

Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones (eds.), ‘Bristol c.1477: Particulars of Account of Thomas Asshe, controller, large fragment, early August to 2 September: Introduction’ (University of Bristol, Research Data Repository, 2019)¹

Text and Comment

This single membrane, a stray from a longer account, was a fortuitous discovery made in 2019. The manuscript was first classified by the Public Record Office in 1978, when it was recognized as a fragment of a ‘particular’ customs account for the port of Bristol in the reign of Edward IV. That information has not, however, made its way into modern finding aids.² The re-discovered item, after forty years of oversight, can be confirmed as a Bristol account from the names of merchants and ships mentioned. Its format indicated that it was a controller’s account.³

Dating the document

The document is in the distinctive hand employed for the controlments of Thomas Asshe, controller of customs in Bristol from 12 March 1476 to 9 April 1481.⁴ His controlments survive in reasonable condition for several months of 1478 and 1479, plus a number of fragments, the earliest dating from March 1476.⁵ [Fig. 1] The single membrane is marked at its head with a Roman numeral vii, indicating that it was preceded by six membranes, now presumed lost. It would have been succeeded by at least one more membrane. Since the surviving rotulet covers the period late July/early August to the beginning of September, it seems likely that the complete account commenced at Easter and ended at Michaelmas (29 September).⁶

The span of Asshe’s employment (March 1476 – April 1481) provides the outside limits for the fragment’s date. But it is possible to be more precise than this. The account cannot be later than 1478, since the merchants listed in it include three members of the Rowley family, two of whom were dead by the early months of 1479.⁷ Nor can the account belong to 1478 itself, since none of the shipments appear in the surviving particulars of the Bristol customers

¹ The National Archives, UK [TNA], E122/19/18. This transcription is an output of the ‘Cabot Project’ (University of Bristol, 2009-), funded by Gretchen Bauta, a private Canadian benefactor, and others. Because of its late discovery (2019), it was not available to the various authors writing in Evan. T. Jones and Richard Stone, eds, *The World of the Newport Ship: Trade, Politic and Shipping in the Mid-Fifteenth Century* (Cardiff, 2018).

² Neither this manuscript, nor the item that precedes it within the bundle, (E122/19/17), is currently visible in the modern digital class lists that now serve as the primary means of reference. Digitisation of class lists from pre-existing hard copy was done by outside agencies in the 1990s. It did not always pick up manuscript annotations in class lists, leading to some entry errors.

³ Bristol customers, with rare exceptions, presented their particulars as ledgers. The controllers’ particulars, or ‘controlments’, were in roll form, and omitted details of customs and subsidies paid.

⁴ *Cal. Patent Rolls 1467-1477*, p. 554: he was appointed on 1 March 1476; *Cal. Patent Rolls 1477-1485*, p. 270.

⁵ For 1478 and 1479 see TNA, E122/19/13, 19/15. In theory, at least, controllers were supposed to write their rolls with their own hands.

⁶ When finally presented to the Exchequer for audit the account could have either been submitted as a document in its own right or been joined to its preceding account, covering the period Michaelmas to Easter. The controller would then have been able to account for the complete accounting year from Michaelmas to Michaelmas. In 1476, for example, only an Easter to Michaelmas roll would have been required, given the dates of Asshe’s appointment; in 1477-8 he delivered a complete roll of twenty membranes, of which only the disordered Michaelmas to Easter section, complete in itself and comprising twelve rotulets, is extant: TNA, E356/22. m. 9r; E122/19/13.

⁷ Wendy R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester, 1978), p. 189, and sources there cited. Thomas Rowley’s widow, Margaret, was trading through the port in July 1479.

and controller, which together cover Michaelmas 1477 to Michaelmas 1478. The fragment must, therefore, relate to the summer of 1476 or 1477.

