

Fleecing the Pious:  
the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow in the  
Central and North Welsh Marches 1400-1530

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A thesis submitted to the University of Adelaide  
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History, School of Humanities

July 2020



# Contents

Tables and maps .....	2
Abstract.....	4
Thesis declaration .....	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
Notes.....	8
Glossary.....	9
Abbreviations .....	10
Introduction .....	11
Chapter 1: Historiographical Context, Primary Sources and Methodology .....	18
Chapter 2: Political Geography, Political Economy, and the Religious Landscape: 1100-1450 .....	77
Chapter 3: Ludlow: The Palmers' Guild in the Town .....	120
Chapter 4: Ludlow's Hinterland: The Guild in County and Lordship .....	171
Chapter 5: Central and North Welsh Marches: Piety and Trade.....	244
Conclusion.....	313
Postscript .....	319
Appendix 1: Palmers' Guild Wardens 1401 to 1551. ....	329
Appendix 2: Palmers' Guild Stewards 1406 to 1551.....	330
Appendix 3: Registrations from the Gentry, Higher Clergy and Nobility .....	332
Appendix 4: Timeline of Religious Changes in the 1530s and 1540s .....	335
Bibliography .....	337

## Tables and maps

Figure 1: Palmers' Guild Manuscripts in the Shropshire Archives .....	57
Figure 2: Palmers' Guild Riding Books and Membership Registers.....	57
Figure 3: Membership Register for 1507-8 .....	58
Figure 4: Oswestry and its Hinterland in the Riding Book for 1505-6 .....	59
Figure 5: List of Wills .....	66
Figure 6: Sample Sheet from Membership Registers .....	75
Figure 7: Merging of Information from Membership Registers and Riding Books .....	76
Figure 8: Cloth Trade Occupations in Fifteenth-Century Ludlow.....	136
Figure 9: Plan of Ludlow: 1906 .....	140
Figure 10: Purchases for the Annual Guild Feast in the Accounts for 1427-8 .....	142
Figure 11: The Internal Structure of St Laurence's Tower in Ludlow .....	150
Figure 12: St Laurence's Tower and Octagonal Porch (built c1470s) .....	151
Figure 13: Ludlow's Demographic Statistics .....	154
Figure 14: Occupations of Ludlow Recruits and Members .....	160
Figure 15: Annual Breakdown of 'Souls' .....	166
Figure 16: Members by Geographical Area (1485-9, 1505-9 and 1515-16) .....	168
Figure 17: Map of Ludlow's Hinterland. ....	178
Figure 18: Market Towns in Ludlow's Hinterland .....	184
Figure 19: The Hinterland's Demographic Statistics for 1501-8 .....	189
Figure 20: Members from the Two Regions .....	190
Figure 21: Map of Leominster Ore showing the Area Visited by the Steward.....	196

Figure 22: The Best Wool Growing Areas in the Fifteenth Century .....	201
Figure 23: Page Entitled <i>Lemster Ore</i> .....	204
Figure 24: Occupational Groups in Leominster .....	208
Figure 25: The Phelyps and Noblet Families .....	209
Figure 26: Map of Corvedale and Cleoland .....	213
Figure 27: Map of Cloneland and Terra Episcopo.....	223
Figure 28: Clun’s Defensive Church Tower Attached to the Nave .....	231
Figure 29: Map of Wigmoreland .....	232
Figure 30: The Langford and Bradshaw families .....	238
Figure 31: Map of the North Welsh Marches .....	248
Figure 32: Map of the Central Welsh Marches.....	249
Figure 33: Main Towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches, Ranked by Number of Registrations .....	255
Figure 34: First Recording of Fulling Mills by Present Day County .....	267
Figure 35: Statistics for the Central and North Welsh Marches for 1503-6 .....	275
Figure 36: Welsh Women from Machynlleth, Holywell and Oswestry areas .....	282
Figure 37: Shropshire Registrations in the 1515-16 Riding Book .....	283
Figure 38: The Intermeshing of Networks: The Palmers’ Guild and the Drapers’ Guild of Shrewsbury .....	292
Figure 39: Names of People from Llanrwst on the Page Entitled 'Denbigh' .....	296
Figure 40: Registrations in the Western Towns of the Central Marches for 1503-6 ..	301
Figure 41: Stewards' Journeys or ‘Ridings' in 1533-4 and 1538-9 .....	322

## Abstract

This thesis examines the role of a late medieval religious institution, the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, in the Central and North Welsh Marches from 1400 to 1530. It investigates the geopolitical climate which saw the rise of the Guild from the mid fifteenth century. It argues that the region of study is complex, culturally diverse, and also suffered continual war and conflict for many centuries prior to the fifteenth century. It was in a constant state of tension. The fragmented political economy and the inhospitable landscape were also factors which set this region apart.

These tensions in the Central and North Welsh Marches led to religious uncertainty by the mid fifteenth century. Monasteries never had a stranglehold on people's piety in the region, mostly because of the endemic political instability which worked against the monastic orders gaining anything more than an early tenuous foothold in the landscape. Instead, by the mid to late fifteenth century, people were drawn to their local parish church and less structured institutions like the mendicant friars and religious guilds. These changing religious patterns saw the Palmers' Guild become an important supplier of religious services and a catalyst for economic and social stability in the region. Ludlow leveraged its influence through its Guild to expand into this region in response to a weakening of religious infrastructure due to the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion.

The key primary sources for this thesis are the membership registers and riding books of the Palmers' Guild. A quantitative analysis of over 3,500 names from these records, offers the opportunity for a reassessment of the role of this religious guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches. It is clear from these records that the Guild

maximised its efforts in this culturally diverse region to extract the greatest returns for the Guild and the town of Ludlow. This was achieved in three main ways. First, it infiltrated the political economy by providing strong, secure networks to facilitate the cloth trade. Second, it used its connections, which were built on royal patronage, to build up its influence in the region. The last factor was its trump card. By offering religious hope to thousands of people in the Welsh Marches, it ensured it was the religious institution of choice, if the parish church could not offer support as death drew near. In this culturally diverse region, the bonds of trust were central to all relationships. The Palmers' Guild used trust to underpin its activities and so became an important institution in the religious landscape, and a 'middleman' in the political economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches.

However, despite the success of the Palmers' Guild in recruiting people who lived outside Ludlow, the number of recruits from Ludlow dwindled in the early sixteenth century. The thesis will examine the reasons behind this phenomenon and how the Guild responded to the drop in local income. In 1551, after 250 years, the Guild was dissolved in response to the Act of 1547 (1 Edward VI) which suppressed religious guilds, chantries, and colleges.

## Thesis declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

**Signature:**

**Date:** 16/07/2020



## Acknowledgements

When I first visited Ludlow, on a warm summer's day in 1998, I did not realise how important Ludlow would be to me over the next 20 years. The commanding position of Ludlow castle, above the river Teme, supports Ludlow's key role in the history of the Central Welsh Marches. I was soon to discover that its religious guild, the Palmers' Guild, was a significant religious institution in medieval Ludlow. However, despite the Guild's high profile, earlier historians have not fully appreciated its role in Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches. It is the aim of this thesis to tell the story of 'ordinary people' who lived in the towns and villages of these regions, and whose names fill the Guild's records. I wish to dedicate this thesis to thousands of people, who lived over 500 years ago, who put their trust in the Palmers' Guild.

My thanks go to the staff of the Shropshire Archives, who have responded warmly to my requests to scan the Palmers' Guild records. Dr Margaret Clark, from the Ludlow Historical Society, has also been there from the beginning and has shared my interest in the Palmers' Guild. I would like to thank Dr Claire Walker, my second supervisor, who shared my enthusiasm for the project and who was an invaluable support to me as the thesis approached the last stage. Thank you to my family and friends, who have often wondered if I was still working on 'that research'. To Martin, my husband, my research has been his passion as well. Thank you for your 'perspective' which gave me the confidence to question, and search for answers.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Gareth Prichard, who has been there by my side through my long journey through the Welsh Marches. His patience, meticulous attention to detail, and his faith in me, has made it all possible.

## Notes

The annual journeys by the Palmers' Guild stewards covered two calendar years, for example 1505-6. For the sake of brevity, I have written the date as the first year, i.e. 1505, in the main text of the thesis. The footnote gives the full manuscript reference for the annual journey.

The normal entrance fee to the Palmers' Guild was 6s. 8d (half a mark). The fee to enter a deceased member or 'soul' was 3s. 4d, although the entry fee for Ludlow based 'souls' was 2s. This fee reduction was also occasionally seen in registrations from other towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches. The most popular coin in use in the late medieval period – a 'noble' or 'angel' was valued at 6s. 8d. The entry fee may have been set at 6s. 8d. for this reason.

It is difficult to define who might be regarded as Welsh in the early sixteenth century. I have included those persons whose names include 'ap' or 'verch', and those who have Welsh Christian names such as Angharad or David. I have also included those with triple patronymic names.

In the quotations, I have preserved contemporary spellings and grammar.

## Glossary

**Alnage/Alnager** – Tax on cloth manufacture. An official who inspected woollen cloth.

**Armiger** – Esquire ranked immediately below a knight and entitled to bear arms

**Barker** – A worker in the leather trade

**Bede roll** – A list of persons for whom prayers would be said on the anniversary of their death

**Bonds of trust** – The relationship between buyer and seller, which took into account the moral reputation of each party as well as their economic standing.

**Capper** – A cap maker

**Cardmaker** – A metal worker who made combs for combing wool

**Chantry** – A foundation and endowment of a mass by one or more benefactors to be celebrated at an altar, for the souls of the founders and other specified persons.<sup>1</sup>

**Clothier or *Pannarius*** – A person involved with both the making and marketing of woollen cloth

**Corveser** – A shoemaker

**Doctrine of Purgatory** – Doctrine defined in 1274 at the Council of Lyons but confirmed as an article of faith in 1439. This doctrine offered an alternative to Heaven or Hell, as Purgatory was defined as a mid-way point on the road to Heaven. The soul was received in Purgatory free from guilt. It could be purged of sin by prayers and good works by the living on behalf of the soul in Purgatory.<sup>2</sup>

**Draper** – A manufacture and dealer in cloth

***Generos* or *Generosa*** – A member of the Gentry class

**Mercer** – A dealer in textile fabrics

**Messuage** – A portion of land occupied by a house and its appurtenances

***Miles*** – A knight

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), 114.

**Mortmain, Statute of** – Act of Edward I (1279) which forbade granting or selling land to an ecclesiastical body without the king's permission

**Obit** – A mass said in commemoration of a person on the anniversary of their death which was financed by an endowment.

**Pointmaker** – A person who makes fine metal points or tips that were pinched on the end of laces to fasten clothes

**Servant** – A general term which could refer to an unskilled worker. It could also be used for a valued member of a household who enjoyed a high level of trust with his employer

**Shearman** – A person who sheared the nap from the cloth

**Trental** – Thirty masses to be said for the dead. A testator might stipulate that a trental be performed as part of their obit. It was often outlined in their will

**Wool broggers** – Wool broggers were middlemen in the wool trade. They bought wool from growers, fixed a price for the wool, and oversaw the delivery of wool to their woolhouse

## Abbreviations

**HRO** – Hereford Record Office

**PCC** – Prerogative Court of Canterbury

**SA** – Shropshire Archives

**TNA** – The National Archives (London)

## Introduction

In the late medieval period, the prosperity of the Central and North Welsh Marches was seriously affected by ethnic tensions, rebellion, and disruption to the economy. The region endured a series of catastrophic events, including famines and plagues in the mid-fourteenth century, the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr in the first decade of the fifteenth century, and finally the fragmentation of the Marcher lordships in the early sixteenth century. The character of the region was very different to that of the lands to the east, in part because of its fragmented political landscape, and in part because the territory was ethnically and linguistically mixed. The people who lived in this borderland area were resilient in the face of long-term conflict and economic stress. In order to survive, they relied heavily on their families and their communities, and the bonds of trust which held everything together.

The Palmers' Guild, a religious guild, was based in Ludlow at the English edge of the Marcher lands. Its chapel of St John, in the parish church, was decorated with gilded statues of its patron saints, vibrant glass windows, and finely carved rood screens. Every year, from the mid fifteenth century to the 1530s, the Guild sent its stewards to visit the communities of the Central and North Welsh Marches to recruit new members and collect fees from past recruits. This English religious guild had to pick its way carefully through the ethnic and linguistic divisions to forge tangible connections with the Welsh to the west. The Guild succeeded. It became a trusted institution, to which people looked for spiritual comfort and, increasingly, for secular benefits. The fostering of these relationships by the Palmers' Guild which were built on mutual trust is a central theme of this thesis. By the early sixteenth century, the Guild

had melded its religious role with its secular interests to create a network of relationships that were beneficial to all.

In this thesis, I analyse how the Palmers' Guild influenced the political economy, social cohesion, and religious behaviour of people who lived in the borderland zone in the period 1400 to 1530. The thesis will demonstrate that the Guild promoted the secular interests of Ludlow, not just in the town's immediate hinterland, but further afield in the lordships of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The large body of surviving primary sources, which were written by Guild officials, also enables a fresh analysis of late medieval piety in Ludlow and the surrounding regions. These records document the stewards' journeys into all parts of England, the Welsh Marches and the Principality of Wales, and list the details of thousands of ordinary people who made a conscious decision to join the Guild. Their connection with the Palmers' Guild opens up a new chapter in the history of the Central and North Welsh Marches in the years before the religious Reformation of the 1530s changed everything forever.

Ludlow, the town at the centre of the region of study, has already been researched by other scholars.<sup>3</sup> The focus of these scholars, however, has been on the role of the Palmers' Guild in the town. This thesis takes a different approach because it looks closely at the relationship between the town, its hinterland, and the regions beyond. It does not concentrate on lay piety in Ludlow or the Central and North Welsh Marches. Instead, the thesis investigates the network of spiritual and economic relationships in the Central and North Welsh Marches, at the heart of which stood the Palmer's Guild. It also investigates whether the Palmers' Guild could be considered an

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<sup>3</sup> M. A. Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1991); David Lloyd, Margaret Clark, and Chris Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199-2009* (Almeley: Logaston, 2010).

important player in the cloth trade of the Central and North Welsh Marches, before the ascendancy of the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury in the mid-sixteenth century.

To this end, the thesis employs the concept of 'geographies of piety' as a central tool of analysis. The premise on which the concept is based is that geography played a critical role, not just in the late medieval economy and in politics, but in spiritual life as well. In a region such as the English-Welsh borderlands, in which hills and forests were many but roads were few, it was the lay of the land which shaped the networks of transport and communication. Given the ethnic and linguistic character of the borderlands, human geography was also of great importance. Political geography and the political economy determined the occupational and social character of the individuals and communities who became involved with the Guild. Other aspects of the 'geographies of piety' include the spatial distribution of religious institutions, the opportunities that were available to individuals to engage with these institutions, and the availability of surplus funds to do so. All these 'geographies' contribute to how and why an individual or a community might build a relationship with the Ludlow Guild.

The thesis will also argue that earlier research on religious guilds has tended to be rather fragmented. Religious guilds have been studied in terms of their religious, economic, social, and political activities, but these have often been studied separately, and not as parts of an organic whole. The concept of 'geographies of piety', which embraces the religious, the economic, the social, and the political, allows a more holistic approach to understanding the role of a religious guild in the late medieval period.

The stewards of the Palmers' Guild travelled long distances, and thereby kept a presence throughout the whole of the Central and North Welsh Marches and beyond.

This meant that inhabitants of the region who wanted to perform an act of pious devotion did not necessarily have to go on a pilgrimage or endow a chantry in the local church. Because of the Guild, they had a convenient alternative. The Guild came to them.

The Palmers' Guild offered many ways to engage, both religious and secular. This *modus operandi* gave the Guild an advantage over established religious institutions, such as monasteries, which usually had fewer incentives to offer to those who were interested in their livelihoods as well as their souls. The Guild also encouraged an interconnectedness between people who might otherwise never have been connected at all. Although other religious guilds recruited members who lived outside their central base, the Palmers' Guild actively recruited to such an extent that they became an important participant in the economic, religious, and social landscape of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The religious web, centred on Ludlow, linked towns and villages that otherwise might have had little to do with each other. Had it not been for the Palmers' Guild, life in the Central and North Welsh Marches would have been very different.

The Palmers' Guild's stewards visited towns in England, southern Wales, and the Central and North Welsh Marches, from the mid fifteenth century to the early 1540s. They successfully recruited thousands of people from places such as London, Coventry, and Bristol, as well as the towns of the Southern Welsh Marches. Instead of covering all the Guild's recruitment drives, which would make the thesis too broad, I have decided to analyse the *modus operandi* of the Guild in Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland, and the majority Welsh-speaking areas to the north and west of Ludlow.



There are five chapters in the thesis. The first chapter discusses the historiographical context, the primary sources on which the thesis is based, and the methodology it has used. This is an important chapter as it outlines the database which is at the heart of the analysis. The database contains demographic information on over 3,500 people who were recruited by the Palmers' Guild in the years 1485 to 1515. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the database offers the opportunity to assess the role of the Palmers' Guild in a way that would be impossible based on qualitative evidence alone.

Chapter Two investigates the geopolitical climate which led to the rise of the Palmers' Guild. It argues that the region of study was complex, culturally diverse, and existed in a constant state of tension. This complexity, diversity, and the tensions that they created, can all help us to explain variations in religious behaviour in the Central and North Welsh Marches. The inhospitable landscape and the political economy were also factors that set the region apart. Chapter Two also examines the political tensions that, by the middle of fifteenth century, led to a degree of religious uncertainty. Monasteries were not a central focus for people's piety in the region, mostly because of the endemic political instability which prevented the monastic orders from gaining a firm foothold in the landscape. Instead, by the mid to late fifteenth century, people were drawn to their local parish church and to less structured institutions, like the mendicant friars and religious guilds. These changing religious patterns created an opportunity for the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow to become a supplier of religious services and a catalyst for economic and social stability in the region.

Chapter Three investigates the political economy and political geography of the town of Ludlow itself, including the most important families, their relationship to the

Palmer's Guild and to the wider region. By the early sixteenth century, Guild membership in Ludlow had plateaued. The Guild responded to this state of affairs by redoubling its recruiting efforts in the Central and North Welsh Marches and further afield. Despite the stagnation in the number of Ludlow people in the Guild, it was still a firm favourite with residents in terms of its funeral services and chaplains' prayers.

Chapter Four considers Ludlow's hinterland. The hinterland included communities which were near Ludlow, and which enjoyed a close economic, social and political relationship with the town. In this region, the Guild's role was multifaceted and complex. The hinterland was not a homogenous area. Instead, the records suggest that the area up to 20 miles from Ludlow was differentiated by ethnicity, occupational class, and social factors. The Guild's reputation was high, and many in this area bequeathed property to the Guild in return for prayers or obits. Partially due to the success of its Guild in the hinterland, Ludlow retained its premier role in the Marches at a time when other towns were declining.

Chapter Five explores the activities of the Palmer's Guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches, where it focused on developing trade networks as well as providing spiritual benefits. The Guild maximised its efforts in order to extract the greatest returns for the Guild and the town of Ludlow in three different ways. First, it infiltrated the political economy by providing strong, secure networks to facilitate the cloth trade. Second, it used its connections, which were built on royal patronage, to build its influence in the region. The last factor was its trump card. By offering religious hope to thousands of people in far-flung areas, it ensured that it was an important religious institution, especially in remote localities where the parish church could not offer support as death drew near. In this culturally diverse region, the bonds of trust

were central to all relationships. The Palmers' Guild used trust to underpin its activities and became an important 'middleman' in the political economy of the region.

The Conclusion draws on the quantitative and qualitative analysis from the earlier chapters to outline the differences in membership patterns for Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches. People from all geographical areas supported the Palmers' Guild, but the data shows us that the relationship was varied and multifaced. For example, although people from the Central and North Welsh Marches lived the furthest from Ludlow, the relationship with the Ludlow Guild endured into the first decades of the sixteenth century. By contrast, in Ludlow, the membership dwindled, and was dominated by members from the leading families of the town.

Although I concentrate on the Palmers' Guild between 1400 and 1530, the Guild was still a significant religious institution in the 1530s and 1540s. These decades saw the gradual stripping away of traditional rituals and beliefs which had dominated religious experience for over 1000 years. The last 20 years of the Guild offer many interesting perspectives which could add to the already substantial early Reformation scholarship. To do it justice, I would have far exceeded the word count for this dissertation. Therefore, I have decided to acknowledge the final years of the Palmers' Guild, by composing a brief Postscript. This last chapter includes a summary of the transition of the Guild's property and goods to the Corporation of Ludlow in 1551, when the Guild was dissolved.

## Chapter 1: Historiographical Context, Primary Sources and Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the membership of the Palmers' Guild in Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland, and the Central North Welsh Marches, from the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth century. In this chapter, the role of a religious guild in late medieval society will be defined. I will then outline the scholarship which underpins the thesis, summarise the primary sources, and describe the methodology which I have used to analyse these sources.

In the early twenty-first century, several excellent literature reviews about the role of religious guilds were published by Virginia Bainbridge, David Crouch and Ken Farnhill in their regional guild studies.<sup>4</sup> A recent book by Gervase Rosser refreshes these authors' reviews by expanding on the social, political, and moral aspects of English guilds in relation to European guilds.<sup>5</sup> It is not the purpose of this thesis to repeat their work. The historiographical context section will instead focus on positioning religious guilds within the broader scholarly debate about the condition of the Church at the end of the Middle Ages. I will also examine the relevant literature on the economic and political conditions of the fifteenth and early sixteenth of century. Research on the towns of the Central and North Welsh Marches, including the Marcher lordships, will only be briefly outlined, as this literature will be examined in more detail in the following chapters. The sections on methodology and primary

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<sup>4</sup> Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire 1350-1558* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), 1–21; David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 4–8; Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia: C.1470-1550* (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), 12–20.

<sup>5</sup> Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7–23.

sources complete this chapter. The main sources on which I have relied are the surviving records of officials of the Palmers' Guild, though these are supplemented by other contemporary records such as wills and national documents.

### **Religious Guilds**

In English medieval society, religious guilds were voluntary, extra-parochial organisations.<sup>6</sup> Men and women were free to join as many religious guilds as they wished. Although religious guilds were part of the fabric of late medieval society, they tended to be concentrated in wealthy regions. The destruction of guild records after the suppression of the guilds by Edward VI in 1547 means that it is difficult to estimate how many religious guilds existed in late medieval society. However, a guild scholar, Gervase Rosser, has estimated that there may have been as many as three or four religious guilds in each English parish, at any one time in the fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The guilds provided funerals for their members, distributed alms to brethren in need, organised masses and prayers, funded the furnishing of guild chapels, and organised feasts, religious processions and plays for their members. A potential guild member needed spare money, not just for entrance fines, but also for other aspects of guild life like attending feasts and supporting religious practices.

Religious guilds were formed in response to the core late-medieval Christian concept of Purgatory, which increasingly dominated people's religious beliefs.

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<sup>6</sup> Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire 1350-1558*, 6–9 Bainbridge argues that the terms, Guild, fraternity and brotherhood were used indiscriminately throughout the medieval period.

<sup>7</sup> Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994): 431.

Purgatory was the temporary state in which souls were made ready to enter Heaven.<sup>8</sup> The Church institutionalised this concept by encouraging the laity to provide monetary or other support to hasten not only their own journey through Purgatory, but also that of their late relatives. For example, Thomas Cooke of Ludlow apportioned nine marks (six pounds) from his property to support his chantry in the parish church of St Laurence, after his death.<sup>9</sup> However, most ordinary people could not afford the luxury of their own chantry or endow money to engage a chaplain to say prayers for their souls. The opportunity to pay a small fee to a religious guild for prayers and services, gave these people hope.

Patron saints were central to the ethos of religious guilds and were influential in encouraging a sense of community amongst members. Popular dedications included the Virgin Mary and other saints, or Christian religious celebrations such as Corpus Christi. Guild members met once a year to celebrate the festival of the patron saint with a mass and a feast. It was here that members gathered, in fraternity, and reaffirmed the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. The guild procession from guild chapel to Guildhall, which included an image of the saint, encouraged the spiritual bonding of guild members. The feasts in the Guildhall were grand affairs and a high point in a town's social and religious calendar. In the case of the Palmers' Guild, members who lived within a range of 10 to 15 miles from Ludlow were expected to attend the annual Pentecost feast, which was celebrated 50 days after Easter.<sup>10</sup> Non-attendance sometimes attracted fines.

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail on the definition of Purgatory see the Glossary.

<sup>9</sup> TNA PROB 11/17/347 Will of Thomas Cooke of Ludlow, Esquire, 1513 (proved 20 April 1513).

<sup>10</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 88.

The Guild returns of 1389 often included the ordinances of religious guilds. These returns were written in response to Richard II's writ of 1388, which instructed guilds and other smaller religious fraternities to document their activities.<sup>11</sup> The ordinances of the Palmers' Guild's return for 1389 set out the governance structure.<sup>12</sup> There was a warden and two stewards who ran the affairs of the Guild, and a group of elders who supplied the personnel for these two key roles. The stewards, who collected entry fines from members, were also responsible for managing the Guild's properties and organised the annual feast. They also paid the stipends of the chaplains who were employed to say masses and other religious services for members. A typical example of the steward's role was specified in many ordinances of religious guilds. In the 1389 Guild Returns, the return from the Holy Cross Guild in Stratford-upon-Avon states that:

There are, and always have been, two stewards of the guild, who are bound to manage and gather in all the profits of the houses and rents belonging to the guild, rendering an account thereof every year to the brethren and sisteren of the guild.<sup>13</sup>

The Palmers' Guild stewards were key players in the expansion of the Guild into the areas near to Ludlow, as well as further afield in parts of England, Wales, and the Welsh Marches. The stewards, in concert with the warden and elders of the Guild,

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<sup>11</sup> See below for further discussion about the 1389 Guild returns.

<sup>12</sup> Most ordinances are given in the 1388 Guild returns but updated ordinances can also be found in Guild documents, often in the front of the membership register.

<sup>13</sup> Joshua Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Gilds* (London: Trubner & Co, 1870), 213.

regulated the spiritual lives of Guild members, contributed to the political economy of Ludlow, and influenced the social networks which dominated town life. Their importance in urban life cannot be underestimated.

Christopher Dyer, and other researchers, have argued that although membership of a religious guild was open to all ranks of society, in practice the admission of poor people was precluded by the entrance fee.<sup>14</sup> In the fifteenth century, the common entry fee for many religious guilds was 6s. 8d. per person or 13s. 4d. for couples.<sup>15</sup> Although scholars have been unable to nominate a typical 'day's wage', a figure of between 2 ½d. and 4d. is a reasonable estimation for farm labourers in the fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The entry fee would therefore equate to wages for around 32 days for a labourer, or 24 days for a chaplain, whose wage was around five pounds a year.<sup>17</sup> This was a significant amount of money for many people in the late medieval period.

The Palmers' Guild's payment structure tests Dyer's assertion that joining a religious guild was not available to the poor. The Guild allowed recruits to pay their entry fine over many years. This type of payment set the Palmers' Guild apart from other religious guilds, who gathered the entry fee in perhaps two or three instalments

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford: A Successful Small Town', in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* Ed. by Robert Bearman (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 61.

<sup>15</sup> This was the case with the Stratford Guild and the entry fine to the Drapers Guild of Shrewsbury Mairi Macdonald, ed., *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon: The Dugdale Society in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2007); Lily F. Chitty, trans., 'The Earliest Book of the Drapers' Company, Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* IX, no. II (1924): 258–77.

<sup>16</sup> The figure of 4d. would be the approximate wage at the peak time of the year, such as the Summer harvest John Hatcher, 'Unreal Wages: Long-Run Living Standards and the "Golden Age" of the Fifteenth Century', in *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages* (Boydell and Brewer, 2011), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Palmer, *Selling the Church: The English Parish in Law, Commerce, and Religion 1350-1550* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 57–58.



but not over the space of 15-20 years.<sup>18</sup> The option of paying by instalments meant that recruits were able to pay when they could afford it, even though the benefits of membership were not available until the entire entry fee had been paid. Although there was no set amount for each instalment, the Palmers' Guild riding books indicate that most recruits paid an annual sum of at least 8d.<sup>19</sup> This amount equates to two or three days, not 32 days of a labourer's average wage, which other guilds required for the 'up front' membership fee. The option to pay instalments to the Guild steward, for as many years as was necessary, meant that many people could achieve membership, possibly even the poor. There were also many benefits to the Palmers' Guild with this type of payment structure. It encouraged a longer engagement between recruits and Guild officials, which fostered the idea of bonds of trust, which could then influence economic factors, such as trading of cloth or wool. The option of a flexible membership was a 'bargaining' chip in the Guild's armoury as its stewards toured Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches.

The Ludlow Guild recorded these instalments for thousands of people who lived up to 100 miles from Ludlow. These unique records enable a geographical and chronological analysis of the Guild's activities. It also provides quantitative data for future research on the Guild's networking and economic relationships with other parts of England outside the Central and North Welsh Marches region. It is for this reason that the Palmers' Guild riding books are very important to the study of religious guilds

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<sup>18</sup> Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia: C.1470-1550*, 15; Macdonald, *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> See instalments in the Guild's riding books. SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

in England. To my knowledge no similar riding books have survived from other English guilds.

The scholarship on English medieval religious guilds stems from research by two late nineteenth and early-twentieth century scholars: H.F. Westlake and Joshua Toulmin Smith.<sup>20</sup> Their research was significant because, amongst other things, it brought to light previously unknown guild records. Later scholars used these primary sources to place religious guilds within the broader medieval community. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, new trends in understanding lay piety in late medieval England stimulated a wave of religious guild studies that made use of these records. In 1993, Barbara Hanawalt and Ben McCree were two of the first researchers to analyse the 1389 Guild returns, which Toulmin Smith had transcribed and listed in his edited book.<sup>21</sup> It has been argued by Caroline Barron and Jan Gerchow that, in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, Richard had introduced greater supervision of guilds because he was fearful of the power of popular institutions.<sup>22</sup>

In 1388, Guild officials were questioned about the purpose and structure of their guilds and their role as voluntary organisations. They answered questions about the foundation of their guilds, their forms of government, their meetings, oaths and feasts, their privileges, sources of income, chattels and tenements, whether held in Mortmain or not.<sup>23</sup> Most returns highlighted the pious nature of their ordinances and

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<sup>20</sup> H.F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Medieval England* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919); Smith, *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Gilds*.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara A. Hanawalt and Ben R McCree, 'The Guilds of Homo Prudens in Late Medieval England', *Continuity and Change* 7 (1992): 163–79.

<sup>22</sup> See Caroline M. Barron and Laura Wright, 'The London Middle English Guild Certificates of 1388-9', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 39 (1995): 108–45; J Gerchow, 'Gilds and Fourteenth-Century Bureaucracy: The Case of 1388-9', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 40 (1996): 109–48.

<sup>23</sup> Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Medieval England*, 193–94.

downplayed their secular sources of income, such as property bequests and money from rich testators. These documents indicate the nature and extent of religious guilds in England, and provide a valuable, though perhaps not entirely reliable, snapshot of their activity at this time. Most of the surviving returns from the 1389 survey come from East Anglia. Eastern England was wealthier and more densely populated than other parts of England. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that more guild records, like accounts and membership records, have survived for guilds in the east of England.

Information from the 1389 Guild returns demonstrates that religious guilds were formed for different reasons. Some were created in response to the plagues of the mid-fourteenth century. Others were organised to support the integration of various groups into urban society. The characteristic which tied them all together was the focus on spiritual support for members in life and in death.

The trend to form religious guilds was not just confined to England. There has been an increasing scholarly interest in urban piety in flourishing European cities. Rosser argues that, in Europe, recruitment was notable in areas where there was demographic instability and significant immigration to urban centres. In France, for example, young men and women, who made up a good proportion of the immigrant population, were attracted to guilds as a way entering the urban hierarchy. Guild membership could lead to a good moral reputation and future advancement.<sup>24</sup> In a similar way, English urban guilds were formed in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century when the existing social hierarchy did not offer a social outlet for

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<sup>24</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Society and Culture in Early Modern France', in *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 50.

men with 'new wealth', such as wool merchants or other social classes in the wool trade. It has been argued by Michael Faraday that this was the main reason behind the formation of the Palmers' Guild in Ludlow in the late thirteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Urban guilds were more likely than village guilds to have a multi-layered structure, in which economic, political, social and religious factors all played a role. Many guild office holders were members of the urban elite. For example, in Ludlow, people who attained secular offices in the town, such as bailiff or alnager (an official who inspected woollen cloth), often took up roles in the Palmers' Guild in later life. A person's role in the Guild usually commenced with a four-year period as a steward or rener, which sometimes led to promotion to the role of warden.<sup>26</sup>

Historians have sought to link large urban religious guilds to the secular authorities of the day. Regional studies suggest that religious guilds could wield considerable power in their towns. In 1979, Charles Phythian-Adams outlined the political aspirations of guilds, in his study of the religious guilds of Corpus Christi and Trinity. He asserted that Coventry men, who had risen to become aldermen of their craft guild, transferred to the premier Coventry guild, the Trinity Guild, to further their political aspirations.<sup>27</sup> Research on the Guild of St George in Norwich indicates that there was an overt political role for this Guild, the officials of which were tasked with establishing order in an increasingly ungovernable town. The Guild of St. George and the Norwich city government merged in 1452, in part as a response to tension between the craftsmen and merchants, and in part as a result of disputes with

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<sup>25</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Faraday, 186–88.

<sup>27</sup> C.V. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 122.

external lay and ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>28</sup> David Crouch, in his review of Yorkshire religious guilds, argues that the highly visible role for the Corpus Christi religious guild in the annual Corpus Christi procession, indicates a fusion of Guild interests with those of the secular elite in York.<sup>29</sup>

English urban religious guilds differed to guilds in Europe, such as the northern Italian city-states, where there was often an emphasis on physical forms of pious expression. Unlike English guilds, which were controlled by secular officials, the Dominican and Franciscan friars were a strong influence in the direction and purpose of the northern Italian guilds.<sup>30</sup> An example of one of these fraternities is the *Scuole Grandi* in the northern Italian city of Venice. This Guild provided support with prayers and funeral rituals, but also encouraged members to express their religious devotion through self-flagellation. The focus of the *Scuole Grandi* was the assistance of members, but – unlike English guilds – it also supported non-members. During the fifteenth century, the *Scuole Grandi* increasingly supported elaborate processions and overt displays of wealth. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, it had evolved to become an institution of the wealthy and influential men of the day. Menial tasks, which included the carrying of banners and other heavy objects in the processions, fell to people of lesser means, rather than to those who exercised an official role in the confraternity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Hanawalt and McRee, 'The Guilds of Homo Prudens in Late Medieval England', 174–75.

<sup>29</sup> Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547*, 143.

<sup>30</sup> John Henderson, 'Confraternities and the Church in Late Medieval Florence', in *Voluntary Religion*, by W.J. Shiels and Diana Wood (London: Blackwell, 1986), 69–83.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State to 1620* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 42–45.

In late medieval Florence, a city of 45,000 inhabitants, there were over 100 confraternities that emphasised the penitential aspects of pious commitment.<sup>32</sup> There were also similar confraternities in Bologna. Nicholas Terpstra's research on Bologna confirms previous findings about Venetian and Florentine guilds, which show how the confraternities were becoming more bureaucratic in the early sixteenth century. He concludes that 'religious brotherhoods had become corporate institutions which were poor only in spirit'.<sup>33</sup> This last observation resonates with the development of the Ludlow Guild in the same chronological period. In 1400, the Guild comprised mostly Ludlow-based members and supported brethren and sisters in need. The Guild's accounts show that, by 1509, far more was spent on property repairs than on supporting poor brethren.<sup>34</sup> The acquisition of rental properties, and the importance of recruiting new members outside Ludlow, overshadowed the support of needy members.

English village-based guilds or fraternities might only exist for the lifetime of the benefactor. Some were formed as an immediate response to the plagues and famines of the mid-fourteenth century. People feared that they might die suddenly, without any family members to organise appropriate funeral services and prayers. The ordinances of the Guild of Corpus Christi in Kings Lynn clearly demonstrate this fear.

In the great pestilence which was at [King's] Lynn in 1349, in which the greater part of the people in the same town died, three men

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<sup>32</sup> Henderson, 'Confraternities and the Church in Late Medieval Florence', 70.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas. Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna*, Cambridge Studies in Italian History and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170.

<sup>34</sup> SA LB5/3/35 Steward's Accounts 1509.

[seeing that] the venerated Sacrament of the Body of Christ was being carried through the town with only a single candle of poor wax burning in front of it, whereas two great candles of the best wax are barely sufficient, deemed this so improper that they ordained certain lights for It when carried by night or day in the visitation of the sick, and designed this devotion to last for the period of their lives. Others, seeing their devotion, offered to join them, and thirteen of them drew up their ordinances [for a guild of Corpus Christi].<sup>35</sup>

Virginia Bainbridge's study of religious guilds in rural Cambridgeshire has shown that 58 percent of English religious guilds, which were listed in the 1389 Guild returns, were in rural communities.<sup>36</sup> However, as these rural guilds left few records, it is hard to trace their progress from 1388 through to the 1540s, when religious guilds were dissolved. The 1389 Guild returns also show that the distribution of religious guilds was far lower in the western counties of England, where there were only a handful of religious guilds in the larger towns. Evidence from the Guild returns of 1389 and other primary sources suggest that the nearest religious guilds to Ludlow were in Coventry, Lichfield, Bristol, and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Both urban and village religious guilds were vehicles for local pious expression, so it is essential to understand their relationship to local institutions, such as the parish church. Frequently, the parish church provided a physical

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<sup>35</sup> Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Medieval England*, 50.

<sup>36</sup> Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire 1350-1558*, 29.

home for the guild in a side chapel or an altar in the nave. Clive Burgess' study of Bristol, and Andrew Brown's analysis of Salisbury, demonstrate that the local hierarchy of the parish church often worked 'hand in glove' with leading members of the town's religious guild.<sup>37</sup> This is was the also the case in Ludlow, where the churchwardens' accounts for the 1470s, catalogue the Guild's contributions to the rebuilding of the church's tower.<sup>38</sup>

Other regional studies of religious guilds in London, Yorkshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, and East Anglia, add to the national picture of guild activity.<sup>39</sup> None of these studies show there was active antagonism between parish churchwardens and religious guilds. In fact, many men and women in holy orders joined religious guilds. For example, in the Palmers' Guild, it was not unusual for chaplains, priests and monks to pay regular instalments for up to 15 years. Almost one-third of people who stated their occupation, and who

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<sup>37</sup> See Clive Burgess, "'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented": An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Late Medieval England', in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion*, ed. S.J. Wright (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 56–84; and Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> See Thomas Wright and Camden Society (Great Britain), *Churchwardens' Accounts of the Town of Ludlow, in Shropshire, from 1540 to the End of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Westminster: Printed for the Camden Society, 1869).

<sup>39</sup> For London see Caroline M. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', in *Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1985), 13–37; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire 1350-1558*; Farnhill, *Gilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia: C.1470-1550*; Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547*; Judith Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: An Analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c.1400-1551' (MA, Cheltenham, University of Gloucestershire, 2010); S Clark, 'Confraternities: A Study of Religious Guilds in Fifteenth Century England with Specific Reference to Guilds in Coventry, Lichfield and Stratford-upon-Avon' (MA, Coventry, Warwick, 1992); F.J. Furnivall, *The Gild of St. Mary Lichfield: Being the Ordinances of the Gild of St. Mary and Other Documents* (London: Early English Text Society, 1920).



registered to be a member of the Guild from the Central and North Welsh Marches for the years 1485 to 1515, were clergy or monks.<sup>40</sup>

Alongside religious guilds, there was a range of other urban guilds in late medieval England. Merchant guilds regulated trade, and craft guilds regulated the workers within particular crafts.<sup>41</sup> For example, the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury regulated that trade in Shrewsbury and was influential in capturing the wool trade in north Shropshire and North Wales from the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>42</sup> As we shall see in chapter 5, the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury and the Palmers' Guild were enmeshed in each other's networks. Craft guilds often possessed chapels with shrines in the local parish church, in a similar fashion to religious guilds. In Ludlow, for example, the Ancient Company of Smith and Hammerman met in the chancel of St Lloye in the parish church of Ludlow and the Company of Cordwainers and Weavers altar was in St Catherine's Chancel.<sup>43</sup> These craft guilds also employed chaplains to look after the spiritual needs of their members, but religious services were not the prime focus of these guilds.

Thus we can see that the nature and role of religious guilds in late medieval England can be compared to a range of European guilds, which prospered in the Northern Italian city states, and the towns of France. Although there were several craft guilds in Ludlow, the Palmers' Guild offered an extra layer of religious services for

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<sup>40</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>41</sup> Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum* 67 (1992): 90.

<sup>42</sup> See T.C. Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the XVI and XVII Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).

<sup>43</sup> Henry Weyman, 'Chantry Chapels in Ludlow Church', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* IV, 3rd series (1904): 345.

tradespeople as well as the pious folk of Ludlow. This special relationship consolidated the Guild's position within the religious, economic and political landscape of the town.

### **Historiographical Context**

My thesis is nested within the broader scholarship of late medieval religion, as it examines an example of a religious institution in late medieval society. For the last 50 years, the scholarship on late medieval religion has been dominated by the question of whether the pre-Reformation Church was vibrant and resilient, or stagnant and ritualised. There has also been disagreement about how the Reformation was received by the people in England and Wales in the mid sixteenth century.

In the mid twentieth century the historian, G.R. Elton, asserted that the Reformation was imposed from above. He argued that the success of the English Reformation lay in the ability of the King and his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, to control the narrative and drive central government reforms to 'nationalise' the church.<sup>44</sup> In the 1960s, A.G Dickens argued that there was a swift acceptance of early Protestant values by the people of England.<sup>45</sup> He maintained that late medieval people were yearning for new ways to express their piety and devotion within a moribund religious landscape.<sup>46</sup> The dissolution of the chantries in the mid-1540s was calmly received because most people 'ceased to believe in the doctrine of intercessory masses for souls in Purgatory'.<sup>47</sup> However, by the 1980s, local studies of the

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<sup>44</sup> G.R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558* (London: Arnold, 1977).

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation', *The Historical Journal* 25, no. 4 (1982): 997.

<sup>46</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>47</sup> A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2nd ed. (London: Batsford, 1989), 235.

Reformation by Christopher Haigh, amongst others, indicated that many people in the 1530s and 1540s were firmly attached to the rituals and beliefs of the established church. Haigh argued that this was particularly the case in Lancashire where, in comparison to cities such as London, people tended to be more conservative in religious matters.<sup>48</sup> Dickens' approach to understanding the Reformation process, in particular, came under intense scholarly scrutiny by the end of the 1980s.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1990s, Eamon Duffy famously contested the pessimistic view of late medieval religion in England. His work, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580*, challenged earlier scholarship. Duffy's key argument was that the rituals and traditions of the Catholic religion were thriving in late medieval England. His research built on Christopher Haigh's earlier conclusion that 'on balance, the late medieval Church was a lively and relevant institution'.<sup>50</sup> Research by Jack Scarisbrick on late medieval wills also demonstrated that there was still a commitment to the old religion in the years before the 1530s.<sup>51</sup> However, Duffy's research went further and deeper. He questioned the value and importance of rituals, images, and saints in late medieval religious observance. In his later volume, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English village*, Duffy continued this lay-centred approach by charting the bewildering array of early Reformation reforms through the eyes of Christopher Trychay, a local vicar in the parish of Morebath,

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<sup>48</sup> Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'A. G. Dickens and the English Reformation', *Historical Research* 77, no. 195 (2004): 29.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>51</sup> J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 3.

Devon.<sup>52</sup> His writing brought to life the worldview of individuals who were caught up in a whirlwind of change, at a time not of their choosing. These parishioners were not at all happy about new religious ideas that were challenging established rituals and customs. The traditions of their forebears were still important, relevant, and integral to their daily life.

This change in conceptual focus encouraged scholars to reassess lay piety, which was often centered around commemoration of the dead. The dead were important to the living. Peter Marshall describes the dead as occupying a space which was close to the heart of late medieval English religious culture. They shaped the whole society, not just the liturgy, as they provided employment for a significant number of chaplains and ‘made the Church a great deal of money’.<sup>53</sup> This concern for the dead was due in part to the doctrine of Purgatory, which was adopted as Christian doctrine in 1439.<sup>54</sup> Amongst other scholars, Judith Middleton-Stewart has traced death and remembrance at a local level in villages and towns of England.<sup>55</sup> She outlines the wide choice for testators for their commemoration *post mortem*. These

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<sup>52</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

<sup>54</sup> See the Glossary for a definition of the doctrine of Purgatory Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547*, 114.

<sup>55</sup> See: Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547*; and also: Clive Burgess, ‘Longing to Be Prayed for: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages’, in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 44–65; Caroline M. Barron and Clive Burgess, eds., *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2008 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010); Madeleine Gray, ‘Reforming Memory: Commemoration of the Dead in Sixteenth-Century Wales’, *The Welsh History Review* 26, no. 2 (2012): 186–214.

included funeral masses, intercessory masses such as trentals, obits and perpetual chantries supported by endowments.<sup>56</sup>

As the mass moved to the centre of the religious experience, there was increasing support for new institutions which had the mass at the centre. For the parish church, it was the chantry.<sup>57</sup> Due to population increases as well as liturgical changes, aisles and chapels were added to parish churches. This accommodated chantries, with their extra altars, so parts of the church became a place of personal piety within a public, corporate space. There was also a central role for religious guilds in this culture of commemoration. Surviving wills, such as Thomas Cooke's written in 1513, show that chaplains from the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow were employed to officiate at chantries which lined the nave of St Laurence's parish church.<sup>58</sup>

Other historians re-examined the role of the parish church in late medieval society. Duffy's principal interest was the intersection between public and private forms of religious observance. The parish church was at the centre of his research, which echoes its central focus for the late medieval person. Beat Kümin also examined the parish as a political and social space. Using evidence drawn primarily from churchwardens' accounts, he argued that the office of churchwarden grew in importance from 1450 as the laity took more control over the church's finances and building works. The new role caused tensions between parishioners and also between parishioners and their parish clergy.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547*, 121, 141.

<sup>57</sup> See the Glossary for a definition of a chantry

<sup>58</sup> TNA PROB 11/17/347 Will of Thomas Cooke of Ludlow, Esquire, 1513 (proved 20 April 1513).

<sup>59</sup> See Beat A. Kumin, *Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400-1560* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).

In the early twenty-first century, research on the parish church grew. The proceedings of the Harlaxton Symposium of 2002 indicate the fervour with which scholars were applying themselves to this theme. The published proceedings of the Symposium included chapters on the parish in its community, lay piety, lay and clerical relationships, liturgy, and commemoration in the parish church, as well as new perspectives on pre-Reformation religious rituals.<sup>60</sup> Clive Burgess, who wrote a chapter in this proceedings, also explores the role of late medieval piety in the parish setting.<sup>61</sup> His early works on the pre-Reformation church has led to his book, published in 2018, which examines the lives of parishioners of All Saints in Bristol in the pre-Reformation period.<sup>62</sup> The intricacies of parish life are brought to life as he describes the devotional concerns of parishioners, and their awareness of their place in the social hierarchy. It was important to be remembered by not just family members, but those who lived in the broader community. Individuals might attend funerals of notable people of the town so that they may attract the concern of others as and when it became necessary.<sup>63</sup> As the Palmers' Guild was a parish-based guild, this scholarship on the English parish church is relevant. It provides solid background material on how a late

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<sup>60</sup> Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy, eds., *The Parish in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2002 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006).

<sup>61</sup> Clive Burgess, 'Time and Place: The Late Medieval English Parish in Perspective', in *The Parish in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2002 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 1–28; See also: Burgess, 'Longing to Be Prayed for: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages'; and Clive Burgess, "'An Afterlife in Memory": Commemoration and Its Effects in a Late Medieval Parish', in *The Church, the Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul: Papers Read at the 2007 Summer Meeting and the 2008 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society Edited by Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2009), 196–217.

<sup>62</sup> Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Burgess, 95.

medieval parish functioned, and how religious guilds were often an important part of parish life.

There were also detractors of Duffy's analysis. His colourful interpretation of the village of Morebath in Devon gave the impression that parishes were homogenously orthodox and harmonious.<sup>64</sup> Other scholars did not necessarily agree. Duffy's research gave the late medieval church a sense of identity and purpose, but the parish he so generously described was one which was static and undifferentiated. He did not appear to support Miri Rubin's argument that 'a static notion of medieval community obscures difference and conflict, it whitewashes shades of tension, distance, and difference'.<sup>65</sup> Katherine French was scathing of Duffy's 'nostalgic' view of the late medieval parish. She examined the parish of Dunster in Somerset from 1357 to 1539 and discovered many areas of tension and conflict between a large body of parishioners and a well-connected but small monastic community. The parishioners and monks shared a church, which became a religious battleground for over 150 years.<sup>66</sup>

The debate about the vigour of the late medieval Church is important in terms of historiographical context, but it is not the main focus of this thesis. My argument neither opposes nor verifies Duffy's thesis. Instead, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which expressions of lay piety were shaped by geographical factors. My goal is not to evaluate the health of the Palmers' Guild, but to explore the ways in which people's interaction with the Guild varied depending on their location.

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<sup>64</sup> Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*.

<sup>65</sup> Miri Rubin, 'Small Groups: Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages', in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth Century England* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1991), 132–50.

<sup>66</sup> Katherine L. French, 'Competing for Space: Medieval Religious Conflict in the Monastic-Parochial Church at Dunster', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 2 (1997): 215–44.

The political geography of the region was dominated by the fact that it straddled the shifting border between England and Wales. The fact that the population was ethnically and linguistically mixed was very important to the social and political history of the region. But was it equally important in religious terms?

There are few secondary sources which examine late medieval religion in the Welsh Marches in detail. The research that has been completed is usually segmented into English and Welsh scholarship. For Shropshire, A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh laid out the framework of medieval religious institutions, in the second volume of the Victoria County History (VCH) for Shropshire.<sup>67</sup> The volume outlines the monasteries, friaries, almshouses and religious guilds which populated the towns and countryside in medieval Shropshire. The discussion also includes detail about how each institution was affected by, and responded to, the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr. Gaydon also exposed the Palmers' Guild's extensive manuscript collection, which is held in the Shropshire Archives, when writing about the Guild in that volume.<sup>68</sup> Further invaluable detail about monastic Shropshire can be found in a leaflet by G.C. Baugh and D.C. Cox, also published by the VCH in 1982.<sup>69</sup>

Glanmor Williams' research on the Welsh Church before the Reformation still influences current research, fifty years after it was published. He was recognised from the 1960s until his death in 2005 as the authority on the history of the Welsh church from the earliest times to the early Reformation.<sup>70</sup> He explored the major themes

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<sup>67</sup> A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh, eds., *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973).

<sup>68</sup> A.T. Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 134–40.

<sup>69</sup> G.C. Baugh and D.C. Cox, *Monastic Shropshire* (Shrewsbury: Shropshire Libraries, 1982).

<sup>70</sup> Glanmor Williams, *Welsh Reformation Essays* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967); Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, revised edn. (Cardiff: University of Wales



which impeded and enhanced its development. His analysis of the growth in lay patronage of parish churches in Wales and the Marcher lordships, from c1450 to 1535, lays a firm foundation for the examination of the role of the Palmers' Guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches. In addition, Williams's profiling of the late medieval Welsh parish, and in particular, those parishes which had mixed English/Welsh inhabitants, is particularly important for this thesis.<sup>71</sup> However, his portrayal of Welsh parishes in the 1530s as an 'incredible mix of sincere devotion and blatant superstition' is reminiscent of Dickens' depiction of the pre-Reformation population.<sup>72</sup>

In support of the revisionist school championed by Duffy, amongst others, early twenty-first century researchers have moved away from Williams's approach to emphasise lay people's religious practices. A PhD thesis by Katherine Olson on Welsh popular religion provides important comparative material for the current study. Olson exploits a range of Welsh sources to explore lay beliefs, customs and practices, including literary and architectural. She asserts that late medieval religious practices had vitality and relevance to those living at that time, and that the accepted view of a disengaged laity has been coloured by early Protestant Welsh reformers and later Nonconformist writings.<sup>73</sup>

John Morgan-Guy's recent history of the diocese of St Davids outlines the cultural, social, and religious changes in the diocese, from 1485 to 2011.<sup>74</sup> This diocese

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Press, 1976); Glanmor Williams, *Renewal and Reformation Wales: C1415-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>71</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*; Williams, *Welsh Reformation Essays*.

<sup>72</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 464.

<sup>73</sup> Katherine Olson, "'Fire From Heaven": Popular Religion and Society in Wales, c.1400--1603' (PhD, Massachusetts, Harvard University, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> William Gibson and John Morgan-Guy, eds., *Religion and Society in the Diocese of St Davids 1485-2011* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015).

adjoined the diocese of Hereford. Abbey Cwmhir, and the towns of Beguildy, Heyope and Knighton, which are discussed later in this thesis, all lay in the diocese of St Davids. Morgan-Guy argues that the intricate screens and rood lofts built in the early 1500s in Patrishow, Llanfilo and Llannano churches indicate that lay interest in the parish church was strong.<sup>75</sup> He supports Eamon Duffy's assertion that 'late medieval Catholicism exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination of the people'.<sup>76</sup> By contrast, monastic St Davids was characterised by weak discipline, lax oversight, and resistance to reform. By the 1530s, only one out of eighteen religious houses in the diocese of St Davids had more than ten monks. Most had very little contact with their local communities as people had shifted their allegiance to parish priests, chaplains, or friars, for services and prayers.<sup>77</sup> Although Morgan-Guy has written a diocesan history, he includes the layperson's perspective. His research highlights the favourable conditions which religious guilds, such as the Palmers' Guild, could complement services provided by the local parish church.

Llinos Beverley Smith provides a glimpse into the cultural aspects of religious observance in borderland communities. In her analysis, which is based on the Act books from the Diocese of Hereford Consistory Court (1468-1517), she argues that there were disparities between the English and the Welsh in terms of marriage rituals. There were also differences in the acceptance of adultery. These differences broke down as the fifteenth century wore on.<sup>78</sup> Smith also argues that there was a steady

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<sup>75</sup> Gibson and Morgan-Guy, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars : Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> Gibson and Morgan-Guy, *Religion and Society in the Diocese of St Davids 1485-2011*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Llinos Beverley Smith, 'A View from an Ecclesiastical Court: Mobility and Marriage in a Border Society at the End of the Middle Ages', in *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 70–74.

Welsh migration, not just to the larger border towns of Ludlow and Monmouth, but also to the smaller towns of Montgomery, Presteigne and Kington, which lay west of Ludlow in the Marcher lordships.<sup>79</sup> This migration would suggest that, by the early sixteenth century, the Ludlow Guild stewards would have been familiar with Welsh religious customs and were aware of how they could recruit members from this ethnic group.

Kristine Rabberman's research on intercultural marriage in the borderland also makes use of the Act books of the Diocese of Hereford Consistory courts. Rabberman argues that Welsh-speaking individuals were the principal defendants in mid-fifteenth century sexual misconduct cases in the western deaneries of Clun and Pontesbury (near Montgomery) of the diocese of Hereford. However, by the early sixteenth century, there were fewer cases in the Consistory court records. She suggests this change was due to a decline in self-divorce cases, which was a Welsh tradition.<sup>80</sup> Evidence in the Act books suggest that this was matched by an increase in the celebration of the English convention of a marriage solemnised by a priest *in facie ecclesiae*.<sup>81</sup> Rabberman's research is valuable as it examines the role of the church within mixed English/Welsh settlements at the same time that the Palmers' Guild was visiting majority Welsh-speaking parishes in the Central and North Welsh Marches. It also examines the parish at a micro-level and shows that ethnic tension in the mid fifteenth century eased as the century wore on.

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<sup>79</sup> Smith, 70–74.

<sup>80</sup> Kristine L. Rabberman, 'Marriage on the Boundaries: Cultural Contact and Marriage Formation on the Welsh/English Border 1442-1526' (PhD, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1998).

<sup>81</sup> Rabberman, 36.

Although there is a range of articles and books written about the Welsh church and religious life in the Marcher lordships, there is no large-scale review of late-medieval religious practices in the Central and North Welsh Marches. Apart from the research which has been already outlined in this section, there are a scattering of resources on late medieval iconography and architecture in Wales.<sup>82</sup> However, it is very piecemeal. There is also no research, to my knowledge, about the role of the Palmers' Guild in the religious practices of people who lived in the Marcher lordships.

The thesis is also located within the broader political, economic and social history of Wales and the Welsh Marches. An important Welsh scholar, Rees Davies, wrote authoritatively about the history of Wales, from 1063 to the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion.<sup>83</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths also wrote extensively on fifteenth century politics. He outlined the political society of the Welsh Marches, and the northern borderlands, in the fifteenth century.<sup>84</sup> His article on the rebuilding of Welsh society after the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion outlines the renewal of Shrewsbury, Hereford, and Chester. He also mentions, in passing, that the growth in the membership of the Palmers' Guild was a factor in the increasing importance of Ludlow in the late fifteenth century.<sup>85</sup> Few

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<sup>82</sup> Martin Crampin, *Stained Glass From Welsh Churches* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2014); Gray, 'Reforming Memory: Commemoration of the Dead in Sixteenth-Century Wales'; Fred H. Crossley and Maurice Ridgeway, 'Screens, Lofts and Stalls Located in Wales and Monmouthshire: Part Five, Section VII Montgomeryshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 99, no. 2 (1947): 179–230; Fred H. Crossley and Maurice Ridgeway, 'Screens, Lofts and Stalls Located in Wales and Monmouthshire: Part Six, Section IX Radnorshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 100 (1949): 207–51; Peter Lord, *The Visual Culture of Wales: Medieval Vision* (Cardiff: University Of Wales Press, 2003), 240.

<sup>83</sup> R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); R.R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, UK, 1995); R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282-1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

<sup>84</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches in the Fifteenth Century', in *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Continuum Academic Publishing, 1991), 55–81.

<sup>85</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, 'After Glyn Dŵr: An Age of Reconciliation?', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 88 (2002): 139–64.

researchers have achieved the status of these two men, although W.R.B. Robinson published fifteen articles from 1962 to 2002, about early Tudor policy in the Welsh Marches.<sup>86</sup>

In recent years there have been a couple of publications which examine the political economy of the Welsh Marches. In 2008 Max Lieberman published a study of the political, economic, and social structure of the Welsh Marches before 1300.<sup>87</sup> His painstaking analysis of the structure of the Marcher lordships examined the nature of colonisation and the effect of constant warfare on border communities. Although Lieberman does not examine the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he provides very useful background material to my research. In his 2019 monograph, Matthew Stevens acknowledges the lack of a general survey of medieval Welsh economic history. He tries to fill this historical gap by outlining the main changes in the economy from the Norman conquest in 1067 to the Acts of Union of England and Wales in 1536. His last chapter offers a theoretical approach to the subject of medieval economic and social change in Wales. He assesses changes in the Welsh economy in the period between 1067 and 1536 in relation to established models of economic change which have been used in researching English economic history. He argues that these three models – neo-Malthusian, neo-Marxist and commercialisation – are useful tools for the comparison of Welsh economic history with English historical narratives.<sup>88</sup> Steven's

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<sup>86</sup> These include: W.R.B. Robinson, "Early Tudor Policy Towards Wales: The Acquisitions of Lands," *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* XX (1962): 421–38; W.R.B. Robinson, "The Welsh Lands of Henry, Earl of Worcester in the 1530s Part II: Chepstow, Tidenham, Caldicot, and Magor," *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* XXV, no. Part III (1973): 298–337; W. R. B. Robinson, "The Tudor Revolution in Welsh Government 1536-1543: Its Effects on Gentry Participation," *The English Historical Review* 103, no. 406 (January 1, 1988): 1–20.

<sup>87</sup> See Max Lieberman, *The March of Wales, 1067-1300: A Borderland of Medieval Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008).

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Frank Stevens, *The Economy of Medieval Wales: 1067-1536* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), 2–8.

timely publication succinctly outlines the complex nature of the late medieval economy in Wales. Ludlow was part of this economy, not only due to its position in the borderland region, but also because its Guild sent its stewards to recruit members from the Marcher lordships and the western lands beyond.

Although these authors have explored aspects of Welsh history a comprehensive regional history of the lordships or the Welsh Marches in the late medieval period has not been forthcoming. For this reason, the material contained within the Transactions of local history societies (Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, Herefordshire, and Shropshire) has been invaluable. It would have been difficult to piece together the political, social, economic, and religious framework for the Marcher lordships without the painstaking work of local historians over many decades.<sup>89</sup>

As the thesis engages with the political economy of Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches, it is important to consider earlier research on political and economic history. Several twentieth-century historians have traditionally portrayed the economy of fifteenth-century Europe in negative terms. In 1922, Johann Huizinga published *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, in which he made the case that the fifteenth century was a century of decline.<sup>90</sup> In a similar vein, Michael Postan, argued in 1939 that the fifteenth century should be seen as 'an age of recession, arrested economic development and declining national income'.<sup>91</sup> James

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<sup>89</sup> Transactions of The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Radnorshire Society Transactions, and Montgomeryshire Collections.

<sup>90</sup> Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages : A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (London: Penguin books, 1922).

<sup>91</sup> M Postan, 'Revisions in Economic History: IX.-The Fifteenth Century', *The Economic History Review* 9, no. 2 (1939): 161.

Bolton's chronological analysis of the medieval economy continued this theme.<sup>92</sup> In 1979, Christopher Phythian-Adams, in his study of Coventry as centre of the wool and cloth industries, claimed that, by the end of the fifteenth century, the town was clearly stagnating.<sup>93</sup>

In recent years, a revisionist school has emerged which portrays the fifteenth-century economy in a more positive light. A notable scholar in this school is Christopher Dyer, who has spent his academic career trying to counter the doom and gloom of earlier scholars. He makes the case that the fortunes of individual towns varied considerably, and that scholars must therefore recognise the diversity of the fifteenth-century economy.<sup>94</sup> Dyer's thesis is supported by a number of local studies, such as Donald Leech's recent work on Coventry, in which he argues that the town had a stable population and an economy which was responsive and adaptive.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the evidence found in the Palmers' Guild records suggests that some towns in the Welsh Marches, such as Ludlow, were thriving. Other towns in the region, by contrast, such as Radnor, Montgomery, and Welshpool, were still suffering from the after-effects of the economic and political upheaval caused by the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion.<sup>96</sup>

A key book which helps to understand regional economies is Dyer's *A Country Merchant 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*.<sup>97</sup> Dyer

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<sup>92</sup> J.L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1980).

<sup>93</sup> Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages*.

<sup>94</sup> Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Christopher Dyer, *Age of Transition? Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> Donald Leech, 'Stability and Change at the End of the Middle Ages: Coventry, 1450-1525.', *Midland History* 34, no. 1 (2009): 1-21.

<sup>96</sup> See Figure 18 and Figure 33

<sup>97</sup> Christopher Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

expertly weaves economic, social and political themes by examining the life of John Heritage, a woolman and grazier who lived in Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire in the decades either side of 1500. Heritage's account book charts his wool dealings, which include merchant transactions, wool prices and instalments. These entries indicate that Heritage was enmeshed in networks of trade which spanned nearby towns, such as Stow-on-the-Wold and Stratford-upon-Avon, but which also included the larger centres of Coventry and London.<sup>98</sup> Although Dyer portrays the life of a woolman in Gloucestershire, it is likely that Ludlow clothiers who traded in the Central and North Welsh Marches, shared similar ideals. Local patronage was important, but mutual trust, honesty and fairness were also highly valued.<sup>99</sup>

Historians have also assessed the role of small towns in the economy of the late medieval period. Dyer argues that small medieval towns (up to 2,000 people), such as Ludlow, or Oswestry in the Northern Welsh Marches, influenced the economy and society of their hinterlands by providing opportunities for migration and social advancement.<sup>100</sup> The markets and fairs in these towns provided an outlet for rural endeavour and contributed to a sense of belonging and community. John S. Lee argues that investment by entrepreneurs, such as clothiers and other wool men, was vital to the economy of small towns. It was a deciding factor in the survival of some urban centres at a time when the overall national economy was under stress.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Dyer, 76.

<sup>99</sup> Dyer, 125.

<sup>100</sup> Christopher Dyer, 'Small Places with Large Consequences: The Importance of Small Towns in England, 1000–1540.', *Historical Research* 75, no. 187 (2002): 1.

<sup>101</sup> John S. Lee, 'The Functions and Fortunes of English Small Towns at the Close of the Middle Ages: Evidence from John Leland's Itinerary', *Urban History* 37, no. 1 (2010): 17.



In the Central and North Welsh Marches, for most of the 150-year spanned by this thesis, the economy was built on wool and cloth. The natural environment of the region encouraged the grazing of sheep and also provided fast-flowing inland streams for the fulling of cloth. Although the region was well known for sheep rearing and wool production, few scholars have written about the wool and cloth trade in this region. Research by economic historians such as Eleanora Carus-Wilson, Michael Postan, Terrence Lloyd, and Eileen Power has demonstrated how this trade was crucial to the economy of England from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>102</sup> Without doubt, their contribution to the economic history of England is substantial. Recently Richard Holt, John Langdon, John Oldland and Dana Ann Durkee, amongst others, have examined a diverse range of topics including medieval mills, wool and cloth production, and the social mobility of weavers in Norwich.<sup>103</sup> However, this solid foundation is in sharp contrast to the study of the cloth trade amongst Welsh Marcher communities, which is much thinner.<sup>104</sup> A few scholars have mentioned in passing the role of the wool and

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<sup>102</sup> E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'An Industrial Revolution of the Thirteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 11, no. 1 (1941): 39–60; Eileen Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History: Being the Ford Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); M Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); T.H. Lloyd, *The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>103</sup> The English perspective has been the subject of recent research see Richard Holt, *The Mills of Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Adam Lucas, *Ecclesiastical Lordship, Seigneurial Power and the Commercialization of Milling in Medieval England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); John Oldland, 'Wool and Cloth Production in Late Medieval and Early Tudor England', *Economic History Review* 67, no. 1 (2014): 25–47; Matthew Tompkins, 'The Structure of the Milling Industry 1427-1437', in *The Later Inquisitions Post Mortem: Mapping the Medieval Countryside and Rural Society* (Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 115–35; John Oldland, 'The Economic Impact of Clothmaking on Rural Society', in *Medieval Merchants and Money: Essays in Honour of James L. Bolton Edited by Martin Allen and Matthew Davies* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2017), 229–52; Dana Ann Durkee, 'Social Mobility and the Worsted Weavers of Norwich, c.1450-1530' (PhD, Durham, Durham University, 2017), <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/12208/>, accessed 25 March 2019.

