Medieval History

This series includes pioneering editions of medieval historical accounts by eyewitnesses and contemporaries, collections of source materials such as charters and letters, and works that applied new historiographical methods to the interpretation of the European middle ages. The nineteenth century saw an upsurge of interest in medieval manuscripts, texts and artefacts, and the enthusiastic efforts of scholars and antiquaries made a large body of material available in print for the first time. Although many of the analyses have been superseded, they provide fascinating evidence of the academic practices of their time, while a considerable number of texts have still not been re-edited and are still widely consulted.

The Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade

A prominent philanthropist, landowner and politician near Halifax, John Lister (1847–1933) was dedicated to his community. He founded a Catholic school in Halifax and a reformatory trade school in the grounds of his ancestral home. A keen local historian, Lister became involved in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, particularly in the later years of his life. Along with four other volumes, he edited for the Society this 1924 publication. Transcribing customs records from Hull and records made by royal officials in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Lister describes in his introduction how the wool trade developed and became a central part of the livelihood and character of Yorkshire. He discusses imports and exports, the lives of merchant families, and how the merchandise itself evolved as wool-working developed. Illuminating the social impact of a historically significant industry, this work remains relevant to researchers interested in the medieval economy.
Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.
The Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade

Extracts from the Hull Customs’ Rolls, and Complete Transcripts of the Ulnagers’ Rolls

Edited by John Lister
The Anniversary Reissue of Volumes from the Record Series of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the leading society for the study of the archaeology and history of England’s largest historic county, Cambridge University Press has reissued a selection of the most notable of the publications in the Record Series of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. Founded in 1863, the Society soon established itself as the major publisher in its field, and has remained so ever since. The *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* has been published annually since 1869, and in 1885 the Society launched the Record Series, a succession of volumes containing transcriptions of diverse original records relating to the history of Yorkshire, edited by numerous distinguished scholars. In 1932 a special division of the Record Series was created which, up to 1965, published a considerable number of early medieval charters relating to Yorkshire. The vast majority of these publications have never been superseded, remaining an important primary source for historical scholarship.

Current volumes in the Record Series are published for the Society by Boydell and Brewer. The Society also publishes parish register transcripts; since 1897, over 180 volumes have appeared in print. In 1974, the Society established a programme to publish calendars of over 650 court rolls of the manor of Wakefield, the originals of which, dating from 1274 to 1925, have been in the safekeeping of the Society’s archives since 1943; by the end of 2012, fifteen volumes had appeared. In 2011, the importance of the Wakefield court rolls was formally acknowledged by the UK committee of UNESCO, which entered them on its National Register of the Memory of the World.

The Society possesses a library and archives which constitute a major resource for the study of the county; they are housed in its headquarters, a Georgian villa in Leeds. These facilities, initially provided solely for members, are now available to all researchers. Lists of the full range of the Society’s scholarly resources and publications can be found on its website, www.yas.org.uk.
The Early Yorkshire Woollen Trade

(Record Series volume 64)

The editor of this volume, John Lister (1847–1933), prepared several publications for the Record Series, five of which are reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection. An obituary and bibliography of Lister, which can be found in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 31 (1934), 423–6, records that he died ‘at his ancestral home’, Shibden Hall, Halifax, and that – like many of his colleagues in the Society – he was a member of the landed classes, and also a non-practising barrister. His obituary in *The Times* of 13 October 1933 reported that he was a founding member of the Labour Party in Halifax and had twice stood as a parliamentary candidate for the Independent Labour Party.

Lister was a pioneering researcher into the early history of the Yorkshire woollen industry. In the absence of documentation for production and trade inland, he made use of the records of royal taxation, both on exports, through customs accounts, and on domestic sale, through the ulnagers’ accounts. His recognition of the value of the latter preceded the work of Herbert Heaton in his *Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries* (Oxford, 1920; reprinted 1965). The first part of the present volume contains extracts from the customs accounts for the port of Kingston upon Hull for various years from 1304 to 1471, taken from the records of the King's Remembrancer: *Particulars of Customs Accounts for Kingston upon Hull*, which for this period now have the National Archives references E122/55/1 to E122/62/3. The second part of the volume contains extracts from the ulnagers’ rolls for Yorkshire for various years between 1378 and 1478, taken from the records of the King’s Remembrancer: *Accounts Various*, which for this period now have the National Archives references E101/345/15–24.
THE EARLY YORKSHIRE WOOLLEN TRADE.
THE YORKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1863. INCORPORATED 1893.

RECORD SERIES.

VOL. LXIV.
FOR THE YEAR 1923.

THE EARLY YORKSHIRE WOOLLEN TRADE.

EXTRACTS FROM THE HULL CUSTOMS’ ROLLS,
AND COMPLETE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE ULNAGERS’ ROLLS.

EDITED BY

JOHN LISTER, M.A.,

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY.
1924.
INTRODUCTION.

The extracts and transcripts presented in this volume are intended to throw a little more light upon the yet somewhat obscure history of the development of the woollen industry in our county of York. They consist of (a) Extracts from the Rolls of the Collectors and Controllers of Customs at Hull, dating from the year 1304; and (b) Copies of the Compoti of the Ulnagers, alias Alnagers, who gathered the subsidy and ulnage on behalf of the Crown, laid and paid upon all cloths exposed for sale made in Yorkshire and elsewhere. These latter returns date from the year 1378.

