

JOHN DON, EDWARD IV'S FIRST MAYOR OF SOUTHAMPTON, 1461–62

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ABSTRACT

This article forms a biographical study of John Don, Mayor of Southampton 1461–62, who began his career as an immigrant from Wales via Sherborne, based on the rich local records of Hampshire and the city of Southampton. He played an important and calming part in the anti-Italian politics of the 1450s and oversaw a new charter from Edward IV. Two of his Southampton properties can be identified including the surviving 58 French Street and these passed to his son, Angel, alderman of London. His descendants were to last into the twentieth century outside Hampshire and include the last abbot of Buckfast and Oliver Cromwell.

INTRODUCTION

John Don was elected mayor of Southampton¹ on the Friday before the feast of St Matthew, 18 September 1461, not long after the coronation of the first Yorkist king, Edward IV, who was determined that the anti-Italian factions in London and Southampton should be brought under control and order be reasserted throughout the realm. It is surprising that Don lacks a biography for he was undoubtedly chosen as mayor because he was opposed to the anti-alien party and known as a man who would support the new king, keep order, and take an active role in obtaining for Southampton a full pardon as well as a new charter of privileges. At a more personal level he was recorded as 'a gode maister' by a fellow merchant.²

ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND

Don was affiliated to the gentry family of Don of Kidwelly, Wales.³ His son, Alderman Angel

Don of London, was to use a variant of the Don arms, known as that of London: *azure, a unicorn rampant argent, between ten crosses crosslet or*, while the Kidwelly family bore *azure, a wolf rampant argent*. The mayor's stepson, the London publisher, William Bretton, was improperly to quarter the Don arms with his own in the books he published between 1506 and 1510.⁴ John was probably a second-generation immigrant from Wales and a son or brother of Thomas Don of Sherborne, Dorset, who is known to have left Kidwelly at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is not known in what trade Thomas Don engaged, but Sherborne had a thriving cloth industry and ranked alongside Dorchester and Shaftesbury; it was also on an important cartage route from Southampton to the west and Salisbury.⁵ From 1419 to 1438, at least, Thomas was a feoffee of the almshouse, known as the Hospital of Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, Sherborne.⁶ He had two sons, both called John, and was rich enough to apprentice one to Thomas Cowlard, mercer of London, in 1435, himself a scion of another Sherborne family⁷ – and might have apprenticed another to a merchant of Southampton. The John Don apprenticed in London became a wealthy and influential mercer, known as John 'Donne' the senior of London, who carefully recorded his father as Thomas 'Donne' of Sherborne, Dorset, born in Kidwelly, Wales, in his will of 1480 and left many bequests to relatives.⁸ Among these was a brother, John, to whom he left a ring of gold enamelled white and blue with a pointed diamond and a folding spoon of silver.⁹

CIVIC CAREER IN SOUTHAMPTON

John Don was one of many immigrants to Southampton¹⁰ – probably by the common

means of apprenticeship – who helped to keep the population buoyant in face of heavy urban infant mortality.¹¹ He was established as a member of the mercantile community and a supplier of the cloth trade by 1444: he can be found having a 'balett' (half a bale) of woad carted to Salisbury on 6 March 1444 in the same cart as six 'baletts' of Walter Fetplace, probably the elder (died 1449), who apart from holding high civic office, was a major importer of woad via the Genoese carracks. A dyestuff, woad was a staple of the Southampton cartage trade to the clothmaking area of which Salisbury was a prosperous centre, famous for its ray cloth (striped).¹² The careers of Don and the younger Walter Fetplace were to coincide so well, that a good working relationship between the men can be suggested and perhaps Don's own apprenticeship to the elder man. Don did not necessarily participate, but would undoubtedly have taken an interest in Southampton's acquisition in 1445 of a charter from Henry VI which granted the town incorporation, the right to hold lands, and many other smaller privileges; and in 1447 a further charter tightened up the omissions and removed the errors of the 1445 document and created the town a county in its own right, with a sheriff.¹³ At the civic election of September 1448 Don was appointed one of the bailiffs of this newly incorporated town by his fellow burgesses. The bailiffs controlled the markets and trading standards, and accounted for the tolls and customs taken. Don had the specific duty to oversee traffic through the Bargate, the main gate of the town, for his year in office,¹⁴ and there his broker, Peter Grute, collected the tolls due on every piece of merchandise passing in or out. Grute's accounts survive and record *inter alia* Don's own wine and iron being carted to Wilton and to Twyford.¹⁵ It was his experience of trade that led to his appointment as bailiff, and in 1450 he served on a commission headed by the mayor concerning a cargo of woad which was the subject of a chancery case brought by a merchant of Bordeaux against John Payne of Southampton. Payne had seized the woad and the commissioners were now to see it returned to its rightful owner.¹⁶ This was an early example of the troubles caused by members of the Payne family which were

to touch Don's life: they became notorious for their hatred of aliens and in particular for their feud with the Italians of Southampton. Don served as bailiff again in 1451 when John Payne himself was mayor.¹⁷

