

‘To avoide all envye, malys, grudge and displeasure’: sociability and social networking at the London wardmote inquest, c.1470-1540

This study considers the London wardmote inquest as a venue for social networking in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It uses a combination of social network analysis (SNA) of wills and a set of ordinances for the conduct of wardmotes written by the jurors of Aldersgate ward in 1540. Wardmotes were an important venue for men to accrue social capital and ‘respectability’ in the eyes of their neighbours and develop personal connections which were crucial for social and economic advancement in the pre-modern city. Such advancement is evidenced in the later office holding careers of jurors and their importance in parish social networks. The meeting of the inquest was a potentially fraught occasion of conflicting loyalties which required close policing in order to engender the sociability key to its role as a venue for networking.

Keywords: sociability; social network analysis; fifteenth-century; sixteenth-century; Aldersgate; Portsoken

In 1540, the men chosen as members of the jury for the Aldersgate wardmote set down a series of regulations ‘for good rule and order to be kepte and observed by suche as are sworne of the wardmote enquest’.¹ Although detailed provisions for the ward court and its jurisdiction had been set out over a century earlier in John Carpenter’s city custumal, *Liber Albus*, it was apparently not such procedural matters which were their concern. Comparison to Carpenter’s ‘Articles of the Wardmote’ shows that only one of the ordinances, for the presentation of a list of all ward householders by the beadle, derives from civic regulation.² Instead, the Aldersgate ordinances are primarily concerned with the personal behaviour of jurors and ward officers during the period of the jury’s sitting. Personal conduct of jurors and officers was crucial not just for the smooth running of the court but also because, as will be demonstrated, the wardmote was an important venue for local men to prove their worth. In the process, men built the personal contacts which were so important to social and economic advancement in the medieval and early modern city.

The wardmote

The custom of the wardmote was ancient, probably deriving originally from the Anglo-Saxon

folk moot. These meetings were held within each ward of the city and presided over by the alderman. Wardmotes were usually held annually, although since 1447 aldermen had been permitted to call them as often as required.³ The meeting itself involved the assembly of all adult males in the ward, who in turn elected local officers (beadles, constables, scavengers, rakers and aleconners) and chose a jury or inquest of male householders who were to investigate offences against the 'points' of the wardmote.⁴ The Aldersgate ordinances suggest that this jury was expected to sit for at least two days, since the beadle was required to present the list of householders 'on the first or seconde daye of sitting of the foresaid enquest'.⁵

The remit of offences to be investigated by the jury appears to modern eyes very wide indeed, ranging from environmental hazards like houses built of flammable materials and poorly maintained roads to moral offences such as extramarital sex and the keeping of bawdy houses. As Sarah Rees Jones has argued, the rhetoric of 'nuisance' under which all of these offences fell provided a 'dynamic and elastic discourse' which enabled jurors to shape presentments to fit changing local concerns.⁶ Caroline Barron has also identified a certain flexibility in the use of wardmotes by local inhabitants as a venue for protest and calls for political change, albeit that the mayor and aldermen usually resisted such appeals.⁷ For the seventeenth century, Valerie Pearl posited that ward office-holding and the wardmote's role as a venue for popular participation in politics were key to maintaining stability in the growing city.⁸ A flexible view of the wardmote tallies with Marjorie McIntosh's analysis of local courts elsewhere in England in the late medieval period which emphasises the extent to which juries in the late medieval period shaped legal processes to their own parochial concerns, using courts to promote the jurors' conception of orderly community.⁹ In a short article responding to McIntosh, Shannon McSheffrey described the wardmote as a process through which the community defined 'which men were respectable, worthy, and of a certain

stature' to the exclusion of those who appeared indicted.¹⁰ The present study explores this avenue further, analysing how the process of communal definition was carried out.

In this context, it seems likely that the Aldersgate ward jurors felt entitled to produce rules for the running of the meeting. The wardmote was 'their' occasion, an instrument of local power which could be moulded to reflect present concerns. It was also, as Barron notes, more inclusive than the craft or company in, theoretically at least, allowing attendance and perhaps nomination to the jury of any man regardless of whether he held citizenship.¹¹ The inquest therefore had the potential to act as a venue in which a broader range of men (although no women) could exercise local power than elsewhere. Although Barron notes that the parish as a spiritual community was inclusive, in terms of parochial office holding and decision making it was, as Clive Burgess has argued, restricted to a smaller group of local residents.¹²

Parish and craft were two of the multiple potential routes for networking and social advancement in the city which in many ways complemented one another. Social capital gained through responsible participation or office holding in one kind of institution might transfer into enhanced reputation in another and thus the same set of 'respectable' men recur in a variety of contexts.¹³ Office holding has been described as part of a *cursus honorum* by which men could ascend the rungs of power through participation in increasingly prestigious roles.¹⁴ It has been argued that this system had both structural and personal benefits. For the city, pervasive responsibility for government has been seen as an integrative structure which guaranteed early modern London's stability.¹⁵ For the individual, participation in institutions which bestowed respectability was highly important for the socially ambitious as it developed the good personal reputation on which financial and social credit relied.¹⁶ Dana Durkee has recently identified the search jury as an important early stage in the *cursus* for weavers in Norwich.¹⁷ Furthermore, contemporary perceptions of bourgeois masculine respectability

were defined by the congruence of men's patriarchal role within the household with their role in governance in the city.¹⁸ Both of the wards discussed here wholly or mainly covered the area of single parishes beyond London's walls, St. Botolph Aldgate at Portsoken and St. Botolph Aldersgate at Aldersgate. Therefore, it seems likely that in these neighbourhoods status gained through participation in one institutional context may have been particularly readily transferable to another. The wardmote was just such a context and yet its flexibility and potential inclusivity invites close analysis of who made up the juries and their status at the time of participation.

