

NEWMARKET 500 YEARS AGO

by PETER MAY

Our knowledge of Newmarket up to the end of the 14th century is based almost entirely on documents concerned with the lords of the manor, Extents, Inquisitions, Charters and the like, most of which are preserved in the Public Record Office. Enter the 15th century and at once our documents are much more local and more concerned with the ordinary man in the Newmarket High Street. Our knowledge of Newmarket 500 years ago is based on three main sets of such documents. There is first a series of court rolls covering, though not completely, the years 1400-1413, and containing records of the four kinds of courts held in Newmarket at this time, the leet, the court baron (or, as it was known in Newmarket, the general court), the fair court and the market court. These rolls are in 48 membranes, in varying states of preservation.¹ There are secondly two series of account rolls for the manor, the one series covering the years 1428-1440,² and the other the years 1472-1482; these are in 20 membranes and are excellently preserved and very legible.³ The fullest and the best of these account rolls is that for the year 1472-1473; I have based this study of 15th-century Newmarket on it, supplementing where necessary from the other rolls. The third group of documents are 20 15th-century Newmarket wills. They date from 1439 to 1497; only the last four of them are in English; the remaining 16 and of course the court and account rolls are all in Latin.⁴

Homes and Holdings

The first item in the Newmarket account rolls, after Arrears on the previous account, is always Fixed Rents (for convenience sake we have thus translated *Redditus Assise*, the exact meaning of which is obscure). The enquiry in 1283 into the estates of the late lord of the manor disclosed that he received an annual 'fixed rent' from

¹ See my *Court Rolls of Newmarket in Suffolk 1408-1410* (Newmarket 1973, hereafter abbreviated CRN) transcripts, not translations, of the original Latin in Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds, hereafter abbreviated SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/18-23 and 32-38.

² SRO(B), Acc. 1476/12. Both court and account rolls were acquired some years ago by Mr. John Taylor of Newmarket, who was then lord of the manor, and were deposited in the Suffolk Record Office at Bury.

³ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/13; the 1472-1473 roll in SRO(B), Acc. 376/3.

⁴ See my *Twenty Newmarket Wills 1439-1497* (Newmarket 1974, hereafter abbreviated TNW).

freemen of 69s.⁵ It appears that rent under this heading was normally fixed not for a period of years but for the life of the manor, and had to be paid at fixed times of the year; in this case it was paid twice a year, at Michaelmas and Easter. Moreover the rent could not be changed, as other kinds of rent could be, at the will of the lord of the manor.

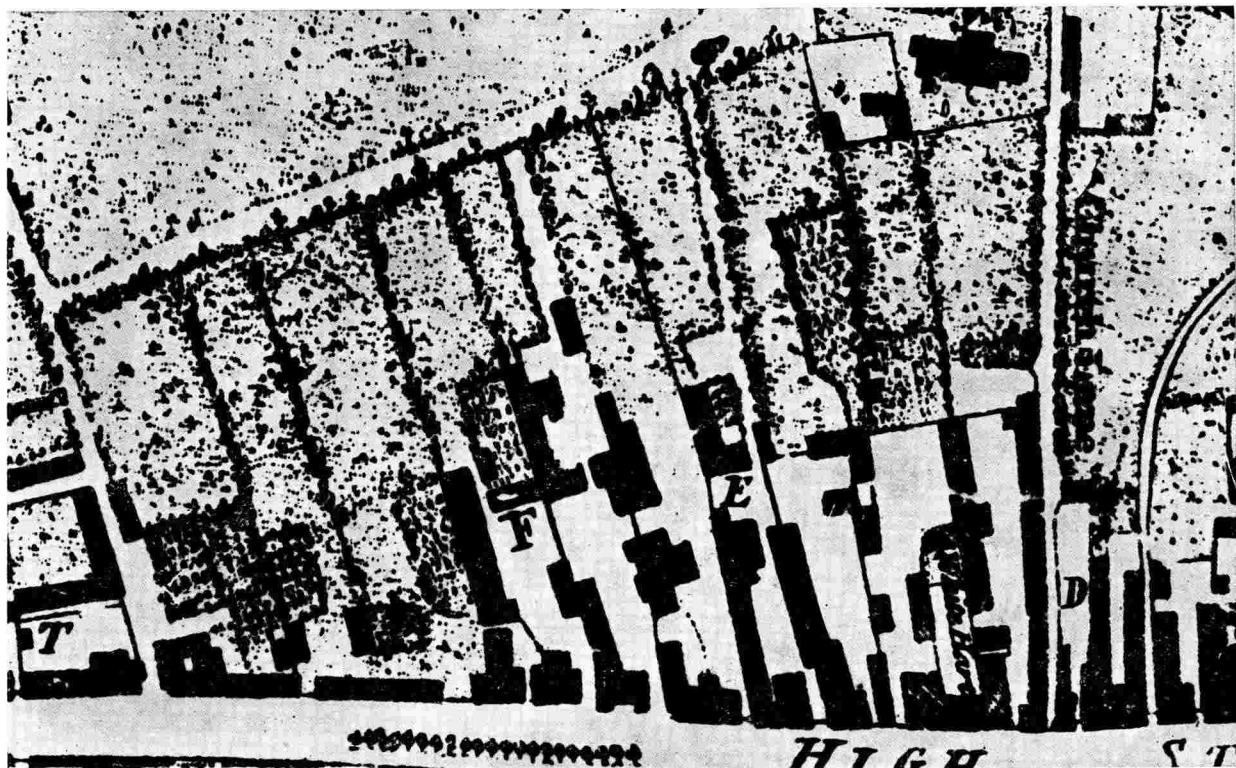
In fact the uniformity over the years of these fixed rents is remarkable. In the first account roll, that for 1428, they were £4 12s. 2½d.; in the last, that for 1482, they were £4 12s. 6d. This uniformity is reflected in another way. With one or two additions and omissions, the holdings and lands rented in 1472 can be immediately identified with those on the 1428 roll, not only because for the most part they occur in the same place on the roll, but also because as often as not the tenant of 1428 is named as a previous tenant in the roll of 1472. For example, in 1472 Arthur Greysson paid the same sum (11s. 6d.) for the Sword Inn and lands, 'lately John Higham's' which John paid for '1 place in which he dwells and lands' in 1428. John Pere paid the same rent, 8d., for 'the messuage in which he dwells', in 1428, as John Laste did for the same holding, 'lately John Pere's', in 1472; and John Kyrkeby paid the same amount, 2s., for 'certain lands', in 1428, that Roger Holyngworth paid for them in 1472, by which time 'the certain lands' had become an alchouse called the Swan. Incidentally it was this same John Kyrkeby who was annually fined 6d. in the Leet Court for having a sign outside his door on the king's highway to the public nuisance;⁶ and we are reminded of the comment of an East Anglian diarist, Philip Skippon, writing in 1668: 'This towne' (Newmarket) 'hath one side of the street standing in Cambridgeshire & the other side in Suffolk; when those of Suffolke goe the perambulation they passe just under the signes of Cambridgeshire side, which are all contrived so as they may with the beams the signs hang on be pull'd close to the houses, else every inne forfeits a shilling to the perambulation'.⁷

If the uniformity of particular rents is remarkable, so also is the variation in the amounts of rent paid by different individuals. For example, Thomas Depden paid 6s. 1d. rent for the Bear while Henry Dale paid only 10d. rent for the Bell; and William Mey paid 7s. 3d. for his holding and Ralph Lott, only a few doors up the High Street, paid only 4d. for his. The large variation in individual rents like these may be due neither to the actual size of the holdings nor to the use to which they were put but to the fact that

⁵ Public Record Office (hereafter abbreviated PRO), CP 25(1) 23/9/2.

