



**Aurum Reginae:
*Queen's Gold in Late Fourteenth-
Century England***

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Abstract: Queen's gold, an ancient tax on fines payable to the king, formed an important part of the medieval queen's revenues and her rights, linking the queen's role as an intercessor to a tangible benefit. A number of writs in the National Archives provide the opportunity to analyse the demands for queen's gold in a short period during the life of the fourteenth-century queen Philippa of Hainault, the wife of Edward III, in terms of those liable and the difficulties involved with extracting payment. Although many individuals were often unwilling to pay an extra tax, they based their arguments on the validity of the fine in question, rather than questioning the queen's right to collect her gold. This article also considers the origins and limits of queen's gold, its role in queenly power and agency, and its relation to queenly motherhood, situating Philippa and her claims within the wider context of queen's gold.

Keywords: medieval; England; queens; revenues

In March 1338, Edward III commanded his Treasurer and Barons of the Exchequer to inspect their records, referencing a complaint from his wife, Philippa of Hainault, that “certain persons, cunningly contriving to defraud her, contrive to convert fines and obligations, from which the gold ought to be paid, into another nature and form, to have discharge thereof.”¹ The order speaks to a wider problem encountered by queens when attempting to assert their rights, specifically in the claiming of queen's gold. Philippa of Hainault (1314-1369) has traditionally been derided as a spendthrift unable to control her household finances—a reputation compounded by the combining of her household with that of her husband's later in her life.² However, the problems encountered by Philippa in particular

¹ *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1234-1396* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1896-1925): CCR 1337-9, 330. A version of this paper was originally presented at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds, 3-6 July 2017. I am extremely grateful to the reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

² C. Given-Wilson, “The Merger of Edward III's and Queen Philippa's Households, 1360-9,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 51 (November 1978): 183-187; W.M. Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 128; Hilda Johnstone, “The Queen's Household,” in *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England: The Wardrobe, the Chamber and the Small Seals*, ed. T.F. Tout (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930), 5:231-289; Hilda Johnstone, “The Queen's Household,” in *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336, Vol. 1: Central and Prerogative Administration*, ed. James F. Willard and William A. Morris (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1940), 250-299; Lisa Benz St John, *Three Medieval Queens* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 89; Christopher Wilson, “The Royal Lodgings of Edward III: Form, Function, Representation,” in *Windsor: Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture in the Thames Valley*, ed. Laurence Keen and Eileen Scarff (Leeds: Maney, 2002), 73-74; Christian D. Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002), 72.

when claiming her gold suggest that there were further issues involved in the management of Philippa's revenues, limitations to financial independence for queens in general, and the significance of claiming queen's gold and the difficulties encountered on a queen's fiscal and political reputation.

Although the tradition of queen's gold had a long history, predating the Norman Conquest, claims seem to have reached a high point during the fourteenth century, particularly under Philippa of Hainault, as demonstrated through the number of surviving writs for queen's gold. The collection of queen's gold provided a significant revenue for the queen's household and had proved lucrative under prior queens, which suggests why Philippa persisted in claiming her gold, despite the associated problems. This article will first discuss some of the customs associated with queen's gold, such as the original link to intercession and the effect that the queen's relationship with her husband could have on the ability to claim, whether prohibitive or supportive through the issuing of proclamations. The article will also investigate the changing revenues of queen's gold and the associated difficulties in collection, with wider consequences for the queen's finances, with reference to the writs surviving for queen's gold from Philippa's tenure. Individuals and groups both proved reluctant to pay, arguing that they were not liable for the fee rather than challenging the queen's right to collect. Queens throughout the medieval period experienced problems and difficulties with claiming and collecting queen's gold, with ramifications for queenly power and agency, suggesting that the convention of queen's gold was more complicated than simply a tax.

The Right to Queen's Gold

The custom of queen's gold had its roots in the early medieval period and was originally a payment for the queens in return for their intercession, which essentially transformed their intercessory capital into economic. By the fourteenth century, the reward had become only a formality through the concept of "queen's gold," or *aurum reginae*, an additional ten per cent on any fine to the king, payable to the queen.³ By the late fourteenth century, queen's gold was no longer overtly linked to intercession and the king cancelled the queen's demands as much he supported her right to claim queen's gold. Although queen's gold was independent in that the queen's officials claimed and collected the income, the custom itself could not be independent given that it was, firstly, derived from the queen's intercession and therefore her relationship with the king, and later based on fines payable to him, in addition to the king's continuing ability to intervene.

Following a preliminary treatise by William Hakewill, the antiquarian William Prynne produced a transcription of many writs for queen's gold, published in 1668, as well as an additional appendix.⁴ Prynne defined queen's gold as "a royal debt, duty or revenue" payable to the queen on all voluntary fines worth over ten marks, in return for "Priviledges, Franchises,

³ William Prynne, *Aurum Reginae: Or a compendious tractate and chronological collection of records concerning the queen's gold* (London, 1668); William Prynne, *An additional appendix: to Aurum reginae* (London, 1668); Kristen Geaman, "Queen's Gold and Intercession: The Case of Eleanor of Aquitaine," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 46, no. 2 (2010): 10–33.

⁴ William Hakewill, *Treatise on the Queen's claim to Aurum Reginae* (London, 1607); The National Archives, Kew [TNA], SP 14/29; British Library Add. MS 25255, fols. 1–23.

