9. Royal servants and city fathers: the double lives of London goldsmiths at the court of Henry VII

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Ian Archer observed that relations between the crown and the City of London were 'lubricated to a far greater extent than has been appreciated by a variety of informal contacts between members of the business elite and the government'.[1] Given the capital's role as a market place and supplier for the royal household, the 'lubricants' were frequently prominent merchants who had come to the attention of the king through the provision of goods of their craft.

By virtue of their trade in often bespoke high-value goods, and ability to raise finance swiftly, medieval goldsmiths, particularly members of the London Goldsmiths' Company, enjoyed better access to the court and royal household than many merchants of other professions. Consequently it was not unusual to find goldsmith merchants among the personnel regularly to be found at court, and their privileged access to the royal household brought particularly talented individuals to the king's personal attention. Throughout the fifteenth century goldsmiths were to be found acting as royal messengers, financiers, ambassadors and servants.

In the reign of Henry VII four goldsmiths can be identified as being both particularly close to the royal administration as well as prominent in the civic life of the capital. Edmund Shaa, Hugh Brice, John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede were remarkable in the breadth of duties they undertook for their royal master and arguably were key contacts for a monarch who sought information about the mechanisms and business of civic government, and its personnel. All four men appear to have prioritized their duties as royal servants over civic duty. All became aldermen long after they became royal servants, though naturally they would have served some years on the common council before reaching the court of aldermen. All served as mayor: John Shaa and Rede both did so within five years of their appointment as aldermen.[2] All four men were

[1] I. Archer, 'The government of London, 1500–1650', *The London Journal*, xxvi (2001), 19–28.

[2] T. F. Reddaway and L. E. Walker, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company, 1327–1509* (1975), pp. 285–8; A. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London* (2 vols., 1908–13), ii. 15.

regular suppliers of goldsmiths' wares to the king and his household, all were knighted and all died very wealthy men.[3]

These men stood comfortably on the fringes of the court elite and successfully balanced often conflicting loyalties to both the crown and the capital. Their friendships and connections at court made them ideal intercessors between London and the king and the vacuum left after their deaths left a vacancy in the royal administration that was filled by a man with intimate knowledge of the Corporation of London, which was to have wide repercussions not only for the City, but for the rest of the country and the historical perception of the entire reign.

The first half of this essay will explore the relationship these goldsmiths enjoyed with the king and the court while the second will examine the repercussions of their deaths for City-crown relations.

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Members of the Goldsmiths' Company had traditionally been favoured by the crown and the reign of Henry VII was to prove no exception. Though merchants and craftsmen from other London companies were to be found at court their presence was not as numerous or as influential as the Goldsmiths. The nature of the goods supplied by goldsmiths required direct interaction between the vendor and the purchaser; high-value items of precious metals and jewels sold by goldsmiths were subject to taste and therefore sight before purchase was desirable whilst bespoke items that might be commissioned required cooperation between the craftsman and the customer. Consequently it was common for a large number of goldsmiths with a varying range of specialities to supply the royal household, in contrast to other companies whose merchants more frequently dealt only with the Great Wardrobe, which functioned as a near autonomous department from its base near Baynard's Castle. Moreover, the sale and the creation of goldsmiths' work required a level of expertise that excluded other merchants and tradesmen from engaging in it, and hence the Goldsmiths maintained a monopoly in this area. The access that individual goldsmiths had to the king and his councillors facilitated the development of personal relationships and therefore it was not unusual to find goldsmiths as trusted royal servants. Two of the most prolific suppliers of

[3] Rede received four payments totalling £1,126 12*s* 10*d*, mainly for jewels, between Nov. 1494 and June 1495 (BL, Additional MS. 7099, fos. 21–24); and four payments between Mar. 1504 and July 1505 for goldsmiths' work totalling £1,134 25*s* 18*d* (BL, Add. MS. 59899, fos. 49, 62r, 92r–93r). TNA: PRO, PROB 11/11/2028; PROB 11/8/187; PROB 11/14/763; PROB 11/14/156; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other Analogous Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII* (3 vols., 1898–1955), i. 20; ii. 679, 719, 863; iii. 29, 42, 51–3, 62, 63, 70, 94, 103, 123–4, 200, 207–8, 358, 425, 677.

goldsmiths' work to Richard II's court, Drew Barantyn and Nicholas Twyford, were charged with purveying essential items for military campaigns, whereas another, John Brydd, carried messages to the continent for both Richard II and Henry IV.[4]

In addition to being able to ingratiate themselves with the king and his court through the provision of goods of their trades, the Goldsmiths had other unique ways of integrating themselves with the court not available to men from other crafts. By virtue of their expertise, goldsmiths enjoyed a virtual monopoly of control over the mint and the king's exchange within the Tower of London and elsewhere in the country.[5] The positions of master-worker, along with the lesser offices of the clerkship of the mint, the exchange, the keeper, the assayer, the engraver and the controller all fell to goldsmiths.[6] Usually this led to close cooperation with members of the court who traditionally held the positions of warden of the mint. Finally, goldsmiths tended to be rich men with large supplies of ready cash. Naturally they were not unique among the mercantile community of the city in this, but many of them assumed a pseudo-banking role, providing loans to men connected to the court. Goldsmiths also provided additional services to the crown: they created and provided the seals matrices required for crown administration, mended and maintained the royal plate and provided religious artefacts for the royal chapel.[7] New Year's gifts were often sourced from goldsmiths, as were diplomatic and wedding gifts. Collectively, goldsmiths were indispensable to the king and his household in a way that no other group of craftsmen or merchants was.

