ABSTRACT

William Cotesworth of Gateshead, c. 1668-1726, was rescued from obscurity during the last war when a collection of his letters and papers were discovered by Professor Edward Hughes. They were later used in the first volume of Hughes' study of North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century (Lond., 1952), which presented Cotesworth as a typical example of the professional, hard-headed 'new men' who were, in Hughes' opinion, seizing both economic and social power from the old-established gentry families of the north-east. However, the recent cataloguing of part of Cotesworth's papers revealed that his voluminous personal and business correspondence could provide material for a study in greater depth, which might offer a unique insight into some of the problems associated with the trade and industry of the Newcastle area during Cotesworth's lifetime.

Consequently the object of my research was less to compile a biography than to examine several aspects of the economic life of the area around Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the early eighteenth century, within the framework of the career of one merchant and industrialist. Cotesworth's papers chart his rise through apprenticeship in trade to landed prosperity; from plain Mr. Cotesworth, tallow chandler of Gateshead, to the 'worshipful' William Cotesworth, esquire, of Gateshead Park.[1] It would not be accurate to describe him as a typical Newcastle merchant, for he was not a member of the town's merchant class either by birth or settlement. On the contrary, he was and remained an outsider, conducting his business from the suburb of Gateshead on the south bank of the river, where he was free from both the privileges and restrictions imposed by the ancient Newcastle companies. It is perhaps because he was so untypical that his business fortunes are of particular interest. Cotesworth was a man on the make, coming from outside the established merchant community, and his

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/510: from W. Blakiston Bowes, 27 June 1721.

humble beginnings make it possible to study the opportunities open to a young merchant with ambition but with very few resources other than his own wits. His pursuit of wealth and status involved him at some time or other in most of the major trades and industries of the region: as he admitted with some pride, he 'dealt in Any thing I cd gaine by'.[1] Moreover, his eventual success meant that he was involved in the economic life of the area at a number of levels, from salaried employee or junior partner to independent entrepreneur. It is this variety of experience, documented by a mass of rich original material, that makes him particularly suitable for a study of this nature.

The first chapter of the thesis is intended to provide a necessary background and frame of reference for the more detailed studies of certain aspects of Cotesworth's activities which follow. It begins with a short synopsis of his family background and character, followed by a biographical sketch. The majority of the chapter, however, is devoted to a brief analysis of the economic activity of the port of Newcastle, examining its most important import and export trades and the industries on which they were founded. A number of interesting problems are dealt with, among them the extent to which Newcastle merchants relied on the London and Dutch entrepôts rather than dealing direct with overseas markets, the reaction of Newcastle's closed and privileged corporation to the growth of trade and industry both inside and outside its town walls, and the effect of competition from Sunderland and other ports and of rising costs on the essential prop of Newcastle's prosperity, the coal trade.

Chapter II, which is concerned with the organization of Cotesworth's trade in northern England, as well as with his coastal and foreign trade, is a somewhat disjointed study based on fragmentary evidence. It has been possible to illuminate some aspects of the inland trade network in the northern counties which was supplied from the Tyne, the relations between merchants and their correspondents or agents both at home and abroad, the relationship between freight rates and shipowning, and the reaction of merchants to the hazards of seaborne trade in general and of consignment trading in particular. However,

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/45: to J. Banks, 31 May 1720 (copy).

the many gaps in the material prevent a more thorough examination of these topics and completely rule out any attempt to measure accurately the volume and value of Cotesworth's trade, his interest in shipping, or the number and location of his customers.

The next three chapters are devoted to the coal trade, which dominated Cotesworth's correspondence just as it dominated the economy of the area. Chapter III deals with the coal industry, attempting to glean some idea of mining costs and the capital structure of the industry from inadequate data, and to relate the results to the coal-owners' apparent despondency about their present and future prospects. The picture which emerges, although impressionistic, reveals that the coal-owners were forced by the exceptionally high level of fixed costs and of risk involved in colliery enterprise to maximize production in search of adequate returns on their vast investments. However, increasing quantities of coal coming onto a market affected by high duties, slack population growth and competition from newer areas of exploitation like the Wear valley meant low prices and cut-throat competition among rival producers desperate to secure the bare minimum of sales needed to break even.

Chapter IV attempts to isolate and examine the different interest groups involved in the coal trade, showing how each contributed to the coal-owners' difficulties while restricting their freedom of action in seeking a remedy. It shows how the London consumers and authorities, in their anxiety to maintain adequate supplies of coal at the lowest possible prices, played into the hands of the powerful ring of dealers who dominated the Billingsgate coal market and fixed the prices offered masters in the Pool. The dealers' power over the market, which was based partly on legal privilege and partly on other factors such as over-production, put the fate of particular collieries entirely in their hands and this forced the coal-owners to try to win back control of the Newcastle market from their ostensible agents, the fitters, and to seek some security of outlet by reaching agreements with the dealers which would forestall both the Newcastle and London markets.

The dealers' ruthless exploitation of their power and the continuing difficulty in securing adequate sales on a saturated market led the Tyne coal-owners to

contemplate combining to regulate production and restrict competition in order to obtain a much greater proportion of the final selling price and thus protect their vast investments. Chapter V examines several associations among the producers, among them the marketing device known as the 'Coale Office'; the more thoroughgoing Regulation which enjoyed a degree of success in controlling output and prices between 1708 and about 1716 and with which Cotesworth was closely involved; and the partnership agreement known as the Grand Alliance. In all these cases, the dependence of the coal-owners on the goodwill of the dealers for their sales and the overriding economic pressure to maximize production prevented the majority of the producers from participating in any determined effort to cut production and raise prices, and consequently the combinations were unable to achieve more than a temporary amelioration of the conditions produced by the saturation of the market.

Chapter VI turns from the coal trade to another major interest in the fortunes of both Cotesworth and the area as a whole: the salt industry. Although the Shields salt industry was one of the largest in the country, its high costs made it vulnerable to competition in a market which, like that for coal, was restricted by heavy duties and slow population growth. The chapter examines the theory that the salt duties had a direct and catastrophic effect on the ownership of salt pans at Shields, the efforts made by combinations to obtain greater security of price and outlet for their members, and the gradual process by which coal-owners gained control of a large share of the industry. Cotesworth was one of the first to integrate his investments in this way, and his relations with the other producers and with the great London importers and their agents, who feared the leverage given by his supplies of cheap coal, illustrate several aspects of the salt trade and marketing arrangements.

Chapter VII approaches the important question of capital supply by examining the sources of both long- and short-term credit available to Cotesworth. His papers provide little evidence of any major short-fall in capital for commercial or industrial investment, given that the need for long-term capital tied up in fixed assets was relatively modest. Short-term capital was widely available through the acceptance of credit instruments as a circulating medium and the

prevalence of trade credit, although the disadvantages of the system have to be recognized. Long-term credit was supplied by the traditional sources, and the chapter emphasizes that Cotesworth's career was an exception to the rule that family backing and finance was vital to initial success in business. It goes on to examine the success of the colliery partnership in providing the vast sums of capital tied up in the coal industry, especially when supplemented by the accessible and reasonably efficient capital markets of London and Newcastle. It is regrettable that nothing can be found to determine the relative profitability of mercantile and local industrial capital.

The final chapter attempts to interlock the personal and general aspects of the study by examining the fate of Cotesworth's estate and drawing some general conclusions about the considerable financial burden placed upon it by the reverses which he suffered in the later years of his life. These reverses were partly the result of over-ambition and of inadequate capital resources, but it emerges clearly that factors such as his ill health and the personal enmity aroused by his character, success, social origins and political opinions played a large part in frustrating his plans and leading him into the debts and lawsuits which undermined his fortunes.

The overall picture of Cotesworth presented by the thesis is of a remarkable man who exploited the opportunities which the economy of the Tyne area held out even at a time when many of its major trades and industries were experiencing considerable difficulties, and who succeeded in carving out an estate for himself and his heirs in the teeth of both these difficulties and bitter personal and professional opposition.

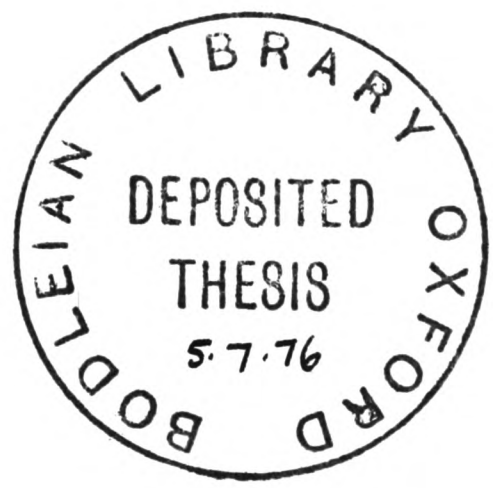
A STUDY OF THE BUSINESS FORTUNES

OF WILLIAM COTESWORTH

c 1668-1726

by

J. M. Ellis



St. Cross College
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PREFACE

The main MSS. sources which have been used in this enquiry are the Cotesworth and Ellison MSS. and the Carr-Ellison MSS., supplemented by material drawn from local and national archives. The Cotesworth and Ellison MSS., deposited in Gateshead Public Library, consist of thousands of private and business papers left by William Cotesworth and his family, his friends the Liddells, and his descendants the Ellisons and Carr-Ellisons. The two collections were saved from destruction by Professor Edward Hughes during the last war and have recently been fully catalogued. They are complemented by ten letter books containing copies of the personal and business correspondence of Cotesworth and his son Robert between 1709 and 1729 which form part of the Carr-Ellison (Hedgeley) MSS. deposited in Northumberland Record Office. The letter books do not seem to have been used before as a source of material on Cotesworth's life or business activities.

These sources have determined the shape and emphasis of the thesis. The majority of the documents refer to the period after 1709 when Cotesworth's attention had shifted from trade to his interests in the salt and coal industries, with the result that it has not been possible to do justice to his long career as a tallow chandler and general merchant in Gateshead. Similarly, the weight given to the problems of the coal industry has been determined as much by the importance attached to it in Cotesworth's surviving correspondence as by the dominant position that coal occupied in the economy of the area. Moreover, the almost complete absence of any of Cotesworth's account books or ledgers, or indeed of individual accounts which are not in draft or note form, has meant that the enquiry has been conducted without much statistical basis. Even where figures exist, as for example in the runs of draft colliery accounts, the deficiencies and idiosyncracies of this evidence make statistical analysis hazardous, and very little has been attempted.[1] Other omissions stem from the

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1. See Ch. III, pp. 56, 58-9.

sheer abundance of material which has made it necessary to concentrate on certain aspects of Cotesworth's business fortunes to the complete exclusion of others, for example his activities as a landowner.

I am indebted to Mr. F.W.D. Manders of Gateshead Library for suggesting that Cotesworth's papers would reward closer examination, to my supervisor Professor P. Mathias for his encouragement and advice, and to Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison for permission to quote from the Cotesworth letter books.

ABBREVIATIONS

Arch. Ael.	Archaeologia AEliana
Bus. Hist.	Business History
Commons Journals	Journals of the House of Commons
Commons Report	Report from the Committee Appointed to Consider of the Coal Trade of this Kingdom (1799-1800). British Sessional Papers 1731-1800: House of Commons Reports, xxvi, no. 161.
Durham Univ. Journal	Durham University Journal
Econ. Hist. Rev.	Economic History Review
Eng. Hist. Rev.	English Historical Review
Hist. MSS. Comm.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
Jour. Econ & Bus. Hist.	Journal of Economic and Business History
Jour. Econ. Hist.	Journal of Economic History
Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist.	Journal of European Economic History
Lords Journals	Journals of the House of Lords
P. & P.	Past and Present
P.R.O.	Public Record Office, London
Adm	Admiralty
C.	Chancery
E.	Exchequer
T.	Treasury
Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc.	Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne
Surtees Soc.	Surtees Society Publication
T.A.A.S.D.N.	Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland
Trans. Newc. Soc.	Transactions of the Newcomen Society

CHAPTER 1

Cotesworth and the Newcastle Background

Cotesworth was born about 1668,[1] the second surviving son of a Teesdale yeoman family which had apparently been freeholders in County Durham for two hundred years.[2] His eldest brother Charles remained on the land while the younger sons were apprenticed as merchants, a practice that seems to have been followed for generations. The family was well represented in the trading and professional classes in both Stockton and Newcastle.[3] In the mid-seventeenth century a William and Michael Cotesworth, possibly his uncles, had been apprenticed in the Hostmen's Company and had established their children in the business and professional classes.[4] Cotesworth, however, did not have the advantages which apprenticeship in a prestigious Newcastle company provided, which may indicate that the family's fortunes could not keep pace with the rising cost of setting up younger sons in the more honourable and profitable trades. Moreover, it does not seem that his prosperous Newcastle kinsmen gave him any considerable help in his early years. He was therefore forced to make his own way in the world, and the younger son of a yeoman family, lacking the financial resources and connections which were vital to success, had little chance of rising far in trade.

Certainly there was ample opportunity for advancement in the commercial activity of the Newcastle area, but even those with adequate financial and family support needed good fortune and ability to seize it. When questioned about their prosperity, most successful merchants would probably have replied in terms of

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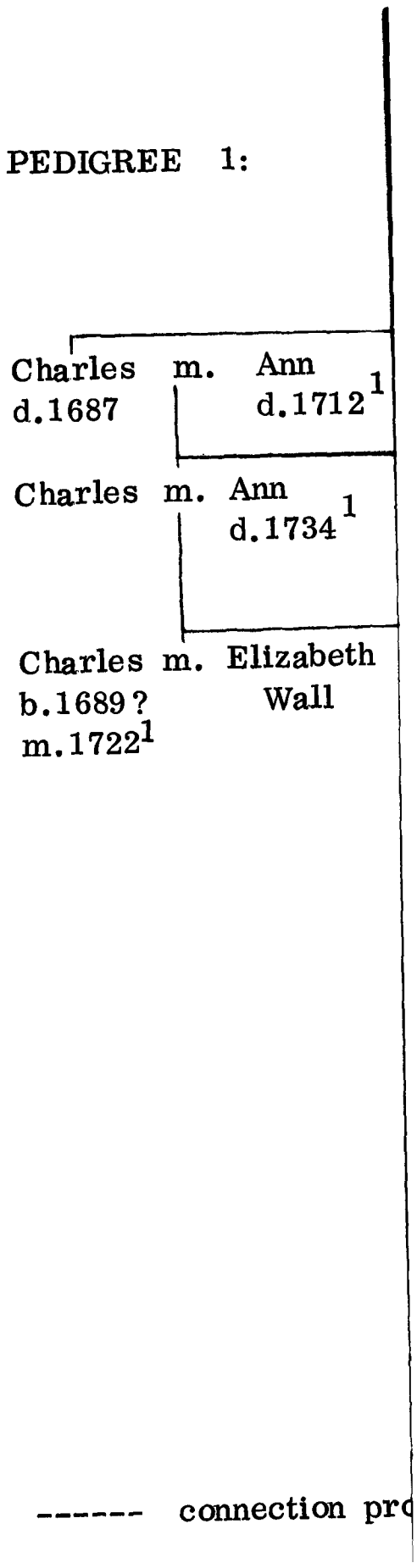
1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/235: from G. Liddell, 14 Mar. 1726; there is no reference to his birth in the Middleton in Teesdale parish registers.
2. The Records of the Gateshead Company of Drapers, etc., ed. E. Dodds (Northern Notes and Queries, supplement i, 1906-7), p.52; Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/57: to Lady Bowes, 5 July 1721 (copy).
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Leadbeater, 21 June 1713.
4. Extracts from the Records of the Company of Hostmen of Newcastle upon Tyne, ed. F.W. Dendy (Surtees Soc., cv, 1901), p.285; J.C. Hodgson, 'Observations on the Pedigree of Cotesworth of the Hermitage', Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 4th ser., i (1923-4), 262-5.

PEDIGREE 1:



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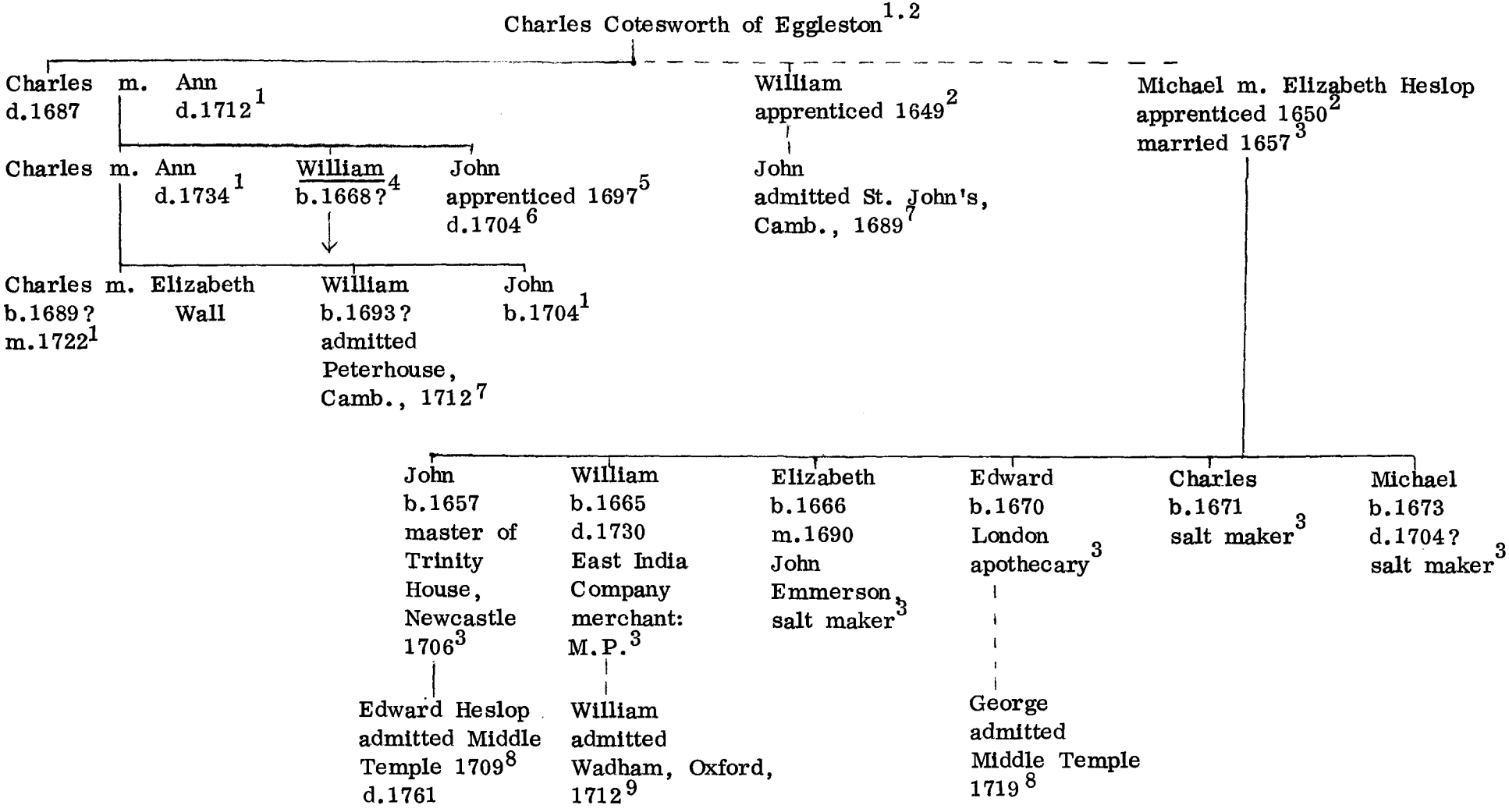
1. Middleton in Teesdale parish registers.
2. Hostmen's Company Records, ed. Dendy, p.285.
3. Hodgson, 'Observations on the Pedigree...', Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 4th ser. i. 263-5.
4. see pedigree 2, p.206.
5. Gateshead Company Records, ed. Dodds, p.61.
6. St. Mary's, Gateshead, parish register 1693-1723.
7. J. & J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses (Cambr., 1922), i. 26.
8. H.A.C. Sturgess, Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple (Lond., 1949), i. 264, 283.
9. J. Foster, Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714 (Oxf., 1891), i. 332.

PEDIGREE 1: PEDIGREE OF THE COTESWORTH FAMILY



------ connection probable but not certain

the grace of God and the rewards of hard work. Cotesworth was no exception to this. He wrote to a correspondent in 1717 that his interest in the salt industry had been placed in his hands by 'providence of his Goodness', but he was also convinced that Providence was on the side of those who helped themselves and concentrated on their business.[1] Yet hard work alone could not guarantee success, as the number of ambitious and determined men in debtors' prisons demonstrated. In order to survive, let alone succeed, in a world that was not charitable to the underprivileged, a combination of more than ordinary ability, industry, coolness, thrift and good fortune was required.

Cotesworth was certainly able, possessing what his friend Henry Liddell called 'a head & Genius in Business'.[2] He also had considerable drive and an abundance of tireless energy. It was accepted by friend and foe alike that he was a 'bold adventurer', with 'a Head ... fitted for troublesome undertakings', and he was regarded as a formidable man to deal with.[3] Despite frequent illnesses, which caused him a great deal of pain, he permitted no slackness either in himself or in his servants. His 'diligence and indefatigable industry' were admired and relied on by his friends and business associates and, once he had undertaken a project, he pursued it relentlessly.[4] He demanded that factors and correspondents conduct their affairs as vigorously and punctually as he would himself and, when he was forced to leave the management of his business in the hands of his clerks, every post brought a letter railing against their weakness of character, undisciplined working habits, lack of foresight and apparent inability to grasp the value of his time and money.[5] Inefficiency exasperated him.[6] As his business interests grew, it became necessary to delegate responsibility, but it did not come easily to him because he knew that he could do the work so much better

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717; CP/2/64: to T. Sisson, 29 May 1722.
2. Ellison MSS. A 36/49: from H. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1716.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/311: from J. Mowbray, 20 June 1715; CM/2/139: from T. Pulleine, 3 June 1712; CK/3/151: from J. Clavering, [3 Apr.] 1711.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/16: from H. Liddell, 30 Dec. 1710; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to C. Sanderson, 17 May 1719.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Beighton, 13 Sept. 1715; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/72: to T. Sisson, 26 June 1722; CP/2/85: to T. Sisson, 7 Aug. 1722; CP/2/80: to T. Sisson, 21 July 1722; CP/2/74: to T. Sisson, 29 June 1722.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/323: to R. Jefferson, 26 July 1715.

himself.[1]

His zealous pursuit of profit was, however, tempered by good sense and coolness in his affairs. These were indispensable assets to anyone engaged in a precarious occupation like trade. Several years after his death a lawyer dismissed a claim made on the estate on the grounds that 'it is so Inconsistant with Mr. Cotesworth's prudence... that I have no faith to believe it'.[2]

Equally vital at a time when business was conducted to a large extent on credit was a reputation for honest, punctual dealing, and Cotesworth defended his character against accusations of dishonesty as he would defend any other asset.[3] His partner in one venture described him as an honest, punctual and honourable dealer, who despised men of 'ye Contrary Qualifications', but the letter indicates that his punctuality at least was doubtful.[4] The credit system gave an advantage to anyone who could delay payments while collecting promptly from his own debtors, and Cotesworth does seem to have held on to money passing through his hands for as long as possible, to the occasional discomfort of his factors and correspondents.[5] Provided these tactics were not carried so far as to reflect on his credit rating, they were probably regarded as legitimate business practice.

This was one aspect, perhaps, of the 'prudent frugality' which Cotesworth recommended to his elder son as the best form of insurance against bad luck.[6] Thrift on the part of a young merchant allowed a great deal of self-financing through the immediate ploughing-back of retained profit, and the habit of saving seems to have remained with Cotesworth throughout his life. Even in his later, prosperous years, he preached and practised abstinence with the same zeal that he advocated efficiency.[7] In 1717, for example, when his land and business ventures were yielding an estimated £5,500 a year, he calculated his annual expenditure at no more than £500, leaving a surplus which he proposed to invest.[8] It was typical that in his will be asked to be buried 'with as little expence as

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/87: to T. Sisson, 11 Aug. 1722.
2. Ellison MSS. A 38/8: J. Airey to H. Ellison, 17 Dec. 1729.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/45: to J. Banks, 31 May 1720 (copy).
4. Cotesworth MSS. CN/11/139: from J. Banks, 6 Aug. 1721; see Ch. VII, p.17
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/241: from D. Collyer, 21 Aug. 1714.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 25 Jan. 1718.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/132: to T. Sisson, 24 Jan. 1723.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to C. Sanderson, 19 Feb. 1717.

Comon decency will allow'.[1]

Certainly Cotesworth possessed many of the qualities necessary for success in business, and the history of his early years in Gateshead shows that he had the most vital quality of all - good luck. As he himself wrote, 'He yt is Born under a 3 penny planet will never be worth a Groat'.[2] Cotesworth must have been born under a particularly affluent planet. He was apprenticed in March 1683 to a prosperous Gateshead merchant and tallow chandler, Robert Sutton, who died three years later, leaving most of his property to his widow with whom Cotesworth chose to serve out his term.[3] This accident seems to have been crucial to Cotesworth's career, because it left the business in the hands of his late master's relatively inexperienced son. Two months after Cotesworth was admitted to his trade company in 1690 he was set up in partnership with young Sutton, all but £20 of his contribution to their capital being provided by his former mistress, and he succeeded in strengthening his relationship with the family by marrying Sutton's sister-in-law, Hannah Ramsay, in 1699.[4] The fact that she was the sister of a wealthy Newcastle goldsmith and merchant adventurer may at the time have been less important. In 1700 the partnership articles were renewed and they continued to trade as grocers, mercers, tallow chandlers and wine merchants, handling an infinite variety of goods.[5]

By 1703, however, Cotesworth had begun to acquire interests outside the partnership. At the instance of Peter Renew, one of the directors of the Hollow Sword Blade Company, he agreed to act as the company's local agent, arranging shipment of the blades to London and paying the German craftsmen who ran the workshops at Shotley Bridge on the river Derwent, a tributary of the Tyne.[6] His first recorded venture into the coal industry occurred in 1704, when he

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/26, pp.65-74: copy of Cotesworth's will, 7 May 1722.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/96: to G. Edwards, 25 May 1723.
3. Gateshead Company Records, ed. Dodds, pp.52, 54, 90; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/693: Jane Sutton's will, 20 Dec. 1701.
4. St. John's, Newcastle, register of marriages, 9 May 1699; see Ch. VII, pp. 181-5.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: copy brief in cross-cause Cotesworth v. Sutton, n.d
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to the Sword Blade Co., 29 May 1718; J. Aylward, 'The Hollow Sword Blade Company', Notes & Queries, cxcii (1948) 377-80, 399-401; R. Jenkins, 'The Hollow Sword-Blade Company and Sword Making at Shotley Bridge', Trans. Newc. Soc., xv (1934-5), 185-94.

obtained an exclusive lease of wayleave rights over lands belonging to the dean and chapter of Durham.[1] Two years later, in 1706, his partnership with Sutton broke up after sixteen years of joint trading.[2] Both parties continued to trade alone, Sutton dying in 1729 in reduced circumstances, which his son-in-law believed dated from his breach with Cotesworth.[3]

Cotesworth, on the other hand, continued to prosper and to extend his interests now that he was established and had acquired some capital. By 1708 he was actively involved in the coal industry and in 1709 he was appointed principal agent to the coal combination formed the year before by several of the principal coal-owners of the Tyne valley. Cotesworth was probably brought into the combination by the Liddells, a powerful land- and coal-owning family based on Ravensworth castle in Co. Durham, who became his closest friends and allies.[4] Cotesworth and Henry Liddell were already involved together in working the upper seams of Bensham colliery and he cooperated with members of the Liddell family in several mining ventures in later years.[5] The quality of the coal worked from their collieries was on the whole poor, and it was to provide a dependable outlet for this inferior coal that Liddell encouraged Cotesworth in 1710 to lease several salt-pans at North Shields.[6] At the same time, Cotesworth was acting as estate agent for the Milbank family, with an annual salary of £10, an office which gave him access to the mineral resources of their lands in Gateshead.[7] In 1711, probably on the recommendation of the Liddells, he was engaged as agent for Lord William Powlett's lead mines and mills in Yorkshire and land at Langley in Co. Durham.[8] These various activities gave him access to several of Newcastle's most important exports, salt, coal, lead and grindstones, while he continued to trade as a general merchant and tallow chandler.[9]

His relationship with Powlett and the Liddells and his important position within

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CA/1/9: lease from dean and chapter, 4 May 1704.
2. See Ch. VII, pp. 184-5.
3. Ellison MSS. A 38/9: J. Airey to H. Ellison, 13 Feb. 1730.
4. See Ch. V, p. 116.
5. See Ch. III, p. 55.
6. See Ch. VI, pp.156-7.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CG/18/194: A. & M. Milbank's accounts with Cotesworth, 1710-20.
8. Ellison MSS. A 35/35: from Sir H. Liddell, 1 Aug. 1711.
9. See below, p. 11.

the coal combination gave him an influence which was more in keeping with a person of much greater wealth and social standing: not unnaturally this aroused resentment.[1] Both the influence and resentment were increased when in 1712 he persuaded his wealthy brother-in-law, William Ramsay, to buy the manors of Gateshead and Whickham on the south bank of the Tyne.[2] Cotesworth and Ramsay were by this time so intimate and Ramsay relied so heavily upon him that the manors and Ramsay's other lands in Durham and Northumberland were virtually under Cotesworth's control.[3] He used the purchase of the Whickham lease to regulate the amount of coal coming onto the market from the new 'western' collieries opening up north and west of the river Derwent, a policy which dragged Ramsay into an open and often violent confrontation with the Claverings of Axwell Park and the owners of Bucksnook and Tanfield Moor collieries.[4]

Cotesworth's increasing wealth and importance in the area brought him an advance in status. Henry Liddell nicknamed him 'Mr. Mayor', since he was the dominant influence in Gateshead, and by 1714 he was claiming the status of gentleman.[5] This was confirmed when he was appointed a Justice of the Peace in January 1715, although on this occasion it seems that he refused to act.[6] However, when rebellion broke out in Northumberland later that year, no such hesitation appeared. Cotesworth claimed that he was the first to send news of the rising to Lord Townshend, while he and the Liddells were conspicuous in preparing the defence of Newcastle.[7]

Cotesworth's business interests were becoming increasingly ambitious. His share of the salt industry grew rapidly after 1714 and by 1719-20 he had become the largest salt manufacturer in the area.[8] In 1715, he and five partners leased

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/151: from J. Clavering, [3 Apr.] 1711.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/51: from Sir H. Liddell, 26 Jan. 1712.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/49: from Sir H. Liddell, 10 Jan. 1712.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/433: to Rev. L. Shafto, 19 June 1713; see Ch. III, pp. 73-4; Ch. V, pp. 123-4, 131.
5. Ellison MSS. A 36/15: from H. Liddell, 8 July 1714; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/824: Bond, 2 Dec. 1715.
6. Ellison MSS. A 36/29: from H. Liddell, 25 Jan. 1715; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/260: from Lady Bowes, 29 Jan. 1715.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to Lord Sunderland, 15 July 1718; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/715: to the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates, 30 Mar. 1718.
8. See Ch. VI, pp. 157-8.

Gateshead Park colliery from Ramsay in the hope of draining it with a 'fire engine', becoming, he claimed, the first coal proprietors to give the invention 'Countenance' in the north-east.[1] He also used Ramsay's power over the route to the Tyne through Whickham to force his way into a share of Bucksnook colliery although the question of wayleave rents from the other 'western' collieries remained unsettled.[2]

In the same year, his transformation from impoverished apprentice to landed gentleman was completed when Ramsay died childless, leaving him the bulk of his estate.[3] In 1717 he finally gave up his business as a merchant and tallow chandler to concentrate on his extensive coal and salt ventures and on his agricultural property.[4] A rental drawn up in 1716 estimated that Cotesworth's total income from land was over £2,600 a year but, although he was obviously pleased by his new status and promptly rebuilt his country house in a more imposing style, he strongly disapproved of settling down to live on the proceeds of an estate.[5] His income from coal and salt was almost as great as his estate revenue and he continued to expand his business interests, as well as adding to his land.[6] His new position probably encouraged him in 1717 to undertake the ambitious step of leasing the deep and flooded Heaton colliery, north of the Tyne, in partnership with George Liddell.[7] Two years later, he purchased the estates of Stella and Winlaton, forfeited by Lord Widdrington as a result of the rebellion, in partnership with the Lincolnshire M.P. and property speculator, Joseph Banks.[8]

Cotesworth was probably at the height of his success at this point. In 1719 he was rewarded for his services to the government by his appointment as High

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CA/2/55: lease of Gateshead Park colliery, 22 Apr. 1715; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to J. Meres, 27 Sept. 1720.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/1: agreement with Bucksnook owners, 27 Feb. 1716 (copy); CP/4/43: to [C. Sanderson], 20 Mar. 1720.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/15: from W. Cotesworth jnr., 28 Apr. 1716.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to Foster & Pickfatt, 12 Apr. 1717.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CN/7/2: 'The Amot of the Whole p anno 1716'; CP/4/47: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 5 Aug. 1720 (copy).
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to C. Sanderson, 19 Feb. 1717; ZCE 10/2: to x, 28 Apr. 1716.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/516: 'Observations on ... Midford's article', 12 Nov. 1722.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/85: from H. Brown, 26 Dec. 1719; The Letters and Papers of the Banks Family, 1704-60, ed. J.W.F. Hill (Lincoln Record Society, xlv, 1952), pp.v, xi-xxvii.

Sheriff of Northumberland.[1] An estimate of his personal wealth, probably made in 1710, had given his total assets in goods, debts, cash, etc. at around £4,000, whereas a rental drawn up in 1722 calculated his annual income from land alone at over £4,500.[2] In that year he was described to the duke of Roxburgh as a J.P. for both Durham and Northumberland 'of Great Service in our parts, of a Good Estate.... He is Concerned in Managing Severall great concerns'.[3] However, Cotesworth had already begun to encounter difficulties in his 'great concerns' which were to disturb and harass him until his death in 1726. The last five or six years of his life were spent in a constant battle against illness as well as against enemies anxious to deprive him of some of the fruits of his success yet, despite these difficulties, he left his heirs a considerable landed estate and a respected position in society: a remarkably successful return on his original stake of £20.[4]

In order to seize the opportunities that the Tyne valley offered, Cotesworth had had to overcome not only the handicap of inadequate resources but also the disadvantage of being apprenticed in Gateshead rather than in Newcastle. Newcastle dominated the trade of the area, while Gateshead remained the poor neighbour which it had been throughout the development of the region. Visitors from the south paused at the top of the steep bank down to the river not to look around but to gaze across at Newcastle, and contemporary writers unanimously dismissed the settlement on the south bank as a suburb.[5] Merchants operating from this suburb shared the trade of the region but lacked the privileges and status which membership of one of the great Newcastle companies could bestow.

Newcastle was much admired by contemporary writers and visitors who compared it favourably with London and Bristol, the only English towns which were

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CN/11/103: to J. Banks, 6 Mar. 1719; J. Brand, The History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne (Lond., 1789), ii. 513n.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/8: minutes, 15 Nov. 1710; CN/1/454: 'A Rental of W.C. Esqrs estate', [1722].
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/850: J. Low to duke of Roxborough, 8 May 1722.
4. See Ch. VIII, pp. 205, 207-16.
5. J. Taylor, A Journey to Edenborough (Edin., 1903), p.82.

said to surpass its considerable and extensive trade.[1] Celia Fiennes thought that 'it most resembles London of any place in England' and praised its broad streets, stone buildings, extensive exchange and fine shops.[2] The Rev. James Brome was equally impressed when he passed the same way in 1700, remarking that Newcastle was a 'large, populous and rich' town, which was the commercial centre of the north.[3] It was the head of an important group of ports which included Sunderland, Blyth, Hartlepool, Stockton and Whitby, and none of these was as yet a serious rival. Newcastle was unsurpassed in the facilities which it offered merchants, above all the famous quay which was shown to every visitor. Defoe was impressed by its size and capacity, while Celia Fiennes thought that the number and activity of the merchants walking along it made it seem like a second exchange.[4] The overall impression of the town received by visitors was that it was so well endowed with natural advantages as a commercial centre that 'industry seems to vie with conveniency for the better carrying on of trade', and all were struck by the amount of traffic using the river.[5]

Some of these golden opinions were equally applicable to other coastal towns, but Newcastle's trade was in many ways unique. It was an ideal example of Defoe's sea-port towns 'where Trade flourishes, as well foreign Trade as home Trade, and where Navigation, Manufacturing, and Merchandize seem to assist one another'.[6] Its prosperity in the middle ages had been founded on the export of agricultural produce, like wool, fish and hides, and of the local grindstones. However, from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a regular trade in coal had grown up to supplement this traditional merchandise.[7] This single commodity, which was at first worked from easily accessible outcrops near Newcastle or close to the banks of the Tyne, resulted in the development of an industrial hinterland which supplied and fostered the town's trade. By the end

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1. Inedited Contributions to the History of Northumberland, ed. J.H. Hinde, (Newc., 1869), p.42.
2. C. Fiennes, Through England on a Side Saddle (Lond., 1888), pp.176-7.
3. J. Brome, Travels over England, Scotland and Wales (Lond., 1700), p.171.
4. D. Defoe, A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain (Lond., 1728), iii. 192; Fiennes, Through England, p.176.
5. E. Birley, 'Sir John Clerk's Visit to the North of England in 1724', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi (1958-65), 227-8.
6. D. Defoe, A Plan of the English Commerce (Lond., 1728), p.85.
7. C.M. Fraser, 'The North East Coal Trade until 1421', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi (1958-65), 213.

of the seventeenth century, Newcastle's trade was characterized by the exchange of industrial for agricultural goods.[1] According to Cotesworth, the 'Stapple Comodity of our Country' included coal, salt, lead and grindstones, which 'are what are mostly demanded here', as well as glass, leather and butter.[2] To contemporaries, however, Newcastle was pre-eminently the centre of the coal trade. It was renowned as the place where 'the perfection of coalery' was to be found, and visitors marvelled at the thousands of workmen employed in the collieries that surrounded it and the shipping that crowded the harbour during the summer trading season.[3] Its reputation as the 'Black Indies' reflected the extent to which the prosperity not only of individual coal-owners but of the region as a whole depended on the coal export trade.[4] Contemporary writers pointed out that coal, besides being gainful in itself, brought a vast return trade to Newcastle and had made the town the 'emporium' of the north.[5] Cotesworth estimated that the coal trade earned £150,000 a year for Newcastle and that 90 per cent of this flowed out again to finance trade in foodstuffs and commercial goods.[6] The revenue from coal sales in London formed the basis of Newcastle's payments mechanism and any interruption in trade, the keelmen's strike of 1719, for example, was said to deprive merchants of the means of settling their accounts with the capital.[7] When the coal trade was in difficulties, it was noticeable that the economic activity of the entire area slowed down, because so many people depended upon it for the circulation of capital and credit.[8] Cotesworth believed that a long-term decline in exports would have such a disastrous effect on employment, land values, shipping and local industries dependent on the coal trade that 'there is not a Cobler that will

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1. T. Willan, The English Coasting Trade, 1600-1750 (Manch., 1938), pp.114-5.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Sword Blade Co., 1 Nov. 1712; to Lord Barnard, 3 Oct. 1712; ZCE 10/2: to C. Bewicke, 17 June 1715; to J.Reup, 7 Feb. 1716.
3. Birley, op. cit., p.223; J. Macky, A Journey Through England (Lond., 1722), ii. 217.
4. J. Houghton, A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade (Lond., 1727), ii. 155.
5. T. Cox, Magna Britania et Hibernia (Lond., 1724), iii. 608, 725.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to T. Slyford, 8 Mar. 1724.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 29 May 1719.
8. H. Bourne, A History of Newcastle on Tyne (Newc., 1736), p.158.

not suffer greatly'.[1]

One of the most important of these local industries was salt making, for the conjunction of salt water and cheap coal had produced a flourishing industry centred around North and South Shields at the mouth of the Tyne. In 1716 there were about 170 pans at Shields, and they were said to produce 500 tons of salt a week.[2] Lord Harley's estimate of Newcastle's income from the coal and salt trades suggests that the latter yielded about 60 per cent as much as the area's chief export.[3] The salt trade served a wide market, both domestic and foreign, although not as wide as that of the coal trade. The 1705-6 Port Books show that salt was shipped to fifteen ports in the Baltic and northern Europe and 27 English ports, while coal went to 38 foreign and 40 English ports.[4] Cotesworth became deeply involved in the coal and salt industries after he broke with Sutton and they preoccupied him in the later years of his life, but he had exported both commodities long before he gained an interest in the industries.[5]

Since salt and coal were two of the bulkiest of all commodities in proportion to their value, Newcastle's foreign and coastal trades were to a certain extent 'one way', that is, some ships returned in ballast rather than with a full cargo. This contributed to the growth of the town's third most important industry, since the ballast used was often sand, some of which was deposited on ballast heaps outside the town. Sand and coal are two necessary commodities for glass making, and a notable glass industry developed. By 1696 there were eleven glasshouses in Newcastle and the suburbs, and a thriving trade in crown and window glass and glass bottles.[6] Cotesworth does not seem to have been involved in glass making although he certainly traded in glass.[7] Like coal

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 15 Apr. 1722.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'The Number of Salt Panns at Sheilds... 1713'; to Mr. Cox, 6 May 1716.
3. Hist. Mss. Comm., Portland Mss. vi (1901), 105-6.
4. P.R.O., Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Port Books, 190/211/3; 212/10.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/35: charter party, 28 Apr. 1703; CM/2/27: salt bond, 19 May 1698.
6. Birley, 'Sir John Clerk's Visit', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi. 228; Houghton, Collection, ii. 48, 50-1; F. Buckley, 'Glasshouses on the Tyne in the Eighteenth Century', Journal of the Society of Glass Technology, x (1926), 26-52.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 10 June 1715.

and salt, it was an article in which any merchant based on the Tyne dealt at some time, even if he was not involved in its manufacture.

The rapid expansion of these three industries since the sixteenth century had stimulated rather than supplanted the trade in Newcastle's traditional commodities.[1] Grindstones, for instance, were mined in the coal measures above the High Main seam in valuable beds of fine grained sandstone which outcropped on both sides of the river. A contemporary writer believed that few ships left the Tyne without one or two stones on board, and they were certainly shipped to a wide variety of markets.[2] The 1705-6 Port Book shows that they were exported to at least twenty foreign and seventeen English ports.[3] Cotesworth traded in them as he did in the other staple goods of the area and enjoyed special advantages after Ramsay's purchase of Gateshead and Whickham manors gave him almost unrestricted access to the quarries within them as well as freedom from wayleave payments for carriage to the river.[4] He does not seem to have been concerned in lead mining as a principal, although he managed Lord William Powlett's Yorkshire mines and in 1712 offered to lease Lord Barnard's Weardale mines to complement the supplies of salt, coal and grindstones which he had at his disposal.[5] Lead was a major foreign export although it does not seem to have been so important in the coastal trade, going in small quantities to only eight English ports in 1705-6 as compared with the large quantities shipped to 24 foreign ports.[6] Cotesworth exported lead to Holland from Newcastle, as well as arranging the sale of Powlett's lead in London or abroad.[7]

Although these heavy mineral and industrial products were the chief items in the export trade, other commodities were still reasonably important. The wool trade had declined in importance after centuries as Newcastle's major export,

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1. See above, p. 10.
2. Cox, Magna Britannia, iii. 608.
3. P.R.O., E. 190/211/3; 212/10.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 16 June 1713.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Lord Barnard, 3 Oct. 1712.
6. P.R.O., E. 190/211/3; 212/10.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Pelsant & Foster, 5Apr. 1709; to Lord W. Powlett, 22 Apr. 1712.

but the foreign trade absorbed moderate quantities of dozens, kersies, stuffs, bays and cottons.[1] There was a flourishing local textile industry, represented in both Gateshead and Newcastle by companies of dyers, fullers and weavers.[2] There were fulling mills on the Team, another tributary of the Tyne, at Urpeth in 1712, and the local craftsmen must have had a certain reputation since in 1715 serge was being sent up from London for fulling.[3] Outside the immediate area of Tyneside, the textile industry was well established in the northern counties. Defoe noticed the manufacture of druggets, serges and stuffs at Darlington, and described the considerable quantities of linen made in the 'North Parts'.[4] This is confirmed by the import of flax, linen yarn and 'Spinning Goods' in general from Holland and the Baltic, although in 1713 Cotesworth wrote to his Konigsberg factor that the flax trade 'does not Lye in my way' and that Newcastle could take only a small quantity.[5] Further north at Morpeth in Northumberland there was a woollen manufacture so well established that there were proposals to use it to open up a trade with Harburg on the Elbe.[6] In Cumberland and Westmorland, Defoe and Celia Fiennes commented on the production of coarse woollens and 'Kendal cottons', which were in fact a form of woollen cloth, usually dyed green.[7] Cotesworth was also interested in cottons, in the proper sense of the word, and sometimes ordered small parcels of 'Cyprous' or 'Turkey' cotton from London.[8]

Animal products like leather, butter and tallow continued to play an important part in Newcastle's trade.[9] The town became a heavy shipper of butter in the

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1. P.R.O., E.190/211/3.
2. W. Longstaffe, 'The Trade Companies of Gateshead', Gentleman's Magazine, n.s., xiii (1862), 164-5; The Register of Freemen of Newcastle upon Tyne, ed. M.H. Dodds, (Newcastle Records Series, iii, 1923).
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Dec. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/257: from H. Benson, 16 Jan. 1715.
4. D. Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman (Lond., 1727), ii (part ii). 61; Defoe, Plan, pp.206-7.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Bewicke, 4 Sept. 1713; to G. Gray, 14 Apr. 1713.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.
7. Defoe, Complete English Tradesmen, ii (part ii). 61; Fiennes, Through England, pp.159, 166.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/105: from J. Hester, 27 Apr. 1710; CM/2/993: Collyer's acct., Mar.-Sept. 1708.
9. P.R.O. E. 190/211/3; 212/10: see above, pp. 10-11.

eighteenth century and it had a wide export market even as early as 1705-6.[1] The pastoral economy of the regions around the port provided a reservoir of hides, tallow and glue which was drawn on by merchants there. Lord Harley was informed that over 3,000 sheep were killed weekly in Newcastle between August and Christmas, with other animals in proportion.[2] Cotesworth, who was a tallow chandler for many years, was closely concerned in the tallow trade to London, and drew his supplies of raw animal fat from as far afield as Carlisle.[3] Such journeys across country cannot have been unusual, since one important aspect of Newcastle's foreign trade was the export of tobacco brought into the country through Whitehaven, although direct imports from Virginia and New York were not unknown.[4]

The increased volume and variety of Newcastle's trade during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries created a demand for shipping and encouraged the growth of a shipbuilding and repairing industry on the Tyne. By 1702, Newcastle merchants owned 11,000 tons of shipping, a total only surpassed by London, Bristol and Ipswich.[5] When Defoe visited the port, he commented on its reputation for building ships 'to perfection' in respect of strength and quality.[6] The growth of the industry, together with that of the coal trade and salt works and the increasing population, created a demand for the import of raw materials, manufactured goods and food which the area did not produce itself, above all timber and grain. Shipbuilding and coal mining were both voracious consumers of timber and, even though native resources in north-east England may not have been exhausted, the demand for oak timber, masts and spars, on the one hand, and for cheap deals as pit-props and shaft linings, on the other, was not easily satisfied.[7] Over half the ships entering Newcastle in 1705-6 from foreign ports carried timber, mainly in exclusive cargoes from Scandinavia.[8] A trade in iron

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1. Willan, Coasting Trade, p.116.
2. Hist. MSS. Comm., Portland MSS., vi. 106.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/210: from J. Craghill, 5 Jan. 1714.
4. P.R.O., E.190/211/3; 212/3.
5. R. Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Lond., 1962), p.35.
6. Defoe, Tour, iii. 194.
7. See M.J.T. Lewis, Early Wooden Railways (Lond., 1970), pp.170-3, 174.
8. P.R.O., E.190/211/3.

was also developing, since the coal, salt and shipping industries required large quantities of assorted ironwork such as spades, picks, nails, chains, anchors and salt pans. Iron imports stimulated the growth of a metal-working industry.[1] In the late seventeenth century Ambrose Crowley, the well-known iron master, had moved his works to the Tyne area, prompted by the availability of local supplies of iron and water power from the Derwent river, as well as by the accessibility of Scandinavian iron.[2] Local men also set up metal-working ventures, although on a more modest scale, and there was also the Sword Blade Company's works at Shotley Bridge.[3] The industry not only catered for local needs for metal goods but also supplied iron and steel to the coastal trade for export to other parts of England.[4]

About 65 per cent of the ships entering Newcastle from English ports carried grain but this does not prove that the area was barren or agriculturally backward, merely that its resources could not support the thousands of workmen employed in local industry.[5] Contemporary writers praised the rich meadows, pastures and cornfields found in Durham, which they attributed not only to the natural fertility of the soil but to the industry of farmers who were sure of a reward for their 'Expence and Pains'.[6] Cotesworth referred to the supply of grain from Durham and Northumberland, as well as from the eastern counties.[7] There is indeed evidence that agriculture in the neighbourhood of Newcastle was improved during this period. Cotesworth's papers contain references to a movement to enclose commons, of which he was very much in favour.[8] He was himself a vigorous and improving landlord, investing large sums in the clearance of colliery wastes and land reclamation, as well as in enclosure on his estates.[9]

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1. Defoe, Tour, iii. 194.
2. M. Flinn, Men of Iron. The Crowleys in the early Iron Industry (Edin., 1962), pp.48, 106-7.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CA/2/65: lease to I. Cookson & J. Button, 25 Mar. 1722; M. Flinn, 'Industry and Technology in the Derwent Valley in the Eighteenth Century', Trans. Newc. Soc., xxix (1953-5), 255-62; see above, p. 5.
4. P.R.O., E.190/212/10.
5. Ibid.; compare G. Fussell & C. Goodman, 'Traffic in Farm Produce in Eighteenth Century England', Agricultural History, xii (1938), 359.
6. Cox, Magna Britania (Lond., 1720), i. 624.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to T. Slyford, 8 Mar. 1724.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to Lord W. Powlett, 4 Oct. 1719.
9. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to the bishop of Durham, 9 Dec. 1718; see below, Ch. VII, p. 195.