<sup>104</sup> See a detailed discussion of the Welsh cloth trade in chapter 5, and also see: E. A. Lewis, 'The Development of Industry and Commerce in Wales During the Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17 (1903): 121–73; Caroline A. J. Skeel, 'The Welsh Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 77 (1922): 220–57.

cloth trade in Welsh Marcher lordships in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but nobody has yet attempted a detailed study of the borderlands.<sup>105</sup> Nor has there been any scholarly interest in the relationship between the Palmers' Guild and the cloth trade of the Central and North Welsh Marches. This thesis will remedy this lacuna by showing a clear link between Ludlow and the late medieval cloth trade in this region.

One historian of particular relevance to this thesis is John Oldland, who questions Eileen Power's assertion that the number of sheep fell by almost a third between 1300 and 1450, and only increased slightly between 1450 and 1550.<sup>106</sup> According to Oldland, this assertion is incompatible with an increase in pastoral land, particularly after 1470, which led to a rise in the number of adult sheep, and hence to more wool. He concludes that the sheep population only declined by 13 percent, rather than a third, between 1300 and 1450, and rose by twenty percent, or 3 million sheep by the 1540s.<sup>107</sup> In terms of the manufacture of cloth, Oldland claims that Power failed to take into account the fact that the weight of cloth was increasing from the thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, as the market moved from light worsteds to heavier broadcloths. Power's statistics were therefore based on the false premise that the weight of cloth remained static over the fifteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Oldland's upward reassessment of cloth output suggests many cloth areas of England were doing well in

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<sup>105</sup> R. Ian Jack, 'The Cloth Industry in Medieval Ruthin', *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions* 12 (1963): 10–25; Matthew Frank Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282-1348* (Cardiff: University Of Wales Press, 2010); Spencer Dimmock, 'Urban and Commercial Networks in the Later Middle Ages: Chepstow, Severnside and the Ports of South Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 152 (2003): 53–68.

<sup>106</sup> Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History: Being the Ford Lectures*, 36–37.

<sup>107</sup> Oldland, 'Wool and Cloth Production in Late Medieval and Early Tudor England', 29.

<sup>108</sup> It took 50lbs of wool to make a broadcloth in 1300 but it increased to 84lbs in the mid-sixteenth century Oldland, 30.

the early sixteenth century. The warden and stewards of the Palmers' Guild would have been well placed to take advantage of this burgeoning trade in towns such as Presteigne, and the northern towns of Ruthin, Oswestry, and Shrewsbury.

Nicholas Amor's book also adds to the scholarship on the English medieval cloth industry. He analyses the textile industry in Suffolk by exploiting information from a wide range of primary sources. He argues that Suffolk was the premier county for cloth production by 1500. This was due to a concentrated network of market towns with good transport links to London and the Low Counties. Flemish weavers who lived in these towns also utilised their connections in the Low Counties to keep abreast of new continental fashions. There was high demand both from the continent and locally for Suffolk cloth.<sup>109</sup> Amor exploits information in alnage accounts, Suffolk leet court rolls and wills, and also examines national statutes that regulated the cloth industry. However, information from the plea rolls of the court of common pleas provides most of the material for his compelling analysis.<sup>110</sup> His study of a range of occupational and geographical factors in the Suffolk cloth industry is complemented by his final section on the rising importance of clothiers in the Suffolk cloth industry. This last section complements the work of other contemporary scholars who analyse the role of the clothier, all of whom provide valuable material to the current thesis.

In his monograph, published in 2018, John S. Lee is keen to stress the pivotal role of the medieval clothier in small urban centres. Lee offers the definition of clothiers as those 'who were involved with both the making and marketing of woollen

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<sup>109</sup> Nicholas R. Amor, *From Wool to Cloth: The Triumph of the Suffolk Clothier* (Bungay: RefineCatch Limited, 2016), 88.

<sup>110</sup> These rolls contain information about the private litigation between lords, burgesses and freemen Amor, 9.

cloth'. They were entrepreneurs who coordinated the production and controlled an increasing share of the cloth trade as the fifteenth century progressed. He argues that, by 1500, clothiers were putting out material to people who lived in their own homes, and who returned the cloth back to the clothier to sell. Clothiers oversaw and provided the finance for the whole enterprise.<sup>111</sup> This research is important to this thesis as many of the Palmers' Guild stewards were clothiers, mercers, or drapers, who visited many towns and villages in the Central and North Welsh Marches to recruit members. It will be argued that their success in attracting members was due to their dual roles as stewards and also cloth traders. They leveraged piety to gain economic benefits to the Guild and also, potentially, for their own profit.

Lee argues that clothiers were less likely to be sited in larger towns, but instead resided in small towns or larger villages which supported cloth production, and which were not necessarily near pastoral regions. This is borne out in the Guild records which shows there were clothiers in a cluster of towns in Gloucestershire, which included Dursley and Wotton-under-edge, near Gloucester.<sup>112</sup> The name of some of these clothiers and cloth workers are listed in the Guild riding book for 1515-16.<sup>113</sup> Although the Central and North Welsh Marches was far less wealthy than the main cloth centres of Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Essex, and the Kentish Weald, the Guild records show that clothiers operated in towns in the region, in particular Welshpool, Shrewsbury, Oswestry as well as Ludlow.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> John S Lee, *The Medieval Clothier* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 2.

<sup>112</sup> Lee, 121.

<sup>113</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 92.

<sup>114</sup> SA LB 5/3/2-10 Steward's Riding Books 1497-8 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

Oldland complements Lee's analysis of the cloth industry by distinguishing between two types of clothier: the complete clothier, who controlled cloth production, and the merchant clothier, who bought cloth from a weaver or dyer which was then sheared, packed and sold to a merchant at a market.<sup>115</sup> It is probable that both types of clothier operated in the Welsh Marches, as well as individual weavers who might sell at market or sell to organisations, such as the Palmers' Guild or the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury. These large organisations had access to sophisticated distribution networks.

The role of geography in the study of a late medieval community is a main thread which runs through this thesis. The centrality of geography to an understanding of medieval society has long been appreciated both by historians and geographers. Briony McDonagh, for example, stresses 'the importance of thinking geographically about the pre-modern world'. According to McDonagh, the connection between the landscape and the people is critical to our understanding of medieval society. McDonagh argues that we should conceptualise the landscape as having been 'brought into being through the attitudes and actions of those living and working within it'.<sup>116</sup> The interconnection between the landscape, the people, and religious institutions is an important part of understanding the role of the Palmers' Guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches.

The field of research known as 'geographies of religion', which has a contemporary rather than a historical focus, is nonetheless of particular importance to

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<sup>115</sup> John Oldland, 'The Clothiers' Century, 1450–1550', *Rural History* 29, no. 1 (2018): 3.

<sup>116</sup> Briony McDonagh. "Fragments from a Medieval Archive: The Life and Death of Sir Robert Constable." *Journal of Historical Geography* 42 (2013): 50–61.

this thesis. In the words of Peter Hopkins, 'geographies of religion' explores 'how matters of faith, belief, and spirituality interconnect with, and shape, everyday landscapes, identities, practices, and spaces'.<sup>117</sup> Thirty years ago, this field of research was still rather fragmented. In the early twenty-first century, however, it has experienced a growth-spurt. New approaches have been spearheaded by human geographers such as Peter Hopkins, Lily Kong, and Elizabeth Olson. They research the shifting geographies of religious affiliation in modern societies and show the importance of 'place' in the study of religion.<sup>118</sup> The critical focus is on how and why religious communities, with their symbols and buildings, are located in particular geographical landscapes.<sup>119</sup>

In this thesis, I take some of the ideas and methodologies from contemporary geographies of religion and apply them to an analysis of the spiritual landscape of the Welsh Marches in the fifteenth century. It should be noted, however, that the practices used by human geographers to study modern societies are not always applicable to the historical study of pre-modern groups. Many of the methodologies adopted by human geographers, for example anthropological or ethnographic field research, is not possible for the historian. Elizabeth Olson, for instance, examines the establishment of religious boundaries and the control of ritualistic spaces by Catholics and Evangelicals in modern-day Cusco in Chile.<sup>120</sup> These social anthropologies,

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<sup>117</sup> Peter Hopkins, 'Religion', in *International Encyclopedia of Geography* (Wiley, 2017), 1–5, DOI: 10.1002/9781118786352, accessed 10 February 2019.

<sup>118</sup> For a review of current literature see: Claire Dwyer, 'Why Does Religion Matter for Cultural Geographers?', *Social & Cultural Geography* 17, no. 6 (2016): 758–62.

<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Olson, 'Myth, Miramiento, and the Making of Religious Landscapes', in *Religion and Place: Landscape, Politics and Piety*, ed. Peter Hopkins, Lily Kong, and Elizabeth Olson (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 76.

<sup>120</sup> Olson, 75.

although interesting, do not align well with the objectives of this thesis, which is about researching a pre-modern religious institution. Nonetheless, the core insight of geographers of religion — that geography and religion are inseparably intertwined — is the inspiration for my own study of religion in the late medieval Marches.

Robert Lutton, who is a historian rather than a geographer, also makes the connection between religious piety and geography. He argues that there is little coherence in current research on the geographical context of orthodox pieties. He also notes that the fragmentary nature of current scholarship is not helpful in understanding how early modern communities, such as the Protestant-leaning towns in Kent, might have had synergies with other communities in England.<sup>121</sup> Lutton also exposes the religious diversity of pre-Reformation society. He demonstrates, through testamentary evidence in his micro-history of Tenterden in Kent, that there was not a universal acceptance of religious norms. He cross matched the heresy trial reports of 1511 with wills from several three-generational families, to argue that parishes in Tenterden were religiously divergent. Rapid economic development and social change were catalysts for religious change, many years before reforming ideas became widespread in the 1530s.<sup>122</sup> He therefore concludes that late medieval religion was neither homogenous nor unchanging.

A book on late medieval Chester, entitled *Mapping Medieval Chester: Place and Identity in an English Borderland City c.1200-1500*, highlights the relationship between geography, religion, and ethnicity. It interweaves topography and ethnicity

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Lutton, 'Geographies and Materialities of Piety: Reconciling Competing Narratives of Religious Change in Pre-Reformation and Reformation England', in *Pieties in Transition : Religious Practices and Experiences c.1400-1640* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 11–39.

<sup>122</sup> Lutton, 37.

with social observations of the daily life of townspeople. One of the contributors to the book, Jane Laughton, focuses on Welsh, Irish and Manx immigration to Chester. Laughton argues that the Welsh were the most common migrants to Chester, and that they settled to the south of the river Dee. Only a few Welsh people rose to secular offices in Chester.<sup>123</sup> Another chapter in the same volume, by Helen Fulton, makes an important point about culturally determined perceptions of place. Fulton explains that English and Welsh people in the period had different mental maps of what constitutes England and Wales. English historians constructed a ‘Welsh version’ of history in which Chester was a bastion against Wales, and where the Welsh were marginalised and humiliated. However, the Welsh saw Chester as a shared social space, and developed their own culturally significant ‘places’, such as pilgrimages to the church of the Holy Cross of St John the Baptist in Chester.<sup>124</sup> These ethnic differences, which can affect the conceptualising of ‘space’ and ‘place,’ underpin the idea that piety has a geographical dimension, which is also central to my own thesis. Fulton’s analysis of Chester aids the understanding of other borderland towns, like Ludlow, which saw the immigration of Welsh-speaking dyers and weavers in the late fifteenth century.<sup>125</sup>

The Ludlow Guild was a many-sided organisation which expanded at a time when society was becoming more complex, and when social norms were changing and evolving. The appeal of an organisation which had adapted to an increasingly affluent and upwardly mobile society is apparent when observing the many thousands of

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<sup>123</sup> Jane Laughton, ‘Mapping the Migrants: Welsh, Manx and Irish Settlers in Fifteenth-Century Chester’, in *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place and Identity in Chester c.1200-1600*, ed. Catherine A. M. Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 169–83.

<sup>124</sup> Helen Fulton, ‘The Outside Within: Medieval Chester and North Wales as a Social Space’, in *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place and Identity in Chester c.1200-1600*, ed. Catherine A. M. Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 149–68.

<sup>125</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 122.



names in the Guild manuscripts. This brief literature review has covered the main areas which give context to the research in this thesis. Scholarship on other issues of relevance, such as the value of wool in Leominster Ore, and the cloth trade of the Central and North Welsh Marches, will be outlined in the relevant chapters.

### **Primary Sources**

The thesis is based on a wide range of primary sources, but the most important are the Palmers' Guild records. These are located in the Shropshire Archives, and it is only by chance that they survived. Shortly after the Reformation, guild records were often destroyed as guilds were associated with 'superstitious' Catholic practices. Fortunately for Shropshire, the Ludlow Borough Corporation inherited the Palmers' Guild records when the Guild was dissolved in the 1550s.

The surviving documents are listed in Figure 1 and include membership registers, riding books, accounts, clerk's receipts, property deeds, and miscellaneous correspondence. The deeds document the extensive property dealings of the Ludlow Guild both inside and beyond the town walls. Michael Faraday has transcribed the abstracts of these deeds.<sup>126</sup> The Palmers' Guild's riding books and membership registers are vital to my research as they demonstrate the Guild's reach into Wales, the Welsh Marches, the Midlands, and other areas of England. The data within these records allow comparisons between towns, regions, social class, ethnicity, and gender. Most of these manuscripts were written between 1460 and 1530.

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<sup>126</sup> M. A. Faraday, ed., *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow* ([Walton on Thames]: M.A. Faraday, 2012).

Membership registers and riding books differ in content and format. Figure 4 shows two pages from a riding book. These records which were compiled by the Guild clerk as an annual record of the stewards' journeys to recruit new members. The clerk copied the notes, which had been written by the steward *en route*, into the riding book. These notes contained new registrations, the names of those who had made instalments, and also members who had paid their entry fine in full. The clerk wrote *sol reg* (paid to be registered) in the margin of the riding book when an individual had paid his last instalment.<sup>127</sup> These names were then transferred into the membership register for the year, which corresponded to the year of the first instalment. These registers have survived as a parchment roll (see Figure 3).

The information in the membership registers and riding books is different. Figure 2 shows that, unlike the membership registers, the riding books contain material about instalments. These instalments, i.e. how much was paid to the steward, which year the money was paid and over what period, provide an opportunity to flesh out the long lists of names in the membership registers. Although historians have referred to some of the data in the Palmers' Guild riding books, it has not been examined in any detail. The analysis of the riding books is a vital part of my research.

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<sup>127</sup> The note 'Sol. Reg.' has been translated as 'Paid. To be Registered' by R N Swanson in his brief transcription of the 1505-6 Palmers' Guild riding books. See R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion, and Observance before the Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 215.

**Figure 1: Palmers' Guild Manuscripts in the Shropshire Archives**

Manuscript	Date	Number of manuscripts	Printed and Transcribed?	Shropshire Archives
Registers of Admission (Membership Registers)	1406-8; 1485-9; 1505-9	5 (containing 1,762 names)	No	LB5/1/1-5
Title deeds	1290-1550 (incomplete)	1473	Abstracts only. <sup>128</sup>	LB 5/2/1-1462
Steward's riding books	1463; 1497-1508; 1515-16	12 (containing c11,000 names)	No	LB 5/3/1-10
Steward's and Warden's Accounts and unpaid fines	1364-1547 (incomplete)	22	No	LB 5/3/13-35
Clerk's receipts, renter's accounts, and list of rentals	1283-1547 (incomplete)	36	No	LB 5/3/37-71
Miscellaneous e.g. indentures, royal pardon etc.	1408-1542	8	1525 Reredos contract transcribed. <sup>129</sup>	LB 5/4/1-3 and LB 5/5/1-4

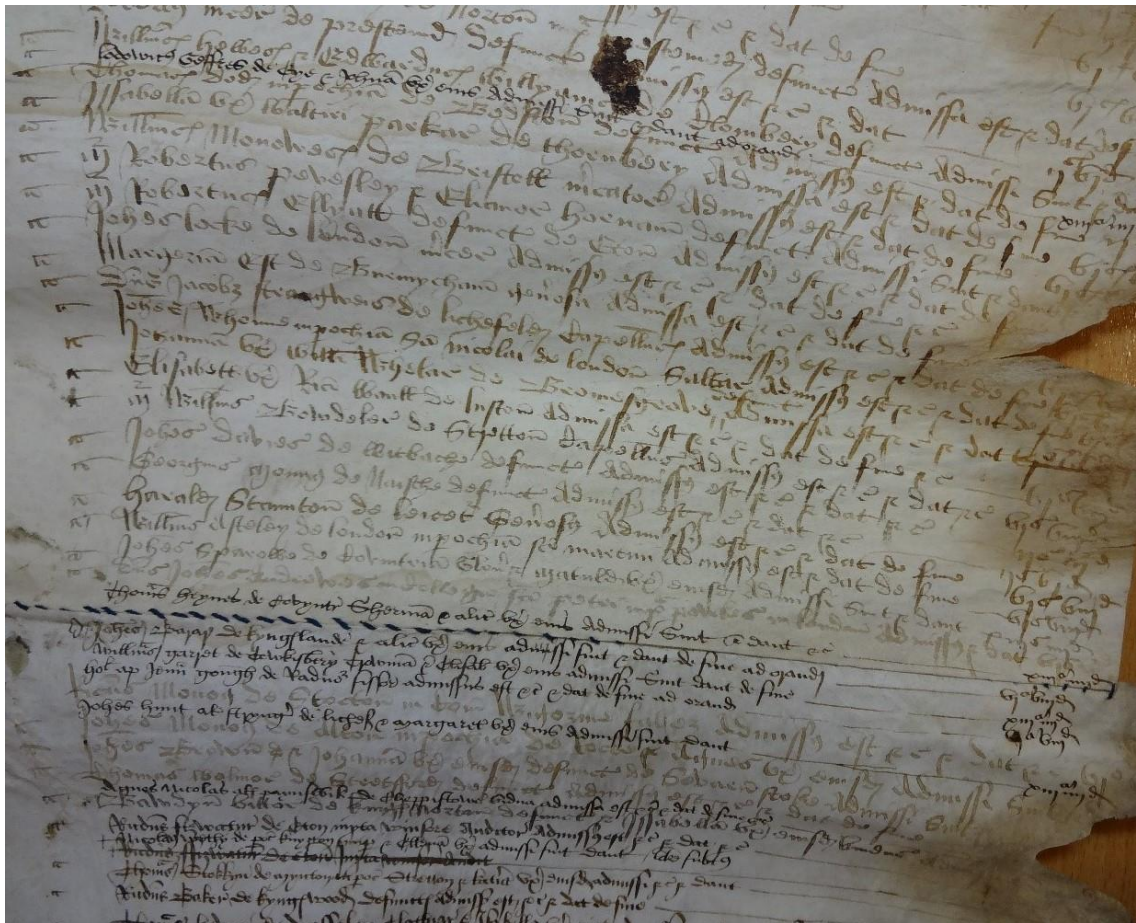
**Figure 2: Palmers' Guild Riding Books and Membership Registers**

Type	Riding Books?	Membership Registers?
<b>Official Members i.e. paid all their instalments</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Registrations i.e. names of all recruits</b>	Yes	No

<sup>128</sup> Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*.

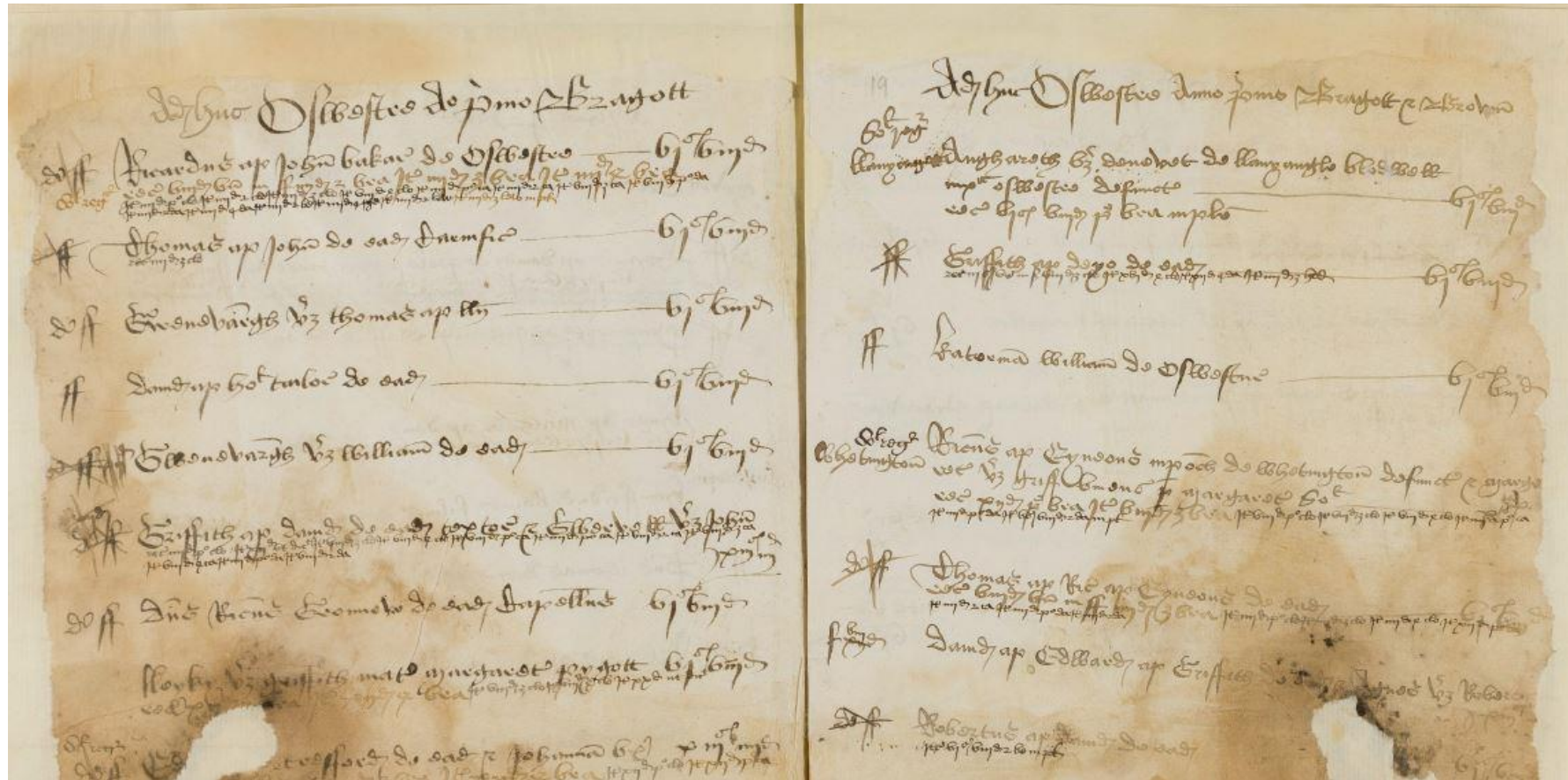
<sup>129</sup> Henry Weyman, "A Contract for Carvings in Ludlow Church," *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, no. 3rd series III (1903): i–ii.

Figure 3: Membership Register for 1507-8 <sup>130</sup>



<sup>130</sup> The image shows stitched membranes with a change of hand. SA LB5/1/4 1507-8 Register of Admissions.

Figure 4: Oswestry and its Hinterland in the Riding Book for 1505-6 <sup>131</sup>



<sup>131</sup> When all the instalments were paid, a note 'sol reg' was entered in the spine next to the member's name. See SA LB5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 19.

A.T. Gaydon refers to the riding books, membership registers and accounts in his chapter on the Palmers' Guild, which is part of volume two of the Victoria County History for Shropshire.<sup>132</sup> There are, however, some problems with his document analysis. First, Gaydon assumes that an individual who has not completed their annual instalments has 'lost interest' in the Guild's services.<sup>133</sup> I will argue that this was not necessarily the case. Some individuals in places such as Welshpool and Leominster paid a small sum every year for over 20 years. These annual instalments signify a tangible and long-lasting relationship with the Guild. This connection may be stronger than, for example, a draper from Coventry, who paid the full entry fee in one instalment.

Gaydon's understanding of the procedure for entering names of people into the membership registers, also warrants closer scrutiny.

When a member's fine had been fully paid a marginal note 'sol reg' was set against his name in the 'receipt' account and 'riding book', and he was entered in the register (a parchment roll) of the year in which payment was completed.<sup>134</sup>

Close examination of the records shows that his description of the procedure is not correct. When the instalments were complete, the Guild clerk entered the name into the membership register for the year which corresponded to their first instalment. Figure 3 shows the membership register for 1507-8. This membership register has

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<sup>132</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 134–40.

<sup>133</sup> Gaydon, 137.

<sup>134</sup> Gaydon, 137.

different 'hands' which suggests that members were added to the appropriate register when they had made their final payment.

There are also errors in the way that the registers have been catalogued in the Shropshire archives. The years of the first membership register are listed in the catalogue as 1412-1422.<sup>135</sup> The warden is named as John Leinthalle, and the steward as William Munselowe. However, the dates on the manuscripts themselves are clearly written as 1406-7 and 1407-8, which are the early years of Henry IV's reign, not 1412-22. The second error is the incorrect date for a riding book. It is catalogued as 1560, which is not possible as the Guild was dissolved in 1551. It is entitled '*London anno iiiii John Sherman*', with further pages stating '*ad huc London anno ii John Dodmore*'. The provenance is clear on page six, which is entitled '*Rex Edwardus quarto anno i John Wroth*'. The inclusion of John de la Pole, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Suffolk, who acceded to his dukedom in 1463, means that the riding book was composed after 1463.<sup>136</sup>

There is also evidence that earlier scholars were not aware of the difference between Guild membership registers and riding books. In the Shropshire Archives catalogue, there is a manuscript, *LB5/3/10*, for the year 1515-16. This manuscript was transcribed in 1884 by W.C Sparrow and published in the *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* for that year. The author clearly stated it was a membership register, yet it is, in fact, a riding book.<sup>137</sup> Instead of including the annual instalments, he ignored them and decided that the names of people were new members of the Guild. As this is not the case, his analysis nullifies

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<sup>135</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

<sup>136</sup> '*King Edward IV in the first year of John Wroth (steward of the Guild)*' SA LB5/3/1 Steward's Riding Book c.1463-4

<sup>137</sup> W.C Sparrow, 'A Register of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* VII, no. 1st series (1884): 81-126.

the discussion, which precedes the transcription, as only 30 percent of the people who are named in the book actually achieved membership.

An article by E.G.H. Kempson queried the date of the 1515-16 manuscript.<sup>138</sup> He argued that the inclusion of the name of Hugh Farringdon, and the reference to 'now being the Abbot of Reading', meant that the document should have a later date of 1520.<sup>139</sup> Kempson has made the same error as A.T. Gaydon in assuming that membership is achieved in the year of the last payment. For example:

*[sol. reg.] Hugo Faryngton, monacus, nunc abbas de Redyng' vis viiid  
Rec iiiid 3Lo, It. iiid p° Cro, It. xiid. 3Cro, It vs 4 Cro m.pl*

The translation is:

[Paid. To be Registered] Hugh Faryngton, monk, now Abbot of  
Reading 6s 8d.

Received 4d. 3Longford [1516], Item 4d. 1Crofton [1517], Item 12d.

3Crofton [1519], Item 5s. 4Crofton [1520] in full<sup>140</sup>

Although there is evidence that Hugh Faringdon was a monk at Reading before his election as Abbot, the elevation to the office of Abbot of Reading did not occur until October 1520.<sup>141</sup> The writing of the words, *monacus, nunc abbas de Redyng*, is in the

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<sup>138</sup> E.G.H. Kempson, 'A Shropshire Gild at Work in Wiltshire', *Wilshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 57, no. CCVI (1958): 50–55.

<sup>139</sup> Kempson, 55.

<sup>140</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding book for 1515-16, 61.

<sup>141</sup> 'Houses of Benedictine Monks: The Abbey of Reading', in *A History of the County of Berkshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1907), 62–73.



same ink as the words for the last instalment, i.e. 1520. Although the last payment was in 1520, Hugh Farrington's name would have been added to the membership register for 1515-16. Therefore, *LB5/3/10* has now been firmly dated to 1515-16 and is a Palmers' Guild riding book.

These discrepancies have a bearing on my research. The confusion between riding books and membership lists is particularly important, as it affects the understanding of the membership profile of the Palmers' Guild in the early sixteenth century. The other inaccuracies are important to rectify as they allow the construction of a correct timeline of the Palmers' Guild activities. It is now possible to create a reasonably accurate list of the Guild stewards for each year, as the riding books are dated correctly.

Another primary source for this thesis is wills. Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the number of wills which have been consulted for this thesis. In researching this thesis I consulted approximately 400 wills written by people who lived in Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland, and the Central and North Welsh Marches. Some late medieval researchers have urged caution with using wills as reliable evidence of piety. R.N. Swanson reminds the researcher that:

A will's omissions may be as important as its contents – the absence of provision for spiritual bequests may show either a lack of spirituality or planning with arrangements already made. Despite their detail, they are only statements of aspirations. In many cases,

money did not exist, and alternative arrangements had to be made.<sup>142</sup>

Clive Burgess also urges caution with using information in wills as they do not necessarily represent a cross-section of society or include information about *post-obit* provision.<sup>143</sup> This cautionary note is important when considering the surviving wills for the Central and North Welsh Marches. There are very few Welsh wills for the current research, and those that have survived are from members of the higher classes, who held local assets as well as property in other parts of England and the Lordships. There are also few surviving wills from women who lived in the Central and North Welsh Marches. Most wills which have survived have been written by people who lived in the larger borderland towns such as Leominster, Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Presteigne, as well as Ludlow. Nonetheless, for all these caveats, wills are useful to historians as they can help document family connections and property transactions. They can also help us to comprehend the culture of pious giving in the late medieval period.

Central government records, such as the Chantry certificates are useful for research on the last years of the existence of religious guilds in England. Edward VI's Chantry certificates of 1547 bear witness to the religious and secular untangling of religious guilds from the spiritual landscape. These certificates were a result of the act of 1547 (1 Edward VI) which suppressed chantries, guilds and colleges in England and Wales. Edward VI's commissioners identified property, which was owned and leased by religious guilds, and also the clergy who were in the employ of these institutions. In

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<sup>142</sup> Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion, and Observance before the Reformation*, 267–68.

<sup>143</sup> Clive Burgess, "By Quick and by Dead": Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol', *The English Historical Review*, 102, no. 405 (1987): 837–58.

1548, Edward VI issued the Chantry certificates and a further visitation, the 'Returns of church goods' was undertaken in 1551-2 (5 & 6 Edward VI). These two surveys document the wealth of the Palmers' Guild when it was under threat of dissolution and again when the Ludlow Borough acquired the Guild's possessions in 1552. The records of 1552 show that much of the Guild plate had vanished into the houses of Ludlow folk or into the pockets of Ludlow Guild officials in those five short years.<sup>144</sup> Without these central government records, the last stages of the Palmers' Guild existence would be very hard to decipher.

The Palmers' Guild manuscripts are a unique set of records which, to my knowledge, are not replicated for other religious guilds in England. They have not been analysed in any detail and remain virtually untouched by previous historians. Although the accounts, membership registers, and riding books only span a few decades of the Guild's 250-year existence, they supply detailed information about thousands of ordinary people. These records bring to life the occupational networks, family connections, and social structure of the Central and North Welsh Marches. These primary sources also include thousands of names of people from other parts of England, Wales and the lordships which await future analysis. The richness of these manuscripts provides a rare opportunity to systematically analyse how expressions of lay piety are shaped by geographical factors.

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<sup>144</sup> A. Hamilton Thompson, ed., 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII. Cap IV and 1 Edward VI. Cap. XIV', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, no. 3rd Series, X (1910): 269–392. See the Postscript for further discussion.

**Figure 5: List of Wills**

Jurisdiction	Dates	How many?	Location	Printed and transcribed?
Diocese of Hereford	1407-1550	c.100	Hereford Archives	Calendar of Hereford Probates 1407-1550; Radnorshire wills <sup>145</sup>
Diocese of Hereford	1304-1500	38 Ludlow Guild members	Shropshire Archives	Snippets in TSAS and other secondary works on Ludlow <sup>146</sup>
Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC)	1400-1550	15 Denbighshire, 75 Herefordshire, 11 Montgomeryshire, 135 Shropshire, 10 Radnorshire, (total c.235)	The National Archives, UK	Summaries for Radnorshire and the Marches <sup>147</sup>

## Methodology

The thesis uses qualitative and quantitative analysis to understand the role of the Palmers' Guild in Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland, and the Central and North Welsh Marches. The quantitative analysis involves interpreting a database of the names of Palmers' Guild recruits, by using pivot tables and graphs. Qualitative analysis includes the interpretation of wills, central government records and the miscellaneous documents written by Palmers' Guild officials.

When considering geographical aspects of late medieval piety, a standard approach is to examine pious expression amongst social classes of people within towns or regions. The laity is sometimes seen as a homogenous group who 'wove themselves

<sup>145</sup> See: M. A. Faraday, *Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407-1550 in the Consistory Court of the Bishops of Hereford with an Appendix of Abstracts of Registered Copy-Wills 1552-1581* ([Walton on Thames]: M.A. Faraday, 2008); E.J.L. Cole, 'Hereford Probate Records', *Radnorshire Society Transactions* 26 (1956): 22–31.

<sup>146</sup> Some examples include: Weyman, 'Chantry Chapels in Ludlow Church'; Lloyd, Clark, and Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199-2009*.

<sup>147</sup> D.R. Thomas, 'Extracts from Old Wills Relating to Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, no. iv vol. vii (1876): 220–26; E.J.L. Cole, 'Abstracts of Radnorshire Wills in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury', *Radnorshire Society Transactions* 6 (1936): 9–14.

into the liturgy' and had their names etched into the glass, on brasses or as effigies on tombs.<sup>148</sup> Existing research often does not fully explain how geographical factors can limit or increase the options for pious expression, or impact upon its character. The current research explores the opportunity to develop a new approach. A cognate framework to 'geographies of religion', discussed earlier, has been developed for this thesis, which examines a medieval religious institution through a geographical lens. The concept of 'geographies of piety' has been developed to understand the data from the Palmers' Guild records which bear witness to the relationship between a religious guild and thousands of ordinary people who joined or interacted with the Guild in the late medieval period.

The key focus of this thesis is the connection between a religious guild and geographically dispersed individuals. The strength and tenacity of this relationship varied depending on a range of factors. These aspects included the opportunity to meet with the Guild steward, the strength of the attachment to other religious institutions, as well as economic factors. The key reason why the current research has been able to adopt this new approach is through the advantage of having digital methods to aid the analysis.

At the core of the current thesis is a unique database of over 3,500 names of people who lived in Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland, and the Central and North Welsh Marches, over 500 years ago. This mass of data, which has come from the Palmers' Guild records, provides a rare opportunity to quantitatively analyse late medieval documents that are often fragmentary. The database lends itself to digital analysis as

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<sup>148</sup> Burgess, 'Longing to Be Prayed for: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages', 64.

records have the name, sex, place of origin, marital status, ethnicity, living or deceased status, and sometimes the occupation of the individual. Digital methodology allows a way of analysing, conceptualising, and visualising this material, to ascertain trends or other correlations which are not possible, or at least would take an inordinate amount of time to do, with manual methods.

The digital analysis of historical manuscripts is a subsection of the broader field known as digital humanities. This area of scholarship began with the development of the ‘humanities computing’ field of research in the 1970s.<sup>149</sup> The current field of digital humanities, is multidisciplinary, pragmatic, and fast moving. It has benefited from the exponential increase in computing power since the 1970s. Digital mapping and data visualisation are at the centre of this approach. Early historical research and ideas often appears on platforms such as Twitter where there are also communities that share ideas, techniques, and support.

Social network analysis is a methodology which is being used by historians to understand connections between people. It identifies informal social or economic relationships between people which complement formal associations. The methodology is beneficial when interrogating large amounts of data. One piece of research by Cornell Jackson and Matthew Hammond explored the witnessing of 6,000 charters in medieval Scotland. It showed that if two people have witnessed more than one charter together, it is probable there is a social, economic or political connection between them.<sup>150</sup> Another relevant study is Justin Colson’s analysis of the City of

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<sup>149</sup> David J. Birnbaum, Sheila Bonde, and Mike Kestemont, ‘The Digital Middle Ages: An Introduction’, *Speculum* 92, no. S1 (2017): S1–38.

<sup>150</sup> Cornell Jackson and Matthew Hammond, ‘Use of Social Network Analysis to Explore the People of Medieval Scotland’, in *Proceedings of the Digital Humanities Congress* (Sheffield: The Digital Humanities

London in the fifteenth century. He analyses community participation, and the social topography of the City, by exploiting probate documents to discover legal and personal relationships for over 4,000 Londoners.<sup>151</sup> It is clear that these intricate connections would have been hard to tease out without digital methods.

One program which would have been useful, if it had been readily available at the start of the project, is 'R' which scholars have used with GIS, to significant effect, to visualise and map places mentioned in medieval manuscripts. An example of research that uses 'R' is Jesse Sadler's thesis on the last will of Jan Della Faille de Oude, a wealthy late sixteenth-century Flemish merchant. She transfers the correspondence of his extended family, who live all over Europe, as they tussle over his vast estate into a highly interactive map, using 'R' and GIS tagging. This visualisation of the beneficiaries of his will contains a map which plots the acrimonious relationships between his nine children over his inheritance.<sup>152</sup> At a glance, the relationships jump out of the page.

The use of quantitative analysis provides an efficient way to interrogate manuscripts in order to redraw and refashion the past in a meaningful way. For this thesis, the methodology involved using the Microsoft Office Excel database software and the Microsoft Google suite of programs. The database was constructed using Google forms and sheets. A small pilot tested how many fields would be needed to extract as much information as possible from the manuscripts. As a result, I decided to

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Institute, 2014), <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/openbook/pdf/dhc2014-hammond>, accessed 15 September 2018.

<sup>151</sup> Justin Robert Colson, 'Local Communities in Fifteenth Century London: Craft, Parish and Neighbourhood' (PhD, London, Royal Holloway, 2011); Justin Robert Colson, 'Commerce, Clusters, and Community: A Re-Evaluation of the Occupational Geography of London, c.1400-c.1550', *The Economic History Review* 69, no. 1 (2016): 104–30.

<sup>152</sup> Jesse Sadler, 'The Estate of Jan Della Faille de Oude, 1582-1617', 2017, <https://www.jessesadler.com/project/df-inheritance/>, accessed 20 June 2018.

use a Google form to capture the information rather than enter the data directly. This procedure was less prone to human error. Most data entry points were via drop-down lists and multiple-choice options. Google forms are an excellent way to organise large numbers of people, places, and occupations.

The principal analysis was conducted using Excel's quantitative analysis which includes using pivot tables and compiling graphs of correlations between different fields. For example, the ethnicity (i.e. Welsh or English) could be correlated against sex, to discover if the data suggested more Welsh women engaged with the Guild than English women. As the data spanned 15 years and in some cases 30 years, it gave clues to underlying trends between towns or regions, within occupations or between different ethnic groups. The use of digital methods worked well as it outlined relationships which were not evident with manual methods of scanning and sorting the information. Although it was clear from transcribing the membership registers that recruits were more likely to come from towns such as Shrewsbury and Oswestry, and less likely from villages, it was not clear what the exact difference was. There was no easy way to see if certain patterns of membership warranted analysis. It was also not at all easy to match the data with other years, and individual entries could not be tagged efficiently for further analysis.

The digital scanning of manuscripts enhanced my reading of the Palmers' Guild records. These manuscripts were daunting at first as the washed-out, brown, spidery writing, and faded pages, meant that it was hard to decipher the words. With new high-resolution scans from the Shropshire Archives and a practised eye, the task was less overwhelming. The barriers to progression with the thesis were apportioning time for the task and developing the patience to puzzle over scrawled Welsh placenames



which all appeared to start with *Llan*, which is commonly associated with a church structure.<sup>153</sup> This database of names of recruits is the backbone to the whole thesis, so without these new digital scanning methods, it would have been difficult to bring the lives of ordinary people to light.

The first task was to enter the names from the membership registers and the riding books into two separate spreadsheets. The second task was to merge the extra information from the riding books spreadsheet into the membership register, to give a holistic view of the profile for a town or a region across 15 years of records. Figure 6 shows a snapshot of the Excel sheet which shows the data from the membership registers. Figure 7 represents the combined raw data for a sample of people from the Central and North Welsh Marches. It shows us that there are common fields for the data which was extracted from the membership registers and the riding books. A new field was needed for the riding books. This additional field captures the timespan of individual instalments which become a marker for an individual's engagement with the Guild. The extra fields for the instalments, are added at the end of the common fields.

Care needs to be taken with this data as not every name was legible and not every page was present in the manuscript. There were often large holes in the parchment, or curled edges which obliterated many names and instalments. However, as the number of names increased the conclusions from the data become less exploratory, and more settled. Oddities were ironed out, such as a spike in people from Welshpool in 1505-6, and patterns, such as the drop in Ludlow residents after 1500, began to emerge.

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<sup>153</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London: S Lewis, 1849), 456.

The database worked because it was simple. There was a clear and consistent template for the entry of data from the primary sources. However, the data did not offer other forms of analysis. There was no easy way to analyse financial data. Although the instalments gave a broad idea of the annual takings of the Guild, they do not show the costs of the annual feast or the day to day running costs of the Guild.

There are challenges or pitfalls with using quantitative data that needs further acknowledgement. Apart from the prior discussions which have already highlighted the fragility and incompleteness of medieval records, it is also important to recognise that even though it is quantitative data, it is not completely accurate. The data can support or challenge a hypothesis, but it does not prove facts. In addition, although digital tools are powerful, I still need to use my judgement as a historian to select which data to input, and to interpret, qualify, corroborate or discount the apparent patterns which emerge.

Maps are also important to this thesis. They aid with plotting the stewards' routes through the Welsh Marches and help find the geographical hurdles which might explain a detour or termination of a journey. They also indicate the position of roads, trackways, bridges, market towns, monasteries and churches, which are useful when mapping the stewards' journeys.

An example of the importance of maps, is the inclusion of Frankwell, which I first saw in the Palmers' Guild riding book of 1505-6.<sup>154</sup> The presence was a puzzle until it became clear from modern day maps that although Frankwell was in the north-western part of Shrewsbury, it was not within the authority of the town. Frankwell or

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<sup>154</sup> SA LB5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 13.

'free town' was a prosperous port and trading centre on the western road from Shrewsbury to Oswestry. The entries in the Guild's membership registers and riding books of names of people from Frankwell, include many cloth-related occupations, such as weavers and shearmen. There were also many names of people of Welsh origin, which shows that the Welsh were an integral part of Shrewsbury's population.

The connection between quantitative and qualitative approaches give the thesis a robustness, which would not have been evident if either method had been adopted on its own. The data which tabulates connections between people, places and religious institutions is strengthened by empirical research. Primary sources, such as wills and churchwardens' accounts, give us first-hand descriptions of people who lived at this time. They give us many examples of their strong religious beliefs, their empathy towards those who were less well off, and their pride in shared endeavour such as the building of St Laurence's parish church in Ludlow. These two approaches offer a comprehensive picture as is possible, given the fragmentary nature of late medieval sources. They also give a good insight into local manifestations of late medieval religious practices, which in turn, adds to the historiography of late medieval religion.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has charted the scholarly literature which underpins my analysis of a medieval religious guild on the edge of England. It has also outlined the key primary sources. The Palmers' Guild's sources are not the usual kind of material which is available to medieval historians. The sheer number of names is unusual, and the geographical spread of steward's journeys, demonstrates that the Guild used a range

of tactics to attract new members. The methodological approach, which will extract quantitative data from the sources to show the interconnections between geography and piety, will underpin the analysis in the following chapters. These chapters will examine the changing fortunes of the Palmers' Guild in Ludlow, and the influence of the Guild on the political geography, political economy and religious landscape of Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches.

**Figure 6: Sample Sheet from Membership Registers**

Year	Surname	First name	Wife of	Town	Occupation	Sex	Ethnicity	Status	Region
1485-1486	Lee	Richard		Ashford Bowdler		Male	English	Deceased	Hinterland
1485-1486	Lee	Margareta		Ashford Bowdler		Female	English	Deceased	Hinterland
1486-1487	Cheyne	Sibilla	Hugo Cheney	Ashford Bowdler		Female	English	Deceased	Hinterland
1486-1487	Smyth	William		Bache		Male	English	Deceased	Hinterland
1486-1487	Smyth	Isabella	William Smyth	Bache		Female	English	Deceased	Hinterland
1486-1487	Smyth	Alicia		Leominster		Female	English	Living	Hinterland
1486-1487	Jevans	Mariona	John Jevans	Leominster		Female	Welsh	Living	Hinterland
1487-1488	Davies	John		Leominster	Tanner	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1506-1507	Gilford	John		Leominster	Monk	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1506-1507	Marten	John		Leominster	Clothier	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1506-1507	Royse	John		Leominster	Hosier	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1506-1507	Bradford	Richard		Leominster	Generos	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1507-1508	Lemster	John		Leominster	Monk	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1507-1508	Worall	Jacob		Leominster	Tanner	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1507-1508	Worrall	Matilda	Jacob Worrall	Leominster		Female	English	Living	Hinterland
1508-1509	Webley	Richard		Leominster	Corveser	Male	English	Living	Hinterland
1508-1509	Abbot	John		Llanegwast	Abbot	Male	English	Living	Central and North Welsh Marches
1505-1506	verch Jenan	Gwenevill		Llanrwst		Female	Welsh	Living	Central and North Welsh Marches
1488-1489	ap Jenkin ap De	Thomas		Llanrwst		Male	Welsh	Living	Central and North Welsh Marches
1488-1489	Egeley	John		Ludlow	Clothier	Male	English	Living	Ludlow
1488-1489	Browne	John		Ludlow	Baker	Male	English	Living	Ludlow
1488-1489	Morrise	John		Ludlow		Male	English	Living	Ludlow
1488-1489	ap Jenkin	Mapp		Ludlow	Tailor	Male	Welsh	Living	Ludlow
1488-1489	Whitestone	John		Ludlow	Butcher	Male	English	Living	Ludlow
1505-1506	Bragott	Margaret	John Bragott	Ludlow		Female	English	Living	Ludlow
1505-1506	Wood	Thomas alias Tailor		Ludlow	Mercer	Male	English	Living	Ludlow
1505-1506	Nasshe	William		Ludlow	Weaver	Male	English	Living	Ludlow

Figure 7: Merging of Information from Membership Registers and Riding Books

Date	Surname	First name	Occupation	Wife of ..	Town	Region	Sex	Ethnicity	Living	Member	Years of Instalments
1503-1504	Decon	Richard			Condover	Central Marches	Male	English	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Docke	Margaret		John Docke	Ruthin	Northern Welsh Marches	Female	English	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Docke	John			Ruthin	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Dolly	Thomas	Chaplain		Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	6-10
1503-1504	Dutton	Richard	Priest		Pulford	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Edwards	Richard			Welshpool	Central Marches	Male	English	Deceased	Yes	1-5
1503-1504	Edwards	Thomas	Parson		West Felton	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	1-5
1503-1504	Flynt	John	Priest		Aberystwyth	Central Marches	Male	English	Living	Yes	1-5
1503-1504	Forster	Alison	Clothier	John Forster	Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Female	English	Living	Yes	6-10
1503-1504	Frysther	Richard	Capper		Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	16-20
1503-1504	Frysther	Edith		Richard Frysther	Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Female	English	Living	No	16-20
1503-1504	Giles	Hugh			Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Glass	Agnes		John Glass	Aberystwyth	Central Marches	Female	English	Living	No	6-10
1503-1504	Glass	John			Aberystwyth	Central Marches	Male	English	Living	No	6-10
1503-1504	Gough	Margaret		Griffith Gough	Welshpool	Central Marches	Female	Welsh	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Gough	Griffith			Welshpool	Central Marches	Male	Welsh	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Gough ap Howell ap Phelip Vaughan	John			Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	Welsh	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Gough ap Llewelyn ap Rees	Ieuan			Llanbadarn Fawr	Central Marches	Male	Welsh	Living	Yes	16-20
1503-1504	Griffith	John	Chaplain		Llanbadarn Fawr	Central Marches	Male	Welsh	Living	Yes	11-15
1503-1504	Gwen	Marerone	Vicar		Llanbadarn Fawr	Central Marches	Male	Welsh	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Hancocks	Johanna		John Hancocks	Condover	Central Marches	Female	English	Living	Yes	11-15
1503-1504	Hancocks	John			Condover	Central Marches	Male	English	Living	Yes	11-15
1503-1504	Hewitt	Peter			Dodleston	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	Yes	1-5
1503-1504	Hewster	John	Merchant		Chester	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	11-15
1503-1504	Hewster	Johanna		John Hewster	Chester	Northern Welsh Marches	Female	English	Living	No	11-15
1503-1504	Hewster	Katerina		Mericke ap Eyenon	Welshpool	Central Marches	Female	English	Living	No	0
1503-1504	Hopley	Henry			Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Deceased	Yes	1-5
1503-1504	Hopley	Thomas			Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Deceased	Yes	1-5
1503-1504	Hosier	Thomas	Clothier		Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	Yes	6-10
1503-1504	Hosier	Alice		Thomas Hosier	Shrewsbury	Northern Welsh Marches	Female	English	Living	Yes	6-10
1503-1504	Huxley	Katerina		Richard Huxley	Denbigh	Northern Welsh Marches	Female	English	Living	No	21-25
1503-1504	Huxley	Richard			Denbigh	Northern Welsh Marches	Male	English	Living	No	21-25

## Chapter 2: Political Geography, Political Economy, and the Religious Landscape: 1100-1450

Political turmoil was the norm in the borderlands between England and Wales, even before the Norman invasion in the eleventh century. However, the Norman incursion into Wales differed to the forays by Anglo-Saxons kings, as it changed the pattern of Welsh settlements and institutions, which had evolved over many centuries in response to a challenging natural landscape. The Normans thrust new political, religious, and economic institutions onto the resident Welsh communities, which altered the border region forever. In 1283, after Edward I established the Principality of Wales under the jurisdiction of the crown, there were three different judicial and political systems—Marcher lordships, the Shire system, and the Principality, which meant law and order was difficult to enforce. The region's boundaries were also fluid and fragmented as Marcher lords fought over land which gave them power and influence. The political economy, which was shaped by both landscape and political geography, was fragile, as agricultural trade between lordships, the county and the crown were continually prone to disruption. This chapter will chart these complex political, economic, and religious conditions which form a backdrop to this thesis and shaped the role of the Palmers' Guild in the Welsh Marches. I will argue that the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow was well placed to exploit this disrupted political, religious, and economic landscape, even though it was an organisation closely associated with an English religious tradition.

This chapter will discuss the central role of Ludlow in the political, economic, and judicial landscape of the Central Marches. It will then examine the consequences

of the political decision, made by William the Conqueror in the eleventh century, to create a series of Marcher lordships on the edge of England. A broad overview of the economic, political and religious drivers that led to the expansion of the Palmers' Guild from its Ludlow base into the towns of the Central and North Welsh Marches will then be outlined. This section will include an investigation into the economy and religious institutions in the Central and North Welsh Marches up to the mid fifteenth century.

The Guild had existed in the town of Ludlow for 150 years before its stewards ventured out from Ludlow into the towns and villages of England, the Marcher lordships, and the Principality of Wales. The last section of this chapter will lay the groundwork for the rest of the thesis, by analysing the conditions whereby the Guild expanded its reach into the areas surrounding Ludlow and further afield from the middle of the fifteenth century.

## **Ludlow**

Ludlow was the key town of the Central Marches. Although the pre-Norman origins of Ludlow are obscure, it is clear that a retainer of William I, Walter De Lacy, built Ludlow castle between 1070 and 1094. Walter had been granted 163 manors in Weobley (North Herefordshire), and south Shropshire, and was a significant early landowner in the March.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of the twelfth century, Ludlow possessed radiating streets with burgage plots to the east of the castle, which suggests that economic and political conditions were right for expansion.<sup>2</sup> When Roger Mortimer, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of March, acquired Ludlow castle by marriage in 1308, Ludlow soon became the *caput* of the

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<sup>1</sup> David Lloyd, *The Origins of Ludlow* (Little Logaston: Logaston Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Keith D. Lilley, 'Urban Landscapes and the Cultural Politics of Territorial Control in Anglo-Norman England', *Landscape Research* 24, no. 1 (1999): 6.



Mortimers' vast territory, supplanting nearby Wigmore Castle. By 1377, Ludlow was ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> amongst provincial towns in England, with a population of 1,172 adults, as given in the poll tax return of that year. Excepting for temporary falls in the 1440s and at the turn of the fifteenth century due to epidemics, the population steadily grew to an estimated 2,500 in 1545.<sup>3</sup>

Norman castles, with settlements attached, did not all survive or thrive in the uncertain times of the early Marcher lordships. However, Ludlow flourished, due in no small part to the laws of Bretueil, which had been granted to Ludlow in 1185 by the de Lacy family. These conditions included exemptions from distant military service, an expectation that the community was responsible for vacant burgages and, most notably, freedom from tolls and levies.<sup>4</sup> This relative liberty from seigneurial control led to the development of a corporate body of burgesses – 'The Twelve and Twenty-five'. The men of the 'Twelve' were the aldermen of the town. The men, who were elected to the 'Twenty-Five', represented the broader council.<sup>5</sup> Edward IV, on his accession in 1461, confirmed the existing rights of burgesses by granting a charter to that effect.<sup>6</sup>

This freedom from direct seigneurial rule stimulated the development of markets and fairs in Ludlow and also encouraged merchants to set up businesses in the town. As a result, Ludlow's economy expanded. From the thirteenth century, the key commodity in the region was wool. Ludlow achieved a middle ranking as an English

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<sup>3</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 157–58.

<sup>4</sup> Faraday, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Faraday, 26–27.

<sup>6</sup> Granville Sharp, ed., *Copies of the Charters and Grants to the Town of Ludlow* (Ludlow: W. Felton, 1821), 1.

wool town by the early fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> One Ludlow merchant, Laurence of Ludlow, traded vast amounts of March wool via London and Southampton to the Low Countries. Some of this wool came from villages near to Ludlow. By the 1290s, Laurence owned land in Stokesay, as well as land in the nearby parishes of Overton and Greete. Later records show he received income from lands of Ralph de Tony, lord of the Marcher lordship of Elfael (currently part of Radnorshire), in return for an outstanding debt.<sup>8</sup> He was also a creditor for Edward I's loans and had a reputation as a strong contract negotiator with continental wool merchants.<sup>9</sup> Laurence's success was Ludlow's success. He managed a plethora of contracts from his base in Corve Street, Ludlow, and later at his grand new manor house nearby in Stokesay.<sup>10</sup>

After 1400, cloth manufacture replaced wool trading as Ludlow's leading industry. The long-standing relationships with towns such as Bristol and Gloucester, which had been built up over decades of wool buying and selling, were extended to the trading of cloth. This relationship can be seen in the lists of names in the Palmers' Guild records. There are seven names of cloth merchants from Gloucester, and 33 from Bristol, in the Palmers' Guild membership registers of 1485-9, 1505-9 and the riding books of 1501-8.<sup>11</sup> By 1515, the small up-and-coming cloth towns of Dursley and Wootton-under-Edge, near Gloucester, are part of the steward's itinerary. Seven men from the cloth trade including John Browne, a clothier, are listed in the riding book for

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<sup>7</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 117.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Summerson, 'Most Renowned of Merchants': The Life and Occupations of Laurence of Ludlow', *Midland History* 30 (2005): 27, 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> Summerson, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Summerson, 28.

<sup>11</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

this year.<sup>12</sup> These connections show that Ludlow was part of the network of cloth manufacturing in the south west of England from the late fifteenth century.

From the fourteenth century to the early fifteenth century, the lords of Ludlow, the Earls of March, were patrons of religious institutions in the town of Ludlow. Ludlow's religious Guild, the Palmers' Guild, was formed in the late thirteenth century, as a social and religious outlet for Ludlow's merchants and other townsfolk. In 1438, the heir to the Earldom, Richard Duke of York and his wife, became members of the Palmers' Guild with a high entry fine of £16 13s. 4d.<sup>13</sup> As I discuss in chapter 3, this patronage, which enhanced and strengthened the political and economic viability of the Palmers' Guild, was a factor in the Guild becoming the largest property owner in Ludlow by the late fifteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

Ludlow's economic and political position, as a gateway to the rich grazing land to the west, gave rise to the key judicial role as the centre of the Council of the Marches in the late fifteenth century. In response to continuing unrest and political fragmentation, Edward IV, a direct descendant of the Earls of March, set up a 'Prince's Council' in Ludlow in 1472 to oversee the Welsh Marches. The Council sought to deal with the 'wilde Welshmenne and evill disposed personnes [who] should refrain from their accustomed murthers and outrages'.<sup>15</sup> Its role was to govern the Welsh Principality and the English border counties and its courts heard criminal, civil, and ecclesiastical cases.<sup>16</sup> Although the Council did not become an effective enforcement

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<sup>12</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 92.

<sup>13</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 135.

<sup>14</sup> Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, xv.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Wright, *The History of Ludlow and Its Neighbourhood Forming a Popular Sketch of the History of the Welsh Border*. (Ludlow: R. Jones, 1852), 320.

<sup>16</sup> David Lloyd, *The Concise History of Ludlow* (Ludlow: Merlin Unwin Books, 1999), 34,63.

agency until Bishop Roland Lee was appointed in 1534, Ludlow's status benefited from this important administrative and judicial role.

All these factors, when pulled together, indicate how vital Ludlow was as an economic and judicial hub for people who lived in Ludlow's hinterland and the Marcher lordships in the Central Marches. Its strategic position on the main eastern route of the borderland, its close relationship with the Earls of March, and its economic connections with Welsh communities, gave Ludlow a stable and secure role in the medieval period.

### **Political Geography of the Welsh Marches**

The Central and North Welsh Marches were defined by a fluid and complex political geography. This was due to the conflicting interests of the Marcher lords, the crown, and various Welsh princes and lords, who fought for control of this land for 400 years after the Norman invasion in the 1080s. The lordship, the key political entity in the borderlands of England in the medieval period, was formed at this time. The decision to develop these Marcher lordships in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries altered the dynamics of the borderland area forever.

When King William encouraged Norman knights to quell Welsh tribesmen on the border, they controlled the region by deploying defensive fortifications. Three of William's trusted retainers, Hugh d'Avranches, Roger de Montgomerie, and William FitzOsbern, were rewarded with semi-autonomous earldoms (Chester, Shrewsbury, and Hereford respectively) along the border from Monmouthshire in the south to Flint

in the North.<sup>17</sup> Within these Earldoms, lordships were created, loosely connected to pre-conquest 'commotes', the Welsh unit of geographical organisation. The number of lordships varied through the next 400 years and ranged between 136 and 153.<sup>18</sup> By the Act of Settlement in 1536 (when the lordships were abolished), there were 136 lordships, 41 of which belonged to the crown.<sup>19</sup>

Until the mid-sixteenth century, the lordships were a region apart and came to be known collectively as the Welsh Marches.<sup>20</sup> Typically, a Marcher lordship would be divided into 'Welsheries' and 'Englisheries'. The Englishry centered on the castle and residing lord. There was often an adjacent town, with burgesses, who were given a charter to trade and conduct markets and fairs. There would also be a church, which was often endowed by land from the lord. Ludlow, Old Radnor, Bishop's Castle, and Oswestry are examples of Norman planned towns. Outside this territory, in the 'Welshry', Norman control diminished, and Welsh customs and settlement patterns generally survived. For example, in the thirteenth century there were separate 'Welsheries' in the lordship of Clun in the Central Marches, and Oswestry in the Northern Marches.<sup>21</sup> As the best land went to the lord, the Welsh inhabitants moved

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<sup>17</sup> The first Earl of Chester was Gherbord of Flanders then Hugh of Avranches (d. 1101), Roger of Montgomery (d. 1094) at Shrewsbury and William fitzOsbern (d. 1071) at Hereford Roger Turvey, *The Welsh Princes: The Native Rulers of Wales 1063-1283* (London: Longman, 2002), 53; see also Lieberman, *The March of Wales, 1067-1300: A Borderland of Medieval Britain*.

<sup>18</sup> Trevor Rowley, *The Welsh Border: Archaeology, History and Landscape* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), 91.

<sup>19</sup> Dorothy Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 116.

<sup>20</sup> The boundaries of the Welsh Marches varied from generation to generation see Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282-1400*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales: The Creation and Perception of a Frontier, 1066-1283* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46.

higher up the valleys and into less fertile land.<sup>22</sup> They were also subjected to English laws, which, until the late fifteenth century, denied them the right to own urban property or high office. Intercultural tensions between Welsh and English, caused by the Norman model of Englisheries and Welshries, led to simmering Welsh resentment. Even though the Welsh kept some laws and customs, they were never assimilated.<sup>23</sup>

At their height, the Marcher lords controlled two thirds of modern-day Wales, not just the borderland zone. The Marcher lands ran from north Shropshire down to the tip of the south-western coast of Wales, encompassing most coastal access, inland waterways, and agricultural land of modern day southern and eastern Wales. However, the physical boundary between Marcher lordships, the Principality and the English counties was fluid and changing. Political feuds and marriage alliances affected the geopolitics of this large region. As Dorothy Sylvester succinctly argues, it was a region where 'the influence of the defensive aspect of the Marches on rural settlement was considerable, especially south of the Middle Severn, for until the Act of Union (1536) the Marches remained a vast armed camp, ready at all times for defensive or aggressive campaigns'.<sup>24</sup>

As the lordship boundaries were fluid, communities lacked cohesion and identity. Some towns which were in the county at the time of the 1086 Domesday survey were absorbed into the lordships. Knighton and Norton, to the west of Ludlow, were declared waste in the Domesday survey, and were considered part of the

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<sup>22</sup> Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography*, 117; See also: Max Lieberman, 'Anglicization in High Medieval Wales: The Case of Glamorgan', *Welsh History Review* 23, no. 1 (2006): 1–26.

<sup>23</sup> Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415*, 432–38.

<sup>24</sup> Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography*, 115.

Shropshire hundred of Leintwardine, but by the reign of Edward I (c. 1270s) they were considered to be 'in Welshry' and were to remain so. Radnor was in Herefordshire in 1250, but by 1304 it had 'moved to the borders of the county' before being absorbed into the Mortimer lordship until the sixteenth century.<sup>25</sup> The border between Shropshire and Herefordshire was also ill defined throughout this period. In the Domesday records of 1086, Ludlow and surrounding areas were listed under Herefordshire, but all are now in Shropshire.<sup>26</sup>

The lordships were given control over their own laws and customs (*sicut regale*) by the King.<sup>27</sup> By the early twelfth century, the Earls and Marcher lords offered their personal allegiance to the King, but their lands were exempt from royal taxation. They had the right to create forests, markets, and boroughs without royal permission. They also had the right to wage war within the March and into the fringes of Wales itself.<sup>28</sup> These Marcher customs and laws were enforced by the lords, who often ruled with impunity. The relationship between King and his lords was turbulent and troubled at times. When the King showed strength and purposefulness in the region, as in the reign of Edward I, the lordships were held under a tight reign. When the King was weak, feuds amongst lords led to tension and instability.

Laws also differed between lordships, which led to lawlessness and fear of outsiders. The lordships were also perceived, by men and women of the shires, as a haven for those escaping the King's law from England. This was magnified further by a

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<sup>25</sup> Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282-1400*, 18.

<sup>26</sup> William Page, ed., *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Shropshire*, vol. 1 (University of London, Institute of Historical research, 1908), 287.

<sup>27</sup> "as if royal"

<sup>28</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, Tony Hopkins, and Ray Howell, eds., *The Age of the Marcher Lords, c.1070-1536*, vol. 2 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Gwent County History Association, 2008), 47.

fear of Welsh raids. The Rolls of Parliament list descriptions of these raids in many entries from the thirteenth century through to the fifteenth century. An example comes from the Parliament rolls of Richard II's reign (1385-97). There are three instances of pleas in the Parliament from men from the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. The description gives the impression that armies of Welsh marauders surround all the border counties. The men from Cheshire:

come sometimes by day and sometimes by night, with great routs of armed men in warlike array, and there commit various felonies, trespasses and extortions namely they slay people, burn houses, ravish ladies and damsels and maim and kill their oxen to the great destruction and oppression of the aforesaid counties for which no punishment is inflicted or forfeiture ordained of the goods and chattels which they have within the aforesaid county of Chester because of their franchise.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear from these petitions that not only was the fear of Welsh raids real and ever-present, but there was also a realisation that law and order was breaking down in the lordships. It is hard to determine whether these fears were real or imagined. However, the concern on the part of the parliamentary representatives, played no small part in Edward IV's decision to set up a Council of the Marches in Ludlow in 1472, to oversee

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<sup>29</sup> C Given-Wilson, trans., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504*, vol. 7 Richard II, 1385–1397 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 139, 201, 280.



the administration of law and order in the lordships and the King's lands in the Principality of Wales.

The fear that the Welsh might rise against English rule became reality during the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion of 1400-12. Most Marcher lands were overrun by Glyndŵr and his Welsh supporters, who raided and destroyed large parts of the northern March, the Principality, and western parts of Shropshire and Herefordshire. Two contemporary chroniclers report this serious uprising from different perspectives. An English chronicler, Edward Hall, describes the panic and disorder of the day:

Thus, Owen Glendor glorifying himself in these two victories, invaded the Marches of Wales on the west side of the Seuerne, robbed villafes, brent touned and slewe the people, and laden with praies and bloody hands returned again to Wales, never desisting to do euil till the next yere.<sup>30</sup>

However, a Welsh chronicler, Adam of Usk, is even-handed:

Owain Glyndŵr, supported by the whole of north Wales, Cardigan and Powis continually assailed with fire and sword the English living in those regions and the towns they lived in, especially the town of Welshpool. A great host of English therefore invaded the area,

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Halle, 'Hall's Chronicle Containing the History of England, during the Reign of Henry IV', in *The Revolt of Owain Glyndŵr in Medieval English Chronicles* (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 121.

ravaging and utterly destroying it with fire sword and famine, sparing neither children, nor churches.<sup>31</sup>

Both reports attest to the serious destruction of the fabric of society at this time.

