The interruptions to eyre visitations from 1252 onwards, which between 1258 and 1267 were essentially political and accompanied by objections to the fiscal aspects of the eyre, greatly lengthened the intervals between eyres in particular counties. As a result, the number of special Assize Commissions increased steadily: between the late 1240s and the early 1270s the increase was almost ten-fold. During the period of the last eyre visitation under Henry III, in 1268-1272, the number of assize actions heard in eyre was probably little more than the number heard in these years under Special Commissions. Special Assize Commissions had ceased to be luxuries. With this increase came the development of subsidiary instruments to ensure the taking of an assize despite the pressure of business on the originally appointed commissioner: letters of association and admission for one or more additional commissioners, with clauses, or accompanied by separate writs, to enable one to proceed without awaiting the presence of the other(s). This writ 'non expectata presencia' remained in use well into the 14th century, before being superseded by the 'si non omnes'.

The increase in special Assize Commissions also evolved circuits. But these were personal, not geographical. They were the spheres of activity of the individual justices of the central courts, the salaried commissioners and a few other royal servants, formed by the whereabouts of their lay estates or ecclesiastical preferment, the places to which other royal business took them, and the vacations left to them by other royal and private business. All this gave plaintiffs in most counties a choice between at least two commissioners. The two attempts at limiting the circuits, in 1259 and 1271, thus took the form of limiting the number of justices to whom special Assize Commissions could issue. Both attempts were effective, but only for a short time.

With eyres postponed because of Edward I's absence at the beginning of his reign, his council of regency, which included some men whose experience of judicial administration went back to the 1230s, took the step of establishing geographical assize circuits, each with two commissioners who were either central court justices or salaried commissioners. The novelty of these Circuit Assize Commissions of 10 July 1273 was marked by the margination on the Patent Roll dorse: 'Nova forma de ordinacione justiciariorum'. Their experimental nature was shown by their limitation to the period up to 2 Nov. 1273. The experiment endured; but the form of the Commission and the pattern of Circuits were neither to become fixed for many years. Moreover, some litigants showed a preference for having their assizes brought before the chief justice of one of the central courts; and during 1278-1287 the first eyre visitation of the reign was proceeding, drawing into it the assize business of particular counties for long periods and bringing justices to parts of the country for which they were not Circuit Assize commissioners. So personal circuits of a sort still persisted, as the business in the surviving assize rolls