

RIDING OUT RECESSION: IXWORTH AND WOOLPIT IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

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INTRODUCTION

THE FORTUNES OF towns in the closing two centuries of the Middle Ages, from Black Death to Reformation, have been a source of intense historical debate. This debate has generated some excellent work on individual towns, such as Alec Betterton and David Dymond's study of 'Lavenham – Industrial Town' and also Alan Dyer's more general survey of 'Decline and Growth in English towns 1400–1640'. One of Alan Dyer's tentative conclusions is that smaller towns enjoyed a 'more cheerful destiny' than larger provincial ones (Dyer 1995, 53). At the time Ixworth and Woolpit were both villis in West Suffolk, some seven miles apart, of similar size, in a similar landscape, of similar distance from Bury St Edmunds and showing similar signs of economic vitality. For all their similarities, their stories are quite different. My essay compares their fortunes; what went on there; how lords and villagers fared; whether, when and why they prospered; and finally whether they should be regarded as towns or villages. Throughout I have used the term 'vill' to avoid prejudging this final question, but I have found it difficult to avoid the term 'villager'.

SOURCES

The archives of small towns in the Middle Ages were rarely extensive and what records were made have been whittled down by time and chance over the intervening five hundred years. Neither Ixworth nor Woolpit has left a wealth of evidence, but both have left enough to allow some tentative conclusions to be drawn. As the former seat of an Augustinian prior, Ixworth is and probably always has been better recorded than most of its neighbouring villis. Its twenty-four late 15th-century court rolls ('the Ixworth Priory Court Book') are the best source of information about everyday life and a handful of account rolls also provide valuable insights. Woolpit was within the orbit of the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds. Those who have read Jocelin de Brakelond's Chronicle will know of Abbot Samson's visit to Rome in the 12th century to secure control of Woolpit church and of his return in disguise as a Scotsman (Greenway and Sayers 1989, 43–45). A series of charters survives, most pre-dating the Black Death, recording grants of land to various monastic officers ('obedienciaries'), like the Almoner and Sacrist, and Woolpit was included in the detailed custumal of his manors prepared by the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds in 1357 shortly after the Black Death. One of his subsequent account rolls also includes some references to the vill. Both Prior and Abbot made occasional lists of their lands and other assets. Death and taxes were as certain five hundred years ago as they are today. So, villagers left their mark by paying taxes, making wills, applying for probate and very occasionally appearing in the records of central government, other monastic houses and great households. Most of the surviving material is concerned with use, value, distribution and produce of land, but just sometimes it throws a shaft of light on to the more intimate affairs of medieval men and women.

BUILDINGS

A town's architectural legacy is an imperfect reflection of its economic fortunes. As Alan Dyer (1995, 35) reminds us, the survival of old buildings may simply mean that no one has troubled or had sufficient means to replace them. The quality of buildings is as important as their quantity.

Whilst neither can rival the likes of Lavenham, both Ixworth and Woolpit have a rich heritage of medieval buildings. Their parish churches date largely from the 15th century and bear witness to the piety and affluence of worshippers. Ixworth's pride in its tower is matched by Woolpit's pride in its south porch, angel roof and surviving medieval pews. We know from local wills that villagers gave generously towards the cost of building work, for instance Thomas Vyell who gave £4 for the building of Ixworth church tower and John Stevynesson who gave 13s. 4d. for the building of Woolpit church porch.¹ Thomas Vyell's contribution has earned him immortality in the tile, now inside the tower, which bears his name.

Both vills have famous inns dating from the early 16th century, The Pickerel in Ixworth and The Swan in Woolpit. Inns undoubtedly served as a focus for the social and economic life of the time. Bargains struck in Ixworth's market or Woolpit's fair were often sealed by a drink at an inn. Farmers in town to buy horses from Woolpit's fair and pilgrims paying their respects to Woolpit's famous image of the Blessed Virgin Mary no doubt squabbled over the better rooms in the inn. Leigh Alston points out that Woolpit has five of the county's dozen or so surviving galleries from medieval inns.²

Most surviving medieval houses in Ixworth huddle around the old marketplace at the bottom end of the High Street where land transactions suggest the preponderance of villagers then lived (I.P.C.B.). Most in Woolpit are close to Green Hill which still serves as its town centre. Both illustrate what David Dymond describes as 'a tightness of plan characteristic of towns' (Wade and Dymond 1999, 162). Compared with pre-Black Death accommodation, many houses were spacious and of high quality, with the building work usually done by professional carpenters, daubers, roofers and tilers. Ixworth and Woolpit each has a 'Wealden House' which was the most desirable residence that any well-heeled villager could aspire to. Dover House in Ixworth was first erected in the early 15th century and modernised a hundred years later. Improvements included a ceiling over the main hall, Trees of Life moulded on the front external wall, ornate carving above the fireplace downstairs and the unusual luxury of another fireplace upstairs (Colman 1963, 336-41). Haywards in Woolpit is earlier, dating from the third quarter of the 14th century. Whilst not a Wealden, Weaver House also in Woolpit is listed as 'an urban house of high quality'.

POPULATION

If small towns of the later Middle Ages are judged on population alone then very few of them prospered. For various reasons but mostly because of plague, the population fell sharply during the late Middle Ages. In John Hatcher's words, it was 'the longest period of declining population in recorded English history' (Hatcher 1984, 11). By the time that the population began to recover in the second quarter of the 16th century, East Anglia had only two-fifths of the number of inhabitants it had before the Black Death. It would, therefore, be surprising if the population of either Ixworth or Woolpit grew over the period.

Guessing medieval populations is a hazardous exercise. No censuses were taken and no parish records of baptisms, burials or marriages were made. The starting point is to gather as much evidence of population as is available. Lists of tenants and taxpayers provide the

best information, but they did not include everyone. So, multipliers must be used and these are not universally agreed. To allow for women, children and other groups my calculations assume a multiplier of five for tenants and six for taxpayers in 1524.