⁶ CRN, p. 1 and so frequently in the leet court rolls: SRO(B), 1476/1/18.

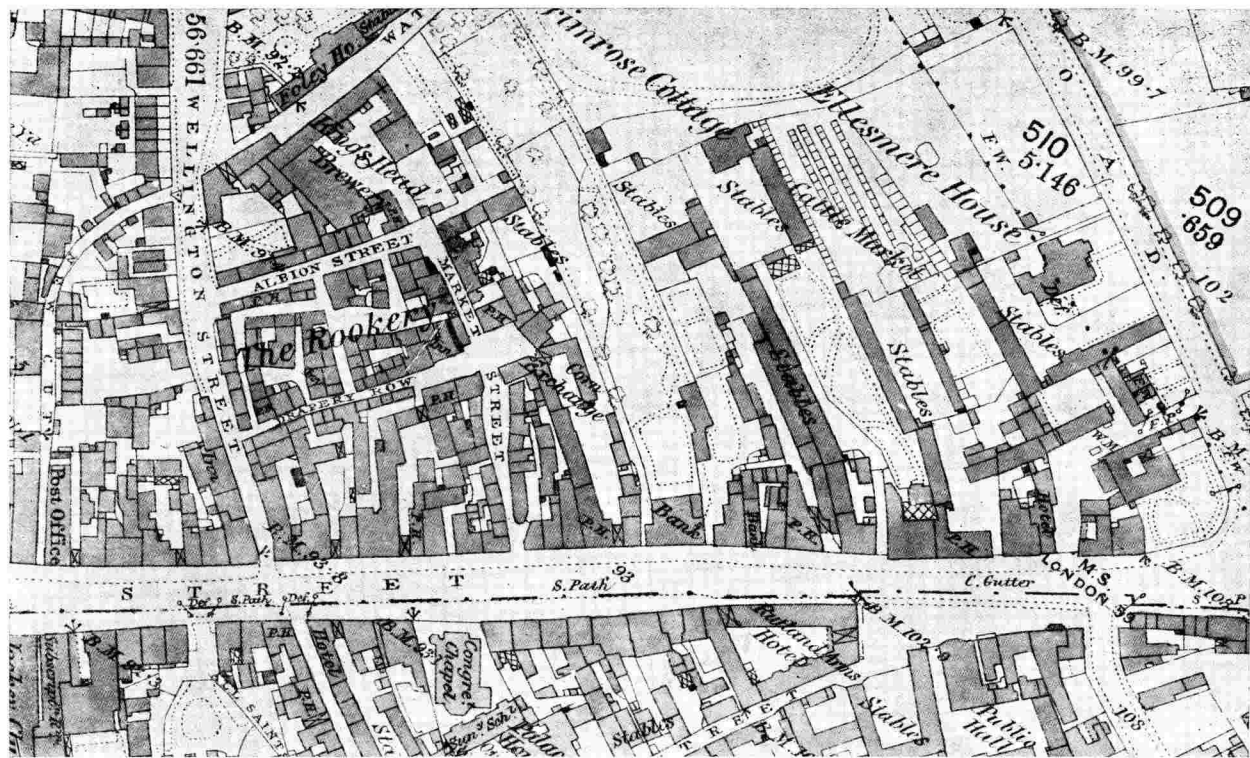
⁷ C. M. Hood, 'An East Anglian Contemporary of Pepys', *Norf. Arch.*, xxii (1924), p. 152. I owe this delightful reference to Mr. David Dymond.



Reproduced by permission of the Suffolk Record Office.

This enlarged section of Chapman's Plan shows St. Mary's Church, the open fields lying north of what is now Fitzroy St., and the boundaries of the 10 15th-century holdings lying between Church Lane and the present Black Bear Lane. The water course (now New Cut) runs across the bottom right hand corner.

PLATE XXIII



A section of the 1886 25-in. O.S. Map. The 15th-century Market Place lay in the rectangle called the Rookery enclosed by Wellington St., Drapery Row, Market St. and Albion St. All the poor housing shown here and in John Chapman's Plan as encroaching on the whole of the Market Place has now been demolished, making way for the new Rookery development. Chapman knew the small open area east of Drapery Row as the Market Place.

the different 'works' which the first tenants had to perform for the manor were commuted into different cash payments. We may note however that in the midst of all this variation the rent for an acre of land is the same for every tenant, namely 6d. an acre.

Holding, *tenementum*, is a vague word; no doubt it consisted of some kind of dwelling house, built of wood and roofed with thatch, with only one or two rooms (perhaps a messuage was a bit more elaborate); behind was a small patch of ground always enclosed by a hedge or a ditch, in which the holder could grow his few vegetables and keep in his chickens and his pig and his cow – and of course keep out any strays. There are some 50 such holdings recorded in our roll. 45 of these are situated down either side of the High Street, 26 on the northern side from the present Black Bear Lane to the Clock Tower (then just a crossroads), and 19 on the southern side (then the Cambridgeshire side) from the Rutland Arms (then called the Ram) to 'Dundich' which I take to refer to the watercourse (then no doubt an open dirty ditch) where it now runs under the Jockey Club buildings. The remaining five holdings were all grouped round where the new Rookery development now is. There may have been other holdings further west up the High Street, but these are not recorded in our roll, perhaps because their tenants belonged to the neighbouring Manors of Ditton Camoys or Ditton Valens. On the basis of the account roll entries I have drawn a plan of Newmarket as it may have been in 1472 (Fig. 75).

Features common to both 1472 and 1976 are the High Street, Church Lane, Market Lane (now Wellington Street), the road to the Cornhill (now Market Street), Millhill, the Fairstead (now St. Mary's Square), Exning Road, the watercourse, and St. Mary's and All Saints' Churches.

According to our roll, there were 8 holdings between Ralph Balowe's holding 'at the western end of the township' (Black Bear Lane) and John Cracke's holding to the west of Church Lane. John Chapman's 'Plan of the Town of Newmarket', dated 1787,⁸ of which we produce an enlarged portion (Plate XXII), shows quite clearly all these ten holdings, abutting to the south on the High Street, and to the north on what is now Fitzroy Street but in 1787 was just a lane with common fields beyond. The Enclosure Award map of 1821⁹ and the Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of 1970 show just the same ten holdings. To confirm it for yourself you have only to walk round and through the block enclosed by Church Lane, St. Mary's Church, Fitzroy Street, Black Bear Lane

⁸ Reproductions of this beautiful map may be obtained from the Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich).

⁹ SRO(B), Acc. 2723/9.

