

MEDIEVAL TRADE, MANUFACTURING AND THE TOWNS - **EXTRACT**

Although primarily rural, England had a number of old, economically important towns in 1066. A large amount of trade came through the Eastern towns, including London, York, Winchester, Lincoln, Norwich, Ipswich and Thetford. Much of this trade was with France, the Low Countries and Germany, but the North-East of England traded with partners as far away as Sweden. Cloth was already being imported to England before the invasion through the mercery trade.

Some towns, such as York, suffered from Norman sacking during William's northern campaigns. Other towns saw the widespread demolition of houses to make room for new motte and bailey fortifications, as was the case in Lincoln. The Norman invasion also brought significant economic changes with the arrival of the first Jews to English cities. William I brought over wealthy Jews from the Rouen community in Normandy to settle in London, apparently to carry out financial services for the crown. In the years immediately after the invasion, a lot of wealth was drawn out of England in various ways by the Norman rulers and reinvested in Normandy, making William immensely wealthy as an individual ruler.

The minting of coins was decentralised in the Saxon period; every borough was mandated to have a mint and therefore a centre for trading in bullion. Nonetheless, there was strict royal control over these moneyers, and coin dies could only be made in London. William retained this process and generated a high standard of Norman coins, leading to the use of the term "sterling" as the name for the Norman silver coins.

Mid-medieval growth (1100–1290)

The 12th and 13th centuries were a period of huge economic growth in England. The population of England rose from around 1.5 million in 1086 to around 4 or 5 million in 1300, stimulating increased agricultural outputs and the export of raw materials to Europe. In contrast to the previous two centuries, England was relatively secure from invasion. Except for the years of the Anarchy, most military conflicts either had only localised economic impact or proved only temporarily disruptive. English economic thinking remained conservative, seeing the economy as consisting of three groups: the ordines, those who fought, or the nobility; laboratores, those who worked, in particular the peasantry; and oratores, those who prayed, or the clerics. Trade and merchants played little part in this model and were frequently vilified at the start of the period, although they were increasingly tolerated towards the end of the 13th century.

In medieval England, towns were centres of trade, manufacturing, and markets.

Trade

Wool: England's most important export, shipped to other countries to be made into cloth.

Coastal ports: Lynn and Yarmouth were major centres of long-distance trade

Eastern towns: London, York, Winchester, Lincoln, Norwich, Ipswich, and Thetford were important trading centres.

Foreign merchants: Heavily regulated, and had to wait before entering the market.

Manufacturing

Leather: York was a major centre for leather goods.

Metal: Smiths, cutlers, pin-makers, and goldsmiths were common.

Building: Stone masons and carpenters were important.

Textiles: Cloth was a major commodity.

Food: Bakers, butchers, fishmongers, grocers, spicers, salters, and saucemakers were common.

Markets

Markets were active in the morning, and most shops closed at 3 PM.

Markets were noisy, and merchants had to "cry the wares" to advertise
Saturday was an early closing day for shops.

Guilds

Guilds were societies of people who made the same products.

Guilds helped protect the interests of members, and ensured that skills were maintained.

End.