

'OLIGARCHY', FACTIONALISM AND URBAN POLITICS IN THE BOROUGH OF
WARWICK, 1562-1588

by

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This thesis is concerned with the extent of 'oligarchy' in the town of Warwick during 1562-1588, specifically how far an urban political elite sought to dominate and control local government. It is the intention of this study to investigate the development of disputes over a twenty-six year period to identify key themes and patterns that emerge from a long-term assessment of urban politics. The thesis therefore takes an alternative approach to that adopted by historians who focus primarily on short-term, episodic incidents when assessing the 'trend' of 'oligarchy'. It will also assess how far traditional notions of 'oligarchic' rule apply to Warwick and the extent to which scholars are correct to assume that dissention in the town was caused by resentment towards a closed form of government. The study will focus on the factional disputes that are documented in the 'Black Book of Warwick' and will be supplemented by primary source material, such as legal, municipal, parochial and probate records, in order to attain a more complete picture of civic culture and politics during this period.

Chapter I investigates the nature of 'oligarchy' and concludes that an unspecific charter encouraged a small ruling elite to gain exclusive power over local government during this period, which was met with resistance by those excluded from their sphere of influence. Chapter II focuses on the causes of factionalism in the town and determines that constitutional and financial issues ignited conflict and developed into fiery personal feuds, which were heightened by the contemporary pre-occupation with the preservation of honour, status, power and authority in the local community. Ultimately, the thesis concludes that religion was not a significant factor in the emergence of dissention in the town. Instead, political and financial concerns were the catalyst for disputes to erupt and were accelerated by personal hostility. The Warwick 'oligarchy' was therefore not as unified as is typically assumed for boroughs of the period.

For my parents, Linda Bromley and Peter Bromley

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Abbreviations

WCRO	Warwickshire County Record Office
WoCRO	Worcester County Record Office
TNA	The National Archives
CR	County Records
DR	Diocesan Records
PROB 11	Probate Records (the dates the wills were proved are cited)
STAC 5	Star Chamber Records (Elizabeth I)
C 2	Court of Chancery Records (Elizabeth I)
REQ 2	Court of Requests Records (Elizabeth I)
SP	State Papers
E	Exchequer
PB	Principal burgess
AB	Assistant burgess
BB	Black Book of Warwick
b.	Date of birth
d.	Date of death
NL	Not listed/illegible
f./ff.	Folio/folios

INTRODUCTION

At a meeting held on Sunday 17 December 1564, one Thomas Powell refused to be sworn as an assistant burgess of the borough of Warwick, declaring that he had already been sworn and did not wish to be forsworn as many of the principal burgesses had been. Powell complained vociferously that the bailiff and twelve principal burgesses had misappropriated town assets without accounting for it, further protesting that the 'poore comons' bore the brunt of the costs to the town while the principal burgesses 'pay nothing'. Powell persisted in his vitriolic ramblings against the first company and declared:

if any of them woold say that he had payd any thing I wooll.. say to his face that hee lyeth - yea by Gods b[llood]. he lyeth

The principal burgess William Hill assured Powell that they had paid their due for the town, to which Powell retorted that he was a liar and 'withall spattered or w[i]t[h] fervent speaking spytt in Mr Hill his face'. Allies of Powell 'put & shewed their mysdemano[u]r so whotely' that the bailiff summoned the sergeant to arrest the troublemakers. Powell and one Thomas Jenks threatened the sergeant, to the alarm of the bailiff, who rushed towards the gallery and asked them "ye say youe will not obey me wooll ye not bee at my commandement", to which they replied "no" and left in protest.¹

The open defiance on the part of Powell and his allies against the bailiff and principal burgesses of the borough demonstrates that the Corporation of Warwick was far from a united and harmonious body at this time. Powell clearly did not trust the governors of the town to work in the best interests of the inhabitants and his accusations imply a growing resentment on the part of the commoners towards the political hegemony of the principal burgesses,

¹ T. Kemp (ed.), *The Black Book of Warwick* (Warwick, 1898), pp. 11-13.

particularly their handling of corporate finances. Over a twenty-six year period, urban politics in the town would be typified by factional squabbles that were sparked by the monopoly of a few townsmen over the political, financial and administrative affairs of the town.

It is the intention of this study to investigate urban politics in Warwick during 1562-1588, specifically how far the 'oligarchic' nature of its Corporation led to factionalism, which contributed towards a troubled atmosphere in the town.² In order to understand the reasons why Warwick was such an unusually divided town during this period, I will explore the emergence of an 'oligarchy' and how the rise of a self-perpetuating governing body was connected to factional disputes that are documented in the 'Black Book of Warwick' and in legal cases in the central courts. I shall consider how factional politics changed over the period and whether constitutional, personal, economic or political contention sparked conflict. This study will be a useful contribution to the knowledge and understanding of urban politics in a 'middle tier' incorporated town such as Warwick, particularly because the existing literature does not discuss the issue of 'oligarchy' in relation to disputes in as much detail over this period of time.³ Existing literature appears to focus on specific issues rather than considering wider avenues for investigation.

Scholarly interest in urban history had waned until its resurgence in the 1950s-1960s, when the works of historians such as Hoskins, Clark, Slack and Phythian-Adams revived historical interest in the subject.⁴ The 'problem' of 'oligarchy' is a pivotal issue within urban political

² The principal source for this investigation, the 'Black Book of Warwick', covers the period from 1562 onwards, so this year has been selected as the start date for this study. The year 1588 has been chosen as an end point for this investigation because the primary contributor to the 'Black Book', John Fisher, details the disputes up until this time, when Fisher apparently retired as town clerk of the borough. The charters of 1545 and 1554 will be referred to in my analysis: Warwickshire County Record Office (WCRO), CR 1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714; WCRO, CR 3891/1 & 2, 37 Henry VIII (1545), 1 & 2 Phillip and Mary (1554).

³ P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 3-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. v, ix.

history. The term 'oligarchy' has been defined as the 'domination of town government by a small and usually self-perpetuating body of the richest citizens' or 'government of the many by the few - an exclusive political elite' which has often been depicted as 'the inevitable result of extreme social inequality'.⁵ Scholars have promoted a largely negative view of oligarchic power by assessing the increase in charter granting as a trend towards oligarchic despotism, fuelled by 'urban elites determined to perpetuate their local status'.⁶ In more recent years, this assessment has been challenged. As Archer has observed, 'that other organising concept, 'the growth of oligarchy' is 'in need of revision' because oligarchic control may have been more flexible than previously believed, allowing a degree of participation from the inhabitants at large.⁷ Whether this argument applies to the borough of Warwick is a question worth exploring.

Since the pioneering work of Clark and Slack, various micro-histories have emerged on individual towns and cities, including Exeter, Worcester and Norwich.⁸ However, a detailed, long-term study of Warwick borough and 'oligarchy' in relation to factional disputes has not been conducted. Relatively few investigations of this type have been undertaken and a study of one town that considers many factors over a twenty-six year period would be valuable. Warwick has been mentioned in passing by historians such as Clark, Slack, Neale and Hirst in relation to 'oligarchy' but their discussions on the subject lack detail and consider specific events and issues rather than the long term dynamics in the town during the period under

⁵ R. O'Day, 'The Triumph of Civic Oligarchy in the seventeenth century?', in *The Traditional Community under stress* (The Open University, Milton Keynes, 1977), p. 109; J. Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town: a reader in English urban history 1530-1688* (London, 1990), p. 24.

⁶ P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (London, 1976), pp. 128-129.

⁷ Ian Archer, 'Politics and Government 1540-1700', in P. Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain 1540-1840*, 2 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 241-242.

⁸ Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (London, 1975); Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the sixteenth century* (Leicester, 1973); J.T. Evans, *Seventeenth Century Norwich* (Oxford, 1979).

review.⁹ Dyer and Beier have written more meticulous studies of Warwick but do not sufficiently consider the issue of 'oligarchy'.¹⁰ Dyer has made a general assessment of the formation and function of the Corporation, concluding that 'Warwick Corporation was poor, exclusively oligarchic, inefficient, amateur and possibly even corrupt', but did not examine factional disputes in detail.¹¹ Beier's study is more recent but is primarily concerned with the lower orders and poverty through an analysis of demographic and economic information provided by examinations of vagrants, poor rates, censuses, tax lists and probate records, rather than the trend of 'oligarchy'.¹² A new study of Warwick in light of more recent research is therefore overdue.

There are many unexplored questions relating to the issue of 'oligarchy' which a study of this kind could help to answer. One 'untilled field of urban study' is how 'oligarchies' recruited their members.¹³ This is a question that is key to understanding the factors that encouraged the formation of an 'oligarchy' and the ideals that bound it together. It will be necessary to identify family and friendship networks in order to assess whether Warwick Corporation was tight-knit and exclusive in character. In addition, town studies on 'oligarchy' do not sufficiently consider how inhabitants reacted to 'oligarchic' government and how resentment could lead to disputes. This subject has been probed by Hirst, who has investigated the long, drawn out and repeated tensions in towns over the management of municipal assets and finances. However, he has focussed on isolated episodes relating to Warwick during this

⁹ Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, pp. 130, 132-133, 135; J.E. Neale, *The Elizabethan House of Commons* (Revised Edition, Glasgow, 1963), pp. 240-244; D.M. Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 52, 210-212, 62, 152.

¹⁰ A. D. Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick 1545 - 1588' (BA thesis, University of Birmingham, 1963); A.L. Beier, 'The Social Problems of an Elizabethan County Town: Warwick, 1580-90', in Peter Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), pp. 46-85.

¹¹ Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', pp. 63-64.

¹² Beier, 'Warwick, 1580-90', pp. 46-85.

¹³ W.G. Hoskins, preface to Clark and Slack, *Crisis and Order*, p. vii.

period rather than the long-term context surrounding the disputes. This study could shed further light on the subject. More recent studies on popular revolt, such as the work of Wood, could assist in understanding popular protest against an 'oligarchy' and the reaction of local government to such protest.¹⁴ Furthermore, certain assumptions made by historians do not stand up on closer inspection; the shared belief that oligarchies primarily comprised merchants does not concur with the Warwick example. The composition of Warwick Corporation was more complex than one might initially assume and warrants further exploration.

The ideological thinking behind urban politics during this period has been another aspect that has been overlooked in previous studies of 'oligarchy' in towns. The contemporary justification for local government of this type and the resulting challenge to this view is an interesting avenue for exploration. Historians such as Cust, Withington, Fletcher and Muldrew have recently discussed contemporary ideas about civic service and urban political culture, such as contrasting world views, issues of hierarchy and status, the importance of honour and credit in public office and within the wider community, and perceptions of the commonwealth, which should assist in situating the issues in Warwick within their local cultural context.¹⁵ Another matter that requires attention is the role of the Crown in granting charters that encouraged the formation and perpetuation of an 'oligarchy'. This issue has been

¹⁴ A. Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002).

¹⁵ R.P. Cust, 'Patriots' and 'popular' spirits: narratives of conflict in early Stuart politics', in N. Tyacke (ed.), *The English Revolution c. 1590-1720: Politics, Religion and Communities* (Manchester, 2007); R.P. Cust, 'The Public Man', in S. Pincus & P. Lake (eds.), *The Politics of the Public Sphere* (Manchester, 2007); P. Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); A. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (Abingdon, 6th Edition, 2016); A.J. Fletcher, 'Honour, Reputation and Local Officeholding in Elizabethan and Stuart England', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 92-115; C. Muldrew, 'Interpreting the Market: The Ethics of Credit and Community Relations in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 18 no. 2 (May 1993), pp. 163-183; C. Muldrew, 'Trust, Capitalism and Contract in English Economic History: 1500-1750', *Social Sciences in China*, 36 no. 1 (2015), pp. 130-143; C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998).

discussed by many historians, including Tittler and Weinbaum, and it is clear that in Warwick this was also a crucial factor.¹⁶ Whether the granting of open-ended charters by the Crown supported the formation of an oligarchy will be considered in the thesis.

In many towns of the period, religious division caused strife and unrest. Barry has highlighted that between 1530 and 1688, 'the problem of religious uniformity lay at the heart of urban government, troubling relations both within each town and with national government'.¹⁷ The viability of this argument for Warwick is questionable. The 'Black Book' does not overtly discuss religious divisions, which may suggest that it was not a direct cause of dissent in the town. However, this does not necessarily mean that religion did not play any role in the development of factionalism. The emergence of puritan beliefs amongst the inhabitants of the town coincided with the arrival of the celebrated and outspoken puritan and Presbyterian preacher Thomas Cartwright to Warwick in the 1580s, which could have pressurised the Corporation to accept the country gentleman Job Throckmorton of Haseley as burgess for parliament in 1586. Equally the dispute could have been triggered by long-standing personal hostility, as argued by Hirst, who has suggested that the difficulties were caused by local rivalries and power struggles rather than religious division.¹⁸ This issue will be addressed in the thesis.

Another critical point which has not been sufficiently considered in relation to 'oligarchy' is the intervention of the gentry in local factional struggles. Neale has asserted that corporations

¹⁶ R. Tittler, 'The Incorporation of Boroughs, 1540-1558', *History Association*, 62 (1977); Tittler, 'The Emergence of Urban Policy, 1536-58', in J. Loach, R. Tittler (eds.), *The mid-Tudor polity, c. 1540-1560* (London, 1980); M. Weinbaum (ed.), *British Borough Charters 1307-1660* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. viiii - xxviii; Barry, *The Tudor and Stuart Town*, pp. 28-29; O 'Day, 'The Triumph of Civic Oligarchy', p. 118; K. Wilson, 'The Fabric of the Traditional Community', The Open University, Arts: A Third Level Course, English Urban History 1500-1780, Units 5, 6, 7, 8 (Milton Keynes, 1977), p. 75; C.F. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite, and the Crown, 1580-1640* (Stanford, 1999), p. 2; Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 78.

¹⁷ Barry, *The Tudor and Stuart Town*, p. 30.

¹⁸ Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, pp. 210-211, 62, 44-45.

during the period were striving for independence and repelled any interference from outsiders.¹⁹ This interpretation has been dismissed by Kishlansky and Patterson, who assert that a patronage relationship was welcomed in most towns. Patterson in particular has emphasised the centrality of patronage relations in borough politics; corporations actively encouraged the assistance of gentry and nobility as town patrons because they provided support and protection for their 'rights and privileges' and, during times of crisis, supplied connections with central government and boosted a corporation's authority in the locality. The patron in turn gained honour, status, 'deference', 'office' and 'privilege'.²⁰ The nature of relations between the borough and its patrons will be further explored in the thesis.

The principal source for this study will be the 'Black Book of Warwick', which is a corporate minute book covering the years 1562 to 1714, written primarily by the principal burgess, John Fisher, who was central to corporate administration during 1562 to 1588.²¹ Fisher served the borough as town clerk from 1569 to 1588, held the offices of steward, auditor and surveyor from 1570, served as bailiff of the borough during 1564-5 and 1580-1 and was elected as burgess for parliament in 1571, 1572 and 1584. An obsessive, officious, meticulous and hot-headed individual, Fisher saw fit to note down in extraordinary detail the minutes of meetings, copies of legal documents, accounts of royal and noble visits, copies of ordinances for trade guilds, leases, deeds, wills, indentures, accounts of elections and how they were conducted, letters between the Corporation and its patrons, accounts for Fisher's term of bailiwick in 1580, a list of bailiffs, and lengthy accounts of factional squabbles over financial and constitutional issues. Overall, the 'Black Book' is structured in a hap-hazard fashion. In the early 1560s, Fisher's entries were shorter and more formal, beginning with the oath of a

¹⁹ Neale, *House of Commons*, pp. 155-158, 165-166, 168-169.

²⁰ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, pp. 1-11, 46-47, 233-235.

²¹ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714.

principal burgess, followed by succinct accounts of various meetings, elections, bailiwick accounts and copies of leases. These early entries are what one would expect from a minute book. However, by 1564, the minutes became much more detailed and chronicled difficult meetings. From 1570 onwards, the 'Black Book' becomes reminiscent of Fisher's personal diary and notebook. Copies of ordinances, letters, deeds and indentures are scattered throughout the first half of Fisher's contribution to the 'Black Book'. The second half is a largely continuous flow of Fisher's narratives detailing disputes. There is therefore no specific order to the 'Black Book', although it is mostly chronological and Fisher attempted to keep certain topics together by leaving blank pages which he never filled. It is unclear precisely who Fisher's intended readership was meant to be but it seems that he was keen to record events and dialogue in case 'this matter may come in question in tyme to come'.²² He also thought it his duty to record important events in the town, such as the visit of Queen Elizabeth I to Warwick in 1572: 'the writer thinkith it better to reoport somewhat than leave all undone the towne having bene at so great chardge'.²³ His lengthy narratives could also have been an expression of his sense of self-importance, as Fisher portrayed himself as being at the centre of events in the town, and an outlet for his exasperation at the machinations of his enemies, particularly the principal burgesses Robert Phillips and Richard Brooks.

The 'Black Book' is an invaluable resource for understanding many aspects of local government during this period; the relationship between the Corporation and its patrons, the language used within corporate politics, the interactions between the burgesses and the friction that could occur, issues that caused division, why some disputes progressed to legal proceedings in the central courts, and Fisher's opinion on the motivations of particular

²² Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 280.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

individuals. Fisher's entries demonstrate the personal nature of local government and the extent to which personal rivalries and grudges shaped corporate politics in Warwick during this period. In particular, the source is excellent in providing detailed dialogue between individuals during factional disputes which will prove useful. Previous studies referring to this source have not utilised it to its full potential because a detailed investigation into the factional disputes described on its pages has not been undertaken.

The limitation of using such a source is that it was written primarily by one individual who we can assume was an 'oligarch' concerned with maintaining his own power and authority in the borough. As Neale has commented, '...repeatedly the Black Book of Warwick reflects the antipathy of an oligarch for a demagogue'.²⁴ The source is dominated by Fisher's authoritarian interpretation of events, which may not have reflected the views of his fellow inhabitants, particularly his nemesis, Richard Brooks. Furthermore, Fisher appears to have written large sections of the 'Black Book' long after the event, approximately ten pages at a time. His poor health may have been a factor.²⁵ Fisher's narratives may therefore only provide a partial picture. However, the information provided by Fisher can be corroborated by other source material, particularly concerning the dispute surrounding Oken's will, which suggests that the 'Black Book' is still a reliable source for understanding the disputes of the period.²⁶

²⁴ Neale, *House of Commons*, p. 242.

²⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 28, 97, 195, 199, 332.

²⁶ Fisher's description of the events and arguments surrounding the Oken dispute correlates with information provided by The National Archives (TNA), C 2/Eliz/W20/23, John Fisher, William Frekulton, Thomas Powell, Robert Sheldon, John Grene versus Robert Phillips, Thomas Cawdrey, 1574; TNA, STAC 5/F20/9, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey, 1575; TNA, STAC 5/F3/6, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey alias Cooke, 1575.

The 'Black Book of Warwick' has been transcribed by local dignitary and amateur historian Kemp, who published his work in 1898 to make the source more accessible to the public.²⁷ To appeal to his intended readership, Kemp has omitted sizeable parts of the 'Black Book', specifically copies of leases, deeds, ordinances, covenants, legal proceedings such as those relating to the Court of Chancery, Fisher's patent of office, bailiffs' accounts, elections of bailiffs and principal burgesses (which have been summarised), a copy of Oken's deed of feoffment, obligations, warrants, bonds, minutes of 1590s meetings and patents. Kemp has also only transcribed extracts from Oken's will and Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth in 1575. Kemp's transcription will be referred to frequently in this study but it is important to remain aware that the accuracy of his transcription is, at times, questionable.²⁸ Kemp's foliation is incorrect, so I will follow conventional foliation when analysing the omitted sections of the 'Black Book' manuscript.²⁹

The information provided by the 'Black Book' will be supplemented by evidence supplied by a wide variety of primary source material.³⁰ The 'Book of John Fisher' will prove valuable for providing information about the relative wealth of individuals during the 1580s through an analysis of tax assessments, which are more precise and complete than subsidy assessments that are available for the period.³¹ The latter, however, will be useful for surveying the relative wealth of burgesses during the early part of the period, specifically the 1550s and 1570s.³² Legal records from the courts of Star Chamber, Chancery and Requests will be

²⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. v-vii.

²⁸ Where Kemp's transcription appears unreliable I have quoted directly from the source: WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714.

²⁹ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714.

³⁰ For a fuller discussion of these sources see Appendix I.

³¹ T. Kemp (ed.), *The Book of John Fisher* (Warwick, 1900); WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588; TNA, E 179/193/186, Subsidy Assessments, 9 April 1550; TNA, E 179/193/190, Subsidy Assessments, 30 January-20 March 1551; TNA, E 179/193/208, Subsidy Assessments, 20 September 1571.

³² TNA, E 179/193/186, Subsidy Assessments, 9 April 1550; TNA, E 179/193/190, Subsidy Assessments, 30 January-20 March 1551; TNA, E 179/193/208, Subsidy Assessments, 20 September 1571.

utilised to provide important additional perspectives to the development of factionalism in Warwick, rather than relying solely on Fisher's account of events. Probate records can reveal personal information about the burgesses that is not readily available in other sources, such as occupations, approximate dates of death and family and friendship networks. The Warwick Borough Charters of 1545 and 1554 will assist in identifying the areas where the charters lack clarity and the specific clauses that were subject to disagreement, thus helping to understand how the weaknesses of the charters caused division within the Corporation.³³ Patent rolls will indicate the wealth of certain prominent burgesses through the granting of leases of land and property to the most wealthy individuals in the borough.³⁴ Rather than using the Churchwardens' Accounts of the parish of Saint Nicholas to investigate the fabric of the church, the source will be utilised in this study to assess the extent of the operation of a 'cursus honorum' in the town and how far the position of churchwarden served as a stepping-stone to more influential offices on the Corporation.³⁵ It will also provide additional information about family and friendship networks and which burgesses originated from the 'poorer' parish. The Corporation's account book will assist in identifying the burgesses that were prominent on the Corporation during the early part of the period under review.³⁶

Throughout the thesis a distinction will be made between the 'inner circle' and the 'outer circle'. The 'inner circle' refers to the 'oligarchs' who were running the affairs of the town, as opposed to the 'outer circle' of citizens who wanted greater participation in local government

³³ WCRO, CR 3891/1 & 2, 37 Henry VIII (1545), 1 & 2 Phillip and Mary (1554); WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994); C. Hodgetts, 'Translation Warwick Charter of 1554 November 12', personal communication (29 January 2016).

³⁴ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office: prepared under the superintendence of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, 1548-1566*, 7 vols. (London, 1924-1960).

³⁵ WCRO, DR 87 1-2, The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Saint Nicholas, Warwick MSS, 1547-1768; R. Savage (ed.), *The Churchwardens' Accounts of The parish of St. Nicholas, Warwick, 1547 - 1621* (Warwick, 1890).

³⁶ WCRO, CR 1618/WA1/1, The Account Book, 1546-1569.

and were critical of the rule of the 'inner circle'. These terms will be applied fluidly because the membership of the 'inner circle' was frequently changing and not always clearly identifiable. Not all principal burgesses were part of the 'inner circle'. For instance, John Grene served as bailiff during 1576-7 but later collaborated with Richard Brooks against the 'inner circle' in 1583.³⁷ The principal burgess John Ridgeley was initially critical of the 'inner circle' in 1574 but then was legally challenged in the Court of Star Chamber by Richard Brooks in 1587 for corruption and extortion, along with other members of the 'inner circle'.³⁸ These terms will therefore be used as a general means of distinguishing between rival factions. The bailiff and principal burgesses will be referred to as the 'first company' and the assistant burgesses as the 'second company', or as the 'upper' and 'lower' chambers respectively.³⁹

The two chapters will consider the following issues:

Chapter I will explore the emergence and extent of 'oligarchic' dominance in the town.

Chapter II will investigate factional politics during the 1560s, 1570s and 1580s, particularly the factors that encouraged factional divisions and the issues that heightened conflict in the town.

The conclusion will attempt to assess the extent of 'oligarchy' in Warwick, the ways factionalism could develop and the causes of division in such a tight-knit urban community.

³⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 332-343.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131; TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, November 1586- November 1587.

³⁹ The composition of the Corporation will be explained in Chapter I.

CHAPTER I: THE EMERGENCE AND EXTENT OF 'OLIGARCHY' IN WARWICK, 1562-1588

Introduction

In December 1573, twelve inhabitants were summoned before the bailiff and principal burgesses of the Corporation of Warwick as candidates for a reinstated body of twelve assistant burgesses. At the meeting, the candidates presented eight articles requesting greater participation in the government of their town in their roles as assistants. Their requests were swiftly dismissed in uncompromising fashion⁴⁰;

For by the charter the Bailief & principall Burgesses are apointid to be the comon counsell of this borough... so if yo[u]r requests were grauntid youe that clayme to be but comoners woold rule the balief & his company w[hi]ch should be yo[u]r hed & Ruler... wee take ourselfes... to be the governors... of the borough... So to ioyne you with us... were in myne owne opynion madnes...⁴¹

Such rhetoric indicates that, as in many boroughs of the period, Warwick was governed by an 'oligarchy' comprising a ruling elite of leading townsmen that claimed exclusive power and control over the administration and financial affairs of the borough.

In order to establish the extent to which these townsmen dominated the Corporation of Warwick and the borough, it will be necessary to identify the factors that may have contributed towards a small group of inhabitants gaining exclusive control over local government. The vague clauses in the charters of 1545 and 1554 presented prominent townsmen with the opportunity to interpret the charters however they saw fit, to elevate

⁴⁰ By a spokesman for the principal burgesses (presumably John Fisher).

⁴¹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 110, 112. We can assume that John Fisher was the orator of this speech.

themselves above the rest of the inhabitants and increase their own power in the community by establishing a power base for themselves as burgesses of the Corporation. This issue leads to several questions: what were the incentives for townsmen to take on municipal offices and how far did honour and status motivate them? What were the processes and factors that propelled individuals towards civic positions? Which offices held the most power and how could this have contributed towards the formation of an 'oligarchy'? What was the role of family connections, friendship networks and religious leanings in the formation of factional alignments? The answers to such questions may assist in explaining the factional divisions that caused dissention in the town during the 1560s to 1580s. This chapter will explore these issues, attempt to contextualise the bitter feuds of the period and explore how far Warwick conforms to ideas about the extent of 'oligarchy' at this time.

I. Weaknesses of the Charters

The seeds for 'oligarchic rule' may have been planted long before the town was incorporated in May 1545.⁴² Before the charter, a system was already in place to support a small number of leading townsmen to play an influential role in local politics in the form of the Guild of Holy Trinity and Saint George. However, during the 'mid-Tudor period' of 1536-1558, the nature of local government began to change on a national scale when the Crown and parliament responded to economic problems in the localities with a spate of charter granting.⁴³ This trend extended to Warwick. Following the dissolution of the monasteries, the Guild, just before its own dissolution, requested a grant of the property previously owned by Saint Mary's college.⁴⁴ Their efforts were rewarded in May 1545 with a charter of incorporation, establishing the town as a corporate body, with its own powers, authority, finances and legal

⁴² WCRO, CR 3891/1, 37 Henry VIII (1545).

⁴³ Tittler, 'The Emergence of Urban Policy, 1536-58', pp. 74-75, 91.

⁴⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 45-46.

identity. This was followed by the Marian charter of 1554, which launched the Corporation as a fully-fledged local authority. The new Corporation was essentially a continuation of the Guild, with some former Guild members serving as burgesses, such as Thomas Oken, Thomas Roo and John Ray, during the early years of the first Corporation.⁴⁵

This newly established Corporation was riddled with problems from the outset and these were directly caused by the inadequacies of the charters. Typically for Henrician charters, which were granted in response to particular concerns without a system in place to produce the detailed and 'standardised' charters that would be issued under Mary, the founding charter of 1545 was insufficient for a number of reasons.⁴⁶ A major flaw was the imprecise nature of its clauses. The town was incorporated under the name of the 'The Burgesses of the Town of Warwick in the county of Warwick' but failed to state the actual names of the founding burgesses, which led to schism in later decades, for there were differing interpretations as to the definition of the term 'burgesses' and who was entitled to be elected.⁴⁷ In particular, the charter was unclear about whether the term 'burgesses' included all the inhabitants or just the few townsmen serving on the Corporation. Moreover, the 1545 charter failed to outline an official structure for the Corporation, and did not provide clear guidelines on election processes. The Corporation had no direct instructions from the charter as to how it should function and manage its own affairs, nor were its offices specified.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the town was not granted all five 'gifts' of incorporation which, according to Weinbaum, typically raised a town from 'an existing community to the rank of a legal personality'.⁴⁹ The founding

⁴⁵ R.W. Dunning, 'The Borough of Warwick: Political and administrative history, 1545-1835', in W.B. Stephens (ed.), *A History of the County of Warwick: The City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick*, 8, in R.B. Pugh (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England* (1969), p. 490; WCRO, CR 1618/WA1/1, The Account Book, 1546-1569, ff. 21r, 26r, 27r, 33r, 34r.

