Cornwall, Connectivity and Identity in the Fourteenth Century

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For Annie

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Sam Drake

Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
BRUO	A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1957–9)
Carew	R. Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall by Richard Carew*, ed. J. Chynoweth, N. Orme and A. Walsham, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 47 (Exeter, 2004)
CChR	*Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226–1516*, 6 vols, HMSO (London, 1903–27)
CCR	*Calendar of Close Rolls, 1296–1454*, 38 vols, HMSO (London, 1892–1947)
CFR	*Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1272–1452*, 18 vols, HMSO (London, 1911–39)
CIM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous, 1219–1422*, 7 vols, HMSO (London, 1916–68)
CIPM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1272–1427*, 20 vols, HMSO (London and Woodbridge, 1908–2003)
Cornish Wills	*Cornish Wills, 1342–1540*, ed. N. Orme, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 50 (Exeter, 2007)
CP	G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage…*, ed. V. Gibbs et al., 12 vols in 13 (London, 1912–59)
CPMR	*Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, ed. A. H. Thomas and P. E. Jones, 6 vols (Cambridge, 1924–61)
CPR	*Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1292–1477*, 42 vols, HMSO (London, 1893–1916)
CRO	Cornwall Record Office, Truro
CS	*The Caption of Seisin of the Duchy of Cornwall (1337)*, ed. P. L. Hull, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 17 (Torquay, 1971)

DCNQ	*Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*
DCO	Duchy of Cornwall Office, London
DCRS	Devon and Cornwall Record Society
EcHR	*Economic History Review*
EETS	Early English Texts Society
EHR	*English Historical Review*
Escheators	*List of Escheators for England and Wales*, compil. A. C. Wood, List and Index Society, 72 (London, 1971)
FA	*Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids, 1284–1431*, 6 vols, HMSO (London, 1899–1920)
FF	*Cornwall Feet of Fines*, ed. J. H. Rowe et al., 2 vols, Devon and Cornwall Record Society (Exeter and Topsham, 1914–50)
GL	Guildhall Library, London
HA	*The Havener's Accounts of the Earldom and Duchy of Cornwall, 1287–1356*, ed. M. Kowaleski, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 44 (Exeter, 2001)
HOP	*The History of Parliament, The House of Commons 1386–1421*, ed. J. S. Roskell, L. Clark and C. Rawcliffe, 4 vols (Stroud, 1993)
HW	*Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London 1258–1688*, ed. R. R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London, 1889–90)
JRIC	*Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*
LB	*Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London, A–L*, ed. R. R. Sharpe, 11 vols (London, 1899–1912)
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, London
MPs	*Return of Members of Parliament*, 2 parts in 4 vols (London, 1878–91), i part 1
NCMH	*The New Cambridge Medieval History, VI, c. 1300–c. 1415*, ed. M. Jones (Cambridge, 2000)
ODNB	*The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. H. Harrison, 60 vols (Oxford, 2004)
PROME	*The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. and trans. P. Brand, A. Curry, C. Given-Wilson, R. E. Horrox, G. Martin, W. M. Ormrod and J. R. S. Philips, 16 vols (Woodbridge, 2005)
RBP	*Register of Edward the Black Prince*, 4 vols, HMSO (London, 1930–3)

Reg.Brantingham	*The Register of Thomas de Brantyngham, Bishop of Exeter (1370–1394)*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 2 vols (London, 1901–6)
Reg.Grandisson	*The Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (1327–1369)*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 3 vols (London, 1894–9)
Reg.Stafford	*The Register of Edmund Stafford (1395–1419): An Index and Abstract of its Contents*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London, 1886)
Reg.Stapeldon	*The Register of Walter de Stapeldon, Bishop of Exeter (1307–1326)*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London, 1892)
RESDCornwall	J. Hatcher, *Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 1970)
SCKB	*Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench*, ed. G. O. Sayles, 7 vols, Selden Society, 55, 57, 58, 74, 76, 82, 88 (London, 1936–71)
Sheriffs	*List of Sheriffs for England and Wales*, List and Index Society, 9 (London, 1898)
TCO	'Thomas Chiverton's Book of Obits', ed. P. L. Hull, *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, 33 (1974–7), pp. 97–102, 143–147, 188–193, 236–239, 277–282, 337–341; 34 (1978–81), pp. 5–11, 52–55.
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
YB	*Year Books 30 and 31 Edward I to 7 Richard II*, ed. M. S. Arnold et al., Ames Society, Rolls Series and Selden Society (London and Cambridge, MA, 1863–1989)

All unpublished documents to which reference is made are preserved in the National Archives of the UK unless otherwise stated.

Author's Note

With non-standard spelling the norm in the middle ages, the majority of personal names used in this book follow the most common form found in the documents.

Preface: a Little Understood Land

On 17 June 1497, the massed forces of Henry VII charged into an army of Cornishmen that had marched in rebellion from the furthest south west of the realm to Blackheath, just outside London.[1] Proving deadly effective, the king's troops were to break the Cornish line and rout those men who had taken up arms over the burden of royal taxation. Many died in the melee and ensuing chaos, with the government capturing the two Cornish rebels-in-chief, Thomas Flamank of Bodmin and Michael Joseph of St Keverne, later sentencing them both to be hung, drawn and quartered. They suffered their gruesome fate at Tyburn soon after. So it was that by *force majeure* the Crown put down the first Cornish Rebellion of 1497, and these events hold a potent place in Cornwall's collective memory to this day. While it cannot be doubted that the rebels were profoundly dissatisfied with the king, however, all was not as it seemed. For a start, the insurgents were actually by no means all Cornish, the rebels having garnered support from across southern England.[2] Neither did the Cornish contingent of the rebellion seek to sever their county from the realm, as this was no war of liberation. On the contrary, after centuries of royal rulership Cornwall's residents believed so implicitly in the king's government that they were willing to march hundreds of miles to petition their sovereign for reform.

Indeed, a contradiction lies at the heart of Cornish history and identity. By some, this idiosyncratic peninsula is seen as a shire of England and an integral if distinctive part of the country at large. But to others, it exists – or deserves to exist – as a country unto itself: one rendered distinct by language, law, culture, genetics and even nature, by the whole length of the river Tamar. Celtic Cornwall, so this logic runs, was subjugated by a rapacious English state in the tenth century, inaugurating millennia of political and cultural domination. Despite some measure of 'accommodation' afforded by its English overlords,

[1] For the classic account, A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall: Portrait of a Society* (London, 1941), pp. 114–128.

[2] Below, pp. 102–103.

and despite its isolation, Cornwall formed a conquered and colonised land.[3] By 1497 the county's residents could supposedly tolerate their servitude no longer, especially after suffering heavy-handed Tudor government, rising in revolt under the leadership of the 'Cornish Braveheart' Michael Joseph.[4] As with all grand narratives, however, we may well wonder about the accuracy of this construct.

Stretching out into the wild Atlantic, Cornwall actually remains a little understood land. In the later middle ages, the long and slender Cornish peninsula held a place on the very edge of the known world. Within its boundaries some Cornish men and women even spoke Cornish, a language entirely different to that of the rest of England, with these folk believing in a rich range of local myths and saints. To many of them King Arthur was a real-life historical Cornishman and they believed that their natal shire had once been the home of mighty giants. The trope of an isolated, self-contained 'little land' certainly found favour among older generations of scholars and antiquaries.[5] According to them, medieval Cornwall could 'be likened to a backwater' left 'self-contained and serenely apathetic', only 'awakening' from 'the long sleep of the middle ages' with the coming of the Tudors.[6]

While fourteenth-century Cornwall stood out as strikingly distinctive, at the same time the peninsula was powerfully integrated into the wider realm. More recent scholarship has considered aspects of the county's government, economics, religious practices and so on, showing how the affairs of the peninsula were influenced by its place in the kingdom.[7] The Celtic influences on

[3] P. Payton, *The Making of Modern Cornwall: Historical Experience and the Persistence of 'Difference'* (Redruth, 1992), pp. 43–70.

[4] P. Payton, *Cornwall* (Fowey, 1996), p. 125.

[5] For example, A. L. Rowse, *The Little Land of Cornwall* (Guernsey, 1986); Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*; L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Medieval Cornwall* (London, 1955); also, W. Borlase, *Antiquities, Historical and Monumental, of the County of Cornwall*, 2nd Edition (London, 1769); other historians of the county were not so sentimental, see C. Henderson, *Essays in Cornish History*, ed. A. L. Rowse and M. I. Henderson (Oxford, 1935); J. Maclean, *The Parochial and Family History of the Deanery of Trigg Minor*, 3 vols (London, 1873–9).

[6] Elliott-Binns, *Medieval Cornwall*, p. 70; Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, p. 16.

[7] Politics: H. Kleineke, 'Why the West Was Wild: Law and Order in Fifteenth-Century Cornwall and Devon', *The Fifteenth Century: III, Authority and Subversion*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 75–93; M. Page, 'Royal and Comital Government and the Local Community in Thirteenth-Century Cornwall' (Unpubl. Univ. Oxford D.Phil, 1995); C. Tyldesley, 'The Crown and the Local Communities in Devon and Cornwall from 1377 to 1422' (Unpubl. Univ. Exeter PhD, 1978); Economics: H. S. A. Fox, 'Devon and Cornwall', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: III, 1348–1500*, ed. E. Miller (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 152–174, 303–323, 722–743; J. Hatcher, *Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 1970); J. Hatcher, *English Tin Production and Trade before 1550* (Oxford,

Cornwall have also received some attention, with the Cornish language and the county's place-names prominent among these subjects.[8] Yet even here the peninsula's English credentials are recognised as significant. At the same time, however, Cornish ethnicity and otherness have increasingly been emphasised as forces that marked the peninsula out as a 'land apart', explaining the tumultuousness of 1497 and thereafter.[9] Although there have been many recent contributions to Cornish history, each of them has – to a greater or lesser extent – had a narrow focus. No overarching study of medieval Cornwall has been written for over sixty years. It also true that the peculiarities of the peninsula often loom larger in the existing scholarship than its links with the rest of the realm. Appearing simultaneously both detached and yet integrated, Cornwall's dual aspects come across as seemingly contradictory and never reconciled.

