Joining a Fraternity in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, c. 1250-1551

RACHAEL CLARE HARKES

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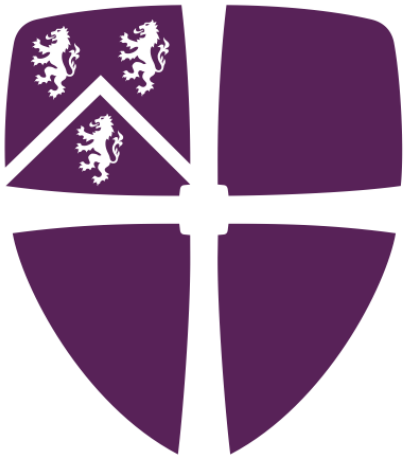

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This thesis examines the role of guild membership in late medieval England and Wales through a case study of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, while also drawing comparisons with other large fraternities. The Ludlow guild was both important and prominent, attracting 15,179 individuals between 1497 and 1509 alone. In addition to being the first history to focus explicitly on the guild's extensive membership, this thesis utilises under-explored archival materials to bring to light patterns of membership that prove crucial to understanding both the pervasiveness of guild membership and the conscious activities of corporate bodies operating within medieval society. It approaches the membership of the Palmers' Guild from a conceptual viewpoint, seeking to understand, as far as historians are able, the motivations of the men and women who joined the guild. It is less concerned with the narrative of the guild's history than with its interaction and intersection with pre-Reformation society. To understand the role and meanings that guild membership assumed in late medieval society, emphasis is placed on the temporal, geographic, and social context of engagement with guilds.

The motivations of late medieval men and women are difficult to discern, but, given a sensitivity to the surviving records and the identification of patterns, this thesis identifies the influence (and expectations) of localised groups upon individual actions, demonstrating the pressures that might be incumbent upon decision-making. This is explored in relation to the family, lay and ecclesiastical households, ruling groups of local elites in town and country, and 'active involvement'. The reasons for joining late medieval fraternities are shown to have been entangled in histories of domesticity and mentalities, and the practices of urban and rural politics. The conclusions drawn have important implications not only for our understanding of religious guilds, but of late medieval society more generally.

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List of Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CPR	Calendar of the Patent Rolls
Itinerary	*The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543,* 5 vols, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (Carbondale, 1964).
SA	Shropshire County Archives
L&P	Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII
VCH Salop	Victoria County History, Volume 2: 'Religious Guilds: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild'
T.S.A.S.	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TNA	The National Archives, London

A Note on the Text

All abbreviations found in the primary sources have been expanded for the reader's ease.

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Introduction

One of the most important results of the work of revisionist historians in the late twentieth century is the wide appreciation that late medieval religion was typified by a multitude of lay-led pious initiatives and outlets of expression. The institutional Church provided a stable super-structure that nevertheless allowed for a significant degree of adaptability and choice for individuals and communities; for example, while the hierarchy of parish, diocese and province, and that of the religious orders, ensured that all eventually led back to Rome, the manifestations of lay piety at a local level were largely subject to the preferences and whims of those who encountered it on a regular basis. Among the most important of these expressions of lay piety were the guilds. Their *raison d'être* was to bring groups of lay men and women together with a particular devotional focus, although their purposes and practices extended well beyond that. Guilds – and fraternities, for the term will be used interchangeably here – organised a number of religious and social activities for their members. While the most basic guilds might maintain a single light in a chapel or at an altar, the majority of fraternities assisted in the provision of a suitable funeral for deceased members, performed masses for their souls, hosted feasts and provided varying degrees of charity. Guilds, however, also provided essential social and religious functions for their members that permeated through communities, often contributing large sums of money and administrative support to building projects in the parish church, enhancing the liturgical capacity of the parish through the employment of guild priests (who assisted parish priests while not engaged in guild duties), organising festivals and ales for the community and stimulating the local economy with their material requirements, particularly in relation to annual feasts.[1] The flexibility and protean nature

[1] For a brief overview of the functions of late medieval guilds and their place within the Church hierarchy and individual 'voluntarism', see Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 2-7.

of religious guilds in different communities led Derek Keene to aptly describe them as 'shell organisations', adapting to the needs and desires of their community.[2]

In fulfilling these functions, the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow (Shropshire) was, in many ways, akin to many of the plethora of religious guilds in late medieval England. Dedicated to St John the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary, and based in the parish church of St Laurence, the guild provided the same religious activities that were prevalent elsewhere. For example, a common function of guilds (the Palmers included) was the execution of obits for those members who left bequests for such a purpose. Over thirty obits were requested of the guild priests by brethren in Ludlow between 1397 and 1530, and the guild diligently recorded the payments spent on obits each year.[3] The guild's bellman was paid 2*s.* 8*d.* for alerting members that their presence was required at obits, and the services were conducted by the guild's priests, who at any time numbered between three and ten.[4] Alongside the duties of commemorating certain individuals, the priests were also paid for praying for the souls of all deceased brothers and sisters.[5] A number of men and children were engaged by the guild as 'singing men', and the chantry certificate in 1546 states that the guild supported an additional six choristers to sing the divine service.[6] The guild's janitor handled the practical side of activities: in charge of general maintenance within the church, he was, for example, paid for his labour at 'diverse' obits.[7] Within the parish church, the guild contributed to the material upkeep of the church, supplying building materials and financial support, as well as increasing the

[2] Derek Keene, 'English Urban Guilds c.900-1300: The Purposes and Politics of Association' in Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis (eds.), *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900-1900* (London, 2006), pp. 3, 9-10.
[3] For example, in 1493, the stewards paid the guild priests 24*s.* 4*d.* for diverse obits. Obits were still being performed in 1532, although the system for recording payments had changed, breaking down the expenses, recording 2*s.* 5*d.* for 'offeryng of obittes' and specific obits, like 20*s.* for John Hosyer's obit. SA: LB/5/3/53, LB/5/3/30; the money collected from lands endowed for obits is found in the renter's accounts, like the collection of 14*s.* 6*d.* for Geoffrey Baugh's obit in 1533/4. SA: LB/5/3/61; VCH Salop.
[4] For examples of payment to the guild's bellman, see: SA: LB/5/3/58, m. 3; LB/5/3/9, m. 3. The priests fluctuated in number: the guild rental accounts of 1284 suggest there were four. In 1349, there were seven and then only four in 1364 and 1377. In the 1530s, the guild's expenses note that there were nine. They resided in a college in the churchyard. VCH Salop; SA: LB/5/3/61.
[5] SA: LB/5/3/59, m. 4.
[6] A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries, under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII, Cap. IV., and I Edward VI., Cap. XIV',*T.S.A.S*, Ser. 3, Vol. 10 (1910), pp. 355-7.
[7] This varied each year, but was usually around one mark. For examples, see SA: LB/5/3/56, m. 2; LB/5/3/58, m. 3; LB/5/3/59, m. 3.

church's liturgical capacity.[8] Such an example can be found in 1446/7, when the Palmers set aside a portion of their income to purchase 100 wainscot boards from Bristol to make choir stalls (which can still be found in the church today).[9] Each year, the guild would note the amount of money spent 'for the makyng of St John's light' (for example, 16*d.* was spent in 1532) in the chancel, honouring the patron saint of the guild.[10] These functions and contributions to both the guild brethren, and the parish community of Ludlow, were typical of late medieval English fraternities.

By the fifteenth century, the guild clearly had a distinct sense of its own identity, which found its ultimate expression in the magnificent stained glass window commissioned for their chapel in the north east corner of St Laurence's.[11] Recounting their legendary origin story, the window depicts two Ludlow pilgrims (hence the name 'Palmers') encountering their patron saint disguised as a beggar in the Holy Land, who, upon realising that they are English, gives them Edward the Confessor's ring to return to their king. Upon their return, the sainted monarch demonstrates his appreciation by granting the men the right to establish a fraternity in honour of St John the Evangelist and the Blessed Virgin Mary in their hometown. The potency of this legend, with its royal and divine connections, is evinced by its inclusion in the antiquarian John Leland's *Itinerary* in the sixteenth century.[12] The surviving evidence, however, suggests a relatively more conventional foundation date of around 1250, although this still pre-dates the fourteenth-century 'boom' of religious guilds.[13] In the window's final lights, the timeline of the narrative is compressed, with a reception at the town's thirteenth-century gates and a depiction of what is quite clearly a fifteenth-century guild feast with the attendees dressed in sumptuous livery robes and hoods.[14]

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[8] For further discussion on the construction of the church in the fifteenth century, see: Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 59-60.
[9] VCH Salop.
[10] SA: LB/5/3/61.
[11] For the window and its role in the guild's identity, see: Christian D. Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window, St. Lawrence's Church, Ludlow: A Study of the Construction of Guild Identity in Medieval Stained Glass', *T.S.A.S*, Vol. 72 (1997), pp. 26-37.
[12] *Itinerary*, Vol. 2, p. 76.
[13] SA: LB/5/2/1443; Michael Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), p. 79.
[14] Liddy described this conflated timeline as an 'invention of the donors' imagination': Liddy, 'Palmers' Guild Window', pp. 30-1, quote at p. 31.

The scene is no longer set in the eleventh century, and instead both the longevity and timelessness of the guild are being emphasised in a bold statement of identity.

The guild at Ludlow was overseen by a council, consisting of a warden, two stewards, a rent collector and a group of men known as 'the elders'; it is this council who are represented as feasting in the window. The warden's term in office followed no set number of years, fluctuating greatly in length. By the sixteenth century, the warden frequently held the position for life. Meanwhile, the stewards served four years terms.[15] Each year, the stewards embarked upon an annual journey (each assisted by a clerk) across to the country to collect membership fees throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were responsible for the finances of the guild, but, as the guild grew, the role of rent collector was created to allow stewards the freedom to focus solely on entry fines and repairing of guild property. The elders' role was never formally discussed in the surviving records, but it can be assumed that they operated in a similar role to aldermen of a town, providing advice to officers and assisting in the guild's governance.

The Palmers feasted as often as four times a year (Michaelmas, All Saints, Christmas and Pentecost) with the feast at Pentecost being the most important.[16] Beginning with a mass in the guild chapel in the parish church, the celebration continued with feasting at the guild hall on Mill Street. The officers spared no expense in 1377, expending a total of £5 3*s.* 6 ½ *d.* in food, drink and entertainment for the feast. The lavishness, and perhaps size, of the feast increased exponentially in the fifteenth century when the stewards paid out a total of almost £50 on Pentecostal feasts between 1423 and 1428.[17] These activities demonstrate the existence of a vibrant, active foundation and reveal the central role of the guild in the religious and social fabric of Ludlow.

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[15] John Hawkins is a notable exception, as he left his position as warden in 1371 (thirty-five years before his death) to become the vicar of St Michael's, Coventry. Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 186.

[16] While in the mid-fifteenth century four feasts were celebrated annually, it appears that by the later years of the guild's life not all four feasts were celebrated every year. The steward's expenses for 1533/4 only record expenses for the Pentecost feast – although they did not refrain from lavish festivities, spending £10 18*s.* 5*d.* SA: LB/5/3/31, mem. 10.

[17] SA: LB/5/3/24. Calculations over the five years made by Madge Moran, *The Guildhall, Ludlow* (Ludlow, 2011), p. 4.

The place of the guild in local society is, in many ways, therefore, another example of the importance of these institutions, which were found in every parish across the country. But the Palmers' Guild departed from other fraternities in its geographical and numerical significance. It was unusually expansive, with membership spanning across late medieval England, Wales and beyond. Vast quantities of guild documents, relating to its membership, activities and endowments, survive in Shropshire County Archives, but they have been subjected largely only to cursory examination by historians.[18] But an extensive analysis of the membership records here demonstrates the breadth and depth of membership of the guild. Between 1497 and 1511, at least 15,179 men and women enrolled in the Palmers' Guild. This is at most a minimum number limited by surviving sources, for membership lists only survive in fragmentary form between 1497 and 1500 and again between 1509 and 1511. While those between 1501 and 1509 are more complete, they are not in the full state that they would have been compiled in.[19] With the addition of the highly fragmentary membership records from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and an addition of one riding book from 1515, the total number of known members rises to 17,098.[20]

In terms of the size and spread of membership, one of the main contentions of this thesis is that the Palmers' Guild can (and should) be considered a 'national' or 'great' fraternity, comparable to the kingdom's leading guilds, such as those of St Mary's, Boston, and the Jesus Guild at St Paul's Cathedral.[21] The issue here is largely one of terminology, as these are modern epithets applied retrospectively which, in any case, have never been precisely defined. For clarification, here I will use the term 'regional guild' to refer to institutions whose membership was

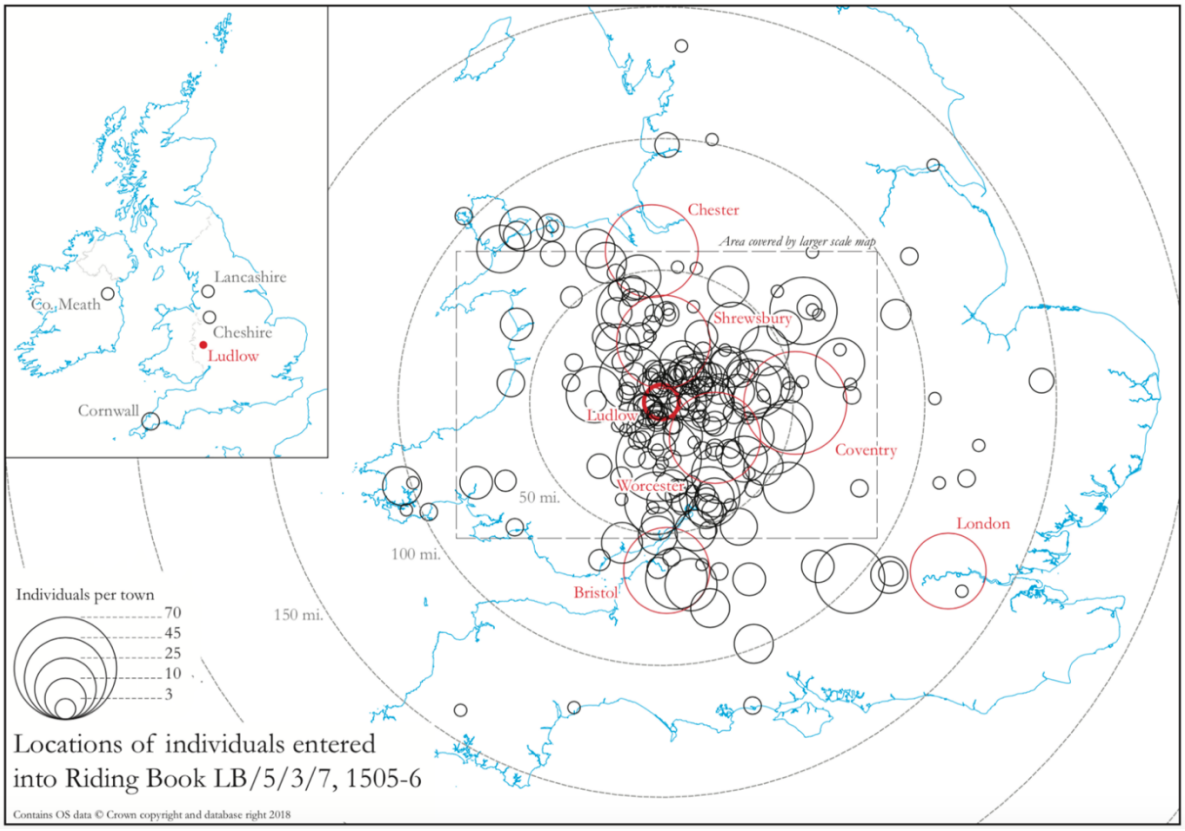
[18] Robert Swanson pointed out the need for a full study of the guild in: Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 90.
[19] 1497-1500 have a few surviving folios of membership, while the individuals known to have signed up between 1509 and 1511 have been gathered from a clerk's receipt book that recorded payments from 1511 onwards. SA: LB/5/3/2; LB/5/3/40. The riding books that appear complete (LB/5/3/3-9), are evidently not: some are missing locations that are part of the guild's routine visitations. For example, London and the south-west is missing from the 1508 riding book and the 1507 riding book only survives for Shropshire locations. LB/5/3/7; LB/5/3/8.
[20] SA: LB/5/1-4; LB/5/3/1-16, 22, 23, 37.
[21] For the former, see: Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 52, 90, 412, 441; and for the latter: Elizabeth A. New, 'The Cult of the Holy name of Jesus in late medieval England, with special reference to the fraternity in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, c. 1450-1558' (PhD thesis, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, 1999), Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

relatively extensive but largely confined to its home county or those immediately surrounding, or was confined to a distinct and acknowledged region such as the Welsh Marches or the East Midlands. On the other hand, a 'national guild' was one whose membership (like the Palmers) extended beyond this reach and was distributed widely (if not evenly) across the kingdom. Indeed, the Palmers exceeded even this definition, with the enrolment of several aliens.[22]

The geographical reach of the guild's membership has not gone unnoticed by scholars, but it has perhaps not been fully appreciated. Judith Bailey argued that half of the fifteenth-century Palmers' Guild members lived locally (Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire), with the next biggest group living in other parts of the West Midlands and the West Country, a point also iterated by local historian David Lloyd.[23] Robert Swanson argued that 'the Ludlow guild never became a fully national institution', illustrated through the late fifteenth-century rise in Welsh and North Midland membership, and the ultimate expansion to cover the entire Midlands, south-west England and Wales.[24] The intensive study of membership here, however, greatly expands our understanding of the guild's geographical reach. While it cannot be said that the Palmers had members in every county, they were certainly more widespread than has been realised. Stretching from Sussex in the south-east, up into East Anglia, through the East Midlands up to Hull, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, across to Westmorland, down through the Midlands, Wales and through the West Country and back to central England, the guild had a presence in *almost* every county. A single year of recruitment illustrates this spread of membership (Map 1), with a clear heartland of membership in the Midlands (Map 2).[25] As noted, the guild had an overseas element of membership, with four individual cases having been identified: two members from County Meath,

[22] See below, n. 26.
[23] David Lloyd, Margaret Clark and Chris Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The parish church and people, 1199-2009* (Herefordshire, 2010), p. 54; Judith Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: an analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c. 1400-1551' (M.A. thesis, University of Gloucester, 2010), p. 75.
[24] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 75.
[25] East Anglia was not part of the guild steward's annual route, but there were still members from there, such as weavers from Norwich in 1499/1500: SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 127v. The guild must have made a trip there after 1514, for thirty-five men and women enrolled in Walsingham in an undated membership receipt. It can be dated to between 1514 and 1538, as Richard Vowell, prior of Walsingham, became a member: LB/5/3/12.

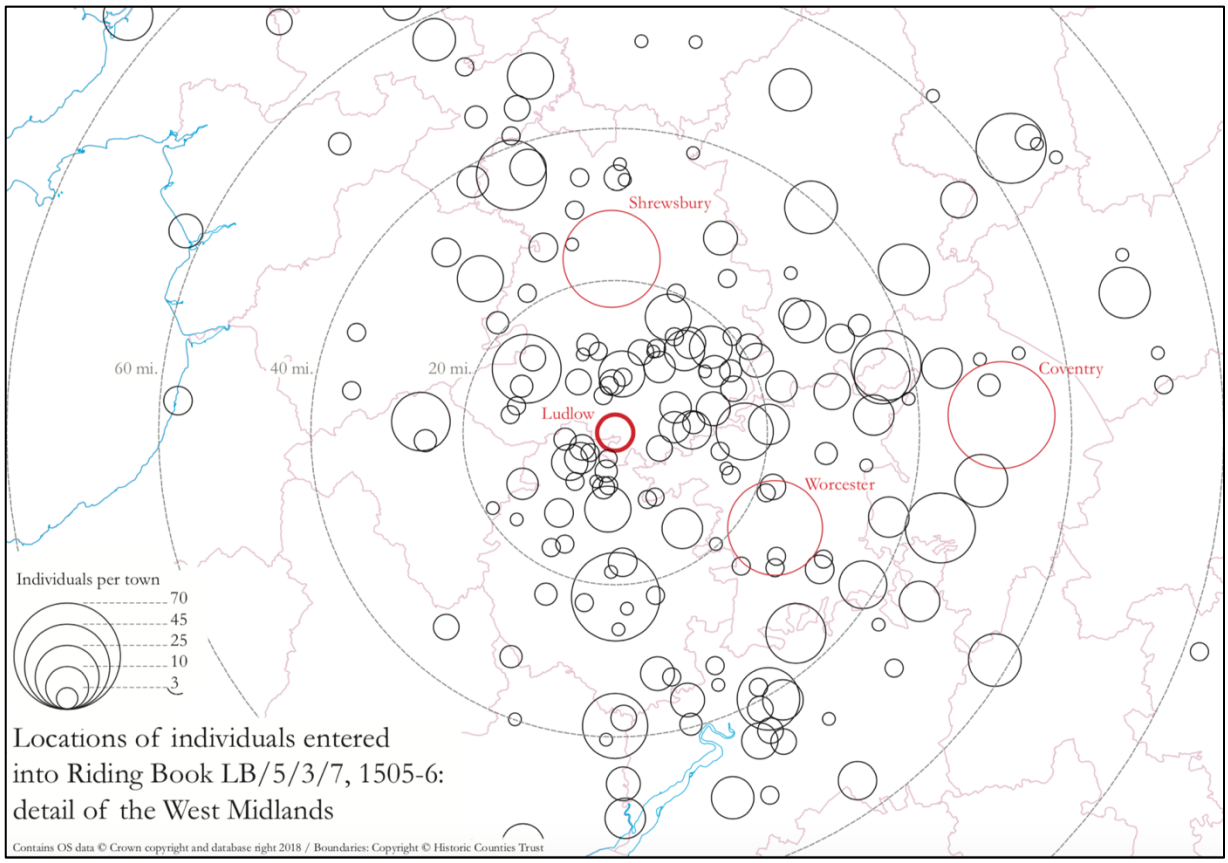
Ireland, who were enrolled by their son in Coventry in 1505, and two Gascons, enrolling in the 1460s and 1505 respectively.[26] In context, and to underline the point being made here, the Palmers also commanded a numerically more extensive membership than many other large fraternities: the Knowle guild, which might be classed as 'regional', attracted roughly 15,000 between 1451 and 1535.[27] In a period of fifteen years, the Palmers attracted more members than the Knowle guild did in nearly a century. This makes it clear that the Ludlow guild is in need of a reconsideration.



Map 1: Locations of new members in 1505/6.

[26] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r; LB/5/3/1, f. 5v; LB/5/3/2, f. 26v. The 1460s riding book is undated, but is clearly from the early reign of Edward IV.

[27] R.N. Swanson, 'A Medieval Staffordshire Fraternity: The Guild of St John the Baptist, Walsall' in Philip Morgan and Anthony David Murray Phillips (eds.), *Staffordshire histories: essays in honour of Michael Greenslade* (Keele, 1999), p. 52.



Map 2: Midlands membership, 1505/6.

This thesis will account for this extraordinary spread of membership, demonstrating the pervasiveness of the guild in late medieval society and offering a justification for a re-evaluation of its status. The ultimate aim will be to produce the first thematic history of the Palmers, and as such will offer much that informs our understanding of the role of guilds more widely. While there were certainly elements distinctive to the Palmers which explain its unique success, the study of the actions of individual members in joining the guild are likely to be common across all comparable guilds. It is only by virtue of the extensive surviving archive that we are in a position to comment on the Palmers particularly, which offers information that might not be available for other guilds.[28] The guild ethos that Gervase Rosser identified across medieval fraternities was demonstrably present in the Palmers and, therefore, engagement with the Palmers presents an opportunity to extrapolate wider interpretative points about guilds and late medieval society. What

[28] For a comparison of the extant sources relating to the Palmers and the Boston guild of St Mary, see: Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 90.

follows demonstrates that a proper understanding of guild membership can inform, and modify, historiographical debates surrounding the family, households and domesticity; urban and county politics; and ecclesiastical-lay partnerships. Its implications therefore run deeper than a traditional guild study.

Religious guilds & historiography

There is a long tradition of scholarship that investigates ideas and practices of lay piety through religious guilds, which remain a popular topic of study. Wilhelm Wilda, Georg von Below and Otto Von Gierke stimulated studies of guilds in the nineteenth century, as did Joshua Toulmin Smith's late nineteenth-century volume on the ordinances of English guilds returned to the Crown in 1388/9, which included transcriptions – a source still utilized to great effect by historians today.[29] Enhanced by Toulmin-Smith's transcriptions, interest in these lay-run institutions grew in the twentieth century, demonstrated by works such as H.F. Westlake's *Parish Gilds of Mediæval England*, which argued that parish guilds were a precursor to mutual-aid societies.[30] There was a surge of popularity of guild studies in the late twentieth-century and the first decade of the twenty-first century.[31] The rise of interest in medieval English guilds was, in part, prompted from a wider shift in historiographical trends. The view that the laity rejected late medieval institutional religion and welcomed the Reformation (a view that had dominated pre-Reformation histories of Western religion and society), was questioned by historians such as Christopher Haigh, J.J. Scarisbrick, and

[29] Joshua Toulmin Smith, (ed.), *English Gilds*, Early English Text Society, original ser., no. 40 (1870; reprint, London, 1963). For an in-depth discussion on the development of guild studies in the nineteenth century, see: Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 8. Although Toulmin-Smith's guild ordinances are utilised by historians frequently, there are a few notable studies that have used the guild returns in considerable depth: H.F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediæval England* (London, 1919); Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Keepers of the Lights: Late Medieval English Parish Gilds', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 14 (1984), pp. 21-38; Andrew Prescott, 'Men and Women in the Guild Returns' in Máire Fedelma Cross (ed.), *Gender and Fraternal Orders in Europe, 1300-2000* (London, 2010), pp. 30-51.
[30] Westlake, *Parish Gilds of Mediæval England*, passim.
[31] Caroline M. Barron, 'Parish Fraternities of Medieval London' in Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (eds.), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 13-37; R.N. Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood: Registering Fraternity and Confraternity in Late Medieval England' in David Rollason, A.J. Piper, Margaret Harvey and Linda Rollason (eds.), *The Durham Liber Vitae and Its Context* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 233-46.

Eamon Duffy.[32] This revisionist historiography stresses the vibrant nature of lay piety and their investment in local devotional outlets, for which guilds, as voluntary associations, were an excellent example of the vitality of the late medieval Church. Tracing the contours of lay piety and understanding the religious motivations of guild membership have remained central themes to a number of studies of guilds.[33] The importance of guilds in the lives of the laity, especially their broader impact on socio-economic relationships, can be found in studies by Virginia Bainbridge, Ken Farnhill and Joanna Mattingly.[34] These works have focused on institutions (either one in particular or a group within pre-determined geographical boundaries), their activities and their organisation. Institutional studies of this type, while now less prolific, still persist, as demonstrated by Claire Kennan's 2018 thesis on guilds in Louth, Lincolnshire.[35]

Other histories have been wider in focus and ask more reaching questions. David Crouch's study of Yorkshire guilds asked questions of the royal policies relating to guilds, as well as their importance in the formation of local political identities and groupings.[36] McRee's studies have asked a range of questions of the role of guilds in local politics, commercial relationships, the regulation of behaviour, and the character of men who frequently dominated these associations.[37] Most searching in national, and even European, analysis has undoubtably come from Gervase Rosser's prolific publication of works, which have drawn wide conclusions on the behaviours and

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[32] Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987); J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, 2nd ed., (Yale, 2005).

[33] This focus on religious action of guilds was not done in order to construct a picture of a homogenous pious community, as Ken Farnhill makes clear in his works. Ken Farnhill, 'Guilds, Purgatory, and the Cult of the Saints: Westlake Reconsidered' in *Christianity and Community in the West* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 59-71; Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*.

[34] Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire, c. 1350-1558* (Woodbridge, 1996); Farnhill; 'Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints', pp. 59-71; idem, *Guilds and the Parish Community*; J. Mattingly, 'Medieval Parish Guilds of Cornwall', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, 10, No. 3 (1989), pp. 290-329. See also Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis (eds.), *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900-1900* (London, 2006).

[35] I am grateful to Claire Kennan for allowing me to read a copy of her thesis while it is currently embargoed. Claire M. Kennan, 'Guilds and Society in Louth, Lincolnshire, c. 1450-1550' (PhD thesis, University of London, 2018).

[36] David J.F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: religious gilds in late medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547* (York, 2000).

[37] Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: the Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan, 1992), pp 69-97; Barbara A. Hanawalt and Ben R. McRee, 'The guilds of *homo prudens* in late medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (August, 1992), pp. 163-179; Ben R. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul.,1993), pp. 195-225.

actions of society in late medieval England.[38] Rosser's *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages* is, of course, a study of guilds, questioning the reasons for the creation, and subsequent membership, of guilds, and the nature of these communities. Yet Rosser's study is much more than that, as it uses the medium of guilds to study individuals and society, engaging meticulously with literature from Plato, Rousseau, Weber and other philosophers. His principal argument is that it is imperative that we study the ethical and religious practices of guilds in order to understand the vital role they played in negotiating the relationship between individual and society. Rosser's thoughtful engagement presents a much more complex and nuanced understanding of guild membership than previous studies (a handful of his early works included). *The Art of Solidarity* should prompt a movement away from studies of guilds as individual organisations, and that concern is present in this thesis. It is crucial to note, however, that Rosser's book would not have been possible without the extensive empirical research of individual guilds that others, and himself, had done in previous years. Rosser's work is a result of many years of establishing a substantive pool of examples to critically examine the development of themes of friendship, ethics, morality and community. It must be remembered, then, that the present thesis is the first to examine the Palmers' Guild in its own right; an undertaking that necessitates the establishment of its structure, activities and inner workings. While responding to Rosser's call to arms to explain the behaviours and tensions between individuals and society in the later middle ages, this thesis takes a different approach by primarily focusing on membership. Through this methodology, which uncovers and charts the connections between individual guild members, it is possible to demonstrate that the 'voluntarism' emphasised by Rosser did not operate in a vacuum: the context of membership

[38] Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*; idem, 'Going to the fraternity feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct., 1994), pp. 430-446; 'Finding Oneself in a Medieval Fraternity: Individual and Collective Identities in the English Guilds' in Monika Escher-Apsner (ed.), *Medieval Confraternities in European Towns* (Frankfurt, 2009), pp. 29-46; idem, 'The Ethics of Confraternities' in Konrad Eisenbichier, (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 91-108. There are two exceptions where his work is more a study of particular institutions: a chapter on guilds in Gervase Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989) and Gervase Rosser, 'The town and guild of Lichfield in the late middle ages', *Staffordshire Archaeological and History Society Transactions*, Vol. 27 (1985/6), pp. 39-47.

reveals the importance of other corporate bodies, such as the household, religious houses, and governmental structures, in promoting engagement with guilds.

The Palmers' Guild: Another 'great' guild?

This thesis seeks to explain why individual men and women chose to join the Palmers' Guild in particular, when roughly 30,000 guilds active in late medieval England presented similar opportunities for involvement.[39] For this reason, the review of historiography here focuses primarily upon the ways in which historians have understood motivation and intention. The first and foremost reason for joining a fraternity was concern for the soul. The religious benefits offered by guilds of funeral provisions, funeral attendance by members, and prayers for the repose of the soul – all of which eased the soul's transition through Purgatory – have been considered the ultimate attraction for the majority of the population of late medieval England.[40] While a number of social and political factors will be considered throughout the thesis as reasons for membership, expressions of faith performed by late medieval lay men and women were spurred by genuine, whole-hearted beliefs and concerns.[41] The *pro anima* prayers performed by guild priests and brethren were undoubtably an appealing reason to pay membership fees, and membership of multiple guilds simply increased the chances of a faster exit from purgatory. The aim here is to not overlook or diminish the importance of those beliefs in the ensuing analysis; in fact, they must remain in mind at all times. The point remains, however, that these benefits applied to *every* guild in late medieval England. The question here is why the Palmers especially appealed to such an extensive body of the populace – a question that is not answered by lay piety alone.

[39] Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast', p. 431.
[40] R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 284; Ben McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behavior in Late Medieval Towns', in Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1997), p. 110.
[41] For a recent exposition on how faith was manifest as religious belief in the middle ages, see: Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith made the Medieval Church* (Oxford and Princeton, 2018), Ch. 1.

Historians have argued that one reason for joining particular fraternities was the 'extra' religious functions gathered by certain institutions, in the forms of pardons or indulgences. Some guilds sought papal grants to reinforce the appeal of their membership.[42] For example, Robert Swanson maintained the importance of the role of pardons and indulgences as a means of attracting membership to Boston's St Mary's Guild. The Boston guild embarked upon a campaign of advertisement, promoting their indulgences through preachers and publicity leaflets.[43] This interpretation, however, does not adequately account for the success of the Palmers' Guild. The guild did *not* offer superior spiritual benefits when compared to other great fraternities such as those in York and Boston, or even middling sized fraternities like that at Knowle.[44] There is a sixteenth-century letter of confraternity which contains details of an indulgence associated with the Palmers, but the spiritual benefits it offered were not limited to guild members, and rather extended to anyone who visited the guild chapel in St Laurence's Church.[45] It takes the form of a confessional letter from Pope Leo X, confirming that visitors to the guild chapel would secure indulgences (offered at Lent for the Stations of Rome) on the feasts of the Annunciation, the Assumption, St John before the Latin Gate, St Katherine and St Edward the Confessor, after completion of the required Pater Nosters and Aves for the pope, king, queen and souls of other members, along with monetary donations.[46] Moreover, as Swanson admits, large numbers of people joined the guild prior to this letter,[47] and there are no visible increases in membership in its aftermath.[48] Intensive archival research shows that significant numerical increases in membership of the Palmers began in the late fifteenth century – more than fifteen years before the Palmers

[42] Examples include York's Corpus Christi. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 91.
[43] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 373.
[44] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 91. These categories will be discussed in more detail below.
[45] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 374; The Bodleian Library, Arch.A.B.8 (6). Another example of a pardon associated with a guild that was not restricted to members was that of a forty-day pardon attainable for attending masses at the high altar of Cambridge's Dominican convent, which was used by a guild dedicated to St Peter of Milan and St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins: Swanson, *Indulgences*, p. 244.
[46] The Bodleian Library, Arch.A.B.8 (6); SA: LB5/1/1-4; Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 374.
[47] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 374.
[48] The confessional letter is undated but is most likely the result of a visit to Rome made by the warden in 1514-15: SA: LB/5/3/36. There are no registers of admission or riding book after 1516, but a number of new members are recorded in the clerk's receipt book for 1511-20; there does not appear to be an increase in membership: LB/5/3/40.

could possibly have obtained their indulgence.[49] This observation highlights two issues: first, that the reasons for which medieval men and women chose to join religious guilds were clearly multifaceted and deserve a more nuanced appreciation; and, second, that the lack of detailed study means that the true nature of the Palmers' Guild has not yet been sufficiently established. Swanson referred to the Palmers within a wider discussion on lay piety, indulgences and the papacy in the later medieval period, and thus is but one example in a more general discussion; typical of the ways in which the Palmers have previously been approached by historians.

A small group of fraternities in medieval England held extensive membership, and thus have been labelled 'great'. This classification is usually reserved for the guilds of St Mary's, Boston (Lincolnshire), Holy Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon (Warwickshire), Holy Trinity, Coventry (Warwickshire), the Holy Name, St. Paul's Cathedral (London), Corpus Christi, York (North Riding of Yorkshire), and the Palmers. The guilds at Boston and St. Paul's have long been considered 'national' guilds, due to their more extensive membership reach.[50] The Boston guild, established in 1260 (and therefore a near-contemporary foundation to the Palmers' Guild) had a prestigious and nation-wide membership that included royalty, aristocracy and higher clergy and possessed attractive pardons for the remission of sins.[51] The guild of the Holy Name at St. Paul's was a mid-fifteenth-century foundation, with occupational diversity among its members and many from London's wealthy civic elite.[52] The suggestion that it had membership outside London is based upon its system of farming out 'devotional offerings', which Elizabeth New argues may have been subscriptions from individuals joining the fraternity.[53] Collections were leased in the dioceses of York, Ely, Lincoln, Exeter and Norwich, which, if New's suggestion is correct, would mean that membership of the Jesus Guild was spread across most parts of the country. Corpus Christi,

[49] The letter is undated, but Leo X's pontificate spanned 1513-21.
[50] New, 'The Cult of the Holy Name'; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 281.
[51] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 54, 134, 422, 437-41; Sally Badham, "He loved the guild': the religious guilds associated with St. Botolph's church, Boston' in Sally Badham and Paul Cockerham (eds.), *'The beste and fairest of al Lincolnshire': The Church of St. Botolph Boston, Lincolnshire, and its Medieval Monuments*, BAR British Series 554 (2012), p. 59.
[52] New, 'The Cult of the Holy Name', pp. 106-183.
[53] New, 'The Cult of the Holy Name', p. 208.

York, was established in 1408. By 1459, with a wide and esteemed membership including noble and gentle families throughout the North, it had nearly attained the status of a national institution.[54] Its broad membership has been explained in a variety of contexts: some members joined when visiting the city, most likely attending the popular Corpus Christi plays and procession; others were attracted by the cult of Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York; while others still by the indulgences attainable.[55] Holy Trinity, Coventry, had a prestigious reputation, attracting membership from across the East and West Midlands.[56] Its membership overlapped with that of the guild of Holy Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon, which drew its membership from trade connections to the north, west and south.[57]

The socio-religious focus of scholarship, which emphasises the religious benefits of guild membership, may be due in part to the prevailing historiographical trends. The focus on indulgences, prayers, friendship, and community has allowed historians to fit guilds conveniently within a wider historiography that has stressed the vitality of the late medieval English Church, as they demonstrate the various connections between the spiritual and secular communities. This interpretation, however, does not adequately account for the success of the Palmers' Guild. The guild did not necessarily offer superior spiritual benefits when compared to the 'great' fraternities, but it nevertheless managed to draw membership over substantial distances. Significantly, members could be found in towns that had their own, more conveniently located, guilds. Indeed, large numbers of people from both Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon – each of which were home to a 'great' fraternity – enrolled in the Palmers. In addition, both Swanson and Faraday have suggested that the brethren of the Palmers did not interact on a regular basis.[58] If, therefore, such members did not regularly interact with other guild brethren (as was needed to keep alive the

[54] Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, p. 162; Swanson, *Church and Society,* p. 281.
[55] Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, pp. 165, 183; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 288; idem, *Indulgences*, p. 91; Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988), p. 234.
[56] Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979); Jane Laughton, Evan Jones and Christopher Dyer, 'The Urban hierarchy in the later Middle Ages: a study of the East Midlands', *Urban History*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (December, 2001), pp. 337-8.
[57] Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds', p. 81.
[58] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 88; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 282-3.

'brotherly love' which was an integral piece of the purpose of guilds),[59] and were not enticed by the temporary remission of sins, what particular benefits proved a motivating factor in the decision to join the Palmers' Guild? Understanding the extent to which guild members were involved in guild activities has been a dominant aspect of guild scholarship for decades. Swanson addressed this issue in two of his books, *Church and Society* and *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, concluding that guilds depended on a small core of active members for meetings and feasts, while notable members – royalty, nobility, high clergy – as well as distant members joined for the prayers and spiritual indulgences.[60] Peter Fleming likewise claimed that members outside of Ludlow 'took little part in the social activities associated with the Guild'.[61] This thesis will contest the claim that members of the Palmers did not interact on a regular basis, despite often being geographically distant from the guild; this is an important intervention for our understanding of the implications of fraternal membership and active involvement.

As noted above, rarely are the Palmers treated on their own terms in the historiography. For example, Rosser used the Palmers as an illustrative example in many of his works, but he has not sought to understand the history of one particular institution.[62] Christine Carpenter has likewise used the Ludlow guild as a comparative example for her study on the Holy Cross Guild at Stratford, while Ben McRee similarly initiated a discussion on charity with the Palmers' guild ordinances.[63] But, and in contrast to work that approaches the Palmers' Guild to illustrate wider points, more detailed study has been done under the remit of 'local history'; history, inspired by local curiosity and expressed as civic pride. Such works follow a tradition of nineteenth-century

[59] Gervase Rosser, 'Party List: Making Friends in Medieval English Guilds' in Matthew Davies and Andrew Prescott (eds.), *London and the Kingdom: Essays in honour of Caroline M. Barron* (Donington, 2008), pp. 118-134, esp. 126-8.
[60] Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 282-3; Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 90-2, 243-4.
[61] Peter Fleming, 'Time, space and power in later medieval Bristol' (Working Paper, University of the West of England, 2013), p. 76.
[62] He uses the Palmers in *The Art of Solidarity,* pp. 82, 133, 144-5, 223; idem, 'Solidarités et changement social. Les fraternités urbaines anglaises à la fin du Moyen Âge' *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, Vol. 48, Issue 5 (1993), pp. 1127-43.
[63] Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire' in Robert Bearman (ed.), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 62-79; McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity', pp. 195-225.

antiquarian scholarship, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for transcriptions of documents which no longer survive.[64] A similar interest continued into the twentieth century, manifesting itself in a number of works by local historians. For example, Michael Faraday has written a comprehensive, descriptive history of the town, but dedicated only one chapter in his book to the Palmers.[65] Within his chapter, he suggested that the guild stewards were selling a form of insurance; that the Palmers offered a reasonable certainty that prayers for the souls of members would be said in perpetuity.[66] This argument aligns with the motivations of membership that Swanson proposed, and has been taken up by historians such as Peter Fleming,[67] but underappreciates the true nature of the guild. Faraday's publication of guild deed transcriptions in 2012 makes a valuable set of documents accessible but his introduction, like his book, is riddled with misinformation about the Palmers' Guild.[68]

Two other studies relating to the Ludlow guild are of note: an article in the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, and an MA thesis by Judith Bailey that compares the Holy Cross Guild of Stratford and the Palmers. The former, by E.G.H. Kempson, retained a local history focus, examining twenty-five Marlborough members, arguing that they joined the guild due to established trade connections with the town.[69] Judith Bailey's thesis, on the other hand, extended the constraints of previous studies to examine the geographical location of members in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. But there are many limitations to her thesis, leaving great holes in our understanding of the guild as well as perpetuating misinformation originally proffered

[64] W.C. Sparrow, 'The Palmers' Gild of Ludlow', *T.S.A.S.*, Vol. 1 (1878), pp. 333-394; W.C. Sparrow, 'A Register of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow in the reign of Henry VIII', *T.S.A.S.*, Vol. 2, (1884), pp. 81-126; C.H. Drinkwater, 'Palmers Guild at Ludlow: inventories of jewells and stuff in the 16th century', *T.S.A.S.* Series 3, Vol. 4 (1904), pp. 379-384.

[65] Faraday, *Ludlow*, Ch. 4.

[66] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 88.

[67] Fleming argues that the high number of deceased members of the Palmers means that brethren were seeking the guild's 'highly regarded spiritual benefits'. He only cites Faraday and does not cite any further evidence for these 'highly regarded' religious benefits: Fleming, 'Time, space and power in later medieval Bristol', pp. 76-7.

[68] For example, Faraday calculated the guild's finances over its lifetime but ascribed the wrong year to his totals: he states that there was c £130 collected from membership fees in 1534/5 and £3 8*d.* spent on Pentecostal feast but references a steward's account for 1529/30 and a secondary source that discusses membership fees for 1533/4: *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, p. xxi.

[69] Kempson believed that there were only twenty-five members but there were, in fact, ninety-four. E.G.H. Kempson, 'A Shropshire Gild at Work in Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, L (1942), pp. 50-55

by Faraday.[70] The examination barely brushes the surface of the guild records, using only printed records of membership lists, of which there are two.[71] Bailey asserts that the stewards used religious benefits (prayers for the soul) of the guild to increase membership,[72] essentially reiterating Faraday's argument, and fails to provide any sound reasoning or examples of these so-called religious benefits (despite the issues with this argument discussed above). We are, therefore, confronted with something of a paradox that has yet to be satisfactorily explained. A thorough examination of the guild's extant records reveal that the Palmers commanded one of the most extensive networks of fraternal membership in the kingdom, yet the spiritual benefits offered pale in comparison to other guilds of similar size and status. The rather linear argument that indulgences and prayers drove guild recruitment in pre-Reformation England has been repeated in relation to the Palmers' Guild simply because the guild and its records have not yet received the attention deserved of such a rich archive, and because much of the work that has been done is either too limited or demonstrably erroneous. This situation puts the need for a proper, wide-ranging study into sharp perspective.

My research will attempt to address these deficiencies in several ways. While the structure and focus of this thesis will be expanded upon at the end of this chapter, several observations are worth making now. The first is the approach taken: I have transcribed every extant membership record and input the information into a relational database. This means that, for the first time, we have a full list of the men and women who both began payments to the guild and those who attained full membership, as far as the records permit us to see. This, moreover, means that we no longer need to make generalisations based upon one or two membership lists, whether in manuscript form or transcribed and published. It also allows us to see the full extent of the

[70] For example, she argues that the stewards did not encourage fees in kind, yet that is evidently untrue from an examination of the riding books, which record stewards accepting a wide variety of goods as forms of payment from individuals located as far as seventy miles away. Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds', p. 63. For one example (of many) of collecting payment in goods from afar, see the case of Morgan ap Jenan ap Thomas from Aberystwyth, who paid for his membership, and his wife's, in wax. SA: LB/5/3/5, 36r.
[71] Sparrow, 'A Register of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow', pp. 81-126.
[72] Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds', p. 66.

geographical and social reach of membership, which is revealed to be far more impressive than previously acknowledged. Second, this thesis is not intended to simply relate this empirical research. Instead the aim is to approach the membership of the Palmers' Guild from a conceptual viewpoint, by seeking to understand, in as far as historians are able, the meaning and motivations of the men and women who joined the guild. It is less concerned with the narrative of the guild's history as with its interaction and intersection with pre-Reformation society more generally.

Sources

After the dissolution of the Palmers' Guild in 1551, the large corpus of guild documents was transferred to the Corporation of Ludlow, with a view to evidence its claim to the large portfolio of property it inherited from the guild. This transfer ensured that a substantial archive relating to the guild survived, although it is by no means complete: significant gaps in the records leave decades of darkness as to the guild's activities. What does survive takes various forms: rental accounts, property deeds, indentures, wardens' accounts and memoranda, stewards' accounts, clerks' receipt books, pardons to the guild by the Crown and membership lists.

The guild owned extensive property throughout Ludlow, and had a smaller portfolio of property in Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Wiltshire.[73] The sheer number of properties resulted in a detailed recording of rents, overseen by two rental officers of the guild. Taking the form of annual rolls, each ward of Ludlow (for example, Castle Ward) was carefully noted with the names of those renting property from the guild and the payment received. The rental accounts are some of the oldest surviving documents of the guild, the earliest dating from 1283.[74] They are also the most complete of the guild documents, covering a significant number of

[73] A petition from the later sixteenth century suggests that they also had property in Evesham, although there is no evidence among the extant guild records to support this: Caroline A.J. Skeel, *The council in the Marches of Wales; a study of local government during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (London, 1904), p. 192.

[74] The contents of the 1283 rental roll have been printed in their entirety, with a translation. This confirms that the rents were always put towards prayers, for the preamble begins with a note that the rents collected were intended for a perpetual priest in the parish church. Sparrow, 'The Palmers' Gild of Ludlow', pp. 333-94, transcription and translation of the 1283 rental roll on pp. 340-51.

years from the guild's three-hundred year life: five rolls from the fourteenth century, thirteen from the fifteenth century and six from the sixteenth century.[75] The nature of a fraternity, as an organisation that is at once secular and religious, is embodied in these rolls. The guild was a substantial property holder in its own right, and this is clearly demonstrated through the detailed payments received in rents. Yet while these rolls are useful for a study of the rise and fall of the guild's fortune in regards to the successful acquisition of properties and their relative occupancies, they also provide an insight into the religious side of the guild's activities, albeit in a basic transactional level. For example, the rents routinely precede payments for guild priests for obits as well as to the rector and the deacons of the parish church.[76] As evidence of the religious activities of the guild is often elusive, the rental rolls prove a useful source, being that the profit from the rents were the primary source of income for employing guild priests. More information on the nature of the guild's relationships within secular society is revealed through the recording of payments to those lords who owned the moiety or lordship in which the guild held property, namely Ludlow itself, Shrewsbury, Richard's Castle, Stoke, and Eastham. So too was the guild required to pay the priory at Wenlock.[77] These rolls are therefore invaluable in detailing both the shape and substance of the guild's economic relationships with ecclesiastical and secular authorities, in addition to the religious activities that were funded by rents.

A substantial collection of deeds – numbering 1,462 in total – relating to the guild survives, dating from the mid-thirteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century. Most of these deeds concern the transfer of property to the guild, evincing their right to own properties in and around Ludlow. Most properties have a series of deeds, which trace their ownership prior to the guild's acquisition. These deeds are an excellent source for constructing a linear history of the guild's events.[78] The transfers of properties and the associated individuals referenced in these deeds aid our

[75] SA: LB/5/3/46-71.
[76] For example, see SA: LB/5/3/56, m. 2.
[77] For example, they paid the bailiffs of Ludlow 19*s.* 3*d.* ob. and the Priory of Wenlock 6*s.* 8*d.* in 1502. SA: LB/5/3/60, m. 4.
[78] Faraday has constructed such a history in the introduction to his *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild*, esp. pp. xv-xvii.

understanding of membership of the Palmers and the actions members were undertaking, in relation to the guild, through the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The detailed witness lists provided by the deeds are invaluable given the paucity of other types of guild documents for the fourteenth century in particular. These deeds will be utilised as the basis for re-constructing guild membership in the fourteenth century and confirming our understanding of fifteenth-century membership initially garnered from membership lists.

For the study of membership, with which this thesis is primarily concerned, there are a number of fundamental sources: *debitoria* lists, 'riding books', clerks' receipt books and registers of admission. The *debitoria* record payments from fifteenth-century guild members, surviving in fragmentary form from 1423 to 1443.[79] With changes to the guild's administrative structure in the late fifteenth century (discussed below), the system of fee collection developed into a highly complex administrative procedure, the aim of which was to keep track of membership. The stewards embarked on 'rides' around the country, recruiting new members, collecting fees from existing members and subsequently recording those in the process of paying their membership fees – hence the name 'riding books'.

The system of incremental payments adopted by this time resulted in manuscripts that record the individual and their portfolio of payments – the riding books. Each payment was followed by an abbreviation which corresponds to the name of the steward who had collected it and the year of the steward's service (instead of the calendar year). For example, the entries '4*d.* p[rimo] Bro[wn]' and '12*d.* 3 Clo[nton]', respectively indicate payments made in the first year of John Brown's stewardship (1505) and the third year of Thomas Clonton (1511).[80] Some entries were lengthy, such as for Hugo ap Thomas of Oswestry, who made twenty-two separate payments

[79] SA: LB/5/3/13-16.
[80] A partial list of the stewards can be found in Faraday, *Ludlow*, pp. 187-8.

towards his joint membership with his wife Katherine (Fig. 1).[81] This number of payments was not unusual and examples can be found throughout the riding books.

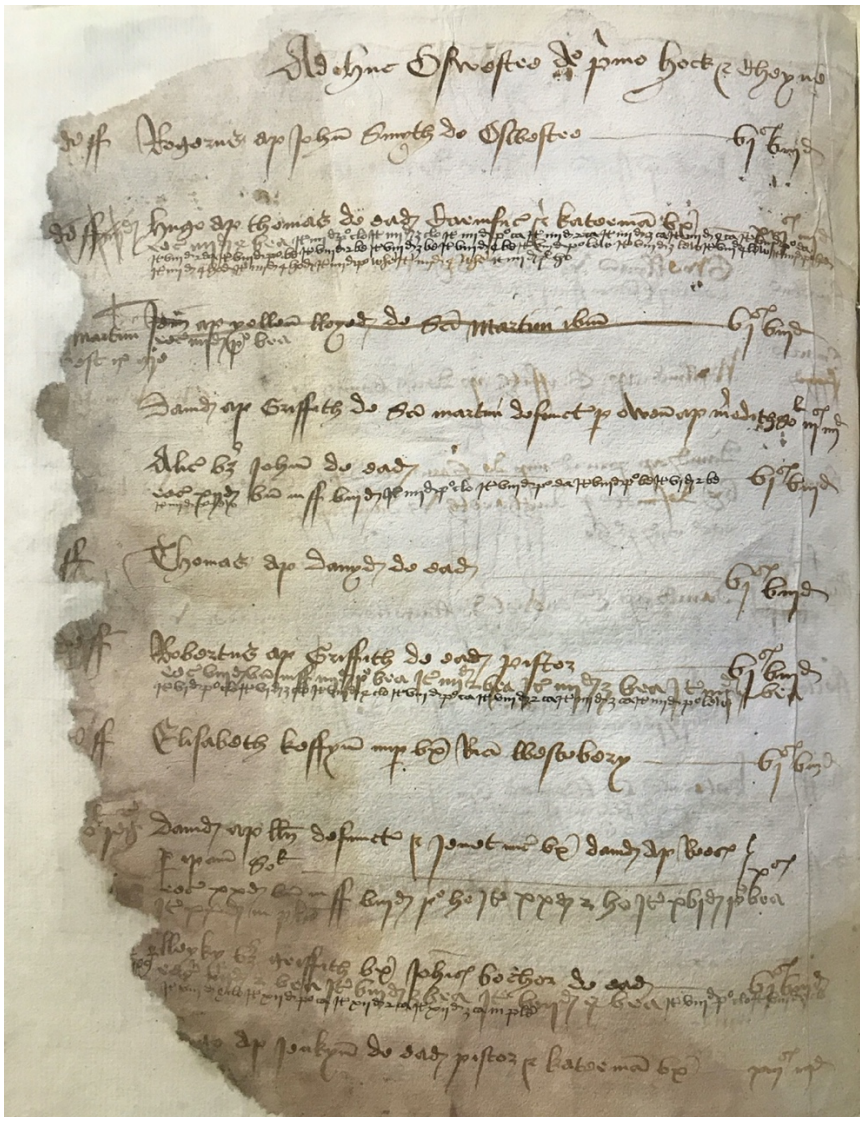

Fig. 1. A folio from a riding book detailing the names of members from Oswestry. It follows the patterns discussed in the text; the example of Hugo ap Thomas' lengthy period of payments is the second entry on the folio. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 19v.

[81] It must be noted that the current state of riding books is such that some have folios from other riding books added in and so checking the top of each folio for the correct year (rather than the title page of the manuscript) is of vital importance. It also means that the numbers written on the top of each folio (by a hand other than contemporaries) are incorrect, with doubling of, for example, folio '1'. The folio numbers that are provided throughout the thesis are the true folio numbers and so may not align with the numbers written on each folio. My database contains both the page numbers written in the manuscript and the genuine folio number.

The entries in the riding books vary in the level of detail provided about the guild member. The most complete riding entry recorded the name (and title, if required), place of residence, occupation (and master if the payee was a servant or apprentice) and the total fee to pay. Husbands and wives might sign up together; in which case the wife's name would be written at the end of the entry, i.e. 'John Dee de Bristol sissor et Katerina uxor 13*s.* 4*d.*'[82] Some individuals were given descriptors that were not associated with an occupation, and instead were assigned their social position: 'wife of', 'singlewoman' or 'singleman'.[83]

The riding books are arranged in a geographical manner reflecting the nature of the stewards' rides. Usually headed by a town, the members listed thereunder would be from either that specific place or neighbouring villages and manors. For cities, particularly Bristol, Coventry and London, a parish might be given as an additional location identifier. Oxford colleges were included in the entries for those residents, as was the clerical college in Warwick.[84] Some headings would simply note counties (i.e. 'lankashur') or often 'extranei' – a jumble of locations from across the country to record a number of 'strangers'.[85] The location of each member was a vital piece of information for the stewards, certainly for the practical purpose of locating members to collect fees. It may also have worked for the stewards to be able to bring together groups of local Palmers on their annual visits, as will be explored in Chapter Five. Yet in the mobile society of late medieval England, circumstances could change as people moved. The importance of keeping current records of a member's location must have been present in the minds of the guild officers as the riding books record locational changes in the margin next to the appropriate entries. When Edward Doen paid 8*d.* in 1515, the clerk assisting the steward Henry Capper recorded that Doen had moved from Castle Ashby to Codington in Cheshire.[86] Richard Longley and his wife moved from

[82] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 53r.
[83] These descriptors were usually written in English. For examples see SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 22r, 67v, 76r.
[84] For an Oxford example, see the entry of John Stevyns of Oriel College, SA: LB/5/3/40 and an example from Warwick can be found in SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 24r.
[85] Multiple examples of this can be found throughout the riding books but these specific examples can be found in SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 9v and LB/5/3/6, f. 54v.
[86] SA: LB/5/3/40. This manuscript is not paginated and as a result all references to it will not have corresponding folio numbers.

Bridgnorth, Shropshire – where they initially signed up – to Chester and this change of residence is reflected in their entry.[87] These emendations happened with a certain degree of regularity, providing yet another example of the meticulous administration of the guild – a necessity for any organisation dealing with thousands of individuals at any one time.

The wealth of information that can be gleaned from the riding books is significant. It forms both the starting point and the backbone of this thesis. It is the survival of riding books dating from 1497-1509 that both dictates and justifies the timescale for the analysis, the emphasis of which is on the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It must be stressed, however, that even though the extant riding books survive for a continuous period of twelve years, they are nevertheless fragmentary. The absence of principal towns and cities in some books indicates missing folios: for example, London does not appear in riding books for 1506/7 or 1507/8, despite being a regular centre of recruitment for the guild.[88]

Taking into account the fact that each riding book might have contained entries for at least 1,000 individuals (often more), at no more than a dozen individuals per folio (at the high end), these manuscripts are bulky. Unsuitable for the stewards to carry around with them on their rides, another system of recording was introduced in the form of a receipt book drawn up by the clerk who accompanied the steward. These recorded the name of the individual, their location, the year that they joined and the payment for that particular year. This information was then copied into the riding book upon the steward and clerk's return to Ludlow. The clerks' receipt books are the embodiment of a set of working documents: short-hand is used at all times for stewards' names, individuals are grouped under wide geographic areas (i.e. those from small villages would be recorded under large towns, rather than their own village) and only strictly necessary information is recorded. Receipt books have been used in this thesis primarily when they survive and cover periods of time in which riding books do not survive – 1472/3 and 1510-30.[89]

[87] SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 22v.
[88] SA: LB/5/3/8-9.
[89] SA: LB/5/3/37, LB/5/3/40-45.

The final class of document to be discussed are the registers of admission; a record common among late medieval guilds, necessitated by the requirement to keep track of guild members. Once individuals had paid the full 6*s.* 8*d.* of their membership fee, their name would be transferred to a register, suggesting full enrolment in the guild. There were exceptions to the total payable amount, however – deceased members were enrolled at a reduced rate of 3*s.* 4*d.*, whereas deceased Ludlow natives were enrolled for only 2*s.* There are notably fewer registers belonging to the Palmers' Guild than other extant records, surviving only for the years 1412-22, 1485-9, 1505-7 and 1507-9.[90] Upon completion of the full membership fee, an individual's name would be written into the registers of admission. Each register is headed with an introduction, outlining that the ensuing names became brothers and sisters of the Palmers in a certain year, along with the names of the wardens and stewards of that year. Importantly, names were enrolled under the year that an individual *began* paying their fee, not the year that they completed. Cross-referencing the riding books and registers confirms this is the case. For example, William Veyll began payments in 1505/6 and completed his 6*s.* 8*d.* fee in 1514 but his name can be found in the 1505-7 registers.[91]

The registers are primarily practical documents, although some may have served a purpose akin to a bede roll, wherein they were used by guild priests to pray for members.[92] But, despite this potential importance, they can be frustratingly opaque documents, little more than a list of names organised by year; Swanson wryly likens them to telephone directories.[93] Yet these documents were clearly valued by fraternities and some were richly decorated – those kept by guilds in Luton and Dunstable being notable examples. Ludlow's registers, while not richly decorated, do differ in presentation from the other versions of membership lists found in the Palmers' archive, such as the *debitoria*. The registers have an elaborate script in comparison, and conservation of space is not prioritized over legibility or orderliness, and there is minor decoration around the address of each

[90] SA: LB/5/3/1-4.
[91] For his entry in the riding book, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r. For his name in the register, see SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 6.
[92] Richard Marks, 'Two Illuminated Guild Registers from Bedfordshire' in Michelle P. Brown and Scot McKendrick (eds.), *Illuminating the Book: Makers and Interpreters. Essays in Honour of Janet Backhouse* (London, 1998), pp. 121-141.
[93] Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood', p. 237.

year - something not found in other records of membership (Fig. 2). The visual impact of the registers is of significance, for it adds gravitas to the names listed on the admissions register.

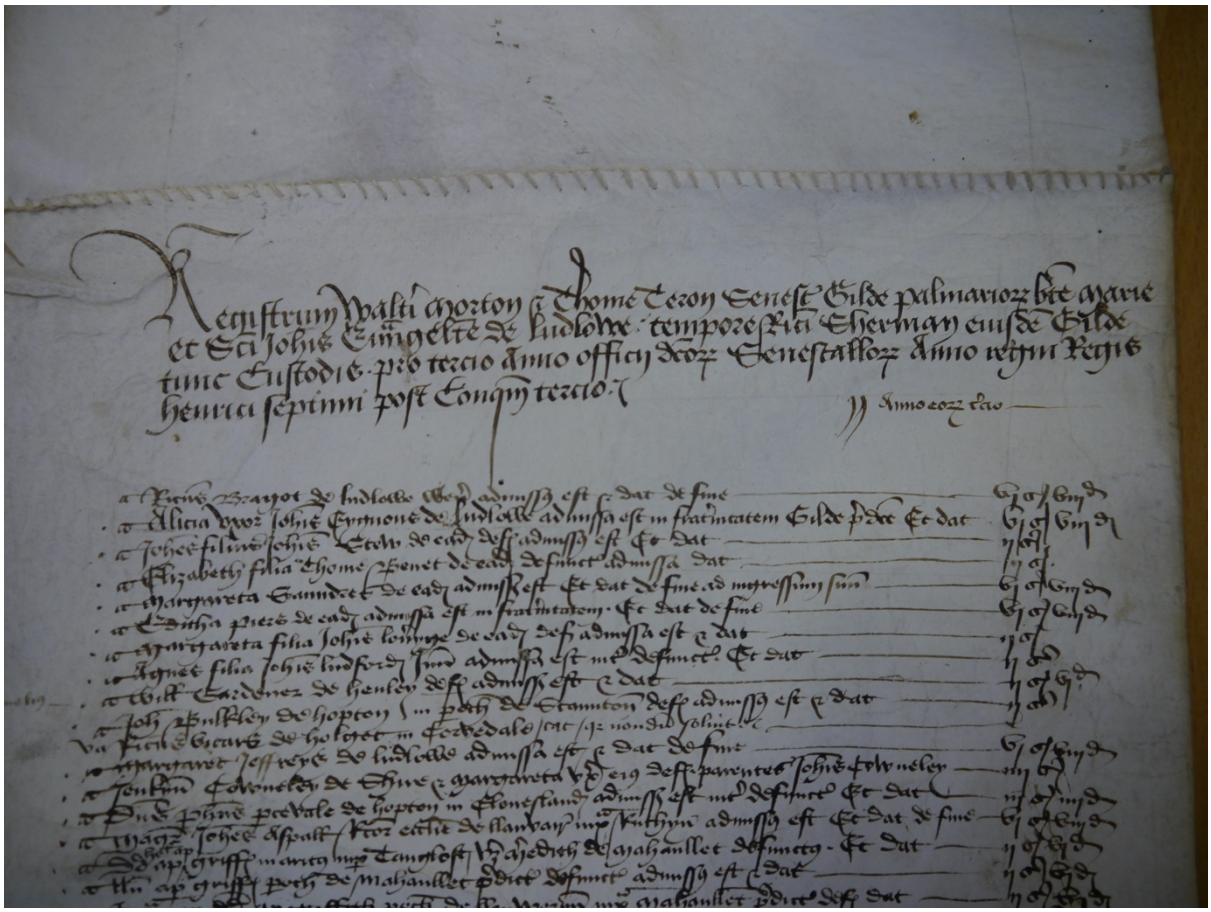

Fig. 2. Register of admission, 1487/8. SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 5.

Payment and Admission

While the information contained within the guild's documents will form the building blocks of this thesis, there is also much that can be discerned from the documents in and of themselves, which adds to our understanding of how the guild operated. This is especially true regarding how the guild went about both recruiting new members and keeping track of the payments due. This process of administration and documentation goes some way to explaining why the Palmers were able to maintain such vast numbers of brethren, which in turn helps us to understand some aspects of the reasons for which people might choose to enrol in the guild.

