

“Pirates, robbers and other malefactors”

The role played by violence at sea in relations
between England and the Hanse towns, 1385 – 1420

Submitted by William Marcus Edward Pitcaithly to the University
of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Maritime History, February 2011

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgment.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signed:

ABSTRACT

The period 1385 – 1420 was an eventful and significant one in Anglo-Hanseatic relations. At its beginning, the English mercantile presence in the Hanse towns was only a few years old, and no real basis for a trading and diplomatic relationship had been arrived at, when an English act of aggression brought into play the issue of piracy and other violence at sea, which would henceforth be one of vital importance in Anglo-Hanseatic relations; it saw the heyday of several notorious pirates, and new policies for their suppression on both sides of the North Sea. Hitherto these years have been treated in this context only as part of examinations of much longer periods.

I approach the subject thematically, with some chronological divisions within chapters, examining separately violence by English, Hansards, and third parties, non-violent reprisals, regional and social divisions within England and the Hanse, the Vitalienbrüder, the role of the law, and other factors.

This thesis will argue that the impact of specific phenomena, particularly the activities of the Vitalienbrüder, on Anglo-Hanseatic relations has been not only neglected but misunderstood, and that attention to English sources can help flesh out our understanding of the Vitalienbrüder's history. The thesis will further argue that the most important factor in determining the nature of both violent incidents and the response to them, and the broader tenor of Anglo-Hanseatic relations, was the political and economic rise of the English merchant class in the decades following the Black Death. I propose that the two principal issues in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, reciprocity of resident merchants' rights and piracy, were inextricably entwined with the fact that the group principally affected by both wielded, in this period, greater political influence

than ever before. Hence, the study of piracy's role in Anglo-Hanseatic relations is a window into the wider social, political, and economic history of the period.

CONTENTS

<i>List of tables</i>	p. 6
<i>Abbreviations</i>	p. 7
<i>Word count</i>	p. 7
<i>Summary</i>	p. 9
<i>Introduction</i>	p. 13
Chapter I: <i>Violence committed by Englishmen against Hansards</i>	p. 52
Chapter II: <i>Violence committed by Hansards against Englishmen</i>	p. 95
Chapter III: <i>Violence committed by or against third parties</i>	p. 110
Chapter IV: <i>The Vitalienbrüder</i>	p. 137
Chapter V: <i>Internal divisions</i>	p. 177
Chapter VI: <i>The role of the law and the courts</i>	p. 207
Chapter VII: <i>Non-violent reprisals for violent incidents</i>	p. 231
Chapter VIII: <i>Other factors</i>	p. 248
Chapter IX: <i>1420 and after</i>	p. 274
<i>Conclusion</i>	p. 287
<i>Appendix</i>	p. 296
<i>Bibliography</i>	p. 299

“... to assemble and man all ships, barges and boats of [town’s name], and proceed with them and others willing to join them for the purpose of attacking, arresting and committing to prison, pirates, robbers and other malefactors who have assembled and in divers vessels put to sea to lie in wait for merchants and have pursued them from port to port, wounding, killing, robbing and imprisoning until ransom made.”

~ Commission to groups of leading citizens in various English ports to deal with the menace of the German *Vitalienbrüder*, 13th May 1398.¹

¹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Richard II* (London, 1905, 6 vols plus Supplement), Vol. VI, p. 366; see pp. 162-63.

List of tables

1	<i>Map</i>	p. 8
2	<i>Family tree</i>	p. 138
3	<i>Incidents in 1394, from the 1405 complaint</i>	p. 146
4	<i>Incidents 1395 – 1401, from the 1405 complaint</i>	pp. 153-55
5	<i>Incidents 1402-05, from the 1405 complaint</i>	p. 171
6	<i>Subsidies collected at Boston, 1377 – 1412</i>	pp. 297-98

Abbreviations

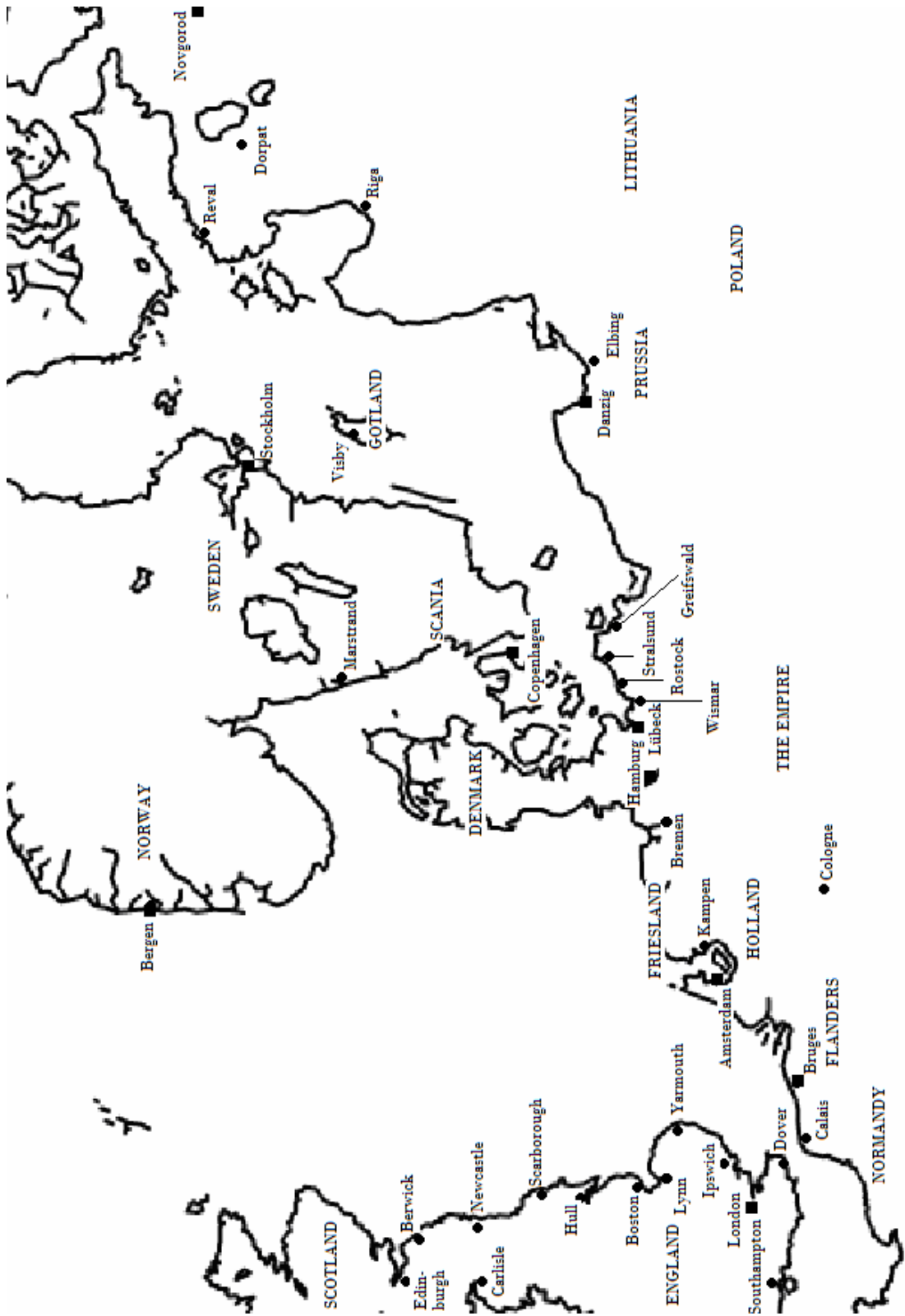
Some commonly cited titles have been abbreviated after their first appearance in the footnotes. Full publication details for each of these titles will be found in the Bibliography.

<i>C.Ch.R.</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i>
<i>C.C.R.</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
<i>C.L.B.</i>	<i>Calendar of Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall</i>
<i>C.P.R.</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
<i>O.D.N.B.</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>E.H.D.</i>	<i>English Historical Documents</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Hanserecesse</i>
<i>H.U.B.</i>	<i>Hansisches Urkundenbuch</i>
<i>T.N.A.</i>	<i>The National Archives</i>
<i>P.R.O.M.E.</i>	<i>The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275 – 1504</i>

Word count (excluding Bibliography and footnotes)

76,263

Table 1: MAP



Summary

It is my intention in this thesis to examine the part which violence committed on the seas played in diplomatic relations between England and the towns of the German Hanse, in the period between the Zwiyn incident of 1385 and the peace concluded between England and France in 1420. This includes not only violence committed by one relevant party against the other, but any violence committed at sea during this period which can be shown or plausibly surmised to have had an influence on these relations, or to have been influenced by them.

The Introduction deals with the reasons for examining this period in particular. Matters such as the nature of the Hanse, and the specific conditions which contributed to Prussia's unique status in relation to England, are sketched. A summary is provided of relations between England and the Hanse towns before and up to 1385, followed by a brief narrative overview of the changing state of those relations within the period under examination. I go on to outline the nature of the available primary evidence, and the reasons why the available evidence is of this nature. I then provide a sketch of contemporary attitudes to violence at sea and the circumstances surrounding it, and finish with an overview of secondary writing on the subject.

Chapter I deals with violence committed by Englishmen against Hansards. This falls into two main categories: violence which was officially sanctioned, and that which was not. The former is subdivided, dealing with:

- 1) English naval policy and its effects: both direct, as when royal ships deliberately attacked Hanseatic vessels, and indirect, e.g. the effect which English success or failure in keeping the sea at different points in this period had on the incidence of piracy.

- 2) Letters of marque and reprisal: although only one is known to have been issued in this entire period with specific reference to Hanseatic prizes, many were sufficiently vague in their wording to allow the taking of such.
- 3) The diplomatic crisis of 1402-05, and its effects on violence at sea.

Chapter II addresses the hitherto neglected area of violence (official and unofficial) committed by Hansards against English, not including attacks by the Vitalienbrüder.

Chapter III covers the part played by the violence of third parties (not including Vitalienbrüder) against both English and Hanseatic victims. In particular, this refers to violence arising from the conflicts between the Danish-Norwegian and Mecklenburg-Swedish monarchies, and between England and France. Other parties are also addressed (e.g. Scotland, whose seamen appear to have been blamed for some attacks of which the English and Hansards suspected each other).

Chapter IV deals with the pirates who came to be known as the Vitalienbrüder. The chapter is subdivided chronologically into sections dealing with the periods before the war between Denmark and Sweden ended in 1395; between that peace and their suppression in 1401; and after 1401 (the activities of surviving Vitalienbrüder, if any). The first two sections are further divided to address the impact of Vitalienbrüder attacks on English, Hanseatic, and third-party shipping respectively. The relevance of the first is obvious, as the Vitalienbrüder often sailed from Hanseatic ports; the second is important because of its effect on the Hanseatic economy, which in turn influenced international relations; and the third because of its effect on European geopolitics.

Chapter V falls into two sections, addressing respectively rivalries between English towns, and rivalries between Hanse towns. The former influenced the foreign trade of the individual towns, and their approach to such issues as the arrest of

Hanseatic goods; the latter is of a more demonstrably immediate importance, as the Hanse towns had considerable independence and often displayed striking disunity in their attitude to commercial and diplomatic relations with other powers, including England.

Chapter VI focuses on the role of court proceedings and the law in both England and the Hanse towns. This covers such issues as the arrest of goods and persons, orders of restitution, trials for acts of piracy (which was not a specifically defined crime in English law at this period, but could and sometimes did breach extant laws), and related issues.

Chapter VII addresses non-violent reprisals for violent injuries committed by Hansards against English or vice versa. This includes the great majority of such reprisals in this period.

Chapter VIII deals with factors other than violence at sea or matters directly related to it (such as legal action and other reprisals), which are nevertheless relevant: it is impossible to form a full understanding of the occasions on which violence was resorted to, and the reasons for it, without examining the cases in which it was not. These factors fall under three headings:

- 1) The trading rights of merchants, both resident and non-resident, in one another's countries, with specific reference to diplomatic demands for reciprocity in such trading rights.
- 2) The effect on diplomatic relations of taxes and duties (and vice versa) in both parties (as relating to each other's goods, each other's resident and non-resident merchants, their own merchants trading to each other's territory, and any other issue which could affect relations between them).
- 3) The role played by broader geopolitics and the relations of both England and

the Hanse with third parties (the German magnates, the Teutonic Order, the Scandinavian kingdoms, and others).

These are considered not only in terms of what effect these factors might have had on violence at sea (or vice versa), but also in terms of their own importance in Anglo-Hanseatic relations relative to that of violence at sea.

Chapter IX offers a summary of the situation in 1420, a short narrative overview of events between then and the Vorrath Treaty of 1437, and a glance at developments after 1437.

In the Conclusion, I summarise and assess the arguments arising from chapters I to VIII, before drawing the conclusions to which they point relating to the role played by violence at sea in relations between England and the Hanse towns between 1385 and 1420.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of the period 1385 - 1420

The period examined in this thesis is not chosen at random. Over the course of the preceding decades, the nature of the commercial relationship between England and the Hanse had been altered by the establishment of a significant English mercantile presence in the Baltic. This, combined with increased English competition in the cloth trade in Norway and the Low Countries, contributed to the end in the 1370s of the long period of growth enjoyed by the Hanse – although the latter was also the result of many other factors (detailed below).² It also meant that England and the Hanse now each had resident merchants in the other's cities.

This raised the issue of the privileges enjoyed by Hanseatic merchants in England – in particular, the members of the London Steelyard. English merchants trading to the Hanse towns naturally resented the fact that they were not accorded equivalent privileges. In 1377-78, England produced the Four Points,³ demanding: that the English should enjoy the same privileges in Hanse towns as Hansards in England; that they should enjoy the same privileges in Scania; that they should be relieved of collective responsibility (which the Hansards refused to accept) for the actions of individuals; and that a complete list should be provided of all the towns in the Hanse.⁴ This last not only would have prevented Hanseatic privileges being claimed by, or protection extended to, any towns omitted from the list, but would have made it much harder for the Hanse to disclaim collective responsibility for the actions of its members.

² Jacob, E.F., *The Fifteenth Century 1399 - 1485* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 356-58.

³ So dubbed by Postan, Michael M., "The Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse from 1400 to 1475", from Power, Eileen, and Postan, Michael M., *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), p. 106.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

“These four points contained the first clear statement of that programme of reciprocity which was to dominate the Anglo-Hanseatic policies in the subsequent hundred years”:⁵ then, on 12th May 1385, an English squadron under the command of both English admirals⁶ attacked and seized without provocation a Hanseatic fleet in the Zwiyn, setting off an unprecedented round of reprisals and counter-reprisals between the two powers. Thus, the beginning of this period was the beginning of a new phase in Anglo-Hanseatic relations.

The end of the period is also carefully chosen. The next real landmark in Anglo-Hanseatic relations may not have been until the Vorrath Treaty (named for the chief negotiator on the Hanseatic side, Heinrich Vorrath, Bürgermeister of Danzig) was signed in 1437: but it remains the case that 1420 was a significant date in the geopolitics of Northern Europe. The peace between England and France,⁷ at the time expected to be permanent, ended a war that had been the single most important constant in European politics, notwithstanding intervals of truce, since 1337. With it ended the main purpose behind the shipbuilding programme that Henry V had pursued since his accession in 1413. From 1421, the number of royal ships declined; after Henry’s death in 1422, the programme was abandoned, and ships rotted on the mudflats. Of course, naval policy had been directed primarily towards the war with France (successfully so: major naval victories had been won in 1416 and 1417): but it had had an inevitable effect on the incidence of violence at sea in general. The level of piracy in the North Sea, as well as in the Channel and further south, was, in Henry’s reign and for a few years after his death, at a lower point than it would reattain for decades afterwards.

It is also the case that, although there have been chapters and essays dealing with this period (as detailed below), it has not hitherto been examined at length and in detail:

⁵ Ibid., p. 106.

⁶ Until 1408, England had two admirals, of the Northern and Western Fleets, appointed annually.

⁷ The Treaty of Troyes.

whereas the decades after 1420 have been addressed rather more closely. It is between 1385 and 1420 that the subject still awaiting and requiring study is to be found. Furthermore, as a consequence of this lack of detail, previous historians have tended to fall back on assumptions and generalisations about the frequency, nature, and significance of piracy. The term itself, and its much abused relative “privateering”, have tended not to be examined closely; contemporary statements on the issue have seldom been subjected to analysis, and the study of the Vitalienbrüder in particular has suffered from a neglect of the evidence from the English side. It is my intention here to correct, as far as possible, these omissions, and to test the assumptions of the past.

What was the Hanse?

“The *Hansa Theutonica* is... a firm *confederatio* of many cities, towns and communities for the purpose of ensuring that business enterprises by land and sea should have a desired and favourable outcome and that there should be effective protection against pirates and highwaymen, so that their ambushes should not rob merchants of their goods and valuables... the *Hansa Theutonica* is not controlled by the merchants; on the contrary each city and each town has its own lords and its own magistracy by whom its affairs are directed. For the *Hansa Theutonica*, as has been shown, is nothing other than a kind of alliance between towns, which does not release the towns from the

jurisdiction of those lords who ruled over them previously: on the contrary they remain subject in all things to these lords as they were before, and continue to be governed by them.”⁸

Thus did the Hansetag define itself in 1469, in response to a memorandum from the English Privy Council. The letter rejects the terms *societas*, *collegium*, and *universitas* in favour of *confederatio* on the grounds that its constituent parts were not merged together, held no goods in common, had no common seal, and that the Hansetag itself was not a common council summoned by a designated authority, but a meeting held by mutual consent when it was deemed necessary. All of these facts were equally true in our period.

The Hanse had begun in the twelfth century as an organisation of merchants trading outside the German lands. It is generally accepted that the fourteenth century saw a shift from a “Hanse of merchants” to a “Hanse of towns”, in which the individual governments of the member towns became prime agents; they were first referred to as “towns of the German Hanse” in 1358.⁹ The *confederatio* described above cannot be said to have existed when the Hansards in England received their charters in 1303 and 1317. The English themselves show no awareness before the 1350s that “the German Hanse” meant anything more than the Kontor in London.¹⁰ It is hardly likely to be a coincidence that the Hanse evolved into a more political beast in the very period when merchants from outside the Hanseatic area, including Englishmen, were beginning to penetrate into the Baltic. An association of merchants had little power to protect its own

⁸ *H.U.B.* Vol. IX, no. 584; quoted by Dollinger, Philippe Jean (trans. D. D. Ault and S. H. Steinberg), *The German Hanse* (London, 1964), p. 412.

⁹ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, pp. 86-89; Lloyd, Terence Henry, *England and the German Hanse 1157 – 1611: A Study of Their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 2-7, 364-65.

¹⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 370.

privileges, and no authority to negotiate the privileges of others; an association of towns was an altogether more potent entity.¹¹ M. M. Postan puts it unflatteringly: the league

“existed in order to defend the economic foundation of the Hanseatic monopoly; its object was to organise military and political action against possible economic change and commercial competition.”¹²

The major towns of the central Wendish-Pomeranian circle – which would form the backbone of the Hanse – had formed alliances to suppress piracy and protect the interests of their merchants before.¹³ The same issue would help to complete and cement the transformation of the Hanse into a political association, when the towns collectively declared a “war” against pirates in 1376.¹⁴ By this time, the English presence in Hanse towns (notably Danzig) was significant, and pressure for reciprocity of privileges had become a major factor in Anglo-Hanseatic relations for the first time: hence, it was with the *confederatio* of towns, rather than with any body of merchants, that the English would negotiate.

Direct negotiation with the Hanse as a body, however, was far from always being England’s first resort. Increased awareness of the existence of the *confederatio* did not necessarily translate immediately into a full understanding of its nature; furthermore, it was often in England’s interests to exploit the league’s internal divisions, dealing with individual towns or regional powers at the expense of others. As we shall see in Chapter V, this tactic became increasingly commonplace in the early fifteenth

¹¹ Ibid., p. 365.

¹² Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 94.

¹³ Fritze, Konrad, and Krause, Günter, *Seekriege der Hanse* (Berlin, 1997), p. 97.

¹⁴ *Hanserecesse* I (i) 105, 150.

century, when the Hanse repeatedly failed to show unity in its dealings with England, and suffered in consequence.

The English relationship with the Hanse was most often articulated with its component parts rather than with the whole league. To some degree, this was necessarily the case, because there was no permanent leadership or representation of the Hanse; the closest approximation was the Hansetag when in session. There were direct dealings with Hansetags, although usually these more often involved Hanseatic approaches to England rather than vice versa; one notable exception occurred in 1405, when Henry IV's complaint detailing Vitalienbrüder depredations on English shipping was presented to the Hansetag rather than to, say, the governments of Rostock and Wismar – probably so that it could be used as a bargaining chip in negotiations to compensate Hanseatic victims of English piracy who came from cities quite unconnected with the Vitalienbrüder.

It would theoretically have been possible for policies set at Hansetags by mutual agreement, and considerations of the interests of the whole Hanse, to have bound the towns in their dealings with England. Yet it is apparent that this was not always the case. The English negotiating tactics over compensation for piracy in 1405 and 1407¹⁵ – dealing quickly with the complaints of some Hanse towns while leaving others to one side – demonstrate that a wedge could be driven between the towns even when they were supposedly acting in concert, and that the English negotiators understood this and knew how. In this very period, however, and afterwards, the English Crown displays an apparent misunderstanding of the nature of the Hanse, treating the Teutonic Order as if it ruled and could speak for not only Prussia but the whole league. It is tempting to speculate that this was deliberate, and part of the same policy of *divide et impera*

¹⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 120; Nash, Elizabeth Gee, *The Hansa* (Oxford, 1929), pp. 159-60.

demonstrated in the compensation negotiations: but there is no evidence that the confusion was not genuine. The English could understand that the Hanse was disunited and that towns had disparate interests without fully understanding how the league was organised or precisely how it functioned. If they had known exactly what the Hanse was in 1405, it would hardly have been necessary to ask in 1469.

Prussia

Of all the Hanseatic regions, none looms larger in the evidence than Prussia (with its satellite Livonia). Prussia-Livonia was unique: a monastic state, ruled by the crusading Teutonic Knights (who had absorbed the Livonian Brothers of the Sword in 1237), but containing several Hanse towns. Further complicating the issue was the fact that the largest of these towns, Danzig (modern Gdańsk), lay within Pomerelia, which the Knights had seized from the kingdom of Poland in 1308. Under the Treaty of Kalisz (1343), the Knights were recognised as the direct rulers of Pomerelia, but the Polish Crown remained nominally sovereign there. The union of the Polish and Lithuanian monarchies in 1386 formed a power which constituted a threat to the Knights' position, and when in 1410 open war broke out, Bürgermeister Arnold Hecht and former Bürgermeister Conrad Letzkau argued that the city should transfer its allegiance to the Polish Crown. They were beheaded for their trouble; but the power of the Knights was dented, and would ultimately be brought low by the Thirteen Years' War (1454-66), in which the Hanse towns of Danzig, Elbing, Kulm, and Thorn, allied with disaffected Prussian gentry and the Polish Crown, revolted, and finally secured the transfer of western Prussia to Poland, while eastern Prussia remained ruled by the Knights under

Polish suzerainty.

The relationship between the Order, the towns, and the Hanse, was complicated. Danzig and Elbing, like many Imperial free cities and similarly autonomous towns within the Hanse, governed themselves according to Lübeck Law: but each had a Commander appointed by the Knights, whose authority could override that of the elected Councils. Kulm and Thorn, on the other hand, were governed by Kulm Law, a code devised and handed down by the Knights in imitation of (Imperial) Magdeburg Law, and which allowed less autonomy than the Lübeck code (hence causing less contradiction with the rule of the Order). The Knights frequently involved themselves in Hanseatic affairs, particularly in relations with non-Hanseatic powers including England: sending and receiving embassies to discuss commercial relations and matters connected thereto; often working in concert with the towns, sometimes overruling them if their interests differed. This involvement is addressed in more detail in Chapter V. Whatever resentments there may have been in Prussian-Livonian Hanse towns over the Knights' involving themselves in these matters, the rest of the Hanse appears largely to have accepted it – although, when the Knights sought to speak for the whole Hanse, as in 1437,¹⁶ non-Prussian towns did not always go along with the agreements they reached.

The Vitalienbrüder

The Vitalienbrüder will have a whole chapter¹⁷ devoted to them later: but as they will frequently appear before that time, it is worth explaining the term and the history

¹⁶ See p. 277.

¹⁷ Chapter IV.

behind it here. The origins of the name are obscure: traditionally, it is supposed to refer to their role in supplying Stockholm during the siege by Queen Margaret of Denmark's forces,¹⁸ but contemporary evidence for this is lacking.¹⁹ The first written use of a term close to "Vitalienbrüder" occurs in a letter of 2nd June 1389, in which the authorities of Dorpat (modern Tartu in Estonia, an inland town, but sited on the navigable river Emajõgi) attempt to justify their building two ships for the "Vitalier".²⁰ However, the name does not appear to have become commonplace until after the end of the siege in 1395.²¹

The origins of the Vitalienbrüder themselves are inseparable from the origins of the war which gave them employment. Although, like all wars, this had many causes – most of which need not detain us here – it was principally a dynastic struggle for control of Sweden, fought between the united Danish-Norwegian monarchy under Queen Margaret, with the support of most of the Swedish nobility, and King Albert, from the House of Mecklenburg, who depended principally on the support of German merchants in Stockholm, and alliances with other German magnates such as the Count of Holstein. Wismar and Rostock, Hanseatic cities within the Duchy of Mecklenburg, had already avoided involvement in anti-piracy measures by the Hanse; and, when Albert's defeat in February 1389 left Stockholm as his supporters' sole hold-out in Sweden, they offered a haven to anybody who would attack Danish interests by sea. The result was predictable: adventurers, freebooters and mercenaries from all over Northern Europe flocked to Rostock and Wismar to take advantage of the offer.

The Vitalienbrüder grew massively powerful, able to sack Bergen on the night

¹⁸ Zimmern, Helen, *The Hansa Towns* (London, 1889), p. 126.

¹⁹ Alternatively, it has been suggested that the name derives from the fact that the pirate fleets were self-victualling: Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 101.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²¹ Bjork, D. J., "Piracy in the Baltic, 1375 – 1398", in *Speculum* 18 (1943).

of 22nd April 1393;²² by this time trade throughout the Baltic and eastern North Sea was hampered by their predations. The first direct reference we have to their attacks on English shipping, Henry IV's complaint to the Hanse in 1405,²³ refers principally to events in 1394, and specifically names the Vitalienbrüder's most notorious captains, Gödeke Michels and Klaus Störtebeker – otherwise not heard of in connection with the pirates until after 1395. The release of Albert and surrender of Stockholm to a neutral officer in the summer of that year put the Vitalienbrüder out of a job, whereupon all those of their officers who can be shown to have been Mecklenburg nobles disappear from the sources: but the activities of the pirates did not cease.

In Gotland, they survived the continued local struggle between the Mecklenburgers (Albert's son Erich himself taking to the sea) and the Danish representative Sven Sture, who – in 1395 an opponent of the pirates – eventually became their leader in Gotland. Not until March 1398 were they dislodged, by a massive amphibious assault conducted by the Teutonic Order in concert with the major Prussian Hanse towns.²⁴ Sture surrendered and abandoned piracy; but some four or five hundred men escaped to East Friesland, whose local chiefs had a long tradition of robbery at sea, of which the Hansards were the principal victims.²⁵

After various offensives and attempted agreements, in the spring and summer of 1400 an operation was undertaken by Lübeck, Hamburg, Bremen, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, and the Prussian and Dutch towns, with the backing of Queen Margaret (who threatened Keno with war if he did not withdraw his support from Störtebeker²⁶), to clear the pirates out of Friesland. They were given a respite by the Count of Holland's

²² Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 102. The date comes from Icelandic chronicles, as the Hanseatic sources are silent, while English and non-Hanse German references dating the sack to 1392 have been shown to be unreliable.

²³ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II., pp. 60-67.

²⁴ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 107.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁶ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 112.

connivance at their retreat to Heligoland, but it was brief: Störtebeker and Wichmann were captured and hanged off Heligoland in October 1400, while Michels and Wigbold were taken in March or early April 1401, brought into Hamburg and beheaded.²⁷ (The dates have been hotly disputed – which crew was destroyed first, and whether in 1400, 1401, or 1402, is or used to be a subject of considerable confusion – but Fritze and Krause have demonstrated the accuracy of the above dates to my satisfaction.) This is what is conventionally taken as the end of the Vitalienbrüder: whether they can be said to have existed after 1401 is still a matter of some doubt, and will be examined later.

The English political background: a narrative overview

This was a turbulent period in English politics. The expense of the Hundred Years' War, funded largely by taxes on overseas trade, had helped contribute to the rising power of the Commons, culminating in a direct clash between Commons and administration in the "Good Parliament" of 1376 and "Bad Parliament" of 1377.²⁸ The Bad Parliament's reversal of many of the Good Parliament's acts did set back the power of the Commons somewhat: but it remained a body whose goodwill and cooperation the King and Council required. During the early years of Richard II (1377-80), a series of Councils and a few powerful Household officials effectively ruled the country, and attempted to freeze the Commons out; but they were still able to secure the reversal in 1378 of Richard's initial confirmation of the Hanse's charter, end the cycle of continuous Councils in 1380, and even secure the promise of an inquiry into the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

²⁸ See p. 291.

finances of the Crown and Household.²⁹

The following year, England was rocked by the insurrections later termed the Peasants' Revolt. The wars with France and Scotland were expensive and achieving little, and the third poll tax of Richard's reign had been imposed that summer: this was a grievance that the rebels shared with the knights and burgesses in Parliament, but their much more radical demands suggest that taxation was not their foremost bugbear, and that they had little in common with the merchant class and still less with landowners. They sought an end to serfdom, and the restoration of "the law of Winchester" – either a mythical Anglo-Saxon constitution protecting popular liberties, or a statute of 1285 providing for self-defence and self-policing by local communities. Despite successfully entering London, and killing the Lords Chancellor and Treasurer, the rebels were dispersed after their leader Wat Tyler was killed and the fourteen-year-old King promised to accede to their demands and pardon their rebellion. Richard's promise was later formally withdrawn, and many rebels executed; serfdom remained in force.

Richard's assumption of majority and his marriage were followed by a period in which new courtiers and favourites of the King – in particular Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and Michael de la Pole, later Earl of Suffolk – became increasingly influential. When de la Pole requested a quadruple subsidy to counter the threat of French invasion in 1386, the Commons demanded his dismissal before any business could go forward; Richard scornfully refused. This time, the Commons acted in concert with aristocratic enemies of the favourites, and the King was compelled to back down. An increased subsidy was granted, though not as high as de la Pole had demanded.³⁰ This measure seems to have proved lucrative: in Boston, for instance, the poundage "take" rose from

²⁹ See pp. 176-77.

³⁰ Rigby, S. H. (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of Boston in the Reign of Richard II* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 54 n. Even in 1388, when Richard's enemies were in the ascendant, the subsidy was confirmed: *ibid.* p. 79 n.

£243 0s. 10¼d. in 1383/4³¹ to £1,040 4s. 2¼d. in 1386/7.³²

When in 1387 Richard sought to overturn the acts of the previous year's "Wonderful Parliament" by force of arms, he clashed directly with his aristocratic enemies, led by his uncle the Duke of Gloucester, and including his cousin Henry of Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt. These "Lords Appellant"³³ indicted five of Richard's favourites, including Oxford and Suffolk, for treason. Oxford, defeated in battle at Radcot Bridge, fled the country; the Lords Appellant effectively seized power, compelling Richard to accede to their demands. The Merciless Parliament of 1388 tried six of his favourites there present, and three who had fled (Oxford, Suffolk, and Alexander Neville, Archbishop of York), for treason. All save Neville were sentenced to death; the King's pleas for clemency on behalf of his former tutor, Sir Simon Burley, went unheeded.

On 3rd May 1389, Richard reassumed power. He was now twenty-one; and, although there had never been a Regency or a formal minority, and he had already proclaimed his personal assumption of power in 1381, this was for face-saving reasons claimed to be his assumption of majority. He was formally reconciled with the Appellants; Gaunt, who now returned from his private wars after spending three years trying to secure the throne of Castile for himself, positioned himself as mediator and conciliator. The succeeding years were dominated by rebellion in Ireland, and the search for peace with France; in 1396, a truce was concluded, in theory for 28 years, and Richard married the seven-year-old French princess Isabelle.

In July 1397, Richard suddenly had Gloucester and two other Appellants, the Earls of Arundel and Warwick, arrested. In September, a parliament surrounded by two

³¹ T.N.A. E122/7/17.

³² T.N.A. E12/7/19. On the other hand, considerable fluctuations in revenue from year to year appear to have been normal in any given town, and it is possible that local factors were at play here.

³³ So called from the *appeal* of treason which they lodged against the royal favourites.

hundred archers dutifully convicted the two earls of treason; Arundel was executed and Warwick exiled. Gloucester had already died in prison, probably murdered on Richard's orders. Their estates were seized, and many of them distributed among supporters of the King. Richard's rule now became increasingly arbitrary and autocratic; and, in September 1398, he imposed ten years' exile on Henry of Bolingbroke. When John of Gaunt died barely four months later, Richard moved to disinherit Henry and take over the Lancaster estates, before departing again to suppress rebellion in Ireland. In his absence, Henry invaded England, rallied support to himself (relying in particular on the powerful Percy family of Northumberland), and swiftly took control, executing key supporters of Richard, who, on his return, was taken prisoner and placed in the Tower of London. He refused to abdicate, but was nonetheless deposed; after the Epiphany Plot of January 1400 had failed to restore him to the throne, he died in prison, very possibly murdered.

Henry's early reign was dominated by war with Scotland and the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr in Wales, the largest Welsh rising since the English conquest was completed in 1282. The capture of many leading Scots nobles at Homildon Hill in 1402 rendered Scotland, for the time being, harmless; but quarrels over their ransoms drove a wedge between Henry and his Percy supporters. In the summer of 1403, the Percys joined with Glyndŵr and Edmund Mortimer, whose nephew and namesake had been Richard's heir presumptive and had an arguably superior claim to the throne, in rebellion. Their Tripartite Indenture proposed the division of the realm: many western English counties would become part of an independent Wales, while the Mortimer family ruled in the South and the Percys in the North. The alliance was heavily defeated at the Battle of Shrewsbury; Henry "Hotspur", eldest son of the Earl of Northumberland and effective leader of the Percy faction, was killed in the battle, his uncle the Earl of

Worcester executed, and Northumberland reconciled with the Crown.

For the moment rebellion was ended in England, though Wales continued unpacified for many years more. 1405 saw another rebellion by Northumberland, in alliance with Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York; it was crushed, and Scrope executed. (Northumberland would eventually die in a last-ditch revolt in 1408.) Meanwhile, in 1406, another victory was secured when James, surviving heir to the Scottish throne after the murder of his brother David, Duke of Rothesay, was captured aboard a Prussian ship by the Lynn pirate Hugh atte Fen. The news quickly put Robert III in his grave, leaving the captive James as King of Scots, and his uncle the Duke of Albany – probably responsible for Rothesay’s murder – as regent; the knowledge that Henry could at any time release James and provide military assistance to restore him to power kept Albany in line, and neutralised any remaining threat from Scotland. (It helped that Albany’s son Murdoch was also a hostage in England from 1402-16.)

From late 1406, following a face-off between Henry and the Commons over his expenditure, power largely passed to a Council effectively controlled by the Prince of Wales. Prince Henry would be the dominant figure in English government for much of his increasingly sickly father’s reign, although the King nominally retained full power, and dismissed his overweening son on 30th November 1411. Nevertheless, by the time Henry IV died in 1413, Henry V had long been in training to rule England.

What little domestic instability the new King faced was largely dealt with in the first two years of his reign. A rising of Lollard heretics, led by Henry’s former friend Sir John Oldcastle, was easily put down; former rebels in Wales were pardoned; a conspiracy aimed at placing Mortimer on the throne was quashed just before Henry’s departure for France in 1415, and its leaders executed. It was, famously, the French war that dominated Henry’s reign. His father’s later years had seen considerable English

intervention in France's civil strife, in which Henry had itched to be involved; his demands for the restoration of lands ceded to Edward III in 1360, and the hand of Charles VI's daughter Catherine, met with no diplomatic success. Although the victory over superior numbers at Agincourt on 25th October 1415 was the most famous event of his campaigns, it was not conclusive. Efforts both military and diplomatic continued, at ever increasing expense. It was only alliance with the Duke of Burgundy in 1419 that tipped the balance in England's favour; and, on 21st May 1420, the Treaty of Troyes was sealed, making peace between Henry and Charles. Henry married Catherine, and was declared heir to the throne of France; but the now disinherited Dauphin, who had been excluded from the treaty, continued to oppose him in the field. Henry would never live to be King of France, dying of dysentery on campaign only a few weeks before Charles' death in 1422.

The situation before 1385

As mentioned above, relations (both commercial and diplomatic) between England and the Hanse towns had taken a new turn in the 1370s. As well as English-inspired reasons for the end of Hanseatic growth, there had been factors such as the rise of rival powers in the region, including Denmark, Poland, and Muscovy, and the Dutch mercantile penetration of the Baltic. Furthermore, western German towns likewise acquired a mercantile presence there, creating competition within the Hanse and causing a failure of cohesion. For the first time, after nearly two centuries of Hanseatic expansion, the English were in a position to compete with the Hansards: and English merchants, coming to realise how poorly their position in Hanseatic towns – particularly

in Prussia – compared with that of their Hanseatic counterparts in England, began to organise against the Hansards, presenting a petition to Edward III in 1375 complaining of unfair treatment.³⁴ Meanwhile, there was something of an explosion in low to medium level piracy.³⁵

The Four Points followed in 1377-78; Richard II, who came to the throne in 1377 and was required to reconfirm the Hanse's charter,³⁶ was placed under pressure by mercantile interests in Parliament to refuse confirmation until the Hanse formally recognised that English merchants did at least have the right to trade in Hanseatic territory. This was not agreed, nor the charter confirmed, until 1380. (On 2nd March 1379, another Hanseatic petition had been presented. This one requested “restitution of undue customs charges made upon them against their privileges”, and followed this up with complaints of various ships seized in and out of port, and other violent incidents, in many parts of England's coast, as far back as 1371.³⁷) As with previous agreements, but still more than before, each side interpreted the settlement of 1380 to favour the other as little as possible. Injuries both piratical and civil continued.³⁸ I will argue that the increased political influence of the English merchant class in the latter decades of the fourteenth century was a vitally important factor, though not always the most important, in Anglo-Hanseatic relations and the role of violence therein.

Every aspect of the Hanse's foreign relations – arguably, every aspect of Hanseatic life – has to be considered in the context of the towns' complex relationship with the magnates of Germany and the neighbouring lands. The fact that several of the

³⁴ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 106.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 106.

³⁶ The original basis of the Hanse's liberties was the 1303 Carta Mercatoria, which applied to a long list of other aliens as well; their specific, greater privileges derived from a charter of 1317. It was the latter which was at issue in 1377-80.

³⁷ T.N.A. SC 8/116/5780.

³⁸ Jenks, Stuart, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen: Handel und Diplomatie 1377 - 1474* (Cologne, 1992), Vol. II, p. 493.

towns were subject to inland powers which were not part of the Hanse created divisions within the league, and considerable complications in its external affairs. Two examples in particular stand out. Wismar and Rostock, subject to the Duchy of Mecklenburg, found themselves as a result entangled in a dynastic war in Scandinavia, which spawned the most notorious pirate gang of this period; while the influence of the Teutonic Knights in the Prussian towns seems sometimes to have led the English to regard them as competent to speak for the whole Hanse.

The troubles in Scandinavia began with the death of King Valdemar IV of Denmark in 1375, which had precipitated a succession crisis into which the Hanse was quickly drawn. There were two major reasons for this: because the Duchy of Mecklenburg, which contained the two Hanse ports mentioned above, was a competitor for the crown, and because of the Hanse's extensive trade relations with the Scandinavian kingdoms. Diplomatic struggles that verged at times on undeclared war were hardly conducive to peace at sea, and the incidence of piracy in northern waters greatly increased: although it was back in decline before the outbreak of war in 1388-89. This war was fought between the united Danish-Norwegian monarchy under Valdemar's younger daughter Margaret on the one side, and the Mecklenburger Albert I of Sweden on the other. It was to cause massive maritime violence.

Meanwhile, in 1385, there occurred the Zwiyn incident mentioned above. The English squadron involved was commanded jointly by Sir Thomas Percy, Admiral of the Northern Fleet, and John Raddington, Admiral of the Western Fleet and Prior of the Knights of St John, sent out under a royal command to pacify the sea. 27 of their 44 ships came from east coast ports, where rivalry with Hansards in general and Prussians

(the captured Hanse ships were all Prussian) in particular was especially intense.³⁹ Six Prussian ships were seized and plundered, for which damages ranging from £2,188 to £2,993 would later be claimed.⁴⁰

The commercial relationship

The basis for relations between England and the Hanse was primarily commercial; diplomatic and political relations were to a large degree driven by commercial considerations. Indeed, as has been mentioned already, it was because of the profound changes this commercial relationship had undergone over the thirty-odd years immediately preceding our period that the diplomatic relationship had become so much more important than it had been before. The precise nature of the interplay between commercial and political relations, and the reasons why this developed the way it did, will be considered later: they can never be entirely separated, especially since commercial tools such as bans or limitations on trade were used to pursue diplomatic ends – whose principal purposes were ultimately commercial. I shall do my best to limit repetition: but, given the tendency of the political relationship to dominate the narrative, it is worth taking a moment to consider the commercial relationship in as much isolation as possible.

The Hansards had for some time been present in significant numbers in London, Yarmouth, Lynn, Boston, and Hull, as well as a few other ports and a smaller presence

³⁹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 494; Jenks does not consider the legal position here of the Hansards, whom English sources allege to have been involved in trade with the Flemings, with whom England was at the time in a state of war. The legal rights and wrongs of seizing neutral ships for trading with one's enemies were not clear-cut in this period; after 1402 Hanse ships would be considered fair game because of their continued trade with Scotland.

⁴⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 63. These figures suggest unusually valuable cargo: the value of a single ship's lading seldom exceeded £250, and was often much less.

in York. By 1385, the English had established a mercantile presence in Danzig, while the merchant class, spurred by perceived unfairness in their treatment by the Hansards on the Continent, had begun to organise politically against them in England. Trade with the Prussian towns would be almost completely interrupted by the political crisis following the Zwiyn incident:⁴¹ but it had reached such a volume that the Prussians found that they, and Danzig in particular, could not do without it.⁴² It is generally considered that this is why an agreement was hammered out in 1388,⁴³ effectively confirming the 1380 charter, and allowing the English community, who had already returned to Danzig, to settle and put down roots there, as the Hansards had done in England.

This did not prevent restrictions being imposed on English merchants' rights of residence in Prussia in 1396, or on their freedom to trade in 1402; in 1404 they were temporarily expelled; but once again these measures hurt Danzig's own economic interests.⁴⁴ The same effect was seen on a larger scale when the Hanse as a body attempted similar tactics in the negotiations of 1405 and afterwards. In the same decade, English merchants in parts overseas including the Low Country counties and Scandinavia received Letters Patent allowing them to hold meetings, elect governors, and pass ordinances for the governance of their own affairs; those in Prussia were already doing the same.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the Hanseatic position in England remained privileged, in some cases paying duties lower than those imposed on citizens. These rights were jealously guarded, as witness the expulsion from the Kontor of Christian Kelmar (see below).

⁴¹ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 107.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴³ Lönnroth, E., "The Economic Policies of Governments: The Baltic Countries", in Postan, M. M., Postan, Cynthia, Rich, E. E., and Miller, Edward (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History, Volume III: Economic Organisation and Policies in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 391.

⁴⁴ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 109.

⁴⁵ Carus-Wilson, Eleanora Mary, *Medieval Merchant Venturers* (London, 1967), pp. xx-xxi.

From the Hanseatic sphere of influence, in particular the Baltic and Scandinavia, the English bought fish, iron, wax, pitch, tar, timber, ashes for making lye soap, and furs. The timber trade was fuelled by the Hundred Years' War, and the English need for bowstaves and shipbuilding materials; iron likewise was needed for arms; a Catholic society needed plentiful supplies of fish for fast days; the wax business owed its success in part to the increasing popularity among the merchant class of relatively lavish funerals, calling for large numbers of candles.⁴⁶ Fur exports, meanwhile, dipped when squirrel skins, the cheapest furs, traded on the largest scale, went out of fashion in the fifteenth century.⁴⁷

England's principal export, meanwhile, was wool, and, increasingly, finished woollen cloth (although she also competed with the Baltic lands as an exporter of grain). The country's cloth production had ballooned in the second half of the fourteenth century; figures are considered in more detail later in the thesis, but broadly, exports – by natives, Hansards, and other aliens alike – rose until c. 1400, before going into decline. This was despite a ban in Flanders on imports of English cloth from 1359 – with an exemption for Hansards, who were permitted to bring it through Bruges as long as it was immediately re-exported without the bales being opened.⁴⁸ The proportion of wool leaving the country as finished cloth continued to rise fairly steadily:⁴⁹ but it was in the early fifteenth century that England's export and import trades alike entered “a deep and protracted depression”.⁵⁰

European economies in general were slumping in this period, and especially from c. 1410; this was exacerbated in Prussia by the after-effects of the Knights'

⁴⁶ Miskimin, Harry A., *The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe, 1300 – 1460* (Upper Saddle River, 1969), pp. 124, 138.

⁴⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 172.

⁴⁸ Munro, John H., *Wool, cloth and Gold: The Struggle for Bullion in Anglo-Burgundian Trade 1340 – 1478* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁹ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. xx-xxi.

⁵⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 156-57.

disastrous war with Poland-Lithuania, leading to a debasement of the coinage and steep inflation, in contrast with a general deflationary trend.⁵¹ The contraction in trade brought an end to English expansion in the Baltic, putting the merchants there once more on the back foot;⁵² their focus gradually shifted to the Low Countries, in whose fairs and marts goods from all over Europe were traded.⁵³

The fact that those involved in violence at sea, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, on the English side tended to be drawn from the merchant class, and to have an interest in overseas trade, certainly affected commercial relations: but indirectly. The increased influence of this class in English politics helped to ensure that their interests were pursued in diplomatic relations with the Hanse: there is no evidence, however, that the piratical tendencies of elements of the English bourgeoisie put the Hansards off doing business with them.

Overview of diplomatic relations, 1385 - 1420

Following the Zwijn incident, the Prussian Städtetag ordered the confiscation of the goods of English Prussia-farers to the value of £20,000, and dispatched representatives of both the Teutonic Order and the towns to England to demand compensation, not only for that incident, but for various injuries suffered since 1375.⁵⁴ The embassy was delayed, however: and, before it arrived, Richard II had assented to the demands of the English merchants hit by the confiscation, and ordered a retaliatory arrest of Prussian goods in English ports. The result was a round of ineffective and

⁵¹ Carsten, Francis Ludwig, *The Origins of Prussia* (Oxford, 1954), p. 133.

⁵² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 170-71.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-72.

⁵⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 495.

frustrating negotiations which dragged out for years, probably exacerbated by the English insistence on including previous incidents in negotiations, which went beyond the Prussian envoys' authorisation.⁵⁵

The dispute, however, remained specifically Anglo-Prussian.⁵⁶ The Prussian diet ordered the arrest of English goods in Elbing and Danzig, and banned all import from and export of Baltic goods to England, before even sending envoys to demand compensation;⁵⁷ while the English government, though rejecting the Commons' demand for the suspension of Hanse privileges, ordered the arrest of Prussian goods in East Coast ports⁵⁸ and prohibited travel to Prussia, and English merchants in Danzig relocated to Stralsund.⁵⁹ By 1388, however, despite the efforts of the authorities on both sides of the North Sea, the English had formed a permanent presence in Danzig;⁶⁰ and in that year, agreement was reached. A more detailed version of the charter confirmed in 1380 was hammered out in the First Treaty of Marienburg; and, three years later, John Bebys was recognised as leader of the English community in Danzig.

1388 was also, however, the year in which the Scandinavian situation came to a crisis, which at the beginning of 1389 broke out into open war. Very quickly, Queen Margaret defeated Albert, and took control of most of Sweden; but German-dominated Stockholm, sympathetic to the House of Mecklenburg, held out. Although in recent years piracy had declined, it had been a weapon of the two sides in the disputes of the 1370s, and the Mecklenburg captains who now supplied besieged Stockholm supported themselves by raids upon Danish shipping: although even at this point they did not confine themselves to Danish victims. The term "Vitalienbrüder" is allegedly derived

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 496-97.

⁵⁶ This was acknowledged by non-Prussian Hansards: *ibid.*, p. 496.

⁵⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

⁵⁹ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 107.

⁶⁰ Miskimin, *Economy of Early Renaissance Europe*, p. 143.

from this supply role,⁶¹ but, since it did not come into common use until after 1395, this is not certain. (It has been suggested⁶² that its real origins lie in the fact that the pirate fleets were self-victualling, as opposed to being reliant on their hosts in Rostock and Wismar.) Be that as it may, it was to become the accepted term for the rovers, who from the beginning included many adventurers, mercenaries, and professional pirates as well as Mecklenburgers; and their activities caused significant disruption to trade through the Sound. Despite hostility to Margaret within the Hanse, Hanseatic fleets were sent against the Vitalienbrüder even during the war years.

As early as 1394, English ambassadors were sent to the Wendish towns to complain of losses suffered at the hands of the Vitalienbrüder, naming individual captains. (Even before this, Richard II had lent ships to Margaret.) When the war ended with Margaret's victory in 1395, those among the Vitalienbrüder's officers who were Mecklenburg nobles appear to have gone home: but the rest, deprived of their legitimising function, became outright pirates. The "Danes" reported to have "robbed sailors, and particularly the inhabitants of Norfolk... to the value of 20,000 *l*"⁶³ in that year may well in fact have been Vitalienbrüder. Their behaviour was profoundly embarrassing to the Hanse, as it damaged the myth of unity on which the towns relied in foreign relations, particularly with England: since the Hanse negotiated as a unified body and demanded corporate privileges, it was naturally expected to control its members, yet individual Hanse towns continued to do business with the pirates.⁶⁴ Letters of reprisal were reportedly issued to merchants of Lynn who had suffered at

⁶¹ Zimmern, *The Hansa Towns*, p. 126.

⁶² Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 101.

⁶³ Nicolas, Sir Nicholas Harris, *A History of the Royal Navy from the earliest Times to the Wars of the French Revolution* (London, 1847, 2 vols), Vol. II, p. 337; from Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Brevis ab Edwardo I ad Henricum IIII* (London, 1574), p. 389. See also Thomas of Walsingham, *The Cronica Maiora of Thomas of Walsingham*, trans. David Preest, (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 294, for a modern translation of the chronicle.

⁶⁴ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 520-21.

their hands, to the considerable annoyance of the Hanse. Although no direct evidence has been found of English reprisals on any significant scale at this point,⁶⁵ the Hanse did complain of them – albeit in general terms, without specifying incidents. The Vitalienbrüder removed from the Baltic to Friesland, but remained a menace until 1401, when they were suppressed and the survivors (if any) scattered. Vitalienbrüder activity is the chief subject of the complaint presented by English ambassadors to the Hansetag in 1405, detailing Hanseatic piracies in the years 1393 – 1405: despite having been in print since 1589, this document has never before been analysed and compared with what we know about the pirates from Continental sources. I will in Chapter IV undertake such an analysis, investigate the apparent contradictions between the sources, and see what we can learn about the Vitalienbrüder from the 1405 complaint.

England's relations with the Hanse in general, and with Prussia in particular, continued to decline: and, on 2nd February 1398, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order rescinded the Treaty of Marienburg and ordered all English merchants to leave Prussia within a year. There were no English retaliations, and the expulsion was not carried out.⁶⁶ The Prussian position proved unsustainable; but the usurpation of Henry IV in 1399 exacerbated matters. It is true that only one letter of marque is known to have been issued (in 1400) which specifically named Hanseatic ships as legitimate prizes – and that was in fulfilment of a threat made by Richard II, which he had not survived to carry out; but, in spite of this, and of Henry's Prussian connections, relations progressed rapidly to something approaching an undeclared naval war. Letters of marque and reprisal were issued more frequently in this reign than under any previous King of England, often naming "the King's enemies" rather than specific acceptable victims; and Hanseatic merchants with the full backing of their cities continued to trade

⁶⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

with Scotland after Henry had made it clear that any ship doing so would be considered an enemy to England.⁶⁷ From 1402 the authorities looked more kindly on attacks on Hanse shipping, and even the King's ships were not above it. A fleet under the admiralty of Lord Grey of Codnore, raised in May 1402 to prevent French naval support for a land invasion of England by the Scots, had plundered four Hanse ships (three Prussian and one from Stralsund), seized another (Prussian) and destroyed two more (from Bremen) before the year was out.⁶⁸ The years 1402-05 were marked by further violence, nearly all from the English side, and economic reprisals by the Hanse, whose effectiveness was limited by the fact that many towns were willing to flout trade bans. (The violence was also more extreme than before. When we read of Englishmen seizing Hanse ships before 1402, there is seldom any mention of destruction of property, let alone killing, both of which become more frequent complaints during these years of crisis.) The next three years were spent negotiating compensation claims; much compensation was indeed paid by England after 1408, although this stopped in 1410, after the power of the Teutonic Order was badly damaged by their defeat at the hands of Poland-Lithuania at Grunwald.

The direction of English policy changed dramatically on the accession of Henry V in 1413. He readily confirmed the Hanseatic charter after the London Kontor had paid a forty mark fine for the privilege, but proceeded to arrest Hanseatic ships and press them into service for his invasion of France.⁶⁹ Whether England can truly be said to have had a unified naval policy before 1413 is a matter of some debate, but such a policy certainly existed now: and its aims were the expansion of the fleet, the attainment of supremacy, and the pacification of the sea. Major naval victories over France followed in 1416 and 1417; but negotiations to compensate the Hansards came to

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 112.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

nothing.⁷⁰ The election of a new Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in 1414 changed the direction of Prussia's English policy: where his predecessor had refused to back the anti-English measures of Prussia's Hanse towns, Michael Kűchmeister gave them free rein. From 1420 – the year in which peace with France rendered Henry's naval policy obsolete in contemporary eyes – the Prussian towns began to arrest English ships; the policy of Lübeck and Hamburg likewise took an increasingly marked anti-English turn, which would swiftly evolve into yet another crisis following Henry's death in 1422.

Note on the definition of the word “piracy”

I have deliberately avoided referring to “piracy” in the title of this thesis, as I intend to range over the whole area of violence at sea: however, its use in the text is unavoidable. At this time, it had no legal definition in England, and in contemporary sources the word *pirata* refers merely to a ship or person engaged in either violence or the appropriation of goods, either committed at sea or facilitated by seaborne transport. There is no necessary overtone of illegality, or even disapproval: the letter of marque vessel (see Chapter I), or the captain who takes a prize in royal service, may be called *piratae*. For the purposes of this thesis, “piracy” will be considered to refer to any such act committed on water outside a port, without specific prior official sanction – whatever the subsequent attitude of the authorities. As most such incidents in this period occurred in coastal waters or river estuaries, and recorded locations are rarely precise, it would be unhelpful to quibble over whether or not the incidents took place below the low tide mark, a necessary part of the modern legal definition.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 127.

Contemporary legislation provided for compensation to those robbed at sea (under an act of 1353),⁷¹ and, from 1414, for charges of treason to be brought in certain specific circumstances.⁷² Much later, in 1536, the “Acte for punysshement of Pyrotes and Robbers of the See”, more commonly known as the Offences at Sea Act, did lay down a legal framework for trying violent crimes committed at sea on a similar basis to those committed on land. Even then, however, the word “piracy” was not used, and therefore not explicitly defined (nor would it be, in English law, until 1698). The 1536 Act was created because it was recognised that, as things stood, only civil proceedings were generally faced by “traitours pirotes theves robbers murtherers and confederatours uppon the see”, who as a consequence “many tymes escaped unpunysshed”, as was certainly the case in this era. Thence onwards, “treasons felonyes robberies murders and confederacies... manslaughteres or such other offences comytted or done in or uppon the sees, or... any other haven river or creak” (i.e. not yet limited by the low tide mark) were subject to the full force of the criminal law. Jurisdiction remained with the Admirals, or Crown-appointed commissions.

A term I have avoided altogether is “privateer”. Although it is often used imprecisely, I consider it an anachronism with regard to this period. The word did not enter English until the mid seventeenth century, which is also roughly when the modern legal concept took concrete shape.⁷³ Letters of marque and reprisal had come into existence in the thirteenth century, but their meaning and use evolved gradually, and were often ill defined – as, indeed, were the terms “pirate” and “piracy”. It is my intention in this thesis to clarify, as far as possible, the meaning and significance of the letter of marque, and the legal significance of violence at sea, in this period.

⁷¹ Rose, Susan, *Medieval Naval Warfare 1000 – 1500* (London, 2002), p. 97.

⁷² Given-Wilson, Chris (general ed.), *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275 – 1504* (Woodbridge, 2005, 16 vols), Vol. IX, pp. 52-55.

⁷³ Rodger, Nicholas A. M., *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain Volume One 660 – 1649* (London, 1997), p. 199.

The nature of the evidence

Considerable primary evidence survives relating to this topic, much of it published: although, as with any subject dealing with so remote a period, there are of course gaps. On the English side, all the standard printed rolls have been made use of, as well as material from chronicles, borough records, published letters and petitions, and the like: and, of course, *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, which although slightly later in date is certainly relevant to this period. The published material includes essentially everything directly relevant to national politics. The unpublished material in the National Archives deals rather with individual cases, complaints, and petitions, and with national customs records and similar material.⁷⁴ Its usefulness in relation to the thesis question lies in helping to determine the attitudes of individual towns to such issues as trade in Hanseatic goods during disputes; helping to ascertain the economic effects of these disputes and of violence at sea; and bolstering our picture of patterns of violence. In general, national records have been preserved better than local ones, and virtually all material from local archives has been published.

The most directly useful of these documents were petitions found in Early Chancery Proceedings, from which I obtained details of several occurrences of maritime violence not to be found in printed sources. Most of the Treaty Rolls for this period have been published, and in any case concentrate on Anglo-French relations. I have made use of customs particulars, where possible, to provide detail on trade matters. I

⁷⁴ The classifications from which it is drawn are: C1 (Early Chancery Proceedings – mostly petitions); E30 (Diplomatic Documents); E101 (Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Accounts Various – mostly military and naval documents); and E122 (Customs Particulars). Most Treaty Rolls (C76) and Council and Privy Seal Records from the Treasury of the Receipt (E28) for this period have been published: see bibliography, and Chaplais, Pierre, *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice* (London, 1982, 2 vols).

had hoped to be able to map from this material the fluctuations, year by year, in the volume and value of trade in particular goods from the different east coast ports: however, the surviving records have proved too patchy in nature for this to be possible. Hartlepool, for instance, has only one surviving particular for the entire period, which has not been dated more precisely than the reign of Henry IV;⁷⁵ while in most others there is almost never enough consistency in what has survived to create a meaningful chart. One document may cover a period of two years, the next, two months; one will give figures for tunnage and poundage only, another for a subsidy on wools and fells, another for impoundment of illegal exports; one will cover only the main port, while the next includes its smaller neighbours. (The problem is illustrated in the Appendix, where Table 6 shows the extremely haphazard nature of the information I found on customs from Boston – one of the better represented ports.) I have, therefore, had to limit my use of this material to extracting illustrative information from individual documents as and when it could be of use. For the reign of Henry V, meanwhile, very little remains at all for ports other than London.

The printed Hanseatic sources, while not significantly less varied in nature, are not spread quite so widely across disparate publications, more of an effort having been made to collect them. The difference, however, is slight. There is of course no direct equivalent in the Hanse to the records of national government in England, as the Hanse was not a unified state: the closest approximations are the records of Hansetags. An even greater proportion of the Hanseatic material appears to have been published than of the English, and the surviving unpublished material is largely concentrated in a few major archives. So far as I have been able to ascertain from my communications with the institutions holding this material, there is little information relating to Anglo-

⁷⁵ T.N.A. E122/49/10, a subsidy of poundage.

Hanseatic relations in this period which is not duplicated in printed sources. None of the major secondary historians on this subject refers to unpublished German material for this period, and I decided not to expend time and money on what would have been a purely speculative research trip to the Continent.

In the surviving records, violence at sea is mentioned more often than any other grievance in Anglo-Hanseatic relations. This does not necessarily mean, however, that it was considered to be more significant than, say, the lack of reciprocity in merchants' privileges: the latter, being a continuous problem, did not need to be constantly reiterated, while instances of violence are detailed in terms of the individual incidents and therefore naturally occupy a much larger volume of the material. The real relation of volume to perceived significance will be considered below. It is also more than possible that the ubiquity of the *Vitalienbrüder* in the source material has created an exaggerated impression of their importance (although that they were a significant factor in North European maritime affairs in the years before 1401 is undeniable). Certainly they would before long become romanticised in works like the *Störtebeker Lied*, whose influence remains a factor in modern German attitudes to the pirates. Contemporary attention, then as now, was grabbed by the dramatic and the colourful: personalities like Störtebeker and Gödeke Michels were of more interest than trade figures, for such is human nature.

A note on contemporary attitudes

There is no equivalent in this period for, say, the Paston Letters, which are so invaluable to students of the social history of the succeeding decades in England; and, with little personal reference to the issues addressed in this thesis, it is very difficult to know what people were thinking. The most examined statement on maritime matters in late medieval England, *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* (1436/7), postdates this period slightly, and its attitude to it is informed by hindsight. It may well be that Henry V's contemporaries believed that "aboute in the see / No better was prince of strenuite",⁷⁶ but they did not have the dubious benefit of looking on that reign from the other side of fourteen years during which the keeping of the sea had been neglected. Other statements found in the *Libelle*, however, do match views we know to have existed within the period under review. "Thus, if they wolde not oure frendys bee," wrote its author of the Prussians,

"Wee myght lyghtlye stope hem in the see.

They shulde not passe oure stremes wythouten leve;

It wolde not be but if we shulde hem greve":⁷⁷

and, later:

"Nowe the principalle matere.

