

The presence of tithings reveals some interesting things about the community of Brigstock. First, it was a collective effort. Today, we have police officers to take down wrong-doers. In medieval Brigstock, tithings did the job; friends and neighbors, not officers, had to haul in troublemakers for justice.¹ Second, community was an idea that somewhat respected the boundaries of households. Since every household was responsible for his or her dependents, wife and children were not in tithings. If children did something wrong, as Cecilia's sisters Emma and Alice did in 1304 when they failed to show up for the barn-work (or harvesting of the demesne), their fathers or widowed mothers answered for them. Third, the community of Brigstock was *in-far-go* part, a community of men. All males over the age of twelve were sworn into tithings, even if they were servants or dependent sons. Yet no women entered tithings, even if they were living, as Cecilia Penhader was by the 1320s, outside the authority of a father or husband.

The idea of community is an abstraction, but to the people of Brigstock, it was an important and sometimes compelling abstraction. After all, they had to work together all the time. As manorial tenants, they had to meet the demands of the lord or lady (or raise money to pay their annual lease on the manor). As peasants, they had to keep the churches of St. Andrew and St. Peter in good repair, as well as meeting other parish expenses. As tenants of lands in open fields, they had to agree with each other on what to plant, when, and on how best to use fallow lands and the pastures. Within the farm-father house, Cecilia could attend to her own business without much regard for others, but everywhere else, she was part of the community of the village.

Those who failed to do so were severely punished. The same court session that allowed Richard Power to enter Brigstock and join a tithing also penalized those men who threatened communal peace and goodwill. William Lori, Robert Lambin, and Peter Kut had so harmed the pastures of Brigstock that their neighbors seized the houses of William and Robert until such time as they could make good on their errors and promise to behave in the future (Peter probably had no house that could be seized). Peter and William were troublemakers; Peter had earlier been involved in a burglary, an assault on a woman, and a nasty confrontation with his tithing, and William was known for eavesdropping on his neighbors, picking fights, and even creating a disturbance during an earlier meeting of the court. It is not clear what these men did in the fields of the manor in 1317—maybe they released their flock on a field not yet fully harvested, or let their dogs attack the grazing

early Middle Ages, the peacekeeping collectively had been kin groups, but by the fourteenth century, kinship was too diffuse to provide an effective monitoring system. In other words, although there were lots of Penhadars in Brigstock in 1317, they did not suffice to ensure Richard Power's proper behavior. Indeed, it is possible that Richard was enrolled in a tithing that contained none of his new Penhadars in-laws.
²Village usually refers to a village or township, but in the case of Brigstock, the "community of the village" (a *manus villae*) clearly embraced the full territory of Brigstock manor, including most of the village of Brigstock and Stanton.

sheep of others, or put more animals than allowed onto a common pasture. Yet it is clear how their neighbors responded. They told William, Robert, and Peter that they had to leave Brigstock, unless they mended their ways. To Cecilia and her neighbors, community was a powerful idea that sometimes could have real consequences.

MANAGING THE COMMUNITY

With all men over twelve years in tithings and all women and children under the responsibility of their householders, peace in Brigstock was readily maintained. To be sure, problems developed all the time. Cecilia illegally took hay off the land of Richard Everard; she let her animals trespass onto the property of others; she argued with Alice Barker. These sorts of troubles happened not because Cecilia was an especially obnoxious woman, but because problems such as these inevitably arose. After all, the people of Brigstock lived in close proximity, and they bumped into each other and each other's property almost every day. Sometimes it was easy (or tempting) to overlook a boundary stone; easy (or tempting) to let sheep wander onto fresh grasses not one's own; easy (or tempting) to argue with a neighbor about new fences, wandering chickens, or ill-spoken words. When these disruptions occurred, tithingmen and householders made sure that they were quickly resolved either in or out of court. Peace was often broken, but peace was maintained.

The peacekeeping work of tithingmen and householders was not enough, however, to manage all the complexities of life in Brigstock. So Brigstock, like other medieval communities, had a host of officers who ran the manor and its court. The most important was the bailiff, the chief officer of a manor. In Brigstock manor, there were usually two bailiffs, one for Brigstock village and the other for Stanton. The bailiffs ensured that Brigstock manor ran smoothly and produced the expected profit. (Depending on who held the manor, this profit sometimes enriched the king or queen, sometimes enriched a lessee such as Margery de Farendraught, and sometimes went to pay the lease or sublease held by the tenants.) Literate men skilled in law as well as business, the bailiffs kept track of payments coming into the manor, as well as manorial expenses. They also embodied the manor to its tenants and to the world. For example, since all land in Brigstock ultimately belonged to the manor (peasants were *landholders* and *tenants*, not *landowners*), land had to be returned to the bailiff whenever it was sold. This is why, when Ralph de la Breche agreed to sell seventeen and one-half acres of meadow to Cecilia in 1322, he went to court, formally returned the land to the bailiff, and then watched as the bailiff granted it out to Cecilia. By thus passing possession of the property through the hands of the bailiff, everyone was reminded that the manor was its true owner, no matter how easy it was for Ralph to sell and Cecilia to buy. In much the same way, bailiffs also acted as the spokesmen for Brigstock manor in the outside world. In 1318, for example, it was doubtless a bailiff of Brigstock who tried to persuade Edward II to lease Brigstock manor directly to its tenants rather than to