When used together, the riding books and clerks' receipt books are demonstrative of the flexibility of the guild and the circumstances of particular members. The records can be used to track the transitory and long-term movement of individual Palmers. In 1511, Roger Towres of Stafford paid 4*d.* to the steward of the guild while in Chester.[94] There is no note beside his entry in the riding book that details his move to Chester (a common characteristic discussed above), suggesting that he was only in Chester temporarily. It is tempting to speculate from this evidence the extent of Towres' dedication in completing his admission fee: he was consistent in annual payments ranging from 4*d.* to 8*d.* for a period of nine years, although he never completed the 13*s.* 4*d.* fee for himself and his wife.[95] This example demonstrates the flexibility of the guild's financial and administrative systems, a feature that will be expanded upon in more detail below. It was of no consequence that he paid that year in Chester; a simple note was written and a consultation of the riding books shows that this charge was duly noted under his name.[96] The Palmers' presence in the town must have been well-advertised to the extent that their members knew to pay their dues, and clearly that knowledge was disseminated to visitors of the town. The ability for Towres to pay elsewhere is revealing of the Palmers' pervasiveness within, and across, late medieval society.

Towres was not alone in paying his fees in a different location from where he lived. When John Kene made a payment of 3*s.* 4*d.* in Tenby in 1511, a note reminded the steward Thomas Clonton to look under Bristol when recording his payment in the riding books.[97] This example further underscores the flexibility of the Palmers' collection system. The mobility of the guild and its stewards suited individuals, especially of the mercantile classes, who were equally mobile – either for business or pleasure. The entrenched nature of the Palmers in an extensive number of towns and cities in late medieval England provided their members with a distinct advantage. The stewards' rides across the country eliminated the need for a journey to Ludlow to pay annual fees

[94] SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 5v.
[95] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 133v.
[96] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 133v.
[97] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 53v; SA: LB/5/3/40.

and, even beyond that, their visitations to so many towns eliminated the need to be present in a member's hometown during their annual visit.

The flexibility of the Palmers can be more clearly explained by examining the evolution of the guild's payment system. The administrative structures and processes of the Palmers' Guild developed in a way that assisted the phenomenon of widespread and varied membership. In the earliest days of the guild, its primary source of income was from rent-charges on properties in Ludlow, and it seems that this was the method by which entry into the fraternity was gained.[98] However, by the fourteenth century this practice had been superseded by the payment of a fixed sum. This change in itself is indicative of a strategy on the part of the administration of the guild, which has been recognised justifiably as thorough and impressive.[99] The use of rent-charges suited a guild that was initially formed for 'the good men of the town of Ludlowe',[100] as it was essentially a system designed for property owners in and around the town. As the guild expanded its membership, however, the introduction of a fixed fee was a far more viable option. This sophisticated development in the administration of finance suggests that the guild had seriously considered strategies to increase membership in the fourteenth century. The surviving fourteenth-century membership lists note members from as far away as Chester,[101] but even the most cursory look at the sixteenth-century riding books illuminates the fact that membership of the Palmers' Guild was not, by that time, restricted to Ludlow and its hinterland but rather attracted members from various locations across the kingdom.

When comparing the fifteenth-century *debitoria* to the sixteenth-century riding books, we can discern further developments in the payment system, which indicate that the Palmers were actively adapting their payment policies to suit the changing nature of the guild. After the move away from rent charges in the fourteenth century, the fifteenth century saw the fixed fee usually

[98] VCH Salop.
[99] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 81.
[100] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 86.
[101] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 86.

being paid in two or three parts. By the early sixteenth century, however, this system was broken down further as most people took to paying in small increments. This practice blurs the restrictive nature of admission fees, as 2*d.* (as the lowest incremental sum) was arguably more affordable to provide yearly, or even less frequently. Small incremental payments, suited to each individual's financial circumstance, allowed a more heterogeneous make-up than other leading town guilds with one-off admission fees, such as Bishop's Lynn's Holy Trinity, which charged £5 admission.[102] The guild evidently provided a means by which the poorer members of society could enjoy the benefits of membership. The entrance fee, at 6*s.* 8*d.* per person,[103] was a fairly standard amount (if perhaps on the lower end) for national or regional guild admission fees: Boston's guild also charged 6*s.* 8*d.*, but Stratford's Holy Cross charged 13*s.* 4*d.* for men and 6*s.* 8*d.* for women, while Coventry's Holy Trinity has been suggested to have a £5 admission fee like that of King's Lynn.[104] The key departure of the Palmers, however, was the overwhelmingly common trend of staggered payments – very few people entered into the riding books paid the full amount in a single sum.[105]

In total, 4,782 individuals completed their payments – almost twenty-eight per cent of those who began contributions. Reasons for failing to pay the full membership fee were probably diverse: death, bankruptcy, and even personal choice. Partial payment over several years clearly demonstrates investment in the guild, and incomplete membership fees should not demand the exclusion of those who did not fulfil their financial obligations. In attempting to understand membership, therefore, it is necessary to consider all individuals who are entered in these membership accounts. Moreover, these attitudes towards payment and membership can be partially explained by the absence of a fine for missing a payment. No charge was levied for a

[102] McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity', p. 214.
[103] This cost remained the same throughout the guild's lifetime and applied to both women and men. There was no discounted rate for couples.
[104] Sally Badham, 'He loved the guild', p. 60; Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 56; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 122.
[105] The only other guild discussed in secondary literature that uses a system of incremental payments was that of St John the Baptist, Walsall. The difference there is that the guild at Walsall still expected an annual fee in addition to an entrance fee, which normal practice for guilds in England. Swanson, 'A Medieval Staffordshire Fraternity', pp. 56-59.

pause in regular payments or for ceasing payments completely. For example, John and Agnes Peenlloyod of Bromfeld (Shropshire) halted their membership contributions between 1507 and 1511 before resuming payments until 1517.[106] Allowing individuals to contribute to their membership fee as they wished, or as their circumstances allowed, provided a flexibility not found with other institutions.[107]

The question of the nature of membership is muddied with the Palmers' system of incremental payments: were individuals officially members upon their first contribution against their 'debt' (that is, membership fee) or when they completed their 6*s.* 8*d.* fee? Robert Swanson has stated (albeit without any justification) that it was not until an individual was entered on the register of admission, signalling the completion of their fee, that they were members who received the benefits of association.[108] The answer is rather more complicated than that and needs addressing. In the first instance, it should be noted that the 'benefits' of membership had different constituent parts, which may be summarised as spiritual or charitable and social or interpersonal in nature. The former – the spiritual or charitable benefits – are more difficult to accurately discern, especially as no extant documents make any distinction between partial (i.e. those in the process of paying the fee) and full members.[109] But Swanson's assertion may hold some weight in this regard, especially if the registers of admission are thought of as bede rolls, as suggested above. As it was only after the full payment had been received that one's name was included in this list, there is the suggestion that certain spiritual benefits – in this case, the regular (probably annual) recitation of one's name as a benefactor as both a means of commemoration and to encourage *pro anima* prayers – were only open to full members.

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[106] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 2v.
[107] A system of incremental payment for membership has only been identified with one other guild in the secondary scholarship: St John the Baptist at Walsall. Swanson, 'A Medieval Staffordshire fraternity', pp. 55-7.
[108] Swanson, 'A Medieval Staffordshire fraternity', p. 56.
[109] For example, the returns of 1388/9 simply state that the guild's charity (for example, dowers for maidens, financial hardships, and wrongful imprisonment, which fall under the remit of Christian ideas of charity rather than the social, interpersonal aspects to guild membership) is available 'to any of the bretheren or sisteren', without further elaboration. Although these returns predate the system of incremental payments, they are the only source that outlines precisely what the guild offered to members. Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp. 193-5.

The situation concerning the social or interpersonal benefits of guild membership, however, appears to have been markedly different. There is evidence that access to these benefits commenced immediately upon starting membership payments and permitted access into a community bound by the bonds of common membership to the guild. This will be made clear throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter Five, which traces connections between members of the guild acting in different circumstances outside the guild's official remit. There are several points which can be made that help to bolster this argument. First, it seems to have been the case that the guild's stewards both encouraged and facilitated the meeting of brethren while on their rides to collect membership fees. This expenditure will be explored in detail in Chapters Three and Five, but it is an issue that needs to be briefly addressed here in light of the crucial question of *who* was a member in the eyes of the guild. The stewards paid for food, a variety of drink and occasional cash payments for its brethren in different locations, almost always coinciding with their rides to collect fees.[110] In each case, these payments are recorded as being made to 'brethren', strongly suggesting that it was those from whom they were collecting fees that were the beneficiaries.[111] Moreover, the guild stewards consistently presented drink and cash to religious houses that housed regular clergy who were engaged in the process of paying their individual 6*s.* 8*d.* fees.[112] This can, unfortunately, given the nature of the information recorded, only be conjectural; it remains equally likely that the stewards' rides were an opportunity for full members to interact with the guild's representatives.

More convincing, perhaps, is the evidence relating to the guild's representatives in individual locations, known as solesters – a term etymologically linked to 'solicitor', which hints at

[110] SA: LB/5/3/40; see Chapter Three for this topic in relation to religious houses and Chapter Five for the importance of these actions in relation to guild solidarity.
[111] Only one source appears to have distinguished – potentially – between those still paying fees and those completed. A bill of allowance for the steward Richard Hore speaks of expenses for 'old brethren' as well as 'brethren' in different locations. Whether 'old' refers to the age of brethren, or simply whether they were not new, in so far that they had previously begun payments for their membership, or whether in fact they had fully paid their fee, is not clear. Considering the number of members within the guild, keeping track of which particular individuals had fully paid in each location would have been a difficult task for the stewards.
[112] For example, the Palmers gave one gallon of wine to Worcester Priory in 1511/2, while monks such as William Fordham and William Barnysley were still paying their admission fees. SA: LB/5/3/40; LB/5/3/9, f. 49r.

the nature of their role within the guild.[113] These permanent agents of the Palmers across England and Wales were recruited by the guild stewards, and this agreement was recorded in the clerks' receipt books. Underneath the entry of John Bigges' initial enrolment in the guild, for example, there is a note that states that 'he hathe promysed to be a good selester'.[114] These men became guild representatives *before* they completed their membership fee – a clear indication that brethren status was initiated, in the eyes of the guild officers, when the process of paying began.[115]

Finally, the registers of admission also offer evidence that individuals in the process of paying their fees were indeed considered to be members in some sense; perhaps paradoxically, given that the spiritual benefits represented by inclusion in the registers themselves were only available to full members. The names therein recorded were not listed under the date of their final payment – the date at which they became a 'full' member – but instead for the year that they began payment, which could be up to twenty years previous. So, although there were evidently some limitations to exactly what form membership took before this point, it is nevertheless apparent that the guild, to the extent we can conceive of them having one voice or intent, understood membership to have been assigned to that individual from the moment that they began their association with the Palmers. The aggregate of the clues left behind in the record – the payments for victuals for brethren, the evidence of the status of solesters, and the date under which one's name was entered into the registers – therefore make a convincing case that the guild council viewed paying members as part of the guild community.

What we see, then, in a study of the ways in which the Palmers' Guild approached membership and admission, is an institution that was both adaptable and gradated. It is quite clear how this outlook would have contributed towards the success of the guild in expanding and maintaining its membership throughout the later middle ages, and underscores how they were able

[113] Solesters will be a focus of Chapter Five.
[114] SA: LB/5/3/40. The following entry also records that one Thomas Pace 'hathe promysed like wise'.
[115] The solesters were expected to pay their membership fee – their role as a representative did not equate the gift of brotherhood. Cases when an individual was gifted brotherhood are clearly illustrated and an example can be found in LB/5/3/40, along with the lack of completed fine for the solesters recruited.

to achieve such a wide-ranging (both geographically and socially) membership. The gradual mutation of their payment system encouraged membership, especially for those who were not inclined or able to pay large lump-sums as fees, and the internal evidence from the guild's documentation reveals a complex administrative machine that both reflected these changes and evinces the guild's ability to keep track of who owed money and where they were located. This bureaucratic mentality was augmented by the status of those who, after the introduction of incremental payments, were in the process of contributing towards their membership fees; the lack of fines for non-payment and the fact that the guild clearly distinguished between full and partial members, but that certain benefits were open to both, surely encouraged men and women to associate themselves with this prestigious and well-known guild.

The social composition of guild membership

While membership of the guild is the focus of this thesis and will be explored in detail throughout, it is useful to introduce the social range of membership here. This topic touches on much of what has been discussed above, as the bureaucratic mechanisms employed by the guild, and particularly the ways in which they adapted, encouraged and allowed for an unusually wide cross section of society to pursue membership. The following will sketch out this range, thereby delineating one of the most distinctive aspects of the Palmers' Guild and providing the background for the remainder of the thesis.

Historians have largely assumed that guild membership generally was exclusive in nature, limited to the middling and wealthier, often merchant, members of the parish.[116] Urban guilds are seen as an outlet for the rise of what early modernists call the 'middling sort', and as a form of distinctly mercantile religious expression. Indeed, large numbers of the mercantile classes from

[116] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 152-3; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 137; Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, p. 287; Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community,* p. 131. Caroline Barron explains parish fraternities as essentially communal chantries and argues that, during the second half of the fourteenth century, it was the 'middling' Londoners who contributed to guilds. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', pp. 13-37.

across the county are accounted for in the surviving records of the Palmers. As the rising merchant class strove to forge an identity, the institutions they constructed, whether in the form of a town government or a guild, can be, and have been, seen as oligarchical, self-reciprocating, and defined by selection from among members of their own class.

If the merchant *nouveaux riches* poured their money into fraternal guilds, then it has been assumed that this was something of which the old money of the gentry would not dream. However, the traditional view of gentry piety as largely self-interested, with investment taking the form of private chantries, chapels, and altars, has been called into question.[117] The gentry in fact integrated themselves wholeheartedly and genuinely into the parish, spurred by a wider commemorative impulse, and this involvement was not just an arbitrary token of their status. This revisionist view is compounded by the evidence that the lesser nobility and gentry tended to join large guilds with some frequency.[118] The Palmers further prove instructive, with extraordinary numbers of the aristocracy joining in force. For example, Sir Richard Sacheverell, the receiver-general to Edward, second Baron Hastings joined in 1501/2, alongside his stepson William Hastings.[119] Local gentry are entered as having paid membership fines, such as Elizabeth, wife of Philip Basterfeld of Hereford, but so too are gentry from further afield, like William Kaye and his wife, of Lincoln, whose epithet in the riding book described him as *generosus*.[120] Kaye was one of several hundred individuals recorded in guild documents whose status was invoked in this way.

More revealing, perhaps, is the level of noble involvement in the guild; here it encompassed both secular and ecclesiastical lords. It was not unusual for large town guilds to rank among their members great men and women who could be considered token noble patrons. The guild of the

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[117] Richmond espoused this view, while Carpenter and Saul argue that it was not the case. Colin Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century Gentleman', in B. Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), p. 199; Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 242; eadem, 'Religion of the Gentry in the fifteenth century' in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the fifteenth century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 63-6; Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2017), p. 110; idem, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (Oxford, 1986), p. 159.
[118] Badham, 'He loved the guild', p. 58
[119] SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 15r.
[120] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 35., LB/5/3/7, f. 35r.

Holy Cross at Stratford was clearly proud to admit George, duke of Clarence, and his family in 1477/8, as the scribe employed particularly extravagant handwriting for their entry in the register.[121] In the same year, the Corpus Christi Guild in York entered Clarence's brother, Richard, duke of Gloucester, and his wife Anne into the guild.[122] The Palmers, on the other hand, had a longer and arguably more prestigious association with the House of York. It is known that George and Richard's father, Richard, duke of York, joined the Palmers in 1438, and his son, Edward IV, gifted the guild £5 in 1472/3.[123] It is likely that all of this was much in the same vein – a token gesture to ensure their position in the heart of the lands that constituted their power.

Although the large numbers of the nobility and gentry who joined the guild add a new social dimension to guild historiography, they were, like the merchants, people of means who could easily afford to pay the fees that entitled membership to the guild. Indeed, it is often the price of membership that is cited as the exclusionary factor of late medieval guilds.[124] But it should by now be clear that the social composition of the Palmers' membership compels us to move beyond these traditionally-held views: the guild was extraordinarily inclusive. To demonstrate this point, we can look at two examples from the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century membership lists. An extremely poignant case is the entry of John Tasler, a beggar, recorded in 1428/9.[125] The second example of note is Alice Barker, a midwife from Coventry who began payments in 1501.[126] Numerous small-scale agricultural and manual workers, such as husbandmen and labourers, also joined.[127] These individuals do not immediately spring to mind as members of a guild that admitted the likes of the civic elite, the gentry, and the nobility, including royalty. Even the 'poor people's

[121] Carpenter, 'Town and Country', p. 69.
[122] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', p. 273.
[123] SA: LB/5/3/25, m. 1; LB/5/3/37, f. 6r.
[124] Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, p. 282; McRee, 'The guilds of *homo prudens*', p. 167.
[125] When the guild referred to friars, who might be considered 'beggars', they were referenced their religious status, opting to call them 'friar'. Examples of this can be found in SA LB/5/3/40, while Tasler's partial payment in the *debitoria* can be found in SA: LB/5/3/15, m. 1.
[126] SA: LB/5/3/3/, f. 14r.
[127] For example, Robert Hichecokes of Stratford-upon-Avon. SA: LB/5/3/7, 67v.

guild' of St Austin, Norwich, was not so inclusive, as it purposely offered its poor members a dignified status to distinguish them from the transient beggar, who was the 'real outsider'.[128]

There certainly was occupational diversity among the brethren. Those best represented are servants, chaplains, monks, members of the gentry, vicars, merchants and mercers, but there are consistent annual enrolments of fishmongers, tailors, butchers, bakers, smiths, grocers, brewers and a number of occupations associated with every stage of cloth production. Other occupations appear infrequently, such as bowdlers: only one is recorded as a member, John Duknell from Hopesay (Shropshire).[129] As noted above, some individuals are described in relation to their marital status – singleman, singlewoman and 'vidua' (or in English, widow) – examples include Henry Cutt, singleman from Warwick, Eleanor Wright from Birmingham and Elisabeth Coton, widow, who could be found 'at the sign of the unicorn' in Lichfield.[130]

An overview of the members of the Palmers therefore makes clear the guild's curious nature and demonstrates the need to understand how the guild was embedded in rural and urban landscapes across late medieval England and Wales. In thinking about the motivation for, and significance attached to, membership of this great fraternity, the social heterogeneity of the guild cautions against straightforward, generalising explanations. The inclusion of regular and secular clergy, labourers and husbandmen, servants, apprentices and masters, gentry and nobility within the ranks of the guild underlines the importance of examining the potentially multifaceted meanings of guild membership to different groups of people. These observations – possible only through the close and comprehensive reading of the guild's records that forms the basis of this thesis – have profound implications not only for our understanding of the Palmers, but also for the study of guilds in society more generally. It is the purpose of this thesis to uncover exactly what these interactions were.

[128] Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 56.
[129] SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 7.
[130] SA: LB/5/3/10, 23v., LB/5/3/2, 36v., LB/5/3/9, 19r.

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While the shared reasons for membership should not be overlooked (as the draw of spiritual provision and sociability is an explanatory factor for the membership of every medieval guild), this thesis approaches the study of guild membership through examination of issues of motivation and intention among different groups of members. Chapter One initiates the discussion of membership with study of the guild within its locality, that of the small market town of Ludlow. The nature of the records that survive for the Palmers creates an inherent bias for, as discussed above, membership records survive in greater quantity for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As a result, previous analysis has generally been concentrated accordingly. The fourteenth-century history of the guild has always remained somewhat elusive: it is generally considered simply as a period of the accumulation of property within the town, without a specific examination of the internal function of the guild and its role within the urban community. The sociological methodology of social network analysis (SNA) has been employed in this chapter to expand our understanding of membership, networks and social structures within the Palmers' Guild and the town of Ludlow itself. This chapter reveals the day-to-day business of the guild and its members and allows us to see how the guild interacted both internally and externally. The fourteenth century solidified the relationship between the governing structures of Ludlow and guild, and, in many ways, this chapter follows the well-established practice of guild historians of considering local politics. The rising place of the guild in town government in the second half the fourteenth century set a precedent that continued through to the Palmers' dissolution in 1551. The discussion reveals that the importance attached to membership at this time was decisive and clear: involvement within the leading religious fraternity of the guild was a requirement to progress through local civic ranks.

Pushing the boundaries of guild studies, the following chapters are unequivocally not Ludlow-centric, but rather seek to understand the meaning of membership for those located

outside the natural catchment area for a religious guild. Chapter Two develops a well-trodden topic of research surrounding guilds – the relationship between government, civic politics and guilds – to consider the relationship between the Palmers and local power structures outside Ludlow; power structures which were both urban and rural. By examining the proliferation of regional guild membership among the elite, this chapter argues that such associations were used to enhance reputations and strengthen bonds between those who governed. The Palmers' Guild was a proving ground for aspiring members of the urban and rural governing elites, attracting men at an early stage of their adult life. Through a study of the offices of rural justice, it becomes clear that membership was a learned behaviour of the rural gentry. The urban elites, however, were influenced by localised ideas of 'civic Catholicism'.

Departing from the secular world, the third chapter seeks to uncover the motivations, and meanings, of membership among the regular clergy. It is unusual to find such a strong monastic presence within a lay-governed fraternity, and so the question arises as to why the regular clergy engaged with the Palmers. Exploring the membership patterns, geographical spread and institutional relationships of religious houses directs us to the importance of regionality in encouraging membership. The actions of the guild itself, the networks between monasteries and the presence of the Council of the Marches at Ludlow were all contributing draws to the Palmers' Guild specifically. The individual benefits of membership were rarely encountered for monks and nuns: the guild, the religious houses and the Council benefitted on an institutional level from their mutual interaction, presenting a situation rather different from the experiences of the rest of the lay brethren.

Communities of late medieval society were places and spaces of communication, integration and influence. While guild membership spread through monastic networks, it also blossomed within each house as a community. This pattern is reflected amongst the laity, as guild membership also flourished within secular households. The study of households proves to be a multi-layered topic, which brings together the history of servitude, domesticity, affective bonds,

retainer networks and guild studies. The fourth chapter therefore ventures into uncharted territory, identifying, for the first time, the prevalence of guild membership among noble, gentle and mercantile households. Four patterns are broadly identified to explain the trends found amongst the Palmers' brethren: the life-cycle of the servant, the internal influences within a household, external pressures and, finally, the resulting benefits of household membership. The sum total of this analysis accounts for the deep social currents, specific to households, that manifested in the large-scale presence of masters, families and servants among the Palmers' membership lists.

The final chapter examines exactly what it meant to be an 'active' member of the Palmers. Throughout the thesis, the actions of individuals and the institution of the Palmers are studied in conjunction, illuminating the nuances and tensions inherent in the working relationship between an institution and its participants. This exercise is, of course, difficult, as the guild was governed by the very individuals who simultaneously made up its participants. The sizeable nature of the Palmers, however, presents an opportunity to study those geographically intimate with the guild, and those physically far removed. What measures, if any, did the guild take to ensure that a community of brethren existed in locations far from Ludlow? How did individual men and women take advantage of guild networks and foster social relations amongst themselves? The chapter ultimately addresses the question that hangs over any study of a regional, or national, institution: to what extent did membership of the Palmers manifest itself in the everyday lives of the brethren?

Overall, this thesis reveals the Palmers to be an unusual institution in late medieval England. While reflecting other national guilds in the size and spread of its membership, it was perhaps distinct in its attempts to replicate the personal bonds formed by smaller parish-based fraternities among its members. The ways in which it achieved this were partly due to the guild offices of the steward and solester: permanent representatives of the guild based in settlements, along with the annual visitation of the guild steward, provided all members across the country with an easily accessible link to the governing structures of the Palmers. This in turn allowed (or perhaps encouraged) guild members in locations across the country to routinely engage with their fellow

brethren, as evinced in the witness lists of localised deeds and in testamentary bequests. These local communities of engagement were no doubt fostered by membership of the Palmers.

Chapter One
A Typical Affair:
A Parish Fraternity in the Fourteenth Century

Introduction

> Grant, on the petition of the brethren and sisters of the gild of Palmers of St. Mary, Lodelowe, confirming the said gild under that name as a fraternity ordained and of old established by the men of Lodelowe to the honour of God, the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist...[1]

By 1329, the Palmers' Guild was already of some antiquity, as revealed by the letters patent quoted above, in which the young Edward III confirmed its status and recognised its seal. While the guild members clearly viewed themselves as well-established at the time of Edward III's confirmation, the guild to which they belonged was in fact still in the relatively early stages of development in terms of membership. The Palmers did not yet possess the country-wide membership and reputation it would achieve by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The confirmation allowed the Palmers 'power to admit whom they will as members', although it is apparent that their selection at this time remained fairly local. In the absence of detailed analysis, it is tempting to view the guild as slowly blossoming from an insular, town guild in the thirteenth century to a growing, expansive guild, that continued on a straight trajectory towards country-wide membership.[2] Alternatively, historians have been inclined to skim over the fourteenth century, preferring to focus on the substantial records of the sixteenth century.[3] Yet such developments are, and were, rarely so clear-cut; accounts which claim so proffer a simplistic teleological narrative of which we should be wary. This chapter will interrogate the size and character of brethren in the

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[1] *CPR: Edward III, 1327-30*, p. 459.
[2] As seen in Michael Faraday, *Ludlow, 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), pp. 75-87.
[3] Swanson refers to the early history of the guild as 'elusive': Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 134, n. 91. Examples of studies that discuss Ludlow which do so for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries can be found in: R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance Before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993); Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250-1550* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 113, 144-5; Judith Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: an analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c. 1400-1551' (M.A. thesis, University of Gloucester, 2010); David Lloyd, Margaret Clark and Chris Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The parish church and people, 1199-2009* (Herefordshire, 2010), pp. 11-13, 34-35.

fourteenth century, thereby considering the developments of the period in their own right. This context of the early stages of the guild's development is particularly pressing if we are to understand later trends in membership on account of the lack of surviving membership lists from this period.

The fourteenth century was the golden age of guild foundation in medieval England. Fifty per cent of medieval English guilds listed by Westlake were founded after 1348, and there was a European-wide expansion of fraternities in the two centuries after this date.[4] Responding to social and economic turbulence, the establishment of guilds was also a reaction to developments in ethical perspectives concerned with Christian morality and personal salvation which had their origins in the thirteenth century. Guild foundation might have been a practical response to perceived inadequacies of pastoral care, or envisaged as the cultivation of community, or necessitated by the need to provide a space for those travelling across parishes.[5] There is almost certainly a correlation between heightened personal mobility and the emergence of guilds in over-crowded centres in which there was great personal displacement; a trend that was evident both in England and in other parts of Europe. The increase in the number of guilds in the second half of the fourteenth century has been explained by rising wages, and subsequent higher standards of living, following the Black Death, which allowed artisans and craftsmen to pay the quarterly or yearly subscription fees required for guild membership.[6] Most of the parish fraternities founded in the fourteenth century remained just that – small organisations rooted in the parish, serving the needs of members in and of that community.

The establishment of the Palmers in the mid-thirteenth century therefore predates this 'boom' in guild foundation throughout Europe, making its early stages of development all the

[4] H.F. Westlake, *The Parish Guilds of Mediæval England* (London, 1919). Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350-1558* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 41-3. For further example, all of the major guilds in Coventry were founded between the 1340s and 1360s: Richard Goddard, 'Church lords and English Urban Investment in the Later Middle Ages', *Past & Present*, Vol. 195, Issue Supplement 2 (Jan 2007), p. 163.
[5] Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, pp. 1-19.
[6] C.M. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', in Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (eds.), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 23-5.

more compelling as a means of providing a context for the later wide-ranging membership that extended far beyond the parish boundary. It is vital to focus first on the local context of the Palmers, in order to determine the nature of membership in the fourteenth century. The Palmers were multifaceted in their nature, and their role as a parish fraternity in Ludlow is one facet; others will be explored in subsequent chapters. It is only through a careful examination of the fourteenth-century situation, followed by excursions into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that we can truly situate membership of the Palmers. This chapter establishes the size and nature of membership locally to ascertain why individuals close to Ludlow were members. The analysis is divided into two halves: the first section, focusing on the fourteenth century, traces this early stage in the development of the guild by utilising the methodology of social network analysis. It argues, first of all, that membership was wider in the fourteenth century than has previously been supposed, and, secondly, that even with a wider membership, the Palmers in the fourteenth century remained characteristic of a typical parish fraternity – both in size and in the identity of those who joined the guild. The second section of the chapter, bringing in evidence from later centuries, recognises that through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the governance of the Palmers continued to be focused around an association with governance of Ludlow, while the general membership of the guild was more inclusive.

Membership of the guild

The nature of the records that survive relating to the Palmers' Guild has created an inherent bias – membership lists (in various forms) survive in larger quantities from the second half of the guild's life than the first. Evidence of thirteenth-century guild membership is especially sparse, suggested only by a list of gifts to the guild, all of which were in the form of rent-charges on property.[7] Similarly, the fourteenth-century history of the guild has remained somewhat unclear, as only two membership lists survive from this time. One can be found in a rental roll of 1346: this document

[7] VCH Salop.

mostly comprises an account relating to the collection of rents on properties in Ludlow from which the guild drew a substantial proportion of its income.[8] However, at the very end of the membrane is an addition: a list of debts paid by thirty-three brethren towards their membership. The other extant membership list dates from 1377/8 and is preserved in a steward's account.[9] Here are recorded sixty-four brethren of the fraternity also paying debts for membership. The combination of these two membership lists allows us only a glimpse of the extent of the Palmers' membership during this time. It would be most unwise to consider that these two lists, which total ninety-seven individuals, offer an accurate representation of the group of people who constituted the Palmers' Guild during this period. It is unclear in both cases whether these lists represent a year's worth of admissions or an intake for a longer period of time.

The diligent recording of financial transactions, in the form of annual stewards' accounts, rental accounts and warden's memoranda in later years of the guild, indicates that the guild most likely kept similarly detailed records in the fourteenth century, which have not survived in their entirety. The survival of rental accounts for the years 1346, 1351, and 1364, along with stewards' accounts for 1344/5 and 1377/8, suggests no reason for yearly accounts not to have been a matter of course; there do not appear to be any abnormal events, large donations or expenditure in those years to indicate extenuating circumstances that led to the creation of these records. That the other stewards' and rental accounts do not include similar fines for brethren suggests one of two things: either that records of membership were kept separately (as is the case in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) and the inclusion of membership in these accounts was due to an unknown reason; or that the guild did in fact only have two periods of recruitment in the fourteenth century, which seems incredibly unlikely. A significant number of individuals in the 1346 list (twenty out of thirty-three) paid only a portion of the membership fee, so if these two dates were the only moments of recruitment, it would be likely to have some overlap in names. In 1377, a smaller proportion of

[8] SA: LB/5/3/46.
[9] SA: LB/5/3/23.

individuals paid less than the fee (seventeen out of sixty-three), again suggesting that a list before or afterwards would have been in existence detailing further subscription fees. These observations heavily imply the original existence of additional membership lists for the fourteenth century. Documentation of the guild in the fourteenth century is paltry when compared with the bountiful documents of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and what survives is likely only a fragment of the original records.

That these lists are not representative of the full extent of the guild's membership is further illustrated by the extraordinarily low number of people listed for a guild that, by 1389, was a substantial property owner within Ludlow.[10] It was also low in regards to Ludlow's population: the poll tax of 1377 identified 1,172 tax-payers in Ludlow, yet only ninety-seven Palmers are named in these lists. The problematic nature of the surviving sources is further illuminated by the fact that these lists do not include the names of people that we know for certain were members: the guild's officers. Wardens, stewards and rent collectors, who are known to hold positions within the guild from other sources within the archive, such as deeds, are not recorded.

Table 1.1: Known Wardens of the fourteenth century

Name	Dates
Henry Pygin	1284-1315
Richard Corve	1329-49
Richard Orleton	1359-61
John Hawkins	1365-71
William Orleton	1372-90
William Hereford	1392
William Broke	1393-94
Philip Lingen	1396-97

The seven men listed in Table 1.1 were accompanied in their duties by eight stewards, two janitors and one rental officer over the course of the fourteenth century, although likely more officers would be known to us if there was a higher rate of survival of documentation.[11] The guild

[10] For property ownership within Ludlow, see Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 78.
[11] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 184.

elders presumably also paid the membership fine to become brethren of the guild. In 1359, a deed identifies these men as Richard Pauntley, Geoffrey Warwyk, John Westhope and John Cachepol.[12] Another group of men ascribed the title of 'aldermen' appears in an indenture from 1383, adding another nine individuals to our knowledge of particular brethren.[13] The absence of these men's names from the existing fourteenth-century lists further confirms that membership was greater than surviving evidence demonstrates. The addition of the officers and elders to the two membership lists bring the total number of known brethren to 125 over the course of a century. This low number does rather beg an inquiry into the state of membership in the fourteenth century, especially in light of the extensive and intensive membership in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Social Network Analysis Part I – Historiography

The vagaries of documentary survival therefore leave substantial holes in our understanding of the Palmers' Guild in the fourteenth century. However, what does remain among the guild's archive is an extensive collection of deeds that relate to the guild or guild members and date from the mid-thirteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century. Most of these deeds relate to the transfer of property and the establishment of chantries and services provided by guild priests. While Michael Faraday has largely used these deeds to pick out events relating to the guild, they have not been analysed for much else.[14] In addition to drawing out events, dates, names, and titles to aid a narrative history, a corpus of material such as this can also be viewed as a mine of potential data. The structure of a deed provides us with information on the grantor, grantees, and witnesses involved in the transaction, which in turn provides information on the connections between these people. Such a vast amount of potential data defies traditional historical analysis, but we can borrow methodologies from the social sciences to make sense of them. Once interpreted in terms

[12] SA: LB/5/2/690.
[13] SA: LB/5/2/392.
[14] Faraday, *Ludlow*, pp. 77-95.

of guild membership, it is possible that these data will fill the gaps currently left in our knowledge of the Palmers' Guild in the fourteenth century.

In his seminal discussion of medieval English guilds, Gervase Rosser dedicated an entire sub-section of a chapter to the notion of 'Friendship Networks', arguing that guilds were both formed of, and facilitated, connections of trade, blood, and association.[15] In an urban setting, he argued, guilds were a way of combatting the pitfalls of a 'fluid' trading population, as they helped to foster both business and friendship.[16] While it is difficult to find fault with Rosser's contentions here, his choice of phrasing raises issues that are indicative of wider trends within the study of history. 'Networks' have often been used by historians in a vague sense, as a convenient summary of social relationships.[17] There is, however, a more precise meaning that can be attached to the phrase, and some historians have seized upon this as an interpretive tool.

Historians have always had a great propensity for adjusting and adapting other disciplinary approaches to fit their own study. Social network theory, a methodology first developed by sociologists which promotes a quantitative analysis of connections between individuals (termed social network analysis, or SNA), has experienced precisely this appropriation, where it continues to be refined for use in the discipline of history. There have been individual attempts to argue explicitly for the role SNA could play in the study of past cultures,[18] but the traditional resistance of historians – especially medieval historians – to the collection and use of empirical data from their sources has meant that historical SNA has not yet taken off.[19] Recently there has been headway, however, with more historical articles devoted to SNA, grants by the Leverhulme Trust and the Arts and Humanities Research Council to fund SNA-based projects, and the inauguration

[15] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, pp. 113-6.
[16] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, p. 116.
[17] C. Rollinger, M. Düring, R. Gramsch-Stehfest, and M. Stark, 'Editor's Introduction', *Journal of Historical Network Research*, Vol. 1 (2017), p. iii.
[18] See below.
[19] This is clearly a generalisation, and, as with every generalisation, there are notable exceptions – especially, for example, in economic history.

of the *Journal of Historical Network Research* in 2017.[20] The fact that Rosser tapped into the cultural understanding of 'networks' but did not explicitly engage with this more specific and burgeoning methodology opens the possibility that medieval guilds can be examined under the aegis of SNA in an attempt to develop the existing historiography in a new manner, with the potential to yield interesting and insightful results.[21]

There is, therefore, scope to examine the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow in this inter-disciplinary capacity, drawing on sociological, anthropological, and statistical methods. Such an approach would at once contribute to the historical use of SNA, advancing our understanding of the ways it can be employed, and simultaneously shed light on the nuances and intricacies of medieval guilds. Before this can be attempted, however, it should first be ascertained exactly how SNA fits into the study of history, and how this is relevant to the current project.

The networks used in SNA, as defined by Cornell Jackson in the *People of Medieval Scotland* project, are 'connections among people, organisations, political entities (states and nations) and/or other units'.[22] This is a sweeping definition, but Jackson goes on to clarify its importance, stating that 'the science of social networks provides a distinct way of seeing the world because it is about individuals and groups and how the individuals become groups'. This wide-ranging reasoning necessitates a wide-ranging definition. More precise definitions are, therefore, discretionary, based upon the questions each individual project seeks to answer.[23] But what is essentially being studied in all cases are the networks that underpin a society; social network analysts argue that these

[20] The *People of Medieval Scotland 1093-1314* project (www.poms.ac.uk, accessed 25 July 2018) is the result of two projects funded by the AHRC and one by the Leverhulme Trust; *Journal of Historical Network Research*, Vol. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.25517/jhnr.v1i1. This publication is designed to provide a platform for social historians practicing SNA to showcase their work, rather than in sociological journals which are often the domain of historical sociologists. As a result, it aims to merge the traditional historical emphasis on source criticism and the technical and theoretical discussions of methodology found in sociological publications.

[21] Rosser does later, however, cite the work of sociologist Mark Granovetter: Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 145, n. 119.

[22] M. Hammond and C. Jackson, *Social Network Analysis and the People of Medieval Scotland (PoMS) Database* (Glasgow, 2017), p. 25, http://www.poms.ac.uk/e-books/social-network-analysis-and-the-people-of-medieval-scotland-1093-1286-poms-database/.

[23] M. Newman, *Networks: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2010), p. 37. Newman lists more specific examples of the connections that might be studied: 'friendship between individuals, ... professional relationships, exchange of goods or money, communication patterns, romantic or sexual relationships, or many other types of connection'.

relationships are at least as important as individual attributes when attempting to discern the forces acting within a society, and that they therefore merit study.[24] SNA allows us to take a step back from the tangled web of human interaction and view it holistically, discerning patterns of behaviour that may not be immediately apparent. Or – to return to the issue of historians conceiving of networks in a vague sense, whereby the networks are generally only assumed – SNA systematically maps out a person's or group's connections and might serve to verify or dismiss suppositions based on merely reading documentary sources. It offers interpretations that are 'independent of the perspective given by traditional historical methods'.[25] To this end, once the data on social interactions have been gathered, one of the most common analytical methods employed in SNA is the use of a sociogram. First developed by sociologist Jacob Moreno,[26] a sociogram maps out the connections based on an algorithm (now usually generated by specialised computer software, such as Pajek or Gephi), which the human eye can easily analyse. Sociograms treat individuals as *actors* or *nodes*, and the connections between them as *arcs* or *edges*, and it is these points and their links that sociograms illustrate as a web-like image. Alongside sociograms, further analytical methods such as *centrality*, *density*, and *reachability* can be used to draw meaningful conclusions from raw data.[27] These notions are, however, of little use without an understanding of the type of insights SNA can offer to the study of past societies. Charles Wetherell offered the best summary, in which he explained in four concepts:

> First, actors in all social systems are viewed as "interdependent rather than independent". Second, the linkages or relations among actors channel information, affection and other resources. Third, the structure of those relationships or ties among actors both constrain and facilitate action. Fourth, and finally, the patterns of relations among actors define economic, political and social structure.[28]

[24] Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*, p. 25.
[25] Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*, p. 35.
[26] J. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive? A New Approach to the Problem of Human Interrelations* (Washington, D.C., 1934); first introduced at p. 26.
[27] Definitions of these terms, and other SNA principles, can be found in Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*, pp. 27-9.
[28] C. Wetherell, 'Historical Social Network Analysis', *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 43 (1998), p. 126.

SNA, when thoroughly applied to a historical society, provides a framework in which the actions of individuals can be understood in relation to each other.

'Networks' of people (rather than of communications) were first conceived with real clarity by sociologists and anthropologists between the world wars.[29] The first historian to use SNA and recognise its potential seems to have been Alan Macfarlane in his paper 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities' in 1977, in which he argued for 'a combination of the anthropological techniques and the historical material', claiming this approach could be 'extremely fruitful'.[30] Macfarlane was impressed by the work of sociologists John Barnes and Jeremy Boissevain, whom he regarded, respectively, as having introduced the concept of a network, and having undertaken the most thorough SNA thus far attempted.[31] Macfarlane himself argued that the use of networks by historians would be one of mutual benefit. SNA could shine a light into the networks of the past, but the problems faced by sociologists and anthropologists could likewise be illuminated by the nature of the historian's sources. He asserted that gathering sufficient information on contemporary subjects to run a full analysis of social networks was near-impossible, but that 'data from the past ... often provide a very large amount of information which is surprisingly good from a statistical point of view'.[32] Macfarlane's suggestions were criticised in the same journal a year later, in a paper which warned of a 'mindless empiricism' that might focus on methods of collecting data at the expense of answering fundamental research questions, but this did not deter historians from working on his suggestions.[33] Indeed, the first work of medieval history to employ SNA substantially was by a historian whose work Macfarlane had cited in his

[29] For a history of the use of networks across academic disciplines, see J. Innes, '"Networks' in British History", *The East Asian Journal of British History*, Vol. 5 (March 2018), pp. 51-72.
[30] A. Macfarlane, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities', *Social History*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (1977), pp. 631-52. Quotes taken from p. 637.
[31] Macfarlane, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities', pp. 637-8; J. Barnes, 'Class and Committees in a Norwegian Parish', *Human Relations*, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (1954), pp. 39-58; J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford, 1974).
[32] Macfarlane, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities', p. 640.
[33] C.J. Calhoun, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities: Some Problems in Macfarlane's Proposal', *Social History*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1978), pp. 363-73. Quote at p. 371.

propositional article.[34] Richard Smith's article, 'Kin and Neighbors in a Thirteenth-Century Suffolk Community', released in 1979, has been described as 'the earliest example of such an isolated innovation [i.e. a medieval study that employed SNA]'.[35]

The 1980s and 1990s saw something of an explosion in the use of medieval SNA, with interesting attempts by Judith Bennett, Barbara Hanawalt, Christine Carpenter, David Postles, and Colin Richmond.[36] This period indicated a real interest in the power of SNA, aided by the development of specialist computer software: Carpenter's study of the networks of the Staffordshire gentleman, Philip Chetwynd (d.1307) was proffered as the early stages of an intended SNA project on a much more ambitious scale.[37] This project, however, never came to fruition, and the use of SNA by medievalists largely returned to one or two isolated examples.[38] David Gary Shaw turned to SNA in 2005 for his assessment of civic oligarchy in late medieval Wells, in which he argued persuasively that the networks of the town's elite helped to define and reinforce their position.[39] More recently, an unpublished PhD thesis by Justin Colson encouraged historians towards SNA.[40] Thanks again to developments in computer software, the more recent attempts at

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[34] Macfarlane, "History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities', p. 638, n. 29.
[35] R. Smith, 'Kin and Neighbors in a Thirteenth-Century Suffolk Community', *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 4, Issue 3 (1979), pp. 219-56; Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*, p. 3.
[36] J. Bennett, 'The Tie that Binds: Peasant Marriages and Families in Late Medieval England', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (1984), pp. 111-129; B. Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence' in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA, 1988), pp. 188-212; C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), pp. 340-80; D. Postles, 'Personal Pledging: Medieval "Reciprocity" or "Symbolic Capital", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 26 (1996), pp. 419-435; C. Richmond, 'Ruling Classes and Agents of the State: Formal and Informal Networks of Power', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 10 (1997), pp. 1-26.
[37] Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community', p. 369.
[38] For example, Carpenter's 'computer-aided network analysis' was noted but not employed by Anne Polden in her 'The Social Networks of the Buckinghamshire Gentry in the Thirteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 32, Issue 4 (2006), pp. 371-94. Carpenter's article has mostly been seen as seminal for its deconstruction of the notion of a 'county community', rather than its development of SNA.
[39] D. Shaw, 'Social Networks and the Foundation of Oligarchy in Medieval Towns', *Urban History*, Vol. 32, Issue 2 (2005), pp. 200-22.
[40] Despite referencing no works of historical SNA in his discussion on methodology, Colson's work influenced Charlotte Berry's article on the social networks of the London Wardmote inquests. Justin Colson, 'Local Communities in Fifteenth Century London: Craft, Parish and Neighbourhood' (PhD Thesis, University of London, 2010), pp. 21-2, 56-60; C. Berry, '"To Avoide All Envye, Malys, Grudge and Displeasure": Sociability and Social Networking at the London Wardmote Inquest, c.1470-1540', *The London Journal*, 42:3 (2017), pp. 201-17. There is now a growing number of publications using network analysis: Joe Chick, 'Urban Oligarchy and Dissolutioned Voters: The End of Monastic Rule in Reading, 1350-1600', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 16, Issue 4 (2019), pp. 387-411; C. Berry and E. Lewis (eds.), *Negotiating Networks: New research in Networks in Social and Economic History* (Forthcoming, Autumn 2020).

SNA have been greatly aided by the use and inclusion of clear sociograms, generated from large amounts of data, in a way that had not been possible for the earliest historians. Arguably the most comprehensive attempt to treat a medieval subject with the methodology of SNA is the *People of Medieval Scotland* project, which created a database of 'all information that can be assembled about every individual involved in actions in Scotland or relating to Scotland in documents' between 1093 and 1314.[41]

While there is, therefore, a precedent for using SNA as a methodological tool to examine medieval societies (and, indeed, other historical periods), there are naturally limitations and issues that have to be considered when applying to past records a methodology created for contemporary social groups. Despite Macfarlane's enthusiastic argument that historical sources could be comprehensive enough for thorough network analysis, this is obviously not applicable to every period, locality, and type of source. Indeed, 'SNA demands evidence of social interaction among all members of a social system for a variety of behaviours, and thus necessitates a broad range of high-quality records for the place, time and activities being studied'.[42] Medievalists are well-aware of the limitations imposed on any analysis by the chance patterns of material survival, and are lucky if such a 'broad range of high-quality records' exists even for a non-quantitative study; the destruction of documents, whether intentional or accidental, leaves deep lacunae in our knowledge more often than we would care for, as illustrated in the above discussion on membership lists. Moreover, 'direct questioning of experimental subjects is probably the most common method' of collecting data for a sociological study that seeks to examine the structure of networks – and naturally this is an impossibility for medievalists.[43] It is therefore essential that we do not try to stretch our sources in ways to which they are not suited. Imposing SNA on an unsuitable subject would act detrimentally to both the historical study and the network analysis.

[41] 'About', 'People of Medieval Scotland 1093-1314', http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/. The methodology and analyses undertaken as part of this project have been published as an e-book: Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*.
[42] Wetherell, 'Historical Social Network Analysis', p. 125.
[43] Newman, *Networks*, p. 38.

How, then, is it possible to reconcile the issues inherent in medieval sources with the desire to use SNA as a methodological tool? The fragmentary nature of historical documents has forced a reassessment of the traditional sociological assumptions about the study of networks, meaning that historical SNA has acquired 'a new theoretical and methodological perspective'.[44] For example, the survival of historical documents removes the inherent personal bias of the sociologist's questionnaire; we cannot compel our subjects to answer in a certain way through the use of leading questions, and we are temporally detached enough to remove ourselves from seeking emotional responses – at least in theory. In the same way, the use of an archive source, if it recorded information contemporaneously with the event in question, eliminates the fallibilities of imperfect memory that are a risk with responses to questionnaires.[45] As for the gaps left by the historical record, this is a problem for historians more generally, and not one that negatively affects a potential SNA study more than any other kind. Once a suitable body of archival material has been selected for SNA, it is only possible to study what survives – but this does not present a 'structural bias', as such inconsistencies are 'integral to all study of medieval documents'.[46] In fact, such issues are rather overshadowed by the ways in which SNA illuminates our sources. In more traditional historical analyses, we are often confronted by the subtle problem that we write about what is most visible in the sources, or what is most striking; in many ways this is natural, as historians revel in idiosyncrasies. But, with the emotional removal demanded by SNA, we are compelled to consider the *whole* of the surviving data.[47] SNA, therefore, keeps us relatively objective.

Critics of any quantitative historical analysis tend to argue that reducing the past to numbers or data distorts the role that human agency has to play;[48] a consideration which is

[44] Rollinger et al, 'Editor's Introduction', p. iv.
[45] Newman, *Networks*, p. 47.
[46] Colson, 'Local Communities', p. 59.
[47] Colson, 'Local Communities', p. 59.
[48] See, for example, Clive Burgess' concerns about 'approaching late medieval pious provision from the point of view of numerical analysis': Clive Burgess, 'Strategies for Eternity: Perpetual Chantry Foundation in Late Medieval Bristol', in Christopher Harper-Bill (ed.), *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 24, n. 94. He further reiterates concerns about quantitative analysis, specifically that the methodology only

exacerbated by the overall 'structuralist' view that SNA creates – sociograms are, after all, a visualisation of societal structures. Proponents of SNA, on the other hand, would argue that, if done correctly, SNA sees human behaviour as instrumental in the creation, maintenance, and disruption of social ties, and only uses the numerical and structural analysis to provide a framework.[49] It is therefore important to remember that SNA holds very little meaning if purely statistical. To achieve the highest quality of analysis, SNA needs to be skilfully blended with a qualitative reading of the sources – it cannot be a wholesale replacement of traditional historical methods. This approach requires some constants to be kept in mind throughout: first, the distinct social context in which the documents being analysed were produced; second, the wider historical narrative, backed-up by corroborating material; and third, the research question being investigated. The issues of bias therefore lie not with the methodology of SNA itself, but with where historians choose to place the parameters of their study. Again, this is not a new problem for historians. The sources selected and omitted for study naturally shape our interpretation, and it is therefore imperative that we ask the right questions of suitable archival material.

For the Palmers' Guild, we are fortunate that, from 1546, negotiations were underway with the Privy Council and the Court of Augmentations with the aim of transferring much of the guild's legacy and property to the Ludlow Corporation.[50] Thus the substantial archive of property deeds remains, being transferred to the Corporation with a view to evidence its rights should the need arise. Deeds are well-suited to treatment by SNA;[51] they are largely uniform, consisting of grantors, grantees, and witnesses, and (so far as we can say for certain that relationships existed between

focuses on what is in the records, rather than what is missing: Clive Burgess, 'Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Lessons from London and Bristol', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 117, No. 471 (Apr., 2002), pp. 306-332, esp. p. 311. This sparked a debate with Beat Kümin, and, in his response to Burgess, Kümin argues that medievalists, despite sometimes lacking in a source base suitable to quantitative analysis, should not be deterred from using it as a means to an end. Beat Kümin, 'Late medieval Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Looking beyond London and Bristol', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 119, No. 480 (Feb., 2004), pp. 88-9. Carpenter, despite advocating the use of quantitative methodology, was wary of 'spurious mathematical precision', which compelled her not to use sociograms: Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community', p. 365.

[49] Wetherell, 'Historical Social Network Analysis', p. 127. A very thorough insistence that SNA does not diminish human agency can be found in: Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*, p. 504.

[50] VCH Salop.

[51] Colson, 'Local Communities', p. 58.

these actors) the data thus extracted carry no emotional weight. SNA will not attempt to discern the exact nature of these relationships – that is for more traditional historical methods – but it will reveal the structures they formed.[52] These documents reveal the interactions of the guild, guild members and individuals outside the structure of the guild, allowing us to understand the nature of membership within Ludlow.

Social Network Analysis Part II: Visualisation and Analysis

The issues with pre-modern sources, as outlined above, can be overcome to reconstruct more accurately the nature and size of the Palmers' Guild in the fourteenth century. The use of SNA allows us to argue that, while membership was most likely more extensive in the fourteenth century than has previously been supposed, it was still focused on and within the town and parish of Ludlow. This conclusion is further bolstered by the fact that the two membership lists that do survive for the fourteenth century overwhelmingly record membership drawn from Ludlow and its hinterland. More pertinent, however, is that SNA demonstrates that this was also a period of intense social integration with the town on the part of the guild.

The grantors, grantees and witnesses of fourteenth-century deeds connected with the wardens of the Palmers' Guild have been extracted systematically from the deeds and recorded. In total, 345 deeds with 5,795 connections between 706 individuals were analysed for this study. It is striking that most people are quite clearly local: they either belonged to established Ludlow families or have their local places of origin recorded in the deeds. As the poll tax of 1377 records a taxpaying population of 1,172, this data, although covering a whole century, nevertheless represents a significant proportion of Ludlow's fourteenth-century population.[53]

The network graph below (Fig. 3) accounts for all the individuals involved in the dataset analysed for this study. The size of the node (representative of an individual within the network

[52] Hammond and Jackson, *PoMS*, p. 82.
[53] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 157; Lloyd, Clark and Potter, *Ludlow: The parish church and people*, p. 22.

graph) and the names reflects the in-degree of each actor, or how many times the individual acted as a witness. Red nodes represent officers of the guild, yellow represents the elders of the guild, blue represents potential members (see below), and green represents actors whose formal relationship with the guild has not been identified. For example, the wardens of the guild constitute the most obvious features of the sociogram. The largest nodes are three of the guild's fourteenth-century wardens: William Orleton, Richard Orleton, and Richard Corve. The size of the node demonstrates the frequency that the individual appears as a witness in the deeds associated with the guild. This frequency, however, simply highlights the unsurprising fact that the most senior members of the guild are among the most connected.

The connections between nodes are directed relationships, or edges; in this case, directional in that the relationships illustrated are between the witnesses and the grantors and grantees. The thickness of the edge reflects the number of transactions between the two individuals, while the directionality of the transaction is represented by an arrow. This is an extremely useful analytical tool, as it demonstrates the nature of relationships; in this case, the number of times that an actor witnessed a document where the other actor was a grantor or grantee. In the context of the Palmers' Guild deeds, the selection of witnesses constituted a selection based on trust. Trust in witnesses was an integral part of legal action, and the role that witnesses played was fundamental;[54] it should, therefore, be taken that a social bond existed between the grantor and their chosen witnesses. As participation in guilds was a fast way to both establish and acquire trust, the utilisation of witnesses from within the guild's membership was both a convenient and straightforward way of legitimising the transaction.[55]

[54] Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How faith and inequality made the medieval Church* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 35, 43-4. For the notion of 'trust' in guilds, albeit mostly in relation to craft guilds, see Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, pp. 149-84.
[55] Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 151.

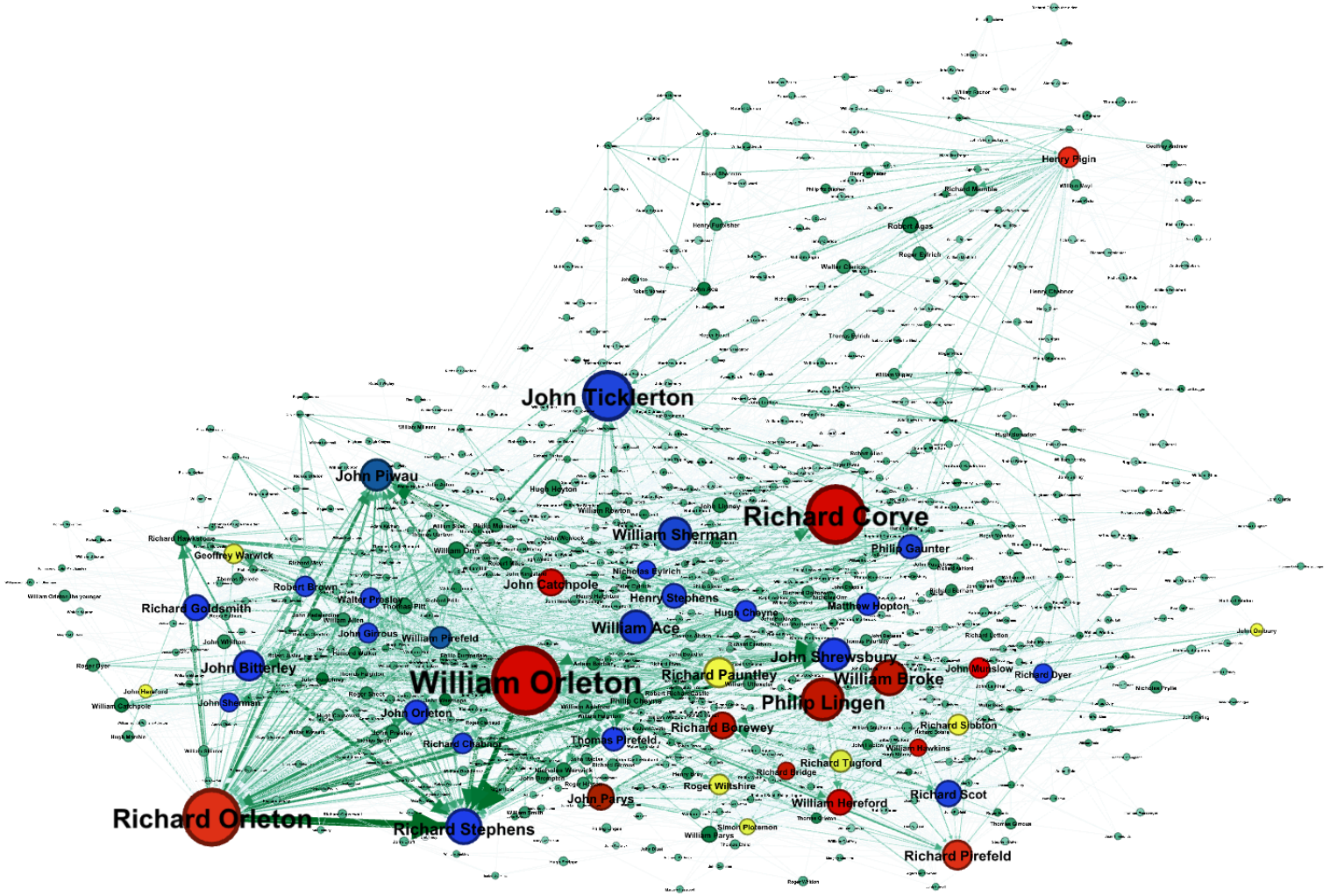

Fig. 3: Networks of the Palmers' Guild in the fourteenth century

It is beyond dispute that guild wardens held a prestigious position within both the guild and within local society. However, characterising the guild as a hierarchical organisation, where the wardens are the primary instigators in networks, implies greater formality and structure than existed within the guild. Wardens often shared responsibilities with stewards, and the stewards were just as integral in guild networks, as demonstrated through the frequency with which they appear as actors within the network. For example, Philip Lingen, Richard Borewey and John Parys were three stewards who acted as brokers in many networks. Individuals serving as brokers created links between otherwise separate networks and play a role in the process of passing along information, and encouraged links between individuals in the different network segments.[56] The size of each of their nodes demonstrates, as with the wardens, the frequency of interactions within the title deeds (Fig. 4).

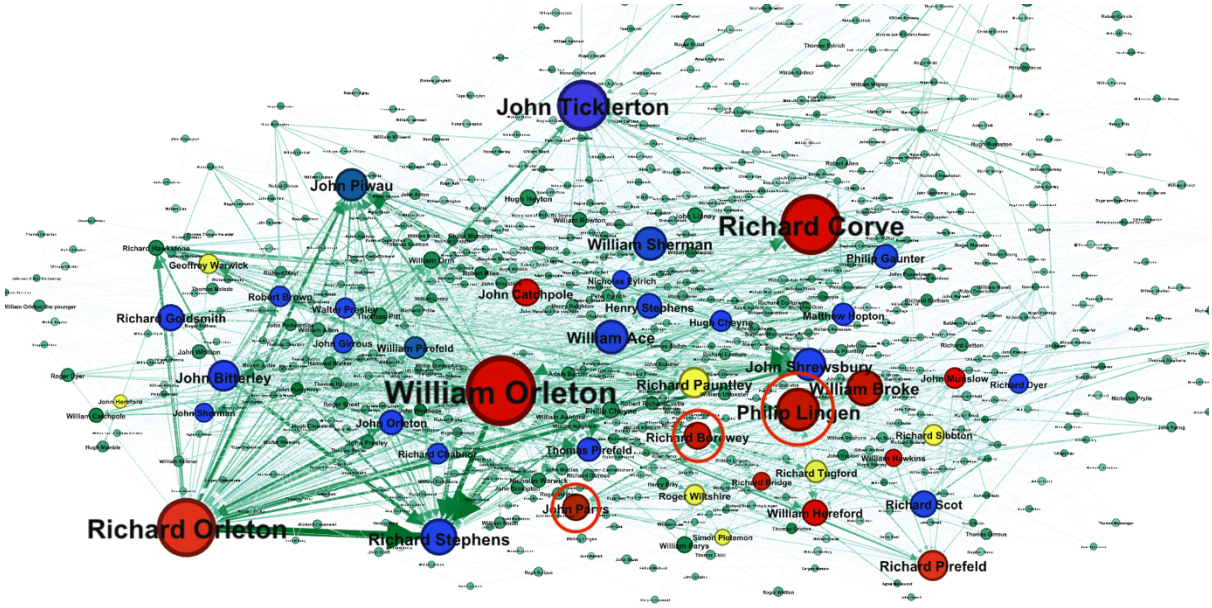

Fig. 4: Stewards acting as brokers in the network, circled in red.

[56] Hammond, *PoMs*, p. 29.

Yet this sociogram can reveal much more than the entrenched nature of wardens and other high-ranking officials. It tells us about membership of the guild: that there were, in fact, at least an additional thirty members (highlighted in blue in the accompanying sociograms and listed in Table 1.2). Colson suggested that SNA can be used to demonstrate membership of a fraternity through close clustering and strong ties within a network graph.[57] This is not exclusive to fraternities, but to any formal association, society or committee, although the present study is the first to take up this proposition in relation to England's religious guilds of the late middle ages. The wider membership proposed here derives from an analysis of the frequency with which individuals appeared as participants in transactions with wardens and other guild officials – either as a grantor, grantee or witness.

The overall degree of connectivity (as calculated by Gephi's algorithm) has been chosen as the marker of potential membership, as it demonstrates the number of situations in which an individual was interacting within a legal situation involving the guild. A degree of thirty-three was chosen as the lowest possible number to indicate guild membership, as it is the degree of connectivity associated with the 'brethren of the guild' – named so in the deeds when discussed as a representative body – so it can be assumed that people with a higher degree of connectivity were probably members themselves. The highest degree of connectivity not associated with a known guild official is that of William Ace, at 156; while Robert Brown, Richard Chabnor and Thomas Chapple all had a degree of thirty-three. Individuals with a lower degree of connectivity therefore may have been members of the Palmers' Guild, but it is necessary to impose some kind of analytical boundary. The frequency of these individuals' interactions in guild deeds suggests a strong involvement with the guild's structure as well as a strong attachment to the officials of the guild; their relative integration is demonstrated in Table 1.2, where their degree of connectivity can be compared with the officers of the guild. The exact position of these thirty individuals within the guild is unknown, but from their high involvement we can be confident that they were

[57] Colson, 'Local Communities', pp. 56-7.

members of the guild. The fact that the elders are among those with a high degree of connectivity demonstrates that SNA is a productive way to reveal membership (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Degree of connectivity for officers, elders and potential members, ranked highest to lowest

Name	Position	Degree of Connectivity
William Orleton	Warden	259
Richard Orleton	Warden	215
William Ace	Potential member	156
Richard Corve	Warden	155
Philip Lingen	Steward	125
John Bitterley	Potential member	108
John Ticklerton	Potential member	103
William Broke	Warden	101
Henry Pigin	Warden	100
John Cachepole	Steward	91
William Sherman	Potential member	90
Richard Stephens	Potential member	86
John Shrewsbury	Potential member	84
Thomas Pirefeld	Potential member	78
Richard Pirefeld	Steward	77
John Parys	Steward	77
Richard Pauntley	Elder	76
John Orleton	Potential member	73
John Piwau	Potential member	72
Richard Tugford	Elder	69
William Hereford	Warden	66
John Humphrey	Potential member	65
Hugh Cheyne	Potential member	61
John Westhope	Potential member	61
Nicholas Eylrich	Potential member	56
John Girrous	Potential member	54
Richard Borewey	Elder	53
Geoffrey Warwick	Elder	53
Richard Sibbton	Elder	51
Matthew Hopton	Potential member	50
William Pirefeld	Potential member	50
John Sherman	Potential member	50
Richard Goldsmith	Potential member	49
Richard Bridge	Elder	49
John Munslow	Potential member	48
Richard Scot	Potential member	47
William Hawkins	Steward	47

Robert Miles	Potential member	44
Henry Stephens	Potential member	43
Philip Gaunter	Potential member	42
Roger Wiltshire	Elder	40
Walter Presley	Potential member	37
William Parys	Potential member	37
Richard Dyer	Potential member	35
Robert Agas	Potential member	35
John Ace	Potential member	35
Robert Brown	Potential member	33
Richard Chabnor	Potential member	33
Thomas Chapple	Potential member	33

The grantors and grantees have been taken to be the instigators of a directed relationship with the witnesses, following the example set by previous historical SNA studies.[58] The network graph of the Palmers' Guild (Fig. 3) illustrates a dense pattern of connections between the wardens Richard Orleton, Richard Corve, and William Orleton and the potential members. Most evidently, the following eight individuals demonstrate these connections: Richard Stephens, William Ace, John Piwau, Robert Brown, Thomas Pirefeld, John Orleton, John Girrous and William Pirefeld. The consistency of the guild officials' interaction with these men is indicative of a willingness to engage with those outside the guild hierarchy. If the wardens are taken to be the ultimate authority and the most recognisable member of the guild, then their connections with so many potential members surely illustrate a significant level of participation on the part of these thirty individuals, most likely a result of their membership.

