

Cultivating Power in Yorkist England: Political Patronage and the Cinque Ports, 1461–1485

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The role patronage played in the urban politics of the fifteenth century English town has received relatively little attention from late medieval historians. The Cinque Ports, in particular, have been neglected despite the impressive survival of their financial records for the later middle ages. This material illuminates the political, economic, and social activity within the five ports and their outlying harbours or 'limbs' in addition to providing a fuller picture of general urban patronage strategies. Like all chartered boroughs, the Cinque Ports had privileges to defend and extend; fee farms and taxation to pay; conflicts with other towns; and interests in international trade to promote. All of these responsibilities demanded participation in national affairs and alliances with members of the political elite. Lorraine Attreed's paper on the York fee farm is a pioneering exploration of these very themes.¹

Municipal favour is known to have had a role in the political arena of medieval England as magnates and leading gentry with strong royal connections were cultivated for their influence with the king by those in need of a patron in high standing. Yet research specifically into the gift-giving *emanating* from the town has remained an underdeveloped facet of the political patronage studies.² Attreed has explored the

1 L. Attreed, 'Medieval Bureaucracy and York's Fee Farm during the Fifteenth Century', *York Historian* 6 (1985), pp. 24–31.

2 L. Attreed, *The King's Towns: Identity and Survival in Late Medieval English Boroughs* (New York, 2001); C.D. Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350–1400* (Woodbridge, 2005); J.M. Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: the Bristol elite, the Urban Community and the Crown, c.1471–c.1553', unpublished PhD thesis University of the West of England, Bristol (2006); R. Horrox, 'Urban Patronage and Patrons

patronage patterns of four specific large towns, namely Exeter, Norwich, Nottingham, and York. Her study into the manner in which magnates, gentry, and lawyers figured in civic patronage patterns has illustrated the burgesses' preference for building mutually beneficial relationships with local leaders possessing strong court connections and political influence.³ Attreed concluded that gift-giving was a long-term investment engaged in by towns in need of powerful friends. These allies were capable of providing future favours that frequently revolved around the economy or autonomy of the town.⁴

The broad scope of Attreed's inquiry resulted inevitably in a rather cursory study, omitting the practices of any towns within the south-east region where the Cinque Ports were situated. The more distinctive characteristics of the patronage patterns in this neglected region are not only significant in their own right, but potentially shed new light on the routines of the provincial towns situated elsewhere. This article will therefore draw upon Attreed's conclusions in examining the urban patronage strategies of the Cinque Ports during the reigns of the Edward IV and Richard III. It will ascertain the potential patrons who received gifts from civic leaders, how these recipients were associated with the crown, and what the confederation acquired in return for their efforts. Finally, it will also consider how the practices of the Cinque Ports fit into wider urban patronage patterns in this period.

Numerous historians have expounded the significance of patronage and the role it played in politics from the twelfth to the nineteenth century.⁵ For students of the fifteenth century, it was McFarlane

in the Fifteenth Century', in R.A. Griffiths (ed.), *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1981), pp. 145–66.

3 Attreed, *King's Towns*, pp. 99–100.

4 Ibid., pp. 101, 123–25.

5 E. Powell, 'After "After McFarlane": The Poverty of Patronage and the Case for Constitutional History', in D.J. Clayton, R.G. Davies, and P. McNiven (eds), *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History* (Stroud, 1994); L.L. Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London, 1990); F. Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014); N.Z. Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison, WI 2000); A.G. Dickens, (ed.), *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty 1400–1800* (London, 1977); J. Hurstfield, *Freedom, Corruption & Government in Elizabethan England* (London, 1973); S. Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 40–67; J.C. Holt, 'Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England III: Patronage and Politics', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series 34 (1984), 1–25; J.M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1986); M. Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1994).

who championed the role it played, citing it as part of 'the essence of contemporary society'.⁶ It was a reciprocal relationship in which goods and services were voluntarily exchanged between two parties of unequal status in the full expectation of mutual benefit. For the medieval town, gift-giving was an advantageous method for establishing and maintaining connections with the political elite. This strategy was not exclusive to the fifteenth century. Felicity Heal and Wallace MacCaffery have illustrated the use of gifts in early modern England as a method for influencing the 'patronage brokers' surrounding the monarch and bridging the gap between subject and sovereign.⁷ Nor was such a practice solely an English affair. In France the promotion of a new civic official of importance was met with a municipal gift in order 'to recommend the town and its affairs to him'.⁸ Yet the economic depression stemming from the Great Slump of c.1440–80 and the domestic turmoil brought on by the Wars of the Roses raised the stakes in England for suitors seeking an in-road to the king. The need to forge relationships with strong local and national figures in order to maintain royal favour became the preferred course of action amidst the political ebb and flow of their day. As such, the records of expenditure from several boroughs demonstrate the sustained efforts town leaders undertook in order to acquire powerful friends with close links to the crown. This is not to say that officials of the central administration and central law courts were excluded from gift-giving, but the bulk of a town's bounty often went to more prominent politically active power-brokers whom the urban elite and the king were likely to have known more closely. The various accounts of the town chamberlain, steward, receiver or bailiff show ample evidence of the provision of gifts and presents (*dona et exennia*) on a regular and long-term basis. Attreed has noted the 'scrupulous recording of every fish, bread loaf, and wine barrel given as... a record of a town's friends, the people upon whom its officers and citizens could rely'.⁹ Horrox observed that 'urban patronage is in many ways analogous to the patronage of individuals', for towns, in lieu of their relatively slight political clout, sought to cultivate

6 K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), p. 290; K.B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford, 1972), p. 226.

7 Heal, *Gifts*, pp. 9–10, 28, 111–15, 123–29; W.T. MacCaffery, 'Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics' in J. Hurstfield and C.H. Williams (eds), *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale* (London, 1961), pp. 95–126.