⁴⁶ Tittler, 'The Incorporation of Boroughs', p. 40.

⁴⁷ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), p. 1.

⁴⁸ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), pp. 1-5.

⁴⁹ Weinbaum, *British Borough Charters*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

charter granted perpetual succession, land and property, the power to sue and be sued as a whole and by the specific name of the Corporation and a common seal. However, it was not granted the authority to issue by-laws, something that Weinbaum considered to be a pre-requisite for a borough to be fully incorporated.⁵⁰

Despite the efforts of the Guild to secure the new Corporation's financial future, the 1545 charter provided insufficient income for the Corporation to sustain itself in the long-term. Property was granted within the town and borough of Warwick, such as the rectories and churches of Saint Mary and Saint Nicholas, including the Rectories of Chaddesley and Budbrooke.⁵¹ The Corporation could increase its income through the acquisition of property, provided it did not amount to more than twenty marks a year.⁵² However, these grants were not enough to allow the Corporation to maintain a healthy revenue. The charter bestowed funding but also limited the wealth, power and independence of the Corporation by binding it to various financial obligations. For instance, the Corporation was to pay the King, his heirs and successors £6 13s. 4d. each year 'for all other rents, services, tenths and demands'.⁵³ The burgesses were also obliged to pay the stipends for the vicar of Saint Mary's, the schoolmaster of the newly established free school and two chaplain priests in perpetuity.⁵⁴ This was without taking into consideration other fees that the Corporation would incur, such as the substantial costs of maintaining the infrastructure of the town.⁵⁵ Consequentially, the

⁵⁰ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), pp. 1-5; Weinbaum, *British Borough Charters*, p. xxiii.

⁵¹ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), pp. 1-3.

⁵² WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), p. 5.

⁵³ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), p. 2.

⁵⁴ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 134-135, 221.

Corporation was troubled by financial difficulties for most of the period under review. These deficiencies led to the burgesses taking measures to obtain a new charter in 1548 and 1549.⁵⁶

In 1554, Philip and Mary granted the borough with a more practicable and detailed charter that was a vast improvement on its predecessor. Warwick benefitted directly from the revision of administrative policy during this period.⁵⁷ The new charter clearly defined and legitimised the structure and function of the Corporation and provided essential details that were absent from the previous charter. It specified that Warwick was to be a 'free borough incorporate... by the name of the Bailiff and Burgesses of the borough of Warwick', the bailiff to be assisted by twelve principal burgesses, thus forming the common council of the borough.⁵⁸ New offices were created, such as the recorder, deputy recorder, town clerk, sergeant-at-mace and clerk of the market. The Corporation was empowered to make its own by-laws, hold a court leet and elect and send two members to parliament.⁵⁹ The office holders, many of whom had served under the first charter, were named in the new charter.⁶⁰ There was therefore continuity with the previous charter but significant improvements under the new charter in terms of structuring the Corporation and legitimising its authority within the borough.

Despite these enhancements, the existence of two charters caused further opportunities for disagreement over constitutional issues. A critical problem was the contradiction of the two charters regarding who was being incorporated. The 1545 charter granted property to the 'said Inhabitants of our said town of Warwick that these same inhabitants ... be in fact and in

⁵⁶ WCRO, CR 1618/WA1/1, The Account Book, 1546-1569, f. 18.

⁵⁷ Tittler, 'The Emergence of Urban Policy', pp. 74-75.

⁵⁸ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 2, 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, articles 6, 20, 24.

⁶⁰ WCRO, CR 1618/WA1/1, The Account Book, 1546-1569; WCRO, CR 3891/2, 1 & 2 Phillip and Mary (1554). Several of these founding burgesses continued to be at the forefront of local politics for many years after 1554, such as Richard Townsend and Richard Fisher.

name one body and community'.⁶¹ All the inhabitants were therefore made burgesses under this charter. The 1554 charter, on the other hand, incorporated the borough under the name of the 'Bailiff and Burgesses of the Borough of Warwick', and named the new officers. The grants given by the first charter, 'wherein they be all made Burgesses as well the worst as best', were still being administered by the Corporation after 1554 so the assistant burgesses thought that they, as the inhabitants, were entitled to be informed about the management of corporate assets.⁶² Confusion was accentuated by the charter's interchangeable use of the term 'inhabitants' to refer to the first and second companies.⁶³

The sufficiency of the 1554 charter was limited by its imprecision and ultimately failed to alleviate potential problems. The unspecific and cryptic nature of its clauses allowed for differences of opinion which led to issues of misinterpretation and uncertainty. This enabled the bailiff and principal burgesses to use their initiative and invent the rules as they went along. This was the case regarding the role of the assistant burgesses. The actual nature of the office of assistant was vague and the method of electing the assistants unclear but it appears that they were merely hand-picked by the principal burgesses.⁶⁴ According to the 1554 charter, the bailiff and principal burgesses 'may make constitute and admit as many other burgesses from the more upright inhabitants of the borough from time to time according to their discretion'.⁶⁵ The principal burgesses interpreted this clause to restrict the political influence of the assistants and restrain their power to challenge the first company; the twenty-four assistants named at a meeting on 10 December 1570 were declared to serve as the

⁶¹ WCRO, CR 674/A1, M. Farr, Warwick Town Charter 1545 Translation (March 1994), p. 1.

⁶² Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 107-108.

⁶³ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 20.

⁶⁴ As on 7 October 1586, when the first company informed the second company that two new assistants, chosen by the bailiff and principal burgesses, would be joining their ranks, and in 1573: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 106, 385.

⁶⁵ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 5.

'mowth of all the comoners', to be 'callid used continued or dismissed as the bailief & principall burgesses shal finde cause by their behavior'.⁶⁶

The failure of the charter to clearly establish the office of assistant burgess allowed the first company to exert their power and left the assistants dissatisfied with their own position within the Corporation. Disputes inevitably resulted, tensions coming to a head on 16 December 1571, when the assistant burgesses refused to elect one of the principal burgesses to check the Corporation accounts and demanded consultation regarding the grant of leases, the administration of the 'corporation lands' and the town charities.⁶⁷ The principal burgesses reacted by disbanding the assistants, declaring that the bailiff and principal burgesses 'had sufficient power of themselves to doo any thing there to be doon w[i]thout them'.⁶⁸ The assistant burgesses therefore did not participate in town government between 1571 and 1573 and the role of 'burgess' of corporate finances was combined with the office of bailiff in a reaction against the assistants' insurgence.⁶⁹ The tension between the first and second companies could have been avoided by a much fuller and specific charter. Instead, the rebellion of the assistants led to disunity and distrust. The second company of assistants was reinstated in 1573 but was reduced from twenty-four to twelve members. Their appointment was entirely on the first company's terms and candidates were expected to serve their superiors obediently, 'assisting aydyng comforting counsiling & helping' the bailiff and his

⁶⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-61. This was the financial 'burgess' who, according to Dyer, was responsible for the financial administration of the 1545 charter, whereas the bailiff was responsible for the financial administration of the 1554 charter. The roles were merged in 1571: Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', p. 42.

⁶⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 61.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* The level of involvement of the wider inhabitants continued to cause friction throughout the period and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter II.

twelve principal burgesses.⁷⁰ The assistants were to be 'conformable' and ready to willingly perform their duties for the benefit of the common weale.⁷¹

The imprecise nature of the charters was to some extent mitigated by the fleshing out of its clauses by the burgesses of the borough in the form of a 'Book of Orders' comprising a set of articles.⁷² These articles established a 'code of conduct' for civic officials but could be amended or adjusted with the approval and consent of its members, including the assistant burgesses.⁷³ The rules were less flexible regarding electoral procedure, which followed the first company's interpretation of the charter. The charter of 1554 directly stated that in the event of the death of a principal burgess, the first company were to 'nominate and elect one or more other persons then inhabitants... to be Burgess or burgesses of the borough for life' within eight days.⁷⁴ The first company interpreted this clause to mean that 'the persone who shalbe electid to bee a principall Burges should or ought to be named chosen & placed by the Balieff and principall Burgesses of that borough or the greater nombr of them onely'.⁷⁵ This excluded the assistants from any say in the matter. This interpretation, however, was contested by Richard Brooks, who argued that the principal burgesses should be chosen by

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 11 (The oath of the assistant burgess).

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 11, 106.

⁷² The Book of Orders itself has not survived but several of its clauses can be reconstructed from various references in primary source material. There appear to have been at least 32 articles in the Book of Orders, stipulating rules regarding conduct whilst in public office, including dress codes, attendance at church and fairs, orders to prevent the overthrow or making void of the charters and/or the franchises and privileges of the borough, confidentiality clauses, and the duties of the bailiff and principal burgesses, encompassing their compulsory attendance on the bailiff on Michaelmas Day and All Hallows Day at the election of a new bailiff, their responsibility to uphold law and order in the streets, to report any slanderous language against the first company, and to call each other 'brother', 'to the end that unytye & concorde might be therby better encreased': Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 369-376, pp. 1-2, 10-11, 430; WCRO, CR 1618/W21/6, The Corporation of Warwick Minute Book, 1610-1662. These articles were presumably set out by the first company after it was incorporated: 'certen politike constitucyons, have been agreid upon by & emongs the Balief and principall Burgesses of Warwik': Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 369.

⁷³ In practice the charters and the Book of Orders appear to have been used as mere guidelines rather than being set in stone, as in the refusal of Richard Townsend to serve as bailiff after being elected in 1574. Townsend was allowed a little latitude regarding his punishment: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 135-136; Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 13.

⁷⁴ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 15.

⁷⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 346.

the 'Baliff principall burgesses and the rest of the Inhabitants of the said Borough or the greater nombr of them only'.⁷⁶ The imprecise nature of the articles in the 1554 charter left room for disagreement and differences in interpretation, ultimately leading to civic crisis.⁷⁷

II. The incentives for townsmen to take on the offices of the Corporation

The charters of 1545 and 1554 founded a Corporation of Warwick but relied upon the assumption that members of the local community would be willing to take on its offices. Contemporary ideas of honour, reputation and status in the community are central to our understanding of what motivated individuals to undertake such weighty and burdensome responsibilities. Townsmen residing in small boroughs during this period appear to have striven to improve their social status in the communities in which they lived in order to elevate themselves above their fellow 'middling' inhabitants as 'urban gentry'. The 'urban gentry' were lower in the social hierarchy than 'country gentry' but were men from the 'upper region of the 'middling sort', who 'aspired to call themselves 'master' or 'gent''.⁷⁸ Public office was a means of fulfilling these aspirations because the gentry associated service in local office with honour, prestige, status and reputation. The distinction of magisterial office conferred honour upon the gentleman serving and acted as a 'public display of status' that was much sought after by local gentlemen.⁷⁹ This section will explore how aspirations for social advancement motivated individuals to progress up the 'cursus honorum' of civic office to high status positions, thus attaining the title of 'master of the town'.⁸⁰ It will also consider how

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 346.

⁷⁷ This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter II.

⁷⁸ J. Milton, 'Gentility in an Urban Context in Late Tudor and early Stuart England' (PhD thesis, The University of Birmingham, 2008), pp. 4-5.

⁷⁹ F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 168-169, 171.

⁸⁰ The term 'master of the town' was used by Warwick inhabitants to refer exclusively to principal burgesses during depositions for the Chancery case of 1583: WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 233v, 234r, 235r; Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 12, 58, 114, 160. The bailiff and principal burgesses were also addressed as 'masters' by the earls of Leicester and Warwick in correspondence and by Sir John Hubaud: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 208, 306, 308, 280.

contemporary ideas of hierarchy, honour and social standing encouraged the development of an exclusive ruling elite in the town, in addition to the benefits and disadvantages of serving in civic office.

Service in public office was a means of boosting the social status of an individual in the community. The position of principal burgess or bailiff conferred upon individuals the honorary title of 'gentleman'. The title of 'gent' or 'master' was used exclusively to refer to principal burgesses and was frequently used as a means of separating the urban elite from the inhabitants at large.⁸¹ Contemporary concepts of the social order organised society into a variety of 'degrees' of people according to their 'status and occupational groups'.⁸² This 'classical social hierarchy' classified these 'degrees' as 'noblemen; gentlemen; yeomen; citizens and burgesses; husbandmen; artisans; labourers'.⁸³ Wrightson has suggested that an 'informal terminology of social description' or 'language of 'sorts' emerged alongside this hierarchical concept of the social order during the mid to late sixteenth century. This language reflected

⁸¹ This is reflected in the terminology used by burgesses and commoners alike; repeatedly the principal burgesses were referred to as 'the twelve masters of the town' and, apart from country gentry, only principal burgesses were given the prefix 'master': WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 233v, 234r, 235r; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588 (tax lists dated 1581/2); Kemp, *Black Book*, e.g. pp. 30, 42, 388. The bailiff was also given the prefix 'Master': Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 231. Between 1554 and 1590, the majority of principal burgesses assumed the title of 'gent' in official documentation: TNA, SP12/137, 'A Booke of the names and dwellinge places of ye Gentlmen and freeholders in ye County of Warwicke', April 1580, f.119; TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, November 1586- November 1587; TNA, REQ 2/31/5, John Raye versus Richard Brooks, 1576; TNA, REQ 2/160/77, Deposition of Richard Brookes of Warwick concerning a debt owed to Sir John Throckmorton, 1576; TNA, REQ 2/61/66, Robert Phillips versus William Hudson, Thomas Hill, 1575/1576; TNA, REQ 2/252/35, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Cawdrey als Cooke, Oliver Brooks, 1577; TNA, REQ 2/256/40, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Hill, William Hudson, 1578; TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye of Warwick versus Richard Brooks of Warwick, 1574-6; TNA, PROB 11/69/288, the will of Humphrey Crane, 18 May 1586; TNA, PROB 11/81/113, the will of Richard Fisher, 5 February 1593; TNA, PROB 11/52/413, the will of William Hill, 27 October 1570; TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon, 5 December 1579; Worcester County Record Office (WoCRO), 1590 (62), the will of Thomas Hankinson als Jenks the elder; WoCRO, 1602 (44), the will of Roger Hurlebutt; 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene; 1596 (99), the will of Christopher Knight; Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 6, 178, 285.

⁸² K. Wrightson, 'Estates, degrees, and sorts: changing perceptions of society in Tudor and Stuart England', in P. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 32-33.

⁸³ K. Wrightson, 'Sorts of People' in Tudor and Stuart England', in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 28.

'an essentially dichotomous perception of society, pejoratively distinguishing the 'common sort' from people of gentility and authority' and was used to 'express the distinctions between this favoured group and those excluded from it'. This binary language of 'sorts' was therefore used divisively to separate the elite from the 'commoners' by using terminology of 'differentiation' and 'dissociation'.⁸⁴ Such concepts placed 'an overriding emphasis upon authority and subordination' and supported the development of 'oligarchy' in towns.⁸⁵ Those resident in Warwick were termed 'inhabitants' or 'townsmen' and were 'householders of the borough'.⁸⁶ However, John Fisher sub-divided those resident in the town into the 'most honest and best sort' or the 'meanest and worst sort', thus reflecting the social and political schism within the town and the 'realities of power relations in the local community'.⁸⁷ Those in the upper echelons of society included property owners, taxpayers and members of the trade guilds.⁸⁸ Towards the bottom of the spectrum were 'poor occupiers' and 'diverse unworthy inhabitants'.⁸⁹ The 'masters of the town' positioned themselves at the top of this hierarchy. Those below could be termed a 'commoner' and assistant burgesses were frequently referred to as such.⁹⁰ It was not enough, however, to hold a high status title. It was necessary for the 'masters' to strengthen their authority in the community by instigating respect from their inferiors.

⁸⁴ Wrightson, 'Estates, degrees, and sorts', pp. 44-45; Wrightson, "Sorts of People", pp. 28-31, 34, 37, 38.

⁸⁵ Wrightson, 'Estates, degrees, and sorts', pp. 42-43.

⁸⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 140, 45, 97, 332, 344, 353, 355, 386, 390, 394.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 354, 390, 393; Wrightson, "Sorts of People", p. 40.

⁸⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 139-140; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, tax lists for the 1580s.

⁸⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 378; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 235r.

⁹⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, e.g. pp. 16, 57.

III. Demonstration of power and status

The principal burgesses' progression through the 'cursus honorum' of public office 'had brought them to positions of authority over their fellows' but in order for them to retain their status within the community, it was necessary for them to reinforce 'civic deference'.⁹¹ The 'masters' publicly demonstrated their social superiority to the inhabitants through formal ritual, ceremony and symbolism, in order to 'impart awareness of hierarchy and support oligarchic tendencies'.⁹² The power of the Corporation was displayed through election and inauguration procedures. The election of the bailiff took place in the guildhall, which functioned as the civic seat of power and embodied the authority and political dominance of the thirteen masters.⁹³ The election process itself was layered with symbolism. The procession from the church to the burgess hall prior to the election displayed the hierarchy of power within the Corporation; the bailiff and principal burgesses processed at the head of the entourage, followed by the inferior assistant burgesses, who represented the inhabitants at large. The superior status of the principal burgesses over the assistants was also asserted within the guildhall. The first and second companies were segregated according to their position within the 'cursus honorum'; the assistants were barred from the 'hall' and were made to stand in 'an other Roome' while the bailiff and principal burgesses voted for two candidates for the election. The assistants were then 'callid in' to the hall to appear before the first company, who instructed them to choose one of the two candidates for the bailiwick. The assistants then retired to 'an other Rome' to choose a new bailiff. Once the election had taken

⁹¹ R. Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community c. 1500-1640* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 157, 105.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁹³ As highlighted by Tittler, *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105, 109. Subsequent to the granting of the guildhall to the earl of Leicester in 1571, meetings, elections and ceremonial occasions took place in Saint Mary's church, the court house at the cross and the shire hall. The first company comprised the bailiff as well as the twelve principal burgesses and was addressed as 'Mr Balief': Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 181.

place, the assistants returned to the hall and presented the name of the successful candidate to the bailiff and burgesses in ceremonial fashion, requesting the approval of the first company to their choice. The first company would then grant their consent.⁹⁴ The candidates were therefore chosen by the first company, who authorised the result of the election, and the superiority of the bailiff and principal burgesses was symbolised through the positioning of the first and second companies within the guildhall.⁹⁵

This social hierarchy was publicly demonstrated at the bailiff's inauguration ceremony on All Hallows Day through ritual, oath-taking and the display of civic regalia, which 'served to display the locus of civic authority to both the community and the wider world'.⁹⁶ The first company led the commoners 'of all sortes sexes & state' into the burgess hall, where the bailiff and principal burgesses were seated according to rank: 'euery man in degree of antiquytie or auctoryty'. The new bailiff publicly swore his oath, which emphasised the bailiff's role in the community to uphold civil concord as 'conservator of the peace... to administer true and indifferent justice', reflecting the contemporary concern about preserving the harmony of the commonwealth.⁹⁷ The retiring bailiff would symbolically hand over his white staff of office and the mace to the new bailiff, thus symbolising the transfer of power. Such civic ceremonies established the white staff and the mace as emblems of the authority of the bailiff, who served as the figurehead of the ruling Corporation.⁹⁸ These representations of power were utilised for ceremonial and practical purposes. The mace was presented during the visits of dignitaries such as Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, in 1571 and Queen Elizabeth in

⁹⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 428-429.

⁹⁵ A trend that has been highlighted by Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, pp. 103, 110.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 111.

⁹⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 429-430.

⁹⁸ Tittler has discussed the importance of the mace for reflecting the status and authority of the mayor: Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, p. 108.

1572.⁹⁹ They were also wielded as symbols of authority to assist in reinforcing civic obedience in times of crisis, such as during the Myton Riots of 1576, when the bailiff knocked on the gates of a tithe barn housing rioters 'softely with his white staffe'.¹⁰⁰

Social hierarchy and civic authority were further reinforced by strict dress codes to be observed exclusively by the principal burgesses and denoted social and political status. At meetings in the church, the hall and 'in other such places', the masters of the town were to wear 'A gowne of black cloth faced with some semely lynning or furre which gowne shalbe made after the cytie fasshon'.¹⁰¹ On special occasions, however, the dress code changed. During the visit of Queen Elizabeth in 1572, the principal burgesses wore 'gownes of puke lyned w[i]t[h] satten & damask upon footclothes', while the bailiff wore a gown of scarlett.¹⁰² Such modes of dress made a visual statement to all those present that the bailiff and principal burgesses were authority figures to be revered and respected.

Ceremonial tradition also extended to the elections of principal burgesses. Ritual modesty was an important aspect of electoral procedure and was a means of affirming the honour that accompanied the selection, as well as reinforcing status within the corporate hierarchy. On Sunday 2 August 1573, John Ridgeley was elected as a principal burgess but openly refused the post before the bailiff and principal burgesses, declaring his 'inhability & insufficiency to that office'. The bailiff and his burgesses declared their 'resolve' to have him and Ridgeley sworn in as a member of the corporate 'inner circle'.¹⁰³ A gentleman was expected to undertake public office impartially for unselfish reasons, so, through the observance of this

⁹⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 36, 91, 94.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 94. The bailiff also wore scarlet at the visit of the earl of Leicester in 1571 and this appears to have been his official uniform: *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

ceremony, Ridgeley was able to accept office without disgrace, thus receiving the acclamation of his fellows, which 'went a long way in matters of honor in this period'.¹⁰⁴ A code of power politics therefore appears to have been in operation which allowed the elected candidate to seek a position on the Corporation without losing his honour and the burgesses to display their power and prestige in a ceremonial fashion. As Kishlansky has suggested for parliamentary selection, there were rules in this ceremonial game of honour that the burgesses had to follow. The candidate had to avoid dishonour at all costs, for 'personal attributes, prestige, standing, godliness - were all implicit in officeholding'.¹⁰⁵

The second charter conferred upon Corporate officeholders the privilege to preside over the borough courts.¹⁰⁶ The right of the bailiff and steward to sit in positions of power over these courts represented the shift from manorial to local control and symbolised the authority of corporate officials over the governing structure of the town.¹⁰⁷ Tittler has suggested that such control emerged alongside the 'increasingly oligarchic' trends of the period.¹⁰⁸ In Warwick, the power of the Corporation over the inhabitants through the courts led to accusations of corruption and extortion; in 1587, Richard Brooks accused the bailiff and town clerk of holding the 'court of record' 'utterly w[i]thout warrant of the lawe, and under colour of Justice pervert the lawe, working their owne willes by indirect dealinges and false ymprisonment'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 179; Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ M. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: social and political choice in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 16.

¹⁰⁶ These were the 'court of record' and the view of frankpledge (court leet). Held every Monday before the bailiff and recorder or their deputies, the 'court of record' dealt with issues involving debts, petty crimes and disputes not exceeding the value of ten pounds. The bailiff was required to examine felons and vagrants and decide upon their punishment. The court leet was summoned and convened by the steward or town clerk twice yearly before the bailiff and recorder to regulate trade, levy amercements, collect profits, undertake the assizes of bread, ale and weights and appoint constables in each ward in the town for the coming year, among other business: Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 10, 19, 20; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588; Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 99; Dunning, 'History', pp. 494-495.

¹⁰⁷ Tittler has highlighted how this devolution was a trend of the period: Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, p. 100. The manor court previously belonged to the earl of Warwick.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, 1586/87.

Whether these allegations were justified or not, it is clear that the authority of civic officers over the courts was another opportunity for the ruling elite to showcase their power to the inhabitants at large in an official capacity.

IV. Financial incentives, obligations and responsibilities

Besides honour and status, there were additional benefits to joining this exclusive 'brotherhood'.¹¹⁰ The production of leases in particular demonstrates how the burgesses favoured their brethren in the granting of property and land. The majority of recorded grants in the 'Black Book' were to Corporation members and could be interpreted as perks of the job. On 10 December 1570, several principal burgesses were granted the following leases; John Fisher the tithes of the field of Coton and Herdwick in Saint Nicholas parish, Thomas Burges (bailiff) a close at Woodcote, William Frekulton three houses beyond the bridge and eighteen acres of arable land at Myton, William Hudson/Huddison the charnel house, Saint Mary's churchyard and a 'litle house' in the churchyard for twenty-one years, and a house and land at Radford to Thomas Powell.¹¹¹ Their corporate membership may not have been the only factor because the burgesses were among the wealthiest inhabitants and presumably could afford to pay the rent for such grants. However, it is interesting that in this particular example, all the receivers of the grants were principal burgesses at the time. Such autonomy over corporate assets would be challenged in 1571, when the assistants questioned the administration of the 'corporation lands'.¹¹²

These benefits had to be balanced out against the potentially crippling financial demands that could be placed on individuals as principal burgesses of the borough. As Archer has

¹¹⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 176.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

highlighted, perceived 'corruption' by corporate officials may have been viewed by the ruling elite as compensation for the personal risks they were undertaking on behalf of their community.¹¹³ The legal responsibilities imposed on the Corporation by the first charter and the limited resources provided by it resulted in high expenditure and low income, leading to the financial insolvency of the Corporation for much of the period.¹¹⁴ The 'masters of the town' were responsible for the financial administration of the Corporation and were to be held personally accountable in the event of financial difficulty. At a meeting in 1574 Richard Fisher reminded the company present that he had paid over forty pounds of his own money for the town during his term of bailiwick and it still owed him almost thirty. He had also paid over twenty nobles for the repair of the bridge and for the maintenance of the booth hall.¹¹⁵ The first company subsequently issued a bond for his repayment.¹¹⁶ Principal burgesses therefore contributed their own money to support the corporate coffers. The financial resources of the Corporation were further strained by costly visits from dignitaries. It was a practical necessity for the Corporation to establish a good relationship with patrons because they could provide much needed protection and support. The provision of gifts and services to noble visitors was a means of cultivating such patrons whilst boosting their own honour and 'offered a social matrix through which connections could be made and nurtured'.¹¹⁷ When the Corporation welcomed Queen Elizabeth to the town on 12 August 1572 they presented her with a purse containing £20 in sovereigns.¹¹⁸ The fees incurred by her visit to Kenilworth in 1575 proved even more costly to the Corporation and amounted to £30.¹¹⁹ Financial burdens

¹¹³ Archer, 'Politics and Government', p. 245.

¹¹⁴ Fisher highlighted in 1571 the pressure this exerted on Corporate finances: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 58-59.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

¹¹⁶ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 25v.

¹¹⁷ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, pp. 24, 87, 85.

¹¹⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 91.

¹¹⁹ The bailiff was required to see to the needs of the Queen's household, who were staying at Warwick. Gifts given by the town to the earl of Leicester, the countess of Warwick and other dignitaries also strained corporate coffers: *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

of office were therefore an issue to consider when accepting a place at the top of the 'cursus honorum'.

V. Progression through the 'cursus honorum'

In order to attain the status of a 'master of the town', a potential officeholder had to prove his respectability as a member of the 'better sort' in the community. He needed to demonstrate his worthiness as a man 'mete' for a position in local government, who could be trusted to uphold the 'privileges and franchises' of the borough and set an example to the rest of the inhabitants. Most importantly, he had to show that he possessed the 'gentle' qualities' that would qualify him for a seat in local government, specifically, traditional notions of 'virtue and honour as the primary indicators of gentry status'.¹²⁰ A means of proving his worth was community service. Service as a churchwarden or constable were respectable positions that could boost one's prospects of being co-opted by the principal burgesses on to the Corporation.