However, Adam of Usk attempts to counter the notion that all Welsh people supported Glyndŵr. In reality, there were many Welsh men and women who suffered in the same way as the English. For example, the capture and garrison of Harlech and Aberystwyth by Glyndŵr in 1404 caused Welsh casualties as well as English.<sup>32</sup>

English legal responses to the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion looked to contain and control the Welsh population. Repressive legislation was passed in 1401-2 where:

Henceforth no Welshman wholly born in Wales shall purchase lands and tenements within the towns of Chester, Salop, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Leominster, Hereford, Gloucester, Worcester nor other merchant towns joining to the Marches of Wales nor in the suburbs of the same on the pain of forfeiture of the same lands and tenements.<sup>33</sup>

The impact of these laws is evident in the borderland town of Ludlow. The Palmers' Guild membership records of 1406-8 do not record any names of Welsh heritage in the 119 recruits from Ludlow.<sup>34</sup> Eighty years later, in 1489, there were still only six Welsh

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<sup>31</sup> C Given-Wilson, trans., 'The Chronicle of Adam of Usk 1377-1421', in *The Revolt of Owain Glyndŵr in Medieval English Chronicles* (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 107.

<sup>32</sup> R.R. Davies, *Owain Glyn Dŵr: Prince of Wales* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2009), 60.

<sup>33</sup> Ivor Bowen and Richard W. Ireland, *The Statutes of Wales* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1908), 31-46.

<sup>34</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

residents in the Palmers' Guild records, which included two tailors.<sup>35</sup> By this time, the legal constraints on Welsh people to purchase property had eroded as they were too difficult to enforce. Even by the mid-1450s, Welshmen who were excluded from high office by nature of their birth were deputising for English magnates in the lordships, who were often absent from their Welsh lands.<sup>36</sup>

Although Glyndŵr's initial destructive force in the early 1400s was focused to the north and west of the Central Welsh Marches, it soon spread to the English borderland towns. Glyndŵr struck at the heart of the Mortimer lands. Abbey Cwmhir, in the lordship of Maelienydd, was laid waste in 1401 or early 1402.<sup>37</sup> The town of Presteigne was also in the path of the Welsh rebels, and this Mortimer town was put to the torch. In June 1402, the battle of Bryn Glas (Pilleth) was fought near Knighton, which was 20 miles west of Ludlow. After a successful stand against the English forces, Glyndŵr did not march towards Ludlow. Instead, he turned towards Leominster, and torched the land near Knighton and destroyed the Mortimer castle at New Radnor.<sup>38</sup>

When Glyndŵr destroyed the castles in the Marcher lordships in the years 1402-3, he diminished the authority of the lords. The rebellion exposed the precarious nature of the lordships as a political structure. In this respect it was a causal mechanism in fragmenting the political fabric of the region during the decades which followed his uprising.

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<sup>35</sup> SA LB5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1485-9.

<sup>36</sup> Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches in the Fifteenth Century', 62.

<sup>37</sup> Davies, *Owain Glyn Dŵr: Prince of Wales*, 49.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Dunn, 'Owain Glyndŵr and Radnorshire', *Radnorshire Society Transactions* 37 (1967): 29–33.

## Political Economy

The political economy was important to regional stability, as it had the potential to unite communities which had been fragmented by political volatility. At the heart of the political economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches was the wool and cloth trade. In the wool trade of the thirteenth century, merchant entrepreneurs such as Laurence of Ludlow sourced wool from all parts of the central Lordships and oversaw the export of this wool to the Low Countries.<sup>39</sup> By the fifteenth century, there were intermediaries (wool broggers) in Ludlow and other borderland towns. They may have traded in a similar manner to John Heritage, from Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire, whose accounts show that he stockpiled wool and carted it to London for export. When Heritage bought local wool, he paid two or more instalments to the grower. The first, known as earnest money, was given to the grower before shearing. A second instalment was handed over when the newly shorn wool had been carted to the wool house, in late June.<sup>40</sup> There were also small payments to the grower through autumn, winter, and early spring.<sup>41</sup> When the cloth trade expanded in Ludlow and other towns, in the fifteenth century, these normalised patterns of trade (delayed payments, credit, and the interlocking of debts and loans) were adopted.

A central theme in this thesis is the importance of the Palmers' Guild as a mechanism for establishing trust-based networks. Trust was essential to the use of credit, which underpinned the late medieval economy. In 2016, Richard Goddard in his book *Credit and Trade in Later Medieval England* argues that 'credit was a pivotal

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<sup>39</sup> Summerson, 'Most Renowned of Merchants': The Life and Occupations of Laurence of Ludlow', 20.

<sup>40</sup> Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 107.

<sup>41</sup> Dyer, 116.

component of domestic trade'. He notes that the boom and bust cycles of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were defined by the availability of credit.<sup>42</sup> Craig Muldrew also asserts that the vast majority of dealings were transacted on credit, which was largely 'oral and informal with only a token amount of cash used to set a seal on a bargain'.<sup>43</sup> Other scholars such as Pamela Nightingale and Christopher Dyer have argued that the flow of cash in late medieval England was stymied by the shortage of coins.<sup>44</sup> This factor encouraged the growth of credit to the point where it became essential for many transactions in medieval business. Growers, cloth workers, clothiers and drapers were all enmeshed in the 'tangled web of credit'.<sup>45</sup>

Hand in hand with the normalisation of credit was the emphasis on trust, which held the medieval economy together. Trade depended on commercial networks which were cemented by bonds of trust – between a wool grower and wool brogger or between a cloth worker and a clothier.<sup>46</sup> As Craig Muldrew argues, in late medieval society, a person's reputation underpinned the success of their economic transitions. It was a 'system of cultural, as well as material exchanges, in which the central mediating factor was credit or trust'.<sup>47</sup> Although many merchants may have entered transactions

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Goddard, *Credit and Trade in Later Medieval England, 1353-1532* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 1–2.

<sup>43</sup> Craig Muldrew, 'Debt, Credit, and Poverty in Early Modern England', in *A Debtor World: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Debt*, ed. Ralph Brubaker, Robert M. Lawless, and Charles J. Tabb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>44</sup> Pamela Nightingale, 'Monetary Contraction and Mercantile Credit in Later Medieval England', *The Economic History Review* 43, no. 4 (1990): 561; Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 121.

<sup>45</sup> Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 119.

<sup>46</sup> For a definition of bonds of trust, please see the Glossary.

<sup>47</sup> Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1998), 4.

in account books, like John Heritage, the monitoring of economic dealings were often enforced by 'mutual trust and reinforced by community sanctions'.<sup>48</sup>

The extensive journeys undertaken by the Palmers' Guild stewards demonstrate that the Guild was a crucial link in this complex, transnational web of economic relationships. In a fragmented wool producing and cloth manufacturing area, the coin that was necessary to lubricate transactions was lacking. Credit was therefore necessary. Credit is based on trust. In parts of the Central and North Welsh Marches, at various times in the fifteenth century, the region was riven by enmity amongst Marcher lords, between these lords and the crown and, more broadly, between English and Welsh speaking communities. Trust between these groups and individuals within these groups could be strained at times. The ease with which the Palmers' Guild stewards travelled freely through these lands on their quest to recruit new members to their Guild, suggests that both English and Welsh communities trusted them.

The Guild also offered a range of flexible membership options. Recruits in this region trusted the Guild steward to accurately tabulate membership instalments. It is not going beyond the realms of possibility that they could also be trusted to be intermediaries in the cloth trade of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The stewards were a 'cog' in the 'network of credit'. This relationship is important and will be investigated further in chapter 5, when I explore the role of the Guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches.

The political economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches was dependent on the physical landscape and political geography of the region. There was no easy

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<sup>48</sup> Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 125.

way to transport wool, cloth, and other commodities to towns both within the Central and North Welsh Marches, and the English towns to the east of this region. This meant the carting of wool and cloth was difficult and time consuming. Significant physical obstacles, and the lack of clear route ways through the region, meant travel was difficult. Many communities were unconnected to others, even a few miles away, due to steep hills, deep river valleys, and dense forests. This diverse landscape had few physical entry points from the east and the Cambrian Mountains separated towns such as Welshpool from the important towns of Machynlleth and Aberystwyth to the west. In the North Welsh Marches, the range of mountains, which includes Snowdonia, forms a natural barrier between Oswestry and Bangor.

To navigate these barriers, traders exploited the old Roman road network and used ancient trackways to carry goods between towns.<sup>49</sup> Roman roads linked the major centres, such as Hereford, Ludlow, Shrewsbury, and Chester. Evidence from the royal itineraries of Edward I show that these roads were often used in the medieval period.<sup>50</sup> However there is little documentary evidence of a road between Ludlow and the town of Machynlleth, on the western coast of Wales, which the Guild steward utilised in his journeys in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It may be the route was a trackway which was carved into the landscape.<sup>51</sup> These trackways ran east-west on the tops of hills that linked up to become long-distance ridgeway networks. A central route, the Kerry ridgeway, ran from Llangurig in the south western part of the Central Marches to Bishop's castle, and from there to the English midlands.

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<sup>49</sup> Brian Paul Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2018), 6.

<sup>50</sup> Brian Paul Hindle, 'The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography* 2, no. 3 (1976): 212–13.

<sup>51</sup> Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks*, 20–29.

From Bishop's Castle it was known as the 'Portway', which ran across the Long Mynd towards Church Stretton and Shrewsbury. The other main east-west ridgeway, known as the Clun-Clee ridgeway, crossed the high land at Clun, and ended near Ludlow.<sup>52</sup>

From the early medieval period, these trackways were used by drovers to herd cattle, sheep, and pigs.<sup>53</sup> They also drove geese, which had their feet protected by a mixture of tar and sand, for the long journey to the markets in London. Drovers headed down from the ridgeways, when there was a need to ford a river, as the wooded slopes and busy river routes were hard to navigate with animals. By the fifteenth century, it was common for drovers to take large herds, sometimes up to one hundred beasts, from the Welsh hills to be fattened in English fields ready for the London markets.<sup>54</sup>

These trackways, which linked remote villages and farms right across the region, also connected monasteries, which had a role to play in the economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The 'monk's trod' is one such track, although in places it was more akin to a constructed medieval road, which ran over the Cambrian mountains between the Cistercian monasteries of Abbey Cwmhir and Strata Florida. Running east-west, the hardened surface implied the track was built as a permanent surface for those on horseback, and in summer it was possible for foot travellers to complete the journey in one day.<sup>55</sup> This was an important consideration given the scarcity of hamlets, farms, or towns in this remote area where one could stay overnight. This 'high road' allowed travellers a safer passage, for regular travellers who

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<sup>52</sup> Twm Elias, *On the Trail of the Welsh Drovers* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2018), 60–69.

<sup>53</sup> Elias, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Shirley Toulson, *The Drover's Roads of Wales* (London: Wildwood House, 1977), 20.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Fleming, 'The Making of a Medieval Road: The Monk's Trod Routeway, Mid Wales', *Landscapes* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 87.



might include monks, royal officials and perhaps the stewards of the Palmers' Guild, who all had reasons to traverse the region. As it was particularly wide in parts, it also eased the herding of animals towards market towns to the east of the Marcher lordships.<sup>56</sup>

The mountainous terrain, few interconnected roads and sparse settlements caused travelling to be difficult and dangerous. It was also mostly undertaken by foot and involved long arduous journeys over inhospitable terrain. The listing of only 20 returns from Radnorshire by the Commissioners, who were charged by Edward VI in 1548 to record all chantries, is not surprising considering the journey involved visiting isolated villages in the hills and forests near Radnor.<sup>57</sup> These physical barriers meant that the lands of the Central and North Welsh Marches were very different to many counties further to the east, particularly in comparison to the lowlands near London or the wide plains which were typical of the East Anglian counties of Suffolk and Norfolk.

The evidence in the Guild riding books clearly demonstrates that the Palmers' Guild stewards used these tracks and roads to visit communities which were not on the main trade routes.<sup>58</sup> Their persistence in travelling through this difficult landscape, it will be argued, was not only to encourage recruits to pay instalments for religious services. It was also to encourage networks of trade. These arduous annual journeys offered secular and spiritual benefits for the Palmers' Guild as well as for the thousands of people who lived in scattered communities in the Central and North Welsh Marches.

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<sup>56</sup> Fleming, 90.

<sup>57</sup> J.T. Evans, *The Church Plate of Radnorshire: With the Chantry Certificates Relating to the County of Radnor by the Commissioners of 2 Edward VI (1548)* (Stow-on-the-Wold: James H. Alden, 1910), x.

<sup>58</sup> See lists of towns in the Palmers' Guild Riding Books. SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

The regional monasteries were important to the economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches until their income was greatly reduced by the Glyndŵr rebellion in the early fifteenth century. The leading monastic organisation in the Central and North Welsh Marches was the Cistercian order. Welsh princes, whose lands lay to the west of the lordships, encouraged Cistercian monks to settle on their lands. They favoured the Cistercian order because new foundations were not normally dependent cells of English abbeys.<sup>59</sup> Strata Marcella, near Welshpool, was founded in 1170 by a Welsh ruler, Owain Cyfeiliog, prince of South Powys, and was under the patronage of the Earl of Powis by the fifteenth century. A daughter house of Strata Marcella was built at Valle Crucis (midway between Ruthin, Wrexham, and Oswestry) by Madog ap Gruffydd Maelor in 1201.<sup>60</sup> Cadwallon ap Madog founded Cwmhir in 1176, which was colonised by monks from Whitland. Contemporary accounts suggest that Cwmhir and Strata Marcella were built to house 60 monks apiece. The first Cistercian foundation, at Whitland, in the far southwest of Wales, was built to house up to 100 monks and lay brothers.<sup>61</sup>

Cistercian monasteries were vital to the local economy as they supported men who wished to become monks. They provided steady employment in areas which were economically poor. Men from majority Welsh-speaking areas were keen to join as it meant they would have regular food, clothing, and the possibility of some education. The attraction was real and tangible. Walter Map, a Welsh cleric writing at the end of the twelfth century, spoke of 'the Cistercians [as having] numbers of coats, the Welsh

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<sup>59</sup> David H. Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians*, New edition (Caldey Island, Tenby: Cyhoeddiadau Sistersiaidd, 1984), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 19.

<sup>61</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians*, 148.

none: one class has boots and shoes, the other goes barefoot and barelegged, the monks eat no meat, the Welsh no bread'.<sup>62</sup>

The order's focus on building monasteries in wild and remote areas made them well placed to undertake cattle and sheep husbandry as a source of income. The order promoted a strong commitment to support themselves, rather than exist on charity. By the fourteenth century, initial endowments of land, which had been tended by monks, were farmed by lay brothers or 'conversi' to extract the maximum benefit to the monastic community. Apart from farming sheep, monks produced meat and hides, even though the order forbade trading of animal produce.<sup>63</sup> The monastic granges, where sheep were run, were often at a distance from the abbey so there were small chapels for the lay brothers to attend. For example, the granges of Abbey Cwmhir lay mostly close to the abbey precinct but there were outlying granges in the lordship of Montgomery and in Knighton in the far eastern part of the lordship of Maelienydd.<sup>64</sup>

The small Cistercian abbeys in the Central and North Welsh Marches were not in the same league as Tintern Abbey, in the southern Marches, or Abbey Dore, in southern Herefordshire.<sup>65</sup> Wool produced by the monks from these abbeys was amongst the highest priced monastic wool in the thirteenth century. Shipments of wool were sold to merchants from Flanders and Italy from a collection point at

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<sup>62</sup> M.R. James, *Walter Map 'De Nugis Curialium'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 53.

<sup>63</sup> James Bond, *Monastic Landscapes* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), 59.

<sup>64</sup> William Rees, 'South Wales and the Border in the Fourteenth Century: North East', 2017, <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/maps/uk/004953638uneu1932.html>, accessed 25 August 2017.

<sup>65</sup> In 1534 there were 13 monks at Tintern, three at Abbey Cwmhir, eight at Strata Florida and four at Strata Marcella Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 563. There were nine monks at Abbey Dore at the Dissolution of the Abbey in 1537 Ron Shoesmith and Ruth Richardson, eds., *A Definitive History of Dore Abbey* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 1997), 149.

Hereford.<sup>66</sup> Although most of the other abbeys in the Central and North Welsh Marches did not partake in this export trade, they had access to grazing land in the vicinity of the abbey for raising livestock. Most had access to arable land as well. Abbey Cwmhir, in the Central Marches, for example, owned parcels of land in the Lugg and Wye valley, which would have supported the cultivation of oats or other cereal crops.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to trading in the market economy, religious institutions maximised their religious monopoly over the community by offering services, such as obits, indulgences, and prayers for the dead. Monasteries and parish churches sought ways to encourage pilgrims to visit relics housed in shrines within their buildings. The income from people visiting these shrines, such as the one dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Madley in Herefordshire, could have a significant impact on the wealth of the parish church and also the whole village.<sup>68</sup> There was also the option of petitioning the Pope to issue indulgences to raise money for repairs to churches or chapels. In 1427, Pope Martin V permitted indulgences to those who 'visit and give alms for the repair and conservation of the chapel of St. Winefride the Virgin, called Haliwell, in the diocese of St. Asaph, whose buildings are collapsed'.<sup>69</sup> This chapel was an important destination for many who wished to venerate St. Winefride, an important Welsh saint in the northern Marches. Shrewsbury Abbey also achieved financial gain from the

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<sup>66</sup> Shoesmith and Richardson, *A Definitive History of Dore Abbey*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> Bond, *Monastic Landscapes*, 48.

<sup>68</sup> See: Sarah Brown, 'The Fourteenth-Century Stained Glass of Madley', in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Hereford* (London: British Archaeological Association, 1995), 122.

<sup>69</sup> 'Relaxation, during ten years, of a year and forty days of enjoined penance to penitents who on the principal feasts of the year and the dedication, the octaves of certain of them and the six days of Whitsun week, and of a hundred days to those who during the said octaves and days visit and give alms for the repair and conservation of the chapel of St. Winefride the Virgin, called Haliwell, in the diocese of St. Asaph, whose buildings are collapsed' J.A. Twemlow, 'Holywell', in *Calendars of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 7 (1417-1431) (London: HMSO, 1906), 504.

popularity of St. Winefride. Her relics were interned in a shrine in the abbey in the late fourteenth century. In 1463, Abbot Thomas Mynde founded a chantry chapel, which was supported by the establishment of a guild in the name of St. Winefride, in 1487.<sup>70</sup> William Pontesbury, and his father Roger, who were from a prominent Shrewsbury wool merchant family, remembered the saint in their wills.<sup>71</sup>

The Central and North Welsh Marches economy was acutely affected by the famine and plagues of the fourteenth century. Harvest failures and wet weather in the years 1315-22 affected all parts of England and Wales, as well as most of north-western Europe. The consecutive years of poor household incomes affected the health of individuals and disrupted the local economy. Grain prices rose and many people stole food to survive.<sup>72</sup> A generation later, the Black Death struck down people from all social groups with devastating consequences. There was a mortality rate of between 40 and 70 percent amongst the population.<sup>73</sup> Forty-three percent of clerics in the Diocese of Hereford were reported to have died in the plague of 1348-50. This figure may have been lower for Welsh parishes, as many were sited in hill and moorland areas, where the plague may have been less virulent. However, there were many parishes without curates.<sup>74</sup> The scarcity of clerics affected the economy, as the cost for engaging a chaplain or priest rose five-fold at this time.<sup>75</sup> The double blows of famine and plague, between 1315 and 1348, meant that the communities in the Welsh

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<sup>70</sup> W. A. Champion and A.T. Thacker, eds., *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, vol. 6, Part 1 (Woodbridge: VCH, 2014), 118.

<sup>71</sup> Champion and Thacker, 6, Part 1:119.

<sup>72</sup> Philipp R. Schofield, 'Wales and the Great Famine of the Early Fourteenth Century', *Welsh History Review* 29, no. 2 (2018): 144.

<sup>73</sup> Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 229–33.

<sup>74</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 146.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, 148.

Marches were under extreme stress. By 1400, the economy was again under threat, this time by the Glyndŵr rebellion which destroyed the livelihood of many families who lived in these communities.

As we have seen, Owain Glyndŵr's effect on the political structure of the Central and North Welsh Marches was long-lasting. The economic destruction was most severe in the Principality of Wales and the Northern Marches but, in other areas of the Marcher lordships, many towns, castles, villages and monasteries lay in ruins. Mills were targeted by those who supported Owain Glyndŵr as they represented the control which English lords had over their lives.<sup>76</sup> The slow pace of reconstruction affected the local economy and also severely disturbed the trade of cloth and other commodities from the Marches to the counties of England. The destruction of the towns of Montgomery, Presteigne and Welshpool, as well as Ruthin and Denbigh in the North Welsh Marches, also affected the economic viability of villages in the hinterlands of these towns.<sup>77</sup>

The fragmentation of the political economy also affected the viability of monasteries in the Central and North Welsh Marches. The economic power of the monasteries was clearly under stress. Even before the destruction of the monastic buildings by Glyndŵr, direct control by the monks over their lands had diminished, as they had leased their demesne lands. For example, Abbey Cwmhir's granges and monastic lands were leased out to farmers.<sup>78</sup> Only the large monasteries in the southern Welsh Marches, such as Tintern and Margam, could afford the transition to

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<sup>76</sup> Griffiths, Hopkins, and Howell, *The Age of the Marcher Lords, c.1070-1536*, 2:234.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, *Renewal and Reformation Wales: C1415-1642*, 19–20.

<sup>78</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians*, 348–49.

cloth.<sup>79</sup> Fulling mills were expensive to build and operate. The demise of monasteries as economic entities gave an opportunity for the Palmers' Guild, which was financed and supported by the rich burgesses of Ludlow, to enter the Central and North Welsh Marches. Their networks with English clothiers, its royal connections, and its reputation as a trusted establishment, meant that it was a stable institution in difficult times.

### **Religious Landscape**

The monasteries were one of several religious institutions in late medieval society. However, the main institution that guided most people's religious behaviour was the parish church. The English diocesan framework which was imposed on the existing Welsh ecclesiastical structure from the late eleventh century, pivoted around the parish church. The Normans carved out four dioceses in the lands to the west of the English dioceses, which followed the boundaries of the ancient Welsh cantrefi. The deaneries followed the geo-political boundaries of the smaller Welsh commotes. First, Bangor in North Wales was formed in 1090 and covered the kingdom of Gwynedd. Second, the cantrefi of Morgannwg and Gwent were aligned with the diocese of Llandaff, which was established in 1107. Third, St Asaph was created in 1143 and covered the kingdom of Powys. Finally, the large diocese of St Davids (formed in 1115) included the central and southern Marcher lordships and the kingdoms of Deheubarth and Dyfed.<sup>80</sup> A small area, in Arwystli, now in Montgomeryshire, was wedged between

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<sup>79</sup> R. Ian Jack, 'Cloth Industry in Medieval Wales', *Welsh History Review* 10 (1980): 448.

<sup>80</sup> The Welsh cantrefi comprised about 100 villages. Commotes were known as cwmydau in Welsh which were a half or third of a cantref. The diocese of St Davids was divided into four archdeaconries – Cardigan, Carmarthen, Brecon and St Davids with the Archdeaconry of Brecon being closest to the

St Davids and St Asaph and belonged to Bangor from ancient times. Dyffryn Clwyd, stranded in the eastern portion of St Asaph, was also a Bangor outlier.<sup>81</sup> These four dioceses gave the Central and North Welsh Marches a fragmented diocesan framework with little shared episcopal authority.

The twelfth-century parish was a product of the merging (or arguably, the submerging) of pre-conquest Welsh and Anglo-Saxon structures with a new Norman ecclesiastical framework. The Norman hierarchical model of parish, deanery, archdeaconry, and diocese was in stark contrast to the Welsh church, which was structured around the Christian ideal of withdrawal from the world. The Welsh church was based on *clas* or 'mother church', with smaller churches or *ecclesiae* and hermit cells known as *capellae*. An abbot or bishop ruled the Welsh mother churches.<sup>82</sup> Churches were also located in spiritual and remote places, often on rivers and away from settlements. In the Central Marches, the isolated single nave church of Llananno, with nearby Llanbadarn Fynydd and Llanddewi Ystradenni, all of which are sited on the River Ithon, were typical examples of Welsh churches. The Norman framework also changed the ecclesiastical landscape to the east of Offa's dyke. Prior to the Norman invasion, the late eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon parish was centred on minsters or 'mother churches', which were not always attached to a settlement. An example is the Mercian minster at Leominster which was supported by a large parish of 12 miles

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borderland. Brecon included the deaneries of Ewyas, Brecon, Elfael, Buellt and Maelienydd: A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The Welsh Medieval Dioceses', *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales* 1 (1947): 100.

<sup>81</sup> William Rees, *An Historical Atlas of Wales from Early to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), plate 33.

<sup>82</sup> Rees, plate 27.



across and was one of the biggest mother churches in England.<sup>83</sup> There were fluid boundaries between parishes in both Anglo-Saxon and Welsh models, so these structures had little in common with the new Norman parish structure.

The new Welsh and English dioceses were administered through a hierarchical structure. The Archdeacon answered to the Bishop and, in turn, the rural dean answered to the Archdeacon. The deans had direct responsibility for the moral and religious health of the clergy and parishioners in their deanery. Each church had a priest who had responsibility for the care or 'cure' of the parish and was beneficed to do so. A monastery might appoint a vicar to administer their appropriated church. The vicar was aided by the stipendiary priests, who were employed at very low wages (typically £5 per annum, a similar wage to a ploughman). They assisted in the care of souls in the parish but were not tied down to one parish.<sup>84</sup>

Another layer in this interconnected web of religious personnel was the unbeneficed chaplains or chantry priests who were employed to celebrate mass at the Guild or chantry chapel. There were many chaplains who registered to join the Palmers' Guild. In fact, there were more chaplains than parish priests in the records. For example, there were 56 chaplains but only 39 priests who enrolled in the Palmers' Guild from 1501-8.<sup>85</sup> Chaplains provided services in residences of lords or gentry, such as the chapel in Ludlow castle. These non-parochial chapels bore no uniform characteristics. They could be permanent structures in the house of a lord, or

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<sup>83</sup> Joe Hillaby and Caroline Hillaby, *Leominster Minster, Priory and Borough c660-1539* (Little Logaston: Logaston Press, 2006), xi; See also Brian R. Kemp, 'Some Aspects of the Parochia of Leominster in the 12th Century', in *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950-1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), 44-65.

<sup>84</sup> William J Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: The Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 22.

<sup>85</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

temporary altars or 'oratories' which were licensed by the Bishop for a particular reason. Some chapels remained outside parochial control whereas others became dependent parochial chapels. This was possibly due to their location near existing churches, which then evolved into 'chapels of ease' in later centuries. A detailed study by P.E.H. Hair estimated that there were 70 parishes in the North Herefordshire deaneries in the late medieval period, yet there were 120 buildings which had been consecrated for religious services. This shows that there were 50 buildings outside the normal parochial system.<sup>86</sup> The late medieval religious landscape bristled with contenders for the souls yet, as we can see with the success of the Palmers' Guild, there was still more room for other players to enter the field.

The Norman ecclesiastical and diocesan structures that swept through the Central and North Welsh Marches irretrievably changed the built environment. They also affected the nature of religious personnel, as the bishops, with their extensive entourages of French-speaking diocesan clerics, were imported from Normandy and created a top alien hierarchy in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. It was soon clear that this layering would create a linguistic and cultural barrier. Oil did not mix with water. The Welsh *clas* also diminished in stature by being merged into the new cathedral chapters or collegiate churches or were suppressed and their possessions transferred to new monasteries favoured by the Normans.<sup>87</sup>

From the eleventh century onwards, religious discipline was the preserve of the bishops. They controlled the population through consistory courts, which upheld

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<sup>86</sup> P.E.H. Hair, 'Chaplains, Chantries and Chapels of North-West Herefordshire c. 1400', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 46, no. 1 (1988): 41.

<sup>87</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 17–18.

canon law. They also scrutinised the moral and religious health of their flock by way of periodic visitations. The consistory courts set fines for individuals who were involved in transgressions, such as marital disputes or consanguinity misdemeanours.<sup>88</sup> In the diocese of Hereford, these courts also proved wills and heard cases where the wills were disputed. The consistory court toured the deaneries of the diocese so all could see the authority of the Church and its monopoly over their spiritual lives. There are few records of the Welsh dioceses which have survived, but those of St Davids suggest that even during the troubles of the early fifteenth century in the Welsh Marches, the courts were able to function to some degree.<sup>89</sup>

The bishop instructed the deans to undertake visitations in order to investigate the behaviour of the clergy and the parishioners in the diocese. All transgressions were scrutinised. In the visitations of the Bishop of Hereford in 1397, the vicar of Montgomery 'rented his church out', the vicar of Wentnor 'frequents inns day and night contrary to the honour of the church' and the churchyard of Leominster was in a 'foul state through the vicar's cows grazing there for pasture so that the silk garments are soiled in processions'.<sup>90</sup> Some parishioners also complained of having no vicar or chaplain 'whereby the souls of the parishioners are in grave danger'.<sup>91</sup> The parishioners appear to enjoy rating their clerics against a spiritual yardstick.

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<sup>88</sup> Robert B. Ekelund et al., *Sacred Trust: The Medieval Church as an Economic Firm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 96.

<sup>89</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 255.

<sup>90</sup> Visitation of Leominster parish. A.T. Bannister, 'Visitation Returns of the Diocese of Hereford in 1397: Part III', *English Historical Review* 45, no. 177 (1930): 99; A.T. Bannister, 'Visitation Returns of the Diocese of Hereford in 1397: Part IV', *English Historical Review* 45, no. 179 (1930): 457–60.

<sup>91</sup> Visitation of the parish of Goodrich Castle A.T. Bannister, 'Visitation Returns of the Diocese of Hereford in 1397: Part II', *English Historical Review* 44, no. 175 (1929): 444–53.

They were also keen to relate the misdemeanours of their community to the commissioners. Many people were the subject of neighbourly gossip. 'Henry comes to church, disturbing the divine service [and] sits in the chancel, without being invited by his curate'.<sup>92</sup> On Sundays and feast days, four named men from Richards' Castle went 'to the town of Ludlow with firewood and other goods for sale scorning the parish church and disobeying church rules'.<sup>93</sup> Others were named as adulterers. Clergy were also 'incontinent' with women of the parish. 'Sir John Skylte chaplain [at Dilwyn parish] and Joanna Snede relict of William Snede are with reason accused of incontinence and of living together for some time in suspicious circumstances'.<sup>94</sup>

However, visitations were rare, and neglectful, uneducated clerics were common in the parishes of the Central and North Welsh Marches. There were parishes which had no regular pastoral care. There was also a dearth of new men who wished to join the clergy to replace those who had died in the mid-fourteenth century's devastating cycles of plague and famine.<sup>95</sup> On the whole, parishes in the western part of the Central and North Welsh Marches fared worse than those in the east. They were also much larger, at six square miles, in comparison to the eastern parishes which averaged 4.5 square miles.<sup>96</sup> These Welsh parishes were scattered, hard to traverse and difficult to control. Amid the turmoil of the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion, the Bishop of St Davids instructed the dean of Brecon to conduct a visitation of the clergy and people of his deanery. In October 1402, five rectors were scolded for 'not

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<sup>92</sup> Bannister, 452.

<sup>93</sup> Bannister, 'Visitation Returns of the Diocese of Hereford in 1397: Part IV', 452.

<sup>94</sup> Visitation of the parish of Dilwyn. Bannister, 445.

<sup>95</sup> Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: The Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth Century*, 103–10.

<sup>96</sup> Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography*, 175.

troubling to reside on their said churches, but [were] running to and fro elsewhere, in wantonness, like vagabonds, [leading] a life dissolute above measure and inhumanly and disobediently [leaving] these churches unserved'.<sup>97</sup> There were many poor parishes in the Central and North Welsh Marches, making it unattractive to English-speaking or educated clergy who may have been more likely to enforce standards of religious observance. The Palmers' Guild riding books record many thousands of parishioners, from this region, who welcomed the arrival of the Palmers' Guild which strongly suggests that, in a similar way to some parishes in the English heartlands, many parish churches did not provide adequate spiritual support to their parishioners.

The almost continuous political turmoil from the eleventh to the fifteenth century also meant parishioners were often unable to keep their churches stocked with the requisite religious paraphernalia. For the nave, this included the provision of books and objects including a Psalter, a book of instructions for the liturgy and sacraments, a missal, a chalice, vestments, processional crosses, lanterns, a bier for funerals, candlesticks, candles bells and banners. The upkeep of the church fabric was also their responsibility. The bishop of Hereford's visitation of 1397 allows a glimpse into the roles and responsibilities of the parishioner. Parishioners occasionally admitted their own failings. 'The parishioners [of Bedstone] say that they have no lamp for visiting the sick and the font is not bolted: in default of the parishioners'.<sup>98</sup> Bedstone was in the oft-contested Honour of Clun so it is likely that the transgressions were due to dire poverty.

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<sup>97</sup> R.F. Isaacson, trans., *The Episcopal Registers of the Diocese of St David's 1397-1518*, vol. I (1397-1407) (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1917), 287.

<sup>98</sup> Bannister, 'Visitation Returns of the Diocese of Hereford in 1397: Part IV', 454.

The importance of considering the burden on parish churches, is that it intertwined with similar tensions in the political and economic infrastructure of the region. The dire economic conditions of the early fifteenth century affected parish churches. Those churches which were linked to the Earl of March at New Radnor, Presteigne as well as Montgomery (a royal town), were partially destroyed by Owain Glyndŵr. He also plundered Leominster priory after the Battle of Pilleth in 1402.<sup>99</sup>

The monasteries and priories fared no better. Henry IV and the Marcher lords dispersed the rebellious monks of Strata Florida.<sup>100</sup> The Marcher lords then used the monastery as a base to subdue the surrounding countryside. In return, Glyndŵr ravaged the Cistercian monasteries in the Central and North Welsh Marches. There was utter destruction at the Cistercian Abbey of Cwmhir.<sup>101</sup> The monasteries were symbols of the power of their respective patrons. Both sides in the bloody conflict disregarded the incumbent monks and the surrounding population. This spelt the beginning of the end for Abbey Cwmhir which, although under patronage of the Earls of March, was too remote for reconstruction. Other Welsh Cistercian houses in the Central and North Welsh Marches never recovered and were in a dilapidated state at the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1535.

Income from tithes, pilgrimages, and from farming ecclesiastical lands dried up or vanished in the years after 1400. It was impossible for diocesan clergy to travel to parishes and collect this money, and very little came in by way of donations from the

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<sup>99</sup> Davies, *Owain Glyn Dŵr: Prince of Wales*, 49.

<sup>100</sup> Alicia Marchant, *The Revolt of Owain Glyndŵr in Medieval English Chronicles* (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 108.

<sup>101</sup> David H Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians: Written to Commemorate the Centenary of the Death of Stephen William Williams (1837-1899)* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), 52–55.

lords of the March or other noble families in the region. Many of the secular clergy, especially from the northern Welsh dioceses, were active rebels who joined the Glyndŵr rebellion. All parishes in the region suffered from total war, where no one was safe, and no real sanctuary could be found.<sup>102</sup> Montgomery was one of a long list of border towns seeking exemption from the 'King's Aid' in 1406, on account of poverty. For most towns in the lordships, it took at least a generation for the ecclesiastical structure to recover.<sup>103</sup> In the 1450s, there were still many cases of economic distress of the Church in Wales and the Marches, which were listed in papal and royal records.<sup>104</sup>

The 'scorched earth' devastation of monasteries, priories and churches caused by the Glyndŵr rebellion meant that people focused on day-to-day survival. As the region emerged from a period of economic and political despair after the rebellion, it was clear that, the monasteries, in particular, were no longer able to provide the spiritual glue to hold the region together.

### **The Growing Competition for the Pious Pound**

Even if the monasteries had not suffered so much at this time, their prominence in providing prayers and a place for patrons to be buried was ebbing away. From the fourteenth century, nobles and other patrons in England and the Marcher lordships, were turning away from funding monasteries, as their services were seen to be too rigid and expensive. Although it is evident that patrons and other donors supported

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<sup>102</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 219.

<sup>103</sup> J. D. K. Lloyd, 'The Ecclesiastical History of the Parish of Montgomery', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 62, no. 1 (1971): 63.

<sup>104</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 259.

some larger monasteries right up to the Dissolution in the 1530s, there were now other players in the spiritual marketplace.<sup>105</sup>

By the early fifteenth century, in England, surplus wealth was being channelled into parish churches as parishioners took control of the nave. Individuals could display their piety and their wealth for all to see, by funding the upkeep of their parish churches. They were also interested in taking part in rituals that had once been the preserve of nobles and the upper classes. They donated embroidered cloths, goblets, gilt spoons, and chalices to the churchwardens and employed craftsmen to carve their names in the fabric of the church.<sup>106</sup>

There was also a trend towards the funding of chantry priests to pray for the souls of the departed. The belief in Purgatory, which dominated religious beliefs at this time, was the reason behind a change in liturgical direction in the late medieval period. The necessity to build altars, where chantry chaplains would say mass, transformed the physical boundaries of the parish church.<sup>107</sup> This expansion of the parish church through the building of chantries, housed in side aisles or within the nave itself, presupposed a degree of disposable wealth. Chantry founders needed to have funding for start-up and ongoing expenses to support the employment of chaplains. For this reason, chantries are mostly found in parish churches of the larger

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<sup>105</sup> For an examination of the health of late medieval monasteries see Karen Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries and Their Patrons: England and Wales, c. 1300-1540* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).

<sup>106</sup> For East Anglia see: Eamon Duffy, 'The Parish Piety and Patronage in Late Medieval East Anglian English Life: The Evidence of Rood Screens', in *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1600* (Manchester England: Manchester University Press, 1997), 133–60; and Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547*; For Wales and the Welsh Marches see: Lord, *The Visual Culture of Wales: Medieval Vision*, chapter 3 and 4.

<sup>107</sup> Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology*, 3–5.



towns of the Central and North Welsh Marches, such as Ludlow, Presteigne, Wrexham, and Shrewsbury.

Benefactors also sought other outlets for charitable giving which differed to those of earlier centuries. The belief in charity for those who were poor is an underlying theme in the late medieval world, which is reflected in wills of this period. For example, the funding for several alms-houses, which were opposite the parish church in Ludlow, was financed by John Hosyer, a Ludlow merchant, in 1463. The almshouse was administered by the Palmers' Guild upon his death in 1486.<sup>108</sup> In 1457, a notable draper from Shrewsbury, Degory Water, endowed alms-houses for thirteen poor people of the town, which were transferred to the Draper's Guild of Shrewsbury upon his death in 1477.<sup>109</sup> The administration of these alms-houses reflects the rising importance of Guilds in the political economy of Ludlow and Shrewsbury from the mid fifteenth century onwards.

The pious also turned to other institutions such as mendicant friars for their services. There were two orders of friars in Ludlow (Austin and Carmelite), three in Shrewsbury (Dominican, Franciscan and Austin) and Chester (Dominican, Franciscan and Carmelite) and a Carmelite friary in Denbigh.<sup>110</sup> Henry III was a notable benefactor of the Dominicans and the Franciscan friars in the thirteenth century. This patronage encouraged support amongst the population for these new religious orders which

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<sup>108</sup> For details of his will see Weyman, 'Chantry Chapels in Ludlow Church', 355–56; M.J. Angold et al., eds., 'Almshouses: Ludlow (Hosier's)', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 108–9. TNA PROB 11/5/9 Will of John Hosyer, 3 June 1463 (proved 30 June 1463).

<sup>109</sup> A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh, eds., 'The Draper's (or St Mary's) Almshouses, Shrewsbury', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 111.

<sup>110</sup> David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longman, 1971), 565.

incorporated both a preaching and missionary approach. Even though there was only a small number of urban centres in the Central and North Welsh Marches, there were friaries in each large town. The mendicant orders were popular with urban testators as they integrated well into town life and were known for their explicit piety and modesty.<sup>111</sup>

In the Central and North Welsh Marches, this trend towards alternative forms of expressing piety did not resonate with the inhabitants of villages and towns which had been at the centre of the destruction wrought by the Glyndŵr rebellion. For at least 40 years after the end of the rebellion, there is little evidence that the smaller communities of the Central and North Welsh Marches engaged in church rebuilding or founding of individual chantries. It was not until the late fifteenth century that parish church projects were initiated in Welsh-speaking communities of the Central and Northern Marches. Welsh families with rising incomes expressed their piety by commissioning wood carvings in the parish church. For example, the churches of Ruthin, Wrexham, and Presteigne, were all enlarged in the late fifteenth century.<sup>112</sup> Limited by funds and by restricted access to skilled craftsmen, who fashioned the expensive rebuilding of English churches, the Welsh craftsmen nevertheless responded with culturally distinct, intricately carved rood screens, lofts, and stalls.

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<sup>111</sup> Knowles and Hadcock, 30–31.

<sup>112</sup> See: Richard Wheeler, *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 2006); David Gareth Evans, *The Foundations of Ruthin: 1100-1800* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2017), 38–39; Alister Williams, *The Parish Church of St Giles, Wrexham* (Bridge Books, 2000); For Presteigne see: Robert Scourfield and Richard Haslam, *Powys: Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire*, *The Buildings of Wales* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 394–98.

## **The Palmers' Guild of Ludlow**

By the middle of the fifteenth century there was a range of religious institutions which offered a smorgasbord of religious services. It was a rich choice for the late medieval pious testator. Although there were well patronised churches in this region, there was one religious institution which transcended the confines of its town to offer a range of services to people in the Central and North Welsh Marches, the Midlands, and further afield. This institution was the Palmers' Guild, a religious guild, which was based at St Laurence's parish church in the town of Ludlow.

Religious guilds were deeply embedded in towns and villages of England. We saw in Chapter 1 that religious guilds were formed for many reasons from the thirteenth century onwards. For towns such as Ludlow, the impetus for developing a religious fraternity was twofold. It enabled the newly rich wool merchants to have a focus for their social endeavours, as there were few options available to this occupational group at that time. The other motive was to offer affordable religious services to members, by employing several chaplains who were paid from fees collected from members.

The Palmers' Guild was formed, initially at least, to be a local town-based fraternity, in which most members knew each other. It was listed in the 1389 Guild returns as being founded in 1284 by a group of Ludlow burgesses.<sup>113</sup> However, Faraday suggests that the Guild may have first been active in the 1250s, at a time of increasing wealth in the Welsh Marches, referring to the existence of an early register of rent-charges by the Guild on property in Ludlow.<sup>114</sup> The origin of the name, Palmer, came

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<sup>113</sup> Joshua Toulmin Smith, p.193.

<sup>114</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 79.

from the belief that the Guild had been founded in the time of Edward the Confessor. John Leland, who travelled to Ludlow in the 1530s, retold the legend that two pilgrims from Ludlow had travelled to the Holy Land and bought back a ring believed to be from St John the Evangelist to give to Edward the Confessor.<sup>115</sup> A highly decorated window in the Guild chapel depicts the legend.<sup>116</sup>

There were no large urban religious guilds in the immediate vicinity of Ludlow. Shrewsbury's religious guilds – Holy Cross, St Winefride's guild, and guilds in St Alkmund's and St Mary's parish churches – were small, parochial guilds which were limited in their scope.<sup>117</sup> Fifty miles north east of Ludlow, interest in the religious guild of St Mary and St John the Baptist in Lichfield peaked in the two decades either side of 1500. However, despite the recruitment of Henry VII and his queen, in 1487 and 1493 respectively, most members were drawn from the town's hinterland.<sup>118</sup> At the northern end of the Welsh Marches, seventy miles north of Ludlow, there were two small guilds in Chester, neither of which were as influential as Chester's Abbey of St Werburgh, which was one of the top twenty Benedictine monasteries in the country.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Lucy Toulmin Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543: Part II* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 76.

<sup>116</sup> The legend states that Edward the Confessor gave his ring to a beggar, who was in fact St John the Evangelist in disguise. St John met two pilgrims in the Holy Land, telling them to return the ring to Edward and inform him that St John would meet him again in heaven within six months. The pilgrims returned to England, told Edward the news and the King died as St John had foretold. Christian Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: A Study of the Construction of Guild Identity in Medieval Stained Glass', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society* LXXII (1997): 28.

<sup>117</sup> Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:123–25.

<sup>118</sup> M. W. Greenslade, ed., 'Lichfield: Guilds', in *A History of the County of Stafford*, vol. 14 (London: V&A Publications, 1990), 131–34, 131.

<sup>119</sup> C.P Lewis and A.T. Thacker, eds., 'Later Medieval Chester 1230-1550: Religion, 1230-1550', in *Victoria County History: A History of the County of Chester*, vol. 5 (London: Victoria County History, 2003), 809–89, 89.

In Bristol, to the south of Ludlow, men and women supported the Kalendars Guild which was a religious guild under the control of the secular clergy. Members gathered in All Saints church in Bristol once a month for the mass of the kalends.<sup>120</sup> There were also parish guilds such as the Jesus Guild and a Guild to 'Our Lady Service', in All Saints church.<sup>121</sup> The midland towns of Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon boasted their own religious guilds, which drew their members from the town and surrounding areas. As we saw in Chapter 1, all these religious guilds have been the subject of scholarly research over the last 100 years. The membership of some of these guilds included people from other towns, such as London, Bristol, and Coventry. However, the Palmers' Guild was in another league, compared to the other guilds in the broader region. The percentage of members who lived outside Ludlow and its hinterland, far exceeded the number of local members, by the early sixteenth century.<sup>122</sup> It may be that some of the regional guilds had a similar identity, however the records to confirm this, have not survived.

In the first 150 years of its existence, from the late thirteenth century to the mid fifteenth century, the Palmers' Guild's operations reflected the local nature of its membership profile. The exact profile of the membership is unclear, as there are no riding books or membership registers for the fourteenth century. The only record is a list from 1377-8, which identifies 63 recruits, the majority of whom come from Ludlow apart from two from Shropshire and one from Bristol.<sup>123</sup> It was in this century that the

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<sup>120</sup> N Orme, 'The Guild of Kalendars, Bristol', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 96 (1978): 32–52.

<sup>121</sup> Barron and Burgess, *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2008 Harlaxton Symposium*, 409–12.

<sup>122</sup> SA LB5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

<sup>123</sup> SA 5/3/23 Steward's Account 1377-1378.

Guild also started to amass property in the town, by using surplus funds, and also through bequests from Guild members. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the Guild owned 112 rent-charges, 38 tenements and 14 shops, and a fulling mill at Linney, which was on the River Teme, below Ludlow castle.<sup>124</sup> By 1439, the Guild owned 167 rent-charges, 96 tenements, 30 shops and 18 other properties in the town.<sup>125</sup> It was the premier landowner in Ludlow which gave it a leading role in the political economy of the town.

From the mid fifteenth century, but particularly from the late fifteenth century, the records of the Palmers' Guild demonstrate a changed focus for the Guild. It expanded its membership from Ludlow to all parts of the county. Recruits came from nearby Leominster but also from large towns such as Chester, Coventry, London and Salisbury, to name a few.<sup>126</sup> In the membership registers of 1406-8, over 85 percent of names of people came from Ludlow.<sup>127</sup> A century later, in the records for 1505-6, the percentages were reversed. Only 1 percent of the names of people in the membership registers came from Ludlow.<sup>128</sup>

The economic reconstruction after the Glyndŵr revolt gave Ludlow merchants, who administered the Palmers' Guild, a chance to reengage with the towns of the Welsh Marches. In 1446, the guild steward, Richard Ryall, set out on two journeys, each of three weeks, to the south-west of Ludlow and Bristol. The second steward,

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<sup>124</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 135–36.

<sup>125</sup> Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow*, xvi.

<sup>126</sup> See: SA LB 5/3/2-10 Steward's Riding Books 1497-8 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>127</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8 (119 from 140 names).

<sup>128</sup> In SA LB5/1/3 Register of Admissions 1505-6, SA LB5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6 there were 357 names. There were only four people who listed their home as Ludlow.

Richard Knighton, made six journeys in 1446. He visited Shropshire and northern Wales four times and travelled twice to London.<sup>129</sup> The membership records slowly filled with members from outside Ludlow. The Guild stewards connected people in the larger towns, such as Welshpool, Machynlleth and Oswestry with Ludlow. They also recruited people who lived in the towns and villages which lay between Ludlow, and these Marcher towns. The relationship between people who lived in this large region and the Palmer's Guild will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Ludlow and its Guild looked east, but it also looked west. It could do both as it had longstanding social and economic connections with people from these regions. It was a prosperous market town, and it was not under the thrall of monastic lords or under tight seigneurial control. The bonds of trust which underlay medieval business, had not been fatally severed by the Glyndŵr rebellion. After all there had not been a Welsh attack on Ludlow itself, at this troubled time.

## **Conclusion**

The Central and North Welsh Marches was a fragmented, politically fragile land. The lordships which straddled the border with England, dominated the political landscape for over 450 years, from 1080 to 1536. However, these lordships were not fixed entities with defined borders. The territory was continually fought over by Marcher families, the crown, and Welsh Princes, to gain power and economic advantage. The building of castles by these great Marcher families, such as the Mortimers, de Braose and the Fitzalans, symbolised the military conquest over the Welsh population. These

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<sup>129</sup> Richard Ryall's circuit took 51 days while Richard Knighton took 89 days in total. SA LB 5/3/28 Steward's Account 1446-7.

castles were also the centre of Lordship administration, which affected the lives of thousands of people in the Marcher towns and villages.

The economy of the Welsh Marches was primarily based on the buying and selling of wool, and the manufacture and trading of cloth. The landscape encouraged pastoral agriculture with the upland regions and lush valleys supplying ideal pasturage for sheep as well as cattle. In the challenging physical environment of the Welsh Marches, the Guild stewards helped to bridge the gap between disparate wool growers or cloth workers and clothiers, drapers and merchants who lived in the English borderland towns. Even though the region was fragmented, there was an economy which functioned, except in times of extreme stress. The Owain Glyndŵr rebellion in the early fifteenth century was one of these stress points where serious political breakdown led to economic dislocation and intercultural tension between the Welsh and English. Although the bonds between Welsh and English were severely tested by this rebellion, they were never destroyed. In the later reconstruction of the Welsh Marches, these relationships were strengthened where one might expect them to falter.

Monasteries and parish churches were the key religious institutions in the Central and North Welsh Marches, from the Norman period through to the mid fifteenth century. Although the parish church was central to religious belief, clerics were unable to keep discipline in many churches in the region. Clerical behaviour was also found wanting by some parishioners. The authority of the Bishop often did not reach the small isolated parish churches of Central and North Welsh Marches. Religious institutions were also not exempt from the devastation caused by the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion. One religious institution, which was there at the beginning, did not



survive intact at the end. The monasteries, which began as extensions of Welsh princes and Marcher Lord authority, were unable to maintain their economic and religious role in the altered landscape of the fifteenth century. Their buildings were either attacked by Owain Glyndŵr or by the forces of Henry IV. However, it was changes in religious expression which saw the declining influence of these monastic institutions, in the valleys and towns of the March.

New trends of expressing individual piety, which had spread across England in the early fifteenth century, caught the imagination of the people who lived in the lordships to the west of Ludlow. Townsfolk donated spare money to their parish church for new altars, chapels, and towers. Villagers in smaller parishes used their skills to carve wooden screens and lofts to house the images of saints, and the rood. Although the Palmers' Guild had functioned as a town guild since the late thirteenth century, the Guild warden saw an opportunity to capitalise on this new wave of religious fervour. The next three chapters will explore this transformation.

## Chapter 3: Ludlow: The Palmers' Guild in the Town

In the early medieval period Ludlow was a key town on the edge of England, with a strongly fortified castle and a steady economy. In the early 1400s, Henry IV used Ludlow castle as a base to subdue the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion in the southern lordships. By the mid fifteenth century, the strong connection with the ruling house of York gave Ludlow freedom from tolls and taxes and other privileges. In response to this steady royal patronage, by the early sixteenth century the town of Ludlow was flourishing. The wealth could be seen in the displays of piety in the parish church, the newly built almshouses in College Street, and the finely carved roof trusses and wall panels of the Guildhall. The highly decorated residences in Drapers' Row framed the busy market square where markets and fairs drew in traders from the surrounding region. However, despite all this wealth and industry, which had been built up over two hundred years due to extensive trade networks and royal connections, there was something amiss. Ludlow residents were no longer flocking to join their religious guild. Ludlow membership of the Palmers' Guild had declined since the late fifteenth century. Possible factors that led to this phenomenon, and potential explanations are the focus of this chapter.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section outlines the historiographical context of Ludlow and the Palmers' Guild. In the second and third parts, I chart the role of the Palmers' Guild in urban politics and the political economy of Ludlow during the turbulent fifteenth century. They examine how an urban elite dominated the political landscape, and how men from a handful of families shaped the direction of the town government and the Palmers' Guild. The fourth section analyses

the relationship between the Palmers' Guild and other religious institutions in Ludlow. The final section exploits the rich demographic information held in the Guild records to track the changing membership profile from 1400 to 1515. In 1400, most members were living. By 1508, many members were entered as 'souls'. I will outline the possible causes behind this transformation, and the reaction of Guild officials to this alarming drop in living members.

### **Historiographical Context**

Although earlier scholars have written about the Palmers' Guild in late medieval Ludlow, none have outlined the deterioration in the Ludlow membership in the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century. As we saw in Chapter 1, A.T. Gaydon compiled one of the first surveys of the Palmers' Guild, which was published in volume two of the *Victorian County History* (VCH) for Shropshire in 1973. He outlined the Guild's property acquisitions, membership structure and religious services. However, Gaydon did not include any detail about the number of Ludlow Guild members.<sup>1</sup> In 1991, Michael Faraday published a general history of Ludlow, one chapter of which was devoted to the Palmers' Guild. He outlined the connections between the Ludlow Guild, the parish church, and the ruling elite of Ludlow, but he did not calculate the number of Ludlow members.<sup>2</sup> More recently, the authors of a new history of St Laurence's parish church did not mention the characteristics of Ludlow members in relation to the broader Guild membership. They only stated that Ludlow members comprised a quarter of the total number of recruits in the early sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 134–40.

<sup>2</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 77–95.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd, Clark, and Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199-2009*, 55.

If Ludlow historians had explored the information in the Guild riding books, instead of just the membership registers, they would have discovered that there was a significant decline in the number of recruits from Ludlow. For example, there are 105 names of people from Ludlow in the registers for 1485-9 and 38 in the registers for 1505-9, which shows a decline of 63 percent.<sup>4</sup> The evidence for a sharp decline is even more compelling in the Guild riding books for 1502-8. Although there are 44 names of recruits in the riding books for 1502-3, the number falls to 13 in the riding book of 1505-6 and only three in 1507-8, which is a decline of 94 percent.<sup>5</sup> By comparison, there are 17 names of recruits from Ludlow's hinterland in the 1501-2 riding book, and 63 in 1507-8.<sup>6</sup> The recruitment of Guild members actually increased in the hinterland towns over this time period. A similar pattern occurred in the Central and North Welsh Marches and many English towns in the early sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The omission by these historians to include information from the riding books, has meant that the current scholarship on the role of the Palmers' Guild in Ludlow is incomplete.

This chapter will address this historiographical lacuna by drawing upon information in both the membership registers and riding books, to give an accurate representation of Guild membership in the town of Ludlow between 1400 and 1515.

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<sup>4</sup> SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>5</sup> SA LB 5/3/4-10 Steward's Riding Books 1502-3 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>6</sup> SA LB 5/3/3,9,10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2, 1507-8 and 1515-16.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5 for a discussion of the membership of Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches.

## The Political Landscape

The structure, composition and character of town government has been a key focus of many urban historians since the late nineteenth century. There has been an almost universal acceptance that most towns in the late medieval period were controlled by urban oligarchies, which were mostly comprised from members of the merchant class.<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Thrupp's mid twentieth-century analysis of the late medieval London merchant class, argues that although the families from the merchant class were constantly changing, the merchant class itself maintained a stranglehold on political power and influence in the city.<sup>9</sup> This approach has been tested by scholars from the 1970s onwards, such as Susan Reynolds, who asserts that the debate on urban oligarchies has stymied research on how urban communities were constructed, and how they were often in conflict.<sup>10</sup> A fresh approach, espoused by Christian Liddy in 2017, changes the emphasis from 'oligarchies' to 'urban citizenship'. Urban power struggles were deeper than feuding between leading families. He asserts that urban political culture was multidimensional and often involved conflict and discord between urban elites, and the majority or 'citizens' who were outside this group. The dominance of urban space by one group, for example religious bodies, could also affect urban politics.<sup>11</sup> Liddy based his research on the leading cities of the late

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<sup>8</sup> Oligarchy has been defined as a system of government involving rule by the few. See Christian Liddy, *Contesting the City: The Politics of Citizenship in English Towns, 1250-1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4; See also: Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Fourteenth Century', *Mediaeval Studies* 46 (1984): 355–84; David Gary Shaw, 'Social Networks and the Foundations of Oligarchy in Medieval Towns', *Urban History* 32, no. 2 (2005): 200–222.

<sup>9</sup> Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London: 1300-1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

<sup>10</sup> Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> Liddy, *Contesting the City: The Politics of Citizenship in English Towns, 1250-1530*, 16.

medieval period – York, Coventry, Bristol, Norwich, and London. Although Ludlow was a far smaller town with a less differentiated urban political hierarchy than these five towns and cities, Liddy’s new perspective offers the opportunity to reassess the role of Ludlow’s urban elite in the Corporation of Ludlow and the Palmers’ Guild.

The political landscape of Ludlow was influenced by its position at the edge of the Marcher lordships and its long connection to the crown. In Chapter 2, we explored the origins of the borough of Ludlow, and argued that the Mortimers, who were lords of Ludlow from 1287-1425, maintained Ludlow’s relative freedom from tolls and external taxes.<sup>12</sup> A corporate body of burgesses – ‘The Twelve and Twenty-five’ was in place by the fourteenth century, although the exact date when it was formed is unknown. The burgesses supported the Yorkist cause in the Wars of the Roses. As recognition of this support, the heir to the Mortimer inheritance and newly crowned king, Edward IV, increased the power of the burgesses to manage their town. His charters of 1461 and 1478 altered the relationship between the town and the royal courts. They also changed the system by which the town was taxed and bestowed extra privileges on the burgesses. It was the burgesses who handled the election of two bailiffs and a recorder, who jointly acted as justices of the peace in the borough.<sup>13</sup> The sheriff’s duties passed to the coroner, who was also elected by the burgesses. The grant of alnage to the borough (a tax on cloth manufacture) meant the Corporation of Ludlow had the power to appoint an alnager to manage the levy, rather than be part of the county system. The borough could also dye cloth in a similar manner to Bristol.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 28.

<sup>13</sup> The two bailiffs, who were the chief officials of the lord, collected burgage rents, tolls, market fees, and profits from the mill.

<sup>14</sup> Summarised from: Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 25–29.

The intensification of oligarchic power over the fifteenth and early sixteenth century was a feature of the political landscape of Ludlow. The process for electing the bailiffs was invested into the hands of the 'Twelve'.<sup>15</sup> The high bailiff was chosen by the 'Twenty-Five' from the ranks of the 'Twelve', and the low bailiff was selected by the 'Twelve' from the members of the 'Twenty-Five'. However, the 'Twelve' could co-opt members from the 'Twenty-Five' and so could, in effect, control both nominations for bailiff. The men of the 'Twelve' also oversaw the election of the coroner, recorder and alnager. All the Palmers' Guild wardens from 1443 to 1547 served at least three terms as high bailiff before moving to the Palmers' Guild (see Appendix 1). It thus appears from the surviving sources, that political power was concentrated in the hands of the few.

The Guild and Borough records demonstrate that the office of warden of the Palmers' Guild was at the top of the political hierarchy. The first step on the ladder of public offices (*cursus honorum*) was the office of churchwarden, followed by the chamberlain, low bailiff, alnager, high bailiff, and coroner.<sup>16</sup> A few men, who had served in these roles, became wardens of the Palmers' Guild. This position was always attained after serving as a bailiff or as one of the other public offices. For example, all of the last four wardens – Walter Morton, Richard Downe, Walter Rogers, and William Langford – served as bailiffs. The role of warden was their last role as all of these men died within two years of relinquishing their wardenship of the Guild (see Appendix 1). However, Guild stewards often moved between their Guild role and the offices of bailiff, coroner or alnager. For example, John Cheyny, a mercer, was Ludlow's bailiff in

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<sup>15</sup> Faraday, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Faraday, 187.

1498, 1501 and 1508, in addition to his role as Guild steward, in 1503 (see Appendix 2). This intermeshing of roles strongly suggests that the Palmers' Guild was an integral component of the urban political landscape. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the Guild was, *ipso facto*, the governing body of Ludlow.<sup>17</sup>

The office of steward and warden were key roles in the administration of the Palmers' Guild. The original ordinances of the Guild in 1389, stated that 'five or seven men of the Guild shall, every year, choose a rector (warden) and stewards of the guild, who shall manage its affairs'.<sup>18</sup> However, by the late fifteenth century, the wardens of the Palmers' Guild served for many years, which was contrary to these early ordinances. From the 1470s to the 1530s, most wardens carried out their duties for at least 15 years. Two wardens, Walter Morton, a clothier (1494-1509), and Richard Downe, a weaver (1509-31), oversaw the stewards' annual journeys, which are listed in the riding books of 1505-8 and 1515-16.<sup>19</sup> These decades also correspond to an era of membership expansion, when stewards travelled to many towns and villages in the Central and North Welsh Marches, southern England and the counties to the east of Ludlow. The long tenure by these two men suggests that there was little animosity towards these wardens from other leading families of Ludlow.

The role of steward was an important position within the hierarchy of the Palmers' Guild. Two stewards collected rents, tallied accounts, and organised the annual Guild feast. They were also responsible for negotiating contracts to repair Guild

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<sup>17</sup> For example, The Gild of St George formally integrated with the city government of Norwich in the mid fifteenth century McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', 69.

<sup>18</sup> Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More than One Hundred Early English Gilds* (London: Early English Text Society, 1870), 195.

<sup>19</sup> LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8, and 1515-16



property. Their main function, however, was to collect the membership fees from members in Ludlow and the wider countryside. These fees were used to buy property and repair the Guild's rental stock. The rents from Guild property paid the salaries of the chaplains, and other expenses.<sup>20</sup>

Men who were elected as wardens or stewards of the Guild were firmly entrenched in the wool and cloth trade. Prior to 1400, wardens were drawn from the clerical classes, but increasingly throughout the fifteenth century their occupations were integral to the manufacture and trade of wool and cloth. The lists of Guild wardens for 1401 to 1551, although incomplete, show that out of 10 wardens there were four drapers, two merchants, a clothier, and a weaver. There were no wardens who worked outside the cloth trade (see Appendix 1). Although not every year is complete, there were 37 names of stewards in the Guild records for 1406 to 1551, and 22 of these are listed with occupations. There are 12 separate occupations, the most common of which are those related to the wool or cloth trade – clothiers, drapers, weavers, and mercers. Only three stewards were employed in livelihoods which were outside the wool and cloth trade (see Appendix 2). There were many opportunities for Guild stewards to combine their official duties with their occupations. The stewards toured the countryside for many weeks of the year, in order to recruit members. It will be argued in later chapters that they built up networks of wool growers and cloth traders which brought rich rewards to both the Palmers' Guild and potentially also to themselves. It is no surprise, therefore, that the office of steward was highly regarded and that it was generally restricted to a four-year term of office.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 139.

<sup>21</sup> Gaydon, 135.

A good number of the leading families of Ludlow were connected by marriage. These families dominated the Guild and town offices, particularly from the 1490s to 1551. Richard Lane, clothier, and steward from 1497 to 1500, was related to the Dodmore, Langford and Sherman families.<sup>22</sup> Richard bequeathed some of his land in Ludlow to Richard Dodmore of London, his brother in law. Richard Dodmore's father, John Dodmore MP, had been a draper, bailiff, steward, and warden of the guild, before his death in 1487. Richard's wife, Alice, bequeathed her tenements in Ludlow to her sister Margaret, who had married William Langford. William held high offices in town and Guild between 1514 and 1551. Alice also bequeathed property to her cousin, Geoffrey Sherman. Geoffrey's father, Richard Sherman, had been warden for 22 years from 1472-94. Finally, Walter Rogers' daughter, Agnes, married Richard, son of William Langford. Rogers was warden from 1535-46 (see Appendices 1 and 2). Walter's other daughter, Catherine, married Edmund Sherman, who was related to Richard Sherman, warden of the Guild.<sup>23</sup> In a small town such as Ludlow, these four families wielded significant political power through their close association with the Palmers' Guild.

A number of Ludlow families, who gained a foothold in the Guild, used its offices as a vehicle for their own advancement but also for the town of Ludlow more broadly. For example, three generations of the Parys family, who were Ludlow cloth merchants, held Guild offices from 1383 to 1449. John Parys was a Guild steward in 1383, his son William served as warden from 1401-2 and from 1422-40, and his

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<sup>22</sup> SA OAK/20/14/6/80 Will of Richard Dodmore, Draper of Ludlow, 31 July 1487. HRO HD4/1/118, 64. Will of Richard Lane, 2 November 1525. TNA PROB 11/27/326 Will of Alice Lane, 27 June 1538 (proved 25 September 1538).

<sup>23</sup> HRO HD4/1/129, 109. Will of Walter Rogers, Mercer and Warden of the Palmers' Guild 4 May 1546 (proved 1546), and HRO HD4/1/130, 92. Will of Margaret Rogers, widow and late wife to Walter Rogers, Warden of the Palmers' Guild, 14 September 1547 (proved 1547).

grandson, John, was warden from 1443 to 1449 (see Appendix 1). John Parys (the elder), his wife Agnes, and his parents, Hugh, and Edith, were also members of Coventry's prestigious Trinity Guild.<sup>24</sup> Hugh, Edith and John Parys' membership of Coventry's Trinity Guild suggest that they travelled to Coventry to meet with Guild members, presumably to build their cloth business. It is unknown if John Parys (the Elder) journeyed to towns like Coventry as part of a membership drive. All that we do know is that there were 42 names of people from Coventry, in the membership registers of 1505-9, 18 of whom were drapers, clothiers, or mercers.<sup>25</sup> The Parys family prospered in part by exploiting their membership of the Palmers' Guild. The inclusion of Coventry on all the steward's itineraries shows that the Guild and the town of Ludlow also benefited from these personal connections with Coventry merchants.

An outline of key Ludlow institutions would not be complete without including a brief mention of the Council of the Marches, which was based in Ludlow from the late fifteenth century onwards. Although the Council was not part of the borough system, it was an important representation of the close relationship between Ludlow, the house of York and after 1485, with Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch. As we saw in chapter 2, the Prince's Council was set up in 1472 by Edward IV. By 1476 it had been given the power to try cases in the border shires (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Worcestershire), the Marches which adjoined those shires, and the Principality of Wales. This was in response to the belief that the Marcher lands were unruly and wild. For example, in 1474, Hereford officials were unwilling to indict

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<sup>24</sup> Mary Dormer Harris, *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary St John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry* (London: Dugdale Society, 1935), 124.