Dispensations, Licenses, Pardons, Grants” and similar favours from the king, at a rate of one mark on every ten, linking the custom to the queen’s intercession. Prynne dated the tradition back to ancient Roman empresses such as the fourth-century Helena, who had an English connection as she was the supposed daughter of King Coel of Colchester, before noting the first surviving records for Eleanor of Aquitaine (c.1122-1204), and then transcribing writs for queens from Eleanor to Katherine Parr.⁵ Prynne’s works on *aurum reginae* form a key source, particularly when the records he transcribed may no longer survive, and demonstrate that queen’s gold was particularly important under medieval queens.

In terms of modern historiography, Kristen Geaman has explored queen’s gold under of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was in many ways an anomaly in that she continued to claim gold after the death of her husband and into the reigns of her two sons, despite the fact that they had their own consorts. The first records explicitly referring to “*aurum reginae*” appeared in the *Dialogus de Scaccario* during Eleanor’s lifetime, leading scholars to mistakenly date the tradition of queen’s gold to the reign of Henry II. Geaman extends Prynne’s argument that queen’s gold originated as a reward for the queen’s intercessory actions, arguing that the collection of queen’s gold, through an official mechanism in the form of the exchequer, formalised queen’s gold and in turn queenly intercession itself.⁶ By the fourteenth century, queen’s gold had become a normalised part of the royal fiscal administration. Joan of Kent, Philippa’s intended successor, never became queen, and thus was not able to claim queen’s gold. Yet Eleanor of Castile (1241-1290), who claimed queen’s gold in Ireland before the accession of her husband, Edward I, in England, may have provided a possible precedent for Joan’s claim to queen’s gold. However, at this point Edward I was actively ruling as Lord of Ireland, whilst Joan of Kent’s husband, Edward, was only Prince of Wales and Duke of Aquitaine.⁷ Despite Earenfight’s assertion that similar customs existed around Europe, Jessica Nelson, for example, found no such similar tradition in Scotland, and queens had difficulty asserting their right to claim queen’s gold in Ireland.⁸ However, as queen, Eleanor of Castile also claimed an annual sum in Aquitaine, which Prynne argued was akin to queen’s gold, and a

⁵ Previous to Prynne publishing his records for Catherine of Braganza, Katherine Parr, the last wife of Henry VIII, had been the last queen consort to claim the custom. Queen’s gold had not been collected during the reign of the unmarried Edward VI, or under Mary I and Elizabeth I, due to their status as queens regnant. Before Charles II, queen’s gold had last been claimed by Anne of Denmark, wife of James I, but apparently not collected, and Charles I had issued a writ for his wife, Henrietta Maria, then purchased the right from her for ten thousand pounds, leaving the medieval period as the most active for queen’s gold. *Acta regia: being the account which Mr. Rapin de Thoyras published of the history of England* (London, 1733), 819: special warrant issued on 19 January 1656 for Henrietta Maria. Prynne, *Aurum reginae*, 2; Antonina Harbus, *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 79.

⁶ Geaman, “Queen’s Gold and Intercession,” 21. H.G. Richardson posits that queen’s gold may have formed a part of Eleanor’s dower specifically, rather than the automatic right of all queens. H.G. Richardson, “The Letters and Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine,” *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 291 (April 1959): 219–221; Geaman, however, argues that Eleanor of Aquitaine continued to receive queen’s gold because she was still the principal intercessory figure. Margaret Howell argues that Eleanor was collecting queen’s gold that she had already claimed before her husband’s death, rather than beginning in the reign of her sons. Margaret Howell, “The Resources of Eleanor of Provence as Queen Consort,” *The English Historical Review* 102, no. 403 (April 1987): 373n3.

⁷ Geaman, “Queen’s Gold and Intercession,” 22–23.

⁸ Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 146; Jessica Alice Nelson, “Queens and Queenship in Scotland, circa 1067-1286,” (PhD thesis, King’s College London, 2007), 220.

similar sum that had been paid to Joan, Countess of Poitiers and Toulouse.⁹ Joan of Kent's inability to claim rights to queen's gold even in the absence of a queen consort highlights her lesser position as the mother of a king, but not a queen dowager, contrasting with Eleanor of Aquitaine, who, with the status of dowager queen, may have claimed queen's gold into the reigns of her sons.

The king was often an enthusiastic supporter of his wife's rights to queen's gold, perhaps because those liable were often unknowing or reluctant to pay. Previous queens also faced resistance in claiming their gold.¹⁰ In response to Philippa of Hainault complaining of attempted fraud, due to individuals arguing that their fines were not voluntary and therefore not liable for queen's gold, Edward III issued a confirmation of his wife's rights to queen's gold in 1338, and repeated a similar proclamation at least once in 1341, suggesting that the first proclamation at least was unsuccessful.¹¹ Edward also issued orders in Ireland in 1342-1343 and again in 1360-1361. Problems with claiming queen's gold in Ireland persisted beyond Edward's reign. Richard II also issued a proclamation to Ireland on behalf of Anne of Bohemia, once in 1389 and twice in 1393, and Anne appointed her own attorney, William Karlell, for the collection of queen's gold in Ireland.¹² This appointment dated Anne's claim to queen's gold to the date of her coronation, 22 January 1382.¹³ The writs drew on the fact that previous queens had received queen's gold, referencing "all queens time out of mind," a legal phrase which had been fixed at the date of Richard I's coronation, despite the fact that in this case Richard I's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, had been the recipient of queen's gold, rather than his wife, and the customs for the queens' rights to the gold had changed in the preceding centuries.¹⁴ However, the wording of these confirmations suggests that queen's gold was, by the fourteenth century, regarded as a traditional right of the queen. Even Margaret of France, second wife of Edward I, was able to claim queen's gold, despite her lack of coronation. Kings often issued confirmations of their wives' rights to queen's gold, which emphasises that the revenues formed a significant part of the queens' funds, a gap which the king would otherwise have to fill, as well as illustrating problems with collection that queens were not able to solve alone. However, the fact that kings issued proclamations to support their wives' rights to collect queen's gold contrasts with the multiple cases in which kings cancelled their wives' demands, underlining the queen's reliance on the king to claim and collect gold.