Humphrey Crane was prominent in the poorer parish of the town as a churchwarden during 1557-1558, prior to his appointment as an assistant burgess in December 1564.¹²¹ Crane progressed through the 'cursus honorum' to the upper chamber in 1573 and distinguished himself by serving twice as bailiff, in 1573-4 and 1582-3.¹²² The role of constable could also encourage the principal burgesses to look favourably upon certain individuals, particularly if they were helpful during a time of crisis, such as the Myton Riots of 1576.¹²³

¹²⁰ Milton, 'Gentility', pp. 23-29.

¹²¹ Savage, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 20; Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 13.

¹²² Thomas Shotteswell, Thomas Allen and Barnaby Holbache also served as churchwardens prior to their appointment as assistant burgesses: Savage, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp. 2, 29, 34, 39.

¹²³ Two of the seven constables listed during the Myton Riots of 1576 subsequently served as assistant burgesses, specifically William Loson in 1585 and Leonard Holmes in 1577. Three of the constables listed were already assistant burgesses, specifically Oliver Brook, Christopher Knight and Henry Chaplin: Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 288.

Service as a churchwarden or constable were, however, desirable criteria rather than an essential pre-requisite to joining the corporate 'fellowshipp'.¹²⁴ Richard Townsend and Richard Brooks served their community as churchwardens whilst they were principal burgesses, so the role of churchwarden was not always used as a stepping stone to higher positions.¹²⁵ The personal merit of an individual was supposed to outweigh other factors and respectability, honour and trustworthiness were desirable traits for civic office. In 1573 the newly selected assistant burgesses were told that 'it was true that there were others w[hi]ch for the substance or age might supplie the place but wanting other such virtues & conformyties as is iudgid to be in them they were rather preferrid'. In their deliberations to co-opt principal and assistant burgesses, the first company would consider 'their honestnes & discrecions', their willingness to be 'bothe conformable & redy to doo their dutyes gladly' and 'euery mans wisdome discrecion hability & metenes to that office'. Candidates for the bailiwick and parliamentary seat were also 'elected and chosen' according to how far they were considered to be a 'faithfull & trustie man... to be of all most metest'.¹²⁶ Those that did not fulfil the first company's expectations could be ejected from their positions.¹²⁷

An individual had to obtain a position on the first rung of the corporate stepladder or 'cursus honorum' of civic office in order to progress within a three-tiered system to the higher status offices. This three-tiered system comprised the lower ranks of the twenty-four/twelve assistants, the 'first company' of principal burgesses and culminated in the highest position of bailiff.¹²⁸ Progression up this stepladder brought increased influence and prestige. The first

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 368.

¹²⁵ Richard Townsend and Richard Brooks served as churchwardens during 1578-1579 and 1579-1580: Savage, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp. 61-63.

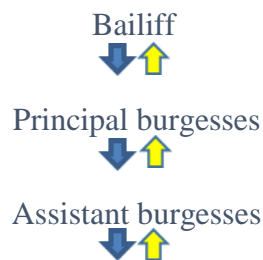
¹²⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 114, 104, 106, 7, 27, 56, 131.

¹²⁷ As in 1565, when three principal burgesses were demoted because of their perceived 'unaptnes... to that place fynding in them desire of quyetnes and ympotence to serve': Ibid., p. 7.

¹²⁸ See Figure I.

step was to be co-opted by the principal burgesses as an assistant. Eventually, if he served well, an assistant could be co-opted onto the first company by the principal burgesses if a vacancy arose. Only principal burgesses could be put forward as candidates for the next term of bailiwick.¹²⁹

Figure I: Structure of the Corporation



↑ = cursus honorum

↓ = power hierarchy

Service as an assistant burgess did not necessarily guarantee an eventual position within the first company. In fact, the odds were against an individual progressing to a higher status position. Vacancies from amongst the principal burgesses only became available upon their deaths, so opportunities to become a 'master' arose infrequently.¹³⁰ The bailiff and principal burgesses did 'electe and chose... one such as they have likinge of' from amongst the second company of assistant burgesses to join their ranks.¹³¹ The majority of assistants never

¹²⁹ WCRO, CR 3891/1, 37 Henry VIII (1545). Towards the beginning of the period, several principal burgesses did not serve as assistants because they were either named as principal burgesses in the founding charter of 1554 or the evidence for their service as assistants has not survived. In order to become bailiff post-1554, it was customary for an individual to have served as an assistant and as a principal burgess.

¹³⁰ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 15.

¹³¹ As in the election of John Hicks to replace the lately deceased Henry Chaplin as a principal burgess: Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 385; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 236v, testimony of Thomas Grene in the Chancery case of 1583, during which he refers to the 1554 charter. According to the testimony of John Grene in the same case, candidates for a position as a principal burgess were 'nominated and

progressed further than the first rung in the corporate ladder, and those that did often had to wait a long time for it. Henry Chaplin and Robert Sheldon are such examples; from their first becoming assistants, each waited sixteen and eighteen years respectively to become principal burgesses.¹³² This lengthy wait for a promotion reflected the normal progression from 'assistant' to 'principal' burgess. Wealth was a crucial factor in determining the success of an individual within the 'cursus honorum'; Chaplin owned land in Saint Mary and Saint Nicholas parishes and Robert Sheldon was in possession of the tithes of Snitterfield.¹³³ Favour amongst the principal burgesses was another significant element; Chaplin had shown his reliability by risking his life on behalf of the Corporation during the Myton Riots, having been 'hurt in the brest w[i]t[h] an arrowe or bolt shott', while Robert Sheldon had assisted John Fisher in his legal attacks against the executors of Oken's will, and, according to Richard Brooks, was closely affiliated with him.¹³⁴ The average ages of the assistant and principal burgesses when they first served in their offices further demonstrates the 'cursus honorum' in action; assistant burgesses began their service at an average age of 36.5 years old, whereas the principal burgesses began serving in the first company when they were 49.25 years old.¹³⁵ This is an average age difference of 12.75 years.¹³⁶ The principal burgesses were therefore

appointed' by the bailiff and principal burgesses only: WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 233v.

¹³² As demonstrated by Appendix III.

¹³³ See Appendix II; WoCRO, 1590 (11), the will of John Chaplin (son of Henry Chaplin); Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 304.

¹³⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 295; TNA, STAC 5/F20/9, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey, 1575; TNA, STAC 5/F3/6, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey alias Cooke, 1575; TNA, C 2/Eliz/W20/23, John Fisher, William Frekulton, Thomas Powell, Robert Sheldon, John Grene versus Robert Phillips, Thomas Cawdrey, 1574; TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, 1586-87.

¹³⁵ Interestingly, Evans found that the aldermen of Norwich began their service at an average age of forty-eight or forty-nine, which correlates exactly with my findings at Warwick, and 'could expect to live fifteen or sixteen years following election': Evans, *Norwich*, p. 55.

¹³⁶ Ages obtained from TNA, REQ 2/160/77, Deposition of Richard Brookes of Warwick concerning a debt owed to Sir John Throckmorton, 1576; TNA, REQ 2/252/35, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Cawdrey als Cooke, Oliver Brooks, 1577; TNA, REQ 2/256/40, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Hill, William Hudson, 1578; TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye of Warwick versus Richard Brooks of Warwick, 1574-6; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 231r-F235v. Please note that only a sample of the ages of burgesses was available to analyse.

senior in age and social standing. The assistants may have been considered as 'juniors' within the Corporation, almost as apprentice principal burgesses that were there to assist and learn from the 'masters of the town'.

The office of bailiff was the most powerful position on the Corporation and was the culmination of an individual's progression through the 'cursus honorum' of civic office. The bailiff was superior in status to the principal burgesses and had the authority to instruct and command his assistants as he saw fit. The principal burgesses were essentially assistants to the bailiff and were to be 'obedyent & attending at the comandement of the Balief... and shall come & acompanye the said Balief at all tymes when he shalbe apointid..'.¹³⁷ The bailiff held considerable influence in borough affairs as justice of the peace, clerk of the market and, post-1571, the 'burgess' or financial officer.¹³⁸ The bailiff ultimately derived his powers from the Crown by the charter of 1554, which authorised and legitimised his authority in the borough, and he was recognised as the official representative of local government and as a dispenser of local justice. His many responsibilities included the assizes of bread, wine and ale and the assessment of weights and measures within the borough, the appointment of the sergeant at mace for his term of office and the organisation of assemblies and meetings.¹³⁹ He was to read proclamations to the inhabitants and to take diligent measures to protect the town and its inhabitants from public disorder.¹⁴⁰ The bailiff therefore personified the authority of the town commonwealth and held an elevated position of status at the top of the social hierarchy of the community, even above the 'masters of the town'.

¹³⁷ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 5, 7, 18, 21; Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 369 (article 6 of the Book of Orders).

¹³⁸ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 7, 10; Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', p. 11.

¹³⁹ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 7; Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 369, 103.

¹⁴⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 430, 370 (articles 8 and 10 of the Book of Orders); Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 10, 13, 14, 19.

The office of bailiff was clearly a great commitment and responsibility for the member who served, particularly the fact that he took on unpaid and time-consuming duties. The burgesses would accept the role because they sought the social status, political power and prestige that accompanied the position. Service as bailiff would have been perceived as socially admirable and conferred honour upon the individual, for 'political participation was an ancient attribute of social distinction', which 'affirmed virtue'.¹⁴¹ The office was temporary in nature as the elected bailiff could only serve for a year at a time, so an individual could only enjoy his increased power for a short period before returning to the ranks of the principal burgesses. Record of service as bailiff was perceived as a mark of distinction by the 'masters of the town'. For instance, Richard Fisher served as bailiff five times in his life and his municipal and financial contribution to the Corporation earned him the respect of his colleagues, who hailed him as a 'father in all his doings towards the towne'.¹⁴²

However, this reputation could come at a price. The honour system was complex and some individuals had to balance the financial and material costs of service against the status and honour that they could attain by serving their community in civic office. As a result, the prospect of service in the role was not always met with enthusiasm. Richard Townsend refused to serve as bailiff following his election in 1574, declaring before the company present that he would 'rather leave the towne & goo dwell in some other place than take the office upon him'.¹⁴³ This was not ritual modesty in operation but a real reluctance to serve and would have been viewed by his fellow burgesses as 'an explicit statement of dishonour'.¹⁴⁴ John Ridgeley was instead selected for the role but also expressed his unwillingness to take

¹⁴¹ Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, pp. x, 8.

¹⁴² Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 138.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁴⁴ Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, p. 17, in relation to parliamentary selections.

on the office.¹⁴⁵ The possible reason for this reluctance to serve is suggested by the example of Humphrey Crane's term of bailiwick. In 1575, Crane's belated accounts were scrutinised by the auditor, John Fisher, who perceived that Crane had fallen into debt and had not taken into account various monies he had received during his term of office. Crane had to pay £13 19s. 9d. of his own money to the current bailiff.¹⁴⁶ The outgoing bailiff was personally liable for any discrepancies in his accounts and had to pay the difference out of his own purse. This, combined with the often burdensome duties associated with the role, meant that the office was a hot potato that some did not wish to handle.

Although the role of town clerk was not a particularly high-status position towards the beginning of the period, it was a potentially powerful and influential position within the Corporation and could enable the post holder unfettered control over corporate finances and administration. The increasing importance of the role of town clerk, along with the emergence of exclusive ruling elites within boroughs, appears to have been a trend during this period as corporate business became increasingly bureaucratic.¹⁴⁷ When John Fisher succeeded Roger Edgeworth as town clerk in 1569, his abilities enabled him to secure power and influence for himself within the Corporation for the long term.¹⁴⁸ Over nineteen years, Fisher developed the office as an all-round administrative and legal position, to give him exclusive power in all aspects of borough business.¹⁴⁹ The town clerk sat in a position of high

¹⁴⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 136-137.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

¹⁴⁷ Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, pp. 118-121.

¹⁴⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 15 (Roger Edgeworth left the town for Coventry).

¹⁴⁹ As town clerk, John Fisher wrote indentures, leases, ordinances, and other legal documents on behalf of the Corporation and copied out letters and minutes of meetings in the Corporate minute book. He also advised the bailiff on legal matters and carried out official duties in London as and when required: WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714.

authority through his attendance on the weekly court of record as deputy recorder and through his role as steward of the court leet.¹⁵⁰

The increasing power of John Fisher within the Corporation was clearly a cause for concern amongst those outside the 'inner circle', for Richard Brooks complained bitterly in 1587 about 'one John Fisher having bene Towneclerk and taking upon himselfe to Counsell advise & Rule all the whole bodye of the saide towne'.¹⁵¹ The role of Fisher as town clerk mainly superseded the more prestigious office of recorder, which in Warwick was a largely honorific position given to gentry who served as burgesses for parliament.¹⁵² Fisher's position as burgess for parliament during 1571, 1572 and 1584 further increased his power and social standing.¹⁵³ Fisher became so influential that he often acted as the spokesperson for the bailiff in corporate affairs. For instance, during a heated discussion with Sir John Hubaud in

¹⁵⁰ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 10, 19, 20.

¹⁵¹ TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, 1586-87.

¹⁵² According to the 1554 charter, the recorder held the position of justice of the peace, enabling him to preside over the weekly borough court and the view of frankpledge: Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', articles 6, 10, 19. However, his deputy, the town clerk, mostly carried out these responsibilities. All the recorders during this period were country gentry with legal backgrounds and had served as burgesses for parliament, specifically Sir William Wigston (served 1554-1572), Edward Aglionby Esquire (served 1572-1587) and James Dyer Esquire (served 1587-90). The latter two recorders enjoyed the support of the earl of Warwick: 'Wigston, William (by 1509-77), of Wolston, Warws.', in P.W. Hasler (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603* (1981), <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/wigston-william-1509-77> (Accessed: 14 July 2017); 'Aglionby, Edward I (1520-?91), of Temple Balsall, Warws. and London', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/aglionby-edward-i-1520-91> (Accessed: 14 July 2017); 'Dyer, James (d. 1590), of Warwick', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/dyer-james-1590> (Accessed: 14 July 2017); Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 75, 86, 382-384, 383; 'Aglionby, Edward I (1520-?91), of Temple Balsall, Warws. and London', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/aglionby-edward-i-1520-91> (Accessed: 14 July 2017). The recorder sometimes acted as a legal advisor and intermediary in times of crisis. In 1583, the first company called on the aid of Edward Aglionby to provide legal counsel and advice during a charity money dispute. In 1564 the recorder, Sir William Wigston, was appealed to by the assistant burgesses to intercede in a dispute with the first company. However, Wigston subsequently ordered the assistants to 'be quyet & use themselves more honestly towards their officer & sup[er]iors'. Recorders could therefore act as patrons by providing protection and support to the Corporation, as well as reinforcing the authority of the Corporation through their gentry status: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 329-332, 14.

¹⁵³ Fisher sat on a committee concerning his nephew Edward Fisher on 15 December 1584 and was possibly the 'Mr Fisher' selected for a committee on 13 March 1576 regarding vicars and curates: 'Fisher, John I (d.c. 1590), of Warwick', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/fisher-john-i-1590> (Accessed: 14 July 2017).

1576, Fisher frequently spoke on the bailiff's behalf and took the lead in the argument, portraying himself as the leading authority figure within the Corporation.¹⁵⁴ Fisher was able to further increase his power by utilising the office of town clerk as a stepping stone to greater influence and control. In 1571, Fisher was granted a patent for life making him steward general of all courts and leets and surveyor, supervisor and auditor of the borough, which granted him the sole power to audit the accounts and oversee the Corporation's financial administration.¹⁵⁵ Legally, the Corporation was now dependent on Fisher to audit their accounts and in 1573, they were compelled to submit to his request for a new patent of office as auditor of the borough.¹⁵⁶ The length of time it took the burgesses to grant Fisher this patent may suggest they were reluctant to grant him more control within the Corporation. The offices of bailiff and town clerk are examples of how one could rise up the 'cursus honorum' to assume the highest positions of power within the borough.

VI. Factors involved in the formation of the 'oligarchy' and factionalism

In ideal terms, the personal merit of an individual provided a standard by which one judged fitness to serve. In practice, virtue was not the only qualification for civic office. Relative wealth was inextricably entangled with power and status and contributed towards the formation of the Corporation. Wrightson has argued that the 'Elizabethan hierarchy of degrees' that informed civic culture was pre-occupied with 'the bald facts of relative wealth, status and power'.¹⁵⁷ Relative wealth is particularly important for assessing the composition of the first company, for all principal burgesses enjoyed the title of 'gent' which accompanied the office. As Wrightson has stated, 'Gentility... was ultimately a matter of relative wealth

¹⁵⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 270-272.

¹⁵⁵ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 25r,v.

¹⁵⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 98-102; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 73v-74r (copy of Fisher's second patent).

¹⁵⁷ Wrightson, 'Estates, degrees, and sorts', pp. 42-44.

and lifestyle', so one would expect the majority of principal burgesses during this period to be financially prosperous.¹⁵⁸ The evidence suggests that many principal burgesses were living the lifestyle expected of a gentleman.¹⁵⁹ Most principal and assistant burgesses were wealthy enough to afford to rent land and property; sixteen principal burgesses and nineteen assistant burgesses were listed in a task book concerning rents in the 1580s.¹⁶⁰ Surviving wills and inventories indicate that several principal burgesses, including long-serving, prominent members of the 'inner circle', lived in large houses furnished with many goods and bequeathed expensive gowns, rings, beds, money, land and property to their friends and relatives upon their deaths.¹⁶¹ Wealth was not just restricted to the principal burgesses. A similar pattern can be found in the wills and inventories of several assistant burgesses, although some assistants were not so financially secure.¹⁶²

However, the limited number of inventories available make it difficult to gain a clear sense of relative wealth from these sources, so one has to use tax assessments as an indicator of

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582; TNA, PROB 11/81/113, the will of Richard Fisher, 5 February 1593; TNA, PROB 11/69/288, the will of Humphrey Crane, 18 May 1586; TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon, 5 December 1579; TNA, PROB 11/74/71, the will of Richard Townsend, 15 June 1589; WoCRO, 1590 (62), the will of Thomas Jenks; WoCRO, 1596 (99), the will of Christopher Knight; WoCRO, 1602 (44), the will of Roger Hurlbutt; Milton, 'Gentility', pp. 1, 14-16, 31, 35.

¹⁶⁰ WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, Task Book.

¹⁶¹ 'Inner circlers' Richard Roo, Richard Townsend and William Hudson were able to purchase substantial land and property and bequeath it to family members upon their deaths: WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, Task Book; TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582; TNA, PROB 11/74/71, the will of Richard Townsend, 15 June 1589; TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon, 5 December 1579. Founding principal burgesses William Hudson, John Ray senior, Phillip Sheldon and Richard Fisher possessed considerable land and property during the early part of the period: *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Edward VI vol. II, 1548-1549, pp. 342-345, Edward VI vol. III, 1549-1551, pp. 364-6, Phillip and Mary vol. I, 1553-1554, pp. 466, 482, 485-486, Phillip and Mary vol. III, 1555-1557, p. 488, Phillip and Mary vol. IV, 1557-1558, p. 258, Elizabeth vol. II, 1560-1563, pp. 291-293, Elizabeth vol. III, 1563-1566, piece no. 2362.

¹⁶² Several assistant burgesses were wealthy enough to afford to rent and own land and property, bequeath luxury items to friends and family and bestow money to the poor upon their deaths. Their inventories also suggest they were wealthy: WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, Task Book; WoCRO, 1575 (48), the will of Thomas Shotteswell; WoCRO 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene. Some assistants were not as financially prosperous, as the inventories of Thomas Diche and Richard Tuskott were much shorter than those of the principal burgesses, and Phillip Coo died in prison owing £465 6s. 8d.: WoCRO, 1617 (125), the will of Phillip Coo; WoCRO, 1565 (39), the will of Thomas Diche; WoCRO, 1579 (42), the will of Richard Tuskott.

relative wealth. Subsidy assessments align less to actual wealth as time progressed during the sixteenth century but give an indication of relative wealth and the evidence correlates closely with the more reliable local tax assessments drawn up by John Fisher in the 1580s.¹⁶³ Of the forty-five principal burgesses that served during this period, only eight do not appear in tax assessments.¹⁶⁴ This may be due to the illegibility of some documents. Thirty-seven of the forty-five are listed in tax assessment documents, thus indicating that the majority of principal burgesses were considered wealthy enough to be taxed. The majority of principal burgesses fell within the middle to upper tiers of wealth in the town.¹⁶⁵ Twenty-six assistant burgesses appear in the tax assessments alongside principal burgesses, although these assistants were generally less wealthy than their upper chamber counterparts and appear towards the bottom of the hierarchy of wealth.¹⁶⁶ Lines of succession indicate that the majority of those progressing to the ranks of the upper chamber during the period appear in tax assessments, so we can assume that wealth was an essential criterion for progression within the 'cursus honorum'.¹⁶⁷ However, relative wealth did not necessarily reflect the precise power hierarchy within the Corporation. The most influential member of the Corporation, John Fisher, was taxed considerably less than other principal burgesses who were not part of the 'inner circle', such as Richard Brooks, who was taxed £4 more than John Fisher in 1582.¹⁶⁸ John Grene, who was taxed £1 more than John Fisher in 1586, was considerably lower in the power

¹⁶³ TNA, E 179/193/186, Subsidy Assessments, 9 April 1550; TNA, E 179/193/190, Subsidy Assessments, 30 January - 20 March 1551; TNA, E 179/193/208, Subsidy Assessments, 20 September 1571; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, tax assessments for July 1581, February 1582, August 1582, September 1584 and August 1586.

¹⁶⁴ See Appendix II which amalgamates this data into a table according to an approximate hierarchy of wealth. See Appendix III for the terms of office of the principal burgesses.

¹⁶⁵ See Appendix II.

¹⁶⁶ As depicted in Appendix II.

¹⁶⁷ See Appendix V, which was assembled from incomplete information in Kemp, *Black Book*, in order to reconstruct who may have succeeded whom.

¹⁶⁸ See Appendix II.

hierarchy than John Fisher.¹⁶⁹ Fisher's wealth was therefore average compared with other principal burgesses but his political power was considerable.

The relative wealth of civic officers was also reflected by their places of residence. The majority of principal and assistant burgesses lived in the centre of town, presumably because they were the wealthiest citizens who could afford to live in the most prestigious and expensive areas.¹⁷⁰ During the periods 1550-1551 and 1582-1586, the majority of principal burgesses residing in St Mary's parish lived in either High Pavement or Market Place. Other principal burgesses lived in Jury, Castle Street, Smith Street, Northgate Street and Church Street wards. Only one lived 'beyond the bridge' (out of the town centre) and this was the 'troublemaker' Richard Brooks.¹⁷¹ An analysis of places of residence for assistant burgesses for the same periods reveals a similar pattern. No burgesses at all lived in the poor Saltisford ward of Saint Mary parish, which suggests that burgesses came from the more financially secure areas of the town.

Membership of the Corporation therefore depended to some degree upon an individual's relative wealth. Family connections were also important. Genealogical evidence is difficult to reconstruct and will be impressionistic, but the evidence suggests that certain families monopolised the Corporation throughout the period.¹⁷² These family names appear in tax assessments so we can assume that these families were amongst the most affluent in the

¹⁶⁹ WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588. See Appendix II.

¹⁷⁰ See Map I (places of residence are highlighted).

¹⁷¹ Saint Mary parish was the only ward where enough information was available to analyse: TNA, E 179/193/186, Subsidy Assessments, 9 April 1550; TNA, E 179/193/190, Subsidy Assessments, 30 January - 20 March 1551; TNA, E 179/193/208, Subsidy Assessments, 20 September 1571; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, tax assessments for July 1581, February 1582, August 1582, September 1584 and August 1586, list of communicants in Saint Mary parish for 1586.

¹⁷² Townsend, Brooks, Roo, Sheldon, Grene, Staunton, Hurlebutt, Ridgeley, Diche, Jenks, Saunders, Heyley, Fisher and Martlyn family members frequently appear as principal and assistant burgesses between 1554 and 1590, see appendices III, IV.

town.¹⁷³ Sons of prominent principal burgesses succeeded their fathers in civic office for several generations.¹⁷⁴ The long-serving member of the 'inner circle' Richard Townsend was succeeded by his sons John and Raphe as principal burgesses in 1588 and 1590 respectively.¹⁷⁵ Richard's youngest son John ascended to serve three times as bailiff and represented the borough as burgess for parliament for four terms, while Raphe held the post of deputy town clerk.¹⁷⁶ Several burgesses were biologically connected, a prime example being the brothers John and Richard Fisher, who dominated the upper chamber for the majority of the period.¹⁷⁷ The lack of recording new elections to the upper chamber makes it difficult to ascertain precisely who succeeded whom as principal burgess. However, some patterns have emerged to suggest that prominent principal burgesses may have put their relatives forward as

¹⁷³ TNA, E 179/193/186, Subsidy Assessments, 9 April 1550; TNA, E 179/193/190, Subsidy Assessments, 30 January - 20 March 1551; TNA, E 179/193/208, Subsidy Assessments, 20 September 1571; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, tax assessments for July 1581, February 1582, August 1582, September 1584 and August 1586.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Fisher the younger, son of founding member Richard Fisher the elder, was listed as an assistant burgess in 1582 but died before he could progress further up the corporate ladder. The last date Richard Fisher the younger is mentioned is in a tax list in 1586 and he is not mentioned in his father's will written 10 August 1592, so we can assume that he died some time between these dates: WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588; TNA, PROB 11/81/113, the will of Richard Fisher, 5 February 1593. Richard Brooks succeeded his father Thomas as a principal burgess in 1565. Churchwardens' accounts suggest that Thomas Brooks was probably the father of Richard Brooks because the latter paid for his father's and mother's grave in 1558/9 and Thomas Brooks is not referred to again after this date: Savage, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 23. Because principal burgesses usually served for life, we can assume that, once the name of a principal burgess no longer appears in the records, that he has died. William Roo became an assistant burgess in 1586, four years after his father Richard Roo's decease, and may have been the grandson of founding member Thomas Roo: TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582. Other possible examples of father/son successions include John and Thomas Staunton, William and Thomas Saunders and Phillip and Robert Sheldon. Phillip Sheldon may have been Robert Sheldon's father because they both had knowledge of the law and Phillip Sheldon was paid for acting as a legal and financial administrator/representative on behalf of the Corporation: WCRO, CR 1618/WA1/1, The Account Book, 1546-1569, ff. 4r, 24r, 52r.

¹⁷⁵ See Appendix III.

¹⁷⁶ John Townsend served as bailiff during 1589-90, 1603-4, 1621-22 and as burgess for parliament in 1597, 1601, 1604 and 1614. Raphe/Ralph served as bailiff during 1593-4: 'Townsend, John (-d.c. 1625), of Warwick', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/townsend-john-1625> (Accessed: 14 July 2017); Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 426-427.

¹⁷⁷ Several burgesses may have been brothers or cousins, one example being the cousins John Grene and Thomas Grene, who were principal and assistant burgesses respectively: WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene. Other examples include Roger and Bartholomew Hurlebutt, John and Thomas Diche, Thomas and William Jenks, Walter and Daniel Heyley and Thomas and William Martlyn (see Appendix III, IV).

candidates for positions amongst the first and second companies.¹⁷⁸ It is also interesting to note which families did not continue to be prominent on the Corporation; John Butler's son, Thomas, did not ascend on to the 'cursus honorum' because he and his father had fallen out with John Fisher, who had written them an invalid lease for the tithes of Budbrook.¹⁷⁹ The sons of William Hill did not succeed their father onto the Corporation, possibly because they were in dispute with the principal burgess Robert Phillips over the execution of his will.¹⁸⁰ Favour amongst the principal burgesses may therefore have been an important factor for progression within the 'cursus honorum'.

Marriage was also a primary familial link between civic officers. There are several instances of a principal burgess marrying the widow of one of his 'brothers', a prime example being Thomas Jenks, who obtained an obligation to marry John Butler's widow Alice almost immediately after Butler's death in late 1572/early 1573.¹⁸¹ The attraction of marrying widows may have been to gain access to some of a former principal burgess's wealth. Inter-marriage between the families of principal and assistant burgesses was common and family members of the 'inner circle' could marry into those of the 'outer circle'.¹⁸² For example, Richard Roo's daughter Anne married Thomas Grene the mercer and assistant burgess, so

¹⁷⁸ The Townsend, Brooks, Roo, Sheldon, Grene, Staunton, Hurlebutt, Ridgeley, Diche, Jenks, Heyley, Fisher and Martlyn families ascended to the ranks of the upper and lower chambers during this period. See Appendix III, IV.