Of the seventy-eight merchants named in the new fragment, more than four fifths can also be found in the 1477-8 account. Two of the shippers recorded in the fragment, and appearing also in 1477-8, were widows: Christina Lovet and Isabel Kewe. Both, for a short period, continued their former husbands' trade, including the import of fish and other goods from Ireland, and the import to Bristol, and re-export to Ireland, of luxury goods from Portugal and Castilian Spain. Robert Lovet, Christina's husband, brought in half a tun of olive oil from the Algarve in March 1476, and purchased saffron from Thomas Rowley in April the same year: but was dead before Easter 1477, leaving his wife to pick up both his business and his debts.⁸ Cornelius Kewe conducted a similar pattern of trade. He was certainly dead by late November 1477 when his widow, Isabel, brought an action of debt against one John Blake of Galway in Bristol's Tolsey Court.⁹ These biographical details confirm that the fragment belongs to the later 1470s. They do not, however, resolve the issue of whether the account concerns 1476 or 1477.

Analysing the ships, voyages, shipmasters and merchants listed in accounts can also help to date them. A comparison between the fragment and the first part of the 1477/8 account is recorded in the following table, followed by a discussion of the individual cases, taken in the order of their appearance in the undated account. Not all the voyages and shipments are included – just those where some potential connection can be established.¹⁰

1476 or 1477?				29 Sept. 1477-April 1478			
Name	To/From	Master	Date	Name	To/From	Master	Date
<i>Mary Redcliffe</i>	From Lisbon	Richard Joye	July/August	Same	From Lisbon	Same	10 April 1478
<i>Christopher</i>	To Bordeaux	Thomas Sutton	July/August	Same	From Bordeaux	Same	6 Nov. 1477
<i>John Evangelist</i>	From Lisbon	Richard Bygge	12 August	Same	From Lisbon	Same	4 Dec. 1477
<i>Mary Sherman</i>	From Ireland	Henry Moyll	18 August	Same	From Lisbon	Same	4 Dec. 1477
<i>Ive</i>	To Algarve	William Ferriby	18 August	Same	From Algarve	Same	22 Dec. 1477
<i>George Lumney</i>	From Lisbon	John Pembroke	18 August	<i>George Berkeley</i>	To Bordeaux	Same	24 Oct. 1477
<i>Anthony</i>	From Lisbon	John Brisley	2 September	Same	To Bordeaux	Same	10 Oct. 1477

The *Mary Redcliffe*, one Bristol's greatest ships, arrived in Bristol from Lisbon in late July or early August under master Richard Joye. The ship's exit is not recorded in either the fragment or the 1477/8 account. However, its first 1477/8 return is known. It entered from Lisbon on 10 April 1478, still under Richard Joye. The lack of an exit record could have been because the ship left in ballast – paying no custom. This would be unusual for a Bristol ship, especially a great ship, engaged in an outbound voyage. If the fragment does belong to 1477, it is more

⁸ TNA, E122/19/12; Bristol Record Office [BRO], JTol1/1, fos. 71v, 82v.

⁹ BRO, JTol1/1, fo. 55v. Both women were trading through Bristol in the winter of 1477.

¹⁰ Two small ships (boats: batellae) that came in from Ireland have been omitted from the table: the *Mary* of Cork, master Philip Roche and the *Patrick* of Minehead, master Richard Banaster. Philip Roche had at least a twenty-year career as a master of various ships sailing from Ireland. They included, in 1478, the *Mary* of Cork. Richard Bannester mastered the *Patrick* from Ireland into Minehead in December 1477. Such congruences support the broad dating of the account. However, short-haul voyages cannot be used to date the fragment more tightly because roundtrip voyage times between the Severn Sea and Ireland could be completed in just a few weeks. For Minehead, TNA, E122/26/7. Neither the unknown navis/navicula entering from southern Iberia that heads the account, nor the three sailings from Tenby recorded in the fragment yield useful dating information.

likely that there is no record of the ship because it left between 2 September and 1 October, a period for which there is no surviving customs record.¹¹ This was a busy time of year for the port, with many ships leaving Bristol to fetch home seasonal products from southern Europe – especially wine, olive oil and fruit. If this September to October window was indeed when the *Mary Redcliffe* exited, it appears that the voyage took seven months, since it did not return until the following April. While this may seem a long time, there are many other cases from this period of ships, particularly great ships, taking many months to complete a voyage to southern Iberia.¹²

