

THE MEDIEVAL MELTING-POT: ENGLAND'S IMMIGRANTS, 1330-1550¹

by Jessica Lutkin²

ABSTRACT

England's Immigrants 1330-1550 is a major research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, that is now in the second year of its three-year timescale. The project is exploring the extensive archival evidence about the names, origins, occupations and households of a significant number of foreigners who chose to make their lives and livelihoods in England in the era of the Hundred Years War, the Wars of the Roses, and the early stages of the Reformation. The outcomes of the project will contribute creatively to the longer-term history of immigration to England, and will prove to be an invaluable resource to genealogists and local historians. This paper outlines the fundamentals of the research being undertaken, a survey of the sources and their historical significance, and the wider historiographical context of the project. It also reveals some of the project's findings, namely in the City of London, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and Yorkshire.

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One of the main challenges for the medieval genealogist is the need to research laterally, and not rely on the traditional genealogical sources of the post-Tudor period. There are plentiful sources, from manorial records to the financial Exchequer records, but they do have their limitations. A new project co-ordinated by the University of York aims to open up a fascinating and revealing set of sources that delve into the heart of local history, and make them publicly available. A web-based database, developed by the Historical Research Institute at the University of Sheffield, will eventually enable us to achieve the project's aim, which is to produce a comprehensive nation-wide study of resident aliens in the late middle ages.

The project will tackle four key research questions, concerning the individuals themselves, the rules governing them, their work and their culture. The data on the individuals will show where the immigrants came from, where they lived and worked, and their relationships with other incomers and the native population. The project aims to shed light on the extent to which aliens were integrated into the towns, villages and rural communities of England, and whether formal or informal types of 'ghetto-isation' were applied to them.

The data will come from a number of different sources, pooling as much information as possible concerning England's resident aliens. The central records for the project are the alien subsidy records – most of which are contained within series E 179 at The National Archives.³ These fifteenth century documents are to be supported by the later Tudor subsidy records, wherein aliens were assessed alongside their English neighbours. It is estimated that this will provide us with

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³ The E 179 taxation records can be searched via The National Archives at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/E179/>. This series of records is invaluable for family and local historians, and explains in detail the subsidies granted.

the names of over 60,000 resident aliens in England, often showing their occupation, their family or household connections, their origin and their association to English men and women.

Alien Subsidies

The alien subsidies provide a fascinating insight into the resident alien population. They were a series of taxes levied upon England's first-generation immigrant population during the mid to late fifteenth century, and were an innovation in taxation procedures. A series of military and diplomatic setbacks in the war with France had seen a growth in tensions between the native population and foreigners living or trading in England during the 1430s. Parliament had been presented with a series of anti-alien petitions, and in 1436, the author of the treatise *The Libelle of Englysche Polycye* had advocated the imposition of massive restrictions on the freedoms of aliens within the realm. These concerns came to a head in the parliament of 1439-40, when actions were finally taken against what were seen by many as an often unwelcome and potentially dangerous group within English society.

Two significant measures were taken against the activities of foreigners in England. Firstly, new laws were introduced that prevented trade between foreign merchants on English soil, banned the shipment of coinage out of the realm – all trading profits had to be spent on English goods – and set up a system whereby all foreign merchants were required to register with English 'hosts' who would help to enforce the new laws. These have been described in detail in the recently published views of hosts by Helen Bradley.⁴ Alongside this, another act of that same Parliament addressed the widely-held belief that aliens resident in England possessed greater wealth than native-born people but were not being taxed proportionately. This imposed a poll tax to be paid by all non-native born people in England over twelve years of age, payable at two different rates - householders (generally artisans, tradesmen and other relatively settled people) were to pay 16d each per year, while non-householders (mainly servants, labourers or migrant workers) were to pay 6d per year. Exemptions were relatively few. Welshmen were specifically exempt, as was anyone who had purchased letters of denization, alien women married to English or Welsh husbands, and members of religious orders (though not regular clergy). Alien wives of alien husbands were not explicitly exempt, but while they are often found recorded with their husbands in the returns, they were not charged. Assessment was to be conducted by the justices of the peace, who would return the names of those liable to the Exchequer, which would then order the sheriff, civic authorities or equivalent officials to collect the tax. It was originally to be collected in two instalments, at Easter and Michaelmas, but in most areas these were soon combined into a single annual payment, assessed and collected as and when the officials decided.