Summary
 K. M. Medford
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Margery de Farendraught. (The failed. Although the tenants offered £50 and Margery de Farendraught offered about one-fourth that amount, the lease went to her—probably as a special favor from the king.) Bailiffs, like parsons, were sometimes local men, but they sometimes came from outside the manor, either gentry or prosperous peasants from elsewhere. Everyone was expected to obey them without question. In 1297, for example, when Robert Pidenton and Henry le Leche were elected as bailiffs of Brigstock by a committee of six men, they were explicitly empowered to order the affairs of the manor in any way that they thought best. Of course, Brigstock's tenants, since they usually leased the manor themselves, had an atypical relationship with their bailiffs. On most manors, the manorial lord or lady selected this critical employee.

The bailiff of Brigstock was assisted by other officers, all of them local men elected by the tenants. These officers worked part-time, for they were also landlords in Brigstock, kept busy, like all tenants, by plowing, harvesting, shepherding, and the like. The most important officer was the reeve, who managed much of the day-to-day business of the manor (again, in Brigstock, there were usually two Reeves, one each for the villages of Brigstock and Stanton). The reeve was especially responsible for the cultivation of demesne lands some leased out to tenants, but others cultivated for the profit of the manor. The reeve had to make sure that these lands were plowed, sown, and harvested on time; that rents of leased portions were duly paid; and that animals were turned onto the demesne in proper numbers at proper times. The reeve supervised the haywards, who kept track of what went on in the fields and flocks of the manor. Bailiffs, Reeves, and haywards worked together to make sure that the arable fields and pastures of Brigstock were well and honestly used. Sometimes they also made mistakes. In 1306, for example, the bailiff of Brigstock accused Robert Penfader of letting his animals feed illegally in the demesne. Robert vigorously denied the accusation and found six men willing to swear to his innocence. He was then acquitted of the charge. But the haywards who had originally raised the accusation with the bailiff were then charged with doing their job so poorly that an innocent man had been falsely accused.

The harvest, with villagers carrying and stacking sheaves. During the harvest, neighbors often operated with one another to bring in the crops as efficiently as possible.



Three other sorts of officers did their most important work when the court of Brigstock convened every three weeks. *Jurors* served on an ad hoc basis, selected whenever a jury was needed, and they had two functions: reporting wrongdoing and judging cases. The first function is less familiar today, but then it was very important. Because Reeves, haywards, and other officers inevitably overlooked some misdeeds, *jurors of presentments* as they were called, reported wrongdoers who might otherwise have been missed. Hence, at the end of every *View of Frankpledge* in Brigstock, a jury judged whether the officers of the manor had presented all misdoings properly; if not, the jurors could add to or amend the charges.

The second function of juries, judging special cases, helped to resolve arguments within Brigstock. For example, when Cecilia's kin argued fiercely over her inheritance in 1344, the matter was settled by *trial juries* rendering firm verdicts. Christina and her nephew Martin disagreed about who was Cecilia's nearest heir, and they jointly opposed Martin's cousins who claimed that Cecilia had granted them a twenty-four-year lease. Who was Cecilia's nearest relative? Was she of sound mind when she granted the lease? These are the sorts of questions that could and did create enduring enmities, and in some such cases, the process of judgment by jury helped to calm things. In the dispute between Christina and Martin, twenty-four men were selected and sworn to serve as jurors; they talked among themselves about the inheritance customs of Brigstock and how they applied to Cecilia's survivors, and they rendered a legal verdict. They probably also did more than merely judge, for when they awarded the inheritance to Christina, she promptly transferred a good part of it to Martin. This suggests that the formal verdict of the jury was accompanied by informal arbitration; in other words, the jury both rendered a legally binding verdict and facilitated an equitable resolution that went beyond the strict dictates of law. Whether jurors arranged this extra-legal resolution or not, the process of judgment by jury—friends, neighbors, and coworkers who gathered together to talk through the facts—could help to resolve disputes and cool tempers. Resolution was not, however, guaranteed. In the dispute that pitted Christina and Martin against Cecilia's lessees, the twelve men selected as jurors offered a straightforward judgment: the lease was invalid. Christina and Martin were doubtless pleased, but Martin's cousins, who thereby lost a lucrative lease, probably left court thinking that they had been cheated of a good deal and blaming their loss on the men who judged against them. Whether presenting or judging, juries were composed of local men drawing on local lore. They based their determinations on custom (for example, their understanding of how nearness of kinship was figured in Brigstock) and on knowledge of local doings (for example, their information about whether Cecilia had or had not left her house during the last days of her life). Unlike modern jurors who are, ideally, uninformed and open-minded about a case, medieval jurors were expected to be informed, knowledgeable, and even opinionated about the cases before them.

Court business was completed with the help of two other officers. Ale-tasters supervised the brewers of Brigstock, making sure that they sold good