Timber and grain may have occupied the bulk of shipping entering Newcastle from foreign and English ports, but the most valuable cargoes were those of miscellaneous luxury and manufactured goods from London and Holland, including wine, groceries, drugs, medicines, sweetmeats, hats, furniture, looking glasses - in fact everything from warming-pan handles to garden seeds. Such shipments also brought raw materials for local industries, for example, hemp, flax and tow for the textile industry. Drysaltery goods made up an important part of these cargoes, above all cloth finishing substances, chiefly dyes like madder and indigo but also dye fixatives such as soap, acids and ashes. Some drysaltery products, especially ashes, would also have found a market in the glass industry.[1] Cotesworth handled a wide variety of drysaltery goods and dealt in commodities like hops, flax and hemp which were traditionally sold by drysalters.[2] He was a grocer as well as a mercer, importing luxury foodstuffs and merchandise such as tea, coffee and tobacco into Gateshead.[3] Most of these goods were bought in the London entrepôt market and imported via the coastal trade, although what were called 'spinning goods' were usually shipped from Holland or direct from Prussia.[4] Some dried fruit came direct from France, Spain and Portugal and so did some of the wines and brandy he sold, while French as well as German wines were imported via Holland or Scotland as long as the war of Spanish Succession lasted.[5]

The volume and value of the goods passing through Newcastle lends weight to contemporary claims that it was the most significant port in England after Bristol, but it must be recognized that the bulk of its trade was carried on within fairly narrow limits.[6] Defoe's description of the considerable merchants engaged in foreign trade to many parts of the world contrasts with the complaints

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1. P.R.O., E.190/211/3; 212/10.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/78: from T. Bard, 18 Sept. 17[05]; S. Fairlie, 'Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xvii (1965), 488.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/253: from R. Hodshon, 27 Nov. 1714.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/843: from Foster & Pickfatt, 8 May 1716; CM/2/341: from G. Gray, 21 Apr. [1716].
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/842: from J. Albert, 12 Jan. 1715; CM/2/32: charter party, 15 Dec. 1699; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Lord W. Powlett, 18 July 1712.
6. Macky, Journey, ii. 216-7.

of a group of Newcastle freemen that the port's trade had in fact decayed.[1] Whereas there had been many 'Opulent' merchants trading with 'the Indies and other remote parts', there were now left only four or five merchants conducting an extensive foreign trade. The majority, it was said, bought their goods in London and drove 'small Pedling Retaile trades'.[2] Evidence from the Port Books seem to bear out the Newcastle freemen's complaints about the restricted scope of Newcastle's trade at the time, if not their comparison with a glorious past. Defoe's trade to 'many parts of the world' boiled down to Holland and the Baltic, and in fact the most valuable export and import trades were conducted with London and Holland, two markets which spared merchants the trouble of going further afield. In 1705-6, for example, 45 per cent of ships clearing from the Tyne for foreign ports were bound for Rotterdam, the Zuider Zee or Amsterdam, and 40 per cent of ships entering the river came from there. The coastal export trade was dominated by London, which was the destination of the vast majority of ships leaving Newcastle, although its position in the return trade was less outstanding in terms of shipping capacity, if not the value of cargoes carried. With regard to the merchants themselves, the coastal Port Books make it impossible to draw even tentative conclusions about the manner in which the coastal trade was conducted, but only seven or eight merchants could be said to have a fairly extensive and varied foreign trade in 1705-6. Of these only two, Nicholas Ridley and Robert Fenwick, could be described as 'opulent'. The vast majority, which included Cotesworth, seem to have been content with a handful of small consignments, usually from Amsterdam or Rotterdam.[3]

There were other flaws in the picture of thriving commercial activity which Newcastle presented to visitors. The writer who praised the 'conveniency' of the port must have been thinking of its well-endowed industrial hinterland, for there were a number of reasons why Newcastle was not a perfect site for a great port.[4] It was seven miles from the mouth of the Tyne, and the long passage up-river

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1. Defoe, Tour, iii. 194.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/84: 'The Case of the Freemen of Newcastle upon Tyne', n.d.
3. P.R.O., E.190/211/3; 212/10.
4. Birley, 'Sir John Clerk's Visit', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi, 228.

was often made impossible by high winds and stormy weather.[1] Moreover the problems of masters trying to reach the town from the sea were increased by the condition of the river, which was perilously shallow in several places.[2] Its natural tendency to silt up was apparently aggravated by the accumulation of ballast thrown out of ships coming up without a cargo, and, as a consequence, the journey was difficult, dangerous and time-consuming.[3] Newcastle's famous quay was impressive but Celia Fiennes noticed that ships over two or three hundred tons could not get up to it.[4] An aggrieved merchant from South Shields complained that a ship carrying his goods had overturned at the quay because of the 'ill groundage' in front of it, and Cotesworth too had trouble when a ship he was having loaded went aground because of the master's failure to take careful soundings before coming alongside.[5] Even when care was taken, only ships of moderate size could be loaded at the quays and larger ships had to be loaded down-river from lighters or keels, which created extra trouble, expense and difficulties with customs officers.[6] The shallowness of the river created particular problems in the coal trade, for not even the smallest collier could sail further up-river than the Tyne bridge, and the majority were forced to use keels to transfer coal from the staiths down to their berths at Shields. The life of these staiths or wharfs was shortened by the formation of sand banks, usually by the natural accumulation of ballast and debris but occasionally by the contrivance of rival coal-owners who sunk loaded keels in the river to divert the channel.[7]

Another disadvantage from the commercial point of view was the narrow passage at the mouth of the Tyne, which was said to be no more than forty

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: E. Mawson to [Capt. Langley], 25 Sept. 1716.
2. J. Guthrie, The River Tyne: its History and Resources (Newc., 1880), p.56 (plan).
3. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/29,30: affidavits, 17 and 25 Aug. 1722.
4. Fiennes, Through England, p.176.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/52: 'A remonstrance of grievances and hardships suffered by me Edwd. Fairless', n.d.; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 20 May 1716.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Henry Durley, 1 May 1716 and 21 Oct. 1715.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/11/6: An account of staiths and keelrooms in Stella freehold and Winlaton lordship, 24 Aug. 1719; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to J. Mowbray, 7 Mar. 1725.

yards wide at low water and which was obstructed by a shelf of sand and rocks, making the entrance to the river dangerous in a north-east wind.[1] Once inside the bar, the harbour was said to be safe from storms and shallows even for larger ships while two lighthouses had been built to reduce the danger from the notorious 'Black Midden' rocks.[2] However, the confined channel, which was only seven feet deep at low water, caused some casualties. Cotesworth assured a correspondent that his ships were safe lying at the bar waiting for convoy because it was not dangerous in summer, but he was perhaps a little optimistic.[3] Some years later, he himself lost part of a cargo of salt from a vessel which had been damaged on Tynemouth rocks during the summer.[4]

Moreover, the long, narrow valleys of the Tyne and its tributaries above Newcastle were liable to sudden floods after heavy rain, which could force ships from their moorings and sink them, as well as cause considerable damage to shore installations. In July 1722, for example, Cotesworth's clerk reported that coal staiths, waggons and bridges in both the Tyne and Derwent valleys had been torn up and carried away, and that the dams and forges of Crowley's works had suffered £1,000 of damages.[5]

Apart from these physical impediments, there were frequent allegations that the dictatorial control exercised by the corporation of Newcastle over the river and the shoreline on both sides of the Tyne hampered the movement of goods and the development of trade. This control was based on a variety of ancient customs and statutory powers, which were interpreted by the corporation to mean that all goods carried up or down the river had to pass through the hands of a freeman and that they should be loaded or unloaded only at the town's quays, where trade could easily be supervised and the town's privileges protected.[6] The situation was worsened by the charter granted in 1600 which encouraged the monopoly of power and trade by a privileged oligarchy within the town, and by the powers

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1. Inedited Contributions, ed. Hinde, p.44; Brome, Travels, pp.172-3.
2. Cox, Magna Britania, iii. 607.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 3 June 1716.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 11 Nov. 1726.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/33: from T. Sisson, 10 July 1722; CP/2/34: from T. Sisson, 13 July 1722.
6. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, p. xxx.

over the river granted to the corporation shortly afterwards as Conservators of the Tyne.[1] Their monopoly was maintained against all challenges, for it had been procured with the expenditure of considerable trouble and money and the corporation did not intend to allow the substantial income from tolls and fines brought in by their privileged position in the entrepôt trade to be eaten away. All traffic using the Tyne, even if the master wanted to go no further than the Shields salt pans, was liable to Newcastle port charges and tolls, and Cotesworth estimated that in 1724 the town's revenue from trade was £10,000.[2]

Those outside the charmed circle of the Newcastle magistracy were dissatisfied with the control they exercised over the Tyne valley. Local landowners like Robert Ellison of Hebburn complained of the tyranny of 'a few ill-bred, ill-natured and insolent inferiors'.[3] Cotesworth accused them of using the power and influence they possessed as members of the corporation to serve private ends, in particular by favouring the interests of certain coal-owners and merchants to the detriment of the prosperity of the town itself and of the region as a whole. This applied above all to Alderman Richard Ridley, who exercised great influence in the corporation, and was known to be developing both the salt and coal industries of Blyth in Northumberland as a rival to Newcastle.[4] Certain freemen of the town, alarmed by the increasingly oligarchic nature of the corporation, which was now virtually hereditary among a group of families closely linked by marriage and by membership of the Merchants' Company, blamed the alleged contraction of Newcastle's overseas trade on regulations confining the import and sale of groceries or 'Merchants Goods' to members of this company.[5] Freemen of other companies were discouraged from trade and harassed by prosecutions for dealing in these proscribed articles, while the Merchants, who included the Drapers, Mercers and Boothmen, received favours, immunities and

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1. J.U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry (Lond., 1932), ii. 125-7; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/102: 'A Copy of the representation... on the Conservatorship of the Tyne', n.d.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Dr. Jurin, 21 Feb. 1724.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/47: from R. Ellison, 17 Aug. 1722.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to C. Sanderson, 6 Oct. 1727; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/128: to T. Sisson, 8 Jan. 1723.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/84: 'The Case of the Freemen of Newcastle...', n.d.

trading privileges.[1] Cotesworth's papers contain documents relating to the prosecution of freemen for importing goods like iron and figs, and he supported their efforts to escape the 'bondage of arbitrary magistrates'.[2]

The corporation was even more oppressive to those outside the town companies and earned its description by the antiquary Surtees as the 'river dragon'.[3] The fact that the most convenient anchorage for shipping using the port was seven miles downstream at Shields and that its principal exports were produced outside the town walls and transported by water made the magistrates particularly sensitive to the danger that an alternative commercial centre would develop at the mouth of the river, by-passing Newcastle altogether.[4] Attempts were made to prevent this by prohibiting certain key tradesmen, like carpenters, anchorsmiths and blacksmiths, from setting up in business near Tynemouth, and by forbidding the brewing of ale and beer outside the town walls for sale in casks within seven miles of the river.[5] In 1703, for example, Gateshead parish vestry was defending a local man against a 'vexatious suit' for brewing ale and beer.[6] Coal-owners who were not members of the Hostmen's Company were still harassed for side-stepping the town's regulations and attempts were made to extend the corporation's control over the keelmen who ferried goods and coal downstream to the ships.[7]

One of the main grievances of merchants outside the corporation was the size of the dues and tolls charged on trade. A list in Cotesworth's papers shows that they covered the whole range of Newcastle's merchandise.[8] They were said

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/81: 'Heads for a petition', Nov. 1714; CG/5/44: copy of M. Bell's affidavit, n.d. Bell claimed that the Drapers were now also excluded from the ruling clique.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/83: 'An Acct of some hardships used by the Town of Newcastle', n.d.; CG/5/87: 'A representation of the case of Cuthbert Ogle', n.d.; CM/2/856: to M. Bell, 14 Nov. 1722 (copy).
3. R. Surtees, The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham (Lond., 1820), ii. 94.
4. Cox, Magna Britania, i. 621.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/42: affidavit of George Shields, 1 Sept. 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: T. Sisson to J. Banks, 26 Jan. 1720; Brand, Newcastle, ii. 28n; Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 128.
6. St. Mary's, Gateshead, Vestry Receipt book, 1694-1725, p.192.
7. See Ch. IV, pp.96-8.
8. Ellison MSS. D 1/1: An alphabetical list of tolls levied by the Town of Newcastle, n.d.

to be double those charged by Yarmouth, which naturally increased the prices of goods passing through the port, causing some anxiety lest shippers should be driven away to rivals like Sunderland and Blyth.[1] Freemen objected to paying tolls on principle, while merchants outside the town persistently ignored port regulations designed to milk those who were only interested in the transhipment facilities offered by quays along the river.[2] The Crowleys, for example, waged a running battle with the corporation over their right to levy tolls on ships and goods passing through Newcastle to destinations beyond the town's boundaries.[3]

The privileges exercised by the corporation might have been tolerable if they had used their powers and revenues for the benefit of commerce on the Tyne but, from the early seventeenth century, there had been complaints that the magistrates were neglecting their responsibility.[4] Their revenue included the proceeds of several dues levied in connection with the conservancy of the river, which should have been applied to clearing the channel, but they were received and expended along with other corporate revenues for other purposes, among them the defence and extension of the corporation's privileges.[5] The corporation admitted their obligations and claimed that they spent large sums on the upkeep of the river, but the ballast shores which they provided to discourage dumping and which were the only visible signs of this effort were said by their opponents to be inadequate, badly sited and so expensive that masters were encouraged to throw their ballast overboard.[6] Moreover, the desire to keep the profits from ballast shores to themselves led the corporation to discourage private attempts to ease the problem.[7] Other charges against them were that they left wrecks which obstructed the channel and failed to replace navigation buoys.[8]

It is hardly surprising that a Newcastle historian, writing in about 1729, came

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/52: 'A remonstrance of grievances and hardships..., n.d.; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 19 June 1719.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/82: 'An Acct of some hardships put upon Cuth Ogle...', 1714.
3. Flinn, Men of Iron, pp.120-1.
4. Guthrie, River Tyne, p.57.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: T. Sisson to [Mrs. Babbington], 31 Jan. 1720.
6. Brand, Newcastle, ii. 31n; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/29: affidavit, 17 Aug. 1722.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/19: from G. Liddell, 2 Mar. 1718; Bourne, Newcastle, p.164.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/30: affidavits, 17 and 25 Aug. 1725.

to the conclusion that 'town or corporation laws are often very arbitrary and very tyranical' and that removing them would encourage trade.[1] In fact, trade was not restricted to as great an extent as might have been expected as many of Newcastle's privileges were not rigidly enforced: the 'foreign bought and foreign sold' regulations in particular were evaded by convenient fictions, thus allowing a Gateshead merchant like Cotesworth to trade unmolested, provided he paid the usual charges and tolls. This forbearance may have been the result of a climate of opinion that was becoming increasingly hostile to such restrictions on trade, as the Attorney General's comments on the Hostmen's privileges demonstrated when they were submitted to him in 1703.[2] By-laws which attacked the rights and profits of individuals or the common profit of the nation were out of favour and Cotesworth believed that many of Newcastle's privileges could not be upheld in the face of determined opposition.[3] However, the great wealth and influence which the magistrates could bring to bear in defence of their position had so far defeated all assaults, including that made in 1714 by a group of disgruntled freemen.[4] It was difficult to withstand an adversary with an income of £8-£10,000 a year, especially when the Government had a vested interest in preserving the corporation's privileges because of the revenue from the levy on coal which had been the price of the 1600 charter.[5] The opportunity to create an alliance strong enough to oppose the town authorities came in 1717, when the corporation bought the estate of Walker on the north bank of the river and applied for a pardon for this mortmain purchase.[6] The magistrates' reluctance to grant Cotesworth and his partner George Liddell a wayleave through Walker for their colliery at Heaton convinced other land and coal-owners that the corporation could no longer be allowed to use their privileges for private ends.[7] Accordingly Cotesworth and his allies represented to the Government that the purchase could

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1. Inedited Contributions, ed. Hinde, p.6.
2. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, pp.162-3.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 20 Sept. 1720.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/90: from C. Ogle, 14 Jan. 1720.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/41: copy petition of Mayor of Newcastle to the king, 15 May 1722.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/74: 'The Case of George Liddell and William Cotesworth', n.d.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/31: from G. Liddell, 4 Apr. 1718.

be used to allow Ridley and his associates to monopolize the collieries beyond Walker, and that the magistrates' power to fix prices at ballast quays could be exploited to influence masters in their choice of cargo, thus leading to a monopoly in both the salt and coal trades.[1] Their grievances and complaints about the town's oppressive influence in the area were so similar to those of Ralph Gardiner in the 1650s that Cotesworth was encouraged to reprint England's Grievance as part of their campaign.[2] A more cogent argument, however, was an offer to the Government ministers of £8,000 a year to divide among themselves in return for restraining the corporation.[3] In the end, despite Cotesworth's tireless efforts, the Walker purchase was confirmed by the Crown without the imposition of controls on Newcastle's powers.[4] The Government believed that the magistrates would protect the port's trade through self-interest, disregarding Cotesworth's demonstration that they could increase their income from tolls and promote their private interests by actions which damaged the area as a whole.[5] Their continued prevarication over the Heaton wayleave was, he believed, an example of this.[6]

Such accusations may have been unfounded, but fear of competition from the outports was not. The growth in output from mines in the Wear valley and in Northumberland seems to have absorbed any increase in demand from the London and south-eastern markets at the turn of the century from which Newcastle might have benefited, and the coal-owners of the Tyne valley were well aware of this.[7] Although Cotesworth thought that their opposition to the Wear Navigation Bill, introduced in 1717 to improve the port and river communications of Sunderland, was divided and ineffective, Lord Harley noticed in 1725 that his Newcastle hosts

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to J. Meres, 3 May 1718; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/104: 'A State of the Case...', n.d. (printed pamphlet).
2. R. Gardiner, England's Grievance Discovered in relation to the Coal Trade (Lond., 1655); Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 130; Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/56: from G. Liddell, 7 Sept. 1722.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 30 Oct. 1719.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Dr. Jurin, 21 Feb. 1724; Brand, Newcastle, ii. 514.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/74: 'The Case of George Liddell and William Cotesworth', n.d.; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 15 Apr. 1722.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/856: to M. Bell, 14 Nov. 1722 (copy).
7. See Ch. III, pp. 78-80.

were very conscious of the dangerously successful competition from their rival.[1]

The Tyne coal-owners appealed several times for help and encouragement from the Government, but this could not have checked the growth of the outports even if it had been granted.[2] Newcastle's pre-eminence had resulted from the accessibility of the coal seams that outcropped around it, near to easily navigable water. The coal seams of the Wear valley, in contrast, were relatively inaccessible, being workable no nearer to the port of Sunderland than eight or ten miles upstream, while the river was difficult to navigate and the harbour was unable to accommodate large vessels. These factors made Sunderland coal uneconomic so long as Newcastle's trade flourished. However, by the second half of the seventeenth century, the coal within easy reach had been worked out in many places on upper Tyneside and the collieries were waterlogged. It was therefore necessary to invest in expensive drainage equipment or to move away from the river to where there were known to be large reserves of coal. Although the development of waggonways, which reduced the cost of carrying coal overland, ensured that the movement inland did not drive Newcastle coal off the market, carriage for several miles to the river, like drainage costs, naturally increased mining expenses and thereby allowed mines in the Wear valley to compete on equal or even better terms with those of the Tyne. However, even in the Wear valley, workable coal was becoming increasingly inaccessible and by 1700 the mines were moving inland and upstream, making the improvement of the river vital and opening the way for the exploitation of newly-developed collieries on the Northumberland coast, where the coal was easily accessible.[3]

With the advent of these new collieries, Newcastle was threatened by neighbours to the north as well as the south and their encroachments into the coal trade made the port's prosperity seem increasingly precarious. Newcastle's trade was based so completely on the export of coal or of goods made with coal that the stagnation of coal exports in the early eighteenth century meant the stagnation of trade as a whole.[4] Failing some vast increase in demand it seemed

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Ridley, 10 Apr. 1717; Hist. MSS. Comm., Portland MSS., vi. 106.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Gibson, 28 Apr. 1713.
3. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 28-34.
4. See Ch. III, pp.76-7.

that there was no way out of the situation: that Newcastle's coal exports would at best remain steady, while its share of the trade was slowly eaten away. It remained a great and prosperous port and men could still grow rich from its trade and manufactures; but there seemed an element of doubt about its future.

CHAPTER II

The Organization of Trade

The loss of Cotesworth's ledgers makes it difficult to write a detailed account of the conduct and organization of his mercantile business. Nevertheless, it is possible to obtain a general idea of the nature, extent and management of his trade from the correspondence and running accounts which have survived.

Only scraps of information are available about his inland trade in north-east England, although he traded from Gateshead for over twenty-five years. Most of the goods which he imported into the Tyne were probably sold locally, with Newcastle as the major outlet. The town's retail market seems to have been organized on modern lines. Celia Fiennes was impressed by the shops, which she reported 'are of Distinct trades, not selling many things in one shop as is ye custom in most Country towns & Cittys', and by the Exchange building with its throng of merchants.[1] Cotesworth's papers also show that there were several coffee houses which served as meeting places.[2] However, the more traditional means of distribution were still flourishing and imposed their pattern on Cotesworth's trade. Markets were held on Tuesday and Saturday, and Cotesworth seems to have attended at least the major Saturday one, which Celia Fiennes thought resembled a fair.[3] Actual fairs took place four times a year: at Annunciation, Ascension, St. Barnabas and St. Luke, and the cycle seems to have remained important for Cotesworth took care to stock up 'against ye Winter fair'.[4]

The shops, markets and fairs catered not only for the inhabitants of Newcastle and its suburbs, but also for the thousands employed in the coal trade and the

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1. Fiennes, Through England, pp.176-7.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CN/11/132: to R. Hedley, 19 May 1720 (copy).
3. Ellison MSS. A 36/18: from H. Liddell, Aug. 1714; Fiennes, Through England, p.177; Bourne, Newcastle, p.54.
4. Cox, Magna Britania, iii. 609; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, Aug. 1716. Bourne, Newcastle, pp.54-5, mentions only two fairs.

Tyne's other industries who lived in the surrounding countryside.[1] Nor was this the limit of Cotesworth's activities, for his papers reveal that Tyneside merchants supplied a market throughout the northern counties no less widespread than that of the later eighteenth century.[2] Cotesworth claimed that he and Sutton had 'a great trade into North'land, Cumberland, Westmorland, Yorkshire & Durham', with an annual turnover of about £5,000, excluding sales in the Gateshead area.[3] It may be of significance that nearly half of all the apprentices enrolled in Cotesworth's company between 1670 and 1719 came from outside the immediate vicinity of Gateshead and Newcastle and indeed some came from a considerable distance away. The Sutton family, for example, originated from Firthbank in Westmorland, while the Mawsons, Cotesworth's correspondents and employees, came from Penrith and Brampton in Cumberland.[4]

Cotesworth seems to have had regular customers who expected him to meet their orders promptly: thus a disagreement with a supplier which forced him to disappoint three of his best customers put the rest of his business with them in jeopardy.[5] There is little evidence that he imported goods for specific orders and customers seem to have been supplied from stock. Occasional miscalculations, such as buying more allom than the market would take, and his willingness to take advantage of sudden fluctuations in demand and price, point to the same conclusion.[6]

In Gateshead and Newcastle his customers seem to have been local retail merchants, like those who deposed that they had traded with the partnership for at least £50 a year over the last five or six years, or tradesmen like dyers and whalebone manufacturers.[7] This created difficulties when a correspondent went bankrupt, leaving him with some poor quality tow which the regular dealers refused

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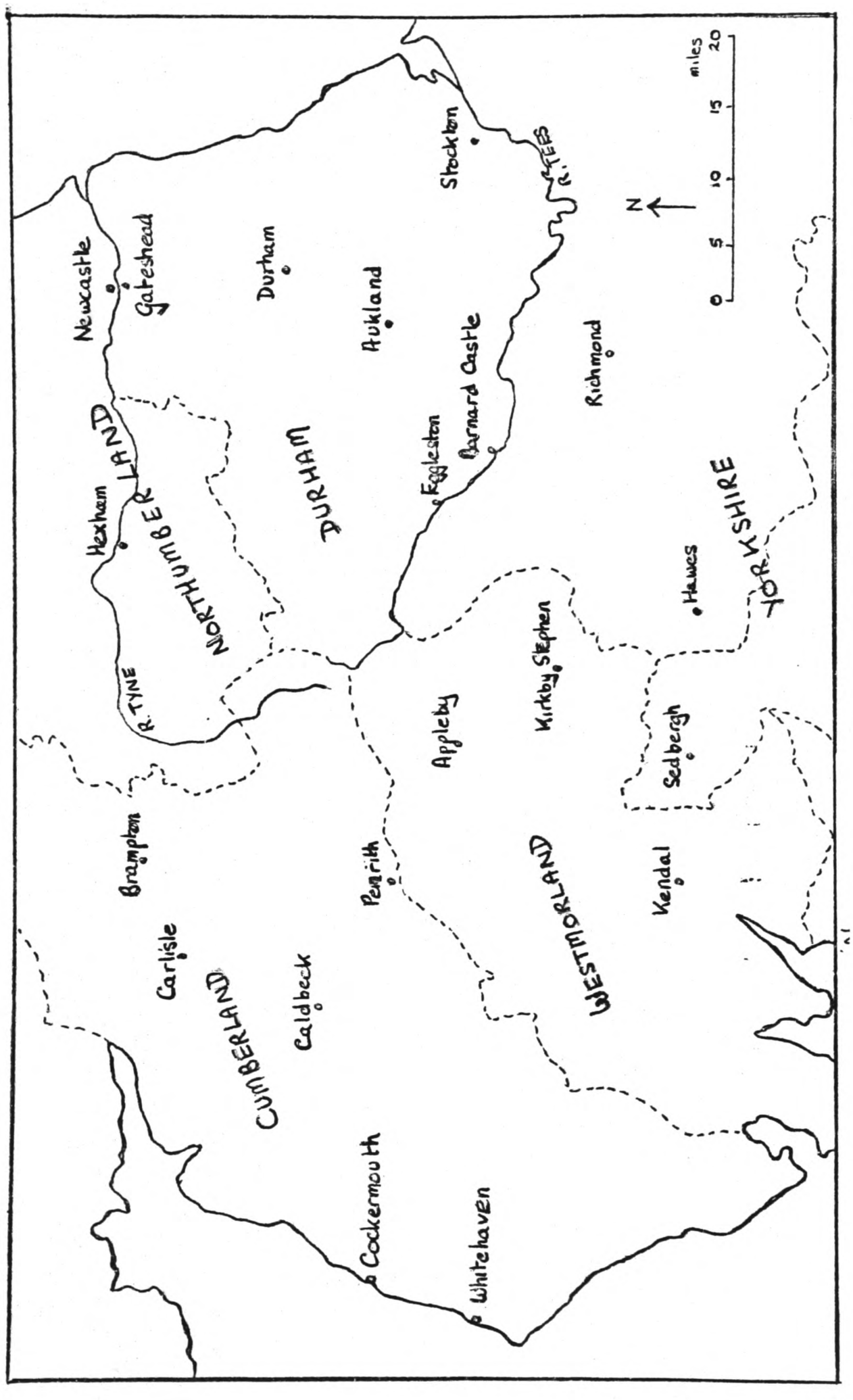
1. Bourne, Newcastle, p.54.
2. T. Willan, An Eighteenth Century Shopkeeper (Manch., 1970), pp.38-40; see Map I, p.30.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: copy brief in cross-cause Cotesworth v. Sutton, n.d.
4. Gateshead Company Records, ed. Dodds, pp.45-71.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Z. More, 14 July 1712.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Buck, 8 Apr. 1710; Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/8: to E. Mawson, 14 May 1717.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in Sutton v. Cotesworth, n.d.; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, Aug. 1716; to R. Bewicke, 30 Apr. 1714.



MAP I: Cotesworth's Inland Market (showing towns in northern England where he is known to have had correspondents)

N.B. In the absence of ledgers, it is not possible to estimate the extent of Cotesworth's activity with correspondents in these towns.

to buy, for he was not 'in the way of Retailing it'.[1]

Customers living locally undoubtedly came to him to place orders and even those from further afield came to Newcastle occasionally to do business.[2] Most orders from the inland counties, however, probably came by letter and it is difficult to tell whether these correspondents were retail traders or simply wanted goods for personal consumption. Cotesworth was probably wi ling to serve both types of customer from the inland counties, from the vicar of Caldbeck who wanted a pound of good Bohea tea to the lady in Kendal who ordered a cask of sack.[3] Contact with such distant correspondents was maintained by regular 'Western Journeys' by Tyneside merchants.[4] Robert Sutton, who handled the partnership's inland trade, went on a circuit of the area twice a year.[5] When winding up the business in June 1706, he took three weeks to cover the journey, travelling by way of Hexham, Carlisle, Cockermouth, Kendal, Penrith, Kirkby Stephen, Bishop Auckland and Durham.[6] Although much of the evidence for the inland market relates to the period of Cotesworth's partnership with Sutton, there are indications that he maintained the same pattern of trade as an independent dealer. He certainly followed a similar route in the summer of 1709 when he is known to have visited Kendal, Carlisle and Durham, and the distribution network probably remained constant throughout his career as a merchant.[7]

The wide area covered by this network suggests a developed transport system, and inland trade would have been impossible without the numerous waggon-carriers operating throughout the country.[8] Defoe claimed that in England 'every body... trades with every body' and the Cotesworth papers bear out the suggestion that there was an effective national market, at least in goods whose value was high

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Foster & Pickfatt, 8 Feb. 1715.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Z. More, 14 July 1712.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/271: from J. Wibergh, 18 Feb. 1715; CM/2/8-15: from M. Gam..., 14 June 170[6].
4. Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 192: J. Blackett to J. Marshall, 13 Mar. 1713.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: cross brief in Sutton v. Cotesworth, n.d.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/15: copy of schedule..., 6-22 June 1706.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to L. Parker, 11 June 1709; to D. Collyer, 28 June 1709; to G. Bowes, 5 July 1709.
8. Anon, The Case of the Waggon Carriers, [1713-4].

in relation to their bulk.[1] Carriers operated regularly between such northern towns as Kendal, Leeds and Richmond and the capital, while the London carriers left Newcastle every Saturday for the White Horse, Cripplegate.[2] Commercial goods were rarely sent overland if carriage by sea was possible, because of the extra expense involved, but if there happened to be no ship due to sail at the right time, such light and valuable goods as indigo and cotton were sometimes dispatched from London for Newcastle by carrier to avoid delay.[3] In the north, however, quite bulky goods such as rough tallow were carried long distances overland.[4] The network suggested by the existence of the tobacco trade between Whitehaven and Newcastle which was revealed by the Port Books is more clearly outlined by Cotesworth's correspondence, for it appears that regular carriers operated between Newcastle and many northern towns.[5] Robert Bousfield and Jeremy Raine covered the route to Sedbergh and Kirkby Stephen, while others served Kendal, Penrith, Bishop Auckland, Carlisle, Hexham, Caldbeck, Brampton, Eggleston and Stockton.[6] The system was so well ordered that Cotesworth could set aside two days a week as 'carrier days' for dealing with his overland trade.[7]

It is impossible on the basis of information found in Cotesworth's papers to state how frequently the carriers operated to the different northern towns, or how long goods were in transit. Despite the condition of contemporary roads, traffic does not seem to have stopped entirely during the winter but it may well have slowed down. There is no indication in the haphazard correspondence which is

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1. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman (Lond., 1726), i. 395, 398.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/627: from R. Hodshon, 3 Mar. 1716; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: notes; ZCE 10/2: to Lord W. Powlett, 25 Jan. 1717; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/417: from W. Jodrell, 19 May 1724; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to Lord W. Powlett, 24 Aug. 1725; ZCE 10/8: T. Sisson to Lady Powlett, 8 Oct. 1727.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Town, 14 Oct. 1709.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/210: from J. Craghill, 2 Jan. 1714.
5. See Ch. I, p. 15.
6. Ellison MSS. A 36a/34, 42: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 3 May & 12 Oct. 1716 (see Willan, Eighteenth Century Shopkeeper, pp. 41-2); Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/15: copy of schedule, 6-22 June 1706; CM/2/271: from J. Wibergh, 18 Feb. 1715; CM/2/332: P. to E. Mawson, 1 Oct. 1715; CM/2/280: from C. Cotesworth, 28 Apr. 1715; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [S. Leadbeater] 19 Feb. 1714.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to T. Wilkinson, 16 Sept. 1716.

the only available source of information on Cotesworth's inland trade about the effect of bad roads on customer tolerance, that is the amount of time between the placing of the order and the delivery of the goods which was accepted as being reasonable.[1]

Trade with correspondents in northern England was complemented by trade with a similar network based on the ports of the east coast and Europe. A merchant's ability to recruit and retain such correspondents was vital to the success of his business and it was here that well-established firms had a great advantage over newcomers who found it hard to break into existing relationships.[2] Forming a connection was thought to be such a crucial step that an essential part of the training of apprentices was putting them in contact with their master's correspondents.[3] Cotesworth was fortunate as regards correspondents since he inherited from his partnership with Sutton the entire network, particularly the important links with London and European correspondents, for which he himself had been responsible.[4]

Correspondence among merchants was based to a large extent on family and personal connections, the best and closest connection being that of blood. Cotesworth employed a kinsman as his agent in Stockton, but distrusted some of his cousins and derived more benefit from his relations by marriage.[5] His brother-in-law Ramsay's experience of trade with Narva, first as partner of a Hull merchant and then of Francis Collins of London, provided Cotesworth with a range of useful contacts in England, the Baltic and Holland.[6] Ramsay's brother-in-law, Bewicke, was a London grocer, two of whose children established

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/332: P. to E. Mawson, 1 Oct. 1715: Mawson was allowed up to a fortnight to obtain the goods ordered, but nothing was said about delivery dates.
2. Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 192: J. Blackett to H. Witton, 1 Feb. 1709.
3. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. 15-6.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: cross brief, n.d.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Leadbeater, 21 June 1713; ZCE 10/3: to Mr. Gould, 22 Feb. 1719.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/26: contract between Tyreman and Ramsay, Mar. 1685; CM/1/102: bill of Messrs. Ramsay & Collins, 8 Mar. 1696; CK/2/22: schedule of Ramsay's debtors and creditors, n.d.

themselves in business in Holland, while another son went to Lisbon.[1] When it was necessary to deal with men outside the kinship group it was still preferable to have a personal link with those concerned. Cotesworth's correspondent Durley was a 'Stranger', despite his connection with Ramsay's former partner, Collins, but there were many who were classed as friends.[2] Jackson found that every important European trading centre had at least one Hull merchant in residence and Newcastle seems to have had a similar network.[3] Several members of the Ridley family seem to have spent time in Sweden, presumably in connection with their interest in the iron trade, while a Newcastle firm maintained an agent at Porsgrund in Norway between 1707 and 1739.[4] Several of Cotesworth's correspondents in the Baltic, like George Gray in Konigsberg, seem to have come from the north east, while in Holland Newcastle-based firms were even more common. At Rotterdam, for example, Robert Pickfatt was a cousin of the Newcastle Hedworths, and another prominent trader, Lawrence Allan, was the son of a Newcastle merchant.[5] London was another centre where Cotesworth could trade with many firms with northern connections often well-known to him or his friends. The preference for such correspondents is shown in the case of Robert Hodshon, a former apprentice of Sutton, who set up in London and was soon transacting the bulk of Cotesworth's commission business in the capital.[6] It is not surprising, therefore, that a London merchant anxious to establish a trade with Newcastle should give the number of his acquaintances there more emphasis than his control of suitable shipping or warehouse facilities when writing to ask for Cotesworth's custom.[7]

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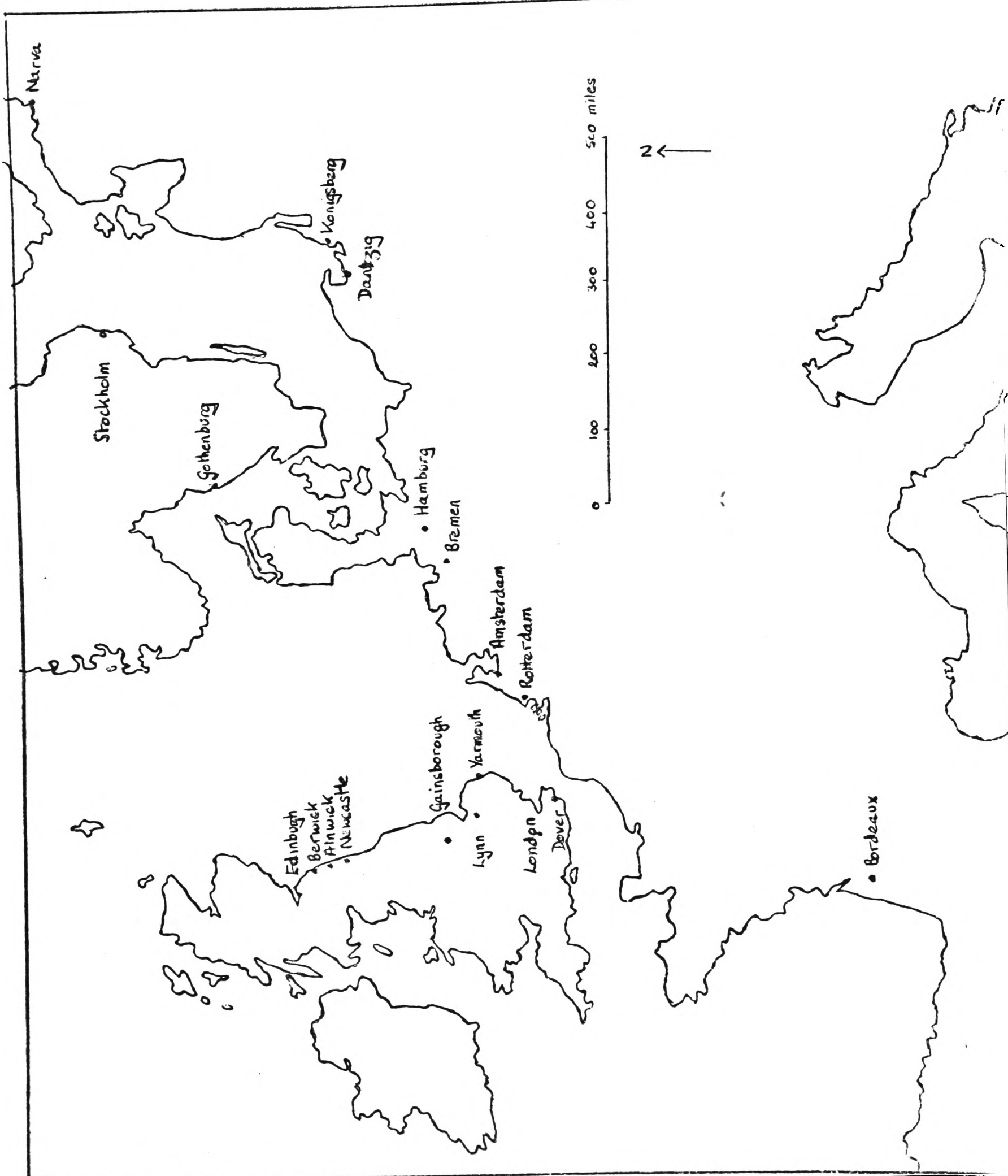
1. Surtees, Durham, ii. 194; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/75: from C. Bewicke jnr., 8 Jan. 1717; CM/2/366: from J. Bewicke, 15 Oct. 1716.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, Sept. 1718; ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 18 May 1716; to Foster & Pickfatt, 8 Feb. 1715.
3. G. Jackson, Hull in the Eighteenth Century (Oxf., 1972), p.122.
4. Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 195: J. Dobson to J. Blackett, 6 Nov. 1710; M. Triewald, Short Description of the Atmospheric Engine, 1734 (Newcomen Society Extra Publication, no. 1, 1928), p.6; H. Kent, War and Trade in Northern Seas (Camb., 1973), p.95.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/843: from Foster & Pickfatt, 8 May 1716; Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 192: J. Blackett to J. Wilkinson, 28 Dec. 1708.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to W. Hodgson, 25 Jan. 1719.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/131: from W. Ward, 25 Dec. 1711.

MAP II:

Cotesworth's Overseas Trade: ports in which he is known to have had at least one correspondent.



The greater part of Cotesworth's trade through Newcastle to other ports was carried on by two distinct methods. In the first place, Cotesworth dealt with a variety of commission agents or factors, who bought goods to his direct order on a percentage commission basis and who ordered from him on the same terms. The tallow trade with London was an exception to the usual pattern since the tallow was consigned to agents who sold it on his behalf. In the second place, he dealt direct with other merchants, the recipient of an order charging freight and other costs to his customer, but not asking for commission. There is no evidence that Cotesworth preferred either of these methods. The employment of factors was necessary in many cases, especially in foreign trade where they could arrange the purchase of a variety of goods ordered from England and manage their handling, storage and shipping more conveniently than could an English merchant dealing by correspondence with several different foreign merchants, shippers and authorities. The same was true of Cotesworth's tallow trade to London, where shipments had to be broken up and sold to small dealers. However, Cotesworth's London suppliers seem to have been principals rather than factors, and Cotesworth always sought to avoid commission payments when dealing with bulk cargoes, like salt or lead, going to a single customer. In these circumstances, when the producer was capable of transacting the shipping and other arrangements, he thought that commission was an unnecessary addition to the price.[1]

The best documented aspect of Cotesworth's trade is his relations with factors selling tallow for him in London. During his partnership with Sutton, they employed James Warman of Southwark and Daniel Collyer of Honey Lane Market, until Warman ran into debt on his account in 1704-5 and was replaced by Peter Pinder.[2] Pinder was himself replaced by the firm of Dixon and Suttle in 1709 but Collyer remained in the agency until the summer of 1713 when he was finally eased out in favour of Hodshon.[3] None of these agencies was exclusive and other firms were often employed. Nor were their activities confined to the sale of

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, 26 Sept. 1714.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in Sutton v. Cotesworth, n.d.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to P. Pinder, 17 Sept. 1709; to D. Collyer, 22 Aug. 1713.

tallow, for they were expected to dispose of any goods that Cotesworth wished to sell in London, such as salt, lead and grindstones, and to buy and dispatch goods which he ordered through them.[1] Cotesworth employed several factors on the continent, for example at Konigsberg, Hamburg and Bordeaux, but his trade with ports other than Rotterdam and London was intermittent and only in these cases was regular contact maintained.[2]

The commission charged by factors varied but the average was about two per cent of the selling price of the goods involved.[3] The usual commission from Newcastle to Hamburg was two per cent, with an extra half per cent if payment was in bills on London, whilst Jacob Albert in Bordeaux charged two and a half per cent on an order in 1715.[4] Correspondents in Rotterdam charged two per cent, but Cotesworth only charged his nephew in Amsterdam one per cent as a favour.[5] The rates charged by his London factors ranged from one per cent for salt to three per cent for sword blades, but most transactions conformed to the average and were charged at two per cent.[6] Cotesworth's attempt to persuade Hodshon to subtract the considerable element of duty from the selling price of salt before calculating his commission does not seem to have been successful.[7] Commission was firmly based on the selling price of a consignment and factors made no allowances for charges such as duty, freight, postage and insurance that were met by their principals.[8]

Commission was, at least in part, a payment for the use of a factor's time and his network of correspondents and, before consigning goods to anyone, Cotesworth required assurances that he possessed the means of selling them, that

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/592: Hodshon's account, Feb.-June 1717; CM/2/275: from R. Hodshon, 12 Mar. 1715.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Gray, 3 Oct. 1712.
3. Compare E. Hatton, The Merchant's Magazine (Ldn., 1719), p.215; A. John, 'Miles Nightingale - Drysalter', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xviii (1965), 154.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Koyler, 13 Oct. 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/842: from J. Albert, 12 Jan. 1715.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/843: from Foster & Pickfatt, 8 May 1716; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 14 June 1715.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/283: from B. Sleigh, 5 May 1715; CM/2/263: from B. Sleigh, 10 Feb. 1715; CM/2/687: Hodshon's account, May 1714-Mar.1715.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: from R. Hodshon, 30 Aug. 1717.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/133: from S. Buck, 15 Jan. 1712.

is to say 'friends' in the trade.[1] A successful commission agent needed a circle of contacts at least as wide as that of an independent merchant. Hodshon, fo example, had a considerable 'Country acquaintance' as well as regular customers for tallow in London.[2] If the market was dull, he knew who to approach in order to sell off a consignment and also where to advertise.[3] A merchant employing such a factor did not need to call in a broker as well, although Hatton asserted that they were employed to find customers.[4] Nightingale, the drysalter, seems to have used brokers regularly but to Cotesworth and his correspondents brokers were a last resort, to be approached when handling something outside their usual experience, or when it proved impossible to sell in any other way.[5] Cotesworth used brokers in Newcastle from time to time; for instance, to help Robert Bewicke build up the neglected Amsterdam trade in 1714, and to find ships for freight to the Baltic when he himself had failed.[6]

Factors were able to maintain their circle of customers and suppliers because they took commissions from several merchants and thus ensured a regular supply of goods and orders. Both Dixon and Hodshon sold tallow for Sutton as well as Cotesworth, and in 1714 the latter congratulated Hodshon on the extent of his business, which certainly included many accounts with other merchants.[7] Moreover, the distinction between merchant and factor was not rigid, and many factors also traded as principals. Cotesworth himself sometimes charged commission for selling his own salt, although this was rare.[8] Hodshon once complained of having to use his own money to uphold his commission business, so it is likely that he also traded independently.[9] Thus he charged

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Beighton, 10 Sept. 1714.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/279: from R. Hodshon, 23 Apr. 1715; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 22 June 1718.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/10: from T. Sisson, 31 Oct. 1717.
4. Hatton, Merchant's Magazine, p.216.
5. John, 'Miles Nightingale', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xviii. 153; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/133: from S. Buck, 15 Jan. 1712; CM/2/796: from J. Dixon, 9 Dec. 1710.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 15 June 1714; see below, p. 46.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/787: from J. Dixon, 4 Nov. 1710; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, 16 July 1714.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, Sept. 1718.
9. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/638: from R. Hodshon, 17 Nov. 1716.

commission for selling Cotesworth's tallow but not for meeting orders for dyestuffs.[1] So faint were the divisions, in fact, that the same man could be a partner in one venture, a factor in another and a principal in a third.

Direct trade between independent merchants seems to have been the normal practice in the English coastal trade. Cotesworth dealt with a wide variety of suppliers in London. Letters have survived to four known drysalters and as many hop merchants, based on Thames Street and Southwark, as well as to several grocers, tobacco merchants, soap dealers and many others. None of these correspondents supplied him with more than one type of goods, although soap boilers would quote tallow and oil prices for his information since they were of interest to both parties.[2] It is interesting that drysalters often quoted hop prices and displayed a detailed knowledge of the hop market, even when they did not deal in hops themselves, for goods such as hops, hemp and flax had traditionally been sold alongside drysaltery wares.[3] By the early years of the eighteenth century, however, a movement towards increasing specialization had begun: this can be seen in a letter printed by Hughes from the drysalter, Thomas Bard, informing Cotesworth that his partnership with Thomas Shipton had broken up 'he dealing in the Hopp trade, myself only in Dyeing goods'.[4] In London, if not in the provinces, the general merchant was fast disappearing.

When correspondents were not also factors their custom had to be encouraged and rewarded, and they could be lured away by lower prices or better treatment from competitors.[5] Important customers expected preferential treatment and complained if they received no more 'encouragement' than the rest.[6] Cotesworth naturally expected favours from his own suppliers and often seems to have received them.[7] Lower prices were the most common form of 'encouragement', together

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/589: Hodshon's account, Mar. 1715-Jan. 1716.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/94: from x, 14 Sept. 1706.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/90: from T. Bard, 1 Dec. 1705; Fairlie, 'Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xvii. 488.
4. Hughes, North Country Life, i. 56. I have not been able to find the original of this letter.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE. 10/2: to R. Hodshon, 18 Feb. 1717.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/388: from Gary & Plummer, 16 Apr. 1719.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/105: from J. Hester, 27 Apr. 1710.

with making the terms of payment as favourable as possible.[1]

Both factors and principals were expected to keep Cotesworth constantly informed of the state of the markets in which he was interested. A merchant, like Cotesworth, living in Gateshead had to rely on his correspondents for accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the movement of prices as well as of events likely to effect prices. Such information was essential to the timing of sales and purchases, and without it, as Cotesworth said, 'a Man's in the dark': naturally enough, Cotesworth grew impatient when his factors neglected their recognized duty in this matter.[2] Hodshon was ordered to send news of the tallow markets every Saturday and to write at once if anything unexpected occurred.[3] Merchants and foreign agents did not write so regularly but contacted him if they had received no orders for a while or if they had encouraging news of local markets.[4] Cotesworth's supply of information about goods in which he had a particular interest, such as tallow, hops and dyestuffs, seems to have been fairly comprehensive. Merchants also occasionally advised him on profitable selling prices in Newcastle.[5]

Good advice of this nature was useless unless it arrived in time, and Cotesworth benefited from the increased efficiency of the postal services during the later seventeenth century.[6] Posts from London came into Newcastle and Gateshead three times a week and returned on the same day, so that Cotesworth received letters written by his London factors on Saturday mornings by Tuesday's post, and could expect an answer to his own enquiries and orders within a week.[7] Naturally, letters to foreign correspondents took longer, especially as they were often sent by way of London and Rotterdam. However, the post was not always

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1. See Ch. VII, p.172.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Beighton, 26 Sept. 1714; Hatton, Merchant's Magazine, p.213.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Hodshon, 22 Aug. 1713.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/847: from Foster & Pickfatt, 12 Oct. 1716; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: from G. Gray, 30 Apr. 1714.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/85: from W. Cholmley, 28 July 1705; CM/2/124: from T. Shipton, 1 Sept. 1711.
6. Defoe, Tour, ii. 135-6.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to T. Wilkinson, 16 Sept. 1716; to R. Lee, 15 July 1716; ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 23 Apr. 1717.

reliable and much inconvenience was caused when, as happened from time to time, packets of letters arranging complicated international transactions were lost on the road.[1] Nevertheless, the postal services were undoubtedly improving, and speedier and more certain communications allowed long-distance trade to be conducted more efficiently.

The supply of information was not the only duty of a correspondent - he had also to follow his client's or principal's orders and notify him immediately of any action taken on his behalf. Cotesworth allowed neither merchants nor factors much initiative and bound them strictly to his orders. Factors were sometimes told simply to sell to the highest bidder, but often Cotesworth arbitrarily ordered them to stop selling or set a minimum price below which they could not sell without an express order.[2] As a result of such treatment, factors fretted against their lack of discretion and sometimes rebelled. Hodshon asked to be judged by results, rather than by the letter of his orders, after he had been rebuked for selling some tallow before it was landed, although he had done so because he realised that the price was about to fall.[3] It was sometimes impossible to obey orders to sell if the market was dull, and factors whose advice to sell earlier had been disregarded resented being blamed for the consequences.[4] Cotesworth does not seem to have trusted their judgement and preferred to rely on his own opinion, based on the information received from a wide range of correspondents. If factors were discouraging, he suspected them of crying the market down to emphasize their subsequent success in selling a consignment, and he admitted taking their advice only when it had proved mistaken: then he broke into bitter reproaches, disregarding pleas that they had done their best and that 'if one Coud forsee what wd happen it wd be an Easey matter to get an Estate'.[5] Cotesworth tended to suspect that failure was the result of malice or carelessness rather

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 7 June 1713.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Hodshon, 22 Aug. 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/784: from J. Dixon, 26 Sept. 1710; CM/2/623: from R. Hodshon, 21 Aug. 1714.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/204: from R. Hodshon, 14 Nov. 1713.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/188: from D. Collyer, 11 Apr. [1713]; CM/2/787: from J. Dixon, 4 Nov. 1710.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 16 June 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/591: from R. Hodshon, 5 Feb. 1717.

than ill-luck and eventually dropped Collyer from the tallow agency because the factor had 'used me so ill of Late'.[1] Factors did sometimes wilfully disobey him, for example, by disposing of his tallow against his wishes, and the only remedy for this was dismissal.[2] Goods sent contrary to his orders were repudiated, although he was willing to sell them on the factor's own account.[3]

Independent merchants could be equally exasperating. They were sent careful orders specifying quantity, quality and often price, but still sometimes shipped goods which did not fit the orders, or even ones they had been expressly forbidden to send.[4] Such consignments were returned, and sometimes disputes arose when accounts were presented.[5] Cotesworth's dealings in alum were a catalogue of such incidents: either the alum was not dispatched, leaving Cotesworth unable to supply his customers, or the supplier failed to inform him of the excessive price that was being asked until it was too late to draw back.[6] As Cotesworth discovered from bitter experience, it was unwise to rely on a single customer or supplier, for the latter became, like the lead merchant Samuel Leadbeater, 'Glutted with my Respect to you & desire of Dealeing with you'.[7] Perhaps as a result, Cotesworth rarely confined himself to correspondence with only one firm in a port or town in which he had interests, even when consigning or ordering the same type of goods. Competition among suppliers ensured that he was well supplied with information and could check one against the others. He seems, for example, to have played his Rotterdam factors against each other to obtain low prices and high quality.[8] Correspondents abetted him by scoring points off rivals who were selling tallow or other goods below the market price.[9] Keeping rival agencies at work enabled him to threaten factors that, if they seemed

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to D. Collyer, 16 June 1713.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to J. Grant, 22 Oct. 1709.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 15 Mar. 1715.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Shipton, 28 Feb. 1710; to W. Harrison, 19 Apr. 1709.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Shipton, 11 June, 3 Aug., 7 Oct. 1709.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Z. More, 14 July 1712; to G. Prissick, 13 Dec. 1711.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to S. Leadbeater, 25 June 1714.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to L. Allan, 7 Oct. 1709.
9. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/265: from R. Hodshon, 12 Feb. 1715.

to be acting against his interests, there was always someone who could replace them. When Hodshon, for instance, failed to collect some tallow from the wharf promptly, he was informed that it had been 'sent... to another hand'.[1] Often a hint sufficed to goad a correspondent into action and speed up Cotesworth's business.[2] Even when only one agent was employed, as at Konigsberg, information was so well diffused among the merchant community that Cotesworth could check their letters against independent reports, and he made sure that they were aware of this.[3] He often said that he preferred to deal with one man rather than several, if the price was right, and such careful checks were a way of ensuring it.[4] It was unfortunate, however, that such information was equally available to his own customers, and competition among local merchants or news of London prices could sometimes frustrate his attempts to make a profitable sale.[5] The increasing efficiency of the national and international markets, and of the correspondence system which made them possible, had its drawbacks as well as its advantages.

Organizing a network of suppliers and customers was a vital part of a merchant's business, but arranging for the transport of goods by sea within this network was of equal importance. The process of finding the right ship at the right time was, it is said, a complicated one and may have supplied an incentive for mercantile investment in shipping. In theory, ownership of a vessel guaranteed space for a merchant's cargo, and it was common for Hull merchants in the eighteenth century to employ their own ships in trades which interested them.[6] Several cases in Cotesworth's papers bear this out: for example, the salt maker Edward Fairless owned a vessel engaged in the salt trade.[7] It was certainly assumed that those with an 'interest' in a ship had some control over its movements and both Cotesworth and Ramsay owned parts in several ships.[8]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Hodshon, 9 Oct, 1713.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/790: from J. Dixon, 17 Nov. 1710.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Gray, 30 Apr. 1714.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Leadbeater, 11 July 1712.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/149: from G. Pile, 27 June 1712.
6. D.W. Thoms, 'The Mills Family', Bus. Hist., x (1969), 5; Jackson, Hull, p.145; but see below, p.44.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 7 Feb. 1727.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Leadbeater, 22 Dec. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CF/1/10: bill of sale for the 'Reserve', 3 Sept. 1703; CK/2/22: schedule of Ramsay's debtors and creditors, n.d.

However, there were drawbacks to such investments. Davis found that actual earnings on the capital involved seem to have been very low and often failed even to cover the charges of depreciation and risk.[1] This is borne out by recent studies which indicate that the convenience of having one's own ship at call was bought at a high cost, and that in any case the convenience was probably restricted to those with complete or majority holdings in a vessel.[2] Not even they, however, were always in control of their property for, while some masters were punctilious about seeking and following orders, there were many contemporary complaints that they were too independent.[3] Cotesworth advised his nephew not to become involved in shipping unless he and a group of friends financed the building of a vessel and kept the Grand Bill of sale in their own hands for, he wrote, 'I have had a Long Experience & always Suffered by takeing parts where the Master had the Grand Bill of sale.... they had Rather go any voyage then that their Owners Recomend because they have not a mind they Shoud be too well acquainted wth their profit'.[4]

Even if a merchant did succeed in shipping goods in his own vessel, this was a doubtful privilege if freight rates were low in relation to the costs of fitting out, manning and victualling a voyage. He had then to choose between, on the one hand, taking advantage of the cheap rates by hiring space in other men's vessels and, on the other, suffering from the same cheap rates when his own ship was chartered by competitors. It seems that freight rates were generally low in the late seventeenth century.[5] In the area in which Cotesworth was particularly interested, that is the Baltic and the North Sea, rates were probably even lower than average, for there they were governed by the price of coal in London and were therefore forced down by poor earnings in the coal trade

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1. R. Davis, 'Earnings on Capital in the English Shipping Industry, 1670-1730', Jour. Econ. Hist., xvii (1957), 418-22.
2. R. Gravil, 'Trading to Spain and Portugal 1670-1700', Bus. Hist., x (1968), 72-3.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 20 Sept. 1715; Anon, A Letter to Sir William Strickland Bart. (Ldn., 1730), pp.33, 35; Commons Journals, xxi. 517; see Ch. IV, pp..104-5.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 30 Apr. 1714.
5. Gravil, op. cit., p.72.

at this time.[1] Sending goods in his own ships would thus yield little economic advantage to Cotesworth and the nature of his trade meant that hiring cargo space would be equally convenient. The greater part of his trade consisted of small consignments carried on popular routes, especially to London and Rotterdam, and finding a ship going in the right direction at the right time with space for a few barrels of tallow or a bag of indigo was rarely difficult. This was especially true of the homeward leg of the voyage, when colliers were often underemployed. Cotesworth's correspondents could afford to be selective about the size and quality of the vessels to which they entrusted his orders.[2] In London, they were often deposited with a wharfinger who placed them on the first suitable ship and, when difficulties were encountered, they seem to have been the result of Cotesworth's high standards rather than a lack of cargo space.[3] The provision of transport from the other main ports with which north-east merchants dealt seems to have been as regular and punctual as that from London. Even when the lateness of the season made it impossible to find a vessel in Hamburg bound for Newcastle, a detour by way of London solved the problem.[4]

Hiring cargo space was only obviously inconvenient in the salt trade, where it was necessary to charter a whole vessel for the bulky cargo and where Cotesworth had to compete for space with outward cargoes of coal. The scarcity of ships willing to take salt tended to push up freight charges from nine to ten shillings a wey or ton, and it was difficult to find one at any price if the market for coal looked promising.[5] Cotesworth often advised customers to hire a ship in London for the round trip, since he could not get one in Newcastle, and he regarded the difficulties connected with shipping as the greatest obstacle to setting up an independent salt trade to London.[6] The most convenient method of

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: notes; Commons Journals, xxi. 373; see Ch. IV, p. 94.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/71: from J. Bayly, 7 July 1705.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/223: from B. Sleigh, 9 Mar. 1714; CM/2/78: from T. Bard, 18 Sept. [1705].
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/60: from N. Remington, 6 Nov. 1694.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/57: from T. Sisson, 30 Nov. 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to R. West, 9 June 1719.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Tomlin, 20 Dec. 1718; ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, Sept. 1718; see Ch. VI, pp. 161-3.

conducting the salt trade was to own shipping, as he advised Gary and Plummer, or to charter several vessels on an annual basis.[1] Finding ships willing to carry goods to ports in the Baltic was also difficult, but for political rather than economic reasons, since the Northern war and Sweden's hostility to the Hanoverians created an uneasy situation there. In 1715, for example, he was forced to employ a broker to find masters willing to brave the King of Sweden's declaration.[2]

Masters and owners obviously considered that operating in the Baltic in these circumstances entailed an almost unacceptable risk, but indeed a merchant put himself at risk every time he consigned goods on board a ship, not only from fire, storm, bad navigation and other accidents, but also from attack by hostile warships or pirates.[3] The dangers are reflected in Daniel Collyer's habit of adding 'when please God itt arrives' to promises to do his best to sell tallow shipped to him, and in Cotesworth's prayers for a speedy and safe passage.[4] Davis estimated that the annual average loss of ships was about five per cent and that the majority of vessels perished through fire or storm rather than old age, which explains the resignation with which occasional losses were accepted.[5] It is not difficult to find reasons for the high casualty rate. The ships involved were small: a ship of 300-400 tons burthen was considered large and, although Cotesworth recommended 150-160 tons as the most useful and economical size, many of those which he himself used were under 100 tons.[6] Small ships riding high out of the water, as all did at that time, were vulnerable to wind and weather, and the approach of bad weather, let alone a storm, forced masters into port rather than risk being damaged, driven off course or wrecked on the shore.[7] Cotesworth kept a wary

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Gary & Plummer, 13 Oct. 1723; Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/108: to N. Burdon, 20 Apr. 1726.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 4 Oct. 1715.
3. Davis, Shipping Industry, p.87; compare Nef, Coal Industry, i. 394-5.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/163: from D. Collyer, 16 Aug. 1712; Carr-Ellison MSS ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 8 June 1716.
5. Davis, 'Earnings on Capital', Jour. Econ. Hist., xvii. 411; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Buck, 28 Mar. 1710.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 11 and 22 May 1716 (the 'great ships' mentioned were all over 300 tons); to R. Bewicke, 30 Apr. 1714; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/35: charter party to Hamburg, 28 Apr. 1703.
7. V. Barbour, 'Marine Risks and Insurance in the Seventeenth Century', Jour. Econ. & Bus. Hist., i (1929), 561-2.

eye on the weather and hoped for 'harmless Winds' for, while there was danger in any sea-crossing, the east coast of England was notorious.[1] There were apparently few ports or havens in which a ship or fleet could shelter, and many coastal vessels were driven onto the shore.[2] Danger bred caution, and this led to delay as ships lay off Yarmouth or Harwich for several weeks when faced with bad weather or contrary winds.[3]

The threat of capture by privateers caused almost as much disruption as the dangers of storms and the lee shore, for the very rumour that a privateer fleet had put to sea was enough to drive vessels dangerously near the coast or prevent them sailing at all.[4] French privateers were the chief menace to Cotesworth's trade when he first set up in business, but after 1715 his interests were endangered by Swedish privateers in the Baltic and North Sea.[5] His worst experience of the expense and sheer inconvenience caused by such depredations occurred in 1702, when the 'Susannah', in which he and Sutton owned a quarter share, was captured by a French privateer on a voyage from Konigsberg with a cargo of flax and cloth in which they were also concerned. The ship and part of the cargo were recovered, at the cost of over £500, and a dispute about the transaction was still unsettled at Cotesworth's death.[6]

The Government was held responsible for protecting trade from such attacks, and public opinion insisted that the seas should be 'Well Lined' with naval vessels for this purpose.[7] In order to mitigate the dangers, convoys were organized, under the protection of the Navy, but, in practice, the system proved inadequate. Even in the case of the vital coal convoys to London, where a special effort was made, there were complaints that too few ships were employed.[8] Moreover, the

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to D. Scarlett, 11 Feb. 1715; J.C., The Compleat Collier (Newc., n.d.), p.20-1.
2. Willan, Coasting Trade, pp.21-5.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/9: from T. Sisson, 29 Oct. 1717; Hist. MSS. Comm. House of Lords MSS., New series, v (1910), 229.
4. Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 195: H. Witton to J. Blackett, 23 Apr. 1709.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/356: from C. Cotesworth, 2 Aug. 1716.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: cross brief, n.d.; CP/5/16: W. Maitland to R. Cotesworth, 31 Dec. 1726.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/345: from C. Cotesworth, 14 June 1716.
8. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 301-2; Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 227, 228-9.

convoy system had practical disadvantages for merchants, who resented having to adjust their sailing dates to the convenience of the Navy.[1] One major disadvantage was that the effort of loading and supplying a fleet of ships in time to catch a convoy put a strain on the facilities of even large ports, and in Newcastle the situation could be exacerbated by the presence of the coal fleet in the Tyne. This combination of circumstances created considerable difficulties for Cotesworth in the summer of 1716 and he, like other merchants loading goods for the Baltic, was enraged when, after all their preparations, the convoy which they expected to join failed to call at Newcastle.[2] Cotesworth blamed the 'Archangle dealers' for this, since many of the ships were carrying coal and salt for the Russian Baltic ports of St. Petersburg and Reval and thus evading the Russia Company's restrictions.[3] Eventually Newcastle Corporation secured the dispatch of two warships from London as an escort for the fleet but its sailing had been delayed for several weeks.[4]

Such delays were inconvenient, but not as inconvenient as the distortion of the market caused by a convoy coming into harbour or preparing to sail. The arrival in Amsterdam or London, for instance, of over a hundred ships from Newcastle glutted the market with coal, salt and the town's other major exports, while the prices of local commodities were pushed up by the concentrated demand for return cargoes: indeed, correspondents advised merchants to order goods well before a fleet even sailed from Newcastle to avoid this inevitable inflation.[5] The fact that arriving ahead of rival vessels meant a quicker turn-round as well as better prices tempted masters to take the risk of running without convoy, even though this doubled the insurance premium.[6] Yet the convoy system must have been reasonably effective, probably on the principle that there was safety in numbers, for ships were still making the east coast voyage in fleets in 1725.[7]

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1. Kent, War and Trade, p.37; E. Donnan, 'Eighteenth Century English Merchants Micajah Perry', Jour. Econ. & Bus. Hist., iv (1931), 89-90.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: E. Mawson to H. Durley, 20 May 1716; to H. Durley, 29 May 1716.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 22 May & 8 June 1716.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 10 June 1716.
5. Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 192: J. Blackett to E. Anderson, 23 Aug. 1709.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/6: from T. Sisson, 22 Oct. 1717; Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 192: J. Blackett to J. Kelley, 28 Dec. 1708.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 3 Oct. 1725.