HULL CUSTOMS ROLLS.

I do not think that any of these Rolls and Compoti have fully seen the light in print before, except one relating to the customs at Hull, produced in the original Latin in Frost's excellent book, Notices relative to the Early History of Hull, published in 1827.

Dealing firstly with the Customs Rolls, it may be useful to give a few facts relating to the early history of the custom due on cloths made in England intended for exportation abroad. This custom was included in the custom called the "New Custom," or "Little Custom," as Stubbs, in his Constitutional History, writes,¹ and which "New Custom," he states, was introduced by Edward I in 1303. But, pace so great an authority as Bishop Stubbs, although it does not seem to have applied to cloth, would appear to have originated earlier, for we have Rolls in the Record Office headed: "Rolls of the New Custom collected at Hull," beginning with the third year of the reign of the same King Edward, 1274-5,² down to the year 1304, in which year, among other merchandise,

¹ Stubbs’ Constitutional History, ii, 524.
² K.R. Customs Accounts 55/1.
viii

INTRODUCTION

Shipments of cloth from Yorkshire abroad seem first to be recorded. Wool and wool fells and hides, etc., only are included apparently in the rolls of the “New Custom” anterior to this latter date. In the first of our printed Rolls it will be noticed that the “New Custom” included general merchandise exported from the Port of Hull. Interesting as other goods then exported from our county may be and well worthy of being published, our extracts must only, with a few exceptions, be concerned with the export of, and custom charged on, cloth.

In the first of these Rolls (I) we find that the period covered is a very short one, extending only from the 4th of July, 1304, to the Michaelmas of the same year—three months less three days. This, as I have indicated, seems to have been the first occasion on which custom was laid on exported cloth, all the nine Rolls that precede it only dealing with wool and fells, etc. With these two items our Roll I does not deal. But, besides cloth, lead, cheese and salmon are accounted for. If this be the first instance of a custom being taken on cloth exported from Hull, it is not surprising, perhaps, to find that only two half cloths are mentioned as paying custom during the three months covered by the return. But one of these cloths was of the best quality, for it is described as being of scarlet, and the only “cloth in grain” exported. While the other half cloth is described as being sine grano, i.e. without grain.

It was under the provisions of the previous year, 1303, that the customs on exports of cloth were fixed at 2s. on “cloths of grain,” 1s. 6d. on those of “half grain,” and on those without “grain” in them at 1s.

But what, it may be asked, is the significance of the word “grain”? Samuel Maunder, in his Scientific and Literary Dictionary (1870), gives us, I think, the most concise definition. Under the term “Kermes,” an equivalent for “grain,” he writes: “Kermes [a little worm], of the genus Coccus of entomologists, found in the excretions of oak trees, growing in the south of Europe. It is an article extensively used in dyeing, and is inferior to nothing but cochineal, as a means of producing scarlet. ‘Kermes-grains,’ as they are called, are the dried bodies of the female insects of the species Coccus
INTRODUCTION

Illicis, which lives upon the leaves of the Quercus Ilex, or prickly oak. It was formerly called Vermicus, whence the French vermilion. Kermes has been employed from time immemorial in India to dye silk, and was also used by the ancient Greeks and Romans for the same purpose; but since the introduction of cochineal, it has become an object of comparatively trifling importance.\(^1\)

In these Compoti, therefore, we shall find scarlet cloths described as of “whole grain,” and others in which a smaller portion of the scarlet dye was used as “cloths of the half grain,” or cloths in which some “grain” was employed in the dye. Cloths with any “grain” in them paid more, as has been already noted, to the Custom House collectors than those from which it was absent.

There is in the Record Office a return made by Barton and Bedeford of imports, for the same period as that of the exports, by which we learn that from the 4th July to Michaelmas, 1304, the cloths imported at Hull were 3½ cloths dyed in “grain,” and 24 in which there was none of this dye.\(^2\)

Coming to Roll II, 1305, we find that all the names of shipowners and exporters, with the exception of William of Tyndale and, possibly, that of John of Walthorp, are of foreign origin. This Roll covers a whole year—Michaelmas to Michaelmas. It enumerates 4 scarlet cloths and 57 “without grain,” together with 16 pieces, of which pieces 11 were valued at the high figure of £15 12s. For the sake of comparison, let us refer to the imports of cloth at Hull for the same period. In this year, as will be noticed, they largely exceed the exports, cloths described as “mixed with grain” being 16 in number, and those without grain 392\(^3\). Pieces of cloth are valued mostly at 1s. the ell.

In Roll III it is to be noticed that all the exporters with the exception per chance of John Greyne, and the masters of ships, save Robert of Oxon, appear to be aliens. This Roll only covers a little over nine months, terminating on the 7th July,

---

1 For further information see A Manual of Dyeing, by E. Knecht, C. Rawson, and R. Lowental (1893).
2 K.R. Customs Accounts 55/16.
3 K.R. Customs Accounts 55/17.
INTRODUCTION

on the death of King Edward I. Only 3 scarlet cloths and 19 cloths without grain are accounted for, and in the returns of the same collectors for the period between the 7th July and Michaelmas no customs on cloths exported are recorded.

For the first year of Edward II, 1307–8, a Compotus of imports is preserved, which will be found printed in Appendix I. The number of foreign cloths imported was apparently 6 scarlet and 224 without grain. The return covers one whole year.