Because the right for queens to claim their gold was dependent on the whim of the king, queens could lose their rights to collection if they displeased their husbands in some way. For example, Eleanor of Provence (c.1223-1291) lost hers for a short period in 1252, after a quarrel with the king over a particular holding. Eleanor of Aquitaine's access to queen's gold was probably suspended during her imprisonment, between 1173 and the death of her husband in 1189, which may explain the lack of records accounting for the revenues of queen's

⁹ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 22–23.

¹⁰ Howell, "The Resources of Eleanor of Provence," 378.

¹¹ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 34–35; *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third, Vol. 1: 1101-1377* (London, 1810), 298.

¹² CCR 1389-92, 6; CCR 1392-96, 158, 170–171; CCR 1381-85, 313.

¹³ CCR 1381-85, 313.

¹⁴ Paul Brand, "Time Out of Mind?: The Knowledge and Use of the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Past in Thirteenth-Century Litigation," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 16 (1994): 37–54.

gold during those specific years.¹⁵ During her imprisonment, Eleanor was also no longer in a position to provide intercession with the king. In another example from 1324, while Edward II was engaged in a war with France over Gascony, a writ granted queen's gold to Isabella of France and was then cancelled two days later, the revenues assigned instead to the king. At the same time, Isabella's lands were confiscated and her French attendants dismissed, due to her French origin.¹⁶ Like all the queen's other sources of wealth, rights to queen's gold ultimately relied on the generosity of the king. Philippa of Hainault maintained a relatively harmonious relationship with her husband until her death, meaning that her access to queen's gold should have remained relatively unproblematic. However, the king's own financial or political priorities meant that he still often intervened.

Queen's gold relied on the queen's relationship with the king and had once originated from her intercessory activity with him. In the case of Philippa of Hainault in the fourteenth century, however, the custom had become a normalised part of royal finance, despite the wording of various proclamations referencing queen's gold as an ancient tradition. Philippa is known for her relatively amicable relationship with her husband, so examining the state of queen's gold during her lifetime allows for the study of queen's gold working at its most developed, particularly in contrast to that under Eleanor of Aquitaine. Although the first records to explicitly refer to queen's gold appeared under Eleanor, she lost the rights to collect during her imprisonment, as did other queens due to quarrels or political circumstances. However, by the time of Philippa, queen's gold had become regarded as the queen's prerogative, despite continued problems for the queen in attempting to collect her gold.

Claiming Queen's Gold

Demands for the payment of queen's gold were issued through the exchequer through writs of *fieri facias*, writs of execution to levy debts issued to sheriffs. The queen had her own official for the collection of queen's gold, and a council that managed the administration of her lands and business. Evidence for the queen having her own council exists from as early as the tenure of Eleanor of Provence, with the first references to her council regarding the collection of queen's gold rather than the management of her lands, but it was subordinate to the king's council, referring issues for arbitration there.¹⁷ Although the existence of the council meant that the queen was in some ways removed from agency, the council meant that queenship

¹⁵ Howell, "The Resources of Eleanor of Provence," 385–386; Geaman, "Queen's Gold and Intercession," 19. Several references to queen's gold survive in the Fine Rolls of Henry III: *Calendar of the Fine Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. David Carpenter, Paul Dryburgh, and Beth Hartland. See: *Henry III Fine Rolls Project*, 20/152, 272; 21/162; 26/105, 106; 27/822; 29/353, 462, 463, 478 (www.finerollshenry3.org.uk). Accounts by John de Berewyk survive for 1229–1232, TNA E 101/505/18, 19 and 20, as well as later writs noted for the queen mother, 1289/90, TNA E 5/212/8. Edward I also levied queen's gold on the justice of the Jews, TNA SC 1/23/7B, and the Bishop of Lincoln challenged the collection of queen's gold he had already paid on a fine, TNA SC 8/309/15409.

¹⁶ TNA E 159/100, m. 9d; Mark Buck, *Politics, Finance and the Church in the Reign of Edward II: Walter Stapeldon, Treasurer of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 152. TNA E 101/691/30 contains an account for queen's gold dated July 1323–July 1324.

¹⁷ Anne Crawford, "The Queen's Council in the Middle Ages," *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 469 (November 2001): 1196–1197.

functioned similarly to lordship.¹⁸ As with other records, more writs survive for Philippa due to her comparatively long span as queen consort. Five bundles in the National Archives contain over a hundred writs each from 1367-1370, presumably relating to the king's writs from the same years, and another bundle contains two writs from 1351-1352.¹⁹ However, the surviving examples that remain are only a sample of those issued, and may not be representative of all demands for queen's gold. In times of war, for example, the queen could collect her gold more frequently on fines for the avoidance of fighting, such as the gold of four marks on a fine of forty for the exemption of "hobelers," soldiers mounted on small horses, paid by the town of Leicester in 1352.²⁰ Many of the writs for queen's gold transcribed by Prynne were claimed on fines paid for grants of wardship, marriage, or lands, often for individuals rather than towns or groups.²¹ Circumstances were therefore a factor in the amount and types of fines liable for queen's gold. The queen might be more inclined to pursue her claims for gold in times of rising expenses, such as following episodes of the Black Death.

