

Margaret M Condon and Evan T Jones (eds.), ‘Bristol 1472: Particulars of account of John Langston and Nicholas Warynges, customers, 20 November 1472 to 14 December 1472: Introduction’ (University of Bristol, Research Data Repository, 2019)¹

Text and Comment

This short account is typical of Bristol customs accounts of Edward IV’s first decade and the years immediately following. The period of account is often brief: rapid changes in the holder of the offices of customer and controller were common. When either one of Bristol’s two customers changed, the account needed to be closed and a new one opened.² Changes in the office of controller seem to have been less critical to the accounting period, even though the controller (whose patents of appointment, unlike those of the customers, were recorded on the patent roll) was the Crown’s direct representative in the port. The records of audit as preserved on the enrolled accounts suggest, that for short periods at least, the Exchequer accepted that customers might have to operate without direct governance. Changes in office holders were particularly common during this politically turbulent period because when the balance of power shifted at a national level, customs officers were often changed.

The first-named customer responsible for this ledger, John Langston, was a very recent appointee. He replaced Nicholas Warynges’ previous colleague, Richard Walwyn, by letters patent dated 10 November 1472, taking office ten days later, as indicated by the outside dates of these particulars. Langston continued as customer until 9 September 1475.³ The second-named accountant, Nicholas Warynges, had first served as customer under the readeption government of Henry VI. He continued to act during the political uncertainties of March and April 1471, when Bristol adhered to the Lancastrian cause in the course of the armed struggle that followed the return of Edward IV to England to seize back his throne. Despite this, Warynges received new letters patent of appointment under Edward IV’s great seal on 29 May 1471.⁴ He was replaced on 14/15 December 1472. The letters patent of his successor, Thomas Croft, were dated two days previously.⁵ Croft was a known supporter of Edward IV, and a younger brother of the politically important Sir Richard Croft.⁶ He was also a cousin of Richard Walwyn, customer of Bristol April 1468 to November 1472. Both connections raise interesting, but ultimately unanswerable, questions about patronage and the channels of

¹ The National Archives, UK [TNA], E122/19/9. This transcription is an output of the ‘Cabot Project’ (University of Bristol, 2009-), funded by Gretchen Bauta, a private Canadian benefactor, and others.

² When an officer changed, there was often a slight time-lapse between the date stated in the witness clause of the patent of appointment, and the date of commencement of the new account.

³ *Cal. Fine Rolls 1471-85*, pp. 39-40, 103-5; TNA, E122/19/10, E122/19/10A, E122/19/11. The warrant for Langston’s appointment was delivered into Chancery 9 November: C81/1636 no. 98, which suggests a minor error of date in either the patent or its enrolment. The end date of 9 September is taken from the 1475 controlment roll, E122/18/39, since no enrolled account survives to confirm the period of Langston’s final account. Langston was replaced in 1475 by Thomas Croft, whose patent of appointment was dated 6 September, C81/1638, no. 18.

⁴ TNA: PRO, E356/22, m. 8d; *Cal. Fine Rolls 1461-71*, pp. 270-1, 274; *Cal. Fine Rolls 1471-85*, pp. 5-9. For Bristol 1470-71 see Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones, eds., ‘Bristol 1470-71: Particulars of Account of Daniel Sheldon, controller, 4 November 1470 to 29 March 1471: Introduction’ (University of Bristol, Research Data Repository, 2019) <https://doi.org/10.5523/bris.ok0gh719ty9z2qrgbxpusb6fe>.

⁵ The outside dates for the account would normally be the same in both the ledger and the enrolled account: but in this instance the ledger has 15 December, and the enrolled account 14 December as the closing date of the accounting period. Given that Bristol was generally two to three days journey from London, the ledger date seems more realistic: cf. TNA: PRO, E356/22, m. 8d. For Croft’s appointment 12 December 1472, C81/1636, no. 108; *Cal. Fine Rolls 1471-85*, pp. 39-40.

⁶ C.S.L. Davies, ‘Croft, Sir Richard, (1429/30-1509)’, *ODNB* (2012); C.S.L. Davies, ‘Croft, Thomas, (c.1435-1488)’, *ODNB* (2008).

appointment to a potentially lucrative office.⁷ Nicholas Warynges, the man whom Croft replaced, was to serve twice more in the port in 1475-6, first as customer, and then as controller, each time for a few months only.⁸ More immediately, his replacement as customer in December 1472 by Thomas Croft is the reason for the end date of this account. There was a month-long interval between the replacement of Walwyn (by Langston) and then Warynges (by Croft). This might have been a pragmatic decision. Since neither of the incoming customers had previously served in the port, the Exchequer may have felt that it would be best to stagger the appointments, to ensure a more effective handover.⁹

The presentation of the account is distinctive. The manuscript now consists of a single bifolium of parchment, of which the first two pages are fully written with ledger entries for two incoming ships. The ledger is clearly incomplete. The document lacks at least one additional bifolium; and may once have had a cover. The heading, identifying the port, the customers and controller, and the period the account covers, commences conventionally enough in a fine engrossing hand. However, the heading then continues in a sprawling cursive that overlaps the first entry: the arrival of the *Kateryne* of Bristol from Ireland. The continuation thus appears to be a later insertion. The language of the continuation is that of the enrolled accounts, naming both the previous and succeeding customers, and the controller. This is not usual. The hand appears to be the same as that of the auditor's clerk writing the *pes compoti* or *determinatio* at the end of the document. The addition to the heading can thus be assumed to have taken place during the process of audit.