Roll IV, 1308–9, covers only a period of a little over ten months, as on the 20th August, 1309, the custom “ceased for a while in virtue of the King’s Writ, under the provisions of the Statutes of Stamford.” This custom was, however, frequently reimposed, and one meets with it again at Hull in 1310. The 1308–9 Roll, it may be noticed, purports to refer only to cloth and other merchandise exported by alienigenae and extranearii. 1 What is the difference between these two terms? Extranearii, i.e. strangers, probably means those who were not free of their city or town, nor members of a merchants’ guild. In these medieval days men of different cities and places were mutually treated as strangers and foreigners. As Professor Ashley writes, the word foreigner is used for any non-burgess, whether English or alien; and it is sometimes not easy to determine which is meant. Regular official “customers”—Customs House officials as we should call them—were appointed in the days of Edward I some time before 1285.

The number of scarlet cloths exported in the ten months of 1308–9 is 121, and of those without grain 924. Taking the imports and exports of cloth in both cases for a period of ten months we find that the imports amounted to about 191 cloths, and exports to 105. More scarlet cloths, we note, however, were exported than were imported.

In Roll V, A.D. 1310, which is the last account we have rendered by Robert of Barton and Gilbert of Bedeford, it is to be noted that there is reference to a few cloths shipped from Scarborough. This town had, like York, a monopoly for dyed cloth, and in the Hundred Rolls (c. 1274) we find it frequently

1 The small custom after the 27 Edward III was levied only on aliens, they being alone permitted to export. See Hubert Hall, Customs.
stated that no cloth made there measured the breadth required by the law.

The export of cloths from Hull and Scarborough in 1310, covering a whole year, seems according to the Compositus to have been very small, and no ships are reported as sailing from those ports after the 24th July.

Between 1310 and 1324, when we meet with the next Compositus, there is a gap of fourteen years, and only two ships are named as carrying cloth abroad—cloths specially named “English cloths.” The sworn value of those is for the first time given, though “pieces” had been valued in previous rolls.

Roll VI of 1324 introduces us to the De la Pole family—previously known as Atte-pole [At the Pool]. This Richard of the Compositus is said to have been the eldest son of John de la Pole, miles, but about the knighthood there seems to be a little room for doubt.1 Frost says that the observation made by Camden—

mercatura non derogat nobilitati—“may be applied with peculiar propriety to Richard and his brother, William de la Pole, whose commercial pursuits laid the foundation of all their future greatness.”

This Roll VI would seem to be only a partial account of the cloth shipped in the year 1324–5. It will be noticed that the heading varies from the usual form, and purports vaguely to be “of money received from the New Custom.” Some explanation seems needed regarding this account, as there appears to be something peculiar about it. Richard de la Pole continued in office until 1327.

Thirty years forward we reach the year 1354, Roll VII, when Walter Box and John of Northburgh were collectors of the custom. The period covered is from the 27th July of that year until Michaelmas in the following year, 1355. The reader will notice that the custom rates are altered—very considerably raised from those of the Carta Mercatoria. We meet with the explanation of this in the year 1361. In a Close Roll Writ, dated 8 February, 35 Edw. III, we find, under the heading Pro mercatoribus, an order directed to the Collectors of

1 See Frost, Memoirs of Hull, p. 31.
INTRODUCTION

the Custom on Woollen Cloths and on Worsted Blankets [lecti de worstede] that the King, after quoting the rates of custom imposed by his grandfather's—Edward I—charter, states that the alien-born merchants had been wrongfully charged by the collectors excessive custom dues on the pretext of a certain order made by the King and his Council, viz. 3s. 6d. for scarlet cloths and other cloths of whole grain; 1s. 6d. for cloths of half grain or intermixed with grain. These figures it will be noted are the same as those that occur in the Comptus of Walter Box and John of Northburgh, so far as alien merchants are concerned. “Cloths of Worsted” are, as we see, mentioned as subject to custom duty in this Comptus of 1354. The word “worsted” appeared in our extant Rolls for the first time in that of 1310 (No. V), where “sayses of worsted” are named, and cloths of this kind are scheduled in the Close Roll recently quoted of 1361. But what was a simplex and what was a duplex lectus? The Public Record translators sometimes render the word lecti as “beds,” and sometimes, much more reasonably, I think, as “bed clothes.” It appears to me that an even more correct rendering still would be “worsted blankets.” In the Petition of the Commons in 1410 on behalf of the city of Norwich, mention is made of les Worstes appelles, “Worsted-beddes,” namely, “doubles et sengles.” Surely blankets must be understood under this phraseology.

Unfortunately, the “Roll of Particulars” mentioned by the collectors of 1354, as having been delivered into the Treasury, does not appear to exist, and we only have the summary thereof. This states that there were 52 cloths without grain shipped by alien merchants at 21d. a cloth, and 8 cloths without grain by denizens [now permitted to export] at 14d. a cloth. No other cloths, scarlet, worsted, or double bed-Blankets [lecti], were exported either by denizen or alien merchants.

That only 60 common cloths were shipped twenty-one years after the immigration of the Flemings does not say much in favour of their supposed vast influence on English weaving!

Roll VIII, 1363–4, is merely an account of cloths forfeited

1 Ashley, Economic History and Theory, i, 248, note 64.
INTRODUCTION

because those cloths were about to be shipped by a German merchant before the custom due had been satisfied. This is the first Compositus in which “strait cloths,” i.e. probably kerseys, are named in these Rolls. The “fardels” contained, we are told, 1,288 ells, and were sold for £22 16s. 11d. The “panni stricti,” i.e. strait cloths, were held each to be equal to one quarter of a whole cloth of assize, and were called “straits” as being less in breadth than the broad cloths were.

