possible for apprentices to complete their apprenticeship and then enter the freedom in a different town. Surviving guild regulations certainly support this explanation.

While many pages of scholarly research have been published on apprenticeship in the sixteenth century and beyond, there has been considerably less discussion of apprenticeship as a practice in its own right in medieval England.²¹⁵ Hanawalt's study of childhood and adolescence in medieval London has illuminated this rather neglected facet of history, but her research focused predominantly on legal and administrative records.²¹⁶ Apprenticeship

²¹² Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 108 and 110.

²¹³ Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 311–315; Jean M. Imray, 'Les Bones Gentes de la Mercerye des Londres': A Study of the Membership of the Medieval Mercers' Company', in *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. by A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 155–178, p. 168; Matthew P. Davies, 'The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 195, table 5.4.

²¹⁴ Gervase Rosser, 'London and Westminster: The Suburb in the Urban Economy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), pp. 45–61, p. 51. See also Barry Dobson's work on York's ecclesiastical franchises – R.B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 26 (1973), pp. 1–22, pp. 12–13.

²¹⁵ See, for example, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Patrick Wallis, 'Apprenticeship in England', in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 247–281; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Jane Humphries, 'English Apprenticeship: A Neglected Factor in the First Industrial Revolution', in *The Economic Future in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Paul A. David and Mark Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 73–102; 'The Matter in Variance: Adolescents and Demoeconomic Conflict in the Pre-Industrial Economy of Northeast England, 1600–1800', *Journal of Social History*, 25 (1991), pp. 89–107.

²¹⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, particularly pp. 129–171.

indentures have, in the main, been neglected as a source of information (with the exception of the research undertaken by Stephanie Hovland, which provided a very helpful starting point for my own archival research).²¹⁷ This thesis seeks to redress this neglect, and demonstrate that apprenticeship indentures can reveal a great deal about the legal, social, and economic realities of apprenticeship in medieval England. This research also uses apprenticeship indentures as a means of interrogating commonly accepted assumptions concerning apprenticeship, with the aim of improving our understanding of the practice through an exploration of its legal, social and economic aspects. The following chapters provide a new approach to the study of apprenticeship, and, it is hoped, will encourage future research into similarly neglected document types.

²¹⁷ Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London', Appendix 1.

Chapter 1: A diplomatic study of apprenticeship indentures

This chapter provides an initial assessment of the diplomatic of apprenticeship indentures, based on a collection of 82 surviving indentures. There are currently no published diplomatic studies of this document type, and the surviving apprenticeship indentures are scattered across various archives and collections. In order to write this thesis, a great deal of time was spent identifying apprenticeship indentures in archive and library catalogues, viewing them or obtaining copies, then transcribing and translating the documents to facilitate further analysis. Some documents listed as ‘apprenticeship’ indentures have been wrongly catalogued, and may actually be servants’ indentures; these documents are identical to apprenticeship indentures in terms of form and content, but lack the word ‘apprentice’.¹ The importance of this distinction is discussed below.

This chapter is not intended as a reference guide to classifying apprenticeship indentures, but instead introduces the main features of such documents, and trends in their development across the period 1250–1500. The chapter explains what an apprenticeship indenture is, using an exemplar from a sixteenth-century formulary to discuss the formation of a ‘standard’ indenture. Formularies presented the most general form of a document, which could be added to or amended to suit the particular specifications of the parties involved. The exemplar indenture is analysed clause by clause, with content and language discussed in turn. Suitable names have been attached to each type of clause, similar to those used to describe diplomatic features of other document classes, such as charters.² The intended purpose of each clause is considered in order to promote a fuller understanding of apprenticeship indentures, how they were used, and how they gradually developed in response to social, legal and economic factors. The use of security features and their importance is also discussed, as well as the poor survival rate of indentures.

1. What is an apprenticeship indenture?

An indenture is a written record of an agreement made between two or more parties. The celebrated jurist Edward Coke (d. 1634) described an indenture as ‘a writing’ such as ‘a

¹ The catalogue description of Canterbury Cathedral Archives, CCA-DCc-MSSB/C/142 has now been changed to reflect this distinction <<https://archives.canterbury-cathedral.org/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=CCA-DCc-MSSB%2fC%2f142&pos=1>> [accessed 10 April 2021].

² See, for example, the description of internal features of episcopal acta *English Episcopal Acta – vol. 27: York 1189–1212*, ed. by Marie Lovatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2004), pp. cxv–cxxvii.

conveyance, bargain, contract, covenant' or other agreement, 'indented in the top or side answerable to another that likewise comprehendeth the self same matter'.³ In the case of apprenticeship, indentures were bipartite agreements made between the master (and sometimes his wife), and the apprentice and their family. Indentures were so called because they were cut in half by a wavy or jagged line '*in modum dentium*' ('like teeth'); when held together 'they would appear by the coincidence in the cutting, to be parts of one another'.⁴ In his recent work on conveyances (the first study of these documents since Thomas Madox's '*Formulare Anglicanum*', first published in 1702) John Kaye stated that indentures developed out of another form of document known as a chirograph.⁵ The agreement was written out twice on one sheet of vellum or parchment. The word 'cyrographum' was inscribed between each part, then cut across the middle. When fitted back together, 'C Y R O G R A P H U M' was visible, indicating that neither part was a forgery. According to Madox, 'indentures were usually cut through the letters *Cyrographum*, or else some other words or initial letters, indentwise'.⁶ Kaye noted that the irregular cutting of chirographs became common in the thirteenth century, 'leading to such deeds being called 'indentures''.⁷

In terms of their relationship with other documents, indentures were more formal than bonds but considerably less formal than charters. Charters were formal sealed documents which formed a public record of a grant of land, services, or money. The agreement was often related in great detail, with flowery language and invocations to God. Bonds, on the other hand, generally recorded a financial obligation and contained little detail beyond the names of the parties, the debt, and the terms of repayment.⁸ In its simplest form, a bond was

³ Edward Coke, *The First Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England, or A Commentary upon Littleton*, vol. 2, ed. by Francis Hargrave and Charles Butler, 18th edn. (London: J. & W.T. Clarke, R. Pheney, and S. Brooke, 1823), s. 370, 229a.

⁴ Thomas Madox, '*Formulare Anglicanum*', Or a Collection of Ancient Charters and Instruments of Divers kinds, Taken from the originals, Places under several Heads, and Deduced (in a Series according to the Order of Time) from the Norman Conquest, to the End of the Reign of King Henry VIII (London: Jacob Tonson and R. Knaptock, 1702), p. xxviii.

⁵ J.M. Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. xi and 8–9. Writing in 1970, Christopher Brooke noted that there was 'no systematic survey or collection of examples more recent than the publication of Thomas Madox's *Formulare Anglicanum* in 1702', and this still holds true for some classes of document – C.N.L. Brooke, 'The Teaching of Diplomatic', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 4 (1970), pp. 1–9, p. 1, cited in Charlotte Harrison, 'Thomas Madox and the Origins of English Diplomatic Scholarship', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 29 (2008), pp. 147–169, p. 149.

⁶ Madox, '*Formulare Anglicanum*', p. xxviii.

⁷ Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances*, p. 9.

⁸ Matthew Frank Stevens, 'The Evolution of the Bond in Late Medieval England', unpublished paper delivered at the Economic History Society annual conference (Robinson College, Cambridge, 2 April 2016), p. 5. My thanks to Dr Stevens for kindly allowing me access to this pre-publication paper.

an ‘IOU’ with legal weight, so commonplace in medieval England that hundreds survive.⁹ Indentures recorded an agreement between two or more parties, with obligations outlined in detail. They were used as early as the tenth century, but probably became more widely used from the beginning of the thirteenth century – the earliest surviving apprenticeship indenture in England dates from 1255.¹⁰ Michael Clanchy observed that bipartite chirographs implied ‘theoretical equality between the contracting parties’; both retained a copy, presumably affixed with the other’s seal (see below).¹¹ In the case of apprenticeship indentures, this may have reflected hopes that the apprentice would one day attain mastership, and enter the guild alongside his former master.

Arguably, almost all medieval document forms developed out of the charter. Even in the fifteenth century, other documents sought to ape the format of charters: indentures were sealed and witnessed in a similar fashion, and bonds consciously emulated charters’ diplomatic features.¹² The development of indentures out of more formal charters is very evident; the earliest apprenticeship indentures mimicked charters by using notification clauses such as ‘*Noverint universi quod in hunc modum convenit inter...*’.¹³ According to James Masschaele, this public address indicated that charters (and indentures) were effectively scripts for staged performances, through which others would know of the agreement.¹⁴ Although indentures developed over time (see below), this performative element was maintained in the requirement that apprenticeships were to be enrolled to make them public knowledge. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

Documents were not static, but more formal documents seemingly changed more slowly. From at least as early as the 1420s, any conditions associated with a penal bond were written in English to prevent debtors claiming they had been misled by a mistranslation of the Latin.¹⁵ This change happened much later for apprenticeship indentures, and did not happen at all with charters in the medieval period. Apprenticeship indentures were almost invariably written in Latin until the very end of the fourteenth century; the only English indenture

⁹ Stevens, ‘The Evolution of the Bond’, p. 2.

¹⁰ Madox, ‘*Formulare Anglicanum*’, p. xxix. Madox gives the example of an indenture relating to Croyland Abbey dating from the year 975. The earliest known apprenticeship indenture is TNA, E 210/1397.

¹¹ M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 3rd edn. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 52–53.

¹² Stevens, ‘The Evolution of the Bond’, p. 14.

¹³ ‘Be it known to all that in this way it is agreed between...’ – *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), p. 126.

¹⁴ James Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter in Thirteenth-Century England’, in *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Ben Dodds and Christian D. Liddy (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 199–216, p. 205.

¹⁵ Stevens, ‘The Evolution of the Bond’, p. 13.

discussed in this thesis dates from 1500.¹⁶ The link between apprenticeship indentures and Latin or English literacy is explored in Chapter 5.

2. Development from memorandum to specialty

The earliest apprenticeship indentures do not have a standard form, save to say that they were all written in Latin. Some of the earliest indentures, dated 1255, 1291 and 1309, do not even feature the word '*indentura*'; the apprenticeship indenture is referred to as a memorandum of an oral agreement.¹⁷ The document itself records an agreement, hence the use of notification phrases such as '*Noverint universi quod in hunc modum convenit inter...*'.¹⁸ While William Hudson and John Tingey described the 1291 indenture as a bipartite 'cyrograph or indenture', the text itself is a memorandum of the agreement between master and apprentice: '*Mem. quod hec est convencio facta inter...*'.¹⁹ To paraphrase Paul Bertrand's work on charters, an indenture was the memory of an agreement rather than the proof of it.²⁰ The apprenticeship agreement was clearly viewed as a covenant: the 1255 indenture was indented and sealed, beginning with the words '*Hec est conventio facta inter...*'.²¹ The same phrase is also found in an indenture dated 1310.²² Before the 1320s, a covenant did not require a sealed and witnessed deed or charter; it was a 'private' agreement dealt with by local courts, where compurgation was still used. A lack of written evidence was 'fatal' only if the plaintiff had no suit (transaction witnesses).²³ It is therefore quite likely that many thirteenth-century apprenticeship agreements were entirely oral and no written evidence was ever created.²⁴

¹⁶ TNA, E 210/6382. An indenture held at Trinity College Cambridge (dated 1480) is also in English, but this has been copied into a notebook from elsewhere so it is impossible to know if this was a direct transcription or a translation of a Latin document, particularly as the heading of the page is in Latin – Trinity College Cambridge, O.2.53, f. 30.

¹⁷ TNA, E 210/1397 (1255); CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich, vol. I*, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 245–247 (1291); *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), pp. 126–128 (1309).

¹⁸ 'Be it known to all that in this way it is agreed between...' – *Year Books 11 Edward II*, p. 126.

¹⁹ 'Memorandum that it is agreed between...' – *Records of the City of Norwich*, p. 245.

²⁰ Paul Bertrand, *Document the Everyday in Medieval Europe: The Social Dimensions of a Writing Revolution 1250–1350*, trans. by Graham Robert Edwards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), p. 47.

²¹ 'This is an agreement made between...' – TNA, E 210/1397.

²² TNA, E 210/5150.

²³ J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 318–319.

²⁴ This may explain why so few indentures have survived from this early period – few were ever created in the first place. That being said, the lack of indentures may also be due to the documents having been destroyed (deliberately or accidentally) in the centuries since their creation.

By 1321, it was decided that, at least in the central courts, the only acceptable evidence of a covenant was a written document under seal – a specialty. This doctrine quickly became common law, pertinent to local justice as well as central courts, and applicable to any claim based on an oral agreement.²⁵ From this date onwards, apprenticeship indentures almost always opened with the words ‘*Hec indentura testatur quod*’, indicating that indentures had developed into the documentary witness of an agreement; this is a subtle alteration, reflecting the contemporaneous change in legal attitudes and the rise of specialty in common law.²⁶ The covenant was the oral agreement, and the indenture was evidence of the agreement.²⁷ As serjeant Herle observed, ‘a man’s will is a thing so secret that one cannot know it without a special deed bearing witness to it’; consequently agreements were only enforceable by writ of covenant if there was a deed to prove the agreement.²⁸ Thereafter, plaintiffs suing on informal agreements without a deed could only do so in local courts, including the London Mayor’s Court.²⁹

Upon reading a handful of indentures, it becomes clear that masters and apprentices were able to exercise autonomy in setting out the terms of the apprenticeship; nevertheless, they followed a general format, and what we might call the ‘standard’ form of indenture became apparent in the early fourteenth century. The apprentice’s obligations were almost invariably listed first, before setting down the master’s obligations. Clerks might have their own preferred phrases and clause orders (such as naming the master first, or putting the dating clause at the beginning of the document), but the ‘standard’ form became sufficiently ubiquitous for it to be used in indentures across England, regardless of local variations and distance from central courts. This is evident in the notebook of a scrivener from Bury St Edmunds, dating from the 1460s. The notebook entries might be a memorandum of work completed, or perhaps an order book outlining work to be done. In either case, the notebook indicates that, by this decade, the form of apprenticeship indentures was firmly set; the scrivener noted down names and occupations, dates, and length of apprenticeship, along with any specific clauses (for example, a gift of bedding at the end of the apprenticeship) which did not fit the standard form.³⁰

²⁵ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 319. Baker cited an action from 1346.

²⁶ ‘This indenture bears witness that’ – TNA, E 40/4450 (1336).

²⁷ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 319.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 319, n. 15, and p. 320. The serjeants’ principal job was to recite the plaintiff’s count and engage in the ensuing argument. Judges were chosen from among the serjeants. See *ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

³⁰ CUL, MS Add. 7318.

Although England's population was increasingly literate in the later Middle Ages, that literacy might be limited to English (see Chapter 5). By 1497, even the London Company of Scriveners found that many of their members had imperfect 'knowledge and cunningge' of Latin grammar, 'wherethrough oftentimes they err, and their acts and feates been incongruous and not perfectly done'.³¹ The situation was probably even worse further from the capital, and it is not surprising that scribes became increasingly reliant on the document forms crystallised in various formularies. This may explain why the form of apprenticeship indenture became increasingly standardised. One such formulary, *An Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding aswel to Make as also to Perceyue the Tenour and Forme of Indentures, Obligations, Quittances, Bylles of Payment, Letters of Licence, Letters of Sale, Letters of Exchange, Protections, Supplycations, Complayntes, a Certificate, and the Copy of Save Condyte*, was published around 1550. This volume contained several exemplars for apprenticeship indentures, mostly in English but with one in Latin which set out what was considered the standard form of an indenture in 1541.³² The form would have been entirely recognisable to a clerk drawing up an indenture in 1341, or to the Suffolk scrivener in the 1460s, and was clearly still in use in the sixteenth century.

3. The form of a 'standard' apprenticeship indenture

After its publication in the *Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding*, the 1541 indenture was reproduced (in slightly less contracted Latin) by the Company of Stationers in *A Booke of Presidents* in 1607.³³ This exemplar indenture is used to illustrate the form of a 'standard' indenture, and each clause is considered in turn below. The clauses are outlined in Table 1.1, along with a brief summary and cross-references to the relevant chapters of this thesis which discuss the context, purpose and significance of the clauses.

³¹ Ordinances from the 'Common Paper', quoted in *The Case of the Free Scriveners of London*, 1749, pp. 24–27, cited in *A Common-place Book of the Fifteenth Century Containing A Religious Play and Poetry, Legal Forms, and Local Accounts, Printed from the Original Manuscript at Brome Hall, Suffolk*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: Trübner and Co./Norwich: Agas H. Goose and Co., 1886), n. 4, p. 131.

³² Anon., *An Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding aswel to Make as also to Perceyue the Tenour and Forme of Indentures, Obligations, Quittances, Bylles of Payment, Letters of Licence, Letters of Sale, Letters of Exchange, Protections, Supplycations, Complayntes, a Certificate, and the Copy of Save Condyte* (London: R. Grafton for J. Waylye, ca. 1550), ff. xii r.–xiii v., xiii v.–xiiii v. [*sic*] and xiiii v.–xv v.

³³ Anon., *A Booke of Presidents with Additions of Divers Necessarie Instruments, Meete for All Such as Desire to Learne the Manner and Forme How to Make Evidences and Instruments, &c. as in the Table of this Booke More Plainly Appareth* (London: A. Islip for the Company of Stationers, 1607), ff. 52 v.–53 r.

Table 1.1 – outline of the clauses included in a standard apprenticeship indenture (based on a formulary exemplar from *A Booke of Presidents*).

Clause name	Brief summary	Relevant chapters
<i>Purpose clause</i>	States the indenture is evidence of an agreement concerning an apprenticeship	2, 5
<i>Length of term clause</i>	Outlines when an apprenticeship will begin and end	2, 3, 7
<i>Good service clause</i>	Binds the apprentice to serve the master well	2, 3, 4
<i>Damage clause</i>	Prevents the apprentice from deliberately causing damage to the master	4, 6
<i>Behavioural clause</i>	Prohibits the apprentice from participating in certain behaviours	2, 3, 4, 6
<i>Master's obligation clause</i>	Outlines the master's obligations to the apprentice, concerning material provision and training	3, 5, 6
<i>Binding clause</i>	Both parties promise to obey the clauses above	3, 5
<i>Sealing clause</i>	Records that both parties have affixed their seals	2
<i>Dating clause</i>	Records the date on which the indenture was made	3, 5, 7

3.1 Purpose clause

Hec indentura testatur quod G.H. filius W.H. de comitatu D. husbandman, posuit seipsum apprenticium E.W. civi & Haberdasher London, ad artem suam quam utitur erudiendem & secum more apprenticii sui commoraturum & deserviturum...

The indenture's opening clause stated the document's purpose – as evidence of an agreement – and thus is referred to as the 'purpose clause'. It can be compared to the '*dispositio*' of a charter, which explained why the document was created. In the formulary, the clause named the apprentice (G.H.), his father (W.H.), and the master to whom he was apprenticed (E.W.). This clause also contained additional identifiers for the apprentice's father, namely his occupation and county of residence; this might become pertinent if the apprentice alleged that the indenture referred to another G.H., and that he was not bound by it. Witnesses could confirm whether or not G.H. was the son of W.H., and where he was from. The same information was also provided for the master, confirming his status, trade and residence. It was important to specify that the master was '*civis...Londoniensis*', as only citizens could take apprentices in that city.³⁴ The purpose clause also stated that the

³⁴ A.H. Thomas, 'Introduction: Apprenticeship – City Custom of Apprenticeship', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. xliv. This was not necessarily the case in other towns.

apprentice placed himself with the master (*'posuit seipsum'*) to learn his 'art', and reside with him and serve him in the manner of an apprentice. This may indicate that the apprentice was over the age of twelve (see Chapter 2).

The phrase *'more apprenticii'* is particularly important and its inclusion has implications in law. Another exemplar in the *Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding* is headed 'An indenture for a prentyce' but the exemplar itself omits this vital word. The clause (in English) runs:

'This indenture wytnesseth Peter Steryck hath covenanted & by these presentes granted hym selfe to be bounde to Thomas Monke of [the] citie of Wynchester in the countye of South, shomaker, wyth hym to dwelle and in maner of a servaunte, alloweth hym to serve...from yere unto yere one after another...unto the end and terme of seven yeares'.³⁵

Thomas Monke was obliged to 'teach and enfourme' Peter 'in all the arte and cunningg whych he useth', but Peter was described as a servant throughout.³⁶ Perhaps Peter was a servant, taught different skills to an apprentice; if Peter was an apprentice, the omission of the vital word 'apprentice' might be detrimental. Apprentices could seek legal redress if their master failed to train them or set them to menial work, but this was not the case for servants (see Chapters 3 and 5).

3.2 Length of term clause

... a festo omnium sanctorum anno regni regis Henrici octavi xxxiii usque ad finem et terminum octo annorum extunc proximo sequentium et plene complendorum.

The purpose clause runs into the length of term clause, comparable to boundary clauses in other document types. Charters concerning grants of land often recorded the geographical boundaries of the grant in minute detail. Clanchy noted that level of detail in a conveyance varied according to the nature of the property, the date of conveyance, and the

³⁵ *An Introduction to the Knowledge and Understanding*, ff. xii r.– xii v.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. xiii r.

level of mutual trust between the parties.³⁷ Anglo-Saxon writs and charters might describe property boundaries in great detail, often in the vernacular rather than Latin (as per the rest of the document), in order to avoid any ambiguity that might occur through translation of Anglo-Saxon names and terms.³⁸ In an apprenticeship indenture, the length of term clause served a similar purpose, setting out the temporal bounds of the apprenticeship. The exemplar indenture stated the apprenticeship would begin on the Feast of All Saints in the thirty-third year Henry VIII's reign [1 November 1541], ending after a term of eight years. If the apprenticeship did not begin on a feast day, the clause could be a little more complicated. In an indenture from 1393, the apprenticeship began on the Monday immediately before Christmas: '*die lune proximo ante festum Natalis dominis anno regni Regis Ric(ard)i secundi post conquestum anglie septimodecimo*'.³⁹ In another, the apprenticeship commenced on the Thursday before the feast of the birth of John the Baptist: '*die Iovis proximo ante festum Nativitatem sancti Joh(ann)is Baptist*'.⁴⁰ This form of dating was common in legal documents, such as gaol delivery and coroners' rolls, and records from Common Pleas.⁴¹

The level of detail also extended to the regnal year, which usually began immediately on the death of the previous ruler.⁴² The 1393 indenture (Latin transcription above) was dated the seventeenth year of the reign of King Richard, the second since the conquest of England. One would expect, perhaps, a difference in indentures created after 1337, when Edward III revived his claim to the French throne. From 1340, statutes specified the regnal years of both kingdoms: 'in the fourteenth year of the reign of our lord King Edward the Third of England, and the first year of his reign of France'.⁴³ However, this change was not apparent in apprenticeship indentures, bonds, or the London Letter-Books, suggesting that the political situation did not affect the formation of more everyday documents.⁴⁴ Regnal years were used

³⁷ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 86.

³⁸ For examples, see the ASChart database (King's College London, 2018)

<http://www.aschart.kcl.ac.uk/idc/idx_sawyerNo.html#d1605925e266> [accessed 2 February 2020].

³⁹ Lancashire Archives, DDHO/636.

⁴⁰ TNA, E 40/8643.

⁴¹ My thanks to Stephanie Brown for the information on gaol delivery and coroners' rolls.

⁴² Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 224. The regnal years of Henry II, Richard I, John and Henry III were reckoned from the date of their coronation, leaving a gap of two months between Henry II's death on 6 July 1189 and Richard I's coronation on 3 September 1189. This changed with the ascension of Edward I, whose reign was reckoned from 20 November 1272, four days after the death of his father Henry III, 'before the tomb had even been closed' – C.R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 21.

⁴³ 14 Edw. III, Stat. 1, (1340). See also 18 Edw. III, Stat. 2 (1344), which is dated 'the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord the King that now is of England the xviii and of France the v'.

⁴⁴ Letter-Book F (1343) only refers to the English regnal years – *Memorials*, pp. 214–215.

to date the majority of apprenticeship indentures, including the very earliest indenture. In some ways this is surprising, particularly as indentures were essentially a private agreement; in the thirteenth century, local records sometimes used memorable events such as the dedication of a local church, rather than regnal years.⁴⁵ The Leicester borough records, for example, used events such as the Earl of Leicester's release from captivity in France (1196), as well as regnal years and the year of grace all at the same time in different records.⁴⁶

The year of grace was used in only one indenture, which stated that the apprenticeship would begin '*a festo sancti Martini in hyeme anno domine millesimo CCC^{mo} sexagesimo quarto*' [11 November 1364].⁴⁷ It should be noted that the date was still linked to a feast, however, and this was not unusual. Christopher Cheney observed that the year of grace was found occasionally in 'private charters' in the later Middle Ages, but was more common in documents of ecclesiastical provenance.⁴⁸ Clanchy argued that the year of grace was alien to the laity, and therefore did not inspire personal confidence. He suggested that regnal years were more trusted because coronations offered an immediate point of reference, being publicly remembered events.⁴⁹ There were also various starting-points for the year of grace, which perhaps explains the long-enduring use of regnal years in apprenticeship indentures. The chronicler Matthew Paris used Christmas Day, but 25 March (Lady Day, or Annunciation) was commonly used as the beginning of the year until as late as 1752.⁵⁰ Adam de Murimuth, a fourteenth-century English chronicler, began his year on the Michaelmas Day [29 September] *before* Christmas, several months earlier than anyone else.⁵¹

A clear length of term clause was very important in an apprenticeship indenture. This detail was recorded, along with the names of both parties, in the guild or borough enrolment records, and would be checked if the apprenticeship's validity was ever called into doubt. Apprentices would be particularly keen to have these details clearly recorded, in order to prevent opportunistic masters from exploiting any doubt about the commencement date of the apprenticeship, and keeping them as (unpaid) workers for an additional year.

⁴⁵ *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1103–1327*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1899), p. 25

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12. Regnal years were used in some records from 18 Henry III (1233–4) (on p. 65), and the year of grace from at least as early as 1241 (on p. 62).

⁴⁷ 'from the feast of St Martin in Winter, year of our lord 1364' – York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1.

⁴⁸ Cheney, *Handbook of Dates*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 304–305.

⁵⁰ Cheney, *Handbook of Dates*, p. 9.

⁵¹ C.L. Kingsford, 'Murimuth, Adam (1274/5–1347)', revised by Wendy R. Childs, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19567>> [accessed 3 October 2021]; C.R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1978), p. 6.

3.3 Good service clause

Durante quo termino prædictus G. prefato E. tanquam magistro suo bene & fideliter deserviet, secreta sua celabit præcepta sua licita & honesta libenter ubiq' faciet.

The good service clause was the first of two clauses setting out the master's expectations of the apprentice, and regulating behaviour during the term of the apprenticeship. The clause stipulated that the apprentice would serve his master well and faithfully, keep his secrets (his craft skills and business practices), and follow his lawful instructions honestly and gladly. This phrase was important because it allowed the master to punish the apprentice, within the terms of the indenture, if he was in any way recalcitrant or unwilling to serve.

Other sources suggest that the commandment to keep craft secrets was taken very seriously. The London grocers required new apprentices to swear an oath at their enrolment, including a solemn promise to keep 'in reverence the secrets of the said fellowship...and give no information to no man but of the said fellowship'.⁵² The London goldsmiths' records contain several examples of former apprentices who moved to another craft being made to swear that they would not divulge any of the goldsmiths' secrets. On 13 July 1411, one John Thomas 'who had been the apprentice of John Gale' came before the guild wardens and 'swore on the book that he shall never do any goldsmith's work at all...and that he shall keep secret all the skills and the privities pertaining to the mistery...nor shall he ever use any of the aforesaid skills either in private or publicly, so God may help him and all the saints'.⁵³ In 1497, the London mercers required any apprentices going overseas to swear before 'God and all Saints and by this Book' that they would not divulge craft secrets to strangers.⁵⁴

The phrase '*precepta sua licita*' infers that the apprentice was obliged to participate in what we might call 'communal policing', and alert the guild or civic authorities to any

⁵² Guildhall Library, MS 11592, Grocers' Company, Register of Freemen (1345–1481), cited in Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 140.

⁵³ *Wardens' Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mistery of London 1334–1446*, ed. by Lisa Jefferson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), p. 349. See also pp. 349–351, where John Halle was required to swear the same.

⁵⁴ *The Charters, Ordinances and Bye-Laws of the Mercers' Company* (London: privately printed for the Mercers' Company, 1881), pp. 89–90. They were also forbidden to buy and sell on their own account, gamble, or stand surety for anyone.

dishonest practices.⁵⁵ This element of protection was important; it prevented apprentices from running into trouble if they were asked to do anything legally questionable, such as selling stolen goods or ‘night working’.⁵⁶ There was a concern that craftsmen who kept their shops open after dark would attempt to pass off shoddy goods as fit for sale. Apprentices whose masters asked them to continue manufacturing or selling goods after dark would be expected to refuse and report the master to the guild or civic authorities.⁵⁷ There was also an expectation that apprentices would help control the behaviour of other members of the master’s household, and perhaps also apprentices training under other masters; if a mercer’s apprentice went overseas, as well as behaving well and keeping trade secrets, he was required to report any trespasses committed by others.⁵⁸

3.4 Damage clause

Dampnum eidem magistro suo non faciet, nec ab aliis fieri sciet, ad valorem duodecim denariorum per annum vel amplius, quiu illud pro posse suo impedit, aut statim dictum magistrum suum inde præmoniet. Bona dicti magistri sui non devastabit, nec ea alicui illicite accommodabit.

The damage clause concerned potential damage to the master, and can be divided into two parts. The first part required the apprentice not to cause damage to the master or allow others to cause damage with his knowledge, above the value of 12*d* per year. This part of the clause was phrased in the knowledge that, while the apprentice was acquiring the skills of the craft, their work might fall below saleable quality and would therefore be written off as waste. They might also make mistakes, perhaps undercharging customers or overpaying

⁵⁵ This ties in with the importance of the frankpledge or tithing group to ensure good behaviour. See Phillipp R. Schofield, ‘The Late Medieval View of Frankpledge and the Tithing System: An Essex Case Study’, in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, ed. by Zvi Razi and Richard Michael Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 408–449. See also Robin Studd, ‘The Tamworth Court Rolls: An introduction to the colour microfiche edition published by Ormonde in 1987’, Tamworth Court Rolls, Keele University Library: Collections & Archives, p. 19 <<https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/k-web/k-central-services/libraries/specialcollections/pdfs/studdtamworthintro.pdf>> [accessed 30 April 2021] for a brief explanation of frankpledge with specific reference to Tamworth.

⁵⁶ The prohibition of night working not only allowed craftsmen’s neighbours to sleep undisturbed (some crafts, such as blacksmithing, could be very noisy), but also improved quality ‘since work completed under the dim and flickering lights of candles and torches often proved defective’: Gary Richardson, ‘Guilds, Laws, and Markets for Manufactured Merchandise in Late-Medieval England’, *Explorations in Economic History*, 41 (2004), pp. 1–25, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Matthew P. Davies, ‘The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 175. This was probably a primary motive behind the closing down of ‘evechepyngs’ (evening markets) in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

⁵⁸ *Charters of the Mercers’ Company*, p. 90.

suppliers. What the clause required, then, was that the waste or damage was not deliberate. Of 82 indentures, only 34 specified an annual limit for damage – in the remainder, if there was a damage clause, no amount was given. In the very earliest indenture, for a London goldsmiths' apprentice, the damage limit was 4*d* per year.⁵⁹ For most of the fourteenth century, the damage limit was 6*d* per year regardless of location or craft. The 12*d* limit first appeared in the late 1370s, and the amount did not rise further at any point up to 1500.⁶⁰ It is highly likely that the amount given was purely nominal; Steven Epstein referred to it as 'a nice touch', allowing for 'the vagaries of human nature'.⁶¹ It was impossible to quantify some types of damage; damage to a master's reputation might be incalculable (see Chapter 4).

The second part of this clause also sought to prevent damage to the master, namely financial loss and reputational damage. The apprentice had to defend against potential damage, either through his own actions or by informing his master. This, again, suggests that 'communal policing' was expected to prevent the master incurring damage from inside or outside the household. The household was likely to be made up not only of the master and his kin, but also of servants, journeymen and other apprentices. Disobedience, theft, and dishonesty were all traits that masters sought to discourage in an apprentice. Walter Prata, apprenticed to a London goldsmith in 1400, provides an extreme example; Walter's numerous misdemeanours included picking grains of gold and silver out of the hearth while the household were at dinner. The surviving records indicate that Walter was part of a fairly large household (two servants are mentioned by name, and the presence of several more is implied), some of whom observed his behaviour and sought to warn their master. On one occasion, Walter took a 3*oz* gold swage from one of the servants, William Faunt, and kept it for three days before confessing to Henry Goldsmith, another servant, 'Henri, lo I have hyd this swage [since] Saterdag & I priye [you] Henri, se [you] that [you] founde it for to excuse me'.⁶² This caused a great deal of trouble in the household, and Henry Goldsmith reported the incident to their master, resulting in Walter being expelled from the household and the guild.⁶³

⁵⁹ TNA, E 210/1397.

⁶⁰ WAM, 5966.

⁶¹ Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 75.

⁶² Jefferson, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 284.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 285. Walter Prata's misdeeds are recounted in full on pp. 283–287.

3.5 Behavioural clauses

Fornicionem in domibus dicti magistri sui nec extra non committet, matrimonium non contrahet, ad talos seu aliqua alia ioca illicita non ludet. Tabernas non frequentabit cum bonis suis propriis at alienis durante dicto termino, sine licentia dicti magistri sui non mercandizabit. A servicio suo predicto non recedet, nec se elongabit, sed in omnibus tanquam bonis et fidelis apprenticius benigne se gerat & habebit per dictum terminum.

Behavioural clauses are among the most interesting clauses in apprenticeship indentures, providing an insight into the behaviour masters feared their apprentices would partake in. Like the majority of apprenticeship indentures, the exemplar prohibited the apprentice from fornicating, contracting marriage, playing at dice, frequenting taverns, and absenting themselves from service. The rationale and implications of these restrictions are discussed in Chapter 4; in short, these clauses sought to protect the master's reputation. As *paterfamilias*, the master needed to demonstrate that he had control over his household. If he did not, it implied a lack of control over his business affairs as well. How could a purchaser guarantee that goods produced in his workshop were good quality, and how could a supplier be sure that he would pay his debts?

The final sentence of this clause, forbidding the apprentice from withdrawing from the master's service, was intended to prevent the apprentice from removing himself from the apprenticeship. Some masters brought actions of trespass against the relatives of apprentices who absconded (see Chapter 2), but in reality there was little that the guilds could do to prevent it from happening.⁶⁴ Some guild ordinances highlighted fears that these former apprentices would continue to produce goods, and that their shoddy workmanship would detrimentally affect the craft's reputation. The London saddlers' ordinances, dated 1390, referred to runaway apprentices who would 'secretly patch up saddle-bows in the roughest manner imaginable', before smuggling them into London at night to be 'disposed of to dishonest Saddlers and Painters'.⁶⁵ Guild ordinances also warded against 'enticing away' another master's apprentice; the financial outlay required to take on an apprentice (see Chapter 6) made this particularly damaging. In London, both the blacksmiths and

⁶⁴ *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes 1486–1493*, ed. by Matthew Davies (Stamford: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust in association with Paul Watkins, 2000), p. 37.

⁶⁵ J.W. Sherwell, *The History of the Guild of Saddlers*, 3rd edn., revised by Lt.-Col. K.S. Laurie (Chelmsford: J.H. Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1956), p. 10.

bladesmiths levied fines of 20s for withdrawing another master's apprentice, and other guilds promulgated similar regulations.⁶⁶

3.6 Master's obligation clauses

Et predict' E. prefat' G. apprenticium suum in arte sua qua utitur meliori modo quo sciverit aut poterit docebit, tractabit, & informabit, vel faciet informari, debito modo castigando. Inveniundo omnia sibi necessaria, ut victum, vestitu', lineum, laneum, calciamentum, & lectum sufficientem per totum dictum terminum.

The master's obligations were almost invariably positioned after the behavioural clauses, but they were no less important. Although the placement might imply these obligations were conditional, their fulfilment was not contingent on the good behaviour of the apprentice. In the exemplar, it was stipulated that the master would teach, instruct and inform the apprentice in his art, to the best of his ability, and would also castigate the apprentice appropriately. The master was also obliged to provide the apprentice with all necessary items, namely sufficient food, clothing, linen, wool, shoes, and bedding, for the whole term of the apprenticeship. The cost of maintaining an apprentice in this way is discussed at length in Chapter 6. Like the behavioural clauses, fulfilling these obligations was important for maintaining good reputation. Apprentices could seek redress from the guild, or at common law, if the master failed to meet his obligations; masters who failed to train their apprentices properly, or who beat them excessively, or who did not feed or clothe them well, would find their reputations tarnished.

The master was head of a household which encompassed both kin and non-kin – his wife, children, other relations, servants, apprentices and so on. Sara Butler's work on marital violence in later medieval England indicated the acceptance of some physical correction on wives, although exactly what constituted 'acceptable' could be a fraught issue. Nevertheless, the accepted right of a master to physically castigate his wife would also extend to other members of the *familia*.⁶⁷ A degree of physical chastisement was allowed but it was expected to be proportionate. Edward Bowden, an apprentice goldsmith, was said to have 'violently and suddenly, beat his mistress, reviling her, seizing her by the throat and making to strangle

⁶⁶ *Memorials*, pp. 362 and 570.

⁶⁷ Sara M. Butler, *The Language of Abuse: Marital Violence in Later Medieval England* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 48–49, 133, 174 and 183.

her’, and therefore the wardens of the craft ‘had him stripped and beaten in the Hall kitchen until blood flowed, as it had from his mistress’.⁶⁸ Both guilds and the courts took action against masters who overstepped the line of acceptability. One early fifteenth-century apprentice was exonerated because ‘it appeared on examination that [the master] and his wife had unduly castigated and governed the girl’, indicating that signs of physical punishment were visible.⁶⁹

3.7 Binding clause

Et ad istas convenciones omnes & singulas ex parte dicti apprenticii bene & fideliter tenend’ & perimplendum, in forma ut supra, idem apprenticius firmiter se obligat per presentes.

In the binding clause, both master and apprentice promise to be bound by all and singular of the covenants set out above, and to hold and fulfil their obligations well and faithfully. This clause compelled both parties to fulfil their obligations; the apprentice to behave well and submit to his master without complaint, and the master to train and maintain his apprentice throughout the duration of the apprenticeship. If either party broke any of the terms of the indenture, they could seek redress at law – and records show that they often did (see Chapters 3 and 5).

3.8 Sealing clause

In cuius rei testimonium partes predictae his [sic] indenturis sigilla sua alternatim apposuerunt. M.D. tunc Maior’ civitatis London’, R.H. H.S. tunc vicecom’ eiusdem civitatis.

The final clause of the exemplar indenture is the sealing clause. This clause stated that both parties had affixed their seals as witness to the agreement. Few seals survive intact, but we know that the majority of indentures were sealed; although they could be forged or fraudulently replicated, the courts treated seals as the most important test of a document’s validity.⁷⁰ Of the 82 indentures collected for this research, 63 contain a sealing clause, recording that both parties (in this case, master and apprentice) affixed their seals to the

⁶⁸ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, p. 147.

⁶⁹ ‘Membr. 3 b, 3 April 1416’, *CPMR*, 1413–37, pp. 42–43.

⁷⁰ Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter’, p. 201.

alternate halves of the document.⁷¹ Although the seal may not have survived, there is often a telltale ‘*queue*’ (see Figure 1.1) which indicates that the document was originally sealed.

Figure 1.1 – ‘*Queue*’ indicating where a document was previously sealed (Berkshire Record Office, D/EZ34/F1).

(Image reproduced by kind permission of Berkshire Record Office)



Due to their age, it seems unlikely that apprentices had their own seals; they may have used the borough seal, or the seal of a friend or relative. Masters might use the seal of the guild or the borough if they did not possess their own. Without further research into the surviving seals, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether the indenture was sealed with a personal seal or a more publicly available seal. It is also impossible to discern whether the surviving part of the indenture was the half kept by the master, or the half kept by the apprentice. One indenture, binding James Whityng as apprentice to John Palmer, a London skinner and merchant of the Staple of Calais, looks like it may have been sealed with a ring (see Appendix A, A1).⁷² The Whityngs were a gentry family, holding the estate of Wood (or Woode) in Devon from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. According to research undertaken by Richard Whiting, James Whityng was born in 1480, which would make him merely eight years old when he was apprenticed in 1488.⁷³ This may explain why he was apprenticed for ten years. Given the social status of the Whityng family, it is possible that the ring may have belonged to James Whityng himself, although given James’ age the indenture may have been sealed by his father (see Chapter 2). In the exemplar the apprentice placed himself with the master and therefore sealed the indenture himself. It is not entirely clear

⁷¹ One other indenture, TNA, C 146/914, has been cut off in the middle of the master’s obligation clause, and so it is not possible to say whether it was originally sealed as neither the clause nor the seals have survived. The details of a further eleven indentures survive as partial documents or as enrolments in court records, and there is no record of whether the indenture itself was sealed.

⁷² This supposition is based on the indentations in the wax above and below the seal.

⁷³ SALS, DD(SF\16/31/1; Fay Sampson, ‘17. Whitynge-Clevedon’, Fay Sampson’s Family History <<http://faysampson.co.uk/family-history/fay-sampsons-family-history/17-whitynge-clevedon/>> [accessed 2 February 2020], citing Richard Whiting, *Whiting of Wood: A Medieval Landed Family* (self-published, 1974), held at Devon Heritage Centre, 21/WHITING. The family held property in London, and James’ father Robert Whityng was frequently in the city.

whether the apprentice or a parent sealed the indenture if the apprentice was placed with the master by their father or mother.

A list of witnesses was included in the sealing clause. Witnesses were central to the process of producing a charter, and the same seems to be true of indentures.⁷⁴ These men (they are, without exception, male) could be called upon to testify to the validity of the indenture; Masschaele referred to the witnesses as sources of evidence.⁷⁵ Although it has not been possible to find any cases where witnesses were called to testify to the validity of an apprenticeship indenture, this certainly happened with charters. In a 1221 action for debt which concerned payment of manor dues, the validity of the charter granting the land was queried. Some witnesses named on the original charter had since died, but the surviving witnesses were summoned to ‘certify’ how the charter had come to be made.⁷⁶

In the exemplar indenture, only the mayor and sheriffs were named; the witness list could be significantly longer but, at least in the indentures collected for this thesis, the average was four names (generally including the mayor and sheriffs). One might expect to find a greater number of witnesses on indentures which concerned apprenticeships in more rural locations; if the apprentice was enrolled in a public ceremony, multiple witnesses, as well as a record of the enrolment, could testify to the indenture’s validity. However, there is no neat correlation between the number of witnesses and the place of apprenticeship. Eight, nine or even eleven witnesses can be found on indentures for Winchester and Coventry apprentices, while an indenture from rural Cornwall named only four.⁷⁷ The Winchester indentures were enrolled in the court rolls, so the number of witnesses seems excessive.

Sometimes no witnesses were named at all. Three late-fifteenth century indentures, all from the west of England, merely stated that the indenture was made ‘in the time of’ the named mayor, sheriff and bailiffs.⁷⁸ This could be used to prove the validity of the document, as some of these offices changed almost annually. Anyone who forged or

⁷⁴ Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter’, p. 210.

⁷⁵ Kitrina Bevan, ‘Clerks and Scriveners: Legal Literacy and Access to Justice in Late Medieval England’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2013), p. 136; Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter’, p. 211.

⁷⁶ Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter’, p. 211. In land disputes, the jury might be made up partly of jurors drawn (as was usual practice) from the area in which the dispute arose, and partly of charter witnesses – *ibid.*, p. 212.

⁷⁷ HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v. and W/D1/22, m. 46; Leics RO, DG11/1156; TNA, E 40/8643.

⁷⁸ ‘*Tempore Joh(ann)is Hawke tunc maioris ville Bristoll’ Joh(ann)is Drews vicecomitis eiusdem Joh(ann)is Popley et Roger(i) Daws eiusdem ville Balliorum*’ – BL, Add. Ch. 70499. See also SALS, D\B\bw/842, and Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B2/1 (‘Red Book of Gloucester’), ff. 194 v.–195.

tampered with an apprenticeship indenture would have to ensure they named the correct mayor and sheriffs for the year in question.

3.9 Dating clause

Dat' London &c. & anno supradicto.

The exemplar indenture contained a very short dating clause, because the date had already been given in full in the boundary clause. In this instance, the apprenticeship began on the day the indenture was drawn up, but this was not always the case. Indentures might be drawn up significantly in advance of the beginning of the apprenticeship, or, conversely, the apprenticeship might pre-date the indenture by several months. There could be a significant gap between the creation of the indenture and the beginning of the apprenticeship. William Burre bound himself apprentice to John Wytton of Ipswich from Michaelmas [29 September] 1447, but the apprenticeship indenture was drawn up 353 days earlier, on 11 October 1446.⁷⁹ Richard Slak had already served as William Rycroft's apprentice for 198 days (from Christmas 1422) by the time his indenture was drawn up on 10 July 1423.⁸⁰ In these indentures, the dating clause differed significantly from the length of term clause and might be indicative of a trial period for the apprenticeship (see Chapter 5).

4. Security features

Indentures and chirographs (see above) were both designed to prevent 'falsity and counterfeiting'.⁸¹ Private documents were frequently forged, and forgery was often difficult to detect: personal signatures were almost unheard of, seals were not always required to authenticate documents, and clerks wrote in a stylised hand rather than in personal, recognisable handwriting. Furthermore, forgery was rarely treated as a crime, although even in the twelfth century it was so prevalent that Glanvill included it in his treatise on English common law.⁸² The 1352 Statute of Treason declared that counterfeiting the king's Great and Privy Seal was a form of treason, but for the most part the forgery of private documents

⁷⁹ SRO, C/2/10/1, m. 2 r.

⁸⁰ West Yorkshire Archives, MMB/56.

⁸¹ Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum*, p. xxix.

⁸² Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances*, p. 18; Masschaele, 'The Public Life of the Private Charter', p. 201. See Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances*, pp. 14–16, for a short discussion of sealing as a means of authenticating documents.

was left unmentioned.⁸³ This gap in the law probably stemmed from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when clerics regularly forged charters to confirm oral grants, or to replace lost authentic documents which had recorded long-established agreements.⁸⁴ Clanchy suggested that ‘recent research may ultimately lead to the conclusion that in England in the century after the Norman Conquest forgery of charters was the rule rather than the exception’. Such forgeries were accepted, ‘ordered or condoned by the greatest scholars, prelates, and administrators’, as a means of producing records of, for example, oral traditions or early Anglo-Saxon charters, in a form which was acceptable to contemporary courts of law, although Masschaele contested that charters which looked to have been made recently were unlikely to find favour if the underlying transaction was rather more historical.⁸⁵

English statute law offered no remedy against forgery of private charters until 1413, although records from late-fourteenth century London indicate that forgery was already taken seriously by the authorities; those convicted of forging private documents were condemned to the pillory.⁸⁶ In 1367 Robert de Edenesore, scrivener, was attached to answer for the making of two false deeds ‘touching the lands, tenements, and rents, which formerly belonged to John Flaundene, *hosyer*’. Robert de Edenesore acknowledged that he had made the deeds ‘after a certain original which had been delivered to him by the hands of Richard Curteys’. The Mayor and Aldermen judged that because ‘Robert made the deeds...to the disherison of all holding the tenements [outlined in the deeds]’ he ‘should have the punishment of the pillory, to stand thereon for two hours of the day, with the said deeds hung by a string from his neck’. This public punishment was intended to discourage other would-be forgers, as well as punish the perpetrator. After his punishment, Robert had to swear that ‘in future he would never be consenting to any such forgery, or incline thereto’. He also swore to present the names of any other forgers to the Mayor and Aldermen.⁸⁷ There was a real fear, particularly in the decades after the Black Death, that dishonest practices could be used to

⁸³ Alfred Hiatt, *The Making of Medieval Forgeries: False Documents in Fifteenth-Century England* (London and Toronto: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 27.

⁸⁴ Bruce O’Brien, ‘Forgery and the Literacy of the Early Common Law’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 27 (1995), pp. 1–18, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 319–320; Masschaele, ‘The Public Life of the Private Charter’, p. 201. Clanchy noted that the courts (who had ‘no historical sense’) would not accept an authentic Anglo-Saxon charter because it did not look like a contemporary charter, whereas a forgery would be acceptable ‘because it suited contemporary notions of what an ancient charter should be like’.

⁸⁶ Hiatt, *The Making of Medieval Forgeries*, p. 27. In 1380, William Lawtone was convicted of forging a letter ‘purporting to have been written by John Sadyngtone of York’ – *Letter-Book H*, p. 152.

⁸⁷ *Memorials*, pp. 333–335. Other examples of forgery recorded in the *Memorials* include forging bonds (pp. 412–414, p. 582), letters (p. 459), title-deeds (pp. 527–529), papal seals and documents (pp. 583–584) and divers other documents (pp. 668–669).

dupe unsuspecting persons, and municipal authorities sought to discourage it through very public punishments.⁸⁸

In bipartite documents such as indentures or chirographs, the text of both halves was identical so that any alterations (such as erasures or additions) were immediately visible to the viewer. This is a deliberate word choice: Kitrina Bevan observed that the form of the indenture relied on visual cues ‘made by legally and linguistically literate scribes in a way that could easily be interpreted by illiterate people without the immediate need...to read the contents’.⁸⁹ Both halves fitted together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, with the jagged line matching perfectly; if they did not fit together as one document, forgery might be suspected. The chirograph added an additional layer of security, as the letters had to match up across both halves, and, again, any mismatch indicated forgery. These security measures relied heavily on both halves of the indentures being present, but they were not rendered pointless if one half of the indenture was lost; oral evidence could be provided by those who had been present when the document was made (named as witnesses in the text of the document), and the visual form of the indented cut and the authenticity of the seals also provided assurance of the document’s validity.⁹⁰

5. Indentures and chirograph indentures

Coke stated that only a deed cut ‘*in modum dentium*’ counted as an indenture; ‘if a deed beginneth *hæc indenture, &c.* and in troth the parchment or paper is not indented, this is no indenture, because words cannot make it indented’.⁹¹ Out of 51 indentures where the document itself survives, 47 are indented and thus fit Coke’s definition of an indenture in law.⁹² The four un-indented indentures might have been trimmed down, or may even be

⁸⁸ Hiatt, *The Making of Medieval Forgeries*, p. 27. It is notable that immediately following this case of forgery committed by Robert de Edenesore is a record of the punishment of Alice, wife of Robert de Caustone, who was selling ale in false measures. She had thickened the bottom of a quart pot with pitch, ‘one inch and a half in depth, and that [rosemary] was laid upon it, so as to look like a bush, in the sight of the common people’. When it was assayed, it was found that ‘six such quarts as this would not make one proper gallon of ale’, and Alice was punished with the pillory. This is followed shortly after by a memorandum of the punishment for perjury – *Memorials*, p. 319.

⁸⁹ Bevan, ‘Clerks and Scriveners’, p. 136.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹¹ Coke, *The First Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England*, s. 370, 229a. Conversely, it could be an indenture in law without ‘words of indenture’ in the deed, ‘for it may be an indenture without words, but not by words without indenting’.

⁹² Two further apprenticeship indentures may have been indented, but the only images I have of these documents were taken in 2016, and the placement of the weights makes it difficult to see the condition of the top edge of the document. Unfortunately, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has made it impossible to access these documents prior to submission in order to ascertain whether or not they are indented. The documents in question are TNA, C 146/5045, and BL, Add. Ch. 73950.

contemporary copies of original indentures – it is impossible to tell. Madox noted that ‘ancient indentings were usually...acute or sharp’ whereas ‘in the more modern times...they are generally indented waivey [*sic*] (*in modum undularum*)’.⁹³ The apprenticeship indentures used in this thesis exhibit both types of indentation, suggesting the two methods were used contemporaneously throughout the period 1255–1500; the choice of cut may be a reflection of scribal preferences rather than changing practices.

Table 1.2 – number of surviving indentures which can be defined as indentures or chirograph indenture, counted by period.

	<i>Number of documents collected*</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	<i>Number which are also chirographs</i>
1255–1349	5	5	4
1350–1399	12	9	7
1400–1449	20	20	9
1450–1500	14	13	3
Total 1255-1500	51	47	23

*This figure only includes surviving manuscript indentures. Indentures recorded in court rolls and other sources have not been included.

As Table 1.2 shows, 23 of the 47 ‘true’ indentures are also chirographs. These documents are henceforth referred to as chirograph indentures. None of the un-indentured indentures are chirographs, despite Madox’s assertion that ‘many *chirographa*...were not indented at all’.⁹⁴ The earliest chirograph indenture in the sample dates from 1310.⁹⁵ Chirograph indentures seem to have fallen out of use, at least outside London, after 1450; Madox certainly considered chirographs to be archaic by 1702, noting that ‘at this day’ documents were customarily ‘indented without cutting through any letters at all’.⁹⁶ Of the fourteen indentures dated 1450–1500, thirteen are ‘true’ indentures, but only three are chirograph indentures. All three recorded agreements with London masters, one a goldsmith and another a skinner.⁹⁷ It is unclear why this practice prevailed in London longer than elsewhere in England. We do not know whether these indentures were drawn up by a

⁹³ Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum*, p. xxix

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxix. Madox also disputed Edward Coke’s view that indentures and chirographs were the same type of document, arguing that ‘therefore...an indenture and a *chirographum* or *charter chirographata* were not altogether the same thing’. Based on the evidence from the apprenticeship indentures, Madox was correct.

⁹⁵ TNA, E 210/5150.

⁹⁶ Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum*, p. xxviii.

⁹⁷ Surrey Archives, LM/1659/17; SALS, DD\SF/16/31/1. The third master’s craft is missing from the indenture – WAM, 5965*.

professional scrivener or by a clerk employed by the guild, but Bevan noted that from the fourteenth century the London scribes held a near monopoly on conveyancing and actively sought to exclude competitors from encroaching on their business. As writers of legal instruments, professional scribes were familiar with technical language, and had both ‘linguistic and legal know-how’.⁹⁸ Assuming these chirograph indentures were drawn up by a scrivener, this might indicate that, in the vicinity of the central courts, chirographs were still considered a useful, necessary convention which provided additional security against forgery. This seems counter-intuitive, as one would usually expect changes to be adopted more swiftly in closer proximity to the centre of justice. Therefore, it may be a reflection of a particular requirement by the London guilds, or perhaps evidence of a pervading fear of forgery. There is little evidence that forgery of apprenticeship indentures was a persistent problem in medieval England.⁹⁹

Regional differences are also visible earlier in the fifteenth century: chirographs were not commonly used for apprenticeship indentures in south-west England during this period. Twelve of the surviving indentures recorded apprenticeships with masters in Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall, all dated between 1424 and 1445. While all are indented, only three are chirograph indentures. All three were drawn up at Bridgwater within a five-year period – the first on 1 November 1432, the second on 15 April 1433, and the third on 29 June 1437.¹⁰⁰ Bridgwater employed a town clerk from the fourteenth century, so this idiosyncrasy may indicate that all three were made during the tenure of one clerk, particularly as the scribal hand is sufficiently similar to suggest that all three might all have been drawn up by the same man. On the two indentures dated November 1432 and April 1433, curved lines appear to have been used instead of the word ‘chirographum’, a peculiarity which further supports the hypothesis that these indentures were drawn up by the same scribe (see Figure 1.2). This is not unusual; letters from the alphabet (‘A B C D E’), universally familiar phrases such as ‘A V E M A R I A’, or words or acronyms of the scribe’s choosing might be used. John Bolton, common clerk of Bristol between 1418 and 1432, used his own name, ‘B O L T O N’, in large block letters in several chirographs.¹⁰¹ From 1396, for reasons known

⁹⁸ Bevan, ‘Scribes and Scriveners’, p. 97.

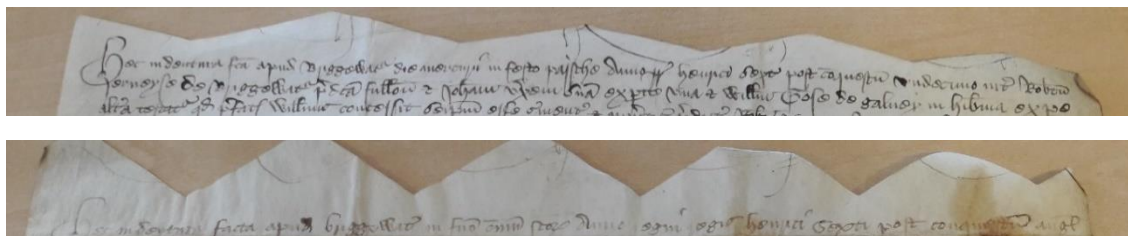
⁹⁹ There is one late fourteenth-century example of an apprentice complaining that the indenture the master had drawn up contained terms that the apprentice and his family had not agreed to: ‘Calendar – Roll A 25: 1381–83, mem. 7b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 14–16.

¹⁰⁰ SALS, D\B\bw/1384, D\B\bw/1008, D\B\bw/945.

¹⁰¹ Bevan, ‘Scribes and Scriveners’, p. 136.

only to himself, the town clerk of Bridgwater John Kedwelly began using the autograph ‘Kedwelly’ on the bottom right of the deeds he drew up.¹⁰²

Figure 1.2 – curved lines used instead of the word ‘cyrographum’ on two apprenticeship indentures: SALS, D\B\bw/1008 and D\B\bw/1384.



6. Survival of apprenticeship indentures

Despite the importance of drawing up indentures to record the details of the apprenticeship agreement, only a small number survive from the period up to 1500. Therefore, it has been necessary to bolster the number of documents used for this thesis by including records of indentures copied into court records and other collections. The reason for the poor survival of this document class is simple – indentures are ephemeral documents, and once the period of the apprenticeship recorded in the document ended, it acted only as the record of an arrangement that *had* happened, rather than an arrangement which was currently underway. A former apprentice might keep it indefinitely as a record of the terms under which they were apprenticed, but it would not necessarily be accepted as proof that they had *completed* the apprenticeship. In modern terms, keeping an apprenticeship indenture was rather like keeping the warranty documents for a domestic appliance after the warranty has expired. The document functions only as proof that there once was a warranty. In the case of an apprenticeship indenture, there would be little need to retain the indenture after the death of the apprentice. Furthermore, indentures are relatively small and fragile documents, which are difficult to preserve.¹⁰³ Without exception, only one part of each indenture used in this thesis has survived, but this is not at all surprising; Bevan noted that ‘without good reason, the two parts [of a chirograph or indenture] would never again be reunited’.¹⁰⁴ Where

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 132. Kedwelly held this post from 1383 to c.1420 – there do not appear to be any indentures made by him among those collected for this thesis. In Bridgwater, town clerk was a life appointment, although Kedwelly appears to have only been paid 6s 8d a year – *ibid.*, pp. 220 and 226.

¹⁰³ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 52.

¹⁰⁴ Bevan, ‘Clerks and Scriveners’, p. 137. I am aware of only one indenture for which both parts survive, and in this case it was because both parts were used in the binding of a book. This particular indenture, written in

apprenticeship indentures have survived, it is likely to be accidental (because they were put in a safe place and forgotten about), or because they became pertinent to another matter, such as a legal action against one of the parties.

Both master and apprentice might be wise to keep their part of the indenture for a few years after the end of the term, as legal disputes which arose after the apprenticeship concluded might hinge on the terms of the indenture. This explains why several indentures can be found in National Archive series ‘C 146’, Ancient Deeds Series C, made up of private deeds which accumulated in Chancery. Some were lodged with the court as evidence in legal proceedings, while others were probably brought to Chancery to be enrolled on the dorse of the close rolls (‘C 54’).¹⁰⁵ More indentures are found in ‘E 210’, which contains private deeds acquired by the King’s Remembrancer’s Office, mostly brought to the Exchequer as evidence to explain non-payment of Crown revenues.¹⁰⁶ Several indentures are now held at the National Archives in the ‘E 40’ series, which consists of estate archives of properties acquired from private individuals by the Crown.¹⁰⁷

The importance of apprenticeship indentures as evidence of an agreement is highlighted by a case from the Year Books. In 1317, Robert Sharp of Ravenstone was called to render reasonable account to Richard atte Grene, to whom he had been apprenticed for six years from 1309. The account concerned £82 8s received by Sharp from ‘silk and woollen cloths and other goods’ sold by atte Grene. Sharp’s response was that he ought not to answer on the writ, because ‘during the whole time when the aforesaid Richard declares that he...was the receiver of his moneys etc., he...was his apprentice, learning and practising his merchant trade’. Sharp proffered the indenture in court, and it was transcribed into the record in full. Unfortunately for Sharp, producing the indenture, and attempting to have the action heard under Law Merchant, did not prevent the court from deciding that he owed his former master £51 13s 8d.¹⁰⁸

English, dates from 1586, and so has not been included in the collection of indentures used in this thesis – Norfolk Record Office, Y/C 5/11.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, ‘Inside you will find: C 146’, <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C3704>> [accessed 11 April 2021].

¹⁰⁶ TNA, ‘Inside you will find: E 210’, <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C6655>> [accessed 11 April 2021]. The TNA catalogue notes that ‘other deeds have almost certainly been attributed to the series in error. The series exhibits only limited signs of order and is largely unindexed’. Indentures in this series are E 210/1397, E 210/5150, E 210/1176, E 210/6382.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, ‘Catalogue description – Exchequer: Treasury of Receipt: Ancient Deeds, Series A’ <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C6539>> [accessed 11 April 2021]. Indentures in this series are E 40/4450, E 40/8267, E 40/8643, E 40/10022.

¹⁰⁸ *Year Book 11 Edward II*, pp. 126–128. It was recorded that ‘Robert could neither learn nor practise his aforesaid trade unless he bought and sold, as properly belongs to the employment of an apprentice’, and any

7. Questionable apprenticeship indentures

In the course of gathering documents for this research, a number of indentures were found which had been catalogued as apprenticeship indentures but which did not feature the word ‘apprentice’. Instead the parties were referred to as master and servant.¹⁰⁹ These indentures conformed to the format of a ‘standard’ apprenticeship indenture (see above), and were catalogued as such. Viewed in isolation, one might automatically classify them as an apprenticeship indenture, but when compared to multiple other documents the differences become more clear. However, it is not entirely clear what sort of arrangement these indentures represent. The most obvious explanation would be that these are indentures for servants, drawn up on behalf of masters who wanted to secure a worker for a long fixed term rather than the customary year.¹¹⁰ Barbara Hanawalt stated that ‘although apprenticeship contracts survive, [she had] come across no service contracts’, but one wonders if this was due to them being wrongly catalogued; Stephanie Hovland provided catalogue references for four service indentures (plus two formulary exemplars) in the appendix to her thesis.¹¹¹ The wages offered in these indentures are very low. In 1480, John Valeys agreed to a single payment of 20s at the end of a twelve-year term working for a husbandman, although he did receive bed, board and clothing for the duration.¹¹² John Herryetsham, working for a Canterbury coverlet-maker, would receive 9s 4d at the end of a seven year term beginning in 1451, and a further 20s for serving for an eighth year.¹¹³ Chris Dyer noted that in the period 1350–1520, urban servants on annual contracts could expect to receive about 40s a year with meals and other benefits.¹¹⁴ This was significantly higher than the wages paid to Valeys and Herryetsham, which suggests that they were not servants.

Both Elspeth Veale and George Unwin proposed the existence of two tiers of apprenticeship; apprentices might be accepted whether or not they paid a premium, but those

losses made should be recompensed ‘according to the merchant law’ and so Robert Sharp queried whether he ‘ought to answer the aforesaid writ which is according to the common law’. Robert Sharp’s attempt to have the action heard under Law Merchant instead failed: after many delays, the jury said that Robert did not pay Richard the full amount and that he owed £51 13s 8d – *ibid.* 129–130.

¹⁰⁹ ‘*esse servient*’ – Essex Record Office, D/B 5 Sb1/2, f. 12 v.; ‘*Joh(ann)i servienti*’ – Canterbury Cathedral Archives, CCA-DCc-MSSB/C/142.

¹¹⁰ Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 211.

¹¹¹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 177; Stephanie R. Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), Appendix 2, p. 266.

¹¹² Essex Record Office, D/B 5 Sb1/2, f. 12 v.

¹¹³ Canterbury Cathedral Archives, CCA-DCc-MSSB/C/142.

¹¹⁴ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 221–222.

who did not pay would never become enfranchised masters and would therefore be unlikely to ever set up their own workshops.¹¹⁵ These indentures could be for the latter type of apprentice, who had no expectation of ever attaining mastery. The *Introduction to the Knowledge and Understandyng* contained a similar exemplar indenture.¹¹⁶ The existence of a two-tier system explains why the content of the indenture was the same for both apprentices and ‘servants’. This could also be a means of subverting guild restrictions on the number of apprentices one master could take; as servants might only serve a year at a time, there does not seem to have been any requirement for masters to enrol them as they did their apprentices.¹¹⁷ These particular ‘servants’ served for significantly longer than a year, but their masters were not required to enrol them. Masters were obliged, under the terms of the indenture, to teach the ‘servant’ to the best of their ability, however, because they were not designated ‘apprentice’ it is debatable whether they would have any meaningful recourse at law if the master failed to provide thorough technical training (see Chapters 3 and 5). Training was implicit in apprenticeship, but not necessarily in servitude.

Power imbalances might affect the terms of the apprenticeship agreement. In 1421, William, son of Alice Spynster, agreed to serve a Windsor butcher for 12 years, during which time he would learn his art and reside with him.¹¹⁸ No father was named and Alice was not described as a widow; in other indentures, widows were described in relation to their deceased husbands: ‘*Alicia que fuit uxor Joh(ann)is of the Ffelde*’.¹¹⁹ Therefore, we must assume that Alice Spynster was an unmarried woman. Jeremy Goldberg argued that there was little evidence of a rigid social stigma attached to unmarried mothers in this period, and, unlike their European counterparts, English guilds do not seem to have restricted apprenticeship on the grounds of illegitimacy.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, it might affect the relative bargaining power of the parties involved. William Spynster’s long apprenticeship might have compensated for the fact that, lacking a father’s income, he was unable to pay a premium. A

¹¹⁵ Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (London: London Record Society, 2003), p. 100; George Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London*, 3rd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 83.

¹¹⁶ *An Introduction to the Knowledge and Understandyng*, f. xiii r.

¹¹⁷ See *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. II, part I, containing Liber Custumarum with extracts from the Cottonian MS. Claudius, D.II.*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 93.

¹¹⁸ Berkshire Record Office, D/EZ34/F1.

¹¹⁹ ‘Alicia, who was wife of John of the Felde’ – TNA, E 40/8267.

¹²⁰ P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Women in Fifteenth-Century Town Life’, in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), pp. 107–128 p.115, n. 89; Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis* (Princeton, NY, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 109.

similarly lengthy apprenticeship can be found in an indenture dated 1364, in which Magota of Lincoln apprenticed her son William to a 'swordslipper' for twelve years. Magota also appeared to be an unmarried woman.¹²¹ Prestigious guilds, such as the goldsmiths, attached higher premiums to shorter terms.¹²² Paying no premium at all might limit one to becoming a 'servant', taught alongside other apprentices without being formally called an apprentice, and without the opportunity to become an enfranchised citizen on completion of the term (see Chapters 3 and 7).

William of Lincoln was described as an apprentice throughout the indenture, but William Spynster was not: he was to behave in the manner of a good and faithful servant ('*sicut bonis et fidelis famulus aut serviens*') during this time, and the word '*apprenticius*' was not used until the sealing clause.¹²³ This is unusual. If one paid a scrivener or notary to draw up a document, one would expect it to be accurate. There was supposed to be a clear difference between an apprentice and a servant. This particular indenture post-dates the 1413 Statute of Additions, which stipulated that writs, appeals and indictments should include details of the defendants 'estate or degree, or mystery, and of the towns or hamlets...of the which they were, or be'.¹²⁴ Legal developments might take some time to appear in related documents, so perhaps this change had not become apparent in apprenticeship indentures by 1420, but nevertheless, one would expect it to be clearly stated that the apprentice was an apprentice, and not a servant. This might have impacted on William Spynster's ability to enter the freedom on completion of his apprenticeship.

8. Other relevant document types

Bipartite documents were not the only means of ensuring the legitimacy of agreements; tripartite or even quadripartite indentures were also used, as the situation required.¹²⁵ Feet of fines are one of the most readily available examples of this, having survived in great numbers. These documents recorded final concords reached in a court of law as a result of a suit concerning land ownership. Both parties kept a part of the document, with the third part, the 'foot' or '*pes finis*', retained by the court as a permanent record of the

¹²¹ York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1.

¹²² T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company 1327–1509* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1975), p. 73.

¹²³ '*serviendum et artem eius erudiendam et secum commoraturum*' – Berkshire Record Office, D/EZ34/F1.

¹²⁴ 1 Henry V, c. 5.

¹²⁵ Madox, '*Formulare Anglicanum*', p. xxix.

transaction, available for inspection if required.¹²⁶ They were kept in the Treasury from 1195, and Frederick Pollock and Frederic Maitland described the concords as being ‘in substance a conveyance of land and in form a compromise of an action’.¹²⁷ The lawsuit was generally fictitious; the process was used as a means of transferring land from one party to another, and very rarely did the concord mark an end to genuine litigation.¹²⁸ Margaret Yates summarised the attraction of this means of transferring land: ‘it afforded incontestable evidence of the transaction, bound the parties to uphold it and might allay some of the fears of defective title to property’ that featured in contemporary poems. Finally, it was the only means by which a married woman’s property could be lawfully conveyed.¹²⁹

One might question why similar tripartite documents were not used for apprenticeship agreements, with one part retained by the master, one part by the apprentice, and the third by the guild or other local authorities as a permanent record of the agreement. There are several reasons why this was not necessary for apprenticeship indentures. First, from an early date masters were required to enrol their apprentices at a specified location, to record the terms of the agreement and make the apprenticeship common knowledge. In London, public enrolment was required as early as 1275.¹³⁰ This requirement may also explain why some indentures appear not to have been indented at all, as an ‘official’ copy was easily obtainable should the validity of the document be questioned. For the most part, enrolment records were limited to the details of both parties and the length of term, as the act of enrolment itself made the apprenticeship common knowledge. However, it is possible that in some guilds or towns the entire indenture was transcribed, as was the case with the indenture copied into the Red Book of Gloucester.¹³¹

Second, apprenticeship indentures concerned personal agreements between two parties, whereas land transfers (particularly those involving ecclesiastical or noble landowners) might involve many people, concern large amounts of valuable property, and have long-term effects on revenues, inheritances and tenures. As Yates noted, the fact that a third of the concord was held by a neutral party helped allay the fears of anyone who stood to

¹²⁶ Jonathan Kissock, ‘Medieval Feet of Fines: A study of their uses with a catalogue of published sources’, *The Local Historian*, 24 (1994), pp. 66–82, p. 66.

¹²⁷ Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances*, p. 187; F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law*, vol. II, p. 95, cited in Margaret Yates, ‘The Market in Freehold Land, 1300–1509: the evidence of feet of fines’, *Economic History Review*, 66 (2013), pp. 579–600, p. 581. See also V.H. Galbraith, *Studies in the Public Records* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1948), pp. 11–12.

¹²⁸ Yates, ‘The Market in Freehold Land’, p. 581.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 581. See Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances*, p. 186, for more on this final point.

¹³⁰ Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds*, p. 197.

¹³¹ Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B2/1, ff. 194 v.–195.

inherit transferred property that their right to the land might be disputed.¹³² Property disagreements were perhaps more likely than apprenticeships to be disputed in central courts, so it was practical for royal officials to hold a record of the agreement. Finally, apprenticeship indentures were records of a fixed-term agreement, lasting for a set term of years, and administered locally by guild or borough officials. Under normal circumstances, the agreement recorded in the indenture was neither transferable nor heritable (see Chapter 7 for exceptions to this general rule), so there was less need for a permanent record to be held in a central location. The transitory nature of apprenticeship – a life stage, rather than a permanent status – might also be a reason why relatively few indentures survive.

That is not to say, however, that the apprenticeship indenture itself was not a necessary document. In fact, the opposite is true: in 1431 Justice Cottesmore determined that it was the plaintiff's own folly to take the defendant as an apprentice without an indenture, because only a writ of covenant could be sued on an apprenticeship and not a writ on the Statute of Labourers.¹³³ The plaintiff, the master, counted that the defendant was his servant, retained in the office of husbandry from year to year for four years, and that the defendant had departed within the term. The defendant pleaded that he had been retained by the plaintiff as his apprentice as a scrivener for seven years, and so was not, in fact, his servant. Although William Babington (see Chapter 2) argued that every apprentice was his master's servant (*'chaqun apprentice est le servant de son Maistre'*), serjeant William Chaunterrell countered that apprenticeship was a covenant as each party was bound to the other (*'fesance d'apprentice est un covenan, & chaqun lie a l'auter'*), and so it could not lie on the Statute.¹³⁴ Presumably the court believed that the defendant had been an apprentice, as judgement went against the master because he had failed to create a written record of their agreement and thus could not pursue a writ of covenant against it.

9. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that apprenticeship indentures developed, as with many other documents, out of the charter deed. Although it was originally a memorandum of an oral agreement, by the mid-fourteenth century the apprenticeship indenture had developed into the written record of a covenant, which could be produced as a specialty at common law.

¹³² Yates, 'The Market in Freehold Land', p. 581.

¹³³ Bevan, 'Clerks and Scriveners', pp. 204–205.

¹³⁴ 9 Henry VI, plea. 18 – Seipp number 1431.040

<<https://www.bu.edu/phpbin/lawyearbooks/display.php?id=17405>> [accessed 17 November 2019].

By the early fourteenth century the form of an indenture was largely fixed, although masters and apprentices were able to change, omit, or add clauses to suit their personal circumstances. The form remained largely unchanged even after 1500, to the extent that a 1541 formulary used an exemplar that was much the same as any indenture drawn up in the fourteenth century.

Although apprenticeship indentures recorded private agreements, with little relevance to the world at large, efforts were made to add security features, including chirographs, seals, and witness lists. All of these features would help to verify the validity of the indenture if it was ever called into question. Despite the personal importance attached to indentures during the term of the apprenticeship, they ceased to be of use once the apprenticeship was completed and the apprentice had become a master or entered the franchise. This contributed to the poor survival rate of apprenticeship indentures – although it is clear that many more once existed, there was no need to keep them long after the end of the apprenticeship and those that have survived are merely lucky accidents. Some were deposited with the Chancery or Exchequer courts, perhaps because they were pertinent to actions heard there, whereas others have survived among family papers. The poor rate of survival should not detract from the importance of apprenticeship indentures as a source for social, legal, and economic history, and this is demonstrated in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Legislation and its implication

This chapter considers the interaction between apprenticeships and common law in medieval England. Apprentices were subject to regulations on three levels: the overarching statute law expounded by the state; the local regulations and customs promulgated by the boroughs in which they lived and worked; and at a more immediate level, the ordinances and articles of the guilds to which they belonged. The first part of the chapter examines the relevant statute law affecting apprentices, which was largely intended to prevent wholesale migration of rural workers to urban centres in the aftermath of the Black Death. The enforceability and enforcement of these statutes is considered, with a case study of one of the few breach of statute actions heard at Common Pleas. The second part of the chapter considers how apprentices, the vast majority of whom were minors, were able to enter into legally binding contracts. Various precedential cases from central and local courts are cited to illustrate the interplay between apprenticeship and the age of civic responsibility. The majority of these examples are drawn from London, home of the central courts, due to the volume of surviving records. A theoretical framework is postulated to explain how apprenticeship indentures might be considered legally binding at law, without being rendered void because the apprentice was still a minor.

1. Overview of relevant statute law

The Crown took a limited interest in apprentices before the Black Death, and made no specific mention of them in legislation in the Statute or Parliament Rolls until 1388, over 250 years after the first known mention of guilds in royal records.¹ Thereafter, legislation concerning apprentices was issued in response to changing economic conditions. The 1388 Statute of Cambridge ordained:

‘that he or she, which use to labour at the plough and cart, or other labour or service of husbandry, till they be of the age of twelve years, that from thenceforth they shall abide at the same labour, without being put to any mystery or handicraft; and if any covenant or bond of apprentice be from henceforth made to the contrary, the same shall be holden for none’.²

¹ Pipe Roll 30 Henry I records payments from extant guilds in various towns in 1130 – *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, ed. by Adolphus Ballard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. lxxii.

² 12 Richard II, c. 5.

If enforced, this legislation ensured that any young person born to an agricultural family, or who had otherwise worked in agriculture, had little option but to spend their life working the land. Unlike their urban counterparts, rural adolescents would be unable to indenture themselves, or be indentured, to a master craftsman; if they did, their indenture would be considered void by law. The context of this statute makes its purpose clear. The sudden, drastic reduction in population resulting from the Black Death and subsequent epidemics had long-term social and economic consequences. With less workers available, the value of labour increased significantly, particularly in the agricultural sector.³ Those who had previously been tied to their lord's land as unfree or customary tenants became more mobile, able to increase their landholdings and negotiate the form of their tenure.⁴

Previous legislation, namely the Ordinance and Statute of Labourers (issued 1349 and 1351 respectively), attempted to prevent food shortages and inhibit wage increases caused by lack of labourers, particularly at harvest time.⁵ According to Frank Rexroth, in the aftermath of the Black Death, the law and its enforcement became the most important instrument for re-establishing lost socio-economic status of landowners and the social elite.⁶ Enacted at the demand of landowners, the Statute of Labourers' stated purpose was to guard against the 'malice of servants' who were unwilling to serve except for excessive wages.⁷ It counteracted potential food shortages by forbidding servants and labourers from 'flee[ing] from one county to another', thus guaranteeing a supply of agricultural labour in places where it was in demand.⁸ The 1388 Statute of Cambridge went further by limiting who could be apprenticed, and, as apprenticeship was the main route to citizenship (see Chapters 3 and 7) this consequently made it difficult for the rural population to become members of the urban bourgeoisie. This was not necessarily intentional, but as citizenship was often a

³ Phillipp R. Schofield, *Peasant and Community in Medieval England, 1200–1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26 and 38. This was particularly true of areas which saw a serious decline in population.

⁵ Robert Braid, 'Behind the Ordinance of Labourers: Economic Regulation and Market Control in London before the Black Death', *Journal of Legal History*, 34 (2013), pp. 3–30, p. 24; Richard Britnell, 'Town Life', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 134–178, p. 175.

⁶ Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 70.

⁷ Braid, 'Behind the Ordinance of Labourers', p. 23; 25 Edward III, Statute 2.

⁸ 25 Edward III, Statute 2, c. 7. See also c. 1, which stopped servants who worked in one town during the winter from moving to a different town to work in the summer. The statute also made exception for 'the people of the counties of Stafford, Lancaster, and Derby, and people of Craven, and of the Marches of Wales and Scotland' who might 'come in time of August, and labour in other counties, and safely return, as they were wont to do before this time'.

prerequisite for conducting business in urban markets, restricting apprenticeship subsequently limited the number of citizens and, therefore, competition for customers in a period when repeated epidemics prevented population recovery. The alternative, entrance to the freedom by redemption, required payment which rendered it unaffordable for many.

Why was apprenticeship not legislated until 1388, when attempts to prevent labour shortages and rising wages were implemented (and enforced) in the immediate aftermath of the epidemic? It is possible that the shortage of young people did not become a pressing problem in rural England until nearly forty years later, as the result of a ‘hollow cohort’.⁹ There are two possible explanations for this, and due to the lack of surviving contemporary birth and marriage records, both rely on evidence from more recent epidemics. Decreased marriage and birth rates might accompany high mortality, resulting in a fall in births in the years immediately following the Black Death. This would continue in a ‘wave effect’; less babies were born in 1350, they bore fewer children in the 1370s, and therefore the low birth rate continued into the 1390s. Vicente Pérez Moreda observed this trend in the aftermath of the late sixteenth-century Castilian plague epidemic.¹⁰ Conversely, using evidence from late nineteenth-century India, John Bean argued that birth rates *increased* after the Black Death, as rising living standards improved fertility and permitted earlier marriage.¹¹ However, subsequent epidemics in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries disproportionately affected children and young people, who had not gained immunity during previous epidemics. Those who died in the so-called ‘children’s plague’ of 1361 did not have children in the subsequent decades, and in further outbreaks in 1374 and 1390, boys and adolescents were reportedly most affected.¹² Even if they survived the plague, John Theilmann and Frances Cate argued that these children would become more susceptible to other ailments.¹³ Moreda, Bean, and Theilmann and Cate’s arguments explain why there were less children in 1388, and why legislation was necessary to prevent those in rural areas from migrating to towns, where apprentices were in demand.

⁹ I am grateful to Prof. John Hatcher for suggesting this hypothesis.

¹⁰ Vicente Pérez Moreda, ‘Plague and its Consequences’, in *The Castilian Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: New Perspectives on the Economic and Social History of Seventeenth-Century Spain*, ed. by I.A.A. Thompson and Bartolomé Yun Casalilla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, Madrid, 1994), pp. 32–59, pp. 48 and 52.

¹¹ J.M.W. Bean, ‘Plague, Population and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages’, *Economic History Review*, n.s. 15 (1963), pp. 423–437, p. 432.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 431; John Theilmann and Frances Cate, ‘A Plague of Plagues: The Problem of Plague Diagnosis in Medieval England’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 37 (2007), pp. 371–393, p. 375.

¹³ Theilmann and Cate, ‘A Plague of Plagues’, pp. 386–387.

In 1406, Henry IV confirmed both the Statute of Labourers and the Statute of Cambridge, and added a new restriction:

‘that no man nor woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughter, of whatsoever age he or she be, to serve as apprentice, to no craft nor other labour within any city or borough in the realm, except he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at the least’.

Contraventions carried a hefty penalty of one year’s imprisonment and a fine decided ‘at the king’s will’. Any master who took an apprentice contrary to the statute would be fined 100s, with half given to the person bringing the action and half to the king.¹⁴ As before, this statute was a reaction to agricultural labour shortages and, consequently, an attempt to limit physical and social mobility. The statute declared that ‘there is so great scarcity of labourers and other servants of husbandry that the gentlemen and other people of the realm be greatly impoverished’. The addition of the property restriction, requiring the apprentice’s parents to possess land or rents valued above 20s per year, was exclusionary; theoretically, this limited apprenticeship to more affluent families in both urban and rural environments. The phrase ‘they shall be put to other labours, as their Estates doth require’ indicates an intention to keep the lower orders in their place: on the land.¹⁵

There may have been some altruistic motives behind the statute. Low-income households were more reliant on their children’s labour, particularly if they were unable to afford servants to supplement their workforce. If one of their children was apprenticed elsewhere, overall household productivity would be lowered, rendering them even less able to afford a servant as their income diminished. Richard Smith observed that, if their children migrated, landholding widows became dependent on expensive hired labour.¹⁶ Therefore, the legislation can be interpreted as a means of preventing families from impoverishing themselves in order to socially elevate their children; for urban craftsmen, social mobility often depended on the family’s ability to pay for an apprenticeship with a more prestigious

¹⁴ 7 Henry IV, c. 17. The person who brought the action would probably have been someone with a vested interest in the apprentice – for example the owner of the land on which they worked. See case study below.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 17.

¹⁶ Richard M. Smith, ‘Coping with Uncertainty: Women’s Tenure of Customary Land in England, c. 1370–1430’, in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Jennifer Kermode (Stroud: Allan Sutton, 1991), pp. 43–67, p. 63.

guild.¹⁷ Altruistic motives might also explain why the 1406 statute permitted parents of any ‘estate or condition’ the freedom to ‘set their son or daughter to take learning at any manner school that pleaseth them’.¹⁸

1.1 Enforceability of statutes

It is unlikely that the Statute of Cambridge or the 1406 statute were enforceable in practice. Certainly, attempts to enforce the latter seem to have been rare, and the mayor and aldermen of London actively ignored it until 1428.¹⁹ This was not only a show of power, a demonstration that the London corporation could choose to ignore legislation, it was also motivated by the fact that high urban mortality rates made towns and cities reliant on immigration to maintain population levels.²⁰ After ignoring it as long as possible, the mayor, aldermen and commons of London complained to the king that they were ‘grievously vexed and inquieted’ by the legislation. In 1429, in deference to the ‘affections, and great kindness done and shewed to...the king in all his affairs by the citizens of...London’, Henry VI amended his grandfather’s legislation, decreeing that ‘the said ancient manner, form, and custom of putting and taking of apprentices used and continued in the said City of London be from henceforth kept and observed’ without incurring the penalties ordained in the 1406 statute.²¹ Custom of London permitted any person of free estate and condition to apprentice himself, or his son or daughter, to any freeman. Given the degree to which ‘custom of London’ predominated in the formation and practices of apprenticeship, it is likely that this also became (or remained) the case elsewhere.

Similar complaints were made outside London. In 1497, the Norfolk worsted weavers petitioned Parliament, warning that ‘for lakke of apprentices the seid occupacyon is lyke to be sett aparte [and] in tyme to come to be utterly destroyed’ because they could not ‘have eny apprentice but if his fadyr maye dyspende londes or rentes to the valew of xx s by yer’. They claimed they were unable to find enough apprentices whose parents held sufficient property, to the detriment of the craft, and asked to be ‘at lybertie to take and kepe at all tymes...apprentyces eny p[er]son or p[er]sons hereafter putt to thafforseid occupacyon’,

¹⁷ Sandro Carocci, ‘Social Mobility and the Middle Ages’, *Continuity and Change*, 26 (2011), pp. 367–404, p. 386.

¹⁸ 7 Henry IV, c. 17. Provision of education is discussed further in Chapter 5.

¹⁹ Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 215.

²⁰ See Peter McClure, ‘Patterns of Migration in the Late Middle Ages: The Evidence of English Place-Name Surnames’, *Economic History Review*, 32 (1979), pp. 167–182, p. 182.

²¹ 8 Henry VI, c. 11; 7 Henry IV, c. 17.

while promising not to have more than two apprentices at any time.²² Henry VII approved this change, and thereafter the Norfolk weavers could take apprentices whose familial wealth did not exceed 20s per year.²³

Both the Statute of Cambridge and the 1406 statute proved to be almost unenforceable, not just unenforced. Enforcement relied on someone knowing that the apprentice was ineligible under the terms of the statute, and then being sufficiently litigious as to bring an action for breach of statute in order to prevent the apprenticeship from continuing. The 1406 statute made the reliance explicit, as half the fine was paid to the plaintiff who brought the action against the master for taking an apprentice illegitimately.²⁴ When labour was in short supply, a master was unlikely to care whether the potential apprentice's employment history and family holdings met legal requirements. The guilds did not necessarily interfere with a master's choice of apprentice, as long as their own regulations were not broken (see Chapter 3). Few people involved in the apprenticeship arrangement would care sufficiently to bring a legal action against the parties, unless they had been slighted in some way – for example, if the apprentice had previously belonged to them. Urban and guild regulations frequently forbade members from enticing away another master's servant, journeyman or apprentice, but any such dispute could be dealt with locally rather than in the central courts.²⁵ If an apprentice was enticed away and the wronged master sought remedy at Common Pleas, it might be more appropriate to bring an action on a writ of trespass or covenant than for breach of statute.²⁶ In any case, it is unlikely that breach of statute extended to this type of dispute; as John Baker noted, 'it lay for a...failure to serve' and so was confined to 'labourers and servants of the inferior sort' who were 'compellable to

²² Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/PU/1/1497/12H7n1.

²³ *PROME*, p. 513.

²⁴ 7 Henry IV, c. 17.

²⁵ Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 229. See, for examples, *Memorials*, pp. 245, 277, 514 and 570.

²⁶ See TNA, CP 40/673, rot. 109 for an example. In 1429, John Leylond of London, armourer, brought an action of trespass against John Harry of Nanturras (Cornwall), tanner, for carrying off his apprentice Roger Trevals, to his damage etc. Roger Travels had been apprenticed to him from Easter 1427 for seven years. John Harry's defence was that the apprentice had been apprenticed to *him* on 6 May 1426 for five years under the name Roger Perou, but had left his service before the end of the term. Although the indenture was shown to the court, a jury was summoned from Cornwall to give the truth of the matter concerning the first apprenticeship. The sheriff of Cornwall failed to send the writ and no judgment was recorded.

serve' under the Statute of Labourers.²⁷ In 1431, Justice Cottesmore ruled that only a writ of covenant could be sued on an apprenticeship, not a writ on the Statute of Labourers.²⁸

Furthermore, the breach of statute actions heard at Common Pleas are indicative of the *end* of an agreement, rather than the beginning. They are evidence of a breakdown in the master-employee relationship, and the enforceability of the statute lies in the fact that one party could claim damages from the other. They were, in effect, self-policing the statute. For example, Richard Gobyon brought two actions at Common Pleas in Michaelmas term 1448. In the first action, brought on a writ of trespass against the Statute of Labourers, Gobyon alleged that he had retained William Gale as a servant to look after his horses, for one year from Michaelmas 1447, but that Gale had left his service on 21 June 1448 'without good cause or licence, in contempt of the king'. This was 'against the form of the ordinance and to [Gobyon's] damage of £20'.²⁹ Gale pleaded that he had been released from Gobyon's service, but Gobyon disputed this.³⁰ Concurrently, Gobyon brought an action of trespass against Henry Hilton, who, he alleged, 'forcibly took and abducted' Gale on 21 June 1448, 'against the peace, and to [Gobyon's] damage of £10'.³¹ Hilton pleaded that he did not abduct Gale; on 20 July 1448 he had found Gale 'wandering in London without any service' and so took him as his apprentice.³² As is so often the case, no judgement was recorded for either action. In all likelihood, Gale left Gobyon's service, with or without his permission, and was taken on by Hilton. It might have been pre-arranged between Gale and Hilton, or Gale might have sought another employer after leaving Gobyon's service. Had Gobyon been awarded the damages he claimed in just one of these actions, it would have made him a wealthy man; in 1481, a leading mason (one of the more well-remunerated crafts) might earn around £7 a year.³³

As *Gobyon v Gale* demonstrates, for the 1388 and 1406 statutes to be enforced, one party had to consider it worth claiming damages, and this was most likely to be the party which had lost the service of the now-apprentice. Given the statutes' focus on preventing a shortage of agricultural labourers, the plaintiff might be the owner of the land on which the

²⁷ J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 333.

²⁸ Kitrina Bevan, 'Clerks and Scriveners: Legal Literacy and Access to Justice in Late Medieval England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2013), pp. 204–205.

²⁹ TNA, CP 40/751, rot. 318.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Notably, Henry Hilton, defendant in the second action, stood surety for William Gale in this action.

³¹ TNA, CP 40/751, rot. 407 d.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 227.

youth had previously worked. Some actions heard at Common Pleas were brought by a plaintiff seeking damages for the abduction of a villein, and damages were awarded because the plaintiff was deprived of the (unfree) villein's service.³⁴ However, legal proceedings were 'archaic...solemn, and slow'.³⁵ Only a desperate landowner would seek redress in this manner for a (free) tenant who paid rent in cash rather than in service. It would almost certainly be easier to replace the tenant than to pursue an action for breach of statute through Common Pleas. If the action concerned a customary tenant who had become an apprentice against the Statute of Cambridge, the judgment would be based on the jury's answer to the issue of the apprentice's age at the time they ceased working on the land.³⁶ Feudal landholding declined after the Black Death and more tenants held land in exchange for cash rent, so it is unlikely that many landowners felt any need to bring this action – they could find another free tenant, rather than being compelled to take back an unfree tenant who owed them service.³⁷ Therefore, the Statute of Cambridge was not easily enforceable.

The 1406 statute might have been slightly easier to enforce as the apprentice's eligibility depended on his parents' yearly income from land, proof of which had to be provided in the form of a sealed document. Therefore, it was more likely that the existence or veracity of this document would become the issue. In prosecuting both statutes, if the plaintiff and defendant put themselves on the country, a jury would be summoned from the apprentice's place of origin: the jury's chief qualification, to quote Baker, was that 'they were supposed to know somewhat of the truth before they came to court'. The requirement that juries be drawn from the 'venue' where the facts were alleged might lead to considerable procedural delays, as the sheriff of the county might neglect to send a writ and the jurors might fail to travel to London.³⁸ These considerations may account for the paucity in the records of breach of statute actions concerning apprentices. Furthermore, as noted above, as enforcement of these statutes relied on self-policing, the plaintiff in a breach of statute case would only be someone who stood to benefit from the action. Therefore, it is more likely that the issue of whether the statutes had been breached would arise in an otherwise unrelated

³⁴ TNA, CP 40/655, rot. 455.

³⁵ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 58.