Indeed, the flexibility of the wardmote appears to have allowed it to become consciously shaped as a social occasion by its participants. The Aldersgate ordinances set out to regulate behaviour not just during the deliberations of the jury but also during communal dining of the inquest members, ward officers, alderman and any 'strangers' invited to attend.¹⁹ Aldersgate wardmotes were held within the hall built for the use of the parish fraternity of SS. Fabian and Sebastian and the Holy Trinity, usually referred to as Trinity Hall.²⁰ With a fixed meeting space already used for the convivial purposes of the local fraternity and ordinances which envisaged dining as an integral part of the wardmote process, the essential place of sociability at the meeting was apparently both recognised and fostered by contemporaries.

Jurors and their social networks

If socialising was acknowledged as an essential element of the occasion, then who exactly took part? Where lists of ward jurors survive in detailed runs, analysis of jury lists alongside other local sources offers some answers. Such records exist for the wards of Portsoken and Aldersgate, at the north-western and eastern fringes of London. Presentments (documents outlining the inquest's findings) containing jury lists as well as officers survive for Portsoken

ward in a near complete run from 1465 to 1483, and then a single early sixteenth century presentment.²¹ At Aldersgate, an apparent bout of administrative enthusiasm in 1584 resulted in the copying of jury lists from presentments dating from the mid-fifteenth century up to the previous year into the new Wardmote Minute Book, alongside the 1540 ordinances for conduct at the meeting.²²

In addition to the survival of ward records, the main constituent parishes of each have a considerable number of enrolled wills in the records of the London Commissary Court and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.²³ Jurors have thus been cross-checked against social network analyses (SNA) of wills in each locality. SNA is a quantitative methodology for the analysis of interactions between a set of ‘nodes’ (points within the network, in this case representative of individual persons) which enables both the visualisation of those interactions as a network graph and the statistical expression of a network’s characteristics.²⁴ Testamentary data lends itself to the use of SNA since wills describe a range of interactions between a testator and their social group, whether individuals act as beneficiaries to wills, executors or supervisors of the testator’s estate or as witnesses to the act of making a will itself. This analysis is focussed on graphing the executors, supervisors and witnesses to those wills, rather than the recipients.²⁵ Executors and supervisors were expected to be trustworthy and to have experience in handling money while witnesses would ideally be of sufficient social standing that in the event of the will being disputed their testimony would be persuasive in court.²⁶ These networks therefore offer the opportunity to analyse who was considered ‘respectable’ within a neighbourhood through those chosen to take on such roles as well as the social connections forged between neighbours. Investigating the relationship between personal connections and social structures is one of the best-established uses for SNA, having been identified as a fruitful use for the methodology by urban sociologists in the 1970s.²⁷ When compared with lists of ward jurors and officers, it is thus possible to

investigate whether participation in the wardmote might have assisted men in gaining local social standing.

Figures 1 and 2 map the social networks of testators from St. Botolph Aldgate (Portsoken ward) who made wills in the period 1465-1495 and St. Botolph Aldersgate (Aldersgate ward) in 1515-1540. The names of men who featured as ward jurors and officials are highlighted and the points (or nodes) are sized by the number of times each individual was cited by another as an official (executor, supervisor or witness) using a measure called in-degree. In-degree describes the number of in-bound connections to a node in a network where relationships are directed, like a testamentary network where connections are directed *from* a testator *towards* an executor, supervisor or witness.²⁸ In-degree is a particularly useful measure in this case since, given the requirements for probity and creditworthiness amongst officials to wills, it acts as something of a relative measure for the regard in which an individual was held by their neighbours.

Although there are several limitations to the comparison of the wardmote and testamentary records, the analysis is suggestive of the significance of the jury. The Portsoken wardmote lists only survive for 18 years of the will sample period in Aldgate parish and the number of enrolled wills from Aldersgate is quite small. Additionally, as will be demonstrated, jurors were often young householders meaning that they may have lived for several decades after their service in the jury, limiting their appearance as testators. These factors will lead to the under-reporting of jurors within testamentary networks. Nonetheless most jurors in the testamentary networks feature within the well-connected portion of the graph, rather than being in isolated groups with few shared connections. Ten of the sixteen juror-testators at Aldgate also named a fellow juror in their will. Both graphs indicate that those who had served as ward jurors were very likely to be mentioned by others; all jurors in the Aldersgate network bar one had an in-degree of one or more, as did 16 out of 24 jurors

and officials at Aldgate. Within these limited samples, there is thus some sense that ward jurors were somewhat more likely to be the kind of men trusted by their neighbours to take on important testamentary roles.



Figure 1: St. Botolph Aldgate testamentary network, 1465-95.