Rolls IX and X, 1380–1, are, as stated in our text, in a deplorably bad condition. I must here correct an error in my note on these documents. Careful investigation has proved that Thomas Friemyng, whose name appears in them, was controller, not a collector of the custom, and that both IX and X may be the remains of one Compositus for which Robert of Selby and Thomas of Wapplyngton were responsible as collectors.

This account is interesting as introducing us to the Hans merchants, but no further mention of them occurs until we reach Roll XIII, 1464. I do not understand why this should be so. The customs are stated in this Compositus of 1380–1 as apparently payable at different rates by (a) denizens; (b) by the Hans; (c) by aliens. The mutilated state of the return does not permit us to learn whether the duty paid by the Hans merchants differed from that charged on other aliens, but in Roll XIV, the fifth year of Edward IV, we find that, while “alienigenæ” paid 1s. 9d. a cloth, and denizens 1s. 2d., the Hans merchants were only charged at 1s.

The Hanseatic League Merchants, as it is affirmed, had other depots than the Steelyard, London. It was the chief, but they also had factories, we are told, in other ports, though I have seen no proof that they possessed such an establishment at Hull.

It is evident that the export of cloth by denizens in 1380–1 largely exceeded that of Hans and alien merchants.

Roll XI, 1391–2, is in a bad condition, and has cost a good deal of trouble to decipher, but yielding, as it does, in spite of its many lacunae, very many most interesting particulars, I judged it wise to have it photographed and reproduce it in print. It gives us the names of ships and their owners, the
INTRODUCTION

names, too, of the exporters, the numbers of the various cloths, their value and the custom thereon. The custom duty is in this case and in subsequent Compoti an ad valorem one. It practically covers ten months.

For the first time in these accounts coverlets [scooptoria] are named. These are known, in our days, as bedquilts or counterpanes. We also meet with “mantal clothes.” In the Petition referred to already of the Norwich weavers, dated 1410, “Wortesdes appellez mantelles” are enumerated, and are described as being of many various colours.

In regard to “coverlets,” of which a very large number appear to have been exported in 1391–2, Roll XI, it is to be remembered, as Mr. Heaton notices,1 that, “the weaving of coverlets for beds had long been an important branch of the York industry, but; although the weavers of the city claimed a monopoly of the trade, coverlet weavers were to be found in many places throughout the West Riding at the time of the Poll Tax Returns.” Mr. Heaton, by the way, seems to have for the moment forgotten that the York monopoly only extended to dyed cloths, and that, moreover, the Weavers’ Gild there seems to have encouraged, rather than otherwise, the admission of outside craftsmen to the privilege they themselves enjoyed, subject to their paying for that privilege.

The names of the ships forming the mercantile marine of this period are interesting, as also are those of the places to which they belonged.

Roll XII, 1401, as I have previously stated, is printed in its Latin form in Frost’s Appendix to his Memoirs of Hull. It shows quite a large volume of trade for the short space of time covered between Easter, 1401, and the 7th July of the same year. In the heading are given not only the names of the collectors, but also that of the controller.

On p. 29 of our text we find that the purchase money of ships was sometimes taxed in the Customs Accounts, for Gilbert Neyse for the purchase of the moiety of the ship called Pasdagh of Skiddam had to pay a subsidy (?) of 5s. 6½d. on a value of £8 6s. 8d.

1 Heaton, Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 55.
INTRODUCTION

All the cloths shipped in this 1401 Roll appear to have been “without grain.” No woollen cloths were coming from abroad.

Our next Comptus, XIII, is dated sixty-three years later. This only purports to cover forty-eight days. Only four ships are stated to have been freighted with cloth. The Trinity of Hull carried 365 cloths of denizens and 62½ cloths and 11½ yards of those of the Hans merchants. The Marie Duras of Calais carried 8 denizens’ cloths. The Peter of Hull had 142 denizens’ cloths, the Marishower of Hull 7, and the Mare of Hull 144 of denizens’. All these cloths, as well those of the Hans as of denizens, were “without grain.” The subsidy to be paid by the Hans merchants is not given in this Roll, but is stated to be found in the “Controller’s Roll.” Doubtless there was a tariff in regard to Hans merchants, which was left to the discretion of the controller. Unfortunately his Roll has not come down to us.

This Roll is followed by one (XIV) for half of the year 1465 and thirteen days, in which eleven ships are named as carrying cloth, exported by denizens, aliens, and Hans merchants. The number of cloths under these three heads are, aliens 74½, denizens 63, and Hans 29 and 3 yards. All are described as being without grain.

The last of these Customs Comptus, XV, is for a “quarter of a year and 12 days,” and is dated 1471. The cloths shipped are all without grain, all freighted by denizens, and their total is 216.

Collectors and Controllers.

The officials who collected the dues at the port of Hull and elsewhere are generally described as the “Customers.” I have taken some little pains to make a list of their names which will be found in Appendix II. The first roll of the collectors of the New Custom, 3 Edward I, has, unfortunately, no name attached to it, and only accounts for wool and wool fells, and it is not until the thirty-second year of Edward I that we find Robert of Barton and Gilbert of Bedeford named as receiving money on account of cloth either exported or imported. The collectors were supervised by a “controller,” who, it appears,
was expected to write out the rolls of the returns. The first of these controllers named is William of Wickkinggeston, Clerk.