In Ixworth, in 1283, seventy-six villagers were indicted for involvement in a local riot and fifty-six paid tax for one of Edward I's wars against the Welsh (*C.P.R. (1281-92)*, 89-90; Powell 1910). Only twenty-three of the rioters paid tax so there are 109 different names. In 1299 forty-nine tenants held land on the slightly smaller of the two manors.³ Two hundred years later 102 people acquired land and sixty-two men served as jurors in the manor court over the period of eighteen years spanned by the Ixworth Priory Court Book. In 1524 fifty-four Ixworth villagers paid tax for one of Henry VIII's wars against the French (Hervey 1910, 54-55). Throughout the late Middle Ages the Prior and his brethren inflated the numbers, but never by more than twenty souls. These figures suggest that the population of Ixworth may have been about 550 before the Black Death and have fallen to about 325 by the Reformation. Turning to Woolpit, 101 tenants lived in about sixty-nine dwellings on the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds's manor in 1357.³ By then the Black Death had killed as many as two-fifths of villagers, so before it struck the population may have been nearly 700. In 1524 there were fifty-eight taxpayers, equating to about 350 villagers at the Reformation (Hervey 1910, 333-34). In conclusion the population of both vills fell significantly, but perhaps Woolpit's rather more than Ixworth's.



FIG. 28 – Ixworth High Street: several of the houses date from the late Middle Ages. They were built to last by skilled craftsmen, using local timber. The ground floors were once shops (photo by permission of Mr Graham Portlock).

AGRICULTURE

Small towns were as much agricultural as urban communities. Fields surrounded and penetrated into the heart of the vill. Most townsfolk had holdings in the fields. Their fortunes were, therefore, closely bound to the fortunes of farming. Before the Black Death population pressure meant that every available acre of land was cultivated, arable production was expanded to the limits of available technology and rents and grain prices were high. For a while after the Black Death peasants with little or no land took up the slack which meant little immediate change. However, as time wore on and numbers continued to fall, rentals and prices spiralled down and much marginal land went out of cultivation. This caused a long term agricultural depression from which Ixworth and Woolpit can hardly have escaped.

A comparison of rentals in Ixworth shows that the value of arable land fell between the late 13th and the late 15th centuries. In 1299 only eight out of twenty-seven (less than 30 per cent) of William Criketot's tenants were paying less than 2d. an acre each year, whilst two hundred years later more than 70 per cent of the Prior's tenanted land was being let for 2d. an acre or less each year.⁵ Nevertheless, throughout the Middle Ages a significant differential persisted between the value of the best and the worst land and in the later period some land was still being let for as much as 10d. an acre. Certainly enclosed land carried a premium. At a court held in 1475 Agnes Chatysle swore fealty for a freehold close of two and a half acres for 16d. a year, or a little less than 6d. an acre. At the same court the Prior granted to Thomas and Joan Puttock a close of one and a half acres and a piece of land of eight acres for a total rent of 7s. 6d. a year, or a little less than 9½d. an acre (I.P.C.B. 13 Apr. 1475).

Some land in Ixworth was undoubtedly difficult to let. Nearly a fifth of recorded land transactions were grants 'out of the hands' of the lord suggesting that the land had been abandoned by former tenants and that the Prior had taken time to find fresh takers. The manor court frequently heard complaints by the Prior that his tenants had committed waste by allowing their land and houses to become derelict and court orders to rectify such waste were often ignored. Nevertheless, all the signs are that Ixworth experienced an active land market throughout the Middle Ages and that few land holdings were permanently abandoned. This rather atypical pattern supports the view that the Prior continued to farm much of Ixworth himself and so kept a tight grip on better quality arable land and pasture.⁶

Whilst the evidence is limited, the story of agriculture in Woolpit after the Black Death is not a happy one. Already in 1357 the rot had set in, with twenty-nine acres abandoned and in decay. Twenty years later the Abbot lost income of 16s. 7½d. for decay of rent for land.⁷ The closing years of the Middle Ages may have been rather more encouraging. In two successive indentures dated 1412 and 1472 the same parcel of land was let for 13d. and later 24d. each year, reflecting the general upturn in its fortunes that Woolpit appears to have enjoyed in the second half of the 15th century.⁸

The staple crop in Ixworth both before and after the Black Death was barley. It accounted for a little over two-thirds the volume of all crops taxed in 1283 and a little under two-thirds the volume of all the Prior's crops threshed in 1474-75.⁹ Local records show a continuous fall in barley prices over two hundred years. In 1283 barley was taxed at 4s. a quarter, but by 1475 the Prior was buying it for less than 2s. a quarter.

It is doubtful whether Woolpit's farmers ever grew such a staple crop. At the time of the Black Death his tenants paid to the Abbot as food rents thirty-two bushels of malt barley, 270 bushels of oats, 226½ bushels of malt oats, no rye and thirty-three and a half bushels of wheat.¹⁰ This does not mean that the vill was flooded with oats or devoid of rye. Oats were the crop traditionally given as food rents and provided fodder for the lord's horses.

Woolpit appears as a source of 'fodercorn' for the Abbot thirty years earlier in the Pinchbeck Register (Hervey 1925, I, 334). What these food rents perhaps suggest is that wheat was as important a crop as barley in Woolpit and far more important than it was in Ixworth. The deeper loams of Woolpit and the chalkier soils of Ixworth may help explain the difference. Wheat held its price rather better than barley after the Black Death, which may have provided some cushion against deflation, but probably not enough (Farmer 1991, 443–55).

An upturn in pastoral farming after the Black Death provided some consolation for this downturn in arable farming. Before the Black Death grazing was limited by a shortage of pasture and meadow as fields that had once reared livestock were turned over to arable. Afterwards the trend changed. In a new age, pastoral farming had inherent advantages. It was less labour intensive than arable farming and so the wage bill was smaller (Keen 1990, 72). Higher standards of living stoked demand for meat, leather, dairy products and wool which generally held their prices better than grain (Hatcher 1977, 50).

This typical pattern is well illustrated in Ixworth. In 1283 neither the two lay lords nor the Prior was taxed on any cows or sheep suggesting, at best, that seigneurial herds and flocks were small. Many villagers owned a few beasts which, no doubt, were highly prized. Nevertheless, only 150 cows and 340 sheep attracted the tax collector's eye (Powell 1910). Sixteen years later less than two per cent of William Criketot's demesne land was pasture



FIG. 29 – Dover House, Ixworth: a roomy 'Wealden' house built in the late Middle Ages with two storeys and four bays, fit for a prosperous medieval yeoman, perhaps even a gentleman (photo by permission of Mr Graham Portlock).

or meadow and only three of his tenants let pasture, although the heathland of Thorpe Common provided more grazing.¹¹

Pastoral farming expanded after the Black Death, although the Prior enjoyed most of the benefits himself and shared them with his tenants only at a price. There are only ten references to tenant holdings of pasture in the Ixworth Priory Court Book and, in 151 recorded land transactions, only ten references to meadow. Of the land transferred by these ten transactions only about five per cent comprised meadow. Grazing rights of villagers on pasture and common were strictly regulated. Local by-laws prohibited grazing on demesne land between 25 March and 31 July in each year. Cases of trespass on the lord's pasture and of illegal commoning were heard at nearly every court session. The Prior sought to enforce these by-laws by seizing and impounding the stray animals of villagers. This was a continuing source of friction which on one occasion erupted in litigation between Prior and villagers before the royal courts (I.P.C.B., particularly 19 March 1481).