¹⁷⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 210-212.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, PROB 11/52/413, the will of William Hill, 27 October 1570; TNA, REQ 2/61/66, Robert Phillips versus William Hudson, Thomas Hill, 1575/76; TNA, REQ 2/256/40, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Hill, William Hudson, 1578.

¹⁸¹ WoCRO, 1590 (62), the will and inventory of Thomas Jenks; WoCRO, 1573 (20b), Thomas Jenks obligation. William Hudson's widow married William Worcester on his decease before the latter served on the Corporation and is another example of this: TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon of Warwick, 5 December 1579; WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene.

¹⁸² The assistant burgess Thomas Grene's daughter married into the Weale family, who were also assistant burgesses; the cousin of Richard Brooks married into the Holbache family and the daughter of the assistant burgess Richard Tuskott married into the Bailies family, one of whom, John Bailies, served as an assistant burgess: WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene; WoCRO, 1600 (77b), the will of Thomas Brooke; WoCRO, 1579 (42), the will of Richard Tuscott.

Richard's grandson was a Grene.¹⁸³ John Grene challenged Richard Roo over the alleged misappropriation of the charity money in 1583, so family ties did not necessarily prevent feuds from occurring.¹⁸⁴ Personal connections between the inhabitants of Warwick were therefore far from straightforward.

Friendship connections between the burgesses were very inter-connected, fluid and difficult to pinpoint with precision. During this period, Warwick was a very tight-knit community and key corporate families would have encountered each other on a daily basis and known each other well through their church and neighbourhood.¹⁸⁵ The most trusted individuals appear to have been the most successful in progressing up the 'cursus honorum' to the higher status offices, such as Humphrey Crane, Roger Hurlebutt and Robert Sheldon, who were frequently put in trust in the wills of their fellow burgesses.¹⁸⁶ The connection between the burgesses was personal as well as political, particularly as the first company was considered to be a 'fellowship' or 'brotherhood'.¹⁸⁷ There were strong ties between and amongst the principal and assistant burgesses, who named each other in their wills as executors, overseers, witnesses, legal trustees and inventory takers, describing each other as their 'trusty', 'loving' and 'wellbeloved' friends.¹⁸⁸ Wills demonstrate that those of the 'inner circle' could have close

¹⁸³ TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582; WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, REQ 2/78/37, Robert Phillips, John Grene, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton versus John Fisher, Richard Townsend, Richard Fisher, Richard Roo, 1579.

¹⁸⁵ Such as in Saint Nicholas Parish, where the Crane, Roo, Brooks, Townsend, Sheldon and Phillips families resided: Savage, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp. 2-73.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, PROB 11/69/288, the will of Humphrey Crane, 18 May 1586; TNA, PROB 11/52/413, the will of William Hill, 27 October 1570; TNA, PROB 11/57/80, the will of Simon Yong, 8 February 1575; WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene; TNA, PROB 11/86/88, the will of Isabel Fisher, 4 July 1595; WoCRO, 1598 (119), 1603 (122), the will of Thomas Powell; WoCRO, 1590 (11), the will of John Chaplin (son of Henry Chaplin); WoCRO, 1590 (62), the will of Thomas Hankinson als. Jenks; TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon, 5 December 1579.

¹⁸⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 116, 176, 367, 368, 370 (Book of Orders article 11), 378.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, PROB 11/52/413, the will of William Hill, 27 October 1570; TNA, PROB 11/69/288, the will of Humphrey Crane, 18 May 1586; TNA, PROB 11/86/88, the will of Isabel Fisher, 4 July 1595; WoCRO, 1602 (44), the will of Roger Hurlebutt; TNA, PROB 11/57/80, the will of Simon Yong, 8 February 1575; WoCRO, 1596 (99), the will of Christopher Knight; WoCRO, 1590 (62), the will of Thomas Hankinson als Jenks the elder; TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon, 5 December 1579; WoCRO, 1579 (42), the will

friendship connections with the assistant burgesses.¹⁸⁹ The long-serving principal burgess, William Hudson, bequeathed his 'next best or second gowne' to Richard Heynes, an assistant burgess who was positioned towards the bottom of the wealth hierarchy.¹⁹⁰

The friendship connections that can be identified were subject to change over time and fluctuated according to factional struggles that occurred during the 1560s to 1580s.¹⁹¹ For instance, the assistant burgess Thomas Cawdrey abruptly left a contentious meeting on 16 December 1571, to the consternation of the bailiff Robert Phillips, who 'bare to much in respect of some friendship belike'.¹⁹² During 1573-1574, the two men defended themselves against John Fisher, William Frekulton and other principal burgesses, who submitted a bill of complaint in the Court of Chancery regarding the execution of the will of Thomas Oken.¹⁹³ Yet in 1575, Phillips was described as Frekulton's 'frend & Socyatt'.¹⁹⁴ In 1577, Phillips and Cawdrey were pitted against each other in the Court of Requests, again over the execution of Oken's will.¹⁹⁵ Such fluctuating relationships are also evident among other principal burgesses; Thomas Powell, who directly undermined John Fisher's authority as bailiff by refusing to obey his commands in 1564, was subsequently described by Fisher as one of his

of Richard Tuscot; WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene; TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582; WoCRO, 1598 (119) and 1603 (122), the will of Thomas Powell; WoCRO, 1562 (92), the will of Daniel Haleye; WoCRO, 1617 (125), the will of Phillip Coe; WoCRO, 1565 (39), the will of Thomas Diche; WoCRO, 1575 (48), the will of Thomas Shotteswell; WoCRO, 1595 (26c), the will of John Diche; TNA, PROB 11/81/113, the will of Richard Fisher, 5 February 1593.

¹⁸⁹ Such as the friendship connections between John Diche and John Weale senior and junior and the Chaplin, Sheldon and Purslowe families: WoCRO, 1590 (11), the will of John Chaplin (son of Henry Chaplin); WoCRO, 1563 (39), the will of John Sheldon (cousin to Robert Sheldon); TNA, PROB 11/69/288, the will of Humphrey Crane, 18 May 1586; TNA, PROB 11/52/413, the will of William Hill, 27 October 1570; TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582; WoCRO, 1575 (48), the will of Thomas Shotteswell; WoCRO, 1562 (92), the will of Daniel Haleye; WoCRO, 1579 (42), the will of Richard Tuscott; WoCRO, 1591 (69), the will of Thomas Grene.

¹⁹⁰ Hudson also bequeathed £10 to Heyne's daughter Anne upon her marriage: TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddisdon, 5 December 1579.

¹⁹¹ The factional struggles will be discussed in more depth in Chapter II.

¹⁹² Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 60.

¹⁹³ TNA, C 2/Eliz/W20/23, John Fisher, William Frekulton, Thomas Powell, Robert Sheldon, John Grene versus Robert Phillips, Thomas Cawdrey, 1574.

¹⁹⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 206.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, REQ 2/252/35, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Cawdrey als Cooke, Oliver Brooks, 1577.

'friends' in 1573.¹⁹⁶ Thomas Powell later turned against Fisher during a charity money dispute in 1579, putting his name to a supplication against Fisher in the Court of Requests.¹⁹⁷ The allegiances between the principal burgesses therefore fluctuated over time.

In terms of occupations, the members of the 'oligarchy' were drawn from a diversity of trades which reflected the town's economy rather than being drawn from a mercantile elite as in Exeter.¹⁹⁸ The majority of principal burgesses consisted of yeomen, drapers, mercers, lawyers, an inn keeper, bakers, a husbandman and a butcher. Only two principal burgesses are recorded as mercers during this period.¹⁹⁹ This multiplicity of professions is reflected by the statement of John Fisher that 'as towching any great trade there was none to be reconid of', further adding that mercers and linen drapers were the two 'most profitable trades w[ith]in that towne'.²⁰⁰ Warwick was a 'middle-tier' incorporated market town, served as the administrative centre of the county and was characterised by a marketing and service culture rather than manufacture.²⁰¹ This resulted in 'little commercial and industrial development'.²⁰² Warwick suffered greatly from economic problems during this period, specifically 'a sluggish

¹⁹⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 13, 99.

¹⁹⁷ TNA, REQ 2/78/37, Robert Phillips, John Grene, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton versus John Fisher, Richard Townsend, Richard Fisher, Richard Roo, 1579.

¹⁹⁸ It is generally assumed that 'oligarchies' tended to be formed from mercantile classes: O'Day, 'The Triumph of Civic Oligarchy', pp. 105-136. The Corporation of Exeter during this period primarily comprised merchants: MacCaffrey, *Exeter*.

¹⁹⁹ Based on a sample of burgesses, see Appendix VII, VI. The assistant burgesses on the whole shared the same occupations: TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, 1586-87; TNA, STAC 5/S7/20, Staunton versus Barryse, Powell, Fisher, 1567/68; TNA, REQ 2/78/37, Robert Phillips, John Grene, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton versus John Fisher, Richard Townsend, Richard Fisher, Richard Roo, 1579; TNA, REQ 2/61/66, Robert Phillips versus William Hudson, Thomas Hill, 1575/76; TNA, REQ 2/31/5, John Raye versus Richard Brooks, 1576; TNA, REQ 2/160/77, Deposition of Richard Brookes of Warwick concerning a debt owed to Sir John Throckmorton, 1576; TNA, REQ 2/252/35, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Cawdrey als Cooke, Oliver Brooks, 1577; TNA, REQ 2/256/40, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Hill, William Hudson, 1578; TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye of Warwick versus Richard Brooks of Warwick, 1574-6; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 231r-235v; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588, tax lists; TNA, SP12/137, 'A Booke of the names and dwellinge places of ye Gentlemen and freeholders in ye County of Warwicke', f.119.

²⁰⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 47.

²⁰¹ Clark and Slack, *Crisis and Order*, pp. 3-5.

²⁰² Beier, 'Warwick, 1580-90', p. 52.

economy, population growth, immigration, political weakness and financial embarrassment'. The poverty and social problems that resulted particularly beleaguered the town governors during the 1580s.²⁰³ The situation was exacerbated by the town's responsibilities as a distributive centre for the corn trade, for it was obliged to supply the whole borough with grain.²⁰⁴ Warwick's economy was further squeezed by competition from Coventry, Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon, the former serving as the industrial centre of the county.²⁰⁵

The occupationally diverse composition of the Corporation may have increased the likelihood of dissention, as some principal burgesses may have considered themselves to be higher in social standing than others, which in turn may have contributed towards the formation of a hierarchy within the 'inner circle'. Other crucial factors, such as wealth, family and friendship ties may have influenced the formation of factionalism within and outside the 'inner circle' of principal burgesses, although no firm conclusions can be reached. However, the extent to which religious differences played a role in instigating schism within the town is dubious. Despite it being acknowledged that 'it is difficult to discover any significant bias in the Corporation's religious activities', historians have been eager to attribute divisions in the town to religious tensions.²⁰⁶ Neale has classified the inhabitants of Warwick into neat categories of conservatives and Catholics (the Corporation) versus 'reckless extremists' (puritans).²⁰⁷ This interpretation is far too simplistic a model to apply to the inhabitants of the town because it fails to consider the flexible nature of human relationships and the long-term issues at the

²⁰³ Beier, 'Warwick, 1580-90', pp. 47, 54.

²⁰⁴ M.J. Kingman, 'Markets and Marketing in Tudor Warwickshire: the evidence of John Fisher of Warwick and the crisis of 1586-7', *Warwickshire History*, 4 no. 1 (Summer 1978), pp. 17, 20.

²⁰⁵ A. D. Dyer, 'Warwickshire Towns under the Tudors and Stuarts', *Warwickshire History*, 3 no. 4 (Winter 1976/77), p. 122; Kingman, 'Markets and Marketing', p. 20.

²⁰⁶ Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', p. 34.

²⁰⁷ Neale, *House of Commons*, p. 242.

heart of factional squabbles. Personal relationships between individuals were so complex that the allegiances were not straightforward. In fact, the close nature of the community meant that the personal and the political became closely intertwined. This is clearly demonstrated in the example of William Hudson, who served as a principal burgess from the creation of the Corporation's second charter in 1554 until his death in 1579.²⁰⁸ In 1564, Hudson acted as an informant to the Bishop of Worcester about his colleagues' religious persuasions. In Bishop Sandys' letter to the privy council, Hudson was named as one of the 'Favorers of true religion', while other principal burgesses were either classed as 'adversaries of true religion' or were split on the religious issue.²⁰⁹ Dyer has noted that Hudson was a 'Protestant extremist and was involved in an abortive rising against the Spanish Marriage in 1554'.²¹⁰ It is therefore significant that Hudson, rather than being an enemy of the apparently Catholic principal burgesses, was one of their close friends; he names the longest serving principal burgesses, Richard Townsend and John Fisher, as his overseers, referring to them as his 'welbeloved freendes'.²¹¹ Furthermore, there are no recorded tensions between Hudson and the Corporation. Hudson was friends with members of both factions in the town; he bequeathed his best gown to Thomas Olney of Tachbrook, who was a firm ally of Richard Brooks, which demonstrates the closely connected nature of these relationships.²¹² In the case of Warwick Corporation, religious issues were often subsidiary to personal, financial and constitutional issues.

²⁰⁸ WCRO, CR 3891/2, 1 & 2 Phillip and Mary (1554); TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddison, 5 December 1579.

²⁰⁹ M. Bateson (ed.), 'A Collection of Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564', *Camden Miscellany* (1893), pp. 1, 7-8. See Table I for a list of the alleged religious persuasions of some of the burgesses.

²¹⁰ Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', p. 34, referring to 'The Chronicle of Queen Jane', *Camden Society*, 1st Series no. 48 (1850), p. 184.

²¹¹ TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddison, 5 December 1579.

²¹² TNA, PROB 11/61/568, the will of William Huddison, 5 December 1579.

Table I: Religious persuasions of principal burgesses in 1564 according to Bishop

Sandys²¹³

Favourers of Religion	Adversaries of True Religion	Indifferent in religion or of no religion
William Huddisdon	Sir William Wigston (recorder)	William Hill
	Richard Roo (bailiff)	John Butler
	Richard Fisher	Thomas Oken
	John Fisher	John Nason
	Thomas Barret	
	William Edmondes	
	Richard Townsend	
	Roger Edgeworth (town clerk)	

The evidence available is insufficient to draw any firm conclusions about religious division in Warwick during this period. The 'Black Book' does not directly or indirectly discuss religious tensions. The wills of the principal and assistant burgesses shed very little light on the matter because the majority contain standard soul clauses that give no hint at Catholic or puritan sympathies, the exception being Humphrey Crane, who may have been a puritan because his soul clause was lengthy and used evangelical language.²¹⁴ Although several of the established 'oligarchs' were named in 1564 as 'adversaries of true religion', the example of

²¹³ Bateson, 'Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council', pp. 7-8.

²¹⁴ TNA, PROB 11/69/288, the will of Humphrey Crane, 18 May 1586.

William Hudson demonstrates that personal relationships could overcome religious differences, as Enis has observed.²¹⁵ Contrasting concepts about the political hierarchy and who should wield municipal power, on the other hand, more obviously caused dissention.

VII. The Rhetoric of John Fisher

Contemporary concepts of civic culture informed and influenced the assumptions and ideals that were supposed to guide urban politics during this period. The standards that were expected of a good magistrate and notions of how to achieve honour in an urban context were interwoven with an authoritarian world view which strove for unity and harmony in an ordered, hierarchical town commonwealth. Perceived challenges to this social structure fuelled antipathy by municipal officers towards those who deviated from these social aspirations. Urban political culture during this period hinged on contemporary notions of honour. The concept of 'honesty', in particular, was an essential virtue for public office: 'the Ciceronian notion of *honestas*: those qualities of honesty, discretion, wisdom, fitness, and decorum designed to enable men and women to constructively engage in community without the dangers of wilfulness, passion, and violence'.²¹⁶ Municipal governors were therefore expected to be suitable for their 'place' in the social hierarchy and this idea was fundamental to civic ideology; '*honestas* expected a 'fitness' between place and behaviour'.²¹⁷ Only a select few would possess the necessary virtues to serve in a civic position as the 'fittest' people were called to exercise and work their roles and affect the commonwealth accordingly'.²¹⁸ The bailiff was expected to exemplify all these qualities as an authority figure in the community.

²¹⁵ C.E. Enis, 'The Warwickshire Gentry and the Dudley ascendancy 1547-1590' (PhD Thesis, University of Reading, 2011), p. 245.

²¹⁶ Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 118, citing J. Richards, *Rhetoric and courtliness in early modern literature* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 2-3.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 122.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

The rhetoric of John Fisher reveals much about the ideals to which civic officers aspired during this period. According to Fisher, magistrates should be 'of synceare lyving & lovers of virtue, and to bee directid in their doings by the rule of cyvile order'.²¹⁹ The election of Humphrey Crane as bailiff in 1573 was met with dismay by Fisher, who berated Crane's 'ignorance his wilfulness his blind boldness his inconstantnes before showed in divers matters'.²²⁰ However, Crane's eagerness to perform his civic duties impressed Fisher, who later noted Crane's 'diligent cares... in his duty.. to the great benefit of the Inhabitants of the said Borough & countrey about'.²²¹ Richard Brooks, on the other hand, was portrayed by Fisher as the antithesis of a good governor. Fisher commented that 'some doo think that he [Brooks] stretchid his consciens in the tyme of his Baliwik', thus insinuating that Brooks was corrupt, which breached the code of honour that was expected of civic officials.²²² As a municipal officer and a former bailiff, Brooks should have displayed 'honestas' qualities by defending the values that the Corporation sought to uphold. Instead, he undermined civic governance in the borough:

... this Rychard Brook..... hathe (not only) chosen to be countid A connyng
companyon, in querelous causes (unfitt for an honest magistrate, And preferrid his
pryuate profite before the publique comoditye, But also, (contempning all duetie of
humanytye) hath most unnaturally practised to perturbe the quyete peace & unanymyty
of the weale publique....ruled by the loose lynes of Libertye, without respect or regard
of the Lawe of God or man.²²³

²¹⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 368.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 281. Brooks served as bailiff during 1564 to 1565: *Ibid.*, p. 425.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369.

From such language we can ascertain that the ideal bailiff was supposed to be honest, trustworthy, respectable, law-abiding, a protector of the commonwealth who sought to uphold the liberties and privileges of the borough, put the public need before private gain, discharge his duties conscientiously and diligently, abide by the law and set a good example for the rest of the inhabitants.

The authoritarian pre-occupation with the maintenance of civil order was situated at the heart of the 'oligarchy' issue. The whole of society was concerned with the preservation of harmonious city commonwealths because the antithesis could result in disorder, desolation and confusion.²²⁴ However, there were differing notions of how to achieve this urban utopia. The assistant burgesses, who represented the 'common' or 'base and vulgar inhabitants not advanced to any honour or dignity', were demanding freedom of voice, transparency and openness, in order to avoid corruption. Conversely, the authoritarian concept shared by Fisher centred on a top-down approach to maintaining order which focused upon the submission of irrational inferior 'commoners' to the better judgement of their social superiors.²²⁵ The assistant burgesses therefore presented a challenge to the patriarchal concept of the 'great chain of being', within which human society was organised according to a natural hierarchical order, comprising superior and inferior degrees of people. Chaos would result if this hierarchy became unbalanced.²²⁶ Fisher feared that the assistants' 'unreasonable' behaviour would cause civil unrest, subvert the power of the first company and impeach the charter. In 1573, Fisher spoke vehemently against the reinstatement of the second company, citing the 'perilles that might & were like to have growen by the mutyny of such disorderid

²²⁴ Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 118.

²²⁵ Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, p. 25-26.

²²⁶ Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, pp. 10-11.

persones of cankerd natures that some tyme had been part of that company'.²²⁷ During the 1560s and early 1570s, the assistant burgesses responded to this authoritarian rhetoric with a demand for greater involvement in corporate business.

According to authoritarian attitudes, the preservation of the commonwealth depended upon the inhabitants observing the absolute authority of the Corporation in the borough, for the corporate system was considered to be at the centre of commonwealth 'ideas and processes'.²²⁸

As Fisher commented, 'take away auctorytye, take away goverment & almaner of good order'.²²⁹ By publicly discrediting the Corporation during the 1570s and 1580s, Richard Brooks presented a challenge to this elite world view and was perceived by Fisher as a disrupting, disuniting and dangerously radical figure. The anti-popular rhetoric Fisher applied to tarnish Brooks' reputation demonstrates this clearly; instead of acting as a 'father & defender' to the town, Brooks acted against its best interests, intending to 'bring some slaughter or extreme accion wherby the lib[er]ties & charters of this borough might be infringed or forfaytid... for the overthrowe of this state'.²³⁰ Brooks was particularly dangerous because he made the authoritarian fear of public disorder a reality by inciting the common 'multitude' to rise up against the establishment, as in the Myton Riots of 1576, 'with swete woordes & dissembling dayntys to put their handes to his develisshe devises' to 'stirre up light & lewde heades to mutynye & uproure against the officers of this borough'.²³¹ Such behaviour overturned traditional ideas of obligation and submission and endangered the stability of the town, thus threatening the commonwealth.²³²

²²⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 104.

²²⁸ Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 52.

²²⁹ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 148v.

²³⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 369, 281, 304.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 374-378.

²³² Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (Abingdon, 6th Edition, 2016), p. 8.

The ruling elite and the 'outer circle' also differed in their perception of the civic ideal of 'honestas'.²³³ The actions of Brooks resulted in the loss of his position on the Corporation as a principal burgess; on 18 June 1582, the first company expelled Brooks from their 'societye companye & counsaile, as A man unmete to remayne in that feloweshipp', who 'leaveth no unkind parte unpractised, nor any subtille slye or craftie devise unaccomplishid'. Brooks was not only ejected from a political governing body but from civilised society, for the Corporation comprised the 'better sort' of inhabitants, who exemplified those admirable qualities of 'honestas' that qualified them for civic office. Fisher and the 'inner circle' portrayed Brooks as unfit for public office because he broke the 'politike constitucyons' of the burgesses' brotherhood.²³⁴ Brooks, in turn, argued that many of the principal burgesses were unfit for their offices because they deprived the inhabitants of a voice in local government.²³⁵ This again reflected the divide between elitist and 'popular' perceptions of the world.

Conclusion

The Corporation of Warwick conformed with traditional ideas about 'oligarchy' during this period in the sense that a group of twelve principal burgesses viewed themselves as politically and socially elevated above the rest of the inhabitants as the 'governers & comon counsell of the borough & all things therto aptening'.²³⁶ They controlled the financial assets of the town to the exclusion of the wider inhabitants, which sparked conflict. Charter granting by the

²³³ Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 118.

²³⁴ According to the expulsion document, Brooks had slandered the Corporation, stirred up dissension, failed to fulfil his obligations as a burgess; he failed to abide by the rules of the Corporation, he had breached confidentiality thus causing 'mutynyes & murmurs'; he had challenged the Corporation and undermined the handling of its financial affairs with a series of lawsuits; he had failed to attend church on a regular basis 'wherby some doubttes have & doo rise of his Religion'; he had put his 'pryuate profite' before the 'publique comoditye', amongst a long list of other misdemeanours: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 367-378.

²³⁵ For example, in late July/early August 1583, Brooks made 'great brags' that the old burgesses would be displaced and encouraged his supporters to be present at a new election of principal burgesses 'when they should heare howe shamfully the old Burgesses had decevid the towne': Ibid., pp. 330-331, 342, 344.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

Crown permitted these townsmen exclusive power and elevated status for themselves within their community as 'masters of the town'. A ruling elite therefore came to dominate the Corporation over time based upon principles and procedures set up by its charters and re-invented by the principal burgesses in order to secure their own authority in the community. The emergence of 'oligarchy' in Warwick during this period was encouraged by a number of factors. An unspecific charter allowed the first company to restrict common involvement in borough politics and opportunities for social advancement encouraged those who sought power and status to join the ranks of a ruling elite that saw itself to be superior to the rest of the inhabitants. The title of 'gent' was a mark of social distinction that was highly prized by those of the upper middling sort who had ambitions to become part of a 'brotherhood' of urban gentry. There were also opportunities for material gain, such as first refusal for lease grants. Nevertheless, Warwick Corporation was atypical in that it was not united by a specific trade or uniformity in religion, as in Coventry or Norwich.²³⁷ The Warwick 'oligarchy' comprised the most wealthy in the town and was bound primarily by kinship and friendship networks. The fluidity of these relationships over time is evident and these constantly shifting alignments contributed towards the emergence of a fragmented and insecure 'inner circle' that was riven by personal animosity and exacerbated by constitutional and financial pressures. Legal disputes between principal burgesses followed that accelerated the development of factionalism within the first company. Differing concepts about how best to govern the commonwealth were also catalysts for conflict to erupt.²³⁸ Factionalism would lead to a ruptured and dis-unified 'oligarchy' that was directed by an overbearing and increasingly powerful town clerk. The 'oligarchy' in Warwick was therefore not as rigid and fixed as the

²³⁷ Evans, *Norwich*, pp. 16-19, 84-85, 102-103.

²³⁸ TNA, REQ 2/78/37, Robert Phillips, John Grene, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton versus John Fisher, Richard Townsend, Richard Fisher, Richard Roo, 26 November 1579.

traditional scholarly view on 'oligarchy' would claim. Historians' perception of 'oligarchy' has recently been challenged by Archer, who has asserted that ruling elites were more readily accepted by their communities than has been previously assumed, further suggesting that most local governments sought a balance 'between rule by the wealthy and an element of consent'.²³⁹ In order to assess whether there is some basis to Archer's assertions, it will be necessary to consider how the emergence of a ruling elite coincided with the development of factionalism in the town during the 1560s, 1570s and 1580s to ascertain which issues were the cause of contention. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

²³⁹ Archer, 'Politics and Government', pp. 235-262, 243.

CHAPTER II: 'OLIGARCHY' AND THE EMERGENCE OF FACTIONALISM IN WARWICK DURING THE 1560s, 1570s AND 1580s

Introduction

At a meeting on 27 October 1574, John Fisher and Thomas Powell complained that their fellow principal burgess, John Ridgeley, had uttered 'woordes very suspicious'. They were the following:

if it lay in the diche meaning the corporacion there it should lye for hym And if it were in the diche he doubtid not but he woold lyue so cyvilly that he should be as fit be towchid as any in this towne whatsoever And should be as sone herd and aswell taken & acceptid with the best and wold be in as good credit & adding further that if he were bailief he wold have in his owne keping such bookes as be hidden from them

Ridgeley refused to take on the office of bailiff, 'for I think youe doo more than youe may doo And I will bring it in question'.²⁴⁰ Ridgeley's cryptic remarks appear to allude to the exclusive control by the 'inner circle' over corporate financial assets. Ridgeley's comments questioned the very existence of the Corporation and do not evoke an impression of unity amongst its officers. Rather, they suggest that the Corporation was shrouded in a dark veil of distrust, resentment and division. Ridgeley elaborated that he thought that 'if there were no corp[or]acion he should live as well as he doth now'.²⁴¹ Such statements highlight the issue of the domination of local government by small ruling elites, particularly its financial assets, to the exclusion of others, including some principal burgesses. The issue of 'oligarchy' is closely linked to the ideals to which corporate officials aspired, particularly honour, reputation and

²⁴⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 130-131.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

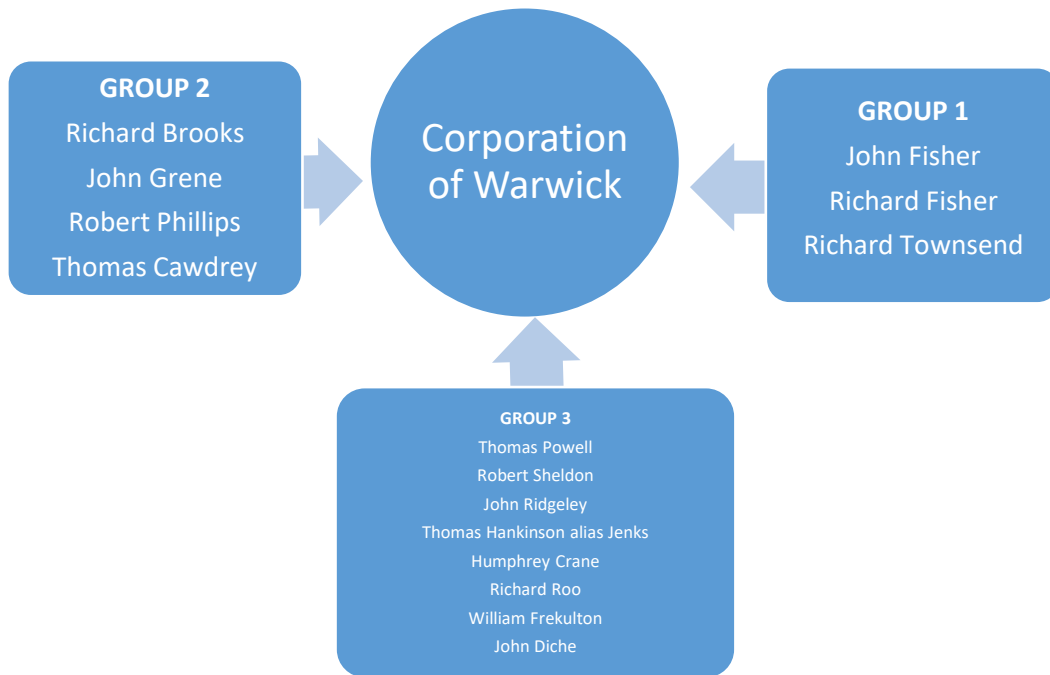
credit within the community, and perceived breaches of this moral code could result in the emergence of schism within the governing body.