The main aim of this book, therefore, is to present an account of how fourteenth-century Cornwall cohered with the rest of the kingdom while remaining a quite remarkable place. Beginning as an internal study of the peninsula before broadening its perspective to encompass the county's interactions with the wider realm, this book opens by looking at the gentlemen, government and identity of Cornwall. Once the county's distinctive but still integral place in the kingdom is established, consideration will be given to the way in which the earldom-duchy and the Crown together rendered the politics of Cornwall part and parcel of the collective politics of England. Attention is then directed away from Cornwall as defined by its boundaries to study connectivity with the wider realm: the movement of people, goods and ideas brought about by the needs of the Crown, warfare, lordship, commerce, the law, the Church and maritime interests. By virtue of placing Cornwall at the centre of the latest debates about centralisation, devolution and regional and national identities, it will be possible to add to our understanding of both the county itself and the regional and social operation of the kingdom at large.[10] The unity of the

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1973); G. R. Lewis, *The Stannaries: A Study of the Medieval Tin Miners of Devon and Cornwall* (Truro, 1908); *The Havener's Accounts of the Earldom and Duchy of Cornwall, 1287–1356*, ed. M. Kowaleski, *DCRS*, n.s. 44 (Exeter, 2001); The Church: N. Orme, *Victoria County History of Cornwall: II, Religious History to 1560* (London, 2010).

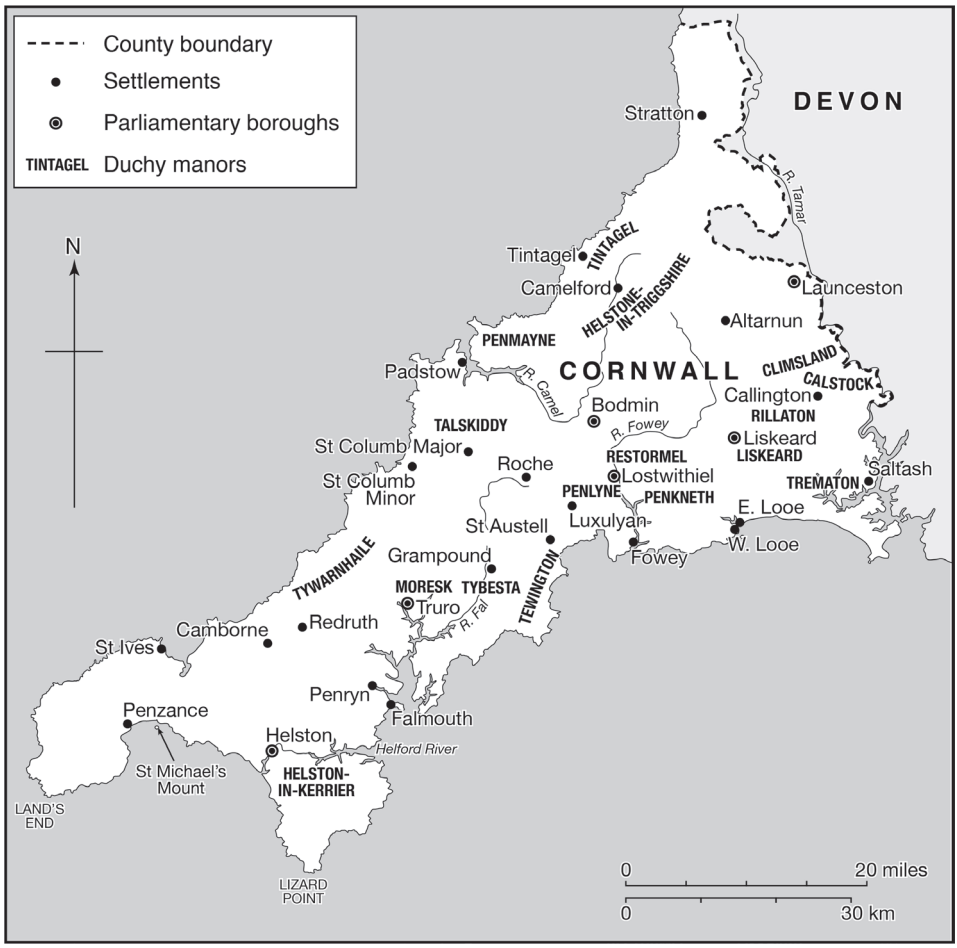
8 For instance, O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988).

9 M. Stoyle, *West Britons: Cornish Identities and the Modern British State* (Exeter, 2002).

10 For some other regional studies: M. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983); C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge, 1992); R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the end of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966); C. Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages: Lordship, Community and the*

period rests on the fourteenth-century expansion of royal government and the resultant growth of source material, both of which prove revealing of the changing nature of Cornish integration. At one and the same time Cornwall was distinctive and integrated, with these twin strands of its history and identity indivisibly tied together and not mutually contradictory.

Cult of St Cuthbert (Woodbridge, 2008); S. J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991); A. J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War, and Politics, 1450–1500* (Oxford, 1990); N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981); *idem*., *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex, 1280–1400* (Oxford, 1986); S. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, 1983).



Map 1. A Sketch-Map of Later Medieval Cornwall

Map 2. The Hundreds and Stannaries of Cornwall
N.B. The area of the stannary districts should only be regarded as a rough approximation, as their exact boundaries were never defined in the middle ages.

I

Cornwall: its Gentlemen, Government and Identity

1

The Very Ends of the Earth: an Overview of Fourteenth-Century Cornwall

'Not only the ends of the earth', so goes Bishop Grandisson's lament of Cornwall in 1327, 'but the very ends of the ends thereof.'[1] The bishop's bewailing of the county as an isolated wilderness, scarcely integrated into the realm, typifies many interpretations of the medieval peninsula. So remote was Cornwall that Richard II's government even employed Tintagel Castle as a place of exile for John Northampton, the demagogue mayor of London.[2] Standing in the furthest south-western corner of the kingdom, Cornwall is undoubtedly distant from the heartlands of England. On three sides the sea envelopes the Cornish peninsula, with the Tamar demarking the greater part of its border on the east. In this way, the county forms a defined geographic space.

Yet Cornwall also contains striking topographical variation between the granitic moorland and sub-tropical valleys, being by no means perfectly uniform. Neither was the county completely isolated. 'Much frequented by travellers', the county's major road artery, the *Via Regalis Cornubiensis*, ran from the far west of the peninsula along its spine to Launceston and across Polston Bridge into Devon, whence it charted a course via Exeter to London.[3] A busy main southern route linked Fowey, Looe and beyond, crossing the Tamar by ferry at Little Ash, near Saltash; while yet another busy route, this

1 *Reg.Grandisson*, i, 97–98; *RESDCornwall*, 1.
2 *CCR 1381–1385*, 485; also, *CCR 1396–1399*, 161.
3 *Reg.Stafford*, 258; W. Worcestre, *Itineraries*, ed. J. H. Harvey (Oxford, 1969), pp. 13, 38–39; C. Henderson and H. Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (Truro, 1928), pp. 11–12; CRO, BLAUS/42; G. B. Grundy, 'Ancient Highways of Cornwall', *Archaeological Journal*, 98 (1941), pp. 165–180.

time running from Padstow to Fowey, connected the north and south coasts.[4] Vessels also thronged the sea that enveloped Cornwall, for all Bishop Grandisson's bemoaning its rarely navigable nature. Ships from places as diverse as the Mediterranean and the Baltic were to land on the peninsula, while many vessels sailed from county harbours on to London and elsewhere. Although storms and the rocky Cornish coast could challenge seafarers, while the county's narrow lanes and branching estuaries could slow journeys on land, a heavily used and increasingly dense 'transport system' connected Cornwall to the rest of England and beyond.

For all these journeys, however, a fleeting glance suggests that the county remained relatively impoverished. Recording movable wealth varying from less than £5 per square mile up to £9, the 1334 lay subsidy shows that comparable figures for parts of East Anglia stood at over £30.[5] The government excluded tinners' operations from parliamentary taxation, however, making the county appear over-poor, particularly as these privileges were sometimes abused. So as to limit their tax liabilities, for example, in 1343 'rich men and others' had allegedly asserted 'that they are stannary men when they are not'.[6] Since smuggling was also rife, we may well wonder whether the county's residents had perfected the art of undervaluation.[7] While there can be little doubt that Cornwall did not enjoy the honour of being the wealthiest shire, it was more prosperous than these tax assessments suggest and this wealth was to burgeon across the later middle ages.[8]

Resting on farming, mining, fishing and shipping, the late-medieval Cornish economy was strong and diversified.[9] As with every shire of England, agriculture was essential to Cornwall's wealth. The peninsula's mild climate extended growing seasons and the coasts proved reasonable for the production of wheat and barley, with the result that Cornish foodstuffs were exported to London and elsewhere.[10] In 1361 one John Treeures even claimed that his land 'bore wheat, barley, oats, hay and peas, and is as good and fair as any

4 *Reg.Stafford*, 245; Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 30–33; *CS*, 118.
5 *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, ed. R. Glasscock (London, 1975), p. xxvii.
6 *CPR 1343–1345*, 165.
7 Cf. W. M. Ormrod, 'The Crown and the English Economy, 1290–1348', in *Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century*, ed. B. M. S. Campbell (Manchester, 1991), pp. 149–183 at 155–157.
8 N. G. Pounds, 'Taxation and Wealth in Late Medieval Cornwall', *JRIC* (1971), pp. 154–167.
9 J. Hatcher, 'A Diversified Economy: Later Medieval Cornwall', *EcHR*, 22 (1969), pp. 208–227; *RESDCornwall*, *passim*.; P. Schofield, 'The Arundell Estates and the Regional Economy in Fifteenth-Century Cornwall', in *Town and Countryside in the Age of the Black Death: Essays in Honour of John Hatcher*, ed. M. Bailey and S. Rigby (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 277–297.
10 For example, *CPR 1313–1317*, 447.

soil in Cornewaille'.[11] Far less suited to arable agriculture, however, granitic moorland covered large tracts of the peninsula. Farmers typically employed these 'zones' for rough grazing or simply left them as wasteland, resulting in a 'patchwork pattern' of cultivation.[12] If Cornish land use stood out as distinctive, then so too did the organisation of its estates. By the fourteenth century it is 'questionable' whether the seventeen manors of the earldom-duchy 'can be called manorialised at all', demesne agriculture having been replaced by conventionary tenure.[13] Such a tenurial arrangement involved the earl-duke leasing out land for seven years at a time, with the price of the lease being determined at the court of assession, comprising an annual fixed rent and a fine, the value of which fluctuated depending on demand. While this estate management practice yielded the greatest seignorial profits, the peninsula was by no means ideally suited to agriculture.[14]