The collectors and controllers seem, generally, to have been Hull or, at any rate, Yorkshiremen. Many rules were laid down from time to time in regard to their behaviour and manner of performing their duties. Regular “Customers” were first appointed in the early years of Edward I. According to the Statute 14 Ric. II, “no customer nor controller” was to have any ships of his own, nor meddle with the freight of ships. By Statute 11 Hen. IV, “no man”—to quote Rastall—“that holdeth any common Hosterie in any City or Borough of England, shall be Customer, Controller, finder nor searcher of the said Sovereign Lord the King, and that to eschew the dammage and losse, which thereof may happen, by the favour that such common hostlers may or will doe to Marchants, and other their hostes in the said offices.”

The appointment on 12th November, 1397, of Thomas Percy to the office of Controller of the 3s. a tun custom on wine, and 12d. in the £ on other merchandise, was conditional that he wrote “the rolls with his own hand, and stay therein executing the office in person.” In 1353 we learn that Walter Box, who appears as a collector in that year, was pardoned, on the payment of two marks, for selling wines before they were gauged, and taking corn and other victuals from England to Germany contrary to divers proclamations that had been made.

**Ship Masters and Merchants.**

The number of ship masters with English names in 1304, of any kind of merchandise, were two, those of John of Faxflete, John Shirlokes, and of masters with foreign names also two, viz. William of Hamburgh and Hermann Bukes. The number of English merchant exporters seems to be one, viz. Ralph of Dureem (? Durham), and of alien merchants three, viz. Walter de Feroun [or Feronn], Walter of Hamburgh, and Baldwin of Hamburgh.

In 1305 (Roll II) the names of both the owners (masters) and merchants with one exception, already noted, who exported cloth, appear to be those of aliens. In 1306–7 (Roll III) we
INTRODUCTION

find among five ships the names, apparently, of two English owners, viz. Robert of Oxon and William Heworth, the latter carrying 5 cloths for apparently an Englishman, one John Greyne. Reymond Geraud, whose cloths were shipped on Robert of Oxon’s boat, also may have been an English merchant.

In 1308–9 (Roll IV) the names of all the ship-owners are those of aliens, and the merchants who freighted their ships I fancy are all foreigners. It is interesting to note that the Bishop of Osel exported from Hull on the ship of Englebright of Greffswold [?], 3 English cloths without grain, and paid the English Custom House officers 3s. duty for the same.

In 1310 (Roll V) all the cloths shipped at Hull were shipped in foreign vessels and by foreign merchants, but two ships sailed from the port of Scarborough, the same year, that were owned and freighted by English owners and shippers. In 1324–5, when Richard de la Pole was collector of customs at Hull, the two ships that sailed, having cloth thereon, were both owned and freighted by foreigners.

In 1391 (Roll XI) the aspect of things is quite different. This roll is (as has been noted) rather imperfect, but it shows the following ships as being owned by Hull masters, viz. the Cuthberte of Hull, the James of Hull, the George of Hull, the Trinity of Hull, the Cristofre of Hull, the Maudelyn of Hull, the Katherine of Hull, the ship of John Kyrkeby called the . . . . of Hull, another Cutbert of Hull, owned by a different master, another Maudelyn of Hull with a different master, the ship of John Blaktoft of Hull, the Petre of Hull, another Trinite of Hull with another owner. Several of the names of ships and masters are obliterated, but the list given shows thirteen Hull ships. Of other English ports we have the James of Dartmouth, the Cristofer of Middleburgh, the Clement of York, the Seyntmarie bote of Barton, the Swan Ship of Barton, the Seynt marie shipp of Nottingham.

Of foreign ships those of Campvere, now known as Vere in the Netherlands, were the most numerous. Their names were the Maudelyn, the Seyn Mary Shipp, the Godberade, and the Marie-knyght. Rotterdam owned the Godbyrade, the ship of Maynard son of Maynard, and the ship of Tydman Potter. Of
xvi

INTRODUCTION

Dantzig were the Trinity and the James, of both of which the names of their masters are English. One ship is credited to Dordrecht, and one each to Bayonne, Menin, Koenisberg, Middleburgh, and Crotoy.

In the Roll for 1401 it will be seen that twelve Hull ships are named, one belonging to Newhaven, and one each to Dantzig, Middleburgh, Campvere, and Schiedam.

In Roll XIII, 1464, of the six ships named as shipping cloth, five are stated to be of Hull and only one as belonging to a foreign port, viz. Calais. It is to be noted that the Hans merchants’ cloth was carried on a Hull ship, of which apparently an Englishman, John Brand, was master.

In the year 1465, Roll XIV there are six foreign ships and five English.

McCulloch tells us that “it is difficult to form any very accurate conclusion as to the state of mercantile shipping from the reign of Edward III to that of Henry VII, but the increase, if there was any, seems to have been very inconsiderable." Our extracts from the Hull Customs Rolls seem to bear out to some extent his statement.