Rosser's assumption that religious fraternities provided a social and economic framework for members to develop relationships is supported, to an extent, by a brief examination of the connections *between* the thirty potential members.[59] In the statistics given in Table 1.3, examples of the highest number of connections between potential members are illustrated; the guild is absent from these statistical relationships, but this may obscure reality. If the connections between

[58] Colson, 'Local Communities', pp. 57-8.
[59] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, pp. 113-6.

members were conceived, or at least reinforced, through the social aspects of guild activity, then the table serves to illustrate how the guild could facilitate extensive connections. The enactment of harmoniously minded activities, like the kiss of peace, and those that required the presence of all members, such as feasts and processions, were physical embodiments of friendship and fraternal bonds. This aspect of guild membership was an active concern of medieval guilds, for membership was not simply an attribute individuals had in common; it was a connection of friendship.[60] The guild not only encouraged wide-ranging relationships, but also focused ones; the strength of edges between potential members is equally illuminating. Within the complete data set, the second highest weighted directed relationship is between William Ace and Richard Stephens, and the third is that between William Ace and John Shrewsbury – all three are suggested as potential members here. Both of these are directed relationships, measuring in-bound connections from one particular actor to another in the network. In this case, it shows a directed relationship between a grantor or grantee *towards* a witness. It is a useful tool for measurement in this case study, as it can suggest the regard in which individuals were held by others within their community.[61] The intense, and extensive, directed relationships between the potential members indicate strong associations within this group of men, again potentially encouraged by mutual membership of the same guild.

Table 1.3: Six most connected individuals within the group of potential members

Potential members	Number of other potential members included in their network
William Ace	19
Thomas Pirefield	14
John Orleton	14
Richard Stephens	13
John Bitterley	12
John Shrewsbury	12

[60] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, pp. 104, 108.
[61] Berry, 'Sociability and Social Networking', p. 204.

The ego networks used here provide insight into the networks of individuals, in contrast to the complete network graph of all of the Palmers' Guild. The strength of interactions – the number of times that there is a direct connection between two individuals – can demonstrate the relevance and importance placed in a relationship. This is visually demonstrated in the network graph and a breakdown of the strongest interactions is provided by the statistics in Table 1.4. The 'source' is the original grantor or grantee of a deed, where the 'target' is the witness, and this therefore represents a directed relationship from the source to the target. It is notable that the strongest relationship between two individuals is that of Richard Orleton, warden from 1359-61, with Richard Stephens, whose interactions are reflected visually in Fig. 5. He is here being newly proposed as a member of the guild. Orleton, moreover, is not the only example of an officer of the guild having strong ties to Stephens. Richard Corve (warden 1329-49) and William Orleton (1372-90) likewise possessed a high degree of connectivity to him, further demonstrating his continual interaction with guild officers.

The more often people witnessed title deeds with one another, or on the request of the grantor, the more probable a real, social and institutional relationship existed. It was not only the wardens that used Stephens as a frequent witness; the network of John Bitterley, another potential Palmer, occupies a high level of in-degree from Bitterley to Stephens (Fig. 6). SNA shows that Stephens was chosen as a witness by many officers and potential members. Five of the top ten weighted connections were directed relationships *to* Stephens (Table 1.4), highlighting the high level of involvement and subsequent significance of Stephens. Stephens' role within the guild would not have been visible through a reading of the deeds, nor does he feature in the guild hierarchy or membership lists, yet the methodology of SNA leaves no doubt of his prominence within the community of the Palmers and Ludlow.

Table 1.4: Most productive grantor-witness relationships; potential members italicised.

Grantor (Source)	Witness (Target)	Number of connections (Weight)
Richard Orleton	*Richard Stephens*	21
William Ace	*Richard Stephens*	19
William Orleton	*Richard Stephens*	14
William Ace	*John Shrewsbury*	14
William Ace	*John Piwau*	13
Robert Miles	*Richard Stephens*	12
John Bitterley	*Richard Stephens*	11
Richard Orleton	*John Shrewsbury*	10
William Ace	Richard Corve	9
William Ace	*John Bitterley*	9
William Ace	*Thomas Pirefeld*	9
Richard Orleton	*John Piwau*	9
William Ace	William Orleton	9
John Humphrey	William Orleton	9
John Westhope	*Thomas Pirefeld*	9
William Ace	Richard Orleton	9
William Ace	Matthew Hopton	8
Richard Orleton	Richard Hawkestone	8
William Ace	Richard Hawkestone	8

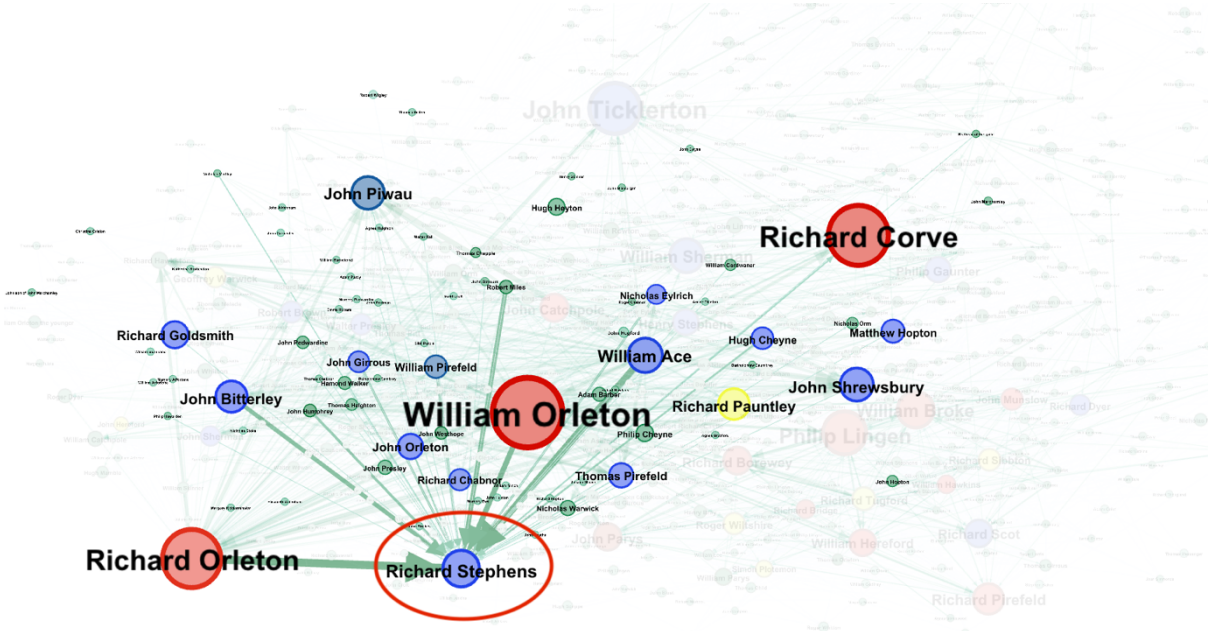

Fig. 5: Ego-centric network of Richard Stephens, potential member of the Palmers' Guild.

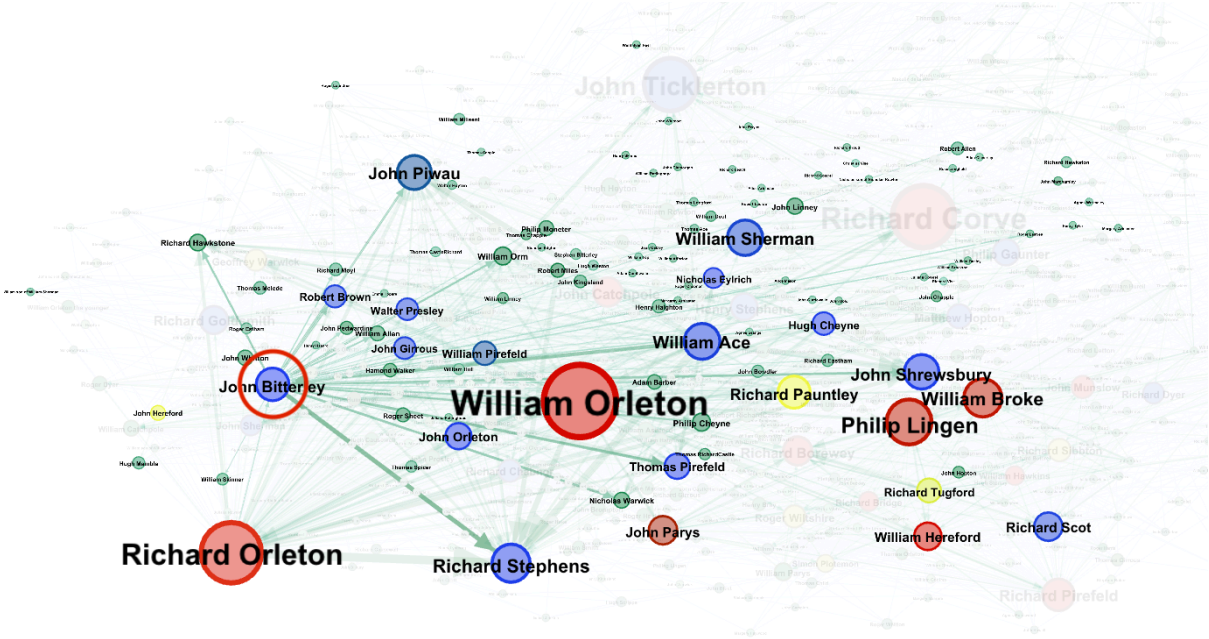

Fig. 6: Ego-centric network of John Bitterley, potential member of the Palmers' Guild.

Beyond Statistics

As stated above, SNA works best when accompanied by traditional historical methods to explain the significance of the data. Questions regarding the identity of proposed members can be asked: what was known about the role of these men within fourteenth-century Ludlow, and how does that inform our understanding of the role of membership? As an in-depth study of all potential members cannot be afforded in the space allowed here, a few examples have been chosen which highlight the nature of membership during this time.

Leland noted that 'This fratarnitie hathe a gardian chosen yerely amonge the burgesses' – a relationship between guild and town explicitly highlighted at least since the fourteenth century, when a guild document talks of 'the good men of the town of Ludlowe'.[62] Faraday identified that the Palmers played a major part in town life in the second half of the fifteenth century and up to their dissolution, as will be discussed shortly. The integration found in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, should not be taken as a new phenomenon. The fourteenth-century deeds, as

[62] Leland, *Itinerary*, Vol. 2, p. 76; Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 86.

utilised in network analysis, paint a picture of an integrated guild and town government structure. Ten out of the thirty proposed members acted as bailiffs of the town during the fourteenth century.[63] Bailiffs were appointed by the lords of Ludlow (of which there were two until the moieties were merged in 1358), and were responsible for the collecting of revenues due to the lord from the borough in addition to carrying out public duties such as raising taxes and arranging musters.[64]

John Shrewsbury was connected to four officers of the guild, two elders and twelve potential members (Fig. 7). Shrewsbury, a wool merchant, acted as bailiff of the town of Ludlow in 1340-1351.[65] The guild was formed during the height of the wool trade in the Welsh Marches, and association with this industry likely provided social benefits which translated into the guild's networks. Wool merchants certainly feature prominently in the list of potential members. Another wool merchant and potential member, William Ace, belonged to a leading Ludlow family, and, as noted above, had the highest degree of connectivity outside of the guild's officials. He was also

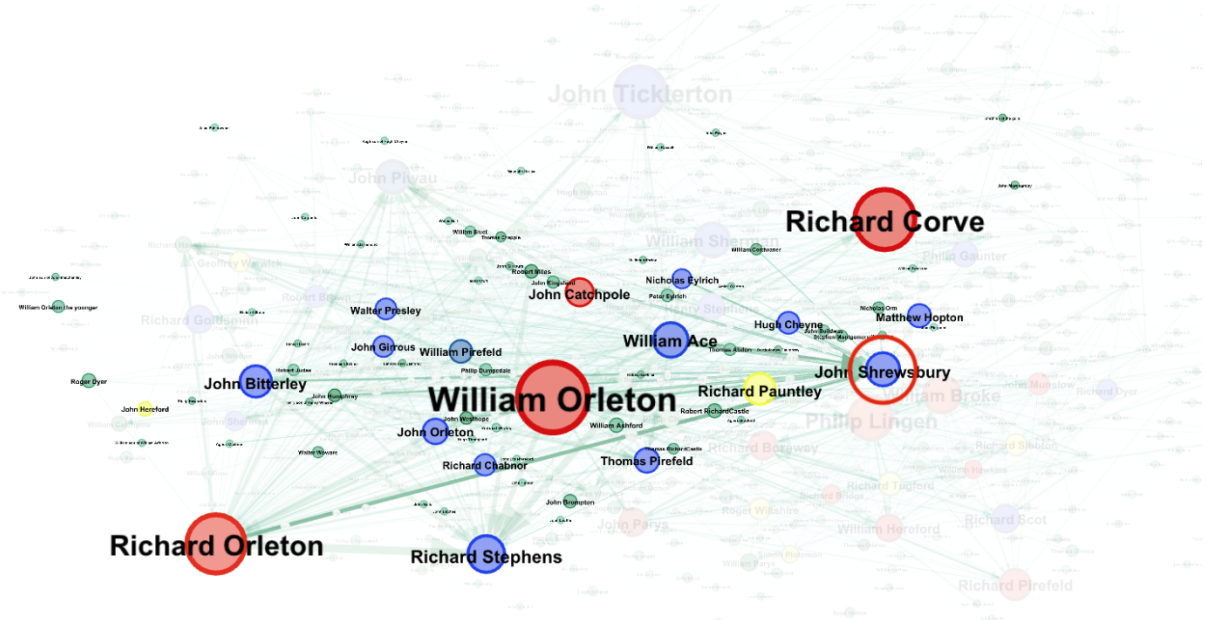

Fig. 7: Ego-centric network of John Shrewsbury, potential member of the Palmers' Guild.

[63] Further bailiffs: William Pirefield, John Shrewsbury, Richard Scot, John Piwau, William Orleton, John Cachepol, Henry Stephens, William Sherman, Richard Chabnor. Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 183-5.
[64] Faraday, *Ludlow*, pp. 25-6.
[65] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 184.

one of the twelve aldermen governing Ludlow for the term of a year in 1339/40.[66] In his will of 1361, he left property called 'le Hope' which, after several reversions, was to devolve to William Orleton, John Cachepol, William Cachepol, Richard Pauntley, William Dodmore and Geoffrey Girrous – several of whom are listed in Table 1.2 – in order to sustain a chantry associated with the guild.[67] Indeed, his prominence led Faraday to suggest that he was a 'senior member of the Palmers' Gild from 1330 until his death in 1361'.[68] No written documentation is provided to substantiate Faraday's claim; yet the above analysis does find itself in agreement with this assertion.

John Ticklerton (bailiff 1295-1332) and John Piwau (bailiff 1340-46) also serve as particularly poignant examples of the extent to which holders of the office were involved in guild deeds, and how this involvement changed over time. A shift occurred over the course of the fourteenth century, where bailiffs became increasingly associated with the guild. This change can be viewed in the networks of Ticklerton and Piwau, where the former, acting as bailiff in the first part of the fourteenth century, is substantially less connected to the guild than the latter, a later successor. Ticklerton became bailiff in 1295 and remained in that position for his lifetime. He was utilised as a witness in more deeds than three wardens and five stewards of the guild, and had the seventh highest degree of connectivity out of all the actors in the sociogram at 103 – no doubt a result of the length of his tenure as bailiff.[69] Despite this, in an analysis of potential members, it is striking that Ticklerton was *not* connected to a large number of potential or known members of the guild. His networks tie him to many individuals within Ludlow, but he was only utilised by four known guild members – three wardens and one elder of the guild – and four potential members. This speaks to his role as bailiff, more than his integration within the guild itself. Conversely, Piwau's network included wardens, stewards, elders of the guild, and twelve other potential members. He had a much lower degree of connectivity than Ticklerton (of seventy-two,

[66] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 146.
[67] SA: LB/15/3/10.
[68] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 146.
[69] This is compared with the following guild officials: Wardens William Broke, William Hereford, Philip Lingen; Stewards: Richard Borewery, Richard Brugge, Richard Pirefeld, John Parys, and John Cachepole.

ranking nineteenth overall), but these connections were more entrenched within the guild and accrued over a much shorter period of time.

From the mid-fourteenth century, the town bailiffs had become more intricately involved within the networks of the Palmers, signalling an increasing interdependency between town and guild. This is illustrated through an analysis of the connections between bailiffs and guild officers, momentarily excluding those who held both positions during their career. Six bailiffs of the fourteenth century also held office in the guild (including one holding the position of elder), and often for more than a single term of a year.[70] Table 1.5 shows the bailiffs of the fourteenth century that feature in the sociogram, and the number of connections each had to guild officials (this, naturally, must exclude the officers of the guild who held office as bailiff for their connections to other guild officers would also arise out of their governance of the guild). The known bailiffs of later years (1343 onwards) were connected to a higher number of guild officers than the three earlier bailiffs. Guild membership, then, clearly became an expectation for those involved in governance in the later fourteenth century.

Table 1.5: Bailiffs of Ludlow and their connections to officers of the Palmers' Guild

Name	Years of Office	Connections to Palmers' Guild Officers
John Ticklerton	1295-1303; 1308-10; 1312-3; 1315-23; 1327-34	4
William Sherman	1316-8	3
Richard Chabnor	1324-5	2
John Shrewsbury	1343-4	6
John Piwau	1343-4	5
Richard Scot	1382-3; 1388-91	9

The relationship between the offices of town bailiff and warden of the Palmers could not be more clearly apparent than in the case of William Orleton (warden 1372-90), who for many

[70] H.T. Weyman, 'The First Bailiffs of Ludlow: an early chapter in the history of the borough', *T.S.A.S.*, 3rd series, vii (1907), pp. 159-60.

years simultaneously held the role of bailiff (1378-92).[71] Office holding in one type of institution had the potential to generate increased reputation in the wider community.[72] The holding of an office in the Palmers' Guild was demonstrably a means to progress to another area of public and private (for the bailiff answered to the lord of the moiety) responsibility.[73] Such an increase in an individual's respectability can be attributed to the accumulation of 'social capital' – a concept connected to SNA and theorised by Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam.[74] It could be gained through responsible participation in an institution, which incurred situations where a set of men frequently appear together in positions of power in a variety of contexts.[75] It was also dependent on the extent of one's networking. The concept of social capital has received substantial attention and recognition by historians, provoking case studies which have revealed a clear correlation between office-holding, the conferring of respectability, and ascension through power structures in medieval English urban centres.[76] For example, Rosser explored the idea of social capital as a beneficial resource acquired through the strategic development of personal connections, and its role in fostering a wider political responsibility within the urban community;[77] although this was done without the complementary study of social network analysis. Here, however, the use of SNA has clearly revealed the importance of social capital.

Previous research conducted by Faraday lamented that there is insufficient evidence for a *cursus honorum* between borough government and guild before 1461, while Ben McRee describes the nature of the relationship between leading town guilds (Norwich in his case study) and town

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[71] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 184.
[72] Berry, 'Sociability and Social Networking', p. 203.
[73] This immediately raises questions regarding the *cursus honorum* of Ludlow in the late middle ages. Faraday argues that a *cursus honorum* of Ludlow's Corporation became part of the Palmers' Guild post-1461. Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 93.
[74] P. Bourdieu and L.J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, 1992); Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000).
[75] Examples of this occurrence in G. Rosser, 'Finding Oneself in a Medieval Fraternity: Individual and Collective Identities in English Guilds' in M. Escher-Apsner (ed.), *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in europäischen Städten* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), p. 37.
[76] Innes, *Networks*, p. 61; Dana Durkee, 'A Cursus for Craftsmen? Career Cycles of the Worsted Weavers in Late Medieval Norwich' in Justin Colson and Arie van Steensel (eds.), *Cities and Solidarity: Urban communities in Pre-Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2017); Berry, 'Sociability and Social Networking,' pp. 201-8; Colson, 'Local Communities', pp. 24-5.
[77] Gervase Rosser, 'Guilds in Urban Politics in Late Medieval England' in I.A. Gadd and P. Wallis (eds.), *Guilds and associations in Europe, 900-1900* (London, 2006), pp. 27-42.

government as 'shadowy'.[78] However, the methodology of SNA suggests more strongly that the two were significantly entwined in the fourteenth century than previously understood.[79] Certainly by the late fifteenth century, as Faraday demonstrates, there was a more-or-less established *cursus honorum* between the guild and Ludlow's town government, but these conclusions now need to be revised in light of the new findings from the fourteenth century.[80] From 1461 onwards, guild officers almost always occupied various roles within the civic hierarchy of Ludlow such as chamberlain, low bailiff, high bailiff, alnager, or coroner,[81] and both the corporation of Ludlow and the guild used the position of churchwarden as the first step in their expected ladder of office-holding in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[82] The *cursus* was loosely fixed so that the office of steward of the guild and the low bailiff were considered equal in status and were held in no particular order. After holding both of those offices, rentership of the Palmers preceded the office of high bailiff, which was finally followed by wardenship of the Palmers.[83] Eleven of the thirteen wardens in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries served as bailiff. Warden of the Palmers' Guild was the height of a civic career in Ludlow and evidently required an experienced hand to be in charge of such a large organisation. As we saw in the fourteenth century with William Orleton, there were occasions in which the corporation and guild offices were held simultaneously. This pattern could also be found in the sixteenth century: Richard Langford was high bailiff in 1549 while also being the guild's rent collector.[84] The interpretation of the guild's networks in this section (based on the participation in and witnessing of deeds) suggests that guild offices were systematically entrenched in the governing structure of Ludlow, and thus reflects the importance of the guild in civic government throughout the late medieval period – not just the last century of the Palmers' existence. The civic connotations of guild membership, and office-holding in the

[78] Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: the Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan, 1992), pp. 72-3.
[79] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 34.
[80] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 93; *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild,* pp. xviii-xix.
[81] Faraday, *Ludlow*, pp. 189-193.
[82] *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild*, p. xix.
[83] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 93.
[84] *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild*, p. xix.

guild, emerged in the fourteenth century and informed the nature of membership within Ludlow throughout the guild's lifetime.

Building the guild

One final avenue of enquiry can further augment our understanding of the development of the Palmers' Guild, adding much to the SNA methodology discussed above. Leland, during his itineraries, spoke largely of Ludlow in terms of its buildings, a significant proportion of which were constructed by the Palmers.[85] By 1351, roughly one hundred years after its foundation, the guild possessed thirty-eight tenements and fourteen shops. By 1439, the Palmers were in possession of ninety-six tenements, thirty shops, and eighteen other properties. In the early sixteenth century, this had increased further to 152 tenements, fourteen shops, and seventy-five other properties.[86] The guild's extensive ownership of property persisted right up until its dissolution, illustrated by Leland's observations made within two decades of the termination of the guild. This evidence raises a question about the importance of both the acquisition and the construction of these buildings, which was evidently in full swing by the fourteenth century. Christopher Dyer has argued that new architecture reflects not just the wealth of a few individuals but of the whole community;[87] a point evidently true with guild buildings.

The acquisition of rent-charges and properties was an essential way of gathering revenue to allow for building projects. In 1284 the total from rents received by the guild was £5 11*s*. There is no indication of rents between this date and 1344/5, when the gross rents received were £24 8*s*. 7½*d*., but a steady increase over those sixty-one years seems likely.[88] The practice of owning property and leasing it out for profit was not uncommon among guilds. A useful source of income, it contributed to their coffers and reinforced their integration with the local community. Yet the

[85] *Itinerary*, Vol. 2, p. 76.
[86] Faraday, *Ludlow*, pp. 88-9.
[87] Christopher Dyer, *Making a living in the Middle Ages: the people of Britain 850-1520* (New Haven, 2002), p. 300.
[88] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 90. A table of guild finances (from which these statistics are taken) can be found in *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild*, p. xxi.

guild in the fourteenth century was not only leasing property; it was building as well. Such property was not for the direct use of the guild (although many guilds, including the Palmers, also financed and constructed chapels and guildhalls), but rather it was an investment. An indenture agreement, dated 25 March 1310, was drawn up between 'Henry Pygin, gildaldernemon and rector of the Palmers gild' (a position that would later become known as the guild warden) and John le Especer, for 'all our newly built shops which are situated between the Cross and the tenement of William de Hyntes with all the solar belonging to the said shops'.[89] It therefore seems that John le Especer was the first tenant of these newly built shops, which had not been a gift of property to the guild, but rather a building project initiated for the express purpose of making profit. Before this profit could manifest itself in the guild coffers, however, capital and monetary investment was required. The evidence of this indenture suggests that by 1310 the guild was in a strong enough financial position to build property at a time before the majority of English guilds had even been founded. The early income gained from rent-charges must have been a success, indicating the precocious local prosperity of the Palmers – indeed, it would continue to be indicative of their financial security in the coming decades and centuries.

The second known instance of the guild constructing property in the fourteenth century was in the form of a college for priests, built in 1393/4. The entrance doorway to the college yielded a dendrochronological date of 1393, confirming written evidence in the guild's collection of deeds.[90] The land was first acquired on 4 June 1393, from Rowland Piwau, in exchange for another property on Galdeford Street.[91] By 26 March 1394, the college had been completed, as a property deed refers to a tenement 'of the New College'.[92] Its role as a college was cemented in a 1395 inquisition where it was described as 'the perpetual residence of the chaplains of the chantry of the Palmers' Gild'.[93] The college was on the west side of what is now College Street, facing the

[89] SA: LB/5/2/755.
[90] Madge Moran, *The Guildhall, Ludlow* (Ludlow, 2011), p. 4.
[91] SA: LB/5/2/656.
[92] SA: LB/5/2/657.
[93] SA: LB/5/2/845.

churchyard. It was built in a typically collegiate form, with a cloistral courtyard, kitchen, hall, and shared chambers containing two cells, providing accommodation for eight to ten priests.[94] The construction of a college by the guild has particular relevance for understanding the mentality of the guild as an institution: previously the guild chaplains resided in a rented house within the town,[95] but the subsequent shift from a rental property to the building of a permanent home for the clergy expresses the confidence of the guild in its own longevity, and its ability to provide funds for the upkeep of both the complex and its inhabitants. This investment in property was a declaration that the guild was able to care not only for its priests, but, through the employment of these priests for its religious services, for the souls of its brethren.

A guild such as the Palmers, supported by a significant administrative network and continually expanding its reach throughout the fourteenth century and beyond, was clearly in need of a physical space in which to conduct affairs. By 1283, although probably in use earlier, the guild was leasing a 'Gildhalle with buildings and appurtenances in Mulnestreet' from Margaret Bradestone and her heirs for six marks of silver.[96] This is the first reference to a guildhall, and is evidently on the same site as the current hall, on Mill Street (a name developed from 'Mulnestreet'), just off the market place. Subsequent references are patchy, although in 1377/8, an expense list records a payment of 8*d.* 'for an effigy of the lamb for the Little Guild Hall',[97] and at some point in the late fourteenth century the guild paid 12*d.* in rent for the guildhall to Sir Hugh Burnell.[98] The 1377/8 accounts confirm that the guild were putting on a Pentecostal feast, which almost certainly took place in the guildhall.[99] It was an occasion for an extravagant and outward display of the guild, with later accounts recording payments for cloaks and robes of guild officials, and the ceremony was augmented by the bearing of silver-tipped rods of office.[100] One of the lights in the

[94] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 85.
[95] In 1346 the rent collector paid 5*s.* for expenses on a house near the church for the chaplains. SA: LB/5/3/46.
[96] SA: LB/5/2/328, Deed of Margaret relict of William de Bradestone.
[97] Moran, *The Guildhall*, p. 4; SA: LB/5/3/23.
[98] Moran, *The Guildhall*, p. 4.
[99] SA: LB/5/3/23, m. 1.
[100] SA: LB/5/3/27; the stewards' rods, 'tipped at the ends with silver', were still being used in 1517/8: LB/5/3/36, f. 18r.

Palmers' window in St Laurence's, which relates the mythical foundation of the guild, shows a meeting of guild officials wearing these robes. So, based on the function apparent in later accounts of the Pentecostal feast, the guildhall was presumably being used in the fourteenth century to host the guild feast. It is likely that a combination of factors prompted the rebuilding of the guildhall at the end of the period in question. Dendrochronology indicates that timber was felled in 1411, with unspecified building costs that may have been connected with finishing off the hall remaining high into the 1420s.[101] It could be the case that the 'little' guildhall referenced in 1377/8 was proving inadequate for the Pentecostal feasts and that the guild wanted a larger and more impressive building, both for reasons of practicality and to make a statement about their importance within the town. The guildhall also played an important role in facilitating the relationship between the guild and town governance: in 1405, the burgesses of the town petitioned Henry IV for certain liberties in recompense for the hardships that they had endured in the Welsh rebellions. Of importance was the request to hear pleas of debt and trespass 'coram dicto ballivo in la Gildehall eiusdem ville'.[102] The bailiff was operating in the space that was paid for by the guild – at this point, still rented, before the building of the new hall, but certainly a space that the Palmers had claimed as their own for a century. The close relationship between the guild and bailiffs was evident in guild membership and networks, but also in the physical spaces occupied and maintained by the guild.

It is pertinent to note that this construction essentially came at the conclusion of a century-long period in which the guild had greatly expanded its presence in Ludlow and its membership. It was, too, the culmination of construction solely associated with the guild, as further projects were of a joint nature with another institution or individual. These collaborations included the erection of almshouses funded by the donation by a single patron and extensive contributions on the part of the guild towards the fabric of the church throughout the fifteenth century. The

[101] Moran, *The Guildhall*, pp. xi, 4.
[102] TNA: SC 8/198/9852.

almshouses were endowed by John Hosier, and managed with the assistance of the Palmers from 1486.[103] By Hosier's will, the Palmers were the recipients of £5 11*s.* 4*d.* and a gilt cup worth £14s 8*s.* 9*d.*, and they were granted the responsibility to choose an honest priest for Hosier's chantry in the parish church.[104] While these entailed gifts to the guild, the Palmers took a more active role in repairs and additions to the parish church in the fifteenth century. The guild paid for the supplies and perhaps the craftsmen's wages for new choir stalls in 1446, as well as the carriage of stone to the church in 1469.[105] The fifteenth-century stained glass window depicting the legendary beginnings of the Palmers' Guild was certainly commissioned, and paid for, as a means of further integrating the guild within the church fabric.[106] The *baldacchino* above the window may also have been paid for by the guild, and initial conservation work dates it to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.[107]

In terms of buildings and building work associated with the Palmers' Guild in Ludlow, the fourteenth century thus forms a distinct period. After an initial period during which finances were accumulated through rent-charges, 1310 apparently marks the genesis of the guild that was of a financial status sufficient to construct buildings of its own. As the guild became more deeply entrenched in the social networks of the town, it invested locally in building projects. The abstract manifestation of the guild in the town's networks, and the physical manifestation of the guild in its own buildings, were part of the same drive to establish a strong identity and association with the town.

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[103] SA: LB/7/1161.
[104] SA: LB/7/1161.
[105] SA: LB/5/3/28; L. Jones, 'Churchwardens' Accounts of the Town of Ludlow, 1468-1749', *T.S.A.S.*, 2nd ser., Vol. 1, p. 235.
[106] For a discussion on the window, see Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild window', pp 26-37.
[107] John Nethercott & Co., 'A Repair Survey and Assessment of the Baldacchino at St. Laurence Ludlow' (September 14, 2017).

Conclusions

What conclusions can we therefore draw from the above analysis of the Palmers' Guild in the fourteenth century? The fourteenth-century extant membership lists and accounts leave much to be desired in our understanding of the guild, but the use of SNA and title deeds have provided the opportunity to substantially reconsider guild life in fourteenth-century Ludlow, demonstrating that membership was much wider than the extant lists would suggest. The network analysis approach reveals that the fourteenth century facilitated a natural cohesion between town and guild, through extensive networks between the guild, both as a whole and between individual guild officers and members of the town government. These networks grew over the course of the fourteenth century, and were mirrored by the physical presence of the Palmers within Ludlow. Moreover, SNA further demonstrated that the Palmers were intensely integrated with town government, with several known and suggested members holding civic office; or perhaps, the point should be made that the town, as represented by the bailiffs, was the one integrating itself within the guild. The expansion of these networks, alongside the concurrent increase in guild building projects, demonstrates the establishment of the guild as a powerhouse within the town during the fourteenth century. Most strikingly (although perhaps not surprisingly), the nature of guild membership in Ludlow is revealed as an expected precursor to civic status from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards. Deficiencies in sources have led to the fourteenth-century role of the Palmers' Guild remaining shadowy, but social network analysis, complemented with prosopography, has here demonstrated the ways in which the guild became embedded in the town. It had yet to develop its kingdom-wide membership that came to characterise its later existence, but the precociousness of the guild's development in the fourteenth century (in terms of the scale of membership, its integration with civic government, and its physical manifestation through building projects) provides the essential context that explains these later successes.

Chapter Two
Local Elites in Town and Country

The Palmers evidently played a significant role in Ludlow throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Intrinsically connected with the town's governmental structure, the guild's officers and a selection of its brethren made up Ludlow's civic elite, frequently occupying the post of bailiff and sitting as members of the Twelve and Twenty-five. The support that the two major bodies of Ludlow provided each other was so evidently ingrained in the town that, when the Palmers were dissolved in 1551, the Corporation continued the almshouses and school that had been the guild's responsibility. Such a close relationship between a town and its leading guild was common across late medieval towns and cities.[1] But, instead of focusing solely on the guild's relationship with local town government, here we can ask whether the Palmers enjoyed similar relationships with the civic elite of the towns from which they frequently drew membership. We can also ask whether the rural counterpart of the civic elite, the county gentry, likewise saw value in membership.[2] The membership lists of the Palmers present an opportunity to understand the place of the guild within localised power structures outside Ludlow. This chapter will consider the ways in which the Palmers were viewed, understood, and used by local elites for social and political purposes, from which it is possible to draw conclusions about the meanings of membership of a large late-medieval guild.

This chapter will be divided into two sections, which focus on urban and rural elites respectively.[3] In an urban context, the focus will be on large towns and cities which were

[1] Stratford is an excellent example: Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford: A Successful Small Town' in Robert Bearman (ed.), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 59-61. Charitable activities, such as the maintenance of schools and almshouses, remained a frequent town responsibility after the Henrician Reformation, exhibiting 'some of the moral enterprise of the former guilds': Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250-1550* (Oxford, 2015), p. 213.

[2] Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire' in Robert Bearman (ed.), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 62-79; Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: the Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages,' *Speculum*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan, 1992), pp. 69-97; Gervase Rosser, 'The town and guild of Lichfield in the late middle ages', *Staffordshire Archaeological and History Society Transactions*, Vol. 27 (1985/6), pp. 39-47.

[3] An exact estimate of the urban vs rural makeup of the Palmers' membership is difficult to construct with any certainty, due to the condition of many of the manuscripts, as well as the guild clerks' penchant to leave some entries incomplete (as so far as for our purposes). A few places are unidentifiable now, even after thorough

established centres of recruitment for the Palmers: Worcester, Bristol, Gloucester and Coventry. The prevalence of guild membership, the stage at which civic officers joined the guild, and the networks among those urban elites all demonstrate a deep-seated attachment to the Ludlow guild. The term 'urban elite' is fluid, and is used by historians to discuss a range of high status individuals, sometimes determined by their level of wealth, but usually by their involvement within the governing structures of a town or city. The present analysis will concentrate solely on those involved with urban government, based on the surviving records of each city: they range from bailiffs and sheriffs through to members of the common councils, and mayors and aldermen. The urban centres will, however, be complemented by an examination of the county elites of each of the corresponding shires – Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Warwickshire. Shropshire, as the home county of the guild, will also be brought in for comparative purposes. Direct comparisons cannot be made straightforwardly, as the precise structures of urban and county governance were vastly different, but similarities can be drawn together productively in a 'big picture' way. Within the counties, the elites will be viewed as those who were elected for parliament and their electors, county sheriffs, those who served as Justices of the Peace and those who participated in sessions on county commissions, following the examples set by county studies by Carpenter, Payling and Saul.[4] While their position as members of government at a national and regional level speak to their visibility and status, the connections within gentry society and accompanying expectations were equally at play within guild membership. This point will be illustrated primarily through the Warwickshire gentry, for which a detailed understanding can be drawn from the work of Christine Carpenter.[5] The sum total of these case studies highlights the

interrogation of the history of place-names. The follow is, therefore, a rough estimate based on the locations that I have been able to record. The membership of the Palmers was approximately two-thirds urban and one-third rural. The somewhat tricky situation of what is classed as an urban or rural location was determined by the towns listed in the 1524 tax returns and the towns with markets. Samantha Letters, *Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516* <http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html>

[4] County studies have usually included escheators in their discussions as well, but they have been omitted here for brevity. Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992); Simon Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991); Nigel Saul, *Knights and Esquires: the Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981).

[5] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, *passim*.

flexibility and prominence of guild membership among the local elites of late medieval England. In interrogating the relationship between local hierarchies and the Palmers, it will be demonstrated that guild membership was malleable to each specific community, and that the relative importance of membership was not equal across urban and rural communities.

Urban Elites

As surviving records demonstrate, town and guild were rarely separate entities in late medieval England. In towns, the majority of council members were simultaneously members of the leading fraternity, or, for those towns without self-government, a guild would act as a 'surrogate town council'.[6] By the late fifteenth century, the masters of leading urban fraternities were frequently recently retired members of the ruling elite. In Norwich, the out-going mayor became the Master of the Guild of St. George, while in Worcester, where the role of mayor did not exist until 1621, the high bailiff became master of the Holy Trinity Guild upon his retirement.[7] Mastership, however, was by no means the only part that the civic elite would play in their guilds, and, should one wish to attain high civic status, the holding of office within a town guild was as expected as fulfilling the necessary civic offices. While slightly less regimented in terms of the exact stage at which one was expected to fulfil such a role, any member of the Forty-eight at Worcester (the lower chamber of government, often referred to as the 'commons') who wished to move up into the upper chamber of the Twenty-four was required to have held the office of steward of the Holy Trinity Guild.[8] The normal course of action for Coventry's hopeful elite was membership of the Corpus Christi Guild before filling junior civic roles such as chamberlain or warden and then

[6] For example, Worcester: Alan Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973). Guilds as a 'surrogate town council' can be seen in Westminster and Stratford: Gervase Rosser, *Medieval Westminster: 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989), p. 285-293. In Boston, the guild of Our Lady – a 'great' guild akin to Ludlow – had a corporate organization feel, providing an opportunity for the town's inhabitants with inclinations in that regard: Stephen H. Rigby, 'Boston and Grimsby in the Middle Ages: An Administrative Contrast', *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 10 (1984), pp. 61-2.
[7] McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 91; Dyer, *Worcester*, p. 190.
[8] Dyer, *Worcester*, p. 190.

progressing on to the associate 'senior' Holy Trinity Guild.[9] Across late medieval England, local leading fraternities demonstrably played an important role in shaping the experiences of those who would go on to hold the highest civic offices. The importance of local guilds to urban governments is indicative of the social and political nature of such institutions, as well as the pervasiveness of late medieval lay religious activity throughout society. Such examples are, of course, not new to historians but it is worth stressing the prevalence of this partnership across late medieval England in both towns and cities. The frequency with which this happened lends weight to the existence, and importance, of institutional relationships in the urban environment.

The great guilds of Boston, Stratford and Coventry, like that of Ludlow, formed a relationship with their 'home' towns, appearing most visibly in the records through office-holding and mutual membership. The guilds shared other characteristics too, namely their prestige and success in drawing membership from the highest echelons of society across the Midlands (although they were not all equally prolific in this respect). But the question to be addressed here is how did these guilds, so integral to their local government, operate in other urban centres within their membership catchment? Specifically, of what importance, if any, did membership of the Palmers, who were extraordinarily pervasive in the urban centres of the Midlands and Cotswolds, play in the governance of Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol and Coventry?

The scarcity of extant records precludes a complete understanding of the membership overlap between the town's government and the Palmers at Worcester, yet a partial picture can nevertheless still be reconstructed through an examination of the bailiffs of the town. A *cursus honorum* existed within medieval Worcester's government, where the career of a civic office holder would follow a series of stages, ascending in seniority, based on the town's dual-assembly system (see Fig. 8).[10] The lower assembly, the so-called Forty-eight, were elected from among the citizens of the town, and was permitted participation in general matters representing their peers. Each year

[9] There were, of course, exceptions to the 'normal' course of the civic elite. For the life-cycle of the Coventry elite, see Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 125-6.
[10] Dyer, *Worcester*, p. 200.

they chose from among their number a representative to take on the position of low chamberlain. The more senior, and select, council was that of the Twenty-four. Generally, the low chamberlain would be promoted to this group when a position became available, provided also that he had served as steward of the Holy Trinity Guild.[11] The Twenty-four were the real authority in the town's government. Mirroring their junior counterparts, the Twenty-four would annually elect a high chamberlain and the two officers would cooperate. Once an aspiring office holder had attained this position, it was then a fairly straightforward progression up the civic ladder. Within a year or two of their election, they would be eligible for the position of low bailiff, then to serve a first term as an alderman, followed by high bailiff, and, finally, a second term as alderman. Presumably the aldermen operated on a junior/senior basis, as with the offices of chamberlain and bailiff, although it was also possible to serve in one office on several occasions.[12]

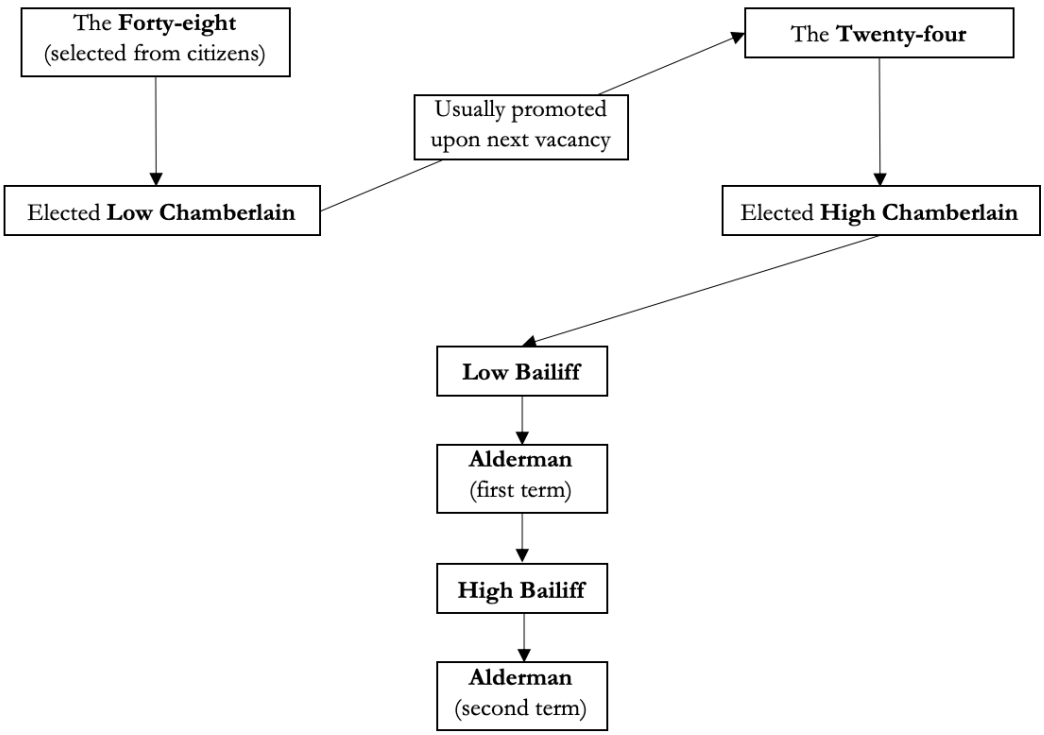

Fig. 8: Structure of Worcester's civic government up to incorporation in 1555.

[11] This requirement was reciprocal, as ex-bailiffs would often be appointed masters of the guild. Dyer, *Worcester*, p.190.
[12] As did Robert Yowle, who served as bailiff on four occasions between 1546 and 1559. Diarmaid MacCulloch and Pat Hughes, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. 75 (Sept., 1995), p. 237.

Within this system, the office of bailiff was one of great importance. With no mayoral office at this time, the bailiff was one of the most authoritative figures in medieval Worcester – even if it was not the most senior position. This is, for example, suggested by a surviving manuscript chronicle from Worcester, created in the first half of the sixteenth century, which arranges its narrative around the individuals who held the office of bailiff.[13] Such a sentiment is also reflected in more modern writing on the town's government, as Alan Dyer described the bailiffs as 'the chief executive officers [who] were much the most important of the city dignitaries'.[14] This importance derived from the wide-ranging responsibilities they held, which included both legal and economic obligations.[15] By virtue of the importance of this office, a study of the bailiffs proves instructive; in all likelihood, anyone who was seriously civically minded would probably have held the lower of the two offices at least once. But it should also be remembered that membership of the Twenty-four was required before assuming the bailiwick. Financial stability was surely a prerequisite for admission into this group – a payment of 16*s.* 8*d.* was the standard entry fee, although this could be increased if the city needed extra income.[16] Moreover, for annual positions such as that of bailiff, the incumbent would need to be secure in their industry and their income for it to be practical and viable to cease their usual business activities and take on what was, effectively, a full-time responsibility. Bailiffs did not take a wage from the city *per se*, but instead were remunerated from the money they generated in that role.[17]

Yet, once again underlining the importance of the role and, indeed, its usefulness as a tool of study, the list of bailiffs in the above-mentioned chronicle identifies every holder of the office between 1483 and 1578, thereby providing us with an unbroken and readily-accessible view of who occupied the role – something we do not have for the other offices or, indeed, either of the

[13] The chronicle is analysed and transcribed in: MacCulloch and Hughes, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', pp. 235-53.
[14] Dyer, *Worcester*, p. 198.
[15] Dyer, *Worcester*, pp. 198-9.
[16] Dyer, *Worcester*, p. 196.
[17] Dyer, *Worcester*, p. 198.

two councils. While using only one office to view the relationship between the Palmers and Worcester's government does not provide a whole picture, the bailiffs, nonetheless, offer a valuable avenue through which we might understand the relationship of urban elite with 'foreign' organizations, due to their intimate and prominent place within town governance.

Comparing this list of bailiffs to the various iterations of membership lists from the fifteenth and early sixteenth century allows us to make judgements about the role that the guild played in the *cursus honorum* outlined above; if, indeed, it played a role at all. It is worth considering at what stage in a bailiff's career a man joined the guild. Between 1483 (the year the list of bailiffs commences) and 1537 (the last year a known Palmer can be identified in the office), eleven different Palmers were either high or low bailiff in Worcester (see Table 2.1). Most of these men held both the high and low offices; exceptions to this trend (at least as far as we can see in the years in the list) are John Payne (high bailiff in 1490), John Hall (low bailiff in 1519), Stephen Collier (low bailiff in 1530), and, finally, John Williams (low bailiff in 1537).[18] The latter three seem unlikely to have advanced to the higher position during their career, or perhaps died before they had the chance. The anomaly, John Payne, is perhaps likely to have held the lower office before the list starts in 1483. It should be noted, however, that the earliest two office holders, Payne and Thomas Green (low bailiff in 1493 and high bailiff in 1497), took that role *before* they began their membership payments – respectively 1507 and 1508. Overall, bailiffs consisted of five and a half per cent of the known Palmers of Worcester.[19] The enrolment in the guild of eleven bailiffs out of a total of fifty-two individuals who held the office between these years clearly demonstrates that guild membership was not an essential part of the local *cursus honorum*, but this does not mean that we are unable to say anything about the role of the guild in a less official capacity.

[18] MacCulloch and Hughes, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', pp. 241-3.
[19] Out of 199 recorded Palmers in Worcester.

Table 2.1: Palmers who held the office of bailiff in Worcester

Name	Initial Membership Payment	Low Bailiff	High bailiff
John Payne	1507	-	1490
Thomas Green	1508	1493	1497
Edward Crompe	1505	1510	1513
John Hall	1511	1519	-
Richard Cam	1499	1520	1523
John Colman	1507	1521	1525
William Sargeant	1503	1523	1527
Richard Bilford	1503	1524	1528
Walter Stone	1504	1525	1529
Stephen Collier	1503	1530	-
John Williams	1506	1537	-

In the years for which we have this information, therefore, Palmers occupied at least one of the two positions for sixteen years (or, strictly, thirteen years, discounting Payne and Green). Indeed, in 1523 and 1525, both bailiffs were Palmers: William Sargeant as low bailiff and Richard Cam as high bailiff in 1523; and Walter Stone as low bailiff and John Colman as high bailiff in 1525. The 1520s saw the presence of the Palmers in the bailiff's position with the most consistency: from 1519 to 1529, a Palmer almost always assumed at least one of the bailiwick offices. The concentrated period of these officials is revealing of the involvement of the urban elite of Worcester with the Palmers. Little value can be attributed to the fact that none of Worcester's bailiffs initiated payments to the Palmers before 1499 – only four years of records survive for 1485-9 and they are registers of admission rather than riding books, so only note those who completed the full 6*s.* 8*d.* The same is true for the period after 1510 (after which date there are not registers of admission or riding books), which correlates with the incidence of Worcester bailiffs enrolling. The prominence of guild membership among the bailiffs may very well have extended into the 1530s and 40s, but identification of that is impossible, as the bailiffs most likely would have joined in the 1510s, given that the average gap between enrolment and the holding of office (excluding Payne and Green) was a little over eighteen and a half years.[20]

[20] The new members of some towns for 1510-12 can be found in the clerk's receipt book for that period, but it is by no means complete: SA: LB/5/3/40.

The office of low bailiff would have taken a considerable time to work up towards, and so William Sargeant, who became bailiff in 1523, would have been at the earliest stages of his trade career when he joined the Palmers in 1503 – or not yet even begun it.[21] He was not alone in this trend, as his colleagues and fellow brethren Richard Cam, John Colman, Richard Bilford, Walter Stone, Stephen Collier and John Williams all began payments for membership of the Palmers some twenty-plus years before reaching the highest stages of civic office in Worcester.[22] It would appear, therefore, that the Palmers' Guild was a place for junior members of the hopeful elite in Worcestershire's county town. In much the same way that Coventry's Corpus Christi Guild provided a space for aspiring young men, the Palmers acted in a similar capacity for Worcester.[23] Of course, the key difference is that the guild was not based in the city itself, which perhaps explains the lack of a town *cursus honorum* that included membership of the Palmers. Yet it is remarkable in itself that the guild had consistent membership among the bailiffs of the town. It was evidently respected enough to garner the initial enrolment of members from the future civic elite; indeed, the guild continued to maintain the interest of these bailiffs-to-come, who consistently paid off their membership fees well into the late 1510s, if not longer.[24] The key aspect of this sustained relationship with the Palmers was that of the accessibility of membership, afforded by the system of incremental payments, which has been commented upon already in this thesis, and will be again in future chapters. Some bailiffs, like William Sargeant, consistently paid 12*d.* annually from his initial payment in 1504 until his fee had been fully paid in 1515.[25] Others were more sporadic, demonstrating their fluctuating financial – or personal – situations, like Richard Cam's initial payment of 20*d.* which was followed by payments between 12*d.* and 20*d.*, on

[21] SA: LB/5/5, f. 71r.
[22] Richard Cam (SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r), John Colman (SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 45r), Richard Bilford (SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 70v), Walter Stone (SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 24r), Stefan Collier (SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 71r) and John Williams (SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 69v)
[23] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 119.
[24] For example, see the entry of Richard Cam and his wife, who paid off his membership debt between 1503 and 1517. SA: LB/5/3/2, 140r.
[25] SA: LB/5/3/5, 71r.

and off, from 1503 to 1517.[26] The men in question, while they would one day attain a comfortable level of wealth, joined the Palmers at the beginning of their careers and, therefore, were less likely to have accumulated the necessary level of disposable income for membership of guilds that required the full fee upfront, in addition to an annual contribution. The Palmers' system of fee payments provided flexibility, giving aspiring men the opportunity to join a prestigious guild, increase their status and reinforce ties with those of alike inclinations in Worcester – and similar elites from further afield.

The Palmers' role in any village, town or city was never, of course, identical: the patterns of membership found in each specific place were not replicated elsewhere. Outside its religious context, the guild occupied differing social and political roles and this observation is key to understanding the guild's place in late medieval society. Yet comparisons nevertheless can be drawn in certain aspects, and the situation of the bailiwick in Worcester, and the shrievalty of Gloucester, is a notable example of guild membership occupying a similar role in two different towns. Gloucester's town government was restructured when it was incorporated in 1483, thereby creating the office of mayor, who was assisted by a town clerk, two sheriffs, twelve aldermen, four stewards and a common council. Despite the increased number of offices and the associated appearance of input from a wider base of citizenry, the town continued in much the same way as it had before: the power of decision-making was limited to the same group of men.[27] The twelve aldermen held their positions for the duration of their lives and subsequent vacancies were filled by those from among their own ranks.[28] In the early sixteenth century, only half of those men who served as steward became a sheriff (with several years in between the two positions), and then, once again, only half of that group of men became mayor, usually five or six years after holding office as sheriff.[29] It was at some point between the office of sheriff and mayor that an individual

[26] SA: LB/5/3/2, 140r.
[27] Richard Holt, 'Gloucester: An English Provincial Town during the Later Middle Ages' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1987), p. 204.
[28] Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', p. 204.
[29] Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', p. 195.

would be elected to the aldermanic bench, but, due to the chance nature of mortality among the sitting aldermen, there was no set timeline for entrance.[30] It is among this group of men that Palmers' membership was a prominent shared trait in the sixteenth century.

The office of sheriff was the route to mayoral office and a position on the aldermanic bench, and therefore the route to the carefully-guarded civic power of Gloucester. It is here that we find approximately five per cent of the Gloucester Palmers – an almost identical number to that of Worcester's bailiffs.[31] Although only representing a small proportion of the Palmers within Gloucester, this group of men is nonetheless deserving of examination. Between 1483, when the role of sheriff for Gloucester was created by a charter of Richard III, and 1540, nearing the end of the guild's life, ten members of the Palmers held the office of sheriff at least once (see Table 2.2). John Poole, mayor in 1486, was a Palmer but is not included in this number as he was not sheriff in the three years between the incorporation and his term as mayor.[32] Five Palmers held both the offices of sheriff and mayor, as well as holding one of the offices on multiple occasions.[33] A few even held both offices twice, such as John Semys, who was sheriff in 1520 and 1525, followed by mayor in 1528 and 1535.[34] Much like Worcester, these men were, for the most part, joining the Palmers' Guild at least a decade before assuming high office.[35] The Palmers were clearly occupying a similar role in Gloucester, providing a space for men at the early stages of their civic office.

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[30] Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', p. 195; 'Gloucester: Aldermen, 1483-1835', in N M Herbert (ed.), *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4, the City of Gloucester* (London, 1988), pp. 374-381.
[31] 181 entries for Gloucester.
[32] Samuel Rudder, *The History and Antiquities of Gloucester, Including the Civil and Military Affairs of that Ancient City; with a Particular Account of the Cathedral Church and All Other Public Establishments, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Cirencester, 1781), p. 141.
[33] These men were Thomas Osborn (SA: LB/5/40, f. 21r), John Rastell (SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 3), John Semys (SA: LB/5/40, f. 20v), Henry Marmion (SA: LB/5/3/9, 47r & LB/5/1/4, m. 4), William Michel (SA: LB/5/10, 40r), Rudder, *The History and Antiquities of Gloucester*, pp. 141-144.
[34] Rudder, *The History and Antiquities of Gloucester*, p. 143; SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 61r.
[35] The average number of years between membership and civic office in Gloucester was 12.8.

Table 2.2: Palmers who held civic offices in Gloucester

Name	Membership	Civic offices
John Poole	1498	1486 (mayor)
Walter Beech	1503	1504 (sheriff)
Thomas Osborn	1499	1512 (sheriff), 1522 (sheriff), 1526 (mayor)
Ralph Halsey	1505	1515 (sheriff)
John Rastell	1505	1523 (sheriff), 1527 (mayor)
John Semys	1503	1520, 1525 (sheriff), 1528, 1535 (mayor)
Henry Marmion	1507	1521, 1528 (sheriff), 1533 (mayor)
Henry French	1503	1524 (sheriff)
Lewis ap Rice	1509	1532 (alderman)
William Michel	1515	1540 (sheriff), 1549 (mayor)

While ten members are a small proportion of the Gloucester brethren, an examination of five of these men reveals the nature of membership. Thomas Osborn, John Rastell, John Semys, Henry Marmion and Lewis ap Rice were all active members of civic life in the 1520s and 30s. The five of them were aldermen at overlapping times and, therefore, made up almost half of the twelve-man aldermanic bench, although only for one year: 1532/3. Yet for the decade between 1523 and 1533, guild membership was still prevalent among the highest levels of civic government, as Osborn, Rastell and Semys were aldermen. A full quarter of the aldermanic bench, therefore, were Palmers. As such, while the number of sheriffs and mayors who were Palmers was low, the role of guild membership among the aldermen in the 1520s and 30s was of some significance. No study has been carried out to assess, in any detail, the role of the aldermen within Gloucester during the sixteenth century, although a number of important conclusions can be drawn.[36] They were unlikely to have held the same influence as London aldermen – whom Caroline Barron argues were the 'nerve centre of civic government' – but may have fallen somewhere in between the situation of aldermen in London and Bristol.[37]

It is likely that the Gloucester aldermen, much like those in Bristol, advised the mayor, sheriffs and councils rather than acting as an integral part of the administration of the city.[38] Unlike

[36] There is a brief discussion in Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', p. 204 but this is not his focus.
[37] Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People* (Oxford, 2004), p. 136.
[38] James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: the Bristol elite, Urban Community and the Crown, c. 1471 – c.1553' (PhD thesis, University of Western England, 2006), pp. 218-9; Christian Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns* (Woodbridge, 2005).

Bristol, however, the Gloucester aldermen were appointed to their office based on their wealth.[39] Aldermen Osborn, Rastell, Semys, Marmion and ap Rice, all of whom joined the Palmers in the first decade of the sixteenth century, had become some of the wealthiest men of Gloucester by the 1530s.[40] Each man was a Palmer during the time he was working his way through the series of civic offices, acting as steward, sheriff and mayor before becoming an advisor to his successors in each of those offices. The Ludlow guild was a common denominator among members of Gloucester's government, acting as an additional enforcement of pre-existing networks while simultaneously providing connections between Gloucester's inhabitants who were outside of the civic elite. Unlike the most prominent religious guild in Gloucester, that of the Holy Trinity, which drew its membership exclusively from the ruling elite, the Palmers provided these men with a network of individuals from a variety of differing occupations and trades.[41] The Gloucester brethren included skinners, smiths, bakers, cooks, tanners, drapers, cardmakers, cobblers and mercers. Parish priests, canons, monks and vicars represented the ecclesiastical community of Gloucester within the Palmers. The guild was pervasive among Gloucester's elite, religious communities and lay population at large, and provided an opportunity for socialisation for young members of the civic elite, who continued to pay their membership fees as they advanced through the upper ranks of civic government.

Similarities existed among the aldermen in nearby Bristol: in this case, seven aldermen were Palmers (see Table 2.3). As mentioned above, Bristol aldermen acted as advisors to the mayor and other members of the civic elite, rather than controlling day to day governance of the city.[42] The evidence of aldermen in Bristol suggests that, according to Lee, the aldermanic bench was more akin to a society, wherein the *social* functions of this group of men were more beneficial to the city

[39] Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', p. 204.
[40] Marmion was one of the wealthiest men in England, and Rastell, his brother-in-law, appears to have been considerably wealthy at the time of his death. Their familial relationship (through the marriage of Marmion's sister to Rastell) may have provided additional pressure on Marmion's enrolment to join the guild: he joined two years after Rastell. TNA: PROB/11/29/78 (Marmion); PROB/11/25/100 (Rastell).
[41] Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', p. 194.
[42] Lee, 'Political Communication', p. 219.

of Bristol than any constitutional power given to the aldermanic bench in the city's 1499 charter.[43] Lee's evidence for this was the entrusting of orphans to the aldermanic bench, as dictated by last wills and testaments, who worked together with executors to ensure the protection of an individual's estate until they came of age.[44] If the aldermen of Bristol indeed embodied such important social functions which were utilised by the city's burgesses, then it is unsurprising to see a number of their members engaging in further localised communal activity – in this case, membership of the Palmers – outside of their civic roles. As seen in Gloucester, a large cross-section of Bristolian society was accounted for in the Palmers' membership lists, and so, for the aldermen, guild membership provided the opportunity to reaffirm their status as instruments of the community under the auspices of the social rhetoric provided by religious guilds.

Table 2.3: Palmers who held civic office in Bristol [45]

Name	Year of Membership	First known year in office
Robert Thorne	1487	1503 (Sheriff)
William Jeffreys	1487	1504 (Sheriff)
Simon Gerveis	1487	1507 (Sheriff)
John Bagot*	1489	1466 (MP)
John Penke*	1497	1495 (Alderman)
John Matthews	1499	1508 (Sheriff)
John Elyot	1500	1496 (Bailiff)
John Hall	1500	1518 (Sheriff)
William Rowley+	1500	1539 (Sheriff)
John Esterfield*	1501	1485 (MP)
John Wilkyns	1501	1509 (Sheriff)
John Ware	1501	1514 (Sheriff)
John Harris	1503	1505 (Sheriff)
Richard Tonell*	1503	1514 (Sheriff)
John Reep	1503	1517 (Sheriff)
David Laurence	1503	1526 (Sheriff)
John Edwards*	1504	1507 (Sheriff)
John Edwards	1504	1507 (Sheriff)
George Monoux	1505	1490 (Bailiff)
William Vaughan	1505	1515 (Sheriff)
Humphrey Bosgrove	1505	1516 (Chamberlain)

[43] Lee, 'Political Communication', p. 220.
[44] Lee, 'Political Communication', p. 220.
[45] These men held several offices in Bristol, making it unwieldy to list all of their offices here. They can, instead, be found in the following sources: *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed., L. Toulmin Smith, *Camden Society*, new series, 5 (1872) and Lee, 'Political Communication', Appendices.

Gilbert Cogan	1505	1522 (Sheriff)
Richard Abingdon	1506	1515 (Sheriff)
Robert Aventry	1506	1520 (Sheriff)
Thomas Pernaunt	1507	1501 (Sheriff)
Thomas More[+]	1507	1536 (Sheriff)
John Vaughan	1508	1498 (Bailiff)
John Smythe*	1509	1532 (Sheriff)
John Davis	1509	1523 (Sheriff)
John Hutton*	1510	1511 (Sheriff)

***** Attained office of alderman
[+] Potential match: long period of time between enrolment and office so may not be same person.

In addition to the seven aldermen, another twenty-three members of Bristol's civic elite in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century were Palmers, primarily those who began their civic careers after 1500 (Table 2.3). For the purposes of this study, the civic elite of Bristol have been taken to include the chamberlains, bailiffs, sheriffs, mayors, aldermen, and MPs. Of these, the shrievalty was the most common office to be held by members of the guild. Between 1500 and 1510, with the exception of 1502/3, one of the two sheriffs was always a Palmer.[46] In 1507/8, both sheriffs – Simon Gervys and John Edwards – were Palmers. This trend was somewhat less pronounced in the following two decades, with Palmers in the shrievalty for a total of five and four years respectively. The sheriffs were among the most visible officers within the burgess community of the town, maintaining peace and stability within the city walls, and managing the city's gaol and the monthly county court. Likewise, the mayor of Bristol held a multiplicity of roles, and acted as the king's representative in the city, a Justice of the Peace, and Justice of Gaol delivery, while simultaneously holding his own court, supervising the city's crafts and administering justice within the Bristol Staple Court.[47] An office with an increasing role in civic politics in the early Tudor period, and respected by the community of Bristol, the mayor presided at common council meetings and meetings of the aldermen.[48] Eight of Bristol's mayors between 1487 and 1542 were

[46] Hugh Elyot, Thomas Pernaunt, Robert Thorne, William Jeffreys, John Harris, Simon Gervys, John Edwards, John Matthews and John Wilkyns. Lee, 'Political Communication', Appendix.
[47] Lee, 'Political Communication', p. 231.
[48] Lee, 'Political Communication', pp. 232-4.

Palmers, three of them holding office twice.[49] Membership of the Palmers, from as early as 1487, was therefore a shared experience of Bristol's highest civic elite. The frequency of the sheriffs as Palmers in the 1510s aligns with heightened levels of membership of the guild within Bristol. The Palmers had, since the fourteenth century, drawn small numbers of Bristolians into the fraternity, but membership rose in 1501 and, thenceforth, the city remained a strong centre of guild membership throughout the sixteenth century (Map 1). While this assessment is partially influenced by the increased survival of membership lists, specifically the riding books, there is nevertheless a notable growth in membership from 1485 to 1505, strengthened by the increase in the number of registers of admission (not just the riding books), which survive for greater periods of time, especially during the fifteenth century. The use of registers of admission to demonstrate the growth in membership is, therefore, a more accurate way to view long-term trends in membership. There was an increase of fifty per cent of membership from Bristol between the 1485-9 registers and the 1505-7 registers.[50] But was there a correlation between increasing numbers of civic officers as Palmers and the more general increase in membership?