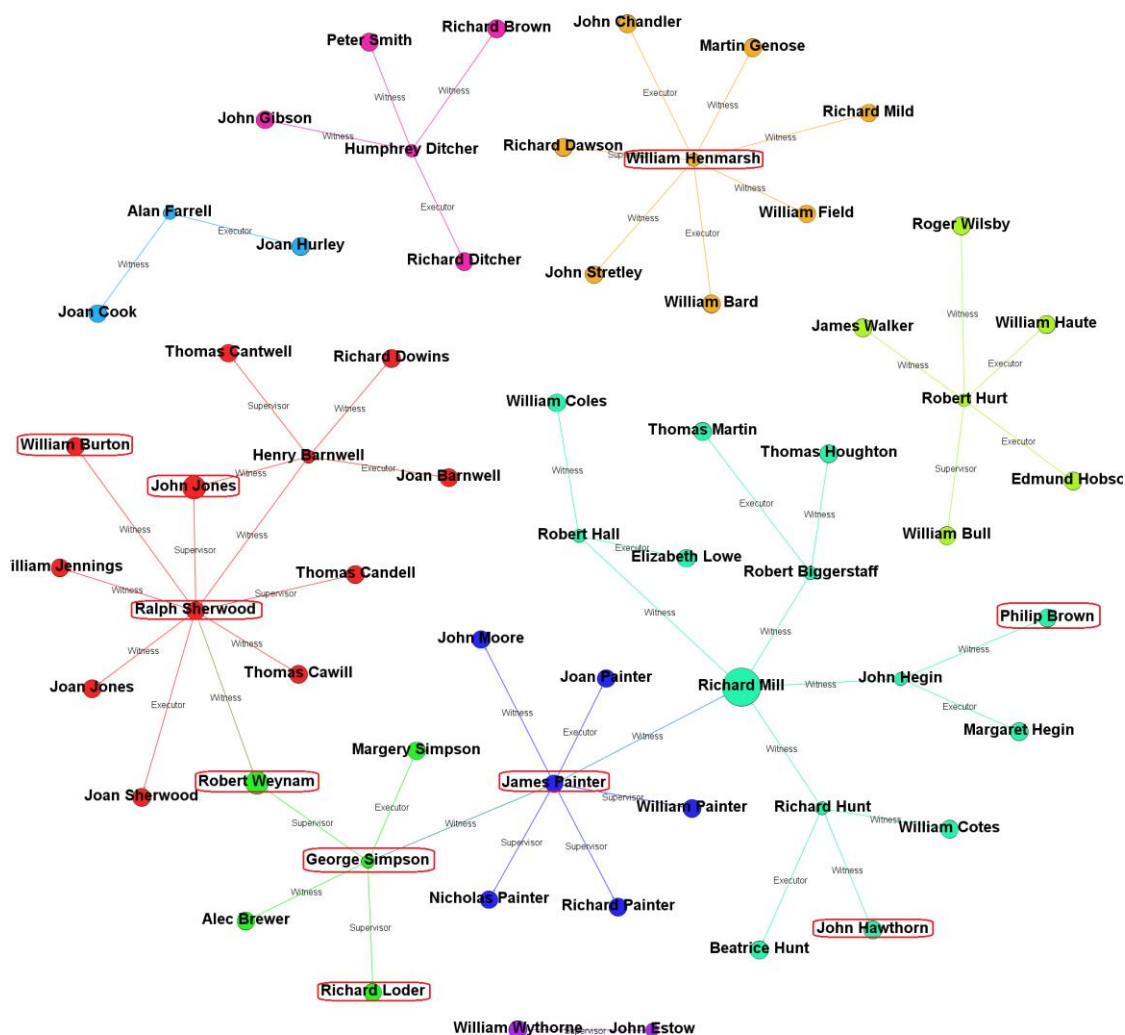


Figure 2: St. Botolph Aldersgate testamentary network 1515-1540.

The person in the Aldgate network with the highest in-degree is Richard Stotfold, a blacksmith or bladesmith, who was cited four times by fellow parishioners as executor, witness or supervisor to their wills. Stotfold was evidently a wealthy man by the time of his death in 1493 since his will was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury which handled the testaments of those with large estates or property in more than one diocese. He was a juror for Portsoken ward three times in the late 1470s and early 1480s.²⁹ At the time of making his will Stotfold had at least two adult children and one son, John, who was still a minor.³⁰ It seems reasonable to conjecture that the date of Stotfold's initial jury service some

15 years before his death had thus come while his children were still young, within a few years of marrying and becoming a householder.

One of the men who named Stotfold as witness to their will was Thomas Dalston, a glover, who had served as ward constable in the late 1460s and then as one of the ward's representatives on the city Common Council 10 times from 1470 to 1483 when he died. Another of the men who named Stotfold as witness to their will was John Mansfield, who served on the jury three times in the late 1460s and was then five times constable of the ward in the 1470s. Office holding within the ward was, as Christine Winter noted in her analysis of the Portsoken presentments, often preceded by a period of jury service.³¹ On this point the Portsoken presentments are more illustrative than those at Aldersgate because the Elizabethan wardmote book of the latter omits mention of officers. The evidence from Portsoken suggests that participation in a jury could thus be a route to advancement through the holding of local positions of responsibility within the ward itself. Dalston and Mansfield would likely have become well known amongst their neighbours as constables, responsible for the apprehension of local offenders as well as raising the hue and cry and organising juries.³² The benefits accrued to one's creditworthiness as a result of participation in the jury thus derived both from the opportunity to become acquainted with wealthy men like Stotfold as well as, in the longer term, through progression to greater positions of local respect and responsibility.