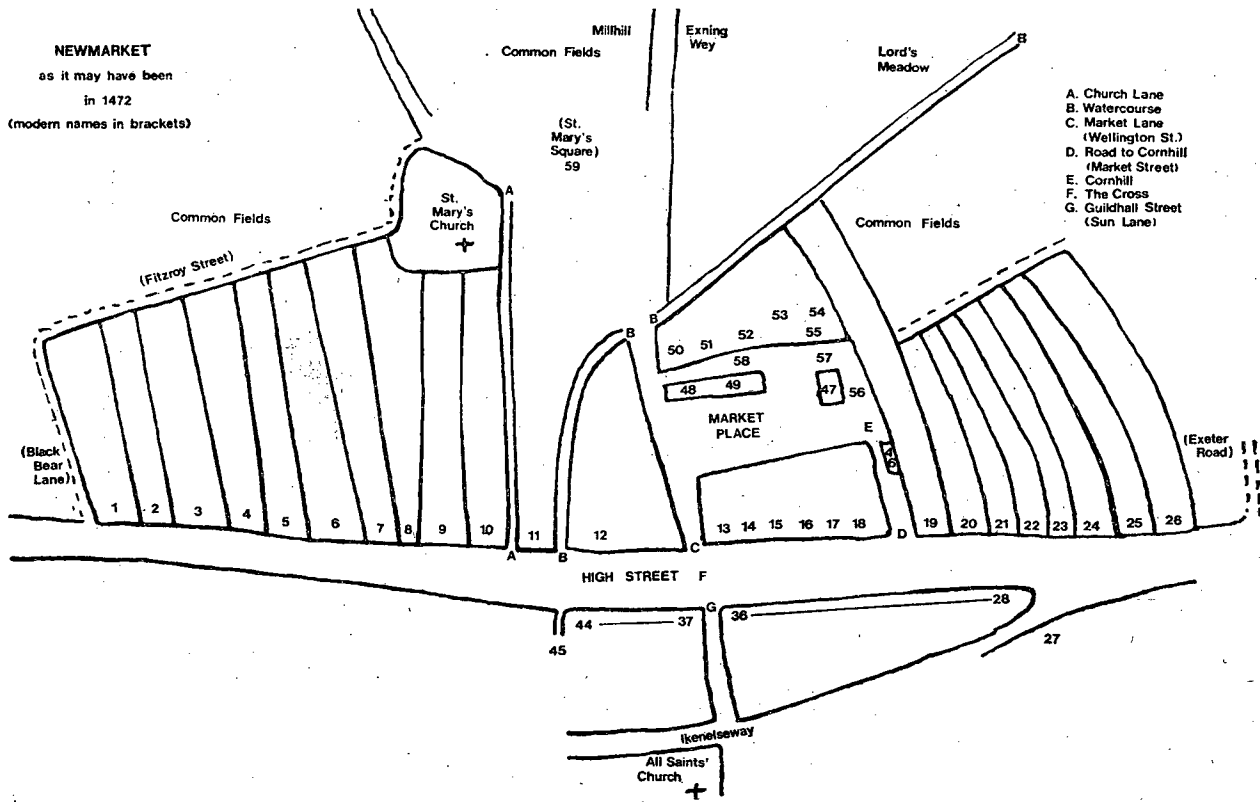


FIG. 75

KEY TO THE PLAN OF NEWMARKET AS IT MAY HAVE BEEN IN 1472

The list of tenants is drawn primarily from the series of account rolls of the manor, the last name being that of the tenant recorded in the 1472-73 roll. *denotes not on the rent roll of the manor.

1. Stoutemey, John Balowe (alias Bladsmyth), Ralph Balowe
- * 2. William Buntynge
3. John Curteys, Thomas Helbye
4. John Schelley, Nicholas Schelley, Ralph Balowe
5. *Jacobbe's*, John Honeman, Margery Honeman, William Goodreed, John Wykes
- * 6. *The Ship*, Peter Petyeru, Adam Chapman, Nicholas Chapman, John Langham, Thomas Hacwronge, William Namsekyll
7. *The Bear*, Gilbert Bernard, Robert Bernard, John Bernard, Thomas Depden
8. John Pere, Richard Gateward, John Laſte
9. *Marham's*, Richard Doe, Edmund Sherman, William Aylnorth
10. William Palgrave, Margaret Maygood, John Cracke
11. Thomas Hacwronge, John Ray, Ralph Hancocks, Thomas Percyvale
- *12. John Ray, Ralph Lote (alias Taylor)
13. Ralph Gateward, Richard Gateward, John Coleyn, Ralph Lote
14. William Farwell, John Dewesby, John Leiston, Roger Holyngworth
15. Richard Lynne, William Smyth, John Leiston, Henry Dale
16. Peter Fetheller, Thomas Depden, William Mey
17. *The Sword*, John Higham, Arthur Greysſon
18. *Pyndfolde (the Pound)*, John Higham, Richard Gateward, John Bonde
- *19. *The Christopher*, John Wryght
20. *The Bell*, Edmund Brown (alias Taylor), John Genought, Laurence Cooke, Henry Dale.
21. Spethy, John Genought, John Upryght (chaplain), John Mandevyle, John Yeresley
22. John Aschedon (chaplain), John Genought, John Upryght (chaplain), John Mandevyle, John Yeresley
23. John Bayhous, John Elmham, Thomas Depden
24. John Manston, Margaret Manston, William Cusset, Thomas Poperyk, Katherine Poperyk
25. William Goodreed, John Wykes
- *26. John Bede
27. William Smyth, John Heyward, Thomas Lacy, Thomas Pateryk

- *28. *The Ram*
29. *The Hart*, John Redere, the Prior of Fordham
30. Walter Bocher, Thomas Bulsham, Henry Cheveley
31. William Cheveley, Thomas Bulsham, Thomas Cheveley, Henry Cheveley
32. Nicholas Bocher, Thomas Bulsham, William Jourdon
- *33. Henry Cheveley
- *34. John Leyceſtre
35. William Wonbourne, John Josshyp, John Bateman, Richard Ixning, Ralph Cooke
- *36. John Mandevyle, Roger Holyngworth
- *37. Richard Deresley
38. *The Swan*, John Kyrkeby, John Thykenesse, Roger Holyngworth
- *39. *The Griffin*, William Baron, Arthur Greysſon
40. *The Bull*, Margaret Landwade, John Motte, Margaret Motte, Richard Motte, Arthur Greysſon
- *41. John Chaundclere, Ralph Lote
42. *The Saracen's Head*, John Koo, William Farwell, William Thoryngton, Roger Mayner, Arthur Greysſon
- *43. The Vicar of Wickambrook, Thomas Depden
44. John Ickelyngham, John Wykes
- *45. *Dundich*
46. *Bullſyard*, John Wykes
47. Thomas Quylter, Ellis Jourdon
48. *Cowper's*, John Bayhous, Ralph Hancocks, Robert Vanncy, Stephen Couper, John Kydde
49. Robert Vanncy, Ralph Lote, John Grygge
50. Richard Barker, Thomas Warner, Ralph Lote, Roger Holyngworth and John Cracke
51. *Fannefeyre*, Sir William Argentcin, William Oſteller (bailiff), William Skynnere, Robert Percyvale, Thomas Percyvale, Simon Funstone
52. Robert Vanncy, Ralph Lote, John Kervin
53. Robert Vanncy, Ralph Lote, John Grygge
54. John Peyt, Ralph Lote, Henry Dale
55. *Fannefeyrewey*, Ralph Lote, John Glover
56. *Bullſyard*
57. *The Feyrewey*
58. *The Shraggeryrow or the Shraggery*.
59. St. Mary's Square is called *Fairstead* in 16th-century court rolls and in the Enclosure Award Map.

and the High Street, and you can still see for yourself the lines of the 15th-century holdings. North of what is now Fitzroy Street were in the 15th century only the open or common fields of arable and pasture, stretching over to Reach, Burwell and Exning. The Enclosure Award gives the exact size of these holdings as they were in 1821; the largest was just over an acre, corresponding to about half the Memorial Park, and the smallest just over a rod, further west up the High Street; the average size of the ten holdings was just over three quarters of an acre.