³⁶ This would likely be a special traverse. The defendant could not deny all the facts of the case (and thus produce a general issue) as they had certainly become an apprentice, but they could deny the fact that they had worked on the land over the age of twelve, thus producing a special traverse in which one material fact (the defendant's age) became the issue. For a full explanation of how the issue was reached, see Baker, *Introduction to English Legal History*, pp. 77–78.

³⁷ Schofield, *Peasant and Community*, p. 32.

³⁸ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 75.

case, based on the pleading of either defendant or plaintiff, rather than in an action of breach of statute itself.

1.2 Enforcement of statutes

Records from Common Pleas show that a handful of attempts were made to enforce the 1406 statute. In 1429, Robert Threlkeld brought an action of breach of statute against Ralph Cresvale, but this case, which did not proceed past the initial pleading, seems to have been part of an ongoing dispute between Threlkeld and Cresvale.³⁹ More revealing is a 1428 action for breach of statute brought by William Babthorp, king's attorney, against Richard Daubney, plumber. Babthorp claimed that Daubney had taken John Chillewell as his apprentice in 1425, contrary to the statute. According to Babthorp, Chillewell 'had worked at husbandry at Chilwell [Notts.] until the age of twelve years and more, and still did thereafter, and his parents did not hold 20s worth of land or rents'.⁴⁰ Daubney thoroughly countered both parts of Babthorp's allegation, answering that Chillewell did not work at husbandry after the age of twelve, having been apprenticed to a tailor in Grantham from the ages of four to eighteen. Presumably, an indenture or record of the enrolment could be produced as a specialty if required. Additionally, at the time of the apprenticeship to Daubney, Chillewell's father held lands and rents at Shelford [Notts.] worth 20s 'and more'.

Furthermore, Daubney argued that Chillewell had placed *himself* as apprentice to Daubney 'of his own will' at the age of twenty-two, with no parental involvement; Daubney (or perhaps his attorney, although none is named in the record) attempted to exploit a technicality by pleading that, as Chillewell's parents did not place him as an apprentice, no proof of their income from rents was required. This corresponded with the view held by the mayor and aldermen of London, that the law referred only to the parents, leaving their children free to apprentice themselves to whoever they chose.⁴¹ In addition, Daubney stated that Chillewell, then aged eighteen, had left his tailoring apprenticeship and 'came to London

³⁹ *Threlkeld v Cresvale*, TNA, CP 40/673, rot. 444 (Easter 1429) – Ralph Cresvale was accused of being apprenticed against the statute, but this case did not proceed past the initial pleading. The plaintiff, Robert Threlkeld, also brought an action of trespass with force at arms against Ralph Cresvale (and others) in Michaelmas term 1428 (*Threlkeld v Cresvale and Holwell*, CP 40/671, rot. 120 d). Threlkeld was an attorney, and appears several times on the roll in that role: as attorney for the plaintiff in *Ashton v Bynggele* (CP 40/673, rot. 305 d.), and attorney for the defendant in *Swyngyll v atte Water* (CP 40/673, rot. 448). Threlkeld may have been related to the Threlkeld family, who were landowners in Cumbria – see W. Jackson, 'The Threlkelds of Threlkeld, Yanwath, and Crosby Ravenworth', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 9 (1888), pp. 298–317, passim.

⁴⁰ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 108.

⁴¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 215.

and was retained by a certain John Swetyng at the art of plumbing'. We can interpret this detail in several ways. It implied that, if Babthorp wished to prosecute Daubney for breach of statute, he should also prosecute John Swetyng. It also inferred that Daubney was not in the wrong, because Chillewell had already been apprenticed in London – therefore why would he have questioned Chillewell's eligibility? The mayor and aldermen were, as noted above, reluctant to enforce the 1406 statute; even if it was enforced in Lincolnshire, the dates of Chillewell's apprenticeship there had already precluded him from being restricted by working on the land after the age of twelve. Therefore, Daubney felt he had no case to answer.

Unfortunately, no judgement was recorded in this action. However, the motivation for prosecution can be ascertained, and it clear that someone had something to gain. The Chief Justice of the Common Bench in 1428 was Sir William Babington, who, through his wife Margery, held the manor of Chilwell, on which Chillewell was alleged to have worked after the age of twelve.⁴² Babington's personal connection to Chilwell may have prompted the king's attorney's decision to bring the action, although what other motivations and private disputes lay behind it we cannot know.⁴³ We do know that the sheriff of Nottinghamshire was ordered to gather a jury to say whether or not Chillewell had worked as a husbandman until the age of twelve, and whether his father held land or rents of sufficient value at the time Chillewell was apprenticed to Daubney. Furthermore, the record continues,

'concerning Daubney's claim that his receipt of Chillewell as his apprentice was not contrary to the statute, Babthorp states that the statute ordained that anyone apprenticing their son or daughter should present a certificate to the mayor or bailiffs of the town concerned, sealed by two JPs from the county where the person was born, stating the value of the parents' lands, and no person should receive an apprentice without such a certificate'.

⁴² S.J. Payling, 'Babington, Sir William (c. 1370–1454)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) online edition <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/976>> [accessed 26 February 2018]

⁴³ Given that the plaintiff, on whose behalf Babthorp was acting, was king Henry VI, we might easily assume that Chilwell was a royal demesne. The evidence from Domesday onwards suggests that this was not, and never was, the case – *Victoria County History of the County of Nottingham, vol. I*, ed. by William Page (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), pp. 270 and 276.

Thus, it did not matter how old the apprentice was and whether their parents were involved in the formation of the apprenticeship; they were still bound by the statute. Therefore, according to Babthorp, as Daubney did not allege that any such certificate was presented to the mayor of London at this time, he received Chillewell in contravention of the ordinance, and should pay 100s to the king.⁴⁴

It is also noteworthy that, although Chillewell was over the age of majority and thus legally an adult when he bound himself to Daubney, the action was brought against Daubney and not Chillewell. This placed the onus on the master to ensure that the apprentice was eligible for an apprenticeship, implying that Daubney was at fault for not thoroughly investigating Chillewell's eligibility. Another consideration may have been the likelihood that Chillewell would not have been able to pay 100s damages. This provides a clear link to other forms of action: there was a high incidence of trespass actions brought against relatives of apprentices, where the apprentice had purportedly been abducted but, in reality, had probably run away.⁴⁵ In these cases, the master sued for damages caused by the loss of the apprentice's service; the family bore the financial burden, as the apprentice could not (being, in all likelihood, unpaid), and so there was little point bringing an action against them for breach of contract.

Viewed through the lens of legislation, apprenticeship appears to have been a means of excluding certain groups – in this case, those from agricultural backgrounds, and with limited property – from economic participation. Initially this was a response to economic conditions in the decades after the Black Death, where it was deemed necessary to restrict apprenticeship in order to retain sufficient agricultural labour.⁴⁶ However in the fifteenth century restrictions on the basis of wealth suggest a change of motivation: restricting apprenticeship to those whose parents possessed above a certain level of wealth implies socially-motivated exclusion, and a means of limiting social mobility. Whatever the motivation, the legislation limited the economic participation of certain members of society, and so from this perspective apprenticeship was an entirely exclusionary practice. Nevertheless, the civic authorities responsible for enforcing legislation might actively choose not to do so (as with London, above), and legal records such as *R v Daubney* show that, in reality, efforts were made to exploit legislative ambiguities and facilitate apprenticeship.

⁴⁴ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 108.

⁴⁵ See, for example, *Skydmore v Mayn*, TNA, CP 40/671, rot. 329 d.; *Pyers v Caundyssh*, CP 40/738, rot. 505; *Cok v Drynker*, CP 40/748, rot. 318; *Walsha v Blanford*, CP 40/809, rot. 408 d.; *Phelipp v Clarell*, CP 40/814, rot. 80 d. Actions of this nature warrant further research, which falls outside the scope of this thesis.

⁴⁶ Schofield, *Peasant and Community*, p. 113.

2. Age of apprentices

There are several points of note arising from *R v Daubney* concerning the age of an apprentice. First, an apprenticeship begun at the age of four, apparently for a term of fourteen years, was not unheard of. Daubney may well have had access to legal counsel, and would probably not have included Chillewell's earlier apprenticeship in his pleading if the terms were considered wholly unlikely. Indeed, the extreme youth of some apprentices is corroborated by the 1406 statute, which mentioned apprentices 'put by their said fathers and mothers...to serve and bound Apprentices to divers crafts...sometimes at the age of twelve years, sometimes within the said age'.⁴⁷ Here 'the age of twelve' seems to indicate a social convention rather than a legal convention. Second, the obverse of this is that, although perhaps unusual, it was not impossible for an apprenticeship to begin when the apprentice was over the age of legal majority. This was probably rare, as few adults would willingly put themselves in a position of childlike reliance on a master, who would also rigidly control their behaviour. In some crafts, the work itself necessitated an older minimum age: London paviors' apprentices had to be at least eighteen because of the physical strength required.⁴⁸ Third, resultantly, the statute was open to interpretation – was the 20s minimum income still enforceable if the apprentice was old enough to place himself as an apprentice without any parental involvement? The record of *R v Daubney* suggests that the justices themselves were uncertain on this point, as they demurred: 'concerning this final point, the justices wish to be advised, and so day is given at the same term'.⁴⁹ If a judgment had been recorded, it would have set a legal precedent on this point – something which justices were loath to do.

Before making a judgment on *R v Daubney*, the justices would have needed to consider three different ages: the legal age of majority, the age of responsibility, and the age at which a person could enter into a legally binding agreement. That is to say, that age at which Chillewell became a legal adult, no longer dependent on his parents; the age at which he became responsible for his own actions in entering into a potentially invalid apprenticeship; and the age at which he was old enough to bind himself by apprenticeship indenture, with or without the involvement of his parents. All three of these ages are explored below.

⁴⁷ 7 Henry IV, c. 17.

⁴⁸ Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 111.

⁴⁹ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 108.

2.1 Age of legal majority

The age of legal majority varied depending on whether property was involved. It was certainly rather low when it concerned marriage, which might be arranged to secure land or wealth. The age of consent for marriages made *per verba de futuro* was seven, but these marriages could be voided before the (arbitrary) age of puberty: twelve for girls and fourteen for boys.⁵⁰ In England, the 1235 Statute of Merton set fourteen as the age of consent for marriages of wards. This protected wards whose guardians sought to marry them to someone unsuitable, such as ‘villains, or other, as burgesses, where they be disparaged’, below the age of fourteen. The statute also sought to protect the interests of the ward’s guardian by making provision to compensate them if their ward married ‘without licence of his lord to defraud him of the marriage’.⁵¹ For city orphans (the children of deceased freemen), the age of legal majority seems to have been twenty-one. Again, this was because property and wealth were involved: orphans below twenty-one were prevented from alienating any inherited land or devise it by will, and their deathbed settlements were limited to moveable goods. Put simply, orphans under the age of twenty-one were viewed as children.⁵² Likewise, male heirs could not inherit land held by military tenure (such as knight’s fees) until the age of twenty-one.⁵³

T.E. James asserted that twenty-one was fixed as the age of majority in English common law from an early stage, developing out of the system of military service.⁵⁴ However, for socage tenure the age of majority seems to have been fourteen or fifteen – Glanvill, Bracton and Fleta’s legal treatises all differ on this point.⁵⁵ Sokemen (socage tenants) owed obligations to their landlord, but these were defined; they might, for example, assist with sowing and reaping at specified times of year, but the lord could not demand any more work from them.⁵⁶ Sokemen were not unfree and thus had access to common law.⁵⁷ Babthorp did not allege that Chillewell was unfree, so his parents may have been socage

⁵⁰ Baker, *English Legal History*, pp. 491–492. Parental consent was not an essential requirement for a valid marriage in canon law – perhaps a reason why so many apprenticeship indentures place restrictions upon making promises of marriage. As Baker noted, parents ‘had to raise [objections] when the banns were called, or else thereafter for ever hold their peace’ – *ibid.*, p. 492.

⁵¹ 20 Henry III, Statute of Merton, c. 6.

⁵² Elaine Clark, ‘City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 34 (1990), pp. 168–187, pp. 172 and 176. In 1395 a guardian was appointed for Cecilia Patrik and the property she had inherited from her father. Cecilia was of full age but ‘an idiot and of unsound mind’, and thus considered a child in the eyes of the court – ‘Fol. cccix’ *Letter-Book H*, pp. 430–431.

⁵³ T.E. James, ‘The Age of Majority’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 4 (1960), pp. 22–33, p. 26.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30. Fleta stated that the heir who held by socage tenure came of age at the age of marriage, which was noted as being fixed at fourteen.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁶ Schofield, *Peasant and Community*, p. 12; Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 227.

⁵⁷ Schofield, *Peasant and Community*, p. 13.

tenants, and therefore Chillewell would have been of age by the time of his plumbing apprenticeship. However, in all of these examples, the age of majority refers to heirs of land or other material wealth. In urban environments, the age of majority might be pragmatically lowered, or left open to interpretation, where it referred to members of the labour market. Glanvill held that a burgess' son could be considered of age 'when he knows how to count pence properly and to measure cloth, and to carry on his father's trade' – usually between the ages of twelve and sixteen.⁵⁸ This is reflected in the borough customs of towns such as Shrewsbury, where boys came of age at fifteen providing they could measure cloth and tell a good penny from a bad one.⁵⁹ According to Bracton, women came of age when once they had an understanding of household management; they would not have sufficient 'discretion and understanding' to manage these things before the age of fourteen or fifteen.⁶⁰ This implied that majority was linked to skill acquisition, and thus was similar to the age of responsibility in that respect.

2.2 Age of responsibility

Twelve was, at least notionally, the age at which a person began to hold civic responsibility. All males over the age of twelve were allocated to a tithing group as part of the frankpledge system, which was designed to provide what Phillipp Schofield described as 'mutual surety'; it made an individual's good behaviour the responsibility of the individual, their kin, and their neighbours.⁶¹ Therefore it may be significant that the age of twelve was used as the limit in the Statute of Cambridge, as this was the age at which a young person could be held responsible for their own actions, and the actions of others. With regard to the Statute of Labourers, the age of twelve stood as a clear and logical limit; in an agricultural setting, even if a person did not know their exact age, their membership of a tithing group would indicate that they were over the notional age of twelve.⁶² Thus they would know if

⁵⁸ *Borough Customs, vol. I*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1904), p. 157; Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe*, p. 127.

⁵⁹ *Borough Customs, vol. I*, p. 159.

⁶⁰ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and Death: The Ages of Man', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 413–434, p. 422.

⁶¹ Phillipp R. Schofield, 'The Late Medieval View of Frankpledge and the Tithing System: An Essex Case Study', in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, ed. by Zvi Razi and Richard Michael Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 408–449, p. 408.

⁶² 'It has sometimes been assumed...that people were vague about the matter'. This was not necessarily the case in more urban environments: 'Town courts assumed that parents and close relatives knew children's exact ages: in the London Bridge orphanage records they are put down without question, often to within a half-year' – Sylvia L. Thrupp, 'Aliens in and around London in the Fifteenth Century', in *Studies in London History*

they were eligible to become an apprentice, or if they were restricted to agricultural labour. Discussing the alien subsidy introduced in 1440, Sylvia Thrupp noted that the minimum age of liability for this tax (and, presumably, others) was twelve.⁶³ Twelve years was also the age after which a young person could be convicted of a felony – before this age, he was considered too young to bear criminal responsibility.⁶⁴ At Exeter in the late thirteenth-century, the ‘lawful age’ for litigious purposes was twelve.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it was also felt that ‘malice [made] up for age’; the Year Books record the case of a ten-year-old in the late 1330s, who ‘killed his companion and concealed him’. The boy was hanged because concealing the body showed that ‘he knew how to distinguish between evil and good’.⁶⁶

It can also be inferred that, if they were ‘wrongfully’ apprenticed after the age of twelve, apprentices could be held legally responsible for their actions in entering into the apprenticeship. An apprentice over the age of twelve who broke the terms of their indenture by, for example, running away, would not be considered a minor and so could be sued under common law. Twelve years would therefore be the logical age to begin an apprenticeship, although this does not seem to have been the case in practice. Although the Statute of Cambridge may have prompted the children of agricultural workers to begin their apprenticeships earlier, Barbara Hanawalt stated that most apprenticeships began in ‘early to late teenage years’.⁶⁷ Jeremy Goldberg thought it ‘unlikely’ that most children left home before reaching canonical majority (twelve for girls, fourteen for boys).⁶⁸ Fourteen seems to have been the usual age, although this increased over the course of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹ According to a Chancery petition from 1452–4, a London ordinance set a minimum age of thirteen years for apprenticeship: John Pye (then aged fourteen) complained that his

presented to Philip Edmund Jones, ed. by A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 251–274, pp. 253 and 254.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁶⁴ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 524. Goldberg suggested that children could be held criminally responsible once ‘capable of trickery’, perhaps about ten years old, but it is quite possible that this age was subject to some fluidity depending on the felony, and child, in question – Goldberg, ‘The Ages of Man’, p. 421.

⁶⁵ ‘He cannot defend by his law because he is not yet of lawful age, to wit, twelve years’ – ‘Exeter, Court Roll 21’ (1288–89), *Borough Customs, vol. I*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1904), p. 157. Nevertheless, they could not devise land or tenements until the age of twenty – *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁶⁶ *Year Books of the Reign of King Edward the Third. Years XI and XII*. ed. and trans. by Alfred J. Horwood, prefaced and indexed by Luke Owen Pike (London: Longman & Co., and Trübner & Co., 1883), p. 626.

⁶⁷ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *‘Of Good and Ill Repute’: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 169.

⁶⁸ Goldberg, ‘The Ages of Man’, p. 420. Although the evidence is somewhat limited, apprenticeships in Montpellier generally began above the canonical age of majority – Kathryn L. Reyerson, ‘The Adolescent Apprentice/Worker in Medieval Montpellier’, *Journal of Family History*, 17 (1992), pp. 353–370, pp. 355–356.

⁶⁹ *Oxford City Apprentices, 1513–1602*, ed. by A. Crossley (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), p. xviii; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 113.

apprenticeship had been enrolled at the guildhall when he was ‘then but xj yer’ old; Where as the orden^anc’ of the Cite Will’ [that] eny p[er]sone at his enrolyng be in age betwene xiiij [and] xiiij at the leste’.⁷⁰ It has not been possible to find the ordinance which set this limit, but it should be remembered that ordinances presented an idealised version of reality.⁷¹ Presumably the apprentice’s age was not questioned at the enrolment, so this seems like an attempt to be released from an apprenticeship that was no longer desirable – John Pye’s master had been confined to Newgate, and his apprentice with him.

As demonstrated by *R v Daubney*, apprentices could be very young, and much might depend on personal circumstances; Hanawalt stated that an earlier placement could be desirable in the case of city orphans.⁷² The guardianship of Matthew le Barber, aged twelve, was committed to John de Drayton, a saddler, in 1332 ‘for a term of seven years, by way of an apprentice’.⁷³ In 1379, guardianship of five-year-old orphan Peter Whappelode was granted to John Homercolt and his wife Juliana, Peter’s mother. Homercolt entered into a bond to pay Peter £10 if he and Juliana failed to school and maintain Peter for seven years before apprenticing him to ‘some honest art’ of Peter’s choice (*‘aliquam honestam artem in qua dictus Petrus libencius voluerit’*) in the eighth year, by which time Peter would have turned twelve.⁷⁴ The pragmatic view of age can also be seen in a complicated action of debt and arbitration from Common Pleas, begun in 1420. The plaintiff John Andrewe ‘took on a certain Joan daughter of Simon Umfrey to be his apprentice whilst she was not yet of age’ but the defendant Thomas Jakes ‘unjustly detained her’.⁷⁵ According to Jakes, ‘the arbitrators ordained that...Joan, in the presence of Jakes and Andrewes, ought be led to the village cross of Dunstable where she should choose which one of them to depart with’, and ‘whomever she should choose ought thence to have retained her peacefully and with the force of the arbitration’. Jakes claimed that Joan was brought to the cross of Dunstable and chose to depart with him, but that Andrewes impeded her.⁷⁶ We cannot know how old Joan Umfrey was, under what conditions she was apprenticed, or why Jakes ‘unjustly detained’ her. What

⁷⁰ TNA, C 1/19/466.

⁷¹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 113; A. Abram, *Social England in the Fifteenth Century: A Study of the Effects of Economic Conditions* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1909), p. 144.

⁷² Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 113.

⁷³ LMA, COL/AD/01/005, f. 232 r. This record is also calendared under ‘Folio ccxxxii.’ in *Letter-Book E*, p. 272.

⁷⁴ LMA, COL/AD/01/008, f. 110 v. This record is also calendared in ‘Folio cx b.’, *Letter-Book H*, pp. 126–127.

⁷⁵ TNA, CP 40/639, rot. 311.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* This may refer to the Eleanor cross in Dunstable, which was erected c. 1293 and destroyed by Parliamentary forces in 1643 – Joan Curran, ‘The Eleanor Cross’, *Medieval Dunstable* <<http://medievaldunstable.org.uk/eleanor.html>> [accessed 28 January 2018].

is clear, however, is that even though she was apparently not of age to be apprenticed, the arbitrators considered her old enough to make her own decision regarding which master to serve. The general issue became whether or not she was brought to Dunstable cross, not the validity of the apprenticeship or if Joan was old enough to make a decision.

2.3 Ability to make (legally enforceable) agreements

Although it was not questioned in Joan Umfrey's case, the apprenticeship's validity might depend on the apprentice's age. Apprentices' ages were rarely recorded in enrolment records or legal actions, and never in indentures.⁷⁷ Where they are recorded, it suggests the age was considered notable or otherwise relevant to the matter. An entry in the Coventry Leet Book recorded that on 1 November 1494 Thomas Richardson became apprentice to Thomas Wardlowe at the age of twenty-four.⁷⁸ Out of fourteen entries in 1494–5, Richardson's was the only one which recorded the apprentice's age, suggesting that it was considered noteworthy.⁷⁹ The apprentice's age becomes very important when we consider the wording of the Statute of Cambridge: 'if any covenant or bond of apprentice be from henceforth made to the contrary, the same shall be holden for none'.⁸⁰ 'Covenant' implies the existence of a legally binding agreement made between two parties, which, by 1388, would almost certainly have been evidenced by a sealed written document – the apprenticeship indenture.⁸¹ 'Bond' entails a financial obligation which might be negated by performing a certain action (for example, *x* will pay *y* £20, unless *x* builds a house for *y* within twelve months). In the case of an indenture, there might be a financial penalty included in the terms; for example, *x* will take *y* as his apprentice and teach him a craft, but should *y* misbehave or depart early, *y* or his guarantors will pay *x* £20.⁸² The use of these terms in the statute highlights a legal technicality: a written document was of such 'high nature' for evidential purposes that, should it become subject of an action at common law,

⁷⁷ It is not impossible that an apprenticeship indenture exists, somewhere, which records the age of the apprentice, but none of the indentures found in the course of researching this thesis note the age.

⁷⁸ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor's Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part II*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1908), p. 561.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 560–561. Richardson is also one of the two apprentices for whom no parent is named, which might also be significant.

⁸⁰ 12 Richard II, c. 5.

⁸¹ Baker, *English Legal History*, pp. 317 and 319. By the late seventeenth century, an apprentice could bring an action of covenant if the master failed to enrol them: 'For if an Apprentice shall not be Inrolled, and the Master turn him away, the Apprentice may in such case bring an Action upon the Covenants in his Indenture, and recover Damages from time to time against the Master' – *Lex Londinensis: Or, the City Law* (London: Henry Twyford, 1680), p. 43.

⁸² For example Berkshire Record Office, D/EZ34/F1.

few oral (as opposed to written) defences were permitted against it. The most relevant defence here was that the deed could be declared invalid for incapacity, including infancy.⁸³

The age below which an indenture was not considered legally binding might vary according to local custom. Some clarification can be found in the Year Books. An action of trespass for assault and battery (and imprisonment) was heard at Common Pleas in 1481 against a hosier accused of beating an apprentice who, the hosier claimed, was neglectful in learning the art of hosiery. In summary, the defendant pleaded that he was not guilty of assault and battery because the plaintiff had, while ‘within age’, bound himself to the defendant as apprentice for a term of ten years. It is implied that the terms of the indenture obliged the master to punish the apprentice appropriately for any wrongdoing. The ‘deed’ (undoubtedly an indenture) was presented to the court. According to the Year Book record, ‘it was held by all the Court that one within age could not bind himself to be apprentice by the common law’, but the ‘defendant showed that the custom of London was, and had always been, that an infant under the age of fourteen years could make himself an apprentice by indenture’.⁸⁴ What is relevant is that the defendant showed the court that the custom of London allowed an infant under fourteen to enter into an apprenticeship by means of a legally binding indenture.

Parental consent was necessary to validate an indenture made by a person under the age of legal majority. The London Plea and Memoranda Rolls recorded that in 1382 William Moreton brought a bill of complaint against Robert de Eye, cutler, with whom Moreton had negotiated an apprenticeship. Moreton complained that de Eye ‘had caused a scrivener to draw up indentures according to his own wishes’, including terms which Moreton had never agreed to, such as a £40 penalty if Morton broke the terms of the indenture. Moreton refused to agree to these terms without the consent of his parents and friends, who were unwilling to give their consent to de Eye’s terms. This implies that Moreton not only relied on the wisdom of his elders, but was also unable to agree to terms without their consent. The £40 bond was rendered null and void because the plaintiff was underage and ‘it seemed to the court...to be against all reason’, but not the apprenticeship itself.⁸⁵ Another case from the

⁸³ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 324. Ideally one would need to present another written record, for example a release, rather than trying to prove the invalidity of the indenture by oral testimony alone.

⁸⁴ 21 Edw. IV, plea 17, f. 6a – Seipp number 1481.025

<<https://www.bu.edu/phpbin/lawyearbooks/display.php?id=20747>> [accessed 7 June 2020]

⁸⁵ ‘Calendar – Roll A 25: 1381–83, mem. 7b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 14–16. The court decided that the apprenticeship should continue, and de Eye ‘was enjoined to provide for and teach him and not to treat him unjustly or maliciously under penalty of losing him’. However, de Eye ‘took Moreton immediately to the Sheriffs’ compter in Milk Street’ and had him imprisoned there ‘without any reason unjustly’ for two days,

Plea Rolls indicates that parental consent was not required if the apprentice was older than fourteen. In 1429, Reginald Lightfot demanded that his daughter Katherine be exonerated from her apprenticeship, because Thomas Blounvyle, carpenter, and his wife had ‘caused [Katherine]...being under fourteen years of age, to be bound apprentice to them against her will and that of her father and other friends’. The Blounvyles argued that Katherine ‘was willing and of sufficient age, to wit, fourteen years and more’. The Blounvyles did not suggest that Lightfot had agreed to the apprenticeship, only Katherine herself; this indicates that Katherine could apprentice herself without parental consent. However, ‘after an examination and numerous other proofs’, the court decided that Katherine was under the age of fourteen and therefore could not apprentice herself without her father’s agreement.⁸⁶

As previously discussed, city orphans were considered children until the age of twenty-one, and thus had to seek consent from their guardians if they wished to be apprenticed below this age.⁸⁷ Some guardians were bound over to seek the assent of the mayor and aldermen before they apprenticed or married off their ward. John Clerk was fifteen years old when he was orphaned in 1394, and so would have been free to bind himself as apprentice by custom of London, but his guardian Hugo Hally was obliged to seek assent from the mayor and aldermen if this was to happen: ‘*Et non licebit eidem Hug(oni) dictum orpahanum interim maritare apprenticium facere nec alio modo ligare sine assensu maioris et Aldermannorum pro tempore existencium*’.⁸⁸ This added an extra layer of protection for orphans, in a situation which might otherwise ‘[afford] guardians the opportunity to manipulate children, to benefit from their labour and profit from their wealth’.⁸⁹

Scriveners who drew up false apprenticeship indentures on behalf of a master might be punished with imprisonment.⁹⁰ London Letter-Book H recorded one such case; the noteworthy point is that lack of consent from the apprentice’s father invalidated the indenture. On 30 May 1376, scrivener William Grendone (alias Credelle) appeared before the mayor and aldermen regarding ‘certain indentures between William Ayllesham, goldsmith of London, and one Nicholas Flourman, of London...a minor’. Nicholas bound

‘making no provision for his sustenance’. Appearing before the court, de Eye ‘could give no reason or excuse for the imprisonment of his apprentice, which was directly contrary to the injunction and judgment of the court and brought disgrace and opprobrium on the city’. It was for this reason that Moreton was exonerated, and de Eye was ordered to bring the indentures into court for cancellation, ‘which was done the same day’.

⁸⁶ ‘Membr. 5 b, 3 Aug. 1429’, *CPMR*, 1413–37, p. 229.

⁸⁷ Clark, ‘City Orphans’, pp. 172 and 176.

⁸⁸ LMA, COL/AD/01/008 (London Letter-Book H), f. 299 v. See also *ibid.*, ff. 40 r., 40 v., 48 r., 227 v., 228 r.

⁸⁹ Clark, ‘City Orphans’, p. 183.

⁹⁰ *Memorials*, p. 397.

himself apprentice to Ayllesham for nine years from 25 December 1374. Grendone ‘had put down the Cross at the North Dore as being the surety and pledge of the same Nicholas’. This may refer to ‘Le Broken Cross’ erected by the Earl of Gloucester in the thirteenth century, ‘about midway between the Northgate of the precinct (of St Paul’s) and the church of St Vedast’.⁹¹ Henry Riley suggested that the use of this monument, rather than a person, as a surety, might ‘perhaps have been considered binding upon the superstitious feelings of the time’.⁹² However, ‘it was against [William Flourman’s] wish that...Nicholas, his son, was thus bound, through the falsity and deceit of the same William Credelle, so making the said Cross his pledge and surety’. William Flourman ought to have been surety for his son, but he was not named in the indentures, ‘or any other friend or kinsman, as pledge of the same Nicholas, as the usage is’. Furthermore, at the time the indenture was made, Nicholas ‘was of such tender age, and still is, that he could not put or bind himself as such’.⁹³

William Flourman’s consent was required due to his son’s age, and without it the indenture was not legally binding. The omission of his name implied that William Flourman had no knowledge of the indenture, which was made while Nicholas was underage (his precise age was not noted). Including the father’s name, with his knowledge, as ‘pledge and surety’ would be considered sufficient consent; he would be responsible for making financial amends for any misbehaviour. Additionally, it is notable that legal redress was not sought until May 1376 despite the indenture binding Nicholas Flourman from Christmas 1374. Perhaps this action, like so many others, is indicative of the breakdown of an existing master–apprentice relationship, where the best course of action seemed to be to invalidate the indenture, thus allowing the apprentice to be bound to another master. However, if this were true, it is unclear why William Flourman had not been actively involved in the process of making the indenture.

3. A theoretical framework

Bearing the legislation in mind, it is possible to formulate a theoretical framework for typical age at apprenticeship. Masters may not have actively considered this when deciding whether or not to take on an apprentice, but it would certainly have become important in cases where the master-apprentice relationship broke down or the validity of the indenture was called into question. The framework is much clearer for male apprentices, as the age of

⁹¹ Aymer Vallance, *Old Crosses and Lychgates* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1920), p. 18.

⁹² *Memorials*, p. 397, n. 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

male civic and criminal responsibility was more clearly defined, but the wording of the statutes indicates that legislation also applied to female apprentices. Although historians such as Hanawalt and Goldberg have used ordinances and other records to suggest that apprenticeships generally began above the age of fourteen, it is clear (as discussed above) that many apprentices were younger than this at the beginning of their term. Therefore, the framework takes the gap between ordinance and reality into account.

Children under the age of twelve could be apprenticed with the consent of a parent or guardian, who would also act as surety, providing financial compensation to the master for any misdemeanours committed by the apprentice. This is corroborated by a note in the formulary belonging to William Kingsmill, a fifteenth-century Oxford scrivener, which stated that if a child was under twelve, it was better that the parents place him as apprentice.⁹⁴ After 1406, this depended on the parent or guardian having land or rents worth 20s per annum. From the age of twelve, apprentices became responsible for their own actions, and for this reason twelve might have been the usual age for an apprenticeship to begin. The parent or guardian still had to consent to the apprenticeship, and would probably be named as surety, but the apprentice would be at fault for breaking the terms of the indenture. A surety was entirely necessary: in law, infancy was sufficient to invalidate the agreement. Although the apprentice was considered old enough to bear responsibility for actions which broke the indenture, they were still too young in the eyes of the law to provide legal redress. It is curious that we do not see many other cases of trespass for breach of statute (1406) at Common Pleas brought against apprentices, but this may well be because the apprentice was still not of age to make a contract. The large number of actions of trespass where the apprentice was ‘abducted’ by a family member almost certainly disguise a great many cases where the apprentice ran away of their own accord.

From the age of fourteen, at least where the custom of London was followed, apprentices seem to have been free to bind themselves. This corresponded with well-established legislation – the Statute of Merton (1235) set fourteen as the age of consent for marriage of wards, and implied that between fourteen and the ‘full age’ of twenty-one, a ward was held fully responsible for his actions if he married ‘without licence of his lord to defraud him of the marriage’.⁹⁵ In the case of apprentices, it is likely that parents or guardians were expected to bear the financial burden of binding and acting as surety; very few young people

⁹⁴ BL, Add. MS 17716, cited in Stephanie R. Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), p. 54, n. 33.

⁹⁵ 20 Henry III, Statute of Merton, c. 6.

would have had enough money to enter an apprenticeship on their own account without any financial support from a parent or relative. Those that did have the financial wherewithal would, in all likelihood, have inherited this money from a deceased parent. If they were a city orphan, they were still considered a child until the age of twenty-one, and therefore would be apprenticed by their guardian, who held responsibility for their inheritance as well.⁹⁶ The assent of the mayor and aldermen might have to be sought before a city orphan was apprenticed, regardless of their age or gender.⁹⁷ Based on the terms of the 1406 statute, the parents' own financial standing was still important even once the apprentice was able to bind themselves, so it would therefore seem logical to include a parent on the indenture. Therefore, it was presumably only from the age of twenty-one that an apprentice could bind themselves freely, without any consideration as to their parents' status.

Clear restrictions and age limits were eventually placed on apprenticeship by the Statute of Artificers, enacted in 1563. Anyone between the ages of ten and eighteen could be apprenticed, and had to serve 'until his age of one and twenty years at the least, or until the age of four and twenty as the parties can agree'. Again, this was a legislative response to a shortage of agricultural labour, and artificers in towns could be compelled to help with the harvest 'upon pain to suffer imprisonment in the stocks [for] two days and one night'.⁹⁸ The statute also set a minimum term for craft apprentices; as long as they were not 'occupying husbandry nor being labourer', the sons of freemen could be apprenticed to craftsmen for at least seven years, 'so as the term and years of such apprentice do not expire or determine [before] such apprentice shall be the age of four and twenty years at the least'.⁹⁹ Therefore, the younger the apprentice was at the beginning of the term, the longer the apprenticeship would be, during which the master would benefit from their labour. This legislation almost certainly affected social conventions, encouraging later entry into apprenticeship so as to avoid very lengthy terms. The *Lex Londinensis* suggests that, by 1680, the minimum age for apprenticeship was fixed at fourteen: 'if the Apprentice shall be under the Age of Fourteen years at the time of his binding, his Indenture is not good'.¹⁰⁰ This allowed the apprentice to finish their term at the age of twenty-one, the age of legal majority.

⁹⁶ Clark, 'City Orphans', p. 176.

⁹⁷ See, for example, LMA, COL/AD/01/008, f. 228 r.

⁹⁸ 5 Eliz. c. 4, c. 15.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Lex Londinensis*, p. 42.

4. Conclusion

The framework for age of apprenticeship suggested in this chapter is entirely theoretical. Until 1563, there were no hard and fast regulations concerning the age of apprenticeship; it is easy to find evidence to contradict ordinances which dictated minimum ages for apprentices. Indeed, the age of majority was also open to question in circumstances which did not involve inheritance of property. The age at which a boy was considered an adult varied from town to town, and might be measured on the basis of acquired skills rather than physical age. Although the age of twelve is used as a benchmark in both the Statute of Labourers and the Statute of Cambridge, it may well have been a notional age which aligned with the age of criminal and civic responsibility. For this reason, apprenticeships may commonly have commenced at the age of twelve, but we know that apprenticeships could also begin much earlier or later in adolescence, or even into early adulthood. It is certainly clear that London set a precedent by allowing apprentices under the age of fourteen to bind themselves as apprentices by indenture.¹⁰¹

Legislative attempts to restrict apprenticeship on the basis of age or wealth were a means of excluding the children of agricultural workers, as well as the rural and urban poor, from economic participation. Apprenticeship was one of the main routes to enfranchisement – if they were not able to enter the freedom by this means, they would almost certainly not be able to buy their way in through redemption either. Nevertheless, statutes aimed predominantly at securing a supply of agricultural labour were of little use to civic authorities in cities and towns which relied on in-migration to maintain a constant population. Thus, legislation was largely ignored by the corporation of London, and probably also elsewhere. From 1429 anyone of free estate and condition could become an apprentice in London, regardless of their wealth.¹⁰² As was so often the case in medieval England, legislation might be applied pragmatically or not at all. Age, status, and wealth were nominal barriers to apprenticeship, but these could be bypassed. The legitimacy of an apprenticeship might only be called into question if someone else could gain (financially or otherwise) from it being declared void.

¹⁰¹ 21 Edw. IV, plea 17, f. 6a – Seipp number 1481.025

<<https://www.bu.edu/phpbin/lawyyearbooks/display.php?id=20747>> [accessed 16 January 2018]

¹⁰² 8 Henry VI, c. 11.

Chapter 3: Apprenticeship: exclusion, exploitation, or ensuring expertise?

At its most basic, apprenticeship was a private arrangement between a master craftsman and, to quote William Cunningham, ‘a youth whom he undertook to instruct in his business’.¹ Apprenticeship was a recognised institution by the thirteenth century. In London, the requirement to formally enrol apprentices existed at least as early as 1275, and applied to all apprentices, both male and female, including those outside the craft guilds, such as silkwomen’s apprentices.² Urban guilds did not invent apprenticeship; this training system pre-dated the guilds. Both Sheilagh Ogilvie and Joel Mokyr observed that guilds were ‘neither necessary nor sufficient’ for the emergence of apprenticeship as an institution, and apprenticeship existed independently of the guild system.³ Nevertheless, few urban apprentices worked without the oversight of a guild, be it a craft guild or guild merchant. Apprenticeship was the usual means of entering a guild and, thereby, the freedom of the town or city. Therefore, we cannot fully comprehend the practice of apprenticeship without considering guild or civic regulations.

Apprenticeship could be regulated, separately or simultaneously, by urban authorities, by a guild merchant, or by a specific craft guild. The urban authorities might be formed of leading burgesses, who held property in the town, often at a low fixed rent, qualifying them as members of the urban franchise.⁴ Borough charters granted burgesses privileges such as freedom from tolls, and might also permit them to form a ‘*gilda mercatoria*’, or guild merchant, to manage their collective privileges.⁵ The guild merchant’s membership was not

¹ W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages*, 5th edn. (Cambridge: University Press, 1927), p. 349.

² Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 197; *Letter-Book D*, p. 37, n. 1; Anne F. Sutton, *Wives and Widows of Medieval London* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2016), p. 22; Caroline Barron and Matthew Davies, ‘Ellen Langwith: Silkwoman of London (died 1481)’, *The Ricardian: Journal of the Richard III Society*, 13 (2003), pp. 37–47, p. 42; TNA, E 210/1176.

³ S.C. Ogilvie, ‘Guilds, Efficiency, and Social Capital: Evidence from German Proto-Industry’, *Economic History Review*, 57 (2004), pp. 286–333, p. 312, cited in ‘Craft Guilds in the Pre-Modern Economy: A Discussion’, *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), pp. 155–174, p. 162; Joel Mokyr, ‘The Economics of Apprenticeship’, in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 20–43, p. 33.

⁴ Morley de Wolf Hemmeon defined burghage tenure as ‘a form of free tenure peculiar to boroughs, where a tenement so held might be alienated by gift, sale or devise to a degree regulated only by the custom of the borough, unburdened by the incidents of feudalism or villeinage, divisible at pleasure, whose obligations began and ended in the payment of a nominal quit-rent, usually to an elected officer of the borough’ – Morley de Wolf Hemmeon, *Burghage Tenure in Medieval England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), p. 5.

⁵ Gary Richardson, ‘Guilds, Laws, and Markets for Manufactured Merchandise in Late-Medieval England’, *Explorations in Economic History*, 41 (2004), pp. 1–25, pp. 5–7.

limited to burgesses, and members were not always free of the town, although this could be beneficial.⁶ While a member of the guild merchant merely enjoyed trading privileges, a freeman was entitled ‘to all the rights and liberties, trading and otherwise, which had been conferred...on the burgesses’.⁷ In some towns self-government developed through an understanding between the burgesses and the guild merchant.⁸ Meanwhile, craftsmen might join together to form a craft guild, representing a single craft or a combination of allied crafts (for example, pinners and wiresellers). Unlike guilds merchant, they paid an annual rent to the Crown to preserve their privileges.⁹ Guild membership might be a prerequisite for entrance to the freedom (as in London from 1319), but not all guild members became freemen (see Chapter 7).¹⁰ In many towns only freemen could take apprentices, so in these cases we can assume that apprenticeship was regulated by either the burgesses, a guild merchant, or a specific craft guild.

The power of self-regulation was granted by the Crown, and in exchange the guilds ensured their members produced goods of acceptable quality. In this way, the guild system was party to a social contract with the Crown, in which guilds played a regulatory role by issuing ordinances on behaviour, working practices, and pricing. Guild members had to conform to working practices and standards in order to access the economic privileges that accompanied guild membership. The spirit in which guild ordinances were produced, their purpose and their enforcement, affect how we view both guilds and apprenticeship. Three models have been created with which we can interpret the concept and practice of apprenticeship; namely, as a practice of excluding competition, as a method of exploiting workers, or as a means of ensuring a high level of expertise within a craft. Arguments and

⁶ This is evident from surviving ordinances: ‘c. 19 And no one of the city of Southampton shall buy anything to sell again in the same city, unless he is of the gild merchant or of the franchise’ – ‘Ordinances of the Gild Merchant of Southampton’, *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History: Vol. II, No. 1 – English Towns and Gilds*, ed. by Edward P. Cheney (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1897), p. 14.

⁷ *The Great Red Book of Bristol – Text (Part I)*, ed. by E.W.W. Veale (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd. for the Bristol Record Society, 1933), p. 25. Rodney Hilton summarised the most commonly granted privileges: security against feudal jurisdiction; simplified legal processes; burgage tenure with rents paid with cash as opposed to services; and freedom from seigneurial dues – R.H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 128.

⁸ Richard Britnell, ‘Town Life’, in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 134–178, p. 142.

⁹ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, ed. by Adolphus Ballard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. lxxii.

¹⁰ Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 205.

evidence put forward by other historians are considered here within each model, but the historians cited would not necessarily position themselves as proponents of these models.

These models are not equal in terms of their applicability throughout the period or the amount of evidence available to support them, and the order of discussion is hierarchical. No single model may be considered the dominant motive for apprenticeship, and the models are not mutually exclusive. Different weighting can be attributed to each model depending on the craft or trade, time period, and geographical location. The first model considers apprenticeship as an exclusionary practice, designed to restrict the number of members of a craft and, to a wider extent, to limit participation within an economic community. The second model discusses apprenticeship as a method of exploitation, wherein masters exploited apprentices as a secure source of labour. This was not simply ‘exploitation’ in the Marxist sense in which the master possessed the means of production (including the apprentice’s labour), and provided the apprentice’s food and clothing while they contributed to the output of his workshop throughout a long term of apprenticeship (see Chapter 6). Here ‘exploitation’ encompasses the more modern sense, considering masters’ attempts to exploit loopholes in regulations and their positions of power. The third model considers apprenticeship as a means of ensuring technical expertise through work-based training, based on Larry Epstein’s assertion that guilds’ ‘primary purpose...was to provide adequate skills training through formal apprenticeship’.¹¹ Each model is considered in turn, with reference to relevant legislation and guild regulations. Apprenticeship indentures and evidence from other sources are also examined.

Model 1: Exclusion

1.1 Economically motivated exclusion

After the Black Death, guilds attempted to restrict membership and economic participation in order to limit economic and social mobility spurred by population decline. Restrictions were necessary to maintain equilibrium in the market, as the number of potential consumers was much reduced. This marked a change from earlier centuries when, as Arthur Leach noted, ‘the great object was not to limit the number of members so much as to make as many as possible come in and contribute to the gild expenses’.¹² Similarly, John Hatcher and

¹¹ S.R. Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe’, *Journal of Economic History*, 58 (1998), pp. 684–713, p. 684.

¹² Arthur F. Leach, ‘II. The Craft Guilds or Trade Companies: Protective Objects of the Craft Guilds’, *Beverly Town Documents*, ed. by Arthur F. Leach (London: Bernard Quaritch, for the Selden Society, 1900), p. lxi.

Edward Miller observed that a common characteristic of early guilds was that members enjoyed a monopoly of their craft within a town.¹³ The motivation was to protect members from non-members and exclude non-members from participating in the local economy, rather than prevent them from joining the guild. Although Rev. George Clune believed that ‘the economic and industrial purposes of the craft guilds were those of mutual aid associations [with] a Christian outlook’, he agreed that their primary aim was ‘protection of members against non-members’.¹⁴ Guilds could not provide mutual aid if profits went into the coffers of non-members, and therefore ordinances sought to protect guild members from external forces, including (but not limited to) competition from non-guild members, as well as economic factors.

Steve Rigby termed these protectionist tactics ‘exclusionary privileges’: guilds sought to exclude non-members from participating in the local economy, a privilege reserved for guild members.¹⁵ From the twelfth century onwards, charters and ordinances demonstrate these strongly protectionist aims. Early charters, such as those granted by Henry II to the London weavers (1155–8) and Oxford corvesars and cordwainers (1175), were concerned with preserving craft monopolies. The weavers’ charter prevented non-members from operating within London’s suburbs.¹⁶ Similarly, the corvesars and cordwainers’ charter prohibited anyone from ‘[carrying] on their trade in the town of Oxford, except he be of that guild’.¹⁷ Guilds paid the Crown for their privileges – two marks of gold at Michaelmas for the London weavers, one ounce of gold (payment date unspecified) for the Oxford corvesars and cordwainers. Therefore, they needed to enforce the monopoly in order to pay for the privilege of the monopoly. The charters formalised liberties and customs held since ‘the time of King Henry my grandfather’, implying that the guilds existed in the reign of Henry I (1100–35).¹⁸ In the York Weavers’ charter (tentatively dated to 1163 by Nicholas Vincent),

¹³ Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086–1348* (London: Longman 1995), p. 362.

¹⁴ George Clune, *The Medieval Guild System* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan Ltd., 1943), p. 47.

¹⁵ S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 151 and 161–162.

¹⁶ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, p. 208. Nicholas Vincent suggested that the Oxford charter was issued between May (when Henry II returned to England) and September 1175, possibly during the council held at Woodstock in July of that year – see no. 2008, *The Letters and Charters of Henry II, King of England 1154–1189 – Texts Volume IV: Nos. 1892–2575, Beneficiaries N–S*, ed. by Nicholas Vincent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 118–119.

¹⁷ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, p. 208.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Henry II granted and confirmed similarly monopolistic customs and liberties, and the weavers paid £10 a year for their privileges.¹⁹

Merchants and burgesses shared guilds' preoccupation with monopolies and exclusionary privileges, reinforcing the idea that profits should be shared among members of the franchise rather than outsiders. Throughout England and English-controlled Wales, boroughs regulated retail opportunities for foreign merchants, with 'foreign' meaning any merchant from outside the borough. Guild merchant charters might exclude foreign merchants from retailing within the borough unless they paid for the privilege.²⁰ Restrictions might be placed on the goods or quantities foreigners could purchase, and who they could purchase from.²¹ Often the intention was to keep unfinished materials (such as skins or cloth) in the hands of citizens, thus keeping profit within the borough. Foreign merchants might also be forbidden to sojourn within the town for more than a specified number of days 'for the sake of selling his merchandise'.²² At Bristol the limit was forty days as early as 1188. This limit also applied in towns such as Lynn, and was recorded in the London customal.²³ The motivation was clear: foreign merchants not resident in the borough did not pay any tax within the borough, so if no limit was placed on the length of stay, an opportunist could reside (and profit) without contributing financially to the borough. The Northampton Customal (c. 1190) required that foreigners only buy wool in bulk or from 'the good men of the town', and only sell it on in bulk.²⁴ This was ultimately less profitable than selling in smaller quantities, and, moreover, it excluded small-scale artisans from the wholesale trade,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 254. The charter limited the production of dyed or striped cloth in Yorkshire to the weavers of York and other boroughs in Yorkshire including Beverley, Kirkby, Malton, Thirsk and Scarborough. Adolphous Ballard dated this charter to 1154–73, however Nicholas Vincent has narrowed this to 1155–66, and suggested that the charter was made during a trip to Yorkshire, after Henry II returned to England in 1163 and before Michaelmas 1164 – *The Letters and Charters of Henry II, King of England 1154–1189 – Texts Volume V: Nos. 2576–2961, Beneficiaries T–Y*, ed. by Nicholas Vincent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 362–363.

²⁰ For example, the charter of Lincoln's Guild Merchant (1154–63) confirmed that no stranger 'shall be resident in Lincoln for the purpose of dyeing his cloths or selling them by retail, save only they who are in the guild and liable to all the customs of the town, and who pay my gelds with them' – see *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, p. 209. Presumably these, or similar, restrictions are also laid out in the Lincoln Weavers' Guild charter from the same period.

²¹ In Newcastle-on-Tyne, only burgesses could buy wool, hides, or cloth to dye, make or cut, and no foreigner might 'cut up fish for sale'. In Swansea, no foreign merchant could cut cloths, or buy skins or hides, while in Wells only a burgess could buy untanned skins or hides. In Bristol, foreign merchants were prohibited from purchasing hides, corn or wool from another foreign man – they could only purchase from a burgess. See *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, pp. 211–213.

²² Ibid., pp. 212–213.

²³ Ibid., pp. 212–213; Rigby, *English Society*, p. 161.

²⁴ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, p. 258. Also, no stranger could buy threads 'for carrying outside the town', skins or 'fells' unless they were purchased in bulk or from a Northampton resident. To ensure that no buyer unwittingly purchased from a foreign merchant by mistake, a common stall was provided for foreign merchants selling wool, skins, fat, tallow, cheese and flesh.

while allowing large-scale entrepreneurs to predominate the market by buying up raw materials in bulk and putting it out to be worked by domestic artisans at piece rate.²⁵ This kept large profits within a small group.

Enfranchisement was also a form of exclusionary privilege. In London, those admitted to the freedom enjoyed privileges such as the right to keep shops for retailing goods. In England, the freedom could only be obtained in three ways: by redemption (purchase), through apprenticeship, or by inheritance (patrimony).²⁶ According to Reginald Sharpe, in London the freedom was so desirable that from 1275 it became necessary to enrol admissions ‘because many persons boasted of being freemen of the City when they were not freemen’.²⁷ The number of citizens in a town varied depending on the entry requirements. If a town set low barriers to freedom, a large proportion of the trading population paid no tolls or fines in the course of its daily activities. For example, in 1488 over half of Colchester’s householders may have been free burgesses. In contrast, a more restrictive policy enabled towns to charge tolls on a higher proportion of market transactions, and extract money from traders either for licences to trade or as penalties for illegal trading. Exeter placed such restrictions on citizenship that in 1377 only 21 percent of householders were free of the borough.²⁸ Similarly, the number of London residents who were actually citizens, free of the city, was very small – perhaps less than 10 percent.²⁹ Using records of entrance to the freedom of London by redemption and apprenticeship, Penny Tucker calculated that, on average, 24 individuals were admitted to the freedom each month between 1309 and 1312.³⁰ In any town, the number of people eligible to become citizens through patrimony was automatically small, and the price of redemption could be raised to limit the number of entrants by that route.

In London, the 1319 ‘Great Charter’ ensured that apprenticeship, not redemption, became the main route to the freedom.³¹ Of 1,047 London Mercers admitted to the freedom

²⁵ Rigby, *English Society*, p. 156.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁷ *Letter-Book D*, p. 37, n. 1.

²⁸ Britnell, ‘Town Life’, p. 163.

²⁹ Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 10. Estimated 3,000 to 3,500 freemen in a total population of between 40,000 and 50,000. Penny Tucker argued that ‘it is unlikely that at any time before 1550 more than twelve per cent of all residents were themselves freemen of the city’ – Penny Tucker, *Law Courts and Lawyers in the City of London, 1300–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 24.

³⁰ Tucker, *Law Courts and Lawyers*, p. 24.

³¹ Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 205. The charter signified royal approval of a decision made in 1312. It specified that they could only be admitted on the surety of six men of the craft or trade, which would be a challenging prospect for someone without many friends in London.

during the fifteenth century, only 69 were admitted by redemption.³² Nevertheless, roughly half of apprentices did not become citizens: Jean Imray's study of the London Mercers' Company found that between 1391 and 1464, while 979 apprentices were admitted to the freedom, a further 958 seemingly never completed their apprenticeship.³³ Despite this, measures were put in place to make apprenticeship exclusionary. Although between one third and one half of apprentice goldsmiths, tailors, skimmers and grocers in London never finished their terms, there would still be a high number of apprentices eligible to enter the freedom if apprenticeship itself was not restricted.³⁴ As Steven Epstein observed, 'once apprenticeship became a path to citizenship, the assurance was needed that abuses, in the guise of fictitious or short terms, would not permit undesirables to acquire status in the community'.³⁵

1.2 Limiting membership

In the aftermath of the Black Death, drastic population decline and a much-reduced market for goods triggered exclusionary practices. In order to maintain market equilibrium, any reduction in the number of consumers must be accompanied by a similar reduction in the number of retailers or producers. If this does not occur naturally, the number of retailers or producers must be limited artificially – therefore it was necessary to limit the number of members of the guild or franchise. As Rigby observed, we have traditionally seen craft guilds as 'a form of social exclusion designed to benefit master craftsmen, in particular by limiting the entry of new men into a craft'.³⁶ The 1406 statute restricted apprenticeship to those whose parents possessed 'land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at the least'. Children who had been employed as agricultural workers above the age of twelve were already prohibited from becoming apprentices.³⁷ The earlier statute (see Chapter 2) was intended to prevent a shortage of agricultural workers, but had the unintended consequence of restricting urban apprenticeship. The statute was supplemented by methods practised by guilds themselves, in the form of ordinances restricting membership and high premiums (fees

³² Jean M. Imray, 'Les Bones Gentes de la Mercerye des Londres': A Study of the Membership of the Medieval Mercers' Company', in *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. by A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 155–178, p. 159.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³⁴ Stephanie R. Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), p. 206–210.

³⁵ Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds*, p. 198.

³⁶ Rigby, *English Society*, p. 158.

³⁷ 7 Henry IV, c. 17; 12 Richard II, c. 5.

paid to the master) for apprentices. Sylvia Thrupp noted that ‘shrinking foreign markets’ prompted English merchants to check competition at home by means of strict company organization. Fifteenth-century merchants guarded entrance to their guilds by requiring long terms of apprenticeship or high premiums.³⁸ Like the 1406 statute, high premiums automatically excluded apprentices from low-income families from seeking to enter the craft or trade, although, according to Jeremy Goldberg, apprentices generally came from fairly affluent backgrounds, ‘the sons of merchants, artisans, and solid peasant agriculturalists’.³⁹

This is not to say that exclusionary high premiums were not used before the Black Death. By 1269 a London lorimers’ apprentice could expect to pay a premium of 30s, while after 1271 anyone wishing to be apprenticed to a London cordwainer had to pay a premium of 40s.⁴⁰ We can view this as a means of limiting apprenticeship to the children of well-to-do parents of good reputation. Those not of *bona fama* could be prevented from joining the guild, thus protecting its reputation. George Unwin observed that prospective apprentices had to be ‘admitted before the Mayor and shown to be of good character’, which corroborated his opinion that the cordwainers ‘constituted an aristocracy in their profession’.⁴¹ In the late fourteenth century, high premiums were used to limit the number of potential apprentices. As personal wealth and living standards increased, so did premiums. In 1393, a new charter allowed the London goldsmiths to offer shorter, more expensive terms. Apprentices could pay a premium of £6 13s 4d for a term of seven years, while the minimum premium for a ten-year term was £5.⁴²

How rigorously enforced these premiums were is, of course, open to debate. Thrupp asserted that, in practice, rates ‘were set by a kind of sliding scale according to the means of the family in question’.⁴³ This suggests a pragmatic approach to exclusion, allowing guilds to pick and choose who was excluded; the child of a family of *bona fama* but little wealth might be apprenticed into a prestigious craft or trade, while a family of greater wealth but lower social standing would be, hopefully, discouraged by the high premium asked of them.

³⁸ Sylvia L. Thrupp, ‘The Problem of Conservatism in Fifteenth-Century England’, *Speculum*, 18 (1943), pp. 363–368, p. 367.

³⁹ P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Masters and Men in Later Medieval England’, in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. by D.M. Hadley (London and New York, NY: Longman, 1999), pp. 56–70, p. 57.

⁴⁰ George Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London*, 3rd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 83 and 84.

⁴² T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths’ Company 1327–1509* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1975), p. 73.

⁴³ Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 214.

Barbara Hanawalt argued that apprenticeship was a privileged position, offering the potential for upward mobility alongside the acquisition of wealth and security, but according to Philippa Maddern ‘successful careerism’ tended to be limited ‘to those individuals already sufficiently well off to purchase entry to lucrative and honourable trades’.⁴⁴ Sandro Carocci also noted that upward social mobility depended on the father ensuring his son was admitted to a more prestigious or profitable guild.⁴⁵ The magnetic attraction of large towns and cities meant that there was stiff competition for a share of the profits of urban trade, and only a small proportion of migrants could hope to become leading craftsmen, traders, or freemen.⁴⁶

1.3 Aliens and foreigners

Economic pressure prompted guilds to place more restrictions on membership, and influenced parliamentary legislation. Borough and guild ordinances also indicate that ‘foreign’ (from another town) or ‘alien’ (from another country) status was only exclusionary if one could not afford to pay a fee. In 1406, aliens were ordered to leave the kingdom; resultantly, we have lists of alien craftsmen who purchased life exemptions from the Exchequer.⁴⁷ Foreigners, aliens, and low-born labourers might become apprentices on payment of a considerable fine, the cost of which would presumably be carried by the apprentice’s family rather than the master himself. The York pewterers’ ordinances, dated 1416, forbade members ‘to take any alien nor *homme naif* as his apprentice on pain of a fine of £10’.⁴⁸ Marjorie McIntosh observed that outsiders were generally welcomed to English towns because they brought new skills with them (as with the Flemish weavers – see below). They could also be in high demand when unskilled labour was in short supply, such as in periods of population decline; higher mortality levels meant that towns required in-migration in order to maintain a constant population level.⁴⁹ However, tensions rose if outside workers were perceived to be ‘diluting’ the labour force or edging out local workers by accepting lower wages: in 1339, five carpenters were charged with using physical violence and

⁴⁴ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 131; Philippa C. Maddern, ‘Social Mobility’, in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 113–133, pp. 125–126.

⁴⁵ Sandro Carocci, ‘Social Mobility and the Middle Ages’, *Continuity and Change*, 26 (2011), pp. 367–404, p. 386.

⁴⁶ Maddern, ‘Social Mobility’, pp. 124–125.

⁴⁷ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, p. 121.

⁴⁸ Ronald F. Homer, ‘The Medieval Pewterers of London, c. 1190–1457’, *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 36 (1985), pp. 137–163, p. 153.

⁴⁹ Marjorie K. McIntosh, ‘Locals, Outsiders, and Identity in English Market Towns, 1290–1620’, in *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 71–91, pp. 75–76 and p. 72.

intimidation to prevent ‘foreign’ carpenters from coming into the city of London and accepting work for less than 6*d* a day.⁵⁰

In 1337 Edward III invited Flemish weavers to England, reiterating and reinforcing Henry III’s grant of 1271 that ‘all workers of woollen cloths, male and female, as well of Flanders as other lands may safely come into our realm there to make cloths’. This angered native weavers, who resented alien incursion into their monopoly and tried to force the aliens to submit to guild rule.⁵¹ William Hazlitt observed that there was a ‘Union or Fellowship’ of Alien Weavers in London by 1362, and bylaws concerning Flemish weavers were proposed for the acceptance of the Corporation of London in 1366.⁵² It is not clear whether these separate companies were necessary as the Flemish and Brabançon weavers were excluded from joining a London guild, but Hazlitt noted that the three groups co-existed.⁵³ Elsewhere in England, coexistence was more apparent. In 1380 the Leicester Merchant guild enrolled Michael Braban, webster, and Reginald Webster, ‘Braban’.⁵⁴ They were included in a list of two dozen other men who entered the guild at the same time; they were not set apart because they were aliens, and no entry fee was recorded.

Exclusion from the local economy could be avoided for a fee. These fees might be so low as to be almost nominal, and therefore probably constituted a form of licensing similar to the fines paid by brewers.⁵⁵ Records from Leicester show that in 1377–8, ‘four Brabançons and one woman’ paid 1*s* 8*d*, probably for leave to trade within the borough.⁵⁶ This was not unusual – payments of 1*s* from ‘three men from Ireland’, 1*s* 3*d* from ‘three strangers’ from outside Leicester, 1*s* 4*d* from ‘three Welshmen and a woman’, and 1*s* each from William Irissh ‘and 10 others surnamed Irish’ were also recorded.⁵⁷ The London goldsmiths permitted an influx of foreign craftsmen, usually referred to as ‘Dutchmen’, in the late fifteenth century.

⁵⁰ B.W.E. Alford and T.C. Barker, *A History of the Carpenters Company* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), p. 17; *CPMR, 1323–64*, p. 108.

⁵¹ Frances Consitt, *The London Weavers’ Company: Volume I – From the Twelfth Century to the close of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 14 and 33.

⁵² W. Carew Hazlitt, *The Livery Companies of the City of London: Their Origin, Character, Development, and Social and Political Importance* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892), p. 156.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 664 and 156.

⁵⁴ *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1327–1509, vol. II*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1901), p. 196. A record from 1336 indicates that chattels worth 20*s* or more were required for a man to be considered ‘rich enough to enter the Guild’ in Leicester, suggesting that both men were fairly successful weavers – *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁵ James A. Galloway, ‘Driven by Drink? Ale Consumption and the Agrarian Economy of the London Region, c. 1300–1400’, in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (London and Rio Grande, OH: The Hambledon Press, 1998), pp. 87–100, p. 89.

⁵⁶ *Records of the Borough of Leicester: vol. II*, p. 163.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

'Dutchmen' paid a fee, ranging from 4s to 20s, for a licence to work, with much larger figures suggesting a licence for life.⁵⁸ They were almost certainly barred from setting up shop; in theory, customers could only access alien goldsmiths by going through established English goldsmiths.⁵⁹ In 1424 Swether Silvester, a 'Dutchman', paid £7 for a licence to work in his chamber for life, and an additional £1 to have a 'servant' (probably a journeyman) work with him. Silvester's business in London must have thrived, as in 1427 he bought the freedom of the Company and the city for £12, and paid an additional 6s 8d to have two servants.⁶⁰

Gervase Rosser suggested that continental goldsmiths and other small-scale artisans were confined to Westminster and other London suburbs, 'excluded by the protectionism of the city companies from the sphere of the latter's jurisdiction' – although the goldsmiths' ordinances did require them to 'make due search in... Westminster' every quarter 'and oftener if need be'.⁶¹ However, as foreigners were clearly able to buy their way into the company, those at Westminster may have been 'unknown and untried newcomers' with less ability to buy a licence, or those who wanted to set up their own shops.⁶² Reddaway also suggested that young, foreign craftsmen might evade the goldsmiths' 'not very efficient net' by working in Southwark; although their charters granted the goldsmiths jurisdiction there, it was far enough away to prevent scrupulous oversight, and 'the difficulties of language and collusion must have reduced the effectiveness of its slow and ponderous searches'.⁶³ When unlicensed foreign goldsmiths were discovered, however, their amercement was not as heavy as one might expect – in 1423, an unlicensed 'Dutchman' was fined 6s 8d, less than some foreigners paid for a licence to work.⁶⁴

Restrictions were probably placed upon taking alien apprentices. In 1451–2, the London goldsmiths complained that alien craftsmen took on 'aliens born and none of the English nation, and them deceive by indentures of covenant after the form of apprenticeship

⁵⁸ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths' Company*, p. 122. 'Usually referred to as *Dutchmen*, such details as are available show that they actually came from the Low Countries, the Rhineland and the well-to-do ports on the coast of the Baltic from Lübeck to Danzig, with a few from central Germany and France, and even some from Italy and Spain' – *ibid.*, p. 120.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 121 and 123.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122. On receipt of his licence in 1424, Silvester swore to work gold and silver honestly, and to keep the craft's secrets, with provisos that he could only take one servant at a time and that he could not go to fairs or markets outside the city of London.

⁶¹ Gervase Rosser, 'London and Westminster: The Suburb in the Urban Economy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), pp. 45–61, p. 54; Reddaway, *Goldsmiths' Company*, p. 108.

⁶² Reddaway, *Goldsmiths' Company*, p. 121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 122–123.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

for two...three...or four years, against the constitution of the...city', which required a seven year minimum apprenticeship.⁶⁵ There were concerns that this was causing unemployment among 'true Londoners' and the goldsmiths desired that 'no alien goldsmith might take an alien apprentice or a servant whilst there were English applicants available'.⁶⁶ Alien infiltration into the craft can be seen in the enrolment of apprentices. Alien freemen were entitled to present apprentices for approval and enrolment in the same manner as their native brethren, and between 1449 and 1469, nearly all of the 32 apprentices taken by alien masters had 'Dutch' names. Few English goldsmiths seem to have taken aliens as apprentices, but many employed aliens in their workshops.⁶⁷ Some alien goldsmiths successfully integrated into English society – John Swerder was probably a second generation Dutchman, as he had been an 'ordinary apprentice' to an alien master. Swerder did not appear to take any alien apprentices, and his will, Reddaway stated, '[suggested] a man completely anglicised'.⁶⁸

The demarcation between foreign and alien apprentices and masters is also visible in apprenticeship indentures. The majority of apprentices were 'foreign', originating outside the town in which they were apprenticed. Four of the indentures used in this thesis were drawn up for 'alien' apprentices, but only one of them was apprenticed to a master who might also have been an alien. Michael Laleye from 'Hibernia' was apprenticed to a Bridgwater tanner in 1425, and William Gose from Galway to a fuller in the same town in 1433.⁶⁹ John Goffe of Spain was indentured to a Penzance fisherman in 1459.⁷⁰ Finally, John Weizter of 'Brabayn' was apprenticed to John Brabayn, weaver, of Wycombe in 1423.⁷¹ John Brabayn was almost certainly either an alien himself, or the descendant of one of the Brabançon weavers who emigrated to England under the protection of Edward III. It is surprising that none of these apprentices was indentured to a master in London. However, by avoiding apprenticeships in large towns, these apprentices might have been less restricted by anti-alien legislation and regulation.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 127; Caroline M. Barron, 'The Child in Medieval London: The Legal Evidence', in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 401–417, p. 410.

⁶⁶ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths' Company*, p. 127.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 128–129.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁹ SALS, D\B\bw/1009 and D\B\bw/1008.

⁷⁰ TNA, E 40/10022 – this document is translated in *Documents Illustrating the History of Civilization in Medieval England (1066–1500)*, ed. by R. Trevor Davies (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 140.

⁷¹ TNA, C 146/3153.

1.4 Raising prices

Exclusion could be used to inflate prices by creating scarcity. In 1350, the Commonalty accused the London fusters (makers of saddle trees) of raising their prices and failing to take apprentices ‘with the intention of restricting the number of their mystery, so that they could control prices’.⁷² In their defence, the fusters claimed that the ‘mischief’ caused by the plague had forced them to raise prices in response to the rising prices of beer and other necessities. They also claimed they found it difficult to attract apprentices.⁷³ Whether they faced genuine recruitment difficulties or not, reducing the number of craftsmen in a trade would help to increase prices by driving down supply while the level of demand (presumably) remained constant. The same was true of apprenticeships – if there were less apprenticeships available but no reduction in demand, higher premiums would be required to secure training. This, as discussed above, effectively excluded children of less affluent families from entering into apprenticeships within the choicer trades or crafts.

1.5 Number of apprentices

Limiting the number of apprentices one master could have at any time was an obvious means of restricting the number of potential practitioners of a craft. Some historians ascribed altruistic motives to this means of exclusion: Jocelyn Dunlop and Richard Denman argued that it prevented exploitation of child labour, as ‘whenever [guild] pressure was relaxed the individual tended at once to pursue what he considered his own interest regardless of whether...it advanced the common good’.⁷⁴ This echoed Karl Marx, who argued in *Capital* that ‘the guilds of the middle ages...tried to prevent by force the transformation of the master of a trade into a capitalist, by limiting the number of labourers that could be employed by a master within a very small maximum’.⁷⁵ However, within the context of the exclusion

⁷² *CPMR, 1323–64*, pp. 238–239.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 239; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 136. The fusters supplied goods to the saddlers, who were unhappy with the inflated prices charged by the fusters – they were selling saddle-trees for 40d ‘though wood cost no more than formerly’. The saddlers suggested a new scale of prices, and that prices should revert to former levels or even lower as conditions improved. The fusters claimed that ‘they were now feeble in strength...[and] needed more comfort in the matter of food and clothing, conditions were so evil that the gallon of beer cost 2d instead of 1d’. Consequently, they claimed, ‘they could not sell at the prices suggested by the Saddlers, since they would be spending more in a year than they could earn in three’. Nevertheless, they accepted the prices ordained by the Mayor and Aldermen – see *CPMR, 1323–64*, p. 240.

⁷⁴ Jocelyn O. Dunlop and Richard D. Denman, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), p. 18.

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I – Book I: The Processes of Production of Capital*, trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. by Frederick Engels, reprint (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1984), p. 292.

model, the motivation was not solely to prevent one master from benefiting to the detriment of others, but to limit the number of future masters within a craft or trade.

Thrupp noted that ordinances controlling the number of apprentices per master were not necessarily effective, ‘in some cases invoked only when there was already considerable unemployment in the trade’.⁷⁶ However, intermittent enforcement would be consistent in the context of exclusion; there was less need to restrict the number of apprentices in periods of labour shortage, but restrictions were necessary in periods of labour surplus. As discussed above, the number of producers had to conform to the number of consumers in order to maintain market equilibrium, so there was little need to limit the number of apprentices when there was no shortage of consumers. Masters were not entirely opposed to restriction because a large number of apprentices would result in a large number of possible future competitors.⁷⁷ Apprentices might be in favour of limiting their own numbers – at one time the London girdlers had so many apprentices that there was insufficient work for them, causing some to become ‘common labourers’ and others to leave the city to take up agricultural work.⁷⁸

Although the maximum number of apprentices varied between crafts and might depend on the master’s status, it was unusual for there to be no restriction at all.⁷⁹ In 1524 Coventry removed all restrictions, enacting that ‘euery Craftes-man within this Citie shall fromehensfurthe take as meny prentises & Journeyemen as they woll’.⁸⁰ This led to such abuse that restrictions had to be reimposed.⁸¹ Reddaway stated that although the London goldsmiths did not limit the number of apprentices a master could take, the exclusive nature of the craft automatically limited the number of potential apprentices (see above).⁸² In less prestigious crafts the number of apprentices was higher, and so limits were required even before a population decline. The London fishmongers limited each master to ‘two or three apprentices at most’ in ordinances compiled during the reign of Edward I (1272–1307).⁸³ In

⁷⁶ Sylvia L. Thrupp, ‘Medieval Gilds Reconsidered’, *Journal of Economic History*, 2 (1942), pp. 164–173, p. 170.

⁷⁷ Clune, *Medieval Gild System*, p. 88.

⁷⁸ E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England: Vol. I – The Middle Ages*, 5th edn. (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1929), p. 287.

⁷⁹ Clune, *Medieval Gild System*, p. 89.

⁸⁰ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part III*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1909), p. 687.

⁸¹ Clune, *Medieval Gild System*, p. 89, n. 16. The cappers limited the number of apprentices to two at the 1544 leet, although they may have returned to this limit before that year – *Coventry Leet Book: part III*, p. 774.

⁸² Reddaway, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, p. 91, n. 54.

⁸³ *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London compiled A.D. 1419, by John Carpenter, Common Clerk [and] Richard Whittington, Mayor*, trans. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1861), p. 330.

York, the girdlers restricted masters to one apprentice at a time as early as 1307.⁸⁴ The glaziers also restricted masters to ‘bott oon at once’ for the first four years of a seven-year apprenticeship *circa* 1463, and the patoners to one apprentice for the first six years of an apprenticeship in 1471.⁸⁵ In their 1496 ordinances, the Coventry cappers decreed ‘þat no Maister frohensfurth haue no moo prentisez in his seruice but ij at ones’.⁸⁶ However, guild regulations did not necessarily accord with reality unless strictly enforced; this is discussed in the exploitation model.

1.6 Points against this model

It is necessary here to introduce some considerations which detract from the veracity of this model as the sole framework for apprenticeship. First, apprenticeships pre-dated and existed independently of guild systems.⁸⁷ If apprenticeship was solely a method of exclusion, we would not expect to find evidence of apprentices indentured as early as 1255, when guilds were largely protectionist organisations without onerous membership restrictions.⁸⁸ Additionally, the existence of mid-fifteenth century indentures for occupations such as fishing and husbandry would be surprising if apprenticeship was primarily a means of restricting entry into the workforce; legislation at that time was concerned with preventing too many people leaving the rural workforce, and those relying on fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods presumably had little to fear in terms of excessive competition.⁸⁹

Second, as demonstrated above, it was entirely possible to ‘buy into’ the franchise or apprenticeship. In fact, the only means of exclusion that it was not possible to negate with money was the 1388 Statute of Cambridge (see Chapter 2) which ordained that anyone who laboured in husbandry until the age of twelve could not ‘be put to any mistery or handicraft’.⁹⁰ At borough or guild level, all forms of exclusion could be bypassed on

⁸⁴ *York Memorandum Book: Part II (1388–1493) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1915), p. lvi.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 209 and 140.

⁸⁶ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part II*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1908), p. 573. This was reiterated in the 1520 ordinances – *Coventry Leet Book: part III*, p. 670.

⁸⁷ Rigby, *English Society*, p. 157.

⁸⁸ TNA, E 210/1397. Derek Keene states that public record of apprenticeship was established in London as early as 1232 – Derek Keene, ‘London from the post-Roman period to 1300’, in *The Cambridge History of Urban Britain: Volume 1 – 600–1540*, ed. by D.M. Pallister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 187–216, p. 209.

⁸⁹ TNA, E 40/10022 (see ‘Indenture of Apprenticeship, 1459’, in *Documents Illustrating the History of Civilization in Medieval England*, p. 140) and E 40/8643.

⁹⁰ 12 Ric. II, c. 5.

production of a sufficiently large cash payment. Maud Sellers noted that almost all of York's craft guilds permitted the admission of non-apprentices by the fifteenth century, although the fee was generally higher than for former apprentices, and entrants might have to satisfy the searchers as to their ability. Sellers also postulated that it was a desire to avoid paying higher entrance fees, rather than any desire for technical training, which caused apprenticeships to become so commonplace; arguments against this are discussed below in relation to the third model, which considers apprenticeship as a means of ensuring technical expertise.⁹¹

Model 2: Exploitation

Marx discussed the exploitation of human labour in his treatise *Capital*, arguing that guilds laid fetters on the free development of production and free exploitation of man by man.⁹² As Larry Epstein observed, 'the main objective of an individual master was to make the most efficient use of family and outside skilled labour in the workshop'.⁹³ In this model, apprentices are considered as a form of human capital, exploited to a degree by their masters but protected from excessive exploitation by legal safeguards in the form of indentures, and the governance of guilds. Apprenticeship was necessary to prevent one master benefiting unduly from an increase in capital; restrictions on the number of apprentices a master could take existed to prevent one master having an undue advantage over his fellows. However, apprentices' exploitation could be linked to wider economic factors and thus the level of exploitation varied across the period 1250–1500. Heather Swanson found that only one in eight apprentices taken on by the York weavers in the 1470s could be traced in the Register of Freemen, falling to one in six weavers' apprentices in the 1490s. This coincided with a crisis in the cloth industry from 1470 onward, and Swanson commented that it 'increased exploitation of the apprenticeship system as a supply of cheap labour' with very little reward for the apprentices in terms of gaining the freedom.⁹⁴

2.1 Apprentices as 'cheap' labour

The apprenticeship system has long been considered a means by which a master acquired 'virtually free labour'; the veracity of this assumption is explored further in Chapter

⁹¹ *York Memorandum Book: Part II (1388–1493)*, p. lvii.

⁹² Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 669.

⁹³ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', p. 687.

⁹⁴ Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 36.

6.⁹⁵ Surviving indentures indicate that few apprentices were paid more than token wages. The master had to feed, clothe, and house the apprentice, but in general this was marginally cheaper than paying wages to a journeyman. Apprentices were not cheap labour; the real value of an apprentice as a worker was that their labour was secured for a fixed term by a legally enforceable indenture. Their cost-effectiveness increased every year as more skills were acquired and the quality of their work improved. The increasing value of an apprentice over time is very clearly reflected in one indenture. Walter Byse was apprenticed to a cordwainer for eight years from 1480. Walter was to be paid threepence in the first year, sixpence in the second year, ‘and so aft[er] the rate ev[er]y yere iij d to encrete’, with a payment of ten shillings in the final year.⁹⁶ Thomas Beryman, apprenticed to a Bridport merchant and chapman in 1440, was unusually lucky in receiving 5s per year throughout his term of eight years.⁹⁷

The apprentice would be a young man by the end of the term, and, as Goldberg suggested, the master-apprentice relationship would have evolved such that the apprentice might be considered a companion and trusted business partner.⁹⁸ Evidence of these relationships is explored in Chapter 7. Some indentures indicate that masters planned to assist the apprentice by means of a material gift at the end of the apprenticeship. In the 1450s, Robert Clerk, a smith’s apprentice, was to be paid 1d a week for all six years of his term on top of the usual provisions, and receive 20s at the end of his term.⁹⁹ This final sum may have been intended to help Clerk join a guild or set up on his own, perhaps using tools made during the course of his apprenticeship. Similarly, William Stakker received eightpence each year for five years from 1499, and 34s in the sixth year; this may have helped him establish himself as a fuller.¹⁰⁰ Given the generally low completion rates of apprenticeships (see above), masters could enter into these agreements knowing that they might never have to follow through on their promises, but safe in the knowledge that the value of the apprentice would match or exceed the financial outlay if they did complete their term.

⁹⁵ Rigby, *English Society*, p. 152.

⁹⁶ Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.2. 53, f. 30r.

⁹⁷ TNA, C 146/1132. This was in addition to the customary food and drink, linen and woollen clothing, and all else necessary.

⁹⁸ Goldberg, ‘Masters and Men’, p. 62.

⁹⁹ KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14r.

¹⁰⁰ MERL, MS2149/24.

2.2 Number of apprentices

Through practical application of medieval thatching techniques, Alex Langlands estimated that 70–80 percent of the total build time was spent preparing the materials, with the remainder spent carrying out the actual thatching.¹⁰¹ This was likely to be the case, to a certain extent, in the majority of medieval crafts. A master could, therefore, increase his overall output by having more workers to carry out necessary preparatory work, perhaps to the detriment of his fellow craftsmen. Thomas Downton, a merchant who enjoyed dual membership of the London mercers' and pewterers' companies, was an example of this. In 1457 Downton operated the largest craft workshop known to historians of medieval London, employing eleven apprentices and seven journeymen in his pewter business; according to Thrupp, at that time the average London pewter workshop employed two apprentices and about three-quarters of a servant.¹⁰² The size of the workshop gave Downton a competitive edge over his fellow pewterers. This is why, as per Marx, guilds sought to limit the number of workers one master could exploit, and apprentices were an obvious target for restrictions. The law of diminishing returns ensured that a workforce of eighteen did not make Downton's workshop six times more productive than a workshop with three workers. As the number of workers increased, so did communication and competition for workspace, tools, and raw materials, meaning that no worker could be fully productive all the time.

As previously noted in the exclusion model, Dunlop and Denman argued that limiting the number of apprentices prevented exploitation of child labour, as unregulated masters tended to pursue their own interests regardless of the common good.¹⁰³ Guilds sought to limit the number of apprentices a master could take from the early fourteenth century, if not before. At York, girdlers were restricted to one apprentice at a time from around 1307.¹⁰⁴ Inadequate training was a reason for an apprentice to be exonerated, and the more apprentices a master had, the less training he could provide. As skills were acquired over a period of years, the ideal workshop setup would allow for multiple apprentices at different stages in their training; some ordinances allowed for this, but retained limits on the number of apprentices. In the late fifteenth century, the York glaziers allowed masters 'bott oon [apprentice] at once' during the first four years of a seven-year term, and the patoners limited

¹⁰¹ Alex Langlands, 'Making History Matter: Objects, Narratives and the Experience of Craft', unpublished paper delivered at the Swansea University Department of History Research Seminar (Swansea University, 19 April 2018).

¹⁰² Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 72; Thrupp, 'Medieval Gilds Reconsidered', p. 170.

¹⁰³ Dunlop and Denman, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ *York Memorandum Book: Part II*, p. lvi.

masters to one apprentice for the first six years.¹⁰⁵ A surviving apprentice book for the York weavers shows that, in the 1450s and 1460s, several masters took on three, four, or five apprentices at the same time, and in c.1464, John Baron indentured six apprentices together.¹⁰⁶ Baron must have had a large workshop, allowing journeymen or more advanced apprentices assist in training his new apprentices. In their 1496 ordinances the Coventry cappers decreed ‘þat no Maister frohensfurth haue no moo prentisez in his seruice but ij at ones’.¹⁰⁷ These regulations allowed masters to exploit multiple apprentices at different stages of training to complete tasks with different levels of skill required, but prevented any one master from gaining a competitive edge over his fellow craftsmen.

The London fishmongers’ ordinances, dating from the reign of Edward I, allowed masters ‘two or three apprentices at most, only according as he is of ability to support them’.¹⁰⁸ Masters were prevented from taking on more apprentices than they could afford to keep comfortably; under the terms of their indentures, apprentices had to be provided with sufficient victuals and clothing. There is no indication this limit was designed to prevent apprentices from being poorly-trained, despite the level of specialist knowledge required in the trade; stockfish had to be specially prepared to make it edible, while juries of fishmongers were called as experts when accusations were made of selling poor-quality food.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the articles of the London saddlers and joiners, dated 1308–9, required masters to have the means to sustain and fulfil the apprenticeship.¹¹⁰ These articles indicate a preoccupation with producing good-quality work, despite not limiting the number of apprentices one master could take. Later ordinances, dated 1390, indicate that a high level of skill was required; the ordinance complained of absconding apprentices producing poor-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 209 and 140.

¹⁰⁶ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁷ *Coventry Leet Book: part II*, p. 573. This was reiterated in the 1520 ordinances – *Coventry Leet Book: part III*, p. 670.

¹⁰⁸ *Liber Albus*, p. 330.

¹⁰⁹ Justin Colson, ‘Negotiating Merchant Identities: The Stockfishmongers and London’s Companies Merging and Dividing, c. 1450–1550’, in *Medieval Merchants and Money: Essays in Honour of James L. Bolton*, ed. by Martin Allen and Matthew Davies (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016), pp. 3–20, p. 8 and n. 17; James C. Oldham, ‘The Origins of the Special Jury’, *University of Chicago Law Review*, 50 (1983), pp. 137–221, pp. 139 and 174. Stockfish had a shelf-life of years but had to be ‘watered’ to make it edible, and the watering process appears to have been a customary part of retailing stockfish. To make stockfish edible ‘it must be beaten with a wooden hammer for a full hour, then set...to soak in warm water for a full twelve hours or more’ before being cooked and skimmed ‘very well like beef’ – Eileen Power, *The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris)* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), p. 179, cited in Colson, ‘Negotiating Merchant Identities’, p. 8, n. 15.

¹¹⁰ ‘...et quil sui de poair de li sustenir a parfaire sez covenauntz’ – *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. II, part I, containing Liber Custumarum with extracts from the Cottonian MS. Claudius, D.II.*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 81.

quality saddles to the detriment of the craft.¹¹¹ One is left to wonder if these guilds were self-policing, assessing the quality of training received by apprentices pragmatically rather than limiting the number of apprentices per master.

Aside from using wives and daughters (who were usually excepted from these restrictions), masters might bypass guild restrictions on the number of workers they could employ by using workers based outside the workshop.¹¹² This was certainly the case in weaving, where ‘putting-out’ was normal practice in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Master weavers were more ‘industrial entrepreneurs’ than craftsmen, organising production and employing wool-beaters, combers, carders, and spinners; Janice Archer labelled this as ‘the earliest form of capitalism’.¹¹³ This work was often carried out at home by female artisans using materials supplied by the master weaver and requiring little or no capital.¹¹⁴ Workers were paid piece-rate, enabling them to fit their work around household tasks; according to Goldberg, such employment was ‘ideally suited to the needs of a wife with domestic and family responsibilities’.¹¹⁵ Putting-out work meant that vital preparatory processes did not necessarily fall under guild control, thus providing a mechanism for bypassing labour restrictions enforced by guilds in urban settings. The putting-out system was so well-established – and so exploited – by weavers that Edward IV enacted legislation in 1464 to offer piece-rate workers some protection from unscrupulous employers: ‘therefore it is ordained and established...that every man and woman being cloth-makers...shall pay to the carders, spinsters, and all such other labourers in any part of the said trade, lawful money for all their lawful wages’, or face a fine of triple the value of the unpaid wages.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ J.W. Sherwell, *The History of the Guild of Saddlers*, 3rd edn., revised by Lt.-Col. K.S. Laurie (Chelmsford: J.H. Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1956), p. 10.

¹¹² Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. by M.M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 47. See, for example, Articles of the Girdlers (18 Edw. III, 1344), in *Memorials*, p. 217, and Ordinances of the Braelers (29 Edw. III, 1355), *ibid.*, p. 278. The fact that sons are never mentioned in these clauses makes it clear that the intention was to exclude women in general, rather than prevent masters from exploiting their own kin as a source of labour.

¹¹³ Janice Archer, ‘Home Manufacturing’, in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Margaret Schaus (New York, NY, and Oxford: Routledge, 2006), pp. 374–375, p. 375.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 375; John H. Munro, ‘Textile Production for the Market’, in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Margaret Schaus (New York, NY, and Oxford: Routledge, 2006), pp. 791–795, p. 794.

¹¹⁵ P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Female Labour, Service and Marriage in the Late Medieval Urban North’, *Northern History*, 22 (1986), pp. 18–38, p. 34.

¹¹⁶ 4 Edward IV, c. 1.

2.3 Enrolment

Masters were required to enrol their apprentices in a specified location within the first year of the apprenticeship. The object was to prevent masters from taking on apprentices without the knowledge of the guild or civic authorities, thus flouting regulations concerning the number of apprentices. While this prevented masters from gaining an advantage in a competitive market, it also protected apprentices from exploitation; if the guild knew of an apprentice, they could monitor their welfare more effectively, and ensure that the terms of the indenture, particularly regarding the length of the apprenticeship, were kept. In London, it was decreed in 1275 that all apprenticeships should be recorded in the Chamber of the Guildhall.¹¹⁷ An ordinance dated 1299 or 1300 decreed that all apprentices must have their names enrolled (*'quod nomina eorum irrotulentur'*) in the first year of their term, and must be exhibited at the next Hustings (*'et in proximo Hustengo...ostendentur'*) so that all attending would know that they were apprenticed.¹¹⁸ This requirement extended to apprentices outside the guild system, such as silkwomen; despite not having a guild, silkwomen were subject to city regulations and their apprentices could be exonerated if they were not enrolled within a year and a day.¹¹⁹ The London saddlers' and joiners' articles, dated 1308–9, specified that masters receiving apprentices must be freemen (*'frank homme de la citee'*), and must enrol the agreement in the Guildhall (*'en la Chaumbre de la Gihale'*) during the first year of the apprenticeship, on pain of a fine.¹²⁰ The Guildhall records were consulted if an apprentice complained about non-enrolment. In 1416, Joan Jurdan was exonerated from her apprenticeship after she and her father complained that her master and his wife had not enrolled her. The master 'could not deny the complaint, which was borne out by the records'; Joan Jurdan's name was missing from the records of enrolment.¹²¹

The performative display of enrolment was intended to make an apprenticeship both a matter of (written) record and of public knowledge, thus protecting apprentices from possible exploitation. By 1345, enrolment was considered part of the custom and usage of London: the spurriers' articles stated that 'such apprentice shall be enrolled, according to the usages of

¹¹⁷ Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds*, p. 197; *Letter-Book D*, p. 37, n. 1

¹¹⁸ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; vol. II, part I*, p. 93.

¹¹⁹ Barron and Davies, 'Ellen Langwith', p. 42; Marian K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 4 (1933), pp. 324–335, p. 326. See, for example, *CPMR, 1419–37*, pp. 162, 166–167, and 227.

¹²⁰ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; vol. II, part I*, p. 81.

¹²¹ 'Membr. 3 b, 3 April 1416', *CPMR, 1413–37*, pp. 42–43. See also 'Roll A 27: (ii) 1385–86, membr. 29', *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 120–121.

the said City'.¹²² As was frequently the case, 'custom of London' quickly became custom elsewhere. In Colchester, to help guard against fraud, all master craftsmen were required to have details of the indenture enrolled by the town clerk, and from 1424 there are references to a specific book, *Liber de Probacionibus Seruencium*, in which enrolments were recorded.¹²³ Coventry had a specific enrolment book from 1494 (if not earlier); the Leet Book recorded that every person received 'as printise' should be sworn before the Steward of the Court, or his deputy, 'and his name entred in a boke remaynyng with þe seid Styward as a Registre'.¹²⁴ A mid-fifteenth century ordinance in the Black Book of Winchester decreed that 'everych maister that ys in franchyse brynge hys prentes and hys [in]dentures...to the curt of cite there to be enrolled'. The names of the master and apprentice, and the length of the apprenticeship, were recorded 'that no deseit be yhad', and the master gave fourpence 'to paye for that enrolyngge'.¹²⁵ This was the English reiteration of a similar ordinance given in Latin in 1412.¹²⁶

Rather than relying upon civic authorities, guilds themselves made enrolment a requirement, not least so they might collect the fee for enrolment. From 1418, the weavers of Beverley demanded 2s from every master taking an apprentice.¹²⁷ The barbers had enacted the same requirement in 1414, for apprentices 'whether bound by indenture or not'.¹²⁸ The tanners, meanwhile, required masters to pay 5s 'of silver' on the apprentice's entrance to the craft from 1416, although this was waived if the apprentice was the master's own son.¹²⁹ Although a useful way of levying fees, the main purpose of enrolment was to make apprenticeship a matter of public record and thus aid guilds in monitoring the treatment and training of apprentices to prevent exploitation by their own masters or by others. Enticing away another master's apprentice was a problem from the very earliest days of formal apprenticeship. The London lorimers' ordinances, dated 1260–1, stated that no one was to withdraw another's apprentice.¹³⁰ Similar prohibitions also appear in the ordinances of the

¹²² *Memorials*, p. 227.

¹²³ R.H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300–1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 239–240.

¹²⁴ *Coventry Leet Book: part II*, p. 560.

¹²⁵ *The Black Book of Winchester (British Museum, Additional MS. 6036)*, ed. by W.H.B. Bird (Winchester: Warren & Son Limited, 1925), p. 1.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹²⁷ *Beverley Town Documents*, p. li.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109. This indicates that not all apprenticeships were formally recorded in an indenture, despite the obvious advantages of creating a formal, legally binding agreement between the parties.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹³⁰ 'Item, qe nul forteie autre emprentiz, ne autri sergeaunt, dedenez son term' – Riley, *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis: vol. II, part I*, p. 78.

London fullers (1297–8), and the articles of the saddlers and joiners (1308–9).¹³¹ Having apprentices enrolled in a public performance negated the defence that the new master was unaware that his apprentice was already indentured to somebody else. It also made it more difficult to exploit apprentices by lengthening the term of apprenticeship; evidence from wills show that on the death of a master, the remainder of an apprentice's term was often bequeathed to the widow or to another master (see Chapter 7).¹³² If the length of the term was a matter of public record and knowledge, the new master could not retain the apprentice for longer than the remainder of his term.