Wardmote jury service seems to have been an early rung in the ladder of local office holding. Dana Durkee estimated that Norwich jurors on the inquest searching worsted cloth were usually in their early thirties when they first served, taking on the role within a few years of gaining their freedom or even before as a way to help establish their business.³³ Examples from Portsoken suggest a similar process in London. Two more constables of the ward, Philip Thomson, a brewer, and William Pywale, a barber, who also held office in the 1460s and 70s were connected; Thomson named Dalston and Pywale as supervisors to his

will. Thomson's will was proved in December 1471, just after his first year as constable of the ward following three stints on the jury in 1466, 1467 and 1468. He left an apparently modest estate with just 12 pence set aside to the parish church for forgotten tithes.³⁴ His will mentions his surviving wife, Hawys, but no children are explicitly named. Testamentary evidence is an imperfect method for reconstructing biographical details, given the tendency for many bequests to be arranged orally in advance of formal will making.³⁵ Nonetheless, comparison between Thomson and Pywale's wills as contemporaries suggests that Thomson died relatively young before having the opportunity to amass much wealth; by contrast, Pywale's will, proved at the PCC seventeen years later in May 1488, includes 20s for forgotten tithes and detailed requirements for memorial masses and doles to the poor.³⁶ It thus seems likely that Thomson, like Stotfold, was still relatively young at the point where he participated in the wardmote jury, having married and established a household but yet to achieve the success of his supervisors Dalston and Pywale.

The interconnections between men who served on wardmote juries were not just evident in the choices they made at the end of their lives. In 1477 Thomas Dalston, Richard Stotfold and Andrew Todd, a mercer who was also a Portsoken juryman, constable and common councillor, entered into a bond for £33 at the Guildhall on behalf of Marion, Thomas and William Roke.³⁷ The Rokes were children of John Roke, junior, who had twice been a Portsoken common councillor. In 1478 Thomas Warren appeared at the Guildhall to acknowledge receipt of the bond because he had married Marion Roke. Underlining the point that participation in the ward formed an early part of a householder's amassing of social capital, the newly married Warren appears on the Portsoken jury for the first time the following year. He went on to serve as constable twice and acted as a witness to Thomas Dalston's will in 1483.

This is a very similar picture to that in Durkee's study of the Norwich weavers where the jury was an early step in the *cursus honorum* which made it a 'broadly accessible social mechanism' rather than an elite route to the mayoralty.³⁸ The trend towards low level ward service as an early stage in a career has been identified by Ian Archer a century later in Elizabethan London, where it was occasionally a prerequisite for involvement in the parish vestry.³⁹ As discussed above, such progression has been seen as important for the stability of early modern London's society. Comparing the records of parish institutions with wardmote jury lists in Aldersgate ward suggests the progression between ward and parish may have been well established in the late medieval period. 99 parishioners were named in the churchwardens' accounts for St. Botolph Aldersgate from 1468 to 1506, either as wardens, or parishioners fined for absence from presentation of the accounts or giving assent to new regulations.⁴⁰ Such parishioners would have been drawn from the select group of decision makers who steered the late medieval parish.⁴¹ Forty-eight per cent of these men were also jurors according to the lists for this period copied into the Aldersgate Wardmote Book. The timelines of involvement for many suggest that acting as a juror was a precursor to parochial office. Robert Woodhouse served five times as a member of the ward inquest between 1490 and 1501 and was then churchwarden four times between 1501 and his death in office sometime in 1504 or 1505. Similarly, Roger Russell served twice on the jury in the 1470s and went on to be churchwarden in 1483-1484 and another four times in the early 1500s, including serving as deputy for Woodhouse in the year of the latter's death. When Russell died around 1513 he was a wealthy enough man to be commemorated in one of the windows in St. Botolph Aldersgate's parish church.⁴²

Involvement in the wardmote jury thus often began soon after a man became a householder. Corroboration with the other available parish records at Aldersgate suggests that in joining the jury a new householder might expect to meet men who formed part of the

parish elite which steered local decision making. Wardmote service thus served as a route for making connections with the respectable men of the neighbourhood. For the ambitious, this could result in building the social capital necessary to progress to a prominent local role as churchwarden or, indeed, to take on greater responsibility in the ward as an officer and perhaps eventually a common councilman. Even for those not interested in the burdens of office, the respect which came with service is evident in the role of jurors in testamentary networks. In the act of judgement of their neighbours jurors could display their sound judgement and adherence to conventional morality in the presence of an influential group of men. In London's *cursus* as well as that of the weavers of Norwich, jury service was a small step which was less time consuming than full office holding and yet participation formed part of one of the routes to advancement.

Number of times named as jury member	Number of jury members	% total jury members
5+	43	11.7%
3-4	46	12.6%
2	55	15.0%
1	222	60.7%

Table 1: Aldersgate jury participation, 1467-1530. Calculated from lists of Aldersgate jurors in LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, ff. 2-15.

