

# LIFE EXPECTATIONS OF THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF FREEMEN IN LONDON 1375–1399

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Most exercises in medieval demography are either speculative or on a very small scale. The problems are obvious. No systematic records of baptisms, marriages or burials were kept in England before 1538. The historian therefore has to rely on very small samples, such as may turn up in manorial, company or city archives. An identifiable group of this kind is to be found in the entries of the Court of Orphans of the City of London.

They offer a rare opportunity to analyse the survival rates and destinations of widows and their young children in the late fourteenth century. This study sought to establish the number of orphans left, the proportion of boys to girls and how many lived to maturity, including the number of girls who married under the age of 21. In addition, an attempt was made to test the theory that most (London) families were dying out within two or three generations. It is known that many people, both men and women, remarried on the deaths of their spouses. Evidence was sought to establish how common it was to remarry more than once. Further, where widows took another partner, how commonly did they choose a man from their previous husband's craft?

The prime source for data bearing on all these questions, the records of the Court of Orphans, is to be found in the London Letter Books. Some additional material is also available in the Calendars of Pleas and Memoranda, the Coroners' Records for 1300–78 and the wills of the children's parents where they exist.<sup>1</sup>

The systematic administration of London developed early. The decisions and ordinances of the Mayor and Aldermen, acting in both their civil and judicial capacities, were noted in the 'Letter Books': so-called because each successive volume was designated by a letter of the alphabet, beginning with Letter Book A which covered c. 1275–98.

The Court of Orphans was, in effect, a sub-committee of the Court of Aldermen and dealt with the property and upbringing of the young children and widows of their freemen who had died. The Court enrolled the details, nominated a legal

guardian, together with two sureties, who held the orphan's property until its owner reached the age of 21, or completed an apprenticeship, if this took longer. An orphan girl could marry and receive her portion early, but only with the consent of the Mayor and Aldermen.

Between 1375 and 1399, Letter Book H recorded the details of 152 bereaved families: the names of the children's fathers, usually of their widowed mothers and of their new husbands when they remarried. Sometimes the orphans' ages were given and the dates on which they claimed their inheritances also appear. Such data provide some hard, if minimal, evidence of the size of late fourteenth-century families, and the ratio of number of boys and girls and their survival rates. It also gives an indication of how many wives survived their husbands, the proportion who acted as their children's' guardians and whether or not they remarried.

Quantification based on such a small sample must inevitably offer a limited baseline. It can, however, afford an opportunity to test estimates drawn from longer periods and larger populations. It also gives an insight into quite a broad cross-section of the community. Sylvia Thrupp, quite reasonably, tended to concentrate on the wealthy merchants<sup>2</sup> but many freemen were craftsmen, including some very humble trades.

By focusing on a limited period, and on a small but finite population, it is possible to use data which may serve as a probe to test broader studies, such as those of Sylvia Thrupp and Barbara Hanawalt.<sup>3</sup> Before 1349 England was suffering from the difficulties characteristic of over-population: in the years after 1349, the reverse was the case. Since the plague of 1348/9 became endemic, moreover, these problems did not go away, but intensified and reappeared in a number of critical epidemics. The period under review is, therefore, likely to demonstrate the impact of very high mortality rates.

Sylvia Thrupp contended that few London families survived in the male line for more than three generations: London therefore depended on immigration from the outlying countryside for new citizens. An attempt was therefore made to trace the subsequent destinies of the widows and orphans as well as the parents' places of origin. Both the tracing of the widows and of the children led to extended searching, retrospectively in Letter Books F and G, and prospectively in Letter Books J and K.

### **Method of procedure**

Straightforward listing provided the original database of the study. Each family was then analysed as a case study, wherever the material permitted. Four cadres of people emerged: fathers, mothers, their daughters and their sons. The last two categories were later supplemented with lists and details of the daughters' husbands and their status. There was also an additional set of people arising from the remarriage of their mothers.