This chapter will explore the development of factionalism within the Corporation during the 1560s, 1570s and 1580s with the intention to provide a longer and broader context for examining the disputes than hitherto, in order to understand the connection between long-term feuds and the emergence of 'oligarchy' in the town over time. During this period, the Corporation was riven by constitutional and financial quarrels. Five crucial factors contributed towards division and emerged alongside the development of 'oligarchic' rule in the town; the weaknesses of the charters, which worked in favour of the 'oligarchs' by allowing them to interpret the clauses how they saw fit to exclude 'outsiders'; sensitivities over the management of Corporate finance and the growing resentment of the local inhabitants to the closed nature of local government; the intervention of the local gentry and nobility in disputes and the strained patronage relationship between the borough and its patrons; the contemporary culture of urban politics, and personal animosity. These themes will be considered in relation to four disputes; the friction between the principal and assistant burgesses during the 1560s and early 1570s, the contention surrounding the management of charitable bequests during the 1570s and 1580s, the dissention that led to the Myton Riots of 1576 and the dispute concerning the contested parliamentary election of 1586. Generally, the principal burgesses were split into two factions; those who supported John Fisher and those who presented a challenge to his autonomy. A third group comprised those who were either reluctant to become involved or switched sides depending on the dispute at hand.²⁴² However, factional

²⁴² See Figure II.

alignments were complex, fluid and subject to change and there was a fine, blurred line between the political and the personal.

Figure II: Factional alignments during the 1570s



I. Constitutional Disputes

Constitutional disagreements were at the epicentre of factional disputes during the 1560s to 1580s. The insufficiency of the 1554 charter allowed the 'masters of the town' free rein to exploit loopholes in its articles to exclude the commoners from access to the accounts and administration of the town. The resulting resentment of the inhabitants to their exclusion from borough government was representative of wider problems for corporations in this period; boroughs were pressurised by accusations of corruption, nepotism and self-interest and there was an increase in common protest against the authority of entrenched 'oligarchies' and their handling of financial resources.²⁴³ Rather than acting as a unifying force, the

²⁴³ Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, pp. 46, 52, 55, 57.

ambiguous nature of the charter reinforced an hierarchical culture of urban politics that sparked conflict between the 'elite' and the commoners and amongst the principal burgesses themselves. Difficulties were accentuated by clashes between two conflicting concepts of the world. The authoritarian view espoused by John Fisher organised the inhabitants of the town into social 'degrees', the principal burgesses existing at the top of this 'great chain of being' as 'masters' in the same sphere as the gentry. The opposing 'popular' view vocalised by Richard Brooks and the commoners during this period promoted popular participation, transparency and freedom of voice in order to achieve harmony in the commonwealth. This section will explore how these issues played a role in creating a schism within the Corporation which furthered the development of factionalism over time.

The charter legally reinforced 'oligarchic' rule but the commoners were not necessarily eager to adhere to the authoritarian ethos of government. Archer's statement that 'Most urban constitutions... reflected a continuing effort to find a balance between rule by the wealthy and an element of consent' does not align with the Warwick example, for the charter of 1554 clearly did not set a solid foundation for the wider inhabitants to participate in local government.²⁴⁴ Neither does Kishlansky's theory of consensus align with the mounting antagonism between the commoners and the 'inner circle'.²⁴⁵ Animosity and resentment amongst the commoners incited challenges to the social and political hierarchy that structured boroughs such as Warwick during this period. Self-compensation from corporate coffers by borough governors and the perceived misappropriation of town lands particularly vexed the local citizenry during this period and resulted in conflict.²⁴⁶ Relations between the ruling elite

²⁴⁴ Archer, 'Politics and Government', p. 243.

²⁴⁵ Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, pp. 12, 17, 48.

²⁴⁶ Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, pp. 46, 52, 55, 57.

of principal burgesses and the 'common' assistant burgesses were far from congenial and began to deteriorate rapidly from 1564 onwards.

Such discord suggests that the civic officers of Warwick did not always adhere to contemporary rules of honour in borough politics. In his assessment of parliamentary selection/election during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Kishlansky has suggested that public officers were always striving for consensus and sought to avoid disputes and contests, for contests led to dishonour, which was to be avoided at all costs.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, there was an instinctive understanding of an honour code to which everyone adhered:

'Complex notions of honour, standing, and deference, shared but not always articulated, helped to regulate and absorb conflict between and within loosely defined status groups'.²⁴⁸

However, different social groups were often at cross purposes, slighting and affronting each other and not adhering to the social hierarchy or the 'great chain of being' that lay at the epicentre of contemporary ideas about the world.²⁴⁹ Contest was a frequent occurrence in Warwick and its burgesses were not striving to keep the peace but were frequently bickering and attacking each other. The principal burgesses' solution to avoid further contest was to further restrict common involvement in local government.

There were certain occasions where the participation of the assistant burgesses was required by the upper chamber. The 1554 charter indicated that 'other inhabitants of the said borough' were to participate in the election of the bailiff annually on Michaelmas Day (29 September).²⁵⁰ It was therefore essential that the assistants were present at the annual election of the bailiff or in the event that a bailiff died or was removed from his office and another

²⁴⁷ Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, pp. 48, 17.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁴⁹ 'Great chain of being' discussed by Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 38.

²⁵⁰ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 13.

election was required.²⁵¹ The assistants were also summoned to participate in the election of the financial burgess pre-1571.²⁵² Their attendance was expected at the bailiff's inauguration on All Hallows Day and at other ceremonial occasions.²⁵³ However, the perspective of the elite was that the assistants were lower in status than the principal burgesses and John Fisher referred to the former as 'inferior assistants' and 'the multitude'.²⁵⁴ The assistants' level of involvement was dictated by the first company, who 'may make constitute and admit as many other burgesses from the more upright inhabitants of the borough from time to time according to their discretion'.²⁵⁵ John Fisher interpreted this clause to mean that the bailiff and principal burgesses were to form the common council of the borough, so 'no other counsaill' was required.²⁵⁶ This attitude resulted in the assistants having limited practical participation in the governance of the borough. The assistants were not called to regular meetings, especially those addressing financial matters.²⁵⁷ Meetings were generally called by the bailiff on an ad hoc basis as and when pressing issues and problems arose and assistants were excluded. Assistants were not consulted when the principal burgesses were dealing with threats to the common weale; during the Myton Riots of 27 November 1576, the only assistants involved in quelling the disturbance were constables and the body of twelve assistants were not invited to participate.²⁵⁸ The assistants were also not involved in the elections of the principal

²⁵¹ Ibid., articles 13, 14.

²⁵² As on Sunday 16 December 1571: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 56-61.

²⁵³ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 429. Examples of these ceremonial occasions include the visits of the earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth to Warwick on 29 September 1571 and 12 August 1572 respectively: Ibid., pp. 35, 86.

²⁵⁴ In the entry for the election on Michaelmas Day 1582 and for the election of the bailiff in 1583 respectively: Ibid., pp. 381-382.

²⁵⁵ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 5.

²⁵⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 104-105.

²⁵⁷ Such as the granting of leases, the burgess account, the opening of the chest to seal leases in the church and meetings to discuss correspondence with local gentry or court officials. Usually, assistants were only summoned to meetings to be informed that new assistants had been amalgamated to their company, as on 7 October 1586: Ibid., p. 385.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 243. Assistants were also excluded from meetings with Sir John Hubaud regarding the Myton dispute e.g. pp. 235, 269-270.

burgesses, assistant burgesses or other officers such as recorder and were not present for the election of burgesses for parliament.

The failure of the 1554 charter to properly define the role of assistant burgess, coupled with the reluctance of the first company to share some of their power with the commoners, led to dissension between the upper and lower chambers. Growing dissatisfaction and animosity emboldened the assistants to challenge the social and municipal hierarchy. The contentious meeting of 3 December 1564 was followed by further protest on 16 December 1571.²⁵⁹ At this meeting, the principal burgesses expected to receive deference and respect from their social and political inferiors. Instead, they were offended by the 'obstynate behaviour and wilfull proceadings' of the assistants. On Saint Thomas Day 1573, the commoners demanded unfettered free speech at meetings and a full company of twenty four rather than twelve assistants.²⁶⁰ The first company protected their autonomy by using the charter as an excuse to refuse the assistants' requests, resorting to body politic rhetoric to explain that the charter would not permit such a number of assistants, 'so should it come to passe that the foot should govern the hed'. Furthermore, John Fisher was cautious to allow the assistants too much of a say at meetings, stating that they were allowed to 'apteyn free speche being not fryvolous or inconvenient... in such things as your speche shalbe requyred... without that ye shall have any effectuall voice either affirmative or negative to consent or dissent'.²⁶¹ The assistants would therefore be allowed to speak so long as it was deemed convenient to the principal burgesses, which was the traditional concept of giving consent rather than having free choice.²⁶² John Fisher also blamed the assistants for their lack of participation because they 'wilfully refused'

²⁵⁹ See Table II.

²⁶⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 108-110.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

²⁶² Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, p. 10.

to partake in the election of the financial burgess in 1571, a trait that contradicted ideas of honour and respectability.²⁶³ Fisher's subsequent call for unity to 'make a sure knot and kepe us in good liking one of another' did not reflect the deep divide that had developed between the 'masters of the town' and the commoners.²⁶⁴ Fissures within the first company itself would develop as the assistant burgesses rose through the 'cursus honorum' to the ranks of the upper chamber.

Table II: Divisions among the assistant burgesses in 1564²⁶⁵:

'Conformable' assistants		Non-conformable assistants
John Ridgeley	Thomas Diche	Thomas Powell
John Biker	Baldwyn Bewford	Thomas Jenks
Roger Hurlebutt	Thomas Bewfoo	Nicholas Purfloo
John Grene	William Townsend	Thomas Burges
John Rey	John Griffin	William Frekulton
Thomas Cawdrey	Henry Bird	Oliver Brooks
Richard Brook	William Martlyn	Thomas Staunton
Simon Yong	Roger Weale	
Humphrey Crane	William Stevens	
Richard Tuskott		
Robert Sheldon		
Robert Phillips		
William Thownders		

The limited role of the commoners in the government of their town was an issue that continued to cause ructions throughout the period and came to a head during the 1580s, when the 'Busie' principal burgess Richard Brooks directly challenged the monopoly of the 'inner circle'.²⁶⁶ Brooks' solution to the 'problem' of 'oligarchy' was to remove some of its officers. A means of achieving this was to publicly question the interpretation of the charter offered by Fisher, particularly the closed nature of corporate electoral procedure. Brooks utilised the

²⁶³ Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 118.

²⁶⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 117.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

Court of Chancery as a means to voice his argument that the citizens should have greater involvement in local government, thus drawing influential gentry Sir Thomas Lucy and Thomas Leigh Esquire into the dispute. In 1583, Brooks allegedly encouraged one Thomas Olney to exhibit a bill of complaint against him, the intention being to accuse John Fisher, Richard Townsend and Thomas Powell of the offences, in order to displace some of the principal burgesses in favour of 'others of their [Brooks'] faction'.²⁶⁷ The key issue was whether the bailiff and principal burgesses were elected 'by the more voices of the whole inhabitants or by ten or twelve persons representing the rest of the inhabitants'.²⁶⁸ Members of the 'outer circle' assisted Brooks in his challenge to the autonomy of the 'oligarchs' by acting as witnesses, such as the principal burgess John Grene, who continued to vocalise the concern that the local inhabitants were being deprived of a contribution in the affairs of the town.²⁶⁹ Several of the inhabitants deposed that corporate officers were not elected by the inhabitants of the town.²⁷⁰ Brooks was now bringing electoral issues to the attention of the gentry, who would directly question the principal burgesses' interpretation of the charter. The 'inner circle' were now facing pressure from their social superiors, who would publicly question their integrity and challenge their hegemony in the borough. Richard Brooks solicited the intervention of the earls of Warwick and Leicester, which resulted in a public inquiry held on 8 August 1583 in the shire hall. Through their legal representative, Robert Atkinson, Brooks and John Grene played on the existing tensions and fault lines caused by the charter to attack the bailiff and principal burgesses, calling for their displacement and

²⁶⁷ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 231r-231v.

²⁶⁸ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 232v-233r.

²⁶⁹ As an assistant burgess, John Grene had acted as prolocutor for the assistants at the meeting of 16 December 1571 and subsequently clashed with Fisher at the meeting on Saint Thomas Day 1573: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 57-61, 113-114.

²⁷⁰ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 233r-236v.

imprisonment 'to the example of all the world'.²⁷¹ Atkinson argued that all the inhabitants were incorporated as burgesses under the first charter and made the case that corporate elections should be 'doone by the whole multytude' rather than six or seven individuals who claimed 'the whole power to themselves... wherby they have deseruid to have the charter taken from them & the burrow to be disfranchised'.²⁷² The threat of rescinding a town's privileges was a 'formidable threat to any borough' and demonstrates the seriousness of the allegations against the Corporation.²⁷³ The earls subsequently demanded popular participation in the election of civic officers.

It has been clear throughout this thesis that the weaknesses of the 1554 charter were the cause of many of the disputes faced by the Corporation during the 1570s and 1580s because it permitted an 'oligarchy' to develop, thrive and prosper. Its main flaw was that it could be interpreted a number of ways and did not easily allow outsiders to gain access to local government without the approval of the principal burgesses within it. The earls appear to have attempted to amend this so that the majority of the inhabitants could participate in elections. However, they took the wrong approach because the bailiff and principal burgesses were not legally at fault. The Crown was ultimately to blame because it granted a charter that permitted a small, self-perpetuating body exclusive freedom to govern as it pleased.²⁷⁴

Brooks and his followers were not calling for a new charter to be made but for the existing

²⁷¹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 330-341. This was Robert Atkinson, recorder of Oxford. Formerly of the Inner Temple, he was expelled for suspected recusancy in 1570 and disbarred in 1572. John Fisher described him as a 'subtill Sophister being alwayes of Brooks counsell': 'Atkinson, Robert (d. 1607), of London and Stowell, Glos.', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/atkinson-robert-1607> (Accessed: 31 July 2017); Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 331. The Warwick recorder Edward Aglionby supported and advised the Corporation throughout this crisis. Aglionby was a 'Dudley client', had ties to the powerful Wigston kinship network through marriage and, along with Sir Fulke Greville and Sir Thomas Lucy, was central to local administration: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 329-332; Enis, 'The Warwickshire Gentry', pp. 64, 125, 131-132, 169.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 341-342.

²⁷³ Neale, *House of Commons*, p. 147.

²⁷⁴ A point echoed by Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 47.

1554 charter to be re-interpreted in their favour. They attempted to achieve this by obtaining the intercession of the earls and their clientele to circumvent the control of the bailiff and principal burgesses. The Corporation continued to resist any change to maintain the status quo which provoked further complaints from Brooks.²⁷⁵ As long as John Fisher was at the helm, the Corporation would remain closed to the majority of the inhabitants.

II. Financial Disputes

Dissent over constitutional issues had caused a deep rift between the 'inner' and 'outer' circles. The management of the financial assets of the town would also cause friction throughout the period. The misuse of charitable funds was a concern in many boroughs at this time. Burdened under the weight of financial pressure, 'oligarchies' had to use their initiative to generate revenue, and one solution was to tap into local charities.²⁷⁶ However, municipal officers compensating themselves from corporate coffers naturally 'aroused feelings of resentment in less privileged members of the community'.²⁷⁷ The management of charitable bequests was a sensitive topic amongst the town inhabitants, particularly as the economic situation in Warwick was far from prosperous; in November 1571, John Fisher informed the earl of Leicester that 'the number of the poore was great and they were relievid only by the charitable devocion of the Inhabitants'.²⁷⁸ Beier has suggested that the origins of this poverty problem might be partly attributed to the 'dispersal' of the lands of the pre-Reformation foundations during the dissolution of the 1530s and 1540s, 'which meant that opportunities for social and educational assistance were lost'.²⁷⁹ The relief of the poor was a

²⁷⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 382; TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, November 1586-November 1587.

²⁷⁶ MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 62, 66.

²⁷⁷ Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 46.

²⁷⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 47.

²⁷⁹ Beier, 'Warwick, 1580-90', p. 68.

pressing issue that required intervention and charitable bequests were a vital source of assistance.

Contemporary concepts of morality were fundamental to the financial disputes of the period. Withington has highlighted the centrality of the humanist idea of 'civitas' in the minds of contemporaries, which stressed the importance of using one's 'moral judgement' to work for the benefit of the public rather than for selfish reasons: 'personal and public industry, like personal and public profit, went hand in hand'.²⁸⁰ Principal burgesses held a civic position in society so they held direct responsibility for the best interests of the commonwealth: 'Governance came with duties and responsibilities that... were also framed in moral terms.'²⁸¹ Burgesses made decisions that affected the community so they had a moral obligation to the town they represented. Failure to adhere to these concepts of morality affronted conventional codes of honour: 'Economic and social grievances were seen as moral or religious grievances, because economic and social misbehaviour was an offence to God'.²⁸² As Wood has observed, the moral obligation that wealthy individuals owed to their fellow inhabitants were inherent to the ideal of 'civitas': 'Poverty... imposed responsibilities upon the wealthy. Wealthy villagers who denied charity money to the poor thereby lost their place within the moral community'.²⁸³ The social standing of the principal burgesses was at risk from accusations of corruption, particularly as the status of 'gentleman' was inextricably connected to the contemporary concept of honesty, which was 'an essential part of the honour and calling of a gentleman to engage with politics'.²⁸⁴ Muldrew has demonstrated that a person's reputation in the community was essential for a trader to prosper because market exchanges

²⁸⁰ Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, pp. 67, 60.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁸² Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, p. 13.

²⁸³ Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, p. 110.

²⁸⁴ Cust, 'The public man', p. 123.

were conducted by credit rather than money. These ideas extended to social interactions and were part of the sixteenth century mind-set: 'interpersonal trust was of central importance, and, as a result, a reputation for honesty and fair dealing in the community was vital to being successful'.²⁸⁵ To actively work against such ideals was an abuse of the trust that the community placed in its corporate officers.

The importance of these concepts became evident during the first serious dispute over charitable bequests arising during 1573-5, when fracture lines began to emerge within the first company over the execution of the last will and testament of the principal burgess, Thomas Oken, who had assigned Robert Phillips and Thomas Cawdrey as executors and John Fisher, Robert Sheldon, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton and John Grene as overseers.²⁸⁶ The catalyst for dissention was the existence of two versions of Oken's will at the time of his decease, which led to disagreement over which version was the 'true' will and which should be executed and proved. Distrust between the burgesses enabled the dispute to develop to a heightened level. Trustworthiness was an integral aspect of credit relations. The breach of this ideal would result in the loss of an individual's reputation and respectability amongst his peers.²⁸⁷ The overseers evidently did not trust the executors to 'truly' execute the will from

²⁸⁵ Muldrew, 'Trust, Capitalism and Contract', p. 130.

²⁸⁶ Oken made a number of charitable bequests to the poor, specifically £15 for fifteen score of the poorest householders, £10 to thirty poor maids and £40 to the poor of Stratford and Banbury. The most significant clause was the bestowing of £100 to the town to purchase land for the commoners, which would cause contention later in the period. If land could not be purchased, the town was to lend £10 a piece to ten honest commoners or the equivalent to five honest commoners for three or four years. According to Fisher, Oken stated when he fell ill in July 1573 that his last will was to be the one containing the most legacies. The will that was eventually proved in London on 15 May 1574 differed in certain details from the version copied out by Fisher and another copy held at the WCRO. Although the key terms of the will were the same, the will proved in London was missing a number of bequests that were present in Fisher's version, including those to be given to some of the burgesses and their families, namely Robert Sheldon and Thomas Powell. The missing clauses may explain why Sheldon and Powell became concerned about the actions of the executors because it directly affected the legacies due to them: TNA, PROB 11/56/237, the will of Thomas Oken, 15 May 1574; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 117r-119v; Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 179-180; WCRO, CR 2758/7, Copy of paper of the will of Thomas Oken, 24 November 1570.

²⁸⁷ Muldrew, 'Trust, Capitalism and Contract', p. 136.

the outset, thus indicating the tenuous nature of the executors' reputation at the time the dispute took place. Shortly before Oken's death, Thomas Powell vocalised his concerns that the will should be properly executed 'acording to the mynde of the man which he fearid would hardly be performed except some carefull men woold tak some paynes therin'.²⁸⁸ This distrust would lead to personal antagonism between the burgesses, who would impugn each other's reputation in the community as honourable, trustworthy and honest citizens.

Table III: Factional divisions during 1574-5²⁸⁹

Executors camp	Overseers camp	Principal burgesses who had minimal involvement
Robert Phillips	John Fisher	Richard Fisher
Thomas Cawdrey ²⁹⁰	Robert Sheldon	Richard Townsend
	William Frekulton	Richard Roo
	Thomas Powell	Richard Brookes
	John Grene	Humphrey Crane
	William Hudson	John Ridgeley
	Thomas Jenks as bailiff	John Diche

A series of affronts and slights of honour followed the death of Oken and further entrenched the divide between the two parties. According to Fisher, the executors opened Oken's coffers without the presence of the overseers, who responded by offering to discharge the executors of their duties. This offer deeply offended Phillips and Cawdrey because Oken had put them in trust to execute the will. A series of procrastinations by the executors followed, despite their promise 'by the faith of a Cristian man' to promptly prove the will.²⁹¹ The executors'

²⁸⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 180-181. Suspicion probably stemmed from the discord surrounding Phillips' involvement in the execution of the will of the former principal burgess William Hill, who died in 1570, a case which progressed as far as the Court of Requests: TNA, REQ 2/61/66, Robert Phillips versus William Hudson, Thomas Hill, 1575/76; TNA, REQ 2/256/40, Robert Phillips versus Thomas Hill, William Hudson, 1578.

²⁸⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 179-201; TNA, C 2/Eliz/W20/23, John Fisher, William Frekulton, Thomas Powell, Robert Sheldon, John Grene versus Robert Phillips, Thomas Cawdrey, 1574; TNA, STAC 5/F20/9, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey, 1575; TNA, STAC 5/F3/6, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey alias Cooke, 1575.

²⁹⁰ Cawdrey was not actually a serving assistant or principal burgess as this time; he was an assistant during the rebellion of the assistants but left in protest and was not accepted back: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 60-61.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

failure to keep their word was a fundamental breach of credit relations because they had proven their dishonesty and could not be trusted.²⁹² This had serious implications for the way Phillips and Cawdrey were perceived by their fellow burgesses, for ideas of honesty were entangled with religious belief: 'Religious teaching stressed both the need to keep promises and to trust one's neighbours just as one trusted God, while the breaking of promises was sinful'.²⁹³ Mounting tensions furthered the schism amongst the principal burgesses, who suspected that John Fisher had become a 'partak[e]r of the spoile' through his association with Phillips and Cawdrey. The dispute progressed to the Courts of Arches, Chancery and Star Chamber between 1574 and November 1575.²⁹⁴ Legal action was ignited during Easter term of 1574, when Fisher claimed that a copy of a 'false' will had been submitted to be proved in which at least £200 was missing, some of which included £100 due to the town.²⁹⁵ Serious criminal accusations were made by the overseers against the executors; failure to prove the last will, lengthy delays in the execution of the will, intention to defraud the will by not making a 'true' inventory, failure to pay all the legacies, misappropriation of £500 worth of debts due to Oken, and committal of 'wilful perjury' by their answers in the Court of Chancery. The executors denied the allegations, stating that everything had been carried out accordingly.²⁹⁶

This dispute began as a clash over money and property and evolved into a bitter personal quarrel between the leaders of the two parties, Phillips and Fisher, as the involvement of their

²⁹² Muldrew, 'Trust, Capitalism and Contract', p. 135.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 193-201; TNA, C 2/Eliz/W20/23, John Fisher, William Frekulton, Thomas Powell, Robert Sheldon, John Grene versus Robert Phillips, Thomas Cawdrey, 1574; TNA, STAC 5/F20/9, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey, 1575; TNA, STAC 5/F3/6, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey alias Cooke, 1575.

²⁹⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 192-194.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 191-196; TNA, C2/Eliz/W20/23, John Fisher, William Frekulton, Thomas Powell, Robert Sheldon, John Grene versus Robert Phillips, Thomas Cawdrey, 1574; TNA, STAC 5/F20/9, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey, 1575; TNA, STAC 5/F3/6, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey alias Cooke, 1575.

fellow burgesses diminished. As Kishlansky has highlighted, slights to one's personal honour or 'engaging in unacceptable conduct... elevated initial difficulties into irresolvable conflicts of honour', as the events that followed demonstrated.²⁹⁷ Fisher and Phillips attempted to tarnish each other's reputation and seek vengeance in the legal courts. Tensions came to a head at the first annual feast to be held in memory of Oken in late 1574. In the presence of the majority of the principal burgesses and twenty-four assistants, Fisher accused the executors of failing to pay the legacies and proving 'a false will like wretches & men of no credit', further stating that Phillips was a 'vile usuring... false forsworne & perjured knave'.²⁹⁸ Relations between the warring parties deteriorated to such an extent that local gentry interceded to quell the dissention.²⁹⁹ During 1574/5, Phillips and Fisher subsequently commenced suits against each other in the Courts of Queen's Bench and Star Chamber.³⁰⁰ These court cases had considerable consequences for the unity of the first company, as several of the principal burgesses were now clearly at odds.

Tensions over charitable funds continued to cause friction between the burgesses as the decade wore on.³⁰¹ Rather than remaining static, factional allegiances shifted dramatically at

²⁹⁷ Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, p. 81.

²⁹⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 196-197.

²⁹⁹ Phillips invited Sir Thomas Lucy to act as mediator and a meeting between the two parties was held at Charlecote on 1 or 2 October 1574. This must have been the date of the meeting because Phillips and Cawdrey were to pay the £10 to the overseers 'within eight days next following', as stated in TNA, STAC 5/F3/6, Fisher, Sheldon versus Phillips, Cawdrey alias Cooke, 1575, the deadline being the 9 October. Lucy concluded that the fault lay with the executors and a compromise was reached, resulting in the surcease of the overseers' legal action in the courts of Arches and Chancery.

³⁰⁰ Phillips commenced a suit in the Queen's Bench during 1574-5 against Fisher for slander. Fisher responded with a counter-suit against Phillips in the Star Chamber for perjury. The case eventually fell to arbitration: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 197-201.