The increase in elite brethren from Bristol displays a similar regard to the importance of guild membership, at a certain time in the elite life-cycle, as that which can be seen in Gloucester and Worcester. But there are, naturally, differences resulting from circumstances unique to Bristol. After 1499, the structure of civic office within Bristol changed. The most junior office of the elite, that of the bailiff, was removed, leaving the shrieval office as the position filled by the youngest members of the common council.[51] Lee has observed that after 1499 a number of people became sheriff early on in their life: Robert Elyot and John Drewes may have been as young as twenty-one when they first took up their posts.[52] The tendency to hold civic office earlier in Bristol than in other cities explains some aspects of the trends of membership identified above. Unlike in

[49] John Drewis, Richard Tonell, John Wilkyns, John Reep, John Edwards. Those who held the office twice were: John Esterfield, John Vaughan and Richard Abingdon. SA: LB/5/3/2-9; Lee, 'Political Communication', Appendix.
[50] SA: LB/5/1/2-3.
[51] Lee, 'Political Communication', p. 240.
[52] Lee, 'Political Communication', p. 243.

Gloucester and Worcester (and Coventry, as will be discussed shortly), where individuals often joined the Palmers some ten to twenty years before assuming a position among the upper ranks of the governing elite, the majority of men in Bristol joined the guild much closer in time to assuming the office of sheriff – especially during the first two decades of the sixteenth century, where most became sheriff within ten years of joining the guild. Despite the temporally closer relationship between civic office and guild membership in Bristol than other cities, the Palmers were likewise providing an opportunity for members of the elite to expand their religious and social activities. Members of the elite, such as John Bagot, gifted chalices to the Palmers (either for use at the feast or for the use of college of priests), while annual social gatherings, evinced by the guild's regular expenditure on victuals, took place in Bristol annually for the brethren.[53]

Coventry, the final urban location under investigation here, was an equally active centre of guild membership. Fifty-four members of the civic elite enrolled in the Palmers between 1499 and 1515, a number which points towards the importance of guild membership among this community (see Table 2.4). For Coventry, like Bristol, the relatively high involvement of the civic elite in the fraternity can be more fully constructed than for Worcester and Gloucester, due to the good survival of city records. The Coventry Leet Book, which records a range of individuals who participated in the different areas of urban governance, including on the leet jury and in the offices of warden of the leet, chamberlain, bailiff, sheriff and mayor, is the primary source utilised here. The average time between enrolment in the Palmers and the first role within civic government was just over ten years. The difference here, which must be acknowledged, is that there was a higher number of the civic elite that joined the Palmers after they had already held office. They were, still, the minority, but their enrolment shifts the demographic dynamic of Coventry's members, being a mix of experienced and aspiring civic officers. For Coventry members, therefore, the guild

[53] SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v. (Bagot's chalice in the guild inventory); LB/5/1/4, m. 6 (Bagot's membership); LB/5/3/40 (example of expenditure on victuals for Bristol members). The annual gathering of brethren in Bristol, and elsewhere, is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

provided a different arena for socialisation from that of the local Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi fraternities, which were predisposed to young and veteran civic officers respectively.

Table 2.4: Palmers who held civic office in Coventry [54]

Name	Year of Membership	First year of office (incl. Leet jury)
William Aleyn	1506	1519 (town crier)
Thomas Bagot	1505	1472 (Chamberlain)
William Bayly	1501	1538 (Leet juror)
John Baker	1507	1514 (Chamberlain)
Thomas Banwell	1506	1513 (Leet juror)
Richard Burwey	1506	1514 (Sheriff)
John Bonde	1506	1509 (Warden)
Thomas Bothe	1505	1517 (Warden)
Nicholas Burwey	1505	1499 (Warden)
William Cook	1508	1515 (Warden)
William Coton	1511	1519 (Warden)
John Dove	1506	1471 (Leet juror)
Thomas Ford	1504	1501 (Warden)
Thomas Gopsill	1503	1511 (Chamberlain)
John Hadden	1505	1480 (Member of the Forty-Eight)
Edmund Hadley	1506	1505 (Warden)
John Hardwen	1505	1500 (Warden)
Richard Hassall	1498	1496 (one of the 'mayor's council')
Thomas Heryng	1511	1522 (Leet juror)
Richard Kemsey	1505	1510 (Warden)
Henry Kylby	1515	1524 (Warden)
Robert Kyrvyn	1504	1524 (Chamberlain)
Thomas Lee	1501	1515 (Chamberlain)
Richard Marler	1499	1500 (Warden)
Roger Mocklow	1506	1492 (Collector)
Thomas Mossell	1506	1501 (one of the 'mayor's council')
Julian Nethermyll	1502	1512 (Warden)
Henry Perkyns	1515	1491 (Collector)
John Payne	1506	1491 (Collector)
Richard Rice	1504	1508 (Chamberlain)
Henry Rogers	1504	1503 (Warden)
William Rogers	1505	1526 (Leet juror)
William Rose	1503	1474 (Collector)
William Rowley	1499	1470 (Collector)
William Ruddyng	1507	1525 (Leet juror)
William Shore*	1499	1472 (Warden)
William Shughbrough	1503	1514 (Warden)
Robert Smyth	1505	1479 (Warden)
Thomas Smyth	1505	1505 (Warden)
William Smyth	1505	1519 (Warden)
John Sparow	1507	1495 (Collector)
Thomas Sponne	1507	1519 (Leet juror)

[54] Like the case of Bristol, these men held a multiplicity of civic offices, which can be found in the Coventry Leet Book, vols. 1 &2.

Henry Wall	1506	1508 (Warden)
Thomas Warde	1515	1492 (Chamberlain)
Thomas Warings	1506	1510 (Sheriff)
Robert Welsh	1504	1518 (Chamberlain)
Richard Westley	1506	1515 (Chamberlain)
Hugh White	1506	1513 (Warden)
William White	1499	1525 (Leet juror)
William Wigson	1505	1496 (Leet juror)
John Woode	1506	1492 (Collector)

* might be son who is a Palmer

The civic elite of Coventry by no means limited themselves to the guild at Ludlow or even those that operated within the city. More understandably in geographic terms, the elite of Coventry frequently graced the annual admission registers of Stratford's guild of the Holy Cross. But many of these men, and their wives, were Palmers as well. For the Stratford guild, 1497/8 saw the enrolment of John Hadden, former bailiff and future mayor, who joined the Palmers in the following decade.[55] In 1506/7, Julian Nethermyll and Richard Kemsey, soon-to-be wardens of the leet, joined the Holy Cross.[56] They were joined later by their fellow civic officials Thomas Banwell and Henry Wall.[57] All had joined the Palmers previously – Nethermyll in 1502/3, Kemsey and Banwell in 1505/6, and Wall in 1506/7.[58] It is clear from these examples that the proximity of these men in their professional and social lives influenced their decision to join not one, but *two* external guilds. If anything, this fact simply underscores that membership to prestigious 'great' guilds – at least one, and possible more – was part of a common culture among the civic elite of late medieval England's urban centres.

What is particularly interesting about this kind of extra-urban guild membership is that, in the early sixteenth century, Coventry was undergoing an economic crisis; although there were fluctuations of decline and prosperity in the second half of the fifteenth century, 1500-18 saw a

[55] *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, ed. Mairi Macdonald (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007), p. 370; SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 28r.
[56] They both held other offices: Kemsey was a member of the jury leet throughout the 1510s. Nethermyll became sheriff, bailiff and mayor. *Coventry Leet Book*; *Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross*, pp. 393.
[57] *Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross*, pp. 414, 422.
[58] SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 14v (Nethermyll); LB/5/3/7, ff. 28v (Kemsey), 30r (Banwell); LB/5/3/2, f. 38r (Wall).

period of increasing decline, with an acute deterioration from 1518-25.[59] Financially, the city was labouring to maintain the commercial success of previous centuries. The struggling cloth trade, exacerbated by a national trade depression more generally, and high food prices were significant contributors to the crisis the once-flourishing city found itself in.[60] But in the midst of the city-wide slump and a downturn in wealth on an individual basis, some of Coventry's inhabitants continued to pay their membership fees to the Palmers. While, naturally, there was some drop in paying members overall, due to the inevitable change in individual financial circumstances, fluctuating interest in fraternal relations and, of course, death, even when Coventry was at its lowest point in the 1520s, a number of individuals continued paying their fees. Henry Wall, a capper, diligently contributed to his fee every year from his initial sign-up in 1505/6 until 1521, when he completed the full fee for himself and his wife.[61] Even drapers, despite their financial worries, remained financially dedicated to the Palmers.[62] Thomas Banwell and Maurice Giwart, both drapers, paid annually through the 1520s.[63] By observing the Coventry Palmers as a whole throughout the more acute period of crisis in the 1510s and 1520s, it is possible to suggest who prioritised membership payments, or at least who could still afford to do so. The civic elite overwhelmingly demonstrated a higher trend of continued payments when compared to Coventry members more generally: seventy-one per cent of the elite continued paying in the 1510s and/or 1520s while only eleven per cent of the rest of Coventry Palmers did so.[64] This significant drop in payments among the latter group can be accounted for by the fact that the guild did not penalise breaks in or even the ceasing of payments, instead allowing the freedom to resume at the

[59] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, esp. chapters 2 & 3. This claim is contested by Donald Leech, who argues that the whole city was not in decline, but instead certain wards and trades demonstrate varying levels of both decay and success: Donald Leech, 'Stability and Change at the End of the Middle Ages: Coventry, 1450-1525', *Midland History*, Vol. 34, Issue. 1 (2009), pp. 1-21.
[60] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 51.
[61] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r.
[62] This financial strain was, in part, caused by changing policies towards country cloth. John Hadden's bequest of £100 for annual cash loans for individual drapers demonstrates the need of the cash-strapped drapers. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 48, 51; TNA: PROB 11/19/241.
[63] SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 30r, 30v.
[64] 39 out of 55 civic elite and 43 out of 396 for general membership.

inclination of the individual. Naturally, the former group consisted of those men who were wealthy enough to have the financial freedom to spend their money on membership. Yet they too were struggling; as demonstrated by the fact there was a shortage of merchants, a traditionally dominant group among the elite, to take civic offices.[65] Offices were refused by individuals based on financial circumstances, like Roger a Lee, who rejected the chamberlainship in 1508.[66] It is of significance, then, that the civic elite were continuing to invest in the Palmers' Guild with no external pressure from the guild to do so.[67] The Palmers were evidently a priority, even in times of economic uncertainty.

Membership of the Ludlow guild performed a service for the civic elite in Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol and Coventry, which, while taking slightly different iterations and possessing different meanings for each location, retained some fundamental implications in all areas. One area that has not yet been discussed, but was evidently of prime importance, was the role membership of religious guilds played in expressions of civic religiosity more generally. Such institutional and co-ordinated expressions of piety in late medieval towns have recently been highlighted by Clive Burgess.[68] For example, the mayors and their fellow civic officers were in tune with the rhythms of the devotional year in Bristol, consistently engaging in the supervision and maintenance of perpetual chantries within the town walls. According to Burgess, the importance of the mayor's actions in this regard was such that it contributed to the spiritual cohesion of the town. The mayor and 'his brethren' were a regular presence in every parish, attending services for their patronal feast days, the obits of their predecessors, and more general celebrations, thereby demonstrating the extent to which the civic elite, as an institution, was involved with the religious side of urban life. One particular effect of the attendance of the elite at parochial events was the demonstration of 'their respect for good fellowship' with parishioners more widely – a

[65] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 47.
[66] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 47.
[67] As discussed in the Introduction, the Palmers inflict an additional charge on members for missed payments.
[68] Clive Burgess, "'According to his wise discretion": Civic Catholicism in fifteenth-century Bristol – and beyond', *Historical Research*, Vol. 92, No. 257 (2019), pp. 479-99.

phenomenon that Burgess identified as being an important aspect of 'civic Catholicism'.[69] The inter-mingling of the civic elite and the wider community in an ecclesiastical setting encouraged regular 'contact between different registers among the laity, encouraging camaraderie.'[70] This could take place, for example, with regards to elite attendance at prominent social events in the parish's annual calendar.

However, the 'respect for good fellowship' shown by the elite had no need to be confined to the parish. Religious fraternities were prominent arenas for the flexing of communal relations – but Bristol did not possess a major fraternity like its urban counterparts of York, Coventry or Norwich. Instead, smaller, more intimate, guilds were a significant part of the religious fabric of Bristol, with Burgess raising the possibility of a close association between the civic elite and the Assumption fraternity based on Bristol Bridge.[71] With this in mind, it could well be argued that membership of the Palmers, who were intensely inter-parochial, offered a different avenue for the manifestation of civic Catholicism in an urban setting. The Palmers were not just an elite phenomenon in Bristol; they formed a comparatively 'catholic' group (in the literal sense), encompassing members engaged in multiple occupations and holding different social statuses.

Membership of the Palmers may have served another purpose for the urban elite across late medieval cities. We may see it as part of a larger movement to reinforce their claims to authority. Civic government was increasingly controlled by a group of elite members, part of the 'close corporation' that many historians have identified as thriving from the Tudor period through the early modern period. Yet, as Christian Liddy argues, the long-term success of the urban oligarchy did not equate to stability, and the idea of the close corporation has therefore been

[69] Burgess, 'Civic Catholicism', p. 485.
[70] Burgess, 'Civic Catholicism', p. 485. Shannon McSheffrey has a different view of 'civic Catholicism', mainly how civic elite adopted religious reasoning in order to control behaviour among the population. Shannon McSheffrey, 'Jurors, respectable masculinity and Christian morality: a comment on Marjorie McIntosh's *Controlling Misbehavior*', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37, Issue 3 (1998), p. 276-7.
[71] Burgess, 'Civic Catholicism', p. 488; Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 104, 256.

thrown into question.[72] In Coventry, the contesting of decisions made by urban officers was a regular occurrence, leaving the urban elite to negotiate economic, social and religious tensions as a result. One product of these stumbling blocks was the strengthening of relations between ecclesiastical authority and the civic elite in a bid to impose order on the city.[73] The close relationship between lay religious fraternities – primarily the Holy Trinity Guild, but also the Corpus Christi Guild – speaks to the importance of religion as a reinforcement of the good rule and political right of civic authorities. Overt examples, such as the Coventry Holy Trinity tapestry, as discussed by Liddy, had benefits for both parties involved. Liddy's identification of the appropriation of religious authority to complement the actions of the civic officers reveals this to be a trait of urban centres, just as Burgess identified similar trends in Bristol.[74]

The Palmers were, therefore, another component of the religious repertoire of the civic elite. Joining the local leading fraternity, and other local fraternities, brought immediate, and visible, advantages in a social and religious sense. Guilds fashioned a distinct social identity for their brethren, and the regularity of fraternity processions through urban space demonstrated the participation, inclusion (and exclusion) of brethren for all to see.[75] In a society with a widespread focus on the accumulation of spiritual capital, especially underscored by the public nature of many religious acts, membership of multiple fraternities amounted to a certain declaration of wealth and religious prestige. In Coventry, membership of the Corpus Christi Guild was an expectation incumbent upon young elite citizens, and membership of the Holy Trinity was occupied by those advanced in their civic careers. Membership of *external*, prestigious guilds went above the established norm: it was an additional sign to the community of wealth, prestige, and piety. Layers of additional reinforcement were characteristic of the civic oligarchy, and the 'great' fraternities of

[72] Christian D. Liddy, 'Urban politics and material culture at the end of the Middle Ages: the Coventry tapestry in St Mary's Hall', *Urban History*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (May, 2012), pp. 203-224.
[73] Liddy, 'Urban politics and material culture', p. 221.
[74] Clive Burgess, "A repertory for reinforcement': configuring Catholicism in fifteenth-century Bristol' in L. Clark (ed.), *Of Mice and Men: Image, Belief and Regulation in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 99-122.
[75] Benjamin R. McRee, 'Unity or Division? The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities' in Barbara A Hanawalt and Kathryn L Reyerson (eds.) *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 190-1.

late medieval England were an outlet for further demonstration of the devout behaviour expected of the elite. The Coventry tapestry presented the elite as 'staunchly orthodox'.[76] Membership of the Palmers (and other great guilds) also presented the elite in a similarly resolutely orthodox manner. While not as obviously visible as the tapestry in the guildhall, membership of the Palmers did possess a public element. The public nature of the steward's annual visits, the establishment of a permanent, local representative of the guild in Coventry (a solester), and the usual display of guild livery worked together to advertise those who were members of the guild.[77] The public nature of guild membership promoted and projected the religious vigour of the civic elite.

Another similarity between guild membership and the Coventry tapestry is worth highlighting: as Liddy argues, the tapestry overtly advertised the close relationship of the guild and town council to the king and, in turn, heavenly authority. Membership of the Palmers worked in a similar manner – albeit with a more subtle note. Through the Palmers, a connection to the crown, especially the regional authority of the Prince of Wales, was established beyond the existing structures of royal government.[78] The Council of the Marches had taken an active interest in Coventry since the establishment of the Council and Edward V's household in Ludlow; Coventry was known as the 'Prince's Chamber' and had a special connection to the then-Prince of Wales.[79] Communication, often relating to justice, continued to flow from the Prince of Wales and his council to the city under both Arthur and Henry's tenures as Prince of Wales.[80] The midland centres were dedicated to maintaining a cordial relationship with the royal authority in the marches, as evidenced by Stratford's policy towards the Council of the Marches in the late fifteenth century. Stratford's guild was, in essence, a surrogate government for a town that did not possess the right to self-government and therefore its actions were representative of the town 'government' in so

[76] McRee, 'Unity or Division?', p. 222.
[77] For further discussion on this, see Chapter Five.
[78] The royal aspect of the Palmers' Guild is most clearly illustrated in the enrolment of Princess Katherine of Aragon and Prince Henry, the future Henry VIII. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 34r, LB/5/3/4, f. 31v.
[79] M. Dormer Harris, 'Unpublished Documents Relating to Town Life in Coventry' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 3 (1920), p. 104; R.A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches' in S.B. Chrimes, C.D. Ross and R.A. Griffiths (eds.), *Fifteenth-century England, 1399-1509: Studies in Politics and Society* (Manchester, 1972), p. 161.
[80] Harris, 'Town Life in Coventry', pp. 104-5.

far as there was one.[81] After the fall of Warwick and the subsequent transfer of his lands into royal hands in 1478-9, there was a move from Stratford's government to ingratiate themselves with those around Edward IV's son, namely the Council of the Marches. That year, the Stratford guild sent a representative to Shrewsbury to bestow membership upon the Prince and the leading figures on the council: Lord Rivers and John Alcock, Bishop of Worcester.[82] Carpenter points out that the bishop was regarded as the king's man in this instance, and it was in this capacity that he was receiving membership, not in his role as a bishop.[83] The power, and importance, of the Council of the Marches in the fifteenth century was therefore clearly recognised by the ruling elite of Stratford. Membership of a guild offered a distinct opportunity to cement political relations with regional governing structures. The Palmers, with the councillors and Princes numbering among their brethren, offered the same opportunity to all the towns from which the guild drew its membership, and perhaps especially to those in which the guild played an important role in civic life. Like the Coventry tapestry, therefore, membership was a public declaration of a relationship with the royal family.

For the towns of Worcester, Gloucester, Coventry, and Bristol, then, the Palmers undeniably formed an important part of the experience of their civic elites. While precise manifestations and patterns of membership differed slightly, the guild nevertheless was pervasive enough that it surely must have provided a common bond among the men who worked together in governing their towns. For those in the early stages of their careers, the guild's system of incremental payments provided the means to join a fraternity that potentially offered a whole range of connections and networks; it could be argued, moreover, that, as this resulted in an disproportionate number of young men joining the guild, membership was both long-lasting (in many cases, more so than local guilds) and ingrained. Town governments were also likely to have

[81] 'The borough of Stratford-upon-Avon: Borough' in *A History of the County of Warwick: Vol. 3* (London, Victoria County History, 1945), pp. 247-258.
[82] Carpenter, 'Town and Country', p. 69.
[83] Carpenter, 'Town and Country', p. 70.

encouraged membership of the guild among their number because it provided them with several important benefits. Association with religious institutions was a matter of prestige and was a visible manifestation of the religious aspects of good governance, demonstrating the piety and reputation of a town's governing class. The Palmers' particularly, however, also presented the opportunity to foster further links with those of lower status in the urban hierarchy, who joined the guild in force in all four locations, and thus became an integral element of 'civic Catholicism'. Finally, it was undoubtedly the unique position of the Palmers in Ludlow, and the close links with the Council of the Marches and the households of successive Princes of Wales, that encouraged membership as a means of gaining yet another route of access to royal power and, potentially, patronage. While the associations between civic governments and local guilds has frequently (and rightly) been emphasised, the evidence from the Palmers' Guild reveals an important dimension to urban life that has not previously been identified.

II: County Elites

How, then, did urban elite membership compare with that of the county? This section will explore the place of the guild among knights of the shire, electors of parliamentary representatives, Justices of the Peace, members of the Council of the Marches, and, to a lesser extent, those described as gentry in the Palmers' records. Twenty-four members of the guild were described as 'knights', while twenty-two were 'armigers' or 'esquires', and, more infrequent but equally notable, are examples of individuals of higher status, such as dukes and earls.[84] Those individuals who were described as *generosus*, a descriptor for the 'lowest grade of gentility',[85] were the most abundant: 385 in the surviving records, almost all of whom enrolled in the first decade of the sixteenth century.[86] Thirty-seven of those came from the populous urban centres of Shrewsbury, Worcester, Hereford, Bristol, Coventry and London. Yet the rest were from smaller towns, such as Lichfield and Ross-

[84] My database, as compiled from SA: LB/5/1/1-4 and LB/5/3/1-10.
[85] Gerald Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461* (Oxford, 2005), p. 137.
[86] My database, as compiled from SA: LB/5/1-4 and LB/5/3/1-10.

on-Wye, or from rural locations across Wales, the Midlands, the Cotswolds and a smattering from the counties of Lancashire and Lincolnshire. The distribution of the gentry reflects the more general membership spread and is, at first glance, typical of most groups within the Palmers. On the other hand, the scholarship concerning the gentry membership of guilds does not naturally lead to this conclusion. Almost every major town guild welcomed the gentry among their brotherhood, but the reach of guild-gentry relations extended only locally.[87] In Warwickshire, the gentry (albeit somewhat spoiled for choice with the three major guilds at Knowle, Coventry and Stratford) focused their membership on the guild most local to them.[88] Norwich's guild of St George counted local Norfolk gentry among their members.[89] But the range of rural gentry membership of the Palmers casts doubt upon the extent to which this was true for every guild. The Palmers certainly drew gentry from further afield, even in Warwickshire, where the competition for membership was high with three other major fraternities. The concentration of gentry along the marches and in the midland counties points to a particularly strong regional attachment to the guild, and it will be the gentry membership from these areas that forms the basis of the subsequent analysis.

To understand gentry and noble membership, we must first identify the policy, if any, of the Ludlow Palmers' Guild towards the rural governing classes. In the mid-fifteenth century, the guild regularly invited 'outsiders and gentry' to its dinners, freely giving livery hoods to these prestigious figures or to their retainers.[90] Donning a livery hood or gown was a visually significant step in the assumption of an 'altered identity' conferred upon an individual with their entrance into a guild.[91] The significance of the invitation to the guild feast – guilds, with the exception of

[87] Rosemary Horrox argues that most major town guilds counted local gentry and nobles among their members. Rosemary Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century' in John A.F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 34-5.
[88] With the exception of those linked with the Warwick affinity, who did tend to join the Stratford guild. Carpenter, 'Town and Guild', esp. pp. 66, 77.
[89] McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 79.
[90] Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct., 1994), p. 442.
[91] Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 66.

the Palmers tended to recruit new members at the annual feast – along with the gift of livery, suggests that this process equated membership. Rosser and Carpenter have both suggested, respectively, that the Palmers and the Holy Cross Guild actively sought out connections with the gentry and nobility in the fifteenth century.[92] In terms of the benefits of this practice for the gentry, and taking into account the importance of the fraternity feasts in brokering social relations, the practice of inviting influential gentry facilitated economic, social, and political relationships, such as marriages and electoral influence.[93] With the turn of the sixteenth century, however, all evidence of an active policy towards the gentry disappears. Any evidence of expenses for hoods for gentry or nobility in the sixteenth century remains wholly absent from the wardens' and stewards' accounts.[94] Yet the numbers of gentry and nobility rose in the sixteenth century, regardless of the guild's change in tactic. Those wealthy members had to pay in the same manner as the rest of the brethren, and the riding books duly record that gentle and noble Palmers did, in fact, pay their fees, rather than be gifted membership as part of the guild's policy of garnering influence.

In studying the membership of the county elites, there was no direct shire equivalent to the systems which existed in urban centres: governance structures were not the same, for obvious reasons, but there are nevertheless several areas of government which prove to be useful delineations of study, and which will be taken here in turn. The first is the returns of members of parliament, focusing here on the returned representatives of counties (excluding those incorporated cities with county status). Those who were elected, along with those who elected them, are one way to view the prevalence of membership among those whom we might term the 'gentry'. The county members of the Commons were from among the magisterial class, such as knights and esquires, and were frequently associates of the lords in both a parliamentary and social

[92] Carpenter, 'Town and county', pp. 62-79; Gervase Rosser, 'Solidarités et changement social. Les fraternités urbaines anglaises à la fin du Moyen Âge' *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1993, Vol.48(5), p. 1139.
[93] Rosser, 'Solidarités', p. 1138; Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity feast', p. 442.
[94] The Stratford guild gave hoods to members of the gentry, and membership to Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1477, along with Anthony, Lord Rivers and John Alcock, Bishop of Worcester. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', pp. 68-9.

sense.[95] Elections took place in the county court, requiring the 'common assent' of the shire community, which, after 1429, theoretically included all freeholders, from the upper ranks of the gentry to yeomen and husbandmen.[96] That did not, however, translate into a mass turn-out of the entire eligible population.[97] The electors, in terms of their status, remained restricted to the wealthiest of the county, while the poor were deliberately excluded.

During Henry VIII's reign, there were ten parliamentary elections. The names of the members for the first three parliaments in 1510, 1512 and 1515 for the counties of Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire do not survive.[98] Those for the 1523 parliament do not survive for Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire either.[99] Our ability to understand the shape and tenure of guild membership among the elected is, therefore, affected by the surviving source material, limiting the evidence for cross-over between the two groups of source material with which we are concerned (electoral returns and membership lists).The survival of a parliamentary return for Herefordshire in 1523 demonstrates the issues arising from this lack of overlap, but it nevertheless offers an example of what might have been more typical, had the evidence survived. The MP for Herefordshire was Sir Richard Cornwall (MP 1523 and 1529), who joined the Palmers in 1501.[100] Born around 1480, he was just in his twenties when he joined the Palmers, and it was just over twenty years later that he became an MP. Most MPs were elected between the age of thirty and forty-five,[101] and, as Cornwall was on the more senior end of the average age of most first-time MPs, his age helps to explain why he alone can be found amongst the Palmers. Cornwall's enrolment in the guild accords with timelines of the urban elite, and, as will be demonstrated throughout the rest of this chapter, the county elite. His fellow

[95] Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, p. 122; Payling, *Political* Society, p. 75; E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c. 1425-1485* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 112.
[96] Harris, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 171.
[97] Harris, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 171.
[98] 'Constituencies' *History of Parliament Online*, http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research/constituencies
[99] 'Constituencies' *History of Parliament Online.*
[100] SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 20r; 'Cornwall, Sir Richard of Berrington, Herefs.', *History of Parliament Online*, http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/cornwall-sir-richard-1480-1533
[101] Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 68.

MPs of 1529, and MPs from the 1530s and 40s, would probably have been too young to join the guild during the years for which we possess membership records, assuming that they fell into the age category identified by Harriss. In fact, crucially, the parliamentary returns demonstrate that MPs were frequently the sons of Palmers. Gloucestershire's MP in 1545, Nicholas Arnold, was the son of a Palmer; in Shropshire, Richard Trentham (MP 1536) and Richard Mytton (MP 1539) were sons of Palmers; the same applies for Herefordshire MPs John Scudamore (1532) and George Cornwall (1539), the Worcestershire MP Gilbert Talbot (1542), and the Warwickshire MPs George Throckmorton (1529), John Greville (1539) and Fulk Greville (1545).[102] Guild membership among the fathers of MPs during the later years of Henry VIII's reign suggests that these MPs too would likely have been members, but the relevant guild sources do not survive. The enrolment of their fathers, and of Cornwall, therefore, demonstrates that Palmers' membership was common among the ranks of those who were typically the governing elite of the counties, even if their membership cannot be directly proved.

For many, family influenced the decision to join the Palmers: this is explored in detail in Chapter Four, but the prevalence of this particular influence means that a brief discussion here serves to illuminate the relationships between family, gentry membership and the holding of county office. It was characteristic of gentry families along the marches to have patrilineal membership of the Palmers. Father and son membership could occur in quick succession, with sons joining within one or two years of their fathers, such as Sir John Wogan and his son, Henry, who joined in 1503/4 and 1505/6 respectively.[103] Especially of interest here, however, are instances where patrilineal enrolment took place many years apart. I suggested above that Richard Mytton, MP for Shropshire in 1539, was likely a Palmer, as his father, William, had previously enrolled with his wife, Cecily, in 1505.[104] Thirty-two years earlier, however, William's father was recorded as

[102] For guild entries (in corresponding order to names listed) see SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 4, LB/5/3/9, f. 2v, LB/5/3/37, f. 1v, LB/5/3/3, f. 20r, LB/5/3/6, f. 16r, LB/5/1/3, m. 4, LB/5/3/2, f. 140v. For MPs, see *History of Parliament Online*, constituency pages for Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Herefordshire and Warwickshire.
[103] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 41v.; LB/5/3/7, f. 43r.
[104] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 11v.

paying 12*d.* towards his membership.[105] John Scudamore, MP for Herefordshire in 1529, was a member of the Palmers' Guild from 1509.[106] His father William contributed 2*s.* 4*d.* towards his own membership fee in 1472/3.[107] Two sons of William Uvedale, active administrator and justice in the marches, joined in 1503 and 1512 respectively.[108]

While the names of MPs survive for the majority of Henry VIII's parliaments, our knowledge of the electors is more patchy. The loss of parliamentary returns for the first half of the sixteenth century for the counties in question prevents a full examination of Palmers' membership among those electors; rather, the only relevant information available the returns of the 1540s. This is by no means ideal as a thirty year gap between the guild records and the parliamentary sources naturally narrows the option for comparison: members who joined in the first decade of the century may have died or removed themselves from more active roles by the 1540s. But there still remains some value in a brief examination of the electors, however, as the situation in towns outlined above demonstrates that a handful of Palmers were still occupying official roles in the 1540s.[109] Each return is structured as an indenture, recording the two men elected to parliament and the names of those who elected them.[110] In Worcestershire's by-election in 1542, four of the twenty-one electors were Palmers – nineteen per cent.[111] In the other counties, there was less representation: for Gloucestershire, one of fifteen was a Palmer in 1545 (six and a half per cent), and for Shropshire in the same year two of thirty-three were Palmers (six per cent).[112] Warwickshire, although not a marcher county, has strong representation in both general and gentry membership, but that is not reflected in their 1547 election indenture.[113] No Palmers can be

[105] Thomas Mytton of Shrewsbury: SA: LB/5/3/37, f. 1v.
[106] This is a payment from the year 1512, in which the '4 Bragott' beside his entry indicates that he joined in 1509. SA: LB/5/3/40.
[107] SA: LB/5/3/37, f. 6r.
[108] SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 79v. and LB/5/3/40.
[109] For example, in Bristol, William Rowley was a sheriff in 1539/40 and Richard Tonell, John Shipman and John Smyth were still aldermen in the 1540s despite having joined the Palmers in the first decade of the sixteenth century.
[110] These returns are preserved in TNA: C 219/18 (for Henry VIII's reign) and C 219/19 (Edward VI's reign).
[111] They were: John Russell, Thomas Trigg, Richard Tony and Thomas Rock.
[112] TNA: C 219/18C/44, C 219/19/37, C 219/18C/94.
[113] TNA: C 219/18C/123.

identified with any certainty, although there are three possible matches; unfortunately their location is indecipherable from the manuscript, so it cannot be said with any confidence that these men were the same as those found in the indenture.

Much as is the case for MPs, it is more productive to look at some of the family names that are found among the electors and guild membership of the early sixteenth century. The Shropshire indentures name men from the Purslow, Hosyer, Kynaston and Spencer families, all of whom had members of the Palmers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[114] Likewise, the Cressets from Upton Cresset became Palmers in the early sixteenth century, and the Palmer Richard Cresset's son Robert was a parliamentary elector in the 1540s.[115] Examples from Warwickshire demonstrate that this trend was by no means restricted to the local gentry that one might expect to find in the home county of the Palmers' Guild. The Throgmortons, originally a Worcestershire family who shifted their focus and energy upon their Warwickshire estates in the late fifteenth century, were members of the guild.[116] There is again, with George Throgmorton's participation as elector for Warwickshire in 1547, a nod to the continuation of involvement of these gentry families in county affairs; gentry families that were previously Palmers very well may still have been.[117] These sons of Palmers were members of the county elite, taking up their right to elect an MP representative of their interests.[118] There is little reason to think that their forefathers held drastically different attitudes in their own involvement with county structures, or to think that

[114] C 219/18C/94. For example, William Spencer of Bewdley made a membership payment in 1473 and it is likely his son was the same William Spencer found in the Shropshire return of 1545. Elector Edward Kynaston was the Palmer Lancerlot Kynaston's nephew, SA: LB/5/3/2, 125r.
[115] TNA: C 219/18B/69.
[116] It was in fact the first Throgmorton, Robert, who was a Palmer. He shifted the family interests to the Warwickshire estates rather than the Worcestershire ones: Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 114. This shift can even be witnessed in the guild records, for he joined in Coughton, Warwickshire, not Fladbury or any of his other Worcestershire residences. SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4.
[117] George's father, Robert became a member in 1507. George also appeared as an elector for Gloucestershire in 1545. SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4; TNA: C 219/18C/44.
[118] The extent to which these men exercised any political weight, or the frequency of their attendance at county courts, and the subsequent meaning – or, specifically, *lack* of meaning – attributed to attendance at parliamentary elections is not the focus in this study. The appearance of these men is simply used as a means to understand the gentry members of the Palmers and the possibilities that their position in counties afforded them. For discussions of the county court, especially surrounding elections, see Christine Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), p. 347; Payling, *Political Society*, pp. 159-65.

the guild's attractiveness to these gentry families plummeted in the 1510s and onwards. The guild's longevity was clearly proven by the sixteenth century, being in its third century of activity, and the security of a guild, in light of the long-term employment of priests to pray for members' souls, has been proffered as a reason for gentry membership.[119] There was, however, perhaps more of a familial *expectation* that members of the county gentry joined the Palmers, who placed less weight on the benefits (i.e. prayers) offered by the Palmers as the reasons for membership.

In addition to roles in parliamentary elections, much of the governance of the localities was performed by the gentry in their capacity of officers of the crown, for example, as Justices of the Peace, escheators and sheriffs. While parliamentary positions were highly important (election as an MP was a step in the '*cursus honorum* of shire office'),[120] the other offices of county government had an immediate resonance for the inhabitants of each county. The local elite were the most likely to hold county office and therefore a brief examination of those who were justices, escheators and sheriffs adds a further dimension to our investigation into the relationship between the Palmers and the county elite.[121]

The Commissions of the Peace between 1509 and 1514 for the counties that regularly drew large numbers of Palmers demonstrates the integration of the governance of the marches with the guild – a fact that was in no small part a result of the Palmers being based in Ludlow. Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire were home to many Palmers of the early sixteenth century, and the commissions overlap temporally with surviving membership lists, making them an ideal source to utilise; certainly more so than the Parliamentary returns. Leicestershire (at twenty per cent), Nottinghamshire (seven per cent), Staffordshire (twenty-four per cent) and Wiltshire (thirteen per cent) had the lowest levels of guild representations on their commissions. The benches of marcher counties, however, consisted of higher concentration of Palmers. Most

[119] Carpenter offers this suggestion in regards to the lesser gentry only. Carpenter, 'Town and Guild', p. 74.
[120] Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 173.
[121] Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community', p. 345.

contained roughly a third as Palmers: Herefordshire at thirty-six per cent, Shropshire at thirty-nine, Gloucestershire at thirty-seven per cent and Worcestershire slightly lower at twenty-nine per cent.[122] As has become increasingly clear across this chapter, Warwickshire, while not a border county, was home to a large number of urban and rural elites who were routinely members of the Palmers, and this too is reflected in the commissions, of which thirty-one per cent of participants were also Palmers.[123] It is unsurprising that commissions consisted of a range of different social groupings from local gentry to elite families close to the Crown, and membership of the Palmers, diverse as it was, spanned those groupings.[124]

The commissioners would hold various positions across county governance that provided influence and prestige in a local context, acting, for example, as county sheriffs. The local gentry represented on the commissions of the peace were part of the group that were the traditional occupiers of the shrieval office, and among them, membership of the Ludlow guild was common; for example, John Newport, commissioner of the peace for Shropshire in the 1509-14 commissions discussed above, was also the sheriff of Shropshire in 1501 and 1510.[125] Likewise, Edward Croft, Palmer and commissioner for Herefordshire, was a sheriff of Herefordshire for six separate terms between 1505 and 1529.[126] Between 1500 and 1530, Herefordshire's shrieval office was frequently held for multiple terms by a small group of men, and a number of those were Palmers: Edward Croft (six terms), John Lingen (four terms), Richard Cornwall (three terms), Richard de la Bere (one term), William Herbert of Troy (one term), John Scudamore (one term), and Richard Mynors (one term).[127] Shropshire presents a more varied array of sheriffs in the same

[122] These calculations were made by comparing the membership lists with the list of commissioners, as reprinted in 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous' in *L&P*, Vol. 1, pp. 1533-1557.
[123] 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous' in *L&P*, Vol. 1, pp. 1533-1557.
[124] Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 168. For example, in Herefordshire, the weight of royal authority was brought by Palmers Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, Bishops William Smith and Charles Booth (of Lincoln and Hereford respectively), knight of the shire, Edward Croft, and parish gentry, John Lingen, George Bromley, Roger Bodnam and John Dansey.
[125] *L&P,* Vol. 1, Appendix: 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous'; SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 48r.
[126] *L&P,* Vol. 1, Appendix: 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous'; SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v.
[127] *L&P,* Vol. 1, Appendix: 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous'; SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v; SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 7r; LB/5/3/3, f. 20r; LB/5/3/2, f. 172v; LB/5/3/5, f. 53r; LB/5/3/40, f. 17r; LB/5/3/10, f. 37r.

period, with fewer multiple occupancies of the shrieval office: ten Palmers held the office for a combined total of fourteen years, compared to seven out of seventeen years for Herefordshire.[128]

Each section of this thesis highlights the extraordinary range and breadth of brethren within the Palmers. However strong the ties of fraternity, there was no single, universal reason as to why individuals joined the guild. We can approach the county gentry as a social group, and we can consider patrimonial influences on membership, but we should also think of the gentry as individuals in order to tease out some of the reasons why membership of the Palmers was a conscious decision among the gentry of the sixteenth century.

Evidently groups of Palmers with pre-existing networks joined the guild and their networks may have been a contributing factor in this regard. A plea of disseisin brought against the Warwickshire knight Henry Willoughby in 1494 reveals another one of these networks. Christine Carpenter has highlighted the range of support he could muster in the county, and the names of his associates are also to be found in the Palmers' Guild records: William Littleton, William Holt, Henry Est and John Savage.[129] In one of the sessions, in July 1494, the JPs called upon to run the session, Robert Throgmorton, Robert Bellingham and Edward Belknap, evidently favoured Willougby, blatantly throwing out the case – despite the severity of the charges.[130] These JPs appear as brethren of the Palmers in the next decade: Bellingham, although dead, was entered into the guild in 1500, Edward Belknap in 1505 and Robert Throgmorton in 1507.[131] An examination of their years of entry into the guild suggests it was not a group activity undertaken at the same time – Littleton, Holt, Trussell, East, Belknap and Bellingham did not join at the same time, nor does it appear that one man's enrolment necessarily sparked the successive enrolment of the rest. There is, however, a clear faction of gentlemen whose interests were deeply interwoven

[128] *L&P,* Vol. 1, Appendix: 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous'.
[129] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 580. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 69v, LB/5/3/2, ff. 37r, 39v, LB/5/3/9, f. 12r. For the Savage family's enrolment, and their servants, see SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 74r. LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r, LB/5/3/7, f. 68v, LB/5/3/8, f. 11r., LB/5/3/2, f. 140r.
[130] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 581-2.
[131] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 119v, LB/5/3/7, f. 31r, LB/5/1/3, m. 4.

outside of the guild. Their membership created a sub-section of the guild among the midlands gentry. The layers of connections amongst the brethren is indicative of the multi-faceted meanings of membership while the affinity of brethren to each other is revealing of the potential motivations for membership.

The nuances of groups among the gentry is lost within the guild records themselves. The only identifiable gentry with obvious connections to each other were those among the royal households.[132] This is only discernible due to the Palmers' meticulous record-keeping, wherein the location of each new member was recorded. So, for Henry Scaresbrige, Ralph Egerton, Thomas Whityngton and Edward Banaster, each described as a gentleman, their connection to each other is clear as their membership entries are all found under 'the Prince's Household'.[133] Palmers outside of the royal households could also, however, boast close royal connections. Robert Throgmorton had an 'intimate association' with Henry VII, while another Warwickshire man, William Brown, was a servant of the king and William Littleton was a royal favourite.[134] Each of these men was a Palmer as well, with few reasons to be attached to Ludlow except for a second degree connection – the presence of the heir apparent and his council there.[135]

Such gentle and noble presence among the sixteenth-century Palmers' brethren is a consequence of the presence of the Prince of Wales and the Council of the Marches, an influence that was particular to the Palmers' Guild among England's great fraternities. The difference, numerically and geographically, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries speaks to a change in the region that was important to the ruling classes. A rough sketch of the rising interest in the nobility and gentry interest can be outlined by the fragmentary membership list during the reign of Edward IV. The establishment of the Council of the Marches with his eldest son generated interest in the guild, but, so far as the records show, only in a handful of gentry and nobility, and

[132] The role of the household in encouraging membership will be discussed in Chapter Four.
[133] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 54r. LB/5/3/2, ff. 84r., 84v, 148v, LB/5/3/3, f. 67.
[134] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 133, 143-4, 575.
[135] SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4, LB/5/3/10, f. 23r, LB/5/3/5, f. 69v.

those with familial ties to the king, such as John de la Pole, second duke of Suffolk, or those with familial ties to the marcher region, like John Sutton VI, first Baron Dudley.[136] With the re-establishment of the Council in the 1490s under Prince Arthur, the frequency with which members of the gentry and nobility joined the Palmers increased. Part of Arthur's role as Prince of Wales was, as the name suggests, to oversee Wales and maintain the king's peace by assisting the judicial bodies operating in Wales and the marcher counties of England. The role of the Council was to assist him and 'to administer his possessions in the principality of Wales, grant licenses or ecclesiastical elections, receive fealties, to present to churches and other benefices, to dispose of custodies of lands and marriages of heirs, grant pardons, appoint and remove stewards, sheriffs, bailiffs, reeves, etc'.[137] Those who resided in areas under royal lordship and wished to air grievances were to seek remedy from the prince or the council.[138] Furthermore, Arthur's responsibilities also included the right to levy troops for the execution of the law, and to appoint royal officers in the area under his purview.[139] Arthur and the Council therefore wielded considerable influence in and around the Welsh border.

Upon examination of the guild's membership lists, it appears as though the Council was indeed integrated into the Palmers' Guild. The association between the Council and guild permeated these top ranks: while there is no record of Arthur having joined the guild, his younger brother, the next Prince of Wales and future Henry VIII, signed up in 1503 for the sum of 20*s*.[140] As Henry's name was committed immediately after he assumed his deceased brother's title, it is highly possible that Arthur was a member, although this assumption cannot be corroborated due to the dearth of membership records for the 1490s. A significant number of people associated

[136] Dudley's wife's family were Gloucestershire landowners. SA: LB/5/3/1, f. 5r.
[137] Caroline A. J. Skeel, *The Council in the Marches of Wales: a study in the local government during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (London, 1904), p. 24.
[138] It was calculated that Henry VII had fifty marcher lordships in his possession during his reign and a large number of those were transferred to the prince, resulting in a large proportion of individuals who would approach the Council of the Marches for judicial purposes. S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, 1972), pp. 248, 150.
[139] Skeel, *Council the Marches*, p. 26; Steven Gunn, 'Prince Arthur's Preparation for Kingship' in Steven Gunn and Linda Monckton (eds.), *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration* (Woodbridge, 2009), p. 13.
[140] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 63v.

with members of the Council are present in the records. Bishop William Smyth, president of the Council, was likely a Palmer: twenty-two of his servants, plus a chaplain and a registrar in his employment, joined between 1497 and 1509. Participation from Smyth's companions and household was prolific during his tenure as president. Smyth's successor, Geoffrey Blythe, committed his name to the Palmers, as did some of his servants, further underscoring the formal ties initiated by the council leaders.[141] The councillors themselves were not reluctant to associate with the local guild either. Sir William Uvedale, comptroller of Arthur's household and a member of the council, joined the guild in 1503/4,[142] while councillors Henry Vernon, Thomas Poyntz, Henry Marian, Anthony Willoughby, Maurice St John and Ralph Egerton were also members of the Palmers.[143]

This trend of overlapping membership between the Council and the guild extended beyond Arthur and Henry's tenures as head of the Council to Princess Mary's occupation of the princely patrimony in the Marches. A letter to the Council from its president in 1526/7 names five men directly, 'with others of the Princess' Council'.[144] All of these men were addressed in relation to their role in governing the marches for Princess Mary, or, indeed, the king, but, crucially, four of these five were Palmers: 'the right worshipful my lord abbot of Reading' was Hugh Faringdon, who joined the guild in 1515/16;[145] Sir John Port, justice of the Council by at least 1526, was a member of the Palmers, along with his wife, Jane Fitzherbert;[146] John Russell, secretary of the Council, had been a member since his days in employment with Edward Stafford, third Duke of Buckingham;[147] and George Bromley, a lawyer attached to the Council (who has been described

141 SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 79v, LB/5/3/40.
142 SA: LB/5/3/5, 79v.
143 Skeel, *Council of the Marches*, p. 34; SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84r, 148v, 184v; LB/5/3/4, f. 31r.
144 'Bishop John Vesey to the Marcher Council, 24 March 1526/7' in Aileen M. Hodgson and Michael Hodgetts (eds.), *Little Malvern Letters I: 1482-1737* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 13-4.
145 His name would be found in SA: LB/5/3/10, except for the loss of the almost all of the document. Luckily, a nineteenth-century transcript of the riding book survives, wherein Faringdon's name can be found. W.C. Sparrow, 'A Register of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow in the reign of Henry VIII' *T.S.A.S.*, Vol II, (1884), p. 85.
146 'Bishop John Vesey to the Marcher Council, 24 March 1526/7' in *Little Malvern Letters*, pp. 13-4.
147 Russell was secretary of Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, until Stafford's execution in 1521. He became secretary of the Council in 1525. *Little Malvern Letters*, p. 13. SA: LB/5/3/8, f. 6v.

as one of the Council's most active members), was also a Palmer.[148] Another member of the council, described in other letters, was Edward Croft, a fellow Palmer.[149]

Guild membership, however, was not restricted to the Council, and the influence of the latter in setting a precedent of membership can be seen among those with whom the Council worked. For example, in 1517/8, a number of knights and esquires were 'appoynted by the kinges most noble grace in the marches to gyff attendaunce ... as they may make to assist the kinges Commyssyoners at Lodlowe from tyme to tyme'.[150] If not explicitly referring to the Council here, it is nevertheless clear that the 'kinges Commyssyoners' were almost certainly directly related to the governance of the Marches, and was perhaps simply another name for the men of the Council.[151] But of interest for present purposes is the fact that the list of those named to 'gyff attendaunce withe such Nombre of hable parsons defensibly arreid as they may make' are, for the most part, also Palmers. Out of the seven listed for Herefordshire, the usual Palmers appear: Sir Richard de la Bere, Edward Croft and Richard Cornwall, in addition to John Gifford, another Palmer. Two-thirds of the Shropshire appointees were either Palmers or had immediate family members who were Palmers.[152] Only two men were appointed for Worcestershire – John Savage and Thomas Poyntz – and both were also Palmers.[153] Thomas Poyntz was, as discussed above, already a member of the Council of the Marches from Arthur's time. Others, like Croft, became councillors during Princess Mary's regime in the marches. The presence of the Council of the

148 SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 7r; Skeel ascribes him this title as one of the most active, along with Lord Ferrers, Edward Croft, Ralph Egerton and Richard Sydnour. Skeel, *Council of the Marches*, p. 58.
149 'Bishop John Vesey to the household of Princess Mary Tudor' in *Little Malvern Letters*, p. 23; SA: LB/5/3/10, 29v.
150 BL: Cotton MS Vitellius C I, f. 6r.
151 This is further suggested by the fact that the manuscript in which the document is preserved is a compilation of material specifically relating to the Council.
152 Sir Robert Corbet, Thomas Blounte, Thomas Scriven and Thomas Mytton were enrolled in the guild, while Thomas Cornwall and Thomas Leighton's sons were Palmers. SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 10r, LB/5/3/2, f. 104r, LB/5/3/8, f. 11r, LB/5/3/37, f. 1v, LB/5/3/7, f. 40v, LB/5/3/3, f. 20r.
153 Savage's wife and children were all members and, given the propensity of the head of the household to enroll before his wife and household, it means that Savage almost certainly enrolled in the years leading up to his family's enrolment – a period for which membership lists do not survive. For his household's enrolment, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r, LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r, LB/5/3/7, f. 68v, LB/5/3/8, f. 11r. Poytnz's enrolment can be found in LB/5/3/2, f. 184v.

Marches in Ludlow itself was an instrument in the proliferation of membership among the gentry classes of the region.

What these examples show is that the Council set the precedent for gentry and noble membership in a regional sense and that an association with the Council generally resulted in guild membership. Moreover, this was a trend that began, presumably, almost immediately as soon as Arthur took up residence in Ludlow, and was certainly prevalent during the years for which we have membership lists; but it also continued right throughout Princess Mary's time with the Council some three decades later. At a basic level, this was simply the result of proximity: the Council were a consistent presence in the town, remaining there during term times.[154] The guild's integration with the town, through its expansive rental portfolio, widespread enrolment of its inhabitants,[155] involvement with local governance structures, large guildhall (located just outside the castle walls), and overt presence in the parish church, made them an unavoidable presence for any visitor to Ludlow. The regular presence of the councillors in Ludlow suggests why they joined this guild, and their residence there presumably meant that they were able to enjoy some of the social benefits of membership that were not available to those who lived some distance away. The councillors, and those appointed to assist them, can be understood as probably having regular formal and informal contact with the brethren of the Palmers in Ludlow itself, and are more likely to have attended the guild feasts – especially as the feasts at Michaelmas and All Saints fell within the Hilary and Michaelmas terms during which the Council was at Ludlow.[156] As the association between guild and Council grew, the guild, therefore, became, in effect, an ancillary facet of the governance of the region. For those wishing to participate in governance of the marches – be it through sitting on commissions, acting as JPs, or participating in shire elections – the guild

[154] R. Churton, *Lives of William Smyth, bishop of Lincoln, and Sir Richard Sutton, founders of Brase Nose College Oxford* (Oxford, 1800), p. 67.
[155] See an undated clerk's receipt for membership within Ludlow, which has been divided up into streets and wards and details the payments of roughly 480-500 Ludlow-based members (approximately one third of Ludlow's tax-paying population). Based on the stewards' names identifying when individuals joined, I would date this document to the early 1530s. SA: LB/5/3/41.
[156] Churton, *Lives of William Smyth*, p. 67; Madge Moran, *The Guildhall, Ludlow* (Ludlow, 2011), p. 4.

therefore acted as a subsidiary 'space' in which it was possible to interact with the region's most influential governors, in addition to cementing yet another direct link with the royal patronage that might help to extend their opportunities on a larger national stage.

It is worth concluding the discussion on the structures that existed between the guild and rural government with an observation that has direct parallels to the patterns of membership seen among the civic elite, as discussed above. The councillors of the marches, the king's commissioners and officers of county governance in the 1520s and 30s had, overwhelmingly, joined the guild ten to twenty years previously, which speaks to the social and political space that the guild occupied. A few case studies, drawn from the experiences of the gentry discussed above, demonstrate the importance of guild membership for men at the early stages of their 'career'. For example, George Bromley was acting as the deputy justice for the Palatinate of Chester in 1505 (although he was not formally appointed until 1509).[157] A year prior to this, Bromley had become a member of the Palmers along with his wife Elizabeth, making an initial contribution of 3*s.* 4*d.* towards their total 13*s.* 4*d.* admission fee.[158] Thirteen years later, Bromley became an active member of the Council of the Marches.[159] John Port, a fellow lawyer and councillor during Princess Mary's tenure in the marches, exhibits a similar pattern. His membership of the Palmers in 1503 coincided with his first forays into practising law, before becoming a successful lawyer and king's commissioner, and occupying roles such as attorney general for the Palatinate of Chester, solicitor-general for Henry VIII and assize commissioner.[160] Port was appointed to the council in 1525.[161] Other young gentlemen, like Richard Snede, joined the guild at similar points in their life-cycles. Snede became a Palmer in 1505, active in local matters in Cheshire in 1512, and appointed deputy justice for the county palatinate in 1523.[162] His appointment to the Council of the Marches, twenty years after he

[157] Tim Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State, 1480-1560* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 147.
[158] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 7r.
[159] Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, p. 91.
[160] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 30v.
[161] W.R.B. Robinson, 'Princess Mary's Itinerary in the Marches of Wales 1525-1527: a Provisional Record', *Historical Research*, Vol. 71, No. 175 (June, 1998), p. 237.
[162] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 26r; Thorton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, p. 147.

joined the Palmers, placed him as a contemporary with Bromley and Port.[163] The relatively early incidence of guild membership in the professional life cycle is, therefore, the defining feature of membership of the gentry, and it is one that can also be seen among urban elites, despite the very different structures their roles inhabited.

Conclusions

The observation that men from both groups often (although not always) enrolled in the guild at similarly early stages in their careers invites us to consider exactly how their respective membership was both similar and different. For both, the guild was evidently a source of both networks and patronage, especially within the regional framework of the Welsh Marches. Even though there were distinctions in jurisdiction between urban and rural areas, those examples considered were nevertheless affected by the unique circumstances of their location, which were informed by the historical tensions created by the Anglo-Welsh border. As such, the Council (acting as proxy for the King) was the arbiter of justice and the source of patronage for the region, and this might be posited as one of the main influences on the decision of the urban and rural elites in joining the guild. The nature of the Palmers, such as it was with thousands of members, meant that the guild provided a place to reinforce and strengthen existing social and political relationships among the gentry classes as well as to extend connections among the urban elite.

But, despite these similarities, there are discernible differences in practice, which speaks to the distinct characteristic of urban and rural government respectively. For those wishing to engage in urban politics, the guild presented an opportunity that was largely voluntary – the fact that the Palmers rarely occupied the same mandatory role in local *cursus honorum* as other town guilds, such as the Corpus Christi and Holy Trinity guilds in Coventry, meant that membership was never wholesale among a town's government, even if it was prevalent. This in itself suggests that those who did join were taking advantage of an opportunity as a means of furthering their connections

[163] Thorton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, p. 147.

within the town above and beyond what was necessary, although evidently it may well have been *expected* for the most ambitious. For the gentry, on the other hand, there appears not to have been the same element of voluntarism. In addition to any expectations resulting from the access to networks or influence, there seems to have been the additional pressure of patrilineal membership, perhaps related to ideas of a class of 'natural' governors inheriting positions of authority in rural government. As will be shown in Chapter Four, the influence of family membership among the gentry extended beyond the Welsh Marches, but its applicability here is largely to do with the tendency for the same families to dominate the offices of MPs, electors, and JPs.

There are, then, a number of ways that guild membership was utilised by the urban and rural elite, and the networks created and reinforced by membership were important to the status and functions of both communities. Guilds were, quite naturally, shaped by those within them – a product of the voluntary nature of fraternities – and so manipulation of their purposes and composition to suit an individual or group's social preoccupations was, in a way, inevitable. It could very well be argued that the guild provided a crucial link between two different governing structures that nevertheless coexisted by virtue of both their location on the border and the overarching pervasiveness of a political ideology in which all power essentially flowed from the Crown. If anything, the possibility for the guild to possess variations in meaning for different groups simultaneously (as well as overlapping concerns) is a powerful indication of the fluidity of purpose of England's 'great' fraternities. Through an examination of regional elites, it is clear that the Palmers' Guild transcended immediately apparent divisions and designations: it held meaning for both urban and rural elites, and defied the traditionally-held view that guild membership of both groups was frequently inherently localised in focus.

Chapter Three
The Regular Clergy

Introduction

In 1428, Prior Thomas Bromfeld of the Benedictine house Bromfield (Shropshire) was included in a list of admission debts owed to the Palmers' Guild. There is no payment accompanying his entry; one can only assume that it was the standard 6*s.* 8*d.*[1] Bromfeld was the first, and only, recorded member of the regular clergy who enrolled in the guild until the late fifteenth century.[2] The next entry of a monastic brethren was brother William Wenlock of Worcester who completed his Palmers' membership fee with a payment of 3*s.* 4*d.* in 1472/3. Found in a clerk's receipt book, the payment noted that Wenlock joined during the first year of an unidentifiable steward (one 'Stevens').[3] Beginning at the end of the fifteenth century, and continuing throughout the early decades of the sixteenth century, monks, nuns, canons and superiors appeared with ever increasing frequency within guild registers across late medieval England, and this was a trend reflected in the Ludlow guild.[4] The Palmers' membership of the professed religious was widespread, prolific and representative of a variety of orders and individual roles: ordinary monks, canons, sextons, cellarers, sub-priors, priors, abbots, nuns and prioresses from Benedictine, Augustinian, Cluniac, and Cistercian houses all enrolled in the guild. At least 311 of the guild's members in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were in religious orders.[5] This number is significant when compared with figures from other traditionally acknowledged 'great' guilds: the guild of Holy

[1] SA: LB/5/3/15, m. 2. The blank space for the payment could be scribal error.
[2] Of course, this may be a reflection of the sparse source base surviving for the fifteenth century; after 1428/9, there are only years for 1433-9, 1442/3 until 1472/3, where a fraction of a list survives, and then again a lack of records until the more complete records from 1497 onwards.
[3] SA: LB/5/3/37, f. 7r. There are no supporting guild documents for the years surrounding this clerk's receipt and, as such, it is impossible to identify Stevens with any certainty. It may be Thomas Stevens, who witnessed several deeds relating to guild property in the 1470s, alongside Walter Hobold, a known officer of the guild. Stevens later became a bailiff of Ludlow. Considering the relationship between town governance and guild office, this appears a positive identification. SA: LB/5/2/1332-8; LB/5/2/1000 (for identification of Stevens as bailiff).
[4] Martin Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders in Late Medieval England' in D. Harry and C. Steer (eds.), *Church and City in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Clive Burgess, Proceedings of the 2017 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2019), p. 186.
[5] This number is calculated from records surviving from 1472-3, 1485-9, 1497-1509, 1515-16 and an undated sixteenth-century register. SA: LB/5/3/37, LB/5/1/2-4, LB/5/2-10.

Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon enrolled six canons, fourteen priors and nine abbots between 1440 and 1535 (most after 1480).[6] The extant records of the Palmers cover a shorter period of time, primarily 1472/3 and 1485-1509, yet the number of regular clergy is astounding in comparison. In terms of monastic membership, indeed, the Palmers were distinctive in many respects: the geographical breadth of their reach, the diversity of religious orders represented, the sheer number of members in a very concentrated space of time and, finally, the dominance of ordinary religious within the records rather than superiors.

The meaning of membership is at the heart of this thesis. If membership of guilds in late medieval England was overwhelmingly concerned with the purpose of accruing prayers in life and death, why did these men and women of the holiest orders join a secular, lay-governed religious community? What was to gain, spiritually or materially, from the commitment to a fraternity, especially one located outside of the immediate vicinity of the cloisters? What did membership mean to the monks, canons, priors and abbots who joined the Palmers' Guild? To borrow a phrase from Prior William More of Worcester, being 'shaven into the religion' was to assume a vow of poverty, which led back to God.[7] These holy men and women, therefore, surely did not need the assistance of pardons, indulgences or prayers to assist their journey to heaven, so precisely how and why did this phenomenon of guild membership transpire?

This question, the answer to which demands both an identification and an understanding of the trends of membership of regular clergy, is deceptively simple. The complexity arises from geographical factors, the different aims of the different orders and the relationships of houses with individuals and institutions within wider society. When we consider the monastic membership of the Palmers' Guild, we see that it superficially mirrors the country-wide trend of increasing monastic involvement in urban guilds. But there are idiosyncrasies that demand explanation. Regular clergy across England and Wales, from the most westerly point in Wales to the east coast

[6] Judith Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: an analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c. 1400-1551', (MA Thesis, University of Gloucester, 2010), pp. 67-8.
[7] Ethel Fegan (ed.), *The Journal of Prior William More* (London, 1914), p. 3.

of Norfolk and from local houses, such as the Carmelites in Ludlow, joined the droves of laity to begin membership payments to the Palmers.[8] The geography of membership therefore aligns fairly closely with general membership of the guild, yet there are two striking exceptions (see Map 3). Notably, London was a great centre for recruiting guild members and regularly held a place in the top five contributing cities to high membership, yet there are no regular clergy from the various London friaries or surrounding monastic houses.[9] Likewise, lay members of the Palmers were scattered throughout the south-west, but only three monastic houses from this area contributed members. Instead, those houses which were significant contributors of members are those from the guild's regional catchment area of the Welsh Marches and just over the border.

The variety of orders present in membership records only adds to the question of why these religious men and women with seemingly different priorities, and opportunities, would wish to join the Palmers. Benedictines were the most well-represented group within the membership of the Palmers, with twenty convents of that order (of both monks and nuns) enrolled. Eight Augustinian houses contributed members, as did seven Cistercian houses. Individuals belonging to Cluniac, Carmelite and Premonstratensian houses, on the other hand, were among the minority within the monastic membership of the Palmers (Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

[8] For example, clergy from St. Nicholas' Priory, Pembroke, St Benet's Abbey, Norfolk, and the Carmelite friary at Ludlow. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 31r; LB/5/1/2, m. 6; LB/5/3/3, f. 2r.
[9] 352 Londoners joined the Palmers, as compiled from SA: LB/5/3/1-12. Londoners are discussed in brief throughout the thesis, but will be a focus of an upcoming article.

Map 3: Locations of regular clergy enrolled in the Palmers' Guild, 1472-1516.

Table 3.1: Monks enrolled in the Palmers' Guild

House	Order	Palmers	Number in house[10]
Monks from unidentified houses[11]	N/A	20	N/A
Bath	Benedictine	1	16

[10] Finding the number of regulars in a house in the years close to the surviving membership lists is near impossible. The closest date of the known number is usually that of the house's suppression; the number provided are from then. There are a few houses in which known numbers of monks closer to the membership lists, which have been used: Pembroke (1525/6), Tewkesbury (1494), Halesowen (1489), Hereford (1510-14), Llanthony Prima (1481), St Thomas near Stafford (1518). Information on number of religious at each house has been compiled from David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London, 1953); Martin Heale, *Dependent Priories of Medieval English Monasteries* (Woodbridge, 2004) and 'Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of St Thomas near Stafford', in M W Greenslade and R B Pugh (eds.), *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 3* (London, 1970), pp. 260-267. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol3/pp260-267.

[11] The riding books of the Palmers do not survive wholly intact. Many are damaged and ripped, resulting in membership entries where only part of the geographical information survives. Sometimes a name, title and occupation are visible, but the location of these individuals is lost or *vice versa*, depending on the severity of the damage. For example, the titles and names for eight individuals can be seen on f. 47r of LB/5/2/3 (these pages cannot be dated, but mostly likely occur from the late fifteenth century) but the other half of the page is missing where the location would have originally been found. These documents are highly formulaic, usually following the order of: title, name, occupation, familial additions (i.e. wife) or identifiers (i.e. 'son of'), location and pledged entrance fee. As such, it is possible to read that seven of these men are monks (due to the title of *dompnus*). It is men like these that form this category of 'unidentified houses'.

Buildwas	Cistercian	2	7 or 12*
Brecon	Benedictine	9	6
Burton on Trent	Benedictine	6	9
Chester	Benedictine	9	11
Coombe	Cistercian	5	14
Crowland	Benedictine	1	32
Dore	Cistercian	2	9
Evesham	Benedictine	1	34
Gloucester	Benedictine	13	35
Leominster	Benedictine	5	10
Valle Crucis	Cistercian	1	13
Llantarnam	Cistercian	7	6
Grace Dieu (Monm.)	Cistercian	1	2
Malvern	Benedictine	3	12
Pershore	Benedictine	2	21 or 25*
Pembroke	Benedictine	1	3
Reading	Cluniac	7	35
Bristol (St James)	Benedictine	1	4
Shrewsbury	Benedictine	5	17
Tewkesbury	Benedictine	3	33
Tintern	Cistercian	2	13
Whalley	Cistercian	1	21
Much Wenlock	Cluniac	8	12
Worcester	Benedictine	27	40

* Disagreement in sources over exact number. See Knowles and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*.