Managing juror behaviour

Successful participation in the wardmote might be part of the journey to local respectability, but what was the criteria for success? Hitherto this analysis has mainly focussed on those men who repeatedly served on juries and took ward office. However, it is important to note that this group was in the minority amongst inquest members. Analysis of the lists of the 366 jury members noted within the Aldersgate Wardmote Book from 1467 to 1530 suggests that those who repeatedly participated formed around forty per cent of the total. As Table 1 demonstrates, rates of participation drastically dropped after one

appearance, although thereafter a juror was more likely to appear three, four, five or even more times than they were to remain at two appearances. While the lack of lists of ward officers for Aldersgate means that it is not absolutely certain that one time participants were not involved again in ward affairs in another capacity, a comparison with the more detailed Portsoken records is here illustrative. Within the limited chronological span of Portsoken presentments, twenty-six per cent of those who at some point became ward officers participated in the jury on multiple occasions and only eleven per cent participated a single time.⁴³ Therefore, the drop off in participation rates suggests that, if the ward jury acted as a kind of testing ground for the character of new householders, many must have failed to impress. It is also likely that many simply did not want to participate any further. The Aldersgate wardmote ordinances thus have considerable value for suggesting the behaviour that was expected of jurors who did want to advance and the means through which they could distinguish themselves from other more unwilling participants.

Although the wardmote was primarily a means for inquiry of local misdemeanours, as we have seen it was also an important forum for local sociability. Its meeting was thus caught between dual purposes, rather paradoxically combining neighbourly conviviality with the accusation and indictment of neighbours' faults. It can be conjectured that competition too may have played a part, particularly for ambitious first time jurors keen to prove themselves above their fellows. There thus seem to be social tensions inherent in the wardmote. The 1540 regulations made in Aldersgate suggest that the tensions caused by this paradox could easily bubble to the surface and threaten to disrupt the orderly conduct of the court and its communal dining. In response, the regulations underline both the importance of self-control and enforcement of hierarchy as means to assuage conflict.

The Elizabethan compilers of the Wardmote Book suggest on the title page that the purpose of the ordinances was 'for goode rule and quietnes to be kept amongst the saide

enquest'.⁴⁴ Indeed, a concern with behaviour seems to have been recurrent, since a note at the end of the 1540 rules suggests that they were 'renewed' by the jury of 1565. Also copied into the Book is a shorter set of ordinances drawn up during the aldermanry of Edward Gilbert (1561-1564) which is concerned partly with the representation of the growing ward by jurors from within and without the walls.⁴⁵ The 'renewal' of the 1540 ordinances and the fact that no original version apparently survives invites a certain hesitancy as to how many of these rules can be dated to the earlier part of the century. However, the later regulations describe a new jury selection process based on geographic division of the ward and similar but augmented ordinances regarding violence amongst the jury and doffing of hats. Therefore, it can be implied that the 1540 ordinances as copied into the Wardmote Book reflect earlier practices not substantially rewritten in 1565. Perhaps the predilection for fractiousness within the jury evident in the 1540 rules only became more severe as population growth and religious differences put pressure on neighbourly society in the sixteenth century.⁴⁶

The method of compulsion to obey the 1540 ordinances is in most instances a monetary penalty, to be paid into a common box. The sums charged range from four pence up to a considerable 6s 8d, with the most common amount a fine of 12 pence. Whilst the purpose of the fund in the common box is not expressly stated, five of the rules refer to the conduct of communal meals by the jurors, officers and alderman and it seems likely that fines were used to fund such conviviality as well as for the ward's general administration costs. Indeed, one rule establishes a fine of either two pence for a quart of wine or four pence if the offender 'will not but delaye the tyme [of paying] till after he have dronke'.⁴⁷

The divisiveness of the wardmote is suggested in the wording of a number of regulations which hint at its potential to become a fractious affair. After three ordinances concerning the course of proceedings and timekeeping, the first rule to specifically identify a source of conflict forbids any juryman to

when any offender or offenders are presently brought before the same to be examyned of the cryme... take upon hym to speake any thing in the favour and excuse of the saide offender or offenders he or they being present⁴⁸

Those disobeying were to pay 12 pence. The rule is highly suggestive of the complexity of managing behaviour within the wardmote and the competing priorities at stake. The indictment of offences would have been based on jurors' personal knowledge of the locality and the activities of its inhabitants. While this meant that neighbour indicted neighbour, it also evidently led to occasions in which an 'offender' named by a fellow juror might be one's friend. However, the rule specifically states that speaking up is only problematic with 'he or they [the offender/s] being present'. This suggests that the jurors who set down the rules had a nuanced understanding of the requirements for conduct; while the testing of loyalties was to be expected, a disagreement amongst the jurymen visible to the offenders over whom they claimed jurisdiction was not to be tolerated. In this instance, personal conduct was expected to be modified in deference to the appearance of a harmoniousness of purpose amongst the jury.

If a degree of disagreement was to be expected, however, the ordinances attempt to set boundaries on the methods of its expression. The sixth and seventh ordinances are explicit in outlawing specific behaviours which could disrupt court business, many of them violent. The sixth rule forbids anyone 'of what degree soever he be' to 'move, strive [or] provoke any person of the said quest... unto any manner of wrath or displeasure, either by worde or countenance'.⁴⁹ Anyone who provoked his fellow jurymen through offensive speech or behaviour was to pay four pence, whilst anyone who 'do drawe any manner of weapon in force of such lewd demeanour and strife' was to pay a steep fine of 6s 8d. The next ordinance reinforces this point by setting out that likewise no such provocation was to be considered reasonable grounds 'for any man for to fight in any manner of wyse within this hall or court