In addition to examples of the writs existing from the last years of Philippa's life, Prynne includes transcriptions taken from the plea rolls under both Edward III and Richard II. The writs surviving that were issued on behalf of Philippa seem unusually high in number, including both existing writs and the now lost writs, those making up a large proportion of those transcribed by Prynne, who recorded over 230 writs under Philippa, the most of all queens.²² Prynne recorded over 170 writs under Elizabeth Woodville (c.1437-1492, queen consort of Edward IV), followed by almost five-dozen for Eleanor of Castile.²³ Writs and an account for queen's gold also exist for Joan of Navarre after the death of Henry IV, and a large amount of writs also survive in the National Archives for Elizabeth Woodville.²⁴ Following Elizabeth Woodville, writs and a receipt exist for Elizabeth of York (1466-1503).²⁵ Philippa of Hainault, Elizabeth Woodville, and Eleanor of Castile all had the highest numbers of surviving children of medieval queens, suggesting that their respective households therefore had a greater drive for collecting queen's gold, even if numbers of writs reduced during their confinements and the queens were not directly responsible for the upkeep of their offspring.

In addition to the sporadic survival of records, difficulties in measuring the revenues that queen's gold brought in are exacerbated by the changing nature of where and how

¹⁸ J.L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445–1503* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 232–233.

¹⁹ TNA E 5/347, E 5/349, E 5/352, E 5/354, E 5/355, E 5/570.

²⁰ Mary Bateson, ed., *Records of the Borough of Leicester, Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 80–81; Adrian R. Bell, Anne Curry, Andy King, and David Simpkin, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 180–181.

²¹ Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 263.

²² TNA E 5/347, E 5/349, E 5/352, E 5/354, E 5/355; Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 33–61; Prynne, *An Additional Appendix to Aurum Reginae*, 8–39.

²³ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 19–28, 107–109, 68–103. A roll of receipts for queen's gold exists for Eleanor of Castile, dated 1290/1291, TNA E 101/505/21. Queen's gold was still being collected after Eleanor's death, for example challenged by Joan de Hederse, TNA SC 8/51/2528, and by her executors, the Cistercian abbots of England, on 2,000 marks collected since her death, TNA SC 8/265/13222.

²⁴ TNA E 101/691/31, an account for queen's gold, and E 5/575, writs for debts to Joan, dated 1413/1434, in addition to E 5/574, writs dated 1409/1410; TNA E 163/8/27, E 19/1/2 and E 5/564; E 5/565 is dated to 23 Edward IV (1483/1484).

²⁵ TNA E 5/5/33 (writs) and E 101/123/10 (receipt) date from 1497/1498 and 1501/1502, respectively.

demands for queen's gold were accounted, a problem which persisted under multiple medieval queens. Nicholas Vincent suggests that King John kept the revenues of queen's gold for himself, both that which was due to his wife and possibly also his mother, ordering that the accounting of queen's gold should return to the royal exchequer alongside the king's debts. Under John the pipe rolls did not record all cases of queen's gold, and copied unpaid fines from year to year, which also emphasises the difficulties in claiming queen's gold across the centuries.²⁶ Only one reference to queen's gold appears on the pipe roll for the seventh year of the reign of King John, alongside notes on one fine roll, suggesting that the revenues were accounted elsewhere.²⁷ The household accounts of Margaret of Anjou (1430-1482) note fifty-nine claims for queen's gold over an eight-year period, forty-three of which went unpaid. In contrast, a sample of accounts for Elizabeth Woodville record eleven claims over two years, ten of which were paid, with A.R. Myers arguing that Margaret's officials experienced more difficulty, but also were more tenacious, in pursuing her claims.²⁸ Therefore accounts of the revenues accumulated over a queen's lifetime do not demonstrate all those claims to queen's gold issued as many went unpaid or cancelled, and were further complicated by their accounting in different areas both between and during reigns.

Hilda Johnstone categorised queen's gold among the queen's traditional prerogatives and argued that the revenue derived could fluctuate widely, both between and within reigns, often depending on a range of circumstances. For example, Philippa of Hainault received £41 15s 8d from queen's gold during the Easter term during 1337-1338, and £112 14s 4d in the Michaelmas term, yet only £16 1s 8d in the Easter term of 1339. Barbara Lake also argues that during these years for Philippa in particular, the collection of queen's gold was not necessarily at the top of Philippa's priorities. During those years she bore five children and aided in the establishment of a network of imported Flemish weavers. The number of pardons associated with Philippa during these years also dropped, with eight between 1337-1338, and only one recorded in 1339. The low sums also contrast with those collected under Eleanor of Castile, when queen's gold at times produced more income than that of her lands, at £4,875 compared to £4,821 in the years 1286-1289. From September 1289 to November of 1290, however, the revenues from queen's gold accounted for only £1,564 of a sum of £4,937.²⁹ Johnstone also stated that Eleanor of Provence received low sums, but Howell argues that Johnstone was incorrect in her assumption of where queen's gold was normally accounted. Under Eleanor of Provence and Philippa of Hainault the keeper or receiver of queen's gold at the exchequer accounted the queen's gold, rather than the keeper of her wardrobe, although this may have changed between queens or even during tenures.³⁰ Alternatively, a period of high collection between 1342-1343 coincided with both a drop in the prices of wool exports and a grant from

²⁶ Nicholas Vincent, "Isabella of Angoulême: John's Jezebel," in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S.D. Church (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 191.

²⁷ Sidney Smith, ed., *Great Roll of the Pipe for the Seventh Year of the Reign of King John* (London: Pipe Roll Society, 1941), xxxvii–xxxviii, 211.

²⁸ A.R. Myers, *Crown, Household and Parliament in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), 141–142; TNA SC 6/1093/14 contains arrears for queen's gold dated to 1449/1450.