In September 1454 John Don was elected sheriff of Southampton.¹⁸ Although he missed by three years the fears of a French attack that blighted 1457–58, this was a time of considerable maritime anxiety for any town on the south coast and for all merchants involved in Channel trade, whether crossing to the Low Countries or plying the coast, for the war in France continued and piracy was rife. The appointment of the duke of York as protector in March 1454 gave brief hope to merchants longing for firm government but this was terminated in February 1455. Only from April 1456 when the earl of Warwick gained control of Calais as its new captain, with the support of the merchants of the Staple, did an energetic policy against foreign aggressors and pirates in the Channel begin, earning the earl a popular following among the southern ports of England. In 1454, the year of Don's shrievalty, Southampton was prompted to prepare a comprehensive survey of properties in the town so that responsibility for the maintenance of defences, including guns and garrison, could be apportioned among its inhabitants.¹⁹

Don was now about forty years old and sufficiently well-off to be living in a substantial tenement in the parish of St John on the corner of the central thoroughfare of French Street and Vyse Lane, a narrow lane which led to Bugle or Bull Street, another main street; there were gardens behind. This house survives as 58 French Street.²⁰ The parish church of St John the Baptist on French Street was particularly patronised by the Italian community, and as will become clear, Don was on good terms with the Italians. Don's son, Angel (given an Italian name) who inherited his father's Southampton properties, was to leave five marks for the repair of the 'poor' church of St John in 1506.²¹ On 8 November 1458 Don can be found witnessing the will of William Soper, a fellow burgess,²² and in that year he and Walter Fetplace were auditors of the town's accounts.²³ Fetplace junior was a wealthy merchant, who traded with Spain and Portugal direct, and

with the Spaniards who came to Southampton. He was also on excellent terms with the Italians in the town who, unlike the Spaniards, were becoming the object of hostility among certain men of Southampton: he shipped goods in Italian carracks and favoured the Italians as regards the hosting laws while he was mayor. Don can be placed in the circle of men like Fetplace who were stalwarts of the town's government and on good terms with the Italians.²⁴ Merchants of Southampton are generally considered to have been more in the distributive trade rather than overseas trade,²⁵ but the mercantile elite who included Fetplace and Don certainly encompassed both. Although Don has not been linked to the Iberian trade, his trade encompassed woad, wine and iron in the 1440s, as mentioned, and he can be found importing black soap – a commodity usually bought from the Italians of the town – and lathnails between March and July 1461. His trade in nails seems to have been on a regular basis to judge by his supply of just under 2s worth of nails to repair the west crane in 1469–70.²⁶ He exported five short cloths between July 1463 and December 1464, and on 11 August 'John Don burgess' shipped two kersies into Southampton in the boat of John Shepherd of Newport, and he is known to have had dealings with Brabant merchants at the end of his life, the likeliest buyers of his cloth (see below).²⁷ The cloth trade may have been the basis of Don's fortune. All this, however, is minimal information for a merchant of one of the great ports of England which saw the regular passage of quantities of goods belonging to Londoners, especially those who wished to use the services of the Italian carracks and galleys harboured at Southampton. For the Italians, Southampton was often an out-port for London, but there was a great complexity of trade relations between the alien and native merchants of both places, which can be glimpsed in the trade of Walter Fetplace already mentioned, or the more unruly activities of John Payne and his London grocer associates. The latter were to disturb Southampton's domestic peace off and on from about 1450 to 1463 and thereby make the choice of John Don as mayor particularly interesting.

Southampton's trade depended largely on

the overseas trade of her alien visitors, notably the Italians, but also Spanish and Portuguese, many of whom settled in the town, intermarried and held local office. The town was known for its friendly relations with alien merchants. From about 1450, however, there is evidence of growing dislike of the Italians by a party led by John Payne, mayor 1450–51 and 1451–52. They were a powerful group: not only was John Payne senior, a citizen of Southampton and a citizen and grocer of London – he had bought entry to that city in 1441 and married a wealthy London widow before 1446 – but so were his sons, John and Thomas, his sons-in-law, Thomas White and Andrew James, his apprentice, Thomas Holman, and his associate, John Walker. They all embraced his opinions.²⁸ Prosecutions brought against him in 1457–58 by Venetian and Florentine merchants reveal some of his activities. Native Southampton men also had quarrels with the family, and the arrogant behaviour of Payne while he was an MP in the parliament of 1460 shows the temper of the man.²⁹ The Italians in England were subject to an unusual degree of hostility in the mid 1450s. There were anti-Italian riots in London in 1456 and 1457 which were largely planned by leading mercers, despite the fact that men of this trade were well aware that cooperation with Italians produced the greater profits. Collusion by members of other companies such as the grocers cannot be entirely ruled out. The attacks were carried out by apprentices and servants actively encouraged by their masters who had become increasingly discontented with the government's long-term failure to listen to mercantile complaints and petitions. The wool staplers among them were made especially angry by the government's persistent and excessive granting of licences to Italians to export wool direct to Italy and thereby circumvent Calais. The same discontent was to result in a strong pro-Yorkist party in the capital, prepared to support the Yorkists with money and declare openly for them in 1460.³⁰