The Prior leased his cattle to his tenants, in 1454–55 fourteen cows and one heifer to Edmund Barry and in 1474–75 eighteen cows to Thomas Crysten.¹² Twenty-two different offenders appeared before the manor court in thirty cases of trespass by straying cows, a sure sign that, despite continuing shortage of pasture, many other villagers kept them.

The sale of sheep wool, pelts, hides and meat comprised a significant proportion of the Prior's income.¹³ When the priory was dissolved in 1536 his flocks were worth £23. 16s. 8d. and included 100 wethers and sixty lambs (Haslewood 1892, 109–12). Sheep farming appears to have operated as a cartel from which most villagers were excluded. The Prior enjoyed a right to fold his sheep on fallow and pasture.¹⁴ In 1474–75 he sold to two of his tenants, Geoffrey Berningham and John Lopham, the right to graze sheep on his pasture.¹⁵ Berningham had thirty-four wethers and Lopham probably more. In a long list of cases of trespass by livestock in the Ixworth Priory Court Book only two villagers were fined for trespass by sheep, one of whom was the same Geoffrey Berningham and the other was John Leman. Berningham, Lopham and Leman were all members of Ixworth's peasant elite. Small fry were not welcome in sheep farming.

Nevertheless, sheep farming was no panacea (Farmer 1991, 461–63). The wool trade suffered during the first three-quarters of the 15th century due to foreign wars, a glut in the domestic market and short sighted tax policy, so wool prices were low. Suffolk wool was not popular and its price was well below the national average (Britnell 1991, 209). In 1454–55 the Prior was selling his wool for only 16d. per stone. Furthermore, sheep were prone to the disease of murrain and however much terpic, tar and pitch the Prior might buy to protect them he could not guarantee their immunity.¹⁶ Years of investment could be wiped out by a single epidemic.

Woolpit was perhaps less typical in so far as the Abbot may have moved into pastoral farming rather earlier than the Prior. By 1286 he already owned 160 acres of pasture in the vill and his bulls enjoyed a right to roam (Hervey 1925, II, 151). The ecclesiastical tax return of 1291 refers to pasture, and the series of charters by which the Abbot's obedientiaries acquired land in Woolpit before the Black Death refer to pasture and meadow.¹⁷ Sadly, his tenants seem to have been little better endowed with pasture than their contemporaries in Ixworth. In the 1357 custumal there are only ten references to pasture and a mere three to meadow amounting to less than four acres. Common pasture and meadow was, however, available to those villagers brave enough to risk confrontation with the Abbot's bull! After the Black Death evidence of land use sadly peters out. Sheep must have continued to graze in Woolpit, for in 1377–78 the Abbot incurred considerable expense in buying posts, digging ditches and erecting hedges to enclose land near Woolpit church for his sheep. Yet he received no income that year from forty-five acres of fallow land because he had not bought any sheep to graze there.¹⁸ At the same time that the Abbot

wound down his pastoral operation, the importance of Woolpit fair grew and drovers were attracted from further afield. For at least part of the year, much pasture in the vill must have been given over to horses awaiting sale at the fair.

In conclusion, a sharp fall in grain prices took the profit out of the commercial farming which had characterised the 'High Middle Ages' and forced many landlords to abandon direct management of their demesne land in favour of leasing. In Ixworth the Prior had many mouths to feed, including his brethren, their servants and the craftsmen and labourers who worked for him on a casual basis. They all expected their wages to be supplemented with food. So, on his doorstep in Ixworth he kept most of his demesne arable land under direct management, whilst leasing out at least some of his pastoral operation. In Woolpit the Abbot and his obedientiaries beat a retreat. Whilst they continued to receive a healthy income of £13. 6s. 8d. each year from Woolpit church, by 1535 only the Sacrist retained any other significant interest in the vill, drawing 53s. 4d. each year from the manor of Coldhall (*Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 462–65). There were no doubt many reasons for this retreat. Not only was the Abbot faced with an agricultural depression, but he also lost the labour services of his tenants as serfdom withered away. Before the Black Death his tenants had owed him 321 works to plough his land, 132 works to hoe it, 331 works to harvest his crop, 376 works to thresh it, 114 works to carry it away and fifty-five works to mow and gather his hay. One third of these works were rewarded with a meal of bread, herring, cheese and ale, but two-thirds were rewarded only with his blessing.¹⁹ Without this help, the Abbot must have concluded that direct management of a demesne nearly seven miles from the abbey was not worthwhile. Having made this decision, he appears to have taken the further step of disposing of his land in the vill.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

During the commercial expansion which characterised the period before the Black Death the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds maintained a stranglehold on trade within medieval commuting distance (seven miles) of his town. So, at a time when small local markets were blossoming elsewhere, much of West Suffolk remained a market-free zone. Ixworth and Woolpit were on the edge of this zone and, in their different ways, escaped the Abbot's restrictions.

In 1293 he granted the Prior access free of toll to his town, perhaps as an inducement to buy and sell in Bury St Edmunds rather than in Ixworth (Gransden 1963, 148–49). He may have enjoyed some success in attracting trade to Bury St Edmunds, as the Cellarer of Ixworth priory was selling wheat in the market there at the end of the 14th century.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Abbot failed to stifle trade in Ixworth. By the early 1300s a stone cross stood in the High Street and almost certainly provided the focus for an informal market.²¹ The market subsequently moved a little further down the High Street to the site which, even today, can be identified by a widening of the road. In 1384, through the good offices of the Prior, the King granted a royal charter to hold a weekly market and two annual fairs (*C.Ch.R. (1341–1417)*, 293). In the same year that the Cellarer was selling wheat in Bury St Edmunds, he was also selling it in Ixworth. Unlike so many, Ixworth's market continued to flourish until the end of the Middle Ages.