It is clear from the extant evidence that this held true for connections between the court of Henry VII and the London Goldsmiths. Contrary to Henry's reputation as a miser, he spent lavishly on gold and jewels, for between 1491 and 1509 he paid an estimated £200,000 for jewels and plate; more, it is likely, than the luxury-loving Edward IV.[8] The five extant chamber payment books for the reign contain numerous payments to goldsmiths but remarkably few to other merchants, with the exception of a handful of favoured members of the Italian mercantile community.[9]

[4] J. Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths and the English royal court, 1360–1413' (unpublished University of London PhD thesis, 2008), pp. 11, 277–8.

[5] The post of warden of the mint was a purely political appointment and therefore usually awarded to royal servants (Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 176).

[6] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 176.

[7] Lutkin, 'Goldsmiths', p. 187.

[8] C. D. Ross, *Edward IV* (1974), p. 264.

[9] Five chamber payment books survive from the reign covering the years 1495 to 1509: TNA: PRO, E 101/414/6; E 101/414/16; E 101/415/3; BL, Add. MS. 59899; Add. MS. 21480; TNA: PRO, E 36/214. In addition to these is a list of extracted payments, made by the

Edmund Shaa, Hugh Brice, John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede were able to take advantage of all these ways of attracting the attention of the court and the royal household, and moreover can be proved to have been regularly in attendance at Henry VII's court. Both Edmund Shaa and Hugh Brice had been close to the household of Edward IV. Edmund had received the award of a life grant of the office of engraver to the mint in 1462, and lent generously to that king.[10] He may also have had connections to other members of the royal family, for in his will, made in 1492, he made provision for prayers to be said for Edward IV and for Edward's sister Anne, the late duchess of Exeter, and Lord Herbert.[11] Shaa also found favour with Richard III, in whose usurpation he played an instrumental part when serving as mayor, for which he was knighted.[12] It was his brother, Dr. Ralph Shaa, the previously popular preacher, who preached Richard's right to the throne at St. Paul's Cross.[13] He was one of the biggest individual lenders of funds to Richard, lending at least £500, and consequently Edmund is usually portrayed as a staunch supporter of Richard III.[14] Yet he was to lend far more to Henry VII in the first year of his reign, at least £833.[15] He was also a close associate of Reynold Bray, a man who, according to Polydore Vergil, enjoyed both high office and ready access to the king with the freedom to rebuke as well as influence him.[16] Shaa named Bray as executor of his will, referring to him as his 'right especiall and tender loving frende'.[17] As this will was made in March 1488, a mere couple of years after Bosworth, it is perhaps suggestive of a longer standing friendship than one formed since Henry's accession.[18]

Hugh Brice was similarly close to Edward IV's court. He served as deputy master of the mint from 1462–85, most of that under William, Lord

antiquary Craven Ord, from the above listed books and others dated from 1491 not now known to exist (BL, Add. MS. 7099).

[10] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 176.

[11] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/8/187. It is unclear from the will which Lord Herbert this might be. William Herbert, earl of Huntingdon, had died in 1490 without a male heir and his father, the first earl of Pembroke, would more commonly have been referred to by his earldom.

[12] P. Tucker, 'Shaw, Sir Edmund (*d.* 1488)', *ODNB*.

[13] *The Great Chronicle of London,* ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (1938), pp. 231–2; C. D. Ross, *Richard III* (1981, repr. 1999), pp. 88–9.

[14] T. More, *The History of King Richard the Third*, ed. G. Logan (Bloomington, Ind., 2005), p. 68.

[15] TNA: PRO, E 405/75, mm. 6d, 11, 13d, 14d, 32.

[16] M. M. Condon, 'Bray, Sir Reynold (*c.*1440–1503)', *ODNB*; P. Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, ed. H. Ellis (Camden Society, xxix, 1844), p. 128.

[17] TNA: PRO, E 101/415/3, fos. 6, 14v, 24v.

[18] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/8/12.

Hastings, who held the position of master of the mint for much of the reign.[19] Brice obviously held Hastings in some regard and perhaps affection, for in 1481 he commissioned a book from William Caxton, *The Mirror of the World*, for Hastings.[20] As an individual, Brice was one of the largest lenders of money to Edward IV with personal loans to the monarch totalling around £3,800, not including his involvement in various syndicated loans.[21] The heavy expenditure Edward IV was burdened with, as a result of the marriage treaty concluded between England and the duchy of Burgundy that saw the Burgundian duke married to Edward's sister Margaret in 1468, obliged Edward to pawn some of the royal jewels to Brice.[22] Brice was rewarded for his generosity with the position of collector of the customs of tonnage and poundage in the port of London in the 1470s, a position which perhaps offered him some security on the loans he had given.[23] He served on diplomatic embassies for Edward IV in 1473 and 1478 and as paymaster on some of the king's building projects.[24] He was made a knight of the Bath by Henry VII upon his coronation, an honour in part given in recognition of his recent appointment as London mayor, perhaps, but it is possible that he had already come to the new king's attention in some way.[25]

The close connections between the four goldsmiths suggest that Edmund Shaa and Hugh Brice, a generation older, paved the way into royal service for John Shaa and Bartholomew Rede. John was both the nephew and apprentice of Edmund. Rede had served as Brice's apprentice, was a close

[19] Thomas Reddaway, unpublished notes, seen with the kind permission of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths; Goldsmiths' Company, London, Minute Book A, fo. 93.