The original grant ran for three years, and in 1442 Parliament extended this for a further two years. Tax rates remained unchanged, but the exemptions were broadened specifically to include both the Irish and the Channel Islanders, both of whom had protested successfully that, as subjects of the English king, they should not be liable. Following the conclusion of this tax in 1444, it was not until 1449 that another subsidy was granted, this time to last for four years. The

⁴ Helen Bradley, ed., *The Views of the Hosts of Alien Merchants 1440-1444* (2012).

rates again remained unchanged, but two new categories were added; specific alien merchants (mainly various groups of Italians, along with Hansers and Prussians) were to pay 6s 8d per head, while clerks of alien merchants were to pay 20d, with all merchants who had been in the country for more than six weeks being liable to pay. The exemptions were again extended, with the inclusion of anyone born under the king's allegiance in Normandy, Gascony and Guienne.

In 1453, after the conclusion of the 1449 tax, a further subsidy was granted, this time to last for the remainder of Henry VI's life. The nominal payment dates reverted back to Easter and Michaelmas, but as before, in most areas the tax continued to be administered on an annual basis. The payment rates remained largely unchanged, but the alien merchants, brokers, factors and their attorneys were now to pay much more, with householders paying 40s and non-householders 20s. After a delay in collecting the tax during the duke of York's protectorate, the first six payments were collected together, and the tax was then collected each year until Henry was deposed by Edward IV. In 1463 Edward ordered that collection resume, under the pretext that the tax was explicitly for the 'natural life' of Henry VI, and while Henry may no longer have been king, he was still very much alive. Collection continued up to and including the payment due at Easter 1471, after which, following Henry's death on 22 May 1471, authority for the grant ceased.

It was not until February 1483 that another alien subsidy was granted. However, this time, the amounts levied were much higher than before. The standard charge on alien householders and non-householders rose to 6s 8d and 2s respectively, while a new category was added, with holders of brewing houses paying 20s each. Householders who were merchants or factors from certain regions were to pay 40s, while non-householders in the same categories were to pay 20s. Spanish, Breton and German merchants were specifically exempt, a concession later extended to Venetians, Genoans, Florentines and Luccans. Initial orders for collection were not issued until 27 April 1483, after Edward IV's death and in the name of the young Edward V, but collection was disrupted, presumably by Edward's deposition, and Richard III issued further orders on 1 August 1483. This tax seems to have been assessed and collected with a thoroughness not seen since 1440, and a number of extensive and detailed returns survive. This subsidy was only levied for a single year, but in 1487 another grant was made to Henry VII, charged at the same rates, and with the same exceptions. However, very few returns for that tax survive.

The most useful documents for the project's data collection resulting from the alien subsidies are the assessments and inquisitions (Figs 1-3), as they contain the names of those taxed. While the other documents, especially the particulars of account (Fig 4), do not usually provide names, they at least give summary figures of resident aliens. This can be immensely useful if the assessments and inquisitions are missing.

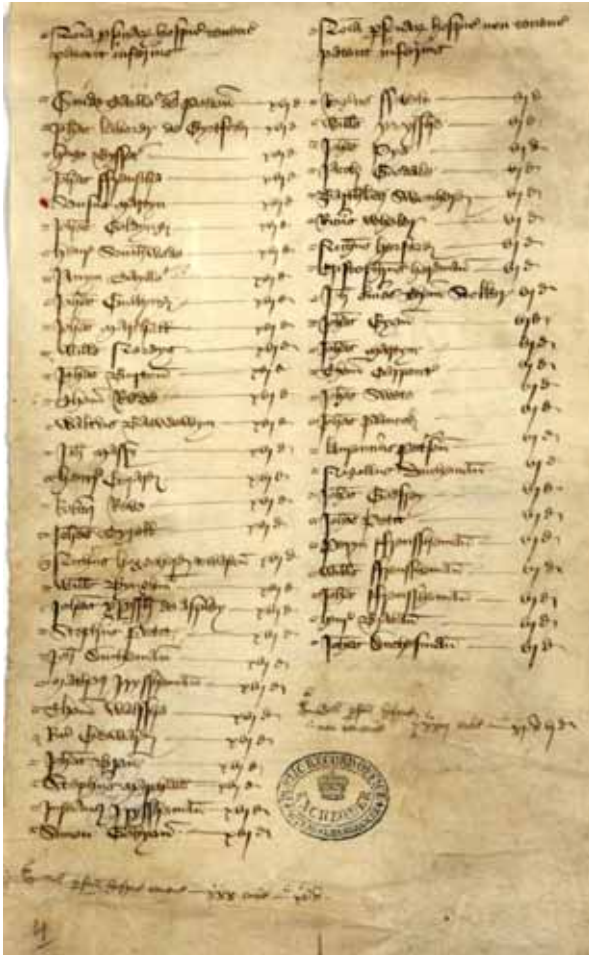


Fig 1. Assessment for the fifth and sixth collections of the 1440 alien subsidy in Bedfordshire (1443)