Instead, maritime interests and the metals which lay under the county's craggy moors were perhaps more significant than cultivation on these hillsides. A great richness of copper, lead, silver, gold and other metallic minerals occur in Cornish rocks, with tin standing pre-eminent among these ores. The county's prosperity in no small part rested on this internationally significant metal. Thousands of folk were involved in extracting and processing tin, while yet more people were employed in supporting industries, not least the production of peat charcoal for smelting.[15] As complex credit networks helped fund the tinning industry, it is unsurprising that merchants from within and without Cornwall transported large amounts of the metal to London, the Low Countries and elsewhere.[16] With the great majority of tin being shipped from the county, maritime industries naturally formed another pillar of the peninsula's wealth. A skilled bunch, Cornish seafarers transported commodities as varied as hides, salt and wine to ports ranging from Chester down to Bordeaux and across to Bruges.[17] The county's fisheries also expanded in this period, while 'piracy', smuggling and wrecking could yield considerable profits at times.[18] Together, these tinning, maritime and agricultural interests contributed to the

[11] *RBP*, ii, 178.
[12] Fox, 'Devon and Cornwall', pp. 307–308, 152, 159–161.
[13] *RESDCornwall*, 52–54; J. Hatcher, 'Non-Manorialism in Medieval Cornwall', *Agricultural History Review*, 18 (1970), pp. 1–16; it remains unclear whether other manors employed conventionary tenure, *The Cornish Lands of the Arundells of Lanherne, Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. H. S. A. Fox and O. J. Padel, *DCRS*, n.s. 41 (Exeter, 2000), p. lviii.
[14] *RESDCornwall*, 9.
[15] Hatcher, *Tin*, p. 47; Fox, 'Devon and Cornwall', p. 162; *CPR 1461–1467*, 482.
[16] Hatcher, *Tin*, p. 51; below, Chapter 11.
[17] Below, Chapter 14.
[18] M. Kowaleski, 'The Expansion of South-Western Fisheries in Late Medieval England', *EcHR*, 53 (2000), pp. 429–454; H. S. A. Fox, *The Evolution of the Fishing*

county's economy and character while linking the peninsula into extended networks of exchange.

By no means impoverished, many Cornish boroughs formed hubs of commercial activity. The county saw the 'proliferation' of small boroughs within its midst, the government taxing eighteen of these thirty or so settlements in 1334 alone.[19] 'Plants of exotic growth... fostered by great landholders as profitable sources of revenue', many new towns stood out.[20] The earldom-duchy owned nine of these, while the local gentry oversaw many others and the bishops of Exeter enjoyed lordship over Penryn.[21] Most urban settlements stood astride the county's main roads or at sites advantageous for shipping, these towns generally representing the convergence of mercantile and seigniorial interests. Whatever the case, the county played host to a striking density of urban centres which in 1334 accounted for over a fifth of its tax yield. The government reckoned Bodmin to be the richest of these places, with some £200 of movable property; Truro came second, having over £120 to its name; but the Crown assessed Camelford at a mere £4.[22] Despite such contrasts in size and wealth, each settlement and its burgesses relied on royal charters securing their tenurial and commercial practices, as trade in Cornwall carried on in much the same way as every other part of the realm.[23]

But how many people lived in the peninsula? Unfortunately, overall figures for the county's late-medieval population remain notoriously unreliable. Although scholars have employed the 1377 poll tax returns to suggest that some 51,411 people inhabited Cornwall at this time, more recent studies have pushed this number higher.[24] Even these revised figures do not represent the high watermark of the peninsula's medieval population, the Black Death having ravaged the county by the late fourteenth century. In Bodmin alone the friars

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Village: Landscape and Society along the South Devon Coast, 1086–1550 (Oxford, 2001); C. L. Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in XVth Century England* (Oxford, 1925); *A Calendar of Early Chancery Proceedings Relating to West Country Shipping, 1388–1493*, ed. D. Gardiner, *DCRS*, n.s. 21 (Torquay, 1976); *RESDCornwall*, 32–35.

19 *Lay Subsidy*, p. 29; M. Beresford and H. Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs: A Hand-List* (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp. 76–83; A. Preston-Jones and P. Rose, 'Week St Mary: Town and Castle', *Cornish Archaeology*, 31 (1992), pp. 143–153.

20 Henderson, *Essays*, p. 19.

21 M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales and Gascony* (London, 1967), pp. 399–414.

22 For all urban figures, *Lay Subsidy*, pp. 29–35.

23 *Placita de Quo Warranto*, ed. W. Illingworth and J. Caley (London, 1818), pp. 108–111; *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516*, compil. S. Letters, 2 vols, List and Index Society, Special Series, 32–33 (Chippenham, 2003), i, pp. 76–85; J. Mattingly, 'The Medieval Parish Guilds of Cornwall', *JRIC* (1989), pp. 290–329.

24 J. C. Russell, *British Population History* (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 132; J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348–1530* (London, 1977), pp. 11–15.

reckoned that some 1,500 folk succumbed to the 'great plague throughout the world'.[25] Outside the county's urban centres the death toll was still high, for Cornwall's dispersed settlements did not mitigate the plague's effects, as once believed.[26] The contraction and subsequent stagnation of the county's population was of concern to the Black Prince himself, who in 1359 complained that the stannaries were suffering 'partly owing to the lack of workers since the pestilence'.[27] As in the rest of England, the plague exercised great influence on the county, but charting its full effects remains fraught with difficulties.

When we turn from the county's economic to its political history, we find a story marked by instability and at least a degree of turbulence. Although King Stephen had created Alan de Bretagne earl of Cornwall back in 1140, he then stripped the dignity from him soon afterwards. No single family was to dominate the earldom subsequently. The title often reverted to the king who then recreated the dignity for another favourite, as did Henry III for his younger brother, Richard of Cornwall, king of the Romans from 1257.[28] Enjoying great influence over Cornish affairs, Earl Richard and his son held the lordship in 1225–72 and 1272–1300 respectively, but Edmund was to die without issue at the turn of the century. Reverting to his cousin and heir, King Edward I, the earldom for the next thirty-seven years bounced back and forth between the Crown and its supporters. In 1337, however, Edward III chose to elevate the lordship to a dukedom and vest it upon his eldest son, Edward of Woodstock, better known to posterity as the Black Prince. The prince then governed the county punctiliously for nearly four decades, but on his demise in 1376 his son, Richard of Bordeaux, succeeded him as duke. All honours then merged with the Crown on Richard's accession to the throne as Richard II, remaining there until his deposition in 1399. Following the Lancastrian Revolution, however, the title devolved to Henry of Monmouth, who was later to rule the duchy directly as Henry V. Throughout the late-medieval period, the lordship had close connections with the Crown.

Not only did he enjoy a direct link with the king, the earl-duke had the good fortune to oversee a county that was neither truncated by any significant liberties nor one which saw another lay magnate hold noteworthy lands within its bounds.[29] He actually held as many as seventeen manors spread across Cornwall, along with nine boroughs and a host of advowsons. Giving him

[25] Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 94–95.
[26] *RESDCornwall*, 102–104; for the county's dispersed settlements, M. Beresford, 'Dispersed and Grouped Settlement in Medieval Cornwall', *Agricultural History Review*, 12 (1964), pp. 13–27.
[27] *RBP*, ii, 157–158.
[28] *CP*, iii, 427–439; G. Ellis, *Earldoms in Fee: A Study in Peerage Law and History* (London, 1963), pp. 113–116; N. Denholm-Young, *Richard of Cornwall* (Oxford, 1947).
[29] *Quo Warranto*, pp. 108–111; *FA*, i, 208–218.

extensive powers over the peninsula, the earl-duke's prerogatives included the right to appoint the sheriff and take the profits of the county court, all while holding eight and one third of the peninsula's nine hundreds. The earl-duke also enjoyed the position of chief lord of every knight's fee in Cornwall, standing out as the universal landlord.[30] All these rights yielded great profits, with the duchy's gross income in 1337 standing at over £4,500.[31] In this year Edward III codified ducal rights in the so-called Great Charter of the duchy, which first stipulated that the duchy's estates never be dismembered and then set out how the title was to devolve to the eldest son of the sovereign at birth, reverting to the Crown in the absence of a rightful duke.[32] By the terms of its descent, the king forever bound together the duchy and the Crown.

Yet despite the earl-duke's great authority over the peninsula, his perennial absenteeism was one of the most significant aspects of the history of Cornwall's lordship. This non-residency influenced the operation of every part of his lordly rulership, but it by no means removed the county from the exercise of his seigniorial power. On the contrary, the structures of the earldom-duchy formed a network of control across the length and breadth of Cornwall. Standing at the administrative heart of the earl-duke's Cornish estates, the 'duchy palace' in Lostwithiel housed his exchequer, the coinage and shire halls and the chief gaol of the stannaries.[33] Combined with seigniorial castles, these formed physical manifestations of lordly power, the source of which resided hundreds of miles away. With comital-ducal officials, they enabled the earl-duke to administer his estates and uphold his rights throughout the county.[34]

As lordly rights to tin were by far the most valuable of all the earl-duke's prerogatives, it is no surprise that the fiscal importance of this metal also resulted in extensive royal concessions to tinners. Back in 1201 the earliest surviving stannary charter had confirmed ancient tinning rights to free bounding, the right freely to search and dig for tin, releasing tinners from manorial justice in all cases save 'life, limb, and land'.[35] Issuing a further charter in 1305, Edward I exempted tinners from normal taxation while formalising a tax on tin itself

[30] *RESDCornwall*, 5–6; *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall, 1296–7*, ed. L. M. Midgley, 2 vols, Camden Society, Third Series 64, 68 (London, 1942–5).
[31] *CS*, lviii.
[32] *CChR 1327–1341*, 399–400, 436–437; *RESDCornwall*, 5–6.
[33] N. G. Pounds, 'The Duchy Palace at Lostwithiel, Cornwall', *Archaeological Journal*, 136 (1979), pp. 203–217; A. Saunders, 'Administrative Buildings and Prisons in the Earldom of Cornwall', in *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. T. Reuter (London, 1992), pp. 195–216.
[34] Cf. G. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 58–84.
[35] Hatcher, *Tin*, p. 48; Lewis, *Stannaries*, pp. 137–138, 158–159.

known as coinage duty.[36] Across the thirteenth century this had become fixed at 40*s*. per thousandweight (1,000 lb.). While the authorities did not actually define what constituted a 'tinner' until as late as 1376, when Edward III classified these men as labourers in tin workings themselves, all these folk enjoyed a direct line of communication to the earl-duke and king through the institutions of the stannaries.[37] In this way, the structures and personnel of the lordship helped to draw Cornwall into the kingdom.