8 Davis, *The Gift*, p. 85.

9 Attreed, *King's Towns*, pp. 123–24.

the friendship of powerful allies to make up the difference.¹⁰ Like the individual petitioner, the town was the client, relying upon the power-broker's goodwill and decision-making as a patron was unlikely to pursue a petition if it was impolitic to do so.¹¹ The financial accounts of the Cinque Ports in the Yorkist period strongly reflect the need to create and nurture such connections. The Wars of the Roses wrought sweeping changes upon the governing elite in 1461, 1469, 1471, 1483, and 1485. In response to the mutability of the political landscape, the patronage activity of the provincial towns intensified as pre-existing patrons and new power-brokers were courted in order to secure favours from the new ruling regime.

I

Although there are a number of English towns whose inhabitants engaged principally in non-agricultural occupations, the Cinque Ports occupied a particularly privileged position. They were both chartered boroughs, defined as one of the self-governing permanent settlements with a royal charter of incorporation, and parliamentary boroughs with the right to send MPs to parliament.¹² One crucial aspect was the right for an inhabitant to hold their tenements in free burgage allowing them to exchange or sell their tenements at will. The principal records for the political patronage of the Cinque Ports are the account books for the corporations of Dover, Sandwich, New Romney, Rye, and Lydd which comprise an unusual concentration of material from a single region. These accounts illuminate the manner in which the barons of the Cinque Ports – that is the mayors, alderman, bailiffs, and sheriffs

- 10 H. Carrel, 'The Rituals of Town-Crown Relations in Post-Black Death England', in F. Andrews (ed.), *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 2009 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2011) p. 148; C. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500* (Oxford, 2004), p. 10; Horrox, 'Urban Patronage', p. 145.
- 11 The disappointment of a petitioner is quite evident in the case of Sir William Plumpton's search for allies to re-acquire Knaresborough Castle from the earl of Northumberland in the 1470s. His attempts to win over Sir John Pilkington and Richard, Duke of Gloucester failed as it was not in the interests of either party to contradict the earl's rights. See, *The Plumpton Letters and Papers*, edited by J. Kirby, *Camden Miscellany* 5th series 8 (1996), pp. 31, 35; R. Wilcock, 'The Life and Career of Sir William Plumpton from 1404 to 1480', *Northern History*, 44 (2007), 39–43.
- 12 C. Dyer, 'Small Towns 1270–1540', in D.M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume I 600–1540*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2000), I, p. 505; F.W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge, 1898), p. 18; C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (London, 1976), pp. 125–47.

which had enjoyed baronial status since the twelfth century – cultivated power. Despite the absence of any documentation from the majority of towns, the prevalence of gift-giving in the existing source material strongly suggests that it was a practice many provincial communities employed to overcome the obstacles of geography and social status that existed between the inhabitants of the towns and the king. The accounts for the ports clearly demonstrate each town spent time and money on gift-giving to specific political power-brokers, these carefully identified, with the expectation that their efforts would be repaid with favours the urban elite could not secure for themselves. An additional record of importance is the minutes of the Brodhull, or Brotherhood as it would be known in the sixteenth century, which is calendared in the *White Book and Black Books of the Cinque Port Courts*.¹³ These records were primarily concerned with the ports' liberties, providing insight into the manner in which the barons of the ports pursued the defence of their privileges. This assembly was a gathering independent of external interference which had been enjoyed by the confederation's urban elite since the fourteenth century.¹⁴ It met twice a year at Romney, developing in a parliamentary fashion with a speaker presiding over the assembly and the members were immune from arrest.¹⁵ The record of this gathering demonstrates considerable political coalescence as the members dealt with matters of mutual concern, especially the confederation's external relations. Additionally, the business of the Brodhull was often focused upon devising organised responses to defend and extend the autonomy of the confederation.

The original confederation was comprised of the five Head Ports of Hastings, Dover, Sandwich, Romney and Hythe; however, the Two Ancient Towns of Winchelsea and Rye, previously attached to Hastings as their Head Port, were promoted to full and independent members in the early fourteenth century. By the late fifteenth century, the confederation of the Cinque Ports had lost much of its former prosperity, yet still maintained substantial shipping resources at its disposal. Perhaps even more valuable was the connection to the continent via their dominance of the narrowest stretch of the English Channel which remained strategically significant for both military and diplomatic purposes. This was stressed in the 1436 poem, the *Libel of*

13 Calendared in, *The White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, edited by F. Hull, Historical Manuscripts Commission Joint Publications 5 (London, 1966).

14 For the origin of the court of the Brodhull, see K.M.E. Murray, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester, 1935), chapter 9.

15 *White and Black Books*, p. xiii.

English Policy, which advocates the importance of the wool staple at Calais and the necessity of keeping the Channel secure:

Whan he perceived too townes Calys and Dover
 'Of alle youre townes to chese of one and othere,
 'To kepe the see and sone to come overe
 'To were oughtwardes and youre regne to recover;
 'Kepe these too townes, sire, and youre magesté,
 'As youre tweyne eyne to kepe the narowe see.'¹⁶

Their geographic location evoked pride from the coastal residents. The network of towns was described by one contemporary as the 'gates that open and shut to the peril or safety of this Kingdome'.¹⁷ Nor was the membership of this network static as more than thirty corporate and non-corporate subsidiaries within Kent and Sussex, often referred to as 'limbs' or 'members', were added to the confederation by the Yorkist period. This expansion should not be regarded as an indication of prosperity but rather as a response to the declining fortunes of the original five ports. The addition of more prosperous limbs to share in the burden of ship-service was a tactic for covering up the economic shortfalls of the Head Ports.¹⁸

There were a number of factors which contributed to the decline in the significance of the Cinque Ports. The natural evolution of the south-east coastline led to a sink or silt crisis which left Rye, Sandwich, and New Romney several kilometres inland, and (Old) Winchelsea and the limb of Northeye under the sea. The harbour at Dover was kept open only after considerable efforts by its populace to halt the silting process. Additional difficulties arose from the eclipse of the local fishing industry, following the maritime expansion, from the early fourteenth century, of Devon and Cornwall.¹⁹ Further compounding the ports' troubles was the regular outbreak of war which affected the population and prosperity of the ports. French raids throughout the Hundred Years War took a toll, particularly on Rye which was brutally sacked in 1339 and Sandwich which was partially burned in 1457. The

16 *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History, Composed During the Period from the Accession of Edw. III. To that of Ric. III.*, edited by T. Wright, 2 vols (London, 1859), II, p. 158.