of wardemote'. The provision goes on to specifically outline the prohibited means of challenging such slights, 'either with weapon or withoute as smyting with hand or fist, violent plucking, wrastling, hurlyng, tearing or punching'.⁵⁰ The specificity in these regulations, particularly around the definition of the violent behaviour which constituted 'fighting and freyes', tends to suggest that the situations described were not merely hypothetical. Tellingly, the sum forfeited for a violent response to a slight was only 12 pence, much less than that for provoking an argument with a weapon although treble that for verbal goading. Once again, it would appear that disputes were to be expected; they were fined at a similar level to late arrival. Loss of self-control through violence, particularly armed provocation, was nonetheless frowned upon. Calm conduct, even in the face of inevitable disagreements, may thus have been the mark of a successful juror. The control of violent behaviour would not just have served to maintain a more sociable atmosphere amongst the jurors but also would demonstrate, particularly for young householders, that they could be trusted to participate co-operatively in local decision making. Decision making at parish level was a matter of co-operation between significant parishioners and churchwardens,⁵¹ so it is understandable that a propensity for amicable discussion would have been valued in the training ground of the wardmote jury. The emphasis on self-control is also a reminder that the test of wardmote jurors was gendered, governance being a key feature of the 'Christian masculinity' they were expected to display.⁵²

Allied to the concern with self-control is a preoccupation with establishing and maintaining a strict hierarchy amongst the jurors. The privileging of an appearance of unity amongst the inquest members has already been noted in the rule against speaking in favour of offenders. Elsewhere in the ordinances it is evident that the maintenance of a semblance of unity was envisioned to rely upon the outward adherence of jurymen and ward officers to a hierarchy.

A primary means through which this was achieved was in the nomination of a foreman for the inquest. The first obligation of the jury upon their election was to choose a suitable 'headman' from amongst the 'most auncient' of the inquest.⁵³ His authority over proceedings is underlined in later ordinances. For instance, one rule establishes that jury members were not to curtail discussion of any issue until a resolution had been reached and ought to obey the headman if they were reprimanded for having attempted to divert the jury's attention. The authority of the headman is also underlined in the provisions for seating order; anyone presuming to sit in the headman's chair was to be fined four pence. Seniority in terms of age and length of service was also enforced through the seating order within the court itself. 'To avoide all envye, malys, grudge and displeasure' it was ruled that no man on his first appearance on a jury should 'sit above his auncient which hath byn twyse, thryse or oftenner chosen' unless he was especially permitted to by the alderman or headman on account of his 'aunciency or wisdom'.⁵⁴ The reliance on both age and frequency of service in the jury as dual markers of status reinforces the point that first time jurors were likely to be younger householders. Furthermore, the use of such a hierarchy once again sublimated the interests of the individual juror and gave greater status and authority to more experienced men, thus fostering an awareness in the young householder of his junior social position within the neighbourhood. If sociability was one of the aims of the wardmote, it was sociability of a highly managed nature which reinforced the need to earn one's respect from neighbours.

Hierarchy was also to be enforced visually through the provision of liveries for the ward beadle as well as the porter and butler who were presumably hired specifically to cater at the inquest's meals. The tenth ordinance sets out that while in attendance at the wardmote the beadle, porter and butler were to wear a livery if they were householders. Those who were not householders were instead rewarded with a meal. Just as by this period the London

companies had come to be divided between the liveried masters of the company and the younger, unliveried yeomen, the Aldersgate wardmote used visual distinctions of dress to define proper hierarchy. This ordinance goes on to insist that the stewards who fetched food for the wardmote meals should not be given livery at all on pain of a 12 pence fine,⁵⁵ suggesting both the desirability of the status conferred by livery as well as a concern with its selected distribution. The appropriation of livery into the lowest levels of civic governance at the wardmote can be interpreted as an aggrandisement of the occasion and authority of the court. Alongside seating order and other markers of status used amongst the jury, such provisions suggest efforts to legitimate the temporary authority gained both by jurors over their neighbours and by certain jurors over others. Visual distinctions of status were a means to impose order on a potentially fractious occasion through a hierarchy in manners, speech and dress.

The regulations for the conduct of jurymen during wardmote meals further stress these twin concerns with enforcing hierarchy and managing tensions. Any jurymen or 'straunger' joining them for dinner was prohibited from doing 'any reverence in putting of his bonnet oftener than once at his first sytting downe'.⁵⁶ Through the provisions of this rule, all members of the inquest and those who joined them for dinner were expected to show respect to the whole assembled company. This would both have served to encourage proper deference to other jurors as well as precluding any show of greater affection a particular individual or group, at least within a formal act of politeness. Once again, a concern with the management of outward harmoniousness is apparent. This has a parallel in Gervase Rosser's analysis of religious fraternity feasts, which he argues were likewise concerned with harmonious sociable dining as a route to the active creation of community.⁵⁷ Just as we have seen that involvement with the ward inquest might be part of a route to local creditworthiness, so has Rosser argued that guilds were crucial to the formation of business

relationships.⁵⁸ In both settings, negotiation of the requirements of deference and self-control set out by ordinances were important to profitable participation.

Furthermore, the timing of the setting down of the Aldersgate wardmote ordinances in 1540 is pertinent to the comparison with religious guilds. The reforming atmosphere of the 1530s caused many fraternities to cease their activities or at least adapt them to those which could be more easily justified as charitable; the fraternity members at St. Botolph Aldersgate had probably already seen the writing on the wall, even if their corporately held property was not alienated until 1547.⁵⁹ It may well have been that as one older form of neighbourly sociability was eradicated, the Aldersgate jurors sought to cement the wardmote's function as a convivial occasion. This is not to suggest that the provisions of the 1540 ordinances represented novelties but instead that the importance of this role had been thrown into relief by the threat to parish guilds. Thus, there may have been greater imperative to set down in writing the expected conduct and sociable functions of the wardmote.