Failure to enrol an apprentice could be treated as a trespass at common law. A very early example of such an infraction is dated to 1304–5. Thomas de Kydeminstre, draper and hosier, came before London's mayor and aldermen for 'a trespass committed touching his apprentice Walter, son of William de Beverlee...not being enrolled within a year according to the custom of the City'. De Kydeminstre was fined half a mark, to be paid within a fortnight.¹³³ In March 1311, Walter de Stebenheth, chalonier, was fined half a mark 'for that he holds apprentices without causing them to be enrolled'. He was given until the quinzaine of Easter [25 April] 'to bring his apprentices here to be enrolled'.¹³⁴ In 1364, William atte Hawe, apprenticed to John de Wynchecombe, armourer, confessed to refusing to be enrolled and was committed to Newgate. However, his mother Margaret de Grubbelane came to court and said that it had been agreed that the indentures were to be broken and de Wynchecombe was to give his apprentice a general acquittance. As de Wynchecombe could not deny this, the Court allowed the indentures to be cancelled, and then fined de Wynchecombe 20s for failure to enrol William in the first place.¹³⁵

Apprentices were clearly aware that masters were obliged to enrol them, and were prepared to litigate if this obligation was neglected. For example, in 1419 Marion Petro 'brought a bill against John Tapelegh, grocer, and Alice his wife, silkwoman, to whom she had been apprenticed for eight years, complaining that they had not enrolled her at the Guildhall within the first year'.¹³⁶ Multiple cases were recorded in the Plea and Memoranda rolls each year, suggesting that non-enrolment was a persistent problem. In most cases the

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126 and 81.

¹³² Barron, 'The Child in Medieval London', p. 411.

¹³³ *Letter-Book B*, p. 146. The record suggests that de Kydeminstre paid up front; the note reads 'whereof R. Poterel, the Chamberlain, received 40d'.

¹³⁴ *Letter-Book D*, pp. 66–67.

¹³⁵ 'Membr. 4b, 10 Dec. 1364', *CPMR*, 1364–81, p. 12.

¹³⁶ 'Membr. 4 b, 24 Aug. 1419', *CPMR*, 1413–37, p. 71.

apprentice was exonerated, and no fine was recorded.¹³⁷ Non-enrolment might be indicative of an underlying problem; for example, in 1419 Richard Colyn was exonerated because his master failed to enrol him, and had left the city.¹³⁸ In 1425 Laurence Smith was exonerated from his apprenticeship as his master ‘had not enrolled him at Guildhall within the first year of his term, had withdrawn to the privileged place of St Martin le Grand, had no shop of his trade of grocery, and had not committed his apprentice to any other master to learn his trade’.¹³⁹

2.4 Delayed marriage

Entrance into adulthood and, therefore, the ability to marry, was increasingly delayed for male apprentices.¹⁴⁰ This also held true for female apprentices, although they were fewer in number. Of the 82 apprenticeship indentures collected for this research, fifteen prohibited marriage completely, while a further 46 permitted marriage with the master’s licence and consent. We cannot know how readily permission was granted, but it probably depended on individual circumstances; this is discussed in Chapter 4. If apprenticeship was a means of exploitation, then marriage would generally be prohibited or discouraged. Under the terms of the indenture, the apprentice usually lived in the master’s household, and was fed and clothed by him. A married apprentice would be a more complicated prospect. Would the master be responsible for feeding and clothing the apprentice’s wife, and any offspring resulting from their union, during the term of apprenticeship? Neither guild ordinances nor borough legislation and customs provide an answer to this question, suggesting a reluctance to set any precedent. The only indication of how married apprentices were treated comes from the late thirteenth-century *Livre des Métiers*, concerning the Parisian guilds, which indicates that in Paris a married apprentice ‘living out’ was able to claim 4d a day in lieu of board if he preferred to dine at home with his wife, rather than in his master’s household.¹⁴¹ Therefore keeping an apprentice unmarried and within the household was probably cheaper than permitting them to marry.

Some apprentices objected to this restriction. Both Hanawalt and Ruth Karras observed that delayed marriage pushed young men into the arms of prostitutes, but some

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 149, 162, 166, 180, 199, 201, 203, 207, 261 and 299–300.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 71. See also p. 180.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 180. See also p. 203.

¹⁴⁰ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 121.

¹⁴¹ E. Dixon, ‘Craftswomen in the *Livre des Métiers*’, *Economic Journal*, 5 (1895), pp. 209–228, p. 216.

went further.¹⁴² An early sixteenth-century mercers' apprentice, Anthony Pontisbury, broke the terms of his indenture by marrying during his term, and in his defence argued that the prohibition on marriage was 'contrary to the laws of God and causeth much fornication and adultery'. His master obviously did not agree; he had him arrested for trespass and imprisoned.¹⁴³ Pontisbury's case highlights that apprentices were easily exploited; guilds and masters extended adolescent status to men who were, except for their position as dependents, essentially adults.¹⁴⁴ Restricting apprentices from marrying was a means of controlling the workforce, and exploiting their labour.

2.5 Exploitation, neglect, and abuse

It is likely that apprentices themselves felt exploited in other ways too. In the periods 1425–45 and 1453–8, only 35 percent of apprentices enrolled in the London tailors' guild completed their terms and became freemen.¹⁴⁵ Deborah Youngs suggested that, after working for three to five years, apprentices felt they had absorbed the basics of the craft, and many departed before they became too heavily exploited by the master.¹⁴⁶ This might be especially true of apprentices with excessively long terms, such as John Herry who appears to have been apprenticed to a draper for a term of eighteen years.¹⁴⁷ Apprentices seem to have had a clear notion of the types of work that were 'proper' to them, and were ready to litigate against masters who tried to put them to work outside the usual scope of their apprenticeship. In 1365, Richard atte Welle, a London goldsmith, took an oath that he would teach his apprentice, John in the Lane, the craft of goldsmithing, 'and that he would not send him into the country to thresh his corn or do any other continuous field work (*'opera campestrina'*)'.¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Salman brought a bill of complaint against his master Robert Leddered in 1366; 'instead of teaching him the trade of a draper, [Leddered] had turned him into a house-boy' or ostler (*'fist destre son hostiller'*) 'and set him to mean tasks both within

¹⁴² Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 121; Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 76.

¹⁴³ TNA, C 1/154/60; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 124. Shannon McSheffrey dated the Chancery proceedings to between 1504 and 1515 – Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 226, n. 37.

¹⁴⁴ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *'Of Good and Ill Repute': Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 192.

¹⁴⁵ Matthew P. Davies, 'The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 195, table 5.4.

¹⁴⁶ Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 113.

¹⁴⁷ 'Membr. 2 b, 22 Jan. 1428', *CPMR, 1413–37*, p. 217. Herry was exonerated in 1428 as his master had not instructed him or committed him to another master, and did not keep a shop.

¹⁴⁸ 'Membr. 7, 24 Jan. 1365', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 18.

and outside his house, thus wasting his time'. Leddered pleaded that he had taught Salman as well as he was able, and denied putting him to 'mean tasks'. The jury found for Salman, awarding 30s damages and ordering that the indentures be cancelled.¹⁴⁹

The law protected apprentices from undue exploitation, and the fact that this was necessary indicates that apprentices were in danger of being exploited. Many apprentices were aware that their master could only turn them over to someone else with their consent, even if it was a bequest in the master's will; in some wills the apprentice's term was shortened if they agreed to serve the master's widow (see Chapter 7).¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, although the master owned the term of apprenticeship, he did not own the apprentice. In 1375 John Bakton objected when his master assigned him to another mercer, and brought a case to the London Mayor's Court. The former master claimed that Bakton was his chattel and could be disposed of by gift or sale, but the court disagreed – an apprentice was not a chattel, and could not be bound to serve anyone other than the original master against his will.¹⁵¹ This precedent prevented apprentices being exploited by, for example, being sold as payment for a debt. An action from the Plea and Memoranda rolls illustrates this. In 1388, Simon Broun was attached to answer John Bishop, mercer, and his wife Katerine, in a plea of contempt and trespass (against the 1349 Ordinance of Labourers). The Bishops claimed that Broun had agreed to serve Katerine, then sole, for seven years from 29 December 1374, but that he had left in 1375 contrary to the ordinance. Broun pleaded that he had been apprenticed to a bottlemaker for eight years 'long before 29 December 1374', on which date his master sold the remainder of his apprenticeship to Katerine without Broun's consent, 'and gave her the counterpart of his indentures', thus providing Katerine with specialty (see Chapter 1). Katerine was not a freewoman 'either then or at any time during [Broun's] apprenticeship' and had no trade. She never instructed Broun in his trade, so he could never hope to gain the freedom. Instead, Katerine set Broun 'to minding horses', so Broun left her service, 'as he was entitled to do, for at no time did he make any covenant to serve her'. The

¹⁴⁹ 'Membr. 5 b, 1 July 1366', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 58. Jeremy Goldberg translated this as 'ostler' – P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Migration, Youth and Gender in Later Medieval England', in *Youth in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P.J.P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (York: York Medieval Press, 2004), pp. 85–100, p. 61.

¹⁵⁰ Barron, 'The Child in Medieval London', p. 411.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 411. This can be contrasted with some Continental indentures where, according to Steven Epstein, 'the parent handed over to the master quasi-parental authority and rented a child in the same way that one might rent a house or a mule' – Epstein *Wage Labor & Guilds*, p. 67, citing Saliatete, *Ars Notariae*, ed. by Gianfranco Orlandelli (Bologna: Guiffrè, 1961), p. 165.

jury said that Broun made no agreement with Katerine, ‘and entered her service in no other way than by colour of the sale of the apprenticeship’, and therefore had no case to answer.¹⁵²

Guilds also enacted safeguards against masters who sought to profit from treating apprentices poorly. For example, in 1496 the Coventry cappers ordained that ‘yf the prentise within his terme departe with consent of his maister, then þat Maister so suffryng his prentise to depart shall take no more prentisez till þat vij 3eres be spente without licens of the keepers of þe Craft, vppon þe peyn of xx s’.¹⁵³ This might have been an attempt to prevent apprentices from ‘buying out’ their term of apprenticeship, but it may also have applied to apprentices who were exonerated due to maltreatment.¹⁵⁴ Some clarity is provided by a later iteration of the cappers’ ordinances, dated 1520. In these, it was decreed that ‘yf any prentiz of the said Craft departe from his Maister hereafter by any mean, & except it be by the visitacion of God, the said Maister to haue no moo prenty3 duryng the said termys, except he delyuer the obligacion of his said prenty3, so gone away, to the Maister of the said Craft, and they take the advauntage therof to the vse of the said Craft’.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, if any apprentice left his master for any reason other than death, the master could not take another apprentice for the remainder of the term unless he paid the ‘obligation’ (presumably either the premium paid by the apprentice at the outset, or the sum paid for breaking the terms of their indenture) to the guild. This prevented unscrupulous masters from taking on apprentices, mistreating them to prompt them into running away or asking to be exonerated, and then pocketing the ‘obligation’.

Cases of neglect and abuse appear fairly regularly in the surviving Plea and Memoranda Rolls and records of the London Mayor’s Court, but the overall numbers are low; the majority of masters did not exploit their apprentices’ vulnerability by neglecting or abusing them. However, the regular appearance of such cases indicates that apprentices knew they could make these complaints, and guilds and courts were quick to act against mistreatment. Of course, this was motivated as much by a desire to maintain the reputation of the craft (discussed in Chapter 4) as by benevolence, but nevertheless it was necessary in the absence of parental oversight – the evidence from surviving indentures suggests that, on

¹⁵² ‘Roll A 28: 1386–88, membr. 11’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 142–143.

¹⁵³ *Coventry Leet Book, part II*, p. 573.

¹⁵⁴ The goldsmiths seem to have had a particular problem with apprentices ‘buying out’ of the remainder of their term of apprenticeship, to the extent that they prohibited it in their 1368 ordinances. Nevertheless, the practice continued. See Chapter 7, and *Wardens’ Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths’ Mistery of London 1334–1446*, ed. by Lisa Jefferson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), p. 111.

¹⁵⁵ *Coventry Leet Book: part III*, p. 670.

average, apprentices travelled 50 miles from the natal home in order to undertake their training.¹⁵⁶ In the late 1480s, a London merchant tailor was imprisoned for failing to provide his apprentice with clean clothes or bedding; the apprentice had been forced to sleep in a bed ‘foule shirtyd and full of vermin’.¹⁵⁷ For a merchant tailor to fail to provide an apprentice with clean clothes was unthinkable. Neglect was sufficient reason for apprentices to be released from their indentures by the central courts, even if the neglect was not deliberate. Masters might take on apprentices with good intentions but find that changed circumstances prevented them from adequately providing for the apprentice. In 1355, William Kyng complained to the London Mayor’s Court that his apprentice Roger Waleys had left his service before the end of his nine-year term. Waleys pleaded that Kyng had been ‘unable to supply him with necessaries, as laid down in the indentures, and gave him leave to serve whom he would’.¹⁵⁸ The outcome of this complaint was not recorded.

Some neglect cases provide an emotive narrative, which might have been exaggerated for the benefit of the court. However, a wise plaintiff would not present a case which was not credible, so there must be at least a grain of truth to the complaint, and often a third party appeared to support the apprentice’s claims. In 1388 William Algate complained to the London Mayor’s Court that in December 1386, six years into his ten-year apprenticeship, his master Roger Streyt went to Zeeland and ‘immediately afterwards his goods in England were arrested and sold for the benefit of his creditors’. Streyt had probably fled his debts. Algate complained that he received ‘no instruction, food or clothing and had become a vagabond’. Two masters of the mystery of ironmongers swore that ‘the master...did not provide for his apprentice’, and an armourer, acting as Streyt’s attorney, ‘admitted the truth of the case’. Therefore, Algate was exonerated by the court and ‘allowed to serve whom he would’.¹⁵⁹ John Shynguler’s complaint from 1391 provides a plaintive account of neglect. Shynguler had recently been apprenticed to Roger Grymston, draper, for eight years, but Grymston ‘had absconded for debt’. Shynguler was left ‘destitute and homeless and without food and drink except what was given to him by good people for the love of God’, and ‘he prayed to be exonerated’. Grymston, despite being summoned several times, failed to appear, and his neighbours gave evidence ‘that he had left no goods and chattels in the city...and had not put

¹⁵⁶ Average distance travelled in a straight line, calculated based on 58 indentures where two identifiable place names are given. Some apprentices originated in the same town as the master, and this distance has been calculated as 0 miles.

¹⁵⁷ Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 139.

¹⁵⁸ ‘26 Jan. 1355’, *CPMR*, 1323–64, p. 243.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Roll A 28: 1386–88, membr. 7 b’, *CPMR*, 1381–1412, p. 135.

his apprentice to any one else to learn the trade'. Shynguler was exonerated on condition that, should Grymston return within a year and a day, he should be allowed to sue any action he had against his apprentice.¹⁶⁰

As *paterfamilias*, the master was responsible for maintaining order within the *familia*, and this extended to disciplining members of the household. As outlined in Chapter 1, indentures commonly included a clause which bound the master to teach the apprentice and chastise them if necessary. Chastisement was generally physical, but limited by accepted bounds; masters, and mistresses, who overstepped these bounds could expect to be punished. In 1364 Agnes Cotiller provided sureties at the London Mayor's Court and promised that she would instruct her apprentice, and 'not beat her with stick or knife'.¹⁶¹ The guilds themselves were willing to step in to prevent abuse if necessary. In 1413, the goldsmiths' wardens warned John Halle de Petyt that would have no other apprentices if abuses continued, after one apprentice died in prison and another ran away after being severely beaten by de Petyt's wife.¹⁶² Physical examination or evidence from others in the household might be used to bolster the apprentice's allegations. Joan Jurdan (see above) was exonerated not only because she was not enrolled, but because 'it appeared on examination that [the master] and his wife had unduly castigated and governed the girl'.¹⁶³ In 1371 Thomas and William Sewale complained that, while their master was imprisoned at Newgate, his wife 'fed them insufficiently...[beat] them maliciously and had struck William on the left eye so violently that he lost the sight of that eye'. A 'corporal examination' showed that both boys 'had been cruelly beaten', and they were 'exonerated altogether from their apprenticeship'.¹⁶⁴ In the late 1480s, Oliver Randy was apprenticed to Elizabeth Jones, a fletcher, who married a skinner named Richard Coke. Randy complained that he received no training because Coke knew nothing of arrowmaking, and that several times Coke had 'dragged him from his bed and beaten him' because Randy objected to the lack of instruction. The household suffered frequent attacks of domestic violence; Coke beat his wife and the other servants, causing the servants to quit the household.¹⁶⁵ When eleven-year-old apprentice Thomas Moyse died c.

¹⁶⁰ 'Roll A 30: 1390–91, membr. 7', *CPMR*, 1381–1412, p. 180.

¹⁶¹ 'Membr. 4, 19 July 1364', *CPMR*, 1323–64, p. 274. The full entry reads: 'Sureties were accepted for Agnes, wife of John Cotiller, that she would instruct her apprentice, Juseana, in a proper manner, would find her in food and drink, and would not beat her with stick or knife'. This may be a record of an informal apprenticeship arrangement, rather than a punishment for excessive physical chastisement.

¹⁶² Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 160; Jefferson, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 359.

¹⁶³ 'Membr. 3 b, 3 April 1416', *CPMR* 1413–37, pp. 42–43.

¹⁶⁴ 'Membr. 5, 11 Aug. 1371', *CPMR*, 1364–81, pp. 128–129.

¹⁶⁵ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 160; TNA, C 1/107/27, dated 1486–93.

1474, his master claimed that he had fallen down the stairs while tussling with another child, causing a head injury. A doctor was summoned two days later, but Moyse died. Although the coroner's jury acquitted the master, the family remained suspicious that the master had caused the death.¹⁶⁶

Sometimes the abuse resulted from wilful exploitation of the apprenticeship. Edmund Pellet was apprenticed to a fishmonger who illegally sold his indenture to someone outside the trade. The new master's wife 'continually beat [Pellet] without any cause', while the master 'put a sharp metal through his thumb'.¹⁶⁷ Thomas Bunny's indenture was sold on to Joan Hunt, a stew-keeper in Southwark. In 1366, Bunny complained that he had been set 'to all manner of grievous work', including carrying heavy tynes of water; on one occasion he fell and was permanently injured. Hunt's lover subjected him to beatings and ill-treatment, and he was ejected from the house when he became ill. The court released Bunny from his indenture.¹⁶⁸ In one harrowing case from 1392, John Bartlet apprenticed his ten-year-old son to John Parker, glover, for ten years. Parker sold the apprenticeship to a tailor for 4s, who then sold it to Robert Hobbok, weaver, for 3s 4d. Bartlet's son was so poorly treated that during the winter he almost lost the use of his limbs, and his body was covered with vermin. Hobbok's servants beat him severely, and when Bartlet went to check on his son's wellbeing, they attacked him too.¹⁶⁹

Alice Kyng and her husband brought a petition before the Chancellor in the late-fifteenth century because John Crychefeylde, goldsmith, 'did diverse things to her son which should be done to no apprentice'.¹⁷⁰ The nature of these 'diverse things' is unclear, but there is no doubt that apprentices were sometimes sexually abused. Hanawalt noted that although she found no cases of masters seducing or raping female apprentices, it is entirely likely that these incidents did occur. Female apprentices were probably reluctant to report sexual abuse, feeling that they lacked access to a public forum, and unwilling to risk future marriage prospects.¹⁷¹ The latter is a likely explanation for the paucity of records for what may have

¹⁶⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London.*, p. 256, n. 13; TNA, C 1/48/509, dated 1473–5.

¹⁶⁷ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London.*, p. 160; TNA, C 1/155/43, dated 1486–93 or 1504–15.

¹⁶⁸ 'Membr. 2 b, 23 March 1366', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 54; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London.*, p. 160. Although Bunny 'had bound himself by indenture to serve' Thomas Rose, it is not actually specified that he is an apprentice, so he may actually have been a servant; nevertheless, experience of this sort of abuse was common to both apprentices and young servants.

¹⁶⁹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London.*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148. In answer, John Crychefeylde brought an action of trespass against Alice Kyng and her husband – TNA, C 1/66/215, dated 1475–80 or 1483–5.

¹⁷¹ J.B. Post highlighted how the second Statute of Westminster (1285) drew the emphasis 'away from the actual or potential plight of the victim of a sexual assault, and placed it upon the unacceptability of an accomplished

been a common problem within the household.¹⁷² There is clear, albeit rare, evidence of apprentices being sexually exploited by those responsible for their care. In July 1385 an inquest was held concerning a procuress named Elizabeth, who ‘ostensibly ran an embroidery workshop’, but actually encouraged her female ‘apprentices’ to engage in sexual relations, mostly with members of the clergy. Elizabeth was pilloried and banished from London.¹⁷³ In 1424, Alice Boston took Joan Hamond, her thirteen-year-old apprentice, to a barber at Charing Cross so that he could abuse her. Boston received 13s 4d for acting as procuress. She was also alleged to have sent her apprentice to other men in Westminster.¹⁷⁴ For exploiting ‘her innocent young apprentice’ for ‘immoral purposes’, Boston was condemned ‘to stand in the pillory three market days for an hour each day’, accompanied from prison to the pillory by pipes or other minstrelsy.¹⁷⁵ Despite the dangers, female apprentices were perhaps less vulnerable than female servants; their place in the household was secured by an indenture and supervised by parents, friends, and guild or local officials.¹⁷⁶

2.6 Points against this model

Although the master-apprentice relationship was inherently unequal, the cases outlined above demonstrate that apprentices could rely on their families, their indentures, and the law to offer them some protection from exploitation. Although apprentices might be cheaper than a waged worker in cash terms, they were significantly less cost-effective – this is discussed in Chapter 6. While long terms of apprenticeship meant that apprentices could be exploited as a secure labour source, they were rarely exploited because they were *cheap*. Furthermore, masters were required to provide their apprentices with adequate food and clothing, and, as demonstrated above, apprentices were ready to complain if this did not happen.

It is clear why masters might be motivated to avoid enrolling apprentices, but apprentices, too, might wish to avoid enrolment despite the risk of exploitation. In periods of population shortage, particularly in the aftermath of the Black Death, apprentices might

elopement, or an abduction to which the victim became reconciled’. The 1382 Statute of Rapes extended the ‘legal wrong from the woman to her family’ – J.B. Post, ‘Sir Thomas West and the Statute of Rapes, 1382’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53 (1980), pp. 24–30, p. 25.

¹⁷² Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 161.

¹⁷³ Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 267–268.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271–272.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Folio 11 b.’, *Letter-Book K*, p. 17; Barron, ‘The Child in Medieval London’, p. 413.

¹⁷⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 161.

prefer a flexible arrangement which would enable them to learn a trade and then work as wage labourers.¹⁷⁷ Labour shortages would also prompt exploitative masters to place stricter conditions and lengthy terms on apprentices, in order to keep their labour for longer. Apprentices make numerous appearances in the plea rolls for refusal to be enrolled, as avoiding the attention of guild or local authorities might make it easier for them to leave their masters prematurely. In December 1364, Richard Bayoun admitted he was an apprentice and was committed to Newgate for refusing to be enrolled.¹⁷⁸ In August 1371, John Aylef was committed to prison for refusing to be enrolled and serve as per his indenture.¹⁷⁹ In October 1375, John Passer was committed to prison for refusing to allow his indentures to be enrolled before the Chamberlain of the Guildhall.¹⁸⁰ These examples are three of many.

Similarly, it was easy for apprentices to exploit their position within the household. In 1305 John le Botener expelled his apprentice, because he was ‘so malicious and caused him so much damage’, and demanded that the apprentice’s family provide financial compensation.¹⁸¹ One early fifteenth-century apprentice Walter Prata, habitually cheated his master, goldsmith John Lincoln. Prata took advantage of the fact that Lincoln’s workshop was within the house, so he lived in close proximity to items he could steal. He took a silver cup from a jeweller on London Bridge, claiming that he was borrowing it for his master; he sold it and kept the money. Prata benefitted from the performative nature of enrolment and apprenticeship – the jeweller knew that he was John Lincoln’s apprentice, and trusted his master. Prata admitted to the wardens that his ultimate goal was to steal his master’s gold and silver and go to Flanders with a Fleming named John Sasse. The guild wardens expelled Prata in 1403, with no prospect of readmission.¹⁸² Confidence trickery of this type was a concern to masters; in 1416, Robert Arnold had it publicly announced and recorded that William Bolecley, his apprentice, who had on Arnold’s behalf ‘heretofore been on business for trading in divers parts...had of late without leave, and without reasonable cause, unlawfully withdrawn’. Arnold ‘feared that he might very possibly be damnified’ should Bolecley ‘appear under the feigned colour of being the factor and attorney...while so living at

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Membr. 3, 4 Dec. 1364’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Membr. 5 b, 14 Aug. 1371’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Membr. 13 b, 22 Oct. 1375’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 205.

¹⁸¹ *Calendar of Early Mayor's Court Rolls: 1298–1307*, ed. A. H. Thomas (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1924), p. 190.

¹⁸² Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 156; Reddaway, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, pp. 83–84; Jefferson, *Wardens’ Accounts*, pp. 283–287.

large’, and therefore Arnold ‘in full court repudiated and renounced whatever [Bolecley] should have done...or should...in future do for him, or in his name’.¹⁸³

The performative aspect of apprenticeship applied to punishment as well as enrolment. The London goldsmiths seem to have had particular trouble with rebellious apprentices. Edward Bowden (see Chapter 1) was beaten in the kitchen of the goldsmiths’ hall, because the wardens decided that committing him to prison would only make his behaviour worse.¹⁸⁴ This also ensured that his punishment was meted out in public. Public punishments were intended to discourage others from similar misdeeds, hence the ritualised beating of John Rolls in the London drapers’ hall in 1534; Rolls’ master had found him ‘upon Passyon Sunday...in naked bed, within hys seid hous’ with Margaret Byllyngton, one of the servants.¹⁸⁵ Whether Byllyngton was a willing participant is not recorded, but Rolls was definitely not the only apprentice to exploit the sexual availability of female members of the master’s household. This was almost certainly a consequence of delayed marriage. A series of depositions from the York consistory court in 1417 outlined the case of John Waryngton, who alleged that his master John Bown had forced him into marriage with a servant against his will, after finding them in ‘compromising circumstances’. Waryngton had capitulated as, if he did not marry, Bown might not assist him in obtaining a workshop and mastership. Meanwhile, Bown actually supported Waryngton’s cause, wanting to portray himself as a ‘good and generous master’; Waryngton’s behaviour was an affront to Bown’s authority as *paterfamilias* and could detrimentally affect his standing in the community, but supporting him might also help maintain good reputation.¹⁸⁶ This case highlights the complicated power dynamic experienced by apprentices and masters, and demonstrates that exploitation could go both ways.

Model 3: Ensuring Expertise

Considered in isolation, using apprenticeship as a means of ensuring expertise is probably the least convincing model for apprenticeship. It is more applicable to crafts where goods had to be made to a certain standard; it might be less important in mercantile trades

¹⁸³ *Memorials*, pp. 629–630.

¹⁸⁴ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, p. 147.

¹⁸⁵ Goldberg, ‘Masters and Men’, pp. 59–60; William Herbert, *The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London; Principally Compiled from their Grants and Records. With an Historical Essay, and Accounts of Each Company, its Origin, Constitution, Government, Dress, Customs, Halls, and Trust Estates and Charities; including Notices and Illustrations of Metropolitan Trade and Commerce, as Originally Concentrated in those Societies; and of the Language, Manners, and Expenses of Ancient Times; with Attested Copies and Translations of the Companies’ Charters, vol. I* (London: self-published, 1834), pp. 423–424, n. †.

¹⁸⁶ Goldberg, ‘Masters and Men’, pp. 58–61.

which relied on assessments of the quality of goods. Larry Epstein has been the main proponent of this model, postulating that the main reason for the development of medieval craft guilds was as a means of providing transferable skills through apprenticeship.¹⁸⁷ As well as providing a level of technical training, this would also include carrying out quality inspections; Epstein argued that, although it remained one of the main functional purposes of the guilds, quality enforcement alone was insufficient reason for guilds to emerge and survive.¹⁸⁸ This echoed earlier studies of medieval guilds. William Cunningham, an early twentieth-century economist, believed guilds' purpose was to regulate work 'in such fashion that the public might be well served'.¹⁸⁹ Rev. George Clune, writing in the 1940s, saw the guilds' purpose as 'insistence on sound materials, proper workmanship and reasonable prices', as well as protection of members, provision of fair wages, and distribution of private property.¹⁹⁰ However, reputation was of utmost importance in the medieval credit-based economy, and it was important to both guilds and individual craftsmen that they be considered trustworthy and wise – that they could be trusted to produce high quality work using their specialist knowledge and skills.¹⁹¹ This specialist knowledge could be transferred through apprenticeship, in order to maintain a high standard of work.

3.1 Number of apprentices

As discussed above, limits were placed on the number of apprentices a master might have at any one time; the more apprentices in his workshop, the less attention he could give to each, thereby diminishing the quality and effectiveness of their training. Obligatory enrolment brought apprentices to the guilds' notice, and helped guilds regulate the quality of training and number of apprentices. In workshops with multiple apprentices, more advanced apprentices would probably be expected to help train their newer counterparts. This *modus operandi* can be seen in some surviving guild ordinances. According to their 1463 ordinances, the York glaziers could take 'bott oon [apprentice] at once' during the first four years of a seven-year term.¹⁹² In the fifth year, if a second apprentice was taken on, the first apprentice would have acquired sufficient technical expertise to be able to teach rudimentary

¹⁸⁷ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', *passim*.

¹⁸⁸ S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds in the Pre-Modern Economy: A Discussion', *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), pp. 155–174, p. 158; Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', p. 687.

¹⁸⁹ Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry*, p. 342.

¹⁹⁰ Clune, *Medieval Guild System*, p. 47.

¹⁹¹ James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 169.

¹⁹² *York Memorandum Book: Part II*, p. lvii.

points of glazing. Similarly, in 1496 the Coventry cappers decreed ‘pat no Maister frohensfurth haue no moo prentisez in his seruice but ij at ones’.¹⁹³ Apprentices would not necessarily have been taken on simultaneously, so one could teach the other basic processes while the master carried out more advanced work. These regulations enabled masters to have multiple apprentices at different stages of training, working on tasks requiring different skills. This would be a highly efficient method of running a workshop, ensuring that a sufficient level of output was maintained while also maintaining high-quality production.

Poor survival of indentures makes it difficult to find evidence for individual masters taking on multiple apprentices, but a collection survives from Bridgwater which is suggestive of this practice. In November 1424 John Davy, a tanner, and his wife Joan, took on Michael Laleye for ten years.¹⁹⁴ In September 1427, Davy and his wife received another apprentice, John Taylor, for three years.¹⁹⁵ Laleye had been apprenticed for nearly three years by this time, and would therefore be able to demonstrate basic processes to the newer apprentice. In November 1432, the Davys acquired another apprentice, John Benet junior, for a term of seven years.¹⁹⁶ By this date, John Taylor would have finished his term, and might have moved on elsewhere or remained with the Davys as a journeyman. Assuming he had not departed early, Michael Laleye was in the eighth year of his term and able to assist with the more advanced processes of tanning. In June 1437, the Davys took on William Baker for seven years.¹⁹⁷ John Benet junior, now five years into his apprenticeship, could assist in Baker’s training. The Davys may also have taken other apprentices during this period, for whom indentures have not survived. The apprentices may not have stayed with the Davys for their entire term; John Taylor’s unexpectedly short term of apprenticeship could indicate that he was finishing an apprenticeship begun with another master. Nevertheless, this illustrates how masters might overlap apprentices’ terms in order to provide technical training and maintain a sufficient workforce while supporting a small number of apprentices at any time.

3.2 Wives’ involvement in training

John Davy’s wife Joan was named in each of the indentures above. Derek Keene highlighted a high level of familial involvement among London tanners, and doubtless a

¹⁹³ *Coventry Leet Book: part II*, p. 573. This was reiterated in the 1520 ordinances – *Coventry Leet Book: part III*, p. 670.

¹⁹⁴ SALS, D\B\bw/1009.

¹⁹⁵ SALS, D\B\bw/1402.

¹⁹⁶ SALS, D\B\bw/1384.

¹⁹⁷ SALS, D\B\bw/945.

similar level of participation from tanners' wives and children was common elsewhere.¹⁹⁸ Among the indentures collected for this research, fourteen masters named their wives on the indentures.¹⁹⁹ Goldberg stated that masters were invariably married, so if a wife was not named on the indenture it might indicate that she had no involvement in the apprentices' training.²⁰⁰ In two indentures it is clear that the husband and wife practice the same craft. In 1408, William atte Nasshe was apprenticed to Nicholas and Katherine Wade, weavers, to learn their craft: '*ad artem illorum erudiendam vocat Wevynecraft*'.²⁰¹ Swanson commented on the role of women in transmitting textile craft skills; as the broadloom required two operatives, wives customarily worked alongside their husbands.²⁰² This trend is also visible in other crafts. In 1457, Thomas Sturte was bound to Robert and Joan Sturte, bakers, to learn their art: '*artificio quo utitur dictis Rob(er)to et Joha(n)ne*'.²⁰³ Although women might not acquire craft-specific skills through formal apprenticeship, they were clearly expected to gain enough expertise from their husbands to enable participation in their craft, and we can assume that the wife was involved in running the business. This would be especially true for merchants; wives acted in partnership with their husbands, who might frequently be away.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, naming the wife on the indenture ensured the apprentice was answerable to both master and mistress. Physical chastisement was common (see above), and could be meted out by the master's wife as well as the master. If the wife's name was included on the indenture, the apprentice could not complain to the authorities or bring an action of trespass for assault at common law unless the chastisement was extreme; acceptable levels of punishment fell within the terms of the indenture.

In London, the law permitted widows to carry on their husbands' businesses; if she did not wish to maintain the household, the widow was expected to transfer any apprentices to another master.²⁰⁵ There are multiple examples of apprentices being exonerated because

¹⁹⁸ Derek Keene, 'Tanners' Widows, 1300–1350', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 1–27, passim.

¹⁹⁹ This figure does not include silkwomen with female apprentices; their husbands were named on the indentures, but they would be solely responsible for training the apprentice in their craft.

²⁰⁰ Goldberg, 'Masters and Men', p. 58, n. 5.

²⁰¹ HRO, W/D1/154.

²⁰² Heather Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past & Present*, 121 (1988), pp. 29–48, p. 45.

²⁰³ Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3.

²⁰⁴ Cathryn Spence, *Women, Credit, and Debt in Early Modern Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 58.

²⁰⁵ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 83; Caroline M. Barron, 'The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London', in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 361–383, p. 371.

the widow did not keep up their late husband's trade, although many obviously did continue.²⁰⁶ Caroline Barron identified two fifteenth-century female bell-founders who continued to run their husbands' foundries as widows, and took on their own apprentices.²⁰⁷ An apprentice whose master died during the term would generally continue their term with the widow, either because it was requested in the master's will, or because it was the custom.²⁰⁸ Two York weavers bequeathed looms on condition that both apprentice and widow fulfilled their terms of the indenture – the apprentice by remaining with the widow, and the widow by continuing to train the apprentice.²⁰⁹ Without question, these weavers deemed their wives competent and capable of high-quality work. In 1310, Henry de Feltham was admitted to the freedom of London after Alice, widow of his master John de Byfold 'testified that the said Henry had faithfully served the said John when alive and herself after his death for seven years'.²¹⁰ In 1397 John Parker was apprenticed to Joan Hendele, widow of Henry Hendele, to learn Henry's craft of tailoring.²¹¹ When Richard Waltham died in 1425, his will stated that his three female apprentices should receive 6s 8d each on condition that they behaved well, in word and deed, towards his wife Elena.²¹² It is unclear whether the girls were apprenticed to Waltham, a cutler, or to his wife; Barron and Davies suggested they may have made elaborate scabbards for Waltham's knives.²¹³ Elena (later Elena Langwith) was a successful silkwoman, who took on apprentices in her own right.²¹⁴

3.3 Quality assurance

Epstein observed that 'one of the craft guilds' main stated and functional purposes was to enforce quality control'.²¹⁵ Guild ordinances, particularly those from London, displayed a real concern for maintaining a high standard of work, and ensuring that all guild members were capable of producing work of the required quality. The goldsmiths were

²⁰⁶ Hanawalt, 'Of Good and Ill Repute', p. 172.

²⁰⁷ Caroline M. Barron, 'Johanna Hill (d. 1441) and Johanna Sturdy (d. c. 1460), Bell-Founders', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 99–111, passim.

²⁰⁸ Homer, 'The Medieval Pewterers of London', p. 143.

²⁰⁹ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 35.

²¹⁰ *Letter-Book D*, p. 114.

²¹¹ Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9/1/1.

²¹² Barron and Davies, 'Ellen Langwith', p. 39. It may be a coincidence that 6s 8d was also the fee silkwomen paid for entrance into the craft upon completion of their apprenticeships – Sutton, *Wives and Widows*, pp. 23–24.

²¹³ Barron and Davies, 'Ellen Langwith', p. 41. Barron and Davies suggested that Elena may have trained as a silkwoman specialising in the silk decoration of daggers and other knives, which would naturally have resulted in close association with the cutlers – *ibid.*, p. 47.

²¹⁴ TNA, E 210/1176.

²¹⁵ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds in the Pre-Modern Economy', p. 158.

bound by statute and charter to check the standard of all gold and silverware produced in England; shoddy workmanship reflected poorly on them. Reddaway argued that their reluctance to accept aliens was because their apprenticeships had been undertaken overseas and so the guild, responsible for maintaining quality, had no knowledge of them.²¹⁶ As early as 1344, the London girdlers refused admission to any ‘strange man...if he will not be an apprentice in the trade, or buy his freedom’.²¹⁷ This would allow them to assess his ability, and take remedial action if necessary, if he intended to practice the craft. The tallow chandlers forbade any alien or foreigner from keeping shop without first being examined by four masters to see whether their work was of sufficient quality.²¹⁸

Several guilds ruled that masters could not employ a journeyman ‘if such person be not first proved and assayed by the Masters of the same trade, as being skilled in his trade’.²¹⁹ In 1376, the London barbers ordained that ‘no man...shall be admitted to the franchise...if he be not attested as being good and able, upon good examination before you made’.²²⁰ Similarly, in 1445 the Coventry barbers ruled that no barber should set to work any man unless he had been apprenticed, ‘or elles that he can his Craft well & sufficiently, the whiche may be proved by the maysters of the seide craft’.²²¹ Guilds sought to ensure that apprentices received high-quality training by decreeing that they could only be indentured to competent and financially stable masters; the London braelers required that no master take an apprentice ‘if it be not testified by the good folks of the said trade sworn, that he is a man proper and sufficient to keep, inform, and teach, his apprentice’.²²² Competency and reputation were also important to the pouchmakers, whose 1371 articles decreed that ‘no one of the said trade shall receive into his service...any person who is a common brawler or rioter, or of ill fame, or who will not be ruled by the Masters’.²²³ The heaumers’ articles from 1347 allowed strangers to work within the trade, but on condition that ‘he be...a proper and lawful person,

²¹⁶ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths’ Company*, pp. 120–121.

²¹⁷ *Memorials*, p. 217. This implies that it was permissible for a stranger to join the guild in order to enter the freedom without demonstrating their skill; entrance to the freedom could only be obtained via guild membership by this date. The freeman would not necessarily work as a girdler, and might simply use his status and membership as a means of enjoying the mercantile privileges that came with the freedom of London.

²¹⁸ Randall Monier-Williams, *The Tallow Chandlers of London: Volume Three – The Guild Catholic* (London: Kaye & Ward Ltd., 1973), p. 15.

²¹⁹ *Memorials*, p. 278.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

²²¹ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part I*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1907), p. 225.

²²² *Memorials*, p. 278.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

and one from whom his master will answer as to his good behaviour'.²²⁴ In 1408, the forcers' ordinances stated that being 'rebellious or contumacious' was punishable by imprisonment and payment of a fine.²²⁵

The London masons' ordinances were preoccupied with protecting the reputation of the craft, prohibiting anyone from setting 'an apprentice or journeyman to work, except in the presence of his master, before he has been perfectly instructed in his calling'.²²⁶ Thus the master could be held entirely responsible for any sub-standard work, as the work was done under his direct supervision. It also prevented apprentices and journeymen from undertaking work on their own account, to the possible detriment of the masons' reputation. The London turners were sworn not to make false measures, thus preventing the honesty of any of their confederates being called into question.²²⁷ The London saddlers feared that shoddy workmanship would reflect badly upon them; their 1390 ordinances referred to runaway apprentices who, 'with other deceitful men, did resort to the wood...and did there secretly patch up saddle-bows in the roughest manner imaginable', which would be smuggled into the city at night 'and disposed of to dishonest Saddlers and Painters'.²²⁸

If everyone participating in a craft was a member of the guild, it was easier for searchers to observe poor workmanship which could adversely affect the reputation of the craft. In this model, making guild membership a requisite for practicing a craft was not an exclusionary practice but a means of maintaining standards. Quality controls might include verifying the metal content of an alloy, or the fibre density and dye quality of a cloth, or guaranteeing the sturdiness and stability of a builder, carpenter or shipbuilder's work.²²⁹ The London pewterers' ordinances, dated 1348, described the craft as highly-skilled, 'founded upon certain matters and metals, such as copper, tin, and lead, in due proportions', and stated that pewter goods 'cannot be made without good knowledge of a pewterer, well taught and well informed in the trade'.²³⁰ They feared that 'many persons, not knowing the right alloys, nor yet the mixtures or the right rules...do work and make vessels and other things not in due manner, to the damage of the people, and to the scandal of the trade'. Therefore, these ordinances ordained that 'no person shall intermeddle...if he be not sworn before the good

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 238.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 564.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

²²⁷ A.C. Stanley-Stone, *The Worshipful Company of Turners of London: Its Origin and History* (London: Lindley-Jones and Brother, 1925), p. 245.

²²⁸ Sherwell, *The History of the Guild of Saddlers*, p. 10.

²²⁹ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds in the Pre-Modern Economy', p. 159.

²³⁰ *Memorials*, p. 241–242.

folks of the trade'.²³¹ The performative action of being sworn into the guild made membership a matter of public, and probably written, record. Consequently, any pewterer not known to the guild could be punished appropriately, whether their work met the correct standard or not.

A notable omission from this discussion is the London silkwomen, who never organised themselves into a guild and, perhaps as a result, had no ordinances of their own. They formed a subordinate group under the supervision of the London mercers, who kept a record of entrants into the craft.²³² Marian Dale stated that there were no strict attempts to maintain standards of work: silkwork, 'being more of an art than a craft, could not be submitted to regulations directed towards standardisation of quality and prices'.²³³ However, Helen Jewell argued that, by suggesting that standardisation was inappropriate for the 'art' of silkwork, Dale was seeking to downplay the significance of the fact the silkwomen never formed a guild.²³⁴ It seems very unlikely that silkworking, of all the crafts practiced in medieval England, was the only one that defied standardisation.

3.4 Points against this model

Epstein argued that the primary purpose of guilds was to standardise quality and provide skills training, but there are two key problems. First, enforcing standards did not exclude 'cheaper' competitors from the market; instead, quality controls unintentionally created a market for cheaper, lower quality, products.²³⁵ Second, apprenticeship was not the sole means of achieving these aims. Wives were expected to obtain a high level of expertise in their husbands' crafts without ever being formally apprenticed, which implies that ensuring expertise was not the sole purpose of an apprenticeship. Similarly, many crafts' ordinances and articles allowed a person to work within a craft as long as they were sufficiently skilled, without specifying that these skills must have been gained through apprenticeship. This again suggests that technical training was not acquired exclusively through apprenticeship. Furthermore, as Epstein himself observed, apprenticeship acted as a curb on opportunism. Apprentices were liable to be exploited as a labour source, and, because they learned craft-specific skills over a period of years, poorly trained apprentices were greatly disadvantaged in

²³¹ Ibid., p. 242.

²³² Sutton, *Wives and Widows*, pp. 23–24.

²³³ Dale, 'London Silkwomen', p. 335.

²³⁴ Helen M. Jewell, *Women in Medieval England* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 90.

²³⁵ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds in the Pre-Modern Economy', p. 160.

the labour market. Therefore, guilds needed to enforce mechanisms to promote high-quality training in order to protect apprentices from opportunistic masters.²³⁶ Formal apprenticeship, therefore, was a means of ensuring that apprentices were well-trained, but high-quality training was not necessarily the overriding aim of apprenticeship.

4. Conclusion

These models cannot be considered in isolation, as no single model offers sufficient explanation for the prevalence of apprenticeship in medieval England (and elsewhere). Instead, we should view these models in relation to the social contract between guild and Crown. As Garry Runciman argued, society is formed of three dimensions – economic, ideological, and coercive.²³⁷ The Crown granted guilds the ideological right, often by means of a charter, to provide members with access to economic privileges. Guild members were coerced by the guild, and had to conform to certain rules and regulations in exchange for economic privileges and protection. Guilds themselves were coerced by the Crown and had to provide *quid pro quo* in exchange, by ensuring the good behaviour of members and high-quality production of goods. Initially, guilds were protectionist organisations which sought to preserve privileges for members, and although guild membership became (in places) a prerequisite for citizenship, apprenticeship was never the only route to the franchise.

Over time, influenced by demographic changes, guilds' protectionist aspects grew in scope, and apprenticeship was increasingly motivated by exclusion and exploitation, seeking first to exclude perceived excess competition from joining the franchise and secondly to exploit a secure source of unwaged labour. Lengthy terms and behavioural clauses made apprenticeship a coercive practice as well as an economic privilege (only masters, after all, could take an apprentice). Successful apprenticeships could culminate in citizenship, and this formed the rationale behind apprenticeship as the main route to economic privilege; it was a means of maintaining the high standards demanded of the guilds by the social contract. Guild records and other sources indicate that enforcing quality controls (and, therefore, the protection of the guild's reputation) became increasingly important during the fourteenth century. Thereafter, restrictions and regulations prioritised maintaining high standards of work over restricting economic competition. After all, enforcing standards served to create a market for cheaper, lower quality, goods. However, if a guild's protectionist liberties were

²³⁶ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change', pp. 691–692.

²³⁷ See W.G. Runciman, *A Treatise on Social Theory – Volume II: Substantive Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 12–18.

confirmed by charter, these remained enforceable even though more recent regulations were largely concerned with self-regulation.

Enrolment of apprentices constituted an overarching means of coercion in all three models. This process ensured that only eligible apprentices were admitted, that no master had too many apprentices at once, and that the master-apprentice relationship was a matter of public knowledge. The length of term was also controlled; long apprenticeships ensured a supply of labour for a lengthy fixed term, but to some extent served as a means of ensuring quality by preventing apprentices from completing their apprenticeship before obtaining all of the requisite skills. Public enrolment prevented masters from releasing an apprentice before the end of their term or, conversely, from retaining them after the term of apprenticeship was officially complete. Surviving legal records indicate that apprentices were aware of this obligation, and that they were both eager to be enrolled or keen to avoid enrolment, depending on the circumstances of their apprenticeship.

In reality, apprenticeship incorporated elements from all three models, with the emphasis varying depending on time and location. Exclusion became an increasingly important factor in the second half of the fourteenth century, in order to maintain market equilibrium. Exploitation became more significant in this period, as labour shortages made masters eager to retain apprentices for as long as possible. This is not to say that the same was true throughout England; in smaller towns there might be less competition for a market share, and therefore less need to practice exclusion even after population decline. Consequently, apprenticeships there would be based more on exploitation and expertise. In London, particularly in more prestigious guilds, greater emphasis was placed on exclusion and expertise. Masters could select apprentices based on desirable characteristics, and needed to ensure that production quality remained high in order to protect the reputation of the craft and fulfil the social contract. In summary, the proportional importance of exclusion, exploitation, and expertise, varied greatly according to the circumstances of both master and apprentice, their location, and, of course, the craft or trade in which they were apprenticed.

Chapter 4: Masters' expectations of apprentices: reputation, and the use of behavioural clauses in indentures

As well as recording the details of the apprenticeship – the names of the master and apprentice, the craft, and the length of the term – apprenticeship indentures also laid out the expectations of the master and the apprentice. Masters' expectations were generally set down first, and were largely concerned with the behaviour expected from the apprentice.¹ These expectations can be divided into three parts. The first part, the good service clause, bound the apprentice to serve well and faithfully, to follow instructions, and to keep the master's secrets. This was sometimes followed by a second part, the damage clause, which forbade the apprentice from wilfully damaging the master through wastefulness or poor behaviour. The third part, the behavioural clauses, prohibited the apprentice from engaging in certain activities. The ultimate purpose of all three parts was to protect the reputations of both master and apprentice; the behaviour of the whole household reflected back upon the master, who as *paterfamilias* was responsible for them socially, spiritually, and economically.² Civic or guild authorities held the master responsible for the conduct of his workers.³ The first part of this chapter briefly considers the importance of reputation, and explains why masters strove to control the behaviour of their apprentices. The remainder of the chapter examines the good service, damage and behavioural clauses in detail, using surviving apprenticeship indentures. Evidence from contemporary legislation and literature provides context, and aids discussion of practical reasons for preventing an apprentice from engaging in potentially damaging behaviours.

1. Reputation

We cannot underestimate the importance of reputation in medieval England. Many commercial transactions involved the extension of credit, and trust and reciprocity were the mainstay of all medieval transactions.⁴ Reputation, trust, and prestige were important for

¹ There are four exceptions to this rule, wherein the apprentice's provisions are outlined first: XL, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. II, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 28–29; BL, Add. Ch. 75055; Trinity College, Cambridge, O.2. 53, f. 30 r.; MERL, MS2149/24.

² Candace Gregory, 'Raising the Good Wife: Mothers and Daughters in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Douglas L. Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 145–167, p. 156.

³ W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages*, 5th edn. (Cambridge: University Press, 1927), p. 211.

⁴ James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 205.

trading success and social standing, and guild ordinances often required members to bolster their reputations by conforming to merchant ‘qualities’ of trustworthiness, discretion, wisdom and sobriety.⁵ These ordinances were couched in terms of disgracing both craft and community, implying that a damaged reputation was disastrous for business; London whittawyers who behaved ‘thoughtlessly, in the way of speaking or acting amiss’ were forbidden to follow the trade until they ‘reasonably made amends’.⁶ Disagreements between members could damage the guild; in orders dated 1494, the Beverley merchant guild required that no brethren should ‘set up detractions or false scandal’ nor ‘say of any brother of the craft in absence whereby the brother so defamed shall lose his name or any of his goods’.⁷

Although erring Beverley merchants paid a fine of 6s 8d, elsewhere public humiliation might be used as a punishment and a deterrent, intended to discourage others from committing such offences.⁸ The London Letter-Books record cases wherein ‘judgement of pillory’ was given ‘for lies uttered against the Mayor and Aldermen’, such as spreading rumours that the mayor had been committed to the Tower.⁹ To compound the humiliation, guilty parties might spend their time in the pillory with a whetstone around their neck, the symbol of a liar.¹⁰ Citizens who slandered the mayor or officials might present them with casks of wine or other items as a symbol of atonement.¹¹ In 1387, for example, William Hughlot, was ordered to present a 3lb wax candle to the church of the parish in which he had assaulted an alderman and insulted the mayor.¹²

Loss of trust could affect a person’s ability to make business deals and maintain supply networks. James Davis discussed the potential impact of slander, citing a 1307 case

⁵ Gardiner Stillwell, ‘Chaucer’s ‘Sad’ Merchant’, *The Review of English Studies*, 20 (1944), pp. 1–18, pp. 14–18, cited in Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 169.

⁶ *Memorials*, p. 233.

⁷ ‘Orders of Merchants and Mercers [1494]’, in *Beverley Town Documents*, ed. by Arthur F. Leach (London: Bernard Quaritch, for the Selden Society, 1900), p. 78.

⁸ ‘...to the community 3s 4d, and to the maintenance of the light and castle 3s 4d, without remission or pardon of any kind’, *ibid.*, p. 78; Barbara A. Hanawalt, *‘Of Good and Ill Repute’: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 28.

⁹ *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London compiled A.D. 1419, by John Carpenter, Common Clerk [and] Richard Whittington, Mayor*, trans. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1861), pp. 521 and 524; ‘fol. cxliii’, *Letter-Book H*, p. 181.

¹⁰ Hanawalt, *‘Of Good and Ill Repute’*, p. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹² ‘fol. ccx b.’, *Letter-Book H*, pp. 295–296. Hughlot was charged with assaulting an alderman, abusing the mayor by ‘saying that perhaps in years to come he would find all his lords and friends forsaking him’, and declaring the London guildhall court to be ‘the worst in the kingdom’. Hughlot was sentenced to lose his right hand for the assault; this was remitted at the request of the alderman, but he was sentenced to a year and a day’s imprisonment for striking a constable who tried to stop the assault. For abusing the mayor and the court, he was condemned to stand in the pillory with a whetstone hung from his neck, but this was remitted ‘on his finding sureties for keeping the peace’ and presenting the candle to the church of St. Dunstan.

from Yorkshire. Thomas Brounesmyth and his wife declared William de Wakefeud a false, faithless man and a thief, and raised the hue and cry against him, thus costing de Wakefeud a deal with Walter Gowere: the ‘scandal and infamy’ of the accusations prompted Gowere to refuse to deal with de Wakefeud.¹³ Some borough ordinances outlined procedures for claiming damages for false or malicious slander in the public marketplace, and legal records indicate that people actively sought redress for reputational damage.¹⁴ In August 1299, Walter Bareth was summoned before the London Mayor’s Court for withdrawing from William le Pavour’s service and ‘going about in Westsmethfield and elsewhere...slandering him and saying that he would never pay his workmen any equivalent for their labour’. Le Pavour claimed damages of 100s for injury to his reputation, and the jury found in his favour.¹⁵

Gossip and slander could be as damaging for the wrongdoer as the wronged: in 1512 John Tresylton, a London goldsmith with a shop on the Chepe, reviled Robert Rede, collector of the king’s money, calling him a ‘false knave’ and threatening to ‘give him such a blow he would never recover from it’. The goldsmiths’ guild fined Tresylton 20s but he refused to pay, leading the wardens to visit his shop to take surety for payment. When Tresylton refused and abused them, the wardens threatened to put him in the Counter debtors’ prison. Perhaps it was bravado or sheer pig-headedness which led Tresylton ‘in his passion’ to insist ‘on being put into the vilest part of the prison’. The wardens complied with his wishes, and a few hours in the Counter was sufficient to motivate Tresylton to pay his 20s fine. Treyslton’s reputation was probably affected more than Robert Rede’s; the Chepe was a busy thoroughfare, and multiple witnesses would have heard the insults and seen the guild wardens escort Tresylton to prison. His return from the Counter would have been accompanied by jeers, laughter, and gossip.¹⁶

It was important to maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the law; if a person was no longer considered *de bona fama*, it could substantially limit their ability to sue or defend themselves at law.¹⁷ Being judged innocent did not necessarily wipe the slate clean, as fishmonger John Dittoun discovered in 1382 – although he was cleared of the charges against

¹³ Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 205.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 205–206.

¹⁵ *Calendar of Early Mayor’s Court Rolls, preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall – AD 1298–1307*, ed. by A.H. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), pp. 40–41.

¹⁶ Hanawalt, ‘*Of Good and Ill Repute*’, p. 28.

¹⁷ Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 213.

him, he was considered to be ‘a man of ill repute’ (*‘homo male fame’*) and committed to prison.¹⁸ Retaining *bona fama* status was vital, as medieval juries were formed of men who were supposed to have some knowledge of the case. In 1445, the unfortunate defendant of a private lawsuit was arrested because the jury recalled that he had been accused of keeping ‘a place of assignation’ at the last wardmote.¹⁹ Neighbours’ informal statements about a woman’s morals could form the basis for prosecution. Although the neighbours could be punished for defamation, such allegations brought offending behaviour to wider attention, potentially causing long-lasting damage.²⁰ In crowded urban centres, people were highly aware of their neighbours’ activities and behaviour, so women’s reputations were affected by relationships with servants, apprentices, and neighbours.²¹ Contemporary literature highlighted the potential dangers: *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, a fourteenth-century conduct poem, warned to ‘kepe...fro synne, fro vyleneye, and schame’, because ‘a [slander] þat is reised is euil to stille’.²² Reputations could be affected by the behaviour of other members of the household, including transitory members such as apprentices and servants. A fifteenth century conduct poem aimed at young men, *þe Conseil and Teiching at the Vys Man Gaif his Sone*, advised the son to serve his master well, and this would include behaving well in order to protect the household’s reputation.²³

2. Good service clause

Although largely formulaic, the good service clause was fundamental to the indenture and appeared in almost all indentures between 1255 and 1500. Some clauses were wordier than others, but the general sense was the same: the apprentice was obliged to serve his master well and faithfully, keep his secrets and counsel (i.e. craft skills and business practices), and follow lawful instructions honestly and gladly. The good service clause might be very simple: ‘*Et predicta Agnes dicto Rob(er)to magistro suo bene et fideliter seruiet in*

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 213 and n. 112.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 213.

²⁰ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 26.

²¹ Gregory, ‘Raising the Good Wife’, pp. 154–155.

²² MS. Emmanuel College, Cambridge, I. 4. 31 (c. 1350), ff. 48 b.–52, f. 49, and MS. Henry E. Huntington Library H M 128 (first half of the fifteenth century), ff. 217 b.–220, f. 217 b., in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter / The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage / The Thewis of Gud Women*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1948), pp. 158 and 161.

²³ *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, p. 70.

officio predicto. Secreta eius celanda firmiter celabit'.²⁴ Others were a little more wordy: '*Pro quem terminum predictum Ffranciscus prefato Drugoni tanquam domino et magistro suo deserviet bene et fideliter benigne ac diligent. Secreta sua celabit ac precepta sua licita et honesta libenter ubique faciet*'.²⁵ Some indentures also prohibited the apprentice from making agreements with others during the apprenticeship: '*Cum alio infra dictum terminum non conveniet*'.²⁶ Sometimes the part of the clause concerning the master's secrets was separate from the clause requiring obedience.²⁷

In fact, out of 75 indentures, only two omitted a version of this clause.²⁸ John de Foxton, apprenticed in 1393, was obliged to 'do such things for his master as an apprentice ought to do', but was not bound to serve him well and faithfully or keep his secrets.²⁹ In Robert Kyme's indenture, dated 1458, the requirement for obedience was implied in a clause binding the apprentice to faithfully hold to the covenants outlined in the indenture, but the apprentice was not explicitly required to keep his master's secrets or serve him well and faithfully.³⁰ These examples notwithstanding, the prevalence of the good service clause indicates its importance to the practice of apprenticeship, and the formation of the indenture. The master was permitted to punish the apprentice, within the terms of the indenture, if he was in any way recalcitrant or unwilling to serve. However, the requirement to follow lawful instructions ('*precepta sua licita*') allowed the apprentice to disobey their master if asked to do something which broke guild or borough regulations, or was otherwise legally questionable, such as working after dark or selling stolen goods. If a master asked his apprentice to produce or sell goods after dark, the apprentice would be expected to refuse and

²⁴ TNA, E 40/8267. 'And the said Agnes shall serve the said Robert her master well and faithfully in the said craft; keep his secrets strictly concealed' – translation in Richard Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship in the West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages', *Midland History*, 27 (2002), pp. 165–181, p. 181.

²⁵ WAM, 5959. 'For the said term Francis will serve Drugo as his lord and master well and faithfully, obligingly and diligently. He will keep his secrets, and everywhere willingly follow his lawful and honest instructions' (translation my own).

²⁶ Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/1; TNA, E 40/4450.

²⁷ For example, TNA, E 210/5150 – the good service part of the clause was separated from the secrets part of the clause by the damage clause. See also *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), p. 127.

²⁸ A further seven indentures have been used elsewhere in this thesis, but survive only in part (for example, because the relevant parts of the indenture were copied into a court roll) and it is not possible to say whether a good service clause was included in the original document.

²⁹ Lancashire Archives, DDHO/636. Summary, in English, kindly provided by Lancashire Archives.

³⁰ '*Ad quas quidem convenciones ex parte dicti apprenticii forma qua permittitur fideliter teneri*' – WAM, 5965*.

report the master to the guild or civic authorities.³¹ There were concerns that craftsmen who kept their shops open after dark would attempt to pass off shoddy goods as fit for sale; the London leathersellers' ordinances, dated 1398, forbade members to work by night, or sell certain items 'at the Evechepyng, or in hostels, or in secret or dark places, in deceit of the common people'.³²

The second part of the clause, concerning the master's secrets and counsel, endeavoured to protect the secrets of the craft. Of the 75 indentures, only four did not bind the apprentice to keep the master's secrets and counsel. Two have already been mentioned above. In the remaining two, the apprentices were bound to 'wele and truely kepe [the master's] occupac[i]on and do such thyng as [the master] shall byd hym do'.³³ The commandment to keep craft secrets was taken very seriously, partly due to reputational concerns. If strangers learned the required rudimentary skills, they might use that knowledge to produce fraudulent and false work, damaging the craft's reputation. The London pewterers' ordinances, dated 1348, highlighted this concern, decrying that 'many persons, not knowing the right alloys, nor yet the mixtures or the right rules of the trade, do work and make vessels and other things not in due manner, to the damage of the people and the scandal of the trade'.³⁴ However, guarding craft secrets was also a means of exclusion, preventing competition by non-guild members. In 1497, the London mercers required any apprentices going overseas to swear before 'God and all Saints and by this Book' that they would not communicate the secrets of the craft to strangers.³⁵ Goldsmiths' apprentices who transferred to another craft had to swear not to divulge any of the goldsmiths' secrets. In 1411, John Thomas 'who had been the apprentice of John Gale' came before the guild wardens and

'swore on the book that he shall never do any goldsmith's work at all, for the reason that he is at present bound apprentice to the Tailors, and that he shall keep secret all the skills and the privities pertaining to the mistery, and that he shall not tell or reveal [them] to anyone, nor shall he ever use

³¹ Matthew P. Davies, 'The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 175. This was probably a primary motive behind the closing down of 'evechepyngs' (evening markets) in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

³² *Memorials*, p. 547. The fine for both offences was 6s 8d.

³³ Trinity College, Cambridge, O.2. 53, f. 30 r. See also West Sussex Record Office, Ep VI/1/4, f. 1a.

³⁴ *Memorials*, p. 242.

³⁵ *The Charters, Ordinances and Bye-Laws of the Mercers' Company* (London: privately printed for the Mercers' Company, 1881), pp. 89–90. They were also forbidden to buy and sell on their own account, gamble, or stand surety for anyone.

any of the aforesaid skills either in private or publicly, so God may help him and all the saints'.³⁶

3. Damage clause

The damage clause sought to prevent apprentices from doing deliberate damage to their masters. During their training, apprentices might produce low-quality work which had to be written off as wastage, or make mistakes by undercharging customers or overpaying suppliers. The damage clause required that such errors were not deliberate, and that the apprentice admitted to their mistakes. The clause might be phrased thus: 'Do not do damage to the master, or see it done, to the value of 12*d* per year or more, but prevent what might cause it and immediately notify the said master'.³⁷ The value was nominal and changed over time, rising from 4*d* in the earliest indentures and reaching a maximum of 12*d* towards the end of the fourteenth century. It was an attempt to quantify something largely unquantifiable; although a value could be put on wastage, damage to a master's reputation was incalculable. Only 34 indentures assigned a value to the amount of damage permitted per year – in the remainder, if there was a damage clause, no annual limit was specified. In these indentures the clause might oblige the apprentice to not to cause damage to the master, 'but rather, whatever might cause a problem, [the apprentice] would prevent it according to [their] ability, or forewarn [the master]' as soon as possible.³⁸

This clause indicates that apprentices were expected to police their own behaviour, as well as that of others, to prevent the master incurring damage from inside or outside the household. The requirement that apprentices 'prevent what might cause' damage obliged them to report on the behaviour of other members of the *familia* (household). The *familia* might comprise servants, journeymen, and other apprentices, as well as the master and his kin. The master, as *paterfamilias*, was responsible for the household's conduct, but constant oversight of the whole household was impossible. Therefore, members of the household were expected to report misbehaviour and damage to the master.³⁹ Walter Prata, a London goldsmiths' apprentice, was expelled from the craft in 1403 after an act of theft was reported

³⁶ *Wardens' Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mystery of London 1334–1446*, ed. by Lisa Jefferson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), p. 349. See also pp. 349–351, where John Halle was required to swear the same.

³⁷ '*Dampnum eidem magistro suo non faciet neque fieri videbit ad valorem Duodecim denariorum per annum vel amplius quin illud pro posse suum impedit aut statim dictum magistrum suum inde premuniet*' – BL, Add. Ch. 73950.

³⁸ TNA, E 40/4450, trans. by Goddard, 'Female Apprentices', p. 180.

³⁹ See Jefferson, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 285.

to his master by another member of the *familia*.⁴⁰ Dishonesty was not a desirable trait in an apprentice; honesty was encouraged. Although a degree of wastage was expected in the course of an apprenticeship, the wording of the damage clause indicates that it had to be reported to the master. However, damage was not always material; undesirable behaviours, such as disobedience or dishonesty, could damage the household's social standing. Thus the damage clause, alongside behavioural clauses, sought to protect the master's reputation from harm.

4. Behavioural clauses

Behavioural clauses were included in apprenticeship indentures because it was so important to maintain *bona fama*. The number of clauses and level of detail within them varied, but as a general rule they regulated four key areas: visiting taverns; playing 'illicit' or 'dishonest' (*inhonesta*) games; fornication and adultery; and marriage within the term of apprenticeship. These activities were all potentially detrimental to the reputation of both master and household. The research presented in this part of the chapter is based on 77 indentures, of which only seven *do not* contain at least one behavioural clause.⁴¹ Two of the seven are thirteenth-century indentures, and so the omission might be due to the early date.⁴² As apprenticeship became more formalised, and documentary evidence of the arrangement became increasingly necessary, the agreement was recorded in more detail (see Chapter 1). Later omissions are less easily explained. Agnes Chaloner and Agnes le Felde were both apprenticed to Robert Raulot, a Coventry purser, in 1336 and 1345 respectively, but neither indenture contained behavioural clauses.⁴³ Richard Goddard discussed these indentures in some detail, but was also unable to provide a reason for this omission.⁴⁴ Both apprentices were female, but this explanation is insufficient – this is discussed further below.

4.1 Taverns, inns and alehouses

Of the 77 indentures, 53 included a clause prohibiting or restricting the apprentice from visiting '*tabernas*', directly translated as 'taverns' throughout this chapter. In the

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 285. This was not Walter Prata's only crime; his misdeeds are recounted in full on pp. 283–287.

⁴¹ A further five indentures have been used elsewhere in this thesis, but are only partial documents – either scribes' notes or partial enrolments in court records – and have not been deemed suitable for use in this chapter.

⁴² TNA, E 210/1397; CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 245–247.

⁴³ TNA, E 40/4450 and E 40/8267.

⁴⁴ Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship', pp. 174–175.

context of medieval England, ‘*tabernas*’ was a catch-all term encompassing taverns, inns, and less dignified alehouses. Peter Clark summarised the difference between these establishments: inns were large and fashionable, offering food, drink and accommodation to travellers; taverns sold refreshment, including wine, to the ‘middling and upper sort’; alehouses provided ale, beer, food and lodging to those unable to afford inn accommodation.⁴⁵ Innkeepers were generally wealthy members of the urban elite, and inns were considered a profitable investment.⁴⁶ Alehouses, on the other hand, were more numerous, humble drinking establishments that catered to local demand.⁴⁷ While innkeeping was rarely a female-only business (most inns were run by married couples), an alehouse might be run by a woman out of her own home.⁴⁸ In reality the demarcations between inns, taverns and alehouses were probably less distinct than Clark implied, and apprentices may have had reason to visit all three during the course of their apprenticeship.⁴⁹

Ale was a staple element of diet, providing a rapidly-absorbed source of energy.⁵⁰ Jessica Warner suggested that ale offered a welcome break from the monotonous, ‘overwhelmingly starchy’ diet eaten by the majority of the population.⁵¹ A 1381 London ordinance required brewers and bakers to sell products in farthing measures ‘to assist the poor’, ale being ‘equally necessary [to them] as...bread’.⁵² The number of brewers in medieval towns and cities indicates widespread ale consumption: the *Annales Londonienses* recorded that 1,334 brewers and 354 taverners responded to a summons to appear at the Guildhall in 1309. These figures only included those living within the city’s jurisdiction. In Norwich, 250–300 brewers were fined (nominally for breaches of regulations, but really as a form of licensing) each year before the Black Death. Norwich may have had a population of

⁴⁵ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200–1830* (Harlow and New York, NY: Longman, 1983), pp. 5, 6–7, and 11. Some taverns only sold wine, and it is possible that London taverns were prohibited from selling ale – *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ John Hare, ‘Inns, Innkeepers and the Society of Later Medieval England, 1350–1600’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 39 (2013), pp. 477–497, pp. 490–491 and 497.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁴⁸ Barbara A. Hanawalt, ‘The Host, the Law, and the Ambiguous Space of Medieval London Taverns’, in *Medieval Crime and Social Control*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 204–223, pp. 207 and 206; Teresa Phipps, ‘Female Litigants and the Borough Court: Status and Strategy in the Case of Agnes Halum of Nottingham’, in *Town Courts and Urban Society in Late Medieval England, 1250–1500*, ed. by Richard Goddard and Teresa Phipps (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019), pp. 77–92, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 5; Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 336.

⁵⁰ James A. Galloway, ‘Driven by Drink? Ale Consumption and the Agrarian Economy of the London Region, c. 1300–1400’, in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1998), pp. 87–100, p. 87.

⁵¹ Jessica Warner, ‘Before there was ‘Alcoholism’: Lessons from the Medieval Experience with Alcohol’, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 19 (1992), pp. 409–430, pp. 414–415.

⁵² Galloway, ‘Driven by Drink?’, pp. 95–96.

25,000 in 1330, equating to one brewer for every 84 persons.⁵³ There was widespread demand for ale, and the supply was there to meet it. Although many women brewed at home, the process was time-consuming. It required space, which was at a premium in towns, and it might be difficult to obtain sufficient malt or water. Consequently, many households purchased ale and beer from neighbours, from regraters who purchased it for resale in the streets, or from taverns and alehouses.⁵⁴

It was largely impractical for a master to entirely prohibit his apprentice from visiting these establishments. Barbara Hanawalt placed taverns and inns among the most complex institutions of medieval life and social regulation, because of the mix of activities, both illicit and legitimate, that took place within.⁵⁵ They provided a venue for unregulated but legally accepted negotiations and trade, including trading commodities, drawing up contracts, and arranging service and apprenticeship agreements.⁵⁶ Inns provided safe places to store goods as well as a venue for social hospitality, and were established commercial centres for merchants and traders: refreshment could be taken during negotiations, and goods could be viewed onsite away from busy (regulated) marketplaces.⁵⁷ Taverns and alehouses also provided space away from cramped living quarters, providing a (relatively) private space to conduct formal negotiations.⁵⁸ During the course of their training, apprentices might be required to travel on their master's behalf, and thus have occasion to stay in inns, taverns or alehouses.⁵⁹ Local taverns and alehouses also provided a 'recreation area' for relaxing and meeting friends, away from a crowded household.⁶⁰ Thus, as Table 4.1 shows, this clause was often phrased to permit the apprentice to do his master's business there, or to otherwise visit for the benefit of the master.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵⁴ Hanawalt, 'Medieval London Taverns', pp. 206–207.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 205.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 205 and 213; Richard Britnell, 'Markets, Shops, Inns, Taverns and Private Houses in Medieval English Trade', in *Buyers and Sellers: Retail Circuits and Practices in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by B. Blondé, Peter Stabel, Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 109–123, p. 118; Hare, 'Inns, Innkeepers', p. 481–482.

⁵⁷ Hare, 'Inns, Innkeepers', p. 480; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Hanawalt, 'Medieval London Taverns', p. 205.

⁵⁹ See *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, p. 129 – the apprentice travelled to Ireland on his master's behalf. *The Charters, Ordinances and Bye-Laws of the Mercers' Company* (London: privately printed for the Mercers' Company, 1881), p. 89, contains an oath to be sworn by apprentices 'that goeth over sea for their masters'. Therefore travel within England was almost certainly commonplace.

⁶⁰ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Making the House a Home in Later Medieval York', *Journal of Medieval History*, pp. 162–180, p. 176.

Table 4.1 – variations in clauses concerning taverns in 77 indentures, for both male and female apprentices.

<i>Prohibition</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	<i>(of which female apprentices)</i>	<i>% of 53 indentures</i>	<i>% of 77 indentures</i>
<i>Conditional prohibition</i>	32	2	60.4	41.6
<i>Strict prohibition</i>	20	2	37.7	26.0
<i>Total prohibition</i>	1	–	1.9	1.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	53	4	–	68.9
<i>No mention</i>	24	3	–	31.2
<i>Total</i>	77	7	100	100

Of the 77 indentures, 53 included a clause concerning *tabernas*. These clauses have been classified as conditional, strict, or total prohibitions. Twenty indentures contained a strict prohibition, preventing the apprentice from customarily frequenting taverns: ‘*tabernam ex consuetudine non frequentabit*’.⁶¹ A further 32 used a conditional prohibition, discussed further below. Only one indenture, for a Coventry apprentice, featured a total prohibition and in this case it was lumped together with other gaming and using brothels: ‘*non utetur tales nec scacario [sic] nec lupanaria nec tabernam durante termino predicto*’.⁶² This was an unusual, and probably unrealistic, expectation.

Although the strict prohibition prevented the apprentice from *customarily* visiting taverns, they were not totally out of bounds. This prevented apprentices from spending too much free time in taverns, and one indenture clarified this: ‘be none ale goer...w[i]t[h]out the lycence of the [master]’.⁶³ ‘Licence of the master’ is the key element here. As noted above, taverns were a convenient place to conduct business transactions, as well as a social space away from crowded households.⁶⁴ Furthermore, travel might be necessary in the course of the apprentices’ training, and they might have occasion to stay in inns, taverns, or alehouses. By the 1520s, the mercers had established six English houses in Flanders, run by men of good reputation, at which apprentices had to stay when travelling to the Low Countries on business. Their alcohol consumption was restricted, and they could not stay up past 9pm.⁶⁵ This sort of accommodation was not common, so it was unrealistic for masters to entirely

⁶¹ Quoted text from TNA, C 146/914.

⁶² Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/2. This indenture is also unusual in that the apprentice is placed with two masters, named together in the indenture, and referred to in the plural throughout.

⁶³ Trinity College, Cambridge, O.2. 53, f. 30 r.

⁶⁴ Hanawalt, ‘Medieval London Taverns’, p. 205.

⁶⁵ Hanawalt, ‘*Of Good and Ill Repute*’, p. 188.

prohibit apprentices from visiting taverns. Therefore this iteration of the clause is as close to a total prohibition as would be practical.

The conditional clauses generally have two main elements; benefit to the master or mistress, and mercantile cause. In sixteen of the 32 indentures containing a conditional cause, the requirement was that it must be of convenience, advantage or benefit to the master: '*tabernas ex consuetudine non frequentabit nisi sit pro comodo [sic] dicti magistri sui ibidem faciendur*'.⁶⁶ In one indenture, the apprentice was not permitted to frequent taverns excessively without benefit to his master.⁶⁷ What constituted 'excessive' was presumably left at the master's discretion, and might change as the apprentice grew older and attained more responsibility, or as the household became more crowded. While pragmatic, this clause was quite vague and may well have caused conflict.

A further sixteen indentures forbade the apprentice from frequenting taverns without mercantile cause, or words of a similar effect, and this was almost invariably tied to a condition that it must benefit the master: '*tabernas non exercebit nisi sit pro comomodo dicti magistri sui ibidem faciend(o)*'.⁶⁸ Apprentices were not meant to buy or sell on their own account, hence the link to the master's benefit. Only one of the indentures mentioned mercantile cause but not benefit to the master, and in this case taverns were linked with covins and gaming instead: '*Covines [sic] tabernas neque tales non utatur nisi per viam mercandisi*'.⁶⁹ This indenture, dated 1479, concerns an apprenticeship with a Waterford mercer. It is the only Irish indenture uncovered in the course of this research, so it is impossible to say whether this iteration was due to local practices.

The absence of this clause from the remaining 24 indentures is interesting. There is no obvious pattern but neither of the two thirteenth-century indentures mentioned taverns, suggesting that it was included as part of the gradual development of indentures.⁷⁰ In some instances, the omission seems to be due to the personal preference of the master or external, local factors. Masters' ability to exercise autonomy when imposing prohibitions becomes apparent when looking at indentures for apprentices bound to different masters within the same town. Winchester provides a good example of this. John Kent and John Williams were both apprenticed to Henry Flem yng, cordwainer, for five years, and both were forbidden

⁶⁶ West Sussex Record Office, Ep VI/1/4, f. 1a; TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135 d.

⁶⁷ '*Tabernas excessive frequentabit nisi sit causa et comodi magistri sui ibidem faciendur*' – TNA, C 146/1129.

⁶⁸ Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9/1/1.

⁶⁹ SALS, D\B\bw/368.

⁷⁰ TNA, E 210/1397; CXXI, *Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, pp. 245–247.

to customarily frequent taverns.⁷¹ However, three other Winchester indentures, for apprentices bound in different trades around the same time, either omitted the clause or made it conditional.⁷²

There are five indentures from Bridgwater, four of which concern apprentices bound to John Davy, tanner, and his wife Joan, between 1424 and 1437.⁷³ The fifth indenture, dated 1433, bound William Gose of Galway to Robert Jervyse, fuller, and his wife Joan.⁷⁴ Regardless of the length of term or the apprentice's origin, none of these indentures mentioned taverns. The omission may have been influenced by local custom, although, notably, Bridgwater apprentices seem to have enjoyed unusually unrestrictive terms. This was not necessarily connected to the size of the town: granted a borough charter in 1200, Bridgwater was a river port with links to Bordeaux.⁷⁵ It was a centre of textile manufacturing, with an estimated population of *c.* 1,600 in the 1440s.⁷⁶ An important crossing on the river Parrett, it had at least three inns and taverns by the late fifteenth century, and the king's players visited the town in the early 1460s.⁷⁷ In other words, this was not a quiet backwater; there were ample opportunities for apprentices to socialise and get into trouble. Either Bridgwater apprentices experienced an extraordinary degree of freedom, or their masters relied heavily on the clause prohibiting them from absenting themselves from service, by day or night, without permission.⁷⁸

It is also possible that inclusion of the clause depended on the age of the apprentice, as suggested by a series of indentures from Bridport.⁷⁹ The grocer and mercer John Burges, and his wife Agnes, took on John Deweboys for two years in 1428, then William Hore for five years and John Bere for thirteen years in 1439, followed by Thomas Beryman for eight

⁷¹ HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v.

⁷² HRO, W/D1/154, W/D1/22, m. 44 and W/D1/22, m. 46.

⁷³ SALS, D\B\bw/1009, D\B\bw/1402, D\B\bw/1384 and D\B\bw/945.

⁷⁴ SALS, D\B\bw/1008.

⁷⁵ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, ed. by Adolphus Ballard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 176; *Bridgwater Borough Archives: 1200–1377*, ed. by Thomas Bruce Dilks (Frome and London: Butler & Tanner, 1933), p. xxxiv; A.P. Baggs and M.C. Siraut, 'Bridgwater: Communications', in *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 6, Andersfield, Cannington, and North Petherton Hundreds (Bridgwater and Neighbouring Parishes)*, ed. by R.W. Dunning and C.R. Elrington (London: Victoria County History, 1992), [pp. 192–206].

⁷⁶ The town produced a broadcloth known as 'Bridgwater'. *Bridgwater Borough Archives*, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv; Baggs and Siraut, 'Bridgwater: Population'.

⁷⁷ Baggs and Siraut, 'Bridgwater: Communications', 'Bridgwater: Inns and taverns', and 'Bridgwater: Social and Cultural Activities'.

⁷⁸ '*a servicio suo diebus sine noctibus illicenciatus se non absentabit*' – SALS, D\B\bw/1402.

⁷⁹ Although there are three indentures in this sample in which John Burges is given as master, his trade is only recorded in one – TNA, C 146/1132. In John Deweboys' indenture the master's name is given as John Borage and his wife Agnes, thus it has been assumed that this is a misspelling of Burges – TNA, C 146/1260.

years in 1440.⁸⁰ While Hore and Beryman were forbidden to customarily frequent taverns, there was no prohibition for Deweboys or Bere. Bere had previously been apprenticed to John and Lucy Sterre in 1430, so may have been in his late teens or early twenties when apprenticed to the Burgeses.⁸¹ The very short length of John Deweboy's term may also indicate that he was an older apprentice. Although it is impossible to be certain (see Chapter 2), Burges and his wife may have put less restrictions on older apprentices. Bridport was a centre of rope, twine, netting and sailcloth production, and sufficiently established to supply the royal navy with rope and cloth.⁸² As a mercer and grocer, Burges may have been involved in selling finished rope, or products which arrived at Bridport by sea; he probably relied on his older apprentices to trade on his behalf, and much of this business might be conducted in inns and taverns. As the younger apprentices grew older, he could ease the restrictions to allow them more freedom, but to omit the clause entirely would have allowed them too much licence too young.

Even a strict prohibition was not a total prohibition, because it was impractical to prevent apprentices from visiting taverns entirely. But if they provided a venue for conducting business as well as drinking, why would a master restrict his apprentices from frequenting them? The main consideration was the potential for damaging the master's reputation. Taverns were not entirely respectable; in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century literature they were associated with vices including gluttony, drunkenness, idleness and lechery. The fourteenth-century *Book of Vices and Virtues* called taverns 'the devil's schoolhouse', while Beton the Brewster's alehouse in *Piers Plowman* was a hive of temptation, gaming and drinking.⁸³ Jeremy Goldberg suggested that taverns' role in the sex trade was fairly clearly established in both actuality and in contemporary perception.⁸⁴ A legitimate venue for business transactions during the day, they were a location for more nefarious deals after dark. In London, statute legislation required taverns to shut after curfew to prevent 'offenders' from holding 'their evil talk' therein.⁸⁵ After curfew, the so-called *evechepynges* (evening markets) moved from the street into taverns and alehouses. Civic

⁸⁰ TNA, C 146/1260, C 146/3879, C 146/5045, and C 146/1132.

⁸¹ TNA, C 146/63.

⁸² Mike Williams, *Bridport and West Bay: The Buildings of the Flax and Hemp Industry*, reprint (Swindon: English Heritage, 2011), p. 7.

⁸³ Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 112.

⁸⁴ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes: Streetwalking in Comparative Perspective', in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. by Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge and Kim M. Phillips (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 172–193, p. 179.

⁸⁵ 13 Edward I, Statutes for the City of London, 1285.

authorities suspected that trade continued in articles that could not be sold in open view, such as stolen property. It was feared that apprentices would use *evechepynges* as an opportunity to trade on their own account, perhaps using goods purloined from their masters.⁸⁶ This concern was probably not unfounded: in 1390 the London saddlers' ordinances referred to runaway apprentices who made sub-standard saddles and smuggled them into the city 'under cover of night' to be sold to dishonest saddlers.⁸⁷ This damaged the reputation of the craft.

If apprentices were allowed to visit taverns, they were not encouraged to get drunk. As early as the twelfth century, the clerk William Fitz Stephen noted that 'the only plagues of London are the immoderate drinking of fools and the frequency of fires'.⁸⁸ Conduct literature warned young men 'be not fond of...drunkenness'.⁸⁹ *Jacob's Well*, a fifteenth-century vernacular sermon cycle, echoed Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiæ* in preaching that 'þe synne is noȝt...in þe drynke, but in þe apetyte...whan þi delyȝt is out of mesure þere-in'.⁹⁰ A little drinking was acceptable, but getting drunk was to knowingly deprive oneself of reason, and thus run the risk of falling into sin.⁹¹ Another concern was that drinking might loosen an apprentice's tongue and cause them to divulge craft 'mysteries' or their master's business secrets. Immoderate drinking could also have financial consequences. In *The Good Wife* poem, the mother warned her daughter not to waste her profits on ale, because 'þat tauerne haunteth / His thurte forsakith'.⁹² Similarly, she should not sit up late at night drinking: late risers were not thrifty.⁹³ Sermons warned against sitting up late drinking, and

⁸⁶ Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 162–163.

⁸⁷ J.W. Sherwell, *The History of the Guild of Saddlers*, 3rd edn., revised by Lt.-Col. K.S. Laurie (Chelmsford: J.H. Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1956), p. 10.

⁸⁸ William Fitz Stephen, 'A Description of London', trans. by H.E. Butler, in F.M. Stenton, F.M., *Norman London: An Essay*, Historical Association Leaflets Nos. 93, 94 (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., for the Historical Association, 1934), p. 30, ll. 193–194; A. J. Duggan, 'William fitz Stephen (fl. 1162–1174)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) online edition <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9643>> [accessed 30 April 2021].

⁸⁹ *þe Conseil and Teiching at the Vys Man Gaif his Sone*, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter / The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage / The Thewis of Gud Women*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja (Helsinki: Academiae Scientiarum Fennicæ, 1948), p. 70.

⁹⁰ 'The sin is not...in the drink, but in the appetite...when the delight is out of measure therein' (translation my own) – *Jacob's Well, An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man's Conscience. Edited from the Unique MS. About 1440 A.D. in Salisbury Cathedral*, ed. by Arthur Brandeis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner & Co., Ltd., for The Early English Text Society, 1900), p. 142; Joan Young Gregg, 'The Exempla of 'Jacob's Well': A Study in the Transmission of Medieval Sermon Stories', *Traditio*, 33 (1977), pp. 359–380, pp. 359–360.

⁹¹ 2a2ae, 150, 2, Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn. (1920), New Advent online edition <<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3150.htm>> [accessed 28 June 2020]. See also *Jacob's Well*, p. 146.

⁹² MS. Henry E. Huntington Library H M 128, f. 218, IX, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter / The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage / The Thewis of Gud Women*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja (Helsinki: Academiae Scientiarum Fennicæ, 1948), p. 161.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, XXV, p. 169.

lying in bed ‘long in the morning, and slothfully to rise and go too late to church’ or work.⁹⁴ An apprentice with a hangover was less productive, and, as few apprentices were paid, they were probably drinking away their master’s money.

As Thomas Aquinas observed, drunkenness led to other behaviours which could damage the reputations of apprentice and master. *Jacob’s Well* called drunkenness the ‘gate of synnes, be þe whiche alle oþere synnes entryn in-to man’.⁹⁵ Sins committed under the influence of alcohol were roundly condemned.⁹⁶ Legal records indicate that taverns encouraged concentrations of disorderly behaviour in the form of noisy pranks, brawling, homicide, prostitution, rape and insurrection.⁹⁷ Inns were more respectable, but still potentially disreputable; even the most upstanding innkeeper might be persuaded to illegally procure prostitutes for guests, and one female innkeeper at Winchester was twice presented as a prostitute.⁹⁸ Although Goldberg asserted that taverns were a place where women could enjoy their own society, they were nevertheless a masculine space and thus dangerous for unmarried women such as apprentices.⁹⁹ ‘Disreputable girls’ were found in taverns, and some were recognized venues for soliciting.¹⁰⁰ Innkeepers might pimp out female servants, and taverns were a good location for pimps and prostitutes to find custom. Every female role related to taverns was linked to tainted womanhood; ‘alewife’ was an insult, tapsters were associated with prostitution.¹⁰¹ In London ordinances brewsters were lumped together with ‘women of disreputable character’, while Coventry ordinances (dated 1492) bracketed tapsters with harlots.¹⁰² Female tavern patrons risked being labelled ‘of easy virtue’.¹⁰³

Seven of the 77 indentures concern female apprentices, but there are few differences between these and the indentures for male apprentices. Three made no mention of taverns,

⁹⁴ *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century. From the Unique M.S. B. 14. 52 in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, ed. and trans. by R. Morris (London: N. Trübner & Co. for The Early English Text Society, 1873), p. 10.

⁹⁵ ‘the gate of sins, by which all other sins enter into man’ (translation my own) – *Jacob’s Well*, p. 145.

⁹⁶ Warner, ‘Before ‘Alcoholism’’, p. 417.

⁹⁷ Hanawalt, ‘Medieval London Taverns’, p. 212.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206; Hare, ‘Inns, Innkeepers’, p. 495.

⁹⁹ P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Women in Fifteenth-Century Town Life’, in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), pp. 107–128, p. 109; Barbara A. Hanawalt, ‘At the Margins of Women’s Space in Medieval Europe’, in *Matrons and Marginal Women in Medieval Society*, ed. by Robert R. Edwards and Vickie Ziegler (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), pp. 9–10, cited in A. Lynn Martin, ‘The Role of Drinking in the Male Construction of Unruly Women’, in *Medieval Sexuality: A Casebook*, ed. by April Harper and Caroline Proctor (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), pp. 98–112, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Felicity Riddy, ‘Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text’, *Speculum*, 71 (1996), pp. 66–86, pp. 78.

¹⁰¹ Hanawalt, ‘Medieval London Taverns’, p. 208; Goldberg, ‘Pigs and Prostitutes’, p. 179.

¹⁰² Hanawalt, ‘Medieval London Taverns’, p. 208; Goldberg, ‘Pigs and Prostitutes’, p. 177.

¹⁰³ Hanawalt, ‘Medieval London Taverns’, pp. 208–209.

two contained conditional prohibitions, and two prohibited customary use of taverns (see Table 4.1). All four indentures which mentioned taverns concerned London apprentices, three of whom were silkwormers, so this is not necessarily a representative sample but we can nevertheless observe a common thread. The conditional prohibitions mirrored those of male apprentices, indicating that women could use taverns on the same terms as men. Katherine Noughe could frequent taverns if it was advantageous to her mistress.¹⁰⁴ Margaret Bisshop (apprenticed to a ‘teldemaker’) was permitted to frequent taverns for ‘mercantile cause’ or if it would benefit her master and mistress (*‘causa mercandizandi aut commodum magistrorum suorum’*).¹⁰⁵ Eleanor Ffyncham and Margaret Ffleming were both prohibited from customarily frequenting taverns.¹⁰⁶ Margaret Ffleming’s mistress was married to a vintner; Clark noted that many medieval taverners were vintners, so the household may have been closely connected to a tavern.¹⁰⁷ However, stricter clauses could be due to the apprentices’ social status. Neither was from London (Eleanor came from Norfolk, and Margaret from Yorkshire), and both were daughters of landholding men – a gentleman and a yeoman respectively. It is possible that both fathers, in negotiating the terms of apprenticeship, sought to impose strict behavioural controls in order to preserve their good reputations. It may also be connected to the apprentice’s age; while Eleanor placed herself (*‘posuit se ipsum’*) as apprentice, Margaret was placed by her father, indicating parental involvement and implying that she was too young to apprentice herself (see Chapter 2).

Contemporary conduct literature emphasised that women needed to preserve their reputations. Girls who could not learn from their mothers directly, perhaps because they were absent from them by reason of apprenticeship, were the main audience for this advice.¹⁰⁸ Conduct literature was ‘designed to socialise them into conforming to a model of femininity...acceptable to those in charge of the smooth running of local society’; it is little wonder that they were concerned about insobriety.¹⁰⁹ *The Thewis Off Gud Women*, a late fifteenth-century poem, advised ‘fra drunkyne folk and tawarne flee’.¹¹⁰ *The Good Wife* poem warned against gaining a reputation for drunkenness: ‘3if þou be ofte dronken, it fallith the to

¹⁰⁴ *‘Tabernam ex consuetudine non frequentabit nisi pro comodo dicte magistre sue ibidem faciendur’* – LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019.

¹⁰⁵ WAM, 5966.

¹⁰⁶ Norfolk Record Office, Hare Mss, no. 2019; TNA, C 146/2314.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, C 146/2314; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Riddy, ‘Mother Knows Best’, p. 71.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹¹⁰ CUL, MS. Kk. 1. 5., Part VI, ff. 49–53, l. 160, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter / The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage / The Thewis of Gud Women*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1948), p. 186.

grete schame'.¹¹¹ One drinking song concluded that some women would 'be at the tavern thrise in the weke' or even every day until they are sick: 'for thyngis used / Will not be refused'.¹¹² There is a sexual element to the phrase 'for thyngis used', linking frequent drunkenness with sexual incontinency. As *Jacob's Well* warned, drunkenness led to other sins. Another late fifteenth-century poem, *The Good Wyfe Wold a Pylgremage*, warned against going to plays and taverns, especially while unmarried: 'yfe þou wiylt no hosbonde have, but wher thy maydon croun'. To protect her 'maiden crown', a woman must avoid excessive drinking, as 'lechery, sclandorynge, and gret dyssese commythe of dronken hede'.¹¹³ Drunk women might be targeted by predatory men. Chaucer's Wife of Bath complained that 'in wommen vinolent [drunkenness] is no defence / this knowen lecchours by experience'; women must avoid drunkenness to remain chaste.¹¹⁴ If female apprentices did visit taverns and alehouses, they had to take care not damage their own reputation, or that of their master or mistress.