The National Archives E 179/235/18

The 1487 subsidy was to prove the final occasion on which England's alien population were targeted by specific parliamentary taxation. For the rest of Henry VII's reign, aliens were assessed alongside their native neighbours, paying on the same terms as they had always done for traditional fifteenths and tenths. However, in 1512 Parliament granted Henry VIII a new type of subsidy, a graduated poll tax, with each person paying a set sum dependent upon their income. Alien residents, although assessed on the same terms as natives, were to pay at double the rates, and when the 1514 subsidy grant, a graduated income tax, added a poll tax on all aliens over 15 years of age who did not otherwise meet the taxation threshold, the assessment procedures were effectively set for all future subsidies granted throughout the Tudor and Stuart periods. For most of these taxes, the thresholds were so high that very few individuals, native or otherwise, were liable to pay (the poll tax element was seemingly only sporadically enforced), but in 1523 and 1543 Parliament set the thresholds relatively low, making those returns, the most extensive tax records for England since those of the fourteenth-century poll taxes, another valuable source of information on England's alien population.

Fig 2. Inquisition for the thirty-first and thirty-second collections of the 1453 alien subsidy in Northamptonshire (1469)

The National Archives E 179/155/94



Denization and Protection

Of course, the project cannot rely on one source alone, and there are plenty of other sources we are using in order to maximise the data collected on the database. In particular, the project is using information found in various letters of protection and denization in the patent rolls and various denizen rolls. Denization occurred by grant of letters patent and these were issued from the 1380s onwards. Potential denizens paid a fee and took an oath of allegiance to the Crown, and in return were to be treated and considered as any English subject, born within the realm. They, as well as their heirs, were entitled to acquire lands, tenements, rents and other possessions in England and to resort to and plead in English courts. Denizens were expected to pay taxes, tallages, customs and subsidies in the same way as other lieges would do, and were therefore, in principle, exempted from paying the alien subsidies.

Letters of protection were granted, also by letters patent, from the 1290s onwards. In most cases these were issued to protect people, usually for a restricted period of time, from being maliciously sued in the king's courts in their absence, but sometimes the beneficiaries were aliens coming into, and residing in, the realm. For such aliens, letters of protection fell well short of the formal process of denization and did not involve exemption from payment of the alien subsidies and other contributions to which aliens were liable. Furthermore, at certain times, leave to remain within the realm was granted to specific groups of aliens or oaths of fealty to the Crown taken. This was the case for the Irish and the Welshmen in 1413 and, following the breakdown of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, for people coming from the Low Countries in 1436.

Fig 3. Inquisition for the third and fourth collections of the 1440 alien subsidy for Buckinghamshire (1441)
The National Archives E 179/235/11

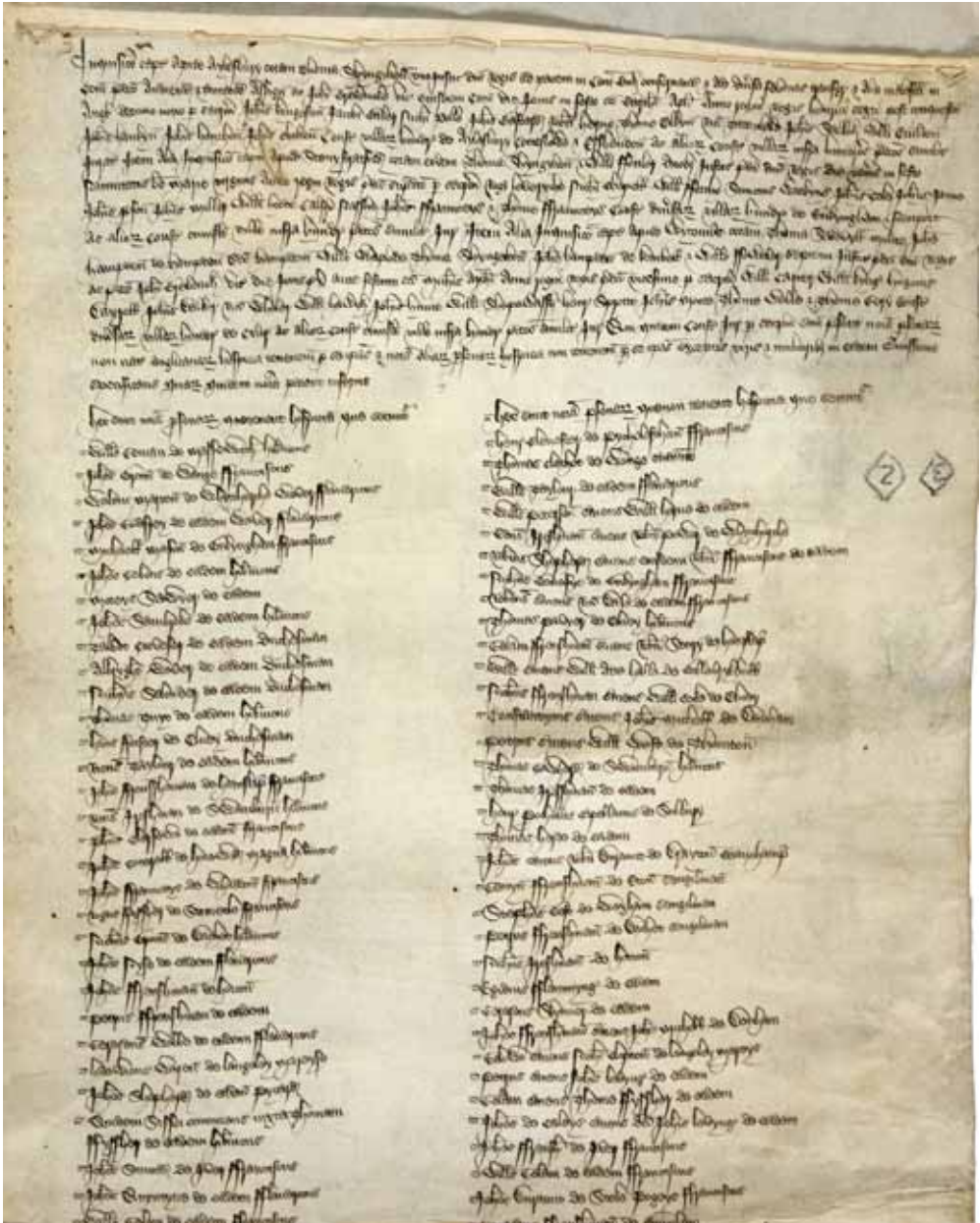


Fig 4. Particulars of account for the thirty-first and thirty-second collections of the 1453 alien subsidy in Northamptonshire (1469)
The National Archives: E 179/155/94



The letters of protection and denization, as well as the leaves to remain, and the oaths of fealty, have been surveyed through the edited *Calendars of Patent Rolls* and, for the denizations after 1509, through the *Letters of denization and acts of naturalization for aliens in England, 1509-1603*.⁵ There are issues with this printed volume, and so the three original denizen rolls for Henry VIII's reign are being used instead, of which there are two at The National Archives (C 67/72 & 73) and one at Westminster Abbey (WAM 12261). This is the first time the denizen roll data will be available to search online, and will be an invaluable resource on its own.

During the second phase of the project (analysis and dissemination) wider qualitative sources will also be used to begin to put flesh on the bones of the individuals. This will include wills and petitions, and resources from other research projects, such as the York Cause Papers.⁶ Initial findings have already shown that a great deal of information can be found about certain individuals using a broad range of sources.

Historiography

The study of aliens in England is certainly not a new idea, yet there have been some limitations to what has been covered. There are three main areas that need to be widened in order to broaden current knowledge of the topic, all of which will be of great value to genealogists and local historians. Firstly, much more needs to be done on the social range of individuals, so, for example, servants, labourers and migrant workers are included in the data. This will be a great point of value as all social levels are covered, not just the top level of society who are so much more visible in many medieval documents than the lower levels. Many of these lower classes are to be found in rural areas, and so the second need to widen the geographical focus beyond cities and ports is also being explored. Finally, the project is looking beyond the traditional national groups, such as the Italians and the Hanse, to include the French, the so-called 'Doche' and Scandinavians, for example.

Probably the most widely known work on the alien subsidies to date is Sylvia Thrupp's 1957 article, which examined the returns of the first of these taxes, granted in 1440.⁷ This article was certainly pioneering in its research, and many of Thrupp's qualitative conclusions will be re-examined. Using the same taxation sources as the current project are employing, Thrupp estimated that in 1440 England was home to around 16,000 foreigners assessed to pay the tax, though quite what overall population that equated to (taking into account children, exemptions and possibly widespread evasion) can only be estimated. However, provisional analysis carried out by Jonathan Mackman, the project's research fellow, suggests that an upward revision of this figure is needed. Thrupp's research was hampered by the limitations of the E 179 records and the catalogues available at the time, but recent work on the E 179 database has brought to light a number of further assessment and accounting documents, allowing a more detailed picture to be drawn up. Some of the figures Thrupp quoted can be confirmed, but many need serious revision, mainly as a result of

⁵ William Page, ed., *Letters of denization and acts of naturalization for aliens in England, 1509-1603* (1893).

⁶ <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/causepapers/>

⁷ S L Thrupp, "A Survey of the Alien Population of England in 1440," *Speculum* 32 (1957), 292-73.

incomplete documents or mis-identification of returns, and many have been significantly increased.

Other gaps can also be plugged by using the enrolled accounts for the subsidy, in series E 359 at TNA, a source Thrupp seemingly did not use, presumably because they contain only basic numbers, not the biographical data on which much of her research was based. Some gaps remain, but it can be shown that at least 17,000 people were assessed to pay the 1440 subsidy, of which just over half actually did pay, and it is possible that future research may increase these figures still further, perhaps to as many as 17,500. That would see an 8-10% increase on the figures first identified by Thrupp and used by an entire generation of historians since. Other more recent in-depth analysis into specific parts of the country has also suggested that Thrupp's figures need revision. In particular, Jim Bolton's work on the aliens in London and its suburbs has likewise provided an upward revision of Thrupp's estimates for the city, suggesting that around 6% of the total population was comprised of immigrants.⁸

As it stands, there are currently 45,000 names of aliens on the database. This is only from twenty-one counties⁹ and the City of London, so with another sixteen counties to go, and a lot more peripheral research besides, we expect to achieve our target of 80,000 names on the database, with as much detail on each individual as possible.

While the end plan of the project is to provide a national picture, at the moment we are currently producing rough local pictures for the resident alien communities, which can be found on the project's website, www.englishimmigrants.com. We can not go into great detail on all the names so far gathered there, but we hope that it will give a fair impression of what can be expected from the database when it is finally available to the public in early 2015. We will also soon be putting more individual and group case studies onto the website, which we hope will help to plug the interim between now and the launch of the database.

The following information intends to provide some more detail as to what can be expected to come from the project in the future, and at least give glimpses into what genealogists can hope to find and glean from the research. The City of London, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and Yorkshire are discussed as some examples to demonstrate some of the project's general findings so far.

The City of London

London's resident aliens currently dominate the database, at over 17,000 names. The City is an anomaly because of the particularly high numbers of aliens who were recorded as living in London, and how consistently high they were compared to the rest of the country. Most noticeably, while the numbers of aliens assessed in the counties fall quite dramatically after 1440, in London the numbers increase during the collection of the 1440 subsidy, and while they do subsequently fall, they still remain far higher than found for any county analysed

⁸ J L Bolton, ed., *The Alien Communities of London in the Fifteenth Century: The Subsidy Rolls of 1440 and 1483-4* (1998).

⁹ The completed counties are: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cumberland, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire, Westmorland and Yorkshire. Durham and Cheshire were not included in the taxation.

so far. Most importantly, while names generally reappear in the counties year on year, different names appear in the London assessments from one collection to the next. This presumably represents the fluidity of the immigrant population in London, with new people arriving and leaving year on year. What this means for genealogists is that there is a wealth of information for London. Most usefully, many of the names that are given are connected to London's citizens, particularly as their servants or lodgers, providing a detailed picture of those living in London. The London records also contain an unusually large amount of detail on female alien residents. What is particularly notable is that alien women married to alien men were taxed in the 1483 subsidy, which is apparently unheard of through the rest of the country, even in Middlesex which was, at least in theory, collected by the same person! Although limited in geographical area, this provides a particularly useful and unusual amount of information on women, and offers much more on women than is usually expected to be found in medieval sources.

Bedfordshire & Buckinghamshire

The two counties of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire were regularly administered together, and so have been treated together here for easier discussion. In the first collection of the 1440 subsidy, 501 aliens were recorded, but by the third and fourth collections this had been halved to only 257. While the initial numbers of resident aliens in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire are quite high, they soon fall to lower numbers, in the region of tens and twenties. Both counties appear to have had similar numbers of resident aliens, and they were fairly evenly distributed through the two counties, but with some pockets of concentration.

The first point to note for Bedfordshire is that the place of residence of an alien was often omitted from the records, so the figures are not as complete as they are for Buckinghamshire. However, from the information that is available, Barford and Wixamtree hundreds in the centre of the county and Manshead in the south were the most populated areas, while Stodden and Willey in the north of the county were the least populated with aliens. The town of Bedford had the greatest concentration of alien residents, and other towns with a high number of aliens included Dunstable, Luton, Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard.

Unlike Bedfordshire, the vast majority of Buckinghamshire's resident aliens were recorded with their place of residence. The most populated hundreds were Stoke, Burnham and Desborough in the far south of the county, while the least populated included Ixhill, Waddesdon and Yardley in the centre. Of the towns, the most populated were Buckingham, High Wycombe and its suburbs, Burnham, Stony Stratford and Aylesbury.

In Buckinghamshire, women are visible in the records up until around 1453, when they are no longer recorded. Before then, fourteen single-women are noted, mainly as servants, but some as householders. Other alien women are also recorded, but are not included in the above statistics, as they were married to an alien, and the couple only paid for one. Twelve wives of aliens are noted in the records, and it is assumed that they were also aliens.

Women are also present in the early alien subsidy records for Bedfordshire, but again by 1453 no longer appear. However, there are many more wives of aliens mentioned in this county, numbering thirty-one (although there may be some repetition of some names), and thirteen single-women feature in the records,

these invariably being non-householders. As mentioned earlier, this was very different to the situation in London, where women continued to be assessed throughout the period.

The data we are collecting can also be revealing about the occupations of the immigrants, but only when the documents deign to provide such detail. The majority of alien householders with a given occupation in Buckinghamshire were weavers and husbandman, while many non-householders were labourers and servants. Some other occupations were also noted, including John Laweles, vicar of Berton, Nicholas Derham, chaplain, and Richard Keell, master of the scholars of Buckingham. Very few occupations of aliens were recorded for those living in Bedfordshire, except for those who were servants. However, in the few cases where an occupation was given, it was either weaver or shoemaker.

One of the major issues of the taxation documents is that they more often than not omit some rather essential information, namely the individual's nationality. In the majority of the Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire assessments, the nationality of the alien was not given. However, assumptions of nationality could be based on the surname, such as Frenchman and Irishman, which provides an overall impression of the origins of the aliens living in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The majority were Flemish, Irish, Dutch and French. There were no Italians, and only four Scots (two in each county).

Despite some of the seemingly general nature of the data, some interesting case studies of individuals have already emerged, and this is what we think will be most exciting for genealogists to explore. Many of the names are somewhat generic, such as John Johnson, John Dutchman, John Servant and so on, but there are a number of gems that do stand out, such as Albright Rosegarden, and the lyrical Hugh Mew. An example of how the information on the database could be of use and interest to the genealogist is that of the surname Barnfather. This name is distinct to Scotland, and by the modern period, the northern-most counties of England. In our period, one such Barnfather, John, is found in Carlisle in Cumberland. As he was taxed as an alien, it is likely he was Scottish. He is recorded as the servant of Thomas, prior of Carlisle in 1440, although after this date he no longer features in the tax records. Could this man be the ancestor of some of the Barnfather families in the north of England? As more data is added, there will be plenty more examples of surnames that stand out. Of course, one of the issues is that many individuals chose to, or inadvertently had to, change their name to an Anglicised form, or settled for using just a descriptive name, such as John Potter or John Beerbrewer (quite a common name!). Yet others, especially the Italians, held tight to their names and identities. There are many examples of Boromei, Barde and Spinola, for example, but also distinctly Icelandic names, such as Sneffluff Artour, who lived in London in 1483.

Other fascinating scenarios have also emerged, creating vivid pictures of people, their families and connections in the middle ages. An unusual entry can be seen in the third and fourth collection of the 1440 tax, assessed in 1441. Usually, the name, perhaps occupation, and location of the alien would be given, but in this case the alien is noted as 'A certain tailor staying next to Thomas Fyssher', noted as an Irishman and householder, living in Langley Marsh in the Stoke hundred of Buckinghamshire. In the non-householder column of the document one Gelam (no surname given) is recorded as the servant of Thomas Fyssher, living in Langley Marsh. Thomas Fyssher himself was one of the members of the jury

who carried out the assessment. So it appears that Fyssher, a resident of Langley Marsh, had an alien servant (origin uncertain), and an alien neighbour. He did not know his neighbour's name, but was sure that he was Irish. This scenario is quite suggestive of the fact that there was perhaps a certain amount of hostility, at least from Fyssher, against his alien neighbour. Although he did not have his name, he made certain that he was still listed in the assessment for paying the higher tax rate.

It is often the case that an alien is identified as a servant of an English person, and this can reveal some intriguing information on the relationship between the English and alien residents. One particularly revealing case is that of Isabel Barton of Thornton in Buckinghamshire and her servants, shown in the first, third and fourth collections of the 1440 tax. In 1440 it is recorded that she had two servants, Robert Alys and Philip Buktoft, and in 1441 Philip Frenshman, Gerard Frenshman and Nicholas (without a surname) are recorded as her servants. It is probable that Philip Buktoft and Philip Frenshman were one and the same, so in total she was mistress of four alien servants. It is relatively unusual to find one person with so many different alien servants unless they were artisans (there were various Cambridge shoemakers listed with four or five alien workers, and a group of eleven clothmakers working together in Suffolk) or members of the nobility (the earl of Oxford's household at Castle Hedingham in Essex included a number of aliens), but it seems to have been relatively common to find alien servants working in English households at all levels.

Isabel Barton was, by 1440, the widow of John Barton (d.1434) of Thornton. He was a successful lawyer and MP for Buckinghamshire, and his clients included several members of the nobility, such as Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick. However, it is not entirely clear how they came to employ four aliens, as during his career, Barton did not spend that much time abroad. He did cross over to Calais as Thomas Mowbray's attorney in 1403 or 1404, but his work there was cut short by the earl's execution for treason in 1405. One possible explanation is that they came to his household from another household, such as one that he had worked for during his career.

A point to note is that often family groups are given in the records – father, mother, sons and daughters, sometimes brother and sister, occasionally even three generations of a family. These family groups will be linked together in the database, and someone may strike it lucky that their ancestors are within such a group.

Lancashire

Moving to the north of the country, we are already seeing many similarities and differences to the trends in the south. While London offers an anomaly of disproportionately large numbers of resident aliens, Lancashire offers the complete opposite. At most, the entirety of Lancashire was apparently home to only six aliens in one year (1443). Over the approximate fifty-year period of the alien subsidies, Lancashire only admitted to hosting a total of twenty-seven resident aliens. We suspect there was something fishy going on there, especially when compared with other northern counties.

Yorkshire

On the other hand, Yorkshire offers a detailed illustration of what was happening in the north of England, and its resident aliens. The collection of the alien subsidies in Yorkshire was a complicated and error-strewn affair, with countless problems in both the assessment procedures and the record keeping. It was seemingly also troubled by the administrative and political geography of the county, and possibly by the turbulent state of the North at various times. The county's three Ridings were generally assessed and recorded separately, although they were usually accounted together, while the city of York (a separate administrative county since 1396) was administered entirely independently. The town of Kingston upon Hull was also a separate entity, having been granted county status in 1440, just before the first alien subsidy was levied. However, document survival is a major problem. While returns for York and Hull survive in relatively large numbers, information for the three Ridings, especially the names of individual taxpayers, is much more fragmentary.

Despite the problems to be found with the documents (which is no exception, by any means), rough statistics give a general impression of what was happening in the county. The first collection of the 1440 subsidy returned the names of 997 resident aliens (with only the figures for Hull missing). Matching the general trends of the rest of the country (except London), the number of resident aliens then fell dramatically, to 305 in 1442, 179 in 1453, and down to a measly fifty-six in 1471.

As with most other counties, the first year of the 1440 subsidy provides the most informative documents. The North Riding inquests show a region where the resident aliens were both numerous and very much scattered across the rural communities, with the only concentrations of any note being in the ports of Whitby and Scarborough. Most of the taxpayers were Scots, although there were others from more distant regions, such as 'Beerne' from 'Fynnemerk', assessed in Stokesley, presumably from the region of Finnmark in northern Norway, and a few French and Flemish natives. However, national origins were not systematically recorded, and nor were occupations. In the West Riding, the majority of the assessed aliens were described as French, although other nationalities were present, particularly Scots but also others such as the Icelandic woman resident in Osset, and at least one Gascon. The East Riding contained by far the most assessed aliens in 1440, over half the total for the county. Again it shows people living across the whole of the Riding, although, perhaps rather surprisingly, the greatest concentrations seem to have been in the northern wapentakes, in the Yorkshire Wolds, almost certainly the areas with the lowest overall population density. Nationalities and occupations were not generally recorded, but those which can be identified suggest that most aliens were Scots, but with a variety of others in small numbers, mainly people from various parts of France and the Low Countries, and 'Scandinavians' from Iceland, the Orkneys and the Isle of Man. The assessment for the town of Beverley, which does give nationalities, appears relatively consistent with the impression of the Riding as a whole, being dominated by Scots, but with numerous others.

The only other details, accounts or assessments, surviving for the main county of Yorkshire for the first two alien subsidies are documents for the North Riding for the first year of the 1442 subsidy. That return contains the names of forty householders and twenty-eight non-householders, a fraction of the seventy-five householders and 231 non-householders recorded in 1440, and again most were

probably Scots. The collection of this tax in Yorkshire was also severely delayed, the reason for which is not clear, but there may have been serious problems with the administrative procedures.