²⁹ Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 265. TNA SC 6/1091/4S and C 6/1091/9 record accounts for *amobrages* and queen's gold for 14-17 Edward III (1340-1344). TNA SC 6/1092/2 and SC 6/1092/3 contain accounts for 33 and 38-9 Edward III (1359/1360 and 1364-1366).

³⁰ Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 265; Howell, "The Resources of Eleanor of Provence," 374.

the king towards Philippa's debts, suggesting that Philippa's finances were under particular pressure at that time.³¹ No extant pardons associated with Philippa are recorded during these years.³² Regardless of Philippa's activity levels, pardons, despite their associations with queen's gold and intercession, provided no immediate profit. Again circumstances affected the revenues brought in by queen's gold, at times depending on the queen's priorities and the state of her own finances.

Tracing queen's gold is made more difficult both by the scarcity of the records themselves, as well as changes from reign to reign, and queen to queen, where the revenues derived from queen's gold were recorded. Queen's gold could form a major source of a queen's finances, as possibly demonstrated under Eleanor of Castile, but collecting queen's gold was not always a priority for the queen, depending on her other concerns, such as during periods of confinement. However, Prynne's highest number of writs was recorded under Philippa, followed by Elizabeth Woodville and Eleanor of Castile, which suggests a link between the collecting of queen's gold and thus revenues, which were necessary because they had larger numbers of children. Alternatively, when the queen was under particular financial pressures, her officials might be especially tenacious in chasing her gold, as demonstrated by repeatedly issued writs for the collection of said queen's gold. Often, however, the queen's efforts were frustrated by failures to pay, or the interference of the king himself, whether on a case-by-case basis or by removing the queen's right to collect. The large number of writs surviving from those issued for Philippa demonstrate many of these problems, although the total number of writs issued remains unknown, particularly given those repeatedly reissued or cancelled.

Problems with Collection

The wide variance in the revenues from queen's gold can be partially accounted for by the problems faced by queens in getting their claims paid. The *Dialogus*, a treatise on the exchequer dating from the late 1170s or possibly 1180s, notes that those owing voluntary fines to the king also owed the queen, *licet expressum non fuerit* (without it being expressly stated) which may account for some confusion among those liable, and provided an excuse for those unwilling to pay. The *Dialogus* also states that the sheriff should collect the gold for the queen only after the king's debts are paid, demonstrating the lesser importance given to queen's gold than the obligations to the king.³³ In addition, the fact that by the fourteenth century the original links between the fee and intercession were less overt may have meant that those liable were more unwilling to pay because they had not received the benefit of the queen's intercession. Many of those seeking to avoid paying the additional queen's gold on top of their fine to the king did not challenge the queen's right to her gold, thus recognising the developed office and right of the queen, but rather argued that the fine in question was not a voluntary

³¹ Barbara J. Lake, "Queenship in Fourteenth-Century England: Theoretical and Actual Authority" (PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 1992), 205.

³² Helen Lacey, *The Royal Pardon: Access to Mercy in Fourteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), 207.

³³ Richard Fitzneale, *Dialogus de Scaccario: The dialogue of the Exchequer*, ed. Emilie Amt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xix, 183–185. "uiccomes per omnia utetur, qua in regis usus est, non tamen ante set post."

one, as several cases during Philippa's tenure demonstrate.

Most evidence for individuals being unwilling to pay queen's gold is the repetition of writs of *fieri facias* issued to the same individual over and over again, at times spanning years. For instance, the register of Simon Sudbury notes that Edward III ordered the bishop to collect £20 from the clerk Roger Holm for the queen on a fine to the king on 8 May 1362, as well as 13s, 4d on a fine of 10 marks from Richard Walton, the parson of Rochford. Another order of execution, issued on the 2 July that year, demanded £9 of Roger Holm's same fine of £20, repeated on 18 June 1363, and by 10 October the demand had risen to £12 10s of £40 of queen's gold. The concurrent entries in the memoranda roll note that Roger Holm had no ecclesiastical goods with which to pay the fine, later demanding £40 from Holm on 1 June 1367 and 16 February 1367-1368.³⁴ In another example, at least two writs were issued to the sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire to collect queen's gold from a man named John Olney during Philippa's tenure.³⁵ Edward probably eventually cancelled many of the writs after Philippa's death, as he did with many writs for queen's gold.³⁶ In addition, the writs surviving are mainly from 1367-1370, the end of Philippa's life, when the mechanisms for collection under her tenure would presumably be most developed, but were not the only writs issued.

Although theoretically queen's gold could not be dismissed without the queen's consent, in practice the king often interfered, particularly concerning the gold claimed on tenths and fifteenths, a form of taxation based on moveable goods. Geaman argues that the tenths and fifteenths were frequently excluded from claims for queen's gold due to the fact that these grants were more akin to a favour from parliament to the king in allowing him to receive the money, not involving the queen or her intercessory powers.³⁷ When parliament granted a tenth or fifteenth to the king, the city often paid a lump sum, as London did in 1334 and 1335, rendering 1,100 marks, with an additional 110 marks to the queen as her gold.³⁸ The reluctance of cities to pay queen's gold is demonstrated through the example of Leicester, which in 1357 paid a fifteenth, with the condition of a pardon for certain fines, including queen's gold.³⁹ One writ of 1341 demanded that the people of London paid 110 marks of queen's gold, due on the 1,100 marks akin to a fifteenth from the ninth year of Edward's reign (1335-1336). The exchequer summoned the Mayor, Aldermen, and citizens of London to explain why they had not paid the same amount three months later, which they were presumably unwilling to pay.⁴⁰ In 1336, another writ forbade the exchequer from claiming queen's gold on money that London paid around that time.⁴¹ In a parliament of 1357, Edward III also pre-emptively reassured his government that the queen would not be permitted to

³⁴ R.C. Fowler, ed., *Registrum Simonis de Sudbiria, diocesis Londoniensis AD 1362-1375* (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1916-1938), 45, 47, 55; ii, xxiv.