[20] Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 267.

[21] P. Tucker, 'Government and politics: London 1461–83' (unpublished University of London PhD thesis, 1995), pp. 340, 427–8. Reddaway and Steel give the lower figure of £2,850, but as Tucker itemizes all of the loans given by Brice it is her data that has been used here: Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 287; A. B. Steel, *The Receipt of the Exchequer* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 334–5, 345. By way of comparison, John Lord Dinham, one of the largest individual money lenders to the crown in the first ten years of Edward IV's reign received repayments for £3,000 he had lent to the king (H. Kleineke, 'The Dinham family in the later middle ages' (unpublished University of London PhD thesis, 1998), p. 246).

[22] Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 111, 259. Margaret's dowry alone was set at a rather generous 200,000 gold crowns which was never fully paid.

[23] G. L. Harriss, 'Preference at the medieval exchequer', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* xxx (1957), 17–40, 35; H. Cobb, *The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480–1* (London Record Society, xxvii, 1990), p. 21.

[24] *Rymer's Foedera with Syllabus*, ed. T. Rymer (12 vols, 1739–1745), xii. 96–7; J.L. Lander, 'Council, administration and councillors, 1461 to 1485', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxxii (1959), 138–80, at p. 173.

[25] It is possible that Brice was one of a clique of Londoners who may have provided Tudor with funding via Bray prior to Henry's victory at Bosworth. This point will be discussed more fully in a forthcoming article.

friend of Brice's son, James, and was godfather to James' own son.[26] John Shaa was named as executor in the wills of both his uncle and Brice and similarities in the provision for the establishment of schools in the wills of Edmund Shaa and Rede suggest that the two were intimate enough acquaintances to have discussed the matter in detail.[27] Rede and John Shaa were also close, for Rede was named in John's will as his executor and as guardian of his eldest son until he came of age.[28]

As was fitting for senior men within their craft, all four were to serve as prime wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company, Brice three times and the others once each. There is, however, evidence to suggest that the company was not their first loyalty. Brice prioritized the needs of the royal mint over those of the company in 1462 when he 'laboured against the confirmation of the King's Letters Patent' granted to the Goldsmiths' Company, though it is probable that he was at least in part motivated by the company's reluctance to admit him into their livery.[29] Brice wrote to Lord Hastings that if the king gave the charter to the Goldsmiths' Company it would be to the detriment of his office at the mint.[30] That Brice's complaint about the charter happened almost concurrently with personal attacks made by him against prominent members of the Goldsmiths' Company suggests that his motivation was personal. At arbitration Brice's actions earned him a fine of 40 marks and also, perversely, an agreement by the company to admit him into the livery.[31] Rede and John Shaa received the disapproval of their company after being fined in 1488 for failing to attend assemblies of the company on a number of occasions.[32]

Rede became master-worker of the mint and exchanger of the king's exchanges throughout the realm in 1483, though he lost office during the reigns of Edward V and Richard III.[33] Reappointed by Henry VII in 1485, he initially held the post with Giles, Lord Daubeney, one of Henry's leading courtiers and councillors, and one of the few of Henry's intimates to be ennobled.[34] From 1492–3 Rede held the position with John Shaa,

[26] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp. 177, 307.

[27] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/8/187; PROB 11/14/763; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 180.

[28] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/11/2028; PROB 11/8/187, 11/14/156. Shaa also acted as feoffee for Rede (*CCR 1485–1500*, nos. 986, 1087).

[29] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 140.

[30] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 140.

[31] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 140.

[32] Goldsmiths' Company, London, Minute Book A, fo. 285.

[33] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 177. It is possible that he remained on as a deputy who did all the work and lost only the title of master-worker.

[34] S. J. Gunn, 'Daubeney, Giles (*c*.1451/2–1508)', *ODNB*.

which might be taken as an indication of the regard in which Shaa was held by the king.[35] If so, Rede was held in similar high esteem, for after Shaa's death he held the position on his own until his death in 1505.[36] This position would have brought Rede into regular contact with the king, particularly as he was instrumental in carrying through improvements in the coinage and minted the first English gold sovereigns, as charged to do so by letters patent in October 1489.[37] It was probably on matters relating to the mint that he was present at a meeting of the king's council early in 1487 and again in 1499, the latter with Shaa, perhaps to discuss the reform of the coinage.[38] From May 1504 Rede made quarterly payments, usually around £30 each time, of the profits of the mint to the king's chamber. A receipt for 2 January 1506 states that Rede paid £20 of the profit into the chamber less £10 'delivered to the king's grace', implying that he paid the king in person.[39] Rede also sold luxury items of his craft to the king, though he did so sporadically, supplying gold-work to the crown in 1494–5 but no more until 1504–5.[40] Rede was knighted in 1503, during his mayoral year, and, as is apparent from his will of 1505 and subsequent inquisition post-mortem, died a very wealthy man.[41] How much he would have profited from his position in the mint is not possible to quantify, but one must assume that it paid dividends in terms of prestige, and obvious gains were to be made through the access the position gave to the king and his entourage.[42]