Against accidents of nature or negligence, such protection was ineffective and a ship could go down in the open sea without any obvious reason or anyone knowing what had become of it.[1] However, there were certain precautions which could be taken to lessen the risks of trade, notably the common practice of dividing shipments into small consignments and sending them in several vessels. Like investment in 'parts' of ships rather than in whole vessels, it increased the chances of partial loss but prevented total disaster.[2] This was probably the reason why Cotesworth's tallow travelled to London in batches of two or three casks at a time, for he was a prudent man and, as one contemporary writer put it, 'common prudence will never suffer a Merchant to venture 2. parts of 3. parts of his Estate in one Bottome without assuring'.[3] Insurance was a more comprehensive safeguard and, although there does not seem to have been an insurance market in Newcastle, arrangements could be made in Amsterdam or London.[4] Evidence in Cotesworth's papers is scarce, but what there is seems to bear out writers like Barbour and Gravil, who found that merchants tended to regard insurance as an unnecessary expense except when war made the seas more hazardous than usual.[5] Even in these circumstances, they seem to have calculated the risks on every cargo before deciding whether an outlay on premium was worthwhile.[6] The most important single factor in these calculations was probably the size and value of the consignment involved, for minor shipments were not thought to be worth insuring, and the evidence supports Defoe's observation that a merchant was only censured for not insuring when too much stock was concerned in one venture.[7] When Cotesworth was chartering ships to carry whole cargoes of coal and salt to the Baltic for Durley they were certainly insured, although here the danger of capture by hostile vessels was also involved.[8] Other factors played

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/277: from R. Hodshon, 19 Mar. 1715.
2. Barbour, 'Marine Risks and Insurance', Jour. Econ. & Bus. Hist., i, 569-70.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/991: Collyer's account, Feb.-July 1707; C. Molloy, De Jure Maritimo et Navali (Lond., 1676), p.286.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: cross brief, n.d.
5. Barbour, op. cit., pp.587-9; Gravil, 'Trading to Spain and Portugal', Bus. Hist., x. 73-5; compare Davis, Shipping Industry, p.87.
6. Blackett (Matfen) MSS. ZBL 192: J. Blackett to J. Kelley, 12 Mar. 1709.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/60: from N. Remington, 6 Nov. 1694; Defoe, Complete English Tradesmen, i. 92.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 21 Oct. 1715.

a part in deciding whether or not to insure. For instance, Hodshon reported that one merchant had lost a consignment of wine worth £400 when the ship disappeared without trace: he had not insured because he knew that the master was a careful man and had made the same voyage several times without mishap. Cotesworth also had an interest in this voyage and his protection on this occasion was that he was concerned in only a small proportion of the goods aboard.[1] Diffusion of risk, rather than insurance, still seems to have been the most common precaution against loss.

The danger at sea was, however, only one of several facing merchants, and they approached them all with caution, doing their best to reduce the risks involved. They were especially dubious about the method of trade that seemed to maximize these risks - that of sending goods abroad to agents who disposed of them on the merchant's behalf. 'Consignment trading' was apparently frowned on by the most reputable export merchants in Leeds, who considered it only in times of good trading conditions and dropped it when markets were glutted and slack.[2] Cotesworth was often willing to consider consigning goods, especially sending salt to the Baltic, although his papers do not reveal how often his schemes were put into practice. He was most inclined to contemplate such schemes when the home market was slack, but became less enthusiastic when the price of salt rose in England.[3] High prices in the Baltic and encouragement from correspondents there were also factors in favour of adopting this method of trade, but the risks involved had to be weighed carefully because, if he shipped goods on his own initiative, without receiving orders from a customer, it was his money that was in danger and not that of his correspondent.[4] In particular, he demanded detailed knowedge of the market involved, of local weights and measures, the denomination and exchange rate of the currency, methods of payment and discounts for exchange, and port charges and duties.[5] More important, but also more open to

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/277: from R. Hodshon, 19 Mar. 1715.
2. R.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants. The Merchant Community in Leeds, 1700-1830 (Manch. 1971), pp.77-8.
3. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [Chambers & Peirson], 18 Aug. 1714; to G. Gray, 30 Apr. 1714.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 30 Apr. 1714; to J. Roberts, 8 Feb. 1715; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/159: from J. Mayes, July 1712.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to [Gildemaster & Van Rhiden], 10 Aug. 1717.

miscalculation, was his correspondent's advice about the salability of a particular commodity and the movement of markets. Judgement of a correspondent's character and ability was therefore even more important in the consignment trade than in other business dealings, for having a cargo of unsalable goods in a foreign port 'makes a great difference in a man's affairs'.[1] Picking an agent of 'too profuse projection', as Cotesworth suspected that his client Durley had done, could ruin a merchant.[2] Whenever possible, Cotesworth preferred to share the risks by entering into a partnership arrangement with his correspondent.[3]

Even if the factor abroad was honest and cautious, there were many things that could go wrong. Before embarking on an adventure, Cotesworth had to calculate whether the market could be spoiled by a flood of goods from Newcastle and other ports, as merchants responded to similar encouragement, and he was wary about sending salt into the Baltic because Scots exporters usually got there first.[4] If the market did hold up, he had to rely on his factor's ability to chose good customers and collect the proceeds without incurring too many bad debts. If he escaped all these hazards, there remained the problem of transporting the proceeds home profitably. Finding a return cargo reduced freight charges on the outward voyage, as well as avoiding any loss by exchange, but this proved more difficult than the balance of trade with the northern countries suggests. English merchants trading in the Baltic usually found the outward cargo more of a problem, since they exported goods that were smaller in volume and higher in value than the large volume of relatively low-valued imports, but Newcastle's chief exports were cheap, bulky goods like coal and salt, and they went mainly to ports on the southern Baltic coast whose principal commodities were small and valuable.[5] Narva flax or Rhine hemp were welcome to Cotesworth but a small vessel could carry as much as he thought that the port could take, and a small cargo of coal or salt was not worth sending.[6] One way of solving the problem was to arrange

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 16 June 1713.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to N. Gould, 16 Aug. 1718.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [Chambers & Peirson], 8 Feb. 1715.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 14 Apr. & 16 June 1713.
5. Jackson, Hull, pp.220, 51-2; Kent, War and Trade, p.127; J. Price, 'Multilateralism and/or Bilateralism', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xiv (1961-2), 255-6.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [H. Durley], 3 July 1716; ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 14 Apr. 1713.

a round trip, shipping coal or salt to Bremen or Konigsberg and picking up a cargo of timber or iron from Scandinavia on the return voyage.[1]

The perils of consignment trading are well illustrated by Cotesworth's painful experience in 1713, when he was persuaded by his Konigsberg correspondent, George Gray, to send out coal and grindstones, the proceeds of which were to be given to the master in specie and used to buy a cargo of deals in Gothenburg.[2] The venture seemed to be prospering and Cotesworth was considering sending another consignment, this time of salt, when he was taken aback to receive news that the Konigsberg grindstone market had collapsed, so that prices were no more than two-thirds of his costs. He reproached Gray for encouraging him to embark on such a venture and was only thankful that his native caution had overcome his reliance on Gray's experience, judgement and integrity so that he had sent only a fraction of the quantity suggested to him.[3] The stones were eventually sold on a better market in 1714, but then Cotesworth found it difficult to extract the proceeds from Gray. A few parcels of hemp finally arrived in Newcastle and London in 1715 and 1716, but without the necessary invoices and account. It is hardly surprising that Cotesworth felt badly treated and began to look for a new correspondent.[4]

He had no better luck with the return cargo of timber, although arrangements made beforehand as a precaution made it possible to go through with the deal despite the failure to sell the grindstones.[5] The ship proved unexpectedly small, so that the cargo had to be split up and part sent on later, causing extra trouble for those concerned.[6] Then the vessel carrying the bulk of the timber ran aground on Scagen reef and a quarter of the deals that were saved had to be given as salvage.[7] By this stage, Cotesworth would have been willing to sell the remainder where they lay, but the Eastland merchant whom he consulted advised him to send a ship to bring them home.[8] It is not known what Cotesworth

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1. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to [Gildemaster & Van Rhiden], 10 Aug. 1717.
2. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 14 Apr. 1713.
3. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 7 & 16 June 1713.
4. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 7 Feb. 1716.
5. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Chambers & Peirson, 1 June 1713.
6. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [Chambers & Peirson], 8 Feb. 1715.
7. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Bewicke, 4 Sept. 1713.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/203: from C. Brander, 5 Nov. 1713.

eventually decided but, in any case, it is unlikely that the whole venture justified the trouble and extra expense involved in both the outward and the return cargoes. This may well have been the incident which prompted Henry Liddell to pass on to Cotesworth the advice of someone who had been concerned in several similar adventures, 'by Sad Experience to sett down wth ye first loss'.[1] After such a lesson in the risks of consignment trading. Cotesworth seems to have taken the advice, for referencesto trade with the Baltic thereafter are confined to supplying cargoes of coal or salt to customers like Henry Durley or to Scottish merchants.[2]

Cotesworth's reluctance to stray from the established and easy trade routes with London and Holland may have been a cautious reaction to the perils of consignment trading and it certainly reflects the general pattern of Newcastle's trade.[3] He was never one of the port's few great merchants, conducting a large overseas commercial business, and his wealth in later life was not the result of his mercantile activity. However, although his was a small-scale operation, the efficient operation of an extensive inland market and regular access to the London and Dutch entrepôts meant that his trade was at least prosperous. The annual turnover of his business in partnership with Sutton was considerable by contemporary standards and probably produced a reasonable income for both partners.[4] Certainly trade enabled Cotesworth to live comfortably and accumulate a fair amount of capital. Already by 1710 his personal wealth was around £4,000, which put him just below Grassby's category of 'substantial merchants', although twenty years before he had been able to raise only £20 towards the partnership's original capital.[5] This sketchy outline of the conduct and organization of his trade has little to do with the commercial empires built up by great merchants like Clayton or Child, but it represents the solid prosperity of the vast majority of English merchants.

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1. Ellison MSS. A 36/31: from H. Liddell, 19 Mar. 1715.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/89: salt bond, 6 June 1719.
3. See Ch. I, pp. 17-18.
4. See above, p. 29.
5. See Ch. I, pp. 5, 9. R. Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth-Century England', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xxiii (1970), 227-8.

CHAPTER III

The Coal Industry

The prosperity of merchants trading from the Tyne was inextricably linked with the fortunes of the area's chief industry - coal mining. Newcastle's trade in coal and the products of local industries which had grown up under the stimulus of the coal trade sustained the economy of its extensive hinterland and it was difficult for anyone living in the immediate vicinity of the port to avoid becoming directly or indirectly involved in the industry.[1] Cotesworth was therefore drawn into it as soon as he began to trade in Gateshead, exporting small shipments of coal to foreign markets and supplying candles for mine workings.[2] In these early days, an active interest in coal mining was certainly beyond his means but he had begun to develop closer links with the industry even before the end of his partnership with Sutton.[3] By 1708, he was working deposits of coal under the Milbank lands in Gateshead as an independent venture and was soon drawn into partnership with Henry Liddell in the upper seams of Bensham colliery.[4] As his interests developed, he hired a member of the Hostmen's company to sell about 12,000 chaldrons of shipcoal a year for him, and by 1712-3 his annual turnover with this agent was around £2-3,000.[5]

Cotesworth gained such extensive experience from his continual involvement with the industry from 1708 onwards that, in the opinion of one of his partners in Bucksnook colliery, 'noebody knowes ye Cole trade in its parts better then

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/31: from F. Johnson, 7 Mar. 1723; see Ch. I, p.11.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/35: charter party, 28 Apr. 1703; CP/4/7: to E. Mawson, 6 May 1717.
3. See Ch. I, pp.5-6.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to W. Carr, 6 Feb. 1720; ZCE 10/1: to x, 3 Aug. 1709; Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/7: 'A state of Mrs. Liddell's case', 22 May 1723.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CJ/3/2: A. Dick's information, 9 June 1710; CK/14/8,9: accounts with Dick, 1711-2.

you doe'.[1] He had interests in many collieries in both the Tyne and Wear valleys, usually in partnership with one or more members of the Liddell family:

Collieries in which Cotesworth was interested:

Bryansleap	1709 (lease): in production by 1712: laid in shortly after?
Bensham upper seams	1709-10 (working): licence to work renewed 1718.
Fenham	1710 (lease): never able to exploit because of disputed title and divided ownership.
Urpeth	1711-12 (negotiations and preliminary work): fell through but still under discussion 1717.
Farnacres	1714 (working): laid in because of drainage costs: negotiations for Newcomen engine delayed rewinning.
Gateshead Park	1715 (lease): drainage problems prevented winning.
Felling	1715-17 (negotiations and lease): drainage problems prevented winning.
North Biddick	1715-16 (negotiations): fell through.
Chester Whitehill	1715-16 (negotiations and preliminary work): failed to obtain necessary wayleaves.
Whickham	1716 (working): still in production 1726.
Bucksnook	1716 (agreement giving Cotesworth an interest): still in production 1726.
Heaton	1717 (lease): wayleave and drainage problems delayed production.
Walker	1717 (estimates discussed): not taken.
Newbottle	1719 (lease): not ratified.
Winlaton	1723 (lease of part of colliery owned by Cotesworth and Banks taken for lack of other tenants): working obstructed.

N.B. This list is not exhaustive.

Wright: see Hughes, North Country Life, pp.18, 163, 213-4, 299 (index); The Correspondence of Sir James Clavering, ed. H.T. Dickinson (Surtees Soc., clxxviii, 1967), p.106n.

2. Ellison MSS. C 17/4: G. Liddell to C. Sanderson, 24 Oct. 1718.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/11/24: J. Weatherby's memorandum, 18 Aug. 1722.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to H. Ellison, 25 May 1725; ZCE 10/6: to E. Wortley, 29 Nov. 1723.
   N.B. The names Montagu and Wortley were used indiscriminately by contemporaries in describing what was originally simply the Montagu family. To avoid confusion, I use throughout Montagu-Wortley for the family as a whole, Wortley for the branch of the family which adopted that name, and Montagu for the rest of the family. See R. Romney Sedgwick, The House of Commons 1715-1754 (Lond., 1970), ii. 268, 555-7.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to W. Carr, 6 Feb. 1720; Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/105: G. Dawson to A. Leaton, 25 Aug. 1726.

you doe'.[1] He had interests in many collieries in both the Tyne and Wear valleys, usually in partnership with one or more members of the Liddell family: with Henry in Bensham and Bryansleap, with George in Gateshead Park, Felling, Walker, Newbottle and Heaton, and with several of the family in Farnacres, Urpeth, Chester, Whitehill and Whickham. In other collieries, like Bucksnook, Winlaton and Biddick, he acted independently or with other partners. Several of these enterprises, for example, Urpeth, Chester and Whitehill collieries, were abandoned at the planning stage, often because it proved impossible to acquire vital leases.[2] Moreover, Farnacres, Gateshead Park and Heaton were not brought into production successfully during Cotesworth's lifetime and, even among those that were, many yielded poor quality coal.[3] Despite the extent of his involvement, therefore, Cotesworth's actual share of the industry was small compared with those of the great coal magnates like the Liddell, Bowes and Montagu-Wortley families.[4] Yet he wielded considerable influence in the coal industry, especially after inheriting Ramsay's property in 1716, because of the hold which his strategically-placed estates gave him over collieries south of the river, the coal from which had to cross his land to reach navigable water. Cotesworth claimed that the majority of coal mined in the Tyne valley came to the market 'by my Lycence or under my influence', and it was this 'great Hammer' which gave him a voice in the counsels of the 'lords of coal'.[5]

The importance attached to the control of routes to navigable water was one symptom of the changes taking place in the Tyne coal industry as the easily-accessible outcrops and upper seams lying near the Tyne, which had given the

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/751: from R. Wright, 9 Jan. 1717.
   N.B. Robert Wright of Sedgefield is sometimes wrongly identified as William Wright: see Hughes, North Country Life, pp.18, 163, 213-4, 299 (index); The Correspondence of Sir James Clavering, ed. H.T. Dickinson (Surtees Soc., clxxviii, 1967), p.106n.
2. Ellison MSS. C 17/4: G. Liddell to C. Sanderson, 24 Oct. 1718.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/11/24: J. Weatherby's memorandum, 18 Aug. 1722.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to H. Ellison, 25 May 1725; ZCE 10/6: to E. Wortley, 29 Nov. 1723.
   N.B. The names Montagu and Wortley were used indiscriminately by contemporaries in describing what was originally simply the Montagu family. To avoid confusion, I use throughout Montagu-Wortley for the family as a whole, Wortley for the branch of the family which adopted that name, and Montagu for the rest of the family. See R. Romney Sedgwick, The House of Commons 1715-1754 (Lond., 1970), ii. 268, 555-7.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to W. Carr, 6 Feb. 1720; Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/105: G. Dawson to A. Leaton, 25 Aug. 1726.

port its pre-eminence in the trade, were worked out.[1] Yet, although contemporary visitors recognized the extent to which the coal seams nearest the river had been exploited and 'wasted', the vast reserves of coal in the neighbourhood coupled with the inhabitants' ingenuity in extracting it reassured them that the industry was in no immediate danger.[2] Defoe, approaching Newcastle from the south, saw 'a View of the inexhausted Store of Coals and Coal Pits' as he drew near the town, and Celia Fiennes, coming from the west, noticed in addition a strong smell of sulphur in the air.[3] According to Sir John Clerk, there were fourteen 'coal works' around Newcastle in the 1720s, but lists of local collieries in Cotesworth's papers suggest that during the first quarter of the century the number increased from fifteen to twenty-five. The total produce of these collieries at this time was estimated at between 190,000 and 250,000 chaldrons of coal a year.[4] The capital equipment required to extract so much coal in increasingly difficult conditions left eighteenth century writers marvelling at 'the Number of Arts and curious Machineries that are used in this Affair of the Coal Business', and attracted tourists as well as coal-owners from other parts of England and Scotland.[5] The Earl of Mar sent an employee to Newcastle in 1709 to inspect the mining machinery and learn the methods of conducting colliery operations, while Sir John Clerk came specifically 'In order to understand my Coal affaires... for there I understood that the perfection of coalery was to be learned both in relation to the Machines necessary above Ground & the easiest ways of working below Ground'.[6] In fact, the new developments enhanced Newcastle's reputation as a centre of the coal industry, notwithstanding the increasing competition from the outports.

Mining costs were certainly high and were increasing rapidly in the period during which Cotesworth was concerned in the industry, but it is very difficult to

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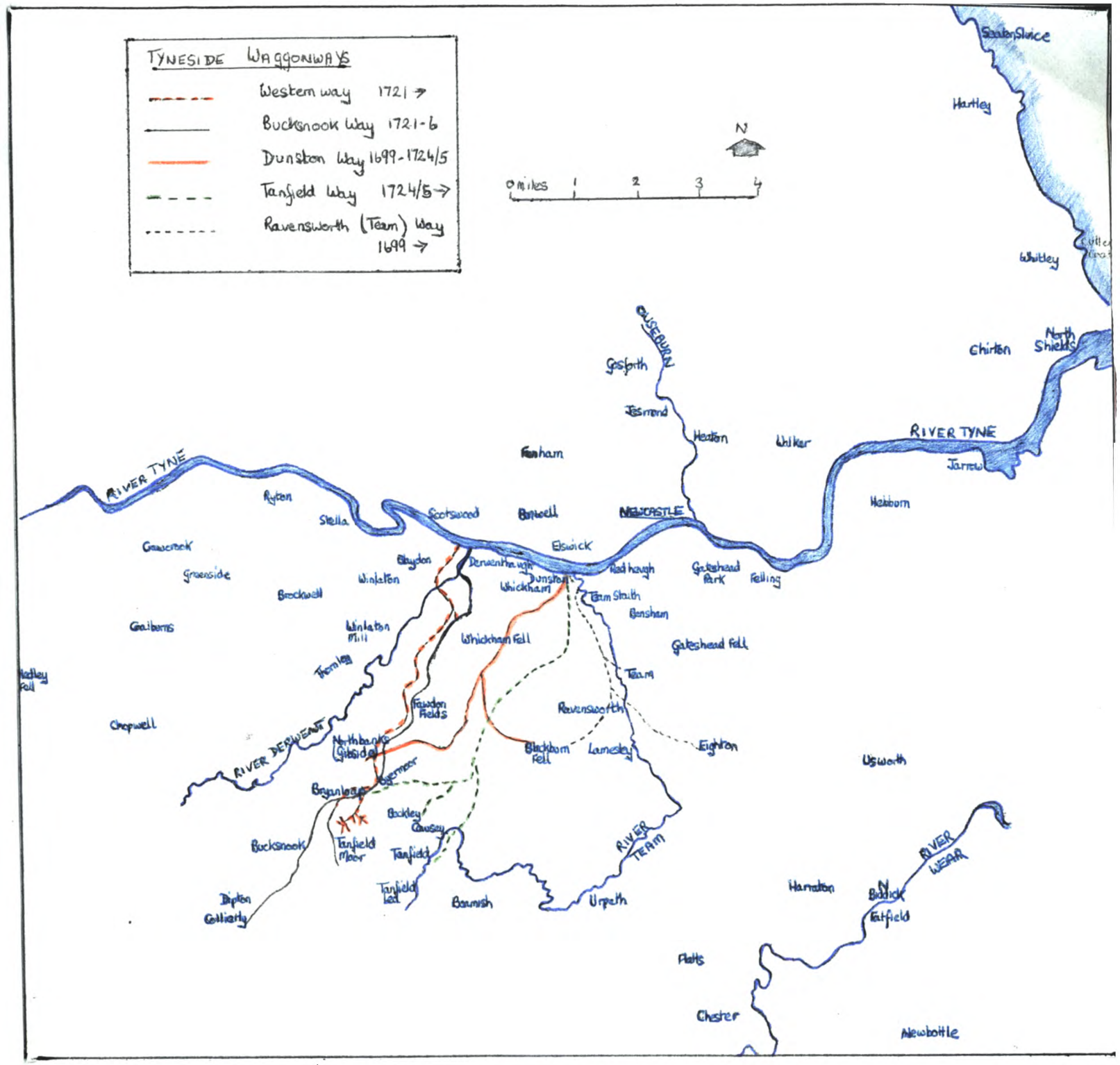
1. See Ch. I, p. 26.
2. F. Atkinson, 'Some Northumberland Collieries in 1724', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi (1958-65), 434.
3. Defoe, Tour, iii. 191; Fiennes, Through England, p.175.
4. Atkinson, op. cit., p.434; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/135: 'A List of collieries on Tyneside', n.d.; CK/1/66: 'A proportion of Coals as was Computed for a Regulation in ano. 1725'.
5. Bourne, Newcastle, p.159.
6. R. Bald, A General View of the Coal Trade of Scotland (Edin., 1812), p.8; Birley, 'Sir John Clerk's Visit', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi. 223.



MAP III: **Collieries and Waggonways on Tyneside**

extract from the figures provided in his papers statistical information about the collieries in which he had an interest. In the first place, the only series of colliery accounts available is one from Bucksnook colliery so that comparisons are difficult and inconclusive. In the second place, those accounts which have survived are not particularly helpful, especially when an attempt is made to analyse the asset structure of Cotesworth's collieries, because of the common contemporary failure to separate capital from current accounts. Because of this, initial and yearly capital costs, as well as working expenses, have to be worked out from current accounts or, when these are not available, from notes and estimates of mining, carriage, drainage and rent charges.

Another obstacle is contemporary confusion about the measures employed in the industry.[1] The two principal measures were the 'ten' and the 'chaldron', the ten being used in the production of coal and the chaldron in its sale. Officially, a ten consisted of ten Newcastle chaldron, each of 53 cwt., but the measures actually used in letters, accounts and other documents bear little relation to official values.[2] There were, for example, two types of ten: leading and delivering or vending tens, one vending ten being the equivalent of five- or six-eighths of a leading ten.[3] These two types seem to correspond to waggon and wain tens - so named because of the transport used in each case - since the wain ten was the equivalent of five- or six-eighths of the waggon ten.[4] To add to the confusion, the size of the measures and their relation to each other were not uniform throughout the Tyne valley. Thus at one colliery the waggon ten, although usually reckoned to consist of twenty to twenty-two waggons of coal, could be made up of as many as thirty waggons. As a result, the number of chaldrons produced by a ten was very irregular, usually fluctuating between fifteen and nineteen chaldrons but occasionally varying considerably from the norm.

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1. Lewis, Early Wooden Railways, pp.184-9.
2. See R. Mott, 'The London and Newcastle Chaldrons for measuring Coal', Arch. Ael., 4th ser., xl (1962), 227-239.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Oldner, 14 Jan. 1717; ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to C. Sanderson, 8 May 1726.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/12/20: 'Estimation of the Difference of Leading, Working et. from Tanfield Moor...', n.d.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/12/3: 'Proposals for the Lady Carr', 25 Aug. 1713.

These variations appeared not only between collieries but at the same colliery over a period of time, so that it was possible for a Bucksnook ten to shrink from $16\frac{1}{3}$ to $15\frac{1}{3}$ chaldron between 1719 and 1723.[1] Moreover, such a change could represent an increase in the size of the chaldron rather than any decrease in that of the ten, and indeed the chaldrons sold by different collieries could contain very varied amounts of coal.[2] It can be seen, therefore, that establishing a comparative unit cost for the collieries in which Cotesworth was concerned would be very difficult even if many more sets of accounts were available.

These reservations about the evidence make it necessary to discuss the costs of mining enterprise to Cotesworth and his contemporaries in very general terms which are in many ways unsatisfactory. Some conclusions are, however, inescapable, notably that the proportion of capital tied up in fixed assets was exceptionally high by contemporary standards. According to Henry Liddell's estimate for Urpeth colliery, 75 per cent of the expenses incurred before the investor could hope to sell any coal were sunk in acquiring mineral rights, winning the colliery and bearing the capital costs of transport to the river.[3] The author of a pamphlet found amongst Cotesworth's papers did not go so far but even he calculated the proportion of sunk to working capital to be no less than 50 per cent.[4] Mining on any commercial scale required so much long-term capital that it was effectively confined to the wealthy and very few people ever made a fortune in the coal industry if they started without adequate capital resources.

A newly-won colliery represented a very large investment of fixed capital, consisting not only of the ultimately productive expense of sinking successful shafts but also of abortive boring and sinking charges. All these costs varied enormously from colliery to colliery since, because of the difference between the new and older areas of exploitation, mines could be anything from ten to nearly

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/58: 'An Accot of the Coales Ledd and Delivered... Xmas 1718 - Xmas 1723'.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Mr. Colepit, 16 Sept. 1721.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: H. to G. Liddell, 27 Mar. 1712.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.

eighty fathoms deep.[1] The greater depth of mines increased the expense of prospecting for workable seams but even in the newer, shallower collieries an increased proportion of the final cost went on unsuccessful prospecting because coal was more difficult to find in previously unworked areas of the coalfield, and more difficult to assess when it was found.[2] New investment in Bensham colliery was held up in 1711 because the angle of the seam was doubtful, and one document records considerable disagreement between coal 'viewers' about the position and depth of the seams in Whickham manor.[3] The deeper collieries were very expensive both to bore and to sink since the cost per fathom increased with the distance from the surface. Boring in Whickham, for example, cost 5s a fathom for the first ten fathoms, 10s a fathom for the next five, 15s between fifteen and twenty fathoms and 30s a fathom for deeper than this.[4] Soil conditions and other contingencies also affected sinking costs so that, although a simple pit forty fathoms deep could be dug for only 50s a fathom, the price of sinking varied considerably, rising to as high as £15 a fathom, or indeed, if the sinkers met hard rock, to £10 a foot.[5] Each shaft sunk to the coal could therefore cost several hundred pounds, and more than one coal pit was usually required to work a colliery efficiently, since the putters or barrowmen who moved coal underground were paid piece-rates which increased rapidly with the distance between the shaft and the workings.[6] As well as the actual coal shafts and workings, the colliery owner had to provide such things as up and downcast shafts for ventilation, extra pits to serve drainage machinery, and a network of underground drainage and communication tunnels, raising the total expenditure on sinking to several thousand pounds. At Walker colliery, for example, it was estimated that deepening two existing coal pits, digging another, sinking two 'water pits' and driving a drainage

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d. 'Documents relating to Elswick colliery', Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 3rd ser., iv (1909-10), 46-7.
2. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 351-3.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/35: from Sir H. Liddell, 1 Aug. 1711; Cotesworth MSS. CN/7/4: J. Weatherby's account of Whickham coal seams, n.d.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CN/7/5: account of boring in Whickham, n.d.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/38: minutes of a conference, 2 Sept. 1725; CP/1/3: from G. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1717; compare Bald, General View, pp.8-9; J.C., Compleat Collier, p.4.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/7/13: R. Featherston to E. Wortley, 7 Dec. 1722; T.S. Ashton & Sykes, The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century (Manch., 1924), p.11.

level to the Tyne would cost over £3,000.[1]

Heavy investment in equipment and plant at the pithead was necessary to open out these underground workings and bring a colliery into production. The quantity of simple tools, ropes, baskets and timber used in winning a colliery was impressive, and the proprietor had also to provide accommodation for workmen and horses employed both above and below ground.[2] Equipment for raising coal and water was expensive, drainage in particular being universally recognized as 'the most difficult and expensive part of the Charge of Wynning & Working'.[3] Most English colliery engines were rope-winding 'gins', worked by water or, more often, by teams of two horses.[4] The actual gin only cost about £30 but it needed ten horses at £7 each to operate with maximum efficiency, raising the price of each unit to £100. Moreover, these simple bucket and chain engines were not effective below thirty fathoms if the colliery was very waterlogged, so that several gins had to be employed in series.[5] Benwell colliery, for example, needed four two-horse gins working six-hour shifts, with two extra 'water pumps' to assist them, to drain it while it took three gins to win Elswick colliery.[6] It was for this reason that, despite the high capital cost, proprietors in the Tyne valley were beginning to install Newcomen 'fire engines' to replace their conventional drainage equipment. Those at Gateshead Park, for instance, were said to have cost the undertaker the greater part of £2,000 before any water was raised, but even so, both here and at Lambton's Washington colliery the engines failed to make much headway against the weight of water.[7] In most cases, however

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to G. Spearman, 9 Dec. 1720; Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/3: from G. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1717.
2. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 371-6; Ellison MSS. A 35/71: from H. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1712.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/67: proposals for draining Heaton and Park, [1725].
4. F. Atkinson, 'The Horse as a Source of Rotary Power', Trans. Newc. Soc., xxxiii (1960), 37-9.
5. Bald, General View, pp.8-9; J.C., Compleat Collier, p.14.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/39: affidavits, 21 Dec. 1722.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/50: from J. Airey, 16 Jan. 1725; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Meres, 18 July 1719. Negotiations for engines at Farnacres and Heaton were inconclusive - see Cotesworth MSS. CN/5/60: to H. Ellison, 12 Nov. 1725 (copy); E. Hughes, 'The First Steam Engines in the Durham Coalfield', Arch. Ael., 4th ser., xxvii (1949), 29-45.

the capital expenditure was felt to have been justified by results. Conventional engines were notoriously expensive to run and repair and the Newcomen engines may have been marginally cheaper since there was no shortage of cheap small coal to feed the boilers.[1] However, this was probably not a decisive advantage since, at around £400 a year, they were still very expensive to run and were also subject to high and arbitrary rents charged by the London committee holding Savery's patent.[2] It was the Newcomen engine's greater efficiency, which enabled colliery owners to raise far more water for a reduced or at least not greatly increased cost, that appealed to the owners of waterlogged collieries, because in some cases water was seeping in so fast that they could not afford to drain them by conventional means.[3] By the 1720s, the four gins and two pumps at Benwell had been replaced by a Newcomen engine and engines of this type were also operating successfully at Elswick and Byker.[4]

The amount of capital sunk in a newly-won colliery was therefore considerable but the capital investment required to provide transport to the river was sometimes equally heavy. The bulk of this expenditure went towards the construction of a waggonway, consisting of a single or double track made with a double layer of wooden rails. These horse-drawn railways carried large amounts of coal for long distances far more cheaply and conveniently than was possible in carts on muddy and sometimes impassable 'wainways', but they were very expensive.[5] A yard of track cost between four and five shillings and many waggonways were several miles long, while the bridges, embankments and cuttings necessary to produce a favourable gradient for the laden waggons were so extensive that a local historian claimed that they 'may vie with some of the greatest Works of the Roman Empire'.

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1. S. Primatt, The City and Country Purchaser and Builder (Lond., 1680), pp. 26-7, 29; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/39: affidavits, 21 Dec. 1722.
2. Atkinson, 'Some Northumberland Collieries', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi. 429-30; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to J. Meres, 4 Mar. 1721; ZCE 10/3: note on Farnacres engine, Jan. 1718; Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/46: 'A memorandum giving the history of the fire engine patents...', n.d.
3. A. Raistrick, 'The Steam Engine on Tyneside', Trans. Newc. Soc., xvii (1937), 153-4; Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/30: G. Liddell to J. Meres, 14 Nov. 1717 (copy)
4. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/39: affidavits, 21 Dec. 1722; Atkinson, op. cit., 429-30, 433.
5. Lewis, Early Wooden Railways, pp.144, 163-6; Nef, Coal Industry, i. 384-5.
6. Bourne, Newcastle, p.159; Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/139: from J. Bullock, 26 Apr. 1723; CK/5/144: 'Dr. Bucksnook owners to F. Baker', 1726.

The six-mile stretch of way from Bucksnook colliery to the river Derwent cost £4-5,000, although it was only a single track with passing places, while the Clavering-Stella way too cost thousands of pounds.[1] However, as with drainage, the capital outlay was thought to be offset by greater efficiency, which increased both the coal-owners' profits and their profit-margins, thus allowing them to open up collieries which were not worth working with wain carriage.[2]

The final charge which had to be met before a colliery proprietor could begin to recoup his investment was the provision of a staith or wharf on the river bank from which coal could be loaded either into keels or directly into waiting ships through spouts.[3] Staiths were often equipped to store large amounts of coal and could cost hundreds of pounds, since every keelbirth cost around £15.[4]

Some of these fixed capital charges were inescapable but the total burden was reduced by a number of economies. For instance, the relatively simple technology involved made it possible to use old timber from an obsolete waggonway or staith to construct new capital equipment, while gins, waggons and other surface plant from collieries were easy to dismantle and move to new locations.[5]

The expense could also be shared. George Pitt paid about half the cost of Bucksnook way because he used it for Tanfield Moor colliery, and indeed reciprocal use of waggonways was a common feature of leases and agreements.[6] Sometimes such economies were achieved without either consent or payment, as the use of Bucksnook way by Lady Clavering and her allies in 1721 demonstrates, and it was even easier, because less conspicuous, to make use of a neighbour's expensive drainage system if the angle of the coal seams was favourable.[7]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to J. Geekie, 12 July 1724; to J. Banks, 17 May 1726.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Clavering, 18 Apr. 1714; Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712 (abstract).
3. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/69: copy of a petition, 1724; compare F. Manders, 'The Tyneside Keelmen's Strike of 1710', Bulletin of the Gateshead and District Local History Society, i (1969), 3.
4. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 386-7; Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/94: a view, 14 Apr. 1725 Ellison MSS. A 35/72: from H. Liddell, 1 Jan. 1713.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/139: from J. Bullock, 26 Apr. 1723.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to J. Geekie, 12 July 1724; Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/27: article with Ridley, 23 Apr. 1726.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 12 May 1721; Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/38: minutes of a conference, 2 Sept. 1725.

Other economies were achieved by converting what would have been long-term capital expenditure into annual charges which appeared insignificant in relation to the working expenses of even the most modest colliery. Fixed capital equipment, for example, was usually built on the site from raw materials like iron and timber which were bought on credit.[1] A more substantial saving was achieved by the common practice of renting coal in the ground, and in fact at this time over half the collieries in the Tyne valley were worked by lessees rather than by owner occupiers.[2] Both fixed rent and royalty leases are referred to in the Cotesworth papers but the majority seem to have combined the two systems, guaranteeing the lessor a fixed annual sum regardless of the amount of coal produced, with an additional royalty payment for any coal worked above an agreed threshold.[3] There may have been a trend away from leases stipulating a fine and fixed rent, as there is evidence that some were converted on renewal to this sort of modified royalty arrangement.[4] The royalties charged ranged from 8s a ten for pancoal to 14-15s a ten for fine quality ship coal and probably accounted for eleven to fourteen per cent of the pithead price, while fixed rents could work out a little less than this if enough coal was worked.[5] Leases usually ran for at least twenty-one years, which gave the lessee time to exploit his vast initial expenditure and it was recognized that short or uncertain leases discouraged investment.[6] The problems caused by such heavy fixed capital investment were also reflected in the practice of deferring the first rent payments until two or three years after the date of the lease, when the colliery could be expected to be showing a profit.[7] On the other hand, to protect the royalty owner from undertakers who were more interested in keeping the coal from their rivals than in

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/880: account with R. Thomlinson, Mar.-Oct. 1724.
2. Primatt, City and Country Purchaser, p.27; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/135: 'A List of collieries on Tyneside...', n.d.
3. Ashton and Sykes, Coal Industry, pp.180-1; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/301: from J. Hebdon, 2 June 1715; CK/5/94: a view taken 14 Apr. 1725.
4. Cookson MSS. ZCO VIII 1/42: statement of the case, 1727; ZCO VIII 1/33; memorandum, 16 Nov. 1724.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/9/4 : from T. Turnbull, 28 Mar. 1715; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [T. Gibson], 19 Feb. 1717.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to M. Browell, 19 Dec. 1718.
7. Ellison MSS. A 35/67: from H. Liddell, 5 Nov. 1712; A 35/47: from H. Liddel 13 Dec. 1711; Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, pp.184-5.

working it themselves, lessees were sometimes bound to a minimum investment of several thousand pounds.[1] In general, the owners of mineral rights seem to have enjoyed an assured and often substantial income and Cotesworth had little sympathy with landowners like Lady Bowes, who complained of being robbed by her tenants while receiving £1,400 to £1,800 a year in colliery rent 'without laying out a farthing Ruñing any hazard or employing any stock'.[2]

Staiths, keelrooms and wayleaves for the use of other people's land for carriage to the river were also leased. No one complained that the price of keelrooms at about £5 a year was too high but wayleave rents were often said to be excessive.[3] The prices recorded in Cotesworth's papers are usually higher than the normal rent of land for agricultural use, despite the fact that a waggonway occupied a strip of ground only twelve to fourteen yards wide.[4] In 1715, for example, Cotesworth obtained a wayleave through one property by offering £2 a year more than the previous agricultural rent.[5] Payments for the use of small pieces of land were usually fixed annual sums but big landowners insisted on 'tentale' rents that took account of the volume of traffic.[6] The amount paid varied according to the bargaining power of the landowner involved, since those who owned strategically placed land 'are not under any obligation to lett other people come thro' their Estates' and felt entitled to a market price for the facilities they offered.[7] If there was no alternative route, the rent could be as high as 5s a ten and bore little relation to the intrinsic value of the land. The Bucksnook owners, for instance, paid Lady Clavering 2s 6d a ten for crossing 300 yards of common land on Tanfield Moor, although her son received only 1s a ten for the use of over 4,000 yards of enclosed freehold and copyhold land.[8] Colliery owners resented paying an arbitrary sum far in excess of the agricultural value of the land and there were occasional campaigns for parliamentary action to restrain

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/1: from G. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1717; CK/5/190: 'Proposals for R.H. letting Hilton Colliery', 21 Nov. 1719; Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry pp.183-4.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 11 May 1716.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/321: to [E.Mawson], 19 July 1715; Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, pp.151-2; Lewis, Early Wooden Railways, pp.139-40.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/3,5: Mr. Bigg's proposals and answer, 16 July 1720.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 20 Feb. 1715.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/10: lease to M. Bell, 28 Nov. 1717.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/59: 'Some Reasonings on a proposal...' 22 Oct. 1725.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to J. Geekie, 12 July 1724; see CN/11/195: Joseph Banks' Case, n.d.

rents, but in James Clavering's opinion this was as unreasonable and unjust as subjecting colliery rents to similar controls.[1] Rents were high but they were certainly cheaper than buying a passage to the river and in general constituted a small proportion of the selling price of coal. George Liddell, for example, acquired a wayleave from Newbottle to the Wear, a distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, for £200, which his calculations show represented only $3\frac{1}{2}$d out of a selling price of 9s $2\frac{1}{2}$d a chaldron.[2] Moreover, wayleave rents were insignificant when compared with the huge working expenses involved in digging and transporting coal: carriage alone usually cost seven or eight times as much as any wayleave payments.[3]

Annual expenditure on fixed assets also included the cost of repairing and maintaining the wooden way and waggons. The cost varied according to the length of the way and was usually met by a contractor who received a tentale rent from the colliery undertakers for this purpose. At Bensham colliery, these maintenance costs amounted to only 5s a ten but the Team way cost the Liddells 10s a ten on the low-lying stretch near the Tyne and 15s a ten on the higher ground.[4] Because of the length of the way and the difficulty of the route, Cotesworth was charged as much as 16s a ten for the maintenance of his share of the Bucksnook way and waggons.[5]

At the pithead itself, capital charges included 'contingencies' like repairing or building gins, levelling coal heaps and banks, digging and repairing levels and shafts, and building branches of the waggonway to new pits, the practice of sinking new shafts instead of extending the underground workings making such investment a continuous process. However, at Bucksnook colliery in the period between July 1716 and February 1717 working costs were over seven times greater than such capital charges.[6] In 1725, it cost 5s $6\frac{3}{4}$d a chaldron to work the colliery, while capital charges were only 9d a chaldron: again a seven- or eight-fold difference. What is more, in the case of a colliery at such a distance from the river carriage and staith charges were quite often greater than the combined total

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/152: from J. Clavering, 12 Apr. 1711.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/1: from G. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1717.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/63: Cotesworth's Bucksnook account, 1725.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/12/3: 'Proposals for the Lady Carr... 25 Aug. 1713'; Ellison MSS A 35/15: from H. Liddell, 23 Dec. 1710.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/12: Bell's agreement with Cotesworth, n.d.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/5: F. Wayle's accounts, July 1716 - Feb. 1717.

of working and capital charges incurred at the pithead.[1]

If these figures point to any general conclusion, it is that the total amount of fixed and working capital invested in a colliery in the Tyne valley amounted to several thousand pounds. The author of a tract found among papers relating to the coal-owners' opposition to the 1711 Coal Bill claimed that the cost of winning a colliery anywhere in the valley was seldom less than £4,000 and was sometimes as high as £7,000; and that, assuming that the operation was successful, the working expenses could be expected to equal, if not exceed, the sum first advanced.[2] These estimates agree both with Nef's assertion that a coal-owner probably needed reserves of between £10,000 and £20,000 and with figures available for Benwell and Walker collieries, but some of the smaller collieries, for instance Urpeth and Farnacres, could probably be won and worked for as little as £3,000 or £4,000.[3] Cotesworth thought that the minimum required to bring a previously unworked colliery at Chirton into production was £3,000, and that anyone who hoped to do it for less 'is much to blame Ever to put a pick in ye Ground'.[4]

It was unfortunate, therefore, that the coal industry was recognized as being so precarious that investment 'cannot be undertaken without the Hazard of an Excessive loss'.[5] In the first place, there was always a chance that it would prove impossible to win the colliery at all, either because the coal deposits in the area were inadequate or because they were inaccessible by current mining techniques.[6] In the second, it was possible that the difficulties encountered in sinking and draining, while technically superable, could increase the financial burden of the enterprise to such an extent that it had to be abandoned. Cotesworth attributed Lambton's failure at Washington, for example, not to the apparent inadequacy of the Newcomen engine but to 'his want of estate (at least wt. he is

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/63: Cotesworth's Bucksnook account, 1725.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.
3. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 378-9; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/39: affidavits, 21 Dec. 1722; CP/1/3: from G. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1717; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: H. to G. Liddell, 27 Mar. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/30: G. Liddell to J. Meres, 6 Dec. 1717 (copy).
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to Mr. Browell, 19 Dec. 1718.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/12/19: 'G. Pitt's Answer to Sir John Clavering Barts. Proposalls', [1710-1]; Primatt, City and Country Builder, p.6.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.

pleased to dispose on this way)', and Walker, Byker and Elswick collieries had all impaired the fortunes of undertakers who had tried to win them and failed.[1] The problem was that it was impossible to calculate accurately in advance the cost of winning a colliery, so that most people had no idea how much capital would eventually be required. At Walker, for example, the viewers gave an estimate of £5,000 but admitted to George Liddell that the figure was pure guess-work 'for that Sume might Winn her & perhaps not double the sum'.[2] Coal-owners reacted to this by treating all prospective investments with great caution and weighed them up carefully on the basis of the best possible evidence.[3] They took pride in being 'Judicious undertakers' rather than 'Forward projectors' and were wary of 'projects' like the fire engine until convineed of their value.[4] However, the unreliability of all their calculations and precautions gave rise to a certain fatalism. Once Cotesworth had committed himself to joining the Liddells in Farnacres colliery he seems to have decided that, since he had 'seldom met with any adventure yt did not Exceed ye Computed charge of Wynning', there was little point in haggling over his share of the bills or even in taking much interest in the progress of the work.[5] Proprietors did their best to ensure that their enterprises had a reasonable chance of success but recognized that the outcome was always doubtful.

Even if the undertakers' efforts were successful, their capital would be tied up in a colliery whose working life in the best of circumstances was short and could be ended with dramatic suddenness by explosions or flooding.[6] Eventually, moreover, either the coal would be worked out or mining would become

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/33: to J. Meres, 25 July 1719 (see above p. 61). Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Lord W. Powlett, 7 Dec. 1714; Triewald, Short Description, p.5; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/24: Cotesworth's affidavit, 3 Jan. 1723.
2. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 377; Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/3: from G. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1717.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/35: from Sir H. Liddell, 1 Aug. 1711; A 36/47: from H. Liddell, 27 Oct. 1716.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/75: from Sir H. Liddell, 19 Mar. 1713; Carr-Ellison MSS ZCE 10/4: to J. Meres, 18 July 1719.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to G. Liddell, 13 July 1717.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d. CK/9/8: account of working..., 6/7 Jan. 1719; Ellison MSS. C 17/4: G. Liddell to C. Sanderson, 24 Oct. 1718.

uneconomical. It was possible to extract a fair amount of coal from an exhausted 'broken mine' but it usually came from the walls and pillars and led inevitably to a collapse or 'thrust' which closed the workings.[1] These natural hazards were not the only threats to colliery investments for they were also at risk by reason of a variety of factors arising out of the prevalent systems of management and organization. A colliery needed close, constant attention to maintain the efficiency of both mining and carriage, and employees could not always be trusted to provide it. Managers were sometimes too indolent or, if they worked the mine on contract, too tight-fisted to repair and extend the workings regularly, so that future production was impaired.[2] At Bucksnook, for example, it was alleged that in 1717 no new pits or drifts had been excavated and the walls were being robbed in the existing workings, while parts of the colliery were completely flooded and in others the miners were 'pudling all among wattr'.[3] Staithsmen also tended to be lax in keeping carriage charges down and maintaining the number of chaldron in a ten, so that Cotesworth was anxious to scrutinize those employed at Bucksnook when he became involved in that colliery.[4] Such personal supervision was always necessary and Cotesworth was scornful of absentee coal-owners like Pitt who 'will not Look into their affaires but suffer their Agents to Swallow their Gaine'.[5] The Montagu-Wortleys were more careful and avoided placing too much trust in managers who had no personal stake in their collieries.[6] This may explain why their local agent John Ord, on whom they depended for advice in colliery matters, sometimes held shares in their enterprises.[7]

Absentee coal-owners, however, were not the only investors whose interests were at the mercy of third parties. The prevalence of multiple partnerships as a method of financing colliery enterprise brought into the industry large numbers

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/14: affidavits, May-June 1724; Ellison MSS. A 36a/22: from H. Liddell, 4 Apr. 1716.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/186: a view of Bucksnook colliery, 8 May 1716.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/9: from G. Nixon, 16 Sept. 1717.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Wright, 18 Dec. 1716.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to G. Spearman, 2 July 1717.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/51: to G. Liddell, 19 Jan. 1723 (copy).
7. Ellison MSS. A 35/13: from H. Liddell, 16 Dec. 1710; A 36/55: from H. Liddell, 17 Jan. 1717.

of people holding shares or 'parts' which could be as small as one-one hundred and eightieth and who had little control over the running of the colliery.[1] The system encouraged a divorce of management from ownership since it was usual for the major part-holders to have 'the Direction of the Managemt' and to take decisions which bound the others without their specific consent.[2] Such arrangements could work amicably enough and in the common interest while the partners retained the 'mutual confidence' often mentioned in the original articles, but partnerships that were not bound together by ties of blood or friendship frequently ended in bitter quarrels.[3] Minor part-holders disagreed with the others about such things as the payment of expenses, the choice and conduct of managers, profit sharing, liability for debts and a host of more petty matters. At Bucksnook colliery, for example, Cotesworth refused to trust the agents employed by his partner and enemy, Thomas Brumell, calling them 'Cormorants' and insisting on separate transport arrangements for his own coal.[4] Relations between the partners were not improved when an attempt was made to alter the management while Cotesworth and Wright were away in London.[5] Disputes between Brumell, Wright and Spearman about the colliery's debts and profits, into which Cotesworth naturally was drawn, dragged on for years, and they were forced by their 'perverseness' to each other to be subject to a receiver appointed by Chancery.[6] Their open enmity led to several attempts to deprive Cotesworth of his share of the coal, often by violence, and to interminable lawsuits.[7] This was perhaps an exceptional case since few partnerships had such a turbulent history as Bucksnook but the same sort of problems occurred in many other collieries.

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1. See Ch. VII, pp. 186-8.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/170: petition to discharge M. Bell, n.d.; Elswick Documents, Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 3rd ser., vi. 46-7, 47-8.
3. Ridley MSS. ZRI 20/13: agreement for Gosforth Colliery, 29 Oct. 1719.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [G. Spearman], 17 Mar. 1717; Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/33: memorandum, 3 July 1717.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to G. Spearman, 2 July 1717; Cotesworth and Wright to Gill, 29 June 1717.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/ 4/170: petition to discharge M. Bell, n.d.; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 13 Oct. 1723; ZCE 10/6: to Mr. Peirson, 20 Aug. 1721.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 7 Apr. 1721; 12 May 1721; ZCE 10/7: to J. Banks, 11 Apr. 1725.

Other difficulties were caused by the divided ownership of coal-bearing land. Proprietors who wanted to lease the whole of a colliery had to reach separate arrangements with the owners of each third or quarter part of the mineral rights and, as Cotesworth and Liddell found at Heaton, this led to disputes and delays.[1] On the other hand, if several proprietors were working separate portions of the same colliery, boundary disputes were bound to occur, and in collieries which were communally owned, like Winlaton, friction about the amount mined by each owner or his representatives was inevitable.[2] Sub-division among both lessees and lessors could result in proprietors losing track completely of their landlords and nominal partners and becoming involved in lawsuits for non-payment of rent through no fault of their own, as Sir Henry Liddell and others did at Bensham.[3]

However, the most intricate and tortuous disputes of all were the result of wayleave controversies. All the problems arising from divided ownership of land applied in these cases and were intensified by the sheer number of properties which had to be crossed to reach the river, making it possible for the part-owner of a few yards of common grazing to disrupt an entire colliery. The case of Fawdon Field, like that of Bucksnook, is exceptional but nevertheless it illustrates the situation at its worst, for not only was 'ownership' of the land divided between those claiming respectively mineral rights, grazing rights and 'rights of inheritance' but both mineral and inheritance rights were sub-divided. The question of which of the owners had the right to authorize or prohibit the passage of Bucksnook way across the land was very confused, and confusion bred violent disputes.[4] Even in less intricate cases, however, land sales and pre-existent leases could hamper colliery owners who needed either wayleaves or watercourses for drainage.[5]

As a consequence of conditions in the industry, most proprietors spent a great deal of time fighting their way through the courts and became entangled in

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 6 Sept. 1724.
2. Benwell Estate Records MBE VI 7: memorandum, n.d.; Cotesworth MSS. CK/11/37: report on the working of Winlaton colliery, [3 Feb. 1726].
3. Ellison MSS. A 36a/6: from Sir H. Liddell, 30 May 1713; P.R.O. Chancery Proceedings, C. 5/363/13: J. Clavering v. E. Rogers & others, 1713.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 7 Apr. 1721.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to Mrs. Babington, 14 July 1724; ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 16 May 1721.

many 'plext and inconsistent Suites & Engagements'.[1] In 1717 the Bucksnook partners were waiting for the settlement of four suits which had been brought against them and of five of their own against various adversaries, and were involved in several other actions.[2] Such heavy commitments were expensive as well as time-consuming. By 1719 the 'great dispute' centred on the Bucksnook way had cost the participants £8,000, and it was to flare up again in the 1720s so that by 1723 Cotesworth alone had spent a further £2,000.[3] He wrote bitterly to one lawyer that 'Rents are triffles to such sumes as wee Spend', while even less complicated and acrimonious cases could swallow a colliery's profits for many years without a decision being reached.[4] Proprietors would have been glad to find another method of settling disputes but the combination of heavy investment and confused titles meant that, as Cotesworth's nephew wrote in 1728, 'their will all ways be something or other for to right about in ye Coal traid'.[5] Some of the suits were perhaps self-generating since the losers, if they were unwilling or unable to meet the costs and damages awarded against them, were tempted to re-open the case in the hope of reversing the verdict or at least postponing payment.[6]

Despite his clerk's claim that 'no body uses more Circumspection in the Law affaires', Cotesworth was sometimes accused by contemporaries of provoking many lawsuits by trying to squeeze vast wayleave rents from those forced to cross his land, and refusing passage if his terms were rejected.[7] These accusations have passed, by way of the polemic literature generated by coal trade politics, into the works of writers like Ashton and Sykes, Tomlinson, and Lewis, so that Cotesworth

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to G. Spearman, 24 Mar. 1720.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/714: from G. Spearman, 14 Aug. 1717.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to G. Mallaber, 11 Apr. 1719; ZCE 10/6: to Dr. Sayer, 26 Nov. 1723.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to J. Mowbray, 13 Aug. 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/172: x to J. Hebdon, 14 Oct. 1712 (copy).
5. Ellison MSS. A 36a/6: from Sir H. Liddell, 30 May 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/70: C. to R. Cotesworth, 16 Jan. 1728.
6. Lady Clavering seems to have tried this: see Carr- Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 24 Oct. 1725.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/166: from R. Wright, 23 Mar. 1723; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, Sept. 1724.

has been branded as a 'wayleave tyrant'.[1] However, this should be recognized as a partisan view of Cotesworth's position, and some weight ought to be given to his side of the argument. He certainly used his control of the south bank of the river to his own advantage and occasionally stopped the passage from certain collieries; but this was common practice and Cotesworth suffered the same treatment from others.[2] Only when he signed the Grand Alliance in 1726 did 'locking up' the ways through his estate become an inflexible policy, and it is to this period that many of the accusations belong.[3] The others derive almost exclusively from his dispute with the owners of the western collieries about wayleaves and wayleave rents for crossing Whickham common. Cotesworth claimed that he and Ramsay had been prepared to settle for a low rent or none at all, provided that they and other proprietors were allowed through the western owners' estates on the same terms.[4] This offer was refused and Clavering, Pitt and the Bucksnook owners tried to force the Bucksnook way through without paying any rent, first by claiming a licence from the previous owner of Whickham and then, when this was exposed as a fraud in Chancery in 1713, by claiming that the waggonway followed the route of a highway.[5] Cotesworth defeated this claim in turn in due course and maintained that the 6s 8d a ten rent which he demanded from those using the way was not for 'Bare passage thro' our Liberty But Chiefly to reimburse us for these Law Charges for it was all the Satisfaction we got for our Charges save 100^{L} pann for 6 years'.[6] Thus, when his adversaries complained of paying £2,000- £3,000 'for ye use of a small pcell of ground over ye Comon Waist', they omitted to mention both the reason for these charges and

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1. J. Spearman, An Enquiry into the Ancient and Present State of the County Palatine of Durham (Edin., 1729), pp.111-2; Anon, An Enquiry into the Reasons of the Advance of the Price of Coals (Lond., 1739); W. Tomlinson, North Eastern Railway (Newc., 1914), pp.6-7; Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industr p.188; Lewis, Early Wooden Railways, pp.121, 137-8.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/131: to T. Sisson, 22 Jan. 1723; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to M. Featherston, 25 May 1725.
3. Spearman, Enquiry, p.112; see Ch. V, pp. 134-5.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/9: to Mr. Bigg, 13 Oct. 1720; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to R. Shafto, 21 Mar. 1725.
5. P.R.O., C. 5/363/14: Sir John Clavering & others v. W. Ramsay & others, 1713.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 16 May 1721; ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 19 May 1721; ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 24 Oct. 1725.

the fact that they had agreed to this method of payment.[1] Moreover, Cotesworth's image as a tyrant and oppressor was not borne out by his lack of success in enforcing his rights on recalcitrant tenants.[2] In fact, the wayleave disputes which bedevilled the coal industry cannot in fairness be blamed on Cotesworth, any more than on other so-called rapacious landowners, to the exclusion of the many other factors involved.