**Table 1** Fathers and their widows

	n.	%
Left widows	100	65
Of which, widows known to be second wives	(30)	(20)
Died as widowers*	52	34

**Notes** \* = Leaving 87 children without either parent.

## Fathers

Inevitably, the information on the fathers was the most complete. There were 152 of them. The family of every case recorded in Letter Book H was included in the study. This involved a number which originated in earlier Letter Books, since some of these cases were very long-running: 36 of the men named had died earlier than 1375, some very much earlier, including one who had perished in 1349, presumably in the Black Death.<sup>4</sup> How many of these men died as a result of epidemic disease can only be conjectured, in view of the fact that their children's goods were often not deposited at Guildhall until long after their father's death, commonly not until their mother's remarriage.<sup>5</sup> Probate dates can be a good indication, however, of the date of decease. Of the 78 men whose wills are recorded, 27 of the testators appear to have died during an outbreak of plague. Of the original 152 fathers, 52 left 87 children without either parent (Table 1). The crafts or professions of 122 men in this sample are known and included one royal, and three city, officials, two MPs and two knights: 46 of the 49 crafts listed in 1381/2<sup>6</sup> were represented among them (Table 2).

Thanks to the City requirements that testators must leave their property in thirds<sup>7</sup> it is sometimes possible to calculate the overall wealth of the testator, by multiplying the orphan's portion by three. Among the six wealthiest men, all former aldermen, it is no surprise to find a draper (a former mayor), two mercers, a vintner, a goldsmith and a grocer. All these men left estates worth over £1000 and one, William Knyghtcote, well over £3000. The value of real estate left cannot be quantified and some men undoubtedly resorted to legal devices to conceal their true worth. At the other end of the scale, however, there were carpenters, brewers, a butcher, an 'upholder' and a cordwainer who each left less than £20. A fruiterer had only 40s. with which to endow his 8 year old son: 17 fathers, however, died possessed of between £100 and £200, a substantial sum at the time, not only the competence of some merchants but of a number of prosperous craftsmen as well. Fourteen left between £200 and £900.

A number of these wealthier men, if ostensibly practising a hand-craft, were probably also exercising their right to invest money in wholesale trading enterprises.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, there were some who, by their occupational standards, left very little. The estate of Richard Cavendish, whose family had been mercers for generations, finally totalled only £20. The explanation may lie in the fact that,

**Table 2 Fathers' crafts and trades**

Craft or trade	n.	Craft or trade	n.
Spicers/Grocers	11	Bowyers	1
Drapers	9	Carpenters	1
Stockfishmongers	8	Clerks	1
Mercers	7	Cornmongers	1
Brewers	7	Tapicers	1
Skinner	7	Glasiers	1
Goldsmiths	7	Patemosterers	1
Vintners	5	Shearmen	1
Woolmongers	5	Cooks	1
Cordwainers	4	Painters	1
Officials	4	Marshalls	1
Gridlers	3	Cheesemongers	1
Founders	2	Weavers	1
Glovers	2	Apothecaries	1
Curriers	2	Butchers	1
Scrivenors	2	Malemakers	1
Fullers	2	Ironmongers	1
Poulters	2	Quiltmakers	1
Spurriers	2	Plomers	1
Pewterers	2	Marberers	1
Tailors	2	Upholders	1
Haberdashers	2	Fruiterers	1
Merchants	2	Armourer	1

before the orphan's patrimony was declared, the estate had to be cleared of all outstanding debts. A merchant might easily leave his property encumbered with losses from speculative enterprises and bad debts in an adverse year. He might, however, have possessed real estate, already conveyed on trust to the next generation. The sharp discrepancies of wealth within the same company, for example the brewers and cordwainers, are also a reminder of the diversity of occupation involved in such trades: from the lowly artisan producer to the capitalist entrepreneur.

Wills, where they still exist, can provide considerable additional detail, notably about the man's craft, place of residence, previous wives, other members of the family and of some real estate. It is clear however that testators only dealt with matters outstanding when the will was made. Where older children had already been 'advanced' and received their portion, they might not be mentioned at all. Real estate, as already shown, could be made subject to a legal 'use' and thus escape mention in the will. Only 96 wills are recorded for this cohort of fathers. They were made by 82 testators, 14 of whom made two, one relating to real estate and the other a personal testament. Of the 96 listed, the texts of only 64 wills have survived. The rest, mainly in the Court of the London Archdeaconry, appear only in the index. Five wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC). The dates of death of these latter are significant, denoting as they do the rise of the PCC as a probate court for men of real wealth. The richest of them all, however, William Knyghtcote, who died in 1383, eluded its net. His wills were proved in the city's own Court of Husting and the London

Commissary court. A mercer, former sheriff and alderman, he left each of his three orphan daughters a dowry of £500. He is known to have had at least three sons, but he only refers to his 'son and heir', omitting to name him, as also in the case of 'his children'. A number of testators used these generic terms, including some who referred merely to 'my wife', in the same way.