³⁵ TNA E 5/355.

³⁶ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 49-57; Prynne, *An Additional Appendix to Aurum Reginae*, 9-39; TNA E 5/355. TNA SC 8/165/8216 and SC 8/331/15629 contain requests against the claiming of queen's gold for Margaret of France after her death. TNA SC 8/315/E158 also protested against paying queen's gold during Margaret's lifetime, in 1302.

³⁷ Geaman, "Queen's Gold and Intercession," 14.

³⁸ R.R. Sharpe, ed., *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall, Letter Book F, 6 (1337-1352)* (London: Corporation of the City of London, 1904), xxxi.

³⁹ Bateson, *Records of the Borough of Leicester, Vol. II*, 106.

⁴⁰ Sharpe, *Letter-Books of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book F, 6 (1337-1352)*, 66-68.

⁴¹ Sharpe, *Letter-Books of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book E, 5 (1314-1337)*, 300.

claim her gold on the fifteenth and tenth that parliament had just granted to him, demonstrating the low priority of collecting queen's gold in comparison to other concerns, and the way in which kings were willing to sacrifice queen's gold as a favour or enticement, putting their own needs above the rights of their queens.⁴² The claims of queen's gold on these tenths and fifteenth were particularly unpopular and cities often sought ways to avoid paying, limiting how much the queen could claim for her revenues. For the king, pardoning the owing of queen's gold might make convincing parliament to allow extra taxation easier, particularly given that tenths and fifteenths were often to raise extra funds for causes such as wars, as opposed to queen's gold, the revenues of which funnelled into the queen's coffers.

Demands for queen's gold elicited from cities or towns were particularly contested, and the disputes could continue for years. One example concerns a writ delivered in 1353 on the 24 February, which claimed £22 in queen's gold on a payment of £220 from Eborard le Frensshe, a former mayor of Bristol, which he had paid in 1338.⁴³ Philippa may have been exacting this queen's gold as part of a series of investigations into her rights and holdings during the 1350s, with similar inquiries in Havering taking place at the same time, perhaps as a consequence of the Black Death.⁴⁴ Havering and Bristol both belonged to the queen, although she could claim her gold from any land whether under her ownership or not, and she may have been particularly exacting on holdings of her own. The bailiffs of Bristol refused to cooperate with the demand, even claiming that they had not received the writ, and one bailiff, Walter Derby, appeared in the court of the exchequer, arguing that queen's gold was not due because the original £220 was a recognisance, rather than a fine, and therefore not liable for queen's gold, again not challenging the queen's right in general to claim her gold. A year later Derby admitted that he had not answered the original writ and paid a fine for contempt of 100 shillings to the queen, suggesting that the queen and her officials remained tenacious in following up on the demand.⁴⁵ No record exists for the settlement of the 1338 writ, although Prynne argues that the dispute was probably resolved in the queen's favour, based on the argument that the queen had proved that she was due queen's gold.⁴⁶ However, Christian Liddy speculates that the king or his council probably cancelled the writ, as Edward had done for similar demands on Bristol for queen's gold in 1336 and 1338. Liddy argues that Edward was probably hoping to conserve peace at home whilst he pursued his wars abroad, especially because Bristol was an important financial supporter of the king on which he may have planned to make further demands.⁴⁷ No evidence survives for the outcome either way, although Edward cancelled many of his wife's writs for queen's gold.⁴⁸ Edward's possible interference on this occasion and others demonstrates how often the king intervened in the collection of queen's gold, and how unreliable queen's gold could prove as a regular source of income.

Perhaps because of the high return, the queen's officials appeared particularly tenacious

⁴² Bateson, *Records of the Borough of Leicester, Vol. II*, 106.

⁴³ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, 70; Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 37, 112–114; *CPR 1334-38*, 564–565.

⁴⁴ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, 71; Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: The Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 58.

⁴⁵ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, 70.

⁴⁶ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 114.

⁴⁷ Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance*, 69, 71.

⁴⁸ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 49–57; Prynne, *An Additional Appendix to Aurum Reginae*, 9–39.

in pursuing claims for her gold from towns and cities, such as the town of Bury in 1385, which had paid 2,000 marks to the king for a charter pardoning all treasons and felonies. A number of men were then appointed to assess their town for each individual to pay in proportion to their means towards the 200 marks due for queen's gold, to the point of compelling by distress.⁴⁹ In 1354-1356, the men of Lenn (King's Lynn) paid £4 13s 4d of queen's gold on fines for range of transgressions. The accounts of the chamberlains, Ancelm Braunch, Thomas Bukworth, Rogers Wyth, and Robert Bryselee, also records the payment of ten shillings on wine for the sheriff of Norfolk's bailiffs when they came to collect the gold.⁵⁰ In another example from May 1354, one letter from Philippa references a previous order to her attorney, John Edington, to postpone the writs from a search by Richard Cressevill, until the octaves of the following Easter, whilst the queen and her council found which writs could be paid and the others cancelled. Philippa may have known she was pregnant at this time. Her son, Thomas of Woodstock, was born in early January 1354, and was possibly a higher priority than collecting queen's gold. Crawford suggests that the order relates to queen's gold, and that Philippa was generously attempting to make life easier for her subjects.⁵¹ However, this seems a change from Philippa's usual determination to gain the money owed to her, and her pursuance of other claims to queen's gold, when she was probably no more lenient on her own holdings.

Ireland proved a particular problem, with Edward III issuing an order in 1342-1343 and again in 1360-1361, despite the fact that queens had claimed their gold there as early as 1268 during the tenure of Eleanor of Castile.⁵² Henry III had also confirmed that queen's gold was payable in Ireland to his queen, Eleanor of Provence, and Edward I had issued similar letters patent for his first wife, Eleanor of Castile.⁵³ Robin Frame notes that under Edward III, the power of the exchequer was diminished in Ireland and only able to collect significantly lesser revenues there than in the reign of his grandfather due to wider problems with English rule.⁵⁴ Philippa reported that a specific man, Robert Holiwode, had refused to pay queen's gold in Ireland in 1360, arguing that queen's gold was not due in Ireland, and Edward's subsequent proclamation specifically referenced that Holiwode and others were liable in Ireland and should pay the queen's gold they owed.⁵⁵ Another order references a Robert Ryng, who claimed to have a commission under Philippa's seal from the office of the queen's attorney general, to receive queen's gold in Ireland in 1360. The commission was false, which meant that Ryng had to appear before the council of the king and queen. Ryng escaped and had to pay a fine to the queen.⁵⁶ Ryng's crime suggests that queen's gold could be lucrative, and that he at least perceived queen's gold as payable in Ireland, even if the collection was chaotic. The

⁴⁹ CCR 1385-89, 38.

⁵⁰ *The Manuscripts of the Corporations of Southampton and King's Lynn Eleventh Report, Appendix: Part III* (London, 1887), 219.

⁵¹ TNA E 13/79; Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England, 1100-1547* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994), 99-100; E.B. Fryde, D.E. Greenway, S. Porter, and I. Roy, eds., *Handbook of British Chronology*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 40.

⁵² H.F. Berry, ed. *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland, Vol. II: King John to Henry V* (Dublin: H.M. Stationery Office, 1907), 588; Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 45-46; CCR 1360-64, 61; CPR 1272-81, 199; Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 266.

⁵³ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 18; Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 266; CPR 1281-92, 199.

⁵⁴ Robin Frame, *Colonial Ireland, 1169-1369* (Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, 1981), 126.

⁵⁵ CCR 1360-64, 61.

⁵⁶ CCR 1360-64, 77.

problems with claiming queen's gold in Ireland were probably reflective of the overall issues with challenges to royal rule there.

Most other surviving records mentioning queen's gold relate to the king issuing writs of *supersedeas*, cancelling the demands for queen's gold, even though Philippa maintained a relatively harmonious relationship with her husband. For instance, in 1332 the king sent a writ of *supersedeas* to a number of sheriffs for £1,000 of queen's gold, a significant amount, due from William la Zouch and his wife Eleanor.⁵⁷ Some examples gave specific reasons, such as a writ of 1350 superseding a demand for £10 on Edmund Bereford, because he had not paid the sum for which he had been assessed.⁵⁸ The knights John Darcy, Elias Assheburn, Nicholas Snyterle, and the deceased Walter Birmingham, as well as their heirs, executors, and tenants, did not have to pay £10 for queen's gold, because the fine was paid for the king's security on the good behaviour of the late Walter Birmingham, who was judged to have met this condition, rendering the fine void.⁵⁹ The exchequer also sought to exact queen's gold from William Fifhide because he had purchased the right to decide the marriage of the heir of Roger Norman. However, the king ruled that no profit could be claimed for the marriage of heirs in the king's wardship.⁶⁰ Similarly, although Edward III pardoned John Fitz Simon of a £40 fine, the council decided that the queen's gold of £4 due was not pardoned, presumably due to the implied intercession of the queen in obtaining the pardon for the original fine.⁶¹ Richard II also issued a writ of *supersedeas* towards the sheriff of Kent in 1383, attempting to levy queen's gold on the archbishop of Canterbury, who had purchased the issues and profits of the archbishopric which would fall to the king during its vacancy. The archbishop had proved that the purchase was not a fine and was therefore not liable for queen's gold, and the writ confirmed the queen was not able to exact gold upon purchases such as wardships, marriages, and vacancies from the king.⁶² Philippa's successor as queen, Anne of Bohemia (1366-1394), faced just as many problems as Philippa in attempting to claim her gold. Although the revenues for queen's gold had the capacity to be extremely lucrative, forming a significant part of the queen's revenues, payment was often delayed or ultimately cancelled, whether due to the king's intervention or a successful argument on the part of those liable.

Edward III cancelled many writs after Philippa's death. Prynne noted many examples of the cancelled records, which suggests that for the king, at least, the difficulties in and unpopularity of claiming queen's gold outweighed the benefit in terms of profit. For example, one of the surviving writs for Philippa provides a case pertaining to the queen's gold owed by a woman, rather than a man as was usually the case, or a town as was less common. In this instance, dating from 1365, Petronilla, the widow of the knight John Benstede, owed queen's gold on a licence allowing her to marry who she wanted.⁶³ The figure noted as "Ravensere" at

⁵⁷ CCR 1330-33, 553.

⁵⁸ CCR 1346-49, 197.

⁵⁹ CCR 1349-54, 546.

⁶⁰ CCR 1354-60, 572.

⁶¹ TNA SC 8/112/5570.

⁶² CCR 1381-85, 292; TNA SC 8/215/10726.