17 K.M.E. Murray, 'Faversham and the Cinque Ports', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4th series 18 (1935), 53

18 R. Jessup and E. Jessup, *The Cinque Ports* (London, 1952), p. 27.

19 See M. Kowaleski, 'The Expansion of the South-Western Fisheries in Late Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 53 (2000), 448–52.

lingering effects of the Black Death were still present in the fifteenth century. It is estimated to have reduced the population of Sandwich by half, from 5,000 to 2,500 between c. 1350 to 1400, and Rye fell to about 1,000 inhabitants by the middle of the century.²⁰ In addition to these crises, the changes in naval warfare rendered the fifty-seven ships the ports were bound to provide for royal service largely obsolete. Besides the unsuitability of their vessels, the conditions by which they were proffered was also no longer relevant as the constrictive fifteen day service was insufficient for royal purpose during the war with France.

These factors meant that the political and strategic importance of these ports had diminished by the reign of Edward IV. Nonetheless, they did retain some economic significance in the region. The confederation, particularly Sandwich and Dover, still held onto revenue from the fishing and cloth trades as well as the lucrative task of supplying and munitioning the Calais garrison with arms, cattle, lime, timber, and stone.²¹ Providing materials for the garrison afforded the ports leverage in acquiring liberties that assisted them in this responsibility, such as the income from pasturage granted to Sandwich for all livestock awaiting transport to the continent.²² Furthermore the short Channel crossing from these ports was another valuable 'commodity'. In the parliament of 1463–65, the mayor and commonality of Dover appealed for royal assent to maintain their pre-eminent position regarding travellers sailing to and from Calais, asking for more vigorous enforcement of the statutes of 1335 and 1330 granting the town this monopoly over cross-Channel movement.²³

20 G. Draper, *Rye. A History of a Sussex Cinque Port to 1660* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 72–83, 189–94; Jessup, *Cinque Ports*, pp. 27–30; D. Martin, B. Martin, J. Clubb and G. Draper, *Rye Rebuilt: Regeneration and Decline within a Sussex Port Town, 1350–1660* (Stroud, 2009), pp. 6–7, 42–43, 71–73; H. Clarke, S. Pearson, M. Mate and K. Parfitt, *Sandwich: the 'completest medieval town in England'* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 122–23; G. Draper and F. Meddens, *The Sea and the Marsh: The Medieval Cinque Port of New Romney* (London, 2009), p. 58; P. Brandon and B. Short, *A Regional History of England: The Southeast from AD 1000* (New York, 1990), pp. 84–85.

21 The National Archives, London [hereafter TNA], E 101/194/6, mm. 1v, 13v, 25–29v; S.J. Burley, 'Victualing of Calais 1347–65', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 31 (1958), 49–57; I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 12–22; R.A. Brown, H.M. Colvin, and A.J. Taylor (eds), *The History of the King's Works. I. The Middle Ages* (London, 1963), pp. 426, 439; D. Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436–1558* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 157–59.

22 Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, p. 13; TNA, E 101/194/6 mm. 3, 30.

23 TNA, SC 8/29/1422; *The Parliament Rolls of England 1275–1504*, edited by C. Given-Wilson, 16 vols (Woodbridge, 2005), XIII, pp. 244–45.

II

It was therefore against this background of economic difficulties and declining importance that the Cinque Ports sought to protect their privileges and political status by cultivating a network of well-placed patrons capable of forwarding, as well as, defending their interests. At the onset of Edward's reign, the ports quickly engaged in the search for allies to assist in securing royal favour. On 21 July 1461, John Chenewe of Romney, Thomas Thunder of Winchelsea, and Thomas Bayan of Rye were dispatched to 'labour to renew the charter' receiving 2s. a day and £7 for costs "in frenship makyng and Counceyll gettyng".²⁴ The minutes of the court of the Brodhull exhibit a similar level of co-operation by the ports in pursuit of their mutual interests. The first assembly under Yorkist rule took place less than a month after Edward's coronation, and less than four months after the establishment of his fledgling regime. Like other provincial towns, the representatives of each port sought to adapt their patterns of patronage to these changed political circumstances. Fortunately, their active assistance of the Yorkists in 1460 meant that the portsmen had a reasonable expectation of royal favour. The ports had been drawn into the conflict in the wake of the earl of Warwick's raid against Sandwich from Calais on 15 January 1460. The Yorkist earls of Salisbury, Warwick, and March had made Calais their operational base since their exile following the rout at Ludford Bridge in October 1459. Fearing the raid was a precursor for invasion, the ports were included in the order for the coastal counties to muster men to resist any landing.²⁵ Yet contrary to this command, the portsmen and much of Kent flocked to join the Yorkist standard after they landed at Sandwich on 26 June 1460.²⁶

There were significant changes in the ruling elite following the invasion, partly due to the vacancies left by the Lancastrians killed or exiled in the first war. As the Yorkist elite established their hegemony, the provincial boroughs amended their strategies and forge new contacts in accordance with the new political reality. 'Frenship makyng and Counceyll gettyng' were important for all town leaders in need of royal favour as well as the support of those with political clout to intercede with the king on their behalf.