The *Christopher* of Bristol left for Bordeaux, under master Thomas Sutton, in July/August. The same ship is recorded as returning from Bordeaux, still under Sutton, on 6 November 1477. A three-month voyage for a trip to Biscay would be fairly typical. Of the twenty-three merchants shipping outwards in the fragment, seventeen (and two others) shipped back from Bordeaux on the *Christopher*.¹³ Merchants commonly employed the same ship for the outbound and inbound leg of a voyage either by prior agreement with the shipowner or because it was convenient. The high degree of correspondence between the merchants employing the *Christopher* on these occasions suggests that these were two legs of the same 1477 voyage.

The *John Evangelist* entered Bristol from Lisbon under master Richard Bygge on 12 August. The same ship is recorded as entering again from Lisbon, still under Bygge, on 4 December 1477. If the fragment does date to 1477, this would imply that the ship left Bristol in September, reached Lisbon, acquired a new cargo and then returned home within three months. While this would have been quite a fast voyage, it is no faster than the voyages of the same ship during the summer of 1478. That year the *John Evangelist* arrived in Bristol from Iceland on 12 June, departed Bristol for Lisbon on 4 July and returned from Lisbon on 25 September. Its return voyage to Lisbon in the summer of 1478 was therefore completed in less than three months.

The *Mary Sherman* arrived from Ireland on 18 August, under master Henry Moyle. It is next recorded as an entry from Lisbon, apparently sailing in company with the *John Evangelist*, on 4 December 1477. This might imply that the ship had again left Bristol in September, along with the *John Evangelist*.

The *Ive* (Eve) of Bristol left the port for the Algarve under William Ferriby on 18 August. The same ship is recorded as returning from the Algarve on 22 December 1477, under the same master. A four-month voyage was about average for a trip to Portugal. That the ship is recorded as sailing to the Algarve in the fragment and sailing from the Algarve in the December 1477 account is suggestive, the Algarve being an unusual destination for Bristol's ships at this time. Most ships sailing to Portugal went to Lisbon, 150 miles north.¹⁴ Of the fourteen men who laded goods on the *Ive* in August, eleven also laded goods on the ship's return in December

¹¹ The 1477-78 account is defective at its head. The first recorded date, following one or more ship loadings, is 2 October.

¹² Evan T. Jones, 'The Shipping of the Severn Sea' in Jones and Stone, *World of the Newport Medieval Ship*, pp. 150-51. Other records relating to the *Mary Redcliffe* shows that even a return Bordeaux voyage could take nearly four months on account of her great size, and a return voyage to southern Iberia as much as ten: Bordeaux 1465-6, out 30 October, back 2 February; Bordeaux 1470-71, out 28 August, back 24 March; Seville 1478-9 out 21 August, back 17 June: TNA, E122/19/3, 4; E122/19/7, 174/3; E122/161/31, 19/15. In other years there is evidence only for one leg of a return voyage.

¹³ Of the two additional consignees in November 1477, one was William Rowley the younger, who seems to have been the Rowleys' resident factor in Bordeaux. Thomas Rowley, a shipper outward, does not appear. So, the shipments out and back by the two Rowley members may have been part of one commercial enterprise by the family business.

¹⁴ Apart from one entry that is possibly for August 1472 (the account is an undated fragment) there are no recorded sailings of Bristol-owned ships to either the Algarve or to Andalucía before 1475, although Bristol's two greatest ships, the *Mary Redcliffe* and the *Trinity*, were sailing to Seville by 1472-3.

1477.¹⁵ As with the *Christopher*, there are thus good reasons for supposing that the undated fragment and the 1477/8 customs account record two legs of the same voyage.