For all the earl-duke's mineral wealth, it is a truth self-evident that land held the main key to wealth and power in medieval England. In the case of Cornwall, the bulk of that land was held by those lesser landholders whom we term the gentry, a group loosely defined 'as all lay, non-baronial landholders who enjoyed an income of £5 per annum or more from freehold property'.[38] When considering these proprietors, royal levies on knights' fees provide some of the best listings of the county's landed lineages.[39] For the first of these imposts in 1303, Edward I was to levy an aid at 40*s*. per fee for the marriage of his daughter, with the surviving lists for Cornwall recording some eighty-one tenants-in-chief paying this tax.[40] If we exclude the Religious, the nobles and the king, who were lords of a different sort, we are then left with a figure of seventy-five Cornish landholders. Forty-three years later, the returns of an aid for the knighting of the Black Prince give a list of no fewer than seventy-eight proprietors, revealing few changes of family names.[41] Excluding the prince himself, the only nobles to make an appearance were the earls of Warwick and Gloucester. Such levies show that gentlemen owned nearly 73 per cent of Cornwall's taxed manors, with just under 17 per cent in the hands of magnates and a little over 10 per cent under the control of the Religious.

Turning to a different class of documents, a list drawn-up in 1344–5 for the extension of military service may be considered among the most useful sources for gauging the size of the Cornish gentry. Naming as many as 128 *homines ad arma* aged between sixteen and sixty who owed service in the county, the return lists a considerably greater number of landholders than the levies on knights' fees.[42] While we should be mindful of the fact that underassessment

[36] *CChR 1300–1326*, 53–54; Hatcher, *Tin*, p. 48; J. F. Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property, 1290–1334: A Study in Medieval Financial Administration* (Cambridge, MA, 1934), pp. 118–120.

[37] Lewis, *Stannaries*, pp. 96–99; *PROME*, v, 347–348.

[38] Payling, *Nottinghamshire*, p. 3; P. Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 9–11.

[39] In 1303, 1306, 1346 and 1428.

[40] *FA*, i, xxii, 195–202; M. Jurkowski, C. L. Smith and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales, 1188–1688* (Richmond, 1998), p. 26.

[41] *FA*, i, xxiv–xxvi, 208–218; Jurkowski et al., *Lay Taxes*, pp. 47–48.

[42] C47/2/39/12; *CPR 1343–1345*, 414–415; M. Powicke, *Military Obligation in Medieval England: A Study in Liberty and Duty* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 190–199.

was rife even here, this figure of 128 folk provides a benchmark for the size of the entire Cornish gentry. Whether all these individuals resided west of the Tamar, however, remains another matter. Licences to crenellate manors are perhaps the surest way of identifying Cornish residency, but only six such for the county survive.[43] Of these, one permitted Sir Ralph Bloyou to crenellate his 'dwelling places' in Cornwall and Dorset, with the Crown conceding the others to Sir Ranulph Blanchminster, Sir William Bassett, Sir John Dauney and Sir John l'Ercedekne. In 1478, however, William Worcestre listed as many as thirty-two castles in the peninsula, among them Sir John Basset's 'tower' at Carn Brea and the Botreaux family's *castrum vocatum Botreaux Castel* at Boscastle.[44] These sorts of castellated residences could proclaim in stone the status of their owners; 'at the hed of [Lanihorne] creeke', according to John Leland, 'standith the Castelle of Lanyhorne sumtyme a castle of a 7. tourres, now decaying for lack of coverture. It longgid as principal house to the archdeacons', the l'Ercedeknes.[45] At times these structures had to earn their keep, with Elizabeth Treffry forced to 'repell the French out of her house [Place House, Fowey] in her housebandes absence' during a raid in Henry VI's reign.[46]

Another clue to residency is to be found in licences for household chapels or oratories. The bishops of Exeter conceded *licencie celebrandi* to Cornishmen and women who wished to celebrate mass in their own household chapels or private residences, with these licences serving as markers of both gentility and residency.[47] Although lists are by no means exhaustive, evidence survives of Bishops Stapeldon, Grandisson, Brantingham and Stafford between them conceding over 250 licences of this sort to local proprietors.[48] Generations of leading Cornishmen sought these written permissions, including scions of the families of Arundell, Beaupel, Beville, Bloyou, Bodrugan, Botreaux, Carminow, Chenduyt, l'Ercedekne, Petit, Peverell, Reskymer, Sergeaux, Soor, Trenewith, Trevarthian and Whalesborough. While leading proprietors sometimes received *licencie celebrandi* for one residence alone, Cornish knights are often to be found seeking permission for chapels in numerous manors. This was because these prominent gentlemen itinerated around their Cornish

[43] *CPR 1327–1330*, 541; *CPR 1313–1317*, 262; *CPR 1334–1338*, 75, 77, 79, 238.
[44] Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 20–23.
[45] J. Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535–1543*, ed. L. T. Smith, 5 vols (London, 1907–10), i, p. 199; also, G. Beresford, 'The Medieval Manor of Penhallam, Jacobstow, Cornwall', *Medieval Archaeology*, 18 (1974), pp. 90–145.
[46] Leland, *Itinerary*, i, p. 204.
[47] K. Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel, c. 1100–c. 1500: An Institutional Study' (Unpubl. Univ. Durham PhD, 2008), pp. 69–77.
[48] *Reg.Stapeldon*, 299–302; *Reg.Grandisson*, *passim*., although Bishop Grandisson's register records no licences after 1332, he evidently conceded them after this date, CRO, AR/27/1; *Reg.Brantingham*, ii, 947–955; *Reg.Stafford*, 270–283.

estates, while proprietors of lesser means more often sought oratories in what was probably their only residence.[49] Despite these variations in landed wealth, the Cornish gentry were undoubtedly numerous, well-established and locally influential.

We find that some Cornish estates, however, were held by lords who did not dwell west of the Tamar. It is illustrative of this that Tregony Castle, 'a building of the Devonshire Pomeroys', even made an appearance on William Worcestre's list of castles.[50] Another landed family, the Dinhams of Hartland, also resided principally in Devon, despite the fact that they held considerable estates in Cornwall.[51] Men largely resident in Devon owned numerous manors in Cornwall; equally, it can be said that men largely resident in Cornwall had interests across the county boundary.[52] There is evidence that a few dynasties at least were active in both shires, among them the Huishs and Chaumpernouns, who held lands and offices on either side of the Tamar.[53] The ties enjoyed by the peninsula's landholders stretched far beyond the county's near neighbour, however, and the Wylintons, for example, oversaw two Cornish manors from their seat in Gloucestershire. Evidently the peninsula's propertied society was by no means hermetically sealed, and yet it is striking that the majority of those lords who owned land in the county resided principally or solely in Cornwall.

Although we group all these proprietors together as 'the gentry', contemporaries referred to landholders of this sort by a variety of terms in any one of four languages.[54] While the French *chivaler* could be translated into the Latin *miles* and the English knight, *gentil homme* had no clear Latin counterpart until the fifteenth-century *generosus*. Below the *miles* stood the *armiger* and *valletus*, terms that in 1300 were generally used as if synonymous. Across the fourteenth century, however, the two diverged. On the one hand, it seems that *valletus* came to be rendered as *yoman* in English, but a lowly *yoman* could not be considered a *gentil homme*.[55] On the other hand, esquire became the preferred English translation of *armiger*, with these men holding a place in gentle society. As the men termed knights (*milites*) and esquires (*armigeri*) made up the mounted elite, contemporaries grouped them together as men-at-arms

[49] *Reg.Brantingham*, i, 332, 340; *Reg.Stafford*, 282.
[50] Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 20–21.
[51] *CPR 1334–1338*, 558; H. Kleineke, 'The Dinham Family in the Later Middle Ages' (Unpubl. Univ. London PhD, 1998).
[52] Page, 'Comital Government', p. 129; BL, Harley MS 1192 f. 46.
[53] *CCR 1337–1339*, 387; Appendix I.
[54] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 30; K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 268–278; T. B. Pugh, 'The Magnates, Knights and Gentry', in *Fifteenth Century England, 1399–1509: Studies in Politics and Society*, ed. S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross and R. A. Griffith (Manchester, 1972), pp. 86–128 at 86, 96.
[55] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 6–7, 16–17; Coss, *English Gentry*, pp. 216–238.

(*homines ad arma*). Even in the far south west, the *Ordinalia* Cornish-language play *Origo Mundi* had knights (*marrouggyoun*) and esquires (*squyerryon*) serve together.[56]

A combination of magnate absenteeism and Earl Richard's dispersal of Cornwall's two baronies, of Cardinan and Vautort, left county leadership in the hands of the richest and most important resident knights.[57] While Mark Page found that thirty-five knightly families were active at any one time in thirteenth-century Cornwall, by the latter years of Edward I's reign this number had dwindled somewhat.[58] A military summons of 1300 named only twenty-eight Cornishmen who enjoyed yearly incomes of £40 or more, a figure which by Edward II's reign had come to represent the minimum required for knighthood.[59] This much is shown by a royal summons to a Great Council of 1323–4, in which the sheriff testified that all twenty-five named Cornishmen enjoyed annual incomes of at least £40. By this time economic difficulties 'had slimmed the ranks of those who could afford to be *milites*'.[60] Since knights formed but the pinnacle of gentle society, however, it is no surprise that in 1352 Edward III found that some forty-seven Cornishmen were in receipt of yearly incomes of £20 or more.[61] These forty-seven represented both the knights and greater esquires of the county, its leading proprietors. When all the information from these documents is pulled together, it seems that before 1348 around twenty-five knights (*milites*) stood at the head of Cornish landed society. Below this group was a squirearchy, those referred to as *armigeri*, of at least 128 families and probably many more, around thirty of whom enjoyed annual incomes of £20 and upwards.