We have notices sometimes, but rather too rarely, of the perils that beset the merchants of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, both on the open sea and on the rivers that flowed towards it. In a Close Roll dated Oct. 24th, 1319, we learn from the proceedings of a suit instituted by the burgesses of Beverley and of other merchants of the realm, who had freighted three ships of Flanders at Kingston-on-Hull with cloth, that these ships, on their voyage to the Scheldt, were taken by Flemish pirates. Further, we learn that William de Brunswik had on board of them “a robe and 2 whole pieces of Pers [i.e. blue] cloth of Beverley, of the value of £18 sterling, and that Gilbert Wadiator had 4 whole Beverley cloths of the value of £28 sterling.” These prices, by the way, as Mr. Heaton remarks, indicate “a high standard of workmanship.” 2

If there were perils, many and various, to be encountered on the high seas, there were also dangers to be met with for the

2 Heaton, Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 4.
men and merchandise going down to the sea in ships, by the Ouse and its creeks and channels. In our Roll XI, viz. that of Robert Garton and John Colthorp—we have mention made of a ship owned by John Dandson and of cloth freighted in another ship by a merchant named Robert Duffield. It appears that a ship owned, or freighted, with cloth by these two merchants and by another trader called Simon of Waghen, was totally lost on Wednesday, the 26th July, 1391, at Skelton Garth, on the north side of the Ouse. The ship and cargo were valued at £60. The cause of this loss and of that of many other ships is to be attributed to the existence of weirs, nets, and other obstructions by which the course of the river was perilously narrowed. An important presentment was made [circa 1394] by jurors of York, from which we learn the cause of the loss of John Dandson’s and his fellow-merchants’ ship, and that of many others.

I think part at least of the presentment, as given in the recently published volume of the Selden Society, may be of interest. This presentment took cognizance of a number of offences from the 31 Edward III, a period of approximately thirty-seven years. The document begins: “Whereas the water of Ouse is a highway and the greatest of all the King’s rivers within the kingdom of England, and is for the use of merchants in ships with divers merchandise from the high sea to the City of York and other places within the County, to the great increase of the kingdom and especially of the King’s city of York and the County of York and of other counties, cities, boroughs, and towns in the northern parts of England, to wit, from the sea to the Humber, thence to the Trent, thence to the Ouse, and so to York. There are in the said water divers hindrances, stoppages, and weirs called fish-garths, and in the said weirs are divers spaces called ‘rowmes,’ set strongly across the whole depth of the water with poles, stones, and hedges, whereby the common course of the said river and the carriage of merchandise as aforesaid was wholly stopped for a few years

---

1 p. 23.
2 Vol. II, Public Works in Medieval Law, Selden Society, x1, 253, 254.
3 A “Room” seems to mean the space of one net (spactum unius retis).
INTRODUCTION

now past and very often the said spaces were endangered and submerged.” The jurors then proceed to affirm that “at Redewy-lyghe by Wystowstocches, Adam de Hatfield, late Bishop of Durham, and Adam Hugyn built a fishgarth and set it firmly with poles, stones, and hedges, on the north side of the said water in the 47th year of Edward III, and Walter de Skirlowe, now bishop, and the said Adam have maintained, enlarged and heightened the aforesaid obstruction from the 14th year of Richard II to the present day, so that no ship can pass in the summer season, to the undoing of the said city and country; and in the said weirs and ‘rowines’ the said Adam has taken salmon and salmon fry with his nets during the close season, from the Nativity of the Virgin Mary to St. Martin’s day, to wit, from the seventh year of Richard II; and fed his swine therewith; and that by reason of the obstruction aforesaid John Steer, merchant, on Tuesday, 26 July, 1390, lost two ships fully laden with woollen cloth to the value of £60, saving for himself nought of his ships or their cargo, to the great undoing of the said John and of the whole country of England in the northern part.”

In regard to John Dandson & Co’s ship it appears from a presentment made [circa 1348] that the weir or fishgarth at Skelton, which appears to have caused the casualty, was one of 18 “spaces,” and belonged also to the Bishop of Durham, and had been set up in the 45th year of Edward III.

Skelton-garth certainly seems to have been a dangerous spot, for there are several presentments regarding vessels and men that perished there. Besides John Dandson’s ship, on the 22nd September, 1377, John Spenser, we are told, lost three men unknown and his ship and cargo there to the value of £100; another ship and cargo was lost valued at £60 at the same place on the 5th October, 1375, and again three men were drowned. On the 25th June, 1376, “all by reason of the said obstruction at Skelton,” John York, of Swinefleet, lost his ship with two Austin Friars and divers other merchandise [sic] to the value of £80. It is not surprising, after these cases of loss, to read in a presentment levelled at the Bishop of Durham in 1360, that Skelton-garth should be described as
INTRODUCTION

"a very harmful weir." The Bishop of Durham at that time, by his attorney, came before the King at York and denied that he had weirs or stakes at Skelton. The case was tried and the jury found that the "rooms" at Skelton were set there not by the said bishop, but by four Skelton men, and the verdict, at any rate so far as this weir was concerned, was given in his favour, but was again contested, as we have seen, in later years. In a presentment made in 1348 it is stated that "the course of the river Ouse ought and is wont to be forty feet wide between York and the Humber, and a direct course unhindered by poles and weirs set in the said water or by nets and other engines." It is "undeniable," writes Mr. Flower, the editor of vol. xl of the Selden Society, "that the condition of this river [the Ouse] and its tributary, the Derwent, was deplorable in the fourteenth century. All along its lower course encroaching fisheries impeded navigation."

YORKSHIRE ULNAGERS' ROLLS.