The risks of total or partial loss involved in colliery undertakings were so great, and the fixed capital investment so heavy, that it was thought that investors deserved a very high rate of return on capital. The author of the 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade' asserted that twenty per cent would be a reasonable return, so that a colliery which had cost £10,000 to open up should yield £2,000 a year, but both he and other writers in Cotesworth's papers believed that in fact investors were lucky if they made any profit at all. In practice, the most that could be expected was six per cent and this assumed a combination of high prices and sales together with low costs: any alteration in these conditions would make inroads into the investor's 'principall stock'. However, this pessimistic view, put forward in a tract intended to emphasize the hardships of colliery enterprise, has to be weighed against evidence that some coal owners in the Tyne valley were making a reasonable profit.[3] Cotesworth believed that Lady Clavering received £1,500 a year from Bucksmoor colliery and that with good management Pitt could get £2,400 a year from Tanfield Moor, one of the best collieries in the area.[4] The Montagu-Wortleys at Benwell and Northbanks collieries were also making what contemporaries regarded as great profits.[5]

However, for every colliery yielding thousands of pounds, there were several yielding little or nothing. Actual profit figures, as opposed to optimistic estimates,

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1. Spearman, Enquiry, p.111; Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/170: petition to discharge M. Bell, n.d.; CG/4/188: articles of agreement, 14 Jan. 1716; CG/4/3: articles of agreement, 27 Feb. 1716 (copy).
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 1 Mar. 1720.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.; see above p. 67.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 14 May 1721.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/39: affidavits, 21 Dec. 1722.

are rare in Cotesworth's papers but the available evidence supports the claim made in the 'Reflections' that high returns were based on a rare and precarious conjunction of favourable circumstances. Henry Liddell and Cotesworth made a loss at Bryansleap colliery in 1713, which they blamed on carriage difficulties, but the 'handsome' profit of which they were thus deprived was only £300 a year.[1] In the upper seams of Bensham colliery they thought they would be lucky to break even while at Farnacres George Liddell considered that they had no chance of selling enough coal at a high enough price to make a 'tolerable' profit.[2] Even at Benwell, the high returns only lasted a few years and by 1722 the colliery was yielding a meagre £152. Four years later, it was closed by the collapse of the ventilation system, which suggests that they were mining the pillars and walls which supported the roof.[3]

Notwithstanding the uncertain profitability of the investment, there was no obvious shortage of entrants to the industry for there were several reasons why capital was still attracted into mining and reluctant to move out. First, the return from a good colliery like Benwell or Tanfield Moor was so good while it lasted that investors were willing to accept the risks involved. There must have been many who, like the Wear coal-owner Henry Peareth, resolved never to meddle in the coal industry again, only to be lured back by the chance of a fortune.[4] Moreover, the amount of fixed capital involved made proprietors unwilling to cut their losses and abandon an expensive and unprofitable colliery, preferring to carry on as long as they could break even or while there was a fair chance of doing so.[5] There was enough hope that perseverence would be rewarded by success to make proprietors ignore sensible advice not to throw good money after bad.[6] As Cotesworth's nephew wrote in 1728, 'their is but few yt getts into ye traid yt is willing for to be out yt promises so great'.[7] However,

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 16 Feb. 1714 (abstract).
2. Ellison MSS. A 36a/26: from H. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/30: G. Liddell to J. Meres, 14 Nov. 1717.
3. Benwell Estate Records, MBE IV 5: 'Profits of Benwell Colly from 1707 to 1722...'; MBE VI 7: memorandum, n.d.
4. Cookson MSS. ZCO VIII 1/16: H. Peareth to L. Vane, 6 Feb. 1702.
5. Ellison MSS. A 36a/11: from H. Liddell, 20 Nov. 1713.
6. Ellison MSS. A 36a/17: from H. Liddell, 23 Feb. 1714.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/70: C. to R. Cotesworth, 16 Jan. 1728.

the promise was most easily realized by those with considerable reserves of capital and credit, like the Montagu-Wortleys who could afford to spend £7,000 on Benwell colliery without any immediate return and would not have been ruined by failure.[1] Those unable to withstand great losses had to be content with small gains.

Much depended on the quality of the coal and the amount which a colliery could produce and sell. At Benwell, for example, the enormous costs of opening out and working the colliery were offset by the high quality of the coal which enabled the Montagu-Wortleys to sell up to 15,000 chaldrons a year in the early years of the century.[2] The high proportion of fixed capital costs compelled proprietors to increase production in order to reduce marginal costs, and the profit margin on each chaldron as well as the net annual return on the investment was crucially dependent on the quantity sold.[3] At Bucksnook, for example, Cotesworth received £953 on sales of 8,530 chaldrons in 1725, representing a profit margin of about 2s a chaldron, but when sales fell by half in 1726 he received only £207 because the profit margin had dropped to 1s a chaldron.[4] It was therefore in every coal owner's interest to sell as much coal as possible, but their ability to do so depended on both the quality of their product and the state of the Newcastle market.

It is clear from Cotesworth's papers that proprietors were becoming increasingly anxious about this second condition. There were many complaints about the 'decay' of trade and they are borne out by the stagnation of coal shipments from the port.[5] Indeed, the amount of coal leaving Newcastle in the coastal trade had not risen materially for fifty years and was in fact lower in the 1690s and 1700s than it had been in the 1670s and 1680s.[6] In at least one case, the

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/39: affidavits, 21 Dec. 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 22 May 1716.
2. Benwell Estate Records, MBE IV 5: 'Profits of Benwell Colly from 1707 to 1722...'.
3. See above, p. 59.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/187: 'An Acct of what profit Mr C made of his share of Bucksnook Colliery... 1725 & 1726'.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/56: from G. Liddell, 7 Sept. 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Gibson, 1 Jan. 1712; ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, Sept. 172
6. See Figure 1, p.77.

Figure 1: Coal Shipments from Newcastle to other English ports, 1661-1710

	Tens:chaldrons				
1661	16,691.9	1678	21,778.2	1695	17,097.0
1662	19,442.1	1679	19,494.8	1696	15,109.6
1663	17,874.7	1680	20,226.2	1697	18,128.0
1664	19,836.3	1681	21,894.2	1698	19,584.4
1665	12,412.4	1682	19,038.0	1699	20.700.6
1666	8,410.1	1683	21,097.2	1700	19,005.1
1667	10,642.2	1684	20,477.0	1701	21,479.5
1668	18,842.0	1685	21,365.9	1702	18,297.6
1669	17,592.0	1686	17,826.5	1703	15,217.0
1670	18,510.0	1687	19,852.8	1704	19,114.6
1671	18,924.1	1688	23,126.5	1705	17,437.9
1672	15,042.9	1689	16,766.3	1706	15,581.5
1673	15,605.3	1690	13,684.7	1707	14,142.9
1674	17,026.8	1691	17,727.0	1708	17,878.6
1675	19,410.5	1692	15,629.9	1709	19,507.5
1676	16,949.6	1693	17,965.0	1710	15,771.9
1677	19,426.8	1694	16,041.3		

Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/47: 'An annual account of all coals exported for the coast 1661 to 1710, from the Custom-hous books coastwise'. Note that 1 Ten = 10 chaldrons. These figures were compiled from official documents and ignore the vagaries to which both measures were subject in practice: see above, pp. 58-9.
Compare Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, p.260. The figures from the Hornsby MSS. which he quotes diverge from those above in 1698.

close relationship between the port's annual vend and the profit margins of individual proprietors was recognized in a colliery lease by a clause providing for a reduction in rent when shipments from the port fell below 20,000 tens, which was about the amount expected in a good year.[1] Such saving clauses no doubt depended on the lessee's bargaining power and would not be available to the majority who were completely at the mercy of market conditions that demanded reduced rather than increased production.

The root of the problem was the slackening of population growth in south-eastern England and the effect of war on demand which caused sales of household and industrial coal to level off, but the heavy duties borne by coal carried from Newcastle to London were not calculated to improve the situation. After 1711, the duties never amounted to less than 8s a London chaldron, which was roughly half the size of a Newcastle chaldron, and they increased the price to the consumer by at least 33 per cent, which was bound to cause a contraction in demand.[2] This increase was especially harmful to collieries producing a high proportion of small or poor quality coal selling at a reduced price. If the best coal sold in London for 27s a chaldron, the duties accounted for just under a third of the price but the proportion increased to three-eighths on coal selling 3s cheaper, and both the price-differential and the fiscal burden could be considerably larger.[3] The effect of increased duties on their trade was painfully obvious to Cotesworth and Henry Liddell, since they were concerned in so many poor collieries, and there is a genuine note of desperation in Cotesworth's letters to his influential correspondent, Thomas Gibson, pleading for government encouragement for the trade.[4]

One of the Tyne proprietors' most vociferous complaints against the duties was that they gave its neighbour and rival Sunderland an unfair advantage. Not only did ships loading at Sunderland avoid the 1s a chaldron levy imposed on Newcastle

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1. Cookson MSS. ZCO VIII 1/42: Statement of the case, 1727; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/159: from M. White, 21 Apr. 1711.
2. Ashton and Sykes, Coal Industry, pp.247-8; Philalethes, A Free and Impartial Enquiry into the Reasons of the present Extravagant Price of Coals (Lond., 1729), pp.4-5. N.B. one London chaldron equalled just under half a Newcastle chaldron.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/58: from H. Liddell, 22 Apr. 1712.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/23: from H. Liddell, 8 Feb. 1711; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Gibson, 28 Apr. 1713. For Gibson see Romney Sedgwick, House of Commons, ii. 62-3.

in 1600 in exchange for its charter but it was alleged that, by loading outside the harbour, they evaded other duties and port charges and were therefore able to give masters who took on coal there a fifteen per cent advantage over those who made the longer voyage to the older port.[1] The Sunderland owners were also accused of giving larger measure than Newcastle coal owners to harm the older port's trade.[2] These accusations (like those against members of Newcastle corporation with interests in the outports) were prompted by the growing threat which the smaller ports represented to Newcastle's existing trade, and by the success of these outports in absorbing any increase in the market from which the Tyne proprietors might otherwise have benefited.[3] Their share of the market was growing rapidly and by 1710 the outports accounted for at least a third of the coal shipped from the north-east coast.[4] This led to pressure to lengthen the shipping season from the Tyne in order to exploit more fully the spring and autumn trade, at which times the Wear proprietors found it difficult to bring coal down to the

Figure 2: Coal Shipments from Newcastle and its principal outports, 1710

	coast	overse	total
Newcastle	15,771.9	1,037.5	16,809.4
Sunderland	6,715.1	1,018.2	7,733.3
Culler cotes	605.1	13.8	618.9
Blyth & Seaton Sluice	423.0	9.5	432.5
	23,515.1	2,079.0	25,594.1

Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/48: 'Exportation from Xmas 1709-Xmas 1710'.
N.B. the figures represent tens and chaldrons.

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to x, 14 Mar. 1719.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/71: 'A Comparison of the quantities..., 2-5 June 1710'.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to [T. Gibson], 1 Jan. 1712; see Ch. I, pp. 21, 25-6.
4. See Figure 2, above.

river.[1] However, such manoeuvres could not overcome the advantage which lower production costs gave to coal-owners both in the Wear valley and on the Northumberland coast, and indeed only increased the problems of the industry in the Newcastle area. When the market was already saturated and more coal being produced that the trade could absorb, a longer shipping season was of doubtful value.[2]

The Tyne proprietors felt compelled by their heavy capital investments to maximize production but increased production without increased sales merely converted part of the colliery's working capital into an illiquid asset which tended to depreciate with storage.[3] Despite this, the majority remained committed to over-production: as Cotesworth noted, 'ye cheife aim of most of 'em Now is to get but quantity enough & all is well, tho... that very Quty must end in destruction'.[4] Their desperate need to sell as much coal as possible in an over-stocked market led to a price war which the industry could ill afford, for it was not only Newcastle's vend which seemed to have stagnated at the turn of the century. The coal-owners' difficulties were increased by the fact that the saturation of the market was holding prices down at a level which took no account of either the rising cost of mining or general inflation: in 1585 much discontent had been caused in London by a decision to raise the Newcastle price to 9s a chaldron but in 1710 Cotesworth was selling coal for shipment to London at prices ranging from 9s to 11s, while some of his shipcoal fetched only 7s.[5] The colliery proprietors were thus caught in a seemingly inescapable spiral of rising costs, over-production, and static or falling prices, but many of them appeared impervious to the danger. John Ord commented bitterly, 'some of us looks noe further than Compareing his neighbrs [vend] with his own & if that look bigger from thence makes his Judgmt'.[6]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to T. Gibson, 19 Feb. 1717.
2. See Ch. IV, pp. 93-4.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to C. Sanderson, 21 Oct. 1712.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712.
5. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, pp.2, 5-6; Cotesworth MSS. CK/14/2: A. Dick's account, Dec. 1709-May 1710; CK/4/12: estimate of working Morrisfield, 1714; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to E. Wortley, 19 Mar. 1725.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/110: from J. Ord, 18 Feb. 1715.

Such intense competition caused a division of interests among the Tyne valley coal-owners. First, it seemed that if the over-production and consequent reduction in price continued unchecked some collieries would be driven from the market, leaving those proprietors with 'longer purses' free to exploit a situation in which demand now exceeded supply.[1] This overlapped with another, perhaps more fundamental, division. Nef ascribed this split to the natural differences in the costs of production at different mines, which enabled the owners of collieries with low costs to sell large quantities at a reduced price and made them indifferent to the fate of mines that were more expensive to work. However, the evidence which Nef cites in support of this theory quite clearly demonstrates that the main division was in fact between those whose collieries yielded coals 'of the best sort' and the less fortunate majority.[2] Costs of production varied widely, as Nef pointed out, but the decisive factor seems to have been that some proprietors could count on a large enough demand and a high enough price for their superior product to make vastly increased production worth their while, however ruinous it might be for their neighbours.[3] These 'Spoilers of ye trade' tended to be those with longer purses, like Pitt or the Montagu-Wortleys, who were thus doubly armoured against the effects of over-production.[4] However, despite Cotesworth's self-interested claim that all the coal in the river was equally good, many collieries, especially the older, shallower ones, fell below the standards demanded by dealers and consumers and found it necessary to cut prices and make concessions to sell at all.[5] They bitterly resented the large sales made by more fortunate rivals even though they were in some cases allied with them against another group in the industry. The great fear of all the owners of collieries in the traditional areas of activity near the river was that the passage of a wayleave bill would, by throwing open all routes to the Tyne, flood

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/56: 'Reasons why the Bill... is needless', [1711]. This argument was often employed to justify combinations in the trade: see the Commons Report, pp.15-6, 20-3.
2. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 118; see above, p. 76.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/110: from J. Ord, 18 Feb. 1715.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 19 Sept. 1712; Ellison MSS. A 36a/4: from H. Liddell, 8 May 1713.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/503: to T. Gibson, 3 Apr. 1716; Ellison MSS. A 35/15: from H. Liddell, 23 Dec. 1710; A 36a/26: from H. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1716.

the market with so much coal from the new 'western' collieries like Tanfield Moor and Bucksnook that the poorer collieries would be ruined and even the survivors would be severely weakened.[1] The prospect of such a disaster encouraged the proprietors of the older collieries to form a defensive alliance but at the same time it also prompted a feverish search for collieries that would allow their owners to swim with the tide. Cotesworth's own relentless efforts to win Gateshead Park and Heaton collieries which he thought would prove as good as any in the area was perhaps a symptom of this general fear.[2]

These divisions among the Tyne coal owners meant that their only common ground was a shared perplexity in the face of their overwhelming difficulties: large and increasing capital costs, over-production, cut-throat competition for a share of a static market, and the entrance of new collieries into an industry that could barely support the existing ones. It was impossible for them to act against rising costs but most of them seem to have thought that those involved in the marketing and distribution of coal could well afford to allow the producers a greater return on their investment in the form of decreased overheads and increased prices. However, the only realistic method of achieving increased returns in the prevailing market conditions was to combine to regulate production and this was in direct conflict with the pressure for maximizing production exerted by the capital structure of the industry.[3] As a result, each section of the mining community wanted a cut-back in production at the expense of their rivals; of the Tyne or the Wear, of the western or older collieries, of the inferior collieries which would soon succomb to natural wastage, or of the better collieries which could afford to allow others a 'fair' share of the market. Such divisions of interest imposed many constraints on the coal-owners' freedom of action and, unless they could find some way of sinking their differences and acting together, it was unlikely that they could prevail against the powerful and often united interests ranged against them.

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to Sir H. Liddell, 7 Feb. 1721; Ellison MSS. A 36/9: from H. Liddell, 20 May 1714.
2. Ellison MSS. A 36/38: from H. Liddell, 19 June 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/83: from G. Liddell, 27 Jan. 1723.
3. P. Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade, 1550-1850 (Camb. Mass., 1938), pp.136-8.

CHAPTER IV

The Coal Trade

Although as has been mentioned coal was exported from the Tyne to a great number of ports abroad as well as to many English coastal towns, to contemporaries 'the coal trade' meant specifically the trade from the north-east coast to London.[1] Only a very small proportion of Newcastle's total shipments went abroad and Cotesworth's correspondence contains few references to exports, although his correspondents sent occasional news of current prices and seem to have kept him informed about foreign markets.[2] The overseas market was looked on as an outlet for coal of inferior quality which the London market would not accept and efforts were made to promote exports only in exceptional circumstances.[3] Nor are there many references to the English market apart from London. Most of the coal carried in the coastal trade went to eastern and south-eastern England, and Nef estimated that 66 per cent of it went to London and the Thames valley which was easily the largest single market.[4] During the early part of the eighteenth century, London was supplied almost exclusively from Northumberland and Durham, a predominance that was based on the low cost of transport by sea and was not broken until the construction of a widespread canal and railway network.[5] It was the demand from the capital which was thought to be the crucial determinant of Newcastle's 'vend', and the London trade was said to be the standard and set the price for the rest of the trade.[6] The coal-owners' efforts to secure a greater return on their investment were therefore concentrated on the London trade and the London market, but

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1. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 79.
2. See Ch. III, fig. 2, p.79; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 20 Mar. 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/842: from J. Albert, 12 Jan. 1715.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/30: G. Liddell to J. Meres, 14 Nov. 1717 (copy); CK/3/13: minutes, 16 Jan. 1711.
4. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 79-83.
5. Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, p.194.
6. Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, p.12.

unfortunately from their point of view there were other interest groups concerned in the trade who often stood in their way.

Figure 3: The Newcastle Coal Trade

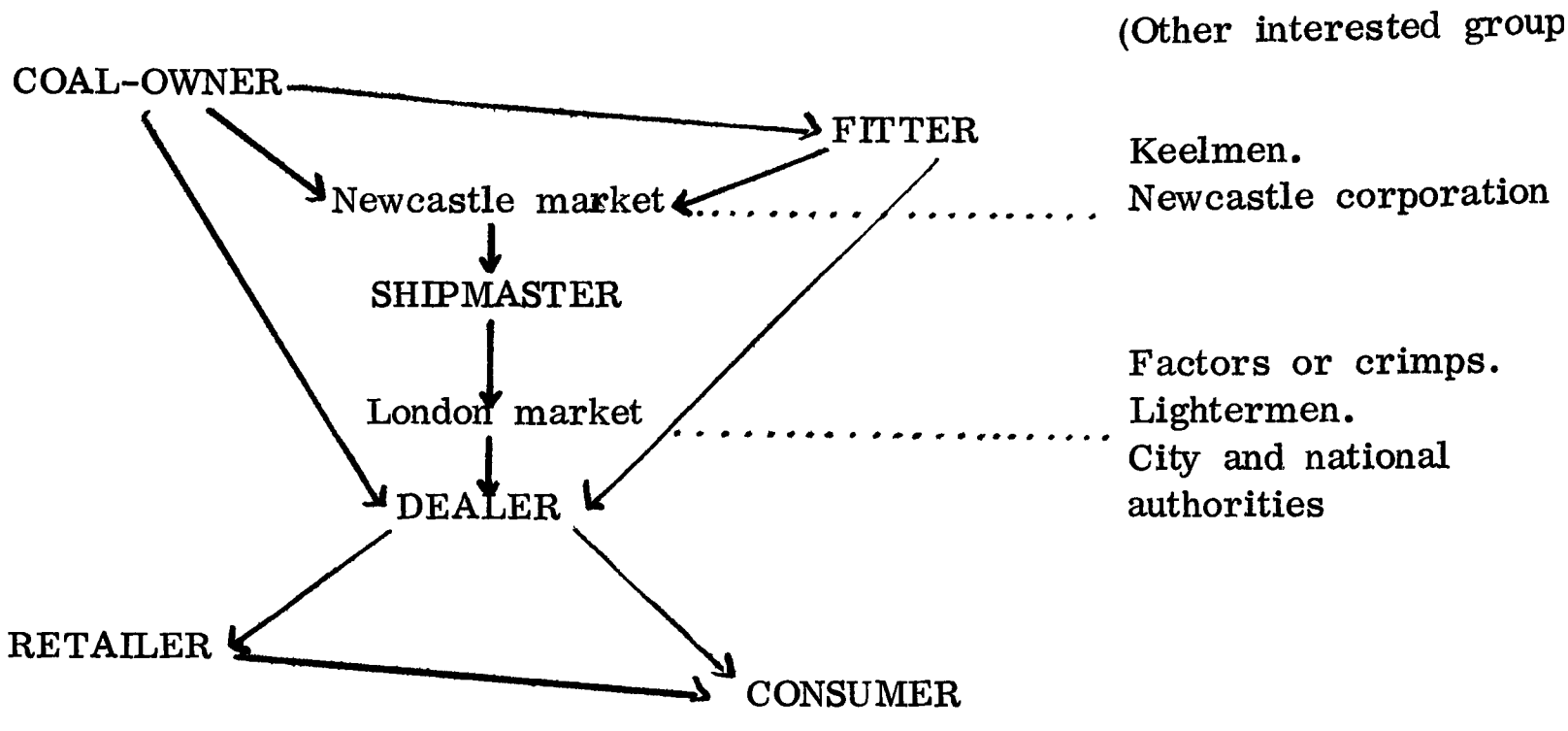

Figure 3 represents a simplified flow diagram showing the passage of coal from a colliery staith in the Tyne valley to a London consumer via the various interests involved in the trade either as principals or indirectly. The first group with whom the proprietors had to deal were the fitters, who were agents hired on a yearly basis to arrange sales between their principals and shipmasters, to hire keels and keelmen to move the coal downstream from the staith, to collect notes or bills from the masters as payment, and go with them to ensure the payment or security of the numerous local and national duties with which the trade was burdened.[1] For this they were paid either a 'fittage' charge per chaldron or an annual salary. They were quite often employed by several proprietors and the coal-owners suspected them of using the leverage given them by over-production to play one employer off against another for their own financial gain.[2] Some fitters also acted as principals in the trade, either buying coal

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1. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 440; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/60: 'Names & offices of sevral agents employed...', [1711].
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/52: from G. Liddell, 24 Nov. 1721; see below, pp. 98-102.

outright from colliery owners or working their own mines, but this was rare and most were simply intermediaries.[1] Because fittage payments were based on the volume of coal shipped and not on the price obtained, fitters often came into conflict with their principals about the latter's efforts to regulate production.

In their opposition to regulation of the trade the fitters were often aided by Newcastle corporation, which drew substantial revenues from the coal trade and was therefore hostile to efforts to cut production. The possibilities of disorder among the keelmen and miners employed in and around the town if there were to be a significant reduction in shipments, and therefore in their wages, also influenced the corporation's attitude to the coal-owners' aspirations and were usually given prominence in any campaign waged against them.[2] Many fitters were members of the corporation which had close links with the Hostmen's Company to which all the fitters belonged, and many keelmen and coal-owners believed that the magistrates, fitters and company shared the same interests and acted in concert to preserve them.[3]

Beyond the fitters and their Newcastle allies stood the shipmasters, who were usually responsible for all the business connected with their vessel, including buying the coal at Newcastle and selling it at London, as well as hiring seamen, victualling and navigating.[4] Masters who owned all or part of their ships shared the coal-owners' interest in the price of coal since their profits and livelihood depended on it. Sometimes, however, the colliers were owned by people concerned in other branches of the trade, in which case the master might have little or no responsibility for the purchase and sale of the coal and received a salary which depended on the number of voyages they made every year, not on the profit or loss of their trade.[5]

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1. See below, p.96.
2. Fewster, 'The Keelmen of Tyneside in the Eighteenth Century', Durham Univ. Journal, 1 (1957), p.33; see Ch. V, p.120.
3. Anon, The Case of the Poor Skippers and Keel-men of Newcastle (c.1712); see below, pp.96-7.
4. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 441.
5. See below, pp.104-5.

As this indicates, the London coal market at Billingsgate could be forestalled by agreements made between the powerful wholesale dealers who bought most of the coal and other groups concerned in the trade, such as the proprietors, fitters, shipowners or masters.[1] The dealers employed lightermen to move coal up the Thames from the Pool of London to their own wharves, then sold it either to retailers or directly to industrial consumers. The dealers had an obvious interest in depressing the price they paid the master or coal-owner, as well as in pushing up the price they themselves received: in the former, they were wholeheartedly supported by the London consumers, whose empha tic demands and high expectations dominated the trade. Their demands differed according to the uses for which the coal was intended: smiths wanted only the strongest 'caking' coal, while brewers, glassmakers, sugar boilers and other industrial consumers preferred coal of 'lesser strength', and householders asked for still more 'open' varieties.[2] However, the most important feature of their demand was its relative inelasticity. The capital's coal consumption seems to have risen steadily during Cotesworth's career, from an average of about 300,000 London chaldrons a year at the turn of the century to about 400,000 chaldrons in 1729, but there was no sudden upsurge in demand and contemporary observers saw no reason to expect one.[3] Nor did Newcastle appear to benefit from the gradual growth in consumption, for demand for coal shipped from the Tyne remained static during these years.[4] The keelmen's strike of 1710 provides an interesting illustration of the inelasticity of the market, for in 1711 it produced feverish activity at Billingsgate earlier in the season than usual, presumably as dealers and customers caught out by the scarcity and consequent high prices of the previous year hurried to make sure of their supplies.[5] Henry Liddell wrote to Cotesworth from London to make hay while the sun shone and ship as much of their Bensham coal as possible, for dealers reported that the town was more than half supplied with coal for the year.[6]

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1. See below, pp.105-6.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.; Nef, Coal Industry, i. 112-3. 'Strength' was in inverse proportion to size.
3. Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 228; Commons Journals, xxi. 370; Anon, Letter to Sir William Strickland, p.16.
4. See Ch. III, pp.76-7.
5. For the keelmen's strike see Ch. V, p.120.
6. Ellison MSS. A 35/36: from H. Liddell, 14 June 1711.

A month later, the coal trade had almost ground to a halt, for the market was glutted.[1]

Over-production and a stagnant market made it difficult for the coal-owners to raise the price they were paid at Newcastle, which was in their opinion ridiculously low.[2] As Cotesworth pointed out, accusations of profiteering were hard to sustain when the price of a London chaldron in Newcastle was only 5s but such accusations were frequent and insistent.[3] The London consumers probably knew nothing of the pit head price and were preoccupied with the admittedly burdensome price which they themselves had to pay. The increase in the London price in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was partly the result of the general pressure of war-time inflation, which is credited with the rise from 18s to 40s a chaldron between 1702 and 1704, of the upward spiral of duties, and of the power of the dealers about which the consumers could do little - but it made them vigilant against anything likely to increase their burden.[4] To the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, any rise in price at Newcastle was an excessive rise and they were ready to call on parliament to protect them.[5] The coal-owners viewed London's close interest in their affairs with dismay but could do little to evade it, especially as both the City and national authorities, like those of Newcastle itself, had a vested interest in the revenue generated by the coal trade as well as in the preservation of public order.[6]

Another powerful group with an interest in checking the coal-owners' freedom of action was the dealers, whose desire to force down the price in the Pool was reinforced by the need to divert public attention away from their own responsibility for the consumers' difficulties. However, they did not always succeed in escaping notice, and complaints about the domination of the Billingsgate market by a ring of powerful dealers were fairly frequent. Contemporaries

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1. Ellison MSS. A 35/33: from H. Liddell, 17 July 1711.
2. See Ch. III, p. 80.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to E. Wortley, 19 Mar. 1725.
4. Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, p.223.
5. Commons Journals, xxi. 345, 739-40.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/31: from F. Johnson, 7 Mar. 1723.

believed that the dealers' power had its origins in the Act passed in 1700 to amalgamate the companies of the watermen and the lightermen, which confined the operation of barges or lighters in the metropolitan area to members of the new company. This would not have been so significant if coal had come from many sources, but since the only source of supply was the north-east coast and it was virtually impossible to deliver coal to customers except by lighter, control over river transport gave the company an opportunity to exploit the market.[1] Already in 1703 the Middlesex Justices were claiming that buyers had little choice but to accept the coal and prices which the richer lightermen offered, and could no longer themselves make direct contact with shipmasters at Billingsgate.[2] Despite the denials of the company, its opponents insisted that the lightermen and coal buyers were 'opulent, and a few in number', and that they operated a well-organized monopoly.[3] The Cotesworth papers confirm the dealers' claims that in fact there were a large number of them but it is clear that the market was dominated by a group whom Liddell called the 'great Dons' who easily outweighed the rest.[4] Indeed, the constitution of the company encouraged the concentration of power in the hands of a small number of 'Rulers' and this contributed to a situation in which it was alleged that the majority of coal brought to London was sold to only ten or fifteen dealers.[5] However, these dealers were not exclusively lightermen and by no means all coal buyers or lightermen formed part of the inner ring.[6] As the Middlesex Justices noticed, the richer lightermen were encouraging people outside the trade to form partnerships or looser working arrangements with them and were using their money to help control the market; and a list of those with coal in Southwark warehouses at that time includes as many brewers and sugar bakers as lightermen.[7] Cotesworth's correspondent John Nicholson seems to have been one of those dealers referred to by the Justices since he was in fact a member of the Woodmongers' Company and one of the

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1. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 389, 409-10.
2. Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 236-7.
3. Commons Journals, xxi. 370.
4. Ellison MSS. A 36/2: from H. Liddell, 1 Apr. 1714.
5. Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, p.203; Commons Journals, xxi. 370, 372.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/46: 'The Humble petition of the free Hoastmen...', [1703]; Commons Journals, xxi. 373, 518.
7. Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 237-8.

principal salt importers: he was however also a close associate of the lighterman Edmund Blunkett and well enough established to apply for and get Victualling Board contracts for coal.[1] All the members of the ruling faction of dealers, whether they were lightermen or their associates, operated within the protection and the privileges of the Lightermen's Company and used the control over river transport which this gave them to 'spread' as widely as possible the prices at which they bought and sold coal.

They were aided in this endeavour by the seasonal and unpredictable nature of the coal trade. One of the trade's most characteristic features was that it stopped for the winter shortly after Michaelmas and began again in early spring when the weather was thought to have improved enough to make the east coast reasonably safe.[2] Eight months was considered a long enough season to keep the London market supplied but there were seasonal variations in the trade within this period.[3] The corporation of London reported to the Lords in 1703 that the main demand fell around July, when buyers began to provide their stocks for the winter, and that two-thirds of the total imports had arrived by midsummer.[4] This seems to be borne out by figures sent to Cotesworth in 1716, covering imports at London from January up to 10 August, which show a sudden upsurge of demand in June and July.[5] Since the majority of consumers were unable to store coal during the summer shipping season, the consequence was that they were effectively separated from the original market and from the shipmasters and had little idea of the price of coal in the Pool.[6] Interruptions in trade during the season itself contributed to this separation and to the leverage which it gave to the dealers. The long line of communication between the Tyne and London made the trade vulnerable to interruption by the vagaries of the weather no less than by those of human behaviour. Industrial action by pitmen, waggonmen,

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 22 June 1718; P.R.O., Admiralty, Victualling Department Minutes, 111/16: 24 June 1719.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 15 Sept. 1724; Commons Journals, xxi. 371; Nef, Coal Industry, i. 396; J.C., Compleat Collier, pp.20-1.
3. Commons Journals, xxi. 372.
4. Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 234.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/358: from T. Will[iford], 14 Aug. 1716.
6. Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, p.12.

keelmen or shipmasters could all cause disruption, but the most common threat to the trade came from the weather. It could take as little as seven days to sail from London to Newcastle, but contrary winds could prolong the voyage for as long as a month and in 1703 one convoy was delayed in Yarmouth roads for 25 days.[1]

In order to make full use of these irregularities in the trade, dealers needed considerable resources. The capital requirements of financing stocks for future sale were heavy, since they included the cost of labour and storage facilities as well as of the coal itself.[2] Moreover, since overheads were proportionately less heavy if the annual turnover was large, and it was possible to obtain rebates and discounts from masters if the whole cargo was taken, the trade favoured those dealers who could afford to maintain a larger turnover.[3] These considerations explain why lightermen were forming alliances with wealthy men outside the company to multiply their own resources of capital and credit. They also account for the division within the market between the great and lesser dealers. Ashton and Sykes believed that this was the result of the Lightermen's Company constitution but the account of the London market given by Henry Liddell in his letters to Cotesworth between 1710 and 1716 suggests that the constitution may have been the consequence, rather than the cause, of the existence of an inner ring, whose power rested on their command of capital and the crucial role of financing stocks.[4] It was a source of great annoyance to Cotesworth and Liddell that the lesser dealers, although they were in the majority, were of little use to them, since it was unlikely that they would be able to guarantee large enough sales and, if they did so, it would have to be on the coal-owners' credit rather than their own. The proprietors, who had enough difficulties of their own without shouldering those of the dealers, were forced to rely on those whom Henry Liddell called the 'great Dons' or the 'Ten'.[5]

Such men had a stranglehold on the market. One of their supporters wrote in 1730 that it was of no consequence to the consumer whether there were fifteen

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 229.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/53: from H. Liddell, 28 Feb. 1712.
3. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 396-8.
4. See above, p. 88.
5. Ellison MSS. A 35/23: from H. Liddell, 8 Feb. 1711.

or fifteen hundred dealers at Billingsgate, since demand was the crucial determinant of price and this was inelastic; but it is impossible to ignore the opportunities which the pattern of the coal trade gave to the small number of men who were said to buy two-thirds of the coal imported into London.[1] One of them admitted in 1729 that he sold 25 or 26,000 chaldron a year, nearly one-sixteenth of the total imports into the Pool, and the leverage which he and his associates possessed was immense.[2] Ashton and Sykes estimated that over the century as a whole ordinary lightermen made a total profit from transport and dealing of about 2s a London chaldron, but the masters had vivid memories of dealers buying at 24s and selling at 40s.[3] Oldner, one of the 'Ten', claimed that masters and dealers 'catch as catch can', but the masters were clearly at a disadvantage because of their habit of moving in fleets of as many as four hundred ships.[4] Since the dealers were kept informed about the movement of these fleets and the masters knew that they were coming onto a limited market, the dealers were able to squeeze and get the better of them in the sale of their coal.[5] They insisted that ships were unloaded before a price was fixed for the cargo and any master who tried to set one himself was 'marked' and left to kick his heels while the rest of the fleet was unloaded. A ship which came in ahead of the fleet was simply held up until the others arrived and the price fell. Since they avoided written and witnessed agreements, the dealers considered themselves at liberty to pay what and when they liked and to demand rebates on the next cargo brought by a master for coal they had supposedly bought at market price. A favourite tactic was to buy up most of the coal carried by a fleet at a rock-bottom price and then take the rest at a higher one as an excuse for raising the market.[6]

The masters had little choice but to accept what they were offered, since the alternative was to be 'blacked' and forced to sell off their cargo in small lots

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1. Anon, Letter to Sir William Strickland, pp.22-4; Commons Journals, xxi. 370.
2. Commons Journals, xxi. 372.
3. Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, p.204; Commons Journals, xxi. 370.
4. Commons Journals, xxi. 372; Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 228-31.
5. Ellison MSS. A 35/63: from H. Liddell, 7 Aug. 1712.
6. Commons Journals, xxi. 370-1; Anon, The Frauds and Abuses of the Coal-Dealers (Lond., 1747), pp.10-11.

among the wharfingers, which invariably involved them in a loss.[1] It was not simply that the majority of masters did not care about the price and were content with a quick turn-round and their wages: they really had little alternative since a delay of six weeks in the Pool on only one trip could cause a collier to miss the next voyage and would achieve very little for either the owner or the master.[2] This situation led to the introduction of an intermediary between the master and dealer, by 1711 referred to as a crimp, husband, agent or factor. The crimp could perform several services for the masters, for example arranging the supply of labour to unload ships or helping with the payment of duties: their main function, however, was to try to prevent the masters being over-reached by the dealers.[3] A man like Nicholas Furs, for instance, who was in 1720 the 'Cashier and undertaker' for most of the Yarmouth ships in the London trade, was in a stronger bargaining position than any of his clients would be on their own.[4] This position would be improved further if the crimp had the resources to store coal himself and supply masters with credit for their next cargo, and in fact Cotesworth's fitter was accepting Furs' notes as early as 1710, along with bills on dealers like Robert Godfrey and masters' own notes.[5] The relationship between crimps and dealers was, however, confused because those most ideally placed to act as crimps were the dealers themselves, and men like Williford filled both roles, no doubt to their own advantage.[6] There were repeated efforts to prevent dealers acting as crimps from selling to their own agents in trust for themselves, none of which seem to have had much effect until the 1730s.[7] Meanwhile, coal-owners who reached agreements to sell through crimps like Furs rather than through the dealers risked the dealers' displeasure and Cotesworth wanted the details of one such agreement kept secret even from his own fitter.[8] By and large the 'vermin', as Henry Liddell called the dealers, continued to squeeze the masters.[9]

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1. Ellison MSS. A 36/28: from H. Liddell, 18 Jan. 1715.
2. Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, pp.21-2; Commons Report, p.56.
3. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 431.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to C. Sanderson, 15 Apr. 1720.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/74: Dick's account, Jan. 1710 - Feb. 1711.
6. Commons Journals, xxi. 369-70, 517.
7. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 86; F.R.S. Smith, Sea-coal for London (Lond., 1961), pp.48, 70-2.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to N. Furs, 1 June 1718.
9. Ellison MSS. A 35/71: from H. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1712.

The shipping interest was weakened in its struggles by over-capitalization. The coal trade provided employment for vast numbers of colliers. A thousand sail were said to be involved in carrying coal by 1729, and at least a quarter of them were engaged in the London trade.[1] The size of these vessels varied between 200 and 400 tons at this date, but there was some dispute between different interests in the trade as to whether the average capacity was higher or lower than 200 chaldron, which was about 266 tons.[2] The actual number of ships engaged in the trade at any one time could vary with the price in London, since the larger vessels at least were known to turn to other employment when prices fell.[3] With an eight-month shipping season, each vessel was said to make an average of eight return voyages a year.[4] Cotesworth did once claim that only four voyages a year were made from the Tyne but he may have been understating the case to fit his argument in the particular circumstances.[5] Certainly the number of voyages per vessel may have been curtailed by the convoy system in wartime but even in such conditions Cotesworth's figure seems rather low.[6] There is indeed evidence that the number of voyages made each year was increasing.

This increased activity was one symptom of the accumulating troubles of the shippers. They faced the same problems as the coal owners for, while the price paid for their cargoes was held down by the dealers and by public opinion, they were forced to absorb vastly increased costs, particularly those of wages in a labour market drastically curtailed by impressment.[7] As the return on each unit was eroded by rising costs, the shippers, like the producers, were tempted to take the line of least resistance and maintain their dwindling profits by increasing their turnover. The shipping season was extended until it started in February and ended in December as masters tried to run more voyages in the year: by the end

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1. Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, p.12; Commons Journals, xx. 372.
2. Commons Journals, xxi. 517; Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, p.31. N.B. the average capacity was increasing, see below, p. 94.
3. Ellison MSS. A 36/8: from H. Liddell, 13 May 1714.
4. Commons Journals, xxi. 372, 517.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Sir G. [Heathcote], 17 Mar. 1724.
6. See Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 228-31.
7. Commons Journals, xxi. 372.

of the eighteenth century the winter lay-off period had disappeared altogether while between two and five more voyages were being made.[1] The trend towards larger ships, which were cheaper to run and had brought large profits in the seventeenth century, continued so that in the first quarter of the eighteenth century the average capacity of a collier increased from 120-240 chaldron to 260-360 chaldron, so that the average cargo must have increased considerably although the actual numbers of ships involved showed no sign of falling off.[2]

Given an inelastic demand, the result of over-capitalization was predictable. The first ships of the season arrived before the warehouses were empty and consequently fetched disappointing prices, which grew worse as the year went on and more ships arrived.[3] In July 1711, for example, few masters were clearing £10 profit a voyage, while the majority were forced by the losses they were making to lay up their ships.[4] In evidence before a Commons enquiry in 1729, not only the masters but also coal-owners and dealers with shipping interests reported that they were failing to get a reasonable return on their investment and were in fact suffering considerable losses.[5] Cotesworth's friends also reported the losses made by shipping when trade had run into a 'tempestuous shallow stream' but, while they recognized the shippers' problems, they were inclined to blame them on the masters' refusal to take the coal-owners' good advice.[6] George Liddell was characteristically blunt: one major reason for the low price of coal was, he said, 'there being too many Ships in the Trade & many of these Ships having Masters of great passions and little Reason'.[7] Fifty years later the surplus of shipping was still being blamed for bringing down the price and destroying the producers' profits.[8]

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1. Ellison MSS. A 36/21: from H. Liddell, Nov. 1714; Commons Report, pp. 46, 92, 96; Anon, Observations on the Coal-Trade in the Port of Newcastle (n.d.), p.55.
2. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 390-2, ii. 95; Commons Journals, xxi. 372.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/53: from H. Liddell, 28 Feb. 1712.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/33: from H. Liddell, 17 July 1711.
5. Commons Journals, xxi. 369, 372, 373, 516-7.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/152: from J. Clavering, 12 Apr. 1711; Ellison MSS. A 36a/3: from Sir H. Liddell, 18 Apr. 1713.
7. Ellison MSS. A 32/21: G. Liddell to H. Ellison, 14 Jan. 1729.
8. Anon, Observations on the Coal-Trade, pp.54-5.

One cogent reason for the coal-owners' irritation was that the over-capitalization of the trade threatened their own position as well as that of the shippers. It has long been recognized that the ability to drive a good bargain with the London buyers was as important to the shipmaster's position as his knowledge of seamanship, for his owners' profit depended on it; and this ability was as necessary at Newcastle as it was at London. As the coal-owners faced similar problems of over-capitalization, the masters were able to force down the prices on the Newcastle market by encouraging competition, aided by the fact that they did not have to face a strong, united interest, able to enforce and exploit their exclusive legal privileges as the London dealers did, for in Newcastle the producers and fitters were divided among themselves and against each other.[1]

There was in fact a possible foundation for a similar united front on the Tyne based on the privileges and organization of the Hostmen's company, which had since the sixteenth century claimed a monopoly over the coal trade in the river. In the sixteenth century its members had used this monopoly to acquire mines of their own, or at least large parts of them, from producers outside the company who were unable to dispose of their coal except on the Hostmen's terms.[2] The company soon controlled all the most profitable mines on the river and by 1600 the highest offices of both corporation and company were in the hands of the largest mine owners, who found them useful in suppressing rivals outside the company and in regulating competition among themselves by means of their privileges and disciplinary powers.[3] However, as the century progressed the company lost its usefulness to these Hostmen mine-owners. Pressure from within the corporation had compelled them to admit members of other town guilds, who were anxious to share in the profits of the coal trade, and apprenticeship also increased the numbers of those who were not primarily coal-owners but instead took over the job of intermediary between the coal-owners and the shipmasters which had been performed by the owners' own servants or factors. The producers

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1. See Ch. III, pp. 81-2 for divisions among the producers.
2. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, pp. xxxi-ii.
3. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 125-6.

were powerless to prevent the transformation of the company into a fraternity of fitters, who accepted work from all coal-owners whether they were members or not and could not be prevented from prejudicing their employers' interests to suit their own.[1] The change in the character of the Hostmen was so far advanced by 1703 that a brief presented to the Attorney General in that year described its members simply as fitters.[2] There were still coal-owners in the company but the gulf between the two groups was so great that the producers tended to co-operate and consult with the mine-owners outside the company rather than with the fitters. Cotesworth referred in a letter to a correspondent to two separate 'fraternays', one of the fitters and one of the coal-owners, which reflected the profound split in the company.[3] Ridley and Rudston, who were fitters as well as mine-owners, were the exceptions which proved the rule, and even Ridley's interest in fitting became increasingly perfunctory as his coal holdings grew.[4]

However, in contrast with the domination of the Lightermen's company by its rulers, neither group succeeded in establishing firm control over the Hostmen's company and in exploiting its privileges in their interests. Earlier writers had assumed that the transformation of the company by the influx of 'trading brethren' was accompanied by the development of the fitters into an organized and dominant group, controlling the coal trade through a monopoly over the keels, but Sweezy maintained that the evidence cited by Dendy and Nef in fact demonstrated the continuing dominance of the coal-owners.[5] The Cotesworth papers seem to indicate that the issue in the struggle was not yet decided but they bear out Nef's contention that control of the trade was closely linked with control of the keels. Cotesworth and his friends were alive to any threat to their friendly relationship with the keelmen and cultivated the idea that the keelmen's true interest lay in supporting the coal-owners.[6] A running battle was fought in the early eighteenth century over the control of the keelmen's charity which even an outsider like

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1. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, p. xlviii; Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition, pp. 20-1.
2. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, p. 162.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to T. Slyford, 15 May 1719.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CJ/3/15: 'A List of the fitters' names...', n.d.
5. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 98, 132-3; Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition, pp. 22-4.
6. Ellison MSS. A 35/10: from H. Liddell, 4 Dec. 1710.

Defoe recognized could be used to 'enslave the poor men' to the fitters and magistrates and 'thereby ... make a monopoly of the coal trade'.[1] A Bill designed to transfer control to the Hostmen was described as a 'fitters' plot' by Henry Liddell and was defeated in the Lords in 1711 with the aid of a counter-petition from twenty-five 'trading Hostmen', the majority of whom were employed by the Liddells or Montagu-Wortleys.[2] This division of interests among the fitters made it difficult for them to gain complete control and it was compounded by the presence within the company of many coal-owners, like the Liddells, who entered 'by patrimony' as a matter of course. The company was therefore uncomfortably straddled between the interests of the proprietors, who still held most of the offices, and those of their fitters, who formed the majority of the members.[3]

This unresolved power struggle meant that the Hostmen's disciplinary powers were used by whichever faction was in temporary control to attack their rivals and were therefore exposed to criticism and attacks which gradually deprived them of any usefulness to either party. In 1703, for example, the fitters took on an opponent too strong for them when they suspended several members who were working for a proprietor outside the company, Charles Montagu.[4] The Montagu-Wortleys had long purses and no compunction in attacking the basis of the Hostmen's monopoly by submitting the case to the Attorney General, whose adverse opinion on their exclusive privileges seems to have brought the dispute to an end.[5] There is no evidence that the Hostmen mine-owners came to the company's defence, while its clerk and attorney, John Ord, who was also agent and attorney for the Montagu-Wortleys, was obliquely accused of undermining it from within.[6] The crumbling of the Hostmen's privileges which this incident underlined enabled a proprietor outside the company like Cotesworth to employ a

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm., Portland MSS., v (1899), 143; Fewster, 'The Keelmen of Tyneside', Durham Univ. Journal 1. 113-6; see Ch. V, p. 120.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/62: from H. Liddell, 11 Aug. 1712; Lords Journals, xix. 418, 426; Anon, The Case of Charles Atkinson...; Commons Journals, xvii. 141.
3. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, pp.263-4, 271-6.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/46: 'The Humble petition of the free Hoastmen...', [1703]; see Ch. V, p. 115.
5. See Ch. I, p. 24.
6. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, p.162.

fitter, Andrew Dick, without making any pretence that Dick was buying coal for resale, but it also prevented the coal-owners from using the company's powers to tighten up their control of the Newcastle market, as in London the great dealers used the Lightermen's Company.[1]

The struggle to control the keelmen is one of several indications that at the end of the seventeenth century the fitters had been far more independent of their principals, who were now in the early eighteenth century trying to win back the initiative in an attempt to combat their low profit margins by cutting overheads. It seems that the fitters were making use of the leverage given them by over-production and by their role as intermediaries between the proprietors and the shipmasters to play one principal off against another, forcing the coal-owners to make concessions in order to ensure the desperately needed sales.[2] The fitters were accused of scraping the flesh off colliery enterprises and leaving the owners with the bare bones, of concealing excessive selling expenses until the end of the year when it was too late to do anything about them, and of encouraging the proprietors to tear each other to pieces in order to feather their own nests 'by their Crafty & false Representations'.[3] It was this belief that the fitters were profiting from the very conditions that were ruining their principals that lay behind Ord's conviction that almost any sacrifice was preferable to being 'drawn into the will of our fitters'.[4]

The possibilities open to a dishonest fitter were extensive, since both the coal-owner and the shipmaster were forced to rely on his honesty in managing the quality and quantity of, as well as payment for, the coal delivered. One of the most common complaints against fitters employed by several owners was that they took cheap coal from one of the struggling, poorer collieries, mixed in a quantity of coal from a better colliery like Team or Tanfield, and then sold it to the masters as top quality coal, pocketing the extra profit themselves. This could be represented to the owner of a colliery like Clavering-Stella as an opportunity

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CJ/3/2: A. Dick's information, 9 June 1710.
2. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 98-9; J.C., Compleat Collier, p.22.
3. Ellison MSS. A 36a/11: from H. Liddell, 20 Nov. 1713.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/56: to G. Liddell, 4 June 1723 (copy); CK/3/110: from J. Ord, 18 Feb. 1715.

to increase his trade, for although James Clavering was dubious about the long-term benefit of such a policy some proprietors did dispose of the poor quality produce from one mine by mixing it with coal from their other collieries.[1] The real threat however was to the owners of better collieries, for a shipment of mixed coal, adulterated without their knowledge or consent, could damage the reputation, price and sales of a colliery for a considerable time; and the London buyers were so alert that a mere rumour that a colliery employed an unusually large number of fitters was enough to bring down the price on suspicion of mixing. The fitters usually made a large enough profit on mixed coal to make it worth their while to bribe the masters to take it.[2]

Another stratagem in common use was 'short charging' at the staiths by taking more coal than was recorded and therefore paid for, although this was difficult without the connivance of the staithsman.[3] The fitter could keep the profits of such a manoeuvre to himself but often passed some of the benefits on to the shipmasters. This may have been one of the factors which contributed to the gradual change in the relationship between the Newcastle and London chaldrons, whereby one Newcastle chaldron became the equivalent of two or more London chaldrons as against the statute measure of 1.82 London chaldrons.[4] The net result was financial loss to the coal-owner as he received no higher price for an increased amount of coal; but the fitter benefited as his livelihood depended on the amount that he could sell and therefore on his popularity with the masters.[5] The practice of giving 'gift coal' had the same origins. An 'ingrain' of one chaldron in the score and two shovels in each bushel free was customary in the coal trade but in bad years, when lack of demand brought down prices in Newcastle, some owners were tempted to increase the gift to encourage their trade.[6] Once this had started, the fitters seized upon it and from one in the

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1. Clavering Correspondence, p.116; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/151: from J. Clavering, [3 Apr.] 1711; Ellison MSS. A 36/44: from H. Liddell, 2 Oct. 1716
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/145: from M. Bell, 27 Mar. 1722.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/52: from G. Liddell, 24 Nov. 1721.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 22 May 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/71: 'A Comparison...', 1712.
5. Ellison MSS. A 35/15: from H. Liddell, 23 Dec. 1710.
6. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 92.

Figure 4: Gift Coal at Newcastle, 1682-92

'An Inspection made by Edwd. Grey, during his time in the Coal Trade, about Gift Coals to the masters of Ships, in the years following.

In	1682	This year was allowed & given away 1 cha. in every score.
	1683	2 cha.
	1684	1 or 2 ch.
	1685	1½ and 2
	1686	2 and sometimes 3
	1687	3
	1688	This year in the beginning was allowed 3 in the score & the rest of the year, no gift at all.
	1689	No gift Coals
	1690	4 - some gave 5 & 6
	1691	3 at the beginning, then none
	1692	at beginning 2 & 3, all year after 4 & some 5 & 6

This report above EG can prove by his books and will depose upon oath (if occasion be) both as to the collierys, and the names, & number of masters, he gave this allowance to Every year'.

Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/46: 'An Inspection...', 1682-92.

score it could become five or six, as Figure 4 demonstrates.[1] As Cotesworth pointed out in 1711, when an owner was paid 10s a chaldron giving six in the score cut his profit margin by 3s and, in a situation where that margin was already dangerously tight, most proprietors would sooner or later be forced out of the trade, leaving it in the hands of those with the 'deepest purses'.[2]

The organization of the coal trade forced every coal-owner to have a 'deep purse' because, although fitters bound themselves to make good to their employers all payments received for coal, the owner was at the end of a long credit chain and payments were often delayed.[3] Much of the blame for the delay lay with the London dealers but sometimes it lay elsewhere: for instance, it was natural for a proprietor whose fitter had withdrawn into the country at the end of

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/159: from M. White, 21 Apr. 1711; see figure 4.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/65: 'Answers to Mr. Terners objections...', [1711].
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/23: promisory note, 3 Mar. 1725.

the shipping season carrying with him a balance of over £1,000 due to his employer to feel that he was being imposed upon.[1] Similar feelings were aroused when fitters demanded an allowance for negotiating bills and making good masters' notes, on top of the salary or fittage payments that were meant to cover such expenses, but there was little chance of one or two owners holding out against what was represented as general practice.[2]

Dilution of quality and falsification of quantity were perhaps the fitters' most irritating depredations but they were confined within natural limits beyond which it was impossible for them to proceed. However, the coal-owners were operating on such tight margins that these activities, combined with the fitters' voracious demands for premiums, rebates and fittage payments, made it seem imperative to assert control over them before conditions deteriorated so far as to make this impossible. The methods that were expected to curtail the fitters' ill-gotten gains were, first, tying each one down to a particular employer and, second, abolishing fittage in favour of fixed salaries. The author of a contemporary tract claimed some recent success in both these objects, but success varied with the state of the trade and in bad years a colliery like Bucksnook found it difficult to control its fitters.[3] The amount that they were paid also varied with the salability of the coal. Attempts were made to limit fittage to 6d a chaldron but the quality of Cotesworth's coal was so poor that in 1711 fittage charges were estimated at 12d a chaldron.[4] Nor was it possible to force the fitters to keep the size of the Newcastle chaldron within statutory limits.

It seems clear that the proprietors could not expect to curb their fitters until they found a solution to the over-production which enabled the more powerful fitters like Johnson and Snowdon to play off one colliery against another.[5]

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/73: from G. Liddell, 9 Dec. 1722; see below, pp. 108-9; Ch. VII, p. 176.
2. Clavering Correspondence, ed. Dickinson, p.112.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade', n.d.; CK/1/145: from M. Bell, 27 Mar. 1722.
4. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, p.157; Cotesworth MSS. CK/14/8: Dick's account, 1711.
5. Ellison MSS. A 35/43: from H. Liddell, 10 Nov. 1711.

Even when concerted action was attempted, the results were hardly satisfactory to the coal-owners since the fitters seem to have reacted by cutting back the wages and dues of the keelmen, and that close-knit and independent body did not submit quietly to such treatment. A 'stop of trade', such as those of 1710 and 1719, may have convinced several proprietors that the remedy was worse than the disease.[1]

The proprietors' failure seems inevitable if, as appears likely, the fitters were motivated by necessity as well as greed. Their income was dependent on the amount of coal they handled and, when there was a restricted demand, they were forced to combine with the staithsmen whenever possible to 'humour or rather Court ye Trade' by giving over-measure. Henry Liddell was probably right in saying that Cotesworth could stop this at Bensham by frequent inspections and constant surveillance at the staith, but how then were masters to be persuaded to take coal from the inferior Bensham upper seams?[2] The campaign waged by Liddell, Cotesworth and the Claverings at Clavering-Stella may have contributed to that colliery's poor sales, and Liddell could not understand why, when other collieries were selling off their trash, 'our people stood wth their arms cross, & seemed like solomons sluggard, they apprehended a Lyon to be upon yr key, so durst not venture abroad to sollicitt'. He did not seem to consider that their employers' vigilance may have reduced their bargaining power with the masters.[3]

The coal-owners' efforts to improve their position at the expense of the masters by raising the nominal price or by cutting back on gift coal, over-measure and premiums seem to have been as unsuccessful as their campaign against the fitters. Taking advantage of the pressure of competition on the market the masters forced the prices as low as they could, because they were afraid of being forced to undersell at London, and tried to cover themselves by obtaining guarantees that the coal would sell well.[4] If they did lose money on

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CJ/3/6: minutes of the keelmen's grievances, 1710; CJ/3/10: keelmen's petition, 1719.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/14: from H. Liddell, 21 Dec. 1710.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/38: from H. Liddell, 10 Sept. 1711.
4. Ellison MSS. A 36a/26: from H. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/46: 'The Humble petition of the free Hoastmen...', [1703].

a cargo, the fitter who supplied it was sometimes forced to make good the loss if he wanted their trade in future.[1] If the coal was known to be of poor quality and therefore difficult to sell, the masters demanded a premium to cover selling expenses and, despite the owners' efforts to insist on statute measure, double coal came to be demanded as a right since the shippers' profits depended on it.[2] The shippers were prepared to appeal against the producers to the consumers and dealers, who were responsible for their own troubles by holding down the price in the Pool, showing how divisions of interest within the trade limited each group's freedom of action. Any attempt by the proprietors to return to statute measure was denounced as an attempt to oppress both shippers and consumers, despite their plea that it was unreasonable to demand more than the law prescribed and that doing so exposed them to a 'flood of chargable inconveniencys'.[3] Attacks on excessive gift coal were also opposed on the grounds that the proprietors would not have submitted in the past unless they could do so while making a reasonable profit.[4] Indeed, the masters defended gift coal and over-measure more fervently than they demanded abatements in price, because direct price cuts at Newcastle hindered their own attempts to maintain a high selling price in London and therefore defeated their whole object.