Nearly three years elapsed before the account was audited.¹⁰ Moreover, neither the immediately preceding account, nor any later account until that for 1477-8, has been enrolled.¹¹ The audit appears to reflect the political disruptions and the strains on local revenue in the years around 1470. The charge, that is, the customers' receipts, can easily be related to the customers' ledger, even in its present truncated state. However, the discharge of the customers is less straightforward. It includes either late payment or re-assignment in favour of John Wood, master of the king's ordnance, of tallies of June 1471 and April 1467.¹²

The *determinatio* entered by the auditor's clerk at the end of the particulars is heavily amended, in the same hand, to revalorise the rates applied to the alien export of pewter and Castilian imports/exports other than wine (for which both denizens and aliens which paid a uniform rate of duty).¹³ The *determinatio* is the auditor's summary of the customers' account. It totals receipts and breaks them down by categories of duty and merchant status. This was part of the process of determining the customers' charge, or amount due to the Crown from

⁷ C.S.L. Davies, 'The Crofts under the Yorkists and Henry VII', *Historical Research*, lxxviii (1995), pp. 249-50; on the corruption of customs officers, and of Bristol's officers, in particular, see: E. T. Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy: Reconstructing the Smuggler's Trade of Sixteenth Century Bristol* (Ashgate, 2012).

⁸ Customer by letters patent of 20 July 1475 (replacing Thomas Croft) until 10 November 1475; controller 10 November 1475 (replacing Guy Westcote) until 1 March 1476: TNA: PRO, C81/1638, nos. 1, 9, 28, 29; *Cal. Fine Rolls 1471-85*, pp. 103-5; *Cal. Patent Rolls 1467-1477*, p. 554. Thomas Croft's brief absence from the port July to September 1475 might suggest that he had other employment during Edward IV's invasion of France in the summer of that year.

⁹ This was possibly the course also in 1502-3, when two long-standing customers were replaced one at a time, with a six-month interval in between.

¹⁰ TNA: PRO, E356/22, m. 8d; E159/250, Fines etc. Mich 13 Edw. IV, dorset; E159/252, Recorda Mich 15 Edw IV, rot. 20; E368/248, States and Views Mich 15 Edw IV, rot. 3d. The enrolled account unusually suggests that the controller's particulars, as well as the customer's ledger discussed above, was delivered in book form for this short twenty-four-day accounting period.

¹¹ TNA: PRO, E356/22, mm. 8d-9.

¹² TNA: PRO, E356/22, m. 8d. While this may be an instance of *mutua per talliam*, reassignment of revenues as a result of a failed tally, the authors have not attempted to trace debt or payment through the Exchequer's Receipt rolls (TNA, E401). For the process, see A. Steele, *The Receipt of the Exchequer 1377-1485* (Cambridge, 1954).

¹³ TNA: PRO, E122/19/9, fo. 2r.

customs, tonnage, and poundage. It is especially useful when, as in this instance, the particulars are incomplete.¹⁴ Read in conjunction with the enrolment of the audited account, the *determinatio* provides some additional trade detail missing from the ledger. It shows, for instance, that Álvaro the Portuguese, alien, exported pewter vessels valued at 75s.¹⁵ This was double-rated for duty, as well as incurring the usual alien supplement of customs at the rate of 3d in the £value. The Basque shipmaster/merchant John Renomandy exported forty cloths of assize or their equivalent in straits and dozens. The *determinatio* of the particulars indicates that his consignment was originally assessed for duty at the denizen rate of 14d per cloth, which would have been the case had his privileges as a merchant of Castile been allowed. However, the levy has been amended to show the alien rate of 2s 9d per cloth, a total of 110s. The audit shows that 60.75 tuns of Gascon wine were imported within the period, albeit only one tun is recorded in the extant section of the ledger. None of the 202.5 cloths of assize exported during the period appears in the surviving part of the document. By contrast, of the goods subject to poundage, 60 per cent (by value) are recorded in the surviving section of the particular account.¹⁶

A breakdown of the totals, with quantities/total values calculated from the spreadsheet in brackets, is given in Table 1 below. Spanish merchants are identified in the accounts separately from other aliens because of the commercial privileges granted to them by Edward IV in 1467. These allowed them to pay the duties at the lower rates charged to English subjects. It is, however, far from clear that the Spaniards were being allowed those privileges consistently in the immediate aftermath of the political upheaval of 1470-71. Castile became an ally of France, whose king supported the restoration of Henry VI. The ledger indicates that the Spanish shipmaster Martin Geldo was charged customs, as well as subsidy, on his import of four pipes of woad. Since the hand of the ledger describes him as ‘de Hispania, indigena’ (of Spain, denizen) this suggests confusion in the port, or more probably in the Exchequer, as to the legitimacy of Castilian exemptions, and thus to a suspension of Castilian privileges in the short term. The enrolled account supports this: approximately one-seventh of goods subject to poundage were imported or exported by merchants of Spain, and customs of 3d in the £ sterling were charged in addition to subsidy. They were thus clearly paying duty at the alien rate: or, if not paid at source, then the customers were still being held liable for the enhanced duty on the grounds that the Exchequer officials felt that they *should* have been paying the higher duty.¹⁷ Similarly the Spaniard John Renomandy paid customs on cloth at alien rather than denizen rates. By 1473, the date of the next extant ledger, the Castilians’ privileges had been restored, continuing until abrogated by the treaty of Medina del Campo in 1489.¹⁸ The

¹⁴ See Stuart Jenks, ed., *The London Customs Accounts 24 Henry VI (1445/46)* (Quellen und Darstellungen zur hansischen Geschichte, N.S. 74, Hansischer Geschichtsverein, Cologne, 2018), pp. xlvii-l; M. M. Condon, ‘More than the Sum of its Parts. The London Customs Accounts, 1400-1500, a Major New Resource’, *The Ricardian* (2019), forthcoming.

¹⁵ Possibly Álvaro Eanes: TNA: PRO, E356/22, m. 8d.

¹⁶ TNA: PRO, E356/22, m. 8d; E122/19/9, fo. 2r.

¹⁷ At the end of audit, the customers were found to be in debt to the Crown in 104s, 6d, and three farthings, which represented the difference between their alleged receipts and payments and allowances. This implies that the auditors believed the customer had been levying some duties at too low a rate. As was usual, this debt was transferred to the Pipe Rolls for levy by the sheriff – of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in this instance: E356/22 m. 8d; E368/248, States and Views Mich. 15 Edw IV, rot. 3d.

¹⁸ For 1473, TNA: PRO, E122/19/10. For Spanish commercial privileges, Wendy R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester, 1978), pp. 53-5. Childs suggests variant practice 1469-73 arising out of confusion among the customers in several ports as to right practice. See also Stuart Jenks, *The London Customs Accounts 1472/3-1476/77* (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Hansischen Geschichte, Hansischer Geschichtsverein, vol. 74.iii.3 [2016]), pp. vii-viii; Jenks, *The London Customs Accounts 1477/78-1478/79*, vol. 74.iii.4, pp. xii-xiii; both volumes published electronically at <https://www.hansischergeschichtsverein.de/>. The author’s name should be used as the search term.

last three rows of the table are subdivisions of the total value [£703.40] of goods subject to poundage, indicating the relative proportions of alien, alien Spanish, and denizen trade. The sterling pounds, shillings and pence of the accounts have been converted to modern decimal sterling to make comparison easier with the spreadsheet. The pipe and hogshead of Gascon wine have been converted to fractions of a tun. In accordance with our editorial practice, values for wine and cloth (in italics) have been calculated at £4 per tun of wine and £2 per cloth of assize.

Table 1

Commodity	Status	Quantity from enrolment	Quantity/ Value from Ledger	Unit	Value from Enrolment
Cloth of Assize	Denizen	161.5	(0)	Piece	£323
Cloth of Assize	Spanish Alien	40	(0)	Piece	£80
Cloth of Assize	Alien	1	(0)	Piece	£2
Wine, Gascon	Denizen/Alien	60.75	(0.5) /£2	Tun	£243
Misc. merchandise subject to 12d in £ (import and export)	Denizen/ Alien		(£420.58)	Value	£703.40 ¹⁹
<i>Of which:</i>					
Goods subject to customs of 3d in £ ²⁰	Alien			Value	£2.19
Goods subject to customs of 3d in £	Spanish Alien			Value	£104.83
Pewter	Alien		(0)	Value	£3.75

Editorial Practice

All entries in italics have been supplied by the editors. This includes extensions of abbreviations.

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.²¹ These conventions are summarised 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.

The presence of editorial comments is marked by a red triangle in the upper corner of any cell, and appears on mouse hover. Comments on discrepancies in value/quantity have been attached to the 'commodity' where they are more clearly visible.

¹⁹ Includes pewter vessels accounted for separately and valued at 75s.

²⁰ Aliens (like denizens) paid subsidy on goods subject to poundage, assessed by value; but also paid customs in addition.

²¹ Databases at <http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm> (accessed 29 January 2014); 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.