Ixworth on market day was a lively place to be. Merchants from further afield, like John Odeham of Bury St Edmunds (I.P.C.B. 7 Nov. 1469), came to buy and sell. Perhaps the Prior's bailiff John Bunne sold the produce of the demesne; when recovering payment from buyers, he appeared as creditor in one of the more valuable debt actions before the manor court (I.P.C.B. 4 Mar. 1472, 19 Mar. 1481). But above all, the market served the vill and its rural hinterland, local farmers selling their surplus produce, craftsmen and

tradesmen plying their wares and smallholders and landless peasants buying the essentials of life. In just over half the recorded debt actions both creditor and debtor were local people in the sense that they owned or had owned land in the village. This small scale trade is reflected in the recorded value of the debts, more than half of which were less than 5s.

TABLE I: DEBT ACTIONS IN THE MANOR COURT (1465–83)

<i>Value of debt</i>	<i>Number of actions</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>
Less than 1s.	8	19.0%	19.0%
1s., but less than 5s.	14	33.3%	52.3%
5s., but less than 10s.	11	26.2%	78.5%
10s., but less than 15s.	3	7.1%	85.6%
15s., but less than £1	0	0%	85.6%
£1 plus	6	14.3%	99.9%
Total	42		

(N.B.: These are the debt actions recorded in the Ixworth Priory Court Book to which a value was given. Another twenty-nine recorded debt actions gave no indication of value. Some entries may record the same action appearing in successive courts. It cannot be assumed that these debt actions all arose from market transactions because much buying and selling took place outside the market, but they probably reflect the value of transactions that were being conducted in the market.)

Ixworth's market proved so durable for several possible reasons. The earlier informal market in the vill had no doubt generated goodwill which the chartered market inherited. There was relatively little local competition. Ixworth's position close to the frontier between Breckland and High Suffolk made it a convenient point of exchange for the produce of two different economic zones. It was on a main highway and enjoyed good road links with neighbouring villages. The Prior had lost the carrying services from his tenants that he had once enjoyed, so carriage costs made it more expensive to buy or sell in distant markets. He might buy exotic items further afield, such as the coal he bought in Brandon, but the cost of carriage was such as to merit particular note.²² In the same way as most lesser lords, he almost certainly bought more day-to-day items on his own doorstep. He continued to manage directly much of his demesne and Ixworth market provided an easy outlet for the sale of his surplus produce. A relatively high proportion of smallholders and landless peasants in Ixworth meant that many local villagers could not provide for their own subsistence and so had to spend their wages in buying produce on the market.²³

As well as the weekly market, Ixworth hosted two annual fairs on 1 May and 18 October (*C.Ch.R. (1341–1417)*, 293). The first may have been an occasion for merriment, but the second was concerned with the more serious business of buying and selling livestock. Surname evidence suggests that drovers were coming to Ixworth from as far afield as Scotland and Wales and then staying. The family of Schot had arrived in Ixworth from

Scotland by the late 13th century.²⁴ Two hundred years later Robert Schot became Abbot of Bury St Edmunds and his 'crown and arrows' can still be seen on a panel on the external wall of Ixworth church tower.

Neither of Ixworth's fairs ever acquired the repute of Woolpit's famous horse fair which William Harrison described as one of the four English places 'wherein great plenty of horses and colts is bought and sold'.²⁵ The fair may be traced back before the Black Death to 1286 when the Abbot enjoyed the liberty of a fair on 8 September each year, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Hervey 1925, II, 151). William the merchant held land in Woolpit at a similar date and was a local pioneer of the commercial classes.²⁶ Nevertheless, he was in a minority and, before the Black Death, Woolpit remained overwhelmingly an agricultural community. Indeed, in 1341 tax collectors reported that no merchant in the Hundred of Thedwastre lived more from trade than from farming (Vanderzee 1807, 76).

Two hundred years later the fair had grown and horses were being sold to visitors from throughout East Anglia. John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, spent considerable sums at the fair in 1481 buying many horses; John Capell of Stebbing in Essex was there at around the same time buying 'northern steers'; and between 1501 and 1533 the Prior of Thetford sent six delegations to buy horses.²⁷ If drovers were coming to Ixworth from the Celtic fringe, almost certainly they were coming to Woolpit too. Indeed, more fortunate visitors were entertained by the playing of bagpipes.²⁸ The fair was not just a one-day wonder, but provided a valuable spin-off for local retailers and innkeepers. Having bought horses on 8 September, John Howard's agent was back in Woolpit on 2 October 1481 to buy bread, ale, beef, mutton, geese, sauce, oatmeal and chickens. This retail trade made the fortune of the shopkeeper Robert Copynger who gave all the 'ware and stuff in my shope' to his wife Joan when he died in 1502 and who joined the ranks of the wealthiest testators by having his will proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.²⁹

The success of Woolpit's fair had more than one ingredient. Whilst horses never replaced oxen as the favourite medieval plough beast, their price relative to that of oxen increased as they proved their adaptability and became cheaper to feed (Farmer 1991, 455–61). There was ample pasture for horses to graze. The vill enjoyed good communications, lay on the main road between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds and was a convenient stopping-point for anyone driving horses south towards London. It was on the doorstep of perhaps the most prosperous region in late medieval England, within a golden triangle that joined Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Colchester and encompassed six of the fifty wealthiest provincial towns (Dyer 1995, 62 and 63). There was, therefore, no shortage of potential customers with money to spend. As Clive Paine shows, Woolpit with its chapel and image of the Blessed Virgin Mary was a popular pilgrimage centre which even King Henry VII's wife Elizabeth treated with due reverence (Paine 1993, 8–12). By 1341 pilgrims were gifting £6. 13s. 4d. a year to Woolpit church and 200 years later must have contributed a good part of the £18. 15s. that flowed into church coffers in 1535 from tithes and offerings.³⁰ The flow of pilgrims peaked on the Madonna's birthday, adding to the number of potential buyers at the fair. Pilgrims could happily combine business and pleasure.