These Rolls, which throw so much light upon the development of the woollen industry, have been sadly neglected by our writers and lecturers on commerce and trade. I do not think any quotations from, or references to them are given in the books written by Professor Cunningham or Professor Ashley, or even by Mr. Hubert Hall. When, in the early eighties, I came across them in the P.R.O., I almost had presumption enough to consider myself their discoverer, or rather the discoverer of their great value in regard to the history of our early cloth industry. Since the period of my research these Rolls have, however, been utilised to good effect by Dr. Maud Sellers and Mr. Heaton.

The office of ulnager was one of considerable antiquity, and can be traced back to the early part of the reign of Edward I. Two men were appointed to view all cloths exposed for sale, whether home-made or of foreign manufacture, and to confiscate all wares not in accordance with the legal dimensions.² Shortly afterwards the work passed into the hands of one man

² Patent Rolls, 7 Edward I, m. 3 (1270).
who was generally appointed for life. Perot le Tailleur had
the uilnage of cloth "in the fairs of our realm" in the above
monarch's time, and the King, on the occasion of Perot's
having forfeited it, committed the office in 1298, by Writ of
Privy Seal to Peter of Edelmeton. "This is the earliest docu-
mentary evidence of an office that existed until the reign of
William and Mary," writes Professor Ashley in his English
Woollen Industry. But we have, I find, an earlier appointment
made in 1291 in connection with the Fair of St. Ives.¹

On the 14th May, 1291, we read in the Rolls of the Fair
Court of St. Ives that Hamon of Bury St. Edmunds "was the
bearer of a letter patent from Sir Roger de Lisle, clerk of the
Great Wardrobe, [ordering] that he should be admitted by the
Keepers of the Fair of St. Ives to measure woollen cloths made
in England, linen and canvas." The steward of the Court,
we are told, would not admit Hamon to execute the said
office, alleging that to do so would be to the disherison and pre-
judice of the abbot and convent of Ramsey and their bailiffs,
and be contrary to the privilege granted by the charter of the
King to the fair. However, Hamon yielded up his letter
patent into the steward's hands, and "at the instance of the
merchants, his letter patent having been renounced and annu-
ulled, he is admitted for the present."

In 1293 we find that Hamon, having with three others made
oath in Court "to make honest measurement for sellers and
buyers," was allowed to act as an uilnager.

From these proceedings we see that the King's Writ did not
run at St. Ives' Fair in regard to the uilnaging of woollen cloth
and canvas, and in a case tried in the Court of Exchequer,
10 Edward I, it is stated that it was customary for the mer-
chants to measure canvas, and, it is to be supposed, also woollen
cloths in fairs.²

In the 9th year of Henry III a statute was passed that
there should be "one breadth of broad cloth, russets and
haberjects, viz. two yards within the lists." According to

¹ Select Cases concerning the Lau Merchant, edited by Chas. Gros for the
Selden Society, i, 42.
² Exchequer Plea Roll, 16, m. 7d.
INTRODUCTION

the statute of Richard I the carrying out of the assize, as it was called, was entrusted to four or six lawful men in every city or borough, supervised by the itinerant justices, who were to inquire whether the assigned keepers in each town were doing their duty. It seems that, as already stated, there was no royal officer, no unlager appointed by the King until the early years of Edward I, when, as in 1291, we find, as we have noticed, Hamon of Bury St. Edmunds producing a writ to the keepers of the Fair of St. Ives, calling upon them to admit him to measure "woollen cloths made in England."

The words, "cloth made in England," is an interesting phrase, as showing that there was a distinction drawn between cloth imported from abroad and cloth made in England, Hamon, apparently, being only empowered to deal with the latter.

Hamon, two days previous to his exhibition of King Edward's writ, had been "attached for having been found measuring 60 ells of canvas in the booth of John of Boulogne, although he had not yet been sworn as an unlager." At the instance of H. of Cottenham and other friends the amerce-ments imposed upon the would be unlager were remitted.

None of the Ulnagers' Rolls, in which Yorkshire is named, seem to be in existence prior to the appointment of Nicholas Shirlok in 1327.

At this date there was no subsidy paid on cloth, and the unlagers then and thitherto and until the 27th year of Edward III, merely dealt with the sizes and sometimes with the qualities of the cloths made and exposed for sale. Cloths not equal to the standard assize were seized by them and forfeited to the King. Owing to this circumstance, viz. that English-made cloths were not taxed, it is impossible to judge the extent of the home manufacture, and it is not until we reach the Customs Roll for 1304 that we can glean anything to indicate the quantity exported from Yorkshire, or elsewhere. Nicholas Shirlok, in his Roll for the 2nd year of Edward III, merely reports the forfeiture he had made at York of two cloths found in the hands of the master of the market [d'ni m'caf] in that city, which were forfeited because they were not "of the assize."
INTRODUCTION

In his Roll, also, for 6 Edward III [1332–3], he accounts for 1 cloth forfeited from a Lincoln merchant at Hull for being of short measure, and of 3 cloths seized at York as forfeit. By the description given of these elaborate cloths we may conclude that they were of foreign manufacture.

The chief ulnagers of the realm employed deputies, and Shirlok styles one Richard of Wynchecombe his “attorney.” Shirlok’s successor, John Marreys, was ulnager for the realm from 1348, apparently until 1365. There appear to be no Rolls existing covering the period of his office. It will be seen from our Appendix III that the names of several of his Yorkshire deputies have come down to us.