Propertied society, however, did not for long maintain its earlier shape and structure. By the fifteenth century it was changing. In 1413 we find that the Statute of Additions recognised the existence of gentleman as the lowest gradation of gentility, the structure of which henceforth comprised knights who enjoyed yearly incomes of £40 or more, esquires with £10 or more to their names and gentlemen with incomes of £5–10.[62] Below the rank of gentleman there also came to exist those wealthy freeholders who had assumed the 'airs and graces' of gentility, those whom we term the 'parish gentry'. Many scholars

[56] *The Ancient Cornish Drama*, ed. and trans. E. Norris, 2 vols (Oxford, 1859), i, OM, lines 1639–1640, 2004.
[57] M. Page, 'Cornwall, Earl Richard, and the Barons' War', *EHR*, 115 (2000), pp. 21–38 at 33.
[58] Page, 'Comital Government', pp. 122–123.
[59] C47/1/6/7-8, excluding the Religious and Devonians.
[60] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 10.
[61] BL, Harley MS 1192 f. 50; *Carew*, 52, three more were Devonians; C47/1/12/26; C47/1/13/15-16.
[62] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 18–20, 29; Coss, *English Gentry*, pp. 216, 237.

Table 1: Cornishmen with Incomes of £40 or more p.a. Summoned to a Great Council of 1323–4

The Knights	**The Men-at-Arms**
1. William Botreaux	1. John Dinham
2. Reginald Botreaux	2. Ranulph Bloyou
3. Ranulph Blanchminster	3. William Basset
4. Richard Chaumpernoun	4. Oliver Carminow
5. Henry Chaumpernoun	5. Henry Pengersick
6. ..... le Petit	6 Roger Reskymer
7. Thomas l'Ercedekne	7. John Lambourne
8. John Alneto [Dauney]	8. John le Soor
9. John Tynten	9. Richard Sergeaux junior
10. William Ferrers	10. John Pyne
11. Robert Beudyn	11. Roger Prideaux
12. Reginald Mohun	12. Ranulph Beaupel
13. Robert Fitz William	
14. John Carminow	n.b. Dinham and Ferrers were Devonians.
15. Otto Bodrugan	

Source: Parliamentary Writs, ed. F. Palgrave, 2 vols in 4 (London, 1827–34), ii part 2, p. 655.

have argued that the Black Death formed the principal agent of change here.[63] Increasing the rate of familial extinctions, the plague and its subsequent visitations inaugurated a period of high mortality that led to the fragmentation of estates. It followed that 'new' proprietors were able to accumulate estates of their own and emulate their social betters, redrawing the broadened bounds of gentility.

Unfortunately, the discontinuous nature of our source material renders quantifying these changes impossible. The returns to a feudal aid levied in

[63] C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition? Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 126–172, especially 132–139; Coss, *English Gentry*, pp. 233–237; Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 25–29; S. J. Payling, 'Social Mobility, Demographic Change, and Landed Society in Late Medieval England', *EcHR*, 45 (1992), pp. 51–73; J. L. Bolton, '"The World Upside Down", Plague as an Agent of Economic and Social Change', in *The Black Death in England*, ed. W. M. Ormrod and P. F. Lindley (Stamford, 1996), pp. 17–78 at 48, 62–63.

1428 list as many as 800 landowners in Cornwall, pointing to a very considerable expansion of landed society.[64] It is virtually impossible, however, to say whether these 800 represent new landowners or landowners whose families had always existed but which had not been recognised in previous surveys. The problem is that we cannot be sure that we are comparing like with like, and it seems that the aid of 1428 lists under-tenants as opposed to tenants-in-chief. We encounter similar difficulties when considering the returns to a parliamentary subsidy in 1450, which list some seventy-five Cornishmen who enjoyed incomes qualifying them as gentle. While this roll-call purports to name every county proprietor in receipt of an annual landed income of £2 or more, a great many people resisted paying this 'novel' subsidy.[65] Although the difficulties of the evidence means that we cannot precisely measure the changes, among the gentry of fifteenth-century Cornwall were many proprietors who enjoyed the newly recognised rank of gentleman.[66] 'Cornish gentlemen', so Richard Carew was to write, 'can better vaunt of their pedigree, than their livelyhood'.[67]

Table 2: Cornish Gentry Paying the 1450 Income Tax

Yearly Income	**Number of Cornishmen**
£40 or more	6
£20	8
£10–£20	23
£5–£10	9
£5	29

Sources: E179/87/92; Royal Institution of Cornwall, HC/43.

Since many leading local lineages suffered the misfortune of failing in the male line, by 1450 it seems that the peninsula played host to a mere six knightly families.[68] It was naturally the case that familial extinctions saw some

[64] *FA*, i, xxvii–xxviii, 220–243; Jurkowski et al., *Lay Taxes*, pp. 85–86; Richard Carew preserved a partial copy of a feudal aid of 1401, *Carew*, 39r–44v.

[65] R. Virgoe, 'The Parliamentary Subsidy of 1450', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 55 (1982), pp. 125–138; Jurkowski et al., *Lay Taxes*, pp. 102–104.

[66] For instance, *CPR 1429–1436*, 198.

[67] *Carew*, 63r.

[68] E179/87/92; the numbers of knights declined across the realm, A. Bell, et al., *The Soldier in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 83–84; Powicke, *Military Obligation*, p. 178.

estates dismembered or carried by heiresses into the hands of new families. K. B. McFarlane, however, has identified the other side to this phenomenon, which was that the fewer and fewer dynasties who survived amassed greater and greater landholdings through inheritance.[69] The latter process is visible in Cornwall too. Of the thirty-eight proprietors whom the sheriff assessed for military service in 1346, the heads of the houses of Botreaux and l'Ercedekne were reckoned to enjoy yearly incomes of £100 apiece; the next six wealthiest lineages – the Arundells, Blanchminsters, Carminows, Reskymers, Sergeauxs and Soors – were each in receipt of £60; the Ingepennes enjoyed £50 a year and the Chaumpernouns £40.[70] A century later, however, the families of Arundell and Colshull were thought to enjoy annual incomes of £200 and £120 respectively; the Bonvilles were in receipt of £66; and the Bodrugans, Courtenays and Whalesboroughs were each in possession of £40.[71] For all the dangers latent in comparing taxes, it does appear that wealth had coalesced into fewer hands.

Although roughly twice as many knightly families failed in the male line in the century after 1350 than in the century before, these changes were not wrought by the plague alone as the vagaries of chance and genetics had a role to play here. In years around 1400, for example, the Bodrugans experienced a crisis with no direct legitimate heir in the male line, giving rise to a great deal of litigation; the Bodrugan estate passed to a legitimate grandson through the female line instead of to an illegitimate son, William Bodrugan.[72] Another knightly family, the Carminows, suffered an even greater crisis when in 1396 their heiress, Joan, died while still a minor, extinguishing the main family line.[73] As a result, the Carminow patrimony was then shared between their in-laws from houses of Arundell and Trevarthian. Following the Carminows into extinction at around this time was yet another knightly lineage, the Sergeauxs, while in the late fourteenth century Sir Warin l'Ercedekne's four daughters stood out as his heiresses.[74] Naturally enough, by 1402 these four eligible women had carried the l'Ercedekne lands into the hands of their husbands from the houses of Arundell, Trevarthian, Courtenay and Lucy. As elsewhere in England, families were always rising and falling in Cornwall.

[69] McFarlane, *The Nobility*, p. 59.
[70] C47/2/41/5, Blanchminster appears in the £60 'group' without an income.
[71] E179/87/92.
[72] *FF*, ii, 13, 29–31, 34–35; H. Matthews, 'Illegitimacy and English Landed Society, c. 1295–c. 1500' (Unpubl. Univ. London PhD, 2012), pp. 113–114; J. Whetter, *The Bodrugans: A Study of a Cornish Medieval Knightly Family* (Gorran, 1995); for the landholdings of the Bodrugans, see their early fourteenth-century cartulary, CRO, ME/595.
[73] CRO, AR/1/192; *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office*, 6 vols, HMSO (London, 1890–1915), iv, pp. 552–553; *Arundells of Lanherne*, p. xvi.
[74] *CIPM*, xviii, 15; *HOP*, ii, 506–507; *Ancient Deeds*, v, p. 470; *CP*, i, 187–188.

While part of the gentry of England, the county's proprietors stood out as distinctive. Ranging from £100 downwards, their similar levels of wealth rendered them a group of flattish composition in the fourteenth century. As no local lord was able to dominate the peninsula with influence derived from his landed wealth alone, this 'Cornish homogeneity' influenced every aspect of county life from the nature of office-holding to the workings of dispute resolution. Even the assets that supported gentle lifestyles in the far south west stood out as distinctive. Some local proprietors were salt-water lords who had invested in shipping, while others possessed tin workings and enjoyed toll tin, the right to take a percentage of the value of metal found beneath their estates, and others again grew fat on the combined profits of their landed, mineral and maritime interests.[75] Yet despite these different sources of income, it seems that the peninsula's relative poverty meant that an estate yielding £50 yearly, for example, required the exercise of a more exacting and geographically expansive lordship than one in the wealthier Thames Valley. Reflecting Cornish topography and demography, the estates of leading county proprietors were spread across the peninsula. In the lower echelons of landed society we may well wonder if gentility itself started at a reduced level of income. This was because the county's modest prosperity resulted in families of comparatively slender resources standing out as the richest folk in their locality, perhaps securing their *de facto* gentility.[76] And yet for all the idiosyncrasies of the Cornish gentry, the whole range of county society knew that land remained the key to wealth and power in the peninsula.[77]

Sharing the gentry's universal interest, local proprietors constantly sought to defend and augment their estates. There is evidence that a land market operated west of the Tamar, as elsewhere, a fact well-illustrated by Sir Robert Tresilian's rapid accumulation and even more rapid loss of estate.[78] Tresilian stands out first and foremost as a successful lawyer. It seems that he acquired much of his property, however, by a favourable marriage to the heiress Emmeline Huish. In Cornwall, again as elsewhere, marriage emerges as 'the most common way in which substantial areas of land changed hands'.[79] The

[75] CRO, AR/15/1; *CPR 1381–1385*, 405; *West Country Shipping*, pp. 80–84; S. J. Drake, 'The Michelstow Family (*per. c.* 1350–c. 1454)', *ODNB* (2016), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/107361?docPos=1 (accessed 15 May 2016); *Arundells of Lanherne*, p. xciv.

[76] Cf. J. Chynoweth, *Tudor Cornwall* (Stroud, 2002), pp. 32–61; P. Contamine, 'The European Nobility', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: VII, c. 1415–1500*, ed. C. Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 89–105.

[77] For example, *Cornish Drama*, i, OM, lines 2395–2400; ii, RD, lines 1701–1702.