Of the four goldsmiths, arguably the most influential was John Shaa. *The Great Chronicle of London* describes him as a man

> of a sharp wytt and therwyth of a good and bold spyryt by Reson of the ffavour that he stood In wyth the kyng and Quene & many othir astasis [sic] of [th]e land In soo much that he was sworn of the kyngis counsayll as the ffame went.[43]

[35] *CPR 1485–1494*, pp. 49, 319, 410, 418.

[36] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, pp. 177–9.

[37] *CPR 1485–1494*, p. 319; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 177.

[38] TNA: PRO, E 405/75, m. 24. Rede received 100 shillings in payment for his attendance upon the king's council in 1487 (*Select Cases in the Council of Henry VII,* ed. C. G. Bayne and W. H. Dunham (Selden Society, lxxv, 1958), p. 31). It is conceivable that Rede and Shaa attended other meetings of the council, but unfortunately not all of the accounts of the meetings have survived.

[39] TNA: PRO, E 101/413/2/2, vol. 3, fo. 93.

[40] See n. 3 above.

[41] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/14/763; *Cal. I.P.M. Hen .VII*, iii. 29, 51–3, 62, 94, 103, 123–4, 207–8.

[42] Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, p. 178.

[43] Thomas and Thornley, *Great Chronicle*, p. 320.

Regrettably it cannot be proved that he was a 'sworn' member of the king's council as evidence exists only for his attendance in 1499 (with Rede) to discuss the matters related to the mint.[44]

Like his uncle, John Shaa was closely associated with Bray, and in all likelihood the two were close friends as evidenced in the post-mortem inventory of Shaa's belongings which lists a number of cushions bearing the arms of Reynold Bray.[45] Edmund Shaa's friendship with Bray had probably facilitated that between Bray and John Shaa. Edmund and John Shaa, together with Bray, were granted the wardship and marriage of John Wrytell, who was later married to John's daughter, Audrey.[46] Both Shaas engaged in business activities with Bray and regularly acted as his feoffees alongside the London mercer Henry Colet and men who had served with Bray in the household of the king's mother prior to Bosworth.[47] John Shaa's second son was given the reasonably uncommon name of Reynold, raising the possibility that Bray acted as his godfather, though there is no evidence to substantiate this directly.[48] Shaa was also named as an executor of Bray's will.[49]

The value the king laid upon Shaa's ability and willingness as a financier is eloquently expressed in a warrant for payment, dated April 1493, demanding that the exchequer pay Shaa £4,000 owed to him from the first money available, 'considering his kind and ready disposition always to serve our pleasurers in laying out his money.'[50] Indeed, Shaa appears to have fulfilled the role of financial handyman for the king, and was trusted with a variety of tasks unconnected with his trade or work within the city of London. In the mid 1490s Shaa regularly received money from both the exchequer and the king's chamber (which served as a personal coffer to the king to allow him to circumvent the clumsy machinery of the exchequer), to employ upon the king's works at Windsor, implying that he held some sort of supervisory capacity there, possibly as paymaster.[51] During Henry's reign such supervisory roles were more usually awarded to clerics connected

[44] Bayne and Dunham, *Select Cases*, p. 31. It is to be noted that the surviving evidence for the proceedings of council meetings is patchy.

[45] TNA: PRO, E 154/2/11.

[46] *CPR 1485–1494*, i. 98; TNA: PRO, PROB 11/14/156.

[47] *CPR 1485–1494*, i. 268, 305; M. Condon, 'From caitiff and villain to pater patriae: Reynold Bray and the profits of office', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. Hicks (Stroud, 1990), pp. 135–68, at pp. 147–51.

[48] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/14/156.

[49] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/13/608.

[50] TNA: PRO, E 404/81, dated at Greenwich, 12 Apr. 1493.

[51] *The History of the King's Works*, ed. H. M. Colvin (6 vols., 1963–82), iii. 14.

to the royal household.[52] In 1492 Shaa was appointed searcher of the port of London, a post he held until his death.[53] This was a potentially lucrative role, not only for the office holder but also for the crown, which gained half of all goods seized by the searcher. The award of such a position can be perceived not only as a reward and sign of royal favour, but also one to be given to a man who could be trusted to given the crown its financial due.