The better quality coal had less need of such inducements to boost their sales, since encouragement was expected only when the master would find it difficult, if not impossible, to get a decent price for his cargo from the dealers. There were also buyers willing to turn down an offer of three chaldrons in the score if they thought that coal from another colliery was a better bargain even at full price.[5] However, there is considerable evidence that masters were not always free agents, able to pick and chose among the various qualities of coal on offer in the Tyne, and that they were often committed to a particular colliery before they left London. Henry Liddell described the troubles of several masters

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/14/9: Dick's account, 1712.
2. Clavering Correspondence, ed. Dickinson, p.112; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/126: from T. Blackiston, 12 Feb. 1717.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/65: 'Answers to Mr. Terners objections...', [1711].
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/134: Notes on coal prices in Newcastle, [1711].
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 21 Mar. 1710 (abstract).

who were carrying an exceptionally bad batch of Clavering-Stella coal and reported that they were swearing 'yt that will not be slaves to their fitters' and load there again. The impact of their oaths was reduced by Liddell's comment that they swore and forswore themselves every voyage, and such persistence in a thankless task suggests that the fitters had some hold over them.[1]

Cotesworth's papers provide several indications of the nature of this hold. Although Ashton and Sykes believed that the cost of running a collier was low enough to allow each master to own a vessel of his own, there is a great deal of contemporary evidence that masters rarely acted as principals in the trade.[2] Indeed, many thought that the problems of the shipping industry were caused by the prevalence of masters who had little or no interest in the profits of each voyage and cared only for their wages, which does not support the idea that it was general practice for each master to own his own vessel.[3] One reason for this was the size of the capital sum required by a single owner-master to purchase, equip and load a collier, amounting perhaps to several thousand pounds, and another factor was the considerable element of risk in the form of delay, dubious profits and possible total loss at sea.[4] Despite attempts to force the producers to accept the risks of trading losses by demanding compensation, probably the majority of cargoes were bought at the risk of those who owned the colliers.[5] These financial considerations led to the concentration of ownership in the hands of wealthy investors, mainly from east coast ports like Ipswich and Yarmouth. However, there is evidence that many ship owners were concerned in other branches of the coal trade and that both fitters and producers used their holdings in shipping to ensure some measure of security of outlet.[6] The coal-owners seem to have been more confident about a shipowner's influence over the master of his vessel than contemporary accounts of the latter's independence suggest, and found it worthwhile to hold interests in the ships themselves.

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1. Ellison MSS. A 36a/11: from H. Liddell, 20 Nov. 1713.
2. Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, p.200.
3. Anon, Letter to Sir William Strickland, pp.33-6.
4. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 395.
5. Commons Report, p.56; see above, pp.102-3.
6. See above, p. 94.

According to George Liddell, for example, his family usually had some interest in colliers that were regular customers of the Liddell collieries.[1] There is some evidence that fitters also relied on such investments to bring them customers for Liddell believed that his fitter's vend depended to some extent on his 'interest' in shipping.[2] Such ties were reinforced by what was said to be the long-established practice of fitters visiting shipmasters at London and along the coast during the winter.[3]

Because of these factors there was a tendency for a master to be bound to one particular fitter and the collieries which he served. Similar influences were at work to restrict the freedom of the London market. It was necessary for a master to build up an acquaintance with the chief dealers, for those who did not know their way around the market had difficulty in selling their coal.[4] Often the relationship with the dealers seems to have been even closer. In some cases, when the dealers themselves owned the colliers, the constraints on masters' freedom of action were clear, for then they would be bound to respond to the wishes of the dealers.[5] In other cases, the connection was more subtle, for masters would probably require little persuasion to follow the orders of any dealer, whether he owned part of the ship or not, who would guarantee a market for the cargo and would be a willing party to any arrangements which ensured this.

Such arrangements would appear to have been the rule rather than the exception, for it was an imprudent fitter or proprietor who sold coal for the London market without trying to prepare a favourable reception for it, and it was the ambition of every coal-owner to have what Cotesworth called 'a settled Intrest at the Gate'.[6] Fitters and owners therefore spent the winter visiting

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/39: G. to Sir H. Liddell, 20 Apr. 1718. By the end of the eighteenth century, the coal-owners protested that they had no interest in shipping. This trend may be a sign of a desire to limit their commitments and allow the factors and dealers to carry the risk of falling returns: Commons Report, pp.42, 64.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/3: from G. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1717; J.C., Compleat Collier, pp.21-2.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CG/5/46: 'The Humble petition of the free Hoastmen... '. [1703].
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/60: from H. Liddell, 3 July 1712.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/71: 'A Comparison...', 1712.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to J. Nicholson, 12 July 1718.

dealers as well as masters, trying to reach an agreement acceptable to all sides which would guarantee the producers' sales, the masters' freight and the dealers' profit.[1] For instance, in the winter of 1716-7, Cotesworth, intervening in negotiations between his fitter Andrew Dick and the London dealers George and Richard Oldner and Edmund Blunkett, to try to bring them to a conclusion, offered to supply Bucksnook coal at 10s a chaldron on the staith, the dealers paying all the charges involved in loading the coal and clearing customs.[2] This agreement did not, as many did, fix the quantity of coal to be taken, because Cotesworth could not be sure how much his share of Bucksnook's output would be.[3] However, it fulfilled the main purpose of such bargains from the coal-owner's point of view, which was to obtain firm guarantees that the dealers would order masters to load at his staiths and so ensure his sales for the coming year.[4] If it proved difficult to agree with the dealers, Cotesworth was prepared to pay 2d a chaldron commission to any 'undertaker' who would recommended ships to him.[5] Such commissions could not compare with the 4d or 6d a chaldron which it was necessary to pay the dealers for taking a colliery's coal, and when no prior agreement with them had been reached it was probably necessary to pay, in addition to the commission to the undertaker, a premium similar in amount to that which the dealers normally received to the masters who would have to struggle on the restricted London market.[6]

The dealers' premiums were represented to the public and to the authorities as 'a small Recompense in the nature of factoridge' in return for recommending certain coal to customers.[7] In reality the proprietors paid, and continued to pay even when premiums became illegal in 1711, not for recommendations but to prevent ships carrying their coal from being 'blacked', and because the results of paying the masters a premium and leaving them to fight their own battles

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Nicholson, 29 May 1720.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Oldner, 24 Dec. 1716.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Oldner & partners, 14 Jan. 1717.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/8: to E. Mawson, 14 May 1717.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: memorandum.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Oldner, 24 Dec. 1716.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.

against the dealers seemed worse than those of submitting quietly.[1] The 'Dons' were therefore no more popular with the coal-owners than with the masters, as Liddell's frequent references to 'virmin' and 'Leeches' show, yet their unity made it difficult for the conspicuously disunited producers to challenge their monopoly.[2] In an overstocked market there seemed no way of doing without 'these Necessary Evills at the Gate', because only they could prevent the inferior coal being driven off the market and 'force' the trade in the face of limited demand.[3] Unless the chief dealers supported a colliery, the coal-owner's efforts to improve the quality of the coal and the management in Newcastle were useless.[4]

There is no doubt that the dealers exploited their advantage to the full. Liddell complained that they did not know 'how to ask enough' premium: they wanted as much as 1s 6d a Newcastle chaldron for Bucksnook coal and yet would not be bound to take a fixed quantity in return.[5] The sums paid out by the owners were enormous. John Ord paid over £1,120 in premiums for the Montagu-Wortley concerns between March 1713 and January 1714.[6] However, the proprietors' real complaint was that the dealers sometimes repudiated their agreements without warning, 'to give a specimen of their arbitrary power', as Liddell bitterly remarked.[7] He became resigned during his years in London to the fact that it was impossible to depend on the great dealers because 'their promises are like syllibubs, seemingly great & yet nothing in ym'.[8] Cotesworth in particular was often let down in the middle of the shipping season because his activities on behalf of both the producers and the shippers made him unpopular at Billingsgate.[9]

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1. Commons Journals, xxi. 372-3; Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/134: from H. Liddell, 17 Feb. 1715.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/71: from H. Liddell, 20 Dec. 1712; A 36a/11: from H. Liddell, 20 Nov. 1713.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/18: from H. Liddell, 11 Jan. 1711; A 35/23 from H. Liddell, 8 Feb. 1711.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/13: from H. Liddell, 16 Dec. 1710.
5. Ellison MSS. A 36a/11: from H. Liddell, 20 Nov. 1713.
6. Blackett-Ord MSS. BOE 5: Account book Z, p.181.
7. Ellison MSS. A 35/39: from H. Liddell, 25 Sept. 1711.
8. Ellison MSS. A 35/32: from H. Liddell, 12 July 1711.
9. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Oldner & Co., 2 Apr. 1717; see Ch. V, pp.127, 129-30.

The vagaries of the dealers made it necessary for the proprietors to devote a great deal of attention to them and led to the development of another agent or factor operating at Billingsgate, this time on behalf of the owners. The existence of such agents and some of their names are revealed by the Commons enquiries of 1729 and 1730, where they were said to be concerned in paying premiums to the chief dealers, but their duties seem to have been somewhat wider.[1] Henry Liddell urged Cotesworth to use one of his London correspondents to negotiate at Billingsgate on his behalf, since he could not be there himself, and Cotesworth's tallow factor, James Dixon, had been employed in this capacity in1710.[2] His functions were not only to pay the premiums to dealers and masters but also to negotiate with the dealers on Cotesworth's behalf and to collect money on the notes given by masters to Cotesworth's fitter.[3] By 1725 at the latest the position seems to have become common practice, since Cotesworth was able to offer someone the 'usual' salary for allowing ships carrying Bucksnook coal to report to him.[4]

As with the shipmasters' factors, however, there was a natural tendency for these agents to be drawn from among the dealers themselves, or at least to identify themselves closely with the dealers' interests.[5] Again, this was because there was no one better qualified to meet the twin requirements of a successful factor: an intimate knowledge of the London market and dealers, andlarge financial resources. In the case of the coal-owners' agents, capital was needed because of the delays experienced by producers in collecting the dealers' notes which usually came into their hands via the masters and fitters. These delays made it impossible for the owners to use them as normal credit instruments and to circulate them to meet current expenses, and they had to rely on London agents to collect the notes as and when they could and to advance money in the

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1. Commons Journals, xxi. 372, 518.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/18: from H. Liddell, 11 Jan. 1711.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to J. Dixon, 28 Mar. 1710; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/780: from J. Dixon, 13 July [1710]; CM/2/782: account, 10 Apr. - 15 Aug. 1710.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to J. Nicholson, 28 Feb. 1725.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/47: from G. Liddell, 11 May 1718.
See above p.92.

meantime.[1] Naturally, the commission and interest charged by such an agent was added to the premium and other selling charges at London and increased the proprietors' overheads. Bucksnook colliery, for example, paid 8½d a chaldron for 'vending' at London and on the coast between 1722 and 1724, and they were paying an undertaker at London as well as premiums to the chief dealers in 1720.[2] When the overheads accruing by fittage and other charges at Newcastle were added to this expenditure at London, the total cost to the owner could be anything between 1s 6d and 2s a Newcastle chaldron, which had to be met out of a selling price of no more, even for top quality coal, than 11s to 12s.[3]

It is not surprising that the northern producers, as well as what Ashton and Sykes called 'the ordinary man of the eighteenth century', found that the 'spread' between the price received by the coal-owner and that paid by the London consumer was too great to be accounted for by impersonal factors such as war and the vagaries of the weather. Although the high duties and delays caused by the cumbersome system of metage played their part, Cotesworth and his Newcastle associates would have agreed heartily that the prime cause of this disparity of price was defective marketing arrangements at the London end of the trade, which forced it through a single constricted channel and allowed the dealers to exploit the shippers' and producers' difficulties.[4] It is difficult to draw any firm conclusion about the effects on the dealers of the inelasticity of demand from papers which are naturally influenced by the prejudices of the producers. A writer sympathetic to the dealers maintained that they were faced with the same problems, since the excess capacity of the trade lowered prices and they were prevented from raising them by the wide publicity given to prices in the Pool.[5] However, the weight of evidence suggests that the great leverage of the dealers allowed them to fix prices as they liked to both masters and

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1. See Ch. VII, p.176.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/103: notes on the working of Bucksnook colliery 1722-4 23 Mar. 1727; CG/4/157: 'An Accompt of Charges on Bucksnook colliery, 1720
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/65: 'Answers to Mr Terners objections...', [1711].
4. Ashton & Sykes, Coal Industry, pp.222-4; Ellison MSS. A 35/63: from H. Liddell, 7 Aug. 1712.
5. Anon, Letter to Sir William Strickland, pp.27-8.

consumers.[1] It is perhaps significant that the dealers never chose to defend themselves against public complaints by pleading poverty, as the coal-owners and shippers did, and they certainly seemed to have regarded the situation with complacency.

Some allowance must be made for the coal-owners' natural inclination to understate the rewards and exaggerate the trials of investment in the coal industry, but they do seem to have been hard-pressed and to have had little room for complacency. Faced with the situation revealed by Cotesworth's papers, of production outstripping demand, of dangerously reduced profit margins and the institutional defects of the London market, some of the northern producers were coming round to the idea that the coal trade and the prosperity of the Tyne valley as a whole could only be saved by a strong combination to give 'ye trade a Lucky Turn, so as that all concerned in it might have a reasonable reward for their labour'.[2]

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1. Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, pp.12-3; see above, pp.90-2.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712.

CHAPTER V

Combinations in the Coal Trade

Such a combination seemed to be favoured by certain natural and technical conditions in the north-east coal industry. In the first place, the supremacy of the collieries of the north-east coast on the London market meant that there was a relatively small and clearly defined geographical area of production within which a combination could be organized. Second, not many proprietors were involved as the heavy and increasing capital cost of mining had led to a corresponding increase in the size of the optimum unit of production, with the result that the existing market could be supplied adequately by relatively few production units. Combination was undoubtedly favoured by this situation for a small number of producers operating in a restricted area of production had a fair chance of reaching an agreement to promote their common aims.

In order to achieve a reasonable return on their investment, it had become increasingly apparent that the proprietors would need to create machinery to limit the output of their collieries, at the same time maintaining and increasing the selling price of their coal. However, because of the threat posed by the 'western' collieries, a successful combination would obviously need to have as one of its chief objectives the limitation of the entry of these new collieries onto the market.[1] This highlights one of the conditions in the industry that weakened combinations, or indeed militated against their formation: the divisions of interest among the proprietors themselves which, in the face of united and determined opposition from dealers, consumers, fitters, shippers and the authorities alike, made co-operation to reduce production difficult to achieve.[2] The north-east coal-owners' actions were therefore rarely unanimous and were conducted under the threat of vigorous counter-attacks from their enemies both

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1. Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition, pp.138-9, 140-1.
2. See Ch. III, pp. 81-2.

in London and the north-east.

The benefits to be gained from what one document in Cotesworth's papers called 'a good understanding' among the principal coal-owners naturally accrued primarily to the producers themselves, who were able, according to Henry Liddell, to keep the dealers and fitters within bounds and prevent inferior collieries being driven out of the trade by excessive competition.[1] However, the coal-owners maintained that the public interest was as much at stake as that of any individual or group, for if the poorer collieries were closed demand would exceed supply and the consumers would be left at the mercy of the remaining proprietors.[2] Moreover, although no one pretended that attempts to regulate the trade would improve the lot of the dealers and fitters, it was thought that a controlled cut in supplies would ultimately be to the advantage of shippers by restraining their ill-advised efforts to keep up their returns by increasing their turnover.[3] The public too would benefit from restrictions that brought better quality, unmixed coal onto the market, and the coal-owners denied that the abolition of gift coal and other methods of reducing the actual price paid at Newcastle would automatically increase the price paid by the consumer.[4] As Nef noted, the London dealers frequently used this argument against combinations but rarely passed on to their customers any benefit which the reinstatement of gift coal restored to them.[5] The fact that interruptions in the trade produced low prices and gift coal at Newcastle but high prices for London consumers convinced many people in the north that the London market was largely independent of the pit-head price: they believed that the intermediaries in the trade were able to absorb any rise in the cost of Newcastle coal without passing it on to the consumers.[6]

This, however, the intermediaries proved unwilling to do. All the attempts

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/179: minutes of articles, 25 Dec. 1714; Ellison MSS. A 35/43: from H. Liddell, 10 Nov. 1711; A 36/21: from H. Liddell, Nov. 1714.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/39: from H. Liddell, 25 Sept. 1711; see Ch. III, p.81.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/152: from J. Clavering, 12 Apr. 1711.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/133: 'Reflections on ye Coale Trade...', n.d.
5. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 117-8.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/159: from M. White, 21 Apr. 1711.

made by the coal-owners during the previous century to act against them were met with fierce public opposition, stirred up by shippers and dealers angered by the increased profits being made at their expense.[1] Combinations to control price and output ran counter to well-recognized principles of the common law and consumers could count on support from parliament as well as from the London and Newcastle authorities, all of whom had a vested interest in low prices, unlimited output and a satisfied populace.[2] The coal-owners had to tread warily even when less contentious matters than 'contracts' to restrict the trade were involved. Newcastle's opposition to the Wear Navigation Bill, for example, had to be conducted so circumspectly as to avoid public attention, which was, as Cotesworth pointed out, rather difficult.[3] Again, the legitimate control exercised by landowners along the Tyne over the quantity of coal carried through their estates, which was regarded as a vital safeguard of the trade, was often jeopardized by popular clamour for a wayleave bill, prompted by purely accidental shortages of coal at London and supported or even instigated by Newcastle corporation.[4] Henry Liddell hoped that Ramsay's purchase of Gateshead and Whickham manors and the restraint that could be placed on the collieries south and west of them would be the salvation of the trade, but no sooner had Cotesworth inherited the manors and negotiated an agreement with the owners of the western collieries than he had to assure Thomas Gibson in London that it would neither reduce the quantity of coal sold nor increase the price.[5] Cotesworth and other landowners did have the power to limit output and entry into the industry by restricting wayleaves, but they had to use their 'great Hammer' with caution.[6]

The difficulties of the divided coal-owners were increased by the temptation which London's vigilance placed in their way. Sometimes it induced them to close ranks: in 1711, for example, the Newcastle proprietors were

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1. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 114, 116-7.
2. Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition, p.141; see Ch. IV, pp. 85, 87.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 25 Jan. 1717 (abstract).
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/69: to E. Wortley, 30 Jan. 1726 (copy); Ellison MSS. A 36/8: from H. Liddell, 13 May 1714; Commons Journals, x. 385; see Ch. III, pp.65-6.
5. See Ch. I, p. 7; Ellison MSS. A 35/64: from H. Liddell, 26 Aug. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/503: to T. Gibson, 3 Apr. 1716 (copy).
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/105: G. Dawson to A. Leaton, 25 Aug. 1725.

prepared to co-operate with Sunderland when threatened with a complaint to parliament.[1] More often, however, it encouraged them to seek to gain an advantage over their rivals on either river by accusing them of attempting to monopolize and 'engross' the trade, so laying them open to public condemnation.[2] These temptations were zealously encouraged by the dealers and other groups hostile to attempts to regulate production, in order to undermine their adversaries from within as well as by direct attacks.

These factors had weakened the many 'partnerships' formed by the Tyne proprietors in the seventeenth century. The majority of the combinations formed in the early part of the century attempted to restrict production and competition by assigning an annual selling quota, based on the estimated demand for that year, to the principal parts in local collieries. Members' coal was then pooled and marketed by a committee so that every participant received his proper share of the total sales and no one was 'overbourne'. There does not appear to have been a direct effort to raise the nominal price. The effectiveness of these combinations was undermined because they were limited to the mine owners of the Tyne valley which, in the face of increasing competition from collieries on the Northumberland coast and in the Wear valley, was bound to put pressure on members to relax or evade these controls. Above all, such partnerships rarely, if ever, included all the coal-owners even of the Tyne valley, for the proprietors of the better collieries were not prepared to make sacrifices to save their weaker neighbours.[3] Their attitude strengthened the hand of the London coal-buyers, and the combinations were often forced either to compromise their restrictions or enlist the dealers' support by sharing some of the fruits of the combination with them. This rarely succeeded in buying off the dealers and only emphasizes the fact that the partnerships could find no way of breaking their power over the trade.[4]

The first 'combination' which is referred to in Cotesworth's papers provides an example of such a compromise with the dealers. Conditions in the industry at

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/18: minutes, 12 Mar. 1711; Ellison MSS. A 35/24: from H. Liddell, 13 Feb. 1711; see below, pp. 120-1.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Clavering, 18 Apr. 1714.
3. See Ch. III, pp. 81-2.
4. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 111-8.

the beginning of the eighteenth century were so desperate that six leading coal-owners, including Charles Montagu, Sir Henry Liddell and their partners, brought eight of the Tyne collieries into an arrangement called the 'Coale Office', probably in March 1701. The accounts for the first year of its operation suggest that the office was no more than a marketing device, designed not to regulate price and output but to give those concerned in it security of outlet.[1] A committee of the Commons enquiring into the excessive price of coal in November 1702 investigated this arrangement and discovered that contracts existed between the coal-owners and certain lightermen to ensure that coal shipped by members was given preferential treatment at London in return for a payment of 3d a chaldron. These contracts were condemned by the committee, proving that even combinations which did not seem to operate a quota to restrict production and allowed double coal could not escape censure.[2] It was in some danger of further condemnation by the Lords a year later, although no action was taken against the office on either occasion.[3] Another attack was mounted by the Hostmen's company, on the grounds that this confederacy between the lightermen and certain 'gentlemen owners not free of this Society' would ruin the Hostmen and the coal trade. Six fitters employed by the coal-owners in question were accused of a series of offences against the orders of the company, all involving unfair trading practices, and were suspended from its privileges for six months.[4] The attack came, according to the fitters concerned, from those 'Envious of our Trade and dilligence', and suggests that the office was still enjoying some success in its limited objects in the summer of 1703.[5] However, the goodwill of the dealers was probably bought at a high price, since offering them 3d a chaldron for preferential treatment was more likely to result in demands for similar concessions from other proprietors than in a permanent improvement in the members' position.

No more is heard of the coal office after 1703 but it paved the way for a much more radical attempt to deal with the situation, an attempt in which

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1. Cookson MSS. ZCO IV 47/19: account of the 'Coale Office Newcastle 1701'.
2. Commons Journals, xiv. 19.
3. Hist. MSS. Comm., Lords MSS., n.s., v. 228, 237.
4. Hostmen's Records, ed. Dendy, pp.160-3.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/46: 'Humble petition of the free Hoastmen...', 1703; see Ch. IV, p. 97.

Cotesworth claimed that the Liddells had made him instrumental.[1] This combination, called the 'Regulation', was based on articles drawn up in 1708 between ten colliery owners, including the Liddell and Montagu-Wortley families again, twenty-three fitters and Daniel Poyen, who became the combination's book-keeper.[2] It seems to have been an annual agreement, renewed and if necessary amended every Christmas.[3] Arrangements were settled and the operations of the combination were supervised by the 'five', who represented the most influential members: George or Henry Liddell, John Ord for the Montagu-Wortleys, James Clavering, Matthew White and John Wilkinson.[4] However, minutes from their meetings between June 1710 and February 1715 show that sometimes the directors' principals attended meetings or held discussions of their own in London, while Sir Henry Liddell held ultimate responsibility for relations with the London dealers.[5] By the original articles, he and his son Henry were to nominate the combination's 'principal agent', and there is little doubt that they called on Cotesworth to fill this post.[6] He later maintained that he was employed only to inspect the workings of members' collieries but the series of minutes which have survived in his papers shows him acting as assistant and adviser to the directors.[7]

The marketing arrangements adopted by this new combination seem to have resembled those of the 1627 partnership, which alone among the seventeenth century combinations did not pool the partners' coal for common sale.[8] Instead, every proprietor in the Regulation marketed his own coal within the quota assigned to him, so that members' sales remained in proportion with one another. The articles estimated an annual vend of around 16,500 tens and assigned a share of this to each concern involved, the largest single share going to the Montagu-

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/43: 'Articles of Agreemt Triptite, 1708'.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/22: minutes, 9 Oct. 1711.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/45: order to pay D. Poyen, 17 Apr. 1710.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/24: minutes, 7 Nov. 1711; CK/3/8: minutes, 15 Nov. 1710; CK/3/6: minutes, 21 Sept. 1710.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/43: 'Articles of Agreemt Triptite, 1708'.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/64: Cotesworth's statement to the Commons committee, [1711]; CK/3/29: minutes, 12 Nov. 1712.
8. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 112.

Wortleys' Gibside and Benwell collieries which were allowed to sell 4,000 tens. However, the quota did not represent a fixed or guaranteed quantity but a guide to the equitable division of the available market, as the exception later granted to the Montagu-Wortleys confirms.[1] Members rendered an account of their sales and paid in whatever contribution per chaldron was required by the directors to defray the expenses of the combination and pay the fitters employed by the producers.[2]

In return for their outlay, those collieries with inferior coal, notably Felling, Scotswood, Blaydon, Bensham and Clavering-Stella, received a certain amount of help in selling their share of the vend.[3] In 1711, for example, the directors allowed only collieries which were in difficulties to export, and they occasionally ordered concerns in easier circumstances, like the Liddells' and Montagu-Wortleys' collieries, to take coal from them.[4] Henry Liddell was prepared to accept such orders and the restrictive apparatus of the combination because, like Cotesworth, he believed that only this could save the trade from ruin. Other proprietors, however, looked to more immediate advantages and were reconciled to the Regulation by the certain amount of success it achieved in increasing the price of their coal. Although coal from different concerns was still sold at different prices, in March 1710 6d a chaldron was added to all these prices, bringing the price of top quality coal to 12s a chaldron.[5] Steps were also taken to enforce statute measure of fifteen London chaldrons to a keel, and this seems to have been further reduced to fourteen and a half or fourteen and a quarter London chaldrons.[6] Attempts were made to put an end to gift coal, although these may have been only partially successful.[7] At the same time, an attack was made on the independence

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/43: 'Articles of Agreemt Triptite, 1708'; see below, p. 126.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/45: order to pay D. Poyen, 17 Apr. 1710; CK/3/64: Cotesworth's statement..., [1711]; CK/3/9: minutes, 22 Nov. 1710.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/31: 'An Acct of the Short Coales proposed to be allowed to each Concerne in the Regulation for the year 1711'.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/13: minutes, 16 Jan. 1711; CK/3/7: minutes, 30 Sept. 1710.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 21 Mar. 1710; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/63: T. Brumell's statement to the Commons committee, 1711.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/2: minutes, 24 July 1710; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 22 May 1716.
7. Clavering Correspondence, ed. Dickinson, p.96; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/63: J. Ord's statement to the Commons committee, 1711.

of the fitters, who now found themselves tied to a fixed salary and restricted both in the number of proprietors they could work for and in the number of keels they could themselves employ.[1] Henry Liddell thought that one of the main advantages of the Regulation was that it kept the fitters within bounds.[2]

These material benefits were gained by the adoption of a fundamental approach to the problems of the coal industry, bringing the Regulation closer to later eighteenth and nineteenth century combinations than to the 'partnerships' described by Nef. All these combinations recognized that 'ye overstocking ye River is a danger yt may divide us among our selves' and sought to achieve unity and raise prices primarily by controlling the output of members' own collieries.[3] While the poorer collieries probably increased their sales, most proprietors had to accept limitations.[4] Supply to the market was also regulated by reducing the number of keels employed: in 1711 they were cut by eight per cent.[5] Members were even prepared to close their own collieries. Sir Henry Liddell closed Bensham colliery, in return for compensation from the directors, and Blackburn colliery, the majority of which was held by the Liddels and the Montagu-Wortleys, was also closed by the Regulation between 1713 and 1717.[6] Some of these measures went much further than any of those adopted by earlier combinations, but what set the Regulation apart was not the attempts to restrict the production of members' own collieries: it was the adoption of a policy designed to exclude or control non-members by obstructing their passage to the river.[7] The Newcastle fitter and coal-owner Thomas Brumell accused the Regulation of engrossing the trade and reducing the quantity of good coal by buying up wayleaves and refusing them to coal-owners outside the combination.[8] There is no doubt

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1. Clavering Correspondence, ed. Dickinson, p.96; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/22: minutes, 9 Oct. 1711; CK/3/13: minutes, 16 Jan. 1711.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/43: from H. Liddell, 10 Nov. 1711.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/4: from H. Liddell, 29 July 1710.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/5: minutes, 14 Sept. 1710.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/9: minutes, 22 Nov. 1710.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/7/10: T. Sisson to G. Liddell, 11 Nov. 1725; CG/7/13: R. Featherston to E. Wortley, 7 Dec. 1722.
7. Lewis, Early Wooden Railways, p.138; the obvious importance of wayleaves to the Regulation is seriously underestimated by Lewis.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/63: T. Brumell's statement to the Commons committee, [1711].

that these allegations were substantially true and that Cotesworth was instrumental in executing, if not formulating, the policy.[1] Once he had secured a lease, he allowed through only coal worked within the Regulation and was prepared to use this lever to force owners like Lady Carr to regulate their output.[2] The western collieries, however, were to be excluded completely. The proprietors agreed not to take financial interests in Bucksnook, Tanfield Moor or collieries belonging to Sir John Clavering, and arrangements were made to acquire wayleaves on both sides of the river Derwent to stop their coal reaching the Tyne.[3] To support their policy, the directors were prepared to pay the legal costs of wayleave suits and, where it was not possible to gain control of the wayleave, to pay large sums to close the collieries completely.[4] Cotesworth's reputation as a 'wayleave tyrant' undoubtedly owes a great deal to his activities on behalf of the Regulation.[5]

An agreement potentially so lucrative to those involved and so threatening to the vested interests of nearly everyone else concerned in the coal trade could not go unchallenged for very long. First to react were the shippers, since they were the first to suffer from the restrictions introduced by the Regulation. One master complained that a shipload of coal now cost an extra £18, for which he blamed the 'short measure' he received, although others also referred to the raising of the nominal price.[6] The enforcement of the Regulation's policy on price, gift coal and measure was said to have produced a 41 per cent rise in the actual price, and the squeeze imposed on shippers was sufficient to cause hardship to a group who were already hard-pressed to make a living.[7] In May 1710, the masters of six or seven hundred colliers themselves entered into a combination, to lie at Harwich until prices in London were forced up to compensate

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/5: minutes, 14 Sept. 1710; CK/3/35: minutes, 17 Aug. 1713.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 30 Oct. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/36: minutes, 21 Oct. 1713.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/35: minutes, 22 July 1713.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/6: minutes, 21 Sept. 1710; CK/3/42: minutes, 26 Feb. 1715.
5. See Ch. III, pp. 72-4.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/64: statements to the Commons committee, [1711].
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/134: 'Notes on Coal prices in Newcastle', [1710-1].

them for the effects of the Newcastle combination.[1] This counter-attack does not seem to have served its immediate purpose for a year later many masters were still consistently making a loss.[2] However, their strike caused a great deal of embarrassment to the coal-owners, not only because they were obliged to bear their usual expenses while the shippers 'playd the fool', but because it attracted unwelcome public attention to their own activities.[3] The situation was exacerbated by a 'mutiny' of the keelmen in June and July of the same year, which the corporation of Newcastle and the fitters and producers opposed to the Regulation blamed on its restriction of their employment. The magistrates' emphasis on the keelmen's hostility to the Regulation served not only to distract public attention from the immediate causes of unrest, which included the shippers' strike and the Hostmen's mismanagement of the keelmen's charity, but also as a convenient weapon against an organization which threatened the corporation's vested interests.[4] As a result of their efforts to exaggerate the effects of the restriction of production, a petition was presented to the Queen in Council on behalf of the keelmen, and a committee of the Privy Council met several times to examine their complaints, apparently calling the proprietors to defend themselves.[5] Matters went no further, presumably because the Regulation had already decided to bow before the storm. In June the directors had informed one of their opponents that the combination was now 'laid aside', and Cotesworth later claimed that the 'contract' had been cancelled because of complaints made against it.[6]

In fact, this apparent capitulation made little immediate difference to the organization or activities of the Regulation, although it was clear that it would soon have to face a major attack in parliament or the courts.[7] The directors'

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/64: statements to the Commons committee, [1711].
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/33: from H. Liddell, 17 July 1711.
3. Clavering Correspondence, ed. Dickinson, p.95.
4. Fewster, 'The Keelmen of Tyneside in the Eighteenth Century', Durham Univ. Journal, 1. 31, 115; Cotesworth MSS. CJ/3/6: minutes of the keelmen's grievances, 1710; CK/3/64: statements to the Commons committee, [1711].
5. Fewster, op. cit., p.115; Ellison MSS. A 35/4: from H. Liddell, 29 July 1710
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/1: minutes, 15 Aug. 1710; CK/3/54: notes on the Regulation, [1711].
7. Ellison MSS. A 35/5: from H. Liddell, 15 Aug. 1710; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/8: minutes, 15 Nov. 1710.

anxiety was increased by a sudden deterioration in their relations with the London dealers. The Regulation had adopted the policy of previous combinations and paid a premium to several of the chief dealers to give a preference in sale and price to coal from its members' collieries, payments being channeled through a London office staffed by three agents, Horton, Furs and Foster. However, the dealers do not seem to have given value for money, since in August 1710 the directors began to accuse them of discouraging the sales of certain collieries and demanded that something be done about this before the year's premiums were paid.[1] When the dealers failed to reply to this ultimatum, the directors decided to break off all connection with them, but such drastic measures seem to have been vetoed by the Liddells in London.[2] Henry Liddell was convinced that failing to keep on good terms with the dealers would produce such confusion in the trade that the Regulation would be shaken 'more yn all other artifices yt our Enemys could practice', and that payment of the premiums was vital, whether they were earned or not.[3] He became increasingly despondent about the Regulation's future, since its uncertain legal basis made it impossible to compel the dealers to carry out their side of the bargain.[4] The situation emphasized the frailty of the gains made by the combination, which Liddell admitted depended entirely on the dealers' goodwill.[5]

When leave was given to bring in a Coal Bill in March 1711, the dealers were still hostile to the combination, despite Liddell's attempts to heal the breach, and, in James Clavering's opinion, they were financing the opposition in the hope of restoring double coal and a large gift.[6] The directors responded by suspending official meetings, although not before levying 12d a chaldron on sales to meet the costs of the coming battle and requesting Cotesworth to go to

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/18: complaints against the Regulation, [1710-1]; CK/3/3: minutes, 1 Aug. 1710.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/6: minutes, 21 Sept. 1710.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/5: from H. Liddell, 15 Aug. 1710; A 35/17: from H. Liddell, 4 Jan. 1711.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/10: from H. Liddell, 4 Dec. 1710.
5. Ellison MSS. A 35/18: from H. Liddell, 11 Jan. 1711; see below, pp.124-5.
6. Commons Journals, xvi. 531; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/152: from J. Clavering, 12 Apr. 1711.

London to defend their interests before parliament.[1] The Bill was subjected to careful scrutiny and the defence to be presented to Parliament was prepared in great detail, including lists of questions which sympathizers on the Commons committee were to ask Cotesworth together with notes of possible replies.[2] These demonstrate that the directors were preoccupied with the threat of an attack on their wayleave policy by an alliance of their enemies in Newcastle and London, an attack which in the event was averted by the defeat of a clause proposing to open wayleaves at the second reading of the Bill, thus removing the main danger to the combination and leaving the way open for a combined attack on the dealers by all the northern interests.[3] In the course of the proceedings on the Bill, Cotesworth was called before the Commons committee and contrived in his evidence to reveal the part played by the dealers in the Regulation, a strategem which won the approval of his principals.[4] Although a clause directed against the lightermen was defeated at the third reading, Cotesworth believed that, on the whole, the Regulation had had the best of the encounter.[5] A Bill 'intended to Break the Contract & to Ly the Coalownrs under difficulty' had been transformed into a 'good bill', presumably because the only effective means of preventing combinations would have been to remove the limitations which wayleave leases imposed on production and entrance to the industry, and the proprietors had 'obviated' this danger.[6] The Act which was finally passed was relatively harmless.[7] Since the only M.P.s with detailed knowledge of the industry were coal-owners themselves, it is not surprising that clauses attempting to prevent mixing or to distinguish between 'useful' and 'obstructive' contracts were, as a later writer commented, 'not of the clearest or precisest order' and

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/18: minutes, 12 Mar. 1711; CK/3/147: from H. Liddell, 17 Mar. 1711.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/50: 'Remarks on the Coal Bill...', 21 Mar. 1711; CK/3/55: 'Questions to be asked WC...', [1711]; CK/3/54: notes, [1711].
3. Commons Journals, xvi. 587; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/149: from J. Wilkinson, 14 Apr. 1711.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/64: Cotesworth's statement..., 1711; CK/3/161: from J. Wilkinson, 24 Apr. 1711.
5. Commons Journals, xvi. 671, 672.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/57: 'Querys on the Coal Trade', n.d. (superscription).
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/28: copy of the Coal Act, [1711].

do not seem to have had the least effect in deterring those involved from carrying on with little regard for the Act's prohibitions and penalties.[1] Meetings of the directors resumed shortly after the Bill had passed the Lords and in November the Regulation articles were amended and renewed for another year.[2]

Relations with the dealers were not improved by the proceedings on the Bill or by its outcome, and the dealers remained 'bent agst ye Coal Owners thriveing', which Cotesworth thought was most ungrateful in view of the amount they were paid every year.[3] In fact, the dealers became so obstructive and demanding during the rest of the Regulation's existence that Liddell and Cotesworth were driven to wonder whether they had been better off giving gift coal.[4] However, the proprietors continued to hold their own because they were still able to use the wayleaves held by individual members or by Cotesworth in trust for them to control supplies to the market. One of their most ambitious projects, the purchase of the manors of Gateshead and Whickham, was concluded in January 1712. At first Sir Henry Liddell planned to buy the lease of the manors but it was probably decided that an indirect approach would provoke less opposition and in the end Cotesworth persuaded his brother-in-law Ramsay to invest in the estate.[5] Sheltering behind Ramsay's name, the directors took exclusive leases of his newly acquired wayleaves.[6] The only flaw in their plans was that, before the purchase was confirmed, the agent of the mortgagors had granted a collusive lease allowing an unlimited quantity of coal through Whickham for a nominal fine and, in order to defeat this lease, Ramsay was forced to engage in long and expensive lawsuits.[7] Sir John Clavering and the owners of Bucksnook colliery alleged that these legal charges were borne by a 'public purse', which Cotesworth

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/52: to Sir R. Hoar, 9 May 1711; CK/3/150: counsel's comments on the Coal Bill, 1711; Anti-Monopolist, Remarks on the Present State of the Coal Trade (London, 1843), p.8.
2. Lords Journals, xix. 313; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/24: minutes, 7 Nov. 1711.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Sir H. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1712.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/63: from H. Liddell, 7 Aug. 1712.
5. Ellison MSS. A 35/4: from H. Liddell, 29 July 1710; see Ch. I, p.7.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Gibson, 1 Jan. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/37: minutes, 25 Nov. 1713.
7. Ellison MSS. A 35/28: from H. Liddell, 13 May 1711; Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/88: from W. Ramsay, 30 Oct. 1713; see Ch. III, pp.72, 73-4.

and Ramsay denied, but Cotesworth's papers show that the Regulation contributed several thousand pounds to the campaign against the Bucksnook way, just as, according to reports, the great dealers were lending money to their adversaries.[1] The money contributed by the Regulation was to be repaid out of the costs which would eventually be awarded to the owner of the manors, but the dispute had not been settled by the time that the combination broke up and the only way to raise the money in the absence of a settlement was to abandon the policy of restricting wayleave grants, which Cotesworth was not prepared to do unless the former directors specifically requested it.[2]

The wayleave policy, which survived not only the attack mounted on it in 1711 but another in 1714 designed to introduce a 'general wayleave bill', was probably the reason for the combination's relative success.[3] It lasted at least seven years, which was no mean achievement in the face of active hostility from other sections of the coal trade, and all those concerned were thought to have benefited from it.[4] This was as true of the better collieries, which profited from the decrease in the 'old confusion', as it was of those which credited the Regulation with their very survival.[5] However, its success was both limited and precarious, since it shared the weaknesses which had undermined the earlier 'partnerships'. In the first place, the Regulation controlled only two-thirds of the coal sold on the Tyne and, when shipments from Sunderland and the outports were added to those of the independent Newcastle collieries, their total exceeded that of the Regulation.[6] Moreover, the opening up of new collieries which threatened to flood the market could not be prevented entirely.[7] These factors contributed to the combination's dependence on the goodwill of the dealers and ruled out any dramatic improvement in the coal-owners' fortunes. As Henry

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1. P.R.O., C. 5/363/14: Clavering & others v. Ramsay & others, 1714; Ellison MSS. A 36/2: from H. Liddell, 1 Apr. 1714.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 10 Jan. 1716 (abstract); CP/7/3: to J. Clavering, [5 Dec. 1719].
3. Ellison MSS. A 36/7: from Sir H. Liddell, 6 May 1714.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/66: from G. Liddell, 21 Oct. 1722.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/110: from J. Ord, 18 Feb. 1715; Ellison MSS. A 36/21: from H. Liddell, Nov. 1714.
6. See figure 5, p.125.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/128: to J. Mowbray, 6 Oct. 1713 (copy); see above, pp. 118-9.

Figure 5: An estimate of coal shipments from the north east coast, showing the proportion controlled by the Regulation

'Sunderland Vends yearly abt	65,000 ch	
Cullercoats & Blyth & Seaton	15,000	
	80,000	
	62,500	
	142,500	Non Contract in Newcastle, Sund & outports
	127,000	Contract'

Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/135: 'A list of Collieries on Tyneside...', n.d.

Liddell admitted, the price of coal could only be upheld by preserving the combination's solidarity, and that was at the mercy of the dealers, who could break it by offering 'undue preferences' to particular collieries.[1]

In the circumstances, it could not be expected that the combination would prevent an outbreak among its members of 'that remarkable contest between the superior and inferior coals', as a nineteenth century writer described it.[2] The strength of the competition was such that the owners of collieries like Tanfield Moor, Hutton and Benwell, which were sure of a market at a reasonable price, were tempted to abandon the limited benefits conferred by such a combination in favour of the reduction in marginal costs achieved by maximising production. This argument kept some collieries outside the Regulation from the start and lay behind a few resignations. Both Pitt, the owner of Tanfield Moor, and Sir John Clavering took their collieries out in 1711, after deciding to increase their collieries' output with the aid of a waggonway.[3] The issue also stirred up dissension even among those who remained inside. The feuds and jealousies which so worried Henry Liddell were exacerbated by the conduct of the

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1. Ellison MSS. A 35/18: from H. Liddell, 11 Jan. 1711.
2. Anti-Monopolist, Remarks, p.5.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/12/17: H. Liddell to Sir J. Clavering, 4 Jan. 1711; CK/3/157: from M. White, 20 Apr. 1711; CK/3/12: minutes, 20 Dec. 1710.

Montagu-Wortleys, who exploited their advantages in the trade by making independent agreements with the dealers and were, in Liddell's opinion, so 'puff'd up with a notion of ye wonderfull feats ye people att Gate will doe' for them that they were largely indifferent to the fate of the Regulation.[1] Since they produced so large a share of the Regulation's coal, they were able, to the chagrin of the other members, to insist on amending the combination in their favour, so that from 1712 they alone were permitted to sell a fixed quantity of coal rather than a proportion of the total vend: at the same time they refused to contribute to compensation payments for those who had fallen behind.[2] All that Cotesworth and the Liddells could do was hope that a deterioration in the Montagu-Wortley collieries would force them to come into a 'more real regulation' in time.[3] Meanwhile, it was natural that owners of less well-endowed mines should feel that the combination was not protecting their interests. By December 1713 James Clavering had ceased to attend the directors' meetings and, in an attempt to entice him back, Henry Liddell proposed that other members should take some of his Clavering-Stella coal and pay fittage for it.[4] This was not enough to reconcile Clavering to the Regulation and by the end of the year Liddell had begun to fear that he would expose its continued existence.[5] The distrust and jealousy which seem to have pervaded the combination contributed to each proprietor's unwillingness to reduce his own sales, and they were both promoted and exploited by the dealers.[6]

The behaviour of several members of the Regulation exasperated those who were convinced that a vigorous combination was in the best interests of all coal-owners. One of those most convinced was Cotesworth, whose activities on behalf of the Regulation were so conspicuous that, he said, even his bitterest enemies

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/146: from H. Liddell, 14 Mar. 1711; Ellison MSS. A 35/18: from H. Liddell, 11 Jan. 1711; A 35/41: from H. Liddell, 13 Oct. 1711.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/24: minutes, 7 Nov. 1711; CK/3/73: E. Wortley to J. Ord, 5 Feb. 1713 (copy).
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 19 Sept. 1712.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/37: minutes, 3 Dec. 1713; Ellison MSS. A 36a/17: from H. Liddell, 23 Feb. 1714.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/132: from H. Liddell, 29 Dec. 1714.
6. Ellison MSS. A 35/38: from H. Liddell, 10 Sept. 1711.

acknowledged his sincerity in promoting it.[1] He seems to have served as its principal agent throughout its existence and soon became indispensable. Henry Liddell went so far as to state that the future of the coal industry depended on Cotesworth's continued life and health, for he was the only man who could hold the divided combination together.[2] Indeed, his exertions on its behalf seem to have established him as one of the leading figures in the trade and they cemented his personal and business relations with the Liddell family. Yet this was achieved at the expense of his own immediate interests, for his preoccupation with the combination directed his attention away from his commercial interests, while his colliery holdings were at the time of its formation of such minor importance and poor quality that they were excluded from the benefits for which he was working.[3] To the Liddells and Cotesworth himself, his salary seemed an inadequate recompense for the sacrifices he was making, and his friends seem to have been puzzled by his disinterestedness since 'wth most people yo know 'tis Customary to Christen their own Child first'.[4] However, Cotesworth had difficulty in obtaining from the directors any reimbursement for the wayleave leases he had taken up or for the expenses incurred in travelling to London on their behalf, and they seem to have been suspicious of him and his friendship with Liddell.[5] His services to the Regulation were in fact better recognized by its enemies than by its friends and he suffered both odium and inconvenience as a result.[6] Liddell reported that the Oldners were refusing Cotesworth's coal, not because of its quality but because it was outside the Regulation, although they were rarely so scrupulous in their undertakings.[7] In his opinion, both the dealers and fitters were taking their revenge on the Regulation's agent in this way and the directors should compensate Cotesworth by guaranteeing his sales.[8] Other people also tended to hold Cotesworth responsible for the combination's activities: Sir

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/7/5: to J. Clavering, 5 Dec. 1719.
2. Ellison MSS. A 36a/12: from H. Liddell, 29 Dec. 1713.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/140: to T. Sisson, 12 Mar. 1723; CK/3/54: notes, 1711.
4. Ellison MSS. A 35/18: from H. Liddell, 11 Jan. 1711.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712; Ellison MSS. A 35/66: from H. Liddell, 1 Nov. 1712.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 11 Aug. 1713.
7. Ellison MSS. A 35/42: from H. Liddell, 25 Oct. 1711.
8. Ellison MSS. A 36a/19: from H. Liddell, 23 Mar. 1714.

John Clavering, for example, believed that 'ye 5 are yr puplls & all rogues togthr'.[1] His brother-in-law received a series of anonymous letters about him at this time and Sir Henry Liddell was convinced that he would be unwise to ride alone and unarmed.[2]

By the time the series of minutes in Cotesworth's papers comes to an end in February 1715, he had made some powerful enemies, but there is no reason to believe that the Regulation was wound up at this date. It seems to have suffered from a gradual disintegration lasting several years, and its effectiveness had undoubtedly diminished by 1716 although it still seems to have been in existence.[3] By 1719, however, regular meetings of the directors had definitely ceased, and when George Liddell was questioned about it in 1722 he replied 'I really had forgot the whole affaire of the Regulation, it was so long ago'. On the other hand, since this remark was intended to discourage his nephew John Clavering from claiming a large sum from the combination's agents, and was followed by a vigorous assertion 'that all yt were Concerned in it were look't upon to be gainers by it', it is unlikely that the Regulation had in fact been forgotten by this date.[4]

Combinations in the trade indeed occupied a great deal of the Newcastle proprietors' attention in the years following the decay of the Regulation. The cause of their concern was a combination organized in 1717 by the owners and masters of vessels engaged in the coal trade, to curtail the shipping season and introduce a system of unloading in the Pool by rota or 'turns', in order to threaten the hold of the dealers over the shippers.[5] During the summer of 1717 the ships kept to their turns, supervised by agents acting for the shipowners in the coastal ports, and Cotesworth was afraid that their restrictions on the trade

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/151: from J. Clavering, [3 Apr.] 1711.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/45: from H. Liddell, 6 Dec. 1711; A 35/10: from Sir H. Liddell, 27 May 1714.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 22 May 1716; Ellison MSS. A 36/45: from H. Liddell, 9 Oct. 1716.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/7/5: to J. Clavering, 5 Dec. 1719; CP/1/66: from G. Liddell, 21 Oct. 1722.
5. Smith, Sea-Coal for London, p.42: most writers give 1718 as the starting date for this combination.

would cut Newcastle's sales by an unacceptable amount and leave the City short of coal for the winter.[1] Such an outcome would provoke opposition, while there was no guarantee that increased prices would be passed on to the producers and a very real risk that the dealers would suspect them of complicity.[2] However, the shipowners soon found it difficult, as they always did in such situations, to enforce their combination on the masters without the co-operation of the coal-owners, and in December 1717 the producers and fitters of the northern ports were approached for their agreement to a revised set of regulations.[3] As Cotesworth was in London, his partner George Liddell wrote for his advice in this difficult situation, for he considered it necessary to co-operate with the shippers in order to secure favourable terms but at the same time was apprehensive about the dealers' reaction to this act of 'common friendship'.[4]

Cotesworth believed that the proprietors were justified in refusing to load ships before the official season opened in March, but the shippers' further demand, that they should refuse ships which could not produce a certificate that they had kept the 'turn' agreement in London, could be regarded as an unlawful combination to obstruct the trade and would certainly infuriate the dealers.[5] Liddell, Ord and most of the fitters were inclined to comply, provided that they could charge interlopers 2s extra a chaldron instead of turning them away, because they were anxious to get the masters out of the dealers' power.[6] In the end, they decided to put the responsibility for checking certificates and refusing coal on their fitters which, since the fitters were left in no doubt of their employers' intentions, would meet the shippers' request without involving the producers in a definite, illegal agreement.[7] Cotesworth, who was having an uncomfortable time in London walking a tightrope between the shippers' agents and the dealers, was dubious

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/11: to E. Mawson, 23 May 1717.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Oldner & Co., 25 Mar. & 2 Apr. 1717: Oldner broke his agreement with Cotesworth, despite the latter's disclaimers.
3. Anti-Monopolist, Remarks, p.13; Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/7: Whitby to Newcastle shipowners, 20 Dec. 1717.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/8: from G. Liddell, 5 Jan. 1718; CP/1/13: from G. Liddell, 11 Feb. 1718; CP/1/17: from G. Liddell, 28 Feb. 1718.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/29: from G. Liddell, 30 Mar. 1718.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/33: from G. Liddell, 6 Apr. 1718.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/37: from G. Liddell, 18 Apr. 1718; CP/1/38: G. to Sir H. Liddell, 18 Apr. 1718. The proprietors always tried to suggest that the fitters were acting independently in such situations: see Philalethes, Free and Impartial Enquiry, p.25.

about the arrangement, although he recognized that the Newcastle owners would be forced to comply if the Sunderland owners did. A united front between shippers and producers could perhaps defeat the dealers, but contact with the shippers' agents convinced him that they were unequal to the task and would fall into the traps set for them by the dealers and consumers, suffering a defeat which would prevent them ever combining again. Moreover, Cotesworth had no desire to see the dealers' ring replaced by an equally arbitrary shippers' monopoly and would have preferred them to choose a less militant method of improving their position, for example by binding the masters to maintain a reasonable price at the risk of their wages. In the meantime, however, all that the coal-owners could do was 'swimm wth the Current', while assuring the dealers that they were doing so against their will.[1]

Cotesworth's role in the combination was not as passive as he liked the dealers to believe, for his advice from London had great influence on the Liddells and, on his return to the north, he did his best to ensure that it ran as smoothly as possible.[2] In March 1720, for example, one of the shippers' agents reported that Cotesworth had been instrumental in renewing the agreement with Sunderland and should be 'noticed' for his help.[3]

Thanks perhaps to his help, the affair seems to have proceeded smoothly enough until May 1719, when it was threatened by a prolonged strike by the Newcastle and Sunderland keelmen for a rise in wages. The keelmen blamed their action on the hardship caused by the 'contract' between the fitters and the masters, and Cotesworth accepted this, although he was convinced that Newcastle corporation was once again exploiting the keelmen's grievances for their own ends.[4] The coal-owners were embarrassed by the attack on the understanding between the fitters and shippers as a 'contract' and by the shippers' failure to prevent small colliers loading at the outports during the strike. In an attempt to stop this,

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to G. Liddell, 26 Apr. 1718.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to N. Furs, 24 June 1718.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: J. Kitchingman to S. Chiffin, 2 Mar. 1720.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to C. Sanderson, 17 May 1719; Cotesworth MSS. CJ/3/12: Cotesworth & G. Liddell to Sir H. Liddell, 24 May 1719; CJ/3/10: keelmen's petition, 1719; Fewster, 'The Keelmen of Tyneside', Durham Univ. Journal, 1. 116-9.

they offered to reduce the masters' charges at Newcastle if the shippers' agents would co-operate with them and, when the strike was over, they promised the agents that the next fleet would be loaded with fifteen and a half chaldrons a keel, which approached double coal.[1]

Clearly, unless the shippers' combination could offer some substantial advantages to the coal-owners to balance such concessions, for instance by effectively curtailing shipments from the outports, they would not be prepared to risk the displeasure of both dealers and consumers by co-operating with it. Moreover, despite occasional protestations that their interests were inseparable, many of the producers may have shared Cotesworth's doubts about the advisability of assisting the shippers to establish themselves in a dominant position in the trade. It must have seemed that the disruption of trade by the keelmen's strike and by disputes between the shippers and dealers at London threatened the economy of the Newcastle area in a cause which was not really their own, and the final breakdown of the combination in 1720 was perhaps a welcome relief from steering a course through such disputed waters.[2]

After 1720, the coal-owners of the Tyne valley were free to seek their own solutions to the problems of the coal trade and, in particular, to reach an effective but amicable agreement to limit production. It was therefore unfortunate that in 1720 Cotesworth's long-standing dispute with Lady Clavering about her use of the Bucksnook waggonway over Whickham common for her western collieries once more broke out into open conflict after years of uneasy truce; and that she was joined by several other prominent coal-owners who were hostile to Cotesworth, notably William Blakiston Bowes and Richard Ridley.[3] One of the main objects of this confederacy was to force a passage through to the river for their coal by disputing Cotesworth's right to wayleave rent and, if necessary, by building a new way to circumvent his land and the controls which he tried to impose on the output of the western collieries.[4] Bowes died in October 1721 but his brother George

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to T. Slyford, 15 May & 21 June 1719.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to Lord W. Powlett, 8 May 1720.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: T. Sisson to C. Sanderson, 8 Apr. 1720; ZCE 10/5: to Sir H. Liddell, 7 Feb. 1721.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 20 Sept. 1720.

entered into articles with his allies which bound him for a thirty year term to allow unlimited quantities of coal from the western collieries through his lands. As a result, according to Cotesworth, the market was flooded with an 'extravagant' quantity of very good coal worked by Pitt and Lady Clavering in the west and by Ridley at Byker below the bridge, which spoiled other collieries' sales and brought in excessive gift coal and premiums.[1]

As a counterweight to this hostile confederacy, Cotesworth began to promote a closer understanding between the Liddell and Montagu-Wortley families, the first stage in his plans being to encourage the conclusion of an agreement to divide Blackburn colliery between the two families and prevent anyone else working or leading from it, something which the Montagus themselves had proposed in 1717.[2] Negotiations proceeded slowly, however, because of the concessions required by both sides, and agreement had not been reached by June 1723.[3] Meanwhile one of Cotesworth's more ambitious schemes had also run into difficulties: both he and George Liddell were convinced that it was necessary to channel the friendship and harmony which they were cultivating between the families into a 'Confederacy' to save the coal trade but, although Edward Wortley and Sir Henry Liddell seemed willing to enter an 'Alliance Offensive & defensive', it became clear that they regarded this with as little urgency as they did the Blackburn agreement and both schemes were delayed.[4]

From this time onwards, Cotesworth became increasingly dissatisfied with his treatment by the principal coal-owners and by their disregard for his advice.[5] He was not mollified by Wortley's sudden discovery in 1725 that if Bowes could be detached from the western owners and brought into an alliance with the Liddells and Montagu-Wortleys all the collieries from Blackburn to the Derwent would fall

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/70: articles of agreement, 11 Apr. 1726; CK/1/80: 'Remarks on Bowes' agreement with Lady Clavering & Ridley', n.d.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CG/ 7/6: from J. Ord, 14 June 1717; see above, p.118. The Liddells and Montagu-Wortleys held the majority but not the whole of the colliery.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/56: to G. Liddell, 4 June 1723 (copy).
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/131: from G. Liddell, 5 May 1722 (copy); CP/1/56: from G. Liddell, 7 Sept. 1722.
5. See Ch. VIII, pp. 212-4.

into the hands of this new partnership for, as he sourly pointed out, he had been telling them so for years but had been ignored by these 'Gentlemen so much Superiour to me'.[1] The real reason for Wortley's conversion to his opinion was all too clearly self-interest. Cotesworth's financial difficulties during this period and his inability to obtain a wayleave for Heaton colliery had forced him to offer the Montagu—Wortleys a share in that colliery's lease, and it was Newcastle corporation's decision in 1724 to grant the vital wayleave through Walker to Bowes, in order to spite Cotesworth, that convinced his reluctant allies of the need to reach an agreement with Bowes.[2] His bitterness was increased by his allies' readiness to accept his enemies' refusal to allow him to take part in negotiations to settle the Bucksnook dispute, and he refused to be bound by any agreement made on his behalf.[3] Plans drawn up for a combination containing both groups show that the Liddells and Montagu-Wortleys, rather than make concessions themselves, were prepared to sacrifice Cotesworth's interests in order to conciliate the other faction, and offered him little in exchange for the trouble and expense he had borne over the past five years of conflict and negotiation.[4]

However, it was impossible for them to proceed without his co-operation, since his rights in Gateshead and Whickham enabled him to block many of the collieries on the south bank of the Tyne from the river, and he insisted on completing his legal battle with Lady Clavering to confirm his rights.[5] George Bowes was especially anxious to reach an accommodation with him, whether as part of a general combination or not, and several sets of articles were drafted between them, guaranteeing passage for Bowes' coal while restricting Cotesworth's

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to E. Wortley, 9 Apr. 1725.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to E. Wortley, 29 Nov. 1723; ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 10 Nov. 1724; see Ch. VIII, pp. 209-10.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to H. Ellison, 25 May 1725; Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/57: to C. Atkinson, 20 June 1725 (copy).
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/43: 'Memorandum: att a Meeting...', 19 June 1725; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to J. Banks, 20 June 1725.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/57: to C. Atkinson, 20 June 1725 (copy). His clerk believed that the attempt on his life in June was intended to remove this obstacle permanently: Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: Sisson to J. Banks, 20 June 1725; see below, p.215.

right to grant wayleaves to other proprietors.[1] Since Cotesworth would lose more by such restraint than he would gain by the improvement in his collieries' financial position brought about by reducing the amount of coal coming onto the market, he would be compensated by a levy of 5s a ten on the coal of the other parties to these agreements, even if it did not cross his land.[2] It was this question of compensation which was at the root of his disagreements with the Montagu-Wortleys and Liddels and led him to dissociate himself from the negotations they were conducting, but a new hearing of the Bucksnook case in December 1725, which completely vindicated his rights in Whickham, strengthened his hand and by the spring he was once again participating in the general talks.[3]

His presence was needed because the parties were still unable to reconcile their particular interests.[4] In May 1726, Cotesworth thought that they were further from agreement than ever and, despite his worsening health, he strove to reconcile them.[5] By the end of June, matters had advanced so far that articles were drawn up for a 'grand partnership' between the Liddells, Montagu-Wortleys, Bowes and Cotesworth.[6] This agreement was not intended to be a 'regulation' of the trade, as those concerned in it understood the term, and it should not be compared with the combinations to regulate the trade which preceded and followed it. As stated in the first article, it was a partnership agreement, designed to link the interests of these powerful families so closely as to provide a 'lasting foundation of friendship'. Adopting a common policy for granting or withholding wayleaves was not a novel or unusually restrictive measure and articles designed to limit the output of the western collieries were intended to co-ordinate activities which individual partners had been pursuing on their own initiative. These aspects of the articles have perhaps been over-emphasized:

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1. For example: Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/70: articles of agreement, 11 Apr. 1726.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/59: 'Some reasonings...', 22 Oct. 1725.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/40: to E. Wortley, 21 Sept. 1725 (copy); Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to R. Loadsman, 17 Dec. 1725; T. Sisson to C. Sanderson, 12 Apr. 1726.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/717: 'Mr. C's remarks on the Conversation...', 28 Apr. 1726.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to C. Sanderson, 8 & 31 May 1726.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to M. Bell, 26 June 1726.

in fact, they form only a small part of a long and complicated document, the majority of which is devoted to the ticklish problem of sharing out the collieries and such 'conveniences' as watercourses and wayleaves which were then or would in the future be held by the partners, so that no one was seen to have an unfair advantage, either in quality or quantity, over the others. It was these provisions which had caused so much trouble to the negotiators and they formed the heart of the agreement.[1] Once this is recognized, the 'Grand Alliance' can be seen as its originators saw it, not as a combination designed to solve the problem of over-supply but as an essential preliminary to the formation of an effective combination among the north eastern coal-owners, plans for which were going ahead at the same time as the partnership negotiations.[2] The leverage created by the union of several of the most powerful proprietors of the Tyne area would, it was hoped, encourage a far higher proportion of the local producers to participate in such a combination than had previously been the case, and would hold the regulation more firmly together.