4.2 Gaming and gambling

In both literature and reality, inns, taverns and alehouses were locations for gaming.¹¹⁵ Dice, chess, and other 'illicit games' were normally played for a stake, and betting was not necessarily discouraged by the host, hence masters' desire to prevent their apprentices from customarily frequenting such places.¹¹⁶ Unwaged apprentices were unlikely to gamble with their own money. Mercers' apprentices staying at the guild's guesthouses in Flanders (see above) were forbidden to play cards or other games for money within the house – a prohibition on visiting local public houses was insufficient to stop such behaviour.¹¹⁷ In England, innkeepers and taverners were continually fined for allowing men to play 'at tables' ('*ad tabulas*') on their premises.¹¹⁸ At the Great Tourn of Nottingham in 1408, several

¹¹¹ MS. Henry E. Huntington Library H M 128, f. 218, X, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, pp. 161–163.

¹¹² Hanawalt, 'Medieval London Taverns', p. 210.

¹¹³ NLW, Brogyntyn MS ii.1 (formerly MS. Porkington 10), ff. 135 b–138b, XII, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, p. 175.

¹¹⁴ 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale', in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 111, ll. 467–468.

¹¹⁵ Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 112.

¹¹⁶ J.H.R. Murray, *A History of Chess*, reprint (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2012), p. 474; Hanawalt, 'Medieval London Taverns', p. 213.

¹¹⁷ Hanawalt, '*Of Good and Ill Repute*', p. 188.

¹¹⁸ Mavis E. Mate, 'Work and Leisure', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 276–292, p. 288. According to a note in *Memorials*, 'tables' may have been a game similar to modern backgammon – *Memorials*, p. 395, n. 1.

hostelers were accused of harbouring ‘dicers, thieves and harlots’.¹¹⁹ Elsewhere, in 1370 John Dale, a London taverner, was charged with aiding one William atte Wode, ‘who by means of lies, false representations and deceit (*per juncariam, conjecturam & decepcionem*)’ enticed a stranger into...[Dale’s] tavern to play dice in order to cheat him out of his money’. Dale allegedly closed the door and prevented the stranger from leaving until he had been ‘defrauded’ of 17s 8d, a fairly considerable sum.¹²⁰

Gaming constituted such an inherent problem among servants and apprentices in medieval England that it was legislated by statute. The 1388 Statute of Cambridge (see Chapter 2) decreed that servants and labourers could not play ‘tennis or football...coits, dice, casting of the stone...and other such importune games’, but that they should ‘have bows and arrows, and use the same the Sundays and holy days’.¹²¹ This statute was confirmed by Henry IV in 1410, who added a penalty of six days imprisonment for offenders.¹²² In 1477, Edward IV re-issued the statute on the basis that ‘every person strong and able of body’ should spend time at archery, ‘because that the defence of this land was much by archers’.¹²³ There were concerns that players who staked money on games risked being ‘utterly undone and impoverished of their goods’.¹²⁴ The concern was not for the players so much as their masters. If servants and apprentices gambled, they risked wasting the goods of their masters; servants might be paid in cash as well as goods, but very few apprentices received anything like a meaningful wage.

Civic authorities meted out punishments for playing dice and other games, and apprentices were unlikely to be able to pay fines if caught.¹²⁵ At Winchester between 1411 and 1455 there were repeated court presentments for playing dice and other games.¹²⁶ Many offenders were caught gaming in the street, from lack of anywhere else to go, implying that those playing *indoors* were less likely to be caught. In 1461, it became illegal for lords or persons ‘of lower estate’ to allow their servants to play dice or card games within their house ‘or wherever else he may prevent it’ outside the twelve days of Christmas; wrongdoers should be expelled ‘from [the master’s] house and service’. Any hosteller, taverner,

¹¹⁹ Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 247.

¹²⁰ ‘Membr. 2, 16 March 1370’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 115. William Wode was already a known ‘*hasadour*’ and was named in an earlier case in the rolls – ‘Membr. 4, 8 July 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 89.

¹²¹ 12 Richard II, c. 6.

¹²² 11 Henry IV, c. 4.

¹²³ 17 Edw. IV, c. 3.

¹²⁴ 17 Edw. IV, c. 3.

¹²⁵ Mate, ‘Work and Leisure’, p. 287.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

victualler, craftsman or householder who allowed games to be played in their house was to be imprisoned.¹²⁷ Such prohibitions may already have been familiar in some towns – in 1452, the Coventry Leet forbade servants from playing illicit games or ‘betyng’ on feast days, on pain of three days’ imprisonment and a 4*d* fine. The servant’s master faced the same penalty, with a 12*d* fine, as a punishment for either poor oversight or tacit acceptance of the servant’s misdemeanour.¹²⁸ In 1495, Henry VII’s Act against Vagabonds and Beggars prohibited apprentices and servants from gambling for money ‘but onely for mete and drinke’. They could play dice and cards at Christmas, but ‘oonly in the dwelling house of his maister or where the maister...is present, upon peyne of imprisonment by the space of a day in the stokkis openly’.¹²⁹ Public presentments and punishments could have a detrimental effect on the apprentice’s reputation, as well as that of the master responsible for their conduct; this was particularly clear in the 1495 legislation, which expected masters to have direct oversight of servants and apprentices. Nevertheless, despite statute legislation and local enforcement, gaming remained a persistent problem, hence the inclusion of this clause in apprenticeship indentures.

Of the 77 indentures, 51 contained a clause prohibiting the apprentice from one or more different types of game. As indicated in Table 4.2, ‘*tali*’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘*scaccaria*’ were considered the most potentially damaging forms of game, but as all of the games were named in Latin there is a certain ambiguity. ‘*Tali*’ could denote dice or knucklebones, and was probably a catch-all term encompassing both types of game. Therefore, we sometimes find ‘*tali*’ alongside ‘*aleae*’, which translates more directly as dice games, and occasionally ‘*aleae*’ is used instead of ‘*tali*’.¹³⁰ Similarly, ‘*scaccaria*’ can refer to a game of chess, a chessboard, or (less relevant here) the Exchequer. Chessboards were used in a variety of different games, including chequers and games of chance (see below), so again this word covered a variety of pastimes. In terms of combinations of prohibitions, one third of the indentures prohibited ‘*tali*’, ‘*scaccaria*’ and included a general prohibition, while a further third prohibit ‘*tali*’ and ‘*scaccaria*’. Dicing’s potential for damage (both financial and reputational) is demonstrated by the fact that 90 percent of the indentures prohibited ‘*tali*’ or

¹²⁷ *PROME*, p. 488.

¹²⁸ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part II*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1908), p. 271.

¹²⁹ 11 Henry VII, chapter 2, c.5.

¹³⁰ BL, Add. Ch. 75625; TNA, C 146/1129. ‘*Ad alios non ludet*’ – TNA, C 146/3879; ‘*ad alias neque staccarium [sic] non ludet*’ – TNA, E 40/8643.

‘*aleae*’ alone, or prohibited ‘*tali*’ alongside a general prohibition. ‘*Scaccaria*’ was never included in an indenture without ‘*tali*’.

Table 4.2 – variations in prohibitions against gaming and gambling in 51 indentures.

<i>Prohibitions</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	<i>% of 51 indentures</i>
<i>Specific prohibitions – each mention counted individually</i>		
<i>Tali (dice, knucklebones)</i>	44	86.3
<i>Scaccaria (chess, chequers)</i>	34	66.7
<i>Aleae (dice, gambling)</i>	4	7.8
<i>Non-specific prohibitions</i>		
<i>Dishonest or illicit games</i>	27	52.9
<i>Games which might damage the master</i>	4	7.8
Total	31	60.7
<i>Combinations of prohibitions</i>		
<i>Tali or aleae, scaccaria and general prohibition</i>	17	33.3
<i>Tali or aleae and scaccaria only</i>	17	33.3
<i>Tali or aleae only</i>	7	13.7
<i>Tali or aleae and general prohibition</i>	5	9.8
<i>General prohibition only</i>	5	9.8
<i>Scaccaria and general prohibition</i>	0	0
<i>Scaccaria only</i>	0	0
Total	51	100

The list of games outlawed in the Statute of Cambridge and subsequent legislation indicates that apprentices’ games were not limited to the broad labels of ‘*aleae*’, ‘*tali*’ and ‘*scaccaria*’. Football remained popular despite restrictive legislation, and wrestling matches drew large crowds, but both could lead to rioting and disorder.¹³¹ In 31 indentures a non-specific prohibition prevented the apprentice from playing any ‘illicit’ or ‘dishonest’ game (‘*illicita*’, ‘*inhonesta*’), or games which might cause the master damage. This covered the majority of games an apprentice might encounter over the course of their apprenticeship, and gave the master reasonable grounds for punishing any misdemeanours. Walter Byse’s apprenticeship indenture, written in English, casts more light on this: Walter shall ‘goer neyther to no revels nor sporte...w[i]t[h]out the lycence’ of his master.¹³² This implies that

¹³¹ F.P. Magoun, ‘Football in Medieval England and in Middle-English Literature’, *American Historical Review*, 35 (1929), pp. 33–45, p. 41; Walter Besant, *Medieval London: Historical and Social* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906), p. 312, cited in Gregory M. Colón Semenza, ‘Historicizing Wrastlynge in the “Miller’s Tale”’, *Chaucer Review*, 38 (2003), pp. 66–82, p. 68.

¹³² Trinity College, Cambridge, O.2. 53, f. 30 r.

some games were more acceptable than others, although this was left at the master's discretion.

The earliest indenture referring to gaming was dated 1310, when the form of indentures was still developing. John of Wiltshire was prohibited from playing dice (*'non ludet ad talos'*) during his eight year apprenticeship to a London fishmonger.¹³³ The earliest mention of *'scaccaria'* can be found in an indenture dated 1364, and from this date onwards the majority of indentures prohibited *'scaccaria'* as well as other forms of game.¹³⁴ Only one indenture suggested that this prohibition was conditional; Thomas McShane, apprenticed in 1479, was forbidden from using *'tales'* unless by way of trade (*'...neque tales non utatur nisi per viam mercandisi'*).¹³⁵ As mentioned above, McShane was apprenticed in Ireland, so this might be indicative of local custom, but without further evidence this is conjectural. From the view of protecting the master's reputation, all of these games were worth prohibiting, especially if they were played for money.

Preventing apprentices from partaking in such pastimes was an exercise in sound business sense as well as a means of protecting an apprentice's reputation. Contemporary literature reflected masters' fears that gaming would lead to gambling and damage to the master. The Cook's Tale, an unfinished segment of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, concerned the apprentice Perkyn Revelour, a womaniser and a 'party animal'. He and his gang played at dice in the street, and there was no apprentice in London 'that fairer koude caste a paire of dys'. Perkyn was also a thief, funding his lifestyle with money from his master's strongbox.¹³⁶ This behaviour was not exaggerated: in 1371 Richard Scot and John Godeston were imprisoned for cheating John Ellesworth out of 40s 'by means of false dice' while gambling with Ellesworth's servant John Green.¹³⁷ This implies that John Green was staking his master's money. Furthermore, masters were unlikely to want their apprentices aggressively pursued by people to whom they owed money.

Inveterate gamblers saw apprentices as fair game. In 1339, Henry Pykard, Walter Waldeshef, and Roger Fynch were charged with being addicted to playing knuckle-bones

¹³³ TNA, E 210/5150.

¹³⁴ York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1.

¹³⁵ SALS, D\B\bw/368. The context of the full sentence (*'Covines [sic] tabernas neque tales non utatur nisi per viam mercandisi'*) makes it unlikely that this refers to tally sticks, although this may of course denote a game played with tally sticks. However it is more likely to be an alternative rendering of *'talos'*.

¹³⁶ 'The Cook's Tale', in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 85, ll. 4386–4390.

¹³⁷ 'Membr. 6b, 25 Sept. 1371', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 130.

(‘*ad talos*’) at night, and leading apprentices into gambling habits.¹³⁸ Gambling could result in eye-watering losses; in 1375, Stephen Lalleford, smith, was committed to prison ‘as a common gamester with dice and chequers’, having ‘cheated’ William Brounyng out of £17.¹³⁹ Very few apprentices could have covered such losses themselves, hence the prohibition in indentures. Not all dice and chess players were honest, and apprentices might fall victim to sharp practices. Most examples are from London, due to the volume of records that survive, but this was almost certainly a problem throughout England. In 1365 John atte Ree entered into a bond of £40 with the Commonalty ‘that [he] would cease to play with false dice’ and inform on any other miscreants found using them.¹⁴⁰ The Museum of London holds several examples of medieval dice weighted with drops of mercury.¹⁴¹ These dice, known as ‘fulhams’ after the London district notorious for dice-sharpers, were weighted so as to land on either high or low numbers. Unweighted dice could also be false – so-called ‘high despatchers’ had faces numbered four, five, and six, while ‘low despatchers’ had one, two, and three. The success of these dice, according to Brian Spencer, proceeded from the fact that it is impossible to see more than three sides of a cube at once.¹⁴²

Chess seems an unlikely target for these prohibitions, but Harold Murray suggested that medieval chess was usually played for a stake, ordinarily for money, and there was risk to life and limb if tempers flared.¹⁴³ Peter Damian, the eleventh-century church reformer, railed against ‘the vanity of chess’, and complained that ‘often insults are exchanged’ and the game ‘degenerates into a brawl’.¹⁴⁴ In *The History of Fulk Fitz-Warine*, the future King John ‘seized the chessboard, and gave Fulk a heavy blow’, and this literary trope appeared in several other sources.¹⁴⁵ Later in the *History*, Fulk and his comrades decapitated a group of

¹³⁸ ‘Membr. 8, 5 Oct. 1339’, *CPMR*, 1323–64, p. 113.

¹³⁹ ‘Membr. 3, 5 Dec. 1375’, *CPMR*, 1364–81, pp. 210–211.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Membr. 19 b, 8 Oct. 1365’, *CPMR*, 1364–81, p. 47.

¹⁴¹ Museum of London, ‘Collections in Focus: Dice’,

<<http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/group/25454.html>> [accessed 3 July 2020].

¹⁴² Brian Spencer, ‘Exhibits at Ballots 29th November 1984: 4. Fifteenth-century collar of SS and hoard of false dice with their container, from the Museum of London’, *Antiquaries Journal*, 65 (1985), pp. 449–453, p. 453. The dice were weighted by drilling out between certain spots and filling the cavities with mercury before capping the holes with ‘spots’, most likely made from a mixture of tallow and black pigment.

¹⁴³ Murray, *A History of Chess*, pp. 474–476.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Milliman, ‘*Ludus Scaccarii*: Games and Governance in Twelfth-Century England’, in *Chess in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: A Fundamental Thought Paradigm of the Premodern World*, ed. by Daniel E. O’Sullivan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 63–86, pp. 74–75.

¹⁴⁵ *The History of Fulk Fitz-Warine*, trans. by Alice Kemp-Welch with an introduction by Louis Brandin (Cambridge, ON: In Parentheses Publications, 2001), pp. 29–30. A similar story in a French chronicle has Henry I, then Prince Henry, strike the French Dauphin with a chessboard: Sir Frederick Madden, ‘Historical Remarks on the Introduction of the Game of Chess into Europe, and on the Ancient Chess-men Discovered in the Isle of Lewis’, *The Chess Player’s Chronicle*, vol. 1 (London: R. Hastings, 1841), pp. 124–128, note, p. 127.

‘vile scoundrels’ after losing to them at chess.¹⁴⁶ Chess-based violence may well have been a regular occurrence in less elevated circles of society, particularly when players (and spectators) placed bets on the outcome. As Paul Milliman noted, with honour and money on the line, chess was not a game that people took lightly.¹⁴⁷

Chessboards could also be used as a ‘rude implement of gambling’ for quek, a game of chance in which players tossed pieces onto a chessboard and bet on whether they would land on black or white squares.¹⁴⁸ In 1376, Nicholas Prestone and William Outlawe were attached to answer a plea of deceit and falsehood. Prestone and Outlawe were alleged to have used a ‘false’ quekboard in order to cheat John and William atte Hull of 39s 2d. The black squares were depressed on three-quarters of the board, while the white squares were depressed on the remaining quarter. This influenced how the counters fell, giving a knowing player 3–1 odds of landing on a black square. Prestone and Outlawe were sentenced to one hour in the pillory while the false board was burnt beneath them and the reason for their punishment was proclaimed.¹⁴⁹ Dishonesty in gambling was such a profound problem that three men accused of ‘cheating at games’ before London’s Council of Aldermen in 1382 were given a hefty sentence: they were ‘led to the place of punishment on three consecutive days with flutes and trumpets’, ensuring public humiliation. According to Rexroth, delinquents were rarely, and only in particularly grave cases, sentenced to more than one day in the pillory, and only on one previous occasion had the miscreant been accompanied by musicians.¹⁵⁰

The apprentice’s gender had a definite effect with regard to gambling. This clause was omitted from the majority of indentures for female apprentices, even those which mentioned taverns, suggesting that (at least in this stratum of medieval society) gaming and gambling was a predominantly male preserve. It was not a female activity, and therefore it was unnecessary to expressly prohibit female apprentices from partaking in it. Only one of the seven female apprentices was prohibited from gambling: Katherine Noughe was forbidden to play any illicit or dishonest games (*‘nec aliqua ioca illicita seu inhonesta non exercebit’*), and there is no obvious explanation for including this clause.¹⁵¹ The existence of a gender

¹⁴⁶ Fulk Fitz-Warine, p. 52.

¹⁴⁷ Milliman, ‘*Ludus Scaccarii*’, p. 70.

¹⁴⁸ Justin du Coeur, ‘Rules to Period Games: Board and Dice Games’, *Medieval and Renaissance Games HomePage* <<http://jducoeur.org/game-hist/game-rules.html#board>> [accessed 30 April 2021].

¹⁴⁹ *Memorials*, pp. 395–396.

¹⁵⁰ Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 146.

¹⁵¹ LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019. Elizabeth Eland’s indenture (1454) is in quite a poor condition and is difficult to read, but the clause does not seem to have been included there – TNA, E 210/1176.

divide is further corroborated by the omission of gambling from contemporary female-orientated conduct literature. Although the Wise Man warned his son ‘not to play at dice’, none of the ‘Good Wife’ poems (discussed above) provided this advice.¹⁵² Instead, the *Good Wife* directed her daughter to avoid ‘wrxling’ and ‘scheting ate cok’, because being a spectator at these events would imply she were ‘a strompet or a gigelot’.¹⁵³ Felicity Riddy noted the similarities between Katherine Noughe’s indenture and the behaviour proscribed by the *Good Wife*, and suggested that these proscriptions indicated ‘the importance of respectability to the bourgeois ethos’.¹⁵⁴ ‘Common fame’, or reputation, was often the basis for prosecution; maintaining a good reputation was paramount.¹⁵⁵ We cannot know how effective these clauses were at preventing apprentices from gambling. It is unlikely that no apprentice ever fell foul of loaded dice, false chessboards, or sheer bad luck.

4.3 Brothels and prostitutes

Medieval drinking establishments were intrinsically linked to sex and the sex trade, and were often directly associated with brothels and prostitutes in civic legislation.¹⁵⁶ As noted above, women employed in service occupations in taverns might be pimped out for the sexual satisfaction of male customers. Taverns also provided opportunities for pimps and prostitutes, a secondary trade that apparently went unregulated by the proprietors.¹⁵⁷ Popular poetry suggested that female tavern patrons were of easy virtue; it is likely that many women ‘picked up’ in taverns prostituted themselves on a casual basis to supplement their income.¹⁵⁸ Prostitutes’ main clientele were men without legitimate access to women, and this group included apprentices.¹⁵⁹ Although masters sought to avert temptation by largely prohibiting apprentices from visiting taverns, these were not the only places that they could find sexual

¹⁵² *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, p. 64.

¹⁵³ MS. Emmanuel College, Cambridge, I. 4. 31 (c. 1350), XI, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, p. 163. ‘Shooting at cock’ seems to have involved throwing sticks or stones (or actually shooting arrows) at a cock or chicken tied to a stake. See W. Carew Hazlitt, *Brand’s Popular Antiquities of Great Britain. Faiths and Folklore: A Dictionary of National Beliefs, Superstitions and Popular Customs, Past and Current, with their Classical and Foreign Analogues, Described and Illustrated. Forming a New Edition of “The Popular Antiquities of Great Britain” by Brand and Ellis, Largely Extended, Corrected, Brought Down to the Present Time, and Now First Alphabetically Arranged – vol. I* (London and New York, NY: Reeves & Turner/Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1905), pp. 139–140.

¹⁵⁴ Riddy, ‘Mother Knows Best’, p. 78.

¹⁵⁵ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ Davis, *Medieval Market Morality*, p. 247.

¹⁵⁷ Hanawalt, ‘Medieval London Taverns’, pp. 208–209.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209; Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 53–54; Goldberg, ‘Pigs and Prostitutes’, p. 176.

¹⁵⁹ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 76; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 121.

outlets; the majority of England's sexworkers were essentially streetwalkers.¹⁶⁰ Ruth Karras argued that masters saw it as unavoidable that male apprentices would seek sexual outlets, and even clerics believed that prostitution was necessary because of men's natural, sinful, libido.¹⁶¹ Therefore it was necessary for apprenticeship indentures to contain clauses which prohibited or placed conditions upon sexual activity.

Ten of the 77 indentures prohibited the apprentice from habitually using brothels ('*lupanaria*'), and a further two forbade the apprentice from using prostitutes ('*meretrices*').¹⁶² Sexual impropriety was also covered by clauses concerning fornication (see below), hence the rarity of this clause; nevertheless, its inclusion indicates clear regional differences of custom and practice in the formation of apprenticeship indentures. All three indentures from York referred to '*lupanaria*'.¹⁶³ These represent the entirety of indentures from York collected for this research, so the inclusion may be indicative of normal practice in the late fourteenth century. Goldberg suggested that York's 'brothels' were often actually boarding houses which profited as a venue for illicit sex, and this was probably true throughout England.¹⁶⁴ Of the remaining indentures, three are from Winchester and the remainder from Coventry, Alton, Wycombe, and Calverley (near Bradford).¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, in all of the indentures from York, the clause reads '*ad talos non ludet; tabernas, scaccarium, neque lupanaria ex consuetudine non frequentabit*', linking taverns, chess, and brothels, while in the Winchester indentures '*lupanaria*' was included along with '*talis*' and '*scaccaria*'. Thus, while Winchester apprentices were forbidden to use dice, chessboards or brothels ('*non utitur talis scaccario aut lupanaria*'), York apprentices were actually only

¹⁶⁰ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 76; Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', p. 186. In York, many sexworkers lived and worked around Aldwark, Grape Lane, St Andrewgate and Swinegate – Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', p. 176.

¹⁶¹ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 76; Ruth Mazo Karras, 'The Regulation of Brothels in Later Medieval England', *Signs*, 14 (1989), pp. 399–433, pp. 399–400.

¹⁶² York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1; *York Memorandum Book: Part I (1376–1419) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1912), pp. 54–55; *York Memorandum Book*, ed. by Joyce W. Percy (Gateshead: Northumberland Press Ltd., for the Surtees Society, 1973), p. 5; Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/2; HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v., m. 42 v. and m. 44; TNA, C 146/3153; West Yorkshire Archives, MMB/56; BL, Add. Ch. 75055; MERL, MS2419/24. For discussion on the use of '*meretrices*' to describe promiscuous women as well as prostitutes, see Ruth Mazo Karras, 'The Latin Vocabulary of Illicit Sex in English Ecclesiastical Court Records', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 2 (1992), pp. 1–17, pp. 6–9.

¹⁶³ York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1; *York Memorandum Book: Part I*, pp. 54–55; *York Memorandum Book*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', pp. 178 and 186.

¹⁶⁵ Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/2; HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v., m. 42 v. and m. 44; TNA, C 146/3153; West Yorkshire Archives, MMB/56.

forbidden to habitually frequent these places.¹⁶⁶ This accords with Karras' argument that young men would inevitably seek an outlet for their sexual urges, and thus ensuring they had an outlet was a means of preserving basic order – and, also, a means of discouraging them from committing fornication or adultery within the master's household.¹⁶⁷ This may also reflect a recognition that the majority of prostitutes did not work out of a fixed location, hence the restriction on 'meretrices', the prostitute themselves, rather than the brothel, in two of the twelve indentures.¹⁶⁸

In so far as they existed, English brothels were mostly small, private, and ephemeral, a far cry from substantial civic brothels found in some Continental cities.¹⁶⁹ London, Southampton, and Sandwich seem to have had the only institutionalised brothels in this period.¹⁷⁰ This was probably deliberate; they were all ports, accommodating large numbers of foreign mariners and merchants. These men, who might speak little or no English, lacked female companionship, and might come from cultures where institutionalised brothels were the norm and unchaperoned women were considered 'available'.¹⁷¹ Both Goldberg and Karras argued that institutionalised brothels were intended to meet the needs of this group, and thus contain the threat to order they might pose if they mistakenly solicited local women for sex.¹⁷² No indentures from Southampton or Sandwich have been found for use in this research, but twelve indentures for male apprentices survive from London and it is interesting to note that, without exception, none of these indentures contains a clause regarding brothels or prostitutes. However, all but two of these prohibited fornication within or outside the master's house, which would prevent the apprentice from patronising prostitutes.¹⁷³

Local ordinances and regulations might prohibit prostitution, or restrict it to an environment which rendered it inaccessible for most apprentices – for example, by moving it outside the town. Therefore, it might have been unnecessary to include this clause in an

¹⁶⁶ HRO, W/D1/22, m. 44.

¹⁶⁷ Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 76 and 134.

¹⁶⁸ West Yorkshire Archives, MMB/56; BL, Add. Ch. 75055; MERL, MS2419/24.

¹⁶⁹ Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', p. 180.

¹⁷⁰ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 35. See Jean Rossiaud, 'Prostitution, Youth, and Society in the Towns of Southeastern France in the Fifteenth Century', in *Deviants and the Abandoned in French Society: Selections from the Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations, Volume IV*, ed. by Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, trans. by Elborg Forster and Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 1–46, pp. 2–5 for discussion on prostitution 'for the common good' in towns along the Rhône Valley.

¹⁷¹ Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', p. 184.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 184; Karras, *Common Women*, p. 135.

¹⁷³ Of the two that do not contain this clause, one dates from 1255 and entirely omits behavioural clauses (TNA, E 210/1397). The other, dated 1397 (LMA, A/CSC/12677) forbids customary use of taverns, gaming, and completely prohibits the apprentice from contracting a marriage, but makes no mention of fornication or adultery.

apprenticeship indenture. Prostitution was illegal in most English towns, but the approach was generally to order sexworkers to leave town. A 1344 ordinance forbade prostitutes (and lepers) from living within Bristol's walls.¹⁷⁴ In the mid-fifteenth century both Coventry and Leicester ordered brothels to move outside the city walls.¹⁷⁵ This made prostitutes less accessible to apprentices with little personal freedom. In London, there were various attempts to shut down brothels and move prostitutes outside the walls, but by 1393 brothels were tolerated in Cock's Lane, which lay outside the city walls in Smithfield.¹⁷⁶ In 1483, 'for to eschewe the stynkyng and horrible synne of lechery...strumpettes mysghyded and idil women', who walked the streets and lanes and used 'taverns and opere private places', were expelled from London and its suburbs.¹⁷⁷ This only succeeded in moving them across the Thames to Southwark, which was probably not quite as far as the authorities had intended. In Southwark, as on the Continent, brothels were known as 'stews', or bathhouses. Not all bathhouses were brothels, but the association with sex was so entrenched that 'going to the bathhouse' required little explanation.¹⁷⁸ Bathhouses were only permitted in the city of London if the proprietor could assure authorities that they did not permit women in the men's bathhouse.¹⁷⁹

A further reason for omitting this clause from indentures might be that the use of prostitutes was already subject to guild regulation. In 1488 the London fullers ordered their apprentices 'not to use or haunt the stews side, nor the skittles, nor any other riotous games'.¹⁸⁰ If there was no specific guild ordinance prohibiting London apprentices from visiting the stews, they might be prevented by other means. Apprentices were expected to serve their masters both day and night, and not absent themselves from the household without good reason. In towns where sexworkers had been banished outside the walls apprentices

¹⁷⁴ Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', p. 173.

¹⁷⁵ *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor's Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part I*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1907), pp. 219–220; *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1327–1509*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1901), p. 291.

¹⁷⁶ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. I containing Liber Albus, compiled A.D. 1419*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1859), p. 283; Karras, 'The Regulation of Brothels', p. 408; J.B. Post, 'A Fifteenth-Century Customary of the Southwark Stews', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 5 (1974–1977), pp. 418–428, p. 418.

¹⁷⁷ 'Fo. 189b.' *Letter-Book L*, p. 206.

¹⁷⁸ James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 527. The inventory of a bathhouse in fifteenth-century Avignon included a large number of beds, but no baths – Rossiaud, 'Prostitution, Youth, and Society', p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ Karras, 'The Regulation of Brothels', pp. 407–408.

¹⁸⁰ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 76.

would have little opportunity to leave the house to find a prostitute. In London, where prostitutes were (theoretically) confined to Southwark, boatmen were prohibited from taking any man or woman to ‘les Estouves’ at night.¹⁸¹ Additionally, London and most other towns had a night curfew; the gates were shut, taverns closed, and patrols challenged any person walking abroad.¹⁸² Thus any apprentice who attempted to absent himself by night to visit the Southwark stews could find himself in trouble several times over.

4.4 Fornication and adultery

The majority of indentures omitted specific mention of ‘*lupanaria*’ or ‘*meretrices*’ because illicit sexual activity was already covered by the prohibition on fornication. This was clarified in one indenture (dated 1384), which prohibited the apprentice from using brothels but also listed prostitutes among the women with whom he must not commit fornication and adultery.¹⁸³ From the 1300s onwards, it was unusual for an apprenticeship indenture not to include a clause restricting sexual activity. Of the 70 indentures containing behavioural clauses, 67 regulated sexual activity – all 67 mentioned fornication, and 32 also included adultery. The penalty for wrongdoing was specified in 33 indentures; either payment of a fine or duplication of the term of the apprenticeship.¹⁸⁴ The indentures restricted a broad range of sexual activity. Adultery covered extra-marital sexual activity, for example with the master’s wife or another married woman (or, for female apprentices, with a married man).¹⁸⁵ Fornication encompassed a variety of ‘sexual errors’, but most commonly described sex between an unmarried man and unmarried woman.¹⁸⁶ These definitions, therefore, included prostitutes, as well as other sexual relationships. Sexual offences fell under the jurisdiction of the church courts, and allegations of fornication might reach them through a network of local informing, ‘offended community opinion’, gossip, and rumours about other people’s *fama* – reputation.¹⁸⁷ The mere whisper of sexual impropriety could ruin a reputation.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁸² Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 30.

¹⁸³ ‘*fornicationem nec adulteram cum uxore, filia nec meretrice nec aliqua ancilla dictorum magistrorum infra domum nec extra non faciet... non utetur tales nec scacario nec lupanaria nec tabernam durante termino predicto*’ – Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/2.

¹⁸⁴ 20s per woman (1309), *Year Book 11 Edward II*, p. 127; 40s per woman (1448), Leics RO, DG11/1156.

¹⁸⁵ Ruth Mazo Karras, ‘The Regulation of Sexuality in the Late Middle Ages: England and France’, *Speculum*, 86 (2011), pp. 1010–1039, p. 1010.

¹⁸⁶ Judith M. Bennett, ‘Writing Fornication: Medieval Leyrwrite and its Historians’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 13 (2003), pp. 131–162, p. 135.

¹⁸⁷ Karras, ‘The Regulation of Sexuality’, pp. 1019–1020.

As Table 4.3 shows, around 60 percent of indentures included a clause which effectively prohibited the apprentice from committing fornication. Variations in phrasing make it difficult to clearly quantify the uses of different permutations of this clause. As such, the indentures have been grouped based on the general sense of the prohibition. Very few indentures explicitly and totally prohibited fornication (for example, ‘*ffornicationem non committet*’), but it is difficult to conceive of any circumstances where fornication would be permitted.¹⁸⁸ This explains why so few indentures prohibited the apprentice from using prostitutes or brothels. One significant point, noted by Karras, is that the wording of some indentures permitted the apprentice to seek sexual outlets, generally *outside* the master’s home.¹⁸⁹ This indicates a pragmatic, realistic, and easily enforceable approach to controlling the behaviour of adolescent males. Roughly 38 percent of the indentures provided a loophole, albeit conditionally (see below).

Table 4.3 – variations in clauses concerning fornication, and fornication and adultery, in 67 indentures for both male and female apprentices.

<i>Prohibition</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	<i>% of 67 indentures</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	<i>% of 32 indentures</i>
<i>Effective total prohibitions</i>	<i>Fornication</i>		<i>Plus adultery</i>	
<i>Within or without house, damage to master</i>	15	22.4	1	3.1
<i>Within or without house</i>	10	14.9	4	12.5
<i>Within or without house, including with members of household</i>	7	10.4	7	21.9
<i>Total prohibition</i>	6	9.0	3	9.4
<i>Not to commit damage</i>	3	4.5	–	–
<i>Subtotal</i>	41	61.2	15	46.9
<i>Conditional prohibitions</i>				
<i>With members of household</i>	13	19.4	9	28.1
<i>Within house</i>	8	11.9	5	15.6
<i>Within house, including with members of household</i>	3	4.5	2	6.3
<i>Within house, damage to master</i>	1	1.5	1	3.1
<i>Within house, or with servants without house</i>	1	1.5	–	–
<i>Subtotal</i>	26	38.8	17	53.1
<i>Total</i>	67	100	32	100

¹⁸⁸ SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.

¹⁸⁹ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 77, n. 41.

In 32 of the 67 indentures, fornication was bracketed with adultery, with the apprentice prohibited or restricted from both. Adultery was only ever mentioned alongside fornication. Nearly half of the 32 indentures effectively totally prohibited fornication and adultery, but as above, it is difficult to envisage circumstances where adultery would be permissible. The fact that just over half of the indentures seem to tolerate adultery is almost certainly due to the Latin phrasing. Although sexual indiscretions were normally punished in the church courts, adultery could be framed as abduction and prosecuted under common law (see below). Caroline Dunn labelled it ‘a sexual sin, but...also a secular crime’.¹⁹⁰ Although the penalty might be a fine, adultery could be punished with public penance and this would have consequences for the reputations of both parties involved; if one was an apprentice, it would reflect upon his master’s reputation.¹⁹¹

Twenty-two percent of the indentures prohibited fornication, within or outside the master’s house, which might incur damage to the master. This clause might be phrased ‘*ffornicationem in domibus dicti magistri sui non faciet nec extra per quam idem magister suus in aliquo deterioretur*’.¹⁹² This represented fears that rumours of misbehaviour might come to the attention of the church courts, thus damaging the reputation of the master, who was supposed to have control and oversight of his household. The same can be said of those indentures which prohibit fornication which might cause damage to the master: ‘*ffornicationem non faciet per quam idem magist(er) suus poterit deteriorari*’.¹⁹³ Although these clauses seem to offer opportunities for apprentices to commit fornication as long as it did not affect the master, it is difficult to think of circumstances in which this would be a viable defence for an apprentice caught *in flagrante delicto*. The only instance that suggests itself would be if the couple were in the process of marrying, and even then, consummating a union before it was solemnised in church could lead to a summons from the church courts.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, this can be considered, effectively, a total prohibition. This seems to have been

¹⁹⁰ Caroline Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 120.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁹² ‘Not to fornicate in the house of his said master or outside, which might in any way damage the master’ – SALS, DD\SF/16/31/1.

¹⁹³ TNA, C 146/1129.

¹⁹⁴ Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 31. See *ibid.*, pp. 28–31 for a discussion of the process of marriage formation in medieval England.

less of a concern for adultery – only one indenture used this variation of the clause in relation to fornication *and* adultery.¹⁹⁵

The nature of medieval households, which might include servants and apprentices alongside the master and his own family, was reflected in the wording of some clauses. In 19 percent of indentures, the apprentice was completely prohibited from committing fornication with any member of the household. Apprentices could develop close relationships with their masters' families, hence fears that this could evolve into carnal knowledge of wives, daughters, and servants. John Corby's indenture (dated 1448) specifically prohibited sexual relations with his master's servants, but clauses prohibiting fornication with the wife, daughters and servants were more common; in this case Corby's master might have been unmarried.¹⁹⁶ This was also the most common iteration for adultery, reflecting masters' concerns. Thomas Sturte's indenture (dated 1457) very clearly illustrated his master's fears, prohibiting him from committing fornication and adultery with Robert Sturte's wife, or his daughters or female servants, or with anyone else inside or outside the Sturtes' house: '*Adulterium et fornicacionem cum Johanna matrona eius uxore dicti Roberti magistri sui filia vel ancilla seu cum aliqua alia infra mansum predicti Roberti magistri sui et Johanne matrone sue nec extra faciet*'.¹⁹⁷

Masters with pretty young wives might have been especially keen to include this clause in male apprentices' indentures; it was not unknown for apprentices to seduce their masters' wives. Dunn described an action of trespass *vi et armis* ('with force and arms') brought by Stephen Upton against his former apprentice Robert Heydon. Upton alleged that Heydon abducted Upton's wife Sybil in 1308, along with goods, including clothes and jewels, worth £60. In actual fact, Heydon had been enjoying a sexual relationship with Sybil, and they had run away together.¹⁹⁸ Sybil's voluntary abandonment of her husband meant Heydon was not guilty of trespass, although after 1382 such 'abductions' were actionable as rape.¹⁹⁹ However, in this case the jury decided Heydon had 'maliciously carried away'

¹⁹⁵ '*Non comittet adulterium vel fornicacionem cum aliqua muliere infra domicilium ipsius magistri sui nec extra unde idem magistro eius in aliquo deterioretur*' – HRO, W/D1/22, m. 46.

¹⁹⁶ '*ffornicacionem cum aliqua muliere eidem magistro suo serviet non faciet*' – Leics RO, DG11/1156.

¹⁹⁷ Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3.

¹⁹⁸ Dunn, *Stolen Women*, pp. 127–128. See also Sara Butler, 'Runaway Wives: Husband Desertion in Medieval England', *Journal of Social History*, 40 (2006), pp. 337–359, p. 342. The law took the view that the wife's consent was unlawful and void, and therefore enticing her away could be treated as a forcible abduction (although a jury could, as in the case of *Upton v Heydon*, find that the abduction had not been forcible) – J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 456.

¹⁹⁹ J.B. Post, 'Sir Thomas West and the Statute of Rapes, 1382', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53 (1980), pp. 24–30, p. 25.

Upton's goods. In legal doctrine, any goods or personal belongings carried away by the wife were the property of her husband, and he could recover damages for their loss.²⁰⁰ Apprentices might develop close relationships with their masters' families (see Chapter 7), so Robert Heydon was certainly not the only apprentice to commit adultery with his master's wife, an incident which presumably damaged the reputations of all involved.

Half of the conditional prohibitions forbade the apprentice from committing fornication *within* the master's house, but not elsewhere (see Table 4.3). Jean Rossiaud noted that, in southeastern France, prostitution was used to curb 'adolescent aggressivity'.²⁰¹ In England prostitution fell outside the aegis of civic authorities, but nevertheless, allowing apprentices a degree of sexual freedom might prevent household conflict. This was not an attempt by masters to frame a restrictive clause so as to make it seem lax. In urban areas, there were manifold opportunities for sexual encounters outside the home; preventing an apprentice from having sex in the house was unlikely to deter them completely. Some inns and taverns operated as brothels, and amorous couples might rent rooms in boarding houses.²⁰² Hanawalt noted cases from the London Consistory Court recording sexual encounters in fields outside the walls, 'behind a mud wall', and in the city's streets and lanes.²⁰³ Although it might affect an apprentice's reputation if he was caught committing fornication in a boarding house or alleyway, there were good reasons for masters to want to prevent this behaviour within their house. Medieval households could be crowded, so this shifted behaviour away from a space which might be shared with the master's family.

Masters would also be keen to avoid accusations of '*lenocinium*' ('procuring'); this term could be applied to those who aided and abetted illicit relationships, whether or not they profited from them.²⁰⁴ Thus, parents who promoted a burgeoning romance and were seen to condone pre-marital sex could be alleged to have '*fovebat lenocinium*' ('supported procurement').²⁰⁵ A master, acting *in loco parentis*, might fear similar damaging accusations if he permitted fornication under his roof. Of course, allowing the apprentice to commit fornication and adultery in other locations might damage the reputations of the parties involved. Shannon McSheffrey noted that a man's reputation depended on his ability to

²⁰⁰ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 456; Lizabeth Johnson, 'Married Women, Crime and the Courts in Late Medieval Wales', in *Married Women and the Law in Premodern Northwest Europe*, ed. by Cordelia Beattie and Matthew Frank Stevens (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 71–89, p. 75.

²⁰¹ Rossiaud, 'Prostitution, Youth, and Society', p. 29.

²⁰² Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', p. 178.

²⁰³ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 123.

²⁰⁴ Karras, 'The Latin Vocabulary of Illicit Sex', p. 9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

protect and control his dependents, and all men had to guard against sexual misbehaviour in order to retain *bona fama*.²⁰⁶ It is difficult to surmise how masters reconciled this with the relative sexual freedom they allowed their apprentices. We must assume that apprentices were limited by other terms in their indentures, such as those requiring them to be at their master's service day and night, and prohibiting them from absenting themselves without permission.²⁰⁷ Masters may also have relied on self-policing, imbuing apprentices with a knowledge that promiscuity was unacceptable, and that respectable men controlled their sexual appetites.²⁰⁸ Alternatively, apprentices were simply ordered not to get caught.

Rumours of licentiousness could have a damaging effect on a woman's reputation. Unsurprisingly, clauses concerning fornication were included in five indentures for female apprentices. All five were effectively total prohibitions. The sexual behaviour of unmarried women was more strictly controlled than men, and the (admittedly small) figures in Table 4.4 corroborate this. Women's honour and virtue was primarily sexual, and rumours of licentiousness could be equally as damaging as actually being a prostitute.²⁰⁹ Karras argued that the number of accusations of having defamed others with sexual slanders indicates that people sought to protect their reputations; such insults could not be shrugged off, as they affected public opinion.²¹⁰

Table 4.4 – variations in clauses concerning fornication, and fornication and adultery, for female apprentices only.

<i>Prohibition</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	
	<i>Fornication</i>	<i>Plus Adultery</i>
<i>Within or without house, damage to master</i>	2	–
<i>Within or without house</i>	1	1
<i>Total prohibition</i>	1	–
<i>Other</i>	1	–
<i>No mention</i>	2	–
Total	7	1

Unlike their male counterparts, none of the female apprentices faced any specific punishment for breaking this clause. As noted above, male apprentices could expect a hefty financial penalty or duplication of their term of apprenticeship if they broke this clause;

²⁰⁶ McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 175–176.

²⁰⁷ For example, 'A servicio suo durante termino predicto diebus vel noctibus se non elongabit nisi a dicto Ricardo magistro suo licenciatus fuerit', *Year Book 11 Edward II*, p. 127.

²⁰⁸ McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 184–185.

²⁰⁹ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 26.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

perhaps female apprentices required less discouragement. This may be due to the very small number of indentures for female apprentices, but could also reflect a double standard; seeking a sexual outlet was acceptable, albeit discouraged, for men, but not for women. Like gaming, fornication was already socially unacceptable for young women, and so it was unnecessary to regulate it further. The threat of reputational damage was sufficient to prevent fornication, without the addition of a punishment. As Karras observed, an unmarried man could visit a whore, but an unmarried woman who had sex *became* a whore.²¹¹ In medical theory women were just as lustful as men, if not more so, and inherently sinful, but women were also less responsible for their sexual lapses by virtue of being the passive partner: ‘is he who does the deed more to blame, or she that does it not, but suffers what men do to her? It is man, who does the deed’.²¹² This perception of passivity explains one interesting iteration of the clause: Margaret Ffleming’s indenture, drawn up in 1459, forbade her from submitting to fornication (*‘ffornicacionem se non subia[c]et’*).²¹³ This is the only version of the clause which suggests that female apprentices differed significantly from male apprentices.

Interestingly, none of the female apprentices were expressly forbidden to commit fornication with members of the household, unlike 23 male apprentices. This may be due to the small number of surviving indentures for female apprentices, but nevertheless it is an interesting omission. The apprentice resided with the master’s *familia*; we cannot assume there was no risk of fornication. Only one apprentice, Katherine Nogle, was forbidden to commit both fornication and adultery, but this is perhaps less surprising.²¹⁴ McSheffrey argued that adultery was more serious when committed by a wife than by a husband; a man’s adultery affected his reputation and called his self-governance into question, but a wife’s adultery highlighted her husband’s inability to control her and, by extension, his household.²¹⁵ Thus, if a man committed adultery with his female apprentice, this violated the sanctity of marriage less than if a wife committed adultery with a male apprentice.²¹⁶ In Katherine Nogle’s case, her female master, Avice Wodeford, appears to have been *femme*

²¹¹ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 134.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 134; *The Southern Passion*, ed. by Beatrice Daw Brown (London: Early English Text Society, 1927), p. 71, cited in Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), p. 118.

²¹³ TNA, C 146/2314.

²¹⁴ LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019.

²¹⁵ McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 142.

²¹⁶ Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, p. 88.

sole: no husband was named on the indenture.²¹⁷ In these circumstances adultery within the household was unlikely, but the clause might be an additional safeguard, securing the apprenticeship's respectability. In 1385, few years prior to Katherine Nougles apprenticeship, Elizabeth Moryng was accused of binding women 'after the manner of apprentices' to learn embroidery, 'whereas the truth of the matter was, that she...used to hire them out to...friars, chaplains, and other men, for such stipulated sum as they might agree upon'.²¹⁸ As a 'common harlot, and a common procuress', Elizabeth was sentenced an hour in the pillory, 'the cause thereof being publicly proclaimed', and then banished from the city of London.²¹⁹ If this case was sufficiently notorious, it may have influenced the formation of apprenticeship indentures, and prompted Avice Wodeford, unable to shelter behind a husband's *bona fama*, to include rigorous terms to assure Katherine's family, and any witnesses, that there was no hint of disreputability in the master-apprentice relationship.

Two indentures, those of Coventry apprentices Agnes Chaloner and Agnes le Felde (mentioned above), omit all behavioural clauses entirely.²²⁰ There is no obvious explanation for this; by the mid-fourteenth century these clauses regularly appeared in indentures, and an earlier Coventry indenture for a male apprentice (1309) was no exception.²²¹ Both girls were apprenticed for short terms of three years. They may have been very young apprentices, whose apprenticeships would finish before they were old enough to need to be prohibited from immoderate drinking, gambling or fornication. Although their ages are not recorded, this offers a reasonable explanation. Age may also explain the omission of this clause from John Deweboys' indenture (see above); he was apprenticed for just two years, and his behaviour was unrestricted. This might indicate that he was considered sufficiently old and wise to control his own behaviour.²²²

Although there was no suggestion that sexual activity was encouraged, there was a tacit acceptance that it was likely during the term of apprenticeship. Promiscuity was not laudable; although it was more damaging for women, frequently changing sexual partners certainly did not aid a man's reputation. Conduct books warned women to behave carefully,

²¹⁷ '*ffornicationem neque adulteram in domo dicte magistre sue nec extra infra dictum terminum non committet*', LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019.

²¹⁸ *Memorials*, p. 484.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 485–486; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 268.

²²⁰ TNA, E 40/4450 and E 40/8267; Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship', pp. 174–175. Goddard suggested this might be because Robert Raulot, the master, decided that long terms were pointless because the apprentice was likely to leave to get married before the end of the term – 'Female Apprenticeship', p. 173.

²²¹ *Year Books 11 Edward II*, pp. 126–128.

²²² TNA, C 146/3879.

lest neighbours judge her to have loose morals.²²³ Nevertheless, sexual intercourse was a customary prelude to marriage, and apprentices were not necessarily forbidden to marry (see below).²²⁴ For female apprentices, the skills they acquired might give them additional value on the marriage market (although this would not replace a dowry), and some courtships must have begun during the apprenticeship.²²⁵ Of course, pregnancy was a concern for female apprentices. Hanawalt argued that bastardy was common, and although urban women who bore children out of wedlock were stigmatised, this did not necessarily extend to their children.²²⁶ For women, it was seen as the first step on a downward career ladder, and might ruin their marriage prospects; in 1423 Sir Richard Whittington endowed a new eight-bed chamber at London's St Thomas' Hospital, 'for yong weme[n] that hadde done a-mysse', and commanded that the names of the women be kept secret 'for he wolde not shame no yonge women in noo wyse, for hyt myght be cause of hyr lettyng of hyr maryage'.²²⁷ St Bartholomew's Hospital provided similar facilities.²²⁸ Unexpected pregnancies presented practical problems. The master had to provide for the apprentice under the terms of the indenture (see Chapters 5 and 6), and this may have extended to children born during the apprenticeship. The master's reputation could be damaged if local gossip suggested that he had fathered the child.²²⁹ Nevertheless, the existence of lying-in facilities for unmarried mothers makes it obvious that no amount of restriction prevented young couples from committing the sin of fornication.²³⁰

²²³ Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 202; Gregory, 'Raising the Good Wife', p. 155.

²²⁴ Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, p. 88.

²²⁵ Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship', p. 172; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 143.

²²⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 59. In rural society, conversely, 'conception may have been necessary for the marriage to take place'; children were so important that a couple wanted to be sure their marriage would be fruitful before actually committing – Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Ties That Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 196.

²²⁷ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 43; 'Introduction', in *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by James Gairdner (London: Camden Society, 1876), p. ix.

²²⁸ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 43.

²²⁹ These rumours certainly affected innkeepers: William le Hostler of Le Crown was said to have fathered the daughter of his servant, Matrosa – Hanawalt, 'Medieval London Taverns', p. 208.

²³⁰ Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 136–137.

4.5 Marriage

It is widely assumed that apprentices were forbidden to marry during their term, but close study of the indentures clearly demonstrates this was not always the case.²³¹ As indicated in Table 4.5, almost a fifth of the indentures made no mention of marriage, while nearly 60 percent permitted marriage with the master's consent. This was not an open invitation for apprentices to marry, but neither was it an outright prohibition. Masters must have known that many young people met their first spouse during their apprenticeship, and might wish to marry before the end of the term.²³² A conditional iteration permitted pragmatism. Although it could disrupt the master's household, if the marriage benefited the master then it might be in his interests to allow it.²³³ The apprentice's wife might bring useful skills, perhaps from an allied trade, thus providing an extra, possibly unpaid, worker. Derek Keene discussed the insular nature of London tanners, who frequently transferred skills and labour between families through marriage.²³⁴ Silkthrowsters' apprentices, for example, might be useful to drapers, weavers, tailors, or even cutlers, and the London mercers promoted marriage between mercers and silkwomen for mutual benefit.²³⁵ Married female apprentices did not necessarily leave the master's household: in 1376, William and Johanna Kaly petitioned that their apprentice Agnes Cook, bound to them for eight years, 'might take a husband if she liked and might then continue apprenticeship or be released on payment of four marks, according as she wished'.²³⁶ Unexpected pregnancies might prompt hasty marriages, while the bride or groom was still an apprentice. In this situation, it might be better for a master to allow the marriage than to have his apprentice's (or his own) reputation called into doubt.

²³¹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 124; Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship', p. 167; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 84; Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 238.

²³² McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 18.

²³³ Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 111.

²³⁴ Derek Keene, 'Tanners' Widows, 1300–1350', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 1–27.

²³⁵ Marian K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 4 (1933), pp. 324–335, p. 327; Anne F. Sutton, 'The Shop-floor of the London Mercery Trade, c.1200–c.1500: The marginalisation of the artisan, the itinerant mercer and the shopholder', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, XLV (2001), pp. 12–50, p. 45; Caroline Barron and Matthew Davies, 'Ellen Langwith: Silkwoman of London (died 1481)', *The Ricardian: Journal of the Richard III Society*, 13 (2003), pp. 37–47. Barron and Davies suggested that Elena Langwith, whose first husband was a cutler, may have trained as a silkworker specialising in silk decoration for daggers and knives – see 'Ellen Langwith', pp. 41 and 47.

²³⁶ Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. by M.M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 51.

Table 4.5 – variations in clauses concerning marriage during the course of the apprenticeship in 77 indentures, for both male and female apprentices.

<i>Prohibition</i>	<i>Number of indentures</i>	<i>% of 77 indentures</i>
<i>Not without consent of master</i>	46	59.7
<i>Total prohibition</i>	15	19.5
<i>Ambiguous</i>	2	2.6
<i>No mention</i>	14	18.2
<i>Total</i>	77	100

Apprentices had to seek consent from their master before contracting a marriage, so the master, acting *in loco parentis*, could offer help and advice, and prevent an unwise match. A young person’s ‘friends’ (usually older, and including both kin and non-kin) played an important role in the formation of agreements affecting a young person’s life, such as marriage and apprenticeship (see Chapter 2).²³⁷ William Langland highlighted the importance of parents’ and friends’ advice in marriage formation, while the *Good Wife* poem instructed young women to consult their friends about any proposals of marriage.²³⁸ This is clearly illustrated by Katherine Nougles’ apprenticeship indenture, which forbade her to contract marriage during the term of apprenticeship without the assent, consent and counsel of her brother and uncle.²³⁹ Furthermore, permitting marriage with the master’s consent prevented apprentices from contracting clandestine marriages. In the early sixteenth century, one London mercer’s apprentice, who broke his indenture by marrying without his master’s consent, complained that strict prohibitions were ‘contrary to the laws of God and causeth much fornication and adultery’.²⁴⁰ Margaret Ffleming’s indenture actually specified that she was not to make an illicit marriage, implying that marriage was permitted if permission was sought.²⁴¹

It was very easy to marry in this period – a simple exchange of words of present consent (*per verba de presenti*) was sufficient, although it should later be solemnised in

²³⁷ McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 78–79.

²³⁸ William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1886), B text, Passus ix, ll. 116–119, cited in McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 78; Riddy, ‘Mother Knows Best’, p. 69

²³⁹ ‘*matrimonium neque contractum cum aliquot viro infra dictum terminum non contrahet nisi cum assensu voluntate et consilio predicti Joh(ann)is et Thome Nougles Civis et Cissoris London’ Avunculi eiusdem Apprenticie*’ – LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019.

²⁴⁰ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 124; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 84 and n. 37.

²⁴¹ ‘*neque...illicite maritar’ faciet*’ – TNA, C 146/2314.

church.²⁴² Consent could be exchanged anywhere, at any time, and two witnesses were sufficient to prove the marriage in a church court.²⁴³ The formal marriage service was intended to impress the solemnity of their vows upon the couple, and, in a time before formal marriage registration, secure the event in the memory of witnesses.²⁴⁴ A promise to marry in future (*'per verba de futuro'*) created an executory contract of marriage (what we might call a betrothal), which could later be solemnised using words of present consent or, in canon law, through consummation.²⁴⁵ Betrothals were not without risk, and apprentices were well-advised not to make such promises, however informal. In *The Good Wyfe Wold a Pylgremage*, the titular Good Wife warned: 'Do3ttor, o þinge I þe forbede: vse not for to swer / Keppe thy hondys and geyfe no trevthe [troth], for weddynggys bythe in wer [are uncertain]'.²⁴⁶ Broken betrothals were potentially harmful to women's reputations; prior contract was sufficient ground to annul a marriage, so any rumour of a consummated betrothal could be damaging.²⁴⁷

Total prohibitions of marriage were not included in apprenticeship indentures until the end of the fourteenth century, but they become increasingly common from the late 1430s.²⁴⁸ Of the 46 indentures dated 1397 (the first incidence) to 1500, fifteen contained a total prohibition. This corresponded with a period of change in the level of provision promised in apprenticeship indentures (see Chapters 5 and 6). From the end of the fourteenth century, apprentices were valued as a secure labour source, and prohibiting marriage during the term ensured the apprentice stayed for the duration of the apprenticeship. The Parisian *Livre des Métiers* indicated that married apprentices did not reside with the master; lack of oversight made apprentices more difficult to control.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, total prohibitions were not used universally, and the decision to use this clause may have been based on mitigating circumstances rather than wider custom. In Bridgwater, for example, only one of John and Joan Davy's four apprentices was forbidden to marry.²⁵⁰ There is no obvious reason why this iteration of the clause was only used in William Baker's indenture; in all other respects there

²⁴² Baker, *English Legal History*, pp. 480–481; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 22. A couple that did not solemnise the marriage committed a sin, but if words of present consent had been exchanged, they were still indissolubly married – McSheffrey, p. 22.

²⁴³ McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 21.

²⁴⁴ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 481.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 480; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 22.

²⁴⁶ NLW, Brogyntyn MS ii.1 (formerly MS. Porkington 10), X, in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, p. 174.

²⁴⁷ McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 23–24.

²⁴⁸ The first outright prohibition can be found in an indenture dated 1397: LMA, A/CSC/12677.

²⁴⁹ E. Dixon, 'Craftswomen in the *Livre des Métiers*', *The Economic Journal*, 5 (1895), pp. 209–228, p. 224.

²⁵⁰ SALS, D\B\bw/945.

are few differences between the indentures for the Davys' four apprentices.²⁵¹ The prohibition may have resulted from negotiations between the Davys and William's father John Baker, who was named in the indenture. Similarly, only one of John and Agnes Burges' three apprentices, Thomas Beryman, was explicitly forbidden to marry within his term.²⁵² Again, apart from the length, there was little difference in the terms of his apprenticeship compared with the Burges' two other apprentices. No parent was named on Thomas Beryman's indenture, so this prohibition was presumably the decision of the Burgeses themselves, and might reflect Beryman's relative maturity.

In a handful of indentures, all dated 1450–1500, the marriage clause also prohibited the apprentice from trading in his own right without the consent of the master; the construction of this clause made the prohibition on marriage slightly ambiguous, implying that marriage was permitted with the master's consent: '*matrimoni cum aliqua muliere non contrahet nec alicui se affidabit nec cum argento suo proprio aut alicuo mercandizabit infra dictum terminum sine licencia dicti magistri sui*'.²⁵³ These have been counted as conditional in Table 4.5. It is reasonable to assume that, if marriage were entirely forbidden, the prohibition would be made more explicit; it is very clear in the fourteen indentures where marriage certainly *is* entirely prohibited (for example: '*matrimonium non contrahet neque se alicui mulieri affidabit*').²⁵⁴ It is notable that the marriage clause was linked to a clause preventing the apprentice from trading on their own account, and thus generating their own profits. This reads as an attempt to keep apprentices in a state of childlike dependence, but may also reflect the fact that, in some towns, non-freemen who traded on their own account were punished.²⁵⁵ There were also justifiable concerns that, if an apprentice worked on his own account before being thoroughly trained, he could bring the craft into disrepute.²⁵⁶

Indentures for female apprentices which included a marriage clause invariably permitted marriage with permission.²⁵⁷ This reflected the fact that marriage was the norm,

²⁵¹ SALS, D\B\bw/1009, D\B\bw/1402 and D\B\bw/1384.

²⁵² TNA, C 146/1132.

²⁵³ KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r. and NR/FAc3, f. 31 r.; Surrey Archives, LM/1659/17; Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B2/1, ff. 194 v.–195. Quote from KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r.

²⁵⁴ SRO, C/6/11/1.

²⁵⁵ Richard Britnell, 'Town Life', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 134–178, p. 160.

²⁵⁶ O. Jocelyn Dunlop and Richard D. Denman, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), p. 34.

²⁵⁷ Agnes Chaloner and Agnes le Felde's indentures do not mention marriage, or contain any clauses governing behaviour – this is discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

and that it could be difficult for a unmarried women to support themselves financially.²⁵⁸ Eileen Power noted that women were more likely to be wage-earners than independent traders or craftworkers, and this applied to silkwomen, an entirely female craft in this period.²⁵⁹ Marian Dale observed that many silkwomen operated ‘*covert de baron*’, making their husbands responsible for paying their debts.²⁶⁰ In general, the only craftswomen working in their own right were the widows of craftsmen, such as Joan Hendele, who received John Parker as her apprentice in 1397 to learn the trade of her deceased husband, a tailor.²⁶¹ Although marriage was an economic partnership and a widow was expected to continue her husband’s business after his death, women were rarely admitted to the franchise or made guild officers. In fact, in 1422 it was stated that it was contrary to the worship of the City of London ‘that women should have such things in governance’.²⁶² Nevertheless, there was generally little difference in the expectations for the behaviour of female apprentices compared to their male counterparts.

5. Conclusion

A significant portion of an apprenticeship indenture concerned clauses controlling the apprentice’s behaviour. Restrictions were placed on everyday activities, such as going to the tavern or alehouse, playing games of skill or chance, and enjoying physical relationships. All of these activities had the potential to damage the reputations of both master and apprentice. Immoderate drinking was discouraged for various reasons, not least because it was a ‘gate’ to other sins.²⁶³ Gaming could lead to physical violence, and gambling to penury. Although apprentices were likely to engage in sexual activity at some point in the apprenticeship, a reputation for licentiousness was harmful, particularly for female apprentices. Therefore, the aim of these clauses was to protect the reputations of all parties.

The phrasing of these behavioural clauses demonstrates an understanding that such activities, while sometimes reprehensible, were often unavoidable. Masters might prevent apprentices from customarily frequenting taverns, but the clause was worded so that they could still do their master’s business in these establishments, and visit them with permission or within reason – for example, when travelling on their master’s business. Although

²⁵⁸ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 48.

²⁵⁹ Power, *Medieval Women*, pp. 47 and 49.

²⁶⁰ Dale, ‘London Silkwomen’, p. 328.

²⁶¹ Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9/1/1.

²⁶² Goldberg, ‘Women in Fifteenth-Century Town Life’, pp. 115 and 107.

²⁶³ *Jacob’s Well*, p. 145.

rumours of sexual impropriety could be exceedingly damaging to the reputations of those involved, more than half of the indentures indicated that masters viewed sexual activity as inevitable. They were more likely to forbid apprentices from fornicating within the house, or with members of the household (wives, daughters, and servants), than they were to entirely prohibit the apprentice from committing fornication. Similarly, masters were open to the possibility of apprentices marrying during the term, but expected to be consulted and asked for permission before promises were exchanged. There was considerably less leeway in clauses concerning gaming and gambling, reflecting the fact that apprentices were unlikely to stake their own money on the outcome.

Superficially, behavioural clauses seemed to place strict limits on apprentices' behaviour, but closer study indicates that terms were often less restrictive. Masters were pragmatic and sought to offer apprentices a degree of freedom within reasonable limits. The caveat, of course, was that an apprentice's behaviour could damage their own, and their master's, reputation. As apprentices grew older, obtained more responsibility, and became more aware of their own reputation, they might be allowed more freedom. Apprenticeship was not just a means of transferring skills, but a method of socialisation and preparation for adulthood (see Chapter 7). Behavioural clauses helped to mould the apprentice into a respectable adult, with *bona fama*. Finishing their apprenticeship as a respectable and respected young person might enable an apprentice to call on sources of credit and conduct business deals, and thus launch their own successful career.

Chapter 5: Apprentices' expectations of apprenticeship

Edward Miller and John Hatcher described apprenticeship as 'a course of technical education which enabled a young man to acquire the skills necessary for the practice of a craft and to maintain its good repute', but this is a little simplistic.¹ Despite the underlying power imbalance, apprenticeship was a reciprocal relationship. Masters expected their apprentices to behave appropriately (see Chapter 4) and punished misdemeanours accordingly in order to maintain their own reputation, and that of the craft. Masters might also receive financial recompense for providing the apprentice with food, board, clothing, and training. In return for their labour, apprentices expected to be adequately fed, clothed, and housed, and of course receive technical training delivered to the best of the master's ability. Although the apprenticeship agreement permitted the master to punish them for wrongdoing, apprentices expected physical chastisement to be within reasonable, socially accepted limits. These limits were not necessarily moderate; in 1403 London goldsmiths' apprentices received 'from his master six stripes of the whip, and three stripes from each of the [four] wardens' as punishment for 'rebell[ing]', selling goods without permission, or attempting to leave the apprenticeship.² Nevertheless, apprentices could bring complaints against physically abusive masters, and seek redress at law for excessive punishment.

As discussed in Chapter 3, apprentices were readily exploited and could easily fall victim to abuse and neglect. However, social custom dictated the level at which masters were expected to maintain their apprentices, if only to protect their own reputations. Furthermore, apprentices and their families were evidently prepared to seek redress if apprentices were abused or neglected. This chapter uses surviving indentures to outline the expectations of apprentices in various crafts and locations. The first part of the chapter explores the training masters were expected to provide, followed by a discussion of the provision of wider education (namely literacy and numeracy). The second part focuses on the provision of food, clothing, and other goods by masters, and argues that some masters sought to move away from the accepted custom of providing for the apprentice from the very beginning of the apprenticeship, by using the first year as a 'trial year'. Legal records and other contemporary official documents are used to contextualise the changes in language engendered by changes

¹ Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086–1348* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 372.

² *Wardens' Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mistery of London 1334–1446*, ed. by Lisa Jefferson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), p. 295.

in how craftsmen perceived themselves, and their place within an increasingly literate society.

1. Expectations of training

Under the terms of an apprenticeship agreement, the master was obliged to teach the apprentice, and the apprentice obliged to work while receiving on-the-job training. The apprenticeship indenture was proof of the agreement, defining apprenticeship and distinguishing it from other forms of work contract. Steven Epstein noted that the earliest Continental contracts and statutes often referred to apprentices as '*discipulus*' ('student').³ However, neither surviving English indentures, nor scholarly works discussing apprenticeship in England, used this word. Instead, apprentices in England are referred to explicitly as '*apprenticius*'. There are no exceptions in the indentures used in this research.

From the late thirteenth century it was seemingly normal practice to include a clause in the indenture stating that the master would teach the apprentice to the best of his ability.⁴ When John le Spicer of Norwich took Hubert Tibenham as his apprentice in 1291, he promised to teach Hubert the skills he used in his work – buying, selling and all other pertinent things – as diligently and as well as possible, throughout the six-year term of the apprenticeship.⁵ The obligation to teach the apprentice throughout the term prevented opportunistic masters from providing rudimentary training initially, before exploiting the apprentice as unpaid or low-paid labour for the remaining years. It might also have served as a means of preventing apprentices from 'buying out' the whole or part of their term, something the London goldsmiths sought to prevent by ordinance in 1368.⁶ In one common iteration of this clause, the master was bound to teach, lead and inform the apprentice in his ways of work ('*officio*') to the best of his ability: '*Et prefatus Adam predictum Joh(ann)em apprenticium suum in officio suo quo utitur meliori modo quo poterit docebit tractabit et*

³ Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 65.

⁴ This clause is missing from the earliest indenture, dated 1255, TNA, E 210/1397.

⁵ '*Et dictus Johannes per totum dictum tempus docebit dictum Hubertum officium suum quo utitur emendi vendendi et omnia alia faciendi que ad illius officium suum pertinent diligenter competenter pro posse suo secundum ipsius Huberti ingenii capacitatem*' – CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), p. 246.

⁶ Jefferson, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 111. The ordinance also applied to any apprentice whose master released him, whose term was remitted, or who was discharged for any reason. In all cases, 'he shall remain a serving-man for as long a time as he should have been an apprentice and until the whole period his terms is fulfilled', and had to give an amount (decided by the wardens) to the alms fund of St Dunstan. When Stephen Clerk purchased five years of his term from Geoffrey Walpole in 1373, he had to pay £4 in alms in 20s installments over four years – *ibid.*, p. 163.

informabit'.⁷ In a variation, the master promised to teach and inform the apprentice of his ways of work, in the best way he knew and was able to: '*instruet et informabit faciet meliori modo quo sciverit et poterit in officio suo quo utitur*'.⁸ The demand that the master teach to the best of his ability ensured that masters who provided sub-standard teaching breached the terms of the indenture, thus enabling the apprentice to be transferred to another master without penalty.

From the latter half of the fourteenth century, indentures began to refer to '*artem*' (from '*ars*') rather than (or, sometimes, alongside) '*officio*'. This is almost certainly evidence of a change in scribal vocabulary and semantics, possibly accompanied by a shift in craftsmen's attitudes and identification after the Black Death. In classical Latin, '*officium*' described a task, or a person's business, duty, function, or employment. '*Officio*' could therefore describe a craftsman's 'function' and daily employment, and so (clerical) scribes might use it to describe the 'functions' a master would teach his apprentice. However, the usage of '*officio*' developed over time. In British sources, especially from around 1180, it referred to a counting-house, or a place of work where non-manual labour was performed.⁹ In short, '*officio*' came to describe intellectual (non-manual) labour. Resultantly, '*ars*' began to be used to refer to a craftsman's daily employment. In Anglo-Norman and Old French from around 1000, '*art*' referred to the technique, means, method or knowledge employed to gain a certain result. Twelfth-century Anglo-Norman used '*art*' to describe a skill, craftsmanship or artifice, trade, craft or profession (as well as magic art or sorcery), and from the thirteenth century it could refer to knowledge or learning. Although '*officio*' might have appeared the more appropriate term in Latin, its evolution to refer to intellectual work made '*art*' a more correct description for the manual skills used and transmitted by craftsmen.¹⁰ This accorded with the Latin '*artificarius*', used from the fourteenth century to describe a

⁷ TNA, E 210/5150 (1310).

⁸ '*...dictus Robertus eandem Agnete infra dictum terminum instruet et instrui faciet meliori modo quo sciverit et poterit in officio suo quo utitur*' – TNA, E 40/4450 (1336).

⁹ 'office, *n.* – Etymology', *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/130640>> [accessed 15 August 2020]. From the thirteenth century it denoted the parts of a house specially devoted to household work or service. The first (extant) use of 'office' with this meaning is found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* at the end of the fourteenth century: *ibid.*, § 6. a.; 'I wole han twelf pens, though that she be wood, / Or I wol sompne hire unto our office' – 'The Friar's Tale', in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 127, ll. 1577–1578.

¹⁰ 'art, *n.* 1 – Etymology', *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11125>> [accessed 15 August 2020].

skilled craftsman or artificer.¹¹ John Gower used ‘art’ to denote a craft in the late-fourteenth century *Confessio Amantis*: ‘Of hem that ben artificiers, / Whiche usen craftes and mestiers, / Whos art is cleped mecanique’.¹² That is to say, their art involved manual labour or skill.¹³ The change of meaning took a little longer to show in official documents than in common parlance, but it became clear during the fifteenth century.

There were at least two phases in the use of ‘*officio*’ and ‘*ars*’, with the change apparent in the aftermath of the Black Death. All seven extant indentures dated between 1255 and 1345 referred to ‘*officio*’.¹⁴ However, three indentures, dated 1364 (for a ‘swordslipper’), 1397 (a tailor) and 1448 (a barber), refer to both art (‘*artem*’) and function (‘*officio*’), implying that these words had different meanings.¹⁵ The paucity of examples makes it difficult to discern if this is a distinct second phase or a scribal idiosyncrasy, but there was a clear change in the late fourteenth century during which ‘*officio*’ fell out of use and indentures referred only to ‘*artem*’. While the omission of ‘*officio*’ might be taken to imply that these crafts were not directly involved in the acquisition of raw materials and the selling of goods, this seems unlikely. Throughout the period 1255–1500, an apprentice could expect to learn both the manual and intellectual aspects of their craft, even if the indenture referred to only ‘*artem*’ or ‘*officio*’.

Take, for example, tailoring; when John Conseil was apprenticed to John Lylly in 1372, Lylly’s craft of tailoring was only referred to as an ‘art’.¹⁶ Although tailoring might be classed as ‘light manufacturing’, it still involved buying and selling.¹⁷ Customers might provide the cloth, but tailors needed to purchase needles, pins, and thread, and sold their

¹¹ ‘artifex’, R.E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources, with supplement*, reprint (London: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 2004) p. 32.

¹² Gower, *Confessio Amantis: Vol. 3, Book 7*, ed. by Russell A. Peck, trans. by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), ll. 1691–1693.

¹³ ‘mechanic, adj. and n. – A. I. 1.’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115543>> [accessed 15 August 2020]. The earliest usage noted in the *OED* is, in fact, in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* quoted above.

¹⁴ TNA, E 210/1397 (1255); CXXI, *Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. 1, pp. 245–247 (1291); *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), pp. 126–128 (1309); TNA, E 210/5150 (1310); TNA, E 40/4450 (1336); Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/1 (1341); TNA, E 40/8267 (1345).

¹⁵ ‘*Infra quem termina predictus Joh(ann)e dictum Will(elmu)m apprenticium suum in arte et officie quibus ipse utitur*’ – York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1 (1364) (Transcription and translation kindly provided by Dr Jill Redford); ‘*Et predicta Johanna in arte officii Cissor(um) ipsum Joh(ann)em apprenticium meliori et pulciori modo quo sciet*’ – Lancashire Archive, DDHK 9-1-1 (1397); ‘*Johannes Sexteyn prefatum Johannem apprenticium suum in arte sua qua utitur videlicet Barbouriscrafte et aliie officii quibus utitur*’ – SRO, C/6/11/1 (1448).

¹⁶ Berkshire Record Office, D/QR22/2/231.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Rutledge, ‘Economic Life’, in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 157–188, p. 160.

labour to create a finished product. The Beverley tailors appear to have considered themselves as holding a monopoly over both the manual (making) and intellectual (selling) aspects of tailoring; in 1492 they attempted to compel drapers who made and sold hose to become members or contributors to the tailors' guild.¹⁸ Elsewhere, John Elstede, a Winchester saddler, was bound to teach Stephen Godelowe 'his art and the contrivance of its practice and selling' ('...*de omni arte et ingenio operandi et mercandizandi*').¹⁹ William Madame of Bosworth promised to instruct John Corby in the art of 'sheryng' and 'cappemakyng', and buying and selling ('*emendo et vendendo*').²⁰ Sometimes the combination of crafts was a little odd, such as those practised by John Gregory: William Sywell was indentured to learn Gregory's arts 'called Irenmonggerscraft and Honymakerscraft'.²¹ Furthermore, indentures for fishmongers and mercers' apprentices – both of which might be considered to be trades rather than crafts – also referred to '*ars*' rather than '*officio*'.²² It seems likely that '*ars*' became used to define a practice or the ability to gain a particular result, whether through intellectual or manual means; the *OED* noted these meanings in use from 1383, or earlier in Anglo-Norman.²³ Although multiple guild ordinances and statutes alluded to the craft's 'mystery', this term was used in just one indenture (dated 1498).²⁴

Craftsmen's work was judged by guild masters, and any substandard work dealt with appropriately. An apprentice who lacked a full understanding of every aspect of his work would not be able to enter the guild as a master. However, only one surviving indenture offers any insight into the specific skills required for a craft. It was difficult to outline in advance what would be taught, how well, how fast, what tools and materials the apprentice would use, and so on.²⁵ This lack of detail might imply that each craft's requisite skills were perceived to be universally understood, but it does not necessarily mean that each craft had a set training regime. Agnes le Felde was apprenticed to the purser Robert Raulot for three years from 1345, and the indenture specified that Raulot was to teach Agnes in the best way

¹⁸ *Beverley Town Documents*, ed. by Arthur F. Leach (London: Bernard Quaritch, for the Selden Society, 1900), pp. lxi and 76.

¹⁹ Hampshire Archive, W/D1/22, m. 46.

²⁰ Leics RO, DG11/1156.

²¹ Northamptonshire Archive, FH/G/C/1971.

²² LMA, A/CSC/12677; TNA, C 146/1132.

²³ 'art, n. 1 – Etymology', *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition.

²⁴ MERL, MS2149/24.

²⁵ David de la Croix, Matthias Doepke, and Joel Mokyr, 'Clans, Guilds, and Markets: Apprenticeship Institutions and Growth in the Preindustrial Economy', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133 (2018), pp. 1–70, p. 4.

he knew and was able to. Specifically, he would direct her in the ways of stiffening, cutting and stitching red purses and leather (*'confutandi loculos rubeos et corea'*), and 'colouring and all other subtleties of the said craft'.²⁶ This level of detail was not commonplace, and might indicate that Raulot had agreed to teach Agnes only the manufacturing side of purse-making, and not the merchandising side; there was no mention of buying and selling. This might differentiate Agnes from Raulot's male apprentices (if any), although it is notable that no specific skills were mentioned in an earlier indenture binding Agnes Chaloner to Raulot, dated 1336.²⁷ Alternatively, this might indicate the minimum skillset which the apprentice could expect to be taught, to ensure that Agnes le Felde's apprenticeship was not restricted to merchandising. This seems more likely.

There was a real danger that an apprentice might receive no training at all from their master during the apprenticeship, for any number of reasons. Legal records provide examples of apprentices who were exonerated because the master seemingly had no intention of teaching them. Nicholas Salman (see Chapter 3) complained that his master, a draper, 'set him to mean tasks...thus wasting his time'.²⁸ In 1425, Laurence Smith was exonerated from his apprenticeship as his master 'had no shop' and had 'withdrawn to the privileged place of St Martin le Grand', presumably to escape his debts.²⁹ Indebted masters regularly absconded and left their apprentices behind, without any material provision – several examples were outlined in Chapter 3. By ensuring that the master was bound to teach the apprentice to the best of his ability, abandonment or neglect of duty could be regarded as breaking the terms of the indenture, thus providing the apprentice with grounds for complaint. Living at a distance from their families made apprentices vulnerable, and some apprentices were physically abused by the master, or others within the household (see Chapter 3). The guilds themselves were proactive in preventing such abuse; in 1413 the goldsmiths' wardens warned John Halle de Petyt that would have no other apprentices 'for all time' if abuses continued; one apprentice was killed in prison while another ran away, and it was said that de Petyt's wife beat his apprentices.³⁰ However, apprentices and parents themselves would have to be the

²⁶ *'spectancia colorandi et cunctis aliis subtilitatibus officii predicti'* – TNA, E 40/8267. Transcribed and translated in Richard Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship in the West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages', *Midland History*, 27 (2002), pp. 165–181, pp. 180–181.

²⁷ TNA, E 40/4450.

²⁸ 'Membr. 5 b, 1 July 1366', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 58. Salman received 30s damages and was exonerated.

²⁹ 'Membr. 4, 27 Jan. 1425', *CPMR, 1413–37*, p. 180.

³⁰ Jefferson, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 359.

ones to litigate in towns and settlements where crafts and trades operated outside guild control.^d

1.1 Numeracy and literacy

The literature on medieval apprenticeship rarely intersects with research on education in medieval England and thus basic questions regarding the wider education of apprentices remain unconsidered.³¹ One of the most prominent is whether apprentices were expected to be literate and numerate prior to commencing their training, or whether illiteracy and innumeracy was expected and tolerated. In the context of medieval England, the general acceptance of illiteracy changed over time, but basic numeracy was likely to have been a requirement throughout. Glanvill stated that numeracy was a prerequisite for entry into adulthood from the mid-twelfth century, whereas literacy was not widely expected in guild ordinances until the late fifteenth century.³² The paucity of references to reading and writing in apprenticeship indentures implies that literacy was not universally important, whereas conversely we must assume that the absence of references to numeracy indicates that apprentices were numerate. Numeracy was so fundamental to everyday life that it did not warrant additional mentions in apprenticeship indentures or guild regulations. Literacy, on the other hand, is missing from the records for the opposite reason – for the majority of the period 1250–1500, there was little expectation in most crafts that apprentices (or masters) would be literate.

Functional numeracy was important for day-to-day business; although people might be unable to perform sophisticated mathematical operations such as multiplication or division, it would be difficult to buy or sell without basic numerical skills, such as the ability to count out twelve pennies to make a shilling. Literacy and numeracy did not go hand in hand, and the omission of numeracy requirements in guild ordinances implies that it was unfeasible for an apprentice to be innumerate, even if they were illiterate.³³ Numeracy was

³¹ Jo Ann H. Moran Cruz, 'England: Education and Society', in *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by S.H. Rigby (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2003), pp. 451–470, p. 462. The education of apprentices has been discussed by Barbara Hanawalt as part of her study of medieval childhood – Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 82–83, 113 and 144. Much of Moran Cruz's (short) discussion of apprentices' education is drawn from Hanawalt.

³² Ranulf de Glanvill, *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England commonly called Glanvill*, ed. and trans. by G.D.G. Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 82, cited in Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 127.

³³ J.L. Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy: 937–1489* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 28.

fundamental to entry to adulthood. By 1187, the test of legal majority for burgess' son was the capacity to count money, measure cloth, and conduct his father's business – usually between the ages of twelve and sixteen, by which age they may well have been apprenticed.³⁴ In Shrewsbury a boy was considered 'of age' at fifteen providing he could measure cloth and tell a good penny from a bad one.³⁵ Masters expected apprentices to begin the apprenticeship with sufficient numeracy skills to ensure that no further education was required, except that which they would learn in the course of their apprenticeship. The only allusion to numeracy in an indenture found during the course of this research comes from a late-fifteenth century Chancery proceeding: Sir William Lucas, 'ancre recluse' at the church of All Hallows (London Wall) apprenticed his adopted son to a tailor, with provision that he would be taught 'to rede write and lay accomptes suffisauntly'.³⁶ This implies that accounting was a supplementary skill which complemented pre-existing numeracy.

Numeracy was an integral element of the 'ars' and 'officium', not an additional extra like literacy. Apprentices might need to record the number of items produced for an order, perhaps using a tally stick.³⁷ They could be required to remember specialised units of quantity, which might vary by location and commodity. For example, there were 25 eels to a 'stick' and ten 'sticks' to the 'gwyde' (250 eels).³⁸ A 'hundred' could denote 106 lambs, or 124 saltfish.³⁹ Ronald Zupko found more than thirty variations of the 'bushel' as a unit of measurement, and over 100 for the 'piece'.⁴⁰ Apprentice drapers or tailors might need to know that, while an English ell was usually 45 inches, a Flemish ell was only 27 inches.⁴¹ Basic calculations could be performed on the fingers – in one section of *De Temporum Ratione*, Bede described how the left hand counted units, while the right hand counted tens,

³⁴ Ranulf de Glanvill, *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England commonly called Glanvill*, ed. and trans. by G.D.G. Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 82, cited in Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, p. 33; Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe*, p. 127.

³⁵ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and Death: The Ages of Man', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 413–434, p. 422.

³⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 159; TNA, C 1/66/69. 'Ancre recluse' presumably refers to a hermit, a male anchorite.

³⁷ Christine Cooper-Rompato, 'Numeracy and Number in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VIII – Papers read at Charney Manor, July 2011*, ed. by E.A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 59–73, p. 62.

³⁸ Moritz Wedell, 'Numbers', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages – Volume 1*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 1205–1260, p. 1226.

³⁹ Ronald Edward Zupko, *A Dictionary of Weights and Measures for the British Isles: The Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1985), p. 80.

⁴⁰ Ronald Edward Zupko, 'Medieval English Weights and Measures: Variation and Standardisation', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 4 (1973), pp. 238–243, p. 239.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Ell', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 189.

hundreds, and thousands.⁴² Abaci might be used to perform mathematical operations, although in secular society counting boards were more common; the usefulness of ‘*scaccarium*’ for arithmetic might explain their ubiquity in taverns and alehouses, where they were often used for gambling (see Chapter 4).⁴³ The duodecimal currency system added challenges to addition and subtraction, particularly as there were no shilling or pound coins in England before 1489. Pounds, shillings and marks [13s 4d] were merely units of account which, at least in theory, made calculating large sums easier.⁴⁴

Jim Bolton noted that men and women participating in trade were likely to be involved in several transactions at the same time, sometimes with obligations to make or accept deferred payments at specified future dates, which would need to be recorded.⁴⁵ The amount owed might be recorded on a tally stick; these were widely-used and would have been familiar to merchants across England, the Low Countries and Scandinavia, enabling trade even when there was no shared language.⁴⁶ The tally stick was notched, then split through the notches so both parties retained verifiable part of the record – similar to an apprenticeship indenture.⁴⁷ Tallies were lightweight, portable, easily comprehensible and ‘practically incapable of fraud’; in England, Exchequer records were kept on tally sticks until the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ The Court of Exchequer took its name from the chequerboard tablecloth used to settle accounts with the sheriffs; the Calculator laid counters on the squares, item by item, as the sheriff rendered account, after which the Cutter carved a tally to record the amount paid or owed. The whole process was observed and audited by the court, and visual representations of numbers (in the form of counters and tally sticks) enabled participation and comprehension without the need for literacy.⁴⁹ Thus, although illiteracy was widespread, it was almost impossible to succeed in medieval society without basic numeracy skills. The absence of specific provision in indentures does not necessarily indicate near-universal numeracy, but does imply that apprentices were expected to have a basic understanding of numbers prior to commencing their apprenticeship. A master could

⁴² For a full transcription and English translation of Bede’s instructions, see Burma P. Williams and Richard S. Williams, ‘Fingers Numbers in the Greco-Roman World and the Early Middle Ages’, *Isis*, 86 (1995), pp. 587–608, pp. 607–608. This article also contains illustrated explanations of various Greco-Roman finger counting systems, in figs. 3 and 4, pp. 591–592.

⁴³ Cooper-Romparto, ‘Numeracy and Number’, p. 61.

⁴⁴ Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁶ See Karl Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols: A Cultural History of Numbers*, trans. by Paul Broneer (Cambridge, MA, and London: M.I.T. Press, 1969), pp. 224–226.

⁴⁷ Hilary Jenkinson, ‘XVI – Exchequer Tallies’, *Archaeologia*, 62 (1911), pp. 367–380, p. 367.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 368; Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols*, p. 237.

⁴⁹ Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols*, p. 237.

then build on this, teaching them relevant numerical operations in the course of their training. If he did not provide this element of training, it would be to the detriment of the apprentice, who would then be free to seek redress at law.

The absence of references to reading and writing in indentures, however, does not point to widespread literacy. In 1255, the date of the earliest surviving indenture, the lay population was largely illiterate; there was no expectation that apprentices, or their masters, would be literate. At this time, ‘literacy’ referred solely to the ability to read Latin.⁵⁰ Towards the end of the fifteenth century, by which point ‘literate’ could also signify the ability to read English, guild regulations increasingly contained literacy requirements for apprentices, sometimes in either Latin or English. The efficacy and enforcement of such regulations, however, is debateable, and they probably reflected aspiration rather than reality. Nevertheless, according to Chris Dyer, a ‘reasonable proportion’ of the urban population was able to read by the end of the fifteenth century.⁵¹ The turning point for literacy was the Black Death – the dearth of literate clergy and ‘grammarmasters’ led to less qualified candidates being employed, some of whom had not even obtained a master of arts degree.⁵²

Very few apprenticeship indentures included provision of additional training in reading and writing. There are 77 indentures which detailed the level of maintenance promised to the apprentice (see Chapter 6), but only three masters promised to provide the apprentice with wider education. All three concern late-fifteenth century apprenticeships. Robert Kyme, apprenticed to William Poklyngton in 1458, was to learn to read and write (*‘legere et scribere sciverint’*).⁵³ In 1466, John Forde of Romney agreed to teach Thomas Turke to write English and read within the seven year term (*‘docebit eum scribere anglicum et legere infra terminum predictum’*).⁵⁴ Finally, Thomas Heyward’s father agreed to pay his master Geoffrey Osborne, an Ipswich smith, 10s at Easter 1482 on condition that Heyward was sent to school to learn to read at first, and then to write English.⁵⁵ The very small

⁵⁰ M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 3rd edn. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p. 23.

⁵¹ Christopher Dyer, ‘Small Towns 1270–1540’, in *The Cambridge History of Urban Britain: Volume 1 – 600–1540*, ed. by D.M. Pallister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 505–537, p. 533.

⁵² Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, ‘Education, Books and Provincial Culture: The City of York 1300–1560’, unpublished paper, p. 9, cited in William J. Courtenay, ‘The Effect of the Black Death on English Higher Education’, *Speculum*, 55 (1980), pp. 696–714, p. 707.

⁵³ WAM, 5965*. The Kyme family lived in Bishop’s Lynn (now King’s Lynn) but the indenture was dated at London, so it is assumed that William Poklyngton was a citizen of that city; damage to the document means that this detail is missing.

⁵⁴ KHLIC, NR/FAC 3, f. 56 v.

⁵⁵ *‘Et ulterius concordatum est quod predictus Joh(ann)es Heyward solvet vel solvere faciet prefato Galfr(ed)o Osborne ad festum Pasche proximum futurum post d... presencium decem solidos legalis monete Anglie sub*

number of indentures containing this obligation, and the fact that all date from the latter half of the fifteenth century, indicates two things. First, for the majority of the period 1250–1500, apprentices did not need to be literate. If they were, we could expect to find at least a handful of indentures from earlier dates which mentioned reading and writing; it is highly unlikely that all apprentices were entirely literate prior to commencing their apprenticeship. Second, from the 1450s, the expectation of literacy among apprentices increased, but this expectation was by no means universal.

If literacy was required, pre-existing literacy would be preferable to masters; attending lessons made apprentices less cost-effective as workers, even if the cost of education was covered by the apprentice's family. Thomas Heyward was to be sent to school, thus absenting himself from the workshop completely and depriving his master of his labour. The 10s paid by Heyward's father would not necessarily cover the cost of lost working hours.⁵⁶ It is unclear from the wording of the indenture whether Thomas Turke's master, John Forde, was to provide him with tuition himself, or simply facilitate it.⁵⁷ Although it might incur additional expenses, the latter might be the preferred option; otherwise Forde would lose working hours or be forced to use his leisure hours to teach his apprentice, assuming he was sufficiently educated himself. Providing an apprentice with an education could be an imposition for a master, and it is not surprising that some reneged on their promises. In 1415, John Holand complained that his master, a barber, had failed 'through poverty' to feed or clothe him properly, or send him to school until he could read and write, as per their agreement.⁵⁸ Another apprentice alleged that his master had agreed to pay for his schooling with a priest, but had instead set him to work in the priest's kitchen 'to washe pottes pannes [and] disshes'.⁵⁹

One Chancery complaint provides an interesting case study. Thomas Bodyn was apprenticed to Robert Chirche, a London haberdasher, in 1441 for twelve years. After a trial period, it was agreed that Chirche would send Bodyn to school 'at his owne costis and charge' during the first two years, for the first 'yere and half thereof to lerne gram[mar] and

condicione quod dictus Galfr(ed)us inveniet predictum Thomam Heyward' ad scolam quousque scit legere primarium et ulterius quousque s[ci]t scribere Anglicum.' – SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.

⁵⁶ SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.

⁵⁷ 'Et inveniet eidem apprenticio suo victum et vestitum durante termino predicto ac docebit eum scribere anglicum et legere infra terminum predictum' – KHLIC, NR/FAc 3, f. 56 v.

⁵⁸ 'Membr. 2 b, 7 Dec. 1415', CPMR, 1413–1437, p. 41.

⁵⁹ TNA, C 1/19/33; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 82; Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 159.

the residue...which amounteth to half a yere to scole for to lerne to write'.⁶⁰ Thus Chirche would lose Bodyn's labour for the first two years of the twelve-year apprenticeship. This case highlights contemporary views on education, as well as illustrating a poor master-apprentice relationship. Despite frequent complaints and requests by Bodyn and his 'frendes', by 1448 Chirche still 'at all tymes utturly hath refused' to send Bodyn to school 'to [his] grete hurte harme and losse'.⁶¹ In answer, Chirche admitted that he had not sent Bodyn to school as promised, but alleged 'y^t y^e seid [Bodyn] is [and] afor his departur was sufficiently lernyd [and] instruct both in redyng [and] also in wrytyng as unto sich app[re]ntice resonably may suffice'.⁶²

As *Bodyn v Chirche* illustrated, reading and writing were separate skills. Reading was taught first, and writing, which required clerical training and specialist equipment, second; therefore not all those who could read could write.⁶³ Jo Ann Moran Cruz described writing as 'a difficult art' which schoolmasters were not necessarily competent to teach.⁶⁴ Basic literacy was easier to acquire and perhaps more pertinent to conducting business. Although functional literacy might benefit an apprentice who intended to enter the freedom on completion of his term, scribes could be employed to undertake any writing that was required. This rendered writing skills less important, so training might only be sufficient for writing personal notes and letters. This is why Bodyn was to spend eighteen months learning to read but only six months learning to write. The overall level of education was not necessarily very high; Chirche had alleged that Bodyn was already sufficiently educated for an apprentice.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ TNA, C 1/19/492.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² TNA, C 1/19/493. This apprenticeship seems to have been doomed from the beginning. After a trial period from November 1441 to Hilary [13 January] 1442, during which time Bodyn failed to find sureties, Chirche decided 'no mor to have had to do w^t Bodyn, 'in so mych y^e y^e seid Endenturis cu[m] y^e p[ar]te afor' y^t tyme made werbroken [and] nocht enrolyd...so y^t y^e seid [Bodyn] myght then have dep[ar]tyd'. A friend intervened, and persuaded Chirche to take Bodyn as his apprentice, and helped find sureties for Bodyn. Chirche complained that Bodyn had 'wrongfully of hys obstinate willfulness' broken the agreement, departing before the end of the term. At Bodyn's insistence, the dispute had already been arbitrated by 'iiij notable [and] thrifty' wardens of the London haberdashers' guild, and thus Chirche 'p[ra]yth to be dismist oute of this Courte [and] to be restoryd to hys Costes [and] damag[e] for hys grete [and] wrongfull vexacon'.