Of thirty-two payments totalling £10,297 9*s* made to him from the chamber in the decade 1494–1504, only eleven payments, totalling nearly £4,000, could possibly be related in any way to his trade.[54] Six payments were made between May 1496 and March 1501 for the building works at Windsor and one for works at Richmond.[55] Two payments relate to the provision of currency exchange services, from French crowns into sterling.[56] Two further payments, in 1502 and 1503, saw Shaa receive money to pay the household allowance of the widowed Catherine of Aragon for the months of July to October, at 125 marks per month.[57] Perhaps the most curious payment, and one that illustrates the trust placed in him by the king, was one for over £650 made in October 1495 to reimburse Shaa for money he had laid out

> for th[e] enterment and byriall of oure dought[er] Elizabeth late passed out of this transitory lif[e] as also in sending the residue of the same sume unto us at oure last being at Chestr comprised more at large in a bill which he hath delivered unto us.[58]

The four-year-old princess was, according to *The Great Chronicle*, buried on the north side of St. Edward's shrine in Westminster Abbey, one must assume with some ceremony as it had come to the attention of the chronicler.[59] The implication is that Shaa had direct involvement in the arrangements, but why would this have been the case? If finance was needed for the burial (which is doubtful in 1495) surely the more usual route would have been

[52] For example, payments that had been made to Shaa for the works at Windsor were paid thereafter to John Seymour, a canon of St. George's chapel, Windsor (Colvin, *King's Works*, iii. 14).

[53] *CPR 1495–1509*, p. 372; BL, Add. MS. 59899, fo. 118; TNA: PRO, E 36/214, fo. 382.

[54] Included in the sum of £3,800 for possible goldsmith work is an unspecified amount for payment for works at Windsor and non-itemized bills of reckoning, which may not have related to goldsmiths work.

[55] TNA: PRO, E 101/414/6, fos. 31, 36; E 101/414/16, fos. 7, 36v, 53v; E 101/415/3, fo. 45; BL, Add. MS. 59899, fo. 27v.

[56] TNA: PRO, E 101/415/3, fos. 59v, 62v.

[57] TNA: PRO, E 101/415/3, fos. 101, 101v; BL, Add. MS. 59899, fo. 27v.

[58] TNA: PRO, E 404/82 warrants dated 23 and 26 Oct. 1495.

[59] Thomas and Thornley, *Great Chronicle*, p. 260.

for the treasurer of the chamber, John Heron, or John, Lord Dinham who regularly lent money to the king to ease short-term cash flows, or some other member of the court to act as a middle man.[60]

A clue to Shaa's formal standing within the hierarchy of the court and royal household can be found in the account book of William Cope, cofferer and deputy to Bray in his capacity as treasurer of war, which details expenses incurred during the French campaign of 1492.[61] The first part of the book details receipts from various individuals and collectors of the benevolence. The list commences with the money gathered by county, not including the capital, then progresses to individual members of the episcopate and other senior clergy, followed by members of the royal family and Lords Temporal.[62] Next follows, beside the margin note of 'Sundry persones of the laifee', what appears to be a list of royal servants and household members. Reynold Bray and Thomas Lovell sit at the top of the list, donating £500 and £400 respectively. Various household knights follow and then two thirds of the way down, fourteenth on the list, is Shaa, not even yet a knight at this point, with his payment of £100. Significantly, he is not listed with the Londoners, but with the court personnel.[63] The second part of the document details expenses incurred in the preparations for the campaign, and Shaa again features heavily. Referred to as 'the king's goldsmith', he received just over £1,970 for the garnishing of the 'king's hede peces and salads'.[64] In addition he received nearly £24,000 at the mint for the coining of new money.[65] His position on the list of royal servants, and the vast sums he was entrusted with suggest he was seen by the court, and indeed by the king, as far more than merely 'the king's goldsmith'.

That Shaa was key to facilitating City-crown relations is demonstrated by the frequency with which his intercession with the king was sought by citizens and companies. In 1502 the Drapers' Company led City resistance

[60] Many example of loans from Dinham can be seen in the tellers' rolls, especially the early ones (TNA: PRO, E 405/75, 78).

[61] TNA: PRO, E 36/285. This document appears to have been compiled by William Cope in 1501. It had been reconstituted from five separately catalogued parts by Margaret Condon in 1978. The front part, which is badly damaged in places, lists money received in benevolence from both individuals and received by collectors. The second part lists all expenditure, though lacks detail in places.

[62] TNA: PRO, E 36/285, fos. 3–15.

[63] Some other London merchants, such as Laurence Alymer (£20) and John Wyngar (£40), also came under the same heading but appeared somewhat further down the list. Most of the individual contributors from London were grouped together later in the document (TNA: PRO, E 36/285, fos. 12, 17).

[64] TNA: PRO, E 36/285, fo. 79.

[65] TNA: PRO, E 36/285, fo. 19.

against the grant by the king of letters patent to the Tailors' Company incorporating them as Merchant Taylors. With the new grant the Merchant Taylors acquired mercantile status, an unlimited ability to increase their membership without regard to any other craft or guild in the city and the ability to ordain and execute ordinances without mayoral approval as long as these were not prejudicial to the laws of the realm or the mayor of London.[66] Three yards of black velvet were purchased at a cost of 30*s* to give to 'master Matlock' to be employed in soliciting Shaa's help in the matter, perhaps with the need for mourning clothes in mind with the forthcoming requiem mass of the young prince of Wales.[67] This was not the only time the Drapers had tried to invoke Shaa's help, for the same year £6 13*s* 4*d* was spent on a tun of wine for Shaa to be minded to aid their candidate in his quest for position of overseer of Blackwell Hall, the centre of cloth trading in the city.[68] Individuals also sought Shaa's help: Thomas Frowyk had the ambition of acquiring the position of chief justice of the common pleas in 1501. Shaa obligingly, and probably in return of a fee or some favour, wrote to Reynold Bray offering 500 marks on Frowyk's behalf for the post.[69] Sir John Raynesford, a retainer of the earl of Oxford who was later to become prominent in Prince Henry's household, sought Shaa's help with securing assent for his marriage to Amy, Lady Grey in 1498.[70]