Meanwhile, in Ixworth villagers pursued a variety of occupations. Some followed exotic trades like John Goos the draper, John Page the goldsmith and John Roodese the glover.³¹ John Page, no doubt, pandered to the Prior's taste for elaborate ritual. He was one of only eight goldsmiths whose deaths were recorded in the Court of the Archdeacon of Sudbury before 1550, six coming from Bury St Edmunds and the other from Sudbury. Henry Deye was the local middle man, buying in bulk in the market and selling smaller quantities at a profit. In total he was party to fifteen of seventy-one debt actions recorded over a period from 1469 to 1483. He was creditor in six of the forty-two debt actions referred to in Table

I and debtor in three of the nine debt actions for sums of 10s. or more. Deye's entrepreneurial spirit was tolerated, perhaps even encouraged, by the Prior and on the only occasion that he was convicted of forestalling the market he appears to have escaped without a fine (I.P.C.B., 3 Dec. 1479). Others worked as bakers, brewers, butchers, chandlers, cobblers, leather workers, millers, smiths, tailors and wrights – all closely allied to the agricultural world around them. For some such occupations were a regular way of life, for others they were an occasional venture outside the normal routine of farming. Bakers and brewers were fined each year in the manor court for breaking the assizes of bread and ale. In practice, such fines were licence fees payable for the privilege of carrying on the trade (Farmer 1991, 427). In the Ixworth Priory Court Book nine different people (including three women) were fined for breaking the assize of bread and sixteen different people (including four women) were fined for breaking the assize of ale. The two family names of Fuller and Nicolas, however, appear repeatedly in the records of both bakers and brewers. Of a total of eighty-eight fines, forty-seven were paid by a Fuller or a Nicolas. These families clearly had a firm grip on both baking and brewing in Ixworth.

The building industry was a major source of employment in Ixworth throughout the 15th century. Carpenters, daubers, masons, plumbers, roofers and tilers earned good money working on extensions and repairs to the priory, the church, peasant houses and agricultural buildings.³² In 1454–55 the Prior employed no fewer than twenty-seven different people in building work. Brick and tile making in the vill found a ready market in such activity.

Some of the earliest English medieval brickwork can be found in Suffolk, dating from the 12th century (Pankhurst 1999, 146). The Hundred Years War then served as a catalyst for brick making in the county. Soldiers returned from fighting in France and the Low Countries with a new-found taste for the brick buildings they had seen there. They brought with them skilled foreign brick makers to help create a domestic brick making industry (Le Patourel 1991, 820–22). The Prior had dug a claypit and opened a tile kiln in Ixworth by the middle of the 15th century and it was still operating in the early 17th century.³³ Foreign experts may have been involved, for Arnold Dewcheman lived in Ixworth in 1469 and Petur Ducheman earned good money there in 1524 (I.P.C.B., 7 Nov. 1469; Hervey 1910, 55). The tile kiln produced bricks, flat tiles and ridge tiles. It was leased out by the Prior and became a valuable source of additional income. The first tenant was very probably John Gerard senior. He and his son John Gerard junior appear to have made a success of the business because they continued to lease it for at least twenty years. Indeed, the tile kiln may have provided the foundation for their family's fortune. Ixworth tiles earned a reputation beyond the boundaries of the vill and, as David Dymond has shown, in the 1520s and 1530s the tile kiln supplied many thousands of bricks and tiles to the Prior of Thetford.³⁴ By that time, however, the business had passed out of the hands of the Gerard family and frequent changes of ownership suggest that the later operators were finding it more difficult to make a profit.

Whilst there is ample evidence of medieval brick making in Ixworth, there is no such evidence for Woolpit. Later the white and durable bricks produced there earned fame as 'Woolpit Whites', but brick making in the vill cannot be traced back beyond 1573–77 when Edward Duger and Richard Reynolde both operated a 'brick kell'.³⁵ A medieval origin is possible, but unproven.

Cloth-making was the other major medieval industry. The field name 'Hempyard' in Ixworth can be traced back from the present day well into the 15th century, suggesting that the Prior was then growing hemp and encouraging linen production locally (I.P.C.B., 22 Nov. 1470, 19 Mar. 1481). Nevertheless, other than mention of the odd retailer, there is little evidence that the woollen cloth industry, which brought such prosperity to some parts of Suffolk in the late Middle Ages, stretched as far as Ixworth.

In contrast, Woolpit was nearer to the epicentre of the industry in south-west Suffolk and villagers were busily engaged in woollen cloth-making, albeit on a smaller scale than some clothiers in nearby towns such as Lavenham. James Fen, who died in 1574, was the first of four clothiers who appear in probate records in the hundred years after 1550 (Grimwade 1984). He may well have come from a line of cloth makers. Fifty years before he died Robert Fenne was one of the three wealthiest men in Woolpit. Fifty years before that Amy Fen left green cloth to her daughter Alice in her will. Amy was a versatile lady and her will also shows her engaged in brewing, referring to her brewing tubs and tubs for ale.³⁶ In the mid 1460s Thomas Bloys of Woolpit paid subsidy and aulnage of 1s. 6d on four woollen cloths that he was offering for sale.³⁷ Another contemporary John Hall was probably involved in a family cloth-making business too, for he bequeathed eleven woollen cloths to his father who, presumably, was his partner. The business was successful enough for John to leave 26s. 8d. for repair of the bridge on the road from Woolpit to Bury St Edmunds, and such an interest in maintaining good communications often reflected an interest in cloth making.³⁸

LORDS

The history of lordship in Ixworth and Woolpit followed quite different paths. In the early years after the Norman Conquest the manor of Ixworth belonged to the Blund family and was the head of their barony, but when the family died out it was divided and no-one enjoyed sole control. Into this political vacuum stepped the Prior, who acquired land piecemeal over two centuries until shortly after the Black Death he became the dominant lord of the vill.³⁹ Domesday Book assigns the manor of Woolpit to the Abbot as a mere outlier of Elmswell and its reference to 'the hall to which it belongs [being] in another Hundred' is almost certainly a reference to the Abbot's summer palace in Elmswell. Later some Woolpit rents were tendered at the same hall.⁴⁰ The Abbot had a park in Woolpit where he could ride in summer,⁴¹ but he must always have viewed the vill from a slightly distant perspective. When the profits of commercial farming began to roll in the High Middle Ages, Woolpit was brought into the Abbot's direct management, but earlier the manor had been leased out to Sir Robert de Cockfield and his family.⁴² It is tempting to suggest that, because it had taken so long to acquire, the Prior valued Ixworth highly, whilst the Abbot was only interested in Woolpit so long as it generated a profit. This would certainly help explain developments after the Black Death.

The Prior not only remained the principal landowner in Ixworth, but appointed the parish priest from among his brethren, kept the peace through his manor court and was the main employer. As well as priory servants, he employed agricultural labourers and building workers. It was the Prior who obtained a charter for the market, the Prior who opened the tile kiln for making bricks, the Prior who grew hemp to encourage linen production and the Prior who operated, perhaps in conjunction with the tile kiln, a 'werkynghous'.⁴³ Nothing stirred in Ixworth, but the Prior knew of it. Assuming that Ixworth was a prosperous community, he must take much of the credit.