[78] Below, pp. 248–249.

[79] Cf. C. Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Later Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (London, 1987), p. 10.

rise and rise of the Arundells of Lanherne certainly bears testament to this. It was Remfrey Arundell's marriage to Alice de Lanherne before June 1268 that brought the manor of Lanherne itself to the family. A series of good matches thereafter increased their holdings, connecting them with leading Cornish lineages including the Carminows, Lambournes, l'Ercedeknes, Luscotes, Nandsladrons and Soors.[80] The Carminows could likewise boast of relations with the Arundells, Beaupels, Botreauxs, Heligans, Glynns and Pomeroys to name but a few, while the Lambournes enjoyed links with the Bevilles, Sergeauxs, Reskymers, Whalesboroughs and others.[81] Seemingly all Cornish gentlemen were cousins, as Richard Carew was later to claim.[82]

In medieval England local marriages were common enough, however, constituting 'insufficient proof that the Cornish were a breed apart'.[83] Indeed, many county nuptials can be found yielding links to other parts of the realm. The Arundells were one family that acquired extensive lands in Devon through marriage, while ties created through matches could introduce major new figures into Cornwall itself. For example, the London vintner John Colshull became a leading proprietor overnight through his marriage to Sir Robert Tresilian's widow.[84] Numerous Cornish dynasties are also found owning property to east of the Tamar, including the families of Blanchminster, Botreaux and Sergeaux, who held lands in Yorkshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire respectively.[85] In this way, common bonds of blood, chivalry and landed interest linked all these Cornishmen both to each other and to their fellow gentry from across England. The author of the *Ordinalia* even had 'trusty', 'proud and strong' knights raise troops and swear that they are no cowards by their 'order of knighthood', all while serving their king.[86] Here especially we see how the Cornish gentry comprised a distinctive group while maintaining a wealth of connections with other parts of the realm.

Standing out as the county's other great landholder was the Church. Since Cornwall was encompassed in the diocese of Exeter, it is unsurprising that the bishop owned estates across the county. In 1346, for example, he was found to hold fees in no fewer than ten Cornish manors, from Lanisley, outside Penzance, to Lawhitton, right on the Tamar.[87] As the priors of Bodmin and Tywardreath exercised lordship over the boroughs of Bodmin and Fowey

[80] CRO, AR/1/192/1; AR/20/11; *Arundells of Lanherne*, pp. xiii–xxiv, clvi.
[81] J. L. Vivian, *The Visitations of the County of Cornwall, Comprising the Heralds' Visitations of 1530, 1573, and 1620* (Exeter, 1887), pp. 72–75; *TCO*, *passim*.
[82] *Carew*, 64v.
[83] Page, 'Comital Government', p. 14.
[84] *FF*, ii, 44, 49; *HOP*, ii, 633–635; Maclean, *Trigg Minor*, ii, pp. 504–505.
[85] Appendix I.
[86] *Cornish Drama*, i, OM, lines 2150–2167, 2199–2224.
[87] *FA*, i, 208–218.

respectively, Cornwall's religious houses also possessed lands and advowsons throughout the peninsula.[88] While none of these small houses rivalled the wealth and political clout of the abbeys of south-eastern England, among them St Albans and Canterbury Cathedral Priory, possession of assets gives a narrow view of the Church's activity as religion was interwoven with every aspect of medieval life. To support orthodoxy in the far south west, the bishops of Exeter administered Cornwall as an archdeaconry of its own, overseeing a peninsula divided into parishes devoted to many local saints. It follows that the county was an integral part of the diocese of Exeter, the *Ecclesia Anglicana* and a wider Christendom, one that still followed many local practices.[89]

Through their many interactions with the county's residents, diocesans became only too aware of Cornish peculiarities. So it was that in 1329 Bishop Grandisson observed that 'a language, too, exists in the furthest parts of Cornwall, known not to the English-speakers but to the British-speakers'.[90] When in dialogue with the parishioners of St Buryan in 1336, for example, Grandisson relied on one Henry Marsely, the rector of St Just-in-Penwith, to translate his words for those parishioners who knew only Cornish.[91] In responding to the bishop, 'the majority' of the parishioners did so 'in the English and French language; but others, who knew only the Cornish language' naturally did so in Cornish. Cornwall was unique in England as possessing its own native tongue, a Celtic (Brittonic) language similar to Welsh and even closer to Breton. By the fourteenth century, however, only half the county's residents are thought to have spoken Cornish. The Fowey–Padstow isogloss linguistically transected the peninsula, with English spoken by those who resided east of this divide, while most of those who lived to its west, in the 'furthest parts', were bilingual, speaking both Cornish and English.[92] Although there can be little doubt that the Cornish language was a significant local marker, linguistics emerge as no impediment to county folk seeking their fortunes elsewhere in the realm. We must also remember that multilingualism was the norm in medieval England, with French and Latin current and English itself heavily

[88] *Quo Warranto*, pp. 108–111; SC6/816/11 m. 13; DCO 4; see, Orme, *Religious Houses*.
[89] Below, Chapter 13.
[90] *Reg.Grandisson*, i, 98; my thanks to Oliver Padel for his advice about this point; M. F. Wakelin, *Language and History in Cornwall* (Leicester, 1975), p. 88.
[91] *Reg.Grandisson*, ii, 820–821; my thanks to Oliver Padel for his advice about this point.
[92] M. Spriggs, 'Where Cornish was Spoken and When: A Provisional Synthesis', *Cornish Studies*, 11 (2003), pp. 228–269; O. J. Padel, 'Where was Middle Cornish Spoken?', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 74 (2017), pp. 1–31.

regionalised.[93] Even in the extremities of Cornwall, only a minority of people were monoglot Cornish speakers.

Yet the churchmen of the day still stand among the most critical observers of Cornwall and its people. Bishop Grandisson's lament of the county as 'the very ends of the earth' serves as a prime example of this. These sorts of complaints came to form a veritable genre of their own, but the circumstances of these comments should not be overlooked.[94] By no means were all assessments of the peninsula critical either, for in 1481 Richard Germyn was to write to his employer, William Stoner: 'as to your tenaunts in Cornwale, thei be as trew unto you as y can understond as any tenauntes that ye have'.[95] We see here how external observers perceived the peninsula as a coherent whole, with the Cornish themselves having a powerful notion of Cornwall existing 'since the time of King Arthur'.[96] Despite being hallowed by history, however, and for all its idiosyncrasies, the county and its residents also depended on their place in the kingdom of England.

While the earl-duke wielded great influence over fourteenth-century Cornwall, nearly all the offices of local government remained directly accountable to the king.[97] At the same time the common law regarded the county's inhabitants as English. In the *Quo Warranto* proceedings of 1302, for instance, leading Cornish lay and spiritual proprietors secured royal confirmation of their liberties, an act which implicitly recognised their acceptance of the county's place in the kingdom.[98] Throughout the later middle ages Cornwall was also obliged to contribute to parliamentary taxation, with the Crown levying tenths and fifteenths in the peninsula just as in other English shires. The county was exceptionally well-represented in parliament, typically returning two shire MPs and a further twelve representatives from its six enfranchised boroughs. As thousands of Cornishmen fought in the wars of this period, the peninsula's residents owed military service to their king too.[99] All these processes of interaction had a powerful integrative effect, drawing the county into the kingdom.

But what of the realm in which Cornwall held a place? The truism bears repeating that England played host to one of the most sophisticated and

[93] J. A. Jefferson and A. Putter, 'Introduction', in *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066–1520): Sources and Analysis*, ed. J. A. Jefferson and A. Putter (Turnhout, 2013), pp. xi–xxiv.

[94] Below, Chapter 4.

[95] *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290–1483*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, 2 vols, Camden Society, 3rd Series 29–30 (London, 1919), ii, p. 120.

[96] Below, Chapter 3.

[97] Below, Chapter 2.

[98] *Quo Warranto*, pp. 108–111; D. W. Sutherland, *Quo Warranto Proceedings in the Reign of Edward I, 1278–1294* (Oxford, 1963), p. 30.

[99] Below, Chapter 9.

powerful governments of the European later middle ages.[100] From its focal point at Westminster, the king's central government – the chancery, exchequer and so on – oversaw the collection of royal dues from across the kingdom while conveying the sovereign's commands far and wide. Firmly linking the king and the Westminster-based bureaucracy to the wider realm, the royal government was represented in the shires by a host of local office-holders – sheriffs, justices of the peace and so on. Outside Cheshire and County Durham, the kings of England enjoyed universal jurisdiction throughout their lands. Their mighty fiscal machine was similarly all-pervasive, raising funds for extensive royal warfare. In levying taxes, however, kings were compelled to summon parliament to give consent to these subsidies. Representing the commonalty of the whole realm, the House of Commons was to speak with an increasingly powerful voice. Since England was a much-governed country, the workings and uniformity of its judicial, fiscal and representative structures helped to pull the polity together. All this led Mark Ormrod to conclude that England was 'one of the very few medieval kingdoms that deserve to be called "states"'.[101]

Such a picture, however, proves by no means complete. R. R. Davies has criticised the concept of the medieval state, providing a powerful corrective.[102] He placed emphasis on the fact that the surviving evidence chiefly concerns the workings of royal government, making the king appear all-powerful when he was most certainly not. Royal authority was neither absolute in Cornwall nor anywhere else in England for that matter, as many 'private' administrations operated in every locality. Yet, in contrast to the voluminous archives of the Crown, the records of these many other lords have long since disintegrated. Losses of this sort and scale greatly distort our vision of the realm. Wielding limited coercive might of his own, the king instead relied on other agents of power, among them earls, knights, bishops and mayors, to enforce his writ across the land. At the same time as playing host to the mighty apparatus of royal government, the realm contained many powerbrokers and sentiments beyond that of the king's administration and regnal solidarity. When set within a powerfully governed and yet more heterogeneous kingdom, Cornwall's contradictory existence as a place simultaneously distinctive and integrated appears less irreconcilable.

[100] For the best introductions, G. L. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation, England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005); J. R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament, 924–1327* (Oxford, 2010); W. M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England, 1300–1450* (Basingstoke, 1995).

[101] Ormrod, *Political Life*, p. 1.

[102] R. R. Davies, 'The Medieval State: The Tyranny of a Concept', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 16 (2003), pp. 280–300.