Indeed, the administration of the alien subsidies seems to have deteriorated further from this point, and while documents for the 1449 subsidy were returned, they are extremely muddled and confused, with some residents clearly being assessed in the documents for a completely different Riding. The flaws in the administrative procedures got even worse with the 1453 subsidy, where again assessments clearly contained different information from what it claimed. For example, the 'East Riding' inquest itself recorded people who were almost exclusively from Dickering wapentake, while that supposedly for the 'North Riding' lists people from the East Riding wapentake of Buckrose, and the 'West Riding' inquest, supposedly compiled in Doncaster, lists people from the wapentakes of Howdenshire and Ouse and Derwent, again in the East. What precisely was going on with the administration in Yorkshire clearly needs much more investigation. As already indicated, as with most counties, the numbers of people assessed declined markedly, but rather than the gradual decline experienced in many areas, the numbers of people assessed fluctuated much more wildly. If the records can be believed, 179 people were assessed for the first three years of the 1453 tax, and 170 for the fifth year, but this then fell to seventy-nine in 1458. Just twenty-three paid in both 1463 and 1465, yet in 1466 the assessors found seventy-three people, before falling back to thirty-nine in 1467. In 1470, despite the renewal of war, it had actually risen to forty-seven, but fell back to only twenty-six in 1471. This fluctuation may have been a product of the troubled state of the northern counties at this time – there are no records at all of any collections being made in Northumberland or Westmorland after 1459 – and it is probably unlikely that it represents any real and significant changes in the actual alien population of the county across this period. Instead, it probably reflects a lack of attention or concern from the officials charged with collecting the tax.

As previously mentioned, York and Kingston upon Hull were administered separately, and returned their own sets of documents to the Exchequer. As usual, a large proportion of those assessed in York in 1440 had disappeared by the time the collection was made – only forty-two of the eighty-three people assessed actually paid – but thereafter the numbers, and the names, remained relatively consistent throughout the 1440 and 1442 taxes. Most of the same people were assessed from one collection to the next (unusually the city returned separate inquisitions for most individual collections), and taken together, they can help build up quite a detailed picture of that proportion of the city's alien population which was being taxed. Most of the householders were listed together with their parishes of residence at least once, but fluctuations in the details suggest either that some people moved within the city during the period, or that they or the assessors were uncertain precisely where the parish boundaries lay. Most of the non-householders were recorded together with their trade or master, providing interesting details regarding the economic life of the medieval city. Relatively few nationalities are recorded in the returns, but of those where national origins can be judged, most were Scots, with a few 'Dutch', one Frenchman in 1440 and two Normans in 1443.

The later taxes were administered far better in York than in the rest of the county, and information (numbers of taxpayers, if not names) survives for every collection up until the final payment of the 1453 tax in 1471. Far fewer people

were taxed towards the 1449 subsidy than in earlier years, the twenty-two for the first payment being followed by only nine each for the second and third, and twelve for the fourth, and again many of the same people appear as were taxed in earlier subsidies. Although no nationalities were explicitly given, three had the surname Scott, and one was called Fleming. Twenty-six people were assessed for the first payments of the 1453 tax, but thereafter the numbers followed the usual pattern, gradually reducing to just three for the final payment in 1471. Again, only a few Scots were specifically noted, but forename and surname evidence suggests that the returns included 'Dutch' and Flemish people, two people presumably from the Orkneys, and a woman called Ragg Halderdoghter, her name suggesting probable Icelandic origins.

As far as the resident aliens of Kingston upon Hull are concerned, the most noteworthy observation is the appearance across the period of a relatively large number of Icelanders, and especially Icelandic women. For instance, in 1466, at least eleven of the thirty-three people named were either described as Icelanders or had distinctively Icelandic names. Presumably these people were drawn to Hull by fishing or trading connections, but some clearly stayed in the town for many years, and presumably formed a notable community within the town.

The most significant individual to come to light in the Yorkshire subsidies, and perhaps one of the most notable taxpayers listed among all the subsidies so far, was the Scottish earl of Mentieth, assessed in Pontefract. This was a rather harsh assessment given that the earl had been a prisoner in the castle there since 1427, detained as a hostage for the long-overdue ransom of King James I, and was to stay there until finally released in 1453.

Further information

This introduction offers an indication of the potential that this research project holds. There is still a great deal more research and data collection to be done, but already the research team are finding answers to questions, as well as the inevitable further questions for which there is not yet an answer. At the conclusion of the project there will be a number of outputs – the public database, two books, conference papers, journal articles, an international conference at York and two PhD theses. The progress of the project can be followed over the next few years via our website, www.englishimmigrants.com, and via our Twitter account @EngImm13301550.

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