In 1377–78 the Abbot spent the not inconsiderable sum of 25s. 3d. on repair and upkeep of a windmill in Woolpit.⁴⁴ He paid for the repair of the woodwork, bought a mill-spindle, an iron axle beam, a wheel, a sail-yard, an iron beam for the sail-yard, sedge and thatch and 260 nails. At the same time, he was already facing falling prices for the grain that he milled there, and villagers no longer willing to help him grow it without pay. It is unlikely that he was a happy man or thought of Woolpit particularly warmly. As his income fell and his costs rose the Abbot lost interest in Woolpit as a farming enterprise and relaxed his seigneurial grip. He did so in various ways. Leases of land grew longer. In 1372 Sewalle

Brown took a lease of one tenement for six years; in 1412 Walter Becon took a lease of another for sixty years; and in 1472 Robert Copynger renewed Walter's lease for a further ninety-nine years.⁴⁵ The custumal of 1357 records that even free tenants were obliged to attend the manor court twice a year, so there must have been at least two annual sittings before the Black Death, probably more. Twenty years later it is doubtful whether there was even one, as the reference in the Abbot's annual account to income from a solitary court is deleted. This only surviving account combines many entries for Elmswell with a few for Woolpit, showing that the Abbot no longer troubled to keep discrete records for the vill or treated it as a separate economic entity. The absence of surviving manorial records from Woolpit in the 15th century speaks for itself. The Abbot kept control of the church and the pilgrims' offerings, but otherwise left villagers freer to conduct their own affairs and make their own fortunes. Some duly obliged.⁴⁶

VILLAGERS

The prosperity of ordinary villagers in Ixworth and Woolpit is best reflected in the interest that tax collectors took in them. In 1524 villagers were taxed on land, goods or wages depending on which produced the greatest return for the King (Hervey 1910). The summary in Table II suggests that their wealth did not lie in land. Venturing into commercial farming, villagers faced the same obstacles as lords, that is high wages and low prices. So, few of them bothered and most peasant farmers cultivated only enough land to feed themselves and their households. What rolling acres came on to the market were probably acquired by local gentry who had larger households to feed. In the late 15th century the Ashfield family of Stowlangtoft Hall held nearly 100 acres in Ixworth from the Prior (I.P.C.B., 3 Dec. 1479) and John Drury died in 1499 leaving 500 acres of land and 300 acres of pasture in Woolpit and neighbouring villages which he had held by knight service of the Abbot (*C.I.P.M. (Henry VII)*, II, 200).

TABLE II: ASSESSMENTS FOR TAX IN 1524 TAX RETURN

	<i>Ixworth</i>		<i>Blackbourne</i>		<i>Woolpit</i>		<i>Thedwastre</i>	
	No. assessed	% assessed	No. assessed	% assessed	No. assessed	% assessed	No. assessed	% assessed
Land	1	2.0	44	11.3	0	0	39	7.3
Goods	18	36.7	186	47.6	35	60.3	260	48.5
Wages	30	61.2	161	41.1	23	39.7	237	44.2
Total	49		391		58		536	

(N.B.: A significant amount of data is missing from the tax returns for some vills. The data from Blackbourne excludes those parishes which Dr Mark Bailey (1989) describes as central or peripheral to Suffolk Breckland and which it is submitted cannot usefully be compared with Ixworth.)

Not even the wealthiest villagers greatly expanded their holdings after the Black Death. Robert Mayster, who prospered in Ixworth twenty years before the Black Death, held thirty-one separate parcels of arable, pasture and meadow extending in total to just under

forty-seven acres.⁴⁷ In eighteen years of the late 15th century John Lopham acquired eight parcels of land, but the seven for which areas were given totalled less than thirty-eight acres (I.P.C.B.). In 1524 Philip Turnour appears to be the only Ixworth villager worth taxing on land and his holdings were valued at just £1 a year. The Abbot's custumal provides a good snapshot of some 600 tenanted acres of Woolpit shortly after the Black Death. Only four villagers held more than twenty acres and four out of five held less than ten acres.⁴⁸ They may, of course, have held land elsewhere. The Abbot's tidy division of the two great fields of Maltlond and Otelond into ten-acre units had crumbled into a complex pattern of lettings and sublettings, many of them held jointly with others. John del Welle had just over thirty acres spread across sixteen different parcels, some held jointly with his brother Simon and some in his sole name. By 1524 no villager in Woolpit was worth taxing on land. Nevertheless, very few villagers abandoned the land altogether, even if most of their income came from a trade or craft. When he died the Ixworth carpenter Thomas Vyell left a plot of land to his son Thomas, another plot of land to his wife Christine and his son Thomas jointly, his house in the High Street called Knotte to Christine for life and then to another son John, and a third plot of land to Christine and Roger Gooderych jointly (I.P.C.B., 12 Nov. 1472, 8 Nov. 1473 and 27 Jun. 1480). In Woolpit the successful shopkeeper Robert Copynger left in his will his lands, meadows and pastures to his wife for life and then to his son.

In 1524 many more villagers were taxed on goods and indeed they formed the majority in Woolpit. Three of them, William Abell, Robert Fenne and William Mays, were prosperous enough to be caught by Henry VIII's 'Anticipation' by which he made his wealthiest subjects pay in advance. A tax on goods is one litmus test of a trade or craft and Abell, Fenne and Mays were perhaps Woolpit's merchant elite. A tax on goods also reflects the more comfortable life style that prosperous villagers enjoyed by the end of the Middle Ages. Robert Garrad was the wealthiest taxpayer in Ixworth and his wife's will lists some of the furniture and furnishings in their home (Tymms 1849, 109–10). Downstairs she left counters, cupboards, cauldrons, brass pots and pans, pewter, a maple wood bowl, six silver spoons and a silver salt cellar and upstairs, in her private quarters, chests, four-poster feather beds, bed coverings made either of red worsted or of Flemish materials, pillows, cushions, basins and a wardrobe of fine clothes.

Even wage-earners were doing better than their forebears had before the Black Death. Shortage of labour meant that both building and agricultural workers could demand better pay, although Ixworth farm workers may have suffered from a local twist to the balance of supply and demand. An unusually high proportion of villagers were wage earners, most of whom were probably employed by the Prior. Furthermore, a switch of emphasis from arable to pastoral farming reduced the demand for agricultural labour. Whilst some increase is apparent, this may have dampened wage rates locally.