"What reason is it that wee schulde go to oste

In there cuntrees and in this Englysshe coste

⁷⁶ Warner, George (ed.), *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye: A Poem on the Use of Sea-Power, 1436* (Oxford, 1926), p. 53.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

They schulde not so, but have more liberte
Than wee oure selfe? ...
Therefore lett hem unto ooste go wyth us here,
Or be wee free wyth hem in like manere
In there cuntres; and if it woll not bee,
Compelle them unto ooste and ye shall see
Moche avauntage and mucche profite arise,
Moche more than I write can in any wyse.”⁷⁸

The sentiment expressed here does appear to have represented the understandable feelings of the English mercantile class in this period: the Hanseatic failure to meet the demands of the Four Points for reciprocity in treatment seems to have been keenly resented. Prussia is singled out because it was in Prussia that English resident merchants most sorely felt their lack of reciprocal privileges, often labouring under threat of arrest or expulsion. This found expression in agreements between England and the Hanse: the principal condition attached to the confirmation of the Steelyard’s charter in 1380 was

“that English merchants in the parts of the same German
merchants, when they shall have come thither with their
merchandise, shall be treated there equally amicably and
honestly and exist in similar conditions”,⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁹ *Hanserecesse: Die Recesse und andere Akten der Hansestage 1256 – 1430* (Leipzig, 1872, 8 vols), I. ii. 270. (“... quod mercatores Anglici in partibus ipsorum mercatorum Alemannorum, cui illuc venerint cum mercandis suis, adeo amicabiliter et honeste ibidem tractentur et consimilis condicionis existant”).

while in the Anglo-Prussian treaty of 1388 it was laid down that

“any liege merchants whatever of England should, having brought themselves with whatever ships, goods, and merchandise to whatever port of the land of Prussia, and also in the same way having transferred any more goods and merchandise to any place soever in the said land of Prussia, have free opportunity, there freely to gather and trade with whatever person, as of old and from of old the usage has existed”.⁸⁰

But the mere fact that it was reiterated so frequently throughout this period and thereafter (the Vorrath Treaty repeats these provisions) indicates that the Hansards had paid little attention, even before violence committed by the English at sea became a significant factor in the years after 1400. The grant of citizenship to Christian Kelmar (see below) smacks strongly of a desire by the aldermen of London to snub the Hanse:

“Grant to Christian Kelmare, upon his petition alleging that he was born in a Hanse town in Almain, and was for thirty years one of the Hanseatic society, until recently expelled at the suit of some envious merchants thereof, who suggested that he paid greater custom to the king than he ought, whereupon the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of London admitted him to the freedom of the city, that he be as free throughout the realm as if

⁸⁰ Ibid., I. iii. 418. (“... ligei mercatores Anglie quicumque liberam habeunt facultatem se applicandi cum navibus bonis et mercandizis quibuscumque ad quemcumque portum terre Prussie, necnon hujusmodi bona et mercandisas ulterius ad quemcumque locum in dicta terra Prussie transferendi ibique cum quamcumque persona libere contrahere et mercari, sicut antiquitus et ab antiquo extitit usitatum”).

he had been born in the city of London or elsewhere in the king's dominions, and not charged with customs otherwise than as others the king's lieges are charged.”⁸¹

The sources are full of references to the seizure of Hanseatic goods or even vessels, not by violence, but upon pretexts such as non-payment of customs or the freighting of enemy goods. Usually, this was dealt with legally, and restitution was made – at least in the reign of Richard II: his overthrow did not lead to a breakdown in the system, but certainly seems to have coincided with a diminution in official sympathy for wronged Hansards. Some of these cases must, indeed, have been honest mistakes, although the tone of Hanseatic complaints becomes rather plaintive. Their very frequency suggests that many saw Hanseatic shipping as fair game. From 1398, and especially after about 1406, the government set up several commissions to address the problem of piracy both English and foreign; Hansards appear in the records of these as victims far more often than as perpetrators. (In neither role, admittedly, were they the principal targets for the commission. English piracy was at its worst in the south-west, well away from normal Hanseatic shipping routes, and the Castilians were its most frequent victims; while the war with France, although mostly “cold” in Henry IV’s reign, was hardly so at sea.) After 1413, this activity simmers down somewhat.

As for attitudes to the Vitalienbrüder, outside their lairs they seem in their day to have been universally considered undesirables, a threat to be wiped out. The English show no signs of having thought differently – nor, on the other hand, of having considered it an especially urgent matter. They were an annoyance, but also provided a grievance against the Hanse that could be useful in negotiations, without apparently

⁸¹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Volume III, p. 97: given at Sheen on 20th January, 1386.

wreaking terrible damage on English trade or shipping. German romanticisation of the pirates almost certainly began, as is common in such cases, after they were safely dead.

Historiographical overview

The issue of maritime violence in Anglo-Hanseatic relations has more often been addressed as part of another topic than directly, whether in general works such as Carsten's *The Origins of Prussia* (Oxford, 1954) and Dollinger's *The German Hansa* (London, 1964), or in tangentially related works such as J. A. Gade's *The Hanseatic Control of Norwegian Commerce During the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1951). Attempts to deal specifically with matters Anglo-Hanseatic began in earnest with Cornelius Walford's *An outline history of the Hanseatic League, more particularly in its bearings upon English commerce* (London, 1881), a solid and still useful sketch of the economic side of things, albeit dated in places. Friedrich Keutgen in 1890 and Friedrich Schulz in 1911 provided broad histories of political relations; Ian D. Colvin's *The Germans in England* (1915), while relatively lightweight and with an anti-German streak probably influenced by the war situation, is a handy overview of the history of German presence (particularly in the London Kontor) over the whole period of the Hanse's evolution, emergence, and decline.

More recently, it has been addressed by E. M. Carus-Wilson in various works of the 1960s and 70s (very useful on trade matters, expanding on Walford); T. H. Lloyd in the 1980s and 90s, and in particular in his *England and the German Hanse 1157 – 1611: A Study of Their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 1991) – which, despite covering pretty much the whole chronological extent of the Hanseatic presence

in England, and therefore being unable to study this particular period nearly as closely as I intend to do, covers it in greater breadth and depth than any other work yet published; and, from the German side, Stuart Jenks (with many invaluable tables and graphs of information not before composed in such form, plus helpful references to German published sources of which I might otherwise have been unaware). Historians from Montague Giuseppe through J. L. Bolton to Lloyd have also examined the situation of alien merchants in England in general.

Broad examinations of the medieval maritime world, such as those of A. R. Lewis and T. J. Runyan, Susan Rose, Richard Unger and John B. Hattendorf, and Dirk Meier, set the scene against which these dramas were played; while English naval history, so often treated as if it begins with the formation of a permanent professional navy in the sixteenth century, is of course a vital part of this background. The monumental work of Hakluyt⁸² aside, the modern historiography effectively begins with Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas' *A History of the Royal Navy from the earliest Times to the Wars of the French Revolution* (London, 1847, 2 vols). For Sir Charles Prestwich Lucas at the height of the First World War, it was overseas trade rather than naval activity that made the late medieval period *A Prelude to the Empire*. R. G. Marsden's *Documents Relating to the Law and Custom of the Sea* (London, 1915-16, 2 vols: Navy Records Society 59-60), meanwhile, is invaluable on the early use of the letter of marque, while Elisabeth Murray's *Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester, 1935) is a solid study of the significance – and the decline – of the once navally vital south coast ports. C. F. Richmond's 1962 D.Phil. thesis on the fifteenth century naval administration, though focusing on the period immediately after ours, is a valuable study of how the organisation of the medieval navy developed, followed up later by

⁸² Best read with D. B. Quinn's *Hakluyt Handbook* (London, 1974, 2 vols) within reach.

Susan Rose in *The Navy of the Lancastrian Kings* (1982). “Winds of Change?”, Ian Friel’s chapter in Ann Curry and Michael Hughes’ *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years’ War* (Woodbridge, 1994), examines how the use of ships evolved through the long wars with France; and Nicholas Rodger’s *Safeguard of the Sea*, the most ambitious and widest ranging study of the subject since Nicolas, integrates naval history fully into its social and political contexts.

Dorothy Gardiner’s *Law Quarterly Review* article on belligerent rights in 1932, and her return to the specific subject of John Hawley in *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* in 1966, cover the thin dividing line between piracy and naval war, and one of the most prominent of the men who straddled that line. On the same subject, C. J. Ford’s 1979 article “Piracy or Policy” remains definitive on the subject of the strife in the Channel in the early 1400s, albeit with a closer focus on Anglo-French than Anglo-Hanseatic relations. In the same year, Stephen J. Pistono published “Henry IV and John Hawley, Privateer”, which – despite its use of a slightly anachronistic term – is useful on the subject of Henry’s dependence on letter of marque captains.

The first notable study of the Vitalienbrüder was Karl Koppmann’s article on the legend of Störtebeker in *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* in 1887. Helen Zimmern, in her English-language narrative sketch of Hanseatic history two years later, accorded them a chapter, although her use of legendary material was not always as critical as it might have been. Anneliese Blasel in 1933 also concentrated on the legend, although Josef Wanke and Fritz Teichmann had looked at them from more sober historical angles. D. J. Bjork’s 1943 *Speculum* article, “Piracy in the Baltic, 1375 – 1398”, was the most comprehensive – and, to date, the last – significant work on the topic in English; but German historians have continued to study the pirates. Hans Bahlow, Matthias Puhle, Jörgen Bracker, and Ralf Wiechmann have all published books or articles on the subject

since 1982; Konrad Fritze and Günter Krause devoted considerable space to the pirates, and provided convincing answers to some of the chronological questions hanging over them, in their 1997 study of the Hanse's sea wars.

Hanseatic history in general has been attacked from various angles. While Walford, Keutgen, and Schulz, followed in our own day by the wider-ranging Lloyd and Jenks, concentrated on commerce with England, Zimmern, following German historians such as F. W. Barthold and H. Deniske, provided a straight politically-centred narrative. Similar broad, general approaches have been taken by far more scholarly writers than Zimmern in every generation since: notably Elizabeth Nash in *The Hansa* (Oxford, 1929), Philippe Dollinger in *The German Hanse* (London, 1964), Johannes Schildhauer in *The Hansa: History and Culture* (Dorchester, 1988), and Rolf Hammell-Kiesow in *Die Hanse* (Munich, 2002).

Others have looked instead at specific aspects of Hanseatic history. Gade, like Ingvild Øye in 1994's *Bergen and the German Hansa*, examines the Hanse's activities in Norway; Wilhelm Ebel, in *Lübisches Recht in Ostseeraum* (Cologne, 1967), the spread of Lübeck law; Klaus Friedland, in *Hansische Handelspolitik und hansisches Wirtschaftssystem im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Vienna, 1976), the Hanse's trade policies and economic system. Fritze and Krause look in some detail at the Hanse's involvement in naval warfare over the course of its history. A. d' Haenens, in *Europe of the North Sea and the Baltic* (Antwerp, 1984), takes the opposite approach, looking at the world in which the Hanse existed rather than at particular aspects of its history – an approach complemented by the more recent work of David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, and J. Simpson.

CHAPTER I: Violence committed by Englishmen against Hansards

English violence against Hansards at sea was not new in this period. Postan describes relations between the two even before 1385 as little short of naval war:⁸³ a slightly hyperbolic view, but not without foundation. T. H. Lloyd has identified in *Hanserecesse* 22 incidents – including six cases of piracy outside ports, and four of the impressments of ships by the Crown – in which Prussian merchants alone claimed to have been wronged by the English in the ten years prior to the Zwijn incident of 1385.⁸⁴

This notorious incident⁸⁵ was one of the most egregious single examples of English violence against Hansards at sea before the seizure of the Bay fleet in 1449, and marks the beginning of the period under review. The aggressors at the Zwijn were admirals commanding a royal fleet (44 strong in total, although very few of these were the King's own vessels): but large scale encounters involving the King's ships were the exception in this period. The nature of maritime incidents showed considerable variation, but those instigated by the English – outside, at least, the period 1402-05, which is a special case, as relations between England and the Hanse during those years really did amount in effect to undeclared naval war – can be divided broadly into three categories.

First, there are attacks like that at the Zwijn, either carried out by ships in royal service, or at least resulting from the naval policy of the realm. Second, there are attacks carried out under the authority conferred by letters of marque and reprisal, whose definition and status in this period are discussed below. Third, there are attacks carried out with no such official sanction. These distinctions are based on the circumstances of the incidents, and the status at the time of the vessels and personnel involved – not the

⁸³ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 107.

⁸⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 62-63; *HR I* (iii) 199, 201, 202.

⁸⁵ Described briefly in the Introduction, and in more detail below.

identity of the vessels or personnel themselves, which frequently overlap between categories. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the difference as understood today between warships and merchantmen was all but meaningless in the Middle Ages, at least outside the Mediterranean.

In this chapter, I shall endeavour to assess the relative frequency and significance of these different types of incident, and how this varied across the period; such patterns as can be discerned in the nature of the attacks; and the effects that the three categories of incident and the factors mentioned above had on Anglo-Hanseatic relations, and *vice versa*.

Naval policy and its effects

If one wished to quibble over the meaning of the term “naval policy”, it would be easy to find arguments against its use in relation to this period. Indeed, as we would understand the term “navy” today (“a permanent fighting service made up of ships designed for war, manned by professionals and supported by an administrative and technical infrastructure”⁸⁶), no such thing can be said to have existed in England before the sixteenth century. However, the Crown had made use of ships in war since time immemorial, and used the term “navy” to refer to all the ships of the realm, pressed into service as and when they were required⁸⁷: and where there is practice there is policy. Inconsistent and ill-defined it may have been, but there was at least some understanding of the purposes to which naval capacity could be put in war, and some effort, however limited, to plan towards those purposes.

⁸⁶ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. xxiv.

⁸⁷ Gardiner, Dorothy A., “John Hawley of Dartmouth”, in *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* no. 98 (1966), p. 175.

One can understand why, before this period, a more detailed approach to policy was not thought necessary. When every vessel was a potential warship, it was naturally impossible to destroy an enemy's naval capacity, and therefore pointless to plan to that end;⁸⁸ and primitive navigation meant that it was little better than impossible to track down an enemy on the open seas, even if one should wish to undertake so perilously unpredictable a quest. (It was only within this period that the use of the compass began to be standard in English fleets – they are mentioned frequently in the accounts of John Starlyng, Clerk of the King's Ships from November 1409 to June 1411, but seldom earlier.⁸⁹) As a result, naval battles of the Middle Ages were largely fought in coastal waters: and our period contains no significant exception.

As long as ships and men could be mustered when they were needed to react to a situation, kings, admirals, and administrators seem largely to have rested content – at least before the accession of Henry V in 1413. The “sovereignty of the sea” was discussed before the *Libelle* (see Introduction), and even before 1413: it was first cast in those terms in 1295⁹⁰: but its meaning was essentially legal – an opportunistic claim to an unenforceable jurisdiction. In practice, no one power succeeded in policing the seas, and, when the Commons bewailed the loss of the title in 1372,⁹¹ what they were in fact mourning was the erosion of England's ability to protect her own shores.

This erosion persisted after Edward III's death, and the Parliament Rolls and Ancient Petitions reveal a certain royal indifference to the warnings of ship-owners. In a petition probably dating to 1379,

“The lords of the ships and barges of the realm of England...

⁸⁸ Richmond, C. F., “Royal Administration and the Keeping of the Seas, 1422 – 1485” (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1962), p. 27.

⁸⁹ Hope, Ronald, *A New History of British Shipping* (London, 1990), p. 64; T.N.A. E101/44/17.

⁹⁰ Chaplais, Pierre, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London, 2002), Vol. I, p. 206.

⁹¹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. V, p. 311.

request that reasonable remuneration be ordained for the future, otherwise they will not be able to maintain their ships and barges in the king's service".⁹²

Appealed to for money "for the increase and maintenance of the king's navy" in October 1386, Richard II replied only "The king has committed it to his council". Told in October 1391 that "the navy of England has been greatly reduced and weakened", and begged to remedy this by restricting the right of English merchants to ship goods in foreign vessels (a notable reminder that there was no distinction drawn between merchant and fighting ships), he replied "Let the statutes made thereon be upheld and kept." Even in January 1393, when the ship-owners declared that "[the] navy, unless remedy be swiftly ordained, is almost destroyed, and the owners of the same fleet ruined forever, which is a great sorrow and pity," the answer was testy: "A good remedy was ordained by statutes which the king wishes to be kept and upheld."⁹³ Action came there none. Nor do changes in the government, such as Richard's assumption of majority from 1381, and the temporary seizure of power by his enemies in 1387-88, seem to have had any discernible effect. On the other hand, of course, the existence of these various petitions demonstrates that the desirability of a more coherent naval policy was recognised in Richard's reign, if not by the Crown.

As has been stated above, there was no standing navy in this period. There were ships belonging directly to the Crown, though not many: four in 1398-99, and never more than seven in the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV⁹⁴: it has been suggested that, during these reigns, these ships were kept "more as a means of... 'conspicuous

⁹² T.N.A. SC 8/21/1008.

⁹³ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, pp. 51, 218, 236-37.

⁹⁴ Richmond, "Royal Administration", p. 30.

consumption' than as an element in the defence of the realm"⁹⁵. English sea power, however – such as it was – depended almost entirely on the system of impressments referred to above. Not only vessels, but individuals, were pressed into service, as when William Terry received permission in 1400 “to arrest mariners to... defend his balinger and ship... to fight the king’s enemies of Scotland and Friesland”.⁹⁶

As a result of this system, status could be dubious. The Northern and Western Fleets of 1400 are described by C. J. Ford⁹⁷ as “semi-official” and seem to have operated with little central control. The commanders of both these fleets in the above year were men frequently referred to in contemporary sources as “*piratae*”, a word which, while it did not necessarily imply criminality in this period, hardly suggests respectability. Again the Parliament Rolls give a fascinating insight, a petition being presented in September 1402 to improve the legal position of “any Englishman who is robbed or plundered at sea by the admiral or by his men”:⁹⁸ it appears that this was not a particularly uncommon occurrence. Around this time, John Charleton of Plymouth sued the Admiral of the West’s lieutenant and the water-bailiff of Plymouth for conspiracy to seize his ship and goods upon false pretences.⁹⁹ Experiments with other means of keeping the seas were unsuccessful. From time to time merchants and mariners were made responsible: in 1383, four men accepted considerable remuneration in return for an undertaking “to guard the sea against the king’s enemies from Winchelsea as far as the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed”, only to be sued for negligence when they failed to prevent the loss of several ships to the French.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, p.82.

⁹⁶ T.N.A. SC 8/254/12686.

⁹⁷ Ford, C. J., “Piracy or Policy: The Crisis in the Channel, 1400 – 1403”, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Series 5, no. 29 (1979), p. 66.

⁹⁸ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 195. While it is likely that these complaints referred mostly to the impressment of ships to serve the Crown, it does appear that admirals were abusing their powers.

⁹⁹ T.N.A. C1/3/118.

¹⁰⁰ T.N.A. SC 8/102/5066 (dated to “c. 1391” on guard); SC 8/214/10692-93, 10695-98, 10700, 10702, 10704-05.

Since prizes taken while in Crown pay at least theoretically became the property of the King,¹⁰¹ and since England and the Hanse never entered a state of open war in this period, there was no immediately obvious incentive for captains in service to attack Hanseatic shipping. (In fact, by this period the Crown generally received only one third of the value of prizes taken in Crown pay.¹⁰² There was, therefore, profit to be made from attacking Hanse ships if it could be legally justified: but finding such justification remained very difficult.) It is therefore unsurprising that – at least outside the period 1402-05, whose crisis was triggered by the English seizure of Hanseatic ships allegedly engaged in trade with Scotland – Hanseatic vessels were not officially targeted because of what they were.

Only two certain instances can be found between 1385 and 1402 of a Hanse ship being attacked by Englishmen in naval service: and, as was the case in 1402, the Stralsund ship seized in August 1400¹⁰³ was alleged to have been conveying supplies to Scotland. The second is another matter. In June 1401, sailors under the Earl of Northumberland's command are alleged to have taken a grain ship, also hailing from Stralsund, thrown the captain and twelve crewmen overboard, and brought her into Hartlepool.¹⁰⁴ no legal justification appears to have been advanced for this action. It is worth observing that English goods had been arrested in Stralsund not long before these incidents, as part of a long-drawn-out dispute.¹⁰⁵ Northumberland was, at the time, still a key supporter of Henry IV, and does not appear to have suffered any consequences for this action. (Other instances of uncertain date may well fall within this period: for instance, the seizure of the *Ever* of Lübeck, master Henry Solying, by the Admiral of the

¹⁰¹ Gardiner, "John Hawley", p. 175.

¹⁰² Gardiner, "The history of belligerent rights on the high seas in the fourteenth century", *Law Quarterly Review* XLVIII (1932), p. 527.

¹⁰³ Ford, "Piracy or Policy", p.73.

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 111. Lloyd does not provide a source for this incident, which I have not managed to verify from independent sources.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

North.¹⁰⁶)

Allegations of trade with an enemy of England as justification for the seizure of neutral shipping were nothing new. The six Prussian ships attacked in the *Zwijn* were, at least officially, singled out not because they were Prussians or because they were Hansards, but because they were apparently engaged in trade with the Flemings, with whom England was in a state of war. At this time the status of neutral shipping trading with a combatant party was dubious, and the English admirals (Thomas Percy and John Raddington – see Introduction) very probably believed they were in the right. There is, however, a Prussian report¹⁰⁷ to the effect that two of the Prussian captains were taken off their ships and, before being ransomed, forced to swear that they would seek no reprisals: if this is accurate, then Percy and Raddington must have been aware that the Hansards would seek legal redress, and would not be entirely without a case.

The general contemporary understanding of maritime law seems to have been that enemy goods freighted in neutral ships should be brought to a safe place and unloaded, the ship then being released and its owners paid for the freight of the captured goods, unless the captain had first refused to submit peaceably to search.¹⁰⁸ A strict application of this rule would probably have placed the admirals in the wrong: but the ambiguity existed. On the other hand, as early as 1378, Flemish masters and mariners from whom enemy goods were seized while Flanders was *not* at war with England had successfully sued to the King's Council for payment of freight on the goods taken, plus damages for the delay and the cost of the suit. The implication of the judgment was that freight should have been paid as a matter of course.¹⁰⁹

To plunder merchantmen was in any case somewhat stretching their remit for

¹⁰⁶ T.N.A. C1/3/81.

¹⁰⁷ *HR I* (iii) 200, 203.

¹⁰⁸ Gardiner, "John Hawley", p. 176; "Belligerent rights", p. 536.

¹⁰⁹ *Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Richard II* (London, 1922, 6 vols), Volume I, p. 46; Gardiner, "Belligerent rights", p. 536.

the pacification of the sea. As detailed in the Introduction, Jenks is probably right to stress the unusual predominance of east coast ships in this fleet, and the consequent likelihood of anti-Prussian feeling among the sailors and officers. (On the other hand, Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas¹¹⁰ is inclined to blame the general jumpiness of the English fleet, occasioned by fear of an impending French invasion. This may have been a factor: such fears had been real enough since the death in 1377 of Edward III, which had been followed immediately by daring raids along the south coast:¹¹¹ but it can hardly alone explain the attack. Nobody mistook the Prussians for French or allies of the French.) Nevertheless, the King's Council subsequently denied all responsibility for the incident.¹¹²

The immediate significance of what happened at the Zwiyn is obvious: it led directly to an almost total breakdown in commercial and diplomatic relations between England and Prussia. The development and resolution of this situation, and the degree to which the events of 12th May 1385 can be said to have been a prime cause as opposed to a catalyst, need not detain us here: the narrative of the crisis is addressed in the Introduction, and the interpretative issues will be examined more closely in chapters VII and VIII. In the meantime, we shall proceed to look at the effect of subsequent English naval policy on violence against Hansards.

As has already been stated, the period 1386 – 1401 was singularly uneventful with regard to violence committed against Hansards by ships in the service of the English Crown; the events of 1402-05 will be addressed below. From 1406, there are no further such incidents recorded in the reign of Henry IV. However, the first known

¹¹⁰ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. I, p. 296.

¹¹¹ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 111. The Records of the King's Remembrancer in the first year of Richard II show a large increase in the number of "soldiers engaged at sea": T.N.A. E101/36/24-27, 29-31, 33, 35-36. The mariners and burgesses of Dartmouth petitioned the Council around this time for the right to impose charges on ships entering their port, to pay for and maintain the defences they had been obliged to install: T.N.A. SC 8/105/5213.

¹¹² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 64.

naval incident of the following reign¹¹³ involved two Prussian hulks, accosted at Belle Isle in May 1413 by Sir John Colville, with eight pressed English merchantmen which he was using as troop transports. According to the English account,¹¹⁴ Colville behaved perfectly correctly, sending three officers to examine the Prussians' bills of lading, confiscate any enemy property, and pay for the freight thereof: but the Prussians responded violently, killing several Englishmen and necessitating the seizure of the hulks out of what sounds like self defence. Despite this apparently strong case, however, the merchants in whose ships Colville had been transporting his men felt it necessary to petition the King not to restore the hulks to their owners until it should be determined whether or not they were legally forfeit. One cannot help but feel that they protested too much: but no contradictory evidence is recorded in this case.

Although Prussians in particular complained regularly during this reign of "interference" with their ships,¹¹⁵ they were less forthcoming with details. It is likely that "interference" does not refer to violence or expropriation, as, had these occurred with any kind of regularity, they would certainly have been complained of in more explicit terms. Excessive regulation, the imposition of searches, temporary impressments, and other side effects of Henry's maritime policies seem more plausible explanations.

There were other incidents in this reign involving the seizure of Hanseatic ships. For instance, on 20th March 1416, the *Marienknecht* of Lübeck was captured near Winchelsea "by two balingers of the realm, one of which pertained to the king".¹¹⁶ Interestingly, the *Marienknecht*'s city of origin is mentioned only in passing: it is not referred to as affecting her legal status, nor are any Lübeckers reported as having

¹¹³ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. I, pp. 403-04.

¹¹⁴ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. IX, pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 129.

¹¹⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry V* (London, 1911, 2 vols), Vol. II, p. 135.

protested at her seizure. The complaints came instead from Flemish merchants who had shipped goods in her; and when, nearly two years later,¹¹⁷ the Royal Council finally took note of what had happened, the legal problem exercising them was the fact that a state of truce had existed between England and Flanders at the time. This apparent indifference on the part of both Englishmen and Lübeckers to the fact that Englishmen in royal service had seized a Lübeck ship is striking, but it is difficult to draw any significant inference from it. (Possibly Lübeckers were too preoccupied with their internal political troubles to worry about this incident: 1416 was the year in which the patriciate regained power there following the merchant class' short-lived revolution.)

After the Zwijn incident, then, the crisis of 1402-05 was the only part of the period under review in which Hanseatic shipping was deliberately singled out for attack: other incidents appear to have been isolated and random. There is a possible exception: the Hansetag's complaints¹¹⁸ in April 1412 strongly indicate that Hanse shipping had been targeted in recent months. This, however, appears to have been the work of captains operating outside an official context, and will as such be discussed under "unofficial violence".

This is not to say, however, that English naval policy throughout this period did not have a marked effect on relations with the Hanse towns – always bearing in mind the rider that, despite the concerns of shipowners, there was little concerted attempt to forge any unified policy before 1413. Given that England was almost constantly engaged in war at sea during this period, it would have been most surprising if this fact had failed to affect these relations.

As has been stated, war policy was at least partly responsible for the Zwijn incident itself. Up until the uneasy truce with France reached in 1396, clashes continued

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 135.

¹¹⁸ Höhlbaum, Konstantin, et al. (eds), *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* (Halle, 1876-1916, 11 vols), Vol. 5, no. 1,047; *HR I* (vi) 66; *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 12, 36.

to be frequent in the Channel – although incidents in the North Sea, never a major theatre of the Hundred Years War,¹¹⁹ were rare. Henry IV, on his accession, ordered that this truce should be kept:¹²⁰ but it very quickly became little more than nominal, as England's wars in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and allegations of piracy, became a cover for the effective resumption of war in the Channel, albeit not formally acknowledged as such by either England or France.¹²¹ (The truce was renewed to little effect in May 1400, and would not be officially abandoned until France and Castile allied themselves with Owain Glyndŵr in July 1404.)

Shipbuilding, however, had been neglected. Around the beginning of Henry's reign it was claimed¹²² that the number of ships in the kingdom suitable for use in war had fallen from 150 only fifteen years previously to 25: while these figures are probably not to be taken literally,¹²³ they must represent some reflection of the reality, however distorted. (In the light of Richard II's apparent indifference to the decline of the fleet, this is not altogether surprising.) Since it was through the arrest of such merchantmen as were suitable for warfare, and the ships that the coastal towns were required to build – often adding to the end of petitions such addenda as “and they have built a balinger”,¹²⁴ in the hope of currying royal favour – that war fleets were principally composed, this was a heavy blow. (When Beverley, an inland town, had petitioned to be excused from involvement in the building of a barge around the beginning of 1377, it was noted that five coastal towns – Barton-upon-Humber, Grimsby, Hornsea, Scarborough, and Whitby – had already been excused;¹²⁵ no doubt this was a factor in the decline of the

¹¹⁹ Saul, Anthony Richard, “Great Yarmouth and the Hundred Years War in the fourteenth century”, in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LII (1979), p. 108.

¹²⁰ Gardiner, “John Hawley”, p. 194.

¹²¹ Ford, “Piracy or Policy”, p. 76.

¹²² Hattendorf, John B.; Knight, R. J. B.; Pearsall, A. W. H.; Rodger, Nicholas A. M.; and Till, Geoffrey (eds), *British Naval Documents, 1204 – 1960* (Aldershot, 1993), no. 3.

¹²³ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 124.

¹²⁴ *Calendar of Close Rolls*, passim.

¹²⁵ T.N.A. SC 8/5/223.

fleet.) It is probably not coincidental that the building of 36 balingers and eighteen barges was ordered in 1401-02.¹²⁶ It is not known how many were completed.

Of course, the practice of pressing merchantmen for naval defence both accustomed their owners and crews to violence, and made it impolitic for the Crown to alienate necessary support by punishing piracy too severely. Alice Beardwood cites (from the *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward III*) pardons granted in the 1340s to known pirates in return for naval service.¹²⁷ Such a system was hardly calculated to discourage violence against neutrals, and even allies: as Beardwood puts it,

“The use of merchant ships for naval defense was one of the reasons why piracy thrived to such an extent that the merchant was often indistinguishable from the pirate. The king was willing to come to terms with those who harried even his allies in order to secure their support against his enemies.”¹²⁸

Within our period, it is true, we do not find such pardons. Given the decline of the fleet, it hardly seems likely that Richard II and Henry IV were in less need of naval support than Edward III. Nor are they likely to have been more scrupulous: indeed, Henry’s tolerance of commerce raiding and scattergun issue of letters of marque suggests the reverse. There is no positive evidence for a change of policy before the accession of Henry V; and some of the most prominent pirates of our era did indeed continue to be made use of by the Crown. If pardons were no longer explicitly exchanged for service,

¹²⁶ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 474.

¹²⁷ Beardwood, Alice, *Alien Merchants in England, 1350 to 1377, Their Legal and Economic Position* (New York, 1931), p. 37.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

it probably signified nothing more than increased circumspection: royal dependency on the services of such men as Hugh atte Fen, John Brandon, Harry Paye, the elder John Hawley, and others like them, was undiminished. Paye, who sailed with royally commanded expeditions to keep the sea in 1404 and 1405, was in the same period making a terrible reputation for himself in Spain, where his depredations provoked retaliatory raids on the coasts of Devon and Cornwall by Pero Niño in the winter of 1405/6;¹²⁹ the involvement of atte Fen and Brandon, whose piracies were regularly complained of by Hansards and others, in the commissions for defence against pirates in 1398 is documented in Chapter IV. Hawley commanded a ship in the King's service in 1395/6,¹³⁰ and was commissioned with Thomas Rempston in 1402 to undertake a "sea-keeping" mission whose real aim was retaliation for French commerce raiding;¹³¹ he too is regularly cited in petitions as a pirate.¹³² C. J. Ford persuasively argues that "piracy", both English and French, in the first decade of the fifteenth century, should in fact be regarded as naval warfare by other means.¹³³

Before 1413, however, excluding the Zwijn incident and the events of 1402-05 (see below), English naval policy towards France appears to have had little direct effect on Anglo-Hanseatic relations. (The effects of policy towards Scotland will be considered shortly.) It can certainly be said to have had *some* effect, insofar as the lack of strong central control over the fleets, and the failure to maintain the truce, contributed significantly to the general prevalence of violence at sea in the reign of Henry IV and therefore particularly to the 1402-05 crisis: however, this is an effect of the policy's

¹²⁹ Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, p. 83.

¹³⁰ T.N.A. E101/41/38.

¹³¹ Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, p. 84.

¹³² Hawley was particularly bold and unscrupulous, notably seizing one French prize from its English captors (T.N.A. C1/3/130), and taking the *Grace Dieu* of Brittany in violation of a safe conduct (T.N.A. C1/6/123).

¹³³ Ford, "Piracy or Policy", pp. 64-65, 77; followed, and expanded upon, by Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, pp. 83-84.

failure rather than a positive result of the policy itself. The one solid positive contributory factor from this policy area to the crisis was the general arrest in 1400 of ships in English ports: despite the Chancery writs which ordered the release of all German ships almost immediately afterwards, this was taken by the Hanse as a hostile act.¹³⁴ As this was a single incident which did not immediately precipitate violence, however, its significance in the overall picture is limited. It can be speculated that encouragement of commerce raiding by the Admiralties¹³⁵ led to a relaxed attitude to outright piracy within the fleets, thus further contributing to the crisis: but this remains no more than a hypothesis.

War policy towards Scotland is a somewhat different matter. Open war existed more or less from Henry IV's accession, and neutrals trading with the Scots were viewed from the beginning with hostile eyes: and this was the issue which was to precipitate the crisis of 1402-05. In March 1406, however, Scottish power was effectively neutralised by the capture of Prince James, only surviving son of Robert III, aboard a Prussian ship. (Robert died shortly afterwards, leaving the new King of Scots a captive in English hands.) Hostilities did not immediately cease, but the capture of James – who remained a prisoner until 1424 – was certainly among the factors which allowed Henry V and William Cotton, when they set out to rebuild English naval power, to succeed so quickly. It has been pointed out¹³⁶ that Henry and Cotton were extremely lucky in the lack of effective opposition they enjoyed, with the King of Scots under control, Burgundy benevolent, and France mismanaged and divided. Had any one of these powers been able to mount serious resistance in 1413 to English naval resurgence, events might have taken a very different course.

¹³⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

¹³⁵ Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, pp. 82-83.

¹³⁶ Lewis, Archibald R., and Runyan, T. J., *European Naval and Maritime History, 300 – 1500* (Bloomington, 1985), p. 150.

For it was in 1413, with Henry's accession and his appointment of Cotton as Clerk of the King's Ships,¹³⁷ that the direction of English naval policy decisively changed. Henry's ambitions in France, combined with his understanding of the effective uses of naval power – and the dangers inherent in the lack of it – drove him to pursue a policy aimed at naval superiority. Absolute supremacy might be unachievable: but the uncertainty bred by the absence of policy in the previous two reigns could be reversed; the capability successfully to invade France, and to defend England's own coasts, recreated; and French naval power severely weakened. The administrative side of things, also hitherto neglected, also benefited from the King's attention. The office of Clerk had become all but invisible around the turn of the century: very little is known of the activities in office of John Elmeshale (1394-99) or John Chamberleyn (1399 – 1406): but as Prince Henry had risen in his father's government, the powers of the Clerk had expanded, and Cotton took on much of the duty of maintaining the King's vessels (although once at sea they became the responsibility of the Treasurers at War).¹³⁸

The King's ships were far more numerous in this reign than in the previous two, expansion beginning almost immediately in 1413-14. Henry had inherited six vessels: by August 1417, there were 34, and the number would not dip below thirty for the rest of his reign. Some were built to order, beginning with the *Trinity Royal*, reconstructed from the remains of Richard II's *Trinity*;¹³⁹ more were prizes, presented to the Crown and refitted for the King's use. The former included the 1,400 ton *Gracedieu*, "by far the largest vessel afloat in northern waters"¹⁴⁰ (built by 1418), and the 760 ton, seven

¹³⁷ Rose, Susan, *The Navy of the Lancastrian Kings: Accounts and Inventories of William Soper, Keeper of the Kings' Ships, 1422-27*, Navy Records Series volume 123 (1982), pp. 34-36; Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 130.

¹³⁸ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 130.

¹³⁹ Rose, *Lancastrian Navy*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁰ Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, p. 86.

gun *Holy Ghost*¹⁴¹ (built by 1416): Richard II had never owned a ship of more than 300 tons' burthen.¹⁴² The capture of large Genoese carracks in 1409 and later almost certainly inspired this programme of building even greater vessels.¹⁴³

On 21st September 1408, England's first permanent admiral had been created: Thomas Beaufort, Earl of Dorset and half-brother to Henry IV. His nephew may have been instrumental in this appointment; and he would hold the position throughout the following reign.¹⁴⁴ Hitherto, Admirals of the two Fleets had been appointed annually: the continuity provided by the presence of a single permanent Admiral of England must have been helpful in the King's attempts to create a unified naval policy. A new mechanism for keeping the sea also appeared: contracts were made between king and commander, the former providing ships, the latter men, and a guarantee to keep the sea – no longer a vaguely defined undertaking, but one governed by precise orders from Henry.¹⁴⁵ A corps of permanent, paid masters, maintained by the Crown, existed for the first time: the forerunner of the professional navy.¹⁴⁶

The impact of England's new naval policy on Hanse shipping was by and large not direct, although the English authorities were not above arresting Hanseatic shipping for the use of the fleet, and forcibly selling all merchandise aboard to free up the room it occupied. This was done in 1415, and again in 1417¹⁴⁷: compensation was agreed for the inconvenience, loss of profit, and the destruction of five ships at Harfleur by enemy action, although by 1434 it had still not actually been paid.¹⁴⁸ The need to use foreign vessels, whether hired or commandeered, was presumably imposed on Henry by the

¹⁴¹ Friel, Ian, "Winds of Change? Ships and the Hundred Years War", in Curry, Anne, and Hughes, Michael (eds), *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge, 1994), p. 186.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 190. His largest ship, the *Trinity*, became the 540 ton *Trinity Royal* when Cotton rebuilt her.

¹⁴³ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁴ Fryde, E. B. (ed.), *Handbook of British Chronology* (Royal Historical Society, 1986), p. 140.

¹⁴⁵ Rodger, *Safeguard*, pp. 144-45.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁴⁷ *HR I* (vi) 451; *II* (i) 385; see also T.N.A. SC 8/305/15236.

¹⁴⁸ *HR II* (i) 385.

English shipping shortage complained of in 1400 and foreseen in the early 1390s (see above). A substantial proportion of Henry's invasion fleet derived from the Low Countries.¹⁴⁹ Prussian complaints of "interference" in this reign (despite Henry's instructions to his lieutenants of 12th May 1416, "to abstain from injuring... allies or confederates of the king", specifically described as including Prussians¹⁵⁰) presumably refer to such occurrences. However, the indirect effects of Henry's policy were largely beneficial. That they failed to produce warmer relations with the Hanse was due to other factors, in particular diplomatic failures, which will be considered in later chapters.

Even in this reign, however, tolerance of piracy, and the use of pirates in royal service, did not disappear. John Hawley the Younger, for instance, following in his father's footsteps, was involved in the illicit seizure of a Breton vessel in 1414, but went on to take part in royal expeditions for the keeping of the sea in 1419 and 1420. Even William Soper, who would in 1420 become the first layman to be appointed Clerk of the King's Ships,¹⁵¹ was accused with others in 1413/4 of unlawfully seizing a Castilian ship. This was, however, judged to be lawful prize, and became the King's ship *Holy Ghost* (mentioned above).¹⁵²

One cannot altogether accept the *Libelle*'s contention that English ascendancy at sea would have brought lasting peace. For instance, George Warner points out, in his introduction to the *Libelle*, the possibility that consequent foreign jealousy might have provoked an anti-English coalition.¹⁵³ Yet such ascendancy would surely have been more conducive to stability than an uncontrolled sea, as we see in Henry V's reign. After 1413, the total number of piracy cases recorded in the printed calendars was never

¹⁴⁹ Hardy, Thomas Duffus (ed.), *Rotuli Normanniae* (London, 1835), pp. 320-29.

¹⁵⁰ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. I, pp. 417-18.

¹⁵¹ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 130.

¹⁵² Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare*, p. 83; *Lancastrian Navy*, p. 20; Kingsford, Charles Lethbridge, *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1925), pp. 80, 83-87.

¹⁵³ Warner (ed.), *Libelle*, Introduction, p. xxxviii.

more than six in a year until 1430, and with the single exception of 1418 never more than three in a year until 1426. (For comparison, the average number of cases across 1406-13 inclusive was 5.375 per year, twice spiking at ten; in 1403 there had been 35.)¹⁵⁴ These include only a handful of English attacks on Hansards. The summer patrols which were a regular practice from 1416 to 1420¹⁵⁵ undoubtedly helped, by maintaining, at least in the Channel, the presence of authority. (After 1420, with both sides of the Channel under the control of the English Crown, they were no longer deemed worth the considerable expense. No immediate resumption of piracy followed, largely because the war with France was for the time being over; although, by the time Henry died, even Bretons – with whom he had made a separate truce – were again attacking English shipping.¹⁵⁶)

The fact remains, however, that Anglo-Hanseatic relations declined in the last years of Henry V, particularly following the failed talks at the Council of Constance.¹⁵⁷ This in itself suggests that any immediate positive effect of Henry's naval policy – brilliant though it undoubtedly was as a means of pursuing his war with France – on relations with the Hanse was extremely limited. As for relations in the longer term, by the time of the next serious turning point in Anglo-Hanseatic relations – the Vorrath Treaty of 1437 – this policy was dead, and the government of Henry VI had not the resources to revive it, rendering it no longer relevant. This throws into question the relevance of the whole area of naval policy. However, a reasonable answer to such an objection would be that a brief and, as it turned out, temporary reduction in the frequency of incidents was little to set beside years of violence and lawlessness, and that

¹⁵⁴ Richmond, "Royal Administration", p. 114.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁵⁶ T.N.A. SC 8/85/4231.

¹⁵⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 127. This was the Council called in 1417 to deal with the disputed Papacy: there were at the time no fewer than three Popes. In fact, however, it was used by the various governments involved to discuss all manner of secular business.

the impact of the policy, had it lasted longer, might have been considerably greater.

On the other hand, from the tone of the Hanseatic complaints, it appears more likely that the difference between piratical assault and commandeering for naval purposes was in contemporary eyes not so great as it might appear to us: and, from that point of view, the benefits of Henry's policy towards the Hansards were small.

Letters of marque and reprisal

While it is anachronistic to speak of "privateers" in this period,¹⁵⁸ letters of marque had been in use since the thirteenth century. Theoretically, they were letters of reprisal for specific losses, issued only after attempts to gain redress through legal channels had failed. Their name was derived from the fact that the reprisals licensed therein were to take place outwith the *marches* of the realm.¹⁵⁹ Any assessment of the use of the letter of marque and reprisal in medieval England is forced to concentrate on the attitudes of Crown and Council, as we possess no data concerning the issue of such letters by local authorities. It is difficult to say what the legal status of such letters would have been if they did exist: from the surviving evidence, it appears that higher authority was required.¹⁶⁰

In theory, the holders of letters of marque were exacting private reprisals for private wrongs – and, unlike later privateers, operating in peacetime. Furthermore, when a state of war *did* exist, it was not essential to obtain such permission at all before seizing enemy goods: and the principle adhered to in the thirteenth century, that prizes

¹⁵⁸ See Introduction.

¹⁵⁹ Marsden, R. G. (ed.), *Documents Relating to the Law and Custom of the Sea* (London, 1915-16, 2 vols: Navy Records Society 59-60), Vol. I, pp. xv, 19, 111-23; Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 199; Gardiner, "Belligerent rights", p. 538.

¹⁶⁰ Marsden, *Law and Custom*, Vol. I, pp. 119-23; Rodger, *Safeguard*, pp. 128, 199 – 200.

belonged to the Crown unless another arrangement had been agreed beforehand, had by our period come to apply only to ships in Crown service.¹⁶¹ It is therefore not so surprising as it may at first appear that letters of marque did not before this period become an arm of maritime policy; nor was there, so far as can be ascertained, any serious effort before the fifteenth century to bring the issue or the exercise of the rights they granted under royal control. Fourteenth century letters of marque have been described as “in practice licences for piracy”,¹⁶² and there is considerable truth in the description. The resort to reprisals inevitably provoked counter-reprisals and insoluble legal tangles.¹⁶³

Official attitudes to letters of marque and the situations arising from their issue did not change significantly during most of the reign of Richard II. To judge from the surviving evidence, Richard’s government appears to have considered them, when it did so at all, more as a troublesome source of friction than as a potential weapon. So far from their having at this stage been used as leverage in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, not one letter specifically naming Hansards as legitimate targets is known to have been issued before Richard’s deposition.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that English captains were using letters of marque and reprisal to justify attacks on Hanse shipping in this reign. On 24th February 1390, Richard found himself obliged to appoint three bishops, three earls, and two clerks “to settle disputes between Englishmen and Prussians over vessels captured or arrested through letters of marque or by way of reprisal”,¹⁶⁴ and on 26th January 1391, a commission was set up under the King’s uncle John of Gaunt

¹⁶¹ Gardiner, “John Hawley”, p. 175. However they were used in practice, medieval letters of marque were therefore legally quite distinct from those issued from the seventeenth century onwards, which were issued in wartime to license attacks on an enemy’s mercantile shipping.

¹⁶² Saul, “Yarmouth”, p. 140.

¹⁶³ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 128.

¹⁶⁴ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 168.

“to hear and determine the matters in dispute between certain of the king’s lieges and those of Prucia, the Hanse, Guelderland and Holand, by reason of the arrest of ships and vessels and capture of goods under pretext of marque and reprisal or otherwise”.¹⁶⁵

There were many other such investigations into Hanse claims of the misappropriation of seaborne goods in Richard’s reign, but before 1390 “marque and reprisal” had not been explicitly referred to as a possible cause or pretext for these alleged misappropriations. Perhaps the extent of the problem had increased, although this cannot be proven. The fact that the former reference apparently considers “reprisal” as a distinct issue from “letters of marque” suggests that these may have been tit-for-tat attacks carried out without the formal authorisation of a letter of marque. On the other hand, these “reprisals” could have been arrests of goods made in port by local authorities. Such reprisals against foreigners required the prior consent of the King in Council, but this requirement may not always have been adhered to.¹⁶⁶

The explicit mention of such letters clearly indicates that there were instances of anti-Hanseatic activity by captains who held them legitimately. The commission of 1391 does not appear to have had a significant impact on such activity, or on related reprisals of any kind: and the activities of such captains were probably at least partly responsible for the Hansetag’s vaguely worded demand in 1396¹⁶⁷ for the cessation of “reprisals”. This was part of a bout of official sparring which went back to the arrest of English goods in Stralsund in 1388, itself a reprisal for English piracy. Certainly these

¹⁶⁵ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 372.

¹⁶⁶ Gardiner, “Belligerent rights”, pp. 538-39.

¹⁶⁷ *HR I* (iv) 182.

“reprisals” can hardly refer to general or Crown-ordered arrests of goods or merchants, as in 1396 there had been none such in England for some time; they must therefore refer either to unauthorised local activity or to events at sea. No evidence for large scale reprisals or related activity can be found for the mid 1390s¹⁶⁸, and some exaggeration must be suspected. When petitioned by the angry Commons in January 1397 to pursue compensation more robustly, Richard responded by setting up a commission with a vaguely worded remit, but avoided mentioning the possibility that reprisals might be authorised.¹⁶⁹ It is, however, surely unlikely that the Hanse would have plucked this complaint from the air.

In 1396, however – the year of the Hanseatic complaint – the *threat* of reprisals was deployed by Richard,¹⁷⁰ in a communication to the Hansetag which marks the first discernible conscious adoption of the letter of marque as a tool of royal policy.¹⁷¹ The Hansards were informed that, unless those English subjects who had lost goods in the 1388 arrests were compensated by 8th September 1399, letters would be issued authorising reprisals. The fact that the Commons continued to pressure the King over compensation after this threat was issued demonstrates that it did not satisfy domestic opinion, but it had probably been inspired by their demands. Its chief significance, however, lies in demonstrating that the potential of the letter of marque as an instrument of diplomatic pressure had at last penetrated the English government.

Unfortunately for Richard, however, he did not survive to carry out his threat. Another petition was presented to him in the summer of 1399, by aggrieved merchants hoping for revenge, reminding the King of his promise: but, before he could act on it, he

¹⁶⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 72.

¹⁶⁹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 329.

¹⁷⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

¹⁷¹ It was, of course, the Crown that issued (surviving) earlier letters: but hitherto they appear to have been genuine letters of reprisal, issued at the appeal of allegedly wronged individuals, rather than weapons of proxy war or diplomatic threats.

was deposed, and replaced with his cousin Henry IV. Henry, possessing connections with Prussia dating back to his visits to the Baltic a decade previously, and not bound by Richard's foreign policy commitments, appeared to signal a new approach. He gave the Prussian and Wendish towns until Midsummer 1400 to address the complaints – an offer they ignored. One letter naming Hansards as acceptable targets was issued before the deadline was even reached, at Easter: but otherwise, Richard's threat was forgotten.¹⁷²

No more specifically anti-Hanseatic letters are known to have been issued in Henry's reign – although the renewal of apparently open-ended letters for John Brandon and other Lynn merchants in May 1400, immediately after they had been involved in the seizure of a Stralsund vessel, carries obvious implications about official attitudes to such attacks.¹⁷³ However, the government's changing approach to letters of marque must have been a factor in the rising tide of maritime lawlessness which characterised the first decade of the fifteenth century, and whose effect on Anglo-Hanseatic relations was considerable. The ongoing war with France was not characterised in this reign by open hostilities; but licensed reprisals by the alleged victims of French piracy, and "searches" of French vessels suspected of trading with the Scots or the Welsh rebels, made it effectively an active war in the maritime theatre: and this approach spilled over into other areas of maritime affairs. More letters of marque survive from Henry's reign than from any preceding, many making no specification as to who could or could not legitimately be attacked: time and again appear such open-ended phrases as "our open enemies" or "our enemies, whosoever they may be".¹⁷⁴ These letters were an important weapon in the war with Scotland, and in operations against the Frisians (who, as a consequence of harbouring the Vitalienbrüder and others, were deemed pirates and

¹⁷² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 111-12.

¹⁷⁴ Marsden, *Law and Custom of the Sea*, 119, 120.

treated as such).¹⁷⁵

There was, nevertheless, a period of relative inactivity in the early years of Henry's reign, although the seizure by men from Lynn of a ship belonging to the Teutonic Order (allegedly captured from the Scottish pirates who had already taken it, a contention rejected by the Prussians but upheld by the High Court of Admiralty) had provoked unspecified reprisals.¹⁷⁶ It was not until March 1402, following the Teutonic Grand Master's failure to reply to the King's demand that Prussian trade with Scotland should cease, that anti-Hanseatic operations began.

The crisis of 1402-05, including the significant role played therein by vessels sailing under letters of marque and reprisal, is considered below. After 1405, however, instances of such letters being used to justify attacks on Hanse shipping – let alone of such justifications being upheld – are hard to find, although there is little doubt that many of those who committed such attacks in the period 1406-13 were sailing under such letters. (It was in a Prussian ship, the *Marienknecht* of Danzig, that the future James I of Scots was captured by Hugh atte Fen in the spring of 1406.¹⁷⁷)

As detailed above, Henry V took from the first a markedly different approach to matters maritime from that of his predecessors. The expansion of the royal fleet and concentration on an active naval policy lessened dependence upon letter of marque vessels, while measures for the suppression of piracy¹⁷⁸ reduced their scope for legally dubious independent action. Indeed, the potential for abuse – or at least misunderstanding – of such letters was perceived, and steps taken to forestall it, as for instance in this instruction to the Mayor of Calais in 1414:

¹⁷⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 111.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁷⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry IV* (London, 1909, 4 vols), Vol. III, p. 168.

¹⁷⁸ Mollat, Michel, "The French Maritime Community: A Slow Progress up the Social Scale from the Middle Ages to the Sixteenth Century", in *Mariner's Mirror*, 69 (1983).

“Order not to suffer John de Waghen of Beverley or his proctors to execute letters of marque, which the king has granted him against William duke of Bavaria, count of Holland and his subjects, in regard to capture or arrest of victuals and merchandise now or hereafter brought by them to the market of Calais; as... it was not nor is the king’s intent that victuals or merchandise brought by the duke or his subjects to the said market be taken.”¹⁷⁹

John de Waghen had received letters in 1399 and again in May 1414.¹⁸⁰ It is impossible to tell whether his stretching of their terms was deliberate: but the potential for ambiguity was clearly dangerous.¹⁸¹

References to letters of marque are considerably less frequent in this reign than in the last – de Waghen is a rare exception, and his was a reissue of that already granted. Altogether absent are cases in which Hansards specifically complain that their merchandise has been treated as enemy goods. Only once in the printed calendars is this issue touched upon, when the *Renawe* of Lübeck was seized by the King’s commissioners and brought to Dartmouth: and on that occasion the captain readily confessed that his cargo, except for some wine belonging to a Flemish burgess, was indeed enemy-owned.¹⁸² The cargo was impounded, including the wine; the Fleming

¹⁷⁹ *Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry V* (London, 1929, 2 vols), Vol. I, p. 137.

¹⁸⁰ Rymer, Thomas (ed.), *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica : inter reges Angliae et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates, ab ineunte saeculo duodecimo, viz. ab anno 1101. ad nostra usque tempora, habita aut tractata: ex autographis, infra secretiores archivorum regionum thesaurarias per multa saecula reconditis, fideliter exscripta*, ed. for publication by Holmes, George (The Hague, 1739-45, 10 vols), Vol. III, Part 4, p. 166; Vol. IV, Part 2, p. 75.

¹⁸¹ Cf. the case of the Salisbury merchant Thomas Felde, who, *circa* 1407, found himself in trouble after seizing French wine “by authority of letters from the Admiral... which he wrongly thought to be letters of reprisal”. (T.N.A. SC 8/22/1079.)

¹⁸² *C.C.R. Henry V*, Vol. I, p. 137.

complained and restitution was ordered, but no Hanseatic objection is recorded.

Nevertheless, unresolved complaints continue, particularly from Prussian towns, concerning English “interference” with their ships:¹⁸³ it appears likely that this refers less to the activities of individuals, with or without letters of marque, than to other phenomena discussed above. The unnamed Hanseatic ship seized in the summer of 1418 for trading with the Scots¹⁸⁴ is exceptional in the records.

At the beginning of our period, the letter of marque was still a true letter of reprisal, which was in practice what it was in law and nothing else. By the end of it, it had become an occasional instrument of royal policy, whose use prefigured its eventual legal redefinition in the seventeenth century. It was, however, an instrument which government did not yet know how to control. How greatly it contributed to the general lawlessness observed in maritime affairs in the reign of Henry IV is not possible to gauge accurately, but its effective use as a licence for piracy can hardly have failed to exacerbate the situation: and, within the period 1402-05, the willingness of the authorities to connive at this use where Hansards were its victims was all too apparent, with effects which will be considered below. In the succeeding reign, the measurable independent effect of letters of marque upon Anglo-Hanseatic relations was greatly reduced, leaving their period of greatest and best attested significance as that which coincided with the greatest crisis in these relations to fall within the purview of this thesis.

¹⁸³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

The crisis of 1402-05

The period 1402-05 was exceptional in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, particularly in terms of the level of violence inflicted by the English on Hansards, and needs to be considered separately from the rest of the period. The immediate cause of the “undeclared naval war” that existed between England and the Hanse in these years was the failure of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order to reply to the demand of Henry IV in December 1401 that Prussian trade with Scotland should cease. By June 1402, when the Grand Master finally retorted that Prussians would trade with all Christian nations unhindered, English attacks on Prussian and other Hanse shipping allegedly involved in trade with Scotland had already begun. Individuals such as John Tutbury, William Terry, and William Jonesson – all of whom habitually straddled what were then the very thin dividing lines between merchants, king’s sailors, and pirates – began assaults on Hanseatic shipping in April. Around midsummer, a national fleet, mustered under the admiralty of Lord Grey of Codnor to prevent the French from sending naval assistance to Scotland (at a time when England and France were officially in a state of truce), burnt two Bremen ships and seized one Danziger in a Scottish port, in what the Hanse could not help but read as little short of a declaration of war.¹⁸⁵

While the Scottish issue was the catalyst, however, it was of course far from being the sole cause of the crisis. On the contrary, there lay behind it a long history of strained relations, which the usurpation of Henry IV had singularly failed to improve. The insurrection in Wales, war with Scotland, and an increasingly strained (if not, at least at sea, worthless) truce with France, all helped create a climate of instability, of the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

kind in which such violence thrives.¹⁸⁶ Anglo-French relations at sea also broke down in 1402, and an attempt in early 1403 to reassert the truce and repair relations by arresting four English, one French, and one Flemish pirate seems to have come to nothing;¹⁸⁷ but there may also have been more specific factors at work.

Henry, who at the beginning of his reign had heeded Hanseatic demands for freedom from the tunnage and poundage levies, allowed these to be reinstated in April 1401,¹⁸⁸ shortly afterwards ending negotiations over compensation for earlier English piracies.¹⁸⁹ (Jenks suggests, probably correctly, that he was influenced in this by England's straitened finances. Possibly the extravagances of his predecessor had left him in little position to do otherwise than he did: though the increasing political influence of England's merchant class was also a factor – see Chapter V.) This might in normal circumstances have led only to an increased frostiness: but combined with the general circumstances at sea, it helped to create a situation waiting only for an issue such as that of Scoto-Hanseatic trade to blow it open. These circumstances included what has been called “a private war between the merchants of La Rochelle and Dartmouth”,¹⁹⁰ erupting in 1401, for which unnamed “pirates” (*piratae*), “predators” (*depredatores*), and “bandits” (*bannitti*)¹⁹¹ were blamed by both the English and French governments: although the English were realistic enough that the agreement¹⁹² reached with the County of Flanders in 1403 to preserve Flemish vessels against English attack was predicated on open war with France. When one adds to this the effective message that truce-breaking and robbery would not be punished, the results are hardly surprising.

¹⁸⁶ When Mark Mixtow, a Cornishman regularly mentioned in connection with violence against French or Castilian vessels, seized Prussian owned wine at the very beginning of the crisis period, it was from a French ship, while he was “searching for the king's enemies at sea”: *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 133.

¹⁸⁷ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 201.

¹⁸⁸ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 522.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 552.

¹⁹⁰ Ford, “Piracy or Policy”, pp. 68-69.

¹⁹¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. VIII, 274-76, 306-09.

¹⁹² Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille, B.534/18342L, quoted by Ford, “Piracy or Policy”, p. 65.

Lloyd has counted four Hanse ships taken, four destroyed, and eight robbed then released, in 1402; nineteen or twenty taken and one destroyed in 1403; and sixteen taken, six destroyed, and two Dutch ships robbed of German merchandise in 1404; plus at least five incidents of uncertain date probably belonging within this period.¹⁹³ These figures for 1402 and 1404 actually exceed the total number of piracy cases found by Richmond,¹⁹⁴ as the latter was working only from the English printed calendars. (These did yield a total of 35 cases in 1403, when incidents involving French and Castilian victims were also at a high.) Jenks, meanwhile, has examined the financial losses resulting from these attacks for the German towns, and assessed them (in sterling, as they were expressed for the purpose of claiming compensation from the English) as follows: total losses of nearly £3,000 in 1402, nearly £6,000 in 1403, and nearly £14,000 in 1404, the brunt borne by Prussian and Livonian towns – which appear in Jenks' table to have lost nothing up to 1402,¹⁹⁵ while other towns' earlier losses had never amounted to more than £1,000.¹⁹⁶

These figures are quite exceptional, both in the number of incidents and in their violence: the deliberate destruction of ships is a rare complaint outside these years. The English aggressors included Northerners, Southerners, and men of Calais. Even West Country captains such as Henry Paye, Mark Mixtow, and the elder John Hawley,¹⁹⁷ notorious pirates all, but none of them in the habit of attacking Hanse vessels, are recorded as doing so in this period. They included letter of marque captains, men in royal service, and others out on their own account. Incidents, although mostly concentrated in the North, occurred from the Forth to the Channel, even including one

¹⁹³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 113.

¹⁹⁴ Richmond, "Royal Administration", p. 77.

¹⁹⁵ Although the table goes back to 1383, the losses it covers are those which were brought up in negotiations at the Hague: therefore any losses already compensated or written off in the settlement of 1388 are omitted.

¹⁹⁶ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 525.

¹⁹⁷ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, pp. 131, 133, 424.

ship making for Southampton, and another making for the coast of Norway.¹⁹⁸ The northern bias does decline somewhat in 1403 compared to 1402. Lloyd suggests that Hanse ships had taken to deliberately avoiding the vicinity of Scotland, in the hope of being let be – only to face more attacks in the south.¹⁹⁹ This may account for the slight fall-off in incidents near Scotland, but is hardly necessary to explain incidents in southern waters. Hansards did have business in southern England and France, and may well simply have been going about it (which Lloyd does not dispute).

This was not by any means an indiscriminate onslaught, untempered by law or diplomacy. Although it may have been only rarely that they came down explicitly on the Hanseatic side or ordered restitution, the English authorities seem in these years as much as throughout the period to have taken Hanseatic complaints seriously: and it is generally accepted that most if not all cases of piracy received a hearing.²⁰⁰ Even at the height of hostilities, we find the King intervening to order restitution to wronged Hansards:²⁰¹ although his orders do not always seem to have been carried out.²⁰²

The apparent Prussian response in July 1402 (restricting the movement of English merchants and expelling the married men among them) probably falls too early to be related to the crisis which was already brewing. Lloyd has suggested, more plausibly, that these restrictions followed from the English failure to address grievances raised in the 1390s.²⁰³ Nevertheless, when, in June 1403, Henry IV invited the Prussians to send ambassadors to discuss the nations' differences, it is clear that the recent violence was uppermost in his mind. (With the Glyndŵr revolt at its height, and the Percies perhaps already plotting to join it, he could hardly afford foreign quarrels.)