The *George Lumney* entered Bristol from Lisbon on 18 August, under master John Pembroke. On 24 October 1477 what was probably the same ship, albeit now listed as the *George Berkeley*, left Bristol for Bordeaux under John Pembroke. This would imply the ship spent eight weeks in port, being refitted prior to sailing. That was not unusual. This said, the very defective and disordered accounts for the neighbouring port of Bridgwater indicate that the [*Geo*]rge *Lomley*, under John Pembroke, stopped at either Bridgwater or its member port of Minehead in September 1477.¹⁶ In the port of Bridgwater the ship discharged cargo that included 10 cwt of wax or sugar. In this instance the commodity can be determined from the combination of amounts of subsidy paid and the unit (C lbs) used to describe the goods. Either, or both, are the only possible commodities, despite the loss of the description of goods; and both were typical exports of Portugal and Andalucía.¹⁷ It is highly unlikely that the '*George Lomley*' would have sailed to Bristol from Lisbon, passed Bridgwater on the way up the Severn Estuary, discharged most of its cargo in Bristol, backtracked at least 25 miles to Bridgwater, unladed half a ship's worth of Portuguese wares, then returned to Bristol to acquire an outbound cargo for Bordeaux.¹⁸ If the Bridgwater account is accurate, this could count as evidence against the fragment being of 1477. On the other hand, it is possible that the Bridgwater accounts were not entirely accurate in this case, the clerk recording an entry in September 1477 that had in fact taken place the previous month. If the ship had only stopped briefly at Bridgwater, while on route to Bristol, the customer there may not have taken a proper note of the date. Customs officials typically wrote up their formal accounts at the end of the year, based on more informal records of duties paid and cockets (certificates recording receipt of payment) issued to merchants. In this instance, further confusion may have been caused by the death of the Bridgwater customer, which meant that the final account had to be compiled by a colleague.¹⁹ Given the parlous condition and poor organisation of this Bridgwater account, the officer or his clerk might have recorded the date incorrectly.²⁰

¹⁵ Twenty-nine individuals, including at least two members of the crew, laded goods on the return.

¹⁶ TNA, E122/26/7. Only the right-hand portion of this account survives. Therefore, while the ship and its master can be identified, only the month of entry, and not the full date, has been preserved. At this point in the account all merchant and commodity names are lost. It is also unclear whether the surviving scrap relates to Bridgwater itself, or to its member port of Minehead, for which the Bridgwater customers usually distinguished as separate information within their main return. This said, the entry for the *George Lomley* falls within the first iteration of dates, which suggests that it falls in the Bridgwater part of the return. A second sequence, mostly of small boats, starts again at January but has no heading. This is likely to be the Minehead section of the customers' particulars. In the case of the *George Lomley*, the valuations of goods, subsidy paid, and, in some instances, the quantity of the commodity, are still legible. The ship had exited Bridgwater for its overseas voyage in April 1477, immediately after the Bristol great ship the *Mary Grace*, which had paused to take on additional outbound cargo of cloth. The *Mary Grace* exited Bristol on 21 March, and Bridgwater on 3 April, returning to Bristol from Seville in December 1477.

¹⁷ The ship's Bristol entry, from Lisbon, in August 1476 or 1477, included cargo of 9.5 C lbs of sugar. Its total discharge in Bridgwater in September 1477 was valued at £118 15s 8d from thirteen separate shipments. Shipments valued at £8 6s 4d and £9 11s 8d are likely to have been for 18 and 21 tons of salt respectively. The remainder of the cargo ranged in value between 20s and £32.

¹⁸ Minehead was 40 miles down the Severn from Bristol, which would be even more unlikely.

¹⁹ The Bridgwater account for December 1476-31 December 1477 had to be completed by John Kendall following the death of his former colleague, John Tremaille, TNA, E356/22, rot. 5; E122/26/7.

²⁰ Customs officials kept a record of the date of the shipment as a check on fraud and to facilitate cross reference to cockets issued to merchants. Dating the shipment also made clear to the exchequer auditors that all the shipments for which customs were paid had been made in the appropriate accounting year. However, the precise date listed was in some senses a legal fiction, in that it recorded the date a ship 'cleared customs', rather than the actual date on which the ship physically entered or left the port. If the customer of Bridgwater had recorded the month of entry of the *George Lumley* wrongly, this would not have been regarded as a serious matter – the important point was that the correct customs duties had been paid, and that these payments were then paid to the

The *Anthony* of Bristol arrived in the port from Lisbon on 2 September, under John Brisley. On 10 October 1477 the same ship left for Bordeaux, under the same master. This entry is unproblematic, a gap of about six weeks being feasible to allow for refitting and the acquisition of a new cargo.