Whilst some villagers did very well and others did well enough, even in a favourable economic climate many still struggled. The Ixworth baker and brewer Richard Fuller was the improvident son of a leading local family. In financial difficulties in the late 1400s, he was disposing of land to keep himself afloat (I.P.C.B.). However embarrassed he may have been, it is unlikely that he sank into the ranks of the local poor. In 1524 more than half the taxpayers in Ixworth and more than two in every five taxpayers in Woolpit paid the minimum tax of 4d. Below them the very poorest escaped the tax net altogether. Some paupers were treated with compassion. The Prior built almshouses in Ixworth for the old and infirm and the Almoner provided shoes in Woolpit for the footsore.⁵⁰ In their wills wealthier villagers made bequests for the poor. William Aubrey died in 1500 leaving six small silver spoons and other items to be sold, the proceeds to be divided among the 'poor folk' of Woolpit.⁵¹ Others were less welcome. In 1482 the Prior fined William Rampoley, Robert Saykyn, Richard Starlyng and William Herwarde 3d. each for harbouring and

maintaining ignominious and suspicious men and 'ryotous mytybeggars' in Ixworth (I.P.C.B., 19 Mar. 1482).

TABLE III: WAGES PER QUARTER FOR THRESHING

Grain	1357	1393-94	1394-95	1454-55	1474-75
Wheat and rye	3d.	4d.	4d.	NDA	2d. plus food
Peas and/or beans	3d.	3d.	3d.	NDA	NDA
Barley	2d.	2d.	2d.	NDA	1d. plus food
Oats	1d.	1d. - 1½d.	1½d.	NDA	NDA

(N.B.: Wage rates for threshing and winnowing are commonly used as a guide to general wage rates for agricultural labourers (Farmer 1991, 468). Such work was carried on throughout the year; so rates were less susceptible to extraordinary demand for labour that might arise at harvest. Wage rates for 1454-55 are given in pence per day and draw no distinction between different types of grain. They are generally 1½d. per day in winter and 2d. per day in summer when days were longer and labourers were expected to work more hours. An allowance of food was valued at 2d. per day (Farmer 1991, 474). The 1357 figures are for Woolpit and the later figures for Ixworth.⁴⁹ 'NDA' means no data available.)

PROSPERITY

With population in decline and agriculture no longer enjoying its pre-Black Death boom, how successful were local commercial ventures and how prosperous were Ixworth and Woolpit? One measure is comparison with neighbouring villages. The old parish of Woolpit extended over 5 per cent of the Hundred of Thedwastre (White 1844, 319). In 1327 Woolpit provided 3.4 per cent of Thedwastre's taxpayers who paid 3.2 per cent of Thedwastre's tax. Two hundred years later Woolpit provided 9.1 per cent of taxpayers who paid 8.2 per cent of tax. Furthermore, of those denizens of Thedwastre rich enough for their executors to apply for grant of probate to the Court of the Archdeacon of Sudbury in the period 1450-1549, 9.8 per cent lived in Woolpit (Hervey 1906 and 1910; Grimwade 1984). In relative economic terms, by the Reformation Woolpit was nearly three times more important locally than it had been before the Black Death. Such an impressive performance must be judged in context, as over the same period Thedwastre slipped from eighth to fourteenth position in the league of Suffolk Hundreds ranked by tax paid per acre (Todd and Dymond 1999, 203). Nor was the performance consistent. By the late 14th century signs of agricultural decay were already clear. In the early 15th century most Suffolk villages pleaded for relief from tax on the basis that they were small and impoverished and Woolpit pleaded as loudly as anywhere else. In 1449 the vill was granted a tax reduction of 36.15 per cent, the second highest in the Hundred (Dymond and Virgoe 1986, 76-98). In the following hundred years Woolpit must surely have enjoyed a 'golden age' to finish the Middle Ages so bullishly.

TABLE IV: APPLICATIONS FOR PROBATE TO THE COURT OF THE ARCHDEACON OF SUDBURY 1450–1549

Place	1450s	1460s	1470s	1480s	1490s	1500s	1510s	1520s	1530s	1540s	Total
Ixworth	11	5	9	8	3	6	3	6	9	11	71
Lavenham	13	8	20	6	4	4	2	10	12	9	88
Woolpit	9	5	11	4	2	3	2	6	3	5	50
Thedwastre	63	58	80	50	45	36	14	53	55	57	511

(N.B.: In addition to applications to the Archdeacon's Court, the executors of wealthier testators applied for probate to the Consistory Court of Norwich and the executors of the wealthiest testators applied to the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. During this period the executors of ten Ixworth villagers applied to the Consistory Court and six to the Prerogative Court; the executors of fifteen of Lavenham's townfolk applied to the Consistory Court and sixty-nine to the Prerogative Court; and the executors of ten Woolpit villagers applied to the Consistory Court and five to the Prerogative Court.⁵²)

The 1327 and 1524 tax returns for Ixworth do not suggest any improvement in economic performance relative to neighbouring villages in the Hundred of Blackbourne over the period, although much of the village's wealth in 1524 may be concealed by the exemption that the Prior's land and assets enjoyed from tax. Whilst the Prior reported difficulty in levying the tax of 1416 on villagers (*C.P.R. (1416–22)*, 54), all other signs are that the vill steadily held its own during the later Middle Ages. Ixworth was one of only eighty-one vills in Suffolk and only eight in Blackbourne not described as small or impoverished in either 1428 or 1449. Between 1450 and 1549 the executors of seventy-one villagers applied for grant of probate to the Archdeacon's court, twenty-one more than in Woolpit which was almost certainly a more populous village.

The testamentary wealth of Ixworth and Woolpit is placed in perspective by comparison with that of Lavenham which was the fourteenth richest town in England and undoubtedly one of the big players in the late medieval cloth industry (Dyer 1995, 62). More applications were made from Lavenham to the Archdeacon's Court and the Consistory Court, but this is only to be expected considering that its population was nearly four times larger (Betterson and Dymond 1989, 40 and 41). It is the difference in the number of applications to the Prerogative Court that stands out. Eight times as many very wealthy people lived in Lavenham as in Ixworth and Woolpit combined.

CONCLUSION – TOWN OR VILLAGE ?