<sup>25</sup> SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

persons from the lands to the west 'for drede of murdyng and to be myscheved in their own houses'.<sup>26</sup> These early assemblies led to Prince Arthur's council in 1493 and then to Princess Mary's in 1525. Ludlow was the one constant in this journey, and therefore it prospered accordingly.

This section has outlined the political landscape of Ludlow and the role of the Palmers' Guild within this environment. All evidence points to an entrenched oligarchy, where men rotated through the influential positions of bailiff, chamberlain, coroner and alnager as well as Guild steward. However, the coveted prize was the position of warden of the Palmers' Guild. Few men achieved this rank, and those that did held on to this powerful role for many years, despite the fact it was contrary to the original ordinances. Many more men were stewards of the Guild, which was a steppingstone to the wardenship of the Guild or to town offices such as high bailiff or coroner, which were all influential positions in the town hierarchy. Most of the men came from a group of leading families that consistently provided candidates for these offices over many years. It has been noted by Christian Liddy and Jelle Haemers that 'from the 1470s to the early sixteenth century, the city of York was in an almost constant state of turmoil'.<sup>27</sup> There is no evidence of this level of social unrest or feuding between these families in Ludlow at this time, which suggests that the town benefited from a stable urban political landscape. The next section will examine the political economy of Ludlow, and the role of the Palmers' Guild in increasing the wealth of Ludlow.

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<sup>26</sup> John Strachey, ed., *Rotuli Parliamentorum, Ut et Petitiones, et Placita in Parlamento: 1472-1503*, trans. Richard Blyke, vol. 6 (London: Parliament of Great Britain, 1767), 160.

<sup>27</sup> Christian Liddy and Jelle Haemers, 'Popular Politics in the Late Medieval City: York and Bruges', *English Historical Review* CXXVIII, no. 553 (2013): 777.

## Political Economy

Ludlow weathered the economic storms wrought by the Glyndŵr rebellion in the early fifteenth century better than most towns in the lordships of the March. However, economic growth was affected by the reduced trade with the market towns to the west of Ludlow, which were in ruins. There are few surviving sources which can assist us with understanding the economy of Ludlow at this time. One source is the income from market tolls which suggest that the economy was subdued, but not in crisis. For example, in 1368, the borough received an income of £13 from weekly markets and the annual St Lawrence fair (9-11 August), while in 1429, the amount was £10.<sup>28</sup> Information about the economic conditions in Ludlow are far clearer for the mid fifteenth century. The decade between 1459 and 1469 were difficult years for Ludlow. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the ruling elite supported the house of York during the Wars of the Roses. In 1459, the battle of Ludford Bridge, on the edge of Ludlow, ended with the sacking of Ludlow by the Lancastrians and the flight of Richard of York and his entourage to Ireland.<sup>29</sup> The destruction of parts of Ludlow impacted on the fortunes of the Palmers' Guild. Income from Guild properties in Ludlow fell from £85 in 1439 to £58 in 1462, and only recovered slightly to an annual income of £78 by 1472.<sup>30</sup> By this time, it is evident that the town's fortunes had turned a corner, as financial

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<sup>28</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 115.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Wright, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch of Ludlow Castle and of the Church of Saint Lawrence, Ludlow*, 2nd ed. (Ludlow: Woolley, 1856), 57.

<sup>30</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 138.

support for the construction of a new church tower dominated the churchwardens' accounts from 1469 to 1471.<sup>31</sup>

The main economic focus in the fifteenth century was the manufacturing and trading of cloth, which had evolved as the demand for wool fell in the late fourteenth century. Due to the smooth transition from wool to cloth, Ludlow's economy did not contract.<sup>32</sup> The following table, which has been drawn from Michael Faraday's work on the economy of Ludlow (Figure 8), outlines the percentage of people who were involved in the wool and cloth related occupations in Ludlow.<sup>33</sup> Rearing sheep for wool, and spinning of wool, took place outside Ludlow. This practice meant that Ludlow merchants needed to nurture relationships with people who lived in sheep rearing areas, such as Leominster Ore, which lay to the south.

In Ludlow, the weavers were the largest occupational group in the fifteenth century. They comprised 46 percent of Ludlow cloth occupations. They often combined their work with selling cloth. Fullers and dyers, who were important in the manufacture of finished cloth, made up 41 percent of the total number who worked in cloth related occupations. Clothiers and drapers represented only 13 percent of the cloth trade occupations in the fifteenth century. The sixteenth-century Guild records show an increasing number of names of drapers and clothiers who filled the posts of steward or warden. These included Walter Morton and Richard Lane, who were both clothiers, and two drapers – John Browne and William Langford (see Appendix 2).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Llewellyn Jones, trans., 'Churchwardens' Accounts of the Town of Ludlow', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, no. 2nd series Vol. 1 (1889): 235–84. See below for more detail.

<sup>32</sup> Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Summarised from Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 119–21.

<sup>34</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

The rise in the number of clothiers and drapers indicates that the cloth industry had matured, and Ludlow now provided a sophisticated system of manufacturing and selling cloth.

The Palmers' Guild was the only religious guild in Ludlow, but it shared the town with a handful of craft guilds. The existence of these guilds demonstrates that Ludlow was economically diverse and supported the manufacture of goods and services which were not wholly dependent on the use of wool. Twelve craft guilds are listed in the 1469 Churchwardens' accounts for St Laurence's. They are the shoemakers, weavers, merchants, corvesers, drapers, tailors, smiths, dyers, barbers, bakers and butchers, glovers, and skimmers.<sup>35</sup> Eight of these crafts donated 6s. 8d. each to the rebuilding of St Laurence's, which suggests that they had an active interest in the refurbishment of the parish church. It may be the case that each guild lit a candle at a particular altar which was dedicated to their craft.<sup>36</sup> According to the will of Thomas Cooke, in 1512, a number of crafts had merged, as he left 12d. to each of the ten crafts of Ludlow.<sup>37</sup> It must have been the case that artisans and merchants who were members of the Palmers' Guild were also were members of their own craft guilds. However, apart from Thomas Cooke's will, there is only one known bequest to a craft guild, in 1448.<sup>38</sup> These craft guilds do not appear to have any real power in the town, unlike other guilds in larger towns, such as Coventry and York.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jones, 'Churchwardens' Accounts of the Town of Ludlow', 238.

<sup>36</sup> Jones, 223.

<sup>37</sup> TNA PROB 11/17/347 Will of Thomas Cooke of Ludlow, Esquire, 1513 (proved 20 April 1513).

<sup>38</sup> TNA PROB 11/1/151 Will of Walter Codur, 5 October 1448 (proved 26 November 1448).

<sup>39</sup> Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 107–26.

By the late fifteenth century, the Palmers' Guild was a significant economic player in Ludlow. Its position in the political hierarchy intermeshed with its economic power. The Guild's role in the economy of Ludlow took many forms. First and foremost, the Guild owned property in Ludlow, which supplied a steady rental income to the Guild. People often joined the Guild for the religious services it offered. They bequeathed property to the Guild in return for these services, so the Guild profited from their piety.<sup>40</sup> The Guild employed craftsmen who repaired these properties. Guild stewards also purchased building materials and other items for the upkeep of its rental stock, as well as for their religious buildings. Second, their ownership of a fulling mill meant they had a stake in the town's cloth manufacture. Finally, the Guild's feasts and liturgical rituals needed investment in consumables such as candles, tapers, food, and wine.

First, the Palmers' Guild owned a large swathe of Ludlow and was the largest owner of property by the early sixteenth century. It had increased its rental stock particularly in the early sixteenth century, where rents bought in £80 a year. By 1546 the figure was £122, and £140 by 1550. At the dissolution of the Guild in 1551, the Guild owned 152 tenements, 14 shops, and 75 miscellaneous properties in the town, as well as the income from 63 rent charges.<sup>41</sup> The streets which radiated out from the castle held many tenements owned by the Guild. The two main thoroughfares were Mill Street and Broad Street (see Figure 9). Mill Street housed the Guildhall, the centre for Guild business since 1283. By the 1480s, the Guild owned 16 out of 30 properties

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<sup>40</sup> Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 135.

<sup>41</sup> TNA E 318/31/1766. Grant of the Properties of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow 5 Edward VI (1551). Rent charges or sock rents were granted in perpetuity see Martin Edward Speight and David Lloyd, *Ludlow Houses and Their Residents* (Ludlow: Ludlow Historical Research Group, 1978), 2.



on Mill Street. It also owned and leased out 10 of 64 burgages on Broad Street. St John's Hospital owned 14 burgages on this street, which meant that one third of a main thoroughfare of Ludlow was under the influence of two religious foundations. It is perhaps not surprising that Guild officials held most of the other burgages in Broad Street. In the records of 1482, the family of John Griffiths owned 9, 13, 15 and 67. Richard Sherman, held numbers 2 to 8, John Morton, father of Walter (warden from 1494-1509), owned numbers 23 and 38, and numbers 31 and 33 were held by the Hoke family.<sup>42</sup> Unlike a monastic institution, which might have its own discrete territory within a town's walls, the Guild infiltrated all corners of the town.

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<sup>42</sup> These are present day house numbers. See: David Lloyd, *Broad Street: It's Houses and Residences Through Eight Centuries* (Ludlow: Ludlow Historical Research Group, 1979), 17. John Hoke, a tailor, was a Guild steward in 1503 (see Appendix 2).

**Figure 8: Cloth Trade Occupations in Fifteenth-Century Ludlow**

Occupation	Role	Place
<b>Wool grower and spinners</b>	Collected, beat and washed raw wool to produce washed wool. Combed wool for spinning usually by women	Outside Ludlow.  Spinning – ‘put out’ by clothiers to nearby villages
<b>Weaver - 46% of Ludlow cloth trade occupations</b>	Initially weavers might also be clothiers but by the sixteenth century, clothiers had taken the role of selling the cloth.	Ludlow based
<b>Fuller - 20% of Ludlow cloth trade occupations</b>	Rewashed and ‘fulled’, treading in a trough or beaten with mill-driven hammers; Cloth was then rewashed, dried and teased with teazels to raise a nap finished by ‘shearmen’	Ludlow based  Also known as ‘walkers’ who trod or walked the cloth in tubs
<b>Dyer - 21% of Ludlow cloth trade occupations</b>	Cloth placed on tenterhooks before dyeing; Ludlow cloth dyed in town; Dyers needed the greatest capital – e.g. for dye vats and dyes.	Ludlow based
<b>Clothiers and drapers - 13% of Ludlow cloth trade</b>	Clothier – mainly production of cloth. Drapers – mainly dealers in cloth Dominant in the sixteenth century, employed the lesser trades.	Ludlow based  Both controlled manufacture in Ludlow and bought in cloth from outside.

The dominance of urban space by the Palmers’ Guild was not confined to buying and leasing tenements. It also included obtaining shops in Shoemakers’ Row, Butchers’ Row, and other small streets clustered around the Market. There are over 1,400 property deeds and leases which have survived for Ludlow.<sup>43</sup> It is beyond the scope of this research to examine this corpus of material in detail. However, the deeds for Draper’s Row, for example, are representative of the Guild’s presence in the commercial sector of the town. Drapers’ Row extended from the corner of Broad Street to the Bull ring (see Figure 9). In 1392, the Guild owned four shops, which ‘lay

<sup>43</sup> SA LB 5/2/1-1462 Deeds of the Palmers’ Gild are calendared in Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers’ Gild of Ludlow*.

together near the conduit'.<sup>44</sup> A lease from 1519, confirms that these shops lay at the corner of Drapers' Row and Broad Street. The Guild also owned the adjoining two tenements in Broad Street.<sup>45</sup>

Guild officials benefited from these retail acquisitions. In 1502, the Guild warden granted a 21-year lease of a messuage and three adjacent shops to Richard Bragott, a weaver.<sup>46</sup> This agreement shows that Richard was weaving and selling cloth in Drapers' Row just before his term as Guild steward in 1505 (see Appendix 2). Although there is no absolute proof, it is reasonable to assume that he may have combined his Guild work with his own interests, when he visited the towns of the Central and North Welsh Marches. He would have had ample opportunity to meet with wool growers or cloth manufacturers in these regions and negotiate contracts to support his growing business in the town of Ludlow. The high number of Guild properties in the streets near the market, for over 200 years, demonstrates its vital role in the economy of Ludlow.

Second, the Palmers' Guild owned a fulling mill at Ludford, on the river Teme, which gave the Guild a stake in the cloth industry.<sup>47</sup> Although cloth manufacture was not the only industry in Ludlow, it was the most important. Cloth-making needed fulling mills, which were used in the last stage of the process when the wool was dressed into cloth.<sup>48</sup> Guild deeds show that the mill at Ludford was leased in 1514 for

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<sup>44</sup> SA LB 5/2/91 Deed of Hugh Ferrour, chaplain 16 Richard II (20 September 1392).

<sup>45</sup> SA LB 5/2/877 Farm let between Richard Downe, warden of the Palmers' Guild of Our Lady and St John the Evangelist and Williams Parsons and Kateryn his wife, 10 Henry VIII (March 1519).

<sup>46</sup> SA LB 5/2/272 Deed between Walter Morton, Warden of the Palmers' Guild and Richard Bragott, Weaver, 18 Henry VIII (20 December 1502).

<sup>47</sup> See Figure 9, which shows the location of Ludford.

<sup>48</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 108–10.

21 years, for an annual rent of 16s. 8d.<sup>49</sup> It is difficult to estimate the value of this mill compared to other fulling mills. However, in the early fifteenth century, the Earl of March's fulling mills at Knighton were leased at 13s. 4d. and the Pembridge mill raised 23s. 4d. per annum.<sup>50</sup> There were three other mills in Ludlow – at Corve Street, the Linney, and Broad Street.<sup>51</sup> If all were as profitable as the Guild's fulling mill, it would indicate that Ludlow was one of the major centres for the fulling of cloth in the immediate region. These fulling mills supplied work for fullers, walkers, and dyers. This water powered industry also supported the drapers, mercers and merchants who traded cloth in Ludlow markets and negotiated contracts for wool in Ludlow's hinterland and further afield. Although ostensibly the foremost role of a religious guild was to provide chaplains to say prayers for members, it is clear that the Palmers' Guild operated outside this remit, as it was firmly entrenched in the main economy of the town.

Finally, the Palmers' Guild purchased items for its religious activities as well as for its annual feast at Pentecost, which attracted members from Ludlow and nearby towns. For example, Figure 10 outlines the accounts for the annual feast for the year 1427-8. It is not known who supplied the wheat and malt, but the large amounts listed in the accounts suggest that these goods were transported from nearby farms. The itemisation of cartage for a hogshead of wine from Gloucester to Ludlow, via Bewdley,

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<sup>49</sup> SA LB5/2/1185 Indenture between Richard Downe, Warden of the Palmers' Guild and William Deducott 'one walkmyll in Ludford ...for 21 years paying to us yearly 16s. 8d. He shall repair at his own costs and provide timber, lathing nails, tiles for roofing of the mill 6 Henry VIII (20 August 1514).

<sup>50</sup> Niall O'Brien, 'Fulling Mills in the Early Fifteenth Century According to the Inquisitions Post Mortem', *Medieval News* (blog), 2016, [http://celtic2realms-medievalnews.blogspot.com.au/2016/11/fulling-mills-in-early-fifteenth\\_38.html](http://celtic2realms-medievalnews.blogspot.com.au/2016/11/fulling-mills-in-early-fifteenth_38.html), accessed 4 March 2017.

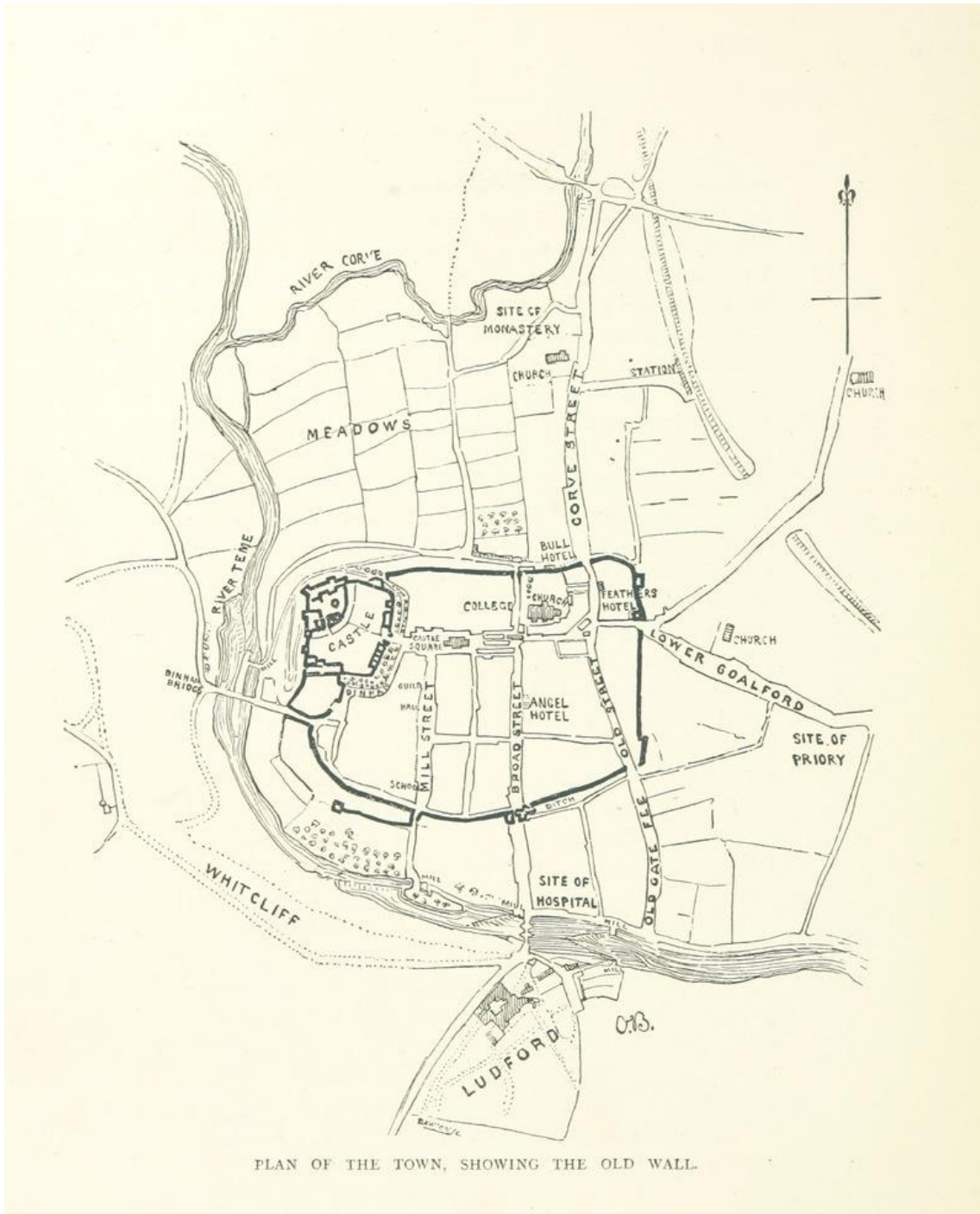
<sup>51</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 108–10.

shows that it was a valuable, and possibly rare purchase. It was sponsored by William Moyle who was a Ludlow based merchant, and high bailiff in 1427.<sup>52</sup> It is unknown whether Moyle paid for the wine out of his own pocket, or with money to which he had access to in his role as bailiff. Unfortunately, there are no surviving sources to throw light on this, but Moyle's generous donation indicates he was an important patron of the Guild. The accounts for 1427-8 also show smaller items, such as salt, spices, bowls and 'kettle hire', which could have been purchased from Ludlow townsfolk. These purchases would have supported the livelihoods of many inhabitants of Ludlow and people who lived in Ludlow's hinterland.

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<sup>52</sup> Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, 45.

Figure 9: Plan of Ludlow: 1906 <sup>53</sup>



<sup>53</sup> Oliver Baker, *Ludlow Town and Neighbourhood: A Series of Sketches of Its Scenery, Antiquities, Geology*, 3rd ed. (Ludlow: G. Woolley, 1906), 47.

The annual feast of the Guild was an important date in the town's calendar. Although the number of members who attended the feast is unknown, a smaller religious guild, the Guild of the Holy Cross in Stratford-upon-Avon, hosted an average of 145 members at its annual feasts from 1407-16, at a cost of six pounds.<sup>54</sup> The Palmers' Guild accounts for 1505 to 1509, although missing some details, indicate that the annual cost of the Pentecost feast was close to seven pounds.<sup>55</sup> Although we cannot be sure of the true state of affairs, as medieval accounting is often unreliable, it may well be the case that the Ludlow Guild attracted greater numbers than the Stratford Guild. Alternatively, it could mean that the supplies for the feast were cheaper to source from the many villages in the hinterland of Stratford-upon-Avon, than Ludlow. Stratford's proximity to river transport could also have been a factor. Although we do not have evidence of the attendance figures, the securing of fuel, wine, cheese, and other food stuffs as well as cartage of wheat and malt, meant the stewards engaged directly with the local economy of Ludlow. They may have also drawn on their networks of Guild members who lived in the hinterland, to supply food and services for the annual feast.

Evidence from Guild records indicate that the Palmers' Guild was enmeshed in the economy of Ludlow. There was a direct link with the main industry of the town – cloth manufacture, through its fulling mill and its properties, which were leased to drapers and clothiers. Most of the wardens and stewards were working in the cloth trades and supported the economy of Ludlow through their businesses, their shops in

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<sup>54</sup> Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: An Analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c.1400-1551', 133.

<sup>55</sup> Table of Gild Finances in Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, xxi.

the market square, and their merchant networks from outside of Ludlow. Although we are not certain how many of the 500 burgages were in use in the mid sixteenth century, the Guild owned over 150 tenements.<sup>56</sup> There were also many shops on the Guild renter's list, which demonstrates that the Guild was able to influence the livelihoods of many shopkeepers, drapers, weavers or corvesers.

The next section will examine the religious functions of the Palmers' Guild and its role in parish life in late medieval Ludlow.

**Figure 10: Purchases for the Annual Guild Feast in the Accounts for 1427-8**<sup>57</sup>

Item	How much/where from	Cost
<b>Wheat</b>	85 bushels	35s 4d
<b>Baking of bread</b>	8.5 loads	8s 6d
<b>First grade malt</b>	45 bushels	26s 3d
<b>Second grade malt</b>	67 bushels	33s 6d
<b>Barley malt</b>	3 bushels	18d
<b>Venison</b>		5s 4d
<b>Hogshead of wine</b>	From William Moyle	33s
<b>Carriage of Hogshead of wine</b>	From Gloucester to Bewdley	20d
<b>Cheese</b>	From Leominster	9s
<b>Diverse spices</b>		2s 1d
<b>Salt</b>		3d
<b>Fuel</b>		5s 4d
<b>One kettle hire</b>		8d
<b>Repair of one furnace</b>		4d
<b>Bowls</b>		8d
<b>Wages of ale-wives</b>		6s 4d
<b>Payment to diverse actors at the Feast</b>		6s 8d

## Religious Landscape

The Palmers' Guild competed with a range of religious institutions for pious donations.

There were the two orders of friars (Carmelite and Austin) and St John and St Giles

<sup>56</sup> Lloyd, *The Origins of Ludlow*, 48.

<sup>57</sup> SA LB 5/3/2 Steward's Account 1427-1428.



hospitals. There were also chapels in Ludlow castle, and St Thomas' chapel in Dinham, which was near the castle. The parish church of St Laurence's completes the list. This fourth section of the chapter will examine the relationship between the Guild and these institutions. First, I will examine the smaller religious institutions – the mendicant friars, and the hospitals, and their relationship to the Guild. The next part analyses the association between the Guild and the parish church. The Guild chapel was housed within the parish church, so the relationship was more complex and multifaceted.

The two orders of friars were not well endowed and had very few men to preach and tend to their simple churches, which lay outside the walls of Ludlow. The Carmelite friars settled in Corve Street, to the north of the parish church, in 1352.<sup>58</sup> The other order of friars, the Austin friars, established a community in 1254, just outside Galford gate, at the opposite end of Ludlow (see Figure 9). Despite having only a handful of friars, the priors of the Carmelite friary feature in the Guild riding books. For example, Richard Willot was prior in 1510.<sup>59</sup> The Guild riding books show that he was sub-prior in 1503.<sup>60</sup> Henry Byschwood gave his occupation as prior to the Guild steward in 1504, which is not listed in other documents about the friary.<sup>61</sup> Guild records show that he became a member of the Palmers' Guild after paying eight

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<sup>58</sup> See: A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh, eds., 'Friaries: Austin Friars', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 95–98, 95; A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh, eds., 'Friaries: Carmelite Friars', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 93–95, 93; Peter Klein and Annette Roe, *The Carmelite Friary Corve Street, Ludlow: Its History and Excavation* (Ludlow: Ludlow Historical Research Group, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> Klein and Roe, *The Carmelite Friary Corve Street, Ludlow: Its History and Excavation*, 73.

<sup>60</sup> SA LB 5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4, 1.

<sup>61</sup> SA LB 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 3v., Klein and Roe, *The Carmelite Friary Corve Street, Ludlow: Its History and Excavation*, 70.

instalments over 15 years.<sup>62</sup> There are no known registrations for the Austin priors in the existing records, which may reflect the loss of records for the years in which they registered. At the friaries' dissolution in 1538, there were only five Carmelite friars and four Austin friars, which clearly shows their humble status in the town.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the relative poverty of the Ludlow friaries, they both received a small number of bequests from the people of Ludlow. In the 20 surviving wills from Ludlow residents from 1480 to 1538, there are five bequests each to the two orders of friars. One donation from Robert Toy, husbandman, to the Austin friars was unusual. He bequeathed a substantial amount of land to the friars to support prayers for his soul. This act suggests he had cultivated close ties with the Friary, while he was alive.

At my funeral five tapers of waxe to burn about my body. I will that all the priests of the parish of Ludlow be at my dirge and masse with chanting and capes and all the friars of both the houses in Ludlow. The house of Austin Friars, after the death of Alison (my wife) to have an acre of land to buy them bread to singe with force for my sowle, my wives sowles and all christian sowles.<sup>64</sup>

John Browne, a Guild steward, bequeathed a much smaller amount of 3s. 4d. towards the glazing of the west window of the church of the Carmelite friars, and the same amount to repair the fabric of the house of the Austin friars, in his will which was

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<sup>62</sup> SA LB 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 3v.

<sup>63</sup> Gaydon and Pugh, 'Friaries: Carmelite Friars', 93; Gaydon and Pugh, 'Friaries: Austin Friars', 95.

<sup>64</sup> TNA PROB 11/11/487 Will of Robert Toy, husbandman of Ludlow, 16 August 1498 (proved 5 November 1498).

proved in 1509. These small donations, however, are in sharp contrast to his bequest of £10 to the Palmers' Guild for his obit.<sup>65</sup> Other testators donated small objects to be used by the friars. In the will of Geoffrey Baugh, written in 1500, he bequeaths a 'pan' each to the friaries.<sup>66</sup> It is clear from these scattered sources that the friaries could not offer a long list of religious services. Instead they benefited from the generosity of townsfolk who gave to a range of institutions in Ludlow. The friaries were not in the same league as the Palmers' Guild and cannot be considered as a serious contender in Ludlow's religious marketplace.

The hospital of the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist (known as St John's) lay in Broad Street, near the river Teme, just outside the town walls, and opposite the small parish of Ludford (See Figure 8). St John's was larger and wealthier than the friaries of Ludlow. St John's was a religious foundation, which housed chantry priests to pray for their founders and benefactors. Those who lived under the hospital roof, who were often elderly or chronically ill, were also expected to pray for their benefactors.<sup>67</sup> St John's owed its status in the town to the patronage of the Earl of March who gave the hospital a licence in 1417 for a corn mill for the inhabitants of Ludlow. The importance of owning a corn mill cannot be underestimated, as grinding of corn is central to food production. Richard, Duke of York, added to the hospital's responsibilities when he granted the castle chapel to the hospital in 1458. St Giles in Ludford, a leper hospital, was also under the control of St John's.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> TNA PROB 11/16/460 Will of John Browne, draper of Ludlow, 24 June 1509 (proved 6 August 1509).

<sup>66</sup> SA LB 15/3/39 Will of Geoffrey Baugh, draper of Ludlow, (proved November 1500).

<sup>67</sup> Rotha Mary Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England* (London: Methuen, 1909), 5.

<sup>68</sup> A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh, eds., 'Hospitals: Ludlow (St John)', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 102.

St John's undoubtedly owed its reputation in the town to its patronage by the Earls of March. The hospital was also highly regarded by townsfolk. The hospital owned 34 burgages in the town, which were mostly in Broad street and near to the hospital.. Surviving wills do not give us any indication of how the hospital acquired these properties but, like the Palmers' Guild, it is most likely that they came from grants in mortmain from pious inhabitants.<sup>69</sup> However, as we will see later in this chapter, it was no match for the Palmers' Guild, or the parish church.<sup>70</sup> Although the hospital was a potential competitor for bequests, there is no evidence that it clashed with the Palmers' Guild. In fact, the prior, Phelipp Kingsland enrolled in the Palmers' Guild in 1503, which demonstrates that the Guild was valued by the men who tended to the spiritual health of the people of Ludlow.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, the parish church of St Laurence was the largest religious institution in Ludlow, as the parish included every person who was born within the town boundaries. The bond between the Palmers' Guild and the church is more complicated than the relationship with the Austin and Carmelite friars and the hospital of St John. The church was the main competitor to the Palmers' Guild for bequests, yet the church was also the Guild's base of operation. These factors mean that the Guild needed to nourish a different relationship with the parish church.

The location of the Guild chapel within St Laurence's demonstrates a close physical connection between the Palmers' Guild and the church. The chapel was in the

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<sup>69</sup> Mortmain licences were issued by the crown after 1279 to religious institutions such as hospitals and guilds to receive bequests of property.

<sup>70</sup> Gaydon and Pugh, 'Hospitals: Ludlow (St John)', 102; A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh, eds., 'Hospitals: Ludford (St Giles)', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 101–2.

<sup>71</sup> SA LB5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4, 11.

north east corner of the parish church and next to the chancel. As Simon Roffey argues, in his research on chantry chapels, testators favoured the north side of the church due to its traditional association with devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>72</sup> The orientation of the Guild chapel in the north-eastern corner, next to the chancel, demonstrates the high status of the Palmers' Guild within the parish. Both the Guild wardens and churchwardens had vested interests in maintaining and enhancing the physical church. The Guild accounts of 1446-7 show that the Guild bought 100 wainscot boards from Bristol for the carving of misericords in the church choir.<sup>73</sup> The Palmers' Guild was also major contributor to the construction of a new tower at the St Laurence's in the 1470s. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate the investment by the Guild. The churchwardens' accounts of 1469 show that the Palmers' Guild paid for the carriage of stone from local quarries for the construction of the tower. The stewards also used part of John Hosyer's bequest to pay for labour and stone cartage.<sup>74</sup> An interesting note in these churchwardens' accounts is the stipulation that the Guild 'then to have stones or what the church may spare'.<sup>75</sup> This entry shows us not only that the parish church relied on the Palmers' Guild for its rebuilding programme, but that the Guild might have also been rebuilding its chapel at the same time. These building projects demonstrate a sense of shared endeavour. Both institutions collaborated to increase the reputation of Ludlow in the region.

Although they may have shared a similar approach to some aspects of religious life in Ludlow, the Guild and the parish church competed for the bequests of pious

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<sup>72</sup> Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology*, 100.

<sup>73</sup> SA LB5/3/18 Steward's Account 1446-7.

<sup>74</sup> SA LB15/1/3 Ludlow Churchwardens' accounts 1469.

<sup>75</sup> SA LB15/1/3 Ludlow Churchwardens' accounts 1469.

folk. As we saw in chapter 2, all late medieval religious institutions vied for the 'pious pound'. The provision of prayers for the soul of a departed member was the central tenet of the Guild. To this end, members requested obits or other services from the Guild which were funded by property or other means. Out of 37 extant Ludlow wills from 1400 to 1530, 22 asked that Guild chaplains conduct daily masses or annual obits.<sup>76</sup> Messuages, crofts, tenements and gardens were bequeathed on condition that religious services, including obits, would be undertaken for the testator. For example, in his will of 1509, John Browne, draper and steward of the guild, requested Guild chaplains, to say a trental of thirty masses and an obit for his soul.

Also, I will and ordeyne a trentall of 30 masses be said immediately after my burying for the health of my soule, my family's benefactors and all cristen soules...I also will and ordeyn that my months mynde be made and kept during the first part of the year and next and immediately after my decease in the said church of Ludlow with the preest of the gilde there.<sup>77</sup>

These requests for obits, were occasionally accompanied by bequests of objects. John Browne bequeathed 'plate xiii ounces of sterling to make a salt therewith and give and deliver a cloth so to be sufficient to make a covering on the image of St George in the parish church of Ludlow'.<sup>78</sup> Money to support obits and donations of objects were

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<sup>76</sup> There are 37 Ludlow wills from 1400-1530. 22 proved in the Diocese of Hereford and 15 proved in the PCC There are 12 wills with bequests for obits from the Diocesan Act Books and 10 wills from the PCC; 8 of the PCC wills were from guild wardens or stewards.

<sup>77</sup> TNA PROB 11/16/659 Will of John Browne, draper of Ludlow 24 June 1509 (proved 6 August 1509).

<sup>78</sup> TNA PROB 11/16/659 Will of John Browne, draper of Ludlow 24 June 1509 (proved 6 August 1509).

added to the Guild's coffers at the expense of boosting the churchwardens' accounts. The Guild benefited handsomely from these bequests.

Although the parish church may not have received many payments for conducting daily masses and prayers, it did profit from the parishioner's desire to leave this life with all debts paid. Most parishioners cleared their conscience by donating small amounts to the high altar of St Laurence's and for 'tithes forgotten'. Over 90 percent of Ludlow wills assigned money to the parish church.<sup>79</sup> Thirty three out of 37 surviving wills from 1400 to 1530 list small amounts for the parish church. For example, In 1499, Thomas Furbour of Ludlow, baker, bequeathed 3s. 4d. to the high altar and 6s. 8d. for 'church work'. He also allocated £2 13s. 4d. 'to an able priest to pray for my soul by the space of half a year'.<sup>80</sup> Furbour's bequest to the parish church for daily masses rather than the Palmers' Guild indicates that he may not have been a member of the Guild. The parish church benefited from the small but steady trickle of bequests to the high altar, but it appears that the provision of obits and daily masses was not a major role for the parish church.

The parish church and the Guild competed for bequests from Ludlow folk. Although the church received more bequests, they were often small and did not provide an ongoing income for the parish priests. The Palmers' Guild was the favoured institution for the provision of daily masses and obits. Each institution differentiated its services, and testators chose the foundation which fitted their needs. This may well

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<sup>79</sup> There are 37 Ludlow wills from 1400-1530. 22 proved in the Diocese of Hereford and 15 proved in the PCC.

<sup>80</sup> SA LB 5/3/38 Will of Robert Furbour, baker of Ludlow, 25 January 1499 (no date of proof).

be the reason that unlike some other religious guilds, there is no evidence of disputes or conflict between Palmers' Guild officials and parish churchwardens.<sup>81</sup>

The fifth and final section of this chapter will examine Ludlow membership of the Guild between 1485 and 1515, which declined a time when support for religious guilds was firmly entrenched in late medieval society.

**Figure 11: The Internal Structure of St Laurence's Tower in Ludlow** <sup>82</sup>



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<sup>81</sup> For examples of parish guild conflict see Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages', in *Parish, Church and People, Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 29–55.

<sup>82</sup> Judith Bailey, *St Laurence's Tower, Ludlow* [photograph] 10 July 2014.



Figure 12: St Laurence's Tower and Octagonal Porch (built c1470s) <sup>83</sup>



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<sup>83</sup> Judith Bailey, *St Laurence's, Ludlow* [photograph] 25 June 2008

## **The Palmers' Guild Membership: an Overview**

The records for the early fifteenth century demonstrate that the Guild was central to the lives of the people of Ludlow. It was well supported by the townsfolk. By the end of that century, a different relationship had appeared. The riding books for the years 1501-8 and the membership records of 1505-9, show us that the Palmers' Guild was showing signs of inertia and stagnation in the town. The manuscripts for these years look more like a bede roll of the dead rather than a list of the living.<sup>84</sup> This section will chart this development.

The Palmers' Guild records for Ludlow include the membership registers for 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9, and the riding books for 1501-8. These records differ from the group of records which will be used to analyse the Guild's influence in the Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches in two ways. First, they include the earliest years of the Guild registers, 1406-8, as they mostly hold the names of members who were based in Ludlow. Second, there are no names of Ludlow people in the riding book of 1515-16, so it has been excluded from the data analysis.<sup>85</sup> The lack of names in the riding book for 1515-16 is unfortunate. However, it must not be assumed that there were no Ludlow entries for that year. It may be that a page or two of the manuscript has not survived, or that the names of Ludlow people were no longer included in the riding books, and membership was noted by another method. However, the lack of Ludlow members in the 1515-16 riding book could also mean that the Guild was struggling to attract local members. It could also mean that the

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<sup>84</sup> See the Glossary for the definition of bede roll.

<sup>85</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9.

population was falling, although this is hard to ascertain as there is no list of inhabitants at this time.<sup>86</sup>

The demographic statistics for Ludlow, which have been gleaned from the membership registers and riding books, are represented in Figure 13. There were 446 names of people from Ludlow in the membership registers of 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9 and the riding books of 1501-8. Most of the 446 names are members. Four hundred and twenty-nine out of 446 names that were entered into the registers for the town of Ludlow were of English origin, which is not surprising given the ethnic profile of the town. However, there were some names of Welsh derivation, and the numbers of these increased from five in the records of 1485-9 to 12 in the riding books for 1501-8.<sup>87</sup> There are no lay subsidy records for Ludlow before 1543, as it was exempt from national taxes in recognition of its role in supporting the House of York in the Wars of the Roses.<sup>88</sup> It is difficult therefore to estimate what proportion of the population of Ludlow was of Welsh heritage. In the 1543 lay subsidy, there were only eight men with Welsh patronyms out of 165 names.<sup>89</sup> Of course there may be many more in the town who had anglicized their name, but even so it appears there were very few inhabitants of Welsh heritage in Ludlow, compared to Hereford or Bristol.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ludlow was excluded from the lay subsidy of Shropshire in 1524. See also Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 157.

<sup>87</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>88</sup> M. A. Faraday, ed., *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Walton on Thames: M.A. Faraday, 2015), 30.

<sup>89</sup> Faraday, 314-17.

<sup>90</sup> For Hereford see: M. A. Faraday, ed., *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Hereford: Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, 2005), 17; Peter Fleming, 'Identity and Belonging: Irish and Welsh in Fifteenth-Century Bristol', in *Conflicts, Consequences and the Crown in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 192.

In terms of gender, the ratio of female to male names in the 1501-8 riding books shows a decline in female registrations when compared to the membership registers of 1485-9. In the four years of records between 1485 and 1489, the ratio was 40:60, but in the records for 1501-8 it was 30:70 in favour of males.<sup>91</sup> This low percentage of females might have been caused by the greater number of male servants in the later records. For the years 1501-8, there were 24 male servants but only five female servants who registered with the Guild.<sup>92</sup> Apart from this possible explanation there seems to be no reason for the decline in female registrations in the early sixteenth century.

**Figure 13: Ludlow's Demographic Statistics** <sup>93</sup>

Year	Registrations	Members	Ethnicity (Welsh)	Female	Deceased members	Child member	Deceased children as a percentage of deceased total
<b>1406-8</b>		119	0 percent	49 percent	30 percent	13 percent	44 percent
<b>1485-9</b>		105	5 percent	42 percent	68 percent	40 percent	58 percent
<b>1501-9</b>	81	141 [63%]	5 percent	30 percent	44 percent	45 percent	73 percent
<b>1515-16</b>	No Ludlow names are in this riding book out of 1408 names						

In the records for the early fifteenth century, the Guild was almost entirely reliant on the town itself for financial supporters, and it is likely that even those

<sup>91</sup> SA LB 5/3/4-8 Steward's Riding Books 1502-3 to 1506-7. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>92</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>93</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9. The figure in square brackets is the number of official members as a percentage of the total registrations.

supporters who came from outside Ludlow probably had close business dealings with the town. In the earliest surviving membership records of 1406-8, over 85 percent of the people (119 out of a total of 140), who gave their names to the steward, came from Ludlow. Only 21 people, whose names are in these registers, came from Ludlow's hinterland or the Central and North Welsh Marches. There were no members from other parts of England. The occupation of mercer was the most common profession for the few members who lived outside Ludlow. For example, Richard Holl, a mercer from Mainstone in the Honour of Clun and Thomas Farber, a mercer from Shrewsbury, may have visited Ludlow to conduct their business in 1406.<sup>94</sup> There is no surviving evidence to suggest that the stewards were undertaking recruitment drives outside Ludlow at this time. Even though Owain Glyndŵr had retreated to his strongholds in Harlech and Aberystwyth by 1407, it would have been unprofitable for the stewards to visit the Marcher lordships as the economy was in ruins.<sup>95</sup>

The membership lists for 1406-8 also show that there was a mixture of occupations and trades in Ludlow. Figure 14 outlines these professions. The data reveals 11 men worked in the wool trade. These men included merchants, mercers and there was also one draper, John Pelton, who registered in 1407.<sup>96</sup> Five clerics, four servants, two bakers and three leather workers complete the list of people who gave their occupation to the Guild steward.<sup>97</sup> There were a good number of people from well-established Ludlow families in the membership list. Roger Mersshetone, Robert

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<sup>94</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

<sup>95</sup> Davies, *Owain Glyn Dŵr: Prince of Wales*, 126.

<sup>96</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

<sup>97</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

Moyle, and David Sherman had been bailiffs and Guild officials in the fourteenth century.<sup>98</sup>

The main occupational groups of the town were also represented in the membership registers of 1485-9, and the riding books and membership registers of 1501-9. Figure 14 clearly shows that people who gave their occupation as servant were the largest occupational group in all the riding books and registers for Ludlow. There were 45 names of people listed in these records. Many of these individuals were servants of Guild officials. For example, there were two servants of John Lane, a steward, in the riding book of 1504-5, and one servant each for Richard Bragott, steward, and Walter Rogers, warden, in the riding book of 1505-6. Another group of servants worked for William Smyth, Bishop of Lincoln, who was the Lord President of the Council of Wales and the Marches from 1502-12. The servants of Edward Stafford, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Buckingham, were registered by the stewards in 1505, which means that Edward Stafford lived in Ludlow at that time. Seventeen out of 45 servants were registered as deceased or 'souls', presumably by their masters, in the riding books for 1501-6.<sup>99</sup> This large group of servants of important officials, nobility and bishops, supports the notion that Ludlow was an important centre of political, economic and judicial power in the early sixteenth century. It was important for temporary residents of Ludlow to support the local religious Guild, as the spectre of an untimely death was ever present.

Figure 14 outlines other occupational and social groups which are represented in the Guild records for 1485-9 and 1501-9. They mostly include cloth trade

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<sup>98</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, Appendices 2 and 4.

<sup>99</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-7 Steward's Riding Book 1501-2 to 1505-6.

occupations, for example weavers and tailors. The inclusion of the name of John Egeley in 1488, as clothier of the Guildhall, is noteworthy. Although we do not know for sure, he may have been in the pay of the Palmers' Guild which suggests that the Guild may have been actively involved in the buying and selling of cloth. The importance of this early evidence cannot be underestimated and demonstrates that the Palmers' Guild could have been directly involved in the wool and cloth trade in the late fifteenth century.

Strong clerical support for the Guild shows that the Guild integrated well with other religious institutions in the town. There were 20 clerics in the membership registers of 1485-9 and 1505-9 and the riding books of 1501-8.<sup>100</sup> The main subgroup of clerics were chaplains, who serviced the chantries overseen by the Palmers' Guild, or within the parish church. There were also chaplains who were employed in other roles. The entry in 1503 for John Massie includes his occupation which was 'chaplain and master of the children of the Guild'. This school, which was supported by Guild funds, was located near the churchyard of St Laurence.<sup>101</sup> The riding book of 1498-9 has only a few entries as it has survived only as fragments. However, there is an entry for Jacob Pister who gave his occupation as 'chaplain in the chapel porch' to the Guild steward. He lived in the upper story of the ornate porch which was built at the southern entrance to the nave (see Figure 12).<sup>102</sup> Another chaplain, Henry Flany, was attached to the chapel of St Thomas of Canterbury at Dinham, near Ludlow castle. He became a member in 1508.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>101</sup> SA LB 5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4, 1.

<sup>102</sup> SA LB 5/3/2 Steward's Riding Book 1498-9, 152.

<sup>103</sup> SA LB5/1/4 Register of Admissions 1508-9.

It is notable that the early membership registers for Ludlow (1406-8) have more names from the gentry classes than the later riding books and registers of 1501-9. However, the number is far fewer than the other regions in this thesis. As we shall see in the following two chapters, names of individuals from most of the leading gentry families from Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches were included in the riding books for these years.<sup>104</sup> The opportunity to register with the Guild steward, when he was in the vicinity of their estates, was not overlooked. It provided a tangible link to the town of Ludlow, with its royal connections and judicial role. However, it is important to remember that we only have eleven years of Guild membership records for the early sixteenth century. There were few members of the gentry class who lived in the town of Ludlow, and they may have joined in the missing years. Nonetheless, there is a discrepancy between the gentry's support for the Guild in Ludlow, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, compared to Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches.

In the early fifteenth century, the Palmers' Guild was supported by the Lancastrian king, Henry IV, and his son. Two men from the inner circle of Henry IV became members of the Palmers' Guild. Sir Hugh Mortimer, who donated a high entry fee of 20s. to the Guild for himself and his wife, was a member of Prince Henry's council and the Chamberlain of his household.<sup>105</sup> Sir John Merbury's name was in the membership register of 1406-7. He was the Chamberlain and receiver of South Wales

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<sup>104</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>105</sup> J.S. Roskell, L Clark, and C Rawcliffe, eds., 'Hugh Mortimer (d. 1416) of Weldon, Northants.', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 1993), <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/mortimer-hugh-1416>, accessed 2 June 2019.



from 1400 to 1421. He was also the sheriff of Herefordshire, intermittently, from 1405 to 1435.<sup>106</sup> The entry of their names in the registers for Ludlow for 1406-8, demonstrates that they were based in Ludlow at this time.<sup>107</sup> The registration of two servants of the crown indicates that there was royal support for the Guild at a time when Ludlow was an important base to control the Welsh insurgents in the lordships to the south-west of the town. This support continued throughout the turbulent fifteenth century, which saw the fall of the Lancastrians, the rise of the house of York and the first Tudor king, Henry VII. As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, the Guild stewards exploited these royal connections to entice people to join the Ludlow Guild.

The Ludlow Guild's records capture the twists and turns of national politics for 100 years. As we have seen, the records for 1406-8 demonstrate that high ranking officials of the Lancastrian dynasty, supported the Guild and its work.<sup>108</sup> In 1437, Richard Duke of York, lord of Ludlow, paid a high entry fine of £16 13s. 4d. for himself and his wife.<sup>109</sup> Their connection to Ludlow and the Guild has been outlined in chapter 2, so the large entry fee reflects this close relationship between the House of York and Ludlow. Later in the century, Edward IV, son of Richard of York, enrolled 38 members of his household into the Guild. The riding book of 1463-4, lists the names of his retainers. For example, John de la Pole, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Suffolk, paid a fee of £3 6s. 8d. and John Tuchet, 6<sup>th</sup> Baron Audley registered with his wife for an entry fee of 40s.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> J.S. Roskell, L Clark, and C Rawcliffe, eds., 'John Merbury (d. 1438), of Lyonshall and Weobley, Herefs.', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 1993), <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/mortimer-hugh-1416>, accessed 4 June 2019. SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

<sup>107</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

<sup>108</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8.

<sup>109</sup> SA LB5/3/25 Steward's Account 1437-8.

<sup>110</sup> SA LB5/3/1 Steward's Riding Book 1463-4, 9.

Finally, the riding books of 1501-3 include the names of the Tudor, Prince Henry, (later Henry VIII), and his sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon, who both registered to join the Guild.<sup>111</sup> The registrations of these high ranking officials, members of the nobility and royal princes, clearly demonstrates the central position of the Palmers' Guild in the urban politics of Ludlow.

**Figure 14: Occupations of Ludlow Recruits and Members** <sup>112</sup>

Occupation	1406-8	1485-9	1501-8
<b>Gentry</b>	4	2	1
<b>Cloth trades</b>			
Capper		1	1
Cardmaker		1	
Clothier of the Guild		1	
Draper	1	1	
Glover		1	
Hosier	1		
Mercer	4		3
Merchant	4		
Sherman		1	2
Tailor		2	4
Weaver	1	4	3
<b>Leather trades</b>			
Barker		2	1
Corveser	2		2
Tanner	1		
<b>Other trades</b>			
Baker	2	2	1
Butcher			2
Labourer		2	1
Miller		2	
Servants	4	12	29
Tiler			2
Vintner		1	1
<b>Clerics</b>			
Clerics	5	3	12
Friars			4

<sup>111</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-4 Steward's Riding Book 1501-2, 67 and 1502-3, 63.

<sup>112</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9.

The longstanding support from the crown enabled the urban elite to navigate through the political turmoil of the 1460s to the 1480s and emerge as staunch supporters of Henry VII in 1485. They 'bent with the wind' through the difficult political storms of the fifteenth century. They were astute and wily men. There is no better visual articulation of this skill than the choir ceiling in Ludlow's parish church, which is adorned by both the white rose of York and the daisy of Margaret of Anjou, wife of the Lancastrian king, Henry VI. There are also heraldic shields from both the dynasties of York and Lancaster. The construction of the choir ceiling can be dated to a few years before 1460 when Ludlow was both the King's town and the seat of power for Richard of York. The Lancastrian daisy would be very unlikely to be carved after Richard of York marched towards London to claim the Lancastrian, Henry VI's throne in 1450.<sup>113</sup>

Information gleaned from Guild riding books and membership registers show that the Guild was well supported by the people of Ludlow in the early fifteenth century. Royal and court officials joined the Guild. However, from the late fifteenth century onwards, the number of living recruits as a percentage of the total number of Ludlow entrants, was steadily decreasing. There was also a worrying trend of a much lower conversion rate from people paying their initial payments to gaining full membership. Many now no longer finished paying their instalments. These two factors would have sent alarm bells through the Guild leadership at this time, as the Guild's revenue from Ludlow townsfolk would have plummeted.

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<sup>113</sup> Henry Weyman, 'The Choir Ceiling of Ludlow Church', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society* Series 4, no. 1 (1911): 384.

## **The Palmers' Guild's Membership Drive**

In the early membership registers of 1406-8 there were 36 names of 'souls', or 30 percent of the total number of Ludlow names for these two years. These membership registers clearly show that the Palmers' Guild was a valued religious institution for the people of Ludlow. There was a spike in the number of names in 1407-8. Thirty-two names of deceased members were entered into the register for that year. This rise could be due to a serious outbreak of disease which may have caused more deaths in Ludlow. However, as there are no statistics to verify this was the case, we cannot be sure. Most of the relatives of the deceased members paid the local Ludlow fee of 2s. instead of the normal fee of 3s. 4d. which was half the fee for a living person.<sup>114</sup> The high number of deceased members in Ludlow is not replicated in the other two regions – the hinterland of Ludlow and the Central and North Welsh Marches – which are the subject of this research. At any time between 1485 and 1515, the percentage of deceased members in these two regions was never more than ten percent.

The data for the years 1485-9 confirms the trend that Ludlow families were registering many of their deceased relatives in order to receive the benefits of the Guild's religious services. Figure 15 shows that the number of deceased members increased markedly from the early fifteenth century to the late fifteenth century, from 30 percent of members in 1406-8 to 68 percent in 1485-9. Only 32 percent of its Ludlow membership in the membership registers of 1485-9 comprised living people.<sup>115</sup> In the riding books of 1501-8, the percentage of living people had increased to 44

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<sup>114</sup> SA LB5/1/1 Register of Admissions 1406-8. See the notes section, at the front of the thesis.

<sup>115</sup> SA LB5/1/1-2 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9.

percent, but there is no escaping the fact that the membership was now primarily comprised of those who were no longer alive.<sup>116</sup> The Guild was not refreshing its pool of Ludlow townsfolk as it had done in the early fifteenth century.

The figures for children who were entered as 'souls' give us a glimpse into the lives of the people of Ludlow who feared the ever-present threat of plague and the 'sweating sickness'. Children were often early victims of these indiscriminate diseases. The records for 1486-7 show a spike in child mortality, as all 25 names of children, which were entered into the membership register, were deceased. There were also 27 adults who were admitted as 'souls'.<sup>117</sup> For 1501-8, over 38 percent of 'souls' were children.<sup>118</sup> As we can see in Figure 15, the peak year was 1502-3, where 41 names of people were entered into the riding books as 'souls', or 85 percent of all registrations for that year.<sup>119</sup> Most of the 15 names of deceased children for this year were children of Guild officials. There were a further nine 'souls' of children who were listed in the 1504-5 riding book, who were all related to Guild officials.<sup>120</sup>

The plague or 'sweating sickness' was indiscriminate. Children appear to have been susceptible to this disease, but it also afflicted adults from all social classes. In 1501, Prince Arthur resided in Ludlow castle with his new wife, Katherine of Aragon, and his retinue of chaplains, servants, officials, and other retainers. He was the executive president of the Council in the Marches of Wales, which oversaw the King's territory in Wales, the Marches and the border shires. The 1501-2 riding book includes

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<sup>116</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>117</sup> SA LB5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1486-7, Figure 15.

<sup>118</sup> SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9 and See Figure 15.

<sup>119</sup> SA LB 5/3/4 Steward's Riding Book 1502-3.

<sup>120</sup> SA LB 5/3/4-5 Steward's Riding Books 1502-3 to 1503-4.

the name of Katherine of Aragon, her servants, and members of the prince's household.<sup>121</sup> In the riding book of 1502-3 there is a spike in the entry of 'souls'. This year also saw the untimely death of Prince Arthur. It is very likely that Prince succumbed to the same disease which killed so many Ludlow townsfolk.

Other religious guilds showed an increase in deceased entrants who were entered by their relatives in the early sixteenth century. The Holy Cross Guild in Stratford-upon-Avon saw the number of 'souls' increase from 22 percent in 1520 to 76 percent by 1534. The total number of living and deceased individuals starts to fall from 1515 onwards.<sup>122</sup> However, Figure 15 clearly shows that the increase in 'souls' was a trend in full flow in the first decade after 1500. The tendency for the membership lists to fill up with 'souls' indicates that for some townsfolk the commemorative aspects of Guild membership were of prime importance.

The riding books for 1498 to 1508 clearly show that many of the established Ludlow families, which had been the backbone of the Guild since the early fifteenth century, were also not enrolling new generations into the Guild. The only names of note were Henry Pickering (capper and Guild recruitment agent in 1515) who enrolled in 1498, Robert Bradocke (bailiff in 1527) who gave his name to the steward in 1502, and William Langford (mercator, Guild steward 1514-16, and warden 1547-51) who enrolled in 1508.<sup>123</sup> Many existing Guild members from established families such as the Mortons, Bragotts and the Hokes, enrolled their children into the Guild, as

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<sup>121</sup> SA LB5/3/3 Steward's Riding Book 1501-2, 67-8.

<sup>122</sup> See also : Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547*; Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: An Analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c.1400-1551', 90-92.

<sup>123</sup> SA LB 5/3/2,4,9 Steward's Riding Books 1498-9, 1, 1502-3, 2. SA LB5/1/4 Register of Admissions 1508-9.

'souls'.<sup>124</sup> Only nine sons and daughters from established Guild families were enrolled as living members in the records from 1501-8.<sup>125</sup>

These riding books also show that many who enrolled in the Guild did not become members. Twenty-three out of a total of 37 names of people (62 percent) which are listed in the riding book of 1503-4, did not achieve membership. In the records for 1506-7, the percentage was 54 percent. Almost all the people who did not pay the full entrance fee were living.<sup>126</sup> These trends were an increasing problem for Guild officials. The core group of active local members was shrinking. The factors which may be behind this trend will now be examined before we look at how the Guild warden and stewards addressed the problem of a declining membership in Ludlow.

There are a range of possibilities which might explain the decline of living members. Ludlow townsfolk may have lost interest in their religious guild. There may have been a slump in population of which we are not aware because documents have not survived. There were other religious institutions which may have been more attractive to Ludlow inhabitants. However, the earlier section in this chapter on the Guild's role in the parish church and the continual interest in the services they offered, belies the concept that the Guild was becoming less relevant to the people of Ludlow.

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<sup>124</sup> SA LB 5/3/2-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>125</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>126</sup> SA LB 5/3/5,8 Steward's Riding Books 1503-4, 1506-7.

**Figure 15: Annual Breakdown of ‘Souls’** <sup>127</sup>

Date	All Recruits and Members	Adult ‘souls’	Total Children	Child ‘souls’	Notes
1406	52	4	3	0	
1407	67	19	13	9	Possible epidemic in Ludlow
1485	10	1	4	4	
1486	63	27	25	25	Possible epidemic in Ludlow
1487	17	2	6	4	
1488	15	7	2	2	
1498	19	4	4	1	
1501	9	2	4	4	Katherine of Aragon enrolls
1502	48	26	18	15	Prince Arthur dies. Prince Henry enrolls. Possible epidemic in Ludlow
1503	37	7	7	5	
1504	44	10	15	9	
1505	21	0	8	3	Highest year for recruits and members in Ludlow’s hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches
1506	33	7	9	1	
1507	3	2			
1508	7	3			

A likely factor, based on the evidence we have to hand, is that Ludlow townsfolk gained the religious benefits of the Guild for free, due to the Guild and parish church merging its roles. As we saw in chapter 2, parish churches became more important as a focus of piety as the fifteenth century progressed. Parishioners gave small amounts to the fabric fund and endowed chantries in their church.<sup>128</sup> However, St Laurence’s also benefited from large donations and in-kind support from the warden and stewards of the Palmers’ Guild. The Guild never had less than six chaplains to conduct

<sup>127</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/1-4 Register of Admissions 1406-8, 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>128</sup> For a good overview of late medieval piety in Ludlow see Lloyd, Clark, and Potter, *St Laurence’s Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199-2009*, 39–52.



services at any time in its history, and there were often eight chaplains. By the late fifteenth century, Guild chaplains outnumbered the parish clergy and there is evidence to suggest that they ran the parish church choir and held services in the Lady Chapel.<sup>129</sup> To the Ludlow inhabitant, the parish church would have given them a plethora of religious benefits which were mostly due to the Palmers' Guild. This is the most likely explanation for the drop in 'living' recruits to the Guild in the 15 years either side of 1500. However, it must not be overlooked that the Guild was still an exclusive institution, which divided the townsfolk into those who had sufficient means to pay the entry fee, and those who could not. It is perhaps going a step too far to argue that the parish church was, in effect, a Guild church.

The evidence in the riding books, membership registers, Guild accounts and Ludlow wills do not give us enough information to understand the exact conditions which were faced by the Guild in the early sixteenth century. However, it is clear that the Guild needed to increase its membership from outside the town if it was to survive. A few leading families, mostly interconnected by marriage, controlled the Guild. There were three men who were wardens for sixty years, from 1471-1535 – Richard Sherman, a merchant, Walter Morton, a clothier, and Richard Downe, a weaver (see Appendix 1). Evidence in the riding books for 1501-8 and 1515-16, suggests that this group at the top reorientated the focus of the Guild, as a deliberate policy. Names of people from Gloucester, Bristol, Birmingham, Derby, Lichfield,

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<sup>129</sup> Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation*, 390–91 for similar examples in All Saints' church in Bristol.

Coventry, and Chester fill the riding books for these years. These new members were often men from the wool trade, who paid their membership fee in full.<sup>130</sup>

Figure 16 shows us the success of this strategy. The number of members from outside Ludlow was relatively steady, at approximately 100 people each year between 1485 and 1489. In the four years from 1505 to 1508 the number of members increased exponentially to an average of 288 individuals each year who lived outside Ludlow. Although it is out of scope to analyse members who came from areas outside the Central and North Welsh Marches, it is important to recognise the impact these distant members had on the Guild's *modus operandi*. Money from entrance fees would have poured into the coffers of the Guild. The stewards would assign the funds to support services in the Guild chapel, and purchase property, which in turn would have boosted the economy of Ludlow more broadly. All the data from the Palmers' Guild records indicate that this shift in focus was permanent and highly significant.

**Figure 16: Members by Geographical Area (1485-9, 1505-9 and 1515-16)** <sup>131</sup>

Date	Ludlow	Ludlow's hinterland	Central and North Welsh Marches	All other places
1485	10	29	39	73
1486	63	31	32	55
1487	17	23	23	56
1488	15	20	9	36
1505	13	65	70	207
1506	15	53	23	209
1507	3	63	26	123
1508	7	32	36	150
1515	0	19	19	96

<sup>130</sup> For example: SA LB 5/3/9 Steward's Riding Book 1507-8, 45, 15. John Colman, clothier of Gloucester, and John Waring, Merchant of the Staple, from Coventry.

<sup>131</sup> SA LB 5/3/7-10 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-8.

## **Conclusion**

The Palmers' Guild was a highly regarded institution which was supported by the people of Ludlow for over 200 years. It was a focus for social and religious activity in the town, and its wardens and stewards were an integral part of Ludlow's governing structure and political economy. However, by the early sixteenth century, the Palmers' Guild was based in its chapel in St Laurence's in Ludlow, but the vast majority of the membership was not from Ludlow. There is no doubt that the typical Guild member we saw in 1406, who lived in Ludlow, was quite different to the one who paid their instalments in 1508.

The downturn in new members from Ludlow, particularly in the early sixteenth century, meant the Guild was at a crossroad. Thankfully, Ludlow was the stronghold of Henry VII and was integral to his plan to bring order to the diverse and unruly Marcher lordships to the west. The Guild warden exploited these royal connections by sending his stewards to traverse vast tracts of the hinterland, the Central and North Welsh Marches, and further afield, to sign up new recruits. The people from these areas often entered into mutually beneficial contracts, which lasted many years. The Palmers' Guild was a complex, multilayered business, akin to a modern corporation in many ways. It offered the promise of prayers for one's soul, so important and central to medieval ideas of religious observance. It also offered economic benefits. The combination of these factors in concert with direct royal patronage meant the Palmers' Guild offered so much to so many people in a region where it had very few competitors.

For those who lived in Ludlow, this new direction changed the relationship they had with their Guild. Guild members who had joined in the late fifteenth century, still

employed chaplains to say prayers and exhorted Guild members to attend dirge and mass at their funerals. However, these members were not being replaced by new people from Ludlow. The new members were from out of town. It was no longer only the 'Guild of the town' but a Guild with regional and national membership. This evolution will be examined in more detail in the next two chapters, where the relationship between the Guild and the people from Ludlow's hinterland and the broader Central and North Welsh Marches will be analysed.

## Chapter 4: Ludlow's Hinterland: The Guild in County and Lordship

By the late fifteenth century, Ludlow enjoyed a stable political environment. Its strong connection with the crown, through both Yorkist and Tudor rulers, created the conditions for this stability. Its economy was also steady, successfully transitioning from the wool trade of the fourteenth century to cloth manufacturing and trade in the fifteenth century. The town's leading men moved smoothly back and forth between secular and Guild offices. Although this shaped conditions for an urban oligarchy, it also created a secure, central political hub in its hinterland. The lack of a dominant monastic institution in Ludlow meant that the Palmers' Guild could consolidate its religious position in the town. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, the Guild reached out from this stable base to communities beyond the town walls.

This chapter will explore the Guild's expansion into the region closest to Ludlow from the late fifteenth century to the early sixteenth century. It will consider how the Guild influenced the religious, economic, social, and political fabric of surrounding communities. The people who lived in these communities will be profiled in order to understand why they chose to have a relationship with the Palmers' Guild. This investigation will not only shed light on the nature of the hinterland landscape, but it will also encourage a deeper appreciation of the role of a late medieval religious institution in the pre-Reformation world.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the debate on the vibrancy and relevance of late medieval religious practice in England has been contentious at times. Despite over 30 years of research there is still no clear understanding of how each English county aligns with the broader national picture. The current thesis will add to the scholarly

record, as it will analyse the significance of a religious guild to the borderland communities of the Welsh Marches. Religious guilds were embedded in the local parish community, but what role did they have outside this locality? This chapter will focus on how an urban religious guild succeeded in recruiting thousands of individuals from the hinterland of Ludlow, in a burgeoning spiritual marketplace.

Ludlow's hinterland comprised a number of *pays* or subregions. This concept of *pays* has been outlined by prior scholars, who have investigated the connection between landscape and the development of settlements. Dorothy Sylvester explored this notion in her analysis of borderland communities. She identified two different settlement patterns in central and north Shropshire. These were the valleys to the north east of Ludlow, such as Corvedale, and the flat north Shropshire plains.<sup>1</sup> The villages which hugged the lower road in Corvedale were different to the larger market towns like Market Drayton, Wem and Whitchurch to the north. In 1977, an historical geographer, Alan Everitt, argued that predominantly wooded areas, sometimes known as wolds, and areas which followed rivers developed different agricultural practices. They also displayed variances in social structure, demography, manorial organisation, distribution of wealth and religious *mores*.<sup>2</sup> Christopher Dyer has also explored *pays* in his analysis of John Heritage. Although he argues that there were differences in soil type, and crop choice between wold and valley, he notes that there were many aspects of daily life which were held in common.<sup>3</sup> These authors, amongst others, give

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography*, 319.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Everitt, 'River and Wold: Reflections on the Historical Origin of Regions and Pays', *Journal of Historical Geography* 3, no. 1 (1977): 1–19.

<sup>3</sup> Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 62,72.

a useful perspective or backdrop to this chapter's discussion about the importance of geography when considering the role and influence of a town-based religious guild.

The definition of a town's hinterland has also been important to scholars. Dyer has argued that a town's hinterland is usually seven to ten miles around a market town.<sup>4</sup> Villagers in the hinterland supplied goods, such as fuel and fresh food, for consumption in the larger town. These workers could comfortably walk to market and back in one day, which encouraged the development of social and economic networks.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, however, the definition of 'hinterland' will be different as it will include a more extensive network of towns and villages up to 20 miles from Ludlow. There are two reasons for this decision. First, the greater area signals the economic, political and social dominance of Ludlow. Second, the region is geographically defined by the stewards' itineraries. These journeys frame the geographical reach of the Guild into the hinterland communities.