Only two holdings are recorded in the roll as lying between Church Lane and Wellington Street; there must have been several more unless of course the watercourse at that point was a swamp in the 15th century. From Wellington Street up to Market Street there were six holdings; if you stand on the other side of the High Street you can see (or could see before some shops were pulled down) over ten shops, but if you look at the roofs on the skyline you will find six main buildings: perhaps these indicate the lines of the six 15th-century holdings? All six holdings backed on to the Market Place to the north, and their tenants had gateways (back doors) which opened on to the Market Place; some of these six tenants were entitled to have their back doors open to the market on market days, but others were not, and so we find entries like this in the court rolls: 'Thomas Cook, Amos Barbor and John Redere have their gates open on the market place, and so incur the penalty of 2s. each';¹⁰ this was a very heavy penalty for what seems today to be a slight offence, but no doubt the lord of the manor lost revenue by forestalling and evasion of dues through these open gates.

The holding on the corner of Market Street was in the 15th century called the Pyndfolde or Pound. In the 1427 roll it had been rented out 'at the lord's will' (and so not under a fixed rent) to one John Higham as an empty plot of land; in the 1472 roll it was called a grange (whatever that may mean, but presumably with a building on it) rented to John Bond. That it was only an empty plot of land in 1427 suggests that only recently had the need for a pound disappeared; and this is confirmed by an entry in the roll for that year which states that no money was received (for release from the pound?) because there were no stray or wandering cart-horses, mares, foals, cows, bulls, calves, pigs, sows, ducks, geese, sheep, etc. in Newmarket that year.

According to our roll there were eight holdings from Market Street up to Exeter Road (or rather up to the boundary of St. Mary's Ward some yards further west which I assume to be the boundary of the 15th-century manor); now that the backs of the High Street

¹⁰ CRN, p. 5: SRO(B), 1476/1/23.

premises here have been exposed we can see again what look like the lines of the 15th-century holdings. It is clear from our roll that the watercourse marked the limit of housing for our 15th-century forbears; beyond the watercourse in the direction of Exning were the arable lands of the manor and its pastureland called the lord's meadow. The 'big houses' seem to have been situated between the watercourse to the north and the old market place to the south. Among them were Roger Holyngworth's messuage with its stable and barn, and the 'lord's close' called Fannefeyre, in 1472 rented by Simon Funstone whose will is preserved.¹¹ Fannefeyre was slightly to the east of the new Astley Club, and was clearly a good site for a manor house; the market was a few yards to the south, under the lord's very eyes, his fair was perhaps held just round the corner in St. Mary's Square, and his chapel, St. Mary's, was just across the road.

The holdings on the Cambridgeshire side of the High Street are much less easy to mark out, partly because the whole area was rebuilt to accommodate the Palace, and partly because the Icknield Way (called in our roll 'le Ikenelsewey') did not run down the High Street, but south of and parallel with it; presumably it ran down the present Palace Street, with All Saints' Church to the south, and widened out to become a series of tracks somewhere near the cemetery.

The commercial life of the town centred round the Market Place and High Street. On either side of the High Street there were alehouses and lodging houses; there were no less than 12 alehouses with recognisable names: the Ship, the Bear, the Sword, the Christopher, the Bell, the Hart, the Swan, the Ram, the Griffin, the Bull, the Saracen's Head and the Angel. Incidentally Arthur Greysson, who in our roll is the landlord of the Griffin, the Saracen's Head and the Sword, by the time he died in 1479 had also acquired the Bull from Richard Motte; he left all four to his wife Margery, requesting her to pay the £92 still owing on the Saracen's Head and the Bull, and requiring that 'the said holding called le Boole with its appurtenances be annexed and joined to the aforesaid holding called le Gryffyn'.¹²

That there were lodging houses as well as alehouses in Newmarket is clear from a 13th-century document according to which an informer called Roger de Flochworp reported graffiti about Edward I's popularity in Newmarket written on the door of his room at Osbert's the shepherd's 'where many are publicly lodged'.¹³

¹¹ TNW, p. 45: SRO(B), Boner f. 92.

¹² TNW, pp. 36, 37: PRO, Probate 11/6.

¹³ PRO, C 145/37(26). See my *High Street and Market* (Newmarket 1975).

We should naturally expect accommodation as well as refreshment to be available on the main London-Norwich road.

Shops and Stalls

For the manor of Newmarket the market was an important source of revenue, not only because the lord of the manor could charge rent for stalls and shops but also because he could exact tolls from everything sold in the market. For example an entry in the general court roll for 1403 records that John Fabyan was fined 6d. because 'on the Tuesday next before the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula in the year last past he struck the lord's bailiff and refused to pay the tax of a farthing on four bushels of barley'.¹⁴ The lords of the manor also held, or rather their bailiff held, market courts on every second or third Tuesday (Tuesday was market day in the 15th century as now) at which traders' complaints and claims for debt were handled, at a fee of course. These were later called pie powder courts (after *pies poudres*) because it was possible for justice to be dealt out there and then for traders who were likely to move on to another market elsewhere that very evening. New tenants of stalls had to pay not only an annual rent but also an entry fee (fine) on taking over the tenancy, as the following entry in a court roll shows: 'To this court came Richard Farewel and remitted and relaxed to Robert Gateward all his right and claim that he has or could in any way have on two shops, namely one shop in 'le lyndrapery' next to a shop of the said Robert Gateward, and the other shop lies next to the lord's land; to be held to him and his issue by the rod at the lord's will according to the custom of the manor; and he paid the entry fee of 2s.'¹⁵ The phrase 'by the rod' refers to the fact that a white rod was handed over to him at the time as a sign that he was now the tenant of the shops concerned. The lease of such a shop was for a period of years, perhaps 20, not, as in the Fixed Rents, for the life of the manor. No doubt by this time the lord's will had been somewhat curtailed by the custom of the manor, whether written or unwritten, but the lord could still, as later entries under the heading Income from New Increases in Rent show, increase the rent.

In the list of rents in this section of our roll the bailiff and his scribe make a clear distinction between shops and stalls; out of a total of 108 properties 72 were shops and 36 stalls. This distinction is not however kept very closely when they are describing the

¹⁴ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/14.