The City government also sought to use Shaa's access to the king to its advantage. He was appointed to take part in a number of deputations of senior city inhabitants to the lord chancellor, John Morton, and other members of the government administration to discuss matters of trade.[71] He was selected as MP twice, though he died before he could serve for a second time, in the 1504 parliament.[72] In December 1503 he was appointed,

[66] H. Miller, 'London and parliament in the reign of Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxxv (1962), 128–49, reprinted in *Historical Studies of the English Parliament*, ed. E. B. Fryde and E. Miller (1970), pp. 125–46, 130.

[67] Drapers' Company, London, wardens' accounts 1475–1509, fo. 74v. Master Matlock (or Mattock) was Nicholas Mattock, a fishmonger who was either a very close friend of Shaa's or served him in some capacity. An inventory of the 'Old Ford', Shaa's residence in Middlesex, refers to a room known as 'Master Mattock's chamber': TNA: PRO, E 154/2/11. Shaa's will lists Mattock and his wife amongst the close friends to be given gold rings worth 40*s* (TNA: PRO, PROB 11/14/156). Mattock was to become a collector of tonnage and poundage within London (*CPR 1494–1509*, p. 525).

[68] Drapers' Company, London, wardens' accounts 1475–1509, fo. 77.

[69] TNA: PRO, E 101/415/3, fo. 299; E 101/413/2/2, fo. 89; BL, Add. MS. 59899, fo. 146v.

[70] TNA: PRO, E 101/414/16, fo. 134v; J. Ross, *John de Vere Thirteenth Earl of Oxford, 1442–1513* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 186, 194.

[71] LMA, COL/CC/01/01/010, fos. 24v, 238; LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fos. 34v, 44, 63, 72v.

[72] LMA, COL/CC/01/01/010, fo. 58v; LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fo. 151.

in his absence, to go to the king to offer £5,000 for the renewal of the City charter and repeal of the Tailors' patent, an amount that was to be reduced to 5,000 marks if the king would only renew the City's charter, as proved to be the case, though Shaa died before he could undertake this task.[73] Sir Thomas Lovell was appointed as overseer of Shaa's will, as he would be for Rede's just over a year later.[74]

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The deaths of Shaa and Rede deprived the king of two conduits of information about the civic government, and the City of potential intermediaries with the crown. They occurred at a time of flux in the personnel of both the court and the City, and as changes in the structure of the royal household with the creation of the privy chamber led to access to the king becoming more restricted, their deaths were to have wide repercussions that have not been examined before.[75]

First of all, the turn of the sixteenth century also saw the deaths of many of those closest to the king. Of particular significance were Cardinal Morton (1500), John, Lord Dinham the lord treasurer (1501), Reynold Bray (1503), Thomas, earl of Derby and Sir John Mordaunt (1504).[76] Most disastrous was the loss of members of the king's own family, including his uncle, Jasper Tudor, duke of Bedford (1495), his eldest son, Arthur (1502) and his queen (1503).[77] John de Vere, earl of Oxford, and Margaret Beaufort were becoming increasingly absent from the court, thus leaving no one at court willing, or most likely able, to either check or influence the behaviour of the king, as Vergil claims Bray did.[78] Dinham, Bray and Mordaunt, of Henry's councillors, were perhaps the best connected within the City before their deaths. Steven Gunn has proposed that the vacuum left by Mordaunt's death allowed Edmund Dudley to become quickly prominent within the king's council.[79] Although this may be true in the sense that Mordaunt's unexpected death left a vacancy, this was filled in large part by Richard Empson, who assumed his responsibilities as head of the council of the

[73] LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fo. 149.

[74] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/14/156; PROB 11/14/763.

[75] D. Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the privy chamber, 1485–1547', in *The English Court*, ed. D. Starkey (1987), pp. 71–119.

[76] To this list might also be added John, Lord Cheyne and John, Viscount Wells (1499), Robert, Lord Willoughby de Broke (1502) and George Stanley, Lord Strange (1503) (S. J. Gunn, 'Henry VII', *ODNB)*.

[77] One might also include his third son, Edmund, who died in 1499.

[78] Condon, 'Bray, Sir Reynold', *ODNB*; Ellis, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 128.

[79] S. J. Gunn, 'Dudley, Edmund (*c*.1462–1510)', *ODNB*.

duchy of Lancaster.[80] It had been Dudley's early patronage by Reynold Bray, his expertise as a lawyer and, crucially, his intimate knowledge of the capital's government and personnel that made him invaluable to the king in light of the loss of a number of servants with well-established City connections.