Given these limitations, it is often hazardous to try to establish the full size of the testator's family, especially as the Court of Orphans was only concerned with the wealth and care of young children. Most men appear to have left only one or two such orphans, though there were six families with four, one with five and one of eight.

What these figures do not show, however, is how many older children were alive and 'advanced' at the time of their father's death. It is thus impossible to be sure that in any particular case the record of a man's family is complete. The names of a few more children have emerged from records of litigation. In this way, it has been possible to add 46 more descendants to the tally: 30 boys and 16 girls. Wills can also be used to throw light on the parents' earlier homes. Many crafts relied for at least some of their apprentices on recruitment from country districts. Eighteen out of 64 testators referred to lands outside London and a number clearly originated in the shires: four from Norfolk, three others with connections in Northampton, four in Essex, two from Surrey and others from Kent, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Lincolnshire. From their requests for prayers in the local church, for parents and families, it is often possible to pin-point their birthplaces with accuracy.

Such were the fathers of the families under review. Not all were wealthy, even though they all claimed the privileged status of freemen of London. There were undoubtedly many poorer freemen belonging to the same crafts as those under scrutiny. Only those who had something to leave, however small, appear in these lists, bearing out the contention of Elaine Clark<sup>10</sup> that the Court of Orphans was chiefly concerned with the protection of property.

## Mothers

Two thirds of the wives of the 152 men in this sample are known to have survived their husbands. Of these, as already indicated, 20 were not their spouse's first wife. Though difficult to identify, some of these widows had also been married before. Many of the second wives would have been younger than their husbands. If girls could marry from the age of 14 onwards, and apprentices were forbidden to do so until the end of their term of service, most young men were at least 21 years of age, and often 24, before they could take a wife. The age of only one of the mothers in the sample is known. Idonea de Hatfelde was 14 when she married Richard Claverynge, as his second wife in 1363. When he died, in 1375, she was still only 26, with a son aged 9 years: she subsequently remarried twice. Likewise, Dame Margaret Phelipot must have been about the same age at the time of her first marriage in 1370, as she was still bearing children to her fourth husband whom she married in 1392.<sup>11</sup>

Though doubtless as vulnerable to personal grief as anyone else, the widow of a London freeman could at least rely on the city to ensure that she received her share of her late husband's property; which would enable her to survive with dignity herself and to care for her young children. As early as 1268, the city had ordained respect and protection for its widows and exemptions from certain tallages, redemptions and contributions. She could claim a life interest in one third of her former husband's property, in the name of her dower, and also her 'Chamber' which entitled her to live in her former dwelling, 'the hall, the principal chamber, the yard, so long as she remain unmarried'.<sup>12</sup> Only a few London husbands in this survey attempted to restrict their wives' dower to their widowhood and three out of six women so restricted remarried notwithstanding. For the London widow was an attractive marriage proposition.

In addition to her dower and her Chamber, the widow was normally, by custom, given the guardianship of her underage children, together with control over their patrimony. Like other guardians she could charge, at a rate of 12d. a week for their upkeep. In this way she had the use of two thirds of her dead husband's assets. Of the 100 widows in this study, 70 are known to have acted as the guardians of their children, 15 per cent more than Barbara Hanawalt's figure over a much wider period. Only 23 mothers were specifically excluded by their husbands who had named an alternative guardian. The one ground for automatic prohibition was that of a personal interest in the orphan's fate and fortune. Usually, where widows were superseded by designated guardians, the intervention arose because the children were those of a former wife: in such cases the step-mother was only allowed the care of her own children. Sometimes, undoubtedly, the husband had been aware that his will would be challenged: as when, in 1369 Lucy Bretforde, a second wife with no children, successfully claimed a half share of her husband's estate, though there were orphans of his first marriage. The precedent was overturned, however, when, in 1394, Idonea Pynchon challenged the right of her step-son to a third of his father's estate and lost her case.<sup>13</sup> On a few occasions, the orphan's inheritance was so large that it required an experienced man of affairs to administer it. In such cases the father would nominate a trusted friend or business associate or, as in the case of John Pynchon, the boy's uncle.<sup>14</sup>

It is thus clear that the London widow, unlike her despised counterparts in Florence, was likely to be in demand for remarriage.<sup>15</sup> If she married again, as 48 of the guardians in the study clearly did, the new husband was automatically entitled to control of her dower. He frequently assumed the right of guardianship of the children as well, but had to appear at the Guildhall to seek permission before he could do so. This was often the first occasion on which the orphan's patrimony was declared and was on such occasions entered in the Letter Book long after the father's death. This means that, in many cases, it is now only possible to locate the date on which the widow remarried, and to whom, not the precise date on which her former husband died.

Of the 100 widows in this cohort, 50 are known to have remarried, of whom 6 married again, after a second widowhood, and one after a third.<sup>16</sup> It is

**Table 3 Widows known to have remarried into their former husband's craft or trade**

	n.
<b>Widows remarrying into same craft/trade</b>	
Goldsmiths	2
Grocers	2
Vintners	2
Stockfishmongers	2
Drapers	1
Shearmen	1
Cordwainers	1
Glaziers	1
Merchants	1
<b>Widows remarrying into allied craft/trade</b>	
Fuller's widow > Webber	1
Fletcher's widow > Glover	1
Clothier's widow > Woolmonger	1
<b>Widows remarrying into different craft/trade</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Total number in sample</b>	<b>100</b>

sometimes claimed that widows of this period remarried very shortly after their first husband's death but the numbers in this group who did so do not give great support to this view. Only 6 are known to have remarried within 6 months of their widowhood and eight within 12 months. Most seem to have waited for at least 18 months to 2 years before pledging themselves again, even at a time of exceptionally high mortality. Nor does this study suggest that widows automatically married men of their former husband's calling. It may be significant that four of the six who remarried within six months did so within the craft, perhaps to keep the business going. They comprised second marriages to one grocer, one goldsmith, a merchant and a shearman. Of all the known remarriages, only 13 widows chose a man from their former husband's trade (see Table 3).

There remain 44 widows who appear not to have remarried. One or two are known to have died soon after their husbands, leaving their orphans bereft. Some may have been older women when left who retired from the scene. At least two grandmothers acted as guardians. One widow was charged by her husband not to remarry in order to look after their 'idiot' daughter: a responsibility which she appears to have fulfilled.<sup>17</sup> Others may have exercised their right, as widows of freemen, to carry on their husbands' businesses, but there is little evidence of this. That the option existed was remarkable, however, since it was no longer available in sixteenth century London, by which time the increase in population had resulted in the marginalisation of women in the working world.<sup>18</sup>

Six of these widows left wills, together with two wills drawn up by widows who had remarried but made them with their husband's consent. One of the latter held enfeoffed property in her own right, to which her husband had no legal access unless she willed her rights to him. Another widow, who died in 1399, had outlived her first husband by 33 years when she made her will in 1409, and 9 years after the death of her second. Two died shortly after their husbands: one only a few months later and the second two years after. The remarkable Margaret Phelipot, made her will in 1431, 56 years after the decease of her first husband and 34 years after the death of her fourth spouse. It is of considerable interest that, on the death of the latter in 1397, she took a vow of celibacy. She did not retire from the world, however, and is to be found, as late as 1428, appearing in law suits alongside her son of her last marriage.<sup>19</sup>

The stamina of these London women was remarkable. Resolute stoicism alone can have carried them through repeated pregnancies and childbirth, only to see their young swept from them, not only by the drama of the plague, but in the high rate of child mortality, from ordinary childhood complaints, for which there were then no remedies. It is hard to reconcile Ariès' conclusion that children were not valued by Londoners with Wiclif's chiding of mothers who grieved for their young children, instead of thanking God in his mercy for taking them out of this world.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Orphans**

Between 1375 and 1399 the London Court of Orphans had the care and oversight, at one time or another, of 301 children of freemen: 159 boys and 142 girls, an unexpected imbalance of sexes.<sup>21</sup> Sixty-seven of these children died before reaching the age of 21 and 62 more disappeared from the records. (See Table 2) The figures suggest a survival rate of 1.5 per family.

As already indicated, however, the available sources only mentioned those children not previously 'advanced'. A number of fathers are known to have had other children, apprenticed, married or adult at the time of their deaths. Court cases, casual appearances in the city records and even entries in the records of the Privy Council have supplied the names and existence of a few additional children; 46 in all. Thirty men and sixteen women have turned up in this way, bringing the total of these London survivors to 280, making an average ratio of 1.84 per family. If so many became known on this haphazard basis, it is surely probable that a number more existed and that perhaps Londoners were just managing to replace themselves, even in these exceptional years of high mortality. The incidence of plague reduced from 1408 onwards and from then on there should have been a steady increase in survival rates.

It proved possible to trace the ultimate destinies of some of the orphans. but only to a limited extent. The records at this point are inadequate as evidence of anything but very tentative conclusions, though even these may serve as sound base-lines for further enquiries. It is possible to establish whether the children reached the age of 21, or, in the case of girls, married before that age, from their



**Table 4 Orphan girls known to have married young and their patrimony**

Surname	Patrimony	Age at marriage
Knyghtcote	£500	11/12
Gyile	£200	11/12
Draper	£40+	13
Knyghtcote	£500	13
Sutton	?	15
Harwendone	40 mks	16
Ursher	£106	17
Draper	£40+	17
Draper	£40+	17
Godyn	£120	18
de Nortone	?	18

appearances in court, to claim their patrimonies from their guardians. Since the Court of Orphans controlled the right to marry underage and was a court of appeal for disputed apprenticeships, such major events in these young people's lives are accessible up to the day on which they claimed their inheritance. Thereafter, unless they broke the law, brought a law suit, or otherwise attracted public attention, they are difficult to track, particularly as the average citizen, even today, probably never appears in a court of law. For those who were involved in litigation, the records of pleas and memoranda, made by the Court, provide a rich source to supplement the Letter Books. Sometimes the orphans, now adult, appeared making their own wills: some, in their turn, leaving young children to become wards of court.<sup>22</sup>

For the girls, their usual destiny was marriage, though nine girls in the sample did in fact embark on an apprenticeship. One of the latter had an unusual 'escape' clause in her indenture, enabling her to leave at any time for marriage, but this was unlikely to be true for others.<sup>23</sup> This may partly account for the remaining girls who were still not married (54 per cent of those surviving). The ages at marriage can be calculated in 11 cases only (see Table 4). Marriage before the age of 14 was not normally permitted by the Court of Orphans, but it was customary among the landed gentry to marry wealthy heiresses when they were considerably younger. Of four girls who claimed their patrimony before they were 14, three had dowries of £500 each and one of £200. Two others, with sums of over £100, did not marry until they were 18, in one case and 17 in the other. Nine took husbands in their fathers' trades and six married into allied trades: a comparatively small number of the whole. Socially, like married like, if only because the city fathers watched jealously lest any of their orphans be socially 'disparaged', by marrying beneath them. Within this framework the remaining 45 girls (73 per cent) crossed the frontiers of different trades and crafts freely in their choice of husbands.

Less is known about the boys' marriages because, in general, they could not marry until 21; or older, if their apprenticeship lasted over that time. Most boys probably served an apprenticeship, but only 29 are recorded for this group. Two

**Table 5 The orphans**

	Boys		Girls	
	n.	%	n.	%
Died under age	37	23	32	21
No further record	26	16	36	25
Survived	96	60	76	53

were the victims of early marriages: arranged in one case by the ambitious father of a boy of six and the other manipulated by a ruthless guardian into marriage with his own daughter.<sup>24</sup>

For 62 children (26 boys and 36 girls) however, there is no further entry at all after their initial enrolment (see Table 5). What happened to them? No doubt, some died of plague and disease, but such deaths would normally have been reported and their money returned to their fathers' executors'. Some may have vanished in the confusion left in a family where few survived, though only two families in this population are known to have been totally wiped out.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, in epidemics, some children were sent out to the country towns and villages whence their parents had come to be apprenticed in London. It is hard to believe, however, that a girl would marry without her dowry.

In their turn, a number of the orphans later drew up wills: 23 boys, 5 girls and 10 of their husbands. As in the case of their parents, these documents are often an incomplete record. They may, and sometimes do, give additional information about the number of their families, but they may also omit very important details. Before lamenting, with Sylvia Thrupp, the social decline of the city's grandees, it should be noted that five of the wills of the girls' husbands achieved PCC status and two of the orphan boys: a total of 7 for this generation: one more than for their fathers.<sup>26</sup>

That neither of the two male orphans concerned became aldermen may well reflect a change of aspiration rather than lack of ambition: and only one of the girls' husbands followed this course.<sup>27</sup> Two orphan boys had been given the means to go to the University of Oxford and John Brikles, in 1440, bequeathed money for a chantry, for five years, to be sung by a student at Cambridge. As both Barbara Hanawalt and Sylvia Thrupp suggest, the title the new generation coveted seems to have been that of 'esquire', denoting as it did, kinship with the knightly class of royal office. Four eventually did claim such status: of the girls of William Knyghtcote, one married an alderman, but the other two married into knightly families of Essex and Suffolk. Another heiress also married an Essex landowner. One wealthy girl, a bastard orphan, was notwithstanding married to 'a valet of the Lord King'. These isolated cases do not support the theory, however, that there was a major exodus into the shires. Most of the orphan girls in this group appear to have married freemen of the city and clearly stayed there. At least five boys left widows with their own orphans.<sup>28</sup> One daughter, following a family tradition, became a nun. Four of the boys became monks and one a

friar.<sup>29</sup> On the death of her mother, the girl described as an 'idiot' was promptly sued by the rest of the family for her portion.<sup>30</sup>

By 1436, the London Rate Assessment list only appears to carry the names of seven of the families in this enquiry. Search in the Letter Books and Calendars of Pleas and Memoranda, however, reveals 41 more families with the names of the fathers originally recorded. Given that the names of older children are often omitted in surviving records and the line of descent is now impossible to trace, particularly in the case of girls, it would seem reasonable to suggest that some of these surviving families were in fact the successors of the original ones. Even if some of the rich members of these families had withdrawn into the counties, yet they probably kept their connections with the city, since it is well known that the English gentry and aristocracy continued to keep roots in trade and sent their younger sons back into it, as apprentices in their turn.

Another factor in the 'dynastic' story is that some families with a long-established London connection were, in the natural course of events, coming to an end in the late fourteenth century: a process doubtless heavily accelerated by the repeated outbreaks of epidemics in the 50 years between 1349–99. The wonder must be that as many as 57 per cent of the orphans managed to survive, and this is to ignore the 62 children about whom nothing further is known. Further, if the older children culled from other sources are included, a survival rate of 1.84 per father emerges.

## Conclusion

The size of surviving families has probably been under-estimated hitherto. The survival rate could therefore be somewhat higher than previously estimated, particularly after 1407, when outbreaks of plague became less frequent. More widows (77 per cent) acted as guardians in this period than Hanawalt's estimate of 55 per cent for the years 1389–1428 suggests. The incidence of remarriage, for this generation, may be less, however. Third and fourth marriages were probably rarer than supposed.

A number of families survived into the next generation and beyond, even if only calculated on the basis of the male line. The names of many in this survey continued well into the fifteenth century. It would be dangerous to assume that none of these were lineally descended from the fathers originally listed and this would seem to suggest that more freemen's families may have continued to live in London than in the case of the wealthy aldermen who were in the best position to purchase country estates for their descendants.

## NOTES

1. Contractions used: CLB (A–K), R. R. Sharpe ed., *Calendar of Letter Books (A–K)*, (London, 1899); CP&M, A. H. Thomas ed., *Calendar of Pleas and Memoranda*, (Cambridge, 1926–43); PCC, Prerogative Court of Canterbury (Public Record Office); Co. Hu., R.R. Sharpe ed., *Calendar of Wills proved and enrolled in the Court of Husting, London 1258–1688*, (London, 1889); L. Com., Commissary Court of London (Guildhall Archives); L. Arch., Archdeaconry Court of London (Guildhall Archives).
2. S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, (Michigan, 1961).
3. B. Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, (Oxford, 1993).