To conclude, in several instances the voyages listed in the fragment can be matched against corresponding entries in the accounts for the early part of 1477-8. Ships recorded as entering Bristol in the fragment can be found leaving Bristol, under the same master, just a few months later. Moreover, in two cases ships leaving Bristol in the fragment for a given destination can be found returning from that destination, with goods belonging to many of the same merchants on what looks like the return leg of the same voyage. It is not possible to make a similar case for 1476. The only surviving customs account for that year is a short one covering 12 March-14 April (Easter) 1476. Given the short time span and the fact that a gap of three months elapsed between the endpoint of this account and the commencing date of late July/early August for the fragment, there are unlikely to have been secure points of correspondence anyway. Almost all the shipping recorded from 12 March to Easter is either small boats, inward bound, or foreign shipping for which there would not necessarily be a return voyage. Moreover, there are no extant particulars for the winter of 1476-77. This said, it is worth noting that there is one instance in which it is *possible* to identify a ship in the Spring 1476 account that *might* be linked to an entry in the later fragment. On 14 March 1476 the *Mary Sherman* left Bristol for northern Spain under Henry Moyle as master. As noted above, the fragment records the entry of the *Mary Sherman* from Ireland on 18 August, under master Henry Moyle, carrying wares typical of the Irish trade. It is conceivable that the ship could have returned to Bristol from its March voyage to northern Spain in May or June 1476. It might then have left for Ireland in early July, returning to Bristol again in August with the consignment recorded in the fragment. That said, this is the only instance where a sequence of voyages can be constructed that would plausibly connect the March-April 1476 account to the undated account. As already noted, there are no customs particulars *at all* extant from Michaelmas 1476 to Easter 1477 to act as a later point of reference. Taking all the above evidence into consideration it seems *likely* that the undated fragment dates to 1477, rather than 1476. But the case for this is circumstantial.

The Controller: Thomas Asshe

Like other accounts for the mid-1470s, neither Asshe's controlment, nor the ledgers of the customers, were subject to audit by the ancient process of the Exchequer. In both 1476 and 1477 the two customers were Thomas Croft and Thomas Norton. For both years, they made their account by declaration before an Exchequer auditor.²¹ It is likely, however, that the customers' particulars, as in other years, were checked against Asshe's controlment and any discrepancies noted. The final summation that would have resulted from the audit was not enrolled. However, Asshe's particulars themselves have one oddity. Valuations of three separate shipments of 80 tons of salt shipped on the *Mary Redcliffe* were each recorded as 33s 4d, the amount due for subsidy, rather than £33 6s 8d. We have corrected the entries in the spreadsheet, with a comment, since it results in a trade difference of £95. In the original it was

exchequer, or otherwise accounted for among the customers' legitimate outgoings. For a discussion of the process and examples of the slips from which the ledgers were compiled, Stuart Jenks, *The London Customs Accounts 24 Henry VI (1445/46)* (Hansischer Geschichtsverein, 74, Cologne, 2018), pp. xxi-xxiii.

²¹ TNA, E159/254, Recorda Hil. 17 Edw. IV, rot. 2; E159/253 Recorda Mich. 16 Edw. IV, rot 25d; *Cal. Patent Rolls 1477-1485*, p. 71. See also Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones (eds.), 'Bristol 1473: Particulars of Account of Thomas Croft and John Langston, customers, April to September 1473: Introduction' (University of Bristol, Research Data Repository, 2019), pp. 1-2.

probably a copyist's error. However, if it originated in the customers' ledger, and was not picked up at audit, these undervaluations would have resulted in a loss to the Exchequer of nearly £5.

Thomas Asshe was appointed controller of Bristol on 1 March 1476, replacing Nicholas Warynges, who had been controller since November 1475. Asshe continued as controller until 9 April 1481, when he was in turn replaced by John Walshe, who had been customer in 1480-81.²² It seems possible that Asshe was the same Thomas Asshe rewarded for his services to the king at the battles of Tewkesbury and Barnet, and that he was the man periodically employed about organising the fitting and repair of the king's ships.²³ Whether this same man transferred from Bristol to serve as customer of Sandwich in May 1481 is uncertain: but the dates would fit, and transfers to different ports within the customs service were not unknown.²⁴ Once appointed to office in Bristol, Thomas Asshe quickly made his presence felt. On 25 July 1476 he seized a number of imported silk and cloth-of-gold girdles, as well as brocade and damask being offered for sale by three London merchants, a Bristol merchant, Robert Cacheman, and a Salisbury vestment-maker.²⁵ Given the date, Asshe's seizure almost certainly concerned goods intended for sale at St James' Fair, a major trade fair held annually in the city around St James' Day (25 July). Asshe alleged that the goods had not been sealed as required under the terms of an act concerning tonnage and poundage, 12 Edward IV c. 3, prompting his confiscations in the king's name.²⁶

Thomas Asshe is probably best known as the man sent by Bristol's sheriff as emissary to Edward IV at a time of civic crisis in 1479.²⁷ Thomas Norton, the customer of Bristol, had publicly accused the town's mayor, William Spencer, of treason. The town council responded by sending Asshe to the king with their official record and Norton's appeal of treason. Asshe also carried the town's far-from-flattering assessment of Norton's character. Thomas Norton was the senior man in terms of office within the king's household, with the rank of an 'esquire of the household'. Asshe too was a member of the royal household, but holding the lesser rank of yeoman. On the other hand, as controller in the port of Bristol, with responsibility for keeping an eye on the customer, Asshe was the king's more immediate representative. Asshe was also clearly trusted by the town as a king's servant and an impartial messenger and intermediary. It was also politically astute. Both men would, from time to time, have been required to serve at court. Norton's loyalty to Edward IV was beyond question; but so was that of Asshe. He was ideally placed to emphasise to the king the town's loyalty, and its humble submission to the will of the king and the decision of his council, in whatever form that might take.²⁸ Norton's actions eventually cost him his employment in the port. Bristol's chronicles

²² *Cal. Patent Rolls 1467-1477*, p. 554; *Cal. Patent Rolls 1477-1485*, p. 270.

²³ *Cal. Patent Rolls 1467-1477*, pp. 470, 471, 524, 554. The commissions were essentially administrative, giving him and others so appointed authority to employ men and purvey materials.

²⁴ *Cal. Fine Rolls 1471-1485*, pp. 215-6.

²⁵ TNA, E159/253, Recorda Mich. 16 Edw. IV, rots 19-21, 39r-40r. The cases were still unfinished more than a decade later. The London merchants were Humphrey Cornish, and the goldsmiths John Lovet and David Panter, both of whom protested that the customers of tonnage and poundage in London *had* sealed their goods. The vestment-maker, Richard Felde, protested that he had not put the goods up for sale, that Asshe had not seized them and that the goods were still in his possession. This may be casuistry, since seized goods were frequently returned to the alleged offender 'to keep for the king' until such time as the matter was resolved.

²⁶ *Statutes of the Realm*, ii, pp. 433-6.

²⁷ E. W. W. Veale, ed., *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, Part IV, (Bristol Record Society, xviii, 1953), pp. 61- 64, 72. A deputation of three of the city's burgesses, representing the common council, and likewise given written instruction and an augmented record, followed the day after Asshe received his instructions and evidence from the sheriff.

²⁸ Veale, *Great Red Book of Bristol*, Part IV, pp. 57-93; according to the Bristol record Asshe was a yeoman of the Chamber. Asshe's service to the king was of long standing. In the mid 1460s he was liveried as a groom of the Chamber: TNA, E101/415/11 fo. 17r. For the duties of an esquire of the household (Norton), yeomen of the

and town register record William Spencer's exoneration and the praise he received from the King for having humbly committed himself to prison as soon as the slanderous accusation was made. By contrast 'the said Norton was severely checked of the King for his malicious intent.'²⁹ He had clearly lost the confidence of both the king and the town, and his position as customer may have become untenable. A disingenuous comment in Bristol's records averred that he had absented himself from the town between 21 May and Michaelmas 1479, 'and it is like that convenient Remedy will thereapon be purveyed.' Prolonged absence was contrary to the requirement of his office. So, even if he had been forced to flee Bristol because of local hostility, his absence could have provided a convenient excuse for his removal by an unsympathetic king. On 22 July 1479 John Wildegris was appointed customer in Norton's place.³⁰