²⁴ *White and Black Books*, p. 43.

²⁵ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls...* [off Henry VI, 6 vols (Norwich, 1901-10) [hereafter CPR Henry VI], VI, pp. 605-7.

²⁶ M.A. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford, 1998), p. 177; C.D. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), pp. 23-25.

For Cinque Ports, a semblance of continuity was provided by their chief officer, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. As a royal agent, the Warden oversaw the Shepway court, the twelfth century creation similar to the county court of the shire, which was held at Lympe. He had admiralty jurisdiction over the south-east coast, and his responsibilities included overseeing the return of writs to the crown, the collection of taxes, and the arrest of lawbreakers.²⁷ From the perspective of the ports, the warden served as the primary royal contact for the confederation. No other town could boast of a similar arrangement. The Warden provided a consistent focus for their patronage, which spared the barons of the Cinque Ports from having to scramble to adjust their efforts in a wholesale fashion as other towns did following major political upheavals. It also allowed them to consolidate their efforts rather than disseminating their bounty so widely that they supported parties that were in opposition to one another.²⁸

In the last decade of Henry VI's reign, the office had been enjoyed by one of the strongest supporters of the Lancastrian regime and prominent landholder in the south-east, Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.²⁹ Numerous supplications were made to Buckingham touching upon a wide range of issues such as the 'inconveniences' of a proposed subsidy in 1450, a complaint regarding 'dyverse derogacion and hurte done to our Baylyfes at Yernemouth' in 1453, and a dispute between the mayor of Dover and the master of the 'masendu' in 1455 which explicitly appealed the duke to 'in all Haste possible for to move & styrre his highnes' to resolve the matter favourably.³⁰ In return for his influence and intercession with the king, Buckingham received monetary gifts such as the payment of £80 to him approved by the Brodhull on 4 May 1451. Gifts were also made in kind such as the load of fish worth 16s 2d given to the duke in the name of the ports at an assembly held on 29 April 1454.³¹ Following Buckingham's death at

27 P. Fleming, 'Sir Thomas Cheyne, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, 1536-1558', in P. Fleming, A. Gross and J.R. Lander (eds), *Regionalism and Revision: The Crown and its Provinces in England 1250-1650* (London, 1998), p. 124.

28 The receivers' rolls for Exeter record overtures of friendship aimed at the feuding Courtenays and Bonvilles in the last years of Henry VI's reign. See, Devon Archives and Local Studies Service, Exeter, Receivers' Accounts, 35 Henry VI - 39 Henry VI.

29 CPR Henry VI, V, pp. 331, 334.

30 *White and Black Books*, pp. 29, 31, 32-34. The 'masendu' (Maison Dieu) was a pilgrim hospital outside Dover founded in 1203 by the Constable of Dover Castle, Hubert de Burgh. I have been unable to determine the nature of the dispute between the hospital and the port.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 32-33.

the battle of Northampton in 1460, the victorious Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick gained the wardenship. The Cinque Ports naturally re-directed their efforts accordingly and sought to cultivate the earl's goodwill.

Although his estates were primarily in the north, midlands and south Wales, Warwick lacked a substantial landed presence, or 'lyvelode', in the south-east region, nonetheless, he did represent a degree of continuity as he had relied heavily upon Kentish support in his capacity as Captain of Calais and keeper of the seas. The popularity Warwick enjoyed with the portsmen was due in large part to his numerous acts of piracy in the Channel. This reputation was useful factor in the Wars of the Roses, particularly in the first outbreak of fighting from 1459 to 1461. The earl's landing in Kent in 1459 met with no opposition, and in the second invasion the following year he garnered great support for himself and the young Edward, Earl of March who was shortly to become king. Warwick had made Sandwich his base of operations following his capture of the royal fleet and its commanders there.³² Already the most valuable patron as a leading figure in the new regime, Warwick's offices as Warden and Captain of Calais – a vital customer of the supplies shipped from the ports – afforded him a stranglehold on the operations in the Channel due to his control over the Calais-Dover axis. This made his friendship and good lordship essential for the ports.

The expenditure of the Cinque Ports naturally show a sustained effort to court Warwick's favour throughout the 1460s when the rule of the Nevilles was at its peak. A gift of 100 marks (£66 13s 4d) was provided by the corporation of Romney in 1461 explicitly for his friendship in his capacity as Warden.³³ At a Shepway court held in Dover on 27 February 1462, the corporation of Rye presented their Warden with their own overtures of friendship in the form of minstrels and a feast.³⁴ There was further feasting during the earl's visit to Sandwich in November 1464, and the treasurer's account for the following year noted additional gifts of several varieties of wine.³⁵ The same year the

32 C. Richmond, 'The Earl of Warwick's Domination of the Channel and the Naval Dimension to the Wars of the Roses 1456–60', *Southern History*, 20–21 (1998–99), 3–8; Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 138–39.

33 *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* ... (London, 1876), p. 544.

34 East Sussex Record Office, Brighton [hereafter East Sussex RO], Rye Borough Records, Chamberlain Account Books Rye 60/2 ff. 93d–94d; Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 240.

35 Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone [hereafter Kent HLC], Sandwich Borough Records, Financial Accounts, Sa/Fat 5, f. 75. The treasurer's account for

urban elite of Dover provided wine and fish for Warwick as well as for his uncle, William Neville, Earl of Kent.³⁶ In exchange for their efforts, the confederation looked to Warwick to employ his influence on their behalf, particularly with regard to their liberties. At a special Brodhull on 12 September 1464, the deputy mayor of Sandwich, John Copyldyck, and John Joseph of Romney were instructed to petition Warwick to obtain the king's confirmation of a new charter of liberties.³⁷ The mayors and bailiffs of the other ports were notified to make the same supplication in the event of the earl's arrival. The ports succeeded in their aim as a new charter was obtained on 25 March 1465.³⁸ On 15 April 1466, the portsmen petitioned Warwick to take their part against his brother, the Chancellor, Bishop George Neville. The barons of the Cinque Ports asked the earl to stop the chancellor from issuing writs that the confederation perceived as infringing their liberties.³⁹ The subsequent silence in the records suggests that the matter was concluded satisfactorily. Other than the king, Warwick was perhaps the only individual capable of curbing his brother's actions, and his aid likely confirmed his reputation as an ally of the ports.