Table 3.2: Canons enrolled in the Palmers' Guild

House	Order	Palmers	Number in house
Canons from unidentified houses	N/A	11	N/A
Priory of St John the Evangelist and St Teulyddog (Carmarthen)	Augustinian	4	12
Chester	College of St. John the Baptist (secular canons)	1	7 or 10*
Woodhouse	Austin Friars	3	N/A
Darley Abbey	Augustinian	1	12
Llanthony Secunda	Augustinian	7	12
Halesowen	Premonstratensian	9	17
Hereford	(secular canons)	6	6
Keynsham	Augustinian	5	15
Leicester	Augustinian	1	26
Llanthony Prima	Augustinian	9	5
Ranton	Augustinian	1	7
St Thomas (near Stafford)	Augustinian	5	8
Wigmore	Augustinian	1	10
Gloucester (St. Oswald's)	Augustinian	6	7

* Disagreement in sources over exact number. See Knowles and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*.

While the spread and variety of monastic members adds a further dimension to the geographically-expansive guild, unlike general membership trends (which feature both dispersed and concentrated areas of membership *outside* the Welsh Marches and its immediate vicinity), the concentration of regular clergy is highest in a relatively 'local' area, clustering in Gloucestershire/Worcestershire and following the Welsh-English border (Map 3). This chapter explores the circumstances that created this inward-facing membership. It argues that the location of the Palmers in Ludlow was the primary motivator of, and the central benefit for, these monastic houses in fostering their local networks – both monastic and secular. This pattern of membership was the result of three local conditions. First, the institutional relationships that existed between the Palmers' Guild and specific monastic houses materialised in either a commercial relationship or a deliberate policy of guild solidarity on behalf of the guild. Second, networks of local houses were a factor in the dissemination of influence, providing a pre-existing platform from which to encourage membership. This could happen through formal arrangements between houses of the same monastic order. Worcester Priory was central in this network, as it possessed the strongest links with other houses and the most prolific connections to the Palmers. The final local condition was more secular in nature, wherein this same monastic network operated in a larger sphere of local power under the Council of the Marches. Operating primarily out of Ludlow Castle, the Council naturally cultivated links with both the town's government and the Palmers' Guild, thanks to the prominence of the latter. In examining the relationship between religious houses and guilds, this chapter will establish the patterns of regular clerical membership among the Palmers' brethren, before moving on to the aforementioned three areas of enquiry. The circumstances under discussion were distinctly localised and only of benefit to nearby religious houses. In joining the Palmers' Guild, members of these localised centres of piety both created and reinforced ecclesiastical and secular networks.

First, however, it is necessary to briefly sketch the historiography concerning monastic membership of lay guilds, in order to situate the present discussion. Surprisingly, it is a topic that

has received little attention from scholars. Mention of the regular clergy has appeared infrequently at best, and often only in the form of a section of a wider guild study.[12] Scholars looking at the relationships between monastic houses, guilds, and laity have done so from an 'outside in' perspective: that is, by examining benefactions to and involvement with monastic communities and monastic guilds on the part of the laity, rather than monastic interactions outside the cloister.[13] Moreover, there has been an inclination to look at religious fraternities with the aim to understand the contours of lay piety in the run up to the Reformation, but here we will utilise a guild as a means of examining the regular clergy. Martin Heale's recent essay is the first attempt to reverse this pattern, providing an exemplary study of what could be termed a 'national overview' of religious membership of lay-governed guilds. In the first study to take this focus, Heale clearly demonstrates the consistency of this trend across England during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He speculates that this timing was due to a series of circumstances, primarily the affirmation of guilds as outlets of orthodoxy in the first half of the fifteenth century, the increase in lay membership of large guilds, and the increasing involvement of monastic superiors in the world of the laity.[14] Undoubtedly, the extant records, and their fragmentary nature, skew this picture because membership lists have, for one reason or another, survived in greater numbers from the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. However, while acknowledging this flaw (which extends to sources relating to monastic houses), Heale nevertheless came to the conclusion that regulars flocked to lay fraternities at the turn of the last century before the Reformation.[15] In this sense, the Palmers were typical in their inclusion of the regular clergy and serve as an enlightening exemplar of how national fraternities played a role in the religious houses of late medieval England and Wales.

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[12] David J. F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: religious gilds in late medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547* (York, 2000), pp. 44, 78, 123; Rosser mentions it very briefly in: 'Solidarités et changement social. Les fraternités urbaines anglaises à la fin du Moyen Âge' *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, Vol. 48, Issue 5 (1993), pp. 1132-3.
[13] Lynda Rollason, 'Liber Vitae and Lay Association with Durham Cathedral Priory in the Later Middle Ages' in Benjamin Thompson (ed.), *Monasteries and Society in Medieval Britain: Proceedings of the 1994 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 1999), pp. 277-295.
[14] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 180.
[15] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 186.

Heale's work stresses that mutual benefaction and religious advantages – meaning prayers for the soul from guild priests and the granting of indulgences associated with the guild – were significant factors in what he described as a 'stampede of regulars … to associate themselves with lay-run guilds'.[16] The Palmers, as discussed in the introduction to the thesis, did indeed possess an indulgence attainable by visitation to the guild chapel, open to all visitors – not just guild members. The pardon was secured from the papacy in the second decade of the sixteenth century, the decade after evidence of the 'stampede' of regulars to the Palmers. The indulgence, therefore, cannot have been the stimulus to monastic membership. We need to look elsewhere for an explanation. Heale also suggests that guilds were a 'valuable mechanism for the regulars … to channel lay piety and patronage in their direction.'[17] While certainly a possibility, this view assumes a proactive involvement on the part of members, both lay and religious, through which they could interact with fellow brethren, as well as the assumption that brethren would physically meet in a guild space for events such as a fraternity feast. While the latter may have been plausible for local guilds, or even regional guilds that compelled their members to pay their membership fee in the town, the Palmers did not require individuals to journey to Ludlow themselves due to the system of stewards' rides and solesters to collect membership fines in towns across the country. Once again, no single explanation proves satisfactory to account for the monastic membership of the Palmers.

This chapter provides a more in-depth examination of one guild, but argues that, while Heale's hypothesis to explain the more general movement for regular clergy to join guilds is pertinent, the relationship between the two institutions (guild and monastic house) and the benefits gained through that relationship are vital to understanding the reasons behind the choice of joining a particular fraternity. The rise in regular membership of the Palmers was both part of the wider

[16] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 186.
[17] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 185.

movement of integration between the religious and laity,[18] and a product of increased guild actions and the activity of the Council of the Marches.

The Professed Religious within the Palmers

As noted above, the Palmers were not alone among pre-Reformation English guilds in welcoming the religious into the ranks of their membership. Female superiors tended to favour the Knowle guild and Holy Trinity, Luton; while ordinary nuns preferred the Corpus Christi Guild in York and the Palmers.[19] The guild of St. Mary's, Lichfield, located within the cathedral priory, experienced a notable intake of superiors and religious clergy from the diocese.[20] Kettle suggests that the location of the guild within the cloister encouraged membership from these individuals because business with the cathedral was the magnetic factor; it was, in essence, a marriage of convenience.[21] The appeal of involvement with a guild in one's own diocese certainly seems to have been present amongst the monasteries of Lincolnshire. The Corpus Christi guild in Boston experienced high levels of involvement from regular clergy, as nine regular clergy served as alderman between 1497 and 1535.[22] This group comprised six monastic superiors from houses in Lincolnshire, clearly with a vested interest in the activities of diocesan religious institutions. It is clear, then, that the location of guilds within the same geographic and religious sphere must be a consideration in studies of fraternal-monastic relations.

We might also ask whether regular clergy were members of multiple guilds, and, if so, whether those guilds were also within the house's locality. If anyone were to appear in multiple guild registers, it was certainly the superiors of these houses; Heale argues that abbots and priors

[18] The clergy have been described as 'enmeshed in the communities they served'. See Benjamin Thompson, 'Locality and Ecclesiastical Polity: The Late Medieval Church between Duality and Integration' in Benjamin Thompson and John Watts (eds.), *Political Society in Later Medieval England: A Festschrift for Christine Carpenter* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 113-145, quote at p. 130.
[19] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', pp. 188-9.
[20] Ann J. Kettle, 'City and Close: Lichfield in the Century before the Reformation' in Caroline M. Barron and Christopher-Harper Bill (eds.), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay* (Woodbridge, 1985), p. 161.
[21] Kettle, 'City and Close', p. 161.
[22] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 191.

joined major civic guilds more frequently than their subordinates.[23] Their status as head of a house gifted them traction within the wider world and their role naturally made them more likely to engage with secular affairs than the ordinary monk or nun. The lack of surviving guild registers severely restricts our knowledge of the frequency of membership of multiple guilds among these religious superiors, but a shadowy picture does emerge, and it is worth coaxing out a deeper understanding of what role these men played. For example, Prior Richard Vowell of Walsingham joined and took over the administration of the guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the same town in the late 1530s.[24] He was simultaneously a member of the Palmers, having begun payments at an unknown point in the sixteenth century.[25] Vowell followed a precedent set out by the priors of Studley (Warwickshire) – who joined the guilds at Knowle and Stratford (Warwickshire) – and Prioress Joyce Bickley of Catesby (Northamptonshire) – who entered Coventry (Corpus Christi) and Knowle.[26] Thomas Stafford, abbot of Hailes Abbey, began payments to the Palmers in 1497/8 (although did not complete the full fee),[27] yet he was also admitted to the Stratford guild in 1500/1.[28] Over two decades later, William More, prior of Worcester, was similarly admitted to the Stratford guild, but he had entered the Palmers in 1507/8 when he was not yet an obedientiary – that is to say, an official of the monastic house.[29]

It is, therefore, apparent that heads of houses were prone to join a number of guilds. Significantly, the superiors of Studley and Catesby entered multiple guilds that were all within their localities; the guilds they joined were no more than forty miles from their respective houses. Vowell's choice of membership was to both a local guild and, more strikingly, one located on the opposite side of the country. Stafford and More, however, are the only two known men to have

[23] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 188.
[24] Ken Farnhill, 'Guild of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the priory of St Mary in Walsingham' in Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (eds.), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donington, 2006), p. 135; Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 186.
[25] SA: LB/5/3/12. This register is undated.
[26] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 188.
[27] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 79v.
[28] *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, ed. Mairi Macdonald (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007), p. 139.
[29] *Register of the guild of Holy Cross*, p. 227; SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 45r.

joined both the Stratford guild and the Palmers, and further consideration of this fact offers some important clues as to how monastic membership of the Palmers was manifest. First, the religious membership between Stratford and Ludlow had a different character. The religious of Stratford's guild were predominantly heads of houses;[30] proportionally, Ludlow overwhelmingly drew in ordinary monks, canons and nuns. That is not to say that superiors were not well-represented – there were forty-seven superiors in the Palmers and twenty-three in Stratford[31] – but that the small number of ordinary regulars found in Stratford was drastically different from the situation presented in the Palmers' membership. This leads to the second, and perhaps more pertinent, issue to arise from a comparison of the guild registers. The status and more accessible wealth of these individuals may be the crux of this situation. The Palmers' system of incremental payments afforded individuals the opportunity to pay in smaller, more financially viable sums.[32] This system benefited both the laity and the clergy, and in this context, allowed a higher number of the lower ranks of regular clergy to join the Palmers than the numbers found in Stratford.

The impact of the Palmers' Guild's decision to implement a system of incremental payments in the late fifteenth century provides an additional avenue to view the manner in which individuals, and groups, approached guild membership. For example, first appearing in the registers of the Palmers in 1503/4, the community of Halesowen provided a steady presence of two or three canons joining in various years until 1515/16. While only two of the nine canons (just over twenty-two per cent) paid their membership in full, there was nevertheless a concerted effort to pay the steward each year. With the exception of Thomas Kinfarre, each canon contributed varying amounts of money to offset their entry fine.[33] The system of incremental payments also demonstrates that the patterns in membership payments for superiors might not be drastically different from regular monks or canons, despite their difference in status and trends in

[30] Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds', pp. 67-8; see above.
[31] SA: LB/5/3/1-9; LB/5/1/1-4; Bailey, Medieval Religious Guilds', pp. 67-8.
[32] See Introduction, pp. 27, 35-6.
[33] For Thomas Kinfarre's lack of payments, see SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 74r.

membership of multiple guilds, as discussed above. For example, Abbot Edmund Green of the same abbey also enrolled, beginning payments in 1507/8.[34] The prestige and financial autonomy provided by the office of abbot did not preclude Green from also taking several years – six, in fact – to complete his payments to the guild. Other houses show similar year-average completions; the thirteen Palmers at Gloucester's Benedictine house of St Peter averaged just over five years to pay off their debt to the Palmers.[35]

The Welsh example of Brecon, however, provides a very different picture of monastic membership from other houses with high numbers of members. Although nine monks began the process of joining the Palmers, not a single one completed payment. However, the house itself was clearly interested in membership of the Palmers: there were only five members of the house in 1504 (increasing to six before its suppression) but a total of nine brethren from the house enrolled in the Palmers between 1499 and 1506.[36] Evidently the whole house joined the Palmers, with new recruits joining when others had moved on (in death or to another house). While some from Brecon only contributed a portion of money for their fee for two or three years, others showed more dedication even without completing the full fine. For example, Robert Leicestur paid annual instalments of 4*d.* to 12*d.* for a period of twelve years.[37] While never reaching the full admission rate of 6*s.* 8*d.*, his lengthy commitment is notable. The evidence of Brecon suggests that interest in the guild could be a house-wide phenomenon.

Overall, however, the regular clergy had a higher rate of completed payments than average for the guild, which suggests that they, as a group, were reasonably financially reliable: forty-nine per cent of the Palmers' regular clergy brethren completed their membership fees, compared to twenty-eight per cent overall.[38] As discussed in the introduction, the state of membership occupies

[34] SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 42r.
[35] SA: LB/5/3/2, 5-6, 10, LB/5/1/2-4.
[36] SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 17v, 146r; LB/5/3/5, f. 43v; LB/5/3/6, f. 14r; Heale, *Dependent Priories*, p. 297. Knowles and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*, p. 60.
[37] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 60r.
[38] 151 out of 311 regular clergy (48.6 per cent).

a potential grey area in our understanding, although it appears as though individuals became members, at least in a *social* sense, as soon as they began their first payment. So, it might be argued that sustained and regular payments to the guild, even from a house such as Brecon, who never completed payments, in fact drew in social benefits concerning access to networks of regular clergy and laity through common membership of the Palmers across the Marches and beyond. What these networks were, and the benefits they brought, will feature heavily in the rest of this chapter.

Institutional relationships

Monastic houses were, of course, places that encompassed a wider community than just the avowed brethren. If the enrolment of a high number of monastic men and women into late medieval guilds is note-worthy, it is also reflected in the enrolment of the laity employed in those houses. The two Llanthony houses – Llanthony Prima in Monmouthshire (the original mother house) and Llanthony Secunda at Gloucester (which eventually surpassed Prima in both size and importance) – illustrate this phenomenon well.[39] 1504/5 was the first time the canons from Llanthony Secunda joined the Palmers (seven canons and the prior), but they were accompanied by six servants from their house.[40] These non-monastic members are described individually as '*serviens*' and no further description of their role is given in the record.[41] Servants from other houses, including Gloucester, Reading, Worcester, Chester, Evesham and Great Malvern, likewise joined the Palmers alongside the religious affiliates of those houses.[42] The majority are described as servants of the religious house, but there are exceptions that reflect the realities of these ecclesiastical institutions. The superior of a house kept his or her own household, financially

[39] For a history of the two houses, see: Lionel Butler and Chris Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain* (London, 1979), pp. 287-9.
[40] SA: LB/5/3/6, ff. 41v-42r.
[41] Their status means that they are not grouped into the figure cited earlier (of 311 regular clergy) but instead are considered in the statistics relating to 'servants' in the following chapter.
[42] This is found in almost every riding book. For an example, see SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 23v, 26r.

supported by the monastery.[43] In the case of Llanthony Secunda in 1504/5, each of the servants was described as '*serviens*' of the lord prior; a similar situation can be found in those enrolled from Bromfield (Shropshire), St. Bartholomew the Great (Smithfield), Buildwas (Shropshire) and Nuneaton (Warwickshire).[44] This distinction is important, as the household, in whichever form it took, was a crucial mechanism of the proliferation of guild membership.[45]

A saying, copied into the sixteenth-century 'journal' of Prior William More of Worcester, alludes to the importance of guild membership for both the laity and clergy of religious houses and superiors' households:

> Each seeks after those like him. A sober lord has a sober household. A foolish lord has a foolish household; for since God is holy he seeks a holy household.[46]

The inclusion of such a phrase suggests that it found resonance with More who, as the head of the monastic household, sought to emulate God's holy example by ensuring that those under his charge (in both his personal household and the monastery more widely) were sufficiently holy themselves. Although few from More's own household joined, we might nevertheless see this sentiment as indicative of wider attitudes. Membership of a prestigious religious fraternity, such as the Palmers' Guild, was a relatively easy way for heads to encourage further religiosity in and among their brethren and servants. The enrolment of servants provided a way of enacting the superior's desire for a 'holy household' while likewise assisting the need to maintain a household of good repute. The behaviour of the servants of the abbot, prior or prioress was a factor in the reputation of the house as a whole, and, in a period of increasing debate about the role of the superior's household in late medieval England, ensuring that attendants were honourable and 'holy' was an important preoccupation of the superior.[47]

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[43] For an overview of the households of superiors, see Martin Heale, 'Abbots' Households in Late Medieval England' in C. Woolgar (ed.), *The Elite Household in England, 1100-1500: Proceedings of the 2016 Harlaxton Medieval Symposium* (Donington, 2018), pp. 258-276.
[44] See Table 3.3
[45] This is discussed at length in Chapter Four.
[46] *Journal of Prior William More*, pp. 11-12.
[47] Heale, 'Abbots' Households in Late Medieval England', pp. 266-276.

Table 3.3: Servants in religious houses

House	Servants as Palmers	Superior or religious house as master?
Buildwas	2 (servants) 1 (cook)	Abbey (2) Abbot (1)
Evesham	3 (servants)	Abbey
Tewkesbury	1 (cook) 2 (servants)	Abbey
Leicester	2 (servants)	Abbey
Chester	8 (servants)	Abbey
Reading	1 (servant)	Abbey
Brecon	1 (servant) 1 (janitor)	Does not distinguish between priory or prior as master (janitor)
St. Peter and St Paul (Gloucester, Gloucs.)	2 (servants) 1 (cook)	Abbey
Great Malvern	3 (servants)	Priory
Halesowen	1 (servant)	Abbey
Nuneaton	2 (servants)	Priory (1) Prioress (1)
White Ladies (Brewood, Staffs.)	1 (servant)	Priory
Llanthony Prima	1 (servant)	Priory
Llanthony Secunda	3 (servants) 1 (butler) 1 (cook) 3 (unknown)	Prior[1] (6) Priory (2)
Bromfield	2 (servants)	Prior
Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield	1 (servant)	Prior
Tewkesbury	2 (servants) 1 (cook)	Abbey
Tintern	1 (servant)	Abbey
Cirencester	1 (cook)	Abbey
Leominster	1 (janitor)	Priory
Bath	1 (janitor)	Abbey
Abergavenny	1 (servant)	Abbey

[1] The cook, two servants and the three 'unknown' are not described as servants but the entries simply list the prior as their master.

The idea of keeping a 'holy' household also had implications for the wider convent, as the pursuit of the holy was, lest we forget, the main purpose of their existence:

> The abbot is armed with spiritual weapons and supported by a troop of monks anointed with the dew of heavenly graces. They fight together in the strength of Christ with the sword of the spirit against the aery wiles of the devils.[48]

The addition of spiritual support gained through collective guild membership sharpened the metaphorical spiritual sword used to fight off the devil. The accumulation of guild membership by lay and ecclesiastical members of religious houses was a two-fold operation wherein the secular

[48] Foundation charter of King Edgar for New Minster, Winchester (966) in R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 224-5.

benefit was the preservation of the house(hold)'s reputation in addition to the role they played in spiritual combat.

How far the impetus for guild membership was in an individual's own hands versus pressure from a superior or the community is unclear; there must have been some individual choice as there are (as far as we know) no examples of the entirety of a monastic and lay community at the same house joining at the same time, which might have suggested mandatory or enforced membership within that community. There are, however, moments in which a sweeping enthusiasm for the Palmers is apparent, as found in 1504/5 in Llanthony Secunda, whose servants and monks, as discussed above, almost exclusively joined in one year. The enrolment of new canons and servants from Llanthony Secunda was not found again until 1515/16, although it must be remembered that no membership records survive for the period of 1509-1515.[49]

The monastic house, like the secular household, was a natural ally for the continually expanding Palmers' Guild in the century leading up to the Reformation: through access to a concentrated group of like-minded individuals, the guild could easily attract new members while also increase the chances of consistently paid fees.[50] For, practically, if collecting money from one member of the house, others would probably contribute at the same time. At Llanthony, despite the lack of (visible) continued recruitment in this house, the canons duly continued to pay their debt to the guild. Robert Cun exemplifies the standard practice for this house: he joined with his brethren in 1504/5, and each subsequent year he contributed varying amounts between 8*d.* and 20*d.*, until he had paid the total entrance fee of 6*s.* 8*d.*[51] For the years in which Cun paid, payments from fellow brethren, like John Gloucetur and Thomas Maysmor were also recorded.[52] Each of these men contributed a portion of money towards their membership fee every year: a regularity that can only have occurred with the group mentality encouraged by communal living.

[49] SA: LB/5/3/10.
[50] For the importance of the 'household', see Chapter Four.
[51] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 42r.
[52] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 42r.

Relationships within the religious house and the pressure of obligation were evidently factors in the encouragement, and continuation, of guild membership among the regulars. Yet this was only one side to the spread of the guild, and only one aspect to the meanings of membership for certain houses. The individual socio-economic relationships between each institution and the guild is an important factor in understanding membership. Neither institution existed in isolation; rather, they were woven into the fabric of late medieval society, particularly through their interactions in a commercial context. Those interactions were contributing factors to the prolific engagement of the regular clergy with the Palmers. The Augustinian priory of Aconbury offers an excellent example of such a relationship. The borough community of Ludlow – represented by the aldermen and common council (the Twelve and Twenty-five) – rented mills from the prioress of Aconbury for the price of 66*s.* 8*d.*[53] This long-standing relationship had existed from the thirteenth century and remained present through to the Dissolution of the Monasteries,[54] and we find six nuns of Aconbury as members of the Palmers from the early sixteenth century onwards – although, of course, there may well have been earlier examples of membership from this house to whom reference has not survived.[55] The continual commercial relationship between the town of Ludlow and the nunnery almost certainly played a role in their membership of the Palmers. As previously noted, the Corporation was highly integrated with the Palmers. Guild officers specifically occupied at least half of the positions on the town's councils.[56] The economic relationship between the Corporation and the priory of Aconbury, therefore, was one in which officers and members of the Palmers were personally involved in their civic capacity. The potential of personal interaction with the guild, through the practicalities of rent collection, may have been a factor in the enrolment of the prioress, Elizabeth Gardener, in 1488/9.[57] Three women of her

[53] Faraday, *Ludlow*, pp. 15, 45, 109. The convent at Aconbury had been founded by the Lacy family, who, in the thirteenth century, gifted 'half of four mills' in Ludlow.
[54] When Aconbury was dissolved by the Crown, Ludlow Corporation attempted to regain the mills, as the prioress was their tenant. SA: LB/4/6/87; LB/5/3/5, f. 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 48r; LB/5/3/10, f. 32v.
[55] SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 6.
[56] See Chapter One.
[57] SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 6.

community joined in 1503/4, followed by Joan Skidmore in 1505/6, and Jocosa Morres in 1515/6.[58] The relationship between the town and the priory, and regular contact between the two institutions, suggests that the membership of these religious women was part of a specific localised set of circumstances.

The question that must be asked is, of course, what other evidence is there for the ways in which these abstract relationships between the guild and religious houses was manifest in real terms? One manner in which the guild supported its monastic brethren was through financial or material gifts. For example, an allowance to Thomas Clonton, steward, in 1511/12 records a payment of 6*s.* 8*d.* to the convent at Wenlock.[59] Exactly what this was for is unknown, but the guild counted eight members of the house among its brethren, so it seems to have been a gift connected to this relationship – indeed, it is likely that the gift occurred as part of Clonton's visit to the house to collect fees as there are several examples of monks paying membership contributions in the same year.[60] Moreover, even in examples where the purpose of the payment is not recorded, it is possible to reconstruct something about the circumstances in which it was made. For example, one such recipient was the prior of Ranton Priory (Staffordshire), a small cell of Haughmond Abbey (Shropshire), which had six canons residing in the house in the early sixteenth century.[61] The prior, Thomas Alton, was the only known canon to have joined the Palmers (which is perhaps not surprising given the apparent prevalence of indiscretion among the brethren there).[62] He began membership payments in 1504/5 and completed his 6*s.* 8*d.* fee eight years later in 1512/13.[63] Most importantly, however, is the fact that Alton was elected prior in

[58] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 48r; LB/5/3/10, f. 32v.
[59] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[60] Moreover, the money was reimbursed to Clonton as part of his 'allowances' for costs incurred on the ride that year. For the monks' contributions see SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 12r.
[61] 'Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of Ranton', in M W Greenslade and R B Pugh (eds.), *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 3* (London, 1970), pp. 251-255. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol3/pp251-255.
[62] For example, issues reported included low observance of masses, the fathering of children, constant departure from the priory to hunt, breaking vows of silence and confessing only once a year: 'Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of Ranton'.
[63] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 26v.

1511, and it is in the same year a rather vague entry can be found in the Palmers' clerk's receipt book, detailing the payment: 'Item spende on the prior of Ronton'.[64] The exact amount given to Alton is unknown, being part of a list of expenses amounting to 4*s.* 9*d.* spent on the priests of Battlefield (Shropshire) and 'men of Salop with others'. While the initial reason for Alton's membership remains obscure, his elevation to prior apparently altered the relationship between the priory and the Palmers: it can hardly be coincidental that the very first record of a guild steward spending money on the priory was the same year that Alton became prior. The example of Alton implies that the guild was prompted to act by their member's new position. Other ways in which the guild lavished upon its monastic brethren took the form of victuals, such as a gallon of wine which was given to the convent at Worcester, worth 8*d.* in 1511/12.[65]

In considering exactly what these different gifts to monastic houses represent, we are faced with several possibilities. The gift of victuals might be analogous to other examples of expenditure on secular members, for example when money was spent on meat and drink for 'our old brethirn ... and our solestr' in Atherstone in 1538/9.[66] In these instances, it is quite clear that the expense was a manifestation of the common guild ethos of solidarity and support. Much like the annual guild feasts, the gathering of brethren in different locations under the auspices of guild officials seems to have been a way of encouraging conviviality and cementing the interpersonal connections facilitated by common guild membership. But, given the institutional nature of the guild's relationships with monastic houses, there might be another dimension here that also has parallels in late medieval secular society. Patronal relationships thrived in late medieval England, and monastic relationships with lay lords were characterised by 'a constant interchange of small gifts [testifying] to the mutual respect' between the two parties.[67] It was a relationship in which each stood to gain. This seems especially to have been the case in the example of the gift made on

[64] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[65] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[66] SA: LB/5/3/19. For further discussion on this topic, see Chapter Five.
[67] Barrie Dobson, *Durham Priory, 1400-1450* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 183.

Thomas Alton's promotion to prior – the guild may have been engaging in some form of patronage, or at least attempting to remain on good terms with an individual who now commanded some degree of local authority. The expectations arising from such gift-giving – for gift-exchange created a network of obligations[68] – were spiritual and temporal, and, in lay terms, the latter frequently related to the presentation of benefices and the like.[69] These were not concerns of the guild's council, but, undoubtably the existence of a vibrant, large, piously-inclined membership was. Such small gifts can hardly be construed as guild charity in and of themselves, but may represent a blurring of solidarity and patronage that was unique to the guild's relationships with monastic houses. Unfortunately, as these payments are recorded in the 1510s – a period for which we do not have membership lists – we are unable to see if there is a continual influx of new members for the majority of these houses. One example, however, suggests that this could well have been the case, as, in 1512/3, the guild spent 10*d.* on the 'White Ladies' of Hereford. In the year following, a member of their convent, Isabell Tomkes, became a Palmer.[70]

The benefits of membership, then, were not unidirectional. The enrolment of regular clergy offered opportunities for the officers of the guild directly interacting with monastic landlords to further their own interests. As discussed above, the canons and monks of Llanthony Secunda joined the Palmers in a single movement in 1504/5, establishing the first link between the guild and house. It is hardly coincidental that in 1508 two active guild officers were involved in a legal arrangement for the leasing of land from Llanthony Secunda – an opportunity ostensibly provided because of their roles within the guild. The prior of Llanthony, Edmund Forest (who had enrolled in the guild four years previously), leased the parsonage, glebe, tithes, rents and profits of justice of Stanton Lacy (Shropshire) to William Cheyne and Richard Braggot for £18 6*s.* 8*d.* (payable on the feasts of the Annunciation and the Nativity of St John the Baptist) for a period of

[68] Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 2.
[69] Dobson, *Durham Priory*, pp. 173-202. For examples of gift-giving from the religious to secular lords, see Thompson, 'Locality and Ecclesiastical Polity', *passim.*
[70] SA: LB/5/3/40.

twelve years – the latter having also been obliged to carry out the terms of the lease on pain of a bond of £20.[71] Richard Braggot was one of the guild's stewards between 1505 and 1509, while William Cheyne had been the steward who oversaw the enrolment of Forest and his brethren.[72] While the lease was to the two men, outside of their roles as guild officers (demonstrated through descriptors based on their occupations rather than their affiliation with the guild), the result of this partnership could not be more striking. While Cheyne was on guild business while visiting the priory, the combination of his position, work and guild membership resulted in a financially productive relationship – one where he, and his fellow member Braggot, could profit from a neighbouring estate. Stanton Lacy is less than five miles north of Ludlow, and therefore easier for Braggot and Cheyne to manage as natives of Ludlow than the distantly-located Llanthony Secunda. The relationship was therefore mutually beneficial, relieving the priory of sizeable work. The lease extended the contact between the priory and the guild officers; it outlined that the steward and cellarer of Llanthony would stop at Ludlow (at the cost of Braggot and Cheyne) 'as often as they or eny of them shall happen to come to Staunton Lacy beforeseid for eny cause of besenes of the seid prior, covent and ther successours'.[73] It seems all too likely that they would engage in contact, formally or otherwise, with guild members while visiting Ludlow. Legally, the priory and these two guild officials were bound together, while socially, in the eyes of their fellow brethren, they had likewise created a lasting bond. The benefits of this relationship to both parties is clear, and they were a direct a result of Cheyne's initial visit to Llanthony, the recruitment of Forest and the canons, and the continued collection of fees by stewards such as Braggot. The outcome of membership of the Palmers therefore had a very real effect on the social landscape of the Welsh Marches.

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[71] *A Calendar of the Registers of the Priory of Llanthony by Gloucester 1457-1466, 1501-25*, ed., John Rhodes (Bristol, 2012), pp. 76-78. The lease (at p. 76) specifies 'Edmund, prior of the howse … and the covent of the same place'. For the prior's entry in the Palmers, see SA: LB/5/3/6, 41v.

[72] SA: LB/5/3/6. The title page of the riding clearly states that William Cheyne and John Hocke were the two stewards for that year. Prior Edmund Forest's entry notes the payment in that particular year, collected by Cheyne: '7*s.* 4*d.* 2 Che[yne] in ple[na]'.

[73] *Registers of the Priory of Llanthony*, p. 77.

As a final note, it should be acknowledged that it has previously been argued that the phenomenon of monastic membership of guilds brought benefits to the local laity both within and outside the guild itself. For example, Kettle argued that the guild of St. Mary, Lichfield (which was intricately entwined with the cathedral) brought in heads of religious houses as well as secular and religious clergy, thereby widening the connections of the citizens of Lichfield.[74] At Walsingham, where the canons of the priory entered the local guild of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the early sixteenth century (as a result of the intimate association of both with the shrine there dedicated to the Virgin),[75] Prior Richard Vowell took over the guild's administration to resolve the financial strains placed upon it through mismanagement.[76] This serves as an explicit example of a monastery and a guild having a working relationship – but it is certainly not the only example of such cooperation. The situation of guilds within cathedrals likewise led to mutual financial and spiritual benefits, as well as access to patronage.[77] The establishment of regular clerical membership, the patterns of their admittance and fee payments, and the institutional relationships that existed between guilds and monastic houses – these were all contributing factors to the size and shape of guild membership in late medieval England.

A Network of Monasteries

One question that remains to be answered is why monastic membership was particularly confined to the area around the Welsh Marches (see Map 3). There were, of course, exceptions, including monastic brethren from as far away as Norfolk and Lancashire, but neither the frequency nor the density of monastic membership compares to lay membership more generally outside of the Marches – in addition to conspicuous absences such as London. This and the following section will attempt to address this issue by examining two different – but related – factors in turn that

[74] Kettle, 'City and Close', p. 161. This may well have been the case, although the author fails to provide any solid proof to substantiate this claim.
[75] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 186; Farnhill, 'Guild of Annunciation', p. 133.
[76] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 186.
[77] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', pp. 182-8.

may account for this phenomenon. The first is the networks between monasteries, particularly in terms of geographical proximity and among houses of the Benedictine order, and the second is the presence of the Council of Marches, focusing on the effect that this had on monastic membership.

Gloucester is a prime example of the geographical proximity of several houses apparently informing high rates of Palmers' membership: there were nine houses in the town, including the Benedictine abbey of St Peter and the Augustinian Llanthony Secunda. At the dissolution, it was recorded that twelve canons lived at Llanthony Secunda, and guild membership records reveal that, between 1504/5 and 1515/16, seven monks had enrolled in the Palmers' Guild, along with several servants.[78] The abbey of St. Peter was an ancient foundation that grew into a vibrant Benedictine community with forty-eight monks recorded in 1510, although fifteen of these were at the four cells of the abbey.[79] Of the remaining thirty-three within the convent, at least thirteen were Palmers.[80] Interaction between these two houses is well attested: both were closely involved with the town as property owners and frequently jurisdiction disputes with the bailiffs of Gloucester.[81] Two more of the town's abbeys feature in the membership lists of the Palmers. The Augustinian priory of St. Oswald's was a small, less-than-prosperous house, frequently overshadowed – figuratively and literally – by the larger Benedictine convent at the cathedral.[82] Nonetheless, six of the seven canons there (almost the entire house) committed their name to the Palmers' stewards in 1504/5, although only two fulfilled their financial obligation to the guild.[83]

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[78] SA: LB/5/1/3, m.6; LB/5/3/2, ff. 33r-33v; LB/5/3/6, ff. 41v, 42r; LB/5/3/10, ff. 39r, 40v.
[79] 'Religious Houses of Benedictine Monks' in William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 2* (London, 1907), pp. 53-61. *British History Online* https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol2/pp53-61
[80] SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 2; LB/5/1/3, m. 2; LB/5/1/4, mm. 4, 5, 7; LB/5/3/2, ff. 76r, 138r; LB/5/3/5, f. 61v; LB/5/3/6, f. 42r; LB/5/3/10, f. 39r.
[81] 'Medieval Gloucester: The town and the religious communities', in N.M. Herbert (ed.), *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4, the City of Gloucester* (London, 1988), pp. 59-63. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol4/pp59-63.
[82] 'Medieval Gloucester'.
[83] There were seven canons at its suppression in 1536. Considering the poverty that the house found itself in for much of the late medieval period, it is unlikely that there were more canons in the early sixteenth century. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 42v. 'Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of St Oswald, Gloucester', in William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 2* (London, 1907), pp. 84-87. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol2/pp84-87.

Gloucester, with all of its houses combined, formed a striking contingent amongst the Palmers' brethren, with twenty-six monastic members in total – while there were almost certainly other dynamics at play, especially the relative levels of influence between Llanthony Prima and Llanthony Secunda – the cheek-by-jowl nature of Gloucester's monastic houses surely goes some way to explaining the high levels of guild membership there. Yet if physical proximity was a key factor, we do not see the pattern in other urban centres of guild membership where multiple houses existed: Gloucester was alone in this trend. Nine monks of Chester's Benedictine abbey priory joined,[84] but they were not followed by any others from the four religious houses there. In Bristol, where guild membership was popular among the laity, only three regulars joined:[85] there was not the knock-on effect that was found in Gloucester.

How, then, might we understand these small pockets of guild membership among the religious houses that were either removed from neighbouring influences, or did not respond to their surroundings? While the diversity of religious orders represented in the Palmers is salient (see Map 3), the Benedictine houses formed the majority, with fifteen out of the twenty-five identifiable houses from the order of St. Benedict. The dominance of Benedictine houses in the Palmers' Guild's membership, and all along the Welsh Marches, suggests that it was this network of institutions that fostered guild membership. There are several ways in which this network manifested itself; they can be viewed mainly through the centrality of Worcester Priory and its interaction with other houses.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Worcester was among the best-represented urban centres in sixteenth-century guild membership. Its close proximity to Ludlow made it a natural source from which membership could be drawn. Between the years of 1485 and 1509, a total of twenty-seven monks joined the Palmers and over eighty-five per cent completed payments.[86] This is

[84] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 25r; LB/5/3/9, f. 7v; LB/5/3/37, f. 4r.
[85] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 55v; LB/5/3/4, f. 23v; LB/5/3/7, f. 53r.
[86] SA: LB/5/1/3, mm. 1-3, 5-6; LB/5/1/4, mm. 1-2, 4; LB/5/3/5, f. 70r; LB/5/3/6, f. 50v; LB/5/3/7, f. 71v; LB/5/3/9, ff. 45r, 49r; LB/5/3/37, f. 7r.

certainly the highest rate of completed payments by any monastery, averaging four to five years to complete the fine. In 1504/5, thirty-four individuals joined from the city, of whom five were monks, one was the sub-prior and another the sexton – all from the Benedictine priory of St. Mary's, Worcester.[87] By the late medieval period, the convent consisted of roughly forty monks at any one time, meaning that there would likely have always been a relatively strong presence of Palmers there in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[88] Worcester's strong presence within the brethren of the Palmers may have encouraged membership from local houses, and so its role in facilitating such networks – based upon the Benedictine's provincial system – will be the subject of the following discussion.

Like all houses of its order, Worcester was connected to its fellow Benedictines through various channels of communications and infrastructure particular to the order. The late medieval Benedictine order stipulated that provincial chapters be held every third year, following the precedent set by the Cistercians' successful use of such a system.[89] After the Constitutions of Benedict XII in 1336, the English chapter met at St Andrew's Priory, Northampton until the late fifteenth century when it relocated to Coventry.[90] While administrative and judicial in character, these chapters provided an occasion for brethren to meet with others from the same order. Benedictine monks 'had to face the difficult problem of grouping together, in an artificial bond, a number of houses, independent and powerful corporations of separate origin and varying in character'[91] – these chapter meetings were one way in which this might be achieved. A secondary opportunity for inter-house interactions for the regular clergy arose from these provincial chapters, as superiors were tasked with ensuring that the chapter's rulings were carried out at other houses.

[87] SA: LB/5/3/5. For the monastic members, see ff. 70r, 72v.
[88] David E. Thornton, 'The Last Monks of Worcester Cathedral Priory', *Midland History*, Vol. 43, Issue 1 (Jan. 2018), p. 4.
[89] W.A. Pantin, 'The General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215-1540', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 10 (December 1927), p. 214; James G. Clark, *Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 265; Janet E. Burton and Julie Kerr, *Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 82-3.
[90] R.N. Swanson, 'The Priory in the Later Middle Ages' in George Demidowicz (ed.), *Coventry's First Cathedral: The Cathedral and priory of St Mary* (Stamford, 1994), p. 155.
[91] Pantin, 'General and Provincial Chapters', p. 205.

For example, when the prior of Little Malvern wished to leave his position and be readmitted, as a regular monk, into the priory at Worcester (the mother house) and the community at Worcester was resistant, the abbots of Winchcombe and Pershore were appointed to ensure the ruling was carried out.[92] Through this mechanism, the priors of Worcester too established links along lines that were reflective of membership patterns: Prior Robert Multon visited the abbot of Shrewsbury and his house in 1474 as required by the provincial chapter.[93] This duty was likewise returned by Richard, abbot of Shrewsbury, upon his visitation to Worcester in 1507, as too did the abbots of Tewkesbury and Gloucester at various points during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[94] Membership of the Palmers was a common denominator between the superiors of the region who undertook these visitations: the abbots of Shrewsbury, Tewkesbury and Gloucester were all Palmers during the early sixteenth century.[95] The Benedictine chapters therefore provided an opportunity for superiors and their community to form and strengthen the networks that existed between houses within the same region.

Although the provincial chapter required the presence of all abbots and independent priors, this was not always followed in practice. Instead, a superior would frequently send a proctor in his place; a practice that became so common that in 1429 only fourteen prelates (superiors) were in attendance while 140 proctors and other monks made an appearance.[96] It has been suggested that the monks who were not prelates in fact formed a large and important body, taking a continually more active role in the work of the Benedictine chapter.[97] It is telling that in 1495 the prior of Worcester did not attend but chose instead to send the cellarer and sacrist of the convent, and in 1498 sent again the cellarer and sacrist along with another monk, John Weddesbery, who

[92] Pantin, 'General and Provincial Chapters', p. 230.
[93] W. A. Pantin, *Documents illustrating the activities of the general and provincial chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215-1540*, Vol. III (London, 1937), p. 242.
[94] Pantin, *Documents*, p. 244.
[95] Richard Lye (Shrewsbury) joined in 1498/9, William Malvern (Gloucester) joined in 1503/4 and Henry Belley (Tewkesbury) joined in 1507/8. SA: LB/5/3/2, 152v, LB/5/3/5, f. 61v, LB/5/3/9, f. 47v.
[96] Pantin, 'General and Provincial Chapters', pp. 219-20.
[97] Pantin, 'General and Provincial Chapters', pp. 219-20.

would become prior himself in 1507.[98] This set of circumstances, in which the officers of monastic houses began to play more important roles in the networks between houses, of course has important implications for how we understand membership of the Palmers. Just as the interaction between different superiors, and their visitations to other houses, may have encouraged membership, it seems likely that the same phenomenon also took place lower down the Benedictine hierarchy. For example, despite the fact that Prior William More of Worcester made multiple payments to guilds across the midlands,[99] this appears to have gone no further in influencing the monks beneath him: no other monks of Worcester can be found in the surviving Stratford guild registers, to whom More paid 6*s.* 8*d.*, which are extensive. Mirroring the trend of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century monastic superiors, More (who joined the Palmers over a decade before becoming prior) did not travel far and wide, and instead spent the majority of his time at local manor houses.[100] Practice in large houses varied so that the level of engagement between the superior and his monks was based on individual circumstances and demands on their energy; the superior may not have featured particularly prominently in the everyday lives of the monks.

Instead, everyday monastic life could be regulated and overseen by subpriors, as was the case at Worcester under Prior More. For our purposes, it seems equally important that an individual like Roger Neckham, a sexton and then subprior, and the one with whom monks interacted on a more regular – in fact, daily – basis, was a Palmer.[101] While the prior of Worcester was responsible for the gathering of the annual procurations to the archbishop of Canterbury (collections from the whole diocese, including the abbots of Gloucester and Llanthony), in 1518 Prior More recorded 'Item receved of dan Roger Neckham Sexton of Worcester beyng visitor to every monastery throwh ye hole diocese for procurations'.[102] The regular collection of procurations

[98] Pantin, *Documents*, p. 216.
[99] He paid for the 'pardon and foundation' of an unidentified guild, for an individual called Symonds to be a brother of a guild in Birmingham, and paid 6*s.* 8*d.*to the stewards of the Stratford guild. *Journal of Prior William More*, pp. 90, 156, 311.
[100] Heale, *Abbots and Priors*, pp. 64, 98.
[101] Roger Neckham, monk, is first recorded as joining in 1505 and had completed his payments in time to be entered onto the 1507 register of admission. SA: LB/5/1/3, f. 3., SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 72v.
[102] *Journal of Prior William More*, p. 4; 'dan' or 'daun' denotes a cleric or a monk.

from houses within the diocese of Worcester established a firm network among neighbouring monastic institutions, providing Worcester with a means to disseminate information and form bonds among houses outside the Benedictine order. Neckham's role in collecting the procurations from houses across the diocese of Worcester brought him into contact with houses represented in the guild records: Pershore, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Bristol and Llanthony.[103] The persistent, steady and substantial numbers of monks, canons and superiors who chose to enter the Palmers' Guild may have been influenced by those with whom they continually interacted. Neckham's appearance in More's accounts may highlight his role as an officer of the priory, but guild membership bestowed the regular clergy with an identity.[104] His fiscal dedication to the guild – in that he completed payments – may have been a personal dedication, or simply an indication of his capacity to pay. While it is not possible to precisely delineate these factors, the continuous annual payments to the Palmers would have reflected a consistency of the guild within Neckham's lived experience as a monk in the Marches.

Unfortunately, guild membership records do not survive for the years in which Neckham occupied his tenure as sexton, but his appearance in Prior More's journal offers us the best insight into the type of duties a monastic sexton would have undertaken, specifically in demonstrating his interactions with other houses from which the Palmers drew their membership. John Weddesbery, a previous sexton of Worcester, may have undertaken similar journeys to monastic houses as a regular part of his role, but they are not recorded;[105] membership records, however, do survive for Weddesbery's time. As such, it is possible to make reasonable assumptions from the evidence relating to both Neckham and Weddesbery, taking their experiences as perhaps representative. Weddesbery joined in 1503, while he was sexton, alongside six other monks from Worcester.[106]

[103] *Journal of Prior William More*, p. 4.
[104] Rosser has argued that guild membership more generally gave individuals an identity. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 114.
[105] Noake suggested that later visitations (in 1522) was an example of the prior and convent's responsibility to perform the duties of the bishop while the see was vacant. John Noake, *The Monastery and Cathedral of Worcester* (London, 1866) p. 168.
[106] SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 70r, 72v.

During that same year, monks from Oswestry, Brecon, Leominster, Wenlock, Bristol and Gloucester also joined; which, if Weddesbery's role as an envoy to other religious houses in the Welsh Marches did mirror that of his later counterpart Neckham, could be a reflection of the influence of Worcester's monks on monastic membership more widely.[107] Indeed, it is during Weddesbery's tenure as sexton (1503-7) and subsequently prior (1507-18) that there is a marked increase of monks from Worcester and the Welsh Marches. From the surviving membership lists of 1472/3 and 1485-9, only four monks joined: one each from Worcester and Chester and two from Gloucester. Membership lists then survive, in varying states, from 1497-1509, with the addition of a fragmentary volume from 1515/16. Despite the existence of six previous years of membership records, it is only in 1503, once Weddesbery became sexton, that there is a jump in the number of regular clergy recorded residing in the Welsh Marches (and Bristol, included as it was in Worcester's area of procurations). The number of monks from this area then remained consistently high while Weddesbery was sexton and prior: each year, between ten and thirteen new monks committed their name to the guild, far outstripping those outside of this geographical region. It is only in 1515/16 that the number of regulars from other parts of the country overshadowed that of the Welsh Marches, yet even then it was a small margin: eleven regulars from elsewhere in the country to nine from those in frequent contact with Worcester Priory.[108] As membership records do not survive beyond 1515/16 (except in fragmentary form) it is not possible to see if this trend continued after Weddesbery's tenure as sexton and then prior. There seems very little reason, however, to believe that that role would have changed when Neckham, a fellow Palmer, assumed the role of sexton after Weddesbery's death. Individual Palmers facilitated and encouraged the infiltration of this Ludlow guild into the networks of monastic houses.

We will never know precisely why individual members of the regular clergy joined the Palmers; as with wider membership, the evidence needed to answer that query does not exist – or

[107] SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 20r, 33v, 43v, 49r, 55v, 61v.
[108] The eleven monks from other parts of the country were solely from two houses: Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire and Llantarnam Abbey, Wales. SA: LB/5/3/10, ff. 20r, 23r.

may never have existed. Instead, this section of the thesis reveals the institutional relationships, motivations and benefits involved in processes of guild activity in late medieval England. It is clear that the monks of Worcester Priory were attracted by guild membership and, significantly, sparked the growth of membership within the monastic houses of the Welsh Marches. Mutual membership of a fraternity had a religious as well as secular value. Just as the guild provided an opportunity for the laity to form fraternal bonds,[109] so too could the Palmers provide the same benefit to members of the Benedictine community. While the Benedictine order's conventual visitations worked to create networks of exchange and a more homogenized order,[110] mutual membership of the same fraternity may have strengthened the sense of shared characteristics between these monks.

Worcester Priory, the Council of the Marches, and the Palmers' Guild

Building upon the monastic networks of Worcester Priory, it is now time to examine specifically its relationship with the secular Council of the Marches, and the relationship of both with the guild. Nowhere are the connections between these three institutions better demonstrated than in the funeral of Prince Arthur in 1502. Having passed away at Ludlow Castle, Arthur's body lay in repose there for several days before being transported to St Laurence's church: the short procession has been described as the 'first stage in making the prince's funeral an inclusive public event'.[111] From there, the body was transported to Worcester Priory, where it was buried in an elaborate ceremony. The connections between the Council and the Priory are therefore immediately apparent in this series of events, but it is striking to note the fact that many of the major players were also Palmers – and it seems doubtless that scores of anonymous guild members would have taken part in the prince's obsequies at Ludlow.

[109] This is explored in detail in Chapter Five.
[110] Clark, *Benedictines in the Middle Ages*, p. 265.
[111] Much of the detail regarding Arthur's funeral that follows, unless otherwise stated, is taken from Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Stroud, 2016), pp. 178-92; quote at p. 187. A near-contemporary account also exists in BL: Add MS 45131, ff. 37r-41r.

A contingent of people associated with Arthur's household were present throughout the whole affair, for example: William Smyth, bishop of Lincoln and president of the Council, who was in all likelihood a Palmer (as argued in Chapter Two), sang vespers and read a lesson at Ludlow and sang the mass of requiem (the culmination of the whole funeral) at Worcester; the chief mourner was Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, who joined in 1501/2;[112] and Anthony Willoughby, a friend of Arthur and member of his household, who had joined in 1499/1500, carried the canopy over the hearse at Ludlow.[113] Richard Lye, abbot of Shrewsbury and a Palmer, sang a mass at the observances in St Laurence's,[114] and he was assisted in this by the abbot of Bordesley, another Palmer.[115] At Worcester, after two days' travel, Arthur's body was greeted by 'honest men of the cittie', including the abbots of Gloucester, Evesham, Chester, Shrewsbury, Tewkesbury, Hailes and Bordesley and the prior of Worcester.[116] All represented houses whose brethren were members of the Palmers, and the superiors of Shrewsbury, Bordesley and Worcester were Palmers themselves.[117] The abbots and priors of the religious houses of the region, along with many monks, were present at Arthur's funeral.[118] Besides hosting the funeral and participating in the required funerary masses, the regular clergy of Worcester cathedral received the prince's standard as an offering during the funeral – a poignant gift.[119] Finally, the accounts for Arthur's funeral in the National Archives at Kew reveal the presence of lesser members of the guild in the recording of gifts of black cloth with which mourning gowns were to be made. Among those named were Humphrey Blackburn, parson of Ludlow, who had joined the guild in 1485, and William Cheyne

[112] The nature of the Palmers' membership lists unfortunately means that we do not know at exactly what point in the year Surrey joined the guild – it might be suggested that it was as a result of Ludlow's prominence in the funeral, but equally likely is the prospect that he joined simply because of the trends set by the Council, as discussed in Chapter Two. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 36r.
[113] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 148v.
[114] Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, p. 188; SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 152v.
[115] Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, p. 188. Cunningham calls him the 'unnamed abbot of Bordesley'. The name given to the abbot in the Palmers' record is that of Richard Barlour, who also joined in 1498/9. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 79v.
[116] John Leland, *De rebus Britannicis collectanea*, Vol. v, ed. Thomas Hearn (London, 1770), p. 378.
[117] Richard Lye (Shrewsbury) SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 152v; Richard Barlour (Bordesley) LB/5/3/2, f. 79v; William More (Worcester) LB/5/3/9, 45r.
[118] Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, p. 189.
[119] Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, p. 189.

who, as noted above, was a steward of the guild.[120] Wriothesley's account of the funeral also notes that 'children, prike song and Organs' accompanied the Our Lady mass performed by the Bishop of Chester (i.e. Coventry and Lichfield) at St Laurence's, and it seems likely that the organist was the same musician who was regularly employed by the guild between 1492 and 1503.[121]

This convergence of institutions – Worcester Priory, other Benedictine houses, the Palmers and the Council of the Marches – points to an underlying relationship that would certainly have been apparent to many of those involved. The connections between the guild, the priory, and the council, however, extended beyond Arthur's funeral, and their constant interaction in a variety of guises during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries may have accounted for the concentration of monastic membership of the guild in the Welsh Marches – it was essentially a culture that was unique to the area, shaped by the political and social circumstances in which it operated.

Monastic houses were not isolated, insular spaces to channel piety, but rather progressively outward-facing thanks to the efforts of superiors in the fifteenth century. Abbots and priors were increasingly appointed as Justices of the Peace, bishops and suffragans, which may reflect a trend of monastic houses attempting to engage more with the world at large – potentially mirrored in an increase in guild membership as well.[122] This naturally brought the superior into contact with other branches of authority that were part of a wider superstructure. While the Council of the Marches' role was overwhelmingly secular, there were religious elements to its authority (as will be explored shortly) and, regardless, the priory of Worcester came into contact with the council in a secular capacity as a landlord. The relationship of the priory and Council was further catalysed by the presence of the Palmers in the same region, which also straddled the religious and secular spheres. Besides offering spiritual benefits, the Palmers permitted access to two secular power structures – that of Ludlow's civic government and that of the Council – simply through sheer fact of co-

[120] TNA: LC 2/1, f.15v.
[121] VCH Salop, n. 74 details the employment of Thomas Sherman, organ player.
[122] Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders', p. 189, Heale, *Abbots and Priors*, pp. 187-226.

existence within a small market town. This was not unusual: in most urban centres and market towns there usually existed a *cursus honorum*, which included both town government and guild, and this relationship was explicit and formalised in some places, like Norwich and the guild of St George, and implicit in many other towns, such as Cambridge and St Mary's Guild.[123] Those belonging to a town's leading guild were often indistinguishable from those who were involved in town governance, and so joining a guild was sometimes a means of acquiring political power. But the presence of the Council added another dimension to guild membership, and the personal and professional links between Worcester Priory and the Council were frequently underscored by mutual membership of the Palmers. The rest of this chapter will attempt to uncover what these connections were and to identify the crucial role played by the guild, even if it is not made explicit in the sources. It is suggested here that it is worth considering the extent to which the ties between the council and the priory, which were identifiably strengthening throughout this period, were facilitated, in part, by the influence of Palmers within both institutions.

One arena in which the Palmers' Guild, the Council, and the Priory interacted was in the structures of royal administration or county governance, such as on commissions of the peace and gaol deliveries. Although this has been discussed in Chapter Two, it is worth here focusing on the part played by those monastic members of the guild. For example, Prior William More served on Commissions of the Peace in 1526 and between 1531 and 1533.[124] In 1526,[125] his fellow justices on a commission for Worcestershire included Sir John Port,[126] Sir Edward Croft,[127] Sir Gilbert Talbot,[128] Sir John Russell,[129] George Bromley,[130] Roger Wynter,[131] and Sir Ralph Egerton[132] – all

[123] Ben McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages' *Speculum*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan, 1992) pp. 69-97; Barbara A Hanawalt and Ben R. McRee, 'The guilds of *homo prudens* in late medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 7 (2) (August, 1992), p. 168.
[124] Heale, *Abbots and Priors*, p. 212; *L&P*, Vol. 4(i), p. 899; *L&P*, Vol. 5, pp. 81, 399, 706.
[125] *L&P*, Vol. 4(i), p. 899.
[126] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 30v.
[127] SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v.
[128] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 16r.
[129] SA: LB/5/3/8, f. 6v.
[130] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 7r.
[131] SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 44v.
[132] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 84r.

of whom were also Palmers. In 1531, the same group of men, including More but excluding Egerton, all sat again for Worcestershire.[133] Nor was More the only instance of a superior/Palmer acting as a JP alongside other Palmers: another good example is that of William Compton, the abbot of Pershore,[134] who sat on three commissions in 1512, 1513, and 1514 (the former two for Worcestershire and the latter for Gloucestershire) with the likes of William Smyth, president of the Council and bishop of Lincoln, Richard Mayhew, bishop of Hereford, Thomas Poyntz, and Richard Pole, among others.[135] On this latter commission, he was also joined by Henry Belley, another fellow Palmer and abbot of Tewkesbury.[136] Many of these men were also part of the Council, and their appointment as commissioners, to assist in law enforcement, had precedent: the original council from Edward IV's reign was called on to employ the king's lieges in Herefordshire to arrest five persons stirring up insurrection in Wales.[137]

The joint role that the Council and the priory of Worcester occupied in governing the Marches can perhaps be explained with reference to a letter sent by John Russell, a Palmer, as the secretary of the Council, to Prior William More in 1530.[138] It outlined a plan to keep the peace, with the help of both More and the Abbot of Evesham. Russell's, and the Council's, trust in More to play his part in the mechanisms of governance was explicit, 'having good trust for my part that we shall do a good deed therein, acceptable before God and to the great quietance of both shires'. The historic state of tension surrounding authority in late medieval Wales and the border counties necessitated a partnership between the powerful priories of the marches and the Council, and it is striking that Palmers frequently recur as key players in this respect.

The Council and Worcester Priory also interacted directly with each other outside of these *ad hoc* commissions under the auspices of royal justice, with members of the Palmers once again

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133 *L&P*, Vol. 5, p. 81.
134 SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 52r.
135 *L&P*, Vol 1, Appendix: Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous.
136 He joined the Palmers in 1507/8, and was then described as cellarer. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 47v.
137 Skeel, *Council in the Marches*, p. 26.
138 'John Russell to Prior William More' in Aileen M. Hodgson and Michael Hodgetts (eds.), *Little Malvern Letters I: 1482-1737* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 29-31.

playing an important role. Examples of such interactions in two different sets of circumstances will suffice to illustrate the point being made. First, the Council of the Marches sometimes resided at Worcester.[139] In 1525, the same year that the Princess Mary set up her household in Ludlow, Prior More's account recorded that the princess' council (in other words, the Council of the Marches) was at Worcester, logging several payments to the princess' servants as well. The prior paid 12*d.* to one John Parret for torches for the princess' council, implying that the hospitality for the princess and her council was at the expense and responsibility of the prior.[140] They were possibly housed in the monastery itself on this occasion and on future visits. Hospitality of royal households was an accepted aspect of a superior's role in late medieval England, and the attention paid to the princess and her entourage is perhaps not surprising.[141] What is noteworthy, however, is the mention of the council explicitly – it is not simply part of the provisions for Mary and her household. The council utilised the priory as a base while embarking upon what was presumably judicial business for the city and county. In 1526, the princess was recorded being at Worcester with the prior for multiple weeks.[142] Unlike the previous year, where the presence of the council is explicitly in the account's description, the presence of the council is indicated through a payment of 'dyvers other pryvate rewards 33*s.* 4*d.* to ye councell servants & others'.[143] The entry of 'pryvate rewards' to council servants is certainly intriguing. The council's meeting at Worcester Priory, shortly after Mary's move to Ludlow, highlights the importance of the priory (perhaps more importantly, the prior, a member of the guild) in the operations of the Council.

The second set of circumstances in which the Council and Priory interacted was as part and parcel of the work of the former as a regional judicial and administrative body. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Council of the Marches was appointed to assist the Prince of Wales in

[139] Noake, *The monastery and cathedral of Worcester*, p. 170.
[140] *Journal of Prior William More*, p. 216.
[141] Heale, 'Abbots Households', pp. 271-6.
[142] *Journal of Prior William More*, pp. 228-9.
[143] *Journal of Prior William More*, p. 229.

governing the marches, 'to administer his possessions in the principality of Wales',[144] a role that involved the administration of justice and the settling of disputes. In reality, it was the councillors who were more often than not the primary arbitrators in the settlement of cases, rather the prince, but many of these men were, as we have seen, Palmers.[145] In one such dispute, the prior of Worcester was embroiled in a four-year dispute with tenants in the lordship of Lyndrige, who claimed that More took 'from them their old customs', which was brought before the Council of the Marches.[146] Encountering the regional judicial system was one aspect of the priory's role as landlords, bringing them into an official arena with the powerful councillors of the region.

Moreover, superiors were not the only regular clergy who interacted with the Council of the Marches – ordinary monks utilised the judicial nature of this secular institution; the regular clergy were not above appealing to the council when other routes had proved unsuccessful. For example, John Musard, a monk of Worcester, wrote to Cromwell, Henry VIII and the president of the Council of the Marches respectively, regarding his grievances against Prior More and seeking an appeal of his imprisonment by More.[147] That Musard believed that the council could overthrow a directive ordered by a prior, relating to the keeping of order within a monastic community, illustrates the relationship that the council possessed with ecclesiastical institutions (not just superiors) in the area. Moreover, Musard himself had joined the Palmers in 1505/6 alongside other religious brethren.[148] Multiple individuals involved in the case of Musard were, therefore, Palmers: Prior More, Musard himself, and the majority of the Council.

One final example serves to further underscore the ways in which the Palmers, the Priory, and the Council regularly interacted in a variety of capacities. More's journal records payments ('rewards') to individuals who were sent on behalf of the Lord President of the council. These

144 Skeel, *The Council in the Marches*, p. 24.
145 Gunn, 'Preparation for Kingship', p. 14.
146 The details of the case are sketchy, appearing in two letters written by More to Thomas Cromwell, asking for the letter's favour in moving the Chancellor examine the depositions which had been taken from witnesses. *L&P*, vol. 6, pp. 335-6; Skeel, *The Council of the Marches*, p. 58.
147 *L&P*, Vol. 9, p. 52; Vol. 10, p. 216.
148 SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 71v.

numbers vary: one received 3*s.* 4*d.* and the others received different amounts – 20*d.*, 4*d.* and 6*d.* The first of these payments was given to 'mr John prat of Ludlow coming from my lord president' in 1520.[149] No other information about the identity of John Prat, nor about what he was providing in his communication from the council to the prior. John Prat does not appear in the extant membership lists for the Palmers, but alternative evidence suggests that he did play an important role in the activities of the guild. In the collection of deeds relating to the Palmers' Guild, Prat features as a witness several times alongside other Palmers at the very end of the fifteenth century and in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Prat was active in Ludlow from as early as 1492, when he and John Grenlef were given land by Geoffrey Baugh (a Palmer and guild elder).[150] The grant was witnessed by Thomas Teron and William Grene (bailiffs of Ludlow), Thomas Coke, Richard Lane and William Cheyne – each of whom was a Palmer.[151] Thomas Teron was steward of the guild between 1485-9, rent collector 1499-1500 and elder from 1497 onwards. Likewise, William Grene was steward 1501-3.[152] One deed in particular is illuminating of Prat's role within the sphere of the guild. In 1497, Walter Morton, warden, the elders (all named) and brethren were granted land in Ludlow.[153] John Prat is not listed as an elder, dispelling the notion that he was involved in high level guild governance at that time. He is, however, one of five witnesses, two being town bailiffs and the other two members of the guild.[154] In 1500, Prat witnessed a document alongside brethren Thomas Coke and Thomas Clomton, involving the grant of land by another Palmer: John Browne alias Hobold.[155] Prat witnessed another deed the same year with the same Thomas Coke and, again, William Cheyne.[156] Prat bequeathed tenements and land in Ashford

[149] *Journal of Prior William More*, p. 114.
[150] SA: LB/5/2/492. It was possible that there was another Palmer involved. John Lane was another Palmer acting as a witness with Prat in 1492. John Lane entered the guild in 1503/4. Interestingly, he was a servant of the Bishop of Lincoln, the President of the Council. Lane and Prat's relationship may have been multi-dimensional – same master, potential guild membership and same town of residence. However, the entry in 1497 may be the father, for he was listed in SA: LB/5/3/249 as being a councillor of the guild (1497).
[151] SA: LB/5/2/671.
[152] SA: LB/5/3/3-4.
[153] SA: LB/5/2/249.
[154] It was customary for the bailiffs of the town to witness each deed. SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 2.
[155] SA: LB/5/2/539.
[156] SA: LB/5/2/671; Cheyne is identified as an elder of the guild in LB/5/2/249.