Ludlow's hinterland is shown in Figure 17. There were few large towns in the hinterland to compete with Ludlow. Leominster was next in size with a population in 1524 of approximately 1,000.<sup>6</sup> It was not a case of 'all roads lead to Ludlow', but it is clear from the primary sources that Ludlow cast a long shadow over its hinterland region. New Radnor, with its Norman castle at the head of a wide valley, was the furthest town from Ludlow in the hinterland region. Situated on the western fringe of the hinterland, it was vulnerable to the politics of the March with its ebb and flow of

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Dyer, 'Market Towns and the Countryside in Late Medieval England', *Canadian Journal of History* XXXI (2006): 24.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Dyer, "Small Places with Large Consequences: The Importance of Small Towns in England, 1000–1540.," *Historical Research* 75, no. 187 (2002): 1–24.

<sup>6</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, 16.

Welsh and English rulers. This valley led to Presteigne, six miles from New Radnor, which was a mixed English/Welsh settlement on the river Lugg. There was good access here for traders from the lordships who travelled through this valley to the markets of Ludlow.<sup>7</sup> The market towns of Leominster and Church Stretton were situated at the margins of the hinterland and straddled the main north-south route between Hereford and Shrewsbury. Cleobury Mortimer, in the east of the hinterland region, was a convenient waystation between Ludlow and Bewdley, which was on the River Severn. The towns of Clun and Bishop's Castle, which were small centres at the north-western edge of the hinterland, complete the list of the main towns that were visited by the Guild stewards.<sup>8</sup>

The organisation of the Guild riding books indicates that there are four areas in Ludlow's hinterland. Figures 21, 26, 27, and 29 show the areas: (i) Leominster Ore, (ii) Corvedale and Cleoland, (iii) Cloneland and Terra Episcopo, and (iv) Wigmoreland. The Guild accounts confirm that one steward was assigned to each area and that the annual journeys started and finished in Ludlow.<sup>9</sup> The existing riding books show that, even though the steward did not visit every town each year, there was a consistent itinerary for each of the four areas of the hinterland.<sup>10</sup> These books also show that the journeys did not stray from one area to another or criss-cross across the hinterland. For example, a steward would not visit Presteigne in the west of the hinterland,

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<sup>7</sup> Leominster was 11 miles to the south of Ludlow; Church Stretton was 15 miles to the north and Cleobury Mortimer 11 miles to the east. Presteigne was 16 miles west of Ludlow, New Radnor was 23 miles to the west and Clun and Bishop's Castle were 17-20 miles to the north west of Ludlow.

<sup>8</sup> The riding books clearly distinguish between the route to Clun and Bishop's Castle and the route to North Wales. See SA LB5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 1-12 (Hinterland) and 13- 18 (Shrewsbury, Montgomery, Oswestry).

<sup>9</sup> SA LB5/3/32 Steward's Account 1538-9.

<sup>10</sup> See SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.



Bishop's Castle in the north and Leominster in the south, in the same journey. He would always visit towns within a discrete local circuit. The riding books also show that the steward usually travelled to the same area on each of his annual journeys. This regular itinerary would encourage a personal connection between the steward and people who lived in a hinterland area. The steward was well placed to exploit these social and economic networks to increase the prosperity of the Guild, its members and also the town of Ludlow more broadly.

The four areas differed from each other regarding ethnic, occupational and social composition. They also had a different economic and trade connections with Ludlow. This chapter will explore these differences. The chapter begins with an overview of the political geography, political economy and the religious landscape of Ludlow's hinterland. It then studies, in turn, each of the four areas into which the hinterland was divided.

### **Political Geography, Political Economy, and the Religious Landscape**

Stretching over county and lordship, the political geography of the Hinterland was complex. These circumstances were mainly due to many decades of unsettled political conditions which were endemic along the spine of communities in the eastern part of the Welsh Marcher lordships. The character of Ludlow's hinterland ranged from isolated townships in the Welsh-speaking lordships in the west, to clusters of English-speaking settlements in the east.

The Mortimers, Earls of March, were the preeminent noble family in the Hinterland from the late eleventh century to the early fifteenth century. William I gave Ralph de Mortimer lands and the title of Baron of Wigmore in 1075, as a reward for his

services to the crown. He built Wigmore castle, which he used as a base to extend his influence into the Welsh lands to the west. The physical impact of this dynasty on the hinterland is striking. Figure 18 shows that the Mortimers founded many of the hinterland market towns by the beginning of the thirteenth century. Even Clun, which was at the centre of the FitzAlan territory in the Welsh Marches, felt the impact of the Mortimer dynasty when it came under the control of a branch of the Mortimer family in the late fourteenth century. Other smaller towns, dotted in the hinterland, were linked to the Mortimers, either by conquest or by the religious arm of the Mortimer family, Wigmore Abbey, which was a patron of several parish churches in the Wigmoreland area.<sup>11</sup>

The Mortimers also influenced national politics. As a result of the significant estates which went with the title of Earl of March, they were one of the wealthier noble families in England by the fourteenth century. Although Roger Mortimer's execution for treason in 1330 led to the forfeiture of some of their territory, the family survived. The death of the last Earl of March, Edmund Mortimer, in 1425, saw the end of the Mortimer dynasty. His estates went to his heir Richard Duke of York. Richard was now the most powerful noble in England. The combination of estates from the Duchy of York, the Earldom of Ulster and the Welsh Marches meant that he was second only to Henry VI in terms of wealth. Through his mother (descended from the second son of Edward III) and father (descended from the fourth son of Edward III), he

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<sup>11</sup> These parish churches are: Leinthall Earls, Leintwardine and its two chapels (Burrington and Downton) Norton and Presteigne. J.H. Denton, 'Taxatio: Containing the Valuation, Plus Related Details, of the English and Welsh Parish Churches and Prebends Listed in the Ecclesiastical Taxation Assessment of 1291-92', 2014, <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/taxatio/>, accessed 20 April 2018.

also inherited a plausible claim to the English throne.<sup>12</sup> The decline of Henry VI's mental state and the resultant political uncertainty drew men to Richard's side. In 1455, this tension flared into the outbreak, known as the Wars of the Roses. This intermittent struggle, which dominated national politics until 1487, forms the backdrop to this thesis.

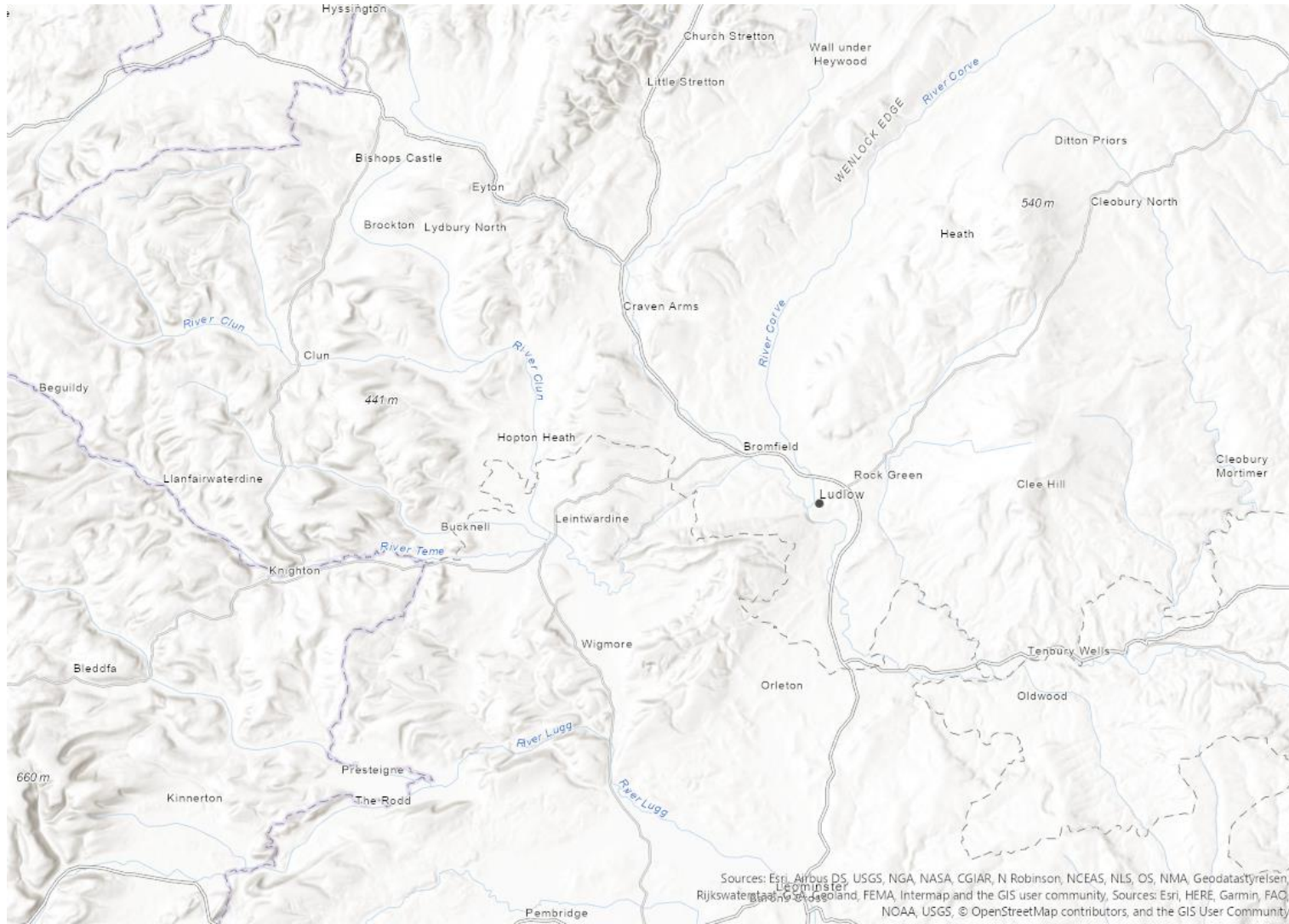
The impact of these wars on Ludlow's hinterland was long-lasting. The rout after the battle of Ludford Bridge in 1459 led to the sacking of Ludlow. The town's lord, Richard of York, fled at night to Wales and from there to Ireland. Less than two years later, in 1461, the land near Wigmore was destroyed by the armies of York and Lancaster in the decisive battle at Mortimer's Cross, in the aftermath of which his son, Edward of York, was proclaimed king. The Yorkist families of the March supported Edward, including William Herbert, first Earl of Pembroke, his half-brother Sir Roger Vaughan of Tretower Court, Walter Devereux, seventh Baron Ferrers of Chartley in Herefordshire and Sir Richard Croft of Croft Castle. The victory also relied to a great extent on Edward's estates in the Welsh Marches, and the support he received from the men of Ludlow's hinterland.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Joel T. Rosenthal, 'Richard, Duke of York: A Fifteenth-Century Layman and the Church', *The Catholic Historical Review* 50, no. 2 (1964): 174. See also: P.A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York 1411-1460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Hodges, *Ludford Bridge & Mortimer's Cross* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 2001), 43.

Figure 17: Map of Ludlow's Hinterland



Ludlow was an ancient stronghold of Mortimer wealth and prestige, and its hinterland provided the economic basis for the dynasty's political ambitions. Due to the strong Mortimer presence, few other noble families held territory in the hinterland. The most powerful of these, the Fitzalans, Earls of Arundel, mostly confined their interests to the territory in the north-west, in and around Clun. There was also patchwork of estates belonging to the Corbet and Talbot families in the vicinity of Church Stretton. The Corbets of Caus (Dukes of Buckingham in the late fifteenth century) held lands in Moreton Corbet and Longnor.<sup>14</sup> The Talbots also owned small estates in this area, at Corsham and Culmington.<sup>15</sup> A few gentry families secured land by the fifteenth century, such as the Blounts of Kinlet and the Cornwalls of Burford, but they were neither numerous nor wealthy enough to disrupt the patchwork of these ancient landowners. Only with the dispersal of monastery lands at the Dissolution did this situation change.<sup>16</sup>

Wenlock Priory and Haughmond Abbey were the largest monastic landowners in the north of Ludlow's hinterland. Wenlock Priory established a market town at Eaton-under-Heywood in 1227 and exerted control over swathes of land in Corvedale.<sup>17</sup> Figure 18 shows that Wenlock Priory invested heavily in its town as it

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<sup>14</sup> Augusta Corbet, *The Family of Corbet: Its Life and Times*, vol. II (London: St Catherine Press, 1914), chapter XIII.

<sup>15</sup> There are some small estates near Corsham mainly linked to the LeStrange inheritance. see A. J. Pollard, 'The Family of Talbot, Lords Talbot and Earls of Shrewsbury in the Fifteenth Century' (PhD, Bristol, Bristol University, 1969), 9, 411–14.

<sup>16</sup> For more detail see D.C. Cox et al., 'Domesday Book: 1300-1540', in *Victoria County History: Shropshire*, vol. 4: Agriculture (London: VCH, 1989), 72–118.

<sup>17</sup> Wenlock Priory leased out its land at Eaton under Heywood, Stoke St Milborough and Ditton Priors: A.T. Gaydon, 'Houses of Cluniac Monks: Abbey, Later Priory of Wenlock', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 38–47.

doubled its lay subsidy value from £34 in 1334 to £70 in 1543.<sup>18</sup> William Rees outlines the extent of the estates of Wenlock Priory in his map of the border counties in the fourteenth century. The Corvedale towns of Hopton, Doddington and Bourton lie in the middle of land owned by Wenlock Priory.<sup>19</sup> Wenlock Priory also managed its appropriated church at Clun, in the Terra Episcopo and Cloneland area. Haughmond Abbey owned six mills near its market town of Leebotwood, which was founded in 1320. Five of these mills were listed as fulling mills in monastic records in 1539, suggesting that the abbey was involved in cloth making, and using its rural Shropshire manors to full the cloth.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 18 outlines the lay subsidy figures for 1334, 1524 and 1543 and demonstrates the relative prosperity of various towns in Ludlow's hinterland. All towns were assessed, except for towns under the control of the Marcher lords, for example, Radnor, Presteigne and Clun. These lordship towns were included in the 1543 lay subsidy, after the Laws in Wales Acts (1536-1542), drew these towns into the English county system. Lay subsidies were a central tax levied for particular reasons. For example, the subsidy of 1524 was collected to fund Henry VIII's war against the French. It was the quickest and easiest method by which kings could obtain money from the population. The 1334 lay subsidy was taxed at a fixed rate or quota for the whole town, whereas the other two subsidies collected taxation which was levied on an individual's personal goods.<sup>21</sup> These later subsidies included a sliding scale of

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<sup>18</sup> Samantha Letters, 'Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516', 2013, <http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html>, accessed 20 June 2018; M. A. Faraday, *The Lay Subsidy for Shropshire 1524-7* (Keele: University of Keele, Centre of Local History, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Rees, 'South Wales and the Border in the Fourteenth Century: North East', accessed 25 August 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Una Rees, 'The Leases of Haughmond Abbey, Shropshire', *Midland History* 8, no. 1 (1983): 14–28.

<sup>21</sup> Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, 19.

taxation which meant that a member of the gentry, for example, Sir Thomas Cornwall, was taxed £5 on his goods worth 100 marks whereas people with goods worth 20s. attracted a much lower tax of 3d.<sup>22</sup> Despite this difference between the earlier and later lay subsidies these central records can still give a good estimation of urban wealth in the hinterland over the space of 200 years.<sup>23</sup>

The lay subsidy returns indicate that the wealthiest towns were in the hinterland area of Corvedale and Cleoland. The data in Figure 18 demonstrates that these towns enjoyed a steady economy for 200 years, from 1334 to 1543, and were unscathed by the Glyndŵr rebellion. The town of Cleobury Mortimer increased in prosperity during this period. Its position on the road from Ludlow to Bewdley on the River Severn gave the town a pivotal role in the carriage of cloth to the markets in Gloucester and Bristol. Bewdley, on the River Severn, was closely linked to Ludlow, as both were under the stewardship of the Mortimer family. It was an important river port for land locked Ludlow. The strength of this relationship is demonstrated by the names of many recruits from Bewdley, in the Palmers' Guild records. The 63 names of people from Bewdley in the Palmers' Guild riding books from 1501-8, include tradesmen such as watermen, mercers, tailors and cappers and also a member of the gentry, John Chetwynd, whose name appears in the riding book for 1505-6.<sup>24</sup>

Although this eastern area of the hinterland was not intimately embroiled in the rivalry between the families of York and Lancaster in the Wars of the Roses, its proximity to Ludlow could have adversely affected the local economy. Instead, the communities in Corvedale and Cleoland and Leominster Ore thrived.

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<sup>22</sup> Faraday, 117.

<sup>23</sup> The lay subsidies for the Hinterland market towns are listed in Figure 18.

<sup>24</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

Incomes in Leominster Ore, which lay to the south of Ludlow, also rose between 1524 and 1543. 130 individuals in Leominster were included in the 1524 valuation, which increased to 210 in the lay subsidy of 1543. The top band increased from one to seven individuals but, even in the middle band of £5 to £10 in personal goods, there was a threefold increase in the number of people who were taxed. Not only were there more people in Leominster with rateable goods, but more individuals were in the higher bracket of taxation by 1543.<sup>25</sup>

It was a mixed picture for the towns in the lordships as they were hit much harder by the Glyndŵr rebellion than the eastern areas. It is difficult to estimate urban wealth in western parts of the hinterland as there are no lay subsidy records from 1334 or 1524. Towns which were connected to the cloth trade, in particular, steadily improved over the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as they recovered from the impact of the Glyndŵr rebellion.<sup>26</sup> For example, Presteigne in Wigmoreland emerged as a leading cloth centre in Wigmoreland by the 1530s. Although destroyed by Glyndŵr in 1401, there were 137 names of people who possessed goods or land worth more than 20s., in the lay subsidy of 1544. The combined assessment for Presteigne was £13 4s. 10d.<sup>27</sup> In comparison, Bishop's Castle in the area of Clonland and Terra Episcopo languished on the edge of England in the fifteenth century. Here we can see an immediate difference in fortunes after it was released from the constraints of Marcher lordship control in 1536. In 1524, 17 individuals in Bishop's Castle possessed goods worth at least 20s. By 1543, the figure had increased to 78 people, with a

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<sup>25</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, table on p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Stevens, *The Economy of Medieval Wales: 1067-1536*, 95.

<sup>27</sup> M. A. Faraday, *Radnorshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII: Assessment-Lists and Accounts of Subsidies and Benevolences 1543-1547* ([Walton on Thames]: M.A. Faraday, 2013), xxx-xxxii, xxxiv.



combined assessment of £8.<sup>28</sup> Clun, on the other hand, never achieved its potential as a Norman planned town, in part due to its precarious geographical location and diminished seignorial support in the fourteenth century. Only 37 people were eligible to be taxed in the lay subsidy of 1544.<sup>29</sup> The destruction of the castle and burning of the church by Glyndŵr in 1401 cut short further expansion of this town.

The economy of the hinterland was based on wool and cloth, but there were other important industries. There was a long-established tradition of droving cattle from the pastures in the Marcher lordships to the lowland counties where the cattle were fattened ready for market in London or other towns in the east. These cattle were also sold at markets in Ludlow and Shrewsbury.<sup>30</sup> There are a few names of recruits who worked in the linked industries of tanning and shoemaking in the Guild records. The membership registers and ridings books for 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16 list six names of corvesers (shoemakers) and five names of tanners in the hinterland. Most of these tradesmen came from Leominster, which indicates a healthy leather industry in this hinterland town.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, 126, 364–65.

<sup>29</sup> Faraday, 397.

<sup>30</sup> Caroline A. J. Skeel, 'The Cattle Trade between Wales and England from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1926): 135–58.

<sup>31</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

**Figure 18: Market Towns in Ludlow's Hinterland** <sup>32</sup>

Town	Miles from Ludlow	Market Foundation	Foundation/Religious Patron	Lay Subsidy 1334	Lay Subsidy 1524	Lay Subsidy 1543
<b>Ludlow</b>		1292	de Lacy/Mortimer	£240	Exempt	£1008
<b>Leominster Ore</b>						
Richards Castle	4	1216	Mortimer	£171 (together with 8 other places)	£27	£88
Leominster	11	1218	Anglo Saxon/Reading Abbey	£45	£518	£834
Kingsland	11	1306	Mortimer	£99	£100	
Pembridge	16	1240	Henry de Penebrug	£103 (together with 6 other places)		
<b>Corvedale and Cleoland</b>						
Burford	7	1266	Mortimer	£33	£44	£31
Wistanstow	10	1306	John de Sibeton		£7	£8
Cleobury Mortimer	11	1226	Mortimer	£45	£62	£83
Eaton-under-Heywood	12	1227	Wenlock Priory	£34	£43	£70
Stottesdon	13	1244	John de Plessetis in 1244	£43	£43	£43
Church Stretton	15	1214	Crown then Earl of Arundel in 1336	£41	£41	£43
Leebotwood	17	1320	Haughmond Abbey	£43 (together with 2 other places)	£16	£32
Bewdley (Worcs)	19	1367	Mortimer	Lordship	Lordship	
<b>Wigmoreland</b>						
Wigmore	8	1304	Mortimer	Lordship	Lordship	£100
Brampton Bryan	12	1252	Brian de Brampton	unknown	£38	£40
Presteigne	16	1225	Fitz Warin in 1225, Mortimer in 1306. Wigmore Abbey	Lordship	Lordship	£13 in 1544
Knighton	17	1292	Welsh/deBroase/Mortimer /Great Malvern Abbey	Lordship	Lordship	19s.
Kington	20	1267	Llanthony Secunda, Gloucester	Lordship	Lordship	
New Radnor	24	1231	Mortimer	Lordship	£2 in 1544	£240
<b>Cloneland and Terra Episcopo</b>						
Lydbury North	14	1249	Wigmore Abbey/ Plowden Chapel	£33 (with More)	£18	£24
Clun	16	1272	Fitzalan / Mortimer /Wenlock Priory in 1291	Lordship	Lordship	£97
Bishop's Castle	16	1394	Bishop of Hereford	£34	£86	£308
Lydham	18	1267	Thomas de Montgomery	£32 (with Stow)	£5	£34

<sup>32</sup>Information taken from: Denton, 'Taxatio: Containing the Valuation, Plus Related Details, of the English and Welsh Parish Churches and Prebends Listed in the Ecclesiastical Taxation Assessment of 1291-92'; Letters, 'Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516'; Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*; Faraday, *Radnorshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII: Assessment-Lists and Accounts of Subsidies and Benevolences 1543-1547*; Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*.

The religious landscape of Ludlow's hinterland continually changed and evolved over the late medieval period. Although the monasteries at Wigmore and Brimfield survived until the 1530s, competition from other religious institutions, such as parish churches, meant that they needed to rely on tithes from their appropriated churches and support from patrons. Most parish churches in the Diocese of Hereford (which covered most of the hinterland) were managed by churchwardens, who generally allocated funds to extend the nave and tower. They also oversaw the queue of well-off parishioners, who wished to carve out private chantries within the church walls. Their wills, such as Thomas Cooke's, esquire from Ludlow, show bequests for elaborate funeral services and an allocation of money for people to attend them. In his will, written in 1513, Cooke bequeathed nine marks for his obit and chantry and at his funeral he assigned '2d. for the masses and to each and every child 1d.'. <sup>33</sup> The increased requests for obits, intercessory prayers, and funeral rituals in the late medieval community, meant that there was more than enough work to go around for the religious institutions in the hinterland. The increasing demand for personalised religious services was an ideal situation for the Palmers' Guild to thrive. Their catalogue of services was attractive to all ranks of society, except perhaps the very poor.

Many churches in the hinterland underwent a building programme, which shows the vibrancy of late medieval religion in this region. It was not a matter of if there should be an investment; it was just a matter of when. Surplus money from townspeople often went straight into the parish church coffers. Even in small parishes

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<sup>33</sup> TNA PROB 11/17/347 Will of Thomas Cooke of Ludlow, Esquire, 1513 (proved 20 April 1513)

in remote parts of Cloneland and Terra Episcopo, the parishioners might add small images to decorate the altar or donate candles for the mass. At the turn of the sixteenth century, in this extreme western edge of the hinterland, in inaccessible parishes such as Llanfair Waterdine, Beguildy and Bettws-y-Crwyn, local craftspeople carved intricate roodscreens and lofts.<sup>34</sup> The economy of the hinterland did not just include the trading of wool and cloth and other commodities. The demand for new religious ‘necessities’ was an essential part of the broader economy. Donations and bequests could be perceived as discretionary spending but, in reality, it was central to the religious observance of many people who lived in the hinterland areas.

### **Ludlow’s Hinterland: An Overview**

The data in Figure 19, which has been drawn from the membership registers and riding books, supplies an overview of the hinterland region. These figures provide a unique opportunity to understand the role of the Ludlow Guild in this region and invites comparison with data from the Central and North Welsh Marches, which is the subject of the next chapter. The records show that most registrations came from people who resided in the Corvedale and Cleoland area of the hinterland. There were fewer registrations in the western areas of the hinterland than in the eastern areas, but the conversion rate (registrations converting to official members) was close to 25 percent in all areas. Cloneland and Terra Episcopo is the area with the lowest number of registrations, the highest proportion of people with Welsh names (28 percent), and

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<sup>34</sup> For more detail see: Crossley and Ridgeway, ‘Screens, Lofts and Stalls Located in Wales and Monmouthshire: Part Six, Section IX Radnorshire’, 219; Sheila Davies, ed., *Bettws Y Crwyn: History, Geography, Farming and People* (Newtown: Imprint, 2007), 20; Nicholas Riall, ‘“Awaiting a Daniel for Interpretation’: The Tudor Church Screen at Llanfair Waterdine, Shropshire’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 161 (2012): 392; Wheeler, *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches*.

the largest number of deceased registrations (7 percent). However, it is not clear what the precise relationship was between ethnicity, social class, and the proclivity to register deceased relatives. An in-depth analysis of this data follows.

Most of the data comes from the riding books and membership registers for 1501-8. Although the early membership registers, which cover the years between 1485 and 1489 and the last riding book of 1515-16, offers a useful comparison, the core records for this thesis are the years from 1501-8. There was an average of 131 registrations each year between 1501 and 1508 from the hinterland region, which was 70 fewer people (36 percent) compared to the Central and North Welsh Marches.<sup>35</sup> Although this statistic mirrors the geographical size of each region, as Ludlow's hinterland is roughly one-third of the northern region, we might expect that the hinterland would provide a higher number of registrations due to its proximity to Ludlow. The records show that this was not the case. The higher number of urban centres in the Central and North Welsh Marches, which would offer the Guild a larger potential membership pool, could be a reason for the higher number of registrations in the northern region. Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Wrexham and Denbigh, to name a few, were thriving towns with at least 1,500 inhabitants apiece in the early sixteenth century. By comparison, Leominster was the largest town in the hinterland, aside from Ludlow, and there were no other hinterland towns with more than 1,000 people. In the final analysis, there is no absolute way to determine if urban size and density were the reasons for the higher number of registrations from the Central and North Welsh Marches, as there are no overall population figures. However, it does seem likely that

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<sup>35</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

the greater pool of potential members in urban settings was a contributory factor towards the higher number of registrations from the Central and North Welsh Marches.

The conversion of registrations to official membership was higher in the towns and villages of Ludlow's hinterland than the Central and North Welsh Marches' communities. Figure 20 shows this pattern for the years from 1501-8, where an average of 43 people from the hinterland became members of the Ludlow Guild each year, compared to 36 from the Central and North Welsh Marches.<sup>36</sup> This statistic suggests that, despite fewer registrations, people who lived closer to Ludlow were more likely to become members, suggesting a greater motivation to complete the annual instalments to gain the benefits of membership. The Guild's most successful years in the hinterland were 1504-7, during which 157 names of people were entered in the membership register, or 52 names per year. The best years for the Central and North Welsh Marches were 1502-6, when 194 new names of people were entered into the register, at an average of 48 people a year. However, there is no doubt that the year 1505-6 was by far the most profitable year for the Guild. The steward's clerk entered 135 names into the membership registers (65 from the hinterland and 70 from the Central and North Welsh Marches) for that year.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>37</sup> SA LB5/3/6-9 Steward's Riding Books 1504-5 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3 Register of Admissions 1505-6.

**Figure 19: The Hinterland’s Demographic Statistics for 1501-8** <sup>38</sup>

Area	Registrations	Official Members	Key Features	Ethnicity (Welsh)	Females	Deceased registrations	People who specified a trade (number)	Gentry (number)
Leominster Ore	268	98 (27%)	Trade links. Familial connections	2 percent	45 percent	4 percent	37	11
Corvedale and Cleoland	362	111 (24%)	Social links. Ludlow people bequeathed property in this area to the Guild	3 percent	44 percent	6 percent	14	9
Cloneland and Terra Episcopo	124	42 (25%)	‘ordinary people’ with religious needs	28 percent	45 percent	7 percent	2	0
Wigmoreland	162	51 (24%)	Ludlow families with connections to the local cloth industry	24 percent	40 percent	4 percent	33	5

Most people who registered to join the Guild came from the two areas which were located to the south and east of Ludlow. These were the areas of Corvedale and Cleoland and Leominster Ore, which accounted for 27 percent and 24 percent of the total registrations respectively for the years 1501-8. Figure 19 summarises information from the riding books and membership registers which shows the key features for the two areas.<sup>39</sup> More people recorded their status as gentry in the records for Leominster Ore and Corvedale and Cleoland than elsewhere in the hinterland. On the other hand, the riding books and membership registers for Leominster Ore included many who specified their trade occupation. For example, the records for Leominster for 1501-8

<sup>38</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9. The figure in brackets is the number of official members as a percentage of total registrations.

<sup>39</sup> SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

list 16 names of people who identified with a trade.<sup>40</sup> This discrepancy suggests there may have been a stronger economic motivation to join the Ludlow Guild for people who lived in the Leominster Ore area.<sup>41</sup>

Although there were fewer registrations from the western parts of the hinterland, there was a steady stream of people from Cloneland and Terra Episcopo, and Wigmoreland, throughout the early sixteenth century. The peak year for Cloneland and Terra Episcopo area was 1504-5, where 35 people registered with the steward and 12 of those people became members within 15 years.<sup>42</sup> The towns in Wigmoreland were more accessible from Ludlow, which could be the reason why the records show an average of 11 new members each year between 1504 and 1508, not just in 1504-5.<sup>43</sup> These two different patterns of membership are examples of the exceptional level of detail which is in the Guild's riding books.

**Figure 20: Members from the Two Regions** <sup>44</sup>

Year	Ludlow's Hinterland	Central and North Welsh Marches
1501-2	17 (19%)	10 (11%)
1502-3	44 (48%)	30 (27%)
1503-4	21 (26%)	51 (17%)
1504-5	39 (36%)	45 (15%)
1505-6	65 (28%)	70 (19%)
1506-7	53 (35%)	23 (38%)
1507-8	63 (56%)	26 (18%)
<b>Average</b>	<b>43 new members per year</b>	<b>36 new members per year</b>

<sup>40</sup> SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>41</sup> See a detailed analysis for Leominster Ore later in the chapter.

<sup>42</sup> SA LB5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 9.

<sup>43</sup> SA LB5/3/6-9 Steward's Riding Books 1504-5 to 1507-8.

<sup>44</sup> The figure in brackets is the number of members as a percentage of total registrations: SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8



Members of the gentry class are dotted throughout the membership registers and riding books for all areas of the hinterland. The Guild records for 1501-8 suggests that the Guild was held in high esteem by gentry families. Appendix 3 lists 21 names of people from these families. This table shows that most came from the southern areas of Leominster Ore and Corvedale and Cleoland. They took no part in Guild business, and it may well have been an association which was not actively nurtured. Members of this class often were assigned roles by the King or owned land in other counties, so they were absent from their hinterland estates. Of note are the lists of names of servants of Sir Richard Croft and his wife Eleanor, Sir Thomas Cornwell, Sir Thomas Blount and Sir John Pakington. These names were entered into the riding books for 1501-6.<sup>45</sup> Although not all achieved membership, many were able to access the services of the Guild, probably through the patronage of their master.

The Guild records also give a glimpse of the ethnic composition of the four areas, which is difficult to unearth from other contemporary records. There were only 16 people with Welsh names in the records for Leominster Ore and Corvedale and Cleoland for 1501-8. The individuals who bore these names mostly resided in the larger towns of Leominster and Stottesdon.<sup>46</sup> In the two western areas, there was a higher number of people with Welsh names, which is hardly surprising given their geographical position. Twenty-eight percent of the people in Cloneland and Terra Episcopo had Welsh names, which was more than the adjacent Wigmoreland area, where only 24 percent of the listed names were of Welsh origin.

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<sup>45</sup> SA LB5/3/3-8 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1506-7.

<sup>46</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

Some towns showed a mixture of people with English and those with Welsh names, such as Lydham and Lydbury North in Terra Episcopo. Other towns consisted entirely of people with Welsh or English names. In the Norman settlements of Hopesay and Clunungford on the eastern edge of the Honour of Clun, there were only English names in the Guild records. By contrast, the towns of Clun and Clunbury on the plateau of Clun provided only Welsh names to the Guild records. The Guild records thus strongly suggest that ethnic divisions still existed in the early sixteenth century in parts of the hinterland.<sup>47</sup>

There are interesting patterns around gender in the records. More men than women in the hinterland region registered between 1501 and 1508 (57 percent male to 43 percent female), which is a similar ratio to that of the Central and North Welsh Marches region. Fifty two out of 170 males, who gave their occupation to the steward, were clerics and 19 of those were chaplains.<sup>48</sup> The registration of these clerics might account for the higher number of males in the records for the region closest to Ludlow. In a similar vein, only four of the 15 tradesmen from Leominster, who gave their name to the Guild steward from 1501-8, also enrolled their wives. This statistic not only gives an example of why there was a greater percentage of men in the hinterland, but also underlines the economic pull of the Ludlow Guild. It is quite possible that these tradesmen were keen to engage with the Guild for trade related reasons. They may not have had enough money to register their wives' names as well. They could also be single men. It is not clear what the exact state of play was, but all

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<sup>47</sup> The ethnic composition of communities in the Welsh Marches has been examined in Rabberman, 'Marriage on the Boundaries: Cultural Contact and Marriage Formation on the Welsh/English Border 1442-1526'.

<sup>48</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

we know is that men from Leominster, who did not give an occupation to the steward, all enrolled their wives at the same time.<sup>49</sup> This difference supports the notion that this latter group may have registered to access the religious and perhaps also the social rewards which came with Guild membership.

There was a small group of women who registered to join the Guild in their own right. The records suggest that women from the gentry class were more likely to join on their own. For example, Elisabeth Cornwall of Burford and Margaret Pole of Corfton, both from the gentry class, registered as single women in 1506.<sup>50</sup> Although there were fewer women than men who registered in the hinterland, they were just as likely to pay their instalments and become members. In the Guild records of 1501-8, approximately 32 percent of women and the same percentage of men, who registered to join the Guild became members. Most of the women were English. By comparison, there were very few names of female members who were of Welsh heritage. Although the numbers are small, only nine out of 39 (23 percent) of Welsh women converted their registration to membership.<sup>51</sup>

The data about deceased registrations is important as it tells us something about the reputation of the Guild as a provider of religious services. However, the small size of the sample of deceased registrations in the hinterland requires us to be cautious. There are only 69 names of deceased people out of a total of 1,172 (6 percent) in the riding books and membership lists for the hinterland, for 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16. However, 72 percent of these registrations were paid in full and were

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<sup>49</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>50</sup> SA LB 5/3/8 Steward's Riding Book 1506-7, 3,10.

<sup>51</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

entered as members into the register.<sup>52</sup> The registrations from the Central and North Welsh Marches are also small, although people from that region were more inclined to register their deceased relatives, as they totalled 10 percent of all the registrations for the same years.<sup>53</sup> Family members who registered their deceased relatives would be comforted by the knowledge that Guild chaplains would say prayers for their kin. However, the small numbers give the impression that either people were happy with the services of their parish church, or that the religious services of the Guild were relatively unimportant. It is also possible that individuals may have made provision for services with other institutions, such as the friars, before their demise. The services of the Guild were therefore not necessary. The inclusion of 20 names in just two of the early membership registers of 1485-6 and 1486-7 and none in the latest riding book of 1515-16 suggests that interest in these services also declined over time.<sup>54</sup> It is perhaps not unrelated that increased investment in parish churches occurred over this same period.<sup>55</sup>

A decline in the number of names in the riding book for 1515-16 demonstrates that recruitment was becoming more difficult. Registrations in all towns fell to single figures except for Leominster. Even people in Leominster were shunning the Guild. Of the 23 whose names were registered in this year, only four went on to become members.<sup>56</sup> This situation is mirrored in the records for the Central and North Welsh

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<sup>52</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>53</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>54</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-7.

<sup>55</sup> See: Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation*, 53-57.

<sup>56</sup> SA LB5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 61-2.

Marches, where there were only 174 names in the riding book for 1515-16, down from 371 in the book for 1505-6.<sup>57</sup> It is unclear whether this decline in registrations continued, as there are no surviving riding books after 1515. What we can say is that only 5 percent of recruits in the hinterland were still paying instalments in the late 1530s. A decade earlier, 15 percent of people were still engaged with the Guild into the 1530s.<sup>58</sup>

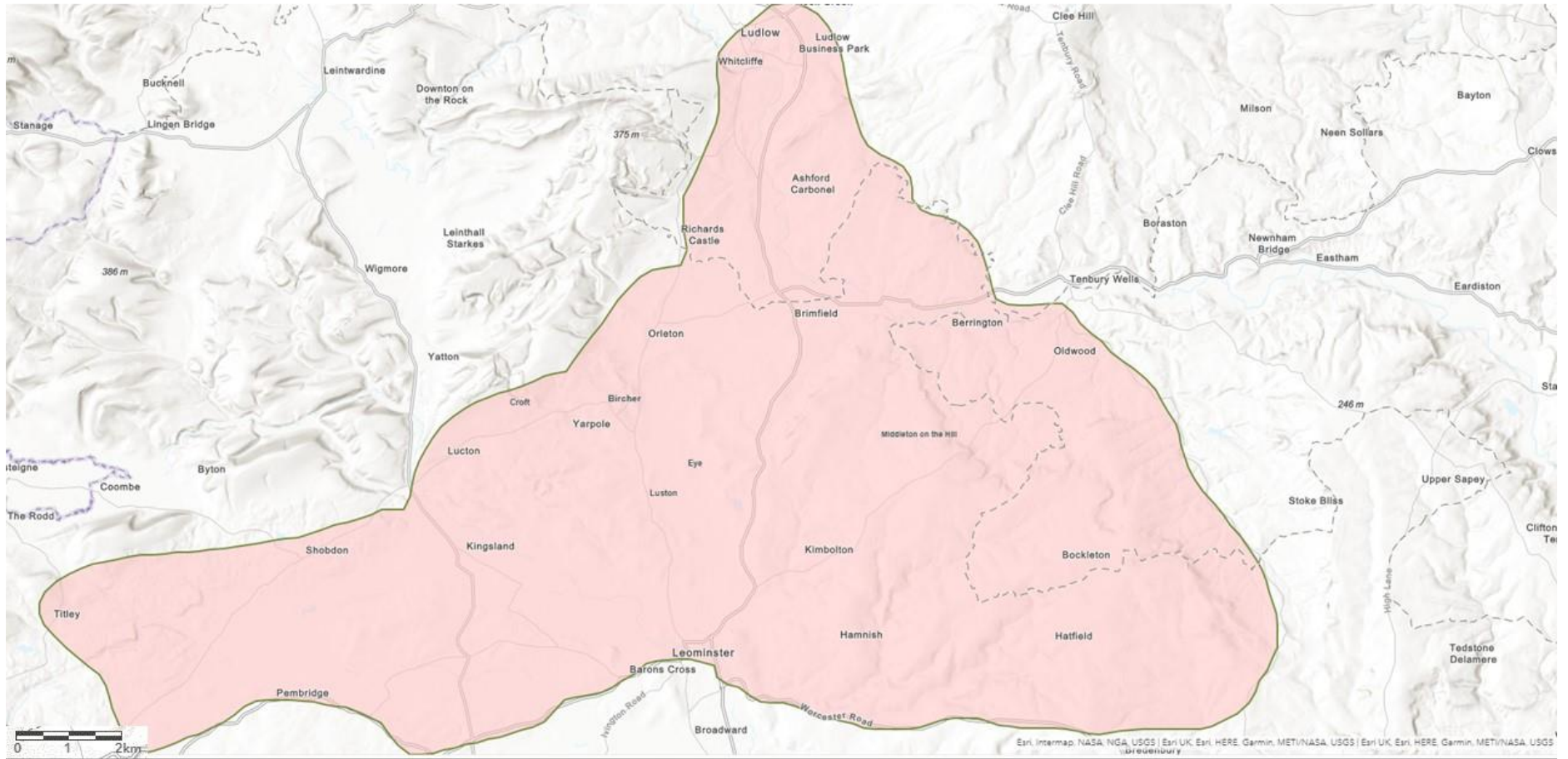
The analysis now turns to examine these four areas of Ludlow's hinterland in detail.

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<sup>57</sup> SA LB5/3/7,10 Steward's Riding Books for 1505-6 and 1515-16.

<sup>58</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

Figure 21: Map of Leominster Ore showing the Area Visited by the Steward



## Area 1. Leominster Ore <sup>59</sup>

The rich wool-growing area to the south of Ludlow supplied a steady flow of members to the Palmers' Guild, which did not diminish over the 30 years covered by the main group of surviving Guild records (1485 to 1515). The engagement with the Guild started from the earliest records we have. In the membership registers of 1406-8, at a time when the membership was predominantly Ludlow based, there were only 17 names of external members out of a total of 140 for these two years. It is apparent that the Guild was drawing in members from the hinterland even at this early stage, as five external members came from the hinterland, and four of these came from Leominster Ore. Hugh Downe from Pembridge paid a substantial entry fee of 36s. to the Guild in 1406, which demonstrates a high regard for the Guild's services at this time.<sup>60</sup>

Although there are only 27 names of members in the 1485-9 records, the numbers show an upward trajectory from the 1406-8 figures. In the core records for 1501-8, there are a further 268 registrations which led to 98 memberships. Even in the last riding book of 1515-16, there were 72 names of people who wished to join the Guild, which was 60 percent of the hinterland total.<sup>61</sup> Although the steward visited many villages in Leominster Ore, the highest number of registrations came from Leominster. The names of 58 men and women from Leominster are listed in the riding

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<sup>59</sup> The etymology of Ore in the context Leominster Ore is unclear. It seems likely that it is a variant of another meaning of Ore (precious metal) 'Ore, n.7', in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://www-oed-com.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/view/Entry/132384?rkey=QSzdII&result=7>, accessed 3 December 2019.

<sup>60</sup> SA LB5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1406-7.

<sup>61</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

books for 1501-8. The second highest number of registrations came from Pembridge, where 32 people registered with the Guild. In third place, the town of Kingsland supplied 16 names to the Guild steward. Most of those inhabitants of Leominster Ore who paid instalments gave regular amounts to the steward for up to 15 years, and 32 percent managed to become members of the Guild, which was the average conversion rate for the hinterland.<sup>62</sup>

People in this southern area engaged with the Guild in three main ways. The primary engagement was through a shared interest in growing the economy. The men and women of Leominster Ore farmed sheep which produced fine wool for local markets. The Guild provided a gateway to Ludlow's markets and fairs and the opportunity to access a network of cloth merchants, mercers and drapers at the annual Guild feasts and other occasions. The second pathway for engagement was through personal networks which were fostered through Guild membership. In the case of Leominster Ore, these networks were based primarily on family relationships. Ludlow members encouraged their Leominster Ore kin to help build the Palmers' Guild 'brand' in this area. Finally, the Guild offered a religious alternative to the services which were provided by local institutions such as parish churches or monasteries. The Guild's solid religious reputation meant it steadily acquired property, either through bequests or by acquisition, well into the sixteenth century. After examining secondary research on Leominster Ore, the research will examine these three factors in more detail.

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<sup>62</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.



There are few secondary sources which examine the political economy, religious institutions and social profile of Leominster Ore in the late fifteenth century. The key resources for local history, the Victoria County Histories of Shropshire and Herefordshire, have only given the area a cursory glance. The main focus of the VCH has been to document towns in and around Shrewsbury and northern areas of Shropshire, although there is a small part of one volume which is relevant to this thesis, as it examines the Corvedale settlements near Much Wenlock.<sup>63</sup> The most relevant volume of that series for this thesis outlines the religious institutions of medieval Shropshire and examines the Palmers' Guild's role within the broader religious landscape.<sup>64</sup> There are few VCH volumes for the county of Herefordshire. Those volumes which have been published mainly focus on broad themes. The inaugural volume deals with agriculture and pre and post-Norman landscapes in Herefordshire. Recent volumes have concentrated on Ledbury and surrounding parishes, which are outside the Leominster Ore area.<sup>65</sup>

Fortunately, the transactions of the local historical and archaeological society provide a significant amount of useful information regarding the landscape and history of Leominster Ore. The Woolhope Club has been publishing learned articles in their transactions since 1856 on a wide range of historical, archaeological, and geological themes, which occasionally includes information on north Herefordshire.<sup>66</sup> Two articles document the chapels and chantries of north-west Herefordshire, and others

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<sup>63</sup> A.P. Baggs et al., *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 10 (London: VCH, 1998).

<sup>64</sup> G. C. Baugh and C.R. Elrington, eds., *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 4 (London: VCH, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> Sylvia Pinches, *Ledbury: A Market Town and Its Tudor Heritage* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009); Sylvia Pinches, *Ledbury: People and Parish before the Reformation* (London: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> A list can be found at 'Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club', Transactions, 2019, <https://www.woolhopeclub.org.uk/publications/transactions>, accessed 7 November 2019.

outline local ecclesiastical architecture and the impact of Owain Glyndŵr's Rebellion on Herefordshire.<sup>67</sup> However, there is no definitive scholarship on the wool and cloth industry in the area around Leominster. Even the seminal monograph on Leominster Priory by Joe and Caroline Hillaby skirts around documenting the influence of the Priory on the wider Leominster *parochia*.<sup>68</sup>

Regional and national studies also omit this area except to reiterate that Leominster Ore was the 'Golden fleece of England'.<sup>69</sup> Many authors have reused this poem by Michael Drayton, a late sixteenth-century Elizabethan poet, who wrote about the beauty of the English countryside.

Where lives the man who so dull on Britain's furthest shore  
To whom did never found the name of Lemster Ore  
That with the silkworms web for smallness doth compare:  
Wherein, the Winder shows his workmanship so rare<sup>70</sup>

This verse encapsulates the contemporary belief that the Leominster Ore was a unique region, where the richness of nature bought wealth and prosperity to those who lived and farmed there.

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<sup>67</sup> Hair, 'Chaplains, Chantries and Chapels of North-West Herefordshire c. 1400'; P.E.H. Hair, 'Chaplains, Chantries and Chapels of North-West Herefordshire c. 1400: Part 2', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 46, no. 2 (1989): 246–88; George Marshall, 'The Church of Leintwardine', *Transactions of The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, 1920, 223–31; C. J. Boylett, 'The Apparent Dearth of Surviving Medieval Domestic Property in Parts of Herefordshire: A Reappraisal of the Influence of Owain Glyndŵr's Rebellion', *Transactions of The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 63 (2015): 51–83.

<sup>68</sup> Hillaby and Hillaby, *Leominster Minster, Priory and Borough C660-1539*.

<sup>69</sup> For Example: Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance*, 345.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion: Or A Chorographical Description of All the Tracts, Rivers, Mountaines, Forest, and Other Parts of Great Britaine* (London: Printed by Humphrey Lownes for M Lownes, I Brown I Busbie, 1612), 105, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A20847.0001.001>, accessed 3 November 2019.

Two late medieval sources support this perception that Leominster Ore was a premier wool-producing region. The ordinances of 1343 and 1454, which quote minimum rates for wool, show that Leominster Ore was the region with the finest wool. As we can see in Figure 22, a sack of wool from Leominster Ore in 1454 was valued at £13, whereas wool from elsewhere in the Marches or from the Cotswolds cost between £8 and £9 per sack. This price differential was still evident at the end of the fifteenth century, despite inflationary pressures. The reasons behind this success lie in the well-watered landscape with abundant pasture and bare rocky hills. This environment discouraged foot rot in the wiry Ryelands sheep whose small stature produced short, fine wool, which was carded and fulled for cloth.<sup>71</sup> The ‘silkeness’ of the wool was due to these favourable environmental conditions which were found in Leominster Ore, at to a lesser extent in the hills of the nearby Welsh Marches.

**Figure 22: The Best Wool Growing Areas in the Fifteenth Century**<sup>72</sup>

Wool region	1454 Price/sack	1499 Price/sack
<b>Leominster Ore</b>	£13	£25
<b>Marches (Shropshire, Herefordshire and Leominster Stoke)</b>	£9	£19
<b>Middle March</b>	£9	£18
<b>Cotswolds</b>	£8	£15

Many secondary sources rely on Drayton’s quotation in the discussion of the wool trade in the Welsh Marches. Both Eileen Power and Michael Postan cite Drayton’s poem in their writings, and John Munro does the same in his book on the late medieval

<sup>71</sup> Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History: Being the Ford Lectures*, 16.

<sup>72</sup> John H. Munro, *Textiles, Towns and Trade: Essays in the Economic History of Late-Medieval England and the Low Countries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 146–49.

wool trade.<sup>73</sup> However, none of these authors investigates why the Leominster Ore wool was so highly valued. There is an acknowledgement that the northern Herefordshire climate played a role, but there is no research on whether the quality of the wool could have been due to sheep husbandry or other local factors. Despite recent books on the late medieval wool trade, particularly in East Anglia, Wiltshire, and the Cotswolds, the reasons for the high quality of the wool from the Leominster Ore area remains a thinly researched area.<sup>74</sup>

There is also no clarity in the secondary sources about the boundaries of the Leominster Ore. For example, in his book on the medieval wool trade Michael Postan writes:

The men in the middle ages knew this wool by much more picturesque names, such as 'Leominster Ore', the Golden Fleece of England, which applied to all wool grown in and around (and round was a vague term, it might have been thirty, forty or fifty miles) the cathedral city of Leominster.<sup>75</sup>

The Palmers' Guild riding books help to solve this historical mystery by demonstrating that Leominster Ore was a distinct area between Leominster and Ludlow. In every riding book, the relevant page is entitled 'Leominster Ore', and the names of the

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<sup>73</sup> Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History: Being the Ford Lectures*, 16; Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance*, 345; Munro, *Textiles, Towns and Trade: Essays in the Economic History of Late-Medieval England and the Low Countries*, 146–49.

<sup>74</sup> Derek Hurst, *Sheep in the Cotswolds* (Stroud: The History Press, 2005); John Hare, *A Prospering Society: Wiltshire in the Late Middle Ages* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011); Durkee, 'Social Mobility and the Worsteds Weavers of Norwich, c.1450-1530' accessed 25 March 2018.

<sup>75</sup> Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance*, 345.

towns and villages are listed below this heading (see Figure 23). From this evidence, we can deduce that the area of Leominster Ore is north, west and east of Leominster and excludes most communities to the south, (see Figure 21). The current A44 road from Worcester to Rhayader, which cuts through Leominster, runs along the southern boundary of Leominster Ore. Burford and Little Hereford, which are north of the river Teme, are excluded, despite their proximity to Brimfield and Middleton, which are inside the area. The evidence in the riding books, therefore, supports the belief that natural features, such as rivers and tracks, have a large part to play in defining the political geography and economy of this rich wool-growing area.

The people of Leominster Ore shared the same goal as those who lived in Ludlow – to increase their families' wealth and prosperity after the widespread famine, war, and pestilence of the fourteenth and early fifteenth century. It is possible that many saw the Palmers' Guild as a trusted, venerable institution which had emerged relatively unscathed from the chaos of the previous centuries. One driver for many who lived in Leominster Ore was the lure of networking with Ludlow's leading families to provide an easier entry into Ludlow's markets. Entry into this world came through membership of the Ludlow Guild.



The Palmers' Guild records for 1501-8 demonstrate the connection between Leominster and Ludlow. Although the stewards visited many places in Leominster Ore, a prime target for recruitment was Leominster. Lying 11 miles south of Ludlow, with a lay subsidy of £518 in 1524, its economy was second only to that of Ludlow. There are 65 registrations for Leominster in the riding books and membership registers for 1501-9, with a further 23 in the 1515 riding book. These registrations were the highest for a town, not just in Leominster Ore, but in the entire hinterland area at this time. Presteigne in Wigmoreland (see below) was the next highest, with 56 names in the riding books and registers for 1501-9 and a further 3 for 1515.<sup>77</sup>

The Guild stewards recruited Leominster tradesmen and their wives in higher numbers than elsewhere in the hinterland. For example, in the Guild records for 1501-9, there were 17 men from Leominster who gave their occupation to the steward, out of a total of 28 men. There was only a total of 27 men with trades for the whole of Leominster Ore.<sup>78</sup> It is not known why there is a high percentage of tradesmen from Leominster. It may have been due to the practice of hiring local agents, who were enmeshed in the Leominster trades, to carry out recruitment on behalf of the Guild. Although there is no direct mention of these men in the riding books for 1501-8 or 1515-16, the accounts of 1533-4 mention agents who received cloaks from the Guild in return for services.<sup>79</sup> It is not clear if these men were local. Neither do we know the exact nature of the services which they undertook in the Guild's name. However, it is possible that these agents used their networks to encourage men working in industries such as the cloth and leather trades to join the Guild. It may also have been the case

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<sup>77</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

<sup>78</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-8.

<sup>79</sup> SA LB 5/3/31 Steward's Account 1533-34.

that other townsfolk, with no occupation, were also enrolled by the agents. All we can say for sure is that many Leominster townsfolk were drawn to the Ludlow Guild.

The evidence from Guild records of the early sixteenth century, shows us that men and women from Leominster responded to the overtures of the stewards and agents of the Guild in increasing numbers. The Guild riding books, and membership registers identify names of people who gave their occupation to the steward. Most were associated with the cloth and leather trades. As we can see in Figure 24, there are 11 names of people who worked in these two trades in the records for 1501-9. By 1515-16, all those who gave a secular trade to the steward when registering depended on the wool and leather trades. The inclusion of a Flemish or French poyntmaker, Henry Blanche, in the riding book for 1515-6, provides a glimpse into the cloth manufacturing industry in Leominster. Poyntmakers were employed to make fine metal points or tips that were pinched around the ends of laces to fasten clothes. It was a highly skilled profession, which may be the reason why an 'alien' was employed.<sup>80</sup>

Although the earlier discussion about tradespeople from Leominster demonstrates that economic motivation could have been a motivating factor to join the Palmers' Guild, it should not be forgotten that 80 percent of names in the Guild records for 1501-8 did not have an occupation written next to them. Most of these people lived in scattered villages and the smaller towns of Kingsland and Pembridge.

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<sup>80</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9. There was a number of aliens living in Leominster in the early sixteenth century See J.L. Bolton, ed., *The Alien Communities of London in the Fifteenth Century: The Subsidy Rolls of 1440 & 1483-84* (Stamford: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1998) and ; 'England's Immigrants 1330-1550: Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages', *England's Immigrants 1330-1550: Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages*, 2015, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/>, accessed 25 November 2019.



These villagers who lived in places such as Bircher, Middleton on the Hill, and Yarpole, to the north of Leominster, farmed the Leominster Ore sheep and were closely connected through family networks (see Figure 25). The names of the Phelyps and Noblet families, which are listed in the Guild records, show the closeness of these communities. There are 11 names of people from the Phelyps family and four from the Noblet family in the Guild membership and riding books for 1501-8 and 1515-16.<sup>81</sup> Figure 25 shows us that the Phelyps family were solid supporters of the Guild through at least two generations. Although the surname is quite common, it is possible that Walter Phelyps of Ludlow, who was a Guild steward from 1524-7 and William Phelyps, a clothier who also lived in Ludlow, and who was a steward in 1539, were also family members (see Appendices 1 and 2). It is notable that no entry fine was paid by Margery Phelyps from Yarpole and her servant in 1502. Apart from this one case, the Guild riding books for 1501-8 show that only Ludlow based members who are related to Guild officials were exempt from payment. It would, therefore, be fair to say that Margery Phelyps was related to the Ludlow stewards who bear her name.

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<sup>81</sup> SA LB5/3/6, 10 Steward's Riding Books 1504-5 and 1515-16.

**Figure 24: Occupational Groups in Leominster <sup>82</sup>**

Name	Guild records	Occupation	Broad Occupation	Member	Instalments
<b>1501-9</b>					
John Alyde	1507-8	Fuller	Cloth trade	No	6-10 years
Moris ap Atha	1501-2	Tailor	Cloth trade	No	11-15 years
John Avenham	1503-4	Mercer	Cloth trade	No	1-5 years
John Benet	1506-7	Weaver	Cloth trade	No	16-20 years
Richard Davies	1505-6	Butler at Leominster Priory	Cleric	Yes	16-20 years
John Forest	1507-8	Corveser	Leather trade	No	1-5 years
John Gillford	1506-7	Monk	Cleric	Yes	
John Goodman	1505-6	Tailor	Cloth trade	No	11-15 years
Richard Goodman	1507-8	Baker		No	1-5 years
Richard Halle	1503-4	Vicar	Cleric	No	1-5 years
John Lemster	1507-8	Monk	Cleric	Yes	6-10 years
John Marten	1506-7	Clothier	Cloth trade	Yes	
Thomas Mason	1508-9	Canon	Cleric	Yes	
Henry Millson	1502-3	Weaver	Cloth trade	Yes	1-5 years
John Moris	1501-2	Miller		No	1-5 years
John Phelipps	1508-9	Chaplain	Cleric	Yes	
John Roysse	1506-7	Hosier	Cloth trade	Yes	
William Sentage	1507-8	Chaplain	Cleric	No	1-5 years
David Stevens	1506-7	Baker		No	11-15 years
Thomas Stevens	1506-7	Husbandman		No	None
Thomas Tailor	1508-9	Carpenter		Yes	
John Thomas	1505-6	Chaplain	Cleric	No	16-20 years
Thomas Thorne	1505-6	Painter	Artisan	No	6-10 years
Richard Webley	1508-9	Corveser	Leather trade	Yes	
Jacob Worall	1507-8	Tanner	Leather trade	Yes	16-20 years
<b>1515-16</b>					
Henry Blanche	1515-16	Poyntmaker (possibly French or Flemish)	Cloth trade	No	1-5 years
William Burchor	1515-16	Fuller	Cloth trade	No	11-15 years
John Carpynter	1515-16	Corveser	Leather trade	No	1-5 years
William Dyer	1515-16	Carrier	Cloth trade	No	None
Hugo Faringdon	1515-16	Monk, later Abbot of Reading	Cleric	Yes	6-10 years
Thomas Erley	1515-16	Monk	Cleric	Yes	11-15 years
John Lewis	1515-16	Tanner	Leather trade	No	11-15 years
Richard Scarlett	1515-16	Mercer	Cloth trade	No	1-5 years

<sup>82</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

**Figure 25: The Phelyps and Noblet Families** <sup>83</sup>

Name	Guild records	Place	Relationship/Occupation	Member	Instalments
<b>Phelyps family</b>					
Margery	1502-3	Yarpole		Yes	No payment
Johanna Jefferies	1502-3	Yarpole	Servant to Margery	Yes	No payment
Isabella	1503-4	Yarpole		No	1-5 years
Thomas	1503-4	Yarpole	Husband to Isabella	No	1-5 years
Alice	1503-4	Middleton on the Hill		Yes	11-15 years
Richard	1503-4	Middleton on the Hill	Husband to Alice	Yes	11-15 years
Johanna	1505-6	Stretford		Yes	
William	1505-6	Stretford	Husband to Johanna	Yes	
John	1508-9	Leominster	Chaplain	Yes	
Margaret	1515-16	Kempton		No	16-20 years
John alias Reynold	1515-16	Kempton		No	16-20 years
Johanna	1515-16	Middleton on the Hill		No	6-10 years
Richard (Jnr)	1515-16	Middleton on the Hill	1525	No	6-10 years
<b>Noblet Family</b>					
Richard	1501-2	Bircher	Husbandman.	Yes	11-15 years
Margery	1501-2	Bircher	Wife to Richard (Snr)	Yes	11-15 years
Richard (Jnr)	1506-7	Bircher	Son of Richard	Yes	
Alice	1506-7	Bircher	Wife to Richard (Jnr)	Yes	

By looking closely at these families' entries in the Guild records and extracting information from family wills, it is clear that the Phelyps and Noblet families not only had a close association with the Palmers' Guild but were also connected with each other. One of the executors of Richard Phelyps' will was Richard Noblet from Bircher, who registered to join the Guild in 1501.<sup>84</sup> This arrangement was reciprocated when a member of the Phelyps family, John Phelyps, was given the role of executor for the same Richard Noblet in 1531.<sup>85</sup> The explicit bond of trust which exists between

<sup>83</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>84</sup> The Will names the executors as John and Richard Noblet. HRO HD4/1/118, 47 Will of Richard Phelypps of Medylton, 5 March 1525 (proved 10 April 1526).

<sup>85</sup> HRO Miscellaneous Wills. Will of Richard Noblet, husbandman, 3 March 1531 (no date of proof).

testator and executor would indicate that these two families were either bound by marriage or by strong ties of friendship. Membership of the same religious guild would also cement these family connections.

The third form of engagement, the religious motivation to join the Palmers' Guild, overlaps with the economic and familial factors which have already been outlined. Bequests of property often demonstrated religious piety in the late medieval period. The property was given to the Guild in return for religious services for the testator, such as prayers, trentals or annual obits after their death. The Guild added to these property bequests by buying land and tenements to lease. By the early sixteenth century, most of the Guild's rental income came from 'foreign' rents in parts of Leominster Ore, particularly in Ashford Bowdler, Ashford Carbonell and Richard's Castle. When the Guild was investigated in 1553 by the Office of Augmentations, the records indicate that there were 24 villages which had Guild properties most of which lay within a fifteen-mile radius of Ludlow.<sup>86</sup> There are no entries for lands west of Ludlow apart from Richard's Castle which was within the immediate vicinity, being only nine miles from Ludlow.

Property bequests and acquisitions increased the Guild's role in the political economy as its stewards managed parcels of land and oversaw the rental and repairs of tenements and houses. An example of a property acquisition is a deed, dated 20 December 19 Henry VII (1503), which shows that John Pratte quitclaimed the lands in Ashford Carbonell forever to the Palmers' Guild.<sup>87</sup> This land included five acres of arable land, a tenement, and a messuage in Huntington. The riding book for 1502-3

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<sup>86</sup> TNA E318 31 1766, Records of the Court of Augmentations (5 Edward VI, 1553).

<sup>87</sup> Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, 185.

contains this deed which would suggest that this transfer was negotiated by the Guild steward, John Hoke, when he visited the Leominster Ore area.

There are also approximately 20 deeds and wills which have survived in the Shropshire Archives that outline property bequests to pay for chaplains to conduct religious services in Leominster Ore. One example is a gift of land by Eleanor, a gentilwoman of Eye, in 1517. The indenture between Eleanor and the Ludlow Guild also outlines the 'pecking order' of religious institutions in Ludlow and also Leominster Ore. Eleanor gave her tenement in Morton, near Eye 'with land and pasture in the field there' to the Guild in Ludlow rather than the monastery at Leominster, four miles to the south of Eye. In return, she specified that

All the priests of the Guild be present with four 'cantill copes' and deacons to ring the Guild bell at Dirige and Mass and the bellman to go about the town praying for souls; the Warden is to offer the mass, the porter of the Guild to set the hearse in the chancel with five tapers burning about. If there is a default the Prior of the Carmelite Friars to enter the tenement and put the Warden out; if the Prior default the Friars Austin to enter.<sup>88</sup>

The instructions in this will indicate a familiarity with the customs and services of the Palmers' Guild, which suggests that Eleanor may have attended services at the Guild Chapel in Ludlow. Eleanor was also well aware of the range of religious institutions which were available to do her bidding. Even though the reputation of the Guild was at its height, which can be seen in her accolade, 'according to the laudable

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<sup>88</sup> SA LB 5/2/1386 Deed of Eleanor of Eye (1517).

custom of the said Guild', she felt the need to have a safety net of other institutions to ensure prayers and the proper burial was carried through. This will shows the complex web of pious giving in the late medieval period and how religious institutions might be tempted to compete for this piety.

Finally, it is clear that the clerical class were comfortable with the extra religious services which the Guild offered its members. Figure 24 gives the names of 10 clerics who were listed in the Guild membership registers and riding books for 1501-8 and the riding book of 1515-16. Their number included a monk, Hugh Farrington, who became Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Reading in 1520, the mother house of Leominster Priory.<sup>89</sup> Their names show that they occupied many roles in the church – chaplains, deacons, monks, priests. A butler at the Priory, Richard Davies, who oversaw the beer and buttery of Leominster Priory, finally achieved his membership of the Guild in 1523, 16 years after his first instalment.<sup>90</sup>

People in Leominster Ore joined the Guild for many reasons. Membership of the Guild offered access to Ludlow's markets and networking opportunities which could be nurtured at the important annual Guild feast at Pentecost. Individuals preferred a Guild with resources and a solid reputation for offering obits, prayers, and a throng of Guild members at their funeral service. Generational loyalty to the Guild demonstrates that the Guild provided safe and affordable secular and also religious benefits. However, the underlying factor was the shared interest in improving the political economy, which was held together by bonds of trust. This gave a springboard for the Guild to market their religious services to the communities in Leominster Ore.

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<sup>89</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 62.

<sup>90</sup> SA LB 5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6



## Area 2. Corvedale and Cleoland

The political geography of Corvedale and Cleoland followed the natural boundaries of the River Teme to the south and Wenlock edge to the north. Figure 26 shows the extent of Corvedale which covers the northern part of Corvedale and Cleoland, from Church Stretton in the west to Much Wenlock in the east. The main west-east trackway winds through a range of valleys, such as Corvedale, each with their own unique settlement pattern. As we saw earlier, these valleys have been described as *pays* or sub regions, because the physical landscape has shaped the growth of settlements.<sup>91</sup> Corvedale includes the market towns of Stottesdon and Ditton Priors, which were closer to Bridgnorth than Ludlow. People in the villages around Stottesdon, for example, would be far more likely to walk nine miles to Bridgnorth than walk to Ludlow's market, which was over 13 miles away. The southern part of this area, which was given the name 'Cleoland' in the riding books, included the towns of Cleobury Mortimer, Cleobury North and Stottesdon.