⁶³ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 49; Caroline M. Barron, 'The Education and Training of Girls in Fifteenth-century London', in *Courts, Counties and the Capital in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Diana E.S. Dunn (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1996), pp. 139–154, p. 149.

⁶⁴ Moran Cruz, 'Education and Society', p. 455.

⁶⁵ TNA, C 1/19/493. It is interesting that this action went to Chancery rather than Common Pleas, where it could have been prosecuted as a breach of covenant. One suspects that this is because an action at Common Pleas would have provided a pecuniary remedy for the loss of an education, rather than compelling Chirche to send Bodyn to school. Bodyn was clearly keen to acquire an education, and therefore perhaps chose Chancery for this reason.

It is not clear whether Bodyn expected to learn Latin or English, or perhaps both. In 1466 Thomas Turke's master agreed to his learning to read and write English, rather than Latin.⁶⁶ By this time, English literacy was perhaps more attainable than Latin literacy. Some guilds kept records in English from as early as 1389, while in 1422 the wardens of the London brewers' guild decided to cease keeping records in Latin, as none of the members were sufficiently literate; instead they would use English, which some of them could both read and write.⁶⁷ This indicates that literacy, Latin or English, was not the norm. From the mid-fifteenth century, London craft guilds increasingly recorded oaths and ordinances in English, implying increasing levels of English literacy alongside decreasing Latin literacy.⁶⁸ Illiteracy, in the sense of being unable to read Latin, remained a commonplace and feasible defence in actions heard at Common Pleas as late as the 1470s, while English illiteracy was a less believable defence.⁶⁹ Oral agreements were not accepted as evidence of a covenant in the royal courts; the 1321 'Waltham Carrier Case' set the precedent that a sealed document was required (see Introduction and Chapter 1).⁷⁰ This also applied to actions of debt, wherein a bond generated greater security by disallowing compurgation and limiting the defendant to a small range of defences, such as forgery.⁷¹ Bonds were invariably written in Latin, often drafted by professional scribes, and as such illiteracy was a plausible defence. Debtors might also claim that the English translation of the bond differed from the original Latin; although the bond bore their seal, it was effectively a forgery, and thus rendered void. This

⁶⁶ KHLC, NR/FAc 3, f. 56 v.

⁶⁷ Paul Strohm stated that some guild records were already kept in English as early as 1389 – Paul Strohm, 'Writing and Reading', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 454–472, p. 462; Brewers' Accounts, *A Book of London English, 1384–1425*, ed. by R.W. Chambers and Marjorie Daunt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 16, cited in Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 158.

⁶⁸ Barron, 'The Education and Training of Girls', p. 142.

⁶⁹ TNA, CP 40/811, rot. 199. The wording of the record suggests that the bond was made in Latin: 'at the time of making the bond [the defendant] was illiterate and the bond was read to him in English as containing this condition, and he sealed it believing that it contained this when in fact it did not'. This seems to indicate that he was unable to understand Latin, as it had to be read to him in English. This defence remained believable, in some cases, into the 1470s – Matthew Frank Stevens, 'The Evolution of the Bond in Late Medieval England', unpublished paper delivered at the Economic History Society annual conference (Robinson College, Cambridge, 2 April 2016), p. 13. My thanks to Dr Stevens for kindly allowing me access to this pre-publication paper.

⁷⁰ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 319. In this case a bill of covenant was brought against a carrier who had failed to carry a load of hay from Waltham to London as agreed orally. In response to counsel's protests that it was not necessary to have a deed for this covenant, Herle J retorted that the judges would not 'undo the law for a cartload of hay'.

⁷¹ Matthew Frank Stevens, 'London Creditors and the Fifteenth-Century Depression', *Economic History Review*, 69 (2016), pp. 1083–1107, p. 1093. The defendant could claim that the bond had already been paid, that it was a forgery, that the debtor had been under age or under duress at the time of its making, or that it had been rendered null and void by the fulfilment of an associated condition.

argument was accepted by the royal justices.⁷² Consequently, from the 1420s the conditions of bonds were increasingly recorded in English; this implies that English literacy was more common than Latin literacy, as the conditions needed to be read and understood by both parties. The commonplace nature of these legal instruments is, therefore, testament to the increasing level of vernacular literacy over the course of the fifteenth century.

Although literacy was advantageous when conducting business, guild regulations did not include literacy requirements for apprentices until the end of the fifteenth century. Barbara Hanawalt labelled them ‘severe’, but in most cases they probably reflected guilds’ aspirations rather than an enforceable reality.⁷³ Requirements, and enforcement, varied by guild, highlighting the differing importance of literacy in each ‘mystery’. In the 1490s the London skimmers ruled that apprentices must demonstrate a functional level of literacy and writing, while the London ironmongers’ rules, copied in 1498, asked apprentices to register their names ‘with their owne handes, yf they can write’, suggesting it was not compulsory.⁷⁴ London often set the custom for other English towns; if these regulations can be taken as a template, it is unlikely that many guilds attempted to enforce literacy requirements for apprentices until the very end of the fifteenth century, if at all. There were certainly no literacy requirements in guild regulations for the admittance of ‘strangers’, even in the late fifteenth century – they had to prove their skill and provide sureties for character, but literacy was never mentioned.⁷⁵

More prestigious guilds, who remained selective and exclusionary, might be more keen to restrict entry on the grounds of illiteracy. In 1478, master goldsmiths were forbidden to take apprentices who could not ‘writte and rede’.⁷⁶ Royal charters and letters patent allowed London goldsmiths to impose their regulations throughout England, so in theory this ruling applied to all goldsmiths in the kingdom.⁷⁷ In the 1490s they sought to strictly enforce the rule that apprentices must be able to ‘read with his tongue [i.e. aloud] and write in English

⁷² Stevens, ‘The Evolution of the Bond’, pp. 12–13.

⁷³ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 82.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82; Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 158.

⁷⁵ See, for example, the Barbers’ Rules (1445), in *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part I*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1907), p. 225; carpenters’ ordinances (1482), mentioned in E. Miller, ‘Medieval York’, in *A History of Yorkshire: The City of York*, ed. by P.M. Tillott (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1961), pp. 25–116, p. 94.

⁷⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 82.

⁷⁷ T.F. Reddaway, ‘The London Goldsmiths Circa 1500’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (1962), pp. 49–62, pp. 50–51.

or Latin in his own hand competently'.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, a Banbury goldsmith, an expert engraver of letters, was found to be illiterate and unable to read his own work.⁷⁹ Multiple master goldsmiths were bound in £40 (a sizeable sum) to ensure that, within a given period, their apprentice would prove able to pass a literacy test.⁸⁰ These apprentices had begun their apprenticeships, and been enrolled, without the requisite skills. The high financial penalty in these cases suggest that the goldsmiths sought to dissuade masters from taking on illiterate apprentices, but it is also evident that this preference was frequently ignored.

The ability to read and write was of utmost importance to the London scribes' guild; in 1497 they ordered that every apprentice should be examined on their 'congruity in the Latin tongue', because many lacked 'perfect congruity of grammar, which is the thing most necessary and expedient to every person exercising and using the science and faculty of the said mystery...wherethrough oftentimes they err, and their acts and feates been incongruous and not perfectly done'. The masters were thus enjoined to send their apprentices to grammar school.⁸¹ It is undoubtedly no coincidence that this deterioration in scribal skill corresponded with the widespread use of formularies (published templates for common Latin legal instruments), and the rising acceptance of documentation written in the vernacular. Scribes more familiar with written English relied on exemplars to bolster their imperfect Latin grammar. It is clear across all the guilds mentioned that literacy was encouraged, even if not rigorously enforced.

2. Expectations of material support

One thing common to almost all indentures was a clause regarding the provision of food, clothes, and lodging by the master. The apprentice usually joined the master's household, living and working alongside the *familia*, which might include servants and other apprentices as well as the master's family. The post mortem inventory of a London fishmonger, dated 1373, referred to the '*prentiseschaumbre*', although this contained 'two

⁷⁸ T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company 1327–1509* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1975), pp. 191.

⁷⁹ Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 158.

⁸⁰ Reddaway, *Goldsmiths' Company*, p. 192. Two more were bound in £10 apiece, perhaps because the apprentices were more likely to achieve the standard within the given time – *ibid.*, p. 192, n. 115.

⁸¹ Ordinances from the 'Common Paper', quoted in *The Case of the Free Scribes of London, 1749*, pp. 24–27, cited in *A Common-place Book of the Fifteenth Century Containing A Religious Play and Poetry, Legal Forms, and Local Accounts, Printed from the Original Manuscript at Brome Hall, Suffolk*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: Trübner and Co./Norwich: Agas H. Goose and Co., 1886), n. 4, p. 131.

boards' and 'four forms' so was not necessarily where the apprentices slept.⁸² Having apprentices live-in helped maintain a reliable source of labour. In all of the surviving indentures, the apprentice was to reside in the master's household for at least part of the apprenticeship, and generally received clothing, bedding, and food throughout the term. Although the norm in England, this arrangement was not ubiquitous throughout Europe. Kathryn Reyerson's study of Montpellier apprentices demonstrated that just under 80 percent of apprentices resided within the master's household, while the remainder merely worked with them.⁸³ In parts of Catalonia, the level of provision often correlated with the distance the apprentice had travelled, but this does not seem to have been the case for the majority of apprentices in England.⁸⁴

2.1 Trial years and trial periods

Contrary to Malcolm Richardson's assertion that apprenticeships began at the point of enrolment, in England the apprenticeship commenced on the date stated in the indenture, which might pre- or post-date the making of the document.⁸⁵ Therefore the master's obligation to feed, clothe, and house the apprentice generally began simultaneously with the apprenticeship, which might or might not prove successful. To prevent unnecessary financial outlay on a short-lived arrangement, some masters used trial years or trial periods to mitigate the costs. Custom of London required masters to be in a condition to sustain and perform their agreement to provide the apprentice with adequate clothing, food and drink for the duration of the apprenticeship.⁸⁶ Reference to 'custom [and usage] of London' appears in indentures as early as 1310, while Coventry had its own 'custom' by 1336, and Winchester by the end of the fourteenth century.⁸⁷ As London generally set the precedent for other

⁸² 'Membr. 6, ...May 1373', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 155. The room below, describe as 'the Workmen's Room' ('*camera serviencium*') contained one chest and one board, total value 2s. See also Stephanie R. Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), p. 116.

⁸³ Kathryn L. Reyerson, 'The Adolescent Apprentice/Worker in Medieval Montpellier', *Journal of Family History*, 17 (1992), pp. 353–370, pp. 361–362.

⁸⁴ Stephen P. Bensch, 'Apprenticeship, Wages and Guilds at Puigcerdà (1260–1300)', in *El Món urbà a la Corona d'Aragó del 1137 als decrets de Nova Planta: XVII Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó*, vol. 1, ed. by Salvador Claramunt (Barcelona: Publicacions Universitat Barcelona, 2003), pp. 209–222, p. 213–214.

⁸⁵ Malcolm Richardson, *Middle-Class Writing in Late Medieval London* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p. 6. Richardson also completely failed to mention indentures (referring instead to 'documents' written in French), which suggests a rather incomplete understanding of apprenticeship.

⁸⁶ A.H. Thomas, 'Introduction: Apprenticeship – City Custom of Apprenticeship', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. xlv.

⁸⁷ TNA, E 210/5150; TNA, E 40/4450; HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v. These dates represent the earliest apprenticeship indenture in the sample to mention the 'custom', but it is not necessarily the earliest usage for each town.

towns, the masters' obligations were probably the same in Coventry, Winchester, and many other English towns.

Some indentures indicated that the first year, during which the apprentice must be enrolled, was used as a 'trial year', during which, in order to limit their outlay, masters only provided food and lodging – the apprentice's family had to provide clothing and bedding. This differed from the trial period illustrated in *Bodyn v Chirche* (see above), wherein the apprenticeship pre-dated the creation of the apprenticeship indenture.⁸⁸ This section discusses the use of and motivation behind trial years, where the trial was written into the terms of the indenture, and trial periods, which used post-dated indentures. The turn of the fifteenth century marks a clear divide in the use of trial years and periods – trial years only appeared in indentures dated *before* 1405, and trial periods were only used in indentures dated *after* 1399. The trial period effectively replaced the trial year at the turn of the century. The reasons for this change are examined further below, but in short, this delineation follows similar trends in the promises made to apprentices (see Chapter 6), and highlights a clear link between apprenticeship and labour shortages. Trial years, during which the apprentice had to provide for themselves, were only used when labour was abundant. When labour was scarce, masters had to offer better terms in order to attract an apprentice, and so used shorter trial periods instead.

2.2 Trial years

The longer the term of apprenticeship, the more a master was required to spend to adequately maintain the apprentice. Longer terms were not merely a means of providing extensive craft-specific training, but also of retaining a legally bound (if not necessarily low-cost) source of labour. Therefore, some indentures included a trial year, during which the master provided little more than food and accommodation. Although only a small number of indentures survive, trial years do not appear to have been common practice: of the 77 indentures which detailed the apprentice's maintenance, only eight set a different level of provision in one or more years (see Table 5.1). The use of trial years mirrors the distribution of surviving indentures, so this is probably a fair indication of the total proportion of apprenticeships which included a trial year. Trial years were used idiosyncratically, suggesting autonomy on the part of the master. Although 'usage and custom of the city of London' (and, by extension, elsewhere) was for a master to provide all necessities for the

⁸⁸ TNA, C 1/19/492 and C 1/19/493.

duration of the apprenticeship, five of the eight trial year indentures were for London apprentices.⁸⁹ This might be an accident of survival, but it might also indicate that higher living costs encouraged masters to attempt to limit initial outlay on potentially unsuccessful apprenticeships.

Table 5.1 – outline of differences in provision between trial years and remainder of apprenticeship, in 8 indentures dated 1255–1405.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Apprentice</i>	<i>Term (years)</i>	<i>Trade and place</i>	<i>Initial provision</i>	<i>Additional provision</i>
1255	John de Santa Cruce	9	Goldsmith, London	Food only	Food, clothing, shoes
1310	John of Wiltshire	8	Fishmonger, London	Food only	Food, clothing, shoes, bedding
1382	Francis Iwerst	10	Goldsmith, London	Food only	Food, clothes, shoes, bedding, etc.
1396	William Sywell	7	Ironmonger, Northampton	Food, drink, and lodging only	Food, clothes, shoes, lodging
1397	John Branketre	7	Fishmonger, London	Food only	Food, clothes, shoes, bedding, etc.
1399	William Mentyl	4	Smith, Sheppey	Food and drink only for 2 years	Food, clothes, shoes, bedding
1402	Thomas Wolrich	7	Draper, London	None	Food, clothes, shoes, bedding
1405	John Heryon	9	Draper, Norwich	Food and drink only	Food, clothing, bedding, shoes, stockings

Although trial years may have contravened the accepted custom, London’s civic authorities did not openly disapprove of this practice, suggesting that these indentures contained written confirmation of an accepted, unwritten, social convention. It was not unreasonable to expect the apprentice to commence the apprenticeship with sufficient clothes, shoes, and other necessities, provided by their family. The disputed indenture in *Moreton v de Eye* (see Chapter 2) stipulated that Moreton was to provide for himself for the first year of the seven-year apprenticeship. Moreton’s father and friends were unwilling to consent to this clause, which Moreton claimed was added, along with a £40 penalty, after an agreement had been reached. The court did not deem the trial year unreasonable, and it was not seen to

⁸⁹ A.H. Thomas ‘Introduction: Apprenticeship – City Custom of Apprenticeship’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. xlv.

contravene accepted custom.⁹⁰ Therefore, it seems likely that parents were expected to provide clothing and bedding for their child at the very beginning of the apprenticeship even if there was no trial year, although this was not reflected in the surviving records. Social conventions, after all, are not generally legislated.

Apprentices had to be publicly enrolled within a year of commencing the apprenticeship.⁹¹ In all of the indentures featuring a trial year, the indenture was drawn up prior to the formation of the apprenticeship – this was different to the trial period (see below). If the apprentice proved unsatisfactory during the trial year, they would not be enrolled and, presumably, the indentures were cancelled. In London, an ordinance dated 1299–1300 set down the requirement to enrol, but the concept of a ‘trial year’ existed prior to the more formal and performative public aspects of apprenticeship.⁹² As shown in Table 5.1, John de Santa Cruce’s master promised to provide food (*‘victui’*) for the first year, while for the subsequent eight years he endeavoured to provide food, clothing and shoes.⁹³ This indenture did not specifically mention accommodation, but this is likely to be an oversight; the standard formula of an indenture was not well-developed in the thirteenth century (see Chapter 1), and, coming from Oxford, it is unlikely that John did not reside with his master, a London goldsmith. Feeding one additional person was almost certainly more cost-effective than providing the apprentice with meals to be eaten elsewhere, or with money to purchase food.

In general the apprentice resided with the master (*‘et secum more apprenticii sui comoraturum’*) for the duration of the apprenticeship, although this was not always made explicit in the indenture and must be inferred from other clauses.⁹⁴ William Sywell’s master undertook to provide food, drink and lodging (*‘hospicium’*).⁹⁵ This probably referred to lodging within the master’s house, as otherwise he might have been obliged to pay for the apprentice to reside elsewhere. In some indentures, which did not feature a trial year, living arrangements were implied by the commandment that the apprentice not absent himself from

⁹⁰ ‘Calendar – Roll A 25: 1381–83, mem. 7b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 14–16. Meanwhile, the bond in £40, was cancelled as ‘it seemed to the court...to be against all reason’, but only ‘in view of the fact that the plaintiff was under age’.

⁹¹ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. II, part I, containing Liber Custumarum with extracts from the Cottonian MS. Claudius, D.II.*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 93.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 93. Steven Epstein states that from 1275 apprentices had to be enrolled at the Chamber of the Guildhall – Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds*, p. 197.

⁹³ ‘...*et in octo annis sequentibus omnia neccessaria victui et vestitui cum calciamentis competenter*’, TNA, E 210/1397.

⁹⁴ WAM, 5959. BL, Egerton Ch. 7355, TNA, CP 40/646, rot. 301 and LMA, A/CSC/12677 also include a variation of this phrase.

⁹⁵ Northamptonshire Archives, FH/G/C/1971.

service either by day or night.⁹⁶ However, in John of Wiltshire's indenture (dated 1310) the only clue was that John was forbidden to commit fornication within the master's house.⁹⁷ It is unlikely that he did not reside with the master, and therefore the lack of clarity may be due to the early date of the indenture. Although the apprentice might be a disruptive and recalcitrant presence, having them reside with the master was the most cost-effective means of facilitating a trial year, and made it easier to control the apprentice's behaviour (see Chapter 4). Apprentices were typically forbidden to frequent taverns, gamble, or commit fornication or adultery, but oversight was impossible if they lived elsewhere.

As Table 5.1 shows, masters commonly provided nothing more than food and drink (and accommodation) during the trial year. This was a pragmatic decision. Chapter 6 demonstrates that annual expenditure on food and drink might be greater than the cost of outfitting an apprentice with clothing and bedding. However, it did not require immediate outlay of a significant amount of capital. If food was cheaply available, the additional expenditure might amount to 1*d* per day, which would immediately cease if the trial year proved unsuccessful. Minimal provision also helped prevent disputes if the apprentice attempted to depart with the clothing and bedding purchased during the trial year. Masters would not necessarily want apprentices to gain material benefit from an unsuccessful apprenticeship, and might wish to retain any clothing and bedding purchased. However, subsequent apprentices might expect to be provided with brand new clothes, rather than second-hand items purchased for the use of a previous apprentice. Therefore, it was easier not to purchase clothing and bedding during the trial year.

Only one indenture indicates that the apprentice received no material provision at all during the first year. Thomas Wolrich's indenture, dated 1402, stated that his master, John Cleye, would provide all necessary items including food, clothes, linen, wool, shoes and bedding as per the custom of London, except in the first year when Wolrich was to provide all necessaries himself, despite residing with the master:

*'Et predictus Joh(ann)es Cleye magister suus inveniret eidem
Thome apprenticio suo omnia necessaria sua scilicet victum vestitum*

⁹⁶ *'...a servicio dicti magistri sui die aut nocte illicite non recederet'* – TNA, CP 40/646, rot. 301.

⁹⁷ *'In domo domini sui fornicationem non faciet'* – TNA, E 210/5150. John of Wiltshire was part of the *'familia'* of the cleric Walter de Bedwynd prior to commencing his apprenticeship. de Bedwynd (or Bedwyn) appears to have been the King's Remembrancer at the time of this apprenticeship, and was subsequently Treasurer of St Peter's Church, York. See *'Walter de Bedwyn'*, Origins of Bedwyn website, author and date unknown <<https://bedwyn.weebly.com/walter-de-bedwyn.html#>> [accessed 26 August 2020]; TNA, SC 1/50/47.

lineum et laneum calciamenta et lectum per totum dictum terminum prout deceret talem apprenticium eiusdem artis inveniri secundum usum et consuetudinem Civitatis London' ac erudicionem tantum excepto primo anno in quo predictus apprenticius omnia huiusmodi necessaria sibi ipsi inveniret'.⁹⁸

The rationale here is clear. The apprentice should begin the apprenticeship with sufficient clothing, footwear, and bedding of their own, and the master should not need to provide any new items for the first year. It was unusual, however, to oblige the apprentice to provide their own food and drink. Wolrich was alleged to have departed from his apprenticeship in April 1403. As he received no wages, Wolrich bore the cost of the failed apprenticeship; Cleye was not obliged to provide anything until June 1403. However, this did not prevent Cleye from seeking £20 compensation from Richard Cleye, Wolrich's guarantor.⁹⁹

Only one indenture included a trial longer than one year. William Mentyl's father agreed to provide clothing and bedding for the first two years of the four year term (*'Joh(ann)es pater eiusdem Will(elm)i inveniet dictum Will(el)mum laneum et lineum et dim(idium) lectum'*).¹⁰⁰ This could indicate that blacksmiths' skills were perceived to take longer to acquire than other crafts, and therefore the master required more time to assess the apprentice's suitability. However, this is more likely to be a practical decision on the part of a less affluent master, who saved money by extending the trial year. The cost of maintaining an apprentice could be considerable (see Chapter 6), particularly in occupations such as smithing where specialist equipment and apparel was required. This indenture is also notable because the indenture post-dated the commencement of the apprenticeship by 176 days (see below).

Apprenticeship was a practice supported by layers of regulation at national, civic and guild level, an umbrella structure regulating interactions between masters and apprentices. The indenture formalised other, outstanding, elements of the master-apprentice relationship in a legally binding document. Social conventions (such as what constituted excessive physical punishment, or how much food was 'sufficient') were not codified but nonetheless universally understood. Trial years fitted within this structure. The possibility that trial years

⁹⁸ TNA, CP 40/646, rot. 301.

⁹⁹ Ibid. It should be noted that John Cleye does not seem to have pursued Richard Cleye at law until 1422, by which point Richard Cleye was deceased.

¹⁰⁰ BL, Egerton Ch. 7355. The phrase *'dimidium lectum'*, half a bed, implies that the master would provide some of the necessary items – perhaps bulkier items such as the mattress.

were used to defray some of the costs of apprenticeship has been given little consideration previously. Sylvia Thrupp's study of London's grocers found that 'the indenture does not state the whole story of the conditions of the contract', as the master did not necessarily agree to provide the apprentice with goods and clothing at his own expense. Thrupp cited 'unmistakable evidence' of apprentices 'frequently' paying for the food and clothing provided for them. Her evidence came from a guardian's account showing 40s expenditure on clothes, shoes, bedding and necessaries for an apprentice, and a will mentioning money owed by the apprentice to the testator for bread.¹⁰¹

Thrupp's argument is incorrect in several ways. Although she was quite right to state that indentures 'in the familiar form' did not tell the 'whole story' of the apprenticeship (payments made to the guild for enrolment, for example, were not mentioned), they clearly set out the 'whole story' of the apprenticeship as concerned the legal relationship between master and apprentice. In essence, the indenture recounted the elements of provision that were not legislated elsewhere, such as in guild regulations. Therefore, what the indenture does not reveal is the story of the apprenticeship with regard to third parties. There was no indication of guild involvement in any indenture mentioned in this research, despite the clear requirement for enrolment throughout the majority of the period. Indentures were legally enforceable documents, and both parties were willing to seek redress at law for breach of the terms. Therefore only a foolish master would neglect to stipulate who paid for the apprentice's upkeep.

Thrupp did not have oversight of the apprenticeship indentures to accompany the wills and accounts cited as evidence, as none of the requisite documents seem to have survived. Without them, it is impossible to state with any certainty whether they depart from the 'familiar form' by requiring the apprentice's family to maintain them throughout the term. As demonstrated in Table 5.1, a number of indentures clearly stated that the master would not provide for the apprentice during the trial year (or years). The guardian's account cited by Thrupp concerned expenses incurred in providing for a grocer's apprentice who had been apprenticed for a term of one year.¹⁰² However the account actually stated that the costs were incurred for the *first year* of the apprenticeship; the intended duration is not recorded, but this was probably an unsuccessful trial year rather than the entirety of the apprenticeship. John

¹⁰¹ Sylvia Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London, A Study of Distributive Trade', in *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Eileen Power and M.M. Postan (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1933), pp. 247–292, p. 255. Thrupp also cited the will of William Grantham (TNA, PROB 11/14/62), which included provision for the testator's grandson during his apprenticeship, but I was unable to find this bequest in the will.

¹⁰² LMA, COL/AD/01/008 (Letter-Book H), f. 297, cited in Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London', p. 255.

Vyne, the guardian, also accounted for money spent to place his ward with another master ‘in the next year after he was exonerated from [his previous master] by the mayor’.¹⁰³ Rather than failing to convey the ‘whole story’ of the agreement, it is more likely that this apprentice’s indenture deviated from the ‘familiar form’ by including a trial year. Thrupp also mis-transcribed the will which mentioned an apprentice who owed money for bread – the bequest concerned 20s owed to the testator by the apprentice’s father (*‘patrem’*, not *‘pannem’*).¹⁰⁴ The accompanying apprenticeship indenture may have been completely unremarkable.

Although it helped to save money if an apprentice proved unsuitable during the trial year, the practice of requiring the apprentice to provide for themselves during that year fell out of favour by the beginning of the fifteenth century. John Heryon’s indenture, dated 1405, was the last to include a trial year.¹⁰⁵ When labour was in short supply, masters found it more difficult to attract apprentices, and thus stopped requiring them to provide for themselves for part of the term. Moreover, as wage rates increased, maintaining an apprentice for the full duration of the term might actually prove more cost-effective than employing a journeyman by the day, and so more effort was made to make apprenticeship an attractive prospect (this argument is examined further in Chapter 6). Instead, in the fifteenth century, the use of shorter trial periods became more prominent.

2.3 Trial periods

All 82 indentures used in this research noted the commencement date of the apprenticeship, while 69 also noted the date on which the indenture was made. Thirty of the indentures were drawn up on the day the apprenticeship commenced, a further thirty pre-dated the apprenticeship, and nine indentures were post-dated.¹⁰⁶ Pre-dated indentures might indicate a trial period between the date of the indenture and the commencement of the apprenticeship, but there is no firm evidence to support this. However, post-dated indentures almost certainly indicated a trial period. Michael Clanchy noted that, in rural England, one

¹⁰³ *‘pro primo anno apprenticietatis sue videlicet pro lecto suo pannis lineis et laneis calciatu et aliis necessariis per totum primum annum, xl s. Et pro invencione predicti Thome ad scribend(um) in proximo anno quando exoneratus fuit de predicto Marco per predictum maiorem videlicet pro victu vestitu et omnibus necessariis, iiii li.’* – LMA, COL/AD/01/008, f. 297 r.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PROB 11/4/141 (Will of Richard Hakedy of Finsbury, Middlesex, 24 March 1457); Thrupp, ‘The Grocers of London’, p. 255.

¹⁰⁵ CXXI, *Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. II, pp. 28–29.

¹⁰⁶ The post-dated indentures are: BL, Egerton Ch. 7355; West Yorkshire Archives, MMB/56; KHLIC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r.; Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3; SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.; KHLIC, Fa/RA1; Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B2/1, ff. 194 v.–195; MERL, MS2149/24; TNA, E 210/6382.

might have to wait for an itinerant specialist to appear in the neighbourhood in order to have an agreement written down.¹⁰⁷ However, as these indentures are predominantly for urban apprentices, this explanation is not sufficient. Instead, post-dated indentures are probably the result of a successful trial period – or, as with *Bodyn v Chirche*, effective persuasion by a friend to encourage the continuation of the apprenticeship.¹⁰⁸

In most cases only a few weeks elapsed between the beginning of the apprenticeship and the creation of the indenture; five of the nine indentures were made within 21 days of the beginning of the apprenticeship. The earliest post-dated indenture was dated 1400, and the longest gaps between the beginning of the apprenticeship are found in the early fifteenth century (see below).¹⁰⁹ This date of the indenture might have corresponded with the date of enrolment at the end of a successful trial period, although in the absence of any enrolment records to confirm this, this remains conjecture. One exception, however, is Thomas Sturte's indenture. While the apprenticeship began on Christmas Day 1457, the indenture was drawn up two days later; this was probably because no clerk was available to draw up the indenture on the day.¹¹⁰ This cannot truly be considered a post-dated indenture, and has not been included in Table 5.2 below.

A short trial period might be sufficient for a master to decide whether or not a potential apprentice was suitable. The average length of trial period in the eight post-dated indentures was 60.5 days, but this is skewed by two very long trial periods (see Table 5.2). With these excluded, the average trial period was 18.5 days. This gave the master and apprentice time to decide if they were mutually compatible, and discover whether the apprentice was a good fit within the workshop and *familia*. The master had the opportunity to test the apprentice's skills, and discern whether they were capable of learning the basic rudiments of the craft. The trial period might also be sufficient to illuminate any moral deficiencies on the apprentice's part, which the master would need to curb with behavioural clauses in the indenture (see Chapter 4). At the end of this trial period, the master could either have the indentures drawn up or send the apprentice back to their family.

¹⁰⁷ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, C 1/19/493. The apprenticeship was said to have begun on 1 November 1441 but the (post-dated) indentures were not drawn up until 15 February 1442, 106 days later.

¹⁰⁹ BL, Egerton Ch. 7355.

¹¹⁰ Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3. Thomas Sturte was apprenticed to relatives, which might have negated the need for a trial period at all – the apprentice was probably known to the master prior to the commencement of the term.

Table 5.2 – length of term, distance travelled by the apprentice, and duration of the trial period in post-dated indentures.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Length of term (years)</i>	<i>Distance travelled (miles)</i>	<i>Commencement date</i>	<i>Date indenture made</i>	<i>Length of trial period (days)</i>
1399–1400	4	0	25/12/1399	18/06/1400	176
1422–3	3.5	2.66	25/12/1422	10/07/1423	197
1451	6	0	25/03/1451	09/05/1451	45
1480	8	7.29	29/09/1480	12/10/1480	13
1490	8	?*	29/09/1490	10/10/1490	11
1498	7	62.03	01/11/1498	07/11/1498	6
1498	6	0	29/09/1498	14/10/1498	15
1500–1	6	0	25/12/1500	14/01/1501	21

* No place of origin was provided for the apprentice in this indenture (Kent History & Library Centre, Fa/RA1). It is possible the the apprentice was local and thus known to the Romney court where he was enrolled, and therefore this detail was not included.

As Table 5.2 shows, the apprentice’s family usually lived within a short distance of the master; this was a practical consideration, as it would be difficult for a master to send an unsuitable apprentice home, for example from London to rural Lincolnshire, after a three week trial. The only exception to this was Thomas Longford (1498), who travelled from ‘Cokery[n]g’ in Shropshire to Gloucester to begin his apprenticeship 6 days before the indenture was drawn up.¹¹¹ Although it has not been possible to locate ‘Cokery[n]g’, it should be noted that both Shrewsbury (Shropshire’s county town) and Gloucester lie on the River Severn, and this would have enabled (comparatively) quick and easy travel despite the 62 mile distance. In comparison, the average distance apprentices travelled (not including the eight indentures above) was 56 miles; the short distances travelled by the apprentices who undertook trial periods are therefore noteworthy.¹¹²

The post-dated indentures featuring very long trial periods were both for very short terms. It is unclear why long trial periods are only evident in very short apprenticeships. It may be purely coincidental, but certainty is impossible without a larger number of indentures. William Mentyl was apprenticed at Christmas 1399 for four years, with the indenture drawn up 176 days later on 18 June 1400.¹¹³ The provision arrangements for his trial years were

¹¹¹ Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B2/1, ff. 194 v.–195.

¹¹² Average distance travelled in a straight line, calculated based on 51 indentures where two identifiable place names are given. Some apprentices originated in the same town as the master, and this distance has been calculated as 0 miles.

¹¹³ BL, Egerton Ch. 7355.

outlined in Table 5.1. Richard Slak was apprenticed for 3.5 years from Christmas 1422, but 197 days elapsed before the indenture was drawn up on 10 July 1423.¹¹⁴ Slak was promised a wage of 6s 8d per annum in equal parts on 24 June and 30 November, but no material provision was mentioned and it is unclear whether Slak received 3s 4d on the 24 June before the creation of the indenture. From a legal perspective, the master was not obliged to provide the apprentice with food, drink, clothing, board or training before the indenture was drawn up, but not doing so might create ill-will, and would probably be frowned upon by the guild as well. Moreover, apprenticeship indentures recorded a pre-negotiated oral agreement, at a point when all parties were content to make the apprenticeship official (perhaps coinciding with the apprentice's enrolment). The apprentice resided with the master and was almost certainly provided with food and drink during the trial period. The master would not need to provide anything else if, as suggested above, social custom dictated that the apprentice brought their own clothing and bedding with them when they joined the master's household.

3. Conclusion

Although the finer details of the apprenticeship indenture might differ, all apprentices had similar expectations of their masters. They expected to be taught the requisite skills of the craft or trade to the best of the master's ability, for the duration of the term of apprenticeship. This was especially important as any dereliction in this duty on the master's part might prevent the apprentice from entering the guild at the end of the apprenticeship. Understandably, an apprentice whose master failed to teach them properly (or at all) might be quick to complain and ask to be released from the terms of the indenture. Literacy and numeracy were rarely mentioned in indentures, but for different reasons. The omission of numeracy from indentures indicates that this skill was fundamental, and that apprentices were expected to be functionally numerate prior to apprenticeship. Numeracy was a requirement for entry into adulthood from at least the twelfth century, and it remained more important than literacy throughout the period up to 1500. It was not until the mid-fifteenth century that guild regulations demonstrated an expectation that apprentices would be literate, and perhaps also able to write, by the time they began their apprenticeship. This is corroborated by the small number of indentures which included provision for the apprentice's wider education. Nevertheless, such expectations were not universal; not all apprentices were literate prior to the apprenticeship, as evidenced by complaints from apprentices whose masters failed to

¹¹⁴ West Yorkshire Archives, MMB/56.

provide them with the additional education promised in their indentures. *Bodyn v Chirche* also indicates that masters had their own views of what constituted a sufficient level of education – after all, it was not necessary for apprentices to be able to write well when scribes could be employed for a fee.

Apprentices also expected material support, and ‘sufficient’ provision was based on popular expectations and social conventions. Custom of London (and elsewhere) was largely unwritten but universally understood, and dictated what was acceptable in terms of provision of food and clothing. As with training and education, apprentices were ready to complain if their masters did not provide for them appropriately, and guilds were also prepared to punish masters for failing in this area. Although it was not necessarily common practice, some indentures indicate that fourteenth-century masters sought to crystallise social custom in writing, thus creating the ‘trial year’ in which the apprentice was required to provide their own clothing and bedding. This was a cost-effective way of introducing a potential apprentice into the household, and, if it proved unsuccessful, the only real outlay was for their food and drink. The paucity of extant indentures makes it difficult to draw a firm conclusion, but trial years do not seem to have been common practice: only eight of the 82 apprenticeship indentures mentioned a trial year. Trial years fell out of use at the turn of the fifteenth century in response to demographic and economic pressures. They seem to have been replaced by the use of a much shorter trial period, using a post-dated indenture, but again these were not common practice. In the eyes of the law, masters were not obliged to maintain the apprentice before the indentures were drawn up, although as the apprentice resided with them, they must have provided food and drink during the trial period. Social custom is rarely recorded but is entirely probable that apprentices generally began their term with sufficient clothing and bedding to minimise the need for additional material support within the first few years. Nevertheless, under the terms of most indentures, a master was still obliged to provide these items for the duration of the term of apprenticeship. The next chapter provides provisional estimates of the costs involved.

Chapter 6: The economics of providing for an apprentice

According to the *Liber Albus* (compiled c. 1419), ‘by ancient custom’ no apprentice should be bound for a term less than seven years.¹ This has led historians including Chris Dyer, Larry Epstein, Shulamith Shahar and Elspeth Veale to assert that long apprenticeships were designed to provide masters with a ‘pool of cheap labour’ or ‘useful, virtually unpaid labour’.² This incorrect assumption has arisen because heretofore historians have given no serious consideration to the cost of maintaining an apprentice. Material maintenance should be considered an integral part of the apprenticeship system, and the costs involved were far from nominal.³ Careful consideration of the cost of items mentioned in apprenticeship indentures indicates that apprentices were not a cheap source of labour. Apprentices were almost always provided with food, clothing, and bedding, and might also receive cash or goods on completion of the term. In most circumstances, maintaining an apprentice for a fixed term was only marginally less expensive, and certainly less cost-effective, than paying a trained journeyman a daily wage. Therefore, apprenticeship was less a means of exploiting a cheap labour source, and more a method of securing a worker using a legally enforceable contract. Given that an apprentice required training before they could produce goods of saleable quality, another driving force behind apprenticeship was the need to maintain and impart high-quality production techniques within crafts.

Apprenticeship was a means of transferring tacit skills and competences from master to apprentice, perhaps by means of ‘monitored participation’ whereby the apprentice learned

¹ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. III, containing Translation of the Anglo-Norman Passages in Liber Albus, Glossaries, Appendices, and Index*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862), p. 90.

² Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 232; S.R. Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change in Pre-industrial Europe’, *Journal of Economic History*, 58 (1998), pp. 684–713, p. 691; Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 233; Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 93. See also Ulrich Pfister, ‘Craft Guilds, the Theory of the Firm, and Early Modern Proto-industry’, in *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400–1800*, ed. by S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 25–51, p. 27; Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660–1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 100; William F. Kahl, *The Development of London Livery Companies: An historical essay and a select bibliography* (Harvard, MA: The Kress Library of Business and Economics, 1960), p. 1; George Clune, *The Medieval Gild System* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan Ltd., 1943), p. 88; Patrick Wallis, ‘Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England’, *Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence: How Well Do ‘Facts’ Travel?*, 22/07 (2007), p. 19 <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/22515/1/2207Wallis.pdf>> [accessed 30 April 2021]. Quotes taken from Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 232, and Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 93.

³ This aspect of apprenticeship is mentioned, but not fully explored, in Stephanie Hovland’s thesis – Stephanie R. Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), pp. 47 and 253.

by carrying out increasingly complex tasks.⁴ Epstein suggested that craft guilds' primary purpose was 'to provide adequate skills training through formal apprenticeship', but in England (and elsewhere) apprenticeship also existed outside the guild system.⁵ Joel Mokyr argued that the guild system was 'neither necessary nor sufficient for the emergence of effective apprenticeship institutions'.⁶ There are two obvious reasons for this. First, a concentration of artisans was required to form a craft guild, thus apprenticeship must have preceded its formation.⁷ Second, an apprenticeship was, essentially, a private legal agreement between the apprentice (or their family) and the master, and could be formed and enforced without the involvement of external parties.⁸ Although apprenticeship was one of the main routes to citizenship, not all apprentices became master craftsmen and fewer still entered the freedom.⁹ That apprenticeship persisted, and continued to exist outside the guild system, signifies that it was not necessarily an exclusionary practice designed to limit competition (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, although masters might be selective when choosing an apprentice in periods where labour was abundant, in times of labour scarcity masters provided incentives, in the form of full maintenance and gifts of money or goods, in order to attract an apprentice. An underlying motivation was required for a master to invest time, effort and money into a practice that promised little financial reward and produced a future competitor: a combination of the desire to secure a worker for a pre-determined period,

⁴ Joel Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 20–43, p. 23; Esther N. Goody, 'Learning, Apprenticeship, and the Division of Labour', in *Apprenticeship: From Theory to Method and Back Again*, ed. by M.W. Coy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 289, cited in Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 24.

⁵ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change', p. 684; Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis, 'Introduction: Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe', in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 1–19, p. 9. The London silkwomen are an obvious example of this: they took multiple apprentices but never formed a guild – Marian K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 4 (1933), pp. 324–335, pp. 324–325 and 335 particularly.

⁶ Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 33.

⁷ Ruben Schalk, 'Apprenticeships with and without Guilds: The Northern Netherlands', in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 187–216, p. 189. For example, the pewterers of London were first granted ordinances for the regulation of the craft in 1348, but the ordinances indicate that apprenticeship was already a well-established practice within the craft by that date – Ronald F. Homer, 'The Medieval Pewterers of London, c. 1190–1457', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 36 (1985), pp. 137–163, pp. 137 and 143.

⁸ See Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 30 for a summary of how social networks and 'social capital' helped to enforce these private agreements.

⁹ Prak and Wallis, 'Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe', p. 16. In sixteenth-century Bristol only one-third of apprentices became citizens – Anne Yarborough, 'Apprentices as Adolescents in Sixteenth Century Bristol', *Journal of Social History*, 13 (1979), pp. 67–81, cited in Jane Humphries, 'English Apprenticeship: A Neglected Factor in the First Industrial Revolution', in *The Economic Future in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Paul A. David and Mark Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 73–102, p. 88, n. 52.

and the need to provide rigorous technical training. Apprenticeship was enmeshed in a wider social context, in which masters acted *in loco parentis*; children routinely spent much of their youth as part of another *familia*, whether as foster-children, servants, or apprentices.¹⁰ Apprenticeship was a means of socialisation and assisted in the inter-generational transmission of culture and norms, hence the strict behavioural clauses (see Chapter 4) intended to ‘ensure respect, reproduce social order, instil values and suppress disorderly exuberance’.¹¹ It moulded the apprentice into a respectable and trustworthy member of society, as well as a competent craftsman.

This chapter uses figures drawn from a variety of administrative and legal sources to provide low and high estimates of the cost of providing an apprentice with clothing, bedding, and food, as per the terms of their apprenticeship indentures. This provision is referred to as ‘maintaining’ the apprentice. Although social custom might have dictated that apprentices commenced their apprenticeship with sufficient clothing and bedding of their own, this cannot be confirmed by surviving documentary evidence. The indentures themselves generally indicated that clothing and bedding were provided throughout the apprenticeship (see Chapter 5), and costs are calculated on that basis. The resulting estimates are used to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of apprenticeship in comparison to employing a waged journeyman. There have been no previous attempts to calculate the cost of maintaining an apprentice in medieval England, and thus the actual cost of apprenticeship has never been properly considered. Statutes, ordinances and assizes, particularly those concerned with food and wages, provide idealised costs, while inquisitions post mortem, tax assessments, and inventories of goods offer (perhaps) more realistic values. Further information has been gathered from legal records, including lists of items pledged as security for loans, and values of goods provided in actions of debt and theft. Appendix B provides a full explanation of how each cost was obtained. These figures are used to calculate low and high estimates. Although the sources used were not necessarily intended to form a record of the cost of living, they have enabled convincing estimates that could be further refined with the addition of data from other sources. This chapter, therefore, is a starting point in the reconsideration of the cost of apprenticeship.

¹⁰ This was often a means of developing artificial kinship, as kin networks could be useful in later life. Llinos Beverley Smith, ‘Fosterage, Adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales’, *Welsh History Review*, 16 (1992), pp. 1–35, pp. 2, 5 and 13.

¹¹ Mokyr, ‘The Economics of Apprenticeship’, p. 22; Prak and Wallis, ‘Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe’, p. 5.

1. Methodology

For the purpose of estimation, the cost of maintaining an apprentice is comprised of three elements, which form a basket of goods used in subsequent calculations: attire (including linen undergarments, tunics, hose, belts, headwear and footwear), bedding, and food. The cost of education was generally negligible, as the master provided it as an intrinsic part of the apprenticeship (indentures which obliged the master to provide the apprentice with additional education are discussed in Chapter 5). Seventy-seven of the 82 indentures were used for this chapter, and the frequency with which they mentioned specific items is outlined in Table 6.1 below; these items formed the starting point for subsequent calculations.¹² Food and clothing were mentioned most often, with separate clothing items noted with varying frequency. All but one indenture referred explicitly to the provision of food. Most indentures used the Latin ‘*victus*’ or ‘*esculenta*’, but two, both in English, record the master’s obligation to provide ‘meat and drink’.¹³ One indenture stated that the master would provide for the apprentice as per the usage and custom of London and Winchester; the custom of London (and, by extension, other large towns) required that the master be in a condition to sustain and perform their agreements to provide the apprentice with adequate clothing, food and drink.¹⁴ If the master was unable to maintain them, the apprentice could be exonerated.¹⁵

Not every item needed to be replaced annually, depending on the initial quality of the item. For example, the low estimate assumes that shoes were purchased annually; lower quality footwear would not last as long as high-quality shoes, which have been assumed to require biennial replacement in the high estimate.¹⁶ The calculations allow for partial annual replacement of hose and linen, and biennial replacement of tunics and headwear. Craft-specific clothing, such as blacksmiths’ leather aprons, have been omitted so the estimates can represent a baseline for all crafts and trades. The estimated total costs were verified against

¹² The remaining five indentures survive only as partial documents – either scribes’ notes or partial enrolments in court records – and have not been deemed suitable for use in this chapter.

¹³ TNA, E 210/6382; Trinity College Cambridge, O.2.53, f. 30r. This has been taken to mean flesh rather than a reference to ‘white meat’ (which might include butter and cheese), on the basis that the 1363 ‘Diet of Apparel and Servants’ mentions ‘flesh or fish’ (*‘de char ou de pesson’*) separately from ‘butter, and cheese, and other such victuals’ – 37 Edward III, ‘Statute concerning Diet and Apparel’, c. 8, 1363. See also ‘Char’, AND² Online edition. <[http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/char\[1\]](http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/char[1])> [accessed 1 November 2020].

¹⁴ ‘*per totum terminum supradictum et hoc in omnibus eidem usum et consuetudinem London’ et civitatis Wynton*” – HRO, W/D1/22, m. 44; see A.H. Thomas, ‘Introduction: Apprenticeship – City Custom of Apprenticeship’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. xlv–xlv.

¹⁵ Thomas, ‘Introduction: Apprenticeship – City Custom of Apprenticeship’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. xlv.

¹⁶ High quality shoes would almost certainly last significantly longer than two years, but if we assume that most apprentices were adolescent boys they were likely to still be growing and so would require new shoes once they outgrew the old pair.

enrolments of pension settlements and accounts of wardships. In addition, one apprenticeship indenture provided a figure for the annual cost of maintenance, and this was used as a benchmark.¹⁷ The low and high estimated costs are then used to undertake a cost-benefit analysis against paying wages to a skilled journeyman. This analysis demonstrates that, even when wages were high, providing for an apprentice was only marginally less costly than paying a journeyman by the day.

Table 6.1 – individual references to specific items to be provided by masters in 77 apprenticeship indentures.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Individual references</i>
<i>Food</i>	76
<i>Clothes</i>	63
<i>Linen</i>	60
<i>Wool</i>	58
<i>Shoes</i>	56
<i>Bed</i>	40
<i>Drink</i>	32
<i>Hose/stockings</i>	6
<i>Lodging</i>	3
<i>All else necessary</i>	45

1.1 Overcoming problems with sources

Legal and administrative records constitute the main source of information for these estimates. Such records present challenges, not least because they were never intended to act as a record of the cost of common items. In the case of stolen goods, plaintiffs might inflate items' values to increase the potential amount of damages awarded. For example, Alice of Stockyngge claimed damages from John of Cornhulle in an action of trespass at the London Sheriffs' Court in 1320. Stockyngge claimed that Cornhulle, who had previously treated her for a foot ailment, entered her house with force arms and carried off goods worth 20s. The jury (who were expected to have knowledge of the case) stated that the goods were worth 13s 4d, and Stockyngge was awarded less than half the amount of damages claimed.¹⁸

¹⁷ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135 d.

¹⁸ 'Sheriffs' Court Roll, 1320: Membrane 17 (transcript pp. 62–64)', *London Sheriffs' Court Roll 1320*, ed. by Matthew Stevens (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2010), British History Online <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-sheriff-court-roll/1320/pp62-64>> [accessed 6 November 2018]. It was alleged that Cornhulle, posing a surgeon, first made Alice of Stockyngge's foot malady incurable before making off with her goods. The goods in question were a blanket, two sheets and a super-tunic. The medical malpractice

Conversely, according to Dyer, goods were routinely omitted and under-valued in tax assessments.¹⁹ Financial records are not necessarily straightforward either; false accounting was a common problem. ‘Creative accounting’ concealed interest payments on loans without giving the appearance of usury, and allegations of entering false accounts also appeared in accusations of heresy.²⁰ Therefore, the individual values of items have been treated with caution; the highest and lowest values found have generally been discounted (see Appendix B).

The availability of published sources made it considerably easier to obtain prices for the fourteenth century than the fifteenth century, but this should not detract from the estimates’ reliability. Jim Bolton noted that wages remained ‘stubbornly high’ after 1380 even though prices of goods fell; this echoed James Thorold Rogers’ earlier identification of the fifteenth century as the ‘golden age of the English labourer’.²¹ Therefore the calculations below illustrate a worst-case scenario for masters by using higher fourteenth century prices. High prices made it more costly to maintain an apprentice, but apprentices offered a more secure labour source than waged workers. Once the cost of goods fell, demand for higher wages resulted in minimal benefit for the master: it was cheaper to maintain an apprentice than pay a waged worker but, as apprentices were generally less productive, they were less cost-effective.

1.2 Second-hand goods

Although the cost of maintenance could be reduced by buying second-hand goods, all estimates assume that the apprentice was provided with brand new items. This decision has been made for several reasons, not least to provide parity across low and high estimates. First, second-hand goods might be low quality.²² If an apprentice’s family paid a premium for their apprenticeship, they would probably expect good quality, new, clothing. In the

element of this case explains why Alice claimed damages of 100 marks [£66 13s 4d], which would probably have been sufficient to keep her for life. The jury awarded her £30 16s 8d, still a considerable amount.

¹⁹ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 206.

²⁰ Adrian R. Bell, Chris Brooks and Tony K. Moore, ‘Interest in Medieval Accounts: Examples from England, 1272–1340, (Reading: ICMA Centre Discussion Papers in Finance, 2008) online edition <<http://ssrn.com/abstract=1318333>> [accessed 27 December 2018], p. 19; T.K. Moore, ‘Credit Finance in the Middle Ages’, unpublished paper delivered at the Economic History Society Conference 2009 <<http://www.ehs.org.uk/dotAsset/2198856a-47ce-475b-8e49-0917b3b1f0d7.pdf>> [accessed 27 December 2018]; Ian Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 192.

²¹ J.L. Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy: 937–1489* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 266; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 2.

²² James Davis, ‘Marketing Secondhand Goods in Late Medieval England’, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 2 (2010), pp. 270–286, p. 271.

fifteenth century, when masters had to offer inducements to apprentices, the promise of new clothes was an enticement. Second, poor quality clothing required frequent replacement, negating any initial cost saving. Third, purchasing substandard goods would be hypocritical of a master craftsman whose professional reputation (and that of his fellows) depended on his ability to produce high-quality goods, as per craft ordinances and regulations. Fourth, James Davis stated that demand for second-hand goods was ‘probably particularly strong among poor families’.²³ A master seeking to preserve his economic and social credit would not wish to provoke suggestions that he was unable to provide for his *familia* by purchasing easily obtained workaday items second-hand.

Although Davis noted that second-hand goods with scarcity value, such as furs, circulated at higher levels of society without any suggestion of social stigma, Parisian skimmers had to be forbidden from purchasing furs from thieves, or from lepers in brothels or taverns, or furs that were wet or bloodstained, so this second-hand market might not have been the most reputable.²⁴ Furthermore, second-hand marketing existed ‘at the margins of the mainstream exchange process, operating in a grey area where utility met suspicion’.²⁵ In the sixteenth century, female criminals were predominantly involved in petty theft such as stealing clothing and household items, and (assuming they were not caught) they made a reasonable living selling purloined items.²⁶ Clothing was mentioned in multiple actions of theft, demonstrating that the same was true in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁷ Masters who imposed stringent behavioural restrictions on apprentices (see Chapter 4) would be understandably reluctant to purchase potentially stolen clothes.

2. Changes in maintenance before and after the Black Death

Apprenticeship indentures illustrate a gradual shift in the maintenance promised to apprentices, coinciding with social and economic changes in the decades after the Black Death. The change became apparent in the early fifteenth century. Of the 82 indentures collected for this thesis, only seven pre-date the plague; although this is probably indicative of the poor rate of survival for this document (which can accurately be classed as ephemera), it might also indicate that apprentices were less sought-after when labour was abundant, and the ability to bind an employee in a long-term working agreement was not so desirable.

²³ Ibid., p. 278.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 278; Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, pp. 13–14.

²⁵ Davis, ‘Marketing Secondhand Goods’, p. 271.

²⁶ Elizabeth Norton, *The Lives of Tudor Women* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2016), p. 73.

²⁷ Davis, ‘Marketing Secondhand Goods’, p. 281; ‘Membr. 16 (19)b’, *CPMR, 1323–64*, p. 50.

Alternatively, as Mokyr argued, apprenticeship might have been a less attractive prospect in this period, as with labour readily available masters could demand more in exchange for less.²⁸ This is reflected in the content of the indentures. Of the 27 indentures dated 1255–1405, eight required the apprentice or their family to provide food or clothing for at least part of the term of apprenticeship (see Chapter 5). Four indentures also noted that the master was to be paid a premium between £1 and £2, while just one of the 27 apprentices was promised a gift at the end of the term.²⁹ With an abundance of labour available, there was no need to try and attract a potential apprentice; if anything, masters could be highly selective. From the early fifteenth century, however, there are marked differences. All of the indentures offered to fully maintain the apprentice for the duration of the term.

Of the 75 indentures dated after the Black Death, 26 promised the apprentice money, goods, or both, at the conclusion of their apprenticeship. Ten apprentices received wages (although, generally, a very small amount) during all or part of their term. Seven indentures also obliged the apprentice to serve the master for an additional year at the end of the apprenticeship in return for a fixed salary and sometimes food, clothes or goods. Only four of the 75 post-Black Death indentures mentioned a premium paid for the apprenticeship, whereas three of the seven pre-Black Death indentures included this detail. This indicates a desire on the part of masters, at a time when labour was harder to come by, to attract apprentices with promises of total maintenance, and bind them for a pre-determined period of employment. Although not necessarily cheaper than employing a journeyman on a daily wage (see below), apprentices offered a more secure supply of labour. While under certain circumstances it might constitute a breach of the Statute of Labourers, a journeyman with some disposable income could generally leave their master whenever they chose; if offered a contract for a year they were required to accept it, but workers often wanted a shorter employment, even by the day, as it allowed them greater freedom to pursue higher wages.³⁰ Masters could seek restitution at law, but this was not always practical or desirable (see Chapter 2). Apprenticeship indentures, on the other hand, were legally enforceable and

²⁸ Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 36.

²⁹ TNA, E 210/1397; CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 245–247; TNA, E 40/4450; *York Memorandum Book: Part I (1376-1419) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1912), pp. 54-55. The gift is noted in Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/2.

³⁰ Christopher Dyer, 'Work Ethics in the Fourteenth Century', in *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. by James Bothwell, P.J.P. Goldberg, and W.M. Ormrod (York: York Medieval Press), pp. 21–41, p. 26; 25 Edward III, Stat. 2, Statute of Labourers, c. 1 (1351) – this mainly applied to agricultural labourers.

included financial penalties; the guarantor (sometimes referred to as the *'fideiussor'*, often a parent or relative) named in the indenture would be as keen for the apprentice to remain with the master as the master themselves.³¹ If the apprentice broke the terms of the indenture, the guarantor had to 'make pledge and bail' (*'constituit plegium et manucaptorem'*), meaning that they were obliged to provide financial recompense on the apprentice's behalf.³²

2.1 Sumptuary laws

The estimated costs of maintaining an apprentice might be affected by restrictions on dining and dress outlined by sumptuary laws. These laws were intended to cover all of society; although apprentices were not mentioned specifically, they can be categorised as employees of urban craftsmen – 'servants...of mysteries, and artificers' – and, assuming the law was enforced, this affected the maintenance of apprentices. Sumptuary laws exemplified the perception of 'normal' consumption of victuals and clothing at each level of society, with the intention of preventing the lower orders wearing 'excessive' apparel. Preventing the gentry from wearing expensive furs, for example, indicated an assumption by legislators that only the aristocracy ought to wear such things.³³ The first sumptuary law, a short piece of legislation enacted in 1336, attempted to boost the domestic textile industry by preventing the wearing of cloth produced outside the realm, and was of little relevance to the maintenance of apprentices.³⁴ A further statute enacted in 1363, 'concerning Diet and Apparel', responded to increased social mobility in the aftermath of the Black Death.³⁵ According to Dyer, it aimed to prevent the lower orders from dressing above their station, underlining fears that similarities in the outward appearance of lords and servants would endanger the social hierarchy.³⁶ This probably had some effect on apprentices' apparel, limiting the amount spent on their clothing. Similar legislation was enacted in 1463, but the statute's preoccupation with 'extreme' fashion meant it had less implications for apprentices than earlier legislation.³⁷ Sumptuary restrictions are used throughout the discussion of apprentices' maintenance to contextualise low and high estimates.

³¹ Norfolk Record Office, Hare Mss, no. 2019.

³² WAM, 5959; York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1.

³³ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 88–89.

³⁴ 11 Edward III, cc. 1, 3 and 2.

³⁵ 37 Edward III, c. VIII, 'Statute concerning Diet and Apparel'.

³⁶ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 88.

³⁷ 3 Edward IV, c. 5. This legislation not only limited the length of 'pikes' on shoes but also forbade the wearing of any gown, jacket or coat which was too short to cover the wearer's 'privy members and buttocks'.

3. Elements of maintenance and associated costs

A master might be paid a premium for taking on the apprentice, but this was less evident in indentures after 1350 (see above).³⁸ This is not to say that premiums ceased to be paid, but they were not mentioned in the indentures, and must have been regulated by guild regulations or local custom instead. Feeding, clothing, and housing an apprentice required sustained financial outlay, and a lack of meaningful financial recompense might negate any savings made by using apprentices rather than paid workers. An idea of the total cost of apprenticeship can be provided by accounts of wardships; guardians were required to provide their wards with food, clothing, bedding and schooling – a very similar combination of obligations to those taken on by masters in charge of apprentices. In 1380, John Bryan, fishmonger, rendered account for moneys spent upon his ward Alice Reigner, a city orphan:

‘For the board of the said Alice, at 8*d* per week, making 34*s* 8*d* yearly, in the whole [five years] £8 13*s* 4*d*. For her clothes, linen and woollen, and bed, 13*s* 4*d* yearly, making in the whole, £3 6*s* 8*d* [over five years]. For dressing and doctoring [‘*ornatu et medicamine*’] the head of the same Alice, and for her teaching, shoes, and other small necessaries, 13*s* 4*d* yearly, making in the whole £3 6*s* 8*d*’.³⁹

The total in this account was £15 6*s* 8*d* over five years. While these figures seem rather conveniently rounded (13*s* 4*d* is equivalent to 1 mark), and although city orphans were, generally, privileged by their inherited wealth, these figures offer an indication of the cost of maintaining a young person.⁴⁰

John Bryan was given 100 marks ‘to the use of the said Alice’.⁴¹ This was probably Alice’s inheritance, intended to offset the long-term cost of her upbringing, but Bryan was

³⁸ See, for example, ‘Turnham’, *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part I, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1358*, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1889), pp. 495–496. Richard Wynk, apprentice of the late fishmonger Simon de Turnham, is to be ‘discharged of the remaining term of his apprenticeship, and to have his *premium* returned, less the amount already expended on his board and other expenses’.

³⁹ *Memorials*, pp. 446–447.

⁴⁰ Elaine Clark, ‘City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 34 (1990), pp. 168–187, p. 172. The guardian was required to preserve the orphan’s estate, wasting nothing and not depleting their legacy in any way – *ibid.*, p. 173. Therefore, if they were spending the orphan’s income on their upkeep, they would want to ensure that they were sufficiently, but not ostentatiously, dressed and accommodated, to ward off accusations that they had misused the orphan’s property.

⁴¹ *Memorials*, p. 447.

also expected to augment the amount.⁴² The premium paid for an apprenticeship would be considerably lower than 100 marks, but masters could expect to profit from their apprentices' labour once trained. To offset the negligible cost of training (primarily time, and the cost of raw materials), around half of the indentures used in this thesis obliged the apprentice not to cause more than a nominal amount of damage per year (see Chapter 4).⁴³ This presumably comprised wastage originating from the training process; for example, material cut incorrectly, or skins or textiles finished improperly. The cost of waste was impossible to calculate in advance, but potentially considerable. Badly tanned hides, for example, might be deemed unfit for even 'saddlers, girdlers, [and] bottlemakers', and must be forfeited, thus wasting working hours and materials.⁴⁴ Louis Salzman noted that in 1355, for a cost of £8 5s, ten kilns on the manor of Wye in Kent could produce 100,000 tiles with a saleable value of £14 15s. Any mistakes in the firing process resulted in lower profits and wasted hours spent digging clay, obtaining and transporting raw materials, and manning the kilns.⁴⁵ Although nominal in theory, in reality wastage could be costly but was largely unavoidable in the training process.

3.1 Clothing

Contemporary documents such as maintenance agreements (individually arranged pensions, agreed between families or non-kin in exchange for the surrender of use of land) offer an idea of how much clothing might cost. Assuming that arrangements for older people reflected the living standards of those who had not retired, such agreements assist in calculating a low estimate of the cost of clothing an apprentice.⁴⁶ Maintenance agreements, alongside contemporary illustrations, suggest that most peasants wore linen undergarments (chemises for women, and a type of loin-cloth for men), leather shoes, and loose woollen tunics. Many figures in the Crusader Bible (dating from the 1240s) also sport coifs or hoods, as do agricultural labourers in the Luttrell Psalter.⁴⁷ In 1313, Anicia atte Hegge, a peasant on

⁴² Clark, 'City Orphans', p. 181.

⁴³ Mokyř, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 24. The amount of wastage permitted in the indentures varies between 4*d* and 6*d* per year in the earliest indentures, but is generally 12*d* from the late 1370s onwards.

⁴⁴ *Memorials*, p. 421; L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 249.

⁴⁵ Salzman, *English Industries*, p. 177.

⁴⁶ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175; Elaine Clark, 'Some Aspects of Social Security in Medieval England', *Journal of Family History*, Winter (1982), pp. 307–320, p. 308.

⁴⁷ The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.638, f. 3r. ('The Crusader Bible'), online edition <<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/5#>> [accessed 27 December 2018]; BL, Add MS 42130

the manor of Crondall [Hants.], inherited her brother's holding and immediately surrendered it to her daughter and son-in-law in exchange for an allowance which provided her with a chemise worth 8*d* and shoes worth 6*d* annually, plus a woollen garment worth 3*s* every other year.⁴⁸ Dyer calculated that a woollen tunic required 2¼ to 2½ yards of cloth, with the cost varying by year and location.⁴⁹ In the early twelfth century, lepers at Reading's Hospital of St Mary Magdalen received a tunic using a generous 3¾ yards (3 ells) of cloth.⁵⁰ In 1480–1, 3½ 'virges' of woaded black were purchased for the Dean of Westminster's tunic – a verge was probably equivalent to a yard.⁵¹ These tunics might warrant replacement annually or biennially, whereas a supertunic, worn less often, needed less frequent replacement.⁵² A fairly well-off retired peasant could expect to receive clothing worth 4*s* 6*d* annually – a tunic costing 3*s*, shoes costing 6*d* and 1*s* of linen.⁵³ Like apprenticeship, maintenance arrangements rested on a *quid pro quo* – the transfer of property in return for maintenance.⁵⁴

Further up the socio-economic scale, it is more difficult to estimate the cost of outfitting an apprentice. Costs were lower if the master was connected in some way to the textile trade, and could either produce his own cloth or purchase it wholesale. Once cloth was purchased, it needed to be made into clothing – a skilled job. If a master, or his wife, was able to make good-quality clothes then costs were reduced as the only outlay was the cost of materials. For tailors' apprentices, garments might be made as part of their training, reducing the cost. The cost of fabric and making-up apparel varied; in order to maintain parity across these estimates, the value of a finished item is used.

An apprentice's basic outfit was the same at any level of society; linen undergarments, a tunic, and leather shoes. Some indentures specified that the apprentice would receive a tunic ('*pannos*'), linen, woollens ('*laneos*'), shoes, a bed ('*lectum*'), and 'all

('Luttrell Psalter'), ff. 22–25, online edition <<http://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=a0f935d0-a678-11db-83e4-0050c2490048&type=book>> [accessed 27 December 2018].

⁴⁸ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵⁰ 'Hospitals: Reading – 25. The Hospital of St Mary Magdalen, Reading', in *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 2*, ed. by P.H. Ditchfield and William Page (London: Victoria County History, 1907), pp. 97–99.

⁵¹ *The Estate and Household Accounts of William Worsley Dean of St Paul's Cathedral 1479–1497*, ed. by Hannes Kleineke and Stephanie R. Hovland (Donington: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, and London Record Society in association with Shaun Tyas, 2004), p. 51; Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Verge', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 613.

⁵² Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵⁴ Clark, 'Social Security in Medieval England', p. 311.

other necessary items'.⁵⁵ The quality of materials used affected the cost. Some apprentices might receive additional garments, which less affluent masters considered non-essential. Such differences can be observed among peasants: Robert Oldman, reeve of Cuxham in the mid-fourteenth century and an 'unusually affluent' peasant, possessed clothing valued at 33s 11½d, including a robe of murrey worth 6s 4d and a red robe worth 5s 3d.⁵⁶ Less wealthy peasants were unlikely to own more than one robe, if any. Furthermore, the cost of clothing an apprentice might be subject to external factors. In the later fourteenth century, doublets became increasingly popular as male attire. Although shorter than tunics, they used twice as much fabric, and therefore might cost twice as much.⁵⁷ If an apprentice's attire was a reflection of his master's wealth and standing, it was undoubtedly affected by changes in fashion, and therefore the cost of outfitting an apprentice must have increased in the late fourteenth century.

Low and high estimates of the initial cost of providing an apprentice with clothing are shown in Table 6.2 – these amounts are intended to represent the first year of the apprenticeship. Contrary to popular belief, laundry was a familiar concept in the medieval period, as was the desirability of clean body linens; the estimated cost of linen accounts for the purchase of three shirts and three pairs of braies.⁵⁸ The sources for these values are listed in Appendix B.

Table 6.2 – Low and high estimates of the initial cost of outfitting an apprentice.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Low estimate</i>	<i>High estimate</i>
<i>Linen</i>	3s*	6s*
<i>Tunic</i>	1s 8d	6s
<i>Hose</i>	6d*	9s*
<i>Headwear</i>	6d	3s 4d
<i>Belt or girdle</i>	6d	3s 4d
<i>Shoes</i>	6d	4s 8d
Total	6s 8d	£1 12s 4d

* Estimates based on provision of three of each item or pair.

⁵⁵ HRO, W/D1/22, m. 46. 'Tunic' has been used as the translation for '*pannos*' based on Charles Homer Haskins' translation of the word (from *Bibliothèque Mazarine*, MS. 3716, pp. 373 f.; *Rennes*, MS. 227, p. 248) in 'The Latin Literature of Sport', *Speculum*, 2 (1927), pp. 235–252, p. 245, n.1, although it can also be translated as 'cloth'.

⁵⁶ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p.76 and 170–171.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁵⁸ Sarah Thursfield, 'Underwear – a historical overview', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 608–609, p. 609.

3.1.1 Linen

Although peasant undergarments might consist of a loincloth, more affluent craftsmen might wear linen shirts and braies. Linen was a smooth, washable material, ideal for wearing next to the skin.⁵⁹ Braies, loose-fitting undergarments comparable to modern boxer shorts, formerly reached the knees, and several examples were depicted in the Crusader Bible.⁶⁰ Braies became shorter and tighter as fashions changed in the late fourteenth century, requiring less fabric.⁶¹ Shorter braies appear in the executions depicted in the ‘Chroniques de France ou de St Denis’ (after 1380), and in manuscript illustrations in ‘The Decameron’ (1432).⁶² Undergarments rarely appeared in legal or administrative records, although shirts featured more frequently than braies. Sarah Thursfield noted that braies appeared only once in the fifteenth-century accounts of Sir John Howard (later Duke of Norfolk), and suggested that they were obscured by the euphemistic ‘linen cloths’ or ‘*robbes linges*’.⁶³ The figure of 1s, given by Dyer, is used for the low estimate, while 2s, based on Champagne linens purchased for Henry VI at 12d per ell, is used as the high estimate.⁶⁴

3.1.2 Tunics

Tunics were essential attire and were often mentioned in legal and administrative records. Some apprenticeship indentures included seasonal clothing: in addition to other clothes, Hubert Tibehnam was to be provided with a tunic or supertunic (‘*supertunicam*’ – more commonly called a surcoat) annually in the final four years of his six-year apprenticeship, while William of Lincoln’s master had to provide him with a new hooded tunic each Christmas throughout his twelve-year apprenticeship.⁶⁵ This ensured the

⁵⁹ Thursfield, ‘Underwear’, p. 609.

⁶⁰ The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.638, ff. 2 r. and 12 v.
<<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/Crusader-Bible/thumbs>> [accessed 30 April 2021].

⁶¹ Jeffrey L. Singman, *Daily Life in Medieval Europe* (Westport, CN and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 38; Ian Mortimer, *The Time Traveller’s Guide to Medieval England: A Handbook for Visitors to the Fourteenth Century* (London: Vintage Books, 2004), p. 107.

⁶² BL, Royal 20 C VII (‘Chroniques de France ou de St Denis’), ff. 15 and 51, online edition
<<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8466&CollID=16&NStart=200307>>
[accessed 30 April 2021]; Bibliothèque National de France, Arsenal 5070 (‘The Decameron’), f. 287 v., online
edition <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100018t/f588.item>> [accessed 30 April 2021]. See also
‘Breeches & Braies for Medieval Men’, Medieval & Renaissance Material Culture
<<http://www.larsdatter.com/breeches.htm>> [accessed 3 October 2021].

⁶³ Thursfield, ‘Underwear’, p. 609.

⁶⁴ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175; Item 578, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), p. 228.

⁶⁵ CXXI, *Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, p. 246; ‘Supertunic’, *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project* (University of Manchester) <<http://lexisearch.arts.manchester.ac.uk/entry.aspx?id=4536>> [accessed 6 November 2018]; ‘*novam tunicam cum capucio*’ – York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1.

apprentice had suitably warm winter clothing. The cost of tunics varied. Although Dyer noted that a fairly well-off retired peasant might receive a tunic worth 3s each year, it is clear that cheaper tunics were available and so a low estimate of 1s 8d is used, based on ‘tunic of scarlet’ valued at 20d (1s 8d) which belonged to Richard Toky, grocer, at his death in 1391.⁶⁶ The 1363 sumptuary legislation stated that grooms, servants, and employees of urban craftsmen should ‘have clothes for their vesture, or hosing, whereof the whole cloth shall not exceed two marks [£1 6s 8d], and that they wear no cloth of higher price’.⁶⁷ Dyer calculated that this equated to cloth worth 1s 1d per yard.⁶⁸ This legislation limited the cost of the clothing a master was obliged to provide. Using Dyer’s calculation that a tunic contained 2¼ to 2½ yards of cloth, the maximum cost of a tunic, for the majority of apprentices, was 2s 8½d; the low estimate of 1s 8d fits within this restriction. This social group could wear ‘nothing of gold nor of silver embroidered, aimeled, nor of silk’, so their tunics could not be excessively ornamented or accessorised.⁶⁹

Legal records provide many examples of tunics valued above 2s 8½d, and certainly the apprentices of very prosperous masters might be able to wear costly tunics without contravening the statute.⁷⁰ The 1363 legislation prevented ‘merchants, citizens...artificers, people of handy-craft’ with goods and chattels to the value of £500, along with their wives and children, from wearing cloth costing more than 4½ marks [£3] for the whole cloth (therefore 5s per yard). This also applied to cloth gifted or given as payment.⁷¹ Nevertheless, ‘no groom, yeoman, or servant of merchant, artificer or people of handycraft’ could wear cloth costing more than 40s for the whole cloth, therefore limiting the value of their tunic to 8s 4d.⁷² Although this law was ignored and flouted, 8s 4d represented the socially accepted maximum of appropriate attire for an apprentice. Rather than using this maximum, a lower

⁶⁶ ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 211. At his death, Toky also owed £92 3s 4d to Thomas Wylford, fishmonger, who took on John Branketre as an apprentice in 1397 – LMA, A/CSC/1267.

⁶⁷ 37 Edward III, c. 8.

⁶⁸ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 88. If this is correct, a ‘whole cloth’ measured just over 12 yards.

⁶⁹ 37 Edward III, c. 8.

⁷⁰ It should be noted, however, that sumptuary legislation was rarely enforced and was perhaps unenforceable: Ariadne Woodward, ‘Sumptuary Legislation and Conduct Literature in Late Medieval England’ (unpublished MA thesis, Concordia University, 2016), pp. 5, 52 and 59. This was not a problem particular to England; similar sumptuary legislation in Italy also seems to have been largely unenforceable – Amanda E. Facelle, ‘Down to the Last Stitch: Sumptuary Laws and Conspicuous Consumption in Renaissance Italy’ (unpublished BA thesis, Wesleyan University, 2009), p. 18, and Catherine Kovesi Killerby, ‘Practical Problems in the Enforcement of Italian Sumptuary Law, 1200–1500’, in *Crime, Society, and the Law in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Trevor Dean and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 99–120.

⁷¹ 37 Edward III, c. 11 and 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*, c. 11 and 9.

figure of 6s is used for the high estimate, based on a list of items placed in pledge in a case heard at the London Sheriffs' Court in 1320.⁷³

3.1.3 Hose

As indicated in Table 6.1, only six indentures mentioned hose or stockings ('*caligas*' or '*calciamenta*') specifically.⁷⁴ Dyer noted that many men went without hose, protected to some extent by ankle-length tunics.⁷⁵ Like second-hand clothing, in urban settings a lack of hose might be perceived as an indicator of poverty. Nevertheless, in particularly messy trades such as tanning, fulling, and dyeing, apprentices may not have worn hose; however, a master would want his apprentice to be properly attired for important events such as his (public) enrolment, even if hose was not part of everyday attire. The standard formula for maintenance in indentures included both '*lineo*' and '*laneo*', strongly suggesting that hose, made of woollen cloth, were an integral part of apprentices' clothing. Furthermore, the majority of figures in the Crusader Bible and Luttrell Psalter were depicted wearing hose – even those engaged in physical labour – as were the craftsmen featured in the 'Smithfield Decretals' *bas-de-page* illustrations.⁷⁶

Many apprenticeship indentures referred to 'all other necessary things' ('*et omnibus aliis neccesaris*') and this might have encompassed hose if they were not mentioned specifically. Hose were tied to strings hanging from the breechgirdle (the belt holding braies in place), although later they were tied to the doublet.⁷⁷ It is possible to ascribe values to hose using evidence from legal records. A cost of 2d per pair is used for the low estimate, based on a 1376 inventory of goods and chattels.⁷⁸ The high estimate, 3s per pair, is drawn

⁷³ 'Sheriffs' Court Roll, 1320: Membrane 2 (transcript pp. 6–11)', *London Sheriffs' Court Roll 1320*, ed. by Matthew Stevens (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2010), British History Online <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-sheriff-court-roll/1320/pp6-11>> [accessed 6 November 2018].

⁷⁴ HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v.; Derbyshire Archives, D2366/3; BL, Add. Ch. 75055; XL, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. II, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 28–29; SALS, D\B\bw/368. A.H. Thomas noted that it was 'difficult to distinguish between shoes and hose in city documents. Whereas in classical Latin, *calceus*, *calceamentum* and *caliga* denote a shoe, *par caligarum* in the city appears to mean a pair of hose, and *caligarius* is a hosier' – *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 206, n. 12. Therefore, where both '*caligas*' or '*calcimenta*' and '*sotulares*' appear in the provisions for the apprentice, it has been assumed that '*calciamenta*' refers to hose and '*sotulares*' to shoes.

⁷⁵ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

⁷⁶ See, for example, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.638, f. 17 v.

<<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/34#>> and BL, Add MS 42130, ff. 166 v.–173

<<http://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=a0f935d0-a678-11db-83e4-0050c2490048&type=book>>; BL, Royal 10 E IV ('Smithfield Decretals'), particularly ff. 99 v., 100 v., 140 v.–145 v. (featuring dyers, bakers, and a man preparing a grindstone), online edition

<<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6549>> [accessed 28 December 2018].

⁷⁷ Thursfield, 'Underwear', p. 609.

⁷⁸ 'Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225.

from a 1393 bill of complaint, which listed two pairs of hose ‘of red cloth’.⁷⁹ Both estimates assume that the apprentice was given three pairs of hose, although they may not have been worn every day in some crafts.

3.1.4 Hats, caps, and hoods

Although not generally mentioned in apprenticeship indentures, hats, caps, and hoods were clearly commonplace attire; in 1441, around 3,000 capmakers worked in London and its immediate vicinity, indicating high demand for headwear.⁸⁰ Two capmakers feature among the indentures used in this research (although in both cases the master practiced two crafts).⁸¹ Many of the Luttrell Psalter’s *bas-de-page* images depicted figures wearing caps and hoods, including archers, men stealing fruit, and agricultural workers.⁸² While only one indenture referred specifically to the supply of caps, in others this was likely encompassed by ‘all other necessary things’.⁸³ Coifs were widely worn in thirteenth-century England, often under hats or hoods. They may have been considered ‘underwear’, an outward sign of respectability that no self-respecting person would be seen in public without.⁸⁴ This explains why one agricultural worker in the Crusader Bible sports a coif despite wearing only braies.⁸⁵ Coifs gradually fell out of favour, replaced by the hood from the fourteenth century.⁸⁶ As mentioned above, in 1364 William of Lincoln’s master promised to provide him with a new tunic with hood each Christmas.⁸⁷ Hoods gave way to hats by the mid-fifteenth century.⁸⁸

Despite the proliferation of hoods in fourteenth-century records, it is very difficult to find values for hats or caps for either the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries; one suspects this is due to interpretation and translation of the various terms. ‘*Chaperoun*’ was translated as

⁷⁹ ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 1’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 206.

⁸⁰ Ian W. Archer, *The History of the Haberdashers’ Company* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1991), p. 9.

⁸¹ One master was a sheerman and capmaker, the other a mercer who traded as a waxchandler and capmaker: Leics RO, DG11/1156; TNA, C 146/1129.

⁸² BL, Add MS 42130. Grottesque wearing cap (and playing a form of bagpipe) in the margin on f. 13; archers, f. 147 v.; men stealing fruit f. 196 v.; agricultural workers ff. 170 v.–171. Online edition <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_42130_fs001ar> [all accessed 9 May 2021].

⁸³ LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019 – it may be notable that this indenture is for a female apprentice.

⁸⁴ Sarah Thursfield, *The Medieval Tailor’s Assistant: Making Common Garments 1200–1500* (Bedford: Ruth Bean, 2001), p. 190; CADW, ‘Hats’, p. 2 <<https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/Hats.pdf>> [accessed 30 April 2021].

⁸⁵ Crusader Bible, f. 18 r. <<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/35#>> [accessed 17 October 2020].

⁸⁶ Thursfield, *The Medieval Tailor’s Assistant*, pp. 190 and 192; Lexis ‘coif’ <<http://lexisearch.arts.manchester.ac.uk/entry.aspx?id=1158>> [accessed 1 December 2018]. By the fifteenth century the coif was mainly seen as part of a specific uniform worn by more elderly or professional men such as lawyers.

⁸⁷ ‘...et dabit eidem Will(elm)o apprenticio quolibet anno termini sui novam tunicam cum capucio contra festum Natale’ – York Merchant Adventurers, 1.4.3.2.1.

⁸⁸ Thursfield, *The Medieval Tailor’s Assistant*, p. 192.

‘hood’ in the Parliament Roll, but as ‘cap’ in a 1393 bill of complaint.⁸⁹ Therefore, rather than attempting to ascribe costs to different types of headwear, nominal costs are used: 6*d* for the low estimate, based on a 1376 valuation, and 3*s* 4*d* for the high estimate, based on goods seized in 1380 as satisfaction for a debt.⁹⁰

3.1.5 Belts or girdles

Belts or girdles were essential items and, although they were never mentioned specifically in apprenticeship indentures, they were probably covered by provision of ‘all else necessary’ (see Table 6.1).⁹¹ They were functional elements of everyday dress, worn at all levels of society, and used as a means of carrying knives, purses, and so on.⁹² The terms ‘belt’ and ‘girdle’ seem to have been interchangeable.⁹³ The total omission of belts from the apprenticeship indentures might imply that they were not worn, but their utility and functionality suggests otherwise – belts were omitted because they were an inherent element of attire. For this reason, the purchase of a belt or girdle is included in the calculation of the cost of attiring an apprentice.

The cost of a belt or girdle depended on the level of embellishment, and they were used to display social status.⁹⁴ In general, legal and administrative records only mentioned costly belts and girdles, decorated with silver, but as they were so commonplace we must assume that much cheaper options were available. The London girdlers, for example, made products from silk, wool, leather, and linen thread.⁹⁵ A further implication of the omission of belts from indentures is that apprentices would generally be provided with a simple, cheap belt; if a valuable item was to be provided, an apprentice would want this specified in the indenture or else they would have no redress if the master failed to fulfil his promise. Although clothing was sometimes gifted at the end of the apprenticeship (see Chapter 7), belts and girdles were never mentioned, perhaps due to restrictive sumptuary legislation. The Statute of Diet and Apparel prohibited ‘people of handicraft’ from wearing ‘things of gold

⁸⁹ ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 1’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 206, n. 10.

⁹⁰ ‘Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225; ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 269.

⁹¹ I am grateful to Dr Chris Briggs and Dr Martin Allen for reminding me that belts were an essential element of medieval dress, and encouraging me to include the cost of these items in these calculations.

⁹² Alexander Kennedy Cassels, ‘The Social Significance of Late Medieval Dress Accessories’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2013), pp. 4–5; David A. Hinton, *Gold and Gilt, Pots and Pins: Possessions and People in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 250

⁹³ The terms ‘belt’ and ‘girdle’ are used throughout Cassels’ thesis: for example, ‘...a silk tablet-weave girdle from London in pink and yellow...which provides a comparison for Chaucer’s sergeant at law who is described as, ‘girt with a silken belt of pin-stripe’ – Cassels, ‘Late Medieval Dress Accessories’, p. 157.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁹⁵ ‘Charter granted to the Girdlers of London’ (1327), *Memorials*, p. 155.

nor of silver, nor no manner of apparel embroidered, aimeled, nor of silk'.⁹⁶ If it were enforced (which is debateable), this limited the cost of the belt provided.

Although other materials were available, leather's longevity would make it an attractive option. Leather belts might not need to be replaced at all during the apprenticeship (like shoes, they could be repaired if required), so perhaps higher initial costs were viewed as an investment. Leather belts could be embellished without contravening sumptuary legislation: the Museum of London holds a late fourteenth-century calf leather belt stamped with a repeated IHC pattern.⁹⁷ An action of trespass, heard at Common Pleas in 1460, concerned the loss of goods including 'twelve decorated girdles worth 40s'.⁹⁸ If all twelve girdles were of the same value, this equated to 3s 4d per item – dear, but not necessarily unaffordable. This is used for the high estimate. When Richard Toky died in 1391, his possessions included two 'paunchers' valued at 6d.⁹⁹ Toky's belts were certainly used and thus depreciated in value, so a cost of 6d per belt (intended to represent the original purchase cost) is used as the low estimate.

3.1.6 Footwear

Unless the master was a cordwainer, shoes or boots would need to be purchased for the apprentice as often as required. Shoes could be purchased 'off the peg', and presumably cost less than made-to-measure footwear; lists of distrained goods, dated 1370 and 1408, indicate that shoemakers' workshops might hold as many as 46 finished pairs of shoes at any time.¹⁰⁰ Although it is difficult to ascertain a retail price, we can determine a minimum cost for footwear. In 1266, Henry III ordered Northampton's bailiffs to distribute 150 pairs of shoes to the poor, half at 5d and the rest at 4d, while Anicia atte Hegge's maintenance agreement (see above) included shoes worth 6d.¹⁰¹ Therefore, it appears an adequate pair of shoes could be purchased for 6d, and repaired as necessary. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that shoes were frequently refurbished or made from recycled parts, and the

⁹⁶ 37 Edward III, Statute of Diet and Apparel, c. 9.

⁹⁷ IHC is a monogram for Jesus Christ. Belt, BC72[89]<2414>, Museum of London <<https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/311567.html>> [accessed 3 November 2020].

⁹⁸ TNA, CP 40/799, rot. 337 d.

⁹⁹ 'Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b', *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 211. A 'pauncher' was either a piece of armour which covered the stomach or a belt or girdle. Given that Toky's armaments were all recorded as being in the counting house, while these paunchers were in the chamber along with his clothes and bedding, this has been interpreted as the latter.

¹⁰⁰ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 172; John Cherry, 'Leather', in *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1991), pp. 295–318, p. 309.

¹⁰¹ Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages*, p. 257; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

responsibility for repairing shoes was divided among the cordwainers and cobblers.¹⁰² The low estimate assumes that shoes were purchased annually for 6*d*, and repaired as required. The high estimate uses a cost of 4*s* 8*d*, based on a pension granted in 1375.¹⁰³ Although this was a royal grant, the cost is actually lower than several other values found in the records (see Appendix B) and thus has been taken as an accurate indication of the cost of good-quality footwear.

3.1.7 Conclusion

Thomas Wakford was apprenticed to Thomas Broune, a London goldsmith, for five years from Epiphany 1399. Broune promised to provide Wakford with food and drink, and 10*s* 8*d* annually for all other necessities.¹⁰⁴ This amount, falling halfway between the estimates presented in Table 6.2, was considered sufficient for Wakford to attire himself to a standard which would not detrimentally affect either his own or his master's reputation. Therefore the figures in Table 6.2, estimated based on available records, are supported by evidence from apprenticeship indentures. There is a great difference between the low and high estimated costs of clothing an apprentice, and even without additional garments (such as surcoats, cloaks or livery), the high estimate is nearly five times greater than the low estimate. Some items, such as surcoats, were entirely optional, but may have been included in the provision of 'all else necessary'.

Some items did not need to be purchased annually. Shoes, as long as they fitted, could be repaired. Hardwearing leather belts might not need replacement at all. Therefore, the estimates in Table 6.2 are indicative of the cost of outfitting an apprentice at the very beginning of their apprenticeship; masters would not expect this level of expenditure annually. It might be customary for apprentices to bring their own clothing and bedding into the apprenticeship but, particularly in the fifteenth century, provision of these items might be promised by masters to aid recruitment. Tables 6.3 and 6.4 extend the costs from Table 6.2 over seven years, which is the mean, median and mode length of term of the 82

¹⁰² Davis, 'Marketing Secondhand Goods', p. 277; *Memorials*, pp. 572–573: 'if any old shoe be broken in the sole...the same belongs to the workers in old leather, called 'Cobelers', to mend it in the place where it is so broken, with a small piece of new leather, or of old, whichever is the most advantageous for the common profit'. Furthermore, 'if it shall happen that any person desires to have his old boots or bootlets resoled, or vamped and soled, or his galoches or shoes resoled, the same, if it can be done, shall pertain at all times to the said workers called 'Cordewaners', to do it'.

¹⁰³ 'Close Rolls, Edward III: January 1375, Jan. 12. Westminster.', *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward III: Volume 14, 1374–1377*, ed. by H.C. Maxwell Lyte (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1913), p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ '...et inveniendō eidem Thome Wakford esculenta et poculenta competent et quolibet anno dicti terminum idem Thomas Broune solveret prefato Thome Wakford decem solidos et octo denaria sterlingorum pro omnibus aliis necessariis' – TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135 d.

apprenticeship indentures. The calculations assume an initial purchase of linen undergarments and hose, requiring partial replacement each year, and assume that both tunics and headwear required biennial replacement. In the low estimate (Table 6.3) shoes were purchased annually; being of lower quality, they would not last as long as the shoes purchased in the high estimate (Table 6.4).

Table 6.3 – Total expenditure on clothing over 7 years based on low estimate.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>	<i>Year 5</i>	<i>Year 6</i>	<i>Year 7</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Linen</i>	3s*	1s	1s	1s	1s	1s	1s	9s
<i>Tunic</i>	1s 8d	–	1s 8d	–	1s 8d	–	1s 8d	6s 8d
<i>Hose</i>	6d*	2d	2d	2d	2d	2d	2d	1s 6d
<i>Headwear</i>	6d	–	6d	–	6d	–	6d	2s
<i>Belt or girdle</i>	6d	–	–	–	–	–	–	6d
<i>Shoes</i>	6d	6d	6d	6d	6d	6d	6d	3s 6d
Total	<i>6s 8d</i>	<i>1s 8d</i>	<i>3s 10d</i>	<i>1s 8d</i>	<i>3s 10d</i>	<i>1s 8d</i>	<i>3s 10d</i>	£1 3s 2d

* Estimates based on provision of three items or pairs.

Table 6.4 – Total expenditure on clothing over 7 years based on high estimate.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>	<i>Year 5</i>	<i>Year 6</i>	<i>Year 7</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Linen</i>	6s*	2s	2s	2s	2s	2s	2s	18s
<i>Tunic</i>	6s	–	6s	–	6s	–	6s	£1 4s
<i>Hose</i>	9s*	3s	3s	3s	3s	3s	3s	£1 7s
<i>Headwear</i>	3s 4d	–	3s 4d	–	3s 4d	–	3s 4d	13s 4d
<i>Belt or girdle</i>	3s 4d	–	–	–	–	–	–	3s 4d
<i>Shoes</i>	4s 8d	–	4s 8d	–	4s 8d	–	4s 8d	18s 8d
Total	£1 9s	5s	19s	5s	19s	5s	19s	£5 4s 4d

* Estimates based on provision of three items or pairs.

These figures demonstrate the accessibility of apprenticeship – even less affluent masters could take on apprentices, providing they could afford to clothe them. As outlined in Chapter 5, trial years (during which the apprentice had to provide their own clothing) were another cost-saving option, although these were not common after the mid-fourteenth century. Although dismissed for the purpose of these estimates, second-hand clothing also rendered apprenticeship more affordable. The majority of masters probably expected an outlay falling somewhere between the low and high estimates, depending on their income. This is corroborated by Thomas Wakford’s indenture, which specified an annual cost for clothing and other necessary items.

3.2 Bedding

Masters were obliged to provide apprentices with appropriate beds. The indentures used the Latin *'lectum'*, which can be translated as 'bed' or 'couch'; therefore, a place to sleep, arguably including all the paraphernalia required for a comfortable night. Henry Riley noted that in the late thirteenth century, 'among the humbler people, [the bed] was nothing but a whitel, or blanket, thrown upon a heap of straw', and cited a proverb from the *Book of Husbandry* attributed to Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (d. 1253): 'whoso streket his fot forthere than the whitel will reche, he schal streken in the straw'.¹⁰⁵ Although not necessarily the case for the very earliest apprentices, it is assumed that most masters were able to provide their apprentices with more substantial beds.¹⁰⁶ The bed might include a bedframe (perhaps a portable truckle bed) or it could be made up on the floor, but nonetheless it should be clean. In the late 1480s, a merchant tailor was imprisoned for reasons including a failure to provide his apprentice with clean clothes or bedding; the apprentice was forced to sleep in a bed 'foule shirtyd and full of vermin'.¹⁰⁷

The medieval definition of 'bed' might refer to the 'essential part' (the mattress), or the complete ensemble including pillows, sheets and blankets.¹⁰⁸ In the 1420s, it appears that a bed was commonly considered to be comprised of a single sheet, bolster, mattress, a pair of blankets, one or two pairs of sheets, and a 'headsheets'.¹⁰⁹ In 1424, Roger Flore bequeathed 'a bed' to each of his four children: 'pat is to say, couerlide, tapite, blankettis, too peyre schetes, matras, and canvas'.¹¹⁰ The bedframe itself was not included in this definition – the bed was comprised only of soft furnishings.¹¹¹ The bedframe might be a truckle or 'trussing bedde', which could be moved out of the way during the working hours.¹¹² Apprentices might expect

¹⁰⁵ *Memorials*, p. 8, n. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Stephanie Hovland argued that 'not all apprentices will have been recipients of such comfort', and that many apprentices' beds may have been 'simply straw' (Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London', pp. 115–116). This may have been true of some early or rural apprentices, but failure to provide an acceptable bed would contravene the terms of the apprenticeship indenture and may have been grounds for the apprentice to be exonerated.