In order to achieve this, Cotesworth's co-operation and the use of his land, staiths and keelrooms were necessary, but his partners were not prepared to buy these facilities too dearly. The articles required that he give up most of his direct participation in colliery enterprise either on the expiry of the leases in which he was concerned, or after a certain number of years. In return, he was to receive 5s a ten for all coal led by his partners south of the Tyne, whether it passed through his land or not, although the amount to be paid for coal carried north or west of the River Derwent was left open to negotiation and he was already being pressed to agree to a reduction.[3] The conversion of his interest in the coal industry into a rent charge was probably not a great sacrifice for his health was deteriorating and his heir was still young and inexperienced, and Cotesworth ratified the articles in September 1726.[4] However, he did resent the grudging

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/26: articles of agreement, 27 June 1726.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/66: 'A proportion of Coals... 1725'. The confusion arose because later combinations often took the name of the 'Grand Allies' from the partnership which formed their nucleus.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/77: from G. Liddell, 19 July 1726.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/36: articles of agreement 27 June 1726.

attitude of the other parties; and Robert Cotesworth remained bitter about his father's treatment after years of giving up his time and money in the interests of the coal trade.[1]

Nor did the partnership produce an immediate improvement in the wayleave rents which Robert Cotesworth inherited on his father's death in December 1726.[2] By the end of 1727 he had made several reductions in the rent and was being asked for more, although accounts show that he had already halved payments for coal carried on the other side of the Derwent.[3] They also show that the original partners had persuaded Pitt to bring Tanfield Moor in with them but by 1728 they were falling out among themselves, and their failure to achieve a better understanding among the rest of the Tyne owners soon disillusioned Robert Cotesworth.[4] Negotiations for a combination to include all the important collieries of the Tyne area, and perhaps even those of the Wear, seem to have fallen through, as did the less ambitious alternative of reconciling the Grand Allies with Lady Clavering, Ridley and their confederacy.[5] There was no progress before Robert Cotesworth's death in May 1729, for, even with the support of Pitt, the Allies did not command a majority of the Tyne's sales.[6] Possibly as a result of their opponents' attempts to break up the partnership, trade conditions worsened throughout 1728 and 1729, and very few of the independent coal-owners were prepared to enter a combination on terms dictated by the Grand Allies; as Cotesworth had found, no amount of argument could convince them that the long-term gains of restricting production would outweigh the immediate hardship.[7] Negotiations were therefore fruitless until the Allies adopted more persuasive tactics and cut the price of their own coal from 12s to 9s 6d or 9s a chaldron, thus starting a price war which few other proprietors

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 4 Jan. 1728.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to E. Sayer, 2 May 1727.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to G. Liddell, 21 Dec. 1727.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/893: account of S. Wortley's executors, 1727; CP/5/70: C. to R. Cotesworth, 16 Jan. 1728; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. to C. Cotesworth, 4 Apr. 1728.
5. Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition, pp.24-5.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to E. Sayer, 24 Sept. 1728.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 19 Apr. 1729.

could afford.[1] The result was an effective, if not amicable, agreement to limit production which continued to operate intermittently for most of the eighteenth century in spite of legislation and opposition, and was held together by the 'Alliance Offensive & defensive' which Cotesworth had done so much to promote.[2]

Looking over the whole period concerned, it would seem that whilst the effectiveness of the producers' efforts to 'regulate' the trade fluctuated, overall it was probably fairly low. The 'Coal Office' was not a true combination and made little attempt to restrict the trade or impose price and output controls.[3] The 1708 Regulation, on the other hand, seems to have been remarkably successful in the first few years, largely because it recognized that price and output control exercised in a static market without restriction of entry to the market or the industry was bound to prove futile.[4] The complaints by other producers and shippers during 1710 and 1711 were perhaps justified and demonstrated the effectiveness of the Regulation at that time, but it seems clear that the combination's gains were subject to a steady process of attrition thereafter.[5] There were several reasons for this. In the first place, continued success demanded the formation of a much more broadly based combination, including coal-owners from Sunderland and the outports as well as a higher proportion of those from the Newcastle area itself. This was made unlikely, if not impossible, by the economic pressures towards increased production and by the divisions of interest which were apparent even within the combination.[6] These divisions were again apparent in the negotiations during the 1720s, for proprietors clearly distrusted and disliked the majority of their fellows and were so jealous of their own interests that, in Cotesworth's opinion, 'if they had the East Indies to divide among them they wou'd not agree Except they had the West Indies too & Even not then, neither wou'd they be able to agree about the Shareing on't'.[7] However, internal disputes among the producers were not the

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1. Anti-Monopolist, Remarks, p.10.
2. See above, p. 132.
3. See above, p. 115.
4. Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition, pp.137-8.
5. See above, pp. 118-9.
6. See above, pp. 124-6.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/3/131: from G. Liddell, 5 May 1722 (copy); Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to C. Sanderson, 8 & 31 May 1726.

main reason for the combination's disintegration, as Henry Liddell recognized as early as 1713, and neither, although it seemed an important factor, was the widespread public and legal hostility to combinations in the trade.[1] In fact it is clear from Cotesworth's papers that neither popular complaints nor legal penalties could eliminate combinations or other 'abuses' in the trade such as premiums, although they did make the participants more cautious.[2] The only sanction of which they were really afraid was a Bill removing the landowners' power to restrict wayleaves, for there would then be no hope of checking entry to the market or the industry. This made them wary of publicity but is not enough to explain their failure.[3]

Indeed, the factors which have been mentioned were symptoms, not the cause of the combination's difficulties: the root of the trouble, leading inevitably to the break-up of the combination, lay in the stagnation of the market for coal. As long as there was no increase in population and demand to meet the increased production which the capital structure of the industry impelled, the producers were at the mercy of the dealers and no combination could ever be formed that could break their power. It was this fundamental imbalance of supply and demand, combined with the continuing threat of a wayleave Bill, that caused the declining effectiveness of the Regulation and vitiated every combination until the growth of the market broke the power of the dealers and gave the producers the initiative.

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1. Ellison MSS. A 36a/7: from H. Liddell, 13 June 1713.
2. Anti-Monopolist, Remarks, p.10n; see Ch. IV, pp. 106-7; above, pp. 129-30.
3. See above, pp.113, 122-3.

CHAPTER VI

The Salt Industry and Trade

Newcastle was dependent on the coal export trade but not exclusively so for the salt-works at the mouth of the Tyne had an important part to play in the area's prosperity. Salt had probably been made at North and South Shields from the earliest times but it was not until the later sixteenth century that the industry was organized and financed on a proper commercial basis. It continued to expand until by about 1700 Shields had the largest concentration of salt works in the country.[1] In 1696, when Cotesworth was interested in salt simply as a merchant dealing in Newcastle's principal articles of trade, there were said to be 143 salt pans at South Shields: seventeen years later, there were 142 pans at South Shields and 29 at North Shields, and Cotesworth owned 13 of them.[2] Over the next twenty years the number of pans seems to have remained fairly constant and indeed there was no significant falling off until the second half of the eighteenth century.[3]

In the prevailing climatic conditions of the north-east coast, extracting salt from seawater by evaporation necessarily consumed large quantities of fuel, and consequently was practicable on a commercial scale only if fuel was both plentiful and cheap.[4] It followed that the salt industry was dependent on and stimulated by the expansion of mining in the area but in fact the intimate connection between the two industries was mutually beneficial. The pans burned 'a sort of crusty, drossy, mouldring coal' which, whilst unacceptable to both domestic and foreign consumers, gave a regular, constant heat that was ideal for brine evaporation.[5]

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1. Nef, Coal Industry, i. 175-7, 206-8.
2. Surtees, Durham, ii. 95; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'The number of Salt panns at Sheilds... 1713'.
3. P.R.O., Treasury, Various, 64/232: 'Mr. Cardonnel His Survey, 1733'; J. Grainger, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Durham (Lond., 1794), p.23.
4. W. Brownrigg, The Art of Making Common Salt (Lond., 1748), p.49.
5. J. Collins, Salt and Fishery (Lond., 1682), p.10.

Since it was often impossible, even in the best mines, to work good shipcoal without bringing up a certain quantity of 'trash', its sale to the pans, although at a greatly reduced price, kept down the coal-owners' marginal costs and helped maintain their profit margins. The abundance of such pancoal made the coal-owners no less dependent on the continued prosperity of the salt-works than the salt proprietors were on that of the coal industry, and Cotesworth claimed that a decline in the salt trade would lead to unemployment among coal workers and a general reduction in trade.[1] Indeed the role of the salt industry was so well appreciated that wayleave agreements often specified that pancoal should be carried free of rent.[2] It could even be worth a coal-owner's while to search for pancoal seams but this was a luxury which few proprietors could afford since in some collieries, such as Cotesworth's and Liddell's Bensham upper seams, even the top quality coal was so bad that some of it had to go to the pans.[3] Poor, 'open' pancoal, on the other hand, could sometimes find no market at all.[4]

Salt, like coal, came in different qualities and appealed to different markets. The type most in demand and commanding the highest prices combined several admirable features: it was clean, white, dry and old.[5] Unfortunately, Newcastle salt tended to be both dirty and grey, since it was produced over open hearths and transported in ships which also acted as colliers. It was said to be carelessly made, with a reputation for weakness and liquefaction which made it unsuitable for several markets, as well as being an inefficient preservative - although those interested in the Shields industry denied this.[6] Both the strength and the texture of the salt depended on the size of the grains and rapid boiling of the brine, the method practised at Newcastle, produced a fine-grained salt which soaked up moisture readily and was considered inferior to the coarser and more

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to T. Slyford, 8 Mar. 1724; ZCE 10/7: to W. Gilroy, 14 Aug. 1724.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/179: minutes of articles, 25 Dec. 1714.
3. Ellison MSS. A 35/9: from H. Liddell, 21 Nov. 1710.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/374: A. to E. Mawson, 15 ... 1716.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to R. Hodshon, 21 Aug. 1720.
6. Collins, Salt and Fishery, p.11; P.R.O. T1/112. 13: Report of the Salt Commissioners to the Lord High Treasurer, 18 Jan. 1709; Cotesworth MSS. CN/5/22: from T. Slyford, 28 Mar. 1719.

serviceable kind produced by slow, gentle evaporation.[1] The inability of the Shields proprietors to produce a pure table salt or a large grain salt restricted them to a lower price-range than they could otherwise have commanded and thus to lower profit margins.[2] Its effects were felt in both domestic and export trades, for one factor behind the failure of north-east saltmakers to capture foreign markets was said to be the lack of salt prepared in acceptable sizes and grains.

In the domestic market, the bad reputation of Newcastle salt offered openings to rival producers to take a large share of what was acknowledged to be an inelastic demand. Although it was estimated that, with the aid of abundant supplies of 'refuse coal', the pans on the north-east coast were capable of doubling their output, the development of the industry was restricted by the fact that the English salt-works alone produced a great deal more than the market was expected to require for a considerable time.[3] Yet competition from other English producers was not the only threat to the Shields proprietors. A certain amount of strong 'bay salt' from France and Holland was imported for curing fish and provisions, arousing complaints from the native industry, but Cotesworth does not seem to have been as concerned about competition from foreign salt in the domestic market as he was about its effect on Newcastle's export trade.[4] Foreign imports into England faced discriminative duties which prevented this stronger salt competing directly with native white salt except in certain restricted areas, such as the fishing industry.[5] However, since the Shields proprietors seem to have relied on the seasonal export trade to raise or maintain the price of salt in Newcastle, the effectiveness of foreign competition in the port's principal export markets had a considerable impact on the domestic market and the industry's

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1. Brownrigg, Common Salt, pp.68-71.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/17: 'Thoughts about Regulating & Improving the Trade of Mr C's salt', n.d.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/13: 'Some Thoughts about Improving of the Salt Revenue...', n.d.
4. Houghton, Collection, ii. 104-5; Brownrigg, Common Salt, pp.9-10.
5. See below, p.149.

prosperity.[1] When such competition was weak, as for example in 1714 when disaster struck both the Polish mines and the French salt-works, the Shields industry enjoyed both an unprecedented export demand and high prices on the home market; strong competition could, on the other hand, produce depression at Shields.[2]

Cotesworth and the other Shields proprietors were even more worried by the finely-grained Scottish salt which competed directly with their own product both at home and abroad.[3] Many complaints about the import of Scottish salt were made, and Cotesworth's correspondent, Thomas Slyford, who set himself up as an expert on the salt industry, believed that its complete exclusion would produce 'Improvements' in the price of Newcastle salt.[4] However, there is no sign that the northern counties were flooded with cheap Scottish salt and Cotesworth seems to have been more jealous of its dominance of the white salt market in the Baltic than at home.[5]

The most important English salt-works were concentrated in Northumberland, Durham, Cheshire, Worcestershire and Hampshire.[6] The effect of their competition on the Shields industry was uneven and Cotesworth seems to have discounted the Worcestershire salt-works completely. It is more surprising that the Cheshire brine and rock industries appear so rarely in his correspondence in view of his association with Slyford who had been concerned in that area at the turn of the century.[7] This indicates that it would be a mistake to over-emphasize the impact of the discovery and rapid exploitation of rock salt in Cheshire. It is

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/149: to T. Sisson, 18 Apr. 1723. The importance of the export trade probably lay in its role as the source of marginal change in the Shields industry's fortunes, rather than in the actual amount of salt exported which does not seem to have been very large: see Hughes, Studies, p.406.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Gray, 30 Apr. 1714.
3. Houghton, Collection (Lond., 1728), iv. 255.
4. P.R.O., T.1/173/20: Salt Commissioners' Report on petition of T. Slyford & J. Hodgson, 26 Feb. 1714; Cotesworth MSS. CN/5/12: from T. Slyford, 10 Mar. 1719; see below, p.149.
5. E. Hughes, Studies in Administration and Finance 1558-1825 (Manch., 1934), p.414; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to G. Gray, 14 Apr. 1713.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/13: 'Some Thoughts...', n.d.
7. Hughes, Studies, pp.225-60, 265, 394, 405, 428.

no doubt true that the eventual fate of the Shields white salt industry was sealed by the Cheshire discoveries but the danger did not become immediate until transport developments gave Cheshire salt cheap access to the London market.[1]

Much more dangerous from Cotesworth's point of view were two rivals which competed directly in the London market, the pans in Northumberland and Hampshire. His letters and papers contain more references to the threat from the 30 odd pans on the Northumberland coast at Blyth, Cullercoats and Seaton Sluice than they do to the entire Scots and Cheshire industries.[2] These Northumberland pans were used by London importers to keep the Shields price down by threatening to send ships further up the coast in search of better treatment.[3] The importers also exploited the 120 pans at Lymington in Hampshire which were nearer to London than those of any other main centre of the industry and could produce up to 3,000 tons of salt in a dry year.[4] The sudden influx of Lymington salt onto the market in 1717 seems to have surprised Cotesworth, since little had been sent to London for a oonsiderable time, but thereafter he took a wary interest in the rival salt-work's fortunes and was able to predict early in the season whether or not the London price would hold.[5] Cotesworth maintained that Lymington salt was inferior to that from Shields, a view not shared by one of his Yarmouth correspondents who thought it both whiter and finer.[6] However, the Lymington producers' greatest advantage was that they reduced the brine by solar evaporation before boiling off the residual water, thus using much less fuel, and consequently they could afford to buy coal from the north-east and still sell at 5s a ton cheaper at London than the Shields proprietors.[7] In a dry year, like 1717 or 1723, they made so much salt that they ruined the

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1. Hughes, Studies, p.409.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'The number of Salt panns... 1713'.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, 18 Feb. 1717.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'Some Remarks on the Salt Trade, 1714'.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717; CP/2/64: to T.Sisson, 29 May 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to Lord W. Powlett, 8 Oct. 1720.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717; CP/2/155: to T. Sisson, 4 May 1723 (enclosed letter).
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to the dean of Durham, 19 Nov. 1723; Brownrigg, Common Salt, pp.124-5, 127-9, 132n; Fiennes, Through England, pp.38-9.

market and eroded the advantage the Shields industry derived from proximity to the coal field.[1]

Salt manufacture was a capital-intensive industry and since salt, like coal, was, in proportion to its bulk, one of the least valuable of all commodities in general use, the return on each unit was small. As Cotesworth admitted, Lymington supplied a part of the demand 'wch the Trade in the north cannot at present dispense with', and the Shields salt makers could not afford to have the price pulled down by rivals who had achieved a significant reduction in production costs.[2] Estimates of the prime cost of a ton given in Cotesworth's papers vary between 24s 10d and 28s, and allowance must also be made for capital tied up in plant and stock.[3] Yet, for the majority of the period during which Cotesworth was concerned in the salt industry, salt was sold at Newcastle for less than 30s a ton. Only an exceptional combination of circumstances in 1713-4 raised the price as high as 40s, and by 1716 competition from other sources had pulled it down to 27s a ton.[4] In 1724, the price was as low as 25s 6d a ton and proprietors must have been hard pressed to make any profit at all.[5]

The smallness of margins and the fluctuation of profits forced producers to check their working expenses carefully. A few years after Cotesworth entered the industry, he conducted a rigorous costing experiment at one of his North Shields pans in order to 'know exactly wt ye Salt Lyes me in'.[6] Thereafter, his other pans were expected to produce at least three tons of salt to a keel of coal, which worked out at around two and three-quarters chaldrons to a ton or wey of salt. If other variables remained constant, this rate of consumption ensured a reasonable profit. To check on this, accounts were prepared at the end of every year which apparently distinguished between capital and current

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/405: from R. West, 19 Nov. 1723.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/756, 776: computations of the cost of 1 ton. [It is not known how Cotesworth costed his own pancoal when used in his pans.]
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Gray, 30 Apr. 1714; to Mr. Cox, 16 Mar. 1716; Brownrigg, Common Salt, p.132n: the usual price varied between 27s and 30s, and only a very small profit was made.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 3 July 1724.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Milbourne, 20 Aug. 1713.

expenditure, allowing Cotesworth's steward to extract from them an analysis of the average cost per ton, broken down into its components of fuel, rent, repairs, etc.[1] When the pan accounts for 1722 were sent to Cotesworth, revealing that production had fallen and fuel consumption had risen during his absence in London, his steward was ordered to tighten up the supervision of coal deliveries and of the workmen. Burning three chaldrons of coal per ton of salt and only producing two tons per pan per week was enough to cut deeply into an already narrow profit margin.[2] Since, according to Cotesworth's estimate, the Lymington salters used only two-fifths of a Newcastle chaldron per ton, the Shields proprietors could not afford to be careless.[3]

In the circumstances, it was natural that attempts should be made to reduce Lymington's advantage by economizing on production costs, as well as by preventing waste. There was little that could be done to reduce the fixed capital burden which, although large, did not differ substantially from that of their rivals. A salt proprietor had to provide not only iron pans and panhouses to shelter them from the weather but also a series of coal holes and garners for storage, pumps and sumps to raise the sea water, houses for his employees and an office for the local excise officer, besides a variety of planks, ladders, barrows, chimneys and metal utensils used in and around the works.[4] Some proprietors owned their own boats for transporting coal and salt down the river, which involved building and maintaining boatmen's houses.[5] The largest single expense however was always the cost of the pans and panhouses. Despite the relative simplicity of the structure, which allowed it to be built on the spot by Cotesworth's own workmen, it was estimated in 1722 that a new unit would cost him about £136, the pan alone costing nearly two-thirds of this.[6] The frequency with which pans needed repairs

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/120: to T. Sisson, 4 Dec. 1722; CP/2/122: to T. Sisson, 12 Dec. 1722. N.B. none of the accounts survive.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/131: to T. Sisson, 22 Jan. 1723.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'Some Remarks... 1714'.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/89: view of ten North Shields pans, 13 Jan. 1725.
5. Ellison MSS. A 58/58: T. Hill to H. Ellison, 27 July 1729.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/11: 'An Acct of the Charges of makeing a New pann and Pannhouse... ', 1722. The Shields pans were about 20' x 12' and were said to be the largest in Britain: see Brownrigg, Common Salt, p.52n; Collins, Salt and Fishery, p.10; Ellison MSS. A 58/58: T. Hill to H. Ellison, 27 July 1729.

as a result of corrosion and hard use, together with the skilled nature of the job, provided smiths like Joseph Pickering with the opportunity of entering into lucrative partnerships with salt proprietors.[1] The cost of an entire industrial unit, that is a pan plus garners etc., is difficult to estimate: the current market value of one seems to have been between £200 and £150 but panboats could add considerably to this since their second-hand value was between £70 and £80.[2]

However, as in other contemporary industries, it was possible to make economies in expenditure on fixed assets by building plant and machinery on the site, buying raw materials and services on credit and paying for them by instalments, thus reducing the need for long-term capital investment. Iron, for example was bought on credit in sheets, known as pan plates, from local suppliers like the Crowleys with whom Cotesworth sometimes ran up large accounts, and the pans were constructed on the site.[3] Indeed, Cotesworth even expected his suppliers to accept part-payment in salt as a concession to so good a customer, which reduced the burden of financing the pans still further.[4] Fixed capital requirements were also reduced by a series of arrangements which allowed proprietors to lease entire salt works at reasonable rents; indeed Cotesworth's early ventures into the industry took the form of agreements with certain pan owners to make salt in their pans, taking a fixed proportion of the selling price and allowing them a share of any profits.[5] One such agreement was later converted into a regular lease at a rent of £10 a year for each pan.[6] Rents of £15 were more common and the lease of these North Shields pans was said to be much to Cotesworth's advantage.[7]

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/304: A. to E. Mawson, 4 June 1715; Ellison MSS. A 58/59: T. Hill to H. Ellison, 5 Aug. 1729.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to M. Bell, 20 Jan. 1728; R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 27 Feb. 1728; Ellison MSS. A 58/58: T. Hill to H. Ellison, 27 July 1729.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/876: account with R. Thomlinson, May 1721 - Aug. 1723 CM/2/304: A. to E. Mawson, 4 June 1715.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/54: from T. Sisson, 31 Aug. 1722.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Bailes, 3 Oct. 1713.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/548: Mrs. Milbourne's account, 24 June 1714.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/454: 'A Rental of William Cotesworth Esqrs Estate', 1722; CM/2/550: from M. Browell, 22 Nov. 1714.

However, although a lessee did not have the capital commitments of an owner-occupier, he was burdened with a rent charge which increased his annual outgoings and perhaps made him more vulnerable to Lymington's competition than were his owner-occupier neighbours. It is not possible to be more precise about the effect of rent charges on the relative working costs of lessees and owner-occupiers since breakdowns of the prime cost of a ton of salt found in Cotesworth's papers put the cost of rent, repairs, garners, etc., at 4s a ton, or around sixteen per cent of the total cost, but they do not break it down any further than that.[1] The hire of panboats accounted for another twelve per cent of the cost of a ton. Another 4s a ton, or sixteen per cent, was spent on the wages of the 'poor wretches' employed in the salt works.[2]

Figure 6: An Estimate of the prime cost of a Ton of Salt

$2\frac{3}{4}$ Cha Coales at 5s	£0 : 13 : 9
Boathire	3 : 1
Makeing	4 : 0
Repairs rent & Salt gs	4 : 0
	£1 : 4 :10

Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/776: 'Computation of Charges of mak' Ton Salt', n.d.

Given that neither the fixed capital charges nor the 44 per cent of the yearly working costs mentioned above could be pruned any further, the proprietors' attention was naturally drawn to the factor which gave Lymington its most significant advantage: fuel consumption. Coal was the chief element in the cost of salt production, accounting for the remaining 56 per cent of working expenses, and strenuous efforts were made to find some method of materially reducing the amount used.[3] When Slyford offered the Shields industry an exclusive means of making cheaper salt, Cotesworth's immediate reaction was to ask how much of

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/131: to T. Sisson, 22 Jan. 1723.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to E. Wortley, 10 Jan. 1724.
3. See figure 6.

this improvement lay 'in Lessening the Consumption of Coals' and whether it would be possible to conceal it from their competitors.[1] In fact Slyford's scheme came to nothing but the proprietors conducted many experiments for the same purpose on their own initiative. Nicholas Burdon brought over someone from Cheshire in 1718 to build pans that would use less fuel but the project, Cotesworth wrote, 'proves like his two former'.[2] Such failures meant that the Shields salt makers were unable to achieve a significant reduction in their costs and remained at the mercy of the advantage which Lymington producers enjoyed during fine, dry summers.

The Shields proprietors' narrow, uncertain profit margins made them vulnerable to the additional financial strain entailed by the demands of government finance and the cost of storage, which together raised the capital requirements of the salt industry to a very high level. The need to finance large stocks arose from the quality of Newcastle salt which, if loaded into ships bound for London 'hot out of the pans', was so prone to liquefaction that it could literally 'Runn of the Menns Backs' as they carried it on board.[3] The longer salt was kept before shipping the drier it became, and the Navy Victualling Board recognized this by refusing to accept salt less than two months old.[4] It was necessary therefore for proprietors to arrange their garners so that the oldest salt was delivered first: moreover they had to tie up large amounts of capital in order to maintain sufficient stocks of mature salt.[5] On one occasion Cotesworth had 4,690 tons in store, representing a stock of nearly £6,000.[6] Those without large reserves were restricted in their trade and even Cotesworth, who usually had around a thousand tons in his garners, was sometimes left with only new, damp salt when demand was heavy.[7]

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717; CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to T. Slyford, 1 and 13 Aug. 1718.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to R. West, 14 June 1719.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 17 Aug. 1718; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/290: from B. Sleigh, 14 May 1715.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. West, 20 Dec. 1718.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/44: from T. Sisson, 10 Aug. 1722.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/13: 'Some Thoughts...', n.d.; CM/2/613: from R. Hodshon, 5 Oct. 1723; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Roberts, 8 Feb. 1715.

Proprietors also had to contend with duties which, at 3s 4d a bushel, were nearly six times as much as the production cost of their salt, and which had to be paid or secured as soon as it left the garner. As a memorandum in Cotesworth's papers pointed out, it could be difficult for individuals to raise the necessary capital in addition to that tied up in their salt works and the high duties 'does also make ye Trade very hazardouse to them as well in the Trust they must repose in Servants as in the Credit they Give to ye buyers'.[1] The burden was alleviated by a duty-free allowance of three bushels in 40, to compensate for waste in transit, and by a nine month discount at ten per cent per year for prompt payment. Together these reduced the duty paid by about 19s a ton but still left it five times greater than the prime cost.[2] If it was secured rather than paid, credit was allowed for nine months but the discount was forfeited.[3]

The discount and the allowance for waste had been adopted after the Union as a 'fence' to protect English salters against Scottish competition, and Cotesworth and Slyford thought that it had been reasonably effective: however, Cotesworth was still anxious to find a means of ensuring that Scottish salt was 'firmly barr'd out' of the country.[4] No official attempt had been made to protect the English white salt industry against other competitors and indeed Cotesworth complained that certain aspects of the duty actually gave an unfair advantage to Shields' rivals. For example, foreign salt escaped paying duty if it was used in the fishing industry and because of this importers were allowed to deposit the salt in English warehouses for an unlimited period, only paying or securing the duty, if necessary, when it was sold. Cotesworth hoped to persuade the authorities to drop these concessions by arguing that waste occurring during storage robbed the government of revenue, and that allowing foreign salt to land without payment, on whatever pretext, encouraged smuggling at the expense of the native industry. Moreover, the duty on foreign salt, although apparently double that on English, was levied on a bushel of 84 lb. as opposed to the 56 lb. bushel used for native white salt.

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/13: 'Some Thoughts...', n.d.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/15: 'Some acct of the Salt duty', n.d.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CN/5/12: from T. Slyford, 10 Mar. 1719; CN/5/22: from T. Slyford, 28 Mar. 1719.

Native rock salt enjoyed a similar advantage since it was calculated on a 65 lb. bushel; moreover, it was allowed an extra three months credit.[1] The legislation in 1719 which put all English salt on the same footing as regards both duty and weight had Cotesworth's full approval.[2]

Apart from his rather muted complaints about the incidence of the duties, Cotesworth seems to have been more complacent about the burden borne by English salt makers than might have been expected. He was in a stronger financial position than many of the other Shields salters and may have agreed with Slyford that 'its well known the higher any Dutys are in any branches of our Trade the better it is for the rich Traders as serving them to keep out the Meaner or poor dealers who use to undersell & thereby spoil trade'.[3] Some of these poorer salt-makers were indeed afraid that the pans would become consolidated in the hands of the most wealthy proprietors if trade did not improve, but there is no sign of such consolidation.[4] In fact, the evidence indicates that the situation remained fairly stable: the list of proprietors in 1713 found in one of Cotesworth's letter books shows 33 men owning 171 pans, while Cardonnel's survey twenty years later lists 28 proprietors owning 175 pans.[5] However, while actual numbers remained steady, the burden of duty may have contributed to a turnover in the ownership of the pans as proprietors sought to let or sell salt-works which they could no longer afford to run. It was Professor Hughes' belief that an almost complete turnover in ownership took place between the 1690s and 1730s mainly as a direct result of the imposition of crippling salt duties as a measure of war finance.[6] He based this conclusion on a comparison between two lists, the first one drawn up in 1708 and showing outstanding debts on the duties contracted between 1694 and 1701/2, the second Cardonnel's 1733 survey of the Shields proprietors: this comparison suggested to Hughes that only two families

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/52: to x, 24 Mar. 1721; CL/1/15: 'Some acct of the Salt duty', n.d.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CN/5/22: from T. Slyford, 28 Mar. 1719.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to T. Slyford, 13 July 1718.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'The number of Salt panns... 1713'; T. 64/232: Cardonnel's Survey, 1733.
6. Hughes, Studies, pp.407-8.

in debt to the Salt Commissioners in the 1690s were still concerned in the industry forty years later.[1] His findings are, however, open to two major objections. In the first place, the two lists were drawn up for different purposes and do not record the same thing. The 1708 list is a record, not of those operating salt-pans at the turn of the century, but of the signatories of outstanding bonds and salt bonds found in Cotesworth's papers suggest that two of the three signatories to each bond sometimes had little connection with the industry. There is indeed evidence that many of those named were not salt proprietors, but the main objection to Hughes' choice of evidence is that the few genuine proprietors on the list were only a sample of those making salt at Shields in the 1690s and were probably an unrepresentative sample: the very reason for the list's existence suggests that it would include a high proportion of the unsuccessful, those most likely to go to the wall before the 1733 survey was made.[2] Taking such a motley collection of names and comparing it with a detailed list of all those actually owning salt-pans in 1733 seems a questionable method of reaching conclusions about the pattern of ownership in the Shields industry. The second objection to Hughes' findings is that it is doubtful whether a change in ownership of that degree over such a period of time was in any way exceptional or due to any special factors. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, firms seldom had a long or continuous history, so that it would have been surprising to find a marked degree of continuity at Shields over a 40-year period.[3] Such changes in ownership were probably even more common in an area of economic development and mobility such as the Tyne valley and do not require an explanation involving the imposition of crippling duties.

Examination of material in Cotesworth's papers suggests a different pattern and a modified conclusion. There does seem to have been a long-term change of ownership over the period in question but it was less complete than appeared

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1. P.R.O. T. 1/112/13a: 'An acct of the Debts on the Salt Duties at Michaelmas 1708'; T. 64/232: Cardonnel's survey, 1733.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/89: salt bond, 6 June 1719; P.R.O., T. 1/172/17: 'An Account of the Severall Persons standing in debt to the Revenue on Salt, Trinity Term 1713'.
3. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants, p.17.

from Hughes' evidence and more easily ascribable to natural wastage. Of the 27 surnames that appear in the 1733 survey about 30 per cent had been active in the industry before 1703, 50 per cent before 1713, and 77 per cent before 1723, indicating a gradual turnover of between 20 and 30 per cent a decade rather than a sudden dramatic overthrow of the old salt-making families.[1] Some proprietors, like Cotesworth's cousin Charles, did run into debt with the Salt Commissioners and languished in prison or were forced to abscond, but there seems little justification for claiming that these debts were the cause, rather than a symptom, of their financial difficulties.[2] The 1708 list reveals that the main burden of debt rested on a handful of proprietors, notably Francis and Mathew Partis who were named in eighteen of the 24 bonds outstanding at South Shields, while the majority seem to have escaped unscathed.[3] Some fell into debt to local people, often to those who supplied them with coal, the biggest drain on their working capital, but there is little evidence that these debts were a direct result of the salt duties.[4] Certainly, the duties played no part either in Cotesworth's decision to invest in the industry nor in his son's decision to withdraw, a cycle which escaped Hughes' notice since it took place within eighteen years.[5]

Financing duty payments could be a heavy burden, especially for a proprietor like Cotesworth who claimed in 1721 that he was paying £400 a week on the produce of his 29 pans.[6] However, his papers show that the duty was usually paid by the 'first buyer at Shields', rather than by the proprietor, because salt was sold on the spot to agents employed by London importers before the duty

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/22-46: bonds for performance of covenants, 12 Jan. 1702; CL/1/49-56: bonds for performance of covenants, 27 Jan. 1704; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'The number of Salt panns... 1713'; Ridley (Blagdon) MSS. ZRI 29/3b: depositions, 1 Oct. 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/1: to M. Beesley and J. Hanell, 18 Sept. 1714; CM/2/326: to E. Mawson, 4 Aug. 1715; CB/8/55: lease of seven North Shields pans, 25 Mar. 1715; CM/2/376: from P. Smith, 13 Jan. 1717; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to J. Rogers, 15 Feb. 1718; to A. Dick, 20 Feb. 1718.
2. P.R.O., T. 1/172/17: 'An Account..., Trinity Term 1713'.
3. P.R.O., T. 1/112/13a: 'An Account... Michaelmas 1708'.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/544: Mrs. Roddam's account with Ramsay, 1710-12.
5. See below, pp. 156-7; Ch. VIII, p. 204.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 26 May 1721.

was paid.[1] Nor was it necessary to pay the duty in cash. Officially, it was paid over or secured to the local collector who arranged its transfer to the London office, usually by obtaining bills from a credit agency at a premium of six to twelve per cent. However, the high securities demanded from collectors put them at the mercy of wealthy salt proprietors or London bankers, and at Shields the duties seem to have been collected at the convenience of a proprietor, John Cay, who was receiver for the Goulds, the London bankers.[2] Cay and the Goulds demanded that the duties should be paid by bill, since it saved them the trouble and expense of procuring one, so proprietors drew on the buyer of their salt, payable to Cay.[3] When Cotesworth wished to pay in cash, in order to extend a customer's credit, Cay was so displeased that Cotesworth was sometimes forced to give way.[4] The proprietor was therefore usually only an intermediary in the payment of the duties and bore the full financial burden himself only when he was trying to by-pass the marketing arrangements dominated by the London importers and their agents in order to sell direct to their customers at Billingsgate. When Cotesworth was acting as a principal in the London trade, he sometimes found it difficult to raise money for the duty and had to try to persuade the Goulds to delay calling in his bills, but his letters show that his difficulties at such times were exceptional and that they were the result of his temporary disagreements with the London importers.[5]

These points have been raised to temper the view that the salt duties brought inevitable ruin to many of the Shields salt-makers. Nevertheless, the duty was so high in relation to the prime cost that it must have had far-reaching implications for the industry. There was a great incentive to evasion by both the proprietors and their employees, and Slyford thought it inevitable that there should be a certain amount of 'Saving as its called'. He estimated that the

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Crowley, 7 Sept. 1714; Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.
2. Hughes, Studies, pp.205n, 214, 222-4; Ellison MSS. A 35/30: from H. Liddell 25 June 1711.
3. Carr—Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Cox, 20 Sept. 1715.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to R. West, 19 June 1719.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/7: to E. Mawson, 6 May 1717; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to [N. & J. Gould], 7 Apr. 1718; to F. Baker, 20 Mar. 1718.

revenue lost about £50,000 a year by frauds, and he advocated forming the salt makers into chartered companies with communal warehouses to make the duties easier to police: this would not only save about £5,000 in salaries paid to watchmen and revenue officers but would reduce the possibilities of corrupting the remainder. Evasion on such a scale, he thought, made trade difficult and ruinous to the honest proprietors.[1] However, the most significant effects of the duties were probably indirect rather than immediate. As in the coal trade, high duties led to static or falling consumer demand.[2] Slyford claimed that demand was inelastic because salt was a vital part of people's diet but he admitted that about £20,000 of the deficit in the estimated yield of the duties was the result of a drop in consumption.[3] Coupled with competition from other salt-producing areas, this produced generally low prices for Newcastle salt, sometimes lower than production costs. The Shields proprietors do appear to have been hard pressed; Slyford described investments in salt manufactureas 'a precarious fluctuating Interest attended wth difficulties hard enough for the Managemt of the most Skillfull persons'.[4] Variations in price and profit tended to benefit those with reserves large enough to weather the lean years, when many of their neighbours could not afford to make salt at all.[5] The usual response to prices that cut the already narrow profit margin too far was to stop production, for the fixed capital involved, unlike that in the coal industry, was not large enough to compel proprietors to persevere at all costs.[6]

Low margins and high costs provided a natural incentive towards combination which would, in Slyford's opinion, make salt-pans 'as tenable as the Rents of Lands or Houses and be valued accordingly'.[7] The first combination which figures in Cotesworth's papers was the Salt Owners' Society, which was apparently founded in January 1702 with a membership of at least thirty-five proprietors and

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/13: 'Some Thoughts...', n.d.
2. See Ch. III, p. 78.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/13: 'Some Thoughts...', n.d.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Cox, 16 Nov. 1716.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 30 Nov. 1716; see Ch. III, p. 75.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.

lasted until 1713.[1] Little is known about its operations except that it undertook prosecutions on behalf of its members, but it seems to have regulated the trade in some way for several years.[2] Its directors had the power to close all the Shields pans when prices or demand fell, and Cotesworth mentioned that they operated a 'turn' or rota, although he added that it was badly observed.[3] Slyford described the combination as 'a very Loose & imperfect one' but maintained that its members had still benefited from its operations.[4] The presence of alternative sources of supply, especially from the Northumberland salt-works, and the opposition of the largest proprietor at Shields probably reduced the society's effectiveness and were certainly blamed for its eventual disintegration.[5] Attempts were made to form a stronger combination, which would include Blyth and the other small Northumbrian ports, but until 1726 such negotiations were inconclusive and half-hearted.[6] In that year, however, a 'contract' was finally drawn up between, on the one hand, a number of London importers and, on the other, salt makers from the north-east coast, which seems to have resembled the Regulation's arrangement with the coal dealers.[7] At Shields, the combination was managed by directors who set prices, collected subscriptions, paid a dividend, and ensured that members dealt only with the dealers concerned in the contract.[8] For a few years trade seems to have benefited from this control but by 1729 a company of interlopers had been formed in London and was encouraging certain Shields proprietors to break the combination.[9] As in the coal industry, the impetus towards combination was not

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/22-44: bonds for performance of covenants, 12 Jan. 1702
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/47: assignment of debt, 31 Dec. 1702.
3. Ridley MSS. ZRI 29/3b: depositions, 1 Oct. 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/770: 'Mr. Cotesworth's Objections to ye Engross'd Deed', [1726]; see Ch. V, p.127.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/2: T. Slyford to C. Atkinson, 9 Aug. 1717.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Roddam, 12 Sept. 1713. The proprietor in question was J. Coulson; see ZCE 10/2: 'The number of Salt panns... 1713'.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/7: from T. Slyford, 26 July 1718; CL/1/12: a provisional agreement, 5 July 1726.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 5 Aug. 1726; see Ch. V, p. 121. No premiums were paid, probably because the salt importers were in a weaker position than the coal dealers; see below, pp. 159-60.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: T. Sisson to W. Hatcher, 28 July 1727; ZCE 10/10: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 26 Nov. 1728; Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/34: R. Hodshon to R. Cotesworth, 22 Dec. 1726.
9. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to M. Bell, 20 Jan. 1728; Ellison MSS. A 58/56: T. Hill to H. Ellison, 7 May 1729.

strong enough to withstand the temptation to maximize production at the expense of prices for very long, even though this temptation was not reinforced to the same extent as in the coal industry by the weight of fixed capital.[1]

The close links between the salt and coal industries and their similar difficulties may account for what was a clearly marked trend among coal-owners to acquire interests in the salt industry. A list of salt-pan proprietors in 1713 shows that Cotesworth was the only one of the three largest pan owners to have interests in the coal industry, but twenty years later Liddell, Ridley and Bell were leading figures in both industries.[2] It is unlikely that they were attracted by widening margins in salt making since the figures given by Brownrigg in 1748 differ little from those found in Cotesworth's papers; and Brownrigg was equally gloomy about the profits to be made.[3] Nor does the available evidence prove conclusively that the relative profitability of investment in the coal and salt industries was changing in favour of the latter, although the evidence is so scanty that this cannot be entirely discounted.[4] A more cogent reason for the coal-owners' intervention was the importance attached to sales of pancoal, for a secure outlet and reasonable price not only removed a potentially crippling burden from a colliery but turned the 'waste product' into a source of additional profit.[5] However, there are signs that by the beginning of the eighteenth century both the price and security of outlet were suffering from the effects of over-supply. Already in 1691 certain coal-owners had banded together against the larger measure and extended credit demanded by their customers, and by 1713 Cotesworth, whose collieries produced a great deal of inferior coal, was complaining about 'the trouble Seeking of Chapmen for them or of Running about Shields for Money, when they have been sold a 12 mth'.[6] When he first entered the industry in 1710,

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1. See Ch. III, pp. 76-8, 80; Ch. V, pp. 125-6.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'The Number of Salt panns... 1713'; P.R.O., T. 64/232: Cardonnel's survey, 1733.
3. See above, p. 143; Brownrigg, Common Salt, p.132n.
4. See W.H. Beveridge, Prices and Wages in England (Lond., 1939), i. 575, 577, 731; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to M. Bell, 20 Jan. 1728.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712; see above, pp. 139-40.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/54: An agreement on the working & sale of pancoals, 1 Oct. 1691; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Bailes, 3 Oct. 1713.

it was for the specific purpose of disposing of the vast quantities of pancoal produced by the upper seams of Bensham colliery which, he told Henry Liddell, 'would otherwise have broke us'.[1] Three years later, when negotiating for the lease of three more pans, he claimed that he was only interested in the industry in order to dispose of his coal.[2] However, by this time his ambitions had transcended his original object and he now regarded the purchase of cheap coal from other people's collieries as well as his own as a means 'to bring the pann trade into our hands'.[3] The 'salt project' had taken on a life of its own, although it still depended mainly on the supply, from his own land in Whickham and Winlaton, of coal 14d cheaper than the market price.[4] Any interruption in this privileged supply meant that Cotesworth was faced with a choice between stopping his production or losing his profit.[5]

His share of the industry increased rapidly after 1714, when he converted his original agreement for the ten North Shields pans into a regular lease, to add to the three pans leased in 1713.[6] Two months later, he leased seven more pans north of the river, bringing his total up to twenty.[7] By November 1719 he owned or held leases of twenty-nine pans, making him the largest proprietor in the area with control over just under eighteen per cent of the entire output of the Shields industry, which must have been several thousand tons.[8] He maintained this level of investment for six years, until he gave up the ten North Shields pans in 1725.[9]

Cotesworth's emergence as the largest single proprietor in the north-east and, he claimed, the producer of 'a Greater Quantitie at this time than any other

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/139: to H. Liddell, 5 Dec. 1710; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Bailes, 3 Oct. 1713.
3. Ellison MSS. A 36a/11: from H. Liddell, 20 Nov. 1713 (memorandum).
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to R. Hodshon, 25 Feb. 1722; Cotesworth MSS. CK/11/24: memorandum, 18 Aug. 1722.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 26 May 1721.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/546: to W. Roddam, 15 Jan. 1714; see above, pp. 146, /156-7.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CB/8/55: lease, 25 Mar. 1714.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/41: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 22 Nov. 1719 (copy); Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. West, 20 Dec. 1718.
9. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/89: view of ten North Shields pans, 13 Jan. 1725.

of the King's English Subjects' does not seem to have endeared him to his neighbours.[1] Their hostility stemmed from the advantage which Cotesworth enjoyed through using his own coal and which allowed him to produce salt at least 3s cheaper than anyone else.[2] Cotesworth made use of this advantage to 'put other people so much on their mettle to worke cheepe that we afford yt valluable Comodity of Salt on better Termes than can be imagined by those that looke on'.[3] He regarded his less fortunate neighbours as stupid and indolent and described them to correspondents as 'poor undiserning Creatures', but they were discerning enough to realize that Cotesworth's ability and readiness to sell his salt at a price that would only have covered their costs of production was harming their interests.[4] The presence in the industry of someone prepared to offer customers at least a shilling off the market price on a regular basis was decidedly unwelcome because it was difficult to restore the price when it had been pulled down in this manner.[5]

Cotesworth's attitude to his neighbours and their aspirations seems to have hardened as the number of his salt pans increased and is illustrated by his reaction to combinations in the trade. As lessee of Mrs. Milbourne's and Mrs. Roddam's pans he assumed their obligations to the Salt Owners' Society, and by May 1713 he was actually a director of the combination.[6] However, within six months of condemning John Coulson for ruining the trade by undermining the society he had decided that, since 'my Gain if any be Lyes in the Consumption of a quantity of Coales', a combination which restricted the output of his pans

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/52: to x, 24 Mar. 1721.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717. This raises the question of 'transfer pricing' again: see above, p.144, n.3. Cotesworth seems to indicate in this and other letters that he forwent a profit on the 'sale' of his pancoal in return for advantage in his salt enterprise. Presumably security of outlet and the valorization of a waste product meant that his colliery interests still derived some advantage from integration.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to W. Carr, 6 Feb. 1720.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to T. Slyford, 30 Nov. 1723; ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Langley, 15 Sept. 1716; to Mr. Cox, 16 Nov. 1716.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 3 Oct. 1725; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/769: N. Burdon to T. Sisson, 26 Jan. 1727.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/58: bond for performance of covenants, 15 Feb. 1712; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Errington, 9 May 1713.

was not in his interests.[1] By 1717, he was convinced that it was in the public interest, as well as his own, 'to be served be the man yt can do it cheapest tho Sevral private persons are injured by it', although, as his belief in free competition did not extend to the coal industry, it may be suspected that his devotion to the greater good had sound economic motives.[2] As he admitted, a large-scale producer, unlike his poorer neighbours, could always command a high enough price to keep his pans going, because of the greater bargaining power of a larger unit.[3] He was, therefore, not prepared to help Slyford or anyone else organize a new combination: although eventually he was persuaded to sign the contract drawn up in 1726, he did so reluctantly and only because it was promoted by the principal London importers.[4]

By 1726, he was prepared to accept anything that might help to establish the friendly relations with the importers that he had sought without great success for thirteen years. The London salt trade was controlled by a small group of men who dominated the Billingsgate market in the same way as the coal dealers did, selling from on board the salt ships in the dock direct to the principal wholesale and retail dealers and also supplying market towns around the capital. According to Cotesworth, there were nine chief importers, grouped into three or possibly four partnerships, controlling a network of dealers, chandlers, oil-shops and petty retailers, these intermediaries together pocketing several pounds a ton from the price paid by the consumer.[5] The importers' control over the trade was not as complete as that enjoyed by the coal dealers, partly because their monopoly had no legal basis and partly because salt was not restricted in supply to one confined area, and consequently they were threatened by the operations of interlopers in London and by Lymington or Shields salt makers trying to sell in

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Capt. Lewis, 23 Feb. 1714; see above, pp. 155, 156-7.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/3: to T. Slyford, 17 Aug. 1717.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to S. Clifton, 24 Feb. 1722. Except for some minor reductions in overheads, there were no technical economies of scale in salt production, apart from the financial advantages of large-scale production or integration with the coal industry.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/770: 'Mr. Cotesworth's Objections...', 1726; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 5 Aug. 1726.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: 'Some Remarks...1714'; Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/17: 'Thoughts about Regulateing...', n.d.

the market as principals; nevertheless their influence was still considerable.[1] As soon as he began to take a serious interest in the salt industry, Cotesworth started looking for contacts among the importers who would guarantee to take his salt; and he was prepared to offer them the lowest possible price as an inducement to commit themselves in this way.[2] His object was probably to achieve the same type of agreement as that which he proposed to Captain John Lewis in February 1714, whereby Lewis would take the whole annual production of his pans for a year from 1 May at 26s 6d a ton, a price which he claimed no other producer this side of Lymington could afford.[3] Failing this, he was prepared to offer contracts for limited periods and fixed quantities, such as that signed with Garret Tomlins in May 1718 arranging the collection of 120 tons of salt at 26s a ton within the next three months.[4] A few such contracts with some of the leading importers would have given him the security that he constantly protested was all he wanted from the trade but the importers were unwilling to accept these apparently favourable terms.[5] His agent in London thought that their reluctance to enter future contracts for a large quantity of salt at such low prices sprang from the fact that 'if they should dow it they are sensible it wd make others lower ye price' on the London market.[6] Their anxiety to maintain the market price was so keen that they occasionally offered more for Cotesworth's salt than they were selling it for in London.[7]

The importers were also reluctant to make arrangements that would by-pass their usual agents at Shields.[8] Cotesworth pointed out to them that paying commission was unnecessary when the producers were capable of transacting the shipping arrangements themselves, and that at least one of their agents was cheating them by demanding discounts from poor proprietors while charging his

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1. See Ch. IV, pp.87-8; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to R. Gary & Co., 24 Jan. 1724; Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/34: R. Hodshon to R. Cotesworth, 22 Dec. 1726.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to B. Sleigh, 2 Oct. 1713.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Capt. Lewis, 23 Feb. 1714.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/5: contract with G. Tomlins, 5 May 1718.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to W. Hodgson, 25 Jan. 1719.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/387: from R. Hodshon, 28 June 1718.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/650: from R. Hodshon, 8 Nov. 1717.
8. See above, pp. 152-3.

employers an inflated 'market price', but the importers appear to have been unmoved by his arguments.[1] In fact the importers did not need independent agents to supervise the selection and loading of the salt, since this was often done by the shipmasters, and, in any case, the agents being producers themselves were hardly impartial.[2] Although the evidence is not conclusive, the importers' reluctance to abandon their agents may have stemmed from some financial arrangement. When Cotesworth was dealing with the importers through Nicholas Burdon, it was Burdon who supplied the bills in which he was paid, but when he and Burdon disagreed Burdon refused to pay and the importers were forced to send their own bills.[3] Burdon's attempts to extend the credit that Cotesworth allowed him suggests that he was himself allowing credit to the importers and perhaps helping them to finance the difficult period between paying the duty and collecting from customers which so stretched Cotesworth's resources when he was trading as a principal.[4] There was therefore more than one sound financial reason why the importers preferred to buy small consignments at market price through their usual agents, and they left Cotesworth in no doubt that his attempts to disrupt their marketing arrangements were unwelcome.[5]

Their attitude may also have reflected a natural desire to avoid becoming dependent on one large supplier, and Cotesworth's use of his enormous leverage must have strengthened their determination. He backed his claims to special treatment with a threat to flood the London market with large shipments of his own salt at cost price and thus ruin the importers and most of the other proprietors.[6] He also toyed with plans, outlined in his papers, for establishing warehouses in London to cut out the importers and sell direct to their customers, and even for entering retail trade in the capital.[7] This threat occasionally forced

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R.Hodshon, 26 Sept. 1714; ZCE 10/6: to x, 23 May 1724.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Mr. Tennant, 13 Oct. 1723.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/107: bills drawn upon Mr. Burdon, 19 June 1722.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to R. Hodshon, 25 Feb. 1722; see above, p. 153; below, p. 162.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 6 July 1718.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to B. Sleigh, 2 Oct. 1713.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/17: 'Thoughts about Regulateing...', n.d.; see Flinn, Men of Iron, pp.44-5, for Crowley's London warehouses.

the importers to comply with his wishes but Cotesworth resorted to direct marketing only when he was refused reasonable terms, showing no real desire to enter the market on a permanent basis.[1] His moderation does not seem to be the result of any fear of popular opinion, for salt prices did not produce the same kind of public and parliamentary outcry that accompanied any hint of a monopoly in the coal trade.[2] It was rather that Cotesworth agreed with his factor Robert Hodshon that reaching an agreement with the importers was more in his interest than breaking into the market.[3] Trading as a principal meant an unwelcome addition to his financial commitments, for even if he did not proceed with the ambitious scheme for a network of London warehouses he had still to finance the payment of duty and the extension of credit to his customers, as well as meeting the costs of freight, port charges and other, minor items.[4]

Figure 7: Charges on a ton of Salt sold in London

Prime cost	£1 : 8 : 0
duty	5 : 14 : 1
freight	9 : 0
carry &c.	$7\frac{1}{4}$
at London	4
	£7 : 12 : $0\frac{1}{4}$

Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/756: (on the cover of a letter to R. Ord, 25 Apr. 1719).

Moreover, Cotesworth tended to distrust the ability or application of his London agents, on whom he would be forced to depend for the sale of his salt.[5] It seems likely, therefore, that the profits to be gained by circumventing the middlemen in the salt trade did not outweigh the extra charges and trouble involved, and Cotesworth decided that his best course was to deliver salt at the market price in Shields, provided that the importers guaranteed to take it regularly enough to

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: T. Sisson to W. Hodgson, 9 May 1719; ZCE 10/6: to R. Hodshon, 25 Feb. 1722.
2. See Ch. V, pp. 113-4.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/387: from R. Hodshon, 28 June 1718.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/756: cost of one ton, n.d.; see Figure 7.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Beighton, 26 Sept. 1714.

keep his pans going.[1] However, with both the other salt proprietors and the importers united against him, his efforts to obtain guarantees were often frustrated.