The decisions regarding urban patronage involved a good deal more risk in times of civil war as the power-brokers who took part in the fighting naturally looked for military aid from their retainers and well-wishers. Towns were especially looked to for providing a sizeable fighting force quickly. The danger for the community was the risk of being at odds with royal authority if support for the wrong magnate took more tangible form such as troops or loans employed against the regime. Thus, the ports, like many other boroughs, had to balance their obligation to the king against the possibility of his removal. The wrong move could incur punishment in the form of resumed liberties, heavy fines, or a refusal to make future concessions. In some cases, more extreme forms of punishment were forthcoming. The mayor of Canterbury, Nicholas Faunt, was put to a traitor's death before the king in 1471 for his assistance in the uprising led by Thomas Neville,

1464–65 is severely damaged; however, there are entries pertaining to payments for Warwick's expenditures, see *Sa/Fat* 4.

36 British Library, London [hereafter BL], Egerton MSS 2090, f. 9v.

37 *White and Black Books*, p. 51.

38 *Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Volume VI, 1427–1516* (London, 1927), p. 204; TNA, C 81/1496, no. 51.

39 *White and Black Books*, p. 54. Portsmen were paid by the burgesses to disobey any royal writs that were perceived to infringe upon the liberties of the confederation, see Kent HLC, CP/B1, *White Book of the Cinque Ports*, ff. 100v, 103v, 105v, 107, 109v, 110, 120v, 130v.

the Bastard of Fauconberg.⁴⁰ Regardless of the risks, the Cinque Ports continued to maintain friendly relations with Warwick despite the earl's growing alienation from the king at the close of the 1460s. The deterioration in relations between Edward and Warwick was the culmination of a number of disagreements in foreign policy, the domestic marriage alliances, and the restoration of local rivals which threatened the dominance the Neville family had enjoyed in the north. The confederation played a role in the earl's scheme to wed his eldest daughter, Isabel, to George, Duke of Clarence in 1469 despite Edward's unhappiness at the proposal. Sandwich paid £8 4s 7d in expenses for their crossing to Calais, and Lydd incurred £7 6s 8d in providing twenty-one men for the voyage.⁴¹ Warwick once more employed Kent as his base of operations for his subsequent coup d'état which saw the king temporarily imprisoned and a number of his favourites killed. The earl's set-back following his second coup in 1470 led to his removal as Warden. This office was subsequently given to William Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel on 10 May.⁴²

Arundel was tied to the royal affinity by the marriage of his heir to Margaret Woodville, and had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Far from a major figure in the Yorkist court, the office was a significant gain for Arundel, extending his authority as a regional magnate in the south where he was frequently courted by a number of southern towns including Southampton, Salisbury, and Winchester.⁴³ In keeping with the shifting nature of urban patronage due to changes in national politics, a token of friendship, in the form of a £20 silver and gilt cup bearing the arms of the ports, was agreed upon on 24 July 1470 to be presented to the earl by the mayor of Dover.⁴⁴ The

40 Thomas Neville was the illegitimate son of Warwick's uncle, William Neville, Earl of Kent, who had died in 1463.

41 Kent HLC, Sa/Fat, f. 6; *Records of Lydd*, edited by A. Hussey and M.M. Hardy (Ashford, 1911), p. 253; *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, p. 525.

42 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls... [of] Edward IV, Henry VI: 1467-1477* (London, 1900) [hereafter CPR, 1467-77], p. 209.

43 Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, Chamberlain Accounts, W/E1 ff. 30-34; Southampton Archives, Southampton, Steward Account Books, SC5/1, book 10, f. 23v, book 12, ff. 12, 13, book 13, f. 52, book 14, ff. 41-43, book 16, ff. 17, 22v, book 17, ff. 12v, 39, book 18, ff. 23, 24v, 48v, book 19, f. 1v; Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham, Salisbury Ledger Minutes, G23/1/2, ff. 10v, 20v, 94A, 97A, 129B; R. Benson and H. Hatcher, *The History of Modern Wiltshire and New Sarum or Salisbury* (London, 1843).

44 *White and Black Books*, p. 61.

cup never arrived. By the time it was fashioned the Cinque Ports were committed to the Readeption government, and the offering was instead sent to Warwick on 9 February 1471 after he had reclaimed the Wardenship.⁴⁵ Evidence of the Lancastrians' return to power was reflected by the minor contributions made to the returned dukes of Somerset and Exeter.⁴⁶

The Cinque Ports support for the return of Henry VI was more substantial than token gifts of wine and bread. On 21 January 1471, an assembly agreed to impress ships for service ostensibly for the purpose of transporting Margaret of Anjou and her son across the Channel; however, it is much more likely (as Colin Richmond has suggested) that this force was intended to patrol the sea against Edward of York's return from the Low Countries.⁴⁷ The most egregious miscalculation by the portsmen was their part in the failed attack on London in May 1471. Under the command of the Bastard of Fauconberg, who had been given control of Warwick's fleet, the men of Kent and soldiers of Calais assaulted the well-defended city despite receiving news of Warwick's death at Barnet and Margaret of Anjou's defeat at Tewksbury.⁴⁸ The stubborn resistance to Edward's restoration was the epitome of too little too late, offering the ports little to gain, but much to lose.