Fraternities also provide a comparator for the legitimating role that the use of status played in the Aldersgate ordinances. Rosser argued that fraternities appropriated the hierarchical structures of the society around them into their feasts as a way to legitimise their existence.⁶⁰ It can be argued that a similar concern with legitimation is also a factor here, both as a route to enforcing the court's authority as a space where certain neighbours gained jurisdiction over others and as a means of sublimating the inherent tensions which would accompany such an event. This interpretation seems especially plausible in a space which acted as a testing ground for the young men of the ward who had newly gained the responsibilities of heading a household. By managing the levels of respect shown to one another over dinner and appropriating the trappings of civic power through the use of liveries, the Aldersgate ordinances attempted to impose order on the sociability of participants as well

as reinforcing the social role of the wardmote in enabling the progression of respectable local men.

Conclusion

There are two main conclusions to be drawn from this paper. The first is that wardmote juries and ward office holding intersected with other routes to social advancement for ambitious London men in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Wardmote inquests were a space in which men could prove their ‘respectability’ early in their time as householders as well as form long-lasting social bonds which might enhance their status and access to credit. Men who had served together at the ward inquest many years before often entrusted one another with the affairs of their estates after death. Evidence drawn from both Portsoken and Aldersgate suggests that, for some, wardmote participation was an effective route to office holding at least at a local level. The second conclusion is that in order to achieve such success, wardmote jurors were required to negotiate the tensions inherent in the use of an event which policed the neighbourhood as a venue for social advancement. If the Aldersgate ordinances imply what made a successful juror then it involved demonstration of moral authority through self-restraint and deference. Disputes and differences amongst jurors were apparently expected as an inevitable part of the wardmote and therefore the outward appearance of unity was stressed particularly through deference to a temporarily imposed hierarchy. In the potentially fractious circumstances of the ward inquest, the Aldersgate ordinances espouse a carefully controlled sociability which permitted jurors to demonstrate their suitability for office holding.

- ¹ The ordinances were copied into Aldersgate Wardmote Minute Book, 1467-1801, London Metropolitan Archives, CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, ff. 54-56v. See below for further discussion of the source.
- ² J. Carpenter, *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, H. T. Riley (ed.) (London: R. Griffin, 1861), 287–92.
- ³ C. M. Barron, ‘Lay Solidarities: The Wards of Medieval London’, in J. Martindale, P. Stafford, and J. Laughland Nelson (eds.), *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 222.
- ⁴ On the procedure of the wardmote see *Ibid.*, 222–24.
- ⁵ LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, f. 54.
- ⁶ S. R. Jones, ‘The Regulation of “nuisance”: Civic Government and the Built Environment in the Medieval City’, in M. do Carmo Franco Ribeiro and A. Sousa Melo (eds.), *Evolução Da Paisagem Urbana: Sociedade E Economia* (Braga: CITCEM, 2012), 290–93.
- ⁷ Barron, ‘Lay Solidarities’, 230–33.
- ⁸ V. Pearl, ‘Change and Stability in 17th Century London’, *London Journal* 5:1 (1979), 18–20.
- ⁹ M. K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- ¹⁰ S. McSheffrey, ‘Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality: A Comment on Marjorie McIntosh’s *Controlling Misbehavior*’, *Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998), 271–72.
- ¹¹ Barron, ‘Lay Solidarities’, 223.
- ¹² C. Burgess, ‘Shaping the Parish: St. Mary at Hill, London, in the Fifteenth Century’, in J. Blair and B. Golding (eds.), *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 246–85.
- ¹³ See for example Rosser’s discussion of fraternity membership and personal credit in G. Rosser, ‘Finding Oneself in a Medieval Fraternity: Individual and Collective Identities in the English Guilds,’ in M. Escher-Apsner (ed.), *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in Europäischen Städten : Funktionen, Formen, Akteure* (Frankfurt am Main; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 37.
- ¹⁴ I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51; D. Durkee, ‘A Cursus for Craftsmen? Career Cycles of the Worsted Weavers of Late Medieval Norwich’, in J. Colson and A. van Steensel (eds.), *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