¹⁹⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 113.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁰¹ National Archives SC 8/170/8488; *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, pp. 359, 424, 432, 433; *Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry IV* (London, 1932, 4 vols), Vol. II, pp. 1-2, 337.

²⁰² See, for instance, T.N.A. SC 8/217/10805.

²⁰³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 113.

English merchants in Prussia gave surety for future compensation, and twenty hostages for the safety of the ambassadors.²⁰⁴ clearly the Prussians were taking no chances. Although their specific claims were not accepted, the principle was agreed in October that each side (meaning England and Prussia, not England and the Hanse) should restore ships and goods taken, pay for what could not be restored, and pay further compensation to be agreed at a later date for deaths; and a truce was made until Easter (30th March) 1404. It appears to have been Henry's hope that the intervening months would give him time to crush the Welsh threat:²⁰⁵ but this was not to be. Glyndŵr was defeated at Usk in May 1404, but the setback to the revolt proved short-lived.

After Easter, trade reopened with Prussia – only for Stralsund, which had also suffered violence at sea at English hands, to arrest all English goods in reprisal. Thus the situation of 1402-03, when it had been the Wendish towns which urged engagement while the Prussians were combative,²⁰⁶ was reversed. Then, on 12th March 1405, a diet convened specially at Lübeck banned the import of English cloth and the export of most Baltic wares, including the timber on which the English forces on land and sea were heavily reliant.²⁰⁷

This was the Hanse's final move, which should have checkmated the English: but it failed. England proved able to buy naval stores in the Low Countries, whose Hanse towns had not been represented at Lübeck, and to smuggle her cloth into the Baltic through Scania:²⁰⁸ and, in August, proclaiming disgustedly that the decree was unenforceable when other members of the Hanse disregarded it, the Prussians set it aside, and reopened negotiations. These were held up by the shipwreck of the English envoy William Brampton – from which, Hanseatic representatives later acidly

²⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 113.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

²⁰⁶ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 522.

²⁰⁷ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 221.

²⁰⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 116.

remarked, only papers favourable to the English cause had been salvaged.²⁰⁹ The violence, however, although it did not end altogether (five Hanseatic ships *en route* to Spain were seized by the English fleet in September 1406, for instance, although these were quickly restored), had by now subsided. Freedom from the obligation to pay tunnage and poundage was even granted in June 1406.²¹⁰

In the negotiations of 1407-08 (to be addressed in more detail later), the English exploited the by now obvious divisions among the Hansards by addressing Prussian and Livonian claims first, before skating over those of other areas. Out of total Prussian claims of £8,644 16s. 8d., the English recognised £2,985 13s. 4d. as legitimate, as well as £7,365 6s. 8d. out of Livonian claims originally totalling £8,027 12s. 7d. plus compensation for loss of life.²¹¹ The rest of the Hanse was effectively left out in the cold thanks to this conclusion of separate agreements. Without solidarity from the eastern towns, and feeling unable to place trust in the Duke of Burgundy's offer of an anti-English combination,²¹² the other Hanse towns were very poorly placed to get what they wanted from England. Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Stralsund, and Greifswald subsequently reached an agreement that deferred settlement of compensation claims to a later date, not one specific sum being mentioned, while commercial relations were immediately restored to the *status quo ante* 1400.²¹³ The Hanse had failed to negotiate as a body.

Jenks sees in these agreements a sign that Hanseatic pressure had succeeded in

²⁰⁹ *HR I* (v) 312, 460; *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol VIII, pp. 568, 574.

²¹⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 118-19.

²¹¹ *HR I* (v) 307; Kunze, Karl (ed.), *Hanseakten aus England, 1275 – 1412* (Halle, 1891), no. 316. The claims not immediately recognised were not all rejected: some were submitted to Imperial arbitration, others put off to future negotiations.

²¹² Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 538-39; Vaughan, Richard, *John the Fearless: the growth of Burgundian power* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 24.

²¹³ Hakluyt, Richard, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (12 vols, Glasgow, 1903), Vol. II, p. 58.

making the English take a more responsible attitude towards piracy:²¹⁴ in fact, it seems that the English finished with the upper hand. After the damage done to Prussian power by the battle of Grunwald in 1410 (in which the Teutonic Knights suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Poland-Lithuania), compensation payments to Prussia did not even continue.²¹⁵

Unofficial violence

“Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.”²¹⁶

The murderous behaviour of Chaucer’s Shipman may not have been unusual even in the 1380s, when these lines were probably written: by its very nature, the frequency of this kind of piracy is much harder to gauge than that of incidents with surviving witnesses. Such violence is certainly recorded – for instance, the Earl of Northumberland’s alleged treatment of thirteen Stralsunders when he took a grain ship in June 1401.²¹⁷ Yet it is interesting to note that, outside the always exceptional period 1402-05, recorded English piracy against Hansards is less marked by murder, torture, and destruction of property than could be considered typical of the era.

There is a fact that could have some bearing on this. Although even the most egregious of freebooters were also engaged in legitimate trade and occasional naval

²¹⁴ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 537.

²¹⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 125.

²¹⁶ Chaucer, Geoffrey, *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, ll. 398 – 400, in *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford, 1988), p. 30.

²¹⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 111.

service, a distinction – however blurred – can be drawn between the major professional pirates and those who were primarily merchants. Since the former were, in England, largely based in the south-west, Hansards were more likely to come into contact with the latter, who may well have been less habitually violent.

Official attitudes to piracy,²¹⁸ meanwhile, were ambiguous. However loudly it might be condemned, the fact remained that it was ineradicable as long as there was no standing navy. Edward III's pardons in return for service have already been glanced at, while in the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV, such names as Mixtow, Hawley, and Paye in the south-west, and Brandon, Terry, and Tutbury in the north-east, may appear as commissioners to examine one case of piracy while they are defendants in another. When, for instance, in May 1398, Richard II appointed commissions in each major port to assemble all local vessels for the suppression of "pirates, robbers and other malefactors",²¹⁹ several of these men were among those charged with suppressing a practice of which – as the authorities must have known – they were themselves regularly guilty: although, in this particular case, it is likely that the pirates referred to were not English but Vitalienbrüder.²²⁰

However, even during the 1402-05 crises (as has already been mentioned), Hanseatic complaints not only were investigated, but frequently ended in orders of restitution. Since the middle of the fourteenth century, foreign plaintiffs had seldom brought complaints of piracy before the King's Bench, largely as a result of the length of time they could drag out there: Beardwood cites one²²¹ which began in 1320 and was still being heard in 1338: but they continued to be brought, in the High Court of

²¹⁸ See Introduction for my working definition of the term.

²¹⁹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 366.

²²⁰ See pp. 162-63.

²²¹ Beardwood, *Alien Merchants*, p. 103.

Admiralty and lower courts.²²²

At no time during this period was officialdom openly sympathetic to attacks against Hansards at sea. Indeed, in October 1407, while compensation was being negotiated for the depredations of 1402-05, English ship-owners and mariners complained that “hasty and impetuous” “commissions and writs” to compensate “various alien merchants of our lord the king’s alliance” for “various wrongs and injuries which, so they allege, have been done to them at sea” had “utterly ruined” many ship-owners, “to the great damage and veritable desolation of the entire realm”. They protested too much, and were met with a curt declaration that “the king will consider this further”: but, however exaggerated, this complaint is clear evidence that sincere attempts were being made to suppress piracy.²²³

In 1414, at the second parliament of Henry V, acts of piracy which dishonoured the Crown by breaking treaties or safe conducts were made treasonable. It was enacted that a conservator of the truce should be appointed in each port to investigate and punish such piracies, before whom shipmasters should swear in advance of each voyage that they would observe such truces as were in force, bring all prizes into their home port, and make a full report before selling any prize goods.²²⁴ (It is worth remembering that there was no defined crime of piracy as such in this period: see pp. 40, 205.) Although the resumption of war with France must at first have created a situation conducive to lawlessness, the combination of regular naval patrols, the absorption of those who would otherwise have been pirates into the regularly raised fleets, and the eventual pacification of the Channel under English control, on top of the aforementioned strong legal attack on piracy, seem to have been effective in reducing it. This, however, was probably of small comfort to Hansards who found their ships pressed into English war

²²² See Chapter VI.

²²³ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 433.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, pp. 52-55.

fleets and their goods forcibly sold.

Modern historians of this period deal so much with the piracy that did occur that there is a danger of forgetting to keep it in perspective.

“In the times when wars were not raging and in areas outside the range of privateering bases, the main channels of sea-borne trade were maintained more or less open... In the later Middle Ages the great Hanseatic routes to the East were almost wholly free from the dangers of piracy and robbery... There was hardly any instance of the Venetian galleys being seized or plundered in northern waters on their annual visits to England and the Low Countries; not one of the great wool fleets which sailed from the great wool ports of England was ever seized; and of all the great Bay fleets, which regularly passed through the Narrow Seas on their way from the Atlantic coast to the Baltic, the first ever to be attacked was the great Bay fleet which was seized by Warwick in 1449... When and where peace prevailed trade flowed unhindered.”²²⁵

This statement generalises a little too much, but is a valuable reminder that piracy was less endemic than is sometimes thought. For three of the years within our period (1399, 1417, and 1419), the English printed calendars record no cases of piracy at all;²²⁶ in twelve of the eighteen years from 1384 to 1401 inclusive, losses to English piracy

²²⁵ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 114.

²²⁶ Richmond, “Royal Administration”, p. 77.

mentioned in *Hanserecesse* were nil.²²⁷ While neither of these sources alone presents a comprehensive picture, and these figures certainly do not mean that there was no piracy in these years, they do point to periods of low frequency. The problem was indeed always present: but we must remember not to exaggerate it.

Outside the 1402-05 crisis, it is hard to discern patterns in English piracy against Hansards before 1413. The report of the Bruges Kontor in 1412, for instance, to the effect that English, Scottish, and Dutch pirates were lying in large numbers off the Zwiyn to exchange at sea loot that they could not sell in their own countries for fear of the law,²²⁸ sits in something of a vacuum. We have no other evidence for cooperation between English and Scottish pirates, or for the sale of stolen goods at sea, although both are perfectly plausible. Did such things happen throughout our period? The evidence is not conclusive, but the printed calendars appear to indicate that English pirates *did* usually take their loot to their home ports, or at least that the authorities expected them to do so. This suggests that what occurred in 1412 was irregular. This is hardly surprising: English pirates in this period were not outlaws like the Vitalienbrüder (see Chapter IV) or the thirteenth century Marisco gang in the Bristol Channel, but merchants, respectable figures in their home ports and accustomed to sell goods there, legally acquired or not.

That piracy against Hansards was most frequently practised by persons sailing from North Sea ports (although, once again, the years 1402-05 are exceptional, with West Countrymen being involved) goes almost without saying. That it was, with apparently random exceptions, not especially violent, has been remarked on. Its frequency was sporadic, and the Hanseatic response generally non-violent (though it varied between official complaints and such reprisals as arrest of goods, ships, or

²²⁷ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 525.

²²⁸ Schulz, Friedrich, *Die Hanse und England von Eduards III. bis auf Heinrichs VIII. Zeit* (Aalen, 1911), p. 70.

individuals – to be considered in subsequent chapters). Nor is the content of the loot remarkable: it ranges across the various kinds of goods which Hanseatic vessels might be expected to carry.

The variable nature of the attacks is perhaps best illustrated by quoting selected accounts of individual incidents.

“the petition of Conrad Fynk of Lubeck in Almain, exhibited to the king and council, alleging that when he and other merchants of Almain had laden in those parts a vessel called *la Seinte Marie Knyght* of Lubeck, whereof John Crobenhavn is master, with white herrings bound for Southampton, certain of the king’s lieges perceiving her sailing off the coast of England, rushed upon her with war vessels and balingers, treating the said Conrad and his mariners as traitors although in the king’s friendship, and although he showed them letters of coket and freight, which they tore up and threw into the sea, and plundered her of all her goods and tackle, except the herrings aforesaid, and removing the said Conrad and his crew, put English seamen in her, brought her to the said port, when by the carelessness of the crew she was broken by the tide and most of the cargo lost.”²²⁹

“Commission to the mayor of Kyngeston on Hull and

²²⁹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 394.

John Topclyf, serjeant at arms, on information that John Herry of the said town and certain other accomplices of his captured among other things seven lasts and two barrels of beer and 100 nobles of gold of Ludkin Claisson of Ampsterdam in Holand and certain letters of payment of the duke of Holand containing the sum of 200*l.* belonging to Ludkin in a ship called the *Julyan* of Dansk, of which John Vulle is master, sailing at sea towards Seland, to cause restitution to be made...”²³⁰

“... complaint by Hermann Grey and Bernard Stour, owners of a ship called *Maryknyght* of Breme of the Hanse in Almain, that when they were lately sailing at sea off the coasts of Norway with the said ship laden with divers merchandise, viz. rye flour, wax, linen cloth, peas and oat flour, one John Chaumberleyne, master of a barge of which Thomas Trusbutte of Lynne is owner, and others in their company on the morrow of Midsummer last came there and captured the ship and all the goods and merchandise, the whole amounting to the value of 300*l.*”²³¹

“... divers evildoers of Newcastle on Tyne, Blakeney, Wyveton, Claye and Crowemere and other towns within

²³⁰ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 432.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

the realm captured a ship called *Marienknyght* of which Isebrand Pierson of Hamsterdam in Holand, merchant is lord and owner, and another ship called *Godesgherade*, of which John Berwoldesson and Peter Jonesson of the same town, merchants, are lords and owners, laden with divers goods and merchandise to no small value, coming from Prussia on the high sea off the coasts of Holand, and threw overboard and drowned 36 merchants and mariners in the said ship and took the ships with the goods and merchandise within the realm, viz. the ship called *Godesgherade* to the port of Blakeney and the ship called *Marienknyght* to Scardeburgh, and there sold them to divers lieges of the king...’’²³²

(The last is apparently a mangled recording of two separate incidents: the two victims, two ports of resort, and two origins for the pirates – Newcastle is over a hundred miles from the cluster of Norfolk towns here named alongside it – all point that way.²³³)

Among this handful of cases, we have incidents ranging from within the waters of the pirates’ home ports to the Norwegian coast; from the relatively peaceful to the slaughterous; from the financially minor to the highly profitable. Many different stretches of the English coast are involved, and the prize goods taken show considerable variation. The more they tell us individually, the less they appear to tell us collectively – except for what we learn by the way these cases came to us. These accounts all come

²³² Ibid., Vol. III, p. 59.

²³³ Cooperations between men of different, widely separated ports were not entirely unknown: it may have been within this period that a Dordrecht ship and its cargo of wine were taken by a balinger captained by a Winchelsea man, with owners in Scarborough and London, and brought into Grimsby. (T.N.A. C1/17/95.) Nevertheless, the *Godesgherade* and *Marienknyght* incidents were probably separate.

from Hansards seeking justice from the English authorities, and most of them appear to have received it. That in itself is surely revealing: but of what?

These cases were selected to illustrate the diversity of incidents, but it is worth looking at them more closely. Except for the first, all fall within the crisis period of 1402-05. Conrad Fynk's complaint is dated 27th November 1387, in a time of strained relations with Prussia, but not with Fynk's native Lübeck. From the wording it sounds as if some sort of pretext was presented for the attack: he and his men were treated "as traitors": but it is not possible to discern what is meant by this. Misdirected anti-Prussian feeling might be a plausible hypothesis if the attack had happened in the North Sea, but seems less likely on the south coast. Restitution was ordered by the Council – the King, though he was in London, is not mentioned; and, given that the date is ten days after the indictment for treason of five of his favourites by the Lords Appellant, it is likely that his political opponents made this decision. There is, however, no reason to suppose that English domestic politics entered into this issue, or that Richard's decision would have been different.

The remaining cases span a very narrow period, from 11th June 1404 to 22nd March 1405. There is no indication that the pirates advanced any pretext for their actions, and the replies to the petitions come from Henry IV, in the first two cases without Council. It is worth noting that, although the volume of English piracy against Hansards remained high at this point, all these incidents fall within a window after the reopening of Anglo-Prussian trade, and before the trade ban imposed by the Lübeck diet on 12th March 1405 could have taken effect. Two of the three petitions have a Prussian link: the *Julyan* was a Danzig vessel, and the two Amsterdam ships in the confused final petition were coming from Prussia when they were attacked. These events occurred after a settlement with Prussia had supposedly been reached, but its fragility, in the face

of continuing violence and the renewed hostility of other Hanseatic areas, must have been all too obvious.

Henry, at this point, was preoccupied with the Glyndŵr revolt, the near breakdown of relations with France, and his financial difficulties. He needed no new enemies, either at home or abroad: nor did he face a simple choice between conciliating either the Hansards or the English merchant class. Merchants not directly profiting from these activities had no interest in continuing hostilities. What the mercantile class wanted was for a more favourable settlement with the Hansards, in line with the Four Points, to be aggressively pursued; but it could not be pursued at all without negotiation, and the prospect of negotiation was threatened by the prolonging of the crisis. The potential impact of the crisis on trade, even before the Hanseatic diet's punitive measures, was also dangerous to both merchants' profits and the King's revenues. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Henry came down hard on the pirates (in the Chaumberleyne case, arrest as well as restitution is ordered – and in the final case, punishment). Indeed, on 14th June 1404, he ordered the serjeant-at-arms Robert Markeley

“to seize... all... ships and vessels of Puce, Campe and Hansze captured by any of the king's subjects, and to keep the same safely, selling any goods and merchandise which cannot be kept, until further orders, and to cause proclamation to be made wherever he may think fit that none of the king's lieges shall capture any ships, goods, vessels or merchandise belonging to those of Puce,

Campe and Hansze.”²³⁴

The governmental attitude to at least the last three petitions, therefore, may be seen as a product of their specific circumstances.

²³⁴ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 433.

CHAPTER II: *Violence committed by Hansards against Englishmen*²³⁵

Outside the period of Vitalienbrüder activity,²³⁶ Hanseatic attacks on English shipping appear with considerably less frequency in our sources than *vice versa*. They are, nevertheless, not unheard of. They have been less studied than the depredations of either the Vitalienbrüder or the English, largely because information is patchy even when their infrequency is taken into account: but they were a factor in Anglo-Hanseatic relations in this period. How important a factor has yet to be assessed.

Official violence

Reprisals and police actions

This period begins with an English act of violence, and Prussian reprisals. The notion that violence might be an appropriate response to English piracy had been mooted at a Hansetag as far back as May 1382, when it was already a serious problem²³⁷: but retaliations for the Zwiyn incident of 1385 were *not* carried out at sea. Instead, English-owned goods were arrested in Prussian ports, provoking retaliatory arrests of Prussian goods in England²³⁸ and a long diplomatic crisis. Anglo-Prussian trade was seriously disrupted:²³⁹ but English relations with the rest of the Hanse

²³⁵ Not including the activities of the Vitalienbrüder, which will be addressed in Chapter IV. There is, however, some overlap, owing to occasional ambiguity concerning who was responsible for particular attacks.

²³⁶ 1389 – 1401, although there is no record of them attacking English vessels before 1393.

²³⁷ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 493.

²³⁸ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 61.

²³⁹ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 107.

remained relatively good,²⁴⁰ despite the fact that controversies arising from the mistaken arrest of non-Prussian wares seem not to have been fully resolved until near the end of the crisis period. It was probably in 1388 that a Hanseatic petition was presented, complaining that:

“all the merchants of the Hanse, with their goods and merchandise throughout England, were arrested and imprisoned for a long time; and they are still under arrest, and the debts owed to them and their goods and merchandise held, as they are accused because the lords of Prussia have seized the goods of English merchants there. They are completely innocent of this, as they can prove.”²⁴¹

The response was positive:

“It is ordained and assented in parliament that the goods and merchandise which have been seized should be delivered to the complainants. As for the remainder, if they can be divided, then this is to be done, and the goods and merchandise of those from the lordship of Prussia are to be seized, and the rest delivered. If they are not divisible, then they are all to be held. In the meantime, a letter under the privy seal is to be sent to the Master of

²⁴⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 495.

²⁴¹ T.N.A. SC 8/21/1009.

Prussia, to repay and make redress to the English merchants for the seizures and other wrongs and injuries done to them in the lordship of Prussia.”²⁴²

The official Prussian response remained non-violent, consisting, after the original arrest, largely of economic sanctions (notably bans on the export of goods in high demand in England).²⁴³ This may well have had more to do with practicality than with any desire to avoid hostilities: encounters at sea were necessarily haphazard, and much harder to plan in detail than activities in port: but it still makes for a contrast with England’s greater readiness to resort to violence.²⁴⁴

The Hanse’s anti-piratical patrols, which began in 1381, were in their early years confined to the Baltic; and the defensive convoys in which their ships took to sailing, ten strong at least in the eastern sea, were thought to need no more than three ships for voyages to Flanders.²⁴⁵ Evidently at this point, troublesome though it was, dealing with English piracy was not a priority. The letter of marque,²⁴⁶ though it seems to have been in use in Germany before the English had been aware of it,²⁴⁷ was not employed against the English, and there is no record that I can find of Prussians (or any other Hansards, for that matter) attacking English vessels at sea during the period of the 1385-88 crisis.

The resolution of relations with Prussia in 1388 ushered in a period of relative stability in Anglo-Hanseatic affairs, at least until Vitalienbrüder attacks on English

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Lönnroth, “Baltic Countries”, p. 391.

²⁴⁴ As is discussed below, the Hansards had long recognised that the reprisal system was a very blunt instrument, not up to dealing with the complexities of international trade; in England, meanwhile, it remained in regular use.

²⁴⁵ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, pp. 97, 100.

²⁴⁶ The meaning of this term in the period referred to is addressed in Chapter I. The term was not used in German, but *Kaperbrief* is a rough equivalent, and I can find no evidence that it was understood differently from *lettre de marque*. The “Lübeck Law” which largely governed maritime matters in the Hanse towns had nothing to say about the *Kaperbrief*: see also Chapter VI.

²⁴⁷ Lloyd, Terence Henry, *Alien Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, 1982), p. 20.

shipping began in earnest in 1393. These years were not without incident, but there are only a very few isolated references to “marque and reprisal”, and these are extremely vague. References to “disputes between Englishmen and Prussians over vessels captured or arrested through letters of marque or by way of reprisal”²⁴⁸ or “the arrest of ships and vessels and capture of goods and merchandise under pretext of marque and reprisal or otherwise”²⁴⁹ tell us only that such issues were included in grievances whose totality covered complaints by both sides: it is possible that these specific issues were complained of only by Hansards. That both sides in fact used these letters appears to be implicit here: but if the Hansards did, it is likely to have been in the arrest of ships in port. If there had been incidents at sea falling under this heading we should expect to find explicit reference made to them, and there is none.

The rest of our period yields little more evidence of such actions by the Hansards. As the 1390s wore on, and the Vitalienbrüder began to make English merchants feel their presence, reprisals were threatened by the English government, but seem not to have been carried out. On the Hanse side, meanwhile, punitive taxes and the arrest of ships in port were used²⁵⁰, but not, so far as our sources appear to indicate, any reprisals at sea. The crisis of 1402-05, which was begun by English attacks on Hansards allegedly trading with the Scots, will be considered below; understandably, in the years of negotiations which followed it, the Hansards were keen to avoid being seen to sponsor violence – and when, after 1410, compensation to the Prussians was cancelled, there was little they could do about it. (The English were, of course, aware of this. Prussian power in general, and not only that of the Teutonic Knights, had been badly dented by the Knights’ defeat at Grunwald.)²⁵¹ The Hanse as a whole was still able to

²⁴⁸ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 168 (24th February 1390).

²⁴⁹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 372 (26th January 1391).

²⁵⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 71, 74.

²⁵¹ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 69.

take action, but it remained in the field of trade bans and the like,²⁵² and when, in 1417, ten Hanse ships were seized by Henry V's fleet, the towns turned in desperation to the Emperor, no longer able to strike back on their own behalf.²⁵³

There are isolated cases after this of what *might* be officially authorised reprisals. There is, for instance, the seizure of the *Gabriel* of Boston "in the parts of Prussia... at the suit of certain people of the town of Campe"²⁵⁴ in 1418: though it is perhaps more probable that this refers to an arrest in port. In this case, the vessel was released on payment of a fine, but ran aground on the way home, which its owner claimed would not have happened without the delay caused by the arrest. Counter-arrests followed: but without more data concerning comparable instances it is not possible to draw much from this, except that its very isolation is a reminder of how rare such incidents were, if indeed this one represents a seizure at sea. As early as 1303, it had been recognised that the reprisal system was too crude to deal with the complexities of international trade:²⁵⁵ it appears that, whether out of choice or necessity, the Hansards had stuck to this view, whereas the English had not.

The crisis of 1402-05

The defining characteristic of the events of 1402-05 is the upsurge in English violence. Coming as it does immediately after the suppression of the Vitalienbrüder, this marks a switch, the first time in a decade that the English appear in the sources as

²⁵² Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 70.

²⁵³ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 70.

²⁵⁴ *C.P.R. Henry V*, Vol. II, p. 205. This may be an example of effective Hanseatic solidarity, Prussian authorities responding to the suit of fellow Hansards from Kampen, which is in the Low Countries, many hundreds of miles from Prussia.

²⁵⁵ Spufford, Peter, *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London, 2002), p. 222.

more active pirates than the Hansards: but it behoves us to consider the question of Hanseatic violence in this period as well. Was there any pattern of official sponsorship, or at least toleration, of maritime violence, comparable with that which can be detected (see Chapter I) on the English side?

Of course, by its nature this question is harder to answer concerning the Hansards than concerning the English. While England lacked a navy in the modern sense, its government was highly active at sea because of the wars with France and Scotland, and letters of marque were handed out by the Crown in unprecedented numbers in this period. The Hanse, with no comparable foreign conflict to prosecute, did not engage directly in naval activities on any such scale; nor, of course, did it even have a central government. Any official involvement in maritime violence may therefore be harder to discern. It is therefore unsurprising that none is immediately apparent; but it is worth looking more closely at the evidence.

The attack on the English settlement in Bergen in 1402,²⁵⁶ like the similar incident some ten or eleven years earlier, appears to have been a spontaneous action by Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer*: there is no indication in the surviving evidence that either the Hanse as a body, or the government of any one town, was thought to have endorsed the assault, let alone ordered it. (When Norfolk fishermen were attacked by men of Hamburg off Norway in 1406, the *Bergenfahrer* managed to convince the Crown that they were not to blame.²⁵⁷) In any case, it fell rather too early to have been a response to English actions: and when we do find decisive reprisals taking place, in Prussia in 1404, they take the familiar form of expulsions and trade bans.²⁵⁸ The Hansetag adopted as official policy a ban on the import of English cloth and the export of Baltic goods to

²⁵⁶ Hope, *British Shipping*, p. 68.

²⁵⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 138.

²⁵⁸ Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 118.

England in March 1405, although this proved counter-productive.²⁵⁹ English references to “damages and grievances” in the same month²⁶⁰ come too early to refer specifically to this action, and *may* cover acts of violence, especially since they include “damages... inflicted at sea”. However, it is possible that this refers to pre-1401 acts by the Vitalienbrüder, or to unofficial acts of random piracy. The words *may*, indeed, be merely formulaic, as they appear in the context of Hanseatic complaints about English piracy, and it was at this time in England’s interests to imply an equivalence between the grievances of the two sides.

The fact is that there is little evidence to suggest that references to “mutual hurts”, and claims for English losses, refer to any other activity on the Hanse side than the arrest of goods in port. Nor, in this period, were violent reprisals for English piracy ever mooted at the Hansetag as they had been in 1382. The crisis was of English making and English unmaking, the activities of the pirates eventually being curtailed by measures taken by their own government in its own time.²⁶¹

Other incidents

The Hanse as a body, unsurprisingly, had neither a standing navy, nor anything equivalent to the royal fleets of monarchies such as England’s. It is possible to speak of “Hanseatic” fleets or flotillas only in relation to those specific occasions when two or more towns agreed that their armed ships should sail together, whether for self-defence, or patrolling in search of the Vitalienbrüder or other piratical menaces. Nevertheless, not only these occasional groupings, but ships operating under the instructions of the

²⁵⁹ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 109.

²⁶⁰ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Volume II, p. 501.

²⁶¹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 536-37.

authorities of individual towns, existed, and were occasionally involved in violent incidents. The line between these and what might be called private vessels is still more blurred in the Hanse's case than in England's: but it is worth considering whether either the former, or ships on primarily private business but acting in the specific instance with their town's or the Hanse's approval, was involved at any point during our period in violence against English shipping.

The seizure of the *St Mary* of Hull by "certain men of les Stedes", including "Giles Hopynbere governor of Cirice... Aron Johansoun burgess of Lubyke... Claus Crepelyn burgess of Stralsonde" and "'here' Claus Bukko governor of Wysmer",²⁶² in 1391 is a bizarre, apparently isolated incident. In addition to these four, the sixteen named perpetrators included men from every major Hanseatic area from the Low Countries to Prussia: and the booty was taken to Copenhagen. King Richard sent "divers writs of the privy seal" to Queen Margaret of Scandinavia and to "the governors and councillors of Lubyke, Stralsonde and Campe" for restitution, but as of 12th December that year none had been forthcoming:²⁶³ this, combined with the presence of the above dignitaries, suggests that there was some degree of official connivance in the attack, but it is impossible to prove. The involvement of the Mecklenburger Bukko, whose city was sheltering Queen Margaret's enemies, in this incident is still more extraordinary than the degree of inter-Hanseatic cooperation: but in the absence of further data on either the individuals involved (there is some, but nothing relevant), the specific incident, or comparable occurrences, it is not possible to draw general conclusions from this. The incident may have played a part in drawing English attention to the situation in the Baltic: but little reaction to this can be seen before Richard's

²⁶² *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

decision in April 1393 to lend Margaret three ships to use against the Vitalienbrüder,²⁶⁴ which can hardly have been a response to an attack which Margaret herself apparently sanctioned.

As a matter of fact, the strangeness of this incident is of a piece with the apparent randomness of most Hanseatic acts of violence against English shipping in this period (those, at least, not attributable to the Vitalienbrüder). There are no more before 1420 in which there is any significant, let alone compelling, reason to suspect any other official connivance than that of the Mecklenburg towns with the pirates, which will be dealt with in Chapter IV. We may therefore now pass on to piracy committed without the winking of officialdom.

Unofficial violence

Incidents misattributed to the Vitalienbrüder

Having apparently escaped the first few years of Vitalienbrüder activity unmolested, save for a single incident in 1393, the English suffered what German and Scandinavian shipping had had to put up with since 1389, in a series of attacks between 1394 and 1401. These are considered in detail in Chapter IV. However, it is notable in relation to these incidents that English sources show only very limited awareness of the existence of the Vitalienbrüder as a group. Complaints name Wismar and Rostock, and known individual officers of the pirates, very regularly: but towns which were consistently opposed to the pirates are named without differentiation from those which

²⁶⁴ Rydberg, Olof S. (ed.), *Sveriges Traktater med Frammande Makter* (Stockholm, 1883, 3 vols), Vol. II, n. 420; Rymer (ed.), *Foedera*, Vol. III, Part IV, p. 85.

supported them, while individuals unknown outside the English complaints are not distinguished from their famous comrades. The peace of 1395, which lost the pirates the protection of Mecklenburg and effectively turned them into outlaws, and their final suppression in 1401, go unremarked in English sources. Indeed, when their depredations were complained of in 1405, incidents right up to that year were included, giving the impression that the English thought the pirates were still active.²⁶⁵

The post-1401 incidents at least must be misattributed – insofar as they *are* attributed, which is by implication only, since neither the term “Vitalienbrüder” itself nor any direct equivalent appears in English sources. This raises several questions. Were there, in this complaint or other English references to the pirates, any other misattributions? Were the mistakes honest or deliberate? If the first, what was the cause; and if the second, what was the motive? And what effect did these attacks and their misattribution to the Vitalienbrüder have on Anglo-Hanseatic relations?

Misattributions, of course, cut two ways. The “Danes” who pillaged Norfolk shipping in 1395²⁶⁶ were possibly in fact Vitalienbrüder: but that is the only instance in which there appears any likelihood of a mistake in that direction. There are, of course, a considerable number of irregularities in the English complaints, which will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter IV: here we shall concentrate on cases where there is identifiable reason to doubt the attribution to the Vitalienbrüder, and shall assume that when individual pirates are named the attribution is accurate unless there is positive cause to think otherwise. This allows us to discount from consideration all incidents from the 1405 complaint save those occurring after 1401: but, before proceeding to them, we should glance at what other sources have to say about attacks in the period 1394 – 1401.

²⁶⁵ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, pp. 60-67.

²⁶⁶ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, p. 337. It is Nicolas who posits the mistake: his hypothesis seems logical, although the chronicle account is quite circumstantial.

The complaint generally names Wismar and Rostock as the home ports of the pirates, sometimes adding “and others of the hans”,²⁶⁷ this continues long after the peace of 1395. But in various other sources, we find these towns associated with others which had no connection with the Vitalienbrüder. All these references date from 1396-97, which was, according to the 1405 complaint, the least eventful part of this period.

“Petition to the king and council in parliament from the merchants and mariners of the realm, who have tried for a long time to pursue their claim against the towns of Lubeck, [W]ysseme, Rostock and Stralsund for the restitution of certain of their boats, filled with merchandise, which were violently seized by robbers from those ports on various occasions; and although the king has sent letters of privy seal including threats of reprisals in each of the last three years in an attempt to remedy this, these towns will not make restitution or do justice.”²⁶⁸

“Commission... to enquire touching the complaint of John Brandon and Thomas Cok, merchants of Bishops Lenne, that lately in the parts of Prucia they were divers times spoiled of their goods and merchandise by malefactors of Lubyk, Wysemere, Rustok and Stralsond, and their men and servants imprisoned until they made

²⁶⁷ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, pp. 60-67.

²⁶⁸ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 329 (22nd January 1397).

fines with their captors for their deliverance, and that Mercnard Stenehorst, Bertram Fanhalter²⁶⁹ and others of those towns, and several persons to whose hands their goods have come are in different parts of England.”²⁷⁰

“The petitioners request the king’s aid in obtaining justice against the towns of Germany with regard to shipping”²⁷¹ (naming “Lubyk” and “Straelsounde” in the text, as well as the two Mecklenburg towns).

That the same two “extra” ports – Wendish towns, like Rostock and Wismar themselves – are named in all these complaints is hardly likely to be a coincidence. Although the first and last give the impression that multiple attacks are being discussed, the specificity of the second – the only mention of Hanseatic violence against English shipping in the English printed calendars for the entire period of Vitalienbrüder activity – raises the possibility that this was the only incident in which men of Lübeck and Stralsund were actually involved, and that they have been grouped together in the other complaints with grievances against only the Mecklenburgers. This would also account for the absence both of these cities and the individuals named in the Patent Rolls from the 1405 complaint: perhaps they had been lumped together in 1397 with complaints against “men of Wismar and Rostock”, but by 1405 either this complaint had been resolved or the English had realised their mistake. In either case, if this was mistaken for a Vitalienbrüder attack – and we cannot be sure that it was – the error appears to have been honest.

²⁶⁹ Otherwise unknown.

²⁷⁰ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, pp. 309-10 (4th December 1397).

²⁷¹ T.N.A. SC 8/22/1069 (1397, exact date unknown).

Whether the same can be said of the three post-suppression incidents recorded in the 1405 complaint – one from 1402, two from 1405, though interestingly enough none from 1403, the year which saw the greatest volume of English violence against the Hansards – is another matter. It is certainly possible that the English were taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the submission of the complaint to claim compensation for what they knew or suspected to be unrelated incidents – especially since these “mistakes” seem curiously out of keeping with the known sophistication of late medieval English diplomacy. This is, however, unprovable. The matter is considered in more detail in Chapter IV.

Other incidents

The English tendency to lump together all “seizures” of ships in their complaints, often not clearly distinguishing arrests in port from incidents at sea, can make it difficult to tell whether in a specific case we are dealing with piracy or not. Where such ambiguity exists, it is of course quite likely that we are not: actual violence would no doubt be milked for all it was worth whenever possible. Most of the few unambiguously described incidents outside the 1405 complaint about the activities of the Vitalienbrüder have already been addressed above; but there are a few other cases worth glancing at.

The kidnap of John Bek and William Burnham by the Danzig shipmaster John Bonycouse in 1384 was not effected by one ship attacking another: rather, de Bonycouse was hired to transport the two English merchants and their goods to

Scotland,²⁷² but instead “delivered them to their enemies” in Sluys, where they were held for ransom – an uncommon form of piracy in this period.²⁷³

Norfolk fishermen were attacked and killed by Hansards (probably from Hamburg) off the coast of Norway in 1406, temporarily making life difficult for Hamburg *Bergenfahrer* in England, until they convinced Henry IV that they were not to blame.²⁷⁴ but this took place at a time when both sides were very keen to restore good relations, and unwilling to let such incidents get in the way. Violence did happen in Norwegian ports – the murders of men from Cromer at “Wynforde” (unidentified), probably in 1407;²⁷⁵ the killing of William Sleght at Bergen, probably in 1413²⁷⁶ - but not, apart from the contretemps off Belle Isle in May 1413,²⁷⁷ at sea. (In the latter incident, although the Prussians seem to have struck the first blow, the English appear to have been the effective aggressors.²⁷⁸) Not until the late 1420s²⁷⁹ and early 1430s did Hanseatic violence against English shipping become a serious problem again.

Official attitudes and reactions

English responses to Hanseatic violence have been mentioned above; they will be addressed again in Chapters VII and VIII, but some are worth glancing at here, before we move on to the attitudes of the Hanse itself and its member towns. The printed calendars and the Parliamentary Rolls are full of commissions for arbitration,

²⁷² This was before trade with the Scots had been explicitly banned: see *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, pp. 50-51.

²⁷³ T.N.A. SC 8/214/10666.

²⁷⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 138.

²⁷⁵ T.N.A. SC 8/188/9352.

²⁷⁶ T.N.A. C1/6/44.

²⁷⁷ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, p. 403.

²⁷⁸ See p. 60.

²⁷⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 139; *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry VI* (London, 1907, 6 vols), Vol. II, pp. 220, 357; *Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry VI* (London, 1933, 6 vols), Vol. II, pp. 145-46.

investigation, or embassies to the Hansards: there is also, of course, the commission to groups of men up and down the east coast in 1398 to hunt down and arrest pirates,²⁸⁰ almost certainly a reaction to the activities of the Vitalienbrüder.²⁸¹

Like England, the Hanse possessed in its varied and overlapping legal codes no specific crime of piracy.²⁸² On the Hanseatic side, measures including the institution of anti-piratical patrols, and the urging of compensation for wronged Englishmen, can likewise be traced back to the Vitalienbrüder. This leaves no concrete Hanseatic action whose origins can be definitely attributed to acts of violence at sea by any *other* Hansards: which is, in fact, hardly surprising, given the sporadic nature of such incidents. It was not worth responding to them collectively: and responses to individual incidents have left very little trace in the records on the Hanseatic side. They gave the English the occasional extra cause of complaint, which they barely (if at all) bothered to distinguish from the activities of the Vitalienbrüder, or even the arrest of goods in reprisal for their own piracies. The waters are muddied by some very general references which could cover both these kinds of incident, and therefore might not refer to any *other* Hanseatic violence at all. However, if we ignore these references, the impact of the remaining incidents on Anglo-Hanseatic relations, if not quite negligible, is clearly very small.

²⁸⁰ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 366.

²⁸¹ See pp. 162-63.

²⁸² Nash, *The Hansa*, p. 61. See also Chapter VI.

CHAPTER III: *Violence committed by or against third parties*

Anglo-Hanseatic violence in this period, of course, did not take place in a vacuum. The Vitalienbrüder were brought into being by a war in Scandinavia; England was in conflict with Scotland and at open war with France for much of the period, both being prosecuted in part at sea; the main theatre of English piracy was not the North Sea at all, but away to the south-west, French and Castilian victims being recorded more often than Hansards. The complex interplay of European geopolitics could not help but have an effect, not only on Anglo-Hanseatic relations, but on violence within those relations, and to be affected by that violence. The total volume of incidents at sea in which English *or* Hanseatic vessels and individuals were variously involved is many times that involving both simultaneously. It is therefore worth asking the question: were Anglo-Hanseatic relations affected by international maritime violence when the specific incidents involved some third nationality and only one of the principals?

Of course, “nationality” is in this context a term of convenience only. The question cannot be approached without the understanding that modern concepts of the nation state are inapplicable to the Middle Ages. The Hanse itself cannot be described as a national entity, nor can many of the powers, polities, and geographical areas considered in this chapter – while some which might be so described in cultural terms (e.g. Ireland) had little or no independent political existence. The “third parties” under discussion are merely groups who were neither Hansards (although in Germany and the Baltic the boundaries are blurred) nor, though some were subjects of the Crown of England, English.

The Scandinavian monarchies, the German magnates, the Baltic lands, the Teutonic Order, and the Empire

The vital significance of the Hanse towns' relationship with the magnates of Northern Europe, and the way in which this complicated the towns' external relations, has already been glanced at. The two most obvious cases are the involvement of Wismar and Rostock in the Duchy of Mecklenburg's wars in Scandinavia, and the influence exerted on Danzig and the other Prussian towns by the Teutonic Knights: but the great majority of the towns had comparable tales to tell.

Interactions with England

Increasing penetration by English merchants into Baltic markets in the decades immediately preceding our period naturally affected England's relations with all the regional powers, not just the Hanse: and in the case of the Prussian-Livonian towns, this means the Teutonic Knights. It was to the Grand Master of the Order that Richard II wrote (three months *before* the Zwijn incident) to complain that English merchants were being forced to take their goods to inaccessible Elbing, tucked behind an eastward-pointing spit of land, instead of the far more convenient Danzig;²⁸³ it was the Grand Master who angrily rebuked Danzigers for planning to sail to England without permission in 1386, during the low ebb in Anglo-Prussian relations which followed the incident.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ HR I (iii) 192.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 197.

This must have somewhat frustrated the Hanse towns – both Prussian ones, whose interests were subordinated to those of the Order, and non-Prussian ones, who found what was to them an alien organisation negotiating on behalf of their members. When an English embassy was sent in May 1387 to negotiate with the Prussians, there was some vagueness as to precisely whose grievances were up for discussion, especially since the complaints which had led to the negotiations had come from towns both inside and outwith Prussia. Dordrecht found itself obliged to communicate to the Prussian towns a wish that they should put pressure on the Order to discuss points of interest to the western towns as well as their own.²⁸⁵ This vagueness persisted into subsequent reigns: after sending ambassadors to Grand Master Conrad von Jungingen in 1406, Henry IV

“ordered the sheriffs to cause proclamations to be made
that all who had been injured by or had injured the people
of Prussia, Livonia or the Hanse should appear before the
king and council at Westminster before Easter next”²⁸⁶,

with little sign of awareness that the Order was not competent to negotiate for the other Hanse towns. Of course, since Hanse merchants quite frequently shipped goods in vessels from towns outside their own area, some confusion of this sort was probably inevitable.

The Order’s own ships seldom came into contact with the English: but in 1401, one did come into the possession of men from Lynn in somewhat dubious circumstances. Their position, backed up by a decision in the High Court of Admiralty,

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 213.

²⁸⁶ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, p. 153.

was that the original pirates had been Scots, from whom they had quite legitimately captured her. Reprisals were taken against Lynn merchants in Prussia, and this may have helped to harden the Order against any cessation of trade with Scotland, the catalyst for the 1402-05 crisis.²⁸⁷

Given the similarity of the Empire's position to the Order's, only on a larger scale, it is interesting to note that Anglo-Imperial and Anglo-Hanseatic relations show little sign of this kind of interconnection. The Empire's concern with England's foreign activities was primarily centred on her incursions in France and the Low Countries, not on her quarrels with the Hanse. When Sigismund visited Henry V, and offered him the friendly if unneeded advice to keep Calais and Dover "as youre tweyne eyne to kepe the narowe see",²⁸⁸ he does not appear to have mentioned Anglo-Hanseatic issues.

Scandinavia is a slightly less complex prospect. True, there was the Hanseatic presence in Bergen, in almost constant friction with English merchants attempting to trade there or further north: but these were not subjects of the Crown of Norway in the way that Hansards in their own towns were often subjects of Knights, Empire, or local magnates, and it is difficult to trace much of a connection between England's relations with the *Bergenfahrer* and with the Danish-Norwegian monarchy. The death of William Sleght,²⁸⁹ for instance, had no demonstrable effect on Anglo-Scandinavian relations. The English assault on Bergen in October 1413, in which substantial damage was done to the city, the *Annals of Iceland* reporting the destruction by fire of seven churches, appears to have been aimed entirely at the Hansards, and no record survives of what reactions it elicited.²⁹⁰ (It clearly had an impact in the Hanse towns, since Christian von

²⁸⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 112.

²⁸⁸ Warner (ed.), *Libelle*, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ T.N.A. C1/6/44; see pp. 234-35.

²⁹⁰ Bruns, Friedrich, *Die Lübecker Bergenfahrer und ihre Chronistik* (Berlin, 1900), p. 349 and nn.

Geren records that “the English burnt Bergen city”, wrongly implying total destruction.²⁹¹⁾

There was, nevertheless, room for uncertainty, as we see in the reaction to the 1391 incident already mentioned in Chapter II. When a gang of Hansards hailing from almost every major city between Danzig and Amsterdam seized a Prussian ship laden with English-owned goods and took it into Copenhagen, King Richard

“sent divers writs of privy seal to the queen of Norway,
Swether and Denmarke and to the governors and
councillors of Lubyke, Stralesonde and Campe for
restitution of ship and goods or the value thereof”.²⁹²

There may have been some understandable confusion as to exactly where responsibility lay – so Richard wrote to everyone. But when a ship of similar status (Prussian-based, carrying English goods) was taken by the Danish pirate Peter Beverneke,²⁹³ there was neither ambiguity nor a detectable effect on Anglo-Hanseatic relations. (The incident did happen to fall just when the Vitalienbrüder were beginning to turn their attentions to English victims, and there has been uncertainty over whether some incidents were the work of Vitalienbrüder or Danes:²⁹⁴ but not in this case.) The complaint was made to Queen Margaret’s ambassador Sueno (or, in one improbable transcription, Owen) Stalefote: and he promised to secure restitution.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Ibid.: “Anno 1414 vorbrenden de Engelschen Berghenbu”: von Geren is also mistaken about the date.

²⁹² *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425.

²⁹³ Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 200-01; T.N.A. C1/1/13.

²⁹⁴ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, p. 337; Walsingham, *Cronica Maiora*, p. 294.

²⁹⁵ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. V, p. 207.

Violence the other way – English against Scandinavian – was a problem, even in the latter part of our period, when the overall incidence of piracy was lower. In 1416, instructions were issued to Sir Edward Courtenay and the Earl of Huntingdon

“to abstain from injuring the people of Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Holland, and Prussia, or other allies or confederates of the King; and to refrain also from injuring the subjects of the King of Castile and Leon, or of Flanders against the existing truces with those states.”²⁹⁶

Such practices had evidently been causing the King diplomatic headaches; however, this did not prevent the arrest of Hanseatic vessels for the use of the royal fleet being repeated in the following year, nor the resulting, predictable complaints from Prussians and others.²⁹⁷

Nor did it prevent the troubles which followed in the Iceland trade, despite the King’s refusal to back outright English rights to trade and fish there. How far the Hansards were involved in this essentially Anglo-Danish dispute is not certain: but it has been plausibly hypothesised²⁹⁸ that Stephen Schellendorp, the German who stirred up King Erik against the English presence in Iceland in 1420, was acting as an agent of the Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer*, who saw another part of their northern monopoly in danger. Scarborough’s fishing fleet, as well as withdrawing from Icelandic waters to the North Sea, declined from between seventy and a hundred vessels around 1400 to about

²⁹⁶ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, pp. 417-18.

²⁹⁷ *HR I* (vi) 451, II (i) 385.

²⁹⁸ Carus-Wilson, Eleanor Mary, “The Iceland Trade”, in Postan and Power (eds), *Studies in English Trade*, p. 164; *Medieval Merchant Venturers* (London, 1967), p. 112.

fifty by 1442. Although the wider national economy and unpredictable factors such as plagues had taken their toll, this was not unrelated to Erik's attitude, and therefore to Schellendorp's interference.²⁹⁹ The violent activities of John Percy and other mostly Hull-based Englishmen on and off the coast of Iceland during the crisis can hardly have helped.³⁰⁰

Interactions with the Hanse

The complexity of the interactions of these powers with the Hanse, and with individual Hanse towns, and the impact of these interactions on the towns' relations with England, has already been glanced at above. A major part of this issue, of course, is bound up with the war for the throne of Sweden in 1388-95, and the resultant rise of the Vitalienbrüder, and therefore belongs in the next chapter: but there are other matters to be considered here.

The lofty neutrality of the Empire – and, after 1417, Sigismund's alliance with England against France – placed a certain distance between Hanse and Emperor on the issue of relations with the English, although it never shaded into outright hostility. (Even if it had, it would hardly have had much effect on maritime affairs, given that non-Hanseatic Imperial ships were not exactly numerous at this time.) The other powers under consideration were a different matter.

The relations of Prussian and other Hanse towns to the Teutonic Order, for instance, were naturally a factor in Prussia's external relations, including with England. It was largely the influence of the Order – allied with necessity – that pushed the towns

²⁹⁹ Bolton, J. L., *The Medieval English Economy, 1100 – 1500* (London, 1988), pp. 275-76.

³⁰⁰ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. 114.

in the direction of a diplomatic solution to the 1402-05 crisis.³⁰¹ Before his deposition in 1413, Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen quashed anti-English measures in Danzig, and generally favoured outside disputants whenever he could use their case for leverage on the Prussian towns, or to punish those which had sided with the Poles against the Order.³⁰² The Order's defeat at Grunwald in 1410 may have lessened Prussia's international clout, and therefore allowed Henry IV to get away with halting the payment of reparations for English piracy.³⁰³ but it also lessened the Order's dominance over the towns, and freed them to pursue a more independent foreign policy³⁰⁴ - which was not, at that time, good news for England. (Nor was the fact that the cost of the Polish war dented the demand for foreign goods in Prussia.³⁰⁵) In 1420, the English factory in Danzig was closed and its governor imprisoned.³⁰⁶ In later years, the readiness of the Knights to employ anybody who offered to counter the Polish-Lithuanian threat helped perpetuate piracy, in a repetition of the situation of the 1390s.³⁰⁷

Nor did the Vitalienbrüder (and the war which created them) in any way represent the limit of relevant interaction between the Hanse and the Scandinavian monarchies and their subjects. The perceived threat of English encroachment on Hanse preserves in Scania, Bergen, and Iceland, already touched on above, coloured Anglo-Hanseatic relations throughout this period. "At no time", Postan has written, was the enmity of the Hansards in Scandinavia to outside interests "more pronounced than at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries."³⁰⁸ In the decades

³⁰¹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 527.

³⁰² Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 113.

³⁰³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 116.

³⁰⁴ Lönnroth, "Economic Policies", p. 391.

³⁰⁵ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol I, p. 94.

³⁰⁶ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 303.

³⁰⁷ Kirby, David, and Hinkkanen, Merja-Liisa, *The Baltic and North Seas* (London, 2000), p. 119.

³⁰⁸ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 93.

preceding our period, the Hansards had systematically eliminated not only the English, but the Scots, French, Flemings, Hollanders, Zeelanders, and even Danes from fairs in Scania³⁰⁹: the English and Hollanders were actually banned from fishing there in 1384.³¹⁰ (It is perhaps unsurprising that Scanian and island Danes gave shelter to anti-Hanseatic pirates in the 1370s, apparently with the goodwill of Queen Margaret.³¹¹) Schellendorp's activities and his possible Bergen connections have already been mentioned. After open war broke out again between the Hanse and Denmark in 1426, England's pro-Danish sympathies and activities influenced the course of the conflict, and opened up yet another bout of hostile relations with the Hanse.³¹²

France, Burgundy, and the Low Countries

Strictly speaking, the Duchy of Burgundy and other magnates of the Low Countries should have been considered in the previous section, as they too had jurisdictions intertwined with those of Hanse towns (and the Empire): but in their case there is a second complex relationship at work, with the kingdom of France. Furthermore, they were not at a governmental level involved in any Scandinavian or Baltic adventures, although some of their subjects were. From the English point of view, they appeared to be orientated westwards, existing largely as a point of triangulation between the contending realms of France and England. They therefore fall

³⁰⁹ Verlinden, C., "Markets and Fairs", in *Cambridge Economic History Volume III*, p. 148. Scania, now in Sweden, was in this period a Danish province.

³¹⁰ Gade, John Allyne, *The Hanseatic Control of Norwegian Commerce During the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1951), p. 19.

³¹¹ *HR I* (ii) 148; I (iii) 95.

³¹² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 132-35.

more naturally for our purposes into a grouping with France than with the North European powers.

Obviously, the single greatest constant of international relations in Europe in this period was the Hundred Years War. Relations with France – which, before the Treaty of Troyes at the very end of our period, ranged from open warfare no further than hostile truce – governed England’s entire maritime policy (see Chapter I); and Burgundy, Brabant, Flanders, Hainault, and Holland were major secondary players in this drama. Furthermore, the gradual establishment of Burgundian control over the counties of the Low Countries within this period effectively created a new state between France and Germany, making it impossible for external rivals to play the counties against one another.³¹³ Given the importance to the Hanse of relations with all these entities, it would be astonishing if this had not impinged on Anglo-Hanseatic relations.

Interactions with England

Before 1413

It has to be remembered that England and France were in a state of war throughout this period; an uneasy truce was reached in 1396, but it was never intended to be more than temporary. In 1400, the Crown found it necessary to order the Sheriffs of London, Wardens of the Passage, and bailiffs of twenty-six different ports, to refrain, and to forbid others, from molesting the ships of France or her allies, “with the

³¹³ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 95.

exception of the Scots”:³¹⁴ the truce was clearly being widely disregarded, and the Crown’s attempts to preserve it did not last much longer. It had become entirely ineffective by 1402 at the latest, although it did not formally end.³¹⁵ It was at sea and on the coasts that hostilities before 1413 were largely conducted: maritime violence was a principal feature of Anglo-French relations in this period. This could not help but affect the relations of both sides with anybody liable to get caught in the crossfire – a not infrequent occurrence: in early 1404, for instance, the Dutch merchant Peter Claysson was attacked by both French and English on the same voyage.³¹⁶ Moreover, it was *Anglo-Flemish* conflict, created by the wider war with France, which occasioned the Zwijn incident, the moment which opens our period. (It has been suggested that the incident occurred because fear of invasion had set the fleet on edge.³¹⁷)

Less dramatic instances of the effect of the war on relations with the Hansards are not hard to find. If there was any truth in the assertion of the West Country pirates who attacked John Puls of Stralsund’s ship on its return from La Rochelle in 1387 that they had taken the Hansards for “the king’s... enemies”, it is likely that they meant the French.³¹⁸ If, on the other hand, we reject this claim, then it was certainly the war situation which provided the cover for this and many similar incidents of so-called mistaken identity. In July 1402, while the truce was nominally still in force and before Anglo-Hanseatic relations had altogether collapsed, it was reported that Mark Mixtow, while “searching for the king’s enemies”, had seized Prussian-owned wine from a French ship. In this instance, it is notable that, despite Prussia’s formal neutrality, the

³¹⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. III, Part 4, p. 185.

³¹⁵ Rodger, *Safeguard*, pp. 454-55.

³¹⁶ T.N.A. SC 8/255/12721; SC 8/301/15041.

³¹⁷ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, p. 296.

³¹⁸ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 364.

King did not immediately order restitution as had hitherto been the norm. Relations were already on the edge of crisis.³¹⁹

Sometimes unlawful seizures coincided with lawful ones – and sometimes the latter were carried out by criminals, or a colour of legitimacy was used to cloak acts of theft. James Bomelond of Romney, some time in the first half of the fifteenth century, posed as the victualler of the royal kitchen to commandeer a shipload of beer and bacon from Hamburg.³²⁰ William Ellis, deputy to the farmer of the petty customs at Yarmouth, was accused in early 1377 of having abused his office to seize goods from two ships, one Prussian and one Scottish (though a Parliamentary inquiry subsequently exonerated him).³²¹ In “the third year” (probably of Richard II’s reign, i.e. 1379/80, but the text is ambiguous: the Crown does not appear to have heard of the incident until 1399³²²), “certain persons unknown” seized French-owned goods, legally forfeit to the King, from a Hanseatic vessel in Plymouth – and unlawfully kept them.³²³ The text is ambiguous as to whether the enemy-owned goods included the “herring from Scone” with which the vessel was laden, but does specify that only “the merchandise which belonged by forfeiture to the king” was seized: so one must presume that, if the herring *were* the property of neutrals, they were spared. It seems probable that something similar was happening in reverse when, in December 1410, Guy de Bussh seized Rochellois wine from a Danzig vessel in Southampton.³²⁴ the French, perhaps, suffered in this case because of enmity to Prussians, rather than vice versa. Given the

³¹⁹ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 133; Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. IV, Part 1, p. 32.

³²⁰ T.N.A. C1/17/418.

³²¹ T.N.A. SC 8/14/660-61.

³²² Delays of this kind were not unknown: for instance, Henry Lakensuyder’s appeal to the Duke of Gloucester for aid in seeking redress against Breton pirates cannot be earlier than 1420, yet the assault complained of took place in 1403. (T.N.A. SC 8/122/6086.)

³²³ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 508.

³²⁴ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 320. On the other hand, de Bussh also attacked Breton vessels: T.N.A. C1/4/92.

prominence of the Hansards in the Rochelle wine trade, such tangles and confusions were probably inevitable.³²⁵

The curious 1391 incident already referred to involved men of Zierikzee, Ghent, Kampen, and Amsterdam working with Stralsunders, Danzigers, Mecklenburgers, and possibly Danes, to seize an English ship.³²⁶ This, however, probably had nothing to do with the French conflict, and much more to do with the war then being fought in Scandinavia (see Chapter IV).

The other side of the coin, of course, is that, when attempts were made to reach accommodation with France, the resultant measures for the suppression of piracy must have helped England's foreign relations in general, including with the Hanse. In 1403, at the height of English violence against Hanseatic shipping, the arrest of six known pirates (four Englishmen, one Frenchman, and one Fleming) was ordered as part of an attempt to patch up the truce with France:³²⁷ if this had any effect at all on the plight of Hanseatic shipping, it can only have been a beneficial one. However, it is of course impossible to demonstrate the effect positively. Since the situation continued to get worse for several months, any effect there was must have been small at best. Nor, indeed, did the arrest prevent Anglo-French incidents, such as the "grete bykering" off Poole that year, in which "thanke it be god there was take and slayne and drowned moo than vc gentilles of Bretons and Normandes and other Nacions".³²⁸

In fact, as has been seen in Chapter I, the issue of letters of marque, and the effective toleration of outright piracy, were the principal means by which the English Crown pursued the war against France in the reign of Henry IV; and the French Crown

³²⁵ James, Margery Kirkbride, *Studies in the Medieval Wine Trade*, pp. 168, 172; Boissonade, P., "La renaissance et l'essor de la vie et du commerce maritimes en Poitou, Aunis et Saintonge du xe au xve siècle", in *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, xii (1934), p. 281.

³²⁶ C.C.R. *Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425; see also Chapter II and above.

³²⁷ C.P.R. *Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 201.

³²⁸ Thomas, A. H., and Thornley, I. D. (eds), *The Great Chronicle of London* (London, 1938), pp. 85-86.

for its part did much the same.³²⁹ French assistance to the Welsh and Scots only exacerbated the problems, especially since it gave English captains an excuse to demand the right to search French ships.³³⁰ (29 out of 48 recorded English attacks on French shipping in 1401 were at least ostensibly reprisals.³³¹) It is hardly surprising, then, that piracy in general increased in this period: and, while this was not a direct cause of the 1402-05 crisis, it surely helped to increase the frequency of the incidents. The resolution of the crisis was also connected with the French war. By 1405, England was in a state of conflict with the Duke of Burgundy. Fortunately for English interests, by this stage the Hansards were themselves still more desperate for the restoration of good relations: but while negotiations dragged out over the next two years, the Duke was seeking a Hanseatic alliance, with a view to closing the Low Countries to the English altogether. This danger cannot have failed to help prompt the English towards reconciliation.³³²

Pursuing a united front, the Hansards invited noblemen and non-Hanse city representatives from the counties of the Low Countries to the Lübeck Hansetag which met in February 1405 to discuss the English question – an unusual move. Henry, however, insisted on negotiating separately with the Count of Holland – and subsequently, in 1407, gave the Hansards enough concessions to make them lose what interest they may have had in a Burgundian alliance. Thereby, the English effectively divided what might – had the Hansards themselves proven able to survive the economic winter of a complete embargo on trade with England, which is doubtful – have been a dangerous combination.³³³

³²⁹ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 115; Rodger, and Rose, Susan (eds), Introduction to *Part I: 1204 – 1485*, in Hattendorf et. al. (eds), *British Naval Documents*, p. 5.

³³⁰ Gardiner, “John Hawley”, p. 194.

³³¹ Ford, “Piracy or Policy”, pp. 68-69.

³³² Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 110.

³³³ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 530-31, 537-38.

After 1413

This reconciliation did not put an end to piracy in the North Sea and the Channel, and the resumption of open war between England and France in 1413 can hardly have helped: although Henry V's tougher line on such crimes did improve the situation by comparison with his father's reign. The Belle Isle incident and the commandeering of Hanse ships as troop transports have already been addressed (see p. 60): there were also renewed "mistaken identity" cases, as when, in 1415,

"John Clifford esquire and Robert Rodyngton... then the king's commissaries, took a ship called the '*Renawe*' of Lubyk... supposing the men to be the enemies of the king".³³⁴

There is some doubt over this case, as the master allegedly confessed that most of the goods taken were indeed enemy property, and it was only in the case of those he specifically excepted that restitution was later ordered. We may be sure, though, that the Lübeck sailors captured were no enemies of the King. No such doubt, however, is apparent in the case of the *Marienknecht* – also of Lübeck, despite her Prussian-sounding name – taken by two English balingers off Winchelsea on 20th March 1416. It is only surprising that the Emperor Sigismund did not make more of the suffering of his

³³⁴ C.C.R. *Henry V*, Vol. I, p. 398.