Edward's return to power in 1471 was a disaster for the Cinque Ports. Not only had the death of Warwick lost the confederation a long-standing ally, but their charters were confiscated by the king and keepers were appointed over each Head Port and Ancient Town.⁴⁹ A similar fate befell the nearby cathedral city of Canterbury which had its liberties revoked after being placed under the supervision of John Brimstone, esquire.⁵⁰ In traditional fashion, the confederation turned to their new warden, an office re-occupied once again by the earl of Arundel who received £154 for his wages on 26 October, and held the post until his death in 1487.⁵¹ The appointment was consistent with Edward's tendency to favour those related by blood or marriage throughout the second reign, thereby expanding royal influence to a

45 Kent HLC, Sa/Ac, f. 199.

46 BL, Additional MS. 29616, f. 64.

47 CPR, 1467-77, 250; *White and Black*, p. 62; Kent HLC, Sa/Ac, f. 199; C. Richmond, 'Fauconberg's Kentish Rising of May 1471', *English Historical Review* 85 (1970), 675.

48 Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 173-74.

49 CPR, 1467-77, pp. 265-66, 276.

50 C. Richmond, 'Fauconberg's Kentish Rising', 683. For Brimstone, see J. Wedgwood, *Biographies of the members of the Commons House, 1439-1509* (London, 1936), p. 126.

51 CPR, 1467-77, pp. 260, 310; TNA, E 404/75/1 no. 39.

more local level.⁵² Men from the town of New Romney were sent to take counsel with the earl for restoration of their charters, and an unspecified gift was to be presented to him by the mayor and jurats of Winchelsea.⁵³ When the earl sat at Blackheath on the commission inquiring into the treasonous activity of those who had supported Fauconberg, the civic officials of New Romney paid £2 7s for his expenses.⁵⁴ Pending approval from their solicitors, a payment of 100 marks (£66 13s 4d) for the earl was agreed upon at a Brodhull on 10 December 1471 as a means of securing his aid with the restoration of the ports' lost liberties. In early 1472, Thomas Caxton was paid to make a written supplication to Arundel and Sir John Scott for the restoration of their liberties.⁵⁵ The payment of 100 marks was formally agreed upon on 7 April, two months *after* the franchises had been restored.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there is no explicit motivation attached to the April gift. It nevertheless remains likely that the grant was payment for services rendered by Arundel in securing the restoration of the charters. The earl stood to gain by ensuring their gratitude in the new extension to his southern power-base.

For the remainder of Yorkist rule in England, Arundel remained a principal beneficiary of the Cinque Ports' patronage as signified by the account books.⁵⁷ Yet Murray's claim placing the warden as the 'sole intermediary between the King and the Ports' is not supported by the archival evidence.⁵⁸ The Warden's connection to the king was never the ports' sole source of royal access. Municipal elites never entirely focused their efforts on a single individual lest that person fall from prominence. As a result, urban patronage was shifting and opportunistic. The leadership of the ports sought to solicit and patronise other prominent figures. In the more politically unstable

52 C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the constitution in England, c.1437–1509* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 183–94; J.R. Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450–1509* (London, 1980), pp. 281–84, 296–301.

53 *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, p. 545.

54 CPR, 1467–77, pp. 287–88; *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, p. 545.

55 *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, p. 525.

56 *White and Black Books*, p. 64; Kent HLC, Sa/Ac, f. 204v.

57 Specific request to the earl of Arundel are rare in the second reign; however, the attempts to cultivate his continued friendship remain prevalent in the accounts. See, BL, Additional MS. 29616, ff. 38v, 100r, 117v, 132, 148v, 192v–93v, 208v, 212v, 226, 251v; Kent HLC, NR/Fac ff. 65v–66v; *Records of Lydd*, pp. 261, 273, 318; East Sussex RO, Rye 60/3 ff. 6, 10, 14, 22; *White and Black Books*, p. 87.

58 Murray, 'Faversham and the Cinque Ports', 67.

years there were occasions of towns dropping an individual from their gift-giving in order to stay on the 'right' side of the political divide.⁵⁹ The stratagem of broadly dispersing their favour is testament to the existence of multiple avenues to power in Edward's reign which precluded a full monopolization by any one power-broker or affinity at this time. The king's familiars were the foremost group to figure into the ports' patronage. Friends with royal blood were naturally prized by towns. As such, Edward, Prince of Wales; Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and Cecily Neville were all recipients of token gifts of friendship from Rye and Dover throughout Edward IV's reign.⁶⁰ Upon her visit to England in 1480, Margaret, dowager Duchess of Burgundy was treated with the utmost respect from the burgesses of Dover. En route to the king, she received substantial presents including a pipe of wine costing £3 6s 8d and several capons worth 15s 6d from Dover.⁶¹ As a duchess and the king's sister, Margaret was an ideal figure to cultivate in the event her influence could ever be employed for the ports' purposes.

A lack of royal blood did not preclude others of standing from enjoying the patronage of the ports. One leading figure amongst the gentry to feature prominently in the accounts was Sir John Scott who, along with his wife, received a number of grants from Dover, Rye, and Lydd throughout Edward's reign.⁶² As a Kentishman and trusted royal agent, Scott was an ideal figure to employ his influence on behalf of his clients and was active in the region on behalf of the government in the early days of Edward's reign.⁶³ Scott possessed strong royal ties, serving as controller of the royal household from 1461 to 1470 and temporarily holding the office of Lieutenant of the Cinque Ports from 4 April 1470. The task of safe-guarding the region from any foreign intervention appears to have been entrusted to Scott and Sir John Fogge. A fellow Kentishman, Fogge served as treasurer of the household from 1461 to 1467, and was connected to the queen's family through his marriage to her cousin, Alice Haute. Both men were commissioned on 8 December 1461 to ensure the placement of watch beacons and oversee the

59 For instances of cancelled and renewed patronage, see Devon Archives, Receivers' Accounts, 37 Henry VI – 1 Edward IV; Wiltshire and Swindon RO, G 23/1/2 f. 20v.