¹⁰⁷ Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 139.

¹⁰⁸ Hollie L.S. Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities* (York: York Medieval Press, 2017), p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, CP 40/652, rot. 483. See Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, pp. 20–39, for a detailed discussion of bed construction.

¹¹⁰ *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate, London: A.D. 1387–1439; with a Priest's of 1454*, copied and edited from the original registers in Somerset House by Frederick J. Furnivall, reprint (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1964), p. 57.

¹¹¹ According to Morgan, this indicated that Flore was aware that the term 'bed' required elucidation, and that he believed it to be a construct made up of soft furnishings – Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

new bedding at the commencement of their apprenticeship, but not new bedframes; these were durable items, with lifespans longer than an apprenticeship. Flore’s definition is used to calculate the cost of bedding, as it encompassed all items deemed essential for a proper bed. The low and high estimates of the cost of bedding for one year are illustrated in Table 6.5. Although bed sharing was entirely normal in the medieval period, it has been assumed that the apprentices slept alone. When labour was scarce, masters worked hard to attract apprentices by offering full maintenance and additional goods; the prospect of sleeping alone, rather than with siblings or other family members, might have been an inducement to enter into an apprenticeship.

Table 6.5 – Low and high estimates of per annum cost of providing an apprentice with suitable bedding.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Low estimate</i>	<i>High estimate</i>
<i>Canvas</i>	–	5 <i>d</i>
<i>Mattress</i>	2 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	5 <i>s</i>
<i>Pair of sheets</i>	2 <i>s</i>	5 <i>s</i>
<i>Pair of blankets</i>	1 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	6 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>
<i>Pillow or bolster</i>	6 <i>d</i>	6 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>
<i>Coverlet</i>	–	2 <i>s</i>
<i>Total</i>	6<i>s</i> 4<i>d</i>	£1 5<i>s</i> 9<i>d</i>

3.2.1 Canvas

Hollie Morgan provided a full description of a bed’s components, starting with a litter of straw (omitted from Flore’s will as it had no value once used). Straw was used even at the highest levels of society; it was purchased for use as bedding when the Duke of York visited Hanlet Castle in the early fifteenth century, and Henry VII’s Household Ordinances referred to ‘the litter’.¹¹³ The straw was covered with canvas, an inexpensive and robust material suited for rubbing against straw-covered pallets and floors while protecting other layers of the bed.¹¹⁴ The cost of straw is considered negligible in both estimates. Although largely imported, canvas was cheap: in 1466–7, nearly 60,000 ells of canvas were imported into England via Poole, valued at £600, or £1 per 100 ells.¹¹⁵ This indicates a price of 2.4*d* per ell,

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹¹⁵ Wendy R. Childs, ‘Trade: Textiles, Arms and Armour, England, c. 1250–1450’, in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 602–606, p. 604. In England, an ell was usually 45 inches, although a Flemish ell was considerably smaller at 27 inches – Elizabeth Coatsworth, ‘Ell’, in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles*, p. 189.

and 2 ells might be sufficient for a bed.¹¹⁶ In 1311 the king's receivers had paid 2s for 'eight ells of canvas for covering the baskets' (3d per ell), suggesting that the cost remained largely steady.¹¹⁷ Canvas was also used for woolsacks and emballage (to contain and protect transported goods), so woolsacks or other canvas could be repurposed to cut costs (although this was probably more easily accomplished by masters connected with the import or export trades).¹¹⁸ While some inventories included canvases valued up to 10s, this is unfeasibly costly for an apprentice's bed and so 6d (for 2 ells) is used as a high estimate.¹¹⁹ The low estimate assumes that repurposed canvas was used, at no extra cost.

3.2.2 Mattress

A mattress (or 'matrasse') was perhaps the most essential aspect of the bed, and evidence from mid-fifteenth century wills led Morgan to label it 'the staple and constant component of a bed'.¹²⁰ Although the form and use of 'mattress' changed over time and was subject to regional variations, by the end of the fifteenth century mattresses were understood to be firmly-stuffed and intended for lying upon.¹²¹ It is difficult to ascertain the cost of mattresses; values varied wildly in legal and administrative records, and might be subject to exaggeration or understatement. In late-fourteenth century legal records alone, values included 16d for 'an old materaz' (1368), 11s for a pair of mattresses (1356), and 2s 6d (1367).¹²² In 1400, the Archdeacon of Richmond's mattress was valued at 3s 4d.¹²³ The Dean and Chapter of Wells spent 7s 8d on a new mattress and bolster in 1448–9, while in the 1455–6 accounts the cost rose to 8s.¹²⁴ For the purposes of these calculations, 2s 6d is used

¹¹⁶ 'Communar's Accounts: 1448–9', in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells: Volume 2*, ed. by the Historical Manuscripts Commission (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1914), pp. 76–77. No cost was recorded for the canvas.

¹¹⁷ 'Fo. cxxv b.', *Letter-Book D*, p. 257.

¹¹⁸ Richard Goddard, *Credit and Trade in Later Medieval England, 1353–1532* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 85; Gale R. Owen-Crocker, 'Emballage', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 189–190, p. 189.

¹¹⁹ This canvas was inventoried in 1400 in the chamber of Thomas Dalby, Archdeacon of Richmond: *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese, 1350–1500*, ed. and trans. by Philip M. Stell (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2006), p. 499, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 31.

¹²⁰ Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 26.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹²² 'Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 90; 'Close Rolls, Edward III: April 1356, membr. 19, April 14', in *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward III: Volume 10, 1354–1360*, ed. by H.C. Maxwell Lyte (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), [pp. 254–259]; 'Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.

¹²³ *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese, 1350–1500*, ed. and trans. by Philip M. Stell (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2006), p. 499, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 31.

¹²⁴ 'Communar's Accounts: 1448–9', in *Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells: Vol. 2*, pp. 76–77; 'Communar's Accounts: 1455–6', in *Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells: Vol. 2*, pp. 81–82.

for the low estimate, while 5s is used for the high estimate (using the Wells accounts, and assuming a value of 2s 8d for the bolster).

3.2.3 Sheets

Sheets and blankets served similar functions as in modern beds, and seem to have always been purchased and used in pairs, with one pair over and one pair under the bed's occupant.¹²⁵ Henry, Baron Scrope of Masham, owned sheets of 'bastard Rheims (or Rennes)' linen valued at 9s 6d a pair, 'Champagne linen' sheets at 5s a pair and 'Brabant linen' the cheapest at 3s 4d a pair.¹²⁶ At the time of his execution in 1415, Scrope's wealth was estimated at £6,000, but his sheets were not significantly more costly than those purchased by lower levels of society.¹²⁷ Again, the value of sheets varied widely, and those mentioned in legal records were, presumably, at least slightly used. A value of 2s is used as a low estimate, taken from a 1368 valuation of goods.¹²⁸ Baron Scrope's 'Champagne linen' sheets, worth 5s, are used for the high estimate. It is assumed that apprentices would receive new sheets as opposed to old, but would not expect sheets of 'bastard Rheims' quality.

3.2.4 Blankets

Blankets or fustians were also important bedclothes. Morgan suggested that the names were interchangeable; fustians were blankets made of fustian, whereas blankets could be made of fustian or some other material.¹²⁹ Fustian was a hardwearing fabric made from any two of cotton, flax, or wool. It was sometimes coloured, and used to make clothing as well as bedcoverings.¹³⁰ Blanket, meanwhile, was a woollen cloth, often white or undyed, and generally cheaper than fustian.¹³¹ Although Morgan asserted that blankets and fustians were always mentioned in pairs in wills, they are often found in odd numbers in legal

¹²⁵ Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, pp. 28–30; see also fig. 5, p. 38.

¹²⁶ Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Soft furnishings and textiles: post-1100', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 530–534, p. 533.

¹²⁷ Brigitte Vale, 'Scrope, Henry, third Baron Scrope of Masham (c. 1376–1415)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), online edition <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24959>> [accessed 11 November 2018].

¹²⁸ 'Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 90.

¹²⁹ Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 29.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Fustian', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 222–223, p. 222.

¹³¹ Mark Chambers, Elizabeth Coatsworth, Gale R. Owen-Crocker, and Mark Zumbuhl, 'Blanket', *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 73–74, p. 73.

records.¹³² Blankets' values varied, and the terms 'fustian' and 'blanket' were used interchangeably. A low estimate of 1s 4d (based on 8d per blanket) is used to represent a pair of blankets, while the high estimate is 6s 8d (based on 3s 4d per blanket).¹³³

3.2.5 Pillows

Bolsters or pillows were also important articles of bedding, and testamentary evidence suggests that one pillow per bed was the norm.¹³⁴ It is difficult to ascribe a value to this item; at Common Pleas, for example, pillows were always listed with other items alongside a total value. Elsewhere, values were highly variable, and often given as a combined total; a bolster was mentioned in a record in the London Letter-Books in 1310, valued at 20s, whereas in 1303, pledges for a recognizance of debt included a bolster and three pillows valued at merely 6d.¹³⁵ Several bolsters were mentioned in an indenture of Henry V's goods (dated 1423), with values ranging from 3s to 8s, and 40s for a feather bed with two bolsters.¹³⁶ This was presumably a grand bed, requiring multiple bolsters. Morgan asserted that bolsters and pillows served similar functions but with different stuffings (feathers for bolsters, down for pillows), and that if both were used the pillow overlaid the bolster.¹³⁷ The estimates assume that only one item is required, and uses 6d as the low estimate, based on the 1303 recognizance; the value seems low for so many items, so the total figure has been used to represent one new pillow.¹³⁸ The high estimate uses 6s 8d, based on the cost of a fustian-covered down pillow owned by Henry V.¹³⁹

3.2.6 Coverlets

The items discussed above were the most common articles of bedding, comprising the minimum required for a bourgeois or aristocratic bed.¹⁴⁰ This might comprise the entirety of bedding for the majority of craftsmen. Coverlets, the topmost (and often highly decorated) visible layer of bedding, are only included in the high estimate. Many people went without coverlets: the fourteenth-century poem *Cursor Mundi*, for example, described Christ's

¹³² Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 30.

¹³³ 'Sheriffs' Court Roll, 1320: Membrane 2 (transcript pp. 6–11), *London Sheriffs' Court Roll 1320*, ed. by Matthew Stevens (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2010), British History Online <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-sheriff-court-roll/1320/pp6-11>> [accessed 6 November 2018]; 'Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.

¹³⁴ Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 33.

¹³⁵ 'Fo. ci b', *Letter-Book D*, p. 221; 'vijjd, folio 58', *Letter-Book B*, p. 127.

¹³⁶ Items 1032, 1100, 909, 1100, 802, 826 and 910, in 'Henry VI: October 1423', *PROME*, pp. 234–241.

¹³⁷ Morgan *Beds and Chambers*, p. 33.

¹³⁸ 'vijjd, folio 58', *Letter-Book B*, p. 127.

¹³⁹ Item 1101, 'Henry VI: October 1423', *PROME*, p. 241.

¹⁴⁰ Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 38.

humble bed at the nativity as being without ‘pride o couerled’.¹⁴¹ Although superfluous, coverlets were not necessarily costly; a tax assessment of the goods of Richard le Barbur of King’s Lynn, made *c.* 1285–90, included two bedspreads valued at 2*s* in total, and a value of merely 8*d* for a ‘quylte devel’ can be found in 1368.¹⁴² A 1400 inventory of goods belonging to the Archdeacon of Richmond included ‘a red coverlet with wheels and grey dragons’, valued at 2*s*.¹⁴³ This value is used for the high estimate.

3.2.7 Conclusion

The estimates in Table 6.5 indicate the initial cost at the beginning of an apprenticeship; masters would not expend this amount annually. In both the low and high estimates, it is assumed that most bedding items only needed to be purchased once (at the beginning of the term), but that blankets and sheets required replacement once during the term of apprenticeship. These might be gifted to the apprentice at the end of the term (see Chapter 7). The costs over the course of seven years are outlined in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 – Total expenditure on bedding over course of seven year apprenticeship, based on low and high estimates.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Low estimate</i>		<i>High estimate</i>	
	<i>Start of term</i>	<i>Additions</i>	<i>Start of term</i>	<i>Additions</i>
<i>Canvas</i>	–	–	5 <i>d</i>	–
<i>Mattress</i>	2 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	–	5 <i>s</i>	–
<i>Pair of sheets</i>	2 <i>s</i>	2 <i>s</i>	5 <i>s</i>	5 <i>s</i>
<i>Pair of blankets</i>	1 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	1 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	6 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>	6 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>
<i>Pillow or bolster</i>	6 <i>d</i>	–	6 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>	–
<i>Coverlet</i>	–	–	2 <i>s</i>	–
<i>Subtotal</i>	6<i>s</i> 4<i>d</i>	3<i>s</i> 4<i>d</i>	£1 5<i>s</i> 9<i>d</i>	11<i>s</i> 8<i>d</i>
<i>Total over term</i>	9<i>s</i> 8<i>d</i>		£1 17<i>s</i> 5<i>d</i>	

Significant financial outlay was required to provide an apprentice with clothing and bedding over the course of a seven-year apprenticeship, although the cost might be spread out over several years. These costs are illustrated in Table 6.7. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the economy was credit-based, and masters might not need to make payment for these items at time of purchase. Nevertheless, even the low estimate cumulative figure of £1

¹⁴¹ *Cursor Mundi (The Cursor o the World): A Northumbrian Poem of the XIVth Century in Four Versions*, ed. by R. Morris (London: 1893), ll. 11238–9, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 31.

¹⁴² Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 206; ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 90.

¹⁴³ *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese, 1350–1500*, ed. and trans. by Philip M. Stell (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2006), p. 499, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, pp. 41–42.

12s 10d would have constituted a considerable expenditure for a craftsman whose income might rarely exceed £10 per annum, and whose rent might be 20s per year.¹⁴⁴

Table 6.7 – Total costs of clothing and bedding provision over course of 7 years, based on low and high estimates.

	<i>Low estimate</i>	<i>High estimate</i>
<i>Total clothing over term</i>	£1 3s 2d	£5 4s 4d
<i>Total bedding over term</i>	9s 8d	£1 17s 5d
<i>Total over term</i>	£1 12s 10d	£7 1s 9d

Unsurprisingly, guilds often enforced limits on how many apprentices each master could take (see Chapter 3). In 1390, the York founders' guild ordinances stipulated that Giles de Bonoyne, as an exceptional case, was permitted an additional apprentice because he lacked a wife.¹⁴⁵ Heretofore this has been interpreted as an indication 'that masters were invariably married' and that therefore the working output of an apprentice was roughly equal to that of a wife.¹⁴⁶ However, in light of the calculations shown in Table 6.7, a different interpretation is possible: perhaps Giles de Bonoyne was permitted an additional apprentice not *instead* of a wife, but *because* he had no wife to provide for. He could therefore afford to clothe and house an extra apprentice. Furthermore, the estimated costs in Table 6.7 only covered clothing and bedding; apprentices also had to be fed. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, failure to provide sufficient food was cause for an apprentice to be exonerated.

3.3 Food

Adding an apprentice to a household comprised of family, servants, and perhaps other apprentices, would make little difference to day-to-day household expenditure; however an extra 2d spent on food per day amounted to £3 10s per year.¹⁴⁷ Dyer calculated that food accounted for 50 percent of expenditure in aristocratic (noble and non-noble) households.¹⁴⁸ Again, sumptuary laws defined expected 'norms' of provision for servants and apprentices.

¹⁴⁴ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 194 and 208.

¹⁴⁵ *York Memorandum Book: Part I (1376–1419) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1912), p. 106.

¹⁴⁶ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and Men in Later Medieval England', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. by D.M. Hadley (London and New York, NY: Longman, 1999), pp. 56–70, p. 58, n. 5.

¹⁴⁷ Based on amounts granted for food in pensions: 'Close Rolls, Edward II: October 1312, Oct. 12. Windsor.', *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward II: Volume I, 1307–1313*, ed. by H.C. Maxwell Lyte (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1892), p. 482.

¹⁴⁸ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, chapter 3 (particularly p. 55) – cited in Caroline M. Barron, 'Centres of Conspicuous Consumption: The Aristocratic Townhouse in London, 1200–1550', in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 421–447, p. 431.

In 1363 it was ordained ‘that grooms, as well servants of lords, as they of mysteries, and artificers, shall be served...once a day of flesh or of fish, and the remnant [with] other victuals, as of milk, butter, and cheese...according to their estate’.¹⁴⁹ This restriction placed a legal limit on masters’ expenditure. This may have been an attempt to reinstate what had been normal practice before 1349, abandoned in the face of workers’ superior bargaining power. This suggestion is supported by a general increase in meat-eating: by the early fifteenth century, non-cereal foodstuffs accounted for 37 percent of expenditure on food for urban building workers.¹⁵⁰

In the majority of indentures used in this research, apprentices were bound to urban craftsmen. Archaeological evidence suggests that some urban residents enjoyed a good diet, including wild and cultivated fruits, and relatively expensive foodstuffs such as meat (particularly from young animals) and fish.¹⁵¹ Craftsmen might have garden plots and pigs to supplement their food supplies, while affluent merchants enjoyed produce from their rural manors.¹⁵² Fruit and vegetables were grown commercially even in urban centres as large as London, where markets sold produce grown on the nearby estates of the bishops of Winchester and Ely.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, Caroline Barron noted that London’s population had little means of feeding itself, and thus the bulk of food consumed in urban environments had to be purchased from markets.¹⁵⁴ This was likely true of many large towns. Throughout England, the diet of poorer households comprised largely of basic foods such as pottage, bread, ale and bacon.¹⁵⁵

Access to ready-cooked food was important in urban environments; many residents were unable to buy food or fuel in bulk, or lacked adequate cooking facilities.¹⁵⁶ Martha

¹⁴⁹ 37 Edward III, c. 8. C. 3 of the same statute complained of the rising price of poultry caused by ‘a great dearth’, fixed the prices of capons, hens and geese (4d for an old capon and 2d and 5d for a hen and goose respectively), and stipulated that ‘in places where the prices of such victuals be less, they shall hold’.

¹⁵⁰ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 202.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197. Dyer noted that younger cattle and pigs tended to be sent to the town for slaughter by butchers, whereas peasant households consumed the meat from older beasts which could no longer work or produce litters – Christopher Dyer, ‘The Material World of English Peasants, 1200–1540: Archaeological Perspectives on Rural Economy and Welfare’, *Agricultural History Review*, 62 (2014), pp. 1–22, p. 9.

¹⁵² Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 196.

¹⁵³ Barron, ‘Centres of Conspicuous Consumption’, pp. 439–440. Barron states that ‘it was comparatively easy for town houses to have gardens of some sort’ after 1350, due to a sudden drop in population caused by the Black Death.

¹⁵⁴ Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 51–52 and 57.

¹⁵⁵ C.M. Woolgar, ‘Food and the Middle Ages’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 36 (2010), pp. 1–19, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ Martha Carlin, ‘Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval England’, in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (London and Rio Grande, OH: The Hambledon

Carlin observed that municipal authorities saw cookshops as places intended specifically to provide hot food for the urban poor.¹⁵⁷ The 1378 London cooks' and piebakers' ordinances offered a pricelist of the 'best' roast meats: pig for 8*d*, goose for 7*d*, and partridge for 3½*d*. However, from 1379 it was decreed that 'every *piebakere* shall bake pasties of beef at one halfpenny, just as good as those at a penny'.¹⁵⁸ These regulations were echoed in other towns, where there was a need to provide hot, cheap food. In 1472, Coventry's cooks were ordered to 'make halpeny pyes as other Townes doth', on pain of half a mark for each default.¹⁵⁹ Although these food options were mainly intended for the poor and homeless, who lacked access to cooking facilities, less impoverished urban workers could also take advantage of these provisions. Ready-cooked food was a convenient option for craftsmen who had no one else to cook for them – perhaps because they lacked domestic servants to cook while their families worked alongside them, or because their workshop was separate from their house. Martha Howell noted that, towards the end of the medieval period, workshops became increasingly separate from the home.¹⁶⁰ The following estimates assume that food was purchased during the day.

As indicated in Table 6.1, 32 indentures specified that the apprentice would be provided with 'drink' (*poculenta*) as well as food. This can be interpreted as an indication that the apprentice would receive ale (and perhaps wine or beer) in addition to water. Therefore, if the apprentice was given only water, this would constitute a breach of the indenture. Drinking only water was a sign of poverty. A 1345 ordinance commanded London's brewers not to waste the water of the Chepe conduit 'so the rich and middling persons therein might there have water for preparing their food, and the poor for their drink'.¹⁶¹ James Galloway described ale as 'a ready and rapidly absorbed source of energy', and it was increasingly regarded as a staple component of diet; in the late fourteenth century, London's aldermen deemed it 'equally necessary to the poor as...bread'.¹⁶² Thus, in the 1380s, measures to regulate London's food supply included ordering brewers and bakers to

Press, 1998), pp. 27–51, pp. 32 and 42. Unless the town had rights over commons, from which fuel could be obtained, the price of fuel would need to be added to the cost of living – Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 209.

¹⁵⁷ Carlin, 'Fast Food', p. 49.

¹⁵⁸ *Memorials*, pp. 426 and 432.

¹⁵⁹ Carlin, 'Fast Food', p. 49.

¹⁶⁰ Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 43, 176 and 180–181.

¹⁶¹ *Memorials*, p. 225.

¹⁶² James A. Galloway, 'Driven by Drink? Ale Consumption and the Agrarian Economy of the London Region, c. 1300–1400', in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (London and Rio Grande, OH: The Hambledon Press, 1998), pp. 87–100, pp. 87 and 95.

sell farthing measures, with mayor John of Northampton minting 76,800 farthings (to the value of £80 sterling) to prevent excuses about not having the right change.¹⁶³ Brewing had long been a household craft, and this rendered ale readily available, but even once it became a more commercial business, ale (and beer) remained relatively cheap – not least because prices, linked to the price of wheat, barley and oats, were regulated by the Assize of Bread and Ale.¹⁶⁴ In the fourteenth century, a gallon [8 pints] of good ale could be purchased for 1½d, while in 1423–4 Hugh Luttrell purchased ale at 1d or 1¼d per gallon.¹⁶⁵ In 1419–20 Richard Whittington, mayor of London, set a maximum price of 3s 6d per barrel for beer sold outside a brewer’s house (much to the annoyance of the brewers), indicating a price of just over 1d per gallon.¹⁶⁶

Table 6.8 – Total costs of feeding an apprentice over course of 7 years, based on low and high estimates of cost per day.

	<i>Low estimate</i>	<i>High estimate</i>
<i>Cost per day</i>	1d	3d
<i>Total per year</i>	£1 10s 5d	£4 11s 3d
<i>Total over term</i>	£10 12s 11d	£31 18s 9d

The availability of cheap food and farthing measures, particularly in London, would make it entirely possible to feed apprentices for 1d per day, as suggested in Table 6.8: a farthing for bread, a farthing for ale, and halfpenny for a pie. Ale could be purchased in bulk, and shared among the household. The single daily serving of meat, outlined in the 1363 sumptuary law, might be cut from a whole animal purchased for household consumption. Based on the 1378 cooks’ and piebakers’ ordinance, whole roast hens could be purchased for 4d, and domesticated or wild ducks for 3½d or 4½d respectively. Ten roast finches cost 1d.¹⁶⁷ Another London ordinance, dated 1378, suggested that ‘best’ lamb could be purchased

¹⁶³ Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 277; J.P.C. Kent, , ‘An Issue of Farthings of Richard II’, *British Numismatic Journal*, 57 (1987), p. 118, p. 118 – I am grateful to Dr Martin Allen for this reference.

¹⁶⁴ Caroline M. Barron, ‘The ‘Golden Age’ of Women in Medieval London’, in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 361–383, p. 382, n.72; L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 286; 51 Henry III(?), ‘*Assisa Panis et Cervise*’.

¹⁶⁵ A.R. Myers, *London in the Age of Chaucer* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p. 201; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 58.

¹⁶⁶ Caroline M. Barron, ‘Richard Whittington: The Man Behind the Myth’, in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 267–333, p. 280.

¹⁶⁷ *Memorials*, p. 426.

for 6*d*.¹⁶⁸ Meat could be supplemented by vegetables (such as onions, leeks, garlic and cabbage) and fruit (perhaps apples or pears) grown in the master's garden, or purchased in markets.¹⁶⁹ The low estimate relies on the availability of cheap food and drink, and does not allow for seasonal food shortages and subsequent price fluctuations. Lenten fasting and abstention from meat 'was only relevant to those who normally expected to enjoy plenty', so has not been taken into account.¹⁷⁰ Although rather low, this estimate can be corroborated: in 1380 John Bryan rendered account for moneys spent upon his ward (see above), claiming expenditure of 8*d* per week (34*s* 8*d* yearly) for her board.¹⁷¹ This wardship pre-dated the food ordinances of the late 1370s and early 1380s. It is therefore possible to suggest, with some confidence, a low estimate of 1*d* per day, amounting to £1 10*s* 5*d* annual expenditure on food and drink.

Expenditure is less easy to gauge for the high estimate. Dyer stated that London merchants' households might spend £30 to £60 per annum on food, with some spending as much as £100, but it is impossible to gauge *per capita* expenditure without knowing the size of the household.¹⁷² In 1383, daily boarding costs for members of the le Strange household were calculated at 7*d* for the lord, 4*d* per esquire, 3*d* per yeoman and 1*d* per groom. Although the household probably acquired much of its food from the family's estates, this still provides an indication of costs. Expensive items (wine, spices, and game) were reserved for the lord and his family.¹⁷³ Therefore a high estimate of 3*d* per day would be appropriate to feed an apprentice, amounting to £4 11*s* 3*d* per annum. Again, this estimate is supported by contemporary sources. Enrolments of pensions granted to residents of the Templars' house at La Bruere [Lincs.] give an indication of the cost of feeding an apprentice.¹⁷⁴ Of the ten pensions enrolled in 1312, five received 2*d* per day for food, and five 3*d* per day. The amount was probably dependent on status: in two cases, a pensioner granted 3*d* for their own food also received 2*d* for their servant or groom.¹⁷⁵ The pension granted to Alice de

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 426. It should be noted, however, that prices in London were always higher than in other towns. For example, a pig could be purchased for 2*s* in Somerset, whereas it would be 3*s* in London – Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 210.

¹⁶⁹ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 157. Dyer gives these as examples of produce from peasants' garden, but this is likely to have been the standard produce of more urban gardens.

¹⁷⁰ The masses 'would have regarded the supposed rigours of aristocratic Lent as the height of luxury' – ibid., p. 66.

¹⁷¹ *Memorials*, p. 446–447.

¹⁷² Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p.199.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁷⁴ Charles G. Addison, *The History of the Knights Templars, the Temple Church, and the Temple* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1842), p. 95.

¹⁷⁵ 'Close Rolls, Edward II: October 1312, Oct. 12. Windsor.', *Close Rolls, Edward II: Vol. 1*, p. 482.

Sweynesthorp, the sole female pensioner, in 1312 indicates the level of maintenance provided. Each Saturday Alice received ‘seven white loaves, three esquires’ loaves, five flagons of the better ale...and seven dishes of meat and fish...for the following week’, along with ‘an extra dish of meat or fish of the best course of the brethren at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, Midsummer, the Assumption, and All Saints’, plus three stone of cheese per year.¹⁷⁶ Like many male pensioners, Alice also received ‘an old garment of the brothers’ each Christmas, suggesting that although she did not dine with the other pensioners, she received a similar level of maintenance. Assuming the value of the food was 3d per day, that amounted to annual expenditure of £4 11s 3d per pensioner. £3 10d would be spent annually to provide 2d of food per day. The provision of one dish of meat or fish per day, along with bread, ale and cheese, accords with the 1363 sumptuary legislation, and thus constituted an appropriate level of maintenance for an urban apprentice.

4. Were apprentices really a ‘cheap source of labour’?

Table 6.9 sets out the low and high estimates for the total cost of providing an apprentice with clothes, bedding and food over the course of a seven-year apprenticeship. This indicates that the level of expenditure required to meet the obligations set out in the apprenticeship indenture was far from negligible. Provision of food and drink was by far the greatest expense – savings could be made elsewhere, but this presented an unavoidable cost. Therefore, it is necessary to reassess the longstanding assumption that apprentices were a source of cheap labour, easily exploited by masters.

Table 6.9 – Total cost of maintaining an apprentice over a 7 year term, based on low and high estimates previously outlined in Tables 6.3, 6.4, 6.6 and 6.8.

	<i>Low estimate</i>	<i>High estimate</i>
<i>Clothing</i>	£1 3s 2d	£5 4s 4d
<i>Bedding</i>	9s 8d	£1 17s 5d
<i>Food</i>	£10 12s 11d	£31 18s 9d
<i>Total</i>	£12 5s 9d	£39 0s 6d

In his study of female apprenticeship in the West Midlands, Richard Goddard attested that apprentices provided ‘virtually free labour’ for the duration of the apprenticeship. Masters could recoup some of the costs by employing their former apprentices on lower than

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. It is not clear from the record whether this was for Alice alone or if she shared it with her servants, but no servants are recorded in the enrolment as they are for other pensioners.

market wages for a period (see Chapter 7). Goddard believed that, for masters, ‘the deal [seemed] like a fairly fruitful and cost-effective one’.¹⁷⁷ What Goddard did not consider was the high cost of providing food and drink. As demonstrated in Tables 6.8 and 6.9, additional expenditure of 1*d* per day amounted to £1 10*s* 5*d* per year, so apprentices were hardly ‘virtually free labour’.¹⁷⁸ Guilds forbade members from ‘enticing away’ another master’s apprentice or journeyman, but loss of a journeyman was seen to be less financially damaging than loss of an apprentice. Both the London blacksmiths and bladesmiths instituted two levels of fine: ‘20*s*, for withdrawing an apprentice; and for withdrawing a journeyman, half a mark [6*s* 8*d*]’.¹⁷⁹ Considering the figures in Table 6.9, the difference in fine was probably due to the costs required to maintain an apprentice, which might be higher than the cost of employing a journeyman.

4.1 Daily wages

Guild ordinances and regulations make it clear that journeymen were expected to be skilled workers, who, preferably, had completed an apprenticeship.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, journeymen were guild members who had attained the requisite level of skill for mastery, but had not yet become master craftsmen. They could not run a workshop or take on apprentices themselves; instead they worked for a master in exchange for wages. Guild regulations make the requirements clear. The London braelers’ ordinances, dated 1355, required that no master take a journeyman unless he be ‘first proved and assayed by the Masters...as being skilled in his trade’, and ordered that any journeyman who did not know his trade ‘be ousted therefrom’.¹⁸¹ Likewise, the 1371 articles of the London haberdashers implied that journeymen should be skilled workers who had completed an apprenticeship. The articles ordered ‘that no one of the said trade shall take a journeyman or any other man, under colour of service or otherwise, to teach him the said trade, unless he take him as an apprentice, to

¹⁷⁷ Richard Goddard, ‘Female Apprenticeship in the West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages’, *Midland History*, 27 (2002), pp. 165–181, p. 170. Indentures TNA E 40/4450 and E 40/8267.

¹⁷⁸ It should be noted that, in one case discussed by Goddard, the apprentice’s father paid 20*s* [£1] for the apprenticeship – TNA E 40/4450, transcribed and translated in Goddard, ‘Female Apprenticeship’, pp. 179–180.

¹⁷⁹ *Memorials*, pp. 362 and 570.

¹⁸⁰ ‘...that no one of the said trade shall be so daring as to receive any one to work at the same trade, if he have not been an apprentice, or if he be not a good workman, and one who can have the testimony of his master, or of good folks of good condition; and can shew that well and lawfully he has served his trade for the time assigned among them’ – 1348 Ordinances of the Pewterers, in *Memorials*, p. 244. See also 1380 Ordinances of the Cutlers, *ibid.*, p. 439.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278. The braelers made breechgirdles. An unskilled journeyman was allowed to remain in the trade if he agreed to ‘be apprenticed to learn his said trade’. Similar conditions can be found in the Ordinances of the Founders (1389), *ibid.*, p. 514.

serve him and learn the trade, in manner as an apprentice ought to do'.¹⁸² From 1434 any stranger wishing to serve a blacksmith was required to give two weeks' service to show his competency; if his work was satisfactory, he could work for a master blacksmith for three years, taking a salary of 40s per annum (possibly in addition to board and lodging).¹⁸³ Similar requirements were also imposed outside London. In 1477, the weavers of Bury St Edmunds demanded that no master 'reseyue apprentys under colour of a journymanne for short tyme for to entre hym in the crafte'.¹⁸⁴ The Colchester fullers' ordinances, dated 1418, stipulated that no one could weave or full without having been apprenticed for at least five years, and all apprenticeships had to be enrolled by the town clerk.¹⁸⁵

Historians writing on wages have tended to rely on tabulations put together by David Farmer, James Thorold Rogers and others. These tabulations, although insightful, relied heavily on wage data for carpenters, thatchers, and other construction workers.¹⁸⁶ This is unsurprising, as records of building projects provide the best wage data for medieval England. For example, the *Liber Custumarum* recorded wages paid to building workers employed in rebuilding parts of London after a devastating fire in 1212, including carpenters, plasterers, tilers, 'workers of freestone', whitewashers, daubers, 'torchers', and their labourers.¹⁸⁷ Workers were paid on two different rates: a lower rate with victuals, or a higher rate without. Labourers earned roughly half the wage of the master craftsman whom they served.¹⁸⁸ These wages are outlined in Table 6.10.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 354. See also the 1408 Articles of the Bladesmiths, *ibid.*, p. 570.

¹⁸³ Henry Charles Coote, 'The Ordinances of some Secular Guilds of London, 1354 to 1496', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 4 (1871), pp. 1–59, p. 33.

¹⁸⁴ '1477, 8 June. – Ordinances for the reformation of abuses in the craft of the weavers; on two membranes', *The Manuscripts of Lincoln, Bury St. Edmunds Etc. Fourteenth Report, Appendix; Part VIII*, ed. by the Historical Manuscripts Commission (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1895), p. 133.

¹⁸⁵ R.H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300–1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 185–186 and 239.

¹⁸⁶ See D.L. Farmer, 'Prices and wages, 1300–1500', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. 3*, ed. by E. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), table 5.8, p. 471, cited in J.L. Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy: 937–1489* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), fig. 9.2, p. 267, and Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 215, Table 18.

¹⁸⁷ Caroline M. Barron, 'The Later Middle Ages: 1270–1520', in *The British Atlas of Historic Towns: Volume III – The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c. 1520*, ed. by Mary D. Lobel (Oxford: Oxford University Press in conjunction with The Historic Towns Trust, 2018), pp. 42–56, p. 51. The fire swept through Southwark and across London bridge, reaching as far as the central chapel – John A. McEwan, 'Charity and the City: London Bridge, c.1176–1275', in *Medieval Londoners: Essays to Mark the Eightieth Birthday of Caroline Barron*, ed. by Elizabeth A. New and Christian Steer (London: University of London Press, 2019), pp. 223–244, p. 226; *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. II, part I, containing Liber Custumarum with extracts from the Cottonian MS. Claudius, D.II.*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), pp. 86–87. The *Liber Custumarum* also contained regulations which encouraged buildings to be reconstructed with stone and roofed with lead, tile, or stone to prevent further conflagration. If thatch was used, it should be plastered over.

¹⁸⁸ *Liber Custumarum*, p. 86.

Table 6.10 – Daily wages (in pence) paid to London building craftsmen employed in 1212.¹⁸⁹

<i>Craft</i>	<i>Master with food</i>	<i>Master, no food</i>	<i>Labourer with food</i>	<i>Labourer, no food</i>
<i>Carpenter</i>	3	4.5	–	–
<i>Plasterer</i>	3	4.5	1.5	3
<i>Tiler</i>	3	4.5	1.5	3
<i>Freestone-worker</i>	2.5	4	–	–
<i>Whitewasher</i>	2	3.5	1.5	2.5
<i>Dauber</i>	2	3.5	1.5	2.5
<i>Torcher</i>	2	3.5	1.5	2.5
<i>Average daily wage (d)</i>	2.5	4	1.5	2.7

As was generally the case, London wages were higher than those paid to building workers elsewhere; Pamela Nightingale noted that in 1210, Hampshire carpenters could earn 2*d* per day (it is unclear whether food was provided).¹⁹⁰ Henry Phelps-Brown and Sheila Hopkins' analysis of building wages in southern England indicated that wages remained at 3*d* or 4*d* per day throughout the period 1264–1350.¹⁹¹ Thereafter, the 1351 Statute of Labourers sought to fix wages at pre-Black Death levels, counteracting opportunism by skilled workers whose expertise was in high demand. Builders ('carpenters, masons, and tilers, and other workmen of houses') were specifically targeted: master carpenters could take no more than 3*d* per day and other carpenters 2*d*; master masons 4*d*, other masons 3*d*, and their servants 1*d*; tilers 3*d* and their servants 1*d*; thatchers ('over coverers of fern and straw') 3*d*, and their servants 1*d*. It is unclear whether food and drink were provided in addition.¹⁹² These wages accorded with the pre-1351 rates put forward by Phelps-Brown and Hopkins, although the legislation's efficacy was debatable. The national limit set lower wage rates than those which had previously been available in London. In 1350 the maximum wages in London for master masons, carpenters, tilers, plasterers and sawyers had been set at 6*d* a day in summer or 5*d* a day in winter; tilers' servants were capped at 3½*d* a day in summer or 3*d* in winter; daubers (who laid a mixture of mud and straw on to a framework) could earn a maximum of 5*d* a day

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁹⁰ Pamela Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: The Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London 1000–1485* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 59.

¹⁹¹ E.H. Phelps-Brown and Sheila Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of Building Wages', in *Essays in Economic History*, ed. by E. Carus-Wilson, vol. 2, (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1962), pp. 168–178, p. 178, cited in Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), Table 5.1, p. 221.

¹⁹² 25 Edward III, Stat. 2, c. 3. In the next sentence, 'plasterers and others [*sic*] workers of mudwalls' are noted as receiving their pay 'by the same manner, without meat or drink'.

in summer or 4d in winter, while their servants could be paid 3½d or 3d.¹⁹³ Lower wages were offered in winter because shorter days and inclement weather reduced the need for craftsmen, and halted some construction projects completely.¹⁹⁴

This thesis focuses on apprenticeship through the lens of apprenticeship indentures, and few of these indentures concerned construction workers. Therefore it would be unwise to rely entirely on wage data for building projects. Although data is limited, evidence exists for wages in various crafts for almost the entirety of the period 1250–1500. The Statute of Labourers was preoccupied with building trades, perhaps because those craftsmen were so mobile and therefore harder to control on a local level, and no attempt was made to fix the wages of practitioners in other crafts. In general, wages continued to be set at a local level, often by the crafts themselves.¹⁹⁵ One challenge when using this data is that craftworkers were often paid piece rate, rather than a daily or weekly wage. In 1364, a journeyman in Bristol could earn up to 3d for making a complete pair of boots, or 12d for finishing a dozen ‘quarter-schone’.¹⁹⁶ In 1365, London tawyers were paid 5–6s for dressing 1,000 squirrel skins for use by skinners.¹⁹⁷ In 1500, a skinner in York could command 6d for shaping and sewing 100 squirrel paws, which were commonly sewn into linings.¹⁹⁸ It is difficult to assess how long these processes took, and what a craftsman might earn each day. Another problem is that craftsmen often paid their employees in part with the goods they produced (so a cordwainer might pay his workers with shoes).¹⁹⁹

Some local regulations recorded the regular wages paid to journeymen and servants in various crafts. Records of Bristol fullers’ wages indicate a slight increase in wages after the Black Death, with a reduction in the early fifteenth century. In 1346, according to the Little Red Book of Bristol, trough workers (who might work directly with substances including fullers’ earth, stale urine and animal droppings) were paid a maximum of 3d per day, while

¹⁹³ *Memorials*, p. 253. The summer ran from Easter to Michaelmas, and winter from Michaelmas to Easter. The payment of variable wages depending on time of year has received very little academic attention, and it deserves some study.

¹⁹⁴ William C. Baer, ‘The House-Building Sector of London’s Economy, 1550–1650’, *Urban History*, 39 (2012), pp. 409–430, p. 425. For example, frost could prevent mortar from binding stones properly, meaning masons could not build during the winter – Jean Gimpel, *The Cathedral Builders*, trans. by Teresa Waugh (Salisbury: Michael Russell (Publishing) Ltd., 1983), p. 56.

¹⁹⁵ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 219.

¹⁹⁶ *The Little Red Book of Bristol, vol. II*, ed. by Francis B. Bickley (Bristol: W. Crofton Hemmons, and London: Henry Sotheran & Co., 1900), p. 43. These rates remained the same until at least 1408 – *ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁹⁷ Veale, *English Fur Trade*, pp. 50 and 31, n. 7. The sum of 5s per 1000 skins dressed was set in 1300 in response to opportunism by the tawyers, while the sum of 6s was agreed between the two crafts in 1365, and paid to a tawyer in 1422–3.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹⁹ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 221.

perch workers (who worked ‘on land’) could earn up to $2d$ per day. Female ‘wedesteres’ might earn $1d$ per day, or $\frac{1}{2}d$ for a half day. Masters were fined $6d$ for overpayments.²⁰⁰ Wages rose somewhat over the next 35 years; in 1381, trough workers might earn $6d$ per day, and perch workers $4d$ in summer or $3d$ in winter.²⁰¹ However, by 1406 this had fallen to $4d$ in summer and $3d$ in winter, with no differentiation between trough and perch work.²⁰²

Wage evidence also exists for various crafts in York, although building workers predominate. Heather Swanson estimated that an early fifteenth-century weavers’ servant could earn up to $8d$ a day, based on a piece rate of $32d$ per cloth. This equated to $6\frac{1}{2}$ – $8d$ per day, or £5–6 annually.²⁰³ This estimate seems rather high, particularly considering that in the 1440s a master carpenter at York Minster earned $6d$ a day in summer or $5d$ in winter.²⁰⁴ Around the same time, a labouring dauber employed by York council might earn $4d$ per day in summer or $3d$ in winter.²⁰⁵ In 1420, a bowyer’s ‘taskman’ could earn up to $12d$ a week in summer and $8d$ a week in winter, in addition to food throughout the year. The difference in summer and winter wages indicates that work was dependent on daylight, which was in much shorter supply during winter months – guild regulations frequently forbade ‘night working’, as it was feared that the quality of work produced would suffer, to the detriment of the reputation of the craft.²⁰⁶

As is so often the case, examples from London predominate due to the volume of surviving guild and corporation records. Although they did not necessarily establish formal journeymen’s associations, journeymen did work collectively to force wage increases – although as much of the evidence comes from records of complaints, fines and imprisonment,

²⁰⁰ *The Little Red Book of Bristol, vol. II*, ed. by Francis B. Bickley (Bristol: W. Crofton Hemmons, and London: Henry Sotheran & Co., 1900), p. 12. See Roeland Paardekooper, ‘The Process of Fulling Wool: Experiments in the Netherlands, 2004’, *EuroREA*, 2 (2005), pp. 67–78, pp. 69–71 <https://exarc.net/sites/default/files/exarc-eurorea_2_2005-the_process_of_fulling_of_wool.pdf> [accessed 26 January 2020] for discussion of fulling agents and techniques used.

²⁰¹ *The Little Red Book of Bristol, vol. II*, p. 15. Summer was calculated from Ash Wednesday to the feast of St Calixtus [14 October], and winter from St Calixtus to Ash Wednesday.

²⁰² *English Guilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Guilds : Together With the Olde Usages of the Cite of Wynchestre; the Ordinances of Worcester; the Office of the Mayor of Bristol; And, the Customary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regis. From Original MSS. of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, Joshua Toulmin Smith, Lujo Brentano and Early English Text Society (London: Trübner, 1870), p. 285. In this case, summer was the period between the first Monday in Lent and Michaelmas.

²⁰³ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 34.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁰⁶ E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England: Vol. 1 – The Middle Ages*, 5th edn. (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1929), p. 300.

this approach did not necessarily result in long-term success.²⁰⁷ The guilds resisted demands for higher wages, and took firm action against servants and journeymen who combined to agitate for increased pay.²⁰⁸ In 1375, the London sheathers set a flat rate of 30s per year plus board for their workers, to prevent agitation for higher wages.²⁰⁹ In 1353, eight opportunistic Flemish journeyman weavers refused to accept less than 7d per day, a rate likely to have been considered exorbitant by their masters; Frances Consitt noted that in 1407, the weavers set journeymen's wages at 5d 'both in winter and summer...and not food nor drink'.²¹⁰ London's brewers, meanwhile, fought a desperate battle to keep daily wages below 4d. In 1372, ten workers were imprisoned for taking wages of 32s per year, 10s per quarter, or 4d per day. Two more were arrested in 1373 for taking 3s 8d per week.²¹¹ In 1406, the brewers sought the right to arrest workers who demanded more than 4d per day in summer, or 3d in winter, plus board.²¹² In 1396 the London saddlers complained that 'whereas a master in the trade could before have had a serving-man or journeyman for 40 shillings or 5 marks [£3 6s 8d] yearly, and his board, now such a man would not agree with his master for less than 10 or 12 marks, or even £10, yearly'.²¹³ In response to these complaints, the mayor and aldermen ordered the dissolution of the journeymen's fraternity, which had agitated for these wages.²¹⁴

Dyer argued that, for various reasons, there was no striking increase in wages until the end of the fourteenth century. The 'new deal for wage earners' emerged slowly from a combination of complex supply and demand factors which historians do not fully understand.²¹⁵ Even in the fifteenth century wages do not seem to have reached the high levels demanded by the saddlers' journeymen. In 1433, the London dyers set journeymen's wages at 40s per year, plus board and clothing. In 1451 and 1452 respectively, the pewterers and blacksmiths also fixed yearly wages at 40s, but without board and clothing.²¹⁶ In 1441, a London baker's servant could earn 12d, 13d or 16d per week depending on the type of work,

²⁰⁷ Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, "An Irresistible Phalanx": Journeymen Associations in Western Europe, 1300–1800', *International Review of Social History*, 39 (1994), pp. 11–52, p. 25.

²⁰⁸ *Memorials*, pp. 542 (Saddlers, 1396) and 495 (Cordwainers, 1387).

²⁰⁹ Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 113. Lis and Soly noted that 'setting new maximum wages sometimes simply fixed the official rates at the level of the actual wages or confirmed a compromise between masters and journeymen' – Lis and Soly "An Irresistible Phalanx", p. 38.

²¹⁰ Frances Consitt, *The London Weavers' Company: Volume I – From the Twelfth Century to the close of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 43 and 77.

²¹¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 112–113.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²¹³ *Memorials*, p. 543.

²¹⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 113.

²¹⁵ Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 218–219.

²¹⁶ Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 114.

with an extra penny a day for drink (food is not mentioned). These were said to be the prevailing rates from ‘tyme out of mynde’.²¹⁷

Sylvia Thrupp argued that, as the population increased over the course of the fifteenth century, unemployment became an issue in some crafts and so masters were not compelled to offer higher wages.²¹⁸ Thrupp’s theory, based on London guilds, may not be indicative of wider trends, but evidence from other sources, such as thatchers’ wages, suggests it is a viable argument.²¹⁹ High wages were clearly not the norm. The plumber John Kirkeby, who died in 1463, stipulated in his will that his servant should be paid up to £4 per year, ‘with convenable reward above that if he deserve it’, in order to prevent the servant from seeking alternative employment.²²⁰ In 1493, despite a period of economic depression, a mercer’s servant could command 5 marks a year (£3 8s 6d); in periods of prosperity, competent servants might earn as much as £20 a year with board. High wages were intended to engender the servant’s full loyalty, but sometimes had the unintended effect of enabling them to begin trading on their own account, something which was forbidden by the mercers’ company.²²¹ The very high wages also imply that mercers’ servants were expected to act as factors, and take an active role in running their master’s business.²²² This was not necessarily expected of servants in other crafts.

4.2 Calculating estimated daily wages

Rather than relying on builders’ wages, the wages recorded for non-building workers (outlined above) have been used to calculate low, medium, and high estimates for journeymen’s wages. These estimates assume a working year of 250 days, based on Leonardo Ridolfi’s recent calculation of the average year for French construction workers.²²³ This accords with Robert Allen and Jacob Weisdorf’s calculations; they suggested that 300

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 114.

²¹⁸ Sylvia L. Thrupp, ‘Medieval Guilds Reconsidered’, *Journal of Economic History*, 2 (1942), pp. 164–173, p. 170.

²¹⁹ See Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 215, Table 18.

²²⁰ Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p. 114.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 104.

²²² We know that apprentices also acted as receivers of money on behalf of their masters: a year book case from 1317 involves an action of account where the defendant was the plaintiff’s apprentice and had been involved in selling silk and woollen clothes ‘and other goods’ on behalf of his master. The sum in dispute was substantial – £82 8s. *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), pp. 126–130.

²²³ Leonardo Ridolfi put forward 250 days as the length of the working year, based on the average working year for (skilled) construction workers: Leonardo Ridolfi, ‘L’histoire immobile? Six centuries of real wages in France from Louis IX to Napoleon III: 1250–1860’, *LEM Working Paper Series*, 2017/14 (2017) <<http://www.lem.ssup.it/WPLem/2017-14.html>> [accessed 16 January 2019], p. 11.

days' work was rarely required, and farm labourers could work less than 200 days per year and still provide for their families.²²⁴ As urban craftsmen needed to purchase food rather than produce it themselves, a middling figure has been used for these calculations. Urban craftworkers were frequently prohibited from working at night, and on Sundays and feast days, suggesting that many sought to maximise productivity by working on these days. In 1344, the London cutlers were prohibited from working at night, or 'on Saturday, or on the eve of a double feast, after None has been rung'. They were also forbidden to open their shops 'on Sundays, or on double feasts'.²²⁵ In 1345 the London spurriers' articles included an order not to work 'on Saturdays, after None has been rung...until the Monday morning following'.²²⁶ In 1464 shoemakers in London and its environs were forbidden to 'sell or command or do to be sold any shoes...upon any Sunday, or any of the said feasts, shall set or put upon the feet...of any person, any shoes...upon pain of forfeiture and loss of 20s'.²²⁷ It is unlikely that London shoemakers were the only craftsmen who sought to maximise productivity by working on holy days, which supports a higher figure for working days than that suggested by Allen and Weisdorf.

Where sources recorded weekly wages, the figure was multiplied by 52 and divided by 250 to obtain a daily rate. Where different rates were given for summer and winter, an average daily rate was calculated by dividing the year exactly in half; the working year was usually divided using Lent or Easter, which varied from year to year, making exact calculations impractical, particularly as these estimates cover 250 years. For the sake of consistency, 1d per day was allowed for food across the low, medium, and high estimates. While apprentices took all their meals in the master's household, journeymen probably only received food and drink during the working day and, as discussed above, food and drink was cheaply available in urban centres. The estimated daily and yearly costs have been expanded over 7 years to provide a direct comparison with the cost of maintaining an apprentice, and Table 6.11 outlines these estimates, with and without the provision of food. The mid estimate is based on the average estimated wage of 3d per day. The low estimate is the mean of wages

²²⁴ R.C. Allen and J.L. Weisdorf, 'Was There an 'Industrious Revolution' Before the Industrial Revolution? An Empirical Exercise for England, c. 1300–1830, *Economic History Review*, 64 (2011), pp. 715–729, pp. 720–721.

²²⁵ *Memorials*, p. 217. If two feasts or festivals fell on the same day, this was called a double feast. Although they were forbidden to open their shops on these days, 'if any strange person, passing by chance through the City upon any feast day, shall have occasion in a hurry to buy anything touching the trade, it shall be fully lawful for a man of the same trade, whosoever he may be, to sell to him within his own house...but without opening his shop' – *ibid.*, p. 217.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²²⁷ 4 Edw. IV, c. 7.

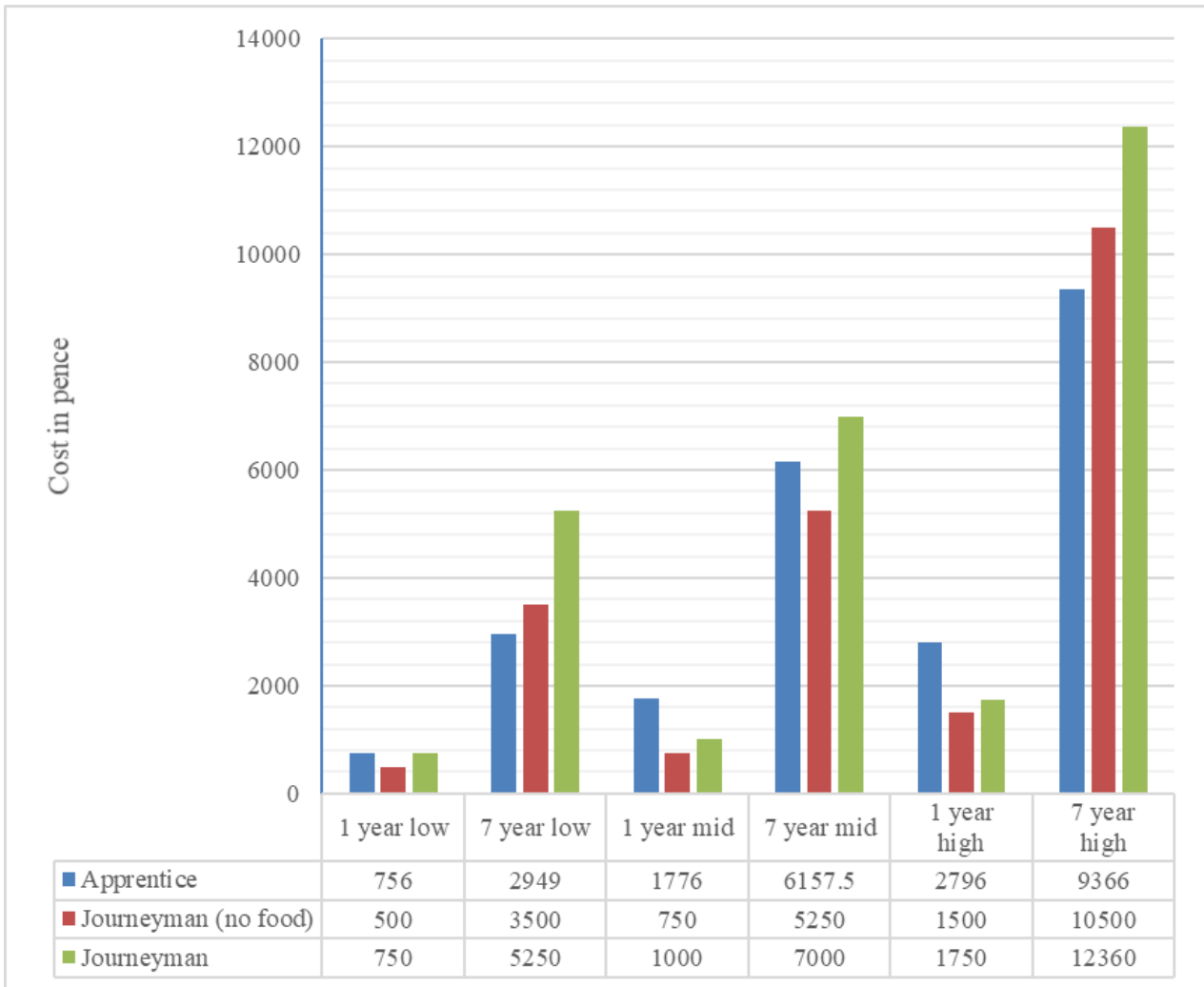
below 3*d* per day (thus 2*d*), and the high estimate is the mean of wages above 3*d* per day (thus 6*d*). As in Table 6.8, the addition of 1*d* for food makes a considerable difference to the annual total, and the estimates would be higher if this cost increased. Food was provided at the master’s discretion, although price fluctuations may also have influenced their decision. These estimates accord with both the 1212 regulations for London builders and the fifteenth-century wage regulations for other craftworkers, and thus provide a reasonable estimation of the cost of employing a journeyman.

Table 6.11 – Estimated daily wages for craftworkers and journeymen, with and without provision of food.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Low estimate</i>		<i>Mid estimate</i>		<i>High estimate</i>	
<i>Daily wage</i>	2 <i>d</i>	2 <i>d</i>	3 <i>d</i>	3 <i>d</i>	6 <i>d</i>	6 <i>d</i>
<i>Daily food</i>	–	1 <i>d</i>	–	1 <i>d</i>	–	1 <i>d</i>
<i>1 year total</i>	£2 1 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>	£3 2 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	£3 2 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	£4 3 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	£6 5 <i>s</i>	£7 5 <i>s</i> 10 <i>d</i>
<i>7 year total</i>	£14 11 <i>s</i> 8 <i>d</i>	£21 17 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	£21 17 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	£29 3 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	£43 15 <i>s</i>	£51 10 <i>s</i>

As discussed above, journeymen were expected to be as skilled as master craftsmen, and should be capable of producing high-quality goods with minimal wastage. By selling these products for a profit, masters could expect to cover the cost of employing a journeyman. This was not the case for apprentices; they began the term with little or no technical skill, and it might be several years before the goods they produced were of saleable quality. During this time, masters had to cover the cost of feeding and clothing their apprentices, as well as the wastage they produced during training. It has long been assumed that apprentices were a cheap alternative to employing a journeyman, but this was not the case in practice. A visual comparison of the costs is presented in Figure 6.1. In order to enable direct comparison, a mid cost per year and per seven years has been calculated for apprentices – this is the mean of the low and high estimated totals (see Table 6.9).

Figure 6.1 – Costs of providing for an apprentice compared to employing a journeyman, using low, mid and high estimates over 1 year and 7 years.



In a single year it was noticeably cheaper to employ a journeyman (particularly if they were not provided with food) than it was to maintain an apprentice. A journeyman would also be considerably more cost-effective. This applies across all three estimates. It is only when the estimates are expanded over a period of seven years that apprentices can be considered cheaper than a journeyman. It was less expensive to maintain an apprentice for seven years than to employ a journeyman for the same period; the only exception to this rule is the mid estimate, where paying a journeyman (without food) remained the cheapest option. However, the real cost of an apprentice was higher than indicated in any of the preceding calculations, as for the majority of the apprenticeship they would be considerably less cost-effective than a journeyman. Apprentices would initially require more supervision and produce more waste than a more advanced apprentice or a highly skilled journeyman.

The estimates above could be refined to account for wastage as an element of maintaining an apprentice, but this is difficult to calculate for two reasons. First, the nominal amount of damage permitted was very small (never more than 12*d* per annum in apprenticeship indentures – see Chapter 4). Second, journeymen also produced waste, albeit less than an apprentice. It is impossible to place a monetary value on the time spent training an apprentice, or the profits lost to wastage during the apprenticeship. These costs are likely to have been considerable, particularly in smaller workshops where masters could not rely on older apprentices or journeymen to provide newer apprentices with basic instruction. Taking into account lost time and wasted materials, the low estimate cost of maintaining an apprentice over seven years was actually probably comparable to the cost of employing a journeyman. Moreover, these additional considerations mean that maintaining an apprentice based on the mid estimate was probably more expensive than employing a journeyman for 3*d* per day plus food for a seven year period.

Of course, this assumes a like-for-like situation. A master paying a journeyman 6*d* per day plus food (high estimate) might have maintained an apprentice on the basis of the mid estimate. In this case, even taking into account the cost of training and wastage, the apprentice was likely to have been considerably cheaper than the journeyman. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that although they were cheaper to maintain, apprentices were certainly not as cost-effective as journeymen, and masters would have borne this in mind when considering whether to take on an apprentice or employ a journeyman. The potential savings made by taking an apprentice rather than employing a journeyman might only become apparent once wages began to rise over the course of the fifteenth century. Another consideration, of course, was that a journeyman could depart from his employment whenever he wished. There was little a master could do to prevent a journeyman from leaving in pursuit of higher wages. Apprentices, meanwhile, were secured for a pre-determined period by a legally binding indenture, and thus offered a more secure, albeit less cost-effective, labour source.

These estimates do not include the potential additional costs of apprenticeship. Some apprentices received wages, although these were usually very low. Robert Clerk and Robert Commynge, both apprenticed to smiths in Romney in 1451, received 1*d* per week – Clerk for the whole term, and Commynge for five of the six years – presenting their masters with an

additional yearly outlay of 4s 4d. Clerk also received 20s at the end of his term.²²⁸ William Stakker, apprenticed in 1499, received 8d a year for five years, and 34s in the sixth year of his apprenticeship (£1 17s 4d in total).²²⁹ During the fifteenth century it became common practice to give the apprentice money, clothing, bedding or goods at the end of their term – 25 indentures promised this to the apprentice (see Chapter 7). Of these, the highest cash gift was 40s, but some indentures promised goods which might have been more valuable.²³⁰ Thomas Alsot was promised eight ewes at the end of his apprenticeship.²³¹ John Bere was promised a horse worth 13s 4d and a ‘packe de graywar’ with all apparatus (*‘cu[m] toto apparatu[m]’*), in addition to 26s 8d. The ‘packe’ presumably related to the master’s business, the nature of which was not specified.²³² Specialist tools or items might also be required for other trades; blacksmiths, for example, were generally depicted wearing leather aprons.²³³ These were essential for preventing damage to woollen and linen clothes; providing an apprentice blacksmith with an apron was effectively a cost-saving measure.²³⁴

Additional costs might also be imposed by guild or civic regulations, such as fees for enrolment. Hovland observed that court records indicated that the master, as a citizen, was responsible for ensuring payment of enrolment fees, and suggested that these may have been paid out of any premium received from the apprentice’s family. In London, the fee for enrolment before the mayor seems to have been 2s in the mid thirteenth century, rising to 2s 6d in the early fourteenth century. Some larger craft guilds set up parallel enrolment procedures, with associated fees, in addition to the enrolment fee paid to the city.²³⁵ Enrolment fees varied widely, and sometimes reflected masters’ desire to attract apprentices in periods of labour scarcity. This is clearly illustrated by the London grocers’ enrolment fees: the fee was set at 20s in 1345, but was reduced to 3s 4d by 1376 in response to demographic changes after the Black Death. In 1418, it was raised to 6s 8d for apprentices who paid a premium, remaining at 3s 4d for those who did not. By 1466, a flat rate of 20s

²²⁸ KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r.

²²⁹ MERL, MS2419/24.

²³⁰ TNA, C 146/1129.

²³¹ TNA, E 40/8643.

²³² TNA, C 146/63.

²³³ BL, Harley 6563, f. 68 v., online edition

<<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8836&CollID=8&NStart=6563>> [accessed 30 December 2018].

²³⁴ Gallivanting Craftsman, ‘No Bullshit Guide To Optimal Blacksmith Clothing (Gloves, Aprons, And More)’, Gallivanting Craftsman (2018), <<https://gallivantingcraftsman.com/no-bullshit-guide-to-optimal-blacksmith-clothing-glovesaprons-and-more/>> [accessed 30 April 2021].

²³⁵ Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London’, pp. 83–84.

was payable on enrolment, rising to 40s in 1500, reflecting the demographic recovery.²³⁶ Similarly, in an attempt to limit the number of new apprentices, the London mercers raised their fees from 20s to £3 6s 8d in 1457–8.²³⁷ However, in less prestigious guilds the enrolment fees remained low; barbers and coopers charged 1s in the 1480s, and the saddlers 2s 2d in the 1490s.²³⁸ In 1485, the London cutlers demanded 8s.²³⁹ Whatever the fee, it would need to be factored into the master's consideration of the cost of the apprenticeship, and in some incidences, even where the master received a premium, it would render the apprenticeship less cost-effective than employing a journeyman. Apprentices certainly cannot be considered a source of cheap labour.

4.3 The 'liquidity crisis'

In a credit-based economy, providing an apprentice with clothing and bedding did not necessarily require immediate financial outlay, and this may have been a consideration for masters. Apprentices would become an especially attractive option if there was a shortage of coin. John Day referred to the period 1395–1415 as a 'liquidity crisis', and this has been echoed by monetarist historians such as Peter Spufford and Pamela Nightingale.²⁴⁰ Even non-monetarist historians such as Jim Bolton have agreed that there were severe difficulties with the European bullion supply in this period.²⁴¹ Although increasing amounts of coinage were available in the late fourteenth century, this was mainly gold. Most of England's population used silver coins for day-to-day transactions, and Spufford argued that hoarding, at all levels of society, was partly responsible for the shortage as it removed a great deal of silver from circulation.²⁴² At his death in 1377, Richard, Earl of Arundel, held over 60,000

²³⁶ *Facsimile of the First Volume of the MS Archives of the Worshipful Company of Grocers of the City of London, AD 1345–1528, vol. I*, ed. by J.A. Kingdon (London: Richard Clay for the Grocers' Company, 1886), pp. 11, 19 and 121, cited in Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London', p. 85.

²³⁷ Matthew Davies, 'Governors and Governed: The Practice of Power in the Merchant Taylors' Company in the Fifteenth Century', in *Guilds, Society & Economy in London 1450–1800*, ed. by Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2002), pp. 67–83, p. 70; Matthew P. Davies, 'The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 186. The fee reverted to 20s in 1485, presumably in response to economic conditions: Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London', p. 85.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²³⁹ Charles Welch, *A History of the Cutlers' Company of London and of the Minor Cutlery Crafts with Biographical Notices of Early London Cutlers – Vol. I: From Early Times to the Year 1500* (London: privately printed for the Cutlers' Company, 1916), p. 338.

²⁴⁰ John Day, 'The Great Bullion Famine of the Fifteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 79 (1978) pp. 3–54, p. 3; Peter Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 339; Pamela Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit in Later Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), pp. 560–575, p. 562.

²⁴¹ Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, pp. 234 and 251.

²⁴² Spufford, *Money and its Use*, p. 345.

marks in silver coin – this is an extreme example, but indicative of widespread hoarding tendencies.²⁴³ Lack of small change, which might be used to pay workers' daily wages, was a constant complaint.²⁴⁴ In 1380, the Commons petitioned that for every pound of silver minted, $\frac{3}{4}$ should be coined as halfpennies and farthings, which were commonly required for small purchases (especially bread and beer) and charitable works. £80 worth of farthings were minted in response to this petition, but a similar complaint ten years later suggests it was a persistent problem.²⁴⁵ Unlike apprentices, journeymen might live in their own households; therefore they required regular payment in cash to cover living expenses. As indicated in Figure 6.1, masters might have to find upwards of 500 pennies per year in order to pay a journeyman. If, as Day argued, there was indeed a liquidity crisis in the early fifteenth century, this would be no easy task. Furthermore, Bolton noted that wages remained 'stubbornly high' after 1380 even though prices fell – therefore it might be cheaper and easier to purchase items for an apprentice, with payment deferred to a later date, than to pay for a journeyman's labour by the day.²⁴⁶

5. Conclusion

One of the initial aims of this thesis was to interrogate the veracity of general assumptions about apprenticeship in medieval England, using information from surviving apprenticeship indentures. There is a fairly widespread belief that apprentices constituted a cheap source of labour, but this chapter has shown this to be a misconception. Masters were generally required to provide their apprentices with food, clothing, and bedding for the duration of the term of apprenticeship, and the cost of this maintenance over the course of a seven-year term was quite considerable. Although the values of goods used were drawn from sources which were never intended to record the cost of living, the resulting estimates appear realistic when compared to contemporary pension enrolments and accounts of wardship. Furthermore, one extant apprenticeship indenture placed a monetary value on the cost of maintaining the apprentice; this value sits neatly between the low and high estimates provided in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 above, thus corroborating the estimates as high and low

²⁴³ L.F. Salzman, 'Property of Richard, Earl of Arundel 1397', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 91 (1953), 33ff., cited in Spufford, *Money and its Use*, p. 346.

²⁴⁴ Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, p. 243.

²⁴⁵ Kent, 'An Issue of Farthings', p. 118. In London, the farthing was particularly important because it was, from 1380, the charge imposed on every laden horse passing through the city gates, with the proceeds to be devoted to road repairs.

²⁴⁶ Bolton, *Money in the Medieval English Economy*, p. 266.

bounds.²⁴⁷ The methods used to calculate the estimates and reach these conclusions could be refined, but this chapter provides a first step in reassessing the monetary cost of apprenticeship. It is certainly not possible to view apprentices as a cheap source of labour.

As Mokyr noted, apprenticeship was an asymmetric relationship, but it became more symmetrical as the apprentice's value grew over time.²⁴⁸ Apprenticeship originated in the thirteenth century (if not earlier) as a means of transmitting craft-specific skills, and this remains an underlying motivation unto the present day. Michael Polanyi argued that 'an art which cannot be specified in detail cannot be transmitted by prescription, since no prescription for it exists. It can be passed on only by example from master to apprentice'.²⁴⁹ In order to maintain the craft's reputation for producing high-quality goods, potential new craftsmen had to be rigorously trained through apprenticeship, with masters swallowing the cost of both training and maintaining the apprentice. However, as has been thoroughly demonstrated above, the cost of maintaining an apprentice was considerable, and knowledge transmission alone was insufficient reason for masters to shoulder this financial burden. Tacit skills could have been transmitted by another means, without the requirement to maintain an apprentice. One of the main reasons that apprentices received room and board was so they could be subsumed into the master's household, which largely coincided with the production unit.²⁵⁰ This was a means of socialisation, and controlling behaviour (see Chapter 4). The apprentice was bound by indenture to serve the master for a pre-determined fixed term, in exchange for training and maintenance. Once the apprentice was sufficiently trained and able to produce saleable goods, the master could profit from their labour.

Only a small proportion of apprentices ever attained mastery or citizenship. Some may have only wished to gain some technical skills before returning to the countryside, or entering an ecclesiastical franchise, where they could work outside guild control (see Chapter 7).²⁵¹ The low proportion of apprentices who entered the freedom resulted in many becoming journeymen, working for their colleagues in exchange for a daily wage. Unlike apprentices, journeymen were highly trained, and able to produce saleable goods without producing costly wastage. As demonstrated above, it was not necessarily cheaper to employ a journeyman than to maintain an apprentice, but, assuming the journeyman's output was of sufficient

²⁴⁷ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135 d.

²⁴⁸ Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 28.

²⁴⁹ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 49, cited in Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 23.

²⁵⁰ Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', p. 35.

²⁵¹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 134.

quality, it was considerably more cost-effective. Given the costs involved, we might question why apprenticeship continued to be so prevalent in medieval England. Hovland explained it quite succinctly: ‘apprentices were particularly attractive in periods of labour shortage and population decline, when craftsmen and -women were ‘destitute’ of servants, and in periods of rising wages and bullion shortages, when the costs and mobility of labour might be difficult to deal with’.²⁵²

The attraction of apprenticeship was threefold. First, the binding nature of the apprenticeship indenture secured the apprentice for a fixed, pre-determined period. Second, although masters were required to provide their apprentices with clothing, in a credit-based economy this did not necessarily require immediate financial outlay. Third, there were intangible benefits of apprenticeship in the form of prestige, social security, and networking. Taking an apprentice might be a public declaration of status – under guild control only masters could take apprentices. Apprenticeship functioned as a means of building networks of fictive kinship, which were particularly important in craft communities where guilds were formed of masters who had trained each other, or had been apprenticed to the same master. The strength of these relationships is discussed in Chapter 7. These social networks helped to maintain communities of mutual trust and respect, and apprenticeship formed an important link in these networks.

²⁵² Hovland, ‘Apprenticeship in Late Medieval London’, p. 47.

Chapter 7: Expectations of the end of the apprenticeship

As seen in previous chapters, apprenticeships often ended before the end of the term stipulated in the indenture. The apprentice might be exonerated due to poor treatment by the master, perhaps in the form of neglect, undue physical chastisement, or a failure to provide proper training. For example, in 1447 Thomas Duffield was exonerated from his apprenticeship because his master Thomas Boges, a pinner, had not instructed him and had ‘chastised him horribly’.¹ Masters might also turn out their apprentices due to misbehaviour. If this was due to a clash of characters, arrangements might be made to transfer the apprentice to a different master. If it was because of a transgression of a more serious nature, the apprentice might be turned away from the craft *in toto*. Walter Prata, for example, committed so many offences against his master that he was ‘not worthy to be a goldsmith’ and so ‘foreswore the City’ on pain of trial ‘according to City laws’ should he ever be found again in London. Although an extreme example, breakdowns in the working relationship were not uncommon.²

This chapter considers the ways an apprenticeship could end successfully, without conflict. In general, these successful endings resulted in far less documentary evidence, and sometimes what little evidence there was has not survived – the London registers of apprentices and entries to the freedom, for example, have been burnt.³ Nonetheless, apprenticeship indentures and testamentary evidence both offer an indication of how masters and apprentices hoped the apprenticeship would end. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first section considers how the apprenticeship could end as a result of the death of the master. The idea that the death of the master could be considered a ‘success’ for the apprentice requires some explanation. Some masters made provision for their apprentices, either in the apprenticeship indenture itself or in their will, in case they died before the end of the term. These provisions might allow the apprentice to complete their term and enter the freedom of the city, if they desired, or they might release the apprentice from the remainder

¹ *CPMR, 1437–57*, p. 95, cited in *The Pinners’ and Wiresellers’ Book 1462–1511*, ed. by Barbara Megson, London Record Society vol. 44 (London: London Record Society, 2009), p. xvi.

² *Wardens’ Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths’ Mystery of London 1334–1446*, ed. by Lisa Jefferson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 283–287. See also *ibid.*, pp. 427–431 and 445 for further examples.

³ Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 195–196. It is clear that ‘a red book of redemptions and freedoms and apprentices’ existed in the late fourteenth century, as it was mentioned in other records, for example the will of John Sauvage, enrolled at the Court of Hustings in 1411 – *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part II, A.D. 1358–A.D. 1688*, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1890), p. 390.

of their apprenticeship. The second section focuses on the successful completion of apprenticeships, and discusses the offer of a ‘bonus’ to encourage apprentices to complete the term. These incentives were generally offered in periods where apprentices were harder to come by, and might be in the form of a financial incentive or the promise of goods at completion of the apprenticeship. The use of additional years of service, to retain the apprentice’s labour after the completion of their term, are also considered. The final section considers the use of apprenticeship as a route to freedom of the city, and discusses why apprentices might have chosen not to become citizens.

1. Death of the master

While masters did not necessarily expect to die during the term of apprenticeship, it was an entirely conceivable possibility. However this did not necessarily result in the end of the apprenticeship.⁴ In an ideal situation, a smooth transition could be achieved if the master’s widow took over the running of the business and continued training the apprentices (see below). However, the situation might be more complicated if the master was unmarried, or knew that his wife was unwilling or unable to continue his business. Therefore, a clause concerning his death might be included in the indenture itself. As we know, indentures were usually drawn up at the very beginning of the apprenticeship, when the apprentice was an unknown quantity. The master-apprentice relationship developed over the course of the apprenticeship, and might change the way the apprentice was treated if the master died.

1.1 Evidence from indentures

Five of the indentures used in this research included a clause outlining what would happen to the apprentice in the event of the master’s death. All five indentures pre-date the Black Death, and none included the name of the master’s wife, suggesting that he was either unmarried or that his wife had no involvement in his business. We do not find this clause in any indentures from London; although this might be due to the small number of surviving indentures, it suggests that the practice of turning apprentices over to other masters was already an established custom, or covered by guild regulations, by the fourteenth century.

⁴ An early ordinance of the London Fishmongers from the time of Edward I stated that the end of the term of apprenticeship would be recorded ‘if the death of one or the other does not dissolve [it]’ prematurely, suggesting that the death of the master was sufficient to terminate the apprenticeship, but this does not seem to have been the case in practice – Ordinance of the Fishmongers [Edw. I], *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London compiled A.D. 1419*, by John Carpenter, Common Clerk [and] Richard Whittington, Mayor, trans. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1861), p. 330.

That being said, it does not seem to have been mentioned in any extant ordinances. The gradual disappearance of this provision suggests that the custom became more widespread over the course of the fifteenth century, perhaps as a result of the Black Death.

The earliest surviving indenture containing this clause dates from 1291. It stated that if the master, John le Spicer of Norwich, died within the term, his apprentice would be assigned to someone suitable (*'ipsum leguerit'*) of the same craft (*'officii'*), to serve him to the end of his term as he would have served John were he still alive.⁵ As with other clauses in indentures, the language and content became more specific over time, and by 1309 it was clear that, should the master die, the new master would be expected to provide the same level of maintenance to the apprentice as set out in the terms of the indenture. If Richard atte Grene, a Coventry mercer, died during the term of apprenticeship, 'which God forbend', he would assign or bequeath the remainder of Robert Sharp's apprenticeship 'to whomsoever he wish, who shall provide the said Robert with food, clothing, footwear, and learning, as Richard should owe him if he lived'.⁶ When Henry de Hornynge was bound to Adam de Kendale, saddler, in 1341, it was agreed that the remainder of Henry's term be spent with a man of good character of the same craft (*'viro fidedigno officii predicti'*), to serve him in the same way he would have served Adam had he lived (*'debuisset si vixisset'*).⁷

Where we have multiple indentures for the same master, we can see this development more clearly. Robert Raulot, a Coventry purse-maker, took on two (female) apprentices in 1336 and 1345 respectively. In both indentures Raulot made provision for the apprentice in the event of his death, but the wording was slightly different in each indenture, perhaps reflecting a gradual change in Raulot's attitude or personal life. In Agnes Chaloner's indenture, dated 1336, it was stated that 'if...Robert should happen to die within the said term', it was 'permitted to him to assign that which remains of the service...to whomsoever he wishes in the town of Coventry'. The apprentice would be obliged to serve the new master 'just as she would have had to serve the said Robert if he had lived'.⁸ The wording of this indenture begs the question of what would happen to the apprentice if Robert Raulot died

⁵ *'Et si dictus Johannes decesserit infra dictum tempus dictus Hubertus seruiet assignato idoneo dicti Johannis cuicunque ipsum leguerit qui sit eiusdem officii usque in finem dicti termini plenarie in omnibus sicuti dicto Johanni fecerit si superstes fuisset'* – CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 245–247, p. 246.

⁶ *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317–1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), pp. 126–128, p. 127.

⁷ Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/1.

⁸ TNA, E 40/4450; trans. by Richard Goddard in 'Female Apprenticeship in the West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages', *Midland History*, 27 (2002), pp. 165–181, p. 180.

suddenly, before he was able to make his wishes known. At least three witnesses were named on the indenture ('Roger the Latoner, John de Busheley, Elias de Checkeleye, and others'), so we might assume that one of these men, or an executor named in Raulot's will (assuming he had made one), would be obliged to select a new master for the apprentice. Perhaps Robert Raulot realised that this was not the best approach, as in the 1345 indenture it was specified that 'the remains of service of the said Agnes shall be assigned to another man of good character ('*viro fidedigno*') in the aforesaid craft', with the same obligation for Agnes to serve the new master as she would the old.⁹

The 1336 indenture explicitly states that the apprentice would stay within Coventry, and this condition might also have applied to the 1345 indenture which specified that the man be 'of good character'. A man's '*fidedigno*' status could only be judged through personal knowledge, hence the requirement in guild ordinances for 'good folks of the said trade' to stand as surety for strangers and aliens.¹⁰ In most crafts, a man could only take apprentices if he was free of the city and had been judged by the masters of the craft as skilled and able.¹¹ Therefore the character and ability of the man would have to be known to the citizens of Coventry, in all likelihood requiring the apprentice to remain in the town. It is unlikely that the pursers had their own craft guild in early fourteenth-century Coventry; Mary Hulton suggested that 'some sort' of organisation of weavers existed in Coventry from the end of the fourteenth century, but weaving was 'medieval England's most crucial industry' and probably of far more importance to the local economy.¹² A 1267 charter granted Coventry a guild merchant, so it is likely that members of this organisation would have been responsible for judging whether a master purser was suitable to take on the apprentices of one of his deceased brethren.¹³ The guild was keen to preserve its reputation; a charter from 1340 ordained that 'no man nor woman who has been openly reputed or charged as guilty of any shameful crime ('*ascun crime abominable*'), shall be taken into the gild. And if any

⁹ TNA, E 40/8267; trans. by Goddard in 'Female Apprenticeship', p. 181.

¹⁰ See, for example, the 1345 Articles of the Spurriers and 1347 Articles of the Heaumers in *Memorials*, pp. 228 and 238.

¹¹ See, for example, articles 1, 7 and 10 of the 1356 Pinners' Ordinances, *Pinners' and Wiresellers' Book*, pp. 1–2; Articles of the Hatters in *Memorials*, p. 239 and Ordinances of the Shearmen, *ibid.*, p. 247.

¹² Mary M.H. Hulton, '*Company and Fellowship: The Medieval Weavers of Coventry*' (Oxford: David Stanford for the Dugdale Society, 1987), pp. 2, 10 and 1.

¹³ R.C.H. Davies, *The Early History of Coventry* (Oxford: Vivian Ridler for the Dugdale Society, 1976), p. 7.

[member]...falls into any such crime, he shall be put out from the gild'.¹⁴ One hopes, therefore, that they would take great care in choosing a new master for the apprentice.

Another important consideration, included in the 1345 indenture, is the continuation of the master's obligation to provide for the apprentice; the new master 'shall do and find for that Agnes just as the said Robert is bound to do by virtue of these presents'. This ensured that the apprentice-master relationship continued uninterrupted. The apprentice was bound to serve her new master 'as she would have had to serve the said Robert if he had lived', maintaining the secrets of the craft and serving him faithfully and obediently. The new master had to continue to provide the apprentice with food, clothing, and necessaries 'as the status of the same Agnes requires for the honour of the said craft'.¹⁵ The terms of the indenture remained enforceable despite the change of master, although it appears that in this period the transfer of their term would not be contingent upon the consent of the apprentice (see below).

1.2 Bequests of apprentices in wills

While the indenture merely stated that the apprentice was to be assigned to another man of good character, if the master had made a will this might specify exactly who that master was to be. If the master's will was made several years into the term of apprenticeship, the choice of new master would be an informed decision based on knowledge of both parties. Unfortunately no wills seem to have survived for any of the masters named in the indentures mentioned above, so while it is impossible to say whether the masters sought to clarify their wishes as bequests, there are obvious reasons why they may have chosen to do so.¹⁶ Bequeathing an apprentice to a specific master was a means of taking the decision out of the hands of other interested parties, perhaps circumventing local customs or alliances. Shortly before his death in 1386, the London skinner Blase de Bury made a will in which he left his apprentice John Musshebroun to John Berkyng, another skinner, 'to bring up in the skinner's craft'. A second apprentice, Robert Broun, was left to the widow Matilda Penne, a successful

¹⁴ 'Coventry: (a) The Gild Merchant', *English Guilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Guilds : Together With the Olde Usages of the Cite of Wynchestre; the Ordinances of Worcester; the Office of the Mayor of Bristol; And, the Customary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regis. From Original MSS. of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, Joshua Toulmin Smith, Lujo Brentano and Early English Text Society (London: Trübner, 1870), p. 229.

¹⁵ TNA, E 40/8267; trans. by Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship', p.181.

¹⁶ It has only been possible to find one will made by a master (or apprentice) named in one of the indentures used for this thesis. Elena Langwith, a London silkwoman, took on Elizabeth Eland as an apprentice in 1454 (TNA, E 210/1176). Elena's will was enrolled at the Court of Husting in 1484, but she does not appear to have had any apprentices by the time of her death – 'Langwith', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 585–586.

skinner, ‘she to teach the said Robert her craft’.¹⁷ Blase de Bury’s wife, although alive, clearly had little ability or interest in training his apprentices, and masters would need to take this into consideration when deciding to whom they would leave their apprentices (see below). When he made his will in June 1395, John atte Hille, citizen and pinner of London, left ‘all the remaining terms of all my apprentices’ to his kinsman (and executor) John Ayleston, along with ‘two of my best pieces of silver’ and the remainder of the lease of his tenement in Fleet Street.¹⁸ In this case, the will indicated that atte Hille’s wife had predeceased him.

Elspeth Veale noted that apprentices were ‘valuable enough’ to be bequeathed in wills, and this may well have been true of a well-trained apprentice in the final years of their term.¹⁹ John atte Hill’s bequest of apprentices, silverware, and a tenement to his kinsman was therefore a generous one, and might have aided John Ayleston to further his own business venture. In many other cases, however, the bequest of an apprentice may have placed undesired financial pressure on the new master. As discussed in Chapter 6, maintaining an apprentice could be expensive. Agnes le Felde’s indenture (see above) specified that any new master ‘shall do and find for that Agnes just as the said Robert is bound to do by virtue of these presents’.²⁰ A new master, therefore, could not alter the obligations of provision, for example by asking the apprentice to provide their own clothing. While a master might benefit from the well-trained labour of an additional apprentice, they would not necessarily receive any recompense. When a fee payable to the master was mentioned in an indenture, it was invariably due for payment within the first year or two of the term.²¹ Therefore a master who received an apprentice in the final years of their term would be expected to feed, clothe, and perhaps even reward them with money or goods, without receiving any financial remuneration. This might explain John atte Hill’s bequest of silverware along with his apprentices.

It would not be surprising, then, if many apprenticeships ended with the death of the master. A master who had been paid to take the apprentice on and then invested time, effort,

¹⁷ ‘Bury’, *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 257; Elspeth Veale, ‘Matilda Penne, Skinner (d. 1392/3)’, in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 47–54, p. 48.

¹⁸ 69, *Pinner’s and Wiresellers’ Book*, p. 52.

¹⁹ Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 98.

²⁰ TNA, E 40/8267; trans. by Goddard, ‘Female Apprenticeship’, p.181.

²¹ See, for example, TNA E 40/4450, trans. by Goddard, ‘Female Apprenticeship’, p.180. Agnes Chaloner’s father is to pay ‘twenty shillings in equal portions at the feasts of Pentecost [the date the apprenticeship commenced]..., the Nativity of St John the Baptist, St Michael the Archangel and St Andrew the Apostle, without delay’.

and money into their training would be keen to retain an apprentice for the duration of the term. Some masters commissioned individuals to discover the whereabouts of rebellious apprentices, or paying sizeable sums to have them found – one London master spent 38s towards the search for his apprentice, who had run away to Cambridge.²² A new master, meanwhile, would have little incentive to demand the return of their inherited apprentice, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that a notable proportion of those apprentices who never completed their terms actually saw the death of their master as an opportunity to leave their apprenticeship and begin earning a living. We should also consider that perhaps the apprentice did not consent to their new master; if an apprentice was unwilling to serve them, the remainder of the apprenticeship might be filled with unnecessary conflict. Perhaps it was better, in that situation, for the new master to simply let the apprentice leave.

1.3 Apprentices' right to consent

Legal precedent stated that an apprentice had to consent to a change of master, although that was not the case throughout the Middle Ages. Ricart's *Kalendar* recorded that the custom of London in the early fourteenth century was that, if a master wished to sell or devise his apprentice, he could do so 'the same as if he was his chattel'.²³ However, this custom fell out of favour in the later fourteenth century, probably as a response to demographic and attitudinal changes in the aftermath of the Black Death.²⁴ In 1375, in response to a bill of complaint, a master claimed that the apprentice was his chattel and could be disposed of by gift or sale. The court, however, decided that the apprentice was not bound to serve any person other than his original master against his will.²⁵ This precedent is reflected in other records of legal proceedings. When John Shepeye, barber, sold all the rights to his apprentice and the remainder of the apprentice's term to Thomas Canoun in 1386, it was noted that the apprentice consented and appended his seal to the document of sale.²⁶ In this instance the masters felt it necessary to prove, by means of a sealed instrument, that the apprentice had consented, in case the sale became a matter of dispute at a later date.

²² Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 164.

²³ 'Et fair assavoire qe chescun eiant tiel apprentice, poet vender et deviser son dit apprentice a qi qil voudra de mesme lart aux comme son chatel' – *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, by Robert Ricart, Town Clerk of Bristol 18 Edward IV, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, for the Camden Society, 1872), p. 103.

²⁴ *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 125, n. 1.

²⁵ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 202.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125. Conversely, the will of Thomas White, armourer, enrolled at the Court of Husting in 1430, stipulated that his executors should sell the term of his apprentice William Stacy and pay the proceeds to his

In many cases the apprentice might continue with the master's widow, either because it was requested in the master's will or because it was the custom of the town.²⁷ From a legal perspective, this would be considered an unbroken continuation of the apprenticeship, as under the doctrine of unity of person, husband and wife were two souls in one flesh.²⁸ Until she remarried, the widow was the living relic of her dead husband – to refer to a widow as 'relict' of her husband was to literally describe her as 'that which is left'.²⁹ However, unity of person did not apply universally (wives were not executed for their husband's crimes, for example), and it is unclear whether unity of person negated the need for the apprentice to consent if they continued to serve the master's widow.³⁰ Although we do not know the precise terms of the indenture, this may explain why, in 1371, apprentice Roger Gosse was committed to Newgate because he refused to serve or be punished by Emma, widow of William Hatfeld, chandler, 'as was fitting and proper': Gosse might have been unwilling to remain with his master's widow, but both she and the justices did not feel that his consent was required.³¹

In some cases, the master's will offered the apprentice an inducement to stay and serve the widow, suggesting that unity of person was not considered to extend to this situation, and that consent was still required. Heather Swanson found two York weavers, who, in 1426 and 1492 respectively, bequeathed their looms on condition that the apprentice remained with the widow and continued their training.³² The apprentice's term might be shortened if they agreed to continue to serve the master's widow.³³ What is clear in these examples is that the husband deemed his wife competent and capable of high-quality work. In London, the law permitted widows to carry on their husbands' businesses, and if the

widow Margaret. Whether the apprentice was required to agree to the sale was not noted, and this could have led to litigation if challenged – 'White', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 454.

²⁷ Ronald F. Homer, 'The Medieval Pewterers of London, c. 1190–1457', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 36 (1985), pp. 137–163, p. 143.

²⁸ J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 483.

²⁹ 'relict, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition
<<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161914?rskey=J91wKi&result=1#eid>> [accessed 9 May 2021].

³⁰ Baker, *English Legal History*, p. 484.

³¹ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 128. This is merely supposition, as we do not know whether the indenture bound Roger Gosse to serve Emma Hatfeld, either as William Hatfeld's wife or widow.

³² Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 35.

³³ Caroline M. Barron, 'The Child in Medieval London: The Legal Evidence', in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 401–417, p. 411; *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate, London: A.D. 1387–1439; with a Priest's of 1454*, copied and edited from the original registers in Somerset House by Frederick J. Furnivall, reprint (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1964), p. 22.

widow did not wish to maintain the household then she was expected to arrange to transfer any apprentices to another master.³⁴ In Richard Hughis' will, made in 1468, his apprentices John Foster and John Leche were bequeathed sums of money on condition that they continued 'to serve Margaret, my wife, or her assigns, for the whole of the rest of his apprenticeship after my death'. Hughis' third apprentice, John Davell, was released from the two final years of his term, on the same condition.³⁵ The implication was that Margaret would either continue to teach the apprentices herself for the remainder of their terms, or reassign them to another master craftsman. Some indentures, particularly those from towns in the south-west of England, included the master's wife's name in the indenture, even where the apprentice was to learn the husband's craft.³⁶ The wife might die during the duration of the term, and if the master remarried and subsequently died, the apprentice would be obliged to continue his training with a widow who was not named on the initial indenture. Therefore, the inducement might be provided to encourage the apprentice to remain with someone who he was not, under the terms of the apprenticeship indenture, obliged to serve. Although the lack of surviving wills to accompany the extant indentures means this can only be speculation, it would provide a reasonable explanation for the use of inducements in situations where the apprentice was required to consent to the change of master.

There are multiple examples of apprentices being exonerated because the widow did not keep up their late husband's trade, but many clearly did continue.³⁷ Some, such as

³⁴ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 83; Caroline M. Barron, 'The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London', in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 361–383, p. 371.

³⁵ 89, *Pinnars and Wiresellers' Book*, pp. 64–65. There is clearly an intriguing backstory here, as John Davell was also obliged to pay 'the said Margaret for all the care and expenses that I Richard paid and incurred when John left my service and had to be re-apprenticed'.