Cotesworth's first approaches to the London importers in the autumn of 1713 were accompanied by broad hints that, while he had no wish to disturb the market, he was determined to sell 'one way or tother', and this soon brought results.[2] By the next summer, however, not only had his plans to secure the sale of his total output by forward contracts met opposition but his relations with the importers were so impaired that he found it necessary to prepare to send a ship to London on his own account.[3] The importers' Newcastle agents in great alarm sent urgent warnings that 'ye enemy wd be Upon them', and a week later Cotesworth had received a good offer for his salt.[4] This incident set a pattern for his future dealings with the importers who were often forced to reopen negotiations by the news that he had chartered a ship.[5] If they failed to do so and Cotesworth persevered, they attempted to sabotage his efforts by bribing the meters to treat his salt unfairly when it was measured on unloading at London or by resorting to other forms of sharp practice which discouraged masters from accepting his charters.[6] Nor did the more unscrupulous importers, among them Hodgson and Tennant, stop at sharp practice: in 1717 Cotesworth reported that Burdon's employer had 'beat poor Hodshon yesterday', and a year later he was planning to send someone to London 'that will be as able to Toss Mr. Tennent into the Dock as he thought himselfe able to toss Tom Sisson', Cotesworth's clerk.[7] On a less physical level, the importers tried to sabotage the Victualling Board contract which Cotesworth won in 1715 by spreading rumours that he had sold all his old salt and would not be able to fulfil the conditions.[8]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. West, 20 Dec. 1718; see above, p.160.
2. See above, p. 161; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to R. Hodshon, 9 & 30 Oct. 1713.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, 16 Sept. 1714; to J. Beighton, 24 Aug. 1714.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Beighton, 19 & 26 Sept. 1714.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to W. Hodgson, 24 July 1719.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to B. Sleigh, 12 Apr. 1715; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/1: from T. Sisson, 1 Oct. 1717.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/20: to E. Mawson, 2 July 1717; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 6 July 1718.
8. P.R.O., Adm. 111/13: 23 Apr. 1715; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to B. Sleigh, 24 May 1715.

However, Cotesworth does not seem to have made a determined effort to supply the government on a regular basis: the risks and expense of trading as a principal, as well as the discount on government bills, may have discouraged him, and he was content to supply salt to men like John Nicholson who were prepared to take the extra trouble.[1] This removed one source of friction between Cotesworth and the importers and it became possible to reach temporary agreements, especially when he was in London and able to negotiate in person.[2]

Agreement with the importers did not, however, mean agreement with their local agents who were unlikely to appreciate Cotesworth's readiness to supply customers without charging a commission.[3] The two men with whom he had to deal most often were Nicholas Burdon, who acted for several of the great London importers, such as William Hodgson, Alderman Bellamy and Richard West, and John Cay, who combined the local receivership of the salt duties with a salt-buying agency for John Lewis and other importers.[4] Both men were proprietors as well as agents and used their considerable influence to protect their vested interests. In 1717 Cotesworth complained that they and the Cullercoats salt-makers were not charging commission 'on purpose to beat me out and threaten hard to do it'.[5] In 1719 Cotesworth accused Burdon of neglecting his employers' orders to negotiate 'for he has a gaine in not doing it & by keeping us at distance he secures his intrest wt ever may be come of yours & mine'.[6] Burdon habitually left Cotesworth in suspense until the latter's store-houses were full in order to force an abatement in the agreed price, mixed his salt with worse quality produce from other salt-makers in order to ruin its reputation, and delayed payment, bringing Cotesworth to the point of revolt time and again.[7]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to B. Sleigh, 7 Apr. 1717; ZCE 10/4: to R. Hodshon, 24 May 1719; see above, p.162; Ch. IV, pp.88-9.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Cox, 16 Sept. 1715.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to J. Goodchild, 29 Sept. 1713.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/401: from W. Hodgson, 10 Oct. 1723; see above, pp. 153, 160-1; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Capt. Lewis, 23 Feb.1714
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 30 Aug. 1717.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to W. Hodgson, 24 May 1719.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to R. West, 14 June 1718; ZCE 10/6: to R. Hodshon, 27 Jan. 1722; Cotesworth MSS. CL/1/95: memorandum, 16 May 1720; CP/2/65: to T. Sisson, 31 May 1722. Burdon's hostility was not purely professional; see Ch. VIII, p. 214.

Such direct attacks, moreover, were not the only weapons in his opponents' hands, since Cay's control over the salt duty collection gave him considerable leverage which he did not hesitate to use against Cotesworth.[1] In the autumn of 1715, after Cotesworth had won the Victualling Board contract, he began to complain that the local salt office was refusing to allow him to load salt until the duty had been paid and was demanding bills of only twenty-one days which, by the time the ship was loaded, cleared, and the invoice posted, allowed customers little time to accept the bill: this brought many complaints.[2] Negotiations with the Goulds, the bankers, produced promises to accept the usual twenty-eight day bills, but in fact the longest that the office would allow was twenty-five.[3] At this stage, Cotesworth retaliated by threatening to pay the duty in cash by negotiating London bills, which would enable him to extend the credit he could offer customers from twenty-eight to forty days.[4] This ploy seems to have worked for there was no more trouble from the salt office until the 1720s.[5] In 1723 Cotesworth was again threatening to pay cash since Wheelwright the collector had been persuaded by Cotesworth's 'neighbours' to demand bills for the duty before his salt was loaded, and once again John Gould promised to keep Cay in order.[6] However, the collector continued for several years to demand that bills should be dated on the day that loading began, and it was not until 1726 that Cotesworth was allowed to leave the date blank until the last possible moment.[7] This development may well coincide with Cotesworth's final reconciliation with the London importers and the agreement 'upon honour' between them that they would cooperate in the disposal of his salt if Cotesworth would deal exclusively with them.[8]

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1. Hughes, Studies, pp.223-4. This describes a similar incident in 1740.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Capt. Langley, 13 Sept. 1715. For the importance of customers' credit, see Ch. II, pp.39-40; Ch.VII, p.172.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Cox, 23 Sept. 1715; to H. Durley, 22 May 1716.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Cox, 18 May 1716.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/54: from Sir H. Liddell, 13 June 1721.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/135: to T. Sisson, 2 Feb. 1723; CP/2/149: to T. Sisson, 18 Apr. 1723.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to R. Gary & Co., 24 Jan. 1724; ZCE 10/7: to R. Percy, 24 Sept. 1726.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to R. Percy, 27 Dec. 1726.

Cotesworth therefore seems to have survived what he represented to be a determined effort on the part of the London importers and their agents to drive from the trade a producer capable of influencing and perhaps sabotaging their marketing arrangements. In any case, others were to follow him as the increasing tendency towards integration between the coal and salt industries meant that the intermediaries in the trade were faced with a growing number of producers who combined the advantages of large-scale production with those of cheap coal.[1] This undoubtedly improved the position of the salt-makers who at the beginning of the eighteenth century had been forced by over-production to depend heavily on the goodwill of the London dealers and their local agents, even though the dealers' leverage was not as great as that enjoyed by the 'great Dons' of the coal trade. The salt duty and the burden that it imposed on the proprietors played a part in their weak position, but Cotesworth's papers indicate that its effects were not as immediate and straightforward as has sometimes been assumed. The high duty helped to force down salt prices by reducing demand, but as in the coal industry, the stagnation of population growth and over-production also had an important role. In the circumstances, the proprietors' inability to cut back their high production costs ultimately doomed the Shields white salt industry to succomb to the competition of cheaper rock and brine salt from both Cheshire and Durham. Although this was not as yet an imminent danger, the proprietors' fear of Lymington shows that they were aware of the situation. It lay behind Cotesworth's attempts to guarantee the sale of his salt in advance and was thus at the root of his disputes with the importers.[2]

Another major cause of these disputes was the importers' jealousy of Cotesworth's powerful position within the Shields salt industry.[3] There is not enough evidence to show how important his involvement in salt was to him in comparison with his other activities, how much time he devoted to it, or how much of his income and capital accretions were derived from it. He was certainly less preoccupied with his salt-pans than he was with the problems of

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1. See above, pp.156-8.
2. See above, pp.143-4, 160.
3. See above, p.161.

his colliery interests, but probably occupied a more important place in the salt than the coal industry; he himself claimed that he produced 'a Greater Quantitie (of salt) at this time than any other of the King's English Subjects'.[1] Despite this position, his son was willing to sell off the salt-pans in order to bring his other affairs into order, which may indicate that the salt industry was not a vital part of Cotesworth's estate or crucial to his income.[2]

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/52: to x, 24 Mar. 1721.
2. See below, Ch. VIII, p.204.

CHAPTER VII

Capital and Credit

The question of capital supply for productive investment in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has attracted much attention from historians who regarded it as the crucial determinant of economic expansion. It now seems to be accepted that, in relation to the demand for productive investment, there was in fact no overall shortage of savings which could threaten the progress of economic growth, since England was the richest country in Europe and the economy generated a surplus in peacetime.[1] However, it has been argued that, since there was little overlap between the groups who required most of the capital and those receiving most of the surplus, there were acute local shortages. Certainly, in the absence of a coherent, nationally organized capital market, the pool of industrial capital available to a provincial merchant or industrialist was restricted to mortgages, personal loans and partnerships organized among his acquaintances. It is not surprising that doubts have been raised whether a system of finance based on personal relationships was adequate to the needs of the able, but not necessarily wealthy, men seeking either to set up a business or to expand its production and scale of enterprise.[2]

These doubts were to a certain extent the result of the assumption that the major capital requirement, for industry at least, was for long-term capital to be sunk in fixed assets such as plant, but this has recently been challenged. Economies in fixed assets, made possible by the simplicity of technology, meant

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1. P. Deane, 'Capital Formation in Britain before the Railway Age', Capital Formation in the Industrial Revolution, ed. F. Crouzet (Lond., 1972), pp. 97, 100.
2. M. Postan, 'Recent Trends in the Accumulation of Capital', Econ. Hist. Rev., vi (1935), 2-5; P. Mathias, 'Capital, Credit and Enterprise in the Industrial Revolution', Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist., ii (1973), 124-5.

that the need for long-term capital was reduced by renting and converting buildings, and constructing machinery on the site, as well as by drawing credit from suppliers of raw materials. Short-term credit needs, for rent, wages, raw materials, and goods, were therefore usually greater than those for long-term capital investment. As it was unnecessary to sink vast amounts of capital into fixed assets it was easy to start up a business, whilst expansion of an existing firm was positively encouraged.[1] The analyses of the capital structure of the various enterprises in which Cotesworth was concerned, which are necessary to test these conclusions in his particular case, are made difficult by the common contemporary failure to separate capital from current accounts.[2] Yearly capital costs have to be pieced together in an admittedly irregular manner from the few surviving current accounts or from Cotesworth's notes. However, enough emerges to show that fixed assets made up only a very small proportion of the total capital involved in a business, even in the capital-intensive coal industry, although the capital ratio varied considerably according to the type of investment. It was naturally lowest in Cotesworth's wholesale trade, but even in the salt industry capital costs were only a fraction of the whole.[3] In the coal industry too, once the heavy initial outlay was past working charges dwarfed yearly expenditure on fixed assets.[4]

The implications of these findings alter the nature of the enquiry for, if short-term credit was the major capital requirement, its availability becomes the most important factor in the finance of commercial or industrial enterprise. That it was available is shown by the smallness of actual cash requirements revealed in Cotesworth's papers. There was monetary constraint at the time and, judging from the condition of the metallic currency in circulation, it might be assumed that the economy would suffer fromthe lack of an adequate medium of exchange.[5] Cotesworth's own coffers contained an astonishing variety of coins,

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1. Mathias, 'Capital, Credit and Enterprise', Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist., ii, 126-7, 128-9.
2. See Ch. III, p.58.
3. See Ch. VI, pp.145-9.
4. See Ch. III, p.66.
5. B. Anderson, 'Money and the Structure of Credit in the Eighteenth Century', Bus. Hist., xii (1970), 86-9.

among them pistoles and portagues, showing the contemporary willingness to make up native shortages with anything that was thought reliable.[1] The shortage was most obvious in the small denominations required for wage payments or in retail trade.[2] Lord William Powlett's lead mines are a good example of this for when Cotesworth took over their management in 1711 he found the 'truck' system well established and, although he abandoned paying in 'penniworths' in the interests of increased production, it was resumed when the mines were let.[3] Workmen could be paid at intervals to reduce the difficulty.[4] It was also possible to make the collection of rents and payment of wages easier by employing tenants on the landlord's or lessee's coal works.[5]

The significance of these examples of the inadequacy of the coinage is that it does not seem to have had any great effect on economic activity. Very few people demanded payment in cash except 'ye more Ignorant Sort', like workmen and petty salt makers, who were unable or unwilling to manage their affairs by alternative means.[6] Correspondents did occasionally complain about lack of money, but 'money' seems in many cases to include credit instruments as well as cash, and the complaints are sometimes linked to temporary recessions in trade which upset the credit network.[7] 'Ready money' in this context meant payment on the spot, rather than actual coin, and the term was used as a simple contrast to selling 'at time', that is to say on credit.[8] In some cases, however, when a payment was made 'part money & part Bills', it is clear that cash was meant.[9] This confusion of meaning demonstrates that credit instruments were generally accepted on the same terms as specie, and bears out the hypothesis that there was a very low and elastic cash preference.[10]

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/50: note of cash in hand, n.d.
2. Houghton, Collection, iv. 238.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Lord W. Powlett, 11 Dec. 1711, 15 Feb. 1712; ZCE 10/7: to Lord W. Powlett, 24 Aug. 1725.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Lord W. Powlett, 8 Dec. 1711; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/18: from T. Sisson, 25 May 1722.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to M. Milbank, 2 Sept. 1713.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: E. Mawson to H. Durley, 15 July 1716.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/604: from R. Hodshon, 19 May 1719.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. West, 23 Jan. 1719.
9. Ellison MSS. A 36a/19: from H. Liddell, 23 Mar. 1714.
10. Anderson, 'Money and the Structure of Credit', Bus. Hist., xii, 86, 99.

Contemporaries were unanimous on the importance of credit, which had expanded rapidly in the later seventeenth century.[1] Davenant asserted that 'the general Trade of this Country has been more carryd on by Credit, than manag'd with the Species of Money', and, according to Defoe, two-thirds or more of the country's trade was conducted on credit.[2] It is clear that in normal times, as opposed to times of financial or commercial crisis, there were considerable advantages for contemporaries in holding other liquid assets and credit instruments in preference to cash. One of the most important advantages was, as Defoe pointed out, that a well-developed credit network enabled merchants 'to trade for a great deal more that he otherwise would do'.[3] Bills, notes and book debts not only deferred payment but obviated the need to produce currency at all to purchase goods, and it was not necessarily true that there could be no credit where there was no money.[4] This naturally increased the purchasing power of hopeful merchants and industrialists who could, by judicious overtrading, use the mechanisms of the credit network to supplement and extend their supplies of working capital.[5]

Cotesworth's experience demonstrates that few commercial payments were made in cash and that the bill of exchange was by far the most common means of payment between traders. He and his correspondents clearly accepted bills as 'money' and expected them to be treated with respect.[6] Nor do they seem to have distinguished bills from other credit instruments, such as notes of hand, despite the legal protection extended to creditors holding inland bills in 1706, allowing them to protest the bills for non-payment. Cotesworth, for example,

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1. K.G. Davies, 'Joint Stock Investment in the later Seventeenth century', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., iv (1951-2), 287.
2. C. Davenant, Discources on the Public Revenues, and on the Trade of England (Lond., 1698), part ii. 161; Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. 416.
3. Defoe, op. cit., i. 416, 76, 225.
4. Davenant, Discources, part ii. 170.
5. R. Grassby, 'English Merchant Capitalism in the Late seventeenth century: the composition of Business fortunes', P. & P., xlvi (1970), 105, 107; Anderson, 'Money and the Structure of Credit', Bus. Hist., xii. 99-100; Jackson, Hull, pp.100-1.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/52: T. Sisson to Mr. Chilton, 22 Mar. 1723; CM/2/396: from Coltman & Bennet, 22 June 1723.

referred to groups of credit instruments as 'bills', whether or not they included notes.[1] Nevertheless, it is clear that bills had great advantages over other forms of 'money' in the absence of a system of banks with deposits transferrable by cheque. Sums of cash sent by carrier or messenger, or notes issued by the Bank of England, were always in danger of loss or theft in transit, and both were easily appropriated by a thief.[2] Bills, however, were payable only to a particular person, which made them less vulnerable. They were especially valuable to a merchant like Cotesworth since they provided him with a relatively easy method of transferring the proceeds of sales in widely scattered domestic and foreign markets to the suppliers of groceries, dyestuffs and wine, who tended to be concentrated in London and Holland.[3] Moreover, creditors in Newcastle were usually willing to accept bills drawn on London merchants since they too needed to finance their imports. Alternatively, of course, a creditor could draw on Cotesworth, achieving much the same result.

Bills were therefore a convenient means of payment, but their most important attribute in this context was that they allowed a period of credit. Trading bills were rarely drawn payable at 'sight', that is, as soon as they were presented, and even ten days was thought to be 'within ye Comon time', putting the drawer under an obligation to his customer that had to be discharged by granting extended credit on other purchases.[4] The usual term was between 21 and 28 days, which was longer than an average non-commercial bill and balanced the need to favour a customer with a fairly rapid turnover.[5] Cotesworth would accept bills payable in forty days from his best customers, although bills of such long date were usually acceptable only when they were scarce.[6] There is little evidence that 'long bills' were unwelcome because they could only be circulated at a discount which varied with their maturing dates, and merchants seem to have accepted all bills at their face value.[7] If Cotesworth needed to

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to J. Goodchild, 5 Sept. 1713.
2. T.S. Ashton, An Eighteenth Century Industrialist, Peter Stubbs of Warrington 1756-1806 (Manch., 1939), pp.99-100, 102.
3. See Ch. I, p.17.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 12 May 1713.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to J. Geekie, 14 June 1724.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Lord W. Powlett, 12 Sept. 1721.
7. Ashton, Eighteenth Century Industrialist, pp.106-7.

turn a bill into cash by selling it in Newcastle, he often had to pay a premium of around one per cent of its value, but it is not clear whether this represented a discount calculated on the maturing date or simply the imbalance of cash and bill supplies.[1] The latter seems more likely since when bills were scarce in town buyers were willing to take bills as long as sixty days and to pay a premium themselves.[2]

The principal market for bills on London was the local revenue officials, although landowners transferring rents to the capital were also a useful source of cash.[3] Ridley remitted the Scottish excise revenues, while Cotesworth had an 'Interest' for many years with the local Customs collector.[4] Such a bill market supplied cash to colliery owners during the difficult winter months when the shipping season was over but it was still necessary to pay working expenses.[5] It was also valuable to merchants who wished to match payments and balances in different towns, since it was easy to buy a bill on Lynn, for example, from another merchant who had a customer there.[6]

However, the inland bill did have drawbacks as the principal instrument of a payments mechanism. In Cotesworth's case, his supply was dependent on a seasonal and uncertain trade in coal, salt and tallow, which sometimes left him without effects to draw on and, since most local merchants were in the same position, it was difficult at times to depend on buying reliable bills to meet necessary payments.[7] Usually the only credit instruments available in this situation were notes drawn on London coal dealers, which were so unreliable that Cotesworth preferred to risk sending cash to London by carrier rather than buy one.[8] Moreover, although bills were safeguarded by an elaborate system of endorsement, acceptance and protest, default and fraud were perennial problems.

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/493: from J. Beardmore, 24 Sept. 1713.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Hodshon, 1 July 1715; ZCE 10/8: T. Sisson to Lord W. Powlett, 8 Jan. 1727.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/135: to T. Sisson, 2 Feb. 1723.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 10 June 1720; ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Langley, 20 Apr. 1716; to H. Durley, 19 June 1716.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to J. Beighton, 4 Jan. 1715.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to J. Wilkinson, 20 Apr. 1717.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to T. Barker, 1 Jan. 1717.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to Lord W. Powlett, 24 Aug. 1725.

It was vital to check that a bought bill had been accepted by the drawee before paying for it, and one plausible rogue made off with about £3,000 because normally cautious men like Ridley and George Liddell neglected this precaution.[1] The system was sound enough for bills to be circulated freely, but its complexities seem to have baffled contemporary merchants at times.[2] Nor was it always possible to find an exact match between debit and credit balances, so that it was necessary to send several small bills to meet a payment, each of which had to be collected by the creditor from different drawees.[3] To facilitate this process, Cotesworth preferred to draw on customers in small amounts, for example by splitting a large balance into single hundred pound bills.[4] It was also necessary to match bills geographically. Some country merchants had agents in London on whom it was possible to draw, but sending a Yarmouth bill to a London creditor could be inconvenient.[5]

These disadvantages were, however, probably outweighed by the invaluable part played by credit instruments in alleviating the effects of an insufficient metallic currency, providing an adequate supply of specie through the bill market and, above all, allowing a period of credit when purchasing goods. In most cases, a bill drawn payable at three or four weeks was only extending what was already a considerable period of trade credit. Selling at 'time' was so prevalent that Cotesworth's London factors sometimes quoted a clear price differential to adjust for credit terms, since it was obvious that a merchant who refused to extend credit 'cannot expect so long a Price'.[6] In some cases, for example, when trying to win new customers or sell on a sluggish market, granting credit was imperative.[7] Credit terms varied: tallow usually sold under two months, but salt could be sold at anything between two and four months, while one merchant

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/29: from G. Liddell, 30 Mar. 1718.
2. R. Hayes, The Negotiator's Magazine (Lond., 1740), ch. 1; Hatton, Merchant's Magazine, pp.205-12; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to J. Meres, 4 Mar. 1721.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Buck, 23 July 1709.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to S. Leadbeater, 1 Dec. 1711.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/791: from J. Dixon, 25 Nov. 1710.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/620: from R. Hodshon, 9 Feb. 1714; CM/2/284: from R. Hodshon, 10 May 1715.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/155: to T. Sisson, 4 May 1723 (enclosed letter); Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants, p.78.

offered hops at either three or six months.[1] Cotesworth did on occasion instruct his factors to sell only for 'present moneys', since he had lost money by granting credit, but if customers demanded it there was little that could be done.[2] In most cases his own sales and purchases were charged on running accounts and credit was both given and received. Such accounts were meant to be drawn to balance and paid off regularly, usually at Christmas and Midsummer, so that the maximum credit period was six months, but Cotesworth tended to run up large balances with his suppliers and correspondents frequently claimed that they were kept out of their money too long.[3] Manufacturing credit in this way was apparently condoned unless carried too far, but overdrawing a customer's account seems to have been unacceptable and when this happened by mistake Cotesworth immediately offered credit for double the sum on his injured client's next purchase.[4]

Cotesworth does not seem to have maintained running accounts with foreign correspondents, possibly because his dealings with them were irregular and fairly infrequent, and both parties seem to have drawn for the value of separate transactions.[5] Bills were usually settled through a London intermediary, since there was no 'Course of Exchange' between Newcastle and Holland, let alone further afield.[6] Foreign correspondents drew on Cotesworth's London agents, and he preferred to draw on these foreign merchants through their own correspondents in London since other methods were too cumbersome.[7] By such arrangements it was possible for Cotesworth to conduct trade over a wide area without exporting specie or resorting to barter, working through his agents and correspondents to form a chain of payments, reaching Stockholm, for example,

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/253: from R. Hodshon, 27 Nov. 1714; CM/2/279: from R. Hodshon, 23 Apr. 1715; CM/2/123: from B. Weatherby, 23 Aug. 1711 Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to H. Durley, 20 Mar. 1716.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to B. Sleigh, 2 Oct. 1713.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/109: from J. Read, 19 Dec. 1710; CM/2/133: from S. Buck, 15 Jan. 1712.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Percy, 12 July 1726.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/185: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 25 Apr. 1729; see Ch. II, p. 40.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 30 Apr. 1714.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Bewicke, 1 July 1715.

through London and Hamburg.[1]

Factors were an important link in both the national and international payments mechanisms. Cotesworth's London agents were especially important since they held the bulk of his credit balances in the capital and were well placed for receiving bills drawn on creditors there, although one disadvantage was that they charged a half per cent for this service.[2] However, they were reluctant to make advances on the sale of goods in their hands, because this tied up their own resources in other men's business, and they usually demanded immediate reimbursement when Cotesworth overdrew his account.[3] Those agents employed by the coal-owners to manage their affairs in London had greater responsibility for making advances and needed large financial resources.[4] Dealers were notorious for paying for coal with notes worded so that they could not be protested, and then leaving the coal-owners, in whose hands the notes rested, waiting for anything up to twelve months for payment.[5] This meant that the notes could not be circulated to pay current working and trading expenses, so that agents had to collect them as and when they could, and advance working capital to their principals in the meantime. Cotesworth employed his tallow factor, Dixon, as his Billingsgate agent in 1710, but the arrangement proved unsatisfactory because Dixon found collecting from the dealers and shipmasters more trouble than ordinary commercial transactions and did not think his commission sufficient to cover both his time and interest on advancing money.[6] Coal-factors seem to have become more professional as the century progressed. In 1737, for example, Ridley was maintaining overdrafts of up to £1,000 with at least two agents, sending down batches of notes to cover bills drawn on them every week and paying interest. He was meant to reduce the balances of these accounts at the end of the year, when many notes were paid off.[7]

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1. Price, 'Multilateralism and/or Bilateralism', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xiv. 254-7; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/59: from N. Remington, 30 Mar. 1694.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/586: Hodshon's account, Oct. 1713 - Mar. 1714.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/188: from D. Collyer, 11 Apr. [1713].
4. See Ch. IV, pp.108-9.
5. Commons Journals, xxi. 516, 517; see Ch. IV, pp.100-1.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/792: from J. Dixon, 30 Nov. 1710.
7. Ridley (Blagdon) MSS. ZRI 35/12: R. Ridley to H. Norris jnr., 21 May & 24 Sept. 1737; to R. Banbury, 7 May 1737.

Cotesworth's career demonstrates that the payments mechanism and credit network on which most contemporary business was conducted was an adequate source of short-term capital: but the system had its drawbacks. Although a merchant or industrialist benefited from credit extended by his suppliers, he was forced at the same time to give credit to his own customers, and because of the inherent instability of trade credit a careful balance of debit and credit had to be maintained in case of accident.[1] To protect both himself and his customers from the effects of bad luck or bad judgement, large reserves of capital were needed but were not always available. In the 1690s, Sutton and Cotesworth were forced by the expansion of their trade to borrow money from Jane Sutton to meet customers' demands for credit; although they obtained money from a safe source within the family, other traders were not so scrupulous and their reserves existed only on paper.[2] Someone relying too heavily on borrowed capital was in a precarious financial position and it was better to avoid dealing with him, but it was almost impossible to judge the extent of such borrowings. The only means of measuring someone's financial security was by careful scrutiny of his reputation and the regularity with which bills drawn on him were paid. Ideal customers were therefore 'safe men and good pay' whose creditworthiness was vouched for by trusted relatives or associates, who seemed cautious enough to avoid either taking or giving excessive credit, and had large enough reserves to survive the risks which even cautious overtrading entailed.[3] Cotesworth examined both the character and circumstances of prospective customers, dismissing one salt dealer because 'He Lived too Loosely to Thrive well'.[4] He was subjected to the same scrutiny himself and supplied references to his friends when they were uncertain about a client.[5] However, these precautions were often inadequate, for men of apparently sound character and circumstances could easily go under without warning.[6] Dixon discovered to his cost that 'it is very hard to know wt

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 30 Aug. 1717; Anderson, 'Money and the Structure of Credit', Bus. Hist., x. 100.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in the case Sutton vs. Cotesworth, n.d.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/389: from J. Garland, 11 Jan. [1720].
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/115: to T. Sisson, 13 Nov. 1722.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/300: from J. & H. Cowling, 31 May 1715; CM/2/182: from D. Collyer, 24 Jan. 1713.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to R. Hodshon, 17 Aug. 1718.

a man owes' when he sold a large consignment of Cotesworth's tallow to a man deeply in debt 'wch was not knowne to any body yt people Judged his Circumstances to be wt they really doe not appear'.[1] This case was particularly galling to those concerned since bankruptcy proceedings against this man were instituted by one of Cotesworth's correspondents 'who but a few dayes before had given a good Character as indeed he hath amongst all his neighbours, & might have had Credit for several 1000 1s'.[2]

A trader who relied on trade credit or outright loans to finance an extensive business needed a rapid turnover of goods and reasonable profits to avoid disaster. A recession forced such men to sell at a loss, since they could not afford to wait for markets to improve, and they could easily be forced to the wall if their creditors, who were also under pressure, refused to extend their credit.[3] Henry Durley, for example, went bankrupt when there was 'a great outcry both for want of Trade and money' in London.[4] The result could be a chain of bankruptcies, since one man's fall could bring down his creditors, and the network of mutual indebtedness meant that the effects of a crisis in London were soon felt in Gateshead. In 1704, for example, when the Bank of England was shaken by such a crisis, Cotesworth and Sutton's London correspondents were forced to draw on them at short notice since 'we are a Little Streightened here in towne at this time here being Severall persons of noat gone [bankrupt]'.[5] The partnership survived this incident, although their London agent Warman did not. He became indebted to them for nearly £250 early in 1705 but was probably saved from ruin by their decision to wait for their money rather than foreclose.[6] Since even the protest of an unpaid bill for a minor amount could start a rumour causing panic among a trader's creditors, forebearance was perhaps wise but it

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/800: from J. Dixon, 3 Jan. 1711.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/799: from J. Dixon, 30 Dec. 1710.
3. Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xxiii. 223-4.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/604: from R. Hodshon, 19 May 1719.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/62: from J. Bayly, 15 Feb. 1705; see Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xxiii. 223-4.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in the case Sutton vs. Cotesworth, n.d.; CM/2/77: from P. Pinder, 15 Sept. [1704/5].

was only possible because of the partnership's relatively strong financial position.[1] Nor could Cotesworth save Henry Durley by extending his credit, since rumours of his imminent bankruptcy had already taken hold in London.[2] It was undoubtedly better to avoid a bad risk altogether than to rely on protesting unpaid bills and risk breaking someone in a shaky financial position.

For this reason, Defoe was too sanguine in assuming that a new merchant began his career with 'negative credit', in that his credit was not known to be bad, for few would give an unknown and possibly penniless youth the benefit of the doubt.[3] Although capital requirements and the credit system meant that it was not necessary to be a wealthy man in order to set up and run a business, it was necessary to have a good local reputation, social standing and access to some long-term capital to act as a reserve. The traditional sources of such capital were inheritance, marriage, loans and savings, with inheritance being the most important of all in the initial stages. Cotesworth's papers emphasize the role of the kinship group as a financial asset, not only as the necessary backing for short-term credit but as the primary source of long-term capital, and bear out that it was unusual for an apprentice, such as Cotesworth himself, who was not born into trade or industry, or was not of gentry origin with the financial resources which this implied, to make much of an impression. Although the official apprenticeship system provided a thorough practical training, it did not bestow the vital gift of creditworthiness.[5] 78 per cent of the apprentices enrolled in Cotesworth's Gateshead company in the 1680s never progressed as far as taking an apprentice themselves, and only four out of fifty-one took more than three apprentices. Of the rest, some were probably the sons of prosperous tradesmen, destined for better things than the family business, but most simply disappeared without trace into the ranks of junior craftsmen or clerks of more fortunate men.[6] Eighteenth century writers on the subject stressed that parents

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1. Davenant, Discourses, i. 38; Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. letter xv, pp.225-75.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to H. Durley, 31 Aug. 1718.
3. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. 419.
4. Mathias, 'Capital, Credit and Enterprise', Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist., ii. 133-4; Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants, p.67; Jackson, Hull, p.107.
5. Jackson, Hull, p.106.
6. Gateshead Company Records, ed. Dodds, pp.51-7, &c.

must consider their own means before deciding on their children's careers.[1] If the children wanted to do more then earn their living as an employee they had to have money or credit or both, and those without prosperous relatives found these assets difficult to acquire.

All the resources of a prosperous family were mobilized to launch sons into business. Fathers who could afford large apprenticeship fees usually provided the capital to set them up in trade. Calverley Bewicke, for example, spent years haggling over proposals to lease his family's colliery at Urpeth in order to 'make Termes for his Younger Children for as ye Sons are Like to be in business Money will be of ye utmost service to them'.[2] Any tradesman's or merchant's eldest son had a ready-made opportunity in the family business, while younger children benefited from a family background which provided not only premiums and capital but knowledge of related trades.[3] An ambitious family would hand their business on to one son and set up another in a better trade or town, and several Gateshead merchants sent their sons to Newcastle companies in this way.[4] Sutton's younger brother was established as a merchant adventurer across the river and allegedly used the family firm to support his own trade.[5] Legacies from uncles and aunts were another source of inherited wealth. Ramsay, who died childless, left over £5,000 in legacies, £1,000 of which went to Sutton's sons.[6] Cotesworth, on the other hand, was unwilling to disperse his accumulated capital among his more remote relations unless his heir predeceased him.[7] However, legacies did not necessarily diminish a family's capital reserves, since they were often left in the hands of the head of the family, and taken out only as interest. Ramsay's sister-in-law, Jane Bewicke, entrusted him with the £200 legacies which she intended for her nephews when they came of age, and in all probability her capital of £1,250 represented her own legacy

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1. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman (Lond., 1747), pp.189, 196, 293-4.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to W. Ramsay, 6 Feb. 1712.
3. Mathias, 'Capital, Credit and Enterprise', Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist., ii. 133-4.
4. Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne II, ed. F.W. Dendy (Surtees Soc., ci, 1899), pp.316, 318, 319, 321.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in the case Sutton vs. Cotesworth, n.d.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/26, pp.57-62: copy of Ramsay's will, 14 May 1713.
7. See Ch. VIII, p.201.

from her father, illustrating the tendency for capital to circulate among a restricted kinship group.[1]

Family resources were supplemented by dowries and property brought by a wife, although a daughter in the house would reverse the flow. A young man was expected to marry wisely and choosing a 'good sort of lady' with no money aroused no enthusiasm among relations.[2] Robert Hodshon gained a dowry of £1,000 and Ramsay £1,500; and Cotesworth can have done no worse when he married Ramsay's sister.[3] However, it is significant that this improvement in his fortunes came nine years after he had begun to trade : since marriage was approached with the prudence and caution of any other business deal, it offered few opportunities for the underprivileged. Self-financing through saving was a painfully slow method of raising initial capital, and borrowing on the open market was effectively ruled out for an impoverished apprentice. In the first place, it was prohibitively expensive, since Grassby points out that the limit on interest rates merely defined the risk premium on secure loans. In the second, it was almost impossible to find a lender willing to take such a bad risk on any terms. It is not surprising, therefore, that great merchants and industrialists were usually from the second or third generation of a prosperous family.[4]

Cotesworth's own start in business, however, seems to have been the result of hard work and ability, and there are other examples in his papers which show how this could be done. Ability and experience could attract the attention of a grateful employer, especially if the employer had no male heir or felt that the firm needed strengthening, and sponsorship made tedious saving unnecessary. Cotesworth himself rewarded his clerk Edward Mawson by handing over to him his tallow and grocery business when he retired from active trade in 1717, and another former clerk seems to have taken over after Mawson's death.[5] His own

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/1/269: C. Bewicke jnr. to W. Ramsay, 22 Nov. 1715; CK/2/14: J. Bewicke's account, 1694-1709.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 9 Mar. 1728.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/13: from T. Sisson, 7 Nov. 1717; CD/1/17: Ramsay's marriage settlement, 27 Jan. 1699. No record of Cotesworth's marriage settlement survives.
4. R. Grassby, 'The rate of profit in seventeenth-century England', Eng. Hist. Rev lxxxiv (1969), 734, 737.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to Foster & Pickfatt, 12 Apr. 1717; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/43: from T. Sisson, 5 Aug. 1722.

initial capital apparently came from winning the favour of his master's widow while serving out his term, so that she brought him into the family business as soon as he completed his apprenticeship.[1]

Partnerships, which combined the capital, credit and ability of two or more active members, were a common method of accumulating enough of these vital ingredients to set up and carry on a successful business. The majority of firms with which Cotesworth dealt were partnerships, sometimes family concerns. It was natural for relatives to pool their resources, but it was also thought to be safer to have investors and their money bound to the well-being of the firm by kinship links.[2] Defoe, who reflected contemporary distrust of business associates, prophesied disaster unless partners were 'brought in some how or other into the family, and [become] one of the house'.[3] Perhaps the Suttons bore this in mind when Cotesworth became his partner's brother-in-law. However, their partnership was not the conventional equal association of capital and effort. Despite the law's insistence on the unlimited liability of each partner for the firm's debts, and Defoe's strictures on the folly of relying on partners or managers, in practice the title 'partnership' covered a wide variety of practical arrangements.[4] Occasionally they were formed for the convenience of one partner, who was prepared to admit another of inferior capital and social standing in return for ability, experience and hard work. Cotesworth's clerk Sisson was offered such a partnership in the management of some salt pans given up after his employer's death by the new undertaker, probably because of his knowledge of the business and of Cotesworth's customers.[5] Often such junior partners were little more than well-paid clerks, carrying the burden of the trade while their partners devoted themselves to social and private activities, as Cotesworth accused Sutton of doing.[6] However, the situation of a 'trading drudge', as Defoe described him, had its advantages, since he could acquire

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1. See Ch. I, p. 5.
2. Mathias, 'Capital, Credit and Enterprise', Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist., ii. 133.
3. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. 260.
4. Mathias, op. cit., p.134; Defoe, op. cit., i. letter xvi, pp.259-73.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 1 Feb. 1728.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/2/3: copy brief in cross cause Cotesworth vs. Sutton, n.d.

enough money, credit and custom over the years to take the firm over completely, simply through hard work and attention to business. However, the rise of a junior partner was not always a straightforward process, and someone in a position of trust could ruin a firm by systematically using his partner's capital for his own benefit.[1]

It is easy to see why Cotesworth was brought into the firm. Sutton's trade required careful attention to the Gateshead workshops, periodic tours of northern England and an energetic management of correspondence with English and foreign merchants. It was not easy for one man to combine all these functions, especially if he acquired other interests, nor was the delegation of responsibility to managers thought to be wise. After the break-up of their partnership, Cotesworth had such difficulty in finding a man both trustworthy and competent to supervise his tallow workshop that the search went as far as Ireland.[2] Cotesworth's material contribution to the firm was minimal. Their workshop, cellars and chambers belonged to the Suttons, as did most of the equipment, but Cotesworth was asked for neither rent nor board until the partnership was dissolved.[3] Almost all the capital behind the firm, and the foundation of their credit, apart from £20 contributed by Cotesworth, came from the family wealth and reputation of the Suttons, and Cotesworth seems to have borrowed another £1,000 from Jane Sutton on his own account, from which she released him before her death.[4] Thanks to her, the firm began with a capital of £600, which was doubled within a few years by loans from her.[5]

Once the difficult initial step of raising capital to establish a business was passed, the main source of long-term capital was the savings of those concerned in it. The immediate and almost automatic ploughing back of the greater part or even the whole of a firm's profits has been seen as the overwhelming source of

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1. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. 259-60, 261, 263-4; Jackson, Hull, p.102.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to T. Lutwidge, 13 Jan. 1710.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/693: J. Sutton's will, 20 Dec. 1701; CM/2/4: Sutton's account of charges on the joint stock, 26 Oct. 1711.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: copy brief in the cross cause Cotesworth vs. Sutton, n.d.; CM/2/14: quitclaim, 31 May 1703.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in the case Sutton vs. Cotesworth, n.d.

industrial capital investment during the eighteenth century, and as the product of the characteristic austerity of contemporary businessmen.[1] Cotesworth's share of the partnership could be expected to increase in value from this practice, just as his general financial position was improved by his marriage in 1699. However, after Jane Sutton's death in 1703 disputes began to arise over his conduct of the business which suggest that he may have improved his position by foul means as well as fair. Sutton maintained that he had systematically exploited the generosity of his benefactors by embezzling money from the firm to finance private business activities, particulars of which were kept in a pocket book apart from the partnership accounts.[2] Cotesworth denied these accusations and filed a cross-suit against Sutton, charging him with similar peculations, with putting all the work onto his junior partner, and with concealing the firm's books.[3] The books have certainly disappeared, although Cotesworth rather than Sutton seems to have had them last, but it is doubtful whether they would throw much light on the dispute.[4] They were 'cast' once and a rough attempt was made to balance the partners' withdrawals, but no proper accounts were ever drawn up and the articles were renewed in 1699 on Cotesworth's simple assurance that they had at least £2,000 capital.[5] A draft account was drawn up before the books disappeared, however, and some interesting information emerges. It was Sutton, the partner accused of neglecting the business, who displayed all the characteristics of the frugal entrepreneur, ploughing back goods and cash worth £5,000 and drawing out only £4,400, mainly in the last few years when he had begun to acquire some land. Cotesworth, on the other hand, appears to have taken out his share of the profits and more: a total of nearly £6,000, although he claimed to have withdrawn only £700.[6] The evidence is not conclusive, but his purchases of coal, land and wayleave rights both before and after 1706, and his ability to support an extensive trade on his own resources, demonstrate that

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1. F. Crouzet, 'Capital Formation in Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution', Capital Formation, ed. Crouzet, pp.188-9; see Ch. I, p.4.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in the case Sutton vs. Cotesworth, n.d.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/3: copy brief in cross cause, n.d.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/105: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 17 Mar. 1728.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/2: brief in the case Sutton vs. Cotesworth, n.d.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/18: draft of an account..., 2 Sept. 1712.

he had acquired a great deal of capital and credit from somewhere, which might not have been gained honestly by marriage and thrift.

Partnerships and self-financing supplied enough capital for most ordinary commercial and industrial ventures, but it might be doubted whether they could fulfil the enormous demands made by large-scale colliery enterprise for both fixed and working capital. However, in the coal industry around Newcastle the partnership had been adapted to the needs of the industry and, as a result, the majority of collieries were financed in that manner. Nef dated the rise of the colliery partnership from about 1575 and asserted that it had been moulded into a business unit that was sometimes difficult to distinguish from the early joint stock company in terms of the number of partners involved and the facilities for selling or transferring their interests.[1] Notwithstanding the fact that membership of a colliery partnership could involve nothing but liabilities, and unlimited liabilities at that, there seems to have been no shortage of investors.[2] The theory that the legal restrictions imposed on joint stock companies in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble constituted a major obstacle to the mobilization of savings, because potential investors were afraid of unlimited liability, does not seem to be borne out by reference to the Newcastle coal industry.[3] Joint stock companies had never played a major role in financing the industry and were used only in attempts to develop the coal trade of Blyth in competition with the output of Newcastle.[4] Two companies were organized in London for this purpose in the 1690s, independent of Newcastle investment or control, but they failed to make an impression and lay dormant for about twenty years until the leading Tyne owners began to compete for shares.[5] When Blyth was developed in earnest, it was by the traditional form of organization and in the hands of the Ridleys.[6]

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1. Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 44, 49-50.
2. See Ch. III, pp. 70-1, 75-6.
3. A.H. John, The Industrial Development of South Wales, 1750-1850 (Cardiff, 1950), p.53.
4. W.R. Scott, The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint Stock Companies (Cambr., 1912), i. 332, ii. 461-2; Nef, Coal Industry, ii. 46.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CN/5/28: 'Instructions for drawing up WCs answer to Nich Ridley etc. Bill fi led the 1 July 1723'.
6. Northumberland History, ix (ed. H.H.E. Craster, 1909), 232-3.

The colliery partnership flourished because it was both efficient and flexible. It certainly raised sums comparable with those invested in joint stock enterprise at the same time. Out of 140 companies investigated by Scott only five, including the Bank of England and the East India Company, had capital conspicuously above that probably invested in each of the largest collieries on the Tyne. After discounting the 27 largest companies, he calculated that the average capital of an English company in 1695 was £5,000, which was about the same as the average colliery investment.[1] The flexibility of the system was also impressive. Each partner was allotted a proportion of the produce and was obliged to contribute to the sinking, working and legal expenses in that proportion.[2] This 'part', as it was known, was a piece of personal property which could be bequeathed, sold, leased, used as security or distrained by creditors as the need arose, and was thus a liquid asset.[3] The system had the added advantage that the parts could be redistributed as the financial circumstances of the enterprise and partners required. Bucksnook colliery, for example, was first won by Wright and Brumell, who subsequently increased their capital resources by selling three-eighths to Gilbert Spearman for £1,800.[4] By the end of 1714, however, the colliery was again in difficulties, not only because they could not get a wayleave from Ramsay but because of a capital shortage, and to solve both problems Cotesworth was offered one-eighth of the coal produced.[5] This deal fell through but by 1716 the colliery's problems were so acute that Cotesworth was allowed in by a complicated agreement that in practice allowed him six-fourteenths of the coal.[6] By 1726 he held two-thirds of the colliery and Spearman the rest, Wright and Brumell having been overcome by their financial difficulties.[7]

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1. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, i. 374-6; See Ch. III, p.67.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CK/11/54: account of holders of shares in Stella and Winlaton collieries, n.d.; see Ch. III, pp. 69-70.
3. For example, Cotesworth MSS. CF/1/11: assignment to Ramsay, 1 Oct. 1709.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/110: case of G. Spearman, 25 Nov. 1725.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CN/1/436, 438: account of a conference, [9 Mar. 1715].
6. Cotesworth MSS. CK/5/1: copy of articles of agreement, 27 Feb. 1716; CM/2/503: to T. Gibson, 3 Apr. 1716 (copy).
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/68: to C. Sanderson, 23 Jan. 1726 (copy).

Dividing up colliery holdings in this way enabled an investor to spread his commercial risks widely, by buying into a number of enterprises in the area so as to reduce the chances of being faced with the full expenses of a poor colliery, increase the chances of hitting a rich seam, and meanwhile enjoy a steady supply of a variety of coal. The Liddells and Cotesworth, for example, were partners in at least six collieries, and the Montagu-Wortleys had an interest in eleven.[1] Responsibility for managing the concern was left to the major part-holders or their lessees, while the others were in practice sleeping partners.[2] Leasing out a share was a method of protection against a risky and uncertain investment, and Cotesworth occasionally rented his part of a colliery to an undertaker.[3]

However, the partnership was not an ideal method of attracting capital. It could be an uncomfortable association, especially among opinionated and often unscrupulous men as coal-owners tended to be. Some of Cotesworth's partners turned out to be as 'strange people as Ever I yet Confederated wth I thank my Starrs', according to George Liddell, and were accused of failing to bear their share of the expense and work, having in the end to be bought out.[4] The divorce of management from ownership which the partnership allowed could endanger the financial interests of sleeping partners, as a case involving Bensham colliery demonstrated. The colliery had been subdivided until Elizabeth Rogers, a widow who held one-third of one-eighth, did not know who her partners were, nor from whom the colliery was leased, for its affairs had been arranged by 'one Comon manager', and she was surprised to find herself being sued for arrears of rent.[5] The law of unlimited liability could mean that Mrs. Rogers, or someone like her, was burdened with the debts of the concern, although new partners do seem to have been protected from debts incurred before they entered

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/7: a state of Mrs. Liddell's case, 22 May 1723; CF/1/11: assignment to Ramsay, 1 Oct. 1709.
2. See Ch. III, pp. 69-70.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/1/64: M. Bell's accounts, 1725.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/35: from G. Liddell, 13 Apr. 1718; CP/1/78: from G. Liddell, 28 Dec. 1722.
5. P.R.O., C. 5/363/13: Clavering v. Rogers, 1713.

the partnership.[1] Those with widely scattered holdings therefore increased their financial liabilities while reducing their commercial risks. Multiple partnerships also faced difficulties when they had recourse to law, since the name of each partner had to be on the writ, and in a properly run colliery where members were consulted by the management making major decisions was a cumbersome and time-consuming process.[2]

Yet there was no difficulty in finding people willing to enter partnerships and acquire colliery leases, even among those outside the Newcastle area. Some of the greatest colliery proprietors were southern gentlemen, like the Pitts, Montagus and Wortleys, the last two families being attracted into the area by favourable leases granted by their uncle Lord Crewe, the bishop of Durham, and their brother, the dean.[3] Parts and shares were so freely marketable that Liddell suggested bringing some of the London coal dealers into the partnership at Heaton colliery, both for the capital and for their influence in the trade.[4]

However, partnerships and self-financing were not the only sources of long-term capital available to entrepreneurs in this and other local industries. Despite the lack of an institutionalized national capital market, there seems to have been an adequate local market and the major colliery proprietors also had access to the great London market. Where they could find partners, they could also find people willing to take the less speculative course of lending money on good security.

At the centre of the Newcastle market were the wealthy merchants and goldsmiths, like Ramsay, and attorneys, like John Ord, who not only lent out their own surplus capital but acted as intermediaries by arranging loans or borrowing money themselves to put out at interest. In 1709 Ramsay had £5,000 out to the Montagus, who were in difficulties at Northbanks colliery, and there

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Heppleston, 29 June 1715; ZCE 10/5: to G. Spearman, 9 Feb. 1721.
2. Ellison MSS. A 36a/14: from Sir H. Liddell, 12 Jan. 1714. For other disadvantages, see Ch. III, pp. 69-70.
3. Sedgwick, House of Commons, ii. 268, 348-9, 557.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/141: from G. Liddell, [22] May 1723.

is evidence that part of this sum was lent to him by two Newcastle attorneys, Ord and Featherstonhaugh.[1] Two years later, when Ramsay needed to borrow on his own behalf to buy Gateshead and Whickham, he received help from both Ord and the Liddells.[2] Ord was a ubiquitous figure in the Newcastle money market, making such a successful career as an attorney, agent for the Montagu-Wortleys and financial intermediary that he founded a thriving legal and land-owning dynasty.[3] Cotesworth not only borrowed from him directly but often employed him to 'take up' money from other lenders in Newcastle and the surrounding district.[4] When Ord died in 1721, he owed over £10,000 borrowed at interest, but had lent over £44,000 himself.[5] Cotesworth also acted as an intermediary himself in some financial deals, arranging mortgages, borrowing small sums and lending large ones, but often employed attorneys to act for him or was approached on behalf of their clients.[6]

The Newcastle market was of course restricted in size and not to be compared with the resources of London, especially since there were no banks and loans had to be tied to some solid security, preferably a mortgage.[7] It was never possible to raise large sums at short notice, nor to get bills at sight, and capital supply was linked to seasonal trading conditions which made it difficult to raise substantial sums during the winter.[8] Yet the examples above and Cotesworth's own experience show that it was possible to raise several thousand pounds from local sources. In 1711 he borrowed £1,500 on his own credit to meet the current expenses of Lord William Powlett's mines, and another £1,000 was raised on a mortgage for Powlett the next year, although he

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CF/1/11: assignment to Ramsay, 1 Oct. 1709; CM/1/129: receipt by R. Featherson, 19 Jan. 1711.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/218: from W. Ramsay, 18 Feb. 1714; CM/2/678: [W. Ramsay] to Sir H. Liddell, n.d. (draft).
3. J. Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester (Lond., 1795), i. 615.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/4/136: from J. Ord, 1 May 1718.
5. Blackett-Ord (Whitfield) MSS. 0 1/45: debts oweing by and to Mr. John Ord at the time of his death, 15 Aug. 1721.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Bailes, 3 Oct. 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/117: from M. Milbank, 1 Mar. 1711; CM/2/383: from N. Richardson, 8 Feb. 1717.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Lord W. Powlett, 8 Dec. 1721.
8. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Lord W. Powlett, 4 & 18 Jan. 1715.

could not get this all from one person, 'there being Little money in this Country save what the Whiggs have, and they dare not part with it on any acct'.[1] By the autumn the situation must have improved, for he told Henry Liddell that he could easily raise £3,000 if he needed to.[2] The land and mortgage market was similarly thriving, as appears from the records of some tortuous transactions concerning the mortgage and equity of Whinney Houses in Gateshead.[3] Despite the institutional rigidities which existed, there does not seem to have been a serious shortage of investment capital in Newcastle. This may have been the result of the social unity of the merchant and landed families around the town, cemented by a common dependence on and active interest in the coal industry, which reduced any gap between classes holding savings and those anxious to invest them.[4]

Nor were Cotesworth and his contemporaries dependent on capital raised in this local market. His papers reveal important connections between the northern merchants and industrialists and the London financial market, fostered by the time they spent in the capital negotiating with coal and salt dealers or government receivers, fighting interminable Chancery suits or sitting in Parliament. London coal dealers could often be persuaded to lend money, as well as enter partnerships, to cement their control over the proprietors. It is impossible to estimate the extent of these loans, but it is indisputable that the dealers had financial interests, especially in struggling concerns like Bucksnook, and that they occasionally burnt their fingers.[5] London financiers unconnected with the coal trade were also involved in the area, for instance, Ramsay had dealings with Nathanial and John Gould, who helped him to raise cash for the Grand Lease purchase.[6] This affair resulted in another important contact for Cotesworth, with the firm of Gibson, Jacomb and Jacob of Lothbury, Walpole's bankers and men of business.[7] Gibson and Jacob held mortgages on

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Lord W. Powlett, 26 Nov. 1711 & 31 Jan. 1712.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to H. Liddell, 23 Oct. 1712.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CA/7/22-6: documents relating to Whinney Houses, 1721.
4. See above, p.168.
5. Ellison MSS. A 36/8: from H. Liddell, 13 May 1714; see Ch. V, pp. 123-4.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to C. Sanderson, 4 Jan. 1712.
7. Sedgwick, House of Commons, ii. 62-3.

Gateshead and Whickham and insisted on their sale in Chancery, thus coming into contact with Cotesworth when he arranged the purchase.[1] In 1715, during a trade crisis, Cotesworth borrowed £2,050 on bond from Gibson and Jacomb to meet essential payments, and in 1717 Gibson seems to have acted as intermediary when Cotesworth borrowed £2,000 on the Grand Lease from Robert Vansittart and Roger Hudson, London merchants and goldsmiths.[2] In 1721 Cotesworth was said to have several accounts with Jacob.[3] This firm did not, however, have a monopoly of his business, for he also had a connection with a banker called Warner.[4]

The price of investment capital was an important factor in its availability, and perhaps the scarcity of comment on interest rates in Cotesworth's papers is an indication that they caused him little trouble. This may have been because those needing to borrow large sums for productive investment almost invariably had property which would be mortgaged, and secured loans were bound by the legal maxima. Loans were made 'with lawful interest' and there are clear signs that the market price fell in 1714 with the official interest rates.[5] In 1715 Cotesworth reported to Lord William Powlett that the five per cent which the Goulds proposed to charge for a loan was the usual rate, although they were asking an additional one and a half per cent premium which he thought excessive; and in 1719 he was charged a four per cent premium on money borrowed to help with the Widdrington purchase.[6] For unsecured loans the interest rates and charges were higher: when Cotesworth wished to borrow money to buy land which he would then use as security he proposed paying six per cent until the purchase was completed and the loan secured, and then lowering the rate.[7]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to C. Sanderson, 4 Jan. 1712; Cotesworth MSS. CA/1/8: agreement, 26 Feb. 1702; CA/1/10: agreement, 16 Jan. 1711.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/824: bond to Gibson & Jacomb, 1 Sept. 1715; CK/5/161: account with Gibson, Nov. 1719 - Oct. 1720; see Ch. VIII, pp. 203-4.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/62: from J. Banks, 11 Nov. 1721.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/85: from H. Brown, 26 Dec. 1719.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/870: bond to G. Liddell, 27 Jan. 1721; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Wilson, 22 July 1714; Mathias, 'Capital, Credit and Enterprise', Jour. Eur. Econ. Hist., ii. 132.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to Lord W. Powlett, 18 Jan. 1715; ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 19 June 1719.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 1 Mar. 1720; T. Sisson to J. Banks, 18 Mar. 1720.

During the times of financial crisis, as in 1710, the price of capital soared until Dixon reported to Cotesworth that it was impossible to borrow £100 a month for less than £30.[1] High interest was accompanied by difficulties in borrowing at all, even on 'ye best land security', and by a disinclination to invest in long-term, low yielding assets 'considering what advantages may be made of money att ys time'.[2] On the other hand, quiet conditions and the lowering of interest rates on government stock were known to release money onto the capital market which could easily be taken up on mortgage security.[3] Contemporaries accepted that the 'Low Ebb of Interest', as in the summer of 1720 or 1728, pushed up the prices of land and house property: the steadily rising price of land in the north east between 1715 and 1725 may reflect a decline in the market price of capital and a consequent improvement in the availability of capital for productive enterprise.[4]

While it is almost impossible to establish accurate tests to determine the amount of capital at the disposal of men like Cotesworth and the ease of access to such funds, certainly neither Cotesworth nor his correspondents seem to have been hampered in their enterprises by capital shortage, and there was no lack of entrants into any of the trades and industries in which he was concerned. Perhaps Cotesworth's own investment pattern is significant in this context, although it would be unwise to generalise from an example which may have been by no means typical. He was apparently reluctant to invest his surplus capital in public or private stock, although he dabbled in lottery tickets occasionally.[5] The news of the reduction of interest on the national debt in 1717 was significant to him only because of his planned land purchases, and it seems that he had no money

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/795: from J. Dixon, 5 Dec. 1710.
2. Ellison MSS. A 35/8: from H. Liddell, 10 Nov. 1710; A 35/21: from H. Liddell, 27 Jan. 1711.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/385: from [C. Sanderson], 7 Mar. 1717.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: T. Sisson to J. Banks, 3 July 1720; ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 9 May 1728; but see Davies, 'Joint Stock Investment', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., iv. 286; H.J. Habakkuk, 'English Landownership 1680-1740', Econ. Hist. Rev., x (1940), 16; see below, p. 194.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/216: from M. West, 13 Feb. 1714. Sir Henry Liddell also professed to have no 'acquaintance' with stock brokers: Ellison MSS. A 35/34: from Sir H. Liddell, 28 July 1711.

in public funds in 1723.[1] The fall in interest rates may have played some part in dissuading him from such investments while, on the other hand, he regarded more speculative schemes with disapproval.[2] He was not concerned in the South Sea Bubble and, although he seemed a little wistful about the missed opportunity in July 1720, he adopted a slightly censorious tone when referring to the handsome profit made by his associate Joseph Banks.[3] In any case, there was no need to seek for attractive investment opportunities on the London securities market: local industry offered an outlet for speculation, while safe investments were provided by mortgages at a steady five to six per cent and by land purchases on the rising market. Cotesworth began buying land and house property while he was still trading in partnership with Sutton and continued to do so until shortly before his death. There is evidence that he also dabbled in the London mortgage market, at least where desirable local land was involved, and that he employed resident attorneys to negotiate for him. In 1714, for example, he was engaged in a protracted and complicated deal over the Thornely Hall estate, which ended when he bought out the mortgagees and acquired possession in 1715, reselling it at a profit in 1723.[4] He also took the opportunity offered by the forfeiture of rebels' estates after the 1715 rebellion to speculate in land. He began looking for a loan of several thousand pounds for this purpose in 1717, and in 1719-20, in partnership with Joseph Banks, he bought the Widdrington estate at Stella and Winlaton.[5]

Such land purchases left him short of cash for his many other enterprises, but it would be an over-simplification to regard it as a simple drain of capital from trade and industry into non-productive employment.[6] It is true that

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/385: from [C. Sanderson], 7 Mar. 1717; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to R. Bowes, 8 Dec. 1723.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/134: to T. Sisson, 31 Jan. 1723.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to J. Banks, 26 July 1720; ZCE 10/6: to J. Banks, 11 June 1721.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to Wilson & Wheeler, June-Sept. 1714; Cotesworth MSS. CA/19/25: assignment to F. Johnson, 26 Mar. 1723.
5. See Ch. I, p. 8.
6. E.L. Jones, 'Industrial Capital and Landed Investment', Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution, ed. Jones & G.E. Mingay (Lond., 1967), pp.68-71; see Ch. VIII, pp. 208-11.