Hanseatic subjects when he appealed for peace between England and France in 1416 (before allying himself to England).³³⁵

On 12th May, 1416, the King's lieutenants received the instructions already referred to above, forbidding the molestation of allied subjects (including Prussians, Flemings, and Hollanders). This might be considered a little late in the day. It is, however, noticeable that exhortations to keep truces are rarer in this reign than in the previous two: this may be because they were heeded, thus eliminating the need for the King to repeat himself.³³⁶ The continuing problems in Anglo-Hanseatic relations in the later 1410s appear to have had less to do with maritime violence than with the gradual erosion of privileges suffered by Hansards in England: and this in turn had less to do with matters specifically Anglo-Hanseatic than with the general economic depression suffered by most of Western Europe in this period. (As early as 1414, with the war visible on the horizon but before fighting began, we find the Lübeck merchant Tideman Brekelvelde complaining that nobody has money to buy his wares. This complaint was to be echoed by other Hansards over the succeeding years.³³⁷)

Interactions with the Hanse

The English were not the only maritime traders from the West to have encroached on traditionally Hanseatic territory in the fourteenth century, nor the only ones in whose land the Hansards had a permanent presence with occasionally uneasy local relations. The pattern of Hanseatic relations with Holland and Flanders is in fact

³³⁵ Myers, A. R. (ed.), *English Historical Documents, Volume IV: 1327 – 1485* (London, 1969, vol. 4 of 10), p. 218.

³³⁶ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 147.

³³⁷ Stieda, Wilhelm (ed.), *Hildebrand Veckinchusen: Briefwechsel eines deutschen Kaufmanns im 15. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1921), p. 116.

far from dissimilar to that of relations with England. France, with no interests in Scandinavia or the Baltic, and, despite a significant Hanseatic presence in many of its ports, no *Kontor*, was a different matter. (This does not make France irrelevant: as both a major sea power and a trading partner of the Hanse, she could never be that: but it does limit her importance to this part of the chapter.)

The disruption of Hanseatic trade to Flanders in 1388-92, coinciding as it did with similar problems in Russia (springing from the same source, the war in Sweden), can only have given England an increased share of the Hanseatic market in assorted goods, particularly cloth.³³⁸ This in turn will have given England greater economic leverage in disagreements with the Hanse, possibly contributing to the latter's weakness in the 1405-07 negotiations and at Constance (1417): though by 1417, of course, there were many other factors in play, not least the fact that the now stronger Burgundy was in alliance with England. (It is also worth noting that prices in Bruges appear to have been unaffected by the blockade, suggesting that the various exemptions made for the obtainment of otherwise unavailable products and for the convenience of the Teutonic Order had perhaps reduced its effectiveness.³³⁹)

The County of Holland's differences with the Hanse had, in 1400, helped to prolong the existence of the Vitalienbrüder by a few months, when Störtebeker and his men were taken under the protection of the County's lord, Albert, Duke of Bavaria.³⁴⁰ This, however, did not have any discernible effect on Anglo-Hanseatic relations, which were undergoing a brief summer at the time. There were no recorded Vitalienbrüder attacks on English ships that year, and only one in 1401, shortly after which the pirates were (apparently) destroyed. (See Chapter IV.)

³³⁸ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 93.

³³⁹ Tits-Dieuaide, Marie-Jeanne, "The Baltic Grain Trade and Cereal Prices in Flanders at the end of the Middle Ages: Some Remarks", in Minchinton, Walter (ed.), *The Baltic Grain Trade: Five Essays* (Exeter, 1985), pp. 17-18.

³⁴⁰ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 113.

Since the influence of Burgundy and the proposed Hanseatic-Burgundian alliance on negotiations following the crisis of 1402-05 has already been addressed above, there remains little to be said about Franco-Hanseatic or Netherland-Hanseatic interactions. Certainly the few actual maritime entanglements between the Hanse and these peoples cannot be shown to have had any effect on relations with England; we shall therefore move on to consider the roles played by Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

Scotland, Ireland, and Wales

Direct suzerainty over Ireland and Wales, and overlordship over Scotland, was claimed with limited success by the English Crown in this period. The reign of Richard II saw rebellion in Ireland; that of Henry IV saw a major Welsh revolt with French support, and a war with Scotland. (It is, however, interesting to note that the arrest of shipping in 1398 and 1399 for expeditions to Ireland apparently did not provoke the same complaints as were heard in 1414 and subsequent years, when Hanse ships were commandeered for the French war.³⁴¹ Did the Hansards have some other reason for keeping quiet at this time but complaining loudly in the 1410s? None is apparent. What is more likely is that Hanse shipping was not affected, as the ships concerned would have been arrested mostly in western ports, which Hansards seldom visited.)

Ireland and Wales have little or no *direct* relevance to the activities of the Hanse: but the situation there certainly affected England's foreign and maritime policies to a degree that could not fail to have some impact on all her foreign relations. As for Scotland, it was the refusal of Hanse towns – particularly the Prussian ones – to give up

³⁴¹ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 453.

their trade with the northern kingdom which led to the crisis of 1402-05 and an epidemic of English piracy against Hansards: furthermore, Scottish pirates were also active in this period, allegedly attacking both English and Hanseatic victims with significant frequency.³⁴²

In view of the lack of direct interaction between the Hansards and the Welsh or Irish, it is probably best here to eschew the earlier division into English and Hanseatic sub-sections and treat the involvement of these three nations in Anglo-Hanseatic affairs as a single subject. The issue most prominent in the sources in relation to this subject is stated near the beginning of our period:

“Also, the commons pray that no liege of the realm, on pain of forfeiting whatsoever he can, shall cause any kind of victual to be transported by land or sea to the enemies of Scotland... The king wills it, unless it be by special permission of the king.”³⁴³

Thus, in October 1386, the attitude of English government to those supplying the hostile neighbour was made clear. Or, rather, not entirely: for this declaration not only allowed for exemptions by royal permission, but named only English subjects as being bound by it. The question of the status of neutrals trading with enemies was a hot potato, having been the prime cause of the Zwijn incident only seventeen months previously: but no internationally satisfactory answer to it had yet been worked out. Nor would it be by 1402, when Scoto-Hanseatic dealings provoked English wrath. (In 1397, a Flemish ship

³⁴² Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 246; though there are very few reports from either side of specific instances involving Scottish pirates, let alone giving such details as names, home ports, goods taken, etc., which are commonplace when English, Hanseatic, or indeed French, piracy is at issue.

³⁴³ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, pp. 50-51.

captured “contrary to the truce” and the Scottish goods taken from her were ordered to be released, in response to petitions from the Scots who owned the goods:³⁴⁴ but by 1402 England and Scotland were again in open conflict.)

The piracies of the Scots themselves, and the reprisals of the English against them – and vice versa – may be reported in less detail than exchanges of blows with continental Europeans, but are a present factor throughout this period. In 1378, the depredations of the Scot John Mercer had been such that John Philpott of London had fitted out an expedition at his own expense to put him down – only to be censured for failing to consult with the King’s Council.³⁴⁵ In 1381/82, the Earl of Dunbar seized Baron Greystoke and held him to ransom in reprisal for the seizure of Scottish ships and merchandise by Baron Hilton “and many men of Northumberland”: in response to Greystoke’s subsequent petition, a commission was appointed to track down the stolen ships and goods and arrest those holding them unless or until they made surety to the Crown for their value.³⁴⁶

Like the Philpott incident, this indicates that the government did not at this point regard Scots shipping as legitimate prize: but when William Terry, John Tutbury, and the less frequently mentioned Peter Stellar and Walter Were, sailed against “the king’s enemies” in 1387 and succeeding years, they appear to have meant principally the Scots – although Danes, Hollanders, and Hansards were also among their victims, the latter fact doing no good at all to Anglo-Hanseatic relations.³⁴⁷ It was by (alleged) mistake for Scots that a Portuguese ship was taken off Falmouth in 1403.³⁴⁸ This dynamic was reversed in 1412, when the Bruges *Kontor* reported to Prussia that English, Scottish,

³⁴⁴ T.N.A. SC 8/223/11127.

³⁴⁵ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, pp. 270-71; Murray, K. M. Elisabeth, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester, 1935), p. 212.

³⁴⁶ T.N.A. SC 8/113/5624; SC 8/178/8864.

³⁴⁷ Kermode, Jenny, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 217

³⁴⁸ T.N.A. SC 8/229/11431.

and Dutch pirates were meeting in large numbers off the Zwiyn to exchange stolen goods which they could not sell in their own countries.³⁴⁹ Evidently, at least some of England's freebooters were willing to do business with those they declared the King's enemies. On the other hand, the Hull merchant John Hury or Herry – himself occasionally involved in violence at sea – had seen no need to go down this route when he wished to trade with the Scots (very possibly at the height of hostilities in 1403). Instead, he freighted his two ships openly for a Scottish voyage, and, when they were arrested, appealed to the King for their release. (The outcome is unknown.)³⁵⁰

It is true that, by the time of the 1412 report, Anglo-Scottish relations were in a new phase, the capture of James I in 1406 having effectively neutralised any real threat from Scotland, and a peace of sorts having been concluded in 1411. As early as 1405, the Crown seems to have taken a dim view of the piracies of "lawless English corsairs"³⁵¹ from Norfolk against the Scots: although this seems to have been more because their actions were unauthorised than because they were specifically disapproved of. The war continued, the English vice-admiral Sir Robert Umfraville conducting a highly lucrative raiding expedition into the Firth of Forth in 1410: he is said to have taken so much cloth, grain, and tar that he flooded the markets in England and forced down prices, gaining the nickname "Robin Mend-market".³⁵² But relations were still unfriendly, and in any case the pirates did not have a record of paying the closest of attention to diplomatic developments. James had been taken aboard a Danzig ship, at the height of negotiations to end the recent crisis in Anglo-Hanseatic relations at sea, and the freight of the vessel had been awarded to his captors "in consideration of

³⁴⁹ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 70.

³⁵⁰ T.N.A. SC 8/229/11439.

³⁵¹ Macpherson, David (ed.), *Annals of Commerce* (London, 1805), p. 615.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 624; Stow, John, *Annales of England* (London, 1592), p. 549.

their great costs in capturing the above”.³⁵³ Yet this insult does not appear to have hurt England’s cause at the negotiating table: a sign, perhaps, of the Hansards’ desperation for peace.

1400, the year in which the Glyndŵr revolt began in Wales and hostilities between England and Scotland became active again, was a largely uneventful year in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, as was 1401. (This was despite the fact that – notwithstanding the truce – Anglo-French maritime hostilities erupted almost immediately, creating general lawlessness in the Channel.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, it was alleged that French pirates were sailing under the Scottish flag, which can only have exacerbated Anglo-Scottish hostilities and the resultant potential for friction with the Hanse.³⁵⁵) Not entirely uneventful, however. As mentioned above, it was in this period that Lynn men (backed after the fact by the Court of Admiralty) “got possession of” a ship of the Teutonic Order, allegedly from the Scottish pirates who had already seized it.³⁵⁶ This incident may have contributed to the Grand Master’s decision, when required by Henry IV to ban Prussians from trading with the Scots, to wait the best part of seven months before issuing a flat refusal. By this time, English captains both in and out of the King’s fleet had already started attacking Prussian and other Hanse shipping on the grounds that the Hansards were supplying the Scots. (This had also been the basis for the only previous seizure of a Hanseatic vessel by ships in royal service since 1385, in August 1400.³⁵⁷) Such attacks were still happening in the spring of 1404,³⁵⁸ when a truce was supposedly in force. Since the purpose of this truce had been to allow Henry

³⁵³ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, p. 168.

³⁵⁴ Ford, “Piracy or Policy”, p. 63.

³⁵⁵ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 115.

³⁵⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 112. It was not unknown for English pirates to seize already taken ships from their original captors: when the balinger *George* of Paignton brought a French prize into Torbay at an uncertain date within this period, it was taken from her by the notorious John Hawley. (T.N.A. C1/3/130.)

³⁵⁷ Ford, “Piracy or Policy”, pp. 72-73.

³⁵⁸ T.N.A. SC 8/170/8488; *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p.337.

to crush the Welsh revolt before having to worry about the Hansards³⁵⁹ - as it turned out, an abortive hope – Welsh affairs, too, were clearly influencing the course of Anglo-Hanseatic relations.

Of course, while the Scottish issue was the catalyst, it must be remembered that there were other matters afoot in the 1402-05 crisis. Both sides had old unanswered grievances concerning maritime incidents over the past twenty years. The levying of subsidies from which the Hansards in England had traditionally been free was an unavoidable consequence of the empty royal coffers left by the profligate Richard, but had also helped to sour relations.³⁶⁰ But the existence of other causes does not alter the fact that the war with Scotland was crucial in sparking this breakdown in relations: it is impossible to imagine that anything so dramatic would have happened without it.

Piracy, of course, continued after the capture of James and the Anglo-Hanseatic reconciliation. “French and Scottish enemies and... Welsh rebels”³⁶¹ were blamed in January 1410 for a recent spate of attacks on English shipping in the Irish Sea, while the alleged cooperation between English and Scottish pirates in 1412 has already been mentioned. The former, however, is unlikely to have influenced relations with the Hanse – unless very indirectly, through the transfer of English naval resources to the waters affected, and hence away from the eastern seas. (It is doubtful whether one should expect the effect of reduced English naval presence on the safety of Hanseatic vessels to have been malign or beneficial. As it turns out, however, no effect is discernible from the available evidence.) In fact, although incidents involving Scottish vessels do not cease, it is difficult to trace any effect they may have had on Anglo-Hanseatic relations at any time after the 1407 reconciliation.

³⁵⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 115.

³⁶⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 521-22.

³⁶¹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 491.

Others

Although the influence of national and quasi-national entities outside the North-West European theatre was obviously far less significant than that of the neighbours of England and the Hanse towns, it should not be ignored. Iberian and Italian merchants traded to North European ports, and were victims of North European pirates: they were, however marginally, involved in the issues addressed by this thesis. Whether or not these incidents had any bearing on Anglo-Hanseatic relations is another matter: but it is worth asking the question.

At first sight, Castile is perhaps the most significant of the countries not yet considered. It was an ally of France against England, and in the summer of 1385, an Anglo-Portuguese force invaded it in support of John of Gaunt's claim to the throne. In the explosion of English piracy in the reign of Henry IV (at which time Castile and England were in a state of truce), Castilian victims were almost as numerous as French ones. The likes of John Hawley appear to have regarded them as a more legitimate target than, say, the Portuguese, allies of England.³⁶² Indeed, on 26th April 1403, we find an order for restitution of goods belonging to three Castilian merchants, taken from a Prussian ship.³⁶³

This is far from the only Hanse vessel to run foul of English pirates while on the Spanish trip during the 1402-05 crisis. The *Seint Marie de Puce* was seized and brought into Dartmouth by a gang including Harry Paye around the autumn of 1403, with a fleet of 25 barges and balingers; and goods ("wax, hides of oxen and cows,

³⁶² Gardiner, "John Hawley". On the other hand, Portuguese vessels were occasionally attacked: see for instance SC 8/122/6072.

³⁶³ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 70. On 4th July, a Castilian ambassador appeared before the Council to demand action on various cases of piracy: T.N.A. SC 8/179/8931.

‘suet,’ iron, oil and other merchandise... amounting to the sum of 12,500 nobles of gold”) belonging to the Castilian merchant Domingo Dyas were pillaged from her.³⁶⁴ A commission to examine Dyas’ complaint was issued to John Hull (specifically named in Dyas’ petition as the desired investigator) on 20th February 1404, but further authority had to be requested, as “[t]he previous letters have not been executed for fear of the robbers”.³⁶⁵ Vessels were even seized during the negotiations for the restoration of good relations in the autumn of 1405.³⁶⁶

These ships would have sailed most of the way with the Bay salt fleet, before completing their journey alone or in small groups: this explains why they were in more danger from the south-western pirates than from those of the east coast, who overall took more Hanseatic prizes. No Bay fleet was attacked before 1449.³⁶⁷ Given the predictability of their route and the relatively short period of their vulnerability, it is quite likely that the English captains lay in wait for them, and were perfectly aware of their Hanseatic provenance.³⁶⁸

Italians too were already building a trading presence in the ports of southern England, France, and the Low Countries. Florentine state galleys may not have visited England until 1425, but the Venetians and Genoese became regular visitors in the 1390s.³⁶⁹ The Italian mercantile world in the late Middle Ages was altogether more advanced than that of Northern Europe, with more sophisticated accounting methods, superior ships, and larger quantities of coined money; while the largest of Hanseatic

³⁶⁴ T.N.A. SC 8/231/11529; SC 8/342/16140; *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 424.

³⁶⁵ T.N.A. SC 8/232/11553.

³⁶⁶ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 110; *HR I* (v) 211-12, 225; see *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, pp. 146-47, 150-51, for another seizure (in the North Sea) also during the negotiations.

³⁶⁷ Postan, M. M., *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 114.

³⁶⁸ Bridbury, A. R., *England and the Salt Trade in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1955), p. 78.

³⁶⁹ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 312. In 1400, Henry IV and his council laid down regulations to govern Venetian merchants in England: T.N.A. SC 8/296/14759.

cities could be matched or exceeded for population by several in Northern Italy.³⁷⁰ Lombards in particular had long rivalled Hansards in their role in England's wool export trade: the board which arbitrated on the weight and quality of wool consisted of two Englishmen, two Germans, and two Lombards.³⁷¹ It was largely through Italian hands that Mediterranean goods reached Northern Europe, as neither English nor Hansards at this time penetrated into the Middle Sea in any great numbers.³⁷²

The Genoese, like the Castilians, are of particular significance here because they were, when open war broke out again, allies of the French. (Long before this, in April 1403, the Duke of Clarence had seized three "great carykes of Ieane", i.e. Genoa, off Sluys.³⁷³ On the other hand, when a Genoese vessel was taken off Bristol in 1410, Henry IV had ordered restitution.³⁷⁴) The petition of the Commons for freer trade with aliens at Henry V's first parliament in May 1413 acknowledged the Genoese (presumably meaning their merchants in Southampton and Bruges) as an exception, without even waiting for the King to raise the matter.³⁷⁵ Henry V's fleet, which he was able to build up so quickly because so many of the vessels were enemy prizes rather than new constructions, appears to have owed all its carracks to Genoa. Unlike Anglo-Castilian maritime violence in the previous reign, however, England's war at sea against Genoa does not appear to have affected her relations with the Hanse.

The most prominent factor in determining the place of third parties in Anglo-Hanseatic relations in this period, within the sphere of violence at sea (or even outside

³⁷⁰ Spufford, Peter, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 280, 381; de Roover, R., "The Organization of Trade", in *Cambridge Economic History, Vol. III*, pp. 106-07.

³⁷¹ Lucas, Charles Prestwood, *The Beginnings of English Overseas Enterprise: A Prelude to the Empire* (Oxford, 1917), p. 34.

³⁷² Verlinden, "Markets and Fairs", p. 143.

³⁷³ Fabyan, Robert, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. Ellis, Henry (London, 1811), p. 571; Thomas and Thornley (eds), *Great Chronicle*, p. 86.

³⁷⁴ T.N.A. SC 8/144/7174.

³⁷⁵ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. IX, p. 30.

it), is thus a predictable one: war, and in particular the Hanseatic refusal to be cowed into ceasing trade with England's enemies. Other factors (such as, towards the end of the period, English encroachment into Icelandic fishing waters and the objections of the Danes) had their part to play. The frustrating patchiness of the evidence makes it difficult to make categorical statements about this issue: but it is probably safe to conclude that – especially if one excludes the war in Sweden, which will be considered in the next chapter – it was England's wars against enemies within the Hanseatic sailing range (i.e. France, Flanders, Scotland, and Castile, but not Genoa or Ireland) which had the most dramatic effect.

The non-Hanseatic powers in Germany, particularly the Teutonic Order, had an influence of a different kind. This was not a matter of actual incidents involving third party shipping: or, at least, not often. Rather, it was a matter of them exerting influence over the towns to shape their foreign relations in their own interest – as seen particularly when von Plauen used pro-English policies to punish pro-Polish towns.³⁷⁶ Pressure applied behind the scenes is naturally less obtrusive than international incidents, but not necessarily less significant for that. It is, however, harder to quantify its effects. Furthermore, while this kind of influence must have helped to shape the context in which each change in the direction of Anglo-Hanseatic relations took place, the *immediate* causes of all the most dramatic such changes are directly connected to the various wars mentioned above.

³⁷⁶ See pp. 200, 260.

CHAPTER IV: *The Vitalienbrüder*

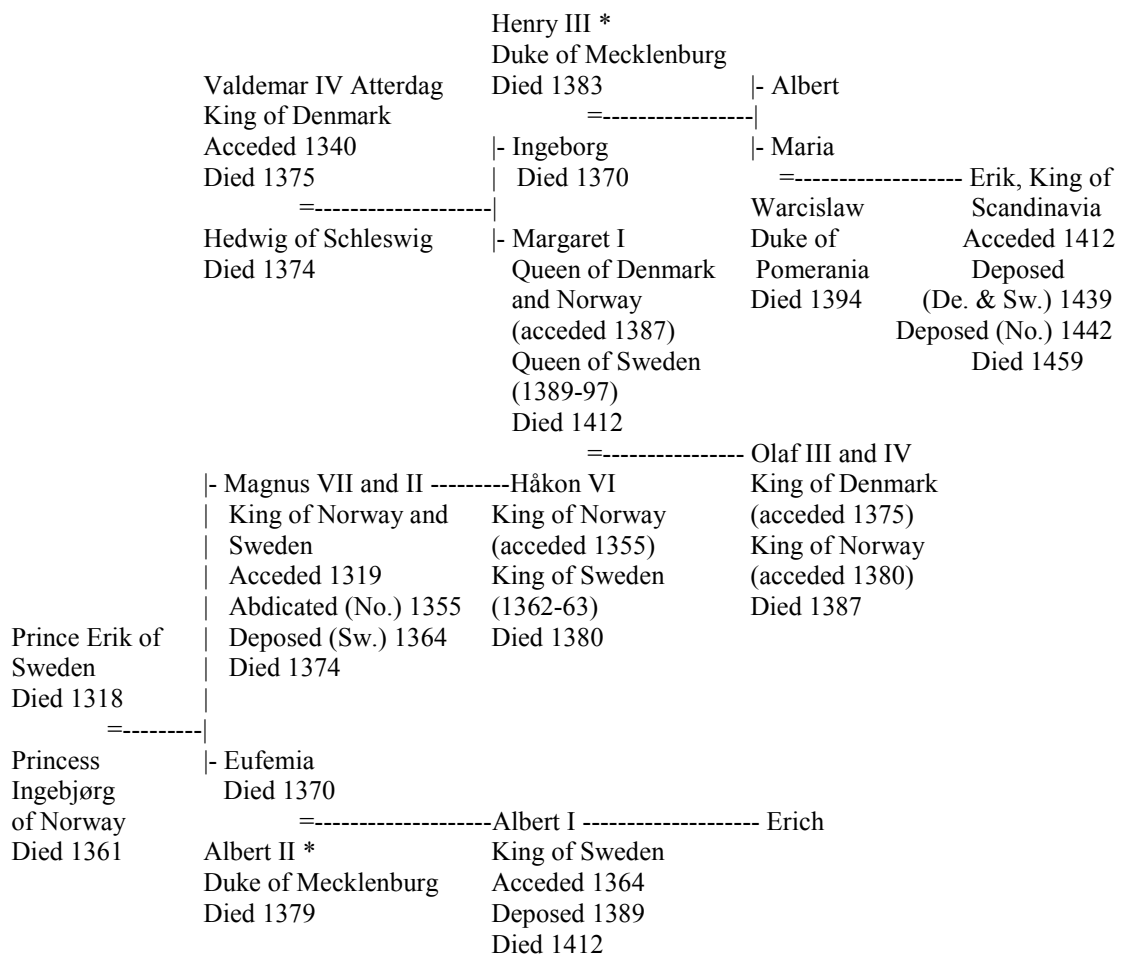
“God’s friends and all the world’s foes.”³⁷⁷

Background

The period under discussion includes the flourishing of the most notorious seaborne thieves in Hanseatic history: the *Vitalienbrüder* (“Victual Brothers”). The origins of the pirates stemmed from the Swedish dynastic war which raged from 1388 to 1395, illustrated by the family tree below.

³⁷⁷ Reported self-description by the Vitalienbrüder, 4th May 1398: from *HR IV*, 153. The phrase is echoed in many subsequent references to the Vitalienbrüder, in both German and Latin.

Table 2: Family tree³⁷⁸



* n.b. The Dukes Albert II and Henry III of Mecklenburg were brothers.

The Danish-Norwegian and Swedish-Mecklenburg dynasties had first been thrown into conflict by the death of Valdemar IV in 1375, leaving a vacancy for the Danish throne. Valdemar had in 1371 reportedly settled the succession on Albert, son of his elder daughter Ingeborg:³⁷⁹ but Denmark was an elective monarchy, and the lot fell instead upon the late king's other grandson, Prince Olaf of Norway, with his mother

³⁷⁸ Tauté, Anne, *Kings and Queens of Europe* (London, 1989).

³⁷⁹ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 97.

Margaret as regent. It has been demonstrated³⁸⁰ that each side was already using clandestine support for pirates to damage the other's supporters. Piracy had for some decades destabilised the Baltic region: in 1338-41, it had even forced Hamburg, Lübeck, Stralsund, Rostock, and Wismar into an alliance with Denmark and the North German princes to suppress it: but with the two most powerful monarchies in the region now to some extent conniving at it, the situation was severely exacerbated. For Rostock and Wismar, there was a dangerous complication, in that they were Hanseatic cities within the Duchy of Mecklenburg, and thus owed allegiance to contradictory policies: repeated Hansetags denounced piracy of exactly the kind which the Duchy supported covertly before 1389 and openly thereafter. Neither, in the latter half of the 1370s, took part in any Hanseatic measure against piracy:³⁸¹ but in June 1381 they joined Lübeck and Stralsund in patrolling the Baltic in search of pirates, and in negotiations with Margaret for a concerted police action in which the Hanse would cooperate with the Danish Crown.³⁸²

The death of Margaret's son Olaf in 1387 left his mother, who had never made any secret of her ambition to unite Scandinavia under her rule, as sole mistress of Denmark and Norway, facing an unpopular German monarch in Sweden. (In the previous year, Albert had attempted to seize the two thousand estates left by his deceased steward Bo Jonsson Grip, until then the effective ruler of Sweden: the resultant civil strife was still going on.³⁸³) The Hanse wanted neither war nor Scandinavian union, either of which could threaten their trade through the Straits and with the Scandinavian countries: but the Hanse, despite Lübeck's offer of mediation,

³⁸⁰ Puhle, Matthias, *Die Vitalienbrüder – Klaus Störtebeker und die Seeräuber der Hansezeit* (Frankfurt and New York, 1994).

³⁸¹ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 97.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

³⁸³ Bjork, "Piracy", pp. 54-55.

was in no position to prevent either eventuality.³⁸⁴ The two sides lined up, German magnates (Holstein, Brandenburg, Stargard) with the Mecklenburgers, and disgruntled Swedish nobles with the Danes: and, in February 1389, Albert was defeated in battle and trapped with his son Erich in Lindholm Castle, leaving all Sweden save German-dominated Stockholm in Margaret's hands.³⁸⁵ Wismar and Rostock, pressured by their lord into supplying the besieged city – which they could not do by their own strength – wrote to allied Hanse towns asking them to bar Danish and Norwegian subjects from their ports, and promising a haven to anyone who did harm to Margaret or her subjects at sea. (A similar promise was made by the Prussian ports of Ribnitz and Golwitz.)³⁸⁶ Thus did the Vitalienbrüder come into being.

A distinction has been detected from the beginning of the Vitalienbrüder's history between professional pirates and those whose primary aim was to serve the Duchy of Mecklenburg³⁸⁷, and the background of the individuals was certainly extremely varied: noble and common, Mecklenburgers and outlanders, those with and without a history of violence at sea. But this line was during the war years an extremely blurred one (though slightly less so by about 1394). In any case, it is only when specific individuals are named that any idea of the proportional numbers can be formed (by, for instance, the regional provenance of particular names, or still cruder measures such as the proportion of "vons"). Even then, the value of such estimates is extremely limited.

No source from before 1395 names Klaus Störtebeker or Gödeke Michels among the pirate captains. The *Störtebeker Lied* (1609) and other later romanticisations tend to obscure what little trustworthy information there is concerning these men.

³⁸⁴ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 98.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁸⁷ Puhle, *Vitalienbrüder*.

Michels was born in either Rügen or Gotland, Störtebeker possibly in Wismar³⁸⁸ (although he is traditionally supposed to have hailed from Hamburg). Neither is likely to have belonged to the aristocracy, although later sources do make Störtebeker a knight; both continued as pirates after the war ceased.

Albrecht von Pecaſel, appointed as Captain of Visby by the Duke of Mecklenburg, readily gave them a haven on Gotland,³⁸⁹ but they seem also to have had bases already in Friesland and in the Gulf of Finland.³⁹⁰ It has been demonstrated that they ranged from Russia to Calais in this period,³⁹¹ although the majority appear to have remained in Gotland until the Prussian invasion of March 1398 drove them out, after which most fled to East Friesland. The first immediately contemporary references to Michels and Störtebeker (as opposed to sources from slightly after the event, such as the English complaint) place them in Friesland, where the latter is supposed to have married the daughter of the chief Keno ten Broke.³⁹² There followed, in 1400-01, the great combined Hanseatic effort which at last flushed them out, and the mass executions of those pirates who survived the battles.

There is no question that the activities of the Vitalienbrüder did affect Anglo-Hanseatic relations: they were, after all, the subject of complaints to the Hanse concerning their attacks on English shipping. The precise nature and extent of these effects, however, and how significant those activities which did not impinge directly on the English were in affecting relations, is rather harder to take in at a glance: but I hope in this chapter to shed some light on these questions.

³⁸⁸ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 93. An isolated reference to “Nicolao Stortebeker” in the *Liber Proscriptorum* of Wismar places him in the city as early as 1380: see Meier, Dirk, trans. Angus McGeoch, *Seafarers, Merchants and Pirates in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 146.

³⁸⁹ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 105.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³⁹¹ Koppmann, Karl, *Der Seeräuber Klaus Störtebeker in Geschichte und Sage* (Lübeck, 1887).

³⁹² Zimmern, *The Hansa Towns*, p. 127.

Before 1395

Attacks on English shipping and goods

Precisely when the Vitalienbrüder became a recognised danger to English shipping is impossible to pinpoint. The outbreak of war had disrupted Hanseatic trade with all traditional partners, but trade relations with England were repaired much more quickly than those with Flanders or Novgorod.³⁹³ Men of Rostock and Wismar were among those arrested over the seizure of English goods in the Sound in September 1388,³⁹⁴ but this seems too early to be connected with the war. In any case, they were reported as having acted alongside Lübeckers and Hamburgers, no friends to the Vitalienbrüder, and as citing “alleged wrongs and damage done them by Englishmen at sea and elsewhere” in justification of their actions.³⁹⁵ This, it appears, was merely a reprisal in which Mecklenburgers had chanced to be involved. Generally, when we find ships from Wismar arrested by the English authorities in the 1380s, it is because they have been mistaken for Prussians.³⁹⁶ Even as late as 12th December 1391, when the order was given for the arrest of Claus Bukko “governor of Wysmer”³⁹⁷ for his part in assaulting the Prussian ship *Seinte Marie* and robbing the Hull merchant John de Erghom,³⁹⁸ a little closer scrutiny shows that this was not a Vitalienbrüder attack. Of Bukko’s fifteen named associates, the home towns of six are given: two of these hailed from Zierikzee, one from Kampen, one from Lübeck, one from Stralsund, and one from

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁹⁴ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 535.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 535.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 535.

³⁹⁷ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425.

³⁹⁸ See Chapters II and III.

Amsterdam.³⁹⁹ At least three more – all known England-faring merchants, one until at least 1409 – can be traced with some certainty: two to Danzig and one to Kampen,⁴⁰⁰ while of the remaining six, at least one more probably hailed from Danzig, and one from somewhere in the Low Countries. When one adds to this the fact that the captured *Seinte Marie* was reportedly taken to Copenhagen,⁴⁰¹ Queen Margaret's capital, the idea that her worst enemies were responsible for the assault becomes utterly untenable. It is tempting to speculate as to how a Mecklenburger came to be part of a gang which could in time of war take its booty to Copenhagen: but with so little data, it would be irresponsible to try.

Jenks believes that the cloth trade, at least, first felt the bite of the pirates in 1392. In his graph comparing cloth exports from Lynn and Hull by denizens with those by Hansards,⁴⁰² the year 1392/3 shows the denizen exports – always spiky, but usually above a safe threshold and well over double those of the Hansards – plunge dramatically, before returning to normal in 1393/4: a note attributes this anomaly to the activities of the Vitalienbrüder. Unfortunately, Jenks does not explain his grounds for this assertion, which available data do not appear to support. Piracy might indeed have explained a longer slump had one occurred, but there is nothing to indicate that there was anything out of the ordinary about this particular year in the context of the war. Indeed, by and large, the woollen trade seems to have been in better shape than it had been in decades, partly due to the easing of relations with Prussia after 1388.⁴⁰³ (The intervening disruption of trade between Prussia and Flanders, another exporter of cloth, had probably also helped the English trade.)

³⁹⁹ C.C.R. *Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425.

⁴⁰⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. III, pp. 867, 879, 889.

⁴⁰¹ C.C.R. *Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425.

⁴⁰² Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 513.

⁴⁰³ Gray, H. L., "The production and exportation of English woollens in the fourteenth century", *English Historical Review* XXXIX (1924), p. 26.

The principal source for Vitalienbrüder piracies against the English is the complaint presented to the Hanse in 1405. Despite the fact that it is readily available, having been printed in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, this invaluable source has been unaccountably neglected by modern historians, and no analysis of the information contained therein has ever been undertaken. Hakluyt's source was a manuscript, now part of the Cotton collection in the British Museum, which he apparently translated.⁴⁰⁴

The text is included as part of an agreement made

“for the demanding and obtaining seuerally, of due reformation, and recompense at the hands of our saide souereigne lord the king, and of his messengers and commissioners aforesayde, for all iniuries, damages, grieuances, and manslaughteres, any wayes vniustly done, and offred seuerally by the liege people and subiects of our soueraigne lord the king, vnto the common societie of the marchants of the Hans, and vnto any of the Citizens, people and inhabitants of the cities aforesaide whatsoeuer on the other part”.⁴⁰⁵

This agreement was concluded with Lübeck, Hamburg, Bremen, Stralsund, and Greifswald. Grievances involving Prussia and Livonia had been dealt with through a separate embassy to the Teutonic Knights; but Rostock and Wismar, repeatedly mentioned within the complaint, were not parties to its conclusion. Deputies from those cities were present at this Hansetag, and it was from them in person that the English

⁴⁰⁴ Cotton MS Nero B II, ff. 35-37; see Quinn, D. B. (ed.), *The Hakluyt Handbook* (2 vols, London, 1974), vol. 2, p. 389. The *Handbook*'s survey of Hakluyt's sources is exhaustive and invaluable.

⁴⁰⁵ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, p. 58.

ambassadors demanded “conuenient, iust, and reasonable satisfactin and recompense” for the “molestations, iniuries and damages uniustly done... by the communalities of the cities of Wismer and Rostok”.⁴⁰⁶

From this complaint – recorded in *Hanserecesse* in terms similar to Hakluyt’s, if less detailed⁴⁰⁷ – it appears that England only really began to suffer from the Vitalienbrüder in 1394. Only one earlier incident is recorded:

“Item, in the yere of our Lord 1393. certaine malefactors
of Wismer and Rostok, and others their complices of the
Hans, wickedly and vniustly tooke from one Richard Abel
of London woollen cloth, greene cloth, meale and fishes,
to the value of 133. li. 6. s.”⁴⁰⁸

No individuals are named as among the attackers. The same complaint identifies eight separate incidents in 1394, nine in 1395, and sixteen in subsequent years up to 1405; Störtebeker is named eleven times in total, Michels thirteen, Klaus Scheld seven times, usually with some such rider as “and diuers others of Wismer and Rostok, and of the Hans”.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁰⁷ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 105.

⁴⁰⁸ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, p. 61.

Table 3: Incidents in 1394, from the 1405 complaint⁴⁰⁹

Vessel	Home port	Home city of goods' owners	Value of goods taken	Date	Location of incident	Pirates named
<i>Godeyere</i>	Newcastle	Newcastle	£400 (ship and "furniture") plus 200 marks (money, cloth, wine)	"about... Easter"	"vpon the sea towards Prussia"	"Henry van Pomeran, Godekin Michael, Clays Sheld, Hans Howfoote, Peter Hawfoote, Clays Boniface, Rainbek"
<i>Shipper Berline</i>	[Prussia]	Hull	160 nobles	[1394]	-	-
-	Elbing	York	1,060 nobles ("werke, waxe, osmunds, and bowstaues")	[1394]	-	"Godekin Mighel, Clays Scheld, Storbiker"
-	[Holland]	York	1,120 nobles (woollens) plus £9 (armour, silver, gold)	[1394]	-	-
-	Elbing	Yarmouth, Norwich	1,000 marks (woollen cloths) plus 100 marks ransom for 4 prisoners	[1394]	"vpon the coastes of Denmark and Norway, beneath Scawe, and at Anold"	-
-	Lynn	-	£42 (woollens)	[1394]	"vpon the sea... bound for Dantzic"	-
n/a	n/a	Lynn	440 nobles (houses) plus £1,815 (goods)	"about the feast of S. George"	"Norbern in Norway"	-
4 ships	Lynn	Lynn	"cloth, wine, and other marchandise" worth £3,623 5s. 11d.	"vpon the 14. day after the feast of S. George"	"sailing vpon the maine sea... for Prussia"	-

⁴⁰⁹ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, pp. 60-69.

The penultimate incident is exceptional in referring not to an attack at sea, but to an assault by “sundry malefactors and robbers of Wismer and Rostok, and others of the Hans, with a great multitude of ships” upon the English at Bergen, in which 21 houses were destroyed. (Among the victims was John Brandon, who usually appears more often as a perpetrator of piracies than on the sharp end – though it was not his last loss at the hands of the Vitalienbrüder.) Both Wismar and Rostock are named in all complaints save the third-last, in which “certaine malefactors of Wismer and others of the Hans” stole from a crayer of Lynn “a packe of woollen cloth” belonging to one Simon Durham. This was the first of no fewer than six encounters with the Vitalienbrüder that the singularly unfortunate Durham would report over the years 1394-97; oddly, it is listed last in the English complaint, after the later incidents.

Most of these cases involve nothing more than the theft of goods from ships at sea. Only the seizure of the *Godeyere* – five of whose seven named perpetrators are otherwise unknown – and the last incident involving the four ships of Lynn were marked by the violence which from 1395 would become much more commonplace in Vitalienbrüder attacks on English shipping. When the *Godeyere* was taken, two men were killed, and four imprisoned “to their vtter vndoing... for the space of three whole yeeres”. In the latter incident, unique in the complaint for the number of ships involved (four victims, “diuers” attackers), “some of the people which were in the saide foure ships, they slew, some they spoyled, and others they put vnto extreame ransomes”. Four men were also held for ransom in the case listed fifth in the table – a slightly confused account of what seem to have been in fact at least two incidents – but none was killed. Later, the massacre of whole crews would not be unusual. They also appear, so far as can be discerned, to be confined to the Baltic and eastern North Sea (the appearance of a Dutch ship is a slight surprise, but need not mean that the attack took place in Dutch

waters): the Vitalienbrüder had not yet spread west.

It is doubtful whether Richard II's offer to Queen Margaret of three English ships with captains and crews⁴¹⁰ was a response to Vitalienbrüder activity. It was made on 20th April 1393, before most if not all of the known incidents; indeed, the printed calendars for the early 1390s say more about the piracies of Margaret's own subjects than those of her enemies. But respond he eventually did. On 25th November 1394, the clerk John Huntynghdon and the merchant John de Wesenham were issued with letters of credence to negotiate with the Wendish towns, principally over compensation for these attacks.⁴¹¹ However, although several Hanse towns expressed worry over the possible consequences of allowing the pirates to antagonise England,⁴¹² no reply was forthcoming until 15th August 1396, when the Lübeck Hansetag wrote protesting at the issue of letters of marque to Lynn-based victims of the Vitalienbrüder. This is the only surviving reference to these letters, or to any English reprisals in the mid 1390s.⁴¹³ Since the Vitalienbrüder attacks were still going on, events following this reply fall under the heading of attacks after 1395, and will be discussed below. It is, however, clear that, even by 1395, Anglo-Hanseatic relations were being poisoned by the activities of the pirates, despite the attempts of both sides to prevent this.

Attacks on Hanseatic and third-party shipping and goods

“Nothing is so inimical to piracy as peace and good government; and nothing so encouraging to it as

⁴¹⁰ Rydberg, *Sveriges Traktater*, Vol. II, n. 420; quoted by Bjork, “Piracy”, p. 64.

⁴¹¹ *HR I* (iv) 182.

⁴¹² Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 520.

⁴¹³ See pp. 70-72.

prolonged jealousies and strife between peoples.”⁴¹⁴

As mentioned above, violence at sea – never absent from the Baltic – had been seriously exacerbated there by the political situation since 1375. Certainly the Hansards made this connection: in 1376 a major upsurge in incidents was not only reported but directly attributed to the Danish succession crisis.⁴¹⁵ The election of Olaf IV, however, did nothing to resolve matters. Throughout 1377, reports of pirates roaming the Baltic in their hundreds emerge; at the Midsummer Hansetag that year – one year after the Hanse had declared a “war” on piracy – Rostock and Wismar were excused attendance until such time as Mecklenburg and Denmark-Norway should be reconciled.⁴¹⁶ hardly a move calculated to produce a speedy solution to the problem. In view of this, the Hansetag’s declaration that those who harboured pirates were as guilty as the freebooters themselves⁴¹⁷ rings very hollow.

The roots of the Vitalienbrüder, then, went deep: but the events of 1388-89 remain a departure from what had gone before, and it can hardly be correct (and is certainly unhelpful) to speak of Vitalienbrüder as existing before this time. Our focus must be on the period after the outbreak of war. The “serovere” quickly dominated the Baltic, to the point where Hansards took to sailing in convoy through the more dangerous areas. These convoys consisted of at least ten ships in the Baltic, the tenth laden with weapons: at this time, three were considered sufficient for the trip to Flanders. Even when the towns were divided by diplomatic troubles, these were put aside at sea for safety’s sake.⁴¹⁸ The defeat, capture, and execution of a hundred pirates

⁴¹⁴ Bjork, “Piracy”, p. 39.

⁴¹⁵ *HR* II (i) 105.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴¹⁸ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 100.

by Stralsund merchants in 1391⁴¹⁹ was an exceptional event: generally, the power of the pirates grew through the early 1390s. “They robbed both friend and foe,” remarks the Detmar Chronicle laconically on their activities in 1392, “therefore herring became very expensive.”⁴²⁰ The sack of Bergen in April 1393 revealed just how powerful they had become even outside the Baltic: 900 men landed, robbed, plundered and burned. This appears to have been an act of war directed against Margaret’s Norwegian subjects: the Hanseatic Kontor and its storehouse were spared.⁴²¹ but it was this more than anything else which convinced the Hanse that peace was necessary. On 22nd July 1393, the Lübeck Hansetag decided to forbid trade with Denmark, and succeeded in forcing peace talks at which Lübeck, Thorn, Danzig, Stralsund, Kampen, Greifswald, and Stettin were represented. Although Margaret’s intransigence prevented these from reaching fruition, the mere fact that it was the Hanse towns which had brought them about is indicative of how anxious they were to deal with the pirates: and when peace was eventually made, these towns were represented at the talks, and it was to a Hanseatic captain that the Mecklenburgers surrendered Stockholm.⁴²² Between these dates, a fleet of 36 cogs and four Rhine ships, manned by 3,500 armed men, had gathered at Lübeck to restore safety to the seas, although the Teutonic Order’s rejection of the idea had nipped it in the bud.⁴²³

Certainly, then, the Hansards had found the Vitalienbrüder intolerable – although their economic effect is difficult to gauge, as figures are too patchy to provide meaningful data. How significant these difficulties were for relations with England is therefore hard to determine. 1389-95 was not a period of crisis in these relations, and such trouble as there was appears to owe more to England’s ongoing and specific

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

⁴²⁰ Quoted by Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 101.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 103.

⁴²³ HR IV (i) 192.

differences with Prussia (and, from 1394, the direct attacks on English shipping dealt with above). Anything which had so great an effect on Hanseatic trade and inter-Hanseatic relations as the Vitalienbrüder did at this time must have affected every aspect of the Hanse's foreign relations, but the paucity of the evidence makes it very difficult to reach a positive conclusion.

The purpose of the Vitalienbrüder, however, was of course aimed not against the English or their fellow Hansards, but against Margaret and her subjects, something it is as well to bear in mind. It was principally Norwegians who suffered in Bergen, although the German population would have made a far more attractive target to attackers bent purely on thievery: the city had possessed no native merchant class to speak of for some decades by 1393,⁴²⁴ while its fishermen were in “a sort of commercial serfdom” to the Hansards.⁴²⁵ (J. A. Gade remarks of the Norwegian experience of the Vitalienbrüder that they were “a scourge even worse than the Hansa”.⁴²⁶) The effect on the Hanse of the suffering of Scandinavians at the pirates' hands is obvious: by supplying Stockholm, and by the damage they did to Danish-Norwegian interests, the Vitalienbrüder delayed Margaret's inevitable victory and prolonged the war, which could only hurt the Hanse. (It did not help that this also facilitated the perpetuation of the pirates' own existence, and therefore their continued predations on Hanseatic and other “friendly” or non-Scandinavian shipping.) Furthermore, the economic damage to key trading partners of the Hanse could not fail to have a knock-on effect. In spite of their own merchants' escape from harm, it was the sack of Bergen that galvanised them to push for peace. Clearly, the Hansards had been weakened economically – and forced to strengthen themselves militarily – by the whole affair. Measurably or not, these effects could not fail to extend into their other foreign relations, including those with England.

⁴²⁴ Gade, *Hanseatic Control*, p. 55.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

1395 - 1401

Attacks on English shipping and goods

Table 4: Incidents 1395 - 1401, from the 1405 complaint⁴²⁷

Vessel	Home port	Home city of goods' owners	Value of goods taken	Date	Location of incident	Pirates named
-	Hull	Hull	476 nobles ("waxe... werke... osmundes... other goods")	1395	"neere vnto Norway"	"Hans van Wethemonkule, Clays Scheld, Godekin Mighel... Strotbeker"
<i>Friday</i>	Cley ⁴²⁸	Cley	500 nobles ("artillery, furniture, and salt fishes")	1395	Off "Maustrond in Norway"	"Godekin Mighel, Clays Scheld, Stertebeker"
<i>Margaret</i>	Cley	Cley	400 nobles ("artillerie, furniture, and salt fishes")	1395	Off "Mawstrond in Norway"	"Godekin Mighel, Clays Scheld, Stertebeker"
<i>Nicholas</i>	Cley	Cley	320 nobles ("furniture and salt fishes")	1395, "about the feast of the natiuitie of S. Iohn Baptist"	Off "Mawstrond"	"Godekin and Stertebeker"
<i>Dogger-ship; Peter</i>	Wiveton	-	£170 (ship, "furniture... salt fishes")	1395, "about the feast of the natiuitie of S. Iohn Baptist"	"vpon the coast of Denmarke"	"Godekins and Stertebeker"
-	Wiveton	Wiveton	410 nobles	1395, "about the feast aforesaid"	-	"Godekins and Stertebeker"
<i>Dogger</i>	-	-	200 nobles	1395, "about the feast aforesaid"	-	"Godekins and Stertebeker"
<i>Isabel</i>	Cley	Cley	406 nobles ("furniture, and salt fishes")	1395, "about the feast aforesaid"	Off "Mawstrond"	"Godekins and Stertebeker"
<i>Helena</i>	Cley	Cley	-	1395, "vpon the	-	"Godekins and Stertebeker"

⁴²⁷ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, pp. 60-70.

⁴²⁸ "Clay", apparently Cley-next-the-Sea in Norfolk.

				Saterday, about the foresaid feast”		
<i>Cogge</i>	Hull	Hull	£200 (woollens)	1396	-	“Tohn van Derlowe, Hans van Gelder”
<i>Buss</i>	Zealand	-	£66	1396	-	“Godekins and Stertebeker, and other their complices”
-	-	Lynn	£663 14s. 2d. total (“osmunds, and... diuers other marchandise”) ⁴²⁹	1396	“vpon the maine sea betweene Norway and Scaw”	“one Henry Lambolt and other his adherents”
-	-	Lynn	£13 13s. 4d. (“cloth and other marchandise”)	1396	“sailing vpon the maine sea towards Sconeland”	-
<i>Buss-ship</i>	Zealand	-	£24 (“mastcs, spares”)	1397	-	-
-	Danzig	Lynn	Cloth worth £52 7s. 6d.; servant ransomed for £8 6s. 8d.; “diuers goods” worth £24	1397	-	-
<i>Trinitie</i>	Hull	Hull	£300 (“oylc, waxe, and werke”)	1398	“neere vnto Norway”	“Tohn van Derlowe, Wilmer, Hans van Gelder, Clays Scheld, Euerade Pilgrimson”
-	[Prussia]	Colchester	5 lots of woollen cloths worth £60, £40, 100 marks, 100 marks, and 200 marks, plus 20 nobles ransom	1398, “about the moneth of September”	-	“Godekin Wisle, Gerard Sleyre”
<i>Peter</i>	Cley	Cley	280 nobles	1398, “about the feast of S. Michael the archangel”	“Langsound in Norway”	“Godekin and Stertebeker”
<i>Hawkin Derlin</i>	Danzig	Hull	£18 (wax)	1399	-	Clays Scheld
-	Lynn	Lynn	Cloth, “harneis”, and “diuers goods” to total value of £548	1399	-	-
-	-	Lynn	“160. nests of masers, worth 100. lib. 13. s. 4. d. Item, 30. fures rigges of Kaleber	1399	-	“Godekin Mighel, Henrie van Hall de Stertebeker” ⁴³⁰

⁴²⁹ John Brandon was among those who lost goods in this attack.

⁴³⁰ The name “Henrie van Hall” is otherwise unknown; Störtebeker’s given name was Klaus.

			woorth 13. s. 4. d. a piece, the summe totall amounting to 20. li. Item, 20. fures wombys of Kalebre worth &c. Item, one girdle of siluer, and one dagger adorned with siluer worth 30. s. Item, two coates, and one long iacket, and other goods, to the value of 30. s. Item, he paide for his ransome 4. lib. 13 s. 4. d.”			
-	“West-Stowe in Zealand”	Great Yarmouth	100 marks (hides, “butter, masts, spares, boordes, questingstones ⁴³¹ and wild werke”	1401	“Longsound in Norway”	-

⁴³¹ Presumably lodestones.

The above table is very interesting. It details twenty-two incidents involving either named and known Vitalienbrüder captains,⁴³² or men of Rostock and/or Wismar,⁴³³ in attacks on English shipping and goods in the period 1395 – 1401. Of these, nine took place in 1395, while the ten whose location was recorded all took place in Scandinavian waters, all but one off the southern coasts of Norway (“Mawstrond” is Marstrand at the mouth of the Kattegat, now in Sweden) or on the approach to Scania. Six involved ships allegedly from the tiny port of Cley-next-the-Sea; five of these took place off Norway in 1395, suggesting that these five vessels may have been attacked together – but it is still surprising that so many ships should sail from Cley in the first place. Two more came from equally insignificant Wiveton. Twelve involved the men who became the heroes of the *Störtebeker Lied*, and none any German whose name is known from non-English sources before 1395. The last fact does coincide with what we know from other sources: the leadership of the Vitalienbrüder changed when the war ended, because the Mecklenburg nobles went home. (“Iohn van Derlowe” might possibly be a von der Lüche, a Mecklenburg name which does appear among the pirates’ wartime leaders,⁴³⁴ but this is a guess. He cannot be identified with any known captain named in other sources.)

To the English, however, Michels, Störtebeker, and their cohorts were still “men of Rostock and Wismar”. In five of these cases, and two of the three cited from after 1401 (see below), no individuals are named, but the pirates’ alleged home ports are the same. Furthermore, the petition of “the merchants and mariners of the realm” on 22nd January 1397 names “the towns of Lubeck, [W]ysseme, Rostock and Stralsund” as the origins of the “robbers” who have “violently seized” their “boats filled with

⁴³² With the exception of Henry Lambolt, who is neither known from other sources nor explicitly linked with Mecklenburgers.

⁴³³ Wismar is named “with others of the Hans”, but without Rostock, in two cases.

⁴³⁴ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 102.

merchandise”, later emphasising the specificity of the citation by referring back to “the four aforementioned towns”. The King is reminded that he has already threatened these towns with reprisals, and called on “to do whatever is in his power in order to secure recovery of these ships and goods”; he responds by appointing three prelates and three magnates

“to try, read and examine the said petitions... and moreover to ordain by authority of parliament recompense or other reasonable remedy in these cases, such as shall seem best to them according to their discretion”.⁴³⁵

The other noticeable trends here, however – that attacks fall off from 1396, and that Norwegian waters remain the most dangerous throughout the period – do not appear to chime so well with what our other sources tell us.

To address the latter issue first: not only did the Vitalienbrüder have no permanent base in Norway or Denmark, but until 1398 Gotland was their principal haven. Michels and Störtebeker are generally believed to have remained based there and operating principally in the Baltic until their expulsion.⁴³⁶ (Traditional accounts have appeared to place them in Friesland,⁴³⁷ but this is probably due to confusion with the period 1398 – 1400, the focus of the *Störtebeker Lied*.) At first sight, therefore, it appears strange that they should be accused of operating largely in Norwegian waters in this period. Yet, of the ten attacks in which these men are cited by name before 1398, five are reported as happening off Norway (four of these near Marstrand – see below). There are, however, other facts to be borne in mind.

⁴³⁵ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 329.

⁴³⁶ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 105.

⁴³⁷ Zimmern, *The Hansa Towns*, p. 126.

First, the Vitalienbrüder were extremely mobile. Although there is no evidence of their ever having settled further west than Friesland, Karl Koppmann's researches show that they sailed at least as far as Calais (see also below), and may even confirm the German tradition that their post-1395 raids took them as far as the coast of Spain.⁴³⁸ The Danish fleet which tried to clear the pirates out of Visby in June 1396 found that they had removed themselves to Russia.⁴³⁹ Furthermore, English and all other Western European ships attempting to enter the Baltic would have had to pass through the Sound, and could approach it only by a limited number of easily predicted routes, Marstrand lying right on their path. With, despite the best efforts of Denmark and the Hanse alike, little effective policing of the Baltic in the years 1395-97, it would not have been difficult for Gotland-based pirates to reach the coast of Norway and lie in wait for them. Nevertheless, it is worth remarking that none of the pirates of whose presence in Gotland at this time we have certain knowledge – notably Arnold Stüke, a rare survival from among the wartime tier of captains – is mentioned in English complaints.

Second, the pirates may have become victims of their own success within the eastern sea. Maritime trade did not cease either within the Baltic or between Baltic and western towns: but it certainly appears to have fallen off badly.⁴⁴⁰ This is hardly surprising, given that the pirates operated almost with impunity: possibly they had driven so much trade off the seas that they were obliged to repair westwards in search of richer pickings. Unfortunately for this hypothesis, however, the figures do not appear to support it. Prices, for instance, were affected in this period by government protectionism or the internal instability of states far more than by robbery at sea;⁴⁴¹ the pirates cannot

⁴³⁸ Koppmann, *Störtebeker*.

⁴³⁹ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 106.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁴⁴¹ Tits-Dieuaide, Marie-Jeanne, "The Baltic Grain Trade and Cereal Prices in Flanders at the End of the Middle Ages: Some Remarks", in Minchinton (ed.), *Baltic Grain Trade*, p. 11; Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 133.

be shown to have caused a shortage of any particular commodity.

These suggestions are at best speculative. It is equally possible that the reason Michels and Störtebeker were attacking English ships when Stüke was not was that they were in fact at least partly based in Friesland even before 1398. Certainly some Wendish pirates were from 1395;⁴⁴² and, given the mobility already mentioned, this need not exclude their having operated from Gotland as well. The geography of the attacks, however, is arguably less problematic than the timing. Even if the pirates were more contained in the years 1396-97 (when there were six attacks recorded) – and there is little reason to think so – why are there only seven between 1398 and 1401, as compared to nine in 1395?

Certainly the peace had been followed almost immediately by an explosion of Vitalienbrüder activity outside the Baltic. As has already been mentioned,⁴⁴³ the “Danes” who robbed Norfolk sailors⁴⁴⁴ in the summer of 1395 were probably in fact Vitalienbrüder. If not, then they were children of the same war reacting to the same sudden unemployment. The first Frisian base was probably established almost immediately, and the Hansetag was already worried in September 1395⁴⁴⁵ about the effect the pirates’ activity could have on relations with England. It is also true that it was not until June 1396 that any significant attempt was made to suppress them – although it ended in tragic farce, as the separate Danish and Hanseatic fleets mistook one another for the enemy and fought a bloody and completely unnecessary battle. The distinct possibility must also be borne in mind that there were not nine separate incidents in 1395, but a small number of incidents involving many ships – which would certainly go some way towards explaining the surprising prominence of Cley and

⁴⁴² Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 106.

⁴⁴³ See Introduction and Chapter II.

⁴⁴⁴ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, p. 337; Walsingham, *Cronica Maiora*, p. 294.

⁴⁴⁵ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, p. 520.

Wiveton among the victims.

These somewhat feeble attempts at policing, and the internal difficulties of Gotland in 1396-97 as Sven Sture and Duke Erich competed for control of the island, may have kept the pirates slightly more occupied than before. Erich's attempt to rekindle the war in Sweden (the 140 men of the Hanseatic garrison in Stockholm saw off his 1,200 knights without a blow struck or a shot fired), his subsequent death, and his widow's alliance with Sture and the pirates, however, left Gotland entirely in their hands. Margaret had meanwhile achieved the union of Scandinavia under her great-nephew Erik, and it is very possible that the Hansards feared she would expand her power still further by a successful invasion of Gotland if the pirates continued to provoke her. Whether for this reason, or purely to protect their own trade, the Prussian Hanse towns joined forces with the Teutonic Knights to invade, and, after a bitter campaign, conquer Gotland in the spring of 1398; by the end of the year the Vitalienbrüder had been almost completely cleared from the Baltic⁴⁴⁶ and their castles burned.

Sture and the remaining nobles among them (not, for the most part, Mecklenburgers, but surviving adventurers and post-war recruits) made peace with their respective overlords, and many others were killed. Some four or five hundred,⁴⁴⁷ however, escaped to Friesland, where local noblemen who had long existed by preying on passing ships were only too eager to welcome them. During the sailing season, they also operated from Heligoland. A report to the Hanseatic Kontor in Bruges⁴⁴⁸ from about this time blames the Frisian chief Witzeld tom Broke for over twenty robberies on the coasts of Norway, Holland, and England: it is more than possible that the English would be minded to attribute Frisian piracies to Michels, Scheld, and Störtebeker, once

⁴⁴⁶ HR IV (i) 424-26.

⁴⁴⁷ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 106.

⁴⁴⁸ HR IV (i) 426.

they knew where they were. It is also possible that, if these men were famous before 1398 – which cannot be proven – other men’s piracies had already been misattributed to them: this might help to explain their ubiquity in the English complaints.

Certainly the English regard for accuracy is lacking in at least one respect: no distinction is drawn between “men of Rostock and Wismar” before 1395, when the two cities were actively promoting piracy, and after, when they were officially trying, however ineffectually, to suppress it. Indeed, the preamble to the complaint, quoted above, makes it clear that the cities were regarded as having specifically sanctioned the activities of the Vitalienbrüder. On the other hand, such obscure characters as “Iohn van Derlowe” and “Wilmer” were surely named precisely because they *were* known to have been involved in the specific incidents; while Wigbold, Wichmann, and other better known post-1395 Vitalienbrüder captains do not appear in English complaints at all. Furthermore, if Frisian piracies were being attributed to the Vitalienbrüder before 1398, it is remarkable that Frisians themselves were still being cited as the problem in May 1399, when the Treasurer of Calais wrote to inform King Richard that “there are on the sea a large number of enemies who are doing great damage and robberies upon your lieges and merchants passing by sea”, and named these pirates as “Freziars”.⁴⁴⁹ Whether or not this refers to Vitalienbrüder attacks, it is difficult to see this information reflected in the 1405 complaint.

All of this should make us expect to see reports of Vitalienbrüder attacks on English shipping increase in 1398-99. In fact, they do not exceed the figures for 1396-97 (six in each two year period), and are nothing like so frequent as they were in 1394-95 (seventeen in total) – though less than half of the 1394-95 period took place after the peace which liberated them to devote themselves to piracy. One might argue, from the

⁴⁴⁹ Legge, Mary Dominica (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions from All Souls MS. 182* (London, 1941), pp. 278-79.

continuing disputes between England and Prussia – which reached in February 1398 the point of the threatened expulsion of Englishmen from all Prussian Hanse towns – that the total volume of English trade eastwards had declined since 1395, thus lessening the opportunity for such attacks. The cloth trade had indeed declined somewhat, before bouncing back in 1400/1-01/2.⁴⁵⁰ Decline would resume in the succeeding two decades: however, the downward trend in the later 1390s does not change the fact that the decade overall was distinguished by growth. The real downturn after 1402 probably had more to do with Europe's general economic malaise than with specific political situations.