The relationship with Ludlow was stronger with the townsfolk who lived in the Cleoland part of this eastern area of the hinterland. Ranulph de Mortimer established the market town of Cleobury Mortimer in the twelfth century. By the early fifteenth century, the town dominated the economy of the southern part of the area of Corvedale and Cleoland. Goods were carried from Ludlow to Cleobury Mortimer and thence to Bewdley, on the River Severn, with no tolls or taxes. Bewdley was originally a Mortimer town that passed to Edward Duke of York in 1433 as part of the Mortimer

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<sup>91</sup> Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography*, 319.



inheritance. It was under Marcher jurisdiction, with many privileges including the provision of sanctuary for fugitives and criminals.<sup>92</sup>

The people who lived in this area engaged with the Ludlow Guild in three different ways. First, the Guild owned land, tenements and houses which were leased to local people and managed by Guild officials. They employed local tradesmen to repair these properties which contributed to the political economy of this area. Second, the Guild offered networking opportunities for those who had sufficient means to attend the annual feast. These networks are mostly hidden from the historical record, but careful analysis of the riding books for 1501-8 throws light on these relationships. Although the third pathway for engagement with the Guild – religious factors, was not as explicit as we saw in Leominster Ore, the registration of many ‘ordinary people’ suggests that many drew spiritual comfort from being part of the brethren of the Guild. These factors will be examined in more detail, after an examination of the secondary research.

The secondary literature on the Corvedale and Cleoland area is fragmentary and often dated. Moreover, none of these sources discuss the Palmers’ Guild’s role in the towns and villages which make up the eastern part of the hinterland. The VCH of Shropshire gives some context and background about the settlement, religious landscape, and political geography of Corvedale. Research on the topography of this area by Jane Croom in 1992, gives a good understanding of the historical geography of this area, but does not cover the parts of Corvedale and Cleoland which the Guild

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<sup>92</sup> Samuel Lewis, ed., ‘Bewdley’, in *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (London: Samuel Lewis, 1848), 228; William Page and J.W. Willis-Bund, eds., ‘Parishes: Ribbesford with the Borough of Bewdley’, in *A History of the County of Worcester*, vol. 4 (London: Victoria County History, 1924), 297–300.

steward visited.<sup>93</sup> In the late nineteenth century, Robert Eyton drew together disparate records to build a seminal history of all Shropshire parishes. However, as his research primarily focuses on the early medieval period, it only provides background information to this thesis.<sup>94</sup> As we found with Leominster Ore, there are some local studies of individual villages in this area, such as Kinlet, and the parishes of Easthope, Shipton and Stanton Long, but the authors focus on these settlements rather than engaging with a broader perspective.<sup>95</sup> Wendy Brogden's book on southern Shropshire, published in 2010, documents the early Reformation in Corvedale and uses the register of Thomas Botelar, the last vicar of Much Wenlock before the Reformation, to great effect. However the scope of her work does not include detail of the journeys of the Guild stewards to this area.<sup>96</sup> This omission is not surprising given that Brogden examines the area from the 1530s onwards. There is a real need for these resources to be updated, with information from the Palmers' Guild records. A new history of this area, which could incorporate these and other relevant sources, would be a significant step towards this end.

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<sup>93</sup> Rees, 'The Leases of Haughmond Abbey, Shropshire'; Una Rees, ed., *The Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey* (Cardiff: Shropshire Archaeological Society and University of Wales Press, 1985); Jane N. Croom, 'The Topographical Analysis of Medieval Town Plans: The Examples of Much Wenlock and Bridgnorth', *Midland History* 17, no. 1 (1992): 16–38; A.P. Baggs et al., 'Munslow', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 10 (London: VCH, 1998), 151–67.

<sup>94</sup> Robert William. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, vol. i–xxii (London: Smith, 1860).

<sup>95</sup> Francis Engleheart, ed., *Kinlet: The Life and Times of a Shropshire Village* (Kinlet: Kinlet History Group, 2007); Elizabeth Norton, 'Elizabeth Blount of Kinlet: An Image of Henry VIII's Mistress Identified', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society* LXXXIV (2009): 21–26; Wendy Brogden, *Glimmers of Dissent: Reactions to the Reformation in the South Shropshire Parishes of Easthope, Shipton and Stanton Long* (Ludlow: Ludlow Historical Research Group, 2010).

<sup>96</sup> 'The Register of Sir Thomas Botelar, Vicar of Much Wenlock', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* VI, no. 1st series (1883): 93–132; Brogden, *Glimmers of Dissent: Reactions to the Reformation in the South Shropshire Parishes of Easthope, Shipton and Stanton Long*.

Corvedale and Cleoland was the largest geographical area in the hinterland and supplied the highest number of names in the Guild membership registers and riding books for 1501-8. In these seven years, 362 people registered to join the Guild from Corvedale and Cleoland, which was 100 more than Leominster Ore.<sup>97</sup> Another point of difference with Leominster Ore is the spike in registrations for 1505-7. Over 60 percent of all registrations in Corvedale and Cleoland, during the seven years from 1501-8, were drawn from these two years. There were 120 registrations in the 1505-6 riding books and 100 names of people for 1506-7.<sup>98</sup> For Leominster Ore, the corresponding percentage was 38 percent, and the smaller areas of Wigmoreland and Cloneland and Terra Episcopo were 43 percent and 32 percent, respectively. By the last riding book of 1515-16, there were only five registrations from Corvedale and Cleoland, from villages which were within a few miles of Ludlow.<sup>99</sup> The Guild records show that this rapid rise and fall in engagement was not replicated in the other hinterland areas.

It is difficult to find a definitive answer to why there was an explosion of registrations in these two years. It is more likely that there is a raft of reasons behind this event. It may be that the stewards did not visit all the villages in Corvedale and Cleoland in the other years covered by the riding books – 1501-4 and 1507-8. It may also be the case that several pages were lost in the five centuries since they were written. It also could be that there were local reasons for this sudden interest in the Guild's services, now lost to the historical record. It is true that the Ludlow was 'riding high' in these few years, as Prince Arthur's Council and Prince Henry's entourage were

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<sup>97</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>98</sup> SA LB5/3/7,8 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6 and 1506-7

<sup>99</sup> SA LB5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 1.

based in the town from 1501-3. There was also an increase in incidence of grave illnesses, such as the plague and sweating sickness, from 1505-8 which may have prompted more registrations as people were fearful of their own mortality.<sup>100</sup> However, all of these factors do not adequately explain the increase in 'ordinary members' in 1505-7 in one area of the hinterland and not the others. It is intriguing to find these pockets of inconsistent data in the Palmers' Guild records. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to drill down into each and every community visited by the Guild stewards, however these types of data provide a basis for future scholars who wish to research the relationship between Ludlow and the region to the north east of that town.

Although the Guild engaged with people through the political economy, it was quite different to Leominster Ore. First, there were far fewer occupations listed against the names of people in the membership registers and riding books from 1501-8. In the surviving records the occupations of individuals are listed in only four cases, all of whom worked in the cloth trade – Thomas ap Howell (a weaver from Diddlebury), Richard Forde (a weaver from Stottesdon), William Crondall (a tailor from Neen Sollars), and John Adams (a tailor from Whittingslow).<sup>101</sup> The entry of trade names, which we found in the records for Leominster Ore, signifies a business connection with the Palmers' Guild, and Ludlow more broadly. However, unlike Leominster Ore, Corvedale and Cleoland did not have a premier urban centre such as

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<sup>100</sup> Guy Thwaites, Mark Taviner, and Vanya Gant, 'The English Sweating Sickness, 1485 to 1551', *New England Journal of Medicine* 336, no. 8 (20 February 1997): 580; John L. Flood, "'Safer on the Battlefield than in the City': England, the 'Sweating Sickness', and the Continent", *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 2 (2003): 147.

<sup>101</sup> SA LB 5/3/3- Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

Leominster, which straddled the primary communication link between Ludlow and Hereford. Instead, the market towns of Cleobury Mortimer, Stottesdon, Cleobury North and Ditton Priors hugged the eastern spine of the Corvedale and Cleoland area. As these towns were closer to Bridgnorth than Ludlow, the merchant class would perhaps favour the larger market towns of Bridgnorth and Worcester, for their economic networks. This economic reality could explain why there were far fewer names of people with occupations in the records for Corvedale and Cleoland, in comparison to Leominster Ore.

The Guild instead engaged with the economy of Corvedale and Cleoland in a different manner. It managed a scattered number of properties from Guild members' bequests. In Ludlow itself, the Guild was a major owner of property, but this was not the case in Corvedale and Cleoland. The few properties which the Guild owned in this area were located mainly in Cleobury Mortimer and Cleobury North. An example is a property which was bequeathed to the Palmers' Guild by Johanna, the widow of Nicholas Cresset of Ludlow in 1481. His will stated that the property was 'to be sold and disposed of for my soul'.<sup>102</sup> An indenture from 1529 outlines the lease of this tenement in Cleobury North for 21 years with 'lands and woods' to Nicolas Brown for a fee of 10s. per year. Nicolas needed to keep the property in good repair 'at his own cost and to give it up at the end of his term in as good a state or better'.<sup>103</sup>

Other deeds in the Palmers' Guild records in the Shropshire Archives involve bequests or sales of property by people who lived in Corvedale and Cleoland. An

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<sup>102</sup> SA LB5/2/1087(1483) in Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, 200. SA LB15/3/37 Will of Nicholas Cresset 20 February 1481 (no date of proof).

<sup>103</sup> SALB5/2/1088 (1529) in Faraday, 200.

example is a property which was leased by the Palmers' Guild in 1501. A mese (messuage) in Cleobury Mortimer called 'Sprosley' was leased to Thomas Hey for 61 years at 22s. per year.<sup>104</sup> The deeds from the early 1500s have longer leases (60 years) than those from the 1520s, which are typically 21 years. As the sample is quite small, it is hard to conclude the reason for this discrepancy, except to say that it might reflect the changing nature of property leases from religious institutions in England in the 1520s. In summary, although the Palmers' Guild was a landlord, it did not see a substantial return from its portfolio of properties in this area. Most of its wealth came from its properties on the streets near the parish church and castle in Ludlow, and the villages in Leominster Ore.

The long lists of 'ordinary people' in Corvedale and Cleoland do not give many clues to the Guild's importance in the first decade of the sixteenth century. The high number of registrations from the market town of Stottesdon is noteworthy, however, as there were few recruits from Stottesdon before 1505, and none registered after the riding book of 1506-7. There were 13 members from 35 registrations for these two years. These members enjoyed a long association with the Guild, often paying instalments for up to 15 years.<sup>105</sup> The instalments, which are attached to each name, often included the abbreviation *capp* or 'hood' as part of the annual payment. For example, all the Stottesdon couples in the riding book of the 1506-7 list '*ii capp*' next to their instalment for that year. The purchase of hoods shows an intention to attend the annual Guild feast in Ludlow, where Guild livery (cloaks and hoods) were worn.<sup>106</sup> Although there are a few similar instalments in the Leominster Ore riding books for

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<sup>104</sup> SA LB5/2/1080 (1501) in Faraday, 198. A messuage is a house with associated land and buildings.

<sup>105</sup> SA LB5/3/7,8 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6 and 1506-7.

<sup>106</sup> SA LB 5/3/8 Steward's Riding Book 1506-7, 5.

1501-8, there are far more in the riding books for Corvedale and Cleoland. We might assume that those who lived closest to Ludlow would be more likely to purchase cloaks and hoods and engage with the social focus of the Guild. It appears that this is not necessarily the case. The purchase of 'hoods' cannot be fully explained by family connections or occupational reasons. It may be that the inclusion of the names of members from a gentry family, the Blounts, who lived nearby in Kinlet, acted as a magnet to draw people from Stottesdon into the Guild. After all 17 people from this village also gave their names to the Guild steward in the same two years.<sup>107</sup>

The inclusion of seven names of people from the Posterne family from Wistanstow, shows that loyalty to the Guild could span two, possibly three generations. William Posterne was one of the wealthiest men in Wistanstow. The Lay subsidy for 1524 shows his assessed income as 4 marks.<sup>108</sup> His parents joined the Palmers' Guild in 1486. In 1504, the steward secured the name of William and his wife. In 1505 three other relatives enrolled.<sup>109</sup> Although not all the Posterne family became members, they all paid instalments for at least 15 years.<sup>110</sup> These long-standing relationships were not at all unusual in the towns of Corvedale and Cleoland more broadly. Thirty percent of people who paid at least one instalment in the years 1501-8, were still paying money to the Guild at least 20 years later. Remarkably, 40 percent of those who were paying small amounts of money for this length of time became members.<sup>111</sup> The engagement with the Guild was steady, long-standing and important for many who lived in this area, in the early sixteenth century.

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<sup>107</sup> SA LB5/3/7,8 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6 and 1506-7.

<sup>108</sup> Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, 112.

<sup>109</sup> SA LB5/3/6.7 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5 and 1505-6.

<sup>110</sup> SA LB5/3/1-10 Steward's Riding books 1501-2 to 1507-8, and 1515-16.

<sup>111</sup> SA LB5/3/1-10 Steward's Riding books 1501-2 to 1507-8, and 1515-16.

The final thread between the people of Corvedale and Cleoland and the Guild was the provision of religious services by the Guild. Over 350 people registered to join the Guild, so it is possible that religious motives were important to a percentage of them, perhaps quite a high percentage. However, there were very few names of 'souls' in the records for this area of the hinterland. Most of the 'souls' were entered by family members who lived in villages within 10 miles of Ludlow. Although there were only 24 names of people who were entered as 'souls' in the Guild records for 1485-9 and 1501-8, some of the names of the deceased suggest a link with Ludlow. For example, the entry fee of 2s. in 1502, for William Eton, son of John Eton, who lived in Kinlet, is the same as for Ludlow members. John also enrolled his other three sons into the Guild in 1505, which suggests a strong connection to Ludlow.<sup>112</sup> However, despite the large number of 'ordinary people' few wanted to make bequests to the Guild in their wills. As we have seen, most bequests in Corvedale and Cleoland were initiated by Ludlow residents who owned property in that area.

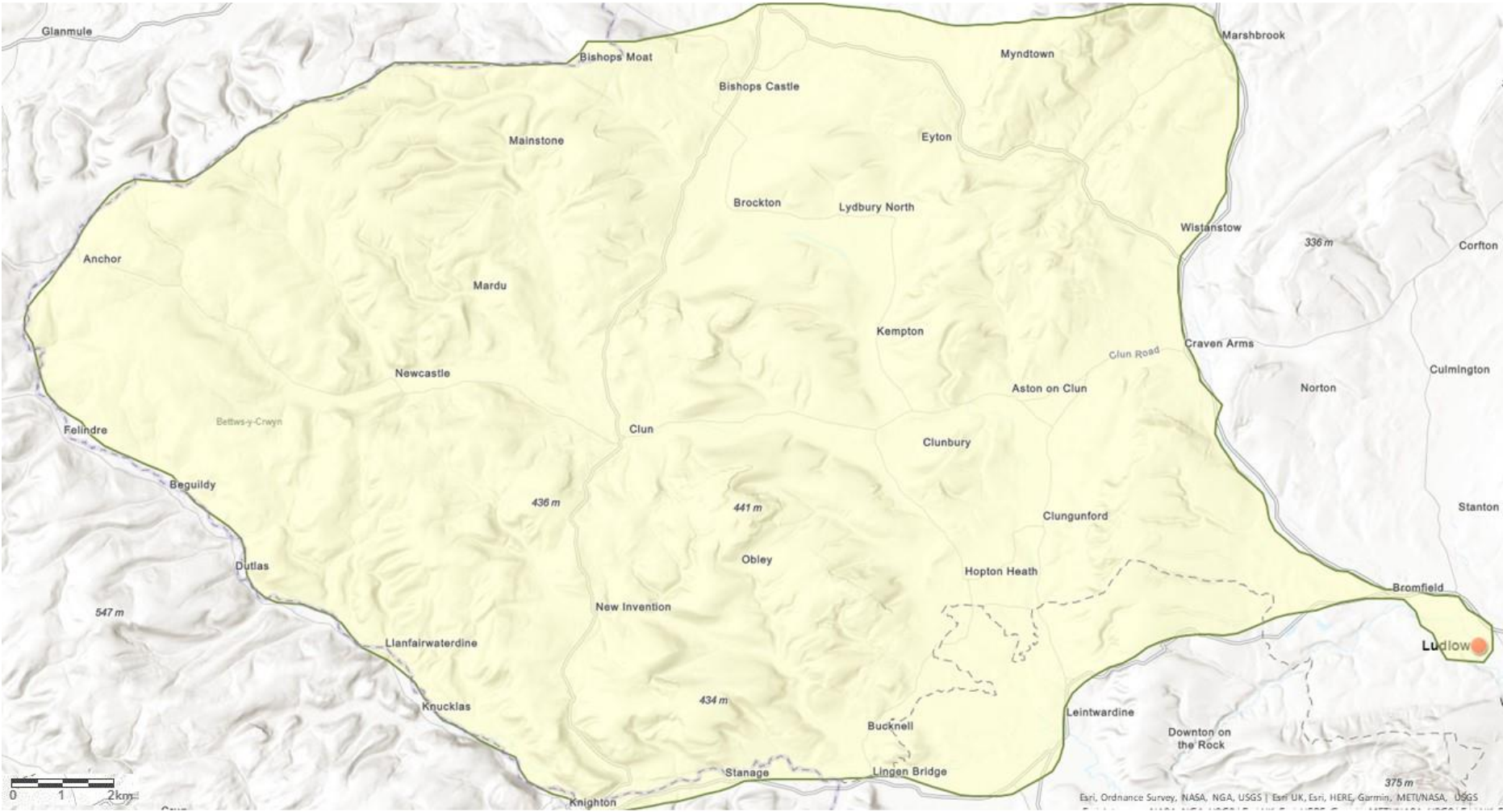
The Guild's relationship with those who lived in Corvedale and Cleoland was quite different to its relationship with the people of Leominster Ore, which was the other primarily English-speaking area of the hinterland. There was a brief flurry of activity between 1505 and 1507, which dropped significantly thereafter. There is no clear reason why people from places such as Stottesdon and Kinlet clamoured to join the Guild in these two years. The lack of occupational data also means that it is so much harder to interpret the possible motives of people who lived over 500 years ago.

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<sup>112</sup> SA LB 5/3/4 Steward's Riding Book 1502-3.



Figure 27: Map of Cloneland and Terra Episcopo



### Area 3. Cloneland and Terra Episcopo

The third hinterland area is Cloneland and Terra Episcopo (land of the Bishop of Hereford) which was on the very edge of the English borderland, and thereby exposed to the dangers of the March (see Figure 27). It was wedged between the county land near Church Stretton, in Corvedale and Cleoland, and the crown lordship of Montgomery, to the north. The area was sparsely settled and open and, although Cloneland was on a high curve of flat land, it was vulnerable to attack. The church towers were solidly built with small arrow slits which suggest a defensive role. An example of a church with this type of architecture is the parish church of Clun, shown in Figure 28, which includes an internal door from the nave that allowed parishioners to seek refuge in the tower when under siege. In this land of contrasts, there were also small village churches, such as that of Bettws-y-Crwyn, on the far western edge of Cloneland, where both Welsh and English stopped to pray *en route* while droving animals.<sup>113</sup> This church was of a squat Welsh design, but its rood screen was built in the English style. It is the ethnically mixed character of this area which makes it quite different from Leominster Ore, and Corvedale and Cleoland.

The steward visited Terra Episcopo after visiting the towns in Cloneland. His itinerary included Bishop's Castle and the small frontier towns of Lydham, Lydbury North and Wentnor. In 1127, the Bishop of Hereford had erected a fortification at Bishop's Castle but, like other westerly outposts such as Clun and Caus, the community had not made the transition from a planned Norman town to a late medieval market

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<sup>113</sup> Davies, *Bettws Y Crwyn: History, Geography, Farming and People*, 3.

centre. The stewards then traversed the wild and open expanse of land, known as the Mynd, and completed their journey back to Ludlow via the present day A49.

The area of Cloneland and Terra Episcopo has not attracted the specific interest of historians. However, as most of this area was under Marcher law and customs from the eleventh to the early sixteenth century, different parts of the area have been researched. Michael Burscher examines the land and territory of the Fitzalans, Earls of Arundel, who were the Marcher Lords of the Honour of Clun from the late thirteenth to the early fifteenth century.<sup>114</sup> They were also lords of the northern lordships of Oswestry, Chirk, and Yale and Bromfield as well as owners of estates in Sussex. In the fourteenth century, the greatest concentration of the Lord's sheep was at Clun. Burtcher describes the late fourteenth-century Bailiff of Clun managing nine flocks of sheep of about 240 each kept in seven different places.<sup>115</sup> Although the crown was the lord of Clun in the early sixteenth century, this pastoral activity would support the assumption that some of the 'ordinary people' whose names are in the Guild records were engaged in sheep husbandry.

This remote area supplied fewer registrations than any of the other areas. Perhaps surprisingly, however, a healthy 17 people paid their entry fees so their names could be entered into the membership registers during the period 1485-9. This was 17 percent of the total number for all the hinterland areas. Nine of this number were Welsh-speaking men and women from the honour of Clun. This early engagement set the scene for a small but steady trickle of names in the riding books

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<sup>114</sup> Michael Burtcher, *The Fitzalans : Earls of Arundel and Surrey, Lords of the Welsh Marches (1267-1415)* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 2008).

<sup>115</sup> Burtcher, 141.

from 1501-8. Over this period, there were 127 registrations, with a further 15 names listed in the riding books for 1515-16.<sup>116</sup> Although the actual number is low, the smaller population, lack of large market towns and primitive economy are mitigating factors. The people from this area supported the Guild in much the same way as the other three areas. People offered whatever goods or money they could spare to pay their instalments, and the Guild took whatever was offered. This reciprocal arrangement cemented the bonds of trust between the people and their Guild. From the records we have from this remote area of the hinterland, it is clear that religious factors were the prime motivation for engaging with the Guild. The lack of occupational data or any gentry in the Guild records strongly suggests that there were many 'ordinary people' who registered for their own personal reasons which are beyond the reach of the historian. The main difference in the makeup, of these 'ordinary people', compared to other hinterland areas, is the high percentage of names of Welsh origin in the Guild records.

The mixture of Welsh names and English names in the membership registers and riding books for 1501-8 provides a point of difference between this area and the other three areas of the hinterland. People with Welsh surnames, who gave their name to the steward, came from Clun, Clunbury, and Clunton, in the honour of Clun. This is unsurprising, as it was largely a Welsh-speaking area. An unexpected outcome is the higher conversion rate of people with Welsh names in a majority English speaking part of Cloneland. A ribbon of English towns on the border with Corvedale and Cleoland included Hopesay, Bedstone and Clunungford. Hopesay, in the lordship of

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<sup>116</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

Clun, provided 20 names to the riding books for the period from 1501-8.<sup>117</sup> Most of these people had English surnames and paid instalments to the Guild for many years.

For example, Alice and William Bloke, whose names appear in the riding book for 1505-6, were still paying small instalments to the steward on his annual visit in 1525.<sup>118</sup> Hopesay was an outlier Mortimer town with a long-standing connection with Ludlow, which would explain the predominance of English names. However, the people who registered and who bore English names did not all become members, but all of those with names of Welsh origin did. Two of these were John ap Gwilliam, who paid his fine in full in 1506, and Hugo ap William ap Madoc, who became a member within two years of his first instalment in 1504.<sup>119</sup> Although this is a very small sample, it seems that Welsh folk who lived in Hopesay were keen to join the Guild. It appears that they became members when they had saved enough money to do so. It may be for religious reasons, or for the status which came from joining a prestigious Guild with royal connections, or for the status which came from joining a prestigious Guild with royal connections, or other factors which are now lost to us. This micro-analysis of a small community highlights why the database is so useful when unravelling the features of each of the hinterland areas.

The riding books contain only a few dozen names of people from Terra Episcopo, and the only occupations which were listed were related to the church. There is no evidence of family connections to Ludlow, and no evidence that people might join for networking opportunities, which was the case in the areas closer to Ludlow. There is evidence, as in Wigmoreland and Corvedale and Cleoland, that those

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<sup>117</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>118</sup> SA LB 5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 11.

<sup>119</sup> SA LB 5/3/6,8 Steward's Riding Books 1504-5 and 1506-7.

who contracted to join the Guild did so for a considerable time, sometimes up to 20 years.<sup>120</sup> This long-standing connection with the Guild indicates that the stewards did travel to small villages and towns, which on the surface appear to be for uneconomical reasons. Perhaps the Guild steward was attending to his own or the Guild's business interests in this region. It is not possible to know for sure, as the records do not exist.

The notion that religion was a compelling motive behind the desire to join the Palmers' Guild is supported by late fourteenth-century diocesan records which suggest that there were problems at the parish level. The Bishop of Hereford's visitation records of 1397 record that:

The parishioners (of Clunbury) say that Sir Edward, chaplain of the parish, does not serve as befits and in fact brawls. Disputes between parishioners and other detestables is a scandal in the church.<sup>121</sup>

In Wentnor (in Terra Episcopo):

The Rector frequents inns day and night, contrary to the honour of the church, and the chaplain, Sir John Bent, dishonestly kept back diverse ornaments from the aforesaid church from the time he was a chaplain there.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See entries in SA LB 5/3/7,8 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6.

<sup>121</sup> Bannister, 'Visitation Returns of the Diocese of Hereford in 1397: Part IV', 458.

<sup>122</sup> Bannister, 457.

Although reports of similar transgressions occur in other towns in the diocese of Hereford, these petitions show that a lack of reliable, integrated clerical infrastructure may have been absent in this borderland area in the late fourteenth century. The clergy and parishioners in Cloneland and Terra Episcopo were remote from episcopal authority. Although clerical resources improved in the decades after the devastation of the Glyndŵr rebellion, people in this region were attracted to services which a distant religious guild could provide. The Palmers' Guild was well prepared to offer spiritual services and support to those who may have been disenfranchised by the usual religious institutions. It understood the spiritual marketplace, and so marketed its services accordingly.

By the early sixteenth century, the state of the parishes in this area is unknown, as records do not exist, but what is clear is the acceptance of the Palmers' Guild into these frontier communities. Over 95 percent of the names of people who registered from 1501-8, did not have an occupation next to their name.<sup>123</sup> They were men and women who wished to be part of something bigger than themselves and to belong to an organisation which they knew comprised many thousands of names. The clergy also supported the Guild. The list includes Thomas Baker (a chaplain from Clunton), Thomas Chelmycke (a parson from Bedstone), and Humphrey Sanford (a priest at the Plowden Chapel in Lydbury North) who registered between 1501 and 1505. All became members within ten years. The Palmers' Guild provided support to these isolated men, who may be anxious about the lack of support from the church hierarchy to provide spiritual services to their flock.

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<sup>123</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

Evidence in the Palmers' Guild records suggests that the complexion of this area was different from the other three areas of the hinterland. The engagement was not obviously related to Ludlow family connections. It may have been related to the cloth trade, but the remoteness of this area and the undifferentiated economy would suggest that this was not the case. The link to Ludlow was resilient and sometimes continued for 20 to 25 years. This suggests that the people from this isolated area valued the religious services of the Guild. The money they gave to the steward would be secure, even if they would not have the opportunity to partake in the religious services in the ornate Guild chapel in Ludlow.



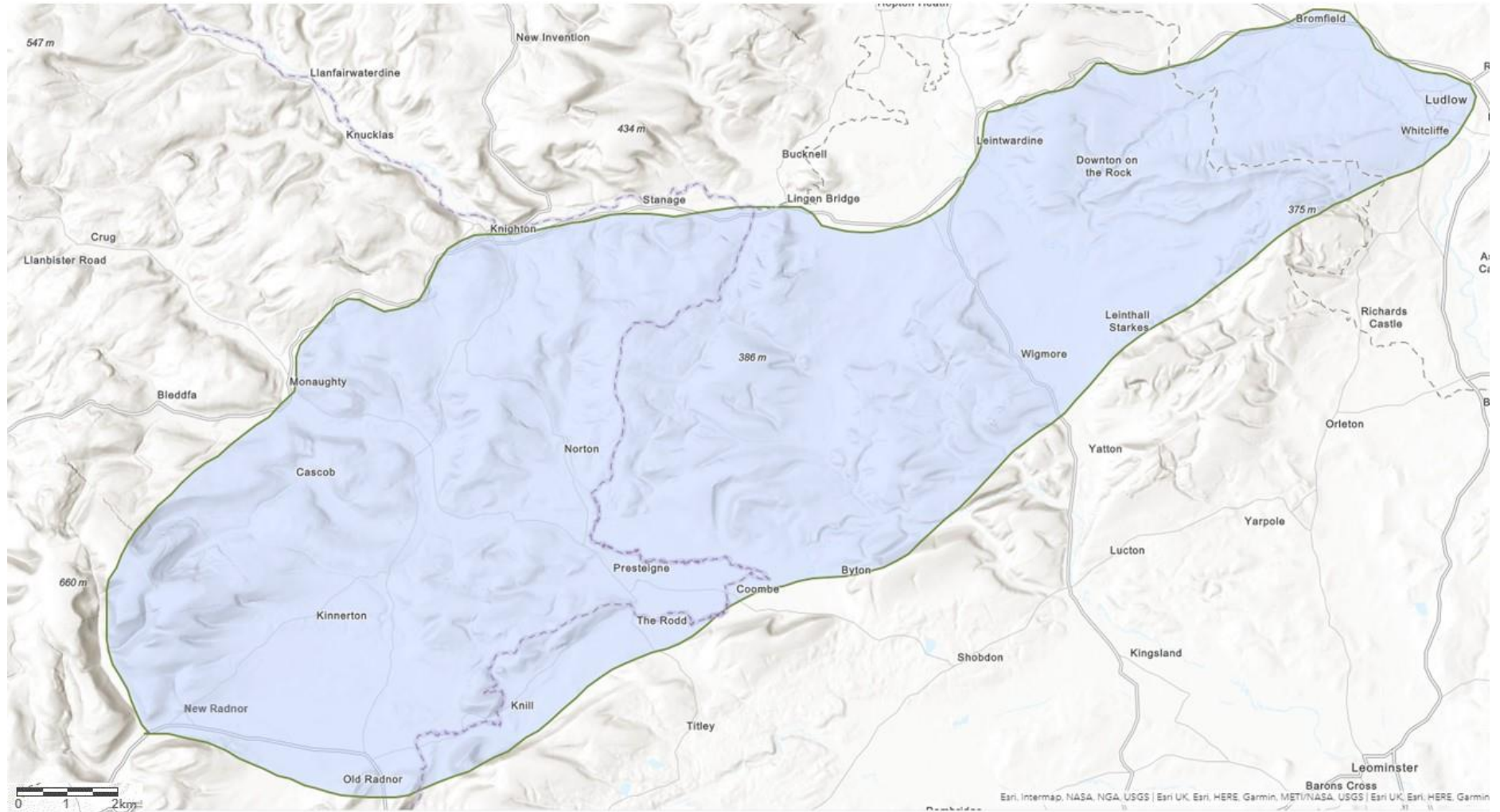
Figure 28: Clun's Defensive Church Tower Attached to the Nave <sup>124</sup>



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<sup>124</sup> The external door and windows were inserted in the late fifteenth century. Judith Bailey *Church of St George, Clun* [photograph] 20 June 2008.

Figure 29: Map of Wigmoreland



#### **Area 4. Wigmoreland**

The fourth area of Ludlow's hinterland comprised part of the Marcher lordship of Wigmore, in North-West Herefordshire and the lordship of Radnor (see Figure 29). The Mortimer family commanded the territory of both lordships at various times until the mid-fifteenth century, when it came under royal control. The itineraries of the Guild steward help us to navigate the boundary of this area and to locate the main villages and towns within Wigmoreland. The extent of these journeys is shown in Figure 29. Towns which were included in the itinerary include Wigmore, Leintwardine, Knighton, Presteigne and New Radnor. This area was next to Leominster Ore and stretched north of the river Lugg to the southern edge of the forest of Clun. Once again, natural features defined an area, as we have seen before with Leominster Ore and Corvedale and Cleoland.

Information from Guild records indicate that people from Wigmoreland primarily engaged with the Palmers' Guild in two ways. First, the underlying connection was to benefit from the religious services provided by the Guild. This factor is important to recognise because over 75 percent of registrations in the years 1501-8 and 1515-16, came from 'ordinary people' who have only left their name to the historical record. It may be the case that a good percentage of these people registered with the Guild for extra spiritual support. This provision complemented the service of their local parish priest. Second, there is evidence of a shared interest between Guild stewards and the weavers of Presteigne, to build a viable weaving industry in the region. The motivation was not necessarily to increase the wealth of the Guild by

employing weavers or carrying cloth to Ludlow. Although the evidence is sketchy, it will be argued that men from leading Guild families – the Bradshaws and the Langfords – used their influence to build an economic bridge between Presteigne and Ludlow not just for the Guild’s benefit, but for their own gain. This factor will be examined in more detail, after a brief overview of secondary research.

Wigmoreland was not a discrete political entity and hence has not been studied as such by historians. However, there are secondary sources which investigate specific communities within Wigmoreland. For example, Richard Suggett’s analysis of the economy of the Marcher lordships suggests the market town of New Radnor, which is at the western tip of Wigmoreland, reared prime cattle for the London market. Cattle were driven from the west Midlands to the Radnor estates to be fattened and then sent to the markets in London and elsewhere. He argues that this husbandry was more important than sheep rearing in this part of Wigmoreland in the late fifteenth century.<sup>125</sup> This research reminds us not to assume that all the pastoral land in the Marcher lordships was used to rear sheep to supply wool for the cloth trade.

Once again, the transactions from local historical societies offer solid background material for this thesis. The *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* provide transcribed wills, and articles on the parish churches, such as Presteigne, which is invaluable when building a multi-layered picture of that community.<sup>126</sup> The

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<sup>125</sup> Richard Suggett, *Houses and History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400-1800* (Aberystwyth: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, 2005), 10.

<sup>126</sup> Cole, ‘Abstracts of Radnorshire Wills in the Pregrogative Court of Canterbury’; Col Drage, ‘The Flemish Tapestry, Presteigne Church’, *Radnorshire Society Transactions* 5 (1935): 52–53.

*Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* provide similar examples of painstaking research on the lordship of Wigmore, which is supported by recent material on the Mortimers.<sup>127</sup> This research is supported by Michael Faraday's invaluable transcriptions of the lay subsidies of 1543 and 1545 for Herefordshire, Shropshire and Radnorshire, and the taxes in the reign of Henry VIII. They form an integral part of the investigation of the leading families of Presteigne in local politics and the cloth trade.<sup>128</sup> Faraday's work in reconstructing the nature of communities in not only Radnorshire, but Shropshire and Herefordshire as well, is fundamental to this thesis. It would not have been possible to understand the importance of the inclusion of the names of certain people in the Palmers' Guild records, without Faraday's work.

Even though Wigmoreland was the smallest geographical area in the hinterland, many people wished to join the Guild. There were 163 registrations for the period 1501-8 and a further 26 for 1515-16.<sup>129</sup> According to the information in the membership registers and riding books, most people came from the towns of Presteigne and Leintwardine. Presteigne supplied more registrations than any other town in the hinterland except Leominster. Thirty percent of these 59 names were Welsh in origin and half of those who listed an occupation against their name had

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<sup>127</sup> D.G. Bayliss, 'Lordship of Wigmore in the Fourteenth Century', *Transactions of The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* XXXVI, no. 1 (1958): 42-48; Charles Hopkinson and Martin Edward Speight, *The Mortimers, Lords of the March* (Almeley: Logaston, 2002).

<sup>128</sup> M. A. Faraday, 'The Radnorshire Lay Subsidy of 1543-1545', *Radnorshire Society Transactions* 66 (1996): 82-129; Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*; Faraday, *Radnorshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII: Assessment-Lists and Accounts of Subsidies and Benevolences 1543-1547*; Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*; and Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*.

<sup>129</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

Welsh surnames. That is not to say that all of these people were Welsh, as it is important to remember that ethnic identity was not hard and fast in the borderland.<sup>130</sup> However, it does give us a good basis to argue that Presteigne provided a good environment for people from both ethnic groups to prosper.

Perhaps surprisingly, 27 percent of the names of people from Wigmoreland in the records from 1501-8 and 1515-16 were listed with an occupation, which was the highest percentage in all the hinterland areas. The names of eleven clerics from most of the parishes in Wigmoreland, and 22 people who worked in the cloth trade, are listed in these records.<sup>131</sup> All cloth trade occupations were represented – from walkers (fullers) and weavers to cappers, merchants, mercers and tailors.<sup>132</sup> It is clear that the Palmers' Guild infiltrated the cloth trade networks to a much deeper extent than other parts of the hinterland.

There was always a strong connection between towns in Wigmoreland and Ludlow. The early decision to base the Mortimer dynasty at Wigmore meant the region supported the ambitions of the Earls of March, both politically and economically.<sup>133</sup> With the growth of Ludlow's cloth trade in the fifteenth century, there was an impetus for a new type of relationship between Ludlow and Wigmoreland. This was due in part to the role of fulling mills in the manufacture of woollen cloth. Fulling mills sprang up in Marcher communities from the early

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<sup>130</sup> See the Notes section for a definition of 'Welsh' in this thesis.

<sup>131</sup> SA LB 5/3/2-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8, 1515-16 and SA LB 5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1505-9. See the notes section on page 8 for a definition of Welsh people

<sup>132</sup> SA LB 5/3/2-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8, 1515-16 and SA LB 5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>133</sup> Hopkinson and Speight, *The Mortimers, Lords of the March*, 29,37.

fourteenth century. They were primarily sited in the south-eastern and central lordships in small Welsh-speaking centres with fast running streams. Some of these towns were known as 'pandy', and there is documentary evidence that there were mills at Knighton, Kington and Norton in the Lordship of Radnor, as well as Newtown in the Lordship of Powys, by the late fifteenth century.<sup>134</sup> The cloth, which was fulled and dyed in the villages, needed to be distributed at markets. The main towns where this cloth was sold were Ludlow, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, and Hereford.<sup>135</sup>

Weavers played a key role in the making of cloth. They were the largest group of registrations for the Palmers' Guild in Wigmoreland, and they all came from the area around Presteigne.<sup>136</sup> Two of the weavers had Welsh surnames (Davy ap Rees and David ap Jenkin), which implies that Welsh tradesmen were gaining a foothold in the local economy. An English weaver, John Lyppart from Combe (near Presteigne), paid yearly instalments for over 20 years from 1515, suggesting a long connection with Ludlow. Other weavers paid instalments for ten to fifteen years. Although it is conjecture, a further five people with the surname 'Wever' in the riding books for 1505-1507 could be added to the known list of weavers. When two walkers (fullers), two tailors and two mercers are added into the mix, we have strong evidence that there was a burgeoning cloth industry in Wigmoreland from the early sixteenth century onwards.

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<sup>134</sup> These mills are listed in the fifteenth and sixteenth century minster's accounts (Henry VII and Henry VIII) which have been summarised in Lewis, 'The Development of Industry and Commerce in Wales During the Middle Ages', 156-58.

<sup>135</sup> Skeel, 'The Welsh Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', 223.

<sup>136</sup> SA LB 5/3/7-10 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6 to 1507-8 (2 weavers) and 1515-16 (3 weavers); 5 members of the 'Wever' family are listed in SA LB 5/3/9-10 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6 to 1507-8.

This evidence gives a fresh new perspective on the cloth trade in Presteigne on the high reaches of the fast-flowing river Lugg. The naming of so many cloth workers in a tight chronological spread of only eight years is new evidence which has not been available to researchers who have investigated the cloth industry in the Welsh Marches. The Guild records outline the actual names of people who were at the centre of this work, and the instalments clearly show that these weavers were still working at their trade into the 1530s. They were loyal to the Palmers' Guild.

**Figure 30: The Langford and Bradshaw Families** <sup>137</sup>

Name	Guild records	Place	Relationship / Occupation	Member	Instalments
<b>Langford family</b>					
Richard and Margery	1485-6	Downton	Parents of William	Yes	
John and Margery	1504-5	Leintwardine		Yes	11-15 years
David	1505-6	Leintwardine	Son of John and Margery	Yes	16-20 years
William	1508-9	Ludlow	Draper, Mercer, Bailiff, Guild Steward (1514-16) and Warden (1547-51)	Yes	1-5 years
Thomas	1515-16	Leintwardine		Yes	6-10 years
John	1515-16	Whitton	Son of William	No	1-5 years
Hugh	1515-16	Bromfield	Son of William	Yes	1-5 years
Richard		Ludlow	Son of William. Guild renter (1548-51)	Yes	
<b>Bradshaw Family</b>					
John		Ludlow and Presteigne	Merchant and Mercer. Guild steward 1525-8. Bailiff of Ludlow, Sheriff and MP for Radnorshire	Yes	
Margaret	1515-16	Combe	Wife to John	Yes	6-10 years
Roger		Ludlow	Brother to John. Mercer, and Guild steward 1533-6	Yes	

<sup>137</sup> SA LB5/3/6-7, 10 Steward's Riding Books 1504-5 to 1505-6 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9



The Guild records demonstrate that there was a close relationship between Presteigne and Ludlow. A closer examination of the records and surviving wills show us that three men were behind this connection (see Figure 30). They were from two important Ludlow families – Langford and Bradshaw. The Langford ancestral home was at Whitton, which was midway between Presteigne and Knighton.<sup>138</sup> William Langford, a member of this family, was both a draper and mercer and an important figure in Ludlow in the sixteenth century. He joined the Guild in 1508, was a steward from 1514 to 1516, and was the last Guild warden from 1547 to 1551. He was also high bailiff five times. His son Richard was the last Guild renter from 1548 to 1551 (see Appendices 1 and 2).

John Bradshaw, a merchant, was based in Ludlow with strong familial ties to Presteigne. In 1515, his wife Margaret enrolled as a member of the Palmers' Guild and listed her residence as Coombe, which was two miles from Presteigne.<sup>139</sup> John was Guild steward from 1525 to 1528 and bailiff of Ludlow in 1531, 1535 and 1541 (see Appendix 2). He lived on his Combe estates from the early 1540s, when he was appointed the sheriff for Radnorshire in 1542, 1553 and 1564.<sup>140</sup> He also undertook a range of other official duties for Radnor, including Commissioner for the 1545 lay subsidy and was chantry commissioner for Edward VI's assessments in 1553.<sup>141</sup> In his

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<sup>138</sup> Sometimes written as Longford in the records.

<sup>139</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 63.

<sup>140</sup> 'The History of Parliament Online', John Bradshaw I (1489-1567), 2017, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/bradshaw-john-i-1489-1567>, accessed 29 September 2019.

<sup>141</sup> Faraday, *Radnorshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII: Assessment-Lists and Accounts of Subsidies and Benevolences 1543-1547*, xxvii.

will of 1567, he asked for his body to be buried in the parish church of Presteigne.<sup>142</sup>

His brother, Roger, was a Ludlow mercer and steward of the Guild from 1533 to 1536 (see Appendix 2). The close connection with Presteigne is shown by his will of 1538 when he bequeaths to 'Agnes Bradshaw, my kinswoman from Presteigne, £3 6s. for her marriage'.<sup>143</sup>

William Langford travelled to Wigmoreland from Ludlow as a Guild steward in 1513 and for the next two years. His steward's duties also sent him to Montgomery, Welshpool, and Machynlleth in the Central Welsh Marches. A decade later John Bradshaw covered the same itinerary for four years from 1525, in his role as Guild steward. Eight years later in 1533, his brother Roger also carried out his steward's duties in Wigmoreland (See Appendix 2). Their tenure as Guild stewards corresponds to the growth of Guild registrations in Wigmoreland, and the increase in cloth workers in Presteigne. It may be that they were building commercial networks, based on credit and trust, between these clothworkers and their businesses in Ludlow. Both families would have the wherewithal to finance the 'putting out' of wool to spinners and carders in local villages near Presteigne, which would be finished by the weavers in Presteigne and Combe. Weavers needed markets to sell their goods. A key motivation for the weavers of Presteigne joining the Guild might well be the opportunity to sell their cloth in Ludlow. The Bradshaws and William Langford would have the connections to facilitate this trade between Presteigne and Ludlow.

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<sup>142</sup> TNA PROB 11/62/558 Will of John Bradshaw of Presteigne, Herefordshire 4 August 1567 (proved 22 December 1567).

<sup>143</sup> TNA PROB 11/27/260 Will of Roger Bradshawe, Mercer of Ludlow, 13 April 1538 (proved 29 May 1538).

William Langford and the Bradshaws shared many interests. They held land near each other in Wigmoreland. They were mercers and part of the merchant class in Ludlow. They also held high offices in the Palmers' Guild and the secular offices in Ludlow. A closer connection can be seen when, in his will of 1538, Roger Bradshaw assigns 'to the said William Langford for his labours [as executor] 10 shillings'.<sup>144</sup> It is a matter of conjecture as to whether the support for the weaving industry in Presteigne was solely to benefit the Palmers' Guild or it was part of wealth generation by the Bradshaw and Langford families. The proximity of particularly the Bradshaw family to the weaving industry in Coombe, two miles from Presteigne, suggests it might be the latter.

## **Conclusion**

Evidence taken from over 1,180 names shows that there were four distinct areas in the hinterland of Ludlow. Support for the Palmers' Guild was solid yet differentiated throughout these four areas. Over 50 percent of all registrations came from Leominster Ore and Corvedale and Cleoland, but Wigmoreland offered the largest number of recruits with occupations, even though it lay mostly in the Marcher lordships. Evidence from Cloneland and Terra Episcopo highlights how poverty can trigger a strong religious bond if the religious institution is trustworthy, reliable, and dependable.

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<sup>144</sup> TNA PROB 11/27/260 Will of Roger Bradshawe, Mercer of Ludlow, 13 April 1538 (proved 29 May 1538).

The engagement with the Palmers' Guild was different for each area. In Leominster Ore, Guild membership gave access to Ludlow's markets. The strong family links to Ludlow and a shared Mortimer heritage also meant that the Palmers' Guild was seen as their Guild, not just Ludlow's Guild. The easy access to feasts and funerals meant more people in Leominster Ore chose the Guild for religious services than other areas, even though their parish churches were well supported. In Corvedale and Cleoland, a land of rolling hills, market towns and villages, the Guild offered social connections, and a solid dependable institution in which successive generations invested. In Wigmoreland, the engagement differed again. Here the Guild facilitated a burgeoning cloth industry, which bought social and economic benefits. Finally, Cloneland and Terra Episcopo was poorer than all the other areas and there were fewer options for religious support. For those who could afford the instalments, the Ludlow Guild would have been a constant in an otherwise difficult life.

The research in this chapter has added to the body of knowledge about whether people in late medieval towns saw religious guilds as important and relevant to their daily lives. The enthusiasm for the Palmers' Guild can be demonstrated by the large numbers of individuals who not only registered but paid their instalments, sometimes into the late 1530s, when the mood for religious change was brewing. The Guild was relevant to the people of the hinterland and offered a range of services which were both diverse and targeted. There is no real slackening of interest until the 1530s, as even though the riding books of 1515-16 show a downward trend, many still paid their instalments until the Guild stewards no longer rode into their town.

Ludlow's hinterland was a diverse area but was united by its political economy and its relationship with Ludlow and its Guild. Many inhabitants joined the Guild, bequeathed property and travelled to Ludlow to take part in the Guild feasts, services and other aspects which the Guild brotherhood offered. For some, the Guild was also their preferred institution for obits and religious services. It was well endowed and provided a reliable religious offering since the early fourteenth century. It also offered networking opportunities, and entrance into the wool and cloth trade. Ludlow was a magnet for religious piety, trade, and social connections. Its religious guild was at the heart of this success.

## Chapter 5: Central and North Welsh Marches: Piety and Trade

By 1500, the Palmers' Guild had fanned out to all parts of the hinterland to secure new members, at a time when the Ludlow membership had reached a plateau. The Guild had also established a mutually beneficial relationship with people who lived in the hinterland. Evidence from the Palmers' Guild records suggest the Guild was perceived as a reliable and venerable religious institution in this region. Beyond the hinterland, prime pickings for the Guild lay to the east, south and north-east of Ludlow in the wealthy, urbanised centres of Hereford, Worcester, and Coventry. Moreover, people with family connections to members of the Guild lived in the busy ports of Bristol, London, and Gloucester, and these individuals might wish to join the Guild in order to cement family trade networks. By comparison, lands to the north-west of Ludlow had neither rich, highly urbanised folk nor people with strong familial connections to Ludlow. The Guild needed a different strategy in this region.

This chapter will explore how the Palmers' Guild penetrated the political economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches by exploiting its reputation as a trustworthy religious institution. By bundling religious services with trade, the Guild enhanced the ancient cloth and wool trading patterns, thereby allowing Welsh producers to access the rich English market towns to the east of the Marches. It will argue that the relationship with the Palmers' Guild was not necessarily related to a person's proximity to Ludlow but had more to do with the perceived economic and religious benefits that the Guild could offer. The chapter will provide a generational snapshot of a region at a time when the cloth trade was diversifying from the

domestic-based production of the mid fifteenth century, to a more sophisticated regional trade in the early sixteenth century.

The purpose of this chapter is also to map the 'geographies of piety' of the Central and North Welsh Marches, which will add to the research on the patterns of pious engagement in Ludlow and its hinterland. It will include a discussion of the social, religious, and economic factors which motivated people to join the Palmers' Guild. Almost 1,700 people from the Central and North Welsh Marches engaged in some way with the Guild between 1485 and 1515, which is a substantial number of people from a sparsely settled landscape. It is even more remarkable, considering that these records only cover 30 years of the 200-year history of the Palmers' Guild.

The scarcity of written documents in a largely Welsh-speaking region, and the dearth of secondary sources, means that research in this region is difficult. The analysis provided here therefore breaks new ground in that it draws on a substantial body of Guild records to assess the nature of the Palmers' Guild's role in the Central and North Welsh Marches. The database of names of people drawn both from the membership registers and the riding books will again be used to help map the web of relationships in this region. This database underpinned the analysis in Chapters 3 and 4, but it is even more important in the Central and North Welsh Marches as there are very few other primary sources that pertain to the Guild.

Figures 31 and 32 outline the political geography of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The closest area to Ludlow, the Central Welsh Marches, correlates to the lordship of Powys, and includes the towns of Welshpool, Newtown, Llanidloes and Machynlleth. The North Welsh Marches encompasses a much larger area, as it

includes Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Denbigh and Chester as well as the Welsh inland cloth towns of Dolgellau, Ruthin and Llanrwst. This area corresponds to the Marcher lordships of Denbigh and Chirk, a slice of Shropshire and the Principality of Merioneth. Once again, as we saw in Chapter 4, the regional boundary of the Central and North Welsh Marches follows the itinerary of the Guild stewards which are listed in the riding books.

As we saw in Ludlow's hinterland, the steward visited towns in the Welsh mountains and valleys in a similar pattern each year. Although the riding books do not always list towns in the same order, the itineraries suggest that the steward visited Shrewsbury, Montgomery, and Welshpool, then travelled in a westerly direction to the town of Machynlleth. A separate northern route branched at Welshpool, then on to Oswestry, Ruthin, Denbigh, Wrexham and Chester, and sometimes as far as Conwy and Holyhead. The bill of allowances in the accounts for 1538-9 indicate that the steward was accompanied by a 'man'. There was a daily payment of 14d. for each, and a further allowance for horses as well as payment towards nightly accommodation for the two men.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the main surviving riding books (1501-8 and 1515-16), one steward covered these two routes in the northern part of Wales. The accounts of 1538-9 suggest that, by the late 1530s, the steward's journey to the western lands had been divided into two different routes. The southern journey included a long sweep southward from Aberystwyth to Haverfordwest, Cardiff and Chepstow. The purpose of

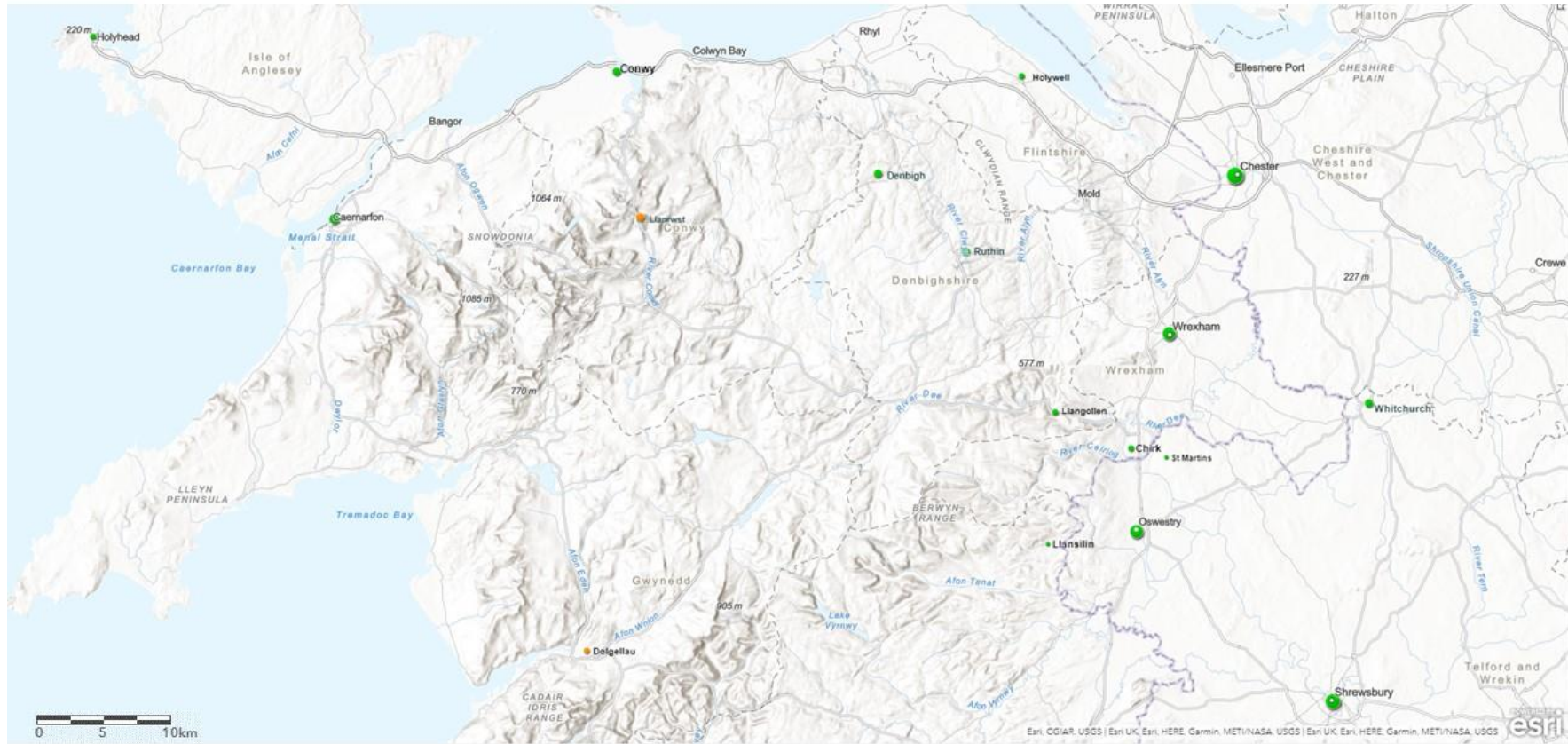
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<sup>1</sup> E.g. SA LB5/3/9 Steward's Riding Book 1506-7,3-8 (Shrewsbury, Montgomery, Welshpool, then Oswestry, Wrexham, Denbigh, Ruthin, Holywell and Chester). The general order of towns is also confirmed in the Palmers' Guild accounts, see SA LB5/3/32 Steward's account 1538.



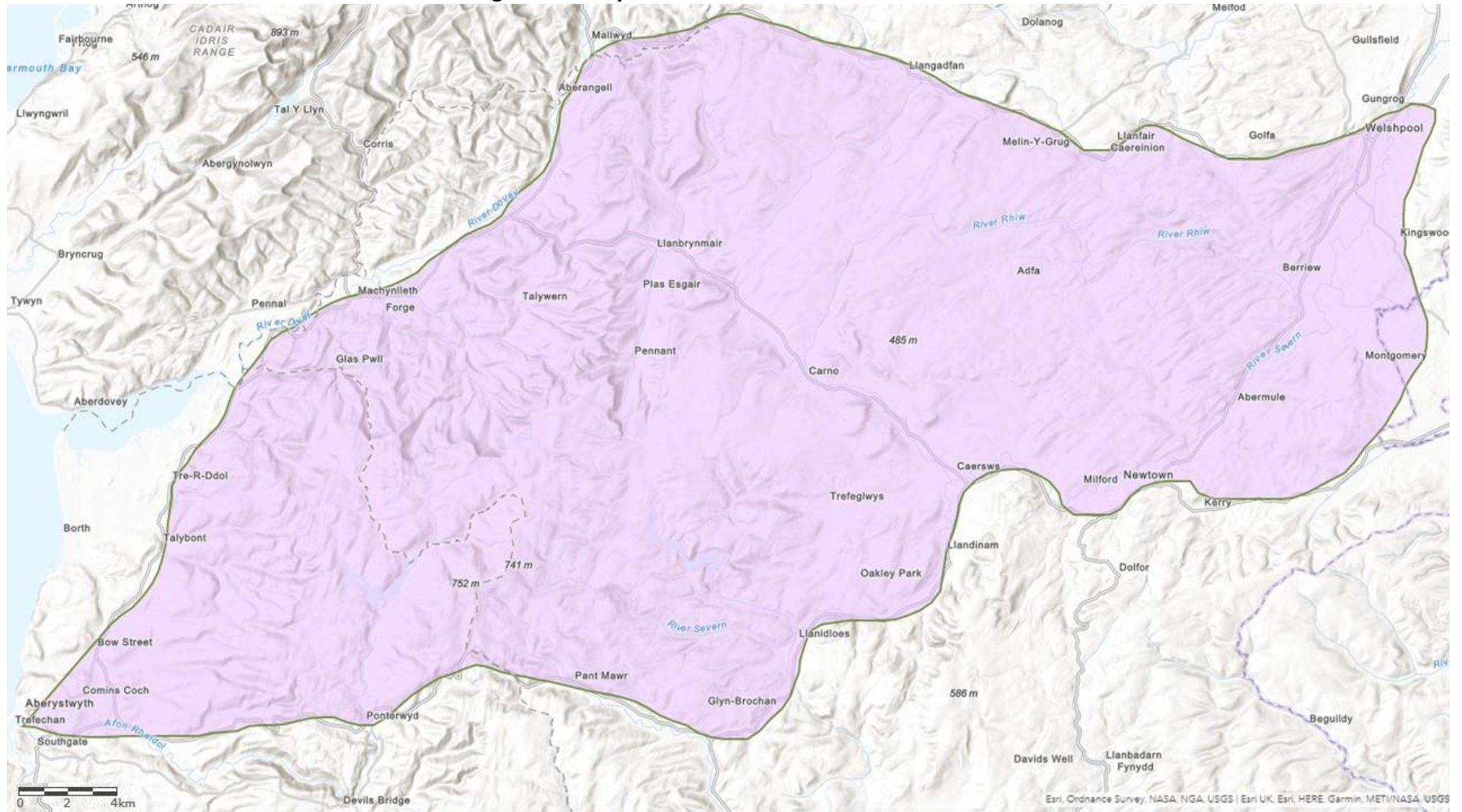
this expansion of territory might well have been to bring more people into the fold at a time when interest in the Guild was stagnant in Ludlow itself. It is difficult to know for sure what the Guild's motives were in sending its stewards so far from home, as there are no riding books which exist from the 1530s. The only thing that we can say for certain is that, between the years 1485 and 1515, the Guild invested a considerable amount of time and money in the Central and North Welsh Marches to recruit members and to build its reputation in this region.

Figure 31: Map of the North Welsh Marches <sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> The map shows the main towns visited by the Guild steward. Recruits from Llanrwst and Dolgellau (in orange) visited the market towns of Denbigh and Ruthin, respectively, to join the Guild (see discussion in this chapter).

Figure 32: Map of the Central Welsh Marches



## **Political Geography, Political Economy, and the Religious Landscape**

This section will consider the political geography, political economy and the religious landscape of the Central and North Welsh Marches at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. These factors framed the Palmers' Guild's strategy in this region.

The Central and North Welsh Marches region was predominantly Welsh speaking, poor, sparsely settled and had no major monastic or religious institutions within its boundaries. The region was distinct from Ludlow's hinterland, as most of the region had been under the rule of Marcher lords or under the direct control of the Crown since the 1280s. The lordships were controlled by the powerful Marcher families of Mortimer and Arundel, whose imprint on the landscape was still evident when the Guild steward rode north from Ludlow, in the late fifteenth century.

The political instability in the north and western areas of the March, which had been a feature for 200 years from the thirteenth to the mid fifteenth century, eased as the fifteenth century progressed. The new situation was due, in part, to the success of Henry Tudor over the House of York in 1485. Henry Tudor's victory was welcomed by the established gentry class. Many had been given lands and favours under Henry IV in the early fifteenth century and were loyal to the Lancastrians. They saw Henry Tudor, a son of the house of Lancaster, as a saviour who might 'free them from their miserable servitudes'.<sup>3</sup> The change in the political geography also had its roots in the failure of Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion (1400-1412). Many families, who had supported Glyndŵr,

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<sup>3</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 254.

lost their lands and titles in the aftermath of his defeat. By the mid fifteenth century, new Welsh families had seized opportunities for advancement.

When Henry VII established his authority over his new kingdom, he promoted those who had marched with him from western Wales to claim the crown in 1485. These grants were not hereditary, which broke with tradition. The granting of favours was now in the hands of the King. One of the men whom Henry VII promoted was Charles Somerset, who was the illegitimate son of his kinsman Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. Charles became a close adviser to Henry VII and was given the hand of Elizabeth Herbert, a rich heiress, in 1492. By the early sixteenth century, Charles had been given the stewardships of the central March lordships of Montgomery, Ceri and Cedewain and was constable of Montgomery castle. This was in addition to numerous small lordships in the south-eastern Marches, which he had acquired through his marriage.<sup>4</sup> From 1509-14 he received additional grants, including the shrievalty of the lordship of Glamorgan and was created Earl of Worcester in 1514. Charles and his son Henry dominated the lands of the Welsh Marches to the west and south-west of Ludlow for most of Henry VII and Henry VIII's reigns. By the 1520s, when Edward Grey, Third Baron Grey of Powys (1503-51), controlled the lands to the north-west of Ludlow, the lordships closest to Ludlow were no longer fragmented parcels of lands with ever shifting boundaries. The political geography had changed from the early days of the lordships, which in turn brought new economic and social conditions into play.

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<sup>4</sup> The south-eastern lordships were crown lordships (Gower, Kilvey, Crickhowell, and Tretower, Talgarth) . By 1514, he also received by lease or by grant from King Henry VIII the lordships of Ruthin, Dyffryn Clwyd (Northern Marches), Paincastle, Elfael, Dinas and Ewyas Lacy (South-Eastern Marches) . See: Robinson, 'Early Tudor Policy Towards Wales: The Acquisitions of Lands', 421.

The major geo-political entity in the Central Welsh Marches, which was ruled by Edward Grey, Third Baron of Powys, was the lordship of Powys. These lands included the cantrefi of Arwystli and Cyfeiliog and the market towns of Welshpool, and Montgomery. The unfortified Welsh settlement of Machynlleth lay at the outer boundary of this lordship and was only ten miles from the Welsh coast. Powys abutted the lordships of Cedewain, Ceri and Maelienydd, which formed an arc around Ludlow. The royal lordship at Montgomery and the lordship of Caus comprised the rest of the Central March lands.

There are few sources that can demonstrate the economic health of the towns in these Marcher lordships, in the late medieval period. The 1543 lay subsidy provides the first opportunity to estimate the number of people in this region, as Marcher towns were not included in the lay subsidies before that time.<sup>5</sup> As Figure 33 shows, Welshpool was the largest town in the eastern part of the Central Marches, with an estimated population of 474 in 1543.<sup>6</sup> Leland describes 'Walsche Poole is one parouche wel builded after the Walsch fascion' on his journey around Wales in the mid-1530s.<sup>7</sup> It was situated midway between Montgomery and Oswestry and was the *caput* of the lordship of Powys, with a weekly market and two annual fairs. By the late fifteenth century, Welshpool had eclipsed neighbouring Montgomery, which had 200 fewer inhabitants than Welshpool in 1543.<sup>8</sup> Although Montgomery had been a Royal

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<sup>5</sup> See discussion on the importance of lay subsidies in Chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> Nia Powell, 'Urban Population in Early Modern Wales Revisited', *Welsh History Review* 23, no. 3 (2007): 36, summarised in Figure 3.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Toulmin Smith, *Leland's Itinerary in Wales in or about the Years 1536-1539* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1906), 125, <https://ia800907.us.archive.org/26/items/itineraryinwales00lelauoft/itineraryinwales00lelauoft.pdf>, accessed 2 February 2017.

<sup>8</sup> See Figure 33 for the population of each town in the Central Marches from the Lay subsidy of 1543

stronghold from the twelfth century, Welshpool's favourable geographical position, its central economic role as a market for Welsh wool, and its political role, were factors in its increasing dominance in the late medieval period.<sup>9</sup>

Machynlleth was a strategically important town in the turbulent fifteenth century. It was a Welsh foundation and the only market town in Cyfeiliog, the western cantref of the lordship of Powys. The inhabitants of Machynlleth supported Owain Glyndŵr in 1404 and also provided a refuge for Henry Tudor on his march through the western lordships to capture the English crown in August 1485.<sup>10</sup> The right to hold a weekly market and two annual fairs, which was granted by Edward I to Owain de la Pole in 1291, meant that Machynlleth was also important to the political economy of the lordship of Powys.<sup>11</sup> It was a centre for weaving, lead and timber trades and an important town on the ancient cattle droving route from north-west Wales to Welshpool.<sup>12</sup>

The evidence in the Guild's riding books and membership registers indicates that Machynlleth townsfolk supported the Palmers' Guild from the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth century. Figure 33 shows there are seven names of people (all of Welsh origin) from Machynlleth in the membership registers for 1485-9. This was second only to Welshpool, where there are 10 names of people whose names are also of Welsh ethnicity.<sup>13</sup> This strong relationship continued into the early sixteenth

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<sup>9</sup> Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, 'Welshpool', Welshpool : Historic Settlement Survey - Montgomeryshire, 2012, <http://www.cpat.org.uk/ycom/mont/welshpool.pdf>, accessed 25 August 2018.

<sup>10</sup> W.R.B. Robinson, 'Henry Tudor's Journey through Powys and the Lords of Powys in Early Tudor Times', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 90 (2002): 90.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1983), 180.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Moore-Colyer, *Roads & Trackways of Wales* (Ashbourne: Landmark Publishing, 2001), 125.