Over approximately the same time period the City of London experienced a similar loss of key personnel. Of the twenty-eight men who served as aldermen during the year 1499 (not including the prior of Holy Trinity who served as the *ex officio* alderman of Portsoken) seventeen had either died or were excused from their posts by 1504, with the deaths of a further three the following year.[81] Among the dead were men well known to the royal administration, including Henry Colet, John Fenkill, John Percyvale, Bartholomew Rede and John Shaa. The influx of new personnel largely unknown to the crown administration accentuated the hole left in Henry's connections to the City by the death of men like Bray, Rede and Shaa (Table 9.1).

It is reasonable to ask whether such a hole was really a problem for the crown-City relationship. Did Henry need insider knowledge of the London civic administration? How important was the capital to the monarch, and to this monarch in particular?

The intimacy of the City and the crown relationship had been reflected in rhetoric employed by both entities during the fourteenth century. London was referred to as the 'king's chamber', an allusion to the qualities it shared with the king's chamber within the household.[82] The financial and moral support of the Londoners had been influential in the dynastic wars of the fifteenth century by making Edward of York's bid for the throne possible.[83] The volume of both people and riches within its walls conferred a political power upon the City that Henry was acutely aware of, especially as, according to Vergil, his bid for the throne in summer 1485 had been aided by funding raised by Bray in the city of London.[84]

The civic government of London, comprised as it was of the great merchants and businessmen of the capital, were not, as J. L. Bolton has pointed out,

[80] This was initially in the capacity of keeper of the seal of the duchy until promotion a year later to chancellor of the duchy (M. M. Condon, 'Empson, Sir Richard (*c*.1450–1510)', *ODNB*).

[81] Only 25 served at any one time but turnover levels during the year meant that 28 served in total during that particular year. See Table 9.1.

[82] C. Liddy, 'The rhetoric of the royal chamber in late medieval London, York and Coventry', *Urban History*, xxix (2002), 329–32.

[83] For the nature of London's support of Edward IV, see C. M. Barron, 'London and the crown, 1451–61', in *The Crown and the Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century,* ed. J. R. L. Highfield and R. Jeffs (Gloucester, 1981), pp. 88–109.

[84] Ellis, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, pp. 196, 215–6.

Table 9.1. Aldermen sitting in 1499

Aldermen who left office 1499–1504 | Aldermen who died 1505

		Dates as Aldermen			
Name	**Occupation**	**From**	**To**	**Notes**	**Reference**
Nicholas Alwyn	Mercer	1496	1506		
John Broke	Grocer	1488	1502	Discharged	LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fos. 94, 96v.
William Capell	Draper	1485	1515		
Richard Chawry	Salter	1481	1509		
Henry Colet	Mercer	1476	1505	Died	
Henry Cote	Goldsmith	1490	1505	Died	
Robert Fabyan	Draper	1494	1503	Discharged	LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fos. 137v, 138.
John Fenkill	Draper	1485	1499	Died	
Richard Haddon	Mercer	1499	1516		
William Issak	Draper	1487	1503	Discharged	LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fo. 141v
Stephen Jennings	Merchant Taylor	1499	1523		
John Mathew	Mercer	1482	1499	Died	
William Martyn	Skinner	1483	1505	Died	
Hugh Pemberton	Tailor	1491	1500	Died	
John Percyvall	Merchant Taylor	1485	1503	Died	
William Purchase	Mercer	1492	1502	Discharged	
William Remington	Fishmonger	1485	1511		
Bartholomew Rede	Goldsmith	1498	1504	Died	
John Shaa	Goldsmith	1496	1503	Died	
John Tate	Mercer	1485	1515		
Robert Tate	Mercer	1479	1500	Died	
Robert Tilney	Grocer	1485	1499	Died	
John Warde	Grocer	1479	1501	Died	
William Welbeck*	Haberdasher	1492	1504	Discharged	LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fo. 167
William White	Draper	1482	1504	Died	
Thomas Wood	Goldsmith	1496	1504	Died	
Thomas Wyndoute	Mercer	1499	1500	Died	
John Wyngar	Grocer	1498	1505	Died	

Source: Beaven, *Aldermen* unless otherwise stated.

* Beaven is wrong in stating that Welbeck was discharged from the court of aldermen in 1501 (Beaven, *Aldermen*, i. 72) as Welbeck was still regularly attending meetings until March 1504 (last recorded attendance 7 November 1504, LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fo. 155).

'political eunuchs with neither will nor opinion of their own' willing only to follow the politics of expediency. They could not afford to be, as the politics of trade were essential to their continued prosperity.[85] Rather they were politically aware, diplomatically adept and materially rich men who looked to their own interests. Henry, a monarch obsessed with his own security, was rightly wary of the political power the City elite could wield if it so wished.[86] Employing men who could facilitate communication between the powerful entity of the capital and his own administration was simply common sense.

Edmund Dudley was the man who would step into the vacuum created by the loss of personnel who had facilitated City-crown communication earlier in the reign. Dudley's rise within the king's service was swift. As a lawyer who probably studied at Gray's Inn, Dudley would have spent many years living in London.[87] After serving as an MP twice and on various commissions of the peace in Sussex he was appointed, in 1497, to be one of two undersheriffs of London, serving with Thomas Marowe, and remained in that post with Marowe until September 1502.[88] He was speaker of the house of commons in the first quarter of 1504 and sworn of the king's council in October that year, becoming president of that body by July 1506.[89] To the king's other long-serving councillors, such as Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester and lord privy seal, Sir Thomas Lovell and William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury and lord chancellor, Dudley's rise in royal service must have seemed meteoric.