³⁰¹ Discord between Richard Brookes and the Corporation over the granting of the lease of the rectory of Budbrook to one William Beynham Esquire also heightened hostilities from the mid 1570s onwards. Legal action followed, continuing into the mid 1590s in the courts of Chancery, Requests and Exchequer. In addition, ongoing tensions over Oken's will continued to cause dissention in the town with several principal burgesses being drawn into legal proceedings over its execution. These tensions continued to cause friction between the burgesses. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314; TNA, SP46/20, William Beynham versus Richard Brookes, 30 November 1594; TNA, REQ 2/105/61, William Beynham Esquire versus Richard Brookes and others, 1594; TNA, REQ 2/181/21, William Beynham of Boxley Esquire versus Richard Brookes, Thomas Brookes and others, 1594; TNA, REQ 2/27/146, William Beynham versus John Weale and others, 1594/1595; TNA, REQ 2/252/35, Robert Phillips

the turn of the 1580s. On 26 November 1579, three of the overseers to Oken's will who had formerly sided with John Fisher switched allegiances and united with their former adversary, Robert Phillips, to exhibit a bill of complaint against John Fisher and his fellow 'oligarchs' in the Court of Requests regarding their alleged misappropriation of charity money. Fellow 'oligarchs' Richard Fisher and Richard Roo were accused of bearing 'speciall favour' to John Fisher by not calling him to account.³⁰² These new factions reflected the old divide between the assistants and the principal burgesses that was characteristic of the late 1560s and early 1570s.

Table IV: Factional allegiances during 1579-1580³⁰³

Charity money dispute 1579-80	
Fisher camp	Phillips camp
John Fisher	Robert Phillips
Richard Fisher	Richard Brooks
Richard Townsend	John Grene
Richard Roo	Thomas Powell
Humphrey Crane	William Frekulton
John Ridgeley	Thomas Olney
	John Yardley ³⁰⁴

The dispute was elevated at this time by the distribution of libels about the town to publicly disgrace the 'oligarchs'. The libels were posted in the form of a letter to the bailiff at various prominent positions in the town, including the shire hall and the high cross. The 'inner circle' were suspicious that Richard Brooks and his allies were responsible. Libels were a particular concern for contemporary authoritarians because they were often a means for the illiterate

versus Thomas Cawdrey als Cooke, Oliver Brooks, 1577. Adams suggests that Beynham was a Dudley client: S. Adams, 'The Dudley Clientele and the House of Commons, 1559-1586', *Parliamentary History*, 8 pt 2 (January 1989), p. 230.

³⁰² TNA, REQ 2/78/37, Robert Phillips, John Grene, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton versus John Fisher, Richard Townsend, Richard Fisher, Richard Roo, 26 November 1579; Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 319-322.

³⁰³ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 313-347; TNA, REQ 2/78/37, Robert Phillips, John Grene, Thomas Powell, William Frekulton versus John Fisher, Richard Townsend, Richard Fisher, Richard Roo, 26 November 1579; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 211r-235v.

³⁰⁴ Thomas Olney and John Yardley were not burgesses at the time.

populace at large to criticise and attack governing bodies and were therefore considered to be a 'threat to the social and political order' punishable in the Court of Star Chamber.³⁰⁵ Adam Fox has suggested that libels were often a reaction to the disruption of the mutually accepted paternal hierarchy of society in which the rules of deference and subjection were not followed. This could be caused by abuse of power by civic officials and was a response to 'perceived injustice'.³⁰⁶ The libels in Warwick appear to fit this description. John Fisher and Richard Townsend were specifically targeted and were accused of causing the poor of the town 'misery' because they had 'deteyned & kept in their own handes to their owne use & benefitt' the charitable funds that were intended for the relief of the poor, who were 'like to perish with famyn'. The letter appealed to the bailiff and principal burgesses to 'calle them to accompt and cause them to restore & emend that which is amysse'.³⁰⁷ This letter was not typical of the bawdy lyrical ballads that have been analysed by Fox.³⁰⁸ Rather, it was a polite petition to the governors of the town 'that have any care of their conscience and beare good will to the same towne.'. ³⁰⁹ However, the 'oligarchs' viewed such libels as a 'challenge to the political order' that had to be quashed.³¹⁰ Fisher described the incident as an attempt by Brooks and his 'outer circle' supporters to 'mak some notable ryott styrre or mischief... under pretence of pittifull petition'.³¹¹ Fisher's comments align with the authoritarian perception that 'the control of speech represented the maintenance of order'.³¹² Brooks was subsequently ejected from the Corporation as a principal burgess on 15 June 1582.³¹³

³⁰⁵ A. Fox, 'Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England', *Past and Present*, no. 145 (November 1994), pp. 54-55, 63, 72, 79-80, 81.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

³⁰⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 323-326.

³⁰⁸ Fox, 'Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule', pp. 47-83.

³⁰⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 323.

³¹⁰ Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, p. 37.

³¹¹ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 323.

³¹² Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, p. 36.

³¹³ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 367-378.

Dissention between the 'inner' and 'outer' circles had reached crisis point to the extent that the earl of Leicester's clientele interceded to hear the case in the shire hall on 8 August 1583.³¹⁴

John Fisher, Richard Townsend and Thomas Powell were publicly accused of misappropriating the charitable funds that were bequeathed for the use of the poor of the town and failing to account for it for the past five years.³¹⁵ Despite Fisher's protests, he was forced to make the accounts 'publik to all straungers or Tounesmen' then present at the inquest.³¹⁶

The central points under scrutiny were the distribution of the charitable funds, contention over £50 bequeathed by William Whateley of Coventry for the town, and the £100 gifted by Oken to purchase land for the use of the commoners.³¹⁷ The deed for the land purchased by the Corporation for this purpose was in the names of only four principal burgesses, which aroused suspicion amongst the gentry presiding over the inquest.³¹⁸ Despite the allegations, nothing could be proved against Fisher over the management of the accounts.

The most violently disruptive factional dispute occurred during 1576, when a quarrel over the tithes of Myton fields escalated into a full scale riot. According to the account by John Fisher, a dozen rioters entered a tithe barn at Myton on 27 November 1576 to 'kepe the possession against all men', armed with 'divers kindes of warlike weapons'. These men were determined to 'kill or bee killed & leave their carcasses before they left the possession' and were acting on behalf of Richard Brooks, who disputed the Court of Requests' ruling that the

³¹⁴ The case was heard before Sir Thomas Lucy, Edward Boughton and Thomas Leigh on 8 August 1583: *Ibid.*, pp. 331-332.

³¹⁵ Richard Brooks and John Grene were named as the informers. The accusations concerned the charities of William Willington of Barcheston, Thomas Oken of Warwick and William Whateley of Coventry, which were to be bestowed or lent to poor occupiers in the town of Warwick under the direction of the bailiff and burgesses of Warwick: *Ibid.*, pp. 332-333; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, ff. 231r-231v.

³¹⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 331, 340.

³¹⁷ According to John Fisher's statements during the inquest, the long-standing animosity between Fisher and Richard Brooks appears to have stemmed from Brooks' failure to pay the discrepancies in his account for his term of bailiwick in 1565 and his alleged non-payment of £15 of Whateley's money that Brooks owed to the town. Brooks swore under oath that he had paid it to John Fisher, who refuted this claim and accused the former of fraud: *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281, 335, 374-375.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

tithes belonged to John Ray junior.³¹⁹ The Corporation responded to the disturbance by sending the bailiff, its principal burgesses, constables and 'some reasonable nomb[er] of staid & honest quiet men' to take the corn for Ray as ordered by a decree dated 7 November 1576 and an injunction dated 21 November 1576 issued out of the Court of Requests. The bailiff and his company approached the tithe barn and spoke with the rioters, who had locked the barn door and still resisted. Thomas Oldnall and George Fulhurst (son and brother in law to Brooks) had a caliver or harquebus in their hands and matches burning. The Corporation suspected that there might be more than twelve in the barn, so the bailiff, assisted by the town clerk and sergeant at mace, made another proclamation referring to the Statute of Riots, Routs and Unlawful Assemblies but this was equally ineffective. The bailiff gave the rioters approximately an hour and a quarter after proclamation to surrender. The bailiff perceived that the rioters would not be persuaded to stand down so they decided to break into many parts of the barn at once, beating down the doors and walls of the barn with two fire hooks, poles and engines. In response, the rioters fired a gun, arrows, bolts and 'great pible stones' and 'thrust' at those who came near the walls of the barn with long rapiers, swords and forest bills. After fifteen minutes the rioters cried 'hold' and the bailiff entered the barn to speak to them at great personal risk. The rioters offered to surrender if Ray was put in possession and the corn be allowed to lay in the barn seven days but the Corporation was determined to carry out the commission. Ray's men entered the barn, the rioters were overcome and they fled.³²⁰

³¹⁹ The riot of 27 November 1576 was the culmination of a bitter feud between Richard Brooks and John Ray junior over the possession of the tithes of Myton that was initially brought before the Court of Requests in 1575. John Ray senior had received the leases from the college of Warwick some time during 1542 to 1544 and from the Corporation in the first or second years of Phillip and Mary, which were inherited by John Ray junior upon his death. In 1575, John Ray junior accused Brooks of tricking him into forfeiting these leases and expelling him from the premises, thus forcing him into extreme poverty. Brooks refuted the allegations, stating that Ray had failed to pay the rent to the Corporation, which would have voided the indentures. The court ruled in favour of Ray. Brooks defied the court order and was subsequently hauled before the Court of Requests for contempt on 16 May 1576: *Ibid.*, p. 227; TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye of Warwick versus Richard Brooks of Warwick, 1574-6; TNA, REQ 2/31/5, John Raye versus Richard Brooks, 1576.

³²⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 286, 293-296, 282-285.

The language used by Fisher in this narrative may contain elements of exaggeration in order to stigmatise the 'rioters' but still demonstrates how relatively insignificant disputes could evolve into serious factional divisions amongst the townsmen and erupt into violent conflict.

The discord that led to the Myton Riot of 27 November 1576 demonstrates how factional alignments in the town could become divided according to who supported whom in what began as a fairly trivial dispute. The Corporation sided with John Ray because it was instructed to by a commission directed out of the Court of Requests dated 7 July 1576, which denounced Brooks as a 'Rebelle and disobedient Subject' to be apprehended.³²¹ In their capacity as steward/town clerk and bailiff respectively, John Fisher and John Ridgeley represented the Corporation in the argument, while other principal burgesses signed official letters and participated on behalf of the Corporation during the dispute.³²² Civic officers may also have supported Ray because his father, John Ray senior, had served as a founding member of the Corporation under the second charter of 1554, so a degree of favouritism may have been at work.³²³ Several principal and assistant burgesses signed a certificate supporting Ray's claim in the Court of Requests, dated 10 January 1575/6.³²⁴ Ray had the personal support of several civic officers, who acted on his behalf in the dispute.³²⁵ The bailiff made proclamation of rebellion against Brooks in the market place on 17 July 1576, which ignited opposition from amongst Brooks' family, friends and allies, who comprised the 'middling sort'

³²¹ Ibid., pp. 228-230.

³²² Specifically William Hudson, William Frekulton and Thomas Powell: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 239-240, 243, 270.

³²³ Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 9.

³²⁴ John Ridgeley, William Frekulton, Richard Roo, Oliver Brook and Leonard Holmes were amongst those who signed this certificate. However, it is unclear how strongly they felt about the issue because when the signatories were deposed in April 1576, they claimed that they only signed the certificate at the request of Robert Sheldon and Christopher Knight: TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye versus Richard Brooks, 1576.

³²⁵ Notably his 'friend', the assistant Robert Sheldon and his brothers-in-law William Worcester of Bilton and Christopher Knight, the latter being an assistant burgess at the time. The long-serving principal burgess Richard Townsend also spoke in defence of Ray: TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye versus Richard Brooks, 1576; Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 230, 277.

in the town, and set off a chain of events that challenged the Corporation's authority in the locality.³²⁶ Those lower down the social order supported Brooks and comprised relatives, household servants, 'hangers on & hirelings of Brookes' or friends from amongst the gentry.³²⁷ This reflected a trend of the time; the yeoman class were those who led the 'low politics' of popular protest because they 'felt that their social superiors were not doing what was right'.³²⁸ However, affiliations could overlap, as in the case of John Grene, who was torn between his civic responsibility to uphold order as bailiff and his personal allegiance to Brooks.³²⁹

Table V: Factions during the Myton dispute of 1576³³⁰

John Ray	Richard Brooks	Corporation	Burgesses not directly involved in the dispute
Robert Sheldon	Sir John Hubaud	John Fisher	Richard Fisher
William Worcester	John Grene	Richard Townsend	Robert Phillips
Richard Townsend	John Jeffries, justice of the peace	William Hudson	Humphrey Crane
Christopher Knight	Lynacres (undersheriff)	John Grene	Richard Roo
John Ridgeley	John Lord (undersheriff)	Richard Fisher	Thomas Hankinson als. Jenks
William Frekulton	Thomas Oldnall	Thomas Powell	William Frekulton
Richard Roo	George Fulshurst	John Ridgeley	John Diche
Oliver Brook	James Richardson	Thomas Hankinson als. Jenks	
Leonard Holmes	Richard Brookes (tanner)	Humphrey Crane	
	Mary Brookes	Richard Roo	
	Thomas Brookes	John Diche	
	Clement Hill	William Frekulton	

³²⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 228-230. The riot of 27 November 1576 was preceded by several smaller disturbances led by supporters of Brooks over the tithes of Myton during July and August 1576: *Ibid.*, pp. 230-238, 263-265.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

³²⁸ Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, p. 48; Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, pp. 128-129.

³²⁹ There are hints in the primary source material that Grene was closely affiliated with Brooks, as in Fisher's statement in Latin relating to Brooks and Grene: 'With many other solicitations not written down they busied themselves': translated in Kemp, *The Book of John Fisher*, p. 203.

³³⁰ According to John Fisher: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 227-305. Supplemented by evidence in TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye of Warwick versus Richard Brooks of Warwick, 1574-6; TNA, REQ2/31/5, John Raye versus Richard Brooks, 1576; TNA, REQ2/291/94, William Worcester of Warwick, gent versus Richard Brook of Miton, 1580.

John Ray	Richard Brooks	Corporation	Burgesses not directly involved in the dispute
	Thomas Carpenter		
	Richard Betts, servant of Richard Brooks		
	Paid strangers		

Table VI: Supporters of Brooks during the Myton dispute of 1576³³¹

Relatives of Richard Brookes	Gentry/influential friends	Servants	Paid people
Mary Brookes (wife)	Sir John Hubaud	James Richardson (retainer)	Thomas Carpenter ('hired servant')
Thomas Brookes (brother)	John Jeffries (justice of the peace)	Clement Hill (ward)	Richard Betts ('hired servant')
Richard Brookes the tanner (described as a 'kinsman' of Brookes)	John Lynacres (Undersheriff)	Richard Gregory (servant to Jeffries)	Francis Bibb (hired by Jeffries at Worcester and sent to Brookes)
Thomas Oldnall (son-in-law)	John Lord (Undersheriff)		Jackson (hired by Jeffries)
George Fullshurst (brother-in-law)	John Grene		Thomas Ensull from Solihull (hired by Jeffries)
William Hicks (brother-in-law)	William Yardley (Undersheriff of Middlesex)		
	Thomas Staunton of Longbridge		

As occurred during the Oken dispute, factional alignments in 1576 were further moulded by personal grudges, slights and affronts, which increased the animosity between the burgesses. This friction was expressed again using language of credit and honour. Muldrew has emphasised how personal honour was tied up with credit and notions of truth and honesty and this culture was prevalent throughout the whole of society, not just the wealthy; 'all members in urban communities, including the poor, were heavily involved in these tangled credit

³³¹ According to John Fisher and Richard Gregory: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 296-297; TNA, REQ 2/260/12.

relationships as both creditors and debtors'. A trader relied on his personal reputation in the community in order to be trusted to conduct their business in good faith and be seen as reliable in order to 'reckon' what they owed and pay the difference: 'to have credit in a community meant that your character was respected because you could be trusted to pay back your debts'.³³² This preoccupation with credit was not just restricted to the markets but to Tudor culture generally, for the Warwick burgesses were very sensitive to having their personal honour impugned. This was evident at the height of the Myton dispute, when John Grene complained that he had been 'not well delt withall neither in creadit nor honesty' by John Fisher and John Ridgeley, who had persuaded him to store the tithes indifferently and had promised that Brooks would obey a sequestration order. However, the hay was still carried away, '.... wherby I am greatly discreditid'.³³³ Those entangled in disputes could therefore risk having their reputation in the community tarnished, which could have a knock-on effect for their status and economic viability in the town.

So far, we have seen how disputes over finances were aggravated by contemporary ideas of status, honour, reputation, credit, integrity and trustworthiness. Such tensions heightened into fierce personal hostility between the principal burgesses. Antagonism could become intensified by personality clashes and provocative exchanges that shaped future disputes concerning the Corporation during the 1580s. A similar pattern emerges in relations between the Corporation and outside individuals during this period and will be explored in the next section.

³³² Muldrew, 'Interpreting the Market', pp. 173, 177-178.

³³³ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 273-274.

III. The Town Patrons and Outsiders

The Myton dispute of 1576 was a prime example of how factionalism within Warwick during this period could be moulded by personal allegiances and deepened by personal antagonism. The intervention of local gentry and nobility in such disputes during the 1570s and 1580s considerably raised the stakes in borough politics. Kishlansky and Patterson have challenged Neale's interpretation of patronage relations as adversarial, instead arguing that the relationship was less confrontational than Neale has proposed. Patterson has rejected the negative appraisal of patronage relationships in boroughs offered by notable historians such as Neale, Clark, Slack and Dyer in favour of a positive approach that focuses on a reciprocal exchange that could benefit towns and patrons. In particular, Patterson has opposed Neale's evaluation that corporations were introverted and preoccupied with keeping outside elite out of local business to maintain their independence. Rather, corporations actively sought patrons because there were distinct advantages to be gained from a patronage relationship, particularly the protection patrons could provide to boroughs.³³⁴

There were many instances where Warwick Corporation sought out the patronage of the earls and their officers, both parties adhering to Patterson's rules of patronage exchange. The Corporation frequently appealed to the earls for protection and support and freely granted their guildhall to the earl of Leicester to found the Lord Leicester Hospital, 'Trusting & even so humbly beseeching the same to stonde our good lord and patrone in all our reasonable suites...'.³³⁵ The Corporation made efforts to appease the earl of Warwick by granting his requests for his candidates to assume one of the two Warwick seats in parliament.³³⁶ The

³³⁴ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, pp. 4-6, 7, 88.

³³⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 41-43. The earl of Leicester's decision to found his hospital in Warwick bestowed honour upon the town and its inhabitants, Fisher noting 'the noble disposicion of the right honorable therle of Leicester towards the said towne & cuntrye...': *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

³³⁶ Specifically Edward Aglionby in 1571 and Thomas Dudley in 1586 and 1588: *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 387-8, 397-399.

earls in turn promised to bestow their good favour upon the town, the earl of Leicester offering his 'harte thanks promissing to do for them any thing he should be hable'.³³⁷

A patronage relationship therefore existed between Warwick borough and the earls but it was a complex relationship which was untypically antagonistic and both sides frequently failed to fulfil the expectations of the other. The relationship had been blackened by the failure of the Corporation to greet the earl of Leicester to the town on his visit on 28 September 1571, the former demonstrating a high-handed approach to municipal authority by considering their patrons to be 'but subjects' who 'must not have such dutys as princes'.³³⁸ This was a serious error in judgement on the part of the Corporation because it slighted the earl's sense of honour. The earl responded by threatening to found his hospital in Kenilworth instead of Warwick. A further breakdown in relations occurred in April 1576, when the earl of Warwick complained that the town was 'forgetfull both of duety & good neighborhood', stating 'I desire nothing that is there but for my mony'.³³⁹ These events align more closely with Neale's hypothesis that patronage relations were inherently hostile and were a battle for independence typified by antagonism and conflict.³⁴⁰

Although evidence exists to indicate that the relationship between Warwick borough and its patrons could be congenial, the Corporation did not always respond enthusiastically to the gentry's involvement and Patterson's assessment does not fit entirely comfortably with the Warwick example. In theory, both parties were aware of the mutual exchange to which they were expected to adhere, but Patterson's interpretation does not take into account human agency, specifically when the two parties did not abide by the rules of this exchange and the

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

³³⁸ Ibid., *Black Book*, p. 31.

³³⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 39, 222.

³⁴⁰ Neale, *House of Commons*, pp. 155-158, 165-166, 168-169.

implications when the patronage relationship broke down. The behaviour of the earls' officers towards the principal burgesses inflamed Fisher's abrasive personality, which in turn led to a lack of deference by Fisher and his colleagues towards the officers, which resulted in the officers not feeling sufficiently respected. The earls treated the principal burgesses as inferiors, to which Fisher and his fellow burgesses took exception, particularly as they viewed themselves as fellow gentry to be treated with respect.

The borough's often tempestuous patronage relationship with local dignitaries contributed towards the progression of disputes to such heightened levels. A history of difficult relations came to a head in July 1576 with the involvement of the earl of Leicester's steward of Kenilworth, Sir John Hubaud, in the Myton dispute.³⁴¹ In a typical patronage exchange, corporations courted local gentry to become their patrons to mediate in disputes. The patron expected to receive honour, deference and prestige in return.³⁴² However, the Corporation failed to treat Hubaud with the respect that a gentleman of Hubaud's status felt he deserved, thus impeaching his honour and credit in the locality. As Enis has suggested, this lack of deference may have reflected Hubaud's insecure and tenuous position in the area because his authority was derived from the earls 'rather than his own position in the county'.³⁴³ The Corporation may not have deemed Hubaud important enough to receive gifts and hospitality, particularly as his family 'were not elite gentry'.³⁴⁴ This was a significant failing on the Corporation's part because displays of reverence were considered a pre-requisite for patronage

³⁴¹ Sir John Hubaud became steward of Kenilworth in 1572. He was knighted in 1566 and acted as the earls' 'main officer in north Wales and the Midlands'. He appears to have died by 11 February 1584 (when his will was proved) and was succeeded as steward of Kenilworth by Edward Boughton: Adams, 'The Dudley Clientele', p. 226; Enis, 'The Warwickshire Gentry', p. 93; TNA, PROB 11/66/331, the will of Sir John Hubaud, 11 February 1584.

³⁴² Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, pp. 87-88.

³⁴³ Enis has referred to the Myton dispute as an example of 'the difficulties that could be faced by those who owed their status to the Dudleys': Enis, 'The Warwickshire Gentry', pp. 95-96.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

relations to establish and prosper: 'Deference on the part of the townsmen and respect on the part of the patron were vital methods of exchange'.³⁴⁵ The principal burgesses did not trust Hubaud to act in their best interests as their patron because they were suspicious of Hubaud's partiality in favour of Brooks, whom Hubaud considered to be his 'very frend', although there was obviously a major difference in status between them.³⁴⁶

Patterson has argued that we should not focus on breakdown, stating that 'it is a mistake to characterise relations between borough corporations and landed gentry as inherently antagonistic or alienated'.³⁴⁷ However, breakdown was a key element in the development of the Myton dispute. A series of incidents leading up to the riot personally affronted Hubaud. In late July 1576, the Corporation sought Hubaud's advice and support regarding a disturbance led by Hubaud's servants. However, the Corporation inconvenienced Hubaud by failing to attend on him when summoned.³⁴⁸ Hubaud was greatly offended by this lack of respect and responded with rhetoric that reinforced his status and honourable reputation:

I believe never a gentleman in this Shire woold so have dealt w[i]t[h] me first to desire myne ayd or advise.. Wherin you shewe yo[u]r selves either very ignorant or otherwise, I can not tell what, so lightly to esteme of me yo[u]r neighbo[u]r & a gentleman as you all know I doubt not... you think me not a man to pleasure you. Nor that you are to be drawn out of yo[u]r corp[or]acion by so meane a man as myself... ye shall not offend me so to think... neither will I seek to recompence you w[i]t[h] any unkindnes or displeasure if I were hable as I am not And yet in some trust as an

³⁴⁵ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, p. 234. Patterson considers gifts and hospitality to be essential to the patronage exchange: *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁴⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 270.

³⁴⁷ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, p. 86.

³⁴⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 234-236.

officer emongs you for both my lordes therles of Warwick & leicester whose Steward
I am you all knowe³⁴⁹

Hubaud's authority, honour and status were further impugned when the Corporation broke a sequestration order for the tithe hay that had been agreed upon by all parties and authorised by Hubaud. Faced with conflicting orders, the Corporation prioritised the authority of the Court of Requests over the agreement, which undermined Hubaud's reputation: 'my good will you have well rewardid me to seek my discredit asmuch as youe can...'³⁵⁰ Hubaud had also been informed that several principal burgesses had held an inquiry into Hubaud's involvement in the disturbance in Myton field.³⁵¹ Hubaud took great exception to being questioned by his social inferiors and responded with abrasive and threatening language:

yoo are very lusty in yo[u]r speches against me... as I am enformed But look to yt I
will not take it at yo[u]r hands to be so said off and to be so searchid For if youe medle
w[i]th my doings or sift me I will mete w[i]th you and teach you howe to deale
w[i]t[h] a gentleman for all yo[u]r corporations³⁵²

Relations were worsened by the strained personal rivalry between John Fisher and Hubaud for the favour of the earls. According to Fisher's account of events, the two men had a long and difficult association leading up to the Myton dispute and Hubaud's actions appear to have personally offended Fisher. In 1571, Hubaud laid the blame for the failure of the Corporation to welcome the earl of Leicester to Warwick squarely on Fisher, who was a servant of the earls at the time.³⁵³ Three months before the onset of the Myton dispute, Fisher had

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 256, 271.

³⁵¹ Specifically John Ridgeley, John Fisher and Robert Sheldon.

³⁵² Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 278.

³⁵³ Ibid., pp. 29-34.

collaborated with Hubaud to obtain some long overdue deeds from the earls of Warwick and Leicester for the Corporation. According to Fisher, Hubaud boosted his own status at Fisher's expense; Hubaud refused to obtain the signed deeds from the earls unless Fisher was present, thus making the earls think that 'the matter was hard to be gotten & therby Sir John Huboud worthie more thanks in procuring the same'. Fisher's narrative implies that Hubaud belittled Fisher's involvement in obtaining the deeds, condescendingly referring to Fisher as 'a lame fellow' before the earl of Warwick.³⁵⁴ Fisher's personal dislike of Hubaud significantly influenced events leading up to the Myton Riots. Instead of apologising profusely for the Corporation's failings, Fisher took exception to Hubaud's criticisms and argued with him publicly before the other burgesses. Fisher was directly challenging the social hierarchy or 'great chain of being' by not displaying his inferiority and subservience to Hubaud.³⁵⁵ Continued antipathy between Fisher and Hubaud led to a further breakdown in communication.

Fisher's resentment may also have reflected the Corporation's frustration with Hubaud's lack of support as a patron. Patterson has highlighted that corporations sought out patrons for protection against dissent: 'For all borough corporations, the need to reinforce their own authority stood at the heart of patronage. Ensuring good government (which to civic leaders meant government by themselves and not by the majority of the citizens) dominated their choices about patrons'.³⁵⁶ Hubaud undermined the Corporation's authority in the town and impugned the honour of its officers; he sided with Brooks and his supporters and questioned the actions of civic officials at a time of crisis.³⁵⁷ Hubaud therefore failed to adhere to his

³⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 221-226.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 243-256, 270-280.

³⁵⁶ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, p. 24.

³⁵⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 243-256, 270-279.

duties as patron, for 'Reaffirmation of corporate authority formed the core of what civic leaders hoped elite patrons would do'.³⁵⁸ Fisher's efforts to re-establish a patronage relationship with Hubaud were reciprocated but ultimately did not alleviate the tensions in the town, which eventually resulted in the Myton Riots.³⁵⁹

Hubaud was succeeded as a main officer of the Dudleys by Edward Boughton, who began to rise to prominence from 1580 onwards.³⁶⁰ However, this change of personnel did not lead to the easing of the relationship between the borough and the earls. The early to mid 1580s saw patronage relations shift to acrimonious levels. Brooks exploited the borough's already fragile relationship with its patrons to his advantage by beginning to 'creape in creadite' with the earl of Leicester's clientele 'to further his purpose', which was to subvert the Corporation by using these powerful allies to attack the 'inner circle'.³⁶¹ As stated by Hirst, for the 'meaner sort' to challenge the status quo they needed the support of a powerful patron.³⁶² Brooks appealed to the earls' affections for the town and concerns about the welfare of its inhabitants.³⁶³ In correspondence to the bailiff and principal burgesses on 30 June 1583, the earl of Leicester expressed his alarm that £230 in charitable bequests had gone missing, the Corporation's apparent failure to account for the rents for the past five years, and the alleged contravention

³⁵⁸ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, p. 99.

³⁵⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 279-280. Lengthy legal wranglings in the Court of Requests followed the riot of 27 November 1576, resulting in another proclamation of rebellion against Brooks issued during 1577. Brooks avoided arrest through various legal manoeuvres and utilised the support of his allies, the undersheriff John Lord and Judge John Jeffries, to subvert John Ray's right to the Myton tithes. An extent was held in Midsummer 1577 regarding £200 that Brooks owed to Jeffries. A jury was impanelled, which found that the debt could be paid from the profits of the tithes of Myton. Ray's title to the tithes was therefore overridden. The outcome of this 'Inquisition' was challenged by John Ray, who took further action against Brooks in the Court of Requests. Depositions took place on the last day of May 1578 in Warwick and at Westminster in June 1578. The outcome to these proceedings is unclear but the dispute became less prominent: *Ibid.*, pp. 296-304; TNA, REQ 2/260/12, John Raye of Warwick versus Richard Brooks of Warwick, 1574-6.

³⁶⁰ Enis, 'The Warwickshire Gentry', pp. 174-175.

³⁶¹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 313-14, 328.

³⁶² Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 44.

³⁶³ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 377. The earl of Leicester viewed the area as the home of his ancestors, stating in 1571 'I am of that countrie & mynde to plant myself there I would be glad to further any good device w[i]th all my hart'. The earl of Warwick equally articulated his affection towards the borough, writing in 1579 of the 'special love I beare to that towne and the Inhabitants therof': *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 316.

of the charters in the election of the bailiff. The intervention of the earls resulted in the direct involvement of local gentry in borough affairs. The earl of Leicester assigned Edward Boughton, Sir Thomas Lucy and Sir Fulke Greville to preside over an investigation to take place on 8 August 1583.³⁶⁴ Brooks displayed staggering self-confidence by making 'great brags' that 'the old Burgesses should be displaced', informing his supporters that they should be present to be chosen as new burgesses and to 'heare howe shamfully the old Burgesses had decevid the towne'.³⁶⁵

The Inquest of 8 August 1583 was a direct onslaught upon the hegemony of the 'oligarchy' by Brooks, Grene and the Dudley clientele.³⁶⁶ The principal burgesses took exception to intervention from outsiders regarding constitutional issues. Patterson's dismissal of Neale's interpretation of patronage relations is understandable given that Warwick borough had a close association with outside forces.³⁶⁷ However, it does not necessarily mean that the Corporation always welcomed the intervention of the gentry in borough affairs. In this instance, the Corporation did not appreciate outside interference in what they deemed to be

³⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 328-331. Boughton enjoyed a distinguished career as a member of the Dudley clientele, serving on the Warwickshire Bench from around 1572 until his death in 1589. By 1580 he held considerable influence in the county, having 'firmly established' himself as 'one of Dudley's main officers'. As Enis has highlighted, the Black Book 'illustrates his involvement at the heart of the county's political and administrative establishment throughout the 1580s'. By 1584, Boughton had succeeded Hubaud as steward to the earl of Warwick (Hubaud wrote his will on 1 April 1583, so was either ill or dead by the time of the Inquest in August 1583). Boughton may have had personal reasons for wanting to take an interest in the administration of the charities in Warwick because he had family connections to William Willington of Barcheston, whose bequests to the town of Warwick were scrutinised during the inquest of August 1583. Sir Thomas Lucy and Sir Fulke Greville owed their pre-eminence in the county to their patrons, the earls of Warwick and Leicester, holding the prestigious offices of justice of the peace and deputy lieutenant for Warwickshire. William Willington of Barcheston served as a Warwickshire justice of the peace: TNA, PROB 11/66/331, the will of Sir John Hubaud, 11 February 1584; Enis 'The Warwickshire Gentry', pp. 24, 54, 64, 174-176.

³⁶⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 330-331. Brooks' confidence suggests that he had strong links with these gentry but it is unclear precisely what these relationships were based on. Certainly he had a firm connection with Sir John Hubaud, who described Brooks as his 'very frend'. Presumably Hubaud's high opinion of Brooks encouraged other Dudley clients to value him as a contact and informant regarding the affairs of the town, or maybe Brooks had a connection with the earls themselves that resulted in the officers respecting Brooks as an ally. Brooks may have served the earls in some capacity but there is no direct evidence to support this: Ibid., p. 270.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 332-343.

³⁶⁷ Neale, *House of Commons*, pp. 155-158, 165-166, 168-69; Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, pp. 5-7.

their own private business. The principal burgesses resented being challenged, overruled and undermined by the Dudley officers, especially in public, where 'all maner of persons both of the towne and countrey would be thrust upon them'. Personality clashes exacerbated the tensions. Fisher's abrasive personality came to the fore during the Inquest of 1583 and was a factor in the breakdown in relations; Boughton's authority as an officer of the earls was not respected by Fisher, who challenged Boughton, stating 'I take not you for no competent Judge in this case...'. This hostility worsened post-Inquest as the Corporation refused to submit to Boughton's order to 'yeld to election by the multitude', a concept that was deemed 'very daungerous' to the bailiff and burgesses. Boughton's attempts to supervise a new election on 24 and 27 April 1585 were thwarted by the political manoeuvrings of the bailiff, Robert Sheldon, who had obtained the support of the 'most honest & best sort' of the commoners, who declared they were 'not willing to have any newe choice'.³⁶⁸ Boughton's response was very confrontational for the time and demonstrates the severity of the breakdown of the patronage relationship between the earls' officers and the borough:

I thought you wold have had more care of their [the earls'] l[ett]res and that I should have found you redy to their so good & godly desires being for the comodytie of yo[u]r whole towne... it appeareth howe litle you regard of yo[u]r estate, and of the good favo[u]r the Lords beare unto you... but it is no matter for if you will have no more care for yo[u]r owne good & comon wealth you shall see what will come of it.³⁶⁹

Sheldon circumvented Boughton by communicating with the earls directly in an attempt to restore the patronage relationship, personally delivering a supplication to the earls in London on the Friday before Whitsunday 1585. After giving some 'hard speches to Mr Balief', the

³⁶⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 331-332, 342-344, 354-355.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 353, 355.

earl of Leicester accepted the Corporation's efforts to forge a better relationship with their patron and displayed a more amenable attitude towards them, declaring that he would 'stand good Lord unto them in what they had nede to use him'.³⁷⁰ The Corporation clearly recognised that in order to preserve their power and social status, they needed the protection of patrons. The episode illuminates the extent to which the problems originated with the earls' officers rather than the earls themselves, for when the burgesses were able to access the earls directly and appeal to their notions of good lordship, tensions could be alleviated. Rather than being helpful and generous to those under their protection, the earls' officers subverted notions of good lordship; they attempted to assert themselves and failed to respect those to whom they had an obligation to protect and support by accusing the Corporation of disrespectful behaviour. This aspect of the patronage exchange, particularly the relationship between boroughs and the representatives of patrons, has not been readily explored by Patterson.³⁷¹ The Corporation's circumvention of Boughton temporarily quelled the matter, although Brooks persisted in his efforts to sabotage the patronage relationship between the borough and the earls over electoral issues.³⁷²

Table VII: Factions during 1587³⁷³

Richard Brooks	John Fisher	
Robert Phillips	Richard Fisher	John Hicks
John Grene	Richard Townsend	Thomas Hankinson als Jenks
	Robert Sheldon	William Worcester
	John Ridgeley	
	Thomas Powell	
	Roger Hurlebutt	
	Richard Townsend	

³⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 357-358.

³⁷¹ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*.

³⁷² The efforts of Brooks resulted in the earl of Warwick writing a letter to the Corporation on 10 July 1585 denouncing the principal burgesses as 'such men as delight in misdoing', demanding a new election of principal burgesses and threatening to 'reforme your mysordered doings if herin youe bee negligent'. The composition of the first company did not change so presumably the election never took place: Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 358-359.

³⁷³ TNA, STAC 5/B54/27, Broke versus Fisher, Ridgeley, November 1586- November 1587.

IV. The parliamentary election dispute of 1586

As the 1580s progressed, Richard Brooks persevered with his campaign to subvert the authority and power of the Corporation by enlisting the support of outside forces to campaign for the electoral rights of Warwick citizens. In early October 1586, the local gentleman Job Throckmorton of Haseley presented a direct challenge to the autonomy of the 'oligarchs' by contesting one of the Warwick seats for parliament.³⁷⁴ Throckmorton declared his intention to push for an election that involved all the inhabitants of the town rather than just its 'masters':

[Throckmorton] myndeth to put it to the Jurye by election..... he woold not have this matter huddled upp in a corner as the most of yo[u]r matters bee amonges y[ou]r selves and not in publik..... surelye sins I fynd myself so farre beholden to many my good neighbours of this towne that have promised me, I will put it to the question. And if I faile them of yt yet mr Rigeley I meane to meet you at the Parliam[en]t dore to trye the title betwene you & mee.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ According to the 1554 charter, a parliamentary election would be called by a writ and the bailiff and burgesses were to nominate 'two discrete and upright men to be burgesses in the parliament'. Typically, the Corporation put forward their own candidate for one of the seats and the earls would nominate their own candidate for the other seat. However, from the granting of the first charter to 1571, most burgesses for parliament appear to have been nominees of a patron of the town rather than a civic official, the exception being John Butler, who was named in the 1554 charter as a principal burgess, served as burgess for parliament in the 1558 and 1562-3 sessions and was a servant of the Dudleys. John Fisher was the longest serving principal burgess to have served as a burgess for parliament during the period, having held the seat during the 1571, 1572 and 1584 parliamentary sessions. After 1586, there were no corporate burgesses elected for the parliament until 1597, when at least one burgess of the Corporation was returned until 1620. After 1620, only gentry were elected for the parliament. The role therefore appears to have been an attraction for the gentry rather than the burgesses as the period progressed. Patterson has argued that the relationship between corporations and patrons regarding parliamentary selection was probably a reciprocal arrangement that suited both parties: Hodgetts, 'Warwick Charter of 1554', article 24; 'Warwick Borough', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/constituencies/warwick> (Accessed: 1 August 2017); 'Warwick Borough', in A. Thrush and J.P. Ferris (eds.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1604-1629* (2010), <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/constituencies/warwick> (Accessed 1 August 2017); Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 179; Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, pp. 69-70, 74-86.

³⁷⁵ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 241r-v.

Throckmorton's determination to hold a public election raises important issues in relation to 'oligarchy' and the development of factionalism in Warwick during this period. The long-term feuds preceding the election contest of 1586 provide a context for understanding the factors that contributed towards such a contentious election. The incident also demonstrates how the influence of local gentry could have a dramatic impact upon borough politics during this period. Another factor for consideration is the role of religion in the progression of this dispute. Neale has suggested that the episode was about conflict between puritans and conservatives and has put forward the case for Throckmorton as an advocate of puritanism, who attempted to claim the Warwick seat in parliament in order to voice his radical views on behalf of his puritan allies. According to Neale, Throckmorton obtained the support of the supposedly puritan Brooks and the puritan element within the town to secure his seat in parliament.³⁷⁶ This interpretation initially makes some sense considering the influence of the town's puritan patrons Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and Ambrose Dudley, earl of Warwick upon the religious atmosphere of Warwick during the 1580s. Puritanism was bolstered in the town by the appointment of the earls' servant, Thomas Cartwright, as the Master of the Lord Leicester Hospital by 3 April 1586.³⁷⁷ Cartwright stirred up puritan fervour amongst the inhabitants for the remainder of the decade, creating an atmosphere more conducive to challenging the establishment and fostering a divide within the town. Scott Pearson has described Cartwright as 'the foster father of Puritanism in Warwick... exercising such a notorious influence as to create dissension in the town'.³⁷⁸ Cartwright caused further commotion in connection with the death of the newly appointed principal burgess, Henry Chaplin, who was scolded by Cartwright for his scurrilous way of life, at which Chaplin

³⁷⁶ Neale, *House of Commons*, pp. 240-244.

³⁷⁷ A.F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1535-1603* (Cambridge, 1925), p. 294.

³⁷⁸ Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright*, p. 301.

supposedly collapsed and died. The followers of Cartwright subsequently hailed him as a saint, stirring up a religious frenzy in the town, while writers such as Sutcliffe denounced Cartwright as a 'miracle monger'.³⁷⁹ Cartwright's close connections with Job Throckmorton, the possible author of the Marprelate Tracts, also supports Neale's argument that 'Puritanism probably furnishes the clue to the borough of Warwick's troubles in 1586'.³⁸⁰

Neale's interpretation is acceptable when analysing the election dispute in isolation.

However, this approach does not consider the long-term context to the dispute. The events of October 1586 were the culmination of over twenty years of disagreement between the 'inner circle' and the inhabitants over constitutional issues, the former finally succumbing to increased pressure to surrender some of their exclusive power over town governance. Neale's assessment fails to sufficiently consider the personal relationships between the burgesses and the long-standing feuds between them. Throckmorton was probably manipulating an already bad situation in the town to his advantage, as there is no evidence in the 'Black Book' to suggest that Throckmorton was specifically targeting puritans for support. The only hint at religion was the accusation by the Corporation that Throckmorton desired a parliamentary position because 'some freends of yours may have some causes in handeling' in the parliament.³⁸¹ The evidence therefore supports Hirst's observation that this dispute was 'merely one more round in the battle against an entrenched oligarchy from which a local gentleman determined to profit... the role of puritanism is questionable'.³⁸² Hirst's conclusion that 'the 1586 dispute looks like the archetypal case of particularist friction over urban power

³⁷⁹ S. Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines*, in *A General Martyrologie* (3rd edn., London, 1677), p. 373; M. Sutcliffe, *The Examination of M. Thomas Cartwrights late Apologie* (London, 1596), ff. 38v-39r.

³⁸⁰ Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright*, p. 304; Neale, *House of Commons*, p. 241.

³⁸¹ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 394.

³⁸² Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, pp. 210-211. This point has been developed further by Cust, who has suggested that Throckmorton was 'exploiting the divisions' in the town to further his political agenda: Cust, 'Patriots' and 'popular' spirits', pp. 49-50.

and exploitation' makes more sense in the light of previous disputes, which were primarily about financial and constitutional issues. The disputes of the 1580s in Warwick coincided with a general trend of challenges from below as the 'meaner sort' were becoming more politically active, which reflected the general pattern of corporate disputes in the localities during this period, which were 'merely one more battleground on which to contest the hold of the oligarchs on the town's affairs'.³⁸³ The franchise dispute of 1586 therefore appears to have been all about 'local rivalries' rather than about religion.³⁸⁴

The extent to which Richard Brooks and his 'outer circle' supporters were motivated by a religious agenda is also questionable. The sources available to us do not directly show that the Corporation or its enemies were in dispute over religious issues and Dyer has noted that 'it is difficult to discover any significant bias in the Corporation's religious activities'.³⁸⁵ Despite this, scholars have been eager to attribute religious divisions as a cause of strife in the town. Scott Pearson was one of the first to suggest that Richard Brooks and his allies may have been puritans, while Fripp went one step further by stating as fact that Brooks was a puritan.³⁸⁶ However, this interpretation provides a restricted view of power politics in Warwick because it glosses over the long-standing context to these divisions. A group of puritans clearly existed in Warwick but it is difficult to identify them and it is doubtful that religious differences directly caused or contributed in any way to the formation of the factions. There is no evidence in the 'Black Book' or elsewhere to suggest that Brooks was a puritan nor that he shared Throckmorton's puritan agenda. As Brooks' enemy, John Fisher surely would have

³⁸³ Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, pp. 62, 44-45.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁸⁵ Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', p. 34.

³⁸⁶ E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare, Man and Artist* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 171-172; Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright*, p. 304.

made a point of mentioning it in his writings.³⁸⁷ Brooks was clearly an opportunistic and resourceful individual who sought to undermine and attack the Corporation by any means necessary and this was his primary motivation. According to Fisher, Brooks became 'an open Enemye and voweth the overthrow and breking the neck of the corporacion w[hi]ch he puttith in vre to the uttermost of his power'.³⁸⁸ Throckmorton provided Brooks with yet another means to strike a blow at the autonomy of the 'oligarchs' by circumventing their control over parliamentary elections, while Brooks was able to influence his 'outer circle' supporters to further Throckmorton's quest for a parliamentary seat.

The campaigns of Richard Brooks during the 1570s and early 1580s had a lasting effect on the election dispute of 1586 and emboldened the assistant burgesses to question the first company and voice their opinions freely. At a meeting on 7 October 1586, the assistants rejected candidates put forward by the first company to fill vacancies within the second company in favour of their own nominees.³⁸⁹ Several assistants declared their support of Throckmorton for the parliamentary seat.³⁹⁰ This increasing willingness on the part of the 'outer circle' to challenge the decisions of the 'masters of the town' was evident amongst the town populace at large and Throckmorton was appealing to their dissatisfaction with the political status quo. The conditions were ripe in the town for Throckmorton to move in and

³⁸⁷ Fisher stated in the Black Book that Brooks absented himself from sermons. However, Hirst has commented that this was 'hardly the mark of the convinced puritan': Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 371; Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 211.

³⁸⁸ WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714, f. 180v.

³⁸⁹ The first company readily accepted their request without dispute, which was a significant change of attitude on the part of the principal burgesses compared with the late 1560s and early 1570s. This indicates that the first company were more willing to listen to the concerns of the assistants: Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 385. From 1581 onwards Fisher was careful to note the presence of 'inferior Assistants' or the 'multitude' at the elections of bailiffs: *Ibid.*, pp. 381-382.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 386-387. The mercer Thomas Grene was among those of the assistant burgesses who declared his support for Throckmorton. He was married to Richard Roo's daughter Anne and was entrusted as an overseer to Richard Roo's will on 25 October 1581. This was the same Richard Roo who allegedly would not call John Fisher to account for the missing charity money and therefore appears to have been a member of the 'inner circle': *Ibid.*, pp. 386-387, 332; TNA, PROB 11/64/258, the will of Richard Roo, 29 May 1582.

mount his popular campaign. According to Fisher, Throckmorton petitioned the inhabitants for their 'voyses to choose him' as a burgess for parliament, assisted by 'the Busie' Richard Brooks, his 'complices' and 'others of the meaner sort', obtaining the support of the 'husbandmen' in Bridge End and West Street, which, as ascertained by place of residence analysis in Chapter I, were areas populated by the 'outer circle' rather than the more wealthy inhabitants. Throckmorton held a 'solempne dinner' at the Swan to 'gratulate his welwillers', around sixty to eighty inhabitants attending at the instigation of Brooks.³⁹¹

Throckmorton's networks of influence also assisted in furthering Throckmorton's cause. Influential local gentry, such as Sir Fulke Greville and Sir John Harrington, as well as knights, esquires and justices of the peace, compelled the bailiff to proclaim the time of election two days before it was to take place.³⁹² Brooks was able to dissuade the Sheriff from issuing the writ of election, which was a common tactic used during parliamentary elections because without it the Corporation could not hold an election.³⁹³ Brooks' influence over the Sheriff may be attributed to the latter's apparent connections to the earls, with whom Brooks appears to have had a close association, as we have seen during the Myton dispute.³⁹⁴ Support for Throckmorton from amongst the inhabitants was so great that the 'inner circle' had no option but to negotiate with him to quell dissent in the town.³⁹⁵ According to Fisher, the Corporation expressed its concern that Throckmorton's alliance with Brooks might cause 'very

³⁹¹ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 389-390.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 389-390. Harrington and Greville were 'neighbouring puritan gentry': 'Throckmorton, Job (c. 1545-1601), of Haseley, Warws.; later of Canons Ashby, Northants.', in Hasler, *The History of Parliament*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/throckmorton-job-1545-1601> (Accessed: 1 August 2017).

³⁹³ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 390.

³⁹⁴ The Sheriff in 1586 was Thomas Dabridgecourt, a nephew of the former recorder Sir William Wigston, related to the serving recorder Edward Aglionby through the Wigston kinship network and a member of the Dudley clientele: T. Fuller, 'The Worthies of England', 3 (London, 1840), pp. 293-297; Enis, 'The Warwickshire Gentry', p. 50.

³⁹⁵ Kemp, *Black Book*, pp. 390-391.

perillous division & disencion emongs the townes men'.³⁹⁶ However, Throckmorton adopted 'honestas' language to reassure the first company of his suitability for public office, stating that he was 'an honest man & woorthy the trust'. Throckmorton's assurances impressed many of the burgesses, so much so that the 'obstacles' preventing Throckmorton from becoming a burgess were circumvented and he was ceremoniously sworn in as a burgess of Warwick.³⁹⁷ It is clear that this dispute was the culmination of ongoing conflict between the 'outer circle', led by Richard Brooks, and the 'inner circle' during the 1560s, 1570s and 1580s. Inhabitants who were disillusioned with the Corporation clearly sided with Brooks and offered their 'voices' to Throckmorton. The 'oligarchs' finally capitulated to popular pressure and relinquished some of their autonomy over parliamentary elections.

Conclusion

This chapter's assessment of the development of factionalism in Warwick over time has illuminated crucial issues at the centre of dissention in the town during the period; the contribution of weak and ineffective charters towards the emergence of 'oligarchic' rule in the first instance, constitutional disagreement over who should have control over local government, and the resulting protest against elitist domination. Concern about the management of corporate assets and charitable funds further intensified the conflict and deepened personal animosity and division amongst the townsmen. The 'outer circle' frequently appealed to local gentry and nobility as allies against perceived oppression by the 'oligarchs', and in some situations where the earls' officers were concerned, their intervention put further strain upon the Corporation. Concepts of morality, honesty and honour informed

³⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 392-394. According to John Fisher, the Corporation argued that Throckmorton was legally unable to stand for the election because he did not reside in the town, neither was he a burgess nor own any freehold within the town, and they doubted Throckmorton's willingness to best serve the interests of the town rather than his own political agenda.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 391-397.

civic life and supercharged the disputes into fiery personal feuds. These ideals formed part of the language in which these disputes were conducted. Factionalism in Warwick was in many respects a reflection of discontent with 'oligarchic' rule. However, power politics in Warwick was much more complicated than this. The personal nature of these disputes cannot be underestimated. From 1573 onwards, the 'inner circle' was at war with itself, as the Oken dispute demonstrated. Archer has commented that the 'stability of towns depended critically on the maintenance of a degree of elite cohesion, for division within the ruling group would tend to radicalise urban opinion as factions competed for support amongst the lower orders'.³⁹⁸ To an extent this is true for Warwick during this period, for as the unity amongst the principal burgesses began to fracture, so the factional squabbles that resulted impacted upon the rest of the inhabitants, who often found themselves siding with particular individuals. Brooks in particular sought and obtained the support of many of the inhabitants against the Corporation, as was the case during the Myton Riots of 1576. The repeated attempts by the 'outer circle' to curtail some of the exclusive power of the 'oligarchy' eventually bore fruit in 1586. However, an 'inner circle' would continue to dominate the borough as 'masters of the town' well beyond the period analysed in this study.

³⁹⁸ Archer, 'Politics and Government', p. 246.

CONCLUSION

At the Inquest of 8 August 1583, Sir Thomas Lucy encouraged John Fisher to show the bonds relating to the allegedly misappropriated charity money. Fisher responded thus:

to shewe them openly or to thes untrue accusers [Richard Brooks and John Grene] I think it not either requysite or resonable, they having not to doo w[i]t[h] the matter. And me thinkith them very busy bodyes that will meddle so much in that they have not to doo.³⁹⁹

Fisher's comments illuminate the attitude of an 'oligarchy' towards the involvement of the town's inhabitants in local government, specifically that the financial affairs of the town were none of their business. As Fisher had stated ten years previously, the bailiff and principal burgesses were the 'comon counsaill of the same borough to order & do all things for the good govern[men]t of thinhabitants of the same w[hi]ch being so their nedith no other counsaill'.⁴⁰⁰ The commoners had minimal involvement in borough politics and, when they did, they perceived that they were 'used as ciphers not to be reconid of'.⁴⁰¹ The electoral system for the appointment of principal burgesses in particular, which Richard Brooks tried to remedy in 1583, was geared towards the recruitment of those in favour with the ruling elite, who were considered to be wealthy enough and possess the necessary honourable qualities to hold a position in civic office, all of which were assessed by the presiding principal burgesses. There can therefore be no doubt that the Corporation of Warwick was dominated by a ruling elite of thirteen townsmen who sought to monopolise the political and financial affairs of the town to the exclusion of the rest of the inhabitants.

³⁹⁹ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 334.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁰¹ As stated by the assistant burgess John Grene at a meeting on 16 December 1571: *Ibid.*, p. 57.

This study has attempted to gain a greater understanding of the extent of this 'oligarchic' dominance in Warwick during this period and illuminate how and why factionalism developed over a twenty-six year period. The evidence has shown that the emergence of 'oligarchy' in Warwick was encouraged by the town's incorporation in 1545 and was legitimised by the grant of a second charter in 1554, which empowered a small ruling elite to control all aspects of borough business with minimal input from the wider inhabitants. Contemporary concepts of hierarchy and social status further entrenched 'oligarchic' rule. Contrary to Archer's suggestion that relations between exclusive corporations and citizens were more affable than might be imagined, Warwick's situation is an example of how the existence of a closed 'oligarchic' form of government could cause dissention and heighten conflict between townsmen. The reaction against the oligarchy's autonomy resulted in the fracture of relations between the first and second companies in the 1560s and early 1570s. Antagonism was accentuated by a clash between authoritarian and 'popular' views about how urban politics should be conducted. Fissures began to emerge amongst the first company itself as the principal burgesses fought each other over financial issues. The rise of Richard Brooks as an 'open Enemy' of the Corporation from 1576 onwards provided an outlet for those dissatisfied with 'oligarchic' rule to question the way the 'inner circle' were governing their town and led to further confrontation.⁴⁰² The resulting Inquest of 1583 and the parliamentary dispute of 1586 were the culmination of this schism within the town.

Factionalism, however, was not solely caused by conflict between the 'inner circle' and the 'commoners'. The 'oligarchy' itself was fragmented throughout the period under review and its political dynamics were more complex than scholars tend to assume. Although alliances amongst the 'inner circle' were cemented by wealth, family and friendship connections, these

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 313.

relationships were fluid, malleable and far from stable. Conflict over financial issues ultimately sparked personal animosity between the burgesses and resulted in the development of factionalism within the Corporation which later affected the cohesion of the whole town. Ideas about honour and credit were at the centre of these disputes rather than concerns over religious uniformity. The role of local gentry in these factional squabbles could often accentuate the difficulties rather than overcome them, as we have seen with the Corporation's relations with the earls' officers, although patronage relations could also be congenial, particularly when the Corporation dealt with the earls directly. The Warwick 'oligarchy' was therefore riven by constitutional disagreements, financial tensions and personal animosity and was pressurised by an increasingly disgruntled populace that was willing to support the disaffected principal burgess, Richard Brooks, to petition for greater involvement in borough politics. Authoritarianism could be moderated by flexibility on the part of the 'oligarchs' in some boroughs, as indicated by Archer, who argues that 'power was rather more dispersed in towns than the composition of their councils would suggest, as councillors were dependent on the cooperation of the middling sections of the community to implement their decisions'.⁴⁰³ However, Warwick was an example of what has been seen as a traditional 'oligarchic' model of borough politics re-asserting itself, as the 'oligarchs' reserved civic power for themselves and reacted defensively and aggressively towards any attempt by the inhabitants to reclaim some of this power over the government of the town.