60 East Sussex RO, Rye 60/3 ff. 9v, 13d, 22v, 24v, 28d, 56d; BL, Additional MS. 29616, ff. 181v, 193, 208v, 212v, 227.

61 BL, Additional MS. 29616, f. 208d.

62 Ibid, ff. 8, 37, 83, 99, 162, 212; *Records of Lydd*, pp. 201, 206, 246; East Sussex RO, Rye 60/3 ff. 23v, 38v–39v; *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, p. 525.

63 CPR, 1467–77, p. 206.

rebuilding of the defensive fortification at Sandwich.⁶⁴ Their business was not confined to royal service alone as Scott was asked to intervene on local matters. One such occurrence involved a dispute – the details of which are uncertain – between the citizens of Lydd and an abbot for which Scott was consulted and his expenses incurred on his journey were paid by the town.⁶⁵

Although less frequent, ecclesiastical leaders also feature in the ports' patronage search for allies. Two examples of petitions toward church figures both involve the unpopular forced loans, or 'benevolences', Edward employed to raise cash in his second reign, particularly for his inglorious, yet lucrative French expedition in 1475 for which the ports were assessed the sum of 600 marks (£400). The under-bailiff of New Romney was paid 12s. 4d. to labour 'to my lord cardynall [Archbishop Thomas Bouchier] for mynesshyng off the kynge benevolence' while a citizen named John Afford was sent 'laboryng to my lord off northwich [Bishop James Goldwell] for the benevolence' at a much more humble rate of 1s. 8d.⁶⁶ The cardinal and bishop were also both the recipients of fish and porpoises from the corporation.⁶⁷ What part Bouchier or Goldwell took on behalf of their supplicants is unclear, but the petition did reach the king's ear by 5 December 1476, as £50 was remitted of from the portion of the benevolence still unpaid by Romney and Lydd.⁶⁸

The next group to receive the ports' bounty were members of the royal household. Nurturing friendships within the king's *domus* was perhaps the most expedient manner by which to gain royal access when favours were required. Isolated cases of gift-giving included prominent figures within the household such as William, Lord Hastings (chamberlain), Thomas, Lord Stanley (steward), Sir John Fogge (treasurer), Sir John Elrington (cofferer and then treasurer) and Master William Hatcliff (physician and secretary).⁶⁹ The gifts to Sir Ralph Hastings, Sir John Donne, Sir Thomas Montgomery, Sir John Middleton, and Ralph Ashton, esquire demonstrate that patronage was not confined to

64 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls... [of] Edward IV : A.D. 1461–1467* (London, 1897), p. 102; TNA, E 101/481/20.

65 *Records of Lydd*, p. 246. The abbot is not identified nor is the nature of the on-going dispute explained.

66 Kent HLC, NR/Fac, f. 76v.

67 *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, pp. 544–45.

68 TNA, PSO 1/44/2252.

69 BL, Additional MS. 29616, ff. 8v, 37, 99, 147v–48v.

the upper echelons of the royal household but even extended to the second-tier individuals of the upper-household.⁷⁰

The scarcity of records and the brevity of Richard III's reign make it more difficult to establish with any certainty the patterns in civic gift-giving, yet the turnover of personnel which occurred in 1483 remains significant for studies of town patronage. A change of monarch brought a change in government and household officials. The consequences of Richard's usurpation are reflected in the accounts of the Cinque Ports as a new crop of power-brokers were patronised by the burgesses eager to forge connections with those closest about the new king. Richard had already been a regular target of their bounty while duke of Gloucester. Unfortunately, the civic records for Richard's rule are not as illuminating as his brother's reign. Arundel remained warden, yet the Brodhulls held in 1483 and 1484 make no mention of any gifts to him. This was most likely a result of Arundel's waning political engagement in light of his advancing years; he was aged about 66 in 1483. The finances of Dover best exemplify the turnover of gifts provided for individuals who had not benefited prior to Edward IV's death, but bore strong ties to his brother.

In the wake of the usurpation of Edward IV's heirs in 1483, Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey began to receive attention from the portsmen as the Howards achieved new heights of power and influence under Richard III.⁷¹ Following Buckingham's rebellion, in which the men of Kent were heavily implicated, Richard relied on northerners to the detriment of leading figures amongst the southern gentry. This northern intrusion into the political affairs of the south is evident in the accounts of a number of towns including the Cinque Ports.⁷² Alongside their economic rival, Exeter, the ports began making overtures of friendship to John, Lord Scrope of Bolton following his promotion to the constableness of the city. The confederation sent additional offerings to Henry, Earl of Northumberland as well as the Yorkshireman, Sir Ralph Ashton, who served in the royal household as a knight of the body.⁷³ Although a Sussex landowner, Northumberland

70 Ibid., ff. 162v–63v, 212v, 225; *Records of Lydd*, p. 274

71 BL, Additional MS. 29616, f. 253v; Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, 18-a, Chamberlain's Account Book III, ff. 50v–51, 60v–67v.

72 *Chronicles of London*, edited by C.L. Kingsford (Durstley, 1977), p. 191; C.D. Ross, *Richard III* (London, 1999), pp. 120–21; M. A. Hicks, *Richard III* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 166–70.