The Paynes in Southampton showed their contempt for authority at the mayoral election of September 1460, knowing that the central government was incapable of reprisal. Southampton was involved briefly in the desperate

attempts of Henry VI's council to organise support along the south coast against the Yorkist earl of Warwick now firmly entrenched at Calais. The outgoing mayor Richard Gryme, in the accustomed manner, nominated two aldermen from whom the mayor was to be chosen, Nicholas Holmage and Walter Fetplace, both men of experience and not of the anti-Italian faction. A riot was led by Thomas Payne and John Payne junior, Andrew James and Walter Bargate and they forced the election of their man, Robert Bagworth, who was then sheriff. In the course of Bagworth's mayoralty Henry VI was replaced as king, the battle of Tewton put Edward IV firmly on the throne, he was crowned in June 1461, and undertook to restore law and order to the realm, with energetic tours of counties and towns. In London it was known he was not only determined to take mercantile advice and solve the problems of the Calais Staple and the coinage, but also that he would not tolerate riots in his capital; the Italians knew that they were now safe to return to normal trade.³¹

The reasons behind the anti-Italian London riots have been expertly diagnosed, but it is not so easy to establish what lay behind the troubles of Southampton, a town which had a strong civic tradition of cooperation with Italians. They may most easily be attributed to the waywardness of the Payne family, their relatives and some close associates, which was activated by personal grudges which got out of hand. Certain elements of the London Grocers' company may have had their own economic reasons for encouraging them.³² Edward IV's attitude was, however, simple and uncompromising: he wanted order maintained. In considering Don's mayoralty, it is important to note Don's affiliations with men like Walter Fetplace junior who has been suggested as the leader of the anti-Payne party (he certainly took over as mayor when Payne was finally dismissed in 1463). Other men of this party included Nicholas Holmage, Robert Aylward and Richard Gryme.³³ Don has not been remarked upon as important despite the timing of his mayoralty. He may have had a reputation for firmness and he can certainly be assessed as a moderate man with the correct civic affiliations.

John Don was elected mayor on Friday 18 September 1461, presumably from two names nominated by the out-going mayor, Robert Bagworth. It is likely that Bagworth wisely selected one man at least not from his own anti-Italian lobby, and the burgesses equally wisely opted for a man who would please the new king. The mercantile elite of Southampton would have known well that their peers in London had thrown in their lot with the Yorkists back in 1460, desperate for a stable government that fostered their trade, and would have thankfully followed this lead, with their Italian community giving eager support. Don's election was peaceful; his sheriff, John Walker, however, was a leader of the anti-Italian faction.³⁴ It was a difficult period, but Don benefited from the policies and determination of the new king.

The town's burgesses and aldermen knew what was expected of them and immediately set out to secure a pardon for the misdeeds of their fellow citizens and ask the king for a new charter clarifying those elements not perfectly set out in their charters of the 1440s. Richard Ashe, the town's MP at the time, acted as main negotiator. Southampton was duly allowed a long, new charter dated 16 December 1461. It secured a further clarification of the town's jurisdiction and courts of law, and a recorder was added to the legal staff, among other useful provisions. The town's draftsmen also carefully emphasised the town's 'laudable submission' to the king and its labours and expenses during the period of his accession, which were 'not small'. In the submission Don had played a not insignificant part, while the reference to labours and expenses is a direct statement that the town had given the Yorkists support in 1461. The total cost to the town of the charter was a very reasonable £15 14s.³⁵ Further anxious work went into the general pardon of 8 March 1462 addressed to Don as mayor and all the burgesses, which covered all offences committed by any man of Southampton before 4 November 1461, certain rebels being exempted.³⁶ Although it has been said that Edward IV visited the town, on the strength of the gift of £4 worth of wine to him and his grant of the December charter, this seems to be unlikely: on 17 August 1461 he went to Sandwich from Canterbury and then

on to Ashford, Battle, Lewes and Arundel, arriving at Bishop's Waltham on the 27th, and then riding on to Salisbury, Devizes and Bristol by 4 September.³⁷ It was in fact a compliment to the peacefulness of Don's mayoralty that the king did not feel it necessary to visit.

The mayor received £10 from his town towards his expenses.³⁸ Don's accounts survive for his mayoralty: he paid, for example, over £14 to the master of the royal ship the *Gracedieu* – the town had responsibility for the custody and victualling of this famous royal ship out of its fee farm – and lent £20 to Richard Gryme, as past steward of the town, to secure his deliverance from the Fleet Prison on the outskirts of the city of London where Lord Wenlock had had him incarcerated for arrears owing on the town's feefarm. Don apparently ended his year with his accounts declaring he owed the town just over £11 13s; he had paid and was quit of this charge in October 1467.³⁹ A worthwhile mayoral activity was acting as one of the town's feoffees, who on 18 January 1462 received a grant of property to support a chantry at the church of St Mary's from Mary, widow of Nicholas Holmage, who had been mayor when Don was sheriff and of the same political persuasion as Don; and another such grant from Joan, widow of Adam Marsh, two days later. By the end of the century the town administered eight such chantries, two of them set up during Don's year in office.⁴⁰

The peaceful interlude of Don's mayoralty ended with the election of John Payne senior as mayor in September 1462. This suggests that Don was persuaded to make Payne one of his two nominees as his successor – or there was another staged take-over on the lines of 1460. Trouble soon followed: in 1462 a Genoese complained of his treatment by Thomas Payne, then constable of Southampton, and another Genoese was in dispute with Andrew James, a son-in-law of John Payne senior. Most serious of all, the mayor himself was accused of bribing a jurymen, and of seizing wine from certain Venetians in February 1463, declaring they had not paid the local customs, and selling on the wine himself. These complaints reached the king who dismissed Payne from office, the deposition taking effect on 17 May 1463. Walter Fetplace was elected in his stead. An attempt to

ascribe Edward's treatment of Payne to Payne's (and Southampton's) supposed Lancastrian sympathies, is not convincing: unruly mayors had to be dismissed, and Payne's case is not dissimilar to that of the bumptious John Hall of Salisbury. Payne departed for London, and from his deposition until his death in 1467 he apparently remained there with his wealthy London wife, Joan, the widow of William Child, a fishmonger of St Botolph Billingsgate, taking over Child's Wharf as Payne's Quay. Sporadic anti-alien activity continued among the remaining Paynites of Southampton but all was quiet by the 1480s.⁴¹

Don continued as an alderman of Southampton. A glimpse of him in this capacity can be found on 18 August 1474 in the presence of Mayor John Walker, when he witnessed the declaration of a tailor that he was leaving Southampton and his trade and taking passage on a carrack – the local tailors suffered from considerable competition from tailors on the carracks.⁴² On 5 January 1475 he heard of the arrest of William Gruer of Fowey with his ship to do service for the king during his expedition to France that year.⁴³

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Sometime in the 1460s, presumably after his mayoralty, John Don married Agnes, his last wife. Given his age it is likely he had one earlier wife at least, but nothing is known.⁴⁴ An approximate date can be fixed for this marriage by reference to their son's admission by redemption in 1493 into the Grocers' Company of London, which is unlikely to have taken place before Angel was twenty-six. Agnes's origins and maiden name have not been found, but Don was certainly wealthy enough to find a young wife of good connections and dowry. Agnes bore him one child who survived: Angel, who was to become an alderman of London. The name Angel suggests an Italian godfather from among those Italians in Southampton with whom it has been suggested Don was on good terms. Possible candidates for this duty in the 1470s can be found in the Catanei and Negri families, but no one can be identified with

certainly.⁴⁵ Most tempting is the better-known Angelo Tani (1415–92), employee of the Medici and commissioner of the famous altarpiece by Memling, which ended up in Danzig. His whereabouts are known for certain years: he was in London 1446, in Bruges 1450–65, and in London again 1467–69 as agent of the duke of Burgundy raising his bride's dowry among other things, at the Hof Bladelin in 1480, and back in Florence the same year. He could therefore have encountered a past mayor of Southampton, where he may have visited in 1473, for example, in pursuit of the stolen altarpiece when the companion galley, which had escaped capture by the pirates, was in that port.⁴⁶ Although the Italian name and god-parent could have been a result of John's intimacy with the Italian community of Southampton, it might equally have derived from the new wife's wishes and connections, about which nothing has been discovered.

It is known that Don acquired three properties in Southampton which he left to his son:⁴⁷ the first of the three was 58 French Street already mentioned, and it may have been the birth of a son which encouraged him to acquire more. It is known that from 1471–72 Don owned a house which owed a rent charge of 4s a year to God's House, the wealthy and ancient hospital of St Julian for the old and infirm, which was owned by Queen's Hall, later Queen's College, Oxford. This was a substantial house on the west side of English Street in the parish of Holy Rood, and just north of Broad Lane. Leland was later to comment on the fine merchants' houses in this street; but whether the family moved there from French Street is not known. The house passed to Don's son, Angel, who duly paid the rent charge.⁴⁸ The third Southampton property acquired by Don and inherited by Angel has not been identified.

John Don died in 1477, as far as can be ascertained.⁴⁹ He made a will according to his son, leaving his property to his issue in remainder, but the will does not survive. It is certain that Agnes was an executor. She was remarried by mid-1478 and thereafter continued to wind up the Don estate with her new husband, Thomas Bretton, ironmonger of London. On 8 July 1478, a John

Jamys and servants of a carter called William Boteler went through the toll at the Bargate of Southampton, and the broker recorded the passage and payment of 2d pontage on two carts of the household goods of 'Isabel Doan' lately wife of 'John Doan'.⁵⁰ The coincidence of date and surname are too great to admit of any doubt that this is Agnes leaving Southampton for London to join her new husband. One of lawsuits in which the widow became involved yields a few last details about John Don. Agnes and Thomas Bretton were prosecuted in chancery about October 1479 by Walter Holman, a merchant of Brabant, over £16 worth of household goods and merchandise bought by Don in Brabant and to be shipped to Southampton. Don had agreed to provide 'all the aventure and juperdy' of the transaction. The goods were lost, along with 700 marks worth of Holman's goods and the lives of fourteen of his servants, in a storm at sea and he was 'undone in this world'. Holman went to Southampton and met Don who declared in the presence of his neighbours 'that he was more sory for the grete losse' of Holman 'then for his owne', that he would demand no money, 'and so contynued a gode maister and lover unto your seid besecher'. But now, concluded Holman, Bretton and Agnes were prosecuting him before the mayor and bailiffs of Southampton in the court of piepowder for the £16. The chancellor duly ordered two local examinations of witnesses: of Thomas Honker and 'others' by John Shropshire, mayor of Southampton, and Walter Fetplace, the known associate of Don; and of William Kerver by Nicholas Henscote and Thomas Brygport, mayor and clerk of Plymouth. They were to report at Easter 1480, but nothing more is recorded.⁵¹ Holman's testimony remains a single personal tribute to the character of John Don of Southampton.

It could have been iron that brought Agnes' second husband, Thomas Bretton ironmonger, to Southampton, a commodity in which John Don is known to have dealt. Iron came in from Spain (often as nails) and Sweden and there was a flourishing trade at this time.⁵² He may have relied on the imports of men like Fetplace and the elusive Don. He would also have been interested in tin, the most important metal

exported from Southampton; the abundance of English tin was to contribute to Southampton becoming the designated staple for all metals from 1492. Londoners were encouraged to come to the port to buy tin and send it home by road or along the coast to the wharves of London – Bretton lived in St Mary at Hill, a Thames-side parish.⁵³

It is impossible to estimate the size of the estate Agnes Don took to Thomas Bretton, who could also have gained the estate of Don's son to invest, with suitable sureties. The business acumen shown by Agnes later in life would have enabled her to protect herself and Angel. It is certain that the Don estate was sufficient to allow her new husband to think of social and civic advancement, an ambition which may have attracted Agnes to him and to London. Bretton attained an aldermanry in 1483, increasingly an unusual eminence for an ironmonger by this date, thanks indubitably, in part, to Agnes' share of the Don fortune. Only his death in 1485 prevented Bretton attaining the mayoralty. Agnes became a very successful wool merchant in her own right while bringing up a large number of Bretton children and Angel Don.

It seems likely that Angel was apprenticed to a Southampton merchant, for he was admitted to the London Grocers by redemption in 1493, rather than by the more usual apprenticeship.⁵⁴ Soon after, he married Anne, the only daughter of John Sparrow, another grocer of London, and had four children. The eldest was Gabriel who was professed a monk at an early age and later became a friend of Thomas Cromwell, who made him the last abbot of Buckfast; he died a canon of St Paul's Cathedral in 1558. There were two other boys, Edward and Francis, and a daughter, Elizabeth. Angel had a successful career as a wool merchant like his mother and was elected an alderman of London in 1505 only a year before he died. His will is notable for its piety and involvement with a reformed, orthodox religion. He scrupulously remembered Southampton and his father: the Observant Friars ('Observantes') of Southampton were left £10 for their relief and comfort and to pray for his soul and that of his father and all Christian souls; prayers were also asked of the Observants of Greenwich and

Richmond (£10 each) and of Canterbury and Newcastle (10 marks each), but only the last request again specified his father's soul. Perhaps his father had had trading connections with Newcastle. The Southampton friars had only become a reformed Observant house 1497-98, so it is clear that Angel was well informed about developments in his birthplace.⁵⁵ Both his parents were also to be included in the prayers of the chantry of the chapel of Jesus he established at St Margaret Pattens, his London parish church, to which he had given gifts for its hearse decorated with the Don arms, 'an unycorne made in sylver with crosses of gold in the same'. Five marks were left for the repair of the 'poore church off Seynt John Baptist in Southampton', the parish of 58 French Street. Lastly, he left a dole of £5, at 3d a head, to the poor of Southampton for the benefit of his soul and that of his father and his other benefactors, to be paid within three months of his death.⁵⁶

Angel's widow, Anne, remarried Sir Robert Dymoke of Scrivelsby, Lincolnshire (d. 1545), and had more children. Angel left his son, Edward, his three tenements in Southampton, for him and his heirs, and failing them to his son, Francis and then his daughter Elizabeth. If all his issue failed then the properties were to be sold and the money spent on his soul and that of John Don 'according to my fader John Dun will whom god pardon' – but heirs were to flourish.⁵⁷ Angel's boys were dead by 1517, so all passed to Elizabeth, a considerable heiress, who was married off first to the elderly Sir Thomas Mirfyn (d. 1523) by whom she had a daughter, Frances. Elizabeth Don, was then married to the elderly Sir Thomas Denys (d. 1561) by whom she had children, including Denys' heir, Sir Robert. Frances Mirfyn was married to Richard Williams, who took the name of his uncle, Thomas Cromwell, and thereby made John Don, Mayor of Southampton, and Agnes his wife, the great-great-great-great grandparents of Oliver Cromwell. Their Cromwell and Denys descendants flourished for many generations in Huntingdonshire and Devonshire respectively, an impressive legacy of a fifteenth-century merchant and mayor of Southampton and his last wife, another successful merchant originally from Hampshire.⁵⁸

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NOTES

- The spelling of Don is more used in the Southampton records and has been adopted here. I am most grateful for the interest shown in this article by Professors Wendy Childs and Colin Platt, as well as various anonymous readers.
- See n. 51, below.
- For a pedigree of the Kidwelly Don family, R.A. Griffiths, ed., *The Household Book (1510–1551) of Sir Edward Don: an Anglo-Welsh Knight and his Circle*, Buckinghamshire Record Society Publications 33 (2004), pp. xiii–xxv.
- For a full discussion of the arms see A.F. Sutton, 'William Bretton, Publisher of Fine Books 1506–10', *The Library* 7th ser. 14 (2013), p. 11. The two beasts are capable of confusion at a distance, see illustration in K.B. McFarlane, *Hans Memling* (Oxford 1971), p. 2, fig. 153. J.W. Papworth and A.W. Morant, *An Alphabetical Dictionary of Coats of Arms belonging to Families of Great Britain and Ireland ... Ordinary of British Armorial* (London 1874), under Beasts, wolf, p. 98, and Monsters, unicorn, p. 987. I am indebted to Mr Robert Yorke, Archivist of the College of Arms, for discussing the arms of both Bretton and Don.
- Victoria County History of Dorset* vol. 2, ed. W. Page, London 1908 [hereafter *VCH Dorset*, vol. 2], p. 360: Sherborne was 'the best town' for cloth according to John Leland.
- C.H. Mayo, *A Historic Guide to the Almshouse of St. John Baptist and St. John the Evangelist Sherborne* (Oxford 1926), pp. 3–7. J. Fowler, *Medieval Sherborne*, (Dorchester 1951), pp. 238–52; and *VCH Dorset*, vol. 2, pp. 104–05.
- For Cowlards, Mayo, *Historic Guide*, pp. 20, 52. Thomas Cowlard, mercer of London, had in his turn been an apprentice of John Fauntleroy, from another family with Sherborne connections: A.F. Sutton, *The London Mercery: Trade, Goods and People 1130–1578* (Aldershot 2005),

- p. 556; Mayo, *Historic Guide*, pp. 16, 18, 29, 58–60; Fowler, *Medieval Sherborne*, pp. 226 n. 2, 234, 241, 254.
- 8 John 'Donne' issued from a 7-year apprenticeship in 1442–43. For his career: *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1453–1527*, ed. L. Lyell and F. Watney (Cambridge 1936), *passim*; *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London 1458–82*, ed. P.E. Jones (Cambridge 1961), pp. viii, ix, 127–31; *Calendar of the Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London*, ed. R.R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London 1889–90), vol. 2, pp. 582, 583, 586; his will, TNA, PROB 11/7, ff. 9–11v; dated 28 Aug., proved 16 Dec. 1480; Fowler, *Medieval Sherborne*, pp. 277, 283, 299, 300 (his obit).
 - 9 John 'Donne' of London made this bequest to his brother, John, in a will dated 28 August 1480, but it is certain John of Southampton was dead before this date. It is not impossible that the testator did not know of his brother's death or that the will contained bequests from an earlier draft.
 - 10 T. B. James, 'Migration and the Southampton Melting Pot in the Fifteenth Century', *Southern History* 28 (2006), pp. 1–23, *passim*; no reference to Don. For other Dons in Southampton see n. 49 below. No apprenticeship records survive for Southampton before 1609: *A Calendar of Southampton Apprenticeship Registers, 1609–1740*, ed. A.J. Willis and A.L. Merson, Southampton Record Series [hereafter SRS] 12 (1968), pp. xi–xiii.
 - 11 One curious reference remains unexplained: an entry in the Bruges Poorters for 31 August 1444 records that a Machtelet Dons, daughter of John, of Southampton, was allowed to work at a trade in the town. Comparison with other entries shows that 'Southampton' may well refer to the daughter. If this does refer to the future mayor, then he has to have been born by about 1400 and was perhaps a brother of Thomas Don of Sherborne rather than a son. A. Jamees, *Brugse Poorters 1281–1478* (Handzame 1974–80), 2 vols in 3 parts, vol. 2, 1418–78, p. 196; she is the only English person admitted 1418–78, women occur rarely, and no trade is specified. I am grateful to Dr Kim Woods for this reference and to Dr Livia Visser-Fuchs for checking the details. See below for the mayor's trade with the Low Countries.
 - 12 O. Coleman, ed., *The Brokage Book of Southampton 1443–44*, 2 vols, SRS, 4 and 6 (1960–61), vol. 2, p. 155 and vol. 1, pp. xxvi–vii. For Fetplace the elder (mayor 4 times between 1419 and 1444), H. Cobb, ed., *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439–40*, SRS 5 (1961), esp. pp. xlvii, lx, 86–89; C. Platt, *Southampton. The Port and Trading Community, AD 1000–1600* (London 1973), pp. 238–39.
 - 13 Platt, *Southampton*, pp. 166–67.
 - 14 *Victoria County History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, ed. W. Page, 5 vols, (London 1900–14) [hereafter VCH Hants], vol. 3, pp. 496–97 (Bargate), 511–12 (bailiffs).
 - 15 Coleman, *Brokage Book 1443–44*, vol. 1, pp. ix–xiv, on office. E.A. Lewis, ed., *The Southampton Port and Brokage Books 1448–9*, SRS 36 (1993), pp. ix, xiii, 130, 135, 189, 193. Platt, *Southampton*, p. 55.
 - 16 *Calendar of Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Henry VI. Vol. V. A.D. 1446–1452* (London, 1910), p. 432.
 - 17 *The Book of Remembrance of Southampton*, ed. H.W. Gidden, 3 vols, SRS 27–29 (1927–29), vol. 1 (1440–1620), pp. 66–67.
 - 18 J. S. Davies, *A History of Southampton* (London 1883), p. 174. *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 1, pp. 68–69.
 - 19 J. L. Bolton, 'The City and the Crown, 1456–61', *The London Journal* 12 (1986), p. 16. Sutton, *Mercery of London*, pp. 256–57. Platt, *Southampton*, pp. 137–38. *The Southampton Terrier of 1454*, ed. L.A. Burgess, SRS 15 (1976), pp. 8–9, and *passim*.
 - 20 *Brokage Book 1448–9*, p. ix. *Southampton Terrier of 1454*, p. 87, T292: 'late of George Usk, formerly of John Pygot'; the owner was responsible for 2 loops in the tower next the Wool Bridge; a later hand has added that it was 'now' of William Huske (see pp. 3–4), and see also pp. 10, 16. English Heritage, Monument 1084978. Plan and elevation, Platt, *Southampton*, p. 102.
 - 21 A.A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton 1270–1600*, (Southampton 1951), pp. 131–32, 351. See Platt, *Southampton*, p. 190 for this 'little' church. Angel Don's will, TNA PROB 11/15, f. 103v.
 - 22 *The Black Book of Southampton 1388–1620*, ed. A.B. Wallis Chapman, 3 vols, SRS 13, 14, 17 (1912–1915), vol. 2 (1414–1503), pp. 98–113.
 - 23 *Letters of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries from the Archives of Southampton*, ed. R.C. Anderson, SRS 22 (1921), pp. 17–19, item 9.
 - 24 Fetplace's trade in galleys: *Calendar of Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Henry VI. Vol. II. A.D. 1429–1436* (London, 1907), p. 352 and see W.R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester 1978), pp. 50, 162, 184, 209–10. A. A. Ruddock, 'Alien

- Hosting in Southampton in the Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 1st ser. 16 (1946), pp. 34-37. Walter Fetplace junior (d. 1487) was sheriff 1456-57, mayor from 20 May 1463 continuing to 1465, and MP 1472-75. Platt, *Southampton*, *passim* and pp. 152-57, 239; Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, pp. 169-70; Davies, *Southampton*, p. 202. Don acted as a co-feoffee with Fetplace in 1465, Historic Manuscripts Commission [hereafter HMC], *11th Report*, Appendix, Part 3, *The Manuscripts of the Corporations of Southampton and King's Lynn* (London 1887), p. 86.
- 25 E.g. O. Coleman, 'Trade and Prosperity in the Fifteenth Century. Some Aspects of Trade in Southampton', *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. 16 (1963-64), p. 20.
- 26 *Port Books of Southampton*, vol. 2, 1477-81, ed. D. B. Quinn and A. A. Ruddock, SRS 38 (1938), p. 201 (black soap and lathnails in 1461). *The Southampton Steward's Book of 1492-3 and the Terrier of 1495*, ed. A. Thick, SRS 38 (1995), p. 97. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, p. 87 (black soap).
- 27 *Port Books of Southampton*, vol. 2, 1477-81, p. 205 (short cloths 1463-64). *Port Books of Southampton*, vol. 1, 1469-71, ed. D. B. Quinn and A. A. Ruddock, SRS 37 (1937), p. 84 (2 kersies 1469-70). *Black Book*, vol. 2, 1414-1503, p. 112n.
- 28 Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, pp. 170, 171.
- 29 A. A. Ruddock, 'John Payne's Persecution of Foreigners in the Town Court of Southampton in the Fifteenth Century', *Papers and Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeology Society* 16 (1944-47), pp. 25-28, 30, and her *Italian Merchants*, pp. 172-73. J. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament. Biographies of the Members of the Commons' House 1439-1509* (London 1936), pp. 669-70 (Payne).
- 30 The definitive study is Bolton, 'The City and the Crown, 1456-61', pp. 11-24.
- 31 Davies, *Southampton*, p. 164. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, pp. 176-77; other lawless acts in 1460, pp. 177-79. Bolton, 'City and Crown', *passim*.
- 32 P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community. The Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London 1000-1485* (London 1995), pp. 506-07, 514.
- 33 Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, pp. 169-71.
- 34 Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, p. 181 (Walker). Election process, *VCH Hants*, vol. 3, p. 512.
- 35 Davies, *Southampton*, pp. 156 and n. 2, 157, 166, 174. Platt, *Southampton*, p. 167 and see his notes. *The Charters of Southampton*, ed. H.W. Gidden, vol. 1, 1199-1480 SRS 7 (1909), pp. 98-119.
- For Ash, *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 1, pp. 68-69, and Wedgwood, *Members of the Commons' House*, p. 21.
- 36 *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 1 pp. 68-69. *Letters of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, pp. 17-19 item 19 and n. 17. *The Letters Patent of Southampton (1415-1612)*, ed. H.W. Gidden, SRS 20 (1919), pp. 24-31.
- 37 Davies, *Southampton*, p. 472. C.L. Scofield, *Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols (London 1924), vol. 1, pp. 197-99, 201-02.
- 38 *VCH Hants*, vol. 3, p. 513.
- 39 HMC, *11th Report*, App. 3, *Southampton*, p. 85. *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 1, 1440-1620, pp. 44-46.
- 40 *The Black Book*, vol. 3, 1497-1620, SRS 17 (1915), pp. 2-9. Holmage and Marsh grants, see also HMC *11th Report*, App. 3, *Southampton*, pp. 85-86, and *Southampton Steward's Book of 1492-93*, pp. xxiv-xxv, xxvi, xxx-xxxi. For Holmage (also Holmege), twice mayor, Platt, *Southampton*, p. 243.
- 41 Ruddock, 'John Payne', pp. 29, 31, 32. Payne's will, PROB 11/5, ff. 138v-39v. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, pp. 180-83. Platt, *Southampton*, pp. 254-55. F. Street, 'The Relations of the Bishops and Citizens of Salisbury (New Sarum) between 1225 and 1612', *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* 39 (1915-17), pp. 238-42.
- 42 *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 1, p. 47.
- 43 *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 1, pp. 5-6.
- 44 The John 'Dunne' of Holy Rood, Southampton, scholar of Winchester in 1454, might be a son of the future mayor but the mayor has not been associated with this parish at this date, and the boy certainly did not survive. T.F. Kirby, *Winchester Scholars* (London 1888), p. 70.
- 45 Angelo Cattanei apparently left Southampton by 1470, Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, p. 216; Angelo Donato di Aldobrandi, representative of the Aldobrandi of Florence, lived in Bugle Street in the 1450s and 1460s, *ibid.*, pp. 123, 130-31; Angelo di Negro a Genoese was there 1452-60 and in 1470s, *ibid.*, p. 125.
- 46 Sutton, *Mercery of London*, pp. 309-10 and sources there; D. DeVoss, *Hans Memling* (Antwerp and Ghent 1994), pp. 24-25, 87, 463. J. Bialostocki, *Les primitives flamands: les musées de Pologne, Corpus de la peinture des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux au quinzième siècle* 1 (Brussels 1966), pp. 73-74, 81.
- 47 Angel's will merely mentions three properties with no details: PROB 11/15, f. 104v.
- 48 *Cartulary of God's House Southampton*, ed. J.M. Kaye, 2 vols, SRS 19-20 (1976), vol. 2, p. 351,

- ten. 162, numbered 39 on map (map after vol. 2, p. 408); the College was still hoping to retrieve the rent charge *de hereditibus Angeli* into the 17th c., but clearly had no idea who they were. J.R. Magrath, *The Queen's College*, 2 vols (Oxford 1921), vol. 1, pp. 18–21. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, p. 259 (cites Leland).
- 49 A Thomas 'Dune', 'Doun' is recorded in tenements 441–42 on St Michael's Square in 1471–84, which was near a garden of Walter Fetplace: *Cartulary of God's House Southampton*, vol. 2, p. 253; a Thomas 'Dun', grocer, occurs in a deed of 1473, HMC 11th Report, App. 3, *Southampton*, p. 87, and a tiler of the same name 1485–86, *Book of Remembrance*, vol. 2, p. 11. Similarly a Richard Don can be found as an importer 1427–28, *The Port Books of Southampton 1427–30*, ed. P. Studer, SRS 15 (1913), p. 25.
- 50 *The Brokage Books of Southampton for 1477–8 and 1527–8*, ed. K.P. Stevens, SRS 28 (1985), p. 94.
- 51 TNA, PRO, C 1/64/337; another witness was Thomas Ash.
- 52 W. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade*, pp. 112–19, esp. pp. 118–19, and her 'England's Iron Trade in the Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. 34 (1981), pp. 25–47. I am most grateful to Professor Childs for telling me that she had found no reference to Bretton dealing with iron in the customs accounts for any provincial port.
- 53 Platt, *Southampton*, pp. 82, 83, 169. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, pp. 91, 256; Coleman, 'Trade and Prosperity', esp. pp. 18–20. A.A. Ruddock, 'London Capitalists and the Decline of Southampton in the Early Tudor Period', *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. 2 (1949), pp. 137–51 *passim*, esp. pp. 138, 140, 143–46. J. Hatcher, *English Tin Production and Trade before 1550* (Oxford 1973), introd, chs 4, 5 esp. pp. 3, 4, 91–114, 129–32.
- 54 See n. 10, above.
- 55 Angel's will, PROB 11/15, ff. 103v, 104v; if all his heirs failed these houses were to benefit from the sale of his properties: Southampton house £10 and the others £5 each, f. 104v. Platt, *Southampton*, pp. 140–206.
- 56 W. H. St John Hope, 'Ancient Inventories of Goods belonging to the Parish Church of St Margaret Pattens in the City of London', *Archaeological Journal* 42 (1885), pp. 10, 19. Will, PROB 11/15, f. 103v (church, 104 (dole).
- 57 PROB 11/15, f. 104.
- 58 Further details about the family can be found in the author's study of Agnes Don-Bretton, Merchant Stapler, Widow and Matriarch of Southampton and London, circa 1450 to 1516', *The Ricardian* 22 (2012), pp. 59–93.