It is worth noting that, from 1395, the ships from which English goods were taken were largely English, whereas in 1394 they had been mostly German – yet there was no fall-off in attacks on German ships. Therefore, this would appear to be symptomatic of an increasing tendency of the English to ship their own goods to Germany: where previous royal commands to avoid alien ships had had little effect,⁴⁵¹ economic factors appear to have done their job for them.⁴⁵² This view is somewhat undermined by the fact that, while the export of English cloth by Englishmen did indeed rise by 54.9 % between 1391/2 and 1401/2, its export by Hansards rose by 119.9 % - and export by other aliens 113.5 % - across the same period.⁴⁵³ Maybe cloth was an exception: of the two cases here in which woollens are explicitly mentioned as among the booty, one did involve a Prussian ship. Perhaps the increasing involvement of English ships is a matter of pure chance. Another possibility is that – unlike the Prussia-farers of 1394, attacked in the Baltic – the Englishmen attacked in the North Sea in this period were not in fact bound for Hanse towns at all, but for Norway. However, while

⁴⁵⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 57.

⁴⁵¹ Giuseppi, Montague S., "Alien merchants in England in the fifteenth century", in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, new series, ix (1895), p. 77; Beardwood, *Alien Merchants*, p. 37; Hope, *British Shipping*, p. 45.

⁴⁵² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 73.

⁴⁵³ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 56.

this might account for some of the attacks whose location is unknown, it does not fit with the concentration of attacks in the vicinity of Marstrand: these victims, at least, must still have been bound for the Baltic. Two, furthermore, are explicitly described as headed for Scania.

When one looks at total English cloth exports for this period, the picture is not particularly enlightening. They rose dramatically in the early 1390s, levelled off but did not seriously decline from 1394/5, and rose to a peak in 1401/2, before declining sharply in 1402/3, then spiking several times, ultimately levelling off again around 1415 at a lower level than they had spent more than two years at since 1384.⁴⁵⁴ It is difficult to see much of a Vitalienbrüder effect here. In all probability, the outburst of maritime violence from 1402 onwards, and the general economic decline in Europe from *circa* 1410, were much more important factors than the activities of the German pirates.

There is only one mention in the printed calendars of an attack by Vitalienbrüder (“malefactors of Lubyk, Wysemere, Rustok and Stralsond”⁴⁵⁵) in the period between the peace of 1395 and their relocation to Friesland in 1398. It tells us that an English ship was attacked “in the parts of Prucia” in December 1397. The alleged perpetrators, Mercnard Steneholt and Bertram Fanhalter, are otherwise unknown. Furthermore, Michels appears only twice after 1396, still in companionship with Störtebeker – although in 1398 they had reportedly divided their hunting grounds, Michels taking the English and Flemish trade routes and Störtebeker the mouths of the Elbe and Weser.⁴⁵⁶ (It is possible that there is some confusion here: while this division certainly existed from early 1400, it is difficult to find evidence to support projecting it backwards.)

The attacks of 1395 – 1401 were distinguished by increased violence. When the *Margaret* was taken, “one of the said masters mates they maliciously drowned”. After

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁵⁵ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 309; see also Chapter II.

⁴⁵⁶ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 110.

the capture of the *Dogger-ship*, “the master, and 25. mariners... they maliciously slewe, and a certain ladde... they carried with them vnto Wismer” (presumably marking this attack as predating the peace – although perhaps not: Arnold Stüke was still selling stolen goods in the Mecklenburg towns some weeks after the surrender of Stockholm⁴⁵⁷). Of the unnamed ship listed sixth in the table, “the master and mariners... they villanously slue” (including Simon Andrew, “godsonne, nephew, and seruant” of the ill-starred Simon Durham). Of the *Dogger*, “the master and his company... they beate and wounded”; the *Helena* was sunk – extraordinarily, with much of her lading aboard, a bizarre act of waste.⁴⁵⁸ However, even these incidents – still a minority among those recorded in the English complaints – hardly compare with the lurid Hanseatic accounts of post-war Vitalienbrüder brutality. No Englishman, it seems, was placed in a barrel before being decapitated, or deliberately starved in captivity.

English reactions in this period seem muted. The Lübeck Hansetag did find it necessary to protest to Richard II and the burghers of Lynn on 15th August 1396 about the issue of letters of marque to the pirates’ victims.⁴⁵⁹ This, however, was probably because, having failed to elicit any response from Rostock and Wismar to English complaints predating the peace, the Hansetag decided to retreat into bluster; certainly it is hard to find evidence of significant English reprisals. Relations with Prussia, meanwhile, appear to have proceeded upon their own lines, the minor crisis of 1398 and its subsequent resolution having little or no demonstrable connection with the activities of the Vitalienbrüder. There is one English action in the period to which we can point as a direct reaction to these piracies: the issue on 13th May 1398 to groups of prominent citizens in Lynn, Boston, Hull, Dover, Sandwich, Calais, Scarborough, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, and Harwich, of commissions

⁴⁵⁷ HR IV, 334, 337.

⁴⁵⁸ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, pp. 60-67.

⁴⁵⁹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 520.

“to assemble and man all ships, barges and boats of [town’s name], and proceed with them and others willing to join them for the purpose of attacking, arresting and committing to prison, pirates, robbers and other malefactors who have assembled and in divers vessels put to sea to lie in wait for merchants and have pursued them from port to port, wounding, killing, robbing and imprisoning until ransom made”.⁴⁶⁰

The date – immediately after the expulsion of the Vitalienbrüder from Gotland – and the North Sea locations of the towns singled out leave little doubt of the target of these commissions. (Their recipients included such men as John Brandon and Hugh atte Fen, a reminder that there was often considerable overlap between the poachers and the gamekeepers.) And perhaps, finally, it was because of the success of these operations that Vitalienbrüder attacks on English shipping did not explode in the years 1398 – 1400.

Attacks on Hanseatic and third-party shipping and goods

“Störtebeker and Gödeke Michels

Robbed both for equal shares

By water and also by land,

⁴⁶⁰ C.P.R. *Richard II*, Vol. VI, pp. 366-67.

Until they annoyed God in Heaven:
Then they had to suffer great disgrace.”⁴⁶¹

Freed from the need for Mecklenburger protection (although the Duchy was insincere, and continued to do business with them), the Vitalienbrüder rampaged uncontrolled after 1395. Even after their expulsion from Gotland, they were still able to penetrate the Baltic from their new Frisian hideouts.⁴⁶² Their impact on the Hanse is seen clearly in the Hanseatic reaction: first the Prussian towns joined the Teutonic Knights in expelling them from Gotland; then, almost immediately, in June 1398, a Hanse fleet led by Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck attacked their bases in Friesland, pressing inland, besieging Frisian towns and forcing Edo Wiemken, a major local ally of the pirates, to swear that he would give them no shelter in future.⁴⁶³ The Frisians had long been a thorn in the side of the Hansards, demanding blackmail for safe passage through their waters: and now many of the chiefs who had been paid the black rent were allowing Vitalienbrüder to operate from their ports. (Bremen had paid ten thousand Rhenish guilders to secure passage only the year before.⁴⁶⁴) The attack, however, was effectively a failure: Wiemken was only one among many Frisian allies of the pirates, and they themselves melted away, many entering the service of the Count of Holland. That, despite the outward success of this campaign, the Hansards were aware that they had in fact failed is clear from the Hansetag held two months later in Copenhagen (the very location is remarkable), at which the first serious attempts were made to gain an alliance with the new Scandinavian monarchy against the pirates.

Hitherto, Denmark had taken its own measures. In 1396, Margaret had ordered

⁴⁶¹ *Störtebeker Lied* (1609): “Stortebeker vnd Gode Michel / de roveden beide tho gliken deel / tho water vnd ok tho lande, / so lang, dat idt gott van hemmel verdroth, / do mosten se liden grote schande.”

⁴⁶² Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 111.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

that townsmen and holders of royal offices should present ships, men and provisions for the defence of the realm: given that the realm was no longer at war, there can be little doubt as to the identity of the threat.⁴⁶⁵ In August 1398, she was still negotiating the surrender of Sven Sture, a Danish defector to the Vitalienbrüder; their peace was not made until 10th October.⁴⁶⁶ (He and the Swede Knut Bosson, son of Bo Jonsson Grip and an ally of the late Erich, agreed to surrender all their castles to the Queen by 20th April 1399.) Eventually, however, following the conclusion of the Copenhagen Hansetag that only a concerted Hanse-Scandinavian action could deal with the pirates once and for all, Margaret reached an alliance with the Hanse at Nyköping on 8th September 1399. In the ten years in which the Vitalienbrüder had been a thorn in the sides of both parties, they had never forced such an accommodation before: since it can hardly have been the case that their depredations had actually got worse since they had fled Gotland, this can only mean that both Hansards and Scandinavians had simply reached the end of their patience.

Margaret wrote to Count Konrad of Oldenburg, the Frisian towns, and Keno ten Brooke, threatening dire reprisals if any of them should cooperate with the pirates; and, on 17th May 1400, a Hanseatic fleet of eleven “peace ships” and 950 armed men gathered at Westerems. (Rostock and Wismar each provided one ship and fifty men.) Within a week, pirate nests had been ruthlessly cleared out, castles and forts burned, and all the chiefs and communities of Eastern Friesland had formally agreed not to help any Vitalienbrüder or other robbers who troubled merchants by land or sea.⁴⁶⁷ Michels and Wigbold, however, had escaped to the coast of Norway with some 200 men, and Störtebeker and Wichmann, with 114, to Holland, where Count Albert took them under

⁴⁶⁵ Bill, Jan, “Scandinavian Warships and Naval Power in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries”, in Unger, Richard W., and Hattendorf, John B. (eds), *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 49.

⁴⁶⁶ Rydberg, *Sveriges Traktater*, Vol. II, n. 426.

⁴⁶⁷ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 113.

his protection, effectively resulting in an undeclared war between Holland and Hamburg.

The saga of what followed – Simon van Utrecht's expeditions in the *Bunte Kuh*; the ferocious battles with the pirates; the capture and execution of Störtebeker in October 1400 and Michels in April 1401 – is well known to students of the period. From the *Störtebeker Lied*, down to modern German children's books and the 2009 feature film *12 Meter ohne Kopf*, it has been told innumerable times. Whether or not it indeed marked the end of the Vitalienbrüder will be considered below: but what effect did these events have on Anglo-Hanseatic relations?

That 1398 – 1401 was a period of flux in these relations is not in doubt. But this had, for the most part, direct and obvious causes: the usurpation of Henry IV and the (as it turned out) temporary warming in English attitudes to Prussia that followed; and more especially the continued failure of the Hansards, and the Prussians in particular, to grant the Four Points. The Vitalienbrüder seem no longer to have been taking English goods from Hanseatic ships in anything like the quantity they had in 1394. Any effect upon England resulting from their activity against non-English victims must by definition have been indirect: but, on the other hand, it is equally true that events so momentous from the Hanseatic point of view could not have failed to affect Hanseatic relations with everybody.

Certainly the fact that at least one major danger in trade to the north-east had been removed must have pleased the English, at least initially. One might also point to the rapprochement these events forced between the Hansards and Queen Margaret, which was significant both in creating an entente in Northern Europe and in view of her close relations with England. Richard II, as is mentioned above, had already lent Margaret ships: and her great-nephew Erik, the nominal (and, after her death in 1412,

real) ruler of Scandinavia, later married Henry IV's daughter Philippa. This closeness might have been expected to help warm relations between England and the Hansards: but instead they were about to tip over into the crisis of 1402-05. One might hypothesise that increased ease of access to the Baltic brought a flood of English goods and a resultant Hanseatic backlash: but this would be a difficult position to back up, given that the crisis was played out in the North Sea, and was much more of English than of Hanseatic making. Indeed, having its roots in England's war with Scotland, it will have had little to do with the Vitalienbrüder.

Throughout the recognised period of their existence, then, while the Vitalienbrüder did exercise a direct influence on Anglo-Hanseatic relations through their attacks on Englishmen, English vessels, and English goods, the indirect effects of their other activities are effectively impossible to measure and unlikely to be significant. But what about events after 1401? Did any Vitalienbrüder survive?

After 1401

“Hamburg, Hamburg, for this I give you the prize.

The sea-rovers will now know it,

At your will they must lie dying.

You may wear a crown of gold,

You have won the prize.”⁴⁶⁸

According to the conventional account, the last Vitalienbrüder were executed

⁴⁶⁸ *Störtebeker Lied*: “Hamburg, Hamburg, des geb ich dir den preis, / Die seereuber werden es nu weis, / Umb deinet willen müssen sie sterben. / Des magstu von gold ein krone tragn, / den preis hastu erworben.”

with Gödeke Michels in May 1401: and – discounting the bizarre legend that Klaus Störtebeker had walked a dozen paces after decapitation and had to be tripped up by the executioner – that was the end of them. Four to five hundred were known to have fled from Gotland; the two flotillas reported to have survived the attack on Friesland added up to 314 men; the two rounds of executions put paid to 150, a minority, the victors reckoned, of those who had taken part in the preceding battles. As none escaped these engagements alive, one might very well conclude that none were left. Certainly the “Vitalienbrüder” who attacked German and Russian ships off Neva in 1420 and took their booty to Wismar⁴⁶⁹ are highly unlikely to have been survivors from the 1390s: it is much more plausible that the word was here used simply to mean “pirates”, perhaps inspired by their choice of haven. There are, however, hints that 1401 was not the final chapter.

⁴⁶⁹ *HR I* (vii) 134-38.

Table 5: Incidents 1402-05, from the 1405 complaint⁴⁷⁰

Vessel	Home port	Home city of goods' owners	Value of goods taken	Date	Location of incident	Pirates named
<i>Michael</i>	Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth	800 nobles (ship, salt, "canuasse clothes") plus 200 nobles (sailors' "wages, canuas, and armour")	1402	"neere vnto Plimmouth"	-
-	Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth	£40 ("salt, cloth, and salmon")	1405	"a certaine port of Norway called Selaw"	-
-	-	London	£32 (cash, plus herring)	1405, "about the feast of S. Michael"	"the sea called Northsound"	Nicholas Femeer

⁴⁷⁰ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, pp. 60-67.

The above table shows three incidents from Henry IV's complaint which postdate Michels' execution, but involve Mecklenburgers (in one case off Plymouth, very far from home). These have been glanced at in Chapter II, but not yet considered in the context of possible Vitalienbrüder survival. The English appear to have lumped these attacks together with the activities of Michels, Störtebeker, and Scheld; indeed, the complaint appears to show no awareness that the suppression and mass executions had taken place. As only one of the perpetrators is named, and he is not known from any other source, these actions cannot be connected to any individual member of the Vitalienbrüder. The *Michael* was taken by "certaine of the Hans, of Rostok, and of Wismer"; the second vessel by "certain malefactors of Wismer... some of the Hans their confederates ayding and assisting them"; the third by "one Nicholas Femeer of Wismer marchant of the Hans, with the assistance of other his complices of the Hans aforesaide". There is no explanation of what they were doing in West Country waters: though Hugh atte Fen, their victim on that occasion, had ventured thither out of his own usual haunts (he was a Yarmouth man) to deal in Bay salt and Breton canvas. (Given atte Fen's involvement, and his own record of entanglement in piracy, it is tempting to speculate that a revenge motive might have been at work here: but there is no evidence for this.)

These incidents, of course, all took place in a time when English maritime violence against Hansards had reached an unprecedented frequency, and was perceived as largely going unpunished. It is not impossible, therefore, that the English decided to blame Hanseatic reprisals on the Vitalienbrüder in order to delegitimise them. This certainly seems more plausible than the idea that the English were genuinely unaware of the suppression of the pirates: such ignorance of vital facts would have crippled royal diplomacy. However, without any Hanseatic reference to the specific incidents, except

to note receipt of the English complaint, it is impossible to tell. The fact that none of these incidents was disfigured by the physical violence which had not been uncommon between 1395 and 1401 may point in some such direction, but is a far from perfect indicator. The printed calendars, meanwhile, do not refer to any further attacks by Mecklenburgers on English ships until 1432.⁴⁷¹

German, Scandinavian, and above all Frisian piracy had not been done away with, of course. Despite the promises of the Frisian chiefs, it was none too long before Dokkum became a pirate stronghold much like those which the Vitalienbrüder had enjoyed in Friesland: it proved such a magnet to ambitious seamen that captains and ship-owners all along the north coast of Germany were complaining of a shortage of crews by 1420. When Dokkum was destroyed in 1422 by a similar joint expedition to those of 1398 and 1400, the escaping pirates sought shelter in England; these formed Bartholomaeus Voet's fleet, which would attack Bergen in 1428 and 1429.⁴⁷² Sea-rovers would always find patrons in a world where few states could afford a standing fleet. The Hansards themselves were by no means above employing such: indeed, the Vitalienbrüder had come about in the first place for that very reason.

There is one intriguing document in the National Archives, in which "the assembly of the clergy and nobles of Oostergoo and Westergoo in Friesland" promise to keep peace with England, but "request that the King will forbid the captain of Calais, who has in his pay the pirates called 'Likedelers', to injure them".⁴⁷³ *Likedeeler* was an epithet of the Vitalienbrüder,⁴⁷⁴ and this letter is dated 19th May 1401. If there were indeed survivors of the Frisian bases not only still alive in significant numbers at this date, but under English protection (direct or otherwise), it would be of huge

⁴⁷¹ C.C.R. *Henry VI*, Vol. II, pp. 145-46.

⁴⁷² Kirby and Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and North Seas*, p. 118; Gade, *Hanseatic Control*, p. 100.

⁴⁷³ T.N.A. E30/1241.

⁴⁷⁴ Thought to be equivalent to modern German *Gleichteiler*: "equal sharers". See Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 102.

significance. Unfortunately, however, this is an isolated piece of evidence. Without any further information to back it up, we might assume that these “Likedelers” were not Vitalienbrüder but other pirates to whom the name had somehow become attached. However, the reference is quite specific, describing the pirates as “God’s friends and all good merchants’ enemies” in reference to their own vaunted status as “God’s friends and all the world’s foes”, and connecting them with the Count of Holland. Although the internal wording appears to say, as the note added by later cataloguers certainly does, that the pirates are in the Captain’s pay, it is just possible that “his” here refers to the Count: but this requires an extremely tortuous reading, and in any case does not help account for the discrepancy in dates.

When Lord Grey of Codnore carried the King’s reply to the Frisians in August, he assured them of England’s friendship but said nothing about the pirates, who are not mentioned again. If the Vitalienbrüder never were at Calais, the letter is difficult to explain: but it may be more plausible to assume that the Frisian letter is merely out of date, referring to some sojourn of the pirates there between May and October 1400. The more dramatic possibility, that survivors were indeed given shelter at Calais after the suppression, may be more attractive: but, if that were the case, it is hard to believe that other references would not have come down to us. In any case, frustrating though it is to have to admit this, we cannot know one way or the other.

Hans Nirnheim blames the Vitalienbrüder for the collapse in Hamburg’s trade to Great Yarmouth after 1400:⁴⁷⁵ however, this seems dubious, given that – having survived a decade of the pirates’ activities – trade did not even begin to crumble until a few months before their defeat. Nor does it match what the customs officers of Yarmouth cited as the reasons for the collapse in 1416: “lack of foresight and

⁴⁷⁵ Nirnheim, Hans (ed.), *Das hamburgische Pfund- und Werkzollbuch von 1300 und 1400* (Hamburg, 1930, vol. 2 of 12), pp. ix – xix.

unnecessary administration”.⁴⁷⁶ It was, as Stuart Jenks points out, “in no way normal”⁴⁷⁷ (“keineswegs üblich”) for English customs officers to tout for business, which is what they were effectively doing in 1416. Although Jenks’ conclusion that “injustice and force”⁴⁷⁸ (“Unrecht und Gewalt”) had driven the Hamburgers away seems a little harsher than the evidence warrants, we can probably agree with him that the fault lay with local officials. Most likely, the statement of the customs officers can be taken at face value, and it was simply a question of bureaucracy which the burghers of Yarmouth regretted too late. It should also be borne in mind that Yarmouth’s trade in general had been in decline for some decades, as a result of depopulation, over-taxation and the silting up of the harbour, as the local population had repeatedly complained to the Crown.⁴⁷⁹ In any case, connecting this with the Vitalienbrüder takes an overactive imagination.

What effect the pirates had on Anglo-Hanseatic relations after 1401 must be deduced from direct references, and not from unprofitable speculation about their possible survival. The tantalising Frisian letter is a blind alley, and will remain so until further evidence comes to light. That it was almost immediately after the pirates’ suppression that Anglo-Hanseatic relations collapsed so badly appears to have been a coincidence. The brief slump (worst in 1404/5) in exports of woollens by Hansards from England to the Baltic⁴⁸⁰ appears to have been due to English aggression and the accompanying diplomatic difficulties. Of course, the unresolved issue of pre-1401 incidents involving the Vitalienbrüder continued to dog Anglo-Hanseatic relations, leading up to the presentation of Henry IV’s complaint at Dordrecht in late 1405.⁴⁸¹ but

⁴⁷⁶ Rymer, *Foedera*, Appendix C.5.

⁴⁷⁷ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 411.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

⁴⁷⁹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vols VII and VIII, *passim*.

⁴⁸⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 78.

⁴⁸¹ Nash, *The Hansa*, p. 106.

the ongoing English demands for reparations appear to have been the only major matter in which their influence was still felt.

CHAPTER V: *Internal divisions*

The Hanse was a loosely structured coalition, something more than an alliance but something less than a state. Its members, whether free Imperial cities (effectively independent) or beholden to local powers such as the Teutonic Order, had interests of their own, which were not always in perfect harmony. There were also different political factions within cities: this period saw bourgeois revolts against patrician authority in Cologne (1396) and Lübeck (1408). These tensions inevitably affected the foreign relations of the individual cities and of the Hanse as a whole, a phenomenon which has already been glanced at in preceding chapters but merits closer attention.

Less examined so far, however, is the degree to which England's internal and local politics might have affected Anglo-Hanseatic relations. England was, of course, a very different creature from the Hanse. How far anything which could be described as a nation state can be said to have existed in the Middle Ages is of course a moot point at best, and every polity that might have aspired to such a description possessed a patchwork of jurisdictions and a considerable level of local autonomy: but England was more unified and centralised than most. There is also the practical matter of evidence to consider: the great majority of local-level material even remotely relevant to Anglo-Hanseatic relations that has survived in England from this period is, naturally, concerned purely with customs and duties. However, we can glean a certain amount both from this material, and from the representations made by individual cities to the Crown concerning the differing interests of particular cities and broader areas. We should also not ignore the fact that this period saw not only a civil war, but the Tripartite Indenture of 1405. The Indenture may have represented wishful thinking on

the part of the rebels: but the fact that they could seriously propose the division of England into what would to all effects have been two separate realms is telling.

In this chapter, therefore, I shall examine the effect that internal rivalries in both England and the Hanse had on relations between the two, and in particular on violence at sea and reactions to it.

Within England

Disputes in national politics

English politics in this period were marked by violence. Disputes between Crown and nobles led to the Merciless Parliament of 1388, the deposition of Richard II in 1399, and the mostly Percy-led revolts over the period 1403-08. Even in time of peace, vehement disputations and bitter power struggles were more the rule than the exception. Naturally, these disputes and the atmosphere they generated affected the country's foreign relations, including with the Hanse.

The issue of reciprocity for the treatment of English merchants in Hanseatic territory had come to the government's attention in the last years of Edward III: a symptom of the increase in both the significance of mercantile interests in English politics, and contact with the Hansards, during the latter part of his reign.⁴⁸² There followed in 1377-78 the Four Points (*vide* Introduction), the basis for the program of reciprocity which England was to pursue in her Hanseatic relations for the next hundred

⁴⁸² Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 106.

years.⁴⁸³ This was a new development: before the 1370s, relations with the Hanse had not figured significantly in England's domestic politics.⁴⁸⁴ The reign of Richard II would see constant tinkering with the status of aliens and efforts to renegotiate the privileges of the Hansards in England: it is not unreasonable to conclude with Ephraim Lipson that this was connected with the factional strife that marred Richard's reign, and in particular the reliance of different noble factions on the support of various London guilds.⁴⁸⁵ Meanwhile, from the 1370s onwards, the power of urban mercantile oligarchies in the regions was being cemented by the granting of county status to cities: Bristol in 1373,⁴⁸⁶ York in 1396,⁴⁸⁷ Norwich in 1404.⁴⁸⁸

Richard had acceded at the age of ten. Nominally, he exercised all the powers of the Crown, with no formal regency: but in practice the first three years of his reign were dominated by a series of Councils, and by the Household. Two knights of the King's chamber, Sir Simon Burley and Sir Aubrey de Vere, received petitions, which did not even reach the Council without their approval.⁴⁸⁹ Throughout this time, the Commons attempted to assert some authority, demanding to know "who would be the king's councillors and governors of his person",⁴⁹⁰ and that Council and Household should work together, while trying to curb the Household's extravagance⁴⁹¹ and complaining about the cost of the ongoing, mostly low-level conflicts with Scotland and France. It was pressure from the Commons that brought the continuous cycle of Councils to an end at the beginning of 1380, and secured the promise of an inquiry into the Crown's

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁸⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 53.

⁴⁸⁵ Lipson, Ephraim, *An Introduction to the Economic History of England*, Vol. I (London, 1915), pp. 523-24.

⁴⁸⁶ *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, p. 560; Hilton, Rodney H., *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: essays in medieval social history* (London, 1985), p. 184.

⁴⁸⁷ *C.Ch.R.*, Vol. V., p. 354.

⁴⁸⁸ *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, p. 560.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004, 60 vols), Vol. 46, p. 726.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 726.

⁴⁹¹ A supervisor was appointed in April 1379 to this end.

finances (though if this inquiry was ever held, there is no evidence that it reported back). The Commons, in other words, though to some degree excluded from influence at the beginning of Richard's reign, fought back against that exclusion, not without success. That they secured the overturning of Richard's initial confirmation of the Hanseatic charter in 1378, and permitted it to be reconfirmed in 1380, after the aristocratic Councils had lost their grip on power, must be seen in the context of this reclamation of influence.

The Commons' next notable assertion of their power, in the "Wonderful Parliament" of 1386, came in distinctly different circumstances. The King's lavish generosity to his favourites, combined with continuing war taxation and little to show for it, had forged an unlikely community of interest between the Commons and the nobility, in particular Richard's uncle the Duke of Gloucester. One of the most prominent of Richard's favourites, Michael, Baron de la Pole – appointed Lord Chancellor in 1383 and created Earl of Suffolk in 1385 – in fact owed his position in part to the rise of the mercantile bourgeoisie: his father, Sir William de la Pole, had been a wool merchant and financier from Hull. However, Richard's and Suffolk's demands for more money threw those in the Commons who wished to restrain the King's financial profligacy into the arms of nobles who resented the rise of such new men and the lack of opportunity for glory in a war without large pitched battles. When, therefore, the Wonderful Parliament impeached Suffolk, secured the dismissal of the Lord Treasurer and the Keeper of the Privy Seal, and established a commission to examine the Crown's finances, it did so not in the teeth of the nobility as in 1376, but with considerable aristocratic support. This time, the commission actually met and sat: but it was largely aristocratic interests and powers that were in play. The Wonderful Parliament's successes did not belong to the Commons in the same way that the Good

Parliament's had. The Merciless Parliament, which would send six of the King's favourites to the block in 1388 as a result of the power struggle begun in 1386, was to a still greater degree led by nobles; and when the Commons ventured in a petition of January 1397 again to criticise the King's extravagance, the Lords, at Richard's angry urging, declared the petition treasonable. Its author, Thomas Haxey, was tried and convicted: only clerical privilege saved his life.⁴⁹² The King was, by this point, aware of the need to manage the Commons: the Parliament which condemned the Appellants in September 1397 elected as Speaker his retainer and key supporter Sir John Bussy, who had held the office twice before, and appears to have steered the House in accordance with Richard's wishes when necessary. Bussy was a sufficiently important prop to Richard's rule to be worth executing during Henry IV's coup in 1399.

Nevertheless, the merchant class continued to wield influence through the Commons and through direct lobbying throughout Richard's reign. The significance of mercantile interests becomes particularly apparent in the negotiations to restore relations following the Zwiyn incident of 1385. The English negotiators' principal concern (equal even with avoiding paying compensation as far as possible) was to secure reciprocal treatment of merchants.⁴⁹³ When, in 1394, Vitalienbrüder attacks on English shipping became increasingly common (see Chapter IV), the government responded by sending a clerk and a merchant to negotiate compensation with the Wendish-Pomeranian towns.⁴⁹⁴

However, although the threat of reprisals was used by Richard in belated response to the arrests of 1388, there is little evidence that they actually took place.⁴⁹⁵ Furthermore, his government frequently dithered over pursuing merchants' interests, whether in negotiations with the Hanse, in taking action on piracy, or in protecting local

⁴⁹² *O.D.N.B.* vol. 46, p. 732.

⁴⁹³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 66, 68; *HR I* (iii) 148.

⁴⁹⁴ *HR I* (iv) 182.

⁴⁹⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

franchises against the encroachments of the admirals.⁴⁹⁶ (When John Philpott, a prominent citizen of London, mounted an expedition at his own expense to suppress Scottish pirates in 1378, the King's Council – which Philpott denounced as “supine” – protested at his illegal unilateral action.⁴⁹⁷) It is worth noting that none of the major upheavals of Richard's reign before his deposition – the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the King's subsequent assumption of majority; his defeat and temporary imprisonment by the Lords Appellant in 1387; the near massacre of his favourites following the Merciless Parliament in 1388; or his revenge upon the Appellants in 1397 – can be shown to have had a direct effect on Anglo-Hanseatic relations. (The crisis spawned in 1385 was largely resolved in 1388: but, while the decision to dispatch an embassy to Prussia will have been taken by the Lords Appellant, it was a natural enough conclusion to the wrangling of the past three years: and the resultant treaty represented a greater climb-down for the Prussians than for England.) The most probable main reason for this is simply that neither Richard nor the nobility, nor indeed the rebels of 1381, took much personal interest in Hanseatic affairs. Those who did were able in this reign to make their voice heard in Parliament more loudly than ever before, and could certainly influence government, but were never going to control it.

The usurpation of Henry IV might have been expected to affect Anglo-Hanseatic relations. It occurred just after a deadline set by Richard, following which letters of marque were supposedly to be issued against Hanseatic shipping, principally over arrests in Stralsund in 1388;⁴⁹⁸ Henry had fought beside the Teutonic Knights and was considered pro-Prussian;⁴⁹⁹ a naval crisis had long been predicted owing to the decline

⁴⁹⁶ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, *passim*.

⁴⁹⁷ Thomas of Walsingham, *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Rolls Series, 1863), p. 213; Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, pp. 270-71.

⁴⁹⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

⁴⁹⁹ Hingeston, F. C. (ed.), *Royal and Historical Letters during the Reign of Henry the Fourth* (London, 1860 – 1965, 2 vols), Vol. I, Introduction (no pagination).

in the number of vessels usable in war available to the English Crown.⁵⁰⁰ Things did improve for Hanseatic England-farers in the first weeks of Henry's reign: one of his first actions was to set aside tunnage and poundage for Hansards, and the privileges of German merchants were confirmed at his first parliament, on 24th October 1399 – on condition of reciprocity and the opening of negotiations for compensation for past injuries to English merchants.⁵⁰¹

The one letter of marque issued by Henry (around Easter 1400)⁵⁰² which named Hanseatic vessels as legitimate targets seems to have had little effect: and his supposed closeness to the Prussians did nothing for Anglo-Prussian relations, which, after the very brief thaw mentioned above, declined rapidly until they reached the point of undeclared war in the 1402-05 crisis. It was Englishmen who initiated the violence (see Chapter I), but there had been intransigence on both sides. This had little to do with Henry's personality, and much more to do with the situation which Richard had left behind him. With naval power so long neglected, the Crown had little choice but to rely heavily on letter of marque vessels, whose captains frequently placed a liberal interpretation on such terms as "the King's enemies",⁵⁰³ while the extravagance which had characterised the previous reign meant that Henry, despite his personal wealth from the Lancaster and Bohun estates, was simply not rich enough to ignore the interests and prejudices of the mercantile class.⁵⁰⁴ This problem was compounded by the generous distribution of grants and annuities with which he had rewarded his supporters and bought up Richard's at the beginning of his reign; by his rash promises not to raise taxes

⁵⁰⁰ Hattendorf, John B., Knight, R. J. B., Pearsall, A. W. H., Rodger, Nicholas A. M., and Till, Geoffrey (volume eds); Rodger, Nicholas A. M., and Rose, Susan (section eds), *British Naval Documents 1204 – 1960: Part I: 1204 – 1485* (Scolar Press, 1993), p. 11; see also Chapter I and below.

⁵⁰¹ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. I, p. 57.

⁵⁰² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

⁵⁰³ Marsden, *Law and Custom of the Sea*, 119. The *Parliament Rolls* (Vol. VIII, *passim*) reveal that concerns over depletion of shipping continued into Henry's reign, and controversies over the jurisdiction of the admirals through to at least as late as 1410.

⁵⁰⁴ Lipson, *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 526.

or demand loans from the City, which proved impossible to keep; by the loss of revenues from his large Welsh estates when they were overrun by rebels in the early years of his reign; by the expensive dowries of his daughters Blanche and Philippa; and by a simple shortage of specie, eventually corrected by reducing the weight of the coinage in 1412.

It is notable that the “Unlearned Parliament”⁵⁰⁵ of 1404 granted the taxes Henry demanded only upon the Commons’ conditions: that two named men should serve as Treasurers of Wars, oversee the monies raised, and make sure that they were spent to the Commons’ satisfaction. (A further proposal to expropriate the temporalities of the Church was denied by the King, who depended heavily on the political support – and the personal friendship – of the Archbishop of Canterbury. On the other hand, Henry was not above reminding the Church of the threat of heresy when he wanted money. Lollardy, largely tolerated by Richard but persecuted under Henry and his devout son, was still a powerful force, and the Church knew that it was worth keeping the King on its side.) In 1406, Henry clashed with the Commons over their demands for guarantees of fiscal prudence, and declared in an angry echo of his predecessor that it was not for kings to account to their subjects: but he ended by accepting a list of articles governing his expenditure, and effectively ceding much power to a new, smaller Council, dominated by the Prince of Wales, which quickly moved to trim the expense of the Household. It was, interestingly, under this Council that the recent relaxation of hosting regulations on alien importers was first suspended, and then annulled – possibly a reflection of mercantile influence.⁵⁰⁶ Despite its successes in curbing expenditure, the

⁵⁰⁵ So called because lawyers were excluded.

⁵⁰⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 109-10. The hosting regulations were of limited relevance to Hansards.

King would die so deeply in debt that his executors at first refused to administer his will.⁵⁰⁷

Henry's attempts to make peace with the Prussians from 1403 were made more urgent by the Percy revolts and the Welsh war, but only insofar as domestic difficulties meant that his government could not spare the time or money for foreign wars. Neither the Percies nor Owain Glyndŵr had any known policy towards the Hanse. Furthermore, these conflicts played out largely in areas remote from the east coast, and therefore did not directly disrupt Hanseatic trade.

The dominant political fact of the following reign was not any domestic issue, but the rekindled war with France: at home, Henry V sat more securely on the throne than either of the last two monarchs. Domestic interests did continue to make representations on matters concerning relations with the Hanse and violence at sea, and to be heard. The protectionism espoused in 1419, when Parliament decreed that supplies for the army should be bought in England, and its pay raised by the export of wool to Normandy (taking advantage of the subsidy on wool granted to the King "for the defence of the realm" in 1415⁵⁰⁸), clearly resulted at least in part from upward pressure from such interests:⁵⁰⁹ this cannot have failed to affect foreign trade, including that with the Hanse, adversely. However, at the same time, the Crown was able to resist demands which threatened to cause violence directly – as when in 1416 Henry rejected the Commons' request that English fishermen be allowed to fish "anywhere and by any means", meaning Iceland, which was already a bone of contention with the Hanse.⁵¹⁰

More attention was paid to mercantile interests in this period than had ever hitherto been the case, and they were the most important factor in England's domestic

⁵⁰⁷ *O.D.N.B.*, Vol. 26, p. 485

⁵⁰⁸ *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, pp. 462-63.

⁵⁰⁹ Rich, E. E., "The Economic Policies of Governments: France and England", in *Cambridge Economic History, Volume III: Economic Organisation and Policies in the Middle Ages*, pp. 333, 337.

⁵¹⁰ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, p. 414.

politics affecting relations with the Hanse. It is clear that on occasion the Crown was able to resist them: but broadly, there is a pattern of placing the demands of the English mercantile class above those of the Hansards, even when the cost was high.

Local interests

A considerable amount has been written about the importance of regional interests in the politics of the Hanse in this period: rather less about the role of the same factor in England. Of course, English cities, counties, and ports did not have the same autonomy as the Hanse towns: but they did have distinct economic and other interests, which were not always in harmony. Sometimes they were in direct conflict, as when a charter granted to Yarmouth in the minority of Richard II forbade all trade within seven leagues outside the town, giving it a local monopoly – despite the fact that Kirkley, a trading port not even in the same county, lay within the limit. The charter was swiftly repealed when this anomaly was brought to the attention of Parliament.⁵¹¹

Writing on this subject, however, has had very little to say about the effects of these conflicting interests on relations with the Hanse. Although some modern historians, notably Stuart Jenks,⁵¹² have acknowledged that there is a subject here, none has addressed it in any great detail.

The main reason for this is the paucity of evidence. Local archives in England have preserved very little from this far back; there is nothing to give us any individual's personal perspective on these issues; there is hardly, in all the primary material, a single explicit reference to conflict between the interests of English regions in the context of

⁵¹¹ T.N.A. SC 8/19/931; SC 8/142/7060.

⁵¹² Jenks, *England, die Hanse, und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 474.

Anglo-Hanseatic affairs. Everything, therefore, must be deduced, from representations recorded in the Parliament Rolls, national customs records⁵¹³ preserved centrally, and other material of this kind.

On one occasion, a few decades after our period in 1456, two cities do appear to come into conflict over an issue affecting relations with the Hanse, and with the Crown of Scandinavia. Hull men who had been trading to Iceland and Finnmark⁵¹⁴ in defiance of royal orders were informed against by the Mayor of York and certain York merchants – and proceeded to take their revenge, according to the York men, by bringing “malicious indictments” against their accusers, aided and abetted by the Mayor and Sheriffs of Hull.⁵¹⁵ York, of course, was not a Customs headport, and its main outlet to the sea was Hull. It was, nevertheless, an active river port. There were Hanse merchants in York, and York merchants trading by sea to Hanse towns and elsewhere. However, it is hard to define this as an example of conflict between regional interests, given that no local interest specific to York appears to have been served by her Mayor and merchants’ involvement in this dispute. Similarly, the Bristol merchants who preferred Hanseatic trading partners to local ones when they visited London were pursuing not a rivalry with the merchants of London, but merely the more favourable terms the Hansards were able to offer.⁵¹⁶

For obvious reasons, it was the east coast ports which had the greatest interest in relations (friendly or otherwise) with the Hanse. It is true that the Hansards sailing in search of Bay salt or Rochellois wine entered the territory of West Country pirates, and in 1402 the *Michael* of Yarmouth (far out of its own way) was attacked “neere vnto

⁵¹³ These records deal with the raising of centrally organised and imposed customs in individual towns and regions, as opposed to specifically local customs, of which little record survives.

⁵¹⁴ A Norwegian county to the north of Bergen, hence constituting an encroachment on the preserves of Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer*.

⁵¹⁵ T.N.A. C1/17/111.

⁵¹⁶ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. 10.

Plimmouth” by “certaine of the Hans, of Rostok, and of Wismer”:⁵¹⁷ but such incidents were much less frequent than ones involving east coast ships nearer their own waters. (Interestingly, though not altogether surprisingly, the North-South divide appears to have had little effect on Anglo-Hanseatic affairs. The Northern knights who came to prominence under Henry IV, for instance, had little personal interest in relations with the Hanse and do not seem to have influenced them.)

Jenks has remarked⁵¹⁸ on the preponderance of east coast vessels in the fleet⁵¹⁹ which seized six Prussian ships in the Zwiyn on 12th May 1385. This, if at all relevant, has more to do with anti-Prussian feeling in these ports than with any rivalry within England – but it is worth asking how east coast ports came to dominate the fleet in the first place. If the incident had taken place in, say, 1285, one would have expected to find the (south coast) Cinque Ports dominant: and in 1385 they were not yet silted up, and their strategic significance should have been, thanks to the Hundred Years War, if anything greater than ever. Yet their decline, in terms of both naval activity and participation in national politics, was already well under way. Elisabeth Murray has analysed this decline, pointing out: that the Cinque Ports’ reliance on fishing meant that overseas trade there was largely dominated by aliens, leaving no real native mercantile class; that their vessels were for the most part too small for the demands of late medieval naval warfare; and that their indulgence in piracy made them a diplomatic inconvenience to the Crown.⁵²⁰ This last point is perhaps a contentious one. Toleration of piracy was not peculiar to the weaker governments of Richard II and Henry IV – it

⁵¹⁷ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II, p. 65; see Chapter IV.

⁵¹⁸ Jenks, *England, die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 493.

⁵¹⁹ Formed from the combined fleets of both Admiralties (Northern and Western).

⁵²⁰ Murray, *Cinque Ports*, pp. 207-14. See also Rodger, Nicholas A. M., “The Naval Service of the Cinque Ports”, in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 442 (1996). Rodger expands on Murray’s arguments, but his conclusions are substantially similar.

had been Edward III's practice whenever he could benefit from it,⁵²¹ and, had it not been for the other factors mentioned above, the piratical habits of the Cinque Ports would probably have done them no harm. Be that as it may, however, by 1385, they no longer dominated the English fleet.

East coast towns were not a bloc. They had individual relations with various Hanse towns and regions, which fluctuated across this period. The Hansards were aware of this: the Lübeck Hansetag of August 1396 wrote not only to Richard II but to the port of Lynn, protesting at the alleged issue of letters of marque to Lynn-based victims of the Vitalienbrüder.⁵²² Jenks goes further, attributing the deep trough in Hanseatic cloth exports via Boston in the years 1413-16 to the arrest of Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer* in Boston in 1411.⁵²³ The English assault on Bergen in October 1413⁵²⁴ may also be connected to this; but the slump had already begun, and there is no evidence that the assault was specifically a Bostonian action. If it was of largely or partly Bostonian inspiration, the fall-off in the woollen trade may have been more a cause than an effect of the attack. 1413/14 seems to have been a very bad year for this trade all round, notably in Yarmouth, but it was only in Boston that the slump lasted until 1416.⁵²⁵ Before 1411, Boston seems to have enjoyed generally good relations with the Hansards: it has been suggested⁵²⁶ that this was precisely because Bostonians had taken no interest in the Bergen trade. The majority of Boston's imports did come from Bergen, but were brought thence by Hansards, not Bostonians.⁵²⁷ Jenks also attributes the fall-off in Hull's Hanseatic trade after about 1415 to Prussian hostility, based principally on Hull

⁵²¹ Beardwood, *Alien Merchants*, p. 37; *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward III* (London, 1900, 16 vols), Vol. V.

⁵²² Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 520.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 78-79; *H.U.B.*, Vol. 4, nos 1,023-25.

⁵²⁴ Bruns, *Lübecker Bergenfahrer* (Berlin, 1900), p. 349 and nn.

⁵²⁵ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 79.

⁵²⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 85.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-84, from T.N.A. E122/7/17-24.

men's participation in anti-Prussian piracy in the previous reign.⁵²⁸ this may be slightly more interpretation than the facts will bear, but it is certainly true that Hull's trade declined, and was largely taken over by Lynn.

Jenks is similarly in danger of over-interpretation when he blames "injustice and force" for the collapse after about 1400 of trade between Hamburg and Great Yarmouth.⁵²⁹ though he is probably right to look at the role of Yarmouth customs officials.⁵³⁰ What he has neglected here, however, is the considerable body of evidence on the English side which suggests that Yarmouth was already a port in general decline in this period. Though described in 1385 as "a real frontier and strong town of war",⁵³¹ it was no longer of great naval significance.⁵³² and its increasingly plaintive appeals to the crown for release from fee-farming and other impositions over this period paint a bleak picture. In a petition which may be as early as 1377, it was described as "denuded and enfeebled, and... wasted" as a result of depopulation.⁵³³ In 1378, it was "desolate",⁵³⁴ in October 1386, we find it dubbed "weak, poor and wasted",⁵³⁵ in January 1397, the port complains of "poverty and depopulation",⁵³⁶ and "will be ruined without relief".⁵³⁷ By October 1399,

"the people of the same town have in great part left it, and
the houses of the said town are deserted and empty, with
the result that the said town, which is the frontier of the

⁵²⁸ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, pp. 93-94.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 411-12.

⁵³⁰ See p. 175.

⁵³¹ Saul, "Yarmouth", p. 106, n. 15.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵³³ T.N.A. SC 8/103/5136.

⁵³⁴ *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226 – 1516* (London, 1903-27, 6 vols), Vol. V, p. 255.

⁵³⁵ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 49.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁵³⁷ T.N.A. SC 8/113/5616.

whole country, is on the point of being utterly ruined and deserted...”⁵³⁸

Finally, in October 1407:

“the port of the same town is now so silted up with sand that ships can neither enter nor leave it with their cargoes... a large part of the people who used to reside in the same town have moved out of it and now live elsewhere, and some of them have moved their houses and residences out of the said town, and built or removed them elsewhere... And if a remedy is not very rapidly provided for this, all the present inhabitants of the same town will be obliged, out of veritable necessity and poverty, to move out of the said town, which will ultimately result in the ruin of the same town and great danger to all the country thereabouts should an enemy invasion occur, which God forbid.”⁵³⁹

Insofar as there is any focus on trade in these complaints, it is not the woollen trade, in which Yarmouth was a relatively minor player, but that in herring. They include at no point any mention of violence or piracy, save the *potential* assaults the French or other enemies might make if they perceive the weakness of the port. (This is not to say that there are no complaints of violence involving Yarmouth men on one side or the other.

⁵³⁸ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 60.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

There are several: but no contemporary ever connected them with the port's decline.) Customs records suggest a steep decline in the late 1380s particularly: the revenues recorded by the Collectors of Customs and Subsidy fell from £436 16s. 3¼d. in 1385/6 to £123 19s. 9¼d. in 1387/8, and £77 8s. 8¼d. in 1388/9.⁵⁴⁰

Yarmouth's economic woes went much deeper than the incursions of the Vitalienbrüder or the crises of 1385-88 and 1402-05, and were too localised to have had much effect on those events. That trade with Hamburg was especially affected, resulting in the withdrawal of Hamburg merchants from Yarmouth at the beginning of the fifteenth century, has less to do with any factors specific to Hamburg than with the fact that, as a glance at Yarmouth's surviving tunnage and poundage accounts⁵⁴¹ will show, Hamburgers did far more business there than any other aliens. Between 20th March and 26th December 1388, seven out of twelve Hanseatic ships recorded as either arriving at or leaving Yarmouth hailed from Hamburg, and they dealt in larger and more valuable cargoes than those from other cities.⁵⁴²

Although the ability of other ports to take on the trade Yarmouth lost probably helped hasten this decline at least slightly, one receives small sense of competition from the sources; likewise when Hull's Baltic cloth exports moved to Lynn.⁵⁴³ The English ports, though conscious of their own interests, seldom appear aware of any direct competition between them, save during the experiment with home staples.⁵⁴⁴ Nevertheless, they did have *different* interests. Hull, for instance, despite its *Kontor* and the prominence of its merchants among those whose goods were seized in 1385⁵⁴⁵ and

⁵⁴⁰ T.N.A. E122/149/18-19.

⁵⁴¹ In particular T.N.A. E122/149/22; see also Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 90.

⁵⁴² Ibid. Lloyd's analysis of these accounts has been very useful to me.

⁵⁴³ Hull had complained of decline around 1377, asserting that many burgesses were leaving as a result of the cost of defence and the seizure of ships for the navy, but seems to have escaped Lynn's fate: T.N.A. SC 8/120/5952. Indeed, the tunnage and poundage revenues collected in Hull rose sharply over the course of the 1390s: T.N.A. E122/59/15-16; E122/158/2; E122/159/11.

⁵⁴⁴ McKisack, May, *The Fourteenth Century 1307 – 1399* (Oxford, 1959), p. 352.

⁵⁴⁵ *HR I* (iii) no. 404.

in subsequent arrests, was much less dependent on Hanseatic trade than Boston, Lynn, or Yarmouth, as it exported a considerable amount of cloth to Gascony; slightly over half its non-wine imports did come from the Baltic, but the volume which did not was still considerable.⁵⁴⁶

If, therefore, the Hansards were right in thinking that Hull men were among the most prolific pirates, it might have been because they had less to lose. Whether this was in fact the case is harder to say. John Tutbury and William Terry did come from Hull, but Lynn's John Brandon, Newcastle's William Jonesson, and Yarmouth's Hugh atte Fen were equally notorious. In the ten cases of violence from 1404 in which the aggressors are identified in the *Hanserecesse*, only one sailed from Hull, as opposed to five from Newcastle.⁵⁴⁷ None of these, however, appears to have been a professional pirate on the scale of Harry Paye, Mark Mixtow, and John Hawley in the West Country, who are seldom heard of in any other capacity at sea.

Scarborough, on the other hand, was principally a fishing port. While Hansards did import some Baltic goods there, their significance seems to have been limited, and if Scarborough had a complaint against the Hansards it would have been during the disputes over Icelandic fishing grounds in the early fifteenth century. As in the case of Hull – whose competition may have been what lured Hanse merchants away from Scarborough in the first place – this may be why Scarborough men were very ready to attack Hanseatic shipping, as a considerable number of complaints in the printed calendars (*vide* also Chapter I) indicate.⁵⁴⁸

In Lynn, meanwhile, locals had an unusually high share of the import trade as early as 1390/1: but it remained dominated by aliens, especially Prussians, although

⁵⁴⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 88-89; T.N.A. E122/159/11.

⁵⁴⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 113.

⁵⁴⁸ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 275; Childs, Wendy R., "Mercantile Scarborough", in Crouch, D., and Pearson, T. (eds), *Medieval Scarborough: Studies in Trade and Civil Life* (Scarborough, 2001), pp. 15, 19.

there was also an active group from Bremen. Even the native share was dominated by Baltic goods.⁵⁴⁹ Her exports to Gascony and Calais were growing in the early 1390s, but the surviving customs accounts⁵⁵⁰ appear strongly to support the view that Lynn, though her merchants may have taken a more active role earlier than Boston's or Yarmouth's, was just as dependent on the Baltic trade.

In terms of exports, although wool, both raw and woven, was certainly England's most important product in this period, it is possible that not enough attention has been given to differences in local production: T. R. Adams has argued persuasively that farmers and other producers in the hinterlands of the port towns deliberately over-produced for the sake of the foreign market, and it is certainly true that England was a major grain exporter in this period: it is possible that variations in what the hinterland produced would have resulted in differing export interests between towns.⁵⁵¹ Adams cites the large quantities of grain, and other agricultural products such as calfskins, exported through Yarmouth by both local and Low Country merchants, pointing out that the river systems of East Anglia made transport easy and Yarmouth the natural point of exit for much of the produce of the region. Boston, too, was a major port of exit for wheat as well as for woollens, probably serving Lincolnshire in the same way that Yarmouth served East Anglia.⁵⁵² However, Londoners travelling to Bordeaux to buy wine took a variety of goods with them to sell, drawn from many parts – grain and fish, both from East Anglia and re-exports originally from the Baltic; tin from Cornwall; and, above all, the near ubiquitous woollen cloth.⁵⁵³ Of 37 ships exporting wool and

⁵⁴⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 90-91; T.N.A. E122/93/31; E122/94/12.

⁵⁵⁰ Notably those cited above, and T.N.A. E122/94/5, 8; E122/95/12.

⁵⁵¹ Adams, Terence R., "Aliens, Agriculturalists and Entrepreneurs: Identifying the Market-Makers in a Norfolk Port from the Water-Bailiffs' Accounts, 1400-60", in Clayton, Dorothy J., Davies, Richard G., and McNiven, Peter (eds), *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 140-42.

⁵⁵² Rigby, *Overseas Trade*, pp. 58-66 (T.N.A. E122/7/19).

⁵⁵³ James, *Wine Trade*, pp. 167-68.

woolfells from Boston in 1377-78, only four were local and ten alien: the remaining 23 came from other English ports, mostly nearby but including one from Newcastle.⁵⁵⁴ Hansards in 1420-21 exported coverlets from York through London.⁵⁵⁵ It appears that the movement of goods within and out of England was quite fluid. Regional variations in production, while they certainly affected what was exported from which ports, did not necessarily dictate it; and it is not possible to demonstrate that contemporaries were conscious of any difference in interests this may have produced.

The biggest regional interest of all might be said to be London. Although severely depleted by the plagues of the fourteenth century, and still smaller than, for instance, any of the major cities of Northern Italy, London in this period was probably more populous than all England's other ports put together;⁵⁵⁶ was in contact with Southern as well as Northern Europe, Venetian state galleys being regular visitors from the 1390s onwards;⁵⁵⁷ was the seat of the Hanse's principal English *Kontor*, the Steelyard; and also had the advantage of being the principal seat of government. For these reasons, London's mercantile class was effectively a faction in national politics. Its interests, and the use of the guilds by noble factions, have already been considered above: but it is worth remarking that its significance was apparently recognised by Hansards. In June 1378, while waiting for the reconfirmation of their charter by the new King (Hanseatic privileges in England having been suspended by decision of Parliament), the consuls of Danzig and Stralsund thought it worth their while to write to the Lord Mayor of London "desiring the City to use its good offices with the King to secure better treatment".⁵⁵⁸ The letter did them no good, but it is certainly interesting

⁵⁵⁴ T.N.A. E122/7/13.

⁵⁵⁵ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 308.

⁵⁵⁶ McKisack, *Fourteenth Century*, pp. 378-79.

⁵⁵⁷ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 312.

⁵⁵⁸ Sharpe, R. R. (ed.), *Calendar of Letter Books Preserved in the Archives of the City of London* (London, 1899 – 1912, 11 vols), Book H, p. 101.

that they wrote it. Ten years later, when, even as relations with Prussia were being restored, a crisis had arisen over arrests in Stralsund and counter-arrests in London, Richard gave a writ ordering the release of merchants and goods: but “because this writ did not seem sufficient to the Mayor and Aldermen, the merchants were told to obtain another writ”.⁵⁵⁹ London, and the mercantile class, were flexing their political muscles.

Although Hansards did occasionally visit south coast ports – principally Southampton⁵⁶⁰ - it was on the east coast that their presence was important. How far this affected local politics is very hard to gauge. While it is possible that men sailing from ports which were less dependent on Hanseatic trade were readier to engage in violence against the Hansards, this picture is at best incomplete, and such evidence as we do possess by no means invariably supports it. Nor do the ports, even those which do appear to have competed for Hanseatic and other custom, show any real sense that their interests were in conflict; and there is no case in which the interests of a city or region other than London can be shown to have directly influenced national policy (insofar as such existed) toward the Hanse. This is in contrast with the Hansetags, whose attitude to England and other foreign powers was frequently swayed by regional interest groups: let us, therefore, now proceed to examine the internal divisions of the Hanse.

Within the Hanse

Differences between regions

⁵⁵⁹ Thomas, A. H. (ed.), *Calendar of Select Pleas and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, 1381 – 1412* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 144.

⁵⁶⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 95-96.

Before the second half of the fourteenth century, although Hanse towns had always had interests of their own, this does not appear to have caused much tension. As Western Europeans (including fellow Hansards) expanded into the Baltic, however, the situation began to change, and fast-growing Danzig in particular to buck against this new competition.⁵⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Duchy of Mecklenburg's disputes with the Danish Crown (see Chapter IV) were already beginning to cause trouble. After 1375, this created a direct conflict of interest between Mecklenburg's Hanse towns and the rest of the league: the Hanse as a body, while it had its own differences from Queen Margaret,⁵⁶² did not want to antagonise her. Moreover, Hanse ships were frequently victims of the piracy which these disputes were already fostering: and it is possible that, even so long before the Vitalienbrüder proper came into being, the pirates were already based at Hanse ports in Mecklenburg. At the Hansetag held in June 1377, largely to address this problem, the Mecklenburgers were excused attendance.⁵⁶³ This exemption constituted, simultaneously, both an acknowledgement of their separate interests, and a failure to address the issues they raised. (At this point, the activities of the Mecklenburg pirates had no discernible effect on relations with England: their significance in that context, as detailed in the previous chapter, dates to after 1393/4.)

The crisis which erupted following the Zwiyn incident was first and foremost an Anglo-Prussian, not Anglo-Hanseatic, conflict, and was perceived as such on both sides. The Prussian towns called a Prussian diet to respond to it, and arrested English goods in Elbing and Danzig, before consulting with their fellow Hansards. The English government initially reacted by arresting Hanseatic goods indiscriminately, but soon released non-Prussian goods, and rejected appeals from the Commons to suspend

⁵⁶¹ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶² Bjork, "Piracy", pp. 50-51.

⁵⁶³ *HR* II (i) 150.

Hanseatic privileges.⁵⁶⁴ English merchants withdrawn from Danzig (a process which had begun as a result of Prussian hostility *before* the incident⁵⁶⁵) were allowed to settle in Stralsund.⁵⁶⁶ (The short-lived arrest of English goods there in 1388 and counter-arrest in England – see above – appear to have been unrelated to the Anglo-Prussian crisis.) Richard II, seeking to bridge the divide, wrote to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order;⁵⁶⁷ and of the three ambassadors who were sent to England in response, two represented the Order and one the diet of Prussian towns.⁵⁶⁸ All parties were behaving as if Prussia – not the individual towns, nor the Hanse, nor even the Prussian diet, but Prussia as a proto-state effectively ruled by the Order – was the polity with which England must negotiate: but it was, in the end, the economic interests of Danzig, Prussia’s largest port, which forced reconciliation.⁵⁶⁹ (Danzig, like most Prussian and Livonian Hanse towns, *was* under the rule of the Order, but in practice exercised a certain if inconsistent degree of autonomy.)

Later, Henry IV at his first parliament referred to the Grand Master as “the master of the land of Prussia”, lumping him in with the governors of Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, and Greifswald, as a leader among the Hansards.⁵⁷⁰ In fact, at this stage the Knights were operating in concert with the towns: it was the Grand Master who had written to inform Richard of the cancellation of the Treaty of Marienburg, but the decision had been taken by a Prussian Städtetag.⁵⁷¹ Nor was it uncommon for communications to be sent jointly by the Grand Master and the “delegates and

⁵⁶⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 63-64; T.N.A. SC 8/21/1009.

⁵⁶⁵ *HR I* (iii) 192.

⁵⁶⁶ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 74.

⁵⁶⁷ *HR I* (iii) 192.

⁵⁶⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁶⁹ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 108.

⁵⁷⁰ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. I, p. 57.

⁵⁷¹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 521.

counsellors of Prucia”.⁵⁷² A burgher of Thorn could even serve as one of the Grand Master’s envoys.⁵⁷³

No other Hanseatic region in this period displays a sense of identity comparable with Prussia’s; this is probably because the Teutonic Knights were unique. “The Wendish towns” are frequently referred to by secondary historians as if they operated as some kind of bloc, but this is extremely dubious. It is true that the Wendland-Pomeranian circle formed the heart of the Hanse, and that, if any one city could be called the league’s dominant member, it would be Wendish Lübeck: but it is not possible to point to a single issue in this period in which the major Wendish towns cleaved unanimously to a position distinct from the rest of the Hanse. Wendland had no unified political identity: indeed, since Mecklenburg was Wendish, there was throughout the 1380s and much of the ’90s a direct conflict between the interests of two Wendish Hanse towns (Rostock and Wismar, subject to the Duchy) and the rest.

The only sense in which there was a regional identity at work here is that towns west of Prussia and east of the Rhineland – even including such economic powers as Hamburg – seem to have looked more readily to Lübeck for leadership than did those further afield. This group, however, is at its broadest far larger than the Wendland-Pomeranian circle, and very ill defined – while in its narrowest manifestations it appears to have consisted essentially of only Lübeck and Hamburg.⁵⁷⁴ This group is certainly not identical with the list of towns using “Lübeck law”: these included towns as far east as Hapsal (modern Haapsalu in Estonia), while Hamburg had its own lawcode.⁵⁷⁵ Nor did the group’s existence prevent Rostock and Wismar from placing the Duchy’s interests ahead of the Hanse’s throughout the war with Denmark. There were enough

⁵⁷² *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 1.

⁵⁷³ *HR I* (iii) 198.

⁵⁷⁴ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 115.

⁵⁷⁵ Schildhauer, Johannes, *The Hansa: History and Culture* (Dorchester, 1988), p. 213.

occasions when this group *did* roughly correspond to the Wendland-Pomeranian circle for the term “Wendish towns” to be useful as a term of convenience, and I have not eschewed it: but it should be used advisedly.

In the aftermath of the war, Prussia again acted as a unit in striking against the Vitalienbrüder on Gotland in 1398, although the Knights had to negotiate the participation of the Prussian Hanse towns.⁵⁷⁶ When eventually the entire Hanse agreed to cooperate, it was only after holding an extraordinary Hansetag in Copenhagen, and agreeing the participation of the newly unified Scandinavian monarchy in the expedition as well.⁵⁷⁷ and when the pirates were finally suppressed, it was by the efforts of Lübeck and Hamburg.

We have seen above, and in Chapter I, that it was again specifically Anglo-Prussian relations which declined from 1398 and particularly after 1400: it was only when the English had taken to indiscriminate piracy from 1402 that the rest of the Hanse took an interest in the quarrel.⁵⁷⁸ Similarly, it was once again at least partly Danzig’s interests which eventually enforced reconciliation: the Prussian towns could undermine any action against English merchants by unilaterally disregarding it, as they had previously accused others (particularly in the Low Countries) of doing.⁵⁷⁹

The English themselves exploited inter-regional divisions in the Hanse in the negotiations of 1405, by addressing Prussian-Livonian complaints first while ignoring the grievances of the rest of the Hanse.⁵⁸⁰ (These regions had borne the worst of recent English piracy, although in earlier years the hardest hit towns had been Hamburg and Bremen.⁵⁸¹) Already, at the Hansetags held in October 1404 at Marienburg, and

⁵⁷⁶ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 108.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

⁵⁷⁸ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 110.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵⁸⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 120.

⁵⁸¹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 525.

February 1405 at Lübeck, the Lübeckers had been anxious about the risk that the Prussian towns would reach their own deal with England.⁵⁸² The English stratagem did not lead immediately to agreement, although actual violence, which had already fallen off, did not revive. In 1407, the English took the opposite approach, concluding agreements with Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Stralsund, and Greifswald while the claims advanced by the Prussians were discussed.⁵⁸³ (Towards the end of our period and after it, as the North Sea herring fisheries began to eclipse those of the Baltic, and the English to concentrate their commercial activity in the Low Countries, the western and Rhenish towns grew more dependent on English trade, and took a pro-English attitude opposite to that espoused further east. Cologne and its satellites opposed the treaty, unfavourable to England, procured by Lübeck with Hamburg and Prussian support in 1474.⁵⁸⁴)

A considerable factor both in first slowing up negotiations on the Prussian side, and in eventually compelling Prussia to come to terms with England, was the divided nature of Prussia's internal politics: principally the conflict between the interests of the towns and of the Knights, but also divisions between those of Danzig and the other towns. Having considered inter-regional differences within the Hanse, we should now move on to the *intra*-regional.

Disputes within regions

The role of non-Hanseatic German magnates and powers whose jurisdiction overlapped with the Hanse's – in particular, the Teutonic Order – has already been

⁵⁸² Ibid., p. 530.

⁵⁸³ Nash, *The Hansa*, pp. 159-60.

⁵⁸⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 171, 371.

looked at in Chapter III (and the involvement of the Duchy of Mecklenburg with the Vitalienbrüder in Chapter IV). However, these powers are inseparable from the internal politics of the Hanse: in particular, intra-regional disputes (within Prussia, say) more often involved non-Hanseatic polities than being simply disagreements between towns. This section is therefore a necessary one, and I shall try to avoid repeating myself more than is needful.

Since Hanseatic “regions” other than Prussia were hazily defined and had little tangible political existence, it is to be expected that Prussia will loom large in this section. The penetration of English, Dutch, and other western merchants into the Baltic in the latter half of the fourteenth century provided the Baltic Hanse towns, particularly Danzig, with both custom and competition. Meanwhile, 1386 saw the dynastic union of Poland and Lithuania, creating a formidable land-based rival for the Teutonic Order. Having separate primary concerns, the Order and the towns had frequently separate interests. At the 1402 Prussian Städtetag, the Knights opposed demands that English goods should be confiscated and the English banned from inland towns.⁵⁸⁵ it is arguable that this policy proved to be in the towns’ interests in the long run, as English trade was of considerable value to them, but the Order was more concerned with its own good relations with Henry. Heinrich von Plauen, Grand Master of the Order 1410-13, even helped English merchants to consolidate their presence in Prussia, so as to curb the power of Danzig and punish those towns which had sided with the Poles in the recent war.⁵⁸⁶ (The war had many effects counter to the towns’ interests, including the steep inflation which occurred across Prussia from around 1410.⁵⁸⁷) But even the towns had variant interests: when Danzig succeeded in persuading the Hansetag to prohibit the trade in English cloth and the export of Baltic goods to England in March 1405, other

⁵⁸⁵ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, p. 530.

⁵⁸⁶ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 111.

⁵⁸⁷ Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 133.

Prussian towns were among those which flouted the ban.⁵⁸⁸ The English were aware of Prussia's internal divisions and able to exploit them, as when in 1418 Henry V protested about Danzig's stance, not to the city or the Hanse, but to the Grand Master, Michael Kuchmeister (much less pro-English than von Plauen).

The principal division within the Wendish-Pomeranian region has already been addressed in Chapter IV. Differences in policy between the towns – e.g. Lübeck's intervention to obtain an extension for English merchants in compensating piracy victims in Greifswald in 1418⁵⁸⁹ – seem generally to have been relatively trivial. Certainly there were, apart from the strained position of Rostock and Wismar, no abiding interests provoking conflict in this region. There were, however, conflicts *within* Wendland's cities: Lübeck's patriciate was even temporarily overthrown in this period: and these are worth examining.

The internal politics of the towns

The forms of government in Hanse towns were many and various. Imperial free cities, such as Lübeck, Hamburg, Bremen, and Cologne, were effectively self-governing, although the system varied from one city to the next; Danzig and other Prussian towns were subject to the Teutonic Order – as late as 1411, Danzig city councillors were beheaded after calling for the city to offer its allegiance instead to the Jagiełło monarchy of Poland-Lithuania.⁵⁹⁰ Each city had its own internal politics.

Apart from what happened in Danzig – which was really a reflection of Prussia's broader internal conflicts – the largest single upheaval within a Hanseatic city in this

⁵⁸⁸ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 109.

⁵⁸⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 128.

⁵⁹⁰ Halecki, Oscar, *History of Poland* (London, 1978).

period was the bourgeois revolution in Lübeck in 1408, which lasted for eight years. (Cologne had seen a similar revolt in 1396, but had few direct dealings with the English at this time.) There had already been unsuccessful risings against the patrician oligarchy in Lübeck in 1380 and 1384: though the prominence of butchers, who had little interest in overseas trade, suggests that such trade was not a major consideration in these earlier revolts.⁵⁹¹ (Nor, of course, can English piracy have been an issue in the 1380s, as it was only later that Lübeckers became regular victims.) Dollinger argues that the principal factor at work was the damage done to the city's finances by the *Kaperkrieg* which had already begun between Denmark and Mecklenburg (combined with the cost of constructing the Elbe-Trave canal).

The early revolts were followed by the imposition on Lübeck's guilds of an oath of obedience to the Council: but in 1403, this was rescinded in return for the raising of a new tax.⁵⁹² By this point, after years of local Baltic piracy, English violence was becoming a menace to Wendish shipping, and it is likely to have been a significant element in forcing this measure on the city. Nevertheless, the guilds were not satisfied, and in 1408 proceeded to set up their own Council in opposition to the patriciate, and effectively take over its power.⁵⁹³ (It is worth pointing out that the decades following the Black Death in 1347-50 had seen the importance of the mercantile class rise all over Europe, making it necessary for governments everywhere to pander to bourgeois interests in this period:⁵⁹⁴ although, of course, Hanse towns had depended more heavily on trade, and for longer, than most other polities outside Italy.)

It is difficult, however, to discern any effect that this revolt may have had on relations with England. Neither 1408 nor 1416 saw any dramatic shift in Lübeck's

⁵⁹¹ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 286.

⁵⁹² Ibid., p. 286.

⁵⁹³ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 93.

⁵⁹⁴ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 96.

attitude to the English or their maritime activities, violent or otherwise. These attitudes did fluctuate, of course, as they did right across the period: and, given Lübeck's dominant position, they must have affected English relations with the Hanse as a whole: but there is nothing to distinguish the period of bourgeois dominance from the patriciate in this respect.

One of the recurring questions in Hanseatic studies is: could the Hanse ever have become something more like a unified state comparable to England? On the above evidence, the answer for this period, at least, is surely no. While cities whose regional interests (or those of their overlords) conflicted with those of the Hanse were not prepared to leave the league, they were quite consistently prepared to pursue their local interests at the Hanse's expense. The practical authority of Hansetags and Städtetags was dependent on the willingness of the towns to abide by their decisions, nor was there any constitutional agreement saying that it should be otherwise. When such competing powers as the Duchy of Mecklenburg or the Teutonic Order *were* challenged by the Hanse towns under their control, it was not in defence of the institutional interests of the Hanse: rather, it was in pursuit either of the interests of the particular towns, or of classes within them. The Prussian-Livonian towns in particular, while they might place local (or even, on occasion, Polish) identities ahead of Prussian ones, were certainly Prussians before they were Hansards.

It is to be expected that England, already a state in this period, should present a very different picture, and it does. Factionalism outside London seems to have had very little effect on maritime affairs; the pursuit of local interests was generally a local matter, and no serious effect from regional rivalries can be discerned. The picture is, of

course, very far from complete, and the shortage of evidence is to be deplored: but one may wonder whether a fuller picture would not be otherwise substantially the same.

CHAPTER VI: *The role of the law and the courts*

At the best of times there was frequent confusion over jurisdiction in this period. In the case of international incidents, this was exacerbated, and diplomatic routes were generally preferred to legal ones for pursuing alleged pirates abroad. It is also true that hardly any surviving court records of this period relate to maritime matters with any international application. However, legal solutions (or attempted solutions) were applied to this problem. Legislation was passed, court cases are mentioned in diplomatic and other records, and officers of the law were employed against alleged pirates. The scarcity of the evidence, and the lack of a defined crime of piracy in this era, make this a difficult area to examine, but it is one which remains relevant.

In the Hanse towns

The courts

The Hansards had played a leading role in developing a system of maritime law within their sphere of influence.⁵⁹⁵ Lübeck law may not have been quite universal, but it was copied in Scandinavia and used in the Hanseatic *Kontors* of Bergen and Novgorod, as well as being the working system resorted to when the Hanseatic diets required a common legal framework.⁵⁹⁶ (Hanseatic statutes appear to have been incorporated into

⁵⁹⁵ Meier, *Seafarers*, p. 125; Schildhauer, *The Hansa*, p. 213; Nash, *The Hansa*, pp. 61, 97.

⁵⁹⁶ Nash, *The Hansa*, p. 97.

local law, at Lübeck itself and elsewhere.⁵⁹⁷) The Visby Sea Law which operated in tandem with it in much of Northern Europe⁵⁹⁸ was the result of combining elements of the Lübeck and Amsterdam codes with the Laws of Oléron.⁵⁹⁹ Neither code, however, makes any provision for dealing with piracy in any version surviving from before the sixteenth century.⁶⁰⁰

Civil disputes relating to maritime affairs in the Hanse towns were almost invariably brought before the town councils, not the lower civil courts, with the council of Lübeck functioning as a court of appeal for other towns governed by Lübeck law.⁶⁰¹ (In the absence of a framework for the criminal prosecution of piracy, civil disputes were what it tended to generate: this issue is addressed below.) Disagreements over jurisdiction tend to concern the applicability of law codes rather than the competence of courts. Edda Frankot cites several cases, in which the parties argued for different codes: in one, involving the seizure of a ship in Stralsund in 1483, the plaintiff sought the application of Visby Sea Law but the defendant successfully argued for Lübeck law: but none involves any dispute over which court should hear the case.⁶⁰²

These, however, were disputes between Hansards. I have found no direct evidence, in surviving *Kämmereirechnungen*⁶⁰³ or elsewhere, of the court systems of the Hanse towns being used in relation to violence at sea between Hansards and English, by either side. Nor is there evidence that any Hanse town ever granted English merchants, collectively or individually, the right of recourse to Hanseatic courts, in either civil or criminal affairs.

⁵⁹⁷ Frankot, Edda, “Medieval Maritime Law from Oléron to Wisby: Jurisdictions in the Law of the Sea”, in Pan-Montojo, Juan, and Pedersen, Frederik (eds), *Communities in European History: representations, jurisdictions, conflicts* (Pisa, 2007), p. 159.

⁵⁹⁸ Ebel, Wilhelm, *Lübisches Recht in Ostseeraum* (Cologne, 1967), pp. 28-29.

⁵⁹⁹ Nash, *The Hansa*, p. 61.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

⁶⁰¹ Frankot, “Medieval Maritime Law”, p. 164.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁶⁰³ *HR*, *passim*.

The role of the legal system

That the English were not granted a right of recourse to Hanseatic courts is hardly surprising, given how jealously their privileges in Hanse towns were limited. It is possible that the recovery of goods arrested following the Zwijn incident involved some kind of legal process in the Prussian towns, in addition to the well documented diplomatic efforts.⁶⁰⁴ There must have been some mechanism for determining how, after three years, reparations were to be made for perishable goods, and how the cost was to be apportioned. The King's ambassadors were instructed

“to take security from... those lieges who refuse to contribute to the cost of suing for and recovering the goods, and from the rest that they will contribute their proportion of such costs”.⁶⁰⁵

However, this seems unlikely to refer to any legal proceedings in Prussia, even if such did take place. There is no indication that the expenses referred to have been incurred in Prussia, and the reference is probably simply to the cost of repeated embassies. Although trade bans, residency restrictions, and the like, do in their way constitute legal matters, there is no surviving reference to judicial involvement. When English merchants were arrested or expelled, or their goods confiscated, no details survive of exactly what they experienced. Nor is it apparent under whose immediate authority the orders of Städtetags, Grand Masters, and other higher authorities, were carried out.

⁶⁰⁴ See Chapters I and VII.

⁶⁰⁵ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 453.

Only occasional glimmers appear of individual experience, as when four merchants who had been imprisoned “at a town of the Hanse” and “refus[ed]... their right of fellowship of merchants by the Burgomaster and Council of Dantzic”⁶⁰⁶ appealed to Parliament for action to right their grievances (some time between 1407 and 1424). The precise role of the Danzig authorities in denying them their “right of fellowship” (presumably, their right to form a Kontor-like association under their own alderman, as recognised by Henry IV in 1404⁶⁰⁷ – although this decision would have affected far more than these four) is obscure. Had they appealed to the authorities to overturn some lower-level refusal, or was it the Council itself which had denied them in the first place? By this time it had become clear that, past treaties notwithstanding, the position of English merchants in Hanse towns was too complex to be governed by a single legal instrument: and even basic issues, such as the “right of fellowship”, were ill defined.⁶⁰⁸

Laws, indeed, were in short supply. Both England and the Hanse lacked a legally defined crime of piracy: the declaration of the Hansetag that those who harboured pirates were equally guilty signified the intent to pursue them through military rather than judicial means.⁶⁰⁹ Merchants like those mentioned above, who had suffered – whether at the hands of the authorities or of “malefactors” – in the Hanse towns, sought recourse to English rather than Hanseatic justice. For example, following the alleged spoliation of John Brandon and Thomas Cok by Mercnard Stenehorst, Bertram Fanhalter and others,⁶¹⁰ six commissioners were instructed:

⁶⁰⁶ T.N.A. C1/4/196.

⁶⁰⁷ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 394.

⁶⁰⁸ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 74.

⁶⁰⁹ Bjork, “Piracy”, p. 39.

⁶¹⁰ See Chapters II and IV.

“by jury of the counties of Lincoln and Norfolk to ascertain the names of all such persons as with the said Mercnard and Bertram have done these things, and the names of those persons at Boston, Lenne and Great Yarmouth and elsewhere in the said counties into whose hands the goods and merchandise have come, arresting the said Mercnard and Bertram and the goods aforesaid until further order.”⁶¹¹

When a Lynn skipper in Bergen was prevented from sailing for Wismar in 1409, his engagers sued the Hanseatic Bergen-farers – in Lynn.⁶¹² When Hugh de Wythom’s vessel *Gabriel* was seized “in the parts of Prussia” by “certain people of the town of Campe”, to whom his representatives had to “[make] fine... for its delivery” – following which she was wrecked on the way home – it was the justices and bailiffs of Boston who were instructed, following de Wythom’s appeal to the King, to see restitution made.⁶¹³

Of course, the courts in Hamburg condemned a large number of pirates who had counted Englishmen among their victims in the middle of this period: the two groups of captured Vitalienbrüder executed in October 1400 and the spring of 1401.⁶¹⁴ This was the conclusion of an effective war against the pirates, and the legal process was the merest formality. It was the cumulative effect of the pirates’ behaviour, and complaints about them from many other sources besides England, rather than specific offences, which had led to this point. Indeed, as has been mentioned,⁶¹⁵ the English seem to have

⁶¹¹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, pp. 309-10.

⁶¹² *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. IV, pp. 152-53; Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 138.

⁶¹³ *C.P.R. Henry V*, Vol. II, p. 205; T.N.A. SC 8/164/8169.

⁶¹⁴ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, pp. 114-16.

⁶¹⁵ See Chapter IV.

been unaware of their suppression as late as 1405. Throughout and beyond the whole Vitalienbrüder episode, their responses to the pirates' attacks had been diplomatic.

The 1405 complaint followed a royal proclamation, to the effect that:

“all liege subjects of the king who feel themselves aggrieved by them of Prucia or of the hanse or their allies, shall... be with all speed before the king and council at Westminster to give information to his ambassadors concerning damages and grievances on either side, if they wish to reap the benefit of recovery for their damages and wrongs; as the king is purposing shortly to send to Prucia divers his ambassadors to crave and obtain amends for damages and grievances inflicted at sea on his liege subjects by them of Prucia and others of the fellowship of the hanse and their allies, and on them by his liege subjects.”⁶¹⁶

This, evidently, was the approved means of seeking restitution abroad for piracies: and it was thus, not through the courts, that restitution was sought.

In England

The courts

⁶¹⁶ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 501; see also *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, p. 153.

In England, the picture is rather fuller. Indeed, if we look at the country's diverse legal patchwork as a whole, there is too much surviving material to investigate anything close to comprehensively. The very wide variety of courts in existence – from the central courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and the Exchequer, to the High Court of Admiralty and the Vice-Admiralty courts, to ecclesiastical courts, to seignorial, borough, county, and forest courts – produced a staggering volume of documentation.⁶¹⁷ Most of these, however, never heard international disputes. The great variety of often overlapping jurisdictions meant that the issue of which courts were competent to hear cases was important, as well as which law applied.

There was very little certainty regarding jurisdiction over the sea, even when all persons involved were English subjects. Piracy, at the beginning of this period, lacked not only a definition, but any certain conclusion as to whether it was a matter for the Admiralty, the common law, the Council, Chancery, or the King's Bench.⁶¹⁸ As in the Hanse towns, it tended by necessity to be a civil matter, for want of any relevant criminal law. This vagueness, of course, was the main factor at the root of the admirals' repeated encroachments on what local authorities regarded as their jurisdictions,⁶¹⁹ even allegedly hearing cases of housebreaking and other firmly land-based offences.⁶²⁰ To take but one example, not complicated by the involvement of aliens: in 1383, a *curia marina* was held in Padstow before the mayor and burgesses, with a jury of mariners and merchants, to adjudge an action of trespass regarding a ship which had been spoiled of gear and cargo in Plymouth Sound. The court's right to judge the case was challenged (successfully) on no fewer than three grounds: that Padstow had no jurisdiction over the Plymouth area, no jurisdiction over the sea, and no right to hear

⁶¹⁷ Brown, A. L., *The Governance of Late Medieval England 1272 – 1461* (London, 1989), p. 101.

⁶¹⁸ *Select Pleas in the Court of Admiralty* (Selden Society, 1897), Vol. I, p. xlvi.

⁶¹⁹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, pp. 158, 207.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 275-76.

pleas at all, not being an ancient borough.⁶²¹ The role of the conservators of truces, who were often also admirals, complicated matters still further, especially considering the highly unsystematic manner of their appointments at the beginning of this period. It was not until 1414 that conservators were appointed to every port and defined as being subject to the authority of the Admiral (by then a single permanent position).⁶²²

The unique right of resident Hansards to trial in their own courts⁶²³ was not relevant, as no Hansards appear to have been actually placed on trial in England for acts of violence at sea. Even if they had been, cases involving English victims would hardly have been allowed to go before these courts, whose very existence the English mercantile class keenly resented; while any attempt at criminal prosecution in English courts would run into the problem of the lack of a crime.

The role of the legal system

Which law actually did apply in England to acts at sea involving aliens was extremely hazy. When the Scots or the Welsh were involved, the Marcher Law came into play, but there is little evidence for its application in the case of incidents involving other aliens outside the actual Marches; and in any case, both the *Leges Marchiarum*⁶²⁴ and the *Lex Mercatoria*⁶²⁵ were extremely ill-defined, relying more on a sort of folk memory than on statute. The latter's main differences from English common law were,

⁶²¹ *Select Pleas in the Court of Admiralty*, Vol. I, p. xlix.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, p. lii.

⁶²³ Lloyd, *Alien Merchants*, p. 14.

⁶²⁴ Davies, Robert Rees, "The Law of the March", *Welsh History Review* 5:1 (1970), pp. 2, 9.

⁶²⁵ Miller, Edward, "War, taxation and the English economy in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries", in Winter, J. M. (ed.), *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 1975), quoted by Lloyd, *Alien Merchants*, pp. 14-15.

in practice, speed of judgement and reliance on merchants' good faith,⁶²⁶ which were all very well in minor disputes but not necessarily advantageous when dealing with the seizure of ships. Cases falling under the *Lex Mercatoria* were, in London, generally heard by the City's two sheriffs at special sessions;⁶²⁷ otherwise, it seems not to have been accorded such distinct status, but rather resorted to by various courts as and when it was deemed appropriate.⁶²⁸ Piracies, as a rule, fell outside the jurisdiction of the sheriffs: since they also raised diplomatic issues when aliens were involved, it made more sense for them to be dealt with at a higher level.⁶²⁹

The primary legal basis for the status of alien merchants in England was the *Carta Mercatoria*, issued in 1303 by Edward I, in which "Almaine" was listed first among the "kingdomes, lands, and countries" for whose merchants the King had "speciall care". "Almaine" here almost certainly refers to the Empire: but many Hanse towns were Imperial free cities, and most of the rest lay within Imperial territories. The Hanse of towns is generally considered not to have come into existence until long after 1303, and the Hanse of merchants was an association of men who were for the most part Imperial subjects. Adjudication over disputed bargains was to be "made according to the vses and customes of the fayres and townes where... [they were] made and contracted"; prompt restitution was promised for the arrest of goods; "speedie iustice... according to the lawe of Marchants" was promised to complainants "touching all and singuler causes, which may be determined by the same law"; juries "halfe... of the sayd marchants, and the other halfe of good and lawfull men of the place where the suite

⁶²⁶ Lloyd, *Alien Merchants*, p. 15.

⁶²⁷ Brown, *Governance*, p. 114.

⁶²⁸ Bederman, David J., *Custom as a Source of Law* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 119.

⁶²⁹ Brown, *Governance*, p. 133. The Law Merchant was invoked in at least one case of piracy by aliens, when bailiffs at Yarmouth, Lynn, Ipswich, and St Ives, and the Mayor and Sheriffs of London, were instructed to arrest Flemish goods in retaliation for the spoliation by Flemings of the Countess Marshall's treasure upon the sea. This, however, happened in 1315, long before our period – and the instruction came from the Crown, which had apparently been the Countess' first resort of appeal in England when attempts to get restitution in Flanders failed. (*Select Cases Concerning the Law Merchant, A.D. 1270 – 1638* (London, 1908-32, 3 vols), pp. 94-95.)

shall fall out” were promised in non-capital cases, unless sufficient numbers could not be found; an English alderman was appointed to guarantee swift justice to alien merchants (not, at this point, exclusively to Hansards).⁶³⁰

In 1303, and still in 1317, when a further charter confirmed the privileges of the Hansards specifically,⁶³¹ this was all relatively uncontroversial. English merchants had no significant presence in Hanse towns, so the question of reciprocity did not arise; and, in any case, they were a rather less significant force in domestic politics than they had become by the 1370s.⁶³² By our period, the native mercantile class had grown to resent these privileges, and was twice able to pressurise the Crown into long effective suspensions of the Charter (1378-80 and 1422-25). The City courts, meanwhile, envied the English alderman’s jurisdiction over Anglo-Hanseatic disputes within London, and refused to appoint an alderman in 1419.⁶³³ There was, however, no alternative legal instrument covering Hansards in England: though, as far as violence or theft involving mariners is concerned, it had later⁶³⁴ been laid down that

“in all manner of cases of ffelony whereof mariners be convicted to death for the goods of fforeigners, if they are not enemyies of our lord the king, they shall have their merchandizes so stolen, though they do not prosecute the ffelons to death”.⁶³⁵

⁶³⁰ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. I, pp. 327-38; Rothwell, Harry (ed.), *English Historical Documents, Volume III: 1189 – 1327* (London, 1975, vol. 3 of 10), pp. 515-18.

⁶³¹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 50.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 369.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶³⁴ Probably in the reign of Edward III.

⁶³⁵ Twiss, Travers (ed.), *Monumenta juridica: The Black Book of the Admiralty* (Longman, 1871-76), Vol. I, p. 47. Piracy as such was not a felony before 1536, but it could sometimes fall under the terms of other felonies, and it is probably such cases which are referred to here.

Juries “halfe... of the sayd Marchants” are not likely to have been popular with their English counterparts. The burgesses of Bedford procured in 1396 the King’s agreement that

“the burgesses shall not be put with foreigners upon assizes, juries or inquisitions... the burgesses shall not be convicted by foreigners but only by their fellow burgesses, unless the matter touch the king or his heirs or the commonalty of the borough.”⁶³⁶

“Foreigners” here means persons who were not citizens of Bedford. If such rights were so jealously guarded against Englishmen from other cities, aliens are hardly likely to have been more warmly received.

Although there was no Piracy Act or equivalent, there were attempts at legislative answers to the problem. It is uncertain which law the Council thought John Philpott had broken by his “illegal” expedition in 1378:⁶³⁷ but in 1414 it was enacted that acts of violence at sea which also violated truces, treaties, and safe conducts should be considered high treason, and authority to investigate and punish such acts given to the newly redefined conservators of the truce, to whom shipmasters were also henceforth required to make a full report before selling prize goods.⁶³⁸ Of course, this hardly compares with the great volume of legislation by which Parliament sought to regulate trade⁶³⁹ in this period – and, increasingly, to restrict the rights and privileges of

⁶³⁶ *C.Ch.R.*, Vol. V, p. 357.

⁶³⁷ Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, Vol. II, pp. 270-71.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 405; *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol IX, pp. 52-55. It was, of course, precisely because there was no defined crime of piracy that it was necessary to criminalise as treason those instances of it which directly contravened royal policy.

⁶³⁹ See, for instance, Giuseppi, “Alien merchants”, pp. 78ff.

resident aliens.⁶⁴⁰ (This was especially true in the reign of Henry IV, whose poverty following his predecessor's extravagance – not to mention the more general weakness of his hold on the throne – forced him to pay more attention to mercantile interests.⁶⁴¹) Henry V's measures against violence at sea, while stringent, relied mostly on the use of the common law rather than the passing of new laws.⁶⁴²

Aliens wronged at sea by Englishmen appear in general to have resorted directly to Crown and Council for redress. Admirals might head commissions which ended up hearing these complaints, but only after they had been brought before the Council or the Court of King's Bench.⁶⁴³ Appeals might come from individuals, as when Conrad Fynk, Gerard Clambeck, and Warner Heynson appealed to the King's Council concerning the seizure of a cargo of herring in 1389,⁶⁴⁴ or their appointed attorneys, as when the proctor John de la Moore appealed on behalf of various merchants of Bruges for restitution of goods taken at sea by Mark Mixtow in 1402,⁶⁴⁵ or from foreign rulers, as when the Consuls of Lübeck appealed for restitution of a seized ship in 1380.⁶⁴⁶

The involvement of local sheriffs and bailiffs in surviving records is generally at the command of the Crown. They are often instructed simply to compel restitution for seizures of goods and gear by persons under their authority, sometimes to "enquire touching the circumstances".⁶⁴⁷ The most notable example is the blanket order issued on 5th October 1403 to the bailiffs of Orwell, Ipswich, Dartmouth, Dover, Hull, and Hartlepool, the Mayor of Calais, and the Sheriff of York, to make restitution to a series

⁶⁴⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 109-10.

⁶⁴¹ Lipson, *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 526; see Chapter V.

⁶⁴² Richmond, "Royal Administration", p. 105; Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 147.

⁶⁴³ *Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Edward III*, Vol. XIV, p. 217; *C.P.R. Edward III*, Vol. XVI, pp. 65, 410; Beardwood, *Alien Merchants*, pp. 86, 103.

⁶⁴⁴ Baldwin, J. F., and Leadam, I. S. (eds), *Select cases before the King's Council, 1243 – 1482* (Selden Society, 1918), pp. 76-77; T.N.A. SC 8/300/14957, SC 8/301/15067.

⁶⁴⁵ T.N.A. SC 8/217/10834.

⁶⁴⁶ T.N.A. SC 8/274/13669; *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. I, p. 414.

⁶⁴⁷ E.g. *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 315.

of Hanseatic complainants.⁶⁴⁸ Occasionally further specifications are made, as in the 1386 case of the *Cristaven* of Middelburg – whose plunderers, should they refuse restitution (their guilt having already been decided upon by the King in Council), were to be brought before the King.⁶⁴⁹ Local authorities could also, of course, be instructed to arrest specific Hanseatic or other alien ships in order to secure restitution for losses suffered at sea by Englishmen (quite separately from general arrests of Hanse shipping).⁶⁵⁰

Commissions were regularly appointed not only to hear specific cases, but to settle much broader questions – notably the three bishops, three earls, and two clerks appointed in February 1390 “to settle disputes between Englishmen and Prussians over vessels captured or arrested through letters of marque or by way of reprisal”.⁶⁵¹ The latter’s remit was extended in the following year to cover “those of Prucia, the Hanse, Guelderland and Holand”.⁶⁵² not that this commission was able to reach a satisfactory conclusion on its own, but the work of such bodies did help form the basis for subsequent diplomacy.

Commissions which were appointed to investigate, or enforce previous judgements concerning, individual cases did not necessarily consist of the holders of high office – or else might include only one such. The seven men, for instance, appointed on 6th November 1387 to “enquire and certify touching the premises” concerning the wrecked cog *Christopher* of Stralsund (a complex case, as not only had the wreck been looted, but goods reportedly belonging to three named Hansards and certain London merchants had been falsely claimed by a man named John Gunter)

⁶⁴⁸ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 190.

⁶⁴⁹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 247.

⁶⁵⁰ *C.P.R. Henry V*, Vol. II, p. 205.

⁶⁵¹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 168.

⁶⁵² *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 372. The size of the commission was also expanded, and some personnel changed.

included only one man identified by office: Simon de Burley, Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports. The other six – including one Roger Wiggemore or Waggemore, who acted as de Burley’s representative, suggesting that the Constable did not in fact sit on this commission – appear to have been prominent citizens from Dover, Rye, and elsewhere.⁶⁵³ The commission appointed in 1399 to investigate the disappearance of seized enemy goods from a German cog in the port of Plymouth consisted of the serjeant-at-arms and two citizens;⁶⁵⁴ that appointed in 1400 to appraise a Danzig hulk seized in Southampton, of the mayor and two citizens.⁶⁵⁵ Sometimes a serjeant-at-arms alone was commissioned to undertake a similar task.⁶⁵⁶

These were commissions of inquiry only, not competent to pass final judgement, and their make-up is not surprising. Wiggemore again supplied de Burley’s place, beside the King’s serjeant-at-arms and four men of unspecified status, investigating the seizure and plunder of the *Seinte Marie Knyght* of Lübeck some three weeks after the case of the *Christopher* – “to cause restitution to be made, and to certify touching the premises”, though in this case the perpetrators were as yet unknown.⁶⁵⁷ Interestingly, despite this commission having the power to compel restitution, its composition does not noticeably differ from that investigating the wreck of the *Christopher*.

The need to *investigate* piracy was recognised in an addition to the 1375 Inquisition of Queenborough, which it is worth quoting in full.

“Item, lett inquiry be made concerning all thieves (or
pirates) whoe robb at sea any of the subjects of our lord

⁶⁵³ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 392.

⁶⁵⁴ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 508.

⁶⁵⁵ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1916 – 2003, 8 vols), Vol. VII, p. 247.

⁶⁵⁶ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, pp. 133, 359, 433, 513; Vol. III, p. 146.

⁶⁵⁷ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 394.

the king or any persons of his allies, or in amity with him, or any being under his truce, or under his protection, the names of the pirates and of the owners of ships of the pyrates, and of the masters thereof, and what goods they have stolne, and of what value, and in whose hands they are come, and of all their maniteynors, receivers, and comforters.”⁶⁵⁸

Believed to date to Henry IV’s reign, this in some degree anticipates the 1414 distinction by which piracies breaking truce or safe conduct became treasonable: but there is here no provision for sentencing the offenders. The relevant local authorities will inquire, but it is presumably the King in Council who will receive the information and decide what should be done.

Given that it was commonplace in England in this period for the most active pirates also to be successful merchants and prominent local citizens,⁶⁵⁹ it is hardly surprising that the likes of John Hawley and Hugh atte Fen sat on such commissions. In 1397, for instance, atte Fen was one of six men appointed “to enquire... by jury of the counties of Lincoln and Norfolk” concerning the Stenehorst / Fanhalter affair mentioned above.⁶⁶⁰

When local officials are named, it is generally because a specific action is ordered which requires the exercise of their authority, as when the bailiffs of Penryn and Falmouth were ordered in January 1388

⁶⁵⁸ Twiss (ed.), *Black Book*, Vol. I, p. 149. The translation is of somewhat later date than the original addition: the French text refers to “*larrons*” and “*robbeurs*”, terms not specific to felonies committed at sea, rather than “pirates”.

⁶⁵⁹ See Chapter I.

⁶⁶⁰ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, pp. 309-10. The complainant John Brandon, of course, was himself a well known pirate.

“to arrest and take for safe keeping into the possession of the bailiffs of Penren, if they exist, the wine and other goods and harness which were in a ship of Almain, John Puls of Stralesonde master”.⁶⁶¹

These items had reportedly been seized on the pretext that they belonged to the King’s enemies. There were many similar cases: as, for instance, when the bailiffs of Weymouth were instructed to deliver to John Golde fifty pounds levied on the sale of herring wrongfully seized as enemy goods, the King in Council having overturned the original judgement which had endorsed the seizure.⁶⁶² It was to the King in Council that representatives of arrested merchants and owners of arrested goods habitually made their appeals. Sometimes, when the government wished to deal conclusively with specific areas of complaint, they were even invited to do so. A writ was issued at Westminster on 25th June 1389

“to the sheriffs of London... ordering them upon sight to cause proclamation to be made that any merchants or others of Cerice,⁶⁶³ Selande or Holand who would lay aught against John Haule by reason of undue capture at sea of ships or vessels of those parts, goods or merchandise should repair to the king and

⁶⁶¹ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 364. The word “they” presumably refers to the stolen goods, not the bailiffs.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁶⁶³ That is, Zierikzee.

council at Westminster on Wednesday following, when justice shall be done”.⁶⁶⁴

“Justice” meant recompense for the victims, not punishment for the offenders. The reference quoted above to “mariners... convicted to death for the goods of foreigners” is isolated and unexplained. When the arrest of alleged pirates is ordered, it is to compel them to make restitution. When, for instance, the shipmasters Christinus Counessoun of Kampen and Bodkin Strote of Lübeck complained that their ships had been “taken at sea... by force of arms”, the Crown was able (after inquiry by a commission consisting of the Sheriff of Suffolk and three citizens⁶⁶⁵) to name no fewer than 129 persons involved, and even their shares of the booty (amounting, when so far subdivided, to only a few shillings each). The Sheriff was ordered to levy the money from them and pay it to the Hansards, but nothing whatever was said about punishment.⁶⁶⁶ When the *St Mary* of Greifswald was seized and despoiled by men of Hartlepool, the order was “to arrest the offenders with their goods and keep them in safe-custody *until they shall make satisfaction*”.⁶⁶⁷ When John Herry of Hull plundered the *Julyan* of Danzig, he was ordered to appear before the King in Council only “if he should refuse to make restitution”.⁶⁶⁸ When a middle-sized fleet from Poole, Dartmouth, and Kingswear seized Castilian-owned goods from the *St Mary* of Prussia in 1403, thus not only committing a robbery but violating the King’s truce with Castile (which after 1414 would be considered treason), the only order – issued by the King without Council – was “to cause restitution to be made”.⁶⁶⁹ In this case, since 25 barges and balingers

⁶⁶⁴ C.C.R. *Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 50.

⁶⁶⁵ C.P.R. *Henry IV*, Vol. II, pp. 435-36.

⁶⁶⁶ C.C.R. *Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 428.

⁶⁶⁷ C.P.R. *Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 359: my italics.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 432.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 424.

and ten named masters were involved, in the very waters where an unofficial naval war with France was being pursued and where a French invasion may even have been feared, it is of course understandable that the King did not feel able to risk undermining the country's coastal defences by punishing the pirates. Similar instructions were issued to John Arnald, serjeant at arms, touching complaints against several shipmasters of Blakeney, Cromer, Queenhithe, Swellington, Kirkley, and Yarmouth, who had robbed a Prussian ship, in December 1404. The owners of the ships involved included the London grocer John St Jermyn, described as a "malefactor", and frequent Vitalienbrüder victim Simon Durham; among the masters were Hugh atte Fen and the "felon" Henry Clark.⁶⁷⁰

Even under the harsher regime of Henry V, when twelve men of Scarborough (the oft-mentioned William Jonesson heading the list) were arrested and imprisoned following the seizure of goods worth 400 marks from John Dordewant⁶⁷¹ of Prussia,⁶⁷² they were to be held only "until John Bruk of Danczik⁶⁷³ be fully satisfied... for their portion of the residue".⁶⁷⁴ Robbery alone was not enough to merit punishment. When we do find a commission instructed "to cause restitution to be made *and to arrest and punish the offenders*", in a slightly confused case that may in fact represent two different incidents,⁶⁷⁵ it is notable that 36 merchants and mariners had been murdered: this, presumably, is why retribution as well as restitution was thought necessary.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 508; *vide* also pp. 389, 422; T.N.A. SC 8/230/11490. Further examples can be seen in *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, pp. 146, 150.

⁶⁷¹ Presumably a relative of the Tydeman Dordewant of Danzig who was taken at sea by men of Hythe in 1403: T.N.A. SC 8/217/10807.

⁶⁷² *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. IV, pp. 62, 265; the original order had been "to levy the same of their lands and goods", but the new King found it necessary to order the arrest of their persons.

⁶⁷³ To whom it had been agreed that the sum should be paid, following Dordewant's death: *ibid.*, p. 266.

⁶⁷⁴ *C.P.R. Henry V*, Vol. I, p. 64.

⁶⁷⁵ See p. 91.

⁶⁷⁶ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, p. 59: *my italics*.

There were even countersuits, as when sundry men of Newcastle petitioned against their own Sheriff over “goods taken in the ship Mariknyght of Bruges”.⁶⁷⁷

It is harder to draw conclusions about attitudes to non-fatal violence, as it surely occurred much more often than it is specifically reported. Most seizures of ships, certainly those described as “by force”, would have involved some degree of such violence. The standard expression was *vi et armis*, “by force and arms”, which broadly covered “assault and battery, false imprisonment, taking away of goods and chattels, and breaking of close”.⁶⁷⁸ It is true that when John Halwater, master of the *Marie* of Danzig, complained that seven masters of vessels from Barnstaple, Plymouth and Fowey had “assaulted him and other mariners” in taking his ship, the resultant commission was ordered “to cause restitution to be made *and* to cause the delinquents to appear before the king and council”.⁶⁷⁹ More likely, however, this had less to do with the violence of their offence than with the fact that, some two months before the order was issued on 24th May 1405, the import of English cloth to the Hanse towns and the export of various Baltic wares to England had been banned by a Hanseatic diet.⁶⁸⁰ In the event, the English proved able to circumvent the ban,⁶⁸¹ but at this point the government would very probably have been anxious not to antagonise the Hanse further. In the following year, when the ban had effectively collapsed but negotiations to restore relations between England and the Hanse were still ongoing, the Council commissioned Sir Thomas Erpingham

⁶⁷⁷ T.N.A. C1/6/105.

⁶⁷⁸ Palmer, Robert C., *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348 – 1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law* (Chapel Hill, 1993), p. 154. On the other hand, since this formula was effectively required when bringing a felony charge, it may have been used when no actual violence had occurred.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60: my italics.

⁶⁸⁰ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 221.

⁶⁸¹ See Chapters I and VII.

“to arrest the owners, soldiers, masters and victuallers of a barge called *le Faucon* of Sandwych who were concerned in the capture and spoliation of a ship of Prussia called *Cristofre* of Grypeswold, of which Godschalk van Brok was master, and to bring them before... justices appointed to hear and determine the complaints of all of Prussia, Livonia and the Hanse feeling themselves aggrieved or damaged by any of the king’s lieges at sea, at Westminster, in the quinzaine of Michaelmas next, and also to enquire about all goods and merchandise captured by them from the said Godschalk and the merchants and mariners in the ship of Prussia and to seize the same and put them in safe-custody.”⁶⁸²

Only after this was done was Erpingham instructed to enforce payment of compensation by the defendants.⁶⁸³ When John de Etton, Sheriff of York, and John Topclif, serjeant at arms, were commissioned in 1407 “to arrest and imprison” seven Yorkshire pirates “until they shall have... made fine and ransom to the king” *in addition* to compensating their victims, merchants of Hamburg, the reason was explicitly given as “an ordinance made by... justices appointed to settle disputes with all of Prussia, Livonia, the Hanse, Campe, Holand and Seland”:⁶⁸⁴ that is, the Commission of Oyer and Terminer which Henry had appointed the previous June to examine, and where appropriate enforce, Hanseatic compensation claims. The imposition of fines over and beyond the Hanseatic claims was a specific power this judicial commission had been granted in order to

⁶⁸² *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, p. 237.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

enforce the cooperation of defendants, a measure made necessary by the need to restore relations with the Hanse.⁶⁸⁵

Occasionally, other legal proceedings would even be suspended in order to facilitate investigations into piracy against Hansards during the 1405-08 negotiations. Following the seizure of the *Marie* of Danzig by a large flotilla off Dartmouth, writs of *supersedeas* had to be issued to halt “any process” against Edmund Arnold, former Mayor of Dartmouth, John Forthe, and John Chesulden, former Sheriff of Devon, appointed to inquire as to where responsibility lay. Whatever the proceedings against these men were in pursuit of (and they appear to have been connected with the very case they were investigating⁶⁸⁶), their inquiries evidently took precedence.⁶⁸⁷ The King’s commissaries themselves were not above wrongly classing captured goods as enemy-owned, and when this was discovered (their victim brought a claim at Calais, effectively a suit against the Crown⁶⁸⁸) were merely ordered to restore what they had taken.⁶⁸⁹

Although there were local suits, like Lawrence van den Saerte’s at Calais mentioned above, the pattern is fairly consistently one of appeal directly to the King in Council as first resort, particularly when the complainants are aliens. This is unsurprising, as international incidents were always at least potentially also diplomatic questions which would have to be settled at this level.

In other jurisdictions

⁶⁸⁵ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 537.

⁶⁸⁶ Had these proceedings perhaps been brought with the specific intention of slowing their investigation?

⁶⁸⁷ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, pp. 142, 288.

⁶⁸⁸ *C.P.R. Henry V*, Vol. II, p. 85.

⁶⁸⁹ *C.C.R. Henry V*, Vol. I, p. 398.

Although the application of the law in third party jurisdictions must have played a part, however minor, in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, there is very little evidence. As in the Hanse towns, there were question marks in some other parts over the degree of autonomy to which English merchant communities were entitled. Henry IV issued letters patent in 1407 allowing merchants in Holland, Zeeland, Brabant, and Flanders to elect governors, hold meetings, and pass ordinances,⁶⁹⁰ and

“to quieten... any disputes... that may arise between the same
merchants and merchants of these parts... and to repair any
transgressions... committed by our liege merchants against the
merchants of these parts...”⁶⁹¹

By the following year, the same was being done in Scandinavia.⁶⁹² This was one of the factors lying behind the quarrels of the English merchants with the Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer* and the Danes in Iceland in the 1410s and 1420s: unauthorised fishing in Icelandic waters, the piracy of John Percy of Hull and others, and the kidnapping in 1425 of the Danish governor, followed. These were, however, addressed through diplomatic, not legal, means.⁶⁹³

English relations with the Hanse were also affected by events in England's French possessions. James Bodeker, merchant and shipmaster of Stettin, suffered the loss of a cog and its cargo in 1406, “taken at sea by them of Baioun”: but by the time he applied to the Mayor of Bayonne's proctor for compensation, he had already procured

⁶⁹⁰ Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. VIII, p. 464; Carus-Wilson, Eleanora Mary, with Coleman, O. (eds), *England's Export Trade, 1275 – 1546* (Oxford, 1963), p. xx.

⁶⁹¹ *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, p. 1032.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-14; Carus-Wilson, article “The Iceland Trade”, in Power and Postan (eds), *Studies in English Trade*, pp. 164-65.

the King's judgement in his favour. As with cases in English ports, it seems that wronged Hansards resorted immediately to the Crown.⁶⁹⁴

When letters of marque were issued, we hear of failed appeals for restitution to authorities abroad by Englishmen who had suffered losses either through piracy or through the arrest of goods. However, although occasionally the jurisdictions in which they appealed are ones which might march or overlap with the Hanse,⁶⁹⁵ there is no known instance (among the admittedly few surviving letters) in which Hansards were directly involved.

In the absence of more evidence than this, it is not possible to draw conclusions concerning the role of legal processes in third party jurisdictions in Anglo-Hanseatic relations.

The role of local laws and jurisdictions in disputes concerning violence at sea was heavily circumscribed by the international nature of the incidents concerned. Diplomatic channels of complaint seem to have been mostly preferred to legal ones on both sides of the North Sea. In England, at least, the legal system was involved: commissions inquired into cases, sheriffs and bailiffs enforced the decisions taken: but the decisions themselves were usually those of the King in Council, to whom wronged Hansards often appealed directly. The delineation of jurisdiction was muddled, and the lack of a defined crime of piracy meant that robberies which, if committed on land, would have been punished with death, were treated effectively as civil matters, resolvable by restitution. On the Hanseatic side, with multiple legal systems in use, still more competing jurisdictions, and a similar lack of legal instruments to deal with piracy, the system was still less equipped to deal with the problem: and the English, like

⁶⁹⁴ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. III, p. 134.

⁶⁹⁵ E.g. the letter granted to John de Waghen of Beverley in October 1399, against the subjects of Albert, Duke of Bavaria and Count of Holland.

the Hansards, preferred to pursue restitution through diplomatic channels. The extant legal systems were among the tools used in dealing with the problem of violence at sea, but the law itself was in this context subordinate to political considerations.

CHAPTER VII: *Non-violent reprisals for violent incidents*

Having so far concentrated closely on actual instances of violence (with the strictly limited exception of the examination of legal proceedings in Chapter VI), we are in danger of obscuring the fact that Anglo-Hanseatic relations at sea, even when they were strained, did not consist in this period of an endless round of tit-for-tat attacks on shipping. Although the word “reprisal” crops up frequently, whether in vague reference to alleged English activities⁶⁹⁶ or in the terms of letters of marque,⁶⁹⁷ it is in fact impossible to pinpoint any known attack which can be shown to have been carried out in reprisal for a specific previous violent incident. As outlined in Chapter I, letters of marque and reprisal in this period were losing their original significance in England and becoming clumsily wielded tools of royal policy, and often did not refer to specific individual losses. Furthermore, outside the years 1402-05, only one was certainly issued in this period specifying Hansards as permissible victims: and it is not known ever to have been acted on.

Direct reactions to maritime violence in this period, within the specific field of Anglo-Hanseatic relations, and excepting general police actions such as those allowed for in the anti-piracy commissions of 1398,⁶⁹⁸ were in fact almost always non-violent. The role of the legal system has already been considered: but there is a broader issue here. The arrest (in port) of persons, ships, and goods; the rescinding or limiting of the privileges of alien merchants: these were the principal weapons of both England and the Hanse throughout these years. This is hardly surprising: encounters at sea were unpredictable enough without adding deliberate violence to the equation, and any policy based on such reprisals would have been somewhat impractical compared to one based

⁶⁹⁶ *HR I* (iv) 182; Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 72.

⁶⁹⁷ See Introduction and Chapter I for a discussion of the meaning of this term in the period in question.

⁶⁹⁸ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, pp. 366-67; see pp. 162-63.

on easily planned actions in port. (On the other hand, of course, planning was not impossible, particularly in the coastal waters to which both piracy and naval warfare were largely confined in this period. If it had been, neither activity would have been worth anybody's while. It remains the case, however, that it made sense for government to prefer measures taken within port to ones outside it where possible.) The use of such measures as first resort or to give teeth to diplomatic negotiations will be considered in Chapter VIII: here we will look specifically at their use in response to violence.

English reprisals against Hanseatic men, ships, and goods

Non-violent reprisals for violence within our period can be divided into three loose categories. In order of increasing severity, these are: bans or restrictions on trade or travel; arrests, targeted and general; and expulsions. Between the first two, however, there is significant overlap, as the enforcement of restrictions on the activities or movements of foreign merchants (as opposed to similar restrictions imposed by the Crown or the Hanse upon their own people to inconvenience the other side) often amounted to the effective arrest of the merchants and their goods. Nor is there an immediately obvious pattern of escalation from one reaction to the next. It is therefore probably more useful to consider these events not at first categorically, but chronologically, and then to see what patterns (if any) emerge.

Before 1385, we hear relatively little of Hanseatic violence against the English at sea. The "injustices" complained of in the merchants' petition of 1375 and following the suspension of the Hansards' charter privileges in 1378, although embracing violence, consisted primarily of protectionism and the lack of reciprocity which was to

become so common a theme over the next hundred years.⁶⁹⁹ (The forcible expulsion of English merchants from Bergen⁷⁰⁰ was of course a factor, but falls outwith the main bounds of this thesis and will be addressed under “other factors” in Chapter VIII.) Likewise, the wrangling which followed the suspension, and the negotiations leading to the reinstatement of the charter in 1380, conspicuously failed to include any mention of piracy.⁷⁰¹

Our period began, of course, with an English act of violence: it was Hanseatic (principally Prussian) reprisals and English counter-reprisals which interrupted trade between 1385 and 1388.⁷⁰² When the Prussians were brought to the negotiating table, resulting finally in the Treaty of Marienburg, the issues important to the English side were largely concerned with merchants’ privileges, not with violence.⁷⁰³ When the subject was raised, it was as a stalling tactic: the temporary breakdown of negotiations in June 1386 occurred because English negotiators had refused to discuss Prussian losses (by piracy or arrest) separately from English ones, in the knowledge that the Prussian ambassadors were not authorised to address the latter.⁷⁰⁴ However, since this was probably a result of pressure from east coast Prussia-farers,⁷⁰⁵ who had recently suffered through the arrest of goods, these arrests must have been the “loss” uppermost in English minds. The recent upsurge in overseas trade, particularly to Hanseatic territory, had naturally made English merchants more vulnerable to German and other pirates: but, had this been an issue of diplomatic significance at this time, the English would have taken advantage of these negotiations to press the point more forcefully than they can be shown to have done.

⁶⁹⁹ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 106.

⁷⁰⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 137.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 61; Nash, *The Hansa*, pp. 174-75; *HR I* (ii) 270.

⁷⁰² Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, pp. 107-08.

⁷⁰³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 66, 68; *HR I* (iii) 148.

⁷⁰⁴ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 496-97.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 497.

Incidents did, of course, occur in the 1380s, but references to them are often vague. The “felony” for which Henry Normay lost his ship⁷⁰⁶ is quite likely to have been of a piratical nature; James Petresson and Ullerik Hildebrand⁷⁰⁷ were ordered to be brought before the King and Council in connection with “robberies at sea”. But Normay’s ship was in English hands when the Crown heard of him, and Petresson and Hildebrand “in the custody of” Nicholas Fisshecoper, the main perpetrator of the aforesaid “robberies”. These men may well have been as much victims as anything else: and, in any case, Hanseatic attacks on Englishmen at sea (or at least those thought worth reporting) were before the 1390s too rare for any pattern to form in recorded English responses to them.

Even in 1391, when fresh difficulties arose in Anglo-Prussian relations, the fault seems to have been largely on the English side. As early as January of that year, we find “pretext of marque and reprisal”⁷⁰⁸ being used to justify attacks on Hanseatic shipping, resulting in diplomatic difficulties; the Prussians complained that the English were in breach of the terms of Marienburg.⁷⁰⁹ The seizure of the *Seinte Marie* by a diverse collection of Hansards who took her into Copenhagen⁷¹⁰ was an apparently isolated incident, and the English response was measured: letters were dispatched requesting restitution, and only after none was forthcoming were orders given for arrests, and then only of men allegedly known to have been involved in the incident.⁷¹¹ Despite the rise of the Vitalienbrüder, it was not until 1394 that England felt compelled to complain of their activities⁷¹², and then only after the Hansetag had complained of franchise

⁷⁰⁶ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 412.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 59. This Petresson is of Danzig; a John Petreson of Wismar was spoiled of herring near Holderness in 1386, and his namesake of Dordrecht lost goods from an arrested ship at Dover in 1387: T.N.A. SC 8/300/14954-55.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁷⁰⁹ *H.U.B.*, Vol. 4, no. 1,054; *HR V* (iv) 6.

⁷¹⁰ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 425; see Chapters II and IV.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

⁷¹² *HR I* (iv) 182; Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. II.

violation and threatened retaliatory taxes against English merchants.⁷¹³ The complaint was ignored. Although Vitalienbrüder attacks mounted up through 1395, and did not entirely cease until their suppression,⁷¹⁴ there was for several years no direct English reprisal, violent or otherwise; the letters of marque threatened in 1396 were never issued, save one in 1400 (mentioned above).⁷¹⁵ Individuals were arrested,⁷¹⁶ and eventually, in 1397 or not much later, a committee was appointed “to try, consider and examine the... petitions” “against the towns of Germany with regard to shipping”.⁷¹⁷ But there were no general arrests and no expulsions.

Restrictions on the activities of alien merchants were tightened in the late fourteenth century. In 1390, English ship owners were prohibited from selling ships to any alien without the King’s permission;⁷¹⁸ in 1392, aliens were temporarily forbidden to retail merchandise other than food;⁷¹⁹ in 1397, Parliament voted to levy a poll tax on foreign merchants.⁷²⁰ None of these measures, however, was explicitly directed at Hansards. The latter’s position, by the time Henry IV summoned their representatives to negotiate the reconfirmation of their charters on 24th October 1399,⁷²¹ was indeed less than ideal. Tensions with London’s merchant class were growing, more because of competition and envy than because of violence by either side: by this time, Hansards actually paid less duty than native merchants on cloth exports, even before the poundage from which they were exempt.⁷²² Nevertheless, they remained privileged in relation to other aliens.

Of the crisis of 1402-05 and the troubles that had preceded it, Lloyd states curtly

⁷¹³ *HR I* (iv) 196.

⁷¹⁴ Hakluyt, *Voyages*; see Chapter IV.

⁷¹⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

⁷¹⁶ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 309.

⁷¹⁷ T.N.A. SC 8/22/1069.

⁷¹⁸ Stat. 14 R2, cc. 6, 9, 10.

⁷¹⁹ Stat. 16 R2, c. 1.

⁷²⁰ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 37.

⁷²¹ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. I, p. 57.

⁷²² Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 189; Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 98.

that “Englishmen started the attacks”.⁷²³ Throughout these years, we hear far more about English violence and somewhat directionless Hanseatic responses than about the reverse; though in the conference at the Hague to restore relations in the autumn of 1407, an apparently opportunistic counterclaim of 4,535 nobles lost at Prussian hands (after accepting the valuation of Prussian losses at 8,957 nobles) was entered. It was largely dismissed, ending up reduced to 766 nobles.⁷²⁴ These claims in any case rested on losses through arrest, not through piracy. No retaliation had been attempted against merchants in England for these alleged losses – indeed, the Hanseatic exemption from poundage had been confirmed by Parliament the previous year.⁷²⁵ (In 1402, the new English settlement in Bergen was attacked by Hansards⁷²⁶ shortly after the Boston *Bergenfahrer* had refused to provide 1,400 nobles as security for its safety; in 1406, a German flotilla – thought to originate from Hamburg – attacked and murdered Norfolk fishermen off southern Norway. There was no reprisal for either incident against Hamburgers or other Hansards in England.⁷²⁷)

There are of course examples in this period of Hanseatic violence against English ships. Some were lumped together with earlier Vitalienbrüder attacks in the complaint of 1405 (see Chapter IV), while the seizure by Danzigers of a ship of Holland carrying cloth and other goods belonging to York merchants in 1404 was indeed taken out on Hansards in England, who were fined to its value.⁷²⁸ The “slaughter... of William Sleght of Boston and another merchant of Lynn” at Bergen, in retaliation for which Boston merchants petitioned unsuccessfully for the arrest of “all merchants of the Hanse

⁷²³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 111.

⁷²⁴ Ibid, p. 120.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

⁷²⁶ Hope, *British Shipping*, p. 68.

⁷²⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 137.

⁷²⁸ *Litterae Cantuarienses* 3.85.

Company and their goods, going to Norbern”,⁷²⁹ may have taken place within this period (although dates as late as 1426 have been suggested, and Lloyd has argued persuasively⁷³⁰ for a date of 1413 – see below). These, however, were relatively isolated incidents in a period when England was, if not the only guilty party, certainly by far the more violent. The reconciliation of 1407-08 did not stop piracy on either side,⁷³¹ but it did lead into a new phase in relations.

Although Jenks refers to the “solid basis”⁷³² (“solide Basis”) of the Anglo-Prussian and Anglo-Lübeck relationships after the Treaty of London in 1409, this was not sufficient to prevent either renewed violence or retaliatory actions ashore – particularly after the battle of Grunwald, a blow to Prussia which significantly altered the balance of power in all her foreign relations. In the summer of 1411, the goods of Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer* in Boston were arrested at very short notice.⁷³³ this was a reaction to recent conflict (“divers injuries done to the king’s lieges”⁷³⁴) and not, or not solely, to the death of William Sleght, which is not thought to have occurred near this time. Old grievances were also re-aired: the tenants of Cromer appealed (apparently in 1412) to the Prince of Wales over the deaths of their fellow townsmen, allegedly at Hanseatic hands, in Norway some five years earlier.⁷³⁵ It is not known what reaction, if any, this petition drew: but in 1413, Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer* were again arrested in Boston,⁷³⁶ resulting in a boycott of the city until 1417. (Lloyd connects this, as mentioned above, with Sleght’s death.) English trade in Norway, however, never fully stopped, and was more or less back to normal even before King Erik offered to impose a

⁷²⁹ T.N.A. C1/6/44.

⁷³⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 137.

⁷³¹ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 70.

⁷³² Jenks, *England, die Hanse, und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 523.

⁷³³ *H.U.B.*, Vol. 4, nos. 1,023-25.

⁷³⁴ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. IV, p. 308.

⁷³⁵ T.N.A. SC 8/188/9352.

⁷³⁶ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. IV, pp. 152-53, 231; *C.C.R. Henry V*, Vol. I, p. 12; *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. IV, pp. 308, 321, 383-85, 400.

settlement in 1417.⁷³⁷

Although it was not unknown after 1413 for the English to impose restrictions on Hansards, this cannot be shown to have had anything to do with Hanseatic violence. (The issue of whether the fifteenth century decline in trade between Hamburg and Great Yarmouth had been affected by this is addressed in Chapter IV, following Jenks and Nirnheim.) Individuals and their ships were of course arrested following acts of piracy (e.g. Grote Court and John Rode in 1418,⁷³⁸ Gossyn Grolle “and his accomplices” in 1422⁷³⁹): but the only *general* acts which hit Hansards were the commandeering of ships for service against France,⁷⁴⁰ and duty increases (to be enforced “notwithstanding any allegations of liberties and franchises put forward by them”⁷⁴¹), the latter trend reaching its natural conclusion when tunnage and poundage were not only applied to Hansards, but increased, in 1431. As early as January 1418, the Steelyard was complaining to the Mayor’s Court about “unwarranted exactions”⁷⁴², but these were a reaction to military and economic necessities, not to anything the Hansards had done.

Hanseatic reprisals against English men, ships, and goods

Although, before the Zwiijn incident, the Hansards’ primary problem with the English was the latter’s encroachment on their Baltic stamping ground⁷⁴³, violence at sea was already also a serious issue. There had been in the past ten years 22 incidents in which Prussian merchants alone had lost money at English hands, six involving piracy

⁷³⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 139.

⁷³⁸ *C.P.R. Henry V*, Vol. II, p. 205.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

⁷⁴⁰ *C.C.R. Henry V*, Vol. I, p. 301.

⁷⁴¹ *Selected Cases in the Exchequer Chamber*, no. 27.

⁷⁴² Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 113.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

outside ports.⁷⁴⁴ There is, however, little sign of any active response to this on the Hanseatic side. Although the issue was raised in the negotiations over confirmation of Hanseatic privileges in 1378-80,⁷⁴⁵ no reprisals appear to have been either threatened or made at this time; the vague declaration of the Lübeck Hansetag in May 1382 that the English should be “hindered” in doing harm to Hansards⁷⁴⁶ seems to have had little effect.

The Zwijn incident brought about an abrupt shift in Anglo-Hanseatic, more particularly in Anglo-Prussian, relations. Already, in January 1382, both the Hansetag and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order had expressed to Richard II their concerns about English piracy; and in 1384, it had been declared that the English must import goods to Prussia through Elbing only – far less convenient than Danzig.⁷⁴⁷ (The Prussians had for some time been wary of allowing English settlement in Danzig, fearful that to do so would be to open up Prussia to the kind of expansionism indulged in by the English in southern France.⁷⁴⁸) The Prussian ships were assaulted on 12th May 1385:⁷⁴⁹ on 18th July, a diet of the Prussian towns ordered the arrest of English goods in both Elbing and Danzig, and banned trade with England. The goods thus seized came to a value of £20,000 sterling,⁷⁵⁰ in large part the property of Yorkshiremen.⁷⁵¹ That this was done *before* envoys were sent to demand compensation⁷⁵² suggests that the Prussians had already been nearing the end of their patience. There had for some time been enmity growing between the towns of Prussia and the east coast of England –

⁷⁴⁴ HR I (ii) 199.

⁷⁴⁵ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 493.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

⁷⁴⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 62.

⁷⁴⁸ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 357-58.

⁷⁴⁹ HR I (iii) 200, 203.

⁷⁵⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 495.

⁷⁵¹ HR I (ii) 404.

⁷⁵² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 63.

indeed, it is partly to this that Jenks attributes the Zwijn incident itself.⁷⁵³ The Elbing Bürgermeister and brother of the Order who were dispatched to England (both in fact falling ill before they arrived) were authorised to demand compensation not only for what had happened at the Zwijn, but for every Prussian grievance of the past decade.⁷⁵⁴

The English response – after the apparently unofficial reply in which the Prussians were scornfully bidden to take what they could from such Englishmen as they could lay hands on⁷⁵⁵ – was to forbid all exports by Hansards from London, Lynn, York, or Newcastle. Although non-Prussian goods were shortly de-arrested,⁷⁵⁶ a cycle of reprisal, counter-reprisal, and wearing negotiation had begun, which will be considered in detail in Chapter VIII. (Only the initial arrests were a direct reaction to violence at sea.) The release of non-Prussian goods is of interest: the Wendish towns, even after the initial staying of their goods along with the Prussians', had mostly proven conciliatory, allowing the English who had escaped Danzig to settle unmolested in Stralsund.⁷⁵⁷ The first arrest of English goods there occurred in 1388, the same year in which good relations with Prussia were restored; but, despite retaliatory arrests in England, it came to nothing.⁷⁵⁸ Had the Prussians and other Hansards been able to cooperate, they might have wrung a more favourable agreement from the English than they did separately.⁷⁵⁹ Throughout the years 1385-88, however, the Prussians had been unable to command any consensus in favour of treating the English as foes.⁷⁶⁰

This cycle ended with the Treaty of Marienburg,⁷⁶¹ which strongly favoured English interests – although the Hanseatic position in England remained remarkably

⁷⁵³ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, p. 494.

⁷⁵⁴ *HR I* (ii) 199, 309.

⁷⁵⁵ *HR I* (iii) 204.

⁷⁵⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 63.

⁷⁵⁷ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 107.

⁷⁵⁸ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 74; see also below.

⁷⁵⁹ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 45.

⁷⁶⁰ *HR I* (ii) 345-46.

⁷⁶¹ *HR I* (iii) 418.

favourable. After this the English community in Danzig was able to put down roots. Despite the interruption of Anglo-Prussian trade, the Hanseatic share in England's export trade had continued to grow through the 1380s.⁷⁶² There was in 1388 another minor crisis in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, when, "alleging wrongs and damage done them by Englishmen at sea and elsewhere", certain "men of Lubyk, Rustok, Wissemere, Sounde and Hamburg" caused the arrest of men and goods at Stralsund that has already been mentioned above.⁷⁶³ Nine Hanse merchants were promptly arrested in retaliation,⁷⁶⁴ and ten more four days later. On their assurance, however, "that merchants and other lieges of the realm may come and go with their goods and merchandise whatsoever... without hurt, wrong, arrest or violence" in their cities, their release was ordered, and that was the end of the affair.

Good relations did not last long. On 5th April 1391, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order wrote to Richard II, refusing to ratify the Treaty on the grounds that its terms had been breached by the English – referring both to incidents at sea and to the treatment of Prussians in England.⁷⁶⁵ (The actions carried out on "pretext of marque and reprisal",⁷⁶⁶ mentioned above, probably contributed to this state of affairs.) In 1395-96, while the Hanse towns were deliberating among themselves whether or not to compensate English merchants for losses at the hands of the Vitalienbrüder, there are hints that the English had been carrying out violent reprisals, but actual evidence is lacking;⁷⁶⁷ and, in any case, no reaction was ever agreed upon. The arrest of 32 English ships in Prussia from 2nd February to 1st August 1396 is mentioned once only, some

⁷⁶² Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. xx.

⁷⁶³ *C.C.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 535.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; *HR I* (ii) 310.

⁷⁶⁵ *H.U.B.*, Vol. 4, no. 1,054; *HR V* (iv) 6.

⁷⁶⁶ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. IV, p. 372.

⁷⁶⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 71.

eight years later, without further details.⁷⁶⁸ If it did occur as the English complainants alleged, it is more likely to have been part of the continuing disagreement over interpretation of the settlements of 1380 and 1388, rather than in reaction to violence.

Certainly the Grand Master's complaints of 31st May 1397⁷⁶⁹ related to harm suffered by Prussian merchants in England rather than upon the sea, and to lack of compensation for losses predating the Treaty of Marienburg; it was the failure of these appeals that led to the renunciation of the treaty and threatened expulsion of the English from Prussia in the following year.⁷⁷⁰ The English did not respond, and the expulsion was not carried out.

Anglo-Prussian, if not Anglo-Hanseatic, relations were nevertheless at a low point when Henry IV usurped the English throne. His attitude at first seemed likely to be more conciliatory than Richard's; the swift decline into the crisis of 1402-05 is dealt with elsewhere (Chapters I and VIII). Of more concern here is the Hanseatic response to the events of those years. Although the attacks began in the spring of 1402 (with William Jonesson's seizure of two Bremen vessels on 15th and 16th April⁷⁷¹), the anti-English measures of the Prussian Städtetag in July occurred too early to be a reaction to recent violence. On 7th July, Danzig cancelled repayments for confiscated English goods; the Teutonic Order managed to block the towns' attempt to forbid the English entry to inland towns, but two weeks later English trade was restricted to the port towns and the married men among the merchants were expelled.⁷⁷² Presumably, as Lloyd has hypothesised,⁷⁷³ this followed on from the threats of 1398-99.

But, though violence cannot have been the main issue at the beginning of these

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁶⁹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 521.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid.; Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 72.

⁷⁷¹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 112.

⁷⁷² Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, pp. 525-26.

⁷⁷³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 114.

diplomatic troubles, it had certainly become so by the time the Prussians and English began talking in earnest in the summer of 1403. English-owned goods of Prussian origin were freed for export in alien ships, but those English merchants who remained in Prussia had to give security for compensation and hostages for the safety of the Prussian ambassadors.⁷⁷⁴ A truce was agreed – an effective acknowledgement that a state of war existed at sea, although it was a war with the Hanse, not only with Prussia. Henry IV was soon firing off angry orders to the mayors, bailiffs, and sheriffs of Orwell, Ipswich, Calais, Dartmouth, Dover, Hull, Hartlepool, and York, to restore Prussian ships and goods taken at sea in contravention of this truce.⁷⁷⁵

At the end of May 1404, after the Anglo-Prussian truce had expired without further settlement, Stralsund arrested English goods in reprisal for her merchants' losses to English piracy.⁷⁷⁶ The interruption of trade was threatening England's access to badly needed naval stores, but it proved possible to buy these in the Low Countries and to smuggle English cloth into the Baltic German cities through Scania. In the end, the Hansards proved too disunited to enforce bans on trade with England. There was not even unity within Prussia: the Order had pushed strongly against the towns' demands for the confiscation of English goods.⁷⁷⁷ Jenks has called Prussia's policy towards England at this time "Janus-faced".⁷⁷⁸ (It has even been plausibly suggested⁷⁷⁹ that Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen deliberately favoured English interests out of enmity to Danzig.) On 8th October 1405, a provisional Anglo-Prussian treaty was agreed, and all sanctions suspended; it took until 1407 to begin to hammer out a detailed agreement.

Precisely how effective any of this was is hard to say. It is true that this period

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

⁷⁷⁵ C.C.R. *Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 190.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

⁷⁷⁷ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 526.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 530.

⁷⁷⁹ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 111.

marked the start of “a deep and protracted depression”⁷⁸⁰ for English trade, but the whole course of the crisis shows that it was in the immediate term the Hansards who were hit harder; and England’s economic difficulties were to outlast the crisis by decades. Jenks’ implication⁷⁸¹ that it was the embargo adopted on 12th March 1405 that forced reconciliation has some truth, in that it did make the need for it more urgent on the English side; but it would hardly have come to that had not the Hansards themselves already been nearing desperation. Within a few months the Prussians were considering raising it unconditionally, so hard had their own interests been hit.⁷⁸² In any case, the proclamation

“that henceforward none of the king’s liege subjects shall under pain of forfeiture take or arrest at sea or elsewhere any Prussians, men of the Hanse of Lubike or of the Teuton tongue, their men or servants, or their goods or merchandise”⁷⁸³

had been issued on 23rd December 1404: England’s policy, therefore, if not her practice, changed *before* the embargo.

A fall in demand for English goods and the growing insecurity of continental markets, plus a Europe-wide decline in the volume and value of trade, probably had more to do with this than the sanctions of the Hansards. The heating up of the war with France did not help. Of course, the economies of individual towns could be profoundly affected by Hanseatic attitudes – for instance, Boston, where cloth exports by Hansards declined significantly in the 1400s: but this situation owed more to the specific conflict

⁷⁸⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 156.

⁷⁸¹ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 533.

⁷⁸² Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 109.

⁷⁸³ *C.C.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 481.

between English and Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer*, which went back to the 1370s,⁷⁸⁴ and which continued, to take in the arrest of *Bergenfahrer* in Boston mentioned above in 1411,⁷⁸⁵ the Hanseatic reprisals for those arrests,⁷⁸⁶ and the English assault on Bergen in 1413.⁷⁸⁷

There followed a change in the English government's approach to overseas trade, the English communities in many Hanse towns being given the right to elect governors.⁷⁸⁸ These governors, however, were not recognised, even by the relatively Anglophile Teutonic Order, until December 1428.⁷⁸⁹ A similarly altered approach emerged towards piracy, which was suppressed rather more effectively than hitherto. Those named in the Hanseatic list of grievances were ordered arrested and brought before the Royal Council; in cases where the names of individuals were not known, sheriffs were required to investigate and establish in whose hands the booty had ended up.⁷⁹⁰ The Hanse towns, as a result, seem to have lost interest in pursuing a Burgundian alliance at England's expense.

After the battle of Grunwald, Henry IV stopped paying compensation to the now less powerful Prussians, apart from a one-off 2,000 noble payment in 1412.⁷⁹¹ In the latter year, however, the Hanse complained of renewed English piracy.⁷⁹² No official retaliation resulted, however. Trade in the 1410s was largely unimpeded, Danzig's reintroduction of anti-English measures in 1414 having little effect.⁷⁹³ The principal complaints the Hanse had against the English now concerned not piracy but duties, and Henry V's commandeering of German vessels for use in his campaigns in France. The

⁷⁸⁴ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 79.

⁷⁸⁵ *H.U.B.*, Vol. 4, nos. 1,023-25.

⁷⁸⁶ *HR I* (vi) 70.

⁷⁸⁷ Bruns, *Lübecker Bergenfahrer* (Berlin, 1900), p. 349.

⁷⁸⁸ Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. IV, Part I, 107; *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 394.

⁷⁸⁹ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 115.

⁷⁹⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, pp. 535-37.

⁷⁹¹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 125.

⁷⁹² *H.U.B.*, Vol. 5, no. 1,047; *HR I* (vi) 66; *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. IV, pp. 12, 36.

⁷⁹³ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 113.

latter, a serious problem from the Hanseatic point of view,⁷⁹⁴ was raised at the Council of Constance, but to no effect: the Prussians were still seeking compensation for these seizures in 1434.⁷⁹⁵ Even when, *circa* 1418, a Prussian ship was seized without warning for trading with Scotland⁷⁹⁶ – harking back to the events of 1402-05 – it took two years before the Prussians responded by confiscating the *Bartholomew* of Hull to pay for the losses incurred; the confiscation of another ship and imposition of a poll tax on English merchants in 1422 were not connected with this incident.⁷⁹⁷

Conclusions

Although, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the direct reactions of governments to violence at sea were usually (and perhaps of necessity) non-violent, data relating to actual reprisals (arrests, expulsions, bans, as opposed to complaints or court proceedings) is patchy. Such reprisals were clearly not uncommon, particularly on the Hanseatic side, but neither were they common enough (or, at least, well-attested enough) for general patterns to be visible. Patterns do, however, appear in relation to the use of such reprisals in specific crises such as those of 1385-88 and 1402-05.

In both of these cases, it is clear that the imposition of trade restrictions hurt the Hansards themselves as much as the English. The first ended in the First Treaty of Marienburg, which all but conceded England's "Four Points" (*vide* Introduction). The second concluded less favourably, insofar as the English agreed to large compensation claims, but it was the Hansards and not they who had been forced to the negotiating

⁷⁹⁴ Schulz, *Die Hanse und England*, p. 70.

⁷⁹⁵ *HR* I (vi) 451, II (i) 385.

⁷⁹⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 129.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

table, and they subsequently got away with stopping the payments.

It seems, then, that, although such measures were not entirely counter-productive, they could often become so as a result of the Hanseatic dependence on English custom. Used on a small scale, they might serve as bargaining counters, though this seems to have been the English approach more often than it was the Hanseatic one. Used in conjunction with complaints through legal channels, they might help to encourage the “right” decision – as witness the greater seriousness with which Hanseatic complaints were treated in 1407 than in 1403. But, used simply as a diplomatic bludgeon, they could be very dangerous to the wielder.

CHAPTER VIII: *Other factors*

It is, of course, not possible to reach a full understanding of the role of violence and the reasons for resorting to it, without examining cases in which it was not used. In Chapters VI and VII, we have considered non-violent *reactions* to violence at sea: but the theme of Anglo-Hanseatic relations is much broader than this. Furthermore, every issue affecting these relations in this period is connected, however indirectly, to violence at sea. We have already glanced at reciprocity of trading rights, and the broader geopolitics of Northern Europe, and will consider these issues in more detail in this chapter.

Trading rights and reciprocity

The *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*'s argument for reciprocity has been quoted in the Introduction, with its charge that Prussians "have more liberte / Than wee oure selfe", and the proposed solution:

"Therefore lett hem unto ooste go wyth us here,

Or be wee free wyth hem in like manere

In there cuntres".⁷⁹⁸

As has been indicated, this issue was a new one in the era under consideration, as before the third quarter of the fourteenth century there had been no English mercantile

⁷⁹⁸ Warner, *Libelle*, p. 26.

presence to speak of in the Hanse towns or their Baltic and Scandinavian areas of influence. The Hanse presence in England, by contrast, dated back to the league's beginnings in the twelfth century. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, they had negotiated various privileges in individual towns, and in the early fourteenth they had secured the general charters which had confirmed their special status, which was well defined by 1317.⁷⁹⁹

The most important single document was the Carta Mercatoria of 1303. This did not deal with Hansards alone: indeed, in the preamble, King Edward I declared that:

“Wee haue speciall care for the good estate of all marchants of the kingdomes, lands, and countries following: to wit of Almaine, France, Spaine, Portugal, Nauarre, Lombardie, Florence, Prouence, Catalonia, of our duchie of Aquitaine, Tholosa, Caturlune, Flanders, Brabant, and of all other forreine countreis and places by what name soeuer they be called, which come into our kingdome of England, and there remayne, that the sayd marchants may liue in quiet and full securitie vnder our dominion in time to come.”⁸⁰⁰

He therefore decreed, in response to petitions from the said merchants,⁸⁰¹ a long list of rights and privileges, which would come to be viewed as exceedingly generous by our period. Certain limits, however, were set. It was not permissible to trade with known enemies of the kingdom, either within Edward's dominions, or by carrying to hostile

⁷⁹⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 50; the Hanse's other great Western Kontor, in Bruges, rested on charters gained in 1307. (Gade, *Hanseatic Control*, p. 21.)

⁸⁰⁰ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. I, p. 327; see also *E.H.D.*, Vol. III, pp. 515-18, for a modern translation.

⁸⁰¹ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, Vol. I, p. 327.

countries such merchandise as they had either bought in England or brought thither and failed to sell. Wine was not to be taken out of England “without our speciall fauour and licence”. Disputes over bargains once struck were to be settled

“according to the vses and customes of the fayres and townes where it chanced that the said bargaine was made and contracted”.

It was not these limitations, however, which were to cause headaches in our period, but such promises as the following:

“from hence forth we will not in any wise make nor cause to be made any stay or arrest, or any delay by reason of arrest of their wares, marchandises or other goods, by our selues, or by any other or others for any neede or accident against the will of the sayd marchants, without present payment of such a price as the marchants would haue sold those marchandises for to other men, or without making of them other satisfaction, so that they shall hold themselues well contented...

... some certaine faythfull and discreete man resident in London be appointed to doe Iustice to the aforesayd marchants, before whome they may haue their sutes decided, and may speedilie recouer their debts, if the Shiriffes and Maior should not from day to day giue them speedy iustice...

... the aforesayd marchants shal not loose the aforesayd liberties
nor any of them, for any libertie whatsoever, which wee or our
heires hereafter shall grant.”⁸⁰²

These three promises, effectively reiterated in Edward II’s charter of 1317, would come back to haunt the English Crown.

If Hanseatic liberties were threatened in England before the 1370s, it was by the Crown itself, regretting the loss of revenue which resulted from a liberal customs regime; when the London Steelyard appealed to the Hansetag in 1370-71, and ended by being deprived of its competency to negotiate independently with the Crown, there is no evidence that English merchants played any role.⁸⁰³ In the 1370s, however, the picture changed. We have already touched on this in the Introduction: the English presence in the Baltic and Norway was growing, while the Hanse’s long period of growth was coming to an end under the pressure of foreign competition.⁸⁰⁴ (Up to the 1350s, English sources show no awareness of the Hanse’s existence as a confederation of towns: the Hanse seems to have been imagined as consisting solely of the London Kontor.⁸⁰⁵) In 1375, not long after the expulsion of English merchants from Bergen,⁸⁰⁶ the merchants of London petitioned the Crown, complaining of unfair treatment by the Hanse abroad; in the same year, a Hanse delegation arrived to negotiate exemptions from tunnage and poundage, even while Englishmen were encountering considerable

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 50-53. Lloyd sees in this a wider phenomenon, the replacement of the “Hanse of merchants” by the “Hanse of towns”: as non-Hansards increasingly traded in Hanseatic territory, Hanseatic privileges abroad came under attack, and only the towns acting in concert were strong enough to defend them – but the towns’ variant interests undermined their ability to do so. (Ibid., p. 365.)

⁸⁰⁴ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 356.

⁸⁰⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 370

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

protectionism in Prussia.⁸⁰⁷ (The poundage tax was first levied on cloth in 1373;⁸⁰⁸ in 1377, the export of unfinished cloth was banned.⁸⁰⁹) The Commons, hitherto generally benevolent towards the Hanse, began to display the growing hostility felt by the merchant class.⁸¹⁰ This was the backdrop against which the Charter came up for renewal following the death of Edward III in 1377.

The Four Points which emerged in the negotiations of 1377-78 (*vide* Introduction) were of vital importance to Anglo-Hanseatic relations across the period, and for several decades afterwards.⁸¹¹ The Hansards' privileges were in fact confirmed following Edward's death, but were then suspended while the Four Points were put to the Hanse, and – once the Hanse's token threat to withdraw from England had been made and ignored⁸¹² – the wrangling over reciprocity began.⁸¹³ Remarkably, the Consuls of Stralsund and Danzig thought it worthwhile to write to the Lord Mayor of London, “desiring the City to use its good offices with the King to secure better treatment” and threatening the withdrawal of their merchants from England. Unsurprisingly, they were rebuffed.⁸¹⁴ It appears that the Hansards, unaware of the shift in the English merchant class's attitude towards them, regarded the suspension of their privileges as a royal initiative, and thought to find their trading partners in the City better disposed. The Mayor, however, enlightened them, explaining that

“the privileges of the merchants of Almaine had been suspended
by order of the Parliament at Westminster on account of injuries

⁸⁰⁷ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 106.

⁸⁰⁸ Munro, John H., *Textiles, Towns and Trade: Essays in the economic history of late-medieval England and the Low Countries* (Coventry, 1994), pp. 231-32.

⁸⁰⁹ Miller, Edward, “The Economic Policies of Governments: France and England”, in *The Cambridge Economic History, Volume III*, p. 325.

⁸¹⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 369.

⁸¹¹ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 106.

⁸¹² Nash, *The Hansa*, pp. 174-75.

⁸¹³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 57-58.

⁸¹⁴ *C.L.B.*, Book H, p. 101.

inflicted by them on the King's subjects at 'Scone' and elsewhere in their dominions."⁸¹⁵

A compromise was reached in 1380, when the English conditionally reinstated the charter and received similar trading rights in German towns (fulfilling the first of the Four Points) – though not in the Hanse's Scandinavian sphere of influence (the second).⁸¹⁶ It is worth noting, however, that a partially surviving Hull particular of account for 1378-79 shows that trade continued during the crisis, including the export of cloth, despite the fact that the Hansards had to pay full alien rates.⁸¹⁷ It is not, of course, possible to show that there was *no* disruption, as we lack earlier figures for comparison: there was, however, at this stage no *complete* disruption. Nevertheless, there was sufficient inconvenience to make it worth the Hanse's while to concede at least in part to English demands.

The Crown, of course, was not always willing to lend its weight to the merchants' demands for reciprocity. A request from the Commons for recognition of the principle in November 1390 was met with the reply:

"The king wills that foreign merchants repairing to the kingdom be well and courteously and rightfully treated and governed in the said realm, so that they have the greater inclination to return to the same."⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., p. 101. "Scone" is Scania, which was of course not a Hanseatic dominion but subject to the Crown of Denmark. It is possible that the Mayor classed it as one of "their dominions" because of the influence that they wielded there; but more probably he intended "elsewhere" to distinguish "Scone" from "their dominions".

⁸¹⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 61; *HR I* (ii) 270.

⁸¹⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 87; T.N.A. E122/59/1.

⁸¹⁸ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 182.

By Henry IV's time, however, when domestic instability and the after-effects of Richard II's financial profligacy had left the Crown far less well positioned to go against the interests of the merchant class, such replies would be a thing of the past. Similar requests in 1404 and 1411 were met with curt affirmation.⁸¹⁹

The Hanse's jealous guarding of its privileges in England may be seen by a glance at the case of Christian Kelmar, a Dortmund merchant who served as alderman of the London Kontor in 1383. Not long after his term of office, Kelmar, wishing to re-export a pack of ermine skins which he had brought into London, paid the full alien rate to avoid inconvenience, though making it clear that this was a unique arrangement and not to be taken as a precedent. He was expelled from the Kontor⁸²⁰

“by some envious merchants... whereupon the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of London admitted him to the freedom of the city,” the King adding to this in January 1386 “that he be as free throughout the realm as if he had been born in the city of London or elsewhere in the king's dominions, and not charged with customs otherwise than as others the king's lieges are charged.”⁸²¹

In 1394, alleging that Hanse blackballing had cost him his overseas contacts and greatly diminished his business, he sued the Hanse in London for £1,000 damages.⁸²² (It was not unknown for Hansards to become denizens or even citizens of English cities, but

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. VIII, pp. 274, 546.

⁸²⁰ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 62.

⁸²¹ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 97.

⁸²² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 62.

presumably they all, like Ernest de Ruden in Lincoln in 1399, were required to demonstrate that they were no longer “of the company of merchants of Almain”.⁸²³)

Although the period 1380-85 was a reasonably untroubled one in terms of Anglo-Hanseatic relations in general, in 1384 the Prussians decreed that English merchants, though already established in Danzig, could henceforth import their wares only through the much less accessible port of Elbing. The King protested to the Teutonic Grand Master, but the Zwiyn incident (12th May 1385) intervened before the situation could be resolved.⁸²⁴ The crisis in, particularly, Anglo-Prussian relations which followed has been looked at in Chapter VII, as it was violence which began it: it is worth noting that neither side used violence as an instrument of policy during this crisis.

The economic effect of the quarrel is difficult to measure precisely, particularly as we possess few figures for the months immediately following the incident and the arrests and counter-arrests of goods which followed. The measures taken in England and Prussia could hardly have failed in the immediate term to disrupt trade severely, and this appears to have happened.⁸²⁵ However, it is clear that England was not starved of goods from the Hanseatic sphere of influence. Boston, in the twelve months beginning 28th November 1386, saw its highest ever levels of denizen and alien trade, a very substantial portion of which consisted of imports by Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer*.⁸²⁶ (Bostonians themselves had made little or no attempt to break into the Norwegian trade at this period, and hence were not in direct competition with their Hanseatic guests.)⁸²⁷

⁸²³ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Richard II*, Vol. VI, p. 463. See also Henry Wyman in York (ibid., Vol. III, p. 518), Hermann Steynford in Boston (ibid., Vol. IV, p. 367), and Nicholas Storme (*C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 157).

⁸²⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 62-63.

⁸²⁵ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 107.

⁸²⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 82, 84; T.N.A. E122/7/19; Rigby, S. H. (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of Boston in the Reign of Richard II* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 54.

⁸²⁷ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 85.

Carus-Wilson and Coleman's figures, as set out in their graph "England: Cloth Exports", appear to indicate that English cloth exports in the late 1380s, though unstable, were consistently higher than they had been a few years before.⁸²⁸ The issue on which negotiations focused was compensation for the initial Prussian losses and subsequent arrest of goods: the Prussian trade ban seems to have been of secondary significance. Parliament had, in October 1386, requested the suspension of Hanseatic privileges, a request denied by the Crown.⁸²⁹ but even this may have been intended as a reprisal for the arrests rather than for the trade ban.

The embassy of two merchants (one of them from York: more Yorkshiremen than Londoners had lost goods in the arrests of 1385⁸³⁰) and a royal clerk, which finally sailed in June 1388, went with the authority of the King in Council. It was paid for, however, not by the Crown, but by the merchants it effectively represented: an innovation in English diplomacy, and a telling one.⁸³¹ On the one hand, the merchants were now a diplomatic force, conducting their own negotiations with the Hanse as a body, with the Crown's blessing: on the other, their interests were still distinguished from the nation's, or they would not have been required to meet the cost of the embassy. Such was the curious position of a class which was more influential than ever before, but still not able to sway government decisively.

The first Treaty of Marienburg was concluded on 21st August, allowing English merchants to enter any Prussian port and trade "as of old and from of old the usage had existed".⁸³² Although it was not immediately ratified, its effect was certainly immediate.

⁸²⁸ Carus-Wilson and Coleman (eds), *England's Export Trade*, p. 138. Lloyd has demonstrated (*England and the German Hanse*, p. 97) that their overall picture is misleading, but this is due to discrepancies between customs records of different periods, which do not apply within this limited timeframe. The figures may therefore be (cautiously) accepted.

⁸²⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 63.

⁸³⁰ *HR I* (iii) 404.

⁸³¹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 64-65; *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 453.

⁸³² Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 118; *HR I* (iii) 418.

In September, a Danzig ship arrived in Great Yarmouth bearing £80 worth of German-owned Baltic goods:⁸³³ relations were re-established, and Parliament ordered redress to wronged Prussian merchants.⁸³⁴ It may also have been at this time – certainly it was no later than 1388, and it is difficult to believe that it can have been significantly earlier – that a permanent English trading station was established in Danzig.⁸³⁵

Such prolonged crises were exceptional. More typical was a smaller disruption to Anglo-Hanseatic relations which also occurred in 1388, when all goods from Stralsund, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, and Hamburg in English ports were arrested until those cities' merchants gave assurances they would export nothing without licence. This seems an oddly irrelevant condition, given that the action was taken in response to the appeal of merchants of London, Norwich, Lynn, Yarmouth, Boston, and Hull concerning the arrest of English goods in Stralsund a few months earlier (which was itself a response to the loss of a ship to English pirates).⁸³⁶ They did, however, also mainpern for the freedom of English merchants to enter and trade in their towns.⁸³⁷

These Wendish towns, like the *Bergenfahrer* in Boston, had cheerfully traded with the English while the Prussians officially would not. English merchants expelled from the Prussian towns were even permitted to settle in Stralsund.⁸³⁸ A ban by the whole of the Hanse might have been far more effective. (Bans on the export of Baltic grain to the North Sea had a devastating effect on prices in Flanders in this period,⁸³⁹ whereas the Hanseatic blockade of 1388-92 did not, because it was circumvented by

⁸³³ T.N.A. E122/149/22.

⁸³⁴ T.N.A. SC 8/21/1009.

⁸³⁵ Miskimin, *The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe*, p. 143.

⁸³⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 68; *Select Pleas and Memoranda Rolls*, pp. 143-44.

⁸³⁷ C.C.R. *Richard II*, Vol. III, p. 535.

⁸³⁸ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 74.

⁸³⁹ Tits-Dieuaide, Marie-Jeanne, *La formation des prix céréalières en Brabant et en Flandre au XV siècle* (Brussels, 1975).

some members.⁸⁴⁰) However, it was in the nature of trade bans that they were difficult to enforce: they could also backfire, given the growing importance of English trade to Hanse towns – including Danzig, which seems to have suffered from the crisis of the 1380s.⁸⁴¹ The flipside of Danzig's good location and its expanding business exporting agricultural and forestry products in the period from about 1360 was that it needed the continued custom of the incomers from Western Europe, particularly the English.⁸⁴²

The arrest of ships and goods, as we have seen, provoked more urgent reactions. The Prussians had seen it too, which is probably why they reportedly arrested 32 English ships during a somewhat obscure dispute in 1396,⁸⁴³ and several English merchants after English seamen had taken Prussian goods from a Scottish prize in 1401.⁸⁴⁴ The expulsion of married English merchants in 1402, and the arrest of goods to compel sureties for compensation for the rising tide of piracy in 1403, were similarly decisive, and similarly effective, measures.⁸⁴⁵ However, although the sureties – and hostages for the safety of Prussian ambassadors to England – were forthcoming, the piracy did not cease: and in March 1405 the Hanse resorted once more to trade bans. Although these did succeed in bringing the English to the negotiating table,⁸⁴⁶ they ultimately proved counterproductive, undermined by Hanseatic disunity and the towns' own need for trade with England.⁸⁴⁷ (Even securing these measures was made difficult

⁸⁴⁰ Tits-Dieuaide, "The Baltic Grain Trade and Cereal Prices in Flanders at the end of the Middle Ages: Some Remarks", in Minchinton (ed.), *Baltic Grain Trade*, p. 18.

⁸⁴¹ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 108.

⁸⁴² Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 93.

⁸⁴³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 74.

⁸⁴⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. IV, Part 1, p. 7.

⁸⁴⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 114-15; note also the apparent effectiveness of the restrictions imposed on the movement of Hanseatic merchants and goods in Boston during a dispute concerning violence done to English merchants in Bergen in 1411 (*C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. IV, pp. 308, 321).

⁸⁴⁶ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 532.

⁸⁴⁷ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 109; see also Chapter VII.

by disunity: the Prussians had first proposed a ban on the import of English cloth nearly three years earlier, but Wendish opposition had made it impossible.⁸⁴⁸)

Henry IV, after usurping the Crown in September 1399, swiftly confirmed the Hanse's privileges: but he changed his tune somewhat after the grievances of the merchant class had been made known to him. On 6th December, he wrote to the Teutonic Grand Master, and the Governors of Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, and Greifswald, summoning them to appear

“in person, or by deputies, before his council to answer to merchants of England, who complained, that they were not treated in those places so well as the merchants from them were treated in England, though the express condition, upon which they had obtained their privileges in England, was, that English merchants should enjoy the same advantages in their countries,”⁸⁴⁹

also warning them against allowing non-Hansards to masquerade as such and thereby benefit from their privileges. “To answer to the merchants of England” is a remarkable formulation. Of course, the various Hanseatic governors were in fact being summoned to answer to the Council, and merely to answer the complaints of the merchants, but that they were summoned at all is indicative of the influence the merchants had now come to wield.

The early years of the fifteenth century, as we have seen, were characterised by an upsurge in English piracy against Hanseatic and other alien victims, with attendant

⁸⁴⁸ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 524.

⁸⁴⁹ Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, p. 610.

diplomatic problems. They also saw increasingly stringent anti-alien legislation in England, pursued with a singularity of purpose that contrasts markedly with the ever-changing policies of the previous reign.⁸⁵⁰ From 1404, in a tightening of restrictions that had been laid down as early as 1393,⁸⁵¹ alien importers were required to provide surety that they would sell their wares within three months of arrival, forbidden to trade with other aliens,⁸⁵² and required to register with a “host” who would supervise their activities.⁸⁵³ The situation did not improve. In 1411, the three month period was reduced to 40 days. From 1425 – the year in which Henry VI’s minority government confirmed the Hanse’s privileges following a period of wrangling much like that at the beginning of Richard II’s reign – aliens had to find a host within 15 days, sell no goods before they had found a host, and not only sell *all* their imports but buy a quota of English goods within forty days.⁸⁵⁴ They were further required to swear to observe the statutes against the export of bullion.⁸⁵⁵

A similar hosting system was imposed on English merchants in Prussia after 1413,⁸⁵⁶ probably not coincidentally. As far back as 1402, rules had been enforced in Prussia forbidding Englishmen to settle with their families, trade with other foreigners, or trade in the interior.⁸⁵⁷ (The temporary expulsion of English merchants in 1404 probably had more to do with piracy than with England’s anti-alien measures: but there was also an element of more general anti-alien feeling on the Prussian side, as witness

⁸⁵⁰ Lipson, *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 523; see also Chapter V for a discussion of how the domestic political pressures differed.

⁸⁵¹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, p. 242.

⁸⁵² Not a new measure, but certainly re-emphasised and perhaps more strictly enforced; cf. *C.Ch.R.*, Vol. V, p. 237, for a request to the Crown for the confirmation of a similar rule in December 1377.

⁸⁵³ This practice had existed since the twelfth century, but had not hitherto been so strongly enforced. See Lipson, *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 528.

⁸⁵⁴ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 109-10.

⁸⁵⁵ Giuseppi, “Alien merchants”, p.85.

⁸⁵⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 129.

⁸⁵⁷ Postan, “Political Relations”, p. 109.

the banning of Holland and Zealand merchants from Danzig in 1405-08.⁸⁵⁸) The volume of trade, however, seems to have been little affected by these measures. Certainly no direct connection can be drawn with the general depression suffered by English trade from 1402/3 on,⁸⁵⁹ although the end of English expansion in the Baltic after about 1400⁸⁶⁰ probably played its part.

Only briefly, during the rule of the Anglophile Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen (1410-13), did the English actually achieve a privileged status in Prussia comparable to that of Hansards in England.⁸⁶¹ and von Plauen seems to have acted deliberately against the interests of the towns. This was despite Prussia's official concession of reciprocity in 1408.⁸⁶² What the English in fact wanted was to turn their settlement in Danzig into a mirror image of the London Steelyard.⁸⁶³ This they were not to achieve, although their own government did by this time support their right to hold assemblies and elect governors,⁸⁶⁴ which the community in Danzig had been doing anyway since at least 1391.⁸⁶⁵ (It was presumably to these rights that Robert atte Wode, John Cutbert, William Bery, and Andrew Emelot were referring when they complained, in either 1406/7 or 1417×24, of having been denied the "right of fellowship of merchants" and imprisoned in Danzig.⁸⁶⁶ The Teutonic Order did not officially recognise this right until December 1428.⁸⁶⁷) In 1420, as the Prussians again saw cause for alarm in English expansion, the factory in Danzig was closed down and its governor

⁸⁵⁸ Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 118.

⁸⁵⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 156.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁸⁶¹ Lloyd, "A reconsideration of two Anglo-Hanseatic treaties of the fifteenth century", in *English Historical Review* CII (1987), p. 924.

⁸⁶² Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", pp. 110-11; Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 119.

⁸⁶³ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 112.

⁸⁶⁴ Miller, "Economic Policies", p. 337; *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. II, p. 394; *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, pp. 1031-32.

⁸⁶⁵ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. xx.

⁸⁶⁶ T.N.A. C1/4/196; see p. 210.

⁸⁶⁷ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 115.

imprisoned; although it was reestablished in 1427-28, it would ultimately come to nothing.⁸⁶⁸

The collapse of Hamburg's trade to Great Yarmouth in the first decade of the fifteenth century has already been examined in Chapter IV, where I essentially accepted the claim of the Yarmouth customs officers that "lack of foresight and unnecessary administration" were to blame.⁸⁶⁹ certainly it is more plausible than Hans Nirnheim's attempt to pin responsibility on the Vitalienbrüder.⁸⁷⁰ However, this seems to have been a question of excessive bureaucracy rather than deliberate policy.

In 1420, the issue of reciprocity remained unresolved. What must have looked at the time like a conclusion to the debate (though in fact Anglo-Hanseatic tensions were far from over) was achieved with the Vorrath Treaty in 1437, in which English merchants in Prussia were promised "all the liberties and free customs which they have ever reasonably enjoyed in times gone by," amounting to considerable freedom of movement and trade, with equivalent privileges for Hansards in England and an undertaking to honour Henry IV's unpaid debts.⁸⁷¹ The major Hanse towns, however, rejected the agreement: and, in the final settlement reached at Utrecht in 1474, the English abandoned the principle of reciprocity.

Taxes and duties

A peculiarity of Hanseatic privileges in England which must have been particularly galling to English merchants was that, owing to an exemption from

⁸⁶⁸ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 303.

⁸⁶⁹ Rymer, *Foedera*, Appendix. C.5.

⁸⁷⁰ Nirnheim, *Pfund- und Werkzollbuch*, pp. ix – xix.

⁸⁷¹ *E.H.D.*, p. 1035; see Chapter IX for a more detailed discussion.

increases in duties (and specifically from the 1347 cloth custom⁸⁷²), they were by this period actually paying less on some goods than the English themselves, even before the tunnage⁸⁷³ and poundage⁸⁷⁴ from which they were exempt were calculated. On a standard length of cloth (not dyed in grain), for instance, on which other aliens were charged 33*d.*, English exporters paid 14*d.*, and Hansards only a shilling.⁸⁷⁵ In this period and for a few decades before, duties had been rising fast. The charge on the export of raw wool, for instance, set at 6*s.* 8*d.* (half a mark) per sack in 1275, had by 1413 or earlier risen to 33*s.* 4*d.* for natives, and twice as much for aliens⁸⁷⁶ - and this in an era characterised by deflation!⁸⁷⁷ The total value of petty custom levied on goods other than wool, hides, wine, wax, and cloths of assise, and which is commonly used to determine the rough total volume of general exports, also rose sharply in the 1380s.⁸⁷⁸ The upward trend had begun before the contraction experienced by the export market from the 1350s onwards.⁸⁷⁹ While there may be a connection, even a mutually reinforcing relationship, between the two phenomena, the contraction was more probably a slightly delayed reaction to depopulation caused by the Black Death.

⁸⁷² Carus-Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, p. 12. This custom imposed differing duties on the export of cloths of assise and kerseys, depending on whether the exporters were English or alien, and whether or not the cloths were dyed in grain: Ormrod, W. M., "Finance and Trade under Richard II", in Goodman, Anthony, and Gillespie, James (eds), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), p. 169.

⁸⁷³ On wine imports, charged at various times after 1347 at 2*s.* or 3*s.* per tun.

⁸⁷⁴ Charged on a wide range of imports and exports, at rates of 9*d.*, 12*d.*, or 18*d.* in the pound at different times: Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 317. It was levied from 1347, and continuously from 1373 (Munro, *Textiles, Towns and Trade*, pp. 231-32), though no accounts are available between Henry IV's accession and May 1403 (Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 156); it was set aside in the case of Hansards from Henry IV's accession (Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 523). At the same time, kerseys and other small cloths were made exempt from the cloth toll for three years, which both Hanseatic and English exporters wanted. (Ibid.)

⁸⁷⁵ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 189. Dollinger falls into the common error of translating "*sine grano*" as bleached; the cloth was not necessarily either bleached or undyed – it was merely not dyed with the most expensive colour.

⁸⁷⁶ Miller, "Economic Policies", p. 317. Hansards played little part in this trade.

⁸⁷⁷ Findlay, Ronald, and O'Rourke, Kevin H., *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, 2007), p. 120.

⁸⁷⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 81, 97. The rate of petty custom remained constant: what rose was the valuation set on most goods.

⁸⁷⁹ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 292; Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. xx.

Be that as it may, the heavy charges on wool not unnaturally made finished cloth a more attractive option for exporters, especially Hansards.⁸⁸⁰ The proportion of English wool leaving the country as finished cloth rose from about 4% *c.* 1350, to over 30% *c.* 1400, and over 50% by *c.* 1450; this trend continued into the sixteenth century.⁸⁸¹ The majority of the trade remained in English hands, though the alien (particularly Hanseatic) share was rising in this period.⁸⁸² Other factors helped to make cloth more popular. Unlike raw wool, on which limitations were imposed under the Statute of Staples from 1353 to 1363, it could be exported from any port at any time.⁸⁸³ Even after the Home Staples were abolished, raw wool had to be sent to Calais, while finished cloth could be exported directly. Certainly the trend, which was steep, long-lasting, and consistent, is not to be explained by any one cause alone. May McKisack's suggestion that the various measures discouraging the export of raw wool were deliberately designed to protect and nurture the native cloth industry is intriguing, but lacks solid evidential support.⁸⁸⁴ Whatever the cause, however, the resultant growth meant that England's cloth exports outstripped demand in the existing markets. New markets had therefore to be sought, and expansion into the Hanseatic zone of influence naturally followed.⁸⁸⁵

The issue of taxation was one on which the Crown appeared to share the interests of its subjects: Hanseatic exemptions were costing revenue. Nevertheless, in 1391 the Hansards, having complained of unjustified imposts, were granted two years' exemption from imposts, "because the king desires to deal favourably with foreign

⁸⁸⁰ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. xx.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. xxvii, 258.

⁸⁸³ Carus-Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, p. 9; Lucas, *Overseas Enterprise*, pp. 30-33.

⁸⁸⁴ McKisack, *Fourteenth Century*, p. 356; Findlay and O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty*, p. 115.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

merchants coming to England and especially with the Hanse merchants”.⁸⁸⁶ The exemption from poundage was confirmed in 1406 and 1410, despite the evidence (see above) from the crisis of the late 1370s that Hansards would still export cloth even when charged full alien rates. Of course, as Ian D. Colvin pointed out⁸⁸⁷ (though he somewhat exaggerates the degree of apparent Hanseatic influence over Crown decisions), timber and other necessities for England’s military purposes, particularly the renewed war with France after 1414, were imported largely from the Baltic, giving the Crown an interest in maintaining trade with the Hanse. In the end, however, Hansards were compelled to pay tunnage at the full alien rate, and a 1422 decision in the court of the Exchequer Chamber rejected their appeal for the reinstatement of the exemption.⁸⁸⁸

Customs officials were certainly thorough; merchants are reported to have complained “that their persons were searched to their shirts”.⁸⁸⁹ The Staple system helped to facilitate the collection of revenue, and the standardisation of quality;⁸⁹⁰ those English merchants who wriggled out of the obligation to visit the Calais Staple on going abroad did so only by paying a duty on any wool or tin they carried, in gold or silver, direct to the Master of the Tower Mint.⁸⁹¹ Successful smuggling is very rarely mentioned – though aliens exporting custom-exempt clothing articles were accused in the Commons in January 1410 of smuggling goods and gold out of the realm, the latter a subject of great concern in these bullionist times.⁸⁹² Attempts were made: the Prussian Simon Bortyn was accused of attempting to smuggle:

⁸⁸⁶ *C.P.R. Richard II*, Vol. V, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁸⁷ Colvin, Ian D., *The Germans in England: 1066 – 1598* (London, 1915), pp. 80-81.

⁸⁸⁸ *E.H.D.*, pp. 486-87. The particular document says nothing about poundage, which had far more impact on the Hansards, as they rarely imported wine.

⁸⁸⁹ Giuseppi, “Alien merchants”, p. 85.

⁸⁹⁰ Lipson, *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 550.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁸⁹² *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 463.

“60 pieces of tin and six bowls of tin weighing 122 pounds and worth 30s.6d., 12 dozens of russet cloth worth 40s., another dozen of cloth worth 16s.3d., 5 yards of blanket cloth worth 7s.6d., 11 yards of blanket cloth worth 6s., 7 pairs of shoes worth 7s., two piles of scarlet worth 6s. and one red pile worth 8d”,⁸⁹³

while a citizen of Zierikzee was arrested for smuggling at Yarmouth in 1415.⁸⁹⁴ Merchants who were accused of smuggling because of discrepancies in the weight of cargoes of wool (which had probably simply got wet in the Channel crossing⁸⁹⁵) were able to demonstrate their innocence thanks to safeguards already in place.⁸⁹⁶ Customs formed by this stage a high proportion of the Crown’s revenue; they were used to subsidise the unsuccessful experiment of 1406 in which the keeping of the sea was entrusted to merchants and shipowners.⁸⁹⁷

More usually, tunnage was used to compensate shipowners whose vessels were commandeered. The abandonment of this practice by Henry V was complained of by the Commons in March 1416, with the usual claims that it would lead to the “ruin” of England’s naval capacity; the King’s non-committal reply was that he “wishe[d] to do that which right and reason require on this matter”.⁸⁹⁸ Subsidies on wine, woolfells, and assorted other staple goods were continually being granted and regranted to the King by

⁸⁹³ *C.P.R. Henry IV*, Vol. I, p. 532. Bortyn was pardoned and his ship and goods returned following the payment of a 200 mark fine to the Exchequer; had this happened during the 1402-05 crisis rather than in the summer of 1401, he might have encountered more difficulty in recovering them.

⁸⁹⁴ T.N.A. E122/151/9.

⁸⁹⁵ Salzman, A. L., *English Trade in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1931), p. 67.

⁸⁹⁶ Hope, *British Shipping*, p. 67.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸⁹⁸ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. IX, pp. 154-55.

Parliament, though generally for limited periods subject to renewal.⁸⁹⁹ It was proposed in 1405 that further customs breaks should be temporarily granted to Hansards in compensation for the recent wave of English piracy:⁹⁰⁰ however, this agreement (which did not mention tunnage and poundage⁹⁰¹) proved abortive.

Outside the periods when the Hanse's privileges were suspended (1378-80 and 1422-25), it is not possible to discern any direct correlation between duties levied and the current state of Anglo-Hanseatic relations. More broadly, however, English resentment of Hanseatic exemptions, and the Hanse's desire to retain them, were ever present factors underlying the diplomatic fluctuations throughout the period.

Relations with third parties

The issue of violence involving third parties has been examined in Chapter III. The single greatest factor contributing to the level of violence was, unsurprisingly, war (whether England's wars with France, Scotland, and other enemies; the conflict in Scandinavia 1389-95; or the war between the Teutonic Knights and the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy in 1410). However, diplomatic and economic relations with third parties, and the general geopolitical picture, also influenced Anglo-Hanseatic relations.

England

⁸⁹⁹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, passim.

⁹⁰⁰ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. II, p. 533.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 535.

England's relations with polities whose authorities directly overlapped with the Hanse, such as the Teutonic Knights and the Empire, are clearly of great significance, and have been considered in Chapter III. The Anglo-Imperial alliance of 1416, for instance, can hardly have been welcomed by Hansards.⁹⁰² We have examined in Chapters III and V how England's relations with the Knights in large part reflected the relations of both with the Hanse: the Knights usually spoke for Prussian Hansards in negotiations, and were more inclined to favour the English when their own relations with the towns were poor. The 1437 treaty, which the major Hanse towns rejected, was – though its architect was a Danzig bürgermeister – officially made between the English Crown and the Teutonic Order.⁹⁰³

So too were her relations with the Hanse's Scandinavian neighbours: the activities of English merchants and fishermen in and off Iceland in the 1410s and 1420s impacted on relations with both the Danish Crown and the Hanse. (These activities went directly against their own government's instructions,⁹⁰⁴ though the men involved complained that they had been driven thither by the dearth of fish in English waters, and appealed to the Crown to uphold what they regarded as their rights.⁹⁰⁵) Indeed, a German named Stephen Schellendorp, very possibly an agent of the Hanseatic *Bergenfahrer*, actually wrote to King Erik in 1420, alleging that the English meant to take Iceland from him.⁹⁰⁶

Erik may have been less influenced by Schellendorp than has been argued in the past – he invited English merchants, along with Hollanders, to his new town of Landskrone in 1422,⁹⁰⁷ and did not expel the English from Iceland until after they had

⁹⁰² Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 161.

⁹⁰³ *E.H.D.*, p. 1035.

⁹⁰⁴ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 363.

⁹⁰⁵ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. IX, p. 156.

⁹⁰⁶ Carus-Wilson, "The Iceland Trade", in Power and Postan, *Studies in English Trade*, p. 164.

⁹⁰⁷ Lönnroth, "Economic Policies", p. 394.

kidnapped his governor in 1425⁹⁰⁸ – but clearly Anglo-Danish and Anglo-Hanseatic relations were intertwined. It is notable that the English mercantile presence in Iceland appears to have been established after English merchants in Scandinavia received from their own government the right to hold meetings and elect governors in 1408, which may have emboldened them to expand into a fresh Scandinavian market. This grant had itself followed on from the Crown's recognition of similar rights for merchants in Germany and the Low Countries the previous year.⁹⁰⁹ an ambition originally inspired by the organisation of Hanseatic merchants in England.

Shortly before this, Englishmen venturing to Nordland had come up against the prohibition against foreigners trading north of Bergen – a point brought up, interestingly enough, not by Hansards, but by Bergen's Norwegian councillors.⁹¹⁰ While the Hansards wanted their competitors out of the Norwegian trade altogether, it is probable that Bergen was more concerned with *keeping* English custom: if a direct trade route was opened up to Nordland, Bergen might lose its status as Norway's principal emporium.

Interestingly enough, it does not appear that Hansards were affected by the anti-alien sentiments stirred up in England as a by-product of the Papal schism. When in January 1404 the Commons requested the expulsion from England of all aliens adhering to the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII, they took the opportunity to add that

“with regard to other Catholic foreigners, such as those from
Germany, they should be assigned to live in garrisons at certain

⁹⁰⁸ Surprisingly, the *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* refers to twelve years' traffic to Iceland “wythoute parille”. However, since it mentions a deterioration of relations at the end of that time, it seems probable that the twelve years referred to are *before* 1425, rather than since.

⁹⁰⁹ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. xx-xxi; *E.H.D.*, pp. 1031-32.

⁹¹⁰ Gade, *Hanseatic Control*, p. 95.

points of entry, as was the custom in the time of the noble King Edward [III]”.⁹¹¹

Hansards, however – who were of course the majority of “those from Germany” – were already living in their *Kontors* behind stout walls, and there is no evidence that they were affected by this measure.

Overall, the picture is patchy and vague, compared with the obvious impact of the violent incidents examined in Chapter III. Apart from the single case of Iceland towards the end of the period, it is difficult to point to specific instances in which the effect of England’s non-violent relations with third parties on relations with the Hanse can be demonstrated.

The Hanse

At the same time that the nature of Anglo-Hanseatic relations was being reshaped by English mercantile expansion into the Baltic, merchants from the Low Countries were also arriving there. There was a Dutch presence in Livonia from 1366, earlier than any English presence is attested: yet there seems to have been less friction.⁹¹² Not until 1405, by which time they were beginning to supplant the English as the major threat to the Hanse’s supremacy in trade,⁹¹³ were Dutch merchants barred from Danzig.⁹¹⁴ There were, of course, major differences between the Dutch and the English. There were Netherland cities within the Hanse, and no Hanseatic *Kontors*

⁹¹¹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 239.

⁹¹² Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p.118.

⁹¹³ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 94.

⁹¹⁴ Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 118.

within non-Hanseatic cities in the counties of Holland and Zeeland. Nor did the Dutch at this time have the imperialistic record that the English had: the Prussians' claim to fear that Prussia would be taken over as Gascony had been was specific to English expansion.

Flanders, however, was a different matter. Bruges, like London, was home to a major *Kontor* whose relations with the local merchant class were not always rosy. When the war situation disrupted Flemish-Hanseatic trade in 1388-92, the English must have been well placed to fill the gap:⁹¹⁵ and it may not be coincidental that English cloth export figures reached a plateau in the years 1391-93.⁹¹⁶ (The Duke of Burgundy, interestingly enough, appealed to the Teutonic Grand Master to mediate in this dispute:⁹¹⁷ the Knights, of course, had a vested interest in being able to buy Flemish cloth, as they made their vestments from it.⁹¹⁸)

The union of the Low Country counties under Burgundian overlordship from the end of the fourteenth century undoubtedly contributed to the decline of the Hanse's power.⁹¹⁹ A more obviously threatening union, however, was that of the Scandinavian monarchies under Queen Margaret. The war of 1389-95 has been covered in Chapters III and IV: it should be added that a Lübeck-led embargo on Hanseatic trade to Denmark brought Margaret temporarily to the negotiating table in the summer of 1393⁹²⁰ - only three months after Richard II had lent the Queen three ships hired at Lynn.⁹²¹ Clearly the war was driving England and the Hanse into opposite camps even before the Vitalienbrüder began to trouble English shipping.

⁹¹⁵ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 93; Lönnroth, "Economic Policies", p. 390.

⁹¹⁶ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 57.

⁹¹⁷ Lönnroth, "Economic Policies".

⁹¹⁸ Tits-Dieuaide, "Baltic Grain Trade", p. 17.

⁹¹⁹ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 95; see also Chapter III.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁹²¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, Vol. III Part IV, p. 85.

The other union which threatened interests intertwined with the Hanse's was, of course, that of the Crowns of Poland and Lithuania. The Battle of Grunwald in 1410 was a catastrophe for the Teutonic Order: they lost their dominance over the Prussian-Livonian Hanse towns,⁹²² the English stopped paying compensation for wrongs inflicted on Prussians at sea, and steep inflation hit Prussia.⁹²³ A side-effect of this, however, was that the Prussian appetite for foreign goods declined, to the detriment of English custom in the area.⁹²⁴

Of the many and varied factors in Anglo-Hanseatic relations not directly related to violence, it is clear that the issue of trading rights and reciprocity was the most consistently and demonstrably significant (though of course the question of duties can never be entirely separated from it). This was driven principally by two factors: the increasing mercantile contact between England and the Hanse, most notably the English presence in Danzig; and the increasing significance of the merchant class in English domestic politics (see also Chapter V). It is very difficult to compare the significance of the issue of reciprocity to that of violence at sea. As a constant factor, it did not need to be constantly reiterated, whereas the problem of violence was composed of individual incidents chronicled individually, and therefore looms perhaps disproportionately large in the surviving evidence. When agreements were hammered out, however, as in 1388, 1405-08, and 1437, it is notable that the question of reciprocity is generally mentioned first – but that of compensation for losses to piracy is given effectively equal weight, or little less. In one sense, of course, reciprocity of rights and the piracy problem were two sides of the same coin: both were significant primarily as hindrances to trade, and it was the merchant class who had the greatest interest in resolving both.

⁹²² Lönnroth, "Economic Policies", p. 391.

⁹²³ Carsten, *Origins of Prussia*, p. 133.

⁹²⁴ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 94.

CHAPTER IX: 1420 and after

Before proceeding to the Conclusion, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the situation at the end of our period, and an overview of succeeding events up to and beyond the Vorrath Treaty of 1437.

The situation in 1420

Between the accession of Henry V and the Treaty of Troyes, much changed in Anglo-Hanseatic relations. Piracy, as a result of Crown initiatives, was much less frequent than in the previous two reigns:⁹²⁵ but Henry's war policy had given the Hanse a new grievance, in the shape of unpaid compensation claims for ships commandeered to transport troops to France.⁹²⁶ Exactions on the Steelyard, which the Mayor's Court had overturned in 1418, were reinstated in 1420 by the King's Council.⁹²⁷ Across the North Sea, the Teutonic Grand Master was smiling on Danzig's restrictions on English commerce, which his predecessor had opposed.⁹²⁸ In July, a Hull ship was seized in Danzig, to pay for losses incurred when the English had seized a Prussian ship some two years before, on the old pretext of illicit trade with the Scots.⁹²⁹ The City of London had refused in 1419 to appoint an English alderman to the Steelyard, forcing Anglo-Hanseatic disputes in London to be heard in City courts or taken to higher authorities.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁵ Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 147; Richmond, "Royal Administration", p. 105. Richmond's graph of piracy cases found in the printed calendars (*ibid.*, p. 114) shows only twelve over the years 1414-20, spiking at six in 1418, as opposed to 39 for the period 1407-13, twice spiking at ten: a very striking difference.

⁹²⁶ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 125, 127.

⁹²⁷ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 113.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*; Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 129.

⁹²⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 129.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Bergenfahrer troubled by competition from English merchants and fishermen travelling to Iceland were finding the Danish Crown sympathetic; five years later, travel to Iceland would be restricted.⁹³¹

The geopolitics of Northern Europe had changed considerably over the past generation. Not only was the English Crown now the greatest power in France, actual union awaiting only the death of Charles VI (although fighting continued): Scandinavia was united under King Erik, Henry of England's brother-in-law;⁹³² while Duke Philip of Burgundy was also Count of Flanders, and his cousin and ally John IV was Duke of Brabant. In 1432, Philip would acquire the counties of Holland and Hainault, uniting the Low Countries under Burgundian rule and ending the possibility, for the Hanse or anyone else, of playing off the local princes against one another.⁹³³ Exactly what impact these developments had on Anglo-Hanseatic relations is difficult to gauge (see Chapter III): though some effects are obvious. The defeat of France and consequent English control of the Channel lessened lawlessness and assisted in the clampdown on piracy.⁹³⁴ The union of Scandinavia had a similar effect, insofar as it ended divisions which had provided opportunities for pirates, while also meaning that Anglo-Hanseatic competition in the Bergen, Scania, and now Icelandic, trades concerned the same monarchy, at the very time when English interest in Iceland was on the rise. (This may be because the increased use of the compass, first mentioned in the accounts of the King's ships during the Clerkship of John Starling in 1409-11, made navigating the open Atlantic less perilous than hitherto.⁹³⁵)

⁹³¹ Carus-Wilson, Eleanora Mary, "The Iceland Trade", in Power and Postan (eds), *Studies in English Trade*, pp. 164-65. The *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, however, appears to indicate that the situation there was only beginning to deteriorate around 1436 – unless the twelve peaceful years referred to are those before 1425, which is highly plausible: Warner (ed.), *Libelle*, p. 41.

⁹³² Tauté, *Kings and Queens*.

⁹³³ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, p. 95.

⁹³⁴ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 86.

⁹³⁵ Hope, *British Shipping*, p. 64.

England's commerce was not in a very healthy state. Her wool exports had levelled out after a period of some volatility, though they would rise again after 1420.⁹³⁶ The production and export of tin and pewter were slumping;⁹³⁷ fishing in the North Sea and Baltic was also contracting,⁹³⁸ hence in part the interest in Iceland. Hansards had begun exporting coverlets bought in York through London instead of the Yorkshire ports.⁹³⁹ Though some towns were hit much worse than others, the financial decline was Europe-wide: real-terms wages declined, while the price of food rose, fairly steadily (though slowly) for around a century from *circa* 1410.⁹⁴⁰ At the same time, persons involved in seaborne trade were increasingly inclined to form themselves into associations. Between 1404 and 1408, no fewer than three companies of English merchant venturers were recognised and granted corporate status, trading to Norway, Prussia, and the Low Countries;⁹⁴¹ while on the Hanseatic side, the Company of Lübeck Shippers came into being in 1401, and similar companies in other Hanse towns in succeeding years.⁹⁴²

The principal issue in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, however, remained what it had always been: reciprocity of privileges. This question lay behind the disputes in London and Danzig; it was still alive and well in the 1430s, as the *Libelle*'s concern with it demonstrates.⁹⁴³ For all that had happened in between, for all the changes to the backdrop of the debate, its terms had not changed substantially since 1378.

⁹³⁶ Pounds, N. J. G., *An Economic History of Medieval Europe* (London, 1974), p. 374.

⁹³⁷ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 276.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁹³⁹ Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 308.

⁹⁴⁰ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 382.

⁹⁴¹ Rymer (ed.), *Foedera*, Vol. IV, Part 1, p. 107; Hope, *British Shipping*, pp. 67-68.

⁹⁴² Schildhauer, *The Hansa*, p. 152.

⁹⁴³ Warner, *Libelle*, p. 26.

Not long after the *Libelle* appeared, perhaps the most serious attempt yet was made to address the reciprocity question and the rest of the Four Points, in the Vorrath Treaty. This was agreed officially between Henry VI and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order: symptomatic, one might argue, of England's continuing confusion over exactly where authority within the Hanse lay. Given the difficulty of negotiating anything with the whole Hanse, beginning with the figure who dominated the Prussian-Livonian towns might seem to make sense: but the Prussian representatives appear to have been regarded as competent to make agreements on behalf of towns outside their sphere, as witness the treaty's repeated references to "other places of the Hanse". (The Hansetag had lent its backing to the negotiations, but the precise competencies of the ambassadors remained ambiguous.⁹⁴⁴) It is worth quoting the text of the treaty at length:

"In the first place, it is agreed and concluded that all merchants and other lieges and subjects of the lord king of England, in the land of Prussia and other places of the Hanse ought to have and enjoy all the liberties and free customs which they have ever reasonably enjoyed in times gone by; and no prises, new exactions, or prests shall be imposed on their persons and goods, other than those which were imposed earlier than 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, and indeed than 100 years and more ago.⁹⁴⁵

"Also, it was agreed and concluded that all merchants and other subjects of whatever status of the lord king of England are able

⁹⁴⁴ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 116.

⁹⁴⁵ Since English merchants had had no presence in Hanse towns worth mentioning until perhaps seventy-odd years before this time, "100 years and more" would appear to eliminate *all* exactions upon them.

and shall be able to enter safely and securely the land of Prussia and other places of the Hanse, there to stay and traffic, to go out and to return, to buy and to sell, with any persons whatsoever, so that they shall be as free as ever they were to enter and leave, to buy and to sell, provided they have paid the due and accustomed customs and dues on their merchandises.

“Also, it was agreed and concluded that all the German merchants of the Teutonic Hanse ought to use and enjoy all the privileges, liberties, franchises and free customs conceded and granted to them and their predecessors by the progenitors of the illustrious lord king, the kings of England, and confirmed by the same lord king, as they reasonably used and enjoyed them in days gone by; and no prises, prests, new exactions, or any subsidies shall be imposed on their persons or goods, beyond the force and form of the charter of privileges conceded and granted to the merchants of the Hanse.

“Also, it is agreed and concluded that all the merchants and other subjects of whatever status of the Teutonic Hanse, are able and shall be able, as often to enter the land of England and other domains of the illustrious lord king, to stay and traffic there, to enter and leave, safely and securely, to buy and sell according to the from and tenor or the charter of privileges given to them, provided they have paid the customs and dues according to the force, form, and effect of the privileges.

“Also, it is agreed and concluded that if any city or town, or official or customer or any subject of the illustrious lord king shall presume to hurt, burden, arrest, or molest any merchant or ship of the Hanse against the tenor and content of the charter of their privileges, then the chancellor of England for the time being shall concede an appropriate and suitable writ to those complaining, so that they shall at once desist from such injuries, burdens, or molestations under threat of punishment...

“[Also, the King of England undertakes to pay in instalments the balance of the debt, of 19,274 nobles, 3s 4d of English money, contracted by Henry IV.]”⁹⁴⁶

If this treaty had been successfully implemented, England’s merchants would have achieved all they had been pushing for in relations with the Hanse since the death of Edward III: and the cost would have been no more than the fulfilment of existing obligations, albeit ones England had long neglected – including finally paying the agreed compensation for the predations of English pirates during the crisis of 1402-05. Trade would have been freer than it had been in nearly a century, the protectionist, bullionist, and controlling tendencies of the age reversed. In the event, the Vorrath Treaty failed (see the following section): but how had Anglo-Hanseatic relations got from their condition in 1420 to here?