³⁶ Namely Winchester (HRO, W/D1/154), Northampton (BL, Add. Ch. 75626), Lincoln (Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3), Waterford (SALS, D\B\bw/368) and Oxford (Oxfordshire Record Office, P6/55D/4). Although this may be merely an accident of survival, the practice of including the wife's name on the indenture appears to have been particularly prevalent in the West Country. Indentures survive from Cornwall, (TNA, E 40/8643 and E 40/10022), Devon (Devon Heritage Centre 3248A-0/11/87) and Bridport in Dorset (TNA, C 146/1260, C 146/63, C 146/5045, C 146/3879, and C 146/1132) as well as the Somerset town of Bridgwater (SALS, D\B\bw/1009, D\B\bw/1402, D\B\bw/1384, D\B\bw/1008, D\B\bw/945). However, as the surviving indentures outline terms agreed by just a handful of different masters, this might be more indicative of a personal preference than a wider trend.

³⁷ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 160 and 162; Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Of Good and Ill Repute': *Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 172; Caroline M. Barron, 'Johanna Hill (d. 1441) and Johanna Sturdy (d. c. 1460), Bell-Founders', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 99–111, passim.; Barron, 'The 'Golden Age' of Women', p. 371; Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9/1/1.

Matilda Penne (mentioned above), even took on apprentices in their own right as widows.³⁸ John Parker was taken on by Joan Hendele, a widow, in 1397 to learn her husband's craft of tailoring.³⁹ The will of London grocer John Curteys, dated 1458, directed that if his apprentice continued to serve his widow, she was to pay for his entry to the freedom and give him wares from the shop worth 10 marks when the time came for him 'to sett up an hows'.⁴⁰ Curteys seemed certain that his widow would continue his business, and present his apprentice to the freedom. Similarly, in 1310 Henry de Feltham was admitted to the freedom of London after Alice, widow of his master John de Byfold 'testified that the said Henry had faithfully served the said John when alive and herself after his death for seven years'.⁴¹ In all these examples, it is clear that the widow was considered sufficiently competent to continue training the apprentice, but this was not always the case. Isabel Sampson, a cordwainer's wife who may have been the widow of a tailor, taught an apprentice the art of tailoring but was sued by the apprentice's mother who questioned the standard of training her son had received.⁴² Unfortunately we do not know how this dispute ended, or how and by whom Isabel Sampson's ability was judged.

1.4 Bequests to masters' widows

In addition to the customary right of widows to continue their husbands' businesses, husbands often bequeathed apprentices to their wives in their wills. We can consider this a means of guaranteeing an already established custom – Derek Keene noted that tanners' wills sometimes contained bequests to their wives which 'served as an unambiguous means, backed up by written record, of providing the widow with her customary entitlement'.⁴³ In 1347, for example, the tanner Thomas Swift left his wife Avice his whole establishment opposite the Fleet Prison, along with the remaining term of his apprentice Ellis.⁴⁴ This practice can also be observed in the wills of other London craftsmen. Veale commented on

³⁸ Veale, 'Matilda Penne', p. 49.

³⁹ Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9/1/1.

⁴⁰ Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 104, n. 6.

⁴¹ *Letter-Book D*, p. 114.

⁴² Matthew Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale, 'The Maid of Week' (d. 151.2)', in *Medieval London Widows, 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 185–207, p. 196 and n. 54.

⁴³ Derek Keene, 'Tanners' Widows, 1300–1350', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 1–27, pp. 14–15.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

the skimmers' use of these bequests.⁴⁵ When Richard de Kislingbury, draper, died in 1361, he left his wife Alice 'a moiety of all his movable goods by way of dower, and the residue of the term of service of his [unnamed] apprentices'.⁴⁶ This guaranteed Alice's right to continue to train the apprentices as a widow, and prevented them from being assigned to a new master. Similarly, the will of apothecary John de Bovyndon, also dated 1361, stipulated that his apprentices 'William Richard de Pridie, William Clervaus, and Thomas de Jarkevill to continue to serve his...wife' Katherine.⁴⁷ The stockfishmonger Richard Bacoun (whose will was enrolled in 1363) also bequeathed the remaining terms 'of his several apprentices' to his wife.⁴⁸

Some wills reflected another aspect of widowhood. As an extension of unity of person (outlined above), the widow of a master could become a member of the guild until she married again; if she married a man from another craft she was excluded from the guild during his lifetime. However, if Isabel Sampson, the cordwainer's wife (mentioned above), was indeed the widow of a tailor, this indicates that not all women gave up their first husbands' business when they remarried.⁴⁹ There were also exceptions to this rule among the mercantile guilds, such as the London companies of grocers and tailors, where craft-specific skills were perhaps less explicitly required. By the end of the fifteenth century, if a widow remarried outside the company, pressure was put on her new husband to join.⁵⁰ Barbara Megson suggested that the payment of membership fees by some pinner's and wireseller's widows indicated that they intended to run their husbands' workshops on their own account, but as no mention was made of such payments in the records or ordinances of other crafts it seems more probable that membership was conferred to widows without payment under the

⁴⁵ Veale, 'Matilda Penne', p. 48.

⁴⁶ 'Kislingbury', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 39. He was possibly the same Richard de Kislingbury who had served as Mayor of London in 1350. The fact that Alice received half of her husband's moveable goods suggests that Richard and Alice were childless, as custom of London entitled widows with children to one-third of the husband's moveable property on his death, with another third to be divided among the children and the final third to be 'spent for the good of his soul' – Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 108–109.

⁴⁷ 'Bovyndon or Bovyndon', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁸ 'Bacoun', *ibid.*, pp. 79–80. See also 'Caustone', p. 94; 'Lygth', p. 134, 'Foot alias Maryns', p. 248, and 'Offham', p. 299.

⁴⁹ Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale', p. 196 and n. 54.

⁵⁰ George Clune, *The Medieval Guild System* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan Ltd., 1943), pp. 76–77; Pamela Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: The Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London 1000–1485* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 379. Thomasine Percyvale's third husband also appears to have been admitted to the livery of the tailors by means of marriage to her, and this reflected a 'more relaxed policy of admission' for men who married the widows of masters from 1490 – Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale', pp. 194 and 196.

doctrine of unity of person.⁵¹ Some crafts made it clear that women were able to continue participating in the craft as widows. For example, if a weaver had two looms, his widow could lawfully retain one loom until she remarried a man outside the craft; if she took a husband ‘who is not of the gild aforesaid, she ought to get rid of her loom, and get rid of it to such a man as is of the gild aforesaid’.⁵² In one will made by a London tanner in 1336, the widow received her husband’s ‘place and table’ in the Tanners’ Seld on condition that she ‘marry a freeman of the testator’s handicraft, or as long as she remain a widow’; otherwise, the place and table were to be given to the deceased master’s apprentice.⁵³

Furthermore, custom of London allowed widows to live in the family home (and thus run the business) until they remarried, not just for the forty days permitted under feudal custom.⁵⁴ By 1465, the Court of Aldermen considered it to be ‘ancient custom’ of London that every woman married to, and residing with, a freeman at the time of his death would be made free of the city providing she lived sole and remained a widow.⁵⁵ This explains the provision in stockfishmonger John Southam’s will, written in 1382 and enrolled in 1395; his apprentice William Prodhome was to serve his wife Margaret ‘so long as she remain unmarried, but to be absolutely free immediately upon her marrying again during his term’.⁵⁶ If Margaret remarried, she would no longer be a freewoman, and might no longer have claim to her husband’s property. This would be particularly true if Margaret remarried outside the stockfishmongers’ company, and could have a detrimental effect on William Prodhome’s future prospects if he was still an apprentice at the time. Some masters sought to mitigate against these potential problems in their wills. At his death in 1446, William Chapman, a tailor, left his wife Alice 100s and the terms of his apprentices as long as she continued to

⁵¹ *Pinner’s and Wiresellers’ Book*, p. xx; Frances Consitt, *The London Weavers’ Company: Volume I – From the Twelfth Century to the close of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 14.

⁵² Consitt, *The London Weavers’ Company*, p. 14. Although this regulation does not refer to a specific type of loom, the stipulation that the wife could retain one loom may relate to the fact that it took two people to keep a broadloom working. There was a general insistence in the weavers’ craft that a broadloom was manned by a master and a trained journeyman. Working ‘at full stretch’ with one of these looms, a master could expect to earn about sixpence a day, and a journeyman threepence, which was more than the average daily wage in the building trade – Hulton, ‘*Company and Fellowship*’, p. 16. This would therefore allow a widow who worked hard to live comfortably during her widowhood, providing she had a skilled assistant to assist her in working the broadloom. The condition that she must get rid of it if she remarried a non-weaver was an attempt to keep profits (and valuable equipment) inside the guild.

⁵³ ‘Ussher’, *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part I, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1358*, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1889), p. 420. Another branch of the Ussher tanning family seem to have been keen to keep their table within the family – see ‘Ussher’ and ‘Usscher’, *ibid.*, pp. 439 and 446. Some tanners also made the same stipulation but with the table passing to the son, rather than the apprentice – ‘Chipstede’, *ibid.*, p. 422.

⁵⁴ Barron, ‘The ‘Golden Age’ of Women’, pp. 368 and 367.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁵⁶ ‘Southam’, *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 315.

follow the craft; if she did not (perhaps due to remarriage), the apprentices were to be turned over to John Gyffard, a tailor who had established his own workshop after completing his apprenticeship with Chapman.⁵⁷ Chapman knew Gyffard's ability as a tailor, and trusted him to train his apprentices well for the remainder of their terms if his wife was unable to.

1.5 Bequests of tangible items

Although it could be a tumultuous time, apprentices might derive some material benefit from the death of their master. All wills devising lands or tenements within the city of London and its liberties were supposed to be enrolled at the Court of Husting 'within a convenient time' or be considered invalid. However, there was no penalty for non-enrolment and so the number of wills enrolled gradually decreased up to 1688, with only a handful (if any) enrolled in some years even in the fifteenth century.⁵⁸ Nearly 4,000 wills enrolled at the London Court of Husting between 1270 and 1500 were calendared by Reginald Sharpe in two volumes covering the period 1258 to 1688. The earliest will containing a bequest to an apprentice was enrolled in 1278.⁵⁹ Of those wills enrolled before 1500, 138 contained a bequest or bequests to current or former apprentices, all of them male. As Table 7.1 indicates, this amounted to just 3.7 percent of the total wills enrolled during the period 1270–1500, but it should be noted that many of the wills were made by people who would never have had apprentices, such as members of the clergy and the nobility.

More wills were enrolled between October 1348 and the end of 1349 than in any other period; this is unsurprising as, according to Fabyan the Chronicler, the Black Death reached London towards the end of 1348.⁶⁰ However, as Table 7.1 indicates, the increased mortality in this period did not directly correlate with an increased number of bequests to apprentices. The number of wills enrolled also increased slightly in 1361 and 1362 in response to a return of the pestilence, but again the number of bequests to apprentices was not noticeably affected.⁶¹ While 130 wills were enrolled in the regnal year 35 Edward III [25 January 1361–24 January 1362], only 6 contained bequests to apprentices.⁶² The number of wills enrolled

⁵⁷ Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale', p. 192 n. 33.

⁵⁸ *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, pp. cxviii and cxxi.

⁵⁹ William de Manhale left Adam his apprentice 'a shop in the parish of Kolchirch', and to Simon his apprentice 'a certain shop'. De Manhale's wife was to have 'control over all his timber...for the purpose of erecting a house [on specified property] to her use for life', with the remainder going to his son. 'Manhale', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 36.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. cxxiii, n. 98.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. cxxiii.

⁶² *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 13–64.

declined from the 1370s, albeit with a slight resurgence in the 1430s. Therefore, although there was a noticeable decrease in the number of apprentices receiving bequests, this was likely to be due to a reduction in the number of craftsmens' wills enrolled, rather than a decline in masters' benevolence.

Table 7.1 – Number of wills enrolled in the London Court of Hustings by decade, 1270–1499.⁶³

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Total wills</i>	<i>Wills with bequests to apprentices</i>	<i>Percentage of total wills</i>
<i>1270s</i>	140	1	0.7
<i>1280s</i>	223	0	0.0
<i>1290s</i>	262	5	1.9
<i>1300s</i>	268	3	1.1
<i>1310s</i>	335	4	1.2
<i>1320s</i>	276	4	1.4
<i>1330s</i>	270	3	1.1
<i>1340-1348</i>	189	11	5.8
<i>1348-1349</i>	360	17	4.7
<i>1350s</i>	190	22	11.6
<i>1360s</i>	295	15	5.1
<i>1370s</i>	149	17	11.4
<i>1380s</i>	127	8	6.3
<i>1390s</i>	117	11	9.4
<i>1400s</i>	106	1	0.9
<i>1410s</i>	77	5	6.5
<i>1420s</i>	66	0	0.0
<i>1430s</i>	83	2	2.4
<i>1440s</i>	53	4	7.5
<i>1450s</i>	40	1	2.5
<i>1460s</i>	42	1	2.4
<i>1470s</i>	30	1	3.3
<i>1480s</i>	28	1	3.6
<i>1490s</i>	22	1	4.5
<i>Total</i>	3748	138	3.7

Table 7.2 shows the type of bequests apprentices were most likely to receive, although the prevalence of each type of bequest varied throughout the period up to 1500. These figures are drawn solely from London wills, but as London generally inspired customs and practices elsewhere it is likely that they are also indicative of trends outside London.

⁶³ Data drawn from Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills: Parts I and II*. Only wills containing bequests to the current or former apprentices of the deceased have been counted as containing bequests to apprentices. No wills were enrolled in 1500.

Property and chattels were the only bequests made to apprentices in the seven wills enrolled before 1300. Although the first pecuniary bequest to an apprentice was not enrolled until 1336, bequests of money were the most common type of bequest throughout the period 1270–1500. The amount was variable and probably depended on how long the apprentice had been with the master; the London pewterer John Claydish, for example, left one apprentice 13s 4d and another, more junior, apprentice 10s.⁶⁴

Table 7.2 – Bequests made to apprentices and former apprentices in wills enrolled at the London Court of Husting, 1270–1499.⁶⁵

<i>Bequest</i>	<i>Number of apprentices</i>	<i>Percentage of 187 bequests</i>
<i>Money</i>	79	42.2
<i>Release (full or partial)</i>	28	15.0
<i>Property (inc. shops)</i>	26	13.9
<i>Goods</i>	19	10.2
<i>Craft-specific goods</i>	15	8.0
<i>Tenements</i>	11	5.9
<i>Return from trade</i>	4	2.1
<i>Terms of other apprentices</i>	4	2.1
<i>Remainder of estate</i>	1	0.5
Total	187	100

It was common to bequeath small amounts of money to friends, servants and acquaintances, so it is not surprising that this was the most prevalent bequest made to apprentices; 42.2 percent of apprentices mentioned in these wills received a sum of money, sometimes alongside goods, property or a release from their term.⁶⁶ Apprentices might also receive clothes, ‘leasehold interests in tenements’, or money and goods.⁶⁷ Caroline Barron observed that, particularly in London, a considerable portion of a man’s wealth was accounted for by his goods and chattels, and this explains why 18.2 percent of apprentices received goods.⁶⁸ When Roger Longe, vintner, died in January 1376, his apprentice John Tylney received £20, a silver tester for a bed, a coverlet, and another tester ‘of Norfolk’

⁶⁴ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 170.

⁶⁵ Data drawn from Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills: Parts I and II*. Unspecified bequests are assumed to be pecuniary. Different categories of bequest made to the same apprentice have been counted separately. Where the number of apprentices was unspecified, they have been counted as 1. Only current and former apprentices of the testator have been counted.

⁶⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 170. See, for example, ‘Mitford’, *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 235–236.

⁶⁷ ‘Wandalesworth’, *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 1; ‘Maford’, *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Barron, ‘The ‘Golden Age’ of Women’, p. 369.

decorated with dolphins.⁶⁹ John Offham's will, dated 1361, specified that his former apprentice William Ponk received 'a sword, a pair of plates and a pair of gloves of plate, his best basynet [bascinet], and a painted box'.⁷⁰ The real value of such bequests was that the items could be sold or used as security for loans – this was often the purpose of the goods promised to apprentices on completion of their term (see below). Some bequests were also meant to aid the apprentice in setting up on their own. Robert Faukys' will, enrolled in 1377, contained a bequest to his apprentice (also his nephew) of 'divers household goods' and some implements of his trade, as well as a release from his term.⁷¹ Similarly Walter, the apprentice of the cordwainer John de Stonelee, was left 'all [John's] chests, aumbries, forms, and all other utensils in his shop' in Stonelee's will (dated 1362).⁷²

Some apprentices did not receive immediate material benefit from the bequest, but could look forward to receiving a meaningful endowment of goods at a future date. In 1347, the tanner William King left his tenements to his wife for life, along with two leaden tanning troughs and the six remaining years of the term of his apprentice John, with the stipulation that John should receive one of the troughs on Agnes' death.⁷³ The bequest of such items was meant to support the apprentice in establishing themselves as a craftsman in their own right. Andrew Kilbourne's will, enrolled in January 1372, included a bequest to his apprentice William Avere of a 'Bylte [chopping block], a chipax [small axe] a Twyble [two-edged bill or mattock] an augour [auger], a squire [square], and a sawe' at the end of his term of apprenticeship. Kilbourne left his shop to his wife for life, implying that the apprenticeship continued under her supervision, after which Avere would receive the tools he required to work on his own account.⁷⁴

As Table 7.2 indicates, 13.9 percent of bequests concerned property. Some apprentices received 'dwelling houses' or other buildings. In 1377 John Horn was promised a dwelling-house in Fenchurch Street by his master Giles de Kelseye, 'after the decease of [de

⁶⁹ 'Longe', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 185–186.

⁷⁰ 'Offham', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 299. We might assume that being an apothecary was surprisingly dangerous in the fourteenth century, but these items were likely to be the result of the requirement that all citizens of London equip themselves for the defence of the realm – Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. xliii. Offham's will was made on 14 April 1361 but not enrolled until 1392, an astonishing delay when it is clear that he was dead by 24 June 1361. Letter-Book G records that on 24 June 1361 the guardianship of Peter, 'son of John Ofham [*sic*], late apothecary' was given to Thomas Frowyk. His other son, Thomas, is mentioned in the will but not assigned a guardian, so had probably also perished – 'Folio xci b.', *Letter-Book G*, p. 128.

⁷¹ 'Faukys', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 193.

⁷² 'Stonelee', *ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

⁷³ Keene, 'Tanners' Widows', p. 19. This implies that Agnes would continue to run the tannery as a widow, perhaps alongside John.

⁷⁴ 'Kilbourne', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 143–144.

Kelseye's] wife'.⁷⁵ In around half of these bequests, the apprentice received a shop or workshop which would enable them to establish their own premises. In one such bequest, enrolled in 1351, William Forester left his apprentice John his table in the Tanners' Seld.⁷⁶ The Seld in Cheapside was the principal trading outlet for London tanners, and rents in that area were extraordinarily high. Each table was held by an individual tanner, and plots were often passed on as bequests to other tanners in order to keep them within the possession of practitioners of the craft.⁷⁷ Prime real estate was a generous bequest. In a similarly generous will, dated 1382, the fishmonger John Longeney left his apprentice John Hille his wharf ('le Saltewharf' at Queenhythe) and his interest in a small merchant ship, as well as a sum of money.⁷⁸ In a further 5.9 percent of bequests the apprentices received tenements, which could be used to provide them with an income from rents; this would also help to establish them as craftsmen of substance.

John Toker, a London vintner, made a particularly generous will, enrolled at his death in 1428. Toker bequeathed to his apprentice Henry Thommissone:

£6 13s 4d, and also I forgive and release to the said Henry all his terms to me coming of his apprenticeship. Also I will that the same Henry have all the terms and possession that is coming to me of my mansion that is called the Mermaid in Bread Street, bearing the charges and the rents thereof during the said terms. Also I will that the same Henry have in possession to his profit and easement during a whole year next after my *obit* day, all the increase that is coming of my wine above the stock, and moreover all my pieces and cups of silver, pewter pots, napery, and all the utensils belonging to my kitchen, and for that foresaid year enduring. Also I will that this reward be truly done and truly fulfilled to the same Henry upon this, that he govern him goodly and honestly as he owes for to do, after the rule and discretion of my executors. Also I will that the same Henry have all the terms coming to me of Henry Clopton, my other apprentice.

⁷⁵ 'Kelseye', *ibid.*, p. 200.

⁷⁶ 'Forester', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 656.

⁷⁷ Keene, 'Tanners' Widows', pp. 11–12.

⁷⁸ 'Longeney', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 233.

Thus Henry Thommissone received a sum of money, property, valuable goods and an apprentice. Henry Clopton, meanwhile, received 40s.⁷⁹ It is clear from his will that John Toker had no wife or children, which might explain why Henry Thommissone received such a generous bequest.

Apprenticeship was a means of socialisation and created bonds of fictive kinship. Some bequests to apprentices suggest a quasi-filial master-apprentice relationship which continued far into later life. Both Walter de Mourdon (1349) and Richard de Wycombe (1358) included provision for the souls of their late masters in their wills, alongside their wives, parents, siblings, and other close relatives.⁸⁰ Several masters made generous bequests to former apprentices.⁸¹ Llinos Smith highlighted the reciprocal duties attached to other fostering arrangements, which created bonds of mutual obligation between the parties.⁸² These bonds are also evident in some of the bequests made to apprentices; some masters forged very strong relationships with their apprentices, to the extent that they trusted them to take care of their families and businesses. It should be noted that these examples are taken from London wills, where both guilds and civic authorities cared for freemen's widows and orphans; therefore these bequests signify a conscious decision on the part of the master.⁸³ When the fishmonger Henry Hale died in 1376, he left his wife 'a shop with half a solar and a cellar in Breggestrete for life', as was her free bench entitlement.⁸⁴ The remainder of Hale's property was left to his apprentices John Wade and John Claydon 'for their lives' on condition that they paid an annual rent to the wardens of a particular fraternity.⁸⁵ The intention here may have been to help Hale's widow to continue running his business; by giving his apprentices an interest in the premises, he provided his widow with men to assist her. This backed up the widow's customary entitlement under dower, and also used the apprentices as a means of creating financial security. It indicates that Hale held his apprentices in high regard.

⁷⁹ Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, pp. 78–79.

⁸⁰ 'Mourdon', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, pp. 655–656; 'Wycombe', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 19–20

⁸¹ Walter Blondel bequeathed several tenements to Geoffrey Bloundel (possibly a relative), 'formerly his apprentice' – 'Blondel', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 193. William Cros bequeathed the reversion of a tenement to his former apprentice Andrew Cros, his wife, and son – 'Cros', *ibid.*, p. 465.

⁸² Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Fosterage, Adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 16 (1992), pp. 1–35, p. 24.

⁸³ For a discussion of the care of widows and orphans, both in London and in other English towns and cities, see Elaine Clark, 'City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England', *American Journal of Legal History*, 34 (1990), pp. 168–187.

⁸⁴ 'Hale', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 186–187; Barron, 'The 'Golden Age' of Women', p. 367.

⁸⁵ 'Hale', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, pp. 186–187.

When Thomas Corp, pepperer, made his will in 1341, he left his shop and property to his wife and children. Corp's children were to remain in the custody of Nicholas Martel, his apprentice, during their minority or until marriage, and Nicholas was to give security at the Guildhall.⁸⁶ Similarly, William de Ware, a fishmonger, appointed a number of guardians for his son, among them one of his apprentices.⁸⁷ As indicated in Table 7.2, 2.1 percent of bequests granted apprentices the returns from trading with money left to the master's children, as a means of providing for the family. When he made his will in 1360, John Stable, mercer, specified that 'certain sums of money which he also leaves to his children are to remain in the hands of John Dallyng and John Wysebech his apprentices to trade withal', with half of the profits to be given to his wife for the maintenance of his children 'during minority', and half 'to be kept by the said apprentices for their trouble'.⁸⁸ Stable's wife was pregnant at the time he made his will, and the trust he placed in his two apprentices suggests that Stable knew they would be required to keep his business running after his death. Again, Stable used his apprentices as a means of creating financial security for his widow and children.

1.6 Bequests releasing apprentices

In 15 percent of the wills enrolled at the London Court of Husting where apprentices received bequests, the apprentice was released from all or part of their remaining terms (see Table 7.2). This further strengthens the argument that the bequests of apprentices in wills were designed to circumvent local custom. It may also indicate a disregard for the minimum term of seven years set out both by guilds and custom of London. Hanawalt argued that releasing the apprentice from his apprenticeship at his master's death 'spared the apprentice the trauma of switching masters and permitted him to either work for wages or set up his own business', perhaps assisted by an additional bequest of money or goods.⁸⁹ In two instances the apprentice also received money, while three apprentices received goods, and one further apprentice received both goods and money. Although we do not know how long the apprentices had been with the master at the time of death, the full release from the remainder of the term was probably not a bequest made to apprentices in the very early stages of their apprenticeships. It seems likely that social custom dictated that such bequests were generally

⁸⁶ 'Corp', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 477.

⁸⁷ 'Ware', *ibid.*, p.478. Two of his executors were also his apprentices.

⁸⁸ 'Stable', *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁸⁹ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 171.

only made to apprentices who were well-trained and nearing the end of their terms. A partial release, where the apprentice's term was shortened by a year or two, would be more acceptable where the apprentice still had the majority of their term left to serve, and might also be intended to help their new master shoulder the financial burden of providing for them (see above). For example, William atte Brom's apprentices were released from 'a portion of their respective terms' when he died in 1382 while Thomas, apprentice of John de Ramesey, was released from two years of his term when his master died in 1371.⁹⁰ Sometimes this release was conditional; in 1413 Richard Yonge, a London brewer, released his apprentice John from two years of his term on condition 'that he be gode an trewe to my wyf', who presumably planned to continue Yonge's brewing business.⁹¹

One can easily imagine the upset an early release could cause if the apprentice had served only one or two years of their term. Nevertheless, a master could mitigate the disadvantages of being released from an apprenticeship in the early stages. In 1485 Stephen Trappes, a London tailor, gave his apprentice John Charles 20s, and released him from the rest of his term 'if his father thinks best'.⁹² This allowed John Charles' father to place him with a master of his choosing for the remainder of the apprenticeship. Simon de Turnham, fishmonger, appears to have had two apprentices at the time he made his will in 1346. One, Richard Wynk, was discharged from the remainder of his apprenticeship and had his premium returned, 'less the amount already expended upon his board and other expenses'. The other, John Fikeys, was to remain with his master's widow or executors, and they were 'to represent him at the end of his term in the Guildhall...as a good and faithful apprentice, as is the custom, and make him free and lawful, according to the custom of the City for apprentices'.⁹³ The available evidence only permits conjecture, but it is possible that Richard Wynk had only recently begun his apprenticeship, and the return of his premium allowed him to enter into another apprenticeship with a master of his choice. Meanwhile, John Fikeys, perhaps nearing the end of his term, could assist de Turnham's widow to continue the business before entering the freedom himself, without being released from his apprenticeship prematurely.

A shortened term was not necessarily a bar to entry to the freedom, assuming that the apprentice had received sufficient training to be judged by his peers as a competent and

⁹⁰ 'Atte Brom', *Calendar of Wills: Part II*, p. 231; 'Ramesey', *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹¹ Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 22. John also received 'I graners, an a flot, an a planer'.

⁹² Nottinghamshire Archives, DD/4P/48/81.

⁹³ 'Turnham', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, pp. 495–496.

skilled craftsman. In 1351 William Greymond, fishmonger, released his apprentice, Thomas, from the residue of his term, ‘so that the said Thomas may, with the aid of his executors, enjoy the franchises of the City’.⁹⁴ The will of Thomas Barnaby, tailor, enrolled in 1467, remitted the remaining term of his apprentice William Smyth and instructed his executors to present Smyth at the city chamber for admission to the freedom.⁹⁵ This does, however, add strength to the argument that long terms of apprenticeship were a method of exploiting a captive source of labour; in this case the apprentice had clearly attained a sufficiently high level of skill before the end of their term, as admission to the freedom would allow them to set up on their own as a master and take on their own apprentices. Moreover, in 1328 John Vaus, dyer, bequeathed his wife ‘seven years of the term of service of his apprentice John, the residue being remitted’.⁹⁶ Although we cannot know much of the apprenticeship had elapsed already, this suggests that the apprentice had been indentured for rather longer than seven years in a period where labour was readily available. In 1356, the London pinners threatened to disenfranchise any master who took an apprentice for less than seven years.⁹⁷ While this may indicate that they felt shorter terms were insufficient to fully train an apprentice, this article was followed by one prohibiting any master from setting to work any woman, except his wife or daughters.⁹⁸ Therefore it was almost certainly a means of limiting future competition into the trade by means of long apprenticeships.

2. Promises made to apprentices

Apprenticeship indentures indicated what would happen if the apprenticeship reached a successful conclusion. In 25 of the indentures used in this research, the apprentice was promised a selection of goods or a sum of money at the end of the apprenticeship. One indenture was dated 1384, but the remaining 24 were made during the fifteenth century, when labour was in shorter supply and more effort was required to attract an apprentice (see Chapter 5). It is also notable that only one of the indentures concerned a London apprenticeship, suggesting that London craftsmen had less need to provide inducements to attract an apprentice. Of the 25 indentures, 22 included a promise of money, with seven promising goods in addition. Two apprentices were promised only goods, while the remaining indenture, concerning a London apprenticeship, promised the apprentice assistance

⁹⁴ ‘Greymond’, *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 645.

⁹⁵ Davies, ‘Dame Thomasine Percyvale’, p. 192, n. 34.

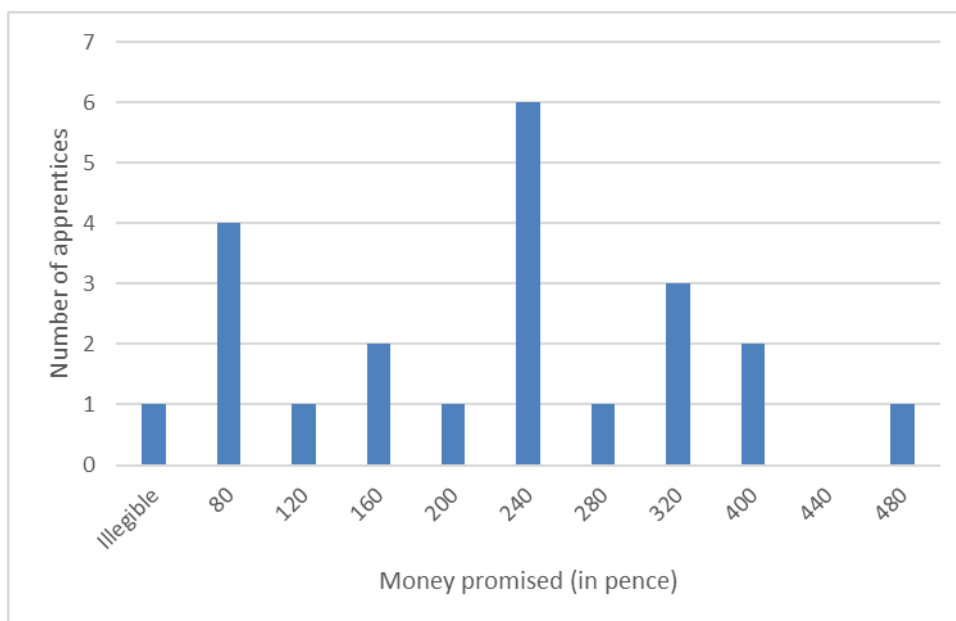
⁹⁶ ‘Vaus’, *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 339.

⁹⁷ Article 10, Pinners’ Ordinances 1356, *Pinners’ and Wiresellers’ Book*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Article 11, *ibid.*, p. 2.

in entering the liberties of London and the Staple of Calais; this might be invaluable.⁹⁹ The amount of money promised to the apprentices varied quite substantially, from 6s 8d at the lower end, to a very generous promise of £2 at the higher end. As Figure 7.1 shows, the majority of the apprentices were promised £1 (240d) or less, and the median and mode amounts were also £1. However, if the apprentice was promised goods as well as money the value of the gift was significantly higher than the value of the cash.

Figure 7.1 – Value of monetary gifts promised to apprentices at the completion of their term, in 22 indentures.



There was little connection between the length of the apprenticeship and the amount of money promised, as presented in Figure 7.2. The highest amount, 40s [480d] was promised to Thomas Marchall, who was apprenticed to a waxchandler and capmaker for nine years from 1469.¹⁰⁰ However, Thomas Heyward, who began a nine year apprenticeship with an Ipswich smith in 1481, was promised only 16s 8d [200d].¹⁰¹ Robert Clerk was promised 20s [240d] at the end of his term of six years, while John Spynster received the same amount at the end of a term of twelve years.¹⁰² In most cases, this disparity might be due to differences in craft or location, although the poor survival rate of indentures makes it difficult to reach any firm conclusions. In some cases, however, the reason is more obvious. Both John Deweboys (apprenticed in 1428) and John Bere (apprenticed in 1430) were promised

⁹⁹ BL, Add. Ch. 73950.

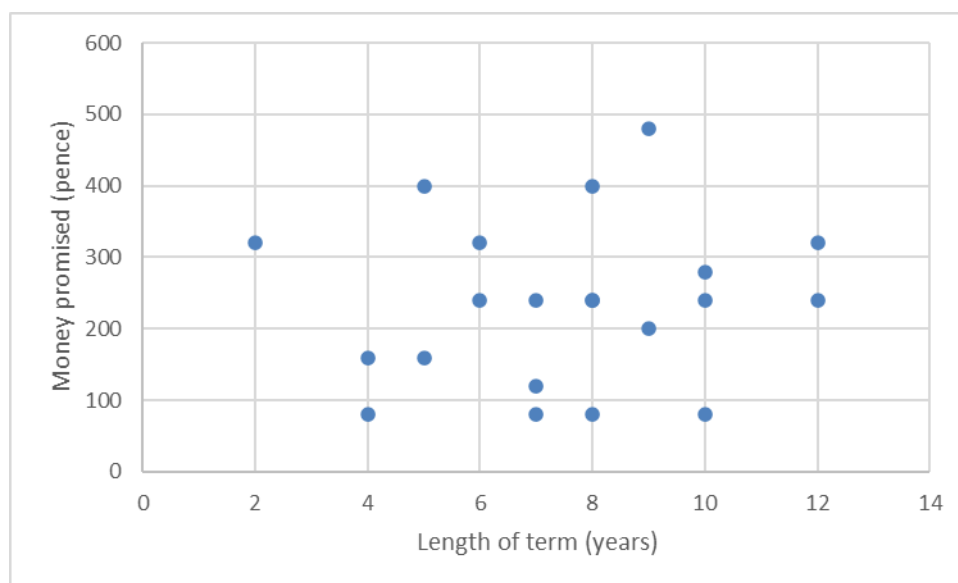
¹⁰⁰ TNA, C 146/1129.

¹⁰¹ SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.

¹⁰² KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r.; Berkshire Record Office, D/EZ34/1.

26s 8d [320d] at the end of their term.¹⁰³ Both young men were apprenticed at Bridport, and in both cases the master was probably a mercer although this was not clearly indicated by the indentures. However, John Deweboys' term was merely two years, while John Bere undertook an apprenticeship of twelve years. While John Deweboys was promised only money, John Bere would also receive valuable goods: a horse (value 13s 4d), bedding (value 30s 4d), a pack of greyware pottery 'with all equipped', and 26s 8d. Some of these items would have had an intrinsically high resale value.

Figure 7.2 – Value of monetary gifts in relation to the length of the apprenticeship in 21 indentures.¹⁰⁴



After money, bedding was the most commonly promised item, mentioned in five of the 25 indentures. Bedding was a practical gift; the apprentice would, in all likelihood, leave the master's household at the end of the apprenticeship. He might join the household of another master craftsman or move into lodgings, and therefore bedding would be a useful gift. Most apprentices were promised sheets and blankets, but in one case the apprentice was promised a mattress, a pair of linen sheets, and a pair of blankets – all that was required to make a comfortable and respectable bed (see Chapter 6).¹⁰⁵ Sheets and blankets were portable items, and could easily be sold or used as security on a loan. The gift of bedding was therefore both practical and valuable. Two of the apprentices were promised clothing, in

¹⁰³ TNA, C 146/1260 and C 146/63.

¹⁰⁴ Unlike in Figure 7.1, the illegible figure has not been included.

¹⁰⁵ SALS, D\B\bw/945.

both cases in the form of gowns, at the end of their apprenticeships.¹⁰⁶ Again, this was a valuable and practical gift; it might be intended to be worn when the former apprentice was presented for the freedom, representing their move from adolescence into adulthood. New clothes could also signify a change in status from a subservient position to that of an equal. This is suggested by the gift promised in the indenture of Thomas Longford, made in 1498 and recorded in the Red Book of Gloucester. As well as 10s in cash, Thomas was promised two gowns, one made of material worth 3s 4d a yard, and one worth half as much.¹⁰⁷ Although the reach and enforcability of sumptuary laws, such as the 1363 Statute of Diet and Apparel, is debatable (see Chapter 6), such legislation represented social mores. The 1363 statute stated that grooms, servants and the employees of urban craftsmen should not wear cloth worth in excess of 1s 1d per yard.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, ‘merchants, citizens...artificers, people of handy-craft’ were not to wear clothing made of cloth costing more than four and a half marks [£3] for the whole cloth (therefore 5s per yard), which again applied to cloth gifted or given as payment.¹⁰⁹ Even bearing in mind that the cost of cloth may have risen between 1363 and 1498, the specification of a particular value of cloth may represent a momentous departure from apprenticeship to adulthood. Furthermore, like bedding, clothing could be sold or used as security for a loan if necessary.

Craft-specific tools appear as gifts less often than we might expect. Including the greyware promised to John Bere (mentioned above), relevant items were promised in only three of the twenty five indentures. Robert Neffe, apprenticed to a smith in Romney in 1458, was promised 20s, a bed valued at 6s 8d, a shoeing hammer and butteris (*‘unum Schoynge Hamor’ et I botyr*”) at the end of the seven-year term.¹¹⁰ The tools, goods and money Robert Neffe received would assist him in setting up his own smithy, or enable him to work alongside another established smith. However, the scarcity of craft-specific tools among the gifts promised to apprentices suggests that, in most cases, assisting the apprentice to enter the craft was not necessarily the main intention of the gift. In 1445, Thomas Alstot entered into

¹⁰⁶ SALS, D\B\bw/1008; Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B2/1, ff. 194 v.–195.

¹⁰⁷ *‘et eidem apprenticio suo in fine eiusdem terminum dabit duas togas videlicet unam longam precii virgat(e) eiusdem toge iij s. iiij d. et alteram togam d(imidi)i precii virg(ate) eiusdem iij s. iiij d.’* – Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B/2/1, ff. 194 v.–195.

¹⁰⁸ 37 Edward III, c. 8; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁹ 37 Edward III, c. 11 and 10.

¹¹⁰ KHLC, NR/Fac3, f. 31 r. A butteris is an instrument used for paring horses’ hooves. John Clark cites an incident from 1366 where it was spelled ‘botour’, and a signet ring from early sixteenth-century England (now held in the British Museum) features a butteris along with a shoeing hammer, pincers and a horsehoe – John Clark, Brian Spencer and D. James Rackham, ‘Introduction: horses and horsemen in medieval London’, in *The Medieval Horse and its Equipment, c.1150–c.1450*, ed. by John Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 1–32, p. 3 and p. 2, fig. 2.

an apprenticeship with John Velyn and his wife Alicia, of Velynmyhall in Cornwall. John Velyn's craft or trade was not recorded, but it might have been agricultural in nature – the indenture states that at the end of the apprenticeship Thomas would receive eight ewes (*'octo capita ovium matricium'*).¹¹¹ This might allow Thomas to establish his own flock, providing him with a small income from selling wool or milk. However, this required access to land; perhaps the ewes were intended to be sold to provide Thomas Alsot with cash.

We should not forget that these promises of goods and money were made at the very beginning of the apprenticeship. Masters would be aware that roughly half of apprentices never completed their terms, and would know that they may never need to make good on their promises. John Bere, for example, did not complete his apprenticeship and so probably did not receive his valuable gift of money, bedding and pottery – in 1339 he was apprenticed to a different Bridport master for a further thirteen years.¹¹² Nevertheless, the fact that these promises only became prevalent in fifteenth-century indentures suggests that they were a means of enticing apprentices at times when labour was harder to come by and retain. Failing to provide the promised goods at the end of the term could be regarded as a failure to fulfil the contract. Although we have no evidence to prove whether apprentices received the promised gift on completion of their term, no court or guild records have been found containing complaints by apprentices concerning unfulfilled promises. This suggests that masters generally fulfilled their promises upon successful completion of the term of apprenticeship.

3. Additional years

From around the turn of the fifteenth century, an *'annum integrum'* was used as a means of retaining an apprentice for longer. The indenture obliged the apprentice to continue in the master's service for an additional year (or two years) at the end of the apprenticeship, generally in exchange for a combination of cash, goods and food. Only nine of the indentures collected for this research featured an additional year, so it was not necessarily a widespread practice. Four of the indentures concerned Winchester apprenticeships, and the remaining five were from London, Okehampton, Bridgwater, Bridport, and Oxford. Taken alone, this would imply that the use of additional years was largely limited to south-west England. However, further evidence can be found in the notebook of a scrivener working in Bury St

¹¹¹ TNA, E 40/8643.

¹¹² TNA, C 146/5045.

Edmunds in the 1460s.¹¹³ Of the 42 draft apprenticeship indentures noted in this notebook, seventeen obliged the apprentice to serve for at least one additional year. The scrivener appears to have worked from a formulary when writing up apprenticeship indentures – only individual details, such as the names of all parties, the length of the apprenticeship and the date of commencement, were recorded in the notebook. Thus we can assume that additional years were not unusual in themselves, but that the details of payment were left to the master to decide; there was no local custom dictating the salary or material remuneration the apprentice could expect to receive during the ‘*annum integrum*’.

For apprentices, the additional year could be both exploitative and beneficial. On one hand, it provided the master with a means of securing trained labour for at least one additional year. This explains why this clause was only used in indentures from 1398 onwards, when it was more difficult to obtain and retain a worker. Apprentices might also be cheaper for the additional year; although they were as well-trained as a journeyman by this point, they could not command such a high salary.¹¹⁴ Although two of the apprentices were promised salaries of 40s during the ‘*annum integrum*’, very few could hope to earn as much as a waged worker.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, the apprentice could use the additional year to establish himself as a craftsman in his own right and perhaps build a customer base before committing himself to joining the franchise and establishing his own workshop. It is difficult to discern the dominant motivation for using additional years, because they do not appear universally or consistently. Multiple indentures have survived for apprentices taken on by John Davy and John Burges in the early fifteenth century, but in both cases the additional year was only used for one in four of their apprentices.¹¹⁶ We also cannot know whether the additional year was included on the wishes of the master or at the behest of the apprentice (or the apprentice’s parents). The underlying motivation probably varied depending on the circumstances of the apprenticeship.

It is not entirely clear whether the additional year was obligatory in every case. Some of the apprentices (such as William atte Nasshe) were promised bonus goods at the end of the term, implying that the apprenticeship ended at that point and that the combination of cash,

¹¹³ CUL, MS Add. 7178, *passim*.

¹¹⁴ S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 152.

¹¹⁵ TNA, C 146/5045; CUL, MS Add. 7178 f. 22 v.

¹¹⁶ SALS, D\B\bw/1009, D\B\bw/1402, D\B\bw/1384, D\B\bw/945 and TNA, C 146/1260, C 146/5045, C 146/3879, C 146/1132. The underlined catalogue references indicate the indentures containing additional year clauses.

goods, and food promised during the ‘*annum integrum*’ should be considered part of the salary.¹¹⁷ John Kent, for example, would receive 13s 4d at the end of his term, with the addition of bedding worth 40d if he served the additional year. The bedding was provided in addition to a salary of 20s.¹¹⁸ We can infer from this that the apprentice was not necessarily compelled to undertake the additional year of service. Like the promise of goods and money, the extra year was written into an agreement made at the very beginning of the apprenticeship; at this point the master-apprentice relationship was untested, and the success of the apprenticeship was uncertain. An apprentice might reach the end of the term and decide that spending an extra year working for their master was not worth the promise of food, drink, and a salary. However, the indentures from Bury St Edmunds indicate otherwise; generally the apprentices were either promised bonus goods at the end of the apprenticeship, or they were obliged to serve for an additional year at the end of the apprenticeship in exchange for a salary comprised of money, food and goods.

Apprentices might receive a combination of cash, goods, food, and clothing during the additional year – the various combinations are detailed in full in Appendix C. This mixed form of payment reflected normal practice outside apprenticeship; as Simon Penn and Chris Dyer observed, ‘workers on annual contracts received a combination of cash and food, sometimes with accommodation and clothing thrown in’.¹¹⁹ Generally the apprentices received a single gown, or some cloth for a gown, but other indentures were more generous and promised the apprentice more clothes than a paid worker could expect.¹²⁰ For example, John Williams was to receive clothes and food as per the previous five years of his apprenticeship.¹²¹ The phrasing implied that John Williams would receive more substantial benefits than a worker who was paid partially in clothes; John Williams was provided with clothes, linen, wool, stockings (*‘caligas’*), and shoes during the initial five-year term. John Williams was also promised a salary of 13s 4d so working for an additional year may have been an attractive prospect. It could also have been as costly for his master as employing a journeyman for the year. The benefit of retaining an apprentice for an additional year, however, was that the master could already be sure of both their temperament and skill.

¹¹⁷ HRO, W/D1/154.

¹¹⁸ W/D1/22, m. 6 v.

¹¹⁹ Simon A.C. Penn and Christopher Dyer, ‘Wages and Earnings in Late Medieval England: Evidence from the Enforcement of the Labour Laws’, *Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), pp. 356–376, p. 366.

¹²⁰ HRO, W/D1/154; CUL, MS Add. 7178 ff. 16 r., 30 r., 47 r.

¹²¹ HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v.

The additional year could be the point at which the apprentice's identity changed, and they became a journeyman. However, it seems likely that they were still treated as an apprentice during this time, rather than as an independent adult. Although it is not clear in some of the surviving full indentures, a number of the draft indentures from Bury indicated that the apprentice remained within the master's household; they were provided with food, drink, and a bed (*'lectum'*) during the additional year. Specific items of bedding were noted in addition – for example, *'xx s. esculenta et poculenta et lectum et coverlyt precio iii s. iiii d. I blanket et unum linthium'*.¹²² The bedding, therefore, was distinct from the sleeping place itself; the significance of bedding as a gift has already been discussed above. The apprentice was almost certainly expected to abide by the behavioural clauses during the additional year (see Chapter 4), and these were easier to enforce if the apprentice remained under close supervision. The small cash salary was probably insufficient to live independently, and so they might be compelled by necessity to remain in the master's household. Therefore the additional year was more an extension of the apprenticeship than a departure into adulthood. This was, perhaps, intentional; the additional year could have been a means of bypassing guild regulations on the size of each master's workshop. For example, in fifteenth-century Exeter, the tailors allowed each master a maximum of three servants and one apprentice.¹²³ Keeping an apprentice for an additional year, during which their status was uncertain, might enable a master to take on a new apprentice while the previous one remained available to provide rudimentary training.

4. Enfranchisement

Enfranchisement (also called the freedom of the borough, and often referred to as citizenship) was not necessarily the ultimate aim of the apprenticeship. The low proportion of apprentices entering the freedom can be perceived as an indication that the majority of apprentices did not finish their terms, but this was not necessarily the case. There are limits to what apprenticeship indentures, drawn up at the outset of the apprenticeship, can tell us about apprentices' future plans, but it is clear that some apprentices did not intend to become citizens of the town in which they were apprenticed. Writing on the fur trade, Elspeth Veale suggested that only apprentices whose parents paid a sufficient premium would become freemen on completion of their term, but this may also have extended to other crafts.¹²⁴

¹²² CUL, MS Add. 7178, f. 21 r.

¹²³ Rigby, *English Society*, p. 158.

¹²⁴ Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 100.

Apprentices whose parents could only pay a small premium, or no premium at all, would not necessarily join the franchise, but this might not subsequently prevent them from becoming master craftsmen or enjoying a profitable and successful career. The relative importance of enfranchisement varied from place to place and changed over time, but, for the majority of the period up to 1500, an apprentice outside London would not necessarily have to join the franchise to become a master craftsman. It should also be noted that, if they did join the franchise, it would not necessarily be in the same town in which they had served their apprenticeship.

Patrick Wallis commented on the difficulty of using entrance to the freedom as a proxy for completion rates (and this is considered further below), but it is generally assumed that about half of apprentices failed to complete their term of apprenticeship.¹²⁵ In a period of high mortality and repeated epidemics, death might account for the fact that many apprentices never finished their terms – it has been estimated that around 10 percent of early modern apprentices died, but this figure was almost certainly higher in the late fourteenth century, due to repeated plague epidemics.¹²⁶ Alternatively, Deborah Youngs suggested that many apprentices left their masters after three to five years, once they had absorbed enough of the skills to be able to practice a craft but before they could become too heavily exploited.¹²⁷ Therefore, the possibility that the apprentice might buy their way out of their apprenticeship also warrants some consideration. In 1368 the goldsmiths of London ordained that ‘if any goldsmiths’ apprentice buys out his apprenticeship terms of part of them...he shall remain a serving-man for as long a time as he should have been an apprentice...and he shall not keep a shop nor shall he be enfranchised during the said period’.¹²⁸ Despite this ordinance, there are multiple records of apprentices purchasing the remainder of their terms from their masters, suggesting that many apprentices never intended to serve the whole term or join the freedom, and that masters were also aware of this.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Patrick Wallis, ‘Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England’, *Journal of Economic History*, 68 (2008), pp. 832–861, pp. 838–839; Chris Minns and Patrick Wallis, ‘Rules and Reality: Quantifying the Practice of Apprenticeship in Early Modern England’, *Economic History Review*, 65 (2012), pp. 556–579, p. 557.

¹²⁶ Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 313, cited in Wallis, ‘Apprenticeship and Training’, p. 838; Jim Bolton, ‘The World Upside Down’: Plague as an Agent of Economic and Social Change’, in *The Black Death in England*, ed. by W.M. Ormrod and P.G. Lindley (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2003), pp. 17–78, pp. 27–28.

¹²⁷ Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 113.

¹²⁸ Jefferson, *Wardens’ Accounts*, p. 111.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 165, 167, 261, 279 and 295.

In 1347, the London heaumers and hatters both decreed that no master could receive an apprentice for less than seven years, ‘and that, without collusion or fraud’. A master heaumer who contravened this article was amerced of 100s, whereas a master hatter ‘shall lose his freedom, until he shall have bought it back again’.¹³⁰ A further goldsmiths’ ordinance, dated 1386, stated that many apprentices ‘as soon as they have learnt a little of the...craft and know its privities [trade secrets] they buy out their terms from their masters and go off to other cities, boroughs and towns’. There was a fear that they might make and sell goods ‘not up to the legal standard’ – that is, the standard imposed on all provincial goldsmiths by Edward I’s 1300 statute – and so damage the reputation of the goldsmiths.¹³¹ Wardens of the craft were empowered and compelled to go ‘from shop to shop’ to assay the quality of their gold and ensure that goldsmiths were making items in accordance with the statute. Goldsmiths who broke the statute could be punished with imprisonment.¹³² Although standards were not necessarily applied quite so universally in other crafts, there was doubtless still a desire to prevent apprentices from buying out their terms and departing before they were fully trained. While it is clear that some apprentices began their terms with no intention of completing the full number of years, many did intend to one day become enfranchised master craftsmen with their own workshops and apprentices.

4.1 The franchise

The urban privileges obtained by joining the franchise varied depending on the size and status of the town, the power of the lord granting the charter, and so on.¹³³ The accompanying obligations also varied, but might be financial, for example contribution to communal costs, or physical, such as the requirement to bear arms in defence of the franchise.¹³⁴ The term ‘freedom’ is also open to a variety of interpretations, but in the period of this thesis it can be taken to signify civic rights and obligations along with legal and economic status.¹³⁵ Rodney Hilton summarised the most commonly granted privileges: security against feudal jurisdiction; simplified legal processes; burgage tenure with rents paid

¹³⁰ *Memorials*, pp. 238 and 239.

¹³¹ Jefferson, *Wardens’ Accounts*, p. 219; T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths’ Company 1327–1509* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1975), p. 2.

¹³² 28 Edward I, *Articuli super Cartas*, c. 20.

¹³³ R.H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 128.

¹³⁴ Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 204; S.H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth & Decline* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1993), pp. 86–87.

¹³⁵ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 107.

with cash as opposed to services; and freedom from seignorial dues. These privileges were often associated with the granting of a new – or legitimisation of an existing – guild merchant, and membership of the guild could convey the right to buy and sell in the borough market without paying tolls or customs.¹³⁶ In places, the freedom came to be synonymous with membership of the guild merchant; at Oxford, for example, a 1199 charter granted the freedom to members of the guild merchant.¹³⁷ However, this was not the case everywhere. Admission to the freedom of Bristol did not amount to the same thing as admission to the guild merchant. Although a citizen would be entitled ‘to all the rights and liberties, trading and otherwise, which had been conferred...on the burgesses’, a member of the guild was merely entitled to trading privileges. Nevertheless, ‘there is no reason to doubt that the greater included the less’.¹³⁸ In any case, freedom from tolls was perhaps the most important privilege for urban craftsmen, particularly those in occupations of a mercantile nature. Exemptions might extend to freedom from tolls and passage and all customs throughout England, Normandy, and Wales, ‘wherever they shall come, they and their goods’.¹³⁹ It also explains the preponderance of leather-workers and victuallers among those who entered the freedom of York in the fourteenth-century – both groups were reliant on goods imported from the countryside to the town.¹⁴⁰

If there was no guild merchant, the privileges of the freedom were held by those with burgess status; this might be restricted to those who were admitted to recognised craft guilds (either through apprenticeship or by another means), which could be costly.¹⁴¹ Hilton noted that, consequently, even in large towns the majority of the population was not free. Just half of the population was free in Oxford, and a mere quarter of residents were citizens in Exeter.¹⁴² In London only a freeman might keep a shop and trade retail within the city, take on an apprentice or practice a craft, but even in the late thirteenth century, only a third of London’s population was free.¹⁴³ As late as the mid-fifteenth century, there were maybe

¹³⁶ Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 128; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 92.

¹³⁷ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 108; Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 94.

¹³⁸ *The Great Red Book of Bristol – Text (Part I)*, ed. by E.W.W. Veale (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd. for the Bristol Record Society, 1933), p. 25.

¹³⁹ *The Great Red Book of Bristol – Introduction (Part I): Burgage Tenure in Mediaeval Bristol*, ed. by E.W.W. Veale (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd. for the Bristol Record Society, 1931), p. 4. This privilege is also found in much smaller towns: the burgesses of Grimsby were exempt from all tolls in land’s within the king’s power – Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 108.

¹⁴¹ Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 92.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁴³ Barron, ‘The ‘Golden Age’ of Women’, p. 365; Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 204; *Memorials*, pp. 217, 218, 227, 239 (and others); Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 92.

4,000 freemen of London in a population of between 12,000 and 14,000 adult males.¹⁴⁴ Although those heavily concerned in importing and exporting goods might feel obliged to become free of a town, in practice entry to the urban franchise was rarely compulsory for craftsmen, although possession of the freedom determined the way in which an artisan could practice his craft.¹⁴⁵ According to Adolphus Ballard, the burgess monopoly was usually confined to sales and purchases of wool, cloth, hides and leather, so this would not prevent other craftsmen from operating outside the franchise.¹⁴⁶ At Northampton, strangers had to purchase wool in bulk or from ‘good men of the town’, while at Bristol only burgesses could sell hides, corn or wool to strangers.¹⁴⁷ Similar restrictions on selling skins and hides can be found in Swansea, Wells and Okehampton.¹⁴⁸ A cordwainer, for example, might purchase skins from a citizen, and then sell the finished shoes to other inhabitants of the town; if he was not exporting goods, he would not need to enter the franchise unless it became a condition of keeping a shop in the town. Furthermore, Barrie Dobson commented that craftsmen in industries ‘with little need for an urban outlet’ would not be motivated to become freemen; he gave the example of craftsmen who manufactured textiles for export, but it could apply to other trades.¹⁴⁹ This might explain why, in the fifteenth century, only 12 percent of apprentices named in the York weavers’ ‘apprentice book’ entered the freedom; they did not consider it necessary, particularly if they were employed as piece-workers, and perhaps could not afford to do so in any case.¹⁵⁰

Some towns made little effort to make enfranchisement a necessity for trade, so an apprentice there would not need to join the freedom in order to become a master. Heather Swanson argued that the infrequent appearance of craftsmen such as smiths or woodworkers in the York Register of Freemen before the 1330s implied that possession of the freedom was not generally necessary for an artisan setting up business in York at that time, and although many York ordinances emphasised the necessity of entering the freedom before setting up as

¹⁴⁴ Caroline M. Barron, ‘London and the Crown, 1451–61’, in *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), pp. 57–81, p. 57.

¹⁴⁵ R.B. Dobson, ‘Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages’, *Economic History Review*, 26 (1973), pp. 1–22, p. 16; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 107.

¹⁴⁶ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, ed. by Adolphus Ballard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. lxxi.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 212 and 213.

¹⁴⁹ Dobson, ‘Admissions to the Freedom of York’, p. 15.

¹⁵⁰ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 36 and 110.

a master, this was not always the case in practice.¹⁵¹ At Beverley, although a master who kept a shop was obliged to belong to the guild, he did not have to enter the franchise (although as long as he remained outside the freedom he was compelled to pay a shilling a year to the town and another shilling to the guild).¹⁵² It was not until the 1580s that restrictions required anyone exercising a trade to be free of the town.¹⁵³ However, in many towns this became a requirement in the fifteenth century or earlier.

4.2 The necessity of the franchise

Imposing an obligation to join the franchise would exclude anyone who had not been an apprentice, or those who could not afford to pay the redemption fee, from fully participating in the opportunities for trade in the local economy. The London girdlers' ordinances, issued in 1344, required all working at the craft to have been apprenticed or to have purchased their freedom. The same restriction can also be found in the 1346 ordinances of the London whittawyers.¹⁵⁴ At Winchester, while non-citizen 'fleshmongeres' could hold a stall on annual payment of 25*d* to the king, all other craftsmen had to be free in order to have a booth or stall.¹⁵⁵ After 1446, the Exeter tailors' oath prohibited anyone who was not free from holding a shop.¹⁵⁶ The Exeter cordwainers' ordinances (dated 1482) contained a similar proscription.¹⁵⁷ However, even after 1415, when joining the freedom became an obligation on all shopkeepers in Norwich, fewer than forty people on average entered the freedom each year. This is perhaps unsurprising, as although entry by apprenticeship cost 13*s* 4*d* (an amount which might be gifted to the apprentice at the end of the term to allow enfranchisement – see above), entrance by redemption might cost at least 5 marks.¹⁵⁸ Costs such as these, alongside ordinances controlling the number of apprentices each master craftsman could take, would limit the number of shopkeepers in the local economy, and thus limit the number of craftsman competing for each customer.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108 and 110. Swanson suggested that the intention was to restrict the marketing of certain valuable goods, especially cloth, to freemen.

¹⁵² *Beverley Town Documents*, ed. by Arthur F. Leach (London: Bernard Quaritch, for the Selden Society, 1900), pp. xliv and xxxiv.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. lxii and 93.

¹⁵⁴ *Memorials*, pp. 217 and 232.

¹⁵⁵ *English Gilds*, pp. 354 and 355.

¹⁵⁶ '(a) Guild of the Tailors: (6) The Oaths to be Taken', *English Gilds*, p. 317.

¹⁵⁷ '(b) Guild of the Cordwainers', *ibid.*, p. 333.

¹⁵⁸ Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 110; Ruth H. Frost, 'The Urban Elite', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 235–253, p. 239.

This may explain why we find some very short apprenticeships, particularly outside areas of strong guild control. A brief apprenticeship, shorter than seven years but long enough for the apprentice to feasibly learn a craft, would allow the apprentice to gain admission to a new local economy. This would perhaps be a means of opening up new trading connections for friends and family elsewhere, and might explain why, where we have multiple indentures for the same master, craft, or town, some apprenticeships were considerably shorter than others. For example, the Bridgwater tanner John Davy and his wife Joan took on at least four apprentices between 1424 and 1437, three of whom were apprenticed for seven or more years.¹⁵⁹ John Taylor of Swansea, however, was apprenticed to John Davy for merely three years; established trade routes between Bridgwater and the ports of South Wales might have made it desirable for John Taylor's family to create a link to the local economy of the town.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps a similar motivation lay behind William Gose's short apprenticeship to Robert Jervyse, a Bridgwater fuller, and his wife Joan, as there were also trade networks linking Bridgwater and Ireland in this period – the indenture stated that William Gose was from Galvey (probably Galway) in Hibernia.¹⁶¹ Once the apprenticeship was over and the apprentice had entered the freedom, he would be free from tolls and tallages and thus able to open up new import and export markets for family members in other towns in the British Isles. Finally, John Deweboys was apprenticed to John Borage of Bridport, and his wife Agnes, for two years in 1428.¹⁶² The indenture does not record where John Deweboys came from, but this short apprenticeship may have served a similar purpose.

4.3 Escaping the franchise

Despite the privileges that came with joining the franchise, and even in urban centres which imposed enfranchisement as an obligation, not everyone wanted to become a citizen. At Grimsby, men did not enter the franchise through guild membership, perhaps because the town lacked formal craft organisations, but apprentices who had completed their term and wished to enter the freedom could do so upon payment of a low fine of 20*d*.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, in 1383 the townsmen complained that many 'foreigners' who lived in Grimsby refused to become free even though they carried out their trades and crafts as if they were, suggesting

¹⁵⁹ Somerset History Centre, D\B\bw/1009, D\B\bw/1384 and D\B\bw/945.

¹⁶⁰ SALS, D\B\bw/1402; *Bridgwater Borough Archives: 1200–1377*, ed. by Thomas Bruce Dilks (Frome and London: Butler & Tanner, 1933), p. xxxvi.

¹⁶¹ *Bridgwater Borough Archives*, p. xxxvi; SALS, D\B\bw/1008.

¹⁶² TNA, C 146/1260.

¹⁶³ Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, pp. 67–68.

that many craftsmen avoided paying the low entry fee because of the obligations that came with the freedom.¹⁶⁴ A canny apprentice might also be able to avoid joining the franchise by setting up shop in an area outside the control of the guild. Dobson noted that neither enfranchisement nor guild membership were compulsory for craftsmen with workshops within the multiple ecclesiastical franchises in the city of York.¹⁶⁵ Lack of guild control in these areas is evident in the 1482 cappers' ordinance which forbade masters to give work 'to no maner of person dwellyng in Seynt Mary gate, ne in Seint Leonardes, ne odyr places ne sanctuaries within this cite, wher we have no power to correk tham'.¹⁶⁶ Not only were the guilds powerless to regulate the quality of work produced in these areas, they were also unable to control the prices charged, wages paid, or number of workers employed.

At least as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, London guild ordinances made it clear that only freemen could take on apprentices – initially this was probably a mechanism to control the number of possible competitors, but the restriction was not removed in subsequent centuries.¹⁶⁷ However, in the early fifteenth century, nearby Westminster constituted 'an island of ungoverned commerce, where no questions could be asked about guild membership, quality standards or price fixing'. This area attracted many craftsmen who were unable to afford the excessive costs of entering the freedom of London, or prevented from entering it for some other reason.¹⁶⁸ Gervase Rosser noted that all medieval towns contained pockets of jurisdictional independence, whose existence subverted

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 84. A late fifteenth-century oath summarised these obligations as follows: loyalty to the king and the mayor and commonalty of Grimsby; to take any office when chosen; to observe the borough franchises; to keep the borough ordinances; and to refrain from taking any action which might disturb the due process of the borough court. Ordinances also indicated that burgesses were obliged to attend upon the mayor whenever summoned; to join the mayor in his circuit of the town and fields on 'Plough Monday' [Monday after 6 January]; to appear in array on Midsummer's Day; to process with the mayor to the chapel of St Mary Magdalene at the leper hospital on 14 August; and to arm themselves and their retainers, when needed, to defend the mayor, the borough, and its franchises. There were also restrictions on acting as deputies to sheriffs or escheators (which might result in split loyalties) and taking cases to other courts which could be heard in the borough court. Finally burgesses owed suit to the borough court at its view of frankpledge sessions, were obliged to pay the local tax of bustage, and were to be in scot and lot – ibid., pp. 85–86. One can see why some inhabitants sought to avoid these onerous obligations!

¹⁶⁵ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of York', p. 12. These areas included the precincts of the royal castle of York, the Liberties of St Peter's, St Mary's Abbey, St Leonard's Hospital, and 'the other ecclesiastical immunities'.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 12–13.

¹⁶⁷ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. II, part I, containing Liber Custumarum with extracts from the Cottonian MS. Claudius, D.II.*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 81 [Articles of the Saddlers and Joiners]. See also *Memorials*, pp. 179, 216, 218, 227, 238, 239.

¹⁶⁸ Gervase Rosser, 'London and Westminster: The Suburb in the Urban Economy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), pp. 45–61, pp. 51 and 53.

local government efforts to control the economy.¹⁶⁹ Therefore an apprentice might avoid entering the freedom by setting up a workshop in an area outside guild control.

4.4 Joining the franchise or guild elsewhere

Another possible explanation for the seemingly low completion rate of apprenticeships, evidenced by admissions to the freedom, is that apprentices were not necessarily entering the freedom in the town in which they were apprenticed. Between 1309 and 1312, 656 persons were admitted to the freedom of London by redemption, in comparison to 253 admitted by apprenticeship.¹⁷⁰ In 1312 it was decided that any ‘strangers’ who wished to become free of the city of London had to be certified by members of the mystery they wished to pursue – a 1319 charter specified that they could only be admitted on the surety of six men of the craft or trade, which would be a challenging prospect for someone without many friends in London. This regulation ensured that apprenticeship, not redemption, became the main route to the freedom.¹⁷¹ Despite this, the number of apprentices entering the freedom remained low. Jean Imray observed that between 1391 and 1464, only 51 percent of the London mercers’ apprentices were admitted to the freedom on completion of their terms.¹⁷² Matthew Davies found that in the periods 1425–45 and 1453–8, just 35 percent of London tailors’ apprentices entered the freedom, and less than 14 percent became masters themselves.¹⁷³ This was a continuing trend: Steve Rappaport calculated that, by the sixteenth century, only 41 percent of London apprentices finished their terms and entered the freedom, and it is unlikely that the figure was much different in earlier centuries.¹⁷⁴

Of course, some apprentices never completed their terms due to poor master-apprentice relationships (see earlier chapters) or death of one of the parties (see above), but

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷⁰ Elspeth M. Veale, ‘Craftsmen and the Economy of London in the Fourteenth Century’, in *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. by A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 133–151, p. 134.

¹⁷¹ Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 205. The 1312 decision was given the royal stamp of approval by Edward II in the ‘Great Charter’ issued in 1319.

¹⁷² 979 apprentices entered the freedom, while 958 did not. Imray suggested that they did not complete their terms, but this was not necessarily the case – Jean M. Imray, ‘‘Les Bones Gentes de la Mercerye des Londres’’: A Study of the Membership of the Medieval Mercers’ Company’, in *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. by A.E.J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 155–178, p. 168.

¹⁷³ Matthew P. Davies, ‘The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1994), p. 195, table 5.4.

¹⁷⁴ Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 311–315, cited in Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 138.

this does not fully explain the low numbers. In all likelihood, many apprentices chose to leave the town in which they were apprenticed and travel elsewhere in search of greater economic opportunities. Becoming a member of a craft guild in a town where one had not been apprenticed was entirely possible, as indicated by guild ordinances. In some instances, the apprentice need only find guild members willing to verify his good character and reputation, and perhaps stand surety for his continued good behaviour. The 1345 ordinances of the London spurriers stated that aliens and foreigners wishing to practice the craft had to be enfranchised, and that ‘good folks of the said trade’ must ‘undertake for him as to his loyalty and his good behaviour’.¹⁷⁵ Elsewhere, ordinances highlighted that the guilds’ original charitable and monopolistic aims remained the foremost concern, regardless of technical ability. The Lincoln fullers’ ordinances, dated 1337, allowed strangers to the city to ‘work among the brethren and sisteren, and his name shall be written on their roll’ upon receipt of ‘a penny to the wax’ and a penny to the Dean.¹⁷⁶ Aside from a prohibition on working the trough (fulling cloth by treading it with the feet), there was little in the way of craft regulation in these ordinances, which also stipulated that no one might work on religious festivals, that bread should be given to the poor when a member of the guild died, and that anyone commencing a pilgrimage to Rome on a Sunday or festival day should be accompanied ‘as far as the Queen’s Cross’.¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, ‘every incomer’ to the Lincoln tylers’ guild had to pay a quarter of barley, 2*d* for ale and 1*d* to the Dean, and no tyler or ‘poyntour’ was to stay in the city without entering the guild.¹⁷⁸ Again, demonstration of skill was not mentioned in the ordinances.

A record in London Letter-Book D suggests that it was possible to enter the freedom if one had written proof of apprenticeship: in 1310 Robert Newcomen was admitted to the freedom after proffering ‘a certain writing testifying he had lived with [his master] as an apprentice for ten years’.¹⁷⁹ Ordinances indicate that, particularly in larger urban centres, proof of technical competency was required before guild membership and associated freedom could be acquired. In 1346, the London whittawyers decreed that no one who had completed an apprenticeship ‘shall be made free of the same trade: unless it be attested by the overseers...or by four persons of the said trade, that such person is able, and sufficiently

¹⁷⁵ *Memorials*, pp. 227–228.

¹⁷⁶ This is a reference to the wax light ‘which shall be kept burning before the Holy Cross, on the days when they go in procession in honour of the holy cross’ – ‘Gild of the Fullers of Lincoln’, *English Gilds*, pp. 179–181.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Gild of the Tylers of Lincoln’, *ibid.*, pp. 184–185.

¹⁷⁹ *Letter-Book D*, p. 47. It is unclear what type of document as presented as proof.

skilled to be made free of the same'.¹⁸⁰ The ordinances of the London sheerman, issued in 1350, stipulated that no one was to be admitted to the freedom unless he was 'a person able and knowing his trade, for the service of the people'.¹⁸¹ In 1307, the York girdlers' ordinances stipulated that 'stranger' journeymen had to produce evidence that they had served an apprenticeship in the girdlers' craft before they could be employed.¹⁸² However, after 1417, perhaps in response to demographic factors, journeymen girdlers who had not been apprenticed in York could bind themselves to masters for a year.¹⁸³ In fifteenth-century York, almost all crafts had a rule concerning the admission of non-apprentices; the entrant was generally required to pay a higher fee to enter the guild as a master, and had to satisfy the searchers as to his competency.¹⁸⁴

Although the restrictions in London became more stringent over the course of the fourteenth century, in other towns it might have been possible for an apprentice to enter the freedom by redemption, although the cost was generally higher. In York, for example, apprentices paid from 1s 8d to 3s 4d to enter the freedom, while those who had been apprenticed elsewhere might pay between 6s 8d and £1.¹⁸⁵ This was made particularly attractive in the decades after the Black Death, when the need to restore the economic balance of a settlement by encouraging in-migration eventually led to lower entry fees. In Bristol, a 1344 ordinance provided that one could enter the freedom by redemption if he were 'of free condition' (i.e. not an 'unfree' serf), and was 'vouched for by two burgesses as of good and honest report'.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, someone who had been apprenticed elsewhere but had connections to Bristol might easily be able to enter the freedom, assuming they could afford the entrance fee. In 1366 admission cost £10, 'without any part thereof being pardoned'. However, perhaps in response to demographic upheaval, by 1481 the entrance fee was 20d, paid four times a year.¹⁸⁷ At Fordwich, it appears to have been possible for a person of good character to purchase the freedom for 11d, renewable after three years, after residing within

¹⁸⁰ *Memorials*, p. 234.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁸² E. Miller, 'Medieval York', in *A History of Yorkshire: The City of York*, ed. by P.M. Tillott (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1961), pp. 25–116, p. 92.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

¹⁸⁴ *York Memorandum Book: Part II (1388–1493) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1915), p. lvii.

¹⁸⁵ Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 95.

¹⁸⁶ *The Great Red Book of Bristol – Text (Part I)*, p. 21.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

the liberty for a year and a day, but this seems exceptional.¹⁸⁸ After 1466, the Exeter tailors held the right to present any man to the freedom of Exeter in their craft providing he was ‘good, trew, and hable for the same craft’, even if he had not been apprenticed in Exeter ‘or oughte to be free there by theire birthe’.¹⁸⁹

4.5 Joining the franchise later

Another explanation for the seemingly low completion rate is that fact that an apprentice did not have to enter the freedom immediately upon finishing an apprenticeship; he might become a freeman later in life, once he could comfortably afford to do so. The London pinners and wiresellers allowed former apprentices to pay 3s 4d to register as brothers of the fraternity and work as skilled journeymen; although they were entitled to enter the freedom, it was usual to spend a few years as a journeyman in order to save up the cost of the entry fee. Some journeymen never attained citizenship, despite the existence of a loan scheme to enable members of the craft to take up the freedom.¹⁹⁰ At Exeter, when a tailor’s apprentice entered the freedom, he had to give a 1oz silver spoon to the guild (‘a sponne of selver, wayyng a nonsse’ with an approximate value of 4s) and hold a breakfast for the guild wardens. This might not be affordable for an apprentice. Those enfranchised by redemption had to pay 20s ‘w^tout any pardon’ and give a breakfast to the master and wardens.¹⁹¹ Undoubtedly, some apprentices never entered the freedom and remained an unenfranchised guild master, or perhaps a journeyman, for their whole career. As Edward Miller noted of York, in the late fifteenth century an apprentice by no means always became a freeman.¹⁹²

4.6 Never joining the franchise at all

As noted above, in some towns a master craftsman did not have to be a freeman. However, once enfranchisement became more of a prerequisite for mastership, more apprentices might remain journeymen, working for enfranchised masters for the duration of their careers. Some apprentices may only have aspired to become journeymen, or desired only to gain some skills before returning to the countryside (or to an ecclesiastical franchise)

¹⁸⁸ C. Eveleigh Woodruff, *A History of the Town and Port of Fordwich, with a Transcription of the XVth Century Copy of the Custumal* (Canterbury: Cross & Jackman, 1895), p. 57. Initially, all men and women born within the liberty of Fordwich were entitled to the freedom, as was anyone married to a freeman or freewoman, or anyone possessing a freehold tenement.

¹⁸⁹ ‘(a) Guild of the Tailors: (3) The King’s Award’, *English Gilds*, p. 306.

¹⁹⁰ *Pinners’ and Wiresellers’ Book*, p. xix. Megson stated that the loan for the entry fee was paid back in installments of 8d each Saturday. The loan was covered by a bond, which incurred legal fees.

¹⁹¹ ‘(a) Guild of the Tailors: (5) Ordinances of the Guild’, *English Gilds*, p. 316.

¹⁹² Miller, ‘Medieval York’, p. 95.

where they could work outside guild control.¹⁹³ This may have been the difference between the Winchester apprentices John Kent and John Williams, both apprenticed to a cordwainer for five years in 1403 and 1405 respectively.¹⁹⁴ Both were to serve an additional year at the end of the term, but with differences in the promised salary. John Kent would receive 20s and two lasts (worth 18d), which he would need if he was to make shoes in his own workshop. John Williams, on the other hand, would receive 13s 4d, clothes and food. If Williams intended to remain a journeyman, he might not need his own lasts; Steve Rigby observed that a master craftsman could be distinguished from a journeyman because the master owned his own raw materials and tools.¹⁹⁵ If, from the outset of the apprenticeship, it was clear that the apprentice would never become a master in his own right, there would be no need to provide him with the requisite tools at the end of the term.

5. Conclusion

A sizeable proportion of apprenticeships do not seem to have ended in citizenship. Although mastership and enfranchisement might appear, from the records, to be the ideal conclusion for an apprenticeship, this was not necessarily the reality for apprentices or their masters. The apprentice might have made a conscious decision to remain a journeyman, or they might have migrated to a different town and entered the freedom there. An inability to pay a premium at the beginning of the apprenticeship might result in the apprentice being ineligible for mastery at the end of their term. Alternatively, the apprenticeship might have ended early for a variety of reasons. In the late fourteenth century, for example, repeated plague epidemics would have prematurely ended many apprenticeships.

The death of the master did not necessarily signal the end of the apprenticeship; local customs, bequests in wills, and clauses in apprenticeship indentures helped to ensure that the apprentice continued to receive training. They might be transferred to another master, or remain with the master's widow for the remainder of their apprenticeship. The apprentice had a right to object to their new master – they could not be transferred like a chattel. As we have seen, apprentices might receive bequests of goods and money, either to encourage them to continue their apprenticeship or to assist them in their future career. Some masters made provision in their wills to release their apprentices from all or part of the remaining term. Steps might also be taken to ensure that this did not detrimentally affect the apprentice's

¹⁹³ Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 134.

¹⁹⁴ Both HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v.

¹⁹⁵ Rigby, *English Society*, p. 152. Some labourers did own their own basic tools – see *ibid.*, p. 153.

future career – masters might provide a sum of money which could be used to enter another apprenticeship, or they might request that the apprentice be presented for the freedom.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, demographic changes in the aftermath of the Black Death led to increased efforts by masters to retain apprentices for longer. One method of retaining skilled labour was to include an '*annum integrum*' within the terms of the apprenticeship indenture, obliging the apprentice to serve an additional year (or sometimes two years) in exchange for a predetermined salary. Although exploitative – the salary was generally below what a journeyman could command – this might be beneficial to the apprentice, particularly if they received valuable goods as part of the salary. Like the bonus goods promised at the end of the apprenticeship, and those bequests made to apprentices in wills, these items were intended to assist the apprentice in their future endeavours. Money could be put towards entering the freedom, or as capital for setting up a workshop. Craft-specific tools were clearly intended to help the apprentice establish themselves as a craftsman. Gifts of bedding were common; such items were portable, useful, and could be used as security for loans.

The master-apprentice relationship was inherently unequal, but the evidence from apprenticeship indentures indicates that masters sought to make provision for their apprentices' futures from the very outset. The indentures, drawn up at the very beginning of the apprenticeship, include promises of goods, money, and assistance at the end of the apprenticeship many years later. At this point neither master nor apprentice could possibly know whether the apprenticeship would prove successful, but these binding promises were made nonetheless. Testamentary evidence also illustrates the strong quasi-familial relationships that could be forged between masters and apprentices. We see apprentices receive sizeable requests of property, money, and even other apprentices. Some apprentices were made responsible for the master's wife, children and business. Turbulent master-apprentice relationships predominate in guild and court records, but wills permit us a different view of apprenticeship: as a mechanism for creating strong bonds of fictive kinship. Such bonds could provide assistance for an apprentice to become a guild master and, if they chose, enter the freedom to enjoy the privileges (and obligations) of citizenship.

Conclusion

This thesis has used apprenticeship indentures as the basis for discussing the practice of apprenticeship in medieval England, and how it evolved throughout the period 1250–1500. There are two key points to which we have returned again and again; the socio-economic nature of apprenticeship, and the importance of reputation. Although apprenticeship indentures were largely formulaic legal documents, they can reveal a great deal about both of these points. Behavioural clauses emphasised the importance of reputation in everyday life in medieval England, while other clauses, such as those outlining the maintenance of apprentices, demonstrate how the practice of apprenticeship evolved in response to wider economic and demographic changes. Used alongside other documentary evidence, apprenticeship indentures illuminate practical aspects of apprenticeship in medieval England, and help address underlying questions about the basic nature of apprenticeship and its place within the guild system.

1. The socio-economic nature of apprenticeship

Apprenticeship existed independently of guilds, but it was also inextricably linked to the guild system, and therefore we must consider the guild system in order to contextualise the arguments presented in this thesis. Guilds exerted influence over apprenticeship in many ways, not least because in many places guild officials held the right, by royal charter, to regulate apprenticeship.¹ This ties into social contract theory, as applied by Garry Runciman: the Crown granted guilds the power to control their membership by means of regulations and ordinances. Thus, from as early as the twelfth century, guilds took on the responsibility of controlling the craft in place of the king, so the relationship to royal power held elements of cooperation as well as subordination. Where there was no craft guild, this role might be exercised by civic authorities. Layers of legislation covered working practices and apprenticeship. In some towns a craft guild or guild merchant might function as the *de facto* government, delegated by the king through the borough charter.² In London and other large towns, civic authority was vested in members of the more prestigious guilds, so the Crown, the civic authorities, and the guilds provided different levels of legislation.

¹ Matthew Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild in Late Medieval London', in *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene*, ed. by Matthew Davies and James A. Galloway (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), pp. 247–286, p. 251.

² Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 135.

Apprenticeship was the primary route to citizenship, in London and elsewhere in England, for those who could not enter the freedom by patrimony or who could not afford to purchase citizenship by redemption. In London, the requirement to enrol apprentices existed at least as early as 1275, and apprenticeship was regulated by the guilds.³ Guild membership was not necessarily coterminous with citizenship (as explained in Chapter 7), but it might be a requirement in order to enter the freedom. From 1319, royal charter decreed that admission to the freedom of London could only be obtained through one of the recognised crafts, thus affirming apprenticeship as the primary route to citizenship.⁴ This fitted the guilds' aim of limiting economic participation to members, in order to preserve craft monopolies within towns.⁵ Elsewhere in England admission to the freedom was significantly easier for strangers to attain.⁶ In Bristol, any man of free condition could be admitted as long as he could pay the fee and two burgesses 'of good and honest report' would vouch for him.⁷ In the late fifteenth century, the Exeter tailors' guild (granted a royal charter in 1466) held the right to present any man of their craft to the freedom providing he was 'good, trew, and hable'.⁸ Nonetheless, in all of these examples, the necessity of guild membership was either explicitly required or obliquely implied.

About 90 percent of those entering the freedom did so by apprenticeship, and therefore limiting apprenticeship by means of exclusionary or restrictive practices necessarily limited the number of citizens.⁹ Citizens enjoyed privileges such as exemption from tolls and tallages, and thus restrictions were required to ensure that the Crown continued to receive these payments. In theory, restricting the number of citizens also reduced competition by limiting the number of participants in local economies, but this was not necessarily the case

³ Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 197; *Letter-Book D*, p. 37, n. 1; Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild', p. 251.

⁴ Davies, 'Crown, City and Guild', p. 251.

⁵ Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086–1348* (London: Longman 1995), p. 362; S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 151 and 161–162.

⁶ Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 205.

⁷ *The Great Red Book of Bristol – Text (Part I)*, ed. by E.W.W. Veale (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd. for the Bristol Record Society, 1933), p. 21.

⁸ '(a) Guild of the Tailors: (3) The King's Award', *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Guilds: Together With the Olde Usages of the Cite of Wynchestre; the Ordinances of Worcester; the Office of the Mayor of Bristol; And, the Customary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regis. From Original MSS. of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, Joshua Toulmin Smith, Lujó Brentano and Early English Text Society (London: Trübner, 1870), p. 306.

⁹ Matthew Davies, 'Citizens and 'Foreyns': Crafts, Guilds and Regulation in Late Medieval London', in *Between Regulation and Freedom: Work and Manufactures in European Cities, 14th–18th Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), pp. 1–21, p. 4.

in practice. Foreigners and aliens might be permitted to sell wholesale, for a limited time, or on payment of a nominal fee (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 7).¹⁰ However, because the number of competitors *within the freedom* was so low – in London, perhaps a quarter of the adult male population were free of the city – it was not necessary to be too exclusionary.¹¹ Heather Swanson found that citizenship was not always necessary for craftsmen in York, even those not residing within a liberty, and the same was true at Beverley.¹²

In towns where citizenship was a requirement for enjoying economic participation enhanced by the borough's privileges, the number of citizens remained low and thus citizens were permanently outnumbered by non-citizens. Therefore citizens always needed to employ non-citizen labour in their workshops.¹³ As Matthew Davies noted, in London (and elsewhere) work by non-citizens was both ubiquitous and essential to many crafts and guilds.¹⁴ Non-citizens might be foreign (from another town) or alien (from another country), and borough records indicate that any restrictions on foreign or alien workers could be overcome on payment of a fee.¹⁵ Many non-citizens would, of course, be apprentices who had either been unable to enter the freedom, or had not finished their term of apprenticeship; it has been suggested that about half of apprentices did not finish their term, for whatever reason.¹⁶ Some died, but others provided a pool of reasonably skilled labour which could be drawn upon by master craftsmen in exchange for a daily wage or annual salary. This reality is also visible in guild regulations which permitted the employment of 'servants' of reasonable skill. Apprentices could become journeymen, working for citizen craftsmen in exchange for a daily wage, or they could return to their hometown (or another town) and make a living from their skills there. Jim Bolton commented on the prevalence of local markets, outside major towns, which catered to rural consumers, and which became particularly lucrative in the late fourteenth century as agricultural workers found themselves

¹⁰ According to the royal charter granted to the Bristol burgesses in 1188, no stranger could remain in town more than forty days for the purpose of selling his goods – *The Great Red Book of Bristol – Introduction (Part I): Burgage Tenure in Medieval Bristol*, ed. by E.W.W. Veale (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd. for the Bristol Record Society, 1931), p. 5.

¹¹ Davies, 'Citizens and 'Foreyns'', p. 5.

¹² Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 108 and 110; *Beverley Town Documents*, ed. by Arthur F. Leach (London: Bernard Quaritch, for the Selden Society, 1900), pp. xlv and xxxiv.

¹³ Davies, 'Citizens and 'Foreyns'', p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁵ For example, see *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1327–1509, vol. II*, ed. by Mary Bateson (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1901), p. 163.

¹⁶ Davies, 'Citizens and 'Foreyns'', pp. 7–8.

with more disposable income as a result of higher wages.¹⁷ These markets provided opportunities for the large pool of apprentices who failed to become citizens on completion of their term. Likewise, Gervase Rosser observed that ecclesiastical franchises such as Westminster provided a place for craftsmen to work without guild oversight. Similar pockets of jurisdictional independence could be found in all medieval English towns.¹⁸

Apprenticeship was an essentially exclusionary construct, using both active and passive modes of exclusion. Initially, persons who could not afford to pay a premium or did not meet a master's own criteria could not become apprentices; they were actively excluded. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, labour was abundant, and apprenticeship became more exclusive – fewer apprenticeships were available, but there was no concomitant reduction in demand for training, resulting in passive exclusion. Higher premiums were required to secure training, actively excluding less affluent candidates. Conversely, when labour was harder to come by, premiums might be lowered and apprenticeship became less exclusionary. After 1388, statute legislation introduced restrictions based on status and property ownership, although this legislation was rarely enforced (see Chapter 2).¹⁹ Guilds and civic authorities might also enact restrictions on eligibility for apprenticeship – for example, in the late fifteenth century the London goldsmiths sought to make literacy a requirement for apprentices (see Chapter 5), an attempt to actively exclude the illiterate. Such restrictions were often a temporary means of limiting participation, and could generally be overcome by the payment of a fee.

Both Elspeth Veale and George Unwin suggested that there may have been a second strata of apprentices, who began an apprenticeship (perhaps informally, or at lower cost) with no intention of entering the freedom upon its completion.²⁰ This seems entirely likely, given the notable disparity between the number of London apprenticeships enrolled each year and the number of subsequent entries to the freedom. These apprentices might remain non-citizens, either working for others or producing goods for other non-citizens in areas outside strict guild control. Martha Howell presented a cautionary tale of a downward spiral for a

¹⁷ Jim Bolton, ‘“The World Upside Down”: Plague as an Agent of Economic and Social Change’, in *The Black Death in England*, ed. by W.M. Ormrod and P.G. Lindley (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2003), pp. 17–78, p. 69.

¹⁸ Gervase Rosser, ‘London and Westminster: The Suburb in the Urban Economy in the Later Middle Ages’, in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), pp. 45–61, pp. 50–53. See also R.B. Dobson, ‘Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages’, *Economic History Review*, 26 (1973), pp. 1–22, pp. 12–13.

¹⁹ 12 Richard II, c. 5 (1388); 7 Henry IV, c. 17 (1406).

²⁰ Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (London: London Record Society, 2003), p. 100; George Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London*, 3rd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 83.

weaver working outside a guild, excluded from certain markets and enjoying less control over resources, who eventually lost economic independence and become a waged worker.²¹ However, this was not inevitable; there was nothing to prevent these former apprentices from entering the freedom at a later date, once they had amassed sufficient capital, perhaps in a different town from that in which they had been apprenticed (see Chapter 7). While the second-class apprenticeship suggested by Veale and Unwin might have been more exploitative in the long term, requiring the apprentice to serve for a longer term in exchange for paying a lower premium (or no premium at all), the existence of such arrangements undermines the argument that apprenticeship was largely a means of exclusion.

If apprenticeship was not solely a means of exclusion, we must question both its purpose and why it persisted. As Joel Mokyr noted, the guild system itself was not necessary, nor sufficient reason for, the emergence and perpetuation of apprenticeship.²² The guilds' use of apprenticeship as a means of providing technical training helped to perpetuate the practice, but apprenticeship had existed, and continued to exist, independently of the guild system. There are several reasons for this.

First, apprenticeship offered a means of securing a worker for a fixed term of years, bound by a legally enforceable contract. This did not mean that apprentices were a source of cheap labour; as demonstrated in Chapter 6, the costs were considerable, and rendered an apprentice only marginally less costly than a skilled journeyman (see below). Apprentices were also considerably less cost-effective as workers; masters were likely to release their 'secrets' slowly, in part because they needed to develop trust in the apprentice, but also because an apprentice might be motivated to leave the apprenticeship once they felt they were fully trained.²³ The desirability of apprentices as a labour source came from the fact that they were secured by long-term, legally binding contracts, and this became particularly important in the latter half of the fourteenth century as workers became more mobile and pushed for shorter contracts. The 'bullion famine' of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries may also have made apprentices more desirable, as they did not require payment in cash.

²¹ Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 25.

²² Joel Mokyr, 'The Economics of Apprenticeship', in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 20–43, p. 33.

²³ Stephanie R. Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in Later Medieval London (c.1300–c.1530)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2006), p. 252; Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 113.

Second, apprenticeship was a means of creating fictive bonds of kinship. It was normal in England for apprentices to be apprenticed outside the natal home, and only one apprenticeship indenture referenced in this thesis bears evidence of a kin connection between master and apprentice in the form of a shared surname.²⁴ Apprentices often travelled long distances in order to undertake apprenticeships, and therefore an apprentice's master played a significant role in their upbringing, independent of familial influences. Llinos Smith highlighted the reciprocal duties attached to other forms of fictive kinship such as fostering arrangements, citing the tale of Pwyll in the first branch of the Mabinogi: Pwyll's son Pryderi was fostered by Teyrnon, creating bonds of obligation between man and boy.²⁵ Not only did apprentices receive bed, board, and training (sometimes in exchange for a premium), but they could also expect fair treatment from their master in return for their own good behaviour. The master, as *paterfamilias*, was responsible for the socialisation of the apprentice, as well as their induction into the craft. Such bonds of fictive kinship enabled the creation of wider economic networks which might be mutually beneficial.

Third, concomitantly, we must consider the use of apprenticeship as a means of entering a local economy and thus creating new markets and lines of credits; this might explain the existence of very short terms of apprenticeship, lasting only three or four years. Trading privileges were often attached to the freedom, including exemption from tolls and tallages, and short apprenticeships might have been a means of introducing oneself to both a guild and future customers, thus establishing business connections without the expense of entering the freedom via the largely financial transaction of redemption. This hypothesis was put forward in Chapter 7, and warrants further study. Apprentices who subsequently joined the guild or entered the freedom would stand shoulder to shoulder with their former masters, and the bonds of kinship developed through apprenticeship could be maintained for life. Whatever the length of the apprenticeship, there is little doubt that some apprentices forged strong relationships with their masters, which outlasted their lives as well as the term of apprenticeship. Testamentary evidence indicates that some apprentices remembered their former masters fondly, including provision for their souls alongside wives, parents, siblings and other close relatives.²⁶ It is also clear that an apprentice might inhabit a position of trust

²⁴ Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3.

²⁵ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Fosterage, Adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 16 (1992), pp. 1–35, p. 24.