Carbonel, Ashford Gameyll, Ashford Jones and Huntington to the Palmers in 1503.[157] Two years later, in 1505, he was acting as bailiff for the town of Ludlow.[158] It is abundantly clear that Prat was a close associate of the Palmers, with both individuals and the guild as a body. Arguably, he may have been a member of the guild as suggested from his continual and close involvement in legal transactions of the guild. The relationship between Prat and the guild was fostered through land transactions and the institutional role of the guild as an active landholder in the area. Not only was Prat witnessing deeds involving the most prominent members of the guild, witnessing them alongside other Palmers, he was also renting land from them in Overton as late as 1527.[159] Prat, therefore, was quite clearly a local man, a typical example of the type of person who would have frequent interactions with the guild and who was, in all likelihood, a member. It might well be argued, however, that it was through Prat's connections to the Palmers – as he was evidently constantly involved in both guild and town business – that provided him access to the Council, culminating in President Blythe's employment of him as a messenger to Prior More. Although we cannot say much with certainty, his network of connections – via the guild – to political structures that superseded Ludlow demonstrates the intertwined and multifaceted connections between the Council and the Priory that at once relied upon and encouraged guild membership in the Welsh Marches. The prevalence of monastic membership of the Palmers, therefore, cannot be separated from these peculiar local circumstances.

By way of summary, then, it might be noted that membership of the Palmers brought access to local power structures, placing each member within a society that fostered connections between governing institutions. The plurality of the roles held by numerous Palmers worked in the favour of each institution to which an individual belonged, be it the Council or Worcester Priory. The nature of the late medieval Church and state demanded collaboration, cooperation and integration between the clergy and laity. The Palmers provided a space for both sectors of society,

[157] SA: LB/5/2/1010.
[158] SA: LB/5/2/444.
[159] SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 51r.

where the guild ethos of support could have only strengthened the cooperation between important regional institutions. While we should be cautious in assuming that 'benefits' were the probable 'motivation' for seeking membership, they cannot be wholly ignored.

Conclusions

Mutually beneficial relationships occupy a central role in understanding the flurry of monastic membership in late medieval English guilds. The Welsh Marches possessed a more unusual power structure than other parts of the country, and guild membership contributed to, and reflected, the myriad connections of the region's multi-layered governance.

Membership of the Palmers provided a variety of benefits for the regular clergy, although none so clear-cut as to be universally and unequivocally applicable to all monastic members. Apart from the possibility of additional care for the soul (through the prayers of fellow brethren and guild priests), the individual benefits for the ordinary monks, canons and nuns are unclear. What is more clear, however, are the benefits gained for a religious house as a whole. Membership of the guild created a formal relationship, which acted in a manner not unlike a secular lord: the guild presented tokens, either monetary or in the form of victuals, possibly with the expectation of increased membership from the house. While the Palmers' relationships with certain priories, abbeys and nunneries accounted for the enrolment of some regular clergy, membership also might expand through pre-existing networks of the regular clergy themselves. Through geographical proximity, visitations and the gathering of the annual procurations for the archbishop of Canterbury, enthusiasm for membership of the Ludlow guild spread through the ranks of the region's regular clergy.

A careful reading of guild, priory and Council documents leads to the conclusion that powerful institutions in the Welsh Marches were equally invested in the Palmers. Whether the value of guild membership was widely acknowledged will never be known, but it was certainly the common denominator in many interactions during the early sixteenth century. An institutional

partnership existed in the Welsh Marches and flourished in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, with the Palmers' Guild at its heart. The Palmers were tied to the Council through their location in Ludlow and the prolific overlapping of membership between the Council and guild. Worcester Priory was an active participant in both institutions, together and respectively, but was also at the heart of its own network – one rather more institutionally ecclesiastical in nature. While the study of monastic membership to lay guilds has only recently been scrutinised by historians, examining this phenomenon from the perspective of a single – albeit unusual – guild demonstrates that the societal intersections provided by guild membership form a complex picture that goes far deeper than the choices of individual monks to join a fraternity.

Chapter Four
The Household within Guilds: Kinship and Co-residency ties

In 1412, the name of Joan, servant of Thomas More, was entered into the register of admission of the Palmers' Guild.[1] She was the first of only three servants whose names were recorded in the registers in the ensuing decade. The frequency of servants rose considerably by the later part of the century, with the enrolment of thirteen individuals described as *servientes* in the 1485-9 registers. Between 1505 and 1509, a further fourteen servants were entered into the registers. The impression here is certainly not one of an overwhelming number of servants completing payments during these years, although it is worth remembering that these are only fragmentary runs of documents. The registers disguise the true nature of the Palmers: one of extensive social and geographic reach, including the involvement of many late medieval *servientes*. The riding books, on the other hand, allow a more insightful investigation into *all* the individuals who began the process of membership, not just those who fulfilled the resulting financial obligations. Instead of the small number of servants found in the registers, there were rather hundreds of people so described who undertook a relationship with the Palmers by committing their names. Yet it is not only the 530 individuals who are described as *servientes* that is striking, but also the simultaneous inclusion of their masters and mistresses in the same riding books. Late medieval households consisted of a range of individuals of differing social statuses.[2] This diversity of individuals, which was especially marked within large aristocratic households, is reflected in the Palmers' records. As has been apparent in the previous chapters of this thesis, the Palmers were extraordinarily inclusive in their membership, and the situation is no different here. Membership was not limited to the master and mistress of the household but to all individuals who existed at different levels of the domestic hierarchy. Gentlemen and gentlewomen companions, through to cooks and clerks, could be counted among the members of the Palmers' Guild. But the guild was not a place where the hierarchies of the

[1] SA: LB/5/1/1, m. 1.
[2] P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Preface' in Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic and Sarah Rees Jones (eds.), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850 - c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body* (Turnhout, 2003), p. 226.

household were replicated and enforced exactly. Instead, the guild provided a space where households, as an *entity*, could join. This chapter seeks to understand the types of households that joined – their characteristics, such as geographic location, status, and size – in addition to the motivations behind and advantages of guild membership. Membership was spread across the household and between households through a series of social and personal connections, yet guild membership was, ultimately, an expression of household piety.

Guild membership was an equalizer – households of almost every stripe are represented with the records of the Palmers. For example, households of craftsmen, such as those of Thomas Tailor, shoemaker of Hereford, and William Pilleston, joiner of Caernarvon.[3] Gentry households, like that of Lady Newton of Pembroke, were frequent subscribers of household membership of the Palmers.[4] The English crown was equally invested, as the enrolment of Edward IV's, Henry VII's and Henry VIII's households demonstrates.[5] These socially wide-ranging households were equally geographically diverse. In 1497, Jacob Streiteberell and two of his servants, John and Milo, joined the Palmers from Lancashire.[6] William Brynley and his household, who began membership payments in 1500, joined from Ingoldsby, Lincolnshire.[7] William Chapman's household of four joined the guild; just one example in a group of regular London household subscribers.[8] This spread of household membership, across a multitude of counties within England and Wales, is, of course, reflective of more general membership patterns.

Before the discussion progresses, it is worth considering exactly what is meant when we are talking about households in this context – what type of institutions they were, and the people involved in them. As multifarious spaces, with pious, economic, social and political concerns,

[3] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 46r; LB/5/3/2, f. 136v; LB/3/5/7, 24r.
[4] SA: LB/5/3/9, ff. 25r., 25v. Lady Newton's involvement in the guild went beyond the encouragement of her household becoming Palmers, as a guild inventory of 1517/8 lists a gilt cup and cover gifted to them by Lady Newton of Pembroke. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
[5] SA: LB/5/3/1, LB/5/3/2-15.
[6] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 63r.
[7] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 120r.
[8] SA: LB/5/3/1, f. 3v. As outlined in the Introduction, London is not the focus of this thesis, but examples are drawn upon here.

households were groups of individuals with motivations that were complex and layered. A range of households joined the Palmers and they exhibited diverse habits. While patterns may be obscured or difficult to trace in the documentary records, it is worth commenting upon individual examples that illustrate the diversity of household membership – both in terms of membership of the household and membership of the Palmers. Two types of individuals are here considered within 'the household': those related to, and those employed by, the head. What we might now term as 'nuclear families' – parents and their children – joined together, often taking up an entire folio of the riding book, which listed each offspring's name individually. This particular practice is almost solely to be found with gentry families, like the Herberts of Troy, although smaller nuclear families joined together in some number (for example, John Lewes, his wife and daughter from Shrewsbury).[9] Merchants signed up their children less frequently, instead focusing on themselves and their wives. This difference could be indicative of a number of things: fiscal restrictions, fewer children,[10] and differing attitudes towards guild membership compared with gentry families, whose enrolment patterns indicate concern for patrilineal membership.[11] Yet despite the differing sizes of gentle-born and merchant nuclear families, they both share the common feature that multiple members of both the nuclear family and the household become Palmers.

The late medieval household was a natural ally for a guild whose officers too journeyed across the country in order to recruit members. Households were functioning groups of individuals with a shared endeavour, though the extent of the success of this functioning was, of course, dependent on each household at various moments in time. Guilds too could be characterised as

[9] For the Herberts, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 25v., LB/5/7, f. 50v., LB/5/1/3, m. 7. For John Lewes and his family see: LB/5/3/7, f. 11v.
[10] It is not easy to draw concrete conclusions about the size of families. For an analysis of household size generally, see J. Krause, 'The medieval Household: Large or Small? *The Economic History Review,* New Series, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1957), pp. 42-32; Peter Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 65-70. The average household in late-fourteenth century York was between 3.91 and 4.58. For a discussion on the difficulties of determining families in testamentary evidence, see Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 72-3. Norwich families had an average of 2.24 children: N. Tanner, 'Popular Religion in Norwich with Special reference to the Evidence of Wills, 1370-1552 (DPhil, University of Oxford), p. 58; Thrupp's study of London found references to families with two to nineteen children: S.L. Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500*, 1st ed. (Michigan, 1948), pp. 197-8.
[11] See Chapter Two, pp. 105-6.

groups of individuals with a shared endeavour, albeit one of a more overt religious inclination. Such collaborations between groups of people were not uncommon in late medieval society – parishioners often came together to pursue the advancement and construction of a parish church, and craft guilds each had their own respective goal. While the practicalities of households joining the Palmers must be acknowledged and explored, so too must the mentalities of the household come under investigation. Although the efficient running and operation of a late medieval household may be conceptualised in terms of a unified body of individuals, the whole undertaking was, crucially, guided by the head of the household. If the household can truly be viewed as a 'shared endeavour', working towards the success of a prosperous and efficient house, under the direction of a master or mistress, then it is not unfeasible that they were able to absorb another common enterprise, such as guild membership.

The frequency with which households joined the Palmers is striking, and the marked lack of discussion on the topic of households within religious guilds in historiography suggests that the Palmers were unusual in this trend, although an in-depth study of membership in other fraternities might prove that this was not the case. It is, however, outside the scope of this thesis to examine the registers of each of England's large fraternities. Rather, it will have to suffice to rely on the scholarship of other historians who have studied the trends of particular guilds and areas. Bainbridge's study of Cambridgeshire guilds does not discuss household membership.[12] Christine Carpenter's essay on the Stratford-upon-Avon guild is unusually silent on this matter, despite its focus on gentry families and their involvement, while Ben McRee's research on Norwich guilds is likewise devoid of any such discussion.[13] Robert Swanson, in several publications relating to fraternities, does not comment upon this trend – despite, in fact, discussing the Palmers on

[12] Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350-1558* (Woodbridge, 1996).
[13] Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire' in Robert Bearman (ed.), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997); Barbara A. Hanawalt and Ben R. McRee, 'The guilds of *homo prudens* in late medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (August, 1992), pp. 163-179.

multiple occasions.[14] Where family membership has been commented upon within guild historiography, it is never the main focus: David Crouch's study of the York Corpus Christi guild mentions instances of mayoral family membership found on occasion within the records, but frames them in relation to social status.[15] Crouch discusses the admittance of a small number of servants each year, from 1477 onwards, in relation to the prestige it added to the individual head (of that household) in the guild itself. There were certainly instances of families joining Corpus Christi, for Crouch notes that 'family' memberships, in which children were included, usually cost 3*s.* 6*d.* yet he does not discuss this beyond providing a single example, nor does he consider critically the nature and importance of family membership or the household.[16] Examination of household membership within late medieval guilds is, therefore, long overdue.

Lynda Rollason's study of non-monastic entries in the Durham *Liber Vitae* provides a useful point of comparison for the appearance of families and households within other kinds of 'fraternal' associations. The *Liber Vitae* cannot be directly equated to a guild or confraternity register (as only a small number of those that were granted confraternity can be found recorded in the *Liber Vitae*), although there are similarities, which warrant a comparison between the Palmers and Rollason's analysis.[17] Rollason notes that there was 'no real tradition of family association', as members of a household are rarely found in the *Liber Vitae*.[18] Only two exceptions appear in the list of 1,688 non-monastic names: Bishop Louis de Beaumont and John of Gaunt, each with a list of their respective retainers.[19] These examples are markedly different from the evidence of the Palmers: they show the operation of the aristocratic affinity, within which the noble household

[14] Robert Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood: Registering Fraternity and Confraternity in Late Medieval England' in David Rollason, A. J. Piper, Margaret Harvey, Lynda Rollason (eds.), *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 233-246; R. N. Swanson, 'A Medieval Staffordshire Fraternity: The Guild of St. John the Baptist, Walsall' in Philip Morgan and Anthony David Murray Phillips (eds.), *Staffordshire histories: essays in honour of Michael Greenslade* (Keele, 1999), pp. 47-65.
[15] David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in late medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 181.
[16] Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, p. 181.
[17] Lynda Rollason, 'The Late Medieval Non-Monastic Entries in the Durham *Liber Vitae*', in David Rollason, A. J. Piper, Margaret Harvey and Lynda Rollason (eds.), *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 131.
[18] Rollason, 'The Late Medieval Non-Monastic Entries in the Durham *Liber Vitae*', pp. 130-1.
[19] Rollason, 'The Late Medieval Non-Monastic Entries in the Durham *Liber Vitae*', p. 131.

was at the centre. Additionally, these are the only two examples compared to the high number of households found in the Palmers' membership.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of how the guild documented and interacted with households in their records and of the subsequent issues arising from the terminology employed by guild stewards in such cases. This discussion of terms such as 'servant' and 'household' naturally develops into a review of the nature of late medieval service and an investigation into how guild membership fit, practically, within the lives of servants. The analysis will then proceed onto the types of households that can be seen joining the guild, with a consideration of household structures, in order to contextualise the parameters within which these individuals were operating. Then we explore the crux of the issue of *how* and *why* households joined, through a study, and argument, of the importance of networks in heavily encouraging household membership. Networks within a singular household, such as the relationship between master and servant, and between co-resident members of the household, were contributors to the drive on membership. But wider societal influences were equally weighty, especially for the nobility and gentry: the pressure to follow precedents set by the royal court or other noble houses, along with the influence of kin networks, were substantial in their own right. Finally, this chapter examines the resulting benefits of a medieval household joining a religious guild.

Households in guild records: issues and terminology

Guild registers and riding books were employed for a specific purpose by the people both creating and using the material in a practical manner, and subsequently the nuances and meanings of the text are not immediately apparent to modern readers. That being said, it is possible to recover some of this type of information, and broad points can be made that act as caveats when we consider the nature of household membership. In this section, I will discuss the construction and semantics of such membership in the documents. Once this has been established, a more detailed analysis of the nature of household membership can ensue with a solid analytical foundation.

At a fundamental level, the description given to each person in the registers and riding books is important to consider. Rosemary Horrox, when discussing the enrolment of William Hopton in the London Mercers' Company in 1475, argues that his guild entry, which describes him as an 'esquire with the Duke of Gloucester', categorically illustrates where the guild thought Hopton's 'importance resided'.[20] The use of one word to describe an individual can obscure the multifaceted nature of medieval identities and it should not be taken for granted that how they were described in the records is the only identity by which we can view them.[21] As ever, the records were designed with a particular need in mind; in the case of the Palmers, the use of personal descriptors was a means to correctly identify an individual's location and employment in order to collect their membership fees in the future.

The Palmers' use of the word *serviens* to assign individuals an occupation presents obvious problems. The word servant encompassed a wide range of individuals with differing social and economic statuses. Within the gentry household, there was usually a clear distinction between the upper servants, who were household officers and included the likes of chamberlains, receivers, porters and cooks, and the lower servants taking on the role of grooms and labourers.[22] Servants could be gentle born, holding property, and might be local figures in their own right.[23] A glimpse of this range of household membership can be seen in the 1460s' riding book, which includes the enrolment of Edward IV's household. Gentleman, cook, groom, squire, gentleman usher and yeoman of the king's chamber were all terms assigned to members of the household.[24] Such specificity of household roles is rarely seen in the records after this. In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century records, the Palmers switched to using '*serviens*' liberally to describe almost

[20] Rosemary Horrox, 'Richard III and London', *The Ricardian*, Vol. 6 (1985), p. 323.
[21] Philippa Maddern expressed a warning that a description, such as 'servant', in records does not preclude other identities attached to them, such as 'husband' or 'wife': Philippa Maddern, "In myn own house': The Troubled Connections between Servant Marriages, Late-Medieval English Household Communities and Early Modern Historiography' in Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (eds.), *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 48.
[22] P.W. Fleming, 'Household Servants of the Yorkist and Early Tudor Gentry' in Daniel Williams (ed.), *Early Tudor England: Proceedings of the 1987 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 22.
[23] Fleming, 'Household Servants', p. 28.
[24] SA: LB/5/3/1.

anyone who occupied a role within the household, and it is only occasionally that an individual has a more specific role described in the riding books, and even this is only ever in the households of princes or that of Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham.[25] As a result, the exact status of each household member is, for the most part, obscured. High-born sons who were part of Prince Arthur's household, such as Anthony Willoughby and John Harley, were described as servants in the Palmers' records.[26] While some extant documents from noble and gentry households can complement the guild records, allowing us to identify more precisely some individuals' positions within a household, the generic and frequent employment of the term *serviens* means that we are unable to construct a more accurate picture of the type of individual joining from every household.[27] Why there was a shift in use of terminology by the Palmers at the end of the fifteenth century is unclear; 'servant' was the generic term for all in service.[28] One explanation might be that perhaps it was a result of the guild's growing membership in the late fifteenth century, and was introduced as a measure for efficiency for the clerk's recording new members.

As will be discussed shortly, most household servants would have been unmarried. There are several cases of individuals in the Palmers' membership records being described as 'singlewoman' or 'singleman'.[29] That no one in the guild documents is described as both 'servant' and 'single' suggests that a descriptor was assigned based on what was most prevalent in the minds of both individual and guild official at that moment of joining. The common usage of the term *serviens* means that it is unlikely there was any thought given to the description by the Palmers other

[25] The only consistent exception to this is the position of cook or clerk of the kitchen, which appears with regularity. Otherwise, other offices are rarely commented on. For example, only one example of a receiver is found: Thomas Seppenham (of the Duke of Buckingham's household) in the Palmers' register of 1507-9. SA: LB/5/1/4, f. 2.
[26] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 148v; LB/5/3/2, f. 84r.
[27] There is certainly the possibility to search each individual's background and it might prove fruitful, although with over 17,000 members, it would be a monumental task. For example, Roger Ledsam of Chester is described in the guild records as a servant of the abbot of Chester, yet other sources reveal him to also be a shearman as well as a servant. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 7v; R.V.H. Burne, *The Monks of Chester* (London, 1962), p. 147.
[28] Goldberg, 'What is a servant?', in Anne Curry and Elizabeth Matthews (eds.), *Concepts and Practices of Service in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 6.
[29] 'Singlewoman' as a term became widely used in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. The term was largely applied to those that never married although it was not restricted to that and could encompass widow. Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: The Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 126-7, 136. For an example, see SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 67v.

than the practicality of locating them within a certain household for future payments and guild activities. It was enough to know to whom they were subordinate and therefore how to find them. Where individual roles within the household are specified, it is within great households (such as that of Edward IV, discussed above), where their intensely hierarchical and formal nature may have resulted in a need to be specific.

While the linguistic obscurity of *serviens* hides the different roles of servants, it simultaneously also conceals their status and income – the latter is an especially important consideration when discussing a system based primarily upon financial obligation. The accessible nature of the Palmers' system of incremental payments was a means to provide those unable to afford standard guild fees with entry to a guild nonetheless. But the payment of household members was not straightforward. Usually, the recompense due for service came, at least in part, in the form of food, lodging and clothing – their immediate needs. A small cash wage was usually only presented quarterly or annually.[30] One study found that rural servants, considering that necessities were covered by the employer, were well-paid by contemporary standards. The average annual wage calculated for 1495 for those in service was £1 5*s*. (male) or 14*s*. (female).[31] It may be tempting to consider that all individuals listed as servants were people of little means, but the overarching nature of this term must be understood alongside servant wages of the period. It is likely that there were considerable wage differentiations between various ranks of servants.[32] Gentlemen servants would have a private income to support extra-household activities as well as some form of income from their position. There was certainly a diversity among household members and within the ranks of the guild membership.

Another practical issue with the records is the further obscurity of the roles played by both husband and wife enrolled in the Palmers. When a male servant joined the Palmers with his wife,

[30] Jane Whittle, 'Servants in rural England c. 1450-1650: hired work as a means of accumulating wealth and skills before marriage' in Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson (eds.), *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400-1900* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 90.
[31] Whittle, 'Servants in rural England', pp. 95, 103.
[32] Fleming, 'Household Servants', p. 24.

the stewards simply recorded *serviens* (singular), omitting any description other than *uxor* for the wife, making it unclear whether or not she was also a servant. Although unusual and fraught with potential tensions surrounding a wife's simultaneous obedience to both master and husband, there is evidence from the fifteenth century that family groups indeed worked together. Through an examination of poll tax evidence, Goldberg has suggested that, while it is impossible to see explicitly, such a conclusion is implied by the very fact that there was no additional occupational description of wives.[33] For example, John Howard at Stoke-by-Nayland employed three members of the same family (John and Margery Alpha and a daughter) in 1467.[34] This pattern can also be found in York, as William Frost employed a married couple along with seven other servants.[35] When thinking about guild membership of servants, it may have been that couples who joined the Palmers were servants in the same household, however the short-form used by the administrators of the guild creates an opaque picture. The social position of the wife is, therefore, unknown. It is entirely possible that Joan, wife (*uxor*) of William Torris, a servant of Edward Belknap, worked with her husband within Belknap's household (Fig. 9 for William and Joan's entry).[36] The absence of separate occupational descriptors for couples in the guild records may follow the pattern detected by Goldberg; that is to say, wives were most likely working in one form or another, perhaps in the same household. Alternatively, it may be representative that the only public status that wives enjoyed was in relation to their husbands; and it was this relationship that defined them. While the unclear nature of the records hinders the reconstruction of a complete picture of servants, the occasions when a husband and wife join together are in the minority and do not obscure the reality of household membership of guilds in late medieval England.

[33] P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Households and the Organization of Labour in Late Medieval Towns: Some English Evidence' in Myriam Carlier and Tom Soens (eds.), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities: Italy and North-western Europe Compared* (Proceedings of the International Conference Ghent, 21-22 January 2009), p. 68.
[34] C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, 1999), p. 36; Fleming, 'Household Servants', p. 23.
[35] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 130.
[36] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 10v.

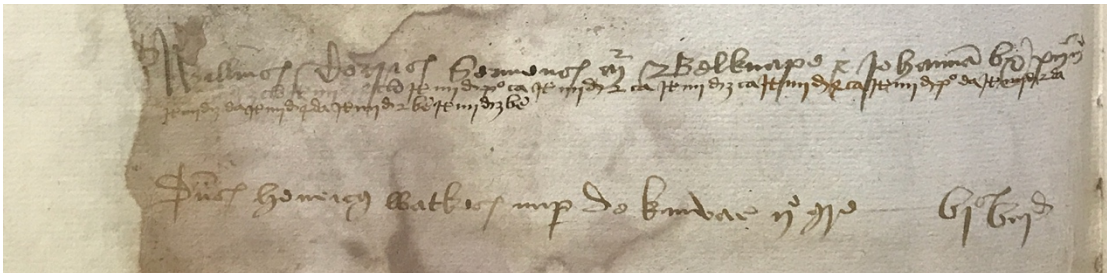

Fig. 9: William Torris' entry in the riding books, with his wife Joan (Johanna). SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 10v.

The entry of a household into the Palmers could take many forms, which means that occasionally they are not immediately apparent in the records – this applies to both the language used (for example, in obscuring the role of married couples) and the order in which names were recorded by the stewards. Sometimes this is not an issue: when members of the same household joined up together at the same time, as Elisabeth Corbet's household did in 1515/6, the association is clear.[37] But, alternatively, the household could enrol in a steady (or haphazard) stream of masters and servants over a series of years. John Hadden of Coventry provides an insightful example. Hadden began his association with the Palmers not through his own enrolment, but through that of his son in 1502/3.[38] That same year, one of Hadden's servants, John Meredith, became a member.[39] Hadden himself joined in 1505/6, paying his admission fee in one lump sum.[40] His servant Richard Phelipp, and Phelipp's wife, Margery, committed their names to the guild in the same year. The final servant of Hadden's household was William Veyll, who joined the guild in the year following his master and fellow servants.[41] Somewhat surprisingly, individuals who signed up in the same year from the same household – at least in this example – do not appear concurrently or even immediately following. For example, even though Hadden's son and John Meredith enrolled in the same year, Meredith's name appears on the following folio. Likewise, Richard and Margery Phelipp's names do not follow their master's; rather they are found two folios after his entry. This is, admittedly, unusual, as often members of the same household appear sequentially,

[37] SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 4r.
[38] SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 14v.
[39] SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 15r.
[40] It is unclear whether the initiative for membership lay with the servant or the master's son. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r.
[41] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r.

if they signed up in the same year.[42] The grouping of household members together was presumably simply a reflection of the order in which individuals joined up together, which suggests that the Hadden household all joined separately.

Furthermore, it was possible for members of the household to join without their masters at all. The sporadic survival of the membership lists means that cases where masters joined before their servants are often obscured. For example, Richard Lee of Quorndon, Leicestershire (now simply Quorn), left no trace of joining the Palmers but his son, Robert, joined in 1485-9 along with two of Richard's servants.[43] All three individuals completed payments and were enrolled on the formal registers of the guild. It is entirely possible, and indeed likely, that Richard was a member but joined before the rest of his household at a time for which we do not have extant records. Similarly, four servants from the same Coventry household of an elusive individual known only in the guild riding books as 'Master Symondes' joined the Palmers in 1504/5 and 1506/7.[44] A fellow Coventry individual, 'Master' Thomas Banbrocke, cannot be found in the Palmers' documents, yet three of his female servants joined in 1504/5, 1506/7 and 1507/8.[45] While this omission may be a result of gaps in the extant documentary record, we should acknowledge the complexity of identifying relationships within the sources. The use of 'household' throughout this chapter refers to any cases where multiple members of the same household joined the guild, although in most cases the master of the household and his servants did both enrol.

The information provided in the guild records can be extremely limiting and leave holes in our understanding. In some instances, it can be difficult to reconstruct whether members of the Palmers were indeed members of a particular household. For example, three servants of Thomas Smyth of Bristol joined the Palmers in 1501/2.[46] Could their master be the same Thomas Smyth

[42] For example, Sir Griffith's household and Edward Stafford's household.
[43] SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 6.
[44] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 37v, LB/5/3/7, f. 19r.
[45] SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 18v, LB/5/3/7, f. 29r, LB/5/3/9, f. 13v. Banbrocke's will is not in TNA, nor does he appear in the Coventry Leet Book.
[46] SA: LB/5/3/3, ff. 50v, 51r.

who joined the Palmers two years later, with his wife Margaret, who resided in the parish of St. Nicholas, Bristol?[47] It is possible that his servants joined and their membership influenced Smyth's later decision, but there is no way to know for certain whether or not this was indeed the same individual associated with the three servants.

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to issues with the overall format of the riding books when deciphering household membership from the accounts. The stewards' riding books were arranged geographically, with a location at the top of each page. As a practical tool, this helped future stewards identify individuals within the books based on their location. Almost exclusively, households would be found under a locational heading, but there are two exceptions to this rule. First, there were individuals recorded under the heading *Extranei* (foreigners, strangers), who came from various parts of the country, although mainly areas in the south, such as Sussex and Kent. Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham, Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, and George Grey, earl of Kent, can be found with their households under this heading.[48] This identification was not exclusive to households, however, as the enrolment of individual men and women unconnected with specific households also appears on those folios. The term *Extranei* denoted those members whose primary residence was not part of the steward's regular collection route. In contrast, the second heading was strictly related to households, occupying the space of a locational header: the 'Prince's Household'. The importance the guild placed upon these individuals in relation to their service and household is clear; it lay in their position within the royal court of Prince Arthur or Prince Henry. This reinforces the practical nature of the guild records, for, at this time, the prince's court moved between its Ludlow and Tickenhill (Shropshire) residences. Using such a heading gave stewards a certain flexibility and signposted the guild's acute awareness of the influence and peripatetic nature of the prince's household. Perhaps the same can be said for the households recorded under the *Extranei* heading. These were the large, itinerant households of noble families,

[47] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 55r. His parish is described in the guild records.
[48] This is found for multiple years. For the entries mentioned, see: SA: LB/5/3/3, ff. 35r, 35v; LB/5/8, ff. 6r-7r.

whose movement between, for example, the satellite royal court at Ludlow and London, or perhaps their country seats, may have precluded any precise geographical description.

It should be clear, therefore, that there are three main issues with which we are faced when attempting to analyse the membership of households in the Palmers' Guild: gaps in the source base, the idiosyncrasies of the documents and the people who wrote them, and the language used. On occasion, we are not able to reconstruct households, even if we are aware of the shadow of their presence in the guild – either because the records do not survive, or because only a proportion of the household enrolled. Sometimes the entry of households does not follow a logical order, and we are therefore required to search more intensely to find them. The same is also true of the location headings used by the stewards and the ways in which people are identified. It is important not to impose our modern preconceptions upon what is a highly unique source that was created and used in a specific temporality. If, however, these issues are borne in mind, then it is possible to draw meaningful conclusions about the nature of household membership – this will be the case throughout the ensuing discussion.

Service life-cycle and guild membership

The existence of servants – or *servientes* – in guild records is perhaps the most visible indicator of household membership. It suggests the co-residence of multiple individuals based upon service. But this conclusion in itself raises issues and questions above and beyond the consideration of semantics outlined above. Various pressures were incumbent upon servants: their relationship with their master; their financial situation; and their stage in the 'life-cycle' – and all of these undoubtedly affected their relationship with the Palmers' Guild. This section will explore these themes in more detail, charting what was undoubtedly the general life course for many of this demographic of Palmers.

The traditional life-cycle for servants after leaving the natal family is characterised as follows: first service, then marriage, and finally establishing their own household and potentially

employing servants in return. The cyclical nature emphasises the fact that servants are not part of a 'class' but rather a group distinguishable by their position at a certain stage in their life.[49] This stage was transient and may speak to the lack of completed payments of the guild. This being said, a distinction can be made between these transient servants and what may be termed 'career servants'. There is only a single example of the latter, but it is worth highlighting as there may have been more, should the records have survived. An individual, whose name is lost due to a damaged document, was assigned the descriptors *serviens* and *fauconer* (i.e. falconer) with the bishop of London.[50] Such individuals were career servants – those who worked for a lifetime in a certain form of service and were called servant as they received a yearly wage from an employer.[51] Unlike the transient employment of servants on monthly or yearly contracts, the bishop's falconer would have been a more permanent fixture of the household.

For most, service was the first stage in the life-cycle outside of the natal household. This observation conjures images of inexperience and a lack of independent financial capital. Here the membership habits of two groups that fit this sub-section of the service demographic are under consideration: apprentices and unmarried young women. Apprenticeship was a position essentially unique to merchant and artisan households and was absent from those of the gentry and nobility. Only a handful of servants had a second descriptor included in their guild entry. For three of the individuals, the pattern was an occupation followed by *serviens*. For example, Thomas White was a 'grocer *serviens*' of Master Marler of Coventry, Edward Jannes, 'merchant *serviens*' to Mistress Penk of Bristol and Richard Wilkins, 'miller *serviens*' to Thomas Fowkner of Westbury.[52] *Serviens* was used as a replacement for 'apprentice' in these examples. It was a more frequent occurrence for an apprentice to be described as a servant without an occupational descriptor, like Robert

[49] P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire, c. 1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), p. 158.
[50] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 127v.
[51] Examples found in other literature include shepherds, millers and gardeners. Whittle, 'Rural servants in England', p. 89.
[52] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 56v.

Packington's enrolment while apprenticed to the mercer Symond Ryse of London.[53] Poll tax returns and legal records often assign individuals the descriptor 'servant' even if they are apprentices – in fact, the term apprentice rarely appears outside of craft guild ordinances, borough records and wills – for the concern was the identification of a relationship between an individual and an employer.[54] By exploring external evidence, however, it is possible to suggest a master/apprentice relationship in cases where it is not immediately obvious from the guild's record-keeping. For example, Peter Abirdyng, servant of Hugh Elyot, merchant of Bristol, joined the Palmers in 1499/1500. The guild received one hoggeshead of wine in payment for his fee, and the stewards noted that his name was to be written into the guild register, indicating that the membership debt had been fulfilled.[55] His master's wife, Alicia, joined the guild in the same year and also paid one hoggeshead of wine for her membership fee.[56] Abirdyng's status as a particular type of servant was, like most of the servants in the guild registers, left unexplained, but the payments in kind might suggest that he was an apprentice to a wine merchant.[57] Bristol's wine trade in the 1490s was booming (although it would decline rapidly in the first decade of the sixteenth century), and apprentices specific to the trade must have been common.[58] Hugh Elyot was involved in the North Atlantic trade and exploration expeditions, providing and fitting ships for multiple voyages in the first decade of the sixteenth century.[59] A litigation case in the Court of Chancery from 1515 details Hugh's involvement in the wine trade.[60] Similarly, one John, servant to J. Stokes of London paid his membership fine in 1472/3 with one hoggeshead of wine worth

[53] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 81r, LB/5/1/4, m. 2; 'Records of London's Livery Companies Online: Apprentices and Freeman, 1400-1900', https://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEB2198.
[54] Goldberg, 'What was a servant?', p. 4.
[55] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
[56] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
[57] Unfortunately, Abirdyng does not appear in Carus-Wilson's edition of the customs' accounts or the Red Book of Bristol. E.M. Carus-Wilson, *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Late Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1937); E.W.W. Veale, *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, Parts 1 & 2 (Bristol, 1931; 1933).
[58] David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 12, 25, 37.
[59] James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: the Bristol elite, Urban Community and the Crown, c. 1471 – c.1553' (PhD thesis, University of Western England, 2006) p. 41; Annabel Peacock, 'The Men of Bristol and the Atlantic Discovery Voyages of the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', (M.A. thesis, University of Bristol, 2007), Ch. 5.
[60] TNA: C1/406/5.

22*s.* 4*d.*[61] Again, Stokes' trade may have been wine, with John as his apprentice, but a lack of sources prevents any concrete conclusions. There was a London grocer, operating in the 1470s or 1480s,[62] named John Stokes who was involved in a Chancery suit against Paul de Negro, a Genoese merchant.[63] De Negro's petition refers to a shipment he made in his carrack of 'C buttes of Wyne called wyne grek of the propre godes of John Stokes of London Grocer'. This is suggestive, although not certain.

While it is not always possible to fill in the blanks with such evidence, it seems reasonable to suggest that payments in kind *could* indicate, in the case of the membership of young (largely male) servants, that they were apprenticed to their master. So, for example, John Hoggetes of Claverley (Shropshire), servant *cum* Thomas Beturton, first joined the Palmers in 1499/1500 and completed his payments after 10 years.[64] Six of his payments were made in brass with the equivalent value of coin noted in the record (for example, one ounce of brass = 6*d.*). His master Beturton is not found in the extant records, so it is not possible to know if John's payments of brass were related to Thomas' trade or position in society. While mixed payments were common, brass was overwhelmingly the most popular form of payment-in-kind by members of the guild.[65] It may simply be that Hoggetes' brass payments were part and parcel of a larger trend. More likely, however, is that Hoggetes completed his payments in brass over a number of years. As will be discussed below, most servants only served with a particular household for a short period of time; apprenticeship, on the other hand, was a legal commitment over many years, often more than a decade. Association with a master for a prolonged period of time, coupled with payments in kind, seem to point towards the existence of apprentices in the Palmers' membership. Regardless of either Beturton's or Stokes' trades, both examples serve as a useful reminder that apprentices were

[61] The damaged nature of this document has resulted in the obscuration of John's surname. SA: LB/5/3/37, 3r.
[62] It is often difficult to date Chancery bills with certainty, as indicators of dates generally come from the form in which the chancellor is addressed. This particular example is addressed to the bishop of Lincoln as chancellor, which could either to the chancellorship of Thomas Rotherham (1475-83) or of John Russell (1483-5).
[63] TNA: C1/64/330.
[64] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 142v.
[65] See Introduction, p. 23, n. 67.

a common part of a merchant household and that the use of the term servant may have been used to describe those individuals. The absence of the term apprentice in the guild records does not equate a lack of presence.

The relationship between the master and apprentice was an important one in the flow of membership. The influence of masters upon younger members of the artisan and mercantile communities is well-illustrated by examples from Coventry. William Rowley, mayor of Coventry in 1492 (and again briefly in 1496 due to the ill-timed death of the incumbent, John Dove), became a Palmer in 1499/1500.[66] In his professional life he was a draper and, naturally, took on apprentices to train, and it appears his influence stretched beyond the shop. Two of his apprentices, William Ruddying and Thomas Waren, went on to assume a role in civic governance.[67] While apprenticed to Rowley, these two young men also became Palmers, both six years after their master.[68] They were evidently learning from their professional master and their 'elder' in civic politics. There may have been an awareness among these up-and-coming young members of the mercantile elite that not only were they expected to join their local leading fraternities – Corpus Christi first and then Holy Trinity, as discussed in Chapter Two – but that they also needed to join a fraternity outside of Coventry: the Palmers. The joining of a religious guild in this way may well have been an instance of what is known as 'ordinary theology' – a view developed by Jeff Astley which argues that Christian belief and actions are shaped throughout the experiences of life, new ideas and environments encountered by an individual.[69] For the medieval period, a study of fifteenth-century Norfolk wills, conducted by Louisa Foroughi, argues that an individual's pious outlook was largely determined by shared experiences of religion, often influenced by upbringing, which dictated the elements of pious practice that formed part of their religious experience – i.e. devotions to

[66] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 135r.
[67] Waren held numerous offices before becoming mayor in 1519. Ruddying was a member of the leet jury: *Coventry Leet Book*, Vol. 2, pp. 665, 736.
[68] SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 15r, 16r.
[69] Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (New York, 2002).

particular saints or attachments to particular guilds.[70] Membership of the Palmers was one expression of 'ordinary theology' in action, wherein members of the household were expected to follow the example of the head of the household. The influence of a master in impressing their notions of the religious and social importance of guild membership onto apprentices, moreover, permeated further, manifesting itself in every relationship of the household.

The employment of servants necessitated a certain level of wealth, and prosperous urban centres were one place where such wealth existed. The mercantile classes had a propensity to maintain servants as much as the gentry and nobility,[71] although it is hard to determine whether they were joining with all of their servants, or just a select few, for household accounts rarely survive with that information. We might take Coventry as a typical example, where a large number of merchant and artisan households maintained servants. Bailey Lane, situated in the heart of Coventry, with St Mary's Hall on the south side and St Michael's church on the north, was particularly known for its prosperity, and many merchants, goldsmiths and other affluent traders lived there. The 1377 poll tax returns for Bailey Lane showed that over eighty-three per cent of households kept servants within their household, with a mean number of almost three servants per household – slightly above Coventry's average as a whole.[72] By 1523, the proportion of Bailey Lane households with servants had dropped to sixty-seven per cent, no doubt mirroring the city's unstable economic environment, although this was still a substantial majority.[73] Coventry was a significant contributor towards membership of the Palmers – certainly in individual membership, but also in household membership.[74] These merchant households were frequently enrolled, with

[70] Louisa Foroughi, "To sey or Thinke Otherwise': Ordinary Theology and Facing Death in Late Medieval Norfolk' *Religions* 9, 67 (2018), pp. 1-20, esp. pp 3-4.
[71] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 195.
[72] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 160; other major centres displayed similar trends of merchant households as substantial employers: merchants accounted for over fifty per cent of the employment of servants in York in 1377: Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 130. The mean number of servants in Coventry was between 2.45 and 2.7: Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 205.
[73] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, pp. 161-3, 311-15.
[74] The number of new Palmers varied year to year. For example, in 1504/5, forty-nine new Palmers joined from Coventry and sixty-one in 1507/8. Coventry was consistently in the top five towns that contributed to new membership.

some specifically from Bailey Lane itself. John Devell, a mercer of Bailey Lane, joined the Palmers in 1499/1500.[75] Three years later his wife Elizabeth joined, as did one of their servants, Margery Gellett.[76] Three more of Devell's servants joined the Palmers in 1505/6 and 1507/8.[77] Although it is impossible to say whether or not the tenure of Devell's servants overlapped, this suggests that his household was among the average size for Coventry. None of the servants paid for more than one year so it is unclear from the records if they continued in Devell's service, or if new servants became Palmers as they joined the household.

Further examples of mercantile household membership can be multiplied. William Rowley, one-time mayor of Coventry, joined the Palmers with his wife Alice in 1499/1500.[78] Although no servants survive in the extant membership records, his daughter-in-law and son employed three individuals who became Palmers in 1507/8.[79] While these individuals were not co-resident with William Rowley and Alice, they were co-resident with their son, Thomas Rowley and his wife Joan. Joan joined in the same year as the servants and there is no surviving entry for Thomas.[80] Household membership was prevalent among the Coventry mercantile classes, but it was not characteristic only of Coventry. Other centres across the Midlands display similar patterns. John Lenche of Birmingham's household joined over two years in the early sixteenth century. While Lenche himself did not join the Palmers (at least nothing remains in the extant records), his wife Agnes began payments for membership in 1505/6 and completed payments over the following three years.[81] The following year, 1506/7, three female servants of John Lenche, began payments

[75] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 135r.
[76] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 28r.
[77] SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 29r., 29v., LB/5/3/9, f. 15v.
[78] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 135r; Shannon McSheffrey and Norman Tanner (eds.), *Lollards of Coventry, 1486-1522* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 28. Alice Rowley was accused of being a Lollard and put on trial in 1511. The evidence of guild membership might challenge our understandings of accusations of Lollardy. The frequency of guild membership among accused Lollards will be the focus of a future project.
[79] SA: LB/5/3/9, ff. 15r, 15v, 16r.
[80] SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 15r.
[81] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 7, f. 27r. Lenche's will is not in the National Archives.

for their membership of the Palmers, though none of them completed payments – or even made a second payment, for that matter.[82]

Both female and male servants were among the guild brethren, yet only 132 of the 530 servants in the Palmers were female, placing them firmly in the gendered minority of their occupational group represented in the guild.[83] This number is perhaps surprising, given that Goldberg found that women outnumbered men in towns and constituted a relatively high proportion of servants, but it may be explained by the gentry and noble tendency to employ men over women.[84] The employers of these female servants, however, align with wider occupational trends – female servants were more common among employers involved with textile and mercantile trades.[85] The under-representation of female servants within guild membership can be explained by the fact that relatively few female servants remained in service beyond their mid-twenties, after which came marriage.[86] The single status of female servants means that there was an added reason to join a religious guild, as guilds often provided dowries. So-called 'maidens' guilds' existed primarily for the purpose of providing comfort and support for young, unmarried women, particularly servants.[87] Yet a young female servant did not *have* to join a maidens' guild in order to receive such support. The Palmers' ordinances, as recorded in the 1389 guild returns, likewise pledged support to their young female members:

> If any good girl of the gild, of marriageable age, cannot have the means found by her father, either to go into a religious house or marry, whichever she wishes to do; friendly and right help shall be given her, out of our means and our common chest, towards enabling her to do whichever of the two she wishes.[88]

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[82] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 36r.
[83] This number has been calculated using the total number of entries, not the total number of individuals (husbands and wives are often within one entry). This produces a more accurate reflection because, as discussed in the main text, it is unclear whether the women described in the entries are also servants. 530 servants is equivalent to just over four per cent of the total membership.
[84] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 165. Most servants in noble and gentry households were male: Fleming, *Family and Household*, p. 75.
[85] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, pp. 166, 187.
[86] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, pp. 172, 185.
[87] Katherine L. French, 'Maidens' Lights and Wives' Stores: Women's Parish Guilds in Late Medieval England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 399-425, esp. p. 411; Katherine L. French, "To free them from their binding': Women in the Late Medieval English Parish', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Winter, 1997), p. 409.
[88] Joshua Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, Early English Text Society, original ser., no. 40 (1870; reprint, London, 1963), p. 193.

If most female servants were unmarried, as has generally been concluded, then the Palmers might seem especially attractive to females in service.[89] While the exact wages given to servants is debated, it is likely that the degree to which a servant might save for marriage was limited – especially for female servants who were paid significantly less than their male counterparts.[90] The assistance with a dowry would certainly have been attractive to some female servants; if not the reason for their enrolment, it may have been an attractive motivation to continue contributing to their membership fee once they had left the employment of the master who had encouraged them to become a Palmer.[91] For the nineteen female servants from Coventry, the two major guilds there (Corpus Christi and Holy Trinity) did not have provisions for a dowry.[92] This was not particularly unusual – dowry provisions are not common in the guild ordinance returns of 1389, but this has not prevented the assumption that they were nevertheless a common aspect of guild charity.[93] In fact, there are only two known examples: the Palmers and a guild in Berwick-upon-Tweed.[94] The guild of St Mary's, Kingston-upon-Hull, made provisions for a loan of 10*s.* to impoverished unmarried women but it is not explicit that this was to be used for dowry provisions.[95] The minimal number of guilds with such provisions suggests that the Palmers might have been even more attractive to single, young women – a brief that most of the female servants enrolled in the guild fit.

It is important to stress that, for the majority of these individuals, service was simply one stage in an individual's life in late medieval England, although there might also have been several gradations within this stage. Movement and changes in employment can be witnessed in the

[89] Maddern has contested this assumption: Maddern, 'In myn own house', pp. 45-60.
[90] Whittle and Goldberg offer different interpretations of how much the average late medieval servant was paid and subsequently whether service allowed savings for marriage. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, pp. 185-6, Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England', pp. 95-103.
[91] While it is difficult to discern how much 'choice' a servant had in their enrolment in the guild, continued payments beyond a year (the usual length of a contract) indicates a more personal inclination towards membership.
[92] The Palmers' ordinances outline that they will provide a dowry for her when her father is unable. Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p. 194; pp. 215-19, 234 for the ordinances of the Holy Cross and Trinity guilds of Coventry respectively.
[93] Michelle M. Saucer, *Gender in Medieval Culture* (London, 2015), p. 139 iterates that dowries were a provision provided by medieval guilds. The Palmers are used as an example of guild provisions for single women in Beattie, *Medieval Single Women*, p. 113.
[94] Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp. 194, 340.
[95] Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p. 156.

Palmers' records, and so it repays to consider how these factored into guild membership. Servants were usually engaged in service for months or perhaps up to a year at a time.[96] Hiring fairs, taking place around certain feast days according to local customs, provided opportunities for servants to find employment.[97] Movement from one household to another was certainly beneficial for servants, allowing them to move up the hierarchy by taking on new responsibilities.[98] The movement of servants on a potentially regular basis could explain the tendency for uncompleted membership fees. Indeed, there was certainly a large proportion of servants who only contributed one payment.[99] This trend is suggestive of two things. First, and most practically, it is likely that these individuals moved on to service in a different household, acting in accordance to the prevalence of single-year service contracts. More pertinently, however, for the understanding of household guild membership, it is also indicative of the employer's influence among their dependants. A single payment might suggest that dedication to the Palmers was fleeting and that it was perhaps not a pressing concern for the new employer. This observation firmly places the initial enrolment of servants, for the most part, in the hands of their masters. The reasons for this enthusiasm on the part of the master – namely status and reputation – will be explored in more detail below.

This being said, the potential agency of servants is not to be forgotten or overlooked, but, due to the nature of surviving source material, it can be viewed only through financial commitment towards the guild. We are therefore not privy to personal opinions or attitudes, and can only discern commitment at the most basic level if membership payments are continued over time. If employment in a household was terminated, there was nothing stopping a servant from continuing his or her payments. Thomas Selby, servant of Thomas Chapman of Bristol, entered the Palmers

[96] Servants became more of a transient group by the fifteenth century: Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 37; Whittle, 'Servants in rural England', p. 89; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 176.
[97] Anywhere north of the Trent and in Lincolnshire, the fairs usually took place around Martinmas (Nov 11) and elsewhere in the country around Michaelmas (Sept 29): Goldberg, 'What is a servant?', p. 11.
[98] Goldberg, 'What is a servant?', p. 15.
[99] The number of servants who only made one payment cannot be said with any certainty. The riding books, especially for the late fifteenth century, have suffered damages that often obscure vital pieces of information, including a number of payments by individuals.

in 1505/6.[100] A later marginal inscription notes 'Coventry', suggesting either that Chapman and Selby moved or that there was a change in Selby's household service. There was certainly a change in residency, but the guild was able to seek out Selby to complete his payments. It is impossible to identify when the stewards noted Selby's move to Coventry, but it is safe to assume that it was during the ten-year period he took to complete paying his 6*s.* 8*d.* fine. The riding books had an overt practical purpose and were used to locate and record individuals with their respective payments. There would be no need to note that he was in Coventry if he had already finished payments, for his name would have been written in the registers of admission. As such, Selby's continued payments illustrate not only a continued level of commitment – a decade of annual 8*d.* payments was more fiscal dedication than many Palmers showed – but a desire to remain part of the guild even when he had left the original location where he had joined. Either his former master, Thomas Chapman, informed the guild of his whereabouts, or Selby himself sought the guild officers out upon his move to Coventry. But this is not the only example of such a phenomenon. Agnes Downe, a servant of Roger Amore, initially joined the Palmers in Derby but later moved to London, where she continued payment.[101] William Coke, a servant of William Moklow of Wigmore, appears to have moved to Gloucester at some point after his initial enrolment in the Palmers in 1498/9.[102] Again, like Selby, Coke's move to Gloucester did not affect his dedication to the guild: he finished paying his 6*s.* 8*d.* fee in 1507/8. What is unclear about these servants and their subsequent moves is whether the individuals themselves were moving to another city – to join another household or to start their own – or whether the master's household was moving. In all three instances, the masters' names do not appear in the surviving guild records, therefore leaving us none the wiser as to whether the whole household also changed location.

Servants had access to new jobs outside of hiring fairs, and these could be pursued through a number of different routes. The most well-documented opportunity was through kin employed

[100] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 53r.
[101] SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 18r.
[102] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 178r.

in a different household.[103] One route to service within the household was through kinship with the head of a household. Kinship connections between servants and employers highlight the existence of the emotional bonds possible between household members, despite the power-dynamic of a relationship that necessitated one party holding power over the other. Provisions might be made for the employment of poor family members, should they be willing to work as servants within the household.[104] It has been suggested, albeit with strong caution, that servants possessing the same surname as their employer were related and that this can be used justifiably in the absence of alternative sources.[105] Due to limited sources of information on many members of the Palmers' Guild, we can use this method to suggest that the involvement of kin servants was present in guild membership. For example, Joan Nevell, servant of Richard Nevell of Aconbury, Herefordshire, joined in 1515/6.[106] Richard Nevell of Herefordshire, who joined the Palmers in 1503/4, may have been her master, although not enough evidence can be gathered to say this with any confidence.[107] Another servant within the Palmers, John Milward, similarly possessed the same surname as his employer, Alice Milward of Ludlow.[108]

Based on the names of individuals within the household of Margery Adene of Hereford, it might be that Katherine and Elizabeth Higgons found employment this way. Katherine joined the Palmers in 1503/4 and, two years later, so did Elizabeth, while they were both in the service of Margery.[109] If their enrolment dates are anything to go by, it may have been that Katherine was employed first and suggested the service of her kin Elizabeth. Such connections may have worked to influence guild membership too. Like the previous examples of continued fiscal investment in guild membership, Katherine paid her membership fee in sixteen annual instalments ranging from 4*d.* to 8*d.* Was it possible that Katherine was in service to Margery for those sixteen years? There

[103] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 177; Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 59.
[104] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 152.
[105] Goldberg, *Work, Women and Life-cycle*, p. 177.
[106] SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 32v.
[107] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 8r.
[108] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 149r.
[109] SA: LB/5/3/5, 50r. For Elizabeth's entry, see LB/5/3/7, 46r.

was no correction or change in her initial entry in the riding books. Longer periods of service in the same household, ranging from two to seven years, have been found to occur in Yorkshire, although sixteen years exceeds even this significantly.[110]

The next stage in the 'life-cycle' was the setting up of one's own house which, financial circumstances permitting, did not mean that membership payments could not be fulfilled. The life-cycle of servanthood has largely been discussed with the view that most individuals were engaged in service prior to marriage.[111] 'Life-cycle service' encompassed the period of time from adolescence until marriage – in essence, the time when most people did not possess their own household. Few, if any, of the lower servants of the household would have married while in service, and when they left service they would have hoped to marry, having accumulated wealth and skills as they came of age in service.[112] Katherine's entry does not note a change in her household location (as in with a husband). It may have been that this information was recorded only when it was necessary for the stewards of the guild to be able to locate the individual. The movement of household individuals from a serving position to an attachment of a husband can be viewed within the Palmers' records only on rare occasions. Isabella Attouneleff, servant of Thomas Banbrocke of Coventry, joined the Palmers in 1506/7. A scribble in the margin informs the steward that she could now be located with her husband, who joined under Richard Braggot's stewardship.[113] Annyng Maywnring, servant of Thomas Pontesbury of Battlefield, Shropshire, made a single payment of 4*d.* before a note was written beside her name, stating that she could be found with her husband, Richard Twisse, in the riding book from the fourth year of Henry Capper's stewardship.[114]

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110 Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 176.
111 Fleming, *Family and Household*, pp. 72-76; Whittle, 'Servants in rural England', pp. 89-110; Shannon McSheffrey (ed.), *Love and Marriage in Late Medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995); Sarah Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour: The Regulation of Labour in Medieval English Towns' in James Bothwell, P.J.P. Goldberg and W.M. Ormrod (eds.), *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 133-53. Philippa Maddern has challenged this historiographical tendency and concludes that some late medieval English households included married members who were in service: Maddern, 'In myn own house', pp. 45-60.
112 Fleming, 'Household servants', p. 25; Whittle, 'Servants in rural England', p. 89.
113 SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r.
114 SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 14v.

The transition of a servant from one 'phase' to another in their life-cycle did not have to result in the termination of their involvement of the guild. It is possible that the sixteen-year stint of payments indicates that Katherine Higgons continued to pay despite moving on from her role in Margery Adene's household – this is suggested if we assume that lifetime servants were generally given more specific descriptors in the membership records, as discussed earlier.[115] However, the overwhelming majority of uncompleted membership fees on behalf of servants suggests that most did not fulfil their membership obligations after moving to another household, either in service or in marriage, despite having the opportunity to do so through the rigorous yet flexible administration of the Palmers. We can, therefore, detect the guiding hand of employers in regards to the guild membership of their household.

The ultimate stage of any life-cycle is, of course, death, and this finality is borne out in some detail in the membership records of the Palmers' Guild. Like much of the preceding and proceeding discussion, an investigation into deceased servants raises questions about the involvement of other parties – notably the master – about what it meant to be a guild member, and about the levels of commitment to the guild. As mentioned, 530 individuals were given the descriptor servant and 104 of them completed the required entrance fee – just over nineteen per cent.[116] Twenty-nine of this group of 104 were deceased when they eventually became full members, begging the question of who paid for their membership fee. 'Jennet ap Owen'[117] of Wiston (near Haverfordwest) initially joined the Palmers in 1503/4.[118] Following standard practice, '6*s.* 8*d.*' was written beside her name, indicating the sum she had to pay. However, the sum was then crossed out and '3*s.* 4*d.*' was written above, which was subsequently paid under Richard Braggot's stewardship in 1505. The change in admission fee and the delayed payment suggest that ap Owen had died after initial enrolment to the guild under Cheyne and Hocke's stewardship in

[115] Whittle, 'Rural servants in England', p. 89.
[116] I have excluded the wives who were listed with male servants as it is unclear whether they were also servants.
[117] This is how the name is entered into the riding book – it is curious because Jennet is a feminine Welsh name, but 'ap' is the masculine form of the patrilineal marker.
[118] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 41v.

1503/4. Ap Owen's master, John Wogan, was himself a Palmer, as were also a number of individuals from his household.[119] It seems reasonable to infer that Wogan completed ap Owen's payments *post-mortem*.

Enrolment after death was not uncommon in the guild; 700 people overall are recorded as deceased, totalling just over four percent of the known brethren of the guild.[120] It appears that there was a determination, on the part of the laity, to ensure deceased servants were placed in the register of admission: only four such examples were not entered. This number equates to ninety per cent of deceased servants within the guild having had their fees completed for them. This trend is certainly striking compared to both the low percentage of living servants who completed payments (nineteen per cent) and the overall membership completion (from eighteen per cent to thirty-three per cent per annum). The nature of some of the records, namely the clerks' receipt books, means that it is not possible to identify if some of the 700 deceased individuals completed payments: these documents recorded single payments and it was only after checking the riding book that a steward would know whether the individual had paid the full amount. Therefore, there is a total of 617 deceased Palmers for whom we can definitely discern whether or not they completed payments and were entered in the registers. Of this group, the full fee was paid for 436 individuals, meaning that 181 deceased members were not entered in the guild registers. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the majority of deceased members did have their fees fully paid (seventy-one per cent), especially when compared to the completion rates overall. But the tendency for deceased servants to have their fees fully paid significantly exceeds even this trend – ninety per cent compared to seventy-one per cent. For deceased servants, then, despite the obvious issue of being unable personally to complete their membership fee, their high rate of admission was oddly in contrast to the membership trends of their living counterparts who were engaged in service *and* the more general enrolment of the dead. Several reasons may be posited for this discrepancy. If

[119] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 15r; LB/5/3/5, ff. 41v and 42r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 28v and 31r; LB/5/3/7, f. 43r.
[120] 700 out of 17,098: 4.09 per cent.

we assume, as has been suggested, that servant involvement in the guild was often done at the instigation of the master (hence the prevalence of single-year payments in line with single-year contracts) then we might infer that it was the master who continued *post-mortem* payments for their servants. Such a suggestion would account for the disproportionately high percentage of deceased servants. This might have been done out of a sense of spiritual obligation. Although the relationship between masters and servants was one based on subordination, this carried with it certain duties: for sustenance, clothing, payment, welfare, and so on. This responsibility could feasibly extend beyond death, when spiritual care was most pressing. Servants were unlikely to afford chantries or annual obits for their souls, and so the corporate spiritual care of the guild seems like an obvious draw, and masters may have considered this within their purview of care. In these instances, the deceased members benefitted only from *pro anima* prayers of the guild priests; the social-minded activities of the guild were, of course, irrelevant to departed brethren. The partial payment system of the Palmers may have allowed involvement in social activities of those brethren in the process of paying their fee but the services of the guild priests were restricted to those that had completed the full fee. It was, therefore, imperative that the fees of the deceased brethren were settled by their master or kin.

One type of servant that has yet to be discussed are those who staffed the domestic chapels that were a mainstay of mercantile and gentry households.[121] Household chapels were looked after by the clergy through a variety of means: stipendiary employment of chaplains, beneficed chaplains, local regular clergy and parish priests were all options for heads of the household.[122] Great households frequently had a group of chaplains plus a choir, like those employed by the duke of Buckingham and Henry Percy.[123] It might be assumed that the prevalence of household

[121] R.G.K.A. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community' in Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middles Ages* (New York, 1987), p. 124; Rawlinson concludes that all gentle and noble households maintained a chapel: Kent Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel c. 1100 – c.1500: an institutional study' (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2008), p. 258.
[122] Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel', p. 263.
[123] Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel', p. 264; Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', p. 127.

chapels would have resulted in a preponderance of chaplains among the scores of other household servants who joined the Palmers, but, surprisingly, this not the case. On the whole, clergy were present in force among the Palmers' membership: 504 names of those belonging to the secular clergy can be found throughout the riding books and admission registers.[124] However, only eleven of these individuals had a master or mistress written alongside their respective entries in the guild registers. Six of those were members of the Council of the Marches: four were listed with Prince Arthur named as their master, one with the Lord President of the Council, and the other with the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry.[125] Other households with chaplains who joined the Palmers include those of the countess of Salisbury, the earl of Kent and Sir John Savage (of Hanley, Worcestershire).[126] These households very much fit the scholarship laid out by Mertes, in which gentle and noble households ensured that daily religious observance was available to the household, thus requiring the employment of a resident chaplain. It is, of course, of no surprise that bishops employed the services of chaplains and an example can be found with the case of Richard Mayhew, Bishop of Hereford, who was a Palmer and so too was his chaplain, John Longlond.[127] Yet that each of the chaplains assigned to a household can be listed here highlights the lack of household chaplains within the Palmers' guild records. If occupations allow us to assign individuals into rough groupings, then we can consider servants (or household members more generally) and the secular clergy as both numerically substantial within the membership of the Palmers, yet there was no crossover between the two within guild membership.

The Influence of Networks I: Insular pressures

As has been discussed, the term servant was multi-faceted and flexible, the meaning of which changed depending upon its context. The proliferation and wide use of *serviens* in guild records

[124] This number consists of those who were given the following titles by the Palmers' scribes: chaplain, rector, vicar, priest, prebendary and guild chaplain.
[125] SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 83v., 84v., 119v., 184v.
[126] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r., LB/5/3/10, f. 42v.
[127] See SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 46v. for Longlond and Mayhew's entries.

highlights that the medieval understanding of servant was centred around mutual obligation, whether contractually or through verbal consent.[128] Service did not necessitate a demeaning status, although the term does imply an unequal relationship and differing status. Service in merchant and gentry households often demanded co-residency and the close proximity between master and servant naturally developed an avenue for influence to run through the relationship either way. We have already briefly touched upon the guiding hand of the master in servants' guild membership – like, for example, in single-year contracts – but it is now time to explore this theme in more detail. What were the internal pressures that made household guild membership attractive to masters, and how far can we see this influence in the enrolment of names in the Palmers' Guild? We might also consider the influence of *other* members of the household – aside from the master – in fostering membership.

The acts of masters and mistresses paying for servants were not a form of financial obligation enforced by the guild, given that there was no penalty for non-payment: it was instead an expression of the bonds formed between the head and servant of a household. Part of the mutual care within this relationship was spiritual. The spiritual care of the household was under the purview of the master or mistress and the payment of guild membership was a very concrete way for masters to fulfil that obligation as well as exert their own extra-parochial preferences.[129] But it was also an opportunity to reflect the pious interests of the master. He or she was, after all, the ultimate authority within this domestic framework. While chapels were a standard forum of religious activity within the gentry and noble household,[130] more personalised forms of spiritual dedication were also prevalent throughout late medieval society. For example, Sir Humphrey Newton of Cheshire was a keen collector of pardons and accumulated half a million years' worth.[131]

[128] Goldberg, 'What was a servant?' p. 2.
[129] Extra-parochial is used here not in the sense of a guild as a competing religious institution to the parish, but as involvement in religious institutions outside of the geographical confines of the parish.
[130] Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel', p. 258; Nicholas Orme, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 6 (1996) pp. 81-2.
[131] Deborah Youngs, *Humphrey Newton: An Early Tudor Gentleman* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 119-121.

This interest was then reflected in the actions of his household, demonstrated by a payment of 1*d.* to a nurse named Kathryn for the pardon of the friary of St. John.[132] If this pardon was intended as a gift to Kathryn, then Newton's sponsorship in this regard – albeit a small sum – demonstrates the influence that an employer could have on the extra-parochial religious activities of those in his employment. The characterisation of this accumulation of pardons as extra-parochial is one that is also true of guild membership, as demonstrated through the enrolment (and sometimes payment on their behalf) of multiple members of a household alongside a master or mistress.