⁶³ TNA E 5/355. "Edwardus Dei gratia rex Anglie, dominus Hibernie & Aquitonie vicecomiti Essex & Hertford salutem. Praecipimus tibi sicut pluries quod de bonis et catillis Petronillae que fuit uxor Iohannis de Benstede Chivaler etiam de terris et tenementis quae sua fuerunt anno regni nostri xxxix seu postea in quorumcumque manibus eadem terrae et tenementa tunc existant in balliva sua fieri faceret xl l d quos debet Philippe Regine

the end of the writ refers to Richard Ravenser, referred to as both Philippa's treasurer and receiver for the issues of her lands, rents, and profits from 1359 onwards.⁶⁴ Other writs were carried over into the reign of Richard II.⁶⁵ Like the demands for queen's gold levelled on towns, many demands for queen's gold remained unpaid and were repeatedly requested, often until their ultimate cancellation.

The problems encountered by Philippa and her officials illustrate some of the difficulties in the claiming of queen's gold. Ireland, in addition to towns such as London, Leicester, and Bristol, proved particularly unwilling to pay, although in many cases the queen's gold was an extra fine upon an already large sum in the form of a fifteenth or tenth. Many towns did not challenge the right of the queen to claim her gold, but rather argued that the circumstances meant that the fine was not eligible for queen's gold, and the lack of intercession needed in these cases reinforces the link between queen's gold and intercession. Repeated writs issued by the queen's officials, particularly in the case of Bristol, demonstrate that the queen's officials were tenacious in asserting her rights, and perhaps that a refusal or failure to pay was a common occurrence, to the extent of needing the king's interference. At times the king intervened despite queen's gold supposedly being an independent source for the queen, especially when the king's need for a grant from a city outweighed the needs of the queen. The king's intervention could be thus helpful or prohibitive but underlines that queen's gold was ultimately reliant on him.

Conclusion

Queens experienced many problems with the collection of queen's gold, both at a general level, forcing kings to issue multiple confirmations of their wives' rights to collect the gold, and on a more individual case by case basis, with writs repeatedly issued to the same individuals, as evidence from Philippa's tenure demonstrates. By the late fourteenth century, the link between intercession and queen's gold was merely a formality, although the custom had its roots in essentially paying the queen for the use of her influence with the king.

Anglie consorti nostre carissime de auro suo de fine xx l. pro licentia se maritandi ubicumque voluerit ita quod denarios illos habeas ad Scaccarium nostrum apud Westmonasterium in crastino sancte Trinitatis Ricardo de Ravensere receptori auri de solvendo et habeas ibi hoc breve Thoma de Lodelowe apud Westmonasterium primo die Maii Anno regis nostri quadragesimo primo per originale de anno xxxix Regis nunc de per breve retornavit in crastino clausi Paschae proximo praeterito. Ravensere." *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1272-1413* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1891-1905): CPR 1364-67, 193, references "Pernell late the wife of John de Benstede." *Calendar of Inquisitions post mortem and other analogous documents preserved in the Public Record Office*, 23 vols (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1904-2004), 15:37-38, notes that Petronilla died 19 July 1377, still named as "late the wife of John de Benstede," apparently not having married again. Sue Sheridan Walker, "Litigation as Personal Quest: Suing for Dower in the Royal Courts, circa 1272-1350," in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 83.

⁶⁴ Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 253. Philippa's receivers of queen's gold also included John Eston, Roger Cloune, and John Cooks. Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 137. Although Philippa had begun with three separate receivers, one south of Trent, one north of Trent, and the last for the collection of accounts such as queen's gold and *amobrages*, in 1331 she appointed John Eston as the receiver for all three. TNA C 47/9/58, m. 12; Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," 255. *Amobrages*, also called *amobr* or *ambrogium*, were a sum paid by or for a Welsh woman on her first marriage. Arthur Jones, "Flintshire Ministers' Accounts, 1301-1328," *Flintshire Historical Society Publications*, 3 (1913): xviii-xix.

⁶⁵ Prynne, *Aurum Reginae*, 49-57; Prynne, *An Additional Appendix to Aurum Reginae*, 9-39.

Although understandably individuals were often reluctant to pay an extra fee on a fine they had already paid to the king, the king probably welcomed and supported his wife's rights because queen's gold formed a substantial opportunity for revenue, without depleting the king's resources. Edward III issued multiple proclamations in support of Philippa's rights to queen's gold, contrasting with prior reigns in which kings restricted their queens from collecting, at times based on personal disagreements, demonstrating one advantage for queens in maintaining a positive relationship with their husbands. Issues with collecting queen's gold in areas such as Ireland reflect wider problems with English rule overall. The problems encountered by Philippa especially demonstrate how the queen could use her agency and authority through her officials to claim her rights and revenues, but that ultimately the custom of queen's gold and the queen's ability to collect the revenues relied on the king, who could also cancel demands for gold for his own benefit or as a favour to others.

The correlation between numbers of writs recorded by Prynne for Philippa and other medieval queens who had the highest numbers of children also suggests a concern with collecting revenues from queen's gold and that Philippa was forced to exhaust every possibility to fund her household, with her large number of children possibly worsening her debt problems. Examining the customs for queen's gold predating Philippa also demonstrates how queen's gold fluctuated between queens, dependent on the individual queen's relationship with her husband, or in some cases son, and other factors, such as a state of war or famine. Although the custom developed over the two centuries after Eleanor of Aquitaine, the collection of queen's gold was still rife with problems, perhaps because the link to intercession and a benefit to the payer was no longer so clear. In other ways, the formalisation of queen's gold and the absorption into the royal fiscal administration alongside mechanisms for collection meant recognition of the queen's office. The fact that those unwilling to pay challenged the validity of the fine in question rather than the queen's right to collect also demonstrates respect for her position and rights. For Philippa, the problems she encountered had a lasting impact in damaging her reputation for the management of her finances and contributing to the combining of her household into that of the king's, a situation that continued under succeeding queens.