⁴⁰³ Archer, 'Politics and Government', p. 243.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

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- I. 'The Book of John Fisher'
- II. Legal records: Courts of Star Chamber, Chancery and Requests
- III. Probate records

Appendix II: Relative Wealth Table 1550-1586

Following page 108

Data for this table was amalgamated from tax assessments in 'The Book of John Fisher' and subsidy assessments.⁴⁰⁴ The assessments are in goods unless otherwise specified. The tax list for February 1586 only specifies the amount to be paid weekly rather than the assessed values of individuals. The tax list for September 1584 was for the 'taxacion of thinhabitantes of the Borough of warwick towards the furnytur of viii horsemen to be sent into Ireland out of this County of Warr[wick], in the moneth of Septemb[e]r 1584... by precept from Sir Thomas Lucy & mr humfrey peytoe Com[m]iss[ion]e[rs]'.⁴⁰⁵ These values are significantly less than the values in other tax lists because only the amount paid was recorded rather than the assessed values.

Appendix III and IV: Terms of office of principal and assistant burgesses 1554-1590

The terms of office diagrams have been compiled from information scattered throughout the primary source material consulted for this study, particularly the 'Black Book of Warwick', 'The Book of John Fisher' and probate records.⁴⁰⁶ Appendix III and IV cover the period 1554-

⁴⁰⁴ WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588; TNA, E 179/193/186, Subsidy Assessments, 9 April 1550; TNA, E 179/193/190, Subsidy Assessments, 30 January-20 March 1551; TNA, E 179/193/208, Subsidy Assessments, 20 September 1571.

⁴⁰⁵ WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588.

⁴⁰⁶ Kemp, *Black Book*; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588; PROB 11, Wills from the Prerogative Court of

1590 because it is difficult to identify the terms of office pre-1554 and the listing of names of principal and assistant burgesses appears to end in the 'Black Book' around 1590. Appendix IV begins in 1564 because the 'Black Book' does not list the individuals that served as assistant burgesses before this time. Where precise dating is difficult, an approximate indication has been made of when individuals began and/or ended office. Colour coding clearly separates the terms of office of each burgess so they are easier to identify in the table. In Appendix III, grey boxes indicate an individual's length of service as an assistant burgess and terms of bailiwick are indicated by a star symbol. Those individuals that have ONLY served as assistant burgesses are listed in Appendix IV. Please note that ALL the assistant burgesses were disbanded in 1571 and were not reinstated until 1573.

Appendix V: Lines of succession 1560-1590

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This appendix lists the principal burgesses that came to prominence during the period under review and attempts to identify patterns of succession based on patchy information provided by the 'Black Book of Warwick'. Probate records have been utilised to ascertain approximate dates of death and a list of the founding members provided by the 1554 charter has been used as a starting point.⁴⁰⁷

Appendix VI and VII: Data for principal and assistant burgesses 1550-1617

Following page 111

The information used to construct these tables has been obtained from the primary sources that have been utilised for this study, particularly the 'Black Book of Warwick', 'The Book of

Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions; WoCRO, Wills and Administrations Preserved in The Consistory Court of the Bishop of Worcester.

⁴⁰⁷ Kemp, *Black Book*; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714; TNA, PROB 11, Wills from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions; WoCRO, Wills and Administrations Preserved in The Consistory Court of the Bishop of Worcester; WCRO, CR 3891/2, 1 & 2 Phillip and Mary (1554).

John Fisher', probate and legal records.⁴⁰⁸ Those individuals that have ONLY served as an assistant burgess are listed in Appendix VII. Appendices VI and VII cover the years 1550-1617 because the source material that was used to compile these tables spans this year range.

⁴⁰⁸ Kemp, *Black Book*; WCRO, CR1618/W19/6, The Black Book of Warwick MS, 1562-1714; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588; PROB 11, Wills from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions; WoCRO, Wills and Administrations Preserved in The Consistory Court of the Bishop of Worcester; TNA, STAC 5, Court of Star Chamber: Proceedings, Elizabeth I; TNA, C 2, Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings, Series 1, Elizabeth I to Charles I; TNA, REQ 2, Court of Requests: Pleadings; TNA, SP 12, 46, Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I.

Appendix I

I. 'The Book of John Fisher'

'The Book of John Fisher' is a 'large commonplace book' containing judicial, financial, demographic and municipal information between 1580 and 1588 (the latter years of Fisher's townclerkship).⁴⁰⁹ It is primarily concerned with the 'court of record', specifically the bailiff's responsibilities as justice of the peace and Fisher's accounts of the examinations over which the bailiff presided, which comprise the majority of the source. It also contains the bailiff's accounts for the year 1580, presentments, trade regulations, tax lists for the relief of the poor, and an account of the dispute concerning the rectory of Budbrook. Fisher's entries are a lot shorter and more formal than in the 'Black Book' and describe events rather than offer an opinion. Beier has relied on this source for his study on the plight of the urban poor in Warwick during the latter part of the period under review.⁴¹⁰ However, Beier has focused primarily on economic and social issues rather than the municipal disputes of the period. The usefulness of this source is limited for this study but it is still useful for understanding the workings of the local community and the socially elevated role of the bailiff in dispensing local justice. The most useful information provided by this source are the tax lists, which have only been partially transcribed by Kemp.⁴¹¹ It has been necessary to transcribe the tax lists from the original manuscript.⁴¹² These have proved very useful in understanding how wealth may have affected the formation of factions in the town and the areas where the burgesses resided.

⁴⁰⁹ Kingman, 'Markets and Marketing', p. 17; Kemp, *The Book of John Fisher*.

⁴¹⁰ Beier, 'Warwick, 1580-90', p. 79.

⁴¹¹ Kemp, *The Book of John Fisher*, pp. 81-96, 188-194.

⁴¹² WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588.

II. Legal records: Courts of Star Chamber, Chancery and Requests

The bills of complaint, answers and rejoinders highlight the issues that sparked disputes and the reactions to the accusations by the defendants, particularly the arguments made by Phillips and Cawdrey and Richard Brookes against Fisher and their fellow burgesses. In particular, legal documents demonstrate how the burgesses were using the courts as a means of venting disputes in a formal arena, to further progress their argument and shame their adversaries. The documents demonstrate the personal nature of these disputes, for the burgesses commenced their suits against each other in their own names rather than against the Corporation. The burgesses did not appear to have an issue with the concept of a Corporation but rather who was serving on it. The depositions in particular are invaluable for understanding the disputes from the perspectives of not only the burgesses themselves but of the inhabitants at large because they provide their actual accounts about the issues causing division in the town and how far they were drawn in to the disputes. The depositions and the interrogatories therefore provide a more rounded picture of the issues that were deemed to be important. The language used in the documents is also informative for understanding the social structure of the town, for instance, in the use of the title 'master' to describe the principal burgesses of the town and the different classes of inhabitants. The disadvantage of this type of source, however, is that the surviving documentation is disproportionate. For instance, more material survives for the 1570s than the 1580s. In addition, legal documents are very repetitive and often reiterate the information provided by the 'Black Book'.

III. Probate records

Probate records obtained from the National Archives and Worcestershire County Record Office provide information about kinship and friendship networks by providing the names of people put in trust by the testator; executors, overseers, friends acting as legal trustees and beneficiaries to wills. The language used by the testator to describe their relationship with such individuals indicates the strength of the friendship connection between them, for instance, 'my wellbeloved friends...'.⁴¹³ A testator's friendship networks with fellow burgesses and the wider inhabitants can therefore be ascertained by such references. The legacies bequeathed to various individuals can reveal much about the testator's regard for the person, such as the bestowing of gold rings etc. In addition, it has been possible to identify instances of inter-marriage between the families of burgesses through probate records. Wills and inventories can also indicate the wealth of an individual and their financial position around the time of death by describing the land they possessed and the household goods they owned. The 'Visitation of Warwickshire' for 1619 and Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* have assisted in identifying influential family connections in Warwick but only minimally.⁴¹⁴

However, probate records have been disappointing in some respects because not all the wills for the burgesses have survived, such as for John Fisher, Richard Brooks, John Ridgeley and Robert Sheldon, and some wills are more detailed than others, so it is impossible to obtain a complete picture of friendship networks from wills alone. Some wills that were acquired were not for the correct individuals, such as for John Grene, which was referred to by Dyer but appears to be for the wrong individual, as the 'The Book of John Fisher' tax lists show that there

⁴¹³ TNA, PROB 11, Wills from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions; WoCRO, Wills and Administrations Preserved in The Consistory Court of the Bishop of Worcester.

⁴¹⁴ J. Fetherston (ed.), 'The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the year 1619. Taken by William Camden, Clarenceaux king of arms', *Harleian Society*, 12 (London, 1877); W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (2nd edn., London, 1730).

were two John Grenes living in Warwick in the 1580s.⁴¹⁵ In addition, scholars such as Fripp have relied on the 'soul clauses' in wills to identify religious persuasion.⁴¹⁶ There are many pitfalls to adopting this method. Goring has argued that 'it is always difficult to ascertain what people actually believed' and the language used can reflect 'cultural conventions rather than deeply-held convictions'.⁴¹⁷ An analysis of soul clauses for this study has borne this out, for most are standard soul clauses that do not clearly hint at an individual's religious sympathies. As Craig has noted, 'wills can be a maddeningly opaque source for determining religious conviction'.⁴¹⁸ It is therefore doubtful how useful wills are in ascertaining the religious composition of the Corporation. The 'Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council' have proved more useful in this regard.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ Dyer, 'The Corporation of Warwick', p. 28; WCRO, CR1618/W19/1, The Book of John Fisher MS, 1580-1588.

⁴¹⁶ Fripp, *Shakespeare, Man and Artist*, p. 169; L. Fox (ed.), 'Minutes and accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and other records 1553-1620', *Publications of the Dugdale Society*, 5 (London, 1926), pp. 55-56.

⁴¹⁷ J. Goring, *Burn Holy Fire: Religion in Lewes since the Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 30-31.

⁴¹⁸ J. Craig, *Reformation, Politics and Polemics: The Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500-1610* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 80.

⁴¹⁹ Bateson, 'Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council', pp. 7-8.

Appendix V: Lines of Succession of principal burgesses 1560-1590

1560: Richard Oughton died. Possible replacements: Daniel Hayley, William Hill, John Nason.

1561: Humphrey Heath had died by then and was replaced by one of the following: Thomas Barryt, Roger Edgeworth, John Diche, John Fisher, William Hill, John Nason.

1562: Daniel Hayley died and was possibly replaced by Richard Roo.

By 1565, Humphrey Heath, Thomas Martyn, Walter Hayley, John Ray senior, Thomas Roo, Thomas Brooks, Phillip Sheldon and John Staunton had been replaced by John Fisher, Richard Roo, Roger Edgeworth, John Diche, John Nason, Thomas Barrett, William Hill and William Edmondson.

1565: William Frekulton replaced William Edmondson.⁴²⁰

1565: John Diche, Thomas Barret and John Nason were displaced and were replaced by Richard Brooks, Simon Yong, Thomas Powell.⁴²¹

Sunday 19 March 1569/70: Robert Phillips replaced Roger Edgeworth.⁴²²

1 August 1572: Thomas Jenks elected a principal burgess and possibly replaced William Hill.⁴²³

1570: William Hill died and was possibly replaced by Thomas Burgess if not Thomas Jenks.

1571: last reference to Thomas Burgess. Possibly replaced by Humphrey Crane or John Diche.

1573: John Ridgeley replaced Thomas Oken as a principal burgess.

⁴²⁰ Kemp, *Black Book*, p. 7.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 15.

⁴²³ Ibid., p. 75.

1573: John Butler died and may have been replaced by John Diche or Humphrey Crane (John Diche and Humphrey Crane were chosen as principal burgesses on 2 November 1573)⁴²⁴

4 January 1575/6: John Grene replaced Simon Yong (deceased)⁴²⁵

1579: William Hudson died, unclear who replaced him.

18 June 1582: Richard Brooks was replaced by Roger Hurlebutt when the former was expelled.⁴²⁶

1582: Richard Roo died. Possibly replaced by Robert Sheldon (who was first mentioned as a principal burgess in September 1582⁴²⁷)

3 March 1586/7: Henry Chaplin elected as a principal burgess, possibly replacing Humphrey Crane.⁴²⁸

8 October 1586/7: John Hicks elected a principal burgess in the place of the late Henry Chaplin.⁴²⁹

1586: Humphrey Crane died, possible replacements: William Worcester or John Townsend.

29 December 1586: William Worcester elected as a principal burgess⁴³⁰

Last reference to Robert Phillips in 1587, gone by 1590. Possible replacements: John Townsend, William Worcester, William Harmer.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., p. 367.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p. 381.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p. 379.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p. 382.

Last reference to Richard Townsend in 1587, gone by 1590. Possible replacements: John Townsend, William Worcester, William Harmer

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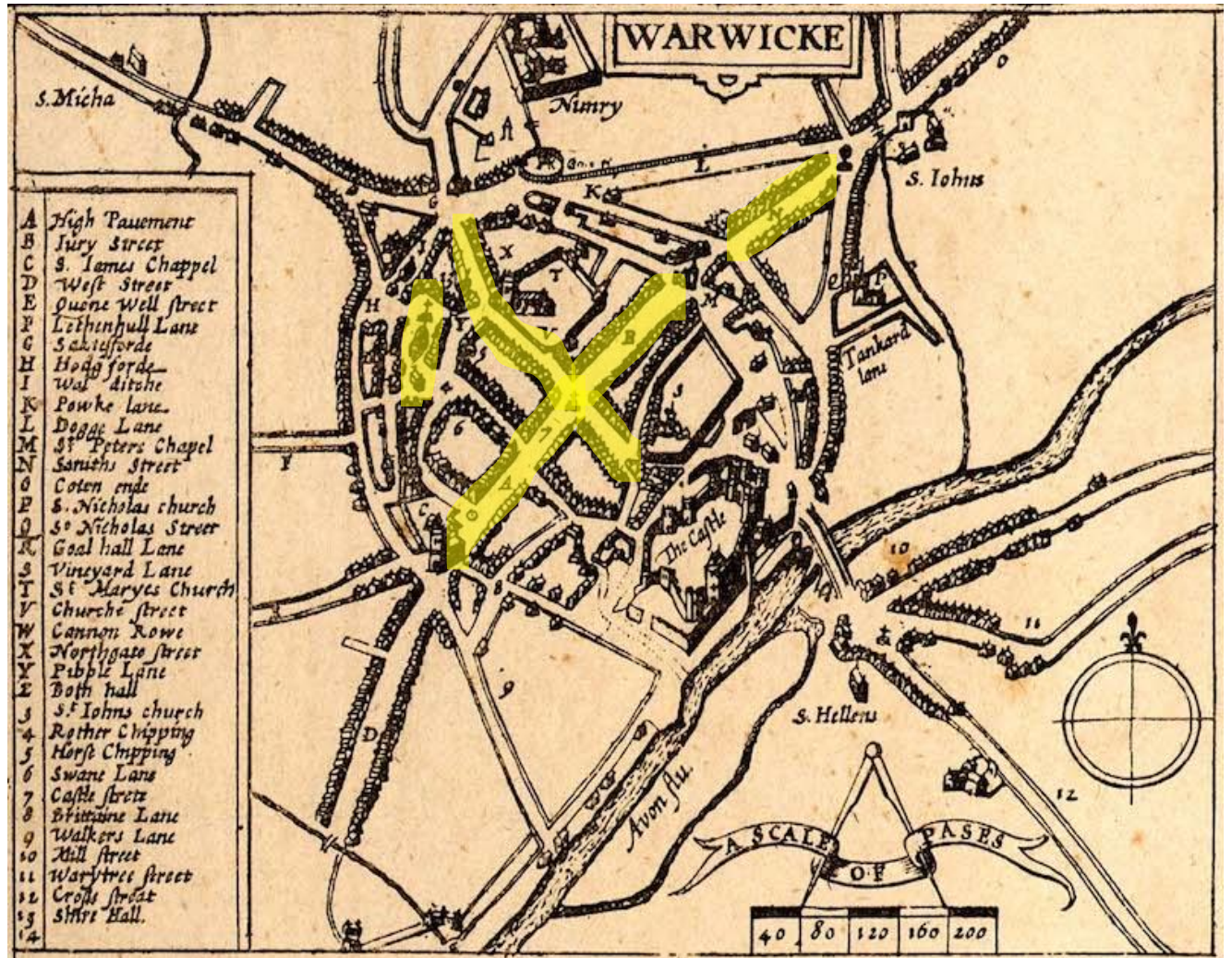
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Map I: John Speed's Map of Warwick, 1610

(The Olde Map Co MCMXCI ©)

Appendix II: Relative Wealth Table

NAME	Position on the Corporation	SUBSIDY ASSESSMENTS			TAX LISTS				
		1550	1551	1571 (only partially legible)	1581 (July)	1582 (February)	1582 (August)	1584 (September)	1586 (August)
John Ray	PB	£15	£16	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
John Butler	PB	NL	£16	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Thomas Roo	PB	£14	£14	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Richard Fisher the elder	PB	£13	£13	£15	£15	12d.	£15	13s. 4d.	£15
Richard Brooks	PB	NL	NL	£12	£12	NL	£12	6s. 8d.	£12
William Worcester	AB/PB	NL	NL	NL	£10 in lands	12d.	£10 in lands	NL	£10 in lands
Thomas Oken	PB	£10	£10	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
William Hudson	PB	£10	£10	£10 in lands	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Thomas Jenks	AB/PB	NL	£12	NL	£8	5s.	£9	NL	£6
Thomas Brook	PB	£12	£12	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Humphrey Heath	PB	£11	£11	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Richard Townsend	PB	£12	NL	£8	£8	NL	£8	6s. 8d.	£7
Richard Roo	PB	NL	NL	£8	£8	NL	NL	NL	NL
Simon Yong	PB	NL	NL	£8	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Thomas Burgess	PB	NL	NL	£5	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Humphrey Crane	AB/PB	NL	NL	£4 in lands	£8	6d.	£8	5s.	NL
John Grene	AB/PB	NL	NL	26s. 8d. in lands	£8	6d.	£8	5s.	£6
Robert Phillips	PB	NL	NL	NL	£8	6d.	£8	3s. 4d.	£6
John Fisher	PB	NL	NL	NL	£8	12d.	£8	5s.	£5
Nicholas Purslowe	AB	NL	NL	40s. in lands	£8	NL	£5	20d.	£5
Phillip Sheldon	PB	NL	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
William Hill	PB	NL	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
William Townsend	AB	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
William Edmondson	PB	NL	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Thomas Marten	PB	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL

Thomas Barrett	PB	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Richard Oughton	PB	£10	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Henry Chaplin	AB/PB	NL	NL	NL	£6	4d.	£6	2s.	£5
Christopher Knight	AB/PB	NL	NL	NL	£6	NL	£6	2s.	£5
Thomas Powell	AB/PB	£10	£10	NL	£6	6d.	£6	5s.	£6
John Ridgeley	AB/PB	NL	NL	40s. in lands	£5	4d.	£8	5s.	£5
Roger Hurlebutt	AB/PB	NL	NL	NL	£5	3d.	£5	3s. 4d.	£5
John Diche	PB	£10	NL	40s. in lands	40s. in lands	3d.	40s. in lands	2s.	40s. in lands
Robert West	AB	NL	NL	20s. in lands	£5	3d.	£5	16d.	£5
William Jenks	AB	NL	NL	NL	£5	2d.	£5	12d.	£5
Thomas Allen	AB	NL	NL	NL	£5	NL	£5	20d.	£5
Barnaby Holbache	AB	NL	NL	NL	£5	3d.	£5	12d.	£5
Thomas Cawdrey	AB	NL	NL	NL	£5	3d.	£5	12d.	£3
Oliver Brook	AB	NL	NL	NL	£5	3d.	£5	12d.	£3
Leonard Holmes	AB	NL	NL	NL	£5	4d.	£5	12d.	NL
Richard Tuskott	AB	NL	£10	NL	£5	1d.	20s. in lands	NL	NL
John Staunton	PB	£10	£10	NL	£4 in lands	NL	NL	NL	NL
Thomas Shotteswell	AB	£10	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Thomas Grene	AB	NL	NL	NL	£4	3d.	£4	12d.	£4
Richard Fisher the younger	AB	NL	NL	NL	£4	3d.	£4	12d.	£3
John Hicks	AB/PB	NL	NL	20s. in lands	£4	3d.	£4	2s.	£3
Richard Heynes	AB	NL	NL	NL	£4	NL	20s. in lands	NL	NL
Roger Weale	AB	NL	NL	NL	£3	NL	NL	NL	NL
John Weale	AB	NL	NL	20s. in lands	£3	1d.	£3	12d.	£3
William Frekulton	PB	£26	£26	£3 8s. in lands	40s. in lands	4d.	40s.	3s. 4d.	NL
Thomas Staunton	AB	NL	NL	£3 in lands	£4 in lands	4d.	£4 in lands	NL	NL
Robert Sheldon	AB/PB	NL	NL	NL	40s. in lands	4d.	40s. in lands	3s. 4d.	40s. in lands
Thomas Chapman	AB	NL	NL	NL	£3	3d.	£3	12d.	£3

William Loson	AB	NL	NL	NL	£3	2d.	£3	12d.	£3
William Harmer	PB	NL	NL	NL	£3	2d.	£3	12d.	£3
Thomas Saunders	AB	NL	NL	NL	£2 in lands	2d.	£3 in lands	12d.	£3 in lands
John Weale the younger	?	NL	NL	NL	NL	1d.	£3	NL	£3
William Roo	AB	NL	NL	NL	NL	1d.	£3	12d.	£3
John Townsend	PB	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	£3
Phillip Coo	AB	NL	NL	20s. in lands	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
Alexander Rogers	AB	NL	NL	NL	NL	1d.	NL	NL	20s. in lands
William Saunders	AB	NL	NL	NL	NL	1d.	NL	NL	NL
Henry Bird	AB	NL	NL	NL	NL	1d.	NL	NL	NL
John Bykar	AB	NL	NL	NL	NL	1d.	NL	NL	NL

APPENDIX IV: TERMS OF OFFICE OF ASSISTANT BURGESSES SERVING ON THE CORPORATION OF WARWICK 1564-1586

		1564	1565	1566	1567	1568	1569	1570	1571	1572	1573	1574	1575	1576	1577	1578	1579	1580	1581	1582	1583	
Allen	Thomas							Dark Blue	Dark Blue		Dark Blue											
Bailies	John							Yellow	Yellow		Yellow											
Beawfoo	Thomas	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue														
Bewford	Baldwin	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red													
Birde	Henry	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple														
Brook	Oliver							Light Green	Light Green		Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
Bykar	John	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow		Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Cawdrey	Thomas	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue													
Chandes	William								Red													
Chapman	Thomas							Light Green	Light Green		Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple
Coo	Phillip							Blue	Blue		Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue								
Diche	Thomas	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow														
Fisher	Richard the younger																				Red	
Grene	Thomas																				Green	Green
Griffin	John	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple		Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple
Heynes	Richard							Yellow	Yellow													
Holbach	Barnaby																				Dark Blue	Dark Blue
Holmes	Leonard														Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Hurlebutt	Bar								Light Green													
Hyckes	John							Green	Green						Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Jenks	William																				Yellow	
Loson	William																					
Martlyn	William	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue														
Purslowe	Nicholas							Purple	Purple													
Ray	John	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow														
Rogers	Alexander																					
Roo	William																					
Saunders	Thomas																					
Saunders	William							Light Blue	Light Blue													
Shoteswell	Thomas							Blue	Blue													
Staunton	Thomas							Purple	Purple													
Stevyns	William	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow														
Thownders	William	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue														
Townsend	William	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red														
Tuskott	Richard	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue													
Weale	John																					Light Green
Weale	Roger	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple		Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple
West	Robert																				Yellow	

APPENDIX VI: DATA TABLE FOR PRINCIPAL BURGESSES 1550-1586

Name		Occupation/positions held	Place of Residence 1550-1586
Barryt	Thomas		Market Place
Brookes	Richard	Yeoman/gent/miller	Beyond the Bridge (Temple Fields)/Bridge End ward
Brookes	Thomas		
Burges	Thomas		
Butler	John (d. by 19 February 1573/4)	Servant to the earls of Warwick and Leicester	High Pavement
Byworth	Roger		
Chaplin	Henry (b. 1536)	Woolen draper	Jury
Crane	Humphrey (b. 1525, d. by 18 May 1586)	Mercer/gent/linen draper	Market Place/Church Street
Diche	John	Yeoman	Market Place
Diche	John jr (d. 1595)		Market Place
Edgeworth	Roger		
Edmondson	William		High Pavement
Fisher	John (b. 1528/1533)	Gent/lawyer/yeoman/steward, burgess for parliament 1571-1587, worked for the earl of Leicester	Market Place/Church Street
Fisher	Richard (b. 1517, d. by 5 February 1593/4)	Gent	Market Place/Church Street
Frekulton	William (b. 1536/1539)	Gent/yeoman	Market Place/High Pavement
Grene	John (b. 1533)	Inn keeper/gent	High Pavement
Heath	Humphrey (d. by 1561)	Baker	Market Place
Heyley	Daniel (d. late 1562)		
Heyley	Walter		Jury
Hill	William (d. by 27 October 1570)	Gent	
Hudson	William (d. by 5 December 1579)	Gent	Castle Street
Hurlebutt	Roger (d. by 1602)	Gent	Jury
Hyckes	John	Baker	Castle Street
Jenks	Thomas (d. by 30 October 1590)	Gent/yeoman	High Pavement/Market Place
Knight	Christopher (b. 1536, d. by 26 January 1596/7)	Gent/husbandman	Smith Street ward
Martyn	Thomas	Gentleman	Market Place
Nason	John		
Oken	Thomas	Mercer	High Pavement
Oughton	Richard		Market Place
Phillips	Robert	Linen draper/gent	High Pavement
Powell	Thomas (b. 1511, d. 30 April 1598-1603)	Linen Draper/reeve of Ambrose Dudley earl of Warwick in the mid 1580s	High Pavement
Ray	John Sr		
Ridgeley	John (b. 1526)	Gent	Castle Street
Roo	Richard (d. by 29 May 1582)	Butcher	
Roo	Thomas		High Pavement
Sheldon	Phillip		Jury
Sheldon	Robert	Lawyer/yeoman	Market Place
Staunton	John		
Townsend	John	Constable of the Market Place in 1586	Market Place
Townsend	Rafe		
Townsend	Richard	Yeoman	Smith Street
Harmar	William		
Whood	John	Yeoman	
Worcester	William (b. 1525)	Gent/yeoman	Market Place/Northgate Street
Yong	Simon (d. by 8 February 1575/6)	Draper	

APPENDIX VII: DATA TABLE FOR ASSISTANT BURGESSES 1550-1586

	Name	Occupation/positions held	Place of Residence 1550-1586
Allen	Thomas (b. 1536)	Dyer	Smith Street ward
Bailies	John		
Beawfoo	Thomas		
Bewford	Baldwin		Jury
Birde	Henry	Constable of Jury ward 1586	Jury
Brook	Oliver (b. 1539)	Woolen draper	Market Place/Church Street
Bykar	John		Market Place/Northgate Street
Cawdrey	Thomas	Cook	High Pavement
Chandes	William		High Pavement
Chapman	Thomas		High Pavement
Coo	Phillip (b. 1538, d. by 22 July 1617)	Yeoman	
Diche	Thomas (d. by 1565)	Butcher	
Fisher	Richard the younger	Mercer	Castle Street
Grene	Thomas (b. 1543, d. by 7 August 1591)	Mercer	High Pavement
Griffin	John		
Heynes	Richard		
Holbach	Barnaby		Smith Street
Holmes	Leonard (b. 1546)	Yeoman	High Pavement
Hurlebutt	Bar		
Jenks	William (b. 1539)		Market Place
Loson	William		High Pavement
Martlyn	William		Market Place

Purflowe	Nicholas		Smith Street
Ray	John		
Rogers	Alexander		West Street
Roo	William	Butcher	Market Place/Smith Street
Saunders	Thomas (b. 1546/1549)	Mercer/yeoman	High Pavement
Saunders	William		Castle Street
Shoteswell	Thomas (d. around 1575)	Landowner	Smith Street
Staunton	Thomas (b. 1537)		
Stevyns	William		Market Place
Thownders	William		
Townsend	William		Smith Street
Tuskott	Richard (d. by 18 June 1579)	Yeoman	Market Place
Weale	John	Glasier	Market Place
Weale	Roger		
West	Robert	Baker	Jury