John Marreys was ulnager when, in the 27th year of Edward III [1353], the first subsidy on woollen cloth made in England for sale was granted by Parliament. It is very disappointing that none of his Rolls, after this event, have been apparently preserved. They would have given us valuable information as to the growth of the woollen industry in our county. On the occasion of the grant of the subsidy on saleable woollen cloth made in 1353, new powers were given to John Marreys, and his tenure of office was renewed for life. For the ulnage (i.e. for measuring it) of a whole cloth he was to take $\frac{3}{4}d.$, and for half a cloth $\frac{1}{2}d$. He was instructed to take nothing for any cloth less than half a cloth, nor intermeddle in any way with the ulnage of cloths other than those for sale.¹ Furthermore, as ulnager he became collector of the new subsidy on English-made cloth, granted by the Lords and Commons to the Crown. Under this statute of 27 Edward III John Marreys, by virtue of this statute, was empowered to collect 4d. for every whole cloth of assize wherein there was no “grain,” and 2d. for every half such cloth; and for every “cloth of assize of scarlet” 6d., and half cloth 3d. On cloths of the “half grain” 5d. was to be charged, and 2$\frac{3}{4}d.$ for every half such cloth. Cloths whose measurement exceeded by three yards or more the standard sizes of whole or half cloths were to pay after, i.e. according to, the rate or subsidy which was payable for the whole cloth of the same sort. Cloths exposed for sale, before the same had

¹ Patent Rolls, Nov. 3rd, 1353.
been measured, had paid the ulnage fee and the subsidy, and had been passed and sealed by the ulnager, Marreys, or his deputies or the bailiffs of a franchise, were to be forfeited. The ulnager or collector was not permitted to gather the subsidy money on any cloth but what was exposed for sale. He was not to tax cloth “which a man maketh for his own use to clothe him and his many,” i.e. household.

It would appear that, although, in certain franchises, the local bailiffs or merchants had the privilege of measuring cloth, there were also royal officials appointed elsewhere to this duty. The first statute [Assize of Measures] dealing with the regulation of the manufacture of cloth is that of Richard I [1197, November 20th], by which it was enacted that wherever woollen cloths were made they should measure two ells in breadth, and should be equally good at the middle and the sides. All cloths made contrary to law were to be immediately burned, and all artifices to impose upon the buyer in the sale of cloths were strictly prohibited. But we are told, that licences to sell cloths of any breadth whatever were granted by Henry II, as exceptions probably to an older law.

By Statute 25 of Edward III, c. 1, we find that, in regard to cloth forfeited for deficiency of the assize measurement, the ulnager was to deal with the delinquency, “notwithstanding any franchise, usage, or privilege made to cities, boroughs, or to any person of the Realm of England to the contrary.” Buyers under this Act of Parliament might measure the cloth they were purchasing, even though it had been measured and sealed by the ulnager, and were empowered to show any deficiency in the same to the mayors and bailiffs of the place, or to the keepers of the fair or market. If the complainant buyer proved his case, the cloth was to be forfeited to the King, seized into his hands and kept by the authorities just mentioned, who were to certify the Chancellor concerning the matter. The ulnager, if guilty of fraud or negligence in measuring, was to be “attainted before the keepers of the fairs and mayors and bailiffs where the cloth shall be bought,” and to be imprisoned for one year, and put out of his office for ever. This explains the reference in the subsequent statute of the
INTRODUCTION

27th Edward III to the seizing of forfeited cloth by mayors and bailiffs in addition to the powers granted to the ulnagers to measure, seal, and make forfeitures.

Nicholas Shirlok was appointed ulnager for England for the term of his life by Letters Patent in 1327.

In 1362 we find that the farming out, otherwise leasing, of the office of ulnager and collection of the subsidy on cloth had begun, and the King in that year let to farm that subsidy for London, the county of Southampton, and the counties of Surrey and Sussex. Also in the same year the farmers of the subsidy on cloth in Wiltshire, Somersetshire, and Dorset are mentioned. In 1365 we find that the subsidy had already been let in the counties of Worcester, Rutland, Norfolk, and Suffolk. Doubtless, at this date, though I have not found record of it, the subsidy was also let to farm by the Yorkshire ulnager. This practice, though sometimes suspended, continued apparently until the ulnager’s office ceased in the time of William and Mary. The farmers were, we find, “never constrained to account to the King for the issues of the subsidy, but only for the rent at which they farmed it.” It seems from a Close Roll of 1362 that many abuses had crept into the collection of the subsidy. False and counterfeit seals were current, at any rate in London. The seal of St. Michael, previously used in that city, was ordered to be made anew in 1365. The farmers and their deputies were bound to deliver all forfeited cloths to the sheriff of the counties where they were found, “by indenture between them made,” i.e. between the farmers and the sheriffs. The latter were to answer to the King on their account, and by the indentures the ulnage farmers and deputies were discharged of their account, and were to have one-third part of the ulnage forfeitures for their trouble.¹

In a great suit in the Exchequer Court, in 1637, between Thomas Lister, of Shibden Hall, and three other leading West Riding clothiers v. the royal ulnagers regarding ulnage, the latter officials allege in their answer to the Bill of Complaint, that this statute of King Edward III stimulated the cloth-makers of Yorkshire to make kerseys rather than broad cloths because the former, being made less than the assize measurement of

¹ See Appendix IV.