4. John Coterelle: will Co. Hu. (I) 599 1349.
5. Unless required to do so, by her husband's will, a widow could assume the right of guardianship without appearing at Guildhall for five years after his death. CLB K, 5 footnote.
6. CP&M 1381–1412, 29–31: Membr. 16 and 17.
7. One third to the widow, one third to be divided between the testator's young children, and the remainder, known as 'the testator's third', could be left in personal bequests, including gifts to the church for masses and charitable works.
8. For example, Adam Haket, Bowyer, left over £750 and John Gilbert, Painter, about £900.
9. If, however, known older children are added in, the figures become: 10 families with four living children, six with five, two with six and one with eight.
10. E. Clarke, 'City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval London', *American Journal of Legal History*, 3 (1990), 168–87.
11. M. Rawcliffe, 'Margaret, Lady Philpot', in C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton eds, *Medieval London Widows*, (London, 1994), 85–98.
12. CLBC 36–37, 'Charter of Henry III to the widows of London'. For a full examination of the status of the London widows, see Barron, 'Introduction', in *Medieval London Widows*.
13. Case of Lucy Bretforde, CLBG 250 (fo. ccxxxiv b). That of Idonea Pynchon CP&M 1381–1412 201 (Roll A 32, Membr. 5).
14. Will of John Pynchon, L. Com. I 263 ans 263v. 1392.
15. I. Chabot, 'Widowhood and Poverty in late Medieval Florence', *Continuity and Change*, 3 2 (1985), 291–311; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle in Yorkshire towns of the Middle Ages: some York cause paper evidence', *Continuity and Change*, 1 2 (1986), 141–69.
16. The widows who married a third time were: Maud Andrew/Vyne/Constantyn; Matilda atte Mylne/Wakelee/Dallyng; Dionisia Claverynge/Hatfelde/Olney; Margaret Hothom/Sibille/Grace. One married four times: Margaret Berlyngham/Philpot/Fitznichol/Bamme.
17. Geoffrey Patrik, scrivener, in his will (Co. Hu. (ii) 147–8) made the dower of his widow, dependent on her not remarrying, perhaps to ensure the care of their 'idiot' daughter, Cecelia.
18. C. M. Barron, 'Medieval Women in Southern England', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), 48.
19. Rawcliffe, 'Margaret Philpot', 85–98.
20. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class*, 200; T. Arnold ed., *The English works of Wiclif*, vol. III (1869–71), 199.
21. A discrepancy still evident in 1552. See S. Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, (Cambridge, 1989), 51.
22. Richard Cok (d. 1397), CP&M 1381–1412 255, 268; William Lynne (d. 1421), PCC 52, 54 MARCHE; Thomas Herkestede (d. 1424), L.Comm. 3 123v.; John Prynce (d. 1421), CLB I 255; William Wyght (d. 1409), CLB I 80.
23. Agnes Cok; her indenture recorded CP&M 1364–81 219 (Roll A21 Membr. 8).
24. John, son of John de Gartone (d. 1362), was aged nine years when his father died and had already been married with his father's consent; CLB H 52. John Costantyn was married to Philippa Peche, his guardian's daughter, during his minority and succeeded in obtaining an annulment when he came of age; CLB H 16, 102, 293.
25. The families of John Nedham (1391/2) and William Pursere (1390).
26. Orphans' Wills proved in PCC: John Godyn (1463) and William Lynne (1421). Husbands of the orphan girls with wills in PCC: William Danvers (1439) married Johanna Leget; Richard Forster (1411) husband of Idonea Knyghtcote; John Sybille (1401) whose wife was Margaret Gylle; John Barley (1409) who had married Dionisia Sutton and John Longe (1460) whose widow has been Matilda Adam. See also Thrupp, *The Merchant Class*, chapter 5.
27. Thomas Aleyn, mercer and husband of Margery Knyghtcote.
28. See endnote 22, above.
29. William Clerk (Carmelite); John Frensshe (Merton Abbey); Thomas Goldyngham (Croxtan Abbey, Leics.); William Hake (Augustinian); Hentry Thomlyn (Monastery at Lewes); Matilda Toky (Kelbourne Priory).
30. CLB H 431.