¹⁵ CRN, p. 18; SRO(B), 1476/1/19. See my *A Fifteenth Century Market Court* (Newmarket 1976).

location of each shop and stall. What was the difference? According to John Stow's *Survey of London* (1604) 'These houses now possessed by Fishmongers were at the first but moveable boordes (or stalles) set out on market daies, to shew their fish there to be sold; but procuring license to set up sheds, they grew to shops, and by little and little to tall houses'.¹⁶ We can see something of this process in an entry in a court roll which runs: 'John Ballowe Smyth made a window in his tenement and a stall annexed to the same window, thus encroaching on the lord's land' and was fined 6s. 8d. for so doing.¹⁷ Thomas Pyngyll, in our account roll, had to pay 4d. annually in rent for 'an empty plot lying in front of the window of his shop, to display his merchandise on a board, and not be built on'. A 15th-century shop window was made not of glass, but of wooden boards and opened outwards to form a stall outside, possibly resting on trestle legs (see the surviving example in Lavenham market place). Our account roll gives the measurements of three such shops or stalls: Thomas Smyth's shop in Ropers' Row measured 10 ft. long by 9 ft. wide, John Deresley's stall in front of the Cross in the High Street was 8 ft. by 6 ft., and John Pyrton's shop, lying before the tollbooth, was 14 ft. by 6 ft.; no doubt these precise measurements are given because Thomas Smyth, John Deresley and John Pyrton were new tenants who had just taken over their shops. We think of a shop as being a more permanent affair than a stall, and this is confirmed by entries in the court rolls, recording for example that John Wynde was fined 3d. for making a hole in the roof of the shop that was formerly Beatrice Feke's, and Richard Farewel was fined 6d. for a similar offence to his shop in 'le Bocheryerowe'.¹⁸

There is very little if any difference between the rent asked for a shop and that asked for a stall; if we disregard the 15 shops and stalls which carry an annual rental of 2s. and over, the average rental for the remaining 93 is just over 5d. a year, of which the greater number are at 4d., apparently the standard rate. Of the 15 rated at 2s. or over, three are besides the tollbooth, clearly a coveted and valuable site, five are in the Mercery, three in the Butchery and two in the Cheesemarket.

In the early days the stalls and shops were all arranged in rows accordingly to the merchandise sold in them, but by the end of the 15th century the location of a stall in a particular row did not necessarily mean that the stallholder sold those particular goods; in our roll for example John Webb alias Glover has a stall in the Cheesemarket, but part of his rent is a pair of gloves. It should be

¹⁶ John Stow, *Survey of London* (Oxford 1971), I, p. 346.

¹⁷ CRN, p. 24: SRO(B), 1476/1/32.

¹⁸ CRN, p. 6: SRO(B), 1476/1/22.

possible to draw up a plan of the market, but the compass bearings of Roger Holyngworth and his scribe are somewhat confusing, and one suspects that the tidy rows of a 20th-century market were not for 15th-century men.

Examination of the entries in the roll makes it clear that the market was located where the modern Rookery development now is; for example three of the holdings on the High Street, Ralph Lott's, Henry Dale's and Arthur Greysson's, are specifically stated to abut 'on the lord's market place to the north'. This location of the market is confirmed by the fact that John Chapman's plan of 1787 specifically marks off a tiny area behind the present Bushel Inn as 'Market Place'; it was of course to this Market Place *off* the High Street that our present Market Street used to lead. Our roll however refers to our present Wellington Street as Market Lane, no doubt because in the 15th century it led to the Market Place in the Rookery—it could be clearly renamed Market Lane today now that the market is held on its old site. Since the 15th century the market area was very heavily encroached on, no doubt on John Stow's pattern, from stalls to shops to houses. Market Lane was first renamed Fox and Goose Lane (after an alehouse inside the lane so called) and later, in the 19th century, Wellington Street, after a public house called the Wellington. I reproduce a portion of the 1886 O.S. map to show this market area (Plate XXIII).

Although the main market was without any doubt held where the new Rookery development now is, there were none the less at least 17 shops and stalls which were not in that area. First there were three stalls beside the Cross in the High Street; I understand that the Cross stood in the High Street where Sun Lane and Wellington Street come into it. Second there were the nine stalls in Barkers' Row (barkers were tanners), and the five shops in Cordwainers' Row (cordwainers were cobblers), none of which are related topographically in our roll to any of the other rows in the Market Place; two of these however are said to lie 'under the wall of the new Guildhall', namely Nicholas Wylkyn's stall in Barkers' Row and Robert Kynge's shop in Cordwainers' Row. It would seem that Sun Lane used to be called Guildhall Street. We surmise therefore that although the main market was in the Rookery area, there were some 17 shops and stalls in the High Street.

As we look closely at the list of shops and stalls (below, p. 273) we see that the butchers and drapers were most in demand, with the mercers (dealing in silks and other costly materials), the barkers and the ropers coming next; there appears to be only one shop in Spiceryrow, but John Simonds' other name was Spycer and he may well have sold spices in his shops in the other rows.

Otherwise the list of stalls indicates where lay the needs and demands of those for whom Newmarket was the market town; we sometimes imagine that medieval villages were self-supporting, but the list of rows here shows that those who lived round and in Newmarket were dependent on its market for their meat, clothes, shoes, leather and metal goods, and their little luxuries.

A comparison of the rents received from stalls and shops according to the account rolls shows that whereas in 1402-1403 they were only £1 16s. 10d. by 1438-1439 they had gone up to £4 14s. 4d. and by the time of our roll were £6 13s. 10d. At the end of the 15th century the market was the most profitable source of revenue for the lord of the manor of Newmarket.

Farms and Fields

The third source of income from rents was Demesne Lands. By definition this was the land which the lord of the manor kept for his own use. The labour he used for this purpose was drawn from the customary tenants who in return for holding land from him had to do the necessary manual work on the fields of the demesne. But as time went on, such customary tenants began to obtain their freedom from such manual work, labour became more difficult to get, and it became more convenient and economical to 'farm out' demesne lands for an annual rent. In the account roll for 1428 the area 'farmed out' was some 40 acres; the first entry runs as follows: '(The Collector renders account) for 10s. 4d. for the farming out (*firma*) of 12 acres of land to John Balowe Smyth for a period of five years, this year being the first'. We note here two differences from the rental of land under Fixed Rents; first the rent in the latter is only 6d. an acre, while that for farmed-out land is just over 10d. an acre; and second the Fixed Rents were for the life of the manor while those for farming were for a period of 5 years. By 1472 some 20 more acres have been farmed out, but the rental value has gone down to just over 8d. an acre. Of the land so farmed out Roger Holyngworth and John Cracke, working in partnership, have by far the biggest amount, over 50 acres; there is a significant note to the effect that they have 'free foldage' (pasturing) in the fields of Exning called 'Shepherds Herdler'. Roger Holyngworth and his partner have more than this; they also paid £2 for the meadow called Lordsmeadow. In the 1428 roll the item relating to Lordsmeadow runs as follows: '(The Collector renders account) for 40s. in cash received for herbage produced from the lords' field there in Newmarket called the Lordsmeadow, sold to John Frere in Newmarket this year'. According to another account roll Lordsmeadow was a ten-acre field; the St. Mary's glebe terrier

for 1633 says there were ten acres of meadow in St. Mary's Parish.¹⁹ Hay was about the only fodder available for cattle penned up in the winter, and meadow land was therefore especially valuable. From the account roll it looks as if Lordsmeadow was to the north of the watercourse.