Upon the accession of Henry VIII it was Dudley, along with his colleague Sir Richard Empson, who would be blamed for the excessive financial exactions of the last reign. Vergil referred to these men as 'fiscal judges' who 'competed in gaining greater favour with their sovereign, and from the

[85] J. L. Bolton, 'The City and the crown', *The London Journal*, xii (1986), 1–24, at p. 12.

[86] The City had demonstrated its political and diplomatic abilities early in the reign when it defied Henry's will to effectively conduct its own foreign policy with the Low Countries (S. P. Harper, 'Divide and rule? Henry VII, the mercers, merchant taylors and the corporation of London', *The Fifteenth Century XI. Concerns and Preoccupations*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 127–40.

[87] D. M. Brodie, 'Edmund Dudley: minister of Henry VII', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., xv (1932), 136.

[88] LMA, COL/CC/01/01/010, fo. 268v. Marowe was to resign as undersheriff in Nov. 1502 (LMA, COL/CC/01/01/010, fo. 273). Dudley and Marowe were rewarded for their service the following Dec. by the City with an annuity of 20*s* each and a livery (LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fo. 119).

[89] James Ross has recently pointed out that Dudley may have been active in the king's service earlier than has previously been presumed (J. Ross, '"Contrary to the right and to the order of the lawe": new evidence of Edmund Dudley's activities on behalf of Henry VII in 1504', *English Historical Review*, cxxvii (2012), 24–45; Gunn, 'Dudley, Edmund (*c*.1462–1510)', *ODNB*).

beginning, armed with a crew of tattle-tales who would denounce men by name'.[90] *The Great Chronicle* stated that Dudley's authority within London was so great that 'whoo soo evyr had the sword born before hym, Dudley was mayer, and what his pleasure was, was doon, thowth the auctoryte of the Cytr and ffraunchyse of the same stood clerely agayn It'.[91]

During Dudley's time as undersheriff of London he would have worked alongside many of the new aldermen chosen at the turn of the century as well as cementing his relationship with some of the older faces. It is unknown whether the undersheriffs would have habitually served with the same sheriff in the sheriffs' court during their tenure or if they served both sheriffs. Certainly Dudley managed to cultivate some friendships during this time: Bartholomew Rede, who was sheriff in 1497–8, named Dudley as an overseer of his will (along with Sir Thomas Lovell).[92] Also serving as sheriff at this time were Thomas Wyndoute, who had lent large amounts of money to Henry in the first few years of the reign; Stephen Jennings, who was to become mayor at the king's behest in 1508; and James Wilford, who became an alderman in 1500, was banned from attending the court of aldermen for a year for speaking rudely to the mayor and was only reinstated after the king intervened on his behalf.[93]

By the time he became speaker of the house of commons in January 1504, Dudley would have developed connections of different kinds with many members of the capital's mercantile community. His contacts within the City, knowledge of its personnel and understanding of civic government could not be bettered among Henry's councillors. He would have been able to tell the king which Londoners had appeared before the sheriffs' courts, who was held in bond to the City's chamberlain and which citizens might have been engaged in activities of dubious legality. He would have known which merchants had money and who had influence within the civic administration, the livery companies or among the citizens generally. He would have been able to impart City gossip and cultivate informants. Eventually his 'promoters', men who gave him information or brought actions themselves against members of the mercantile community, included men among the servants employed by the mayor and sheriffs.[94]

[90] P. Vergil, *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil A.D. 1485–1537*, ed. and trans. D. Hay (Camden Society, 3rd ser., lxxiiii, 1950), p. 46.

[91] Thomas and Thornley, *Great Chronicle*, p. 348.

[92] TNA: PRO, PROB 11/14/763.

[93] C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 348–50. For Wilford's ejection from the aldermanic court and reinstatement, see LMA, COL/CA/01/01/001, fos. 129, 155.

[94] Thomas and Thornley, *Great Chronicle*, pp. 348–9.

The changes in the structure in the royal household that took effect after around 1495 with the establishment of the privy chamber meant that access to the king became far more difficult.[95] Merchants, even London goldsmiths and favoured Italians, were no longer to be found in the king's inner circle after the deaths of Rede and John Shaa, and the new royal domestic arrangements meant that they would not be replaced. City goldsmiths, like John Mundy and Robert Amadas, who supplied the king with goods during the remainder of the reign remained merely suppliers, and there is little evidence that they served the king in any other capacity. With the deaths of Bray and Shaa the king was left largely bereft of insider knowledge of the civic government and intermediaries with personal contacts and networks in the capital. Dudley, with his knowledge of the City administration and its personnel, including the new men within the court of aldermen, was able to step into this void. In short, the deaths of Bray and Shaa, and the king's need for a new 'London man' meant that Dudley was the right man at the right time, which propelled his rise in government.

[95] D. Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the privy chamber, 1485–1558', in *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. D. Starkey (Harlow, 1987), pp. 71–119.