2

Office-Holding in a Wild Spot

According to the Venetian ambassador, Cornwall was 'a wild spot where no human being ever came, save the few boors who inhabited' the desolate place.[1] It is clear that in the county and everywhere else the intermeshing of local interests, traditions and lordships moderated the impact of royal rulership. Yet it is just as clear that by the fourteenth century the tendrils of royal government had long stretched into every corner of the kingdom, with the men who held the main county offices serving as the Crown's agents in the locality.[2] In the far south west, the intertwined offices of the royal shire and the comital-ducal franchise simultaneously helped to bestow coherence upon Cornwall itself while integrating the county into the kingdom.

The Sheriff-Stewards

The sheriff was the oldest shire office with the broadest responsibilities. Although shrieval authority had been eroded since the Anglo-Norman period, the post still retained an impressive range of powers. Within his bailiwick

[1] *Calendar of State Papers Venetian*, 38 vols in 40, HMSO (London, 1864–1940), i, p. 312.

[2] The Sheriff: W. A. Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff to 1300* (Manchester, 1927); R. Gorski, *The Fourteenth-Century Sheriff: English Local Administration in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2003); The MPs: *HOP*; Maddicott, *English Parliament*; The JPs: B. H. Putnam, 'The Transformation of the Keepers of the Peace into the Justices of the Peace', *TRHS*, 4th series, 12 (1929), pp. 19–48; A. Musson, *Public Order and Law Enforcement: The Local Administration of Criminal Justice, 1294–1350* (Woodbridge, 1996); The Escheator: S. T. Gibson, 'The Escheatries, 1327–41', *EHR*, 36 (1921), pp. 218–225; The Coroner: R. F. Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner* (Cambridge, 1961); also, *The English Government at Work, 1327–1336*, ed. J. F. Willard et al., 3 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1940–50); R. Gorski, 'A Methodological Holy Grail: Nominal Record Linkage in a Medieval Context', *Medieval Prosopography*, 17 (1996), pp. 145–179.

the sheriff enjoyed administrative omni-competence, with the preservation of royal rights forming the mainspring of his duties.[3] The earl-duke held the shrievalty of Cornwall in fee, however, even though that the county had paid King John and Henry III for charters enshrining shrieval elections, charters that Earl Richard was later to repudiate.[4] It followed that until 1376 the earl-duke appointed a deputy to act as sheriff on his behalf, also employing this man as his steward in Cornwall.[5] Standing at the apex of the local administration of comital-ducal prerogatives, the steward oversaw the lordship's manors, stannaries and boroughs, along with the county court itself.[6] While the sheriff-steward received a handsome annuity for his labours, some £60 under the earldom and £40 during the Black Prince's tenure, those who held the post perennially failed to raise the enormous dues required of them.[7]

Although lordly rights to the shrievalty marked Cornwall out as distinctive, the county was by no means the only shire to be overseen in this way by a seigniorial sheriff.[8] In the north west, for example, successive earls and dukes of Lancaster appointed the sheriff of Lancashire to defend their local interests.[9] Enjoying yet greater powers over the shrievalty in his palatinate of Durham, the bishop there concurrently bestowed the shrievalty and escheatorship on the same man.[10] Yet in this county palatine both offices accounted to the bishop alone, whereas in Cornwall the sheriff-steward rendered account to the exchequers of both the earl-duke and the king.[11] In this way, the sheriff of Cornwall was a simultaneously lordly and royal official. Long terms and the regular appointment of 'outsiders' were characteristic of all seigniorial shrievalties and Cornwall proved no exception. Between 1300 and 1376 some twenty-four men are found holding the shrievalty-stewardship, with Thomas de la Hyde of Staffordshire and John Dabernon of Bradford, Devon, serving for some sixteen years apiece.[12] Just under half of those who held the office hailed from east of the Tamar, with 'incomers' serving as sheriff-steward for fifty of these seventy-six years.[13]

[3] Morris, *English Sheriff*, chapters 7–9.
[4] Page, 'Barons' War', 22, 27–28.
[5] SC6/811/3 m. 1r; *Ministers' Accounts*, i, pp. xxix–xxx; *RESDCornwall*, 5; aside from in 1336 and 1342–7.
[6] *RESDCornwall*, 42–45.
[7] *CIM 1307–1349*, 83; *CCR 1333–1337*, 399–400; *RBP*, ii, 62, £20 as sheriff and £20 as steward; many former sheriff-stewards were indebted, for example, E372/177 m. 23v.
[8] Gorski, *Sheriff*, pp. 33–34.
[9] R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1265–1603*, 2 vols (London, 1953–70), i, pp. 10–11, 45, 59.
[10] Liddy, *Durham*, pp. 132–139.
[11] For example, *RBP*, iv, 34–35, 88.
[12] Albeit not continuously; for individual biographies, see Appendix I.
[13] Gorski, *Sheriff*, pp. 46–47; Liddy, *Durham*, pp. 133–135.

Across the fourteenth century the parliamentary Commons requested repeatedly that the king change his sheriffs annually. At the same time the Commons sought the appointment of men who resided in the county in which they held office and were in enjoyment of an annual freehold income of at least £20.[14] Presenting a combined petition concerning the shrievalty and escheatorship in 1371, the Commons were finally to achieve their ambitions. Three years earlier the Crown had conceded that the escheator should enjoy an annual landed income of at least £20, and once this was accepted of the escheator 'it seemed reasonable' to expect the same of the sheriff.[15] Using concessions related to the former office to force the Crown's hand over the latter, the Commons at the same time secured the introduction of annual shrieval appointments. In Cornwall, however, the implementation of these changes was delayed until 1376. It was only after the death of his father, the Black Prince, that Richard II divided the two offices, replacing the sheriff annually while retaining seignorial control of the stewardship. This was because Richard sought to use the shrievalty to draw leading Cornishmen into the magistracy, securing their acceptance of his rule. Between 1376 and 1405 a further twenty-two men held the post, two of whom served three times, seven held the office twice and the rest served once only. All but three originated from Cornwall, although of these exceptions all possessed a stake in the county through marriage. It certainly seems fair to talk of a 'shrieval elite' from 1376 onwards, for scions of leading local lineages, men such as Sir Richard Sergeaux and Sir Ralph Carminow, are often found holding the post.

Whether they were knightly proprietors, minor gentlemen, or 'outsiders', the shrievalty elevated all these men to a leading position in the county. Each of these office-holders served as the foremost local representative of his king and earl-duke, defending royal and lordly interests to the west of the Tamar. Although the powers of the sheriff-stewardship also presented countless opportunities to advance local agendas, the office still proved essential to the county's commonweal.[16] Holding a leading position in Cornwall's administration and collective life, while simultaneously forming a lasting point of contact between the county and the wider realm, the sheriff-stewardship was an influential and desirable post.

The MPs

Since the 1290s the Crown had issued writs instructing each sheriff to cause to be chosen two knights from his shire and two burgesses from each borough to attend parliament with authority to speak for their

[14] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 107–111.
[15] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 110.
[16] Cf. Gorski, *Sheriff*, pp. 102–125.

locality.[17] For the period from 1295 to 1405 some ninety-seven returns for Cornwall have come down to us.[18] Just under a hundred men are known to have represented the county in this time, and whereas many served on multiple occasions, half sat only once. Perhaps as many as sixteen parliaments were attended by two county MPs who had never sat in the House before, with this becoming less prevalent as the century went on. At least nine knights of the shire had prior experience through attendance as parliamentary burgesses, notably Sir John Treiagu, who had represented Truro in 1304–5.

Although the majority of those who sat for Cornwall were Cornish, some fifteen MPs can be identified as hailing from east of the Tamar. It seems that Richard Bakhampton, John Moveroun and John Kentwood, for example, were officials in the comital-ducal administration who owed their election to their posts in the lordship. While there is no evidence of a concerted lordly policy to pack parliament, this does not necessarily imply an absence of coercion.[19] It should be noted, however, that the great majority of those returned were well-qualified by Cornish birth, landownership, or both, including the six-times elected Sir Thomas l'Ercedekne. Knightly lineages were to achieve no stranglehold on the county's representation, however, as a steady stream of less prominent gentlemen can be identified as also making their way to parliament. Over two-thirds of Cornwall's MPs held other posts in local administration, attesting to their active involvement in county affairs. Believing that parliamentarians who enjoyed the support of their fellow Cornishmen possessed the clout to defend royal interests locally, the Crown often appointed men who had sat in the House to other county offices.[20]

To concentrate on the knights of the shire alone, however, presents only a limited view of the county's representation as Cornwall contained one of the highest densities of parliamentary boroughs in the kingdom: Bodmin, Helston, Launceston, Liskeard, Lostwithiel and Truro. Each of these boroughs returned two men to the House, resulting in as many as fourteen Cornish spokesmen sitting in a typical parliament.[21] Across the period as a whole the names of over 400 burgesses who sat for Cornwall's towns have come down to us, even though returns remain incomplete and writs of expenses are sparse.[22] Nonetheless, we know enough about the urban members to offer some general

17 Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 119.

18 Only one member each are recorded in 1340, 1352, 1353 and 1371.

19 Cf. Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 123; J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307–1322: A Study in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 51–52.

20 Tyldesley, 'Local Communities', p. 36.

21 At least on paper; *HOP*, i, 295–317; in 1295 Tregony replaced Lostwithiel; in 1298 neither Launceston nor Lostwithiel sent returns.

22 M. McKisack, *The Parliamentary Representation of the English Boroughs during the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1932), p. 75.

observations. Those who sat for Cornish boroughs were mainly of lesser substance than the county's MPs. Some were men of commerce, while others made their living at the law and others again were minor local gentry. Burgesses could enjoy long parliamentary careers, pre-eminent among them the nineteen-times returned John Cokeworthy, a busy lawyer who sat for multiple boroughs.[23] The county's towns emerge as willing to look beyond their own residents for their MPs, with the result that during his career one man might well sit for several Cornish boroughs. Again, there appears to have been no magnate policy to manipulate returns.

Since parliament served as the greatest political forum in the kingdom, its burgeoning influence was to secure continued attendance by the most influential Cornishmen.[24] Despite being a fusion of fact and fiction, the *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum*, a tract written in the 1320s, recorded widespread co-operation between the various strata of parliament.[25] The once rigid divisions between the knights and the burgesses began to break down in the early years of the century, and after that time the two groups often collaborated.[26] In Cornwall, the actual membership of these two groups of county and urban representatives overlapped. At least a tenth of Cornwall's MPs first entered the House as burgesses, while a minimum of five men sat for the county's towns after being returned as knights.[27] So it was that parliamentary meetings encouraged the peninsula's residents to think in terms of both collective Cornish concerns and kingdom-wide interests, not least when considering the maintenance of law and order.