The relationship between a master and servant in late medieval England therefore went beyond a transactional relationship of dues and payment for services rendered. The household was a functioning unit which frequently led to meaningful relationships between masters and servants. Upon the death of a master, normal practice dictated that the service of an individual was not forgotten, nor were household servants left without provision. Care was usually taken to ensure the employment of servants for a period of time (usually up to six months) after the death of the master, and, beyond that, servants were commonly remembered in employer's wills, often in the form of bequests of clothing.[133] In 1519, for example, the Palmer John Hadden of Coventry bequeathed 'to every man servant in my house ablack gowne and xx s. in money'.[134] Female servants were likewise bequeathed a black gown, but only 8*s.* 6*d.* 'in money'.[135] Monetary bequests were also common but not usually substantial,[136] and so Hadden's case is noteworthy. He arguably had a more significant association with the Palmers than many members, with the enrolment of his immediate family and servants, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The bequest of black gowns to Hadden's servants came with obligations of their own, as they were probably expected to

[132] Youngs, *Humphrey Newton*, p. 122, n. 71.
[133] Goldberg, 'What is a servant?' p. 17, Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 182; Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 32-3.
[134] TNA: PROB 11/19/241.
[135] In gentry households, male household servants were twice as likely to received bequests as female servants. The discrepancy between the two cash payments given may be a reflection of this or a reflection of the differences in wages that each gender received: Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 34.
[136] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, p. 182.

participate in his funeral and commemorative services, wearing the black gowns in mourning.[137] The bequest of money, by contrast, was an act of benevolence towards individuals who had been an integral part of his *familia*. William Veyll, his fellow Palmer and servant, was remembered with a more specific bequest:

> Also to william vele that was my servant hys duete he owith me is x li which I forgyve hym.[138]

While Veyll was no longer part of Hadden's household, he was still remembered in Hadden's will. The forgiveness of debt was part of a common discourse of late medieval will-making, but the absolving of a debt of a former servant was an act that underlined the recipient's role as an extension of the *familia* even after they had left.[139] It is this persistent attention to his servants' well-being, on the part of Hadden, that underscores the very nature of his household – one where servants are enveloped within the same sphere as the immediate family – which is also typified in the remarkable enrolment of Hadden himself, his natal family and multiple servants in the Palmers. Hadden's bountiful and numerous bequests to both pious and secular recipients is testament to his wealth, and £10, while a substantial sum, was evidently not a crippling debt for Hadden to forgive. Bequests to servants by their employers shows that the master-servant relationship was not purely exploitative.[140] As Kermode's study of the Yorkshire towns of Beverley, Hull and York demonstrates, some fifteen to twenty-six per cent of wills mention servants receiving small gifts of cash, meaning this trend was common enough.[141] Forgiveness of Veyll's debt by Hadden was, in part, a demonstration of financial care administered by a master (while also undoubtedly a proactive action to ease Hadden's reckoning at the Last Judgment), while the spiritual duty of care

[137] Household members were expected to participate in the master's funeral. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', p. 135.
[138] TNA: PROB 11/19/241.
[139] Kermode and Goldberg have both suggested this idea as demonstrated through gifts of cash or bedding to servants after they had left service. The phrase 'once my servant' was utilised in wills with some frequency: Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 130-1.
[140] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle,* p. 182.
[141] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants,* p. 130.

implicit in a master-servant relationship was enacted through household enrolment in the Palmers' Guild.

The relationships created by virtue of being head of a household – both with servants and family members – could take the form of fiscal responsibility. There may therefore have been many occasions in which a master or mistress were responsible for a servant's entry into the Palmers. On occasion, the evidence is clear and direct. For example, when Elizabeth Arnald, widow of Westbury (Wiltshire), joined the Palmers in 1505/6, she enrolled (and paid for) the deceased John Arnald at the same time. It is likely that this man was her husband, although he is not described as such. Elizabeth did not just pay for her and John's membership: she also paid for the membership of one of John's servants, William, at the same time.[142] This is one of the few times when the records state explicitly that a mistress took charge of a household member's debt to the guild. A small number of servants remained in service to their master's widow for a number of years after a master's death.[143] Elizabeth's payment for her deceased husband's servant suggests that William was indeed carrying on a role within the same household. It was also a reflection of Elizabeth's interests in extra-parochial activities; guild membership was a form of spiritual care she chose to encourage within their household. William's membership was a result of Elizabeth's interests and the completion of William's membership fee a fulfilment of an obligation. This trend was not isolated to the Ludlow guild: in York, in 1477, William Snawsell, former Lord Mayor, and William Chymney, former chamberlain (and Lord Mayor in 1486) introduced two and four servants of their households respectively into the Corpus Christi Guild and appear to have paid their fees.[144] It is worth noting that only 6*d.* was charged for a servant's entrance into the Corpus Christi Guild, and 3*s.* 6*d.* for 'family' memberships, which would include children – significantly

[142] All three entries can be found in SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 56r. William is not given a last name. It does not say that he was deceased yet it does not appear that his fine was to be the full 6s. 8d. The page is ripped but the required sum certainly was 5s.
[143] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-cycle*, pp. 175-6.
[144] Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, p. 181.

lower fees than those which individual Palmers and their households paid.[145] The financial commitment needed to pay for a servant's membership fee of the Palmers was a heftier commitment, although, of course, the system of incremental payments for Palmers' membership relieved the immediacy of the financial pressure arising from membership.

It is almost certain that there are other instances of heads of household paying the membership fees for their subordinates, despite not being explicitly mentioned. One way to deduce the encouragement of household membership is through a study of the practicalities of payments. The most common method by which servants paid their membership was in coin. However, there are a few examples of servants' fines being paid in goods, as seen above with potential apprentices. To return to the example of Hugh Elyot, merchant of Bristol, and his apprentice Peter Abirdyng, we have already seen how the guild received wine in payment for his fee.[146] Elyot's wife, Alice, joined the guild in the same year and gave exactly the same payment.[147] The payment of a hoggeshead of wine, therefore, is an example of the head of the household's occupation being revealed through membership payments. Guild fees in wine were not wholly unusual, with a small proportion of Bristol merchants paying in this manner – a signpost to their commercial interests – but the wine paid by Alice and Peter reveals that Elyot was the facilitator.[148] If a master, or husband, was controlling payments, as suggested in this example, it seems likely that he both approved of, and perhaps orchestrated, the membership of other people in his household.

The close-knit nature of some gentry households may have influenced actions of both servants and masters and is worth considering in terms of guild membership. The affective and economic bonds of the household tied individuals together in such a way that the entire household membership must be considered, rather than simply the individuals whose names appear on the

[145] David Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power: religious gilds in late medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547' (PhD Thesis, University of York, 1995), p. 297.
[146] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
[147] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
[148] There is no record of Hugh Elyot in the Palmers, but the result of the lack of extant records does not preclude his membership.

membership records, on which we have generally focused thus far. In 1520/1, Rees Griffith, son and heir of Sir William Griffith of Penrhyn, Gwynedd (knight and chamberlain of North Wales), joined the Palmers along with his sister Elizabeth.[149] On the same folio a further seven members of Sir William's household also joined.[150] The phrasing used to describe members of this household is important to focus on, albeit briefly. The females of the house, Ellyn, the wife of Morgan Gittowe, and Katherine Ludlow (daughter of Laurence Ludlow) were described as 'with my lady Griffith', suggesting companionship more than service. Alice Adams, however, was described as 'servant with my lady Griffith'. Walter Cook, Robert Lloid, and John Bedow were likewise described as servants with Sir William (clarifying that their service was not to Rees Griffith, but to his father). The final individual, William ap Rees, was described as 'beyng with Sir Griffith', again suggesting that his service was less that of a traditional servant and more likely to be that of one appropriate to someone of gentle birth. Historians have identified friendships between gentry servants and their masters, fostered through ties of reciprocity, which could be manifest, for example, in legal advice or financial support.[151] Unfortunately, no further guild membership records survive past 1521, leaving us none the wiser if members of the Griffiths' household demonstrated their financial dedication to the guild through the completion of their fee. Yet here we see the household operating as a single unit, far beyond the parish in which it resided and that would have been the central focus of its collective worship.

The impetus for the enrolment of so many members of the household, however, did not belong to the head of the household alone. As is abundantly clear, masters exerted substantial influence over the enrolment of servants, yet it would be remiss not to comment upon other, lesser, influences. Guild membership permeated household life through *all* layers, and bonds

[149] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[150] It is unclear is Rees Griffith lived with his father at this time. It is certainly possible, for other gentry and noble families had their heirs and families remain with them after they came of age. For example, Edward, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, had his son and heir remaining living with him even after the marriage and subsequent birth of his grandson. Barbara J. Harris, *Edward Stafford: Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521* (Stanford, 1986), p. 45
[151] For a discussion and many examples of friendship and support among gentry and their servants, see Fleming, 'Household servants', pp. 27-9, 31.

certainly existed between servants within the house. The enrolment of household members in successive years is suggestive of the power of proximity to other guild members. As mentioned, three female servants of Thomas Banbrocke joined the Palmers successively in 1504/5, 1506/7 and 1507/8. Joan Osbern and Elizabeth Jeffreys, servants of John Devell of Coventry, joined the Palmers in 1505/6 and another servant from the same household, Alice Wylde, joined two years later.[152] The initial enrolment of a servant of Richard Norbery in 1498/9 may have led to the enrolment of another household servant, John Nekson, the following year.[153] The household of one Master Symondes of Coventry was a substantial presence in the guild records, with two female servants joining in 1504/5 followed by another two in 1506/7.[154] It was certainly not only urban households that follow this trend: gentry households in rural areas display similar patterns. As noted, four servants from the household of Sir John Wogan of Wiston, Pembrokeshire, signed up in 1503/4 and another two the following year.[155] While it is not possible to reveal the influence of other servants upon guild membership, we should acknowledge the possibility. The introduction of new servants in successive years from the same household undeniably expresses a continued interest in the Palmers. While the absence of a master's name does not necessarily preclude his own enrolment in the Palmers, it may be that the master did not in fact enrol. In some households, membership could be a servant initiative.

While numbers alone do not always imply significance, the prominence of servants and their masters in the guild suggests the strength of ties within the household. We might suspect that active involvement with the Palmers was difficult for members who lived sometimes hundreds of miles away from Ludlow. Perhaps the household was one way to make membership of the Palmers a less isolating experience. For country gentry, frequent contact with other Palmers was less likely to materialise on a coincidental basis than was the case for fellow guild members in towns. In

[152] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r; LB/5/3/9, f. 15v.
[153] SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 67r, 164v.
[154] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 37r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 19r, 20r.
[155] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 15r; LB/5/3/5, ff. 41v, 42r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 28v, 31r; LB/5/3/7, f. 43r.

enrolment of Sir John Wogan and twelve of his household (as noted above), collective membership of the guild enabled them to create their own microcosm of Palmers in rural Pembrokeshire.[156] These household microcosms were self-replicating and helped encourage membership – which was in turn encouraged by genuine affective bonds (or even those of expectation and hierarchical pressure).

While households were not necessarily entirely insular in nature, the bonds created through co-residency were not negligible for servants. A master's particular interest in guild membership often led to wider household membership, while more horizontal connections between servants could likewise be an encouragement. The obligations of a master to provide for his servants' spiritual and physical well-being was another factor, which might take the form of financial responsibility for a servant who had begun membership payments but was unable to complete them. Each participant in a household would have experienced the influence of their connections with both their master and co-residents. Co-residency networks, therefore, were a significant contributor to the facilitation of guild networks.

The Influence of Networks II: External Pressures

The strength of ties between members of a household explains how and why many servants enrolled in the Palmers' Guild. These ties were both vertical and horizontal: between masters and servants and between servants and their colleagues. But households were not isolated structures, and those of the gentry and nobility certainly experienced, and reacted to, the actions of their peers and the influence of role models such as the royal household. This section will therefore pick up this theme in an attempt to identify and analyse the external pressures that encouraged household membership of the Palmers.

[156] Unfortunately, Wogan's will is short, outlining his desired place of burial and naming his wife as his executrix, and no additional information about their household can be gleaned from it. TNA: PROB 11/39/502.

In the 1460s, forty-seven members of Edward IV's household, including servants of Elizabeth Woodville, enrolled in the Palmers.[157] These were gentlemen servers, grooms, squires, yeomen and a large number of unspecified servants. This royal example may very well have set a precedent for the gentry and nobility, but unfortunately the dearth of guild sources during Edward's reign leaves no way to corroborate this theory. The sources are, however, more complete for the years surrounding Henry VII's reign. The first members of Henry's household joined the guild between 1485 and 1489, although only three did so.[158] In the 1490s, between two and five members joined per annum and this continued throughout the guild's lifetime, yet this was only a fraction of the 800 plus members of Henry's household.[159] These figures inevitably raise the question of the extent to which the royal household influenced membership of the Palmers. Did noble households join the Palmers as a unit because of the trend set out by Edward IV, Henry VII and Arthur, Prince of Wales?

The numbers of Henry VII's household joining the guild on an annual basis were small, and there appears to have been no immediate effect on noble households, as the first noble household did not join the Palmers until 1501/2.[160] Yet Henry's household was not the only royal household in the realm in the late fifteenth century. Prince Arthur's impact on the household membership was arguably more influential than his father's. His initial involvement with the guild was, of course, a product of his move to Ludlow in 1493, as was the enrolment of numerous members of his household who resided with him until his death in 1502. At least ninety-eight members of the 'Prince's Household' enrolled in the Palmers between 1497 and 1509. This period includes the time after Arthur's death in which his brother Henry was prince of Wales, from 1503 until his accession in 1509. Of the ninety-eight known members of the princes' households,

[157] SA: LB/5/3/1.
[158] There are four individuals from the household in the registers, but one is a repeat. SA: LB/5/1/2, ff. 1-3.
[159] For the years that records survive. The records are patchier than for the late sixteenth century, being that there survive only portions of the annual riding books, compared with the more complete books of the early sixteenth century. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 118r, 130v, 148r, 183r. For household numbers, see Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 10.
[160] SA: LB/5/3/3.

seventy-eight joined under Arthur, while only twenty joined while Henry was prince.[161] This discrepancy can partly be accounted for by the transfer of some of Arthur's household to Henry, as some members continued paying off their membership fee during Henry's time as prince of Wales.[162] Continued enrolment of members of Prince Henry's household, despite his lack of residency in Ludlow, speaks to a precedent that was set by Arthur.

Some of those in service with Arthur had servants of their own, and the knock-on effect in relation to them is worth considering here. Four servants under the heading of the 'prince's household' in 1499/1500 were identified as servants of William Uvedale, knight, commissioner and councillor of the Council of the Marches, who himself was in Arthur's service.[163] Uvedale's deceased parents, Thomas and Margaret, are enrolled on the same folio as his servants. It is quite clear that Uvedale was responsible for enrolling both his servants and his parents, a fact which demonstrates a certain level of investment in membership. The example of Bishop William Smyth's household again demonstrates the effect patterns of membership set by Arthur had on noble households. Smyth was president of the Council of the Marches and a prominent member of the prince's household, and, although he himself is not known to have enrolled (although probably did), thirteen of Smyth's servants did join the Palmers under the heading of the 'prince's household' in the riding books.[164] In both cases – those of Uvedale and Smyth – their household membership was undoubtedly influenced by two factors: first, their own position as part of Arthur's entourage; and, second, the example set by Arthur. Just as with servants in smaller households, the internal pressures that emanated from a precedent set by Arthur informed the shape of guild membership within the princely household, but the respective head of each smaller household was a lynchpin who clearly disseminated patterns of guild membership downwards,

[161] For Arthur's household, see SA: LB/5/3/2 and for Henry's household: LB/5/3/4-8, LB/5/1/3-4.
[162] For example, Henry Clerc and William ap Thomas, SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84v, 184v.
[163] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 48r.
[164] SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84r, 118v, 148v, LB/5/3/5 f. 31v.

thereby creating a two-tier situation. It is apparent, therefore, that it was an expectation that participation in the guild was part of the role of each man and his servants.

Households within the larger, princely household, such as those of Uvedale and Smyth, however, were not the only examples of the influence of the princely household on membership: it also set the model for the enrolment of separate noble households in the guild. The prince of Wales' attachment to Ludlow as the seat of the Council of the Marches, as well as his personal seat of power, may have directed his own initial involvement, but his actions were felt across the country. A few notable nobles and their households, which were *not* associated with the prince's household, joined the guild in the years immediately following Arthur's move to Ludlow and the beginning of his household enrolment. For example, George Grey, earl of Kent, and his wife Katherine enrolled in 1501/2 along with nine other members of their household.[165] In the same year, Thomas, earl of Surrey and High Treasurer of England, joined with Agnes, his wife, and three other members of the household.[166] The quick succession of enrolment by these nobles is demonstrative of Arthur's influence within the personal households of his greater subjects. While not members of the Council, there was, evidently, a trend or a fashion for noble involvement in the Palmers, which can be traced back to Arthur's move to Ludlow. It is difficult to say precisely if the replication of the royal household's policy of guild membership among noble households was a deliberate endeavour to gain favour from the crown; a positive correlation is not beyond the realms of possibility.

One of the interesting characteristics of household membership within a guild was the ability, or potential, to 'flatten' the hierarchies present within them. As has been mentioned, the household could be an extremely stratified place, which was governed by strict regulations.[167] Yet guild membership, where there was no hierarchy outside of the governing council, was a space where these stratifications did not exist for the majority of members; as Gervase Rosser has argued,

[165] SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 35r.
[166] SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 35v.
[167] The duke of Buckingham's household provides an excellent example of this: Harris, *Edward Stafford,* Ch. 4.

guild feasts were a space in which members could forge relationships that crossed traditional economic and social boundaries within the hierarchical structures.[168] Unspoken politics and hierarchy may very well have existed, but, crucially, there was no institutionalised hierarchy among membership. The diversity and range of social status of members in the Palmers make this even more stark. That so many servants of gentry and mercantile houses joined, who appear to have been very much 'ordinary' servants – that is to say, not of gentle birth – demonstrates the inclusivity of the guild.

The household of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, does not, however, conform to the general trend. In 1505/6, during the time that Henry was prince of Wales, Buckingham headed the enrolment of at least nineteen members of his household and the duchess joined the following year.[169] A further four individuals joined the Palmers at the same time as the duke; they may have been part of his household although it is unclear from the records. This was the largest household enrolled in the Palmers, with the obvious exception of the king's and princes' households. Buckingham had a significant number of gentle-born servants in his household: between thirty-three and thirty-seven per cent.[170] The members of his household who joined the Palmers were almost wholly gentle-born or held positions within the higher echelons of the household hierarchy. They included men such as John Russell, his secretary; John Gregory, clerk of the household; Richard Pooley, clerk of the spicery and future clerk of the household; Thomas Kemys, gentleman server; and Ambrose Skelton, gentleman server.[171] The type of servants who joined the Palmers with the duke, such as his receiver and secretary, coupled with the complete absence of female servants, suggests that these individuals were part of his 'riding' household, for

[168] Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies,* Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct., 1994), p. 443.
[169] SA: LB/5/3/8, ff. 6v.-7v., LB/5/1/3, ff. 2-4, LB/5/1/4, f. 1.
[170] Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 20.
[171] Some of these are simply identified as servant or not even given a position in their entries in the guild records. Additional information has been gathered from household accounts of Edward Stafford: Harris, *Edward Stafford,* Appendix A.

there were certainly gentlewomen employed in the duke's household.[172] This is further suggested by the fact that these entries were recorded under the heading of *Extranei*, and not enrolled at the duke's formal residences at Thornbury or London.[173] The duchess' separate enrolment in the guild records is significant: she did not enrol at the same time as her husband or his servants, rather appearing on the registers of admission in 1507.[174] Buckingham's household was fluid: only a portion of his councillors – men found with him in the guild records like his secretary, treasurer, comptroller – resided at his primary residence of Thornbury at any one time.[175] Although there would have been lesser servants among the travelling household (which consisted of approximately sixty people), none of these are to be found in the Palmers' records.[176] Did the hierarchy of the household translate to guild membership in the case of the great noble households? Stafford's example would suggest that the inclusivity did not stretch into the household of the duke; only his closest servants became members. Was this, in fact, another demonstration of the influence of the head of the household upon guild membership? Unlike other households, both gentry and merchant, where the head of the household encouraged membership among servants of all status, thus increasing the guild's membership, only certain, more elite, members of Stafford's household joined – a sign, perhaps, of his distance from lesser servants in his household. This time the master's influence did not appear to be to the guild's advantage, for the Palmers did not exclude individuals based on their status in society: the fee system was engineered by the late fifteenth century to be adaptable for a variety of individual financial circumstances.

More likely, it was an aspect of Stafford's conscientious, and public, policy regarding religious institutions. He took an active role in visiting religious houses around Thornbury,

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[172] Margaret Geddynge, a gentlewoman, was in charge of the nursery and at least two other gentlewomen assisted her. Harris, *Edward Stafford,* p. 47.
[173] SA: LB/5/3/8, ff. 6v., 7v. For more on the riding/foreign household vs the great household, see Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 15.
[174] SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 1.
[175] Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p. 93.
[176] Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p. 77; Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham: 1394-1521* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 88.

bestowing large sums of money on them: he endowed Tewkesbury Abbey with an annual income of £60, and, very publicly, restored order to Kingswood Abbey (Gloucestershire) when a riot broke out there in 1517.[177] His standing was demonstrated when the canons of Maxstoke requested that Stafford sit in judgment on their prior.[178] Like many great households, he had a chapel and several chaplains along with a choir,[179] and Barbara Harris has suggested that he exhibited a demonstrable dedication to shrines.[180] Each year, around Easter, Buckingham spent a month or more visiting shrines in a local area (changing each year). In 1508, he spent the period between 29 March and 30 June at a monastery in Keynsham, Somerset, and visited nearby religious shrines.[181] Within his principal seat at Thornbury he owned enough church plate to create a suitable atmosphere in his chapel to complement the opulence of his residence.[182] Joining the fraternity at Ludlow was another expression of Stafford's piety and his interest in guild membership likely was the motivation of those of his household that did join up – those who were closest to him rather than a cross-section of his household.

A notable absence is the duke's son, Henry, who almost certainly resided in the ducal home of Thornbury at this time.[183] As has been shown, it was quite common for offspring to be enrolled in the Palmers alongside their parents and household members. The duke was concerned enough to pay for his wife Eleanor's membership (who signed up separately) and it might have been natural to sign up his children at the same time.[184] The sway of kinship, however, was not confined to the household. It is a truism that late medieval England consisted of a dense tangle of interwoven ties between gentle and noble families, and many of these connections were forged through marriage which were ultimately the extension of kinship ties. The household, while generally considered a

[177] Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, p. 98.
[178] Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, p. 98.
[179] Mertes, 'The Household as a religious community', p. 127; Audrey M. Thorstad, 'There and Back Again: The Hospitality and Consumption of a Sixteenth-Century English Travelling Household' in Theresa Earenfight (ed.), *Royal and Elite Households in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: More Than Just a Castle* (Leiden, 2018), p. 368.
[180] Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p. 82.
[181] Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p. 82.
[182] Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p. 90.
[183] The 1508 household accounts set out the daily food allowance for Henry: Harris, *Edward Stafford,* p. 48.
[184] *L&P,* Vol. 3, pp. 496; SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 1.

group of individuals who were co-resident, had a wider influence in bolstering the membership of the guild: familial ties were a significant factor behind the influx of certain households joining the Palmers, as can be demonstrated in the case of Buckingham. Sir Walter Herbert of Chepstow and his wife, Anne, joined the Palmers in 1505/6 along with two of their servants.[185] It is hardly coincidental that Anne's brother, Buckingham, then joined the Palmers the following year alongside ten members of his household.[186] In the same year that Buckingham's household became Palmers, Anne returned to her brother's residence as a widow.[187] The enrolment of the Herberts and their servants in the Palmers the previous year, and Anne's move to Thornbury in 1507, is too closely aligned to the enrolment of Buckingham and his household to be mere coincidence. Over the next two years, while Anne was living at Thornbury, at least another four members of Buckingham's household became guild members.[188] Walter and Anne Herbert were not the only ones of this extended family already involved in the Palmers. The Herberts of Troy, an illegitimate line, were a substantial presence in Monmouthshire. Like their legitimate family members, the household of William Herbert (Walter's half-brother) were Palmers. Blanche, his wife, joined in 1504/5, and three of their children and two servants.[189] Both lines of the Herberts embodied a sort of advocacy for family influence upon guild membership, but, more specifically, the household as actors within the guild. While household ties were clearly an influence on membership, so too were kinship ties in fostering household membership.

These were not isolated cases of familial influence. Thomas Savage was the most distantly located member of a Cheshire gentry family, but was the first to engage with the Palmers. Savage served as a diplomat through the late 1480s and 1490s and then moved through a succession of roles within the Church: from the bishopric of Rochester to that of London in 1496 and finally to

[185] SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 52v, LB/5/1/3, f. 6.
[186] SA: LB/5/3/8, ff. 6v, 7v.
[187] Harris, *Edward Stafford,* p. 50; Anne is recorded at Stafford's Epiphany meal after Christmas 1508. John Gage, 'Extracts from the Household Book of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham', *Archaeologia* 25 (1834), pp. 320-321.
[188] SA: LB/5/1/3, mm. 2, 4, 5; LB/5/1/4, f. 2.
[189] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 25r, 25v, LB/5/3/5, ff. 32r, 53r, LB/5/3/7, f. 50v, LB/5/1/3, f. 7.

the archbishopric of York in 1501. Bishop Savage's relationship with the Palmers began with the enrolment of four of his servants in 1497 while he was bishop of London.[190] Over the next decade, a steady trickle of individuals connected with the Savages began to join the Palmers. Savage, despite being located in London, sparked a movement within his kin network. After various servants of Thomas' household enrolled, John Savage VI (of Hanley, Staffordshire) followed suit with the enrolment of four of his servants.[191] It seems highly likely that the kinship ties between John VI and his uncle Thomas prompted the latter to embrace the concept of household membership to a guild along with the spiritual and social benefits attached to it. The kinship link was the stimulus, but the influence of co-residency within the household equally played a role in encouraging membership. Unlike Bishop Thomas's household, who joined all at once, the Savage household at Hanley joined the Palmers in a slow stream. The enrolment of the first servant took place in 1499, followed by Alice (aunt of John VI) in 1503, then her siblings Edmund and Margaret, along with another servant of John VI, in 1504. Finally, two more servants enrolled in 1505 followed by Lawrence Savage in 1506.[192] Maud, John VI's aunt, also enrolled at Hanley along with her husband Sir Robert Needham.[193] While they were unlikely to be living permanently with the Savages, for their home lay in Shenton (Shropshire) they must have been visiting the Savage household for their enrolment to take place in Hanley. The domino effect on enrolment of the household is clear, and it was blind to status. The growth of membership within the Savage household continually alternated between servant and gentleman/woman or even both together in the same year. Further kinship ties are visible in the enrolment of Thomas Stanley and four servants of his father, George Stanley, Baron Strange and heir apparent to Thomas Stanley, first earl of Derby.[194] The Stanleys were cousins of the Savages through the marriage of Katherine Stanley to John IV Savage. While

[190] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 127v.
[191] SA: LB/5/2, f. 140r, LB/5/3/6, 51r, LB/5/3/7, f. 68v.
[192] The servant entries are listed above (n. 192) and the family entries can be found in SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 74r, LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r, LB/5/3/8, f. 11r.
[193] SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 73v, 74r.
[194] SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 63r, 84r.

the fairly substantial number of twenty individuals associated with these prominent, intertwined families might seem unsurprising if taken simply as a nod to their location near Shropshire, which was obviously the Palmers' base, the breakdown of their enrolment has demonstrated that their guild membership was a product of the influences of kinship and co-residency rather than simple proximity.

Benefits of Membership

While the means by which membership spread throughout, within and between households in late medieval England and Wales has been established, the final substantive question to consider is the reason *why* so many masters, their families and their servants enrolled *en masse*. This question has been touched on indirectly, but it requires consideration in its own right. Two interlocking trends can be identified in this analysis: piety and reputation. Both can similarly be ascribed to individual guild membership, but they take on a new significance in the context of the household. The Palmers provided a framework in which these two aims could be pursued by masters, and it can thus be suggested that they were considerations common to most of the heads of households discussed in this chapter.

Late medieval religion was not circumscribed by the parish church, but instead had room for individual preference in expressions of piety – its range of expression, its 'voluntary' nature, and the depth of lay devotion have all been the subject of recent scholarship.[195] In this instance, it repays to consider lay piety specifically within the framework of the household, and, additionally, to think about how household guild membership interacted with other forms of devotion. While several aspects of what follows have been subject to scholarly examination – for example, noble,

[195] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional religion in England, c. 1400- c. 1580* (New Haven, 2005); Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 1 (1991), pp. 173-189; Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2018).

gentry and mercantile piety – this work has largely been done in isolation,[196] and it has already been noted that households have not featured in guild historiography at all, nor guilds in scholarship on households – despite the popularity of the topic over the past three decades. Fraternal membership has always been seen as a form of pious expression (among other things),[197] but what did it mean for households specifically?

Before we consider guild membership as an expression of lay household piety, it is essential that we situate it within other types of devotion. The most immediate and universal encounter with religion was, arguably (although recognising the exceptions encompassed by 'unorthodox' expressions of religion),[198] at the level of the parish. Canonically, every single man, woman and child residing under the jurisdiction of the Papacy (and, indeed, beyond) belonged to a parish and was obliged to receive mass and confess at least once a year. Parish churches, therefore, became foci for investment in various forms.[199] Households were very much a part of this parochial existence – those who maintained them would attend church with their families, retainers and servants, often occupying a personal pew or chapel.[200] Familial chapels could develop into mausolea, forming, essentially, an inter-generational representation of the household. Indeed, one of the most striking examples of this phenomenon is to be found in the church of St Michael and All Angels, Macclesfield, wherein numerous effigies and tombs of the aforementioned Savage family reside.[201] Across the kingdom, parish churches could assume a symbolic mantle of 'local

196 Kermode, *Merchant Piety*; Clive Burgess, 'Making Mammon Serve God: Merchant Piety in Later Medieval England' in Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (eds.), *The Medieval Merchant: Proceedings of the 2012 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2014), pp. 183-207; Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: The Social Function of Aristocratic Benevolence, 1307-1405* (London and Toronto, 1972); Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 242; Christine Carpenter, 'Religion of the Gentry in the fifteenth century' in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the fifteenth century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1987) p. 66; Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2017), p.110; Nigel Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (Oxford, 1986), p. 159.
197 Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', pp. 13-37.
198 Rob Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England: Reconstructing Piety* (Woodbridge, 2006).
199 One way this was expressed was in the rebuilding of parish churches, a feat which was undertaken under many different auspices and by many different groups: Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2017).
200 Gabriel Byng, "In common for everyone': shared space and private possessions in the English parish church nave', *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 45, Issue 2 (2019), pp. 231-253, esp. p. 236.
201 Nikolaus Pevsner and Edward Hubbard, *Cheshire* (New Haven, 1971; reprint 2001), p. 267.

identity and family power' for many gentry families.[202] Wealthier individuals integrated themselves wholeheartedly and genuinely into the parish, spurred by a wider commemorative impulse and this involvement was not just an outward token of their status.[203]

This is a view of the parish that emphasises integration – in terms of involvement and investment – especially on the part of those with wealth. Some historians have argued the opposite, citing family chapels and household oratories as evidence for a withdrawal from the parish, particularly in reference to the gentry.[204] The existence of household chapels, as devotional spaces, is important to discuss here. The institution of chapels was transformative of both the physical and social household, and it seems likely that the household in its entirety would, at some level, have gravitated towards it for certain expressions of devotion, which may have been communal and reinforced household relationships. Domestic chapels were common among the social groups from whom household membership of the Palmers was drawn. Naturally, a prerequisite was surplus capital – in order to obtain an episcopal or papal licence, employ a chaplain, create a sanctified space and stock the chapel – and so they were ubiquitous among noble households from an early date. By the late fourteenth century, however, chapels or oratories were also prevalent among even minor gentry,[205] and elite townspeople increasingly sought to obtain them.[206] The household functioned 'as a spiritual unit as directed by its lay head',[207] and the maintenance of a domestic chapel and accompanying clergy was an expression of the 'good rule' of a household visible to every visitor. As such, its existence had parallels to the household membership of a guild

[202] Ian Forrest, 'The politics of burial in late medieval Hereford' *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXV, No. 516 (2010), p. 1136.
[203] Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 242; Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, p. 110; Richard Asquith 'Serving the Needs of a Lakeland Parish: Kendal in the Later Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, New Series, Vol. 17 (2017), pp. 89-93.
[204] Colin Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century Gentleman', in B. Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), p 199.
[205] This was certainly the case found by Carpenter. Some of the gentry names she gives as possessing chapels are family names found in the Palmers' records: Chetwynds, Fulwodes and Harewells. Carpenter, 'Religion of the Gentry', p. 63.
[206] Sarah Rees Jones and Felicity Riddy, 'The Bolton Book of Hours: Female Domestic Piety and the Public Sphere' in Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (eds.), *Household, Women and Christianities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005), p. 238.
[207] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales: 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 353.

like the Palmers, in which the centrality of the household was the basis of their piety. Households operated through joint religious acts: for example, the communal reading of devotional books and worshipping in chapels or designated rooms in the house with portable altars. In membership of a guild like the Palmers, however, households retained an element of the independence of religious investment identified by Richmond, but directed that investment into an expression of religion that simultaneously benefited the household as a unit while supporting a parish-centric organisation (not necessarily their own parish, but *a* parish nonetheless).

Other forms of religious expression had similar pertinence for the household. Religious houses, guilds, pardons and indulgences were obvious sources of investment for the laity. The situation was one of reciprocity, where additional spiritual benefits were a result of participation, and such investment was commonplace across society. In some cases, this interaction was purely financial, like the involvement of Humphrey Newton's household in his pardon-collecting habit.[208] Others were more internal processes, such as devotional reading which became exponentially popular and accessible throughout our period.[209] Membership of the Palmers, in a way, was not the extraordinary for households because it served as an extension of the operation of the household. Membership fit within the spiritual obligations of the householder to teach its inhabitants the Paternoster, Ave and Creed, as well as encourage spiritual observance.[210]

Guild membership, therefore, must be understood within this wider household context, where devotion could be both parish-based or extra-parochial, and these were not at odds. The extent to which a household was genuinely 'pious' is often difficult to discern. Simply having a chapel with a daily mass did not necessitate the attendance of members each day; the ideal and reality may have been very different. While it is unclear who was a regular, active beneficiary of

[208] See above for Newton. R. N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007).
[209] Among the most common tools for such reading were books of hours, which ranged from elaborate illuminated volumes to cheap, printed ones. Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240-1570* (New Haven, 2006); Rees Jones and Riddy, 'The Bolton Book of Hours', p. 220.
[210] For example, as instructed in Richard Whitford's *Werke for housholders*. Lucy Wooding, 'Richard Whitford's *Werke for housholders*: Humanism, Monasticism and Tudor Household Piety', *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 50 (2014), pp 162-5.

the religious care provided by the presence of a household chapel, guild registers are more explicit in outlining who within the household stood to benefit from the spiritual rewards of membership. These rewards arose by virtue of the individual's position within the household. What were the benefits both for a head of a household and its other members?

We should not dismiss the existence of genuine spiritual concerns. The Middle Ages are no longer seen as an age of 'blind faith', but devotion and belief were often genuinely and deeply felt.[211] The penitential system that underpinned the Catholic Church, with the notion of the 'third place' of Purgatory, encouraged the accumulation of *pro anima* prayers in order to expedite the journey to salvation.[212] As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the Palmers employed priests to perform divine service, which benefited both the living and the dead. There are obvious individual reasons, therefore, that a master might enrol himself and his family in a religious guild, but this line of thought can also be extended to those under his care. The concern, highlighted above, for masters to finish the payments of dead servants suggests that the resulting benefits of these prayers were sought, and channelled, in a household context. The affective bonds within the household may have manifested in a genuine concern for the spiritual welfare of servants, who may not have had the means to access other forms of religiosity, and so investment in guild membership at the master's instigation may have been an addition to a probably limited spiritual repertory.

It was also beneficial for heads of household to display their own piety in a wider societal context, and more crucially, to assert and project the pious nature of their entire household. Religious expression could take the form of giving alms, and servants, on occasion, were permitted reimbursement from their master if they gave charitably.[213] The fulfilment of the duty of each

[211] Recently summarised by Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton, 2018), Ch 1.
[212] Clive Burgess, 'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented: An essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in late medieval England' in S. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750* (London 1988), pp. 56-84.
[213] Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', p. 136.

household member to give alms was an extension of household charity,[214] and thus an outward form of piety, which constituted a fulfilment, and indeed an exceeding, of societal expectations. Naturally the more elaborate the donation, the more favourable the external perception. Guild membership had the same purpose. The social capital accrued through fraternal membership was advantageous for individuals alone, but this personal benefit was multiplied for masters joining with their servants. As with the distribution of alms, the perception of the servants performing a pious act reflected favourably on the master. There was, therefore, two aspects to the motivations for masters to enrol their household in the Palmers' Guild. The first was internal, concerned with the welfare of the immortal soul. The second, on the other hand, was perceptibly external and constituted public acts that were witnessed by others. This theme is therefore inherently linked with the second, more general, reason for household membership: the enhancement of the reputation of the household.

The medieval household was a microcosm of the body politic. As Philippa Maddern has argued, the nation, each city or town, and households could all be represented as the human body, with each respective head responsible for the obedience and order of all other parts of the metaphorical or physical polity.[215] Chris Given-Wilson has likewise argued that 'the magnificence of (the king's) domestic establishment was one of the yardsticks by which his political authority was judged'.[216] Nowhere is this sentiment better encapsulated than when the 1485 Parliament of Henry VII insisted that 'Your Honorable Household … must be kept and borne worshipfully and honorably, as it accordith to the honour of your estate and your said realme'.[217] A well-ordered household was the basis for order within the kingdom: disorder within the household would

[214] Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', p. 136.
[215] Philippa Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', in Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds.), *Medieval Norwich* (London, 2004), pp. 205-8.
[216] Chris Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics, and Finance in England, 1360-1413* (New Haven, 1986), p. 1.
[217] 'Henry VII: November 1485, Part 2' in Chris Given-Wilson, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (eds.), *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2005), *British History Online* https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1485-pt-2

produce disruption elsewhere, rippling through society.[218] The maintenance of discipline at every level within the household was a duty of the householder and anything less came with personal repercussions. In both urban and rural settings, control of the misbehaviour of servants outside of the home was the responsibility of the master and might cause significant damage to his or her reputation.[219] In a more intimate sense, should a servant marry without sanction, it could 'jeopardize the appearance of household rule that sustained civic identities of both householders and servants'.[220] Yet a household ruled wisely led to godly behaviour of those within the household.[221] Guild membership captured that relationship of godliness and social respectability that was entwined in late medieval domesticity: it was the epitome of encouraging godly behaviour within a house, providing an additional outlet for religious activity, while fulfilling a social obligation of order. Guilds provided an additional layer of order that ensured that members adhered to common standard of behaviour – not just at guild events, but in their private lives.[222] Householders not only demonstrated the respectability of their inhabitants with guild membership, but also reinforced good behaviour; it took the inward-facing establishment of order and respectable actions of the *familia* and presented it to the world outside of the household.

To become a 'brother' or 'sister' of a religious guild was, ultimately, a conferment of a certain status and an identity, mixing with pre-existing layers of identity and status: the statutes of guild membership that stated that members were to have a good reputation led to Rosser's assertion that 'social credit accrued to [a] member of a confraternity'.[223] Under closer examination,

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[218] Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', p. 208.
[219] Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 142-3, 151; Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 144-5.
[220] Maddern, 'In myn own house' p. 54.
[221] McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture*, p. 138.
[222] McRee, 'Religious Guilds and Civic Order', p. 70; Ben McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour in Late Medieval Towns' in Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 108-9. An early modern example of the importance placed on the behaviours, especially speech, as a reflection of reputation can be found in Jennifer Bishop, 'Speech and Sociability: The regulation of language in the livery companies of early modern London' in Justin Colson and Arie van Steensel (eds.), *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2017), pp. 208-224.
[223] Gervase Rosser, 'The Ethics of Confraternities' in Konrad Eisenbichier (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities* (Leiden, 2019), p. 91. Rosser discusses this idea more in depth in *The Art of Solidarity: in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250-1550*, (Oxford, 2015).

this ostensibly personal benefit appears also to have been a secondary benefit for heads of households. 'Good housekeeping', along with control of the household through extensive management and a formal hierarchy, was key to preserving noble honour,[224] especially as the household as a whole formed a 'crucial element in the master's public image'.[225] The social capital accrued from guild membership was a route to circumvent and negate the damage that might arise from the bad reputation of members of the household, and was a measure to demonstrate the piety (read: reputation) of the household in addition to partaking in exercises such as alms-giving and other charitable work that the guild undertook for those in need. Actions were catalysts for the creation or altering of reputation, and the charitable actions of a guild towards individual members of the public, such as the poor or the sick, or more general charity, such as the repair of roads or building of bridges, had the effect of increasing the reputation of individual guild members.[226] For a noble such as Edward Stafford, whose household contained young men of noble status, concern for his retinue's behaviour may have been a preoccupation, and guild membership may have been an action of damage limitation to guarantee the morality of his household.

Moreover, the very materiality of joint membership of a guild and a domestic household was a clear demonstration of status and reputation: livery, which would have been worn at the guild's annual feast and perhaps other occasions such as important festivals, consisted of hoods and badges and were a visible sign of membership. How precisely the hoods of the Palmers' Guild would have been worn in tandem with a master's livery is not clear, but the visual imagery of both liveries together would have been a striking exhibition of household guild membership. In a similar manner, evidence for other great guilds suggests that the feast was also an opportunity for the

[224] Felicity Heal, 'Reciprocity and Exchange in the Late Medieval Household' in Barabara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (eds), *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of literature and history in fifteenth-century England* (Minneapolis, 1996), p. 189.
[225] Mertes, *The English Noble Household*, p. 131.
[226] Rosser, 'Ethics of Confraternity', p. 104.

enrolment of large numbers of people in a very public setting.[227] Attendance at the Holy Cross feast at Stratford ranged from 108-160 annually in the early fifteenth century, while Luton's Holy Trinity and Coventry's Holy Trinity guilds expected several hundred each year, and all of these were occasions for mass enrolment.[228] Although the guild records suggest that most of the Palmers' enrolment took place outside Ludlow, it is not difficult to extend this line of thinking to suggest that the simultaneous enrolment of several members of a single household in one location would have been witnessed by a number of individuals, especially if a steward undertook his duties in a public area, such as a market place or another guild's hall.

Guild membership helped the individual, therefore, but the impact was three-fold when it positively influenced the status of the head of a household, the nuclear family *and* servants. The bestowment of respectability was even more important when servants were relatives of the master, and the kinship ties that might have existed between servants and a master increased the high stakes of maintaining control and reputation of a household. While guild membership could be a private act of piety, it was also highly public in certain contexts, and so it advertised the piety and subsequent reputation of an individual. The religious benefits, as well as social, were open to, and indeed sought after, by mercantile, gentle, noble and royal households.

Conclusion

Perhaps unsurprisingly, household membership in the Palmers' Guild was as diverse as individual membership. It included a heterogeneous mix of different types of households, a range of individuals from the household and a diverse range of reasons prompting membership. While the households themselves enrolled from the wealthier segments of society – the nobility, gentry, mercantile and artisan elite – the social variation within these households was great. In addition to heads of households, some the greatest peers of the realm, we find the enrolment of manual

[227] Rosser suggested that the practice for admission of new members took place at the end of the annual feast. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', p. 435.
[228] Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', p. 439.

servants though to gentlemen companions. This chapter noted that there is little in the way of discernible patterns among this membership, but certain trends do emerge.

Broadly, four such trends have been identified, which help to account, in a general sense, for the enrolment of households in the guild. The first was the influence of life-cycle, especially in reference to servants. If service is conceptualised as one stage of this life-cycle, then single-year payments can be readily accounted for, but other factors such as movement, marriage and death prove to be equally influential on membership trends. Throughout this process, the guiding hand of the master is often identifiable (although not in all cases), and this leads to the second substantive point of the chapter – that of internal household influences. This took the form of a master's personal pious preferences, the affective bonds between members of a household and the creation of Palmer enclaves at a distance from the guild itself. Households of regional magnates and gentry have been noted for their role as centres of 'religious instruction',[229] and guild membership appears to have been an output of this role of the household. These internal factors were both contrasted with, and complemented by, external pressures, such as kinship links between households and the example set by Prince Arthur's court at Ludlow (for the nobility, at least). The final trend analysed was the resulting benefits that encouraged this type of membership. There were two interrelated strands: piety and reputation. The sum total of this analysis has been to account for the deep social currents, specific to households, which manifested in the large-scale presence of masters, families and servants in the guild registers of admission and riding books.

More generally, the staggering reach of the Palmers' Guild, geographically and socially, allows us properly to situate this household membership. The relatively infrequent mention of the guild mechanisms for recruitment in this chapter highlights the role the laity played in expansion of the Palmers. The role of the guild administration in encouraging a diverse membership, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis, was vital to this achievement, but so too were the

[229] J. L. McIntosh, *From Heads of Household to Heads of State: The Preaccession Households of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor 1516-1558* (New York, 2009), p. 197.

internal and external pressures on households. The processes by which households joined the guild, and the influences upon those processes, are worth deep consideration as they speak to the importance of the Palmers within late medieval English society and guild membership more broadly. Guild membership through the household was a manifestation of the 'ordinary theology' of medieval men and women.

The social importance of guilds has been long recognised and discussed, but historians have consistently focused on guilds that were local or regional to its members. National fraternities, such as St Mary's (Boston) and the Jesus Guild (London), have been studied to show their geographic reach and to demonstrate how they achieved this expansion. A discussion of households within guilds – especially those of the mercantile classes – has been missing, but this chapter has gone some way to proving the extent to which national fraternities were part and parcel of the lives of an extraordinary number of people in this context. The identification of the presence of households within the Palmers, and the subsequent analysis, has generated a new area for debate in guild and household historiography. Each was a previously unrecognised component of the other, and further detailed investigation into other source bases should prove productive. The groupings and networks of households within the Palmers across the country is an indication of the pervasive nature of membership.

Chapter Five
'The Essence of Guild Membership': Participation in a National Fraternity

> Active personal commitment was the essence of guild membership, bringing adherents, however widely dispersed, regularly into direct contact with one another. The solidarity of the guild was the more vital for being the creation, not of an accident of geographical proximity but the sum of conscious decisions of its participants.[1]

Introduction

The final aspect of this study of membership of the Palmers' Guild is the nature of individual commitment to a national fraternity by those brethren residing outside of Ludlow in the early sixteenth century. Gervase Rosser's definition of 'the essence of guild membership' as the conscious activity of each participant arguably captures the vitality of guilds and forces a different consideration of institutions that can all too quickly be reduced to historical timelines and understood only as avenues to achieve political and economic success. Much of Rosser's scholarship has emphasised the cyclical, and reciprocal, nature of guilds, between individual development and the social and ethical practices of the group, as the key to understanding these institutions.[2] The individuals within a guild were the reason for its vitality, specifically the contribution of both the governing members of a guild and those who comprised the body of membership. The officers of the guild, naturally, appear more frequently in the sources due to their often (nominally) paid roles, but we should ask how, and whether, active personal commitment was possible in a fraternity with almost national reach. It is now clear that the Palmers' membership spanned the length and breadth of medieval Wales and England and was marked by the inclusion of different occupations and social classes. Yet were members involved

[1] Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages' in Susan Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750* (London, 1988), p. 35.
[2] Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250-1550* (Oxford, 2015), p. 76; for further discussion, see Gervase Rosser, 'Big Brotherhood: guilds in urban politics in late medieval England' in Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis (eds.), *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900-1800* (London, 2006), pp. 27-42.; Gervase Rosser, 'The ethics of confraternity' in Konrad Eisenbichler (ed.), *A companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 91-108.

in the guild beyond the payment of their annual dues? Did opportunities for involvement in the Palmers present themselves outside of Ludlow, and, if so, in what ways? Each of the preceding chapters has addressed these questions implicitly in the consideration of the different communities of Palmers and the importance of guild membership. This chapter builds upon those foundations to examine explicitly the individual and group experience of these extramural members in order to draw conclusions about the role of guild membership in late medieval society.

It is not possible to trace the informal activities of members, but we can examine formal activities with a view to evidence and understand their relationship with the Palmers' Guild. Using guild accounts and testamentary evidence, we can begin to trace the lineaments of individual interaction with the guild and guild structures outside of formal events for the entire brethren, such as feasts. Members of the Palmers, while living at some distance from Ludlow, actively took advantage of the social and religious opportunities afforded to them by their membership. The national membership reach of the guild did not preclude what might be termed an 'active relationship' with the guild. Bequests to and financial support of a guild are the most obvious starting point to analyse levels of involvement; this analysis necessitates a study of the initiative of guild members. This initiative, however, did not exist in a vacuum. It was encouraged by the governing men of the guild and by the institution's conduct. We must consider in tandem the roles of the guild and the guild members in order to determine the level and nature of participation, and reasons for involvement, by guild members not resident in Ludlow.

This chapter will begin with an interrogation of the Palmers' infrastructure, which gave it a complex and multi-layered regional and national presence. This first section considers how the guild and its officers consciously increased visibility in the localities and subsequently generated more direct contact with the guild compared to other wide-reaching fraternities. Throughout this thesis, I have suggested that the Palmers' actions, as an institution, were important in shaping the social composition of membership. The argument here is that the guild's administrative operations can offer insight into the personal commitment to a fraternity located far away from a member's

residence. The simple collection of guild dues led to a system of officers 'in the field' who were armed with a rigorous tabulation and knowledge of their members. With over one thousand recruits each year during the first half of the sixteenth century, the guild officials maintained detailed records of their members to keep their accounts in order. The steward's annual 'rides' acted as a visible reminder of the guild across the country and these iterations were a key component in the relationship between each member and the guild as a distant institution. Additionally, the establishment of guild representatives in towns – primarily across the midlands – worked as a secondary, and more permanent, actualisation of the Palmers in the localities.

The first section argues that the Palmers created an environment in which its members were confronted with the guild on a regular basis. But how much did members take it upon themselves to utilise a relationship with the guild and with its fellow members? The second section analyses bequests left to the guild, both in movable and immovable goods, as an expression of voluntary support of the Palmers. Finally, I will show how members created microcosms of the Palmers' Guild in the localities. A study of the gifts of property to the Palmers in Richard's Castle (Shropshire), Eastham (Worcestershire) and Marlborough (Wiltshire) is decidedly revealing. Viewed altogether, these three sections will demonstrate how a large guild like the Palmers could infuse and structure the lives of its members.

The extant sources permit study of the establishment, and maintenance, of guild solidarity in the first half of the sixteenth century, specifically between 1497 and 1540. For the Palmers to exist as a fraternity, in the true sense of the idea of 'brotherhood', it was the mutual responsibility of the guild officials and the wider membership. That collaboration was present in the Palmers, defying obstacles of separation and distance. Ultimately, the manifestations of lay involvement in the Palmers were polymorphous, demonstrative of the vitality of one late medieval national institution, but also of the opportunities for community outside of the laity's local social, religious and political structures.

Subjects of this study

Those members who resided in Ludlow are, to some extent, in a different category and mostly excluded from the discussion here. The Palmers operated, within Ludlow, as a typical parish fraternity: they possessed relevant characteristics such as a *cursus honorum* with town government (as shown in Chapter One), provided spiritual benefits and were an outlet for local power.[3] Historians have already studied in detail lay participation in local, parish-based fraternities, and the actions of Ludlow Palmers align with trends identified in other towns.[4] While some consideration of Ludlow members shall take place here, it will therefore be minimal. Instead of treading ground already covered, those individuals from different towns, with an emphasis on those from different counties, shall be the primary subjects under investigation. Some comparative work shall be done throughout the chapter, with reference to other geographically extensive religious fraternities.

Documents

Until now, this thesis has made extensive use of the riding books to reconstruct and explain the character of the guild and its brethren. An excellent and over-looked source thanks to their apparent lack of provision of anything but names, they have offered a new level of understanding of the composition of Palmers' membership. However, the riding books are difficult documents from which to extrapolate and understand the vitality of the Ludlow guild. They only record annual payments between the individual member and the guild (as represented by its officers). Occasionally, when they record that an individual paid another member's annual fee, they offer a tantalising view of possible relationships between members extending across different places. For example, the Palmer John Soket of Bristol paid for the membership of both Thomas Harry of St.

[3] These characteristics are typical of a fraternity in a small town. For a discussion, see Rosser, 'Big Brotherhood', pp. 27-42.
[4] Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: the Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages,' *Speculum*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan, 1992), pp 69-97; Virginia R. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350-1558* (Woodbridge, 1996); David J.F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Guilds in late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547* (York, 2000).

Ives (Cornwall) in 1503/4 and Nicholas and Joan Young of Easton in Gordano (Somerset) in 1504/5.[5] John Ketilsby of Coventry paid for John and Elizabeth Portar of Balsall (West Midlands), who are described as 'late of Coventry' – perhaps a relationship formed from their former residency in Coventry.[6] Generally, however, the riding books are not suited to an understanding of the more personal actions of members. As they are the bulk of surviving documentation relating to the guild, viewed on their own the riding books can force the illusion of a purely transactional relationship between the Palmers and its members further afield. Yet an individual's relationship with the guild and its members was much more complex and participatory than the riding books would suggest. The dearth of personal records relating to individual members cannot be wholly overcome, and so as much as possible will be gleaned from testamentary evidence and a variety of guild records: memoranda, accounts from wardens, stewards and clerks and property deeds.

Stewards

The guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Boston, is well-known for its remarkable ecclesiastical pardon campaign, taking a central role in Robert Swanson's study of indulgences and of the bodies that distributed them, in which religious guilds took their own place. While the Boston and Ludlow guilds are similar in their size and scope, Swanson discerns that 'there is a real sense of difference in the motivations for membership' when comparing the Ludlow and Boston guilds.[7] Swanson was referring to the differences in religious benefits, such as indulgences, and their distribution. Yet this statement holds true in several aspects of the Palmers, for their operations were markedly different from their counterparts of numerical significance: the Boston and Jesus guilds. The following will ascertain what role these strategies had in generating and fostering a sustained relationship with its members.

[5] This happened with some regularity for both living and dead members of the guild. In the case of Thomas Harry, he was entered while alive, while Nicholas and Joan Young were dead. John Soket and his wife Joan entered the guild between 1485 and 1489. SA: LB/5/1/2, LB/5/3/5, f. 55r, LB/5/3/6, f. 37v.
[6] John and Elizabeth Portar were both alive when joining the Palmers. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 28v.
[7] Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007) p. 428.

As the Boston guild's membership was essentially national, like that of the Palmers, it is perhaps no coincidence that it operated similar methods for the collection of membership fees, which were both necessitated and informed by their widespread membership patterns. Guild chamberlains, in essence very similar to the Palmers' stewards, were allocated areas of the country from which to collect fees. Unlike the Palmers, however, the collection of fees was delegated even further through the role of the vice-chamberlain, who was given a more specific area, within a chamberlain's oversight, to collect money. Likened to the processes of fee-farming or leasing, the similarities between the Boston and Ludlow administrations end abruptly here.[8] As with large pardon bodies, fee-farming for large guilds was a common practice in late medieval England. The Jesus Guild operated through a system in which the collection of fees was farmed out to proctors across the country, each active in certain dioceses.[9] Farming could become highly complex as farms became sub-leased to other individuals. Inevitably, this practice led to legal cases, as when Nicholas Smith sued William Kynston for 7*s.* due for the collections at Lenton (Nottinghamshire) for the Jesus Guild.[10] The full-blown process of fee-farming, as manifested in the Jesus Guild, or the partial process chosen by the Boston guild, resulted in the individual guild member interacting with an associate of the guild but not with the main governing structure. This individual was different from the equivalent collector from Ludlow: the steward. The steward was a member of the governing council of the Palmers and directly involved in both the administration and governance of the guild.[11] Each Palmer was guaranteed a direct link to the guild through their contact with the steward on his annual journeys throughout the country.

Direct links between the individual and guild officers almost certainly created the potential for interpersonal relationships. The retention of control over guild fees, and the money spent on

[8] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 35.
[9] E. New, 'Fraternities: A Case Study of the Jesus Guild' in Derek Keene, Arthur Burns and Andrew Saint (eds.), *St. Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London, 604-2004* (London, 2004), p. 162.
[10] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England,* p. 216.
[11] The stewards and the warden were the primary ruling figures. The stewards held the heavy burden of responsibility for the guild's finances and were therefore involved in many aspects of the guild's activities.

the stewards' necessary expenses on journeys to collect fees, while suggestive, lead the way to more concrete actions that communicate the guild's investment in its members. Despite their role as collector of guild fees, the stewards took the opportunity on their journeys to spend money in the localities on members there.

The money that a guild collected would contribute to the provision of a range of benefits to its brethren. These fraternal associations were concerned with almsgiving and charity to the deserving poor, both within and outside of their membership. A significant number of the guild returns of 1389 outline their responsibility to care for their brethren in times of need. The Palmers' Guild return states:

> When it happens that any of the brothers or sisters of the gild shall have been brought to such want, through theft, fire, shipwreck, fall of a house, or any other mishap, that they have not enough to live on; then once, twice, and thrice, but not a fourth time, as much help shall be given to them, out of the goods of the gild, as the rector and stewards, having regard to the deserts of each, and to the means of the gild, shall order; so that whoever bears the name of this gild, shall be upraised again, through the ordinances, goods, and help of his fellows.[12]

The Palmers were among good company in making provisions for the accidental destitution of their members. Thirty-one per cent of the guild ordinances from the 1389 returns promise aid to their destitute or aging brothers and sisters.[13] Of course, many studies of late medieval charity have demonstrated that guilds were not as actively charitable to their members as the ordinances would lead the reader to believe.[14] While never explicitly stated in the guild documents that the steward should spend money on brethren during his collection, this responsibility can be discerned from the scraps of expense sheets that remain. The earliest reference to expenses on brethren outside of Ludlow is found in a clerk's receipt book from 1501, which records that the steward spent 4*d.*

[12] Toulmin-Smith, *English Gilds.*
[13] Ben R. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul.,1993), p. 199.
[14] Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987); Caroline M. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London' in Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper Bill (eds.), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 26-7; Gervase Rosser found that Westminster's Guild of Our Lady of Rounceval distributed aid almost exclusively to non-members of the guild. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 310-24.

on the brethren of Shrewsbury and 4*d.* on unspecified brethren.[15] Between 1511 and 1520, the stewards spent money on the Palmers' brethren in Shrewsbury, Coventry, Birmingham, Hereford, Leominster, Bristol, Worcester, Bath, Brecon, Chester, Oswestry and, on many occasions, unspecified 'dyvers brethren'.[16] There may well have been brethren in other locations that account for a steward's costs: a number of scribbles in the clerk's account book speak of the steward's expenses on brethren 'as it apperet in a byll'.[17] The stewards' accounts for later years provide different but equally unclear examples. The July reckoning of 1533/4 includes the note: 'paid in expenses per magistrum berry super fratres de dynbygh 1*d.*'[18] Earlier in the year the stewards had paid one 'Robert' for 2*d.* on brethren expenses in Wales.[19] What were these payments to brethren, while the steward was undertaking his annual rides?

They were not the distribution of alms. These expenses in the clerk's receipt books are interspersed among the recording of the collection of payments from the stewards' journeys. The lack of detail precludes definitive understanding of the nature of the dispersal of money by the steward; the guild's accounts were created for its own use, to balance the books, not for the historian seeking precise information. The reason for such expenditure must, therefore, be somewhat speculative. There are a few signs that point towards the fact that these payments were not intended for support of brethren who had fallen upon hard times – or at least, they were not the traditional form of support. Unlike many of their counterparts who specified a weekly stipend, the Palmers did not stipulate the amount that they would spend on their recently destitute brothers and sisters.[20] However, it has long been settled that the amount of money that most guilds pledged in charity was only just sufficient for a member to sustain themselves. It has been estimated that

[15] SA: LB/5/3/38.
[16] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[17] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[18] SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 6
[19] SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 2.
[20] The stipends could range from as little as 3*d.* per week as the guild of St George, Lincoln specified, or as high as 14*d.* that some of the London guilds provided their needy brothers and sisters. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity', p. 206.

8-9*d.* per week would have covered food and the price of renting a cottage.[21] The sums of money that the Palmers were spending on 'brethren' and 'men' of the guild were paltry, ranging from 1*d.* to 20*d.* Even the highest amount, 20*d.*, would not have been enough to sustain one member of the guild. Almost every reference to payments on brethren were on an annual basis, when the steward arrived in the town to collect money.[22] Twenty pence, split over the course of the year, would be less than half a penny a week – a sum of money so trivial that it can hardly have been considered suitable financial aid. It almost goes without saying that the words 'brethren' and 'men' indicate multiple individuals as recipients, reducing even further the possibility that this payment was part of the Palmers' undertaking to help members 'be upraised again'.

Ben McRee has argued that the guilds that pledged assistance to their members in the 1389 returns were large, prestigious and wealthy. Their admission fees tended to be almost twice as expensive as those that did not offer assistance, appealing to the more financially secure individuals who wished to participate in a guild that would naturally occupy a prominent place in local society.[23] This category of guilds, into which the Palmers certainly fell, did not expect to contribute to their members frequently, for the provision was for infrequent and extraordinary accidents.[24] Herein lies a key piece of evidence regarding the payments to brethren of the Palmers. That there is a distinct absence of justification for the payments is striking: they were evidently commonplace, a routine activity that the guild council expected to spend on members. There is no evidence, in either the fine copy of the accounts, or the informal scribbling in the clerk's book (that was taken with the steward on his collection journeys), of a discussion by the 'rector' (warden) and the stewards of individuals in need of these payments – the officers given the responsibility for charitable decisions in the 1389 returns. Although historians are acutely aware that ordinances

[21] McRee points out that average 8*d.* a week is just enough to live on, based on Christopher Dyer's calculations in *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, 1200-1550* (1989) and Phythian-Adams' study of Coventry: Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979); McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity', p. 207.
[22] The exception is Shrewsbury, whose brethren received money more than once a year. SA: LB/5/3/40.
[23] McRee, 'Gild Charity and Solidarity', p. 203.
[24] McRee, 'Gild Charity and Solidarity', pp. 203, 209.

were aspirational documents and should not be taken as the rules that guilds followed, the lack of consultation between guild officers on the charitable case at hand, as well as the absence of distinction between recipients, suggests that the Palmers were not distributing this particular type of charity in these visits. It is highly unlikely that brethren, each year, were experiencing disaster in almost every town that the stewards visited.

The stewards did not specify the names of individual brethren, or even how many brethren they met with in each town. They simply recorded money spent on unnamed brethren rather than individuals. Were they meeting their brethren together, which is why the sum is not broken down into its constituent parts? We know that the stewards did spend money on certain members and specify it in their accounts. Diane, wife of the dyer Richard Wymfold of Alcester, received 6*d.* from the steward Walter Rogers on his ride to collect fees in 1511.[25] But the frequent use of the blanket term of 'brethren' by the stewards suggests a more social aspect. One entry in the clerk's receipt book records that the steward spent 3*d.* on a quart of Romney wine for the brethren of Oswestry; this likely indicates a local gathering of guild members.[26] Such a meeting of brethren and guild officers was an indication that membership, for those outside of Ludlow parish, was not simply a transactional relationship of the payment of money in return for *pro anima* prayers. The steward's arrival into a town subsequently meant a meeting of brethren. The social aspect of a guild – the community, the networks available – materialised in the localities, on a formal basis, each time the guild official arrived. The gathering of brethren over food and drink was, therefore, a vital component in the creation, and maintenance, of an active guild community.

The absence of records detailing those who attended the main guild feast at Pentecost prevents us from knowing the scope of attendance, both in the geographical catchment of attending members and the numbers of people involved. There is no record of fines for absence, nor specific travel costs for the invitation of members from the localities, as found in Stratford:

[25] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[26] SA: LB/5/3/40.

the Holy Cross guild paid for its officers to go to Warwick, specifically with the intent to invite its brethren there to the feast.[27] Those who did not attend the feast (and the mass that preceded it) would incur a fine. The regular assembly of brethren, and the community it fostered, was a noticeable priority of the Holy Cross guild and it was not alone in this behaviour.[28] The key explanatory difference between the two guilds may be the type of membership. Unlike the Palmers, the Stratford guild had mostly 'short-range contacts' residing within fifteen miles of the town.[29] Is it realistic to assume that Ludlow's members in distant counties, such as Cornwall, Sussex, Norfolk and Yorkshire, attended the feast every year? It is highly improbable, and, moreover, the guildhall was not suitably sized to accommodate its thousands of members.[30] A smaller gathering from the Midlands, Cotswolds and the Marches was more likely to have made up the core of attendance each Pentecost.

But the Palmers did not shun the prevailing guild ideology of solidarity in spite of its extensive national reach. Feasts may have been the most common way to forge relationships between members. Indeed, they were a 'tangible expression' of the companionship commensurate with guild membership;[31] but the Palmers performed guild solidarity in other ways. In the towns in which the stewards visited, their arrival activated the collective bodies of local Palmers. The meeting of 'brethren' with the stewards (as referenced in Richard Hore's bill of allowances) was a secondary opportunity (after the feast) for members to gather together. Because of the guild's practice of annual rides to collect fees, rather than the practice of collection at the annual feast as was the case with many guilds, members in each town could meet formally under the auspices of the guild more regularly than the Pentecostal feast. The brethren of Shrewsbury met the steward even more frequently than his annual collection visits. On two occasions in 1511, the stewards

[27] Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 33 (1994), p. 438.
[28] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', p. 33; eight guilds in Cambridgeshire included the punishment of a fine for non-attendance in their guild ordinances. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 65.
[29] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', p. 34.
[30] Moran, *Guildhall*, pp. 1-6.
[31] Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast', p. 437.

Thomas Clonton and Walter Rogers spent money on the 'men' of Shrewsbury, and one more time on the 'brethren' of Shrewsbury.[32] Through these interactions, the Palmers' guild had a collective presence beyond the annual feast, and beyond the town of Ludlow.