There is not and never has been a sharp dividing line between town and village. Whilst incorporation and self-government through a mayor and aldermen is one relevant factor, not all towns enjoyed the formal trappings of a borough and not all boroughs were towns. Both Ixworth and Woolpit were firmly embedded in a conservative manorial world. Neither ever acquired borough status, but then relative to some other regions, few towns in medieval Suffolk did. Neither enjoyed any formal self-government, although Ixworth had an active manor court and both vills had guilds which undoubtedly exercised some

collective influence on local affairs, particularly in Woolpit where seigneurial control appears to have been much weaker. Other factors, which have been considered in this essay, are buildings, population, and the range and degree of commercial activity. Whilst their populations may not have been much larger, Ixworth and Woolpit had acquired some characteristics which marked them out from neighbouring villages. Even if no mayor appeared to welcome him, a drover arriving from the north – admiring the high-quality workmanship in the buildings; noticing the hustle and bustle of the market, fair, shops and inns; sensing a general air of well-being; and meeting John Gerard the brickmaker, John Page the goldsmith, or Amy Fen the clothier-come-brewer – would have known that he had come somewhere of importance and somewhere that was entitled to call itself a town.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this essay to my mother Sheila Amor (1928–99) who encouraged my early interest in history, cheerfully shepherded me around so many castles in my childhood and sadly died shortly before I completed the work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 Tymms 1849, 103–04; S.R.O.B., Baldwyne 2a/105.
- 2 Report of Day School held on 17 October 1998.
- 3 Extent of a manor of William Criketot (I) in Ixworth, 1299, P.R.O., C133/89.
- 4 Custumal of the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, 1357, B.L., Add. MS 14,849.
- 5 P.R.O., C133/89; I.P.C.B.
- 6 Rental of the demesnes of the rectory of Ixworth Priory, early 16th cent., P.R.O., LR2 257, f. 40; Valuation of lands and properties lately of the Ixworth Priory, ? 1536, S.R.O.B., E1/13.
- 7 B.L., Add. MS 14,849; Account of the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, 1377–78, S.R.O.B., 7.8.1.
- 8 Croftis Register, B.L., Harl. MS 27.
- 9 Powell 1910; S.R.O.B., Account of the Cellarer of Ixworth Priory, 1474–75, S.R.O.B., 553/113.
- 10 B.L., Add. MS 14,849.
- 11 P.R.O., C133/89.
- 12 Accounts of the Cellarer of Ixworth Priory, 1454–55 and 1474–75, S.R.O.B., 553/112, 113.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 S.R.O.B., E1/13; I.P.C.B., 3 Dec. 1479.
- 15 S.R.O.B., 553/113.
- 16 As 'costs of the fold', in 1454–55 the Prior spent 26s. 8d. on four casks of terpic and 8s. on ninety-six measures of tar, S.R.O.B., 553/112.
- 17 Croftis Register, B.L., Harl. MS 27.
- 18 Account of the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, 1377–78, S.R.O.B., 7.8.1.
- 19 B.L., Add. MS 14,849.
- 20 Account of the Cellarer of Ixworth Priory, 1393–94, S.R.O.B., 651/40.
- 21 Rental of Ixworth Priory in Ixworth, early 14th cent., S.R.O.B., HD1538/278/1.
- 22 Account of the Cellarer of Ixworth Priory, 1454–55, S.R.O.B., 553/112.
- 23 See Dr Richard Smith's study on the neighbouring market of Botesdale in Smith 1996, 450–81.
- 24 Extent, 1299, P.R.O., C133/89.

- 25 Quoted by Norman Scarfe in Dymond and Martin 1999, 78.
 26 Croftis Register, B.L., Harl. MS 27.
 27 Collier 1844, 107, 115, 124 and 234; B.L., Add MS 66,051 (reported in Britnell 1997, 220–21); and Dymond 1994–96, 152, 388, 499, 542, 550 and 598.
 28 On 2 October 1481 Lord Howard's agent gave 10d. 'to him that pleyd upon the bagpype', Collier 1844, 115.
 29 P.R.O., 30 Blanyr PROB 11/13.
 30 Vanderzee 1807, 76 and *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 488.
 31 Grimwade 1984, 408 and 476; Farrow 1943–45, 176; and *C.P.R.* (1446–52), 490–91 and *C.P.R.* (1452–61), 134.
 32 S.R.O.B., 553/112 and 113.
 33 I.P.C.B., 1 Jul. 1473 and 8 Nov. 1473; S.R.O.B., 553/112 and 113 and Ixworth Abbey Estate Plan, 1625 S.R.O.B.
 34 Dymond 1994–96, ff. 145v, 149v, 155r, 166v, 170r, 204v, 207r, 245v and 251r.
 35 Extent of Woolpit, 1573–77, S.R.O.B., E7/16/2, f. 60r.
 36 S.R.O.B., Hervye 158.
 37 Accounts of aulnage, 7 and 8 Edward IV, P.R.O., E101/343/4.
 38 S.R.O.B., Baldwyne 2b 446; Betterton and Dymond 1989, 16.
 39 *C.P.R.* (1348–50), 439; *C.P.R.* (1350–54), 117; *C.P.R.* (1370–74), 78; *C.P.R.* (1377–81), 31.
 40 Croftis Register, B.L., Harl. MS 27.
 41 S.R.O.B., 7.8.1; Hoppitt 1999, 67.
 42 Croftis Register, B.L., Harl. MS 27; see Greenway and Sayers 1989.
 43 S.R.O.B., 553/112.
 44 S.R.O.B., 7.8.1.
 45 S.R.O.B., 7.8.1; Croftis Register, B.L., Harl. MS 27, indentures dated 6 Oct. 1412 and 22 Jun. 1466.
 46 Dr Mark Bailey (1993, 351–71) analyses the similar success, in the absence of strict manorial control, of the market town of Buntingford, Hertfordshire after the Black Death.
 47 Terrier and rental of the family of Mayster in Ixworth, early 14th cent., B.L., Harl. Roll H4, 13.
 48 B.L., Add. MS 14,849.
 49 B.L., Add. MS 14,849; S.R.O.B., 651/40, 553/112, 113; S.R.O.I., HD1538/278/1.
 50 S.R.O.B., 553/112 and B.L., Harl. MS 27.
 51 N.R.O., 118 Cage.
 52 Grimwade 1984; Farrow 1943–45; Oswald-Hicks 1913; Betterton and Dymond 1989, 6.

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Abbreviations

- B.L. British Library.
- C.CH.R. *Calendars of Charter Rolls*.
- C.I.P.M. *Calendars of Inquisitions Post Mortem*.
- C.P.R. *Calendars of Patent Rolls*.
- I.P.C.B. Ixworth Priory Court Book 1467–83, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Bacon MS 912; Ixworth court roll 1465, Westminster Abbey Muniment 27810.
- N.R.O. Norfolk Record Office, Norwich.
- P.R.O. Public Record Office, London.
- S.R.O.B. Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch.
- S.R.O.I. Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch.