CHAPTER 2

The English challenge, 1361–1399

The legal foundation of the privileges enjoyed by the German Hanse in England in the later middle ages was completed in 1317. Negotiations after that were concerned with the interpretation of existing charters in the light of changing political and commercial circumstances. Constant vigilance was needed by the merchants to protect earlier gains. The franchises were the fruit of direct bargaining between the crown and the resident Hanse community, with considerable sums of money changing hands at critical times. The community was autonomous and in these matters may have acted completely independently of the home towns of its members, though there is no sure proof of that. It is more certain that the crown did not negotiate directly with the towns. Occasionally the king wrote to individual towns demanding redress for his subjects alleged to have been injured by their citizens. The formulae used do not differ from those found in letters addressed to Flemish towns about similar matters. They give no indication that the English government was at this time aware of the German towns being part of any association. Until a relatively late date the Hanse merchants in England continued to negotiate without external assistance or interference, possibly because they preferred it that way. As late as the 1360s they were able unaided to vindicate their claim to immunity from the export duty upon English cloth introduced in 1347. A decade later the merchants invoked the assistance of the Hanse diet in another dispute about taxation. Significantly, perhaps, this followed hard upon the heels of the treaty of Stralsund, 1370, which successfully concluded a contest with Denmark, and which has been hailed by some Hanseatic historians as one of the most important events in the transition of the Hanse.[1] After the diet's first

[1] D. J. Bjork, 'The Peace of Stralsund, 1370', *Speculum*, 7 (1932), 447–76.

intervention there was no turning back. The London Gildhall was no longer regarded as fully competent to treat with the crown. The English now appreciated that ultimate authority resided in the diet, though it soon became clear that in the case of the Prussian towns parallel or separate diplomacy might be necessary, since in this quarter the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order had the final word.[2]

The first direct contact between the English government and the diet was occasioned by the levy of tunnage and poundage which began in October 1371 and continued with only a short break until Christmas 1375. Notwithstanding the fact that the dispute about cloth duties had been settled in favour of the Hanse, its members were required to pay tunnage and poundage when it was reintroduced. The London *Kontor*[3] complained to the diet which met at Lübeck in May 1373 and again just over a year later. In June 1375, after written representation had been disregarded, the diet resolved that two ambassadors, whom it had sent to Flanders, should go on to England to put its case more forcefully. They arrived in London in November and presented their demands to the king's council, which parried with its own list of grievances voiced by English merchants. The ambassadors asserted that they had no power to deal with counter-complaints and that any Englishmen seeking redress should attend the next session of the diet. This prevented meaningful negotiations, though the meetings ended

[2] The first Hanse embassy to England (1375) formally represented the 'High Master of Prussia, the common cities and all the merchants of the Hanse of Germany' ('Monsiour le haut mestre de Pruys, de par les communes citees et touz les marchants del hans d'Alemaigne'; 'De hoghen meester van Prussen, van den ghemeenen citeden ende allen den coopmannen van der anse van Alemaignen'): *HR*, I (iii), no. 317.

[3] The Hanse communities in England are frequently personified by the terms *Kontor* (plural *Kontore*) or Steelyard. These are often used anachronistically, simply for convenience. The former is a general term which can be applied to an organised Hanse community anywhere in Europe. The latter is the name of the London factory or headquarters, which is first found in the late fourteenth century, but does not become common until much later. Use of the word Gildhall tends to disappear, but makes a partial comeback in the late fifteenth century. Much has been written about the derivation of the word Steelyard and its physical relationship to the Gildhall. The factories at Boston and Lynn are sometimes referred to as Steelyards at the end of the fifteenth century. W. Kurzinna, 'Der Name Stahlhof', *HG*, 18 (1912), 429–61. M. Weinbaum, 'Stahlhof und Deutsche Gildhalle zu London', *HG* (1928), 45–65. In their outward letters the London merchants came to follow the common European practice of referring to themselves as 'the alderman and common merchant'. The earliest surviving example (20 June 1374) is in an extended form, 'By deme aldermanne unde deme ghemeynen copmanne van der Dussche hense van Almanien op der tiit to Londen wesende.' In the next surviving letter (10 April 1378) the redundant words 'van Almanien' were omitted. *HR*, I (ii), no. 99; (iii), no. 102.

amicably and the ambassadors were presented with relics of St Thomas of Canterbury, in whose honour there was a chapel near one of the city gates of Lübeck. The king also issued a general letter of protection in favour of Hanse merchants for twelve months.[4]

The council refused to free the Hansards from tunnage and poundage on the grounds that it had legitimately been granted by parliament, that it was a wartime tax levied solely for the protection of commerce and that it was paid by denizens as well as aliens. The logic of the last argument was, of course, flawed by the fact that the Hanse franchises already ensured that they paid a lower rate of cloth duty than denizens. Besides the matter of tunnage and poundage the ambassadors also submitted a number of other complaints about alleged abuses of customs procedure. Briefly, these related to certain imposts on exported wool in addition to custom and subsidy, disregard of accepted practice for valuing merchandise, illegal charges for certain types of cocket letters, the double levying of poundage on a ship at Boston, the levying of an incremental duty on certain cloths of assise (those more than 24 yards long but shorter than 32 yards) and attempts to charge duty on the cargoes of ships driven to take shelter in English harbours but not wishing to unload there. The first four points were summarily dismissed by the council, but the remaining two were referred to a great council or parliament. In the matter of the cloth lengths this yielded the ambiguous reply that customs officers were under orders to honour Hanse franchises. The other decision was that storm-driven ships should pay customs duties on the spot unless they were able to find security to pay in another English port or to take their goods entirely away from England. There is independent evidence that the crown did not in fact sanction attempts to exact payment from ships which had no intention of discharging in England.[5] As well as these charges against the king's ministers, two general charges were laid against his subjects: one alleging disregard of Chancery writs ordering recognition of Hanse franchises, the other that the city of London obstructed retail sales by Rhenish wine merchants. Finally, the ambassadors raised five cases in which Germans were alleged to have been denied justice in England. Three of these were simply wrangles about titles to property, but the others cited attacks upon ships which involved loss of life.[6]

The matters raised by the ambassadors suggest that, while the

[4] *HR*, 1 (ii), nos. 99–103; (iii), no. 68. *HUB*, 4, nos. 469, 520, 526. *CPR*, 1374–7, p. 194.
[5] *CCR*, 1369–74, p. 10. [6] *HR*, 1 (iii), no. 317.

Hansards were aggrieved, their dissatisfaction fell short of anything that might have caused them to break off trade. They are, in fact, less significant in the development of relations between the two sides than the English counter-complaints.[7] During the reign of Edward III the main threat to Hanse liberties had been the crown itself. We hear comparatively little about hostility from English merchants and urban communities. However, ill-feeling undoubtedly existed and should the crown decide to mobilise it to counter Hanse resistance to taxation then the latter might find themselves in serious trouble. The conjunction of interests came in 1375, when the ambassadors' charges were met with a catalogue of grievances and demands submitted by English merchants. With the exception of a complaint by John Ward, one-time mayor of London, that in 1365 his apprentice had been forced to pay double duty on battery purchased in Dinant, all the English charges relate to northern trade and resulted from the war fought by the Hanse against Denmark and Norway (1368–70). The most serious allegation was that in 1367–8 the King of Norway expelled the German merchants from their staple at Bergen and allowed the English to take their place; after some four years the Germans returned, attacked the Englishmen and drove them away, causing losses estimated at more than 10,000 marks. The facts are that German merchants began to be harassed by the kings of Norway and Denmark in 1366 and evacuated Bergen hurriedly in the spring of 1368, after being warned that a fleet from the Zuider Zee towns of the Hanse was about to attack Norway. In their haste they left their property behind, which was confiscated by the King of Norway. To make matters worse they had to pay an exorbitant sum to the English and Flemish skippers who carried them to safety. The Germans began to return to Norway in the early 1370s during a series of truces, which were converted into a firm peace in 1376. The peace treaty formally confirmed the Hanse privileges, which gave them a stranglehold on Norway's overseas trade. By this time the English had in their turn been expelled, though this must have been after February 1372, when the Hanse merchants in Bergen reported to Lübeck that there were still many Englishmen in the town.[8] They also complained that the Englishmen had been allowed to charter a great cog at Wismar to take goods to Bergen. As a result, or possibly before then, the Hanse seems to have forbidden its members to carry Englishmen's goods, since this was

[7] *Ibid.*, nos. 318–19.

[8] *HUB*, 4, nos. 257, 412.

one of the complaints made in 1375. Another grievance was that English merchants had no claim to salvaged goods in Eastland, these still being regarded as a perquisite of the lord of the soil on which they were wrecked. It was only in the Peace of Stralsund (May 1370) that the Hanse managed to get recognition of the right of salvage for its own members. The English were resentful that this had not yet been extended to them, since a more civilised custom had long been allowed to all merchants in their country. A further general claim was that, as German merchants were free to trade throughout England, Englishmen should be allowed to trade in all Hanse towns and their environs. Besides Norway, English enterprise had recently suffered a severe check in Skania, the southern province of Sweden, hotly disputed between the king of that country and the King of Denmark. The autumn fairs of Skania not only supplied vast amounts of herrings, but also provided an important market for west-European cloth, which was redistributed over a wide area of eastern Europe. Their attraction for English merchants is obvious. Until 1368 a fairly liberal regime had prevailed in the fairs, but in that year the Hanse gained control of the province and the King of Sweden conferred upon it extensive privileges, which were later confirmed in the Peace of Stralsund. In February 1370 a Hanse diet ruled that English, Welsh and Scottish merchants should no longer be allowed to purchase fresh herrings and salt them themselves. They were permitted to buy salted herrings, though in the first season of the new regime a number of those who did so complained that consignments paid for were not delivered. This was in the autumn of 1370, and when the English parliament met in February 1371 the king was asked to intercede on behalf of his subjects. It was said that the chief purpose of the Hanse was to prevent the English from selling cloth in Skania. The latter did not usually take cash there, but relied upon the proceeds of their sales to finance purchase of herrings. Edward III duly complained to Rostock, Lübeck and perhaps other towns, but the replies gave little hope of satisfaction.[9]

The programme of the English merchants was ill-defined in 1375, but this was characteristic of all their demands in the late fourteenth century and it did not follow that the Hanse could afford simply to ignore it. For the moment, however, the demand for reciprocity was perhaps less of a threat to the Hanse than anti-alien sentiment in

[9] *Ibid.*, nos. 378, 387, 393, 421. *Rot. Parl.*, 2, p. 306.

England. Of course, this was not new and was not directed solely against the Hanse, but it seems to have intensified in the later years of Edward III's reign, during which there was a tremendous growth in alien trade. Although increasingly concentrated at London, alien trade, consisting overwhelmingly of imports, was not necessarily welcomed by the citizens. The total population of England was declining, so that scope for expansion of imports must have been limited and alien growth may have been at the expense of denizen trade. It is significant, perhaps, that in 1354 John Malewayn refused to accept guardianship of a London orphan on conditions which required him to trade with the boy's inheritance, since he claimed that English merchants were not making the same profit as in former times. More was involved than merely the import of goods, for the citizens of enfranchised towns, particularly London, were concerned about how aliens sold them after they had been cleared by the customs officers. Londoners were reluctant to accept that aliens should enjoy freedom of trade, even after their right had been confirmed by parliament. In 1353 and 1356 they pleaded that the city should be absolved from observing the offensive statutes of 1335 and 1351.[10]

The late 1360s saw the beginning of a new campaign against alien participation in internal trade. In May 1368 London petitioned parliament about the loss of its franchises which had debarred non-freemen from retail business. It requested that once more all retailing should be confined to freemen, and that aliens should not sell to other aliens for resale (*pur revendre*). The response was ambiguous. As an act of special grace it was conceded that retail sales of victuals should be limited to freemen, but only in London and only until the next parliament; moreover, this was not to prejudice any aliens who had their own charter or franchises. The concession was evidently accompanied by a writ ordering proclamation of the fact that aliens might sell by retail any non-victuals, but in July 1368 the London sheriffs refused to publish the proclamation.[11] The act was not renewed in the parliament of 1369, so the legal ban on alien victuallers lapsed. In February 1371 the commons requested the restoration of the ancient privileges of towns, on the grounds that this would prevent the decay of trade and the navy. The crown replied that the request was too general, but that

[10] *Letter Book* G, pp. 15, 39, 52.

[11] *Rot. Parl.*, 2, p. 296. *Letter Book* G, p. 231.

if they supplied details of their grievances a remedy would be provided. Similar petitions were submitted in the parliaments of 1372 and 1373 and the same evasive answer given.[12] Absence of crown support did not, of course, prevent Englishmen from continuing to harass aliens, and one of the Hanse complaints in 1375 was that its wine merchants were prevented from retailing wine in London.[13] The Good Parliament (April to July 1376) had much to say about financial and commercial malpractices on the part of some supporters of the crown, but there is no evidence that it raised the question of alien trade.[14] Nevertheless, in the following winter the court party, now beginning to re-establish its power, made a concession to anti-alien interests. On 4 December, in response to a petition from the city, the London sheriffs were ordered to proclaim that foreigners should not engage in retail trade nor trade between themselves for resale until the matter had been discussed by the next parliament. Saving clauses were inserted that lords could buy large amounts for their own use and that all the liberties of the German Hanse should be respected.[15] When the last parliament of Edward III assembled in January this letter patent was copied on to the parliament roll, presumably as a record of the fact that the royal proclamation had been confirmed in parliament.[16]

The death of Edward III in June 1377 threw the liberties of the Hanse and all other aliens into the melting pot. It was advisable, to say the least, that all who wished to continue to enjoy established liberties should have them confirmed by the new king as soon as possible. The meeting of parliament (October–November 1377) provided an occasion for interested parties to lobby to have their own franchises confirmed and those of their opponents cancelled. The commons in parliament petitioned for the confirmation of the franchises of all English cities and boroughs, to which the crown sensibly replied that their charters would first have to be examined in the Chancery. A similar request by the city of London produced the answer that the king's council would need to consider what franchises were claimed. More satisfying answers were given to a commons plea that aliens should not be allowed to keep hostels and the renewed London cry that they should not trade between themselves. These were conceded, although in each case a rider was added saving the rights of the king's lieges of Gascony. A further

[12] *Rot. Parl.*, 2, pp. 306, 314, 318.
[13] See also *CPMR*, 1, p. 151.
[14] G. Holmes, *The Good Parliament* (Oxford, 1975), *passim*.
[15] *Letter Book* H, p. 53. *CPR*, 1374–7, p. 389.
[16] *Rot. Parl.*, 2, p. 367.

petition, claiming to come from the community of English merchants, called upon the crown not to confirm the Hanse privileges as the latter were now asking. However, on 6 November 1377 these privileges were confirmed in the form of the *Carta Mercatoria* of 1303 and Edward III's 1327 ratification of his father's charter of 1317.[17] Within a short time they had been suspended and, although the exact date cannot be determined, it was certainly before 10 April 1378, when London put into effect sweeping anti-alien measures and the *Kontor* wrote to Lübeck describing these and reporting that the king's council had suspended its charter. The council seems to have acted because of a renewed complaint by English merchants about obstacles to their trade in Norway and Skania. It was claimed that the whole country was damaged by a Hanse monopoly, which raised the prices of imports from those places.[18]

The suspension had a twofold effect upon the *Kontor*. On the one hand, it could not plead immunity from the new anti-alien measures in London, which went beyond those sanctioned by parliament the previous autumn. Each of the principal city mysteries was ordered to appoint searchers to ensure that all strangers should board with freemen, that they should not engage in retail trade nor trade among themselves, and that they must dispose of imports within forty days of arrival. On the other hand, the royal customs collectors, either on their own initiative or upon instructions from the Exchequer, began to demand both the 1303 and the 1347 duties on exported cloth. Lübeck referred the complaint of the London *Kontor* to the Prussian towns and to the diet then about to assemble at Stralsund. In consequence, both the diet and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order wrote to Richard II and to the city of London threatening a trade boycott unless the franchises were restored and the merchants compensated. The Londoners artlessly replied that the matter lay with king and parliament, while the king's council also answered that nothing could be resolved until parliament met. In fact, the situation had relaxed slightly even before the protest of the diet had been dispatched. On 20 May the Chancery had instructed customs officials that for the present they were not to collect the 1347 cloth duty, but were to take security for it to be paid should the council decide against the merchants.[19]

[17] *Rot. Parl.*, pp. 16–17, 27–8. *CPR*, 1377–81, p. 57.
[18] *Letter Book* H, pp. 90–1, 101. *HR*, 1 (iii), nos. 102–3. *HUB*, 4, no. 600.
[19] *CCR*, 1377–8, p. 61. *HR*, 1 (ii), nos. 159–64. *Letter Book* H, p. 101.

The parliament which sat at Gloucester in October and November 1378 has generally been regarded by historians as one which looked favourably upon aliens. The usual explanation is that the country at large was reacting against sacrifices demanded of it in the interests of merchants trading overseas and of towns such as London. This interpretation is hardly borne out by the evidence. A short petition from the commons asking for free trade for aliens met with a very long, but guarded, response which was incorporated in a statute.[20] The king recognised the utility of alien merchants to the realm, welcomed their activity, extended protection to them during a stay of unlimited duration and promised immediate redress of injuries. However, on the matters in dispute they were given only partial satisfaction. It was agreed that victuals and goods classed as small wares might be sold by retail as well as in gross, both within and without enfranchised boroughs. But in boroughs wine and other great wares might be sold only in gross, and then only to freemen of the place and not to others. This statutory definition of the rights of alien merchants left them considerably worse off than they had been in the reign of Edward III. Little had been gained except a slight curb upon the excessive zeal which London had used against aliens during the course of the year. The notion of English disunity in this parliament is discounted by the response to the Hanse petition asking for the restoration of their privileges.[21] They were informed that they would be allowed to trade in England provided that they obtained permission for English merchants to trade freely in their country; moreover, they were not to act against English interests in other places, such as Denmark and Norway. Unless by the following Michaelmas they produced letters to this effect sealed both by the Hanse towns and territorial princes, such as the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, their own privileges in England would be abolished. This was the first expression by the crown in parliament of the principle that henceforth Hanse privileges ought to depend on the enjoyment of similar rights by English merchants in northern and eastern Europe.

The English were actually more united in their resolve than the Hansards at this time, for, while the Prussians favoured a hard line and demanded the restoration of the privileges without conceding anything in return, the rest of the Hanse was more conciliatory. The

[20] *Rot. Parl.*, 3, pp. 47–8. *Stats.*, 2, pp. 7–8.

[21] *Rot. Parl.*, 3, p. 52.

other towns worked together to restrain the Prussians from taking precipitate action against English interests, and Lübeck attempted to set up a conference to discuss the crisis in the autumn and winter of 1378–9, but the Prussians refused to attend. The Prussian towns persuaded the Grand Master of the Order not to take unilateral action, but during the course of their own diet at Marienburg in April 1379 they received a report of English attacks upon their ships in Flanders. They decided, therefore, that at the next meeting of the Hanse diet they would press for a complete break in relations with England until the latter gave way.[22] When this diet met at Lübeck on 24 June 1379 it rejected the demand for an immediate break, but prepared a plan which was to be put into effect if diplomatic efforts did not bring about a settlement by Shrovetide 1380. This would have brought trade between the two communities almost completely to a halt.[23] Michaelmas 1379 came and went without the English getting the assurances they had demanded as a condition of continuing the privileges of the *Kontor*. However, on 9 October the Chancellor wrote to certain towns saying that England desired amicable relations and urged them to work to this end. As a result of this and a further appeal from the London *Kontor* the Hanse diet authorised two ambassadors visiting Flanders to go on to England. They arrived in London on 21 November 1379 and four days later had the first of a series of discussions with members of the king's council and officials of the city of London. The talks with Londoners were acrimonious, since they attempted to raise matters which lay outside the ambassadors' competence, and thereafter negotiations continued with only the councillors.[24]

It was virtually impossible for the talks to bear fruit since the ambassadors were empowered only to deliver replies to four English demands which had been considered by the diet in June.[25] The first was that English merchants should be free to trade in Reval, Pernow and Livonia and all other regions within the jurisdiction of the Hanse towns or of 'any who were generally of their society'. In all these places Englishmen ought to enjoy whatever rights the Hansards exercised in England. The Hanse answered that it could not give such an undertaking, since its members had no jurisdiction in the greater part of this area, which was subject to different temporal and ecclesiastical rulers. Moreover, it was pointed out, Englishmen had

[22] *HR*, I (ii), no. 174; (iii), nos. 113, 116, 118, 122. *HUB*, 4, no. 651.
[23] *HR*, I (ii), no. 190. [24] *Ibid.*, nos. 210–11. [25] *Ibid.*, nos. 212–13.

never before traded in most of these places. The second demand was that Englishmen should have the right to buy, salt and barrel herrings in Skania, taking them thence wherever they wished without discriminatory taxation. This was rejected on the grounds that the sovereignty of Skania was shared with Denmark. Thirdly, it was requested that English merchants and their property should not be arrested in the lands of the Hanse, save for personal debts and trespasses. This was countered by the claim that Hanse merchants did not enjoy such immunity in England. In fact, while the ambassadors cited arrests in London in 1378, the principle at stake was one of the most valuable immunities won by the Hanse from Edward II. The final demand was that all places which were members of the Hanse should be certified to the English authorities. The answer, that this was simply not possible, might have seemed reasonable to those who gave it, but clearly would not satisfy the English government, which was reluctant to allow aliens to enjoy privileges merely on the strength of their own word that they were merchants of the Hanse. After this exchange it was suggested to the ambassadors that the Hanse charter should be restored with a codicil recognising the rights of Englishmen to trade in Norway, Skania and areas governed by the Hanse. This offer they rejected, as they did an invitation to remain in England to await the deliberations of parliament, which was due to meet in January 1380. By Christmas they had returned to Bruges and the dispute was still unresolved, although each side may have gained a better understanding of the other's position.

When parliament assembled, the *Kontor* submitted two petitions; one asked for a decision about the restoration of its charters; the other complained about the reimposition of tunnage and poundage.[26] The latter also instanced five cases of alleged denial of justice to German merchants, although only one was new, the remainder having already been complained of by the ambassadors who came to England in 1375. The English merchants presented a counter-petition, requesting that the Hanse privileges should not be restored unless their own demand for freedom of trade was conceded.[27] The upshot was that the *Kontor* was asked to set its seal to a bill identical to that which the ambassadors had refused to allow to be attached to the charters.[28] Answer was given that not only did it lack the

[26] *HUB*, 4, nos. 671–2. [27] *Ibid.*, no. 647. [28] *Ibid.*, no. 673.

authority, but also that such a step was unnecessary since even without formal guarantees the English already enjoyed greater freedom of trade in Hanse towns than the ostensibly privileged Germans did in England. However, as a good-will gesture the *Kontor* offered to intercede on behalf of its rivals at the next meeting of the diet. In February 1380 the Prussian towns reported that they had persuaded the Grand Master not to take any action against Englishmen until Easter 1381.[29]

When the diet met in June 1380 it decided to give the Englishmen some form of reassurance, with the result that on 23 September 1380 the charter of Hanse liberties was conditionally restored to representatives of the *Kontor* in London. The diet did not concede the four points which had been communicated to it the year before, nor even the watered-down version which was subsequently put forward. All that the English obtained was a statement that they should trade as freely 'in partibus ipsorum mercatorum Alemannorum' as the Germans did in England. No specific privileges were described and all references to Norway, Skania and other places had been deleted. Whether this represented any sort of victory for English merchants is debatable. They appear to have gained nothing that they did not have before, while the guarantee was worded so vaguely that it could not provide authority for settling any dispute which might arise in future about English trade in the north. The return of their charter was hardly a triumph for the Hansards, since it merely restored the *status quo* and left many points still in contention. A few days later the Chancery ordered that the mainpernors for payment of double duty upon cloth exports be released, since the council had ruled in favour of the Hanse. The point seemed to have been even more firmly established in February 1381, when the king formally ratified Edward III's concession of 8 February 1361.[30] However, within a very short time customs officials, despite the merchants' protests, were disregarding this franchise and converting strait cloths and short pieces into notional cloths of assise, upon which they levied 1s instead of the *ad valorem* duty of 3d in the pound. Furthermore, in May 1382 a new parliamentary grant of tunnage and poundage began to be collected and the Hansards again submitted a claim to immunity, but in November the council decided against them and the tax was levied retrospectively.[31] Customs collectors also began to

[29] *HR*, 1 (iii), no. 125. [30] *HR*, 1 (ii), nos. 224–5. *CPR*, 1377–81, p. 57.
[31] *CCR*, 1377–81, pp. 401, 407; 1381–5, pp. 174, 192. *HUB*, 4, no. 762.

harass Hanse merchants to pay a second duty on imported goods which, having failed to sell in England, were re-exported; such double collection of tax was forbidden by the *Carta Mercatoria*. About 1384, Christian Kelmar of Dortmund, who had been alderman of the London *Kontor* as recently as 1383, handed over 3s 1½d when he re-exported a pack of ermine skins.[32] His defence, that he had sworn that this submission should not prejudice the rights of his fellows, naturally cut no ice with them and he was expelled from the *Kontor*. In compensation, he was first granted citizenship by the authorities of London and then denizenship by the crown. He continued to be black-balled by the Hanse and lost many of his overseas contacts, so that ten years later he sued them in an English court for £1,000 damages. Continuing hostility from English communities made it dangerous for the Hanse to resist the crown too strenuously. Several towns tried to levy local tolls upon the merchants and in 1384 London revived the claim, first advanced in the reign of Edward I, that their immunity ought to apply only to goods imported from their homeland and not to other commodities, such as Bay salt and Gascon wine.[33] On this occasion the London claim was disallowed, but should the king decide to lend his support then the Hanse would be in trouble.

Local harassment was not confined to one side and in 1384 the Prussians decreed that English merchants must henceforth import their wares only through Elbing. Since Danzig was far more convenient to them, the English saw this as a deliberate attempt to throttle their trade and induced the king to make a formal protest to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. Nevertheless, it was neither taxation nor trading rights but allegations of piracy which acted as the catalyst of the next crisis in Anglo-Hanseatic relations. As early as January 1382 both the diet and the Grand Master, while thanking Richard II for the restoration of the franchises, had expressed concern about attacks on shipping.[34] Having due regard to all the circumstances, common piracy does not seem to have been a particularly serious problem at this time. This conclusion is based on several lists which catalogue the losses claimed by Prussian merchants from 1375 to the end of April 1385; these total something over £2,136 sterling for material damage sustained in 22 separate incidents.[35] In addition, there was a demand for an enquiry into the alleged murder of the entire crew of a Danzig ship at Boston in 1384,

[32] *Hanseakten*, nos. 226, 277.
[33] *HUB*, 4, no. 806.
[34] *HR*, 1 (iii), nos. 142–3, 192.
[35] *Ibid.*, nos. 199, 201–2.

for which no figure for damages was calculated since the ship itself had been recovered. Of the 22 incidents, 6 involved piracy, 3 robbery of goods after shipwreck, 2 other robberies on land, 6 relate to embezzlement, extortion and the like, 1 to commercial negligence, while the remaining 4 were claims against the crown itself for seizure of wine and the enforced service of ships. These incidents, resulting from a mixture of lawlessness, dishonesty and reasons of state, amount to a level of provocation which was probably regarded as normal and containable in the middle ages. But on 12 May 1385 an English royal fleet attacked and robbed six Prussian ships anchored in the estuary of the Zwin, for which damages ranging from £2,188 to £2,933 were later claimed.[36] Since England was then at war with Flanders this could be represented as a legitimate action against those trading with its enemies. For the Prussians, of course, it was an intolerable act of piracy. The captains of two ships were abducted and before being ransomed were forced to swear that they would not take legal action to recover damages. Allegedly, they were taunted that they could get redress in Prussia, where there were more than enough English goods to pay for all their losses. While this claim may be true it is just as likely that it was invented by the Prussians to justify their subsequent behaviour since, contrary to accepted practice, they did not give the crown an opportunity to repudiate the actions of its subjects or to offer compensation. On 18 July 1385 a diet of the Prussian towns ordered the arrest of English goods in Danzig and Elbing and banned all trade with England. Only then did it dispatch two envoys to demand compensation for the Zwin incident and all losses over the previous ten years. One of these died in Holland and the other was prevented by illness from continuing the journey, so the mission came to nothing.[37]

News of the arrests had reached England by 3 August at the latest, for on that day Hanse merchants in London were brought before the mayor and told that on no account were they to export any of their property; similar measures were taken at York, Newcastle, Lynn and, no doubt, wherever else German-owned goods were discovered. Later, the king gave instructions for the release of non-Prussian goods.[38] When parliament met in October 1385 the government rejected a request to suspend the privileges of the Hanse and allow English merchants to recover their losses from arrested Prussian goods by a suit of withernam. However, it did make provision for the

[36] *Ibid.*, nos. 200, 203.
[37] *HR*, 1 (ii), no. 309; (iii), no. 204.
[38] *HR*, 1 (ii), no. 310. *CCR*, 1385–9, pp. 2, 48.

systematic arrest of Prussian property in all ports from London to Boston. Goods which could not be detained indefinitely without deterioration were to be redelivered to their owners under mainprise. By June 1386 sufficient goods had been found to cover English losses in Prussia, and on this account instructions were given to de-arrest a Prussian ship and its cargo.[39] It is clear that responsible Englishmen were anxious not to widen the dispute with Prussia into one with the Hanse as a whole, and to resolve it as soon as possible. Nevertheless, negotiations for a settlement were protracted. As early as October 1385 two Prussian merchants and the ship in which they were travelling were accorded diplomatic status, but they appear to have been merely the bearers of letters between the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and the king.[40] On Palm Sunday (15 April) 1386 a Prussian embassy, consisting of two representatives of the Teutonic Order and one of the towns, presented its credentials to the king and afterwards spent several weeks in intermittent discussions with his council.[41] The council was unwilling to consider claims relating to incidents antedating that in Zwin and declined to accept responsibility even for this. It proved impossible to reconcile conflicting accounts of what actually happened, but the Prussians were portrayed as having brought misfortune upon themselves by trading with the king's enemies. When the English suggestion of a mutual release of goods currently arrested on each side was rejected they offered to send their own embassy to Prussia to continue the search for a solution.

During the course of the discussions with the ambassadors and in the following months the council frequently summoned before it representatives of the English merchants who had lost goods in Prussia.[42] This was necessary not merely to ensure that the losses were fully catalogued and to provide the council with advice, but also to ensure that the merchants ultimately bore the cost of any actions taken on their behalf. The king made it clear that he would not shoulder any charge beyond the inclusion of one knight in the embassy which was to be sent to Prussia. As an interim measure the mission was funded from the sale of Prussian goods arrested in England. It was originally intended that it should depart in the spring of 1387, but it did not do so then and the stalemate continued

[39] *HUB*, 4, nos. 849–50. *CCR*, 1385–9, pp. 54, 146.
[40] *CCR*, 1385–9, p. 21.
[41] *HR*, 1 (iii) nos. 198, 204–5.
[42] *CCR*, 1385–7, pp. 67, 163, 194, 204, 481, 529. *HUB*, 4, nos. 925–6.

until parliament met in February 1388.[43] The embassy, which finally sailed from Lynn about the middle of June 1388, consisted of Nicholas Stocket, a royal clerk, and two merchants, Thomas Graa of York and Walter Sibille of London. It was accompanied by John Bebys or Bevys of London, who was to act as its 'informer'. They were under instructions to submit a number of requests and proposals which the English regarded as conducive to a lasting settlement between the two sides.[44] Foremost was the demand that the king's subjects be given access to Prussian courts to pursue actions relating to chattels and personal injuries, while all property subject to the general arrest of 1385 be released immediately. In summary, the English council contended that they had already submitted claims exceeding £3,889 6s 10d sterling for the value of merchandise and debts arrested and over £4,000 damages for unjust arrest. It was then proposed that in future the right of Prussian merchants to enter and leave England by any port and to trade wherever they wished within the country should depend upon the enjoyment of a similar freedom by Englishmen in Prussia. In addition, it was requested that the Prussians should recognise a corporate English mercantile organisation headed by a governor. When it came to the Prussian claims, the record of the ambassadors' instructions does not go beyond a lengthy restatement and justification of the English actions in the Zwin.

The ambassadors presented their credentials to the Grand Master at Marienburg on 28 July, and on 21 August came before him again for the sealing of an agreement which had been made with his personal representatives, after the latter had consulted the towns.[45] The settlement provided that all goods and debts arrested by either side during the recent dispute should immediately be released, but no suits would be allowed for damages resulting from the stoppage. Any Prussians who wished to claim for losses in the Zwin incident or in earlier times should attend upon the English ambassadors after their return home, who would help them to lay their claims before English courts. In respect of personal injuries, the ambassadors were themselves empowered to make amends, unless defendants denied

[43] F. Schulz, *Die Hanse und England von Eduards III. bis auf Heinrichs VIII. Zeit* (Berlin, 1911), p. 41, states that an embassy was sent in 1387. This is an error which probably results from the misdating (by twelve months) of a letter written by a Thorn merchant to his fellow townsmen, warning that the English were inflating their losses by one third. Dated only 5 April it reports rumours of an impending embassy. This appears to be that which left in June 1388, suggesting that the letter was written in 1388 and not in 1387. *HUB*, 4, no. 888.

[44] *HR*, 1 (iii), nos. 402–3.

[45] *Ibid.*, nos. 405–6.

the charges, in which case the former were to take all steps necessary to ensure that justice was done. Similar arrangements were made for Englishmen who wished to pursue claims in Prussia. As regards general matters, the English had reason to be tolerably pleased. The request for recognition of their corporate organisation was not accepted, but nor was this specifically forbidden; it was simply passed over in silence in the treaty. The right to freedom of trade was rather vaguely worded, probably because of reservations expressed by the Prussian towns, but it did specify that Englishmen might use any port and also trade inland; all the towns had agreed to this, with the exception of Elbing and Braunsberg.[46] A further guarantee, potentially as valuable to Prussia as to England, was that in the event of any future dispute between the two sides merchants should be allowed a full year to wind up their affairs and depart in peace before reprisals would be instituted.

While the English appear to have been satisfied with the treaty of Marienburg, the Prussians soon came to regret it. Their reasons were set out in an angry letter sent by the Grand Master to Richard II on 5 April 1391, though disillusion had set in long before that date.[47] He complained that his subjects were bankrupting themselves in vain attempts to recover their losses in England, while the crown continued to disregard the rights of the Hanse by levying unjust taxes, such as tunnage and poundage. Since England was allegedly breaking the treaty the Grand Master refused to ratify it. These accusations of bad faith, at least with regard to the treatment of Prussian litigants, are probably not justified. It was the complexity of many cases rather than wilful refusal to award justice which was the cause of delay. The king's council was concerned about this and, as recently as January 1391, a commission had been issued to some of the most powerful magnates in the land to sit with a team of lawyers to deal with the cases.[48] The charge of duplicity about taxation stemmed from an unbridgeable difference of opinion between the two sides. On the one hand it is certain that in ratifying the treaty of Marienburg the crown had no intention of renouncing its claim to tunnage and poundage. On the other hand it is easy to understand why the Prussians chose to interpret the treaty as they did. They were simply taking up the English challenge of reciprocity. They accepted the general principle that Hanse rights in England should depend upon the enjoyment of similar privileges by

[46] *HUB*, 4, no. 936.
[47] *Ibid.*, no. 1054. *HR*, 1 (iv), no. 6.
[48] *CPR*, 1388–92, pp. 372, 374.

Englishmen, but they stuck to the view that the traditional Hanse rights included immunity from virtually all taxation instituted after 1303. (The only tax established after that date which they never seriously challenged was the wool subsidy.)

The judicial commission of January 1391 was clearly associated with an embassy to the Baltic, preparation for which had begun shortly before Christmas. Both the commission and the embassy were authorised to consider disputes with other sections of the Hanse, but Prussia was the main cause for concern. It was more than a year since the English ratification of the treaty of Marienburg had been sent to Prussia, but the Grand Master had not yet returned his ratification. The ambassadorial credentials were made out in the names of John Pykering, clerk, Walter Sybille and John Bebys, merchants. Bebys also received a royal commission as governor of all the English merchants trading in the Baltic. There is little doubt that he was already in Prussia at the time of these appointments and already acting as governor.[49] The purpose of the royal appointment was probably to add greater weight to the renewed attempt to persuade the Grand Master to afford official recognition to this office. It was not successful. On the other hand it is unlikely that recognition was categorically refused as historians have traditionally argued. The confusion has arisen from the Grand Master's refusal to ratify the treaty of Marienburg.[50] The matter of the governorship was again passed over in silence, as it had been in the treaty. Bebys no doubt continued to act as governor, officially recognised by the English crown but not by the Prussians. Sybille, who arrived in Prussia in March 1391, seems not to have excelled as a diplomat, for he soon antagonised Conrad von Wallenrod, the newly appointed Grand Master, who previously had headed the Prussian team which had negotiated the treaty of Marienburg. Von Wallenrod charged Sybille with slandering his predecessor by falsely accusing him of lying about an alleged English promise relating to the Zwin incident.[51] This seems to have resulted from a misunderstanding arising from a Prussian embassy which had come to England in the summer and autumn of 1389. Its purpose had been to help Prussian merchants prosecute their claims in England and its chief task to ensure that the English judges understood the Prussian evidence and official documents. However, rightly or wrongly, the ambassadors

[49] S. Jenks, 'Die Ordnung für die englische Handelskolonie in Danzig (23 Mai 1405)', pp. 110–11 in B. Jähnig and P. Letkemann, *Danzig in acht Jahrhunderten* (Münster/Westph., 1985), pp. 105–20. [50] *Ibid.*, p. 111. [51] *HR*, I (iv), no. 11.

came to believe that the king's council had made an offer of 3,000 nobles in compensation for the attack in the Zwin. It was the denial of any such promise which provoked angry scenes in 1391 and resulted in the failure of Sybille's mission. Nevertheless, although the Grand Master refused to send another embassy to England, the English wished to continue direct negotiations and, in September 1391, the Duke of Gloucester actually set out on a mission to Prussia.[52] After he was forced back by storms the initiative was not resumed. Prussia continued to reproach Richard II for breaking the treaty, though the emphasis came to be more on present wrongs than on old debts.

During the course of its dispute with England, Prussia received little support from fellow members of the Hanse. The Wendish towns continued to export goods of Prussian origin to England, despite attempts by Prussia to prevent them. The crown encouraged this by proclaiming that they were not to be held accountable for English losses, though in practice it was difficult to restrict reprisals to Prussian-owned goods. When parliament met in February 1388 the London *Kontor* complained that its franchises were being flouted by continuing arrests as well as by attempts to make them pay the lay subsidy of tenths and fifteenths.[53] The response was not very satisfactory. It was ordered that perishable goods be released under mainprise and all clearly non-Prussian goods de-arrested, but wherever there appeared to be a possibility of partnership with Prussians then the property must remain attached. Shortly afterwards, Englishmen seized a Stralsund ship laden with goods belonging to some of the leading men of that town, who thereupon secured the arrest of English property in Stralsund. Inevitably, there was retaliation and, on 14 July 1388, orders were issued to arrest everything belonging to men of Stralsund, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock and Hamburg until they gave assurances not to take anything out of the country without licence. On 26 August, additional powers to treat with the Wendish towns were made out for the English ambassadors then in Prussia. The commission was entrusted to a Hanse merchant about to sail for Skania, who was paid 70s for the estimated additional twelve days voyage to Prussia. However, before the ambassadors can have received the news the immediate crisis had been resolved by direct negotiations between the interested parties in England. On 6 September members of the provincial

[52] T. Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley (London, 1863), 2, p. 202.
[53] *Rot. Parl.*, 3, p. 253. *HUB*, 4, nos. 911–12.

Kontore assembled in London; on 8 September the crown lifted the prohibition (imposed on 3 August) on export by Englishmen to the Baltic; on 20 September trade restrictions upon Hanse merchants were eased after the London *Kontor* had provided sureties for the safety of Englishmen in all Wendish towns except Stralsund. On 18 September the captain of Calais was instructed to deliver the captured Stralsund ship and its cargo, or the value thereof, to the mayor of the English wool staple then located at Middelburg.[54] This order was not carried out, but the English goods in Stralsund were released when the owners undertook to secure compensation for the aggrieved burghers. They failed to do this and there was a new arrest of English goods in Stralsund in 1391. On the latter occasion they were not released, but there was no general retaliation against either the Wendish towns as a whole or citizens of Stralsund. English merchants were obliged to sue individually for damages, but progress was slow, probably because of difficulty in identifying Stralsund-owned goods in England. In 1397 and 1398 John Brandon of Lynn succeeded in making good much of his loss by legally authorised arrests. In turn this action probably prompted the seizure of cloth owned by Coventry merchants in Stralsund in 1398 and 1399.[55]

Although the dispute with Stralsund was contained, the 1390s witnessed a general deterioration in relations between England and the Hanse as a whole, caused chiefly by complaints of the *Kontor* about treatment at the hands of the crown and English towns. The parliament of 1388 had actually attempted to improve the status of alien merchants in general, by reviving the free-trade statute of Edward III and ruling that no franchises or usages should be invoked against it. However, in January 1393, the restrictions imposed on aliens at the beginning of the present reign were re-introduced, and freedom of trade was limited by the proviso that aliens should not deal among themselves and that their retail business should be confined to victuals.[56] The chief complaint of the Hanse against the towns related to attempts to exact local tolls. The leading offender, although by no means the only one, was Southampton, and the fact that it was a growing centre of Hanseatic trade made it imperative to resist. As early as 1381 Southampton was ordered to stop trying to exact any duties beyond those

[54] *CCR*, 1385–9, pp. 532, 535. *HUB*, 4, pp. 933–4, 942–3. *Hanseakten*, nos. 248, 250–1.
[55] *Royal and Historical Letters during the Reign of Henry the Fourth*, ed. F. C. Hingeston, 1 (London, 1860), pp. 258–61. *Literae Cantuarienses*, ed. J. B. Sheppard, 3 (London, 1884), pp. 79–81.
[56] *Rot. Parl.*, 3, p. 247. *Stats.*, 2, pp. 82–3.

established by the *Carta Mercatoria* of 1303. In 1387 it was again ordered to stop levying a custom of 2d on each barrel of herrings. When parliament met in November 1390 the *Kontor* complained that Southampton was still taking illegal tolls, whereby its members were likely to abjure the realm and the king would stand to lose 2–3,000 marks a year. In February 1391 the Chancery ordered Southampton and Sandwich not to levy tolls until 16 April and to pay those already taken into the Exchequer for safe-keeping. In the autumn parliament the *Kontor* again complained that not only Southampton but Sandwich, Hull and other ports were taking a toll on all manner of imports. It was ordered that these impositions should cease for two years, within which time the king's council should give a ruling about their lawfulness. No definite pronouncement was made within the time limit, but at the end of it the Chancery repeated the prohibition on the collection of tolls until the following Easter.[57]

Taxation was also the bone of contention between the Hanse and the crown. The merchants were still required to pay tunnage and poundage, which was all the more objectionable since it showed every sign of becoming a permanent part of the king's revenue, rather than a wartime tax for the protection of commerce, which it was alleged to be. More importantly, the Exchequer reneged on the 1361 agreement about the taxation of cloth. Since the early 1380s Hanse merchants had complained about some customs collectors converting straits and pieces into notional cloths of assise and charging 1s duty instead of the *ad valorem* duty of 3d in the pound. At Michaelmas 1388 this became official policy, with straits and pieces rated at 48 yards to the assise and kerseys at 3 cloths to the assise. This step was particularly damaging to the Hanse merchants, who during the first parliament of 1390 claimed that on average they exported 10,000 strait cloths and kerseys each year. On this occasion the commons also objected to the new duty, and it was agreed that collection should be suspended until the next parliament.[58] On 12 November 1390, during the course of the new assembly, collection recommenced, and ever after the cloths in question were taxed like assise cloths. In the autumn parliament of 1391, the Hanse again complained that its franchises were being dishonoured.[59] The merchants could not for long unilaterally boycott the export of kerseys and straits, since this would simply hand the trade over to Englishmen. The London *Kontor* tried, therefore, to get a total ban

[57] *CCR*, 1377–81, p. 447; 1385–9, p. 45; 1392–6, p. 238. *HUB*, 4, nos. 1045, 1073.
[58] *Rot. Parl.*, 3, p. 272. *HUB*, 4, no. 998.
[59] *Ibid.*, no. 1074.

on the import of such cloths into the Baltic region. The Wendish towns would not countenance this move, since they were currently at odds with Scandinavia and Flanders and could not sustain a trade war with England as well. The Prussians proposed that a ban should be enforced as soon as a settlement had been reached with Flanders. They also wanted to retaliate by raising duties on imports by Englishmen into their country, but this measure was overruled by the Grand Master.[60]

On the whole the Hanse favoured diplomacy rather than sanctions, but in 1394 the diet wrote to the king's council and five English towns threatening that unless the Hanse franchises were honoured their own merchants would be burdened with new taxation in Germany. On 3 July 1394 the London *Kontor* reported that it had submitted this letter to the council six weeks previously but had not yet received a reply. It had no idea when one might be forthcoming, but did not expect it to be favourable.[61] The English government ignored the ultimatum, but in November 1394 issued letters of credence to John Huntingdon and John de Wesenham as ambassadors to the Wendish towns.[62] The chief purpose of this mission was to complain about attacks by Mecklenburg pirates known as the *Vitalienbrüder*. These pirates, whose origins were associated with the Scandinavian ambitions of the ducal house of Mecklenburg, had been active for many years but had been particularly dangerous since they had captured Visby in 1391. They were also succoured by the towns of Rostock and Wismar. The English complaint does not seem to have been fully considered by the diet until August 1396, when it decided that attack was the best form of defence. It then wrote to Richard II stating that it had no control over the pirates who, in any case, were doing more harm to Hanse merchants than they were to the English. It requested, therefore, that the king should prevent his subjects from attacking Hanse ships in retaliation for damage done by the *Vitalienbrüder*. The diet further demanded the full implementation of the franchises and threatened that, unless it received satisfaction on all these points, it would not only increase the taxation of English merchants but would also ban the import of English cloth. The diet apparently saw no incompatibility between its own demand for corporate privileges in England and its denial of responsibility for the actions of Rostock and Wismar, important members of the Hanse. This view was not

[60] *HR*, I (iv) nos. 26, 28.
[61] *Ibid.*, no. 196. *HUB*, 5, nos. 153, 169.
[62] *Ibid.*, no. 182.

shared by all the towns. As long before as March 1395, Dortmund, fearful for its own trade in England, had written to Lübeck urging that compensation should be paid to the English. The German claim that English merchants made good their losses to the pirates by attacks on other Hanse ships may be true, but there is little evidence to support it. There are few immediately contemporary details of any such attacks, and the charge can be sustained only if a few undated claims made at the Hague conference of 1407 relate to events in the 1390s. There is certainly no evidence of any sustained onslaught on Hanseatic shipping by the English in this decade.[63]

Because of the continuing unrest in northern Europe it was impossible to implement the new threat of discrimination against English merchants and merchandise. In December 1396 even the Prussian towns, the most aggressive wing of the Hanse, admitted this and conceded that for the time being they must be content with further diplomatic representations. By the following spring, however, they were so dissatisfied with the ineffectual protests of the Grand Master that they refused to endorse a letter which he was then proposing to send to Richard II until it was altered to meet their requirements. The letter, finally sent on 31 May 1397, was in fact fairly restrained, but it stated that if England continued to disregard the Hanse franchises then Prussia would consider cancelling the treaty of 1388.[64] At this stage the Teutonic Order, because of its own commercial dealings with Englishmen, was still inclined to treat them favourably. The Grand Master tried to prevent discrimination by ruling that any laws made against the English must be applied equally to other aliens. He was finally obliged to bow to the pressure of the townsmen and, on 2 February 1398, wrote to Richard II and the city of London renouncing the treaty and ordering Englishmen to leave Prussia within a year.[65] The English seem to have taken this news remarkably coolly, for there is no indication that at this stage they threatened retaliation, either against the Hanse in general or the Prussians in particular. In October 1398 the king even ordered London to stop trying to make Hansards contribute to the current tenth and fifteenth.[66] This restraint was amply rewarded, for at the end of a year no attempt was made to expel Englishmen from Prussia and for several more years the campaign of harassment remained at a low key. This was not, however, the result of any change of attitude on the part of the Prussian merchants. The restraining factors were

[63] *Ibid.*, nos. 189, 235. *HR*, I (iv) nos. 255, 260–4.
[64] *Ibid.*, nos. 399–401.
[65] *Ibid.*, no. 433.
[66] *HUB*, 5, no. 348. *CCR*, 1396–9, pp. 344–5.

their inability to gain support from the rest of the Hanse and a deterioration in relations between the Teutonic Order and Poland, which threatened war between the two.

The key to relations between Prussians and Englishmen was the ambition of the latter to operate in the internal markets of Prussia and beyond. Even before 1400, exports of English cloth to Prussia by Englishmen were greater than those of native Prussians. Doubtless, this was an annoyance to those Prussian merchants who themselves actively engaged in overseas trade, though any who had an interest in ship-owning gained some compensation from the fact that Englishmen employed a considerable volume of Prussian shipping to bring goods home from the Baltic. Merchants who operated only within Prussia, like their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, were not insurmountably opposed to alien importers, in this instance Englishmen, provided that they were content to deal only with enfranchised citizens on a wholesale basis. What they objected to was any attempt to establish retail businesses, attempts to penetrate inland towns and any dealings, even on a wholesale basis, with unenfranchised merchants visiting the ports from the interior. Englishmen, of course, wanted to do all these things and, moreover, regarded it as their right, since Hanseatic merchants were making precisely the same claims in England. During the 1390s comparatively little was done to squash the pretensions of the Englishmen, who took full advantage of the vague formula of the 1388 treaty, which promised them rights similar to those enjoyed by the Hanse in England. They disregarded hosting laws and rented property, both for living in and for retailing cloth; some formed partnerships with natives, while some established themselves even more firmly by taking up residence and either brought wives from England or married Prussian women. They also ignored local regulations about statutory cloth lengths dating back to before 1388. In 1392, after much debate in the Prussian diet, a new law was made that *halb-laken* (half-cloths), as well as whole cloths, must be sold with lists at each end. Such a regulation had long been in force in Skania, and while its intention is never explained in the sources it would, of course, betray any pieces which had been cut for retail sale. The law was not enforced for several years, and not until 1395 do we encounter a complaint that the authorities of Danzig had confiscated twenty-one dozens from two Lynn merchants on these grounds. Thereafter, some Englishmen breached the law in spirit by cutting cloth along its length, and in 1397 Richard II complained about the

confiscation of cloths which, although cut in this fashion, were of full length.[67] The growing tendency of Englishmen to settle in Prussia created a potentially dangerous situation, but became a serious problem only in later years. The sole charge of mass restrictive action against Englishmen in this period is recorded in a list of grievances written after May 1404. It alleged the arrest of thirty-two English ships from Purification to Lammas (2 February–1 August) 1396; no details were given and the action may simply have arisen from the current turmoil in the Baltic and been no more sinister than similar arrests by the English crown, which frequently delayed alien ships or pressed them into royal service. Despite the suspended threat of expulsion Englishmen appeared to be in no immediate danger in Prussia when Richard II was deposed, and the accession of the Prussophile Henry IV might have led them to expect that the situation could only improve. This was not to be, but before seeing how things developed it is appropriate to make a more detailed examination of Anglo-Hanseatic economic relations in the later fourteenth century.

A feature of this period, compared with the early fourteenth century, is an increased tendency for Hanseatic merchants to confine their trade to one port. Then merchants quite frequently figured in the customs accounts of several ports; now it is comparatively rare, though not unknown. If any single factor was responsible for this change it was the withdrawal from the wool trade. The great wool exporters dispatched their sarplers from Hull, Boston, Lynn or London as convenience suited, and also imported at any of these places. Having given up the wool trade, merchants seem generally to have confined their business to one place. A converse of this was that the provincial ports ceased to be patronised by a broad spectrum of Hanse merchants and each became dominated by merchants of one town or region. London was something of an exception since Westphalia, the Rhineland, Prussia, the west Baltic and the North Sea towns were all strongly represented here. When the Steelyard was required to find individual mainpernors for its collective responsibility in 1388, the eighteen names put forward were those of ten men from Cologne, seven from Dortmund and one from Hungary.[68] The list is biased in so far as Wendish merchants were not currently acceptable as sureties and Prussians were still absent

[67] *HUB*, 5, no. 252. *HR*, 1 (iv), nos. 127–8.

[68] *HUB*, 4, nos. 934, 945.

from the city. Nevertheless, the names are those of merchants who appear time and time again in dealings with the English authorities and as the leading importers and exporters recorded in the surviving customs particulars. The total numbers occupying the Steelyard or living elsewhere in London at this time are not known, but in 1381 the collectors of the poll tax counted twenty-eight merchants of Almain who were excused payment because of their franchises.[69]

At the end of the fourteenth century the London *Kontor* overtook that of Boston in economic importance, though until then it may have occupied second place. The degree of uncertainty results from an unknown quantity in Hanse cloth exports from London. These appear to have grown more slowly than those of Boston (see table 2), but trade in non-assise woollen cloths and worsteds casts doubt on the matter. In 1358–9 the Hanse men paid 1s 9d duty on each of 281 cloths of assise and 3d in the pound by value for 1,171 worsteds, while an unknown quantity of strait cloth also paid 3d in the pound.[70] The next year the figures were 263½ assise paying 2s 9d, 2,709 worsteds paying 1½d each and probably also 3d in the pound, and 16,150 yards of strait, deemed to equal 323 cloths of assise, paying 1s 9d and probably also still paying 3d in the pound. In 1360–1, when Hanse rates were altered in mid-term, separate figures do not survive. (The 467 cloths shown as Hanse in *England's Export Trade* is a mistake; these belonged to John de Mary, a Genoese.) From the following year Hanse cloths of assise, now paying 1s, were again recorded separately, but straits and worsteds were included in the total of all alien goods paying 3d in the pound. The only year in which there is a separate record of the latter is 1376–7, when under the description of serges and beds of worsteds their value was given as £1,068 10s 8d. This evidence suggests that in the later years of Edward III non-assise cloths were worth much more in value than cloths of assise. The latter averaged only 135 per annum between 1361 and 1372 and, after a period of customs farming, 183 for the last two Exchequer years of the reign (1375–7). The first enrolled account of the new reign (1377–8) records no Hanse cloth exports before 1 June 1378, but 426½ cloths of assise between then and Michaelmas,

[69] *Letter Book* H, p. 164.

[70] In the remainder of this chapter all statements about cloth exports are derived from enrolled customs accounts, PRO, E356/7, 9, 14, unless another source is cited. *England's Export Trade, 1275–1546*, ed. E. M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman (Oxford, 1963), omits important information and some figures, while some figures are printed incorrectly.

Table 2. *Hanse cloth customed at assise rates, 1358–72*

Mich.–Mich.	London	Boston and Lynn	Hull	Newcastle
1358–9	281[a]			
1359–60	587[b]			
1360–1	n/a	80[c]	35[d]	0
1361–2	45	145	62	0
1362–3	135	847	107	0
1363–4	92	1,783	169	0
1364–5	178	1,766	350	0
1365–6	77	1,975[e]	303	0
1366–7	70	1,197	70	0
1367–8	46	2,008[f]	151	0
1368–9	153	929[f]	104	3
1369–70	241	1,074[f]	188[g]	0
1370–1	163	1,646[f]	195	0
1371–2	281	1,625	127	28
1372 (to 24 Dec.)	32[h]	76	78	0

[a] After 2 Dec. 1358.
[b] Includes straits.
[c] After 8 Feb. 1381, excused 1s 9d.
[d] Before 8 Feb. 1381, pays 1s 9d.
[e] Includes alien imports.
[f] Includes alien imports and denizen re-exports.
[g] Plus twenty imports or re-exports.
[h] Includes re-exports.

each paying 1s by virtue of a Chancery writ of 20 May. Subsequently the merchants were charged £28 19s 10½d *super compotum*, so that the cloth should answer for the full alien duty; in fact that sum does not fully satisfy the difference between the two rates. It is unlikely that Hanse merchants exported cloth before 1 June, but if they did the duty must be included in the total of £254 6s 1¾d paid for other alien woollens and worsteds for the whole year. (*England's Export Trade* erroneously states that this sum is not recorded.) In 1378–9 Hanse exports are not separately recorded, but included in a total alien payment of £296 15s for woollens and worsteds. In 1379–80 and 1380–1, when the Hanse were again paying only 1s, their cloths of assise still totalled only 389 and 406, but this was followed by a sharp rise. The figures for 1381–2 and 1382–3 were 803 and 793, while the average for 1383–6 was 890; the last figure includes a few alien imports, but probably not enough to reduce the Hanse total significantly; the latest separately recorded figure for alien imports, in 1382–3, was a mere 63. Warfare in Flanders in the 1380s stifled cloth imports into England as certainly as it was the factor responsible for the increase in Hanseatic and Italian exports from

England in this period. The drop in Hanseatic assise exports to an average of 386 in 1386–8 is not readily explicable, though the political events of those years must be borne in mind. Equally, or more likely, is the possibility of a switch in investment to low-taxed kerseys, which were increasingly attracting all groups of exporters. As early as 1384 a tunnage and poundage particular for 1 July–Michaelmas records a minimum Hanseatic export to the continent of 519 kerseys and 128 cloths of assise, while 2 ships obviously bound for Prussia carried 237 Hanseatic-owned kerseys and 13 cloths, together with 254 English-owned kerseys and 24 cloths.[71] Because of the loss of revenue, the Exchequer now ruled that, in addition to poundage, denizens must for the first time pay custom on kerseys and all aliens should pay a specific custom duty in lieu of the *ad valorem* rate of 3d in the pound; the conversion rate for all parties was three standard or two Isle of Wight kerseys to one cloth of assise; any remaining straits, which kerseys had largely replaced in the export market, were also converted to assise cloths. Between Michaelmas 1388 and 2 February 1390, Hanse merchants exported 1,378 cloths of assise and 7,545 kerseys; the latter being valued at £1,796 16s 2d would formerly have paid £22 9s $2\frac{1}{2}$d in tax, but now paid £125 15s $0\frac{3}{4}$d. Prussian merchants, who returned to England in force after the Marienbad settlement, were treated as aliens until the formalities of the treaty were completed, and between Michaelmas 1388 and 25 May 1389 paid the full alien rate of 2s 9d on another $6,118\frac{1}{2}$ kerseys valued at £1,504 12s. Between 1 March and 30 November 1390, during the temporary suspension of the new policy, twenty-two readily identified Hanse men exported a minimum of 3,354 kerseys valued at £714 7s 4d and 529 cloths of assise valued at £1,120 6s 2d.[72] The valuations of these kerseys were uniformly lower than the averages of 5s 1d and 4s 11d derived from the enrolled accounts of 1388–90. If the current averages of 4s 3d per kersey and 42s 4d per cloth are realistic, then it means that a merchant had the choice of investing £100 in 470 kerseys or 47 cloths of assise; on the former he would currently pay custom of £1 5s and on the latter £2 7s; poundage would be the same in each case. With a price ratio of 10:1 the merchants were obviously affronted at a tax-conversion ratio of 3:1, and when the harsher regime was reintroduced in November 1390 the Steelyard probably ordered a boycott of kerseys. The petty-custom particulars for 1390–1 show

[71] PRO, E122/71/8.

[72] PRO, E122/71/13.

seven merchants exporting 84 cloths of assise and 830 kerseys between 1 and 29 October; 21 kerseys entered on 31 October were first valued at £3 14s 6d and charged *ad valorem*, but were later converted to 7 cloths of assise; in the following eleven months only 145 standard and 3 Isle of Wight kerseys were exported by three merchants, none of them leading members of the Steelyard, compared with something over 1,200 cloths of assise legible in the account.[73] (The figure of 1,581 cloths for the whole year in the enrolled account includes kerseys converted to assise cloths.) Denizens were not put off by the resumption of taxation on kerseys, and from November onwards exported at least 7,347 (including 22 Isle of Wight), compared with somewhat more than 2,623 cloths of assise taken over the course of the whole twelve months. Other aliens exported well over 1,000 kerseys in the autumn, while the matter of taxation was still disputed, but only 190 thereafter; their assise cloths exported over the whole year were in the region of 1,900. Between 6 July and 8 August 1392 Hanse merchants still exported only 280 kerseys compared with 870 cloths of assise, though significantly 200 of the former were owned by Frowyn Stepyng, a leading member of the Steelyard.[74] Hanse exports through London were apparently now building up to an unprecedented boom and, between Michaelmas 1391 and Michaelmas 1395, averaged 4,315 short-cloths (including kerseys), which represented over 60 per cent of all Hanse exports from England. Unfortunately, London customs accounts are lacking from Michaelmas 1395 to 10 December 1397 and by the latter date steam was temporarily running out of the Steelyard machinery, so that between then and Michaelmas 1399 exports averaged only 2,321 short-cloths per annum, about 45 per cent of the current national Hanse figure.

Whatever may have been the precise attraction and characteristic of kersey, if indeed it was yet a homogeneous product, by the 1380s and 1390s it had virtually replaced all other types of English cloth (other than assise cloths) in the export trade of the London Hanseatics. They now handled very few worsteds and even fewer pieces described as strait or serge; pieces of so-called 'Irish cloth' and Welsh cloth are more frequently encountered, though their total value was insignificant. Some textiles were also exported in made-up form, caps, mantles and 'Irish' mantles being the most common. Non-textile exports included gloves, cony skins and lamb skins; tin

[73] PRO, E122/71/16. Some illegible entries make exact calculation impossible.
[74] PRO, E122/71/17.

and pewter constituted a more regular and more valuable trade, both to the Baltic and the near continent, but the Hanseatic share of these products was small compared with that of denizens and Italians.[75]

A full list of Hanse imports would be much longer and more varied than that of their exports. Many items, such as glass, locks, mirrors, pouches, rosaries, geegaws, ciphers, dogstones, querns and more besides, are quite obviously not part of a specialist business. Such things appear among the stock of leading members of the Steelyard, but they are more frequently found against the names of obscure merchants, ships' captains or sailors. In any event the combined values of such things made up an insignificant proportion of total Hanse trade. By far the greatest contribution was provided by the traditional staple goods, which depended upon greater capital and specialised knowledge of the markets. Much of this trade was in the hands of resident merchants, who may seldom have left the city, depending instead upon consignments from agents in the Baltic, Bruges, Antwerp, Cologne or Dinant. The Baltic region was still the ultimate source of most Hanse imports but many of them, perhaps even a majority, were generally brought to London not directly, but via the Low Countries. This practice was not confined to the fur trade, the most valuable sector of imports, though it is most apparent here. In July, August and September 1384, total imports of furs by aliens and denizens amounted to rather more than £3,300 in value, but there were none in eight ships which can safely be claimed as coming direct from the Baltic, except for a mere handful owned by two Englishmen. This short account, which has the most furs recorded in any surviving customs particular, was dominated by Christian Kelmer of Dortmund, alderman of the Steelyard, with fur imports worth £1,045. The trade of eleven other Hanse merchants, among whom were at least five more from Dortmund or Cologne, brought their combined share of fur imports to almost 80 per cent. A complete monopoly eluded them, for besides the two Baltic traders a few prominent Londoners imported valuable consignments from the Low Countries. The sheer volume of furs imported in this period may have been exceptional, and it may even have been a glutted market which caused Kelmer to re-export the ermines which led to his disgrace in the same year.[76] The vast majority of imports, however, consisted of relatively inexpensive squirrel skins, which

[75] J. Hatcher, *English Tin Production and Trade before 1550* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 103–5.
[76] See above p. 62.

originated chiefly in Russia.[77] Although there is probably a connection between the tendency to import Baltic furs from the Low Countries and the prominent role of Westphalian merchants, this does not necessarily mean that the latter were uninvolved in the first leg of the trade. Bernard Mechynghous of Cologne, a leading London importer, lost furs in one of three Riga ships attacked on a voyage to Bruges in 1405.[78]

The 1384 account is exceptional in the fact that furs heavily outweigh all other products. The account for the twelve months of 1390–1 is more typical in that the traditional products of the Westphalia-Meuse region are better represented. Copper, steel, iron and laton were imported in the form of ingots, bars and wire and also as battery, basins, plates, dishes, swords, knives and sundry pieces of armour. Together, they made a respectable contribution to the import total, though not on the same scale as those of Baltic origin. The enrolled customs accounts of London and other ports show that the wax trade, which had moved away from the city in the early fourteenth century, returned there after mid-century. Alien trade was decidedly cyclical, reaching a high which averaged 1,142 cwt per annum in 1367–72 and a low of 95 cwt per annum in 1375–80; the late-century peak was 762 cwt per annum in 1391–3, but in 1397–9 the level was down to 115 cwt. It is reasonable to suppose that the bulk of alien wax was owned by Hanse merchants, but they did not monopolise the trade and Englishmen imported significant amounts both from the Low Countries and directly from the Baltic.

Ranked in importance between the traditional staples of furs, metals and wax and the sundry wares mentioned earlier was the Hanse stake, as yet relatively small, in a major growth area of English trade: non-woollen textiles, particularly linens.[79] Hanse imports of linen cloth were dwarfed by those of Englishmen; these had been manufactured in all parts of the Low Countries and Westphalia. A considerable amount of yarn or thread, of various sorts though generally indeterminable, was also imported. The Hanse merchants brought in quite a large quantity of Cologne thread, which was sometimes described as Cologne pack thread and

[77] On the fur trade generally see E. M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966). J. Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness* (Cambridge, 1986).

[78] See below p. 113.

[79] V. A. Harding, 'Some Documentary Sources for the Import and Distribution of Foreign Textiles in Later Medieval England', *Textile History*, 18 (1987), 205–18.

possibly intended for stitching up bales rather than for weaving. Even in this commodity Englishmen did a brisk trade, and both communities shared in the import of raw flax. There was a small Hanse trade in fustian and Cologne merchants were already establishing a stake in silk; the latter was generally specified as '*crud*'. (?unthrown), but some consignments described as Cologne silk had a much higher valuation.

Although the London customs particulars of this period provide little information about shipping, it is frequently possible to determine roughly where a ship was laden by studying the mix of its cargoes and the names of the merchants who freighted in it. By this means only eight out of ninety-eight ships entering the port in July–September 1384 may be said to have been involved in direct transport from the Baltic, although two of these, with a small quantity of Cologne thread, Cologne steel and silk, must have touched briefly upon a Low Countries port. The total value of the cargoes was £1,336 (including about £100 for the non-Baltic goods). None of the ships appear to have been skippered by Englishmen, but the bulk of the cargoes was English owned, leaving a maximum of 38 per cent for Hanseatic merchants and sailors. Apart from wax, a little copper and a few furs the cargoes consisted chiefly of traditional, high weight/value goods such as timber, ashes, osmund, pitch, tar, flax and a little stockfish; more novel were Prussian linen cloth and yarn and beer, the new drink promoted aggressively by north-German merchants in the late fourteenth century. The 1384 account is in the wrong season to find imports of Skania herrings, but two years earlier the Hanse merchants had protested when the London collectors of the petty custom began to demand 1s 3d instead of 1s on this product.[80] On that occasion the king's council ruled that the matter should be decided by parliament, and meantime the merchants should give security to pay later, should the decision go against them. Particulars of the 1390s show that the customers did successfully raise the assessed value of herrings from £4 to £5 per last. Hanse merchants imported herrings in 1390–1, none positively said to be from Skania though brought in at the right time of the year. Since the total was comparatively small it may be that the herring trade was largely in the hands of native merchants. On the other hand, during part of this year Hanse merchants may have

[80] *HUB*, 4, no. 759.

imported herrings duty free by royal proclamation. Because of dearth it was ordered that corn and all victuals save stockfish and sturgeon should enter free of custom and subsidy. Some merchants who responded to the opportunity by importing Prussian grain got their fingers burned when the scarcity ended unexpectedly and the city authorities ordered bakers not to buy from merchants until its own magazines had been run down. Consequently, Hanse merchants successfully petitioned to re-export grain duty free to specified places, including Bordeaux, Bayonne and Dordrecht.[81]

Many denizen London merchants routinely imported goods of Baltic or Westphalian origin via Flanders or Brabant, but comparatively few traded directly with the Baltic. All surviving evidence points to the fact that now, as later, Londoners were less active here than English merchants from the east-coast ports. Nevertheless, the London interest should not be judged solely from the record of English goods seized in Prussia in 1385, when eleven Londoners lost property to the value of £353.[82] Six of that group and at least twenty-five other Englishmen had freight in the eight ships coming from the Baltic in July–September 1384, though only three exported there in the same period, sending 254 kerseys, 24 cloths of assise and 16 dozen caps.

In the late fourteenth century Boston was still the chief provincial centre of Hanseatic activity, but the geographic and economic bases on which this *Kontor* rested were narrower than before. Here, as elsewhere, wool exports had been replaced by cloth, directed overwhelmingly to northern Europe; on the import side the Norway trade was even more dominant than before. Between Michaelmas 1390 and Michaelmas 1391 Hanse imports from Bergen amounted to £3,779, 74 per cent of all alien imports, while between the latter date and 8 December they totalled £2,679, 64 per cent of all alien and denizen imports.[83] In the twelve months beginning 28 November 1386, when denizen and alien trade paying poundage was valued at £20,804 – the highest annual figure ever recorded at Boston – Bergen imports accounted for £8,844, 43 per cent of the total and 61 per cent of all imports.[84] Shorter particulars confirm the dominant role of this trade, which consisted almost entirely of stockfish and train oil. Small quantities of other goods, such as timber, pelts and hides, could have come from Norway, but the occasional shipments of beer must have originated in Germany and been re-shipped at

[81] *CCR*, 1389–92, pp. 388, 390.
[82] *HR*, I (iii), no. 404.
[83] PRO, E122/7/22–4, 27.
[84] PRO, E122/7/19.

Bergen. There appears to have been almost no regular import trade direct from the Baltic. Occasional cargoes of Skania herrings brought in by Hanse merchants and goods carried by the masters of ships chartered by English merchants were a small fraction of Englishmen's imports from the Baltic, and insignificant compared with Hanse imports from Bergen. Hanse imports from the Low Countries and the Rhineland were insignificant relative both to Englishmen's imports from this region and total Hanse trade.

Hanse exports consisted almost entirely of cloth, and this *Kontor* was probably the first to venture English cloth on a large scale in the expansionary period which began in the middle of the fourteenth century. Between 1353 and 1372 the cloth exports of Boston are enrolled with those of Lynn, but the bulk of Hanse trade was at the former port. From February to Michaelmas 1361, Hanse merchants handled 79½ cloths, with 145, 847, 1,783 and 1,766 taken in the next four years (1361–5). The Boston accounts of the 1350s pose various problems of interpretation, but even if they conceal Hanse cloth exports in those years it is quite clear that the merchants increased their investment in cloths of assise during the 1360s by a large amount. The average annual export for 1365–72 was rather less than 1,493, since that figure includes a few cloths imported by aliens in five of the seven years and denizen re-exports of imported cloth.[85] Between August 1377 and Michaelmas 1399 Hanse cloth exports from Boston averaged just under 2,000 per annum, an increase of one third on the earlier combined Boston/Lynn figure. A slightly higher average for the 1390s alone reflects the inclusion of previously untaxed straits, but this factor is not as distortive of the true trend as in London. At Boston straits were not a major export and kerseys even less so. On the other hand, some merchants still exported worsteds, which were not counted among the enrolled short-cloth figures. It is difficult to set a value upon exports, but it is quite clear that in the late fourteenth century this *Kontor* had a comfortable surplus of imports over exports.

Almost all Hanse cloth went to northern or eastern Europe. In 1386–7 even James St George and John Noldman, Dinant merchants, seem to have exported substantial quantities to the Baltic.

[85] To judge from figures given in A. R. Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking: An Economic Survey* (London, 1982), appendix F, p. 118, Carus-Wilson and Coleman seem to have reduced the figures by 25 per cent to arrive at Hanse exports. This may be too much. Denizen exports at 1s (which can only be re-exports of foreign-made cloth illegally burdened with the 1303 custom) numbered only 15 in 1366–7 and 41 in 1371–2; alien imports in the former year were 118, but the trend was steeply downward.

Comparatively few merchants can be positively linked to specific towns, and the home ports of visiting ships are seldom given. From other sources it is known that Bergen trade was still dominated by Lübeck men and there is no doubt that this group ranked largest among Boston importers. In the long run there may have been a strong correlation between importers and cloth exporters, but within the shorter time-scale of surviving particulars the correlation is very variable. The same is true of the ships employed in these trades, so that no single account provides a picture which is entirely typical. Between 6 December 1383 and Michaelmas 1384 fifteen individuals (none of them ships' masters) imported Bergen goods to the value of £1,620, but only four recur among the twenty-five who in the same period exported cloth to the value of £2,253.[86] A second example shows that between 28 November 1386 and 28 November 1387 Bergen goods were imported to the value of £8,844, of which £894 were owned by ships' captains and sailors and the rest by forty-nine or fifty merchants.[87] Only nine of the latter appear among the seventeen Hanse merchants who exported cloth worth £4,407. Of the fifteen ships employed in the import trade only two obtained a cargo when they left; one entered 4 February and left 20 February with £2,499 of Hanse cloth, the other entered 16 February and left 1 April with £247 of Hanse cloth and £220 of denizen cloth; on 30 April the former of these left again with another ship, between them carrying Hanse cloth worth £1,828, no incoming voyage having been recorded for either of them on this occasion. A final example is provided by the account for Michaelmas 1390 – Michaelmas 1391.[88] Bergen imports worth £3,779 were owned by eighty-two merchants, save for £2 credited to a ship's captain. Cloth exporters numbered seventy-two, virtually all of whom appear also in the list of Bergen importers. Out of five ships which brought Bergen imports on 13 November, three left on 4 January and a fourth on 18 February with a total of 1,004 Hanse cloths and 312 worsteds, and 35 denizen cloths. On 4 April two of these same ships again appeared with Bergen imports and left on 8 and 18 May with 629 Hanse cloths and 135 worsteds, and 133 denizen cloths. Yet another made a return appearance on 1 August, possibly from the Baltic, and left again for the Baltic on 20 August with 270 denizen and 17 Hanse cloths. Despite the large number of merchants' names which may be culled

[86] PRO, E122/7/17. [87] PRO, E122/7/19. [88] PRO, E122/7/22–3.

from the Boston particulars it is likely that many of them seldom or never set foot in the town, their business being managed by factors or commission agents. In 1407, when writs of *venire facias* naming fifty-four Hanse merchants were sent to the sheriff of Lincolnshire, only seven came in person to defend themselves in the king's Chancery.[89] The headquarters of most of them, in so far as it was not in their home towns, was the Bergen *Kontor*, and this seems to have induced a reluctance to contribute the costs of the London Steelyard. However, in 1383 representatives of the *Bergenfahrer* and the alderman of the Boston *Kontor* met with Steelyard officials and the aldermen of the Hull and Yarmouth *Kontore* and agreed to pay scot to London.[90]

Relations between established members of the *Kontor* and the townsfolk of Boston were probably amicable and numbers of the former enrolled in local gilds and became benefactors of town churches. Competition between the two groups was limited on the import side, since Bostonians apparently made no attempt to break into the lucrative Norway trade, while they enjoyed a relatively free hand in the Baltic and the Low Countries. In the case of exports, denizens dispatched on average 750 cloths a year through Boston port in 1377–91 and 817 per annum in 1391–1402. All surviving particulars testify to the fact that the vast majority of this cloth was going to the Baltic and very little to the Low Countries or south-west Europe. The 1386–7 account, which exceptionally records the destinations of some outward bound vessels, shows that between August and October seven went to Bordeaux with wheat worth £304, but no cloth; two earlier sailings with £149 of wheat and no cloth may also have gone there. In 1390, however, a ship left with 16 cloths on 1 September and returned on 10 November with Gascon wine. The reliance of Boston-based cloth exporters on the Baltic was a cause of potential rivalry between them and the Hanse merchants, though in practice this may not have been serious. It is likely that most of the Hanse cloth was destined for markets in the western Baltic and, while some denizen cloth was undoubtedly going to this region, Bostonians were also exploring the Prussian market. When English-owned property was arrested in Prussia in 1385 the Boston share was less than that of any other port. One source gives a figure of £300 for Boston and Coventry goods, while another gives

[89] *HUB*, 5, no. 779.

[90] Lappenberg, *Urkundliche Geschichte*, 2, no. 41.

£206 11s 4d for twelve Boston men and £98 13s 4d for one from Coventry.[91] Several Coventry merchants can be identified in surviving Boston particulars. Prior to this incident, between 6 December 1383 and Michaelmas 1384 thirteen ships had imported east-Baltic wares to the value of £1,166 (23 per cent of all imports subject to poundage in that period). Only £74 was credited to ships' captains, among whom any denizens are not readily distinguishable from aliens, but most, and probably all, of the twenty-seven merchants who shared the remainder of the cargoes were denizens. Among them, with goods worth £269, were six of the Bostonians involved in the later Prussian seizures. The absence of Skanian herring from this account is not significant; the 1383 imports of herring may have appeared before 6 December; the main shipment of denizen cloth, £1,262 in one vessel in August 1384, was clearly synchronised with the next season's Skania fairs; seven of the Prussian 'arrestees' had cloth on this ship to the value of £273. No goods from the east Baltic were imported either by denizens or aliens between 28 November 1386 and 28 November 1387, during the Anglo-Prussian dispute, but the account covers part of two seasons of the Skania trade. In December 1386 three ships held herrings worth £608, of which £61 belonged to captains and crewmen and the rest to twenty-seven denizen merchants. In October and November 1387 two shipments worth £391 belonged to Hanseatics, but five others worth £651 belonged to twenty-one denizens, except for £57 credited to captains and crews. Two vessels which left on 15 August 1387 with cloth worth £1,044 belonging to eleven denizens and £381 to the Hansard John Noldman returned with herrings on 30 October, but of this group of exporters only Noldman and three of the denizens had returned any herrings by 28 November. Between Michaelmas 1390 and Michaelmas 1391, when Anglo-Prussian relations were back to normal, twenty-six denizens sent 487 cloths to the Baltic in January, February and May, but all went in company with Hansards in three ships employed in the Bergen trade, which may mean that they were going to the western Baltic. The next consignment, of 523 cloths belonging to thirteen from the previous group and fourteen new men, left on 20 August and one of the three ships now employed returned with herrings on 10 November. Any returns made by these cloth exporters later than 8 December 1391

[91] *HR*, I (iii), no. 404.

are not known, but twenty-nine denizens (including eight of the August contingent) shared ownership of herrings worth £494 imported on 10 November. In 1397–8 the chronological shipping and shipment pattern of denizen cloth exports was slightly greater than in earlier examples, but out of a total of 800 the most significant shipments were 160 in a Hanse ship in February, another of 87 in April and a total of 462 in five ships on 2 September, suggesting that the gearing of denizen trade to the Skania fairs was still significant.

The northern *Kontor* of the Hanse was at Hull, but as in the early fourteenth century there was some settlement in the hinterland. Henry Wyman, whose trade is recorded in many of Hull's customs particulars between 1378 and 1399, married a daughter of the mayor of York, became a freeman of the city in 1387, was granted denizen status the following year and was himself thrice mayor in the early fifteenth century.[92] Wyman's career was far from typical and must certainly have led to his renouncing membership of the Hanse. The scale of Hanse activity in Yorkshire must be deduced chiefly from totals of cloth exports. The first separately recorded figure in 1360–1 was 35, increasing to 62, 107 and 169 in the next three years, an average of 327 during the next two years, but then falling back to an average of 139 from 1366 to 1372. Between 1379 and 1391 they averaged 319 a year, but despite the inclusion of newly taxed straits declined to an average of 272 over the next eight years. Fragmentary tunnage and poundage accounts show that some straits as well as a few worsteds were regularly exported, but by far the greatest part of the cloth consisted of standard broadcloths of assise, typically valued at less than 30s each. Since the Hanse exported little but cloth, the value of this trade can be clearly defined. Identifying the origins of the merchants and putting a value on imports is hampered by the poor state of most of the surviving particulars. The earliest, 1378–9, shows that trade continued throughout the current crisis in Anglo-Hanseatic relations.[93] Cloth was exported despite the prospect of having to pay full alien rates, while eleven Hanse ships imported alien-owned herrings worth £200, general Baltic wares worth £193 and 16 cwt of wax; at least two other Hanse ships also appear in the heavily damaged export account. Four of these ships belonged to Lübeck, one to Kampen and the remainder were all Prussian, five from Danzig and one each from Elbing, Königsberg and Braunsberg.

[92] J. N. Bartlett, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of York in the Later Middle Ages, 1300–1550' (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1958), p. 456. [93] PRO, E122/59/1.

The last particular of this period, for tunnage and poundage levied between Michaelmas 1398 and 15 September 1399, is the only one for a complete year which is almost perfect.[94] This was an exceptionally poor year in Hull's trade and details may therefore not be typical. Among the total of eighty-one incoming vessels were twelve Danzig and one Elbing ship, but none from other Hanse ports; only four of these found a cargo for their outward voyage, though one other Danzig ship is also recorded in the export section. Two Oslo-owned ships imported small cargoes, but there is no indication that Hull had any stake in the Bergen staple trade during this period.

Hanse merchants regularly imported goods from the Low Countries, and individual consignments, especially of battery and copper, were sometimes substantial, though they were an insignificant element in total imports from this region and a small part of total Hanse trade. Most Hanse trade was geared to the Baltic and the preponderance of Prussian ships, plus a disproportionately large element of ships' captains' trade, suggests that most of this was in the hands of the eastern bloc. Even so the greater part of the Baltic trade was firmly in the hands of denizens. Despite the attraction of the Prussian market for cloth exporters the possibility of some sale in the western Baltic cannot be ruled out, and the west provided more imports than the east. Yorkshiremen were the largest group among the Englishmen whose goods were seized in Prussia in 1385.[95] The first schedule of claims listed thirty separate items totalling £1,617 on behalf of thirty-three York merchants, and eleven totalling £306 for twelve Beverley men (though two of the latter seem actually to have been inhabitants of Hull). During negotiations the York details were somewhat altered and the agreed total reduced to £1,151 15s 1d, but Beverley submitted an extra claim and its total went up to £324 6s 8d. Additionally, a number of factors sojourning in Prussia on behalf of merchants of both towns submitted claims for alleged physical assaults. While Yorkshire merchants clearly valued trade with Prussia, it is dangerous to conclude that this was the principal market for the very substantial amounts of denizen-owned cloth shipped from Hull in the late fourteenth century. Although it is impossible to determine the proportions of exports going to different regions, much was undoubtedly going to Gascony. Those

[94] PRO, E122/159/11.

[95] *HR*, 1 (iii), no. 404.

who exported regularly through Hull spread their capital very widely and it is unlikely that there were many who were totally dependent upon the Baltic markets. In this respect Hull differs markedly from both Boston and Lynn.

The origin of all imports can be established more precisely than the destination of exports and, while a great deal came from the Low Countries, the parallel importance of the Baltic is beyond dispute. Prussia provided some imports but the greatest part generally consisted of Skania herrings. In 1398–9 the total value of Hull's imports, other than wine, was £3,550, of which £1,715 came from the Baltic. Englishmen imported herrings valued at £1,153 and Hanse merchants another £84. The non-herring trade, totalling £478, cannot be precisely allocated between each group, though Englishmen owned much of it. A clear demarcation exists in the case of shipping employed in the import trade. Seven English ships (Hull three, York two, Beverley one, Newcastle one) were loaded with nothing but herrings, while a second Beverley ship had both herring and a substantial volume of Prussian produce. Three Prussian ships (one freighted exclusively by Englishmen) carried only herrings, while ten others had no herrings and carried all the non-herring Baltic imports, save those in the Beverley ship. The conclusion, that northern English skippers sailed to the Baltic frequently, or usually, with little freight but secure in the knowledge of a return cargo of herrings, is amply borne out by the more fragmentary customs particulars of this period. Each year the number of denizen importers of herrings was numbered in scores or even hundreds, so that while most owned only a small amount the total volume was large and very valuable. This probably means that many importers were passive investors, without an intimate knowledge of the Baltic. The homogeneous character of salted herring bought by a commission agent or skipper in Skania obviously minimised risk. The investment pattern on the export side was not so simple, since the marketing of cloth was less straightforward and probably riskier. The possible business or financial relationships between cloth exporters and the much greater number of herring importers poses an intriguing question, but no light can be shed on the matter here. Most of the herrings were clearly for the home market but re-exports, chiefly to Gascony, provided Hull's main export after wool and cloth.

The third provincial Hanse *Kontor* at Yarmouth was largely monopolised by Hamburg merchants, and the withdrawal of this

group in the early fifteenth century, which was recognised as a serious loss to the town, virtually put an end to Hanse trade in the port. The dominant role of Hamburg may be illustrated from the best of the few surviving tunnage and poundage accounts of this period, extending from 20 March to 26 December 1388.[96] On 15 May three Hamburg ships entered with typically northern goods valued at £1,218 and all left on 20 June with £1,344 in cloth and a little cheese; a fourth entered on 16 September with goods worth £276 and left on 18 October with £288 in cloth. Three other Hamburg ships appear as either inward or outward bound with small cargoes owned partly by their captains and partly by natives of Yarmouth. There was no shortage of vessels from other Hanse ports at Yarmouth but, unlike those of Hamburg which were associated with the regular trade of the *Kontor*, the former generally appear to have had a more casual role. Within the period under consideration a Danzig ship brought in £80 of German-owned Baltic goods in September and left with a small cargo of denizen strait cloth and red herrings; another left on Christmas Eve with a little denizen cloth; a Rostock ship came in with German-owned salt and canvas, no doubt from Brittany, and left with denizen salt and wheat; two Lübeck ships also left with small denizen cargoes. The dominant role and regular trade of Hamburg merchants is amply borne out by the town's local customs accounts, though the nature of the sources precludes quantification. Unfortunately, the king's petty custom at Yarmouth was farmed from July 1362 to the end of the fourteenth century. Before that the Hanse do not seem to have exported any cloths of assise, but had a thriving trade in worsteds and straits, manufactured in Norwich and the surrounding region. Because of the method of taxation, figures are not recorded.

While most of the goods imported by Hamburg merchants originated in the Baltic, the natives of Yarmouth may have been in something of a quandary about personal involvement in that region. The principal English return from there was herrings, but importing herrings to Yarmouth was the medieval equivalent of carrying coals to Newcastle. Although its greatest period of prosperity was already past, the town remained the chief centre of the English herring fishing and curing industry. Whether it was the decline of the North Sea fishery which led English merchants to go to Skania, or vice

[96] PRO, E122/149/22.

versa, Yarmouth must have regarded the Baltic fish as a detestable rival. On the other hand, the Baltic had proved itself as a market for cloth and the Norfolk industry could not and did not ignore it. Yarmouth itself was not involved in the attempt to reach a settlement with Prussia after 1385 but Norwich, for which Yarmouth was the outport, figures prominently. Fifteen merchants submitted claims totalling £938 for confiscated property, of which ten totalling £731 were accepted.[97]

Lynn was a nodal point in the burgeoning Anglo-Baltic trade, but there was no established Hanse *Kontor* in the port in the late fourteenth century. An explanation may lie in the fact that Lynn men were keen to exploit the trade on their own account and did not welcome Hanseatic merchants. They were also foremost among England's attack on the Hanse monopoly of Bergen trade. The merchants of Bremen, a town expelled from the Hanse organisation in 1275 and re-admitted only in 1358, were excepted from any general hostility. They were the only group which traded regularly, though modestly, at Lynn after establishing a connection in the early 1380s. In 1387 a Bremen ship making for Lynn inadvertently came ashore near Grimsby and, not being known locally, was placed under arrest. It was released after security was given to proceed to Lynn. The Lynn authorities in certifying the Exchequer of its arrival confirmed that the master and merchants had been coming regularly to the town for five years and more and were regarded as 'friends and well wishers of the king'.[98]

The claim for damages submitted by nineteen Lynn merchants in the aftermath of the arrests in Prussia in 1385 totalled £1,913 3s 4d, the largest of any town, though it was whittled away to £1,027 13s 3d.[99] Undeterred, many of these men continued to trade there and figure prominently in the surviving customs particulars of the 1390s, which prove that the town was staking its prosperity on the Baltic and Norway markets. Between 1 April 1390 and Michaelmas 1391 forty-three of Lynn's own ships entered the port with cargoes from foreign parts;[100] eight brought wine from Gascony, five salt (probably from the Bay) and two lampreys; this leaves two from Norway with stockfish (£653), four from Skania with herrings (£1,355) and twenty-two with general Baltic goods (£1,503). But the town's own ships by no means sufficed to carry all the goods

[97] *HR*, 1 (iii), no. 404. [98] *CCR*, 1385–9, p. 600. [99] *HR*, 1 (iii), no. 404.
[100] PRO, E122/93/31; 94/12.

imported by its merchants and they had to charter an even larger number of foreign vessels for their exclusive, or nearly exclusive, use. In the former category four vessels (Danzig two, Wismar one, Osterdam one) carried stockfish from Norway (£1,180) and five (Danzig one, Wismar one, Hamburg two and Brill one) herring from Skania (£1,742). As in the case of English ships, a greater number of foreign vessels was needed to carry a smaller (by value) amount of general Baltic wares, forty-one bringing goods worth £2,313. Because of damage to the account, this last figure cannot be precisely divided into English and Hanseatic, but well over 90 per cent was English owned, with the rest belonging to captains and crewmen. Most of the ships carrying this general cargo were Prussian (Danzig twenty-five, Elbing one), with contributions from Bremen (two), Hamburg (three), Wismar (four), Stralsund (two), Kampen (one) and Veere (three). In comparison with this English trade exclusively Hanseatic ventures were few and far between. The only significant entries were two shiploads (£414) belonging to the Bremen group, and a Lübeck ship with £136 of cargo owned by a single merchant; four other vessels (Hamburg two, Wismar one, Stettin one) had cargo worth a total value of only £25. Finally, mention may be made of two Hanse ships importing salt from the Bay, one (Wismar) for English merchants and one (Königsberg) the property of the captain. A petty custom account for 12 February 1396 to 17 February 1397[101] confirms that the Bremen group was still active at Lynn, bringing in one ship with a cargo valued at £193. Fourteen other ships contained alien-owned Baltic goods though only one had a significantly high value (£93); most or all doubtless carried English-owned goods; only six ships are identified by their home port (five Danzig, one Osterdam).[102] A Bergen (Norway) ship with a small alien cargo was probably also chartered by Lynn merchants. The picture of Lynn as a town heavily dependent on Baltic trade is amply confirmed by the surviving export particulars of this period. Between 30 November 1390 and Michaelmas 1391 only five Lynn ships left the port with any goods other than cloth, though all carried cloth as well (cloth £190, other wares £145).[103] Since all carried re-exported northern goods, these were obviously not bound for the Baltic; the most likely destinations were Gascony or Calais. In the same period seventeen Lynn ships sailed with nothing but cloth, to

[101] PRO, E122/94/16.

[102] The identification of Osterdam is uncertain. Its skippers sometimes paid Hanse rates, which seems to rule out Amsterdam.

[103] PRO, E122/94/13.

a total value of £3,265. While we cannot be certain that all these vessels were bound for the Baltic, there is no doubt that the majority were going there. Out of ten ships which left between 27 January and 7 May six returned with Baltic goods within the period of this account, one on 20 May and five (including one which left as late as 7 May) on 26 June; on their outward leg these six ships had carried cloth valued at £1,432. Of the remaining seven ships, four left on 10 August with cloth worth £1,231; had we a particular for the period after Michaelmas we would doubtless find some or all of these ships returning with herrings. In addition to the cloth which they sent to the Baltic in their own vessels, Lynn merchants dispatched cloth worth £597 and 7 tuns of wine in seven Danzig and three Wismar bottoms, in which they were virtually the sole shippers. Using the same criterion of Lynn ships laden only with cloth as primary suspects for the Baltic trade, in the period 22 February 1392 to 28 January 1393 we find seventeen ships carrying cloth to the value of £1,821, of which eight with more than £80 each accounted for £1,555.[104] In addition Lynn merchants dispatched cloth to the value of £1,670 in thirteen exclusively chartered Hanse ships (Danzig nine, Kampen two, Lübeck one, Elbing one). Lynn's stake in the Gascony/Calais trade in this period was substantially greater than before, though chiefly on account of grain exports, which totalled something like £900; cloth sent there came to just over £300, with small amounts of herrings, haberdashery, rice and a few other goods. This trade occupied eleven of Lynn's own ships together with four chartered from Yarmouth, Danzig, Greifswald and Stralsund. A few Lynn men also sent very small amounts of cloth to the Low Countries in Dutch ships. Finally, we may note the evidence of a petty custom particular, 12 February 1396 to 17 February 1397, in which cloth exports are recorded by number but not by value.[105] This was a disastrous period in Lynn's overseas trade and there can be no doubt that this is to be explained by the mass arrest of English ships in Danzig between February and August 1396.[106] In these twelve months denizens dispatched 153 cloths and 17 worsteds (which cannot have been worth more than £300) in nine Lynn ships and one from Newcastle; these ships may or may not have carried other goods, but are unlikely to have been going to Prussia. On the other hand Lynn merchants did commit 100 cloths and 68 worsteds to four Danzig ships. The only remaining denizen cloth exports in

[104] PRO, E122/94/14. [105] PRO, E122/94/16. [106] See above p. 74.

this period were 8 in a Bergen (Norway) ship and 28 in two Dutch ships. The conclusion to be drawn from these particulars is that Lynn merchants sent their cloth overwhelmingly to the Baltic, chiefly to Prussia. They did not much cultivate other markets, so that when there was trouble in Prussia exports were bound to suffer. Because of the practice of customs farming, the Exchequer enrolled accounts have no record of denizen-export totals from Lynn until Michaelmas 1394. Between then and Michaelmas 1399 (but excluding February 1396 to February 1397, with a total of only 289) the average denizen export was 1,602 per annum.

Hanseatic-owned cloth exports from Lynn averaged 200 a year between April 1392 and Michaelmas 1399 and the total is unlikely to have been any higher in the earlier period of customs farming. The modesty of the figure is explicable by the fact that only the Bremen merchants exported regularly, while the balance consisted of a small-scale, casual trade largely in the hands of captains and crewmen. In the period 30 November 1390 to Michaelmas 1391 this Bremen group exported cloth valued at £193 in one ship, in February 1392 to January 1393 £258 in two ships, in February 1396 to February 1397 111 cloths and 23 worsteds in one ship. In the same three periods the total cloth exports of other Hanse merchants was £25, £50 and 99 cloths, spread over six ships which also held denizen-owned cloth and fourteen which did not, while the total of twenty was a minority of all Hanse vessels leaving the port.

Surveying briefly the remaining English ports we find that at Newcastle Hanse cloth exports were few and far between, and in the 1390s still averaged no more than 21 per annum. On the other hand a fair number of surviving particulars prove that cloth figures are not here a reliable guide to overall Hanse trade since, exceptionally, the value of other exports frequently exceeded that of cloth. There was also a regular and not insubstantial import trade. Newcastle-owned ships occasionally ventured to the Baltic, but there is little to show that the town's merchants made much contribution to the English eastward thrust. Ipswich is something of an unknown factor in this period, since its petty custom was farmed with that of Yarmouth until the beginning of the fifteenth century. One of the members of this port was Colchester, an important cloth-making town from which three merchants submitted claims totalling £104 for losses in Prussia in 1385; £43 was proven.[107] A Hadleigh (Suffolk) merchant

[107] *HR*, I (iii), no. 404.

who claimed £67 also probably traded through Colchester or Ipswich. No Hanse merchants appear in two short tunnage and poundage accounts of the 1380s, but a cargo of herrings worth £191 imported by seven denizens in a Zierikzee ship on 6 December 1386 is at the right time of year to have come from Skania. A longer account for 1397–8 shows both denizens and Hanse merchants importing a wide variety of Baltic wares, but the scale of the trade was still comparatively modest.[108] At this time Gascony was probably a more important market than the Baltic for the Essex–Suffolk cloth industry and there is as yet no trace of the links with the fairs of the Low Countries, which were to develop a few decades later.[109] The enrolled customs accounts of Sandwich record infrequent and very small quantities of cloth being exported by Hanse merchants, while surviving particulars show that other trade was negligible before the end of the fourteenth century. Only at Southampton among the south-coast ports do the merchants seem to have made an effort to gain a trading foothold. The first recorded cloth exports were in 1382 and from then until 1399 averaged about 20 a year, though there were long periods without any. By chance, a customs particular survives for the year with the largest export (1390–1).[110] Of the total of 114 short-cloths, 12 were taken by one merchant in a Southampton vessel, 89 by six in an Elbing ship and 13 by two in a Lübeck ship. The Hanse may have been less interested in Southampton for cloth than as a potential market for herrings. Kampen ships had brought substantial quantities to the port at least as early as 1371–2[111] and the merchants tried to maintain the trade until well into the fifteenth century, despite the burden of local tolls which they complained were illegally levied against them. The only suggestion of any local interest in the Baltic is provided by the claims of a half-dozen Salisbury merchants for losses totalling £134 in Prussia in 1385 and a Winchester man for £43.[112] These probably exported through Southampton. There was no regular Hanse trade at the ports between Sandwich and Southampton or in any of those in the west country. Very occasionally a Hanse shipmaster ventured a cargo of salt to Bristol, and while such illustrations might be multiplied if all the customs records had survived intact, the total would remain negligible. The Hanse interest in England was overwhelmingly

[108] PRO, E122/50/30–2; 193/33.
[109] R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300–1525* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 54–71.
[110] PRO, E122/193/25.
[111] PRO, E122/137/19.
[112] *HR*, I (iii), no. 404.

directed at London and a handful of east-coast ports and the historian does not need to waste much time looking elsewhere.

To conclude this chapter an attempt will be made to set Anglo-Hanseatic trade into the general context of England's overseas trade in the second half of the fourteenth century, and to compare the achievements of Hansards and their English rivals not merely with one another, but also with those of other aliens and of English merchants whose ambitions did not extend to the Baltic and Norway. During this period the historian is able to cast his net more widely than before. Sources are enhanced by records of English-made cloth exports after 1347 and by accounts of tunnage and poundage, levied intermittently from that date and almost continuously from 1386. The importance of these is that for the first time they offer the possibility of studying the trade of Englishmen in commodities other than wool and hides. They do not give up their secrets easily, particularly poundage which in its enrolled form does not distinguish between denizen and alien trade. But by comparing one type of record with another and with the help of judicious estimates it is possible to gain some indication of the size of denizen trade.

The outstanding characteristic of England's overseas trade in the late fourteenth century is the beginning of the long drawn out decline in exports of raw wool. In the 1350s and early 1360s this trade enjoyed an Indian summer, during which exports averaged over 33,000 sacks a year, the best performance since the first decade of the century. Then the trade ebbed and by the 1380s and 1390s exports were running at fewer than 18,000 sacks a year. Despite intense debate it has been impossible for historians to agree on the causes of the decline.[113] Some of the consequences are beyond dispute. What was left of the trade fell largely into the hands of Englishmen, aliens being excluded by the politics of the staple. Only Italian merchants managed to hold on to a share. Hansards, who for a time in the early fourteenth century had been the largest alien group in the trade, were ousted completely. That they were able to weather the economic and financial consequences and retain an important stake in England's trade was no mean achievement. On the other hand one should not make too much of their astuteness in replacing wool exports with cloth; they were not unique in this.

[113] Lloyd, *Wood Trade*, pp. 314–16. Bridbury, *English Clothmaking*, pp. 90–7.

The growth of cloth exports is the second main characteristic of England's trade in this period. E. M. Carus-Wilson long ago provided an account of this development which became an orthodoxy.[114] She outlined a resurgence of native industry in the middle years of the fourteenth century, which displaced imported cloth in the home market and began to penetrate overseas markets. Interrupted by set-backs and periods of stagnation, growth in exports was slow until the 1380s, while in the 1390s there was an unprecedented boom. It is not disputed here that there was growth in the 1390s and a possible contributory factor will be discussed later. On the other hand it is suggested that the contrast between the earlier and later periods has been exaggerated by selective use of the sources. This *caveat* applies to exports as a whole and sectional shares. Carus-Wilson, for instance, wrote that cloth exports 'of the Hanse, still only 2,700 in the early 1380s, reached 6,300 in the early 1390s'.[115] This gives a very misleading picture of the true situation. The distortion has arisen from the tendency to measure the growth in exports simply from the receipts of the custom levied on cloths of assise. In the 1390s these were artificially increased by the inclusion of kerseys and straits (converted to notional assise cloths), which previously had not paid custom (though liable to poundage subsidy) when exported by Englishmen, and had paid a different sort of custom when exported by aliens and Hansards. Equally distorting is the fact that for some time after mid-century exports of worsteds (never incorporated in the assise cloth custom) were important, whereas by the 1390s they were very much smaller. These observations are not new, indeed Carus-Wilson herself was aware of them, but in her general assessment of export performance she pushed them into the background, and since then the tendency has been to overlook them completely. What they mean, however, is that cloth exports in the second half of the fourteenth century cannot be measured with great precision and the generally accepted picture to some extent distorts the truth.

Given the uncertainty about cloth exports, alien trade as a whole is best measured by the petty custom of 3d in the pound on the value of merchandise other than wool, hides, wine, wax and cloths of assise. This takes in exports, including all cloths other than those of

[114] E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'Trends in the Export of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century', in *Medieval Merchant Venturers* (2nd edn, London, 1967), pp. 239–64.
[115] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

Table 3. *Alien merchandise*[a] *charged at 3d in the pound and wax imports, 1351–99*

	All England		London		East coast		South and west coasts	
	Merchandise (£)	Wax (cwt)	Merchandise (£)	Wax (cwt)	Merchandise (£)	Wax (cwt)	Merchandise (£)	Wax (cwt)
Mich.–Mich.								
1351–2	17,955	21	8,244	16	8,206	5	1,505	0
1352–3	30,972	443	18,288	324	10,079	19	2,605	100
1353–4	37,955	490	16,586	288	16,420	202	4,949	0
1354–5	27,539	433	12,992	395	11,861	34	2,686	4
1355–6	37,189	140	19,179	125	13,980	15	4,030	0
1356–7	53,199	566	29,530	444	18,503	116	5,166	6
1357–8	48,283	575	24,137	555	19,160	20	4,986	0
1358–9	48,421	1,212	29,017	1,083	16,687	127	2,717	2
1359–60	48,290	603	28,126	599	17,204	0	2,960	4
1360–1	40,329	670	25,833	629	12,589	41	1,907	0
1361–2	46,972	229	27,012	213	16,878	16	3,082	0
1362–3	44,575	493	24,240	445	18,958	48	1,377	0
1363–4	52,229	425	32,855	398	15,578	27	3,616	0
1364–5	59,749	701	39,274	641	17,885	60	2,590	0
1365–6	67,886	857	39,539	785	24,609	61	3,738	11
1366–7	63,910	511	45,590	446	14,500	65	3,820	0
1367–8	65,305	1,213	45,628	1,082	17,001	131	2,676	0
1368–9	58,887	1,093	46,277	1,015	9,290	78	3,320	0
1369–70	62,750	1,120	42,738	1,035	18,989	85	1,023	0
1370–1	63,890	1,024	44,597	972	17,864	52	1,429	0
1371–2	94,790	1,762	69,160	1,605	20,674	157	4,956	0
1375–6			45,298	170				
1376–7			43,987	119				
1377–8			46,822	0	13,561	35		
1378–9	66,888	35	39,919	2	19,706	33	7,263	0
1379–80	70,659	214	45,588	186	19,470	26	5,601	0
1380–1	68,414	578	47,271	516	16,166	54	4,977	8
1381–2	82,625	572	47,868	501	19,860	71	14,897	0
1382–3	74,152	383	39,814	300	15,196	38	19,142	45
1383–4	72,308	999	44,721	929	13,527	51	14,060	19
1384–5	69,350	1,014	36,005	675	18,880	25	14,465	314
1385–6	72,696	680	45,410	314	16,495	39	10,791	327
1386–7	67,962	301	40,118	67	17,380	24	10,464	210
1387–8	62,236	164	43,763	30	7,171	8	11,302	126
1388–9	85,560	570	54,421	439	18,884	89	12,255	42
1389–90	70,130	652	47,953	595	14,369	9	8,940	48
1390–1	64,380	555	44,232	433	12,340	22	7,808	100
1391–2	64,049	1,421	44,307	925	11,399	61	8,343	435
1392–3	66,342	848	42,990	602	12,456	56	10,896	190
1393–4	57,524	269	39,938	171	11,661	32	5,925	66
1394–5	72,448	528	44,097	427	13,435	58	14,916	43
1395–6					13,654	33	11,763	15
1396–7			32,530[b]	229[b]	13,600	5	12,608	20
1397–8	51,652	269	34,272	188	9,180	3	8,200	78
1398–9	54,637	262	26,405	127	12,603	37	15,629	98

[a] Incorporates estimates for some gaps in accounts. Margin of error in totals is not significant. Gaps in this table are caused by customs farming or other gaps in accounts which are too serious to allow estimates.

[b] 10 Dec. 1396–Mich. 1397.

assise, but the bulk of it consisted of imports. Table 3 shows that from 1351 to the mid-1360s trade increased continuously and rapidly and then more or less stabilised at a level well in excess of £60,000 a year. The increase was most spectacular at London, which by the 1360s handled between two-thirds and three-quarters of all alien trade. Business at east-coast ports, predominantly Hanse, was many times that of the south and west where Hanse trade was insignificant. The petty custom of all England was farmed from Christmas 1372 to 1375, but full returns for most ports are not available for several years after the latter date. By the 1380s the general level of trade had increased again and fluctuated between £70,000 and £80,000 a year. This time the increase was concentrated at Southampton, which accounts for more than 90 per cent of the figures given for the south- and west-coast ports. The explanation is that civil war in Flanders between 1379 and 1385 caused Italian merchants to divert trade to the Hampshire port, and they chose to remain there even when more peaceful times returned to the Low Countries. West of England cloth replaced some of that previously bought in Flanders and there was a ready market for imports, including Genoese alum needed by the expanding English cloth industry.[116] During the 1390s receipts of the 3d custom fell back and the last two or three years of Richard II's reign have the appearance of depression, most noticeably at London. It has to be remembered that the change in the tax structure (1391) which increased the yield of the 1347 custom at the same time decreased that of the 3d custom by absolving some cloth exports from paying the latter duty.[117] Nevertheless, there is a distinct possibility that in the 1390s a decline in alien imports coincided with a real increase in alien cloth exports. How is this to be explained? Serious thought should be given as to whether any part of the change resulted from current English bullion legislation.

Bullion laws were first enacted in the early 1340s and required both alien and denizen merchants to import a specified quantity of coin or plate for each sack of wool exported. The immediate cause was a serious shortage of coin within the country, brought about by recent interruptions of the wool trade and the king's export of money to subsidise foreign allies. In the 1350s there was a great turn-around

[116] A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton, 1270–1600* (Southampton, 1951), p. 49.

[117] At London the transfer of kerseys from one account to the other would alone have caused a fall of several thousand pounds in the value of goods charged with 3d.

as the boom in wool exports and the successful prosecution of the war brought silver flooding into the country and new money pouring out of the mint (see table 4). Thereafter the tide slowly ebbed again. The trade balance dwindled but overall probably remained positive. What is true of the whole, however, is not necessarily true of all parts. Aliens increased their imports and therefore had more money to repatriate, but at the same time ground lost in the wool trade deprived them of opportunities for doing so. Their cloth exports did not yet suffice to fill the gap. Alien trade may well have been out of balance, with an import surplus being financed by letters of exchange, the export of specie being prohibited. By 1379 parliament was sufficiently disturbed by a deterioration in the balance of trade to enact a new bullion law, though this was limited to the period which should elapse until the meeting of the next parliament, and it was not then renewed.[118] The parliament which sat from November 1381 to February 1382 appointed a commission to advise it on monetary matters. One consequence was a permanent ban on the export of money by exchange. The new law proved to be too severe and in the next parliament it was amended to allow the use of exchange in commerce. A joint petition of the commons and Italian bankers claimed that letters of exchange were essential to the smooth operation of the wool trade. There was no further action on monetary matters until December 1390, when a parliament still uneasy about exchange effected a compromise with aliens. New legislation, generally termed an employment act, permitted the latter to transmit half the proceeds from the sale of imports by exchange, but commanded them to buy English goods for export with the balance. Furthermore, this parliament ordered that the staple be removed from Calais to England and by forbidding denizens to export wool created a monopoly for aliens. One of the intentions of the latter step may have been to provide aliens with the means of legally repatriating proceeds of import sales. For denizen merchants the cure proposed for the country's monetary ills was worse than the disease and in November 1391 they were re-admitted to the wool trade. It might be logical to assume that when their short-lived monopoly of wool exports was removed aliens had to increase other exports, i.e. primarily cloth, or reduce imports (or a combination of

[118] Lloyd, *Wood Trade*, pp. 242–4. T. H. Lloyd, 'Overseas Trade and the English Money Supply in the Fourteenth Century', in N. J. Mayhew (ed.), *Edwardian Monetary Affairs* (British Arch. Soc. Reports, 36, Oxford, 1977), pp. 96–127.

Table 4. *English mint output, 1303–99*

	Silver				Gold					
	Weight of coin (pounds)				London Weight of coin (pounds)		Calais Weight of coin (pounds)		Aggregate values in money of account (£ sterling)	
Period of account[a]	Total	Annual average	Origin of bullion[b]	Composition of coin[c]	Total	Annual average	Total	Annual average	Total	Annual average
1303–9	634,381	105,730	99% F	P99% F1% Hnegligible					642,362	107,060
9 Oct. 1311–21	259,705	25,971	99% F	P98% F2% Hnegligible					263,009	26,300
7 Oct. 1322–4	3,826	1,913	E negligible	P91% F9% Hnegligible					3,878	1,939
1324–7 May 1335	4,882	461	51% E	P26% H1% F73%					4,937	466
7 May 1335–41	10,865	2,006	83% E	H54% F46% PNil					11,449	2,114
1341–15 Dec. 1343	22,496	10,187	94% F	H97% F3% PNil					23,620	10,696
20 Jan. 1344–5	57,231	34,339		All P	3,448	2,069			111,185	66,711
1345–24 June 1351	37,521	6,525		P20% H77% F3%	9,810	1,706			180,387	31,372
24 June 1351–8 Apr. 1357	299,445	52,077			29,444	5,121			815,966	141,907
8 Apr. 1357–11 Feb. 1363	48,476	8,310			46,451	7,963			757,360	129,833
11 Feb. 1363–8	10,045	1,786			7,712	1,371	18,803[d]	3,406	410,281	72,939
1368–73	3,926	785			9,786	1,957	9,165[e]	1,767	289,172	57,834
1373–84	13,298	1,209			4,264	388	2,927[f]	266	124,487	11,317
1384–9	2,901	580			4,115	823	2,170[g]	635	97,888	19,578
1389–10 Oct. 1399	7,274	727			11,469	1,147	3,960[h]	410	240,536	24,053

[a] All periods of account start and end at Michaelmas (29 Sept.) except where stated otherwise.
[b] F = foreign coin, E = English.
[c] P = pence, H = halfpence, F = farthings.
[d] To 27 Aug. 1368.
[e] 27 Aug. 1368–4 Nov. 1373.
[f] From 4 Nov. 1373.
[g] To 17 Jan. 1390.
[h] 17 Jan. 1390–25 Aug. 1399.

both) in order to comply with the employment act. Some individuals may have been obliged to react in this manner, but the proposition cannot be substantiated for aliens as a whole. In aggregate they so over-subscribed to the requirement of the employment act that one must conclude either that it was enormously successful or was not necessary in the first place. An estimate of their trade (table 5) between 1391 and 1399 suggests that aliens imported values of around £70,000 and exported values of £66,000, a deficit of only 6 per cent of imports. Given the inevitably wide margins of error involved in the estimate, the deficit may easily have been less.[119] One of the biggest problems in determining the size of alien trade is the difficulty of obtaining reliable figures of non-Hanse alien cloth exports for the whole of Richard II's reign. The estimate given above uses the conventionally accepted figures, but it is possible that they are too low.[120] If that were the case then the value of alien exports would have to be increased and the deficit reduced.

Given the uncertainty about the spread of cloth exports between denizens and aliens in the 1380s and 1390s, it is even more hazardous to compare the overall trade of the two groups than it is to speculate about the alien balance of trade, but the task cannot be avoided. The exercise depends primarily on comparing total values of goods subject to poundage subsidy (everything except wool, hides and wine) with those of alien goods paying the petty custom. The first year, and for a long time the only one, in which this can be done is 1371–2. Table 6 shows the stages which lead to the conclusion that

[119] An increase in the estimated value of wool by £1 per sack would virtually eliminate the deficit.

[120] It is impossible to give an exact picture of non-Hanse alien cloth exports in this period because of accounting methods at London and Southampton, which between them handled almost all such cloth. At the former port denizen cloth can be distinguished from alien in only five years during Richard II's reign (1377–81, 1384–5); at the latter they are not separated in 1391–5. Carus-Wilson claimed 'considerable precision' (*Merchant Venturers*, p. 264) for her estimated division into denizen and alien at times when this is not given in the source. Nevertheless, the result is suspicious. This conclusion is based on a comparison of denizen performance in various ports before and after 1391. Using the *EET* figures, denizen exports for all England averaged 15,519 in 1379–91 and 23,487 in 1391–9 (but excluding 1395–6) – an increase of 51 per cent. There are only three important outlets (Hull, Bristol and Boston) where accounts survive for the whole period and also distinguish between denizen and alien. Their aggregate denizen export averaged 8,892 before 1391 and 9,384 thereafter – an increase of only 6 per cent. This implies that in the remaining ports (but overwhelmingly London) trade increased by 83 per cent. Such a regional disparity in performance is possible, but is it likely? The alternative is that Carus-Wilson overestimated denizen trade in London and underestimated that of aliens. In that event the improvement in other alien cloth exports in the 1390s was greater than implied by the conventionally accepted figures. How much of this was due to the employment act?

Table 5. *An estimate of the alien trade balance, 1391–9 (annual average)*[a]

Imports (£)		Exports (£)	
Merchandise[b]	54,998	Merchandise[b]	6,111
Wax[c]	1,200	Cloths of assise[e]	32,511
Wine[d]	13,845	Wool[f]	27,200
Total	70,043		65,822
	Import surplus £4,221		

[a] Excluding all data 1395–7, because of gap in London petty custom account.
[b] Merchandise charged at 3d in £. Split 90:10, imports:exports.
[c] 600 cwt valued at £2.
[d] 2,769 tuns valued at £5. Alien imports recorded only 1392–5, when they amounted to 15·4% of denizen plus alien total. That proportion applied to denizen plus alien total in other years.
[e] 17,058 valued at 35s Hanse, 40s other alien.
[f] 3,400 sacks valued at £8, including custom and subsidy.

the total value of commodities in denizen trade (other than wool, hides and wine) was around £113,000, compared with an alien value of about £105,000. The removal of cloths of assise gives figures of £100,000 and £98,000 respectively (largely imports, but with some exports). Denizens tended to export more miscellaneous goods than aliens, so it may be predicted that the latter led in the import field. On the other hand it cannot be stressed too strongly that this was a highly exceptional year, in which alien trade was by far and away the largest recorded in the fourteenth century. It was 50 per cent higher than that of the preceding six record-breaking years. Denizen trade cannot be compared with earlier periods, but this was a disastrous year for Englishmen. The renewal of war with France in 1369 had already disrupted trade with Gascony and Spain. This year (1371–2) wine imports were a paltry 5,998 tuns (4,795 denizen, 1,203 alien). Worse still, in August 1371 a simmering dispute with Flanders flared up, with arrests of goods and merchants on each side followed by a prolonged stoppage of trade between the two countries.[121] Dislocation in the wool trade lasted even longer than the breach with Flanders. The English government withdrew its

[121] Lloyd, *Wool Trade*, pp. 217–21. D. Nicholas, 'The English Trade at Bruges in the Last Years of Edward III', *Journal of Medieval History*, 5 (1979), pp. 23–61.

Table 6. *An estimate of denizen and alien trade (excluding wool, hides and wine), 1371–2*

	£	£	£
Total value of goods liable to poundage[a]	217,726		
Value of alien merchandise paying 3d[b]	94,790		
Denizen goods plus alien assise cloth and wax		122,936	
Value of alien assise cloth[c]		6,420	
Value of alien wax[d]		3,524	
Denizen goods			112,992
Value of denizen assise cloth[c]			12,583
Denizen imports and exports, excluding assise cloth			100,409

[a] London, 28 Oct. 1371–28 Oct. 1372. Provinces, 1 Nov. 1371–1 Nov. 1372.
[b] Mich. 1371–Mich. 1372.
[c] Denizen 8,388½, Hanse 2,015¼, alien 2,265½. Valued at 30s. Newcastle, Hull, Boston, Queensborough, Bristol, Exeter (12 Nov. 1371–25 Dec. 1372), Melcombe (28 Mar. 1371–Mich. 1372), London.
[d] Valued at £2 per cwt.

support for the monopoly of the Calais staple and there was a substantial, though temporary, increase in alien wool exports. Unfortunately, in this critical year the accounts of the main ports fail to distinguish between denizen and alien wool so that precise figures cannot be provided. From Christmas 1372 both the petty custom and the tunnage and poundage subsidy began to be farmed, but there is no doubt that trade generally continued to be depressed, with aliens benefiting at the expense of denizens.

Table 7 provides information similar to that in table 6 for the years 1391–9.[122] A definitive peace treaty with France was not made until 1396, but this whole period was peaceful and international conditions conducive to trade. Nevertheless, the average value of goods paying poundage was 11 per cent lower than in the disastrous year 1371–2; denizens had around £98,000 and aliens £95,000. Even more revealingly, when the values of assise cloths are deleted (leaving mainly imports), the figures become denizen £57,000 and

[122] Excluding figures for 1395–7, because of 14½ month gap in London petty custom account.

Table 7. *An estimate of the denizen trade balance, 1391–9 (annual average)*[a]

	£	£	£
Total value of goods liable to poundage	192,952		
Value of all alien goods liable to poundage	94,820		
Denizen goods liable to poundage		98,132	
Value of denizen cloth[b]		40,978	
Value of denizen general imports and exports			57,154

	£		£
Denizen general imports[c]	51,438	General exports[c]	5,715
Denizen wine[d]	75,975	Cloth[b]	40,978
		Wool[e]	120,000
Totals	127,413		166,693
Export surplus £39,280			

[a] Excluding all data 1395–7.
[b] 23,416 valued at 35s.
[c] Split 90:10, imports:exports.
[d] 15,195 tuns valued at £5.
[e] 15,000 sacks valued at £8.

alien £62,000. After due allowance is made for the transfer of some alien cloth from the 3d account to the 1347 account it is clear that alien imports, though substantially lower than those of the 1380s, were not much below those of the late 1360s. On the other hand, no such allowance needs to be made for denizen cloth. We are left with a denizen figure which is little more than half of that of 1371–2 and by implication even worse in relation to denizen trade prior to 1369. Can denizen trade have deteriorated so much?[123] However wide the margin of error it is difficult to escape the conclusion that in the late fourteenth century general imports into England declined substantially, with the bulk of the loss being borne by denizen merchants. In contrast the wine trade in the 1390s was fairly buoyant, imports averaging 17,635 tuns a year and denizens

[123] An alternative scenario is even more untenable. This is that before 1369 denizens imported little merchandise because they were bringing in so much bullion, but in 1371–2 imported less bullion and more goods. This is unacceptable because of the indisputable and massive increase in alien imports in 1371–2. Were it so then total imports in 1371–2 would have been far higher than in the 1360s, which is impossible.

handling around 85 per cent of the total.[124] The decline in wool exports was temporarily halted and denizens finally vindicated their claim to a near monopoly of the trade. Denizen earnings from wool and cloth exports comfortably exceeded their outlay on wine and other imports. Ideally, the balance should have been repatriated in specie, and a bullion law was intended to bring this about. The fact that the output of English mints, though but a fraction of that in the 1350s and 1360s, was rising again during the late 1380s and 1390s suggests that the law may have been partially successful. On the other hand the rigid bullionist policy maintained by Burgundy, England's principal trading partner, made it impractical for Englishmen to bring all their profits home in specie.[125] It was for this reason that aliens importing to England were allowed to export up to half of the proceeds by exchange.[126] This was a necessary corollary to Englishmen's having to repatriate some of their overseas earnings by exchange. Net earnings of Englishmen more than covered the export deficit of aliens and the nation's balance of trade remained positive, though much less than in the heady days of the 1350s and 1360s.

If it were possible to break down alien trade into Hanse and non-Hanse components the former could be compared more directly with the trade of Englishmen, but this can be done only in the case of cloth exports. On the basis of the figures used above, between 1379 and 1391 denizens owned 66 per cent of total cloth, Hansards 13 per cent and other aliens 21 per cent; from 1391 to 1399 the shares were 58 per cent, 16 per cent and 26 per cent. The Hanse share of all trade was obviously less, since they now exported no wool and imported little wine. In the absence of more detailed figures, but drawing upon earlier descriptions, the conclusion must be that at this time Hansards were probably not a major threat to the livelihoods of English merchants and certainly not the main threat. Leaving aside the Mediterranean, the geographical pattern of England's trade may be divided roughly into three. In the south-west (Iberia, Gascony) there seems to have been a tendency to mark time and in

[124] Total import figures survive for all years, but the denizen/alien ratio only for 1392–5.

[125] J. H. Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold: The Struggle for Bullion in Anglo-Burgundian Trade, 1340–78* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 43–63. Munro's figures for English mint production have to be corrected by figures given in Lloyd, *English Money Supply*, p. 119. But it should be noted that the latter wrongly noted a gap in the Calais mint accounts (the figures themselves are complete).

[126] Unless the English could wrest more of the import trade away from aliens.

any event there is no question of Anglo-Hanse competition here. In trade with the Low Countries Englishmen may have lost ground to aliens, but while the Hansards had some share their role was as yet relatively small. On the other hand, in the Baltic where Hansards were their direct and principal rivals Englishmen put up a better performance than they did anywhere else in this period. Starting from little or nothing in the middle of the fourteenth century they built up a substantial export and import trade. In terms of strictly Anglo-Baltic trade (i.e. disregarding the Hanse imports from Norway) Englishmen appear to have been the more successful of the two groups. Here they established the first English trade organisation after the Fellowship of the Staple – and that in the face of local hostility. One suspects that some of England's most enterprising merchants must have been involved in these ventures. Earlier, credit was given to Hanse merchants for retaining a niche in England after being driven out of the wool trade. Surely the Englishmen deserve greater plaudits for their achievement.