At this point most manorial account rolls record everything that was bought, received or produced on the manor; there is no such entry in our roll. The reasons for this omission are indicated in the 1428 roll on the back of which is a list first of cereals and second of livestock, typical products of an agricultural community. The list of cereals normally included wheat, rye, peas, barley, oats and 'dredge', but against each of these items there is the comment in the 1428 roll that no cash was received from any of these 'because no one sowed any in Newmarket in the preceding year'. Another interesting comment indicates that it was customary for a mixture of wheat with rye or barley to be given out to the inferior servants of the lord of the manor, but adds that there were no servants of the manor; only the collector (Roger Holyngworth) had one, and he took his wages in cash. The livestock listed in the 1428 roll included carthorses, mares, foals, cattle, pigs and sheep of various ages, geese and hens, with the comment which we have already noted, that no money was received, 'because there were none stray or wandering in Newmarket that year'. The 1472 roll omits the whole list of both cereals and livestock, over 30 in all, no doubt because by this time all the demesne lands were farmed out and nothing was bought or sold from manorial produce or livestock. It is also a clear indication that the manorial economy was not primarily based on agriculture but on the market and the traffic through the High Street.

The one exception to this mention of livestock in our roll is in the next entry, Poultry Rent. In the 1428 roll this rent was received in kind, in the form of capons, as the following entry shows: 'received two capons as rent from Alice, wife (widow?) of William Cheveley for one plot called Dofhouseherd' (a dofhouse was a pigeonhouse) 'and for one croft lying there, to be paid yearly on Christmas Day', a most convenient time of year for a hospitable lord of the manor. Long before 1472 this rent in kind had been commuted into a cash payment, each capon being valued at 3d.

An agriculturally-based community usually had several large fields; Exning, Newmarket's mother community, had according to the 1633 terrier at least seven such fields, Broydon Field (bounded on the west by Exning Road), Arnold Field (bounded on the west by Fordham Road), East Field, Windmill Field, West Field and Little & Great Southfield. These were the common fields of Exning

¹⁹ SRO(B), Acc. 806/1/115.

and were divided into more or less equal strips and distributed among the various tenants and inhabitants. They were subjected to a common course of agriculture by which one or two fields would lie fallow each year while the others were cultivated; as the individual tenant's strips were in different fields (the Newmarket parson for example had in 1633 40 'peeces', mostly under one acre each, scattered all over these Exning fields) he had always at least some strips under cultivation.²⁰ But Newmarket was market-based, and it had only one field, as the terrier records: 'item there is within our Perambulation a field called Market Meanes (or Demeases—presumably Demesne) that tithes to the said parsonage conteyning Nine Score & Two Acres'. We do not know whether this one field was called Market Meanes in the 15th century, but we do know that 'the said Felde of Newmarket is severde from the Feldes of Yxnyng be usyng and occupyng. For the Feldes of Yxnyng are too yeres downen and the thirde yere ly valowe. And the felde of Newmarket is every yere downen. Ande when upon ther is Chirche Holydaye in Yxnyng they forbere alle werkes withyn ther towne and felde then in Newmarket Felde they kepe there occupacion with the plowe and with other labor etc. Also wher as the townnchipe of Yxnyng paye to the Shreve of Suffolk yerly v li (£5) also the saide towne of Newmarket nor the Felde longyng therto are not contributory to the payyng of the saide summe etc whiche provyth that it is not exnyng Felde for if it were the said felde it shulde be contributory to the payment of the saide summe'.²¹

Market Meanes, with its 182 acres, covered more or less what is now St. Mary's Ward or Parish north of Fitzroy Street and St. Mary's Square, the area bounded by Hamilton Road, Portland Road, Braham Close and Millbank. We know that in 1633 the parson had 2 'peeces' in this field, one of 2 acres and one of half an acre, somewhere near the present Lowther Street—no doubt he had the same pieces in 1472.

Because the field was sown and harvested in common, Newmarket, like any other vill had strict (mostly unwritten) byelaws about harvesting, gleaning and grazing of cattle; our 15th-century court rolls record two such byelaws. At harvest time in the 15th century only manual labour was available, and so every able-bodied man and woman had to help reap and gather the harvest. But there were in Newmarket as elsewhere those who preferred the much easier job of gleaning, left normally to the feeble and the old.

²⁰ A visit to North Field, Soham, where land is still farmed in strips, will help to understand something of this kind of farming; an aerial photograph of this field is reproduced in Christopher Taylor, *The Cambridgeshire Landscape* (London 1973), Pl. 6. For a detailed study see W. O. Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England* (London 1973).

²¹ SRO(B), E 3/33/1.

A byelaw in the 1407 court roll runs: 'It is ordered that no one shall go to glean who is able to earn 1d. a day with food under pain of paying 6d. for each offence'.²² Written byelaws sometimes articulate long established customs which are being forgotten and explain present day customs which are no longer understood. One wonders whether the following byelaw in the roll of 1579 reflects the custom of a hundred years earlier: 'Yt Ys ordayned that it shall not be lawfull for any person or persons being able to worke any harvest wyrke to gleane any corne in any yeare before that person hath cryed horkey uppon payne the such person offendinge to the contrary shall forfayte to the lorde of this Manner foe evry such offence 12d.'.²³ Crying horkey refers to the carrying of the last or 'horkey' harvest load out of the fields, followed by the 'horkey supper', probably today the only surviving relic of the old harvest customs.

The other byelaw concerns the grazing of sheep in the fields after the completion of harvest; sheep apparently crop very close and therefore are only allowed to graze on the fields after the 'great beasts'. Our byelaw runs: 'It is ordered by the afferers of the lords of the manor and of the tenants that all fields within the demesne of Newmarket and the South field of Exning up to Fabionshead are forbidden to all sheep until St. Michael's Day, and anyone who shall pasture his sheep contrary to this order shall pay to the lords 40d. for each offence'.²⁴ The court rolls record many fines for breaking the byelaws about grazing, not only for sheep but also for other animals as the following entry shows: 'Walter Skynnere with 1 horse (1d.), Walter Bocher with 1 cow (1d.), Nicholas Bocher with his horses (3d.), Roger Smyth with 1 horse (1d.), John Lucas with 1 horse (1d.) and Peter Smyth (1d.) occupy the lord's common where they have no common rights; therefore they are at the mercy of the court'.²⁵ It seems fairly clear from the small fines imposed that few Newmarket folk had many horses, cows or sheep, probably only the one or two that they were able to keep in their own holdings; feeding even these in the winter must have been difficult, and they must have been strongly tempted to put them out to grass in this illegal way.

We have already seen how Newmarket field differed from Exning fields. Millhill also seems to have had its own traditions as the following extract from a later roll (1612) shows: 'The homage doe present that the hearbage of the Millhill doth belonge to the parishe of St. Marye's in Newmarkett and the soyle to the lord and that the townesmen of Newmarkett weare alwayes used to take

²² SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/10.

²³ SRO(B), Acc. 359/4.

²⁴ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/10.

²⁵ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/4.

Sand Gravell and Chalke there for their necessary uses, Butt every stranger to pay towards the churche for every loade 1d.²⁶ If we wonder why it should go to the church we must remember that the townsmen were also parishioners of the church and as such were responsible for maintaining its fabric; this penny rate on each load was one of their ways of covering their responsibility. That responsibility is reflected in another 15th-century byelaw: 'It is ordered that no one shall place piles of dung (night soil?) round the great common in future, under pain of paying 40d. to the lord of the manor and 40d. to the chapel of the blessed mary'.²⁷ The disposal of dung and rubbish was a continual problem in the restricted area that was Newmarket, and the court rolls record many fines for leaving them in the streets to the public nuisance; when Newmarket became Royal Newmarket, we even have the following 1621 byelaw: 'It is ordered that no one shall allow any rubbish to lie in the streets or lanes above the space of ten days when the king is absent from the town, and not at all when he is in residence, under pain of 10s.'.²⁸

In Trouble with the Law

The second main source of income for the lords of the manor was the profits from the four manor courts, the market court, the general court (or court baron), the leet and the fair court. I have already transcribed the complete records for two years (1408-1410) of all these courts, but it may be of interest to summarise here their concerns.