Trade

In the absence of enrolled accounts for Bristol customs in 1476 and 1477, the total trade value of whichever period is represented by the account is unknown. While the sample is small, the absence of other information lends added value to the data preserved in this account. The fragment evidences the continuing health of Bristol's Portuguese trade, typically conducted in the larger ships of Bristol's own marine.³¹ Portuguese trade, both inwards and outwards, dominates the short period encompassed by the data, although it also includes cloth and hides being shipped to Bordeaux in preparation for the wine season; and fish and coarse cloth imports typical of the Bristol-Ireland trade. The data hints at Bristol's modest but established place in the growing sugar trade, probably coming from Madeira via Lisbon. Just under 50 C (2.5 tons) are evidenced in the account.

In terms of recent research on Bristol's trade, perhaps the most interesting entry in the fragment relates to imports by William Weston. He was a minor Bristol merchant who would, during the 1490s, play a major part in Bristol's voyages of discovery.³² In a recent article about Weston, we showed that Weston was heavily involved in the Portuguese trade by the 1470s. He may already also have had the grander ambitions that led him, to undertake a direct 1480 voyage from Bristol to Madeira on a Breton ship.³³ The evidence in the fragment fits well with what is known about William Weston's trading activities at this time. On 2 September, Weston imported the 5-cwt. sugar, along with 12.5 tuns olive oil, 2 tuns vinegar, 1 tun of wine and 1.5 C wax on the *Anthony* of Bristol. This ship was owned by John Foster, Weston's future father-in-law and employer. Foster himself was the biggest shipper on the vessel, importing 70 tons

household, yeomen of the Chamber, and grooms, A. R. Myers, ed. *The Household of Edward IV: the Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478* (Manchester, 1959), pp. 116-7, 120-1, 127-9. For a thoughtful discussion of Norton's possible motives as a mix of family issues and simmering resentment of a known Yorkist loyalist against former Lancastrian collaborators, Peter Fleming, 'Politics and the Provincial Town', in Keith Dockwray and Peter Fleming, eds., *People, Places and Perspectives: Essays in Later Medieval & Early Tudor England in Honour of Ralph A. Griffiths* (Stroud, 2005), pp. 100-1.

²⁹ Francis F. Fox (ed.), *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol* (Bristol, Arrowsmith, 1910). p. 73; Veale, *Great Red Book of Bristol*, Part IV, pp. 71-7, 86-8. In the words of the city's official record, when Norton came into the king's presence Edward IV 'estraunged his loke from him' leading Norton to withdraw from the court.

³⁰ Veale, *Great Red Book of Bristol*, Part IV, p. 93; *Cal. Fine Rolls 1471-1485*, pp. 180-1.

³¹ Jones, 'Shipping Industry of the Severn Sea', pp. 140-7, 149-55; Richard Stone, 'Bristol's Overseas Trade in the Later Fifteenth Century: the evidence of the 'Particular' Customs Accounts', in Jones and Stone, *World of the Newport Ship*, pp. 188, 192-5; Wendy R. Childs, *Trade and Shipping in the Medieval West: Portugal, Castile and England* (Porto, 2013); Flávio Miranda and Hilario Casado Alonso, 'Comércio entre o porto de Bristol e Portugal no final da Idade Média, 1461-1504', *Anais de História de Além-mar*, xix (2018), pp. 11-36.

³² Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones, 'William Weston, early voyager to the New World', *Historical Research*, 91 (2018), pp. 628-46.

³³ Condon and Jones, 'William Weston', pp. 636-8.

of salt. This accounted, however, for only a very small part of the value of the cargo and was probably only taken on when it became clear that the ship would not achieve a full lading of more valuable goods. Indeed, given that the *Anthony* is known from other sources to have been of between 200 and 300 tons burden, the salt may have been *required* as ballast to ensure the stability of the ship.³⁴

Editorial Practice

All entries in italics, including extensions of abbreviations, have been supplied by the editors. The presence of editorial comments is marked by a red triangle in the upper corner of any cell and appears on mouse hover.