The JPs

Forming an essential cog of shire administration, the office of keeper of the peace had acquired a quasi-judicial role by the fourteenth century.[28] Accordingly, Edward II empowered commissioners to 'enquire by sworn inquest of felonies and trespasses, and to arrest and imprison the indicated' until the case could be brought before royal justices.[29] Pressure from the parliamentary Commons and the desire to enforce order across the realm resulted in the

[23] *HOP*, ii, 620–621.
[24] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 126; Maddicott, *English Parliament*, pp. 352–366.
[25] *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum*, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1846), pp. 20–21.
[26] Maddicott, *English Parliament*, pp. 335, 342–343.
[27] Cf. Tyldesley, 'Local Communities', p. 54; H. Kleineke, 'The Widening Gap: the Practice of Parliamentary Borough Elections in Devon and Cornwall in the Fifteenth Century', *Parliamentary History*, 23 (2004), pp. 121–135.
[28] Cf. A. Harding, 'The Origin and Early History of the Keepers of the Peace', *TRHS*, 5th series, 10 (1960), pp. 85–109 at 102, 106; Coss, *English Gentry*, pp. 167–168.
[29] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 128.

Crown conceding a range of extra powers to the keepers from 1327, notably the ability to determine cases.[30] Although the gentry had performed many judicial functions in the shires before the 1360s, the permanent acquisition of the determining power by the keepers at this time established these officers as justices of the peace, with wide judicial authority.[31] Even after this decade, however, peace commissioners enjoyed no monopoly on the local dispensation of justice. This was because the county bench remained linked to itinerant circuits of royal assize and gaol delivery staffed by justices of the central courts, who brought with them national practices and precedents in civil and criminal matters.[32] As a devolved system of justice operated across England under royal supervision, it is unsurprising that the Crown included Cornwall on the south-western assize circuit.

To promote law and order, the Crown issued peace commissions for Cornwall at the same time as commissions for every other part of England, although between times their membership might be altered as and when circumstances required. The trend across the fourteenth century was for the commissions to grow slowly in size, and this was the case in Cornwall too. Until 1338 no Cornish commission can be found containing more than four men, but in this year the pressures of war prompted the Crown to appoint thirteen members to the bench, with numbers falling back to five or six for the next thirty years or so. From 1369 commissions were again to expand, however, averaging nine members until 1405. A very similar picture emerges for the shire of Gloucestershire, whereas in the semi-autonomous palatinate of Durham the bishop alone issued commissions 'sporadically'.[33]

Since no great lords resided west of the Tamar, it is unsurprising that noblemen rarely headed the Cornish bench. The gentlemen and lawyers of the county instead dominated Cornish commissions. Upwards of 120 men are known to have served between 1300 and 1405, with perhaps eighty hailing from Cornwall itself. Many of these folk were local gentry who held numerous other posts but, as ever, a mix of the richly and poorly endowed appear, with the latter gaining in prominence. Local lawyers were especially well represented from the 1370s onwards, undertaking most of the day-to-day work. All these Cornish folk were also joined by numerous 'outsiders'. Across the century as a whole no fewer than twenty-one comital-ducal stewards served as JPs, and in

[30] Putnam, 'Keepers of the Peace', 25–45; Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 128–131; B. Post, 'The Peace Commissions of 1382', *EHR*, 41 (1976), pp. 98–101.

[31] Musson, *Public Order*, pp. 79–82.

[32] E. Powell, 'The Administration of Criminal Justice in Late-Medieval England: Peace Sessions and Assizes', in *The Political Context of Law*, ed. R. Eales and D. Sullivan (London, 1987), pp. 49–59; Musson, *Public Order*, pp. 95–122.

[33] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 133–134; Liddy, *Durham*, p. 141.

Table 3: The Locations of County Peace Sessions in Richard II's Reign

Bodmin Launceston Lostwithiel	The sessions were held most often in these three towns
Helston Lelant Liskeard Marizion St Columb Major Truro	The JPs met on several occasions in each of these six settlements
Camelford Grampound Penryn Saltash Stoke Climsland St Colan St Germans	There are single references to proceedings in each of these seven locations

Source: Tyldesley, 'Local Communities', p. 76.

1349 the king even issued a commission 'by bill of the [Black] prince' himself.[34] Naturally, the king made his judicial authority felt on the county bench. It is illustrative of this that in 1344 Edward III appointed Justice William Shareshull to the quorum, one of the earliest appointments of an inner circle of royal justices to a commission.[35] To secure royal interests, in the last quarter of the century the Crown routinely appointed central court justices of this sort to the county bench.

As a result of all this judicial activity, Cornwall's peace commissions formed an arena for both 'local' and 'national' rivalries.[36] A prime example of the former is to be found in February 1381, when Richard II removed all Cornishmen from the bench in an attempt to end the virulent Sergeaux–Carminow–Trevarthian

[34] *CPR 1348–1350*, 383.

[35] B. H. Putnam, *The Place in Legal History of Sir William Shareshull, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, 1350–1361: A Study of Judicial and Administrative Methods in the Reign of Edward III* (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 25–26.

[36] Cf. Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 131; R. Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government: East Anglia under Richard II', in *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay and C. M. Barron (London, 1971), pp. 218–241.

feud.[37] The high politics of the realm can also be found intruding on Cornish commissions: notably in 1312, 1314, 1330, 1381, 1387–8 and 1397–9. While nobles and kings regularly interfered in such appointments elsewhere, the scale of intervention in Cornwall is striking.[38] There are a number of possible reasons why this was so. Perhaps most significant was the earl-duke's perennial absenteeism, which meant that local office held a more important key to power in the peninsula. Since the Cornish bench can be shown to have sat in as many as sixteen different locations across the county, this mobility further increased its reach, workload and local importance.[39] From all this we can see that royal peace commissions were essential to the authority of the Cornish magistracy, the earl-duke and the king himself, enabling these various powerbrokers to influence county affairs.

The Escheators

In contrast to that of the JPs, the power of the escheator was to wane in the later middle ages. The escheator's post was concerned with the collection of those feudal prerogatives arising from the king's position as lord paramount.[40] For the purposes of collection, in 1300 the country was divided into two great escheatries north and south of the Trent, with Cornwall and Devon overseen in the 1310s by the sub-escheator Richard de Clare.[41] In 1323, however, Edward II reorganised the office by creating eight bailiwicks, one of these comprising the western counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset.[42] Sir Robert Bilkemore, a Bedfordshire-man, held the west country post from 1323 to 1327 when the Crown appointed him escheator south of the Trent. In this year the government had chosen to re-establish the northern and southern bailiwicks.

Embarking on a fresh major reform of the office, in 1341 Edward III decided to align the escheatries with the shrievalties. To this end, he appointed as

[37] Tyldesley, 'Local Communities', p. 139.

[38] Cf. Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 131–132; Virgoe, 'East Anglia', p. 234; S. Walker, *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. J. Braddick (Manchester, 2006), pp. 83–85; *idem*, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361–1399* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 245–246.

[39] Tyldesley, 'Local Communities', pp. 68–78; *Quo Warranto*, pp. 108–111.

[40] S. L. Waugh, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Articles of the Escheator', *Thirteenth Century England, V*, ed. P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 89–113; S. L. Waugh, 'The Escheator's General Inquest: the Enforcement of Royal Lordship in the Late Fourteenth Century', in *Foundations of Medieval Scholarship: Records Edited in Honour of David Crook*, ed. P. Brand and S. Cunningham (York, 2008), pp. 11–24; also, *The Fifteenth-Century Inquisitions* Post Mortem*: A Companion*, ed. M. Hicks (Woodbridge, 2012).

[41] SC8/275/13734.

[42] Gibson, 'Escheatries', 218–219; *English Government at Work*, ii, pp. 163–165; *CFR 1319–1327*, 251–252.

escheator of Cornwall one John Dabernon, the Black Prince's feodary. While some tensions were to arise early on over royal and ducal rights, until 1368 the king and the prince always bestowed the offices of escheator and feodary on the same man.[43] In that year, however, the prince appointed one Henry Cokyn as feodary while the king retained in the office of escheator a certain Robert Wisdom. Three years later the king again combined Cornwall and Devon in one escheatry, a unit that was to remain in place until 1395. Fourteen men held the post over the period from 1368 to 1395, only four being Cornish, the rest coming from Devon. In 1395, however, Richard II once again made Cornwall a bailiwick in its own right, although in 1401 Henry IV recoupled the post with that of Devon. It seems that competing demands on the escheatries produced this complex history.[44] Petitioning the king repeatedly concerning corruption, qualifications and the annual appointment of escheators, the parliamentary Commons received few royal remedies for such grievances.[45] So far as personnel is concerned, the office in Cornwall was a less prestigious one than that of sheriff or JP, virtually all the local gentlemen holding the post being of comparatively humble stock: men such as the tin-merchant Roger Juyl.

The Coroners

Mirroring the escheatorship, the office of coroner was subject to repeated reorganisation. The post had been created back in 1194 by Richard I 'to keep the pleas of the crown', duties which turned principally on the holding of inquests on dead bodies and the organising of outlawries promulgated in the county court.[46] To secure the enforcement of these royal rights, the government regularly divided the peninsula into four districts under four separate coroners.[47] As these officials were elected in the county court, Cornwall's coroners were answerable to both the Crown and the commonalty in much the same way as every other shire.[48] Showing rather less concern about coroners than about the posts that we have already discussed, the parliamentary Commons complained only periodically about qualifications for office and the execution of duty.[49] As many as sixty-three men are known to have served as coroner in Cornwall between 1298 and 1409, fifty-two of whom held no other county office. Virtually all these folk were of modest means, with the

[43] *CCR 1346–1349*, 447, 565; Cf. Liddy, *Durham*, pp. 132–139.
[44] Gibson, 'Escheatries', 219.
[45] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, pp. 136–137.
[46] Hunnisett, *Coroner*, pp. 1–4, 100–115; for example, JUST3/120 m. 23.
[47] Tyldesley, 'Local Communities', p. 111.
[48] Hunnisett, *Coroner*, pp. 150–151; Cf. Liddy, *Durham*, pp. 155–156.
[49] Saul, *Gloucestershire*, p. 141.