Cotesworth's successive acquisitions of land were accompanied by a withdrawal from wholesale trade but his salt and coal interests continued to expand at an even greater rate after he had inherited Ramsay's estates and become a landed gentleman. Money sunk in land was at least a secure investment of surplus funds at a time when coal and salt were notoriously speculative industries, and it was quickly realizable by sale or mortgage. Nor was it an entirely non-productive investment, at least in the Newcastle area. Land prices do seem to have risen considerably there: in 1714-5 the common price was about 18 years purchase, but by 1717 it had risen to 20.[1] In 1718 Cotesworth thought that 24 years purchase for the Shipcoat estate was high, but two years later he thought that the price of the Widdrington castle estate would have to be over 25 years to be dear.[2] People were asking 30-40 years in 1720, as money made in South Sea stock filtered into the country, and the price undoubtedly dropped after the crash, but 25 years purchase was still thought to be a reasonable price for land in 1725.[3] Defoe might well have thought that 'an Estate's a pond, but a Trade's a spring', but an estate in the Newcastle area was a very well stocked pond.[4] Its attractions were increased by the fact that the ownership of land often involved the ownership of existing or potential collieries, salt pans, wayleave rights and staithrooms, which the purchaser could exploit himself or lease at a lucrative rent. Cotesworth's attempt to buy North Biddick, for example, was directed mainly at the colliery, while the Widdrington estate included Stella and Winlaton collieries, as well as many staithrooms and wayleaves.[5] Nor can it be said that Cotesworth was buying the perquisites of social class rather than making a rational investment when he purchased land.[6] There is no doubt that he was socially ambitious, both for himself and for his

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CG/18/68-71: notes on Milbank properties, [1714-5]; CN/5/1: from Mr. Hall, 26 Feb. 1717.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to J. Ord, 5 Dec. 1718; ZCE 10/4: T. Sisson to J. Banks, 13 Mar. 1720.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to Mrs. Babbington, 15 Sept. 1720; to R. Bowes 24 Jan. 1721; Cotesworth MSS. CN/7/6: to Mr. Aynsley, 17 Nov. 1725 (copy).
4. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman, i. 375.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to [W. Carr], 27 Nov. 1716; Cotesworth MSS. CN/11/8: rental of Lord Widdrington's estate, n.d.
6. See Habakkuk, 'English Landownership', Econ. Hist. Rev., x. 11-2.

children, and the fact that land was 'in itselfe very Reputable' did influence him, but there were two other factors involved in his decision. These were the profits to be made from well-managed farming and leasing of his agricultural land, and the power given by mineral and wayleave rights.[1] He expected his land to show a profit, like his other investments, and demanded the same standards of management and accounting.[2] He was a vigorous and improving landlord, planting hedges, extracting detailed husbandry covenants and forcing up rents, so that the yield of his estate at Newsham in Durham, for example, had risen 25 per cent by 1720.[3] However, his land was never an end in itself to Cotesworth, who looked on it as a reserve, the income from which could be relied on in case of 'Cross Accidents', but was not intended to stand alone.[4] His coal and salt ventures remained his main preoccupation and probably absorbed the majority of his surplus income from all sources. Nor did he make much effort to transfer his property out of industry into safer assets in the years before his death, although he seemed to be aware of the danger of leaving his children an inheritance which they would not be experienced enough to handle.[5]

Generalizing from the experience of one possibly atypical entrepreneur in a possibly atypical region is extremely fallible, but Cotesworth's papers provide little evidence of any major short-fall in either long or short-term capital for commercial or industrial investment, given that the need for long-term capital tied up in fixed assets was relatively modest. Short-term capital, the major credit requirement, was readily available in the form of inland bills and trade credit, while most of his long-term finance probably came from his own accumulated resources. Modest and not so modest amounts of capital, however, could be obtained in both Newcastle and London with relatively little difficulty, despite the personal basis of the capital market. The difficulties which

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to W. Ramsay, 6 Feb. 1712.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/122: to T. Sisson, 12 Dec. 1722.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to the bishop of Durham, 9 Dec. 1718; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/51: from J. Walton, 25 Aug. 1722; CP/2/93: to J. Walton, 31 Aug. 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 27 Feb. 1720.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/47: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 5 Aug. 1720 (copy).
5. See Ch. VIII, p. 207.

Cotesworth experienced in the last few years of his life seem to have been the result of personal misjudgements and the interplay of other factors, such as ill health and malice, rather than the inevitable result of a defective capital market.[1]

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1. See Ch. VIII, pp. 211-7.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

The future of Cotesworth's estate rested on his children and it was for them rather than for himself that he worked so tirelessly to build up a fortune. His success ensured that he was able to give his family all the advantages of which he had been deprived, especially education. His ambitions for his children seem to have been those of any propertied gentleman and he certainly showed no sign of wanting to found a merchant dynasty in Gateshead.

Cotesworth's wife died in 1710, leaving four surviving children to be brought up by their father and their spinster aunt, Margaret Ramsay.[1] The two boys, William and Robert, were apprenticed to their father at an early age but the apprenticeship was probably a formality, rather than a serious attempt to train them for business.[2] Until 1716 they attended Newcastle grammar school, but the teaching offered by a Tory corporation failed to satisfy Cotesworth and his Whig friends, who were not convinced that the school provided for a 'Polite Education'.[3] In April 1716 they were therefore removed and sent to Sedbergh school in Yorkshire, where Cotesworth's elder son remained for a year preparing for entrance to university and a 'more Polite Way of Living' than his father or brother.[4] In May 1717, at the age of seventeen, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge.[5] Robert Cotesworth, then aged about fifteen, was to become a merchant but his training indicates that Cotesworth intended his son for better things than Gateshead or even Newcastle could offer. In 1717 he handed over his own commercial business to his clerk and there is no indication that he intended his son to enter a partnership with him.[6] Younger sons with capital

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1. St. Mary's, Gateshead: parish register 1693-1723, 2 June 1710.
2. Gateshead Company Records, ed. Dodds, pp.67, 69.
3. Ellison MSS. A 36a/18: from H. Liddell, 6 Mar. 1714.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/12: from W. Cotesworth jnr., Apr. 1716; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to R. Cotesworth, 21 June 1716; Ellison MSS. A 36a/42: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 12 Oct. 1716.
5. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses, i. 401.
6. See Ch. VII, p. 181.

and connections often moved from Newcastle to London, as Cotesworth's cousin William and brother-in-law Calverley Bewicke had done.[1] Thus in 1717 Cotesworth took his younger son to London and placed him in a 'french house' to learn French, writing, geography and arithmetic, all useful accomplishments for a prospective merchant.[2] By 1721 Robert was completing his training with a firm of merchants in Amsterdam while his elder brother had left Cambridge and was settled in the chambers of Cotesworth's friend Charles Sanderson in the Temple, having chosen to study law.[3] The two girls were not forgotten either: in 1717 they had been placed in a boarding school in London.[4]

Cotesworth spent a great deal on his children's education, as he frequently reminded them over the years. His elder son in particular received an education which, in Cotesworth's opinion, 'has much exceeded those of greater Quality and Fortune'.[5] It cost around £100 a year to support him at university and almost double that at the Temple.[6] However, the investment required to set up a son in a law practice was often smaller than the apprenticeship fees and initial capital needed to train and finance one destined for trade, and the returns on such an investment were much more secure than those of business, provided that the young man concerned was reasonably competent. These practical considerations were reinforced by the unquestioned fact that lawyers ranked higher than merchants in the social scale, and for that reason alone Cotesworth may have preferred such a career for his son and heir.

Paternal ambition, however, could be frustrated by a number of factors: by the child's disobedience, lack of ability, taste for idleness and extravagance, sickness or early death. Cotesworth's sons do not seem to have been disobedient or incompetent, but his generosity to them carried with it a more insidious threat

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1. Hodgson, 'Observations on the Pedigree... ', Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 4th ser., i. 263-5; Surtees, Durham, ii. 193-4.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/17: to E. Mawson, 8 June 1717.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/73: W. jnr. to R. Cotesworth, 13 June 1721; CP/4/47: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 5 Aug. 1720 (copy); Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to [C. Sanderson], 14 Nov. 1719.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/17: to E. Mawson, 8 June 1717.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/47: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 5 Aug. 1720 (copy).
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 25 Jan. 1718; Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/46: from W. Cotesworth jnr., 13 Dec. 1718.

of disappointment. Children brought up and educated as gentlemen tended to adopt standards of dress and behaviour which were profoundly distressing to fathers who had had to make their own way in the world and believed in the mercantile virtues of thrift and hard work. Cotesworth was obviously on good terms with his children and displayed considerable warmth and affection towards them, but he felt it his duty to warn them constantly against being idle and extravagant 'dispensers of and scatterers of money'.[1] He insisted that his daughters should not be raised above their station, but his main concern was for the conduct of his sons.[2] False reports that they were the greatest rakes in town and changed night into day caused him great distress, even while he indignantly rejected them.[3] His disappointments, such as they were, were on a more modest scale. He could not understand why his younger son should be more fussy and demanding about his clothes than Sir Henry Liddell's heir, especially as he himself had worn coats of no finer cloth than his children now had until a few years previously.[4] His elder son pleased him by his sobriety, virtue and application to his studies, but there was still an element of doubt in Cotesworth's mind about his inclination to a little more 'setting up' than his father considered consistent with habits of study and frugality.[5] Reports that he was spending his time in the Temple acquiring 'a Universall Knowledge in Polite Learning' rather than preparing himself to practise law alarmed Cotesworth, not only because he had not confided in his father but because Cotesworth disagreed with his son's intentions. Such a course would train him for nothing except living like a gentleman on the income that his father could provide for him, and Cotesworth was a great believer in self-sufficiency.[6]

Cotesworth's children were not the only ones to benefit from his success, for his sense of kinship was strong and he was always ready to extend his generosity to his more remote relations. Success meant that he could act as

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1. Ellison MSS. A 36a/35: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 9 May 1716.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to Mrs. Roddam, 12 Sept. 1713.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/128: to T. Sisson, 8 Jan. 1723.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 25 Jan. 1718.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to [C. Sanderson], 14 Nov. 1719.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/47: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 5 Aug. 1720 (copy).

rich uncle to his elder brother's children. His nephew, William who had attended Sedbergh school, was sent up to Peterhouse in Cambridge in 1712 at Cotesworth's expense, although the nephew's estimate of his annual expenditure was modest compared with that submitted by his cousin several years later.[1] He took his degree in 1715-6 and gained a scholarship, thus relieving his uncle's pocket, before taking orders in 1718.[2] His elder brother, Charles, as heir to the family land, was 'bred to country affairs', but he was a favourite of Cotesworth's, who gave him experience on his own estates.[3] Cotesworth intended that this branch of his family should inherit his property should his own children die young, but other relatives met with the same kindness and friendship.[4] Even Robert Sutton's children qualified for his patronage and he was probably supporting a remote cousin in the Temple in 1722.[5]

Cotesworth's main hopes of course centred around his own children, and in the case of his elder son they were destined to be frustrated by his early death. Although Cotesworth had done his best to protect his sons' health by warning them against the harmful effects of excessive study and encouraging them to take plenty of exercise, the workings of Providence could not be evaded.[6] William Cotesworth jnr. died in August 1721, before he had completed his studies at the Temple, and with his death the future of Cotesworth's estate became more precarious.[7] The foundation of a landed or indeed mercantile family demanded both the birth of a number of sons, in case of accident, and good luck to ensure that some of them had reached maturity before their father's death. Late marriages among the propertied classes militated against success and, in Cotesworth's case, his wife's early death and his failure to remarry added to this initial handicap. When his elder son died, Cotesworth had only one more

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/2: from W. Cotesworth (nephew), 3 June 1712.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/5: from W. Cotesworth (nephew), 7 May 1716; Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses, i. 401.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to C. Sanderson, 27 Jan. 1727; Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/8: to E. Mawson, 14 May 1717.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/26, pp.65-74: Cotesworth's will, 7 May 1722 (copy); CM/2/153: from J. Robinson, 8 July 1712.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/53: from J. Sutton, 10 May 1721; CP/4/93: to R. Cotesworth, 15 Aug. 1722.
6. Ellison MSS. A 36a/42: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 12 Oct. 1716.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to F. Taylor, 10 Nov. 1721.

chance of perpetuating his achievement, and Robert was only nineteen while he himself was over fifty, in contemporary terms an old man. He transferred his ambitions to his younger son, who was promptly removed from the Amsterdam counting house and sent to take his brother's place in Sanderson's chambers.[1] Cotesworth naturally transferred his anxieties as well as his ambitions. He had not gone to all the trouble of building up his estate and his interests in the coal and salt industries, and defending them from the attacks of his enemies, for his own sake but for that of his children. However, just as he found it difficult to delegate responsibility to his employees, he did not altogether trust his heir with his inheritance and wanted to know in advance what he intended to do with it.[2] It is probably significant that, according to the will drawn up in 1722, Robert Cotesworth would not come into full possession of the estate until he was twenty four. Until that time it was placed in trust to several of Cotesworth's relatives, who were themselves bound to take the advice of four of his friends.

In his will, Cotesworth was not tempted to dissipate his property in legacies to his more remote relations. His son was to receive an income of £200 a year until he came of age, when he was to take possession of the estate and two-thirds of the profits that had accrued since his father's death. The two girls were each to get £100 a year until Robert came of age, and then each was to receive £3,000 and one-sixth of the profits. Only if his male heir predeceased him were any legacies to be granted to relatives like the Suttons and Cotesworths.[3] These provisions were altered slightly by a codicil added in the year of his death, which made his daughters' portions conditional on their marriage and the number of their male children. The codicil also revealed the existence of Cotesworth's 'unofficial' family, consisting of his housekeeper Hannah Watson and her child Henrietta. Hannah, who was named in the new provisions as his wife, to whom Cotesworth said he owed his life, was left an annuity of £100 and a legacy of £1,500.[4] The marriage, if one had taken place, had probably been contracted while Cotesworth and his 'nurse' were in London in

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/3/47: from R. Cotesworth, 10 Apr. 1722.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 22 Aug. 1725.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/13/26, pp.65-74: Cotesworth's will, 7 May 1722.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CE/1/18: probate will & codicil, 6 Feb. & 12 Sept. 1726.

1722 and 1723.[1] Robert Cotesworth only discovered the alteration of the will on his father's death and complained that it had been drawn up by a young Newcastle lawyer 'with a great charge of secrecy'.[2] His attitude to the interlopers was openly hostile and he obstinately referred to his stepmother as 'ye Madam' and to her daughter as 'the child'.[3] If Henrietta was indeed Cotesworth's daughter, she did not disgrace him: in 1760 she became sub-governess of the Royal Nursery on the birth of George III's eldest son. Her mother married again and died in 1766.[4]

When Cotesworth died in December 1726, his son had reached his majority and so came into possession of his estate. There is no indication in his papers that he practised as a lawyer, as Cotesworth wished his heir to do, but, although he may have lived like a gentleman, he was neither a fool nor a weakling, despite the rather overbearing character of his father. Cotesworth had already reduced his commitments in the coal industry by his signature of the Grand Allies' articles in September 1726 and had slimmed down his involvement in the salt industry.[5] His son was therefore left with an income based largely on agricultural and wayleave rents, but he made it clear that he intended to persevere in the salt industry.[6] Other commitments were deferred until he had taken stock of his position.[7]

Since Robert Cotesworth died within three years of his father's death, it is difficult to judge whether he disappointed Cotesworth's expectations through lack of ability. The early deaths of several members of the family may indicate that he had a congenitally weak constitution, and his health was certainly deteriorating towards the end of his life. It does not sound promising that he excused himself from participating in discussions among the Grand Allies about

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 12 May 1722.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to C. Sanderson, 30 Dec. 1726.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. to C. Cotesworth, 16 Mar. 1728 & 16 Dec. 1727.
4. H. White, 'A Newcastle Lady at St. James', Northern Notes and Queries, i (1906-7), 129-134; Six North Country Diaries, ed. J.C. Hodgson (Surtees Society, cxviii, 1910), p.218.
5. See Ch. V, p.135; Ch. VI, p.157.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to R. Percy, 17 Dec. 1726.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to Lord W. Powlett, 15 Jan. 1727.

his share of Bucksnook colliery in 1728 on the grounds that his lack of health, experience and advice made him unequal to the task.[1] However, the Bucksnook affair had baffled the participants for nearly twenty years and Robert Cotesworth's voice would not carry much weight with his senior partners in the alliance. In other matters he displayed a firm grasp of his own affairs and an attitude to business which resembled that of his father. On succeeding to the estate he was continually harassed by tenants and others hoping to take advantage of his youth and inexperience now that his formidable father was dead, but he was on his guard against this.[2] His uncle Sutton, who revived his claims against his former partner after a politic silence of fifteen years as soon as Cotesworth was safely dead, received neither sympathy nor cash from his nephew, and neither did those who tried to get the better of him in colliery leases and lawsuits.[3] Robert Cotesworth did not intend to let other people walk over him and made this clear.[4] He was of course well served by his father's experienced clerk, Thomas Sisson and by his cousin Charles, but he had a mind of his own and could be as critical of Sisson's lack of punctuality and precision as his father had been.[5]

However, his freedom of action was inhibited by the lack of opportunity as much as by lack of time. In the last years of his life, Cotesworth had become involved in so many schemes, lawsuits and commitments of various kinds that his affairs were thrown into confusion, and his son spent the whole of his few remaining years trying to reduce them to order. Equally troublesome were the large financial obligations with which the estate was encumbered. William Ramsay had charged his heir with debts and legacies amounting to over £7,000, a large proportion of which were due to be paid, with interest, in 1726, and Robert Cotesworth had to raise the money.[6] The estate was also burdened with several

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to R. Featherson, 13 Sept. 1728.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to Mr. Donnison, 8 Mar. 1727.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/71: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 16 Jan. 1728; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 27 & 11 Jan. 1728.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 13 Jan. 1728.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 20 Jan. & 14 Dec. 1728.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/10: Cotesworth's answer to Spearman's Case, 25 Nov. 1725; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 28 Apr. 1716; ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to C. Sanderson, 19 Sept. 1727.

mortgages raised by Cotesworth, one from the London bankers Hudson and Vansittart to finance his share of the Stella and Winlaton purchase, and at least one other from the wealthy Newcastle lawyer John Ord to finance the purchase of Shipcoat in Gateshead.[1] Moreover, the number and complexity of the lawsuits which Cotesworth left pending at his death was a drain on his son's resources and left him with an unknown, but certainly substantial, debt to his lawyers.[2]

In order to straighten out the confusion, Robert Cotesworth was forced to sell off his salt pans in 1727 and 1728 so that he and Sisson could concentrate their energies and resources on the immediate problem.[3] He also decided to sell the manor of Whickham to the Liddells.[4] Although he realised that this would rob the estate of a great potential income from the wayleave rents, since the majority of this came from Whickham, the failure of the Grand Allies to improve the state of the coal trade convinced him that it was worth sacrificing possible future profits for the sake of clearing the incumbrances on the rest of his property once and for all.[5] However, his plan to pay off all those with claims on the estate was not accomplished as promptly as he had hoped, since the condition of the coal trade made it impossible for the Liddells to meet their payments on time.[6]

What Robert Cotesworth would have done once he was clear of his father's debts remains conjecture, since he died in May 1729 and the estate passed to his two sisters, Elizabeth and Hannah.[7] Their position was co-owners of the Cotesworth estate, even after the sale of some of its assets, rapidly found them husbands from well-established gentry families. Hannah married Henry Ellison, the nephew of Cotesworth's old friend George Liddell in September 1729, while Elizabeth married Henry Thomas Carr a year later. Henry Ellison was an able

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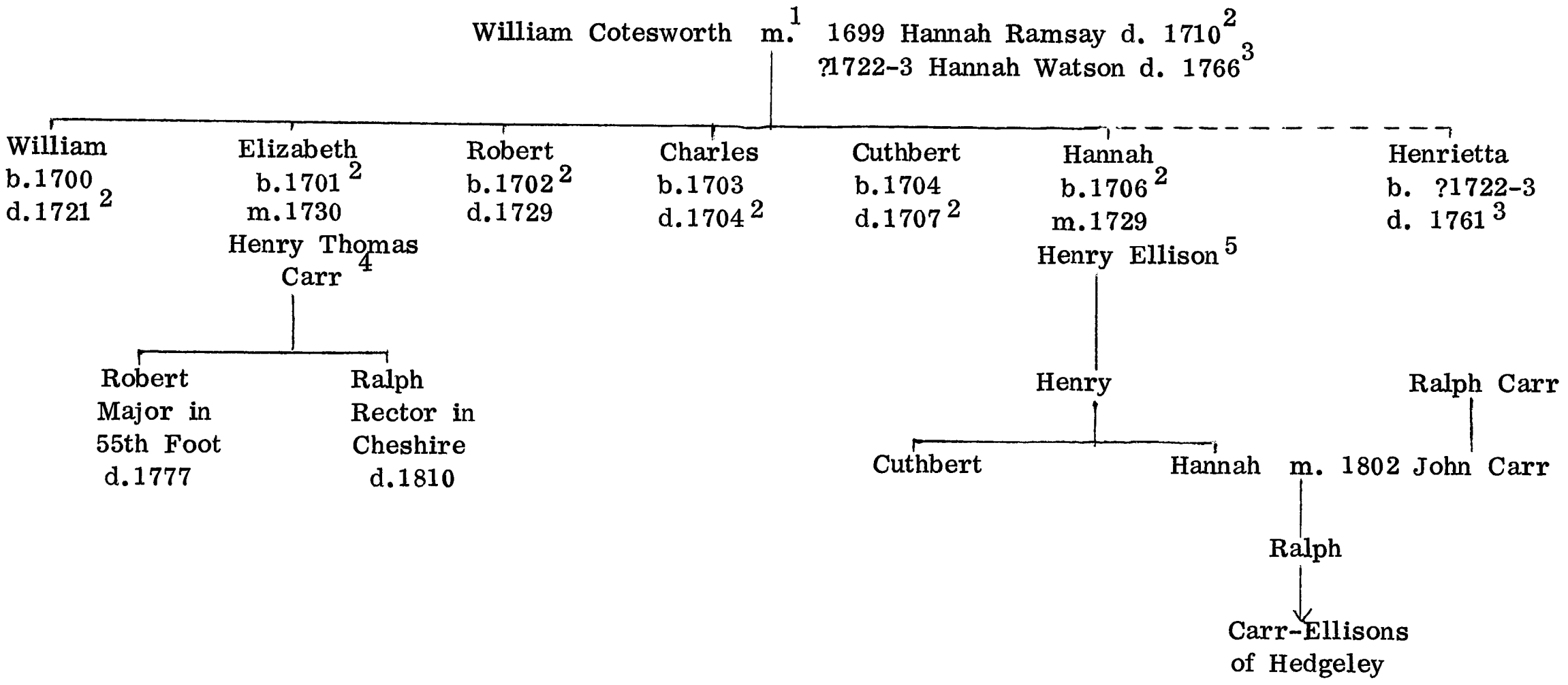
1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to C. Sanderson, 29 Oct. 1727; to T. Ord, 29 Oct. 1728.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to C. Sanderson, 8 Jan. & 15 Oct. 1727.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 19 Apr. 1728.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/8: R. Cotesworth to the bishop of Durham, 8 Oct. 1728.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. to C. Cotesworth, 4 Apr. 1728; see Ch. V, p.136.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 19 Apr. 1729.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/10: T. Sisson to H. Cotesworth, 16 May 1729.

PEDIGREE II: THE DESCENDANTS OF WILLIAM COTESWORTH



1. St. John's, Newcastle, parish registers.
2. St. Mary's, Gateshead, parish registers.
3. White, 'A Newcastle Lady', Northern Notes and Queries, i. 129-134.
4. Hodgson, 'Observations on the Pedigree', Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 4th ser., i. 265-7; Surtees, Durham (London, 1816), i. 209.
5. Carr, The History of the Family of Carr, i. 107, pedigree 1a.

man, who had worked as agent for the Liddells, managing their salt and colliery enterprises as well as their estates, and the Cotesworth estate was run jointly and prosperously for many years. Henry Thomas Carr was less of an asset and eventually went insane. In the 1770s Ellison's son bought out the Carrs and resumed sole possession of the estate, which descended through him to the Carr-Ellison family.[1] Cotesworth's descendants were comfortable country gentlemen, rather than dynamic entrepreneurs, but they were gentlemen in an area where active involvement in the mining industry was socially acceptable.

Cotesworth's ambitions for his children were frustrated, not only because their early deaths prevented his estates being handed down intact in the male line but because they both showed signs of disregarding his advice to make their living as professional lawyers instead of relying on their estate income. Perhaps they were less ambitious than Cotesworth and were content with what he could leave them without striving to increase it. He himself was never satisfied and grew frustrated and embittered in his later years as his ambitions were thwarted. Although his personal success was impressive and he achieved a prominent position in the region, his power, influence and wealth never equalled those of better established families like the Liddells, Bowes or Montagu-Wortleys. Moreover, the difficulties which he encountered after about 1720 so overwhelmed him that he left his heirs a muddled and encumbered inheritance. It certainly seems that his business fortunes reached a peak in 1719-20 and that thereafter he was forced to fight hard to keep his head above water, let alone advance any further.[2]

The reasons for this check to his progress are varied and some apply specifically to Cotesworth and his particular circumstances. However, some may have a wider application and help to explain why great merchants and industrialists were usually from the second or third generation of a prosperous family. This was not simply a matter of capital accumulation and connections,

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1. Hodgson, 'Observations on the Pedigree...', Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc., 4th ser., i. 262-7; R.E. & C.E. Carr, The History of the Family of Carr (Lond., 1893), i. (pedigree 1a); see pedigree II.
2. See Ch. I, p. 9.

although these were important factors: certain personal and social considerations were also involved, and they cannot be discounted when dealing with a period in which business was a matter of personal contacts and credit ratings. Cotesworth was inclined to attribute his difficulties to a conspiracy among his enemies to ruin him, rather than to more mundane or material factors.[1] This may sound far-fetched, but there was an element of truth in it and it was an element that may also have affected others who were perhaps too conspicuously successful in their careers.

One factor that was universally applicable was the passage of time. The accumulation of wealth from humble beginnings was a slow process and Cotesworth's stamina was sapped by increasing age and failing health. By 1720 he was already over fifty and he suffered from frequent illness. Even in 1712 he had been writing in terms of forcing his 'Crazy Body' to hold out for a few years more, and by 1716 he was waxing lyrical on his age and infirmity and the youth and inexperience of his children.[2] On succeeding to the manors of Gateshead and Whickham he played with the idea of selling them to local magnates like Bowes or Pitt, to avoid leaving his children a troublesome inheritance which they would be too young to handle, but he did not press it very far. On the contrary, he embarked on an ambitious purchasing programme of land and coal and salt works, despite his gloomy prognostications that he would not live to complete these improvements to the estate.[3] The result was that, as he wrote to his elder son in 1718, 'on ye Continuance of my life for a few years depends your being in Easier or hard Circumstances'.[4]

For someone with such ambitious commitments, frequent serious illness was a handicap, and Cotesworth was often ill at critical moments during the next few years.[5] His associate Joseph Banks praised the 'Roman Courage' with which he

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 10 June 1720.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to C. Sanderson, 4 Jan. 1712; ZCE 10/2: to J. Ord, 8 July 1716.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to G. Pitt, 24 Apr. 1716.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 25 Jan. 1718. Compare ZCE 10/2: to C. Sanderson, 19 Feb. 1717.
5. Hatton, Merchant's Magazine, p. iii; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: T. Sisson to C. Sanderson, 8 Apr. 1720.

endured his 'vast paines and Bodily Infirmitys' but they must have hindered the already burdensome task of keeping pace with his affairs.[1]

Sickness and old age were inevitable and general hazards but in Cotesworth's case they only aggravated difficulties which he had to a large extent brought on himself. It seems clear that the numerous and expensive projects in which he became involved after 1716 overstretched his resources both of time and capital. He was a wealthy man by contemporary standards, with an income in 1717 of nearly £5,500 a year, but he was dealing with men with greater resources than his own.[2] He considered that his great enemy Richard Ridley's interest in the coal trade was not yet great enough to warrant his inclusion in negotiations between Bowes and the Montagu-Wortleys in which he himself was participating, and yet Ridley had a wide and rapidly increasing interest in collieries on both sides of the river and an income of £8,000 a year.[3] Even with this additional financial support, Ridley came perilously close to ruin several times through investment in difficult and expensive mines, and Cotesworth was facing the same dangers.[4] Ridley was perhaps his nearest rival in the area and neither of them could really compete with the inherited wealth of the great landed families. George Bowes, for example, had an income of £5,000 a year from land and £7,000 from the coal trade, and in 1724 captured a considerable dowry to add to his wealth. Bowes, the Liddells and Montagu-Wortleys could afford to 'Eat up this Country', and competing with them was expensive.[5] The dead rents and expenses of Heaton colliery, for example, were a much greater burden to Cotesworth than they were to his partners, the Liddells and Montagu-Wortleys, in comparison with their other interests in the trade.[6]

Cotesworth's capital resources were considerable but they were tied up in illiquid assets, especially land. Besides the estates inherited from Ramsay or bought by himself before 1716, Cotesworth extended his holdings by the purchase

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/108: J. Banks to R. Cotesworth, 21 Dec. 1726.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to C. Sanderson, 19 Feb. 1717.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to E. Wortley, 9 Apr. 1725; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/78: to T. Sisson, 14 July 1722.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/81: from G. Liddell, 20 Jan. 1723.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to J. Banks, 5 June 1724.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to H. Ellison, 25 May 1725.

of the Shipcoat estate at a cost of over £5,000 in 1719, and by his involvement in the Widdrington estates, which cost him and his partners over £9,000.[1] He was still buying land on the fringes of his estates in 1722 and had an appetite for more.[2] This was probably unwise, considering the ordinary working expenses of his twenty-nine salt pans and his colliery enterprises, let alone the development costs of Heaton and Gateshead Park collieries. By 1719 he was short of cash because of the sums which he had to raise and explained to his elder son that he would not have committed himself so deeply 'but that the things I have bought could not have been come at afterwards'. At this stage he expected to complete all his schemes in eighteen months and then retire to live quietly on the proceeds.[3] However, in his desire to take advantage of the opportunities open to him, Cotesworth seems to have underestimated the risks involved, and he certainly failed to allow for the possibility that all his 'projects' would run into difficulties.

On paper, the prospects were encouraging. When he borrowed the money to pay for his share of the Widdrington purchase, for example, he confidently expected to have a surplus income of around £5,000 a year, which would rapidly accumulate and allow him to redeem the mortgage.[4] The income from the purchased land would simply add to the surplus because Cotesworth expected to double the existing rental once he and his partners were in possession.[5] In the same way, the initial investment in Heaton and Gateshead Park would be considerable because of their depth and drainage problems, but both were expected to be profitable.[6] However, the surplus income from Gateshead and Whickham, and from his coal and salt ventures, was eroded by the expensive disputes in which he became involved. Attempts to break through Whickham manor without paying any wayleave rent and to force him out of Bucksnook and

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/721, 722: 'Account of the nature of tenures of land held by RC, 1728'; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/10: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 17 Jan. 1729; see Ch. I, p.8; Ch. VII, p.193.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/95: to T. Sisson, 6 Sept. 1722.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/41: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 22 Nov. 1719 (copy).
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to C. Sanderson, 19 Feb. 1717.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to J. Banks, 7 Mar. 1721.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/1/78: from G. Liddell, 28 Dec. 1722; CP/1/83: from G. Liddell, 27 Jan. 1723.

Heaton collieries entangled him in so many lawsuits and agreements that he was unable to extricate himself.[1] These disputes and lawsuits not only swallowed up the surplus on which he had counted but also cut his total income as wayleave rents were refused and colliery profits withheld.[2] His troubles were increased by the setbacks which his colliery enterprises suffered at this time. Attempts to drain Gateshead Park and to obtain engines for other collieries, like Farnacres, had proved unsuccessful, and he was in an even worse position at Heaton for he could not start to drain and win the colliery until the disputed wayleave through Walker was granted.[3] Litigation and dead rents placed a strain on his resources. By 1724 he estimated that he had paid out at least £3,000 in the current Bucksnook and Heaton suits, but the main damage lay in unworked coal, uncollected rents, unpaid bills and unredeemed mortgages.[4] The expense of prosecuting campaigns against attacks on the coal-owners' independence like the Bishops' Bill and Newcastle corporation's purchase of Walker added to his burden.[5] Nor did the purchase of Winlaton and Stella prove as profitable as had been hoped. Cotesworth and Banks were scarcely able to collect the original rents, let alone increase the estate's yield, because of obstruction by agents of the former owner.[6] Cotesworth was forced to lease and finally work Winlaton colliery himself to maintain rents from tenants on the estate, since no one else would take it.[7]

In short, all Cotesworth's investments seem to have miscarried and involved him in expenses that were out of all proportion with the eventual income. This resulted in a liquidity problem which left him almost permanently short of cash in his later years and contributed to his decision to cut his investment in the salt industry in 1725, and ultimately to the sale of Whickham.[8] Robert Cotesworth

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 20 Sept. 1720; to G. Spearman, 24 Mar. 1720; see Ch. III, p.70; Ch.V, pp.131-2, 133-4.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 14 Aug. 1726.
3. See Ch. I, pp.24-5; Ch.III, pp.61-2; Ch. V, p.133.
4. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/24: to E. Sayer, 28 Jan. 1726; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 27 Sept. 1724.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 4 Jan. 1728.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to J. Banks, 7 Mar. 1721.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: J. Weatherby to J. Banks, 23 Jan. 1722.
8. Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/116: to T. Sisson, 15 Nov. 1722.

blamed 'that hurry of business' for throwing his father's affairs into confusion but Cotesworth had brought his troubles on himself by over-extending his resources at a time when he was perhaps physically less able to deal with the results.[1]

However, the heaviness of Cotesworth's investments might not have told against him had he been able to avoid the numerous disputes in which he became involved. It was unfortunate that he had an enormous capacity for making enemies who were prepared to go out of their way to make trouble for him.[2] He wrote in 1721 that Ridley and his confederates were prepared to spend £20,000 and Bowes £40,000 to ruin him, and a venomous letter sent by William Blackiston Bowes in that year indicates that he was not exaggerating their determination or their purpose.[3] Cotesworth maintained that these quarrels were never of his own making and that he was persecuted by envious people who would not let him live in peace.[4] He claimed that he disliked controversy and was always willing to buy peace with concessions, but he was clearly not an entirely innocent party.[5] He admitted that he had a quick temper and he divided the world sharply between those who were for or against him.[6] Since he never doubted his own judgement or the rectitude of his own conduct, conflict with those who had the temerity to disagree with him was inevitable.[7] Negotiations were made difficult by his belief that he was in the right: as one harassed associate complained, his idea of a compromise was that the other side should compromise with him since 'you as usuall with some Take all yr Propositions as granted to be true'.[8]

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1. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 1 Feb. 1728.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to C. Sanderson, 21 May 1721.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to Sir H. Liddell, 7 Feb. 1721; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/510: from W. Blackiston Bowes, 27 June 1721.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 21 Aug. 1720.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to x, 3 Aug. 1709; ZCE 10/2: to Mr. Turner, 2 July 1715.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/1: to J. Mowbray, 19 July 1713; Cotesworth MSS. CP/2/77: to T. Sisson, 10 July 1722.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/529: from M. Forster, n.d. (note in Cotesworth's hand).
8. Cotesworth MSS. CG/4/166: from R. Wright, 23 Mar. 1723 (copy).

If Cotesworth was right, it followed that his opponents were wrong, and his attitude towards them was hardly conciliatory. When he lost a lawsuit at the Durham assizes, he was narrowly prevented from writing to the under sheriff to accuse him of corruption.[1] His opponents in the Whickham wayleave dispute were 'a sett of Vile oppressive Bloodthirsty men', while Lord Widdrington's agents who were thwarting him at Stella and Winlaton were merely 'Incarnate Devils'.[2] He tended to accuse his opponents of Jacobitism, presumably on the grounds that his enemies must necessarily be the enemies of the government he supported.[3] This somewhat biased view of a large section of humanity was combined with a stubborn determination to defend his rights against them to the last breath and, although lawsuits were an inefficient and expensive method of settling disputes, in the circumstances they were unavoidable.[4] To this extent, contemporary accusations that Cotesworth provoked many of the suits in which he was involved were justified, even though the accompanying allegations that he was a rapacious wayleave tyrant were exaggerated.[5]

Cotesworth's aggressive self-righteousness undoubtedly played a part in sowing the whirlwind which he reaped in the last six years of his life, but other factors working against him were outside his control and may have had similar effects on the careers of less belligerent men. His papers demonstrate that his success and ability aroused great prejudice against him even among those whom he considered his friends. He had risen from obscurity to gentility in one generation, and there were many who thought that he had risen too far and too fast.[6] Envy of his wealth aroused hostility against him, but probably the most damaging effect was on his reputation.[7] To many, he seemed almost invincible and acquired a reputation for ability and subtlety, but subtlety could be and was

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/255: to Mr. Lee, [1714].
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/2: to x, 3 June 1714; ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 30 May 1720.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to C. Sanderson, 15 Sept. 1724.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to R. Wright, 6 Dec. 1719; to Mr. Mallaber, 11 Apr. 1719.
5. See Ch. III, pp.72-4.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/510: from W. Blackiston Bowes, 27 June 1721.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to W. Cotesworth jnr., 21 Aug. 1720.

interpreted as cunning and this made business associates wary of him.[1] As Cotesworth pointed out to George Liddell in 1717, a reputation as a man of 'Vast designe & foresight' had its drawbacks.[2] Once it was established, it became impossible for him to propose any course of action without his associates suspecting that it was part of a deep-laid and self-interested master plan. Joseph Banks accused him of arranging the purchase of Winlaton and Stella for his own private ends, and scrutinized every move that he made in connection with the estates in case it played into his hands.[3] Cotesworth blamed his partners' reluctance to allow him to petition parliament for a wayleave for Heaton colliery on their fear that it was calculated for his benefit alone, and he resented their acquiescence in his enemies' suggestion that he was not fit to be negotiated with.[4] This attitude naturally created difficulties for Cotesworth and contributed to his bitterness and frustration in the later years of his life.

Another important factor working against him and closely linked with his reputation for cunning was the prejudice aroused by his lowly social origins, which made it difficult to negotiate on equal terms with the leading figures in the coal industry like the Montagu-Wortleys. Even Richard Ridley was the son of a respected and wealthy Newcastle alderman and did not have to fight off suggestions that he and his family were 'pragmatical upstarts'.[5] Certainly Cotesworth acknowledged the social inferiority of trade and deferred to those of superior status, as his ambition to launch his heir into a 'more Polite Way of Living' demonstrates.[6] His enemies seem to have used his origins against him. The Bowes family made frequent accusations that either he or his father had been employed as menial servants and considered this significant enough to swear out

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1. Six North Country Diaries, ed. Hodgson, p.87; Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/353: from R. Mylott, 17 July 1716.
2. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3: to G. Liddell, 13 July 1717.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CN/11/137: from J. Banks, 6 Jan. 1722; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to J. Banks, 5 June 1724.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to H. Ellison, 25 May 1725; to E. Wortley, 9 Apr. 1725.
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/57: to Lady Bowes, 5 July 1721 (copy).
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to E. Wortley, 29 Nov. 1723; see above, pp. 197-8.

an affidavit in 1723 for use in a lawsuit.[1] William Blackiston Bowes objected to Cotesworth acting as a J.P., while Nicholas Burdon, the local agent for several of the great London salt dealers, was infuriated by his assumption of the title of esquire.[2] Cotesworth thought that this social prejudice affected his economic activities. He wrote in 1724 that his opponents in the Whickham wayleave dispute considered him 'too little a man' to be entitled to the rights of lord of the manor, and that he was excluded from the negotiations for a general combination which preceded the conclusion of the Grand Alliance by 'people very superiour to me' who considered him too inferior to be admitted to great things.[3] Perhaps it was this prejudice which prevented him from receiving the knighthood which he and others thought was a proper reward for his services to the government during the 1715 rebellion and as both J.P. and sheriff.[4]

These services to the government were another source of friction between Cotesworth and many of those with whom he had to do business. He had the misfortune to be a zealous low church Whig in an area that was predominantly high church Tory, if not Roman Catholic Jacobite.[5] He claimed that his 'Zeal to ye Governmt' was one reason for Ridley's hatred of him, and his relations with Burdon, and therefore his salt trade, were seriously strained at times by their opposing political convictions.[6] His life was often threatened and the aftermath of the rebellion produced a long series of unpleasant anonymous letters, containing model gallows and knaves of clubs among other less savoury items.[7]

Religion and politics were not the only issues which aroused passions and led

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/57: to Lady Bowes, 5 July 1721 (copy); CP/2/153: R. Cotesworth to T. Sisson, 30 Apr. 1723.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/44: to W. Blackiston Bowes, [5 July 1721] (copy); Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/6: to Mr. Tennant, 8 Mar. 1724.
3. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: to R. Shafto, 21 Mar. 1725; to H. Ellison, 25 May 1725.
4. Six North Country Diaries, ed. Hodgson, p.123.
5. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 19 June 1719. See also: W.V. Smith, 'Two Newcastle lawyers in 1705', T.A.A.S.D.N., xi (1958-65), 423-4.
6. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/5: to C. Sanderson, 10 June 1720; ZCE 10/6: to W. Hodgson, 1 May 1724.
7. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to Mr. Elhrick, 27 Sept. 1719; ZCE 10/5: T. Sisson to J. Banks, 3 July 1720.

to violence in an area which, Cotesworth declared, was only too prone to it, and Cotesworth had a knack of championing unpopular causes.[1] His influential position in the Regulation produced the usual anonymous letters and threats to his life.[2] Sir Ralph Carr had him beaten up at one stage of a wayleave dispute between them, and his life was again threatened as a result of his attack on Newcastle's privileges and the purchase of Walker.[3] In June 1725 the threats were put into action when he was poisoned with a substantial amount of arsenic by his butler, who had previously been employed by Ridley.[4] It was not felt to be a coincidence that Cotesworth's lawsuit against Ridley, to recover coal stolen by the latter from Heaton colliery through Byker and to stop Ridley's attempts to prevent him working the colliery, had reached a critical point at this time, as had Cotesworth's efforts to prevent Lady Clavering, Ridley and their allies from using Whickham manor.[5] As the Bishop of Durham commented, 'so great & so vile an attempt was not the produce of the fellows own Brains', and the general weight of opinion was against Ridley.[6] However, Cotesworth recovered from the attack and the Heaton case proceeded, only to be delayed yet again, this time by a mysterious explosion in that part of Byker which Cotesworth was most anxious to have inspected. Ridley had opposed the view strenuously, asserting that Cotesworth's viewers would 'fire' the colliery and kill his workmen, and Cotesworth therefore felt some satisfaction when the mine exploded eight hours before the view was due to take place, killing fifteen of the miners. This, Cotesworth insinuated, was not so much an accident as a miscalculation of the fuses, which wasted all Ridley's careful preparation of opinion, although it certainly delayed the view indefinitely.[7]

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1. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/44: to W. Blackiston Bowes, [5 July 1721] (copy).
2. See Ch. V, pp.127-8.
3. Cotesworth MSS. CK/12/15: to Mrs. Carnaby, 1713; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to x, 21 Apr. 1719.
4. Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/7: T. Sisson to J. Banks, 20 June 1725; Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/41: to Mr. Whytell, 5 Nov. 1725 (copy).
5. Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/6: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 16 July 1725; see Ch. V, p.133.
6. Cotesworth MSS. CP/5/7: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 1 Aug. 1725; CP/3/81: Eliz. to R. Cotesworth, 13 June 1725.
7. Cotesworth MSS. CK/7/41: to Mr. Whytell, 5 Nov. 1725 (copy); CP/5/6: T. Sisson to R. Cotesworth, 16 July 1725.

In this context of violence, Cotesworth's frequent assertion that his enemies were going out of their way to ruin him gains a certain credibility, and it emphasizes that the hazards of a successful career were not all economic. Many of his ambitions were frustrated by a combination of the factors outlined above, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were too great to be accomplished by one man in one lifetime, however gifted and determined that man might be. They not only aroused opposition to his plans among his contemporaries but also led him to overstretch his resources of time and capital, so that he was unable to deal with this opposition effectively. His bitter reaction to his treatment by the leading coal owners in these last years was one aspect of his growing frustration in the face of his overwhelming difficulties.[1] When he died in 1726 his property, apart from his coal holdings outside his own land, was worth around £60,000 and, even after the incumbrances on the estate had been deducted, he would still have been a very rich man by contemporary standards.[2] Perhaps if he had not tried to push so hard, his heir would have had an even larger, as well as an easier, inheritance.

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1. See Ch. V, pp.132-3, 135-6; above pp.212-4.
2. Cotesworth MSS. CP/4/43: to [C. Sanderson], 20 Mar. 1720; CP/4/107: from J. Banks, 3 Dec. 1726; Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to J. Banks, 22 Mar. 1720; ZCE 10/9: R. Cotesworth to J. Airey, 9 Dec. 1727; Ellison MSS. C 31/1: rental of R. Cotesworth's estate, 1726; Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community', Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., xxiii, 227-8.

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Carr-Ellison (Hedgeley) MSS.
Cookson (Minsteracres) MSS.
Middleton-in-Teesdale: parish register transcripts
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Ridley (Blagdon) MSS.

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	Various

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Note on the principal sources

The main MSS. sources which have been used in this enquiry are the Cotesworth and Ellison MSS., deposited in Gateshead Public Library, and the Carr-Ellison MSS. at Northumberland Record Office. Although I supplemented the material taken from these archives by some from other local, national and private papers, I cannot pretend to have located, much less consulted, all the available sources of information on either Cotesworth himself or those aspects of the economic life of the area around Newcastle upon Tyne examined in the thesis. Other valuable sources do exist: in Newcastle University library alone there are the Montagu papers, relating to Hutton and Benwell in the 1690s and 1700s and to the Coal Office, the 'Jacobite Letters', which were obviously once a part of the Ellison MSS., and the letter book of James Clavering, covering parts of the period 1712 to 1734. These letters in particular offer what might be called an 'outside' view of Cotesworth and the coal trade and are often less than flattering to my protagonist.

The omission of such collections was a matter of deliberate choice, being dictated by the sheer bulk and quality of Cotesworth's own papers. In order to complete my thesis within three years, it was necessary to work within a fairly narrow period, and to confine the range of the study within that period. I therefore chose to concentrate on Cotesworth's papers and to view the subject through his eyes and those of his correspondents. As this indicates, his papers are unusual in that they consist to a large extent of correspondence: moreover, although it is only rarely possible to match letters and replies, the correspondence contains both in- and out-letters, many of which are packed with interesting information. In these circumstances, the absence of any account books, ledgers, day books, &c. is not a crippling handicap.

The extraordinary volume of the MSS. collections connected with Cotesworth would have made the work very laborious if two of them had not been carefully listed and catalogued. The Ellison MSS., for example, contain a large number of letters relating to the Ellison and Liddell family, nearly 3,500 of which date from the eighteenth century, but the list makes it easy to pick out the 200 letters which refer to Cotesworth. This was the smallest section of documents consulted, although it was also among the most valuable since it includes three bundles of letters written to Cotesworth by his closest friend, Henry Liddell, from London between 1710 and 1717. These 171 letters contain a wealth of information on a wide variety of topics, but above all on the operation of the Regulation: the example transcribed below is in fact one of the shorter letters and is in no way outstanding. Other sections of the Ellison MSS. contain relevant colliery leases and accounts and some legal papers, none of which were particularly illuminating.

The Cotesworth MSS. form a mammoth collection of approximately 13,200 items, of which at least 4,000 were directly relevant to the thesis. The documents are divided into sections according to their content, an arrangement which suits deeds, wills, &c. but can lead to confusion since many of the documents, especially the letters, deal with several topics that do not fall within the narrow subject heading of their section. Among the documents relating to Cotesworth are about 1,500 letters and papers concerned with the coal trade, including the minutes of the Regulation and the Grand Alliance agreement, over 1,000 miscellaneous business papers, again mostly letters, and over 800 letters, including correspondence between Cotesworth and his friends George and Henry Liddell, and his steward Sisson. Although there are copies and drafts of out-letters in the Cotesworth MSS., the greater part of the correspondence consists of in-letters, some of them relating to matters of business which figure

only briefly in the Ellison MSS. letters. There is also a great deal of material on Cotesworth's activities as a landowner, which I have not used in the thesis.

The third section of Cotesworth's papers consists of the ten letter books containing copies of the out-letters written by himself, his son and his steward between 1709 and 1729. These form a tremendously rich source although, since they are neither listed nor catalogued, the task of sifting through the 2,000 pages and approximately 4,000 letters involved is a daunting one. They are however in chronological order, which helps to put the rather fragmented material in the Cotesworth MSS. into context. Only the first two volumes deal with the period in which Cotesworth traded as a general merchant, but there is more information in these letters than there is in the Cotesworth MSS. on the same subject. The letter books as a whole, however, share the general bias of Cotesworth's papers towards coal, salt and personal correspondence. Occasionally the large number of letters involved makes it possible to reconstruct business transactions and correspondence of more general interest in great detail, as can be seen from transcripts 2 and 3: even when the out-letter and reply do not match exactly, as in this case, the tone and substance of a correspondence emerge quite clearly.

These three MSS. sources contain much more material than I had an opportunity to use, on topics ranging from agriculture to education and fashion, and would reward further study.

Transcript 1:

G.P.L., Ellison MSS. A 35/10.

Dec^{r}. 4th 710/

Kind friend./

Since my last to y^{o} I have seen Cha: Sanderson, who tells me y^{t} M^{r}. Marloves Goldsmith has bid 7000^{li}. for y^{e} Mannors &c. but is backward in filing y^{e} money as usuall in those Cases. This Goldsmith y^{e} person y^{t} has bid, is a man of little or no Substance, & Cha: thinks y^{t} he will be obliged to drop itt att last; nay in all probability y^{r} friends may take ye bargain off his hands in case they approve of itt, for he will never be able to go thro' wth it; & before all parties be brought to consent (w^{ch} must be first obtain'd) much time will be spent, att least a twelve month. So y^{t} if y^{o} have any thoughts if y^{o} will either write to me or Cha: (but he will be y^{e} properest to satisfye any scruples or clear Objections) he promises to doe all y^{e} service he is capable off. The sum̄ y^{t} is generally paid into Court on y^{s} & y^{e} like occasions is ab^{t}. 4 or 500^{li}. in y^{e} nature of Earnest, & to satisfye y^{e} Court y^{t} y^{e} party dos design to proceed.

The two Objections y^{o} raised in y^{r} last, are y^{e} chief y^{t} can affect y^{e} Contractors, I shew'd my Uncle y^{r} Letter, but as he was going out of Town, we had not an opportunity of seeing y^{e} Originall; w^{n} y^{t} is don I shall press a Resolution & I believe it will be thought convenient to cancell itt, for in effect if y^{e} Dealers sh^{d} make a breach I dont see y^{t} y^{e} owners ever durst venture to sue their Covenant, least it be thought an illegal one, & y^{n} it turns upon y^{m}selves.

If y^{e} Partys could be brought to lessen their Numbers of Waggons as also their Winter works, it would effectually remedy y^{e} Complaints under w^{ch} y^{e} Trade groan'd y^{e} last year, & this may be don wthout any Exception. The abatem^{t}. of Keels will likewise contribute to make matters go more glibly in severall Respects. 'Tis to be hoped y^{t} by y^{r} prudent menagem^{t}. below, y^{e} Keelmen will be brought to Reason, & see w^{t} is their true interest, w^{ch} I take to be, y^{e} joining in wth their Owners, & endeavouring to serve their interests wth Zeal. Had y^{o} any discourse wth Dan: D..oe w^{n} in y^{e} Contrey? w^{t} sort off Spiritt possesses y^{t} man, who seems by y^{e} print, of w^{ch} he is suspected to be y^{e} author, to encourage modestly speaking a Refractoriness among y^{t} sort of people.

Pray will y^{o} putt y^{e} gentlemen in mind of providing against y^{e} Evill day, by remitting a Convenient sum̄ to be lodged in any hand they think fitt. The sooner y^{s} is on y^{e} better, for we don't know how soon we

may be attack'd. Be pleased to acquaint y^e Cap.^t y^t y^e bill of forty pounds he return'd me before I went to Bath £r. Starkin is not yet paid; y^e person on w^m it is drawn has but twenty pounds of y^e masters in his hand, & will not disburse a farthing for him. Lett y^e Cap^t discourse Starkin ab.^t itt. I mention'd thus much to him some posts agoe, but now y^e Party is positive he will pay no more y^n he has Effects for, w^ch is as above. I am heartily glad J. Johnson is like to doe well againe. This Rainy weather accompanyed w^th Storms of wind little inferior to y^e great one, has much disturb'd my Corporation.

P. S. Dec^r 5^th. Last night I had one £r. y^o & another £r. y^e Cap.^t who tells me he has spoke to Starkin. Wortley is not yet come to Town, but I must tell y^o unless y^t money for y^e menagem.^t be not remitted speedily, I believe y^o will find y^e two gentlemen very backward in pursuing y^e Cause. pray therefore press a supply w^thout loss of time. I shall acquaint M.^rs Clav: y^t y^o design to furnish y^e market w^th choice Coals y^s next year. I heartily rejoice y^t y^o have defeated S^r J. &c. but am concernd poor Marly sh^d be dismissed, since his Crime can be no other, y^n an intimacy w^th Rav: if any post sh^d offer y^t may be fitt for him, y^o will have him in View. Adieu I am in hart

Kind friend

Y^rs most faithfully

Gov.^r

I sh^d be glad of y^r Tittle Tattle.
it w^d entertain us extreemly att a time w^n
publick news is not so gratefull.

To M^r Will.^m Cotesworth to be sent by y^e Postm.^r of Durham.

Transcript 2:

N.R.O., Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/3.

Gateshead Park June 22

1718.

M^r Hodshon

I thank God Wee Arrived Safe on fryday sennet - I drew on you Yesterday for 200^l. to M^r. Douglas at 30 dayes w^ch pray pay - I desire you will on Receite of this go Round to all your Old Custom^rs and Know w^t. they will give you for 500. Tons of Old Salt - If they will but Encourage you I will Send you that and a greater quantity for I find M^r. West Just the man that he was. - He wōu'd faine buy 600 Tons to be DD after y^e 600 Tons I Sold him and to have it at the Same price - I believe he wōu'd gladly give me 28, but If I cōu'd make 28 of it at Lond^o. - I had rather pay you provision and Run the Risque then deal w^th men that have used both you and me So ill - I beg you will take a dilligent Trip thrō' them all and let them know if they will Encourage you, you will Supply 'em w^th a Sufficient Winter Stock - pray Exert y^r Selfe on this Occasion and write by first post after this to all your Country Acquaintance I Also desire you will before next post Speak to M^r Nicholson Woodmong^r who I Sold the Salt to for the Government and tell him I Shall be much Oblidged to him if he will pick me out 4. Ships of 70 Tons apeace & I will Keep 'em Constantly running in the Salt Trade for you may tell him I find the Salters are like to Use me ill -

I am yo^rs &c. W.C ____

P.S pray faile not of an Answ^r. by returne of the Post you may shew M^r Nicholson this whole Letter for I think if I have any friends it is him selfe and M^r Bluncket

Transcript 3:

G.P.L., Cotesworth MSS. CM/2/387.

London 28th June 1718.

Sr/

I am facoured with yours dated the 22 of this Instant, and am Glad to here you got safe home, your bill Two hundred pounds to Mr. Duglas you may assure your Self will meet with due honour, According to your Request I have been amongst all the Customers but Cann't fix ym to any Quantity Salt, all I can get out of 'em if you Send any they will give a market price, I desire you'l Let me know ye Lowest price you'l take for a Loading about ye Later End of Next mounth, being I have the promise of a Loading from some of ye Customers, Since I received yours I had some Conversation with Mr. West Mr. Hodgshon and Tennant who seames to be under a great Consarne being you press ym to a thing that is not Consistant to there Interest, and I must Needs say I find 'em very unwilling to do any thing that wd oblidge you, Mr. West produced Two Leters from you dated the 14 and 22 Ultom': * and ye first I must beg leave to say is two hard upon 'em, being you'l not Load the Ships they Send which is a Charge to ym & a Loss of time, and you know ye agrement was to Load Two hundred Tuns a mounth, and the time is almost Expired and they have got but 240 Tuns which I think may give ym some reason to Complaine, I find they are not willing to Comply in taking 800 Tuns at your price, for no other reason then this if they should dow it they are Sencable it wd make others Lower ye price, they have now agreaded to give Robert Young a order this post to buy a Loading of yu at a market price let it be what it will, they did designe him to Load with you in part of ye Contract, but they did this purly to Let you See they are willing to take yrs befor any bodys Else provided they Can all ways have it at a market price, without makeing any agremt for a Quantity, I will do all I can to accomodate matters betwixt you, and I am

Sr Yor: Most oblidged humble

Servant to Comand

Robert Hodshon

TO William Cotesworth Esqr att Parkhouse Near NewCastle upon Tyne.

* See N.R.O., Carr-Ellison MSS. ZCE 10/4: to R. West, 14 & 22 June 1718.