<sup>13</sup> SA LB5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1485-9.

century, where the riding books for 1501-8 show that 28 householders registered from the town of Machynlleth.<sup>14</sup> Although it is 40 years later, the lay subsidy of 1543 shows there were 51 householders or 260 people in Machynlleth. If the number of householders remained steady, approximately 55 percent of all householders supported the Guild in the years 1501-8.<sup>15</sup> This statistic is significant as it demonstrates a continuous, strong link between Ludlow and Machynlleth, even though the two market towns were 60 miles apart.

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<sup>14</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Book 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, 'Urban Population in Early Modern Wales Revisited', 36. Multiplier - head of household x 5.1 to ascertain actual population i.e. there were 51 households listed in the lay subsidy for 1543, so a multiplier of 5.1 gives a total population of 260.



**Figure 33: Main Towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches, Ranked by Number of Registrations <sup>16</sup>**

Town	Region	Foundation	Miles from Ludlow	Members 1485-9	Registrations 1501-8, 1515-16	Percentage of Welsh names in all records	Population in the lay subsidy of 1543	Attacked by Owain Glyndŵr
<b>Shrewsbury</b>	North	Anglo-Saxon	27	17	167 (30)	7	2890 in 1525 lay subsidy	Partially
<b>Chester</b>	North	Roman	65	2	138 (18)	7	c.3000	
<b>Oswestry</b>	North	Norman	43	4	113 (45)	80	c. 900	Yes
<b>Denbigh</b>	North	Edward I	75	6	85 (18)	46	877	Yes
<b>Welshpool</b>	Central	Welsh	32	10	71 (13)	83	474	Yes
<b>Wrexham</b>	North	Welsh	62		62 (5)	88	1505	Supported Glyndŵr
<b>Machynlleth</b>	Central	Welsh	60	7	56 (13)	92	260	Supported Glyndŵr
<b>Llanbadarn Fawr</b>	Central	Welsh	78	3	52 (9)	94		
<b>Ruthin</b>	North	Welsh	68	6	44 (9)	70	632	Yes
<b>Llanrwst</b>	North	Welsh	85	3	36 (8)	77	810	Yes
<b>Caernarfon</b>	North	Edward I	103	4	35 (7)	33	653	Yes
<b>Conwy</b>	North	Edward I	96		35 (7)	51	474	Yes
<b>St Martins</b>	North	Welsh	47		28 (3)	93		
<b>Llangollen</b>	North	Edward I	58	2	25 (7)	85	974	Yes
<b>Holywell</b>	North	Welsh	75	1	20 (1)	100	418	
<b>Llanidloes</b>	Central	Welsh	45		20 (2)	100	301	
<b>Meifod</b>	North	Welsh	39	2	16 (2)	89		
<b>Aberystwyth</b>	Central	Welsh	77		15 (3)	73		Yes
<b>Montgomery</b>	Central	Henry III	25	1	14 (4)	67	260	Yes
<b>Dolgellau</b>	North	Welsh	65	2	11 (8)	100	117	

<sup>16</sup> The number of registrations which converted to full membership is given in brackets. Information drawn from: Denton, 'Taxatio: Containing the Valuation, Plus Related Details, of the English and Welsh Parish Churches and Prebends Listed in the Ecclesiastical Taxation Assessment of 1291-92'; Powell, 'Urban Population in Early Modern Wales Revisited'; Letters, 'Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516'; Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*; Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*.

The evidence which is drawn together in Figure 31 shows that the North Welsh Marches covered the territory north of the lordship of Powys to Chester but also swept up the Welsh-speaking areas of Conwy and the important early medieval wool centres of Llanrwst and Dolgellau. The lordships in this region (Chirk, Oswestry, Denbigh, Dyffryn Clwyd, and Yale and Bromfield), were under the control of the crown by the end of the fifteenth century. However, due to the tenacity of the early Marcher lords, they kept their identity and political structure until the mid-1530s, after which they were subsumed into the counties of Shropshire and Denbighshire. Shrewsbury and Chester were the largest towns skirting the North Welsh Marches and were of a similar size of approximately 3,000 people each. By comparison, Bristol had almost 10,000 inhabitants at this time, which puts into perspective how small these leading Marcher towns were in the broader picture.<sup>17</sup>

Wales was surprisingly urbanised by the early fourteenth century. Ian Soulsby has estimated that between 16 and 23 percent of Welsh people lived in towns at this time, compared to 15 to 20 percent of the English population, who lived in the counties to the east of the lordships.<sup>18</sup> This was due in part to the creation of a ring of thirteenth-century Edwardian castles, which created the conditions for vibrant market towns with large hinterlands in the North Welsh countryside. By the mid to late fifteenth century, Welsh tradesmen had integrated into some of the existing urban commercial networks and built their livelihoods around the wool and cloth trade. For example, in Ruthin, in the eastern part of the Northern Welsh Marches, early

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Fleming, 'Time, Space and Power in Later Medieval Bristol' (Bristol: University of the West of England, 2013), 5, <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/22171/2/TimeSpacePowerFinalVersion%20%283%29.pdf>, accessed 10 October 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales*, 23.

seigniorial policy had not distinguished between Welsh and English burgesses.<sup>19</sup> This encouraged mutual respect and enabled Ruthin to become a leading weaving town by the fifteenth century.<sup>20</sup> The Palmers' Guild riding books for 1501-8 and 1515-16 indicate that Ruthin had a greater percentage of Welsh registrations than neighbouring Denbigh, a thirteenth-century English planned town (70 percent to 46 percent).<sup>21</sup>

Figure 33 demonstrates that organic Welsh settlements enjoyed better economic conditions than Anglo-Norman planned towns in the North Welsh Marches. For example, Wrexham had the largest population of any urban setting in the North Welsh Marches (c.1505 people from the 1543 Lay Subsidy records), excepting Shrewsbury and Chester.<sup>22</sup> This Welsh settlement survived the woes of the early fifteenth century to expand and build on its pivotal role in the cloth trade. Although it achieved quasi-burghal privileges in 1380, as the centre of the Lordship of Bromfield and Yale, it had already attracted solid investment to support 52 tenements held by 44 tenants by the early fourteenth century. There was also evidence of a tanning industry.<sup>23</sup> Leland wrote in the 1530s that Wrexham 'is the only market town of Welsh Maylor, having a goodly church collegiate, and one of the fairest in all North Wales. There be some merchants and bokeler makers'.<sup>24</sup> The only buckle maker in the Guild records from the Central and North Welsh Marches, Edward ap Rees, is listed in the

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<sup>19</sup> Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282-1348*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Jack, 'Cloth Industry in Medieval Wales', 20.

<sup>21</sup> See Figure 33. Information from SA LB5/3/2-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16

<sup>22</sup> Powell, 'Urban Population in Early Modern Wales Revisited', 36.

<sup>23</sup> Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, 'Historic Settlement Survey – Wrexham County Borough', Wrexham, 2013, <http://www.cpat.org.uk/ycom/wrexham/wrexham.pdf>, accessed 3 November 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *Leland's Itinerary in Wales in or about the Years 1536-1539*, 69–70.

riding books for 1505-6 as living in Wrexham. This tangible evidence in the Palmers' Guild records supports Leland's observations.<sup>25</sup>

In the same journey, Leland describes Denbigh as having 'diverse rows of streets within the walled town, of which the most part be now down in manner, and at this time there be scant 80 householders'.<sup>26</sup> Denbigh was a planned English town which was established by Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln in 1285.<sup>27</sup> The town was built next to but was not integrated with the previous Welsh community. Planned towns, like Denbigh, which were at the centre of its Marcher lordship, did not necessarily succeed as one might expect. This was due in part to Owain Glyndŵr's plan to destroy as much of the English infrastructure as he could. However, the problems of the Anglo-Norman boroughs might also have been due to the strength of the ancient Welsh trade networks which predated these settlements. The trade networks between Welsh-dominated northern towns such as Llanrwst and Dollgellau were the backbone of the cloth and wool trade from earliest times. These networks also sustained the economies of majority Welsh-speaking communities in the east, such as Wrexham and Ruthin, which were not originally English foundations.

The key town in the southern part of the North Welsh Marches, with a mix of Welsh and English inhabitants, was Oswestry. During the turbulent early days of the Marcher lordships, Oswestry had been a fortress. It subsequently witnessed the ebb and flow of Welsh chiefs and English nobility and prospered under both. By the mid fifteenth century, it capitalised on its geographic position by developing its role as an economic hub between East and West. For example, most of the Welsh cloth trade

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<sup>25</sup> SA LB5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book for 1505-6, 21v.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, *Leland's Itinerary in Wales in or about the Years 1536-1539*, 97.

<sup>27</sup> Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales*, 121.

was funnelled through Oswestry. Although its population was much smaller than that of Wrexham, (ca. 900 to 1500), the Guild riding books indicate that many villages in its immediate hinterland supported Oswestry's clothing and other industries.<sup>28</sup> These included Whitchurch and St Martin's to the east, and Llansilin, and Llangollen to the west.<sup>29</sup> The dominance of Welsh names in the Palmers' Guild riding books for Oswestry (80 percent) indicates that the Guild was comfortably entrenched in Oswestry's Welsh speaking community by the early sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

The economies of the major towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches — Welshpool, Machynlleth, Denbigh, Ruthin, and Wrexham, were devastated by the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion. There was extensive destruction particularly in the north Welsh borderlands in the early fifteenth century. One flashpoint for the uprising concerned a land dispute between Owain Glyndŵr and Sir Reginald Grey, third Baron of Ruthin, in the summer of 1400.<sup>31</sup> Ruthin Castle was one of the first castles to be torched and destroyed by the Welsh rebels. Denbigh and Oswestry were attacked by September of that year. The Central Marches did not fare well either. Montgomery and Welshpool were partially or wholly destroyed in the chaotic years after 1400. Shrewsbury weathered the storm better than most, although in 1405 Frankwell, to the north-west of the town, was raided and burned by Welsh supporters of Owain

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<sup>28</sup> For Oswestry see W.J. Slack, *The Lordship of Oswestry 1393-1607* (Shrewsbury: Shropshire Archaeological Society, 1951), 17; 1543 figures in Nia Powell, 'Do Numbers Count? Towns in Early Modern Wales', *Urban History* 32, no. 1 (2005): 50; For Shrewsbury see Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:104.

<sup>29</sup> In the riding books for 1501-8, the Oswestry entries always included people from these towns on the same page,

<sup>30</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>31</sup> Evans, *The Foundations of Ruthin: 1100-1800*, 34. See also: Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*.

Glyndŵr.<sup>32</sup> The destruction by Glyndŵr's forces in the northern Welsh borderlands was sporadic, wide-ranging, and dislocated the region's economy for many decades well into the fifteenth century.

Shrewsbury, which was on the eastern edge of these devastated lands, had been important to the stability of the borderland since the eleventh century when the Earl of Shrewsbury built his castle on the banks of the Severn. The Earl of Shrewsbury was one of three Earls who had been commissioned by William I to control the western border of the new Norman kingdom, in the late eleventh century. Shrewsbury was noted for its strong fortified walls and the castle was a base for King John and his son Henry in their ongoing disputes with Llewelyn ab Iorwerth, the Welsh prince of Gwynedd, in years from 1204 to 1216.<sup>33</sup> Since the early fourteenth century Shrewsbury had been the wool staple town for Shropshire and the North Welsh Marches. Carmarthen was the only other staple town in the Marches, as Cardiff, in the Marcher Lordship of Glamorgan, lost this role when Edward III ordered that Staple towns must only be the King's towns.<sup>34</sup> In the fourteenth century there were 25 wool merchants in Shrewsbury, whose trading partners included merchants in London, the Midlands and Calais, which was an important English wool market on the edge of France.

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<sup>32</sup> Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:92.

<sup>33</sup> Champion and Thacker, 6, Part 1:32–34. See also Lieberman, *The March of Wales, 1067-1300: A Borderland of Medieval Britain*.

<sup>34</sup> Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History: Being the Ford Lectures*, 52.

However, a century after the Glyndŵr rebellion, the economy of Shrewsbury had stagnated. There were now only four wool staplers in Shrewsbury.<sup>35</sup> Its pivotal role as a staple town had attracted a healthy population of between 4,400 and 5,500, in the early fourteenth century.<sup>36</sup> In the poll tax of 1377, after the Black Death, the population had fallen to 1,900. It increased only marginally to 2,500 in 1524.<sup>37</sup> Alan Dyer, who has drawn disparate evidence together to rank English towns, classified Shrewsbury as nineteenth by taxpaying population, but thirty-first on the ranking of taxable wealth by 1524.<sup>38</sup> The decrease in receipts from tolls and murage, which had fallen by half by the end of the fifteenth century, added to the notion that Shrewsbury was slipping down the ranks.<sup>39</sup> At the height of the Glyndŵr rebellion in 1402, in a response to a petition from the town's bailiffs to the Council in the Marches for relief, an official remarked that Shrewsbury 'is hastily likely to be right poorly inhabited, in such great ruin and decay it daily falleth'.<sup>40</sup> Although this decline in Shrewsbury's economy righted itself by the mid sixteenth century, mainly through increased inland trade, it was under economic stress in the decades either side of 1500, when Ludlow's population and economy was steady.<sup>41</sup> This may well have encouraged the Ludlow Guild to venture into Shrewsbury's western sphere of influence, to the town of Oswestry and surrounding market towns in the North Marcher lordships.

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<sup>35</sup> Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:105.

<sup>36</sup> Champion and Thacker, 6, Part 1:104.

<sup>37</sup> Faraday, *Shropshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Dyer, 'Appendix: Ranking Lists of English Medieval Towns', in *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 761, 765. The multiplier of 5.1 has been used.

<sup>39</sup> Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:109.

<sup>40</sup> Champion and Thacker, 6, Part 1:110.

<sup>41</sup> Champion and Thacker, 6, Part 1:104.

When considering the religious landscape of the Central and North Welsh Marches, it is clear that the Welsh monasteries in the Marcher lordships did not survive in any tangible way after the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion. The Cistercian abbeys of Cwm Hir and Strata Marcella near Welshpool were destroyed almost beyond repair. Henry IV partially destroyed Strata Florida in 1401 because of perceived support for Glyndŵr.<sup>42</sup> The already sparse Central March monastic network fragmented even more. By the early sixteenth century, the number of monks and nuns had declined substantially, and the income from leased monastic land was not enough to provide a means of expansion.

The English border monasteries at Shrewsbury, Haughmond and Lilleshall had increased their economic influence by extracting rents from manors and appropriated churches in the Central and North Marches from the twelfth century onwards.<sup>43</sup> By the early sixteenth century, the reduction in their geopolitical influence was clear. Early sixteenth-century bishop's visitations indicate that the Shropshire monasteries were not well kept, that they had no proper accounts, and that many buildings were dilapidated.<sup>44</sup> By the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1538-40), all border monasteries were in a state of crisis. Even Shrewsbury Abbey, which had the largest community of monks, saw a slowdown in patronage which led to its demise after five centuries of political, economic and religious dominance in the town. By 1539 there was little political will to stop the breakup and ransacking of stones from the conventual

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<sup>42</sup> Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 231.

<sup>43</sup> These included for Haughmond Abbey the church at Stokesay. M J Angold et al., eds., 'The Abbey of Haughmond', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 62.

<sup>44</sup> M.J. Angold et al., 'Houses of Benedictine Monks: Abbey of Shrewsbury', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2 (London: VCH, 1973), 36.



buildings of the abbey. Only the western part of the church was saved from destruction by its new role as the parish church of the Holy Cross.<sup>45</sup>

The network of parish churches was also adversely affected by the Glyndŵr rebellion. Many were put to the torch by one side or the other, and those churches which were sited near to English castles, such as Welshpool, suffered a similar fate to their secular counterpart.<sup>46</sup> However, by the late fifteenth century, there were signs of a revival spurred on by better economic times. Parishioners were investing in their local churches, as we have already seen in Ludlow and the towns in its hinterland. This trend, which was sweeping throughout England, caught the imagination of all social classes in the March. Due to population increases as well as liturgical changes, aisles and chapels were added to parish churches. This accommodated chantries, with their extra altars, so parts of the church became a place of personal piety within a public, corporate space.<sup>47</sup>

One example is the parish church of St Giles at Wrexham which underwent major renovations between 1506 and 1524. It became light and spacious, and was enlarged with a south side aisle and Lady chapel which were both built in the fifteenth century, after the church was burnt by Owain Glyndŵr in 1401.<sup>48</sup> Although it is not documented, the Tudor imagery within the church suggests that Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII, was a significant patron before her death in 1509.<sup>49</sup> Parish

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<sup>45</sup> Angold et al., 37.

<sup>46</sup> The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, 'The Church of St Mary, Welshpool', Montgomeryshire Churches Survey, 2007, <http://www.cpat.demon.co.uk/projects/longer/churches/montgom/16973.htm>, accessed 15 January 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology*, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Scourfield and Haslam, *Powys: Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire*, 396.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, *The Parish Church of St Giles, Wrexham*, 6.

churches at Llanidloes, Meifod and Oswestry, to name a few, were extended and embellished. There was a strong culture of pious giving in late medieval society that the Palmers' Guild duly exploited.<sup>50</sup>

By the late fifteenth century, the economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches had stabilised after the ethnic disruption in the early years of that century. Although Shrewsbury was showing signs of stagnation, there were indications that the smaller March towns were increasing in population and were building on prior economic relationships which had been disrupted by the Glyndŵr rebellion. After the rise of the Tudor dynasty in 1485, there was an increase in royal patronage of Marcher churches and more opportunities for Welsh-speaking Marcher families to have a role in the new dynasty. As people's disposable income slowly increased, those who wished to demonstrate their piety moved away from monasteries towards their local parish church and also religious guilds. There was now more choice. The conditions were ripe for the Palmers' Guild to infiltrate this region. The surviving Guild records suggest this is exactly what they did.

### **The Cloth Trade in the Central and North Welsh Marches**

With over 1,650 names from the Central and North Welsh Marches in the Palmers' Guild records from 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16, it is clear that the Guild was intimately connected with the people from this region. However, the lists of names in the Guild manuscript pages on their own, do not tell us why this relationship was so

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<sup>50</sup> Many authors have noted the upsurge in pious giving in the fifteenth century. See: Eamon Duffy, 'Late Medieval Religion: The Evidence from Material Culture', in *New Approaches to the History of Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters, 2009); and also Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation*, 119–62 for examples of pious parishioners in Bristol.

deep. We need to understand why this particular religious guild operated in this region from the end of the fifteenth century to the 1530s. Apart from religious factors, the answer lies in the political economy of the region. At the core of this economy was wool and the cloth trade.

An understanding of the Welsh cloth trade relies heavily on E.A. Lewis' seminal article, published in 1903, on early Welsh industry and commerce. Lewis argued that the early cloth trade lay primarily in the southern Welsh Marches. He claimed that the increase in cloth production in the southern Welsh Marches was due to the differences in the level of duty for wool and cloth. In the early fourteenth century, Edward III raised the levy from 33 percent for wool but only five percent for cloth.<sup>51</sup> This meant that the cloth industry could service the home market as well as growing the export markets. Bristol and Shrewsbury were the main destinations for Welsh cloth, with Bristol offering the easiest route to an overseas export market.<sup>52</sup>

Caroline Skeel, in her 1922 article on the Welsh woollen industry, argued that it was difficult to reconstruct the nature of the cloth trade before the mid sixteenth century because there were so few primary sources. She repeated Lewis' claim that Welsh cloth was not noted for its quality, which led to its exemption from taxes in the early fifteenth century. Despite its coarseness, the sale of Welsh cloth grew, as it was cheaper to buy. It was sold in the late fifteenth century in fairs at Ruthin (Lordship of Denbigh), and the English towns of Chester, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, Hereford, and Ludlow.<sup>53</sup> Skeel and Lewis did not pay much attention to the devastating impact on the Welsh economy of the Glyndŵr rebellion. Such an omission is rather surprising and

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<sup>51</sup> Heather Swanson, *Medieval British Towns* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), 40.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis, 'The Development of Industry and Commerce in Wales During the Middle Ages', 160.

<sup>53</sup> Skeel, 'The Welsh Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', 223.

indicates the superficial character of their discussion of this period of Welsh economic history. They appear to sprint past this century in order to concentrate on the mid sixteenth century, which is easier to study because sources are more plentiful.

Fulling mills were not only crucial to the development of a burgeoning cloth industry, they also indicated a transition from a decentralised domestic industry to a more centralised endeavour. The Marcher lordships were ideally suited to the construction of fulling mills as they had fast-flowing streams to drive the mills. They also had strong local support from the Marcher lords and other entrepreneurs. For example, the Fitz Alans of Chirk built a fulling mill at Llangollen near Oswestry in 1330 and established a further two mills on the river Ceirog near Chirk by 1348.<sup>54</sup> Other organisations, such as religious guilds or monasteries owned and leased out fulling mills. For example, the Palmers' Guild owned a fulling mill at Ludford on the river Teme, just outside the Ludlow town walls, which was regularly leased out to weavers or fullers. These fulling mills would have needed a steady supply of local wool to drive the cloth-making process, as well as markets for cloth.

Ian Jack has identified the sites of 202 fulling mills in Wales and the Marches. Sixty-two *pandies* (fulling mills) were built between 1420 and 1480. Almost all were secular enterprises, particularly in the Central and North Welsh Marches. Tintern in the southern Marches, with its three fulling mills, was the only Cistercian house which actively engaged in cloth making in the early fourteenth century.<sup>55</sup> In Figure 34, Jack's research shows that there were 38 *pandies* in Denbigh and West Shropshire and a further 17 in the Central Marches by the beginning of the sixteenth century. There

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<sup>54</sup> Jack, 'Cloth Industry in Medieval Wales', 453.

<sup>55</sup> R. Ian Jack, "Cloth Industry in Medieval Wales," *Welsh History Review* 10 (1980): 443–60.

were very few in the Principality, signifying that the Marcher lords were more likely to support the development of fulling mills, than areas under crown control. Jack's analysis also shows that the development of the cloth industry in the Central Marches (Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire) may have been earlier than Lewis thought.<sup>56</sup>

**Figure 34: First Recording of Fulling Mills by Present Day County**<sup>57</sup>

Modern Day County	Before 1301	1301-49	1350-1400	1401-1500	1501- 47	Total
<b>Denbighshire</b>		11	2	13	3	29
<b>Montgomeryshire</b>		2	4	4	1	11
<b>Radnorshire</b>		4		1	1	6
<b>Shropshire</b>	3	2	3		1	9

The trend towards centralising cloth manufacture in communities which had access to fast flowing water and reasonable transport routes meant that local markets grew in importance. In the fifteenth century, Welshpool was a meeting place for Shrewsbury merchants, and Welsh clothiers from Llanidloes in Arwystli and Machynlleth in Cyveiliog. Knighton clothiers went to Ludlow with their blankets, and the alnage returns from counties near the Welsh Marches show the names of Welsh cloth traders in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and even at the wool fair at St Bartholomew in London.<sup>58</sup> Good transport links to Ludlow and Shrewsbury were important, but networks of cloth traders in the Marches were even more crucial to the success of this growing industry. For the Palmers' Guild, this centralisation meant the

<sup>56</sup> Jack, 'The Cloth Industry in Medieval Ruthin', 459.

<sup>57</sup> Jack, 'Cloth Industry in Medieval Wales', 449.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis, 'The Development of Industry and Commerce in Wales During the Middle Ages', 159.

stewards' journeys could be targeted. The Palmers' Guild needed to have an economically viable itinerary for its stewards, when they visited this sparsely settled region.

During the fifteenth century, the interests of entrepreneurial clothiers intersected with wool broggers and wool merchants, as wool was often transported to cloth-making areas. Their worlds were interdependent and complementary. As we saw in Chapter 1, English rural clothiers needed to use capital and their labour force effectively, which was as important as the increasing role of mechanisation in the early sixteenth century. John Oldland, in his analysis of the wool and cloth industry, argues that 'rural clothiers bought and often dyed the wool, financed its production, invested in looms and fulling mills, built up wool, yarn and cloth inventories and financed its sale'.<sup>59</sup> However Skeel argues that the late medieval Welsh clothier was more likely to be an artisan who combined farming with wool buying, weaving and cloth selling and probably sourced his wool locally, rather than primarily being a clothier.<sup>60</sup> My research shows that by the early sixteenth century, rural clothiers who were operating in the towns of the Welsh Marches, were more akin to English clothiers than Skeel's 'multiskilled artisans'.

As we saw in Chapter 2, the use of credit was widespread due to the scarcity of coin in the late medieval period. Although we cannot say for certain, it is possible that the Palmers' Guild had a role in this region, whether it was to facilitate transactions, or as a guarantor for loans or debts. It is more likely that the stewards engaged in financial relationships in this region than Ludlow's hinterland due to the region's

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<sup>59</sup> Oldland, 'The Economic Impact of Clothmaking on Rural Society', 232.

<sup>60</sup> Skeel, 'The Welsh Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', 235.

difficult landscape, and lack of a dominant trade guild before the mid sixteenth century.

It is not possible to say for sure what role the Palmers' Guild played in the cloth trade, but it was not uncommon for religious guilds to be an integral part of long-distance trade networks. For example, there were 25 names of men and women from Kendal in Westmoreland, in the registers of the Holy Cross in Stratford-upon-Avon and 10 names in the accounts for the Guild of the Holy Trinity, Luton.<sup>61</sup> These men and women from Kendal carried their bundles of cloth through the midlands to the markets of Southampton. The nurturing of commercial relationships must have been important to them, but the scattering of the names of deceased members in the registers of Stratford-upon-Avon and Luton, suggests that the Kendal folk also appreciated the Guilds' religious services. Familiar rituals would comfort long distance members. Lists of outsiders or 'extranier' can be found in the Ludlow riding books of 1503-4 and 1504-5. For example, there are two names of people who come from Southampton in the riding book of 1504-5.<sup>62</sup>

The Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury actively engaged in the Welsh cloth trade in the Central and North Welsh Marches, particularly from the mid sixteenth century onwards. It was the only real competitor to the Ludlow Guild in this region. The Drapers' Guild was one of number of Shrewsbury guilds which oversaw the regulation of cloth occupations. The Mercers Guild was the oldest guild in Shrewsbury.<sup>63</sup> Three

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<sup>61</sup> Macdonald, *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, 22–23; Barbara Tearle, ed., *The Accounts of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, Luton 1526/7 - 1546/7* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press for the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 2012), xxii.

<sup>62</sup> SA LB 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 112.

<sup>63</sup> Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the XVI and XVII Centuries*, 79.

other guilds, which were active in the cloth industry in Shrewsbury, secured charters in the fifteenth century. They were Weavers' Guild in 1448-9, the Shearmen's Guild in 1478, and the Drapers' Guild in 1462.<sup>64</sup> As the cloth trade expanded beyond the walls of the town, the men of the Mercers' and the Drapers' Companies were in direct competition with each other. By the mid sixteenth century, the Drapers' Guild wrested control from the Mercers' Guild, and set up trade routes between suppliers in Oswestry and markets in London.

Scholars of the Welsh cloth trade argue that the Shrewsbury Drapers' Guild dominated the cloth trade in the North Welsh Marches, from the mid sixteenth century onwards.<sup>65</sup> This approach is fully supported in Thomas Mendenhall's seminal work, which was written in 1953. Mendenhall acknowledges that Welsh cloth manufacture moved from the southern Marches to the Central and North Marches from the mid fifteenth century onwards. However, he does not give much detail of the trade before the 1550s, which was the decade when the Drapers' Guild took control of the cloth trade in north Wales.<sup>66</sup> Although he argues that the initial stages of the process (cleaning, sorting, carding, spinning, weaving, fulling and finally stretching the cloth on tenterhooks) were conducted in Welsh villages, he maintains that most of the cloth was sent to Shrewsbury for finishing.<sup>67</sup> Although Oswestry is mentioned as an important Welsh market town where cloth makers gathered, he maintains that the

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<sup>64</sup> Mendenhall, 80.

<sup>65</sup> See Owen and J.B. Blakeway, *A History of Shrewsbury*, vol. 2 vols (London: Harding, Lepard and Co, 1825), p 511 ; J. Geraint Jenkins, *The Welsh Woollen Industry* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1968), p 119; W. A. Champion and A.T. Thacker, eds., *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Shropshire, Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, vol. VI, Part 1 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer for the Institute of Historical Press, 2014), p 111.

<sup>66</sup> Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the XVI and XVII Centuries*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Mendenhall, 36.



Shrewsbury Drapers' Guild oversaw this cloth making process and drove out all competition. He also asserts that the finishing of cloth was possibly not done at the local level, and that clothiers were 'probably very rare in North Wales'.<sup>68</sup> Mendenhall's thesis overlooks the notion that there may have been other organisations which were active in the cloth trade in the North Welsh Marches, prior to 1550.

Entrepreneurs, such as clothiers and wool broggers who lived in England, unlocked local cloth production to external markets, from the late fifteenth century onwards. Mendenhall argues that the infrastructure in Wales and the Marches before the mid sixteenth century was too primitive for a similar system of exporting cloth to markets outside of the small Welsh communities.<sup>69</sup> It appears, from the Shrewsbury Drapers' Guild's surviving records, that the Guild did not have the infrastructure in place before the mid sixteenth century, to exploit fully the burgeoning distributed cloth industry. After all there were only 58 members in the Drapers' Guild's list of 1498.<sup>70</sup> The Palmers' Guild did have the wherewithal to undertake this activity, from the late fifteenth century onwards.

Evidence in the Guild riding books, and membership registers shows us that there were thousands of people who lived in this region, who were connected in some way to the Guild and to Ludlow. As I have demonstrated earlier in this chapter, some of these people worked in the cloth trade, and a few key people from this group were drapers, clothiers and cloth merchants. These entrepreneurs represent the beginnings of an organised system of cloth distribution in the region. Like the early monasteries,

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<sup>68</sup> Mendenhall, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Mendenhall, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Chitty, 'The Earliest Book of the Drapers' Company, Shrewsbury', 261–62.

the Palmers' Guild was one of the few organisations which could organise the cartage of wool or cloth over long distances and have access to lines of credit.

In 1953, Mendenhall argued that the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury 'might be said to have inherited the control of the [Welsh cloth] trade which the government had largely abandoned in 1557'.<sup>71</sup> It is questionable that the entire Central and North Welsh Marches cloth trade was under the thrall of the Shrewsbury Drapers' Guild, as Mendenhall asserts. The large gap between the late fifteenth century (when the cloth-making infrastructure was set up) and the mid sixteenth century could well be filled by an organisation such as the Palmers' Guild. Mendenhall's thesis projects the late-sixteenth century montage backwards to the early years of the sixteenth century, and in so doing does not give any room for other guilds to be involved in the cloth trade. This suggests that he was completely unaware of the influence of the Palmers' Guild, in a region which was very close to Shrewsbury. The Palmers' Guild's extensive itineraries in the Central and North Welsh Marches in the early sixteenth century suggest that the accepted narrative of the Welsh cloth trade needs to be revised.

According to the surviving primary documents, the Palmers' Guild steward rode through towns and smaller communities of the Central and North Welsh Marches from the 1480s to the late 1530s. Although documents from the 1480s only list names of members, the records for 1501-8 and 1515-16 list names of people who paid annual instalments, sometimes for over 20 years. The Guild's tenacity in completing these annual routes, sometimes when there were adverse political events and unrest, bears witness to the importance of this region to the financial health of the Guild. It is worth

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<sup>71</sup> Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the XVI and XVII Centuries*, 5.

stating, once again, that it is highly likely that the Palmers' Guild was the only religious guild which visited towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches. The nearest religious guilds were the Corpus Christi and Trinity guilds in Coventry, and the Guild of St Mary and St John the Baptist in Lichfield. There is no evidence that officials from these Guilds travelled to the towns and villages of the Central and North Welsh Marches.<sup>72</sup>

The chapter will now look in detail at the Guild's presence, and how it affected the political economy, religious landscape, and social fabric of the communities in the Central and North Welsh Marches.

### **Central and North Welsh Marches: An Overview**

The Ludlow Guild records demonstrate a solid penetration into the Central and North Welsh Marches region. There were over 1,650 names of people in the records from 125 towns and villages, for the years 1485-9, 1501-9 and 1515-16.<sup>73</sup> The Guild steward visited most towns on the main routes at some time in the years between 1485 and 1515. Registrations included those who paid their entry fine in full, those who paid instalments towards their eventual membership and those who registered but never obtained membership. Nineteen percent, or 254 names of people, became official members of the Guild in the core years of the Guild records — 1501-8. It is important

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<sup>72</sup> There is no evidence of journeys to recruit members in the Guild records: Furnivall, *The Gild of St. Mary Lichfield: Being the Ordinances of the Gild of St. Mary and Other Documents*; Harris, *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary St John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry*; Clark, 'Confraternities: A Study of Religious Guilds in Fifteenth Century England with Specific Reference to Guilds in Coventry, Lichfield and Stratford-upon-Avon'.

<sup>73</sup> SA LB5/3/1-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

not to discount the other 81 percent, as one third of that percentage paid instalments for 10 to 25 years, indicating a lifetime connection with the Guild.<sup>74</sup> They may have died before they could make the final membership, but that is not to say that they were unimportant when considering the Guild's impact on this region. It is a mistake to gauge the impact of the Ludlow Guild by the number of official members alone.

The three years from 1503 to 1506 show a spike in membership. Figure 35 shows that the highest year was 1505-6, when 70 people who registered in that year, became members of the Guild. In addition, in the previous two years there was about 50 new members each year.<sup>75</sup> There was also a surge in engagement, as 750 individuals also registered to start their instalments. There were a range of factors which could explain this strong upward trend in engagement with the Guild at this time.

First, as we saw in Chapter 3 and 4, royal patronage was extremely important to the Guild's recruitment drive. The entry of the name of Katherine of Aragon, Prince Arthur's wife, in the riding book of 1501, and the name of Prince Henry and five of his retainers in 1502, are seminal moments in the Guild's history.<sup>76</sup> To those who had benefited from the policies of the new dynasty, this tangible royal connection might well have influenced their decision to join the Guild. Second, as we found when considering this same spike in memberships and registrations in the hinterland region, in the years around 1505-6, there were economic pull factors. For example, the increase in disposable income, and the role of the Guild in assisting Welsh cloth traders would have encouraged people to come forward. Third, local epidemics of

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<sup>74</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>75</sup> SA LB5/3/5-7 Steward's Riding Books 1503-4 to 1506-7.

<sup>76</sup> SA LB5/3/3 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2,67 and SA LB 5/3/4 Steward's Riding Book 1502-3,63-4.

‘sweating sickness’, which were common between 1485 and 1515, could have motivated many people to join the Guild for religious comfort.

**Figure 35: Statistics for the Central and North Welsh Marches for 1503-6** <sup>77</sup>

Year	Members	Number of registrations which did not lead to membership	Total
1503-4	50	235	285
1504-5	45	261	306
1505-6	70	299	369

An examination of the rate at which registrations were converted into actual membership of the Guild, suggests that it was lower in the Central and North Welsh Marches than in Ludlow’s hinterland. This is not surprising, as the region is located far from Ludlow and the Guild steward may not have visited each town every year. The highest conversion rate was Oswestry, where 42 percent of those who registered with the Guild between 1501 and 1508 became members.<sup>78</sup> Conversely, in the towns of Llanbadarn Fawr and Aberystwyth, which were on the fringe of the region, many people joined the Guild, but few people paid all their instalments. An exception to this trend was Machynlleth, where 13 out of 56 (23 percent) who registered with the Guild, became members in the years from 1501-8.<sup>79</sup>

All this data points to the tentative conclusion that the Guild’s engagement with this region peaked around 1505-6. After that date, it is possible that journeys were curtailed or that towns were only visited in alternate years. For example, for those who registered in 1505-6 and who paid at least one instalment, 22 percent were

<sup>77</sup> SA LB5/3/5-7 Steward’s Riding Books 1503-4 to 1505-6

<sup>78</sup> SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>79</sup> SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

still paying instalments 16 or more years later. For those who registered in 1515-16, only 10 percent were still engaged with the Guild, 16 or more years later.<sup>80</sup> This mirrors the statistics of the hinterland areas, which also show that the Guild lost ground in 1515, except for a few towns in Leominster Ore.

Even though the steward visited many towns in the late 1530s, the accounts of 1538-9 show that the bill for the steward's expenses (£2 9s. 10d.), was half the amount of money which was collected to pay for memberships (£5 11d.). As the expenses in the Guild documents only covered food and lodging, it is possible that there were also undocumented expenses.<sup>81</sup> However, the data we have to hand shows that the journey to the Central and North Welsh Marches was becoming less and less viable as the 1530s progressed. This situation may well be a response to the changes in liturgical practice, or the lack of money in the Palmer's Guild's coffers to pay for long journeys with little financial return. It is worth noting that some urban religious guilds, such as the Holy Cross Guild in Stratford-upon-Avon and the Trinity Guild in Coventry, lost support well before the mid-1520s, at a time when the Palmers' Guild stewards were still visiting a long list of towns across Wales and England.<sup>82</sup>

The surviving Palmers' Guild records throw a strong light on the social and occupational class as well as the ethnic profile of the people who registered to be members. Examining social classes first, the *generosi* (gentry) were strong supporters of the Guild. When examining the surviving documents, there was only one of this class from the Central Welsh Marches, Thomas ap Rees of Newtown, whose name

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<sup>80</sup> SA LB5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16.

<sup>81</sup> SA LB5/3/32 Steward's Account 1538-9.

<sup>82</sup> Bailey, 'Medieval Religious Guilds: An Analysis of the Palmers' Guild, Ludlow, and the Holy Cross Guild, Stratford-upon-Avon c.1400-1551', 91.

appears in the riding book for 1504-5.<sup>83</sup> When we move further north, the number increases markedly, which may be due to the many Anglo-Welsh families who held lands in this region. Here there were 50 names of people from the gentry class, in the membership registers and riding books of 1485-9, 1501-9 and 1515-16, who came from towns such as Shrewsbury, Denbigh, Oswestry and Conwy.<sup>84</sup>

There was at least one representative from all the leading families of the region, which demonstrates that the Guild was held in high esteem by the gentry. The *generosi* from Oswestry included the well-known families of Snede, Trefor, and Brinerton.<sup>85</sup> The name of William Mitton, *armiger* and bailiff of Shrewsbury, was listed in the 1505-6 riding book and Thomas Trentham, warden of the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury, enrolled in 1507.<sup>86</sup> In the records for Denbigh and Conwy there are members of the Salusbury and Holland families. Edward Salusbury was constable of Conwy when he enrolled in the Guild in 1507. (see Appendix 3).<sup>87</sup> The situation in the north is also reflected in Ludlow's hinterland where there were 21 *generosi*, amongst whom were the Vaughan, Cornwall and Blount families.<sup>88</sup> This trend is also apparent in the southern Welsh Marches, where there was strong support from the Herberts of Troy and Chepstow (see Appendix 3). Once again, all of these gentry families joined in the peak years for the Guild, from 1503-7. This gives weight to the argument that royal patronage of the Ludlow Guild, as we saw in chapter 3, encouraged the gentry to join

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<sup>83</sup> SA LB5/3/6 Steward's Riding Books 1504-5,10.

<sup>84</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9. In the riding books and membership registers, the gentry were listed as *generos* and *generosa*

<sup>85</sup> Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Oswestry', in *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, ed. R. A. Griffiths (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), 219-42.

<sup>86</sup> SA LB5/3/7 Steward's Riding Books 1505-6,13v. SA LB5/3/9 Steward's Riding Books 1507-8, 3v.

<sup>87</sup> SA LB5/3/9 Steward's Riding Books 1507-8, 12v.

<sup>88</sup> SA LB5/3/1-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8, and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9. See Appendix 3.

the Guild. These families also owed much to the Crown for their success and livelihoods. It was *de rigueur* to be listed in the Palmers' Guild records in the early sixteenth century.

In broader terms, the people who gave their names to the steward as well as their occupation, worked mostly in the cloth trade, were servants, or were members of the clerical class. Care is needed, however, in analysing occupational class, as only 20 percent of those who registered with the Guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches recorded their occupation. With this proviso, the Guild was particularly popular with monks and chaplains, who outnumber parish priests in the Central and North Welsh Marches list. The inclusion of names of abbots from England and Wales is a feature of the Palmers' Guild records. Richard Lye, the abbot of Shrewsbury, joined in 1501, and the name of John Butler, the abbot of Vale Crucis, is to be found in the 1515-16 riding book (see Appendix 3). Many Cistercian monks wished to join and they often paid instalments over long periods of time. It is notable that the abbot, prior, and all 12 monks from Llantarnam Abbey, in the southern Welsh Marches, engaged to join the Guild in 1515.<sup>89</sup> There were the names of two abbots of Tintern Abbey in the riding books: the name of Henry Newland is in the riding book of 1503-4 and Thomas Morton's name can be found in the 1505-6 riding book (see Appendix 3).

There were 24 names of servants in the Guild records in the years 1501-8. This number meant that it was the third most common occupation after clerics and members of the gentry class.<sup>90</sup> The term 'servant' was used for a range of roles in late

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<sup>89</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 27.

<sup>90</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.



medieval society, from an unskilled worker through to a trusted member of the family.<sup>91</sup> The names of servants were listed in the riding books, near to their master's names, who were either from the gentry class, the clergy or leading merchants and clothiers. The high number of names of servants correlates with the Ludlow statistics for the same years. In Ludlow, in the same period, there were 29 servants who gave their names to the steward. It was the top occupational category for these years.<sup>92</sup> It is more than likely that the servants' entrance fine was paid by their employer, although we have no way of knowing this for certain. This would indicate that masters took a close interest in ensuring the religious wellbeing of their household servants. The large cohort of servants shows us that both servants and employers held the Guild in high esteem.

In the records for 1501-8, tailors led the cloth occupations, closely followed by mercers, merchants and clothiers. Some occupations were listed from outside the wool trade, such as corvesers, bakers, butchers, and those in the building trades. In most cases, however, names are listed with no occupation.<sup>93</sup> This could be because the occupation was not thought worthy of mentioning, or because people could 'turn their hand' to many trades. The broad range of occupations reflects the degree to which the Guild's reputation had permeated all levels of society, and that joining the Guild was not only for the higher social and occupational classes.

The data on ethnicity contained within the Ludlow Guild records sets this Guild apart from other English religious guilds. It gives a unique insight into the composition of Welsh-speaking communities in the borderland, at a time when other evidence is

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<sup>91</sup> Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495-1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages*, 42-44.

<sup>92</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>93</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

virtually non-existent. In my thesis I have followed the approach of Michael Faraday, who has transcribed many lay subsidy and probate records from the Welsh Marches. His convention assigns 'Welshness' to any person whose first or last name is Welsh.<sup>94</sup> With this in mind it is not surprising that many of the people listed in the riding books from this region seem to have been Welsh by ethnicity. More than 57 percent of the names in the Guild records for 1501-8 have Welsh patronyms.<sup>95</sup> Of the names listed in the riding books for the Central Marches, which includes Welshpool, Machynlleth and Llanbadarn Fawr, more than 80 percent of the names are Welsh. Only the towns of Shrewsbury and Chester had significant numbers of people with English names in the Guild riding books and membership registers, from 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16.<sup>96</sup>

The data from the Central and North Welsh Marches also contains some interesting patterns in terms of gender. More men than women registered between 1501-8 (55 percent male to 45 percent female), which is like the figures from the hinterland areas.<sup>97</sup> As we found in the Ludlow's hinterland, the higher percentage of males could be partly explained by the inclusion of clerics and servants, who were predominantly male. However, within these statistics, there is a fascinating sub-group — single women whose names suggest they were of Welsh ethnicity. These names included the Welsh word *verch* which means 'daughter of', followed by a male personal name which was then followed by the patronym 'ap' (son of). For example,

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<sup>94</sup> Faraday, *Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407-1550 in the Consistory Court of the Bishops of Hereford with an Appendix of Abstracts of Registered Copy-Wills 1552-1581*, xxii. See Notes on page 8.

<sup>95</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>96</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>97</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

*Elena verch David ap Llewellyn ap John*, registered in Machynlleth in 1505-6.<sup>98</sup> The majority of these women hailed from Darowen, Llanrwst, Penegoes and Machynlleth in the western part of the Central Marches, and Oswestry and Holywell in the North Welsh Marches. Although the numbers are small, Figure 36 shows that over 50 percent of women from these towns, who registered for the Guild from 1501-8 and 1515-16, were not married. The only town where there was a significant group of single English women was the town of Baschurch, which is midway between Shrewsbury and Oswestry. There is a group of 10 women with English names in the riding book for 1515-16, of whom seven were single.<sup>99</sup>

This difference in female membership patterns could be due to a range of factors. Welsh women who were not registered with husbands, may have been sponsored by their fathers. They may have wanted to protect their unmarried daughters, by giving money to a religious guild. It may also be due to cultural preferences. Welsh women were particularly attracted to local Welsh female saints. St Winefride (in Welsh, *Gwenfrewy*) was extremely important to Welsh women and her well at Holywell was a significant site of pilgrimage in the medieval period, as well as in post-Reformation Wales.<sup>100</sup> This attachment to religious images and cults, coupled with the lack of local religious guilds might have caused single Welsh women to consider joining the Guild. The dearth and poverty of local monasteries could also be a factor. Women might also not have trusted the local parish priest to be able to perform religious services when they were in spiritual need. It is hard to come to any

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<sup>98</sup> SA LB 5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 24v.

<sup>99</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16.

<sup>100</sup> See: Janet Bord, 'St Winefride's Well, Holywell, Clwyd', *Folklore* 105 (1994): 99-109; and Alexandra Walsham, 'Holywell: Contesting Sacred Space in Post-Reformation Wales', in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 211-36.

definitive conclusions about the motives behind any religious act, but it is even more difficult when so few records about pre-Reformation Welsh society have survived.

**Figure 36: Welsh Women from Machynlleth, Holywell and Oswestry areas** <sup>101</sup>

Place	Married Welsh women	Single Welsh women
Machynlleth area	21	31
North coast (near Holywell)	16	17
Oswestry area	29	31

Finally, as we found in Ludlow’s hinterland, deceased registrations comprised only a small proportion of the total membership base. There are only 171 names of deceased people (10 percent) in the riding books and membership registers for 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16. Most of the names of the deceased (71 percent) were of Welsh origin. Many of these registrations (60 percent) were paid in full and the names entered into the membership register for that year. The registration of 31 Welsh names in the membership registers for 1485-9 shows a firm early commitment from Welsh-speaking communities to the Guild and its religious role.<sup>102</sup> The motivation to join a religious guild for pious reasons was more important to the people of this region than the hinterland areas, where only six percent of new registrations were deceased. The support over the span of the Palmers’ Guild records (30 years), from Welsh-speaking communities such Chirk, Ruthin, Dollgellau and Machynlleth, could be due to the paucity of reliable alternative religious institutions in this region, in comparison to the many options which were available in Ludlow’s hinterland.

<sup>101</sup> Numbers in include recruits and members. SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>102</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward’s Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

**Figure 37: Shropshire Registrations in the 1515-16 Riding Book <sup>103</sup>**

Town/Village	Miles from Shrewsbury	Registrations in 1515
<b>Towns and villages near Shrewsbury</b>		
Atcham	4	4
Baschurch	8	17
Berrington	5	4
Berwick	3	7
Ruyton-XI-Towns	10	4
Shrewsbury		8
Stanwardine in the Wood	12	4
Wem	11	13
<b>Eastern Shropshire towns (New entries in the 1515-16 riding book)</b>		
Bridgnorth (no registrations between 1488 and 1515)	20	6
High Ercall	8	17
Rodington	8	5
Shawbury	8	9
Waters Upton	12	16
Wellington	12	19
Wroxeter	6	5

As we discovered in Ludlow’s hinterland, the number of registrations from the Central and North Welsh Marches fell in the 1515-16 riding book, the last manuscript which lists the names of people who wished to join the Palmers’ Guild. There were 174 registrations in the Central and North Welsh Marches, which yielded only 19 members (11 percent). These registrations were scattered but mostly came from English communities near Shrewsbury, such as Wem and Baschurch. Figure 37 also shows that there were registrations from several towns which had never offered recruits before. These towns all lay to the east of Shrewsbury and included 19 people from Wellington and 16 from Waters Upton. These registrations eclipsed those from the western borderland areas, which had been the traditional base of the Palmers’ Guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches, in previous years. This development may be simply

<sup>103</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward’s Riding Book 1515-16.

due to the fact the Guild steward did not visit all his traditional areas that year.

Alternatively, it may indicate that the Guild was forging into new areas where they did not have networks in place, because they had exhausted the pool of applicants from traditional areas. It could also be due to rising incomes in these eastern Shropshire towns which gave people an opportunity to belong to an established religious institution.

### **The Political Economy: the Role of the Palmers' Guild**

The Guild's *modus operandi* in the region was built on engaging with three key aspects of people's lives. First, the engagement was economic. The steward's chief role was to increase the membership base in order to improve the Guild's financial position. He visited towns which could sustain viable economic relationships with Ludlow and did not visit Welsh towns which were too far away, or which could not provide sufficient return. The Guild interacted with the local economy when it received payments-in-kind as membership instalments. Sometimes, cloth was used as a currency for these transactions. Second, the Guild offered an alternative religious institution to the parish church. The fact that the Guild offered religious and economic benefits gave it a significant advantage over the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury. Whereas the Drapers' Guild was primarily a secular organisation, the Palmers' Guild could also offer clients an insurance policy for the soul. Third, the Guild engaged actively with the leading families of the region. These families acknowledged the economic and networking opportunities that the Guild offered. Membership of the Guild also offered the opportunity to build connections with the leading families of Ludlow. These three aspects of the Guild's activities will now be examined in turn.

The principal factor in the Guild's success in this region was its role in the economy. The steward rode to market towns in the region, to build up the Guild's financial capital and to facilitate bonds of trust between the Guild and the people in these towns. As his itineraries spanned many towns in the region and involved financial transactions between recruits and the Guild, the Guild had a direct role in the local economy. The regular instalments, which are listed in the riding books, demonstrate this economic role and will be considered as part of the following analysis. The investigation will also examine the notion that the Guild steward encouraged economic relationships between Guild members and may have acted as a 'middleman' in a fragmented, embryonic economy, which was dominated by the cloth trade.

Before starting the analysis, it is timely to reflect on the nature of the relationship between the Guild and the people in this region, which was far from Ludlow. The thousands of names in the riding books and membership registers strongly suggest there was a reciprocal relationship between the Guild and these people. This reciprocity was based on a shared understanding of what each party gained from the relationship. Although there is no tangible evidence of wool contracts or deeds of sale of cloth, it is probable that the bond, which was secured by annual payments, offered more than a religious component. There were those who could pay the entrance fee upfront but chose instead to pay instalments over many years. This behaviour suggests that for some people from this region the relationship was based on something else than pious motivation. It was about mutual trust and developing trade networks in order to build their own and their families' economic security.

The Guild stewards were vital to the Guild's success in the region, even more than in the hinterland region of Ludlow. As representatives of a distant religious guild, their reputations were important. Appendix 2 shows the breakdown of the stewards' occupations between 1406 and probably the last journeys in 1539-40. Most worked in the wool and cloth trade, and almost all held high-status occupations such as weavers, drapers, and clothiers. The Guild records show that the role of steward was usually a four-year posting, so it is likely that most stewards also pursued their trade at the same time as their stewardship. It is also probable that these stewards were chosen for their reputation. An entrance fee to a religious guild might be a small price to pay for a connection with this important English border town.

When the Palmers' Guild steward and his man set out on annual visits from Ludlow their first halt was Shrewsbury, which was a major source of members for the Guild. Shrewsbury was an important town in the political economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches due to its geographical proximity to the Welsh towns of the Marcher lordships.<sup>104</sup> As we saw earlier in this chapter, Shrewsbury benefited from royal patronage, which encouraged wool merchants to set up their businesses in this heavily defended town. Shrewsbury's role as a wool-staple town meant there were wealthy wool families by the middle of the fifteenth century. Notable men from these families include Thomas Pontesbury, John Bayley, Thomas Ottley, Thomas Stone, and Roger Knight, who as wool-staplers, benefited from their trade connections with London, Calais and the continent.<sup>105</sup> The development of the cloth industry built on these early relationships.

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<sup>104</sup> See Figure 31. Oswestry is 17 miles north west of Shrewsbury.

<sup>105</sup> Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:111.



By the early sixteenth century, the nature of Shrewsbury registrations, in the riding books and membership registers, demonstrates the dominance of the cloth trade in Shrewsbury. There are over 180 names of people from Shrewsbury in the Guild records for 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16. Amongst the 65 individuals who gave their occupation to the steward, there were 23 from the cloth trade which included six tailors, four clothiers, six drapers, and three mercers. There were also 11 recruits from the gentry class.<sup>106</sup> An important figure at this time was Thomas Hosier, a clothier, who was bailiff of Shrewsbury in 1516. He joined the Ludlow Guild in 1503 and was also a member of the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury.<sup>107</sup> His father, Edward Hosier ap Llewelyn, presumably a hosier by trade, had migrated to Shrewsbury from Oswestry, and so had Welsh kin in that town. This close relationship with Oswestry, was also reflected in the Drapers' Guild's records of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The entries included the names of John Felypps, William Gittyns and William Phelyps, who were all of Welsh ethnicity.<sup>108</sup>

Due to information contained in the Palmers' Guild riding books, which has not been readily available before to researchers, it is now possible to trace the linkage between the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury and the Palmers' Guild. The records from the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury list members from 1461, when the Guild was chartered, and a scattering of years between 1498 and 1547.<sup>109</sup> Figure 38 indicates the

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<sup>106</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>107</sup> SA LB 5/3/4 Steward's Riding Book 1502-3, 14.

<sup>108</sup> Chitty, 'The Earliest Book of the Drapers' Company, Shrewsbury', 258-62.

<sup>109</sup> Irene Mary Rope, trans., 'The Earliest Book of the Drapers' Company, Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 4th series, no. III (1913): 156-57; Chitty, 'The Earliest Book of the Drapers' Company, Shrewsbury', 258-62.

overlapping membership list of the Drapers' Guild and the Palmers' Guild. The major Shrewsbury families are all represented in the membership registers and riding books of the Palmer's Guild. These families include the Mittons, the Trenthams, and the Corbets of Corbet Moreton.<sup>110</sup> One notable example is William Water, the son of Degory Water, who petitioned Edward IV for a charter for the Drapers' Guild in 1461, William Water joined the Palmers' Guild and the Shrewsbury Drapers' Guild in the same year, 1505. This indicates that membership of both guilds was important to the conduct of business in the Welsh Marches. As this list covers only the Palmers' Guild's records from 1485-9, 1501-8 and 1515-16, it is likely there were many more people from notable Shrewsbury families who registered to join the Palmers' Guild.

It is clear that there was a strong and abiding connection between these two guilds. The cream of Shrewsbury's drapers and clothiers were intimately connected to the Guild and to Ludlow. They were part of the brethren of the Palmers' Guild, hence were expected to abide by the Guild's ordinances. These included support for brethren in need, attendance at the Guild feast and the avoidance of litigation between members.<sup>111</sup> There is no evidence to prove that the Ludlow merchants, drapers and clothiers, who were members of the Palmers' Guild, collaborated with their counterparts from the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury in building and expanding the cloth trade in the Central and North Welsh Marches. Conversely, there is also no evidence to prove that they did not. However, because a significant number of Shrewsbury drapers appear in the Palmers' Guild registers, and in the riding books, it is likely that there was little 'bad blood' between them. As we saw earlier in this chapter,

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<sup>110</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>111</sup> Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow*, iii.

the drop in revenue from market tolls indicates that Shrewsbury was under economic stress in the years either side of 1500. This allowed Ludlow to leverage its influence through its Guild to expand into the political economy of this region. There was mutual benefit in collaboration as the alternative was to compete, which would probably have been disadvantageous for both towns.

After Shrewsbury, the steward visited Welshpool on the way north to Ruthin and Denbigh. As we found with Shrewsbury, the highest engagement with the Guild is in the years 1501-8, when 72 names were entered into the Guild records. However, the relationship with Ludlow had spanned at least 30 years, as the earliest membership registers (1485-9) list 10 names of members from Welshpool.<sup>112</sup> It is possible many of these early members joined in the first rush of support for Henry VII, when the prosperity of Ludlow was entwined with the fortunes of new King. By the early sixteenth century, support for the Palmers' Guild had permeated through all levels of society. If we use the figures from the 1543 lay subsidy there were 93 households in Welshpool. This would equate to an approximate figure of 186 adult men and women.<sup>113</sup> Although there may have been a different population mix in the early decades of the sixteenth century, it is striking that the riding books and membership registers contain the names of no fewer than 80 adults for the years 1501-8 and 1515-16. This indicates that over 43 percent of Welshpool's adult population engaged with the Guild at some time in the first 15 years of the sixteenth

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<sup>112</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>113</sup> Multiplier - head of household x 5.1 to ascertain actual population. Powell, 'Urban Population in Early Modern Wales Revisited', 36,40.

century.<sup>114</sup> Although most did not complete their instalments, we cannot ignore this surge in enthusiasm for the Guild. It shows how far the Guild had penetrated the society of one of the main cloth towns of the Central Marches.

In the Palmers' Guild riding books and membership registers for 1501-9, of the nine people who gave their occupation to the steward, five were from the cloth trade — four tailors and one clothier. The remainder were clerics.<sup>115</sup> The cluster of tailors suggests a thriving town where townsfolk valued the tailors' skills in measuring, cutting and stitching of cloth. Through their registration with the Palmers' Guild, these tailors were given the opportunity to connect with other Guild members who might be cloth suppliers or wool growers in Welshpool and neighbouring villages and towns. Most of these tailors paid instalments over long periods of time, sometimes up to 20 years, which suggests that they trusted the Palmers' Guild. Membership of the Guild for religious purposes was not the only goal.<sup>116</sup>

Reynold ap David, the only clothier in the membership registers and riding books of 1501-9 for Welshpool, was part of a rare high-status occupational group in the Central and North Welsh Marches. Only six clothiers in the region registered with the Guild between 1503 and 1506, most of whom resided in Shrewsbury.<sup>117</sup> Reynold ap David's name suggests that he was of Welsh ancestry. His entry in the riding book of 1505-6 signals the beginning of a long relationship with the Guild. He continued to make annual contributions both for himself and his wife for 21 years.<sup>118</sup> There is no

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<sup>114</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>115</sup> The tailors John Any (1501-2), David ap Mathew, David Mivott (1504-5), David Gitton (1505-6) registered with the Guild steward. SA LB5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8.

<sup>116</sup> SA LB 5/3/3-9 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8. SA LB5/1/3-4 Register of Admissions 1505-9.

<sup>117</sup> SA LB5/3/5-7 Steward's Riding Books 1503-4 to 1505-6.

<sup>118</sup> SA LB 5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6,9. Instalments: 8d per annum from 1507 to 1528.

evidence of what motivated ap David to pay instalments to the Guild. He could have been deeply pious. It may be that he was meeting with the steward each year to further his business interests. It may be both these factors, or there could be other explanations which have now been lost to us. What is clear is that ap David, who was a member of a relatively wealthy occupation, could have paid the entrance fine in much less time than 21 years. Instead, he opted to forge a long-standing relationship with the steward from the Palmers' Guild. For a clothier in Welshpool such as Reynold ap David, the steward gave access to the rich cloth markets in the royal stronghold of Ludlow. The steward could also have introduced him to others in the broader cloth trade and secured contracts with wool producers in the region. The Guild's reputation as a trusted institution and its extensive networks meant it was valued by clothiers like ap Reynold and other cloth workers, who lived and worked in Welshpool.

**Figure 38: The Intermeshing of Networks: The Palmers' Guild and the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury**<sup>119</sup>

Name	Palmers' Guild records	Occupation	Drapers' Guild Member	Bailiff
<b>William Bayley</b>	1505-6	Merchant	Yes (Warden 1530)	Yes
<b>John Burton</b>	1506-7	Generos		
<b>John Coly</b>	1501-2	Draper	Yes (Steward 1507)	
<b>John Corbet</b>	1502-3	Generos	Yes	Yes
<b>Richard Dicher</b>	1506-7	Bowyer	Yes (Warden 1495, 1507, 1517)	Yes
<b>John Don</b>	1486-7	Draper	Yes (Warden 1479, 1485, 1491, 1499)	
<b>Roger Doon</b>	1486-7	Draper	Yes	
<b>Richard Flecher</b>	1505-6		Yes	
<b>John Forster</b>	1503-4	Clothier	Yes	Yes
<b>Peter Higgons</b>	1515-16	Draper		
<b>William Hochkiss</b>	1506-7	Clothier	Yes (Steward 1497)	
<b>Thomas Hosier</b>	1503-4	Clothier	Yes (Steward 1529-30, Warden 1531)	Yes
<b>Richard Lucas</b>	1502-3	Draper	Yes	
<b>William Mitton</b>	1505-6	Armiger	Yes	Yes
<b>John Ottley</b>	1515-16	Generos		
<b>Richard Palmer</b>	1506-7	Generos		
<b>Richard Phelyps</b>	1485-6	Draper	Yes (Steward 1501)	
<b>Richard Phelyps</b>	1505-6	Clothier	Yes	
<b>Roger Phelyps</b>	1505-6	Draper	Yes	
<b>William Pontesbury</b>	1507-8	Merchant		Yes
<b>Thomas Trentham</b>	1485-6	Generos	Yes	Yes
<b>Thomas Trentham</b>	1507-8	Generos	Yes (Warden 1488, 1495, 1505)	Yes
<b>William Water</b>	1505-6	Clothier	Yes ('Brother of the Guild' in 1505)	
<b>Hugh Walker (dec)</b>	1505-6	Mercer	Yes (Warden 1483, 1489, 1501)	
<b>William Webbe</b>	1508-9	Armiger		
<b>Walter Wotnall</b>	1502-3	Draper	Yes	
<b>Robard Wotton</b>	1501-2	Draper	Yes	

If Welshpool was the 'prize town' in the Central Marches, then Oswestry was the 'jewel in the crown' for the Guild, in their visits to the North Welsh Marches. In the mid-1530s, Leland describes it as a 'town which standeth mostly by sale of cloth made in Wales'.<sup>120</sup> Lying just inside the Shropshire border and only 17 miles from

<sup>119</sup> Compiled from: Joseph Morris, 'The Provosts and Bailiffs of Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 3rd series, no. ii (1902): 269–86; Chitty, 'The Earliest Book of the Drapers' Company, Shrewsbury' and SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16. SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9.

<sup>120</sup> Smith, *Leland's Itinerary in Wales in or about the Years 1536-1539*, 75.

Shrewsbury, it had been given the right to hold a four-day fair by William Fitz Alan in 1228, much to the chagrin of traders from Montgomery and Shrewsbury.<sup>121</sup> The leveraging of this early economic advantage, combined with new industry built around fulling and cloth, meant that by the 1470s Oswestry had taken over the mantle of premier wool town from Llanrwst.<sup>122</sup> It had the most Guild registrations of all the towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches region (113), in the Guild records from 1485 to 1515, except for Shrewsbury and Chester, both of which had three times the number of residents (see Figure 33).

Figure 33 confirms Oswestry's pivotal role in the membership strategy of the Palmers' Guild. From the 1480s, there had always been Oswestry residents in the membership lists and riding books. For the North Welsh Marches region, non-members outnumbered members by four to one, but in Oswestry the figure was only two to one. Most Oswestry recruits also paid off their instalments over a longer period than other towns in these regions. They paid instalments over 15 or even 20 years, which suggests they had a strong bond with the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow.<sup>123</sup>

Visiting Oswestry was economically viable for the Palmers' Guild steward. Larger market towns, like Oswestry, were central gathering points for the steward to recruit members from local communities. The steward could align his visit with an annual fair or weekly market which would make the long journey feasible. For example, in the riding books for 1505-6, the three pages entitled 'Oswestree' or 'adhuc Oswestree' also contain the names of people from Llangollen, Llansilin,

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<sup>121</sup> Smith, 'Oswestry', 220–22.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, 'Oswestry'.

<sup>123</sup> SA LB5/1/2-4 Register of Admissions 1485-9 and 1505-9. SA LB5/3/1-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8, and 1515-16.

Whittington and Selattyn.<sup>124</sup> This clutch of small feeder villages, all of which were within a day's ride from Oswestry, fed names into the riding book's lists. As the names of people from these villages are interspersed with the names of people from Oswestry, it is likely that new recruits joined the Guild there. This pattern of recruiting members differed from that of Ludlow's hinterland, where the steward would visit many towns in a circular route, particularly in the Cleobury Mortimer and Corvedale area.

The pattern which we see in Oswestry can be seen in other North Welsh March towns, such as Denbigh and Ruthin. However, instead of people coming in from small local communities to a central market town, the recruits came from towns which were part of long-standing trade links. Visiting a whole host of disparate villages would have taken time and involved an arduous journey for potentially little return in this part of the lordship of Denbigh. Figure 39 illustrates the riding book manuscript for 1505-6, where there are names of people from Llanrwst who lived over 20 miles from Denbigh. Three out of the four Welsh people from Llanrwst, who gave their names to the steward (two males and two females), attained membership of the Guild, but over quite different timespans. They are Elisabeth verch Ieuan ap Doicy (member after 4 years (1511-15), Eyneon ap Griffith ap Plothyne (member after 5 years, 1506-11), David ap Llewellyn ap Hol ap Griffith (non-member for 20 years, 1508-28) and Gwen verch Rees ap Ieuan ap Llewellyn (member after 20 years, 1508-28).<sup>125</sup> The key factor here is not just the years of engagement, but the annual instalments, which were all listed on the same page as Denbigh names. The four Welshmen and women must have

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<sup>124</sup> SA LB 5/3/7 Riding Book for 1505-6, 19-20.

<sup>125</sup> SA LB 5/3/7 Riding Book for 1505-6, 21.