The transcription into Microsoft Excel follows the pattern set by Evan Jones for his ESRC-funded project on Ireland-Bristol trade in the sixteenth century.³⁵ These conventions are explained in the introduction to the account for 1461. In particular, surnames and ships' names follow the manuscript; quantities of any particular commodity have, as far as practicable, been standardised to a single unit, calculated if necessary to two decimal places. Wine and cloth of assize have been notionally valued at £4 and £2 respectively, unless specifically valued in the manuscript.

³⁴ Cf. William Weston's lading of salt on a later and larger *Antony*, also belonging to Foster, in a voyage in which Weston was Foster's factor: Condon and Jones, 'William Weston', p. 640.

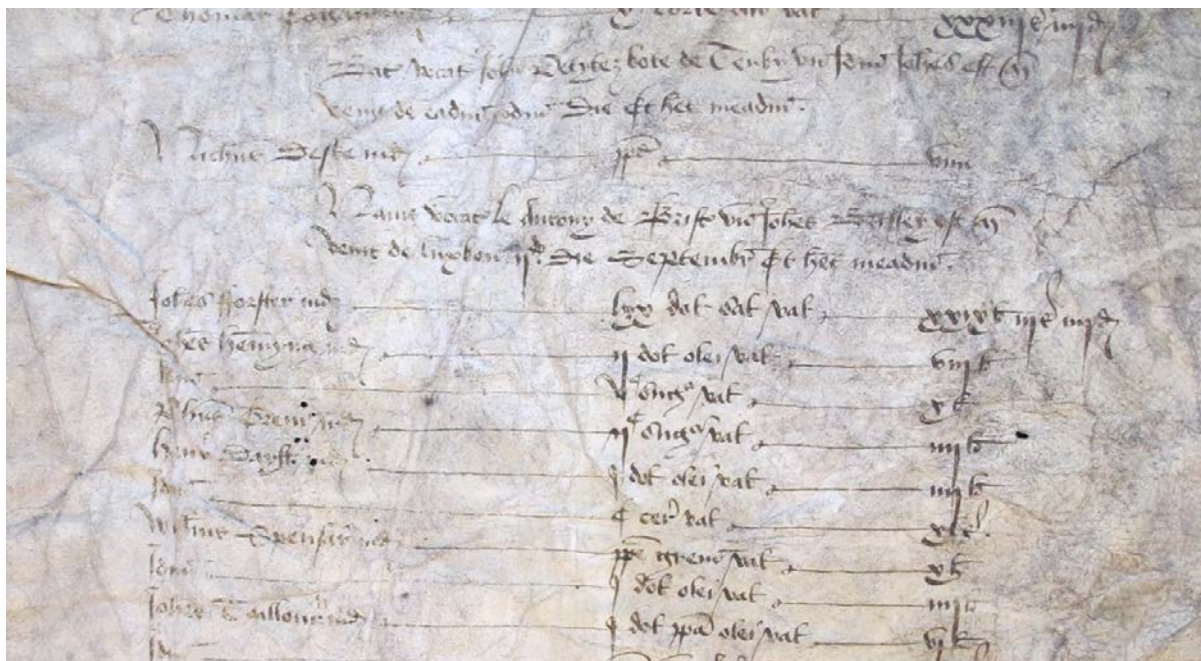
³⁵ Databases at <http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm>; these were reformatted and published with indexes and abbreviated glossaries as Susan Flavin and Evan Jones, *Bristol's Trade with Ireland and the Continent 1503-1601* (Bristol Record Society, vol. 61, 2009). Editorial conventions are repeated at pp. xxii-xxv.

Fig 1.

The handwriting in the fragment appears to be the same as that of Asshe's controlment.

(a) Fragment, E122/19/18 (detail)

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(b) 1479, Asshe controlment, TNA, E122/19/15 m. 2

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