73 BL, Additional MS. 29616, ff. 251v, 252, 261, 262v; Devon Archives, Receivers' Accounts, 1 Richard III – 1 Henry VII.

did not figure in the patronage strategy at any point prior to 1483, thus suggesting his inclusion was a response to national affairs rather than a natural desire to build relations with a local leader. Ashton was one of several new men introduced into Kentish society by the new regime. He was promoted to vice-constable of England and was made the recipient of the estates seized from Fogge, Sir George Brown and other Kentish rebels.⁷⁴ The Suffolk knight, Sir James Tyrell, was also a recipient of the ports' goodwill following his appointment as Lieutenant of Guînes.⁷⁵ Maintaining good relations with officials stationed across the Channel made economic sense as Calais and its environs because of their important commercial ties. Ecclesiastical figures still did not feature significantly in these urban patronage strategies but when the burgesses did seek their goodwill they normally turned to the leading local prelates. The inclusion of Thomas Langton, Bishop of St David's is thus a surprising entry in the accounts for Dover. A staunch supporter of Richard who he claimed 'God hath sent him to us for the weal of us all'. Langton owed his bishopric to Richard as protector and later was translated to the more valuable see of Salisbury following the attainder of Lionel Woodville in the aftermath of Buckingham's rebellion.⁷⁶

A shift in the personnel a town patronised following a change in ruler was natural, but Richard's promotions proved much more abrasive as lamented by the anonymous continuator of the Crowland Chronicle:

What great numbers of estates and inheritances were amassed in the king's treasury in consequence! He distributed all these amongst his northerners whom he had planted in every part of his dominions, to the same of all the southern people who murmured ceaselessly and longed more each day for the return of their old lords in place of the tyranny of the present ones.⁷⁷

Further criticism of the northern intrusion can be found within the carol *The Briar and the Periwinkle*.⁷⁸ Written in a Kentish dialect, the piece prays for an evil ending for the periwinkle, most likely the Yorkshire esquire, William Malliverer, who was the trusted agent

74 *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, edited by R. Horrox and P.W. Hammond, 3 vols (Gloucester, 1979–82), II, pp. 55–56, 77.

75 Ross, *Richard III*, p. 177.

76 BL, Additional MS. 29616, f. 251v; Ross, *Richard III*, p. 151.

77 *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations 1459–1486*, edited by N. Pronay and J. Cox (London, 1986), pp. 170–71.

78 Hicks, *Richard III*, pp. 169–70; *The Early English Carols*, edited by R.L. Greene (Oxford, 1977), p. 257.

Richard appointed as escheator in Kent after the revolt and served on both commissions of array and the peace.⁷⁹ Malliverer is condemned for taking root until he 'yknowmbyrghyt owre town' at the expense of the [rose]-briar, Sir John Fogge. The entrenched nature of traditional regional leaders like Fogge is highlighted in the last couplet of each stanza 'Kyng of Blysse de brere de vysse/An al his rotys stronge'.⁸⁰ The regional preference the Cinque Ports exhibited in their gift-giving practises underwent a drastic transformation in 1483, particularly after the rebellion. Sussex and Kent were prime centres of Buckingham's Rebellion. Several of the ports' former connections amongst the leading gentry were implicated misleading the people 'now late bene abused & blynded' into revolt.⁸¹ Despite any disdain for the northern 'invasion' and Richard's rule, the continuation of patronage for these strangers demonstrates the burgesses' willingness to maintain appearances and work with the ruling regime for fear of a cessation of royal favour.

IV

The tendency for the Cinque Ports to patronise local figures with strong royal links, the king's immediate family, and servant of the Crown corresponds with the findings of Attreed's investigation into the patronage patterns of York, Nottingham, Exeter, and Norwich. The patronage emanating from the ports was similar to that of other towns. It was designed to sustain connections among the political elite so that the affairs of the town might be relayed to the sovereign, yet these relationships broke down at times and needed to be rebuilt with new associates made with further gifts and signs of flattery.

There are sufficient atypical aspects in the confederation's gift-giving patterns to warrant an investigation into the patronage activity of the ports. The ports' exclusive contact with the Warden of the Cinque Ports provided them with an advantageous in-road to royal favour. This office was not only unique, but valuable as it virtually guaranteed the ports a contact who would take interest in the affairs of the ports and possessed a close connection to the sovereign. In contrast, the local leaders other boroughs patronized may not have possessed a close relationship with the king if one existed at all. In

79 Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 120, 122; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls... [of] Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III: A.D. 1476-85* (London, 1901), pp. 385, 435; *Harleian Manuscript 433*, II, p. 76.

80 *Early English Carols*, p. 257.

81 *Harleian Manuscript 433*, II, pp. 48-49.

the 1450s and 1460s, the office was held by the duke of Buckingham and the earl of Warwick, two prominent men described by modern historians as props to the ruling regime. The earl of Arundel did not reach the great heights of his two predecessors, yet even he was tied to the royal affinity via his heir's Woodville marriage in addition to his status as a substantial southern magnate in his own right. Furthermore, the sizeable cash gifts that the ports mustered for their gift-giving are without parallel in scale in any other surviving town accounts for the Yorkist period.⁸² The ability to raise such payments was achieved by the members pooling their resources together for a common goal. The Brodhull minutes make meticulous record of the financial burden for such gifts being divided amongst the Head Ports and their limbs. Each member faced penalties such as fines or confiscation of goods if failing to contribute the specified sum.⁸³ It is this level of cooperation between the members which further lends to the distinctiveness of the Cinque Ports' patronage activity. Such a practice appears quite unique as the majority of boroughs were content to go it alone. When put into a broader context, the ports raised large sums of money to cultivate power-brokers on a more frequent basis. The strength in the Cinque Ports' collaboration helped counter the numerous strokes of misfortune the group had experienced. In Yorkist England, the confederation was still an ally worth having, and as such, was still capable of influencing its own fate by securing concessions indirectly through its friendship with the ruling elite.

82 Wealthy towns such as Exeter and Norwich spent an annual average of £10 8s and £11 13s respectively on gifts for the entirety of Edward IV's reign. Excluding years in which there were royal visits, the incomplete records from York show the city never spent more than £9 per year. See Attreed, *King's Towns*, pp. 102–4.

83 *White and Black Books*, pp. 52, 58, 60, 64, 68, 75.