The stewards' visit and the spending of money did not solely foster communities of brethren in towns, where members came from a varying selection of crafts, trades and social statuses, but also extended into spheres where strong communities of guild members already lived: religious houses. Money spent on the priories of Ranton (Staffordshire), Worcester and the Whiteladies (Shropshire) were noted throughout the 1510s.[33] Communities of priests, such as those at Battlefield, Shropshire, were also recipients of the steward's expenses. The steward Thomas Clonton spent 4*s.* 9*d.* on the priory of Ranton, the priests of Battlefield and an unspecified priest who brought in a 'nobull…as it apperith in a byll' in 1511.[34] These religious communities were already arenas of solidarity between members – just a different source of solidarity. And, as has been discussed in Chapters Three and Four, households, of either an ecclesiastical or secular nature, were hotbeds of guild membership. While the commitment of each member of the guild was re-confirmed each year with the payment of membership fees, the gathering on the steward's arrival operated in much the same way. The steward, in his wide-ranging and varied role, as a member of the guild council *and* as an itinerant official, was a key figure in connecting centre and locality. The Palmers were geographically dispersed, yet also concentrated in particular towns. In this way, guild membership could still stimulate and enact the performance of community. Members did not need to travel to Ludlow to participate actively in the Palmers' communal life.

Solesters

Stewards were not the only guild officials to represent guild interests further afield than Ludlow. 'Solesters' (or 'selesters') were local representatives of the guild, and have previously been thought

[32] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[33] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[34] SA: LB/5/3/40.

to have existed in the villages of Kingsland, Wigmore, Yarpole and Hanley.[35] The first mention of the Palmers' solesters can be found in 1504, and their office was still in existence in the 1540s.[36] While it is entirely possible that the role was created by the guild in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, their first appearance in the early sixteenth suggests that solesters were a product of the ostensibly sudden and dramatic increase in membership of the Palmers in the last years of the fifteenth century, coinciding with (and perhaps prompted by) the arrival of Arthur and the Council of the Marches. The continued existence of the role into the 1540s is testament to the need for their services to cater to the extensive membership; the expansion of membership was not merely a flash in the pan. The exact purpose of the solesters is not outlined in any additional surviving documentation of the guild. Previous scholarship believed that they were the collectors of fines, and Michael Faraday suggested that solesters existed to reduce the number of villages around Ludlow that the stewards had to include on their collection routes.[37] Upon closer inspection, however, the solesters were at the very heart of the Palmers' supporting infrastructure for their members. Previous assumptions of the solesters' functions have been misguided, and the following re-evaluation will demonstrate the extent to which this office was part of the process of building guild community facilitated by the Palmers.

That the guild had an informal accounting system for the stewards' expenses, incurred while on their travels, is clear through the countless scribbles in the more formal account books, offering a tantalising glimpse of the frequent expenditure in English and Welsh towns.[38] The lowest order of accounts, and the most utilised in this study, are the clerk's receipt books. While on rides with the steward, a clerk recorded the names of members and the expenses that occurred on the journeys. Each year, a section of the receipt book would be 'new brethren' – those individuals who

[35] Michael Faraday, *Ludlow, 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), p. 81; he states that solesters existed in Yarpole, Wigmore, Kingsland, and Hanley, as referenced in the 1534/5 steward's account. Hanley refers to either or both Hanley William and Hanley Child. They exist as two neighbouring villages in Worcestershire, part of the Hanley civil parish.
[36] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 81; SA: LB/5/3/33.
[37] VCH Salop; Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 81.
[38] For example, see SA: LB/5/3/40.

joined the guild and began their payments for membership. The use of 'new' for incoming members signals that brethren still in the process of paying may have been those in question when the clerk describes 'old brethren'.

The money that the stewards spent on the brethren was discussed above, but payments were also made for solesters. The money spent on solesters reveals their existence and charts their locations. The stewards had to keep track of the money that they spent on their travels and so payments to solesters appear in the yearly accounts of the stewards, in a memorandum book from the warden and stewards and clerk's receipts. Only one separate bill survives, dating from c. 1538/9: 'Richard Hore bill of alowance'.[39] Richard Hore, the guild steward, paid for the meat and drink for 'our' solester and his 'reward' in Birmingham, Coleshill, Atherstone, Nuneaton, Derby, Burton, Leicester, and Coventry.[40] The accounts from 1534 record payments to solesters in Kingsland, Hanley, Yarpole, Worfield, Tenby, Oswestry, Ombersley, Martley, Claverley and Wigmore.[41] Gloucestershire had solesters in at least Ashleworth and Hasfield in 1513/4.[42] Solesters also operated throughout North Wales and as far away as Suffolk.[43]

Although locations can be established only through a few surviving sources, a sense of the scale of the Palmers' permanent presence across England and Wales is clear. The heartland of the guild's membership was the West Midlands, and solesters were present among the towns and cities that joined the Palmers in force. Once again, the pervasiveness of the Palmers is noticeable. Previous suggestions that the solesters were present only in important market towns would imply that the guild was concerned with providing a presence in towns with large numbers of members.[44] Yet, Yarpole, Ombersley, Martley and Wigmore were small contributors to the Palmers' membership, at least in the sixteenth century: only thirty-one members joined from those four

[39] SA: LB/5/3/19. Hore was steward for at least 1538-9, suggesting the dating I have given above. However, the usual term for a steward was four years and, therefore, the bill may be as early as 1536 or as late as 1541.
[40] SA: LB/5/3/19.
[41] SA: LB/5/3/31, m 5.
[42] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[43] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[44] VCH Salop.

villages between 1497 and 1515.[45] Coventry, Birmingham, Derby, Burton and Leicester, on the other hand, were hives of membership. Coventry was the city with the highest contribution to membership in 1505/6.[46] The size of the village, town or city, and the number of paying members does not appear to have had any bearing on the decision of the guild to employ a solester there. The Palmers were willing to pay for a representative in a village or town, regardless of how much money they received from individuals there, revealing an investment in its wide community of members.

Contrary to Faraday's claim that the solesters were part of a local process of fee collecting, relieving the stewards of a small part of their work, the solesters were, in fact, part of the national process of guild membership. The surviving evidence does not support the claim that the solesters collected fees. Firstly, the clerk's receipt books, detailing payments made to the steward and his clerk on their journeys, record individuals and their payments from each town (those with solesters and those without) – there is no reference to collection of fees there by the solester. Secondly, the presence of a solester did not preclude visits by the stewards, who are recorded as having visited each town and city in which the solesters resided. They paid the solestor's fee and purchased food for each solester while simultaneously meeting with brethren of the guild. The stewards still spent a number of days in each place; for example, Richard Hore spent three days in Leicester and four days in Derby meeting with brethren and the solesters.[47] The existence of solesters did not eradicate the need for the stewards to visit those towns, nor did it appear to shorten the length of time there. In Nottingham, where there is no surviving evidence of a solester, Hore likewise spent three days collecting fees and spending money on members. It would appear the office of the solester had no direct impact on the efficiency of the administration of the guild, which prompts an inquiry into the specific purpose of the solester and of the explanation for the creation of this office.

[45] SA: LB/5/3/2-10.
[46] SA: LB/5/3/7.
[47] SA: LB/5/3/19.

Similar to the Ludlow-based officers, the solester was an officer of the guild whose role was more than existing as a financial agent. Where the records are not able to illuminate the exact role of the solesters, the definition and etymology of the word can point towards their role. Solester is a form of 'solicitour' (solister, solester), defined as either an 'instigator' or an 'agent, representative'.[48] These officials, then, were either placed to encourage, or 'instigate' membership and/or to act as the guild's representative in their respective locations. A rare glimpse into the process of appointing solesters is presented in the clerk's receipt book for 1513/4: men from two villages in Gloucestershire join the Palmers and each 'promysed to be a good selester'.[49] The word 'good', found in use when referencing the engagement of a Suffolk solester as well, implies a certain level of responsibility that accompanied the role of a solester. The guild was evidently concerned that their representatives were capable of shouldering the responsibility, and, perhaps, acting in a manner that suitably represented the guild's reputation. Just like their membership, the Palmers employed solesters across the country, from Wales all the way to Suffolk, demonstrative of a clear commitment to establish infrastructure to support their members in each location, not only the ones within a convenient range of Ludlow.

Assemblies, as discussed above, augmented feelings of solidarity between brethren and were therefore a key aspect in the social function of a guild. While the visitation of the steward prompted a gathering of brethren, it was still simply an annual gathering, like the Pentecost feast. While the benefits of this localised gathering have already been discussed, the absence of a guild hall, or even an occasion to meet, were issues the Palmers had to overcome in the localities if they were to create a community. The significance of guild solesters, therefore, lay in their permanent presence and potential to encourage the social activity the steward generated each visit. In Atherstone and Nuneaton, around 1538/9, the steward met the solester and the brethren together, as it is written 'item spend on our brethren there and our solester meat.'[50] Rather than recording

[48] *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. 'solicitour'; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'soliciter'.
[49] LB/5/3/40.
[50] LB/5/3/19.

separate expenses for the brethren and solester, they were grouped together, indicative of a social gathering between the two officers and brethren. Despite the somewhat obscure references in the surviving documentation, it is plain that the solesters were the 'face' of the Ludlow Palmers for the majority of members. The guild was evidently concerned with the type of person suitable to act as their representative from afar, as it was noted that a new recruit from Suffolk in 1518 would make a 'good' solester, while the Gloucestershire solesters 'promysed to be good'.[51] The Palmers sought to create and sustain a positive presence across the country, devolving the usual structures of fraternity to create microcosms of Palmers that were directed by officials – a system that complemented brethren-initiated microcosms that will be discussed in the third section.

The Palmers, while located in a small market town in the Welsh Marches, did not operate in the same fashion as parish-based fraternities. Although a national guild with similar geographical reach to the Jesus and Boston guilds, the Palmers' actions in the sixteenth century demonstrate an attempt to retain the bonds of fraternal support characteristic of localised fraternities. Stewards and solesters provided a direct link to the guild as an institution and provided the opportunity for membership of a national fraternity to be more than a transactional and occasional relationship in return for spiritual benefits. This was not, of course, a one-way relationship. The structures put in place by the guild reveal nothing of the reciprocal investment of the brethren, begging the question to what extent were individuals far from Ludlow demonstrating their commitment to guild membership?

The Active Brethren: Bequests to the Palmers

In 1509, John Browne bequeathed eight marks to the warden and brethren of the Palmers to make a 'salt [cellar] therwith' for their use.[52] A Ludlow man with many pious testamentary provisions relating to the parish church of St Laurence and the Palmers' Guild, including a month's mind and

[51] SA: LB/5/3/40.
[52] TNA: PROB 11/16/659.

an annual obit, both to be performed by guild priests, his bequest is characteristic of membership of a local guild. Over thirty extant wills, over the guild's lifetime, illustrate Ludlow parishioners' requests for daily masses or annual obits to be performed by the Palmers' guild priests.[53] That is not to say that each and every Palmer of Ludlow bequeathed money or items to the guild. The Palmers provided an *opportunity* for bequests, often in return for prayers or obits, but acting upon that was optional. As ever, the voluntary aspect of guilds must be stressed.[54] Deathbed bequests to guilds were a choice of the individual benefactor and, as such, have often been used by historians to demonstrate investment in a guild.[55] Bequests to parish fraternities were, in one form or another, a method of commemoration within the local sphere. Local members would be confronted on a more regular basis with divine services or material items such as chalices and vestments, bequeathed by a local member. These bequests served a dual purpose of providing spiritual benefits as well as acting as visible reminders of an individual's relationship to a powerful and prominent local guild. The residents of Ludlow had these daily or weekly reminders; and local members would reap the benefits of these bequests, either for themselves if they were still living, or for their families and their memory, if deceased. At first glance, Ludlow members stood to gain most from visible recognition within the community through their bequests. Yet the Palmers were much more than a local parish fraternity, and testamentary evidence can illuminate the engagement and commitment of members who resided further away.

Seventy wills of members from outside of Ludlow, proven in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, were sampled for this study. Wills were selected based on the locations of members, primarily from the urban centres under consideration in Chapter Three, where there were a large

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[53] VCH Salop.

[54] Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 1 (1991), pp. 173-189.

[55] Claire Kennan, 'Guilds and Society in Louth, Lincolnshire c. 1450-1550' (PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018); Sally Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement in Religious Guilds' in Caroline Barron and Anne F. Sutton (eds.), *The Medieval Merchant: Proceedings of the 2012 Harlaxton Medieval Symposium* (Donington, 2014), pp. 221-241; Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire' in Robert Bearman (ed.), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 62-79; Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1998); Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, p. 137.

number of Palmers: Bristol, Worcester, Gloucester and Coventry. Reading, Shrewsbury and Lincoln were added to ensure that the sampled wills were representative of the geographical spread of the Palmers. A small number of Welsh members were included, primarily from Abergavenny and Wiston, Pembrokeshire. The occupational range represented in the wills is confined mostly to those of more substantial means: merchants, drapers, grocers, bishops and self-ascribed 'gentlemen'. Only three wills mentioned the Palmers' Guild, and each featured a slightly different bequest. Thomas Eyton, bailiff of Aylesbury (Buckinghamshire) bequeathed 6*s.* 8*d.* to the Palmers in his will dating from 1504.[56] While his will does not specify a purpose for this money, it was likely intended for membership as it aligns with the normal admission fee. This is confirmed, as his name appears in the 1504 riding book, which notes both that he was deceased and that his fee had been paid in full.[57] The other two wills relate to merchants of Bristol and are from the mid-fifteenth century: Thomas Aisshe (1457) and Robert Sturmy (1458). Aisshe bequeathed 20*s.* to the Palmers in 1457 while Sturmy left a legacy to the guild priests in 1458.[58] The guild was collecting 4*d.* of rent from 'Sturmy's grownde' in 1513 and 1514, presumably as part of Sturmy's legacy from over fifty years previous.[59]

Although three testamentary bequests to the guild might not indicate much in the way of active involvement, this is perhaps more of an issue with the nature of the source base than an accurate reflection of how brethren interacted with the guild. The limitations of wills are the subject of continuing scholarly debate among historians of the later middle ages.[60] Wills, often utilised to comment upon an individual's relationships, piety, and status, permit analysis of what

[56] TNA: PROB 11/14/169. It has been mislabeled on the catalogue as 'Thomas Eyton of Ashbury' but it is in fact Aylesbury.
[57] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 80r.
[58] TNA: PROB 11/4/193; Thomas Procter Wadley, *Notes or abstracts of the wills contained in the volume entitled the Great orphan book and Book of wills: in the council house at Bristol* (Bristol, 1886), p. 138.
[59] SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 6v, 7r.
[60] Clive Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered', in Michael Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-33; Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2018); Rob Lutton, *Lollardy and orthodox religion in pre-Reformation England: reconstructing piety* (Woodbridge, 2006); R. Lutton and E. Salter, *Pieties in Transition: religious practices and experiences, c. 1400-1600* (Aldershot, 2007).

can only be considered a very fleeting moment in a lifetime of an individual. In terms of the Palmers, the lack of bequests in the sample cannot be taken as absence of interest or a dearth of piety. Even those members for whom the Palmers were the primary parish guild – not the regional or national context in which others might view it – were not a guaranteed source of deathbed bequests for the guild. Comparisons with other fraternities in other parts of England confirm the general point. In Louth, a mere six wills between 1450 and 1550 mention one or two of the town's major guilds.[61] Wills are not, therefore, indicative of an individual's relationship with the guild. In general, wills alone rarely reveal membership of particular fraternities. In Cambridgeshire, Bainbridge's study of 150 wills before 1547 found that only fourteen per cent mentioned guilds or fraternities.[62] Significant attention has been paid to mercantile bequests to guilds, which were often low as well. Only fifteen per cent of York's merchants left bequests to guilds, while Hull and Beverley guilds were even less likely to receive legacies.[63] Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire guilds were frequently overlooked by merchants in favour of deathbed contributions to their parish church.[64] The exception might lie with certain major trading centres, which tended to have a higher contribution from merchant members, as seen through fifty-four per cent of Boston's merchant wills bequeathing money or items to guilds, and forty-three per cent in King's Lynn.[65] The Palmers, however, were not the only major guild that suffered a lack of bequests from members outside of its immediate community. Even the gentry members of Stratford's guild of the Holy Cross who were active in the guild during their lifetime failed to remember the guild in their will.[66] Christine Carpenter's study concludes that substantial gentry families did not see the Stratford guild as a viable option for religious patronage – they were more likely to endow their own chantries for remembrance. Lesser gentry might use the guild for obits when it was unlikely that local parish

[61] Kennan, 'Guilds and Society', p. 27.
[62] Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 91.
[63] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 137; Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement', pp. 229-30.
[64] Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement', pp. 231-39.
[65] Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement', pp. 225-27.
[66] Carpenter, 'Town and Country', p. 73.

chantries would survive long.[67] The process of will-making was often guided by the scribe's practice or convenience, negating, to some extent, the use of wills as sole evidence of a testator's pious inclinations.[68] We should not, therefore, take the lack of testamentary bequests to the Palmers as an indicator of either the pious inclinations of its members or the involvement of its members through gift-giving.

Other sources complement our understanding of bequests, or gifts, to the Palmers. An extant warden and stewards' memorandum book dating from the 1510s and 1520s contains miscellaneous information primarily relating to the guild's financial activities and obligations. Reckonings and 'acownting' happened on at least an annual basis and are recorded here. So too are the rent collections, expenses and obligations of multiple obits, and other financial transactions of guild business. Hidden among a multitude of repetitive pages of rental collections are a few inventories of what 'ys yn the treasour of gold' and the 'tresour of gages'.[69] These inventories provide a glimpse into the wealth of the guild as well as a shadowy picture of the gifts given to the guild. Several items within the treasure certainly fall into this category. A red girdle 'of the gifte of Thomas Williams' was one such item in the treasury in the early sixteenth century. With no descriptor or further information about this gift, it is hard to identify Thomas Williams. There are two men of that name in the extant records who were members contemporaneous to this inventory; one from Stamford, Lincolnshire, and the other from Lugwardine, Herefordshire. He could be one or neither of those men. Amongst a scribble of accounts in the memorandum book is an item listed in a reckoning of the 'treasure of gold': 'And also there ys yn a nothir litle bag of the gifte of John Brown together 5 libras vi s. viii d.'[70] Were the contents a gift from John Brown or simply the bag in which the money was contained? It is highly plausible that a gift of such value

[67] Carpenter, 'Town and Country', p. 74; this is part of a larger discussion on the privatisation of religion, of which can be found in: Colin Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century Gentleman' in B. Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 193-208.
[68] Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention', p. 15.
[69] It is unclear exactly what sense of 'gages' the guild was referring to here. It could be that of payments, security or bonds, although it seems unlikely as some of the items listed as in the 'tresour of gages' explicitly state that they are the gift of an individual. It may simply have been an additional chest of items.
[70] SA: LB/5/3/ 36 , f. 6r.

was from the steward John Brown (in office 1505-9), who was a wealthy draper of Ludlow. As already has been noted, Brown gave eight marks for the guild to have a salt cellar commissioned, but his will also bequeathed £10 for a tenement to be bought and given to the guild for a perpetual obit.[71] His testamentary provisions are arresting enough, when compared with the lack, and low value, of other bequests to the Palmers, yet evidently they were not his only gifts to the guild. Regardless of whether the bag, the contents, or both were the initial bequest, it was gifted from Brown. The numerous bequests of officers, both in life and death, are indicative of investment in, and a strong attachment to, the Palmers. The relationship of the guild with its officers was reflected, and reinforced, by the expansion of the guild's collection of goods. Brown's fellow steward, Richard Bragott (in office 1505-9), gifted the guild items recorded on the same folio. Unlike Brown's, these items are clear in their function and subsequent religious nature, being 'abassen a yewer and a dyaburue [diaper?] towell'.[72] Sir Hugh Cheney, a local member of the gentry and one of the elders in the fourteenth century, gifted the guild a gilt and enamelled nut cup (known as the Warden's Nut cup) and a goblet with his arms engraved on the bottom.[73] John Hosier, likewise involved in the guild, gifted another nut cup in the fifteenth century.[74] Those intimate with the guild's governance, as these men were, lavished material wealth on the Palmers in ways that are perhaps unsurprising.

The guild accounts reveal gifts from non-local members as well, often materialising in the form of a cup, such as a gilt cup and cover 'of the gifte of my lady Newton of Pembroke' recorded in an inventory of the treasury of the guild in 1517/8.[75] The same inventory describes another gilt cup and cover from one 'Master Bagot' of Bristol. This is almost certainly a reference to John Bagot, merchant and member of the civic elite in Bristol (one of the men discussed in Chapter

[71] TNA: PROB 11/16/659.
[72] SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 6r.
[73] Nut cups were so-named due to their construction from a coconut. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
[74] SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
[75] SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.

Two), who became a Palmer in 1489 with his wife, Elizabeth.[76] Charles Booth, Bishop of Hereford, had given the Palmers a gilt standing cup with a cover by 1517/8.[77] Two other gifts – amounting to three spice plates in total – are recorded in the same inventory: two by the gift of one 'mistress Lane' (location unknown) and one from Sir John Bristowe from Bristol.[78] These gifts to the Palmers were each given by members who, unlike the officers discussed above, were not intimately involved in running the guild and are therefore of note. They were voluntary in a different way from those of local members. For while each of these members, from Ludlow or afar, gave material goods, it is worth acknowledging the differences of their geographic locations and therefore the initiative behind the bequest. Put quite simply, the immediacy and intimacy that existed in small, pressured market towns such as Ludlow were strong enticements to donate. Yet the voluntarism of guild activity was most marked in the actions (of bequests) of Lady Newton, John Bagot, Bishop Charles Booth and Sir John Bristowe. These bequests would have been used for feasts, or for the college of priests in Ludlow maintained by the guild. The nut cups were reserved for feasting, presumably the Warden's Nut for the elders of the Palmers and the spice plates for general deployment at the feasts. Such gifts may be analogous to individual bequests to parish churches which were clearly meant to invoke presence or memory of the donor;[79] in this sense the use of a donated cup may have been a way of 'participating' in the guild's activities even if one were absent. The guild clearly took pains in recording from whom such gifts originated, an act of remembrance in and of itself, but also an action that highlights recollection of the donor.[80] This theme of remembrance through objects is further underlined by the form of the proceedings of guild feasts – the lighting of candles, praying for the souls of members, singing hymns and partaking in acts

[76] SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 6.
[77] SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 18v.
[78] SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 17v, 18r. It has not been possible to identify Sir John Bristowe in other records.
[79] For example, the hearse cloth for general use at All Saints, Bristol, was inscribed the donor's initials, while Jane, Viscountess Lisle, willed her executors to provide twenty-four sets of vestments with her arms on them for twenty-four parishes 'to haue my soule remembred and prayed for'. Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls*, p. 229; TNA: PROB 11/12/213.
[80] For a discussion on the donation of drinking vessels as a commemorative object in religious houses, see: Shelia Sweetinburgh, 'Remembering the Dead at Dinner-Time' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Burlington, 2010), pp. 278-288.

of eating and drinking – all of which Rosser has described as 'paralitugical' as they invoked certain elements of the Mass.[81] In fact, it could be argued that this blurring of materiality, commemoration, and feasting had biblical precedents, echoing Christ's admonitions at the Last Supper and the very institution of the Eucharist: 'this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me'; and 'this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:24-5).[82] In the Mass itself, the body and blood of Christ were physically manifest as participants were urged to remember Christ's sacrifice, just as the presence of benefactors was invoked through the use of their bequests:[83] there was no mistaking the liturgical parallels invoked in the circulation of wine in a common drinking cup during the feast. These bequests serve as stark reminders that the Palmers' Guild was not merely the recipient of the simple acts of fee paying.

The scope of gift-giving to the guild may have been larger than the few examples provided above. The working nature of these documents results in somewhat obscure references, and our modern reading of the text does not always pick up on the nuances probably known to the guild officers. These accounts were written for the warden and stewards, whose roles necessitated an intimate knowledge of the guild's inner working and every activity, and, as such, explanatory and exhaustively descriptive lists do not appear always necessary. Any description provided is clearly for identification purposes only, when two or more similar items are in possession of the guild. One such issue arises from the language used by the scribes writing these memoranda. The items in the treasury are, with some regularity, described as 'of' someone. Does this vocabulary denote that the item was a gift? Or was it, in fact, being held there for safe-keeping, as the term 'gages' implies? It is plausible that a guild could act as a safe deposit for its members, for some guilds already acted in the manner of a banking institution with frequent loans to their members.[84] The

[81] Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast', p. 435.
[82] The verses in 1 Corinthians is the only account that emphasises active remembrance associated with both the bread *and* wine, although it is nevertheless implied in the synoptic gospels; indeed, only Luke explicitly states that the eating of bread was to be done 'in remembrance'.
[83] For the Mass in pre-Reformation England see: Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional religion in England, c. 1400- c. 1580* (New Haven, 2005), pp. 91-130.
[84] Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 117; loans were not limited to individuals, but also to institutions. The leading fraternities in Louth, Lincolnshire, loaned money on two occasions to the churchwardens of the parish

descriptions could also denote the gift of these items to the guild from the individuals mentioned within the inventory. For example, during the first year of Richard Bragott and Henry Capper's stewardship, the inventory lists:

> a demysent of Richard Tibbottes
> A redde gurdyll of John Frongk the younger
> A pece of a Cors of John Wall goldsmytthe[85]

Unfortunately, no other information is given about these individuals and it is not possible to confirm if they were all members. None of these men's names is present in the extant membership lists, but that does not preclude their membership due to the gaps in membership records discussed previously. Others, like John Dynon and John Shrawley, are known only from their connection to items in the treasury recorded as being 'of' them.[86] The chantry certificate for the Palmers notes that in addition to the valued plate and gilt of the guild, there were goods and ornaments that appear in an inventory but separate from the surviving certificate.[87] It is likely here that these potential items would be found, if they were indeed gifts to the guild.

While inventories are frequently used to inform understanding of guild wealth, property and ceremony,[88] the aim here has been to use them as tools to view bequests to the Palmers. The act of bequeathing an item to the Palmers is evidence of active thought and acknowledgement of the guild by the individual member. While the extant wills leave little indication of explicit investment in the Palmers, the guild inventory illuminates a wider effort by members to bestow material wealth upon the fraternity.

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church – a striking demonstration of the support that fraternities provided the parish. Kennan, 'Guilds and Society', p. 180.

[85] A demysent (demi-cent) was a type of girdle (belt) that fastened with a hook at the front. Cors could refer to either ordinary, coarse wool or a material woven in strips, richly adorned with silver and gold, that was often used as a ceinture or belt. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 5v., 6r.; *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. 'cors': https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary

[86] SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 9v., 17v.

[87] A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries, under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII, Cap. IV., and I Edward VI., Cap. XIV', *T.S.A.S.,* Ser. 3, Vol. 10 (1910), p. 328.

[88] Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, pp. 142-3, Kate Giles, 'A table of alabaster with the story of the doom': the religious objects and spaces of the guild of Our Blessed Virgin, Boston (Lincs)' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday objects: medieval and early modern material culture and its meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 267-288.

Microcosms of Guild Activity

Instead of looking at active involvement simply in terms of direct links between the guild as an institution and its members, it repays to consider how guild members worked together in other parts of England. Assessing the active engagement of guild members should not be confined to examination of the payment of membership fees or the making of bequests. The grouping of guild members within their respective locations illuminates the character of guild community afforded to members of this national fraternity. The active utilisation of guild connections highlights the day-to-day presence of the Palmers anywhere members were concentrated. The existence of these microcosms of guild activity can be viewed through two different source bases: wills and deeds.

Of the seventy non-Ludlow wills sampled, only eight turned to fellow Palmers as executors or supervisors.[89] For example, a Palmer from Bristol, John Meysam, appointed John Drewis as his executor.[90] Both were merchants, likely one of the reasons for appointment; Richard Mayhew, Bishop of Worcester likewise appointed an executor close to his livelihood: the archdeacon of Hereford, who was also a Palmer.[91] Testators frequently chose their executors from those closest to them, such as their wives and children, emphasizing the gravity of the responsibility of an executor. John Meysam bequeathed the residue of his goods, after debts and funeral expenses paid, to John Drewis so 'that he doo for my soule according to his conscyence'. Meysam evidently trusted Drewis to act in his best interests, crucially, for the care of his soul, and conferred on Drewis a high level of freedom to act on his behalf. With the freedom given to Drewis to choose the most suitable ways to assist the departed soul, Meysam must have trusted his executor to understand his devotional preferences. Their devotional practices during life were already aligned through membership of the Palmers' Guild, so it can be presumed Meysam felt secure that Drewis

[89] TNA: PROB 11/18/327 (Richard Mayhew/Mayo); PROB 11/18/61 (John Meysam); PROB 11/22/545 (Nicholas Hyde); PROB 11/23/170 (John Thomas); PROB 11/17/471 (Robert Corbett); PROB 11/15/461 (John Wilcox II); PROB 11/19/347 (Nicholas Burwey); PROB 11/19/312.
[90] TNA: PROB 11/18/61; SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4; LB/5/1/4, m. 4.
[91] TNA: PROB 11/18/327; SA: B/5/3/7, f. 46v.

would spend the residue money wisely in accordance to preferences expressed during their relationship. In these cases, membership of the guild is one aspect of the close relationship illustrated by appointment as executor, while occupational ties are likewise highly influential. In the Jesus Guild at St. Paul's, London, there are a few examples of members looking to their brethren as executors and witnesses where guild membership reinforced pre-existing connections to secure the level of trust necessary for involvement in testamentary procedures.[92] In some cases, then, it seems as if mutual membership of the Palmers impacted the choice of overseer and executor in testamentary evidence.

One case of a fellow Palmer acting as an overseer of a will is perhaps suggestive of a relationship fostered more heavily through guild membership than occupational or parochial relations. John Thomas, merchant of Bristol, appointed Abbot Morgan Blethyn of Llantarnam Abbey as one of his overseers.[93] John Thomas' will suggests a Welsh connection, for he left £10 to the parish church of Abergavenny for an obit to pray for the souls of his mother and father, along with his own. The relationship Thomas had with Llantarnam Abbey is not explicit, as is often the case with testamentary evidence. Amongst a variety of pious bequests, Llantarnam was one of the primary benefactors, receiving £5 for building works with the possibility of a further £30 should his children predecease him. If Thomas grew up in Abergavenny, where evidently his parents must have resided, or were buried, there may have been good reason for Thomas to establish a relationship with Llantarnam; it was fewer than 20 miles from Abergavenny and situated on a route between there and Bristol, where Thomas lived. Yet it certainly was not the closest religious house to Abergavenny (Llanthony Prima was notably only ten miles away) and was one of several establishments along the Welsh Marches. Was the strength of this relationship due to their shared membership of the Palmers' Guild? Thomas joined the guild in 1507/8, and Abbot Blethyn joined in 1515, fourteen years prior to the proving of Thomas' will in 1529.[94] Their

[92] New, 'The Cult of the Holy Name of Jesus', pp. 143-4.
[93] TNA: PROB 11/23/170.
[94] SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 36v, LB/5/3/10, f. 20r

respective residencies in Bristol and Llantarnam were not so unreasonably far from Ludlow that they would not have encountered each other at guild events; it is plausible that they both attended the celebratory guild masses in the years following Blethyn's enrolment. Prominent and appropriate friends were to be carefully selected as officers of a will, as a certain level of trust was required of an overseer.[95] One had to be trustworthy, possessing a good reputation and status to fulfil the required role in the testamentary process. For Blethyn, who was not a resident of Bristol, where the testator resided and where a number of his testamentary wishes had to be fulfilled, the possession of enough social capital and the ability to work cordially with the executors of the will was a necessity. It was not unusual for abbots to occupy the role of supervisor; in this case, the abbot's trustworthiness was derived not only from his ecclesiastical status, but from Blethyn's and Thomas' mutual membership of a prominent religious guild.[96] Thomas' executors would have known of Thomas' membership of the guild, and the reputation that accompanied it; they would assume that Blethyn possessed a similar reputation, arising from their common membership. Regardless of whether the Palmers were the primary source of a connection between Blethyn and Thomas, or a secondary one that reinforced a previous relationship, common membership of a fraternity can only have strengthened their bond, reinforced Thomas' decision to appoint Blethyn as overseer, and provided Blethyn with additional social weight to fulfil his important duties in assisting the execution of the testator's post-mortem wishes.

There were, on occasion, groups of Palmers present in other parts of the testamentary process. John Ednam of Leicester utilised two fellow members as witnesses to his last will and testament; so too did John Hadden and Nicholas Burwey (both of Coventry) and William Lendall I of Reading.[97] Witnesses held an important role in the verification process of testamentary

[95] Richard Asquith, 'Piety and Trust: Testators and Executors in Pre-Reformation London' (PhD Thesis, University of London, *forthcoming*).
[96] Examples of heads of religious houses as executors or supervisors can be found in: Martin Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Oxford, 2016), p. 241.
[97] TNA: PROB/11/18/523; PROB/11/19/241; PROB/11/19/374PROB/11/18/232; SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4; LB/5/3/7, f. 28r; LB/5/3/6, f. 19v; LB/5/3/7, f. 58v.

provision and were rarely part of the testator's family, due to their obvious vested interests if the contents of the will were disputed.[98] William Marlow and John Chamber were two of Hadden's witnesses. Marlow's occupation is not listed in the guild registers, but Chamber, as a merchant, may have known the draper Hadden in a professional context. Two of three witnesses of Burwey's last will and testament were Palmers and fellow members of the civic elite: Henry Wall and Thomas White.[99] Lendall's two Palmer witnesses were both shoemakers, while Lendall himself was a dyer, suggesting further possible connections through business. The examples are few in comparison to the extensive membership of the guild and probably reflect findings elsewhere on the sociability of witnessing. It was common, if not preferable, to call on neighbours to perform this task of witnesses as part of 'their duties of neighbourliness'.[100] The limited occurrences of Palmers witnessing fellow brethren's wills may be a result of the tendency to choose neighbours as witnesses.

However, the collective action of guild members can be viewed outside of deathbed documents, and reflects more consistent groupings of Palmers during their lifetime and visible through a larger corpus of extant sources. While wills only suggest lifetime connections, these connections are certainly present in the second type of source in question: deeds. In a property deed of 1500, John Hunt of Brimfield (Herefordshire) presented Walter Morton, warden of the Palmers, thirteen named men (two recognisably stewards and the others most likely elders) and 'the Brethren of the Gild' with land in the liberty of Richard's Castle.[101] Hunt may have begun the process of joining the guild in 1497/8, as a man of his name was entered in the riding book for that year.[102] The folio has been torn and the exact location of this John Hunt is missing from the

[98] Justin Colson, 'Local Communities in Fifteenth Century London: Craft, Parish and Neighbourhood' (PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010), p. 273.
[99] TNA: PROB/11/19/374; SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r; LB/5/3/7, f. 29v.
[100] Craig Muldrew, 'The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England' *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 926-7. Justin Colson's research on fifteenth-century London revealed typical patterns of reliance on neighbours or even those who were present in the location in which the writing of the will took place. Colson, 'Local Communities', pp. 273-6.
[101] SA: LB/5/2/1357.
[102] SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 69r.

surviving portion of the folio. However, it is likely that it was him: the riding books are arranged topographically and the next folio is labelled 'Leominster' and includes places such as Richard's Castle, Orleton and Stockton – all neighbouring villages to Brimfield. Membership of the guild would certainly be probable, given Hunt's gift of land to the guild.[103] Definitely two, possibly three, of the witnesses were Palmers. The John Higgons who acted as witness was one of two possible Palmers, either located in Lingen, Herefordshire, or Preston, Shropshire (just outside Shrewsbury). Both joined the guild in 1505/6.[104] Less likely is William Newman, who may be the William Newman of Caerleon who joined the Palmers in 1427, although that date suggests he may have been deceased by 1500 when this land transfer took place – perhaps the man named in this deed was a son or grandson of the Palmer.[105] The final witness listed in this deed was John Tomkes alias Wever of Worcester, who joined the Palmers in 1503/4.[106] The two witnesses who are identified with more certainty, John Tomkes and John Higgons, resided within a 35 mile radius of Ludlow, while William Newman lived almost twice that distance from Ludlow. Common membership of the Palmers apparently informed personal connections that were manifest in the formal process of land transfer, or *vice versa*.

In similar situations, witnesses were drawn from further afield as the example of Marlborough, to which we turn now, shows. On 12 August 1499, Robert Somerfeld of Marlborough granted three tenements in the same town to Richard Malebroke and John Heriettes (also both of Marlborough).[107] A second deed, dated 31 August 1499, witnessed the land being returned to Robert by the two grantees with the condition that upon his death the land shall be passed onto Walter Morton, warden of the Palmers' Guild, his successors, and the brethren.[108] While ensuring his ability to keep his tenements for the duration of his life, it allowed the gift of

[103] This land was used as a source of income for the guild. For example, they rented it to Roger Daccus of Richard's Castle in 1536 for a bi-annual fee of 10*s*. LB/5/2/1358.
[104] For John Higgon of 'Lymbrake' (Limebrook Priory located in Lingen) see LB/5/3/7, f. 11r. and for John Higgens of 'Presten' (Preston) see LB/5/1/3, f. 3.
[105] LB/5/3/13, f. 2v.
[106] LB/5/3/5, f. 71r.
[107] These last names are spelled either Malebroke or Malybrok and Heriettes or Heryott. SA: LB/5/2/1437-8.
[108] SA: LB/5/2/1438.

land – an act of pious charity – to the Palmers by Somerfeld. The rent received by the guild was 33*s.* 4*d.*, with a reduction for annual repairs, meaning the Palmers received 28*s.*[109] The reason for this transfer of land to a group of feoffees and then back was ostensibly an attempt to avoid certain dues and taxes that fell on property endowments – perhaps, as the land ultimately was to go to a religious guild, it was specifically to avoid falling foul of the Mortmain laws. This act feasibly provided Robert with more prayers from the guild's priests upon his death, although this can only be a matter of speculation as no corroborating documents survive. What this case more interestingly demonstrates, at least for this study, is the connections within the Palmers' membership. The initial grantor, Robert Somerfeld, was most likely a member of the Palmers. Someone with the name of Somerfeld from Marlborough was certainly enrolled in 1498/9, but that membership list has deteriorated in such a way that the given name is not legible. His gift of land to the guild strengthens the suggestion that he was a member and that this anonymous Somerfeld may be identifiable with him. The two grantees, Richard Malebroke and John Heriettes, were both members of the guild and joined in 1485 with their wives.[110] The first deed at the beginning of August was witnessed by two Palmers, among others: John Stodham and his wife Margaret, who had already joined in 1485;[111] and John Fryse, constable of Marlborough, although he did not become a member until his posthumous entry by his widow, Alice, in 1503/4.[112] The second deed, allowing Robert the right to hold those tenements until his death, was witnessed by a group of men that again included John Stodham. One William Skern also witnessed the deed, and a Thomas Skern of Marlborough and his wife, Juliana, joined the guild in 1485-9. It is possible they were related and that this is another tie to the guild, but there is no trace of a William Skern in the extant membership lists.

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[109] E.G.H. Kempson, 'A Shropshire Gild at Work in Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, vol. LVII, No. 206 (July, 1958), p. 20. Where this information comes from is unclear – the source is not cited his source. In the rental accounts of 1533/4, the Palmers received 6*s.* 4*d.* for rent for the tenement in Marlborough. SA: LB/5/3/61.
[110] SA: LB/5/1/2, mm. 1-2.
[111] SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 1.
[112] SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 60r.

What can be learned about membership from this one example of land transfer in fifteenth-century Marlborough? The majority, if not all, of these men were local to Marlborough. Yet it was not only their shared locality that joined these men together; at the very least, four shared the bond of mutual membership to the Palmers' Guild, plus one other who was almost certainly a member. Somerfield's choice of two men who were members and implicitly tied to the guild may have been an act to ensure the successful transition of the property to the guild after his death. Either way, John Stodham, a Palmer, acted as a witness for both deeds, and John Fryse for the earlier deed. It certainly appears that this group of Palmers was operating within Marlborough to support the guild through an endowment from afar. The cooperation and inter-reliance of these four men suggest the existence of a circle that encouraged guild membership – two joining the same year, one a decade later and the other posthumously by his widow – and may have strengthened pre-existing links within the town itself. John Fryse was not a Palmer while he acted as witness, being rather enrolled posthumously by his widow. Acting in close conjunction with various brethren of the Palmers, as illustrated through the legal transaction under examination here, Fryse must have been aware of the existence and active nature of the Palmers' Guild. The stewards of the guild made annual visits to Marlborough to recruit new members and gather fines from existing members.[113] The rent collectors of the guild integrated Marlborough into their purview upon receipt of this property, as guild property was rented out as a source of income, and the collection of the rent from there can be seen as late as 1533/4.[114] Ultimately, this pair of deeds resulted in the Palmers maintaining an active presence in Marlborough. If Fryse's associates were members, it is likely his wife would know of their existence and activities. Alice Fryse joining the guild and simultaneously enrolling her deceased husband is an example of the influence and presence of the Palmers within the town. That these Palmers were calling upon others who were not only their neighbours, but also shared a common association with the guild, suggests that their

[113] SA: LB/5/3/2-12.
[114] SA: LB/5/3/61. It may have continued later but the renter's accounts do not survive beyond 1534.

membership was more than nominal. This may be surprising, given that Marlborough is some hundred miles from Ludlow. The social capital gained from membership (especially in the eyes of other brethren) could have facilitated the choice of witnesses and feoffees. Moreover, it can be suggested that guild membership itself was facilitated by these local connections – perhaps John Fryse was enrolled by his wife after his death precisely because they both evidently knew, and were perhaps friends with, members of the Palmers who lived in Marlborough, as illustrated by this deed. In comparison to this localised example, the second deed represents a wider geographical spread, but one that is contained very much within the heartlands of the Palmers' Guild in the western half of the country.

Two separate but interrelated land bequests to the Palmers within the lordship of Eastham (Worcestershire) are highly indicative of the activities of guild members in both fostering a community among themselves and supporting the guild from afar. In January 1499, William Glover of Eastham demised his properties within the lordship to a group of four men: William Hereford, Thomas Walker, Richard Nassh and John Walker.[115] Following a similar model to the Marlborough case, these four men granted the land and tenements back to Glover on the condition that they be granted to the warden of the Palmers' Guild upon his death.[116] It is highly probable that Glover was a Palmer (he clearly approved of the transaction, having a deed drawn up to confirm the transfer of the land to the guild after his death),[117] although his name does not appear in the surviving records. At least two of the men to whom he devised the land were Palmers (Thomas Walker and Richard Nassh),[118] and were evidently responsible for overseeing the transaction after Glover's death. The gift of land from one man (William Glover) was in this case supported and aided by his local community of Palmers. The transfer of land from Glover to this

[115] SA: LB/2/1421.
[116] SA: LB/2/1422.
[117] SA: LB/2/1423.
[118] Richard Nassh's daughter also joined in 1503/4, and his wife in 1505-9. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 76r, LB/5/1/4, f. 4. For Thomas Walker's entry, see LB/5/3/5, 77r. The other two men could have been Palmers but no documentary evidence survives to determine their involvement with the guild beyond these transactions.

group of men, and the enfeoffment back to Glover, before being given to the guild, served the practical purpose of tax avoidance, yet there were further effects for the guild, as an institution, and the members themselves. Most clearly, Glover had the reassurance that his bequest would enter the guild's possession upon his death, overseen by fellow brethren who had a vested interest in the guild. The Palmers benefited in an obvious way through the acquisition of land that would bring them an increased annual income.[119] Strikingly, these interactions demonstrate that a group of guild members was active in a village outside of Ludlow – outside of Shropshire, even – and was taking the assurance of a guild bequest into its own purview. The guild was the cause that brought these men together and this bequest is evidence of a pocket of guild activity initiated by individual members, which, in this case, continued until Glover's death and the transfer of the property to the Palmers. The same has been seen to have occurred in Marlborough around the same time.

As noted earlier, the material support bestowed upon the guild was in constant flux and was indicative of the fortunes of any guild, experiencing support in an unpredictable manner. While there was an active group of Palmers in Eastham in 1499 with the Glover case, the guild did not receive any further property there until almost twenty years later. In 1518, William Nichols and John Owens quitclaimed six selions of land in Eastham to Richard Downe, warden of the Palmers.[120] The investment by both men in the Palmers is clear from the joint gift of land, but the community of Palmers in Eastham was, once again, arresting in its activity. A few weeks later, William Nichols gave Richard Downe a messuage and half a virgate of land in Eastham, which he himself had received in 1503.[121] While this deed was endorsed in Ludlow, it was witnessed by none other than John Owens, who had quitclaimed the selions to the guild jointly with Nichols only 3

[119] Land the Palmers owned in Eastham was worth £1 6*s*. at their dissolution. Arthur Willis, *A Short Account of the Ludlow Palmer's Guild Estate* (1845), p. 10.
[120] SA: LB/5/2/1425.
[121] SA: LB/5/2/1424.

weeks before.[122] Another witness was the Eastham Palmer Thomas Walker. Was this Walker the same man who was part of the group that William Glover endowed with his land, with the view to gift it to the Palmers, back in 1499? William Nichols had previously been employed by Richard Nassh, one of Walker's fellow Palmers and an active member in the land transfer of 1499. Nassh's employment of Nichols may have both introduced Nichols to the Palmers (Nichols joined in 1503/4, after Nassh's involvement in the Glover case, and it is at that stage that Nichols was employed by Nassh) and to Thomas Walker. Walker continued paying his membership fee until 1511, when he completed the required sum of 13*s.* 4*d.* for him and his wife. If it was indeed the same man, his active involvement with the Palmers was long and sustained, and far beyond the only relationship usually visible between guild and member – that of annual payments. On the same day of Nichols' gift of land to the Palmers, another deed was drawn up appointing Thomas Walker as Nichols' attorney, to receive seisin of the land and to deliver it to Richard Downe.[123] Walker was clearly trusted by Nichols, and presumably by Downe, and his appointment is suggestive of a well-established relationship of some longevity between himself and Nichols.

The Nichols gift highlights two spheres of participation in the Palmers and demonstrates the vitality of the guild's social function. First, it provides insight into the interaction of groups of Palmers from different villages. The witness list for Nichols' gift was comprised of the two Eastham men and two Ludlow-based Palmers. While perhaps deceptively simple as a fairly common document, the deed was the embodiment of the guild ideal of cooperation between members, despite the difference of the witnesses' geographic locations. This deed, along with the other Eastham deeds of gift, reveal a community of Palmers in a village that was not dominated by the guild's infrastructure.[124] This is equally true of the Marlborough microcosm, which was

[122] SA: LB/5/2/1427. John Owens continued his active involvement with the guild well beyond this date. In 1524, the guild received 2*s.* from John Owens for rent. A few years later, the stewards noted that Owens owed money for rent that was used to pay for Thomas Cook's chantry. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 39r, 51r.
[123] SA: LB/5/2/1428.
[124] Christine Carpenter has likewise, on a much smaller scale, used guild deeds to suggest involvement by individual members in Stratford's Holy Cross guild. The gentry families who put their names to property transactions were involved in the guild. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', pp. 71-3.

perhaps even more striking considering the almost certain existence of other guilds in the more urbanised Marlborough, compared to the village of Eastham.[125] The Palmers were evidently more than a mere annual presence to their members when they arrived to collect fees. They were the recipient of land bequests from groups of Palmers throughout the guild's lifetime. The guild was vital in its localities and was sustained through the layers of interpersonal relationships between its members.

While the nature of the surviving documents relating to the Palmers' Guild makes locating and defining matches between the names in the membership lists and those in the guild deeds a difficult task, these two examples show how the guild permeated the day-to-day activities of its members. These examples are perhaps representative of the more widespread phenomenon of devising or bequeathing goods or property to a church, monastery, or guild as an act of devotion and piety. As such, the choice of witnesses and feoffees holds value in illuminating the social ties that existed between members of the guild. The proportion of fellow brethren that is prevalent in these examples is striking. It is clear from these case studies that when brethren gifted property to the Palmers in towns other than Ludlow, they were utilising their fellow members that lived nearby. For the insurance of property transfer, it is perhaps unsurprising that benefactors wished for witnesses in the local area to back their claim should the need arise, but the implications of choosing fellow members (and the wider suggestions of how membership worked, especially outside of Ludlow) give this issue a more tantalising relevance. Those who gave land to the Palmers did not exist in isolation. While the land may ultimately appear to come from one or two individuals, there was a network of guild members behind that specific man or group.[126] The layers of connection reveal the Palmers of Eastham and Marlborough who gifted land to the guild were

[125] While there has been no major scholarship on Marlborough's religious guilds, we can assume that there was indeed at least a handful, thanks to Gervase Rosser's estimation of the number of parish guilds in late medieval England. The craft guilds possessed a social and religious element to their institutions, as discussed in: 'Salisbury: Merchant and craft guilds to 1612,' in Elizabeth Crittall (ed.), *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 6*, (London, 1962), 132-136. *British History Online.* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol6/pp132-136.
[126] There were eight guild members from Eastham and eighty-two from Marlborough. SA: LB/5/3/2-9; LB/5/1/1-4.

working within a community of brethren that existed in their own geographical- and trade-based communities. The process the Palmers' Guild undertook, especially in light of its geographic spread, in order to engage and maintain an active and enlarging brethren, was a *collective* endeavour that included both its brethren and its governing council.

Conclusion

Involvement in the Palmers was undertaken by individuals in a variety of ways, each suited to the context of their particular circumstances. Bequests in last wills and testaments were a rare occurrence, but a greater contribution is shown through the inventory of the Palmers in the early sixteenth century. Every action, be it a gift of material goods, monetary donation, a bequest of land, the utilisation of fellow members in their local area or the sharing of food and drink with the steward and fellow brethren, demonstrates that distance was not a deterrent for active membership within the social community of a guild.

The medieval guild ethos, as Gervase Rosser has argued, placed a high premium on active participation. Some of the actual mechanisms of the Palmers do not suggest an institutional expectation: there was neither a fine for lack of attendance at the Pentecost feast, nor a financial reprimand for missing a payment at the annual collection of membership fees. Perhaps bequests and obits by local parishioners were, in a way, an expected form of contribution; certainly, the presence of the guild was impossible to avoid as the Palmers were the most substantial landowners in Ludlow.[127] The guild presence was more subtle further afield, where the guild put mechanisms in place that enabled members to have easy access to guild officers and where the guild was a constant presence in certain towns via solesters. In fact, the ever-present question of why individuals chose to join the Palmers may be helped by the understanding of the Palmers' devolved infrastructure advanced throughout this chapter. In certain places, it was very difficult to avoid the

[127] The Palmers owned 173 tenements in Ludlow. Willis, *Ludlow Palmers Estate*, p. 10.

guild, thanks to the expenditure spent by the guild on its brethren in the localities and thanks to the institution of the solester's office.

To a large extent, Rosser's definition of the active guild member applies to the actions of the Palmers. The guild at Ludlow, despite the obstacles presented by a geographically-diverse membership, were a guild where solidarity was 'consciously pursued' and where solidarity was enacted through the 'sum of conscious decisions of its participants.'[128] However, where Rosser stressed the role of the feast in ensuring that members, no matter their distance, were brought directly into contact with each other, this chapter has shown how the guild operated locally as well as centrally, far away from Ludlow, in the use of fellow guild members in land transactions.

[128] Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild', p. 35; Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, p. 35.

Conclusion

During his itineraries, the Tudor antiquarian John Leland spoke of Ludlow largely in terms of the Palmers' Guild, or, as he called it, 'a brothar-hode therein foundyd in the name of St. John the Evangeliste'.[1] Leland credited the Palmers with having 'muche avauncyd' the church of St Laurence, which was 'very faire, and large, and richely adornyd, and taken for the fayrest in all those quartars'. He highlighted the Palmers' legacy of building projects, specifically the construction of a 'fayr howse at the west end of the paroche churche yard' for its priests and the maintenance of a 'hospitall or almeshouse of a 30. pore folks'.[2] The central place occupied by the Palmers in Leland's description of the town makes it clear that Leland saw the guild as one of the defining features of Ludlow. Yet, as this thesis has shown, the Palmers' role in Ludlow was the least remarkable aspect of this fraternity. The guild drew in members from across the country, reaching deep into Wales, through England in the north-west, midlands, south-west, London, the home counties, East Anglia and, to some extent, Yorkshire. Crossing rural and urban divides, it proved accessible for members of diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The guild's membership brought together the multiple, frequently distinct communal spheres of late medieval England: public, private, lay and religious.

The aim of this thesis has been to uncover the communities within the guild's brethren and to sketch, so far as it is possible, the reasons why men and women chose to join this particular fraternity. In doing so, the thesis has argued that the Ludlow guild was important and prominent in regions across late medieval England and Wales, a conclusion evinced by the enrolment of 15,179 new members between 1497 and 1509 alone. In writing the first history of the guild's extensive membership, I have demonstrated the importance of guild membership in late medieval society. The motivations of late medieval men and women are difficult to discern, but, given a

[1] *Itinerary*, Vol. 2, Part v, p. 76.
[2] *Itinerary*, Vol. 2, Part v, p. 76.

sensitivity to the surviving records, extensive archival research, and the identification of patterns, I have underlined the influence (and expectations) of localised groups upon individual actions, demonstrating the pressures that might be incumbent upon decision-making. The influence of localised, corporate groups – the family, the lay or ecclesiastical household, or the ruling groups of local elites in town and country – was not confined to decisions regarding guild membership. In this, and in other respects, the reasons for joining late medieval fraternities are entangled in histories of domesticity and mentalities, and the practices of urban and rural politics.

I have demonstrated the fruitfulness of moving beyond the popular institutional study of guilds to advocate for the importance of studying guild membership in the context of a number of arenas in late medieval society. The purpose of this study has not been to argue for the vitality of the late medieval Church (although the evidence provided can be used to support such an interpretation), but rather to emphasise the interactions between guilds and late medieval society more generally. In almost all themes under consideration, it has been demonstrated that the study of guilds in this manner offers historians a *quid pro quo*; guilds records reveal as much about pre-Reformation society as other areas do about guilds, but this seems to have been little appreciated previously. For example, the fields of local politics and domesticity have been pressed into service here to both reveal much about the pressures that exerted themselves upon guild membership but also about how the guild figured into these socio-political structures. This study also complements Rosser's scholarship, providing an example of the importance of the actions of brethren in building a strong foundation for the guild. It argues, however, that individual volunteerism is not a wholly appropriate viewpoint from which to understand the membership of guilds; more than anything, it has become clear that historians should not proffer singular explanations for their composition. The thesis, moreover, disproves the narrow interpretations offered by historians writing about the Palmers' Guild in the past. Such revisions can be broadly summarised in three points: first, that Swanson, Fleming, Faraday and Bailey's assertions that the 'extra' spiritual benefits of the guild

(indulgences) promoted membership are incorrect;[3] second, that the assumption that members outside of Ludlow did not participate in the activities or structures of the guild do not bear out under the weight of evidence;[4] and, finally, that neither the size nor importance of the Palmers' membership have before been accurately portrayed.[5] In addition, new information has been provided to augment the limited field of study relating to the Council of the Marches under Henry VII and Henry VIII, proffering guild records as new sources for historians of Tudor government and county studies.

There were many nuances to membership. The incremental payment system adopted by the guild in the late fifteenth century allowed individuals to take upwards of twenty years to pay their full fee of 6*s.* 8*d.* This system, of course, raises a question that has been debated at some length in this thesis: did the initiation of payments confer membership status? As has been suggested, the answer is not as simple as 'yes' or 'no'. The social benefits of the guild, for example partaking in the breaking of bread with fellow brothers and sisters (at the feast and in the localities) and establishing social networks, were elements that did not demand completed payments. In the eyes of the administration of the guild (that paid for, and organised, such victuals) and in the eyes of fellow brethren, forming relationships – friendship, even, to adopt Rosser's terminology – was a worthwhile endeavour once an individual had taken the first step of fiscal investment in the fraternity. This mindset was most clearly embodied in the guild's recruitment of the officers known as solesters, who assumed their office before completing payments. Prayers for the soul, however, required full payment for enrolment in the official register. Unlike other large guilds, the Palmers did not possess overwhelmingly attractive spiritual benefits. The indulgence obtained may have spurred some additional membership, but it was unlikely: it was obtained by those who went to

[3] R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 284; Peter Fleming, 'Time, space and power in later medieval Bristol' (Working Paper, University of Western England, 2013), pp. 76-7; Michael Faraday, Ludlow, p. 88; Judith Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: an analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c. 1400-1551' (M.A. thesis, University of Gloucester, 2010), p. 66.
[4] Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 88; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 282-3; Fleming, 'Time, space and power in later medieval Bristol', pp. 76-7.
[5] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, p. 75; Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds', p. 75.

the guild chapel, not those who joined the guild. It also required journeying to Ludlow, which a number of Palmers may have done, but which a large number may not; the guild's devolved system of recruitment, collection of fees and organised social activities was one of convenience for its far-flung members and did not exactly encourage individuals to journey to Ludlow. The lack of spiritual advantages and the accessibility of the social benefits prompted the consideration in this thesis of all individuals who began paying their fees, not only the ones that finished. By examining those who began payments, and who may have contributed to their membership fee only for one or two years, it has been possible to suggest the original motivations of their membership. Or, to put it plainly, *who* or *what* circumstances encouraged individuals to join.

Guilds have frequently been discussed in relation to the governing structures of late medieval urban life. One of the dominant characteristics of medieval guilds identified by historians was the role that guild membership played in local politics, either supporting local governing structures or acting as a surrogate town government. In Ludlow, the Palmers embodied this typical role: an informal *cursus honorum* existed in the fourteenth century, while a clearer framework of office-holding came into fruition in the fifteenth century. While the importance attached to membership and elite status morphed into a slightly different form beyond the town walls, the ingrained nature of the Palmers in local government was the basis for the strong relationship between the guild and the Council of the Marches upon the arrival of Prince Arthur and his council at Ludlow in the late fifteenth century. The location of the guild in Ludlow is, therefore, one factor in understanding the motivation for membership of a number of lay and ecclesiastical brethren.

The geographical location of the guild explains, in other ways, the attractions of membership and the meanings that membership assumed in a local context. The Council of the Marches dominated the structures of the region's governing spheres, generating interaction with individuals urban and rural, lay, and ecclesiastical alike through its judicial and administrative roles. Upon Prince Arthur's arrival at Ludlow in 1493, the authority of the Crown became firmly fixed in the Welsh Marches. Assisted by the Council, whose membership overlapped with that of his

own household, Prince Arthur assumed responsibility for governing the region. The integration into the Palmers of Arthur's councillors and their servants, as well as his own probable involvement in the guild,[6] transformed the significance of guild membership in the late fifteenth century. The heightened enrolment of major players in the governance of the Marches – urban and rural elites, and the heads of religious houses – is testament to the perceived power and potential opportunity offered by guild membership. If it is difficult to discern to what extend individuals took advantage of this opportunity, especially given the loss – or perhaps absence entirely – of records of attendance at feasts, the patterns of membership identified in this thesis have shown clearly the rise of guild membership *after* the integration of the Council with the guild. This observation raises the possibility that other devolved royal agencies, such as the Council of the North, might have had a similar effect in their sphere of geographical influence.

The household and family – the distinction is important – were two additional influences upon the nature of membership in the Palmers' Guild. Expectations of good order, reputation, and pious provision permeated urban, rural, mercantile, gentry and noble households alike. It is within this context that households, comprising of servants and masters, engaged widely with the Palmers' Guild. Future guild studies might reveal more of the centrality of the household as the motivation for, and enabling mechanism of, guild membership. It might be that the Palmers' are unique in this respect (with both masters and servants joining because of their unusual system of incremental payments), but focusing on guild membership as a means of examining late medieval households might reveal that servants were more likely to join separate, cheaper, fraternities than their masters; in any case, the enrolling of servants in a guild bolstered the good governance of a household. This is a consideration conspicuous by its absence in discussions on the morality and operation of households. Certainly, household membership bridges some gaps in the study of domesticity, expanding our understanding of the short- and long-term influences within a master-

[6] Katherine of Aragon joined in 1502 upon her arrival to Ludlow, so it is possible that Arthur may have done the same upon his arrival in 1493. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 34r.

servant relationship, the extension of the domestic sphere into religious/social institutions, and the social and religious obligations placed upon householders. The acceleration of this trend at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries reveals the importance of the precedent set by Arthur and his household, as well as the power of familial networks, illustrated so clearly in the example of the Staffords. Family expectations, specifically patrilineal relationships, brought continued involvement in the Palmers over multiple generations.

In answering the question of why medieval men and women joined large fraternities, the thesis has made many observations that, in all likelihood, are equally applicable to other major guilds, whose membership was both regional and national. The Palmers activated, and were embedded within, the social and political processes of various kinds of community. In this sense, the utility of large fraternities such as the Palmers extended far beyond spiritual support, in terms of *pro anima* prayers, indulgences, and fraternal prayers. Their appeal was instead rather more social and political in nature, which is demonstrated especially in the membership patterns of the urban and rural governing elites. While the nuances of what guild membership meant in each respective community varied, a uniting factor was the guild's embodiment and enhancement of the common values of shared identity, whatever form this identity took in each situation or locality.

While different individuals, but particularly groups, encouraged guild membership, the guild itself stimulated membership through its structures and actions. The system of incremental payments was undoubtedly a factor that accounted for the wide social range of brethren. It made fraternal membership accessible to either previously under-represented groups of society or to those, like members of urban and rural elites, who were likely to have joined further on in their career, but who instead were able to join many years before taking an active role in local governance. Assisting the accessibility of membership were the actions of the guild across the country for the stewards collected fees from the villages, towns or cities of brethren; in each respective location, they facilitated and enacted a sense of shared community and conviviality on their rides through expenditure on food and drink for brethren. In contrast to the transient

presence of the guild stewards, solesters provided a permanent reminder of, and conduit to, the council of the guild at Ludlow, and worked to encourage microcosms of membership. The guild was evidently enacting a deliberate policy of inclusion and engagement among its members. Although the surviving records do not explain why the council made decisions towards greater social and geographical inclusivity, they demonstrate that there were several distinct shifts in practice that had the same effect.

We might, of course, ask *why* the guild decided to undertake a series of steps that would lead to greater and more diverse membership. While any conclusions drawn can only be speculative, they repay consideration. The most pressing concern which springs to mind may have been financial, although a quick appraisal of guild finances – so far as records permit – cast doubt on this (somewhat pessimistic) assumption. While some accounts survive for this period, there is not a surviving run of accounts for both the income and expenditure of the guild for single years, so analysis must be made by gathering information from different years. What follows is evidently not an accurate reflection of the guild's income and expenditure on an annual basis, but rather an attempt to sketch an understanding based on the surviving materials. The guild's two different streams of income – rents and membership fees – worked to support each other. Rent from the guild's substantial portfolio of properties went towards maintaining the guild priests and their college. In a cyclical manner, the membership fees went towards the building works and repairs of those properties that supported the priests.[7] The rental income from their property in 1501/2 was £81 21 ½ *d.* and £80 12*d.* in 1503/4, far surpassing parish guild rental incomes of the early sixteenth century, like those of Louth's guilds of Holy Trinity and Blessed Virgin Mary who respectively collected £25 5*s.* 2*d.* and £56 8*s.* 6*d.*[8] After expenses for a number of spiritual provisions (for example, the paying of guild priests, the keeping of lights, and the wages of singing men), expenses due to the bailiffs and lords of each respective location in which the guild had

[7] *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild*, ed., Michael Faraday (2012), pp. xvi-xvii.
[8] Claire M. Kennan, 'Guilds and Society in Louth, Lincolnshire, c. 1450-1550' (PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018), pp. 307-8.

property, and the fees of the guild officers, they were in debt for just over £9 and £4 for each respective year. The nearest year for which membership income is recorded, unfortunately, is not until 1514/15, when the guild received approximately £156 in membership fees.[9] Assuming that this figure aligns fairly closely with the income from membership in the early years of the century (the loss of records from before 1514/15 means that we cannot directly compare the intake of members), then the guild could easily make up the £9 or £4 deficit. Their building projects averaged a cost of £50 per year during 1505-8, but most years were less than that.[10] Therefore, the guild was evidently collecting enough from its membership fees to cover the costs of building repairs and new projects and still would have had money left over. The policy of social inclusion and geographical engagement by the Palmers, begun in the late fifteenth century, was not, therefore, a policy borne of financial need. Any other suggestions are necessarily tentative, but the simplest explanation may just be that the guild council desired extensive membership, perhaps taking their cue from other guilds that had achieved this on a kingdom-wide scale. Although it is difficult to define 'success' for late medieval guilds, sheer spread of membership might provide an indication and, in this respect, the Palmers were clearly 'successful'. Although the association with the Council undoubtedly widened their purview, they probably realised that there were other, more proactive steps that could be taken. Success bred success, and the policies which proved the most advantageous were continued.

The aim here has not been to present a cynical view of the motivations of membership to guilds in late medieval England and Wales; individuals were genuinely spurred by piety *and* by an interest in engagement with networks of community and friendship, and the outlet through which they fulfilled those aims was influenced by their social environment. Of particular importance, as this thesis has demonstrated, were the actions and policies of the guild, societal expectations and structures, and familial influences. The social and geographical reach of the Palmers, and of other

[9] VCH Salop.
[10] Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild*, pp. xvi, xxi.

large fraternities, was the result of individual preferences and persuasions, but also of varying pressures and influences that were woven into the fabric of late medieval society.

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