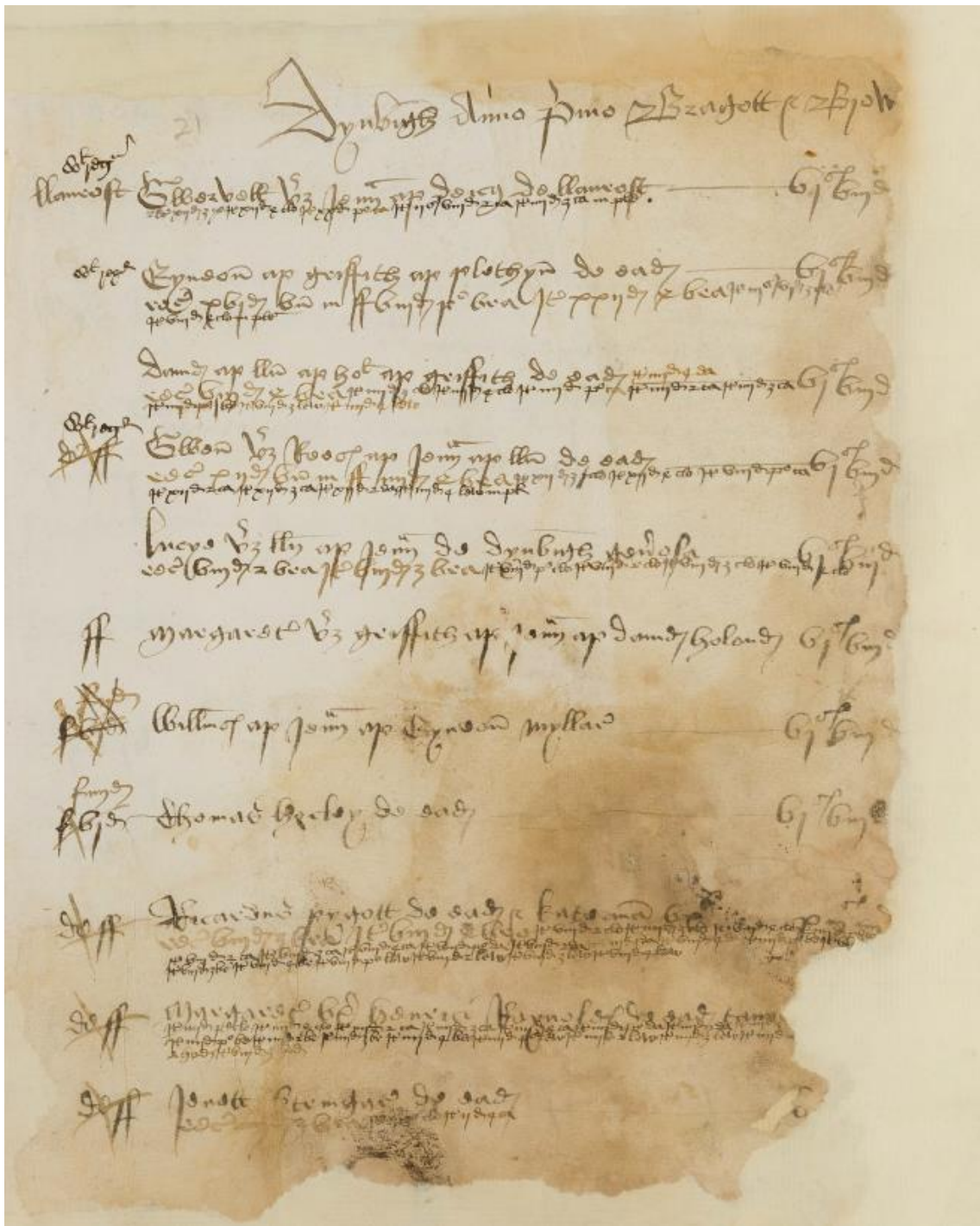
travelled 20 miles from Llanrwst to Denbigh, at a similar time each year, to attend a fair which was also attended on a regular basis by the steward. Although we do not know why the folk from Llanrwst joined the Guild, we do know that the connection with the Guild was regular and formed part of their lives.

It is likely that economic factors were behind this continuous and long-lasting relationship between Llanrwst and Denbigh. Llanrwst was an ancient wool town and had been the centre of the Welsh wool trade in the thirteenth century. People from Llanrwst could have been readying cloth or other saleable items for the Denbigh fair, which was held in early May. Some of the annual instalments may have been paid at the second annual Denbigh fair, which was held in the second week of September.<sup>126</sup> These names in the 1505-6 riding book shows that many people in this thinly settled western part of the lordship of Denbigh were aware of the Palmers' Guild and what it offered and had reasonable access to the market towns which the steward visited.

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<sup>126</sup> Denbigh had at least two fairs, one on 3 May and the second one on 14 September. See Letters, 'Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516'.

Figure 39: Names of People from Llanrwst on the Page Entitled 'Denbigh' 127



127 SA LB 5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 21.

The steward's itinerary was determined by the physical geography of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The steward overlooked some towns and instead relied on the larger fairs or markets to bring in potential recruits. The following analysis of four Welsh market towns illustrates this point and allows a deeper understanding of how the steward used his knowledge of local trade networks to build an economically sustainable route through the northern Marches and the western edges of the Principality of Wales.

Evidence from the riding books for 1501-8 suggest that the steward visited Machynlleth, Aberystwyth and its mother church at Llanbadarn Fawr, which were at the end of the Central March route from Welshpool via Newtown. The steward did not visit Dolgellau, which was at the end of the north-west route, and was 38 miles from Ruthin, a large market town. Since both Machynlleth and Dolgellau are sited at the mouth of a river on the rugged western coast of Wales, why did the Guild visit the former but not the latter?

It is likely that the decision not to visit Dolgellau was a result of its geographical isolation. In the riding book for 1503-4, on the page entitled 'Ruthyn', there were two names of deceased members from 'Dolgethley' (Dolgellau) which had been entered in the book by living relatives. Unusually, their fine was only 2s. 6d. each, which was similar to the fine of 2s. for deceased Ludlow entrants. Normally, it was 3s. 4d. for non-Ludlow members. The fee reduction suggests pragmatism on the part of the steward, and also an awareness of the lower incomes for this far western part of the region.<sup>128</sup> These names were interspersed with living recruits from Dolgellau and are

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<sup>128</sup> SA LB 5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4, 23.

listed on the same page as Ruthin names. Given the fact that Dolgellau is 38 miles from Ruthin, it is unlikely that the steward rode all the way to Dolgellau to recruit a mere handful of people. Moreover, if he had actually visited Dolgellau, he would have entered the names on a fresh page in the riding books for Dolgellau specifically. The records also show that the men and their deceased relatives were not resident in Ruthin, as their original place of birth was not mentioned. The records usually record this event. For example, the entry of 'Llewelyn ap Hol ap Griffith ap Jenkin, deceased, formerly of Llanrwst, now Denbigh' in the riding book of 1515-16.<sup>129</sup> It is more likely that the people from Dolgellau joined the Guild because they were physically present in Ruthin at the same time as the Guild steward.

Ruthin was a key weaving centre in the late medieval period. There are surviving ordnances of a fuller and weavers' guild from as early as 1447, and Ian Jack believes that it may have been the only one in the north-east Marches at that time.<sup>130</sup> Court documents from 1436 show that there was a fulling mill within the town boundaries, and by 1460 there were at least five fulling mills in and around Ruthin.<sup>131</sup> In the riding books from 1503-5, we find mention of a mercer, a tailor and a glover from Ruthin, all of whom paid instalments but did not achieve membership.<sup>132</sup> William Reynold, a cardmaker, was the only tradesman who achieved full membership of the

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<sup>129</sup> SA LB5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1485-9. SA LB/5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 16.

<sup>130</sup> R. Ian Jack, "The Cloth Industry in Medieval Ruthin," *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions* 12 (1963): 10-25.

<sup>131</sup> R. Ian Jack, "Fulling Mills in Wales and March before 1547," *Archaeologia Cambrensis* CXXX (1981): 70-127.

<sup>132</sup> John ap Ieuan, a Glover (Riding book for 1503-4) paid 3 instalments from 1507-11, Edward ap David, a tailor, (Riding Book for 1503-4) paid 14 instalments from 1508-24, SA LB 5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4. Robert Naires, a mercer and Robert Williams, a baker, whose names are entered in the riding book of 1504-5 paid no instalments. SA LB 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 30.

Guild. William and his wife gave 22 instalments, starting in 1509, and their names finally appeared on the membership register in 1531.<sup>133</sup>

Most names in the riding books for Ruthin for 1503-4 do not have occupations. This was also the case for the five individuals from Dolgellau whose names are listed for 1503-4.<sup>134</sup> The lack of information on occupation is not surprising, as at that time there was little specialisation in small rural communities, even one such as Ruthin which possessed a well-developed weaving community. Multi-tasking was the norm. People were often simultaneously engaged in the rearing and shearing of sheep, and the dying, combing, carding and spinning of cloth. It was a domestic industry in which women and children also participated. The men from Welsh communities such as Dolgellau would have been unwilling, or more likely not qualified, to identify with a specialist trade such as that of tailor, cardmaker or weaver. It is reasonable to assume that the men from Dolgellau travelled to Ruthin to sell their wares, such as rough Welsh cloth or frieze. It may also have been the case that they were droving cattle or sheep to the markets at Ruthin. Whatever the nature of their business, the fact that people from Dolgellau are listed on the riding-book page for Ruthin is a clear indication that the Guild steward did not visit Dolgellau.

Dolgellau was a thriving small Welsh market town, which Leland describes in the 1530s, as 'the best village in this commote'.<sup>135</sup> It lay at the end of a long winding valley. The impenetrable mountainous landscape meant that the steward would have needed to make a return journey up the winding valley back to Ruthin, as there was no

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<sup>133</sup> SA LB 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 30. A cardmaker was a metal worker who made the combs for combing wool.

<sup>134</sup> SA LB 5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4, 23.

<sup>135</sup> Smith, *Leland's Itinerary in Wales in or about the Years 1536-1539*, 77.

clear trackway around the coast to Machynlleth. This was another pragmatic reason why the Guild steward would have been reluctant to travel to Dolgellau. Although it is conjecture, it is possible that what was true of Dolgellau also applied to the rest of north-west Wales. There were only few names from Anglesea, Beaumaris, Bangor and Carnarvon in the riding books for 1501-8 and 1515-16. The remoteness of north-west Wales would have made it uneconomical for the steward to visit the region. It is therefore probable that people from north-west Wales were recruited further to the east, in Conwy, which had strong links with the north-west communities.

By comparison, further south along the Welsh coast, the communities of Machynlleth, Aberystwyth and Llanbadarn Fawr were at the 'end of the line' for the Central Marches route (see Figure 32). There were far more names of people from Llanbadarn Fawr than neighbouring Aberystwyth in the Guild records, although the total was on par with Machynlleth's tally of names (see Figure 40).<sup>136</sup> They were regular destinations and key towns for the Guild. Llanbadarn Fawr was an important religious centre and boasted the largest parish church in Powys. It had been an important Celtic *clas*, with many endowments and royal support. Vale Crucis Abbey near Welshpool held the advowson. Machynlleth was a significant Welsh cloth-market town with a busy Wednesday market and two annual fairs. Owain Glyndŵr was crowned Prince of Wales in Machynlleth in 1404, at the height of the rebellion. Aberystwyth, on the other hand, was a smaller settlement in late medieval Welsh society, and would only reach its potential in later centuries. So, these numbers reflect

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<sup>136</sup> SA LB 5/3/5-8 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4 to 1506-7.

the contemporary situation, not how the towns are faring now in the twenty-first century.

**Figure 40: Registrations in the Western Towns of the Central Marches for 1503-6** <sup>137</sup>

Town	Registrations in the 1503-6 records	Ethnicity	Occupation
<b>Aberystwyth</b>	15	75 percent Welsh	1 Cleric
<b>Llanbadarn Fawr</b>	57	100 percent Welsh	3 Clerics
<b>Machynlleth</b>	56	92 percent Welsh	1 Tailor

Unlike the case with Dolgellau, there is compelling evidence that the steward visited these three towns. First, all these towns had their own page in the riding books. Names of people from Llanbadarn Fawr were not mixed with names of people from Machynlleth on the same page. Aberystwyth was clearly differentiated from Llanbadarn Fawr. Second, the steward took the lowland route from Welshpool to Machynlleth which was easier than the route from Ruthin to Dolgellau, as it ran through a wide valley. There is another route from Welshpool to Machynlleth via Meifod but even today this is a difficult winding track with few settlements on the way to break the journey. The onward route from Machynlleth to Llanbadarn Fawr was through lowland pastures, and the journey was also not difficult. Finally, *en route*, there was a clutch of small communities, which were visited by the steward. The names of people from towns such as Penegoes, Carno, Llanbrynmair and Darowen are in the riding books. The steward appears to have enrolled a person or two on their nightly stops in these villages, while on the road towards Llanbadarn Fawr. These places were a comfortable day's ride from each other.

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<sup>137</sup> SA LB 5/3/5-8 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4 to 1506-7.

In this chapter, the analysis of the role of the Palmers' Guild in the political economy has covered the viability of their itineraries, the ability to encourage cloth workers to join the Guild to have access to other Guild members to grow their businesses, and the possibility that the stewards were involved as 'middlemen' between Ludlow merchants, and people from the cloth trade in the towns of Shrewsbury, Welshpool and Oswestry. A fourth aspect covers a direct intervention into the political economy in the Central and North Welsh Marches.

Instalments from the three western communities, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth and Machynlleth, often involved a payment-in-kind. In the riding book of 1504-5, Jenkyn ap Thomas and Margaret his wife, of Llanbadarn Fawr, gave 'xix yards of white frisses [frieze] cloth' towards their fee to the Guild steward, Richard Bragott, in 1506.<sup>138</sup> This entry is tangible evidence that the people of Llanbadarn Fawr were using cloth as a part or full payment for their entry fees. However, it does lead us to wonder about what happened to these yards of cloth. The lengths involved suggest that they may have been sent by pack horse to markets further east, or perhaps sold at market for ready cash. Other guilds, such as the Guild of Holy Cross in Stratford-upon-Avon, regularly accepted payment-in-kind. For example, Thomas Trewman who lived at Tiddington, a mile and a half from Stratford-upon-Avon, gave 10s. and a woollen cloth worth 6s. to enrol in the Guild. Most of the in-kind payments came from members who lived within a 20-mile radius of Stratford-upon-Avon, and so could easily be converted into cash.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> SA 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 20.

<sup>139</sup> Macdonald, *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, 154.



There were also many instances of payment-in-kind instalments in the entries for Machynlleth. In the riding books for 1501-6, several people from Machynlleth gave the steward amounts such as 'iii or iv li(pounds) and 1 quarter of sers' which might be a reference to wool that had been spun.<sup>140</sup> As cloth was a commodity which was used to pay for membership of the Guild, the steward was *ipso facto* involved with the cloth trade.

The role of the Guild in the political economy of the Central and North Welsh Marches has not been appreciated or understood by earlier scholars. The time, money and effort put into these long journeys into this distant region suggests that there was an understanding that there would be a significant return on investment. The Guild accounts are not complete and in themselves would only show the actual instalments paid by recruits. What was unseen by the Guild clerks back in Ludlow, was the benefit the Guild 'ridings' or journeys was doing for each of the towns in this region. The Guild was helping to build a web of connections, based on the major industry, cloth manufacture, which benefited not only the Guild but opened up opportunities for many in the region who otherwise would be unable to grow and prosper.

### **Religion, Piety and Membership of the Palmers' Guild**

The Palmers' Guild increased its membership base in the Central and North Welsh Marches at a time when the people's religious behaviour was changing. Many late medieval individuals were concerned about preparing for their inevitable death and their soul's transition through Purgatory. Religious guild membership offered security

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<sup>140</sup> SA 5/3/3 Steward's Riding Book 1501-2, 21; SA 5/3/5 Steward's Riding Book 1503-4, 36; SA 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5, 20; SA 5/3/7 Steward's Riding Book 1505-6, 24v.

for people who were not able to supply their own funds to pay for funeral services, obits and prayers for the soul.

In the outer reaches of the Central and North Welsh Marches there were few chantries, rich parish churches or religious institutions apart from the monasteries, which were in a terminal decline. This gave the Guild a clear pathway to push its services, and benefits of membership to those who had few local trustworthy alternatives. Although a good part of this chapter has examined people's economic reasons for joining the Guild, for some people religious services were the primary reason for paying their instalments to the Guild steward. We have already seen this earlier in this chapter with the case of Welsh single women. There are two sets of clues in the Guild records which point towards religious motives for joining the Guild.

First, most people, in the vicinity of 80 percent, who registered with the Palmers' Guild offered no occupation to the Guild steward. This is perhaps not surprising as many people did not identify with a trade, and instead made use of a range of skills to make a living. Their reasons for joining are not known for certain, but it is possible that pious motivation was a factor. For example, entries from Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth and Machynlleth, suggest this religious connection with the Guild. These recruits offered payment-in-kind which included candles or wax. Janet Dee from Aberystwyth gave 'vi li (pounds) of wax' and David ap John Lloyd from Machynlleth gave 'xi pounds of wax' [for candles] in 1504. Owen ap Rees and his wife Angharad verch David gave 'xxii pounds of wax' as part payment to steward John Hooke also in 1504.<sup>141</sup> Morgan ap Ieuan ap Thomas and his wife Dolibrad from Aberystwyth gave

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<sup>141</sup> SA 5/3/6 Riding Book 1504-5,18, 20.

wax and 'sers' (cloth) for both of their two payments to secure their membership in 1508.<sup>142</sup>

These recruits were engaging intimately with the religious focus of the Palmers' Guild, but they lived many miles away from the Guild chapel in Ludlow. It is possible that these gifts of candles and wax by people in Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth and Machynlleth were used by the steward in the local parish church for religious services for Guild members. It is unlikely the heavy articles were sent back to Ludlow with the steward. It is hard to know for sure what happened with these religious offerings, but what is clear is that the Guild steward accepted these gifts as instalments, and that it was not uncommon to record these donations as part payment towards Guild membership.

Second, the entering of the names of deceased relatives into the Guild's membership list suggests a motive which was primarily religious. Ten percent of the 1,688 people whose names are listed in the riding books for the Central and North Welsh Marches from 1485 to 1515 were deceased. Significantly, more names of deceased people were of Welsh ethnicity than English origin (70 percent) and most of these had lived in the North Welsh Marches. This statistic is a strong indicator that people from that part of the region were fully aware of the Guild's catalogue of religious services.<sup>143</sup> The highest number came from the Welsh-dominated smaller communities at Machynlleth, Dolgellau and St Martins (near Chirk) and the larger towns of Denbigh and Oswestry. This evidence supports the notion that the Welsh

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<sup>142</sup> SA 5/3/5 Riding Book 1503-4, 35.

<sup>143</sup> SA LB5/3/1-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

were convinced of the benefits of joining a Guild which could supplement the services provided by the local parish clergy.

Another factor which helped the kin of deceased members to choose the Palmers' Guild was lowering of the entrance fee to 2s. or 2s. 6d. instead of the normal rate for those who resided outside Ludlow which was 3s. 4d. Earlier in this chapter we saw that the entry fee for deceased members who had resided in Dolgellau, but who had been registered in Ruthin, was at the reduced fee of 2s. 6d. The higher fee almost always applied to registrations in larger towns such as Bristol or Worcester. There is no clear-cut pattern for which areas attracted the reduced fee, however. The deceased registrations from Machynlleth from 1485-7 and Denbigh in 1488-9 paid 2s. as the entry fee, yet the entrants from Welshpool paid 3s. 4d. at the same time.<sup>144</sup> Other religious guilds also reduced their entry fee for the registration of deceased members. In the late fifteenth century, the Holy Cross Guild at Stratford-upon Avon charged 3s. 4d. for 'souls', regardless of their place of origin. In 1502, when the Guild was losing traction in the town, the entry fee for 'souls' was reduced dramatically to 20d.<sup>145</sup>

There are no signs that people from the Central and North Welsh Marches remembered the Palmers' Guild in their wills. The lack of evidence in wills, is not surprising as there are very few surviving wills in Wales from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. There is also no evidence in wills, deeds, Guild accounts or riding books that there were any tenements or lands bequeathed to the Guild in return for obits or other religious services, from settlements to the north and west of

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<sup>144</sup> SA LB5/1/2 Register of Admissions 1485-9

<sup>145</sup> Macdonald, *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, 21.

Ludlow.<sup>146</sup> Even those who resided in towns near Shrewsbury, such as Baschurch and Wem, which had a large percentage of English people, had no interest in bequeathing or undertaking an indenture for their property to the Guild. These aspects of religious motivation are entirely absent from the people who lived in this region. This does not mean that they did not exist. It is more that there is no clear evidence in surviving records, unlike in Ludlow's hinterland, where members would gain more from this decision, as they were in closer proximity to Ludlow.

Geography and trade determined the steward's itinerary through the Central and North Welsh Marches. However, it is reasonable to argue that the glue holding it together was the ability to offer religious services and prayers to poor Welsh communities, which had few alternatives for the expression of piety in their local community. This was a different religious need to those who lived in Ludlow's hinterland, who were able to travel to Ludlow. However, the distance from Ludlow did not weaken the resolve of these Welsh families and their perceived understanding of the Palmers' Guild.

Although the benefits the Guild gave to members, in terms of access to the political economy of the wider borderland region, were highly valued, its religious benefits were also respected. Religion and trade were inextricably linked in late medieval society. The Guild's success in this region was based on its ability to offer all things to all people.

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<sup>146</sup> The fifty-three surviving wills from 1440-1551 have been examined for any bequests to the Palmers' Guild.

### **Networking in the Marches: The Palmers' Guild and the Gentry**

The third factor in the Guild's success in this region was its ability to tap into the contemporary geopolitical landscape to build its 'brand' in the region. The steward targeted key gentry families whose patronage would open up opportunities for the Guild. The number of gentry members who are listed in the Guild records is significant. We have seen already that the premier gentry families of Shrewsbury, the Mittons, Trenthams and Corbets supported the Palmers' Guild. Although not every family in the Central and North Welsh Marches engaged with the Guild, most of the leading gentry families were represented (see Appendix 3).

The Salusbury family had many branches in all parts of the North Welsh Marches. The riding books for 1501-5 list many from the Denbigh branch of the family. Roger and Elena Salusbury committed to instalments for over 20 years and their father, Sir Thomas Salusbury, paid his membership in two instalments to steward John Hooke in 1503 and 1504.<sup>147</sup> Thomas had fought and been knighted by Henry VII at the battle of Blackheath in 1497, and was subsequently appointed the steward of the Lordship of Denbigh.<sup>148</sup> His son, Roger, who registered in 1504-5, was constable of Denbigh castle in 1530, and was MP for Denbighshire several times.<sup>149</sup> The Salusbury family's allegiance to the Palmers' Guild was understandable, for the Tudor court (including Prince Arthur, Princess Katherine of Aragon and Prince Henry), as well as members of the Council of the Marches, were based in Ludlow at this time.<sup>150</sup> This

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<sup>147</sup> SA LB 5/3/3 Steward's Riding Book 1501-1502, 17.

<sup>148</sup> 'The History of Parliament Online', John Salusbury I (1485-1547), 2017, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/salusbury-john-i-1485-154749>, accessed 10 October 2018.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas Nicholas, *Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1872), 392.

<sup>150</sup> See Chapter 4

Anglo-Welsh family was typical of the gentry who joined the Guild in the early sixteenth century.

The Holland family from Conwy was another example. Although the origins of the family were English, by the early sixteenth century they had deep roots in the Welsh economy. Five of the eight Holland names in the riding books from 1504-9 were entered in the membership registers. Richard and Humphrey Holland were listed as merchants in the riding books of 1504 and 1508.<sup>151</sup> It is probable that they traded with merchants from Denbigh and sourced wool from the markets around Llanrwst. Conwy, a royal town, lay on the north coast between the eastern March towns and the western royal outposts of Carnarvon, Bangor, and Beaumaris. The Holland family were key allies for the Palmers' Guild. The patronage of this influential family no doubt helped the Guild to infiltrate the far north-western tip of Wales.

It appears from the riding books, that the gentry's role may have been to provide the impetus for others to join the 'club'. They did not actively recruit members on behalf of the Guild in the same way as we saw the agents did in the towns of Ludlow's hinterland. This was not necessary. Their mere presence of their names in the riding books was used by the steward to attract more people to the Guild. Members of these gentry families did not always pay instalments, but their names were placed boldly at the top of a page in large lettering, written with swirls and a flourish.<sup>152</sup> This suggests that their relationship with the Guild was motivated more by political considerations. The distance from Denbigh to Ludlow (78 miles) meant that families such as the Salusburys or Hollands would rarely have visited the Guild's annual

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<sup>151</sup> SA LB 5/3/6 Steward's Riding Book 1504-5. SA LB 5/1/4 Register of Admissions for 1508-9.

<sup>152</sup> See a particularly fine rendition for Edward Salusbury, who was the Constable of Conwy in 1507. SA LB 5/3/9 Steward's Riding Book for 1507-8, 12v.

feast. Their social needs differed from the gentry families of the hinterland areas of Corvedale and Cleoland.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the 'geographies of piety' for the Central and North Welsh Marches. It has argued that the Palmers' Guild was very active in the Central and North Welsh Marches between 1480 and 1515 and that this role had something to do with religion but had even more to do with trade. Evidence from the Guild records suggests that the Guild stewards made their way through the Central and North Welsh Marches from Welshpool and Montgomery to the larger centres of Machynlleth, Oswestry and Denbigh, collecting new members, both English and Welsh on the way. They travelled through the Marches, the Welsh cantrefws and the principality of Wales at a time when political tensions were often high. Although the accounts state that one steward rode with one man, it is conceivable that there may have been others who accompanied the stewards, to shelter under the Guild's protection. This may have included drapers and clothiers who were keen to extend their trade networks into the Marches and beyond.

Information which has been gleaned from many thousands of names, in documents written by Guild officials over 500 years ago, now supports the notion that the Palmers' Guild was an important player in the cloth trade in the first twenty years of the sixteenth century. Instead of competing with the Drapers' Guild of Shrewsbury, the warden and stewards of the Palmers' Guild chose to build on the strengths of the two guilds. Many men from the leading cloth families of Shrewsbury joined the Palmers' Guild between 1485 and 1515. Drapers and clothiers from Shrewsbury



needed to tap into the Palmers' Guild's vast network of contacts to enhance their business, when the town's fortunes revived after the slump in the last decades of the fifteenth century. This concept of 'brotherhood' between guild members, with its religious and charitable facets, underpinned many economic and social interactions in the late medieval period.

The Guild's penetration into the political economy of the region was enhanced by its connections to the Tudor dynasty, and Henry VII in particular. In this northerly region, many people from families in the higher social classes who joined the Guild, had enjoyed the patronage of Henry VII in the early years of his reign. Their relationship with the Guild, and Ludlow, differed to the families who lived in Ludlow's hinterland. Due to the greater distance, there was no evidence they attended the Guild feast. The connection had a political edge to it. It was important to show a strong connection to Ludlow, the seat of the Council of the Marches and the westerly base of the King, Prince Arthur, and Prince Henry.

Religious connections were strong, despite the distance from Ludlow. Many 'ordinary people' gave their names to the steward, when he visited their town. It is never easy to single out one motivating factor, but it appears that many who did not give their occupation to the Guild joined for pious reasons. They were convinced that the small amounts of money which they put aside to pay the Palmers' Guild steward every year would enhance their spiritual security when local priestly support was often lacking.

Most members in the Central and North Welsh Marches had Welsh names, as did those who made pledges to pay instalments. That so many Welsh people maintained a relationship with the Palmers' Guild demonstrates the degree to which it

bridged the ethnic divide in this region. The care with which each Welsh patronym was recorded also suggests that the Guild steward or his man were either bilingual or had access to trusted Welsh speakers. Even if the steward had not been bilingual, the Guild's success in recruiting over 1,650 men and women from the Central and North Welsh Marches in the period 1485 to 1515 is testament to its pivotal role in this region. The religious and economic landscape would have been very different if the Guild steward had not ventured out on these journeys to the north and west of Ludlow.

## Conclusion

In 1525, Richard Downe, warden of the Palmers' Guild, engaged Robert Watkinson of Lilleshall, carver, to fashion a three-story reredos for the Guild chapel in St Laurence's parish church, for the large sum of £10. The contract stated that:

On the north side of the Altar, one substantial story that is to be known as St John Evangelist and over him St. Edward in a goodly story receiving the ring of the Palmers, and every story volted over with trays gests and riche mounts joined with knots. And on the other side of the Altar on the south side, two substantial stories with our Lady beneath, and Jesus over our Lady in another story and in the other story joining to the same St. John Baptist beneath in a story and St James the More over him in another story.<sup>1</sup>

It is not known if Robert Watkinson carved the reredos, but there are indented niches and faint marks on the wall where the reredos would have stood, at the east end of St John's chapel. The contract to build this elaborate structure demonstrates that the Palmers' Guild was responding to the religious trends of the day. Guild members wanted concrete signs of their Guild's wealth to be displayed in their chapel. However, who was paying for this extravagant display of late medieval saints in the Guild chapel in Ludlow?

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<sup>1</sup> Weyman, 'A Contract for Carvings in Ludlow Church', i-ii.

In 1525 the Palmers' Guild was entrenched in the social, religious, political and economic life of Ludlow. Money flowed into the Guild coffers to build the new three-story reredos, to support the work of the chaplains, and to repair and maintain the Guild rental properties. However, most of this money no longer came from the people who lived in Ludlow. It came from thousands of people who lived in Ludlow's hinterland, the Central and North Welsh Marches and many towns and villages further afield.

This thesis has followed the trail of money from villages and towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches to the Palmers' Guild's chapel and Guildhall in Ludlow. It has captured the relationship between the people in these communities and the Guild steward, who acted as the Guild representative in the regions outside of Ludlow. The people in Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches trusted the stewards with their money, and in return, the stewards provided them with assurances that they would not be forgotten, when death drew near. These bonds of trust were not easily nurtured in regions which had been often riven by distrust between Welsh and English communities and fragmented by centuries of political and economic turmoil.

The Guild stewards also offered the promise of a better life for the living. The stewards were drapers, weaver, mercers, or clothiers, and as such were intimately involved with all aspects of the cloth trade. They offered many people in the March the opportunity to connect with cloth buyers in the English markets in Ludlow and Shrewsbury. Membership of the Guild also offered the chance to build new networks with people in other towns in the Central and North Welsh Marches. The key towns in the Welsh March economy, such as Oswestry in the

North Welsh Marches and Presteigne in Ludlow's hinterland, benefited from being included in the steward's itinerary.

This thesis has also investigated the 'geographies of piety' in Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches. Instead of taking a one-dimensional approach, it has viewed late medieval religious life as multi-layered and many sided. After all medieval folk took on different roles in their lives, whether it be as tradespeople, parents, parishioners, or pious individuals. Their faith could be extremely important to them or not important at all. An individual's reaction to meeting the Guild steward at a fair or market, could be triggered by an immediate desire for religious support or a way of making a better life for themselves and their families. It is for these reasons that I have researched the political geography, political economy, and religious landscape of the regions nearest to Ludlow. It is only by understanding the whole picture of a society – its ethnic, social, and occupational composition – that the role of a late medieval religious guild in the Central and North Welsh Marches can be comprehended, and fully appreciated.

The itinerary of the stewards' annual journeys stretched to the edges of the March lands and beyond. The riding books of the Palmers' Guild record this annual progression of the Guild stewards to faraway places, such as Machynlleth, Dolgellau, Denbigh, and Ruthin. The connection with the Guild was strong for many who lived in this region, despite their distance from Ludlow. A greater geographical distance did not mean that people felt less connected to the Ludlow Guild. The determination to pay instalments year after year shows that the Guild was important, even vital, to their wellbeing in this life and in preparation for the next.

The Ludlow Guild operated far outside its normal 'sphere of influence' with no apparent competition. This remarkable achievement meant that it must have been highly valued by all who encountered the stewards of the Guild. People from majority Welsh-speaking communities were strong supporters of the Guild from the earliest days in the 1480s. Henry VII's accession to the crown in 1485 was accompanied by an upsurge in Welsh recruits to the Palmers' Guild from towns such as Machynlleth and Welshpool in the Central Marches. The records from 1501-8 show that people from these communities, and other towns and villages, often paid instalments into the late 1530s, until the steward no longer visited their town. The Guild also recruited many people inside Shrewsbury's natural 'sphere of influence', around Welshpool and Oswestry. The Palmers' Guild records demonstrate an overlap in membership between the Shrewsbury Drapers' Guild and the Ludlow Palmers' Guild. This key data indicates an intermeshing of networks in this burgeoning cloth manufacturing area, which has not caught the attention of previous historians.

Ludlow's direct connection to the Tudor court of Henry VII, gave the impetus for many in the higher social orders to also join this impressive, highly regarded religious guild. Members from most of the leading North Welsh March families joined the Guild in the 10 years after 1500, even though they often lived over 70 miles from Ludlow. Gentry from this region, and the hinterland areas of Corvedale and Cleoland, and Leominster Ore in particular, also joined the Guild. They also enrolled their servants. This act of medieval charity meant that men and women from all ranks of society were able to consider membership of the Palmers' Guild. The choice to pay by instalments, for as long as was necessary, gave hope to many who may otherwise have had to rely on local, poorly organised religious services. All who became members

knew that the Guild chaplains would say prayers for their souls, in the chapel of St John in the parish church of Ludlow.

In a broader sense, my research adds to the revisionist view on the late medieval church, espoused by Eamon Duffy, amongst others. It firmly supports the argument that late medieval religious practices were valued and supported by English and Welsh folk who lived in the Central and North Welsh March towns and villages, in the few decades before the Reformation of the 1530s. However, it does more than just confirm the central role of a religious guild in the lives of late medieval people. It outlines a methodology for how a region can be examined in a holistic way, and how the decisions of 'ordinary people' can affect the health of a late medieval religious institution.

The thesis has also demonstrated how a list of seemingly unconnected names can be harnessed to support an understanding of late medieval religious, economic and social behaviour. The thousands of names which have been investigated in this thesis are the 'tip of the iceberg'. The riding books of 1501-8 and 1515-16, include upwards of 8,000 names of people from areas which are outside the Central and North Welsh Marches. The Guild amassed lists of people from all parts of England and Wales, from as far away as Walsingham in Norfolk to Haverfordwest in the southern Welsh Marches. There are names of merchants of the Staple and the nobility of England. There are hundreds of names of people from towns such as Coventry, Bristol, Worcester, Hereford, and London which could be analysed by the historians of these towns, to determine social and economic networks.

There are many other ways for future researchers to utilise the rich information which is held in the Palmers' Guild membership registers and riding books.

For example, although I have analysed the engagement patterns for Ludlow's hinterland and the Central and North Welsh Marches, I have not tallied the amount which each person paid in their instalments each year. Future research using these amounts of money could help identify the fruitful years for the Palmers' Guild. It could also expose the fortunes for an individual town or region. For example, the amount which individuals paid per year to the Palmers' Guild could throw light on how well the wool growing area of Leominster Ore fared in the years between 1501 and 1515. In a similar vein, a close analysis of payments for the entry of 'souls' into the Guild membership register could form the basis for broader research on how reducing the cost from 3s. 4d to 2s. affects the take-up of Guild membership. This research could also look at how particular years, where there is a higher incidence of deadly epidemics or disease, influences the enrolment of 'souls' in the Ludlow Guild's riding books and membership registers. All these ideas and perspectives clearly show that there are almost limitless opportunities for research, now that the Palmers' Guild records have been opened to the researcher.

Thousands of 'ordinary people' gave their money to the steward of the Guild when he rode into their local market town or passed through their village. The impact of the Palmers' Guild on the political, economic, and religious landscape of the Marcher lordships and borderland counties in the late medieval period, cannot be overstated.



## Postscript

In this thesis I have argued that the relationship between the Palmers' Guild, and the people who lived in the hinterland of Ludlow and also in the region to the north and west of that town, was complex and multi-faceted. The Guild capitalised on the long-standing relationship between Ludlow and these regions, which transcended political turmoil and ethnic divisions, to build a membership base of thousands of men and women. The chronological focus of the thesis finished at an important juncture in religious history, before the religious reforms, which would be known as the English Reformation, had taken hold in the 1530s. The Postscript does not replace an examination of the Palmers' Guild in the turbulent decades of the 1530s and 1540s, as these years are worthy of deep analysis in their own right. Instead it will briefly outline the key factors which led to the dissolution of the Guild in 1551.

The stewards' journeys or 'ridings', which were undertaken to recruit new members and collect instalments from existing members, continued into the 1530s. The riding books have not survived from this decade, so we are reliant on a few steward's and warden's accounts. Figure 41 outlines the evidence we have from these accounts for 1533-4 and 1538-9. These accounts show that the steward travelled to many towns in order to recruit new members. Other surviving records, such as the warden's accounts of 1540-1 and 1544-5, give a financial picture of instalments from recruits, but do not give any detail about expenses which relate to the stewards' journeys.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that by 1540 stewards no longer travelled across the length and breadth of England, in search of new members.

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<sup>2</sup> SA LB5/3/31-2 Steward's Account 1533-4 and 1538-9. SA LB5/3/33-4 Warden's Account 1540-1, 1544-5.

The surviving accounts for the 1530s demonstrate that the Palmers' Guild stewards continued to travel to the regions close to Ludlow, as well as to towns and cities in England and the southern Marches. The itineraries, shown in Figure 41, are similar to those which they undertook from 1501 to 1508. Some areas were no longer visited, such as eastern parts of the midlands. However, the stewards still travelled to the richer areas of Shropshire, the cloth manufacturing area of Wiltshire and the wool growing areas of Gloucestershire. The larger towns in the North Welsh Marches still offered good rewards, but towns such as Clun, Bishop's Castle or Stottesdon in Ludlow's hinterland, are not mentioned.

Information in the riding books of 1515-16, also gives vital information about the stewards' annual journeys in the 1530s. As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, some individuals paid instalments to the steward for up to 20 or 25 years. For example, Thomas Carpynter from Middleton on the Hill in Leominster Ore, paid regular instalments from 1515 to 1533, when he achieved membership of the Guild.<sup>3</sup> Future research using these records could assist in plotting the stewards' itineraries in the 1530s. These two groups of primary sources show that the Palmers' Guild was still actively building its membership base in the 1530s.

As the 1530s progressed, however, there was growing uncertainty about one of the major drawcards for recruitment for the Palmers' Guild. The notion of 'Purgatory' was fundamental to the *modus operandi* of religious guilds. Many had flocked to join in the previous three centuries because Guild chaplains offered prayers to guide their soul through Purgatory, in return for a small fee. By the mid to late 1530s the concept

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<sup>3</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding Book 1515-16, 59.

of Purgatory was under serious assault. Appendix 4 outlines the series of events which led to this change in religious belief. There was a steady trickle of national edicts and laws which attacked the pillars of traditional religion. The monarch, Henry VIII, in concert with his powerful chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, oversaw these fundamental changes to religious practice. The change in emphasis concerning the practice of saying prayers for the dead, which was authorised by Henry VIII in the publication of the "Six Articles" in 1539, may be the reason why the Guild stewards' itineraries petered out in the early 1540s.

Although adherence to the tenets of late medieval religion started to waver in the mid-1530s, economic factors which underpinned the *modus operandi* of the Guild meant it was still relevant and important in a changing world. It is clear from the steward's accounts of 1533-4 and 1538-9, that the stewards continued the unbroken partnership with the cloth and wool towns of the Central and North Welsh Marches. The economic connections with Ludlow remained, but it is not easy to tease out these relationships as we were able to do for the years 1501 to 1508. It is clear, though, from evidence gleaned from market tolls and other primary sources, that Shrewsbury was emerging as the leading cloth town in the Central and North Welsh Marches from the 1520s onwards. Its role grew in status so that it became the preferred 'middleman' in the region. Cloth was purchased at the Oswestry markets, finished off by shearmen in Shrewsbury, and then despatched to London.<sup>4</sup> By 1540 it may well be the case that the

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<sup>4</sup> Champion and Thacker, *A History of the County of Shropshire: Shrewsbury General History and Topography*, 6, Part 1:140.

economic ties which bound 'ordinary' people to the Palmers' Guild were unravelling, as the drapers of Shrewsbury rose in influence in the Welsh cloth marketplace.

**Figure 41: Stewards' Journeys or 'Ridings' in 1533-4 and 1538-9** <sup>5</sup>

Date	Steward	Days	Region/County	Towns visited
<b>1533-4</b>	Roger Bradshaw		Leominster Ore, Wigmoreland	Kingsland, Eardisland, Knighton, Kimbolton, Yarpole.
	Thomas Wheler		Worcestershire, eastern Shropshire	Stottesdon, Chaddesley Corbet, Stourbridge, Halesowen, Holt, Worfield, Claverly.
<b>1538-9</b>	William Phelips	30 days	South West England	Thornbury Bath Bristol Westbury Keynsham Wells Glastonbury Reading Shaftsbury Salisbury Amesbury Wherwell Abbey
	William Phelips	45 days	Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Leominster Ore	Marlborough, Marshfield, Painswick, Bishop's Cleve, Cirencester, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Pershore, Evesham Worcester, Hanley, Ross-on-Wye, Monmouth, Newland, Chepstow, Hereford, Leominster, Bromyard.
	Richard Hoore	46 days	Warwickshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire	Old Swinford, Birmingham, Eton, Southam, Warwick, Coventry, Banbury, Northampton, Nottingham, Derby, Lichfield, Wolverhampton.
	Richard Hoore	28 days	North Welsh Marches	Llangollen, Oswestry, Wrexham, Ruthin, Denbigh, Holywell, Caernarvon, Chester.
	Richard Hoore	32 days	Central Marches, Southern Marches	Welshpool, Montgomery, Newtown, Machynlleth, Aberystwyth, Haverfordwest, Tenby, Carmarthen, Kidwelly, Cardiff, Caerleon, Abergavenny, Brecon.
	Richard Hoore	15 days	Shropshire, Staffordshire	Shrewsbury, Wem, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Stafford, Newport.

In Ludlow, in the 1530s, there was no lessening of interest in prayers, obits and religious services to be conducted by the Guild. Wills from Ludlow residents show

<sup>5</sup> SA LB5/3/31-32 Steward's Account 1533-4, 1538-9.

that there was support for the religious services of the Guild in that decade. An example is Katrine Wollascott, a sister of the Guild, who instructed the Guild chaplain to conduct her funeral, with all the clergy and friars present:

the parson with all the priests of the guild and all other priests within the town be at my dirge and masses and all the two orders of friars having for their labour after the custom of manner of the said town.<sup>6</sup>

The last two Guild wardens were intent on supporting and protecting the Guild as the Reformation storm gathered. In his will of 1535, Richard Downe, warden of the Guild from 1509-35, requested that:

I give and bequeath to the warden of o[ur] lady gyld and seynt John Evangelist and to hys brethren and to their successors for ever all that my te[neme]nt with garden and close to have and hold all the sayd ten[anment]s gardens and close with the othyr gardens before namyd to the said warden and brethren and successors for ever and to the performance of an yearly obit to be done for my sowle my wife agnes soule and o[ur] fathers and mothers soule and all crystyn soules.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> HRO HD4/1/120, 100. Will of Katrine Wollascott, 11 June 1530 (proved 1530).

<sup>7</sup> HRO HD4/1/122, 130. Will of Richard Downe, Weaver and Warden of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, 18 July 1535 (proved 1535).

The last known Ludlow will to mention the Palmers' Guild was composed in May 1546 by Walter Rogers, mercer, and warden of the Guild from 1535-46. It was a time of disruption and ongoing religious uncertainty for the townsfolk, and the Guild members in Ludlow. Edward VI's commissioners were investigating the Palmers' Guild. They had been instructed to identify the Guild's property and to document the names and roles of the clergy who were in the employ of the Guild.<sup>8</sup> Rogers' will is a testament to troubled times for the Palmers' Guild:

All my lands in Stanton Lacy, with acres lying in Ludlow fields to be kept an obit yearly for me and my wife Margaret, my father William, my mother Isabell and all Christian souls ..at dirges and masses, Mr Warden and his brethren to be present for their diligence and pains taken there, Mr Warden to have 8d. and every one of the Brethren 4d. Master Parson and his parish priest with all the rest of the guild to be at my said dirges and masses with two tapers upon my hearse. Mr Warden and his brethren to have yearly towards the repairs of the houses of the guild 3s. 4d. annually as long as the said guild should stand and continue. And if by chance it shall not stand then the said 3s. 4d. to be distributed in alms to poor people.<sup>9</sup>

Rogers feared that the Palmers' Guild would be unlikely to 'stand and continue'. A year later, his worst fears were realised. In the will of Rogers' wife, Margaret, written in

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 4 for the chronological breakdown of events in the 1540s.

<sup>9</sup> HRO HD4/1/129, 109. Will of Walter Rogers, Mercer and Warden of the Palmers' Guild 4 May 1546 (proved 1546).

1547, there is no mention of her husband's wishes for dirges and masses or alms. Instead she wishes to lie next to her husband in the parish church 'whose soul God pardon'. She then lists the recipients of her worldly goods.<sup>10</sup> It was clear that the role of the Guild as a supplier of religious services had run its course.

The Act of 1547 (1 Edward VI) suppressed chantries, guilds and colleges in England and Wales.<sup>11</sup> Chantry certificates were issued after the survey. At this time, although the Palmers' Guild owned many properties in Ludlow, a significant number were in disrepair. The Commissioners assessed the Guild to have property worth £122 as well as seven chaplains, two singing men, two deacons, a schoolmaster, and six choristers working for the Guild. 'Gold and 'certen other plate being set and fastened to the glas & stone & other goodis or ornamentis with diverse vtensyllis' were also listed.<sup>12</sup>

The act of 1547 set up several commissioners to assess the wealth of religious guilds, chantries, and colleges. The commissioners placed Guild property under the administration of the court of Augmentations. The Palmers' Guild warden petitioned for an exemption from this Act and was successful to some degree. Instead of surrendering Guild property to the court of Augmentations, the Guild was permitted to transfer its assets to the Corporation of Ludlow, for an annual fee farm rent of £8 13s. 4d., payable to the court of Augmentations. In 1551 the Palmers' Guild warden

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<sup>10</sup> HRO HD4/1/130, 92. Will of Margaret Rogers, Widow and Late ife to Walter Rogers, Warden of the Palmers' Guild, 14 September 1547 (proved 1547).

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the surrender of the Guild properties and goods see: Gaydon, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', 138; Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 91–93.

<sup>12</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII. Cap IV and 1 Edward VI. Cap. XIV', 328–29.

surrendered the goods and properties to the Ludlow Corporation. The Corporation pledged to maintain the almshouses, grammar school, the organist, and a preacher in the church.<sup>13</sup>

The last days of the Palmers' Guild between 1547 and 1551 are enshrined in mystery and intrigue. There was a claim that the last Guild warden, William Langford, and his son, Richard, had spirited away Guild plate worth £200 and pocketed the rents from Guild land, to the tune of £300. John Berkeley, a Guild chaplain in 1546 wrote to Sir Richard Sackville, Knight Chancellor of the court of the Augmentations, sometime between 1548 and 1553:

William Langford who taketh upon him to be warden of the said gilde  
Richard Langford John Alsoppe & John Taylor alias barker hath  
entered upon the Kinges Maiesties possession of and in the said gilde  
& its possessions & hath not only taken the rents & profittes of the  
same for three years past amounting to the somme of three hundred  
powndes and above but also hath taken the plate jewelles & goodes  
of the same gilde being worth £200 & more & hath converted all the  
same to their owne uses to the manifest wronge & disinherytaunce  
of the Kinges Maiestie<sup>14</sup>

There is no surviving document which responds to this petition, so it is unclear if the pilfering of Guild plate and the transfer of rents and property took place as charged.

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<sup>13</sup> This paragraph has been summarised from Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 91.

<sup>14</sup> Summarised in Weyman, 'Chantry Chapels in Ludlow Church', 369–70.



All we can say is that the same key families who managed the Palmers' Guild ran the Corporation. William and Richard Langford were aldermen in the Ludlow Corporation and were well placed to see the 'writing on the wall' in respect to the downfall of the Guild. It may be the case that they did indeed sequester away these large sums of money and goods, but there is no absolute proof one way or the other. Further research could throw light on these murky activities, which occurred in the dying days of the Guild.<sup>15</sup>

Men like William and Richard Langford slid effortlessly across into the government of Ludlow, from the offices of the Palmers' Guild. In a similar way, the trade connections with Shrewsbury and the Central and North Welsh Marches, which had been a defining characteristic of the Palmers' Guild era, were taken up by men from these families and others, as the Guild lost influence in the town. The distribution of conventual property after the 1530s to up-and-coming men such as William Foxe, meant there was new wealth to invest in the cloth trade and other ventures.

Richard Downe was warden of the Palmers' Guild from 1509 to 1535. William Foxe married his daughter, and their son Edmund, married Catherine, daughter of Thomas Trentham, draper, of Shrewsbury.<sup>16</sup> This marriage is an example of the cordial connections between the leading families of Ludlow and Shrewsbury. It also shows how the cloth trade may have evolved and developed after the demise of the Palmers'

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<sup>15</sup> For information about the Reformation in Ludlow see Lloyd, Clark, and Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199-2009*; Peter Klein, 'Ludlow Parish Church and Its Clergy at the Reformation', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society* 73 (1998): 20–32; Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, 69–73; Margaret Clark, Tessa Frank, and Caroline Franklin, *Light on St Laurence's: The Churchwardens' Accounts in the Reformation Era C1540-1575* (Ludlow: Ludlow Historical Research Group, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> S.T. Bindoff, ed., 'Edmund Foxe (by 1515-50), of Ludford, Salop', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509-1558* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 1982), <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/foxe-edmund-1515-50>, accessed 14 October 2019.

Guild, through familial links between Ludlow and Shrewsbury. Ludlow's influence over the Tudor court, the cloth trade and the religious observance of many thousands of late medieval people had waned by the 1540s. Its surviving records have only now exposed how important it once was in the history of this region, before the world changed forever in the religious reforms of the 1530s and 1540s.

## Appendix 1: Palmers' Guild Wardens 1401 to 1551.

Date	Name	Occupation	Other Guild roles	Other Official roles	Died
1401-2 <sup>1</sup>	William Parys	Draper		King's Alnager for Shropshire 1399, 1401; Bailiff 1416-19	1440
1404	William Broke				1404
1406-8	John Leinthalle				1409
1422-40	William Parys	See above		See above	1440
1443-9	John Parys	Draper, son of William Parys	Steward 1442	Bailiff 1439, 1443	1449
1451-62	John Griffith	Hosier, Merchant	Steward 1436-40	Bailiff 1446	c1465
1468-71	John Dodmore	Draper, Merchant	Steward 1428-34	Bailiff 1465; MP	1472
1472-94	Richard Sherman	Merchant		Member of the Twelve 1469	
1494-1509	Walter Morton	Clothier, Mercer	Steward 1485-8	Bailiff 1462, 1476, 1481. Member of the 'Twenty-Five' 1469.	1511
1509-35	Richard Downe	Weaver	Steward 1501-2	Bailiff 1500	1535
1535-46	Walter Rogers	Mercer	Steward 1509-12	Bailiff 1514, 1518, 1522, 1525, 1530	1547
1547-51	William Langford	Draper, Mercer	Steward 1514-16	Bailiff 1519, 1526, 1533, 1538, 1542; Coroner 1543	1553

<sup>1</sup> Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History*, Appendices 2-5; Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow*.

## Appendix 2: Palmers' Guild Stewards 1406 to 1551

Date	Name	Occupation	Other Guild roles	Ludlow offices	Died
<b>1406-8</b>	William Munselow <sup>2</sup>				
<b>1423-8</b>	Mathew Grene	Clothier		Member of the '12' 1448	
	John Lawrence	Draper			
<b>1428-34</b>	John Dodmore	Draper	Warden 1468-71	Bailiff 1463-4	1472
	Thomas Dountone	Weaver		Member of the '12' 1448	1455
<b>1436-40</b>	John Bowdeler	Merchant		Member of the '12' 1448	
	John Griffith	Merchant	Warden 1451-62		
<b>1440-2</b>	Richard Dylowe	Corveser		Member of the '12' 1448	1453
	John Hosyer	Hosier		Member of the '12' 1448	1463
<b>1445-7</b>	Richard Knyghtone				1466
	Richard Ryalle	Baker			1453
<b>1461-3</b>	John Wroth			Bailiff 1468	1477
<b>1463-6</b>	John Sherman	Merchant		Bailiff 1461	1468
<b>1461-6</b>	John Dodmore	Draper	Warden 1468-71		1472
<b>1467-8</b>	John Dale	Walker			1487
<b>1469-70</b>	Walter Hobbold	Weaver		Bailiff 1470, 1475, 1478,1482	1501
	Richard Thornton	Barber		Bailiff 1470	
<b>1472-6</b>	John Malmeshulle	Mercer		Churchwarden 1464 Bailiff 1470	
	John Wylkes			Bailiff 1471, 1478	1487
<b>1485-8</b>	Thomas Teron			Churchwarden 1471, Bailiff 1479, 1492, 1496, 1499, 1510	1519
	Walter Morton	Clothier	Warden 1496-1509	Bailiff 1476, 1481	1511
<b>1497-1500</b>	Richard Dyer alias Bingham	Weaver		Bailiff 1502	1549
	Richard Lane	Clothier		Bailiff 1495, 1509, 1519, 1524	1526
<b>1501-2</b>	Richard Downe	Weaver	Warden 1509-35	Bailiff 1499	1537
	William Grene	Hosier		Bailiff 1491, 1504	1515
<b>1503-4</b>	John Hooke	Walker		Bailiff 1494, 1501, 1515	1523

<sup>2</sup> Information (some years are incomplete) from Faraday, *Ludlow 1085-1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* Years 1406-1509 from Appendices 4 and 5. and Faraday, *Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407-1550 in the Consistory Court of the Bishops of Hereford with an Appendix of Abstracts of Registered Copy-Wills 1552-1581*.

	William Cheyny	Mercer	Clerk 1517	Bailiff 1498, 1501, 1508	
<b>1505-8</b>	Richard Bragott	Weaver			1519
	John Browne	Draper			1509
<b>1509-12</b>	<i>John Clongunwas</i> <sup>3</sup>			Bailiff 1502, Alnager 1519	
	Walter Rogers	Mercer	Warden 1535-46	Bailiff 1514, 1518, 1522, 1525, 1530	1547
<b>1513-14</b>	Richard Bragott	Weaver			1519
<b>1513-16</b>	Henry Capper				
<b>1514-16</b>	William Langford	Draper	Warden 1547-51	Bailiff 1519, 1526,	1553
<b>1515-16</b>	Henry Pickering	Capper <sup>4</sup>	Agent in Shrewsbury	Bailiff 1518, Alnager 1521	
<b>1517-20</b>	Richard Davies			Bailiff 1523	
	<i>Thomas Crofton</i> <sup>5</sup>			Bailiff 1521	1524
<b>1521-4</b>	Richard Bury			Bailiff 1517	1546
	Walter Phelips			Alnager 1520 Bailiff 1525	1528
<b>1525-8</b>	<i>Thomas Lewis alias draper</i>	Draper		Bailiff 1531, Alnager 1536	
	John Bradshaw	Merchant		Bailiff 1530, 1534, 1540 Coroner 1541, MP Radnorshire 1542,1553.	1567
<b>1529-32</b>	<i>Robert Hood alias Stayne</i>	Glass Stainer		Chamberlain 1528 Bailiff 1534	1549
	<i>John Tailor alias Barker</i>	Barker		Chamberlain 1525 Bailiff 1526, 1535, 1539, 1545, 1546, 1554.	1558
<b>1533-6</b>	Thomas Whelar <sup>6</sup>	Mercer		Bailiff 1537, 1541, 1554, 1565. MP for Shropshire	1574
	Roger Bradshaw	Mercer		Bailiff	1538
<b>1537-8</b>	Richard Hoore <sup>7</sup>				1539
<b>1539-40</b>	John Lloyd <sup>8</sup>				
<b>1537-40</b>	William Phelyps <sup>9</sup>	Clothier		Churchwarden 1529 Chamberlain 1534 Bailiff 1535, 1547	1559

<sup>3</sup> Information about Guild Stewards from 1509-1540 taken from the instalments in SA LB 5/3/2-10 Steward's Riding Books 1497-8 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

<sup>4</sup> SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding book 1515-16, 21.

<sup>5</sup> When a steward's name is in italics, the identity cannot be absolutely confirmed from surviving sources.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Whelar and Roger Bradshaw, Stewards of the Guild in SA LB 5/3/31 Steward's Account 1533-4.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Hoore, Steward of the Guild in SA LB 5/3/32 Steward's Account 1538-9.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. John Lloyd is in the instalments for Derby. SA LB 5/3/10 Steward's Riding book 1515-16, 53.

<sup>9</sup> William Phelyps, Steward of the Guild in SA LB 5/3/32 Steward's Account 1538-9.

### Appendix 3: Registrations from the Gentry, Higher Clergy and Nobility <sup>10</sup>

Name	Occupation/Class	Guild records	Member	Town	Area
John Abbot	Abbot	1507-8	Yes	Vale Crucis	Llangollen, Denbighshire
Oliver Adams	Abbot	1515-16	No	Coombe Abbey	Warwickshire
Anthony Acton	Gentry	1505-6	No	Kinlet	Corvedale and Cleoland
Roger Acton	Gentry	1407-8	Yes	Ludlow	
Anna and John Knylle	Gentry	1515-16	Yes	Kingsland	Leominster Ore
Margaret Baker, wife of John Esquire	Esquire	1507-8	Yes	Presteigne	Wigmoreland
Ralph Bannaster	Gentry	1507-8	No	Wem	North Welsh Marches
John Barnaby	Gentry	1504-5	Yes	Eyton	Leominster Ore
Milo Bentham	Gentry	1507-8	No	Radnor	Wigmoreland
Richard Betton	Gentry	1507-8	No	Berwick	North Welsh Marches
Morgan Blethyn	Abbot	1515-16	Yes	Llantarnam Abbey	Southern Marches
Margaret daughter of Sir Thomas Blount	Knight	1503-4	No	Kinlet	Corvedale and Cleoland
William Bostock	Gentry	1504-5	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Richard Bradford	Gentry	1507-8	Yes	Leominster	Leominster Ore
Randall Brinerton	Gentry	1508-9	Yes	Oswestry	North Welsh Marches
Edmund Broase	Gentry	1503-4	No	Pembridge	Leominster Ore
John Burton	Gentry	1506-7	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
John Butler	Abbot	1515-16	No	Vale Crucis	Llangollen, Denbighshire
Thomas Clebery	Abbot	1515-16	Yes	Dore Abbey	Herefordshire
Richard and Katerina Colvey	Gentry	1503-4	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Reynold Conwey	Gentry	1504-5	No	Conwy	North Welsh Marches
John Cooke	Gentry	1487-8	Yes	Ludlow	
John Corbet	Gentry	1502-3	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
Eleanor Cornwall, husband of Sir Richard Croft	Gentry	1506-7	No	Burford	Corvedale and Cleoland
Richard Cornwall	Gentry	1501-2	Yes	Bourton	Corvedale and Cleoland
Edward Davenport	Gentry	1507-8	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
David ap Gwilliam ap Rees	Gentry	1505-6	No	Aberystwyth	Central Marches

<sup>10</sup> Information taken from Guild records towns for Ludlow, Ludlow's hinterland and the Southern, Central and North Welsh Marches. SA LB 5/3/3-10 Steward's Riding Books 1501-2 to 1507-8 and 1515-16.

Edward Easthope	Gentry	1485-6	Yes	Easthope	Corvedale and Cleoland
Edward ap David	Gentry	1488-9	Yes	Caernarfon	North Welsh Marches
William Eyerton	Gentry	1505-6	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Hugh Faringdon	Abbot	1515-16	Yes	Reading Abbey (previously Leominster Priory)	Berkshire
Fowke Medilton ap David	Gentry	1502-3	Yes	Denbigh	North Welsh Marches
Griffith ap Moris	Gentry	1505-6	No	Heyope	Wigmoreland
John Griffiths	Gentry	1515-16	No	Radnor	Wigmoreland
Thomas Grymesiche	Gentry	1505-6	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Elisabeth Gulde	Gentry	1488-9	Yes	Burford	Corvedale and Cleoland
Richard Harvies	Gentry	1486-7	Yes	Ludlow	
Isabel Heath	Gentry	1503-4	Yes	Presteigne	Wigmoreland
Sir William, Blanche and Caroline Herbert	Armiger	1503-4	Yes	Monmouth	Southern Marches
Edward Hopton	Gentry	1506-7	No	Rockhill	Corvedale and Cleoland
David Lloyd	Gentry	1508-9	Yes	Chirk	North Welsh Marches
Catherine daughter of Sir John Longford	Gentry	1503-4	No	Holt	North Welsh Marches
Lancelot Lowther	Gentry	1503-4	Yes	Holt	North Welsh Marches
Edward and Johanna Lye	Gentry	1507-8	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Richard Lye	Abbot	1501-2	Yes	Shrewsbury Abbey	North Welsh Marches
Richard Oton	Gentry	1506-7	No	Ashford Bowdler	Leominster Ore
Maude, wife of Thomas Maynwaring	Gentry	1505-6	No	Wem	North Welsh Marches
Randell Maynwaring	Gentry	1515-16	No	Wem	North Welsh Marches
Edmund Medilton	Gentry	1507-8	No	Chirbury	Central Marches
John and Alice Merbury	Armiger	1406-7	Yes	Ludlow	
Thomas Mitton	Gentry	1501-2	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
William Mitton	Armiger	1505-6	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
Hugh Mortimer	Knight	1406-7	Yes	Ludlow	
Thomas Morton	Abbot	1505-6	Yes	Tintern Abbey	Southern Marches
Henry Newland	Abbot	1503-4	Yes	Tintern Abbey	Southern Marches
John Ottley	Gentry	1515-16	No	Pitchford	North Welsh Marches
Richard Palmer alias Dyer	Gentry	1506-7	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
Robert Payner	Gentry	1506-7	No	Frodesley	North Welsh Marches

Thomas Pole	Gentry	1505-6	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Thomas Pygott	Gentry	1508-9	Yes	Kinlet	Corvedale and Cleoland
Ralph Ravynestrot	Armiger	1504-5	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
John Rowland	Abbot	1507-8	Yes	Coombe Abbey	Warwickshire
Henry Salusbury	Gentry	1505-6	No	Denbigh	North Welsh Marches
Edward Salusbury	Gentry	1508-9	Yes	Conwy	North Welsh Marches
Thomas Salusbury	Knight	1501-2	No	Denbigh	North Welsh Marches
Thomas Skymsher	Gentry	1504-5	No	Ludlow	
Richard Snede	Gentry	1505-6	Yes	Oswestry	North Welsh Marches
Hugh Starkye	Gentry	1505-6	No	Chester	North Welsh Marches
Thomas ap Rees	Gentry	1504-5	No	Newtown	Central Marches
Edward Trefor	Gentry	1505-6	Yes	Oswestry	North Welsh Marches
Thomas Trentham	Gentry	1485-6	Yes	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
Thomas and Elizabeth Trentham	Gentry and Draper	1507-8	No	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
Richard Upton	Gentry	1515-16	No	Leominster	Leominster Ore
John Vaughan	Gentry	1504-5	Yes	Leominster	Leominster Ore
William Webbe	Armiger	1508-9	Yes	Shrewsbury	North Welsh Marches
Hugh and Elisabeth Weldon	Gentry	1503-4	No	Holt	North Welsh Marches
John and Elisabeth Wigston	Gentry	1506-7	Yes	Leominster	Leominster Ore
William Wollascott	Gentry	1507-8	No	Ashford Bowdler	Leominster Ore



## Appendix 4: Timeline of Religious Changes in the 1530s and 1540s

Date	Statutes/Injunctions	National events	Central and North Welsh Marches
1532	Restraint of Appeals to Rome Act (24 Henry VIII c. 12)	Forbade appeals to the Pope on religious or other matters	
1533	Submission of the Clergy Act (25 Henry VIII c. 19)		
1534	Act of Supremacy (26 Hen VIII c. 1) Treasons Act (26 Henry VIII c. 13)	Henry VIII proclaims himself to be the Head of the Church of England. Those who refuse to acknowledge this fact were punishable by death under the Treasons Act	
1535	Laws in Wales Act (27 Henry VIII c.26) ' <i>Valor Ecclesiasticus</i> '	Visitations of lesser monasteries, (376 religious houses), parish churches, colleges, hospitals etc	Dissolution of Ruthin Priory.
1536	Suppression of Religious Houses Act (27 Hen VIII c. 28)  See of Rome Act (28 Henry VIII c. 10) 1536 Injunctions (Issued by Thomas Cromwell)  The Ten Articles (Henry VIII)	Religious Houses under the revenue of £200 dissolved and given to the King and his heirs.  Extinguished the authority of the bishop of Rome. Clerics and those taking holy orders required to take an oath recognising Royal Supremacy. Pilgrimage of Grace and other disturbances.  Outlined doctrine and ceremony. Belief in Purgatory under threat.	Dissolution of Llantarnam Abbey (Mon), Strata Marcella Abbey.
1537		Surrender and destruction of smaller monasteries and their relics	Dissolution of Vale Crucis Abbey (Llangollen), Abbey Cwmhir.
1538	1538 Injunctions (Issued by Thomas Cromwell)	Images to be removed, and no candles before images.	Dissolution of Ludlow Austin and Carmelite Friars, St Werburgh's Abbey (Chester), Vale Royal Abbey, Denbigh Friary.
1539	Suppression of Religious Houses Act (31 Henry VIII c. 13); Act of Six Articles (31 Henry VIII c. 14)	Dissolution of 552 larger monasteries and destruction of their relics but Henry VIII confirmed Six Articles of Faith, rejected the name Purgatory but maintained 'belief that the dead benefited from prayers of the living. Bequests for lights and candles for altars fell sharply.	Dissolution of Strata Florida Abbey, Tintern Abbey (Mon). Haughmond Abbey, Leominster Priory

Date	Statutes	National events	Central and North Welsh Marches	The Guild and Ludlow Parish Church
1540		Radical reform ebbed perhaps due to Cromwell's execution	Dissolution of Shrewsbury Abbey, Wenlock Priory	No more surviving Steward's accounts, Warden's account for 1540 shows sharp drop in income.
1542	Laws in Wales Act (34 & 35 Henry VIII c.26)			
1543			Marcher lordships abolished	
1545	Dissolution of Colleges Act (37 Henry VIII c.4)	Commissioners report on foundations (colleges, chantries, hospitals, free chapels, guilds and stipendiary priests)		
1546		Guild investigated by Chantry Commissioners authorised under 1545 Dissolution of Colleges Act		Chantry Certificate for the Guild. Will of Walter Rogers, warden.
1547	Sacraments Act (1 Edward VI c.1)  Dissolution of Colleges Act (1 Edward VI c. 14)	Official order to remove images  Act to dissolve Religious Guilds, Chantries, Colleges and Free Chapels.		William Langford last Warden – 1547-1551. Will of Margaret Rogers, widow of Walter Rogers.
1548				In the Ludlow churchwardens' accounts there is payment for taking down the Rood and Images and painting of the Rood loft. There are also costs in taking down Mr Watts chantry. The churchwardens also sold images which had been used in the chantry chapels. <sup>11</sup>
1551				Transfer of Palmers' Guild's lands to the Ludlow Corporation.

<sup>11</sup> Wright and Camden Society (Great Britain), *Churchwardens' Accounts of the Town of Ludlow, in Shropshire, from 1540 to the End of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, 33.

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