The market court was held on a Tuesday (market day) every two or three weeks, not so frequently in harvest time, some 20 a year. Most of the cases brought before it are concerned with debt, as for example: 'John Rolf, merchant, is plaintiff in a plea of debt against John Skott of Wylyngham, merchant, the pledge for the prosecution being William Godard; and the aforesaid John was attached by one bushel of barley in a sack worth 5d., remaining in the hands of William Godard, bailiff';²⁹ needless to say John Rolf had to pay the lord of the manor to have his case recorded on the court roll, the bailiff holding the sack of barley until John Skot paid his debt. In most of the cases recorded the merchant's property attached was his horse, valued at the amount due to the plaintiff; his horse was of course one of his more valuable possessions since it was his means of transporting his goods from market to market; in the rolls it is valued at between 2s. 6d. and 6s. 8d. If the debtor

²⁶ SRO(B), Acc. 359/8.

²⁷ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/18.

²⁸ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/7.

²⁹ CRN, p. 17: SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/19.

had no horse he was attached by some other of his possessions; Agnes Portyngale, for example, was attached by two firedogs and a gridiron.³⁰ In 1472-1473 the lords of the manor received 17s. 8d. from fines imposed at the market court.

The general court (held twice a year) was concerned primarily with the rights of the lords of the manor. Two major items in its business were breaches of the assizes of bread and of ale; officers in each county determined every year the quality of bread baked and ale brewed and what they should be sold for. In the ten years covered by the court rolls at least 60 different bakers were fined for breaking the assize of bread, many of them of course every year, an average of 12 at each court. It seems that the 15th-century housewife did not bake her own bread, but it is obvious that much of the bread must have been sold to travellers going through Newmarket.

Over 60 different alewives were fined during these ten years for breaking the assize of ale, an average of 17 a year; but it was not only the brewing of low quality ale that was an offence; 49 different alewives (other than those breaking the brewing assize) were fined for selling illegally. Nearly all these good ladies were also fined for not bringing to court the measures with which they made or sold their ale; it was evidently worth their while not to have them too carefully examined. We might think from this that the two official ale-tasters did a good job, but in fact they are regularly fined 3d. each for not doing their job properly, hardly surprising perhaps since the wife of one of them, John Pepyr, was one of the erring alewives. It looks as if the sale of ale to travellers was more profitable than to 'Newmarket folk, for 'John Redere's wife is a common alewife and had 36 gallons of ale and would not sell to John Wykes, Walter Bocher, Thomas Pere, Thomas Sowcere and others, but kept them back as she says for strangers; and they say that the price of each gallon was 1½d. and so she was ordered to pay 4s. 6d.'³¹

Excessive profits in the sale of other goods, such as meat and fish, oil and tar, even oysters, brought more money by way of fines imposed by the general court into the manorial coffers, as did also trespass in the lord's meadows with pigs, sheep and cows. Particularly appropriate for 20th century Newmarket is the item recording that the wives of John Brunne and John Osteller are sellers of horsebread and are fined for buying three loaves for a penny and selling two for a penny.³² In 1472-73 the lords of the manor received 17s. 2d. from the fines imposed in the general court.

³⁰ CRN, p. 29: SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/36.

³¹ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/14.

³² CRN, p. 22: SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/38.

The leet court was held round the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula (better known as Lammas Day), and was concerned entirely with minor rights of the King, mostly of two kinds, offences against the king's peace, and nuisances on the king's highway. Among the numerous assaults recorded in the court rolls, the following stands out: 'John Catelyn, chaplain, (6d.) assaulted William Coteler and drew blood from him; Richard Taylor, chaplain (4d.) assaulted the foresaid William Coteler; and Walter, chaplain (3d.) assaulted the foresaid William Coteler';³³ poor William, one wonders what he had done to incur such violence from men of peace! As for nuisances on the king's highway, characteristic are the following: 'Walter Bocher places intestines in the king's highway to the public nuisance'; 'John Manston (3d.) has a heap of dung in the king's highway to the public nuisance' and is also fined 12d. for putting 'a beam of wood in the public watercourse to the public nuisance'.³⁴ In 1472-1473 the lords of the manor received 4s. 10d. from fines imposed by the leet.

The fair court, like the general court was held only twice a year, round St. Barnabas' Day (11 June) and round St. Simon and St. Jude's Day (28 October), the times of the year when the fairs were held in Newmarket. The fines from these courts, chiefly for non-attendance or bad maintenance of shops, at least in those held in 1400-1412, as well as the profits from the fair itself, were annually well over £3; but by 1472 evidently the popularity of the fair had waned and the proceeds of both had dropped to only 26s. 4d.

The fair itself was no doubt originally held in the High Street. It is clear from the court rolls that by the 15th century it had been transferred to the market place in the Rookery. 16th-century rolls however refer to St. Mary's Square as the Fairstead, and it is so called in the Enclosure Award map of 1821. It was of course a much bigger and less local affair than the weekly market. Earlier rolls record, among the expenses of the manor, the purchase of six purses for the men hired to collect the fair dues, and the payment of a tenth or tithe of its receipts to 'the chaplain of the chantry chapel of St. Mary, built in Newmarket for the repose of the souls of the lords of the manor'.

Five Hundred Years ago

What kind of picture does the account roll give us of 15th-century Newmarket? Obviously it is an incomplete one, since the roll is concerned with only one side of the town, St. Mary's side, and only with the tenants of the manor. But it suggests a Newmarket

³³ SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/10.

³⁴ CRN, p. 2; SRO(B), Acc. 1476/1/18; 1476/1/17. See also above, p. 254 and n. 6.

with a lot of ordinary people occupied very largely with selling merchandise in the market or running ale or eating houses in the High Street. The great figures who appear in the history books did not adorn the Newmarket scene; even the lord of the manor is only a shadowy figure who condescends to visit Newmarket on a few occasions in the year.

Fortunately we can supplement our account roll picture not only with the earlier court rolls but also with the 20 surviving Newmarket wills for the 15th century, including several of people whose names appear in our roll. The reading of these wills at once indicates one very big omission from the roll. We should never guess, apart from a reference to 'the lane leading to the chapel of blessed Mary', that the Church, and in particular St. Mary's and All Saints', played any part in the life of the inhabitants of 15th-century Newmarket. In all the surviving wills there is always the bequest 'for the high altar' of either St. Mary's or All Saints', generally for tithes forgotten or unpaid. But it was clearly more than mere convention. Arthur Greysson for example left money to the four orders of friars in Cambridge; John Grygge and John Bonde left money for the repair of St. Mary's and All Saints', and of five other churches in the neighbourhood; and in other wills money is left to church guilds at Stetchworth, Wood Ditton and St. Mary's. William Folkys bequeathed 20s. 'to the sayd churche of our lady to the stolling or rodelofting which that they beganne first'. John Ray left a hive of bees to provide beeswax for the light in front of the statue of blessed Mary in the chapel of All Saints'; Adam Colakyr left a cauldron to All Saints' to heat the lights in the easter tomb.³⁵ In any account of Newmarket during the 15th century we must reckon with the Church as playing a big part.