²⁶ 'Wycombe', *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part II, A.D. 1358–A.D. 1688*, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1890), pp. 19–20; 'Mourdon', *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London*,

within the household, to the extent that they were appointed as guardian of the master's children at his death.²⁷

Fourth, apprenticeship outside the immediate kin group facilitated the spread of new ideas and technological innovations, preventing stagnation. Although this consideration might not have been at the forefront of a master's mind, taking an apprentice from elsewhere in England (or, indeed, abroad) could result in a mutual exchange of ideas. This might have been particularly important for guilds such as the London goldsmiths, who held the right to assay the work of goldsmiths throughout England by royal charter, and could thus ensure that their skills were spread over a wide area. This indicates that ensuring technical expertise was a dominant motivation in the continued practice of apprenticeship – if not, a master could simply pass on his skills to his wife and children without establishing a formal, guild-regulated apprenticeship. This would have resulted in workers of whom the guild had no knowledge, and whose competency was unknown.

This leads us to the fifth reason for the perpetuation of apprenticeship: the importance of the household economy, highlighted by Howell.²⁸ Many guild regulations indicate an implicit reliance on familial labour within workshops, and it is clear that this was normal practice. In some guild regulations we find masters prohibited from setting 'any woman to work, other than his wedded wife or his daughter'.²⁹ Richard Goddard, among others, suggested that female 'servants' were trained in parallel with male apprentices but without the formality of an indenture. Therefore, these prohibitions were introduced as the use of cheaper female labour angered unemployed male craftworkers.³⁰ The importance of familial labour resulted in wives becoming equally as skilled as their husbands, and in fact an apprenticeship indenture survives for a male apprenticed to a widowed female master; in this case it seems that she had learned the craft of tailoring from her deceased husband (a London tailor), and was considered sufficiently competent to be able to take her own apprentices.³¹ This was not unique; Caroline Barron highlighted the example of two fifteenth-century

A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688: Part I, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1358, ed. by Reginald R. Sharpe (London: by order of the Corporation of the City of London, 1889), pp. 655–656.

²⁷ 'Corp', *Calendar of Wills: Part I*, p. 477.

²⁸ Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy*, pp. 9–10 and 34.

²⁹ 'Articles of the Girdlers', in *Memorials*, p. 216.

³⁰ Richard Goddard, 'Female Apprenticeship in the West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages', *Midland History*, 27 (2002), pp. 165–181, pp. 169–170.

³¹ Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9-1-1.

female bell-founders, who learnt the craft from their husbands.³² The importance of wives in transmitting skills in the crafts of tanning and weaving was highlighted by Derek Keene and Heather Swanson respectively, and this is also demonstrated in the surviving indentures.³³ There was a trend, particularly in south-western England, of including the master's wife's name on the indenture, and this might indicate that they were involved in training the apprentices – the apprentice was bound to serve and obey the wife, as well as the husband.

Although guild regulations permitted the labour of wives and daughters, nothing was said about sons, and this implies that it was normal for a son to be employed in his father's workshop during childhood. Apprenticeship provided a means of building new social relationships and therefore parents would be motivated to place their children in another household, despite the fact that it meant losing a worker in their own workshop. In this case, an apprentice might be taken on to replace the labour of a child apprenticed elsewhere. Furthermore, a master who had no children himself might take an apprentice both to acquire a worker and to construct a fictive kinship with another household. A shortage of young men in fifteenth-century England prompted young women to delay marriage and childbearing in response to greater working opportunities, resulting in lower birth rates and thus perpetuating this demographic trend.³⁴ Longer apprenticeships might also delay a man's entry to the labour market, resulting in later marriage and fewer children. Urban settlements relied heavily on in-migration to maintain population levels, and studies of Exeter, Gloucester and Yorkshire towns support Sylvia Thrupp's assertion that mercantile families tended to die out after a couple of generations.³⁵ Apprentices became more desirable, as there were less children within the population in the century after the Black Death. The potential material benefits of being apprenticed to a childless master were considered in Chapter 7.

Finally, apprenticeship was a means of providing high-quality, craft-specific technical training, and this brings us to the second key point of this thesis – the importance of reputation. In London and elsewhere, guilds acted on behalf of both civic and royal

³² Caroline M. Barron, 'Johanna Hill (d. 1441) and Johanna Sturdy (d. c. 1460), Bell-Founders', in *Medieval London Widows, 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 99–111, *passim*.

³³ Derek Keene, 'Tanners' Widows, 1300–1350', in *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 1–27, *passim*.; Heather Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past & Present*, 121 (1988), pp. 29–48, p. 45.

³⁴ Bolton, 'The World Upside Down', pp. 37–38.

³⁵ Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 198–206. See Bolton, 'The World Upside Down', p. 36, for a concise summary of these findings.

authorities to regulate trade and membership. One priority was to maintain quality and standards, in terms of both behaviour and products. The guilds' insistence on high-quality production, and regulations on working practices, may have had the effect of pushing prices up despite efforts to maintain 'fair' prices; after all, a prohibition on night-working necessarily limited the amount of goods a workshop could produce in a given week, and therefore the value of these items was increased. Craftsmen working outside guild oversight, in an ecclesiastical liberty or in a rural settlement, could perhaps exploit retail opportunities by selling to those who could not afford the higher prices charged by guild members for goods of similar quality, backed by an implicit guild guarantee. The guilds discouraged the production of low-quality items in order to protect their reputation, as part of a social contract with both royal and civic authorities. Nevertheless, lower quality or second-hand items were more affordable for poorer members of society. The insistence on both high-quality workmanship and fair pricing for purchasers may also have influenced the continued prevalence of apprenticeship; because few apprentices required payment in cash, a master might be able to keep prices low because the immediate outlay required to run his workshop was reduced (see Chapter 6). In the 1350s, the London fursters were accused of failing to take on apprentices in an effort to raise prices artificially; reducing the number of craftsmen in a trade helped to increase prices by driving down supply while the level of demand presumably remained constant. Therefore apprenticeship helped to maintain a difficult balance between prices and wages in periods where labour was more expensive.

2. Reputation

Reputation remained of paramount importance throughout the period 1250–1500, on both a personal and a collective level. As part of the social contract between guilds, civic authorities, and royal authority, guilds took responsibility for controlling their members. Chapter 2 considered the importance of frankpledge as an indication that an apprentice had reached the age of civic responsibility. In areas where craft guilds existed, they operated in a similar way, providing what Phillipp Schofield termed 'mutual surety', in which the behaviour of one was the responsibility of all.³⁶ Additionally, guilds were responsible for the quality of the goods members produced and, therefore, the reputation of the craft. This involved an element of trust; the guilds, in effect collectively, promised the authorities above

³⁶ Phillipp R. Schofield, 'The Late Medieval View of Frankpledge and the Tithing System: An Essex Case Study', in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, ed. by Zvi Razi and Richard Michael Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 408–449, p. 408.

and the consumers below that guild members were trustworthy craftsmen who produced high-quality goods. Poor practices by non-members reflected poorly on the reputation of guild members, hence the saddlers' complaints of shoddy workmanship by runaway apprentices (see Chapter 3).³⁷ There was, therefore, a desire to delineate clearly between members and non-members, and to promote good practices and high quality. Although we cannot know for certain, it is possible that, by ensuring that apprentices were trained to a high standard, guilds hoped to raise the standard of work carried out beyond guild control, in the same way that national oversight exercised by the London goldsmiths and pewterers aimed to increase the quality of workmanship of goldsmiths and pewterers throughout England.

Apprenticeship was a means of ensuring that high standards were maintained. With the exception of one apprenticeship indenture, the surviving documents give no indication of the craft-specific skills an apprentice was taught during their term (see Chapter 5). Individual guilds do not seem to have regulated the content of apprentices' training, but there were almost certainly craft-specific norms. This becomes apparent in apprentices' complaints concerning lack of training, and the guilds' willingness to exonerate these apprentices and allow them to train with a new master. Moreover, restrictions on the number of apprentices a master could have at any one time, while partially a means of limiting the number of future competitors, can also be read as an attempt to ensure that each apprentice received the best possible training. The London pewterer Thomas Downton (who ran the largest craft workshop known to historians of medieval London) could not possibly have personally trained all eleven of his apprentices.³⁸ Nevertheless, Thrupp noted that ordinances limiting the number of apprentices per master were not necessarily effective, and were generally only enforced when there was already considerable unemployment of journeymen in the craft – thus encouraging masters to take on paid workers as opposed to unpaid apprentices.³⁹ The traditional Marxist view is that a limit on the number of labourers was symptomatic of guilds' efforts to 'prevent by force the transformation of the master of a trade into a capitalist', as Jocelyn Dunlop and Richard Denman put it, to prevent masters from '[pursuing] what he considered his own interest regardless of whether...it advanced the common good'.⁴⁰

³⁷ J.W. Sherwell, *The History of the Guild of Saddlers*, 3rd edn., revised by Lt.-Col. K.S. Laurie (Chelmsford: J.H. Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1956), p. 10.

³⁸ Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 72.

³⁹ Sylvia L. Thrupp, 'Medieval Gilds Reconsidered', *Journal of Economic History*, 2 (1942), pp. 164–173, p. 170.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I – Book I: The Processes of Production of Capital*, trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. by Frederick Engels, reprint (London: Lawrence &

Although such restrictions prevented masters from gaining undue advantage over their competitors by running larger workshops, we cannot forget that an apprentice was not a cheap worker, and that if guilds desired to see all apprentices well-trained and well-maintained, there had to be a limit on the number of apprentices that any one master could have simultaneously.

As noted above, apprenticeship was a means of socialisation as well as technical training; it was intended to mould young men and women into trustworthy and respectable members of the local economy. Therefore, apprenticeship indentures placed a great deal of emphasis on the behaviour expected from apprentices. By prohibiting apprentices from frequenting taverns (except on business), gambling, fornicating, and so on, masters hoped to preserve their own reputations. Apprenticeships were a matter of public knowledge, and thus the poor behaviour of an apprentice would reflect badly on the apprentice himself, on the master, on the master's *familia*, and on the craft in general. In extreme cases of poor behaviour, apprentices could be expelled from the craft entirely (see Chapter 4). Apprentices were not usually related to their masters; as discussed above, the master acted as *paterfamilias*, responsible for their upbringing in place of (and often at a great distance from) the natal family. This meant that apprenticeship provided apprentices with access to a broader range of knowledge, fostering the spread of new techniques and ideas, beyond familial structures.⁴¹

The few apprenticeship indentures that survive for female apprentices provide an indication of the behaviour expected from young women in medieval England. It is notable that female apprentices were generally, like their male counterparts, forbidden to frequent taverns, but the fact that their indentures generally omit the clause prohibiting the playing of 'illicit or dishonest games' suggests that gaming was a male pastime. This supposition is corroborated by female-orientated conduct literature of the period. Nevertheless, sexual incontinency was considered as likely from female apprentices as from males, and there was overall very little difference in the content of indentures for male and female apprentices. Apprenticeship indentures alone can neither confirm nor refute the existence of a 'golden age' for women from the mid-fourteenth century, but they do support Marian Dale's assertion that London's female silkwomen actively recruited apprentices under similar terms as male

Wishart, 1983), p. 292; Jocelyn O. Dunlop and Richard D. Denman, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), p. 18.

⁴¹ David de la Croix, Matthias Doepke, and Joel Mokyr, 'Clans, Guilds, and Markets: Apprenticeship Institutions and Growth in the Preindustrial Economy', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133 (2018), pp. 1–70, p. 7.

apprentices, despite not having any formal guild organisation.⁴² However, the relative paucity of evidence for female apprentices supports the arguments put forward by Barron, Howell, Kowaleski, Bennett and others: this might have been a time of increased economic opportunity for women, but only in comparison to what came before and after. The London silkwomen failed to convert their economic gains into political influence, and consequently they were eventually subsumed into the weavers' guild and lost the ability to train their own apprentices.

Other aspects of the content of apprenticeship indentures must also influence how we view apprenticeship. It became less exploitative over time in response to economic and demographic changes in the aftermath of the Black Death. Various aspects of this change – a shift away from trial years to shorter trial periods, the addition of an '*annum integrum*' to the term of apprenticeship, and a promise of goods or cash at the end of the apprenticeship – were discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The indentures reveal a reality that is not necessarily clear in other sources; the turn of the fifteenth century saw a change in the practice of apprenticeship, in response to demographic conditions. Towns and cities were reliant on immigration in order to maintain the urban population, and once land became more plentiful, tenures less exacting, and wages more generous, young people might be more inclined to acquire skills through well-remunerated, short-term service work rather than through a lengthy formal apprenticeship. As wages increased, it became more difficult for parents to replace their children's labour, and thus they might be reluctant to place them in a long apprenticeship. Apprenticeship also became less exclusionary, as a paucity of workers made it difficult to find apprentices; masters had to offer more inducements to attract apprentices, and sought to keep their labour for longer. Longer apprenticeships were not desirable, and masters sought to assuage this by promising payment in cash or goods at the end of the term. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, these bonuses could be of relatively high value. Additional years were introduced at the end of the term of apprenticeship, during which the apprentice would receive payment in cash or goods as well as room and board, as a means of securing a skilled worker for longer. Apprenticeship became less exploitative as masters sought to retain apprentices' labour for longer, but were compelled to offer greater material and financial recompense in exchange. Thus apprenticeship, at least in the first half of the fifteenth century, was a more mutually beneficial arrangement than at any other point in this

⁴² Marian K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 4 (1933), pp. 324–335, *passim*.

period. In exchange for their legally secured labour, an apprentice could hope to receive goods and cash that would enable them to enter the freedom and become a master craftsman in their own right upon completion of their term.

3. Addressing assumptions about apprenticeship

This thesis examined some commonly held assumptions about apprenticeship in medieval England in order to determine whether they are supported by the contemporary evidence of apprenticeship indentures and other documents. The three main assumptions were that seven years was the usual length of term, that apprentices were unable to marry, and that apprentices constituted ‘cheap’ labour. On examining the evidence, we can conclude that the first of these assumptions has a documentary basis. Seven years has long been thought of as the ‘usual’ length of an apprenticeship. A minimum seven year apprenticeship was established custom in some parts of England, although at York the minimum term varied from craft to craft.⁴³ The *Liber Albus* recorded the ‘ancient establishment’ of London, under which ‘no apprentice shall be received for a less term than for seven years’.⁴⁴ The London goldsmiths offered lower premiums for longer terms, to try and encourage apprentices to bind themselves to a master for ten-year terms.⁴⁵ The fact that multiple guild ordinances sought to prevent masters from taking apprentices for terms of less than seven years indicates that shorter apprenticeships were both common enough to cause concern and generally frowned upon.⁴⁶ Although the apprenticeship indentures used throughout this thesis indicate that terms could vary from three years to thirteen years, the mean, median and mode length of term was in fact seven years.

The veracity of the other assumptions, however, has been roundly refuted in Chapters 4 and 6. Few apprenticeship indentures contained behavioural clauses which explicitly

⁴³ *York Memorandum Book: Part II (1388–1493) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1915), p. lvi–lvii.

⁴⁴ *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn – vol. III, containing Translation of the Anglo-Norman Passages in Liber Albus, Glossaries, Appendices, and Index*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862), p. 90. Seven years was also the minimum term in Coventry from at least as early as 1494 – *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part II*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1908), pp. 553–554

⁴⁵ T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths’ Company 1327–1509* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1975), p. 73.

⁴⁶ Article 10, Pinners’ Ordinances 1356, in *The Pinners’ and Wiresellers’ Book 1462–1511*, ed. by Barbara Megson, London Record Society vol. 44 (London: London Record Society, 2009), p. 2; *Memorials*, pp. 238 and 239; *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor’s Register, containing the Records of the City Court Leet or View of Frankpledge, A.D. 1420–1555, with Divers Other Matters, part I*, trans. and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., for the Early English Text Society, 1907), p. 225.

prohibited the apprentice from marrying during their term. There was little indication that marriage was encouraged, but in nearly 60 percent of indentures the apprentice was permitted to marry with the master's consent and licence. A further 18 percent of indentures did not mention marriage at all. Masters could make a pragmatic decision to allow it, based on whether the marriage would benefit them. The indentures also indicate that many masters viewed sexual activity as inevitable, and that they often phrased behavioural clauses to permit a degree of freedom – with the intention of limiting reputational damage, rather than prohibiting sexual activity entirely. The idea that apprentices constituted a 'cheap' form of labour has also been thoroughly disproven by the calculations presented in Chapter 6. These calculations demonstrate clearly that, while maintaining an apprentice might be cheaper than employing a journeyman, apprentices were certainly not 'cheap'. The cost of feeding an apprentice was quite considerable, without taking into account the cost of providing adequate clothing and bedding. Reputation was of the utmost importance in this period, and a craftsman who was accused of neglecting an apprentice could see his creditworthiness detrimentally affected. The guild might even forbid him from keeping apprentices, thus removing a valuable labour source from his workshop. Here reputation worked hand in hand with the social contract to ensure that apprentices were adequately trained and maintained.

Apprenticeship indentures are evidence of a formalised training system that both predated and continued to exist outside the guild system. They provided a legally enforceable means of formalising an informal master-apprentice relationship, and ensuring that neither master nor apprentice was unduly exploited. This thesis has provided an initial study of these hitherto neglected documents, but further avenues for research remain. The wealth of information collated and analysed within this thesis will provide a starting point for future research, and highlights the usefulness of the apprenticeship indenture as a source of information for studies of apprenticeship and the guild system in medieval England.

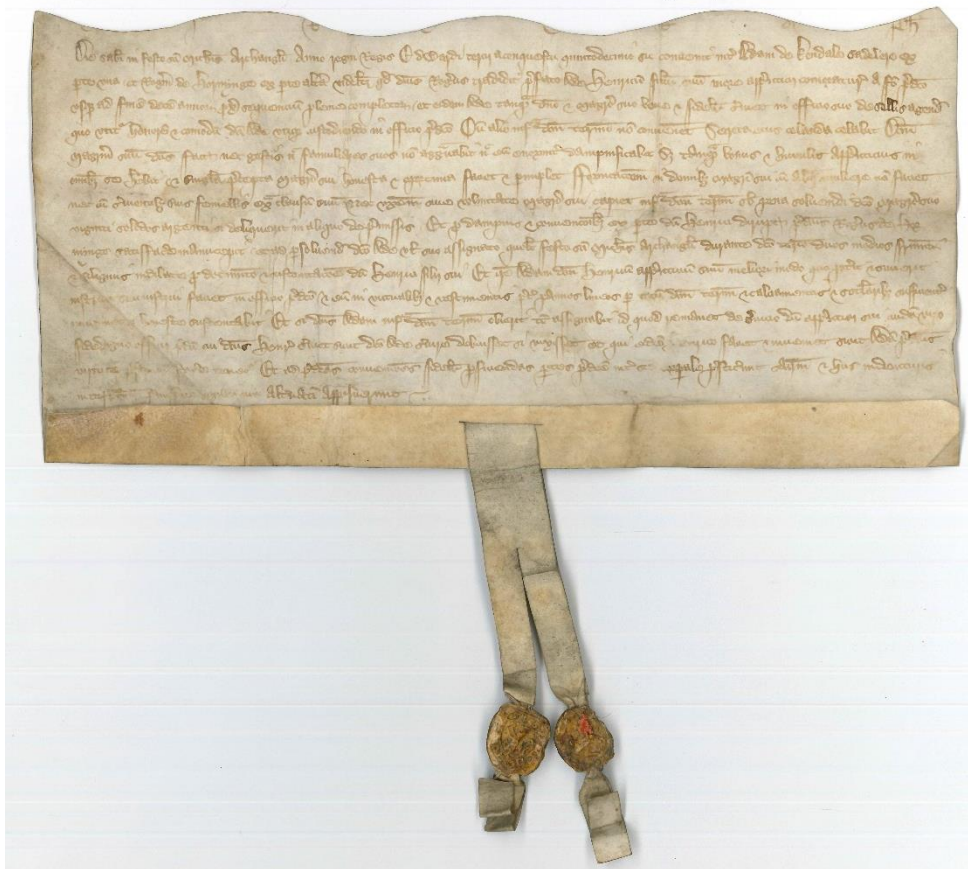
Appendix A: Apprenticeship indentures used in this thesis

A1 Images of apprenticeship indentures

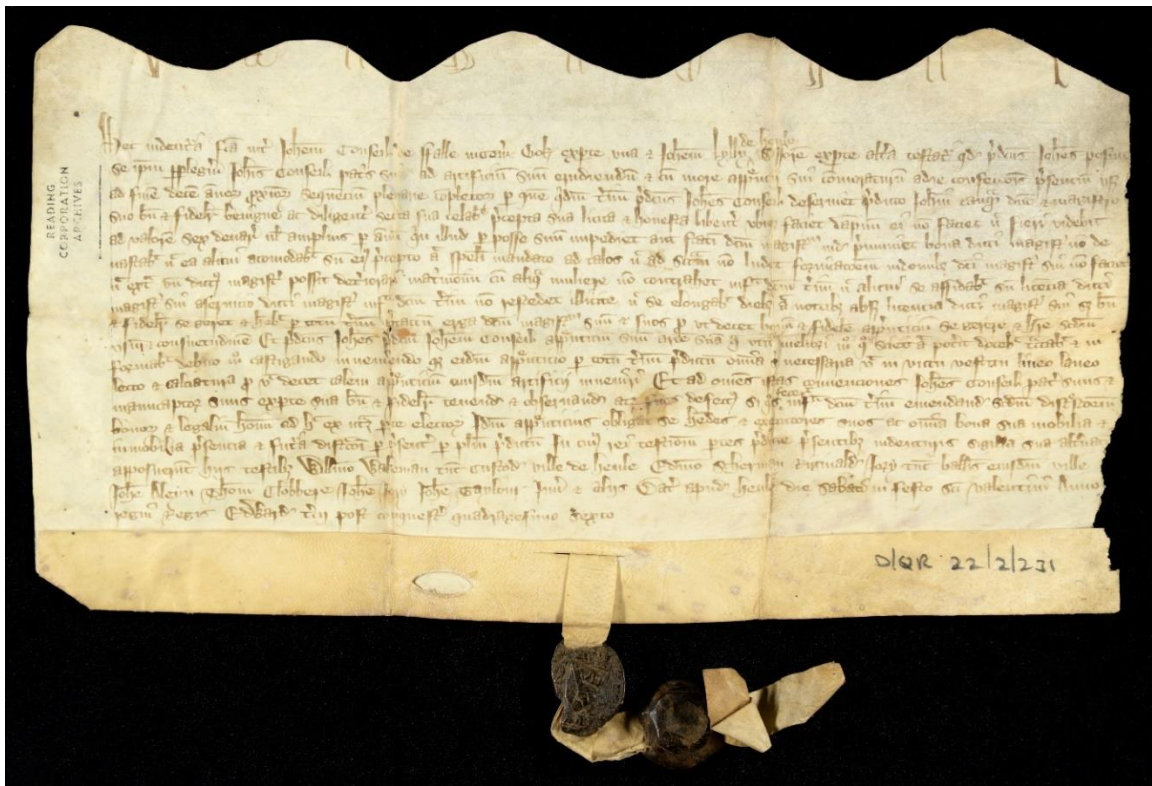
A1.1 Seal from SALS, DD\SF/16/31/1



A1.2 Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/1 – indenture dated 1341, with waved indenting (Image reproduced by kind permission of Culture Coventry Trust/Coventry Archives)



A1.3 Berkshire Record Office, D/QR22/2/231 – chirograph indenture dated 1372, with waved indenting
 (Image reproduced by kind permission of Berkshire Record Office)



A1.4 WAM, 5966 – chirograph indenture dated 1378, with jagged indenting
 (Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster)



A2 Apprenticeship indentures by date of indenture

- 1255 TNA E 210/1397
John de Santa Cruce of Oxford apprenticed to Peter Standaune of London, goldsmith, for 9 years from Christmas [25 December] 1255.
- 1291 CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 245–247.
Hubert Tibenham of Yarmouth apprenticed to John le Spicer of Norwich, spicer, for 6 years from Pentecost [10 June] 1291.
- 1309 *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317-1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), pp. 126-128.
Robert Sharp of Ravenstone apprenticed to Richard atte Grene of Coventry, mercer, for 6 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1309.
- 1310 TNA, E 210/5150
John of Wiltshire apprenticed to Adam de Ely of London, fishmonger, for 8 years from Easter [19 April] 1310.
- 1336 TNA, E 40/4450
Agnes le Chaloner of Coventry apprenticed to Robert Raulot of Coventry, purser, for 3 years from Pentecost [19 May] 1336.
- 1341 Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/1
Henry Hornynge apprenticed to Adam de Kendale, saddler, for 10 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1341.
- 1345 TNA, E 40/8267
Agnes le Felde of King's Norton apprenticed to Robert Raulot of Coventry, purser, for 3 years from the feast of St Laurentius the Martyr [10 August] 1345.
- 1364 York Merchant Adventurers, 1/4/3/2/1
William of Lincoln of Osbaldswyck to John Patt of York, *swerdshipper*, for 12 years from Martinmas [11 November] 1364.
- 1371 *York Memorandum Book: Part I (1376-1419) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1912), pp. 54–55.
Nicholas de Kyghlay of Keighley to John de Bradlay of York, bowyer, for 7 years from the feast of St Peter ad Vincula [1 August] 1371.
- 1372 Berkshire Record Office, D/QR22/2/231
John Conseil of Fawley apprenticed himself to John Lyly of Henley, tailor, for 10 years from the feast of St Valentine [14 February] 1372.
- 1372 *York Memorandum Book*, ed. by Joyce W. Percy (Gateshead: Northumberland Press Ltd., for the Surtees Society, 1973), p. 5.

- Robert de Hotoft of Gate Burton to Robert Christendome of York, bowyer, for 7 years from the 4 October 1372.
- 1378 WAM, 5966
Margaret Bisshop of Seford juxta Lewes apprenticed herself to John Pretchet of London, *tallyser*, and his wife Burga, *teldemaker*, for 7 years from the feast of St Peter ad Vincula [1 August] 1378. Indenture made 28 July 1378.
- 1382 WAM, 5959
Francis Iwerst apprenticed to Drugo Barantyn of London, goldsmith, for 10 years from Christmas [25 December] 1382. Indenture made 24 November 1382.
- 1384 Coventry Archives, BA/C/17/3/2
Robert Wellis to John Thwenyng and Thomas Cawod, for 6 years from the feast of St Andrew [30 November] 1385. Indenture made 15 December 1384.
- 1392 LMA, COL/CHD/AP/05/019
Katherine Nougale of London apprenticed to Avice Wodeford of London, silkthrowster, for 7 years from Pentecost [2 June] 1392.
- 1393 Lancashire Archives, DDHO/636
John de Foxton of Walton apprenticed himself to John de Walton of Preston, mercer, for 6 years from 22 December 1293.
- 1395 BL, Add. Ch. 75625
Thomas Edward of Windsor apprenticed himself to John Hyndlee of Northampton, brazier and pewterer, for 7 years from the feast of All Saints [1 November] 1395. Indenture made 18 October 1395.
- 1396 Northamptonshire Archives, FH/G/C/1971
William Sywell of Lobenham apprenticed himself to John Gregory of Northampton, ironmonger and honeymaker, for 7 years from Pentecost [21 May] 1396.
- 1397 LMA, A/CSC/1267
John Branketre of Hatfield Regis apprenticed himself to Thomas Wylford of London, fishmonger, for 7 years from the feast of St Gregory the Great [12 March] 1397.
- 1397 Lancashire Archives, DDHK 9/1/1
John Parker apprenticed himself to Joan Hendele, widow of Henry Hendele of London, tailor, for 7 years from the feast of St Andrew [30 November] 1397.
- 1398 TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135 d. (1428)
Thomas Wakford apprenticed himself to Thomas Broune of London, goldsmith, for 5 years from Epiphany [1 January] 1399. Indenture made 10 December 1398.
- 1399 TNA, C 146/914
John Stace of Essex apprenticed himself to Richard atte Wend of Haverhill, fuller, for 6 years from Easter [30 March] 1399.
- 1400 BL, Egerton Ch. 7355

- William Mentyl of Sheppey apprenticed himself to Henry Christian of Minster, Sheppey, smith, for 4 years from Christmas [25 December] 1399. Indenture made 18 June 1400.
- 1402 TNA, CP 40/646, rot. 301 (1422)
Thomas Wolrich of Norwich apprenticed himself to John Cleye of London, draper, for 7 years from the Nativity of St John the Baptist [24 June] 1402. Indenture made 10 May 1402.
- 1403 HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v.
John Kent of Titchfield apprenticed himself to Henry Flemmyng of Winchester, cordwainer, for 5 years from the Decollation of St John the Baptist [29 August] 1403. Indenture made 10 June 1403.
- 1405 XL, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. II, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 28–29.
John Heryon of Rendham to Walter Smyth of Norwich, draper, for 9 years from Candlemas [2 February] 1405. Indenture made 17 January 1405.
- 1405 HRO, W/D1/22, m. 6 v.
John Williams of Gloucester to Henry Flemmyng of Winchester, cordwainer, for 5 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1405.
- 1408 HRO, W/D1/154
William atte Nasshe of Winchester apprenticed himself to Nicholas Wade of Winchester and his wife Katherine, weavers, for 7 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1408.
- 1411 HRO, W/D1/22, m. 42 v.
Simon Stephen to Stephen Dighere of Alton, mercer, for 10 years from Easter [12 April] 1411. Indenture made 22 September 1410.
- 1411 HRO, W/D1/22, m. 44
John Godale to John Bottret, *fabrum*, for 6 years from 1 February 1411.
- 1412 HRO, W/D1/22, m. 46
Stephen Godelowe to John Elstede of Winchester, saddler and merchant, for 7 years from the feast of the Annunciation [25 March] 1412. Indenture made 8 January 1412.
- 1414 BL, Add. Ch. 75626
William Spragge of Shropshire to John Hendeley of Northampton, brazier and pewterer, and his wife Isabella for 8 years from the Nativity of John the Baptist [24 June] 1414. Indenture made 4 June 1414.
- 1421 Berkshire Record Office, D/EZ34/1
John Spynster of Newbury to William Hackere of Maidenhead, butcher, for 12 years from the feast of the Annunciation [25 March] 1421. Indenture made 16 March 1421.
- 1423 West Yorkshire Archive Service, MMB/56

- Richard Slak of Pudsay to William Rycroft of Calverley, blacksmith, for 3.5 years from Christmas [25 December] 1422. Indenture made 10 July 1423.
- 1424 TNA, C 146/3153
John Weizter of 'Brabayn' apprenticed himself to John Brabayn of Wycombe, weaver, for 8 years from 17 April 1424.
- 1424 SALS, D\B\bw/1009
Michael Laleye of Hibernia apprenticed himself to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 10 years from Martinmas [11 November] 1424.
- 1426 TNA, CP 40/673, rot. 109 (1429)
Roger Perou apprenticed himself to John Harry of Nanturras [Cornwall], tanner, for 5 years from the feast of St John ante Porte Latinam [6 May] 1426.
- 1427 SALS, D\B\bw/1402
John Taylor of Swansea apprenticed himself to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 3 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1427. Indenture made 24 February 1427.
- 1427 TNA, CP 40/673, rot. 109 (1429)
Roger Trevals apprenticed himself to John Leylond of London, armourer, for 7 years from Easter [20 April] 1427. Indenture made 20 February 1427.
- 1427 Devon Heritage Centre, 3248A-0/11/87
John Cresa to Walter Lemman and his wife Matilda, for 6 years from 22 April 1427.
- 1428 TNA, C 146/1260
John Deweboys to John Borage [Burges] of Bridport and his wife Agnes, for 2 years from 16 August 1428.
- 1430 TNA, C 146/63
John Bere of Bothenhampton to John Sterre of Bridport and his wife Lucy, for 12 years from 20 August 1430.
- 1432 SALS, D\B\bw/1384
John Benet jun. apprenticed himself to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 7 years from the feast of All Saints [1 November] 1432.
- 1433 SALS, D\B\bw/1008
William Gose of Galway apprenticed himself to Robert Jervyse of Bridgwater, fuller, and his wife Joan, for 4 years from 15 April 1433.
- 1437 SALS, D\B\bw/945
William Baker of Taunton apprenticed himself to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 7 years from 29 June 1437.
- 1439 TNA, C 146/5045
John Bere apprenticed himself to John Burges of Bridport and his wife Agnes, for 13 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1439.

- 1439 TNA, C 146/3879
William Hore of Steeple in Purbeck to John Burges of Bridport and his wife Agnes, for 5 years from 5 October 1439.
- 1440 TNA, C 146/1132
Thomas Beryman of Bridgwater to John Burges of Bridport, grocer and mercer, and his wife Agnes, for 8 years from the feast of the Annunciation [25 March] 1440. Indenture made 10 March 1440.
- 1445 TNA, E 40/8643
Thomas Alsot apprenticed himself to John Velyn of Cornwall and his wife Alicia, for 8 years from 17 June 1445.
- 1446 Essex Record Office, D/DP Z72
John Callere of Andover apprenticed himself to John Knave of Andover, tailor, for 8 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1446. Indenture made 31 July 1446.
- 1446 SRO, C/2/10/1, m. 2 r.
William Burre of Leighs apprenticed himself to John Wytton of Ipswich, grocer, for 7 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1447. Indenture made 11 October 1446.
- 1447 Norfolk Record Office, Hare Mss, no. 2019
Eleanor Ffyncham of Fyncham apprenticed herself to William Rotheley of London, goldsmith, and his wife Anne, silkthrowster, for 7 years from Candlemas [2 February] 1447. Indenture made 26 January 1447.
- 1448 SRO, C/6/11/1
John Frere of Ipswich apprenticed himself to John Sexteyn of Ipswich, barber, for 7 years from the Nativity of St John the Baptist [24 June] 1448. Indenture made 20 June 1448.
- 1448 Leics RO, DG11/1156
John Corby of Bosworth apprenticed himself to William Madame of Coventry, shearman and capmaker, for 8 years from St George's Day [23 April] 1448.
- 1451 KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r.
Robert Commynge of Lydd apprenticed himself to Thomas atte Nasshe of Romney, smith, for 6 years from the feast of St Luke the Evangelist [18 October] 1451. Indenture made 9 May 1451.
- 1451 KHLC, NR/FAc3, f. 14 r.
Robert Clerk of Lydd apprenticed himself to John Gore, smith, for 6 years from the feast of the Annunciation [25 March] 1451. Indenture made 9 May 1451.
- 1454 TNA, E 210/1176
Elizabeth Eland of Sturton apprenticed to John Langwith of London, tailor, and his wife Elena, silkwoman, for 7 years from the feast of the Translation of St Thomas the Martyr [7 July] 1454.

- 1456 TNA, CP 40/824, rot. 358 (1467)
Roger Moriell of Long Melford apprenticed himself to Thomas Wynslowe of London, draper, for 9 years from Pentecost [16 May] 1456. Indenture made 17 April 1456.
- 1457 Derbyshire Record Office, D2366/3
Thomas Sturte of Newton apprenticed himself to Robert Sturte of Lincoln, baker, and his wife Joan, for 6 years from Christmas [25 December] 1457. Indenture made 27 December 1457.
- 1458 KHLC, NR/Fac3, f. 31 r.
Robert Neffe of Spalding apprenticed himself to Thomas a Nasse of Romney, smith, for 7 years from the feast of the Annunciation [25 March] 1458. Indenture made 24 February 1458.
- 1458 WAM, 5965*
Robert Kyme of King's Lynn apprenticed to William Poklyngton of London [term missing] from the feast of the Decollation of St John the Baptist [29 August] 1458. Indenture made 5 June 1458.
- 1459 TNA, C 146/2314
Margaret Fflemyng of Serleston apprenticed to Gerard Brevera of London, vintner, and his wife Margaret, silkwoman, for 7 years from the Nativity of St John the Baptist [24 June] 1459.
- 1459 TNA, E 40/10022
John Goffe of Spain apprenticed himself to John Gibbs of Penzance, fisherman, and his wife Agnes, for 8 years from the feasts of Sts Philip and James [1 May] 1459. Indenture made 1 April 1459.
(This document is not legible. See *Documents Illustrating the History of Civilization in Medieval England (1066-1500)*, ed. by R. Trevor Davies (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 140, for a translation.)
- 1466 KHLC, NR/Fac3, f. 56 v.
Thomas Turke of Hornchurch apprenticed himself to John Fforde of Romney, for 7 years from 25 April 1466.
- 1467 BL, Add. Ch. 75055
Roger Wright of Repton to Richard Basturville of Repton, webster, for 4 years from Martinmas [11 November] 1467.
- 1469 TNA, C 146/1129
Thomas Marchall of Woodstock apprenticed himself to Robert Austyn, mayor of New Woodstock, mercer, waxchandler and capmaker, for 9 years from the feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist [24 June] 1469. Indenture made 10 May 1469.
- 1479 SALS, D\B\bw/368
Thomas McShane of Youghal apprenticed himself to Nicholas Prendirgest of Waterford, mercer, and his wife Joan Flemyng, for 10 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1479.

- 1480 SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.
Robert Payn of Woodbridge apprenticed himself to Thomas Drayll of Ipswich, mercer, for 8 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1480. Indenture made 12 October 1480.
- 1480 Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.2. 53, f. 30 r.
Walter Byse of 'Wymelton' apprenticed himself to John Gare of St Mary Cray, cordwainer, for 8 years from 18 September 1480.
- 1480 Oxfordshire History Centre, P6/55D/4
Henry Nicol of Oxford apprenticed himself to William Ashlay and his wife, for 7 years from Pentecost [21 May] 1480.
- 1480 Oxfordshire History Centre, P6/55D/4
Peter Owen of Westminster apprenticed himself to Richard Pitt of Oxford, cordwainer, and his wife, for 8 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1480.
- 1481 SRO, C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.–v.
Thomas Heyward of Grundisburgh apprenticed himself to Geoffrey Osborne of Ipswich, smith, for 9 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1481. Indenture made 20 June 1481.
- 1481 SALS, D\B\bw/842
John Davy of Bridgwater apprenticed himself to Thomas Ffisher of Taunton, merchant, for 6 years from the Nativity of the Virgin Mary [8 September] 1481. Indenture made 3 September 1481.
- 1488 Surrey History Centre, LM/1659/17
George Bracewell of Doncaster apprenticed himself to John Swerder of London, goldsmith, for 9 years from the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary [15 August] 1488. Indenture made 10 August 1488.
- 1488 SALS, DD\SF/16/31/1
James Whityng of Kentisbeare apprenticed himself to John Palmer of London, skinner and Merchant of the Staple of Calais, for 10 years from the feast of St Peter ad Vincula [1 August] 1488. Indenture made 7 July 1488.
- 1490 KHLC, Fa/RA1
Thomas Crepon apprenticed himself to Thomas Noball of Faversham, glover, for 8 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1490. Indenture made 10 October 1490.
- 1491 BL, Add. Ch. 73950
John Pounce of London apprenticed himself to Sir Gilbert Talbot, citizen and mercer of London and of the Merchant Staple of Calais, for 7 years from the feast of the Annunciation [25 March] 1491. Indenture made 7 March 1491.
- 1493 BL, Add. Ch. 74099
James Mattye apprenticed himself to John de Houpplines [John de Blicquy de Houppeline, French Secretary to the King's Council at Calais], for 4 years from 25 May 1493.

- 1498 Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/B/2/1, ff. 194 v.–195 (‘Red Book of Gloucester’) Thomas Longford of ‘Cokery[n]g’ apprenticed himself to Thomas Porter of Gloucester, draper and hosier, for 7 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1498. Indenture made 14 October 1498.
- 1498 MERL, MS2419/24
William Stakker of Odiham to John Park of Odiham, fuller, for 6 years from Michaelmas [29 September] 1498. Indenture made 14 October 1498.
- 1501 TNA, E 210/6382
Thomas Tanner of Haverfordwest apprenticed himself to Reynald Sclad of Haverfordwest, for 7 years from Christmas [25 December] 1500. Indenture made 14 January 1501.
- n.d. West Sussex Record Office, Ep/VI/1/4 f. 1A
Robert Sutton of Fawley apprenticed himself to Henry Chalender [term missing] from the feast of St Edmund of Abingdon [16 November] – year missing.

A3 Apprenticeship indentures by archival and published locations

A3.1 London archives

British Library (BL)

Add. Ch. 75625 (1395)

Thomas Edward of Windsor to John Hyndlee of Northampton, brazier and pewterer, for 7 years.

Egerton Ch. 7355 (1400)

William Mentyl to Henry Christian of Minster, Sheppey, smith, for 4 years.

Add. Ch. 75626 (1414)

William Spragge of Shropshire to John Hendeley of Northampton, brazier and pewterer, and his wife Isabella for 8 years.

Add. Ch. 75055 (1467)

Roger Wright of Repton to Richard Basturville of Repton, webster, for 4 years.

Add. Ch. 73950 (1491)

John Pounce of London to Sir Gilbert Talbot, citizen and mercer of London and of the Merchant Staple of Calais, for 7 years.

Add. Ch. 74099 (1493)

James Mattye to John de Houpplines [John de Blicquy de Houppeline, French Secretary to the King's Council at Calais], for 4 years.

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

COL/CHD/AP/05/019 (1392)

Katherine Nougé of London to Avice Wodeford of London, silkthrowster, for 7 years.

A/CSC/1267 (1397)

John Branketre of Hatfield Regis to Thomas Wylford of London, fishmonger, for 7 years.

The National Archives (TNA)

E 210/1397 (1255)

John de Santa Cruce of Oxford to Peter Standaune of London, goldsmith, for 9 years.

E 210/5150 (1310)

John of Wiltshire to Adam de Ely of London, fishmonger, for 8 years.

E 40/4450 (1336)

Agnes le Chaloner of Coventry to Robert Raulot of Coventry, purser, for 3 years.

E 40/8267 (1345)

Agnes le Felde of King's Norton to Robert Raulot of Coventry, purser, for 3 years.

C 146/914 (1399)

John Stace of Essex to Richard atte Wend of Haverhill, fuller, for 6 years.

C 146/3153 (1424)

John Weizter of 'Brabayn' to John Brabayn of Wycombe, weaver, for 8 years.

C 146/1260 (1428)

John Deweboys to John Borage [Burges] of Bridport and his wife Agnes, for 2 years.

C 146/63 (1430)

John Bere of Bothenhampton to John Sterre of Bridport and his wife Lucy, for 12 years.

C 146/5045 (1439)

John Bere to John Burges of Bridport and his wife Agnes, for 13 years.

C 146/3879 (1439)

William Hore of Steeple in Purbeck to John Burges of Bridport and his wife Agnes, for 5 years.

C 146/1132 (1440)

Thomas Beryman of Bridgwater to John Burges of Bridport, grocer and mercer, and his wife Agnes, for 8 years.

E 40/8643 (1445)

Thomas Alstot to John Velyn of Cornwall and his wife Alicia, for 8 years.

E 210/1176 (1454)

Elizabeth Eland of Sturton to John Langwith of London, tailor, and his wife Elena, silkwoman, for 7 years.

C 146/2314 (1459)

Margaret Ffleming of Serleston to Gerard Brevera of London, vintner, and his wife Margaret, silkwoman, for 7 years.

E 40/10022 (1459)

John Goffe of Spain to John Gibbs of Penzance, fisherman, and his wife Agnes, for 8 years. (This document is not legible. See *Documents Illustrating the History of Civilization in Medieval England (1066–1500)*, ed. by R. Trevor Davies (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 140, for a translation.)

C 146/1129 (1469)

Thomas Marchall of Woodstock to Robert Austyn, mayor of New Woodstock, mercer, waxchandler and capmaker, for 9 years.

E 210/6382 (1501)

Thomas Tanner of Haverfordwest to Reynald Sclad of Haverfordwest, for 7 years.

The National Archives, CP 40 Common Plea rolls (available online via Anglo-American Legal Tradition <<http://aalt.law.uh.edu/>>)

CP 40/669, rot. 135 d. (Easter term 1428)

1398 Thomas Wakford to Thomas Broune of London, goldsmith, for 5 years.

CP 40/646, rot. 301 (Trinity term 1422)

1402 Thomas Wolrich of Norwich to John Cleye of London, draper, for 7 years.

CP 40/673, rot. 109 (Easter term 1429)

1426 Roger Perou to John Harry of Nanturras [Cornwall], tanner, for 5 years.

CP 40/673, rot. 109 (Easter term 1429)

1427 Roger Trevals to John Leylond of London, armourer, for 7 years.

CP 40/824, rot. 358 (Trinity term 1467)

1456 Roger Moriell of Long Melford to Thomas Wynslowe of London, draper, for 9 years.

Westminster Abbey Muniments (WAM)

5966 (1378)

Margaret Bisshop of Seford juxta Lewes to John Pretchet of London, *tallyser*, and his wife Burga, *teldemaker*, for 7 years.

5959 (1382)

Francis Iwerst to Drugo Barantyn of London, goldsmith, for 10 years.

5965* (1458)

Robert Kyme of King's Lynn to William Poklyngton of London.

A3.2 Local archives

Berkshire Record Office

D/QR22/2/231 (1372)

John Conseil of Fawley to John Lylly of Henley, tailor, for 10 years.

D/EZ34/1 (1421)

John Spynster of Newbury to William Hackere of Maidenhead, butcher, for 12 years.

Coventry Archives

BA/C/17/3/1 (1341)

Henry Hornyng to Adam de Kendale, saddler, for 10 years.

BA/C/17/3/2 (1384)

Robert Wellis to John Thwenyng and Thomas Cawod, for 6 years.

Derbyshire Record Office

D2366/3 (1457)

Thomas Sturte of Newton to Robert Sturte of Lincoln, baker, and his wife Joan, for 6 years.

Devon Heritage Centre

3248A-0/11/87 (1427)

John Cresa to Walter Lemman and his wife Matilda, for 6 years.

Essex Record Office

D/DP Z72 (1446)

John Callere of Andover to John Knave of Andover, tailor, for 8 years.

Gloucestershire Archives

GBR/B/2/1, ff. 194 v.–195 ('Red Book of Gloucester') (1498)

Thomas Longford of 'Cokery[n]g' to Thomas Porter of Gloucester, draper and hosier, for 7 years.

Hampshire Record Office (HRO)

W/D1/22, m. 6 v. (1403)

John Kent of Titchfield to Henry Flemyng of Winchester, cordwainer, for 5 years.

W/D1/22, m. 6 v. (1405)

John Williams of Gloucester to Henry Flemyng of Winchester, cordwainer, for 5 years.

W/D1/154 (1408)

William atte Nasshe of Winchester to Nicholas Wade of Winchester and his wife Katherine, weavers, for 7 years.

W/D1/22, m. 42 v. (1411)

Simon Stephen to Stephen Dighere of Alton, mercer, for 10 years

W/D1/22, m. 44 (1411)

John Godale to John Bottret, *fabrum*, for 6 years.

W/D1/22, m. 46 (1412)

Stephen Godelowe to John Elstede of Winchester, saddler and merchant, for 7 years.

Kent History & Library Centre (KHLC)

NR/FAc3, f. 14 r. (1451)

Robert Commynge of Lydd to Thomas atte Nasshe of Romney, smith, for 6 years.

NR/FAc3, f. 14 r. (1451)

Robert Clerk of Lydd to John Gore, smith, for 6 years.

NR/FAc3, f. 31 r. (1458)

Robert Neffe of Spalding to Thomas a Nasshe of Romney, smith, for 7 years.

NR/Fac3, f. 56 v. (1466)

Thomas Turke of Hornchurch to John Fforde of Romney, for 7 years.

Fa/RA1 (1490)

Thomas Crepon to Thomas Noball of Faversham, glover, for 8 years.

Lancashire Archives

DDHO/636 (1393)

John de Foxton of Walton to John de Walton of Preston, mercer, for 6 years.

DDHK 9/1/1 (1397)

John Parker to Joan Hendele, widow of Henry Hendele of London, tailor, for 7 years.

Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)

MS2419/24 (1498)

William Stakker of Odiham to John Park of Odiham, fuller, for 6 years.

Norfolk Record Office

Hare Mss, no. 2019 (1447)

Eleanor Ffyncham of Fyncham to William Rotheley of London, goldsmith, and his wife Anne, silkthrowster, for 7 years.

Northamptonshire Archives

FH/G/C/1971 (1396)

William Sywell of Lobenham to John Gregory of Northampton, ironmonger and
honey-maker, for 7 years.

Oxfordshire History Centre

P6/55D/4 (1480)

Henry Nicol of Oxford to William Ashlay and his wife, for 7 years.

P6/55D/4 (1480)

Peter Owen of Westminster to Richard Pitt of Oxford, cordwainer, and his wife, for 8 years.

Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (Leics RO)

DG11/1156 (1448)

John Corby of Bosworth to William Madame of Coventry, shearman and capmaker, for 8
years.

Records of the Company of Merchant Adventurers of York, Merchant Adventurers' Hall, York (York Merchant Adventurers)

1/4/3/2/1 (1364)

William of Lincoln of Osbaldswyck to John Patt of York, *swerdslider*, for 12 years.

Somerset Archives & Local Studies (SALS)

D\B\bw/1009 (1424)

Michael Laleye of Hibernia to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 10
years.

D\B\bw/1402 (1427)

John Taylor of Swansea to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 3 years.

D\B\bw/1384 (1432)

John Benet jun. to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 7 years.

D\B\bw/1008 (1433)

William Gose of Galway to Robert Jervyse of Bridgwater, fuller, and his wife Joan, for 4
years.

D\B\bw/945 (1437)

William Baker of Taunton to John Davy of Bridgwater, tanner, and his wife Joan, for 7 years.

D\B\bw/368 (1479)

Thomas McShane of Youghal to Nicholas Prendirgest of Waterford, mercer, and his wife
Joan Flemyng, for 10 years.

D\B\bw/842 (1481)

John Davy of Bridgwater to Thomas Ffisher of Taunton, merchant, for 6 years.

DD\SF/16/31/1 (1488)

James Whityng of Kentisbeare to John Palmer of London, skinner and Merchant of the Staple of Calais, for 10 years.

Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich (SRO)

C/2/10/1, m. 2 r. (1446)

William Burre of Leighs to John Wytton of Ipswich, grocer, for 7 years.

C/6/11/1 (1448)

John Frere of Ipswich to John Sexteyn of Ipswich, barber, for 7 years.

C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.-v. (1480)

Robert Payn of Woodbridge to Thomas Drayll of Ipswich, mercer, for 8 years.

C/2/3/6/4, mm. 5 r.-v. (1481)

Thomas Heyward of Grundisburgh to Geoffrey Osborne of Ipswich, smith, for 9 years.

Surrey History Centre

LM/1659/17 (1488)

George Bracewell of Doncaster to John Swerder of London, goldsmith, for 9 years.

Trinity College, Cambridge

MS O.2.53, f. 30 r. (1480)

Walter Byse of 'Wymelton' to John Gare of St Mary Cray, cordwainer, for 8 years.

Available online <<https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/O.2.53>> [accessed 2 May 2021].

West Sussex Record Office

Ep/VI/1/4 f. 1A (n.d.)

Robert Sutton of Fawley to Henry Chalender.

West Yorkshire Archive Service

MMB/56 (1423)

Richard Slak of Pudsay to William Rycroft of Calverley, blacksmith, for 3.5 years.

A3.3 Published indentures

Hubert Tibenham of Yarmouth to John le Spicer of Norwich, spicer, for 6 years. (1291)

CXXI, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 245–247.

Robert Sharp of Ravenstone to Richard atte Grene of Coventry, mercer, for 6 years. (1309) *Year Books 11 Edward II, 1317-1318*, ed. by John P. Collas and William S. Holdsworth (London: Quaritch for the Selden Society, 1942), pp. 126–128.

Nicholas de Kyghlay of Keighley to John de Bradlay of York, bowyer, for 7 years. (1371) *York Memorandum Book: Part I (1376-1419) – Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers (Durham: Andrews & Co., for the Surtees Society, 1912), pp. 54–55.

Robert de Hotoft to Robert Christendome of York, bowyer, for 7 years. (1372) *York Memorandum Book*, ed. by Joyce W. Percy (Gateshead: Northumberland Press Ltd., for the Surtees Society, 1973), p. 5.

John Heryon to Walter Smyth of Norwich, draper, for 9 years. (1405) XL, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. II, compiled and edited by Rev. William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey (Norwich and London: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1906), pp. 28–29.

John Goffe of Spain to John Gibbs of Penzance, fisherman, and his wife Agnes, for 8 years. (1459) *Documents Illustrating the History of Civilization in Medieval England (1066–1500)*, ed. by R. Trevor Davies (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 140.

A4 Draft apprenticeship indentures in the Bury St Edmunds scrivener's notebook (CUL, MS Add. 7178), by folio

- 11 v. Robert Hangyng of Bury apprenticed to John Halton, baker, for 6 years.
- 12 r. John Deye of Troston apprenticed himself to Edward Walpool of Ixworth Thorp, 'wryter', for 5 years.
- 16 r. Richard Debynhem of Worlington apprenticed to John Walsh of Bury, glover, for 9 years.
- 16 r. Robert Geylys of Bury apprenticed to Robert Ffarewell, baker, for 7 years.
- 17 r. William Leynge of Bottisham apprenticed himself to Johne Grygge (alias Subbard) of Bury, woolman, for 8 years.
- 19 v. George Nimmo of Hessett apprenticed to John White of Bury, brasier, for 5 years. (1460)
- 21 r. Richard Carter (alias Steff) of Bury apprenticed to John Halton, baker, for 6 years.

- 21 v. Katherine Clerk of Bury apprenticed to John Moxyel of Bury and his wife Joan, 'sustere', for 12 years.
- 22 v. Alexander Hervy of Bury apprenticed himself to Philip Harpur, 'bedwevere', for 6 years.
- 27 r. Robert Haddenam of Kentford apprenticed himself to John Porter of Bury, mercer, for 6 years.
- 27 v. Thomas Person (alias Catelyn) of Kirtling apprenticed himself to William Borywey of Bury, weaver, for 3 years.
- 27 v. Agnes Manney of Bury St Edmunds apprenticed to Joan Herry, wife of John Herry, 'sostere', for 12 years.
- 28 v. Thomas Stevenyssone of 'Braborne' [Northumberland] apprenticed himself to Thomas Lorymer of Bury St Edmunds, harper, for 7 years.
- 28 v. John Smyth of Wetherden apprenticed to John Hoyntastett, corviser(?), for 6 years.
- 29 v. Robert Archer, of the household of Edward Ampe of Bury, apprenticed to John Wylwys of Bury, 'kervere', for 7 years.
- 30 r. Robert Rafnesby of Ravensby [Westmorland] apprenticed to William Boston of Bury, leather dyer and pointmaker, for 7 years.
- 30 v.–31 r. John Merymonth of Bury apprenticed to Nicholas Teryngton of Bury, butcher, for 6 years.
- 35 v. William Stacy of Bury St Edmunds apprenticed to John Grougte of Bury St Edmunds, fuller, for 7 years.
- 36 r. John Reymond of Beetley apprenticed to William Hilderyerd, fuller, for 5 years.
- 36 v. John Scomyr of Bishop's Lynn apprenticed himself to John Gouty, 'barker', for 5 years.
- 37 r. Gregory Sonowe of Bury apprenticed to Stephen Gardener of Bury, weaver, for 4 years.
- 39 v. Thomas Corp of Stowmarket to John Reggys of Bury, grocer, for 8 years.
- 39 v. Robert Bokenham of Redgrave apprenticed himself to Richard Sterne of Bury, draper, for 6 years.
- 40 v. Walter Jonson of Wainfleet apprenticed to William Yonge of Bury, tailor, for 6 years.
- 41 r. Robert Carter of Bury St Edmunds apprenticed himself to Thomas Lorymer of Bury St Edmunds, harper, for 5 years.

- 43 v. John Boydon of 'Stethesword' apprenticed himself to Robert Swetman for 4 years.
- 44 v. John Ffelyp of Bury apprenticed to John Myldenhale of Bury, dyer, for 10 years.
- 45 r. John Seymoor of Stanfield apprenticed to William Boston of Bury, pointmaker, for 8 years.
- 46 r. William Grene of 'Toftoke' apprenticed to John Mey jun. of Bury, weaver, for 12 years.
- 47 r. Thomas Alawe of Edenham, of the household of Thomas Page, apprenticed to William Symond, weaver, for 7 years.
- 47 r. Thomas Kyng of Bury apprenticed to Leonard Belle, dyer, for 9 years.
- 48 r. Thomas Josep of Bury St Edmunds apprenticed to John Alpe snr., cardmaker, for 12 years.
- 54 r. John Perfey of 'Hilbylworth' apprenticed himself to William Troys of Bury, hosier, for 4 years.
- 54 v. John Hilperby of Bury apprenticed to William Boston of Bury, 'poynter', for 8 years.
- 58 v. Thomas Grove, of the household of Ralph Wannty of Newmarket, apprenticed to Thomas Moor, tailor, for 7 years.
- 58 v. William Warde of Papworth St Agnes apprenticed to Thomas Moor of Bury, tailor, for 7 years.
- 59 r. John Kyrkeby of Moulton apprenticed to Thomas Lakford, corviser, for 7 years.
- 63 r. Edward Skey apprenticed to Robert Ffareweyll, baker, for 8 years.
- 71 v. John Howlet of Larling apprenticed himself to Henry Whitehead of Bury, 'chemenemaker', for 7 years.
- 73 v. Edward Collys apprenticed himself to John Collys, tailor, his father, for 6 years.
- 76 r. Edward Burnamit of Bury apprenticed to Robert Grene of Bury, carpenter, for 5 years.
- 77 r. John Okele, of the household of Robert Bryan of Bury St Edmunds, apprenticed to Edmunds Okele of Bury St Edmunds, weaver, for 6 years.
- 77 v. John Pay apprenticed himself to William Broun of 'Cokes', carpenter, for 6 years.
- 79 r. John Goch of 'Westowe' apprenticed to John Groughte, fuller, for 9 years.

A5 ‘Apprenticeship’ indentures, not containing the word ‘*apprenticius*’

- 1424 Nottingham University Library, Department of Manuscripts, Pa D 41
John de Wylleford of Burton on Trent to Robert Leek of Burton on Trent, *kerver* and painter, for 10 years.
(John de Wylleford is referred to as ‘*servient*’ throughout.)
- 1451 Canterbury Cathedral Archives, CCA-DCc-MSSB/C/142
John Heryettsham to Robert Lacy of Canterbury, coverlet maker, for 7 years.
(John Heryettsham is referred to as ‘*servient*’ throughout.)
- 1476 HRO, 49M84/1
John Vyle jun. to William Smith of ‘Greele’, *fabrum*, for 6 years.

Appendix B: Sources of costs for estimates in Chapter 6

In the records costs are given in a variety of forms, but have been standardised to £ *s d* in this appendix.

1*s* = 12*d*

£1 = 20*s*

A short explanation of the source for each cost is given alongside the amount. A short reference is included for each figure. Refer to section B3 for full bibliographic details.

B1 Clothing

B1.1 Sumptuary laws

11 Edward III, cc. 1, 3 and 2 (1336)

This first sumptuary law was a clear attempt to boost domestic textile production by prohibiting the wearing of cloth produced outside the realm. Not only did the statute forbid the exportation of wools ‘upon pain of forfeiture of life and of member’, but also the import of ‘any cloths made in any other places...upon the forfeiture of the said cloths, and further to be punished at the King’s will’. No one except the king, queen, and their children, could wear cloth ‘other than is made in England, Ireland, Wales, or Scotland, within the King’s power’. The same statute invited alien clothworkers to ‘come safely and surely’ into the realm (as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis). It seems unlikely that this prohibition would have affected apprentices in terms of their attire, although it might have had more impact on apprentices linked to the cloth trade.

37 Edward III, Statute concerning Diet and Apparel (1363)

This legislation was prompted by rising prices, caused by an increased demand for elite goods from wage-earners and the *nouveau riche*. It sought delineate different social groups, often based on annual income, and introduce strict proscriptions on appropriate attire. These proscriptions limited the cost of the fabrics groups could wear, as well as restricting the decorations and accessories that could be worn. Although apprentices do not appear as a distinct social group in this legislation, they are likely to have been classed as employees of urban craftsmen – ‘servants...of mysteries, and artificers’.

3 Edward IV, c. 5 (1463)

This legislation has little relevance to apprentices. There is a preoccupation with ‘extreme’ fashion, and the legislation not only limits the length of ‘pikes’ on shoes but also forbids the wearing of any gown, jacket or coat which is too short to cover the wearer’s ‘privy members and buttocks’.

B1.2 Linen

Low estimate:

1s cost of linen provided in annual maintenance agreement for a ‘better-off’ peasant – Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

High estimate:

2s cost based on 2 ells of Champagne linen at 12*d* per ell, in indenture of goods belonging to Henry V (1423) – Item 578, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

Other figures considered:

Linen, of variable cost and quality:

7*d* per ell – linen, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.

10*d* per ell – Champagne linen – Item 577, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

1s 2*d* per ell – Champagne linen – Item 576, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

10*d* per ell – based on 21s 10*d* for 27 ells of ‘Brabant’ linen, in an action of debt on a sale of goods (1425) – TNA, CP 40/656, rot. 203 d.¹

1s 8*d* for 3 ells – linen (‘cloth of Colgne’), inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.

4s 6*d* based 27s for 6 ells of ‘munsterdevillers’, in an action of debt on a sale of goods (1407) – TNA, CP 40/587, rot. 220 d.

6s 8*d* based on £4 for 12 ells of ‘munsterdevillers’, in an action of debt on a sale of goods (1407) – TNA, CP 40/587, rot. 220 d.

Individual goods

Shirts

6*d* based on four shirts (‘*camisias*’), value 2s, in an inventory of forfeited goods (1327) – ‘December 1, Nottingham – Close Rolls, Edward III: December 1327, membrane 4’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward III: Vol. I, 1327–30*.

Braies

¹ Although Brabant was a relatively cheap linen, it was considered fit for lining Henry V’s stockings and so might have been a choice for basic undergarments – Lisa Monnas, ‘Reading English Royal Inventories: Furnishings and Clothing in the Inventory of King Henry V (r. 1413–1422)’, in *Inventories of Textiles – Textiles in Inventories: Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, ed. by Thomas Ertl and Barbara Karl (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2017), pp. 89–110, p. 102.

2–3*d* based on two ‘pairs of drawers (‘ii *bracce*’), along with one *poket*, together valued at 6*d*’, in a valuation of goods belonging to a debtor (1376) – ‘Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376’ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225.

Both

2*s* based on four ‘*shertys* and six pairs of drawers (*bracce*)’, total value 2*s*, in a valuation of goods belonging to a debtor (1409) – ‘Membr. 9, 11 Oct. 1409’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 300.

B1.3 Tunics

Low estimate:

1*s* 8*d* ‘tunic of scarlet’, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2*b*’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.

High estimate:

6*s* individual values of red tunic and green tunic, in a list of items taken as pledges for a trespass (1320) – ‘Sheriffs’ Court Roll, 1320: Membrane 2 (transcript pp. 6–11), *London Sheriffs’ Court Roll 1320*.

Other figures considered:

10*d* a ‘worthstede’ tunic, mentioned in an action of theft (1328) – ‘Membr. 16 (19)*b*’, *CPMR, 1323–64*, p. 50.

1*s* ‘an old tunic of tawne’, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1371) – ‘Membr. 6, 22 Sept. 1371’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 130.

2*s* ‘a tunic of russet furred with black wool’, in a valuation of goods belonging to a debtor (1376) – ‘Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376’ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225.

3*s* tunic provided in annual maintenance agreement for a ‘better-off’ peasant – Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

3*s* ‘a tunic with an unlined hood of russet and *raye* [striped material]’, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1371) – ‘Membr. 6, 22 Sept. 1371’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 130.²

3*s* ‘a tunic and cap worth 3*s*’, mentioned in a grant of land (undated) – ‘Deed A. 3523’, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds: Vol. 2*.

3*s* doublet, in a schedule of goods seized by order of the mayor of London (1380) – ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR: 1364–81*, p. 269.

3*s* 4*d* doublet, in a schedule of goods seized by order of the mayor of London (1380) – ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR: 1364–81*, p. 269.

² Russet was not generally a costly fabric. The 1364 sumptuary law prohibited agricultural workers and those with less than 40*s* of goods and chattels from wearing any cloths other than blanket or russet – 37 Edward III, c. 14.

- 5s tunic for a woman, mentioned in sale of property (1250–1) – ‘Deed B. 3279’, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds: Vol. 2*.³
- 5s amount granted per year for ‘winter tunic’ (presumably sufficient for the recipient’s social position) in a life pension (1312) – ‘Close Rolls, Edward II: March 1312, March 8. York’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward II: Vol. I, 1307–13*.
- 8s 4d maximum cost of tunic suggested by 1363 sumptuary law, 37 Edward III.

B1.4 Hose

Low estimate:

- 2d ‘a pair of hose’, in a valuation of goods belonging to a debtor (1376) – ‘Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376’ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225.

High estimate:

- 3s pair of hose ‘of red cloth’, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.

Other figures considered:

- 5d based on average cost of five pairs of hose with total value of 2s 6d, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.
- 8d ‘a pair of hose and a pair of old shoes’, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.
- 12d ‘a pair of old russet hose’, in a valuation of goods belonging to a debtor (1376) – ‘Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376’ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225.

B1.5 Hats, caps and hoods

Despite the proliferation of hoods, it has been very difficult to find reference to the values of hats or caps for either the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, but one suspects this might be due to interpretation and translation of the various terms. ‘*Chaperoun*’ has been translated as ‘hood’ in the Parliament Roll (‘Edward III: March 1332, membr. 3 dorse’, *PROME*), but as ‘cap’ in a Plea and Memoranda Roll (‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.)

Low estimate:

- 6d ‘three hoods (‘*capucia*’) of *sangwyn*, one of blue and one green, 18d’, in a valuation of goods belonging to a debtor (1376) – ‘Membr. 12, 12 Aug. 1376’ *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 225.

³ In 1249 the same couple had sold a shop in Great English street, Southampton for 10 marks and another tunic for Cicely (cost unspecified) – ‘Deed B. 3377’, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds: Vol. 2*.

High estimate:

- 3s 4d hood, in a schedule of goods seized by order of the mayor of London (1380) – ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR: 1364–81*, p. 269;
‘two caps of ray’, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.

Other figures considered:

- 1s beaver hat, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.
- 1s 4d ‘a red hood with a lining of black cloth’, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1371) – ‘Membr. 6, 22 Sept. 1371’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 130.
- 1s 6d ‘a part-coloured hood with one half *motle*’, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1371) – ‘Membr. 6, 22 Sept. 1371’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 130.
- 1s 8d two caps of green cloth, combined value 3s 4d, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.
- 2s 6d two hoods of ‘black stuff’, in a list of items taken as pledges for a trespass (1320) – ‘Sheriffs’ Court Roll, 1320: Membrane 2 (transcript pp. 6–11), *London Sheriffs’ Court Roll 1320*.
- 2s 6d blue cap, combined value 3s 4d, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.
- 3s 4d hood, in a schedule of goods seized by order of the mayor of London (1380) – ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR: 1364–81*, p. 269.
- 4s two caps (‘*chaperouns*’) of scarlet, combined value 3s 4d, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.
- 5s a lady’s hood (‘*capelyne*’), in a schedule of goods seized by order of the mayor of London (1380) – ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR: 1364–81*, p. 269.

B1.6 Belts or girdles**Low estimate:**

- 6d based on value of two ‘paunchers’, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.

High estimate:

- 3s 4d based on value per item of ‘twelve decorated girdles worth 40s’, assuming all twelve girdles were of equal value (1460) – TNA, CP 40/799, rot. 337 d.

Other figures considered:

- 3s 4d a belt partly garnished with silver, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.
- 13s 4d a woman’s ‘girdle of silk harnessed with silver’, mentioned in a bill of complaint (1367) – ‘Membr. 7b, 1 April 1367’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 75.
- 20s a silver girdle, in an inventory of goods (1373) – ‘Membr. 6, ...May 1373’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 155.
- 20s silver girdle, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.
- 24s silver girdle, in a schedule of goods seized by order of the mayor of London (1380) – ‘Membr. 6, 3 July 1380’, *CPMR: 1364–81*, p. 269.
- 40s a girdle decorated with silver, in an action of trespass (1402) – TNA, CP 40/567, rot. 247 d.
- 46s 8d girdle, delivered as pledge in an action of debt (1376) – ‘Membr. 1, 26 Nov. 1376’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 231.

B1.7 Footwear

Low estimate:

- 6d shoe element in maintenance agreement of Anicia atte Hegge, Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 175.

High estimate:

- 4s 8d annual payment ‘for his shoeing’, in life pension granted by the crown (1357) – ‘Close Rolls, Edward III: January 1375, Jan 12. Westminster’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward III: Vol. 14, 1374–77*.

Other figures considered:

- 4–5d shoes distributed to the poor of Northampton by order of Henry III (1266) – Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages*, p. 257.
- 7d value of pairs of shoes sold two three different men, in action for breach of statute (1466) – TNA, CP 40/824, rot. 423 d.⁴
- 3s 4d annual payment ‘for shoeing’, in life gift to a corrody of the monastery of Bardenay [Lincs.] (1384) – ‘Close Rolls, Richard II: 1384, membrane 20d’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Richard II: Vol. 2, 1381–85*.

⁴ 4 Edward IV, c.7.

- 5s value of shoes in three pensions granted by the Knights Templar at La Bruere [Lincs.] (1312) – ‘Close Rolls, Edward II: October 1312, Oct. 12. Windsor’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward II: Vol. 1, 1307–13*.
- 6s 8d two pairs of scarlet shoes, total value 13s 4d, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.
- 6s 8d annual grant ‘for boots’ as part of the office of bailiff of Haygrove (1409) – ‘Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry V, entry 424’, *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Vol. 20, Henry V*.

B2 Bedding

B2.1 Canvas

Low estimate:

Free it is assumed that woolsacks or emballage canvas have been repurposed for this layer. Goddard, *Credit and Trade*, p. 85; Owen-Crocker, ‘Emballage’, in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles*, pp. 189–190, p. 189.

High estimate:

6d cost for 2 ells of canvas, based on cost per ell for 8 ells of canvas ‘for covering the baskets’, purchased by the king’s receivers (1311) – ‘Folio cxxv b.’, *Letter-Book D*, p. 257.

Other figures considered:

5d value per 2 ells of canvas, based on 60,000 ells imported into England via Poole valued at £600 (1466–7) – Childs, ‘Trade: Textiles, Arms and Armour, England, c. 1250–1450’, in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles*, pp. 602–606, p. 604.

10s bed canvas, in probate inventory of goods belong to the Archdeacon of Richmond (1400) – *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese, 1350–1500*, ed. and trans. by Philip M. Stell (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2006), p. 499, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 31.

B2.2 Mattress

Low estimate:

2s 6d ‘1 mattress’, in list of goods delivered in bill of complaint concerning a bond (1367) – ‘Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.

High estimate:

5s payment for new mattress and bolster 7s 8d, assuming that bolster was valued at 2s 8d, in the accounts for the Dean and Chapter of Wells (1448–9) – ‘Communar’s Accounts, 1448–9’, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells: Vol. 2*.

Other figures considered:

- 16d mattress, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.
- 3s 4d mattress, in probate inventory of goods belong to the Archdeacon of Richmond (1400) – *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese*, p. 499, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 31.
- 5s 6d ‘two mattresses for a bed, price 11s’, in list of goods and chattels delivered as mainprise for debt (1356) – ‘Close Rolls, Edward III: April 1356, membr. 19, April 14’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward III: Vol. 10, 1354–60*.

B2.3.1 Sheets

Low estimate:

- 2s a pair of sheets, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.

High estimate:

- 5s a pair of ‘Champagne linen’ sheets, in inventory of Baron Scrope’s London wardrobe (before 1415) – Coatsworth, ‘Soft Furnishings and Textiles: Post-1100’, in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles*, pp. 530–534, p. 533.

Other figures considered:

- 6d a pair of old sheets, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.
- 8d three single sheets with total value of 12d, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.
- 2s a pair of sheets, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.
- 3s 3½d average value of four pairs of sheets valued at 13s 2d in total, inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.
- 3s 4d ‘two sheets, of the value of 40d’, among stolen items listed in delivery of infangenthef (1352) – ‘folio ccxxi b.’, *Letter-Book F*.
- 3s 4d a pair of ‘Brabant linen’ sheets, in inventory of Baron Scrope’s London wardrobe (before 1415) – Coatsworth, ‘Soft Furnishings and Textiles: Post-1100’, in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles*, pp. 530–534, p. 533.
- 4s ‘another pair of sheets’, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – ‘Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.

5s 'two pairs of sheets', total value 10s, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – 'Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393', *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.

9s 6d a pair of 'bastard Rheims (or Rennes)' linen sheets, in inventory of Baron Scrope's London wardrobe (before 1415) – Coatsworth, 'Soft Furnishings and Textiles: Post-1100', in *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles*, pp. 530–534, p. 533.

B2.3.2 Blankets

Low estimate:

1s 4d 'a blanket' valued at 8d, in a list of items taken as pledges for a trespass (1320) – 'Sheriffs' Court Roll, 1320: Membrane 2 (transcript pp. 6–11), *London Sheriffs' Court Roll 1320*.

High estimate:

6s 8d a blanket valued at 3s 4d, in list of goods delivered in bill of complaint concerning a bond (1367) – 'Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.

Other figures considered:

1s 6d two pairs of blankets at 3s, so 1s 6d per pair, in an inventory of goods (1468) – *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese*, p. 626, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 40.

2s two pairs of blankets at 4s, so 2s per pair, in an inventory of goods (1468) – *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese*, p. 626, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 40.

3s 4d four blankets valued at 6s 8d, so 3s 4d per pair, in a bill of complaint for detinue of goods (1393) – 'Membr. 1, 14 Nov. 1393', *CPMR, 1381–1412*, p. 205.

3s 4d two pairs of fustians valued at 6s 8d, so 3s 4d per pair, in an inventory of goods (1468) – *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese*, p. 626, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 40.

4s one blanket valued at 16d, in list of goods delivered in bill of complaint concerning a bond (1367) – 'Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.

B2.4 Pillows

Low estimate:

6d a bolster and three pillows of the value of 6d, in list of items pledged for recognizance of debt (1303) – 'vijjd, folio 58', *Letter-Book B*.

This value seems very low for so many items, so the total figure has been used to represent one pillow.

High estimate:

6s 8d down pillow covered in fustian, in indenture of goods belonging to Henry V (1423) – Item 1101, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

Other figures considered:

3s ‘a bolster of black tartarin [a type of silk]’, in indenture of goods belonging to Henry V (1423) – Item 1032, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

5s short down pillows, in indenture of goods belonging to Henry V (1423) – Item 1101, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

6s 8d a feather bed with a bolster, in indenture of goods belonging to Henry V (1423) – Item 1100, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

8s large down pillows covered in fustian or linen, in indenture of goods belonging to Henry V (1423) – Item 801, ‘Henry VI: October 1423’, *PROME*, online edition.

16s 8d large feather pillow with bolster, in inventory post-mortem of goods of Richard Toky (1391) – ‘Roll A 33: 1393–94, membr. 2b’, *CPMR, 1381–1412*, pp. 209–211.

20s a bolster, in an acknowledgement of receipt of chattels (1310) – ‘fo. ci b.’, *Letter-Book D*, pp. 220–221.

40s a feather bed with a bolster, in an inventory of goods – ‘Close Rolls, Richard II: February 1378, membrane 10’, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Richard II: Vol. 1, 1377–81*.

B2.5 Coverlets**Low estimate:**

Not included.

High estimate:

2s ‘a red coverlet with wheels and grey dragons’, in probate inventory of goods belong to the Archdeacon of Richmond (1400) – *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese*, p. 499, cited in Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*, p. 31.

Other figures considered:

8d a ‘quylte devel’, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.

2s two bedspreads, total value 2s, in a tax assessment (c.1285–90) – Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 206.

2s a coverlet, in a valuation of goods belonging to debtors (1368) – ‘Membr. 4b, 21 Oct. 1368’, *CPMR, 1364–81*, pp. 90–91.

- 4s two 'covertures', total value 8s, in list of goods delivered in bill of complaint concerning a bond (1367) – 'Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.
- 8s 'coverture' and tester in 'bluet', in list of goods delivered in bill of complaint concerning a bond (1367) – 'Membr. 7, 22 Jan. 1367', *CPMR, 1364–81*, p. 73.

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Appendix C: Salaries promised to apprentices during the ‘*annum integrum*’

Nine of the indentures collected for this thesis contained clauses compelling the apprentice to serve the master for an ‘*annum integrum*’, or additional year, at the end of the apprenticeship. Thomas Wakford, apprenticed to a London goldsmith for five years from 1398, was to serve for *two* additional years, and seemingly received the same provision as during his apprenticeship (namely food, drink and 10s 8d per year).¹ Eight of the nine indentures date from the period *c.* 1399–1450. Only one indenture from the late-fifteenth century included an additional year. However, seventeen of the draft indentures from the Bury St Edmunds scribes’ notebook contained an additional year, suggesting that this practice was fairly prevalent, at least in Suffolk, after 1460. These are discussed further in section C2.

The remuneration promised to the the apprentice during the additional year can be categorised in one of six ways:

1. cash, food and goods;
2. cash, food and clothes;
3. cash and food;
4. cash and goods;
5. cash and clothes;
6. food and clothes.

C1 Salaries offered in full indentures

The remuneration offered to each apprentice is set out in Table C1 below, with a rough translation of the relevant clause provided in each case. None of the apprentices received only one form of recompense, for example payment only in cash or only in food. This reflected normal practice outside apprenticeship; as Simon Penn and Christopher Dyer noted, ‘workers on annual contracts received a combination of cash and food, sometimes with accommodation and clothing thrown in’.² The additional year marked the point at which the apprentice began to be treated like a worker on an annual contract, rather than an apprentice. Nonetheless, it seems likely that they were still treated as an apprentice during this time, rather than as an independent adult (see Chapter 7).

¹ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135d.

² Simon A.C. Penn and Christopher Dyer, ‘Wages and Earnings in Late Medieval England: Evidence from the Enforcement of the Labour Laws’, *Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), pp. 356–376, p. 366.

Table C1 – maintenance and salary promised to apprentices during the additional year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Apprentice</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Drink</i>	<i>Clothes</i>	<i>Goods</i>	<i>Cash</i>
1399	Thomas Wakford	Goldsmith	London	5 + 2	✓	✓			✓
1403	John Kent	Cordwainer	Winchester	5 + 1				✓	✓
1405	John Williams	Cordwainer	Winchester	5 + 1	✓		✓		✓
1408	William atte Nasshe	Weaver	Winchester	7 + 1			✓		✓
1411	John Godale	<i>'fabrum'</i>	Winchester	6 + 1	✓		✓		
1427	John Cresa		Okehampton	6 + 1	✓	✓			✓
1432	John Benet jun.	Tanner	Bridgwater	7 + 1	✓	✓		✓	✓
1439	John Bere		Bridport	13 + 1				✓	✓
1480	Henry Nicol	Fuller	Oxford	7 + 1	✓		✓		✓

Thomas Wakford (TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135d.)

Bound to 'faithfully serve [his master] for two years immediately following the end of the term' on the same terms as previously, therefore receiving food, drink, and 10s 8d annually for all other necessary items.

John Kent (HRO, W/D1/22, mem. 6 v.)

Bound to 'serve [his master] in the next year after the end of the term of five years abovementioned, taking for his salary for the whole of that year 20s and two cloth lasts (*'duas virgas pan[nis]'*), value 18d'.

John Williams (HRO, W/D1/22, mem. 6 v.)

Bound to 'serve [his master] for one *'annu[m] integru[m]'* then immediately following the term of five years abovementioned, taking for his salary for the said year 13s and 4d in good and legal money, and his food and clothing as in the aforementioned five year term'.

William atte Nasshe (HRO, W/D1/154)

'And after the end of the aforementioned term, the aforementioned William will serve the aforementioned [master and mistress] for one year next following and receive food and drink, and one robe with a hood, and 10s'.

John Godale (HRO, W/D1/22, mem. 44)

Bound to serve 'for one *'annu[m] integru[m]'* after the aforementioned term' on the same terms as previously, receiving food and clothes.

John Cresa (Devon Heritage Centre, 3248A/1/87)

'And after the end of the said term, the said apprentice will serve the aforesaid masters for one *'annu[m] integru[m]'* then immediately following the end of the same...taking food, drink and 13s 4d for his salary'.

John Benet jun. (SALC, D\B\bw/1384)

‘And at the end the aforesaid apprentice will serve the aforesaid masters one year immediately following the eight...taking from the same food and drink and 13s 4d of silver and ‘*unu[m] cup[er]e*’,³ two blankets, and one pair of sheets for his salary’.

John Bere (TNA, C 146/5045)

‘And at the end of the thirteen years aforementioned, the aforesaid apprentice John will serve his aforesaid masters for one ‘*an[n]u[m] i[n]tegru[m]*’. And at the end of that one year the aforesaid [master and mistress] will give to John 40s of sterling, good and legal English money, and a bed valued 20s, one leather bottle [‘*oll[a cor]ea[m]*’] for two quarts, and one two gallon vessel [‘*patella[m]*’] for his good and laudable service’.

Henry Nicol (Oxfordshire Record Office, P6/55D/4)

‘And at the end of the aforesaid term the aforesaid Henry will well etc. serve for a year...[taking] food, clothes and 20s’.

C2 Salaries offered to apprentices during the additional year in Bury St Edmunds in the 1460s (CUL, MS Add. 7178).

Table C2 – maintenance and salary promised to apprentices during the additional year.

<i>Apprentice</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Drink</i>	<i>Bed</i>	<i>Clothes</i>	<i>Etc.</i>	<i>Goods</i>	<i>Cash</i>
<i>Robert Hangyng</i>	Baker	6	✓	✓	✓				✓
<i>Richard Debynham</i>	Glover	9	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
<i>Robert Geylys</i>	Baker	7	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
<i>Richard Carter</i>	Baker	6	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
<i>Alexander Hervy</i>	Bedweaver	6						✓	✓
<i>Robert Archer</i>	‘Kervere’	7	✓				✓		✓
<i>Robert Rafnesby</i>	Leather dyer and pointmaker	7	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
<i>John Merymonth*</i>	Butcher	6	✓	✓			✓		✓
<i>William Stacy</i>	Fuller	7						✓	✓
<i>John Reymond</i>	Fuller	5	✓			✓	✓		✓
<i>Gregory Sonowe</i>	Weaver	4							✓
<i>John Seymoor</i>	Pointmaker	8	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
<i>Thomas Alawe</i>	Weaver	7				✓		✓	✓
<i>Thomas Kyng</i>	Dyer	9	✓	✓				✓	✓
<i>Thomas Josep*</i>	Cardmaker	12	✓				✓		✓
<i>John Hilperby</i>	‘Poynter’	8	✓			✓	✓		✓
<i>John Okele</i>	Weaver	6							✓

*apprentices to serve for two additional years at the end of the term of apprenticeship.

³ Perhaps a cup, or copper vessel.

Robert Hangyng (fol. 11 v.)

To serve an additional year, 'taking for his salary 20s, food and drink and bed (*'lect[um]'*).

Richard Debynham (fol. 16 r.)

To serve an additional year, taking '4s 4d, two blankets, two sheets and one coverlet, food and drink, and all else necessary'.

Robert Geylys (fol. 16 r.)

To serve 'for one year taking for his salary 20s, and five *'virg[as]'* of coloured cloth for a robe, food and drink and bed (*'lectu[m]'*).

Richard Carter (alias Steff) (fol. 21 r.)

To serve 'for one *'a[nnum] integru[m]'*, taking 20s, food and drink and bed (*'lect[um]'*), and a coverlet valued at 3s 4d, one blanket, and one sheet'.

Alexander Hervy (fol. 22 v.)

To serve for one *'a[nnum] integru[m]'*, 'taking 40s and one coverlet, one pair of blankets, one pair of sheets, and one mattress valued at 13s 4d, or 13s 4d [presumably cash] for the same'.

Robert Archer (fol. 29 v.)

To serve for one additional year 'taking for his salary 20s and food and all else necessary'.

Robert Rafnesby (fol. 30 r.)

To serve for an additional year 'taking for his salary 2 marks [26s 8d] and a robe, food and drink and bed (*'lectu[m]'*).

John Merymonth (fols. 30 v.–31 r.)

To serve for 'two *'annos integros'*, taking for his salary for those aforesaid two years 10s, food and drink, and all else that will be necessary'.

William Stacy (fol. 35 v.)

Apprenticed for seven years, 'and in the eighth year [to receive] 6s 8d and 6s 8d 'Ware' at the end of the aforesaid'.

John Reymond (fol. 36 r.)

To serve for 'one year, taking 13s 4d and a robe, food etc.'.

Gregory Sonowe (fol. 37 r.)

To serve for a year, taking 20s.

John Seymoor (fol. 45 r.)

To serve ‘for one *‘annu[m] int[e]gru[m]’*, taking for his salary 33s 4d, food and drink, bed and a place for his clothes (*‘loc[us] panno[rum]’*) – presumably a chest or other storage item.

Thomas Alawe (fol. 47 r.)

To serve ‘for one *‘a^{nnu[m]} integr[um]’*, taking for his salary 10s legal money, one new robe, and a new bed, one sheet and one blanket’.

Thomas Kyng (fol. 47 r.)

To serve for one year, ‘taking for [his] salary 20s, a coverlet, one pair of sheets, one pair of blankets, and one ‘underclothe’, food and drink etc.’.

Thomas Josep (fol. 48 r.)

To serve for two years ‘next following, taking each year 10s and food etc.’.

John Hilperby (fol. 54 v.)

To serve ‘for a term of 8 years, and one year, taking for his salary 2 marks [26s 8d] and a new robe, etc., food’.

John Okele (fol. 77 r.)

To serve for one *‘a^{nnu[m]} integr[um]’*, ‘receiving for his salary 6s 8d’.

C3 Discussion

Six of the nine of the apprentices for whom full indentures survive, along with twelve of the seventeen apprentices in Bury St Edmunds, were promised food as part of their salary during the additional year, although the paucity of evidence makes it impossible to say whether this was representative of normal practice elsewhere in England. It seems likely that the majority of apprentices would have received food, as in other employment contracts. Penn and Dyer observed that the Statute of Labourers showed special concern for the provision of food and drink in addition to a cash payment.⁴ The apprentices who were not explicitly provided with food during their additional year received relatively small amounts of cash – 6s 8d at the least, or 40s [£2] at most.⁵ In Chapter 6 the cost of food, assuming expenditure of 1d per day, was calculated as £1 10s 5d per annum. The majority of these apprentices were paid significantly less than this. It is left open to conjecture whether their masters provided them with food during the working day, or whether they were left to provide for themselves entirely.

The situation is more clear for those apprentices who were paid partly in food; John Williams’ indenture specified that he would be provided with food, as per the previous five years of the term.⁶ Likewise, Thomas Wakford was given food, drink, and cash on the same basis as during his apprenticeship.⁷ Two of the nine indentures specified that the apprentice

⁴ Penn and Dyer, ‘Wages and Earnings in Late Medieval England’, p. 357.

⁵ CUL, MS Add. 7178, 35 v. and 77 r.; TNA, C 146/63.

⁶ HRO, W/D1/22, mem. 6v.

⁷ TNA, CP 40/669, rot. 135d.

would receive drink (*'pot[us]'*) in the additional year, while eight of the seventeen apprentices in Bury St Edmunds were promised drink. This seems to be a regional variation.⁸ These apprentices were also promised fairly small salaries of 13s 4d, which may indicate that apprentices with higher salaries were expected to provide their own drink during the additional year. However, the opposite was true in Bury St Edmunds – as a general rule, apprentices who receive a lower cash salary were less likely to be clearly provided with drink during the additional year. However, it seems unlikely that those apprentices who were not explicitly provided with drink would be left thirsty, particularly when one considers that part payment in food and drink was normal practice for workers employed on annual contracts. Although 74 of the main group of indentures stated that the apprentice would be provided with food during their apprenticeship, drink was only specifically mentioned in 31 (see Chapter 6). Therefore it is more likely that masters customarily provided their workers with drink, probably ale in addition to water, during the working day.

Payment in cash, food and clothes reflected annual employment practices. John Williams was to receive clothes and food as per the previous five years of his apprenticeship.⁹ This phrasing implies that John Williams would receive more substantial benefits than a worker who was paid partially in clothes; John Williams was provided with clothes, linen, wool, stockings (*'calig[as]'*) and shoes during the initial five-year term. The apprentice William atte Nasshe, who was to be paid partly in clothes in the manner of a worker, would receive only 'a gown with a hood'.¹⁰ Several of the Bury St Edmunds apprentices were promised a new robe, or coloured cloth for a gown. This seems to indicate that this was not an item for everyday wear, and may have been intended to be worn when the former apprentice was presented for the freedom, representing their move from adolescence into adulthood. New clothes could also signify a change in status from a subservient position to that of an equal (see Chapter 7). Some of the wages promised to apprentices might be more than sufficient to pay for admission to the guild, or even the freedom, at the end of the additional year. Therefore working for an additional year may have been an attractive prospect. Given the level of maintenance some of the apprentices were promised for this year, it may also have been as costly for their masters as employing a journeyman for the year. The benefit of retaining an apprentice for an additional year, however, was that the master could already be sure of both their temperament and skill.

Only two of the apprentices was promised craft-specific goods as part of their salary. John Kent's salary included 20s cash and two lasts (*'virgas'*) worth 18d.¹¹ Even if he was expected to provide his own food and clothing during the additional year, the promise of two lasts might have helped him to find work as a journeyman, or establish himself as a master in his own right once he had accumulated sufficient capital. The bedding could also be used as security for a loan, to help him establish himself as a craftsman. Steve Rigby noted the example of a glover who successfully established a shop on London Bridge with capital of only £2 8s 4d.¹² London Bridge was the first bridge on the Thames between London and the sea, and, until 1729, the only way for Londoners to cross the river except by boat.¹³ Naturally, it was an important thoroughfare; by 1358 there were 138 shops and inns, and

⁸ Devon Heritage Centre, 3248A/1/87; SALS, D\B\bw/1384.

⁹ HRO, W/D1/22, mem. 6v.

¹⁰ HRO, W/D1/154.

¹¹ HRO, W/D1/22, mem. 6v.

¹² S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 154.

¹³ D.F. Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development, 1300–1800', *Economic History Review*, n.s. 45 (1992), pp. 240–261, p. 244; J. Benskin, 'The Bridges of London – Past, Present and Future', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 81 (1933), pp. 279–301, p. 281.

houses on the bridge as well as several commodious ‘necessary houses or wardrobes’.¹⁴ Establishing a shop in such a prime location required far more capital than was necessary to establish a shop in a smaller town such as Winchester, where John Kent served his apprenticeship. Alan Dyer’s rankings of towns based on the taxable wealth assessed in the 1334 subsidy and by number taxpayers of the 1377 poll tax placed Winchester fourteenth. In both cases, London was ranked first.¹⁵

John Bere was offered quite generous remuneration for remaining with his master for an additional year at the end of his thirteen-year apprenticeship.¹⁶ Given that Bere had first been apprenticed (to a different master) in 1430, he may have been nearing the age of majority by the time he commenced his second apprenticeship in 1439.¹⁷ The substantial salary may have been intended to assist him in establishing his own shop and household. His master’s occupation was not noted in this indenture, but another indenture stated that he was a grocer and mercer.¹⁸ The promised items, a two-quart leather bottle and another two-gallon vessel, in addition to bedding and money, might therefore have been intended for storing goods which John Bere could sell in his role as a grocer, should he complete his apprenticeship and the additional year.

None of the apprentices in Bury St Edmunds appear to have been promised anything craft-specific; instead, bedding was the main item promised to apprentices. Bury St Edmunds was a centre of cloth production, and by the 1460s, Suffolk produced more cloth than any other English county.¹⁹ Seven of the seventeen apprentices in Table C2 were apprenticed to weavers, fullers or dyers, while others (such as cardmakers) were also connected to cloth production. As well as being readily available, bedding was also a useful item – it was practical, portable, and could be used as security on a loan (see Chapter 7). Therefore although the cash element of these salaries was lower than what a journeyman might expect to receive, the material elements of the salary increased its overall value. The additional year, while exploitative, might have long-term benefits for the apprentice.

¹⁴ Ernest L. Sabine, ‘Latrines and Cesspools of Medieval London’, *Speculum*, 9 (1934), pp. 303–321, pp. 307–308.

¹⁵ Alan Dyer, ‘Appendix: Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns. 4: Ranking of towns by taxable wealth: the subsidy of 1344’, and ‘Appendix: Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns. 5: Ranking of towns by taxpaying population: the 1377 poll tax’, in *The Cambridge History of Urban Britain: Volume 1 – 600–1540*, ed. by D.M. Pallister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 755–757 and pp. 758–760.

¹⁶ TNA, C 146/5045.

¹⁷ TNA, C 146/63.

¹⁸ TNA, C 146/1132.

¹⁹ Mark Bailey, ‘Technology and the Growth of Textile Manufacture in Medieval Suffolk’, *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 42 (2009), pp. 13–20, p. 13.

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