In the early 1420s, the situation had remained tense. In July 1422, the Court of the Exchequer Chamber had rejected the Hansards’ claim to their traditional exemption from tunnage, “notwithstanding any allegations of liberties and franchises put forward

⁹⁴⁶ *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, p. 1,035.

by them”.⁹⁴⁷ In the same month, Danzig imposed a poll tax of six Prussian marks per head, to be paid twice a year, on all English merchants, resident or visiting; the English alderman and twelve of the 53 resident merchants were imprisoned for non-payment.⁹⁴⁸ Following the King’s death in August, the Steelyard’s charter came up for renewal: but the English merchants presented a petition against renewal, and the Hansards were granted one year’s protection but not their charter. The situation of 1378 thus repeated itself. The next year’s Hansetag recommended the imprisonment of English merchants and confiscation of their goods by way of retaliation: but the towns did not take the proposed action. Most took none.⁹⁴⁹ In February 1423, subsidies and customs on the export of wool and hides by aliens were raised.⁹⁵⁰ In 1425 – the year in which the charter was finally reinstated – hosting regulations were tightened, so that aliens arriving in England were compelled: to find a host within fifteen days; to sell no goods before finding a host; and to sell all their goods *and* buy their quota of English merchandise within forty days.⁹⁵¹ Hansards, with their Kontors, were not in the same situation as most aliens, but they were not immune.

Compromises were gradually reached. In February 1426, overriding the protests of the City, the government imposed an English alderman upon the Steelyard, which had been without one for nearly seven years, to judge “in cases in which the mayor and sheriffs of London do not afford sufficiently speedy justice in the recovery of debts”,⁹⁵² in December 1428, the Teutonic Knights at last recognised the right of English merchants in Prussia to elect a governor.⁹⁵³ (The English factory had officially been closed, and its governor arrested, during a panic over perceived English expansionism

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 486-87.

⁹⁴⁸ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 130.

⁹⁴⁹ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 114.

⁹⁵⁰ *C.P.R. Henry VI*, Vol. I, p. 63.

⁹⁵¹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 110.

⁹⁵² *C.P.R. Henry VI*, Vol. I, p. 346. The man chosen was former City alderman William Crowmere.

⁹⁵³ Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 115.

in 1420.⁹⁵⁴) In England in March 1430, an order was given “that all the lieges shall receive, admit, and peaceably and kindly entreat as the king’s true friends merchants and others whatsoever of the Hanse of the Teutons”.⁹⁵⁵

The Hanse’s war with the Scandinavian monarchy in 1426-35⁹⁵⁶ led to a renewed *Kaperkrieg* reminiscent of the heyday of the Vitalienbrüder in the 1390s; and, like their predecessors, these sea-rovers proved uncontrollable, plundering Bergen against their orders in 1428, and again in 1429.⁹⁵⁷ The Hamburger Bergenfahrer appear to have connived in these attacks, from which the English in the city fled.⁹⁵⁸ They do not, however, seem to have suffered much: claims submitted during the Arras negotiations mention £20,000 of losses at Bergen from nine ship seizures in 1430, but nothing in the previous two years.⁹⁵⁹ (The Hansards blamed this and later confiscations on King Erik.⁹⁶⁰) The same pirate fleet, commanded by Bartolomaeus Voet and acting mostly independently, had wintered in the West Country 1426-27;⁹⁶¹ before that, they had been cleared out of Dokkum in Friesland by a Hanseatic expedition in 1422.⁹⁶² The Hamburgers were probably motivated more by their longstanding rivalry with the English than by the rumour that England intended to enter the war on the Danish side.⁹⁶³ The English themselves reportedly attacked ships of Danzig at Bergen in 1432, and ships of Lübeck in 1434.⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁵⁴ Dollinger, *The German Hanse*, p. 303.

⁹⁵⁵ C.C.R. *Henry VI*, Vol. II, p. 55.

⁹⁵⁶ These hostilities began with a territorial dispute between Denmark and Holstein over the sovereignty of Schleswig – essentially the same question which would spark the Schleswig Wars of the nineteenth century. Hamburg, one of the most prominent towns of the Hanse, lay within the County of Holstein, and was hence directly involved: but the drawing in of the Hanse owed more to discontent with King Erik’s trade policies than to solidarity with Holstein. See Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 132-33.

⁹⁵⁷ Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, pp. 94, 116.

⁹⁵⁸ Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, p. 116.

⁹⁵⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 139.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁹⁶² Kirby and Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and North Seas*, p. 118.

⁹⁶³ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 133.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

The blockade of the Sound by Wendland-Pomeranian and Saxon towns was as unpopular with Prussians and Low Country Hansards as it was with the English. The latter tried and failed to break the blockade, but did sometimes slip through it, and were able to do business with grateful Prussians on the other side: the belated recognition of the English governor in Danzig was almost certainly a consequence of this.⁹⁶⁵ That English ships were, as in the last war, being lent to the Danes and used against Hansards, to their considerable cost, seems to have weighed less than the opportunity to buy Bay Salt and English cloth.⁹⁶⁶

As early as 1429, Hull merchants were imprisoned in Danzig in pursuit of grievances going back to the Percy revolt of 1403.⁹⁶⁷ In March 1431, tunnage and poundage were once more levied on the Hansards in London, in violation of their charter – and at a higher rate than before. English merchants in Prussia were forced to give surety against these demands; seizures of English goods followed;⁹⁶⁸ in July 1432, the minority government in England issued a writ for the arrest of goods of Lübeck, Hamburg, Rostock, and Wismar, supposedly in retaliation for the seizure of a Boston ship in the Sound the previous March – although the writ was soon cancelled so as not to jeopardise attempts at reconciliation.⁹⁶⁹ As the English grip on Northern France loosened, piracy increased to levels comparable with those of Henry IV's reign, a striking contrast with the quiet of the previous decade and a half:⁹⁷⁰ though a return to Henry V's naval policy does not appear to have been contemplated.⁹⁷¹ In 1434, with the Hansetag's approval, the Grand Master sent a thinly disguised ultimatum to Henry's

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 134-35.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁷ Jenks, *England, Die Hanse und Preussen*, Vol. I, p. 93.

⁹⁶⁸ Postan, "Economic and Political Relations", p. 116.

⁹⁶⁹ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 140-41; *C.P.R. Henry VI*, Vol. II, p. 220; *C.C.R. Henry VI*, Vol. II, p. 145.

⁹⁷⁰ Richmond, "Royal Administration", pp. 94, 106, 114.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 167.

government. It was thus Prussian initiative, and Prussian threats, which led to the negotiating table at Arras and the hammering out of the Vorrath Treaty.⁹⁷² This was despite the fact that the English woollen cloth trade, which unlike most businesses had picked up in the 1420s, was not in fact greatly affected by the renewed troubles.⁹⁷³ The Papal nuncio Piero da Monte found England in 1436 “a very wealthy region, abounding in gold and silver and many precious things, full of pleasures and delights”: the great fifteenth century depression was apparently not yet biting *too* sharply.⁹⁷⁴

It was during the negotiations at Arras that the *Libelle* appeared, praising Henry V’s “strenuite” in maritime matters in implicit contrast to the record of the current government,⁹⁷⁵ demanding to know what the bar was to reciprocity,⁹⁷⁶ and pointing out that it would be possible to prevent Prussians from coming to England:

“Thus, if they wolde not oure frendys bee,
Wee myght lyghtlye stope hem in the see.
They shulde not passe oure stremes wythouten leve;
It wolde not be but if we shulde hem greve.”⁹⁷⁷

It was views such as this which the London alderman Henry Frowicke went to Arras to represent.

The Englishmen appointed to negotiate with Vorrath⁹⁷⁸ appear at first sight to have represented a range of interests: in addition to Frowicke, there were two clerics,

⁹⁷² Postan, “Economic and Political Relations”, p. 116.

⁹⁷³ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p. 292.

⁹⁷⁴ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 346, quoting Letter 18, in Haller, J. (ed.), *Piero da Monte, ein gelehrter und päpstlicher Beamter des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Rome, 1941), p. 10.

⁹⁷⁵ Warner, *Libelle*, p. 53.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁷⁸ Lloyd, “Two Anglo-Hanseatic treaties”, p. 919.

two peers, and two lawyers. When one looks more closely at the list, however, it becomes apparent that the Crown's representatives overwhelmingly dominated. William Alnwick, Bishop of Norwich, was a former Keeper of the Privy Seal;⁹⁷⁹ William Lyndwood, Archdeacon of Stow, had succeeded him in that office; John, Baron Tiptoft, had held a range of government and Household positions;⁹⁸⁰ and Ralph, Baron Cromwell, was Lord Treasurer (a position formerly held by Tiptoft). All surely represented the Crown rather than their respective estates, and the same is doubtless true of the two lawyers. This leaves Henry Frowicke as sole direct representative of the merchant class. However, England's interest in reaching a settlement with the Hanse *was* the interest of the merchant class: the Crown's main, if not sole, reason for concern was what it had been for over sixty years – the need to appease mercantile opinion at home. What the composition of the embassy shows is that, unsurprisingly, the Crown retained control over the conduct of those relations, even as its policies were driven by the merchants.

After 1437

Although it was Prussia that had brought the issue to the table, Prussia which presumed to speak for the rest of the Hanse, and a Danzig *bürgermeister* who negotiated the treaty and gave it his name, the treaty was never confirmed by the Knights or recognised by Danzig.⁹⁸¹ Over the succeeding years, English piracy against Hansards, apparently with the blessing of the government, became ever fiercer, while Low

⁹⁷⁹ Fryde, E. B., Greenway, D. E., Porter, S., and Roy, I., (eds), *Handbook of British Chronology* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 95.

⁹⁸⁰ Cockayne, G. E., *The Complete Peerage* (London, 1926).

⁹⁸¹ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p. 359.

Country merchants colonised Baltic trade and froze the English out.⁹⁸² The massive 1449 Bay fleet, consisting of fifty Hanse ships and sixty more from the Low Countries,⁹⁸³ was seized at sea by the Earl of Warwick: no Bay fleet had ever before been attacked.⁹⁸⁴

In 1468, outright war broke out between England and the Hanse.⁹⁸⁵ When an Anglo-Hanseatic treaty was finally concluded, at Utrecht in 1474, the hope of reciprocity was abandoned. This was not a consequence of any overwhelming Hanseatic victory, but rather of Edward IV's preparations for war with France, which required that peace be made with England's other enemies (hence his treaties with Scotland and Denmark the previous year).⁹⁸⁶ The main "winner" in 1474 was Lübeck, the principal victim of the latest round of piracy.⁹⁸⁷ The victory had been achieved in alliance with the Prussian towns, but against the opposition of the Cologne-led Rhenish League, whose merchants did plenty of business with the English on dry land and seldom put to sea. Hanseatic disunity thus remained a factor: though it did not undermine the Hanse's interests as in 1408, or scupper the entire treaty as in 1437.

1474 was not a disaster for England: it represented rather the abandonment of aims which, however desirable, had long since ceased to be realistic – and, while full reciprocity was abandoned, codification of the rights of English merchants trading in Hanse towns was achieved. Temporarily, at least, it ushered in a period of greater stability in Anglo-Hanseatic relations: though piracy remained a problem. (Interestingly,

⁹⁸² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 214.

⁹⁸³ Bridbury, *England and the Salt Trade*, pp. 77-78.

⁹⁸⁴ Postan, *Medieval trade and finance*, p. 114.

⁹⁸⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 204.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

it did decline noticeably in the 1490s, the very decade in which the Treaty of Utrecht came under attack on the Hanseatic side, and diplomatic relations again worsened.⁹⁸⁸)

Piracy was one of the issues of 1474 only insofar as the agreement concerned reparations for past instances and the cessation of official sponsorship for maritime violence. The means of preventing future unofficial activities remained a matter neither side was ready to discuss, if they were even considered. But the significance of the Treaty of Utrecht lies in the fact that it provided an agreed answer, however unsatisfactory, to the chief questions which had bedevilled Anglo-Hanseatic relations for a hundred years. The Four Points had definitively been abandoned, and a new model established for the relationship between England and the Hanse.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 246-47.

CONCLUSION

That violence at sea, in all its forms, was a significant issue in Anglo-Hanseatic relations throughout this period is clear. Fluctuations in its prominence are at first sight mostly predictable. One would expect that high profile instances, such as the Zwijn incident, the Vitalienbrüder attacks, and the upsurge in English piracy in 1402-03 and after, would have a much greater diplomatic impact than the scattered individual incidents found throughout the period; and that less attention would be paid to piracy when it was eclipsed by other diplomatic and economic imperatives than when it could be addressed without troubling about such matters; and this is indeed the case.

I have therefore concentrated my attention less on violence or Anglo-Hanseatic diplomacy themselves than on the background behind them. My subject is found in the causes driving shifts in the volume of violence and in official attitudes to it; the circumstances which created the diplomatic and economic pressures affecting those attitudes; the ways in which these distinguished this period from earlier decades; and the meanings that can be attached to such terms as “piracy” in this period. Events themselves are seldom in question: the major exception, of course, is the role of the Vitalienbrüder in Anglo-Hanseatic relations. The tantalising reference in the Frisian nobles’ letter of May 1401 to the pirates’ alleged survival at Calais must remain a blind alley until more evidence surfaces: but the 1405 complaint, never before analysed and compared to the information we glean from Continental sources, provides a basis upon which can be constructed a picture of the pattern of Vitalienbrüder assaults on English shipping, and reactions thereto. This analysis can be found in Chapter IV.

However, although the Vitalienbrüder are a fascinating subject, and their activities loom large in Anglo-Hanseatic relations, they nevertheless form only one facet

of the broader subject of violence at sea. The wider picture is one of the social, economic, and political changes which characterised the late Middle Ages, in England, in the Hanse towns, and on a European level. A link between social shifts and violence at sea is apparent when one glances at the background of prominent pirates. In the thirteenth and early to mid fourteenth centuries, while there had never been any group with a monopoly on violence at sea, those who made the greatest impact tended to be either disaffected nobles (such as the Mariscos, the Despensers, or Jeanne de Belleville) or out-of-work mercenaries (e.g. Eustace the Monk, or the various Norwegian rovers who turned to piracy when the civil war between *Birkabeinar* and *Baglar* ended in 1208). The Vitalienbrüder may fit the latter pattern, but English pirates in this era fit neither. The best known names among them are Harry Paye, the elder John Hawley, and Hugh atte Fen, all men of the merchant class. All the prominent Englishmen who were regularly involved in violence at sea (as opposed to indulging in often unauthorised violence while about the King's business, as several noble admirals did) were merchants and leading citizens of the port towns. John Tutbury served as Mayor of Hull,⁹⁸⁹ atte Fen as a bailiff of Yarmouth and a collector of subsidies,⁹⁹⁰ and both John Hawleys as Members of Parliament.⁹⁹¹

This affects the meaning of "piracy". The general modern image of the pirate is of an outlaw, like Eustace or the Mariscos or the Vitalienbrüder, but not much like the English pirates of our period. It is true that Paye, John Hawley, and other West Countrymen, were effectively professional pirates, unlike their brethren on the east coast for whom trade came first: but this did not adversely affect their status on land. Piracy, for these men, was an activity rather than an identity: an activity without precise

⁹⁸⁹ Stanewell, L. M. (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Deeds, Letters, and Miscellaneous Documents* (Hull Corporation, 1953), p. 54.

⁹⁹⁰ T.N.A. C1/68/238; E122/149/16, 27-28, 34; E122/150/3.

⁹⁹¹ Rose, *Lancastrian Navy*, p. 36.

definition, and not in itself criminal. I have covered its possible meanings in the usage of the period, and set out a (rather narrower) working definition for the purposes of this thesis, in the Introduction. Nor was this the only change in the character of violence at sea between this period and later. Violence of all kinds, whether official or otherwise, was of necessity confined to coastal waters, since it was impossible to plan for encounters on the open sea in the infancy of offshore navigation: it is likely that government's general preference for arresting goods or ships in port rather than at sea had as much to do with this practical consideration as with a desire to minimise hostilities.

The massive reduction of Europe's population in the Black Death, 1347-50, when the continent had barely recovered from the famines of the 1310s, had changed everything. Population levels would not recover until the early sixteenth century.⁹⁹² Economically, the aftermath of the plague led (not unpredictably) to a fall in total production; a rise in per capita real income and wealth; a rise in real wages; a fall in land rents; inflation in the prices of labour-intensive and deflation in the prices of land-intensive goods; a decline in the staples market; and relative growth in the luxuries market.⁹⁹³ These developments ultimately hastened the move from a manorial to a cash economy, although the process would be slow. The feudal decline had already begun: after 1327, feudal levies in England were replaced with indentures as a means of raising men for military service. Only one later levy (in 1385) was summoned.⁹⁹⁴ An already quite sophisticated merchant class which had emerged from the "commercial

⁹⁹² Hatcher, John, and Bailey, Mark, *Modelling the Middle Ages: The History and Theory of England's Economic Development* (Oxford, 2001), p. 57.

⁹⁹³ Findlay and O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty*, pp. 112-13.

⁹⁹⁴ Britnell, R., *The Commercialisation of English Society* (Manchester, 1996), p. 209.

revolution” over (particularly) the previous century⁹⁹⁵ was well placed to take advantage of these changes, and of the growing market in luxuries.

Furthermore, the expansion of land-intensive agriculture (i.e. animal at the expense of arable) led to a decline in the cost of animal products, notably wool. Since end prices did not decline correspondingly, profits from all stages of woollen production rose, leading to a boom in the woollen industry – and also benefiting, in wool-producing England, merchants engaged in the export of wool.⁹⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the specialist artisan class also expanded and profited, as the fall in prices of materials such as wool and leather led to greater demand, and the expansion of professions working and dealing in them.⁹⁹⁷ (This kind of specialisation was not new: it had begun with the commercial advances of the previous century: what grew was the proportion of the population involved in highly specialised crafts and trades.) Not every effect of the demographic crisis was to the collective advantage of the merchant class, of course. Merchants heavily involved in the new luxuries market had a more complex relationship than most with the feudal aristocracy, as the political rivals of their class were also their customer base;⁹⁹⁸ while the *firma burgi*, the fee which the chartered boroughs paid to the Crown in return for their corporate liberties, became extremely onerous when it had to be raised from shrunken populations.⁹⁹⁹

With the Hundred Years’ War eating up money, and its funding reliant on taxes levied on overseas trade, the Crown was compelled to pay attention to the interests of the merchant class.¹⁰⁰⁰ This class had not hitherto found its interests opposed to those of

⁹⁹⁵ Lopez, Robert S., *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950 – 1350* (Upper Saddle River, 1972); de Roover, Raymond A., *Money, banking and credit in mediaeval Bruges – Italian merchant bankers, Lombards and money-changers* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), p. 11.

⁹⁹⁶ Findlay and O’Rourke, *Power and Plenty*, pp. 114-15.

⁹⁹⁷ Britnell, *Commercialisation*, p. 168.

⁹⁹⁸ Hilton, *Class Conflict*, pp. 181-82.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Parliament had gained control over the grants of customs on wool, an essential component of the royal war chest, after 1348: Britnell, *Commercialisation*, p. 210.

the feudal aristocracy: but the changing socio-economic picture was propelling it towards greatly increased influence in national politics, which naturally created rivalry. It is no coincidence that it was in the latter half of Edward III's reign that the Commons – dominated, indeed, by the knights of the shires, but including burgesses representing the cities since 1295 – became a political force for the first time. Its rise culminated in the Good Parliament of 1376, which created the office of Speaker; impeached Richard Lyons, Keeper of the King's Moneys and Collector of Customs and Subsidies, and William, Baron Latimer, Constable of Dover Castle and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, for corruption; imposed seclusion on the King's mistress, Alice Perrers; and compelled Edward to accept three men of its choosing to his Council. There were, however, limits to the Commons' new strength. The new Councillors were not drawn from the Lower House's own ranks, but were instead an earl and two bishops (Edmund Mortimer, William Courtenay, and William of Wykeham). In the following year, the "Bad Parliament", dominated by the Commons' chief enemy, John of Gaunt, overturned the Good Parliament's acts. Nevertheless, the precedent had been set: and it was in this atmosphere that the Hanse's charter came up for renewal following Edward's death, a renewal which the Commons was able to delay until 1380, in pursuit of the Four Points governing the privileges of English merchants in Hanse towns: surely an initiative of the burgess element.¹⁰⁰¹ The Four Points and the issue underlying them, reciprocity of privileges, would dominate Anglo-Hanseatic relations for nearly a century, from 1377 to 1474: and this was a direct consequence of the increased political influence in England of the merchant class.

The Black Death's effects at the lower end of the social spectrum also became more visible over this period. Land, labour, and capital markets were still far from free,

¹⁰⁰¹ See the Introduction.

and models which assume relative freedom are not applicable: but thanks to the reduced population, landowners were now to some degree in competition for peasants to work the land, and the peasantry was not blind to its new power. The results are seen everywhere from the “growing hostility to authority” found by Rodney Hilton in the court records of Thornbury for the 1350s and 60s,¹⁰⁰² to national politics. The nobility’s attempts to turn back the clock through repressive legislation (in particular the Statute of Labourers, 1351) undoubtedly played a part in provoking the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. (On the other hand, landlords themselves appear to have cheerfully broken the statute when it suited them, and faced few consequences – which is itself suggestive of the decline of the feudal order.¹⁰⁰³)

The rebels shared some grievances with the knights and burgesses of the Commons. Both resented the ever heavier taxes imposed to pay for the wars with France and Scotland, and the rebels identified the Commons’ enemy John of Gaunt as their own, sacking his palace at the Savoy: but serfdom and centralisation of government (in their call for a return to the “law of Winchester”) loomed larger in their rhetoric than taxation. Neither was a bourgeois concern; and the sympathisers who helped the rebels enter London were hostile to the merchants.¹⁰⁰⁴ After the dispersal of the rebels, the King’s promise to manumit the serfs (which he may not have had the legal power to do in any case) was formally withdrawn. The Statute of Labourers was replaced in 1388 with the still more severe Statute of Cambridge; serfdom remained in force; and there is no evidence of any opposition in the Commons. The political upheavals of the next five decades would not involve the peasantry; only in the still more disordered reign of Henry VI would rural lower class rebellion again pose a significant danger to authority. The breakdown of serfdom in England was to be a slow

¹⁰⁰² Hilton, *Class Conflict*, p. 203.

¹⁰⁰³ Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *O.D.N.B.*, Vol. 46, p. 728.

and uneven process. The rise of the merchant class, by contrast, continued, though not unhindered.

The early part of this rise had coincided with the expansion of English overseas trade into Hanseatic territory in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Reciprocity became an issue because there were for the first time English merchants resident in Hanse towns; and the English became aware of the Hanse's existence as an organisation beyond the London *Kontor*. Before the 1370s, the main threat to Hanseatic interests in England had come from the Crown,¹⁰⁰⁵ and the Hansards wrongly assumed that the delay in the renewal of their charter was also due to Crown hostility.¹⁰⁰⁶ They would not make the same mistake again.

The crisis of 1385 was occasioned by an act of the King's admirals while engaged in a naval campaign: but it is, as we have seen, likely that anti-Prussian feeling among east coast captains and sailors contributed to the incident – and these feelings were in large part a consequence of the treatment of English merchants in Prussian towns.¹⁰⁰⁷ Furthermore, reciprocity dominated the negotiations to end the resultant crisis in Anglo-Prussian relations. In 1402, similarly, a crisis sparked by national policy (the war with Scotland) was prolonged by rather different factors. The reliance of the Crown on letter of marque captains was among these, as was the difficulty of negotiating the restoration of relations with merchants still smarting over the recent activities of the *Vitalienbrüder*, as well as the continued lack of reciprocity. This crisis, however, was exceptional in its breadth and violence, and it is very difficult to say whether any one of the cocktail of contributory factors predominated. What is notable is that, during the compensation negotiations of 1407-08, it was once again economic and trading interests with which both sides were principally concerned. Since economic theory in Northern

¹⁰⁰⁵ Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *C.L.B.*, Book H, p. 101; see p. 196.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Introduction and Chapter I.

Europe had not yet progressed beyond a primitive bullionism, this would have been understood as meaning the interests of the merchants.

It has not been possible to make any but the most artificial distinction between economic and political issues, or commercial and diplomatic relations, in Anglo-Hanseatic issues: however, such distinctions clearly still formed a major part of international relations in general in this period. In England's relations with any number of other European powers, from Scotland to Burgundy to Castile, trade was a relatively low priority. Other issues loomed larger: dynastic relationships; disputed claims to territory, tribute, and sovereignty; military opposition or alliance. The Hanse was unique in that hardly any of these issues applied to it, although Hanse jurisdictions overlapped with those of powers to which they could apply, such as the Empire and the Low Country counties. The Hanse had no ruling dynasty, and no territory which it collectively claimed, though individual towns might have territorial disputes of their own; it made no claims to sovereign status anywhere; and although it could wield collective military might, it did so only to protect its trading interests. Commercial matters were, in effect, the only questions on which it *could* have any interests either overlapping or conflicting with those of England.

It is, of course, important not to exaggerate the significance of the merchant class. They were making their voices heard, and influencing government as never before: but they never controlled it, or came close to doing so, in England in this period. Society across Europe was still very much pre-capitalist, "ruled by and for territorial aristocracies... not... merchants or industrialists".¹⁰⁰⁸ Richard II frequently dithered over pursuing their interests, whether in negotiations with the Hanse, in taking action on piracy, or in protecting local franchises against the encroachments of his own

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hilton, Rodney H., "Capitalism: What's in a Name", in Hilton (ed.), *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London, 1976), p. 153.

admirals.¹⁰⁰⁹ Even in 1416, Henry V – while luxuriating in a subsidy on wool granted him by the Commons “for the defence of the realm” (the wool trade had been a source of funding for campaigns in France since the reign of Edward III) – felt able to reject their request for support for English fishermen in Icelandic waters, whose activities damaged relations with the Hanse.¹⁰¹⁰ The fifteenth century economic depression stalled their rise, as trade stagnated and even the greatest exporters failed to become as rich as their fourteenth century predecessors.¹⁰¹¹ Although influenced by the merchant class, the direction of English national policy was ultimately driven by the monarchy, as appears most notably in the dramatic changes which followed the accession of Henry V in 1413. The new King readily confirmed the Hanseatic charter, after the London Kontor had paid a 40-mark fine for the privilege,¹⁰¹² but then proceeded to arrest Hanseatic ships and press them into service for his invasion of France.¹⁰¹³ This, rather than piracy by commoners (which Henry was quite effective in suppressing), was the dominant issue in Anglo-Hanseatic relations in this reign: but negotiations to compensate the Hansards for the impressment came to nothing.¹⁰¹⁴ None of this, however, changes the fact that there is a broad pattern throughout the period of placing the demands of the English mercantile class above those of the Hansards, even when the cost was high.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. VII, *passim*.

¹⁰¹⁰ *E.H.D.*, Vol. IV, p. 462.

¹⁰¹¹ Hatcher and Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages*, p. 181.

¹⁰¹² Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, p. 127.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*; Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 124.

¹⁰¹⁴ *P.R.O.M.E.*, Vol. IX, pp. 154-55.

APPENDIX

I had hoped to be able to use information from customs particulars (T.N.A. E122) to chart the fluctuations, year by year, in the volume and value of trade in particular goods from the different east coast ports: however, there has not been enough consistency in the surviving records to allow for this. Any meaningful table of this information would have to refer to multiple directly comparable documents, covering the same duties, the same ports, and comparable lengths of time, over the course of the period, and no such table can be composed from the documents available.

The table below is intended to illustrate this problem. Boston was a significant east coast port, heavily involved in trade with the Hanse, and frequently referred to in this thesis. It is also, relative to many other ports, quite well represented in terms of the number of documents surviving from the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV – and those from the former reign have been translated, edited, and published,¹⁰¹⁵ which made it possible for me to check my findings against the published version. However, the surviving documents represent too haphazard a collection of material to be effectively tabulated, covering a wide range of different duties and different time periods, and in one case several extra ports besides Boston itself: and this picture is entirely typical of what I found in the particulars of other east coast ports.

¹⁰¹⁵ Rigby, S. H. (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of Boston in the Reign of Richard II* (Woodbridge, 2005).

Table 6: Subsidies collected at Boston, 1377 - 1412¹⁰¹⁶

Period covered	Nature of document	Total recorded monies received
26 th August 1377 – 30 th June 1378 (ten months and five days)	Particulars of collectors' accounts – subsidy on wool and fells, and petty custom ¹⁰¹⁷	£8,608 14s. 5d.
2 nd December 1383 – 29 th September 1384 (nine months and 28 days)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: tunnage and poundage ¹⁰¹⁸	£267 9s. 10 ¼ d.
28 th November 1386 – 28 th November 1387 (one year and one day)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: tunnage and poundage (with controller's accounts) ¹⁰¹⁹	£1,068 14s. 2 ¼ d.
20 th March 1388 – 17 th May 1388 (one month and 28 days)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: tunnage and poundage (including all ports from Wisbech to Grimsby) ¹⁰²⁰	£90 9s. 10 ¾ d.
1 st March 1390 – 16 th June 1390 (three months and sixteen days)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: tunnage and poundage ¹⁰²¹	£117
17 th June 1390 – 30 th November 1390 (five months and fourteen days)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: tunnage and poundage ¹⁰²²	£237 2s. 5 ½ d.
29 th September 1390 – 29 th September 1391 (one year and one day)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: petty custom ¹⁰²³	£219 2s. 4 ½ d.
1 and 2 Henry IV (30 th September 1399 – 29 th September 1401) (two years)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: subsidy on wool (including all ports from Wisbech to Grimsby) ¹⁰²⁴	£2,393 3s. 5 ¼ d.
5 and 6 Henry IV (30 th September 1403 – 29 th September 1405) (two years total): four documents together	Particulars of collectors' accounts: subsidy on wool and petty custom ¹⁰²⁵	£92 18s. 1d.
	Controller's return ¹⁰²⁶	£16 13s. 7d.
	Particulars of collectors' accounts: subsidy on wool, petty custom,	£418 12s. 11d.

¹⁰¹⁶ I found no Boston particulars for the reign of Henry V. See nn. below for sources of this information.

¹⁰¹⁷ T.N.A. E122/7/13.

¹⁰¹⁸ T.N.A. E122/7/17.

¹⁰¹⁹ T.N.A. E122/7/19.

¹⁰²⁰ T.N.A. E122/7/20.

¹⁰²¹ T.N.A. E122/7/21.

¹⁰²² Ibid.

¹⁰²³ T.N.A. E122/7/23.

¹⁰²⁴ T.N.A. E122/8/4.

¹⁰²⁵ T.N.A. E122/8/7.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid.

	tunnage, and poundage ¹⁰²⁷	
	Particulars of collectors' accounts: tunnage and poundage ¹⁰²⁸	£103 19s. 4d.
10 and 11 Henry IV (30 th September 1408 – 29 th September 1410) (two years)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: petty custom ¹⁰²⁹	£75 7s. 4 1/4d.
13 Henry IV (30 th September 1411 – 29 th September 1412) (one year)	Particulars of collectors' accounts: subsidy on wool, tunnage, and poundage ¹⁰³⁰	£16 6s. 10d.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁹ T.N.A. E122/8/18.

¹⁰³⁰ T.N.A. E122/8/21.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript sources

All the manuscript sources I used were found in the U.K. National Archives, for reasons stated in the Introduction. Those with the classification SC were mostly found through the recently created Catalogue of Ancient Petitions; those with the classification C1 are also petitions, and were similarly located through the catalogue system. These were the most useful class of document, as they provided details of several instances of violence at sea not mentioned in printed sources.

Those with the classification E101 are Exchequer documents dealing mostly with military and naval matters, while those classed as E122 are customs particulars and other documents relating to exports. I found these originally by following up references in secondary sources, principally T. H. Lloyd's *England and the German Hanse*, and subsequently located more through the catalogue system.

The most fascinating single document I found was E30/1241: the Frisian complaint alleging that surviving Vitalienbrüder had been given shelter at Calais by May 1401 (see pp. 171-72). This I happened across by chance while searching the online catalogues for petitions.

The Treaty Rolls for this period (C76/61-105) have little to say about Anglo-Hanseatic affairs, and most have been published. The Council and Privy Seal records from the Treasury of the Receipt are covered in E28/1-35: the most significant have been published in *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice* (London, 1982, 2 vols), ed. Pierre Chaplais – see below.

London

The National Archives

Chancery

C1 (Early Chancery Proceedings)

C1/1/13

C1/3/81, 118, 130

C1/4/92, 196

C1/6/44, 105, 123

C1/17/95, 111, 418

C1/68/238

C1/70/75

C1/71/93

C1/72/8

C1/73/161

Exchequer

E30 (Diplomatic Documents)

E30/1241

E101 (King's Remembrancer: Accounts Various)

E101/36/24-27, 29-31, 33, 35-36
E101/40/23
E101/41/38
E101/43/1
E101/44/17
E122 (Customs Particulars)
E122/7/13, 15-24, 27-31
E122/8/2, 4, 7, 18, 21
E122/49/10
E122/50/21, 29, 31-33, 35, 40
E122/51/28-29, 35, 39
E122/59/1, 15-16, 21, 23
E122/71/6, 9, 13, 16, 18, 25
E122/72/2, 4, 27, 64
E122/76/32
E122/93/31
E122/94/5, 8, 12
E122/95/12
E122/106/3, 6-7, 9, 18, 20-22, 24-25, 30, 32, 41-42
E122/107/10
E122/134/4-9
E122/149/11, 16-19, 21-22, 27-28, 34
E122/150/3, 9-10, 17, 19
E122/151/9, 21
E122/152/8
E122/158/2
E122/159/11
E122/161/2
E122/176/13-14
E122/177/23, 34
E122/181/16-17, 19, 21, 29, 39, 43
E122/182/1-2, 5, 17, 26
E122/184/1
E122/185/20
E122/187/5, 7, 10-11
E122/192/91
E122/212/3
E122/213/7
E122/215/11

Special Collections

SC 8 (Ancient Petitions)

SC 8/5/223
SC 8/14/660-61
SC 8/19/931
SC 8/21/1008-09
SC 8/22/1069, 1079
SC 8/85/4231
SC 8/102/5066
SC 8/103/5136

SC 8/105/5213
SC 8/113/5616, 5624
SC 8/116/5780
SC 8/120/5952
SC 8/122/6072, 6086
SC 8/142/7060
SC 8/144/7174
SC/8/164/8169
SC 8/170/8488
SC 8/178/8864
SC 8/179/8931
SC 8/188/9352
SC 8/214/10666, 10692-93, 10695-98, 10700, 10702,
10704-05
SC 8/217/10805, 10807, 10834
SC 8/222/11070
SC 8/223/11127
SC 8/229/11431, 11439
SC 8/230/11490
SC 8/231/11529
SC 8/232/11553
SC 8/254/12686
SC 8/255/12721
SC 8/274/13669
SC 8/296/14759
SC 8/300/14954-55, 14957
SC 8/301/15041, 15067
SC 8/305/15236
SC 8/342/16140

Printed primary sources

Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226 – 1516 (London, 1903-27, 6 vols)

Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Edward III (London, 1896, 14 vols)

Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Richard II (London, 1922, 6 vols)

Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry IV (London, 1932, 4 vols)

Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry V (London, 1929, 2 vols)

Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry VI (London, 1933, 6 vols)

Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous Preserved in the Public Record Office (London, 1916 – 2003, 8 vols)

Calendar of Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall (London, 1899 – 1912, 11 vols)

Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward III (London, 1900, 16 vols)

Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Richard II (London, 1905, 6 vols plus Supplement)

Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry IV (London, 1909, 4 vols)

Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry V (London, 1911, 2 vols)

Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry VI (London, 1907, 6 vols)

The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, 1326 – 1600 (Edinburgh, 1878 – 1908, 23 vols)

Hanserecesse: Die Recesse und andere Akten der Hansetage 1256 – 1430 (Leipzig, 1872, 8 vols)

The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275 – 1504 (Woodbridge, 2005, 16 vols)

Select Cases Concerning the Law Merchant, A.D. 1270 – 1638 (London, 1908-32, 3 vols)

Select Pleas in the Court of Admiralty (London, 1897, 2 vols)

Bateson, Mary (ed.), revised by W. H. Stevenson and J. E. Stocks, *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1327 – 1509* (Leicester, 1901)

Boland, Jürgen, (ed.) *Hamburgische Burspraken 1346-1594 mit Nachträgen bis 1699*. (Hamburg, 1960, 12 vols), Vol. VI Parts 1 & 2, *Veröffentlichungen aus dem*

Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg

Boyle, J. R. (ed.), *Charters of Kingston upon Hull* (Hull, 1905)

Bruns, Friedrich (ed.), *Die Lübecker Bergenfahrer und Ihre Chronistik* (Berlin, 1900)

Carus-Wilson, Eleanora Mary, with Coleman, O. (eds), *England's Export Trade, 1275 – 1546* (Oxford, 1963)
Medieval Merchant Venturers (London, 1967)

Chaplais, Pierre (ed.), *English Royal Documents: King John – Henry VI, 1199 – 1461* (Oxford, 1971)
English Medieval Diplomatic Practice (London, 1982, 2 vols)

Chaucer, Geoffrey (ed. Benson, Larry; Pratt, Robert; Robinson, F. N.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford, 1988)

Conrad, Klaus, and Franz Engel, eds. *Pommersches Urkundenbuch* (Cologne, 1962-70, 11 vols)

Długosz, Jan (trans. and abridged Michael, Maurice), *The Annals of Jan Długosz* (Chichester, 1997)

Dragendorff, Ernst, and Ludwig Krause, eds. *Das Rostocker Weinbuch von 1382 bis 1391* (Rostock, 1908)

Ebel, Wilhelm (ed.), *Die Rostocker Urfehden: Untersuchungen zur Geschicht des Deutschen Strafrechts* (Rostock, 1938)

Fabyan, Robert, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. Ellis, Henry (London, 1811)

Hagedorn, Anton, et al., (eds), *Hamburgisches Urkundenbuch* (Hamburg, 1911-67, 4 vols)

Hakluyt, Richard, *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (Glasgow, 1903, 12 vols)

Hapke, Rudolf (ed.), *Niederlandische Akten und Urkunden zur Geschichte der Hanse und zur deutschen Seegeschichte* (Munich and Leipzig, 1913)

Hardy, Thomas Duffus (ed.), *Rotuli Normanniae* (London, 1835)

Hattendorf, John B.; Knight, R. J. B.; Pearsall, A. W. H.; Rodger, Nicholas A. M.; and Till, Geoffrey (eds), *British Naval Documents, 1204 – 1960* (Aldershot, 1993)

Hingeston, F. C. (ed.), *Royal and Historical Letters during the Reign of Henry the Fourth* (London, 1860 – 1965, 2 vols)

Höhlbaum, Konstantin, et al. (eds), *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* (Halle, 1876-1916, 11

vols)

Kirby, J. (ed.), *Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V (1399 – 1422)* (London, 1978)

Kruse, A. T. “Register der Altermänner des Gewandhauses in Stralsund.” In *Sundische Studien von A. T. Kruse*, ed. Sandhop, J. (Stralsund, 1847)

Kunze, Karl (ed.), *Hanseakten aus England, 1275 – 1412* (Halle, 1891)

Kuske, Bruno (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Kölner Handels und Verkehrs im Mittelalter* (Bonn, 1917)

Lappenberg, Johann Martin (ed.), *Hamburgische Chroniken in niedersächsischer Sprache* (Hamburg, 1861)

Tratzigers Chronica der Stadt Hamburg (Hamburg, 1865)

Legge, Mary Dominica (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions from All Souls MS. 182* (London, 1941)

Loose, Hans-Dieter (ed.), *Hamburger Testamente 1351 bis 1400* (Hamburg, 1970, 12 vols)

Macpherson, David (ed.), *Annals of Commerce* (London, 1805)

Marsden, R. G. (ed.), *Documents Relating to the Law and Custom of the Sea* (London, 1915-16, 2 vols: Navy Records Society 59-60)

Mohriker, G. Ch. F., and Zober, C. H. (eds), *Johann Berckmanns Stralsunder Chronik und die noch vorhandenen Auszüge aus alten verloren gegangene Stralsundischen Chroniken* (Stralsund, 1833)

Myers, A. R. (ed.), *English Historical Documents, Volume IV: 1327 – 1485* (London, 1969, vol. 4 of 10)

Nicolas, Nicholas Harris, and Tyrrell, E. (eds), *The Chronicle of London 1089 – 1483* (London, 1827)

Nirrnheim, Hans (ed.), *Das Hamburgische Pfund- und Werkzollbuch von 1399 und 1400* (Hamburg, 1930, vol. 2 of 12)

Perroy, Edouard (ed.), *The Diplomatic Correspondence of Richard II* (London, 1933)

Rigby, S. H. (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of Boston in the Reign of Richard II* (Woodbridge, 2005)

Rothwell, Harry (ed.), *English Historical Documents, Volume III: 1189 – 1327* (London, 1975, vol. 3 of 10)

Rydberg, Olof S. (ed.), *Sveriges Traktater med Främmande Makter* (Stockholm, 1883,

3 vols)

Rymer, Thomas (ed.), *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica : inter reges Angliae et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates, ab ineunte saeculo duodecimo, viz. ab anno 1101. ad nostra usque tempora, habita aut tractata: ex autographis, infra secretiores archivorum regionum thesaurarias per multa saecula reconditis, fideliter exscripta*, ed. for publication by Holmes, George (The Hague, 1739-45, 10 vols)

Schroeder, Horst-Diether (ed.), *Der Stralsunder Liber memorialis* (Schwerin, 1964)

Sprandel, Rolf (ed.), *Das Hamburger Pfundzollbuch von 1418* (Cologne, 1972)

Stanewell, L. M. (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Deeds, Letters, and Miscellaneous Documents* (Hull, 1953)

Stow, John, *Annales of England* (London, 1592)

Techen, Friedrich (ed.), *Die Burgersprachen der Stadt Wismar* (Berlin, 1906)

Thomas, A. H. (ed.), *Calendar of Select Pleas and Memoranda of the City of London, 1381 – 1412* (Cambridge, 1932)

with Thornley, Isabel D. (eds), *The Great Chronicle of London* (London, 1938)

Toulmin Smith, Lucy (ed.), *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land made by Henry Earl of Derby (afterwards King Henry IV) In the Years 1390-1 and 1392-3. Being The Accounts kept by his Treasurer during two years* (London, 1894)

Twiss, Travers (ed.), *Monumenta juridica: The Black Book of the Admiralty* (London, 1871-76, 4 vols)

Walsingham, Thomas of, *Historia Brevis ab Edwardo I ad Henricum VIII* (London, 1574)

The Cronica Maiora of Thomas of Walsingham, trans. David Preest, (Woodbridge, 2005)

Warner, George (ed.), *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye: A Poem on the Use of Sea-Power, 1436* (Oxford, 1926)

Secondary sources

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 2004, 60 vols, and at www.oxforddnb.com)

Agats, Arthur, *Der Hansische Baienhandel* (Heidelberg, 1904)

Alban, J. R., “National Defence in England, 1337-89” (Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool, 1976)

Armstrong, Lawrin, with Elbl, Ivana, and Elbl, Martin M. (eds), *Money, Markets and Trade in Late Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of John H. A. Munro* (Leiden, 2007)

Atton, Henry, and Holland, Henry Hurst, *The King's Customs, Volume I: An Account of Maritime Revenue & Contraband Traffic in England, Scotland, and Ireland, from the Earliest Times to the Year 1800* (London, 1908)

Bahlow, Hans, *Störtebeker und Konsorten: 800 niederdeutsche Satznamen: ein Beitrag zur Volkskunde des Mittelalters* (Bad Honnef, 1982)

Barthold, Friedrich Wilhelm, *Geschichte der deutschen Hanse* (Leipzig, 1862, 2 vols)

Bass, George Fletcher (ed.), *A History of Seafaring based on Underwater Archaeology* (London, 1972)

Bautier, Robert-Henri, *The Economic Development of Medieval Europe* (London, 1971)

Beardwood, Alice, *Alien Merchants in England, 1350 – 1377* (New York, 1931)

Bederman, David J., *Custom as a Source of Law* (Cambridge, 2010)

Bjork, D. J., “The Peace of Stralsund, 1370”, *Speculum* 7 (1932)
“Piracy in the Baltic, 1375 – 1398”, *Speculum* 18 (1943)

Blasel, Anneliese, “Klaus Störtebeker und Goedeke Michels in der deutschen Sage” (dissertation, Greifswald, 1933)

Bluer, Dick, “The headquarters of the Hansa in the City of London”, *Medieval Life* 8 (1997-98)

Boklund-Lagopoulou, K., with Liszka, Thomas R., and Walker, Lorna E. M. (eds), *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages: Studies in a Medieval Context* (Dublin, 2000)

Bolton, J. L., “Alien Merchants in England in the Reign of Henry VI, 1422-61” (B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1971)
The Medieval English Economy, 1150 – 1500 (London, 1988)

Bottin, Jacques, and Calabi, Donatella (eds), *Les étrangers dans la ville: minorités et la space urbain du bas moyen âge à l' époque moderne* (Paris, 1999)

- Bracker, Jörgen, with Henn, Volker, and Postel, Rainer, *Die Hanse: Lebenswirklichkeit und Mythos* (Lübeck, 1999)
 with Förster, Thomas, and Hennig, Klaus J., *Gottes Freund – aller Welt Feind: Von Seeraub und Konvoifahrt: Störtebeker und die Folgen* (Hamburg, 2001)
- von Brandt, Ahasver, *et al.*, *Die Deutsche Hanse als Mittler zwischen Ost und West* (Cologne and Opladen, 1963)
- Bridbury, A. R., *England and the Salt Trade in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1955)
Medieval English Clothmaking: An Economic Survey (London, 1982)
- Britnell, Richard H., *The Commercialisation of English Society, 1000 – 1500* (Manchester, 1996)
 with Campbell, Bruce M. S. (eds), *A commercialising economy: England 1086 – c. 1300* (Manchester, 1995)
 with Hatcher, John (eds), *Progress and problems in medieval England: essays in honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge, 1996)
- Brown, A. L., *The Governance of Late Medieval England 1272 – 1461* (London, 1989)
- Buszello, Horst, *Die auswärtige Handelspolitik der englischen Krone im 15. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Vienna, 1976)
- Cam, Helen M., *Law-finders and Law-makers in Medieval England* (London, 1962)
- Campbell, Bruce M. S., *Land and People in Late Medieval England* (Farnham, 2009)
- Carsten, Francis Ludwig, *The Origins of Prussia* (Oxford, 1954)
- Carus-Wilson, Eleanora Mary, *Medieval Merchant Venturers* (London, 1967)
 “Die Hanse und England”, in *Hanse in Europa* (Cologne, 1973)
 “The German Hanse in the Economy of Medieval England”, in Kluge, Paul, and Alter, Peter (eds), *Aspekte der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen im Laufe der Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1978)
- Chaplais, Pierre, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London, 2002)
- Clayton, Dorothy J., with Davies, Richard G., and McNiven, Peter (eds), *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval English History* (Stroud, 1994)
- Colvin, Ian Duncan, *The Germans in England: 1066 – 1598* (London, 1915)
- Crouch, D., with Pearson, T. (eds), *Medieval Scarborough: Studies in Trade and Civil Life* (Scarborough, 2001)
- Crumlin-Pedersen, Ole, *From Viking Ships to Hanseatic Cogs* (London, 1984)
- Curry, Anne, and Hughes, Michael, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge, 1994)

- Daenell, Ernst Robert, "Holland und die Hanse im 15. Jahrhundert", *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, IX (1903)
Die Blütezeit der Deutschen Hanse (Berlin, 1905, 2 vols)
- Davies, Norman, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (Oxford, 1981, 2 vols)
- Deniske, H., *Von der deutschen Hansa* (Berlin, 1884)
- Denuce, Jean, *La Hanse et les companies commerciales anversoises aux pays Baltiques* (Antwerp, 1938)
- Ditchfield, P. H., *The Story of the City Companies* (Boston, 1926)
- Dollinger, Philippe Jean (trans. D. D. Ault and S. H. Steinberg), *The German Hanse* (London, 1964)
- Ebel, Wilhelm, *Lübisches Recht in Ostseeraum* (Cologne, 1967)
- Engel, K., *Die Organisation der deutsch-hansischen Kaufleute in England im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert bis zum Utrechter Frieden (1474)* (Göttingen, 1914)
- Ewe, Herbert, *Schiffe auf Siegeln* (Rostock, 1972)
- Findlay, Ronald, and O'Rourke, Kevin H., *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, 2007)
- Ford, C. J., "Piracy or Policy: The Crisis in the Channel, 1400 – 1403", in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Series 5, no 29 (1979)
- Friedland, Klaus, *Hansische Handelspolitik und hansisches Wirtschaftssystem im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Vienna, 1976)
- Friedman, John, with Figg, Kristen (eds), *Medieval Trade, Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopedia* (Oxford and New York, 2000)
- Friel, Ian, *The good ship: ships, shipbuilding and technology in England, 1200 – 1520* (London, 1995)
- Fritze, Konrad, and Krause, Günter, *Seekriege der Hanse* (Berlin, 1997)
- Gade, John Allyne, *The Hanseatic Control of Norwegian Commerce During the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1951)
- Gardiner, Dorothy A., "The history of belligerent rights on the high seas in the fourteenth century", *Law Quarterly Review* XLVIII (1932)
 "John Hawley of Dartmouth", *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* XCVIII (1966)
- Giuseppi, Montague S., "Alien merchants in England in the fifteenth century", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, new series, ix (1895)

- Goetz, Leopold Karl, *Deutsch-Russische Handelsgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Halle, 1922)
- Gras, Norman Scott Brien, *The early English customs system: A documentary study of the institutional and economic history of the customs from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century* (Oxford, 1918)
- Gray, H. L., “The production and exportation of English woollens in the fourteenth century”, *English Historical Review* XXXIX (1924)
- Gross, Charles, *The gild merchant: A contribution to British municipal history* (Oxford, 1890)
- d’ Haenens, A., *Europe of the North Sea and the Baltic: The World of the Hanse* (Antwerp, 1984)
- Halecki, Oscar, *A History of Poland* (London, 1978)
- Hammell-Kiesow, Rolf, *Die Hanse* (Munich, 2002)
- Hatcher, John, *English Tin Production and Trade Before 1550* (Oxford, 1973)
Plague, population, and the English economy, 1348 – 1530 (Basingstoke, 1977)
 with Bailey, Mark, *Modelling the Middle Ages: The History and Theory of England’s Economic Development* (Oxford, 2001)
- Hilton, Rodney H. (ed.), *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London, 1976)
Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: essays in medieval social history (London, 1985)
- Hope, Ronald, *A New History of British Shipping* (London, 1990)
- Houtte, J. A. van, *Essays on medieval and early modern economy and society* (Leuven, 1977)
- Hutchinson, Gillian, *Medieval Ships and Shipping* (Leicester, 1994)
- Irsigler, Franz, *Anmerkungen zu den Kölner Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit England im 15. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Vienna, 1976)
- Jacob, Ernest Fraser, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399 – 1485* (Oxford, 1961)
- James, Margery Kirkbride, *Studies in the Medieval Wine Trade* (Oxford, 1971)
- Jenks, Stuart, “Die Ordnung für die englische Handelskolonie in Danzig (23 Mai 1405)”, in Jähnig, B., and Letkemann, P. (eds), *Danzig in acht Jahrhunderten* (Münster, 1985)
Hansische Vermächtnisse in London, ca. 1363 – 1483 (Lübeck, 1986)
Die Carta mercatoria: ein Hansisches Privileg (Lübeck, 1990)

England, Die Hanse und Preussen: Handel und Diplomatie 1377 – 1471 (Cologne, 1992, 3 vols)

Die Hansen in England: die wirtschaftliche und politische Bedeutung ihres Handels (1380 – 1474) und ihre Versuche zur Bewältigung der Krise von 1468 (Frankfurt, 1994)

Johanek, Peter, with Stoob, Heinz, *Europäische Messen und Märktsysteme im Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Cologne, 1996)

Jones, Michael (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 6: 1300 – c. 1415* (Cambridge, 2006)

Jörn, Nils, “Der Stralsunder Frieden von 1370” (*Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 1998)

Kagay, Donald J., with Villalon, L. J. Andrew (eds), *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History* (Woodbridge, 1999)

Keene, Derek, *New discoveries at the Hanseatic Steelyard in London* (Lübeck, 1989)

Kermode, Jenny, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1998)

Keutgen, Friedrich Wilhelm Eduard, *Die Beziehungen der Hansa zu England im letzten Drittel des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Giessen, 1890)

Kingsford, Charles Lethbridge, *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1925)

Kirby, David, with Hinkkanen, Merja-Liisa, *The Baltic and North Seas* (London, 2000)

Koppmann, Karl, “Der Seeräuber Klaus Störtebeker in Geschichte und Sage”, (*Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 1887)

Lewis, Archibald R., and Runyan, T. J., *European Naval and Maritime History, 300 – 1500* (Bloomington, 1985)

Lipson, Ephraim, *An Introduction to the Economic History of England*, Volume I (London, 1915)

Lloyd, Terence Henry, *Alien Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, 1982)

“A reconsideration of two Anglo-Hanseatic treaties of the fifteenth century”, *English Historical Review* CII (1987)

England and the German Hanse 1157 – 1611: A Study of Their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy (Cambridge, 1991)

Loades, David M., “The King’s Ships and the Keeping of the Seas: 1413 – 1480”, *Medieval History* I (1990)

Lopez, Robert S., *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950 – 1350* (Upper

Saddle River, 1972)

Lucas, Charles Prestwood, *The Beginnings of English Overseas Enterprise: a prelude to the Empire* (Oxford, 1917)

Luntowski, Gustav, *Dortmunder Kaufleute in England im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert: ein Quellennachweis* (Dortmund, 1970)

McGrail, Seán (ed.), *The Archaeology of Medieval Ships and Harbours in Northern Europe* (Oxford, 1979)

Ancient Boats in North-west Europe: The archaeology of water transport to A.D. 1500 (London, 1988)

McKisack, May, *The Fourteenth Century 1307 – 1399* (Oxford, 1959)

Meier, Dirk, trans. Angus McGeoch, *Seafarers, Merchants and Pirates in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006)

Minchinton, Walter (ed.), *The Baltic Grain Trade: Five Essays* (Exeter, 1985)
Britain and the Northern Seas: Some Essays (Pontefract, 1988)

Miskimin, Harry A., *The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe, 1300 – 1460* (Upper Saddle River, 1969)

(ed. with Herlihy, David, and Udovitch, A. L.) *The Medieval City* (New Haven, 1977)

Mollat, Michel, “The French Maritime Community: A Slow Progress up the Social Scale from the Middle Ages to the Sixteenth Century”, *Mariner’s Mirror* LXIX (1983)

Moore, Alan, “Accounts and Inventories of John Starlyng, Clerk of the King’s Ships to Henry IV”, *Mariner’s Mirror* IV (1914)

Munro, John H. A., *Wool, Cloth and Gold: The Struggle for Bullion in Anglo-Burgundian Trade, 1300 – 1478* (Toronto, 1972)

Textiles, Towns and Trade: Essays in the Economic History of Late Medieval England and the Low Countries (Coventry, 1994)

Murray, K. M. Elisabeth, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester, 1935)

Nash, Elizabeth Gee, *The Hansa* (Oxford, 1929)

Neukirchen, Heinz, *Piraten – Seeraub auf allen Meeren* (Stuttgart, 1989)

Neumann, Gerhard, *Hansisch-englische Wirtschaftsbeziehungen im 15. Jahrhundert* (Lübeck, 1936)

Nicolas, Sir Nicholas Harris, *A History of the Royal Navy from the earliest Times to the Wars of the French Revolution* (London, 1847, 2 vols)

Ormrod, W. M., "Finance and Trade under Richard II", in Goodman, Anthony, and Gillespie, James (eds), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999)

Øye, Ingvild (ed.), *Bergen and the German Hansa* (Bergen, 1994)

Palais, Hyman, "England's first attempt to break the commercial monopoly of the Hanseatic League, 1377-80", *American Historical Review* 64 (1959)

Palmer, Robert C., *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348 – 1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law* (Chapel Hill, 1993)

Pedersen, Frederik, "The German Hanse and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 57 (1984)

with Pan-Montojo, Juan (eds), *Communities in European History: representations, jurisdictions, conflicts* (Pisa, 2007)

Persson, Karl Gunnar, *Pre-Industrial Economic Growth: social organization and technological progress in Europe* (Oxford, 1988)

An Economic History of Europe: Knowledge, Institutions and Growth, 600 to the Present (Cambridge, 2010)

Pistono, Stephen J., "Henry IV and John Hawley, Privateer", *Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art Report and Transactions* 3 (1979)

Postan, Michael Moïsey, with Miller, E., and Rich, E. E. (eds), *Economic Organisation and Policies in the Middle Ages* (*Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, 3) (Cambridge, 1963)

Medieval trade and finance (Cambridge, 1973)

Pounds, Norman John Greville, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe* (London, 1976)

Power, Eileen, *The wool trade in English medieval history* (London, 1941)

with Postan, Michael Moïsey (eds), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1966)

Puhle, Matthias, *Die Vitalienbrüder – Klaus Störtebeker und die Seeräuber der Hansezeit* (Frankfurt and New York, 1994)

Quinn, D. B. (ed.), *The Hakluyt Handbook* (London, 1974, 2 vols)

Reitemeier, Arnd, "Das Handelsverbot der Hanse gegen Schottland (1412-1415/1418)", (*Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 1994)

Richmond, C. F., "Royal Administration and the Keeping of the Seas, 1422 – 1485" (Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1962)

"English Naval Power in the Fifteenth Century", *History New Series* LII (1967)

Rodger, Nicholas A. M., "The naval service of the Cinque Ports", *English Historical Review* CXI (1996)

The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Great Britain, Volume I, 660 – 1649 (London, 1997)

de Roover, Raymond A., *Money, banking and credit in mediaeval Bruges – Italian merchant bankers, Lombards and money-changers* (Cambridge, MA, 1948)

Rose, Susan, *The Navy of the Lancastrian Kings: Accounts and Inventories of William Soper, Keeper of the Kings' Ships, 1422-27*, Navy Records Series volume 123 (1982)
Medieval Naval Warfare, 1000 – 1500 (London, 2002)
Calais: An English Town in France, 1347 – 1558 (Woodbridge, 2008)

Rosentreter, Robert, *Hansezeit und Hanse Sail* (Rostock, 2004)

Roskell, John Smith, *Parliament and politics in late medieval England* (London, 1981, 3 vols)

Sandahl, Bertil, *Middle English Sea Terms* (Uppsala, 1951-82, 3 vols)

Saul, Anthony Richard, "Great Yarmouth and the Hundred Years War in the fourteenth century", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* LII (1979)
"English towns in the late middle ages: the case of Great Yarmouth", *Journal of Medieval History*, volume 8 (March 1982)

Scammell, Geoffrey Vaughan, "English Merchant Shipping at the End of the Middle Ages: Some East Coast Evidence", *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, volume XIII (1961)

Schildhauer, Johannes, *The Hansa: History and Culture* (Dorchester, 1988)

Schulz, Friedrich, *Die Hanse und England von Eduards III. bis auf Heinrichs VIII. Zeit* (Aalen, 1911)

Sherborne, J. W., "The Hundred Years' War. The English Navy: Shipping and Manpower 1369 – 1389", *Past and Present* 37 (1967)
with Tuck, Anthony (eds), *War, politics, and culture in fourteenth-century England* (London, 1994)

Sicking, Louis, *Neptune and the Netherlands: State, Economy and War at Sea in the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2004)

Simpson, J., *The Medieval Baltic 1050 – 1492* (London, 2004)

Smith, Robert Douglas (ed.), *British Naval Armaments* (Leeds, 1989)

Spufford, Peter, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London, 1986)
Money and its Use in Medieval Europe (Cambridge, 1988)
Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe (London, 2002)

Stein, Walther, *Die Hanse und England. Ein hansisch-englischer seekrieg im 15. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1905)

“Die Hanse und England beim Ausgang des hundertjährigen Krieges”
(*Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 1921)

Strayer, Joseph R. (ed.), *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988)

Tauté, Anne, *Kings and Queens of Europe* (London, 1989)

Teichmann, Fritz, *Die Stellung und Politik der hansischen Seestädte gegenüber den Vitalienbrüdern in den nordischen Thronwirren 1389 – 1400* (Berlin, 1931)

Thomas, Maurice W. (ed.), *A Survey of English Economic History* (Glasgow, 1968)

Unger, Richard W., *The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600 – 1600* (Montreal, 1980)
Ships and Shipping in the North Sea and the Atlantic, 1400 – 1800 (Aldershot, 1997)

(ed.) *Cogs, Caravels and Galleons: The Sailing Ship 1000 to 1650* (London, 1999)

with Hattendorf, John B. (eds), *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 2003)

Vaughan, Richard, *John the Fearless: the growth of Burgundian power* (Woodbridge, 2002)

Veale, Elspeth Mary, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966)

Vogel, Walther Paul, *Geschichte der deutschen Seeschiffahrt* (Berlin, 1915)

Walford, Cornelius, *An outline history of the Hanseatic League, more particularly in its bearings upon English commerce* (London, 1881)

Walker, J. A., “John Holand, a fifteenth-century Admiral”, *Mariner’s Mirror* LXV (1979)

Wanke, Josef, *Die Vitalienbrüder in Oldenburg (1395 – 1433)* (Oldenburg, 1910)

Webber, Ronald, *The Peasants’ Revolt: the uprising in Kent, Essex, East Anglia, and London in 1381 during the reign of King Richard II* (Lavenham, 1980)

Werner, Theodor Gustaf, “Der Stalhof der deutschen Hanse in London in wirtschafts- und kunsthistorischen Bildwerken”, in *Scripta Mercaturae* 2 (1973)

Westerdahl, Christer (ed.), *Crossroads in Ancient Shipbuilding* (Newbury, 1994)

Wiechmann, Ralf, with Bräuer, Günter, and Püschel, Klaus, *Klaus Störtebeker* (Munich, 2003)

Winter, J. M. (ed.), *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 1975)

Wood, Diana, *Medieval Economic Thought* (Cambridge, 2002)

Wylie, James Hamilton, *History of England under Henry IV* (London, 1896)

Zimmern, Helen, *The Hansa Towns* (London, 1889)