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- ¹⁵ S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 175–78; Pearl, ‘Change and Stability’, 16–18.
- ¹⁶ G. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), chap. 5.
- ¹⁷ Durkee, ‘A Cursus for Craftsmen?’, 159–64.
- ¹⁸ S. R. Jones, ‘Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour : The Regulation of Labour in Medieval English Towns’, in P. J. P. Goldberg, W. M. Ormrod, and J. Bothwell (eds.), *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), 133–53; S. McSheffrey, ‘Man and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture : Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation’, in J. Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities : Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Garland, 1999), 243–78; P. J. P. Goldberg, ‘Masters and Men in Later Medieval England’, in D. M. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999), 56–70; McSheffrey, ‘Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality’, 270–71.
- ¹⁹ ‘it is ordeyned that none of the saide quest at dynner or supper sitting at the table within the saide hall, straunger or other...’, LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, f. 55v.
- ²⁰ P. Basing, ‘Introduction’, in P. Basing (ed.), *Parish Fraternity Register: Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS. Fabian and Sebastian (Parish of St. Botolph without Aldersgate)* (London: London Record Society, 1982), vii-xxviii. *British History Online*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol18/vii-xxviii>> [accessed 17 August 2016].
- ²¹ Most are transcribed and published in the appendices to C. L. Winter, ‘The Portsoken Presentments: An Analysis of a London Ward in the 15th Century’, *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeology Society*, 56 (2005), 97–162.
- ²² The title page describes the compilation as ‘a register book as well of the brief notes of all the indentures of the wardmote inquest of the ward of Aldersgate remaining in the chest in Trinity Hall and of all the ordinances and decrees made and set down for good rule and quietness to be kept amongst the said inquest’. LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, ff. 1-15. The original Aldersgate presentments themselves have for the most part disappeared, although three early sixteenth century examples survive; LMA, CLC/W/FA/005/MS01499 (dated 1510), CLC/W/FA/006/MS01500 (dated 1528) and CLC/W/FA/006/MS01501 (undated, c.1512-20 based on alderman).
- ²³ The wills used in the analysis presented here have been taken from two sample sets of dates, 1465-1495 and 1515-1540, for wills drawn from the PCC PROB 11 and Commissary records (LMA DL/C/B/004/MS09171/005-08, 009-011). Sample sizes of testators for 1465- 1495: St. Botolph

Aldgate (37), St. Botolph Aldersgate (15). Sample sizes for 1515-1540: St. Botolph Aldgate (31), St. Botolph Aldersgate (14).

- ²⁴ For a review of the historiography in this area see Joanna Innes, ‘‘Networks’’ in British History’, *East Asian Journal of British History* 5 (2016), 51–72. A good analysis (in German, with an English abstract) of the pitfalls and potential gains to be made through SNA in medieval history is provided by Eva Jullien, ‘Netzwerkanalyse in Der Mediävistik. Probleme Und Perspektiven Im Umgang Mit Mittelalterlichen Quellen’, *Vierteljahrschrift Für Sozial- Und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 100: 2 (2013), 135–53.
- ²⁵ On the use of social network analysis with testamentary evidence see J. Colson, ‘Local Communities in Fifteenth Century London: Craft, Parish and Neighbourhood’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2011).
- ²⁶ K. L. French, ‘Loving Friends : Surviving Widowhood in Late Medieval Westminster’, *Gender & History* 22:1 (2010), 24–27.
- ²⁷ Paul Craven and Barry Wellman, ‘The Network City’, *Sociological Inquiry* 43:3–4 (1973): 57–88.
- ²⁸ For a good explanation of degree and direction for humanities scholars see Scott Weingart, ‘Networks Demystified 2: Degree’, *The Scottbot Irregular*, <http://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/?p=6526> [accessed 17 August 2017].
- ²⁹ Dates for service on Portsoken juries drawn from Winter, 145–47.
- ³⁰ Will of Richard Stotfold, 1493, The National Archives PROB 11/12/81.
- ³¹ Winter, 100.
- ³² C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (Oxford: 2005), 124–25.
- ³³ Durkee, ‘A Cursus for Craftsmen?’, 158.
- ³⁴ Will of Philip Thomson, 1471, LMA DL/C/B/004/MS9171/006 f. 93. On the use of tithe sums as a measure of testator wealth see R. A. Wood, ‘Poor Widows, c.1393-1415,’ in C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500* (London; Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1994); R. B. Dinn, ‘Popular Religion in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1990), 63-66 .
- ³⁵ C. Burgess, ‘Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered’, in M.A. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), 14–33.

- ³⁶ Will of William Pywale, 1488, TNA PROB 11/8/169.
- ³⁷ ‘Folios 131 - 140: Nov 1477 - ,’ in R. R Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London: L, Edward IV-Henry VII* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), 153-162. *British History Online*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-letter-books/voll/pp153-162>> [accessed 14 July 2016].
- ³⁸ Durkee, ‘A Cursus for Craftsmen?’, 153.
- ³⁹ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 63–64.
- ⁴⁰ Drawn from St. Botolph Aldersgate churchwardens accounts, 1468-1506, LMA P69/BOT1/B/013/MS01454/002-025.
- ⁴¹ Burgess, ‘Shaping the Parish’, 262–69.
- ⁴² Basing, ‘Introduction’.
- ⁴³ 15 of the 57 officers named 1465-1483 also featured on multiple Portsoken juries. 6 featured just once. Winter, 145.
- ⁴⁴ LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, f. 1.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 57-58v.
- ⁴⁶ The wardmote was one of the routes which Steve Rappaport suggested as structural buffers against disorder in an expanding early modern London. See Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 181-3.
- ⁴⁷ LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, f. 54v.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 55.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Burgess, ‘Shaping the Parish’.
- ⁵² McSheffrey, ‘Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality’, 271-3.
- ⁵³ LMA CLC/W/FA/001/MS02050/001, f. 54.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 55.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 55v.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ G. Rosser, ‘Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England’, *Journal of British Studies* 33:4 (1994), 430–46; Rosser, ‘Finding Oneself in a Medieval Fraternity’, 43-44.
- ⁵⁸ Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages*, chap. 5.
- ⁵⁹ B. R. McRee, ‘An Urban Fraternity in the Age of Reform: Norwich’s Gild of St. George, 1516-1548’, in *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften*, 47–48, 60–61. On the Aldersgate parish fraternity of SS. Fabian and Sebastian in the Reformation, see Basing, ‘Introduction’.

⁶⁰ Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', 444.