We notice in our account roll that there is little overlap between those who have holdings in the High Street and those who rent stalls or shops in the market. No doubt this is partly due to the fact that then as now the latter came in from the neighbouring villages to sell their wares; thus we read of Thomas Todde of Bury, John Dawe of the Green, John Simond of Barrow and John Webb of Bottisham—the places are presumably mentioned because they are comparative newcomers to the market; the earlier court rolls record the names of merchants from all the neighbouring Cambridgeshire villages (though strangely only from a few Suffolk ones). There were none the less a few who both resided in Newmarket and had shops or stalls in the market. Simon Funstone for example, had a foot in both market and town, with both shops and holdings as well as a house called the Old Bakehouse and Fannefeyre

³⁵ TNW, pp. 36, 39, 32, 29, 42, 27, 35.

with its stable and barn. When he died in 1497 he does not mention in his will the shops, but left 'to Margaret my wyffe all my londes, tenementes, houses, croftes and medowys' and a horse to each of his two sons, Henry and William.³⁶ John Grygge too had a shop as well as a house and an adjoining garden; when he died in 1488 he had evidently done well, directing that 'alle my Shepe be sold by myn wyffe' and leaving to her and 'Robert Larkyn her sone all myn hors with the carte harneys and alle othyr thynges longyng to the same'.³⁷ Katharine Poperyk too had shops and a garden as well as a holding in the High Street. Another who bridges the two worlds of High Street and market is Ralph Lote alias Taylor who at the height of his prosperity seems to have had at least seven holdings and eight shops or stalls (most of them in Barkers' Row). But apart from these the two worlds do not seem to have overlapped.

One of the interesting features of our roll is the fact that sons rarely succeed their fathers as tenants either of holdings or of shops; only three sons appear to be in their father's shop, William Aynorth, John Fennale and John Boydon, and only two sons in their father's holding, Ralph Balowe and Thomas Percyvale. It is perhaps understandable why this should be so in the case of shops or stalls which were rented out 'at the lord's will', and we suppose that if there was a large demand a shop might be let out on the principle of 'first come first served' or to the highest bidder. An examination of our wills suggests that economic factors may have prevented some from inheriting their father's holdings. When he had made dispositions for his soul's health (in the middle ages a man's primary concern), it looks as if a Newmarket man was not normally wealthy enough to provide for both his wife and his children; he may, of course, have already provided for his children, but in his will he tended to leave his property, including his holding, to his wife 'for the term of her life', and directed that when she died the property should be sold and the proceeds distributed among the children. Thus John Grygge willed that 'Felice myn wyffe have to her all myn tenements that I dwell in with all the londes longyng thereto and alle myn londes lying in the Townes of Ixnyng and Dytton with all other pertenantes longyng thereto to have and to hold to her terms of her lyffe'; and added 'after the decease of the said Felice the said tenement and foresaid londes with their appertenantes to be solde by myn executores to performe this myn present testament and laste wyll'; this included legacies of 40s. each (out of the proceeds of the sale) to his son John and his daughter Margaret.

³⁶ TNW, p. 45: SRO(B), Boner f. 92.

³⁷ TNW, p. 40: SRO(B), Hervye f. 392.

There is one group of people about which our roll tells us nothing except that they had holdings on the High Street. The list of holdings includes the names of at least 13 who were not tenants of the manor; they are mentioned in the roll because their holding adjoins that of a manorial tenant whose holding can thereby be more precisely located; I have identified them with an asterisk in the key to my plan of Newmarket in 1472. For example the landlords of the Ship, the Christopher, the Ram, the Griffin and the Angel were not tenants of the manor; did they own their own holdings or were they tenants of another manor, perhaps Exning or Wood Ditton? Nor do we know anything about the sub-tenants in some of the holdings where the rent-paying tenant mentioned in the roll has another holding.

Another group of people about whom our roll tells us nothing is those who had no holdings of their own but were servants in the more prosperous households or journeymen and apprentices to the tradesmen of the town. How many people for example were there in Roger Holyngworth's household, besides his wife Agnes and his son Nicholas? As bailiff and collector of rates he surely had others who worked for him. The court rolls record the presence of servants, known simply by their Christian names, in some households, for example John Kyrkeby had a servant John. Some of the testators make bequests to others, men and women, who may well have worked for them in some capacity or other; Adam Colakyr for example left in his will two pecks of barley and a brass pot to Matilda Grene and two pecks of barley to Robert Fleke.³⁸ We know also of John Stedman, carpenter, who in our roll was paid 10s. for repairing the tollbooth, and was allowed 9s. for 'commons' for himself and his workmen. Of the really poor we know nothing at all, unless we include John Sporle from whom an amercement of 4d. could not be levied because he was housebound.

Fifteenth-century Newmarket seems to have been a small but prosperous market town; its residents were husbandmen working on their strips of land, tradesmen with shops and stalls in the market and innkeepers supplying the needs for refreshment and accommodation to the many travellers on the great road from London to Norwich.

³⁸ TNW, p. 35: SRO(B), Hervye f. 107.

LIST OF SHOPS AND STALLS

The following list of shops and stalls is based on locations specifically stated in the roll or inferred from it. The numbers against each row indicate the numbers of shops therein.

In the Market Place (In Foro Domini)

- Butchery* (25): William Maryot (4); Thomas Sewall; Walter Pekche; John Dawe of the Green (3); Thomas Skrevener (12); John Fennale; William Preston; Thomas Cohard; John Colett
- Ropers' Row* (9): Thomas Smyth; John Cooke; Richard Cullyng (2); Thomas Stock; William Haukere (2); Katherine Poperyk; Thomas Cullyng
- Spicers' Row* (1): Richard Cullyng
- Turners' Row* (4): Richard Cullyng (2); William Maryot (2)
- Drapery* (23): Richard Stern (4); Richard Cullyng (9); Margaret Poole; John Herward; Richard Motte; Thomas Skrevener (2); Robert Kynge; Katherine Poperyk; William Maryot; John Simond (2)
- Mercery* (9½): John Goytie; John Boydon (2); William Cootes (1½); Thomas Skrevener; Thomas Stock; John Bagott; Laurence Smyth; John Bryghtwell
- Ironmongers' Row* (6): Thomas Pyngill; John Herward (2); John Fennale; John Simond (2)
- Cheesemarket* (6): Thomas Skrevener (4); John Webb; William Troys
- Beside the Tollbooth* (3): John Whytyng; John Jakeman; John Pyrton
- Others (unlocated)* (4): Simon Funstone (3); John Grygge

In the High Street

- Beside the Cross* (3): Katharine Poperyk (2); John Deresley
- By the Guildhall* (?) (14):
- Cordwainers' Row* (5): William Cuckowe (2); William Aylenoth; Thomas Skrevener; Robert Kynge
- Barkers' Row* (9): Nicholas Wylkyn (2); Thomas Stock; Thomas Cullyng; Robert Kynge; Thomas Gochie; Thomas Todde; Robert Mare; John Parkere

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